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The domestic space of the Spitalfields silk weaver as anti-industrial nostalgia. *The Queen*, 21 Sept. 1861, p. 37.

Making History in Bethnal Green: Different Stories of Nineteenth-Century Silk Weavers

by Hilda Kean and Bruce Wheeler

A 'FAMILY' STORY

On January 17th 1890 Sarah Hayes collected from the French Protestant hospital in East London,¹ the effects of Ann, her elderly relative.² The list

of Ann's belongings declared: '2 skirts and 2 jackets, 3 shawls, 5 capes, 2 boxes, 2 p o scissors & shears & pickers, 1 shoe horn, 1 silver spoon, 2 brooches, 4 books, 1 pr stays'. Materially there was little to show for her eighty years, but the list of her possessions served to confirm the character statements from the Minister of the Hoxton Academy chapel and the vicar of St James that here was a woman who merited charitable attention. Although too old to support herself through paid employment she nevertheless had kept tools for gainful activity alongside her books.

We start deliberately with the story of a woman: an elderly weaver, once proudly independent, who was now reduced to near destitution, reliant on charity for her continued existence. As such she epitomizes much of the contemporary coverage of Spitalfields silk weavers and the area they inhabited: a community which once was and was now no more. Such descriptions and images of the area's industrial decline and consequent social disintegration were constant themes in the commentaries. Thus the *Queen* lamented the fall from grace of the weavers in 1861: 'In the days of our forefathers, a Spitalfields weaver was a man to be envied by every other handicraftsman', but now 'it is not through indolence that the weaver has become what he is, and weaving but another term for starvation'.³

The solution, so the *Queen* declared, was for different work in a new land. This vision of the future had been shared by the *Builder* in the same year when it advocated 'emigration to pastoral districts and colonies', and recounted encouraging evidence of weavers who had bravely relocated – some of whom had even 'done well as shepherds'! It seems, however, that there was real reluctance amongst weavers to take such a momentous step, and their apparent attachment to the place they lived and to the past was seen as evidence of wilful aberration: 'they are generally, in a most remarkable degree, attached to their homes and gardens'.⁴

While the press advocated change, movement, and migration, those working in the area appear to have had a different understanding of their futures which was not solely predicated on looking for new employment. As both these excerpts and our own analysis of census returns suggest, there was no simple exodus of silk weavers from the area in the second half of the nineteenth century. Not only did the weaving community display a remarkable degree of permanence in the area, with individuals and families continuing to live and work in the same streets they had grown up in, the silk industry itself appears to have been a far more entrenched and durable feature of the culture of the local area than has conventionally been supposed.

Returning again to the story of Ann Hayes, here was an unmarried East London working-class woman, born in 1810, who had lived since at least the 1840s with her parents and other relations in Robert Street, a small street running off Bethnal Green road, a main thoroughfare in East London. This had been – and still was even in the late nineteenth century – the heart of the silk-weaving trade, as our study of the census returns for

a small area of Bethnal Green confirms.⁵ It was here in Robert Street in June 1841 that Ann's father John had informed the census enumerator that she, like himself and his wife (also called Ann), earned a living from the specialist craft of orris weaving, that is the weaving of lace in gold and silver patterns.⁶ Ten years later it was mother Ann, now a widow, who communicated her employment to the enumerator.⁷ Ann senior had returned to her first trade, silk weaving, and had inducted her daughter into the same job. Yet another ten years passed by and in April 1861 the mother again declared that this was indeed still their trade. By the 1870s mother Ann was dead and her daughter could no longer support herself. Ann junior, like her mother before her, was looked after by the French protestant community, and received institutional care in its premises in Victoria Park.⁸

Other members of the wider Hayes family who also lived in Robert Street continued the same work, producing luxury items, heavy silk for drapes and furnishing which they were unlikely to afford to buy themselves.⁹ Long after the supposed demise of the trade, in the 1870s young Emma Hayes worked with her sister Sarah as a silk trimmer. Their neighbours also carried on weaving silk. In 1891 they included Abraham and Elisabeth Lamy, James Bradley a silk spinner, twenty-two year old Alice Merry, and the Nial family who lived a few doors down at number ten. Of the thirty-two occupied houses listed in the 1891 census of Robert Street, a third contained a silk weaver. Here in this street in the last decades of the nineteenth century were people apparently working at a trade that many historians consider practically finished up to fifty years before.¹⁰

