Working-Class Homes in three Urban Communities 1870-1914

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Abstract

This thesis examines the place of 'home' in the lives of the poorest residents of the late Victorian city. Using new personal sources it looks afresh at three districts that, through the work of social investigators, have long been at the heart of working-class historiography. The homes of these 'working-class' men women and children have received very little historical attention despite, between 1870 and 1914, becoming a key element in the lives of those struggling with poverty and overcrowding. The home was a place where not just money, but also space and time became resources that family members employed to keep both home and family intact. Complex relationships with time, space and money governed the lives of those who inhabited these homes and proved especially important for the young men and women who were born into them. Studying the lives of youths from the perspective of the home reveals how, as they grew older, they came to experience more and more of their urban surroundings. This expanding world view, so formative to the lives of the young, was centred on the family home. Examining the homes of the urban poor also highlights the subtle yet significant distinctions and variations in 'working-class' life in the period that call into question the usefulness of such a term when describing people and communities. The powerful image of a culturally unified working-class stems not from the homes of these men and women themselves but the perceptions of such homes, and by extension their residents, by outside society. By 1914 the image of one, sadly deficient, working-class home was firmly rooted in the minds of social reformers. It was an image that, despite little relationship to the realities of life for the urban poor, went on to resonate in twentieth-century Britain.

Contents

Tables and Illustrations

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Oliver Betts York May 2014

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is solely and entirely my own work. It has not been presented for examination at this Institution or any other before. It is not a result of joint research.

Oliver Betts

Introduction

On a Saturday morning in May 1890, those perusing the *York Herald* over breakfast may have noticed a small column about a coroner's inquest held at the Garden Gate Inn in the Hungate area of York. Lewis Wells, a paper hanger living a street away from the public house in question, had been ill for some time. Suffering from 'consumption and bronchitis' he had been 'confined to bed for a fortnight', the jury heard, before asking his son to fetch a shoemaker's knife from a drawer and stabbing himself in the chest. It was not clear at first that he had done this. A series of friends and visitors came in and out of the room before his wife, turning back the covers, noticed him drenched in blood. Mrs Wells, in a panic, summoned the neighbours, but it was too late. Ultimately, the jury decided, the pain had become too much for Lewis and he had taken his life whilst driven 'temporarily insane'.[1] Halfway down page five of the paper, the Wells case was wedged in alongside reports of the Bristol by-election and a lengthy report on the Imperial Parliament. It may have gone overlooked by many readers.

Small items such as these were increasingly present in the pages of regional and national newspapers as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth. The newspaper was not the only means of insight into the lives of the poor afforded to residents of Victorian York. Throughout the late nineteenth-century The York City Mission published detailed reports of their philanthropic efforts in an attempt to raise funds. They spoke of how the 'decay of home influence is a matter of deep concern', as 'young life is thrown away on the streets' and 'habits are formed and practices indulged in which are both morally and spiritually injurious'.[2] The home life of the working-class had become such an issue that in 1907 Lady Florence Bell, the wife of a local Iron Master in the town of Middlesbrough, felt moved to join the voices of already established experts such as Charles Booth and B. Seebohm Rowntree. *At the Works* was the result of visits to over a thousand homes, she pointed out, and offered primarily a glimpse into those most 'needy and unhappy'.[3] As this thesis will demonstrate,

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[1] *York Herald,* 10th May 1890.
[2] York City Mission, 1902, 7-8.
[3] Lady Florence Bell, *At the Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town.* London: Virago Edition, 1985*,* xxvii-xxxii.

the working-class home played a central role in class identity in the half century prior to the First World War.

The homes of working-class men, women and children have received only peripheral attention from historians. It has been discussed most prominently by historians of housing. Martin Daunton, engaged in a study of *House and Home in the Victorian City,* dedicated a penultimate chapter of his work to an examination of 'domesticity and the working-class'. His primary focus on the construction, management and regulation of housing, meant that much of the analysis of home (as distinct from house or dwelling) remained limited to a discussion of how residents responded to these external forces.[4] Likewise, although a critically useful text, David Englander's study of the rental market in the pre-war period focused primarily on the *economic* aspects of renting and the associated social and cultural tensions.[5] Wider studies of domesticity in the Victorian period, meanwhile, have often ignored the homes of the poorer sections of society. The middle-class home, unlike its working-class counterpart, has received much more attention. For historians such as Judith Flanders, Thad Logan and others, the home is a symbolic encapsulation of middle-class life, a lens through which middle-class attitudes towards family, domesticity, the role of women, and the division between public and private life may be analysed and understood. The middle-class vision of the home was, as Jenni Caulder has pointed out, the very 'quintessence' of social values for its occupants, and whilst this was an ideal that was perhaps more aspirational than achieved, it has left a powerful after-image in the modern mindset.[6]

In the absence of a dedicated study of the home amongst the working-class, the general consensus has been muted. John Gillis, in tracing the importance of cultural rituals and representations to the development of modern conceptions of 'family values', claims that working-class homes 'had too little space' for them to be able to see even part of it given over to 'representational', or culturally significant, activities.[7] Judith Flanders similarly demurred, merely

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[4] M.J. Daunton, *House and Home in the Victorian City: Working-Class Housing 1850-1914*. London: Edward Arnold, 1983, 263-285.
[5] David Englander, *Landlord and Tenant in Urban Britain 1838-1918.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983*,* 1-10.
[6] Jenni Caulder, *The Victorian Home.* London: Batsford, 1977*,* 9.
[7] John Gillis, *A World of Their Own Making: myth, ritual and the quest for Family Values*. New York: Basic Books Edition, 2001, 127.

stating that working-class houses 'had their own problems', perhaps ones far too varied in contrast to the 'pattern' of life taking place the middle-class homes which she puts under the cultural magnifying glass.[8] George Behlmer, in an otherwise powerful and insightful study of the growing trends towards social intervention between 1850 and 1950 in Britain, afforded the working-class vision of home only a few lines. First artisanal elites and then 'less privileged workers' came to share many of the 'same values' of privacy and family-life that emanated downwards from middle-class culture, he argues.[9] This "trickledown" model has been increasingly critiqued by historians of the working class over the past few decades for a wide variety of social and cultural elements, ranging from ideas of masculinity and femininity to working practices and leisure activities.[10] Yet although recently Jon Lawrence has raised doubts about the idea of a slow and partial adoption of middle-class domesticity in the interwar period, there has been no similar reconsideration of the place of the home amongst working-class society in the late Victorian period. Whilst actually discussing working-class children learning to read from ponderous Victorian textbooks, Jonathan Rose's observation that regardless of subject matter 'they managed to extract…something relevant to their individual lives' could stand for any facet of late Victorian culture.[11] Just because the middle-class cult of domesticity existed does not automatically mean that working-class men and women accepted it at face value, or indeed at all. By studying those men, women and children who were not as affluent, and who by extension the trickledown model ignores, this thesis will demonstrate that across urban England there were ideas of home developing amongst working-class communities. These notions of home, moreover, were central to working-class identity.

This thesis examines the period between 1870 and 1914, and it concentrates on this almost half-century for several reasons. On a critical level, the period between 1870 and the beginning of the First World War is a familiar

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[8] Judith Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home: A portrait of domestic life in Victorian England*. London and New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2003, 36.
[9] George Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and its Guardians.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 121.
[10] Jonathon Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes.* Yale: Yale University Press, 2010*,* 10.
[11] Jon Lawrence, 'Class, "Affluence" and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c.1930-1964', *Cultural and Social History,* 10, 2, (2013), 273-274.

terrain for historians of the working-class. The boundaries are, admittedly, flexible. Mike Savage and Andrew Miles have taken 1840-1940 as the period in which they consider the 'remaking' of the working class to have occurred, whereas Andrew August has more recently stretched the period to cover 1832-1940 to allow for a discussion of the ramifications of the Reform Act.[12] Joanna Bourke, meanwhile, pursued her more culturally based study of the working class well into the 1960s.[13] Even those who do stop with the advent of war, such as Ross McKibbin, stress the continuities between pre-war and interwar life.[14] This thesis does not intend to impose a more strict period discipline upon working-class studies, merely to demarcate the time covered by logical bookends. 1870 stands at the beginning of the Long Depression, an economic downturn that had significant implications for poorer residents across Britain, yet also falls roughly in the middle of the urban expansion that gripped the country in the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition to this it was the year of the Elementary Education Act that precipitated a dropping off of employment amongst children. This was by no means an overnight transformation; as Jane Humphries has emphasised recently children's work in the second half of the nineteenth century was not suddenly 'separated out from mainstream production processes'.[15] Yet it does signify the beginning of a process of re-assessing the work of children that had an important impact on the income and functions of the home. Similarly selecting 1914 as the end date of the investigation was the result of both economic and socio-cultural considerations. The wartime rental market, as Englander has emphasised, went into a considerable state of flux, a chaotic period of rent strikes and prices fluctuations that were a marked contrast to the pre-war economy.[16] To extend this study into the interwar period would also have been to transition into a period when ideas of home, housing and the domestic were rapidly changing. State intervention in housing, although

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[12] Mike Savage and Andrew Miles *The Remaking of the British Working Class 1840-1940.* London: Routledge, 1994*,* ix-xi, Andrew August, *The British Working Class 1832-1940.* Edinburgh: Pearson Education, 2007*,* 7-12

[13] Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain: 1890-1960,* London: Routledge, 1994*,* 1-22.

[14] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 164-167.

[15] Jane Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 370.

[16] Englander, *Landlord and Tenant,* 191-297.

beginning in small steps before 1914, accelerated rapidly after 1918. Likewise, as Lawrence emphasised in his recent study of interwar 'affluence', consumption patterns changed dramatically in the 1920s and 1930s.[17] Whilst the period between 1870 and 1914 was steadily changing, it remains a timescale that the majority of historians of the working class consider a period of common ground, with shared cultural, social and economic characteristics.

It was the historiographical importance of 1870 to 1914 that helped shape the methodological choice of both period and scale. This thesis will examine three working-class communities across urban England within the period. These are the Hungate area of York, part of the Marsh Ward in the northern industrial town of Middlesbrough, and a section of Bethnal Green in London's East End. The specifics of these case study areas are covered in detail in the following chapter. The reason for choosing these case studies was twofold. Firstly all three were definable areas. Although different in both geographical and population size, with the section of Bethnal Green housing more than four times the number of residents as Hungate, each district was identifiable to contemporaries as a specific locale, recognisable to visitors and residents alike. Secondly, all three were the focus of social investigations which have, since their publications, underpinned sociological and historical studies of the working class throughout Britain. Bethnal Green, like the entirety of the capital, was swept up in Charles Booth's monumental *Life and Labour of the People in London.* Hungate formed a central part of the analysis of B. Seebohm Rowntree that, under the title of *Poverty: A Study of Town Life,* was published *in* 1901 as a provincial comparison to Booth's work.[18] The Marsh Ward, one of the earlier parts of the still growing industrial conurbation of Middlesbrough, was covered by Lady Florence Bell's *At the Works* published in 1907.[19]

These three areas were partly selected as case studies for the range of urban economies and functions they represented. Between them the areas cover communities in a newer manufacturing town, a smaller and older provincial town with a mixture of light industry and trade, and part of the East End that has proved so alluring to historians of the working class. Yet it is important to

[17] Lawrence, 'Class, "Affluence" and the Study of Everyday Life', 273-277.
[18] B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life.* York: Policy Press Edition, 2000 and Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London.* London, 1901.
[19] Bell, *At the Works.*

acknowledge the limitations of such a sample. Late Victorian contemporaries were themselves aware of the partial nature of social investigation. In his introduction to *Livelihood and Poverty*, a 1915 study of four towns across Britain by the statistician Arthur Bowley and the economist A.R. Burnett-Hurst, R.H. Tawney argued that a sampling method allowed for a much more valuable *comparative* form of investigation.[20] There are other studies from which to choose, ones that shed light on less-studied areas of Britain, such as Maud Pember Reeves' *Round about a Pound a Week* (1913) that focused on Lambeth, Eleanor Rathbone's studies of Liverpool dock workers, or the rural social investigators that Mark Freeman has studied.[21] The statistical evidence provided by Rowntree in particular has, in recent years, come under increasing scrutiny from historians, and there have long been methodological issues with the partiality of social investigations as a whole.[22] Yet for all their limitations, these three case studies remain crucial. They cover a wide range of occupations, housing types, social structures and lived experiences, which are emphasised in more detail in the area summaries that follow this introduction, as are the reasons for selecting the particular neighbourhoods. These areas are also, and perhaps more importantly, representative of the evidence used by historians of working-class society in Britain. Booth, Rowntree, and to a lesser extent Bell, are common fixtures of bibliographies, and it was the pre-eminence that the contemporary studies of these areas hold in the historiography of the working class that made them ideal settings for this study.[23] These three social investigations are often employed to support observations about the working-class on a national scale or as a point of comparison with detailed research into a

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[20] Arthur Bowley and A.R. Burnett-Hurst, *Livelihood and Poverty: A Study in the Economic Conditions of Working-Class households in Northampton, Warrington, Stanley and Reading.* London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd, 1915, 9-10.

[21] Maud Pember Reeves, *Round about a Pound a Week,* London: Persephone Books Edition, 2008, Eleanor Rathbone, *How the Casual Labourer Lives: Reports of the Liverpool Joint Research Committee on the domestic condition and expenditure of the families of certain Liverpool labourers.* Liverpool: The Northern Publishing Co. Ltd., 1909, Mark Freeman, *Social Investigation in Rural England 1870-1914.* Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003.

[22] Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell, 'Poverty in Edwardian Britain'. *Economic History Review,* 64, 1 (2011), 69.

[23] Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures,* 248, 251, 257. Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950.* Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, Reprint, 2002*,* 103-107, 169. Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Sixth Reprint, 1996, 196-211, August, *British Working Class,* 272-273. Standish Meacham, *A Life Apart: the English Working Class, 1890-1914.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1977*.,* 7 amongst many others.

particular locality. These three studies have never been contrasted with each other in the light of detailed research into the particular areas from which their authors each drew the material evidence that supported their works. Given the preeminent place these studies hold within not only historical research but also contemporary opinion surrounding the working class, they are a significant trio of case studies representative of both late Victorian urban society and the historical field.

Social investigations, as mentioned above, are problematic sources. Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, the foremost experts on the work of Charles Booth, have emphasised both the significant nature of the material Booth collected and the problems of using it.[24] Whilst relying on the social investigators to provide detailed material evidence of the areas in question, this thesis utilises a range of other sources to compare and contrast that evidence. Chief amongst these is the census. Working with the census to build composite pictures of working-class communities is not new to the historical field, but has not been done with these three areas before. Nor have many historians been able to use the census returns for the 1911 census, up until 2011 covered by the rolling veil of data protection, in their studies. This census, which followed the trend from 1871 onwards of asking more and more detailed questions, not only offers a new stage of material but also new information. Many of the details included on the 1911 census, such as numbers of deceased children for mothers and more detailed employment histories for workers, have been utilised in this study. The details contained within the enumerators' books for each census have been compiled in full, not simply sampled, and these form the majority of the statistical evidence used in this study. Although this does mean that widespread numerical analysis of residential persistence, family size, occupation rates and other factors are limited to five consecutive integers, snapshots of almost half a century, it does allow a statistical basis for both chronological and lateral comparison.

As well as delving into the census returns for the three districts, this thesis has followed the urging of Richard Dennis that historical studies of urban Britain

[24] Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, Mr Charles Booth's inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London reconsidered. London: Continuum, 1993, 42-45.

'must employ an even wider range of sources in a more integrative fashion'.[25] The work of local officials, such as Medical Officers of Health and Sanitary Officials, provide both statistical evidence and descriptive accounts of the areas in question. Likewise newspaper reports, trial transcripts, charity records and other printed sources have been used to fill in the gaps between censuses, trace families and individuals between years, and provide further details on both areas and residents. Many of these have been digitised in recent years, and this has allowed for a much more thorough search based on streets or names than would have been possible even five years earlier. Casting such a wide net has not only allowed for a more complete picture of life in the three districts to be compiled, but also turned up a number of small but interesting incidents and anomalies that might otherwise have escaped notice.

The evidence this thesis has not employed is personal accounts. Oral histories and autobiographies have an impressive and well-deserved pedigree in working-class history. Classic auto-biographical accounts of slum life, such as Robert Roberts's *The Classic Slum,* as well as those oral histories so ably collected by John Burnett and Paul Thompson, are as frequent a part of bibliographies as the studies of Booth and Rowntree.[26] This study has not followed in the august footsteps of Elizabeth Roberts and others for one simple reason; no complete body of oral history survives for any of the areas in question.[27] Those accounts which do, such as Raphael Samuel's transcription of the life of Arthur Harding, have been brought in.[28] There are simply not enough extant accounts, however, to offer a representative picture of life in Hungate, the Marsh Ward or Bethnal Green.[29] Moreover the distance between this thesis and the period in question, although an advantage for census work, prevents any new

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[25] Richard Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography.* Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, Paperback Edition, 1986, 288.
[26] Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum.* Manchester: Manchester University Press Edition, 1997*,* Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society.* London: Routledge, Second Edition, 1992, John Burnett (ed.), *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s.* London: Allen Lane, 1982.
[27] Elizabeth Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890-1940. London: Wiley-Blackwell, New Edition, 1995, 6.
[28] Raphael Samuel, *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
[29] The work of the York Oral History Project has recovered many voices from the period, but these are still only fragments. See, for instance, C. M. Van Wilson, *Rich in All But Money: Life in Hungate 1900-1938.* York: York Archaeological Trust, 2007.

oral history from being done. Sadly the period between 1870 and 1914 has passed out of living memory. It is simply not possible for this study to replicate the impressive work done by Ben Jones with the oral histories of Brighton residents in the twentieth century.[30] Following the example set by Lucinda McCray Beier and drawing upon the transcripts of another oral historian's work would have been an alternative focus, but this would have raised serious methodological issues.[31] Not only would the focus have been shifted away from these three significant areas, but there would have been no way of altering the questions asked. As Jones himself has pointed out, constructing life histories from interviews can uncover detailed webs of relationships and cultural experiences, but only if the right questions are asked.[32] This caution must stand double for a subject as personal and enigmatic as the home. The majority of first-hand accounts of this period were written or recorded significantly later – Paul Thompson's interviews for his *The Edwardians,* whilst featuring over four hundred men and women born before 1906 with 'the earliest in 1872', were recorded in the 1970s.[33] Likewise Roberts's work was written in the 1970s, reflecting back on his early life.[34] Attempting to trace the importance of the home in these accounts would be to contend not only with the hazy world of childhood memory but more significantly to receive observations informed by the experiences of a twentieth-century where cultural representations of the home have dramatically shifted. Rising levels of private home-ownership, the increasing availability of domestic labour-saving technologies and an ongoing dialogue surrounding 'broken' homes represent only a fraction of the cultural debate which continues to shape attitudes towards homes in twentieth-century Britain.

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[30] Ben Jones, *The Working-Class in mid-twentieth-century England: community, identity and social memory.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012, 6.
[31] For an example of a more recent study drawing on Roberts's work see Lucinda McCray Beier, *For Their Own Good: the transformation of English Working-Class health culture 1880-1970,* Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2008.
[32] Ben Jones, 'Telling Family Stories: Interpretive Authority and Intersubjectivity in Life History Research', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History,* 7, (2004), 1-9.
[33] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class,* London: Penguin Edition, 2002*,* xix.
[34] Roberts, *Ragged Schooling,* 1-6.

Attempting to impose any clear definition of home on a given historical context is, as Behlmer has pointed out, simply an exercise in 'cultural myopia'.[35] Such a warning must stand doubly true when the most vocal sources available to the historian are those produced by outsiders immured in a definably distinct culture of the domestic. In undertaking this analysis, then, this study will attempt to maintain an open consideration of "homes". It is not just the bricks and mortar of walls and roofs and floors but, in the words of Allison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, the networks of 'wider social, political, cultural and economic relations' around which individuals and families define the home and by extension themselves.[36] Given the common use of "home" and "house" as synonyms, however, it is worth delineating how this thesis will employ these terms.[37] Dwelling is used here to denote the living space occupied by a particular family, group of residents or sometimes a solitary person designated as a household by the census enumerators. Although the drawbacks of this often arbitrary designation will be discussed in detail later on, it serves here as shorthand for the spaces occupied by these co-habiting groups (and "household" concurrently is employed to describe the actual co-habitants themselves) in contrast to the physical dwelling-places, here described as "house", "Lodging House", "cellar" etc. This allows home to be considered in the widest possible context.

Finally it is the issue of context that provides the final key element of this thesis. Recent studies of the late Victorian working class have, perhaps as a reaction to the heavily cultural direction of class histories of the 1980s and 1990s, returned to embrace the economic. In their conclusion to a 2000 sociological study, *Renewing Class Analysis,* Fiona Devine and Mike Savage praised the reintegration of the social and cultural with the economic in class analysis.[38] Likewise the conclusion to Selina Todd's more recent study of young female workers in the early twentieth century emphasised her hope that social, economic and demographic factors would be further intertwined by historians

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[35] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family*, 3.
[36] Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, 265.
[37] Roderick Lawrence, 'Deciphering Home: An Integrative Historical Perspective' in *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments,* David N. Benjamin (ed.), London: Averbury, 1995, 134-139.
[38] Fiona Devine and Mark Savage, 'Conclusion: Renewing Class Analysis', in Robert Crompton et al, *Renewing Class Analysis.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, 184-185.

exploring the landscape of class.[39] Following this line of inquiry, this thesis intends to do exactly that for the pre-1914 world, using detailed studies of these three areas to uncover the interplay between social, cultural, economic and personal factors that took place within, and shaped, the home.

Exploring an environment as personal as the home, however, also demands a close attention be paid to an older facet of working-class history; namely the discussion of 'experience'. Prominently positioned across the intervening decades of scholarship since its publication is the long, detailed and fervent analysis of E.P. Thompson's 1963 *The Making of the English Working Class*, and particularly Thompson's musing over the definition of class in the original preface.[40] 'Class', Thompson claimed, 'happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different (and usually opposed to) theirs'.[41] Historical opinion has naturally changed and evolved since the first appearance of *The Making of the English Working-Class*.[42] Yet it is a passage to which many historians continue to return. Joanna Bourke, to select just one example, employed it to open up her debate about the importance of gender and conflict to the experience of working-class cultures.[43] It is to the beautifully and frustratingly open-ended concept of 'common experiences' which this study wishes to return, for gauging what actually constitutes a 'common experience' calls the entire question of class in this period into sharp relief. Thompson argued that these experiences could be 'handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms'; indeed he believed this process was the fundamental genesis of class-consciousness.[44] It made sense then, in conceptualising this study, to select something which could arguably be the *most* common experience, one which would have the most significant, and by extension traceable, effect on the

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[39] Selina Todd, *Young Women, Work and Family in England 1918-1950.* Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2005, 230.
[40] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 8-13.
[41] Ibid, 8-9.
[42] For a taste of the debate surrounding this work see August, *The British Working Class,* 1. See also Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes,* 1-11 and Geoff Eley and Keith Nield, *The Future of Class in History: What's left of the social?* Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007, 1-18.
[43] Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures*, 1994, 3-4.
[44] Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class,* 9.

widest worlds of working-class culture. Home, present in so many accounts of working-class life but chronically unstudied, provides that common cultural thread.

Following on from this introduction is a summary chapter that provides a descriptive overview of the three areas under investigation and the social investigators who studied them. Chapter One then offers a more detailed investigation of living conditions, utilising a new sensory-based approach to overcome the lack of resident voices. Chapter Two explores the social composition of the residents themselves, both as individuals and as groups, placing them into the lived environment. Chapters Three, Four and Five examine key aspects of the home, namely space, time and money, in an attempt, to borrow Todd's definition, emphasise how life was 'shaped by surviving, adapting to, modifying and resisting' the urban landscape and economy.[45] Chapter Six then tests these concepts against a particular group of residents, the young, in the three areas. Despite a growing body of scholarship surrounding youth at the turn of the century there are still significant gaps to fill, and this chapter examines emerging youth cultures at the point when young men and women left the homes they were brought up in to set up their own.[46] The final chapter will then draw these themes back together and place the home within wider discussions of working-class culture and identity in the period. The home, an element of working-class life that appears so simple at first glance, can act as a lens through which sources and ideas can be re-examined.

Although extremely varied, homes in these three urban communities at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries exemplified the struggles of their inhabitants to adapt to their surroundings. Not always poverty stricken, nor especially culturally homogenous, they represent the sheer variety of working-class life in the period and emphasise the importance of local context

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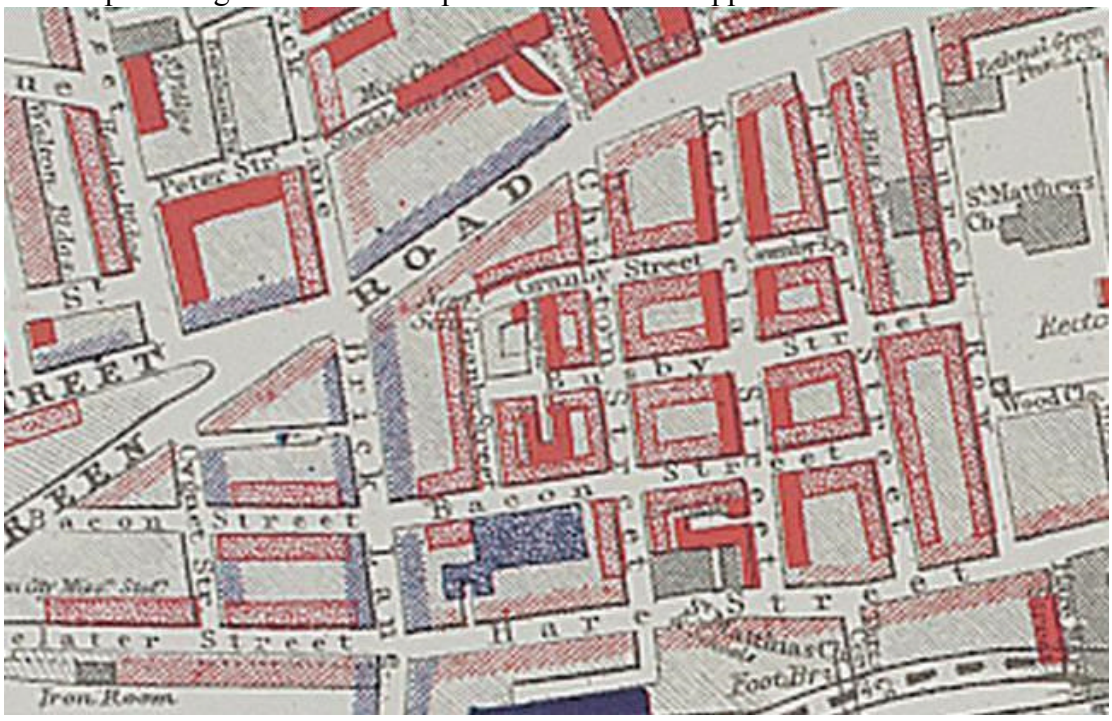
[45] Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family,* 230.

[46] Besides Selina Todd's work mentioned above see John Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements 1883-1940. London: Croom Helm, 1977. Troy Boone, *Youth of Darkest England: Working-Class children at the Heart of Victorian Empire.* London: Routledge, 2004, Andrew Davies, *The Gangs of Manchester: The Story of the Scuttlers, Britain's First Youth Cult*. London: Milo Books Edition, 2009. Lise Sanders Shapiro, *Consuming Fantasies: Labour, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl 1880-1920*. Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2006, Matthew Hilton, 'Tabs, Fags, and the Boy Labour Problem in Late Victorian and Edwardian England'. Journal of Social History, 28, 3, (Spring 1995), 587-607.

to working-class identity. It calls into question the idea of a culturally united working-class in the period but also demonstrates that these homes were no mere pale carbon copies of middle-class domesticity. More than anything else it is an attempt to locate three classic accounts of working-class life back within their proper contexts.

Figures One and Two: The maps of the triangle of Bethnal Green streets studied in this thesis. Above, that drawn up by Charles Booth for *Life and Labour of the People in London* showing the majority of the area as either black (vicious semi-criminal) and dark blue (very poor, casual, chronic want). The area under investigation here is highlighted in yellow.

Below, the adapted copy of Booth's map utilised in *The Jew in London,* a study of the new migrants to the area published in 1900. Colours relate to the percentage of Jewish occupants. Street names appear clearer here.



Bethnal Green

Census Year	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Population	2087	2239	2958	2552	2567

Figure Three: Population of this part of Bethnal Green taken from Census Returns

The East End of London

The East End of London, subject to so much immigration and expansion during the nineteenth-century, has not failed to attract a similarly diverse and developed body of historical interest. An 'eternal slum', as Anthony Wohl has put it, the housing problems of the East End were swollen by migration, cut through by railway construction, and rendered dangerous through poorly built and maintained properties.[47] By the 1870s the area was notorious as a locale of poverty, sweated labour and crime. It was an area that captivated the minds of wider Victorian society. By the late nineteenth-century authors and journalists were keen to cross the growing divide between West and East London. Margaret Harkness, a social commentator and budding journalist, was just one of many who took rooms in the area in order to observe what she termed 'Darkest London'.[48] A fascination that was pushed to a feverish height by the press revelations surrounding the Whitechapel Murders, the late Victorian East End fascinated then as now.[49] Given the particular attention that the East End has garnered from the late nineteenth-century to the present, it was natural that part of it be taken into consideration for this study.

Bethnal Green may not have been the most obvious choice of districts within the East End, but was certainly one of the most interesting. Compared to nearby Whitechapel, where the Ripper killings have encouraged a detailed study of squalor and crime, Bethnal Green remains relatively untouched by scholarship. This is not to say that it has attracted *no* historical research – indeed

[47] Anthony Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian England.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, Third Printing, 2009, 2.
[48] R. A. Biderman, 'Introduction', to Harkness, Margaret. *In Darkest London.* London: Black Apollo Press, Second Print, 2009, 7-10.
[49] Judith R.Walkowitz, *City of dreadful delight: narratives of sexual danger in late-Victorian London,* London: Virago Press, 1992, 1-14.

the area has formed the basis of both Ellen Ross' study of working-class womanhood and of Hugh McLeod's work on religion amongst the working-class.[50] Yet there are large sections of its census, parish, police and other records that remain not just intact but relatively untouched. It is both a familiar area of study for historians and one which can offer new insights into the East End as a whole. It also, as the preceding maps demonstrate, represents that mixture of poverty and relative comfort that was so common in the late Victorian capital. Neither entirely a slum nor by any means a exclusive artisanal district, Bethnal Green offers an insight into the often confused nature of communities and demographics in the East End in this period.

The District

Bethnal Green itself, however, is far too large to cover in a detailed fifty year census-based study. This thesis will concentrate on a triangle of streets at the heart of the district. These streets, bordered by Bethnal Green Road to the north and the railway tracks to the south, are close to areas that have been the subject of historical study, but have never been the subject of intense scrutiny themselves. They border onto the Nichol Slum, a notorious black-spot of poverty and crime in the East End, but are not actually part of it.[51] The area itself appeared a cohesive unit when Booth's investigators visited. They were all of a 'rough class' the investigator noted, and 'the triangle' lived 'together as a happy family' according to the police sergeant that accompanied him. It is clear from the accounts that even a triangle of streets as small as this contained a remarkable variety of residents. At the time of Booth's visit in 1898 these streets had recently become host to 'a great part of the Old Boundary St' population, evicted as the London County Council began to clear the area just to the north.[52] The area was also home, from the 1880s onwards, to Jewish migrants from Eastern

[50] Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 1-10. Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City.* London: Croom Press, 1974.
[51] Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum.* London: Vintage, 2009.
focuses on the infamous Nichol Slum that, in 1900, was remade as the Boundary Street Estate by the London County Council.
[52] London School of Economics Archive, London, B351, Booth Police Notebooks, 169-171

Europe. Many of these came via Whitechapel and added another complex element to the social mix in the area. Lacking any detailed study itself, the area offers a cohesive sample of the pressures and changes affecting the wider area.

The Study

Charles Booth began his studies of London with a survey of Tower Hamlets in 1887, and over the following fifteen years branched out to cover the entirety of late Victorian London. In the course of his surveys he interviewed those he felt could shed most light on conditions: local authorities such as police officers, school board visitors, charity workers and employers, as well as residents themselves. The final results of the survey, published in seventeen volumes in 1902 as *Life and Labour of the People in London* was split into three sections titled Poverty, Industry and the less clearly defined Religious Influences.

This thesis not only draws on information from all three of these published sections but also from the raw data collected in the vast number of notebooks now held at the London School of Economics archive. Indeed, of the three investigations featured in this study only the original notes for Booth's enquiry still exist. These offer a unique insight into not just the unedited opinions of middle-class interlopers to the area, such as clerics and policemen, but also, in some rare instances, the voices of residents themselves. In assembling such a vast array of material, Booth utilised a number of assistants and experts. Some of these had prior experience of the East End, and many others went on to become distinguished figures in their own rights. Amongst those featured in this study are George Duckworth, George Arkell, Ernest Aves, E.W. Brooks, Clara Collet, and Beatrice Potter (who went on to marry Fabian Socialist thinker Sidney Webb) and at various points throughout this study these different assistants and investigators are mentioned in conjunction with Booth himself.[53]

[53] Rosemary O'Day and David Englander, *Mr Charles Booth's inquiry: Life and Labour of the People in London reconsidered*. London: Continuum, 1993, 1-24.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Trade	4.5%	6.5%	11%	7%	9.5%
Craft	66%	60.5%	56%	58.5%	56.5%
Transport	8.5%	11%	12%	14%	12.5%
Manual Labour	5%	10%	10.5%	9.5%	6%
Dock Worker	0.5%	1%	1.5%	2%	1%
Clerical	1%	1.5%	0.5%	1%	3%
Other	10.5%	6%	4.5%	7%	9%
None Listed	3%	2%	3.5%	0.8%	2%
Unemployed	1%	2%	0%	0.2%	0.5%

Figure Four: Employment amongst men aged fifteen and over in Bethnal Green taken from 1871-1911 censuses.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Craft	42%	35%	32.5%	39.5%	48%
Domestic Service	3%	8%	4.5%	5.5%	8%
Trade	1%	1.5%	2.5%	2.5%	4%
Laundry	3%	3.5%	2.5%	2.5%	1%
Other	2%	1%	1%	0.5%	2%
None Listed	49%	51%	57%	49.5%	37%

Figure Five: Employment amongst women aged fifteen and over in Bethnal Green taken from 1871-1911 censuses.

Figure Six: Middlesbrough in 1857. The town was still undergoing considerable expansion at this point. The streets studied here (Nile Street, Vine Street, Olive Street and Princess Street) are highlighted in red. A more detailed street map of the area can be found in Chapter One.

The Marsh Ward

Census Year	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Population	719	679	676	636	646

Figure Seven: Population of this part of the Marsh Ward taken from Census Returns

The Town

The discovery of iron in nearby hills made the North-East village of Middlesbrough a key centre for the iron and steel industry, and the town grew rapidly around the works. The area went from a small village in 1800 to an industrial metropolis of almost 100,000 residents by the start of the twentieth-

century.[54] The Iron and Steel Works of the town grew up predominantly on the north side of the River Tees, whilst much of the residential part of the town was situated on the southern bank. The Iron Masters, as they became known, exerted considerable power in the town and their interactions with civic institutions and identities has been the subject of interesting new research.[55] The poorer residents of the town, however, have received less attention from social and cultural historians.[56]

The District

The streets focused on in this study were some of the earlier areas of housing established as Middlesbrough grew. The city was sub-divided into wards and these four streets, separated from the centre of town by the railway lines, were part of the Marsh Ward (for ease of reference these streets will be referred to throughout as the Marsh Ward although, as with Hungate and Bethnal Green, they did not constitute the entirety of the so-named area). The grid pattern of streets along which the town had originally been designed is clear from the maps above. The area was predominantly the home of men employed at the Iron Works and their families, although throughout the period a sizeable minority of other occupations were represented on census returns. It was also one that played host to more temporary residents. Vine Street contained a series of Common Lodging Houses (marked C.L.H on map above) and throughout the district residents routinely took in lodgers on a smaller-scale. There was a significant Irish migrant population in the Marsh Ward throughout the period, although as the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth the number of residents actually born in Ireland was diminishing.

[54] Minoru Yasumoto, *The Rise of the Victorian Ironopolis: Middlesbrough and Regional Industrialisation*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011.
[55] Tosh Warwick, 'Middlesbrough's Steel Magnates and the Guild of Help', *Cleveland History,* 98, 24-35, Barry Doyle, 'Managing and Contesting Industrial Pollution in Middlesbrough 1880-1940', *Northern History,* 47, 1, (Nov. 2010), 135-154.
[56] One notable exception here must be Barry Doyle's work on hospital provision and healthcare in the town. See, for example, Barry Doyle, 'Voluntary hospital finance in North-East England: the case of North Ormesby Hospital 1900-1947', *Cleveland History,* 80, (2001), 5-19.

The Study

Middlesbrough was put under the lens of social investigation by Lady Florence Bell. Wife of one of the key Iron Masters of the town, Lady Bell was a formidable force in local reform movements and a prolific writer. Her study of the town, *At the Works,* was published in 1907 and revised again in 1911, yet its genesis was a drawn out process. Along with her step-daughter Gertrude Bell and a few other assistants Bell studied the lives of iron workers and their families for over thirty years. As with Rowntree's study, however, few traces of the original raw data that went into the finished survey have survived. Although acknowledging a debt of inspiration to Booth in her introduction, Bell's study eschewed much of the statistical analysis that Booth, and to a greater extent Rowntree, had adopted in favour of an in-depth study of the working patterns and domestic lives of over one thousand families in the town.

At the Works remains as tight-lipped about the precise locations and identities of its subject matter as Rowntree did in *Poverty.* There is, therefore, no direct evidence that conditions in the Marsh Ward were as Bell suggested. Yet her insistence, and that of others working in or studying the city, that life at the Works brought a remarkable uniformity to the lives of workers and their families in the town suggests that, if adequately supported by other sources, *At the Works* offers at least some insight into the lives of residents.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Iron and Steel Works	71.5%	74%	71%	42.5%	58%
Docks	4.5%	5.5%	4%	27%	19%
Trade	7.5%	7.5%	8%	8.5%	5%
Construction	6%	4.5%	4%	12%	6%
Lodging House Keeper	0.5%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Other	8%	6%	9.5%	5%	10%
None Listed	2%	2.5%	2.5%	5%	2%

Figure Eight: Employment amongst men aged fifteen and over in the Marsh Ward taken from 1871-1911 censuses.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Dressmaking	2%	3%	2.5%	2.5%	1.5%
Trade	3.5%	3%	1.5%	6%	4%
Domestic Service	6%	10.5%	11%	15%	16%
Other	0%	5%	3.5%	0%	0%
Lodging House Keeper	0%	0.5%	0%	1%	0.5%
None Listed	88.5%	78%	81.5%	75%	78%

Figure Nine: Employment amongst women aged fifteen and over in the Marsh Ward taken from 1871-1911 censuses.

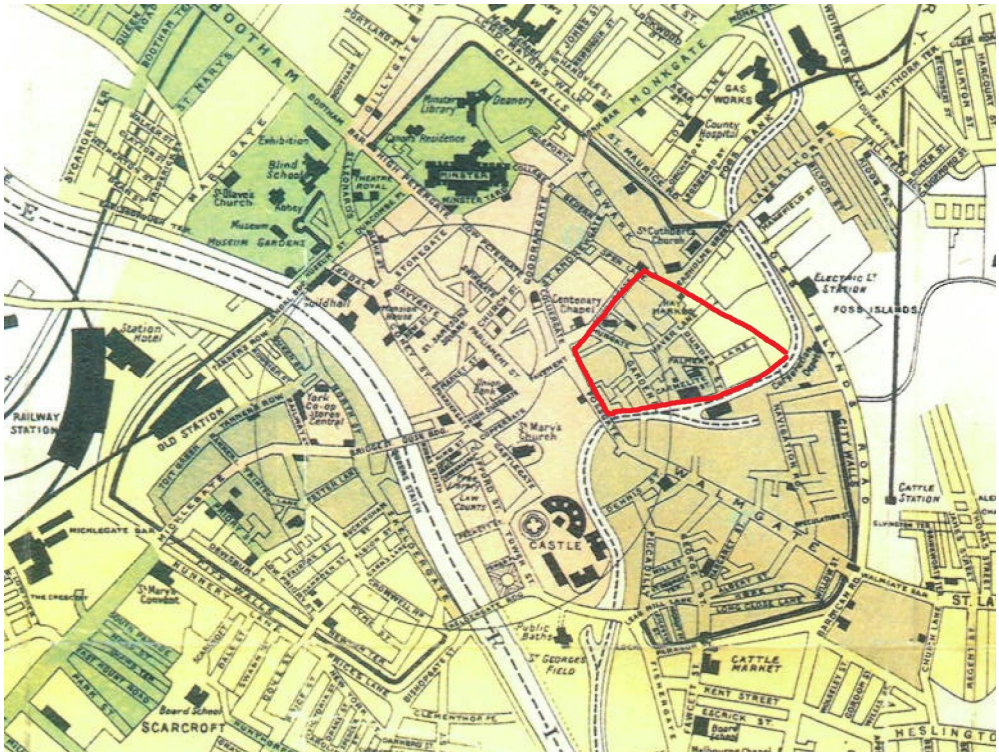


Figure Ten: The map of central York included in Seebohm Rowntree's *Poverty*. Hungate is ringed in red.

Figure Eleven: A closer detail of an 1852 map, showing the actual street layout of Hungate. The streets focused on here are (left to right) Garden Place, Hungate, Haver Lane, Carmelite Street, Palmer Lane and Dundas Street.[57]

[57] Taken from Kurt Hunter-Mann, *Block D, Trench D4, Hungate Development, York: A Report on an Archaeological Excavation,* York: York Archaeological Trust, 2008, 132.

Hungate

Census Year	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Population	652	625	520	441	526

Figure Twelve: Population of this part of Hungate taken from Census Returns

The City

York, unlike London and Middlesbrough, had been subject to much less change during the course of the industrial revolution. Between 1801 and 1901 the population of York had grown from 16,846 to 77,793, but there had been little expansion of industry in the city by 1871 beyond the growth of the railway in the mid-century.[58] Much of the poverty in York, at least according to the Victorian civic authorities in the city, was centred upon the migrant Irish population. This had expanded rapidly from the 1840s onwards, partly as a product of the Great Famine, and seemed to favour the crowded courts of the south-east area of the city.[59]

The District

Although late Victorian York was beginning to expand beyond the early modern boundaries of the city, with more and more housing being built on arterial roads out from the centre, the poorer districts remained those within the medieval walls. Lying to the south-east of the centre of the city, Hungate was singled out by Rowntree as the chief slum.[60] Although frequently lumped together with its neighbouring district of Walgmate, a long string of shops, public houses and yards crammed with run-down tenements that ran outwards from Hungate to the city walls, Hungate comprised a distinct neighbourhood. On one side it was bordered by the River Foss, a tributary of the main River Ouse that ran through the city, and on the other sides the tightly packed housing of the district saw

[58] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 1-12.
[59] Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prejudice: A Study of Irish Immigrants in York 1840-1875,* Cork: Cork University Press, 1982, 1-15.
[60] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 5.

access largely limited to a number of small alleyways.[61] The only main thoroughfare that led into the district was the street named Hungate itself, the site of a number of small shops and pubs, and it was from here that the other streets radiated off. There were also a series of yards, some given over to industry, dotted around the area and these contained further small tenement dwellings. Overcrowded, poverty-stricken, and the subject of a mixture of supervision and philanthropy from York's elite, Hungate was singled out by the residents of York themselves, and Rowntree particularly, as a working-class neighbourhood.

The Study

B. Seebohm Rowntree, the second son of chocolate manufacturer Joseph Rowntree, was brought up in the family traditions of Quakerism and enlightened employer-led philanthropy. Educated in chemistry at the University of Manchester, Rowntree was spurred into launching a scientific investigation of poverty in York after reading *Life and Labour of the People in London.* Between 1897 and 1898 he left the family factory to conduct the research into the living conditions of the population of York that would be eventually published as *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* in 1901. This publication marked the first step of a career in social investigation that saw Rowntree analyse both York and Britain for fifty years. Some of his later studies, particularly his investigation of unemployment in 1911, are also utilised in this thesis.[62]

Rowntree had several assistants working under him on *Poverty,* and according to the pages of the published work collected a voluminous amount of detailed notes. None of these, unfortunately, survive for the historian. Therefore, whilst the detail contained within the study offers fascinating descriptions of the residents and their struggles with poverty, Rowntree's care in obscuring the identities of his subjects means that in some cases it is not always clear where the homes under discussion actually are. Therefore this thesis has taken care to try and offer as much corroborating detail as possible when drawing on those examples in *Poverty* that are less obviously rooted in Hungate.

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[61] York City Archives, York, Y614, Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District by Edmund M. Smith, Medical Officer of Heath, June 1908, 7-10.
[62] Seebohm Rowntree and Bruno Lasker. *Unemployment: A Social Study.* London: Macmillan and Co., 1911, v-xvii.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Craft	38%	32%	23%	15.5%	8%
Manual Labour	24.5%	19%	30.5%	22%	25%
Construction	10.5%	11%	0.5%	22%	16%
Engineering	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Clerical	1%	1%	0.5%	1.5%	0%
Railway	2.5%	9%	3.5%	1.5%	2%
Trade	11%	12%	16%	11%	16%
Confectionary	2%	1%	12.5%	8%	9%
Other	8%	10%	11.5%	14%	12%
None Listed	1.5%	5%	0.5%	4.5%	12%

Figure Thirteen: Employment amongst men aged fifteen and over in Hungate taken from 1871-1911 censuses.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Domestic Service	11%	7%	14%	10.5%	9%
Dressmaking	6.5%	4.5%	2.5%	1%	0%
Trade	3.5%	2.5%	5%	3.5%	4.5%
Confectionary	0%	1.5%	4.5%	15%	17%
Other	8.5%	8%	6%	13.5%	12%
None Listed	70.5%	76.5%	68%	56.5%	57%

Figure Fourteen: Employment amongst women aged fifteen and over in Hungate taken from 1871-1911 censuses.

Comparative Statistics

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
York	163	134	158	125	108
Middlesbrough	-[63]	144	164	184	178
Bethnal Green	176	153	161	147	177
National Average	158	130	149	151	130

Figure Fifteen: Infant Mortality Rates, calculated for each town/district as the number of infants aged one year and under who died per thousand live births.

	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
York	0.5%	4%	2%	3.5%	4%
Middlesbrough	-	3%	2.5%	4.5%	6%
Bethnal Green	1%	2.5%	3%	5.5%	6%

Figure Sixteen: Pauper Rates, calculated from Local Government Board Annual Reports and expressed as a percentage of individual applicants for Poor Relief per head of population

Location:	Booth (Class B)	Booth (Class D)	York	Middlesbrough
Year:	1889	1889	1901	1907
Income:	10s/week	25s/week	20s/week	18s 6d/week
Family Size:	5	5	4	3
Rent:	1s 3½d	2s	3s	5s 9d
Food:	2s 4½d	5s 2¼d	10s	7s 5d
Household:	10½d	1s 4½d	5d	8d
Coal:	-	-	2s 6d	2s 4d
Other Fuel:	-	-	2d	-
Insurance:	-	-	11d	7d
Debt:	-	-	1s	3d
Club/Tobacco:	-	-	1s 3d	9d
Doctor:	-	-	2s	-

Figure Seventeen: Family Budgets taken from Booth, Rowntree and Lady Bell. Items left blank were those not listed on budgets by respective investigators.[64]

[63] At this point Middlesbrough was still tied to Stockton and thus no independent figures exist.
[64] Booth, *Life and Labour,* I, I, 137-138, Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231-232, Bell, *At the Works,* 56. N.B. Booth offered no family budgets that could be directly attributed to particular streets or

	Total Number of Census Households	Nuclear Families 1-3 Children	Nuclear Families 4+ Children	Extended Households	Other Households
Bethnal Green 1871	522	43%	23%	7.5%	37.5%
Bethnal Green 1911	601	31%	30%	14%	25%
Hungate 1871	155	30%	26%	14%	30%
Hungate 1911	195	30%	26%	14%	30%
Marsh Ward 1871	140	39%	16%	10.5%	33.5%
Marsh Ward 1911	131	33%	14%	13%	40%

Figure Eighteen: A breakdown of census household structure for one street in each of the three districts across both 1871 and 1911 censuses. Results expressed as percentages of the total number of households.

families, so instead this table has drawn on two sample budgets included in the published *Poverty Series* that represent the classification groups Booth felt most prevalent in the area.

	Total Number of Census Households	Single Parent Households 1-3 Children	Single Parent Households 4+
Bethnal Green 1871	522	37 (7%)	19 (4%)
Bethnal Green 1911	601	44 (7%)	9 (1.5%)
Hungate 1871	155	9 (6%)	7 (5%)
Hungate 1911	195	14 (7%)	6 (3%)
Marsh Ward 1871	140	13 (9%)	5 (4%)
Marsh Ward 1911	131	13 (10%)	2 (1.5%)

Figure Nineteen: A further breakdown of the same streets, showing single parent households in 1871 and 1911 expressed in both numbers and as a percentage of the total household count for the district.

Chapter One: Sensory Experiences – at home in the slums of late Victorian England

The sensory aspects of the modern city were, by the second half of the nineteenth-century, a familiar and almost comforting motif for late Victorian writers fascinated by the worlds that had developed around them. 'If I were writing a particularly fancy description of the poverty and wretchedness in a particular district', one journalist noted in 1861, 'I should mix the aspects of one street with the aspects of another…I should call Whitechapel by its more appropriate name of Blackchapel and play with the East of London under the title of St. George's-in-the-Dirt'.[65] For Thomas Archer, the genesis of his new book, even down to its title, came from a question he had posed in the pages of *London Society* two years previously. 'What' he had asked, was 'the most terrible sight in London?'. There were enough, it seemed, to furnish five chapters in his 1870 *Terrible Sights of London*.[66] Nor were such sensory preoccupations with the urban landscape confined to London. The nameless 'busy town' visited in *Bleak House*, deep in the northern 'iron country', has the 'clang of iron in it' and the works were, as Dickens put it, 'an iron taste, an iron smell, and a Babel of iron sounds'.[67] Historians wishing to penetrate the realities of the Victorian cityscape have, as Judith Walkowitz and Alan Mayne have shown, first to navigate the sensory accounts of these often partial observers.[68]

For the historian focused on the homes that existed within the poorest parts of these cities, however, the sensory accounts of these observers represent a tantalising, yet deeply problematic, avenue into the closed world of the domestic. As previously observed, a particular vision of the role and appearance of the home had assumed a paramount position in the culture of the Victorian middle-class by the middle of the nineteenth-century. The 'sentimentalization of the domestic scene', Caulder has argued, was an attitude that was paramount in the latter half of the nineteenth-century.[69] This had a subtle but significant effect on

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[65] John Hollingshead, *Ragged London in 1861,* London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1861, 39,
[66] Thomas Archer, *The Terrible Sights of London and Labours of Love in the midst of them.* London: Stanley Rivers and Co., 1870, preface.
[67] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House.* London: Bradbury and Evans, 1853*,* 601.
[68] Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, 15-40, Alan Mayne, The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities 1870-1914, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993, 1-13.
[69] Caulder, *The Victorian Home,* 131.

the accounts of those who ventured into the urban world of the poor to record their findings. As shall be shown in the following chapters, social investigators, local authorities, charity workers and other observers shaped their encounters with working-class life around the ideas of home that they knew. Some were well aware of the innate prejudice they brought to their work; 'there is nothing more difficult in looking at some one else's house or way of living' Lady Bell noted at the start of her study of Middlesbrough 'than to ascertain exactly what the qualities and defects are from the point of view of the occupant, although it may be easy to see what they are from the point of view of the spectator'.[70] More recently historians have come to question not only the attitudes of the occupant towards life in the city but also the motivations that lay behind the 'view of the spectator' through which much of this detail is filtered.[71] Given the dominant position of the middle-class notions of domesticity in the culture of the period, a culture shared by all of the interlopers to the working-class homes whose observations form the basis of current historiography, a new assessment is required from the ground up. This first chapter, therefore, will draw upon a variety of sources, including the social investigations of the period, to examine the three districts in question in ways that will shed new light on both environments and residents.

Bethnal Green

Coming to these working-class homes with external eyes, like those of the social investigators, it seems fitting to begin this exploration with the unnamed correspondents of *The Builder* magazine, as close as possible to the starting point of the period, on a rain-slicked morning in Bethnal Green in January of 1871. 'A showery day', our guides inform us, is not the best light in which to view these buildings, although as the description progresses it is tempting to wonder whether any light ever would do them justice.[72] Bethnal Green had expanded rapidly in the early eighteenth-century, migrants attracted to

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[70] Bell, *At the Works,* 5.
[71] See, amongst others, Lynette Finch, *The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance.* London: Allen and Unwin, 1993, Pamela K. Gilbert, *Mapping the Victorian Social Body.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004 and the essays contained within Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (eds.). *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950.* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007.
[72] *The Builder,* 28th January 1871.

the silk weaving trade that came to dominate the area. In 1743, when it was first established as a separate parish, it had just fewer than 15,000 inhabitants.[73] Tablets built into the five-storied houses, *The Builder* points out, indicate that they were built in the early decades of the eighteenth-century with tall windows, designed to let in as much light as possible, for the weaver occupants.[74] Earlier in the nineteenth-century this was a reasonably comfortable, if not necessarily affluent, district. The relatively good wages of the silk weaving industry stood alongside a series of small craft workshops, such as a pianoforte manufacturer in Chilton Street, as the eighteenth-century gave way to the nineteenth-century. By the time of this tour, however, the weavers' houses, along with their industry, are in terminal decline. A rising population in the area, around 85,000 by 1850, combined with a deteriorating weaving market, led to many of the houses falling into disrepair. 'Rags, millboard, an old hat, or newspaper' could be found 'doing duty for a pane of glass', *The Builder* reports. Some windows are devoid of glass entirely. Multiple-occupancy, with not only buildings but even individual rooms subdivided by different residents, is the order of the day in Bethnal Green in 1871. Both small side passages and the front doors of houses have become throughways, rather than impermeable barriers between home and street, and lead into yards crammed with the detritus of life. Drying washing intermingles with toilet blocks, overflowing drains and the small workshops and timber stores of the furniture trade that has come to fill the economic vacuum left by weaving in the district. Our tour, *The Builder* concludes, has been one of an area 'in a most disgraceful and neglectful condition', but also one which has been this way for 'years'.[75]

Bethnal Green had attracted a considerable negative reputation by the mid-nineteenth-century as an insanitary slum. Before the sweeping investigation that Charles Booth began in 1886, the text that proved most influential in forming outside opinion of the area was the *Sanitary Ramblings* of the famous sanitary reform campaigner Hector Gavin. Published in 1848, Gavin's account of the area left no doubt about the 'neglected state and defective sanitary condition' that prevailed there. 'Bethnal Green', he pointed out in his preface, 'has long

[73] Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*. London: Penguin Edition, 2000, 118
[74] *The Builder,* 28th January 1871.
[75] Ibid.

possessed an unenviable notoriety'.[76] Armed with a battery of social and sanitary ills, and employing a ghoulish wood-cut of a Field Street Lodging house to illustrate his point, Gavin found the triangle of streets focused upon in this thesis 'filthy' and 'beastly'.[77] By the late nineteenth-century the area had become synonymous with decay. Writing about the proposed changes to the area that would later form the basis of the Boundary Street development, the local Medical Officer of Health noted that 'a low condition of health prevails' in the area. It was caused by, he argued, 'the bad condition of the houses and bad arrangement of the streets'. Dr Longstaff, a member of the London County Council, seemed to agree, adding that the population were mainly 'prostitutes and thieves'. Even the national press had written off Bethnal Green as a slum of the lowest kind it appears, as the Medical Officer somewhat resignedly noted that the area under his jurisdiction had featured prominently in the *Daily Graphic* the previous year.[78] Bethnal Green was attracting national attention as a dangerously insanitary slum.

Yet at the same time that it was becoming a focal point for detailed studies of poverty and disease, Bethnal Green was also becoming part of the wider semi-fictive world that was the 'East End'. Crusading (or muck-raking) journalists, charity workers and early social scientists all descended on the East End in growing numbers, attracted by, and in turn contributing to, the reputation of the area. During the fifty years covered by this study, the East End was depicted as the origin of Mearns's *Bitter Cry of Outcast London,* a significant part of William Booth's *Darkest England,* and home to Jack London's *People of the Abyss.*[79] So common were visiting reformers and voyeurs that several newspapers seriously considered George Bernard Shaw's quip that the nearby Whitechapel murders could have been committed by a social investigator on the prowl.[80]

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[76] Hector Gavin, Sanitary Ramblings: Being Sketches and Illustrations of Bethnal Green. A type of the Condition of the Metropolis and other Large Towns. London: J. Churchill, 1848, 1-3.
[77] Ibid, 38.
[78] T.O.D, 'The Housing of the Working-Classes: Bethnal Green Improvement Scheme', *Public Health,* III, (1890), 233.
[79] W.C. Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London,* 1883, William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out.* London: International Headquarters of the Salvation Army, 1890, and Jack London, *The People of the Abyss.* London: Macmillan, 1904.
[80] Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight,* 200.

This national notoriety is important for two key reasons. Firstly, whilst such attention generated a significant body, and variety, of sources focused on the East End, many drew upon an established trope of images. Journalists, such as those quoted above, often utilised an array of negative sensory examples (sights, smells and sounds) in their accounts of the area. Lines between the physical and the fictional were blurred for many of those who ventured into Bethnal Green for the first time. As Sarah Wise has shown, for instance, the Nichol Slum was the thinly veiled inspiration for Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*.[81] Morrison, goaded into a defence of his book on the grounds of accuracy, published a preface to the third edition that contained a resounding endorsement of the "realities" of his fiction. 'Lucky I need not vindicate my accuracy' he concluded 'that has been done for me publicly by independent and indisputable authority'. Amongst these guarantors he listed the parish priest, a famous philanthropic leader in his own right. He did not even need such support, he added, as 'not only have I lived in the East End…but observation is my trade'.[82] By underscoring the veracity of his account Morrison was contributing to an image of the East End that had a powerful hold on the minds of those who had never even set foot there. Secondly, this blurring of the lines between the real and the imagined led many contemporaries to view Bethnal Green as one part of the greater amorphous East End. Residents and conditions were tarred with the same broad brush strokes in the public mind, obscuring the range of people and places that such a wide geographical area encompassed.

