

## “From Dickens’s London to Gissing’s London”

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- 1) [Dickens] describes London like a special correspondent for posterity. (Bagehot, 394)
  
- 2) As I was studying to-day at the Museum an important book on “Life & Labour in the East End,” which was published last year, I came unexpectedly on the following passage: “It is very difficult for outsiders to gain a correct idea of the private life of these people; something may be gleaned from a few books, such, for instance, as ‘Demos.’”  
(“To Ellen,” Dec 8, 1890, *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, 4: 249)
  
- 3) When, seven years after [Dickens’s death], I somehow found myself amid the streets of London, it was a minor matter to me, a point by the way, that I had to find the means of keeping myself alive; what I chiefly thought of was that now at length I could go hither or thither in London’s immensity seeking for the places which had been made known to me by Dickens. . . . I now had leisure to wander among the byways, making real to my vision what hitherto had been but names and insubstantial shapes. A map of the town lay open on my table, and amid its close-printed mazes I sought the familiar word; then off I set, no matter the distance, to see and delight myself. (Gissing, “Dickens in Memory,” *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*, 1: 49)
  
- 4) Forster’s biography told me where to look for the novelist’s homes and haunts. (“Dickens in Memory,” 1: 50)
  
- 5) Making the connection between geography and literature explicit, then—mapping it: because a map is precisely that, a connection made visible—will allow us to see some significant relationships that have so far escaped us.  
(Moretti, 3)
  
- 6) Walk with me, reader, into Whitecross Street. (*Workers in the Dawn*, 1: 3)
  
- 7) Well, this is the Whitecross Street of to-day; but it is in this street rather more than twenty years ago that my story opens. There is not much difference between now and then, except that the appearance of the shops is perhaps improved, and the sanitary condition of the neighbourhood a trifle more attended to; the description, on the whole may remain unaltered.  
(*Workers in the Dawn*, 1: 8)

8) Sunday evening was invariably spent thus. . . . Starting from the shop about four o'clock, they would walk in a direction already agreed upon, and, by fetching a lengthy compass, regain home towards nine. . . The direction they had taken was Citywards. After crossing Smithfield Market, they passed along Little Britain, and over Aldersgate Street into Barbican. . . . Talking thus earnestly they had passed out of Barbican into Beech Street, and so to the foot of Whitecross Street. (*Workers in the Dawn*, 1: 159-62)

9) The first few days were spent in walks alone, which she planned each morning by reference to a map of London, choosing in preference those districts which she knew by reputation as mean and poverty-stricken. As yet she had never seen poverty in its worst shapes, and she now for the first time became acquainted with the appearance of a London slum. (*Workers in the Dawn*, 1: 255)

10) A conversation ensued which I shall not endeavor to repeat, under fear of being stigmatised as a 'realist' by the critical world. (*Workers in the Dawn*, 1: 65)

11) [F]our and twenty years ago, when I had no London memories of my own, they were simply the scenes of Dickens's novels, with all remoter history enriching their effect on the great writer's page. The very atmosphere declared him; if I gasped in a fog, was it not Mr Guppy's 'London particular'? —if the wind pierced me under a black sky, did I not see Scrooge's clerk trotting off to his Christmas Eve in Somers Town? . . . In time I came to see London with my own eyes, but how much better when I saw it with those of Dickens!

(Gissing, 'Dickens in Memory', *Collected Works of George Gissing on Charles Dickens*, 1: 50)

12) They were threading the neighborhood of Saffron Hill on their way citywards (Bill always preferred these backways to the more open thoroughfares), when he was hailed by a 'pal' from the doorway of a dram-shop[.] (*Workers in the Dawn*, 1: 81)

13) In the troubled twilight of a March evening ten years ago, an old man, whose equipment and bearing suggested that he was fresh from travel, walked slowly across Clerkenwell Green, and by the graveyard of St. James's Church stood for a moment looking about him. . . . [W]ith a slight sigh he went forward along the narrow street which is called St. James's Walk. In a few minutes he had reached the end of it, and found himself facing a high grey brick wall, wherein, at this point, was an arched gateway closed with black doors. . . . Above this hideous effigy was carved the legend: Middlesex House of Detention. (*The Nether World*, 1)

14) They were just emerging from a narrow court not far from the open square in Clerkenwell, which is called, by some strange perversion of terms, 'The Green,' when the Dodger made a sudden stop, and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again with the greatest caution and circumspection. (*Oliver Twist*, 74)

15) As Jack Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the turnpike at Islington. They crossed from the Angel into St John's road, struck down the small street which terminates at Sadler Wells theatre, through Exmouth-street and Coppice-row, down the little court by the side of the workhouse, across the classic ground which once bore the name of Hockley-in-the-hole, thence into Little Saffron-hill, and so into Saffron-hill the Great, along which, the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels. (*Oliver Twist*, 63)

