POPULAR CONSPIRACISM IN BRITAIN, C.1880-1914

Submitted by Peter Mills in part fulfilment of the requirements for doctorate in history, September 2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores 'popular conspiracism' as an identifiable cultural current in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, evident in Parliament, politics, the press and popular literature. It contends that popular conspiracism was visible throughout the public sphere in the period 1880-1914, and was structured by three key discursive motifs. Firstly, popular conspiracism described secretive, often transnational systems of agency and connectivity operating beneath the surface of everyday life, and attributed pseudo-divine characteristics of potency and perception to the hidden actors that peoples these systems. Secondly, popular conspiracist discourses were deeply bound up in the interplay between the sometimes contradictory practices of secrecy, transparency and accountability encoded within contemporary liberal governance. These allowed for the emergence of conspiratorial speculations regarding individuals and behaviours which were ambiguously situated within the public sphere: i.e. whose existence was known, but whose activities nevertheless remained obscure. Thirdly, popular conspiracism blossomed within an increasingly rich, complicated and at times confusing media environment, and mobilised a wide range of suspicious and speculative narratives, which ranged from the mundane to the fantastic.

These conspiracist narratives were most visible in three principal areas of popular discourse, which form the evidential core of this thesis: I) foreign espionage and structures of preparation for invasions of the British Isles; II) international systems of insurrection and terrorism; and III) Jewish plutocracy and the uncertain position of resident aliens. Each of these elements has its own pre-history, and might be studied separately. By contrast, this thesis suggests that they should be studied together as part of a broader, if variously expressed, culture of 'popular conspiracism'.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCING POPULAR CONSPIRACISM IN BRITAIN, C. 1880-1914

Any reader of late Victorian and Edwardian popular media might be forgiven for believing that Britain was riddled with conspiracies. The daily press regularly warned of the threat posed to the nation by German espionage networks, carrying out preparations for a forthcoming invasion. Newspaper commentators railed against the insidious influence of Jewish millionaires over politics and the imperial economy. Popular politics was punctured by claims that vast webs of conspiracy connected a complex of terrorist plots against commerce, Christianity and civilization. Fears of this sort – political, conspiratorial and often global – were a consistent presence in British popular culture in the period 1880–1914.

These fears, however, were almost completely unfounded (we shall return to this 'almost' below). There is no evidence for a widespread, 'cosmopolitan' conspiracy to provoke conflict between Britain and the Boer nations of South Africa, or, subsequently, to pervert the course of British southern Africa's destiny as a 'white man's land'. Terrorist networks in mainland Britain, anarchist or Fenian, never posed a serious threat to the viability of the British state, let alone Western civilization; and while conflict did break out in 1914, Wilhelmine Germany had at no point established a functioning system of espionage in Britain. Yet, despite the essential unreality of these concerns, late Victorian and Edwardian culture brimmed with discourses of conspiratorial agency dealing with these very issues: in literature, both high and low; in the broadsheet, tabloid and magazine presses; in pamphlets, political speeches and parliamentary debates; as well as in discussions at the highest levels of military and political governance.

When studied in isolation, and in light of the 'facts', such discourses can be easily dismissed as the paranoid, hysterical marginalia of otherwise legitimate social or political concerns: or in the context of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, concerns regarding an ascendant Germany of growing military and industrial might; the threat of anarchist and Fenian terrorism; and the consequences of a globalising world, replete with increased levels of

emigration and ever-more ramified networks of international finance. This 'marginal' analysis allows such styles of thinking to be labelled as a form of irrationality, the by-product of rapid and deepening 'modernisation', which as such might be debunked as dangerous cultural and political misinformation. This desire to debunk is certainly alluring, but it suffers from two principal shortcomings. Firstly, it obscures the resonances between different discourses of conspiratorial agency, as expressed in relation to different concerns. Analyses which seek to address particular 'fevers' often fall short in their endeavours by focusing only on individual examples of 'popular irrationalities'. Insightful though they may be, such analyses artificially isolate their subject matter, ignoring the wider affinities of the discursive forms and expressions they seek to explain but ultimately dismiss.

Secondly, the assumption of this literature, however implicit, is that conspiratorial thinking is somehow 'un-modern', an irrational throwback to, or residue of, an earlier religious or superstitious age. However, this assumes a progressive teleology towards a more rational, secular and indeed tolerant society; or more simply a properly modern society, in terms of the qualities normally attributed to modern societies in liberal-Whiggish and more left-wing narratives. What this fails to consider is that conspiratorial thinking can indeed be modern; which is to say, that modernity comprises its own – and quite distinct – forms of conspiratorial thinking that need to be understood in terms of the peculiar forces and tensions of a modernising, global society.

This thesis argues that the various discourses of conspiratorial agency visible in British popular culture between 1880 and 1914 must be studied together and not separately. It suggests that such an integrative approach, when applied to the study of discourses of conspiratorial agency pertaining to espionage, terrorism and international capitalism, reveals the existence of what this thesis refers to as *popular conspiracism* – a consistent resort to globalising narratives of hidden and malign agency, which was evident in a variety of popular media, throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. It also argues that late Victorian and Edwardian popular conspiracism should be understood in its peculiar historical context. Neither irrational nor un- or anti-modern, popular conspiracism was an expression of the particular tensions and limitations of liberal-capitalist modernity. This is not to suggest that it should,

therefore, be understood as rational or secular. Instead, we need to develop a more nuanced and subtle analytical framework that avoids relying on neat binary distinctions of this sort.

The aim of this introductory chapter is to provide the historiographical and contextual framework for the three substantial chapters that follow, and to detail the key elements of popular conspiracism. It will begin with a discussion of the existing historiography of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, followed by a discussion of the various analyses – historical, critical, sociological and philosophical – that have sought to account for the presence and persistence of 'conspiracy theory' in modern life. The introduction will then set out its definition of popular conspiracism, a facet of popular culture which has, until now, been neglected in the study of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Finally, it will detail the source base and scope of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORIOGRPAHY AND CONSPIRACY THEORY

Fear, fever and panic

Broadly speaking, the existing historiography of popular fears and anxieties in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain is based on the postulation of a broad shift from a period of mid-Victorian optimism and relative political calm to a darker, more anxious turn of mind from the 1880s onwards. To be sure, this is simplistic in at least two keys respects. Firstly, the idea of the mid-Victorian period as uniformly characterised by consensus and social harmony is not entirely accurate. Martin Hewitt's collection of edited essays has, for example, modified – if not completely remoulded – W.L. Burns' generic description of mid-Victorian Britain as an 'age of equipoise', noting that for all the confidence of the 1851 Great Exhibition, there was much that was troublesome, even traumatic, in the mid-Victorian period, both at home and abroad.[1] Notable examples include the multiple debacles of the Crimean War and the so-called

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[1] W.L. Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London: Gregg Revivals, 1994); and, M. Hewitt (ed.), *An Age of Equipoise?: Reassessing Mid-Victorian Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), esp. introduction.

'Indian Mutiny' (or 'Great Rebellion') of 1857. Secondly, if conversely, the period 1880-1914 was not entirely free from the ambience of the *Belle-époque*. This was still, in many ways, an era of optimism, particularly in terms of political and social reform.[2] Accordingly, it would be wrong to speak of an entirely pervasive sense of crisis that emerged from around 1880 onwards.

Nevertheless, the claim that 'the confidence we associate with the Victorians began to decline in the years after the Second Reform Act', and that the 1880s in particular represent the key transitional period in the movement from mid-Victorian confidence to late Victorian anxiety, is broadly tenable.[3] Indeed, despite the various historiographical shifts of the past thirty or so years – including the decline of social and economic analyses of class-based conflict, industrialization and labour unrest – the broad consensus remains that the late Victorian and Edwardian period was one of transition, characterised by a 'restless energy, creativity, and often destructive turmoil' that led to a fracturing of Britain's mid-Victorian 'liberal consensus'.[4] It was during these years when the British developed an anxious turn of mind informed by the sense that Britain and the wider world was undergoing a recurrent series of crises, and by no means necessarily progressing forwards into the future.[5]

None of this historiography, however, engages directly and expansively with the conspiratorial themes which this thesis seeks to integrate and address and analyse afresh. Widespread, popular conspiracist fears of espionage, terrorism and international finance and migration have all, in various ways, remained relative historiographical backwaters, meriting little mention in broader examinations of late Victorian and Edwardian British culture. Although numerous histories make reference to Edwardian Britain's obsession with spies, few have directly addressed the popular conspiratorial beliefs which

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[2] See: A. Briggs, *The age of improvement, 1783-1867* (London: Longman, 1959); D. Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840-1914* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1994); and, M. Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain Since 1870* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008).

[3] K. Boyd and R. McWilliam, *The Victorian Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 4.

[4] G.R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 4. See, more broadly: S. Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

[5] Boyd and McWilliam, *The Victorian Studies Reader*, p. 4; J. Vernon and S. Gunn (eds.), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 4-5.

constituted 'spy fever'. Historians of the First World War and its origins tend to view spy fever as the direct and relatively uncomplicated literary product of the geo-political threat from Germany. Niall Ferguson, for example, deals with espionage literature as part of a chapter entitled 'The Myths of Militarism', describing popular spy-fever as 'laughable'.[6] Historians of the culture of secrecy in Britain and its emerging 'secret state' tend to do much the same, viewing spy fears as a paranoid by-product of popular – and for some legitimate – Germanophobia.[7] Although they draw upon an enormous canvas of popular media, the literary histories of I.G. Clarke, David Stafford, Deak Nabers and Thomas Hitchner pay little attention to the conspiracy culture of which the Edwardian spy thriller was an important constituent element, viewing such works as a sub-genre of the invasion scare genre.[8] This tendency extends even to the wider historiography of the Edwardian period, which broadly addresses espionage conspiracy theories and spy-fever as a largely indistinguishable sub-genre of invasion scare culture: the direct and relatively uncomplicated (if sometimes cynically manipulated) product of fears regarding an ascendant Imperial Germany. In his summary of militarism in Britain prior to 1914,

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[6] N. Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 1-30. See, also: A. Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Controversies and Consensus* (London: Longman, 2002); and, M. Ferro, *The Great War* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 29-37.

[7] In his authorised history of the Security Service, Christopher Andrew's titles his chapter on Britain's pre-war counter-espionage activities 'Spies of the Kaiser', the most popular book writer by the most popular author of Edwardian spy thrillers. However its author, William Le Queux, receives a single fleeting mention within that chapter. See: C. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 3-28; and, K. Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010). Other works outlining the development of Britain's secret intelligence gathering activities in the Empire make similarly little reference to the conspiracist discourses which surrounded these activities, and continues to surround their cultural memory. W. Beaver, *Under Every Leaf: The History of British Intelligence in the Formation of Empire* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2012); P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 24-37; and, P. Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For the history and culture of official secrecy in Britain, see: D. Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1832-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and, more recently, C. Moran, *Classified: Secrecy and the State in Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[8] T. Hitchner, 'Edwardian Spy Literature and the Ethos of Sportsmanship: The Sport of Spying', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 53:4 (2010): 413-430; C. Moran, 'In the Service of Empire: Imperialism and the British Spy Thriller, 1901-1914', *Studies in Intelligence*, 54:2 (2010): 1-22; D. Nabers, 'Spies Like Us: John Buchan and the Great War Spy Craze', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 2:1 (2001); D. Stafford, 'Spies and Gentlemen: The Birth of the British Spy Novel, 1893-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 24:4 (1981): 489-509; idem, *The Silent Game: The Real World of Imaginary Spies* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991); and, D. Trotter, 'The politics of adventure in the early British spy novels', *Intelligence and National Security*, 5:4 (1990): 30-54.

Lawrence James describes spy fever as 'ridiculous' and 'orchestrated by the conscription lobby, which carefully exploited that intense, irrational fear of sudden invasion which had long been embedded in the national psyche.'[9] The sole exception perhaps is David French and his 1978 article 'Spy Fever in Britain, 1900-1915'. However, French's article does little more than chronicle examples of the ways in which 'pre-war stereotype[s] of the evil and ubiquitous enemy spy had been transferred to the entire German nation' by 1915.[10] Although useful in providing evidence for the profusion of conspiratorial beliefs, French's work does little to explain why Germanophobic espionage conspiracy theories were the *de rigueur* popular cultural form for anxieties regarding the German threat.

Similarly, fears and representations of terrorism have also been addressed in this fractured manner. The canonical text for popular fears of anarchist and Irish terrorism in Britain remains Barbara Arnett Melchiori's *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*.[11] However, excepting a single chapter by David Speicher, and Antony Taylor's recent *London's Burning* – and also, to some extent, the works of Richard Jensen and Isaac Land – little historical research has since been published on popular representations and fears of terrorism in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[12] Many works have been published which address the position and perception of anarchism and anarchist movements in the British public sphere between 1880 and 1914, but such studies devote little attention to conspiracy theories regarding anarchist terrorism.[13] I.G. Clarke's *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars, 1763-*

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[9] L. James, *The rise and fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus, 1988), p. 335.

[10] D. French, 'Spy Fever in Britain, 1900-1915', *The Historical Journal*, 21:2 (1978): 355-370 (p. 370).

[11] B.A. Melchiori, *Terrorism in the late Victorian Novel* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

[12] Jensen's work is largely gauged at the European, rather than the British, level. Land's work is gauged at a truly international level. R.B. Jensen, 'The International Anti-Anarchist Conference of 1898 and the Origins of Interpol', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16:2 (1981): 323-347; idem, *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); I. Land, *Enemies of Humanity: The Nineteenth-Century War on Terrorism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); D. Speicher, 'Terror, Spectacle and the Press: Anarchist Outrage in Edwardian England', in T. Crook, R. Gill and B. Taithe (eds.), *Evil, Barbarism and Empire: Britain and abroad, c.1830-2000* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 54-72; and, A. Taylor, *London's Burning: Pulp Fiction, the Politics of Terrorism and the Destruction of the Capital in British Popular Culture, 1840-2005* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

[13] This is not to say that the texts of this history have gone unstudied. Michael Whitworth, for example, has argued that Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and other forms of 'scientific romance' were

3749 addresses itself to terrorist 'global takeover' literature, as part of a very broadly defined 'invasion scare' genre. However, Clarke's analysis is broadly cultural, more concerned with the prophetic qualities of such literature than its mobilization of discourses of secretive and malign agency. Indeed, though works such as Roger Griffin's *Terrorist's Creed*, Walter Laqueur's *The Age of Terrorism* and John Merriman's *The Dynamite Club* have each, in their own ways, suggested that modern terrorism emerged in the late nineteenth century, little research into *popular anxieties* regarding the methods and objectives of contemporary terrorists and terrorist organisations has been published.

In similar fashion, the origins of various terrorist movements, and more recently the transnational currents which informed *particular* revolutionary movements in nineteenth century Europe, have been thoroughly investigated from a number of disciplinary directions.[14] Nevertheless, this research has yet to be complemented by integrative historical research which seeks to place these connections in the context of prevalent fears regarding international terrorist conspiracies and co-operation in the late nineteenth century.[15] As Speicher notes, there was 'a general public impression that all anarchist outrages were somehow coordinated by a clandestine international organisation'; yet little research into such beliefs has taken place, not least regarding the form in which they were expressed.[16]

Alone amongst the concerns of this thesis, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories have received significant scholarly attention, even if little of this has

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deeply wedded to contemporary perceptions of scientific discovery and thinking. M. Whitworth, 'Inspector Heat inspected: *The Secret Agent* and the meanings of entropy', *The Review of English Studies*, 49:193 (1998): 40-59.

[14] M.A. Miller, 'The Intellectual Origins of Modern Terrorism in Europe', in M. Crenshaw (ed.), *Terrorism in Context* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 27-62; N. Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 27-70; and, T. Messer-Kruse, *The Haymarket Conspiracy: Transatlantic Anarchist Networks* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2012), pp. 1-8, 27-127.

[15] H. Oliver, *The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian London* (London: Business & Economics, 1983); H. Shpayer-Makov, 'Anarchism in British Public Opinion 1880-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 31:3 (1988): 487-516; and, A. Vernitski, 'Russian Revolutionaries and English Sympathizers in 1890s London: the case of Olive Garnett and Sergei Stepniak', *Journal of European Studies*, 35:3 (2005): 299-314.

[16] Though Speicher's work explicitly labels the popular outcry over the Houndsditch Affair and the Siege of Sidney Street as a moral panic, Speicher's work stands alone in its concern to investigate of popular responses to 'terrorist' outrages in the late Victorian and Edwardian Britain media. Speicher, 'Terror, Spectacle and the Press'.

been focused on Britain in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, though compendious, Anthony Julius's *Trials of the Diaspora* makes little mention of late Victorian and Edwardian anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, briefly referencing only the period of the South African War, the Marconi and Indian Silver scandals and 'certain Foreign Office officials' ' assessments of the Young Turk movement in the period 1908–1910.'[17] In contrast, Colin Holmes' widely cited *Anti-Semitism in British Society: 1876-1939* provides much evidence for popular belief in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Holmes throws much light on the connections between 'old' anti-Semitic beliefs, the newer popular anti-Semitic forms of anti-Alien agitation which sprang up from the 1880s onwards, and the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories of the radical Left and Right in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.[18] Claire Hirshfield also goes into great detail in her examination of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about the Boer War, describing the existence of a potent strain of conspiracy-theory thinking on the British Left in the late nineteenth century.[19]

However, this literature is almost exclusively concerned to debunk such conspiracy theories and to expose those who, to quote Hirshfield, 'sought to exploit the prominence of capitalists and financiers in the economic life of South Africa as a means of influencing public opinion… [with] an appeal to a base and discreditable prejudice.'[20] Rather than attempting to examine the reasons for the existence of the 'Jewish responsibility' conspiracy theory, or its relationship to other contemporary conspiracy theories, these scholars have been content to expose and demystify. Moreover, beyond the specific work of Hirshfield in particular, little literature directly concerns itself with race, international finance and conspiracy theory in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

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[17] A. Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 60.

[18] C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979). See, also: idem, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (London: Macmillan Education, 1988 [1972]).

[19] C. Hirshfield, 'The Anglo-Boer War and the Issue of Jewish Culpability', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 15 (1980): 619-630; idem, 'The British Left and the "Jewish Conspiracy": A Case Study of Modern Antisemitism', *Jewish Social Studies*, 43:2 (1981): 95-112.

[20] Hirshfield, 'The Anglo-Boer War', p. 619.

Indeed, histories of race, migration and diaspora which cover this period make little reference to racially inflected conspiracy theories, beyond brief sections or individual chapters covering the origins of Sax Rohmer's master-conspirator character Fu Manchu.[21] Given that 'Yellow Peril' fears and anxieties only really emerged in Britain towards the very end of the Edwardian period, histories of anti-Chinese agitation and Yellow Peril scares tend not to dwell for too long on the pre-1914 British context. Nevertheless, though Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu stories were only published from 1912 onwards, the works of Ruth Mayer and Antony Taylor once more are notable in this context, given their focus on understanding Fu Manchu as a reification of contemporary popular concerns regarding race, migration and modernity, as manifest in the particular media context of the first decades of the twentieth century.[22]

The historiography of conspiracy theories regarding espionage, terrorism, and international finance and migration in the late Victorian and Edwardian period is thus highly fractured. Few works have attempted to address conspiracy beliefs head-on; and fewer still have gone beyond the attempt to debunk and marginalise. In large part, this is due to the fact that historians have tended to focus only on episodic outbreaks of 'panic', rather than the enduring continuities of what Richard Hofstadter once called the 'paranoid style'. As such, although Hirshfield's works on anti-Semitic conspiracy theory, or Speicher's chapter on the Siege of Sidney Street, or again French's work on spy-fever, are all excellent on their own terms, they miss the wider significance of the events which they seek to analyse.

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[21] See, for example: S. Auerbach, *Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle" in Imperial Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); G. Benton and E. Gomez, *The Chinese in Britain, 1800-present: Economy, Transnationalism, Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); R.K. Bright, *Chinese Labour in South Africa, 1902-1910: Race, Violence and Global Spectacle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); D. Glover, *Literature, Immigration and Diaspora in the Fin-de-Siècle England: A cultural history of the 1905 Aliens Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and, V. Kunnemann and R. Mayer, *Chinatowns in a Transnational World: Myths and Realities of an Urban Phenomenon* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[22] See, for example: R. Mayer, *Serial Fu Manchu: The Chinese Supervillain and the Spread of Yellow Peril Ideology* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2013); idem, 'Machinic Fu Manchu. Popular Seriality and the Logic of Spread', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 43:3 (2013): 186-217; and, A. Taylor, '"And I Am the God of Destruction!": Fu Manchu and the Construction of Asiatic Evil in the Novels of Arthur Sarsfield Ward, 1912-1939', in Crook, Gill and Taithe (eds.), *Evil, Barbarism and Empire*, pp. 73–95.

Certainly methodologies drawn from the 'moral panic' school of analysis have been fruitful, distinguished as they are by a focus on episodic alarm at the apparent breakdown of order and morality amidst the complexity and confusion of modern urban society, and the role of the media in nurturing such concerns.[23] But however useful such analyses may be, the terminology of 'panic' is perennially problematic. The term itself implies a negative judgement, connoting popular naivety, disproportionality, volatility and a general sense of irrationality, with the 'panic' rendered equivalent to a 'craze' or a 'scare'.[24] As such, the term 'panic' lends itself more to the de-legitimization of concerns than to the description of episodically intense expression of latent anxiety, legitimate or otherwise. This is not to deny that late Victorian and Edwardian society was subject to periodic outpourings of intense and disproportionate concern regarding issues of morality and order; and to this extent the term 'panic' is of use. Nonetheless, not all forms of popular anxiety, fear and concern are best analysed through a focus on either moral concerns or on episodic panics.

One element of the argument of this thesis, then, is that it is no longer possible to dismiss the prevalence of conspiracy theory under modernity as 'an aberration of a maturing bourgeois society', to quote J.M. Roberts in his classic *The Mythology of Secret Societies*.[25] Indeed, the emerging field of Conspiracy Studies holds that it is *imperative* to study conspiracy theory as a key facet *of* modernity. This thesis, accordingly, suggests that ideas from this emerging field can be fruitfully applied to the study of late Victorian and Edwardian popular fears, anxieties and grand theories of malign agency.

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[23] Robert Sindall's classic 1987 study of the London Garrotting Panics of 1856 and 1862, for example, certainly illustrates the media's influence in structuring middle-class concerns regarding the 'dangerous classes' in mid-Victorian Britain. John Springhall and Judith Rowbotham and Kim Stevenson's more recent works also provide excellent illustrations of the extent to which late Victorian and Edwardian British middle-class culture was saturated in a climate of fear and anxiety regarding, for example: the pace of scientific discovery and technological change; working class, juvenile and Irish immigrant criminality; the moral implications of contemporary financial systems; and the 'threat' of homosexuality. R. Sindall, 'The London Garrotting Panics of 1856 and 1862', *Social History*, 12:3 (1987): 351-359; J. Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap, 1830-1996* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); and J. Rowbotham and K. Stevenson (eds.), *Criminal Conversations: Victorian Crimes, Social Panic and Moral Outrage* (Columbus, OH; London: Ohio State University Press, 2005).

[24] K. Thompson, *Moral Panics* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 9.

[25] J.M. Roberts, *The Mythology of Secret Societies* (London: Watkins Publishing, 2008 [1972]), p. 4.

Conspiracy theory: terminology, definitions and research agendas

According to some journalists, we are currently living in an 'age of conspiracism', or even 'an age of fashionable conspiracism'.[26] Given the profusion of conspiracy narratives in the age of the internet, the evidence for widespread subscription to popular conspiracy theories, as well as the commercial structures which surround much of this conspiracy culture, this is difficult to deny.[27] Conspiracy theories likewise seem to pervade the non-Western world, even if this is an area which has received far less attention. This 'orientalist' division, however, is relatively meaningless. Contemporary conspiracy theory is, to quote one study of conspiracy theories, deeply implicated in the articulation of 'opposition to the forces of globalisation, America's military and political supremacy, and the general rise of a transnational political order'.[28]

It is equally true that the modern world has always been richly supplied with conspiracy theories, and since the French Revolution at the very least. It is not without good reason that Jovan Byford begins his *Conspiracy Theory: A Critical Introduction* with quotes from Augustin Barruel, Winston Churchill, Joseph McCarthy and Mahathir Mohammad, spread across the years 1799 to 2010.[29] Indeed, the entire period from, roughly, the 1770s to the present might be described *en bloc* as an 'age of conspiracism'. The belief that 'an occult force operating behind the seemingly real, outward forms of political life' – what Karl Popper referred to as the 'conspiracy theory of society' – can be said to

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[26] J. Alter, 'The Age of Conspiracism', *Newsweek* (24 Mar. 1997); and, D. Aaronovitch, *Voodoo Histories* (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 3.

[27] P. Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to the X Files* (London: Psychology Press, 2000), p. 8. See, also: M. Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); R.A. Goldberg, *Enemies Within: The Culture of Conspiracy in Modern America* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2001); and, P. Knight, *Conspiracy nation: the politics of paranoia in postwar America* (New York; London: New York University Press, 2002). For a summary of recent social scientific research into the prevalence of conspiracy theory, see: J. Byford, *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 6-17.

[28] Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 2.

[29] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

have represented a significant portion of political opinion in the West throughout the modern period.[30]

Until recently, however, there was always more than a hint of reluctant distaste in academic investigations of 'conspiracy theory'. Commonly characterised as paradigmatically irrational, 'conspiracy theory' has tended to be dismissed as paranoiac, and as an aberrant irrelevance to narratives of human progress. 'Conspiracy theorists', consequently, have most often been viewed as little more than the delusional peddlers of sensational, irrational rubbish, operating at the margins of modern society, comparable to creationists and lunatics.

Yet, since the 1990s, conspiracy theory has been subject to increasingly intense critical investigation. During the past quarter century, a vast range of 'historians, political scientists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers as well as journalists, commentators and political pundits have sought to explain the enduring appeal and even increasing presence of conspiracy cultures within modernity.'[31] At the same time, despite this emerging and extensive bibliography, Conspiracy Studies, as it is termed, has suffered from a lack of interdisciplinary communication, with contributions split between competing disciplinary traditions and with little rigorous and productive reference to each other's works. As an example, while psychologists have tended to view conspiracy theories with little reference to cultural context, other disciplines have often appropriated psychological terminology with no reference to psychological research. National traditions have similarly abounded in the historiography of conspiracy theory and there is no 'global' historiography of conspiracy theory, merely a series of exclusivist traditions, featuring few attempts at truly comparative research. Moreover, while political and social scientists often make productive reference to the architecture of the modern informational order as framing the possible forms of conspiracy theory, their analyses are almost entirely centred on the present. Wherever one finds international perspectives, one also seems to find a trajectory that begins

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[30] Roberts, *The Mythology of Secret Societies*, pp. 29-30; K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013 [1966]), p. 307.

[31] Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 3.

with the advent of the internet, with little reference to the historical evolution of communications technology (see below).

Given the nature of these competing traditions, it should come as no surprise that there is little consistency across the field in terms of terminology. Related terms – such as 'unconfirmed conspiracy theory', 'petty conspiracy', 'conspiracism', 'paranoid style' and 'parapolitics' – circulate widely (and are often used interchangeably with 'conspiracy theory') without any real sense of the origins of these terms or their deeper meanings. 'Conspiracy theory' is itself a highly contested and flexible term, pulled as it is between varying usages and demands, from the popular and journalistic to more academic vernaculars and research agendas. Foundational questions such as what exactly a conspiracy theory is and what it is that drives (or should drive) academic interest in conspiracy theory are only now coming to be addressed in a manner that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. Nevertheless, there are at least some motifs which emerge from even the most cursory of bibliographic explorations, apparent even to the novice researcher, as the central concerns that bind Conspiracy Studies together. These are the twin concerns of style and structure.

Throughout the history of the Western world, popular politics seems to have featured a consistent and visible strain of rhetorical and idiomatic *style*, which exhibits what is often described as a 'paranoid' obsession with subversion carried out by 'secret', 'hidden' and 'malign' forces; and that are further expressed through a Manichaean worldview that reifies all the negative connotations of modern existence and projects them on to the figure of the 'amoral superman'. Richard Hofstadter long ago argued that this was 'above all, a way of seeing the world and expressing oneself';[32] and as Byford notes, this style can be traced in many areas:

> Conspiracist interpretations of the 2008 financial crisis draw on the same armoury of arguments and tropes which were used to interpret the Great Depression of the 1930s. The 9/11 Truth movement draws extensively on the interpretative framework established in the 1940s, when the opponents of Franklin. D. Roosevelt accused him of allowing Pearl Harbour to happen in order to create a pretext for taking America to war. Throughout post-communist Eastern Europe, criticism directed at the supposedly seditious and sinister activities of Western non-

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[32] R. Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (London: Random House, 2012 [1964]), p. 4.

As the above quotation suggests, popular politics in the West, since the time of the French Revolution, or thereabouts, has consistently featured the set of totalizing discursive motifs originally described by Hofstadter and which, when taken together as a style, tend commonly described as 'conspiracy theory'.

Equally, these conspiracy theories have, since the revolutionary period of the late eighteenth century, exhibited a more or less consistent argumentative *structure*: a tendency, that is, to mobilise similar concepts of fact, proof and argumentative logic, which amount to what Michael Billig describes as an explanatory tradition, and a set of texts which might be described as a historical conspiracist canon. Accordingly, while conspiracist interpretations of the 2008 financial crisis did indeed draw upon the rhetorical styles of conspiracist critiques of the Great Depression in the 1930s, they also drew upon an explanatory tradition or structure which focuses on the mutually distorting causal effects of 'money', bureaucratised and centralised political organisations and hidden enemies, something in fact which goes all the way back to the French Revolution.[34]

So far, so good; but beyond these broad concerns, there remains little agreement among academics, and the project of defining exactly what 'conspiracy theory' is has proven exceptionally difficult. This is perhaps surprising since at first glance 'conspiracy theory' might seem a relatively simple concept. Certainly, the meaning of 'conspiracy' is simple enough, deriving for the Latin *conspirare,* meaning 'to breathe together' and signifying the collusion of two or more individuals in pursuit of a mutual objective. At the very simplest level, a 'conspiracy theory' is a postulated explanation which attributes the causation of an occurrence to a conspiracy.[35]

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[33] Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 5.

[34] M. Billig, 'Anti-Semitic themes and the British far Left: some social-psychological observations on indirect aspects of the conspiracy tradition', in C. F. Graumann and S. Moscovici (eds.), *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy* (New York: Springer, 1987), pp. 115-136.

[35] D. Coady, 'An Introduction to the Philosophical Debate about Conspiracy Theories', in D. Coady (ed.), *Conspiracy Theories: The Philosophical Debate* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. 1.

In contrast to popular usage, then, a strict application of such a definition would mean that 'conspiracy theory' included: (1) suspicions of 'petty conspiracy'; (2) narratives of conspiratorial agency which have 'official' status; and (3) suspicions of conspiracy which are subsequently proven true.[36] These are all problematic, however, because of the disjuncture between critical and vernacular uses of the term 'conspiracy theory'. The crucial fact is that 'conspiracy theory', in the popular mind, does not fit with the terminology used to describe it, as least in terms of its precise meaning. Instead, 'conspiracy theory' popularly refers to a much *narrower* set of phenomena: sets of discourses of conspiratorial agency, that is, which deal with global and dramatic occurrences (revolutions, wars, and epidemics, for example) that seek not only to describe but to reveal the hidden. Moreover, while critical definitions of 'conspiracy theory' attempt primarily to carve out a legitimate space for enquiry, popular usage of the term functions primarily as a dismissive epithet. 'Conspiracy theory' suggests poor reasoning and paranoia, with these pejorative connotations serving to position an identified 'conspiracy theory' as unreasonable and only loosely rational, in relation to what is understood as 'reasonable', 'rational' and 'evidence-based' forms of explanation.

Simply put, in popular usage, the terms 'conspiracy theory' and 'conspiracy theorist' seek to question the truth-value of a postulated explanation, its basis in proper reason, and in large part the mental health of the proposer.[37] In this analysis, 'conspiracy theory' is also an academic 'strategy

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[36] Daniel Pipes defines 'petty conspiracy' as plots which are unimportant on the grand scale of things, such as an accusation of conspiracy to commit a burglary. In contrast, the allegation of the covert, warrantless capture and storage of vast reams of data by the NSA were regularly labelled as 'conspiracy theory' by right-wing commentators prior to Edward Snowden's revelations. However, since these revelations, few have suggested that such allegations are conspiracy theories. D. Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (New York; London: Free Press, 1997), p. 10. See, also: Coady, 'Introduction', pp. 1-3.

[37] The difference is, in some ways, driven by arguments between the Right and the Left over the definition and usage of the term 'conspiracy theory'. Conservatives have tended to condemn the politically disenfranchised for their acceptance of conspiracy theories, and the Left for its defence of such irrationality. In contrast the Left has tended to argue that conspiracy theories are merely an understandable response to the pressures of existence under neo-Liberal modernity, and that the term 'conspiracy theory' is merely a pejorative discursive device with which the Right and the establishment seek to evade and dismiss legitimate concerns about the operation of power. As an example, Noam Chomsky has proven a particularly divisive personality in this respect. Pipes, in 1997, castigated Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* as little more than a sophisticated conspiracy theory, his works equivalent to the pronouncements of the John Birch Society and anti-Masonic conspiracy theorists. Chomsky himself denied this accusation in 2004, distancing himself from the example of JFK assassination theories with the argument that the label 'conspiracy theory' could not be applied

of exclusion', a form of character assassination which according to Noam Chomsky – himself the subject of many such accusations – is 'the intellectual equivalent four-letter words and tantrums'.[38] The term even operates beyond the individual level, at the disciplinary level and beyond, as part of a wider context of other stigmatised forms of knowledge.[39]

The project to define conspiracy theory becomes even more difficult when one remembers that conspiracies do, in fact, occur in the world (see below). Indeed, despite the popular denigration of 'conspiracy theories', few deny that conspiracies actually exist; nor do many object to the belief in the power of conspiracy as a form of organisation for the exertion of agency in the modern world; nor again to the potency of 'conspiracy theory' as a call to political arms and protest.[40] Even Hofstadter, Popper, Lipset and Raab, 'the greatest sceptics … when it comes to the explanatory value of conspiracy theories, acknowledge that conspiracies occur regularly and are even a typical social phenomenon'.[41] Accordingly, it is very difficult to create definitions that reliably distinguish between legitimate investigations of secretive practices from conspiracy theorising.

Given the profusion of potential meanings of the term 'conspiracy theory' – particularly the radical disjuncture between popular and critical vernaculars, and the continuing pejorative connotations of the term – it is not surprising that there is still no real consensus as to the definition of the term 'conspiracy theory'. Certainly none exists that might lead to genuine multi-disciplinary research agenda. Nonetheless, amongst some academics, at least,

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to his thesis because his was a legitimate analysis of the operation of power. N. Chomsky, 'On historical amnesia, foreign policy and Iraq', *American Amnesia* [online] www.chomsky.info\interviews\20040217.htm (accessed 1 December 2010), referenced in Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 25; Coady, 'Introduction', pp. 3-5; E.S. Herman and N. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* (London: Random House, 2010 [1988]); and, Pipes, *Conspiracy*, p. 160.

[38] G. Husting and M. Orr, 'Dangerous Machinery: "Conspiracy Theorist" as a Transpersonal Strategy of Exclusion', *Symbolic Interaction*, 30:2 (2007): 127-150; Chomsky, www.chomsky.info/interviews/20040217.htm (accessed 30/02/2014).

[39] M. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), p. 26.

[40] Few would argue that acts of Islamist terrorism are capable of profoundly damaging the structure of any Western nation-state. At the same time, it would be difficult to deny that the development of Western nations' security apparatuses and the 'securitization' of national and international political discourse since 2001, profound changes, have been the product of a popular conspiracist discourse which placed Islamism as a civilizational threat to the West.

[41] Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, pp. 23-24.

the desire to debunk is receding.[42] Byford epitomises these new developments, seeking in his *Conspiracy Theory: A Critical Introduction* to address himself to a:

> *qualitatively distinct class of personalised explanations* which stands out from the rest. At its core is not only an allegation of conspiracy, the assumption about the importance of human agency and the suspicion of government and official explanations, but also much more than that … this class of explanations is identifiable by a distinctive narrative structure, thematic configuration and explanatory logics, as well as by the fact that it is embedded within a particular tradition of explanation.[43]

This emerging research agenda concerns itself with arguments which situate plots and conspiracy as the primary engine of historical change, and whose discursive techniques make such arguments essentially irrefutable on their own terms. (This project, incidentally, is an offshoot of wider definitional projects within Conspiracy Studies, described by Heins as the attempt to develop rational hypotheses about actual conspiracies; and by Bale as the attempt to develop definitions between genuine conspiratorial politics and bogus conspiracy theory; and epitomised by Harper, who has attempted to distinguish between dysfunctional and critically derived paranoia.[44]) According to Byford, the beliefs which should be of interest to academic researchers are as follows:

1) Constructed through totalizing narratives of global conspiratorial agency, which seek to delineate order and intent amongst the chaotic causality of modernity and seek to apportion causality to a single, overarching plot;

2) Essentially unreal and impossible, but nonetheless highly visible and often discussed in public fora, but not necessarily believed in naively; rather, there to be played with, drawn upon, modified and dabbled in as heuristic exploratory devices in a bewilderingly complicated world;

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[42] Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 42. Instead, recent research has striven to move away from Hofstadter's political motivations. Hofstadter's primary concern in writing *The Paranoid Style* was arguably the attempt to discredit McCarthyism, the John Birch Society and Goldwater Republicanism by pathologising their dissent against the post-war consensus. Having noted this, it is well worth remembering that Hofstadter's analysis of conspiracy theory as a 'style' remains operant at the core of Conspiracy Theories, largely unchallenged in terms of its description of what most academic consider their research interest.

[43] Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 32.

[44] J. Bale, 'Political paranoia *v.* political realism: on distinguishing between bogus conspiracy theories and genuine conspiratorial politics', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 41:1 (2007): 45-60; V. Heins, 'Critical theory and the traps of conspiracy thinking', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 33:7 (2007): 787-801; and, D. Harper. 'The politics of paranoia: paranoid positioning and conspiratorial narratives in the surveillance society', *Surveillance and Society*, 5:1 (2008): 1-32.