The Hayes's story, a story of people living in the same streets where they were born, continuing to work often in the same trade of weaver which they joined in young adulthood, is neither unique nor unusual for this particular area of East London. As a diary of the 1830s suggested of Bethnal Green: 'They are all weavers, forming a sort of separate community: there they are born, they live and labour, and there they die'.¹¹ This same statement might also have been applied to many in this area some fifty or more years later. Here were people who stayed, who survived and did not go to new lands or even places outside their own hinterland of Bethnal Green. This sense of continuity was also reflected, for example, in the six friendly societies established by the local French Protestant community in the eighteenth century, which continued in existence up until the 1960s. A forerunner of the Lamy family of Robert Street had been an early secretary of the Norman Society which had met in the Pitt's Head pub in Tyson Street. This organization continued its operations until 1962. The Lintot Society had been held together by Isaac Levesque, another Robert Street resident, and was not wound up until 1964. The Society of Protestant Refugees, the committee of which included one of the Hayes, and whose members included a Mignot of Squirries Street and a Martin of Robert Street, also met locally at the Norfolk Arms in nearby Ivimey St.¹²

CENSUS STUDIES

Such a story of aspects of individual lives, family and place is not difficult (though very time consuming) to create. It might be relatively easily constructed from analyses of the detailed individual census returns of streets in the area, and using genealogical-research aids such as those published by the Huguenot society or the East London Family History Society.¹³ In researching the census returns for a group of streets in Bethnal Green we found similar circumstances to those of the Hayes family. Here were potential tales of people born, marrying, living and dying in the same small area. These were not stories of movement but of stasis. Families inter-married – we can trace the links between adjacent streets – and stayed together.

This might suggest that meanings other than notions of broad demographic change and movement can also be created by digging deeper into the census, and related state and administrative documents.¹⁴ The rough examination books of the local Board of Guardians, for example, provide extensive material about individuals whose lives would otherwise appear to be without trace. The story of John Knight of Tyssen Street an unemployed twenty-six year old weaver claiming relief is not unusual: in between different claiming periods, we are told, two of his three children have died although ‘he has the same wife and one child Lucy 20 months’.¹⁵ In a recent article Carolyn Steedman has reminded us that the narratives which were demanded of the poor in their engagement with the state were indeed enforced.¹⁶ The stories which John Knight recounted to the local Board of Guardians examination officer were those which were dictated by the structure of the interview: they were no more ‘his’ stories than those told to the census enumerator were personal accounts divorced from the discourse of this state compilation. Nevertheless the data contained in such returns might be used in order to emphasize the particular, the detailed, the specific. Interrogation of such material might suggest different directions to the broad-brush approach of demographic or economic historiography.

A starting point of ‘micro’ or ‘individual’ material often ignored by mainstream historical practice can suggest meanings that disrupt conventional narratives. The illusory ‘factual’ nature of census returns, which formed the basis of our research, admittedly only conveys tiny moments, but they are moments nonetheless.¹⁷ The information reproduced from the census evaluators’ files is also, of course, second-hand and selective, but at least we can be fairly confident that the questions were asked of the respondents in an actual time and place, and that their answers were recorded as accurately as the enumerators could manage – albeit, of course, within the confines of the administrative and methodological frameworks through which they were gathered.¹⁸ Street census returns, fragments gathered every decade, suggest a rather more mundane picture of quotidian life than the sudden change indicated in the broad sweep of economic trends. The people

recorded in such census returns had a past in their trade, both in the locality and within their families. Working and living in close proximity to those connected by family and place also have created a particular sense of a shared past and a common identity. Such a lived narrative of continuity is enhanced by the juxtaposition of decennial moments strengthened by the discourse of census returns. These stories of continuity in the local area were also replicated in contemporary story-telling practices of the poor. In order to obtain financial support from the local state or religious charities particular stories were needed. To obtain poor relief an applicant needed to be eloquent in certain tales. Applicants repeated the stories of a father's past apprenticeship, of the rent he had previously paid, and where he had lived and for how long to qualify for outdoor relief in present time. In contrast, entry into the routines of the workhouse demanded a silence.¹⁹ To the officials of the French Protestant Hospital the descendants of Huguenots were obliged to recount tales of Protestant persecution and to be knowledgeable in the history of their family. They proffered ancestors' papers and evidence of religious adherence, showing through their connection with the past lives of their families that they were worthy of charitable relief in the present.²⁰ The display of their family history was even depicted visually in the *Quiver*: credentials shown to one journalist included both documents in French and English and samplers of silk woven by predecessors and displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851.²¹ The testimony weavers gave even within the formal milieu of a parliamentary commission helped to reinforce a sense of continuation with the past through family working practices and the particular sense of occupational and cultural identity.²² While the autobiographical tales are those structured by the commission, they are nevertheless stories which continue to draw on traditions of continuity with the silk-weaving trade.

In her vivid account of nineteenth-century London Lynda Nead has suggested that, 'Change in London was happening so quickly that it seemed by enchantment rather than man-made'.²³ Here in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields, however, a particular sense of cultural permanence seems to have been created which presents a contrast both to the wider nineteenth-century metropolis and to an idea of sudden and abrupt economic change.