Even for seasoned investigators, such as Booth and his team and those local experts they interviewed, the sheer variety and change encompassed within the East End could be staggering. As Booth noted in a letter to Beatrice Potter at the start of the inquiry, new methods needed to be developed and 'meanwhile the truths imagined must be laid aside'.[83] The fictional and the real both had profound impacts on a local level for those living in this triangle of Bethnal Green streets. At least partially goaded on by the success of Morrison's horror story of slum life the demolition of the Nichol Slum, and the ejection of residents in favour of the "better" class of people wanted for the new Boundary Estate,

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[81] Sarah Wise, *Blackest Streets,* 222-238.
[82] Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago.* London; Methuen and Co., Third Edition, 1897, preface.
[83] Quoted in Englander and O'Day, *Mr Charles Booth,* 37.

affected the north of the triangle at the same time that the Jewish influx to the East End spread up from Whitechapel. Despite being portrayed as part of a wider and more infamous whole, small sections of Bethnal Green were, throughout the period, in enormous states of flux.

Figure Twenty: Garden Place in Hungate, looking towards Leetham's Flour Mill, c.1900

Hungate

Hungate, in contrast, was famous only within the context of York. In his introduction to *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* in 1900 Rowntree was keen to point out that, just as York was a typical provincial city, so Hungate was 'like many other slums districts' across Britain. Set along a winding street pattern that had evolved from the sixteenth-century if not earlier, these two storey houses were much newer, and as the above photograph shows much lower, than their

counterparts in Bethnal Green.[84] Yet by the closing decades of the Victorian period their poor construction began to show. Walls leaned out into the street, buckling without support, and plaster fell away from the wall. Some had been built back-to-back to save space, with both properties rendered unstable by poor interior walls. Most residents, unlike in Bethnal Green, were occupying an entire house, but this did not necessarily mean that there was no overcrowding. 'When the small nature of the houses/rooms were considered', the local Medical Officer of Health reported in 1908, there was sufficient cause for alarm.[85] Interspersed amongst these narrow streets were courtyards. One was 'approached by covered passage or tunnel 3 feet wide, 6 feet high, containing staircases leading to two single-roomed tenements' and contained four houses, a stable, and a midden privy when visited by one female sanitary inspector.[86] Poorly lit, badly paved and set back from the main thoroughfare, Hungate presents a vision of decay and poverty comparable with Bethnal Green, yet one that was, due to its low-lying and winding streets and its hidden courts, more obscured from view.

Hungate never really achieved national prominence in the way that Bethnal Green did, even after being so graphically depicted in the pages of *Poverty,* but it was the intense focus of local attention. The area was a subject of police surveillance given the number of fights, thefts and instances of prostitution which were thought to occur within its boundaries.[87] By the time he published *Poverty* in 1901, Rowntree felt able to claim that its residents 'exhibit the chief characteristics of slum life', namely 'reckless expenditure… aggravated want…an indifference to the higher aims of life'.[88] Throughout the period, the Hungate Mission exhorted its supporters to new heights of charitable giving – as late as 1906 their pamphlets still decried the 'deplorable condition of the masses who live in the slum neighbourhoods'.[89] That same year a number of civic dignitaries, including the Mayor and Rowntree's father Joseph (owner of the family business and a considerable civic figure in York), weighed in by sending an open letter to the Medical Officer of Health. It urged him address the

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[84] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 3-5
[85] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 8-11.
[86] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 155-157.
[87] Finnegan, Frances, *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 1-33.
[88] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 5.
[89] York City Archives, York, Y268, York City Mission Records, 58th Report 1906, 5.

'narrowness of the streets', the large number of back-to-back houses, the 'dampness' and the 'darkness' caused by overhanging buildings. The Medical Officer's own conclusions, whilst defending his department's record up to that point, concurred with those of his critics. Much of the area, he observed, was 'unsavourily damp', ill-ventilated and overcrowded, breeding a 'sallow and cadaverous' population.[90] Clearly in the minds of interested local parties, Hungate was York's very own answer to the slums of the capital.

The Marsh Ward

For contemporary reformers in Middlesbrough, in contrast, there was no easy point of comparison or reference. Unlike the twisting streets of old Hungate or the eighteenth-century weavers' houses of Bethnal Green, the houses of the Marsh Ward, like all of Middlesbrough, were still new in 1870. In an attempt to provide for the population explosion that industry brought to the town, the housing stock of Middlesbrough went up fast and cheap. The town had originally been planned around a grid pattern, but the rapid pace of building quickly overwhelmed this ideal. Most houses, Bell claimed, were 'four rooms', two up and two down, although there were minor variations from street to street.[91] Rapid building in the mid-century had led to the Marsh Ward playing host to that pariah of housing for the late Victorian reformer – the back-to-back house. Much like in Hungate, by the late nineteenth-century, the housing stock had begun to show its poor quality. 'Many windows are without any glass' the Medical Officer of Health noted in 1899, 'and there are several with leaking roofs'. Vine Street and Princess Street were singled out as particularly being 'in bad repair'.[92] Local officials visited neighbouring cities such as Hull to compare planning and repair strategies, and in 1902 attended a Housing Reform Conference in Newcastle that drew delegates from all over the North East.[93] From a historical perspective it is clear that the town shared social and structural forms with rapidly growing iron and steel hubs both in Britain and abroad. Similar pressures of fast construction,

[90] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 1-10.
[91] Bell, *At the Works,* 3.
[92] Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CB/M/H/1-, Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, 6-8.
[93] Ibid, 11-12.

large-scale migration (particularly of young men), and a physical and temporal environment completely dominated by heavy industry were present in the steel towns of the Ruhr, Sheffield and Merthyr Tydfil.[94] Even with Middlesbrough residents moving to and from these places throughout the period, however, local authorities continued to view the problems that beset the town in the wider context of British urban reform.

Lady Bell's analysis of Middlesbrough, as previously noted, neatly encapsulates both the rich material and the potential pitfalls of utilising the visual material gathered by social investigators. The eye of the beholder, as she noted, often records priorities in different ways to the eye of the subject.[95] There is, however, much to be gained from their descriptions of the neighbourhoods in question. None of these three areas survives intact today. German bombs levelled parts of Bethnal Green whilst the LCC and later the GLC also made inroads after the end of the war. Slum clearance in the 1930s, promised since the turn of the century, finally brought an end to Hungate. The Marsh Ward has been slowly but surely cleared over the last fifty years. Even the fortuitous survival of the foundations of Hungate, uncovered in a recent urban development and currently the focus of intense archaeological study, cannot reconstitute the urban sight-scape as experienced by residents.[96] Historians are left only with the accounts of outsiders, and the rare surviving sources left by residents, if they desire to explore the sensory world of the late Victorian city. And they should. As this chapter will show, there is vast potential in a study of the experience of life in these three distinct urban neighbourhoods. Attempting to recreate the sensory experiences of residents opens up new perspectives on not only their lives, but also their place within the wider world of the developing modern cities of Britain and, crucially, how these perspectives and positions changed over time.

The visual, perhaps the most reachable given the descriptive emphasis of much of the source material, offers insights into the issue of space. Hungate's narrow passages, the close-packed nature of houses and especially court

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[94] See, for example, David Crew, *Town in the Ruhr: A Social History of Bochum 1860-1914.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, 11-58 and Bill Jones, 'Inspecting the 'extraordinary drain': emigration and the urban experience in Merthyr Tydfil in the 1860s'. *Urban History,* 31, 1, (May 2005), 100-113.
[95] Bell, *At the Works,* xxvii-xxxii.
[96] David Evans, 'Block D Hungate Development York: A Report on an Archaeological Evaluation' York: York Archaeological Trust, 2007, 1-138.

dwellings, and towering position of the Mill all served to cut off a significant amount of natural light.[97] The blow-off of debris from the Mill would have further limited visibility during working hours. Set back from busy thoroughfares in the City, but still connected to them by narrow and twisting passages, the limited visibility of Hungate could be both a boon and a curse for residents. Limited lines of sight meant that even seemingly secure back yards could become targets for theft, as Alfred Plews found in 1889 when two young lads from the neighbourhood shimmied over the wall to his yard and helped themselves to the piles of sacking he stored there.[98] Likewise the publican of the nearby Ship Inn and his wife discovered that nocturnal darkness could prove even more dangerous, as they were both assaulted whilst walking through Hungate.[99] Dangerous to some, the unobserved nature of Hungate clearly also offered benefits for residents with trouble on their minds. Less nefarious opportunities also abounded, as evidenced by the number of young children who chose to play in the streets of Hungate, rarely disturbed by traffic, and were only occasionally moved on by constables.[100] Hungate had already attracted a rough reputation by 1870, based as much on assumption as investigation. Amongst the wider population of York its defects did not always need to be seen to be known.

[97] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 3.
[98] *York Herald,* 25th January 1889.
[99] *York Herald,* 2nd October 1874.
[100] *York Herald,* 10th June 1871 and 10th November 1885 for several groups of children who fell foul of this occasional inspection.

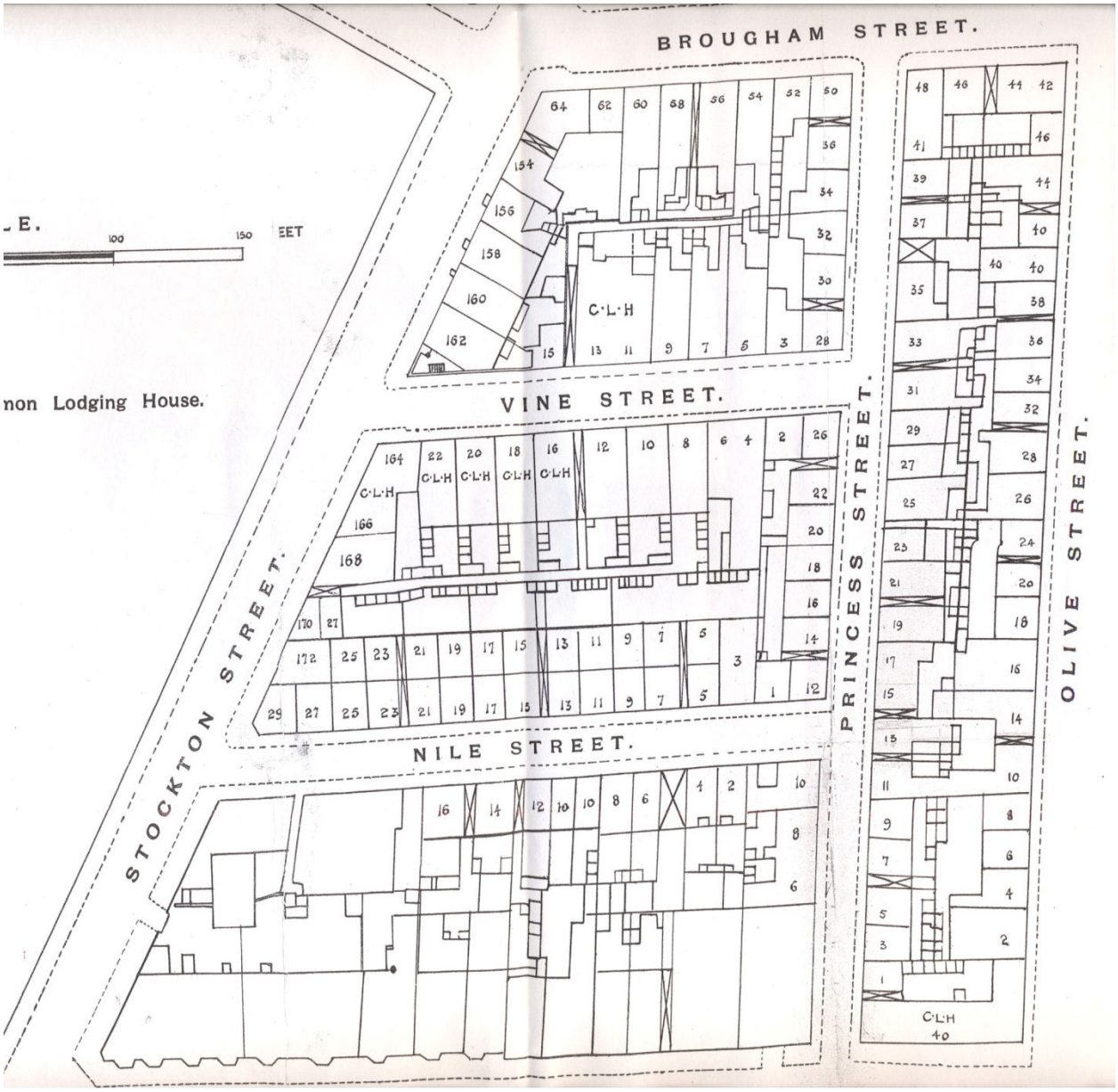

Figure Twenty One: A plan of the part of the Marsh Ward studied here as drawn up by the Borough Engineer (one side of Olive Street is missing).

In contrast the visual aspect of the Marsh Ward was very different. As the above map demonstrates, a tour around the neighbourhood would have been facilitated by the ruler-straight streets. Throughout the period the adult male residents of the Marsh Ward were predominantly employed in the various iron works that were largely situated on the northern bank of the Tees. The eight hour shift system meant that the streets of the Marsh Ward were a thoroughfare at set times of day and night. With men setting off or returning at 6 a.m., 2 p.m., and 10

p.m., the street was always a visible place.[101] The grid-pattern streets allowed for little of the unnoticed play space available in Hungate. Clear lines of observation did not necessarily stop children from playing in the streets of the Marsh Ward but it did make the process more risky, as two young men found when they were finally fined for stubbornly continuing their disruptive football game by a beat constable.[102] Overlooked by passersby the streets of the Marsh Ward were a place where the visible could be put to good use, as Lady Bell found when interviewing one mother. Bell was shocked that her 'supervision of her daughter and her beau took the strange form of saying she would not have the young man in the house, because, she said, she "did not like such carryings on"', but was happy for the girl to walk the streets with her suitor 'often until midnight'.[103] Unlike the secluded areas of the dwelling, where anything might be taking place, walking out in the visible landscape of the Marsh Ward ensured propriety. Sight would have been more constricted when it came to the more secluded areas of the Marsh Ward. The passages into the inner courts (marked by Xs on the above map) led into yards reserved for toilets and other outbuildings. Some, such as those around the back of Vine Street were large and split into smaller subdivisions used by individual houses or a couple of neighbouring properties. Others, such as those along Olive Street, were so narrow as to be nearly non-existent.[104] High walls would have restricted vision here as houses pressed against each other, with tiny external spaces largely occupied by the midden privies that constituted the main waste receptacles for much of the town.[105]

In Bethnal Green young couple William Newman and Lizzie Stanton needed such a culture of oversight not so much to protect their sexual morals as to protect William's neck from the hangman. Arrested in 1908 on a charge of attempted murder, William's trial offers an unusually detailed insight into how seeing and being seen affected residents in Bethnal Green. In his defence his girlfriend Lizzie Stanton claimed that they had left Granby Street at around half

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[101] Bell, *At the Works,* 26.
[102] Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CM/M/P 33, Pocket Book of a Constable 1893-1896, CB/M/P 33, 5-8. Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CB/M/P 34 Notebook of Sgt Rainbeck, 1-21.
[103] Bell, *At the Works,* 181.
[104] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, 7-8.
[105] David Taylor, 'The Infant Hercules and the Augean Stables: a Century of Economic and Social Development in Middlesbrough, c. 1840-1939', in A.J. Pollard, *Middlesbrough: Town and Community 1830-1950.* London: Sutton, 1996, 53-80.

past nine in the evening and gone 'up Shoreditch', stopping at a series of public houses in Old Street, Kingsland Road, and Bethnal Green Road before returning home close to midnight. Her evidence was corroborated by other young couples who had either been out at the public houses mentioned or had been in the process of parting ways on nearby doorsteps at the time she and Newman arrived home.[106] What the Newman trial exhibits is not simply a more developed or inclusive leisure culture for the young in Bethnal Green, but one where the built environment played a measurable role in shaping youthful relationships. Unlike the concerned mother that Bell observed in Middlesbrough, anxious that her daughter's beau not enter the house, neither Newman nor Stanton had been forced out into the streets by their parents' senses of propriety. Indeed upon reaching Granby Street again Newman was forced to break up a fight between Lizzie's parents that had spilled out onto the street. The two young people and their parents then returned to homes that were situated within the same Granby Street property.[107] Whilst this may have raised eyebrows in the court room it was simply a statement of fact for the two families – the children of neighbours in the same building were courting and there was nothing scandalous in that.

Sight, despite the potential pitfalls of biased or critical visions as recorded in the reports and remembrances of outsiders, is the easiest of the five senses to investigate. It is also the easiest to trace as part of a trajectory of growing reform-minded interest in the working-class home. Much of Booth's initial inquiries were based on the work of School Board Visitors who had no 'right of entry to the home'. Their evidence was, as Rosemary O'Day and David Englander have pointed out, external.[108] The later studies of Rowntree and Bell, however, both included analysis of the home environment in the form of budget case studies and personal vignettes. As the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth-century social investigators proved more and more interested in crossing the threshold and entering what they considered the home proper. Yet before following them across this threshold, it is important for the historian to consider where the limitations of the home actually lie. As Martin Daunton has pointed out, the front-door was at best a semi-permeable barrier for many working-class

[106] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 17 April 2011), June 1905, trial of William Newman (t19050626-562).
[107] Ibid.
[108] Englander and O'Day, *Mr Charles Booth,* 43-44.

residents, and for Stanton and Newman such a door would simply have opened into shared spaces that led off to more private family homes within 6 Granby Street.[109] A study of those senses other than sight, less tangible in the written sources but just as much a part of the homes in question, sheds new light on the complex relationship between street and dwelling.

If anything struck social investigators, local officials, and well-meaning volunteers almost as tellingly as the sights of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward, it was the smells. In both Hungate and the Marsh Ward it was one smell in particular – that of sewage. The narrow back passages in Olive Street, for instance, channelled the smells of the external midden privies back into the houses.[110] In Hungate the smells were, perhaps, even worse. Sixteen families shared one water-tap with a grating beneath which was 'used for the disposal of human excreta', Rowntree reported of one visit to the slums of York. The grate was 'partially blocked with it' when inspected.[111] On an official level smells could mean change. As Anthony Wohl has demonstrated smell was a powerful persuasive to action for late Victorian civic reformers.[112] In Hungate in 1908, seven years after Rowntree reported on drains clogged with excrement, plans were afoot. 'Yards have been…surfaced with cement concrete, water closets have been substituted for privy-middens; defective drains have been re-laid; galvanised iron ash-bins have been provided' recounted the Medical Officer of Health.[113] Similar plans were drawn up by an enthusiastic Borough Engineer in Middlesbrough, fully backed by the evidence of the local Medical Officer of Health, but were seemingly shelved.[114] Bad smells also, judging by Churchill's oft-quoted response to Rowntree's work that there was 'little glory in an Empire which can rule the waves and is unable to flush its sewers', touched chords on a national level.[115] In measuring the impact of reform and rebuilding on the three districts in question an appreciation of the smells of the areas is vital.

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[109] Daunton, *House and Home,* 273-285.
[110] Teeside Archives, Report to Sanitary Committee 1899, 8-10.
[111] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 155.
[112] Anthony Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain,* London: Methuen, 1984.
206-212.
[113] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 6.
[114] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, 3-7 and appended map.
[115] Boone, *Youth of Darkest England*, 90.

The official response to smells, of course, was very different from that of the residents themselves. As Upton Sinclair found in his exposé of conditions in the meat-packing industry in the United States, those most shocked by the disgusting sensory experience of methods and places were those who had never experienced them before. Additionally, just as in the case of Sinclair's work, such a focus on the shocking and disgusting masks what smells were the most pertinent and noticeable for residents themselves.[116] Judging the extent to which residents of slum areas responded to their unhealthy environs is difficult but, as David Englander has demonstrated, 'the silence of the poor is deceptive…non-participation of working people in the sanitary reform movement is not evidence of a want of interest'.[117] Yet although Englander's work has largely undermined the conclusion of Enid Gauldie that is was near impossible to gauge the dissent caused by unpleasant living conditions among the poor, he was also forced to admit that the source record of such dissatisfactions was often absent.[118] Such is the case in all three districts featured here – although residents may have resented their surroundings and expressed their dissatisfaction to landlords and investigators, little evidence of these objections survives.

Smells, which cannot be exactly pinpointed, must be inferred from the information available. Yet in many ways the natures and origins of smells would have been intangible and difficult to pinpoint in these urban neighbourhoods. There were some that would have been universal, encountered not just in the districts featured here but across urban Britain. Smells of cooking would have filled the air, issuing not only from chimneys but leaking out of cracked and bent flues and from broken or ill-fitting windows, thin or cracked walls, and loose-fitting doors. Yet even in this most common of household activities there was remarkable local variation across both time and space. As Anna Davin has shown, by the mid nineteenth-century residents of the East End were both able and willing to take advantage of a wide range of street-sellers and food vendors that were spread across the area.[119] Other smells would have been much more

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[116] A. J. Kantor, 'Upton Sinclair and the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906'. *American Journal of Public Health,* 66, 12, (1976), 1202-12051202-1205.
[117] Englander, *Landlord and Tenant,* xiv-xv.
[118] Enid Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-Class Housing 1780-1918.* London: Allen and Unwin, 1974, 106, Englander, *Landlord and Tenant,* xiii-xvi
[119] Anna Davin, 'Loaves and Fishes: Food in Poor Households in Late Nineteenth-Century London'. *History Workshop Journal,* 41, (Spring 1996), 167-192.

particular to the individual neighbourhoods in question. The smells of craft and industry would have distinguished each area from the others. The smoke and steam of iron-making carried across the Tees throughout the day and night.[120] The "smellscapes" of Hungate and Bethnal Green would have been more subtle, not influenced by heavy industry but by the craft and light industry that dominated the areas. The common use of the latter's yards and through-passages for the furniture industry would have rendered inescapable the smells of varnish, wood-shavings, and glue. A dusting of flour and grit would have been similarly generated by the mill that overshadowed Hungate, but from the 1880s onwards the more dominant industrial smell in the district would have been the sweet aromas of chocolate and sugar carried by prevailing winds from the large *Rowntree's* and *Terry's* factories situated further afield.[121] The permeable nature of these dwellings, exacerbated by poor construction and condition, meant that there would have been considerable interplay between the smells of the home and the smells of the urban environment that surrounded it.

The sounds, like the smells, of each district also afford new insights into where the boundaries of the home lay. Many dwellings restricted vision of the external world (and likewise blocked views inside), especially when windows were patched with newspaper or other opaque materials, and although some smells did trickle in others would have been blocked out. Thin walls, open yards, and windows (regardless of condition) would have reverberated with sound, however, and residents would in many cases have been avid listeners. Sound, more than any other sensory stimuli, provoked action from residents themselves. Historians of the working-class have not been immune to the study of sound. Some sounds could be alarming and unnerving, as exemplified by the woops and war-cries of the juvenile street gangs featured in the work of Andrew Davies.[122] Other sounds were welcome and even necessary intrusions as the gossip networks, conducted on doorsteps, through windows or over yard walls, studied by Melanie Tebbutt have revealed.[123] Yet there is a need to tie this analysis of

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[120] Bell, *At the Works,* 12.
[121] Robert Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution, 1862-1969.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995*,* 18-24.
[122] Andrew Davies, 'Youth Gangs, Masculinity, and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford'. *Journal of Social History,* Vol. 32, 2, (Winter 1998), 356-360.
[123] Melanie Tebbutt, *Women's Talk?: A Social History of "gossip" in Working-Class Neighbourhoods, 1880-1960.* London: Scholar Press, 1995, 48-73.

noise more tightly together and to consider how it affected the spaces that comprised the working-class home and its surroundings. Gauging how different sounds were heard and acted upon by residents reveals much more complex patterns of public and private space in the three areas.

Disruptive sounds were as much a part of life in the three districts as the more regular sounds of the day and night. The street was a common place of conflict. Shouting and fighting often drew in more participants startled by the noise. An ongoing feud between Isaac Oglesby and his ex-wife Mary Ann in Hungate spurted into life in June of 1874 when she brought him before the Police Court on charges of assault. He had been walking down the street when he spotted her, he claimed, and upon trading insults she had attacked him, the noise of the dispute drawing out her new husband who also began to punch Oglesby. Witness reports were conflicting. Some claimed that Alfred Plewes (Ann's new husband) had been summoned to an ongoing fight, others that the assault on Mr Oglesby had been unprovoked, still more that Plewes simply watched the couple struggle 'mild as milk'. What is clear is that neighbours were drawn out of their houses by the commotion and that whilst some had cried 'shame' and summoned the police, others had been more than up for a little entertainment and egged the participants on.[124] The continuing saga between Mr Oglesby and his ex-wife and her new partner offers a series of insights into noise and the boundaries of the home in Hungate. With relatives and friends of both sides resident in the area there was considerable opportunity for conflict. A month after their run-in in the street, the new Mrs Plewes brought her former husband to court for allegedly summoning a crowd of people to her home and threatening her into signing the divorce paper. The Police Constable summoned to the scene reported a disturbance but no particular threat from the crowd – people seem to have assembled in the hope of disturbance.[125] Angered, perhaps, by this set-back, the former Mrs Oglesby was again in court in August 1874 for smashing the windows of her ex-husband's dwelling.[126] It may have seemed, from the court's position, a foolishly self-incriminating attack, but the former Mrs Oglesby may not have minded being caught. Smashing windows was a common tactic for

[124] *York Herald,* 2nd June 1874.
[125] *York Herald,* 14th July 1874
[126] *York Herald,* 22nd August 1874.

drawing reluctant opponents into the street for public conflict. It was a way of life common not only to Hungate but also to Bethnal Green as Jewish migrants found during a personal dispute that escalated into a neighbourhood-wide fight. As they retreated into their dwellings, an official report into a 1915 disturbance in the area reported, their gentile assailants began to pelt their windows with stones to draw them out again.[127] Sounds drew men and women into the street, either to participate in, or play witness to, public confrontation.

The sounds of conflict in the streets prompted complex interactions between public display and private dispute. In 1871 four young men were brought before the Old Bailey to answer for the assault on PC John Young. Late one January night PC Young had been drawn to Chilton Street by the sounds of 'men shouting and women shrieking', but upon trying to break up the fight he was knocked to the ground, kicked, and beaten with an iron bar.[128] As Clive Emsley has observed, in the decades leading up to 1914 many a policeman's beat needed 'a tough man to walk it'.[129] PC Young's intrusion, as the participants saw it, into an ongoing dispute in Bethnal Green demonstrates the sense of ownership that residents felt towards the external space of the street. On one level the street was a public space for conflict where the sounds of a fight, or at least the taunts and jeers that preceded one, drew out spectators. Witnessed combat was not only about settling disputes. It was also a means of proving oneself, especially for young men, and in Bethnal Green the policeman was often a convenient target. One of the young men that assaulted PC Young, it was alleged at the trial, had burst into the local pub with 'shirt sleeves covered in blood' to announce that he had 'had a bloody lark with a policeman' to the assembled patrons.[130] Their objection could also have been to the very act of intrusion, as PC Young was not actually struck until he tried to arrest one of the combatants. Although the street was, in a physical sense, open to the public, residents of Bethnal Green were clearly sensitive to who that notion of "public" could contain. Nurses and other

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[127] Quoted in David (ed.) Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840-1920.* Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1994, 296-297.
[128] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 13 April 2011), January 1871, trial of Alfred Browning (25), John Bryan (18), Joseph Beer (20) and Charles Davey (19) (t18710130-173)
[129] Clive Emsley, *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18th century to the Present*. London: Quercus, 2009, 144-145.
[130] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online,* trial of Alfred Browning, John Bryan, Joseph Beer and Charles Davey.

female health workers, one District Nurse told Booth's researchers, were not worried about entering even the roughest of streets, but the policeman charged with his duty could, unwittingly or otherwise, step into a world at once public *and* private with the attendant dangers that both entailed.[131] An ownership of space extended beyond the four walls of the home.

The sound of the police whistle inspired different reactions amongst residents of the three districts. These differences were not only geographical but temporal. David Taylor's research has shown that crime was dropping in Middlesbrough by the end of the nineteenth-century. The 'conquest' of the town, which in the mid-century had acquired a reputation for violent crime, he ascribes to both the increasing professionalism of the local police and the dying off of the 'frontier' nature of the early town.[132] Whatever the reason, a lower rate of violent crime, would have made the police whistle a less common and less contentious sound. Policemen entering the Marsh Ward would not only have had fewer fights to break up but would have been less likely to become targets themselves by 1914.

Yet the extension of the "civilising mission" of control, or as Patrick Joyce has argued the nurturing of notions of 'self-control' amongst urban residents, mainly shaped the external neighbourhood.[133] Both police and residents were constantly acting and reacting within their particular sensory worlds. Even the most cursory examination of Middlesbrough Newspapers suggests that crime continued on out-of-sight of the long and straight streets of the Marsh Ward. In 1885 Joseph Watson was summoned to court for keeping a 'house of ill-fame' in Nile Street.[134] Prostitutes could be found behind the closed doors of all three neighbourhoods, police and other investigators alleged, profiting in the spaces beyond direct police observation. When comparing this Nile Street brothel with Hungate, long associated with prostitution, attention must be paid to the different benefits bestowed by the varying areas. Hungate offered a lack of visibility, set back from the road, poorly lit, and with winding

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[131] London School of Economics Archive, London, B227, Charles Booth Notebooks, 83.
[132] David Taylor, 'Conquering the British Ballarat: The Policing of Victorian Middlesbrough'. *Journal of Social History, 37, 3,* (Spring 2004), 764-767
[133] Peter Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street: The Reform of Public Space in Hartford, 1850-1930,* Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1999, Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City,* London: Verso, 2003, 87-89.
[134] *Newcastle Weekly Courant,* 19th June 1885.

passages. Potential clients could, as Frances Finnegan has pointed out, be collected from the public houses of the main thoroughfares, led through into the narrow darkness and then treated, robbed, or both.[135] There were clear advantages to establishing business in the Marsh Ward. Coming and going was the rhythm of the area, particularly amongst young, unattached men returning to their lodgings with heavy pay-packets. Watson's initial survival may well have been down to the fact that to the official observer many of his clientele would have blended into the crowds of workmen with ease. Indeed they more than likely *were* the workmen. It is vital, in exploring the context of the home, to consider how such minute sensory differences played out. Small local distinctions offered considerable risk and reward for residents – and all three districts were affected by both the rhythm of the street and the disruption of life in the late Victorian city.

If disruptive sounds, or at least those stemming from criminal sources, were swept off the street, they were by no means eradicated from the late Victorian city. In April 1898 an inquest was held in Middlesbrough to examine the brutal death of a woman in the Marsh Ward. Anne McGuire had been living 'on and off' with Jack Bruce in a Marsh Ward lodging house for two or three years. They returned drunk one evening and a row began over money. Bruce struck her repeatedly and she fell heavily, after which he left the lodging house to buy more alcohol. Upon returning to find her slumped over seemingly unconscious, Bruce set about her again, beating her with her boots and kicking her, until with a tired 'let her lie there', he left her at the bottom of the stairs and proceeded to bed. Several other lodgers attempted to aid McGuire whilst Bruce was absent, and one remonstrated with him upstairs, but no-one stepped in to prevent the violence. It was not just the sights witnesses saw that incriminated Bruce, however, but the sounds that they heard. Other lodgers reported hearing someone come upstairs 'apparently pulling a weight into Bruce's room'. When Bruce summoned the doctor the following morning he had moved McGuire upstairs, perhaps hoping to pretend she had died in the night, but the close-quarter nature of life in the lodging houses of the Marsh Ward condemned

[135] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 169. Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution,* 65-66.

him.[136] Unlike the conflicts that took place in the streets of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward, that drew in spectators as witnesses, participants and reconcilers, the closed space of the lodging house seemed to instil a sense of privacy upon the violence.

Lodging houses were, arguably, unique. Violent attacks such as those mentioned above attracted press attention because of the shocking copy they offered. Such assaults were rare, although not wholly unfamiliar in lodging houses, and rarer still in private dwellings. The Common Lodging Houses of the Marsh Ward were significantly different terrain when it came to personal space and the boundaries of privacy. Opportunity for vice abounded, as James Henry found in 1881 when he stole the money of a blind fellow lodger, but the stakes were equally high as he also discovered when another bedfellow reported him to the police after seeing him take the waistcoat and then hearing him 'rifling the pocket'.[137] They were makeshift and often dilapidated, with lodgers crammed into large dormitories on straw beds and sacking.[138] A key point of the 1900s plan to improve the sanitation and general condition of the area hinged on buying up the lodging houses and rebuilding them as official boarding houses administered directly by the Town Corporation.[139] As Tom Crooks has shown, local corporations were particularly suspicious of the lodging houses which, they believed, often lay on the fringes of their urban jurisdictions.[140] Within them they contained complex matrixes of public and private. As Amanda Vickery has demonstrated in the case of eighteenth-century servants, privacy could be shrunk down to the size of a travelling trunk, and men and women could both abhor the invasion of their own personal space and delight in overhearing or spying on the personal affairs of others.[141] With shifting numbers of residents, communal spaces for eating, and shared sleeping arrangements, the lodging houses of the

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[136] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* April 20th 1898,
[137] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 5th December 1881.
[138] See, for example, the partial description offered in *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 13th July 1885.
[139] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, F5-9.
[140] Tom Crook, 'Accommodating the outcast: common lodging houses and the limits of urban governance in Victorian and Edwardian London'. *Urban History,* 35, 3, (2008), 431-436
[141] Amanda Vickery, 'An Englishman's Home is his Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House'. *Past and Present,* 199, (May 2008),164-167.

Marsh Ward looked as different as it was possible to be to the ordered and tranquil image of the home so prominent in middle-class Victorian society.

Yet the confusion over the lines between private and public in the lodging houses of the Marsh Ward is symptomatic of the wider problem facing historians of the working-class home. As forays into the sights, smells and sounds of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward have shown, the homes of the urban poor were complex and often highly mutable. Boundaries of privacy could shift and change as social or financial pressures affected the residents in different ways. Despite collecting such vast arrays of sensory material, however, social investigators were not always adept at interpreting it. Reform-minded, Bell, Rowntree and Booth, like countless other philanthropic and medical observers, surveyed their subjects with a critical eye. Interior appearance of the home was closely tied, in the minds of contemporary observers, to the condition of the occupants. The 'dark, dilapidated and overcrowded dwellings' of Hungate, the Medical Officer of Health for York reported in 1908, engendered the 'slum habit of life' amongst residents.[142] In some respects Rowntree agreed, arguing that the 'general appearance' of the same houses, one of 'dilapidation and carelessness', indicated 'the condition and character of the tenants'. Yet in other passages in *Poverty* he demonstrated a belief that poor environment did not breed a distinct social class. One widowed mother and her adult daughter whose budget he included lived in one room up 'a crooked, narrow, wooden staircase which is unventilated, and almost pitch dark'. Their room, however, was 'clean and comfortable' and clearly, for Rowntree, such surroundings did not indicate a paucity of character.[143] In following the sensory trail left by these guides, we must be careful not to adopt the criteria through which they interpreted their findings, as it tells us little about the working-class home itself.

The issue of gauging the haptic elements of these homes, however, reveals just how difficult such a study is. Historians have increasingly, particularly in the last decade, attempted to engage with the complex issue of touch in history. Particularly influential have been the essays contained within *City and the Senses: Urban Culture Since 1500* where, as the editors explain, 'the symbolic significance of touch in commercial and interpersonal

[142] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 9.
[143] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 154, 273-274.

relationships' is shown to be an integral aspect of the lived urban environment.[144] Alexander Cowan's chapter on how the tactile environment can be used to understand how social boundaries 'were blurred by social realities' in the city, is especially pertinent to the late Victorian cityscape.[145] As historians we may look in through windows and doors, or be ushered in, welcome or otherwise, as social investigators were. We can observe the sounds and smells of the street, and assess with reasonable accuracy which of them may have intruded into the dwelling, as well as sensing those native to the dwelling itself, albeit through borrowed noses and ears. Yet we cannot experience the tactile element of these homes. There are, of course, surviving elements of the built environment. Foundation levels remain in Hungate, as uncovered by the recent archaeological exploration, and it is possible to get a sense of the rough brickwork and plaster. Interiors have vanished. Visitors to the Back-to-Back museum in Birmingham may feel the thinness of the blankets, the steep incline of the stairs, and the cold iron of the unlit stoves. Yet even though these are appropriate period pieces, and not recreations, they represent a tactile environment native to Birmingham, not the three districts studied here, and are felt with thoroughly twenty-first century hands. The world of touch remains more deeply personal for contemporaries, and thus much more abstract for historians, than the senses so far described.

Truly exploring the haptic world of these homes requires more than simply a focus on things touched by residents and visitors. 'Home', as Blunt and Dowling have pointed out, 'is neither the dwelling nor the feeling but the relationship between the two'.[146] Dwellings in all three areas were subject to a range of environmental conditions that would have subtly affected residents in significant ways. Heating, and perhaps even more significantly lack of heating, represented a conscious decision making process for residents about how dwellings were used. In compiling sample budgets for the residents of York and Middlesbrough both Rowntree and Bell noted a similar expenditure on fuel

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[144] Alexander Cowan and Jill Steward Cowan, 'Introduction' in Alexander Cowan and Jill Steward (eds.). *The City and the Senses: Urban Culture Since 1500.* Oxford: Ashgate Publishing, 2007, 9.
[145] Alexander Cowan, "Not carrying out the vile and mechanical arts': touch as a measure of social distinction in early modern Venice', in Alexander Cowan and Jill Steward (eds.). *The City and the Senses: Urban Culture Since 1500.* Oxford: Ashgate Publishing, 2007, 39.
[146] Blunt and Dowling, *Home,* 22.

(2s10d of 20s a week in York and 2s4d of 18s6d a week in Middlesbrough).[147] Cost breakdowns such as these, however, give little indication of the physical amount of fuel. Keeping entire houses warm would have been a difficult enough task even before broken windows, holed roofs, and inefficient stoves were taken into account.[148] The repeated distribution of coals by parishes across York suggests that, even if the spending patterns of most families were close to Rowntree's margins, fuel was in constant demand.[149] Fuel was not only needed for warmth – it was also required to cook food and provide light after darkness fell. Many would only have been able to afford to keep the kitchen, centred on the stove or fireplace, warm. In some respects this would seem to favour those living in single-occupancy dwellings, such as those that predominated in Bethnal Green, as both waking and sleeping activities were, by necessity, focused in the only heated room. Both Rowntree and Bell, however, noted that family life tended to concentrate on the one heated room in larger dwellings in Hungate and the Marsh Ward as well.[150] Even the diffusion of domestic gas supplies in the final decades of the period, particularly the penny in the slot system, would have changed this pattern only slightly. It would have allowed for the extension of lighting into other rooms of the dwelling for much less cost than candles or coal fires, but it was, as Bell observed, still better value to light one room for longer.[151] 'Burned for light only' she noted, a pennyworth of gas 'lasts eight hours'.[152] Even as domestic technology changed, the kitchen, consuming the lion's share of fuel in the house, would have remained the focus of domestic life for many residents in all three districts.

If warmth, or at least the desire to avoid the cold, encouraged residents to huddle together in communal rooms, feeling cold often seems to have been a more solitary sensation. In many cases being cold was directly linked to being poor. Fuel, like food, was elastic and could be scrimped on, and throughout the

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[147] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231-232, Bell, *At the Works,* 56
[148] Alison Ravetz, The Victorian Coal Kitchen and its Reformers'. *Victorian Studies,* 11, 4, (June 1968), 435-460.
[149] See, for example, the seventy seven bags of coal distributed by one parish in 1909. Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York, PR/Y/MARG 32, St. Margaret's Parish Relief Fund, 4.
[150] Bell, *At the Works,* 87. Rowntree, *Poverty,* 150-154.
[151] M.J. Daunton, 'Housing' in F.M.L.Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, Volume Two: People and Their Environment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 206-207.
[152] Bell, *At the Works,* 93.

period it was the elderly who felt the cold bite the hardest. Rowntree had calculated old age as a very minor cause of poverty, combining it as 'illness or old age of the chief wage earner' in his study and attributing to it only 5.11% of York's primary poverty.[153] But, as Booth increasingly became convinced following his research for *Life and Labour of the People in London,* the poverty of old age was not one that could be easily deduced through a wage income calculation. In towns, he noted in a 1899 pamphlet on Old Age pensions, the elderly 'not only break down at an earlier age, but are accounted incapable sooner still'.[154] With the elderly largely removed from the workforce, or at least from the more formal modes of employment that Rowntree focused upon in his analysis, the lack of regular income would have seen their dwellings significantly less heated. More than any other group, Booth argued, the elderly were dependent on the support of family members or friends.[155] Staving off the cold could often bring neighbours together, and as Melanie Tebbutt has shown networks of mutual support were vital, yet keeping one's own family warm was also paramount.[156] In 1870 one Marsh Ward mother took a neighbour's daughter to court for stealing coals. The case was dismissed after the mother of the accused argued that as the two families were given to sharing fuel it was impossible for her daughter to know when it was forbidden to take the coal.[157] The case reveals not only networks of support but the limits that could be imposed on those networks. Those without access to support, not just the elderly but also new arrivals, would have been more at the mercy of the cold.

Although the fight against cold may have been common for urban dwellers in the nineteenth-century there were other environmental factors that were more localised. Hungate flooded. Repeatedly. The River Foss, running around the edge of the district, would swell with rainwater and force the contents of the districts already poorly-constructed drains back up to the surface. Photographs from the interwar period, before the district was torn down, show streets under several feet of water. 'Ground damp', the Medical Officer of Health noted in 1908, was a significant problem in the houses of Hungate. Seeping into

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[153] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 121.
[154] Charles Booth, 'Old Age pensions and the aged poor: a proposal', London: Macmillan and Co, 1899, 5
[155] Ibid, 42.
[156] Tebbutt, *Gossip,* 53-67.
[157] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 23rd July 1870.

the walls and rising up through the floor, which he noted were often just bricks 'resting directly upon the earth', the damp was a noticeable presence in the area.[158] Rowntree concurred.[159] The prevailing sense that visitors got of houses in Hungate was a powerful feeling of damp.

Figure Twenty Two: Flooding in Hungate in February 1933, several years before the area was finally cleared by the civic authorities.

Houses in the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green were by no means immune to damp of course. Heavy rainfall combined with poor street drainage, broken windows, and holed roofs, would have made none of the districts in question completely immune to the elements. Yet the damp in Hungate was far worse and far more constant than that experienced in Bethnal Green or the Marsh Ward, and would have affected residents much more profoundly. The interiors of dwellings would have been damaged. Wallpaper would have peeled and plaster flaked. Woodwork would have rotted. The health implications were clear to inspectors.

[158] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 8.
[159] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 153-157.

In 1900 there had been a serious typhoid outbreak in York that emanated from Hungate, a product, the Medical Officer of Health believed, of the damp conditions.[160] Rates of respiratory diseases were also high in the area. The dampness of Hungate was a small variation in urban life, a consequence of York's poor drainage, but one that affected the homes and lives of residents in a multitude of ways.

The cold and the damp of these homes are, by their very nature, relative values. Residents in all three districts would have been colder in the winter months, for instance, when both the demand for fuel and the significance of not being able to afford it would have been in sharper relief. Attempting to gauge a general pattern to the affects of the urban environment is impossible; the experiences of residents in the same neighbourhood, street or even building could be different. The houses in Olive Street, in the Marsh Ward, were cleaner than those in neighbouring streets, inspectors noted, but 'many of the upper rooms…[were]…uninhabitable owing to leaking roofs'.[161] It is important, David Benjamin has argued, to always consider the home within its context – it is 'essentially dialectic in nature'.[162] Yet the retrospective position afforded to the historian allows for one crucial aspect of this relativity to be explored; namely whether it is possible to discern notions of comfort or discomfort in each of the three districts.

Discussions of comfort have largely been confined to studies of better off homes in the modern period. Indeed Clive Edwards argued that the home 'is the concept of bourgeois comfort' in his study of how retailing and consumption have shaped modern domestic culture.[163] Analysis of working people's homes, both in Britain and further afield, has instead centred on the prioritisation of practical need over comfort.[164] This is to misunderstand the nature of comfort, however, as something that is definably present or absent in surroundings. The evidence that emerges from the observations of Rowntree, Booth and Bell is that

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[160] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 5.
[161] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, 10-11.
[162] David N. Benjamin (ed.), *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments.* Aldershot: Avebury, 1995, 2-3.
[163] Clive Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the retailing and consumption of domestic furnishings.* London: Ashgate Publishing, 2005, 3-5.
[164] See, for example, Gillis, *A World of their own making,* 126-129, Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011, 158 and Daunton, *House and Home,* 263-285.

men, women and children all attempted to find some measure of enjoyment in their domestic environments. They did this often at the same time as finding them damp, cramped, overcrowded and any of the other myriad pressures so far described in this chapter. Those houses featured in *Poverty* as typical of those in primary poverty exhibited a range of embellishments. 'Framed photographs and pictures on the wall' were found in one, unframed pictures and prints in several others, a 'shelf for ornaments' in another. These possessions were by no means the static fixtures of the private family-orientated home that they were for wealthier families, and as Rowntree himself found were frequently exchanged for desperately needed money at the pawnshop, but were clear attempts to personalise the domestic environment on the part of residents.[165]

Ideas of comfort, or at least the staving off of discomfort, formed powerful memories for working people. Many of these memories, particularly childhood ones, were focused on food and eating. Oral histories collected from those growing up not only in the three districts in question but across late Victorian Britain speak volumes about how central food was to positive memories of home. Clifford Hills, one of the 'Edwardian Childhoods' recorded by Paul Thompson, recalled the family dinner of Sunday with fondness.[166] There are undoubtedly difficulties in assessing connections between taste and memory such as these. The oral history, particularly the oral history of childhood, remains a tricky subject. Memories, as David Lowenthal has emphasised, are subject to both conscious and subconscious interference from individual and community.[167] The 'lovely smell – roast beef, Yorkshire puddings, potatoes' of Clifford Hill's childhood Sundays may mask the scrimping and saving of the rest of the week.[168] Certainly the evidence presented by Rowntree shows the Wednesdays and Thursdays approaching the payday on Friday as leaner times for family meals.[169] The recent growth of interest in the history of food and eating, both on academic and popular levels, may also have affected the questions that oral historians ask. There is the danger that the memories of the family meals of yesteryear is simply a response to what a twenty-first century audience wants to hear. As Anna Davin

[165] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 263-284.
[166] Thea Thompson, *Edwardian Childhoods.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981*,* 43.
[167] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Eleventh Reprint, 2003*,* 197-210.
[168] Thompson, *Edwardian Childhoods,* p. 43.
[169] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 263-284.

has emphasised, food was by no means the sole purview of the home, and the constant stealing and begging for food of some East End children clearly demonstrates that not all memories of family meals should be taken at face value.[170]

These sensory memories are important, however, because of the avenues of inquiry they offer into the homes of poorer residents of urban Britain. As this chapter has endeavoured to show, new approaches can offer different insights onto seemingly familiar territory. In the spirit of this process of discovery it seems sensible to offer up not final answers but more general points of interest at this early stage. There are two particularly important points. Firstly, the studies of social investigators, when placed against the testimony of local experts, reveal that whilst homes often appeared similar, these broad brush strokes concealed a remarkable range of local variation. The rent-collector might appear each week in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward but the rents he collected, the properties he visited, even the ways in which he accessed them, differed. Houses in Middlesbrough, Bell noted, were penetrated by the incessant 'noise of machinery' and the 'odours and vapours' of the works, whereas those in Bethnal Green would have been subjected to the smells and sounds of craft industry.[171] Each would have elicited a different response from residents. The smells of the Iron Works in Middlesbrough would have been a reminder of employment for male residents and their dependents, so closely tied to the wages offered there, whilst in Hungate the dampness of walls and floors would have held little positive association. These urban environments were also changing, however, as from the 1890s onwards prevailing winds would have brought the smell of chocolate wafting over the roofs of Hungate from the newly expanded confectionary factories that signalled a major shift in juvenile employment in the area. Any attempt to assess what comprised a sense of home, both physical and emotive, for working-class residents in the late Victorian period must remain responsive to these significant local distinctions and changes.

Secondly, it is clear that this definition must not be adopted haphazardly from the studies of social investigators. George Behlmer has dubbed the combat over the domestic sphere amongst the different shades of Victorian and

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[170] Davin, Anna, 'Loaves and Fishes' 185-192.
[171] Bell, *At the Works,* 15.

Edwardian reformers as 'intense' yet ultimately 'inconclusive', but the one binding similarity between these different investigators and researchers was their insistence on viewing the homes of their subjects in terms that they could understand. Avoiding the cultural myopia that Behlmer himself warns is a potential pitfall in studying the home requires a vision of the home to be built from the ground up, tracing what was important to residents themselves.[172] Based on a wide range of sources, the following chapters will trace four key elements of home that emerge across the three districts, albeit with significant local variations.

[172] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 3.

Chapter Two – The Residents

Seebohm Rowntree was a remarkably cagey man when it came to the details of his subject matter. Passionate to the point of obsession about the inclusion of the minute numerical details of poverty, ranging from family budgets to complex wage calculations, he nevertheless went to considerable efforts to obscure the identity of those whose lives he was laying bare. It is impossible to know for certain, then, whether one particular household, featured in his 1911 study of unemployment, was situated within Hungate itself. The description of a house, somewhat 'roomier and more solidly built' than those around it, lying in 'a poor quarter of the town' facing an open square, gives little away. The anonymous dwelling was occupied by two children, a boy of twelve and a girl of ten, their mother (whom Rowntree dubbed Mrs Taylor) and her mother (dubbed Mrs Wade). Mrs Taylor's husband, a drinker and gambler, had abandoned her for America, forcing her to move back in with her widowed mother. They had not always been the four however, as Mrs Wade's other married daughter and her family had also lived with them, but 'this arrangement had to cease as the house was overcrowded'. They struggled on together, feeling the pinch of poverty, but 'now the Old Age Pension is in sight', Rowntree noted, life would ease, although he did note that this was dependent on whether Mrs Wade 'lives to the spring'. The effect of such poverty on Mrs Taylor, however, was clear to see. 'Pallid, pinched and prematurely old', Rowntree observed, 'but the very spirit of pluck and patience'.[173]

In one sense the Taylor-Wade household represents a vision of working-class family life wholly familiar to historians. The struggles of working-class mothers and matriarchs are well-documented. Although Carl Chinn has argued that it was a 'hidden matriarchy' at the time, since the publication of Elizabeth Roberts' groundbreaking *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working Class Women 1890-1940* in 1984 the close association between the wives and mothers and the struggle for survival has been a key feature of working-class historiography.[174] Yet considerable gaps still exist between these studies of

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[173] Rowntree, *Unemployment,* 235-237.
[174] Carl Chinn, *They worked all their lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England 1880-1939.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988., 12-14 Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* 1-20.

working-class women (and also children) and wider histories of the making or re-making of the working-class. Attempts to rectify this situation have often created more problems that they have solved; as Joanna Bourke has stressed many of those trying to emphasise the place of women in working-class society have overlooked the housewifery that so many found pride and purpose in. The lack of any systematic investigation of the home has seen studies of working-class women split by an artificial division that has struggled to reconcile social significance and domestic work. [175] More recent explorations of working-class fatherhood, likewise, have attempted to place the father (an often absent figure in studies of the working-class family) back in the frame. Julie-Marie Strange has recently argued that the only way this can be done is through a 'recognition of the fluid boundaries…whereby…fathers' obligation to provide could be deeply embedded within an understanding of the interpersonal dynamics of everyday life'.[176] It is only the home, as this chapter will demonstrate, that offers such an insight.

Family descriptions were the bread and butter of all three social investigators and offer compelling insights into the personal, and changing, worlds of the residents of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward. A close reading of even just the Taylor-Wade household above reveals a plethora of hidden details. There is, for instance, the changeable nature of poverty for residents. In 1911 the family was beset by poverty, clearly, but it had not always been so. A piano in the living-room stood as 'a relic of the palmy days long ago', Rowntree noted, when Mr Wade had lived and brought home a decent income. It was now the source of occasional income, Mrs Taylor giving the odd lesson for sixpence. It was not just external pressures that affected the home, the high price of coal and food for example, but the changing lives of the residents themselves. Mrs Wade had once raised a large family, nursed a dying husband, and worked a long day, but now, almost 'completely crippled' by rheumatism, she was sofa-bound, finding it too difficult to climb the stairs each day. There is also, although not specifically noted by Rowntree himself, the impending moment in which the children leave home hanging over this household. At that point it would change

[175] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 167-171
[176] Julie-Marie Strange, 'Fatherhood, Providing, and Attachment in Late Victorian and Edwardian Working-Class Families'. *The Historical Journal,* 55, 4, (Dec. 2012), 1027.

yet again. There is also a wider temporal dimension to the Taylor-Wade home that transcends the everyday struggles of poverty. As Rowntree observed, with the Old Age Pension coming in that year the fortunes of the family were about to change in a way that would have been impossible even a year before.[177] Any study such as this, which covers the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, must remain sensitive to the enormous political, cultural and social changes that affected society in that period.

John Gillis has argued that it was not until the mid nineteenth-century that 'people began to think of home as something that families could make for themselves'. Up until then the ultimate home in British society was in heaven, he claims, and 'crowded residences' and the auspices of 'the church and the community' were only temporary places of respite. Only by the Victorian period had the 'modern quest for a homeplace begun in earnest'.[178] The men and women that inhabited the homes that Rowntree, Booth and Bell placed under national magnifying glasses had very real and particular styles of life that have not always been realised in the historiography that draws upon these social investigations. The very nature of these homes, as this chapter will show, makes their occupants the first step in any attempt to understand them.

Husband and Wife

The vast majority of households in all three districts throughout the period were arranged around a married couple. Less than 10% of the households in each area consisted of single men or women in 1871, a figure largely unchanged by 1911. This is not to suggest that nuclear family structures were universal. Complicated, broken, or reconstituted family units existed across areas and census integers. Vertically extended families were nowhere near as common as Steven Ruggles has found in Lancashire towns in the 1871 amongst what he terms the 'unskilled' working-class, but families extended either horizontally or vertically did form a sizeable, and remarkably consistent, minority across the period.[179] The 1911 census found that 14% of households in each area contained some further kin

[177] Rowntree, *Unemployment,* 235-237.
[178] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 109-110.
[179] Steven Ruggles, *Prolonged Connections: The Rise of the Extended Family in Nineteenth-Century England and America.* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, 37.

member, typically a sibling or widowed parent. As Figure Nineteen illustrates, single parent families were also a significant minor current in each district. Despite exhibiting a variety of forms across the period, however, the basic foundation of homes in the Marsh Ward, Bethnal Green and Hungate between 1870 and 1914 was that formed by husband and wife.[180]

In many ways this should not come as a surprise. The married couple, with children attached, was seen as the natural unit around which a home was built.[181] When it came to the working-class, many social observers felt, this relationship was even more crucial. Into the hands of the wife, 'sometimes strong and capable, often weak and uncertain', Bell agonised, 'the burden of family life is thrust'.[182] It was a sentiment seemingly shared by many of their subjects. Bourke has observed a steady increase in the number of married women abandoning paid work to concentrate on housewifery. Cultural motifs of a woman's role in the home, such as those observed by Ellen Ross in ballads and music hall songs, combined, as Bourke has emphasised, with real belief amongst many women that 'housewifery was a good –even the *best* – option'.[183] This separation of home and work, as it did for many more well-to-do urban couples, has been seen as fundamental in culturally tying the wife/mother to the domestic and private whilst seeing the husband/father as responsible for earning in the public sphere.[184]

Such a neat overview of husband-wife division of labour, however, is far too general a conclusion. In Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward husbands and wives came to individual arrangements about how the home was run, decisions that varied with not just the local pressures specific to each district but also the needs and desires of the men and women themselves. Concluding her research into the lives women of Lancashire towns, Elizabeth Roberts noted a 'mass of individual differences' which nevertheless were part of a wider set of mores held up by 'a large section of society' which saw a woman's place as

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[180] 1871 and 1911Census Returns, York, Middlesbrough and Bethnal Green.
[181] Jenni Calder, *The Victorian Home,* 122-123.
[182] Bell, *At the Works,* 171.
[183] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 167-171, Ross, *Love and Toil,* 69.
[184] See, for example, Lynn Hunt and Catherine Hall. 'The Sweet Delights of Home', in Ariès, Philippe and Georges Duby (eds.). *A History of Private Life: IV From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War.* Harvard: Harvard University Press, English Translation, 1990, 4, 67.

indelibly tied to the home.[185] Yet this was not always the case in the different districts studied here. For men and women in Bethnal Green, Ross has observed, the idea of a sexual division of labour rested on 'unstable foundations' and, given the pressures of childbirth, illness and loss, 'had to be negotiated from moment to moment'.[186] Both out-work and factory work remained available in Bethnal Green throughout the period; whilst social investigators may have found the idea of women seeking paid work uncomfortable, for many residents it was clearly common practice. Even if much of this was conducted within the home, as out-work paid per item, it represented a significant female stake in the financial element of the home that was absent in both Hungate and, especially, the Marsh Ward.

The households traced from the 1871 census in Hungate and the Marsh Ward displayed no clear indication of employment amongst married women.[187] Despite this seeming similarity, however, the specifics of life in the different towns meant that the what and the why of the housewife roles women in these districts played were remarkably divergent. For Lady Bell the answer was two-part. The vast majority of wives in Middlesbrough did not seek paid employment not only because, she argued, the wages of their husbands at the Iron Works were relatively high, but also because there was little work for women in the town. The expansion of the iron and steel industry that had fuelled the rapid growth of Middlesbrough had not stimulated any 'organized women's labour' Bell noted, and what did exist was, she insisted, largely the province of unmarried girls rather than wives and mothers.[188] Whilst a superficial perusal of the census returns for Hungate would seem to suggest a similar absence of female employment, there was, as Rowntree discovered, a considerable gulf between what census recorders considered work and what residents themselves thought the work of a home to be. Of the two samples selected from amongst those earning 25s a week or less (i.e. on or below the poverty line) Rowntree noted that whilst Mrs D was an enthusiastic household manager but 'lacks method' and faced domestic work alone, in contrast not only was 'Mrs B…always busy mending, making, washing, or backing' but Mr B had been making furniture for

[185] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* 202-203.
[186] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 69.
[187] 1871-1911 Census Returns, York and Middlesbrough.
[188] Bell, *At the Works,* 179-180.

the house.[189] The actual financial impact of both paid work and housewifery are dealt with in more detail further on in this study. What is important here is the particular ways in which income affected the relationships between husbands and wives within, and sometimes beyond, the home.