3) At their core, extremely sceptical in relation to 'official' discourse, particularly in the narrative and evidential forms it utilises – exhibiting a self-sealing quality which makes them highly resistant to refutation.[45]

The benefits of this characterisation are many. Firstly, it neatly sidesteps the problem of the continued existence of 'irrational' conspiracy theories amidst a supposedly ever-more rational world. Indeed, it allows historians to take seriously conspiracy theories as an essential and persistent, rather than incidental, facet of modernity. Secondly, it allows historians to analyse conspiracy theory as a relatively unchanging medium and discursive strategy through which the stresses of existence under modernity are particularly prone to being expressed. Thirdly, it allows historians in particular – and more especially by historians of Victorian and Edwardian Britain – to move beyond the moral-panic style of analysis noted above (useful though this is), and instead to recover the informational, technological and discursive structures within which periodic panics occur; and indeed more than this, to identify particular currents and forms of expression and anxiety.

In seeking to overcome the historiographical deficiencies noted in the previous section, this thesis thus draws on – and seeks to speak to – the literature discussed in this section. It affirms the ideas that conspiracy theories constitute a key and defining feature of modern culture. The thesis does so critically, however, and it will also argue that these new approaches nonetheless require a new (or at least, relatively new) term to appreciate fully the hugely complex ways in which conspiracy theories are embedded in the political, cultural and informational fabric of the modern world.

POPULAR CONSPIRACISM, 1880-1914: KEY ELEMENTS

This thesis uses the term 'conspiracism' and related terms to describe an identifiable current of late Victorian and Edwardian popular culture – evident, that in Parliament, politics, the press and popular literature – that postulated the existence of conspiracies in relation to espionage, terrorism, immigration

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[45] Byford, *Conspiracy Theories*, p. 32.

and international finance. It does so in favour 'conspiracy theory', for in both academic and popular vernacular understanding conspiracy theory is much too pejorative. Furthermore, the study addresses less individual conspiracy theories and more a popular tendency towards conspiratorial thinking.

'Conspiracism' is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'The belief that major historical and political events are brought about as the result of a conspiracy between interested parties, or are manipulated by or on behalf of an unknown group of influential people; belief in or advocacy of conspiracy theories'.[46] This is not a new term in academic discussion of conspiracy theory. Daniel Pipes first used 'conspiracism' as a key analytical term in his 1997 book *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From*, defining it as something similar to Hofstadter's 'paranoid style': an obsession, that is, with hidden hands manipulating world events that can permeate the lives of individuals and which can grow into a 'culture' of conspiracism.[47] This thesis will argue that Pipes' definition of 'conspiracism' aptly, if imperfectly, describes the nexus of late Victorian and Edwardian conspiratorial discourses that form the subject of this thesis. In some respects, this culture of popular conspiracism has already been addressed by the literary critics Adrian Wisnicki and Albert Pionke. Pionke's *Plots of Opportunity: Representing Conspiracy in Victorian Literature* argues that the spectre of the secret society was deployed in nineteenth-century Britain to help consolidate hierarchies which, while ostensibly promoting democratic ideals, were in fact concerned to cement secret and selective forms of authority and that 'sought to keep undesirable constituencies [such as Catholics and trades unions] permanently disenfranchised by branding them as secret societies.'[48] Building on Pionke's work, Wisnicki argues that the proliferation of these kinds of conspiracy *plots* in late nineteenth-century literature developed, in the early twentieth century, into a culture of *conspiracy theory narratives*.[49] However, although Wisnicki claims to

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[46] 'Conspiracism', *OED*, 3rd edn., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[47] Pipes, *Conspiracy,* passim. It should be stated, however, that this thesis claims no affiliation with Pipes Islamophobic beliefs.

[48] A. Pionke, *Plots of Opportunity: Representing Conspiracy in Victorian England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2004), xxxii.

[49] A Wisnicki, *Conspiracy, Revolution and Terrorism: from Victorian fiction to the Modern Novel* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

adopt a partially historical approach and does consider immigration, terrorism, secret policing and invasion scares in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, his work is still overwhelmingly literary and indeed focused on 'high' literature.

Nevertheless, to quote Wisnicki, a focus on conspiracy theory narratives that defy categorisation and location 'because conspiracy is *everywhere*, because it has grown to the extent of being *generalized*, potentially *indeterminate*, and even *beyond the conscious control of knowledge* of its conspirators' is indeed 'fertile in interpretative possibilities' when mobilised as historical analysis. This thesis builds on Wisnicki's work, as well as on Byford's new definition of conspiracy theory described above. But it also goes much beyond, advancing a definition of popular conspiracism in terms of three key elements: conceptions of agency, causality and connection; relations of secrecy, transparency and governance; and thirdly, popular forms of speculative (ir)rationality.

1. Agency, causality, and connections

A key feature of popular conspiracism is the resort to totalising narratives of causality which invoke a singular, invisible, and omnipotent *human* 'agent', or set of 'agents'. Such agents, however, blur the distinction between 'unmodern-religious' and 'modern-secular' qualities, doing so precisely because these human agents take on divine qualities of invisibility and omnipotence. Indeed, such agents complicate well-established narratives that describe a progressive and linear secularization of causal understandings which, to put it crudely, posit the gradual replacement of God and providence by man (or 'Man') as a progressive, historical being. As Robert Nisbet, for example, has argued:

> What we find in this period we are now concerned with [the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries] is the beginning of the secularization of the idea of progress – detaching it from its long-held relationship with God, making it a historical process … From Turgot's notable lectures and discourses in 1750-1751 through Condorcet, Comte, Marx, Mill, Spencer and others, there is a manifest desire to liberate process from any crucial relationship with an active, guiding, ruling Providence. Throughout the period we find that system after system in philosophy and the social sciences was concerned primarily with demonstration of the scientific relation of human progress and of the laws and principles which make progress necessary.[50]

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[50] R. Nisbet, *The History of the Idea of Progress* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1980), p. 197

In a similar vein, we might also note the emergence of Darwinian evolution and the complementary development of statisticalized views of causality and probability (what one account calls the 'Empire of Chance') that began to open up in the nineteenth century, before flourishing in the twentieth, each of which undermined providential modes of thinking and indeed linear, uniform notions of causality.[51]

The problems with these types of secularising accounts, pitched at the level of scientific ideas, are multiple. Even at an elite level, providential views of agency persisted long into the nineteenth century, as Boyd Hilton and David Nash, among others, have shown.[52] Equally, a belief in socio-historical laws that determined human action as if from 'outside', or 'above', persisted in the human sciences across the later nineteenth century, forming in fact the basic premise of some key human sciences, such as economics, sociology and criminology.[53] For the human sciences, man nonetheless remained the object of overarching 'laws' of development which were thought to govern his behaviour, thereby complicating the idea that humans were *fully* self-determining. This was not completely denied; but casual agency was also invested in entities such as 'society', the 'economy', and 'history'; or at the level of the individual, in his or her environment, body and mind (and later, of course, the 'unconscious'). As such, though human-scientific accounts were not, properly speaking, providential, they still vested agency in causal mechanisms that were positioned 'outside' and 'behind', or 'below' and 'beyond', the conscious, autonomous human agent.

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[51] G. Gigerenzer *et al.*, *The Empire of Chance: How Probability Changed Science and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[52] Boyd Hilton, for instance, has pointed to the persistence of two variants of evangelical Christian thought that lasted up until the 1880s in England. One of these, the more 'extreme' variant, believed in an interventionist God; the other, more 'moderate' variant believed in a more deistic, distant God – but both ultimately appealed to a divine agent presiding over the world. B. Hilton, 'The Role of Providence in evangelical social thought', in D. Beales and G. Best (eds.), *History, Society and the Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 215-234.

[53] This, in spite of their resort to probablism. 'Secular' ideas – such as, for example, that of the liberal self-governing economy as tending to automatically channel self-interested behaviour towards socially beneficial activities – were often couched within a teleological, providential framework. Moreover, as has been argued, the connection between prosperity and God's providence was strongly felt in Britain throughout the nineteenth century. D. Nash, '"To Prostitute Morality, Libel religion, and Undermine Government": Blasphemy and the Strange Persistence of Providence in Britain since the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of Religious History*, 32:4 (2008): 439-456.

Secularising accounts also overlook the subject of this thesis: namely, the *re-working* of divine agency in conspiratorial modes of thinking at the popular level. The connection between conspiracy theory and religious thought is nothing new to the field of conspiracy studies. Karl Popper long ago argued for the similarities between the 'conspiracy theory of society' and Homeric theism, noting that both present totalising narratives of causality and historical change, exerted secretly through invisible or hidden omnipotent agents. As Popper noted, the difference between the two comes from the conspiracist tendency to believe that 'whatever happens – especially happenings which people as a rule dislike – is the result of direct design by some powerful individuals and groups', i.e. *human beings*.[54] Popper, however, still held that conspiracism was not substantially different from theism, constituting what he called a 'secularisation of a religious superstition':[55]

> a belief in gods whose whims and wills rule everything. It [conspiracism] comes from abandoning God and then asking: "Who is in his place?" His place is then filled by various powerful men and groups – sinister pressure groups who are to be blamed for having planned the great depression and all the evils from which we suffer.[56]

What Popper's invocation of a secularisation process obscures, however – and which, in fact, it also describes – is precisely that conspiracy theories nonetheless ascribe divine powers to *human* agents. Certainly, a distinction should be drawn with providential modes of thought, for here agency is not only human but also malign, rather than benign. Yet to describe it as 'secular' misses what makes conspiracism distinctive from other modern forms of causal explanation. It is best described as a kind of hybrid, neither wholly religious nor wholly secular, eluding but also partaking of both qualities. The point is not that conspiracism is religious, for the reasons given above; but it is also that it constitutes much more than a kind of religious residue. Put another way, we need not restrict ourselves to a choice between different halves of a secular-religious binary distinction.

This thesis will examine various instances of this. For the moment one particularly illuminating example might be offered: Arthur Conan Doyle's

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[54] Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, p. 310.

[55] Ibid.

[56] K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*, 4th edn. (London and Henley: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 123-125, quoted in Coady, 'Introduction', p. 13.

Professor James Moriarty, of whom Sherlock Holmes notes in *The Final Problem*:

> For years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organising power which forever stands in the way of the law, and throws itself over the wrong-doer … I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its actions in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally consulted … He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organiser of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city… He sits motionless, like a spider at the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself, he only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organised. If there a crime to be done, the word is passed to the Professor, the matter is organised and carried out. The agent may be caught… But the central power which uses the agent is never caught – never so much as suspected.[57]

More simply put, Professor Moriarty is 'the organizer of every deviltry, the controlling brain of the underworld, a brain which might have made or marred the destiny of nations – that's the man!'[58]

Professor Moriarty, then, is certainly no deity: he dies, after all, at the Reichenbach Falls. But nor is he just a mere man or ordinary criminal: rather as Holmes suggests, he is a 'deep organising power', 'the controlling brain of the underworld'.[59] Furthermore, he is always at one remove, not committing the crimes themselves, only planning them, and his plans are accomplished seamlessly. Certainly Moriarty's omniscient centrality, potency and 'hidden' ubiquity are beyond the reach of ordinary human agency, even if this does not make for divine agency as such.

Moriarty was, of course, a fictional character, yet his superhuman capabilities were made credible by the emergence of a globally networked and decentred informational and commercial order during the second half of the nineteenth century; or what Armand Mattelart has described as 'the first unified electric sphere' to embrace the world.[60] This constitutes a crucial, if often overlooked, contextual factor when it comes to considering the history of modern conspiracy theories, for it meant that connections between agents and groups could, and indeed were, made with unprecedented speed over large

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[57] A. Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (London: Race Point Publishing, 2013), p. 484.

[58] A. Conan Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 770.

[59] Ibid.

[60] A. Mattelart, *Networking the World* (Minneapolis, MN; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 7.

tracts of the globe. It is no coincidence that conspiracism flourished in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the world became 'networked' as never before and when the speed of travel, communications and organisation was significantly enhanced. These technological changes did not determine the content of conspiracism; but they made it impossible to imagine conspiracies of an unprecedented international scale and organization.

On one level, this was about communications and transport technologies – in particular the railways, steamships, postal systems, telegraphs, telephones and, by the close of the period, radio telegraphy – which between them formed the key technological circuits and joints of the late Victorian and Edwardian world. Certainly, in 'the last decades of the nineteenth century… extensive material change transformed processes of communication, commerce, transportation and migration across continents'.[61] However, novel Victorian technologies did more than just facilitate the ever faster movement of people and information over greater and greater distances. They also took the 'tyranny' out of distance and reconfigured social spaces both within and between societies in ways which were unimaginable only fifty years previously.[62] Indeed, by the early twentieth century, driven by the efforts of the emerging syndicated news agencies, reported events positively 'careened around a world that … the invention of the telegraph closely knit together', allowing a diverse and distant range communities to consume a variety of political discourses in ways which have been inconceivable only a generation before.[63] Moreover, this was a remarkably decentred informational order, which functioned more as a cultural 'exchange' than a vehicle for the projection of a dominant metropolitan culture onto passive peripheral recipients.[64]

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[61] N. Whelehan, *Dynamiters*, p. 13.

[62] G.B. Magee and A.S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of people, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 23.

[63] Although news of Wolfe's victory over the French at Quebec in 1759 had taken months to arrive back in Britain, news of the Russian Navy's defeat by the Japanese at Tsushima in 1905 – the first battle in which radio telegraphy played a crucial role – travelled the globe to fill the front pages of London newspapers on the other side of the world *in a matters of days*. P. Mishra, *From the ruins of empire: the revolt against the West and the remaking of Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), pp. 1-2.

[64] This was, as such, a matter of community, of the ways in which the Victorian world was internationally structured by interaction through professional association, friendship,

At the same time, the first truly 'international' institutions emerged in the later nineteenth century. Information businesses, such as telegraph agencies and syndicated news agencies, became the first truly international corporations. The increasingly comprehensive connections between national rail and shipping networks also led to the development of a truly global transport system. These news and transport systems further gave tremendous impetus to the development of international financial markets, and in order to better regulate these novel modes of international activity, international regulatory organizations and agencies – such as the International Telegraph Union (founded in 1865) and the Universal Postal Union (1874) – were founded, which cut across states' boundaries.[65] These agencies and organisations were themselves both the progenitors and products of harmonizing and standardizing projects in a number of international areas, such as the global adoption of Greenwich Mean Time between 1884 and 1911.[66] As such, while all six continents had been encompassed within the European 'network' since the late eighteen century, it was only in the latter part of the nineteenth century that, with the drastic reduction of intercontinental travel and communication times, that a global informational order truly came into existence.

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acquaintance, travel, business, correspondence and the sharing of news, all of which transgressed traditional territorial boundaries within the structure of the Anglophone world. L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 238-240; J.F. Codell, *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), p. 212; S.J. Potter, 'Communication and Integration: The British and Dominions Press and the British World, c. 1876-1914', in C. Bridge and K. Fedorowich (eds.), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 190-207. See also: J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: the settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 49-78; L. Chilton, 'A New Class of Women for the Colonies: Female Emigration Societies and the Construction of Empire', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31:2 (2003): 36-56; and, A.S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), pp. 17-20.

[65] Mattelart, *Networking the World*, p. 7. International structures were also called for and instituted in some forms of political association (particularly socialism and anarchism) and police cooperation – exemplified as the international anti-anarchist agreements of 1898 and 1904, and the first International Criminal Police Congress, held in 1914. Jensen, *Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, pp. 131-184.

[66] Mattelart lists such as the International Telegraphic Union (1865) and the General Postal Union (1874), the International Commission for Weights and Measures (1875), the Agreement for International Regulation of Sea Routes (1879), The International Union for the Protection of Industrial Property (1883), the International Union of the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works (1886), and the Agreement for International Rail Transport (1890) as exemplary of this tendency towards international regulation. Ibid.

It was in this milieu, this richly interconnected and internationally interwoven informational order, that popular conspiracism in Britain first blossomed, for these new networks facilitated the machinations of malign agents just as much as the benign operations of liberal markets. International communications systems such as the telegraph network, for instance, were just as much for the transmission of secret messages between spies, terrorists and greedy, plotting plutocrats, as for the confidential messages of statesmen, governing the far-flung peripheries of the Empire. Indeed, as was evinced on several occasions, the passenger liners which plied their trades between the major international ports of the world were just as useful for terrorists travelling to carry out 'outrages' on unsuspecting publics, as they were for emigrants seeking out new lives in the settler colonies.[67]

2) Transparency, secrecy and liberal governance

Concerned with the kinds of secrets that Sissela Bok describes as 'destructive only so long as they *remain* concealed', the conspiracist imagination is driven by a very human desire to uncover the concealed and to unmask the hidden. However, what distinguishes conspiracism from its investigative peers is its ability to endow the apparently irrelevant with covert meaning, transforming them into what Svetlana Boym describes as texts of revelation.[68] Equally, as Brian Keeley reminds us, given the conspiracist tendency towards radical global scepticism regarding 'authoritative' evidence and discourse, the conspiracist mind is difficult (and perhaps impossible) to satisfy.[69] Indeed, whenever conspiracist discourse achieves 'authoritative' status, 'the desire to reveal …

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[67] In 1883, James Carey, who had been involved in the Phoenix Park murders but turned Queen's evidence against his compatriots, was murdered while secretly travelling to a new life on a passenger liner bound for South Africa from Britain, killed by a fellow Fenian, who had travelled from the US, via Donegal and London. Gaetano Bresci, the anarchist who assassinated Umberto I of Italy, had decided to kill the Italian king while living in the United States, and had travelled back to Italy by passenger liner. S. Molony, *The Phoenix Park Murders: Conspiracy, Betrayal & Retribution* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2006), pp. 241-244; and, Jensen, *Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, pp. 187-197.

[68] S. Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 4; and, S. Boym, 'Conspiracy Theories and Literary Ethics: Umberto Eco, Danilo Kiš and the Protocols of Zion', *Comparative Literature*, 51:2 (1999): 97-122.

[69] See: B. Keeley, 'Of Conspiracy Theories', in Coady, *Conspiracy Theories*, pp. 45-60'; idem., '*Nobody* Expects the Spanish Inquisition! More Thoughts on Conspiracy Theory', in ibid., pp. 107-114.

simply gets deferred elsewhere, searching for new material in an endless exchange of signifiers parading as signifieds'.[70] Conspiracism is therefore always restless, forever probing the borderlands between transparency and opacity, investigation and concealment. Because of this, conspiracist discourse tends not to construct 'the secret' as a finite, reducible quantity, but rather as a fluid and amorphous state, which may at times retreat, but which will always continue to mutate and endure. In consequence, conspiracist discourses are always indelibly marked by the cultures of visibility, transparency and accountability through which they circulate, whose idiosyncrasies they navigate, and whose injustices they react against.

Such senses of secrecy are, of course, very difficult to reconcile with established narratives of modernity, which tend to cite the increasing prevalence of visibility, enforced through systems of surveillance, statistics and inspection. Most cited among these accounts is Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, where its discussion of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon functions as a general metaphor for modernity as a disciplinary project, and more particularly as a 'diagram' of how discipline functions in practice. For Foucault, the Panopticon, with its central annular building and surrounding cells, represents an attempt 'to induce a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power … a power relation independent of the person who exercises it … a power situation of which they [its subjects] are themselves the bearers.'[71] Or again:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.[72]

Such accounts of disciplinary modernity, describing the progressive march and 'perpetual victory' of visibility, are in some ways true. As Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lasch have argued, driven by a desire to manage uncertainty and characterised by a rapacious appetite for systems of visibility, modern 'risk' society is partly distinguished by the quantity, scope and

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[70] C. Birchall, *Knowledge Goes Pop: From Conspiracy Theory to Gossip* (London: Berg, 2006), p. 24.

[71] M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 201.

[72] Ibid., pp. 202-203.

penetration of surveillance and inspection systems.[73] In the meteoric rise of the popular press, the profusion of parliamentary Blue Books, and the growth of official inspectorates and domestic visiting societies, this narrative certainly rings true in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Moreover, from the early Victorian period onwards, the ideal of 'accountability' increasingly represented a core moral element of Victorian liberalism as a governing project. To borrow from Lucy Brown's description of the Victorian newspaper, historically unprecedented levels of inspection, surveillance and scrutiny – some of which penetrated right into people's houses – had become part of the 'furniture of everyday public life' by the late nineteenth century.[74]

Of late, Foucauldian narratives of disciplinary modernity in Victorian period have been complicated on a number of levels. Famously, Bentham's Panopticon was never actually built (at least not in Britain); and recent accounts have demonstrated that, far from constituting streamlined manifestations of Foucauldian panopticism, practices of inspection and surveillance were always contested and frustrated.[75] As Lauren Goodlad and Chris Otter have shown, disciplinary governance in Victorian Britain was 'conditioned and restrained by at least two liberal demands: economy and taxpayer thrift', making for insufficient resources and meagre staffing levels. Equally, ideas of public accountability were always enacted through 'England's "idiosyncratic" culture of governance … which if anything was pastoral and patrician rather than disciplinary and bureaucratic.'[76] There were decidedly more domestic visitors than there were official inspectors, for instance. At the same time, other historians have further complicated the visual dynamics of Victorian governance. Patrick Joyce, for example, has introduced the idea of the Victorian city as the 'oligopticon', which eventually became the more demotic 'omniopticon': from the few watching the many, to the many

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[73] U. Beck, A. Giddens and S. Lasch, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (London: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 149-150.

[74] Brown, *Victorian News*, passim.

[75] L.M.E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); and, C. Otter, *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[76] T. Crook, 'Secrecy and Liberal Modernity in Victorian and Edwardian England', in S. Gunn and J. Vernon (eds.), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), p. 72.

watching themselves. Such analyses conceive of the nineteenth century city not as a panopticon but as a site of multiple gazes, flowing in multiple directions:

> one watched and was watched: in the public park, in the municipal museum, in the public squares of the city, people were led to present themselves in way that would be 'publicly' acceptable, and in presenting themselves to others, these others, in a reciprocal 'calculated administration of shame', presented themselves in turn to them as but themselves magnified. Visuality was indeed essential to these strategies.[77]

Nevertheless, while such accounts complicate Foucauldian narratives of disciplinary governance and surveillance, they do little to question its underlying assumption: namely, that modernity is characterised by a linear movement, whereby secrecy is gradually, if patchily, displaced by 'tactics of governmental visibility and publicity'.[78] In fact, as Tom Crook has shown, forms of secrecy did not uniformly decline during the Victorian period. Rather, some forms of secrecy *prospered* and *intensified* in liberal Britain. Voting in municipal and parliamentary elections, for instance, was made secret in 1872, whereas previously it had taken openly and publicly. More importantly, secrecy became an 'official' part of the British state. As David Vincent has discussed, the 'gentleman' administrator of discretion, tact and reserve that was central to the reformed civil service that began to emerge in the wake of the Northcote-Trevelyan report (1854) was merely the tip of the iceberg when it came to the increasingly systematised, bureaucratised and codified relationship between British governance and secrecy. Notably, in 1889 Parliament passed the first ever Official Secrets Act; followed by another in 1911. Secrecy was now legislated for and these were more than just caveats in Britain's broadly liberal commitment to openness, transparency and accountability; they were fundamental and institutionalized. As Vincent aptly summarises, 'Secrecy is as integral to liberal democracy as openness; the latter indeed could not exist without the former.'[79]

Developing this argument, Crook suggests that Foucauldian accounts of modernity and visibility are vulnerable to more than just empirical complication. Rather, Crook argues for a wholesale jettisoning of arguments 'in terms of more or less: of a society or state becoming more *or* less transparent

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[77] P. Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 148.

[78] Crook, 'Secrecy and Liberal Modernity', p. 74.

[79] Vincent, *The Culture of Secrecy*, vii.

over time, or more *or* less secretive'. Instead, Crook advocates an approach which investigates of the 'epistemological problems that, in any given domain or system of thought and practice, make the entanglement of secrecy and transparency necessary'.[80] For Crook, the cause of this complex relationship is the fact that 'secrecy protects practices and people whose place within a given system (legal, political, etc.) is undecidable and ambiguous – and thus in excess of the system to the extent that they cannot be wholly accounted for by the system – but which nonetheless form part of the system and play a role within it.' One example he gives is espionage, which though considered distasteful and illiberal is nonetheless considered necessary to the security of the liberal state.[81]

For Crook, we should speak of the 'necessary entanglement' of secrecy and transparency, and their inextricable implication in each other.[82] In pursuit of this analysis, Crook draws upon the work of Stefanos Geroulanos, which demonstrates that even the Foucauldian account of modernity and visibility is *itself* deeply wedded to exactly the kinds of ambiguity, entanglement and enfolding that Crook suggests are characteristic of the relationship between transparency and secrecy under liberal modernity more generally. In particular, Geroulanos argues that there is a blind spot at the very heart of the Foucauldian account of the panopticon: namely, the *unverifiable* gaze emanating from the tower. Ultimately, the panopticon turns upon what it rejects (openness, transparency) and it is this in particular that represents a structural analogy between modern panopiticism and divine forms of power.

> Lacking evidence of the presence of a supervisor, the subject turns a visual unavailability into an epistemological one. He assumes a spectatorial presence that is at once empirical and transcendental: empirical, because of the very real threat of punishment; transcendental, because of its omnipotence and near-divine force. And what acquires divine status (in a very real sense) is not the person in the tower but the very possibility of a person looking from the tower — in other words, the very centre of the structure. The architecturalized omnipotent gaze formalizes the all-seeing God, at once present and absent, and reinscribes him as a Great Observer: whether it is the whole of society or nobody that is watching, the Great Observer reappears, served by the precarious

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[80] Crook, 'Secrecy and Liberal Modernity', pp. 77-78.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., p. 78.

yet unconfirmed absence of any real gaze. The epistemological unavailability, the absence of a divine observer, confirms his existence.[83]

Simply put, for Geroulanos, the unverifiable status of the central gaze at the heart of the Panopticon recalls a divine power relationship, whereby the unaccountably gaze functions like the omniscient gaze of God. As we shall see, popular conspiracism is bound up in the kinds of structural relationships described by Crook and Geroulanos, which concern the ambiguous division between transparency and secrecy, without ever conveniently falling into any of these categories. Indeed, to recall the precious section, this is another area where the secular is difficult to distinguish from the religious, for popular conspiracism relied (and still relies) on the invocation of agents who are at once distant and secret but also, somehow, all-seeing.

Most conspiratorial masterminds, such as Professor Moriarty noted above, are themselves rarely visible. Equally, globally connected and networked via modern communication and transport technologies, their gazes – as manifest in their ability to seek out and expose weaknesses on multiple levels – approach omniscience and divinity. To be sure, these gazes are enacted through secular intermediaries (i.e. their followers and members of other secret societies), not through angelic or demonic agents. They are not straightforwardly religious in this sense. Nonetheless, they recall the kind of religious or theological structure noted by Geroulanos above, whereby sitting at the centre of immense infrastructures of visibility, but themselves only rarely verifiable or visible. Moriarty, for instance, sits at the heart of a vast web of connections, and 'he knows well every quiver of each of them'; and yet he rarely makes himself visible by personally carrying out his plots.[84]

As we shall see in this thesis, most conspiracist agencies conform to similar structures of transparency and secrecy, regularly featuring descriptions of unverifiable, yet omniscient agencies operating beneath the surface of contemporary state and society. Bentham's panopticon may not have existed in reality; but modernity nonetheless contains strains of what might be called *fantasies of panoptic agency*; and these bear a crucial relation to the problems and

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[83] S. Geroulanos, 'Theoscopy: Transparency, Omnipotence and Modernity', in H. de Vries and L.E. Sullivan (eds), *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 641-42.

[84] Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, p. 484.

tensions of liberal governance and its resort to different kinds of institutional secrecy.

The public sphere and popular (ir)rationality

A final element of popular conspiracism is the question of its rationality: which is to say, its relationship to speculation, sensationalism and panic, and of its position within a dense, information-rich public sphere. As the past two decades of philosophical debate have shown, it is exceedingly difficult to categorize conspiracism as *either* rational *or* irrational, strictly speaking.[85] In some respects, driven by a refusal to accept that there is nothing that cannot be explained, conspiracism is both hyper-rational and hyper-empiricist in the way it seeks to enfold every piece of available data, however discordant, into totalising and holistic explanatory narratives. A case in point from this thesis (Chapter Three) is the suggestion that all anti-British actions in late Victorian Ireland – from the criminality and civil disobedience of the Land Campaign all the way through to the mainland bombing campaign – were co-ordinated and directed by a secret society led by a 'mysterious Number One'. This is certainly very neat and causally specific; but at the very same, this very neatness and specificity means it enters the realms of fantasy and speculation, not to say pure fiction.

However, though often highly speculative and sensational, late Victorian and Edwardian popular conspiracism was never a matter of pure invention. To put it bluntly, spies, terrorists and 'plutocrats' did exist in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, and were sometimes caught doing things which, putting it mildly, drew popular opprobrium.[86] Indeed, when seeking to explain the popular obsession with terrorists plotting dynamite outrages, we *must* acknowledge that there *were* terrorists living in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, whose machinations the police found it exceedingly difficult to prevent, let alone investigate and punish.[87] Given that popular fears

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[85] Coady, 'Introduction', pp. 1-13.

[86] See, for example: French, 'Spy Fever in Britain'; Hirshfield, 'The Anglo-Boer War'; and, idem, 'The British Left and the "Jewish Conspiracy"'.

[87] B. Porter, *The Origins of the Vigilant State: The London Metropolitan Police Special Branch before the First World War* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 1987). In the 1880s the Irish mainland bombing

regarding terrorism, espionage and the corruptions of capitalism were very often based on real concerns such as these, they cannot be described as entirely irrational. Yet, it must also be noted that these fears were, almost without exception, entirely disproportionate to the real level of threat they posed. Terrorists, spies and cosmopolitan millionaires never threatened the fundamental viability of British state or society, nor did they ever exert anything approaching a dominant influence over the national life.

We can explain this tendency towards speculation partly in terms of what was discussed in the preceding section. Simply put, given the increasing institutionalisation of secrecy, it was often difficult to answer important questions about what was going on. The status of secret policing within the late Victorian state, for example, was always a messy, contested and largely hidden affair.[88] Given considerable leeway when it came to the tactics of surveillance (not to mention, probably, entrapment) allegations about Special Branch's behaviour occupied an ambiguous, undecided space within popular discourse – neither provably true or untrue; always unresolved and inherently speculative. As we shall see Chapter Two, the space for speculation created by official reticence in relation to matters of state secrecy was sometimes viewed as an enticing piece of 'dead ground' from which to attack ministers. Members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, for example, were always quick to exploit official reticence regarding secret policing, as were radical Liberals. Doubtless often motivated by genuine concern, but perhaps equally as often motivated by the desire to speak to their own constituencies, these MPs knew that ministers were trapped by the exigencies of official secrecy, and unable to authoritatively refute accusations of embezzlement, corruption and malpractice.

At the same time, however, popular conspiracism was never uniformly a matter of a naïve British public, cynically preyed upon by populist politicians seeking to portray 'necessary' secrecy as evidence of official culpability – though indeed, sometimes it was. Rather, it was much more often the case that the ambiguous, undecided space provided by secrecy sustained speculation on a range of topics, which then fed into the popular conspiracism which this

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campaign was *so* successful that the then Home Secretary, William Harcourt, nearly suffered a nervous breakdown.

[88] Ibid.

thesis investigates. Perhaps counter-intuitively, then, popular conspiracism depended upon the mechanisms of openness and transparency which emerged in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century. Certainly, the increasing institutionalisation official secrecy *and* public accountability played an important role in structuring senses of the hidden in this period; or what might be or should be revealed, but in fact never was.

Equally, but just as crucially, the increasing availability of information through the densely factual reporting style that emerged in this period provided a rich tapestry of data for the enquiring mind to interpret. Key to this changing situation was the emergence of a nationally published and internationally networked press in the late Victorian period. Until the 1880s, the predominantly middle-class reading public had tended to view journalism and the press through the lens of an 'educational ideal' which preferred quality reportage and the dissemination of virtue to the sordid rewards of sensationalist exposés, and which was dominated by the high-minded hope that the journalism was a rational domain of inquiry within which the truth would inevitably push its way to the fore. Journalism, it was hoped, would transmit these 'truths' (and the tendency to engage in rational debate) to an increasingly literate, educated and enfranchised working-class. As Mark Hampton has described, broadly held by both Liberals and Conservatives, this sense of journalism held that the press was an important tool with which to mould the working classes into a more biddable, less restless constituency: one, that is, more versed in the rhetoric and mechanisms of mid-Victorian British politics, and less prone to the excesses of demagoguery and continental radicalism. Readerships, in this context, were relatively low, as was the number of publications (at least, when compared to what was to come).[89]

From the 1880s onwards, however, this educational ethos of opinion-informing took a back seat to a commercially driven, attention-grabbing and opinion-*forming* sensationalism, as a greatly increased range of publications competed ever more intensely for a rapidly expanding readership. In publishing *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* in 1885 – W.T. Stead's *tour de force* in

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[89] For the development of the British press in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see: Brown, *Victorian News*; and, M. Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

crusading sensationalism – the *Pall Mall Gazette* epitomised a 'new' kind of journalism.[90] From this decade onwards, so-called New Journalism became increasingly established as the dominant popular form of journalism, just as visible in the panicked style with which the 'Jack the Ripper' murders were reported in 1888, as it was in the speculative sensationalism of the *Daily Mail*'s phantom airship scare coverage in March and April 1909.[91] Following hot on the heels of the naval scare of January and February 1908, this last episode was the product of one of the key aspects of conspiracism which this thesis will discuss: the production and interpretation, reproduction and selective reinterpretation of densely factual reporting in an increasingly fraught and sensational style.

There is also the question of suddenness. As the example of the 1909 airship scare demonstrates, Edwardian press 'panics' occurred quickly, before passing just as rapidly. In 1909, it took only three days from the first parliamentary question being asked (on May 17th) for a media storm to break across most of the British press.[92] Of course, though the public may have believed that German airships were emerging out of thin air, even the most cursory examination demonstrates that the panic itself did not. Rather, it was a product of the same long-term fears that caused the invasion and espionage genres to resonate so strongly with the British public. The important point here is that this brief, short-term panic would not have been possible without the dense, information-rich media context, wherein newspapers daily reprinted one another's reports with only slightly altered analyses and commentary, further enflaming the sense of danger and creating ever-more material upon which the media could feed itself.[93]

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[90] This is, of course, a huge oversimplification. However, the period prior to the 1880s is largely beyond the purview of this thesis. For studies of the Victorian press, see: n. 83.

[91] L.P. Curtis Jr., *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 61; S. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain,* Vol. 1 (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p. 343; A.M. Gollin, 'England Is No Longer an Island: The Phantom Airship Scare of 1909', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 13:1 (1981): 43-57.

[92] Gollin, 'England is No Longer an Island'.

[93] Ibid., p. 57. Ironically, the 1909 bubble was burst by a letter published in the Daily Mail written by the man most responsible for creating the environment of frenzied Germanophobia that had caused the panic in the first place: Lord Northcliffe.

In sum, the popular conspiracism of the later Victorian and Edwardian period consisted of a peculiar mixing of both rationality and irrationality, composed in equal parts of empiricism and sensationalism, and which was simultaneously hyper-rational and periodically panicked, and as credulous in one moment as it was sceptical in the next.

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The three elements set out above constitute the general structure and discursive form of popular conspiracism as explored in this thesis. Some caveats should be mentioned, however. This thesis does not seek to describe popular conspiracism as a dominant cultural trope. Indeed, conspiracism never fully broke down the barriers of the 'rational' public sphere in Britain, even if it was often highly visible in the periodic confluences of speculation, sensation and panic. Dedicated conspiracist speculation, for instance, was always a minority pursuit in the British Parliament, and was largely restricted to Irish Nationalists, and radicals of both Liberal and Tory hue. Or again, though prone to sensationalism and panic, the British press never entirely gave itself over to the allure of narrative holism and the 'paranoid style'. Likewise, if often the site of morally and politically didactic fantasy and invention, popular literature was never uniformly read with total naivety. Conspiracist portrayals of spies, terrorists and cosmopolitan millionaires certainly reflected – and reflected upon – the potential damage that could be done to the national life by various constituencies (such as immigrants, foreign nations and empires, political dissidents and the criminally inclined) or by scientific/technical developments (submarine and air travel; extremely potent, stable and portable explosives); but their construction could also be either self-consciously fantastical or deliberately provocative, rather than descriptive of any believable reality.

Nevertheless, the conspiracism described by this thesis *did* represent an identifiable current of popular culture in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods; and it did, at times, influence decision making at the highest of levels, notably in the foundation of Britain's modern secret intelligence gathering institutions in 1909. It was also periodically important to the course of affairs in Parliament (e.g. in discussions of secret policing and in the run-up to the

South African War) and was highly visible in the espionage, 'dynamite' and Yellow Peril genres that prospered in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. It provided the thematic and discursive structure for many of those events which historians of this period have tended to call 'panics' and 'fevers'. Though often ignored by historians, popular conspiracism was highly important to the experience of modernity in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, which continued to be influential in popular responses to perceived threats to the national life during the First World War and beyond.

SOURCES, SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

This thesis, then, does not seek directly to address the question of the legitimacy of conspiracism as a form of rationality or political expression, even if it may draw conclusions which pertain to debates on these issues. Rather, this thesis primarily seeks to describe and account for the nature and development of popular conspiracism as a facet of British popular culture in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, 1880-1914.

At first glance, 1880 might seem a suspiciously neat year with which to begin. Given the contention of this thesis that late Victorian and Edwardian popular conspiracism depended on a broadly accepted sense of 'the public' as having a legitimate right to access certain categories of information, and of a concomitant duty on the part of Government not to impede access to these, this thesis could have begun in 1870. This year witnessed the publication of the Comptroller and Auditor General's first report, and was the point at which modern debates over the proper status of the British Government's use of 'Secret Service' money began, as we shall see in Chapter Two. Equally, in this respect, this thesis might have begun its narrative in 1844, with the Mazzini Affair and Sir James Graham's refusal to answer questions regarding matters of state secrecy. Such a date would also have allowed a more complete survey of the history of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and conspiracist discourse regarding Ireland; not to mention the spectre of Paris as the centre of European revolutionary conspiracy from the 1850s onwards.