LOCALITY: A PARTICULAR MAPPING OF EAST LONDON

Spitalfields, the name first given to an area just to the north-east of the City of London's boundary, was the oldest industrial suburb in London.²⁴ By the nineteenth century the words Spitalfields and silk weavers had become almost synonymous, despite that fact that most of the weavers had moved further north and east into the area today described as Bethnal Green.²⁵ Although the area was a centre of silk weaving long before the coming of the Huguenots, many of whom had arrived mostly as refugees after the

revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, many contemporary commentators chose to emphasize the Protestant nature of the area which the Huguenots reconfigured.²⁶ Indeed so significant was their religious influence that it had been stabilized geographically by the erection of the French Protestant church in Spitalfields where James Jacob Lemaitre, the father of Ann Hayes senior, was clerk for many years.²⁷

Their form of Protestantism encompassed hard work, thrift and non-reliance on the state. Poor weavers descended from Huguenots tended to look to their own benefit societies and charities rather than to the Board of Guardians in times of distress. Thus although the Bethnal Green rough examination books do record pleas for support and include claims from weavers, in the streets in our study they are fewer than one might expect. There are claims for poor relief from weavers from streets throughout the area but those from streets with a strong Huguenot presence do not dominate.²⁸

The physical location of the streets in our study – Duke/Ducal St, New Tyson/ Tyssen St, Satchwell Rents, Orange St, Princes Court, Providence Place, and further to the east Pollard Row, Squirries St, Robert St, William/Ivimey St – are all in Bethnal Green. Directly to the south lies Whitechapel, a centre of extensive late-nineteenth-century Jewish immigration.²⁹ To the south-west of Bethnal Green is Spitalfields, which many decades later would be the focus of Bangladeshi immigration.³⁰ In the period covered by our study, however, in the streets north of Bethnal Green Road inward migration was unusual.³¹ According to the census returns in 1891 over 80% of residents in the streets in our study had been born in Bethnal Green or other local parishes. This figure had remained virtually unchanged over the preceding fifty years.³² In certain streets, even in the 1890s, the figures were higher than 85%.³³ In terms of geographical movement, as well as occupation, there was a sense of stability and continuity.

If we consider the bald statistics based on the brief moment of the census, a local place of birth is the norm. But this could mean, of course, that there was nevertheless much movement *within* the area defined as Bethnal Green. However an unpacking of the individual names, and the particular intermarrying and localized movements of Bethnal Green families, suggest not a simple geographical attachment to the administrative district or parish known as Bethnal Green, but an even more localized adherence to particular streets within this broader space. This is both a real space consisting of actual streets and houses, and also a space which was defined and constructed in particular ways – existing as much in the mind as it did on the ground. The ‘map’ of Bethnal Green created by such residents was not one necessarily circumscribed by the state’s or its functionaries’ definitions of locality, but one which began, as de Certeau has put it, at ground level, with footsteps.³⁴ When asked to describe officially the area in which they had been born the answer might have been Bethnal Green or, to give

examples from Pollard Row census returns in 1871: 'Cambridge Heath', 'Pollard Row', 'Hackney Road', 'Shoreditch' or 'Spitalfields'.

For some, of course, their 'choice' of home may have been based on its convenience for specific local work.³⁵ Thus we see the Howard or Oldman families living in Pollard Row, and both working as weavers' harness makers, in a period spanning some thirty years: in 1851 Sarah Oldman, a 'weaver's harness maker's mistress', employed '20 hands'. Concurrently other families in the same street such as the Morrises, who worked as fish dealers or as fellowship porters at Billingsgate fish market, also stayed despite the fact that their place of work would have been a good walk away.³⁶ This suggests that there were not only work-related reasons for families deciding to remain within particular streets and neighbourhoods. Certainly many of the streets in our study were of low rateable value, and owned by large landlords such as Colonel Warde or the Tyssen family. Housing costs, therefore, may have also been a significant factor.³⁷

Streets as much as jobs, we would argue, mark out the life span of individual families: the Darlings and Joplings in Orange Street or the Le Marechals and Mignotts in Squirries St are typical examples. John Le Marechal and his wife Elizabeth are first found living in Squirries St in the 1841 census working in the silk trade. (John's great grandfather Nicholas Le Marechal, also a weaver, had migrated to England from Caen in Normandy around 1704.) Some forty years later, in 1881, they were still there, although by now John, at seventy-three, was a park-keeper with responsibility for opening and closing the once up-market Spital Square, where the silk 'masters' of a previous generation had formerly lived.³⁸ The Mignotts also lived out their lives in Squirries Street and perhaps even flourished despite the apparent decline of the area. The work of John Mignott continued despite the overall economic climate, and in 1871 he declared himself to be a silk manufacturer employing eight people. This particular experience seems to have been short lived: in 1891 he was living in the same street and engaged in the same work but now was a simple silk weaver. Those who were descended from French Protestant refugees tended both to stay within a number of neighbouring streets, and to marry into similar families within the same locality. Thus John Le Marechal of Squirries Street had married Elisabeth from the Nial family who lived in the adjacent Robert Street.³⁹ There was intermarrying too between the Levesques – a weaving family prominent in running the Lintot friendly society (through Isaac Levesque of Robert Street) and the Lamys, also of Robert Street.