One husband and wife relationship, first encountered in Hungate in 1871, emphasises just how important the actions of individuals were in shaping, and breaking, homes. In April of 1874 York was gripped by the story of how one Hungate home dissolved into turmoil; indeed interest in the twists and turns of the case was so great that several regional papers also carried the story in their columns.[190] Mary Ann Oglesby, wife of the landlord of the Britannia Inn, sent her teenage daughter to a bank in town to withdraw £600 from the joint account she held with her husband. The bank soon began to suspect that the husband's signature on the withdrawal note was a forgery, but by this point Isaac discovered that his wife had fled to Doncaster with two local men and their youngest child.[191] Captured by police in Sheffield, Mary and the two men were brought back to York to face a trial which, when looked at for evidence of prevailing notions of the domestic, raises more questions than it answers. When she was caught in Sheffield, Mary had been living as husband and wife with one of the men, Alfred Plews, and her infant child. There was laughter in the court when the lodging house keeper revealed that it had been Mary who had paid for the room and this, coupled with the knowing implications that the couple were living as "husband and wife", kept the scandalised attention of both the court and its wider print audience. A satirical poem printed in one Sheffield paper cast Mary as a new Guinevere, and the implications that she could reside as a 'high priestess' over a 'new religion' of female polygamy, from which the courts could learn to make the vows of marriage 'a trifle looser', leave little doubt that many in the press considered her actions immoral, a stark contradiction to the ideal of a tranquil and ordered home life.[192] Abandoning her older two children and her husband, taking with her a large sum of money from their account, Mary Ann

[189] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231-233.
[190] *The Bradford Observer,* 10th April 1874, *The Daily Gazette,* 10th April 1874, *Manchester Times,* 11th April 1874, *Northern Echo,* 10th April 1874.
[191] *York Herald* 9th April 1874, 13th April 1874, 14th April 1874.
[192] As reported in *York Herald,* 20th April 1874.

Oglesby certainly damaged both the financial and emotional stability of the family home she left behind.

This sundering produced two new homes and these changes hint at the aspirations of a "good" home, and concurrently fears of lacking one, held by both Mr and Mrs Oglesby. For Mary Ann taking the money and fleeing to Sheffield may have been an attempt to cast off a home she was no longer comfortable with and start anew. She certainly had no love for Isaac, spitting at him as she was brought into court in York. The money, part of a £1500 inheritance left to Mary Ann herself by a relative, would certainly have provided both the opportunity to escape her old home and financially secure a new one.[193] This combined with a new partner and new lodgings in Sheffield may have been for Mary Ann the first step towards a new home. For Isaac the shattering of the domestic stability, both financially and emotionally, that he was accustomed to seems to have been deeply aggravating. Filing for divorce in November of 1874, within five years Isaac was back before the court for having assaulted his new wife. The cause, he claimed, had been that she had been out spending money on new dresses for her and their children without his permission. Although unlikely to have been the ideal husband before Mary Ann eloped given her testimony in court, the events of 1874 clearly affected Isaac deeply and his new wife's use of money without permission may have stirred up anxious memories of the disintegration of his previous home.[194] The lingering effects of the conflict between husband and wife were compounded by the fact that, stripped of the money which had been returned to the original account by a suspicious Sheffield bank when Plews had tried to deposit it, Mary Ann and Plews were forced to return to Hungate. Two months after the events of April, all three returned to court levelling charges of assault against each other. According to Plews, various witnesses and Mary Ann, who was seen with a black eye in court, Isaac had spotted her in the market and followed her back to Hungate, shouting abuse at her and drawing a crowd before finally beating her until Plews intervened. Isaac and other witnesses, in contrast, claimed that it had been Plews and Mary who had set about him, attempting to beat him and steal his watch.[195] With their new homes situated so close by, the

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[193] *York Herald,* 9th April 1874.
[194] *York Herald,* 12th November 1874, 31st October 1879
[195] *York Herald,* 2nd June 1874, 9th June 1874.

failure of Isaac and Mary Ann's original home was a matter of public consumption. Plews even claimed in 1875, whilst on a charge of assault, that the man and his wife he was alleged to have attacked had in fact followed him home and proceeded to knock at his door and windows 'asking him to send out Mrs Oglesby, their conduct causing a crowd to assemble'.[196] Even the children were affected, although the extent is harder to discern. Martha, the daughter sent to collect the £600 originally, provided the final evidence at the assault case in June, claiming that her mother's black eye was, Mary Ann had said to her, the work of Alfred not Isaac.[197] The two homes which resulted from the split between Mary Ann and Isaac were in neither case ideal for either one; any dream of a peaceful domestic life had been confounded by the harsh realities of personal circumstance.

Although extreme in its details, the events which surrounded the collapse of the Oglesby home and the creation of two new ones, emphasises just how important the husband-wife relationship was to the running of a home. Yet it also reveals just how varied these relationships could render the homes that they supported (or failed to support). Few relationships exposed their homes to such public attention as the Oglesbys' did, but census returns point to small and intimate variations which had great consequences on the domestic lives of both partners and other residents of the home. John and Rose Lawrence created a family home in Princess Street for over thirty years, their children settling around them in Middlesbrough, without leaving any discernable trace of criminal behaviour.[198] Eliza Pepper's experience of home in Bethnal Green may not have been as stable as that, yet her decision that year to marry a widower almost twice her age may unintentionally have served to tie her and the father she continued to live with more closely to their shared home, as by 1891 both were widowed and living together in the same Chilton Street house that had housed three generations of the family twenty years before. Similarly, it is impossible without personal records to know whether the home that James and Jane Starr occupied, which shifted between Fuller Street and Weaver Street in Bethnal Green for forty years, was one marred by the fact that across the years not one of their seven

[196] *York Herald,* 7th September 1875.
[197] *York Herald,* 9th June 1874.
[198] 1871-1901 Census Returns, Middlesbrough.

children had made it past infancy.[199] Their decision to take in a niece, who lived with them for over ten years, may have been an attempt to experience a little of what they had lost; bequeathing over £300 to her in their will certainly suggests an effort to hand over the materials of a home to their surrogate offspring.[200]

It would not be 'unreasonable to ask', as Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon has put it in regards to microhistory, 'how this fragmentation – crumbs fallen from the table of life – can…afford a different insight from that provided by a general survey'.[201] It could be argued that these cases, even the larger-than-life Oglesbys, are simply minor exceptions to the general rule which, as Elizabeth Roberts has claimed, saw the working-class home a woman's place with the paterfamilias a decidedly casual interloper.[202] What only a determined concentration on such variations can reveal, however, is the tentative nature of such a general, gendered, pattern of domestic life. Life close to the poverty line put an immense pressure on husband-wife relations not encountered in the homes of middle-class Victorians. In 1875 Ann Mount, a widow living in Hungate, threw herself into the River Ouse just a short walk from her house rather than continue facing the financial peril that loosing her husband three years before had left her in. [203] Men and women were not simply at the mercy of such pressures, however, and a close lens focus allows true significance of individual situations to emerge. Sarah Bayly, living only a few doors away from Ann Mount, was also widowed a few years earlier, but unlike Mount continued on for another twenty years supported by a series of grown children.[204] Men and women across Hungate, the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green arranged households around husband and wife roles, but the pressures of poverty, of varying dependents and of different opportunities for employment across urban England were more important in determining this rough consensus than any wider cultural conception of a home ordered along gendered lines. Furthermore, as the instances of turmoil related above indicate, these arrangements were paper thin.

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[199] Bethnal Green Census 1871-1911.
[200] Principal Probate Registry, England and Wales National Probate Calendar, 10th January 1912, James Murkin, 247.
[201] Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon, '"The Singularization of History": Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge', *Journal of Social History,* 36, 3, (Spring 2003), 723.
[202] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* 202-203.
[203] *York Herald,* 3rd April 1875.
[204] Public Records Office, RG10/4750, 1871 Census Returns, 7.

Despite the variations that their works uncovered it is clear, from their accounts where the social investigators stood on the issue of home and marriage. Bell, Booth and Rowntree were all, to a greater or lesser degree, convinced that women were the domestic managers. 'The pivot of the whole situation', Bell asserted firmly, 'is the woman, the wife of the working man and the mother of his children'.[205] Rowntree was less forthright about his own opinions on the matter, but his discussion of the monotony of life for married women, 'left in the house all day', and his concentration on the work of the home in his family budgets, leaves little doubt that he was convinced by his evidence of a clear gendered division in the home. Yet as he himself admitted, this ordered domesticity could be lacking in those homes most beset by poverty. The monotony of housewifery, he noted, was 'least marked in the slum districts' where women were 'constantly in and out of each others' houses'.[206] Overall discussions of domestic order amongst social investigators, with clear husband and wife roles, masked much more confused and temporary arrangements amongst their subjects. Social reformers of all stripes frequently cited the need for wives and mothers to become more competent domestic managers throughout the period. Concerns, be they moral, social or as Anna Davin has argued imperial, 'tended to consolidate the family in its bourgeois form and to consolidate the mother's role as child-rearer and home-keeper'.[207] It was a task, many felt, that working-class women were not always up to. As Bell observed, one encountered many young women in Middlesbrough 'sinking into a depressed, hopeless acceptance of the conditions' they were wholly unprepared for.[208] Kathleen Martin has termed much of this social investigation 'hard and unreal advice' and comes down particularly hard on Helen Bosanquet, whose 'personal defects' approach to the causes of poverty she feels was particularly rooted in assumption and cultural prejudice.[209] Arriving at anything approaching an accurate picture of the work that working-class wives and mothers put into the family home is complex, yet it is clear from the source-work conducted by social investigators that many homes survived on their efforts.

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[205] Bell, *At the Works,* 171.
[206] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 77-78, 222-294.
[207] Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood'. *History Workshop,* 5, (Spring, 1978), 55-57.
[208] Bell, *At the Works,* 184
[209] Kathleen Callanan Martin, *Hard and Unreal Advice: Mothers, Social Science and the Victorian Poor Law.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 93.

It is clear from the source-work that social investigators themselves undertook that husbands and wives living close to the poverty line arranged the various tasks of keeping the home afloat as circumstances demanded. From the outside this could appear remarkably uniform, and the more that reformers attempted to draw national comparisons between the different investigations that spanned the period the more they became convinced that whilst mothers were the linchpin that held the family home together, fathers were an often absent force. This concern was by no means limited to the working-class.[210] Yet as recent studies of working-class fathers have begun to show, they were not always the absent figures they were portrayed as.[211] Heavily scrutinised by social reformers and judicial authorities through the auspices of the police court, marriage assumed a key place within working-class culture by the closing decades of the nineteenth-century.[212] Yet it alone could not form the basis of the home. Financial instability, social expectation, and the various balances of work and domesticity amongst men and women in different urban neighbourhoods all ensured that marriage was part of the process of building a home. Homes in all three districts were rarely formed without marriage, but it was having children that truly defined them.

At Home with the Kids

As the nineteenth-century progressed the home, or at least its cultural image, was becoming more and more identified as a family space. 'Maternal [and Paternal] love' Edward Shorter observed 'created a sentimental nest in which the modern family would ensconce itself'.[213] The shape and structure of the household and family group of plebeian families in the nineteenth-century has been a major point of contention amongst historians.[214] Who comprised the family group, and the strength of bonds between them, remains unclear. Shorter believed that the nineteenth-century was a period where it was 'Mum, Dad and the Kids' who

[210] John Tosh, Manliness Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain. London: Pearson Education, 2005, 129-130.
[211] Julie Marie-Strange, 'Fatherhood, Providing and Attachment', 1026-1027.
[212] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 181-229
[213] Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family.* London: Collins, 1979*,* 224-225.
[214] Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900: England, France and the United States of America.* Oxford: St. Martin's Press, 1994*,* 25-26

'gleefully' cut apart the bonds that tied them to wider kinship units and began to seclude themselves within the privacy of the domestic environment.[215] Time spent with the family was becoming increasingly ritualised from the mid nineteenth-century onwards, Gillis has argued, ranging from the regular timetable of the family day with its mealtimes and bedtimes to the festivals of cyclical time such as Christmas.[216] For novelists and playwrights 'the intimacies of the home' were portrayed as 'simultaneously a moral bulwark, a sanctuary…[and]…an academy where children learned their first and most lasting lessons'.[217] The idea of the home as an environment that supported and nurtured family members and the relations between them, although often aspired to rather than lived, was an increasingly powerful influence on men and women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

But was this child centred conceptualisation of the home as a family space shared by those living in Hungate, Bethnal Green or the Marsh Ward? Outside observers were not always convinced, indeed the increasing concern over the children of the urban poor amounted to what George Behlmer has termed a 'policing of parents'.[218] Arnold Freeman, studying the 'boy labour' problem of Birmingham in 1914, agreed with 'all investigators' in pointing out that that the home 'may be almost left out of account as a positive influence in the life of the boys of this class'.[219] Other investigators were more measured but still agonised over the condition and lifestyles of children living close to the poverty line; the parallels that Rowntree drew between the physical underdevelopment of poor children in York and the poor condition of army recruits was just part of a wider anxiety over "national efficiency" which was rooted, many believed, in the unsatisfactory domestic environments of the poor.[220] NSPCC agents were active in all three neighbourhoods by the 1890s, and even before this Poor Law authorities and police officers had begun to lobby courts to have children taken to industrial schools or other establishments out of

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[215] Shorter, *Making of the Modern Family,* 13-30.
[216] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 81-108.
[217] Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: A History,* London: Little Brown Book Company, 2006, 388
[218] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 74-76.
[219] Arnold Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour: The Manufacture of Inefficiency.* London: Garland, 1914. 124.
[220] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 209-221

the reach of parents. Clearly many advocates of the supportive family home, even if they did not live the ideal themselves, were convinced that it was largely lacking amongst the urban poor.

Yet these accounts, by their very nature, are not only partial but measure the homes of working-class families against an ideal that they did not necessarily share. Ellen Ross has claimed that for many working-class mothers in Bethnal Green childbirth and child-rearing meant work. 'They knew their love was vital to their children' she argues 'but they acknowledged that young children meant hard work, which the children could later reciprocate – a vision much closer to that of preindustrial families'.[221] Yet there is a danger in falling to the same hurdles as the social investigators, and allowing our prejudices about how we feel the relationship between children and the home ought to be to label as simply 'preindustrial' what was in fact an alternative vision of the family home of the industrial age distinct from the middle-class ideal. Or more precisely, alternative *visions,* as even the family meal, as Anna Davin has pointed out, 'was not a universal practice' but in fact depended on range of factors (income, working hours, cooking facilities, dining space, eating utensils), 'conditions which often could not be met'.[222] Likewise, many children worked when they grew older, alleviating the financial pressure on the family as Rowntree described in *Poverty*, but not all did as Bell found in Middlesbrough. Much was dependent on local circumstance, as Eric Hopkins has emphasised in his study of childhood amongst the working-class, and close study and comparison of the Marsh Ward, Hungate and Bethnal Green are required to determine the extent to which the residents conceived of the home as a family space.[223]

Children were a highly visible part of the urban landscape in the late Victorian period. Contemporaries exploring all three districts encountered children in the streets, moving between houses, and eating, sleeping, or simply spending time in the dwellings they were studying. The streets of Bethnal Green were thronged with children when George Duckworth walked around the area for Booth.[224] As the above table demonstrates, the percentage of households in 1911

[221] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 128-129.
[222] Davin, 'Loaves and Fishes', 168.
[223] Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994*,* 267-269.
[224] B351, Booth Police Notebooks, 177.

that included children in all three districts remained close to the figures for 1871. Across the 1871-1901 censuses the percentage of families with four or more children in both Hungate and the Marsh Ward never dropped below 26%, whilst in Bethnal Green it actually rose as large families of Jewish migrants settled in the area from the late 1880s onwards.[225] Although this pre-1914 period only lies at the beginning of the sharp downward trend in national fertility rates that reached a peak in the interwar period, there seems to have been little evidence of any downward trend amongst families in the three districts featured here. Even though, as Sian Pooley has convincingly argued, 'shifting interpretations' of parenthood increasingly affected family size in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these remained 'locally-diverse and class-specific'.[226] Both large families, and children more generally, remained a key feature of both household structure and social space throughout the period in all three districts.

Just as today, however, the presence of children in the household did not automatically render it a family home. Inferring family affection from the passionless statistics of census returns is an impossible task.[227] Eric Hopkins, in his study of working-class childhood, has suggested that the falling national fertility rate would have intensified affection towards the smaller numbers of offspring each generation of working-class parents had over the nineteenth-century. [228] To some extent the evidence would seem to bear out this suggestion. Arthur Harding did not last long in his family's new Bacon Street residence – the birth of his younger brother saw him abandon the noise and cramped conditions of their single room dwelling for the streets and stairwells of the neighbourhood.[229] Children in many dwellings would not have been able to enjoy the personalised space increasingly becoming a part of the middle-class vision of the home. [230] Houses in Carmelite Street, for example, remained crowded

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[225] 1871-1901 Census Returns York and Middlesbrough.
[226] Sian Pooley, 'Parenthood, child-rearing, and fertility in England, 1850-1914', *The History of the Family,* 18, 1, (2013), 106.
[227] For just a taste of the debate over kinship circles and affection see Litchfield, R. Burr. 'The Family and the Mill: Cotton Mill Work, Family Work Patterns, and Fertility in mid-Victorian Stockport', in Wohl, Anthony (ed.). *The Victorian Family: Structures and Stress.* London: Croom Helm, 1979, 180-196, Steven Ruggles, *Prolonged Connections,* and Tamara Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: the relationship between the family and work in a New England industrial community.* Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1993.
[228] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed*, 265.
[229] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 65.
[230] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 71-75.

throughout the period, and Richard and Alice Boston and their six children would have found as little space in 1911 as William and Eliza Hanger and their six offspring did in 1871.[231] Sleeping arrangements would have been even more compressed in the split dwellings which dominated the yards of Hungate and the tenements of Bethnal Green, and children would have frequently been expected to bunk in with brothers, sisters, and other family members, as much for warmth as for lack of space.[232] Whilst for many this may have been a source of comfort and familiarity, it also carried hidden dangers as the campaign of the Bethnal Green sanitary authority waged against the overlying of infants throughout the period demonstrates.[233] In a period where conditions were often cramped and alternatives few it would be a mistake to assume that the presence of children automatically rendered these dwellings "family homes".

Of the three social investigators whose accounts covered the districts featured here, it was Rowntree who spent the most time directly discussing the children he encountered as part of his research. Any reader of Rowntree's research, contemporary or historian, would be forgiven for believing that the primary function of children in families close to, or below, the poverty line in York was an often desperate attempt to offset the financial burden they placed on their parents. Children marked a dip below the poverty line for the majority of working-class York, he argued, and only when they began to earn would the family again enjoy a 'period of prosperity'. So extreme was the situation, he claimed, that 'in York it is the general custom for older children to pay to their parents such a portion of their wages as they would have had to pay for board and lodgings if not living at home.[234] The issue of how children contributed to the survival of the household has been a long-running theme of the historiography of the plebeian family in the modern world. Eric Hopkins has pointed out that after 1870 childhood was transformed from 'being dominated by full-time work…to being shaped and coloured by school'.[235] Work, as Hopkins

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[231] Public Records Office, 1881 Census Returns, York RG11/4723, 11 and 1911 Census Returns, York, District 17, 298.
[232] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 49-50.
[233] See, for instance, George Paddock Bate, *Report on the Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics of the Parish of St. Matthew Bethnal Green during the year 1913.* London: J. Williams-Cook, 1914.*1913,* 103.
[234] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 135-137, 30.
[235] Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed,* 258.

himself admitted, continued for working-class children up to 1914, but Jane Humphries's recent study has argued that it never again assumed such a key part of the family economy. From the 1850s onwards, she argues, the working-class family became increasingly focused around the wages of male breadwinners.[236] By the time Rowntree was studying Hungate, it seems, children were, at best, casual and incidental wage earners in the economy of the home.

It is important to remember that *Poverty* was by no means a timeless study. It took place within a particular context and as such represents a snapshot moment of an ongoing shift in youth employment in York. By the time that Rowntree began the fieldwork for his study, in 1898-1899, the industry of which he was a part had already had an electrifying impact on the financial fortunes of the young in the poorer parts of the city. By the 1901 and 1911 censuses a third of young people aged between thirteen and twenty were working in the confectionary industry.[237] Previously the impact of such industrial employment on the area had been negligible, with relatively low numbers of Hungate youths listed as working on the 1871-1891 censuses, but the expansion of the final years of the 1890s brought well-paid and regular work within reach of a majority of older children in Hungate. Placing *Poverty* within the context of this transformation fundamentally changes the nature of Rowntree's economic vision of childhood for the residents of Hungate.

This trend also had wider ramifications for the residents of the area. Despite a national movement towards smaller families, as the above table demonstrates Hungate was still home to almost exactly the same percentage of large families in 1911 as it had been in 1871. The introduction of large-scale waged work for youths of both sexes in York may have helped families offset the costs of having children. More than half of the families listed as having four or more children on the 1911 census had older children working in the confectionary industry, and many of those families that did not take advantage of this financial opportunity were those where all children were too young to work.[238] The seemingly consistent percentage of extended families in Hungate between 1871 and 1911 offers a particularly important insight into the way this

[236] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour,* 366-373.
[237] Census Returns York, 1871-1911.
[238] Ibid.

shift in local economy affected the structure of households in the area. Many of the extended households featured on the 1901 and 1911 censuses were nuclear families extended not, as might be expected, upwards but downwards. Thomas and Ann Nye, who had been resident in the area since 1871 were, by 1901, living with six children and one grandchild. Three of these children were over twenty years old and four of them were in work (two in confectionary). A similar pattern can be determined amongst newer arrivals as well, with the widowed Georgina Lewis, in 1911, living in a three roomed house on Hungate itself with three children (youngest a confectionary packer), the oldest of whom was married and was accompanied by his wife and new-born daughter.[239] The long-term effect of this new source of income, concentrated in the hands of those members of the family whose financial position in the household had been previously undeveloped, was to stabilise the family home in the area.

The limits imposed on the wages of confectionary work were just as important in determining household structure in Hungate. Although relatively generous, particularly given the lack of work for young women in York prior to the expansion in confectionary work, the wages of the confectionary factories were always imagined as supplementary by employers. This, combined with the *Rowntree's* prohibition on continuing to employ women after marriage, meant that the wages that helped sustain the family home also ensured that young men and women remained within it for as long as possible. The high number of offspring over the age of sixteen remaining in the parental household on both 1901 and 1911 censuses indicates that young women, and some young men, in Hungate were not simply becoming more active supporters of the family home as they grew older. They were also increasingly tied to the home as their newfound financial opportunities evaporated as they left to set up their own family home. The presence of a sizeable number of extended families in the district, with young couples and their infant offspring settling in with their parents, should be seen as a direct product of this changed economic circumstance. Moving out may well have been offset until other financial arrangements could be made to support a family home. There was, as many historians of the family have observed

[239] Public Records Office, 1901 Census Returns, York, District 12, 18-19, 26.

nationally, a move towards a nuclear family home in Hungate, but this was much more dependent on the pressures of local life than on any sweeping general trend.

Of the three districts, households in the Marsh Ward were perhaps closest to the growing ideal of a home where the paterfamilias was the main, and in many circumstances the only, provider. Yet the means by which the vast majority of Marsh Ward families came to enter into what Jane Humphries has termed the 'series of compacts between male breadwinners and nuclear dependents' were largely determined by local pressures peculiar to Middlesbrough.[240] There was, as Bell noted, little work for women, married or not, in the town.[241] Whilst the earlier stage of industrialisation in Britain covered by Humphries saw children contribute to the domestic economy, however, the final decades of the Victorian Era saw them almost entirely excluded. In Middlesbrough, where employment was so minutely concentrated in a few key industries, this process of exclusion was completed by the early 1870s. School Board officials, newly empowered by the 1870 Elementary Education Act, combined with the Iron Masters themselves to push young men under the age of sixteen from the Works.[242] By 1907 Bell was able to pronounce that the town 'offers hardly any occupation for boys'.[243] There were still smaller jobs available, such as messengers and hawkers, but the prohibition of juvenile employment by the key industries of a town of such singular economic purpose left most boys in the Marsh Ward as much an economic dependent in the family as their mothers and sisters.

The impact this had on the home is difficult to determine. Nuclear families in the district whatever the size, declined slightly between 1871 and 1911, but this was matched by a slight growth in the number of extended households in the Marsh Ward. This drop was also accompanied by a rise in the number of households that only consisted of a married couple and it is this change that sheds light on the concept of the family home in the area. The 1911 census was the first to ask couples about the duration of their marriage and the number of their children, and both lines of inquiry yield interesting results for the historian. Some of these new "childless" census households in 1911 were actually husbands and wives whose children had already moved out. John and

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[240] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour,* 368.
[241] Bell, *At the Works,* 177-180.
[242] *Daily Gazette,* 9th December 1872.
[243] Bell, *At the Works,* 138.

Kathleen Rose had been married nineteen years by the time of the census and their only child had left home, as had the six children that Daniel and Catherine Nye had seen survive to adulthood by 1911. Others "childless" households were older couples who either had never had children, whilst the remaining members of this group were young couples who had only recently married and had yet to have children of their own.[244] The samples covered by the concurrent censuses are, admittedly, too small to offer a concrete examination of changing family trends in Middlesbrough. They do, however, indicate that within the Marsh Ward population in census years youths were less financially tied to the home than their peers in Hungate at the same integers. The prohibition on child employment at the Works ended when young men reached sixteen and this prompted many to take the first steps towards leaving the family home. The high wages, combined with a lack of female employment, prompted many youths in the town, Bell noted, to marry young.[245] Many of the young men who featured on the census seemed disinclined to marry immediately upon starting work. Instead they often took up lodgings, either in the Lodging Houses that dotted the Marsh Ward or in the myriad of private lodgings that were part of family dwellings. The complex spatial wanderings of Marsh Ward youth will be dealt with in greater detail later on in this study. What is crucial here is the young men and young women who appear on the census, at least, seem to have come to view the family home as one that could, and should, be left as soon as independent means allowed.

Financial pressures and opportunities were important in determining the place that children held within the working-class home, but they were by no means the only determining factors in these relationships. The structure of families, the types of work available locally, and the attempts to combine 'children's work with their training and elementary education' were all party to the decision making process.[246] The shifts in household structure displayed by the changing residents of Bethnal Green are emblematic of the range of cultural and emotional elements that shaped the home in this period. A comparison of the 1871 and 1911 census returns for the district show a sharp rise in both extended families (doubled across the period) and nuclear families with four or more

[244] Public Records Office, 1911 Census Returns York, District 17, 46.
[245] Bell, *At the Works,* 181.
[246] Humphries, *Childhood and Child Labour,* 366-373.

children (increased by half), whilst the percentage (although not the actual number) of nuclear families with three children or less dropped. This change was almost entirely due to the influx of Jewish migrants to the area. Any approach to the Jews of the East End that draws upon the wealth of detail collected by Booth and his team must be tempered with caution. As David Englander has pointed out, 'in terms of survey research' Booth's study of the new arrivals 'must be deemed a disappointment'. The eyes of outsiders, such as police officers, were doubly prejudiced when it came to the Jews and their dwellings. [247] Some observers, as Booth's researchers found to their dismay when interviewing local School Board officials, did not even make it across the threshold.[248] There are clear limitations on what official sources such as these can tell the historian about the composition of the working-class family and home.

Despite the potential flaws of the census returns, however, the evidence they present points to a clear sense of household structure amongst the new arrivals based on their experiences of migration. The other areas covered by this study experienced migration across the period in question but none of it took the same shape as the Jewish movement to East London. A large proportion of the migration to Middlesbrough in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was comprised of young, single, men.[249] Jewish migration to Bethnal Green, by contrast, was conducted to a large extent by family groups. Moreover many of these groups were following pathways of migration that, whilst beginning in Eastern Europe, also encompassed other parts of the East End. The Levy family, two parents and six children aged eighteen to seven, were occupying five rooms in Chilton Street in 1911. They had come, they told the census taker, from Russian Poland, but their two youngest children, aged seven and twelve, were listed as having been born in Whitechapel and Mile End respectively.[250] The movement of established Jewish families into the area explains not only the rise in large nuclear households visible on the 1911 census but also growth in extended family groupings in the district. Many extended family groups comprised of a married couple with a number of children, the eldest often born in

[247] David Englander, 'Booth's Jews: the presentation of Jews and Judaism in *Life and Labour of the People in London*', in O'Day, Rosemary and David Englander (eds.). *Retrieved Riches: social investigation in Britain, 1840-1914.* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1995*,* 312.
[248] London School of Economics Archive, London, B47, Charles Booth Notebooks, 169.
[249] Yasumoto, *Ironopolis,* 77-81.
[250] Public Records Office, 1911 Bethnal Green Census Returns, BG, BGSW, 23, 130.

Eastern Europe whilst the younger offspring were native to the East End, and younger siblings, nephews or nieces of the parents. The Gabe family, resident in Granby Street, were amongst the most confused, with Mrs Gabe's mother, father, two sisters, a cousin and two lodgers augmenting a nuclear group of five, but there were many other instances of extended family members who had travelled to join existing family units.[251]

Despite entering into the same spatial pressures of sub-divided dwellings that the gentile residents of Bethnal Green were experiencing, the reactions amongst Jewish migrants seem distinct. Jewish migrants to the area tended to cluster. Not only did extended kin arrive to join established family units, possibly for the short term before moving on to a place of their own, but many adult children remained within the family home even after having children of their own. A sizeable proportion of the extended family groupings were tiered households, with three generations occupying the same space. Evidence from contemporary observers, as previously noted, is flawed at best. Charles Russell and H.S. Lewis, social investigators who undertook a targeted study of the migrants in 1900, argued that Jewish homes were often very contented, a fact they found especially remarkable given the overcrowding and myriad other 'adverse influences' they faced.[252] Yet despite the sweeping generalisations that sometimes plagued their work, there is no reason to reject that conclusion out of hand. Residential clustering may have been a response to the waves of short-distance travel that characterised Jewish migration within the East End and an uncertain, although by no means hostile, environment that potentially made moving out less appealing. Yet it may also have been an expression of familial closeness, an affection for the home and its residents that is certainly suggested by specific studies of the Jewish East End in general.[253]

Gentile youths, in contrast, seemed keen to move out as soon as possible; indeed a number of local and national observers expressed concern over the rapidity with which young men and women entered into youthful unions in the

[251] Ibid, 396.
[252] C. Russell and H.S. Lewis. The Jew in London: A Study of Racial Character and Present-Day Conditions. New York: Thomas Crowell & co., 1901, 186-191.
[253] Lara Marks, *Model Mothers,* 49-67.

area with the intention of setting up home together.[254] This rush to leave the parental home may have been, as Ellen Ross suggests, part of a growing cultural emphasis on love and marriage in British culture at the turn of the century that the newer, Yiddish speaking, arrivals were less exposed to. [255] Or it may have been simply that the hesitancy over entering the shifting rental market of the East End was a less terrifying prospect for those from more established gentile families. Whilst Jewish migrants struggled to establish themselves in the area, gentile youths may have been able to call on not only existing support networks of kith and kin but also a wider number of fellow gentile employers. Just as Bill Fishman and Lara Marks have urged, in their studies of the Jewish East End, that the migrant population not be treated as a homogenous whole, so must caution be taken when generalising about the domestic arrangements of the native gentiles.[256] Residential persistence was low throughout the period in Bethnal Green, and the vagaries of life in the area, beset by poverty and frictional tenant-landlord relations, should belie too firm a concept of "established" local residents. What an investigation of both Jew and Gentile households in the area demonstrates is that, as much as local circumstances shaped homes, residents were just as capable of affecting the home around them, shaping it to their own needs. In different ways both Jew and Gentile households featured here clearly placed children at the centre of the home.

Social investigators were not always finely tuned to the family structures extant amongst their subjects. This was partly due to aims of their studies. Neither Booth nor Rowntree were insensitive to the shifting family structures that their investigations uncovered. Both spent time discussing the financial impact of caring for children as well as other, non-nuclear, kin, as well as the ways in which overcrowding, in their eyes, affected morality and health for residents. Bell, with her special interest in the women of Middlesbrough, entered into perhaps the most detailed discussion of the family lives of her subjects. The concentration of earnings in the hands of the paterfamilias, at least for those families where the father was employed at the Works, saw, as she put it, an 'ever

[254] Helen Bosanquet 'Marriage in East London', 70-71 for a national perspective and B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, London School of Economics Archives, 125-127 for the local Reverend's attitude.
[255] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 60-68.
[256] Marks, *Model Mothers,* 94, Bill Fishman, *East End 1888,* 166-222.

present' anxiety over the potential for industrial accidents and the financial ruin they could bring.[257] Yet in all these cases this concentration on how men, women and children lived was a means to understanding problems, social, cultural, financial, rather than an exploration of family ties. For all three social investigators, and many of their like-minded contemporaries, the family unit was paramount and, generally, contiguous amongst the working-class across urban England. The bonds were not always as strong as they would have liked, worn down by poverty or a sense of social brutality (often connected), but for those looking in through the windows of the working-class dwelling the home was synonymous with the nuclear family.

Despite the obvious pitfalls and assumptions that affect the work of the social investigators, however, it is difficult to disagree with their premise, albeit for different reasons. The mass of detail collected by Booth, Rowntree, Bell and others, when compared against more statistical sources such as census returns, speak of homes conceived of as a place shared by children and parents. There were, as shown above, notable exceptions. The presence of extended kin within the household, especially for those in particular circumstances such as newly-arrived migrants, had not markedly diminished in any of the three areas by the end of the period. Yet in many cases these extended households are further evidence of the close correlation between nuclear family and home. As the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth, the "extended" kin present within homes in Hungate and Bethnal Green were more and more frequently adult offspring and their partners, sometimes with new-born children of their own, yet to move out and establish homes of their own. Even in the Marsh Ward, where young couples were keen to move out and establish themselves, the bonds of affection to the parental home continued into adulthood for many. The 'affectionate' bonds between offspring and parent, centred on the home, saw many daughters travel back and forth across the town to help each their parents in times of need.[258] Marriage amongst the working-class may have moved the young towards establishing homes but, despite the differing pressures of local life across urban Britain, it was the relationships between parents and children that ultimately came to define the structure and purpose of these homes.

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[257] Bell, *At the Works,* 103.
[258] Bell, *At the Works,* 115.

The Limits of Home

This growing concentration of the home around the parent-child relationship, however, raises questions about whether a corresponding weakening of the bonds of home grew up around those for whom the parent-child relationship was a thing of the past or, indeed, something that had never occurred. Simply put, as working-class homes became increasingly orientated around the parent-child bond, could a sense of home exist apart from it?

Before delving too deeply into this question, however, it is first necessary to assess the wider picture, as Booth endeavoured to do, and consider the general trends surrounding old age and poverty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. Assessing pauperism, particularly amongst the elderly, is difficult from a statistical standpoint. Pauper Records, such as Workhouse Admission Books, do not always list the previous residence of inmates, and thus arriving at a clear statistical picture of how many residents in each area were in receipt of assistance from the local authorities is difficult. Earlier, Figure Sixteen listed the Local Government Board's calculations of pauper rates for the areas as a whole, but these only counted individual applications once, failing to differentiate between a long-term recipient and a one-off payment. Source work surrounding the elderly poor is notoriously difficult, as is defining the poor themselves. Much of the census work in this section defines old-age as sixty and over so as to be able to make direct comparison with the observations made by Rowntree (who himself used the same yardstick). Booth's national survey, however, adopted sixty-five as the starting point for old age without any real explanation as to the reasoning behind this choice.[259] Janet Roebuck has argued that historians need to examine these definitions much more carefully, as they were part of a 'process which began in the late 19th century' linked more to poor law reform and investigation than the realities of life for the elderly.[260] Pat Thane and Lynn Botelho's tri-partite definition (chronological, cultural and functional) offers much better insight into the lives of residents themselves.[261] The importance of

[259] Booth, *Aged Poor,* 3-28.
[260] Janet Roebuck, 'When does "Old Age" Begin?: The Evolution of the English Definition'. *Journal of Social History,* 12, 3, (Spring 1979), 424-425.
[261] Lynn Botelho and Pat Thane (eds.), *Women and Ageing in British Society Since 1500.* London: Pearson Education, 2001*,* 4-5

the 'process' that Roebuck describes to the interventions of charities, reformers and the state into the lives of the elderly, meant that, as reflected below, in the struggles over the home environment both sets of definitions were crucial.

All three social investigators expressed concern over the elderly, who throughout the period were amongst the most vulnerable residents of urban Britain. Bell may have been sanguine about the continuing good relations between parents and their adult children after they had left the home, but Rowntree, much more obsessed with the pure financial aspect of poverty, was much less hopeful. The absence of earning children, Rowntree argued, was a time of severe risk. A man might enjoy relative prosperity whilst his children were earning, but he would soon 'sink back again into poverty when his children have…left him and he himself is too old to work'.[262] It was Booth, however, who was the most concerned over the plight of the elderly. In 1893 Charles Booth sent out a questionnaire to the 648 Poor Law Unions that covered England and Wales. He received 360 responses, augmented by reports from COS members and local clergy, and began the heavy task of compiling them into a statistical overview. His subject: 'The Condition of the Old' throughout the country.[263] Bethnal Green, Hungate and the Marsh Ward all, to greater or lesser degrees, featured in the survey that Booth published the following year, and in each area a considerable number of elderly residents were living in poverty.

Older family relatives, all three social investigators noted, frequently made themselves useful in a domestic environment. The childcare offered by older female relatives was a considerable boon for many mothers, so too, it seems, was their advice in matters of maternity.[264] Although often treated with suspicion by outside observers, particularly those who favoured a national scheme of midwifery, older female relatives could be a welcome source of support for young mothers-to-be. Nor were the contributions of the elderly limited to household chores and childcare. Although maintaining employment was difficult in old age, and re-entering the workforce after being set aside on grounds of age near-impossible in many cases, some residents in all three

[262] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 136-137.
[263] Booth, *Aged Poor,* 106-107.
[264] Bell, *At the Works,* 108-115.

districts continued to earn well beyond the age of 60.[265] Reduced wages, such as those experienced by older men who employers moved to time-keeping as they became unable to cope with heavy labour at the Middlesbrough Iron Works, were still wages.[266] Like Friendly Society dues, and later pensions, they could be important bargaining tools in securing a place within a home. Both utility and emotion could play a part in ensuring that the elderly remained a part of the domestic structure.

Just such a mixture of emotional and financial factors, however, could also see the homes of older men and women collapse around them or equally see them held at arms length from those of others. Earning potential, although it still existed, was negligible enough that it did not feature on the sample budgets drawn up by either Bell or Rowntree. 'Modern conditions of Industry', Booth noted, 'do not favour the aged'.[267] Although such accounts do not register in any meaningful way the contribution to housework, childcare or even informal wages from tasks such as charring and laundry-work, it was clear to all three investigators that in general the elderly fell on the cost side of any equation. Bell felt that 'affection' and 'duty' were powerful motivators when it came to filial relationships, but noted that the day-to-day relationships themselves could often be frictional. One widowed mother moved between the houses of her three married children, staying with 'each in turn until they could bear it no longer' and asked her to leave. She went from one to the other, Bell noted, 'complaining of the one she had just come from'. Another widowed mother given a room in her son's home, and sent an allowance by another son, 'constantly complains and tells every visitor who calls how badly she is treated'.[268] Ultimately, Booth concluded, the young 'have to weigh the claims of parents against those of wives and children'.[269] The universal pressures of urban poverty, the careful balancing of resources against needs, brought a rough symmetry to the decision making process in all three districts.

There were also, however, considerable variations in how these older people were treated by their families, wider communities and local authorities

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[265] Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Reprint, 2002*,* 281-282.
[266] Bell, *At the Works,* 108-109.
[267] Booth, 'Old Age Pensions'*,* 15
[268] Bell, *At the Works,* 114-116.
[269] Booth, 'Old Age Pensions'*,* 42.

(both state and voluntary) between the three areas, attitudes that both mirrored and affected the homes in each district. As Booth himself was aware, it was local factors that ultimately decided the relationship between elderly men and women and homes, either their own or those of their children. It seems that Middlesbrough's representatives did not respond to his 1892 inquiry. What he could discern from the available statistics was that almost half of the town's population aged over sixty-five had required some form of Poor Law assistance over the preceding twelve months.[270] Moreover, unknown to Booth given his lack of information from the civic authorities, this was a growing problem. Residents aged 60 and over comprised 25% of the inmates of the Union Workhouse in 1871, jostling for space with widowed or unwed mothers and their children and new arrivals who had failed to establish themselves in the town.[271] It was a logical extension of the population only just outgrowing the heady rush of migrants that David Taylor has dubbed its 'frontier' period.[272] By 1911, as the population became more established, the composition of inmates had changed. The workhouse population had nearly doubled in size and two-thirds of the inmates were aged sixty or over.[273] Other vulnerable groups, such as widows and orphans, were still present, but over the forty year period the workhouse had come to hold a considerable position in the lives of many elderly residents in the town.

Combining Booth's research with other sources from Middlesbrough indicates that elderly men in the Marsh Ward had a very different stake in the home than that enjoyed by elderly women. Compiling the local poor law statistics, Booth found that the Workhouse and Infirmary was dominated by older men, whereas local out-relief was paid to almost twice as many elderly women as men.[274] It is unclear whether the recipients of out-relief were living in their own homes or had moved into the homes of others. The census returns from the Marsh Ward between 1871 and 1911 offer few glimpses of residents over the age of sixty-five.[275] Those few that did exist, such as the seventy year old Henry Blackgrave in 1911, were either living in the homes of relatives or, as was the

[270] Booth, *The Aged Poor,* 117.
[271] 1871 Census Returns, Middlesbrough.
[272] Taylor, 'British Ballarat', 755-756.
[273] 1911 Census Returns, Middlesbrough.
[274] Booth, *The Aged Poor,* 117.
[275] 1871-1911 Census Returns, Middlesbrough.

case for seventy-two year old Mary Judd two doors up the street, were relying on the income of lodgers and adult children to keep their own homes afloat.[276] What is clear is that this process was much more difficult for older men than it was for older women. The peculiarities of life in the town lay behind this gender split. As Bell pointed out, employment at the Works was taxing in the extreme, and with the majority of Marsh Ward men working in Iron from an early age, the aged male population of the district was one especially run-down in terms of 'strength, physical energy, alertness, and endurance'.[277] The over-crowding of the Workhouse Infirmary, routinely populated by older men in need of care, suggests that the local Poor Law facilities came to play a role in caring for the elderly that families themselves were unable to provide.

Further evidence of how local pressures and opportunities shaped the relationship between the elderly and the domestic environment can be seen in the role played by lodgings and lodgers. As previously shown lodging was a serious cottage industry in the Marsh Ward, with a constant demand stemming from migrant male workers. Yet these men were not the only ones who patronised the system. The percentage of Marsh Ward male lodgers aged 60 and over increased steadily across the period. For elderly men, Bell noted, the hierarchy of security ran from the homes of relatives, through lodging houses, to, when all other options were exhausted, the Workhouse.[278] Lodgings were not only a source of refuge when homes proved unsustainable or uninviting for elderly men; they were also provided a different life-line to older women. Taking in lodgers could supplement some of the household income lost through the departure of adult children or loss of a husband or, as Leonore Davidoff has pointed out, could be seen as respectable occupation (and hence one that could be supplemented in good faith) by local Guardians.[279] For those older women unable to keep up their own homes, the ability to lighten the domestic work that taking in lodgers entailed could be a powerful bargaining chip in securing a place in the homes of relatives. Despite a consistent status as relatively high wage earners in a male-

[276] 1911 Census Returns, Middlesbrough, District 6, 457-463.
[277] Bell, *At the Works,* 109.
[278] Bell, *At the Works,* 110.
[279] Leonore Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century England' in Sandra Burman (ed.). *Fit Work for Women.* London: Routledge: 1979, 64-66.

orientated economy, men in the Marsh Ward were, it seems, left much more vulnerable in a domestic sense when they stopped being able to function as such.

Booth's summary of the key features of poverty in each subdivision, indicates that life in Bethnal Green was not kind to the elderly. 63% of paupers in the district were aged over sixty five. There was, Booth noted, very limited out relief.[280] Whether from a desire to restrict spending or motivated by a genuine belief that in-house provision was better, the restriction of out-relief payments in Bethnal Green seems to have funnelled the elderly poor into the Workhouse. Between 1871 and 1911 the number of couples living in the district without children (largely comprised of elderly pairings) dropped, and there was also a slight decrease in the percentage of men and women (again often but not exclusively elderly) living alone.[281] In contrast both the overall size of the Workhouse population and the specific proportion of elderly residents soared. Throughout the period local Guardians struggled to find space at the Workhouse – one surprise inspection in February 1890 found it had exceeded maximum capacity by over 400 inmates.[282] The 1871 census saw the inmate population aged over sixty represent 68% of the total Workhouse population. By 1911 this was 76%.[283] A combination of pressures peculiar to Bethnal Green worked in concert to render the keeping a home afloat as men and women grew older harder and harder. Firstly the wages of out-work, as already discussed, were limited. Frequently paid per piece, rather than for time, out-workers needed to work for prolonged periods at rapid speed, performing intricate tasks such as pinning, gluing and stitching that required nimble fingers. Despite a seeming equanimity of employment for both men and women in old age, with an array of out-work and none of the debilitating long-term effects of heavy industry as in Middlesbrough, it is clear that an independent domestic life was becoming increasingly difficult for the elderly residents of Bethnal Green.

The aged population of Hungate, however, remains something of a mystery. York was one of the Poor Law Unions that actually responded in detail to Booth's survey, and the answers they provided give some indication of the

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[280] Booth, *The Aged Poor,* 96
[281] 1871-1911 Census Returns, Bethnal Green.
[282] London Metropolitan Archives, London, BEBG/265/028, Letters from Local Government Board to Bethnal Green Board of Guardians, 24th February 1890.
[283] 1871-1911 Census Returns, Bethnal Green.

uncertainty with which they assessed the situation. Aged women could find a place in homes as child-carers 'setting [the] worker free', they noted, but 'aged men seldom earn anything'. Ultimately, they informed Booth, it was deeply concerning that 'the spirit of not providing for parents is growing', but even if children 'show unmistakably that they grudge them [elderly relatives] sustenance and house-room, and wish them away', they concluded that the elderly working-class in York could usually find a home somewhere amongst their kin.[284] Examining the statistics Booth obtained for York from the LGB allows some perspective on this confusion. Despite having an aged population almost twice as big as that of Middlesbrough, the number of them receiving either in or out relief was less than half of the number Middlesbrough guardians wrestled with. Unlike in Bethnal Green or Middlesbrough, where the aged population of the local Workhouse had risen to encompass the vast majority of inmates by the end of the period, in York the percentage of inmates over sixty rose only sluggishly from 31% in 1871 to 46% in 1911.[285] The aged population of both towns at the time of Booth's survey was around 5% of the total, but that similarity clearly belied significant local differences in the way households were organised.

Many of the differences between the position of the elderly amongst the homes of Hungate and the Marsh Ward stem from the nature of the two urban areas. Both finding the support needed to keep a home afloat and an alternative home should your own become untenable in old age required men and women to have kinship networks in the locality. The majority of those elderly men and women resident in Hungate did. Tracing those aged sixty and over across both the 1871-1881 and 1901-1911 census integers in Hungate reveals that in both cases the majority of those who could be followed continued to live in Hungate or the wider area with their children either as extended family within the homes of their offspring or, more commonly in Hungate, within the original family home with adult children a continuing presence.[286] Middlesbrough, in contrast, was still growing when Booth began his national survey. With a high population turnover and a mobile migrant population, many of the elderly residents of the Marsh Ward, particularly men drawn to the Works, may have found themselves

[284] Booth, *Aged Poor,* 118-119.
[285] 1871-1911 Census Returns York.
[286] 1871-1911 Census Returns York.

without resident kin to rely on when old age rendered their own homes financially vulnerable. The local Poor Law Union was forced to act much more often than in York. Moreover the rapid growth of the town saw it largely devoid of the established charities and aid groups that existed in York, some of which had existed for centuries. 'Numerous almshouses…C.O.S. and nursing institution', Booth was informed, as well as parochial funds from across the city kept many elderly men and women away from the Workhouse.[287] Whilst in the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green the choice was largely between a home or lodging of one's own, the charity of family, or the Workhouse, in Hungate there were other intermediaries.

Regardless of scope, however, what bound homes in all three areas together was the important place of outside intervention as old age began to upset the fragile balance of the home. This was not really increasing, as the vast majority of intervening forces, state or philanthropic, were in place well before 1871. Those changes that did come in during the period, such as the introduction of state pensions under the Liberal Government in 1908, were too late in the day to impact census returns in a meaningful or measurable way, not least given that until 1911 many elderly men and women were exempted from state pensions if they had previously been in receipt of Poor Relief. Many elderly men and women entered and left the Workhouses of Bethnal Green, Middlesbrough and York voluntarily, and some expected a certain degree of comfort from the institution. Elderly Inmates in the Bethnal Green Workhouse were active in blocking the appointment of the Warden's son, sending letters to the Committee pointing out that he was both inept and unkind.[288] Yet others looked upon it with trepidation. Every positive remembrance is matched by a unpleasant one, be it the naivety with which a young Arthur Harding viewed the Workhouse or the chilling description of the seemingly endless tiled entrance hall leading into a world of despair that Kathleen Woodward depicted in her semi-autobiographical *Jipping Street.*[289] It is impossible to know whether elderly men and women found

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[287] Booth, *Aged Poor,* 118-119.
[288] London Metropolitan Archives, London, BEBG/265/028, Bethnal Green Board of Guardians, Letters from Local Government Board, 13.3.1890.
[289] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 12, Kathleen Woodward, *Jipping Street: Childhood in a London Slum.* London: Harper and Brothers, 1983*,* 45-48

comfort or dread in the Workhouse; all that can be known for certain is that for many it was the last destination after their homes ceased to exist.

This trend does, however, underline the significant distinction between household and home. Pat Thane has astutely pointed out that Rowntree paid little attention to poverty amongst the elderly in his 1901 study.[290] With his overwhelming focus on the family unit, it would be reasonable to expect that Rowntree would have turned his inquiring gaze on the considerable proportion of Hungate households that the census shows were headed by elderly men and women. Yet the very fact that this was not present in *Poverty* suggests that even when they remained within the family home itself, the very structure of that home could change around the elderly. Poverty caused by the old age or illness of the chief wage earner (Rowntree grouped these together) accounted for only 5.11% of primary poverty he concluded.[291] Although heading the family on census returns, elderly men and women were no longer the main earners of the home, and this may have seen both their, and their children's, ideas of home shift even within an established family dwelling. It is impossible to know exactly how aged men and women in Hungate, the Marsh Ward or Bethnal Green felt about the homes that were changing or disintegrating under their feet or the potential array of alternatives on offer. What is clear is that as old age approached home became much less certain and much more problematic for men and women in all three districts, something to be looked on with anxiety rather than seen as a comfort. The certainties of family life no longer automatically applied.

In attempting to describe the changing residents of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward, this chapter has pointed out shared conditions of life, both across space and time, and significant, although sometimes subtle, local variations. In many ways the general trends would seem to support the wider observations of working-class life suggested in the social histories of the period. The increasing identification of home with a parent-child relationship, combined with a growing uncertainty and instability once homes lost this basis, seems comparable across all three districts. Yet behind these general trends there lurked considerable local differences. Old age did not as often mean the Workhouse in

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[290] Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Reprint, 2002*,* 213-214.
[291] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 121.

Hungate as it did in Bethnal Green or the Marsh Ward. Jewish migrants in Bethnal Green, whether out of close kinship or the unease of the new arrival, were a significant extended household departure from the growing nuclear norm. Youths in the Marsh Ward, despite a clear attachment to home (at least according to Bell), seem to have been slightly more eager than their Hungate and Bethnal Green peers to leave the family home. Varied patterns of employment ensured that whilst the tension of setting up a new home as a young couple was commensurate in the different areas, the experiences and resources that both parts of the couple brought to the new home were very different. The growth of female employment in Hungate particularly indicates that if, as Anna Davin has argued, the remaking of working-class childhood 'depended on their sex' so to did the recasting of working-class youth and marriage in the period.[292]

Both home and residents were products of their particular environments and if, as comparing the three districts suggests, the outcomes were part of a recognisable general trend then it was the experience of struggling against their particular urban environments that produced such similarities. This tension between local variation and wider social-cultural trends demands further attention. Not only can it shed more light on the experiences of residents themselves, it will also allow a more critical reading of the work of social investigators themselves than has previously been achieved. At times they wrestled through the same process of putting the minutia of their subject matter into a wider context. Yet, as this chapter has shown, at other times they appeared keen to brush over the specifics of life their local studies uncovered. The next three chapters, focussed on the key aspects that emerge from their material as defining factors of home for their subjects, will also show that they articulated their own clear ideas of what working-class homes (and their residents) were like.

[292] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 217.

Chapter Three – Space and Home

Studies of the home in the modern world have invariably begun with the dwelling. For some historians it is, simply, the natural point of commencement. Bill Bryson's recent popular study of the place of the home in British society began with an investigation into his own house, an old Norfolk vicarage. Although ultimately a wide-ranging study of the creation of the modern world, Bryson's belief that the home represents the 'repository of history' demands, he claims, a room-to-room approach.[293] For Judith Flanders , looking *Inside the Victorian Home,* a spatial approach, from bedroom to a conclusion in the street outside, was the best way of revealing the pattern of lives to which middle-class families, she argued, conformed. [294] Even John Tosh's more critical analysis of the place of husbands and fathers in the home still focused on the physical world of the dwelling. 'Those cluttered domestic interiors', as he put it, which reflected the 'range of activities' that took place within the four walls of the Victorian home remain crucial to understanding 'the deeply felt appreciation of home as a place of peace, seclusion and refuge' in late nineteenth-century culture.[295] There has been no consensus, despite as David Benjamin has pointed out a 'wealth of scholarship and multi-disciplinary debate' over the definition of home, but any historical study of the home remains, it seems, fundamentally flawed without deep consideration of the dwelling.[296]

Yet in attempting to avoid the cultural myopia of imposing a definition onto Hungate, the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green, it is important to question whether this coupling of home and house is appropriate to the experiences of residents.[297] A multi-faceted term in any context or culture, home exists in multiple layers some of which, there is no doubt, remains rooted in the physical. There are elements of the home, Juhani Pallasmaa has argued, such as entry-ways and hearths that exist on a 'deep unconscious, bio-cultural level'.[298]

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[293] Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*. London: Doubleday, 2010, 1-8.
[294] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* 1-36.
[295] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England.* Bury St. Edmunds: St Edmundsbury Press, Paperback Edition, 2007*,* 13.
[296] Benjamin, *The Home,* 2-3.
[297] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 2002, 3.
[298] Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Identity, Intimacy and Domicile: Notes of the Phenomenology of Home', in David N. Benjamin (ed.), *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings and Environments,* London: Averbury, 1995, 134-139.

Beyond such deeply-rooted associations, almost impossible for the historian to gauge, it would be foolish to ignore the physical context of the home. Regardless of the quality or quantity of space available, much of what residents understood home to be occurred within, or in close proximity to, the dwelling. This did not mean, however, that the dwelling for poor men, women and children in urban England was the sheltered environment that middle-class reformers at least hoped it could be. Living close to, or below, the poverty line meant that for many of the residents featured here, home had to be highly flexible in what it provided. Space, for residents of Bethnal Green, the Marsh Ward and Hungate, was a resource that needed careful harnessing. Not only did home for them have to encompass the basic needs of shelter, a place where sleeping and eating could take place, but it was also a place where space could be worked in (or upon), adapted to the changing needs of residents, and, ultimately, traded for other necessities if circumstances demanded. As this chapter will show, the spatial components of the homes in these three districts were much more fluid than the structured world of middle-class domesticity. Dwelling could range from an entire house down to a single room or even a shared bed within a lodging house. Homes extended out to cover yards, out-houses, even sections of the street and neighbourhoods. Space could (and did) ultimately become a resource for residents in all three districts, but the manner in which that resource was utilised depended on both the specific circumstances of the three areas and those of the residents themselves. Nevertheless space, despite these differences, remains an important critical lens through which the lives of residents can be understood.

Even the most cursory of examinations of urban housing in poorer quarters of the late Victorian city quickly demonstrates that a room-by-room approach can only shed so much light on how residents used their homes. Although a major part of the analysis of the middle-class home, attempting to move from room to room here would be counterproductive. Partly this is because of the limitations of space within the dwellings themselves. The strict divisions of space found in many middle-class homes were impossible in many of the dwellings that housed the residents of the three districts featured here. It was also a question of utility, as limited space in the dwelling meant that many families were not only forced to adapt their activities but furthermore prized the ability to remain flexible in how they used space.

What renders a room-based approach most problematical, however, is that the majority of the sources available to the historian are filtered through outside eyes. Whilst Booth's experience of varying types of dwellings across London saw him adopt a more reserved approach to classifying spaces, both Rowntree and Bell were engaged in labelling and subdividing rooms as they saw fit. The three plans of housing that Rowntree felt typified the living conditions of many of the poorer residents of York were replete with distinct labels that divided each room functionally from the others.[299] Bell, despite her clear belief that it was near-impossible for the investigator to discern what went on behind closed doors, likewise insisted on referring to kitchens, pantries, front rooms and bedrooms as definable and identifiable spaces.[300] Nor were they alone; those officials who visited the homes in question, and others across urban Britain, seemed also to insist on defining and dividing space. In some instances the labels did apply, or at least the distinctions were largely semantic. The lack of food storage facilities, often 'only an unventilated cupboard under the stairs', in Hungate was repeatedly referred to as a problem of 'pantry accommodation' by the Medical Officer of Health.[301] Although the extent to which a cupboard might be considered a pantry, even a limited one, is debatable, the distinction does not threaten to confuse our understanding of how residents used their domestic spaces.