These alternative periodizations would have suffered from three key problems, however. Firstly, though key arguments of this thesis relate to

questions of accountability and secrecy, these are not the principal concern. Secondly, the major themes of late Victorian and Edwardian conspiracism that this thesis discusses – espionage and the threat of invasion; terrorism, both Irish and anarchist; and the problems of liberal-capitalist society in a networked world – only really began to develop into popular conspiracism in the 1880s. Thirdly, the circumstances, technologies and media that facilitated the transmission of these new conspiracist modes of expression (e.g. very high levels of newspaper and fiction consumption, requiring 'mass' literacy) also only properly emerged in the 1880s. It is with this confluence of conspiracism and new technologies and media forms that this thesis is primarily concerned.

By contrast, the end date of this study is much less problematic. In many ways, British culture during the First World War was saturated with popular conspiracism. This was partly caused, no doubt, by the extreme stress of such a traumatic conflict; but it was also a product of the increasing use of propaganda, which deliberately sought to mobilise conspiracist tropes by way of shaping public discourse and promoting public vigilance and perseverance. However, as a result of this changed public sphere (which, as the conflict progressed, became a much more heavily regulated space), combined with the sense that the conflict confirmed some aspects of early conspiracist speculation (Britain was, after all, now at war with Germany), the context within which conspiracism operated changed dramatically. Accordingly, pre-war conspiracism cannot profitably be described as the same creature as wartime conspiracism. In what follows, some reference is made to 1915 and beyond, given that wartime British society did not merely leap into existence, fully-fledged in late summer 1914; but 1914 marks a turning point nonetheless, and is where this thesis ends.

Geography is also a tricky question. Concerned with British popular conspiracism, the question arises: what do we mean by British? Clearly, this included England, and to a considerable extent Scotland and Wales too – but Ireland as well? Moreover, as has already been noted, by the later Victorian and Edwardian period, the historian is not only confronted by a national 'common reader' but also an 'imperial reader' and perhaps a 'global reader' as well. Indeed, the conspiracist themes which this thesis seeks to address – espionage, terrorism, immigration and international capitalism – transgress, by their very

nature, any sense of a national cultural boundary. To speak of a 'British' form of popular conspiracism is potentially problematic.

Despite these problems, a 'British' conspiracism is still defensible. Firstly, although those prone to conspiracist narration were often clustered around particular forms of political belief and particular constituencies, there is nevertheless a society-wide sense of the conspiracist mind-set in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.[94] Accordingly, this thesis will adopt the practice of referring to the English, Welsh, Scots and Irish as 'British' when they acted together, and separately when they did not (i.e. Irish MP's will be discussed as 'Irish' when they engaged in 'anti-British' conspiracist discourse). Secondly, although the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterised by unprecedented international connectivity, this does not make the fact that things were published in Britain and primarily aimed at a domestic market insignificant. This was by no means a precisely defined marketplace. Certainly books published in Britain were often republished for the US market and vice-versa. The same is true of Britain's imperial possessions and the wider 'Anglophone' world. However, these were mostly stories about threats to the British Isles and its residents. As such, it is still legitimate to speak of British forms of conspiracism, though caveats must always be attached.

This thesis makes use of three main kinds of source material. Firstly, it draws extensively on the Parliamentary materials made available through Hansard online, and through the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers online portal. Extensive reference is made to parliamentary debates (particularly Commons debates), which were made available to the public via Hansard and through reporting in the contemporary press. Use is also made of political pamphlets, particularly those which dealt with the issue of 'Chinese Slavery' between 1902 and 1910, and the Aliens Act of 1905. Secondly, the thesis makes extensive reference to a wide selection of late Victorian and Edwardian newspapers (listed in the bibliography), particularly those available through the British Library's online newspapers portal, the Times Digital Archive and ProQuest. Finally, it makes extensive reference to late Victorian

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[94] For an example of one of the 'British' contexts from which conspiracism emerged, see: W.D. Rubsenstein, 'British Radicalism and the 'Dark Side' of Populism' in W.D. Rubsenstein *Elites and the wealthy in Modern British Society: Essays in Social and Economic History* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), pp. 339-73.

and Edwardian literature, primarily from the spy thriller and invasion scare genre, the dynamite genre and the emerging – but still by the end of the period, nebulous – Yellow Peril genre. Taken together, these sources constitute a large proportion of the popular media of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

This thesis deliberately focuses on 'popular' source materials and avoids making extensive, detailed reference to 'high' literature. This is partly because the 'high' literature with which this thesis does concern itself has already been the subject of extensive, multi-disciplinary analysis; as such, this thesis seeks to make only a tangential contribution to this kind of analysis, principally by situating it in the context of what it calls 'popular conspiracism'. More importantly, the study is concerned with *popular* forms of expression, visible at a mass level of media production and consumption. Although brilliantly evocative, and certainly worthy of consideration, 'high'-literary novels were read only by a relative minority.

The thesis is structured very simply. Following from this introductory chapter – itself containing lengthy historiographical contextualisation, and theoretical discussion of the major concepts advanced by this thesis – three major chapters follow, each concerning a particular thematic case study. Chapter Two examines popular conspiracist discourses relating to espionage and invasion scares, most of which were of German design. Chapter Three examines popular conspiracism and terrorism, which throughout the period related primarily to the threat posed by anarchist terrorism and far-Left political activism, but which was also concerned with revolutionary Irish nationalism. Chapter Four examines a more expansive, less coherent category: anti-Semitic and anti-Chinese popular conspiracism, the former split between anti-Alien sentiment and anti-plutocratic discourse, and the latter closely connected to the sense of a nascent threat from 'the East'.

CHAPTER TWO:

SECRECY, SURVEILLANCE AND SPYING

In 1909, a special sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence (hereafter CID) was established and ordered by the then Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, to investigate the true extent of foreign espionage in the UK. It later concluded as follows: that 'the evidence produced left no doubt in the minds of the subcommittee that an extensive system of German espionage exists in this country and that we have no organisation for keeping in touch with that espionage and for accurately determining its extent or objectives.'[1] Had it been made public, this conclusion would likely not have occasioned any great surprise. By 1909, the conspiracist idea of a potent and covert threat posed to national life by German espionage was firmly established in British popular culture, despite the fact that pre-war German espionage in Britain was so insignificant, amateurish and *ad hoc* as to be practically non-existent.[2] By contrast, the sub-committee's further conclusion that the British state had 'no organisation for keeping in touch with [German] espionage and for accurately determining its extent or objectives' would have caused consternation, both at home and abroad.[3] Although Britain was regarded in Europe as a nation of spies, the Victorian state had effectively renounced domestic and European espionage in the aftermath of the 1848 Mazzini Affair, only haltingly taking up

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[1] Quoted in Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 3.

[2] For the extent of foreign espionage being carried out in Britain prior to 1914, see, especially: Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, pp. 3-29; and, Jeffery, *MI6*, pp. 3-39. For the extent of Russian espionage in Europe and Britain, see: A. Butterworth, *The World That Never Was: A True Story of Dreamers, Schemers, Anarchists and Secret Agents* (London: The Bodley Head, 2010), pp. 244, 295, 297, 312, 322, 367-368; Jensen, *Battle against Anarchist Terrorism*, p. 7; and, Porter, *Origins of the Vigilant State*, p. 143.

[3] Quoted in Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 3. Britain had a lengthy history of spying – and, in continental Europe, a reputation to match it – dating back to the Elizabethan English state's pan-European network of spies and informers. The myth of England's excellence in European espionage was widely believed throughout late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, and indeed, 'Most continental commands would have been surprised to discover that British intelligence was in such an enfeebled state.' As such, when James Edmonds took over M.O.5 in the late 1900s, he was shocked to find that his only records consisted of a handful from the South African War, and sundry records concerning France and Russia, with absolutely nothing covering Germany. Ibid., pp. 3, 8.

the domestic cudgels once again in 1883, before beginning the process of establishing foreign intelligence gathering capabilities in the early 1900s.[4]

This is not to deny that espionage took place in late nineteenth-century Europe. It very much did, as the example of Prussian intelligence gathering in France prior to the 1871 conflict, and later during the Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906), demonstrates.[5] Likewise, instances of unauthorised disclosure of official documents (notably the *Globe* scandal of 1878, and the sale of warship designs to a foreign power and the release of instructions to the Naval Intelligence Department in 1887) kept the existence of some level of secrecy in British government very much in the public mind at home.[6] It also had tangible legislative consequences, in the form of the Official Secrets Acts passed in 1889 and 1911.[7]

These two Acts, of course, were hugely important. Yet, official secrecy in Britain was never solely a matter of enforcing legislation. Rather, it was always a contested and mutable set of norms and conventions, which only

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[4] Both overt and covert intelligence-gathering capabilities emerged within the bureaucratic architectures of most European nation-states – including the United Kingdom – during the second half of the nineteenth century. There continues to be debate about the extent of domestic British surveillance, espionage and political policing during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is accurate to state that it was only in the early 1900s that the British state began tentatively to convert its various 'vigilant' capabilities into dedicated agencies responsible for espionage and counterespionage in Britain and Europe. See: *C. Andrew, Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985), pp. 1-38; idem, *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 3-29; Beaver, *Under Every Leaf*; L. Clutterbuck, 'Countering Irish republican terrorism in Britain: Its origin as a police function', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18:1 (2006): 95-118; idem, 'The Evolution of Counter Terrorism Methodology in the Metropolitan Police from 1829 to 1901, With Particular Reference to the Influence of Extreme Irish Nationalist Activity', PhD Thesis (University of Portsmouth, 2002); Hopkirk, *The Great Game*; Jeffery, *MI6,* pp. 3-39; and, G. Morgan, 'Myth and Reality in the Great Game', *Asian Affairs,* 60 (1973): 6-30. See, also: M.P. Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), chs 1 and 2.

[5] The Dreyfus affair was a divisive and hugely public espionage scandal that demonstrated the extent of German espionage taking place in France in the 1880s. Dreyfus' conviction for espionage, based on misinterpreted and forged evidence, split the French nation between largely anti-Semitic, monarchist anti-Dreyfusards and largely republican Dreyfusards, reshaping the political landscape for around a decade. See: P.P. Read*, The Dreyfus Affair: the story of the most infamous miscarriage of justice in French history* (London: A&C Black, 2012); and, L. Derfler, *The Dreyfus Affair* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

[6] In May 1878, Charles Marvin, a clerk at the Foreign Office, leaked the text of an Anglo-Russian treaty to *The Globe and Traveller* before the treaty had been announced to Parliament. Subsequent to a denial of the leak's veracity by the Foreign Minister, Lord Salisbury, Marvin later leaked the entire text of the treaty. Under existing laws, however, Marvin could not be prosecuted and was set free. http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18243, *ODNB* entry for Charles Marvin, recovered 12/08/2013.

[7] Vincent, *Culture of Secrecy*, pp. 78-131.

slowly hardened into codified and bureaucratised forms as the period progressed.[8] As we shall see in this chapter, the people and practices that these conventions covered – such as Britain's nascent secret intelligence-gathering and espionage agencies, as well as her secret policing capabilities at home and in the Empire – were always contested and controversial topics. Moreover, the policies of non-disclosure that surrounded and protected them proved an inviting area for those inclined to speculate about the uses and abuses of 'necessary' secrecy. These speculative discourses blossomed in the late nineteenth century, forming a crucial backdrop to the emergence of 'spy fever' from 1900 onwards.

The existing historiography of spy fever tends to treat it as sub-category of late Victorian and Edwardian invasion scare culture, and in some ways, rightly so.[9] The product of a potent mix of fears regarding Britain's economic and military decline and the burgeoning military power of Britain's continental rivals, invasion fiction was one of *the* dominant popular literary forms in Britain from around the time of the French defeat at Prussian hands in 1871 to the middle years of the First World War. Indeed, in Britain alone several hundred titles within the genre appeared between the 1870s and 1914. Given the historical context, it is easy to see why. Viewed throughout Europe with a combination of wonderment, intrigue and horror, Prussia's stunning victory over France in 1871 – and the subsequent declaration of the German Empire – represented a seismic shift in the balance of Great Power politics. The consequences of this epochal breach reverberated throughout British popular culture and international politics along a number of different trajectories in the decades that followed.[10]

Most directly, there was a growing sense from around the 1880s that Britain was failing to keep pace with her rivals' speedy advances in science and technology. Responding to this sense of relative decline, the National Efficiency movement emerged, advocating technocratic reforms along German

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[8] Ibid., passim.

[9] A.J.A Morris, for example, is strangely silent on the topic in *The Scaremongers*. A.J.A., Morris, *The Scaremongers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 160-163.

[10] For the history of invasion fiction and future war fiction, see: I.F. Clarke, *Voices prophesying war: future wars, 1763-3749* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

lines in fields such as the military, education and the operation of the poor laws.[11] There was also France's post-1871 turn towards colonial assertion, resulting in a string of Anglo-French crises. At the same time, Russia began remilitarising the Black Sea (1871), later scoring significant victories over the Ottoman Empire (1877–8), as well as making advances into Central Asia that were felt to threaten the Raj (1881–7).[12] By the Edwardian period, Germany had repudiated its earlier Bismarckian policy of avoiding entanglements outside of Europe, acquiring several colonial possessions and in the process becoming increasingly assertive. Notable instances include German behaviour around the Kruger Telegram (1896), the First (1905) and Second (1911) Moroccan crises, and the passage of a series of naval laws (1898, 1900, 1906, 1908 and 1912) that provoked popular and political concern in Britain.[13]

These increasingly regular colonial and European crises occurred during a period when British political and military power was waning, but when the need to defend the economic benefits of the Empire had never been greater. Accordingly, as Brett Woods has noted, as the Empire was increasingly seen as threatened by the malign intentions of foreign powers, the figure of the enemy-without 'became one of the fundamental themes of British imperialist culture' and this was especially manifest in invasion scare culture.[14] As I.G. Clarke has suggested, from the 1870s the authors of the invasion genre represented 'a new college of prophets and predictors [who] first began to describe the new machines, the new societies, and the new wars that would follow in the next decade or the next century.'[15] From Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* (1870) to H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), much

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[11] G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (London: University of California Press, 1971), passim.

[12] For Anglo-Russian relations and 'the Great Games', see: R. Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006); K.E. Meyer and S.B. Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Asia* (London: Basic Books, 2006); G. Morgan, *Anglo Russian Rivalry in Central Asia, 1810-1895* (London: Routledge, 2012); and, T. G. Otte, 'From 'War-in-Sight' to Nearly War: Anglo–French Relations in the Age of High Imperialism, 1875-1898', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 17:4 (2006): 693-714.

[13] For an excellent discussion of the impact of German behaviour on British popular culture during this period, see: Stafford, 'Spies and Gentlemen'.

[14] B. Woods, *Neutral Ground: A Political History of Espionage Fiction* (London: Algora Publishing, 2008), p. 26.

[15] I.F. Clarke (ed.), *The Great War with Germany,* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), p. 1.

of this literature was shot through with the sense that secret, potentially malign networks of power were at work just beneath the surface of contemporary life, watching, waiting and taking account of its weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This was quite literally so in the case of Wells' 1898 novel, *The War of the Worlds*, where we find an exemplary instance of the conspiracist form of expression. 'No one would have believed', the book opens:

> that in the last years of the nineteenth century… this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water.[16]

'Greater than man's' intelligence but 'mortal as his own': this alone captures the kind of secular-divine omniscience that distinguishes popular conspiracism, as the introduction to this thesis has detailed. Of course, neither Wells' Martian invasion nor any other projected invasions of Britain's shores ever took place outside the pages of contemporary fiction. Nevertheless, throughout the period 1880–1914 invasion and espionage fiction played an important role in popular culture, nurturing and promoting a belief in conspiracist figures and forms.

Such fears of invasion and subversion flourished in later Victorian and Edwardian periods, reaching their zenith in the years after Britain's military self-confidence was shattered by a lacklustre performance in the South African War (1899–1902). During the early Edwardian period, the national mood thus began to shift from the jingoistic bellicosity of the 1890s into a more anxious and introspective phase. As we shall see, demand for conspiracist narratives of invasion and espionage plots blossomed at this point, and authors like William Le Queux and E. Phillips Oppenheim became immensely popular. At the same time, fears of Germany's expanding High Seas Fleet and consequent concerns about the possibility of a German invasion sprang to the fore in the public mind. By late 1907, a strong press campaign – backed by Field Marshal Roberts, Le Queux's authorial collaborator for his novel *The Invasion of 1910* – had forced the Government to concede an inquiry into the invasion threat, which eventually resulted in the special CID sub-committee quoted above.

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[16] H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898), p. 1.

Among other things, it recommended the formation of the Secret Service Bureau, the precursor agency of MI5 and MI6.[17]

Spy fever, however, had a number of more specific contextual facets and discursive features than the more general fears of vulnerability and penetration found in invasion scare culture. In particular, conspiracist spy fever discourses were concerned to describe the British state as comprehensively undermined by foreign agents and plots, whilst evoking a world of contemporary diplomacy riddled with the actions and initiatives of spies. This was also a Manichaean discourse. At every level, 'spy fever' was concerned with the description of almost omnipotent and almost omniscient malign agents and agencies, whose actions were matched and mirrored by equally capable English agents. Yet spy fever was never simply the preserve of those inclined to fantasy. It existed as part of a broader culture of conspiracism and a complex spectrum of anxious, speculative and fearful discourses.

We shall turn to other examples in the chapters that follow, where kindred conspiracist discourses sought to bring secret, malign structures of international power to light, at the same time as constructing Manichaean moral narratives. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the nature of invasion scares and spy fevers as a particular variant of popular conspiracist discourse. The chapter begins with an exploration of the culture of necessary secrecy and accompanying speculation that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in one particular arena: Parliament, an arena otherwise upheld as a national forum of liberal openness and accountability.

A SPACE FOR SPECULATION: THE SECRET SERVICE FUND IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

By the mid-Victorian period, Parliament was widely upheld as a crucial bulwark of British (or, more commonly, 'English') liberties and constitutional traditions. As Jonathan Parry has written, the prestige of Parliament as an integrating, deliberating and essentially reasonable national institution was at its height

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[17] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 3.

during the period of Whiggish-liberal ascendancy, roughly 1830 to 1880.[18] This was with some justification, for Parliament became more open, accountable and inclusive in some crucial respects. Notably, the franchise expanded, following acts in 1867 and then again in 1884–5. Contested elections became more frequent; and party lines within Parliament became harder after the mid-century, just as the Liberal and Conservative parties began to develop into 'mass' organisations, complete with central and local hierarchies.[19] At the same time, as the introduction detailed, the press expanded, becoming more active, aggressive and assertive. As such, it is certainly possible to speak of a linear, if gradual, process of growing democratic openness and accountability along modern-representative lines.

Yet there were some crucial limits to this openness. In fact, there were some limits that were regarded as *necessary* and that might, as such, be seen as structural, even if some disputed their necessity. One of these is the Secret Service Fund, the subject of this section. The secrecy that was gradually institutionalized as the figure of the reformed, anonymous civil servant has been detailed at length.[20] The same can be said of the passage of the Official Secrets Acts, both passed swiftly and both altogether short statutes. (Passed during the First World War, the Defence of the Realm Acts, despite granting the British state enormous powers of coercion and allowing resort to martial proceedings against civilians, would be similarly brief in legislative terms – barely more than two paragraphs.) The longstanding debate over the Secret Service Fund has been altogether neglected by comparison; but it is just as revealing of the limits of rational, open and accountable liberal governance. Indeed, as we shall see, the existence of the Fund provoked quite the opposite: conspiracist speculation, unconfirmed arguments and irrefutable accusations.

The structure of secrecy: non-disclosure, trust and confidence

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[18] J. P. Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. introduction.

[19] M. Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics, 1867-1945*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), ch. 1.

[20] Vincent, *Culture of Secrecy*.

In his first full report, published in 1870, the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir William Dunbar, stated that he could not certify the propriety of accounts rendered to him for the Secret Service Vote as per the stipulations of the Exchequer and Audit Act of 1866.[21] This report, accompanied by correspondence between his office and the Foreign Office, represents the starting point for a 40-year-long series of parliamentary debates on the proper position of espionage within the institutional structure of the British state, and the proper position of information regarding domestic espionage within the British public sphere.

The Fund, rather than the budget of an institution entitled 'the Secret Service', was the method by which the British state paid for services rendered to it in secret. The use of 'secret' money by the British state can be traced back as far as the latter half of the fifteenth century.[22] Though secret money had always been paid for through the provisions of various Civil List Acts, from 1790 the government was forced to supply extra money by means of a parliamentary vote.[23] This meant that by the beginning of this period, the British state was supplied with secret money from two directions: the 'direct charge' for home secret services, and the Secret Service Vote (hereafter SSV) for foreign secret services. The 'direct charge' was a continuing service on the Consolidated Revenue Fund facilitated by the Civil List Act of 1837, which

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[21] Comptroller and Auditor General (1867-1888). http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55736?docPos=2, *ODNB* entry for William Dunbar, recovered 08/01/2013.

[22] The Secret Service Fund, for instance, was the primary spending mechanism through which Pitt the Younger's Government administered bribes to Irish MPs, in order to guarantee the passage of the Act of Union. For a general, though not particularly detailed or incisive, history of the Secret Vote, see: Foreign and Commonwealth Office [hereafter, FCO], *"My Purdah Lady": The Foreign Office and the Secret Vote, 1782-1909* (London: Historical Branch [Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library & Records Department], 1994), pp. 1-25. For the uses of Secret Service money in Ireland, see: J.F. McEldowney, 'Legal Aspects of the Irish Secret Service Fund, 1793-1833', *Irish Historical Studies*, 25:98 (1986): 129-137; E. O'Halpin, 'The Secret Service Vote and Ireland, 1868-1922', *Irish Historical Studies*, 23:92 (1983): 348-353; and, D. Wilkinson, '"How Did They Pass the Union?": Secret Service Expenditure in Ireland, 1799-1804', *History*, 82:266 (2002): 223-251. For the uses of Secret Service money in France, see: A. Cobban, 'British Secret Service in France, 1784-1792', *The English Historical Review*, 69:271 (1952): 226-261. See, also: S.F. Bemin, 'British Secret Service and the French-American Alliance', *The American Historical Review*, 29:3 (1924): 474-495; E. Sparrow, 'Secret Service under Pitt's Administrations, 1792-1806', *History*, 83:270 (1998): 280-294; and, J. Walker, 'The Secret Service Under Charles II and James II', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Fourth Series)*, 15 (1932): 211-242.

[23] FCO, *"My Purdah Lady"*, p. 4.

Parliament had no right to scrutinise, or even demand accounts for.[24] The Secret Service Vote was an annual vote of supply, the amount of which could vary year-by-year, as was felt necessary by the Government of the day.[25] Together, these monies were known as the 'Secret Service Fund' (hereafter SSF). From 1886 onwards, with the passage of the Secret Service Money (Repeal) Act, the 'direct charge' was abolished and the entire amount for secret services was consolidated into the annual vote of supply.[26]

Questions had been asked regarding the disbursement of the SSF at various times throughout the nineteenth century. However, the passage of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act of 1866 (hereafter 'the Audit Act') placed the Fund in a statutorily ambiguous position.[27] Effectively, the newly appointed Comptroller and Auditor General (hereafter C&AG), William Dunbar, felt that the Audit Act gave him the right to demand, scrutinise and report on accounts for the disbursement of the SSF. One of the primary concerns of the C&AG and the Committee of Public Accounts, as expressed in the requirement that each department surrender any unexpended balances to the Consolidated Revenue Fund at the end of each financial year, was to ensure that such a build-up could not take place: a matter for serious concern

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[24] The 'direct charge' was an amount directly taken from the Consolidated Revenue Fund (hereafter CRF), for the purposes of Home Secret Service. ('Standing', or 'continuing', services on the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) are payments made directly from the government's current account (the CRF), and are facilitated by specific acts of parliament, rather than through an annual vote of supply. As they are not voted for by Parliament, and not disbursed by the Treasury, the government of the day has no right to demand or scrutinise accounts for funds supplied through standing services.) The amount, £10,000 – stipulated by the Section 15 of the Civil List Act of 1837, was by tradition directly paid to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury. The Parliamentary Secretary was not actually a Treasury minister. This was actually a sinecure given, by tradition, to the Chief Whip of the Government. *Hansard's* House of Commons Debates [hereafter, HC Deb.], 24 May 1886, vol. 305, cc. 1842-971.

[25] The SSV was administered by the Foreign Office, which effectively acted as other government departments' banker when it came to the use of Secret Service money. This included the Colonial Office, the Office of the Secretary for Ireland, the Home Office, the War Office and the Admiralty. FCO, *"My Purdah Lady"*, p. 14.

[26] This act specifically repealed Section 15 of the Civil List Act (1837), which facilitated the direct charge. HC Deb., 27 Aug. 1886, vol. 308, cc. 667-8.

[27] The Audit Act of 1866 created the office of the C&AG, to whom all government departments were required to submit annual accounts for scrutiny and certification as properly managed. The C&AG was required to submit an annual report to Parliament, which was then scrutinised by the Committee of Public Accounts (CPA, constituted in 1861), who were empowered to consider the behaviour of government departments in relation to cost efficiency etc. The propriety of increased Parliamentary scrutiny over normal expenditure by government departments was almost entirely accepted once the 1866 act was passed. E. L. Normanton, The Accountability and Audit of Governments: A Comparative Study (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), xv.

in the case of Secret Service money. Without this requirement, the Foreign Office, which acted as the 'banker' for Secret Service money, could potentially accumulate unexpended balances year-by-year, and thereby surpass the spending capacity intended for it by Parliament within given financial years. However, successive governments, senior civil servants and a sizeable cross-party majority of MPs argued that the SSF was a special case and should be exempt from detailed parliamentary scrutiny.[28]

The consensus position argued that to disclose any details of the operation of the SSF would be to destroy the very conditions of secrecy that it required in order to operate. As William Gladstone stated in 1880:

> Although the amount required under that [Secret Service] Vote was a small one … considering its nature, he thought it would be obvious how unwise it would be to make the details public. If it had been a question for the House of Commons only, it would be a simple matter; but … talking to the House of Commons was, in fact, talking to the world.[29]

Nevertheless, it was thought that Parliament should vote on motions regarding the proper disbursement of the SSF, mainly in relation to the purposes to which it should *not* be put. As the radical liberal MP, Charles Dilke, had argued in 1878: 'Of course, the House of Commons had no right to ask in what way the Secret Service money was spent; but certainly it had a right to say that pensions should not be supplemented out of such a Vote.'[30] Ministers, however, seem to have taken little notice of these expressions of parliamentary

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[28] That this was the consensus position within parliament is illustrated by two facts. Firstly, successive governments always received the amount they requested for Secret Service. Not a single amendment that proposed to reduce the amount of the SSV was passed by Parliament. Secondly, the propriety of the secrecy that surrounded the SSV was not an issue that was played upon by front bench opposition members. This consensus was graphically illustrated by the actions of Sir R.A. Cross in 1881 (at that point, the former *and* future Conservative Home Secretary) in defending the Liberal Home Secretary (William Harcourt) in refusing to disclose or discuss the uses of the SSF to back-bench members of his own party. HC Deb., 02 Aug. 1881, vol. 264, cc. 668-669.

[29] HC Deb., 28 May 1880, vol. 252, cc. 669-729.

[30] HC Deb., 24 May 1878, vol. 240, cc. 657-703. Another example of this would be Mitchell Henry's 1886 motion, 'That it would be an abuse, and contrary to public policy, that any money raised by taxation should be expended by the Government of the day for election purposes.' This was in response to questions from Albert Grey, who asked whether any Secret Service money had previously been, or was still being, used for Party purposes. HC Deb., 25 May 1886, vol. 305, cc. 1829-31. The issue of salary supplementation was one that exercised the consciences of many in the House – motions decrying this practice, and seeking to reduce the amount of the SSV in directly proportionate response, had already tabled in the early 1870s. HC Deb., 21 July 1870, vol. 203, cc. 670-92; HC Deb., 01 Jun. 1871, vol. 206, cc. 1381-433; HC Deb., 12 Aug. 1871, vol. 208, cc. 1515-17.

will. By the late 1880s, for example, it was known to Parliament that successive ministers had continued to allow Foreign Office salaries to be augmented using Secret Service monies, despite numerous parliamentary motions to the contrary.[31] Such behaviour, riding roughshod over the express wishes of Parliament, did nothing to assuage the suspicions of those already attempting to bring the SSF under increased parliamentary control. Nor did the manner in which Secret Service votes were scheduled 'at the end of the Session, when it [was] impossible to discuss them' and when attendance in the House tended to be low.[32]

At times, however, ministers did concede that the SSF was a regrettable and distasteful facet of the British system of governance. Equally, they also argued that the SSF was a necessary rejoinder to the existence of conspiracies against British interests. The nature of this 'necessity' and its effect on the Government's willingness to disclose information regarding secret activities was expressed by the Tory 'Ultra', Charles Newdegate, in 1884:

> unfortunately it [the SSF] was an accompaniment, and an inevitable accompaniment, of the existence of secret societies … It thence became inevitable that the Government should meet the action of the secret societies in some degree with their own instruments … It was an evil. At the same time, it was, under the circumstances, a necessary evil.[33]

Any acceptance of the necessity of the SSF, so the argument went, logically led to the acceptance of the secrecy that surrounded it. As the Tory MP, Henry Drummond Wolff, stated: 'If you once answer Questions as to the sums which are or are not paid out of the Secret Service money, you at once put an end to the whole use of the Secret Service.'[34] This is not to say that governments never commented on the disbursement of Civil Service Funds. Ministers regularly denied specific uses relating to the SSF.[35] Yet these denials were made

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[31] HC Deb., 31 May 1888, vol. 326, cc. 792-872; HC Deb., 12 Jul. 1888, vol. 328, cc. 1202-9.

[32] HC Deb., 13 Aug. 1890, vol. 348, cc. 853-96.

[33] HC Deb., 21 Jul. 1884, vol. 290, cc. 1759-895. J. Campbell expressed this more directly in 1889, arguing that 'If the Government are to defeat a Fenian or any other conspiracy, they must employ secret agents, and they must pay these agents.' HC Deb., 04 Jun. 1889, vol. 356, cc. 1807-75.

[34] HC Deb., 15 Feb. 1882, vol. 266, cc. 692-763.

[35] For example, in 1881 the Liberal Home Secretary explicitly denied that Secret Service money had been spent on elections. HC Deb., 02 Aug. 1881, vol. 264, cc. 569-681. Similarly, in 1888, the then First Lord W. H. Smith denied that the government had expended any Secret Service

without supporting evidence and it was exceptionally rare for ministers to disclose or confirm anything specific in relation to the SSF.[36] When disclosures were made, it was with a view to reassuring members of the propriety of the disbursements; but this merely stoked the suspicions of those who already detested the very idea of the SSF.

The SSV was thus an issue of trust and confidence. From the early 1870s onwards, the Foreign Secretary and the Permanent Undersecretary to the Foreign Office were required to swear affidavits to the effect that they had disbursed the funds for the purposes and in the manner expected by Parliament.[37] Such statements were accepted by Parliament and (albeit grudgingly) by the C&AG in lieu of actual accounts from which the propriety of disbursements might be verified. Similarly, ministerial arguments for the passage of the SSV from the 1870s to the 1890s consistently referenced the fact that if Parliament wished to entrust ministers with funds for secret services, it had accordingly to trust the character of the ministers charged with disbursing those funds. As early as 1871, Viscount Enfield (then Foreign Secretary) argued that 'if it was right to intrust the Secretary of State with a certain sum of money [from the SSV], it was equally right to allow him to exercise his discretion as to the manner in which it should be expended.'[38] In similar fashion, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, William Henry Smith, stated in 1877 that 'as long as the necessity for a Secret Service unfortunately existed, the House must be content to leave the subject in the hands of the responsible Ministers.'[39]

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money in aiding *The Times* in an investigation against several MPs. HC Deb., 12 Nov. 1888, vol. 330, cc. 908-9.

[36] The amount the PUS to the Foreign Office received from the SSF as an increment to his salary was the only topic upon which government ministers ever disclosed or confirmed specific, factual information about the uses to which the SSF was put. See, for example: HC Deb., 24 Jul. 1881, vol. 208, cc. 161-3; HC Deb., 28 Jul. 1871, vol. 208, cc. 436-49; HC Deb., 5 Apr. 1872, vol. 210, cc. 833-50; HC Deb., 03 Jul. 1871, vol. 207, c. 999; HC Deb., 15 Apr. 1887, vol. 313, cc. 1002-5; HC Deb., 31 May 1888, vol. 326, cc. 792-872; *First Report from the Committee of Public Accounts, together with the proceedings of the Committee, minutes of evidence and appendix* [301] (1870), p. 54.

[37] For the text of these affidavits, see: *First Report of the Committee of Public Accounts* (1870), p. 48. For later, formalised versions of these affidavits, see: *Secret Service. Copy of the Treasury minute, dated 19 April 1886, on the expenditure out of the vote for Secret Service, and of the sum charged for the same purpose on the Consolidated Fund* [167] (1886).

[38] HC Deb., 01 Jun. 1871, vol. 206, cc. 1381-433.

[39] HC Deb., 11 Jun. 1877, vol. 234, cc. 1603-33.

The importance of trust as the basis upon which the SSV was annually passed cut right to the core of the issue of 'secret' money. This much is illustrated by the divergent attitudes held by parliamentarians in relation to the 'direct charge' and the SSV in the debates that preceded the abolition of the 'direct charge' in 1886. Mitchell Henry (Liberal member for Glasgow Blackfriars) commented that he was 'perfectly satisfied with the certificate from the Head of the Department that the money has been expended by him for the purposes for which it was contemplated by Parliament. But the charge that was placed on the Consolidated Fund is in a totally different position:' that is, one that did not require parliamentary assent, and therefore the minister responsible for its disbursement could not be said to be in receipt of the confidence of Parliament.[40] Indeed, the nature of this trust was such that any failure to pass the SSV was viewed as a vote of no confidence in the Government. This was made clear to Parliament in February 1884, when the Prime Minister William Gladstone explicitly stated that 'The [Secret Service] vote was altogether a Vote of Confidence, and that the only ground upon which the Government asked for it was the ground of confidence.'[41] As William Harcourt had earlier argued in August 1881, 'Either this Secret Service Vote is right or it is wrong. If it is wrong, then vote against it'.[42]

Effectively, then, the annual passing of the SSV by Parliament implied trust in the character of the ministers tasked with the management of the SSF. Specifically, it implied that ministers would be trusted to follow the implicit wishes of Parliament in relation to the SSF, and that their character would restrain them from abusing the power given to them. At the same time, passage of the SSV implied an acceptance of the necessity (in certain circumstances) of secret actions on the part of the Government and the necessity of non-disclosure. This is not to suggest that ministers never commented on the operation of the SSF. Ministers regularly promised that diplomatic salaries were no longer augmented with Secret Service money. However, the authority of such denials was undermined by the fact that, as Secret Service money was not subject to parliamentary scrutiny, they could not

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[40] HC Deb., 24 May 1886, vol. 305, cc. 1842-971.

[41] HC Deb., 29 Feb. 1884, vol. 285, cc. 242-320.

[42] HC Deb., 02 Aug. 1881, vol. 264, cc. 569-681.

be authoritatively verified. Accordingly, such denials had to be trusted, for speculation could never be fully refuted. Put another way, it opened up a speculative space for debate, the substance of which could neither be confirmed nor denied. It is a space that is not usefully described as either rational or irrational. Rather, it combined both qualities, for it meant that any conspiratorial insinuations could never be fully refuted – or affirmed.

Probing the boundaries of non-disclosure

As noted above, for most MPs this speculative space was not particularly alluring, and they seem to have been content to trust ministers with the disbursement of Secret Service money. However, a vocal minority found the very existence of 'secret' money entirely reprehensible. In the main, this minority sought to challenge the consensus that surrounded the use of Secret Service money with the following: accusations of misappropriation and misuse of funds; speculation about the corrupt purposes to which the SSF had been, or could be, put; and criticism of the hypocrisy that governments to act in a manner contradictory to their professed ideals. These challenges generally came from a combination of radical Liberals and MPs from the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Radicals detested the existence of 'secret' money for a number of reasons. Broadly speaking, they viewed the idea that *any* money expended by departments of State should not be subject to parliamentary scrutiny as corrupt and wrong. The voting of 'secret' money was, quite simply, not felt to be consistent with principles of transparent governance. As the radical MP Charles Bradlaugh commented in August 1887: 'in a country like this we ought not to have a secret service vote … they ought at least to come under some sort of audit in connection with each Department.'[43] The suggestion of increased audit scrutiny over Secret Service monies voted by Parliament was a recurrent theme for radical Liberals.

More specifically, secret money was thought to represent a threat to the conventions of good governance, in that it might be disbursed for

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[43] HC Deb., 08 Aug. 1887, vol. 318, cc. 1559-668.

purposes of which the House disapproved, but of which it had no direct knowledge.[44] As Bradlaugh again suggested in 1888: 'There ought not to be a possibility of suggesting that some Department used the money of the nation outside the Knowledge of Parliament and beyond its control.'[45] Using such funds, governments might be able to subvert constitutional conventions and statutory requirements in the service of political expediency.[46] This was most forcefully expressed by Peter Rylands, Liberal MP for Burnley, when he argued that 'Members have a right to know that Secret Service money is not prostituted for purposes which would be repugnant to the feeling of the House of Commons.'[47] Even the extent to which trust might be vested in ministers was questioned in this vein.[48] Equally, that the SSF was thought to be used for the subversion of foreign peoples and governments was viewed as distinctly distasteful and incongruent with Britain's reputation as an honourable nation. Moreover, that the SSF was known to be used within the UK for the purposes of 'espionage' made it morally repugnant.