In the north of England the skilled (male) handloom weavers had been thrown out of work and replaced by machines often staffed by women. John Burnett has suggested that many moved; some migrated, or went into the army or went on the tramp for work.⁴⁰ If the industrial folk song 'The handloom weaver and the factory maid' is to be believed, unemployed northern handloom weavers were obliged to follow the women to the mills

to find love – if not work.⁴¹ In Bethnal Green love, at least, was less exacting: within a matter of yards men and women continued to find their life partners, and raise their children, in the same streets as had their parents and grandparents.

By the 1890s and beyond many of the silk weavers remaining in the craft were older workers, but this was not a simple linear form of ‘dying out’. The individual census returns suggest that this was a trade which one dropped out of but also into. Young people, especially women, moved into the trade. Thus we see young women, in say the Lamy family of Robert Street, renewing the family’s silk-weaving tradition in the 1870s, or the young Nial girls starting their working life in the 1870s as silk-trimming finishers. Some moved from jobs directly in the silk-weaving business to the related trades of clothes making – Esther Poulson of Squirries Street, for example, turned to waistcoat making – or upholstery.

Although we did not have access to the 1901 census returns during the course of this particular research, we were able to trace vestiges of the physical movement of the trade from Bethnal Green to Essex. This marked a development, and in some instances a reversal, of weavers’ migration routes in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which continued into the mid twentieth century. In the 1890s Warner’s silk mills, based in Hollybush Gardens off Bethnal Green Road, together with between 100 and 200 of their workforce, represented by their union, the Amalgamated Furniture Silk Weavers’ Union, moved to Braintree where they continued to work on their highly-valued product. Many refused, however, to leave their homes for a new life in Essex and, in consequence, the company was forced for a time to operate its plants in Bethnal Green and Braintree simultaneously.⁴² Some migrants quickly returned to London homesick. It was not the work alone which had kept the weavers there, but family and community ties.⁴³ The electoral registers of the 1920s and 1930s of Bethnal Green still recorded family names from the previous century in the streets of our study – the Robertsons in Satchwell Rents and the Davieses in Pollard Row for example. Here were still traces of nineteenth-century local names including Agombar, Hayes and Holloway.⁴⁴ A dying industry could not impel many residents to leave the area: nor indeed, it seems, could a dead one.

OTHER EAST LONDON STORIES

Through scrutinizing census returns for changing patterns of work within a handful of streets we suggest, for example, that certain stories concerning the relationship between the furniture and silk-weaving trades can be challenged. Some have asserted, for instance, that the furniture trade took over locally from silk weaving. As Wilmott and Young suggested in their romanticization of the area, ‘The furniture making which started as an offshoot of the silk upholstery trade has supplanted its parent’.⁴⁵ Although the

aggregate figures in our own small study confirm that employment in silk declined in the same period when jobs in the furniture trade rose, it is by no means clear that these two trends were causally linked. Silk weavers – at least according to the detailed information on census returns – did not suddenly shift jobs into the ‘new’ trade, but often carried on working in a range of silk-related activities. The silk trade was clearly the major industry in this area of Bethnal Green in the 1840s when it employed over 50% of the working population. Whilst our research demonstrates that it did undergo a significant decline over the next fifty years, it was to remain the largest single sector of local employment until 1871 at least. It was only from 1881 onwards that the furniture trade began employing more local people than silk. However, the highest proportion of local workers that furniture ever employed was 17% (in 1891). The contrast with silk’s dominance – 52% in 1841 and 37% in 1851 – suggests that to describe one industry as ‘replacing’ the other is not really an accurate description.

Our research also provides a valuable insight into the changing gendering of work in the area. The continuation of silk weaving in the second half of the nineteenth century employed a workforce in which women would become increasingly dominant.⁴⁶ During the period covered by our study, census returns indicate that women outnumbered men in this industry for every year in question except 1841 when the figures were roughly equal. A woman entering the labour market was at least 50% more likely to find work in silk than a man from the same community; in the 1860s and 1870s they would be more than twice as likely to do so. In furniture the situation was reversed with men outnumbering women by about ten to one throughout the period in question.