More difficult, however, is navigating those descriptions that sought to impose a sense of order and clarity on the dwelling under inspection. In 1896 Mr and Mrs Agar of Hungate were summoned to the York Police Court by NSPCC officials on charges of neglect. The upstairs room, where the children slept, was encrusted with filth 'a foot or a foot and a half deep'. The downstairs room, referred to in the newspaper report (and presumably in the court proceedings) as the 'living-room', was likewise filthy. 'The stench was overpowering' the *York Herald* reported. Yet the division of space in the two-room dwelling was not as simple as the article suggested. Mr Agar slept downstairs with his wife and youngest child. He told the court, he 'had not been into the upstairs room more than twice since Christmas'. He may well have been lying to protect himself; he

[299] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 146-154.
[300] Bell, *At the Works,* 171-245..
[301] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 10.

certainly tried to cast the responsibility for cleaning (and thus the blame) onto his wife. Yet whatever the truth of the case, there was clearly not one defined bedroom in the Agar home.[302] Although an extreme case, the Agar's home represents the difficulty of accepting functional notions of rooms at face value, especially when these are filtered through the eyes of outsiders.

Of all the spaces in the home that came under the scrutiny of social investigators and reformers the most defined was the bedroom. Even if, as in the case of the Agars, sleeping arrangements were ill-defined and spread out, almost all of those who left behind their impressions of the dwellings of the urban poor agreed that space, ranging from a few square feet to entire rooms, was set aside for sleeping. From the 'living room' of one family surviving on 20s a week, Rowntree noted, 'you go upstairs straight into the bedroom'.[303] Although the two-up two-down houses of the Marsh Ward were by no means the same as those in Hungate, Bell was still somewhat surprised to find many using the downstairs rooms as a 'bedroom'.[304] Bed-sharing, seemingly common in all three districts where family of four or more children remained a sizeable proportion of residents throughout the period, elicited dark fears in the minds of social investigators. Part of the reason why bedrooms appeared so often in accounts of life amongst the urban poor was due to the significance they held as private spaces within middle-class homes. The popular household manual *Enquire Within Upon Everything,* first published in 1856, made it very clear that bedrooms, even for the young, needed clear definition within a good home. 'A bedroom or nursery' it advised 'ought to be spacious, lofty, dry and airy, and not inhabited through the day' whilst not even servants, the following entry insisted, 'should be suffered to sleep in the same room as a child…as they contaminate the air in which so considerable a portion of infantile life must be spent'.[305]

Forty five years later reformers were still obsessed with air supply at night. Rowntree dedicated a substantial section of poverty to calculating the volume and freshness of air in slum dwellings across York.[306] Concern over respiratory diseases ran high. Although those afflicted by tuberculosis were only

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[302] *York Herald,* 24th October 1896.
[303] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231.
[304] Bell, *At the Works,* 202.
[305] Anon. *Enquire Within Upon Everything.* London: Houlston and Stoneham, 1856.*ng,* 257.
[306] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 171-175.

bound by law to notify local authorities as late as 1912, Medical Officers in each of the three districts compiled detailed statistics for their reports. [307] The high levels of infection in slum districts went hand-in-hand with more social and moral concerns about space.

Lifting the lid on such personal spaces resulted in a mixture of fascination and horror amongst those looking in. Chief amongst these was the fear of what bed-fellows of mixed ages and genders might be exposed to. Even Seebohm Rowntree, a man with a passion for the logical and the rational, felt that homes 'where there are boys and girls past childhood and…no third bedroom' raised questions of 'decency and morality'.[308] As Anthony Wohl has pointed out in his thoughtful study of this fear of incest, it 'evoked the nightmare of exploitation and animal sexuality' for outside observers precisely because it occurred within the most 'sacred of institutions, the home and the family'.[309] Ultimately, as Wohl has concluded, it is impossible for the historian to judge the veracity of these external fears over incestuous relationships. As he observes, the 'demographic pressures' of overcrowding and poor-housing led to the 'various forms of urban social and moral pathology' of which incest was a part, but sources are hazy and laden with assumption and rumour.[310] It is difficult for the historian to penetrate the anxiety-laden second hand accounts of insinuations left behind.

Anxiety over sexual taboos left to one side, the near-universal bed-sharing that saw children side-by-side with not only their siblings but also parents and other adult relatives demands further attention. Extra beds took up both space and money in the dwelling that could be otherwise turned to profit. As Anna Davin has pointed out, the idea that 'while children were young they could pile in together' was nowhere near as problematic for many working-class parents as it was for outside observers.[311] Where this left mother and father, however, seems complicated. The demographic evidence of the three areas, combined with more explicit sources such as the notes taken by one of Bethnal Green's female health workers on child-care and abortion, indicate that husbands

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[307] Wohl, *Endangered Lives,* 130-131.
[308] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 177.
[309] Anthony Wohl, 'Sex and the Single Room: Incest among the Victorian Working Classes', in Anthony Wohl (ed.). *The Victorian Family: Structures and Stresses,* Croom Head, London, 1978, 201.
[310] Ibid, 212-213.
[311] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 50.

and wives were sexually active. Whether this took place in the bed next to children, however, or elsewhere in the dwelling is unclear. Although interested outsiders agonised over the results of such sleeping arrangements, they proved much more reticent when it came to the actual act of coitus. Even in the lurid works of slum-fiction such as Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*, whilst the birth of children proved a frequent medium for conveying the dirt and desperation of urban poverty, these infants were created off-page.[312] Davin has suggested that some mothers took advantage of the desire to keep older children apart to avoid sharing a bed with their husbands and risking pregnancy.[313] The extremely dangerous lengths that some Bethnal Green mothers went to in order to avoid giving birth would certainly suggest that, if couples did enter into marital relations, they also agonised over the consequences.[314] Such close quarters point to different notions of comfort and appropriate behaviour in operation in the space of these homes.

This is not to suggest that the residents of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward were fond of their cramped arrangements. Recorded opinions on dwellings are rare, but tracing residents across census integers suggests that some, at least, displayed a clear desire to move on. In Middlesbrough a widespread lodging house industry, largely catering to migrants arriving to take up employment at the Iron Works, provided temporary accommodation for many young Marsh Ward men upon leaving home. These movements were, however, part of a wider conception of space as flexible that stemmed directly from the experiences of space in the home. It is impossible to know for certain, but what seems most likely is that husbands and wives were adaptable about where and when in the home moments of intimacy could be snatched. Bell reported that many wives liked to wait up for their husbands of an evening and then, children already in bed, sit talking and relaxing together.[315] It is not inconceivable that they did more in these private moments than they were willing to tell Bell. It was not only time that could be worked around, as both children and adults were routinely encountered sleeping in rooms other than that which investigators

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[312] Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*.
[313] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 52.
[314] George Paddock Bate, *Report on the Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics of the Parish of St. Matthew Bethnal Green during the year 1910.* London: J. Williams-Cook, 1911, 34-38.
[315] Bell, *At the Works,* 188-191.

considered the "bedroom". Both Bell and Rowntree encountered sick residents with temporary beds made-up downstairs.[316] Bell found one case, that of a young man whose bed had been moved to the kitchen 'to avoid so much going upstairs and downstairs for the people who waited on him', particularly shocking. The four-room house was occupied by a family of thirteen and 'some of them slept in the same kitchen where the boy was lying, all of them dressed there, ate there, talked and laughed there…the cooking was done in the same room' and some of the washing was drying there. Even given his 'hopeless' case, Bell added in shock, there was no 'careful tending' to be found here in her opinion.[317] Yet her opinion did not shape household decision making for this unnamed family, and it is vital to an understanding of the homes in question that the decisions of residents are seen in context. Parents divided space in ways they thought was best.

They were arrangements that often appeared so haphazard that investigators feared there was no sense of domestic order in place at all. The 1912 and 1913 reports of Charlotte Hammond, the Female Sanitary Inspector of Bethnal Green, highlight the potential distinction between the ideals of inspectors and those of the inspected. Hammond was keen to eradicate one of the major problems of overcrowding, namely the overlaying of infants. 'Expense is no excuse', she pointed out, 'as banana crates and orange boxes can be obtained for a penny each'.[318] Yet in many cases, she noted, 'the mother could not be brought to see the necessity'. For mothers sleeping arrangements were a personal and private affair. "I've had six children and I knows what's good for 'em"' one woman pointedly told Hammond.[319] Overlying was a problem in Bethnal Green, indeed in all three districts, but with fuel expensive and insects and rodents plentiful, many mothers may have felt that having baby in bed was safer, overall, than using a makeshift crib. Emotional bonds may also have seen mothers reluctant to stop taking infants into bed. According to the 1911 census returns, the first to ask the question, the majority of mothers in Hungate, the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green had lost children before they reached adulthood.[320] The

[316] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 263.
[317] Bell, *At the Works,* 82-83.
[318] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1913,*103.
[319] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1912*, 86-87.
[320] 1911 Census Returns, York, Middlesbrough and Bethnal Green.

middle-class home was, as Gillis has observed, a place where the lives and deaths of children were becoming increasingly celebrated and honoured.[321] The keen desire of Bethnal Green mothers to keep their infants close by, even at the risk of overlying and smothering them, speaks of similar, yet distinct, attitudes. Space for sleeping in the homes of the urban poor could never be personalised for children in the way that individual bedrooms were becoming for the more well-to-do, but even the smallest of spaces, such as the family bed, could be bent to some degree of comfort and care.

The ideal world of the home, in middle-class culture, was a tranquil and ordered environment. Of course such ideals were rarely met in practice, but they formed a cornerstone of the creed of many social reformers. Lynette Finch has argued that this 'classing gaze' reflected a number of social divisions in the nineteenth-century, including Marxist ideas of proletariat vs *lumpenproletariat,* 'temperance societies', 'sober and inebriated' and 'evangelicals' quiet and rowdy', yet towards the end of the century it becomes clear that what social commentators of all stripes valued most was a sense of order.[322] Examining the actions of social reformers in the slums of the late Victorian city it is difficult to see the 'loci sacri' that Patrick Joyce has argued were a growing part of a Liberal 'social city'. If slums were identified as distinct environs where time and space worked differently then these were variations that required regulation and, ideally, removal. [323] These were locations where disorder seemed to exist, and it was the job of the domestic missionary to bring order. As one article written by a seasoned charitable worker in *The Girl's Own Paper* put it:

> It is necessary at the outset to have a clear idea of one's object in thus visiting amongst the poor. Some people will make temperance their one aim; others will affirm that no good result can be gained till cleanliness and neatness reign in the home, cleanliness being next to godliness.[324]

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[321] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 55-57.
[322] Lynette Finch, *The Classing Gaze,* 144-145.
[323] Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom,* 227-233.
[324] Dora Hope, 'My District and How I Visit It', *The Girl's Own Paper,* 43, 23rd October 1880, 59.

Ordered homes had well-tempered, temperate, and upstanding occupants the logic ran. This may have been why the East End attracted so much attention; in the sub-divided spaces of Bethnal Green it was even harder for outside observers to impose the domestic boundaries of function and space they so desperately felt were needed. The jury and onlookers at a trial in 1877 in which a Bethnal Green woman was convicted of bigamy were treated to a clear account from her young "victim" of how Elizabeth Pitchford had first seduced him downstairs, sitting on his knee and 'pulling' him 'about', before taking him upstairs 'to her bedroom' where, he added, 'we had connection'. At first glance the rooms appear constructed along clearly defined lines – there is a downstairs area and a separate upstairs bedroom mentioned in the court case. Yet the activities conducted in those spaces, mapped out in such scandalous detail before the court, speak of a much less clear cut arrangement of use and function. Sexual 'connection' may have culminated in the bedroom, but it had begun in the spaces downstairs where the young man involved was supposedly under supervision.[325] Published accounts, be they social investigations, philanthropic reports, or newspaper accounts of crimes were fundamental in depicting the lives of the working-class for middle-class Britain, and all told the same story – one of a chronic lack of order and the miseries and immoralities that induced.

The issue was even more complex for outside observers when it came to the Jewish homes of the East End. Moving into Bethnal Green from Whitechapel, and with new kith and kin arriving from Eastern Europe as the census returns demonstrate, Jewish migrants in the area were by no means immune to prevailing modes of living. Actual insights into migrant homes are even rarer than gentile ones, but the press furore around the Lipski case of 1887 offers a few tantalising glimpses. The trial of Israel Lipski for the alleged murder of his female neighbour in Whitechapel, fifteen minutes walk from Bethnal Green, demonstrated that many migrants were quick to adapt to the general patterns of space that housing in the area encouraged. Housing stock in Batty Street was similar to that in Bethnal Green, with the first PC on the scene attesting to the three storied composition, back yard accessed by passage and

[325] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 17 April 2011), March 1877, trial of Eliza Pitchford (26) and Thomas Wilkinson (18) and Henry Flood (58), (t18770305-323).

large windows. Subsequent investigation into the crime revealed not only that Lipski and the other occupants of the house adapted the space of the dwelling to work and leisure, with a yard given over to furniture production and Lipski's own room filled with tools, but that they utilised the spaces of the building in remarkably similar ways to their gentile neighbours. There were individual rooms within the house that were home to different families, and kept private, but also shared spaces such as the kitchen and parlour where both visitors and residents mixed.[326]

[326] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.0, 16 August 2013), July 1887, trial of ISRAEL LIPSKI (22) (t18870725-817).

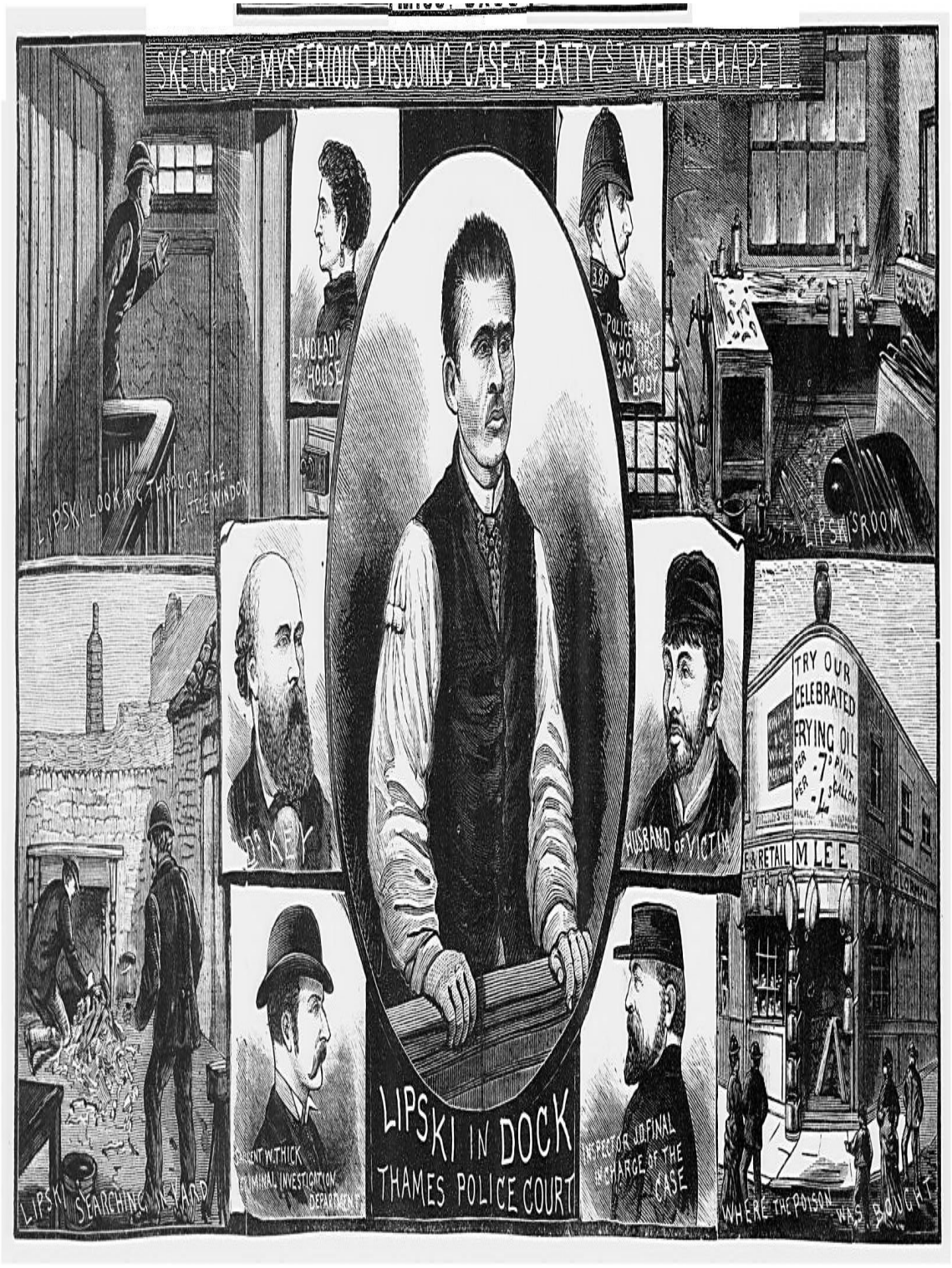

Figure Twenty Three: The illustrated spread *The Illustrated Police News* offered on the Lipski case, offering views into the shared and private spaces of the house (top corners) and the yard workshop (bottom left).[327]

[327] *Illustrated Police News,* 16th July 1887

It is important not to loose sight of the individual variations within the migrant groups themselves. Jewish homes, with their strictures on kosher, mezuzahs on door frames, and complicated migrant family structures, would have been different from those of their working-class neighbours in many small ways. Yet it is difficult to separate distinct Jewish or Gentile modes of living from each other. The limited insight available into the spatial configurations of these Jewish homes suggests that, as both David Feldman and David Englander have observed, the native working-class was often 'no more than a mirror-image of its immigrant analogue'.[328] Outside observers of the Jewish migration were faced with a fundamental paradox; they found the new arrivals orderly and respectable in the streets but nevertheless persisted in viewing their home lives as something foreign and unrecognisable. Brought before a Select Committee on Immigration in 1889, the Superintendant of the Whitechapel District testified that on the whole the migrants were 'more amenable to the Police Regulations than we find in the case of what we should term our English roughs'. When pushed on 'their ideas of sanitary law', however, the Superintendent admitted that these were 'very low I should think'.[329] In the introduction to a new study of the migrants published in 1900 local impassioned reformer Canon Samuel Barnett argued that much of the prejudice between working-class and Jew was the product of misunderstanding. 'The immigrant Jew has' he noted 'habits of living acquired in other countries which offend the prejudiced Englishman, who is apt to call 'dirty' whatever is foreign'.[330] Yet the prejudice that emerges from the sources is often that of the middle-class observer, not necessarily the native working-class. That Booth and his fellow researchers failed to appreciate these similarities is further proof of a middle-class gaze that was more interested in how migrant homes failed to match-up to an ideal than in how they compared to those around them.

Beyond the bedroom, the other space in the homes of the poor that social investigators went to great pains to define was the kitchen. Rowntree clearly labelled one of the rooms on each of his floor plans a 'kitchen'.[331] In Middlesbrough, Bell pointed out, 'most of the houses' consisted of four rooms

[328] Englander, 'Booth's Jews', 309.
[329] Quoted in Englander, *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants,* 94-95.
[330] Canon Samuel Barnett, 'Preface' in Russell and Lewis, *The Jew in London,* xxv.
[331] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 146-154.

with 'one of them a kitchen and living-room'.[332] Creeping confusions over definitions, however, indicate just how unreliable these imposed ideas of functional space were. Despite confidently stating that even the poorer members of the working-class in York lived in houses with definable kitchens and sculleries, Rowntree's detailed studies of families living on less than 25s a week made no mention of kitchens. The majority of them, in contrast, cooked and ate in a room that Rowntree took to referring to as the 'living room'.[333] It is clear from written and oral accounts of urban poverty that the functions of the kitchen, eating and cooking, were significant parts of the home for many residents. As John Burnett has observed, food created powerful, and often pleasurable, images of home life in the memories of many children born between 1870 and 1914, as 'even a pot of boiled potatoes could make a memorable feast'.[334] Davin has pointed out that regular meals 'went with regular working hours and a regular income', and the budgets kept by families for Bell and Rowntree indicate that the majority of families seemed able to put at least some semblance of meals together from one day to the next.[335] For families in Bethnal Green, where male wages in an unstable market fluctuated for much of the period, securing a regular meal time was much more of a joint affair. Beyond a certain minimum of income, the District Nurse informed Booth, 'it depended more on the wife…whether the home was comfortable and the children decently fed'.[336] Creating family time and space within the dwelling was, for many poorer residents, a combination of money and hard work.

Uncoupling the comments made by outside interlopers from the actual experiences of residents is crucial here. Eating and cooking in the same room evoked mixed emotions in social investigators. Rowntree vacillated between a poorly masked distaste for families bolting down food directly from the table, an 'unattractive way' of dining, and a surprised respect for those who, despite using the space for a variety of activities besides cooking and eating, managed to keep the room 'wonderfully clean'.[337] For residents themselves cooking and eating in the same room seems to have been a regular occurrence. It was not just cooking

[332] Bell, *At the Works,* 3-4.
[333] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 273-282.
[334] Burnett, *Destiny Obscure,* p. 57.
[335] Davin, Fish and Loaves, 168, Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231-294, Bell, *At the Works,* 47-85.
[336] B227, Booth Notebooks, 89-91.
[337] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 277-282.

and eating food that saw the living space of the home feature so fondly in the memories of many children; the varied functions of this space saw it encapsulate much that was positive about the experience of childhood. Crucially, time in the waking areas of the home (rather than the bedrooms upstairs), meant time with mother. For many housewives, such as in the Marsh Ward and Hungate where employment amongst married women was uncommon, the majority of domestic work took place around the fireplace. Even in Bethnal Green, where many women took up out-work from local factories to supplement family incomes, the light and warmth of the fireplace would have made the living space of the home the most attractive place to work. Indeed, given the limited space available in the sub-divided houses of the district, it may have been the only space. Whether needing to be watched, wanting to help, or simply desiring attention, these spatial arrangements ensured that mothers spent a significant amount of time with their young children. Although historians of working-class motherhood have pointed out the key role older daughters played in caring for their younger siblings, it is clear that the positive memories of mothers for many men and women born amongst the late Victorian urban poor stemmed from the close-quarter living that brought mother and child together.[338] Cramming the waking activities of the household into the limited space available may not have been ideal but it did have tangible effects on residents.

The social investigators whose accounts of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward feature here were by no means puritanical moral judges. Throughout their work they expressed an awareness of how different the lives they were surveying were from their own. To modern eyes the section in *At the Works* where Bell discusses how unfinished household tasks and un-tidied mess was much more of a problem for those without servants may seem patronising, but it was her attempt to emphasise what she saw as the different priorities and pressures faced by the different social classes.[339] Yet even the most fervent attempts to remain objective were difficult when it came to viewing something so fundamental as the home. In a late Victorian society that was placing increasing value on a tidy, clean and ordered home, and was armed with a growing battery

[338] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* 24-5. Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 97-112. Ross, *Love and Toil*, 148-153.
[339] Bell, *At the Works,* 186-187.

of hygienic knowledge to justify such passions, the mixed functions space in working-class homes was put to could appear chaotic and unclean, the very anathema of the comfortable domestic setting they idealised.

This apparent chaos was actually what comprised the experience of home, pleasant or otherwise, for residents. Some apparently disordered uses of space were universal across the three districts. The small ornaments and knick-knacks that adorned shelves, window-sills and fireplaces were a source of agony for social reformers desperate that husbands and wives conserve every penny. For those living in the homes in question, however, they were not only a financial investment that could be redeemed at the pawnshop in times of need, but were also a tactile element of the home that could be packed up, transported, and unpacked as needed. When Arthur Harding's family moved to Bacon Street as the neighbouring Nichol was pulled down to make way for the Boundary Estate, they arrived with 'just a mattress and a big chest of drawers, a kettle, a saucepan'. The material element of their home, he recalled, was 'easy to fit on to a barrow'. After five years in Bacon Street, however, during which he and his siblings began to earn and support their parents, Harding proudly recalled that his parents summoned 'two carts' to transfer their belongings.[340] Mobility was something that appeared very alien, almost antagonistic, to the sense of what constituted a home for many more affluent observers.

Settling into one's own space was, if not a reality, at least a key aspiration for many middle-class men and women. It was an attitude that determined attempts to reform the dwellings of the poor. Several of the women who worked on Booth's survey had experience supervising model dwellings where residents were vetted for long-term suitability before being admitted.[341] Model villages such as Bourneville and the Rowntree family's own New Earswick, built from 1902 onwards, aimed to provide more stable dwellings; a stability, in the minds of the architects, that could only stem from regular employment. Mobility was by no means a universally welcome part of life for the urban poor, fuelled as often by eviction (as the Hardings found) as by choice, but it was undeniably a key feature of life for the vast majority of residents. Few reached the heady heights of John Elcoat who, after living in the Marsh Ward for over fifty years, appeared on

[340] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 59-63.
[341] O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth,* 8-19.

a 1911 survey as the owner of both his house and the neighbouring one.[342] Despite how ephemeral it often appeared to observers, the money spent on furnishings and ornaments should not be seen simply as small steps towards a middle-class ideal of a comfortably settled domestic idyll, but as indicators of a distinct domestic culture built on the experience of, and often need for, the essence of the home to be mobile and adaptable.

Identifying the kitchens and bedrooms of these homes remains a difficult task, but it is as nothing when the remaining domestic space is brought into consideration. Outside of those areas of the home that conformed to identifiable functional spaces, the accounts left by social investigators become much less certain. There was also uncertainty about where the boundaries of an individual home lay. A 1900 report by the Medical Officer of Health for Middlesbrough leaves little doubt that the yards and outbuildings of a particular house were solely the property of the residents of that house. Backyards were in close proximity in the Marsh Ward, he noted, but had clear boundaries.[343] Yet this was just the definition of one local sanitary expert, and it sheds little light on what residents themselves thought. It reflects neither the attitudes of the residents themselves nor the local variations in properties and residents between the different districts. With closer investigation it quickly becomes clear that all edges of these homes were tentatively defined for both those living within the home and those outside it. Understanding the importance of mobility and adaptability, in spatial terms, to homes in these three districts requires a much closer examination of the interactions between people and spaces in specific contexts.

The confusion over overcrowding exemplifies this need for a contextualised study of residents and homes. In each of the three districts Medical Officers of Health went to great pains to stress the overcrowded nature of the dwellings they inspected. In both York and Middlesbrough sanitary authorities resorted to counting up the number of rooms and comparing it to the population of the district to arrive at some measure of residential density. In Bethnal Green, perhaps overwhelmed by the herculean task of analysing the shifting residents and subdivisions of space in the area's housing that had already

[342] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, F5-9.
[343] Report to Sanitary Committee 1899, 7-10.

broken the back of the local School Board Visitors Booth interviewed, authorities simply utilised the yearly census head count and discussed if it had risen or fallen. Yet the investigations that these men and women conducted revealed markedly different levels of overcrowding. In 1900 the Medical Officer of Health reported that there were 5.15 occupants in each house in the Marsh Ward whereas a report on Hungate in 1908 put the figure there at 4.13 per house, a difference of an entire person.[344] The repeated use of the house as the unit of measurement further undermined the usefulness of these statistics as comparatives; with local authorities reporting only on conditions in their own towns there was little consideration given to the fact that the houses in each area varied in size and composition. The confusion was worsened by the propensity of intervention-minded Medical Officers of Health, and interested others, to offer their own definitions of what actually constituted overcrowding. There existed a clear government standard by which to measure overcrowding, 'said to exist when the average number of persons per room is more than two' as Rowntree noted; yet despite this York's Dr Dingle developed his own standard in the report, 'viz: the overcrowding of people and homes in an area'.[345] Bethnal Green was so notoriously overcrowded, it seems, that the national press felt the need to weigh in. Dr. Bate, the resident Medical Officer of Health, writing about a mooted improvement scheme in the professional journal *Public Health,* noted that his area had been labelled in the national press as one where 'the streets are narrow, many of the houses dilapidated, and the death rate is abnormally high', and the criticism had clearly stung Bate, who made scathing remarks about the danger of 'amateur inspection' in his 1910 report when explaining why his office had turned down an offer of help in inspecting dwellings from the Bethnal Green Health Society. .[346] The accounts of outside observers, however well-informed, give the impression that dwellings in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward were all heaving at the seams.

Beyond the fears over illness and the moral implications of crowded sleeping arrangements, many social investigators were convinced that the

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[344] Report to Sanitary Committee 1899, 2. Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 20-21.
[345] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 169 Teeside Archives, Report to Sanitary Committee 1899*,* 10.
[346] T.O.D., 'The Housing of the Working-Classes: Bethnal Green Improvement Scheme', *Public Health,* III, 1890, 233. *The Graphic,* 1st November, 1890, 4.

overcrowding of the homes they viewed could not be comfortable for the residents. Overcrowding, many felt, led to a lack of comfort and a concurrent carelessness about physical surroundings amongst occupants. There were 'broken windows' in Bethnal Green, the woodwork of Nile Street in the Marsh Ward was 'exceptionally bad' and walls 'covered with filth and insects', whilst one court described by Rowntree (rendered anonymous but most likely to be part of Hungate) featured holes in ceilings, rotting woodwork, and 'wallpaper begrimed with smoke and dirt'.[347] The adjoining court was even worse. The grainy photograph included in *Poverty,* showing the water closets used by the entire block of residents, leaves little doubt of the poor condition of many of these dwellings.[348] Just as with the medical maps favoured by Victorian Sanitary authorities that Pamela Gilbert has studied, descriptions of the internal and external appearances of these homes served to further the ongoing debate over how the home, that 'domain of the social' as Gilbert puts it, was a place of collision between the 'responsible individual' and the 'barbarous'.[349]

Nearly half a century on from the mid-Victorian studies Gilbert has focused on, social investigators were even more convinced that these depressed environments had a brutalising effect on residents. As the Medical Officer of Health for York noted, 'if it is true that alcoholism is largely responsible for the production of the slum tenant, it is no less true that the slum induces drinking or continued alcoholism'.[350] Rowntree agreed. Intervention was a 'necessity' he pointed out 'for it is Nature's universal law that all living things tend to adapt themselves to their environment'.[351] In the minds of concerned citizens of the late Victorian period the danger of slum homes lay in their very dirty, unsanitary and uncomfortable appearance. These just did not match up to the close association between comfort and well-being that John Gillis has argued was the 'Victorian's great contribution to modern living'.[352] If, as they believed, comfort made the home then these overcrowded dwellings, so devoid of charm, could hardly be expected to convey the benefits of a wholesome home environment.

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[347] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 73, Teeside Archives, Report to Sanitary Committee 1899, 2. Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 7.
[348] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 155-157.
[349] Gilbert, *Mapping the Victorian Social Body,* 54.
[350] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 8
[351] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 158.
[352] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 119.

It is tempting to disregard the criticisms of outside observers like the Medical Officers of Health as irrelevant when attempting to understand the attitudes of residents towards their own dwelling spaces. As the varying criteria of overcrowding adopted by these officials demonstrates, the idea of the appropriate space for a family or person depended on the particular view of the individual in question. The preconceptions of external observers was, as the work of Alan Mayne has shown, fundamental in shaping opinion about nineteenth-century "slums" in newspapers and journals.[353] With all three Medical Officers of Health, from middle-class backgrounds, adopting their own criteria for measuring overcrowding, it could be argued that their departure from the official standard saw them interpret any dwellings more crowded than their cultural ideal as chronically packed. Yet, as David Englander's critique of Mayne's work has demonstrated, the 'lived experience' of slum-land extended beyond this investigative realm.[354] Whatever the means of measurement employed, it is clear that the three areas studied here were heavily populated. The real question, following Englander's observations, is whether residents considered this overcrowding and to what extent this affected both them and their particular conceptions of home.

Gauging the extent to which residents enjoyed the spaces of their homes is complex. As Enid Gauldie observed, all the historian can do is take the evidence supplied by reformers and 'balance it with judgement against what little we know of actual measurements and furnishings…to produce something like a true picture of working-class life'. Yet Gauldie's own conclusion that close-quarter living combined with 'a general lack of possessions' rendered the dwellings of the urban working-class across Britain 'cruel habitations' requires careful reconsideration.[355] Whilst residential persistence across the ten years intervals between censuses remained below 25% between censuses throughout the period for all three districts, there were other changes taking place that affected how residents in each of the neighbourhoods utilised the space within their dwellings. Multiple-occupancy remained high throughout the period in Bethnal Green, but in the Marsh Ward and Hungate it was dropping off by the

[353] Mayne, *The Imagined Slum,* 1-20.
[354] David Englander, 'Review: Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities 1870-1914', Urban History*, 21, 2, (Oct 1994), 309-311.
[355] Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations,* 92-98.

first decades of the twentieth-century. The census returns for just one street, Garden Place, in 1911 reveal an incredible variety in household size in single occupancy dwellings, ranging from solitary occupants to families of eleven.[356] By 1911, however, only in two instances did distinct family units have to share the same dwelling. Recent archaeological explorations of the area on which these dwellings once stood have provided evidence to suggest that this increasing trend of one family to one house affected how individuals dealt with the spaces available to them. Post 1850s finds have included a wealth of man-made decorative materials, particularly an array of wall and floor tiles and paver pieces for laid floors.[357] These might have been put in by improving landlords, but this seems unlikely; they were more likely the results of improving residents. Rowntree encountered a number of improving husbands during his investigations, including one who spent his time adding 'conveniences' such as 'a cupboard for boots..[and]…a bookcase with glass doors' to the house.[358] The slight increase in residential persistence in the first decades of the twentieth-century, combined with a much more definable drop-off in rates of multiple occupancy, saw some residents of Hungate begin to take steps to alter the physical spaces they called home.

Comfort, however, remains an intangible concept. Although there is clear evidence that by the final decades of the period residents of Hungate were making cosmetic changes to their dwellings, these do not automatically indicate a desire for comfort. The bookcases and cupboards that Rowntree noticed were, as he put it, 'conveniences', and there was no guarantee that they might not end up, like so much furniture from Hungate, at the pawnshop if times got hard.[359] The majority of embellishments in Hungate, as in the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green, were small, portable and, ultimately, redeemable when needed. Given the profound emphasis on comfortable domesticity in middle-class culture, enshrined in the desire for furnishings, judging whether comfort was attainable, or even particularly desired, by working-class residents must be done through heavily-tinted lenses. Writers advocating slum work frequently exhorted volunteers to dedicate their time and effort to beautifying the houses of the urban poor.

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[356] 1911 Census Returns York.
[357] Evans 'Block D Hungate Development York', 39.
[358] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 233.
[359] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 282.

Possessions were prominent in homes in all three districts, yet as the following chapter will demonstrate in more detail, very few items ever lost their association with money.

Much more measurable, and more distinctly shaped by the different patterns of life in each district, is the place of leisure within the domestic environment. Whilst comfort is elusive as a concept, it is much easier for the historian to attempt to understand the ways in which men, women and children enjoyed their homes. In both Hungate and the Marsh Ward, with their dwindling levels of multiple-occupancy, leisure time seems to have been concentrated in the room with the main fire. Be it open fire, grate or oven, Bell found her men and women tended to gravitate towards it of an evening. A number of families that she visited were collected around the fireplace listening to newspapers or novels being read aloud, or simply reading in each other's company. One wife, she noted, read to her illiterate husband every night 'but he will listen to nothing but romances'. Reading was, it seems, also one of those activities that could bring non-residents (most often friends and family from the surrounding area) into the family space of the home. In one family featured in *At the Works* the son-in-law read to his wife's entire family each evening.[360] Reading, however, depended not only on the availability of lending libraries but also on the willingness of the occupants to take up reading as a source of enjoyment. Not all families encountered did read to each other, or even at all, however; whilst Bell was encouraged by the fact that she found only twenty eight 'houses where no-one cares to read', the 'very poor', she was forced to admit, made very little use of the town's Free Library.[361] As Rowntree pointed out, making time for families required not only available space but often an investment in terms of both time and money.[362]

Finding space for leisure was infinitely more difficult, however, for those whose homes were more spatially limited. Arthur Harding recalled spending much of his childhood out and about in the streets of the East End.[363] Booth and his associates frequently encountered children as they walked the streets. There were children in every street when George Duckworth visited with a local Police

[360] Bell, *At the Works,* 149-154.
[361] Ibid, 162-163.
[362] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 133-134.
[363] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 96.

Sergeant. They appeared 'ragged', Duckworth noted, but also 'well-fed'. Close to Busby Street he stopped to watch 'several boys boxing with gloves', seemingly a regular sight as it attracted 'only a few onlookers'.[364] The street, as Anna Davin has observed, was not just a convenient location for East End mothers to send children to get them out of the way whilst they worked but, for the children themselves, it was a realm of leisure.[365] The wanderings of poor children in the urban environment has attracted considerable historical attention, from those such as Stephen Humphries who emphasise the struggles between children and civil authorities over space as crucial to understanding youth in the modern city, to cultural critics such as Seth Koven studying how these 'street arabs' became such sources of pity and fascination for reformers.[366] Less attention has been paid to why it was the street, rather than any other external spaces, that Bethnal Green children were to be found in. Historians and linguists working on early twentieth-century Helsinki have demonstrated that as poor children grew older their conceptions of the boundaries of home shifted. Whilst small children identified with the dwelling itself (often including the yards that were a feature of poorer housing in the city), as they grew older they began to roam around neighbourhoods and districts that they identified as their own. Groups of boys formed groups localised around a particular area they claimed as their own. They were 'Kinapori Apaches', inspired by stories of the Wild West, or Sörkka lads, and the areas that they chose to claim as their own radiated out from the family dwelling that served as the epicentre of these widening spaces they identified as home.[367]

This would seem to hold true for boys and girls in all three districts studied here. The notebook of one constable who patrolled the Marsh Ward in the 1890s recorded his regular run-ins with a group of boys determined to play football in the streets around the area. David Gulley likewise ran afoul of the police when he reacted violently to a constable's attempt to break up his Hungate game of marbles and stone-throwing, striking the constable and ending up before the

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[364] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 169-173.
[365] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 48-49.
[366] Humphries, *Hooligans and Rebels,* 1-20, Seth Koven, *Slumming: sexual and social politics in Victorian London.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004*,* 112-123.
[367] Heikki Paunonen, Jani Vuolteenaho and Terhi Ainiala. 'Industrial Urbanisation, Working Class Lads and slang toponyms in early twentieth-century Helsinki'. *Urban History,* 36, 3, (2009), 449-471.

Police Court.[368] Yet what children in both the Marsh Ward and Hungate also had were the semi-private spaces at the backs of houses. Yards, passageways, outbuildings and other spaces, often overlooked by rear windows, offered alternative spaces for children to play in, particularly when, towards the end of the period civic authorities across Britain, concerned about safety and traffic issues, began to exert more control over streets. Life in the East End cast this process in a different light. It would be unrealistic to assume that such spaces were completely off-limits in Bethnal Green. The accounts of Arthur Harding, and those of less wayward children, reveal that boys and girls were more than willing to explore and roam the semi-private spaces around the edges of dwellings. These were also, however, places of work. Yards played host to the small workshops and storage areas of the furniture trade. Many of those workers interviewed by Booth did not live in the house that bordered onto their workshop space, instead living a few streets away, and these areas would have been full of the noise and bustle of industry. Children from Bethnal Green may have watched, or come to visit fathers or other relatives at work, but there would have been little room for the leisure time children in Hungate and the Marsh Ward invested in their yards. Nor would there always have been the oversight, given the split occupancy that continued to be a feature of life in the area up till 1914, which both mothers and social reformers prized. Both Anna Davin and Ellen Ross have, in their studies of life in the East End, pointed to the common custom among residents of tasking older children with watching and nursing their smaller siblings.[369] Davin has argued that this process, often centred on older girls, was one that stemmed from the instability of life close to the poverty line, where older daughters would have been relied upon increasingly by overworked mothers.[370] This seems more than likely, but what neither note is that the genesis of this nurturing role emerged directly from the need to adapt the lives and activities of children to the peculiar spatial constrictions of life in the area.

Part of the difficulty of assessing the relationship between space and leisure time is that it varied not just depending on the space available but on the residents themselves. For wives and mothers the home was a space not of leisure

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[368] *York Herald,* 9th May 1876.
[369] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 97-98, Ross, *Love and Toil,* 155-157.
[370] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 160-161.

but, primarily, one of work. It was also a changing relationship. As the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth, Joanna Bourke has observed, the number of working-class women who defined themselves as housewives increased dramatically. This was, she argues, due to the collapse of the 'home employment system' and the increasing exclusion of married women from the late Victorian workforce. The extent to which this was actually the case, however, is completely dependent on the changes in local economies. Hungate, until the expansion of the confectionary industry in the late 1880s, offered little direct employment for women of any age or marital status.[371] The experiences of wives and mothers in Bethnal Green and in the Marsh Ward, however, stand as almost polar opposites throughout the period. Although shrinking on a national scale by the early twentieth-century the so-called 'sweated trades' that had long roots in the East End were still a major source of employment in Bethnal Green. As Bourke herself admits, census returns offer no accurate picture of female employment, and much female work went unrecorded.[372] The repeated mention of women's work, for both married and unmarried women, in the studies of social investigators, however, suggests that for many women in Bethnal Green the continuing survival of out-work employment made the home a place of work. In the Marsh Ward the opposite was true. The town offered little in the way of female employment. For an adult female population that reached over 44,000 by the time Bell published *At the Works* in 1907, she could find only 814 opportunities for employment.[373] It was domestic work, as Bourke has noted a burden often under-appreciated by historians of the working-class, that Bell believed was the responsibility of fell to the wives of iron workers.[374] The local cultures of work, social investigators suggested, had profound effects on the female residents and, by extension, the homes they observed.

It is worth noting, however, that despite their intense concentration on local circumstances, social investigators repeatedly arrived at the same general conclusion that placed the maintenance of domestic space squarely at the feet of wives and mothers across urban Britain. For Bell it was obvious; husbands were at work and that left wives with the responsibilities of the home. One woman she

[371] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 167-168
[372] Ibid, 167.
[373] Bell, *At the Works,* 178-180.
[374] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 169-172, Bell, *At the Works,* 171-189.

particularly admired 'governed her house with the skill of a born administrator', organising tasks to leave Sunday 'all ready for a day of leisure and comfort'. She was by no means dismissive of the work required, frequently noting throughout *At the Works* the heavy burden housework was for women, but she was convinced that, fair or not, this was the natural division of labour for these men and women. Her conviction was further bolstered by the belief that it was only an effective domestic manager that could render the home a comfortable space that would entice husbands. The husband of the 'born administrator', she observed, arrived home to find 'a comfortable meal' and rarely stepped out again, by which Bell meant visiting the pub.[375] Rowntree concurred, believing that the appeal of the public house was greatest for those having to experience the discomfort of the slum dwellings of York.[376] Marriage required both participants, Helen Bosanquet wrote whilst considering a group of young East End newlyweds from her office window, to be aware of the 'responsibilities' of bringing up a family 'in decency and comfort'. Although stressing that women of all classes were often cajoled into marriage with a lack of knowledge of what lay ahead, Bosanquet's short account clearly stated that such naïveté was much less forgivable in a working-class living so close to the poverty line.

The inevitable consequence of this close linking between mother and home was that many social investigators became anxious about the absence of the father from the domestic space. 'Again and again', Bell sombrely intoned, one saw a husband and father grow 'more and more accustomed to look for comfort and enjoyment out of his own home' as wives struggled with to keep the dwelling comfortable.[377] There is considerable evidence, certainly, that working-class men could be temporary inhabitants of the home, although the work of Shani d'Cruze and others on domestic violence patterns suggests that it was those husbands who stayed and grew angry upon returning to an environment not to their liking, rather than those that wandered off, that working-class women were most apprehensive of.[378] A closer examination of the evidence they collected,

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[375] Bell, *At the Works,* 176-178.
[376] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 306-326.
[377] Bell, *At the Works,* 183.
[378] See the edited collection Shani D'Cruze (ed.), *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850-1950: Gender and Class.* Harrow: Longman, 1999*,* especially Judith Rowbotham, "Only when drunk': the stereotyping of violence in England, c. 1850-1900' in Shani D'Cruze (ed.). *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850-1950: Gender and Class.* Harrow: Longman, 1999 and John E. Archer.

however, suggests that often husbands and fathers in each district were at the mercy of time and work. One of Rowntree's investigations into the home of a carter and his family, existing on 20s a week and thus below his poverty line, was interrupted by the arrival of the five year old son who burst into the kitchen with some change in his hand to proclaim 'Father will be home at 12 o'clock and wants something good for his dinner, and here is the money to buy it with'.[379] Prone to condensing their myriad observations into more pithy conclusions, social investigators often neglected the important subtleties of life that their studies uncovered.

Many were too ready to believe in the image of a father absent through choice to consider the alternatives. The furniture workers interviewed by Booth in Bethnal Green were, almost to a man, working late evenings and weekends due to a drop in trade prices for their goods.[380] Even if they had wished to return home, they were caught up with trying to earn the money necessary to keep that home afloat. The rhythms of life in the different areas meant that men and women had different amounts of time to spend in the home. Bell was especially critical of those women in the Marsh Ward who stayed in bed till late in the day, sometimes not rising till early afternoon.[381] Given the rolling pattern of shift-work in the area, however, with men returning home sometimes in the early morning and sometimes in the middle of the day, these irregular sleeping patterns may have been an attempt to maximise the time that husbands and wives could spend together. The general condemnation of absentee fathers throughout the late Victorian period obscured a remarkably varied patina of pressures and lifestyles that complicated the relationship between father and home.

Even if temporally absent, husbands and fathers would have been aware of the changes that homes in all three districts were subject to. In all three neighbourhoods there were not only economic and social pressures that the home was forced to adapt to, but also money that could be made through successful adaptation. For working-class residents across urban Britain space within the

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''Men behaving badly'?: masculinity and the uses of violence, 1850-1900'. Shani D'Cruze (ed.). *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850-1950: Gender and Class.* Harrow: Longman, 1999 in this volume.

[379] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231-232.

[380] London School of Economics Archive, London, A6, Charles Booth Notebooks, 171-173, 224-230, London School of Economics Archive, London, A7, Charles Booth Notebooks, 322-329.

[381] Bell, *At the Works,* 186-187.

dwelling was a valuable commodity. The forms it took varied from location to location. In the Marsh Ward, with a constant influx of young and unattached male migrants drawn to the high wages of the Iron Works, there was considerable money to be made in opening up one's home to lodgers. It was not only registered lodging houses that flourished in the Marsh Ward; the Medical Officer of Health noted, but more informal affairs run from individual dwellings.[382] Social reformers were uncertain about the taking on of lodgers; some such as Bell believed it should really be limited to family members and acquaintances in need, whilst others viewed it as the only respectable way in which married women could earn extra income.[383]

In Bethnal Green it was out-work that took up space in the home. Observers encountered kitchen tables, beds and floors covered with drying match-boxes, shirt-collars waiting to be sewed, or the downy residue of the fur-pulling trade that clogged the air and caused residents to cough and splutter. One investigator, studying fur-trade workers in the area, wrote that 'the effect of them eating and sleeping in a room where the hairs are over everything…must be left to be imagined', adding that one woman had told her 'can't even have a cup of tea but they [pieces of fur] are in it'.[384] Sometimes this work excluded other functions of the home, and even Arthur Harding, who from Samuel's accounts was by no means the most helpful child in Bethnal Green, was roped into helping his parents glue matchboxes together.[385] The spaces of the home that could be bent to profit were not just those within its four walls either. Yard spaces in Bethnal Green, and to a lesser degree in Hungate, were given over to storage or workshops, used either by residents themselves or rented out. John Benson has pointed out that prior to 1914 working-class men and women living close to the poverty line, or below it, would adapt any resources they could muster to make a little more profit, and there was no resource quite as fundamental or accessible as the space offered by the home.[386] Circumstances differed from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and resident to resident, but ultimately it was adaptability,

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[382] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, 7.
[383] Bell, *At the Works,* 108-125 and Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work?', 64-66.
[384] S.E. Barber, 'Fur Sewing' in Mudie-Smith, Richard. *Handbook of the Daily News Sweated Industries' Exhibition May 1906.* London: Burt, 1906, 81-83.
[385] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 22.
[386] John Benson, *The Penny Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Entrepreneurs.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983, 1-10.

particularly the ability to adapt space, that was both required and prized in the homes in all three districts. This resourcefulness, however, is more complex than an economic materialist conclusion would suggest. Space, time and money were combined not simply to ensure economic survival but also to allow for comfort and to bolster familial connections. As following chapters will demonstrate, adaptability was key to not just working-class survival strategies, but to the social and cultural life of families as well.

This adaptability was also what middle-class Victorians, even the most critically minded of social investigators, struggled to understand about the homes they analyzed. Where residents chose to alter their living patterns, whether to better adapt to their surroundings or to survive the pressures of poverty, outside observers saw chaos. The confusion that the dying young man Bell encountered on a cot in the kitchen of one Middlesbrough home sums up the problem. In her mind the disruption of meals and activity the dying young man was subjected to (not to mention the hygiene implications) vastly outweighed any comfort from proximity to either the fire or other family members that such a temporary bed offered.[387] For the residents it was clear the comforts outweighed the inconvenience. This is not to suggest that social investigators were either dogmatically blind or uncaring in their observations. Concerns expressed by both Bell and the female sanitary workers of Bethnal Green over the conditions mothers had to give birth in, for instance, echoed the sentiments of a national study conducted by the Women's Co-operative Guild in 1915. All were fuelled by a real concern for the welfare of both mothers and children.[388] Conditions in the homes featured above were undoubtedly unhygienic, and by modern standards overcrowded and uncomfortable. Yet the passions of social reformers obscure more than they reveal about space in the working-class home. Negotiated, adapted, embellished or stripped down for a few pennies, space formed one of the key pillars of a working-class idea of home. It was not only an arena in which the processes of the home took place, but through a desire for adaptability amongst residents, it was a resource that kept those very homes alive.

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[387] Bell, *At the Works,* 82-83.
[388] Margaret Llewellyn Davies (ed.). *Maternity: Letters from Working Women: Collected by the Women's Co-operative Guild.* London: Virago Edition, 1984*,* v-17.

Chapter Four: Time and Homes

Despite his intentions, Joachim Schlör's study of the night-time in modern cities has not opened up a wider array of research into the shifting patterns of light and dark, open and closed spaces, and work and leisure that such studies might promise. Perhaps in a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century context such as the one he employs, this is because his conclusion that 'nocturnal entertainment is to be found in enclosed spaces, while the terrors of the night are linked to the street' neatly sums up cultural positions.[389] Frequently, accounts of the middle-class home present their subjects as unaltered by the passage of time. The home, distinct from the public world of work, remained unaltered as the sun rose and set. Whilst its functions truly awoke of an evening, sheltering the family and their guests from the dangers of the modern city, its form and purpose remained steadfast across day and night.[390] Studies of working-class time are much more fragmented, but this is because they focus on activities frequently cited as external to the home by historians. The East End of Gareth Stedman Jones's *Outcast London* hums to a fluctuating rhythm sensitive to not only night and day but changing seasons, but it is a rhythm of work and leisure (or perhaps more accurately work and unemployment).[391] Growing from a small village, Middlesbrough was an 'Infant Hercules' that hummed to the rhythms of industry.[392] Yet time played a much more significant role in the homes and lives of residents of all three districts than it could ever have done for their middle-class urban contemporaries.

For many residents in Bethnal Green and Hungate home was only a short walk from work, for many more it was a place of work itself. Even in the Marsh Ward, where men trekked out to the Iron Works across the river, the home remained an epicentre they gravitated back to according to the vagaries of shift patterns. Unlike the ideal of domesticity that middle-class families strove towards, the homes of working-class urban England were in use throughout day and night. Only a close study of both the hours of light and dark, as Schlör has

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[389] Joachim Schlör, *Nights in the Big City: Paris, Berlin, London, 1840-1930*. London: Reaktion Books, Reaktion Translation, 1998, 32.
[390] Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home,* xlii-xliii.
[391] Jones, Gareth Stedman, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between classes in Victorian Society.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, 33-51.
[392] Yasumoto, *Ironopolis,* 1-27.

suggested, can illustrate just how fundamental a place home assumed in the lives of its occupants. Such a study, as this chapter will show, also brings into sharp relief just how much of tentative and changeable an environment the home could be. Time was undoubtedly a key part of building a home for working-class men and women, but, just as with space, it was also a resource to be harnessed when needed.

Night

The warm evening weather of June 1905 saw many residents of Bethnal Green spill from their homes and roam the streets or take up seats on the front steps and pavement outside their dwellings. Thus it was that Joseph Bailey was sitting outside his Ducal Street house with his wife, his brother Jack and Jack's 'young lady', when six or seven men from across the street began to shout at his brother. The men were known to the brothers, Joseph acknowledging that Jack was 'on bad terms' with them, and they began to hurl abuse at the sitting party. Then three of their number opened fire with revolvers, one shot hitting Jack in the leg, before fleeing down the street. Amongst their number, according to Joseph, was a young man called William Newman whom he had seen 'knocking about' the area. As Newman's home in Granby Street was only a few minutes walk from Ducal Street, he was easily picked up by a group of officers the following morning. In his defence he argued that he had not been out with 'the crowd' that night, instead having taken his girl out on the town, and at the time the assault took place had returned home and was involved in a quarrel with his neighbours. [393]

The subsequent trial of William Newman offers a series of compelling insights into how the actions, reactions and general patterns of life of Bethnal Green residents changed as day gave way to night. A. Roger Ekirch, in his recent study of night time in early-modern culture, has emphasised that whilst the night allowed men and women at once a greater sense of privacy than they had during the daylight hours, yet also an increased freedom from the constraints of daytime society. The night, he adds, allowed associations that were 'the product of choice

[393] Old Bailey Proceedings Online, trial of Wiliam Newman, 1905

not circumstance – trusted friends and family rather than workmates or inquisitive superiors', but that this was changing by the late nineteenth-century.[394] By then, he claims, 'whereas their forebears had once roamed cities and towns at will, exerting nocturnal authority over a vast domain, the indigent were increasingly confined to zones of darkness riddled by extensive crime'.[395] For Joachim Schlör, studying night time in three of Europe's capitals from 1850 onwards, the three key themes of the night were concerns and conflicts over security, morality and accessibility.[396] All three of these were themes that appeared in dramatic fashion in Newman's trial. The use of outside space, both by the Bailey brothers and their partners and the gang that attacked them, raises questions both about the boundaries of homes at different times of the day and night and also the levels of security (or lack thereof) that those boundaries provided. Following on from this the case brings into sharp relief the sense of habitation that residents found in Bethnal Green. Bailey's attackers believed, correctly, that they would find him home of an evening, and both he and the police were equally sure that Newman could be found within a few streets of his own dwelling the following day. Residents of Bethnal Green were accessible, in different ways, around the clock to a variety of, not always friendly, people. Finally, the disturbed relaxation of the Bailey party and Newman's alibi of being out with his girlfriend, show that nights in Bethnal Green could represent a heady mixture of comfort and danger.

None of this would have been surprising to the court that heard the trial. The Whitechapel Murders of 1888 had cast a particularly long shadow over the East End for outsiders, but even before that nights in the area had a particularly unsavoury reputation. The following year the journalist George Sims offered a particularly lurid description of the night.

> Turn out of the main thoroughfare and into the dimly-lighted back streets, and you come upon scene after scene to the grim, grotesque horror of which only the pencil of a Doré could do justice. Women, with hideous, distorted faces, are rolling from

[394] Roger A. Ekrich, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past.* London: W.W. Norton, 2006, 153.
[395] Ibid, 335-336.
[396] Schlör, *Nights in the Big City,* 22-23.

> side to side, shrieking aloud snatches of popular songs, plentifully interlarded with the vilest expressions. Men as drunk as themselves meet them; there is a short interchange of ribald jests and foul oaths, then a quarrel and a shower of blows. Down from one dark court rings a cry of murder, and a woman, her face hideously gashed, makes across the narrow road, pursued by a howling madman. It is only a drunken husband having a row with his wife.[397]

This stimulating mixture of fact and fiction, with the evocation of the shadowy world of Doré's engravings, remains as familiar to historians today as it was for Sims' contemporaries in 1889. For many impassioned reformers, it seemed, nights in the Edwardian city represented a loosening of control, combined with a greater incentive to wander, which demanded both a carrot and stick response. The East End became more than just another part of London; as Seth Koven has pointed out it came to exercise 'powerful and tenacious claims' over the 'minds and hearts' of many reform-minded outsiders.[398] 'A dark continent that is within easy walking distance of the General Post Office' as one journalist put it, the pull the area exerted over the imagination of late Victorian society was 'magnetic'.[399] It has retained a powerful hold over the history of the urban working-class, and the nocturnal lives of the poorer residents of other turn-of-the-century British cities have not received similar attention. As this chapter will show, there is much to be gained from a consideration of nights beyond the peculiar world of the East End.

Before leaving Bethnal Green, however, the attitudes of residents themselves to the shifting landscapes of day and night requires more careful unpacking. The East End of Jack the Ripper and the middle-class visitor, be he/she out for an evening of slumming or a day of philanthropy, was not, as David Englander succinctly put it in his critique of Alan Mayne's work on the

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[397] George R. Sims, *How the Poor Live and Horrible London.* London: Chatto and Windus, 1889*,* 137.
[398] Koven, *Slumming,* 1.
[399] Peter Keating (ed.), *Into Unknown England 1866-1913: Selections from the Social Explorers.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976*,* 14. Ross (ed.), *Slum travellers,* 1.

imagined slum, the 'lived experience' of residents themselves.[400] The men, women and children that lived in Bethnal Green throughout the period experienced the process of day to night to day again differently; the district was an altered landscape after dark, alternate patterns of life applied, and, crucially, these temporal shifts brought the boundaries and purposes of their homes into sharp relief.

Historians have long argued for a strict demarcation between the public arena of the street and the private world of the home in nineteenth-century cities. Both Peter Baldwin, working in an American context, and Martin Daunton, studying a British one, have convincingly argued that this period saw the increasing regimentation and segregation of public space.[401] Forced off the main streets of cities working-class communities were forced to appropriate the back-alleys and by-ways as semi-public spaces, adapting to what F.M.L Thompson has labelled 'a semi-private community.[402] This may have been true of the daylight hours but, as Schlör observes, the changes from day to night 'are fluid…gradually the urban workings change, submitting little by little to the conditions of the night'.[403] The topography of urban neighbourhoods changed as evening fell, and to simply ascribe the vague label of semi-private to the interactions that took place at night in these areas is to misinterpret how individuals and communities responded to space and time.