This latter issue was where radicals and Irish Nationalists came together. The amount voted for Secret Service increased quite dramatically in the early 1880s, in response to the Fenian mainland bombing campaign during the period 1881–5.[49] Irish members, who missed few opportunities in the 1880s and 1890s to criticise the British government's use of colonial methods of governance in Ireland, seized upon the issue of Secret Service money as a venue within which they could discuss the injustices of British rule. The

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[44] In 1872, Vernon Harcourt effectively summed up the ramifications of the secrecy surrounding payments made to Civil Servants from the SSF, in that it 'set up the bad precedent of paying a man under a fictitious pretence.' HC Deb., 05 Apr. 1872, vol. 210, cc. 833-50. Conservative members also joined in this questioning, at times. The feelings of these (perhaps Liberal leaning) members were best expressed by Thomas Mellor (member for Ashton-under-Lyme) when he described the SSF as 'a most pernicious system.' HC Deb., 12 Aug. 1871, vol. 208, cc. 1515-17.

[45] HC Deb., 12 Nov. 1888, vol. 330, cc. 913-41.

[46] For an example of this 'expediency', see Arthur O'Connor: HC Deb., 21 Jul. 1884, vol. 290, cc. 1759-895.

[47] HC Deb., 24 May 1886, vol. 305, cc. 1842-971.

[48] HC Deb., 12 Nov. 1888, vol. 330, cc. 913-41.

[49] Gladstone himself alluded to this in Parliament, though very general terms, stating that 'The Vote for Secret Service was a Vote of Confidence, and it there was an excess hon. Members might, perhaps, be allowed to ask themselves whether there had not been circumstances in the history of the past year or two which would naturally account for it.' HC Deb., 29 Feb. 1884, vol. 285, cc. 242-320.

primary complaint of Irish MPs was the use of the SSF to finance a system of 'continental' policing in Ireland, featuring the use of informers, infiltrators and *agent provocateurs*. Such styles of policing were felt to be entirely incongruous with the principles of consensual policing that operated in England, Scotland and Wales. In 1878, Richard O'Shaughnessy had criticised the SSF as 'a positive temptation to a certain class of Government officials to encourage crime, in order that they might gain rewards for afterwards detecting it.'[50] O'Shaughnessy was by no means the only member to bring about accusations of this nature; and the status of the SSF as a corrupting influence in politics and society was seized upon by radicals and Irish MPs throughout the 1880s.[51]

As time passed, blanket non-disclosure regarding the SSF seems to have driven those opposed to it towards increasingly speculative questioning, perhaps in the hope of garnering some sort of evidential response. In 1881, Irish Parliamentary Party member Frank O'Donnell asked whether:

> the promotion of [Irish] bye-elections enter[s] into the question of the allocation of Secret Service money? No doubt, from the point of view of the Government of the day the gaining of a bye-election was a matter of interest, and in the absence of information he certainly did not see why the Home Office should not be suspected of such an application of the fund.[52]

In the very same debate, T.P. O'Connor, MP for Galway, asked 'whether any of this Secret Service money was spent on elections in England? … [as] he heard it said, on very good authority, that Secret Service money, which was voted in the interest of the State and for the protection of the State, was actually spent at elections.'[53] By 1883, T.P. Sullivan was speculating, more than half-seriously, that:

> There were Irish Representatives whose exclusion from the House was desired… by the Government… [and that] he should not be surprised if treacherous agents [could be] found who would play candidates a trick in order to deprive them of their seats' upon payment from the Secret Service Fund.[54]

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[50] HC Deb., 24 May 1878, vol. 240, cc. 657-703. See, also: HC Deb., 28 May 1880, vol. 252, cc. 669-729.

[51] T.D. Sullivan, HC Deb., 28 May 1880, vol. 252, cc. 669-729; Richard O'Shaugnessy, HC Deb., 28 May 1880, vol. 252, cc. 669-729; T. M. Healy, HC Deb., 10 Jul. 1890, vol. 346, cc. 1401-6.

[52] HC Deb., 02 Aug. 1881, vol. 264, cc. 569-681.

[53] HC Deb., 02 Aug. 1881, vol. 264, cc. 569-681.

[54] HC Deb., 07 Jun. 1883, vol. 279, cc. 1930-82.

In May 1886, the prominent radical Henry Labouchere put a further question on this theme, alleging that the 'direct charge' was 'given into the hands of the Patronage [Parliamentary] Secretary to the Treasury' to be expended for the purposes of 'electioneering or other such purposes.'[55] Unsurprisingly, the allegation was flatly denied by the Liberal Home Secretary, William Harcourt. In response, Sir Albert Grey – then a Liberal, but very soon after a Liberal Unionist – raised his concerns that the Parliamentary Secretary was inexplicably absent from the debate, and therefore unable to answer questions on this matter. Sir Henry James – another Liberal, soon to become a Liberal Unionist – then speculated (in much greater detail than is here quoted) that 'If £10,000 of the Secret Service money were devoted at bye-elections to assist the Governments candidates at 20 elections, such aid would obviously place the Government candidate in a position of superiority as against the democratic candidate.'[56] In summation, the Liberal MP, Mitchell Henry, speculated on the possible consequences of the application of 'secret' money' to electoral matters, noting that 'it certainly opens up a vista of possible corruption in this country.'[57] However, as was noted by the Irish MP, Sir Joseph McKenna, these 'allegations were made without one particle of evidence to sustain them.'[58] What McKenna failed to note was that in the context of debates formed around the issue of non-disclosure, rather than receding because no evidence was presented, speculative discourses could linger on in the public sphere *because no evidence was presented to refute them*. Indeed, in the absence of empirical refutation, speculation was perhaps the only rational and critical thing to do.[59]

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55 HC Deb., 24 May 1886, vol. 305, cc. 1842-971. By this point, the status of debates surrounding the operation of the Fund was such that for those prone to speculation, the burden of proof had entirely shifted to the side of the accused. Accordingly, it was entirely possible for Labouchere, in 1888, to allege that that Secret Service money had been given to O'Donovan Rossa (a prominent Fenian leader) during the period of the recent Fenian mainland bombing campaign. Tellingly, when asked to clarify or substantiate his allegation by Sir. Henry James, Labouchere simply replied that 'he had make a general statement, and left the Government to deny it.' In his response, the Secretary to the Treasury (William Jackson) simply ignored Labouchere's statement. HC Deb., 12 Nov. 1888, vol. 330, cc. 913-41.

56 HC Deb., 24 May 1886, vol. 305, cc. 1842-971.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 It seems that Secret Service money was, at some points, paid to members of Parliament. As the Foreign Office Historical Branch's history of the Secret Vote notes, when Benjamin

By September 1886, Matthew Kenny, Irish member for Mid-Tyrone, could assert that 'a portion of the Secret Service Fund, payable out of the Civil list, has for many years past been devoted to the purpose of securing the election of Gentlemen to this House' – an assertion which was simply ignored by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in his response. In 1887, Patrick Chance stated that 'the Irish executive utilizes the Secret Service Fund for the commission of crime and outrage in Ireland, instead of checking it'; but once more, the allegation received no comment from the Government benches.[60] Likewise, in 1888, the Irish MP Bernard Molloy stated that Secret Service money had earlier been found to have been employed for the purposes of election expenses; but the Financial Secretary (the very same William Jackson) again avoided any definitive confirmation or denial of the charge, stating only that 'When his noble Friend the Member for South Paddington (Lord Randolph Churchill) was Chancellor of the Exchequer [3rd August, 1886 to 22nd December, 1886] the possibility of this occurring was put to an end.'[61] In 1890, both T.M. Healy and Henry Labouchere blithely stated that the Government had spent the 'sum of £10,000 … in securing Parliamentary candidates', an accusation that was simply ignored.[62]

Irish nationalists continued to speculate on the topic of the Secret Service Fund during the 1890s. In 1890, Healy suggested that the legal representation of corrupt Irish police might be paid for using Secret Service money.[63] In 1892, Patrick O'Brien, member for Monaghan North, accused William Harcourt of complicity in 'a Government plot … paid for out of the Secret Service Fund.'[64] In 1893, Healy again weighed in on the topic of secret

Disraeli questioned the Foreign Secretary, the Early of Malmesbury, on his disbursements of secret service money, Malmesbury responded that if the payments were suspended, there would be trouble in Parliament and described the whole issue as 'of an odious nature'. FCO, *"My Purdah Lady"*, p. 12.

[60] HC Deb., 09 Jun. 1887, vol. 315, cc. 1442-554.

[61] HC Deb., 12 Nov. 1888, vol. 330, cc. 913-41. The same debate also saw Charles Bradlaugh using the purported boastings of another MP as evidence of the practice of paying members' rail fares paid out of Secret Service money. Ibid.

[62] HC Deb., 20 Jun. 1890, vol. 345, cc. 1510-92. See, also: HC Deb., 03 Aug. 1900, vol. 87, cc. 701-37.

[63] HC Deb., 10 Jul. 1890, vol. 346, cc. 1401-6.

[64] HC Deb., 12 Feb. 1892, vol. 1, cc. 312-409.

money, claiming that the level of criminality in County Clare was entirely due to the disbursement of the SSF.[65]

Questioning ministers regarding the operation of the Secret Service Fund started to die down around the mid-1890s, and virtually ceased after 1900.[66] It did so for a number of reasons. Between 1895 and 1905, the parliamentary majority was held by a coalition of Conservative and Liberal Unionist members, who evinced little concern with the unaccountability of the SSF, so much in evidence in the 1870s, 1880s and early 1890s. At the same time, Irish MPs seem to have lost interest in the SSF as the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) descended into internecine conflict. (A notable exception to this is the debates which occurred in the aftermath of George Tynan and his co-conspirators' arrest, which will be discussed in considerable detail in the chapter that follows.) Other Irish members active in SSF debates lost their seats to candidates from other factions of the IPP. Arthur O'Connor, a prominent IPP member who persistently advocated greater parliamentary control of the Secret Service Fund as a member (and later chair) of the Committee of Public Accounts, lost his seat in this manner in 1900. Other prominent members retired or died. Peter Rylands, a key player in SSF debates from the very beginning had already passed away in 1886, and his successor as the parliamentarian most opposed to the SSF, Charles Bradlaugh, died in 1891.

Other prominent members who had concerned themselves with the issue of Secret Service money seem simply to have lost interest in the Fund. As early as 1893, for example, the Liberal Alpheus Morton rather languidly commented that 'he would have been glad to take a division against it [the SSV] … were it not for the lateness of the Session and the pressure of Public business, but he protested against it, as he had always done every year since he entered Parliament.'[67] Morton's opposition to the SSV, though, amounted solely to this comment and nothing more; and he lost his seat in 1895. Henry Labouchere, previously so prone speculation on the issue of the SSF, ceased to

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[65] HC Deb., 01 Jun. 1893, vol. 12, cc. 1771-811.

[66] An important exception to this general trend is the sudden outburst of debate which centred around the role of Secret Service money in the arrest several dynamite plotters in Antwerp in 1897. While important, though, this is far better dealt with in this thesis' second major case study, that which pertains to terrorism and counter-terrorism.

[67] HC Deb., 12 Sep. 1893, vol. 17, cc. 1026-51.

comment on it in the mid-1890s, concerning himself with other issues such as the South African War (see Chapter Four).

This is not to say that questions were not asked regarding the SSF under Conservative and Unionist administrations. In August 1900, for instance, John Herbert Lewis, Liberal MP for Flint Boroughs, stated that it was common knowledge that:

> in recent times this particular fund was applied to purposes wholly illegitimate… [and that] a most reasonable appeal has been made to the right hon. Gentleman; but of course if that appeal cannot be answered we can only place once construction upon it, and must come to the conclusion… that the Government are going to devote the secret service money to the help of their friends at the General Election.[68]

In the same debate, John MacNeill, MP for Donegal South, summed up the state of affairs created by the continued policy of non-disclosure:

> It might have been expected that the suggestion that this money, taken from the public, was to be devoted in aid of a political campaign, would have been repudiated with scorn and indignation; but Members are left to draw their own inference from the fact that the question was met in the way it was.[69]

However, instances of questioning were far more sporadic after 1895 and, by the mid-Edwardian period, ministerial refusal to engage with questions about the operation of the SSF had reached an almost perfunctory, pro-forma state. In response to questions asked of the operation of the SSF in 1907, Sir Edward Grey stated that 'Details of the distribution of secret service funds are never published. It clearly could not be done without destroying the use of the fund.'[70] Comments by H.H. Asquith a year later summed up the status of the SSF by this point: 'In making these grants under the head of "Secret Service" Parliament expressly waives its right to the explanations to which it is otherwise entitled in respect of all grants of public money, and to give such explanations would be to defeat the object of the grants.'[71]

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[68] HC Deb., 03 Aug. 1900, vol. 87, cc. 701-37.

[69] Ibid.

[70] HC Deb., 11 Apr. 1907, vol. 172, c. 362.

[71] HC Deb., 25 Mar. 1908, vol. 186, c. 1229.

As noted above, interest in the use of Secret Service money died down in the aftermath of the 1895 election and for various reasons. However, these reasons do not fully account for the changing nature of parliamentary interest in the Fund. The early 1890s were also the beginning of 'spy-fever' – we shall return to this below – which up until the First World War sought to encourage a popular consensus that England was under threat from foreign espionage. As early as 1897, Charles Dilke commented that he believed 'that in the spending of secret service money we are at a disadvantage. We do not spend enough. There is no great Power in the world that does not spend ten times as much as we do, and we are accordingly at a dis-advantage… in the present state of Europe our secret service money should be larger than ever.'[72]

Crucially, in the early 1900s, the then Prime Minister, the Marquess of Salisbury, inaugurated a sea change in the way that the Government made public arguments in relation to espionage. Up to the late 1890s, successive governments had never themselves raised the issue of espionage or of the Secret Service Fund. As we have seen, when the issue was raised ministers had consistently sought to dampen down interest. By contrast, in January 1900 Salisbury himself raised the issue of the Secret Service Fund in a debate over the Queen's Speech, adopting a mocking tone regarding popular attitudes towards the SSF:

> It is a very remarkable peculiarity of public opinion in this country that people always desire to eat their cake and have it. They rejoice very much in the spiritual complacency that is afforded them by the reflection that they have a very small Secret Service Fund. Information, however, is a mere matter of money and nothing else. If you want much information, you must give much money; if you give little money, you will have little information. And, considering the enormous sums which are spent by other Powers … and comparing these with the ridiculously small sums that have for a great number of years been habitually spent by English Governments, it is impossible to have the omniscience which the noble Earl seems to regard as the necessary attribute of Her Majesty's Government.[73]

In the same debate, Salisbury summed up the basis of a new consensus: 'There is no other country which is content to protect itself with so slight a supply of

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[72] HC Deb., 05 Aug. 1898, vol. 64, cc. 292-402.

[73] *Hansard's* House of Lords Debates [hereafter, HL Deb.], 30 Jan. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 5-44.

funds as our own.'[74] This amounted to a remarkable change in discussions of the SSF. Salisbury made positive arguments both as to the necessity of the Fund and for increasing the amount given to secret services. Rather than arguing for the necessity of the small amount of money given for the surveillance of domestic threats, Salisbury effectively changed the rules of the game, redefining the issue of espionage as one of the British state's ability to cope with modern warfare:

> I do not think that the British Constitution as at present worked is a good fighting machine. I have stated that it is unequalled for producing happiness, prosperity, and liberty in time of peace; but now, in time of war, when great Powers with enormous forces are looking at us with no gentle or kindly eye on every side, it becomes us to think whether we must not in some degree modify our arrangements in order to enable ourselves to meet the dangers that at any moment may arise.[75]

Indeed, subsequent debates about military preparedness (which took place in the Commons in the days following Salisbury's 1900 statements) featured arguments as to whether any specific person or party was to blame for the underfunding of Britain's intelligence gathering institutions. These debates contain none of the distaste for espionage so prevalent in those that had taken place before the commencement of hostilities in South Africa, exhibiting a belief that Secret Service money was an absolute necessity in time of war; and particularly so in order that Britain might know the intentions of its continental rivals, as well as those of the Boer governments.[76] Even when Conservative MPs, such as Thomas Gibson Bowles, subsequently made arguments to the effect that ministerial expenditure of Secret Service money should be subject to greater Parliamentary accountability, explicit statements as to the necessity of the Fund were in evidence:

> I am by no means opposed to voting sums of money for secret services, for I believe it is absolutely necessary for the safety of the country… it is absolutely necessary that such money should be spent … if it be necessary to spend this money in ordinary times of peace, it is absolutely indispensable in times of war, and the English government should have a considerable sum at its disposal to obtain information which may become of most vital importance… [and it] is the nature of the spy, for if you want to get information from him as a rule you have… got to pay him in money.[77]

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] HC Deb., 31 Jan. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 164-232; HC Deb., 01 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 295-400.

[77] Thomas Gibson Bowles, HC Deb., 03 Aug. 1900, vol. 87, cc. 701-37.

This growing consensus as to Britain's need to fund its secret intelligence apparatus also resulted in an increasing number of very pointed Parliamentary questions regarding the foreign espionage thought to be taking place in Britain.

In this way, parliamentary discussion of Secret Service money was very different to most other debates during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Although the existence and amount of the secret money available to the Government in a given year was a matter of public record throughout the period, successive governments refused to disclose any further information as to its operation on all but the rarest of occasions. Content only to deny specific allegations regarding misappropriation and corruption, successive ministries created a discursive environment devoid of the evidential processes by which parliamentary debate normally progressed, making for a major deficit in authoritative factual disclosure. Instead, each ministry relied upon trust in the character of ministers charged with the disbursement of Secret Service money and the consensus as to the necessity of the policy of non-disclosure as sufficient confidence to see the annual vote through Parliament. The Secret Service Fund was, accordingly, a kind of *public*, *open* secret. Its existence was known of and publicly acknowledged; but the details of its operation and the purposes to which it was put were matters of the strictest secrecy – and necessarily so, at least according to ministers

This policy, though doubtless convenient for the successive ministers, was not without its consequences. The nebulous discursive spaces that surrounded the Fund seem to have acted as a standing invitation for those inclined to oppose it and speculate as to its operation. As time passed and speculative statements remained neither authoritatively confirmed nor denied, the discursive burden of proof in these debates seems to have shifted from the accuser to the accused. From the mid-1880s onwards, most of those who wished to see the SSF reduced or removed tended to speculate simply as to the potential uses of the Fund, and argue, as Labouchere put it, that it for them to 'make a general statement, and [they] left the Government to deny it.'[78] As the period progressed, this tendency to speculate moved from the principled and moderate, to the increasingly imaginative and unrestrained. From the mid-

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[78] HC Deb., 12 Nov. 1888, vol. 330, cc. 913-41.

1890s onwards, debates also ceased to take place during votes on the passage of the Secret Service Vote, more often occurring in relation to specific events or incidents, when members opportunistically chose to raise the issue of Secret Service money.

Around 1900, the experience of the South African War had inaugurated the development of a new governing consensus in relation to espionage. Previously, the maintenance of secret intelligence-gathering capabilities by the British state had been viewed as distasteful and distinctly ungentlemanly. After 1900, a public and institutional consensus began to form around a belief in the need to develop such capabilities beyond what the British state already possessed, both of which were part of a broader response to England's lacklustre performance in South Africa. However, changes in attitudes towards the use of Secret Service money did not occur only because of the experience of the South African War. Although a traumatising, if galvanising, experience, popular ideas about the existence and necessity of espionage did not arise in direct response to Britain's failure to crush the Boer Republic. Rather, these attitudes developed slowly from the 1870s onwards; and it is to the development of these attitudes that the thesis now turns.

INVASION, ESPIONAGE AND POPULAR CONSPIRACISM

> Today it takes a determined will and a high tolerance for unrefined and unmitigated twaddle to get through the many books by William Le Queux or E. Phillips Oppenheim. If we hope to understand the British spy novel… however, we have to plough through their writing.[79]

The invasion-scare culture that developed in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain was based on a consistent, albeit diversely expressed, conviction: namely, that somewhere, somehow, amidst the chaos and confusion of everyday life, foreign architectures of secret surveillance and subversion were operating just beneath the 'surface'. These agencies of malign perception were commonly portrayed as exerting an omniscient and omnipotent gaze over particular populations and constituencies, preparing for the day when the existing order of things would be violently overthrown. Wells' *The War of the*

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[79] L. Panek, *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890-1980* (London: Popular Press, 1981), p. 5.

Worlds once more captures this ominous sense of omniscience best: 'we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure abiding place … we can never anticipate the unseen good or evil that may come upon us suddenly.'[80]

Few texts within the late Victorian and Edwardian invasion and espionage genre come close to the brilliance of Wells' evocation of the contemporary climate of anxiety and fear – although Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) and John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) certainly compete. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the almost spoof-proof pomposity of much that was written about the threat of invasion and espionage – and we will return to spoofs and satires below – this most prolific of genres came increasingly to exhibit an obsessive fascination with a series of conspiracist tropes and Manichaean struggles.

Firstly, there was the suggestion that Britain's continental rivals were secretly studying her geography, military installations and mobilisation plans, as well as British logistics and communications systems, in preparation for the delivery of a swift and devastating knockout blow: a raid or invasion, launched without (or almost without) warning upon British shores. Secondly, it was popularly believed that networks of foreign (most often German) reservists and saboteurs had long been at work in Britain, secretly embedding themselves in strategic locations and institutions as part of a long prepared plot to strike against Britain's paramount imperial position. Thirdly, there was the potent sense that the 'visible' world of contemporary diplomacy was mirrored by – and in fact entirely dependent upon – actions taken by spies and secret agents operating in the 'invisible' world of espionage, and that Britain had long been infiltrated by foreign espionage networks working for her continental rivals.

Each of these tropes was shot through with detailed and altogether conspiracist descriptions of secretive sites of patient, perceptive and malign intent, something that was given discursive form in fantasies of *perfectly* planned invasions, commanded by central, pivotal and evil leader-figures. In addition, these figures were commonly possessed of pseudo-divine qualities approaching omniscience and omnipotence. Indeed, these forces and commanding figures were supported by hierarchically organised espionage networks, embedded in

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[80] Wells, *War of the Worlds*, p. 1.

strategically important British locations and enmeshed in powerful British institutions. These imagined espionage networks were further served by master-spies and spymasters who navigated – always swiftly and silently – the confusion of contemporary British life; and all were essentially imperceptible, as they weaved their plots into the fabric of British life, undermining Britain's strength and perverting its destiny.

At the same time, such forces were often matched and countered in these narratives by secretive British defensive agencies, and in particular by fictional British espionage and counterespionage agencies which – though hampered by a moribund State and outmoded constitution – were described as more than capable of countering foreign machinations. Embedded within the upper echelons of the British state and exerting a profound influence over strategic policymaking, these agencies were directed by fictional spymasters, including senior diplomatic figures of great perception, insight and integrity. Much before the emergence of a James Bond-style espionage genre, Britain was served by agents just as capable as those of her evil foreign counterparts: who acted, that is, just as swiftly, silently and brilliantly as any French, Russian or German spy.

Such characters were the product of men like William Le Queux and E. Phillips Oppenheim, both among Edwardian Britain's most prolific and financially successful writers. Between the early 1890s and his death in 1927, Le Queux, for example, penned a mystery, invasion or espionage thriller almost every year from 1893, including at least forty between 1914 and 1918. (Indeed, his output was *so* prolific that new works of his were still being published several years after his death.) Neither author was considered to be in the 'first rank' of literature. However, Le Queux and Oppenheim were also among the wealthiest authors of their day, reportedly earning as much as Thomas Hardy and H.G. Wells, and their conspiracist narratives and ideas were certainly of the first order in terms of popularity, as were those of their fellow spy-obsessive compatriots in literature, the press and Parliament. Historians have rightly tended to view the Le Queux-Oppenheim corpus as a prime example of Germanophobic Edwardian popular literature, with Le Queux himself held up as the epitome of the scare-mongering tendency in English popular culture. Indeed, as has been argued, 'without them, the single espionage novels of

Kipling and Childers would have never captured such a wide audience'.[81] Le Queux and Oppenheim thus feature prominently in the pages that follow, though there were multiple other authors, as we shall see.[82] Equally, if it was fear and phobia they expressed, it nonetheless assumed a distinctly conspiracist form, as understood and argued for here.

Dystopias of enemy foresight and preparedness

> [T]he German plans of invasion were absolutely perfect in every detail.[83]
>
> Every detail of the surprise invasion had apparently been carefully considered [84]
>
> This incident, however, was but one of the many illustrations of German's craft and cunning. The whole scheme had been years in careful preparation.[85]
>
> "I am afraid," the Duke said, "that when it comes to throwing a million men at different points of your coasts protected by a superb navy you might find yourselves unpleasantly surprised."[86]

The tendency to believe that Britain's weaknesses were being scrutinised by her rivals in preparation for a projected future invasion was visible in the Victorian and Edwardian invasion scare genre from its earliest origins, in ways which were more earthly, but no less panoptic and quasi-divine, than Wells' Martian gaze. In the Ur-text of the invasion-scare genre, George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* published in 1871, Britain is complacently enjoying a period of military retrenchment and is caught off guard by an unnamed (but clearly, and hereafter referred to as, 'Prussian') enemy. Within this text, the Prussian enemy has been secretly preparing plans to invade Britain, so that when the invasion does

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[81] Woods, *Neutral Ground*, p. 30.

[82] Le Queux dominated popular conspiracist culture relating to espionage and subversion to such an extent that entire articles on 'spy-fever' and the emergence of the spy-thriller genre have been written which make little reference to anyone or anything except W. Le Queux and Kaiser Wilhelm. For Le Queux and Oppenheim, see, for example: French, 'Spy Fever in Britain'; and, Stafford, 'Spies and Gentlemen'. For a broader appreciation of the espionage genre in Britain prior to 1914, see: Stafford, *The Silent Game*; A. Masters, *Literary Agents: The Novelist as Spy* (London: B. Blackwell, 1987); D. Trotter, 'The Politics of Adventure in the Early British Spy Novel', in W.K. Wark (ed.), *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence* (London: Cass, 1991), pp. 30-54; N. Hiley, 'Decoding German Spies: British Spy Fiction, 1908-1918', in Wark (ed.), *Spy Fiction*, pp. 55-79; and, Panek, *The Special Branch*.

[83] W. Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910* (London: George Newnes, 1906), p. 30.

[84] W. Le Queux, *The Great War in England in 1897*, 11th ed. (London: Tower Publishing Company, 1895), p. 137.

[85] Le Queux, *Invasion of 1910*, p. 30.

[86] E.P. Oppenheim, *A Maker of History* (New York: A. L. Burt Co., 1905), p. 120.

come, 'everything had been arranged beforehand'.[87] Indeed, only a few months before its invasion of Britain, this Prussian enemy had proven itself able to 'move down half a million men on a few days' notice, to conquer the greatest military nation in Europe, with no more fuss than our War Office used to make over the transport of a brigade from Aldershot to Brighton.'[88] As the Prussian enemy deploys these wondrous logistical capabilities against Britain, the disorganised mass of Britain's reserve and militia system is mobilised, the press panics, the Government vacillates, and the regular army shambles down from London toward Dorking, underequipped and unfed. In the meantime, the Prussian invader lands and marches inland for two days without receiving any check, 'carrying out all the while firmly his well-considered scheme of attack'.[89] Britain's forces are soon defeated in the field and the country subjected to the ignominious loss of its imperial possessions.

The structure and style of Chesney's foundational text – in particular, its portrayal of perfectly prepared and informed foreign invading forces placed in sharp contrast to a shambolic British government, military and public – was endlessly rehashed from the 1870s and right up to the outbreak of war in 1914. Indeed, this was so much the case that its central themes often needed little elaboration. As the un-named hero of Hugh Arnold-Foster's *In a Conning Tower*, published in 1891, comments: 'everybody remembers the merciful escapes from destruction, due not to forethought but to chance, which enabled the country to survive the blunders and the wanton carelessness of the Administration, and to live through the first shock of the war.'[90] *In a Conning Tower* was in fact exemplary only of a particular thread of invasion literature: namely, that of texts dealing with the technical aspects of modern warfare, most often of a naval sort. However, most authors (and particularly the more imaginative among them, such as the prolific Le Queux) went to great lengths in detailing the level of preparation that went into these speculative, fictional

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[87] G. Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* (London: Grant Richards, 1871), p. 25.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid., p. 43.

[90] H.O. Arnold-Forster, *In a Conning Tower: How I took HMS Majestic into Action*, excerpted in I.F. Clarke, *The Tale of the Next Great War, 1871-1914: fictions of future warfare and battles still-to-come* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), p. 147.

future invasions, constructing enemy nations as sites of potent, secretive and deeply perceptive agency.

This perception operated on two fronts. First, these enemy nations were described as having infiltrated Britain to such an extent that they were even more aware of Britain's capabilities than the British Government itself. Secondly, these enemy nations were described as deeply knowledgeable about their own capabilities and thus able to control information regarding their own preparations to such an extent that they were effectively invisible. Here, as elsewhere, the enemy was situated as somehow simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, both diffuse and discrete, and consequently assuming a kind of human-divine spectral presence.

In popular literature, as in real life, other European nations' military establishments (particularly the Prussian-German military) adopted new technologies and technocratic reforms far more readily than the British did, particularly in the fields of planning and mobilisation – hence 'invasion' authors' concern with the politics of National Efficiency. As such, these texts alluded to the potency and necessity of exactly these partially visible architectures of communication and control in planning and mobilisation, operating amidst the machinery of foreign states, in ways which made these fictional invading nations at once more militarily powerful than their rivals, and able to deploy that power more effectively than their competitors.[91] This much was epitomised in Patrick Vaux and Lionel Yexley's *When the Eagle Flies Seaward* (1907), in which the British Navy is lured away on a wild-goose chase while a force of 60,000 Germans subsequently lands in the Midlands.[92] These imagined invasions were always, as Le Queux put it, 'secretly planned … with great forethought, every detail having been most carefully arranged'.[93] As Erskine

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[91] These architectures encompassed, but were not limited to, logistical networks, legal and technocratic institutions , security infrastructure (including police, secret police and spies); comprehensive mobilisation planning and centralised communications capabilities; conscription, training national service systems; and foreign intelligence gathering functions.

[92] P. Vaux and L. Yexley, *When the Eagle Flies Seaward* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1907), passim.

[93] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 69.

Childers succinctly stated in *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service* (1903): 'Two root principles pervade it: perfect organisation; perfect secrecy.'[94]

Most invasion texts describe exactly this manner of incursion. The product of decades of patient preparation – in most cases at least 'since the glorious and victorious war with France', i.e. 1871 – invading forces speedily mobilise and decant themselves onto British shores in invasions so perfectly planned, timed and swiftly executed that they evade or outclass the Royal Navy.[95] In Le Queux's *The Great War in England in 1897*, the result is that within three days of the declaration of war 'two French and half a Russian army corps, amounting to 90,000 officers and men, with 10,000 horses and 1500 guns and waggons, had landed; in addition to which reinforcements constantly arrived form the French Channel and Russian Baltic ports, until the number of the enemy on English soil was estimated at over 300,000.'[96] Most commonly, such speedy deployment was described as having been facilitated by the prior use of mobilisation and embarkation networks specifically and secretly prepared in advance. In *The Riddle of the Sands*, for instance, Germany has constructed a series of camouflaged railway connections and seemingly inconsequential embarkation points. The result is that Germany is poised to launch 'multitudes of sea-going lighters, carrying full loads of soldiers' at a moment's notice, issuing 'simultaneously in seven ordered fleets from seven shallow outlets… under the escort of the Imperial navy, [to] throw themselves bodily upon English shores.'[97] In Le Queux's *The Great War* (1894), similarly innocuous preparations form a crucial element of the invasion plan, allowing large bodies of men to be mobilised without alarming Britain's complacent military and political leadership.[98] Non-military vessels, for instance, conceal a dual-purpose: French mobilisation plans include the secret recall of merchant

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[94] E. Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (New York: Mead & Co., 1915), p. 327.

[95] W. Wood, *The Enemy In Our Midst* (London: J. Long, 1906), p. 37; Vaux and Yexley, *When the Eagle Flies Seaward*.

[96] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 69.

[97] Childers, *Riddle of the Sands*, p. 309. See, also: L. James, *The Boy Galloper* (London: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1903); and, Vaux and Yexley *When the Eagle Flies Seaward*. In the Channel Tunnel invasion literature of the early 1880s, moreover, the French government was universally portrayed as the prescient driving force behind 'seemingly' commercial tunnelling operations, or at the very least an opportunistic attacker – a theme which would recur in invasion literature published during the Boer War. Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 5.

[98] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 36.

vessels, which permits 'An army of carpenters and engineers [...] to work in the ports to alter the fittings of such of the merchant steamers as were destined to convey horses, and these fittings, prepared beforehand, were already in position.'[99]

This manner of secretive preparation applied to other areas such as troop training and technological development. The secret deployment of revolutionary new technologies designed specifically to target key areas of British military deficiency – areas such as submarine warfare and mobilisation planning – was of paramount importance. The Prussians of Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking*, for example, have developed 'fatal engines' (sea-mines) which sink the entire Channel Fleet; or again, the French of George Griffith's *The Raid of Le Vegneur* (1901) have poured huge effort into the development of submarine technologies, having noted Britain's lacklustre efforts in this area.[100] Le Queux's *The Great War* features 'The Demon of War', a 'huge and curiously-shaped air-ship' which is 'used for dropping great charges of mélinite and steel bombs filled with picric acid', as well as others 'with sulphurous acid, carbon dioxide, and other deadly compounds, the intent being to cause suffocation over wide areas by the volatilisation of liquid gases!'[101] This sometimes extended to the truly fantastic, as in in Walter Wood's *The Enemy in Our Midst* (1906), which sees the deployment of an 'earthquake' device that destroys much of London.[102]

Within the invasion scare genre, then, enemy nations were always perfectly poised and secretly prepared, and in complete control of the flow of information regarding their own preparations. These were all fantasies in the conspiracist mould, deeply wedded to senses of overwhelming technocratic capability on the part of the enemy: fantasies of a God-like yet material-technological perfection. However, as much as this self-knowledge was of paramount importance, an intimate knowledge of Britain was just as vital.

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Chesney, *Battle of Dorking*, p. 32; G. Griffith, 'The Raid of *Le Vegneur*', *Pearson's Magazine* (Feb. 1901): 158-168.

[101] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 249.

[102] Wood, *Enemy In Our Midst*; Griffith, 'The Raid of *Le Vegneur*'.

Infiltration, reconnaissance and sabotage

> England is the paradise of the spy[103]

At the very least, Britain's invaders were always described as thoroughly versed in local geographical details, the product of decades' worth of secret reconnaissance missions carried out by foreign officers – or so-called 'staff rides'.[104] In Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906), England's invaders are 'perfectly equipped' and 'ready to advance at any moment', because they are 'perfectly well acquainted with every mile of the country'.[105] The result of this deep knowledge of English terrain is that upon arrival enemy troops occupy key positions with ease, achieving the element of surprise. One example is A.J. Dawson's *The Message* (1907), wherein General Baron von Fuchter is complimented by the narrator for 'the discretion and despatch he used in distributing the huge body of troops at his command, without hitch or friction, to the various centres which it was his plan to occupy.'[106] Allusions were also made to the existence of embedded systems of secret military intelligence gathering. Oppenheim's *A Maker of History* (1905), for example, refers to a secret system of German reservists and saboteurs at work in England, numbering 290,000 in total.[107] His later novel *The Secret* (1908) refers to a still more embedded network – indeed, one embedded in the very fabric of everyday life – describing a network of around 30,000 German military spies, operating under the cover of the German Waiter's Union.[108]

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[103] W. Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser Plotting the Downfall of England* (London: Hurst & Blacketts, 1909), p. 44.

[104] Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser*, p. 152. Another key example of this 'staff-rides' line of thinking is to be found in the first example of English spy fiction, Headon Hill's *Spies of the Wight* (1899), wherein the Baron Von Holtzman and his entourage of spies to attempt acquire knowledge of English fortifications on the Isle of Wight: H. Hill, *Spies of the Wight* (London: Pearson, 1899).

[105] Le Queux, *Invasion of 1910*, pp. 96-97. Similarly, in Le Queux's *Great War in England in 1897*, the French and Russian officers of the invading armies are 'thoroughly studied in the geography of the South of England', allowing them to advance quickly, nigh on unimpeded by British forces. Russian troops are also later led into battle by a French spy who has familiarised himself with the layout of Birmingham's transport and communications infrastructure. Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, pp. 138, 151. Le Queux's extensive description of his travails in reconnoitring the coastlines of Britain in the preface to *The Invasion* can be read as a direct imitation of his literary foes. Le Queux, *Invasion of 1910*, pp. 1-3.

[106] A.J. Dawson, *The Message* (London: E. Grant Richards, 1907), p. 225.

[107] Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 2. See, also: Stafford, *Silent Game*, p. 41.

[108] Ibid.

Sabotage operations took various forms, including the transmission of false orders sending powerful British forces far away from the field of battle.[109] More often descriptions of sabotage focus directly on the demolition and destruction, or else capture and conversion, of Britain's transport and communication infrastructure. In Dawson's *The Message*, for example, Britain suddenly awakes to the knowledge that the transport infrastructure has been infiltrated by German saboteurs. The public is shocked to discover from the pages of its morning newspapers that 'through the Great Eastern Railway Company, and through one or two shipping houses', the German invader has built up 'huge consignments of stores, and … of munitions of war. The thing must have been in train on this side for many months—possibly for years.'[110]

The severing of communication systems was something of an obsession for Britain's invasion authors, underlining the importance of hidden architectures of visibility, communication and command. Le Queux's *The Invasion* features a programme of destruction whereby, immediately prior to the landing of troops, German spies have already 'blown up bridges, taken up rails, and effectually blocked all communication with the coast.'[111] Soon after the invading forces land, the following is detailed:

> The railways to the east and north-east coasts all reported wholesale damage done… by the advance agents of the enemy, and now this was continued on the night of Monday in the south, the objective being to hinder troops from moving north from Aldershot. This was, indeed, effectual, for only by a long détour could the troops be moved to the northern defences of London, and while many were on Tuesday entrained, others were conveyed to London by the motor omnibuses sent down for that purpose.[112]

During the resulting turmoil:

> The Southampton line of the London and South-Western Railway was destroyed […] by the bridge over the Wey, near Weybridge, being blown up; and again that over the Mole, between Walton and Esher, while the Reading line was cut by the great bridge over the Thames at Staines being destroyed. The line, too, between Guildford and Waterloo, was also rendered impassable by the wreck of the midnight train, which was blown up half-way between Wansborough and Guildford, while in several other places nearer London bridges were rendered unstable by dynamite, the favourite method apparently being to blow the crown out of an arch […]

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[109] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 55.