Perhaps the reason why silk’s decline was emphasized so strongly in contemporary commentaries lies in the fact that it was demasculinized. Increasingly this was a trade dominated by female labour and much of the work continued to be undertaken in domestic locations. As such it constituted an anachronistic image of a pre-industrial and pre-modern system of production located in the home, in contrast to the division that was developing between home and work in the wider industrial base. Similarly, in the context of a particular gendered construction of working-class identity in the late nineteenth century, the inclusion of women in silk weaving suggested – erroneously – a lack of skill.⁴⁷ This picture of an industry where women and men worked alongside each other found a particular representation in contemporary ‘anthropological’ and visual materials of hard work in domestic surroundings.⁴⁸ Plants on the windowsills, pictures on walls, or the inclusion of chairs, appealed to a particular sort of anti-industrial nostalgia as the image heading this article suggests.⁴⁹ These images are not spaces of male ‘craft’ or heavy manual work – the conventional locations for industrial activity – but of ‘female’ domestic spaces. In this image the minority gender is male.

We suggest that the stories sketched out above, developed largely from

institutional and administrative materials, differ significantly from much that has been written about this area of East London, both at the time and in subsequent histories. The women and men from weaving families who comprise the characters in these tales seem far removed from the contemporary configuration of the East End world of Jack the Ripper, the 'abyss' and 'outcast' London. The weavers' stories have also failed to fascinate cultural and social historians of today. Whilst 'outcast' London, and other melodramatic depictions of East London of the 1880s, have found their social and cultural historians in the work of Judith Walkowitz, Gareth Stedman Jones or Bill Fishman, the less dramatic continuing presence of the silk weavers has yet to be portrayed as a source of similar fascination.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

The over-arching narrative of historians discussing the economic condition of silk weavers has been one of decline and death. The difference in approach centres on the disputed date of such demise. According to Schwarz, 'essentially the silk industry was limping from 1826'.⁵¹ For David Green the 1840s were the significant date. Silk weaving in Spitalfields had so declined in the 1840s that the area had become 'synonymous with impoverishment'.⁵² For Plummer February 1860 was the key moment characterized by the comments attributed to Richard Cobden, on the scrapping of import duties from France, 'Let the silk trade perish and go to countries to which it properly belongs'.⁵³ In similar vein Frank Warner, whose family owned the prestigious silk mills in Hollybush Gardens, described the treaty with France as practically striking the death blow to the local industry, despite the flourishing of the family firm for decades to follow.⁵⁴

We do not dispute that on a macro level there was indeed an overall decline in the number of people in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields employed as silk workers by the end of the nineteenth century. But there was also, we suggest, a peculiar sort of continuation, a staying, a getting by, in the streets north of the Bethnal Green Road. Some weavers did indeed move into new jobs, but others who had left returned to their former trade. For some there was a moving into trimmings and trifles, for others a continuation of the work of winding raw silk. In a story of the silk trade constructed from the minutiae of census returns the work of women is prominent; unsurprisingly this barely features in studies largely drawn from the extensive parliamentary reports of the trade.

Material for writing stories of the lives of the residents of Bethnal Green does still exist. It can be found in state and institutional documents stored in archives. In the Warner's weavers' sample books at the Victoria and Albert museum one can admire the continued brightness of the colours and the intricacies of the designs. The colours are so vivid, a curator explains, because so few researchers are interested in consulting these sample books.⁵⁵ In the homes of descendants too there exist personal archives of

photographs and other ephemera, passed down through families – the fragmentary traces of other lives. Ann Hayes, the elderly silk weaver whose story opened this article, did not leave her relatives much of a material legacy of her life in the area: ‘2 skirts and 2 jackets, 3 shawls, 5 capes, 2 boxes, 2 p o scissors & shears & pickers, 1 shoe horn, 1 silver spoon, 2 brooches, 4 books, 1 pr stays’. But there are other traces of the lives of Sarah Hayes and her peers buried in records and archives like the census. Decades ago Raphael Samuel suggested that, ‘By using a different class of record . . . the historian can draw up fresh maps, in which people are as prominent as places and the two are more closely intertwined’.⁵⁶ Our ‘map’ is not a celebration but an attempt to explore whether there might be another way of writing a history of part of East London.⁵⁷ We would suggest that a study of street census returns might well provide the basis for new ways of constructing new maps and new histories of Bethnal Green lives.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1 This charitable foundation was where many elderly descendants of Huguenots spent their last days. In the early nineteenth century it was located in Bath Street, St Luke’s, off Old Street. A new hospital was erected in Victoria Park Road in 1865. The building still exists and is used by the Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic Secondary School.

2 Charles F. A. Marmoy, *The French Protestant Hospital. Extracts from the archives of ‘La Providence’ relating to inmates and applications for admission, 1718–1957, and to recipients of and applicants for the Coqueau charity, 1745–1901*, London, 1977 (pages unnumbered).

3 *Queen*, 21 September 1861, pp. 35–7.

4 *Builder*, 1 June 1861, pp. 365–7.