Ten years before William Newman's trial, another well-known local face was on the nocturnal prowl. When Arthur Harding's family arrived in Bacon Street in 1895 his mother gave birth 'directly' to his brother, and with four other siblings crowded into one room, Arthur took up ranging around the streets. Stealing, playing and hanging about in turns, he and his small group of friends were well-known faces to residents and interlopers, especially patrolling constables, alike. Yet his nocturnal ramblings were of a different hue. Unable to sleep in the crowded room, he found space in landings in Scalter Street, huddled around the watchman's fire in Vallance Road, and in empty houses he found on the Whitechapel Road where he was ultimately found and taken in by workers

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[400] Englander, 'Review: Alan Mayne', 309-311.
[401] Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street,* 116-176. Daunton, *House and Home,* 266-273.
[402] Baldwin, *Domesticating the Street,* 266, Daunton, *House and Home,* 280-281, F.M.L.Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900.* London: Fontana Press, 1988, 193.
[403] Schlör, *Nights in the Big City,* 9.

from the local Barnardo's home.[404] Sleeping rough was by no means uncommon in the area. In 1911 the female sanitary inspector of Bethnal Green reported that she had encountered one family 'turned into the street for arrears of rent' who had spent several nights in the street before finding another place. Their children, the inspector noted, 'were taken in by various relatives' in the meantime.[405] With the sudden changes in fortune that could accompany life in Bethnal Green, night-time never represented the safe and comfortable domestic environment that reformers wished it could.

Whilst in 1895 Arthur Harding had yet to commence his criminal career, other residents were more than willing to take advantage of limited visibility of the night to carry out nefarious activities. At 8 o'clock on a December night in 1878, Ann Hollidge saw two men atop the yard wall bordering a house. When she challenged them, they called out to her that the place was 'on fire at the back' before dropping down to the street and running, only to be tackled by a policeman on the nearby Bethnal Green Road.[406] The risk was not only to dwellings during the dark hours of night in Bethnal Green; personal security was also threatened. A domestic servant, walking down Bethnal Green Road during an early March evening in 1908 had her feather boa snatched by three boys who made off into the Chilton Street area. Yet they themselves were to fall foul of unintended encounters at night, as three hours later they were collared by a policeman who had been looking for them in the same neighbourhood.[407] A similar fate befell George Smith who, returning with the illicit proceeds of a house-breaking in the early hours of an August morning in 1871, ran straight into a policeman and was swiftly apprehended.[408] The temptation to stray that night brought to the neighbourhood was well-known to the police. Sergeant French, walking the streets of Bethnal Green with George Duckworth, told him that this triangle of streets comprised a 'rough class' of carters and furniture makers mixed in with prostitutes and thieves.[409] Throughout the period both residents

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[404] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 61-63.
[405] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1911,* 83-84.
[406] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 17 April 2011), January 1878, trial of James Shean (22), (t18780114-200).
[407] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 19 April 2011), March 1908, trial of Edward Scott (18), (t19080303-33).
[408] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 19 April 2011), March 1908, trial of George Smith (26), (t1871084-570).
[409] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 169.

and visitors hoping to profit from the night-time world of Bethnal Green were forced to contend with patrolling policemen willing and able to contest the freedom of the night.

If the night tempted many to roam in Bethnal Green, there was also a general expectation amongst friends, wider family and neighbours, that night-time would find residents somewhere within the boundaries of the dwelling. Hollidge had been out that night to visit the inhabitant of the house she saw being breached, Thomas Sully, and had one of his relatives in tow when she spotted the two men climbing the wall. Sully himself had only just stepped out to the public house minutes earlier, and had noticed the two men lingering under a nearby streetlamp. Clearly they had waited to know for certain that he was out before breaching his home.[410] Newman, likewise, had returned home with his girlfriend after an evening of touring public houses up and down the Bethnal Green Road. Upon their return they found her parents, Newman's mother and several other friends and neighbours 'quarrelling' and Newman was forced to step in to 'stop it and [he] persuaded them to go inside'.[411] It was perhaps an extreme example, as all the parties involved seemed to live in rented rooms in the same property, but even taking into account the occasional quarrel many residents of Bethnal Green were not just at home of an evening but, when the weather permitted, were able and willing to extend the borders of that home to encapsulate a wider area. Newman's attempt to move the arguing couple indoors, moreover, suggests that some of the activities that took place within the home environment (in this case domestic dispute) were not always part of this nocturnal extension.

At first glance residents in both Hungate and the Marsh Ward appear to have embraced a similarly mixed attitude towards the night, both embracing the freedom that it brought and turning to the home as a place of comfort and sanctuary as darkness fell. Martin Daunton has pointed to a steady process of 'encapsulation' of homes amongst the working-class, part of a desire to escape 'from the promiscuous mixing and sharing' of the street, and it would seem that in both instances this was the case.[412] Bell invested a considerable amount of time into a study of the reading habits of the working-class in Middlesbrough,

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[410] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online,* trial of James Shean.
[411] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, trial of Wiliam Newman.
[412] Daunton, *House and Home,* 277

concluding that reading often took place as a social activity at set times of the evening. She encountered a number of husbands and wives who read together, or to each other, and even found one household where the son-in-law had been encouraged to read aloud to the assembled family.[413] Rowntree's concentration on the functional and financial aspects of the home offered few insights into the social life of Hungate residents, but his discussion of the public houses of the slums of York reveal a lively interaction between home, street and pub. This began much earlier in the day, as he observed several men try the door between six and seven in the morning, but reached a crescendo as the evening began.[414] At first glance it would seem, as it did to Rowntree, that the home was all but forgotten of an evening in the slums of York.

Closer examination of these areas, however, reveals that, as in Bethnal Green, both area and resident brought subtle distinctions to this general process of 'encapsulation'. As Bell found, different residents of Middlesbrough had varying ideas of who could cross the threshold and when. Although not always conducted at night-time, the census returns for Middlesbrough in 1901, taken on a Sunday, did capture at least eight visitors to Marsh Ward homes. Whilst some remain difficult to trace at least one, Henrietta Coles, was visiting her married sister, brother in law, and their children.[415] Other dwellings, especially on earlier censuses, listed nocturnal visitors who were less carefully selected. The 1871 census of the Marsh Ward included a number of lodgers spread across both Common Lodging Houses and private dwellings. The residents of 2 Back Nile Street, housing one lodger in addition to their family of five, admitted that 'two lodgers slept here on Sunday but they [the residents] did not get the names'.[416] As Bell found, families often limited the scope of the home at night, attempting to capitalise on the opportunity for comfort and leisure time. When the financial opportunities presented by the day-and-night shift work patterns of the town beckoned, however, this could change dramatically – the boundaries of homes in the Marsh Ward were often only as impermeable as residents could afford them to be when night fell.

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[413] Bell, *At the Works,* 142-170.
[414] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 314-320.
[415] 1901 Census Returns Middlesbrough, District 6, RG13/4574, 33.
[416] 1871 Census Returns Middlesbrough, District 12, RG 10/4891, 12.

Despite the changing nature of Middlesbrough in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no tangible hardening of the boundaries of home can be observed in this period. The steady flow of migrants to the area placed a premium on bed-space in the Marsh Ward, such a short walk from the ferry to the Works, and both lodging houses and private affairs continued apace throughout the period. Sailors from ships in port and visiting salesmen bedded down with labourers from the iron and steel works and men from the building trades – if they could afford the rent.[417] The Lodging Houses in particular were rarely tranquil environments. In 1881, for example, James Henry was hauled before magistrates for stealing 1s 11d from a blind man in a Vine Street lodging house; a third bedfellow had seen the theft and reported it to the police.[418] Whilst some of these residents were what Raphael Samuel has termed 'comers and goers', present for a few days or weeks before moving on, others were more long-term residents, and for them night-time brought much less privacy and security than it did for family homes in the area.[419] Even as the police gained control over the streets, desperate local authorities attempted to stymie the spate of fires, thefts and even murders that occurred in lodging houses by drawing up plans for purchasing them and placing them under municipal control.[420] For those Marsh Ward residents hoping to capitalise on the economic boon that lodgers could bring, the choice to accommodate lodgers often came at the expense of weakening the privacy, security and comfort of the home at night.

Hungate had a similar reputation to Bethnal Green in 1870, that of an insanitary and unsafe district, and it was a reputation that stretched back throughout most of the nineteenth-century. 'Two secluded and ill-lit passages' allowed for clients picked up in the public houses of Fossgate and Walmgate, the greatest concentration of drinking establishments in York, to 'be conveyed right to the doors of the houses of ill fame'. Indeed by the 1870s two thirds of York's prostitutes lived somewhere in the courts and small streets of Hungate.[421] Tracing

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[417] 1871-1911 Census Returns Middlesbrough.
[418] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 5th December 1881.
[419] Raphael Samuel, 'Comers and Goers', in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff (eds.). *The Victorian City: Images and Realities,* Volume I, London: Routledge, 1973123-125. See also David Taylor, 'Melbourne, Middlesbrough and morality: policing Victorian 'new towns' in the old world and the new'. *Social History,* 31, 1, (2006): 33-35.
[420] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, F1-9.
[421] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution,* 21, 56-57, 61.

the women who made their living as prostitutes is difficult for this period, very few appear on the census, and although some can be distinguished from newspaper reports and court proceedings, as Finnegan has done for the period between 1837 and 1887. Jane Douthwaite, mentioned in an 1875 court case, seems to have been resident in Hungate since at least 1871, and the police and charity investigations cited by Finnegan often mentioned in passing the presence of the children of prostitutes in brothels.[422] At the end of her period, however, numbers of both brothels and prostitutes had been in continuous decline for some time.[423] By the time Rowntree was writing *Poverty,* around thirteen years later, the police felt able to state with confidence that 'not more than about a score or so of women in York…depend upon prostitution as a sole means of livelihood', although prostitutes still appeared in the Police Courts section of the *York Herald* in the final decades of the period, and the numbers operating undetected or outside of the carefully phrased 'sole means' in *Poverty* may have been more.[424] Although by no means representative of the inhabitants of the district, the presence of prostitutes in Hungate is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it attracted the attention of officialdom from across York, placing nights in Hungate under closer scrutiny. Secondly, and partly as a result of this increased attention, the presence of prostitution in the area meant that night time in Hungate was shot through with interlopers of both suspect and official backgrounds.

Hungate was a place that seemed, at least according to the reports of local journalists, to attract a rough and dangerous crowd after dark. There were assaults and fights, thefts and break-ins and plenty of instances of 'drunk and disorderly' conduct. Those that were picked up by police surveillance, or otherwise brought to court by aggrieved parties, were presented first to the police court and then, by local journalists, to the population of the wider city.[425] As late as the 1900s the local residents were pressuring the Medical Officer of Health to draw up plans to combat the physical defects that, they believed, were the root

[422] 1871 York Census Returns, RG10/4750, *York Herald,* 15th January 1875.
[423] Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution*, 70.
[424] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 313. *York Herald,* 8th August, 1896.
[425] For example, *York Herald* 9th November 1872, 2nd October 1874, 17th June 1876, 23rd January 1891.

cause of such social ills. [426] Yet these reports on the police court cases of Hungate reveal that night time was not necessarily an incentive or a barrier to such criminal behaviour. Homes were breached during the day as easily as during the night; in April of 1878 John Clout indecently assaulted his eighteen year old neighbour whilst her parents were out of the house during the day, whilst other assaults and thefts took place throughout the daylight hours.[427] It was Hungate's winding streets rather than its darkness at night, which drew many residents and visitors into nefarious activities.

Historical visions of the night in the late Victorian city are complicated by the attitudes and assumptions of the contemporary interlopers who aimed to not only record but often to shape that night. Some middle-class reformers were more than willing to wave their position on children being abed of an evening if they deemed the reason worthy. Every year the Hungate Mission's annual dinner and prize-giving was reported in the *York Herald*, an event which involved the feeding, in 1886, of over three hundred parents and pupils, the presentation of religious texts as prizes for learning and an earnest lecture on 'the importance of religion and temperance' for one and all.[428] This wholesome context, it seemed, was one for which the idealised sanctity and security of the nocturnal home could be waived. Reformers may have agonised over the lack of appeal of the home of an evening, seeing it as a powerful inducement to drinking for husbands and fathers, but were often complicit in offering alternative venues they found more palatable. Lady Bell, for instance, so critical throughout *At the Works* of wives and mothers that were unable to present an attractive domestic environment for husbands, spearheaded with her own the Winter Gardens in Middlesbrough. A few short minutes walk from the Marsh Ward, the Winter Gardens offered lectures, reading rooms and a (non-alcoholic) bar for men of an evening.[429]

From a working-class perspective, night-time offered similar opportunities and dangers across the different districts, although these were not always the same as social investigators suspected. Whilst the pull of a free meal was undoubtedly a powerful factor in convincing parents and children to attend

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[426] Included in Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 1-3.
[427] *York Herald,* 26th April 1878., 17th September 1877, 10th November 1885.
[428] *York Herald,* 1st January 1886.
[429] Angela John, "Bell , Florence Eveleen Eleanore, Lady Bell (1851–1930)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eee online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: OUP, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41106 (accessed September 10, 2013).

the Christmas festivities of the Hungate Mission, there were other reasons for attending. There is little doubt that, as with the youth clubs run by members of the St Matthew's vestry in Bethnal Green of an evening, that these activities were viewed as a positive experience by many parents. It would be wrong to ignore the possibility of parental pride in their offspring as at least part of the motivation for going to such an event. Furthermore, when put in context with Rowntree's observations about children visiting the public house, a recognisable pattern begins to emerge. The Mission School, like the public houses nearby and the communal block of toilets established for the area, was within a short walk of the dwellings of Hungate; unlike the abandoned houses and railway arches where Barnardo's workers found many children sleeping rough, these closer locations seem to have existed within a safe and acceptable distance for many Hungate parents. Night-time may have limited the boundaries of the home for many parents, but it is clear that such a constriction did not represent a total retreat within the four-walls of the dwelling.

What truly made nights in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward comparable for residents was a tension between need and desire. Stemming from the local conditions of life in the different districts, what forms this tension took were often distinct. The most obvious form of tension in the Marsh Ward was over the taking in of lodgers. Opening up one's home to lodgers represented a purposeful weakening of the boundaries of the nocturnal home, replete with the dangers that represented, whilst desiring a more intimate family-only home at night meant forgoing the (often needed) income that lodgers brought with them. In Bethnal Green, as those cases brought before the Old Bailey demonstrate, it was the relative freedom offered by the night-time street that was a source of conflicting need and desire. Both leaving the home, as Newman and his girlfriend did, or simply extending the boundaries to include outside space as was the case for the Bailey Brothers or Newman's family and friends, could be a welcome break from the pressures of the working day. Yet, as all these parties found, it also exposed them to the dangers of the nocturnal world. Opening up the boundaries of the home, or venturing beyond it, saw them set aside the relative security of the dwelling for the more unpredictable and accessible world of the street, as Sarah Close found when, one night in 1878, she was knocked down by a cart in nearby Nelson Street after returning home drunk from the

funeral of a relative.[430] If both Tebbutt and Daunton are correct about the dangers and impossibilities of entirely walling-off the family during the day, then it would seem that the same applied at night, to greater or lesser degrees, in the three districts featured here. Although working-class families might hope for comfort as they bedded down, the realities of life close to the poverty line in urban England meant that such dreams could not always be realised in the homes around them.

Day

When it comes to the day time experiences of working-class men and women, historians have long been drawn into a discussion of whether the home was a place of work or leisure. Since the late 1980s new lines of enquiry have chiselled away at the belief that, as the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth, the home was a place of leisure that counterbalanced an energetic public world of work. Bourke's critique of those historians of working-class women who seem 'less pleased' with the housewifery their subjects enthusiastically embraced has been matched by a growing appreciation of the work of maintaining a home in different contexts, exemplified in an American context by the various contributors to *Household Chores and Household Choices* in 2004.[431] Yet although such studies shed valuable light on the processes and relationships that comprised home in different situations, such a discussion focused on the twin points of work and leisure has failed to provide any clear perspective on how working-class men and women ultimately conceived of the domestic environment around them.

Bell's jumbled conception of housework in *At the Works* demonstrates just such confusion. The work of a home (a woman's lot) was integral to rendering the home comfortable, she argued, but the work itself could push a husband outdoors to seek relaxation elsewhere. Husbands did not, she argued, take part in the work of the home, but it was their wages that kept it afloat, and

[430] *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper,* 20th April 1878.
[431] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 168-169, Kerri S. Barile and Jamie C. Brandon (eds.). *Household Chores and Household Choices: Theorizing the Domestic Sphere in Historical Archaeology.* Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2004.

they hoped to enjoy the proceeds of their labours with wives and children.[432] Bell struggled to reconcile the work that went into producing leisure time with the detrimental effects such ongoing work had on leisure within the home. *At the Works* remains, like much of historiography on this subject, at a fundamental impasse. This section instead focuses on how time was used in a specific focal point – the home. By examining how time played out in a particular location rather than attempting to balance multiple *uses* of time, such as work and leisure, this section will outline who used time within the home, how they used it, and how that differed from the temporal patterns of others.

In her study of households, homes, and social change in turn-of-the-century Colorado, Margaret Wood has argued that women in the coal camps did work outside of the home, rather they were supporters and assisters whose roles have tended to 'recede into the backwaters of history'.[433] The same was true for Middlesbrough, a town similarly dominated by an almost exclusively male economy. 'There is…no organised women's labour', Bell observed, and instead it was the work of the home that was thrust into the hands, 'sometimes strong and capable, often weak and uncertain', of wives and mothers in the town.[434] The town was one that hummed to an industrial rhythm. 'A cumbrous ferry', Lady Bell noted, ploughed back and forth across the Tees every quarter of an hour, 'filled almost to overflowing' with the shift-workers that travelled to and from the Iron Works across the river from the Marsh Ward. It was a river which, she observed, 're-echoed with the noise of hammering and machinery'.[435] Bell should know; her husband, one of Middlesbrough's most prominent Iron Masters, was himself increasingly stretched. In 1894, an average year for the Iron Master, he not only ran the family business but also acted as an alderman for Middlesbrough, opening schools and encouraging musical education, appeared as a representative of business interests in labour disputes, wrote an article on the 'Living Wage' for the *National Review,* and still had time to attend to the demands of family time, be present at funerals, supporting his wife's efforts as a

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[432] Bell, *At the Works,* 182-184.
[433] Margaret C. Wood, 'Working-Class Households as Sites of Social Change', in Barile, Kerri S. and Jamie C. Brandon (eds.). *Household Chores and Household Choices: Theorizing the Domestic Sphere in Historical Archaeology.* Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2004, 211.
[434] Bell, *At the Works,* 171-180.
[435] Ibid, 13.

playwright and giving character statements at a divorce court.[436] Middlesbrough, swollen by migrants and continually growing, was a town acutely aware of the passage of time. By the time a new Town Hall was erected in the centre of Middlesbrough in 1889, residents of the Marsh Ward were already living in sight of the Dock Clock Tower, erected nineteen years earlier on the banks of the Tees. Colin Cunningham has suggested that much of this civic construction was for show, and that the reluctance of merchants, a group for whom time was arguably money, to fund a clock tower for their own exchange negates the idea that these clock towers were an exercise in the provision of time to the masses.[437] Yet the persistent rumours that the fourth clock face was left blank on the orders of an Iron Master, unhappy about the thought of his employees clock-watching whilst at work, suggests that a growing sense of industrial time played a significant role in the delineation of homes in the Marsh Ward.

Repetitive industrial work formed the backbone of what E.P Thompson considered the layering of 'time-thrift' onto older cultural patterns during the nineteenth-century, leading to a clearer demarcation between leisure and work.[438] Yet an acute awareness of the demands of industrial time, gleaned from her detailed study of her husband's company, did little to help Bell formulate husband-wife relations in her study. She found the sleeping and waking patterns, or perhaps lack of pattern, of wives incomprehensible. They could not be expected to wait up of a morning for their husbands to return from night shifts, or stay up late waiting for the 2 a.m. shift to return, but to see them with 'curling-pins' in their hair 'all day' was beyond comprehension for her. Yet that so many women were content to spend their time without due 'seemliness and order' that Bell thought so crucial to the home reveals a different set of priorities amongst the wives of Iron Workers about time spent in the home.[439] With a rotating pattern of shifts out of their control, iron workers and their wives in the Marsh Ward had unusually clear ideas of when they would be finished with work each day. Men did not always return home immediately, the public houses that lined

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[436] *The Standard,* 15th March 1894, *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 10th October 1894, 22nd January 1894, 27th January 1894, *York Herald,* 6th February, 1894.
[437] Colin Cunningham, *Victorian and Edwardian Town Halls,* London: Routledge, 1981, 166-167.
[438] E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present,* 38, (Dec. 1967), 93.
[439] Bell, *At the Works,* 185-187,

their routes back saw to that, but the shift patterns that dominated male labour in the Marsh Ward had a clear effect on the lives of residents. With few leisure spaces for women around town, little opportunity for working outside of the dwelling, and an increasing amount of shopping brought to the door by travelling salesmen, women in the Marsh Ward would have spent much of their time within the home. Much of their socialising was done, as Bell noted, 'standing and talking at the door', or in the home itself with family and friends, and just as the coal miner's wives that Ward studied used such interactions to create 'bonds of reciprocity and friendship' so too did Marsh Ward women lack any need to routinely "dress up" for the outside world.[440]

The demands on women's time, it must be remembered, were never completely universal in any context. The reasons for what Bell deemed the relaxed appearance of Marsh Ward women was not necessarily solely due to there being little need for dressing up. Middlesbrough's Medical Officer of Health had a very different understanding of the impact of the rhythm of shift-work on wives and families to Lady Bell. 'Difficulty was experienced in gaining entrance to many of the homes' of the Marsh Ward, he noted in his Annual Report of 1909, 'owing to the inmates still being in bed, often as late as noonday'. It was, he believed 'one of the results of the lack of food and fire owing to poverty' that kept cold and tired wives and mothers in bed.[441] As nutritional studies have made clear, this was by no means exceptional; significant proportions of the British population prior to 1914 lacked the calorie intake needed for physical labour.[442] For some wives and mothers the need to conserve fuel and food trumped any desire to become more active during the daytime. Not all women in the Marsh Ward had lives that revolved around the shifts of the Iron Works. There were six married women listed as working on the 1901 census, and they would have experienced time in very different ways to their neighbours whose husbands were employed at the Works. Five worked either alongside husbands (one as a shopkeeper and two as market hawkers) or independently of them (a cook in the family lodging house and a second shopkeeper). Others, unlisted on the census, may have had similar experiences –

[440] Wood, 'Working Class Households', 230-231, Bell, *At the Works,* 228-229.
[441] Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CB/M/H, Annual Reports and Statistics 1909, 17.
[442] Roderick Floud et al, *The Changing Body: Health, Nutrition, and Human Development in the Western World since 1700.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, 168-169.

Jane Pinder could well have worked alongside her husband in the Butcher's Shop he kept at 13 Princess Street. Her neighbour Emily Byron certainly helped in the Fruit Shop next door.[443] For these women the home would not have been subject to the routines of shift-work but rather the common patterns of domesticity mixed with the shared tasks of running a small business. Even if this was, as the census returns and Bell's studies suggest, an uncommon arrangement of homes in the Marsh Ward, the same cannot be said for Bethnal Green.[444]

Close spatial correlations between home and workplace made for particularly stressful environments in Bethnal Green, or at least that was how it appeared to outside observers. When Booth's assistant E.W. Brooks came to interview the cabinet makers of Bethnal Green for the Industry series of *Life and Labour of the People in London* he found that these men expressed anxiety over the hours they were compelled to work. Speaking to five men living within the triangle of Bethnal Green streets featured here, Brooks found workers and small employers deeply depressed over the state of their industry. Mr Steel, living in Granby Street and running a workshop in neighbouring Bacon Street with 'five men under him' told Brooks that 'the trade is getting worse and worse'. 'I did not ask him about his hours of work' Brooks annotated the interview 'but I gather they are rather long as I found his men at work on a Sunday afternoon'.[445] On average, the other four men told Brooks, they worked between nine and twelve hours a day, less on Saturdays, and could earn around 35s to £2 a week dependent on orders and completion of work.[446] Employment in larger factories or at the Docks would not have solved these agonies of time either, as men were forced to run the gauntlet of waiting to be chosen from the crowd for work each morning. Unable to rely on the regular hours, and decent pay, of the Iron Works as many Marsh Ward families did, men and women in Bethnal Green throughout the period were forced to counteract payment by piece, diminishing hourly rates, or trade downturns by investing more time into the struggle for the money needed to survive.

Ellen Ross has claimed that in this area of the East End 'household jurisdictions and even physical spaces apparently were sharply divided by

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[443] 1901 Census Returns, Middlesbrough, District 6, RG13/4574, 39.
[444] Bell, *At the Works,* 179-180.
[445] A6 Charles Booth Notebooks, 227-230
[446] A6 Charles Booth Notebooks, 171, 224. A7 Charles Booth Notebooks, 322.

gender' and, as Elizabeth Roberts has done for Lancashire towns in the same period, drawn on a large body of oral histories, autobiographies and social investigations to identify a distinction between the male wage earner, operating outside of the home in the workplace, and the female wage-manager within the home.[447] Yet, as can be seen from the earlier census summary tables, many wives in Bethnal Green did work. Some of them, such as Sarah Squire living at 48 Bacon Street, worked alongside their husbands in craft industries; indeed the patchwork survival of silk-weaving in late nineteenth-century Bethnal Green was a remnant of a working culture which had relied on family members working the looms together. Many more, however, spent considerable time working independently from their husbands, turning the "domestic" space of the home over to work. Indeed, so common were such arrangements that often the distinction between home and workplace in Bethnal Green seems, at least for women, an artificial one. Elizabeth Wales, the wife of a cabinet maker, was a silk weaver, Mary Osbourne sewed ostrich feathers into hats and garments, and Elizabeth Wren supplemented her husband's earnings as a porter by making cardboard boxes, to pick just three.[448] The so-called 'sweated trades' of the East End not only employed young unmarried girls in small workshops but provided ample opportunities for married women to work at home. Much of this was piece-work; match-boxes, for instance, were paid 1s. for the gross. Whether or not Stedman-Jones is right to claim that married women's work had about it the whiff of poverty and desperation for many East-End residents, the differences in the routines of work and leisure for mothers and wives that did labour beyond the demands of housewifery had a profound impact on the lives of the family within their homes.[449]

Yet this poverty-stricken picture of the financial constraints of time in Bethnal Green is by no means universally representative. Unlike many Iron Works employees, some men in Bethnal Green were able to exercise more control over their time. The two French polishers Brooks interviewed were to a certain extent free agents in the area, brought in to finish off cabinets before they were sold, and were thus able to move between workshops working the hours

[447] Roberts, *A Woman's Place,* 135-168, Ross, *Love and Toil,* 72-78.
[448] 1881 Census Returns, Bethnal Green.
[449] Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London,* 83-4.

they wished. Even this freedom, however, was tempered by the need to secure enough money to survive. One of the French polishers told Brooks that 'he knows…of many polishers who are walking the streets in search of work'.[450] Nor do such grim conceptions consider work as in any way desirous. Just as Bourke has urged historians to view housework as something that wives and mothers found aspirational, so too must a perpetually negative image of work in the East End as grinding and degrading be reconsidered. Writing of his fictional East-End girl Liz, in 1901, Walter Besant observed her affliction by a 'strange and distressing restlessness'. Whether prompted by the 'talk of the other girls' in the factory or moved by the desire to escape the close confines of an East End summer, Liz and her friends 'poured into London Bridge Station' bound for Kent. 'They had', Besant dramatically exclaimed, 'gone hopping'.[451] Booth's researchers pointed to a similar pattern amongst their non-fictional subjects, and many fur pullers and lead workers from the area headed south to live and work in the hop-fields of Kent each summer.[452] With temperatures spiking in the capital during the summer, particularly during the heat wave of 1911 where they reached 33°C and continued that high well into September, alternative employment that took residents from London, such as hopping, grew in popularity. The lack of permanence many men and women had in their regular employment shifted from a detriment to an asset.

At the centre of this complex web of time stood the home, and it is to the home, and specifically the homes of Hungate, that this examination of time must return. In Rowntree's mind Hungate was an area that, as a locus of extreme poverty in York, was dominated by desperate financial need. Indeed families were often running a deficit. Infants born in Hungate were 50% more likely to die than the city-wide average and, if they did survive, were more likely to be undernourished, several inches shorter and several pounds lighter than their compatriots in more affluent working-class areas of the town.[453] Workers at the Hungate Mission shared his concern, their newsletters across the period continually exhorting their contributors to ever increasing donations to stem the

[450] A7 Charles Booth Notebooks, 324, 328.
[451] Walter Besant, *East London,* Century Co.: London, 1901. 136-137.
[452] Raphael Samuel, 'Comers and Goers', 134.
[453] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 206-213.

tide of chronic want in the area.[454] So poor was Hungate's reputation locally, as an investigation of nights in the area has shown, that there was 'loud laughter', the *York Herald* informed its readers, when at a City Council meeting in 1878 it was suggested that repaving the streets of the district was the task most urgently needed in the area.[455] For Rowntree, ever the level-headed statistical analyst, it was financial want that really crippled the residents of Hungate. Any attempts to shift family income that did not really meet essentials, he pointed out, could 'only be met by limiting the diet'.[456] Such a picture of poverty suggests that time spent in the home in Hungate must primarily have been concerned with the struggle to survive.

Residents in Hungate, however, proved adept at employing time to cover a wide range of activities. Time was employed by many to seek out alternate ways of securing those events and items that the pay packets they received at work were unable to cover. Night-time meant taking in lodgers for some, venturing out into the night for legal or less-than-legal money-making schemes for others. Any daylight hours not spent in employment could be turned over to working in allotments, cultivating plants or pets for competitions, or betting on horses, all of which were methods (of varying success) for bringing more money or resources to the home. Some spent time visiting and receiving friends and relations. Census returns for the area between 1871 and 1911 provide a snapshot of relatives, friends and other associates noted as 'visitors' in Hungate homes. A lack of funds did not seem to entirely hamper the desire to socialise. 1891 revealed one young couple visiting another at 8 Hungate, whilst the 1901 census may have captured a moment of courtship as the three teenage sons of Eliza Russell were in the process of entertaining the eighteen year old Jane Stockport when the census taker called. Even the Oglesby family, later to become the source of so much local dispute, had a visitor in 1871.[457] Other men and women made small monetary sacrifices, even when submitting budgets to Rowntree himself, which promised greater returns in enjoyment. Amongst the poorest budgets included in *Poverty* were small expenditures on newspapers, letter

[454] Y268, York City Mission Records.
[455] *York Herald,* 6th July 1878.
[456] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 134.
[457] 1871-1911 Census Returns, York.

writing material, and allotments, all activities that promised a modicum, at least, of enjoyment.[458]

Homes in Hungate, or indeed in any of the three districts, were never the exclusive location of working-class entertainment. A desire for leisure, coupled with the need to keep costs down or even make money, drew men and women out of the home. Several residents of Hungate were amongst those displaying birds at the Yorkshire Gala over the years, whilst Bethnal Green was famous as a local centre of song-bird and dog breeding.[459] Hesitant to prescribe a precise starting point, Ross McKibbin has nevertheless charted an increase in 'hobbies as a significant activity outside of formal work' to the closing decades of the nineteenth-century.[460] Some hobbies could take place within the home, but others, such as the singing competition held at the Ship Inn in 1880 that featured many Hungate residents, were beyond the parameters of home.[461] Women from Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward could all be encountered in public houses. Social investigators differed in how they presented drinking, especially amongst women, in their surveys. Rowntree admitted that the 'social attractiveness struck him very forcibly' when he made a tour of public houses in York in 1901, and, observing singing rooms, filled with young men and women chorusing well-known music hall tunes, he noted that the 'air of jollity' must 'prove very attractive after a day's confinement'.[462] Bell was less convinced, and made much of the fact that women who did drink in Middlesbrough preferred to 'slip out in the darkness' to avoid being seen drunk, without considering the fact that evening drinking amongst women may have stemmed both from a desire to enjoy the company of men at work all day and the need to get the money for such pleasures from working husbands on their return.[463] The public house as a social venue separate from the home will be discussed later in this thesis; what is important in this immediate discussion of need and desire is that it was a place where wives and husbands could come together. If they did not fancy the public

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[458] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 233, 265, 268, 271.
[459] *York Herald,* 17th June 1875, 15th June 1876, 17th June 1877. B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 159-177.
[460] Ross McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class,* 142-3.
[461] *York Herald,* 30th March 1880.
[462] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 312.
[463] Bell, *At the Works,* 253.

house itself, the notes of all three social investigators show, they could always send their offspring to the bottle bar and enjoy alcohol at home instead.[464]

It is not drinking per se, however, that has most interested historians of working-class life as much as the after effects of drinking, the most prominent being domestic violence. There is a well established literature surrounding domestic violence in the working-class marriage, often the violence of husband towards wife, and much of it revolves around questions of responsibility and want.[465] In her recent study of marital violence and rape Gail Savage has argued that the Divorce Court trials of a 'broad social range of litigants' show not only 'husbands asserting a physical power that did not recognize any limits' in private life but also a court and prevailing domestic ideology that increasingly urged 'companionate affection and respect'.[466] There is little doubt that husbands could be tyrants. Mary Ann Oglesby, once free of a husband she claimed as abusive after her dramatic flight and court appearance, had little respite. In 1874 she brought her former husband to court, claiming that he had beaten her and given her what the *York Herald* seemed to think was an impressive black eye, only for the case to collapse when her eldest daughter testified that Mary Ann had confided in her that 'Alf [her new husband] did it'.[467] Other cases do seem to demonstrate a gendered division of household duties and responsibilities amongst the poor that, when breached, could lead to anger.

Such court cases, whilst vivid, provide a lopsided sample. Police Courts, roving missionaries, journalists, and even, to some extent, social investigators were less interested in harmonious working-class homes. Each had a vested interest in the problems of urban life amongst the poor. Just as Savage has pointed out that we would not expect to find 'a married couple of like mind about enjoying a sexual interlude in a railway car' amongst those who brought the tatters of their marital lives before the Divorce Court, so too should we remain sceptical about the representativeness of such negative accounts of husband-wife relations.[468] This is not to downplay the levels of domestic violence or somehow

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[464] London School of Economics Archive, London, B227, Charles Booth Notebooks, 77-97.
[465] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 84-86, Bourke, 'Housewifery', 172-189.
[466] Gail Savage, ''…the instrument of an animal function': Marital Rape and Sexual Cruelty in the Divorce Court', in Ben Griffin, Lucy Delap and Abigail Wills (eds.). *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 53-54.
[467] *York Herald,* 9th June 1874.
[468] Savage, 'Marital Rape and Sexual Cruelty', 54.

diminish their impact, rather to suggest that in many cases these instances of violence occurred when the desires and needs of different members of the household fell out of synchronisation. There is no doubt that in some cases husbands set the priorities for the home, but as Bourke has shown wives had a number of strategies for wrestling control back.[469] The copious detail presented by Rowntree, Booth and Bell, often overlooked by the investigators themselves, suggests that many homes ran to a mutually agreed balance between need and desire, determined by husband and wife, and in this context the public house must be understood as part of this relationship. As Rowntree found, Working Men's Clubs in the town, like the public houses, were not just a venue for male camaraderie but also one for arranging collections for the families of members unable to support them (including those serving in South Africa), subscriptions to Hospital and Insurance funds, and raffles and sweeps for seasonal prizes.[470] Time spent in the pub was, just as with time spent anywhere for residents, something that could both undermine and reinforce the tranquillity and financial stability of home.

Whether utilised during the day or night, time was a major resource for working-class men and women in urban England. Close study of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward reveals that local circumstances determined both the opportunities that allowed families to turn time to their advantage and the demands and restrictions that made it such a precious commodity. An analysis based around need and desire, not mutually exclusive concepts as shown above, demonstrates that for many families resources were scant but could also be husbanded for special moments. Whilst interviewing the wife of a carter, Rowntree's investigator was interrupted by the son who 'came running in to his mother with 2 ½ d. in his hand'. He had been sent by the husband who had added to the money a message that he would like 'something good for his dinner'.[471] As Bell found in Middlesbrough, although husbands were given the lion's share of food to build up their strength for work, many made an effort, at least, to have such meals with their children.[472]

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[469] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 189-190.
[470] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 326-331.
[471] Ibid*,* 231.
[472] Bell, *At the Works,* 95-97.

Adaptability was the key; covering the essentials required to keep a home running was difficult, but parents frequently found ways to substitute or modify. Such choices were not easy, nor do they necessarily appear logical to external observers. The ways in which parents and children spent time, both inside and out of the home, deeply concerned social investigators. 'Large numbers of boys and girls may be seen running about the streets nightly' the Middlesbrough's Chief Constable reported in 1878 clear evidence, he felt, of their being 'no kind of parental control' amongst the town's working population.[473] Many had clear ideas of how time and money should be spent. Bell was particularly proud of one 'most respectable, well-conducted man' who spent his Sundays reading in bed rather than smoking or drinking'.[474] Both night and day could be bent to purpose by residents, and as such the homes present in all three districts were never as impermeable or as ordered as observers hoped. The pressures of poverty encouraged many residents to see time as a key resource, whether that meant extending working hours as the cabinet makers in Bethnal Green did, opening up homes at night to lodgers, or waiting until darkness fell to breach the homes of others and steal valuables. Yet financial need was by no means the only motivation either, and although the time available to them depended very much on prevailing conditions of life in each district, many working-class families seem to have been adept at setting aside time for each other within the home. A focus on how time played out in homes, and who utilised it, provides insights into not only survival strategies and living conditions amongst working-class families themselves but also reveal the ways that social investigators and reformers believed that time and money should be spent. A further examination of money, in the following chapter, will demonstrate just how these decisions shaped, and were shaped by, family and home.

[473] *Daily Gazette,* 7th October 1878.
[474] Bell, *At the Works,* 79.

Chapter Five: Money and Homes

Rowntree was convinced that the only way to adequately understand the condition of the working-class residents of York was through their purses. He wanted to know the 'extent and depth' of poverty in the town, to understand 'how many families were sunk in a poverty so acute that its members suffered from a chronic insufficiency of food and clothing'. The only possible way answer to these questions, he explained in his introduction to *Poverty,* was 'nothing short of a house-to-house survey', and it was as a part of this survey that he encouraged a number of families across the city to keep detailed budgets.[475] Rowntree was neither the first nor the last social investigator to undertake such detailed studies of family expenditure, and for historians these provide vital insight into a variety of different aspects of life amongst the urban poor. Paul Clayton and Judith Rowbotham have, for example, used them as a basis to explore diet and consumption patterns, whilst Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell have contrasted various budgets to analyse the relative levels of Edwardian poverty.[476] When it comes to understanding the significance of money within the working-class home these budgets offer a unique insight into the lives of individuals in the three districts.

The family budget featured in Figure Seventeen was one which, for Rowntree, gave a 'fair idea' of the standard of living for families earning under 26s, his poverty line for a family of two parents and four children. York had a housing surplus when Rowntree conducted the fieldwork for *Poverty* and, although this was not necessarily felt throughout all income levels in the city, residents did seem to pay less rent than their contemporaries in Middlesbrough or London. Yet savings in rent seem to have been consumed by higher food prices. The family in question nevertheless attempted to counteract high food prices and impose some order on their expenditure. 'Mrs D.', Rowntree recorded, did 'her principal shopping at the end of the week…at the Co-operative stores' where goods were generally cheaper, and made her own bread. According to the notes taken by Rowntree's investigator she lacked 'method' but had 'great ideas of

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[475] Rowntree, *Poverty,* vi-vii.
[476] Clayton and Rowbotham, 'An Unsuitable and Degraded Diet? Part One', 282-283, Gazeley and Newell, 'Poverty in Edwardian Britain', 52-53.

keeping her house…nice' and always imagined 'that when they "get around a bit" it will be easier'.[477]Alongside these attempts at stability, however, was a thread of financial insecurity that seemed to hang heavily over the home. Mr D worked as a carter, had been out of work for six months prior, and even though in regular employment at the time of the inquiry, was not earning much above the poverty line for a family of four established by Rowntree.[478] The family was coping with debts from the previous period of unemployment, paid off at intervals, and several Doctor's bills stemming from a period of whooping cough that the young children had just overcome. As a household it displayed a keen sensitivity to the shifting costs of life in York. Yet this was also the household where the interview was interrupted by the arrival of the young son with money from his father for 'something good' for tea.[479] There is no doubt from the details of *Poverty* that families such as that of Mr and Mrs D struggled with making ends meet. Given the high food prices in the area, Rowntree's observation that families routinely sacrificed expenditure on food to cover other costs seems more than apt; not only was food, as he noted, the most 'elastic' item on the budget, it was also one of the biggest.

Using these budgets to shed light on homes, however, requires that careful attention be paid to both how and why they were drawn up. Inquiries by the Board of Trade in the early twentieth century emphasised that besides rental prices, the fluctuation in cost of living was relatively small across England. Tea, that great staple of working-class diets in the period, was between 1s 4d and 1s 6d per lb in all three districts in both 1905 and 1912, as indeed it was across the country. Likewise bacon, another staple element of the working-class dinner table, was more likely to vary in country of origin than price.[480] The methodologies employed by social investigators are complex and not always particularly open to scrutiny. In York, Rowntree provided thirty-five housewives with notebooks, a clear indication of his belief that women managed the domestic economy, and asked them to note down income 'from all sources', all

[477] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 231-232.
[478] Ibid, 110
[479] Ibid, 231-232.
[480] Board of Trade, *Cost of Living of the Working Classes: Report of an Inquiry by the Board of Trade into Working-Class Rents and Retail Prices together with the Rates of Wages in Certain Occupations in Industrial Towns of the United Kingdom in 1912*, London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1913, 80-83, 85-87.

money spent, and 'what the family had to eat and drink at each meal' over as many consecutive weeks as possible.[481] Bell was more reticent about how she collected the budgets which appeared in *At the Works,* talking of making a close study of nine hundred families, yet only including a small selection of budgets.[482] Lacking the raw material collected for these surveys, what remains for the historian are sample budgets selected by the social investigators for their supposed representativeness, and any use of them to analyse spending and earning patterns in the home must be aware of their potential limitations. Likewise the editing of these budgets by the investigators presents further problems when attempting to gauge the rhythm and reason of spending and saving. O'Day and Englander have shown that Booth, who made less systematic use of budgets, often using them to inform small sections of his work presented to interested parties, was well aware of the difficulties of reconciling fact with opinion and even observer bias. Yet in the interest of presenting clear and concise data to support their findings, Booth and his associates were more than comfortable with summarising and abstracting the budgets they collected.[483] In tracing the financial patterns of homes in all three areas then, these budgets need to be contextualised with other evidence of earning, spending and saving routines.

Whilst these budgets reveal much about the tensions between income and expenditure in the three districts, they offer only a partial perspective. A comparison of the sample budgets compiled by Rowntree and Bell would suggest very little difference between the lives of their respective subjects; indeed Bell adopted Rowntree's poverty line for her own work. Rent was higher in Middlesbrough than in York but this was offset by a smaller food bill. Fuel costs in Middlesbrough were lower, perhaps a knock-on effect of the vast quantities brought into the town for industrial purposes, but other sundry household items such as soap and polish were again more expensive. Yet, as this thesis has already shown, there were considerable differences between the two towns that had major effects on the lives of residents. Firstly, although Bell examined it in

[481] Rowntree, 223-224.
[482] Bell, *At the Works,* 51-75.
[483] O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth,* 55-56. For an example of summarising see footnote 8 of page 55: 'Miss Edith Collet…was credited with amplifying the scheduled budgets, abstracting the longer ones and 'the still more laborious task of summarising the accounts'.

minute detail the 18s 6d budget featured above was by no means representative of income in the town. Wages at the Iron Works, she recorded elsewhere, varied between 10s and 80s a week, with the majority of men earning somewhere between 20s and 40s.[484] Although the extremes of the pay scale were uncommon, reserved for older men reduced to odd-jobs and valued foremen respectively, the town was well-known as an epicentre of high wages. A smallpox outbreak in 1898 saw civic leaders build an isolation hospital in rapid time, and workers were so well-paid, both in cash and drink, that they dubbed the new wards 'Klondike, Dawson City and Kimberly' after the gold-rush region of Canada.[485] The frenetic pace, and corresponding rewards, of the 'infant Hercules' were renowned. The five other budgets Bell included in *At the Works* had weekly incomes of 26s, 24s, 30s, 22s and 19s 6d.[486] Even the initial 'A.B' family she concentrated most upon had an income that varied between 18s 6d and 23s 9d over the six weeks they kept a budget.[487] Whilst Rowntree found that a third of working-class York was living below the poverty line of 21s 8d that he established for a family of five, Bell was convinced that only 125 of the 900 households she visited could be considered 'absolutely poor'.[488] Although a comparison of household budgets would suggest that residents in Hungate and the Marsh Ward were locked in a similar financial struggle to survive, closer inspection reveals that homes in the Marsh Ward were, on average, in receipt of greater incomes.

The reasons behind such fluctuations in incomes, spending patterns, and how such financial ups and downs affected homes were not always clear to social investigators. Historians are more definite. An 'internal "wage" system' as Ellen Ross has dubbed it, has been seen as the cornerstone of domestic life, respectability, and at least for some the basis of marital strife and violence.[489] The husband handing his wife the weekly wage packet, minus some pocket-money in many cases, was a common occurrence across not only all three neighbourhoods studied here, but urban communities across England. Yet this

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[484] Bell, *At the Works,* 48.
[485] H. Gilzean-Reid, *The Story of the Smallpox Epidemic in Middlesbrough,* Middlesbrough: Northern Weekly Gazette, 1898, 8-9.
[486] Bell, *At the Works,* 73-75.
[487] Ibid, 56-60.
[488] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 118, Bell, *At the Works,* 51.
[489] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 76, Charles Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers: a case study of York 1867-1914.* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010*,* 62-63, Meacham, *A Life Apart,* 70-72, Bourke, 'Housewifery', 181-182.

did not necessarily leave the totality of domestic economy in the hands of wives and mothers. Husbands, as this chapter will show, were often active participants in the financial decisions that shaped the home. Deciding what to buy, when to buy it and how to continue paying the necessities of household expenses (or what to do if these could not be paid) were decisions made by husbands and wives, sometimes in concert and sometimes in opposition. Intense local study of household economies is necessary not only to avoid making overly-generalised sweeping national trends. As this chapter will demonstrate, despite conducting such close examinations themselves, Booth, Bell and Rowntree all contributed to the creation of a "typical" working-class household budget that came to stand as a national average by the end of the period.

Spending

Although Rowntree's ultimate conclusion was that more than half of primary poverty was the result of chronically low wages, he had also to prove that poverty in York was not the result of spendthrift habits on the part of the working-class, and thus much of *Poverty* was spent discussing expenditure. He was only partly successful. In studying the city Rowntree had divided his conception of poverty into two sections, one an absolute (or as he put it 'primary') poverty, the other ('secondary poverty') a tenuous existence which could see families plunged below the poverty line by 'drinking, betting, gambling…ignorant or careless housekeeping, and other improvident expenditure'.[490] For Ross McKibbin, this category, like the qualitative elements of Booth's classifications, was based largely on 'casual observation and impression'. [491] Although low wages, large families and the death of the chief wage earner remained major causes of poverty, he observed, any investigator of the poor in York also had to consider what Rowntree described as the 'useful or wasteful' decisions of the residents themselves.[492] The choices made by working-class men and women, as shown in the previous chapter, did not always make sense to social investigators. In York, and specifically in Hungate, the decisions

[490] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 141-142.
[491] McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class,* 168.
[492] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 115.

that most baffled Rowntree and other outside observers revolved around the figure of the bookie.

Gambling amongst the working-class in pre-war Britain has received considerable attention from historians in recent decades. Gambling was 'endemic' in mid-Victorian Britain, McKibbin has pointed out, but from the 1880s onwards it became unprecedented in 'scope…[and]…character'.[493] This was certainly the case in Hungate, or at least how it appeared to outside observers. In 1901 two men in York were prosecuted for using a private residence for betting. From a cottage in a 'working class district of the city', reported Rowntree who included details of the case in *Poverty* as a footnote to his observations on gambling, and watching the house during five days in June inspectors from the York constabulary saw 534 men, women and children, enter.[494] Although Rowntree's description of the location is vague, this illegal establishment is likely to have been in either Hungate or neighbouring Walmgate, areas he routinely described in such fashion. If so, the overlooked nature of these areas, with their small courts and narrow alleys, may have been an added incentive. Gambling was near 'universal' in Hungate, the mission informed its backers, and held a 'bewitching power' over residents.[495] For Rowntree, an avid member of the National Anti-Gambling League who included evidence from their *Bulletin* in *Poverty,* it was 'not only a great but a growing evil' which drained much-needed money from the family home.[496] For contemporary observers in York it was clear that gambling was a needless, and dangerous, pastime.

There is little doubt that, on a basic level, gambling for many was rarely about covering basic financial necessities. Both McKibbin and Clapson are right to point out the excitement, the 'intellectual' element that rewarded 'initiative and spontaneity', and, of course, the prospect of the sudden windfall.[497] To a certain extent gambling stands as an exemplar of the world of 'often luxury goods' that Charles Masters has argued was not just displayed around working-

[493] McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class,* 102-103
[494] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 144.
[495] Hungate Mission, 1890, 6, and 1891, 5.
[496] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 143-144.
[497] McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class,* 122-123. Mark Clapson, *A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society c.1823-1961.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992, 70-71.

class residents of York but was often produced by them.[498] Yet this was by no means the only motivation for gambling, and without a wider consideration of the social elements there is a danger in accepting to readily the contemporary belief that it was boredom and desperation that drove working-class men to gambling as a form of escape. Although the overlooked nature of York's slums may have led residents to establish ad-hoc betting shops with the hope of remaining undetected, even in the ruler-straight streets of Middlesbrough, Bell admitted, many were willing to make their houses 'a centre for betting operations'.[499] There was money to be made from such schemes, as the 534 customers in York proved, and whether they arranged gambling in the street, the workplace or private homes residents of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward were both punters and bookies.

It was the social element of gambling, however, that seemed to underpin its mass appeal, and as gambling was pushed from the streets by police patrol it was the home where it increasingly took root. Like the tallyman and the street hawker the bookie in the Marsh Ward often came to the back door. The courts and alleys that allowed access to the rears of properties in the Marsh Ward may have been just what Bell was thinking of when she observed that often the bookmaker was a welcome guest at the rear door to many dwellings, or otherwise made a quick exit from it if a policeman was prowling nearby.[500] In both the Marsh Ward and Hungate women and children were listed amongst those betting. Indeed, coming to the rear door during the day in Middlesbrough would *only* have given the bookie access to women and children. This pattern suggests that gambling in the Marsh Ward was a much more shared experience than contemporary critics believed. In her investigation of reading patterns in the town Bell noted that many families not only consumed sporting pages but also discussed them. Given the emphasis that McKibbin has placed on the growing consumption of penny pamphlets and turf guides in the years running up to the First World War, it seems that either husbands and wives co-ordinated their

[498] Masters, *Respectability of Victorian Workers,* 71
[499] Bell, *At the Works,* 254-257.
[500] Bell, *At the Works,* 254-256.

betting, or wives in Middlesbrough were independently gambling with the family income.[501]

The severe limitations on female employment in Middlesbrough, combined with the higher wages on offer in the town, saw families in the Marsh Ward better able to move beyond the essential necessities of household income and realise financial desires. Conspicuous spending amongst working-class men and women has often been seen as part of a growing trend towards social stratification amongst the working-class as a whole, with a more stable income used to harness social respectability.[502] Certainly some of the expenditure was highly visible. One of Bell's acquaintances, delivering a lecture on the evils of gambling, was 'reduced to silence' by one of her audience who declared that she had won £5 recently. The family had purchased new toys for children, a new boiler for washing clothes, and other ornaments and utilities for their house. Other families in the street, Bell noted, took envious notice.[503] Yet gambling, at least in the eyes of middle-class society, was hardly respectable. Nor were the tally-man and his eclectic range of wares, brought to the front door for the housewife's perusal in Middlesbrough. The variety of items, ranging from mangles and umbrellas to china dogs and gramophones, were for Bell dangerous extravagances that tied families to lengthy hire-purchases.[504] Bell's evidence suggests that many residents of Middlesbrough, those in the Marsh Ward included, were able to combine the high wages of male employment and the more flexible time of female housework to endow their homes with both pleasurable and utilitarian items.

Although evidence of a growing prosperity amongst families able to take advantage of new avenues of youth employment, the purchases made with extra income remained rooted in the experience of poverty. Charles Masters has made a compelling case for a working-class in pre-1914 York as one driven by the desire to appear respectable and capable in the face of intense poverty and prejudice, but the spending patterns of residents of Hungate speak of a struggle with poverty that was prioritised far above outward appearance or inward self-

[501] McKibbin, *Ideologies of Class,* 122-123.
[502] Paul Johnson, 'Conspicuous Consumption and Working-Class Culture in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* Fifth Series, Vol. 38, (1988), 41-42.
[503] Bell, *At the Works,* 257.
[504] Ibid, 80-81.

respect.[505] Investment in the ornaments and small items of working-class homes, so often commented upon by social investigators, was one predicated around the value the item could fetch at pawn. Standish Meacham has emphasised that a pawn ticket 'by no means implied disgrace' and both Ross and Bourke have argued that women could in fact find power and comradeship in repeated trips to the pawnshop.[506] It was a difficult habit to break Rowntree observed, and even if many caught in the cycle of pawning and redeeming were able to take solace in it as a common necessity shared by fellow neighbours, that did not necessarily mean that the act of pawning did not carry with it associations of unease. York's narrow winding streets and enclosed yards lent themselves to discretion; one of the pawnshops operating closest to Hungate in the nineteenth-century was situated in Lady Peckitt's Yard, a few minutes walk away, and only accessible through the narrow entrances to the yard. The pawnshop was clearly a public space, but as a centre for local gossip as Melanie Tebbutt has demonstrated, this does not mean that all visitors were entirely at ease with the transactions which occurred inside, or were happy about being observed entering.[507] Pawned items could be regularly redeemed, such as the pattern of pawning Sunday clothes on the Monday and recovering them after the Friday wages arrived, but in more dire circumstances it was not only ornaments and decorations but furnishings and household essentials which made their way to the brokers. A noted feature of many Hungate dwellings, the Mission informed its potential donors, was a lack of furniture and bedding, which had often been pawned to help make ends meet.[508] Masters may well be right that the actual act of parting with the 'china ornaments, engravings, and other bric-a-brac' that had previously graced homes in better times was very difficult.[509] The continuous presence of the pawnshop, even when wages were more comfortable as in the Marsh Ward, indicates that ultimately, however, the items around the home were seen as portable assets.

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[505] Masters, *Respectability of Victorian Workers,* 1-20.
[506] Meacham, *A Life Apart,* 74, Ross, *Love and Toil,* 81-83, Bourke, 'Housewifery', 190-191.
[507] Melanie Tebbutt, 'Women's Talk? Gossip and "women's worlds" in working-class communities, 1880-1939', in Davies, Andrew and Steven Fielding (eds.). *Worker's Worlds: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford 1880-1939.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992, 54
[508] For examples see ACC 223, Box 1, 54th Report 1902, 5, 40th Report 1889, 6, and 46th Report 1896, 1.
[509] Paul Johnson, *Spending and Saving: the Working-Class economy in Britain, 1870-1939.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, 219, 222-223, Masters, *Respectability of Victorian Workers,* 72-73.

To truly understand how the tension between need and desire played out for residents of these three neighbourhoods a more accurate picture is required of what the essentials of household expenditure really were. Common across all three districts was the price of rent. Even in Hungate, where rent consumed only 15% of the family income listed by Rowntree, lower cost rents were avidly sought after.[510] The local Medical Officer of Health claimed that many families turned to the low rents of Hungate to allow them to have more money in hand, especially those with children.[511] Yet even rents could be negotiated and avoided, exemplified by the act of 'flitting'. A financial life-line that allowed families to reconfigure their domestic incomes around cheaper rents or the need for greater space, the act of moving was a considerable disruption for a home and its residents. Flitting out on the rent was a reasonably common occurrence in the East End Booth was informed, with some families frequently loading their possessions into handcarts and moving on in search of cheaper rents. Even moving short distances, however, meant sacrificing established networks of support amongst relatives and neighbours. Yet even this could prove preferable to returning home to find a family's possessions piled outside in the street – a common tactic of landlords who had not received the weekly rent. One Bethnal Green family, encountered by a Sanitary Inspector had been thrown out twice in short succession. 'The mother stated that she and her husband had spent several nights in the streets', the Inspector noted, 'while her children were taken in by various relatives'.[512]

There were other tactics common across all three districts. Although Middlesbrough did not attract the rental barracks found in many steel towns in Europe, taking in lodgers was a popular alternative to skipping out on rent.[513] Bell noted that one of the first things workmen did when their wages rose was 'to move to a better house', but many residents of the Marsh Ward were in situ seemingly because of the demands of low income, large family size or both.[514] The 'three-bedroom…minimum standard of "decency"' may have been the ideal, unlike the more communal housing culture of Scottish cities at the time, but it

[510] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 43.
[511] Report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 11.
[512] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1911*, 83-84.
[513] David Crew, *Town in the Ruhr: A Social History of Bochum, 1860-1914*. Columbia University Press: New York, 1979, 96.
[514] Bell, *At the Works,* 68-69.

was one aimed at, rather than achieved, by many families.[515] A much less common response was that of Lawrence family, resident in the same property throughout the entire period, who were revealed in the 1900s to own not only their own house but also the neighbouring one as well.[516] Prices in the area were way beyond the means of most residents. An attempt to reform the housing in the Marsh Ward in the 1910s saw the local authorities inquire what price property owners would let their houses go for; the answers were between £85 and £155 depending on condition and whether the premises were licensed for a shop.[517] Purchasing a property required not just a sizeable monetary commitment but also tied a family to a particular area for the long-term. Given the large proportion of income that rent consumed, even in lower cost markets such as Hungate, it is clear to see why so few families opted to purchase their own dwelling, even if they could scrape together the capital required. Purchasing meant sacrificing the mobility that kept the home financially flexible for many on tight budgets. Rent could be postponed, skipped out on, bartered or even fought over but, as David Englander has emphasised, it remained a bond between landlord and tenant that was near impossible to fully sever.[518]

It was food, the only significant item on the family budget that Rowntree considered elastic, that could truly be bartered over in any meaningful way. The other items that appeared on budgets drawn up for social investigators were either much less flexible, as with rent, or relatively small-scale finite expenses such as insurance, which families either paid for or let lapse. Consuming half of the sample budget Rowntree included in *Poverty,* and over 40% of household income in both Middlesbrough and Lambeth according to Bell and Pember Reeves and at least a quarter of the budgets drawn up by Booth, food, in comparison, was a hefty yet adaptable part of life for families. If contemporary observers had been polled over whether the essential food requirements of families were being met in each district the answers would most likely have been a resounding no. This is certainly the sense left behind in the works of social investigators, urban reformers and medical professionals. Bethnal Green children

[515] Ian Gazeley, Andrew Newell and Peter Scott, 'Why was urban overcrowding much more severe in Scotland than in the rest of the British Isles? Evidence from the first (1904) official household expenditure survey', *European Review of Economic History,* 15, 1, (2011), 151.
[516] 1871-1911 Census Returns Middlesbrough.
[517] Report to the Sanitary Committee, 5th December 1899, F5-9.
[518] Englander, *Landlord and Tenant,* 1-20.

were already notorious as underfed street-arabs in the national press. Although as Koven has shown this image had a life of its own that sometimes transcended the reality of day-to-day life in the East End, children and adults were often underfed. This was certainly the case for Arthur Harding, who recalled ranging the streets around Bacon Street with friends in search of food scraps from friendly shopkeepers.[519] As Anna Davin has noted, children became experts in where to turn when seeking out food outside of the dwelling itself.[520] Hungate's notoriety, as with its reputation for crime and poor sanitation, had a more localised context, but local reformers had long maintained that food was scarce in the area. Much of the work of Hungate Mission, when it came to adults, consisted of delivering food and fuel.[521] More scientifically minded, Rowntree consulted with the esteemed medical expert Karl Pearson to demonstrate conclusively that children were undernourished in the district.[522] Food, concerned contemporaries agreed, was frequently the first casualty of life close to the poverty line.