[110] Dawson, *The Message*, pp. 155-156. Le Queux, *Invasion of 1910*, pp. 8-9.

[111] Le Queux, *Invasion of 1910*, p. 22.

[112] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

> Among the thousands of Germans working in London, the hundred or so spies, all trusted soldiers, had passed unnoticed but, working in unison, each little group of two or three had been allotted its task, and had previously thoroughly reconnoitred the position.[113]

Later on, it is discovered that

> on the night of the invasion six men… advance agents of the enemy, arrived at the Ship Inn, at Weybourne […] At two o'clock the trio let themselves out quietly, were joined by six other men, and just as the enemy's ships hove in sight nine of them seized the coastguards and cut the wires, while the other three broke into the Weybourne Stores, and, drawing revolvers, obtained possession of the telegraph instrument to Sheringham and Cromer until they could hand it over to the Germans.[114]

Regular suggestions were made regarding the hidden-hand of foreign influence at work behind the radical politics of the period: those opposed to military reform and the promotion of preparedness were just as likely culpable as were the paid agents of foreign governments. In Wood's *The Enemy in our Midst*, German agents have infiltrated Britain's resident immigrant anarchist population (see also Chapters Three and Four). This functions as both a cover for German spies, saboteurs and reservists, and as a convenient population within which to incite a timely revolt against the British. The result, in this text, is a London transformed: 'From a noble and orderly abode of more than five millions of people, it had become a very hell of conflicting hordes. The vast, overgrown, unwieldy city was like a stricken monster, which had been secretly attacked by overwhelming enemies, and, for the moment, overcome and stunned.'[115] In general, however, it was more common to make oblique references to this style of subversion, with enemy forces taking advantage of domestic unrest to carry out sabotage operations. Le Queux's *The Great War* features a London shocked to discover that spontaneous anarchist bomb outrages in London – triggered by a Franco-Russian invasion – have provided cover for an organised programme of outrages, in which foreign agents have carried out a lightning fast demolition campaign against Britain's military leadership infrastructure.[116] Similarly, in Dawson's *The Message*, a massive

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid., p. 40.

[115] Wood, *Enemy In Our Midst*, p. 137.

[116] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 46.

disarmament demonstration provides cover for the commencement of sabotage operations and the first stages of an invasion.[117]

Such small groups of secretly infiltrated saboteurs were, however, merely the tip of the spear. Britain's urban environment was often portrayed in these narratives as not only riddled with the unwanted human 'refuse' of Europe, but also with deliberately implanted enemy formations, such as those described in E. Phillips Oppenheim's *A Maker of History*:

> There are in the country 290,000 young countrymen of yours and mine who have served their time, and who can shoot… Clerks, waiters and hairdressers… each have their work assigned to them. The forts which guard this great city may be impregnable from without, but from within – that is another matter.[118]

Upon the outbreak of hostilities such formations suddenly emerge from their hidden positions, taking up their uniforms and secretly stored weapons and attack Britain from within. In Wood's *The Enemy in our Midst* an entire 'Alien Army' leaps into place and executes an attempted *coup d'état*, tying up British forces while the German Navy attempts to break through Britain's naval defences along the East coast.[119] The consequence of harbouring such enemy formations is summed in Captain Henry Curties' *When England Slept* (1909), in which Britain awakes one morning, to the following headline:

STUPENDOUS COUP BY THE GERMANS
LONDON SEIZED IN ONE NIGHT
WITHOUT DECLARATION OF WAR[120]

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[117] Dawson, *The Message*, pp. 137-138. More generally, however, successive governments' lax policies in relation to immigration and asylum, in particular for foreign radicals, was constructed as engendering a dangerous weakness in Britain's defences, the consequence of which would be that that attack from without would facilitate a secret attack from within. In Le Queux's *The Great War* (1894), a Franco-Russian invasion leaves the field open 'for Anarchism to vent its grievances against law and order, and, unshackled, spread with rapidity the length and breadth of the land' and for 'the scum of the metropolis to… wage war against their own compatriots.' Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 45.

[118] Quoted in Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 2. London, in A.J. Dawson's *The Message*, is similarly 'extraordinarily full of Germans' and has also been infiltrated by a deliberately implanted immigrant community who, upon receipt of the agreed signal, decamp en masse to a pageant taking place in East-Anglia, and promptly take up arms in support of the looming German invasion. Dawson, *The Message*, p. 157. For deliberately implanted insurrectionary alien populations, see, also: E.P. Oppenheim, *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin* (New York: McKinley, Stone & Mackenzie, 1898); Oppenheim, *A Maker of History*; and, T. W. Offin, *How the Germans Took England* (London: Durrant, 1900).

[119] Wood, *Enemy in our Midst*, passim.

[120] H. Curties, *When England Slept* (London: Everett, 1909), p. 131. Curties was not alone in contemplating an invasion from within. Louis Tracy's *The Invaders* (1901) inaugurated this trope, describing French and German troops hidden in Birmingham and Liverpool, awaiting the signal to attack. L. Tracy, *The Invaders* (London: Pearson, 1901).

The evil 'enemy' nation was thus portrayed as a site of profoundly secretive and prescient agency, one that navigated the course of contemporary events adroitly, whilst waiting for an opportune moment in which to deliver an assault of overwhelming force. In preparing such strikes, the actions of these enemy nations were such that British's strategic military position was totally compromised by the infiltration of foreign espionage networks, secretly gathering information and preparing to cripple those systems of infrastructure that would otherwise have supported her ability to command and deploy forces in response to external threats.

Enemy agents

> How little the public knows of the stealthy treacherous ways of modern diplomacy, of the armies of spies seeking always to plot and counter-plot, of the base subterfuges of certain foreign diplomatists.[121]

At the same time as providing descriptions of secret military infrastructures, invasion and espionage fiction also presented the spectre of British security compromised by the actions of a particular kind of malign agent: the secret, foreign spy. These were a product of different systems of secret intelligence gathering and subversion to those already described. Although foreign spies were often figures of military rank, the intelligence they gathered tended to be more political and diplomatic than the tactical military information sought by foreign intelligence networks. Such foreign agents were also most often found outside of Britain, even if their actions were seen as deeply threatening to British security. Moreover, these characters were portrayed as the antithesis of English ideals of gentlemanliness, even if their skill was mirrored and matched by later, and increasingly professionalised, portrayals of English secret agents (see below).

For example, wandering amongst the explorers, geographers and adventurers of the Royal Geographical Society's (RGS) club reception, Gilbert Shand, in the opening pages of Le Queux's *England's Peril* (1899) – newly appointed secretary to the Government's Secret Defence Committee – talks to his friend Neyland of African adventures past and present. Passing through the

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[121] W. Le Queux, *Her Majesty's Minister* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901), p. 7.

RGS's map room, Neyland introduces Shand to an acquaintance whose life he once saved far away in the Tinghert desert. This is Gaston La Touche, a 'merry, irresponsible', 'easy-going, devil-may care' fellow of the RGS and a 'born *raconteur*', with whom dinner is soon after taken at a nearby Regent Street café. Unnoticed by Shand and Neyland, however, during the course of the meal, a well-dressed Frenchman enters and makes a series of pre-arranged secret signals, and leaves a 'mysterious hieroglyphic' drawn on the bottom of his newspaper for La Touche. La Touche later picks up the paper, finds the curious mark and exclaims '*Tres bien!*'[122]

La Touche, we soon discover, is no mere African adventurer, but a master-spy. In particular, he is the head of the French Secret Service, who goes on to blackmail, murder and thieve his way into possession of England's most closely guarded secret (its plans for defence against foreign invasion) before his actions are ultimately uncovered and checked. Characters in the La Touche mould – ruthless, cunning, amoral and above all professional – played a crucial role in the structure of the espionage genre that came to dominate Edwardian popular fiction. Operating behind the façade of respectable status, such characters presented the readers with the spectre of a world shot through with secretive networks of malign agency, in which England's enemies were capable of uncovering even the most profound of the nation's secrets.

The nature of the threat posed by such fictional master-spies, however, was various and driven by their exploitation of what Lord Barmouth (of Le Queux's *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, 1903) describes as the 'horribly weak' state of England's counter-espionage capabilities.[123] Serving as the Manichaean mirror for descriptions of English agents (discussed in the next section), fictional foreign spies and espionage networks would stop at nothing in the execution of their duties. Murder, theft and blackmail were all their stock in trade.[124] Von Hern-Bernardine, of Oppenheim's *The Double Four* (1912), for example, carries out all three of these in the pursuit of his allotted task, the acquisition of

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[122] W. Le Queux, *England's Peril: A tale of secret service* (London: George Newnes, 1899), pp. 30-31.

[123] W. Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1903), pp. 1-4.

[124] Stafford, *Silent Game*, p. 41.

Anglo-French plans for a cross-Channel expeditionary force.[125] Similarly, Von Beilstein, of Le Queux's *The Great War*, murders and thieves his way around England in pursuit of secret orders for a naval counter-attack against invading Franco-Russian forces.[126] These actions were constructed as the diametric opposite of English gentlemanly behaviour. Indeed, in the Manichaean universe so typical of the espionage genre, the trusted lieutenant of *The Double Four*'s hero Peter Ruf notes that to understand his enemy, Ruf must think of himself as a monk, 'and Bernardine as the Devil Incarnate'.[127]

As in Le Queux's *England's Peril* (1899), Oppenheim's *The Mysterious Mr Sabin* (1898) and Le Queux's *Her Royal Highness: A Romance of the Chancelleries of Europe* (1914), the foreign spy's weapon of choice was often blackmail carried out against women. In all three of these texts, the novel's malevolent master-spies (respectively, La Touche, Von Hern-Bernardine and Mijoux Flobecq) attempt to blackmail their way into possession of Britain's most secret strategic defence plans.[128] This is not to say that male characters were constructed as immune from blackmail or as disinclined to commit treachery: more that, as in Oppenheim's *The Betrayal* (1904), matters were rarely as simple when it came to blackmailing men in this literature. Rather than being inherently vulnerable, the male victims of blackmail had normally suffered personal setbacks. In *The Betrayal* (1902), the Duke of Rowchester's business interests have all collapsed and he is thus forced to sell documents from the Committee of Imperial Defence to the French Secret Service.[129]

Theft, however, was more often the foreign spy's weapon of choice, as in Le Queux's *Who So Findeth a Wife* (1898), which turns on the theft of

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, passim.

[127] Ultimately, however, Rowchester redeems himself by taking an honourable course of action – committing suicide. Quoted in Stafford, *Silent Game*, p. 41.

[128] Le Queux, *England's Peril*; Oppenheim, *Mysterious Mr. Sabin*; and, W. Le Queux, *Her Royal Highness: A Romance of the Chancelleries of Europe* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914).

[129] E.P. Oppenheim, *The Betrayal* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904). See also: Le Queux, *Her Royal Highness*, ch. 14. In *The Under-Secretary* (1902), Dudley Waladegrave Chisholm is not construed as particularly cunning, intelligent, or even capable. Nevertheless, rather being personally culpable, his loss of important documents is caused by the fact that he has been made 'the unfortunate victim of as vile and ingenious a conspiracy as ever was formed against us by dastardly spies from across the Channel.' Le Queux, *The Under-Secretary* (London: Hutchinson, 1902), quoted in Stafford, *Silent Game*, p. 16.

Foreign Office documents by Russian agents; and Oppenheim's *The Double Four* (1912), which features the theft of Anglo-French plans for an invasion of Germany.[130] Interception was also profitable. In Le Queux's *Her Majesty's Minister* (1901), telegraph cables running between Windsor Castle and the Foreign Office are tapped by French spies, allowing the French Government to block Britain's diplomatic manoeuvres.[131] Similarly, Le Queux's first great spy-villain, Count Karl Von Beilstein of *The Great War* (1894), worms his way into the confidence of Geoffrey Engleheart – a Foreign Office functionary – and manages to 'intercept' a copy a new secret treaty by peering surreptitiously through the hole in a pre-cut copy of *The Times*.[132]

Murder was another key tactic. In Le Queux's *The Man from Downing Street* (1904), the entire plot turns upon the murder of an Italian secret agent in London by his compatriots.[133] La Touche, of *England's Peril* (1899), blows the face off England's most committed advocate of preparedness for invasion with an exploding cigar.[134] Indeed, Duckworth Drew, the hero of Le Queux's *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, manages to evade various assassination attempts by poisoned pin, direct gunshot, explosive cigar and gas-filled cellar.[135] Jack Jacox and Ray Raymond, similarly, only manage to survive to the end of Le Queux's *Spies of the Kaiser* by the fortuitous intervention of a detective inspector, who informs them that a gift of Christmas crackers from a group of good-natured Germans actually contains powerful bombs.[136]

Such agents were usually described as operating through one, or both, of two systems. Firstly, as in Le Queux's runaway bestseller, *Spies of the Kaiser*, German agents were described as working through espionage networks deeply embedded within Britain. In *Spies of the Kaiser*, England is riddled with spies. Its security is undermined by a bureaucratically organised and hierarchical network of over 5,000 agents, working through a system of 'fixed posts' and 'travelling

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130 W. Le Queux, *Who So Findeth a Wife* (London: F.V White & Son, 1898), passim; E.P. Oppenheim, *The Double Four* (London: Cassell & Co., 1912), passim.

131 Le Queux, *Her Majesty's Minister*, ch. 36.

132 Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, pp. 31-33.

133 W. Le Queux, *The Man from Downing Street* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1904), passim.

134 W. Le Queux, *England's Peril*, p. 28.

135 Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, p. 6.

136 Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser*, p. 288.

agents'; all of which is overseen by 'a well-known member of the German Secret Police', Hermann Hartmann who lives in London.[137] Crucially, these spies were *hidden in plain sight*, masquerading as musicians, landlords and waiters and using secret wireless transmitters to relay information to their masters in Germany. All the while, they attempt to steal plans of British defences at Rosyth and Clyde naval bases, as well as designs for new submarines, aeroplanes, dreadnoughts and artillery pieces.

In fact, this German network has so penetrated England that the country is made totally visible and transparent: a spy-driven, but nonetheless truly panoptic endeavour. The following excerpt from *Spies of the Kaiser*, of the captured notes of a German spy, is worth quoting at length:

> EAST COAST OF ENGLAND—DISTRICT VI.
>
> Memoranda by Captain Wilhelm Stolberg, 114th Regiment Westphalian Cuirassiers, on special duty February, 1906—December, 1908.
>
> WEYBOURNE—Norfolk—England. (Section coloured red upon large scale map. Photographs Series B, 221 to 386.)
>
> In Sheringham and Cromer comprised in this District are resident forty-six German subjects, mostly hotel servants, waiters, and tradesmen, who have each been allotted their task on "the Day."
>
> ARMS:—a store of arms is in a house at Kelling Heath, where on receipt of the signal all will secretly assemble, and at a given hour surprise and hold up the coastguard at all stations in their district, cut all telegraph and telephones shown upon the large map to be destroyed, wire in pre-arranged cipher to their comrades at Happisburgh to seize the German cable there, and take every precaution to prevent any fact whatsoever leaking out concerning the presence of our ships.
>
> MEN:—Every man is a trained soldier, and has taken the oath of loyalty to your Imperial Majesty. Their leader is Lieutenant Bischoffsheim, living in Tucker Street, Cromer, in the guise of a baker.
>
> EXPLOSIVES FOR BRIDGES:—These have been stored at Sandy Hill, close to Weybourne Station, marked on map.
>
> LANDING PLACE:—Weybourne is the easiest and safest along the whole coast. The coast-guard station, on the east, has a wire to Harwich, which will be cut before our ships are in sight. In Weybourne village there is a small telegraph office, but this will at the same time be seized by our people occupying an inn in the vicinity, a place which will be recognised by the display of a Union Jack.
>
> WIRES:—Eight important wires run through here, five of which must be cut, as well as the trunk telephone. Direct communication with Beccles is obtained.

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[137] 'Fixed post' agents are tasked with the discovery of particular secrets, and with monitoring specific areas. 'Travelling agents' control these fixed posts, visiting them regularly, allotting work, collecting reports and making monthly payments. Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser*, pp. 5-7.

BEACH:—Hard, and an excellent road runs from the sea to the highway south. For soundings, see notes upon British soundings. Admiralty Chart No. 1630 accompanying.

FORGE:—There is one at the end of the village.

PROVISIONS:—Grocers' shops in village are small, therefore do not contain much stock. There are plenty of sheep and oxen in the district towards Gunton. (See accompanying lists of amount of livestock upon each farm.)

MOTOR-CARS:—(List of owners and addresses attached)...[138]

More often, however, such spies were presented as operating in the shadowy fringes of international diplomacy. In the course of its adventurous narratives, Le Queux's *Secrets of the Foreign Office* criss-crosses Europe, moving at bewildering pace from London to Paris, Rome, Berlin and beyond, with motorcars, trains, boats and even submarines in abundance.[139] Each of these cities and the transport and communication arteries that connected them – trains, automobiles and ships abounded throughout, along with aeroplanes by the 1910s – were the spy's high-paced, dangerous playground. As the cunningly disguised hero of *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, Duckworth Drew, meets the French Foreign Minister Delcassé (a barely fictionalised version of the then French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Théophile Delclassé) in his country house, the mysterious Dr Vaux agitates the 'anti-English' movement from his hiding place in Brussels.[140] In John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), Richard Hannay flees from his German pursuers, travelling across England and into Scotland, by train and car, whilst hunted by spies in flying aeroplanes.[141] Similarly, in Oppenheim's *A Maker of History*, as German spies flood into Paris, French spies steal a German ambassador's papers from an English country-house; and in Le Queux's *The Spy's Czar* (1905), a Russian spy-boat sails around Europe's ports attempting to steal secret documents from English, French and Italian dockyards.[142]

This spatial and logistical easiness, however, also served to *invert* a sense of casual scale and significance. In this new world of technological

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[138] Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser*, pp. 78-80.

[139] Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, passim.

[140] Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, p. 6.

[141] J. Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (London: Dover Thrift Editions, 2010 [1915]), passim.

[142] W. Le Queux, *The Czar's Spy: The Mystery of a Silent Love* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1905), ch. 17. See, also: Oppenheim, *A Maker of History*, p. 164; and, Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, p. 6.

connectivity, enemy actions on the furthest of Europe's borders were constructed as deeply threatening to each nation's internal security, particularly Britain's. In the conspiracist imagination, the faraway doubled as the intimate; the micro as the macro. In Le Queux's *Her Royal Highness* (1914), the loss of Italian plans to defend their Austro-Hungarian frontier almost precipitates a conflict that would have inevitably drawn England into an all-out continental conflict.[143] Indeed, though the average Englishman of these genres might wish to withdraw from this world and return to a policy of splendid isolation, 'quite unaware of the clever shrews, and self-sacrificing men who are for ever foiling the attempts of hostile nations, ever living upon the edge of a volcano', England's position was irrevocably intertwined with its allies and enemies.[144] As described in Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), England's position was threatened by an enemy (in this case German), whose power was 'impregnably based on vast territorial resources which we cannot molest ... she grows, and strengthens, and waits, an ever more formidable factor in the future of our delicate network of empire, sensitive as gossamer to external shocks.'[145]

Confronted by such enemies, any slip, however inadvertent or minor, might cause disaster; any vulnerability might lead to terrible effect. Or as Le Queux's *Of Royal Blood* (1900) put it, 'A single stroke of the pen, a hasty or ill advised action, and a war might result which would cost our Empire millions of valuable lives … the war cloud hangs over Europe always. The mine is laid, and the slightest spark may fire it.'[146] Tellingly, Kaiser Wilhelm II was popularly seen as the central and omniscient point around which anti-British expansionist German machinations turned: a figure capable of seeing right to the heart of the British establishment. As a cartoon published by *Punch* in 1901 suggests, he was the 'One Who Knows' (Fig. 2.1). Certainly, anyone who later read work from the espionage and invasion genres would have no doubt as to who was giving the orders.[147] Indeed, very often (and particularly in the

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[143] Le Queux, *Her Royal Highness*, ch. 15.

[144] Le Queux, *Man From Downing Street*, p. 152.

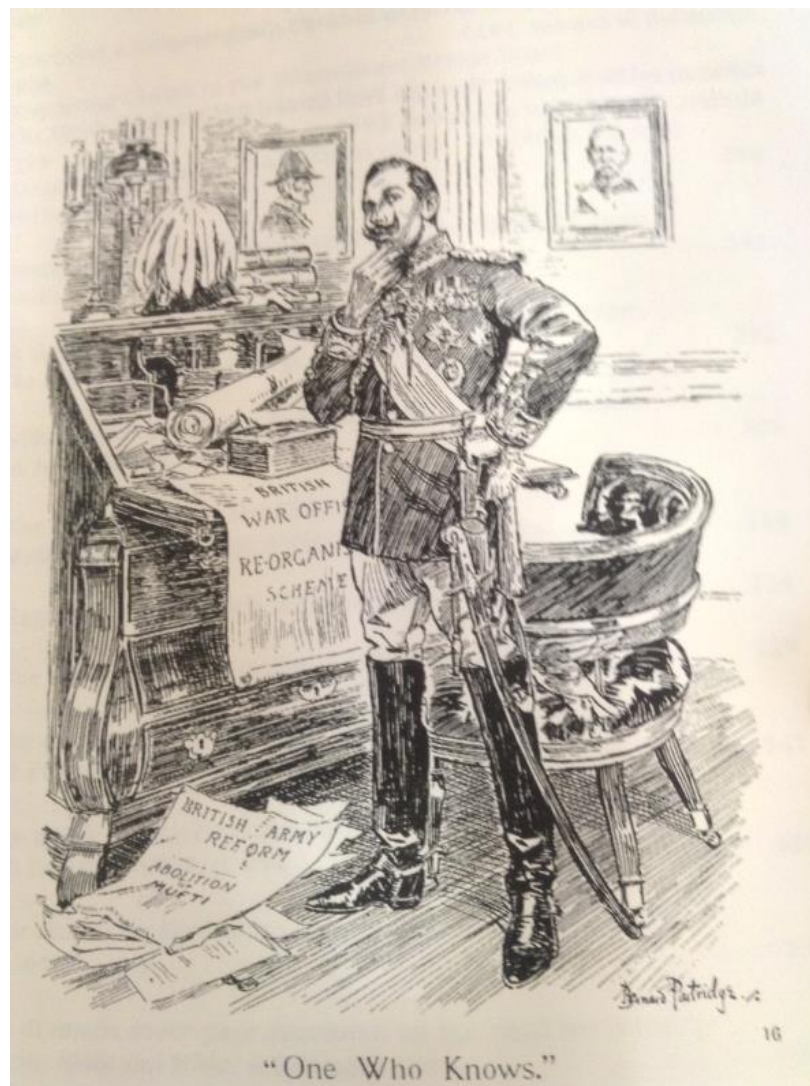[145] Childers, *Riddle of the Sands*, p. 120.

[146] W. Le Queux, *Of Royal Blood* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1900), pp. 5-6.

[147] In Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands*, the Kaiser is located as the epicentre of German military planning for a raid against England's shores, personally ordering and taking part in invasion preparations. 'he who 'insists on coming,' the [at the time] unknown superior at

invasion genre) the Kaiser was portrayed as a kind of secular deity, or malign superman – incredibly powerful, hugely capable and possessed of ill intent. In *The Secret*, E. Phillips Oppenheim went as far as to describe the Kaiser as 'chock full to the lips with personal jealousy, a madman posing as a genius … the man who believes he hears voices from heaven.[148] In *The Riddle of the Sands*, the novel's hero Carruthers underlines the Kaiser's central position with the German Reich, referring to him as: '[O]ne who, in Germany, has more right to insist than anyone else.'[149]

FIG. 2.1: 'One who Knows'. Kaiser Wilhelm II in the uniform of a Field Marshal of the British Army. *Punch* (13 Feb. 1901), p. 127.

whose insistence and for whose behoof this secret expedition had been planned'. Childers, *Riddle of the Sands*, p. 306.

[148] E.P. Oppenheim, *The Great Secret* (1908)*,* quoted in Stafford, *Silent Game*, p. 41.

[149] Childers, *Riddle of the Sands*, p. 314.

Although the Kaiser only makes a brief, if pivotal, appearance in Childers' seminal text, his agency and his ambition are central to the novel's narrative. As one who 'sees ahead' and enforces his aggressive, militarist will upon the machinery of the German state, the Kaiser drives events without ever being particularly visible.[150] In spite of this partial invisibility – in relation to the nation's secret ambitions – in this and other invasion narratives, the German Reich was the physical and political manifestation of the Kaiser's personality. The reverse was also often true: the Kaiser was both the archetypal example of the 'Teutonic' or 'Prussian' character, and the paramount expression and essence of the German nation. In R.W. Cole's *The Death Trap* (1907), for example, the Kaiser was described as 'The German Dictator of Europe': 'a man of commanding appearance. His face was deadly pale, but every feature betokened intense ambition and selfishness, supported by unconquerable energy and resolution.[151] Moreover, the Kaiser, his Imperial Chancellor and most senior Field Marshal were described as 'the skilful engineers who controlled the vast pent-up forces of the might German Empire – three Fates, who plotted with relentless determination the ruin of rival states.'[152] In this world, the ambitions of the Kaiser and the Reich (*Kaiserreich)* were always closely intertwined. As the Kaiser himself notes: 'It is her [Germany's] divine destiny to expand, and eventually to become a world-empire; it is my heaven-sent mission to become Emperor of the West. By the grace of God, and the power of my sword, I shall rule over the greatest and most mighty empire the world has ever seen.'[153]

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[150] Ibid., p. 104.

[151] R.W. Cole, *The Death Trap* (London: Greening, 1907), p. 1.

[152] Ibid., pp. 1-2, 11.

[153] Ibid., p. 2. This was less the case in the espionage genre, where royalty tended to be portrayed in a somewhat more sympathetic light – sometimes even as active participants in the espionage 'game'. In Le Queux's *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, for example, the Kaiser himself makes an appearance, contributing directly to the successful conclusion of one of Duckworth Drew's missions. Cole, *The Death Trap* excerpted in Clarke, *The Great War with Germany*, p. 176. More commonly, however, Kaiser-like characters tended to trigger events, requesting a particular spy's help, such as the occasion when Cuthbert Croom 'secret agent of His Majesty's Diplomatic Service' is asked to help solve the mystery of an embarrassing jewel robbery, in Le Queux's *Confessions of a Ladies' Man*. W. Le Queux, *Confessions of a Ladies' Man* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1905), pp. 1, 187-209. Most often, such characters are often textually peripheral, setting events in motion without actually taking part. Such as in E. Phillips Oppenheim's *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin*, which mentions orders signed personally by the Kaiser, but who otherwise makes no appearance. Oppenheim, *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin*, passim. In Oppenheim's *A Maker of History*, the Kaiser and the Czar are seen secretly meeting in a railway

This is not to say that the Kaiser was the only human-omniscient character in the invasion and espionage literature of the time. Rather, in the espionage fiction of the period, the Kaiser figured only as one element of a constellation of secretive and powerful figures, of varying levels of potency and malignancy. In Le Queux's *Her Royal Highness: A Romance of the Chancelleries of Europe* (1914) we find Mijoux Flobecq, an Austrian master-spy who, although young, has been entrusted with the direction of the entire Austrian secret service. (Unusually for the espionage genre, even other spies have no idea who Flobecq is.) Indeed, even within *Her Royal Highness*, Flobecq is only one of many: 'There are several others, Bylandt of Berlin, Captain Hetherington of London, Gomez of Petersburg, and the mysterious and elusive Monsieur X. of the Quai D'Orsay. Diplomats know them by name, and are too well aware of their successes. But not one of them has ever been identified in the flesh.'[154]

As can be seen, then, the figure of the foreign spy was a pervasive threat, his agency diffuse and indistinct, and at the same time deeply woven into the fabric of contemporary European society and governance. Equally, such figures were concentrated and distinct, their actions potent and economical; and yet, though each was endowed with the ability to ensure the gravest of consequences with the smallest of gestures, such figures were all the while nigh-on intangible to the untrained or ill-attuned mind. Such characters, in their human-yet-superhuman qualities, formed the core of the conspiracist *oeuvre* in popular literature in its narration of the German threat to the British national life. As we will now see, the threat of German espionage was more than matched by the actions of English spies and English espionage agencies, in what amounted to a domestication of conspiracist fantasies – which is to say, superhuman espionage with an English twist.

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carriage, but never feature subsequently. The reader is left in no doubt, however, that the Kaiser or Czar is the ultimate authority. Oppenheim, *Mysterious Mr. Sabin*, 353. In Le Queux's *Her Majesty's Minister*, it is only the Czar's pacific foreign policy which has kept the European peace. Le Queux*, Her Majesty's Minister*, ch. 15.

[154] Le Queux, *Her Royal Highness*, ch. 31.

THE ENGLISH SPY AND SPYMASTER

> I have reports from agents everywhere – pedlars in South Russia, Afghanistan horse-dealers, Turcoman merchants, pilgrims on the road to Mecca, sheikhs in North Africa, sailors on the Black Sea coasters, sheep-skinned Mongols, Hindu fakirs, [and] Greek traders in the Gulf, as well as respectable consuls who use cyphers.[155]

> The stay-at-home Englishman is entirely ignorant of the difficulties of British diplomacy on the Continent, or of the unscrupulous enemies which we have daily to face... peace is still preserved by the calm, steady policy pursued by our representatives at the various Courts of Europe, that small band of Ambassadors and Ministers upon whom the weight of anxiety is every pressing, and of whom the country knows so very little... the-man-in-the-street is quite unaware of the clever, shrews, and self-sacrificing men who are for ever foiling the attempts of hostile nations, ever living upon the edge of a volcano. They know nothing, and unfortunately they are less.[156]

The top quote above, taken from John Buchan's *Greenmantle* (1916), encapsulates the state of English espionage fiction during the First World War. In *Greenmantle*, Sir Walter Bullivant, a senior Foreign Office mandarin, oversees a global system of British espionage, directing his agents across a secretive wartime landscape to counter every threat to British interests. Bullivant's finest agent, Richard Hannay (already known to the public from Buchan's masterpiece, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, published a year before in 1915) travels across an international landscape, conspiring with fellow British agents, bringing secret and seemingly inconsequential information to light, and ultimately foiling Colonel Ulrich Von Stumm and Rasta Bey's plans to stir up religious war in the Orient.

By the time of *Greenmantle*'s publication in 1916, this particular trio of characters and institutions was an established feature of British espionage fiction: namely, the spymaster, the master-spy and the secret service, all embedded within the English state and all navigating the murky world of interstate espionage whilst ensuring England's security in the face of often overwhelming odds. Yet this particular constellation of English secret agency should not be taken for granted. Most histories of espionage fiction date its emergence to the 1890s; but even if broadly defined to include those pre-1900 invasion-scare novels that featured espionage operations, we still find almost no reference to the existence of specifically English espionage and counter-

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[155] J. Buchan, *Greenmantle* (London: Collector's Library, 2009 [1916]), p. 14.

[156] Le Queux, *Man From Downing Street*, p. 152.

espionage capabilities. Indeed, though Le Queux's *The Great War* (1894) featured an enemy spy, the term 'espionage' is never mentioned. The idea that the British state might benefit from better protection against foreign espionage is considered only implicitly.

The imagining of British spies was a complicated affair and it began only at the very end of the 1890s. This much is unsurprising, given the distaste of most British espionage writers for their very subject matter: even in later espionage fiction, the spy was still presented as an equivalent of the criminal, on the same moral level as a murderer, blackmailer and thief. Such was the disdain with which professional espionage was regarded in this period that the first proper English 'espionage' novels – Headon Hill's *Spies of the Wight* (1898), Oppenheim's *The Mysterious Mr. Sabin* (1898) and Le Queux's *England's Peril* (1899) – make no reference to English spies or secret agencies. Tellingly, England's first fictional 'secret agent', Shirley Wreford, of Hill's *Spies of the Wight* (1898), was not a spy at all. A crusading investigative journalist, Wreford only takes up the counter-espionage cudgels when he is entangled in the machinations of the devilish Baron von Holtzmann. Wreford is less a secret agent than an amateur detective, forced to take matters in hand only when confronted by the bungling incompetence and stubborn intransigence of officialdom.[157]

From around 1903 onwards, however, English authors of espionage fiction began to imagine how English systems of espionage might operate, and how English secret agents might reconcile their role with traditional, long-established attachments to liberal governance and gentlemanly morality. It was a matter of negotiation. English secret agents always retained a healthy dose of amateurism and never lost their sense of distaste for 'the job' whilst actually doing it. As Jack Jardine, of Le Queux's *The Man from Downing Street*, states:

> There is, I know, something repugnant to the British mind where the secret agent is concerned; but it must be remembered that England's enemies nowadays keep up a whole army of unscrupulous spies. She is compelled, therefore, both in her own interests and in those of European peace, to supplement her attachés at the various Embassies by a corps of secret agents, of which I held office as chief.[158]

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[157] The same was true of Max Pemberton's *Pro Patria*. M. Pemberton, *Pro Patria* (London: Dodd Mead, 1901).

[158] Le Queux, *Man From Downing Street*, p. 5.

A sense of practical necessity and compulsion was crucial to any British heroes' adoption of espionage as a career. As Childers' Davies in *The Riddle of the Sands* states, when faced with the task of countering a foreign invasion conspiracy: 'If we can't do it without spying, we've a right to spy'.[159] The authors of later examples of Edwardian espionage fiction took this line of reasoning much further, arguing that if England was to become a spying nation, the job should be done properly, if reluctantly; and if English secret agents were always amateurs, this never precluded the possibility of *brilliant* amateurism.

On one level, this involved the emergence of powerful English spymasters, at once visible and important figures in contemporary governance but also discrete manipulators and diplomatic dealers. The Marquess of Macclesfield and the Marquess of Glinton, both creations of Le Queux in the early 1900s, epitomise this curious combination of qualities. Both are Foreign Secretaries; but Macclesfield is also the 'most important public man' in England, more so than the Prime Minister or any military figure; and Glinton is a Knight of the Garter and a Knight of St Patrick, a Privy Councillor and a distinguished public servant of long duration.[160] Equally, both operate secretly at the pinnacle of European diplomacy; and both have more than once steered England through successive war-scares and crises with aplomb, in the process saving Europe from conflagration and ruin. In this way, while espionage remained somewhat distant from the English state, hidden infrastructures and secret networks of power were nonetheless underpinned the world of diplomacy and inter-state relations.

At the same time, the literary birth of specifically English espionage involved the creation of English spies along similar lines. Like their masters, these characters exhibited a distant relation to English government; if they were part of the British government, they were never publicly acknowledged as such – at least not in their roles as spies. Once again, these agents were both visible and invisible, operating publicly in diplomatic roles but also secretly as spies. Duckworth Drew, of Le Queux's *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, describes himself as both 'a diplomatic free-lance' and 'a free-lance in the Secret Service';

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[159] Childers, *Riddle of the Sands*, p. 327.

[160] Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, v; Le Queux, *Man From Downing Street*, p. 63.

and he is also the 'chief confidential agent of the British government', and after his master, Macclesfield, 'one of the most powerful and important pillars of England's supremacy.'[161]

As with their masters, these were brilliant amateurs, rather than professionals: if they were morally detached from espionage, they were more than equal to the necessary, if repugnant, task. Each was intimately familiar with the structures, methods and members of each Great Power's secret chancelleries, spy agencies and policing systems. Each regularly uncovered the secrets of foreign governments in ingenious ways. Le Queux's *Revelations of the Secret Service* (1911) features perhaps the most developed English spy, Hugh Morrice:

> a veritable prince of secret agents … An accomplished linguist, a brilliant raconteur, a good all-round sportsman, a polished diplomat, a born adventurer, a cosmopolitan of cosmopolitans, still under forty, and a personal friend of half-a-dozen reigning sovereigns, it was declared of him by the German Imperial Chancellor not long ago that he knew more of the Continent, and of the under-currents of international politics, than any other living man.[162]

Likewise, Duckworth Drew possesses superhuman powers. His very first act is to inveigle himself into the house of the French Foreign minister, temporarily disable him with a poisoned cigar, and then discover the details of a secret dispatch which, had it not been uncovered, would have meant that 'England was to be dictated to by France and Russia.'[163] He goes on to steal plans for a new French rifle; rescue an English princess from the clutches of a kidnapping gang; foil a proposed Franco-Italian alliance against England; steal the text of a proposed Russo-German alliance from a band of Nihilist terrorists; destroy the French naval base at Villefranche; recover lost copies of a German invasion plan and prevent a pan-European conflagration; uncover the French government's cognizance of British diplomatic ciphers; disrupt another proposed Russo-German alliance; and finally catch the English traitors Franklyn and Hewson.

All this is entirely fantastical, of course; but it is the nature of this fantasizing that is crucial, which here includes the fantasy that quasi-human

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[161] Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, pp. 161, 71, v.

[162] W. Le Queux, *Revelations of the Secret Service* (London: F.W. White & Co., 1911), vi.

[163] Le Queux, *Secrets of the Foreign Office*, pp. 25-26.

omnipotence and secrecy could also be a force for good. Like their foreign counterparts, these fictional English agents were highly mobile, moving from place to place with great speed and secrecy. In Le Queux's *Her Majesty's Minister*, for example, the action flits between London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna and Constantinople with bewildering speed.[164] Oppenheim's *A Maker of History* similarly moves quickly from frontier railway sidings to metropolitan Paris to London and back at breakneck pace.[165] Cuthbert Croom (of *Confessions of a Ladies' Man*, 1905) and Jack Jardine's exploits are at least as numerous and equally improbable – if, again, on the side of good.[166]

Uniquely for pre-war espionage literature, Le Queux's *Revelations of the Secret Service* also features a dedicated English espionage agency, the so-called 'Nameless Department at Whitehall'. It is, as its 'name' suggests, simultaneously visible and invisible. The Department is the 'ever-open eye of the British Empire', a site of 'never-ceasing vigilance' in its watchful oversight of England's 'network of spies … spread all over Europe.'[167] Thanks to the Department, 'there is no defensive move on the part of any of the great powers and few diplomatic secrets of which we [the English government] are not in early possession.'[168] However, despite its centrality to the power of the English state, the Department's 'work is unsuspected, even by those hundreds of Government clerks employed in the same colossal building' and 'it figures under an entirely innocent and misleading title, in order to conceal from the public its real scope of activity.'[169] At every level, 'Secrecy, the most profound and inviolable, is the first lesson to be learnt by each of the members of that confidential department.'[170] Yet this is not a 'mass' continental system of espionage. While other European nations were regularly described by the authors of spy fiction as having 'armies' of spies resident in England and abroad, the Nameless Department employs only 'a small picked body of a

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[164] Le Queux, *Her Majesty's Minister*, passim.