5 The area comprised a number of streets lying in a rough rectangle bordered by Bethnal Green Road to the south, Hackney Road to the North, Cambridge Heath Road to the east and Brick Lane to the west. The area generally can be identified as a significant site of residence for silk weavers and furniture makers throughout this period. Specific streets were in the west: Duke/Ducal St, New Tyson/Tyssen St. Satchwell Rent, Orange St, Princes Court, Providence Place, and further to the east: Pollard Row, Squirries St, Robert St, William/Ivimey St. (See Rough Examination books of the Board of Guardians for Bethnal Green in London Metropolitan Archives for further indications of local employment.)

6 According to the 1851 census there were only sixteen people employed in the orris weaving trade in the British Isles (and 114,570 as silk weavers). *Illustrated London News*, 5 August 1854, p. 119.

7 In the 1851 census Ann was deemed head of the household she shared with her daughter Ann. We are aware that the returns (assuming the people told the truth) were to be based on the employment the residents had undertaken for the majority of the time during the previous year, that is it was not necessarily the only paid work being undertaken at that precise moment. See Edward Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census. The Manuscript returns for England and Wales 1801–1901*, London, 1989, pp. 78–9. See also M. J. Cullen, *The Statistical Movement in Early Victorian Britain: the Foundation of Empirical Social Research*, Hassocks, 1975, p. 32; Eileen Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, London, 1996, pp. 159–60.

8 Marmoy, *The French Protestant Hospital*, (Vol. I: A–K). Being ‘of unsound mind’, Ann junior was subsequently removed to Homerton Infirmary where she died on 1 January 1890.

9 The Jacquard machine was first used in Spitalfields in the 1820s. From the 1860s there was still some demand for rich furniture and dress silks, but by the end of the century the emphasis was upon small items, for example, silk ties and handkerchiefs. Warner revived the production of figured silks which continued to be highly regarded. See Frank Warner, *The Silk Industry of the United Kingdom. its origin and development*, London, 1921, pp. 90ff; W. H. Manchee, *Memories of Spitalfields*, London, 1914, p. 28; Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London. First series: Poverty. The Trades of East London connected with poverty*, London, 1902, p. 244.

10 That is, twelve of the thirty-two houses. L. D. Schwarz judges that 'essentially the Spitalfields silk industry was limping from 1826': *London in the Age of Industrialisation. Entrepreneurs, Labour Force and Living Conditions, 1700–1850*, Cambridge, 1992. David Green has argued that silk weaving in Spitalfields had so declined in the 1840s that the area had become 'synonymous with impoverishment', David Green, *From Artisans to Paupers. Economic Change and Poverty in London, 1790–1870*, Aldershot, 1995, p. 158; Gareth Stedman Jones takes a similar position: the 1860s 'marked the final agony': *Outcast London: a Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 101. See also Warner, *The Silk Industry*, pp. 80–3 and Francois Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy*, London, 1982, p. 220.

11 'Leaves from the Greville diary 17 February 1832' (Tower Hamlets archive) as quoted in Wolf Wayne, *The Spitalfields Silk Weavers: their Place in the London Radical Movement and the Decline of the Community 1820–59*, unpublished BA dissertation, University of Sussex, 1975, p. 20.

12 William Chapman Waller, *Early Huguenot Friendly Societies. Reprinted from Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London*, printed for private circulation, 1901, pp. 6–12, 19, 26, 27–32; cf. A. Marmoy, 'The Huguenots and their Descendants in East London', *East London Papers* 13: 2, winter 1970, p. 79; Samuel Sholl, *A Short Historical Account of the Silk Manufacture in England, from its introduction down to the present time*, Hackney 1811, pp. 9–10; Samuel Smiles, *The Huguenots; their Settlements, Churches, Industries in England and Ireland*, London, 1869, pp. 251, 263.

13 For example: Marmoy, *The French Protestant Hospital; Cockney Ancestor*, published by the East London Family History Society, and *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*.

14 For the demographic work of the Cambridge group see E. A. Wrigley, 'Small-scale but not Parochial: the work of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure', *Family and Community History* 1: 1, November 1998, pp. 27–36.

15 *Rough Examination Book – Bethnal Green Board of Guardians 1839–40*, p. 111, London Metropolitan Archives (Be BG 267/1).

16 Carolyn Steedman, 'Enforced Narratives: Stories of Another Self' in *Feminism and Autobiography. Texts, Theories, Methods*, ed. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield, London, 2000 p. 36; Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester, 2001.

17 The census had been instituted both to dispel radical discontent (by revealing the true structure of the economy) and to reflect demographic concerns about sanitation and public health: Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census*, p. 15.

18 The dates on which the census returns completed were Sunday 6 June 1841, Sunday 30 March 1851, Sunday 7 April 1861, Sunday 2 April 1871, Sunday 3 April 1881, Sunday 5 April 1891: Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census*, p. 105. In the Spitalfields ward of Christ Church in 1871, for example, only 15% of returns were filled in by the respondents themselves, apparently indicating an illiteracy rate of 85%: Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census*, p. 13.