Bell, however, was more muted on the subject and it is from her reticence that cracks in the general picture of an undernourished working-class begin to appear. For Bell the problem with food in Middlesbrough was not necessarily to do with quantity but quality. Her particular concern was over infants. Although it was 'obviously not suitable', she explained, parents seemed to feed their children 'anything that may happen to be on the table'. Frequently young children were simply given the same food as parents, leading to 'a great deal of diarrhoea and sickness'.[523] Medical Officers in Bethnal Green agreed; successive female sanitary workers struggled with mothers in the area who refused to consider that infants might require a special diet.[524] Conflict between mothers, sometimes stubborn but caring, and health workers, well-meaning but lecturing, has long been a theme of the historiography surrounding working-class women.[525] Poverty played a large part in the constricted diet of infants. It was not always possible for mothers to buy separate food for infants and, as the sanitary workers found in

[519] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 20.
[520] Davin, 'Loaves and Fishes', 184-185.
[521] Y268, York City Mission Records 21st October 1887, 6.
[522] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 210-212.
[523] Bell, *At the Works,* 211.
[524] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1910,* 34-35.
[525] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', 9-12.

Bethnal Green, those times when they could persuade working-class women to adopt new feeding methods were also the occasions when they had been given large consignments of powdered milk and baby food to distribute for free. Yet as Bell's observations demonstrate, there was a tendency amongst social investigators to conflate lack of food with poor food. 'It is not always from actual want of means that children are fed on unsuitable food' she noted, repeating the experiences of one health visitor who had found a child of five months 'almost reduced to a skeleton' but after being switched to a formula food 'was fat and flourishing'.[526] Many children in Middlesbrough, it seems, were not underfed to any extreme degree, but concerns about poor diet were becoming combined with anxiety over the deprived existence of the slum child.

Much of the recent historical debate over working-class diet has been around the issue of health. The consensus, and as D.J. Oddy has put it the 'apparent paradox' that the pre-war working-class were undernourished despite the rise of real wages in the period, has recently been challenged.[527] A series of articles written by Paul Clayton and Judith Rowbotham have aimed to demonstrate through scientific and historical analysis that the diet of the mid-Victorian working-class was much healthier than previously thought. 'Mid-Victorian nutritional standards were significantly better than generally realised' they have concluded, only declining after the 1880s 'to a nadir at the end of the nineteenth-century'.[528] The second article, summarising access to various types of food much richer in health benefit than contemporary diets today, is particularly impressive, representing a detailed survey of official and personal sources.[529] Yet such analysis, however detailed, does not address the profound social value that both food and meal time held in working-class life.

Whether, as Rowbotham and Clayton have argued, food was reaching a 'nadir' amongst the working poor by the time Booth , Rowntree and Bell stepped onto the scene, or it had always been consistently low quality, it is clear from the accounts of social investigators that much of a working-class diet was comprised of a few key staples. Rowntree, the most passionate about working-class

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[526] Bell, *At the Works,* 213.
[527] D.J. Oddy, 'Working Class Diets in Late Nineteenth Century Britain'. *The Economic History Review,* 23, 2, (August 1970), 322.
[528] Rowbotham and Clayton, 'An Unsuitable and Degraded Diet? Part One', 283.
[529] Rowbotham and Clayton, 'An Unsuitable and Degraded Diet? Part Two' 350-357.

nutrition of the three, had families who kept a budget for him draw up meal plans.

	Breakfast	Dinner	Tea	Supper
Friday	Bacon, bread, tea	Stew	Steak, bread, tea.	
Saturday	Bacon, bread, tea	Beef, potatoes	Hotcake, butter, tea	Fish, potatoes
Sunday	Bacon, bread, tea.	Beef, potatoes, Yorkshire pudding.	Tea, bread, butter, sweet cake	Cold meat, bread.
Monday	Bread, butter, treacle, tea.	Cold beef, potatoes, rice pudding.	Toast, butter, tea.	
Tuesday	Cocoa, bread, butter.	Liver, onions, potatoes, suet pudding.	Bread, butter, treacle, tea.	Bread, cheese.
Wednesday	Dripping, toast, tea	Soup	Meat, bread, tea	
Thursday	Bread, butter, tea	Bacon, bread, tea.	Bread, butter, tea.	

Figure Twenty Four: Menu of meals eaten by S. family, budget no. 8 in Rowntree's work.[530]

The meals he recorded were remarkably repetitive, a pattern echoed by not only Booth and Bell but also other social investigators working across urban Britain. Much of the repetition stemmed not just from poverty, which saw families seek to stretch joints of meat out between paydays, but also from the poor cooking and storage facilities available in many homes. 'If we managed to get a joint, it set the pattern for the following three days' dinners' recalled Edith Hall, one of the

[530] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 275-276.

working-class voices collected by John Burnett.[531] On one level the experience of her family was somewhat universal across the working-class of urban Britain.

Such generalisations, however, belied the local variations that the work of social investigators themselves turned up. When placed in the context of time and space, working-class meal times in Bethnal Green, Hungate and the Marsh Ward appear much more varied. For the two samples families included in the table above, Booth found that meals could be very distinct affairs. For the Class B family, defined by Booth as those families in receipt of 'casual earnings', both the times and content of meals depended not only on irregular work hours but also on the vagaries of philanthropy in the district.[532] Bethnal Green also, Booth soon learned, played host to an extraordinary variety of vendors who served to very not just the content but also the times of residents' diets. Two other interlopers to the area, the photographer John Thompson and the journalist Adolphe Smith, encountered an enormous range of food for sale in the street. One oyster seller told them his tactic was to 'Find out a prime thirsty spot…oysters, whelks and liquor go together inwariable'.[533] They were, maintained the engineer turned social commentator Thomas Wright (resident for some time in Bethnal Green) 'fishers of men' who hovered outside factory gates hoping to catch men on the way home with pay packets. They were most successful amongst 'boys' Wright wrote, 'many of whom can be seen scampering home carrying red herrings, papers of shrimps, bundles of water-cresses, and other delicacies', yet he himself seems to have been more than partial to a second breakfast of coffee and bread bought from a stall on the way to work.[534] Fractured working hours, with factory work common amongst older daughters and piecework at home employing many mothers, may have led to many fractured meal times in Bethnal Green. As soon as the clock struck one o'clock in the East End trouser workshop where Beatrice Potter worked undercover as a plain hand, out came a 'cracked mug, bits of bread and butter,

[531] Burnett, *Destiny Obscure*, 122.
[532] Booth, *Life and Labour,* 1, 1, 140-141,
[533] Quoted in Gordon Winter, *A Cockney Camera: London's Social History recorded in Photographs.* London: Penguin, 1975, 84.
[534] Thomas Wright, *The Great Unwashed.* London: Frank Cass & Co. Edition, 1970, 173.

cold sausage or salt fish' and a variety of other odds and ends eaten with workmates rather than at home with the family.[535]

If the twin pressures of poverty and variety caused meal times for many residents of Bethnal Green to be a haphazard affair, the same could not be said for the Marsh Ward. Here regular wages and set working hours saw meal times become part of a more structured household rhythm. 'Having been all day…on his feet' Bell noted, the workman in Middlesbrough, 'does not want to go out again when he gets home and finds a comfortable meal'. At least this was the ideal. Bell spoke proudly of the organised housewives she met who arranged family meals around the working times of their husbands. One woman, she noted, spent most of her Saturday cooking in preparation for a formal family meal on the Sunday.[536] Yet elsewhere in *At the Works* she expressed concern over both the quality of food and the methods of cooking. 'Large chunks of often indigestible meat, washed down with eternal cups of tea' were a weekly staple, she complained, and wished that such homes could be visited by a professional chef capable of addressing the problems of both defective range cookers and the unskilled women who operated them.[537]

Anna Davin has argued that for many working-class families regular eating habits and meals 'went with regular working hours and a regular income'.[538] Given the chronically low wages, endemic poverty, and crowded homes of Hungate, it might be expected that such a district would bear this observation out. The changing nature of employment in the area, however, and the benefits that came with it indicate that time and money were not necessarily linked when it came to family meals. Lunches in Hungate, it seems from Rowntree's study, were often family affairs. Some fathers took food with them, but the small size of York, and the types of employment Hungate men took up, meant that many others were left with the time to return home for meals during the day. From the 1880s onwards young women from Hungate, and to a lesser extent young men, were drawn more and more into the confectionary industry. Concerned employers, further motivated by the dire results of Seebohm's investigation of nutrition amongst York's poor, *Rowntree's*, and the other

[535] Beatrice Potter, 'Pages from a Working Girl's Diary', in Ross (ed)., *Slum Travellers,* 271.
[536] Bell, *At the Works,* 177.
[537] Ibid, 226.
[538] Davin, 'Fish and Loaves', 168.

confectionary companies in the town, established canteens to feed their employees at lunch.[539] Although many young women in the area were in employment in the 1870s and 1880s, many more remained at home prior to marriage and would have eaten with their families during the day. Employment at the confectionary factories, in contrast, gave them not just more money but at the same time drew them from the home and fed them elsewhere. Regular work for young women in Hungate meant sacrificing family meals in the daytime.

For many of the families that Rowntree encouraged to keep budgets, meagre wages did not prevent them from sitting down to regular meals. There is a danger, of course, in assuming that the samples drawn up for *Poverty* represent conditions amongst the working-class in York with complete accuracy. The structure and regularity of the meals Rowntree recorded may have been closer to ideal than reality. The details of even the poorest families he studied, however, reveal what were, at the very least, efforts towards family meal times. Even those families who came in for implicit criticism from Rowntree for how they cooked or ate still exhibited a desire for regular meals. One mother baked so many of her family's meals that she was, as Rowntree's investigator recorded, 'dead sick of bread and butter – nothing but bread and butter until I hate the sight of it'. Other families eschewed the economy of home-cooked meals, as Rowntree saw it, in favour of the immediate convenience of pre-prepared food bought elsewhere.[540] Fish and chips, John Walton has shown, was growing in popularity by the turn of the century, and many shops took orders from workers during the day that were then prepared for collection on the way home.[541] That the rise in popularity of fish and chips shops across Britain should coincide with increased youth employment, and subsequently higher family income in Hungate, is not a surprise. Offering cheap meals that spared families from cooking and cleaning, fish and chip suppers represented a way in which Hungate families could, from the 1880s onwards, make use of greater income bought at the expense of time in the home to keep the habit of family meal time alive.

Davin is correct that, in an East End context, family meal time relied on regular income and hours. It is clear that amongst the poorer residents of York,

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[539] John Burnett, *England Eats Out: 1830 to Present.* London: Pearson Education, 2004, 110.
[540] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 271-282.
[541] John Walton, *Fish and Chips and the British Working Class 1870-1940.* Leicester: Leicester University Press, Paperback Edition, 2000, 137-145.

however, smaller incomes could be worked around when it came to family meals. Perhaps the most disrupted family included in *Poverty* was a labourer, his wife and their young daughter. Mr L., his wife admitted, was subject to 'drinking bouts' and they were frequently forced to make sacrifices to ensure their was enough food. Despite these difficulties, however, the general sense that the account produces is one of regular, if insufficient, meals. Even when, as Mrs L. confessed, any household extras had 'to come out of the groceries', families in York managed to create time for families on limited financial resources.[542] Deeply important as an insight into the health and consumption patterns of working-class families, studies of the nutritional composition of working-class diets represent an external priority. Residents interviewed by Booth, Bell and Rowntree did not express concern over the content of their meals; indeed even those in Hungate and Bethnal Green compelled by poverty to limit their diets, were near exclusively focused on covering the needs of the earning members of the family. Ensuring that sons and husbands were given larger portions, particularly of meat if it was available, was as far as any expression of nutrition reached for those working-class families featured in the accounts. The social element of food was paramount in all three districts, tying into the time discipline of the Marsh Ward and, in contrast, a subject of careful balancing in the financially poorer but temporally freer Hungate. If a generalisation is to be drawn from this myriad of minute detail, it is that meal times in all three districts were frequently carefully negotiated events that saw families attempt to utilise all the resources of the home, time, space and money, to draw their members together.

There were, of course, exceptions as the work of child protection authorities such as the NSPCC uncovered in graphic detail. Some simply did not have sufficient resources to manage. Yet whilst the families of the Marsh Ward were relatively secure in their wages, Hungate and Bethnal Green, as Booth and Rowntree demonstrated, contained some of the poorest residents in the country. Evidence of such financial hardship, however, also fostered a separate generalisation of working-class life in the minds of social investigators and reformers. It was one that downplayed the more subtle adaptations that working-class parents, particularly mothers, employed within the home and concentrated

[542] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 278-280.

instead on the poverty, the malnutrition, and the financial instability observable in all three districts. As far as the financial elements of life were concerned, many concluded, the working-class home was firmly in the red.

Earnings

As the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth the suburbs of urban England marked the growing distinction between the worlds of work and home for some sections of the population. 'Men' Alan Gillis has pointed out 'were supposed to leave their worries as well as their work at the threshold' of the home.[543] Idealised by social investigators and middle-class observers, this physical and mental separation was rarely present in the homes that made up the three districts studied here. The boundaries between work and home were not simply blurred – in many cases they did not exist. The home was built on the back of work. Ross has emphasised that for working-class men, 'being a husband was synonymous with providing support', yet the home for the vast majority of these men not simply the result of this support.[544] It was also where work took place and where the activities of earners could be managed. In the direst of times it was where time and space, those other key definers of the domestic for working people, could be desperately bartered for a third fundamental support of the home – money.

The male wage, as many historians have emphasised, provided the core financial support for the majority of homes.[545] Sara Horrell, in studying the place of household members within the labour market of twentieth-century Britain, has emphasised that the average household in 1900 saw 81% of the total outside labour undertaken by the paterfamilias, with children making up the majority (13%) of the remainder. In contrast, she adds, the average working-class mother only entered into waged labour for 'four hours per week'.[546] The amount that

[543] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 171-174.
[544] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 72.
[545] Michael Childs, *Labour's Apprentices: Working Class Lads in late Victorian and Edwardian England.* London: Hambledown Press, 1992*,* 14, Savage and Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class*, 27-28.
[546] Sara Horrell, 'The Household and the Labour Market', in Nicholas Crafts, Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell (eds.), *Work and Pay in Twentieth-Century Britain,* Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2007, 117.

men brought home in wages, however, was dependent on their chosen trade and their positions within it. Iron workers in Middlesbrough could reach into the heights of 80s per week as foremen, but the majority were earning somewhere between 20s and 40s.[547] For those men who secured their wages in craft industries earnings could fluctuate even more. The majority of men working with wood in Bethnal Green, as furniture makers and gilders, were largely paid per piece produced. Skilled wood turners, Arkell and Duckworth discovered, could earn up to a shilling an hour for their work, and those upholstering the chairs produced in the area could see their weekly wages rise up to 60s in busy periods.[548] Piece-work cut both ways when it came to earnings though, and Booth's investigators also encountered men working late into evenings or throughout the day on Sunday, desperate to make up their money during a trade depression.[549] When examined on a national level it is clear that the earnings of fathers and husbands provided the majority of household income for many urban homes.

The male breadwinner was, admittedly, a far from universal figure in late Victorian England. As Sara Horrell has herself pointed out, in studies with both Deborah Oxley and Jane Humphries, wide-angle overviews often fail to take into account the 'pluralistic and multifaceted nature of the family in the past'.[550] The majority of women who earned a wage after marriage in Hungate and the Marsh Ward were widows, taking up the mantle of providing household income when the earnings of the male wage-earner was no longer available. This was not the case in Bethnal Green. In 1871 over a third of mothers (133 out of 353) living with their offspring in the same dwelling were listed as having paid employment.[551] By 1881 this proportion had only shrunk very slightly, reaching just under a third.[552] Even by the very end of this period the Medical Officer of Health for the area found that between 12% and 17% of mothers were employed

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[547] Bell, *At the Works,* 48.
[548] Booth, *Life and Labour,* II, 1, 182, 187-190, 196-197.
[549] A6 Charles Booth Notebooks, 230.
[550] Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, 'The Origins and Expansion of the Male Breadwinner Family: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Britain', *International Review of Social History,* 42, S5, (1997), 64, Sara Horrell and Deborah Oxley, 'Bringing home the bacon? Regional nutrition, stature, and gender in the industrial revolution', *The Economic History Review,* 64, 4, (2012), 1354-1379.
[551] 1871 Census Returns Middlesbrough, York and Bethnal Green.
[552] 1881 Census Returns Bethnal Green.

in local trades, more would have secured income through less formalised patterns of work.[553] Horrell and Humphries have observed, in relation to the earlier part of the nineteenth-century, that 'for all its growing dominance numerically' most working people lived 'some years…outside the male breadwinner family' model.[554] This was certainly true for inhabitants of all three areas, especially for widows and abandoned wives, but in the case of Bethnal Green the male breadwinner often seemed to rely upon an actively contributing wife.

Clara Collet, whom Booth charged with investigating piece-work in London, noted that the vast range of female labour located in the East End was often so varied that it defied any sort of precise definition.[555] Whilst Arkell and Duckworth had suggested that the wives of wood workers in Bethnal Green rarely took up work, turning to it only to 'supplement irregular earnings' or because their husbands were out of work, Collet's detailed report made it clear that the proportions of wives who did work, and the reasons why the chose to, were much more varied and personal. They may, Collet wrote, 'be working for the barest necessaries of life or to provide for the future, or for luxuries' or even to 'pay someone else to perform the more distasteful household duties'. Some young women Collet encountered were employed in small workshops and factories, but married women and widows, she noted, were largely employed in home work.[556] Home-work, also known as piece-work or out-work, was a key feature of the East End economy. The label encompassed a remarkable variety of industries and crafts. The most common amongst residents of Bethnal Green were sewing, preparing fur for garments, and making cardboard boxes such as matchboxes, and all were worked upon within the dwelling. The routine of home-work; taking work from factors and middlemen, performing the labour in their own space and time, and returning it to be paid per piece; required considerable sacrifices of time. Women moved between suppliers searching for the best payments possible, and frequent 'locomotion', as Collet put it, between dwelling and supplier could be both time-consuming and costly.[557]

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[553] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1910,* 38.
[554] Horrell and Humphries, 'The Origins and Expansion of the Male Breadwinner Family', 27.
[555] Booth, *Life and Labour,* I, 4, 302.
[556] Ibid, 295.
[557] Ibid, 266-267, 295-301.

The sacrifices the home-worker made were a constant source of concern for social reformers, who agonised over the pressure this form of labour put on the domestic ideal they sought to inculcate amongst the urban poor. Some of their concerns certainly had a solid basis. Giving over space in the home to fur sewing, as some Bethnal Green women did, often led to particles of fur and hair strewn across tables and floors. Even more contained tasks, such as matchbox making or shirt sewing, could see the products of such labour strewn around the living space to dry or await delivery. Matchbox makers, such as Elizabeth Angus who supplemented the wages of her wood worker husband in an attempt to support four young children, would have been paid small amounts for each gross of matchboxes produced, and securing a decent level of income from the work would have eaten into the time she spent with her family.[558] Even as it demanded enormous sacrifices of time and space, however, home-work was also an attractive prospect for many wives and mothers. Home-work was conducted within the space of the dwelling. It allowed privacy to those who wanted to keep their working a secret from the community at large, as Collet noted, but more importantly it allowed mothers to work whilst also keeping their infants close at hand.[559] Rebecca Bailey, living on the same street as Elizabeth Angus in 1891, had a one-year old daughter when she was making boxes at home.[560] Skills and contacts learnt as young women could be put to use to earn money during the financial strain of parenthood, whilst newer arrivals often turned to younger factory hands to be trained in different out-work industries.[561] Taking on home-work was a complex balancing act in Bethnal Green. Making money meant sacrificing time and space within the home, and even if that money was then re-invested in the domestic economy, sacrifices in the present were not always realised in the future.

For those men and women unable or unwilling to give over domestic space to production, an alternative survival strategy for many was to turn the space and labour that defined the home to financial gain. Giving over space in the dwelling to lodgers and boarders was a money-earning option for many families. The distinction between the two, where boarders were 'part of the

[558] 1901 Census Return Bethnal Green, Bethnal Green South, District 3, 32.
[559] Booth, *Life and Labour,* 1,4, 296.
[560] 1901 Census Return Bethnal Green, Bethnal Green South, District 3, 9.
[561] Booth, *Life and Labour,* 1, 4, 268

family' and lodgers were closer to paying customers, existed from the first censuses but, as Davidoff has pointed out, 'enumerators would persist…in confusing the two'. Attempts to define boarders as those who ate with their host family, whereas lodgers were considered to organise their own food or eat elsewhere, proved equally problematic.[562] Making sense of census returns in this light can prove difficult. The privileges offered to those renting space in the home depended on the space available in the home, the local economy and the social dynamic of the neighbourhood.

In the Marsh Ward the manpower demands of the Iron Works fed a continuing desire for lodging spaces amongst male migrants. In the early years of Middlesbrough, when the town was a small but rapidly growing industrial centre, migration outstripped housing stock. In 1841 60% of households in the town included at least one lodger. By the end of the nineteenth-century, however, this had fallen to 20%, a trend that David Taylor has seen as evidence of a wider process of settling down. [563] Even if it was decreasing across the town, however, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lodging continued to be a fundamental part of the Marsh Ward economy. The percentage of households taking in lodgers in the area never dropped below 20% across the five census integers. Nor were they entirely the 'semi-autonomous young persons' that middle-class observers agonised about and historians have suspected.[564] Some lodgers were young men in their twenties, taking up lodging before marrying and setting up their own homes, yet many more were older men, their ages stretching from thirties to seventies, who, at least they informed the census taker, were unattached. The desire for lodging spaces fuelled an economy which was both formal and informal in the Marsh Ward. Vine Street hosted a series of lodging houses throughout the period, clearly a lucrative venture as their owners were amongst the most long-lasting residents of the neighbourhood. Many other Marsh Ward residents, perhaps encouraged by the profits they saw being made around them, took lodgers into their households. It was most common, Bell noted, in areas 'where the accommodation' for iron workers was

[562] Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work?', 77.
[563] Taylor, 'British Ballarat', 756-7, 767.
[564] Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work?' 78, Taylor, 'British Ballarat', 756.

'inadequate'.[565] The Marsh Ward, close to the ferries to the Iron Works on the north banks of the Tees, was the ideal spot for men employed at the works to live, and for many residents in need of money, the temptation to exchange space for money proved irresistible.

Lodging houses, both established and more haphazard family affairs, existed throughout urban England in the decades preceding the First World War. In neither Hungate nor Bethnal Green, however, was the industry as developed as it was in the Marsh Ward. Alternative avenues of female employment and migration patterns less solely composed of single male migrants made the taking in of lodgers much less universal in these two districts. There were a small number of lodgers, decreasing over the period, present in Hungate households. Many were present to supplement household income in homes under financial strain. John Judge, a 57 year old railwayman, was lodging in 1891 in the home of a widowed mother and her young children. The rent he paid must have made a significant difference.[566] In Bethnal Green, as previously noted, many "lodgers" were actually family members, particularly among the Jewish migrants who arrived from the 1880s onwards. It is unclear from census returns whether such arrangements resulted in any financial recompense for the hosts. It would be a mistake, in many cases, to view lodging as either entirely financial or exclusively as evidence of fond kinship connections. Lodgers could affect the home in both monetary and social ways. Rowntree noted that many parents charged their adult children some form of rent in Hungate but this should not be seen as concrete evidence of a lack of sentimentality.[567] Few of the sources available to historians speak well of lodgers but these often official documents, by their very nature, had no interest in the small positive elements of life in a lodged home. It is impossible to tell, for instance, whether John Judge and his widowed landlady offered each other more than a mere financial comfort.

For those social reformers and observers removed from the everyday mundanities of lodgings, the process frequently appeared distasteful and disturbing. Although Davidoff is right to argue that for some middle-class contemporaries taking in lodgers was one of the few respectable ways of

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[565] Bell, *At the Works,* 117.
[566] 1891 Census Returns, York, RG12/3892, 29.
[567] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 30-31.

securing an income for women, for many more the lodger was increasingly a subject of suspicion.[568] As Tom Crook has pointed out, lodging houses lay on the very fringes of urban civilization for many late Victorian civic authorities, and remained subjects of distrust.[569] Even Lady Bell, whose subjects were the most active participants in this lodging house culture, had little good to say about the trend. She gave it only a few pages of coverage in *At the Works* where, although she acknowledged their untypical nature, she largely replicated an image of lodgings, and lodgers, that would have been both familiar and uncomfortable to her readership. 'In a house of three rooms', she noted, there were a husband, wife, four young children and 'five young men lodgers'. In another were 'two lodgers who were employed on different shifts, and who used often to go into the room and to bed without the room having been touched or the bed remade'.[570] Not only did such insanitary and uncomfortable arrangement seem an anathema to the tranquillity that Victorian society hoped that a good home would represent, but when placed alongside the unsavoury reputations of the three districts lodgers appeared in an even darker hue. There was also the fear of prostitution. All three neighbourhoods were suspected of housing brothels. The coming and going of lodgers seeking accommodation, especially after dark, was thought by many to provide the perfect mask for a more illicit trade. Jane Douthwaite met George Tunnacliffe in a spirits shop in York in 1875 before accompanying him back to the brothel she worked, and probably lived in, in Hungate. Tunnacliffe's stay however, whilst short, was by no means sweet, although he was unable to prove that it was Douthwaite who had stolen the money from his pocket whilst at the Palmer Lane property.[571] Such cases, copied from court to newspaper by eager journalists, paid little attention to the incredible variety of lodger-landlord relations yet were instrumental in shaping a resoundingly negative public opinion about the place of lodging in the working-class home.

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[568] Davidoff, 'Separation of Home and Work?', 78.
[569] Crook, 'Accommodating the outcast', 414-417, 436.
[570] Bell, *At the Works,* 117-118.
[571] *York Herald,* 15th January 1875.

Conclusion

Intense study of the financial elements of homes in Bethnal Green, Hungate and the Marsh Ward reveal both broad similarities and significant small distinctions between earning and spending patterns. In all three districts homes were centres of often complex financial balancing acts. Covering the essentials such as rent could require a series of sacrifices on the part of the residents. By and large these were accomplished by exchanging the other resources of the home, the labour of its residents, the space of the dwelling, the comfort of the occupants, for money. The forms that these transactions took, however, depended entirely on the local economy. Lodging was a valuable industry in the Marsh Ward, fuelled by an overwhelmingly unattached male migration that demanded not just space to sleep but also the small comforts of home that they had left behind. In Bethnal Green and Hungate such arrangements were less fruitful and instead represented more complex negotiations over kinship duties and recompense. Nor were these arrangements static across the period. Time, once a flexible element of life for many residents of Hungate and one used to counterbalance lack of money in the home, was becoming more structured for young workers who were forced to adapt their domestic lives accordingly. In Bethnal Green, where women's work had long been a staple of the local economy, the home could be arranged as a working area where time and space could be utilised for profit. In direst circumstances the physical elements of the dwelling could be turned to profit. Landlords throughout the East End, David Englander has observed, complained that tenants preparing to escape without paying the rent would often pull apart banisters and skirting boards and smash up furniture for firewood to take with them when times were hardest.[572] There was no time for squeamishness towards certain aspects of the home, it seems, when the financial crutch of that home was starting to weaken.

The financial weakness of the working-class home was well documented by social investigators. Collecting masses of data, Booth, Rowntree and Bell were all keen observers of the local distinctions that shaped the relationship between a home and the financial fortunes and actions of its residents. The

[572] Englander, *Landlord and Tennant,* 44-47.

writings of all three, however, also fed into a landscape that was increasingly convinced of the homogenous poverty of working-class life. Reviewers of all three noted the various bands of poverty and local distinctions the investigators uncovered, but invariably concluded with a more general statement about the condition of the working-class(es). A reviewer from the LSE found *At the Works* both encouraging and concerning. Despite noting the peculiarities of life in the town, the strongest comparison the reviewer drew was not between the 'English industrial classes' across the country, but between the sheltered middle-class woman and the working-class housewife. The latter's experience, he observed, 'has been practically unchanged'.[573] Likewise, L.L. Price praised *Poverty* as an 'intensive' study of York in *The Economic Journal* but put especial emphasis on Rowntree's own assertion that conditions in the city were 'fairly representative' of the provincial towns of the nation.[574] Even Helen Bosanquet, who as a leading light of the Charity Organisation Society repeatedly preached the value of individual case work when tackling poverty, seemed to have caught the generalising bug. Booth's Third Series of *Life and Labour* left her with the profound impression that religious work throughout London was met with the same 'utterly indifferent' response from the poor in 'almost every parish'.[575] A similar tone is detectable in her own work; a survey of East End marriages written by her in 1895 was damning but hardly seems rooted in any *real* location.[576]

Kathleen Martin has condemned the conclusions of social investigators in this period as ones plagued by misconceptions and mistakes, yet this seems too harsh a verdict for what was occurring.[577] In the eyes of many, including the three social investigators featured here, the home was a place beset by an ongoing battle with poverty and it was this struggle, rather than the peculiarities of place, that demanded attention. Yet this led to a divergence between the opinions of social reformers and the realities of working-class life, as the

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[573] Henry W. Macrosty, 'At the Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town by Lady Bell', *Political Science Quarterly,* Vol. 22, No. 3, (Sep. 1907), 526-528.
[574] L.L. Price, 'Poverty: A Study of Town Life by B. Seebohm Rowntree', *The Economic Journal,* vol. 12, No. 45, (Mar. 1902), 56-62.
[575] Helen Bosanquet, 'Life and Labour of the People in London by Charles Booth', *The Economic Journal,* Vol. 13, No. 51, (Sep. 1903), 409-413.
[576] Helen Bosanquet, 'Marriage in East London'.
[577] Martin, *Hard and Unreal Advice,* 2008.

following two chapters will show. The conclusion to *Poverty* saw Rowntree extrapolate out the basis of his work to encompass all of Britain. 'Probably more than one fourth of the population are living in poverty' he concluded. Whilst he steered clear of advocating any course of action that might see his work written of as polemic, he finished with an ardent plea for 'patient and penetrating' thought when it came to the condition of this poverty-stricken minority.[578] Despite the intensely detailed nature of their work, social investigators and those who came after them brushed aside the local differences they uncovered in favour of establishing a broader national relevance for their work. Yet for their subjects, those born and brought up in the homes of 1870 to 1914, these minute but significant variations were instrumental in shaping their lives.

[578] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 304-305.

Chapter Six – Growing Up in a Working-Class Home

Historical studies of working-class youths have been, at best, patchy. Just like the home they have failed to attract any considerable body of work, and instead have largely been examined piecemeal in studies of other aspects of working-class history. Both Stephen Humphries and Andrew Davies have approached the concept of neighbourhood belonging in their studies of youth activities and gang culture in the pre-1914 period. Humphries has emphasised that although the growing hysteria about street violence and roving gangs in the national press was in some ways overblown, there were indeed 'organised gangs of teenagers in inner-city areas' who fought over spatial boundaries and roamed the streets.[579] In emphasising the 'rapid transition from childhood to adulthood' amongst working-class youths, Humphries makes significant inroads into exploring the tension between authorities and youths, yet overlooks the crucial significance of the transition itself.[580] Nor has there been any significant attempt to link such external activities with the process of growing up within the home. Carol Dyhouse and Ellen Ross have both produced fascinating and detailed insights into the transition between childhood and adult life for working-class girls, but these have largely addressed the "internal" aspects of domestic life without considering the wider arenas in which working-class youth was played out.[581]

There has been no study of English working-class youth prior to the outbreak of World War One that satisfactorily explores the links between these spatial interactions and the wider lifecycle in the ways that the authors of an article on Helsinki youths suggest. Working on the slang toponyms for home and place used by young men growing up in Helsinki in the early decades of the twentieth-century, the authors demonstrate that as lads grew older the boundaries of space that they identified with expanded. Even when the boys left home, they concluded, 'their home district, its bygone places…left lifelong marks in their memories'.[582] As young men and young women (the later of whom only appear peripherally in accounts of working-class youth focused on gang culture) grew

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[579] Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels,* 176-177. Davis, *The Gangs of Manchester*.
[580] Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels,* 18-19.
[581] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 56-68, Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England.* London: Routledge, 1981*,* 3-39.
[582] Paunonen, Vuolteenaho and Ainiala, 'Working Class Lads and slang toponyms', 471-472.

older their explorations of the areas surrounding the family home grew more wide-ranging. Yet these explorations were matched, as was the case in Helsinki, with a continuing (if not growing) interaction with the intricacies of domestic life. The experiences of growing up in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward all saw young men and women develop their own ideas and interpretations of what home meant to them.

The closing decades of the nineteenth-century, and the first ones of the twentieth-century, were a time when working-class youth increasingly came into a national focus. Arnold Freeman, commissioned to undertake an inquiry into the youth of Birmingham by the civic authorities, began his account by emphasising how 'the problem of Boy Labour has received considerable attention in the last few years'.[583] As Harry Hendrick has observed, by the 1900s studies of youth had largely passed from moral and philanthropic-minded groups to national and international authorities.[584] Thus the long study of child labour conducted by Frederic Keeling and published in 1912 was the result of impassioned debate and interest amongst the British Section of the International Association for Labour Legislation (forerunner of the International Labour Organization).[585] Hendrick, examining the outpourings of these groups, has concluded that they cultivated a number of 'images of working-class adolescents' beyond the simple conformity-delinquency dichotomy suggested by Gillis.[586] Yet in drawing upon such studies, almost entirely focused on as Freeman put it 'the problem of Unemployment' amongst the young, the historiographical agenda has been set along reformist lines. Fixated on the issues of work and joblessness, Edwardian youth experts painted a series of images of their young subjects based around their identities as workers. Selina Todd, working in a twentieth-century context, has called for a reassessment of young workers. Their economic identities, she argues, have been subsumed by debates over other social-cultural elements, missing out on a major element in the lives of the young. In examining the correlation between young women, workplace and family, Todd has attempted to resolve the present confusions surrounding young women workers, placing workplace identity back

[583] Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour,* 1.
[584] Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class and the male youth problem, 1880-1920.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, 79-180.
[585] Frederic Keeling, *Child Labour in the United Kingdom: A Study of the Development and Administration of the Law relating to the Employment of Children,* London: P.S. King, 1914, vii.
[586] Hendrick, *Images of Youth,* 250-255.

into the discussion of class, leisure and consumption.[587] Yet the pre-1914 field stands almost exactly the other way round – little attention has been paid to the lives of young men and women *outside* of a working context. Thus, whilst following Todd's advice to consider all aspects and influences that comprised the experiences of the young, this chapter will invert the order of her analysis. Placing work last rather than first sheds new light on how working-class youths interacted with the space around them.

The streets and districts of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward were significantly different environments. Middlesbrough, its development entirely driven by the growth of the iron industry, lacked the developed leisure activities of Hungate and Bethnal Green, yet shaped the lives of young men through its singular industrial capacity.[588] Hungate, lying at the heart of York, offered more to its young residents, yet as Rowntree emphasised it was a community limited by its poverty.[589] In Bethnal Green young men and women were forced to rapidly adapt to unstable employment and a highly mobile local population. If youth was a time when modes of living were inculcated into young men and women then these local variations seem to point to a much more fragmented culture than the all-embracing culture of a 'cup-finals, fish-and-chip shops [and] palais-de-danse' working-class.[590] A closer examination of the formative influences on young men and women in the three districts studied here raises questions about the extent to which working-class culture can be explained by 'shared experiences' on a national scale.[591] This chapter will explore how three different neighbourhoods shaped the lives of their young residents. Beginning with the major influence of work, it will continue on to examine youth leisure, and in doing so explore not only the impact of impersonal forces such as economic change and the built environment but also the social environment into which youths entered. Young men and women did not only associate with their peers in each district; they were also exposed to, and participated in, a wide range of leisure activities. Some were local and spontaneous, others nefarious, and still more organised by outsiders with particular agendas. Finally, this chapter will

[587] Todd, *Young Women, Work, and Family,* 10-11.
[588] Bell, *At the Works*, 126-141
[589] Rowntree, *Poverty,*133-137
[590] Benson, *Working-Class in Britain 1850-1939* , 2-3.
[591] August, *British Working Class*, 2007, 2-3, Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures*, 4-25.

trace the lasting impact of these youthful steps into adulthood and how local distinctions, although seemingly minor, had a lasting impact on young men and women.

Whatever differences and variations determined children's early years across the dimensions of time and space this study encompasses, for nearly every child featured here their first sight of the world would have been of the home. Despite the work of lobby groups such as the Women's Co-operative Guild, who campaigned for more lying-in places to be made available in hospitals, as late as 1914 the vast majority of births took place within the dwelling.[592] Certain forms of support were becoming more common towards the end of the period. By 1910 the Bethnal Green Medical Officer of Health had a Sanitary Officer on staff who was entirely dedicated to improving the health of women and children, particularly around childbirth. Stung perhaps by the appalling rates of infant mortality that continued to plague the area, she drew up concise lists of exactly who attended births within Bethnal Green. Thus in 1911 she was able to report that 3785 births had been supervised by 'qualified medical practitioners', midwives, or staff from the London hospital in roughly equal proportions.[593] Yet this assistance did not cover all births in the area, and with the availability of such help highly dependent on the patchwork distribution of medical practitioners and institutions (either official or otherwise) across the country, childbirth throughout this period was still a dangerous and risk-filled activity.

The presence of danger within the home did not finish with the act of childbirth, and for many children the home would have been a place haunted by death. The 1911 census was the first to ask respondents how many of their children were still living. The returns from Hungate indicate that roughly one third of children from families living in Hungate in 1911 had died before the census took place. This was, of course, a very imprecise measure; some of these children had been born and passed away before the family had moved to Hungate, others had reached adulthood before succumbing to disease or accident. It was, however, somewhat comparable with the high rates of infant mortality that plagued all three neighbourhoods. A study in the *British Medical Journal* in 1904 put the rates of death for infants under the age of one at 156 per 1000 born

[592] Davies, *Maternity,* preface and 1-7.
[593] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1911*, 74.

in York and 186 per 1000 in Middlesbrough, whilst Arthur Newsholme, an active public health advocate and epidemiologist who had by 1908 become Medical Officer to the Local Government Board, put the death rate for infants under the age of five at 201 per 1000 in the Bethnal Green area as late as 1917.[594] The wider social reaction to the constant threat of disease and death will be dealt with later in this analysis. For children, these statistics point to childhoods marked by the loss of siblings.

It was not only disease that threatened the youngest residents of these homes. The domestic environment itself represented a considerable array of dangers for the young. 'From birth until they were replaced by another newborn', Ellen Ross observes, 'working-class infants were in nearly continuous contact with their mother's body'.[595] Sometimes these close quarters could prove perilous; in Olive Street in Middlesbrough in 1891 the two year old Margaret Cubitt died from scalding when she bumped into her mother, upsetting the pan of hot water all over herself.[596] Children across urban England were hurt, or even killed, by the hidden dangers of the home. Risks posed by open fires or grates and boiling wash pots were matched by more universal threats such as steep stairs and sharp objects. There were also those threats that, social reformers at least, were convinced stemmed from the ignorance of working-class parents. The campaign against overlying, particularly in Bethnal Green, has already been discussed above. Other issues of how children were fed and pacified also caused anxiety for observers who, as Davin has put it, showed 'ignorance of the material constraints of poverty and incomprehension and intolerance' towards different notions of parenting.[597]

In his recent study of American children at play Howard Chudacoff has pointed to three main 'play settings' in which children attempted to 'assert their own culture' through play. These were, he argues, 'nature', public places such as the street and playground, and the home. What is most important, he urges, is that historians see such landscapes as children did, not simply as backdrops to

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[594] Anon. 'Public Health and Poor-Law Medical Services', *British Medical Journal,* 2255, 1, (March 1904), 704. Arthur Newsholme, Arthur. 'On Child Mortality at the Ages of 0-5 years, in England and Wales', *The Journal of Hygiene,* 16, 1, (July 1917), 69-99.
[595] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 139.
[596] *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, Oct 13th 1891
[597] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 19.

play but places that could be transformed and incorporated into play itself.[598] His observations ring true when placed against the major studies of working-class childhood that have emerged in a British context, especially that of Anna Davin. Her 1996 study of poor children between 1870 and 1914 was significantly titled 'Home, School and Street', three environments, she argued, that were fundamental in shaping working-class men and women both as children and, more lastingly, as adults. Such an approach required both 'zoom and wide-angle lens' to appreciate the intricacies of neighbourhood and street and also the wider concepts of 'class, age cohort, sex or race' inherent in studying childhood, and in order to concentrate her enquiries she focused on the East End.[599] Tracing the different forces, some great others minute, that shaped the lives of working-class boys and girls in the three districts focused on in this study requires a blend of the two approaches. Only through a comparison of the ways in which young people in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward interacted with the environment around them can an adequate understanding of the significance of home in their lives be built. Such interactions, as both Chudacoff and Davin point out, took place from childhood onwards.

When George Duckworth, one of Charles Booth's researchers, ventured into the triangle of streets south of Bethnal Green Road in the company of a local police officer, he found them crowded with children. Busby Square had a 'vicious' character according to Duckworth but was thronged with 'clean' children sporting 'good boots'. The children around the corner in Bacon Street, by contrast, were much more 'ragged'. Back in Busby Street he found several young boys boxing in the streets with few residents paying any attention. To Duckworth, the children 'all looked sturdy ruffians' and there was 'much life in the street', a sentiment shared by many social investigators.[600] Towns and villages across Britain were 'teeming' with children in the decades leading up to the First World War, it is true, but the image of East End children in the street is a particularly lasting one.[601] Sketched, photographed, written about, discussed, feared and worried over, the children that inhabited the streets of the East End

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[598] Howard Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History.* New York: New York University Press, 2007, 4-5.
[599] Davin, *Growing Up Poor,* 1-11.
[600] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 171-173.
[601] Lionel Rose, *The Erosion of Childhood,* 3.

remain for historians the most visible poor children of the period. Yet the question of why they were on the street, and perhaps more pertinently what they were there to do, remains more illusive. As Hugh Cunnigham has observed, 'ideas about childhood in the past exist in plenitude; it is not so easy to find out about the lives of children'.[602]

For many the distinction between home and street may not have been clear cut. The triangle of streets that Harding came to call home along with thousands of others was comprised of tall buildings subdivided into multiple occupancies, streets busy with foot traffic and the business of shops and stalls, and yards utilised for industry. [603] Children continued to linger in the home itself, and attached yards and public spaces, in Bethnal Green. Yet one of the hallmarks of children's play in any period, Chudacoff has argued, is a desire for independence.[604] Spaces where parents were, by their very nature, were not always the ideal locations for the play of childhood. Many of the fathers of Bethnal Green were employed in the furniture industry worked in yards and small workshops within a few doors of their dwellings. Thus whilst yards in the area may have offered a chance to interact with otherwise absent fathers for children, they were also overlooked. As such yards were suitable for parents wanting to check on their offspring, but not for children wanting to escape from that supervision. Paunonen, Voulteenaho and Ainiala argued that as working-class children in Helsinki grew, the boundaries of what they considered home expanded by steps outwards from the home.[605] In Bethnal Green, however, this process seemed to happen much earlier and children were out and about in the street from a very young age.

This must partly have been, as middle-class reformers suspected, a result of the premium placed on space within the home in the district. Economic activity in Bethnal Green revolved around the spaces available to residents. Attempts to tackle this childhood wandering, Booth's researchers discovered, were failing. Guided around the area by a local school board visitor Booth's assistants became increasingly frustrated with his seeming passivity. Granby Street was being renumbered when they visited and, the guide reported, 'there

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[602] Hugh Cunnigham, *Childhood and Children in Western Society since 1500,* 2.
[603] Samuel, *East End Underworld,* 54-61
[604] Chudacoff, *Children at Play,* 13-18.
[605] Paunonen, Vuolteena and Ainiala, 'Working-Class Lads and Slang Toponyms', 472.

are probably children here' but they were 'impossible to schedule'. The entire area was 'wretchedly poor' Booth's assistant recorded, and the migratory population meant that many of the children remained 'unscheduled and utterly neglected' by the local School Board. The visitor acting as guide, the assistant rather caustically noted, confessed himself 'quite unable to cope with the work'.[606] It was perhaps unfair of Booth and his team to come down so heavily on the school board visitors. As John Hurt has put it, the first decades of the 1870 Elementary Act were a battle between the school board authorities and the 'parental non-consumer' amongst the working-class.[607] Nevertheless, their compatriots in Hungate and the Marsh Ward, as shall be seen, had much more success in corralling their young charges. The large and highly mobile population of Bethnal Green proved a complex task for local authorities and many children slipped through the net, escaping the supervision of school at least some of the time, unlike their peers in other areas.

In contrast to these opening worlds, however, the Marsh Ward continued to restrict the external activities of its young residents. Children still worked and played in the streets, and the civic authority remained willing to issue trading licences to older children for hawking goods or selling newspapers. Yet the ruler-straight streets created little in the way of sheltered areas where play could take place out of the sight of either parents or civic authorities. They were also dangerous, as industrial traffic rattled along the streets of the town at high speed.[608] Lady Bell criticised the lack of public space for family recreation on a national level, but it was very clear that she was really talking about Middlesbrough.[609] She was so concerned over the lack of public amenities that in 1907 she established the Winter Garden. Lying just across the railway lines from the Marsh Ward, the Winter Garden was actually a large recreational centre hosting a variety of games, a library, concerts and refreshments for the entrance fee of a penny. Crucially, a 1913 review noted, it opened at 9 o'clock in the morning to cater to those finishing the morning shift at the iron works.[610] It was not a solution aimed at children, though, and the rhythm of the industrial town,

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[606] London School of Economics Archive, London, B47, Charles Booth Notebooks, 162-169.
[607] Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the working-classes,* 52-54.
[608] Bell, *At the Works,* 14
[609] Ibid, 131.
[610] F. J. Marquis and S. E. F. Ogden, 'The Recreation of the Poorest', *The Town Planning Review,* 3, 4, Jan. 1913, 247.

so important in the lives of parents seems to have had a similarly powerful effect on their offspring. With few yards and gardens to play in and fathers working across the river, rather than within visiting distance, the dimensions of home for many children in the Marsh Ward may have been more limited than they were for their peers elsewhere.

It was older children, however, who really sought out new areas beyond the extended influence of the home. This seems to have certainly been the case in Hungate. The nearby River Foss was a favourite venue for youthful adventure. In 1872 Charles Judson, a young resident of Carmelite Street, was sent to prison for seven days after shocking passers-by when he took to bathing in the Foss. Bathing may have been unusual, not to mention ill-advised in the stagnant Foss, but swimming in both the Foss and its parent River Ouse was a common pleasure for Hungate youths. Although newspaper reports provide only a very cursory vision of this youthful pleasure, their accounts depict swimming as an entirely male activity. It was also one that was tied to masculine identity – the drowning of Thomas Appleyard in the Ouse whilst swimming an impromptu race for half a crown was a dark testament to how youth leisure was linked to bravado.[611] Swimming does not appear as a popular pastime in either Bethnal Green or the Marsh Ward. Bell's introduction to *At the Works* features young children playing on the banks of the river, but the more heavily industrialised Tees, plied by ferries to and from the Works, may have prevented swimming becoming a source of leisure and masculine pride for young men in the district.[612] Similarly, the lack of any substantial body of water in Bethnal Green meant that swimming was no part of the development of resident young men. Small variations in the urban landscape subtly shaped how young men and women expressed their identities.

Wider notions of space were fundamental to youths of both sexes in all three districts as they grew older. The reasons why, however, varied slightly from area to area. This is not to say there were no shared cultures in common; a sense of freedom seems to have been central to all such youthful excursions. Why young people sought such freedoms, where they found them, and what they did with them, remained geographically distinct. In some areas, notably the Marsh Ward, this freedom was easier discussed than achieved. When it was

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[611] *York Herald,* 27th July 1877.
[612] Bell, *At the Works,* 14-15.

achieved, freedom for youths in Middlesbrough seems to have been about escaping notice and finding time and space away from the family home. In Bethnal Green, in contrast, freedom for the young seems to have been as much about being seen as not. Streets became places of expression of self, especially for young men. The young men who assaulted PC Young in the street in 1871 were observed bragging about it to those who had missed the event. For these young men home was a place of security and comfort, where a separate image of themselves as part of a family unit could be projected, distinct from the one they created for themselves in public. John Davey, one of the lads accused of attacking PC Young swore vehemently that he was at home at the time. Even when confronted with the evidence of her son's blood-drenched shirtsleeves, Mrs Davey managed to present a compelling and convincing picture of her son as a young man who enjoyed sitting with her beside the fire, enjoying bread and tea. The blood, she added, came from nosebleeds.[613] Youths were not only active in using the space around them to develop as adults, but were, it seems, adept at cultivating a range of images dependent on who was examining them.

The significance of space to working-class youths did not escape the notice of local reformers. In each district youth-work was centred on creating new activities and spaces for the young. Despite Booth's fairly accurate assessment of their uneven efforts, it was the Anglican Church in the East End that spearheaded much of what was becoming known as youth-work.[614] Both St Matthias' and St Matthew's were running clubs for both young men and young women by the 1890s. These were by no means the only activities run, and in many East End parishes activity groups ran the gamut of childhood to old age for both sexes. Yet it was the youth that the organisers held out most hope of reform for. The new Rector, appointed in 1902, campaigned for the next three years at the Vestry meetings to increase the scope and funding of youth clubs.[615] As

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[613] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 19 April 2011), January 1871, trial of Alfred Browning (25), John Bryan (18), Joseph Beer (20) and Charles Davey (19), (t1871013-173).
[614] London School of Economics Archive, London, B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 7-21, 115-127
[615] London Metropolitan Archives, London, P72/MTW/325, St Matthew's Vestry Minute Book 1900-1913.

national youth expert Reginald Bray argued, the reformers passionately believed that working-class youth across Britain was susceptible to positive influence.[616]

The strict gender divisions, and the accompanying rationale this brought to the selection of activities by organisers, however, were starting to take their toll on the Bethnal Green youth clubs by 1900. In June 1901 the St Matthew's Girl's Club was forced to close due to a near non-existent membership.[617] The strict regiment of sewing lessons and discussions of budgeting for the family seem to have attracted few members. The Boys Club, by contrast, proved remarkably popular. At the same time that membership of the Girl's Club was dwindling, the boys were playing away games of cricket against other clubs and taking part in mass gatherings at Oxford Hall.[618] The distinct activities selected as appropriate by the organisers most likely lay at the root of this disparity in membership. John Hurt and June Purvis have both argued that many young women already learned domestic skills at home, indeed were part of the domestic routine of work by their teens, and that this saw them treat the teaching of domestic skills in clubs or school with disinterest and disdain.[619] Some indication of this attitude is evident in Bethnal Green, as the exciting sports and lectures offered to young men clearly failed to compete with the more tedious regime of household skills for girls. Yet it also raises a more general point about youth culture in the area. The success of the Boy's Club indicates that the new and the unusual were highly prized by youths of both sexes in the area. Travel, even short distances within the East End to Oxford Hall and to other clubs, was appealing, as were opportunities for organised leisure. The success or failure of organised activities depended not just what they could offer to young men and women but also the realities of life for those youths beyond the walls of the club.

A comparison between organised youth activities in Bethnal Green and Hungate reveals just how important both the local activities offered and the attitudes of local youths were to the process. For Hungate youths, especially in the last two decades of the period, organised activity came to be largely the

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[616] Reginald Bray, *Boy Labour and Apprenticeship,* London: Constable and Co., 1912, 1-3.
[617] London Metropolitan Archives, London, P72/MTW/243, St Matthew's Parish Magazine*,* May 1901.
[618] Ibid*,* January 1901, 3-5.
[619] J.S. Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Class 1860-1918,* Routledge and Paul: London, 1979, 86-87, Jane Purvis, *Hard Lessons: The Lives and Education of Working Class Women in Nineteenth Century England,* University of Minnesota Press: Minnesota, 1989*,* 76-80.

purview of the *Rowntree's* Factory. The large number of Hungate youths that they employed, and their passionate desire to reform the lives of others, saw the Rowntree family assume a position of incredible influence over youth leisure. Some were arguably paternalist in conception, such as the penny-banks run to encourage thrift, whilst in other areas gender stereotypes crept in (domestic economy classes were a major aspect of the girls' activity roster), still more (such as Grecian dancing) were of dubious appeal. Yet, as Robert Fitzgerald has noted, on the whole these schemes, particularly protection from sudden unemployment and the extension of welfare initiatives to include family members, 'must have been of some personal value to employees'.[620] Working at *Rowntree's* and participating in the leisure activities organised for workers, including displays at York Civic Week throughout the 1900s and 1910s, conferred on young women especially a sense of value distinct from their peers employed in less prestigious jobs, and those female neighbours too young to work or excluded by marriage.

That young women worked for the firm for a clearly defined period of time also had a profound effect on their lives distinct from the experiences of youth for women in Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward. After marriage there was no return to the *Rowntree's* factory for young women in Hungate; the firm generally did not approve of the employment of married women. The only exception was during periods of exceptional labour shortage, and even then re-entry was closely scrutinised.[621] The majority of Hungate girls would have largely been left, barring a mention of their marriage in the employee magazine, with their memories of work as the lasting legacy of their time at the firm. Yet this is crucial to any understanding of the peculiarities of youth in the area. Firstly memories are important. As John Gillis has emphasised, families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were increasingly desperate to commemorate and recollect key moments of their pasts.[622] Although it is impossible to know for certain, it would seem likely that these magazine issues may have taken their place on the mantelpiece amongst the other treasured possessions of family life. Secondly these memories would have been of work distinct from the demands of poverty. Rowntree was adamant that the earnings of

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[620] Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution,* 225-230.
[621] Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution,* 238.
[622] John Gillis, *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Ritual and the Quest for Family Values,* Basic Books, New York, 1996, 3-42.

older children lifted the majority of even the most destitute families above the poverty line. It was only when young men and women married and had children, he argued, that they began to dip down into poverty again.[623] Unlike in Bethnal Green, however, where young mothers retained the contacts and skills necessary to take up work again in times of need, former *Rowntree's* employees could not. This may have been a practical disadvantage in times of need, but this separation of youth work from adult poverty would also have fostered a culture amongst residents that regarded young women's work at the firm as something above and beyond the basic graft of poverty.

If youths from the Marsh Ward appear remarkably absent from this study of leisure activities it is because that they themselves were an often overlooked aspect of life in the town. Minoru Yasumoto's recent study of Middlesbrough revealed a spike in the male population aged between 20 and 29 in the years 1851 to 1881. He has put this down to the considerable draw of the Iron industry in attracting young men to Middlesbrough for work. It was not until 1881, he observes, that these 'extraordinary age and sex structures' began to diminish, an idea of a settling town akin to the social and cultural maturing that David Taylor has claimed occurred in the same period.[624] What neither historian accounts for, however, is the effect this curious imbalance of age and gender had on youths in the town. Bell was certainly aware of the issue. In *At the Works* she argued that the culture of town that had developed over the last fifty years, so tied to the Iron Works, had largely come to exclude the young from any meaningful activities.

The coming of the Elementary Education Act in 1870 saw a major push in Middlesbrough to exclude youths from the Iron Works. The opening shots of this battle were fierce, with mistaken accusations of exploiting child-labour and of workers found smuggling younger boys into the Works without the knowledge of employers. The situation was complicated by the rapid growth of the town, as the vast influx of migrants over the preceding decades now needed to be quantified. An extra-ordinary census was required before the School Board could begin to comprehend the scale of the task before it. The dismissal of the first

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[623] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 136-138.