[165] Oppenheim, *A Maker of History*, passim.

[166] Le Queux, *Confessions of a Ladies' Man*; Le Queux, *Man From Downing Street*, passim

[167] Le Queux, *Revelations*, pp. 27, 29.

[168] Ibid., p. 28.

[169] Ibid., p. 27.

[170] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

couple of dozen men', and yet they are just as deft and panoptic as their continental rivals.[171] These men and their Chief (Charles Houghton, a career diplomat) are 'cosmopolitans and gentlemen … ever ready to go anywhere at a moment's notice, the majority like myself, without family ties, and eager for adventure.'[172] Arguably, this is Le Queux's Anglicized variant of Foucault's (and Bentham's) Panopticon: an all-seeing, regulatory eye that functions perfectly only because it is hidden.

The presentation of the English spy as *exceptionally* English fitted the crudely moralized, Manichaean universe that these authors created. The sense of threat to England required Englishmen to partake of espionage activities that were not coherent with prevailing ideas of honourable conduct. To be sure, portrayals of enemy spies varied greatly throughout the genre, from the physically impressive Baron von Holtzmann of *Spies of the Wight* to Le Queux's Von Beilstein, 'a fat, flabby, sardonic man of about fifty-five with grey eyes fully of craft and cunning, a prominent beard, and short-cropped grey beard.'[173] Yet all were dishonourable and dirty men, with no loyalty to a nation or particular ideals, and committed only to an enjoyment of their reprehensible profession and the spoils it had to offer.

In one sense, it is possible to view the English secret agent – later to become known as the 'gentleman spy' – as a domestic version of the spy in general; or at least as a kind of sanitized variant of the foreign spy, whereby deeply English characters retained their own sense of gentlemanly morality whilst getting on with an intrinsically dishonourable job. But they also attest to how conspiracism, in order to manage this conundrum, was capable of inverting and redistributing qualities otherwise associated with enemies – secrecy; panoptic omniscience; omnipotent mobility – so that they could become a force for good. Certainly fantasizing about forces of evil did not preclude fantasizing about forces of good.

Given the popularity of writers like Le Queux and Oppenheim, it is clear that these conspiracist discourses were widely read; but how did this

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[171] Ibid., p. 28.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser*, p. 44.

conspiracist discourse play out on the domestic front? The final section of this chapter considers this question.

RECEPTIONS AND SUBVSERSIONS OF SPY FEVER

Suggestions of hidden agencies, subterranean networks and malign superspies were not limited to the realms of literary fantasy – even if this was also the place where they were subverted in the form of parody, as we shall see in a moment. From the early 1900s onwards, suspicions regarding the extent of German espionage taking place in Britain came into the public view in both the press and Parliament. This particular kind of conspiracism was never pervasive or dominant for prolonged periods of time, as in fact with other forms of conspiracism, as we shall see; but it did feature, in brief, feverish outbursts in the public sphere.

As early as 1900, an editorial in the *Daily Mail* stated that almost all spies in Britain were Germans; the beginnings of a consistent line of speculation for *Mail*, the *Daily Express* and Leopold Maxse's *National Review*, which similarly spent much of the period from 1900 until the outbreak of war in 1914 accusing Germans living in Britain of working for the Kaiser in various capacities.[174] Members of the public played their part, reinforcing the beliefs of popular conspiracist writers like Le Queux and Maxse, by writing letters reporting suspected German espionage, and complaining of official intransigence.[175] Among other examples, in May 1907 the *Morning Post* published a letter claiming that there were 90,000 German reservists and spies living in Britain, with arms stored for them in every city, ready for an insurrection in support of a future invasion.[176] Even groups of foreign cyclists

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[174] *Daily Mail* (4 Jan. 1900). See, also: *Daily Mail* (12 Aug. 1898). Later in 1906, around the time of the Morocco crisis, the *Daily Mail* serialized Le Queux's *Invasion of 1910*, which apparently added some 80,000 copies to its circulation. Morris, *Scaremongers*, p. 149. Reputedly, the sight of veterans hired by Lord Northcliffe to advertise the novel by marching up and down Oxford Street in Prussian uniforms and sandwich boards triggered the formation of the National Defence Association. H. Pogge von Strandmann, 'The mood in Britain in 1914', in L. Kettenacker and T. Riotte (eds.),*The Legacies of Two World Wars: European Societies in the Twentieth Century* (London: Berghahn Books, 2011), p. 63. For the excesses of the *Daily Express* in reporting on espionage, see: Morris, *Scaremongers*, p. 149.

[175] Maxse was absolutely convinced by 1910, writing to Lord Northcliffe that he received proof of his suspicions by almost every post. Morris, *Scaremongers*, p. 159.

[176] *Morning Post*, (6 May 1907), p. 5.

were regularly accused in the press of being spies – whether photographing the coastline or not – a topic upon which *The Graphic* expressed itself in 1908, purporting to have uncovered a non-existent nexus of German spies (Fig 2.2).[177] In 1909, the *Annual Register* published a letter alleging that there were 50,000 Mauser rifles stored in cellars near Charing Cross; though they turned out to have been bought from the Government by the Society of Miniature Rifle Clubs.[178]

FIG. 2.2: 'German espionage in Essex', *The Graphic* (15 Jul. 1908), 17.

Crucially, these conspiracist lines of inquiry also featured in Parliament, beyond the debates regarding the SSF examined earlier. In March 1903, Henry Broadhurst, Lib-Lab MP for Leicester, suggested that the Committee of Imperial Defence was likely to be the 'besieged by foreign spies looking for chance copy' if they took minutes of their meetings, which would probably

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[177] Morris, *Scaremongers*, pp. 101-102.

[178] Quoted in French, 'Spy Fever in Britain', p. 358.

then 'be transmitted throughout Europe.'[179] In July 1905, Lord Ellenborough spoke in the House of Lords of the necessity of secrecy in the face of foreign espionage, arguing that it was 'illogical to make no attempt to conceal our own proceedings.'[180] If the public was reading of its deliberation, then so too, surely, was the German enemy.

These latter instances were unconnected to any speculation in the press; but more often the two went together. When spy fever peaked in 1908–9, on the news that Germany might accelerate its shipbuilding programme, there was a demonstrable increase in parliamentary speculation.[181] In July 1908, Amelius Lockwood, MP for Epping Forest – and soon to be the subject of lampooning (see below) – asked the Secretary of State for War whether any steps had been taken regarding 'the subject of the military men from a foreign nation [Germany] who have been resident for the last two years, on and off, in the neighbourhood of Epping; and who have been sketching and photographing the whole district and communicating their information directly to their own country.'[182] After the Secretary of State, Viscount Haldane, responded in the negative, Lockwood quipped: 'Does he approve of the system which is apparently going on in our midst?'[183] Several days later Lockwood even asked the Prime Minister for his thoughts on 'whether the Government Departments concerned are causing inquiry to be made as to the reports of foreign espionage in various counties in England.'[184] The Prime Minister, Asquith, simply stated that the Government kept itself 'as fully informed in regard to this matter as the nature of the case [would] allow.'[185]

Lockwood was undeterred and several days later he pressed Haldane once more, asking a series of sarcastic questions regarding the right of foreign nations to collect information in England that might be useful to them in times of war; whether Haldane had any information regarding a 'staff ride through

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[179] HC Deb., 05 Mar. 1903, vol. 118, c. 1621.

[180] HL Deb., 13 Jul. 1905, vol. 149, c. 517.

[181] Andrew, Secret Service, pp. 34-39; P. Panayi, 'Germans in Britain During the First World War', Historical Research, 64:153 (1991): 63-76.

[182] HC Deb., 06 Jul. 1908, vol. 191, c. 1230.

[183] Ibid., c. 1232.

[184] Ibid., c. 1681.

[185] Ibid.

England organised by a foreign power'; and whether he had received any 'official information or reports from chief constables in the Eastern Counties as to espionage in England by Foreign nations; and, if so, whether he [attached] any importance to the information.'[186] At this point Haldane felt moved to quell suggestions that were now circulating in the press regarding the Government's apparently negligent attitude towards foreign espionage. He stated that unofficial reports had reached him regarding 'the presence of supposed spies'; that inquiries had been instituted; and that he did not attach great importance to the matter. In response, Lockwood, reflecting the popular consensus, asked whether 'the right hon. Gentleman [Haldane] looks upon the system of espionage as but an amusing recreation on the part of foreign Powers?'[187]

Other parliamentarians were similarly dogged. In November, Michael Hicks-Beach (Conservative M.P for Tewkesbury) asked the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, if he knew anything of press reports that 'a party of officers from the Naval War College went for a reconnaissance to the Isle of Wight a few weeks ago and found there some German officers engaged upon selecting suitable places for landing troops'.[188] After receiving a sharply worded put down, Hicks-Beach furiously asked 'whether it was the accepted policy of His Majesty's Government to allow foreign officers of any country to reconnoitre over any portion of this country at their will and not to make any representations to other countries to get similar facilities.'[189] After the question was repeated (this time by Hugh Arnold Forster, a Liberal Unionist First Lord of the Admiralty), McKenna responded with the comment that 'We have no evidence that any German officers have reconnoitred in the neighbourhood of British fortresses', subsequently noting, in exasperation, that 'the whole story [was] a mare's nest.'[190] Yet, in the same month, Lord Roberts stated in the

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[186] HC Deb., 13 Jul. 1908, vol. 192, cc. 392-3.

[187] Ibid.

[188] HC Deb., 03 Nov. 1908, vol. 195, c. 961. Not to be confused with his father, also named Michael Hicks-Beach, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1885-1886 and 1895-1902.

[189] Ibid., c. 962.

[190] HC Deb., 03 Nov. 1908, vol. 195, c. 962. At this point, after being asked whether he was undertaking sufficient precautions for the Kaiser's upcoming Zeppelin trip, McKenna refused to answer any more questions.

House of Lords that it was 'calculated that there are 80,000 Germans in the United Kingdom, almost all of them trained soldiers. They work in many of the hotels at some of the chief railways stations, and if a German force once got into this country it would have the advantage of help and reinforcement such no other army on foreign soil has ever before enjoyed.'[191] The comment formed a key part of Roberts' argument for a motion, which was subsequently passed, that stated:

> That in the opinion of this House, the defence of these islands necessitates the immediate attention of His Majesty's Government to the provision (in addition to a powerful Navy) of an Army so strong in numbers and so efficient in quality that the most formidable foreign nation would hesitate to attempt a landing on these shores.[192]

These were perhaps routine parliamentary skirmishes and they ultimately came to nothing. Yet this is not true of all the conspiracist speculation that ebbed and flowed during the Edwardian period, which in fact found its way into the highest echelons of the British State. In May 1907, a letter to the *Morning Post* regarding German spies and reservists on British soil was picked up by Major General John Thwaites, Head of MO2 – one of Britain's early military intelligence gathering offices – and sent to his superior Colonel Count Gleichen, who appended the comment that 'There is much truth in this as you know.'[193] Gleichen immediately forwarded the letter and report to the head of the Directorate of Military Operations' counterintelligence section (MO5), James Edmonds. Edmonds' superior, Major General John Spencer Ewart, was as convinced as his subordinate that Germany controlled 'hosts of agents and spies' in Britain.[194]

Edmonds had been attempting to track German espionage operations in England since October 1906, when he assumed his post as head of MO5.[195] Hereafter Edmonds was in regular receipt of forwarded letters regarding suspicions of espionage. In 1908, for example, he received a report from a

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[191] HL Deb., 23 Nov. 1908, vol. 196, cc. 1690-1691.

[192] Ibid., c. 1742.

[193] Quoted in French, 'Spy Fever in Britain', p. 356.

[194] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 10.

[195] His failure to find many German spies can be attributed to two facts: firstly, his 'department' consisted of himself and two assistants (one of whom was more concerned to cultivate his parliamentary constituency than seek out German spies), and secondly, there were very few German spies in Britain before 1914. Ibid., p. 8.

Lincolnshire JP, detailing that a foreigner going by the name of 'Colonel Gibson' (otherwise known locally as 'the German spy') had passed the summer in Sutton-on-Sea and had taken a great interest in the local coastline.[196] German waiters even featured in some of these letters, including one regarding the Queen's Hotel in Aldershot, popular with the local garrison but staffed mainly by Germans.[197] Edmonds also received letters from none other than William Le Queux. After the publication of *Spies of the Kaiser* (1909), a huge bestseller, Le Queux himself had begun receiving a stream of letters detailing the suspicious behaviour of Germans living in and travelling through Britain, most of which he forwarded straight on to Edmonds. Edmonds seems to have read these with great eagerness, using them, in the words of David French, 'to construct a picture of what he supposed was the German intelligence organisation in Britain'.[198] By 1909, Edmonds was so alarmed by all the correspondence he was receiving that he wrote: '[A] German General landing a force in East Anglia would know more about the country than a British General, more about each town than its own British Mayor, and would have his information so methodically arranged that he could, in a few minutes, give you the answer to any question you asked him about any town, village or position in that area.'[199]

Not all of this conspiracist speculation met with willing credulity at the top levels of the State. In 1907, the head of MO3 (and former head of Special Branch) William Melville believed he had identified a nest of German spies in Epping; but he received only stony silence from the Home Office in response to suggestions for a system of surveillance covering all foreigners resident in the UK.[200] Likewise, the War Office responded only that 'every foreign government implicitly believes that we already have a thoroughly organised and efficient European Secret Service.'[201] By late 1908, however, Edmonds had won Haldane around to his view, supposedly with the help of a letter from the

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[196] French, 'Spy Fever in Britain', p. 356.

[197] Ibid., p. 357.

[198] Ibid.

[199] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 13.

[200] Ibid., p. 7.

[201] Ibid., p. 4.

Mayor of Canterbury. The aforementioned Mayor reported that he had found two Germans wandering in his park. He then invited them to dinner, and was astounded to hear his guests later admit, after much port, that they were carrying out reconnaissance of the East Coast in preparation for a German advance on London.[202] That neither Edmonds nor Haldane appears to have countenanced the possibility that the credulous Mayor had been taken in by a pair of drunken tourists certainly speaks of the penetration of spy-fever into the popular consciousness.

Nonetheless, in 1909 Haldane authorised the constitution of the CID subcommittee quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Edmonds provided the bulk of the evidence, setting out the rationale of what would become MI5 and MI6. This same subcommittee also recommended the development of an anti-sabotage scheme (a task enthusiastically taken up by the first head of what would become MI5, Vernon Kell); the passage of a new Official Secrets Act (achieved in 1911); and the construction of an unofficial register of aliens resident near strategic military installations, which by July 1913 ran to some 28,000 names.[203]

These new security infrastructures had immediate, if sometimes farcical, impacts. By 1910, the new head of domestic counterespionage was hard at work investigating suspected German espionage in Kent and Sussex, and that September had the German Captain Siegfried Helm arrested in Portsmouth on espionage charges.[204] In July 1911, another former German military officer, Max Schultz, was tried and convicted of attempting to bribe two Englishmen in order to obtain information about the Royal Navy – despite the fact that Schultz lived openly as a German and that the information he sought was readily available in the press. Both Helm's and Schulz espionage trials received significant publicity in the press.[205] In 1912, Special Branch was actively investigating reports that German agents were at work stirring up trouble in the coalfields of South Wales. In the same year, MO5 (almost certainly without any factual basis) circulated a memorandum to local constabularies to the effect

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[202] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[203] French, 'Spy Fever in Britain', p. 360.

[204] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 33.

[205] Ibid., pp. 33, 38-40, 44.

that foreign spies were particularly dangerous to the national interest, given that they were wont to spend large amounts of money in garnering vital information.[206]

This perception of Germany's infiltration of Britain and the belief that it was planning an invasion went right to the top of British government and society. Even King Edward VII, in 1908, privately stated his fear that the Kaiser might be planning to 'throw a *corps d'armee* or two into England'.[207] By November 1911, Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, and senior Foreign Office officials Eyre Crowe and Sir Charles Hardinge all accepted that 'the Germans have studied and are studying the question of invasion'.[208] Grey and Haldane (Minister for War) were also convinced that German officers were taking holidays in England, for the primary purpose of 'making strategic notes as to our coasts'.[209] During the Moroccan crisis of 1911, the Home Secretary Winston Churchill even ordered a military guard around a naval magazine in London, lest 'twenty determined Germans … arrived well-armed upon the scene one night.'[210]

Criticism and parody

Evidently, espionage and invasion-scare conspiracism had purchase far beyond the popular literature of the Edwardian period. However, though the avalanche of letters received by Le Queux subsequent to the publication of *Spies of Kaiser* in 1909, for example, certainly speaks to the credulity with which some approached spy fever, it was by no means *always* consumed or conveyed in this fashion. Nor in fact was criticism of popular panic mongering necessarily anything new in the British public sphere.[211] Already, in 1880, the *Spectator* had already rounded on those about who routinely pointed to the fragility of Britain's economy and the integrity of her armed forces and Empire,

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[206] French, 'Spy Fever in Britain', p. 362.

[207] *Andrew, Secret Service*, p. 88.

[208] Morris, *Scaremongers*, p. 158.

[209] Quoted in Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 14.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Stafford, *Silent Game*, pp. 26-27.

suggesting that arguments along these lines were at once predictable and overblown:

> The Army is not half large enough. The Navy might be so overmatched, that a blockade of the British Islands sufficiently perfect to prevent the importation of food from America, Russia, and India all at once, is a probable contingency. The people are so reluctant to make sacrifices, and so un-organised, that they cannot be relied on even for a successful defence. The Colonies could all be fined or occupied by hostile fleets. Our commerce could all be shut out from the ocean. As for India, that splendid possession, organised so strongly that the revolt of 120,000 regular soldiers, in possession of the strongest arsenals and of ample artillery, failed even to shake it, is a mere house of cards. A breath from St. Petersburg might blow it down.[212]

Such criticisms of the tendency towards panic-mongering were visible throughout the later Victorian and Edwardian period. Indeed, exactly this kind of dismissive scepticism was evident on the part of MPs and ministers during the Edwardian period, when questions regarding the likelihood of an invasion and of Britain's penetration by foreign espionage networks were shrugged off or batted away (as, for example, 'entirely devoid of foundation') in the Commons.[213] However, what distinguishes the Edwardian period is the fact that some of that at least some of this scepticism deliberately and directly addressed the nature and extent of invasion and espionage conspiracism, especially in relation to its principal target, Germany. Thus, just as this spy fever form of conspiracism peaked, towards the end of the Edwardian period, so too did those voices seeking to critique and lampoon its myriad excesses.

Not all the press, for instance, was convinced of the reality of the German espionage threat. Indeed, D.C. Thompson's *Weekly News* may well have been offering a £10 reward for information about 'Foreign Spies in England' in 1909, yet in May of the same year, the *Daily Chronicle* was also warning that 'Jingo journals of the baser sort have frankly given themselves over to the now familiar game of making the irrepressible Englishman's flesh creep with sensational stories of German invasion'.[214] Indeed, as Charles Lowe

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[212] 'The Patriotism of Panic', *The Spectator* (1 Jan., 1880), p. 7.

[213] HC Deb., 03 Nov. 1908, vol. 195, c. 962.

[214] These adverts were placed alongside the serialised publishing sensation of the year, W. Le Queux's *Spies of the Kaiser*. Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 11; *Daily Chronicle* (22 Mar. 1909), p. 3. Echoing the socialist and pacifist H.S. Perris's 1906 statement that such 'press polemics are the greatest single danger to good international relations'. H.S. Perris, *Concord* 2:2 (February 1906), p. 27, quoted in Morris, *Scaremongers*, p. 5. For the influence of the press, in general, in whipping up support for preparedness and rearmament, see: Morris, *Scaremongers*, passim.

noted in the *Contemporary Review* less than a year later, the actions of authors and newspaper owners like Le Queux and Oppenheim, Thompson and Northcliffe, had consequences that ran beyond the page. 'Among all the causes contributing to the continuance of a state of bad blood between England and Germany, perhaps the most potent is the baneful industry of those unscrupulous writers who are forever asserting that the Germans are only waiting for a fitting opportunity to attack us in our island-home'. Warming to this theme, Lowe went on to argue that the power of the press over the popular mind in Britain was such that accusations of German espionage were believed, which caused no end of bad blood between the two nations.[215]

Lowe was by no means alone in expressing frustration and annoyance at the pernicious effects of 'spy fever' on contemporary politics and the Anglo-German relationship. Some parliamentarians were quite direct and bitterly sarcastic on this topic: 'There is a section of the population in this country obsessed with the fear of Germany, and they see German spies just as a drunkard sees stars which do not exist. [An HON. MEMBER: "Snakes."]', noted Liberal MP William Byles in Parliament in 1911. He then recalled scenes familiar from the works of Le Queux and others: 'When they are having their chin shaved by a German barber, they think he is a German spy, and when they sit at the table with a German governess, they think she is writing home to her friends acting as a spy against this country. Surely it is not worthy of the Government to entertain such ridiculous suspicions as those.'[216] Such comments were regularly echoed in the leaders of other national newspapers, such as *The Times*, which in 1908 described spy-fever as an 'unfortunate, and in some respects absurd, development.'[217] Byles, here, was clearly tapping into the speculative discourses that were circulating throughout the British public sphere at that point.

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[215] C. Lowe, 'About Spies', *Contemporary Review* (Jan. 1910), p. 42. This was a somewhat curious, yet quite comprehensible, *volte-face* for Lowe. Though he had previously co-authored of the invasion novel (*The Great War of 189-,* published in 1893) and was also what we would now call a 'defence expert', he also been a Berlin Correspondent for *The Times*, and was intimately aware of German politics. P. Colomb, *et al.*, *The Great War of 189-, a forecast* (London: William Heinemann, 1895); C.E. Gannon, *Rumors of War and Infernal Machines: Technomilitary Agenda-setting in American and British Speculative Fiction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), p. 27.

[216] HC Deb., 13 Mar. 1911, vol. 22, cc. 1949-50.

[217] *The Times* (21 Aug. 1908), p. 9.

Comments such as these attest to the strength and currency of popular conspiracist discourse; but also to its weakness, for it was evidently not taken seriously by everyone, and at times subjected to satire, sarcasm and parody. *Punch*, for instance, became a regular caricaturist of those obsessed with the espionage threat.[218] In 1910, Amelius Lockwood (quoted above) was savaged by the famous cartoonist Heath Robinson who, in *The Sketch*, published a series of satirical cartoons depicting camouflaged German spies dangling from trees in Epping Forest, raiding Yarmouth beach disguised as bathers, and posing as statues in the 'Graeco-Roman galleries' of the British museum.
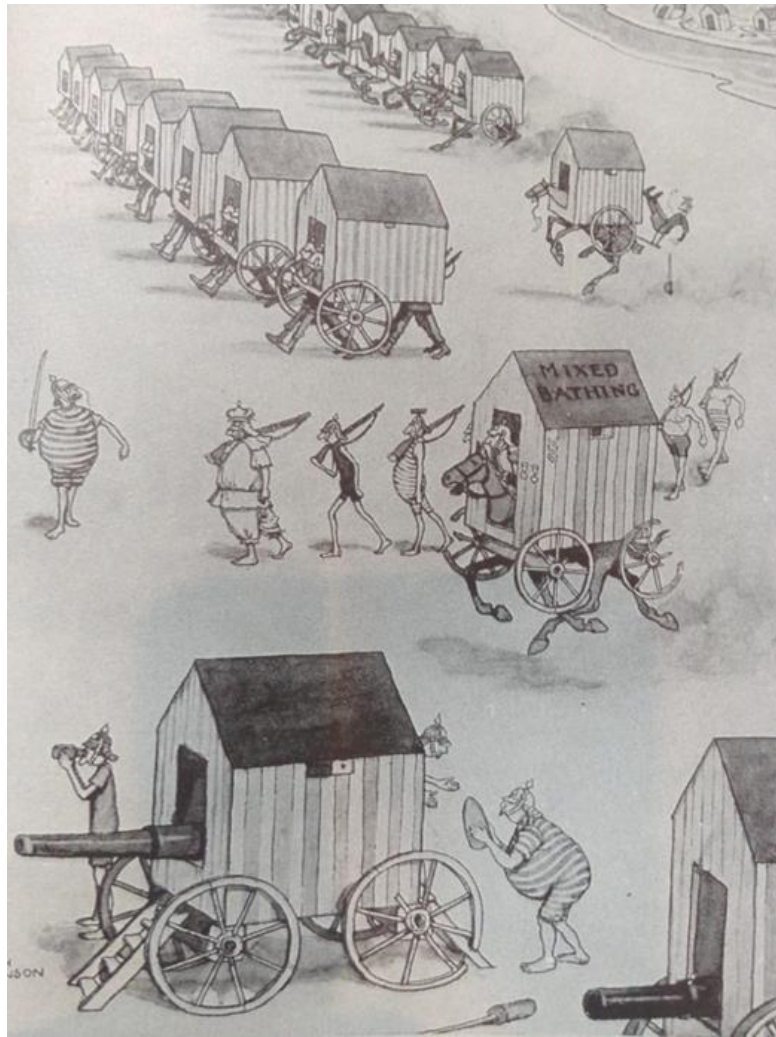
FIG. 2.3: 'A masked raid on Yarmouth beach', *The Sketch* (18 May 1910), reproduced in Clarke, *The Great War with Germany*, 285.

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[218] For example, based on his claim to have discovered German spies carrying our reconnaissance photography in his Epping Forest constituency, for example, in July 1908 *Punch* lampooned Amelius Lockwood with a cartoon entitled 'Colonel Lockwood hot on the trail of German spies'. 'Colonel Lockwood hot on the trail of German spies', *Punch* (15 Jul. 1908), p. 49.

In 1909, *Punch* portrayed the populist Germanophobic likes of Le Queux and Le Maxse as British agents invading Germany, and it later published A.A. Milne's spy-thriller spoof, 'The Secret of the Army Aeroplane', a parody of Le Queux's recently published and hugely popular spy-thriller *Spies of the Kaiser* (1909). In particular, the text played on the conspiracist tendency to endow the mundane and quotidian with global-causal significance:

> 'Tell us the whole facts,' Ray, urged Vera Vallance, the fair-haired daughter of the Admiral Sir Charles Vallance, to whom he was engaged.
>
> 'Well, dear, they are briefly as follows,' he replied with an affectionate glance at her [...] 'Last Tuesday a man with his moustache brushed up the wrong way alighted at Basingstoke station and inquired for the refreshment-room. This leads me to believe that a dastardly attempt is about to be made to wrest the supremacy of the air from our grasp.'
>
> 'And even in the face of this the Government denies the activity of German Spies in England.'[219]

Though it has been suggested that the invasion and espionage genres were 'beyond parody', there were also numerous Edwardian satires on the themes of invasion, subversion and espionage.[220] Ernest Oldmeadow, for example, turned the idea of enemy formations composed of immigrants fighting behind the lines completely on its head in *The North Sea Bubble* (1906), portraying the actions of a German vigilante force fighting against an invading German force.[221] Moving to the more fantastical, Allen Upward's *The Fourth Conquest of England* (1904) imagines a modern *reconquista*, with England overthrown by the forces of Roman Catholicism, and the Royal Family banished to the Antipodes, which are subsequently declared non-existent by the Vatican.[222] There were even still works being published around the time of the outbreak of war in 1914 that satirised this Germanophobic conspiracism: Walter Emmanuel and John Hassall's *Keep Smiling* even had those infected with German measles made to feel decidedly unwelcome.[223] Indeed, in spite of the

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[219]Needless to say, the man with the 'moustache brushed up the wrong way' was intended to suggest the presence of the Kaiser. 'The Secret of the Army Aeroplane', *Punch* (26 May 1909), p. 366.

[220] J. Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: the British and Germans since 1890* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), p. 73.

[221] E.J. Oldmeadow, *The North Sea Bubble* (London: E. Grant Richards, 1906), pp. 90-95.

[222] A. Upward, *The Fourth Conquest of England* (London: Tyndale Press, 1904), passim.

[223] W, Emanuel and J. Hassall, *Keep Smiling, More News by Liarless for German Homes* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1914), p. 7.

fevered atmosphere of the months that followed August 1914, *Punch* still felt able to satirise the oddities of life in spy-fevered wartime Britain.[224]

The best of the satirical bunch is P.G. Wodehouse's April 1909 novel, *The Swoop! or how Clarence saved England: A Tale of the Great Invasion*, which was equally as farcical and no less pointed, its whimsical front cover merely the opening salvo of the satirical onslaught which followed (Fig. 2.4).

FIG. 2.4: P.G. Wodehouse, *The Swoop! Or How Clarence saved England* (London: Alston Rivers, 1909), front cover.

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[224] See, for example: *Punch* (26 Aug. 1914), p. 179; ibid., (30 Sep. 1914), p. 271; ibid., (21 Oct. 1914), p. 347; ibid., (18 Nov. 1914), p. 428.

The Swoop! depicts an England simultaneously invaded by nine separate forces, including the Russians, the Swiss navy, the Young Turks, the Monegasques, the Mad Mullah, the Chinese, the ever-present Germans, a band of Moroccan brigands and the Bollygollans in war canoes. In an obvious parody of Guy du Maurier's recent invasion scare theatre hit 'An Englishman's Home' (first performed only four months previously in January 1909) the novel's opening scene – set in the boy-scout Clarence's family home – directly contrasts the eponymous hero's patriotic and preparatory zeal with popular desensitisation to the idea of England's vulnerability to subversion and invasion.[225] Clarence, to his horror, soon after discovers England's fate from a newspaper boy's (typically sport-dominated) poster (Fig. 2.5):

FIG. 2.5: P.G. Wodehouse, *The Swoop! Or How Clarence saved England* (London: Alston Rivers, 1909), 4.

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[225] P.G. Wodehouse, *The Swoop! Or How Clarence saved England* (London: Alston Rivers, 1909), passim.

As these incredulous and sceptical commentaries demonstrate, by the end of the Edwardian decade there was, at the very least, a market for satire on the topics of espionage, subversion and invasion in Britain. Given the extent to which spy and invasion fever pervaded Edwardian popular culture, this is hardly surprising. However, while this certainly speaks to the popularity of conspiracist discourse, the tendency towards parody, spoof and satire also illustrates the extent to which conspiracism was simultaneously both dominant *and* marginal in a variety of discursive arenas. Scepticism was always present, from the very beginning of the period onwards, about those who speculated wildly about threats to the national life. Though figures within the press were certainly cynical in 'boosting' the German threat, there were also those who pushed back against the tendency towards a fear which, at times, spilled over into paranoia. Yet, in creating ever more improbable scenarios than their scare-mongering peers, the authors of satires, spoofs and subversions also graphically illustrated the space for speculative reasoning available in conspiracist discourses. Ministers' responses to the regular questions they received regarding the SSV and later espionage arguably speak to the same contention: there was little which could not be suggested when conspiracist discourse was able to blossom fully, just as there was little that could be done to allay the resultant fears. Invasion and espionage fever were, in many ways, almost unstoppable cultural forces by the later Edwardian period. However, as this section has demonstrated, popular responses to them were not without their nuances.

CONCLUSION

This chapter began with a discussion of some of the suspicious and speculative discourses that circulated in the late Victorian and Edwardian Parliament, as they pertained to the operation of the Secret Service Fund. Clearly, when considered in isolation, such discourses might seem irrelevant in the grand scheme of British politics. Indeed, we might perhaps consider these discourses as the product of the ideological inflexibility of a dwindling, if still highly vocal, radical-liberal minority; or as the suspicious concerns of Irishmen disinclined

to trust English ministers whose liberalism seemed not to extend as far as Ireland.

Yet these concerns should not be viewed alone. Although anti-SSV parliamentarians operated at some distance from the nation's governing consensus, their language and their perspectives sat at the relatively calm end of a much wider spectrum of conspiracist currents and concerns. As has been shown, the ambiguous status of Secret Service money – necessary, but secret, and publicly known about – proved fertile ground for suspicion and speculation in relation to surveillance, electoral corruption and embezzlement: all quite legitimate speculations regarding a State that deliberately hid some of its actions from the gaze of the public and parliamentarians. At the other end of the scale, we find the invasion and spy fever that blossomed in the Edwardian period, and that constitutes perhaps the most powerful example of conspiracist discourse that this thesis considers, for it was potent in Parliament, the press and popular literature.

This, however, was not merely an alliance of the irrational, or a paranoid constituency. As has been noted, there were those who really did believe in the German espionage threat, driven by a mixture of genuine concern and a burgeoning popular tendency towards speculative reasoning and conspiracist discourse. This includes, perhaps, both a significant portion of those who wrote to the likes of Le Queux and Leopold Maxse. Maxse and Le Queux certainly seem to have believed, more or less, in the existence of a variety of covert threats to British life – not limited to Germany, or espionage. Many in the emerging British secret state seem to have believed in the espionage threat too: there is little evidence for scepticism in this respect amongst the small but growing cohort of England's spies and secret policemen.

However, at the same time, there were others, such as Lord Northcliffe, who were cynical and calculating in 'boosting' the German espionage threat. Indeed, the popularity of authors in the Le Queux's mould existed in a mutually reinforcing relationship to their audiences: as more narratives of infiltration, penetration and subversion were demanded, so more appeared. Yet such cynicism can never be described in simple terms. Belief in

the German threat was, to some extent, justified by the facts. Throughout the period, German power was growing along a number of vectors, economic, cultural, naval and military. At the same time, Britain was seemingly in the process of a decline from global pre-eminence, slipping from her previously unassailable position. Anxieties and fears about the German threat were, in this sense, rational. Narratives of England's subversion and penetration by foreign forces cannot, then, be seen as simply a matter of panic or popular paranoia; or indeed ignored as irrelevant in the scheme of Victorian and Edwardian 'progress'.

Furthermore, invasion and espionage fever was by no means the only example of conspiracist thought and discourse in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, many facets of British public debates on terrorists and terrorism were also inflected, and at times dominated, by popular conspiracist motifs, and in ways that were strikingly similar to spy and invasion fever.

CHAPTER THREE:

DYNAMITE, DISSIDENCE AND GLOBAL DESTRUCTION

Acts of terrorism were highly visible in the late Victorian and Edwardian public sphere, thanks to comprehensive press coverage and extensive literary exploration. The word itself – 'terrorism' – dates back to the early 1800s, when it was used to refer to the short-lived radical phase of the French Revolution (also known as 'the Terror') and political intimidation; but by the end of the century it had come to assume something like its current meaning, namely acts of violence against civilians.[1] Already States might commit acts of terrorism, but in the public mind terrorism was principally associated with three ideologies: Nihilism, Fenianism and, most of all, anarchism. All were often lumped together as part of a more or less coherent nexus of violently inclined and increasingly internationalist revolutionary groups. Indeed, in some cases they were thought to be organised by all-powerful individuals – terrorist taskmasters and masterminds analogous to the spymasters and master-spies considered in the preceding chapter.[2] To paraphrase George Woodcock and Peter Marshall, anarchism was popularly seen as something akin to a river with many different sources, tributaries and eddies, but from which all currents of terrorism flowed, and into which all currents of terrorism fed.[3] It is with these popular conspiracist assumptions that this chapter concerns itself.

It is worth affirming at the outset that Nihilism, Fenianism and anarchism were never the hidden leviathans of popular fiction or of the panicked popular imagination. Increasing vigilance and periodically intense repression on the part of the police and military combined to severely limit the ability of these rebellious constituencies to draw themselves together into

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[1] S. Jones, 'The Victorian Lexicon of Evil: Frederic Harrison, the positivists, and the language of international politics', in Crook, Gill and Taithe (eds.), *Evil, Barbarism and Empire*, pp. 126-146; W. Laqueur, *The Age of Terrorism* (London: Weidensfeld and Nicolson, 1987).

[2] For the Russian Nihilist movement, see: R. Hingley, *Nihilists: Russian radicals and revolutionaries in the reign of Alexander II, 1855-81* (New York, NY: Delacorte Press, 1969). For Fenianism, see: Whelehan, *Dynamiters*. For anarchism, see: Butterworth, *World That Never Was*; J. Joll, *The Anarchists* (London: Routledge, 2013 [1964]); and, P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: a history of anarchism* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008 [1992]).

[3] Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp. 3-11.

effective revolutionary organisations.[4] Furthermore, Nihilism, Fenianism and anarchism were fractious groupings, prone to schism and rupture, and which operated in the context of movements committed to political means other than violence. In fact, the vast majority of terrorist 'outrages' in this period were carried out by individuals or small groups with only the most tenuous organisational links to wider dissident movements.

Equally, of course, police repression and surveillance attest to *some* kind of organized agency and it was not entirely unreasonable to entertain suspicions about internationalist subversion in this period. Paris was popularly (and accurately) known to have functioned as a kind of Mecca for revolutionaries, dissidents and exiles of all nationalities and creeds in the decades following the failed 1848 revolution; as a common waypoint in the journeys of many famous mid-nineteenth century revolutionaries, where the various currents of Europe's revolutionary traditions met and mixed. London played a similar role during the late nineteenth century, hosting dissidents of all stripes from across Europe, many of whom entered into regular and often public dialogue on 'revolutionary' topics in the English media.[5] These revolutionaries tended also to see themselves (and, consequently, were seen by contemporary commentators) through the prism of Europe's history of insurrection and revolution, as part of a historic international swelling of rebellious energy. At his 1894 trial for the bombing of the Paris Café Terminus, for instance, the French anarchist Emile Henry addressed himself to a global constituency of the oppressed, disenfranchised and disaffected:

> You have hanged in Chicago, decapitated in Germany, garrotted in Jerez, shot in Barcelona, guillotined in Montbrison and Paris, but what you will never destroy is anarchy. Its roots are too deep. It is born in the heart of a society that is rotting and falling apart. It is a violent reaction against the established order. It represents all the egalitarian and libertarian aspirations that strike out against authority. It is everywhere, which makes it impossible to contain. It will end by killing you.[6]

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[4] For the battle against subversion, dissidence and terrorism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see: Jensen, *Battle Against Anarchist Terrorism*, p. 1. See, also: Land (ed.), *Enemies of Humanity*.