19 Peter Wood, *Poverty and the Workhouse in Victorian Britain*, Stroud, 1991, pp. 101 and 147. John Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law*, London, 1986; Anthony Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: the Politics of Inquiry, Enactment and Implementation, 1832–39*, London, 1978; *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Derek Fraser, London, 1976.

20 There were several other charities specifically for the poor of Spitalfields. George Fournier, for example, provided for interest on £4,000 to be distributed to the local poor who had not received assistance from the parish and Margaret Vaughan had left interest on £6,000 for unemployed weavers. Somerset (sic) J. Hyam, *An Account of the Charitable Benefactions belonging to the parish of Christ Church Spitalfields*, London, 1866.

21 G. Holden Pike, 'The Last of the Weavers: a Walk through Spitalfields', *The Quiver*, Dec. 1892, pp. 173–4.

22 See the narratives given to the assistant hand-loom commissioners in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 23 part 2, pp. 232–9. The employees (Thomas Heath, Samuel Sully, Joseph

Hoyles and John Duce) all discuss past family history and past family work practices. See too the account of William Bresson in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 24, pp. 76–9.

23 Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon. People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London*, New Haven, 2000, p. 29.

24 Raphael Samuel and John Shaw, *A Farewell to Spitalfields. An exhibition at the Bishops-gate Institute arranged by Raphael Samuel and John Shaw*, London, 1988, p. 2.

25 Weaving had emanated from the city livery company in the square mile's Basinghall Street, not from the Huguenots although they had revived the trade. Manchee, *Memories of Spitalfields*, p. 7; Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*.

26 Huguenots also came to England before 1685. Natalie Rothstein 'The eighteenth-century English silk industry' in *Eighteenth century Silks: the Industries of England and Northern Europe*, ed. Natalie Rothenstein, Riggisberg, 2000, p. 15; Robin Gwynn, *The Huguenots of London*, Brighton, 1998; Peter Thornton and Natalie Rothstein, 'The Importance of the Huguenots in the London Silk Industry', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society* 20: 1, 1959, pp. 60–88.

27 Entry for Ann Haye (Hay/Hayes), Marmoy, *The French Protestant Hospital* (Vol. I, A–K).

28 The rough examination books for 1841–2 are unavailable. For 1839–40 (Be BG 267/1) there are a handful of claimants from these streets: Frances Spong from Squirries St. and Peter McLaglan from Satchevells Rents stick out as rare examples. Other streets with numbers of weavers seeking relief include Hare St, Wilke St, Church St, Twig Folly and Tyssen St. A study of the records of the French Protestant Hospital, however, indicates larger numbers seeking assistance in this geographical area; Marmoy, *La Providence*.

29 'The feeling is of being in a foreign town', George Duckworth, co-worker of Charles Booth, as quoted in David Feldman 'Jews in London 1880–1914', in *Patriotism. The Making and Unmaking of British Identity*. ed. Raphael Samuel, vol. 2, *Minorities and Outsiders*, London, 1988, p. 212. According to Feldman, it was estimated in 1902 that between 45 and 50% of the population of St George's in the East and Whitechapel were Jewish.

30 William Taylor, *This Bright Place: a Travel Book in One Place*, London, 2001; Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair, *Rodinsky's Room*, London, 1998; Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Post Colonialism and the City*, London, 1996.

31 Using similar iconography to that of Booth in his (in)famous map of London poverty, colouring streets of Jewish migrants in dark blue and those with less than 5% red, we find that Pollard Row, Robert, Squirries, Orange and Duke Streets, and Princes Court and Satchwell Rents (amongst others) all are coloured red as the nineteenth century turns into the twentieth, marking an absence of migrants; Charles Russell and Harry S. Lewis, *The Jew in London. A Study of Racial Character and Present Day Conditions*, London, 1900.

32 This includes specifically East London parishes and others nearby including Bishops-gate and Moorgate. Those born in Middlesex in 1841 (prior to separate categorization): 77.8%; 1851: Bethnal Green 58.38%, other local 20.34%, rest of London 10.35%; 1861 Bethnal Green 61.88%, other local 19.52%, rest of London 9.11%; 1871 Bethnal Green 61.84%, other local 18.71%, elsewhere in London 10.19%; 1881 Bethnal Green 59.08%, other local 20.85%, elsewhere in London 11.77%; 1891 Bethnal Green 63.04%, other local 19.02%, elsewhere in London 10.81%

33 1891: Squirries Street, Bethnal Green and other local 85%, Robert St 89%, Pollard Row 85%, Ducal St 89%.