[624] Minoru Yasumoto, *The Rise of the Victorian Ironopolis: Middlesbrough and Regional Industrialisation,* The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2011, 64. David Taylor, 'Conquering the British Ballarat: The Policing of Victorian Middlesbrough', *Journal of Social History, 37, 3,* (Spring 2004), 755-771

Beadle (the man responsible for carrying out the compulsion itself), together with angry exchanges from 'ratepayers' in the local press, are testament to the tumultuous birth of the local school system.[625] By 1907, however, Bell felt able to announce that Middlesbrough 'offers hardly any occupation for boys'. They were often reduced, she worried, to having to 'loaf about the streets with nothing to do'. [626]

Bell's accounts of what she termed the 'unsettled habits' of Middlesbrough youth need to be carefully considered.[627] For many of the young men in question 'loafing' about the streets was nowhere near as bad a Bell claimed. The streets of the Marsh Ward, although much less interesting or secluded than those of Bethnal Green or Hungate respectively, were still a space that offered some degree of independence for the young. Nor was the area completely bereft of well-intentioned organised youth activities. Band of Hope temperance groups for older children organised through the Roman Catholic Church in the town were particularly popular, with large numbers of children signed up, although the impact of such groups is less easy to discern.[628] There was also, towards the end of the period, the growth of football in the town, with both Middlesbrough F.C. and the breakaway Ironopolis F.C. making their professional debuts within weeks of each other in December 1899. Not only would young residents have been aware of the fortunes of the local sides but, at the time of the 1911 census, 2 Olive Street was inhabited by the family of Middlesbrough F.C.'s inside forward.[629] There were also fluctuating attractions. As well as the growth of local resorts and day-trips there were circuses and carnivals that came to the town, including a 'wild beast show' that was the centre of an outbreak of smallpox.[630] Yet it is difficult to fully dismiss Bell's distinct observation that many of the young men of the town spent their lives waiting to turn old enough for the Works. Many of the instances where young men in the streets fell foul of the law give the clear impression of restlessness on the part of the young. In 1893 seven youths were picked up for pitching pennies in Bridge

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[625] See, for example, the Beadle's own letter pleading his case. *Daily Gazette,* 9th December 1872.
[626] Bell, *At the Works,* 138-140.
[627] Ibid, 140.
[628] Anon., *Middlesbrough Year Book*, North Eastern Daily Gazette: Middlesbrough, 1901.
[629] 1911 Census Returns Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough West, District 6, 431.
[630] Charles Dingle, 'The Story of the Middlesbrough Small-Pox Epidemic and some of its lessons', *Public Health,* xi, 1898-1899, 175.

Street West, a main thoroughfare bordering the Marsh Ward, and were fined 3s6d each. One of the lads, P.C. Atkinson reported, had mentioned not eating that day, yet had the coins for pitch and toss.[631] Similarly, whilst the *Northern Echo* seemed to share Bell's concern over the impact of 'trashy literature' on young minds, the robbery of a small amount gunpowder and firing caps that were then detonated in the street by two teenage brothers suggests a certain boisterous impatience.[632] A town dominated by a few major adult male employment opportunities, where high wages could open up a world of camaraderie and domestic stability, Middlesbrough offered little independent opportunity for its younger residents.

The growing concern over young working-class men and women that fired social investigators and reformers was, in part, driven by their anxiety over the domestic lives that these children led. From the 1850s onwards, Behlmer has pointed out, a dual strategy of juvenile courts for initial offenders and reformatories and industrial schools for repeated troublemakers 'offered hope', to concerned outsiders, that 'working-class children might yet escape a brutalized future'.[633] Towards the end of the period a new breed of youth experts began to level their professional opinion on the home-life of working-class youths. They were not complimentary. Reginald Bray, who published a number of studies on working-class boys, noted that

> Everywhere we have abundant evidence to show that from want of supervision, or of the effective means of supervision in the home, large numbers of children are growing up ill-clad, ill-nourished, and suffering from definite diseases, all alike leading to inefficient manhood.[634]

These problems at home manifested themselves, in an unmistakably visible way, on the street. Arnold Freeman, a man with a similarly keen interest in what he dubbed the 'boy labour problem', was inclined to agree. Homes amongst the working-class Birmingham lads he studied were on the whole 'indifferent' or

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[631] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 13th April 1893.
[632] *Northern Echo,* 3rd March 1892.
[633] Belhmer, *Friends of the Family,* 234-235.
[634] Bray, *Boy Labour,* 96.

'unsatisfactory', he argued.[635] For the youth experts of late Victorian and Edwardian England the crimes of juvenile working-class boys and girls were dually the product of weak parental supervision at home combined with the lack of constructive work upon reaching adulthood. Social reformers were clear – across urban England working-class slum life was destroying the young.

Crime rates amongst working-class youth appear relatively uniform across the three districts throughout the period. The streets surrounding the dwelling provided both the opportunities and the means. The streets of the Marsh Ward appear like any other in urban England from the court records and newspaper reports of the town. The notebooks of two Middlesbrough Police Officers, one from the 1890s the other undated, testify to the amount of time that dealing with youths in the streets of the town consumed. One constable chased the same young men away from Stockton Street repeatedly during the course of his regular beat; on the third occasion he fined them for stubbornly continuing their disruptive football game.[636] Even the most cursory survey of the *Daily Gazette,* Middlesbrough's daily paper, at the very beginning of the period reveals a wide range of petty crimes committed by the town's youthful residents. Newspapers, alcohol, cash boxes, pocketbooks and clothing were all grabbed by young men and women from shops or passersby along the streets of Middlesbrough.[637] Yet to view these crimes, as contemporary observers did, as emblematic of a nationwide model of working-class youth is to ignore the very nature of these crimes. Both motive and modus operandi differed substantially from those common in Hungate and Bethnal Green, shedding light on patterns of youth that had developed differently in these separate districts.

Readers perusing the regular local papers in Middlesbrough would have felt well appraised of the levels of crime in the town. Throughout the period the Chief Constable's yearly report was reprinted in the paper. In 1875 he was able, seemingly with some satisfaction, to report that the actions of the local School Board had severely limited the number of children 'formerly…allowed to roam

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[635] Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour,* 123-124.
[636] Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CB/M/P 33, Pocket Book of a Constable 1893-1896., 5-8. Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CB/M/P 34, Notebook of Sgt. Rainbeck. 1-21.
[637] *Daily Gazette,* 1st December 1873, 22nd December 1873, 18th May 1874, 7th September 1874, 2nd February 1875.

the streets and commit all kinds of petty depredations'.[638] Two years later, however, he was forced to report that the number of juvenile crimes had risen again, and this steady fluctuation set the tone for much of the reports across the period.[639] Night-time was the worst. 'Large numbers of boys and girls may be seen running about the streets nightly' he reported in 1878, without any 'kind of parental control' in evidence.[640] Overall crime was decreasing in the town as a more effective police force combined with the slow ebbing of Middlesbrough's 'frontier' makeup as the town became more established.[641] Youth crime, however, remained reasonably constant according to the reports. Even in 1913 the Chief Constable was continuing to rail against those parents who allowed their children to 'run about the streets'.[642]

Much of the crime was of a very minor nature. Throughout the 1870s youths in the town were convicted of stealing alcohol, newspapers, wallets, small change, and articles of clothing. Some were more adventurous. The *Daily Gazette* dedicated an entire column to the antics of three teenaged girls who left their homes, a few minutes walk from the Marsh Ward, and embarked on a four day shoplifting spree in the nearby coastal resorts of Saltburn on Sea and Redcar. Even what these apparent 'novices in the pilfering art', as the *Gazette* dubbed them, stole were small items. Broaches, pins, earrings, and clasps were the chief elements of their haul.[643] Although the motives of juvenile criminals were never speculated on in the press, the accounts leave the distinct impression that these were small crimes of excitement and ownership rather than ones born out of poverty or desperation. There was a clear gendered element to the thefts, both boys and girls stealing items prized by their respective peers. Moreover, the theft of such items suggests a desire to be seen by peers as "grown-up" or "daring". For a town designed around hard, dangerous adult work, from which the young were excluded, it seems more than likely that the crimes of Middlesbrough's youth should reflect a desire to enter the adult world as quickly a possible.

Civic authorities in the town matched this desire to treat the young as those about to commence adulthood. The Chief Constable's definition of

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[638] *York Herald,* 12th October 1875.
[639] *Daily Gazette,* 4th October 1877.
[640] *Daily Gazette,* 7th October 1878.
[641] Taylor, 'British Ballarat', 762-767.
[642] Teeside Archives, Middlesbrough, CB/M/P, Chief Constable's Report 1913, 7.
[643] *Daily Gazette,* 20th January, 1874.

juvenile, at least according to the reports he drew up, was cut-off at the age of sixteen, tellingly the exact age at which the Works took young men on. Throughout the 1870s, a period where the reports in the local paper were the most detailed, petty crimes committed by the under 16s of the town remained reasonably stable, yet the number of young people sent by the local Police Court to Reformatories and Industrial Schools in the area grew steadily.[644] The three girls on their stealing spree were sent to prison for fourteen days each with three years of reformatory to follow. [645] Yet so were young people convicted of much smaller crimes. The sixteen year old Alice Hunter, convicted of stealing a jacket, received jail for one month and then a five year spell in a reformatory.[646] As Linda Mahood has observed in a Scottish context, and George Behlmer in an English one, reformatories were routinely used by police courts across the country to deal with children (and families) deemed recalcitrant.[647] This was certainly the case when, in 1890, five lads were convicted for stealing books from a street stall. Only the ringleader received a sentence in the reformatory.[648] In many other cases, however, the Middlesbrough court appeared much keener to employ the reformatory solution. Their passion was driven by a clear conception that parents were to blame and that removing these youths from their homes might give them a better pathway to adult life. As the Chief Constable observed in his 1913 report, in many cases the 'home surroundings' of juvenile criminals 'were of the very worst' and it was in the 'interests of the children' that forty eight had been committed to reformatory and industrial schools that year.[649]

Crime for youths in Hungate was much more closely associated with the unobserved nature of the area. Hungate, and by extension neighbouring Walmgate, offered prime access to the central streets of York, but also a series of yards and courts in which to hide from pursuers or divide up spoils. As young men and women grew older in Hungate, they began to explore and interact with the wider areas around their dwellings. George Bellwood, a youth living in

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[644] See for example *Daily Gazette,* 12th October 1875, 4th October 1877, 7th October 1878, and 8th October 1879.
[645] *Daily Gazette,* 20th January, 1874.
[646] *Daily Gazette,* 18th May 1874.
[647] Linda Mahood, *Policing Gender, Class and Family, Britain 1850-1940,* 75-76. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 230-271.
[648] *North-Eastern Daily Gazette,* 8th January 1890.
[649] CB/M/P Chief Constable's Report 1913, 7.

Carmelite Street in 1882, was convicted of attempting to pawn stolen goods in nearby Walmgate. Although he was from Hungate, both his accomplices and the two girls he attempted to persuade to do the actual pawning were residents of Walmgate.[650] The overlooked nature of both areas, with little architectural improvement throughout the period, saw a continuation of the petty crime observed by Frances Finnegan in the early to mid nineteenth-century.[651] The "enclosed" nature of the district seemed to encourage youths from the district to view the streets as their own domain. There were repeated instances cases brought before the local Police Court where young men and women from the area had disrupted or outright assaulted interlopers.[652] Yet youths were by no means the only residents who came into conflict over territory. In 1882 two mussel sellers from the area were reduced to brawling in the street over the sites of their stalls.[653] The street was, as previously noted, a place where conflict was acted out in a public way, much more so than in the Marsh Ward or Bethnal Green. Many of the cases of public violence were not the result of police arrests but instead charges brought by one Hungate party against another. Such was the case with Henry Jutty, a bricklayer from Carmelite, who was summoned for assaulting his neighbour as she stood outside her house talking with a friend. Other neighbours appeared as witnesses.[654] Although such a conclusion would have shocked contemporary reformers, it seems plausible that many of these criminal interactions were, for their young participants, preparation for adult life in the area.

The streets of Hungate also appealed to a variety of outsiders and their contribution to the lives of youths in the area should not be overlooked. Chief amongst these interlopers were the men of the garrison. There were sporadic incidents throughout the period where soldiers stationed at the nearby barracks came into Hungate and Walmgate to drink, visit friends or sample some of the more illicit pleasures the area had to offer. Inevitably there were run-ins with locals. There were scuffles and debts incurred through drinking.[655] There were

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[650] *York Herald,* 14th February 1882.
[651] Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution: A Study of Victorian Prostitutes in York,* CUP, Cambridge, 1979, 334-67
[652] *York Herald,* 10th November 1885, 9th May 1876,
[653] *York Herald,* 24th October 1882.
[654] *York Herald,* 17th September 1877.
[655] For example, *York Herald,* 27th May 1893.

also seductions, however, and it is important to remember that the majority of the interactions between soldiers and residents would have been, at least initially, friendly. Elizabeth Florence, a young woman from Hungate, was brought before the court in 1896 to answer a charge of illegally possessing a military jacket. She told the court, to no avail, that it had been a gift from a soldier.[656] Rowntree, exploring the public houses of the area for *Poverty,* noted that especially in the winter months their rooms were often crowded. 'The company is almost entirely composed of young persons' he noted, and often 'there is a considerable number of soldiers present'.[657] Whilst the Police Court records of violence, theft and other illicit activities made Hungate appear a closed and dangerous place, the sporadic mentions of York's garrison indicate that young men and women from the area were sometimes more than willing to welcome other young people into the growing radius they felt they belonged to.

If juvenile crime in Hungate represented the unsteady steps towards independent adulthood for youthful residents, steps that radiated outwards from the family home, then in Bethnal Green such crimes were much more about providing what the family home did not. Crimes committed by youths in Bethnal Green seem to have been driven by two clear motives – space and money. Financial crimes committed by the young were often thefts or burglaries that either focused on money or goods that could be easily redeemed for cash. In 1906 the nineteen year old George Rowe was arrested for knocking down a woman in the street a stealing her purse and two handkerchiefs. His alibi was that he had been a nearby coffee-shop, but his purchase of tea and bread, and a promise to the landlord that he would soon repay the expense of a few cuts of meat, suggest that this meal was courtesy of his victim's purse. Certainly, the court was not impressed by the proximity of the coffee house to the scene of the crime.[658] Similarly two years later, the eighteen year old Edward Scott knocked down a servant in the street and made off with her feather boa.[659] The small pawnbrokers and shops that dotted the district and ran up and down the Bethnal Green Road were a fertile ground for turning such objects into ready cash.

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[656] *York Herald,* 10th January 1896.
[657] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 311.
[658] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 11 April 2011), July 1906, trial of George Rowe (19), (t19060723-58).
[659] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, trial of Edward Scott, 1908.

Although many young men and women in the area found ready employment, wages and working hours fluctuated, and moreover many youths were expected to contribute to the household economy. Petty thefts and robberies such as those described above offered perpetrators a way to not only seize money but keep it for oneself.

The second motive common to many youth crimes in Bethnal Green revolved around the spaces of the district itself. Some young men, as evidenced by the assault on P.C. Young discussed in the first chapter, could be fiercely territorial over their rights to the public spaces of the area. Those who intruded could become "fair game". John Marks, a young man from Finsbury out one night with a friend in Bethnal Green, walked past a group of local youths who hurled abuse and pint glasses at him. The case fell apart when what may have been a young Arthur Harding testified that Marks had gone looking for his alleged attackers, knife in hand.[660] As previously noted, the close association between youths and the streets of their home district could cut both ways, and outsiders often had a clear idea of where to find local youths. This was by no means limited to the rival gangs described by Humphries and Davies; the local police also demonstrated an increasing confidence when it came to locating young offenders.[661] Edward Scott did not need to wait long; he was arrested hours after knocking down his victim by a beat officer who knew him by sight. At his trial he gave vent to his frustrations over the double-edged nature of his involvement in the public space of the street. 'Everything that is done in Bethnal Green Road and Brick Lane' he complained 'I am always blamed for'.[662] What many of these young men were seeking in the streets was a space they could call their own.

The trial of William Newman in 1908, mentioned earlier, offers an unusually detailed insight into how interaction with the street represented the yearning for independent space common amongst Bethnal Green youths. Accused of being part of a gang who assaulted several men in the street,

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[660] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 10 April 2010), July 1906, trial of Edward Emms (24), (t19060723-28). The witness appears as 'Arthur Treseldon', claiming Harding was simply a nickname, but the address given suggests that it is the same man interviewed years later by Raphael Samuel.
[661] Humphries, *Hooligans and Rebels,* 1-10. Davies, 'Youth Gangs, Masculinity and Violence', 353-355.
[662] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, trial of Edward Scott, 1908.

Newman's alibi was provided by his girlfriend Lizzie Stanton. She claimed they had visited a series of pubs up and down the Bethnal Green Road before returning home. What is perhaps most fascinating about the case is that Newman and Stanton lived in the same multiple-occupancy dwelling in Granby Street with their respective families. Walking-out for this young couple, like many of their witnesses in the case who were couples themselves parting at the doorstep that evening, may have been the only way to secure some private space for courtship.[663] Walking out was remarkably popular amongst courting youths in all three districts; during courtships in Middlesbrough, Bell noted, many young men and women 'go about together in the streets'. She knew one mother, she recounted, 'whose supervision of her daughter took the strange form of saying she would not have the young man in the house, because, she said, she "did not like such carryings on", and she therefore let the girl walk about the streets with him often until midnight'.[664] Yet the sheer levels of overcrowding in Bethnal Green left little room privacy for burgeoning young couples. As Bell demonstrated, as late as 1907 leisure options for the young (especially those too young to secure their own income in the town) were severely limited. For Marsh Ward youths the street may have simply been the *only* space available, whereas in Bethnal Green the street was one part of an external world opening up around the home. Whilst the desire to walk out was still alive and well amongst the young people of 1898 as Nurse Williams informed Booth, a range of spaces had developed that were preferable to simply walking the street.[665] Although not specifically designed for youths as church clubs and activities were, public houses, coffee shops, and increasingly towards the end of the period music halls and cinemas, saw youth, especially youth courtship, develop in ways very different to the Marsh Ward.

Three years on from the trial in which their nocturnal leisure time was laid bare, William and Elizabeth were married at St. Matthew's Bethnal Green. At the time of the marriage in 1908 they were no longer living in the same property in Granby Street, and three years later the 1911 census found them in

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[663] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, William Newman 1908
[664] Bell, *At the Works*, 181.
[665] B/227, Charles Booth notebooks, 95-97.

Hackney with a two year old son.[666] On the surface this seems an unremarkable occurrence, one human moment unfolding as many thousands did across the East End in the period. Yet this marriage, like many others in the district, was symptomatic of a growing desire amongst the young to establish their own homes independent of their parents. Concerned social investigators were aware of a shift in priorities. The District Nurse had provided Booth's researchers with a fairly pragmatic vision of marriage in the East End. 'Public opinion' she noted 'does not allow…[unmarried cohabitation]…amongst young people…they must be married'.[667] It was acceptable for Newman and Stanton to live as neighbours in the same building, but another matter for them to live *together* in the same home.

Ellen Ross has made a detailed study of motherhood in the East End, including a detailed study of St. Matthew's, where William and Elizabeth married. She concluded that Bethnal Green youths did marry at a younger age than the wider population and convincingly argued for a culture of courting in the neighbourhood sensitive to both local conditions and 'the earliest years of the modern commercialisation and magnification of love and romance'. Yet she does not adequately question the assumption that an 'astonishingly high proportion' of couples listed as living in the same street or the same dwelling on the marriage certificate definitely indicates that a great many were 'actually cohabitating' before marriage.[668] As is clear in the case of William and Elizabeth similar addresses did not always mean a local acceptance of pre-marital cohabitation. Nor did it point, as some feared, to an ongoing acceptance amongst both young couples and wider working-class society of pre-marital sex. Reverend Carter, the incumbent of St. Matthias, painted an uncompromising picture of marriage in his parish for Booth. 'Marriage in the parish is usually a disgusting orgy' he told Booth's assistant. Services were frequently disrupted by drunken parishioners and many marriages were delayed by the doctor fearing that the bride was about to give birth.[669] An examination of Reverend Carter's parish records, however, does not bear out his claims of a large number of pregnant brides. Of the

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[666] London Metropolitan Archives, London, P72/MTW/077, St Matthew's Marriage Register 1903-1909, 19. 1911 Census Returns, Shoreditch North East, 2, 442.
[667] B227, Charles Booth Notebooks, 95-97.
[668] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 60-68.
[669] B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 125-127.

hundreds of marriages that took place in the parish between 1870 and 1911, the vast majority of them amongst the young, only a tiny number were followed by a birth less than nine months later.[670]

Of all of the concerned observers studying the young in Bethnal Green Helen Bosanquet came closest to touching on the true reason behind the increasing trend towards youthful marriage. It was all a rush, Bosanquet concluded, of young people keen to set up together. Whilst her concern that their young age and inexperience would doom many couples to being unable to offer the family they were establishing 'decency and comfort', she was perhaps more accurate in her assessment that chief amongst the causes was 'the overcrowding in our large towns'.[671] As previously observed, marriage did not always lead to the instant establishment of the family home. Many young couples in all three areas, as Gillis has pointed out, 'would have to move in with parents' to start with, yet the 'ideal' remained 'the nuclear family and the separate household'.[672] What the marital home ultimately represented for many working-class young men and women across urban England was the freedom to dispose of resources in ways they themselves saw fit. There is no doubt that continuing to live in the parental home as a newly-wed couple caused friction. Thomas Lynch, summoned for failing to support his wife in Hungate, complained to the court that he simply did not get on with her parents, with whom they were living, and had been turned out by her father. He swore to the court that he would take the new Mrs Lynch back, but refused to live with her if it meant returning to her family home.[673] Despite the continuing bonds that Bell observed, particularly between mothers and daughters, which tied these new homes to the parental ones they had sprung from, the idea of ownership over space, time and money seems to have driven many young men and women across urban Britain to establish homes of their own.[674] The 1911 census, the first to ask couples about the duration of their marriages, found that the vast majority of those married for three years or under

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[670] London Metropolitan Archives, London, P72/MTS/023 and 024, St Matthias Bethnal Green Marriage Register 1878-1920.
[671] Helen Bosanquet 'Marriage in East London – 1895', in Ellen Ross (ed.), *Slum Travellers: Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920,* University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2007, 70-71.
[672] Gillis, *For Better For Worse,* 243.
[673] *York Herald,* 25th September 1877.
[674] Bell, *At the Works,* 115.

in Hungate were living in their own homes, often with children already in place. There were exceptions, such as George Russell and his wife, who lived with his widowed mother and younger siblings, but such decisions were often about the need to support existing family members in need. As such the arrangements worked both ways; Florence Casper, newly widowed, was assisted in supporting her small children by her younger brother who had moved into her marital home with her.[675] Unlike the act of marriage itself, which could represent only the most hesitant of first steps into the world of independence that lay beyond the family home, having children demanded more developed structures and attitudes towards how homes were arranged.

Examining the developing social and cultural experiences of working-class youth in all three districts casts the significance of work in a new light. As the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth the issue of youth employment and unemployment came to preoccupy social reformers. Yet within the context of working-class youth itself employment was nowhere near as defining. Drawing on the work of Reginald Bray and Arnold Freeman, both respected pioneers who studied working-class youth in the decades before the First World War, Gillis has pointed to youth as a crucial time when the skilled, favouring apprenticeship and a later entrance into the world of work, separated from the unskilled, for whom 'the change of school to employment involved no choice on their part, no investment on the part of their parents'. This lack of planning, driven by the pure need for any form of income from older children, led to a failure to 'attain a "man's job" – usually meaning a skilled or semi-skilled position' and was 'tantamount to not only economic poverty but social subordination'.[676]

Accepting this strict delineation between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' at face value, however, imposes severe limitations on how youth work in the period can be understood. Censuses prior to 1911 offer too little information for historians to assess levels of skill in a number of industries. Likewise the observations of middle-class outsiders confuse as much as they illuminate.[677] Clearly the types of

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[675] 1911 Census Returns York, District 17, 284.
[676] John Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations 1770-Present,* Academic Press, New York and London, 1974, 127-128.
[677] Donald M. MacRaild and David E. Martin, *Labour in British Society, 1830-1914.* Macmillan Press Ltd, Basingstoke, 2000, 22.

employment that many young men and women in these three districts ventured into were by no means the skilled professions that comprised the labour aristocracy which has received so much critical attention over the last few decades.[678] Employment for many young people, however, did involve the acquisition of skills and experience that could be relied upon in later life. Women working in the East End, for instance, were often hired back to perform outwork for firms that they had worked in-house for as young women. Indeed, as Clara Collet found in her study of young female workers for *Life and Labour in London*, firms relied upon the previously learned skills of their outworkers in order to maintain the speed of production outside of factory control.[679] Women's work was almost universally considered 'unskilled' by observers, yet the hours dedicated to staff training and development, especially at a *Rowntree's* increasingly interested in new studies of efficiency, indicates a localised conception of young women's work that placed considerable value on the idea of skill.[680] Although only temporary workers, who would be let go upon marriage, girls at *Rowntree's* relied upon a level of skill that, although not necessarily conferring lasting social status, did provide them with a stake in the labour market during their short tenure there. Seeing youth work purely through the lens of wider lifetime employment ignores the contextual importance of these jobs in young adulthood itself. Adopting a language of 'skill' and 'semi-skilled' as Michael Childs has done in his study of youth labour raises important questions about long-term employment prospects but ignores many of the young men and women growing up in districts such as the three featured here who saw youth employment not as the start of a life of work but as an independent stage where specific skills, contacts, and earnings coalesced in the short term.[681] Youth work in all three districts held an immediate significance for young men and women that extends well beyond historical discussions of the relationship between mechanisation and work that skilled and semi-skilled have come to represent.

The significance of work for youths in the Marsh Ward is the most clear-cut of the three. With few options for gainful employment other than the Iron

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[678] Arthur McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950.* Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001, 48-49.
[679] Booth, *Life and Labour,* I, 5, 267-280.
[680] Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution,* 212-213.
[681] Michael Childs, 'Boy Labour in Late Victorian and Edwardian England and the Remaking of the Working Class', *Journal of Social History,* 23, 4, (Summer 1990), 782-784

Works for young men in the town, establishing an independent living for the young men of the district hinged on seizing this work with both hands as soon as possible. Bell was certainly convinced, complaining that at the very point that he was becoming a man, the Middlesbrough boy was 'simply turned loose, either to do nothing, or else to take on one odd job after another'.[682] Of the seven thirteen to sixteen year-old Marsh Ward boys that are traceable between the 1881 and 1891 censuses, five had gone from small jobs or having no occupation to being employed at the Works. There were, of course, small exceptions. Bell's perspective, as wife of one of the town's major Iron Masters, was skewed. . Of the two remaining boys from the 1881-1891 sample, one followed in his father's footsteps to become a Corporation Labourer, whereas the other went from Print Compositor to working in the shipping industry in the town.[683] For the majority of young male residents throughout the period, however, it was the start of a life at the Works that marked the transition into independent adulthood. Some continued to live at home until marriage, yet some others in the Marsh Ward chose to celebrate their new-found financial freedom by leaving the family home and taking up lodgings elsewhere. As successive sons of the Denny family left the family home in Middlesbrough they took up lodgings around the town before marrying later on.[684] Desperate for freedom since youth, Marsh Ward boys leapt at the first opportunities they could take advantage of.

In York a different culture was emerging that increasingly placed considerable value on short-term youth employment. Young women were gaining more power as individual workers in the final decades of the period. The expansion of both *Rowntree's* and *Terry's,* saw one third of Hungate residents aged thirteen to twenty working in the confectionary industry on both 1901 and 1911 censuses. The rates of employment were even higher amongst young women – half of all girls in Hungate aged between thirteen and twenty worked at either *Rowntree's* or *Terry's* according to both 1901 and 1911 censuses.[685] It is a trend that ran counter to not just growing preponderance of housewifery that Bourke has observed amongst working-class women more generally, but also

[682] Bell, *At the Works,* 138-139
[683] 1881 and 1891 Census Returns, Middlesbrough.
[684] 1871 Census Returns, Middlesbrough, RG10/4891, 12, 1881 Census Returns, Middlesbrough, RG11/4854, 44, 1891 Census Returns, Middlesbrough, RG12/4012, 11.
[685] 1901 and 1911 Census Returns, York.

complicates arguments that point to a growing desire to marry young amongst those women.[686] As demonstrated in Chapter Two, not only larger families but also single parent domestic units not just survived across the period, but by 1911 had actually risen from the 1871 census. Many of the older children in these families, especially the young women, were employed in the confectionary factories of the city. The confectionary industry, and *Rowntree's* in particular, were widely acknowledged as beneficial employers. Whilst staff sports days and lessons in Grecian dancing may have been of fleeting interest (or perhaps more of an obligation) for many young men and women at the factory, the attention of welfare officers and company support schemes would have added a sense of value to the work that they did.[687] Likewise we should not be too hasty to decry domestic economy classes (attendance compulsory) as useless and patronising. Meg Gomersall is certainly correct that for many girls classes like these would have simply been a summary in skills already learnt at home from mother, but then at the very least they should be seen as a positive reinforcement.[688] As the notebook of one girl, Lillian Larcum, demonstrates, information was also provided on subjects of wider utility such as treating diseases and injuries.[689] Not only would youth employment in the confectionary industry, however short, have been seen as beneficial by the wider family in need of the wages of youth, but *Rowntree's* may well have fostered a culture amongst young women in Hungate that saw them value their labour in youth.

Although it is impossible to fully ascertain without direct testimony, it is clear from Rowntree's own calculations of poverty over the lifecycle, gleaned from discussions with and observations of Hungate residents, that for the girls and their families in question, by the twentieth-century youth was increasingly a clearly defined period in which significant earnings could be achieved.[690] This would have cast the earning potential of daughters and sisters in a considerably different light to the limited opportunities Bell was mapping out in

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[686] Bourke, 'Housewfiery', 172-181.
[687] Robert Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution, 1862-1969,* Cambridge, CUP, 1995, 225-229.
[688] Meg Gomersall, *Working-Class Girls in Nineteenth Century England: Life, Work and Schooling,* Macmillan, London, 1997.
[689] Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York, Rowntree/DL/MISC/13, Notebook of Lillian Larcum, 65-95.
[690] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 137.

Middlesbrough.[691] For young women of the Marsh Ward marriage opened up spaces and incomes that, even if they were heavily dependent on the continuing vitality and humour of husbands, offered far more independence than they had as children within the parental home. In Hungate the trend seems to have been towards the opposite. The advent of mass factory work, far from excluding women from the workforce, offered unprecedented incomes and activities for the young girls of the district. It also gave these young women a greater financial stake within the family home. The 1901 and 1911 censuses show that many of the larger families recorded by enumerators were supported in part by both young men *and* women working in the confectionary industry. Rowntree had postulated in 1901 that one of the chief causes of poverty was 'largeness of family', but the explosion in youth work in the area occurring as his study was published suggests that this was in flux.[692] Many of the single parent families featured on the 1901 and 1911 censuses were supported by the earnings of their youthful residents; the widowed Charlotte Bush in Palmer Lane in 1911 had an adult son who helped her sell coal and two adult daughters working in confectionary.[693] Youthful earnings in Hungate allowed larger families to survive well into the twentieth-century.

Tracing the impact of employment on the lives of Bethnal Green youths is the most complex. In earlier periods Bethnal Green had been a centre of silk-weaving in London, yet by the final decades of the nineteenth-century its economic trajectory mirrored that of many other districts previously dedicated to craft industry. Increasingly focused in factories and geared towards mass production, the silk industry left the area to be replaced with more piece-meal workshops and modes of production. Following on from the critiques of reformers who decried the 'sweated trades' of tailoring and piece-work, historians have largely seen this industry as unstable, poorly-paid, and the province of the desperate. Gareth Stedman-Jones casts East-End work in a negative light – a product of desperate necessity.[694] At first glance the trajectories from youth work to adult employment in Bethnal Green would seem to mirror such an observation. Many of the young residents of Chilton Street in 1871, for

[691] Bell, *At the Works,* 171-245.
[692] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 128-129, 137.
[693] 1911 Census Returns York, District 17, 340.
[694] Jones, *Outcast London*, 205.

example, were working in the same industries they were to be found in ten years later. Cabinet making and general labouring predominated amongst young men and, as Booth researchers found, was given to peaks and troughs in terms of both hours and wages.[695] Some young men changed their occupations as they grew older; errand running and porting goods were dropped in favour of work in clothing or shoe manufacture. Girls likewise followed the general trend of abandoning youth employment on marriage. Only one of the girls that comprised the cohort was still working in 1881 – she had remained a spinster at the family home. Bethnal Green youths, in a small but remarkably representative sample of youth work in the district, seem to have been trapped in the unskilled cycle of temporary and low-grade work that led on to insecure and low-wage adult work for men and motherhood for women.[696]

A sharper focus, however, reveals considerable flaws in this wide-angle analysis. The furniture trade, a major source of employment in the area, was, as Childs has observed becoming an industry where adult workers assembled the pieces crafted by youth labour.[697] It was also an industry in economic flux throughout the period, one where wages could be perilously unstable, and new competitors and workshops could easily undercut existing concerns.[698] Low levels of unionisation and the lack for any set qualification to enter the trade, combined with an influx of Jewish workers in the 1880s and 1890s that set up in competition, served to stretch the already thin profits of the industry further. On the surface this would seem a prime example of the low-skilled industry that trapped working-class youths in unsatisfactory employment. Yet if it is examined from the perspective of the youths themselves, it quickly becomes clear that work in the furniture trade required young men to gather contacts and abilities during their youths. Those men interviewed by Booth spoke of 'small and precarious' units of production, as Hugh McLeod has put it, but also the survival of what he dubs 'preindustrial' work rhythms including 'a modified St. Monday'.[699] Some lived a vicarious existence on what employment could be found, but others had established connections to furniture dealers in the West

[695] A6, Charles Booth Notebooks, 171-173, 224-230
[696] Gillis, *Youth and History*, 127-128.
[697] Childs, 'Boy Labour', 787
[698] A6, Charles Booth Notebooks, 171-329
[699] McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Victorian City,* 102-103.

End and Overseas, they told E.W. Brooks.[700] Although Brooks occasionally struggled with the figures provided by these 'gaffers', noting after one interview that a Mr Peck in Busby Street must have either 'overstated' the income or 'understated' the hours of work 'for at 7d an hour he would have to work ten hours every day', by and large the wages could fluctuate up and much as they could down.[701] Although arguably unstable, the trade was by no means a dead end for young initiates.

The question of young female employment in Bethnal Green is even more complex. Liz, the fictional East-End girl created by journalist Walter Besant, embodied for him the personification of the female lifecycle in Bethnal Green. She went to school as a child, and then became a 'factory girl' until marrying and having a family, the daughters of which would repeat the process. It was, Besant claimed, 'the natural order of things' for girls like Liz.[702] Middle-class observers were quick to label youth employment amongst East End girls as a temporary state, part of a transition between childhood and adult married life, where the wider family need for wages took over. East End girls were seen as flighty and uninterested in work beyond the necessity to earn. 'When the girl leaves school', one District Nurse in Bethnal Green told Booth, 'her first object is to find a "business" which may occupy her during the day and leave her free in the evening'. This explained, she continued, the local reluctance about entering service, as even those who acquiesced to day service 'insist upon returning home in the evening'.[703] Census returns would seem to support this – women in the district were rarely recorded as working once they entered into marriage and maternity. Youth work for many girls, they suggested, was a means to an end. Simply describing youth employment for young women in such terms, however, glosses over the significance it held to young women during their time as paid workers. Historians must of course, as Joanna Bourke has emphasised, ensure that they do not disregard the importance of housewifery for many working-class women. Domestic life was not simply a fate awaiting girls as Besant suggested but, increasingly throughout the period, one that women actively aspired to

[700] A6, Charles Booth Notebooks, 224-226, 227-230.
[701] A7, Charles Booth Notebooks, 322-324.
[702] Besant, *East London*, 114-135.
[703] B227, Charles Booth Notebooks, London School of Economics Archives, 93-95.

Bourke claims.[704] Such observations are undeniable, particularly when the trends portrayed on the census returns are taken into consideration. Yet such a focus overlooks the significance of youth employment within the youths of young women in Bethnal Green. Both Louise Raw and Lise Sanders have placed emphasis on the burgeoning opportunities and cultural outlets for young women employed in a variety of trades in the capital. Raw's work in particular, although principally focused on the famous Bryant and May strike, depicts a group of young employed women who identified socially with each other both in work and outside of it.[705]

The economies of Bethnal Green encouraged a more durable relationship between young women and work, one that could continue well after marriage. Partly, as O'Day and Englander have observed in their assessment of Booth's work, it was because the Industry Series that provided so much insight into working practices in the capital 'was written and researched entirely by men'. Although Clara Collet studied women's work for the previous Poverty Series, much of Booth's coverage of female work in London remains at best patchy.[706] This leaves historians at a considerable disadvantage when talking about the impact of work in the East End on the lives of female residents for, as Collet herself discovered, the area was a complex patchwork of female employment that was entered into at a young age. Despite what census returns may have indicated women in Bethnal Green continued to work after marriage. Not only were they engaged in pre-industrial patterns of 'production and service' such as Leonore Davidoff has observed in the taking on of lodgers, but they also carried on in industries that they had worked in as girls. Collet found that most women who made packaging or matchboxes at home after marriage had worked in the craft before marrying. For some the earnings could be considerable, such as the third of married women working in corset-sewing who earned over 12s. a week.[707] Access to this world of outwork required the cultivation of skills and contacts much like those needed by young men in the area. It also represented continuity

[704] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 167-197
[705] Louise Raw, *Striking a Light: The Bryant and May Matchwomen and their Place in History,* Continuum Publishing: London, 2011 and Lise Sanders, *Consuming Fantasies: Labour, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl 1880-1920,* Ohio State University Press: Ohio, 2006.
[706] O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth,* 109.
[707] Booth, *Life and Labour,* I, 5, 267-280.

with the patterns of time, space and money that dominated the parental homes these girls had left behind.

Any assessment of how youths both affected, and were affected by, their environments as they grew older must unavoidably struggle with the transitional nature of youth. In a review of recent historiography on the subject of youth in Western history Oded Heilbronner was left with the impression that this was a discipline still emerging. Inevitably his attempt at a more definite conclusion, that between the end of the nineteenth-century and the 1970s youth culture shifted from one 'initiated by state authorities and the establishment to a culture initiated by young people' is not borne out in the context studied here.[708] As a study of smoking amongst working-class lads in the decades leading up to the First World War has shown, young men and women at the end of the nineteenth-century were more than capable of defining their own cultures.[709] This chapter has attempted to follow the advice of John Gillis, who has urged that the study of youth 'must focus on that interface where the expectations of the young and those of their elders interact in a dynamic manner'.[710] Working from this formula, it is clear that working-class youths in all three districts embarked on a journey to adulthood that emanated from the family home. In Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward young men and women entered wider social and geographical boundaries as they developed their own ways of marshalling time, space, money and each other. It was a trajectory that, in all cases, led to the establishment of homes of their own.

Scratching the surface of this process reveals just how fundamental an affect local environment had on youths. The choices they made as they reached adulthood were responses to the pressures and opportunities offered by their particular surroundings. In the Marsh Ward this manifested itself as an impatience to marry and financially "arrive" as adults, whereas in Bethnal Green the process was a much more subtle one that involved a continuation of patterns of life developed in early childhood. A time period of fifty years also means that such processes were subject to change, as was the case with the opening up of

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[708] Oded Heilbronner, 'From a Culture *for* Youth to a Culture *of* Youth: Recent Trends in the Historiography of Western Youth Cultures', *Contemporary European Histories,* 17, 4, (Nov. 2008), 575-591.
[709] Matthew Hilton, 'Tabs, Fags, and the Boy Labour Problem in Late Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Social History,* 28, 3, (Spring 1995), 587-607
[710] Gillis, *Youth in History,* x.

confectionary employment on a major scale for the residents of Hungate. Moreover, such an emphasis on linking what Richard Dennis had described as 'spatial structure (shapes on the ground)' with 'social structures (shapes in society)' is complicated by the fact that many of these young men and women were parts of highly mobile populations.

Tracing residential persistence between census integers in these three areas is extremely difficult. Even with increasingly sophisticated software available to historians studying the census, less than half of residents in any given year could be traced on the following census. Rough calculations of those who remain from one integer to the next suggest that residential persistence never topped 30% in any of the three areas. As Dennis himself has shown, even those who appear to stay over the years cannot always be trusted.[711] With a constantly changing population in each district, the time many young people would have been exposed to the particular influences of Hungate, Bethnal Green or the Marsh Ward could have been anything from whole childhoods to a matter of days. This is reflected in the varied living patterns adopted by those youths whose transition into adulthood can be followed on successive censuses. In some cases children adopted living patterns similar to their parents even when moving to other cities; many of the ten children Thomas and Annie Nye brought up in Garden Place in Hungate went on to have large families despite being scattered not just across York, but the wider Yorkshire region and even in London.[712] Others, however, developed their own arrangements of home. The children of the Lawrence family, who largely remained within walking distance of their family home in the Marsh Ward, never seem to have embraced taking in lodgers as their parents did.[713]

High levels of mobility in all three districts saw couples come together and then often move on. Some moved close by, as Lady Bell found in her examination of Middlesbrough. Daughters sometimes relied on mothers for childcare and domestic advice and, less frequently, parents continued to rely on offspring as 'there are cases', Bell noted, 'where the young wife neglects her

[711] Dennis, *English Industrial Cities,* 198, 254, 294
[712] 1871-1911 Census Returns, York.
[713] 1871-1911 Census Returns, Middlesbrough.

own house to go to her mother's'.[714] Other children moved on, however, and the children of families traced at random from the 1871 census in Hungate spread not only across York but across the cities and villages of Yorkshire. Local intermarriage represents no steadfast indication of a growing indigenous culture.[715] Bethnal Green in 1871 was almost ninety years away from the more introverted community that Young and Willmott argued existed in the post-war world of the East End and the physical environment was markedly different.[716] Yet this myriad of experiences merely reinforces the important place that the home held in the lives of young men and women – although circumstances varied the need to remain adaptable was constant for the young. It was something they sought in their homes.

More than anything else, the formative experiences of youth carried over into marriage, and although their connections to Bethnal Green, Hungate and the Marsh Ward may have continued or faded, young men and women entered new married life tied firmly to their particular past experiences. The steps from childhood, to youth, to adult life in all three districts were fundamentally formed by the experiences of individual girls and boys. The broad travails of life close to the poverty line, the careful balancing act of resources, was held in common, but it was the detail of this struggle that mattered most to the young. Hendrick, arguing so convincingly for a reassessment of the image of working-class youth, nevertheless frames his study of them around a largely economic identity. In Edwardian period, he argues, young people were more and more becoming part of 'the public domain' as 'young workers'. It was a new role that interested parties sought to 'carefully' circumscribe.[717] As this chapter has shown, however, work was just one of the final steps in reaching adulthood for young men and women in the period, an uneven step at that. It came at the end of a long series of important influences that found both site and expression in the spaces around the family home. Growing up in homes in Hungate, Bethnal Green or the Marsh Ward saw young men and women go from childhood to adulthood in urban environments that were intensely localised. The fabric of dwellings, the layout of

[714] Bell, *At the Works,* 114-115.
[715] Ross, *Motherhood,* 67.
[716] Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London,* Routledge New Edition: London, 2011.
[717] Hendrick, *Images of Youth,* 259.

streets, and the supervision (or lack of) both kith and kin and authoritative figures such as the School Board officer, all varied from place to place and it was this variation that shaped the lives of the young. Even as they grew older and their horizons radiated outwards from the family home, the young men and women of urban Britain remained anchored in particular cultures of time, work, leisure and freedom that stemmed directly from the facilities and opportunities of their respective environments. Such intensely local influences, however, were of only coincidental interest to the Edwardian youth experts. Whereas the social investigators whose works spearheaded interest in such studies, particularly Rowntree and Booth, took a very reserved tone with their evidence, there was no such hesitation on the part of this second stage of experts. Freeman, for instance, was introduced as a researcher in the mould of 'Mr. Charles Booth and…Mr. Seebohm Rowntree', but his conclusions were much more forceful.[718] The images of working-class youth that Freeman and his contemporaries created, focused around particular social problems and their solutions, have had a lasting legacy on studies of young men and women to this day. Reconciling this intense localism on the one hand and this increasing urge to see the working-class as a unified national body that could be analysed and understood on the other, is crucial if these homes are to be placed in a wider historical context.

[718] Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour,* xii-xiii.

Chapter Seven: Groups and Classes – the Home in wider context

The Home in Working-Class society

From the early 1880s onwards small notices began to appear in the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* emanating from homes in the Marsh Ward. Written up by an anonymous typesetter at the newspaper, and featuring in the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Obituaries section, they all followed the same general pattern.

> PARKS – At 23, Olive Street, on the 28th Inst., Henry Parks, aged 42 years. Internment on Wednesday 30th at 2 o'clock. Friends please accept this intimation.[719]

Some varied in their application of personal detail. John Robson, 73, was 'for over 30 years in the employment' of a local Iron Foundry, whilst Robert Edgar, only 47, was more touchingly 'the beloved husband'. Underneath, in a typical display of late Victorian entrepreneurial spirit, the paper ran advertisements for headstones and wreaths.[720]

The adverts offer several interesting insights into life in the Marsh Ward. Firstly, they only begin to appear from the 1880s onwards, and not in any considerable number. This suggests that either the insertion fee was relatively prohibitive, or that, despite only retailing at one halfpenny for the majority of the period, the *Gazette* was not a widely read paper amongst residents of the Marsh Ward. It was not named by Bell in her extensive survey of reading habits and materials amongst the Iron Workers.[721] Word-of-mouth may well have been a much more effective method of transmitting the news of death amongst a tightly concentrated and cash-strapped network of acquaintances. Secondly, the importance of an (at least semi-permanent) address was becoming a useful, and sometimes even lucrative, aspect of daily life. Throughout the period residents of the Marsh Ward placed their addresses in the local paper to enlist aid in finding lost dogs, sell Christmas cards and other festive goods, and attest to the healing

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[719] *The Daily Gazette*, 29th March 1881.
[720] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 30th January 1888, 11th September 1899.
[721] Bell, *At the Works,* 142-170.

properties of a Mr. R. Lonsdale's 'magnetaire belt'.[722] Most significant, however, were the notices of bereavement that indicate that homes in the Marsh Ward were increasingly becoming focal points for issues that affected groups beyond the household itself.

There seems to have been a subtle yet significant variation between the funerals of children and adults. Direct sources are not easy to come by. Maud Pember Reeves's frequently cited study of Lambeth described the common whip-round for the funerals of children in the neighbourhood. A funeral, she discovered, cost somewhere between 28s and 30s for a child, more if the body 'was too long to go under the box-seat' of the cortege driver, and families would borrow small amounts of neighbours to make up the sum, eating less for 'months afterwards' to pay back these loans.[723] Her observations would certainly seem plausible for the three districts studied here. Local policemen were at pains to tell Booth's researchers how the triangle of streets in Bethnal Green pulled together in times of need.[724] Rowntree, although somewhat reticent about discussing funerals, nevertheless held up the spectre of the pauper burial for children as something that many struggled to avoid.[725] The sample budgets that both he and Lady Bell drew up feature burial clubs as a common aspect of household expenditure.[726]

Unlike the adult funerals, however, the death of a child seems to have been a much more private affair. No newspaper notices exist for children's funerals. A common feature of life, Bell noted, the death of a child was also deeply distressing for parents.[727] Child mortality rates were high in all three districts throughout the period as Figure Fifteen demonstrates. Death and its immediate aftermath were usually intimate affairs restricted to the household. 'For many families' Julie Marie-Strange has observed 'sharing domestic space with a cadaver was a necessity that left little room for squeamishness'.[728] In Hungate, the Marsh Ward and Bethnal Green that cadaver was most likely a child. Despite the agonising lengths that many parents went to in ensuring that

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[722] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 9th January 1877, 21st December 1887, 22nd April 1881.
[723] Maud Pember Reeves, *Round about a Pound a Week,* 58-65.
[724] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 171-177.
[725] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 133-134.
[726] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 263-284, Bell, *At the Works,* 56-60.
[727] Bell, *At the Works,* 193-199.
[728] Julie-Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain 1870-1914,* 69.

their children received a dignified send-off, the patterns of borrowing, insuring, and grieving that Pember Reeves observed, and were shadowed in Bell's work, suggest that for many working-class parents across urban Britain the death of a child remained an event focused on family. Observation was expected but wider attention was not always wanted. This may have been because of the close correlations between infant mortality and poverty. Not only did poor living conditions and diet increase the risk of children dying young, but the very circumstances that saw them die would have made the home un-presentable. In all three districts, high infant mortality rates were not only rooted in the struggle with poverty, but represented significant, and private, failures in that struggle.

Marking death amongst adult residents, in contrast, was a much more public affair. Whilst the actual moment of the death and its aftermath were socially and physically intimate, taking place within the close space of the dwelling, there was a clear expectation that the home would open up for the wider process of commemoration.[729] The vast majority of notices placed in the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* and other papers were not simply announcements of bereavement, but invitations to funerals. John Robson's cortege, the notice informed readers, would leave his home in Olive Street at 2 o'clock.[730] The now-familiar image of the late Victorian funeral procession, with accompanying expenditure, was one that social commentators routinely agonised over. Home was not only the starting point for many funerals, but also the ultimate destination following the interring of the deceased. Bell, slightly disapproving yet also sympathetic to the considerable expense of a funeral, noted that in the house 'for a day or two before, the baking, the cleaning, the turning out' were all integral parts of the funeral or, as it was commonly known amongst the town's working population, 'a slow walk and a cup of tea'.[731] Although there is no way of gauging how accurate the mixture of excitement and sorrow that she claimed such occasions engendered in hosts was , it seems clear that the 'open house' of a funeral in the Marsh Ward did allow residents to interact with the wider community around them.

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[729] Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty,* 71-76.
[730] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 30th January 1888
[731] Bell, *At the Works,* 76-77.

In some ways it seems that this particular open house hosting of grief and commemoration found particular expression in Middlesbrough. Bell clearly thought so. The constant threat of accidental injury and industrial illness, she argued, hung like a pall over the town's workmen and their families.[732] The residents of the Marsh Ward streets featured here certainly suffered their share of injuries and deaths over the period. They encouraged, Bell claimed, a spirit of communality amongst the workers and their dependents. 'If you go into a house visited by death you will find it full, quite full, of visitors'.[733] The heavy dependence on male wages combined with the frequent risk of injury amongst that male workforce saw a culture of mutual-aid and sympathetic assistance develop in the Marsh Ward. The home, decked out in the appropriate materials of mourning, was at the very centre of this culture. It was not only a venue of mourning for friends and family, and a show of gratitude for the financial assistance widows and children received from neighbours, but was also an unintentional reminder of the commonality of risk and household disintegration that came with employment at the Works.

Few social investigators are as vocal about cultures of death and mourning as Bell was. Neither of the Reverends into whose parishes the triangle of streets in Bethnal Green fell discussed funerals with Booth's researchers.[734] Rowntree was very interested in calculating mortality rates in York but fell largely silent when it came to the cultural and social responses to such high incidences of death.[735] This is not to say that funerals were significant events in either Hungate or Bethnal Green. What evidence that does exist suggests that families invested heavily in the symbolic send-off. Even in the Marsh Ward itself, there was always a sizeable minority of homes not directly tied by employment to the Works who nevertheless would have been part of this general culture of mourning. Those living and dying in lodging houses, or without kith and kin in the area, would, it is true, have been unable to muster the financial or spatial resources necessary for the sort of commemoration described by Bell, but this does not mean that their deaths went entirely without notice. Although no mention was made of the funeral, the murder of Annie McGuire at a lodging

[732] Bell, *At the Works,* 100-101.
[733] Bell, *At the Works,* 103.
[734] B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 7-21, 115-127.
[735] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 205-207.

house in the Marsh Ward in 1898 certainly received considerable attention.[736] Yet the combination of high rates of work in one dangerous industry, a steady decline in multiple occupancy, and relatively high but very male-dependent household incomes meant that whilst cultures of mourning in the Marsh Ward were not unique, residents were able to invest such ceremonies with significant resources and meaning.

Funerals held a particularly poignant and symbolic place in the lives of many residents, but they were by no means the only social occasions which saw the home open its doors to the wider community. Marriage was another ceremony that came to utilise the domestic setting. As Gillis has pointed out, the developing 'tradition' of the modern wedding, with its emphasis on elaborate family celebration, was gaining ground in this period but was still largely out of the reach of many poorer couples.[737] Rates of common-law marriage were dropping rapidly in the period and, as the Bethnal Green district nurse told Booth's researchers, marriage was becoming the business of everyone.[738] Often, however, it was parents who were absent from the ceremony. 'Wedding parties' were increasingly popular in the East End, somewhat mockingly described by Helen Bosanquet as a gaggle of young men and women in 'wonderful' outfits ranging from whites to 'glowing greens and purples' who played witness and witnessed in turn for each other.[739] Their popularity stemmed from the fact that many couples would then return to the family home for a party prepared and hosted by one or other sets of parents. Bell noted that many mothers remained at home to cook the 'wedding feast'.[740] Although, as many social commentators noted, some weddings were simply an incident in the working day, for those who married at weekends or were able to take the time off to celebrate, the home played an important hosting role. Its place within the growing idealisation of the wedding was noticeable in fiction – the marriage that ends the otherwise austere socialist *The Knobstick* of 1893 featured the mother-in-law to-be waking early to prepare 'a vast pile of bread and butter; and the rounds of beef, ham and

[736] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 20th April 1898.
[737] Gillis, *A World of their Own Making,* 149-151.
[738] B227, Charles Booth Notebooks, London School of Economics Archives, 95-97.
[739] Bosanquet, 'Marriage in East London' 66-67.
[740] Bell, *At the Works,* 181.

tongue'.[741] For those who could muster the time, space and financial resources, the home could be a significant place of celebration.

In this, however, the home was seen to be in direct competition with another all-purpose venue. Some couples returned to a family celebration at home, Bosanquet noted, but others newly weds went straight from church to public house.[742] One of the two local priests interviewed by Booth was particularly scathing. Services were routinely disrupted by drunken parishioners and the bridegroom was often 'seized by his pals at the church door and taken off to stand drinks all round'.[743] Nor was it only marriage that drew residents to the public house. The pub was a common venue for the meetings of Trade Union groups and Friendly Societies. Even Rowntree, coming from a family of committed teetotallers, could see the appeal. Upon making a round of public houses in York one Saturday evening in May 1901, their 'social attractiveness', he wrote, 'struck him very forcibly'. Indeed even the 'dingy looking house' in the slums of York that he had observed saw 550 men, women and children come and go on one Saturday.[744] By the mid nineteenth-century, F.M.L Thompson has argued, the public house had become an almost exclusively working-class domain.[745] John Burnett has expanded on this point, arguing that for male members of the working-class the pub was a 'home from home'.[746] Indeed, Brad Beaven's recent study of working-class masculinities has argued forcefully for the continuity of the public house and drinking cultures as a 'centrepiece of working man's leisure and work time'.[747]

The accounts of social investigators and other observers would appear to bear this out. A running theme in many of their studies was the competition for time and money that the public house entered into with the home. 'Again and again', Bell argued, 'one sees…a brisk young workman…growing more and more accustomed to look for comfort and enjoyment out of his own home'. The cause, it was clear to her, was more often than not the wife's lack of

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[741] C. Allen Clarke, *The Knobstick,* 1893, 267.
[742] Bosanquet, 'Marriage in East London, 67.
[743] B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 125-127.
[744] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 312-315.
[745] Thompson, *Respectable Society*, 308.
[746] John Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures: A Social History of Drinks in Modern Britain.* London: Routledge, 1999, 130.
[747] Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and working-class men in Britain, 1850-1945*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005*,* 80-81.

housekeeping skills. [748] Other commentators were less certain; some shared Bell's belief that an uncomfortable domestic environment created by a careless or uneducated wife was to blame, others were more willing to blame the husband.[749] Rowntree was perhaps the most sympathetic to the genuine attractions of the public house. Singing-rooms, cosy fires, and good company, he noted, were all in abundance in even the most run-down pubs he visited during his 1901 reconnoitre.[750] What all agreed, however, was that the public house drained money from the household budget. The repeated invocation of 'good' and 'bad' husbands in studies of all three areas and further afield, the difference being the amount of money they did or did not spend in the public house, reflects not just the powerful sway of the public house over men and women in urban England, but also the preoccupation with the public house-home divide in the minds of social observers.

Considerable care needs to be taken when unpacking the place of the public house in working-class culture. Social investigators were rarely dispassionate observers when it came to the public house. Bell was active in creating alternative places of leisure in Middlesbrough to draw men away from the public house, culminating in her and her husband establishing the Winter Gardens in 1907. Rowntree was not only active in similar forms of alternate leisure, especially the York Adult School, but also through his family firm established a series of domestic economy classes for both his young women workers and their female relatives. Compiled by multiple investigators with their own viewpoints, *Life and Labour* offered no clear position on drink. Occasional comments by contributors such as Beatrice Potter, and the inclusion of questions about drink on surveys sent out to the Clergy, suggest that it was never far from the minds of the authors, but as O'Day and Englander have emphasised, Booth was also attentive to the ebb and flow of human life.[751] Perhaps given the wider scope, both in terms of subject and geography, of his survey, he was more sensitive than the other two investigators to the patchwork of localised differences that comprised "drinking culture". Subtle yet significant distinctions

[748] Bell, *At the Works,* 183.
[749] See, for instance, Dora Hope, 'My District and How I Visit It', *The Girl's Own Paper,* 43, 23rd October 1880, 3.
[750] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 310-311.
[751] Englander and O'Day, *Mr Charles Booth,* 68-69, 137, 50.

emerge when the three areas are compared. Public houses not only played different roles depending on the location, occasions, and individuals involved, but in doing so reflected the local variations that shaped the lives of men and women in the different areas.

The landscape of public houses and homes is crucial to understanding the complexities of drinking cultures in each district. No one was more keenly aware of this than Seebohm Rowntree. *Poverty* contained a carefully drawn map of York detailing where every public house, off licence and club was in the city. Newer areas around the edge of the city were lacking in drinking establishments, in some cases a deliberate choice of the investors, but in the slum areas of Walmgate and Hungate the concentration was so dense as to almost blot out sections of the map. York was by no means the city with the most licences per head, he noted, but with one for every 230 residents, they were hard to avoid.[752] This was especially the case when, as was common in Hungate, access to streets and yards was partially or wholly achieved by going through the public house.[753] Half of the public houses in the city, according to Rowntree, had more than one door and, positioned on street corners or the mouths of yards, drew in people from all directions.[754] Drinking in Hungate was not as much a temptation as a geographical certainty. With public houses positioned so prominently amongst the crowded district it would have been very difficult to ignore the social atmosphere of the pub. As Melanie Tebbutt has pointed out men and women ignored engaging with local networks of gossip and discussion at their own peril, and whilst she posits shops as a key site of these exchanges, it is clear that in Hungate the public house also fulfilled this purpose.[755] Rowntree was adamant that the slum pub he observed was a site of 'social drinking', with the majority of men staying for 'more than a quarter of an hour'. The high turnover of visitors, especially women, and the number of children appearing to collect bottles for parents at home indicates that it was not so much the drinking as the need to show one's face that drew men and women to the public house in Hungate.