[5] See, for example: C. Bantman, *The French Anarchists in London, 1880-1914: exile and transnationalism in the first globalisation* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013); P. di Paola, *The Knights Errant of Anarchy: London and the Italian Anarchist Diaspora* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014); and, Vernitski, 'Russian revolutionaries and English sympathizers'.

[6] Quoted in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p. 438. Henry's comments stemmed from a tradition of revolutionary radicalism which had deep roots in the history of European politics,

These movements also tended to operate through a similar set of revolutionary tactics and organisational structures.[7] (Indeed, as Timothy Messer-Kruse has recently demonstrated, with the benefit of new evidence, some suspicions of the threat posed by dissident insurrectionists seem rather more real than has previously been suggested.)[8] As such, it was never *necessarily* unreasonable to suggest that terrorist organisations were internationally organised and ambitious.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of ideas about hidden structures of co-ordination and control underpinning contemporary dissident and terrorist activity can be characterised as *wildly* inaccurate. As with the espionage literature considered in the last chapter, the suspicions and narratives that arose were not wholly without foundation and some kind of factual footing. Without this they would have failed to obtain any kind of purchase in the public sphere. But as we shall in this chapter, they moved much beyond this, offering in some cases quite grandiose visions of internationally organised plots that were altogether conspiracist in their understanding of the causal mechanics and interconnections of terrorism. Furthermore, most exploited the suspicion that subterranean insurrectionary organisations were operating in Britain – and indeed throughout the world – just beneath the surface of everyday life. This much was brilliantly expressed by Henry James in the opening pages of *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), a novel that details the story

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reflecting a post-1848 shift in European revolutionary demagoguery, encapsulated in a movement away from insurrectionary thinking, and towards terrorism Indeed, the crucial difference between the revolutionaries of the second half of the nineteenth and their insurrectionary antecedents was their belief – succinctly expressed by the revolutionary author Karl Heinzen – that: 'Murder is the principal agent of historical of progress.' K. Heinzen, "Murder" (1848), quoted in Messer-Kruse, *Haymarket Conspiracy*, p. 73. See, for example: Land, 'Introduction', in Land (ed.), *The Enemies of Humanity*, pp. 1-17; Jensen, *Battle Against Anarchist Terrorism*, pp. 66-73; and, Whelehan, *Dynamiters*, pp. 1-27.

[7] Whelehan, *Dynamiters*, pp. 13-15. For example, though operating in very different political contexts, the Irish National Invincibles, responsible for the Phoenix Park Murders of May 1882, was a strikingly similar organisation to the small *Pervomartovsty* grouping within *Narodnaya Volya*, which had assassinated Czar Alexander II a year earlier in March 1881. Both were committed to the violent overthrow of an unjust contemporary order, both chose to strike at the pinnacle of the system of government which oppressed them, and both emerged from much broader dissident movements, with which they had little real connection - due in part to the fact of their radicalism and advocacy of terrorism, and also to their very real 'operational' need to minimise the chance of discovery and suppression.

[8] Messer-Kruse, *Haymarket Conspiracy*, pp. 11-26.

of a London bookbinder, Hyacinth Robinson, who becomes involved in radical politics and eventually a terrorist assassination plot:

> Nothing of it appears above the surface; but there's an immense underworld of people with a thousand forms of revolutionary passion and devotion. The manner in which it's organised is what astonished me. I knew that, or thought I knew it, in a general way, but the reality was a revelation. And on top of it all society lives. People go and come, and buy and sell, and drink and dance, and make money and make love, and seem to know nothing and suspect nothing and think of nothing; and iniquities flourish, and the misery of half the world is prated about as a 'necessary evil,' and generations rot away and starve in the midst of it, and day follows day, and everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. All that's one half of it; the other half is that everything's doomed! In silence, in darkness, but under the feet of each one of us, the revolution lives and works. It's a wonderful, immeasurable trap, on the lid of which society performs its antics.[9]

But this uncanny sense of malign hidden forces – distant yet intimate (even living next door); hidden but close to the surface of modern life – spilled much beyond the pages of novels and into the pages of the press. As we shall see, it was a key component of the popular conspiracism that surrounded terrorism in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

This chapter examines these conspiracist currents, which were more or less pronounced in particular places and at particular points in time. As will be demonstrated in the first section, suspicions of subversive international structures were certainly present in the press commentary on the various congresses of the Second International. To be sure, these ideas never came to define this coverage, and these congresses were often seen for what they were: the fractious gatherings of an ambitious, but disparate (and in the British case, arguably, only partly representative) body of political radicals. Equally, however, such coverage was always drawn against the background of 'revolutionary' memories, structuring discussions of the internationalist Left in ways which were more fully expressed in the 'terrorism' literature of the 1880s and 1890s, the subject of the second section of this chapter. Here especially the spectre of a global landscape consisting of myriad conspiracies – that is, a kind of *conspiracist landscape* – was presented in the form of totalizing narratives of global, insurrectionary agency and control which, on their own, might easily be dismissed as the fantastic imaginings of the early 'science fiction' genre.

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[9] H. James, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), quoted in Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*, p. 5.

The emergence of this kind of landscape has partly been identified by Adrian Wisnicki (to some extent prefigured by the various works of I.F. Clarke on prophetic fiction), who has posited a transition during the Victorian period from the conspiracy plot to the *conspiracy theory* plot.[10] Wisnicki's work, however, besides its focus on high literature – and indeed because of this – overlooks the broader and more profound context that is recovered in this chapter. Indeed, at particular times, these ideas came to the fore, briefly rising up to dominate coverage of events. We will examine two instances of this in the third and final section of this chapter, which discusses the panics that followed the arrest of Patrick Tynan – the 'Mysterious Number One' of the Phoenix Park murders – in 1896, and the so-called 'Siege of Sidney Street' in 1911.

This chapter, then, examine these varied aspects in turn: the worried suspicions of contemporary newspaper commentators; the often wild imagery and anxieties of works of fiction; and brief eruptions of popular paranoia and shock in the press. It builds on the argument developed in the last chapter: namely, that these aspects are best understood together in terms of a variously expressed current of popular-conspiracist anxiety and an identifiable set of tropes regarding hidden agents and subversive, border-crossing systems of malign agency.

SUBVERVSIVE INTERNATIONALISM IN THE PRESS

> The words "Socialism" and "Socialist" have still terrors for the more timorous portion of the community.[11]
>
> Looking back upon the International Labour Congress, which has just ended its sittings, it is impossible to deny the importance and significance of this great gathering.[12]

International cooperation was widely upheld as a force for good in the nineteenth century. As the introduction noted, this was an age of internationalism and growing international connectivity. One list of the international meetings of all scales and agendas contrasts twenty-four entries

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[10] Wisnicki, *Conspiracy, Revolution, and Terrorism*, pp. 143-191; and, Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War*, passim.

[11] *The Standard* [hereafter, *Standard*] (17 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

[12] *The Times* [hereafter, *Times*] (28 Aug. 1891), p. 11.

up to 1851 (and only one before 1815), against 1,390 between 1851 and 1899. From fixing a global timescale to combatting cholera and plague, international cooperation was commonly viewed as both progressive and benign.[13] Yet internationalism also assumed subversive forms; most of all when it mixed with political radicalism. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British press regularly discussed internationalist left-wing organisations in one and the same breath as stirrings of internationalist feeling in domestic labour politics. At best, this was thought likely to disrupt the national loyalties of Britain's working classes; at worst, it threatened global insurrection.

In some respects, this was altogether reasonable, given the history of revolutionary violence in Europe. On one level, there was the deeply embedded cultural memory of the Revolutionary period (c. 1789–1815), the spectre of which loomed large in British politics throughout the nineteenth century. Britain's role in defeating the forces of the Revolution was a treasured part of national identity. Mid-Victorian liberalism, for instance, expressly concerned itself with enacting the lessons of those years, in its arguments that bureaucratic, centralised governance inherently militated against liberty and restricted prosperity, thereby increasing the incidence of dissidence and expressions of popular disaffection.[14] As a result, recollections of the Revolutionary period – of revolutionary demagoguery and Robespierre, and of fire and sword brought to every country between the Rock of Gibraltar and the Kremlin – echoed across the decades in references to the possibility of a 'new Terror' inaugurated by dynamite outrages, and the power of Jacobin-like clubs in contemporary radical societies. Such thinking clearly played an important role in underwriting suspicions of transnational association in pursuit of goals that ran contrary to the prevailing order of things.

More recently, there was the experience of 1848. In that year, uprisings had taken place throughout Europe, from Spain, Italy and the Danubian Principalities in the south to Germany and Denmark in the north, and from France and Ireland in the west to Poland and Western Ukraine in the east.

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[13] V. Huber 'The Unification of the Globe by Disease?: The International Sanitary Conferences on Cholera, 1851-1894', *The Historical Journal*, 49:2 (2006): 453-476.

[14] B. Porter, '"Bureau and "Barrack": Early Victorian Attitudes towards the Continent', *Victorian Studies*, 27:4 (1984): 407-33; and, J.P. Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Frighteningly, at least for Europe's governing elites, these uprisings had involved more than just the peasantry and proletariat; they had also involved middle-class communities and constituencies. Although Britain was generally thought to have remained aloof from revolutionary agitation, it too had had its moments of crisis. The Young Irelanders rebelled in the summer of 1848, hoping to overthrow Britain's long dominion over Ireland; and this rebellion took place barely three months after more than 100,000 Chartists had marched on London to deliver a petition of nearly two million signatures to Parliament, demanding radical reforms to the practice of politics. The Chartist threat melted away during the 1850s – and there was certainly a level of late Victorian smugness about the defanging of Chartism by the reforming legislation of the 1860s–1880s – but there was also the suspicion that Britain might only have narrowly avoided the fate of its continental companions. Accordingly, the spectre of pan-European insurrection featured heavily in the political imaginary of those who wrote the popular novels and news reports of the later Victorian period.

More importantly, there was the troubling history of internationalist revolutionary organisations. The International Workingmen's Association (hereafter IWA, popularly known as 'the Internationale' and later 'the First International') had been founded in St Martin's Hall in London in 1864, at a meeting attended by an impressive cohort of revolutionaries, nationalists, republicans, socialists, communists and trades unionists.[15] The St Martin's Hall meeting resolved that agitation for working-class causes, until now carried out by disparate and disconnected movements, would be more effectively carried out under the guidance and control of an international co-ordinating body. Certainly the fact that the IWA's various congresses always brought together the cream of European revolutionary society lent credence to the idea that the IWA was becoming increasingly important in the course of Left-wing politics across the globe, as did its large membership. During the late 1860s the IWA's

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[15] Some attendees at the St. Martin's Hall meeting, such as Louis Blanqui and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, were already famous, extensively experienced in radical activism and revolutionary conspiracy. Others, such as the then unknown émigré journalist Karl Marx, were only just setting out on their 'revolutionary' careers. For histories of the First International, see: H. Katz, *Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992).

official journal claimed its membership stood at over eight million workers from around the world.[16]

In reality, the IWA was a conflicted organisation, split between a number of groupings (in particular between the followers of Mikhael Bakunin and Karl Marx) and exerting little power over its members. Nevertheless, the popular consensus pointed in the other direction. For many, the IWA was a highly cohesive and disciplined agency that directed the activities of all contemporary revolutionary activists and organisations throughout the world. Unchecked, it might trigger the global insurrection that many on the late nineteenth century Left saw as a necessary precursor to the achievement of social revolution.[17] Accordingly, when the notoriously unruly population of Paris rose up and seized control of the city in March 1871, in the aftermath of France's humiliating defeat to the Prussians, it is no surprise that contemporary commentary speculated that the Commune was the product of an IWA plot and the harbinger of another insurrectionary *annus horribilis* along the lines of 1848. In truth, few members of the IWA participated in the events of 1871, and the uprising that brought about the Commune was largely spontaneous rather than planned.[18] Nevertheless, the posited connection between the IWA and the Paris Commune meant that the IWA became the *bête noire* of the conspiracist imagination, serving as *the* example of what happened when internationalist organisations of the political Left were allowed to operate without restriction.

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[16] Contemporary police reports, however, suggest that the number was nearer to five million, still an impressive figure. R. Payne, *Marx: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 372.

[17] Most bitterly, there was the division between Mikhael Bakunin's 'collectivist' anarchist grouping and Karl Marx's predominantly 'parliamentary' faction. D. Guerin, 'Marxism and anarchism', in D. Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 109-127.

[18] The First International was crushed by the French, Spanish, Italian and German governments in the years which followed the Paris Commune, and voted itself out of existence at its final congress, held in Philadelphia in 1876. Moreover, in the decade which followed the Commune, European police forces began to co-operate internationally against anarchists and political dissidents – driven by fears of international mobility and co-operation amongst dissidents. The First International's inability to mobilise the masses *en masse* was also graphically illustrated by the failure of the Cantonal Revolt in Spain in 1873, the Romagna uprising in Italy in 1874, and the disastrous ineptitude of Malatesta and Cafiero's attempted revolutionary sally into Southern Italy in 1877. Jensen, *Battle Against Anarchist Terrorism*, pp. 15-16.

As a result of these various factors, organisations of the internationalist Left were often seen through the prism of the IWA and its revolutionary predecessors. As we shall now see, this tendency was particularly marked in the reporting of the various international congresses held by the Second International. Founded in 1889 and meeting some nine times up to 1912 – in 1889 (Paris), 1891 (Brussels), 1893 (Zurich), 1896 (London), 1900 (Paris), 1904 (Amsterdam), 1907 (Stuttgart), 1910 (Copenhagen) and 1912 (Basle) – it was the most significant and high profile manifestation of subversive *political* internationalism during the period covered by this thesis (we shall deal with financial variants in the next chapter). Yet, crucially, the reporting was never consistent, fluctuating between speculative conspiracism on the one hand, and dismissive accounts that sort to play down the threat on the other. Ultimately, it was highly confused.

Connections and conflations

From the moment of its inception in Paris, the Second International was discussed as a direct descendent of the IWA. Reporting of the Second International's congresses thus tended to draw upon the memory of the Paris Commune.[19] The posited connection between the Second International, the IWA and the Paris Commune was often baldly stated, as when the *Glasgow Herald* in July 1889 asserted that the inaugural congress of the Second International (held in Paris that month) represented an attempt to 'reconstitute an International Worker's Association'.[20] Later that year, in November, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* explored this connection, speculating on the consequences of internationalist association by Left wing organisations, noting that:

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[19] Ibid., pp. 15, 16, 66-67.

[20] *Glasgow Herald* [hereafter, *GH*] (28 Jul. 1889), p. 5. Already, in May that year, three months prior to the arrival of delegations in Paris, the *Belfast News-Letter* and the *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* had branded the whole occasion as an 'International Revolutionary Congress'. Both *The Belfast News-Letter* and the *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* reprinted a Central News Agency telegram from Brussels which used this term, on March 18th, 1889, three months before the Paris Congress. *The Belfast News-Letter* [hereafter, *BN-L*] (18 Mar. 1889), p. 5; *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* [hereafter, *Freeman's*] (18 Mar. 1889), p. 6. *The Times*, later in the period, also occasionally referred to the Second International as the 'Red International'. See, for example, *Times* (07 Sep. 1907), pp. 3 & 9; and, ibid., (07 Sep. 1910), p. 9.

> The extreme Socialists do mischief by alarming timid people; but there is no reason why they should not co-operate with more moderate men for the gradual elevation of labour, if they are so minded. If, however, they insist upon turning the new organisation into an international revolt against society, the new International will be as barren of results as the old.[21]

This kind of casual commentary regarding the lineage of the Second International was apparent in the coverage of all the congresses. Throughout the central contention was the same: that the Second International represented an internationalist constituency of revolutionary feeling that looked back in fond mourning over the ashes of the Commune. In August 1891, the *Belfast News-Letter* claimed that socialists speaking at the recent Brussels Congress had appeared 'to prefer the Commune to well-ordered social arrangements, overlooking the importance of class distinctions, without which there would be no guarantee against the return of barbaric conditions.'[22] In 1900, *The Morning Post* commented that 'The International Socialist Congress has decided on what is practically the resurrection of the "Internationale" Society, which was one of the chief promoters of the Paris Commune … This new "Internationale", unless suppressed, like its predecessor, may cause trouble'.[23]

Such commentary was framed by wider connections drawn between the Second International and Europe's deeper history of revolutionary violence. This was mostly focused on remembering the Commune, but it could also extend to the French Revolutionary period. As *The Times* remarked in 1889, reporting on the inaugural Paris congress: 'It is natural that, in this year of all years [the centenary of the French Revolution in 1889], there should have been an attempt to get up an International Workmen's Congress in Paris. Paris, as we know, was the adopted home of the old "International." There that society, in 1871, proclaimed universal fraternity and perished in fraternal blood [the Commune].'[24] Other facets of the coverage added some empirical colour to speculative claims of revolutionary designs, for instance the periodic publication of mini-biographies covering delegates' pasts and reports of

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[21] *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* [hereafter, *Lloyd's*] (11 Nov. 1888), p. 6.

[22] *BN-L* (17 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

[23] *The Morning Post* [hereafter, *Morning Post*] (27 Sep. 1900), p. 5.

[24] *Times* (18 Jul. 1889), p. 9. Occasionally reported references made by delegates to the necessity of 'a class dictatorship such as the *bourgeois* revolutionists established in 1793' certainly seemed to reinforce this sensation. See, for example: ibid., (28 Sep. 1900), p. 3.

delegates greeting each other as 'Comrade' and 'Citizen' and singing 'revolutionary songs'.[25]

This was not, perhaps, the more developed conspiracism apparent in the popular literature of the time, as we shall see in the next section. Yet the willingness of the press to make speculative connections was pronounced and it is evident that the Second International was also seen as something more than just the descendent of the IWA. Particularly important here was the connection to anarchism and the suggestion that the Second International was likely harbouring a significant cohort of violently inclined anarchist fellow-travellers – a contention bluntly summed up by *The Newcastle Weekly Courant* in September 1889, when it commented that the Second International was 'a dirty gathering of communists and cut-throats'.[26] Indeed, belief in the covert presence of anarchist delegates at the various congresses of the Second International was undiminished by reporting of protracted deliberations over whether or not to include anarchists. (The fact anarchist delegates were excluded from all of the Second International's congresses had little effect either.) Indeed, the suspicion that 'The purely Socialist and Semi-Socialist factions naturally wish to introduce Anarchists into the Congress' (*The Yorkshire Herald*, 1893) seemed warranted given that, in the words of the *Morning Post* (1891), 'those who without committing themselves to any open support of anarchy were yet indignant when the insane persons who proclaim

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[25] For 'citizens', see, for example: *Pall Mall Gazette* [hereafter, *PMG*] (18 Jul. 1889), p. 6; ibid., (19 Jul. 1889), p. 1. For biographies, see, for example: short biographies of Leo Frankel and Amilcare Cipriani in 1889, and Mr. M. Lapitsky in 1893. *Birmingham Daily Post* [hereafter, *BDP*] (27 Jul. 1889), p. 5; *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* [hereafter, *AWJ*] (02 Aug. 1889), p. 6; *Reynolds's Newspaper* [hereafter, *Reynolds's*] (08 Oct. 1893), p. 1. For the singing of revolutionary songs, see, for example: *Times* (30 Aug. 1907), p. 5. The *Morning Post* also reported, in September 1900, that 'members of the International Socialist Congress proceeded this morning to the cemetery of Père Lachaise in order to lay a wreath on the grave of the Communists. After speeches had been delivered, the Socialists marched past the grave amid cries of "Vive l'Internationale" and "Vive la Commune!" *Morning Post* (29 Sep. 1900), p. 5. See, also: *Times* (29 Sep. 1900), p. 5. Jean Baptiste Sipido, soon after to attempt the assassination of the Prince of Wales, was later reported to have attended these demonstrations. See, for example: *Standard* (29 Oct. 1900), p. 7; *The Leeds Mercury* [hereafter, *LM*] (03 Nov. 1900), p. 2.

[26] *Newcastle Weekly Courant* [hereafter, *NWC*] (07 Sep. 1889), p. 4. In 1891, an Italian and a French delegate to the Brussels Congress (respectively: Merlino, attending under the name Levy, and Chanvieres) were arrested and deported by the Belgian police. See, for example: *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* [hereafter, *N-EDG*] (19 Aug. 1891), p. 2; *GH* (19 Aug. 1891), p. 7; *Morning Post* (19 Aug. 1891), p. 5; *Yorkshire Herald, and York Herald* [hereafter, *YH*] (19 Aug. 1891), p. 4; and, *Lloyd's* (23 Aug. 1891), p. 4. *The Times*, in 1896, also reported that 'evidence of a Socialist belief that to inspire terror by threat of violence is legitimate in their struggle for power' had been abundant at the London congress of that year. *Times* (15 Jul. 1896), p. 7.

themselves Anarchists were excluded from its deliberations'.[27] As the monthly journal *Fun* noted, in its poem of August 11th 1896, there was always the sense that, willingly or not, socialism was providing cover for the revolutionary agenda of anarchist radicals:

> The Socialists in conclave met
>   The Universe to fix,
> In pride, objected with a set
>   Of Anarchists to mix.
>
> But words (and fists) that flew about
>   And ears (and eyes) assailed,
> Soon left us little room to doubt,
>   That Anarchy prevailed.[28]

Equally, suspicions regarding the darker, anarchist underside of the Second International blended with affirmations that it *might* signal something still more ominous and dangerous than anarchism: the formation of a united, globally oriented, anti-capitalist political Left. As *The Times* reported in August 1891, describing the Brussels Congress of that month:

> The wage workers of Europe were invited to unite to put down the domination of capital, and to emancipate themselves and their fellows from the degradation of wagedom [...] the doom of the offending capitalist was pronounced with general consent, his prompt extinction being clearly the thing most necessary for the peace and prosperity of the world.[29]

The Belfast News-letter warned of much the same, noting that although it was important to attend to the concerns of the disenfranchised and disaffected, it was just as important for the public not to be swayed by arguments put forth by radical internationalists of all stripes, and to 'avoid every enterprise tending to the turbulence and confusion [and], in fact, the chaos, at the end of the path indicated by the crude theorists known as Socialists, Nihilists, Irreconcilables, or whatever name they may choose to adopt, in order to realise their factitious propensities.'[30] Or again as *The Standard* reported in 1896, it was believed that the London Congress of that year would:

> symbolise the International propagation of the Socialist conflict of classes still more than its predecessors, the great International Congresses of

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[27] *YH* (12 Aug. 1893), p. 4; *Morning Post* (21 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

[28] *Fun* (11 Aug. 1896), p. 60.

[29] *Times* (24 Aug. 1891), p. 7.

[30] As the *Belfast News-Letter* noted in August 1891, though the demands of *trades unions* were legitimately to be listened to, and the grievances of moderate socialists were certainly not without merit: *BN-L* (27 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

> Paris, Brussels, and Zurich […] No other Party can show so close a cohesion and such a brotherly community of innumerable people of kindred sentiments of almost all countries, both on this side of the ocean and the other.[31]

By the Edwardian period, the creation of the International Socialist Bureau and the Socialist Inter-Parliamentary Committee in 1907 (tasked respectively with representing organised internationalist socialism and the co-ordination of parliamentary socialist movements in the intervals between congresses) were felt to stand 'eloquent testimony to the fondness of Socialists for the international idea', and an acute consciousness amongst those it represented that 'under varying national circumstances' those attending the congresses of the Second International felt that they were 'fighting a single battle.'[32] Indeed, such was the seeming potency of the Second International that just the year before, in 1906, *The Times* had issued the following words of caution: 'In a word, it [the Second International] is world-wide, and growing – undoubtedly growing. To ignore the fact would be foolish'.[33]

Crumbling loyalties

Yet, what, precisely were the 'facts' – how dangerous was it, even potentially? Certainly the Second International represented something like the emergence of a sense of international solidarity on the part of socialists, and even on the part of the working classes more broadly. As *PMG* noted in 1889, 'the important point' to remember about working-class issues from now on was 'that, small or great, they are to be discussed internationally.'[34] Some descriptions went even further, as when the *Glasgow Herald* described the Brussels congress of 1891 as 'an assemblage of representatives of the Human Race', and when the *PMG* noted that as 'Capitalists have no country but the cashbox; workers must have but one – Humanity'.[35] More commonly, this was dwelt upon as a matter of the internationalist Left's truly global-representative scope. Warming to this theme, the *PMG* article (continued from above)

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[31] *Standard* (27 Jul. 1896), p. 5.

[32] *Manchester Guardian* [hereafter, *MG*] (21 Aug. 1907), p. 6.

[33] *Times* (07 Sep. 1907), p. 9.

[34] *PMG* (24 Apr. 1889), p. 2.

[35] *GH* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 4; *PMG* (22 Jul. 1889), p. 4.

described the Paris Congress of 1889 as 'no gathering of famous men… but a vast parliament of labour, consisting of duly elected representatives of organized groups of workers in every European country … as well as the United States.'[36] The Second International thus came to be seen as representative of 'the international views and feelings of the workers – men and women – the world over', as *Reynolds's Newspaper* put it in August 1893.[37] Such 'global' language reflected widespread acceptance that the Second International was broadly representative of an international constituency of internationalist sympathy, and was reinforced by the internationalist nature of those policies discussed and agreed at the various congresses of the Second International.[38]

It is no surprise, then, that the kind of connections and conflations explored above were fused with another significant axis of worried speculation: namely, the growing influence of 'continental' forms of politics over the British working classes, and their potential to unbalance the British political system by

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[36] *PMG* (17 Jul. 1889), p. 6. Moreover, as the *Dundee Courier and Argus* stated, in August 1891, 'with respect to its international character, it may be described as the most representative of its kind held in the history of the movement.' *Dundee Courier & Argus* [hereafter *DC&A*] (19 Aug. 1891], p. 3. *Reynolds's* similarly noted that the 1891 Brussels Congress was 'the most representative that has ever assembled.' *Reynolds's* (23 Aug. 1891), p. 1. In 1893, *The Standard* argued that the Zurich congress of that year truly was 'an International Parliament of Labour', and the *Leeds Mercury* also reported in 1896 that the London Congress promised 'to be thoroughly representative of European labour.' *Standard* (03 Aug. 1893), p. 5; *LM* (25 Jul. 1892), p. 7.

[37] *Reynolds's*, (20 Aug. 1893), p. 1. Even, for example, in reports of the failure of the Paris Congress to merge with the concurrent Marxist congress (also taking place in Paris), there existed a tendency to opine that this division did not reflect the state of contemporary 'labour' opinion, which was felt to evince a sense of 'great common purpose.' *Reynolds's*, (21 Jul. 1889), p. 4. See, also: *Daily News* (19 Jul. 1889), p. 5. Accordingly, as a *Glasgow Herald* editorial of July 23rd 1889 argued, 'their aims are reputedly the same, although their efforts may find different forms of expression.' *GH* (23 Jul. 1889), p. 4. This was not uniformly the case, newspaper coverage in the run up to the various Congresses did feature reports of disagreements between various delegations, and of acrimonious debates within various leaderships over whether or not to attend. *Lloyd's* (11 Nov. 1888), p. 6; *Freeman's* (18 Mar. 1889), p. 6; *Reynolds's* (24 Mar. 1889), p. 8; *Reynolds's* (12 May 1889), p. 3; *BDP* (30 Apr. 1890), p. 8; *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* [hereafter, *S&RI*] (30 Apr. 1890), p. 4; *Morning Post* (30 Apr. 1890), p. 7. At the same time, however, coverage tended mostly to focus on consensus building efforts, or the desirability of consensus building, see: *Reynolds's* (07 Apr. 1889), p. 3; *LM* (30 Apr. 1890), p. 8; *Daily News* (17 Sep. 1889), p. 5; and, *Reynolds's* (21 Jul. 1889), p. 4. Often, they simply reported delegates' decisions to attend the congresses of the International. *DC&A* (02 Jul. 1889), p. 3; *BDP* (03 Sep. 1890), p. 5; *BN-L* (04 Sep. 1890), p. 1; *Reynolds's* (12 Jul. 1891), p. 3. They also relayed, verbatim, statements of the warmth of feeling between various labour groups from different nations: *LM* (03 Sep. 1890), p. 8; *Standard* (03 Sep. 1890), p. 2.

[38] In 1896, the *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* argued that the purpose of the upcoming London Congress would be 'to draw up an international programme of the immediate demands of the working classes.' *S&RI* (04 Apr. 1896), p. 6.

breaking down the liberal governing consensus. As noted by *The Morning Post* in August 1891, the British working classes could be dis-embedded from their natural loyalties by exposure to imported continental doctrines which held 'that existing political parties concern only the upper and middle classes, and that the only policy for the conventional working man is one which aims exclusively at the aggrandisement of labour'.[39] At a more basic level, what the rise of internationalist Left-wing organisations was really thought to signify, as *The Graphic* noted in August 1891, was 'the deep-seated feeling of the working classes that the relations between Capital and Labour are not satisfactory, and that some approach must be made to a less unequal distribution of material advantages. This feeling has been steadily growing, and statesmen cannot afford to neglect it.'[40]

Of course, the Second International was not the only factor in play. Another was mass immigration and the importation of radicalised forms of political agitation from different political contexts in Europe and Russia (more on this in Chapter Four). At the same time, there was the related issue of Britain's tradition of asylum, which by the final decade of the nineteenth century was increasingly (though by no means universally) coming to be seen as a dangerous indulgence, given that it permitted revolutionary demagogues to preach their creeds *in Britain*, demanding the destruction of the very established order which protected them from their continental pursuers. Still further, there was the rise of more aggressive trade unionism (or a 'new' kind of unionism, an

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[39] However, as the *Morning Post* noted later than month, with relief: 'the English delegates, conscious of the slow but steady means by which their own position has been attained are naturally perplexed and disappointed by the rhetorical levity indicated in the fantastic outbursts of the extreme Socialists […] The advantages of combination possessed by them cause them to view with distrust the visionary and revolutionary schemes of men who have failed to believe in moderate counsels.' *Morning Post* (21 Aug. 1891), p. 4. The *Morning Post* also noted that the Brussels Congress would be considering 'the adoption of a general and uniform designation to indicate all the labour parties of the world. The Central Socialist Revolutionary Committee of Paris proposes that the designation in question should be "The International Socialist Party," whilst the Belgian Committee propose "The International Socialist Workmen's Party." Here and elsewhere, the term Socialist is almost ostentatiously introduced'. *Morning Post* (15 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

[40] *The Graphic* (22 Aug. 1891), pp. 4-5. As *The Graphic* reminded its readers, however, as 'legitimate' as these feelings were, international political meetings like those of the Second International tended to be 'watched by the various European Governments, and there were journalists who wrote about them as if the very bases of civilization were being shaken […because] If they were united, it would be possible for them to form one of the strongest organisations the world has known.' Ibid.

innovation increasingly at odds with the classic Smilesean liberal traditions) and the growing power of the labour movement.

Nonetheless, the Second International served to focus concerns regarding the 'infiltration' of continental ideas and agents. Indeed, 'evidence', rather than mere suspicions, began to emerge during the 1880s and 1890s that this infiltration might already be happening. The Paris Congress of 1889, for example, was widely and worriedly reported as featuring more English delegates than any other previous international labour congress.[41] Moreover, throughout the 1890s there was a consistent tendency to report that the number of English delegates was increasing and that English delegates were played an increasingly active and influential role in proceedings than at previous gatherings – even though this was clearly not the case.[42] Expressions of internationalist solidarity and ambition from British trades unions to the delegates of various congresses also reinforced the sense of an increasingly active and numerous internationalist constituency amongst the burgeoning British Left, as evinced by the following Trade Union Protest Committee's statement from May 1889 (reprinted by *Reynolds' Newspaper*), which outlined its attitude to the Second International:

> We want men who will defend the interests of labour, and will not fear to bring forward new ideas, even if they should be frowned upon by the chiefs of official Liberalism. The labour question is essentially an international one… we are now prepared to declare, with pleasure, that the prospects of a thoroughly representative and successful Congress are so encouraging that all trade unionists who desire to promote international solidarity of the workers must feel an intensified enthusiasm.[43]

This quote neatly encapsulates much of what was feared about the Second International: namely, that it was undermining national loyalties and established traditions of relatively mild labourism.

Declarations such as this – along with, for example, an address sent by the Amalgamated Society of Tailors of the United Kingdom's to the Brussels Congress of 1891, which expressed the Society's 'hopes for the speedy emancipation of our class through the international solidarity of labour' – led

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[41] *PMG* (13 Jul. 1889), p. 4; *BDP* (15 Jul. 1889), p. 8; *PMG* (17 Jul. 1889), p. 6.

[42] *PMG* (17 Jul. 1889), p. 6; *BDP* (15 Jul. 1889), p. 8; *Times* (13 Jul. 1889), p. 7.

[43] *Reynolds's* (12 May 1889), p. 1.

many newspapers to begin commenting on the internationalism of the workers' movement in Britain during the 1890s.[44] Even the relatively radical *PMG* commented that there was 'every reason to believe that at that [Paris] congress the organised advanced working-class party throughout Europe [would] formulate alike its immediate and its ultimate demands.'[45] Moreover, so the *PMG* argued, it could 'no longer be argued with even a show of reason that the workers of Great Britain stand aloof from their fellows on the Continent on social questions', referencing the 'growing dissatisfaction, not only among the workers, but among all classes not directly interested in capitalistic industry, with the existing state of things.'[46] This sense of the English working classes as standing alongside their continental confreres, and as vulnerable to forms of politics that sought to detach them from the normal functioning of British politics, was commonplace. In July 1891, *Reynolds's Newspaper* which noted that Englishmen did not stand aloof from the wider international context of class struggle, and in fact occupied a central position in the history of 'the movement':

> The English working man has always led the struggle between Capital and Labour, and in every new development of it seems to be his destiny to be in the van. The working men of other nations have been incited by his success to imitate the policy by which it was won [...] The chief question to be discussed at the International Congress [in Brussels, 1891] will be the scheme for the Federation of Labour throughout the world.[47]

By 1893, even *The Manchester Guardian*, a consistently calm liberal voice in this period, was noting that the labour movement in Britain was becoming increasingly internationalist, with its report on the May Day protest marches of that year explicitly stating that:

> an agitation like this gives a violent shock to many existing conceptions of national life and feeling. It accords but ill with that picturesque form of patriotism which assumes as a matter of course that [...] its rich citizens are the most generous and its labouring people the most contented. Nor does it consist with the too common conception of international relations as little more than a series of continued efforts to avoid quarrels on points of national pique [...] The best men among the organisers of internationalism in labour movements earnestly reject the idea that the prosecution of traditional quarrels and old affairs of honour between one

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[44] *Daily News* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 3. This was widely reported elsewhere: *DC&A* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 3; *Freeman's* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 2; *LM* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 5; *Northern Echo* [hereafter, *NE*] (18 Aug. 1891), p. 3; *Morning Post* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 1.

[45] *PMG* (24 Apr. 1889), p. 2.

[46] Ibid.

[47] *Reynolds's* (26 Jul. 1896), p. 1.

country and another is a higher object than the alleviation of misery and the diffusion of civilization among the helpless and brutalized people of both.[48]

Dismissals and denials

The question of what the Second International really signified, however, returns once more, for the press spent just as much time striving to differentiate between the British working classes and their more overtly politicised continental peers; *and* denying that the Second International actually represented any significant level of internationalist sympathy, in Britain or elsewhere.[49] As the *Yorkshire Herald* claimed in August 1891, 'The representative character of the Congress was more apparent than real', arguing that, fortunately, 'the great industrial classes are not socialistic, and, therefore, the pernicious doctrines enunciated are not likely to find a lodgement in the mind of those for whom they were specially intended.'[50] Just as often it was noted that the Second International's 'primary condition [was] that the association shall absolutely respect the autonomy of each national party, and shall not attempt to interfere with the internal affairs of associated countries. Herein is to be noted the marked divergence from the platform of the old International.'[51] *The Times*, in a similar fashion, argued in July 1899 that

> the International has been resuscitated on lines diametrically opposed to those on which is was founded. There will be no central council having the right to interfere with the Labour parties of the different countries; but a federal Labour bureau, possessing no rights and no powers, and with the sole mission of facilitating intercourse between the different countries.[52]

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[48] *MG* (03 May 1893), p. 5. Even those who regularly denied that the internationalist socialist movement was as powerful as 'the socialists' claimed still tended to speak in terms of a trajectory which nevertheless ended with kind of internationalist movement which they feared. As *The Times* noted in September 1907: 'the concerted strategy, the matured plan, the discipline, and the complete combination of action, which alone avail for an attack on a strongly-intrenched [*sic*] fortress, seem to still be a long way off.' *Times* (07 Sep. 1907), p. 9.

[49] There were also regular comments to the effect that those who claimed to speak on behalf of the 'masses' or 'workers' were not, in fact, in themselves particularly working class. See, for example: '"Socialists" and "Workers"', *Times* (12 Sep. 1907), p. 7.

[50] *YH* (25 Aug. 1891), p. 4. In the same month, the *Manchester Times* similarly reported that anti-Alien resolutions adopted by the Tailor's Conference in Liverpool had thrown 'grave discredit on the representative character of the delegates who progress to speak for English labour' at the Brussels Congress of 1891. *Manchester Times* (28 Aug. 1891), p. 1.

[51] *GH* (23 Jul. 1889), p. 4.

[52] *Times* (18 Aug. 1889), p. 9.

Simply put, it was sometimes stated that the Second International was a completely different beast to the IWA and that the Second International did not represent any significant constituency of internationalist feeling, at least not in any direct and uncomplicated way.