16) Pennyloaf then put on her hat and jacket again and left the house. She walked away from the denser regions of Clerkenwell, came to Sadler's Wells Theatre . . . , and there turned into Myddleton Passage. It is a narrow paved walk between brick walls seven feet high; on gardens behind Myddleton Square. (*The Nether World*, 76-77)

17) Let me describe this room. It was the first floor back; so small that the bed left little room to move. She took it unfurnished, for 2/9 a week; the furniture she bought was; the bed, one chair, a chest of drawers, and a broken deal table. On some shelves were plates, cups, etc. over the mantle hung several pictures, which had preserved from old days. . . . then there were several cards with Biblical texts, and three cards such as are signed by those who 'take the pledge', all bearing date during the last six months. (*London and the Life of Literature*, 22-23)

18) There was no bed, but one mattress lay with a few rags of bed-clothing spread upon it, and two others were rolled up in a corner. This chamber accommodated, under ordinary circumstances, four persons. . . . over the fireplace, the stained wall bore certain singular ornaments. These were five coloured cards, such as are signed by one who takes a pledge of total abstinence; each presented the signature, 'Maria Candy,' and it was noticeable that at each progressive date the handwriting had become more unsteady. (*The Nether World*, 75-76)

19) You would have enjoyed a peep into the rear chamber on the ground floor. There dwelt a family named Hope—Mr and Mrs Hope, Sarah Hope, aged fifteen, Dick Hope, aged twelve, Betsy Hope, aged three. The father was a cripple; he and his wife occupied themselves in the picking of rags—of course at home—and I can assure you that the atmosphere of their abode was worthy of its aspect. Mr Hope drank, but not desperately. His forte was the use of language so peculiarly violent that even in Shooter's Gardens it gained him a proud reputation. On the slightest excuse he would threaten to brain one of his children, to disembowel another, to gouge out the eyes of the third. He showed much ingenuity in varying the forms of menaced punishment. Not a child in the Gardens but was constantly threatened by its parents with a violent death; this was so familiar that it had lost its effect; where the nurse or mother in the upper world cries, 'I shall scold you!' in the nether the phrase is, 'I'll knock yer 'ed orff!' To 'I shall be very angry with you' in the one sphere, corresponds in the other, 'I'll murder you!' (*The Nether World*, 249)

20) Her employment was the making of shirts for export; she earned on an average ten pence a day, and frequently worked fifteen hours between leaving and returning to her home. (*The Nether World*, 72)

21) Stephen pursued the occupation of a potman; his hours were from eight in the morning till midnight on week-days, and on Sunday the time during which a public house is permitted to be open; once a month he was allowed freedom after six o'clock. (*The Nether World*, 75)

22) She lived in Shooter's Gardens, a picturesque locality which demolition and rebuilding have of late transformed[.] (*The Nether World*, 74)

23) This winter was the last that Shooter's Gardens were destined to know. [I]n the spring there would come a wholesale demolition, and model-lodgings would thereafter occupy the site. (*The Nether World*, 248)

24) What terrible barracks, those Farringdon Road Buildings! Vast, sheer walls, unbroken by even an attempt at ornament; row above row of windows in the mud-coloured surface, upwards, upwards, lifeless eyes, murky openings that tell of bareness, disorder, comfortlessness within. One is tempted to say that Shooter's Gardens are a preferable abode. An inner courtyard, asphalted, swept clean—looking up to the sky as from a prison. Acres of these edifices, the tinge of grime declaring the relative dates of their erection; millions of tons of brute brick and mortar, crushing the spirit as you gaze. Barracks, in truth; housing for the army of industrialism, an army fighting with itself, rank against rank, man against man, that the survivors may have whereon to feed. (*The Nether World*, 274)

25) Directly in front, rising mist-detached from the lower masses of building, stood in black majesty the dome of St Paul's; . . . Somewhat nearer, amid many spires and steeples, lay the surly bulk of Newgate, the lines of its construction shown plan-wise; its little windows multiplied for points of torment to the vision. Nearer again, the markets of Smithfield, Bartholomew's hospital, the tract of modern deformity, cleft by a gulf of railway, which spreads between Clerkenwell Road and Charterhouse Street. Down in Farringdon Street the carts, wagons, vans, cabs, omnibuses, crossed and intermingled in a steaming splash-baths of mud; human beings, reduced to their due paltriness, seemed to toil in exasperation along the strips of pavement, bound on errands, which were a mockery, driven automaton-like by force they neither understood, nor could resist. (*The Nether World*, 280)

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