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[752] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 308-309 and map typically inserted between these two pages.
[753] York City Archives, York, ACC 258, Police Chief Constable's Report on Ale Houses 1902, 1-24.
[754] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 307.
[755] Tebbutt, *Gossip*, 53-67.

Both gender and geographical dimensions also determined the place of the public house in the Marsh Ward. Here many public houses lined the streets running down to the River Tees on both banks. Here, Bell complained, they specialised in separating men from the Works with their wages. Frequently paid in high denominations, workers needed a place to break up sovereigns and half-sovereigns and it was here that the publican came into play.[756] These pubs had a reputation for being rough, as David Taylor has pointed out, although they were slowly calming under the influence of a more effective and accepted police force by turn of the twentieth-century.[757] A common place for treating and celebrating for not only the iron workers but those, such as stevedores, whose work rotated around the shifts of the Works, public houses in Middlesbrough were much closer to the masculine environment described by Burnett and Beaven.[758] Female residents, in contrast, were largely nocturnal visitors to the town's public houses according to Bell.[759] It is difficult to know exactly how true this observation is, but police reports of disturbances and accidents generally indicate that if women had been drinking it was within the confines of the home or lodging house. As in Hungate, the public house was a place of leisure and socialising, but, unlike Hungate, in the Marsh Ward this seems to have been largely the preserve of men, an extension of the masculine culture of the Works.

As in the other two districts, the place of public houses in Bethnal Green society was governed by the geography of the area and the needs of the residents. Drinking, as previously seen, was something that caused local philanthropists and reformers considerable anxiety. Bosanquet believed that the steady progress of the wedding party around the public houses of the district only further exemplified their naivety about the responsibilities of marriage. They will spend the day 'sampling the public houses' she wrote 'until any lingering traces of the sobering effects of the morning ceremony have been well washed away'.[760] In many ways, however, there is remarkable continuity between the treating that followed a wedding party and the growing habit of walking-out amongst the young in Bethnal Green. Going to the public house

[756] Bell, *At the Works,* 251.
[757] Taylor, 'Melbourne, Middlesbrough and morality: policing Victorian 'new towns' in the old world and the new'. *Social History,* 31, 1, (2006), 34 and Taylor, 'British Ballarat', 765-767.
[758] Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures*, 125, Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and working-class men,* 80-81.
[759] Bell, *At the Works,* 252-253.
[760] Bosanquet, 'Marriage in East London', 67.

together was a key part of courtship in the district. William Newman and Lizzie Stanton's progress up to Shoreditch and back down the Bethnal Green Road one night in 1908, witnessed by a series of other courting couples, was a circuit that took in a number of public houses.[761] The repeated accounts of bad husbands drinking away their wages in Bethnal Green, are, as Ross has pointed out, undeniable evidence of the masculine aura of the public house for older residents, but this came later on in life.[762] Men and women, as Joanna Bourke has observed, were often selective in their choice of public houses, and living in an area that provided considerable wage opportunities for young people of both sexes drinking for them was an activity entered into together.[763] Whilst marriage might mark a transition into a more general culture where the pub was a male-orientated domain, touring the public houses of the area with friends and family on the wedding day itself would seem much more a legacy of the particular waged culture experienced by youths in Bethnal Green.

Both overarching cultural ideas and specific local functions existed in tandem when it came to the public house. Uses changed over the lifecycle of residents. In Bethnal Green a largely male-orientated place of leisure for older residents was simultaneously a place frequented by the young of both sexes. Local economies were tied up in defining who could afford to enter the public house; in Middlesbrough the culture of the Works funnelled men into the public house whilst elsewhere growing opportunities for young women's work saw them left with money to spend. One of the duties of the Female Supervisor who cared for the *Rowntree's* girls was to visit them at home and survey their living conditions, a check-up, one suspects, that would also have sought to dissuade any pub-going tendencies these new wages might encourage.[764] Caution is needed in assessing the public house in working-class culture. Patrons, activities, and patterns of use all varied with the different social and economic conditions prevalent in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward. Even the houses themselves were startlingly different. For every cosy public house as spied on by Rowntree there were places like the Cross Keys, a few minutes walk from Hungate, where in lieu of having toilets the publican allowed his guests to 'use

[761] *Old Bailey Proceedings Online*, trial of William Newman 1908
[762] Ross, *Love and Toil,* 42-44, 65-68.
[763] Bourke, *Working-class Cultures*, 143-144.
[764] Fitzgerald, *Rowntree and the Marketing Revolution,* 229.

the yard wall' instead, an arrangement that hardly catered to female customers.[765] The same local pressures that shaped homes also determined how men and women used other spaces like public houses available to them in their localities. Rarely did these spaces stand as diametrically opposed to homes as social reformers feared.

Nor were these local pressures consistent across the period. Residents and their environment were locked in a symbiotic process of change throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. The most noticeable of these, both for contemporaries and historians, was the rapid influx of Jews from Eastern Europe into the East End. Initially focused on Whitechapel, migration spread outwards, and by the time that Charles Duckworth went to interview Reverend Carter for Charles Booth in 1898, the panic amongst the local clergy was reaching epidemic proportions. 'Two years ago they were about 200 out of 5000, now they are about 2000: in a few years they promise to oust the gentile' Carter complained.[766] Ultimately Carter's dark predictions were not realised – as of the 1911 census roughly 35% of households in the area comprised Jewish residents.[767] Nevertheless, the sudden appearance of the migrants was a subject of fascination and concern in equal measure. There were social investigations, first pioneered by Booth himself, as well as Parliamentary Select Committees into both Immigration and the Sweated Trades the Jews were thought to be taking over.[768] Impassioned debate in the national press reached a fever pitch after the Lipski case, where a young Jewish man was hanged for murdering a female lodger in the same building, and then the Whitechapel Murders, with their cryptic references to both Lipski and the wider Jewish community, hit the front pages in the late 1880s.[769] Much of the historical study of the interaction between the new arrivals and their existing gentile neighbours has focused on the animosity leading up to the recruitment riots of the First World War, where tensions over the migrants exemption from conscription (as foreign nationals) and unwillingness to enlist (and thus fight alongside the Tsar) boiled over. The

[765] ACC 258, Police Chief Constable's Report on Ale Houses 1902, pp. 1-2, 11.
[766] B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 115.
[767] 1911 Census Returns, Bethnal Green.
[768] Beyond the studies of Booth and then Russell and Lewis, referenced earlier, Parliamentary Select Committees were Select Committee on Emigration and Immigration (1888) and Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Sweating System (1890).
[769] Martin L. Friedland, *The Trials of Israel Lipski.* London: Macmillan & Co., 1984, 15-26.

influx certainly raised tensions, the growth of the British Brother's League in the East End and the forty five thousand signatories to an anti-alien petition they organised testify to just how heated feelings were getting.[770] Yet this focus on the conflicted outcomes of the migration overlooks the complexity that underlay the feelings between gentile and Jew in Bethnal Green, feelings rooted in the local environment and ideas of home and belonging.

When the gentile residents of Bethnal Green were interviewed by researchers or gave their testimony before commissions it was the difference of the new arrivals, not their religion, which they found most noticeable. 'When outsiders visited the East End', Endelman has argued, 'they tended to see its filth, congestion and bewilderingly foreign character', but this was by no means restricted to visitors.[771] Signs and businesses in Yiddish, conversations conducted in different languages, a large number of men and women wearing fur (previously something *made* in Bethnal Green for consumption *elsewhere*), were all as disturbing to local eyes as they were to the concerned journalists and MPs. The great and the not-so-good were anxious about the Jewish migrants 'colonising Great Britain under the nose of HM Government' as Arnold White, one of the most vociferous anti-immigration publicists, put it.[772] For the current residents of the East End, however, it was the foreignness that irked. One piano-forte tuner from Stepney who testified before the Royal Commission on Immigration, whilst a member of the British Brothers' League, was seemingly less concerned about the threat of foreign invasion as he was about the pickled herring business his Jewish neighbour ran from his yard. 'I do not know whether you gentlemen know what pickled herrings are' he charged the committee during the most impassioned part of his testimony, 'I have never tasted one, but the odour from them is something dreadful'.[773] The changes the migrants brought to sensory landscape Bethnal Green was what fundamentally set them apart.

Certainly large areas of Bethnal Green went through a process of transition as the new arrivals became to put down roots. Although the tidal wave of settlement that Reverend Carter feared did not come to pass, the fact that

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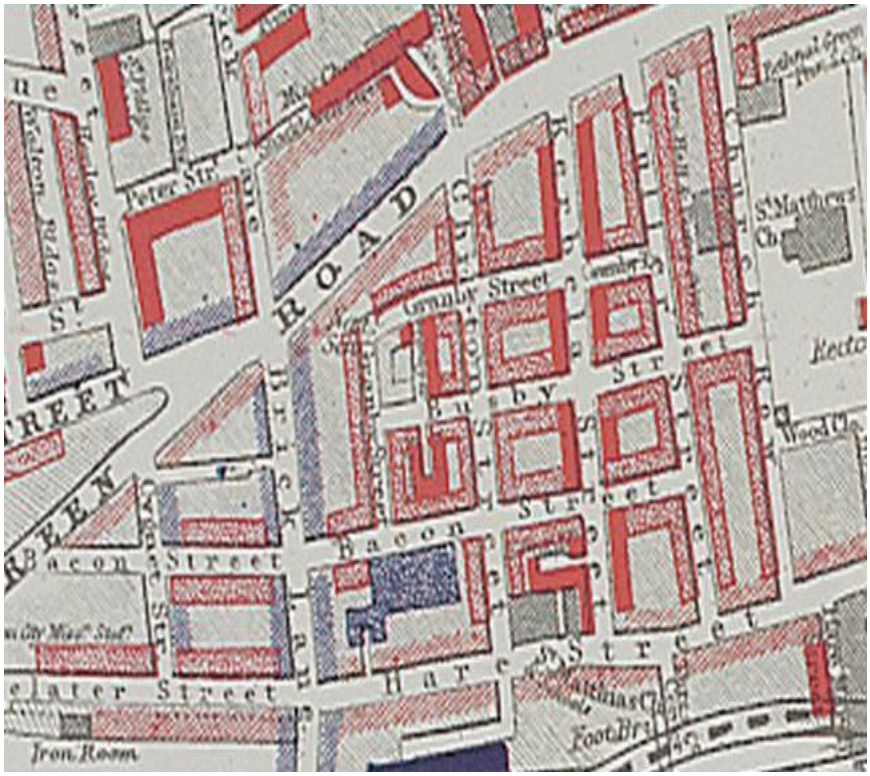
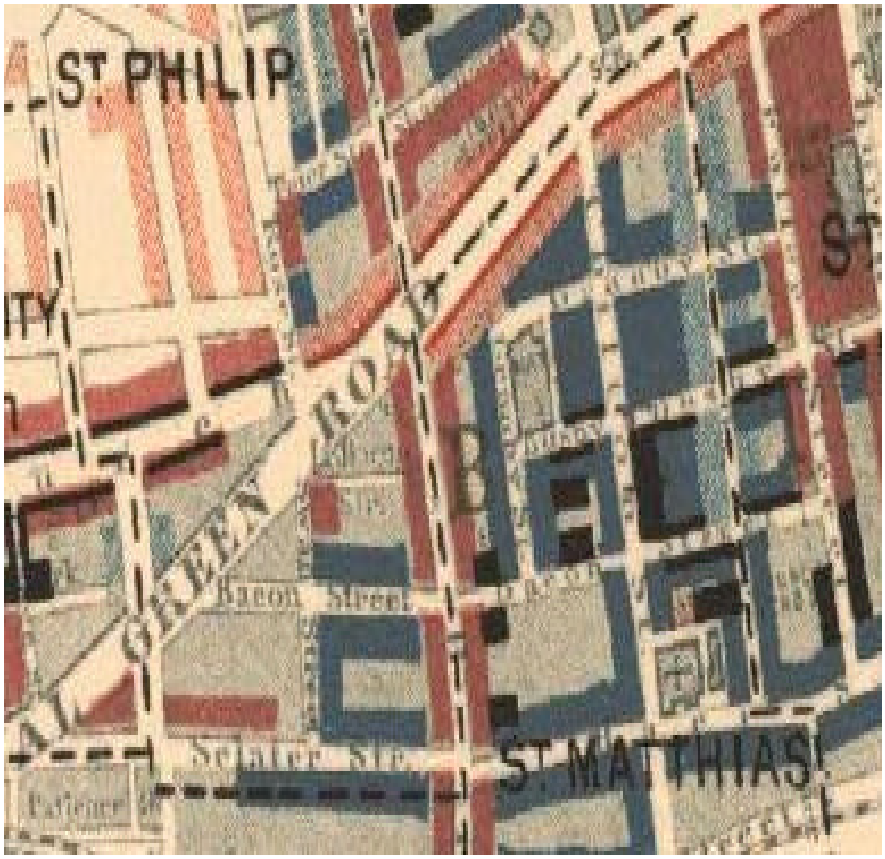
[770] Todd Endelmen, *The Jews of Britain: 1656-2000.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 159-160.
[771] Ibid*,* 145.
[772] Quoted in Fishman, *East End 1888,* 180-181.
[773] Englander, *Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants,* 91-92.

roughly one in three households listed on the 1911 census were those of Jewish migrants or their descendents represents a considerable change in the composition of the district. Even the differences between the mapping of the district in *The Jew in London* and the 1911 census returns are noticeable. Apart from a significant cluster in the buildings of Bacon Street, in 1900 the migrants had made few inroads into the area, yet by 1911 they comprised over a third of households in both Fuller Street and Busby Street, and half of those in Granby Street.[774] Spreading out from the major streets such as Brick Lane, by 1900 already predominantly populated by migrants along the section that ran through the triangle of streets studied here, the new arrivals spread not only into the geography of the district but also into the economy. 'There are 100,000 Jewish workmen in East London in all trades' a Chilton Street furniture carver complained to Brooks in 1898, 'creating an enormous demand for workshops in the district and thereby making the rents higher'.[775] Their investigations taking place over the course of the Jewish in-migration, Booth and his team found evidence of growing immigrant involvement in many of the trades that dominated Bethnal Green employment, from furniture to garment production to street trading.

[774] 1911 Census Returns, Bethnal Green.
[775] A6, Charles Booth Notebooks, 173.



Figures Twenty Five and Twenty Six: Jewish migration measured in *The Jew in London* 1900 (above) and the original poverty map produced by Booth between 1898 and 1899 (below) with relevant keys



Figures Twenty Seven and Twenty Eight: The keys accompanying the maps on the preceding page from *The Jew in London* (left) and *Life and Labour of the People in London* (right). Note on bottom right image reads: 'In all streets coloured blue the Jews form a majority of the inhabitants. In those coloured red, the Gentiles predominate'.

The responses of the new arrivals to life in the area were often different to those of their new gentile neighbours. Homes were no exception, shaped by the distinct cultural background of the migrants. They were a mixture of backgrounds and nationalities, and to attempt to define one "Jewish" home in depth would be simply impossible. There were, however, some common features of domestic life among the new arrivals that were distinct from the gentile population. Small differences, such as mezuzahs on door frames, shop-signs above family businesses in foreign lettering rather than English (or sometimes both), and other cultural and religious ornamentation, served to identify the newcomers as culturally distinct. Lara Marks has argued that not only did the rituals of kosher mark Jewish homes out as different in the East End, but they also saved lives. The separation of milk and meat, especially, she claims, led to lower rates of infant diarrhoea.[776] Although very convincing, it seems that this statistical difference went largely unnoticed amongst the residents of the area, especially when spikes in the infant mortality rates such as the 1911 heat wave were undiscriminating in the homes they affected.

Migration itself, especially since that migration was still ongoing, shaped the composition of these households. Unlike in Hungate and the Marsh Ward where the number of households containing four or more children was slowly decreasing between 1871 and 1911, in Bethnal Green the steady arrival of migrants from the East with large families saw the percentage there rise from 23% of households in 1871 to 32% in 1911. More significant still was the growth in the number of households playing host to family members beyond the nuclear family. Before the Jewish influx this had been lower in Bethnal Green than in Hungate and the Marsh Ward, a legacy of both poverty and the lack of space in the subdivided dwellings of the area. The new arrivals, however, proved more willing to accommodate extended kin. The Kohn family, living in Kerbala Street in 1911, seem to have driven the census taker to near distraction with the complexities of the relationships between the parents, their children, their grandchildren, the two separate boarders, and assorted other members of the household.[777] In the six rooms of 3 Granby Street were crammed a young couple and their three children, her parents and two of her sisters, and two lodgers of no

[776] Marks, *Jewish Mothers,* 49-67.
[777] 1911 Census Returns, Bethnal Green, South West, 23, 272.

obvious connection to the family.[778] In many cases existing Jewish households were swollen by newer arrivals from the East, many of whom stayed only a short time before moving on to find their own spaces, and it may have been the temporary nature of much of this migration that made such household expansion bearable for occupants. Unlike the housing of elderly dependent kin, which as previously shown was a key problem in Bethnal Green, the ability to expand was a necessity of many Jewish migrant homes that was justified through the knowledge that contraction would follow as the lodgers moved on.

Change in the district cut both ways. Jewish migrants shaped their homes in accordance with the different needs and cultures they brought with them, but their domestic lives were also shaped by the district itself. Their arrival, although an upheaval, did not change the physical geography of Bethnal Green. Although family structure and the use of space was composed differently, they were still forced to inhabit the same subdivided houses that their gentile neighbours did. Comparing those trial transcripts that feature Jewish migrants, such as the Lipski case, with those where the participants were gentile residents indicates just how quickly patterns of life in the area became ingrained amongst the newcomers. The use of the backyard as a workplace, common amongst many gentiles in the furniture trade, became a common feature of working practice for those Jewish workmen who took up the trade.

What is most striking about the domestic arrangements of these Jewish migrants is not the differences that existed between them and the gentile residents, but the vast similarities. Small differences in language and culture were keenly felt, it is clear, but when the Booth's researchers turned to the residents of Bethnal Green for opinions on the new arrivals, what they articulated as most irksome about the new arrivals had a disturbing familiarity. According to Mr Rose, the most vocal of the furniture makers interviewed by Brooks when it came to the Jewish question, the problem with the new arrivals was that they 'work for any number of hours and live on bread and water'. The demand for workshops and housing in the district, he continued, was only matched by the 'fearful hours' they worked. It was, Brooks directly quoted him, 'terrible to see them working'. Yet these were exactly the pressures that faced residents in the

[778] 1911 Census Returns, Bethnal Green, South West, 22, 396

area well before the Jewish influx. Of the five furniture workers interviewed by Brooks, only Rose expressed any resentment about the new arrivals, but all five men made reference to the long hours, low wages, and high cost of living they encountered. Indeed Mr Steel, living in the next street to Rose and with his workshop in Bacon Street (according to the Russell and Lewis map the heart of Jewish settlement in the area at the time), claimed to know only one Jewish chair maker in the entire East End. It had been particularly bad for the last eight years, he noted ruefully, but this was due to falling prices and competition from other English workers. Despite his upbeat conclusion that he was 'sometimes ten shillings to the good and sometimes the same to the bad' each week, Brooks noted in the margins that he did not ask Steel about his hours of work 'but I gather they are rather long, as I found his men at work on a Saturday Afternoon'.[779] It is certainly true that the long running economic downturn in the area caused particular tension between existing residents and the new migrant population, resentment that sometimes boiled over into anti-migrant and anti-Semitic sentiments. What is also clear from the testimony of gentile residents, however, is that much of what caused them discomfort about the Jewish population was the harsh light they shed on the conditions already existing in the area. Even as they changed the district, and were changed by it, Jewish migrants in the East End also held up an uncomfortable mirror to their existing gentile neighbours.

The other distinct cultural group in the Victorian city, which has attracted considerable and prolonged study, were the Irish. The Irish population of all three cities was swollen from the 1840s onwards as famine and economic deprivation drove waves of migrants to the cities of Britain. Both the East End of London and the slums of York have long been areas utilised as case studies in ongoing debates over cultural identity and integration/segregation amongst the migrant and host communities. Frances Finnegan's detailed study of the Irish in York, however, has underlined just how important it is to treat each area as distinct. As she has pointed out, unlike the East End, York had no other sizeable migrant groups. The Irish were unique in their appearance, and met with considerable resentment from existing residents as a poverty-stricken and

[779] A6, Charles Booth Notebooks, 171-173, 224-230, 322-329.

criminally inclined element. By the 1871 census Irish migrants were firmly clustered into yards and enclosed streets in the slum area of Walmgate, which adjoined Hungate, in almost entirely homogenous closed groupings.[780] Unlike the Irish in the East End, whom Lynn Hollen Lees has argued began to adopt household structures and family sizes indistinguishable from their neighbours, the Irish in York largely retreated in on themselves.[781] It is in the Marsh Ward, however, that a study of Irish migration requires the most attention to local circumstance. The migrant population has attracted little historical attention, despite being proportionally the third largest concentration of Irish migrants in the country during the late nineteenth-century.[782] Drawn in, like migrants of all backgrounds, to a city ever hungry for male workers, the Irish in Teeside were one migrant group amongst many. Although some of the tensions existing in other cities could be found in Middlesbrough regarding the Irish, particularly associations with drinking and violence, they were also one migrant group among many. Common residents of the Marsh Ward, sometimes as temporary lodgers other times as long-term family units, the area never became the ghettos that Finnegan has argued the yards of Walmgate became in York. Taylor has argued that the rapid turnover of migrants and male-orientated camaraderie of the Works created a remarkably equal environment when it came to violence in Middlesbrough – 'Englishmen fought Irishmen…Irishmen (and women) fought each other…and finally, men and women, Irish and English attacked the police'.[783] In actuality this was only one aspect of a wider culture of, if not acceptance, at least forbearance derived from the fact that for much of the nineteenth-century there were few who could claim to be anything other than migrants in the town.

Irish identity in the late Victorian city is complex. What is clear is that it was rarely expressed within the dwelling. Certainly customs, cooking, the presence of fellow lodgers from Ireland, all may have set the homes of Irish migrants apart from that of their neighbours, but little hard data exists to enable the historian to know for certain. Social reformers, already anxious about the

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[780] Frances Finnegan, 'The Irish in York', in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds.). *The Irish in the Victorian City.* London: Croom Helm, 1985, 59-72.
[781] Lees, *Exiles of Erin,* 123-131.
[782] Chase, 'The Teeside Irish in the nineteenth-century', *Cleveland History: The Bulletin of the Cleveland and Teeside Local History Society,* 69, 3-23.
[783] Taylor, 'British Ballarat', 759.

presence of a dead body within the home during periods of mourning, were near-apoplectic when it came to the wakes traditionally associated with the Irish community. Despite an increased reputation for drunken behaviour, however, reports of wakes seem to differ little from the 'slow walk and cup of tea' culture that Bell encountered in Middlesbrough, for example, and remained exceptional events in the lives of residents.[784] When Irish identity was expressed it was publically and in the plural. Religious displays were particularly popular in Middlesbrough, which had received its own Roman Catholic Bishop in 1878, and several visits by Cardinal Manning the following year to spearhead his new temperance movement elicited an enthusiastic response from local Catholics.[785] The children's arm of the movement had over 1800 pledged members in the town in 1901. [786] Not all Catholics were Irish and it would likewise be a mistake to assume that Catholicism, or religion in general for that matter, was an integral part of being Irish for every migrant. Whether Irish identity was important for migrants and their descendents in Bethnal Green, Hungate or the Marsh Ward or not, it was largely enacted beyond the boundaries of the home.

Ultimately it would be foolhardy in the extreme to claim that every aspect of the lives of men, women and children from Bethnal Green, the Marsh Ward and Hungate, stretching across a fifty year period, can be understood through the medium of the home. Tracing a working-class of 'cup-finals, fish-and-chip shops [and] palais-de-danse' as John Benson has attempted to, channelling Eric Hobsbawm's analysis in his recent defence of labour history, must by necessity take place in the world beyond the front door.[787] Homes do not contain the entirety of human life today and nor did they for working people in any of the three districts studied here. Identities and connections extending beyond the home were important to residents throughout the period. Instead a study of the homes of these men, women and children emphasises the other half of these wider groupings, the intense relationship between people and locality that often gets swept aside in historical analysis. Sometimes these could be, and

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[784] Charles Dingle, 'The Story of the Middlesbrough Small-Pox Epidemic and some of its lessons', *Public Health,* xi, 1898-1899, 175.
[785] *North Eastern Daily Gazette,* 19th December 1879.
[786] Anon., *Middlesbrough Year Book*, North Eastern Daily Gazette: Middlesbrough, 1901.
[787] John Benson, *The Working-Class in Britain 1850-1939,* I.B. Taurus: London, 2003, 2-3. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour,* Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984, 194.

were, shared; a growing reading culture amongst workmen and their families in Middlesbrough was passed from parent to child (or visa versa) as Bell discovered.[788] Other times they revealed contrasts between life in the different areas. The travails of one newly-arrived young couple assisted by the Hungate Mission, with no-one else to fall back on, were clearly distinct from the persistent culture of lodging in the Marsh Ward that played host to many of those who lacked networks of support in the area.[789] Life in the three areas was forged by the, often changing, local circumstances prevalent in each district, and analysing the place of the home within the different areas sheds light on how residents were shaped by, and struggled against, such turbulence. Not the be-all and end-all of life for working people, home was nevertheless an important and deeply personal element of their lives, both in a day-to-day sense and in the long-term, and as such stands as an important medium through which to understand and interpret their histories.

The Image of the Working-Class Home

There was one considerable group, however, to whom the home served as a perfect microcosm of working-class life in the period. Between 1870 and the start of the First World War social reformers, investigators, philanthropists, indeed anyone who was interested in what the ongoing debate over the condition of England, were increasingly convinced that the homes of working people were not only the means of understanding the problems that beset poor urban residents but were also the only location in which to properly tackle these problems. 'At no point between the Victorian high noon and the outbreak of World War Two' George Behlmer has argued 'was the English home seen as sufficient unto itself'.[790] As the nineteenth-century ended and the twentieth-century began, the home was increasingly in the cross hairs of the growing number of Britons convinced of the need for social reform.

Booth, Rowntree and Bell were a key part of this ongoing focus on the home and the domestic as a source of, and location for, the problems that many

[788] Bell, *At the Works,* 146-162.
[789] York City Mission, 41st Annual Report 1890, 6.
[790] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 321

outsiders felt were a degrading part of working-class life. Although Booth's locus of choice was the street, indeed he was adamant that entering into the homes of his subjects would be an intrusion, some of those he recruited to work on *Life and Labour* were not of the same opinion. Several had cut their teeth as female residents in model dwellings before coming to Booth, such as the future Beatrice Webb, and others had been part of Toynbee Hall or other settlements where the passions of the religious mission justified domestic intrusion.[791] Likewise, whilst Booth may have expressed his distaste for domestic intrusion, he himself was not above a little dabbling in the experiences of working-class home life as his period as a lodger suggests.[792] Ellen Ross, in introducing a collection of accounts by female social investigators, has astutely observed that the process of observing and investigating poverty involved 'knocking on doors, alighting from a tram in a strange district, or even just looking out a window at street life outdoors', but neglects to point out that often this was a trajectory.[793]

The response to Booth's work, particularly from Rowntree, saw the desire to delve deeper into the conditions of poverty lead from the street to the home. 'Nothing short of a house-to-house inquiry…would suffice', Rowntree established in his introduction, in calculating not only the extent of poverty but also its causes.[794] Both Bell and Pember Reeves, among others, adopted the family budget method that Booth had used and Rowntree specifically championed.[795] Bell, writing later than Rowntree and Booth, singled them out as key influences on her methods of inquiry.[796] Historical debate over the precise origins of this family-budget approach to poverty has seen multiple other individuals or groups identified as the important to its development, including School Board workers and the Birmingham reformers headed by Joseph Chamberlain.[797] Regardless of origins it is clear that as the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth it was domestic budgets were the most accurate

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[791] O'Day and Englander, *Mr Charles Booth,* 1-20.
[792] Ibid, 28-29.
[793] Ross, *Slum Travellers,* 5.
[794] Rowntree, *Poverty,* vi-vii.
[795] Pember Reeves, *Round about a Pound a Week,* 66-85.
[796] Bell, *At the Works,* 66-67.
[797] Veit-Wilson, 'Paradigms of Poverty', 76-80, C.L. Mowat, 'Charity and Casework in Late Victorian London: The Work of the Charity Organisation Society', *The Social Service Review,* 31, 3, (Sep. 1957), 258-270.

measure of poverty, and that these could only be understood through an examination of the homes of the poor.

It was not just the poverty experts of the late Victorian period, however, who were increasingly fascinated by the domestic environment. Social reformers of all stripes were increasingly convinced that the home held the key to understanding social ills. Sanitary inspectors, such as the two consecutive female officers in Bethnal Green who fought a running battle against overlying and inappropriate baby food, were unswerving in their belief that the home was a dangerous environment that needed direct intervention.[798] Homes not only embodied the immediacy of poverty and deprivation – they were also long-term influences on the lives of their residents. Arnold Freeman claimed to be in agreement with 'all investigators' when he pointed out that the home was a terrible social influence in the lives of many young men.[799] 'Children thus hungered, thus housed, and thus left to grow up as best they can without being fathered or mothered', William Booth of the Salvation Army urged, ever going to be upright citizens.[800] All arrows pointed to the home.[801]

Increasingly the residents of the home were closely associated with its appearance and composition. Smith's 1908 survey of Hungate concluded, as his critics had done in their letter, that environment played an enormous role in not just the health but the lifestyle of residents. 'It is impossible to exaggerate the evil influences of a dark and ill-ventilated dwelling', he claimed. It rendered residents 'sallow and cadaverous, they feel unequal to work or continued effort, and there is great disposition to resort to alcohol'.[802] Lynette Finch has argued that it was ideas of respectability that drove the social surveys of the late Victorian period. 'By the end of the century' she claims 'the respectable working class alone were left in the public gaze of sociologists…and of charity groups', the unruly and disreputable remainder only resurfacing as exceptional and undesirable contrasts.[803] Her focus on legal and psychological accounts, however, has narrowed the parameters by which she has interpreted these reformist visions. Respectability, or lack of it, was merely another symptom of

[798] Bate, *Sanitary Conditions and Vital Statistics 1912,* 86-90.
[799] Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour,* 124.
[800] William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out,* 65-66.
[801] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 127.
[802] Report of the Sanitary Conditions of the Hungate District, June 1908, 8.
[803] Finch, *The Classing Gaze,* 32-49.

the problems besetting the homes of the poor. Even Rowntree, who went to such lengths to avoid advocating any conclusion that might be labelled as political, nevertheless drew upon the work of statistician Karl Pearson to conclusively demonstrate that working-class children were under-nourished. 'So long as this state of things continues' he pointed out 'a low standard of physical efficiency among the wage-earning classes is inevitable'.[804] Although the details of his study, especially its location, were shocking, when it came to the long term impact of poverty-stricken homes, in many cases Rowntree was preaching to the choir. 'Mr Rowntree' one reviewer put it 'hardly puts the case too forcibly'.[805] Regardless of where they felt the blame lay, social reformers came to see the working-class home as one incapable of fully protecting and nurturing its occupants in the late Victorian period. And once the home had been identified as incapable, the work of improving and assisting could begin in earnest.

It was moments of transition in the home that worried social reformers the most and it was the times before these that they were most keen to affect. An anxiety over early marriage was shared by Bell, Rowntree, Helen Bosanquet, and others. Young people, they felt, were too unprepared. Girls had not learnt the skills necessary to survive the fraught years of child-rearing to come. Boys had not saved enough money or established themselves in a lasting career. Their burdens were almost 'too heavy to be borne' Bosanquet noted, and under the weight they grew 'less and less able to cope' as Bell put it.[806] Whether or not they believed that the fault for this lack of skills lay with the parents, reformers in London and York threw themselves into filling this perceived gap. In the East End it was the Anglican Church, despite Booth's fairly accurate assessment of their uneven efforts and application, which spearheaded this youth-work.[807] The youth clubs run by St Matthias' and St Matthew's were by no means the only activities organised in the parishes of Bethnal Green, yet it was the youth that the organisers held out most hope of reform for. The new Rector of St Matthews, appointed in 1902, campaigned for the next three years at the Vestry meetings to

[804] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 209-216.
[805] L.L. Price, 'Review of *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* by B. Seebohm Rowntree', *The Economic Journal,* 12, 45, (Mar. 1902), 61.
[806] Bosanquet, 66-67. Bell, *At the Works,* 181-183.
[807] B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 7-21, 115-127

increase the scope and funding of youth clubs.[808] As Reginald Bray argued, youth was susceptible to positive influence and if this was not found at home it had to be supplied elsewhere.[809]

Of the two clubs in St Matthews, it was only the Boys' Club that met with success. Away days to play cricket against rival clubs across the South East and trips to take part in mass gatherings of young men's clubs at Oxford Hall lay behind the Rector's push for more funding. At the same time as these cricket away days, however, the Girl's Club was haemorrhaging members.[810] By June 1901 it was forced to close due to a near non-existent membership.[811] Jane Purvis and J.S Hurt, amongst others, have both argued that the teaching of domestic skills in clubs and schools were of little interest to girls who were routinely involved in domestic work from a young age.[812] The strict regiment of sewing lessons and discussions of budgeting for the family certainly seems to have won few converts in Bethnal Green. Yet organisers had carried on until low membership made the club untenable. This was not simply naivety nor was it a blind adherence to prevailing middle-class values. The efforts of youth club organisers in Bethnal Green to establish what they considered good domestic practice amongst the young girls of the district stemmed from their direct experience of the young girls, their families and their home lives. Partly, as Anna Davin has observed, it stemmed from a belief that the solution to social problems lay in a well-ordered and thus female-led home.[813] But it was also receptive to ongoing social work in the area. The mother's club, similar to that run by Father Jay in the neighbouring Nichol, was based around sewing, saving and contemplative discussion and was a considerable success.[814]

What both the club organisers and subsequent historians overlooked, however, were the local circumstances that provided girls with more profitable uses of their time than attending domestic economy lessons. In Bethnal Green a large number of young women across the period were employed in small factories, sweated workshops or in service. The same was true of young girls in

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[808] *St Matthew's Vestry Minute Book* 1900-1913.
[809] Bray, *Boy Labour*, 1-3.
[810] *St Matthew's Parish Magazine,* January 1901, 3-5.
[811] *St Matthew's Parish Magazine,* May 1901.
[812] Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Class,* 86-87, Purvis, *Hard Lessons,* 76-80.
[813] Davin, *Growing up Poor,* 153.
[814] B228, Charles Booth Notebooks, 121.

Hungate, where the rapid expansion of the *Rowntree's* factory saw half of all resident girls aged between thirteen and twenty working in the confectionary industry in both 1901 and 1911.[815] Even if, as Bourke and others have suggested, rates of housewifery were increasingly over the period, working opportunities for young women prior to marriage left them with a different set of priorities to those they adopted after marriage.[816] Young women rejected domestic economy clubs and classes not simply because they knew it all already but because the incidental benefits these clubs offered, savings kept away from potentially drunken husbands and companionship outside of the closeting world of the home, were not yet desirable at this stage in their lives.

If young people could not be reformed prior to marriage, reformers believed, then at least intervention could take place afterwards if need be. Although the late Victorian state was unwilling to intervene directly between husband and wife, beyond the after-the-fact justice dispensed by the Police Courts, and philanthropists even less so, the growth of groups such as the NSPCC from 1883 and the strengthening of the powers of the Poor Law with regards to children represents a clear belief that those children most vulnerable could be removed from the domestic environment if it was deemed harmful. In 1896 the local NSPCC in York were keen to portray the parents of the eight children they removed from one Hungate home as unsanitary as possible. Not only was the Police Surgeon summoned to support their inspection of the house, 'the stench was overpowering', but the corresponding coverage in the *York Herald* moved deftly from describing the house as dirty to labelling the whole case, and thus the parents, as 'revolting'.[817] Intervention in cases of cruelty such as this could be medically justified, supported by a growing reputation, fostered by the reports of sanitary investigations published in the local paper and by studies such as Rowntree's, that life in Hungate was at the mercy of dirt and disease. Reputation of the district was crucial in the removal of children. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s residents of Middlesbrough were able to read the yearly report of the Chief Constable in their local newspaper. In 1878, a particularly bad year of crime, he laid bare some of the key problems facing his

[815] 1901 and 1911 Census Returns, York.
[816] Bourke, 'Housewifery', 176-181.
[817] *York Herald,* 24th October 1896.

force. The Irish were a problem nearly ever Saturday night, he noted, and almost a third of crime was caused by strangers to the town. The 'large numbers of boys and girls…running about the streets nightly' deeply troubled him, and the following yearly report detailed a regime of whippings, fines, and the use of the Reformatory and Industrial Schools for the worst offenders.[818] No specific mention of the Marsh Ward was made, but the notebooks of constables from the town indicates that, like their compatriots in Bethnal Green, the police knew where to go to pick up troubled youth. Although clearly guilty there is perhaps something to be said for the eighteen year old Edward Scott who, in his statement to the court after his trial moaned that 'everything that is done in Bethnal Green Road and Brick Lane I am always blamed for!'.[819]

The fact that reports, investigations, and depressing statistics continued to appear in local and national press, however, seems to have increasingly convinced those working to support the working-class child that it was not only the most vulnerable who needed assistance. Anna Davin has pointed to a developing struggle for control of the child in the nursery schools in the East End.[820] For many other philanthropists the wholesale rescue of children from the slums was the ultimate aim, even if it was only for the short term. 'Everyone must sympathise with the idea of country holidays for city children' proclaimed an article in Christian magazine *The Dawn of Day* in 1901. The vestry members of St. Matthews clearly agreed, even before they leafed through the copy they had in their parish.[821] Seven hundred children attended their Christmas excursion in 1900 and their Boy's Club was travelling as far as Repton for their games.[822] The Hungate Mission likewise made efforts, if not take children out to the countryside, then at least to create what they considered a comforting space within their Mission School at Christmas time.[823] Unresolved sanitary issues, however, especially following the record summer of 1911 which saw a spike in

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[818] *Daily Gazette,* 7th October 1878 and 8th October 1879. Also see *York Herald,* 4th October 1888.
[819] Old Bailey Online, Edward Scott (18) Violent Theft, 3rd March 1908.
[820] Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', 9-15.
[821] Anonymous and untitled article in *The Dawn of Day,* London: The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, July, 1901, 152. The copy consulted was saved by the St Matthews vestry, London Metropolitan Archives, BE/B/G/vi.
[822] *St Matthew's Parish Magazine,* June 1901, 3-5, February 1901, 2, London Metropolitan Archives, BE/B/G.
[823] Y268, York City Mission Records, Notebook of Minutes, 33.

infant death rates across urban Britain, continued to concern reformers.[824] In the 1900s plans were drawn up independently to alter Hungate and the Marsh Ward on a large scale, and the LCC cut its teeth on the Boundary Street Estate. During 1911 the Public Health Department in Bethnal Green whitewashed over five thousands dwellings in the district and more than eight hundred workshops.[825] Calls to alter not only families but the entire environment they lived in were growing more and more vociferous amongst reformers on all sides of the political spectrum when war broke out in 1914.

Historians such as Gertrude Himmelfarb and Kathleen Martin, critical of what they perceive as the unfair conclusions of the poverty experts of Edwardian Britain, are not entirely correct in suggesting that misunderstanding and assumption about working-class families led to the creation of an unhelpful and dependency-creating welfare system in twentieth-century Britain.[826] Certainly the movement to develop national solutions to social problems, seen as stemming directly from the home, saw reformers adopt the general conclusions of investigators such as Booth, Rowntree and Bell without acknowledging the local circumstances that so deeply affected the homes covered by their surveys. The move towards Old Age Pensions by the Liberal Government from 1906 onwards, however, was born out of an acknowledged need that cut across different districts as demonstrated by experts. Furthermore, viewing these welfare provisions as monolithic and sweeping neglects any of the recent studies that show just how capable men, women and children were of using and working the systems to support their own visions of life. The creation of a generic working-class urban home, replete with needy inhabitants, in the minds of social reformers in late Victorian Britain was not necessarily a negative development. Many of the welfare developments in the first decades of the twentieth-century were genuine desires to help those they believed were the vulnerable members of society. The perceived lessons of this period, carried forward into a war where national government became increasingly involved in social plans such as the large-scale munitions estate at Gretna, however, were seen to justify intervention in the

[824] See, for example, detailed concern in the pages of the 1911 Medical Officer of Health Report, Bethnal Green, 20-36.
[825] Annual Report of the Public Health Department, 1912, 14.
[826] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians.* New York: Knopf, 1991, Martin, *Hard and Unreal Advice,* 1-30.

domestic life of the working-class. The widespread popularity of the Homes fit for Heroes movement (one of the first estates of the scheme was built in York), political commitment to house-building (Labour's post-war manifesto pledged 100,000 new houses), and the impassioned debate surrounding support for war-widows and orphans all demonstrate how alive these passions were in the post-1918 environment.[827]

The growing identification of the need for sweeping solutions to these problems created in the minds of reformers across Britain a stock image of the working-class home and its inhabitants. This "typical" home was created from an intense period of social investigation, sensational journalism, and widespread speculation and assumption in both local and national press. Even the C.O.S., who had long prided themselves on the case-study basis of the evaluations of poverty, were becoming prone to using tropes and stereotypes when advising their member groups about how the deal with paupers. The only real distinction that founder Charles Loch drew in an 1893 pamphlet was between the occasional rogue and the majority of working men and women who were 'being turned from foes into friends' by their auspices.[828] Ultimately it was, regardless of ideas of blame or helplessness in the face of circumstance on the part of the residents, one that was incapable of fully caring for or correctly rearing in inhabitants. Debate over the best way to regulate home and family continued well into the twentieth-century, as Behlmer has pointed out, but the creation of a general vision of the working-class home between 1870 and 1914 amongst reformers of all backgrounds meant that the state was committed to involvement in these homes as never before.[829]

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[827] Swenarton, *Homes fit for Heroes,* 1-10, Iain Dale (ed.), *Labour Party General Election Manifestos 1900-1997,* 16-18. Angela Smith, *Discourses Surrounding British Widows of the First World War,* 1-14.
[828] C.S. Loch, *Charity Organisation*, London, 1893.
[829] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 317.

Conclusion

By 1914 the only culturally unified vision of the working-class home existed within the minds of middle-class observers. The homes of men, women and children in the Marsh Ward, Hungate and Bethnal Green were too diffuse, too attuned to the particular environments in which they were situated, to represent a cohesive nationwide image of the domestic. Yet this does not mean that the home is any less useful in determining identity and community amongst the poorer residents of urban England in the decades prior to the First World War. Home can, by no means, represent the entirety of working-class experience in the late Victorian city; even stepping outside of the four walls and into the street, shared yard or over to the public house or workplace reveals other significant spaces as this thesis has demonstrated. Homes were epicentres of family life, places where small yet significant decisions over money were made, time was spent, and relationships played out. Although different in all three districts, the processes that defined these homes, and in turn shaped the lives of residents, were roughly similar. The physical, economic and cultural compositions of Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward were different, but the influences these wrought on the home, and the struggle of inhabitants to cope with those pressures, are clear across both the geography and time covered by this thesis. As such home, on both local and national scales, more than encapsulates the criteria that Thompson established as defining class; the small 'common experiences (inherited or shared)' that underpinned both shared and oppositional identities.[830]

This thesis aimed to contextualise three classic studies of the late Victorian working-class by re-examining the locations they covered. In doing so it has attempted to offer the reader as full a depiction as possible of three *lived* urban environments. There is, as Dennis has demonstrated, a tendency amongst many historians to 'deny the city's existence as an independent social reality'. The 'problems of cities' he emphasises, citing H.J. Dyos, often become instead the study of 'problems in cities'.[831] By employing a wide range of textual sources, both statistical and descriptive, this thesis has demonstrated that even for a period already faded from living memory some of this social reality can be

[830] Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class,* 8-9.
[831] Dennis, *English Industrial Cities,* 290.

recovered for historical study. In doing so it has become clear that for working-class residents in Hungate, Bethnal Green and the Marsh Ward the problems of the city *were* the problems they faced *in* the city. The process of 'surviving, adapting…modifying and resisting' that Todd has seen as central to working-class life in the early twentieth century was just as crucial to the pre-1914 period. Whilst Todd herself urged historians to take such a social, demographic and economic study forward into the later twentieth century, it is obvious that such factors are just as important to the study of working-class life in the period before her study as well.[832] Local circumstances, as this thesis has repeatedly demonstrated, are critical to understanding the interplay between the economic and the personal. Homes in the Marsh Ward, caught up in the industrial divisions and rhythms of labour that dominated the town, were very different from those in Bethnal Green, where any small space in and around the house might see a blurring of the lines between work and domestic space and time. Small though they may have been, these distinctions are much more important than their current place in the historiographical field suggest. Juggling time, space and money within the home was a common concern for residents of all three districts, but it was the particular forms these pressures took in each location that determined the responses of different residents and in turn shaped the home environment. As small a matter as having a yard large enough for a pig could dramatically alter not just family survival strategies but the reactions of neighbours to such a sensory and spatial invasion.[833]

Given the significance of both broad similarities and more subtle distinctions to the homes covered by this thesis, it is important to emphasise how these lie within the schema of current historiography. Perhaps the most important shared element across all three areas is the absence of any real evidence of the "trickledown" of middle-class domestic values. Despite the lack of a culturally cohesive image of the working-class home organic to the working class themselves, it is abundantly clear that these homes were product of neither the conscious aping of middle-class values nor simply places created haphazard by

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[832] Todd, *Young Women, Work and Family,* 230.
[833] Robert Malcolmson and Stephanos Mastoris, *The English Pig: A History,* London: Hambledon and London, 2001, 41-44. For an example of the treatment of such animals in York see City of York Archives, York, BC 17, York Urban Sanitary Committee Minutes, 9th June 1874, 725.

neighbourly mutualism and the increasing regulation of more public spaces.[834] Homes in all three districts embodied the struggle of urban life central to the experience of working-class people across urban Britain. Almost as soon as they had finished compiling a sample budget for Rowntree's investigation, one of the families featured in *Poverty* saw their chief wage earner struck down by serious and prolonged illness. Needing to clarify some items on their budget sheet, Rowntree returned to find the family struggling financially, weighed down by mounting debt and dwindling income, but glad that they had put money aside in a sickness club in better times.[835] The home was not just the site in which these survival strategies were played out, but the very reason such strategies were taken up in the first place. This widespread evidence of the struggle of daily life is important because of the continuities it represents with the post 1918 world. It prefigures the modification of social values Jon Lawrence and others have seen as critical to the working class of the interwar period, but also emphasises how complex the minutiae of family economics were for working-class people.[836] If historians of the working class are, as Todd herself urges, to remember that whilst 'household and family relations were shaped by economic need…this does not mean they were economically determined', then it is the struggle against economic forces that the home encapsulated that offers the most fertile ground for further study.[837]

The other key continuity, both in terms of time and geography, is the desire for adaptability. Even as living standards increased in the early years of the twentieth century, closely linked to a rise in real wages, the residents featured in this thesis seem to have lost none of their zeal for adapting and appropriating the resources of the home. Spatial divisions within working-class homes were different from the ideals of middle-class domesticity and, concurrently, so were the interactions between residents and those spaces. Function still drove the conceptualisation of space for many, but the functions were those born out of a desire to remain adaptable in the face of poverty. Lodgers, out-work, and yards given over to workshops or storage were all evidence of the close interplay

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[834] Alison Ravetz and Richard Turkington, *The Place of the Home: English Domestic Environments, 1914-2000.* London: Taylor and Francis, 1995*,* 5.
[835] Rowntree, *Poverty,* 272.
[836] Lawrence, 289 AND MORE.
[837] Todd, *Young Women, Work and Family,* 226.

between space, money and the needs of residents in working-class homes. Adaptability was not always achieved, or was achieved in different ways by different men and women, but was always the central tenet of residents. This drive towards adaptability in the face of trying economic circumstances is most closely aligned to John Benson's vision of the pre-1914 working class as comprising a cohort of 'penny capitalists', all keen to try their hands at small business ventures to keep their heads above water. Unlike those activities covered by Benson, however, the work of the home was far less sporadic and much more widespread than the 40% he has argued were engaged in penny capitalism.[838] Nor were the profits of it purely economic. As explorations of time and space have demonstrated, the assets of the home were put to use not only to save or earn money but to secure more family time, more comfortable surroundings, or safeguard relationships between family members. For those historians keen to emphasise the 'remaking' of the working class in this period these domestic struggles must be taken into consideration, both as part of an ongoing social, cultural and economic process of adapting to changing circumstances in nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain, but also as common experiences for those living in this period itself.

This attention to seemingly minute local circumstances is also significant because it serves to expose key differences in lived experience. This was born out in the detailed studies of the final two chapters, particularly when it came to the young. Brought up in these areas in homes directly shaped by local circumstances, young working-class men and women were forced to adapt from their earliest years. As they grew, however, so the circumstances around them changed. The opening up of new employment opportunities in some districts was matched by a closing off of older forms of child labour in this period. Wide-scale youth employment in Hungate, particularly amongst women, brought new opportunities and possibilities to residents. As both Rowntree and the census returns for the area indicate, the most profound "change" wrought by new factory employment in Hungate was the continued survival of larger families supported by young adult earners. In the surging industrial hub of Middlesbrough, still in the process of expanding and solidifying its economy in the final decades of the

[838] Benson, *Penny Capitalists,* 134.

nineteenth century, young men and women developed very different trajectories into adult life from both each other and their contemporaries in Hungate and Bethnal Green. The lack of any real employment opportunities for young women, coupled with the age restrictions at the Iron Works that saw young men either search for temporary work to fill the void before coming of age or simply remain idle, as Bell saw it, shaped not only the family homes they grew up in but the ones they went on to establish. It was certainly very different to the situation in Bethnal Green, where the vast factory and outwork labour markets of the capital increasingly gave young women an identity as independent earners by the early 1900s.[839] Small local changes over the period had dramatic effects on both working-class people and the homes they built for themselves.

Nor were these changing influences confined to economic factors. The changing social composition of these three districts had profound effects on the homes within them. The demographic, cultural and social differences that took place over the period are perhaps most noticeable when migrant groups are considered. Although faced with the same external economic pressures, the same geographic and temporal landscapes of the city, Jewish migrants in Bethnal Green and Irish migrants in the Marsh Ward and Hungate adapted in different ways to their English neighbours. Not all residents lived, as a local Police Sergeant put it when taking Booth's researchers round Bethnal Green, as 'a happy family', and whilst observers expressed anxiety over how the growing Jewish settlement in the area would be received, there were more than enough clashes between gentile neighbours in the period.[840] David Harvey, exploring the issue of class consciousness in the modern city, has argued that whilst the family unit could stand 'substitute for community' in forming the basis of class receptions, it was an institution 'perpetually buffeted' by the pressures of urban life.[841] This was certainly true for homes, so intimately connected to family life but also to the wider world around it. The difficulties of defining the areas and dimensions of communities are, as Patrick Joyce has observed, manifold, and it is clear that the three districts studied here were as different from each other as

[839] Raw, *Striking a Light,* 1-10, Ursula De La Mare, 'Necessity and Rage: the Factory Women's Strikes in Bermondsey, 1911', *History Workshop Journal,* 66, (2008), 62-80.
[840] B351, Charles Booth Police Notebooks, 171.
[841] David Harvey, *Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanisation.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985, 258-259.

they are from the northern textile towns that form the basis of Joyce's own exploration of working-class society.[842] As this thesis has attempted to demonstrate in its close contextual analysis, more attention needs to be paid to the specifics of class within particular urban landscapes. Only such detailed case study work can advance our understanding of how the changing economic, social, demographic and cultural landscapes of the late Victorian city affected the lives of its working-class residents.

Homes cannot, as the introduction to this thesis made clear, represent the entirety of working-class culture and society in the pre-war period. Other significant influences in working-class life, such as politics, intellectual pursuits and more active group recreations (particularly football), took place beyond the walls of the home. Likewise spaces beyond the home, equally significant to creating collective identities and shared experiences, lie beyond the scope of this study. Yet these activities and spaces have, as noted at the beginning of this study, received considerable historical attention already. This thesis has attempted to place the home, and the experiences it represents, alongside this existing scholarship. In doing so it has highlighted the fragmentary and diffuse experiences of residents across urban Britain, experiences that were much more personal and varied than those encountered working-class people outside the home. The home, shaped by a wide variety of pressures and resident responses, was an intensely personal experience. To some extent this is a product of the primary sources used in this study – the statistical information and investigative reports gave only glimpses of the neighbourly mutualism that historians of the working class have seen as crucial to not just survival strategies but community identity.[843] As Emily Cockayne has recently observed in her study of neighbours, those living next door could run the gamut of competition and help, friend and foe, for residents of the late Victorian slum.[844] Yet even where they existed, networks of reciprocity only offered so much. The most significant conclusion to draw by far from the study of working-class homes in this period is that, no matter how diffuse they were, the experience of keeping a home afloat amidst the

[842] Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: the culture of the factory in later Victorian England.* London: Meuthen, 1980, 117-122.
[843] Emily Cockayne, *Cheek by Jowl: A History of Neighbours.* London: Vintage Books, 2013. See also Tebbutt, *Women's Talk*, 48-73.
[844] Cockayne, *Cheek by Jowl,* 98-106.

pressures of the late Victorian city was a fundamental one common across the urban working class and one that, despite being shared, was also suffered through within the individual, family or household group. These experiences must be taken into account by historians seeking a 'remaking' of the working class in this period; there were not separate Hungate, Bethnal Green or Marsh Ward working-classes clearly distinct from one another, but there were important differences in how class worked in each district.

The other significant result of placing classic social investigative accounts back into their urban contexts has uncovered has been just how important the home became in determining the attitudes of outsiders to the working class as a whole. Developing over the period, with one study building on another, by 1914 a wide range of middle-class reformers, philanthropists, authorities, educators, and law enforcers has come to see the working-class home as something clearly definable. Although the lived experiences, the details of poverty and relative comfort, uncovered by Booth, Rowntree and Bell were fragmentary and localised, those who took up their conclusions in the early years of the twentieth century came to see the working-class home as embodying a particular structure. Increasingly, by the early decades of the twentieth century, this working-class home was seen as one in desperate need of state intervention. Delegates at the 1911 National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution, following a panel on birth and infancy amongst the poor, were unanimous in their calls for intervention in the home. The chairman of the panel, an Alderman from Huddersfield, likened the situation to a burning building – 'they could not' he argued 'stand by when the house was on fire'.[845] By 1914 calls for direct intervention in the working-class home, be it state or philanthropic, were reaching a critical mass. 'Unless we somehow break the vicious circle of: Poor Parents – Poor Children – Poor Parents Again', Arnold Freeman wrote that year, there could be no hope for the future of the working-class in Britain.[846] By the end of the period the social investigations and reforming activities of the last half century had left middle-class observers in little doubt that something needed to be done to help residents of all three districts.

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[845] Anon, *Report of the Proceedings of the National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution,* London: P.S. King and Son, 1911, 95.
[846] Freeman, *Boy Life and Labour,* 230.

In justifying this campaign of reform to themselves, and to others, reformers built up an image of the working-class home that was, increasingly, distinct from the realities social investigators uncovered. The visions of reformers like Freeman, the delegates to the 1911 conference cited above, the architects of the post-war 'Homes Fit For Heroes' programme, and others were not entirely divorced from reality. As Ian Gazeley has demonstrated, social investigation not only continued into the interwar period but, arguably, became more accurate in its observations and methodologies.[847] Yet, as George Behlmer pointed out in the conclusion to his study of social reform and family life up to 1940, 'social disintegration, like beauty, remains very much in the eye of the beholder'.[848] Despite the measured conclusions of Booth and Rowntree, so careful to avoid dogmatic statements of what needed to be done, those who took up the banner of reforming the condition of the working-class in the first decades of the twentieth-century increasingly came to rely on clear cut visions of their subject matter. They did not simply look for similar values (or the lack thereof) as a "trickledown" vision of domestic culture might suggest; they constructed an image of the home that offered a clear-cut comparison to their own domestic ideals. Quoting the District Nurse Margaret Loane, an avid social investigator, Behlmer has emphasised the direct (and often negative) comparison such as this offered. 'Family life', she wrote, had 'vastly improved among the decent poor' in the fifty years prior to the publication of her notes in 1907, but within her own work she struggled with the differences the working-class home represented.[849] Domestic violence, she concluded, was a routine aspect of the working-class home and, unlike in the middle-class one, something not always wholly negative. Neglectful wives, Loane mused, who ill-treated their children and put their husbands 'to shame' with poor housework might sometimes have benefitted from a beating.[850] A different set of rules existed in the working-class home in her eyes, stemming from the pressures of life close to the poverty line, and it was these that necessitated the intervention of reform-minded outsiders. Powerfully persuasive, and rooted in social observation that justified as "fact", the working-

[847] Ian Gazeley, *Poverty in Britain 1900-1965.* London: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, 2003.
[848] Behlmer, *Friends of the Family,* 324.
[849] Ibid, 121.
[850] Margaret Loane, *The Queen's Poor: Life as they Find it in Town and Country.* London: Middlesex University Press, Edited edition, 1988, 1-5.

class home was a spectre that rooted itself in the minds of reformers during this period.

At no point after 1918 was the working-class home ever to be free of intervention from outside reforming influence, and any cultural development in domesticity for poor parents and children in interwar urban Britain would have to contend with these new, and not always welcome, influences. What an examination of the pre-war world reveals, ultimately, is that for neither working-class resident nor middle-class observer were these homes merely poor attempts at aping the prevailing culture of domesticity. Complex patterns of living in, coping with, and, to some extent, failing to adapt to, the pressures of urban life in the late Victorian period were bound up in these homes. There were rough experiences in common for working-class residents, but also distinct differences. For middle-class observers these homes came to represent a model of poverty and need increasingly solidified as a vision of the "working class". As such, both the realities for residents and perceptions of such life for outsiders must be a crucial part of any historical attempt to understand British society both before and after the watershed moment of the First World War. For residents and outsiders working-class homes encapsulated the experiences of class.

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