34 Michael de Certeau, 'Practices of Space', in *On Signs*, ed. Marshall Blonsky, Oxford, 1985, p. 129.

35 This is particularly borne out by the pattern books of Warner's, the silk mill operating at Hollybush Gardens in the 1890s. In lists which set the names of weavers next to the patterns they wove one observes 'local names' such as Agombar, Makin, Burrows and Hunnable. Warner's pattern books: T610, T612, T613, T617, Textile Archive, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

36 Pollard Row census returns for 1871–1881.

37 *A History of the County of Middlesex: Early Stepney with Bethnal Green*, *Victoria County History Vol. XI*, Oxford, 1998; St Matthew Bethnal Green rate-assessment books, Vol 268, 1878, Tower Hamlets local history library; John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815–1985*, London, 1986, pp. 58ff.; *The History of Working Class Housing: a Symposium*, ed. Stanley D. Chapman, Newton Abbot, 1971; Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London*, London, 1977, pp. 40–2.

38 Marmoy, *La Providence*. In 1888 John Le Marechal was recommended by a Mr Merceron for a grant from the French Protestant Hospital which was later agreed. He was at that time eighty-four years old, as was his wife.

39 Marmoy, *La Providence*; and census returns for Robert Street. Also personal correspondence with Ted Richards, a descendant of the Nial family as contacted through www.Rootsweb.com, East London Family History Society message board, Nial thread, 16 July 2001.

40 Charlotte Erickson, *Leaving England: Essays on British Emigration in the Nineteenth Century*, Ithaca, 1994, p. 105. Erickson suggests that in the later nineteenth century textile workers were not well represented amongst emigrants; John Burnett, *Idle Hands: the Experience of Unemployment, 1790–1990*, London, 1994, pp. 42–77. Burnett also states that in addition to undertaking building work, older men often stayed in their villages.

41 *One Hundred Songs of Toil*, ed. Karl Dallas, London, 1975, pp. 109–110.

42 Alec B. Hunter, 'A History of Warner and Sons Ltd', 1949, typescript of talk to Braintree and District Textile Society, in Warner archive, Essex Record Office, Chelmsford.

43 Warner, *The Silk Industry*, pp. 515–6 and 613; Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, pp. 393 ff. Warner's pattern books containing names of weavers working on a specific pattern, 1884–1902. Victoria and Albert Museum Textile Archive (refs. T610, T 612, T613, T 617). See too collection of cuttings and contemporary accounts in the Warner archive deposited at the Essex Record Office, Chelmsford.

44 Register of electors, Bethnal Green South West, autumn 1924, 1934–5, London Metropolitan Archives (LCC/ PER/ B/ 2044).

45 Peter Wilmott and Michael Young, *Family and Kinship in East London*, London, 1957, p. 69. See also James H. Robb, *Working-class Anti-semitism: a Psychological Study in a London Borough*, London, 1954, pp. 199–200; and Jacobs, *Edge of Empire*, p. 74.

46 Charles Booth's late nineteenth-century survey similarly found that of the total employed in his sample of 1,674 silk workers (in dyeing, designing, winding and warping, dressing, finishing and weaving) there were 823 men to 851 women. Of actual weavers 680 were men compared to 580 women: Booth, *Life and Labour*, p. 254ff.

47 Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750–1850* (1930), London, 1969, pp. 168–9; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, London, 1995, pp. 126–7; Alfred Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company 1600–1970*, London, 1972, pp. 391–4.

48 Manchee, *Memories of Spitalfields*; Smiles, *The Huguenots; Builder*, 28 May 1853 and 1 June 1861; G. Holden Pike, 'The last of the Weavers: a Walk through Spitalfields', *The Quiver*, Dec. 1892; J. H. Clapham, 'The Spitalfields Acts 1773–1824', *Economic Journal* 26, 1916, pp. 459–71; Theodore Compton, *Recollections of Spitalfields*, London, 1894. The Rector J. H. Scott, *Spitalfields. A Short History of Spitalfields, 1197–1894*, London, 1895–6; *Queen*, 21 Sept. 1861.

49 *Queen*, 21 Sept. 1861, p. 37. See Hilda Kean, 'East End Stories: the Chairs and the Photographs', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 6: 2, 2000, pp. 111–27.

50 Stedman Jones, *Outcast London*; Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in late-Victorian London*, London, 1992; William Fishman, *East End 1888: a Year in a London Borough among the Labouring Poor*, London, 1988. See also John Marriott, 'Sensation of the Abyss: the Urban Poor and Modernity', in *Modern Times: Reflections of a Century of English Modernity*, ed. Mica Nava and Alan O'Shea, London, 1996, pp. 77–100.

51 Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialization*, p. 38.

52 Green, *From Artisans to Paupers*, p. 158.

53 Plummer, *The London Weavers' Company*, pp. 368–9; the speech made by Cobden in Manchester was discussed in parliament on 1 March 1860. See *Hansard* 3rd series CLVI column 2116.

54 Warner *The Silk Industry*, p. 78.

55 Conversation with one of the authors October 2001.

56 Raphael Samuel, 'Local History and Oral History', *History Workshop Journal* 1, spring 1976, p. 199.

57 See Denis Cosgrove, 'Mapping Meaning', in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove, London, 1999.