Equally, the prospects of internationalist socialism as a form of government were always a matter for debate. In August 1891, *The Belfast News-Letter* had already summed up the opinion of most of the British press on this topic, arguing that 'the brotherhood of man, as it is understood by the Socialists, never did, and never could exist'.[53] By 1893, the *Glasgow Herald* was arguing that the International's third congress, held in Zurich in August of that year, was 'destined, like so many of its predecessors, to demonstrate the futility of the International propaganda.'[54] This position was more succinctly stated by the *Leeds Mercury* in 1896, which noted that the congresses of the Second International seemed more often to resemble a 'polyglot bear-garden' than the 'world of happiness and peace' which socialists were reported to believe 'would rise upon the ruins of capitalism.'[55] Even the idea the congresses themselves were particularly unified was regularly the subjected of derision. As the *Glasgow Herald* noted in August 1891, as the Second International was meeting in Brussels: 'The rivalry between the different groups of Socialists is so strong that one may well doubt whether the week will pass without fierce conflict, and another demonstration of the fact that "Internationalism" is but a phrase.'[56]

Meanwhile, verbatim reporting and commentary on the various congresses of the Second International tended to indicate very specifically that English attendees were not moved by the 'internationalist' cause in any particularly potent manner. Among other examples, Keir Hardie's widely reported speech to the 1889 Paris Congress argued: 'In Britain, they were a cold-blooded, practical people, and if progress had to be made, it must, in their opinion, be the result of something more tangible than talk of a bloody

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[53] *BN-L* (27 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

[54] *GH* (08 Aug. 1893), p. 5.

[55] *LM* (28 July 1896), p. 4.

[56] The same article would also go on to ask: 'What have the organised trades of Great Britain in common with the dissatisfied and struggling workers of the Continent?' And yet, TUC representatives were still at the Brussels Congress, as they were at each of its other eleven meetings between 1889 and 1912. *GH* (18 Aug. 1891), p. 4.

revolution which nobody believed in in Britain, and which would do no good although inaugurated tomorrow.'[57] This sentiment was echoed throughout the British press and throughout the period. Even *Reynolds's Newspaper*, staunchly internationalist during this period, regularly decried the divisions of the Left and during the later 1890s began to argue against the idea that the Second International was a properly representative body. 'The most striking feature about the International London Congress is that not one of the men who have taken a conspicuous part in it is a "workman"', it wrote in 1896, adding: We are not finding the least fault with any of these gentlemen. But it is as well that the truth should be known that the "leaders" of a working class "Congress" are not themselves "workers" in the usual acceptation of that term.[58] The broad British press position in relation to the Second International was aptly summed up by the *Glasgow Herald* in 1889 and *Reynolds' Newspaper* in 1891, which argued (respectively) that:

> the toilers and spinners of the world may do much for themselves by international combination. They have assuredly as much moral right to combine for certain conditions of labour as have capitalists to combine to enhance the price of commodities. But while international agreement among workers for a common end is possible, it is by no means probable.[59]

Moreover: 'The idealist's dream of a federation of all the Labour interests of the civilized world is still, and must remain for ages to come, only a dream.'[60]

Comments in this derisive vein continued through to the Edwardian period. In August 1907, *The Times* noted the following in a report on the congress then taking place in Stuttgart: 'Under the cover of grandiloquent proclamations of brotherhood and international solidarity, it is surprising to note how many serious differences, not to say animosities, lurk hidden behind the stock phrases of the revolutionary vocabulary.' Two weeks later, it noted that 'the international solidarity which is an essential condition for their success has only a nominal existence.' And yet, tellingly, in spite of this, just a week

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[57] *DC&A* (23 Jul. 1889), p. 2.

[58] *Reynolds's* (02 Aug. 1896), p. 1. Only a week later *Reynolds'* would declare the London Congress as a failure, and a lost opportunity for the internationalist movement. Ibid., (09 Aug. 1896), p. 5. Later that year, the *Ipswich Journal* would describe the London Congress as having been 'scandalous'. *Ipswich Journal* [hereafter *IJ*] (19 Jul. 1896), p. 4.

[59] *GH* (23 Jul. 1889), p. 5.

[60] *Reynolds's* (23 Aug. 1891), p. 1.

later *The Times* was affirming quite the opposite: 'Every impartial observer must admit that International Socialism has never before held so imposing a demonstration as the congress which terminated yesterday.'[61]

Evidently, then, press coverage of the congresses of the Second International created not one but *multiple* narratives. On the one hand, there was the image of the Second International as the descendent and even at times the reincarnation of the IWA. A related variant was the narrative of the Second International as a truly international body, which really did represent an upwelling of internationalist feeling amongst the global working classes. Combined, these related narratives produced a sense that all dissidents and subversives (and most particularly socialists and the institution of the Second International itself) were, so to speak, guilty by discursive association, given the popular press's commitment to speculating on, or simply asserting, the existence of wider links between the Second International and all kinds of political creeds.

On the other hand, these conspiracist narratives were always drawn alongside reporting and commentary that moved in a decidedly more sceptical direction. There was never a consistently conspiracist publication in this period. Every single evocation of international co-ordination, authority, structure and power was contested and debated in the British press; and some of these denials appeared only weeks before or after more conspiracist claims affirming the Second International's subversive potential.

It is thus difficult to generalise about the nature of this coverage, save that it attests to certain kind of fear and fascination. What is clear is that this confident yet contradictory reporting created an environment in which speculation regarding radical activism and association, of whatever sort, was judged legitimate. Put another way, it helped to create a very confusing informational environment, permeated with a sense of *potential* threat and, most of all, deep uncertainty about what exactly was going on. As we shall see in the

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[61] *Times* (23 Aug. 1907), p. 10. Two weeks later, *The Times* noted that 'the international solidarity which is an essential condition for their success has only a nominal existence.' Ibid. (07 September 1907), 9. In spite of this, *The Times* was also forced to note, less than a week later, that 'Every impartial observer must admit that International Socialism has never before held so imposing a demonstration as the congress which terminated yesterday.' Ibid., (30 Aug. 1907), p. 5.

final section of this chapter, conspiracism of this sort found its most public expression in the several terrorism panics of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. But it was most fully expressed in so-called dynamite literature, to which we now turn.

TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS IN POPULAR LITERATURE

Some novelists working in the late Victorian terrorism genre were clearly concerned with little more than the portrayal of terrorists as farcically misguided cranks and lunatics.[62] Others, generally the more literarily capable, provided their readers with nuanced explorations of contemporary terrorist conspiracies and plots, exploring the possibilities afforded to the secretive radical or revolutionary by modern technologies and ideas in texts ripe with irony, tragedy and farce.[63] All, however, tended to express themselves through the same assumptions regarding extensive organisational structures, hidden agency and malign potency that surfaced now and then in the coverage of the Second International. Importantly, in contrast to press coverage of the internationalist Left, the conspiracism of the popular terrorism genre was absolutely explicit and direct, presenting detailed visions of secretive insurrectionary organisations, operating through hidden – if also global – infrastructures of co-ordination and control.

In terms of literary quality, it must be admitted that most of the texts discussed below were far from the nuanced descriptions of 'revolutionary' activism to be found in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* or *Under Western Eyes*. Almost none of these, moreover, exhibited the subtlety and authorial deftness of G.K. Chesterton in *The Man Who Was Thursday*, which simultaneously engaged popular conceptions of revolutionary conspiracy at the same time as subverting and lambasting them. Nevertheless, it is in the popular terrorism literature of the period where popular conspiracism regarding terrorism found its fullest realisation and, accordingly, where popular conspiracism was

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[62] See, for example: R.L. Stevenson and F. Van der Grift, *More New Arabian Nights* (London: Longmans, 1885).

[63] See, for example: J. Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (London: Methuen, 1907).

subjected to its ripest satire – as indeed with espionage literature, as we saw in the last chapter.

As Barbara Melchiori notes in *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*, most works in the dynamite genre were saturated with 'the sense of foreboding and threat, and of a great upheaval from underneath, which pervaded intellectuals in the dynamite years'.[64] They were also drawn, she adds, against the background of a growing Victorian concern with the 'social question'.[65] Of course, many social novels of the mid-Victorian period had dealt with plots and conspiracies and their relationship to the prevailing order of things. As Albert Pionke has argued, these social novels tended to use the spectre of secret societies as a mechanism for social discipline, in particular applying the label ('secret society') to Irish and other unruly constituencies as a method of limiting their power and channelling it into petty plots. As the Victorian period progressed, however, the dynamics of the interplay between order and dissidence were irrevocably changed by a technological advance whose consequences persist to the present day: namely, the invention of dynamite by Alfred Nobel in 1868.

Dynamite changed everything in terms of the possibilities of dissidence. Simply put, prior to the invention of dynamite, those seeking to express their political feelings through the use of explosive force operated under a series of very real constraints placed upon them by the limitations of gunpowder as an explosive. Gunpowder is unstable and bulky, difficult to produce and store safely, and dangerous to transport and deploy. Moreover, gunpowder deflagrates. In layman's terms, this means that it burns at a rapid but steady rate, which limits the force of its blast as the wall of air-pressure produced by gunpowder combustion never exceeds the speed of sound. This is not to say that gunpowder is not explosive or hugely destructive if properly handled. The gunpowder plotters, for example, would certainly have succeeded in killing King James had they been able to blow up thirty-six barrels of gunpowder beneath Parliament in 1605. However, as demonstrated by the plotters' fates, the risks involved in secretly placing quantities of gunpowder

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[64] Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*, p. 6.

[65] Loc. cit.

sufficiently large to do significant damage to do anything important placed almost insurmountable barriers in the path of those wishing to demolish any symbols of the established order. As such, gunpowder is ill suited to the task of illicit demolition, and as a result, 'terrorists' were ill equipped to present a serious threat to the forces of order for much of the nineteenth century.

Dynamite, in contrast, positively invited secretive use. Unlike gunpowder, dynamite *detonates*, using a primer charge to ensure the simultaneous combustion of *all* explosive materials, consequently producing a supersonic wall of air-pressure. The result is a destructive blast several orders of magnitude more powerful than comparable quantities of gunpowder. In terms of tradecraft, the invention of dynamite had several consequences. The relatively simple and safe methods by which dynamite was produced made it widely available, easy to acquire and effectively impossible to trace. Its stability also made it easy and safe to transport and place, making it ideal for those who wished to carry out the destruction of highly public symbols of state power – be they architectural or corporeal – and walk away from the scene, though there was always a steep learning curve for the novice dynamitard. The invention of dynamite thus meant that there was potentially no target which could not be blown up by even the tiniest revolutionary cell, or even simply a committed individual. In consequence, in a matter of years, the existing dynamics by which the forces of order and dissent interacted were changed almost beyond recognition. For the disenfranchised and dispossessed, it seemed that nothing would ever be the same again, for dynamite had democratised violent dissent. As the anti-hero Zero declares in Robert Louis Stevenson and Fanny Vandegrift's *More Arabian Nights*, published in 1886: 'a star – the star of dynamite – has risen for the oppressed.'[66]

Another feature that distinguishes the late Victorian period is the concept of 'propaganda of the deed'. The idea had begun to emerge in the 1870s, as formulated by Carlo Pisacane, and was entirely unrelated to the invention of dynamite. (In fact, propaganda of the deed had no *necessary* connection to violence. Its origins lie in the more pacific words of Francis of

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[66] Stevenson and Van der Grift, *More New Arabian Nights*, p. 316.

Assisi.[67] Ghandi's pacifism is an example of propaganda by deed.) However, by the early 1880s the association between explosive-force, politics and propaganda of the deed had been firmly established in the writings of anarchists such as Mikhail Bakunin and Johann Most. Although this connection was strongly contested by the likes of Peter Kropotkin and Fernand Pelloutier, it remained popular in anarchist circles and the period 1880–1914 saw an unprecedented wave of assassinations and so-called dynamite 'outrages'. Although Britain never witnessed a dynamite assassination – unless Martial Bourdin's self-detonation in 1897 at Greenwich is counted – within fifteen years of the invention of dynamite, Britain's cities were rocked by a four-year (1881–5) dynamite bombing campaign carried out by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the Special Irish Branch of the London Metropolitan Police – the first strut of what would later become Britain's secret state and Britain's first modern secret policing institution – was founded in 1883. It was a direct response to the fact that established methods of policing were utterly inadequate to the task of rooting out committed conspiracy in the age of dynamite.[68]

Such was the change wrought in the dynamics of order and dissent that Britain in the 1880s and 1890s saw the publication of a vast number of 'terrorist' and 'dynamite' novels. However, in contrast to the espionage genre, dynamite never produced an author in the mould of Le Queux, or Oppenheim. There were, however, important authors, whose careers cast some light on the relationship of the genre to the wider literary world of the nineteenth century. For example, the prolific late Victorian science-fiction writer George Griffith published his most famous work, *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893), in the popular Magazine *Black and White*. *Black and White* had, less than a year before, commissioned and published Admiral Philip Colomb's hugely successful *The Great War of 1892*, demonstrating its peculiar ability to surf the rising tide of

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[67] 'let them show their love by the works they do for each other, according to the Apostle says 'let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' St. Francis of Assisi, Z. el Bey, *The Complete Writings of St Francis of Assisi* (London: Foreign Language Study, 2009), p. 28.

[68] Such was the extent to which Britain's police forces were unable to counter the Fenian mainland bombing campaign that the British Home Secretary, William Harcourt, almost suffered a nervous breakdown in attempting to do something, *anything* to combat the wave of dynamite outrages which washed over Britain in the early 1880s. Porter, *Origins of the Vigilant State*, p. 38.

invasion fears in late Victorian Britain with an adept combination of profit-making panic-mongering. However, *Black and White* was no mere tabloid rag. Nor was *Pearson's Magazine*, which published Griffith's sequel to *The Angel of the Revolution*, *The Syren of the Skies*, in 1894. These magazines were famous for publishing short-stories and serials written by such renowned (and highly remunerated) authors as Arthur Conan-Doyle, Henry James, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Bram Stoker, Jerome K. Jerome, H.G. Wells and William Le Queux – operating amidst the surge in magazine publications and readerships in the later Victorian period. Evidently, then, Griffith and his works sat comfortably in the company of some of England's finest (and best paid) writers, as well as the most important, popular and profitable literary trend of the period: the invasion narrative.[69] The American novelist Richard Savage was equally as prolific as Griffith, though he only wrote one novel in the 'dynamite' genre: *The Anarchist: A Story of Today*, published in both England and America in 1894. That Savage's text resonated strongly with Griffiths' two key 'terrorist' works stands as evidence for his qualities as a popular author, attuned to the popular mood, though this does not particularly differentiate him from the majority of 'terrorism' authors, who tended only to write a single novel in the genre, and then move on. As should be evident in the following section, the terrorist literature of this period had much in common with late nineteenth century invasion literature, in its mobilisation of key conspiracist concerns, such as subversion, infiltration carried out through international networked systems of agency, controlled by pseudo-divine figures possessed of tremendous and secretive power.

The 'social question'

Much of this terrorism literature was concerned, if often indirectly, with what contemporaries called the 'social question'. Crudely, this was the question of the condition of the labouring poor and how it might be improved – an issue that had been central to many mid-Victorian 'social' novels such as Disraeli's

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[69] H.G. Wells once reputedly described Griffith's *The Outlaws of the Air* (1895) as an 'aeronautical masterpiece', and several of his later works, such as *The War in the Air* (1908) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933), certainly took up the idea of a 'pax aeronautica'. For a reference to the above quote popularly attributed to wells, see: A.A. Rubbra, 'Alan Arnold Griffith, 1893-1963', *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society*, 10 (1964):117-136.

Sybil (1845), Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) and Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866). In the 1880s and 1890s, however, the nature of the confrontation between order and dissent, rich and poor, changed, as a lengthy series of cyclical trade depressions bit into the value of working-class wages and began eroding the popular consensus that a liberal polity could generate enduring prosperity by ensuring that the economy was interfered with as little as possible. Likewise, social investigators, journalists and Christian-evangelical missionaries highlighted the existence of urban 'residuum' – a term first used in the 1860s – that was growing rather than diminishing. General (William) Booth's 1891 investigation, *In Darkest England*, suggested that no less than one tenth of the British population lived lives of desperate poverty, ill-health and semi-criminality: a so-called 'submerged tenth'.

Although rarely developed in a subtle fashion, just this context featured in the terrorism genre. Certainly anarchists and anarchism were increasingly demonized and to a large extent dehumanised in the press and popular fiction; but in fictional accounts at least there was an equally strong tendency to view anarchism and the use of dynamite as an entirely logical consequence of urban poverty. In short, whilst the rich and respectable might prosper, those cast aside by the march of so-called 'progress' would inevitably become disaffected and resort to violence. 'Do you know what it is to be poor?', asks one the characters in Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895). 'This is the grinding curse that keeps down noble aspiration under a load of ignoble care; this is the moral cancer that eats into the heart of an otherwise well-intentioned human create and makes him envious and malignant, and inclined to the use of dynamite.'[70] Indeed, we might speak of a kind of anarchist 'residuum': poor, broken, but also inclined to violence and criminality. H. Barton Baker's *Robert Miner, Anarchist*, for instance, describes a city scene characterised by 'a sea of awful faces, of men and women, blood-craving as tigers, merciless as hyenas, vicious as monkeys.'[71]

Two further tendencies should be noted, besides the affirmation of a causal connection (of some sort) between destitution, disaffection and the use

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[70] M. Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan* (London: Methuen, 1895), p. 1.

[71] H.B. Baker, *Robert Miner, Anarchist* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1902), pp. 156-157.

of dynamite. One was to conflate many forms of dissidence into one imaginary subversive bloc; the other, building on this, was to invoke the spectre of impending social breakdown on a grand scale. These tendencies can be found in social novels such as Walter Besant's *Children of Gibeon* (1886), George Gissing's *Demos* (1886) and W.H. Mallock's *The Old Order Changes* (1886), as well as in the press (see previous section); but it was in the terrorist genre where they came to fruition.[72] As Maestro Marzio Pandolfi reflects in Marion Crawford's *Marzio's Crucifix* (1887), 'In Germany it ['socialist'/'socialism'] means an ingenious individual of restricted financial resources, who generally fails to blow up some important personage with wet dynamite. In Italy, a socialist is an anarchist pure and simple, who wishes to destroy everything existing for the sake of dividing a wealth which does not exist at all.'[73] Likewise, Richard Savage's *The Anarchist* (1894) conflated all forms of dissidence in its depiction of an ascendant insurrectionary movement. At one point, the novel's early protagonist, David Hartley, is asked: 'Are you blind to the growth of organized resistance? Trades-unions, labor[sic.]-unions, socialistic clubs, agitation, secret societies, anarchism, nihilism, in its drastic remedy of "dynamite" for every political and social ailment!'[74]

At the same time, authors invoked the possibility of social disorder and destruction. Not all of this was without reference to lives of the poorest and some sense of sympathy. In Charles Gleig's *When All Men Starve* (1898), for instance, whilst the forces of order are drawn overseas by imperial commitments, the forces of disorder and anarchy rise up; and what follows is partly an exercise in the forgetting of misery:

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[72] The fact these novels were all published in 1886 is no coincidence, 1885 having seen the onset of a sudden depression in trade and a resultant rash of strikes and demonstrations, and the period 1881-1885 having witnessed the Fenian bombing campaign. Unsurprisingly, then, the sense of a crumbling, outdated order about to succumb to a series of almost tidal waves of popular protest and disaffection, in these novels, is forever palpable. Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*, p. 190.

[73] M. Crawford, *Marzio's Crucifix*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan & Co., 1887), p. 219. At the same time, such comments also reflected a general tendency towards the criminalisation of political radicalism in the late Victorian terrorism novel. As Edward Jenkins's Mr. Sontag, the detective protagonist of *A Week of Passion or the Dilemma of Mr George Barton the Younger* (1884), noted: 'the Socialistic ideas now allowed to be freely propagated in all free countries, and which are being propagated in spite of authority in others, are developing and producing a large number of criminals.' E. Jenkins, *A Week of Passion on the Dilemma of Mr George Barton the Younger, vol. 1* (London: Remington & Co., 1884), pp. 133-134.

[74] R. Savage, *The Anarchist: A Story of Today* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1894), p. 32.

> From all quarters come men and women and slatternly, drunken girls, until thousands are gathered round the glowing building, shouting cursing, dancing a man-can-can in the flicker of the leading flames … The mob dances its mad dance of anarchy, revelling in the downfall of the Respectabilities, forgetting in this brief hour of triumph, the curse of Labour, the squalid wretchedness of vanished years.[75]

More commonly, however, it was expressed in a more doom-laden, prophetic fashion, whereby the coming disorder was a truly historic event or turning point, but whose grand scale was as yet unsuspected. 'The bells ringing out the nineteenth century may ring in a conflict which, in its political and social importance, will dwarf every other issue of the day', wrote Savage in *The Anarchist: A Story of Today:* 'Its projects will be varied… Its future course will be bold and its vicious attacks must be firmly and promptly met[, and] No one can tell now, what crystallized form of modern society will survive the coming storm.'[76] Or as he put it later on in the novel: 'When the torch of anarchy is lit, it will wrap the world in flames.'[77]

Equally, as in the espionage and invasion genres, this sense of foreboding was dramatized using metaphors of 'surfaces' and 'depths' and 'grounds' and 'edges': of a society teetering on the brink of catastrophe, albeit unknowingly. As Elizabeth Haddon wrote in *Under the Red Flag* (1885):

> assuredly, of all who ever danced upon this earth, none ever danced upon the edge of a more terrible volcano than that which trembled and throbbed under the feet of these light-hearted revellers tonight – happy, unforseeing, rejoicing in the balmy breath of summer, the starlit sky, the warmth and the flowers, with no thought that this fair Paris, whitely beautiful in the sheen of starlight and moonlight, was like a phantasmal or fairy city – a city of palaces which were soon to sink in dust and ashes, beauty that was to be changed for burning while joy and love fled shrieking from a carnival of blood and fire.[78]

This sense of scale should be emphasized, for it is partly what distinguishes popular conspiracism in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Anarchism, terrorism, socialism, poverty: these

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[75] C. Glieg, *When All Men Starve* (London: John Lane, 1898), p. 192.

[76] Savage, *The Anarchist*, pp. 3-4. For Savage, 'Socialism and Communism', both powerful political forces throughout the western world, were 'moving blindly on parallel lines… closely followed by the were-wolf [sic.] of anarchy.' Ibid. It must be noted that Richard Savage was an American writer. However, *The Anarchist* was published in London in 1894 – running through two editions in its first year in print.

[77] Ibid., p. 92.

[78] E. Braddon, *Under the Red Flag* (1885), quoted in Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*, p. 43.

were the ingredients not just of single, localized plots or attacks
(though that is what happened in practice), but of genuinely historical
and international revolutions. 'Under the whole fabric of Society lay
the mines in which a single spark would now explode,' wrote Haddon,
'and above this slumbering volcano the earth was trembling.'[79]
Terroristic, anarchic conspiracies were the very stuff of History, if not
of Progress and Civilization.

Pervasive conspiracy: local, international, global

If terrorism literature commonly described a world riddled with conspiracy,
then this operated in ways great and small, local and international and featured
a vast constellation of variously visible and invisible characters. In narrative
terms, the plots tended to be located in London and for obvious reasons: it
was the economic, political and cultural capital of the largest and most
populous empire the world had ever seen. As Melchiori notes, 'reading the
novels of the 1880s and 1890s we get the impression of a whole network of
anarchist activity in England and particularly in London'.[80] Certainly it is true
that the London described in these works was the site of numerous
conspiracies and acts of violence: Mary Hawker's *Mademoiselle Ixe* (1890)
describes the assassination of a foreign count in London by a Russian
anarchist;[81] Joseph Conrad's short story 'The Informer' depicts the surveillance
of an anarchist group living in Hermione Street in London; and Stevenson and
Vandegrift's 'The Explosive Bomb', from their *More New Arabian Nights*,
narrates a farcical bomber running around London, unable to rid himself of a
bomb timed to detonate in less than an hour.[82] More recently, Antony Taylor
has analysed the primacy of London in the imagined, apocalyptic landscapes of
terrorist literature at this time and it is undeniable that London's urban

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[79] G.C. Griffith, *The Angel of the Revolution* (London: Tower, 1893), p. 63.

[80] Melchiori, *Terrorism in the Late Victorian Novel*, p. 74.

[81] E. Hawker (pseud. Lanoe Falconer), *Mademoiselle Ixe* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1890).

[82] J. Conrad, *A Set of Six* (London: Methuen, 1908), ch. 2, 'The Informer'; Stevenson and Van der Grift, *More New Arabian Nights*, ch. 1, 'The Explosive Bomb'.

landscape provided the canvas upon which much of the anxious imaginations of the genre projected their narratives.[83]

Most of the novels referenced in the preceding subsection were concerned with what might be called petty conspiracy and the actions of the powerless made dangerous by the use of modern weaponry (rifles and dynamite, for instance). However, some of the more 'prophetic' novels described truly global conspiracies and not all of them based in London.[84] These were the more futuristic and 'science-fictive' novels of the genre such as Edward Fawcett's *Hartmann the Anarchist* (1893), George Griffiths' *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893) and Savage's *The Anarchist*. Furthermore, these conspiracies relied on agents cast in the same mould as the spymasters and master-spies discussed in the last chapter: agents, that is, equipped with superhuman, quasi-divine powers of international movement, acumen and organization.

In the course of his various activities, Dr Stein, of Savage's *The Anarchist*, travels swiftly and secretly across the European and North American continents, from the US to England, Switzerland and Italy and back again in quick succession. All the while he is stirring up discontent, instigating strikes and uprisings in America and Europe, and evangelising to a global revolutionary constituency made up of 'Italy's toilers, Germany's peasants, England's down-trodden workmen, Ireland's outcasts, the French artisan, the Belgian miner, [and] America's groaning wage-workers.'[85] Dr Stein represents,

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[83] Taylor, *London's Burning*; and, S. Webb, *Dynamite, Treason & Plot: Terrorism in Victorian & Edwardian London* (London: The History Press, 2012).

[84] Joseph Conrad's 'The Anarchist' (1908), for example, detailed the coming to grief of an anarchist in self-imposed exile, living on an island in the middle of a river in South America. J. Conrad, 'The Anarchist', in Conrad, *A Set of Six*. George Fleming's *Vestigia* (1884), described the actions of Dino, acting in service to a shadowy German anarchist arch-conspirator, who orders him to kill the Italian King. G. Fleming, *Vestigia*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1884). In similar fashion, Hugh Conway's *Called Back* (1884) described the actions of a group of Italian patriots, conspiring to assassinate the Russian Czar, as did Joseph Hatton's *By Order of the Czar* (1890). H. Conway, *Called Back* (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1884); J. Hatton, *By Order of the Czar: The tragic story of Anna Klosstock, Queen of the Ghetto*, 3 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1890).

[85] Savage, *The Anarchist*, pp. 149-150. Stein, tutor to Evelyn Hartley, a millionaire heiress, is possessed of tremendous intellectual credentials – as well as hinted at 'republican principles' which have held back his promotion in the German diplomatic service. Ibid., p. 24. Ever 'an enigma', Stein's 'impenetrable social reserve' masks his true identity – for 'the anarchist is [always] an *anonymous coward!*' Ibid., p. 170. Stein is, in reality, the leader of an anarchist conspiracy to overthrow the capitalist world-system, 'a dreaming, human tiger', seeking Evelyn Hartley's inherited riches as seed money for the coming insurrection. Ibid., p. 37. Stirring up revolutionary sentiment throughout the Western world in a seemingly continuous train of

perhaps, the epitome of the internationally mobile master-conspirator, though he was by means alone in possessing a kind of lithe social invisibility: an easy-going ability to deceive and outwit.

Much like Stein, who moved through high-society with ease due to his upper-class pedigree, Carlitz, of Guy Boothby's *The League of Twelve* (1903), uses his connections to infiltrate an aristocratic household, where he attempts to blackmail an aristocrat into murdering a Spanish government minister.[86] The 'Chief' of the Brotherhood in Griffiths' *The Angel of the Revolution* is none other than a senior British diplomat, Lord Alanmere, whose position and status as an aristocrat have protected him from implication in the murder of a senior Russian bureaucrat.[87] Buchan's *The Power-house* features 'an honourable and distinguished gentleman, belonging to the best clubs, counting as [his] acquaintances the flower of our society.'[88] In Joseph Lyons and Cecil Raleigh's *The Master Crime* the 'Chief of the Terrorists' is an 'evil Prince'.[89] In some ways, these characters' aristocratic and bourgeois credentials recalled the real biographies of famous contemporary anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin, who was a Russian aristocrat with connections at the Czarist court. However, they also served to illustrate the insidious potential of radical creeds to infiltrate and poison even the highest levels of society and government. Crucially, it thereby made the problem pervasive and *socially indeterminate*: whilst it was linked, in some way, to the condition of the poor and downtrodden, ultimately it was difficult to locate, for subversive creeds and predilections existed among the rich and the well-heeled as well. It is the same kind of conspiracist fantasizing that structured contemporary invasion scare narratives where the enemy is truly at large and seemingly everywhere.

But if these forces of evil were everywhere, they were also nowhere, to extent that they were highly mobile and invisible – at least to the authorities – thereby enabling the co-ordination of a vast range of global revolutionary

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events designed to bring about a world anarchist revolution, Stein seeking to bring Bakunin's 'black pall of utter annihilation' down to 'cover the grave of modern society.' Ibid., p. 65.

[86] G. Boothby, *The League of Twelve* (London: F.W. White & Co., 1903), pp. 151-161, 201.

[87] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, p. 51.

[88] J, Buchan, *The Power-house* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916 [first published in England in serial in *Blackwood's* Magazine,1913]), p. 193.

[89] J. Lyons and C. Raleigh, *The Master Crime* (London: Cassell and Co., 1907), p. 90.

constituencies. Rudolph Hartmann, the evil genius of *Hartmann the Anarchist* (1893), passes untraced and untracked on his travels across Europe, journeying to liaise with his colleagues at an anarchist congress in Switzerland, the prelude to a pan-European plot to initiate an anarchist revolution. Similarly, 'Natas' in *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893), flies around the world in his 'aeronef' (a small plane), co-ordinating the activities of 'the Terrorists', a globally powerful organisation that hopes to use a coming conflict between the Great Powers to inaugurate a global revolution.[90]

Such secretive and internationally travelled characters were, to quote Stevenson and Vandegrift's anti-hero Zero, 'obscure yet famous' – famous in their own particular constituencies – and given 'an anonymous, infernal glory' by the narrative of these texts.[91] Although 'Nameless by day', these agents were immensely powerful and perceptive.[92] Like Conan Doyle's Moriarty, they were hidden string-pullers and manipulators of the highest, superhuman order. The anarchist mastermind Hoffendahl, in James' *The Princess Casamassima*, is the only one who knows everything. Each individual conspirator is aware that he is playing a role in 'a very large plan'; but the plan is known only to Hoffendahl, who manipulates minor characters along with 'all things, persons, institutions, ideas, as so many notes in his great symphonic revolt […] with exactly the same mastery as a great musician.'[93]

Networks and organisations

On the one hand, then, an ability to move swiftly and silently through the bustle and clamour of contemporary existence; on the other, a malign controlling influence unnoticed by those they moved amongst: such as was the curious combination of quasi-divine qualities embodied in (otherwise human) master-anarchists. The organizations they led and controlled also combined a range of qualities and were at once hidden, indistinct and small but also rigorously organised and capable of immense, destructive deeds. In George

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[90] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, passim.

[91] Stevenson and Van der Grift, *More New Arabian Nights*, p. 315.

[92] Loc. cit.

[93] James, *Princess Casamassima*, p. 334.

H.R. Dabbs' *The Ladder of Pain* (1902), for instance, the anarchist conclave he describes is staffed by 'various nationalities and yet of one type. Each one had the dreamy, fanatical face associated with the evangel of destruction … In that one room were gathered together the very ganglia of the disordered creeds of Europe and America'.[94]

Indeed, these 'disordered creeds' were in fact very ordered and organized, raising once more the spectre of a single constituency that combined anarchism, socialism and Nihilism – and often many other subversive ideologies besides. Nothing was quite as it seemed on the outside or surface. In George Griffith's *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893), the novel's narrator Robert Arnold discovers the following upon joining the 'Brotherhood of Freedom':

> In the first place, that which is known to the outside world as the Terror is an international secret society underlying and directing the operations of the various bodies known as Nihilists, Anarchists, Socialists – in fact, all those organisations which have for their object the reform or destruction, by peaceful or violent means, of Society as it is at present constituted. Its influence reaches beyond these into the various trade unions and political clubs, the moving spirits of which are all members of our Outer Circle. On the other side of Society we have agents and adherents in all he Courts of Europe, all the diplomatic bodies, and all the parliamentary assemblies throughout the world.[95]

'The Brotherhood', otherwise known as 'the Terror' is an anarchist organisation dedicated to 'the ruin of… civilization and the establishment of a new order of things'.[96]

These organisations were figuratively – and literally – situated underground and in the recesses of urban society. As Taylor observes, anarchists were commonly (and largely accurately) believed to plot 'in dark corners and behind closed doors.' They were 'frequenters of the dangerous "lurks" and bolt-holes of London, that from the days of Henry Fielding and Patrick Colquhuon, were seen as a component part of the dangerous and transgressive landscape of the capital.'[97] Grant Allen's *For Maimie's Sake* (1886), for example, describes the operations of a small cell of Nihilists ('a very

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[94] G.H.R. Dabbs, *The Ladder of Pain* (London: Charles William Deacon & Co., 1902), p. 109.

[95] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, p. 32.

[96] Ibid., pp. 17, 19, 35.

[97] Taylor, *London's Burning*, p. 58.

villainous lot'), operating from an attic somewhere in London.[98] The Executive Council of Griffith's *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893) meets in a similarly secluded spot: a gigantic basement beneath a suburban London house.[99] Even in more sympathetic portrayals, this subterranean perception prevailed. In H. Barton Baker's *Robert Miner, Anarchist* (1902), are described as gathering together in dark and dirty Soho dens 'to which entry can only be gained by a pass-word'.[100] Similarly, Rosetti's *A Girl Amongst the Anarchists* (1903) describes anarchist meetings taking place in a 'fetid… den.'[101]

A further development of the same conspiracist theme was to portray seemingly inconspicuous organisations as in fact mere covers for the sinister machinations of 'Black Internationals' and anarchist organisations. In Henry James' *The Princess Casamassima*, for example, a working-men's debate club is nothing more than camouflage for a radical inner circle of anarchists; the Mission for Russian Seamen, in Edgar Wallace's *The Council of Justice*, functions as a shell for the gatherings of the mysterious Red Hundred; and the 'Alpine Club of Journalists' in Savage's *The Anarchist* is in reality a gathering of the most dangerous anarchist conspiracy the world has ever seen.[102]

The conspiracist imagination also evoked elaborate, hierarchical organizations of global reach and infiltration. The terrorist organisation of Griffith's *The Angel of the Revolution* (1893) is highly structured, comprising an 'Outer Circle', an 'Inner Circle', an 'Executive' body of the Inner Circle, as well as a 'President' of the Executive and a 'Chief' and a 'Master'.[103] Those in the Outer Circle are committed anarchists, members of the Brotherhood 'who will not understand… orders, but simply obey them blindly, even to the death': namely, police officers, cab drivers and hundreds of thousands of soldiers of many different nationalities.[104] The Brotherhood's power thus extends 'beyond … the various trade unions and political clubs, the moving spirits of which are

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[98] G. Allen, *For Maimie's Sake* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1886), p. 29.

[99] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, pp. 30-36.

[100] Baker, *Robert Miner*, p. 85.

[101] Quoted in Taylor, *London's Burning*, p. 58.

[102] E. Wallace, *The Council of Justice* (London: Ward and Lock, 1908), ch. 1; Savage, *The Anarchist*, pp. 67-70.

[103] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, pp. 19, 20, 36, 36, 49, 50-51.

[104] Ibid., pp. 19, 25.

all members of our Outer Circle.'[105] As the reader is reminded early on, the Brotherhood's leaders 'have agents and adherents in all the Courts of Europe, all the diplomatic bodes, and all the parliamentary assemblies throughout the world.'[106] Moreover, the members of the Brotherhood's Inner Circle are all also described as 'accustomed to the best society, not only in the social but the intellectual sense of the word.'[107] The result of their secretive accumulation of influence, combined with their development of a global, interconnected hierarchy, was of global significance: 'It is in the power of the Terrorists to delay or precipitate war to a certain extent.'[108] Indeed, the Brotherhood has actually triggered some of the great diplomatic crises of the preceding years in order to delay the onset of exactly that inevitable conflict until such time as they would most benefit from it, whereupon 'all the innumerable organisations with which we are in touch all over the world will rise in arms.'[109] Accordingly, the Brotherhood is a secret organisation upon whose decisions 'the fate of the world hung.'[110]

Further examples include Savage's *The Anarchist*, where he contends that the 'Octopus feelers of a revolt against all law which guards Private Right are stealing to-day through every avenue of human life.'[111] His Alpine Club contains 'two-score of the Revolution's trusted leaders' – or 'the associated Chiefs of the Impending Revolution' – and are the representative leaders of 'the International, the Latin secret societies, the Republicans, anarchists … the Slavic assassins of nihilism' and 'The Children of the Revolt'. All are the grizzled veterans of secret campaigns controlling 'militant labor unions, socialistic clubs, organized communists… and [the] advanced anarchists.'[112]

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[105] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

[106] Ibid., p. 33.

[107] Ibid., p. 37.

[108] Ibid., p. 33.

[109] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[110] Ibid., p. 63.

[111] Savage, *The Anarchist*, pp. 3-4.

[112] Ibid., pp. 67-71.

There were other organisational tiers, however, for presiding 'over all was the secret executive committee of the [Second] International'.[113]

Great or small, these same conspiracies were commonly described as held together by the use of secret oaths. Having agreed to join the 'the Terrorists', Richard Arnold, the narrator of Griffith's *The Angel of the Revolution*, is forced to sign a binding oath, which states that:

> I, Richard Arnold, sign this paper in the full knowledge that in doing so I devote myself absolutely for the rest of my life to the service of the Brotherhood of Freedom, known to the world as the Terrorists. As long as I live its ends shall be my ends, and no human considerations shall weigh with me where those ends are concerned. I will take life without mercy, and yield my own without hesitation at its bidding. I will break all other laws to obey those which it obeys, and if I disobey these I shall expect death as the just penalty of my perjury. [114]

As in James' *The Princess Casamassima,* even those co-opted unwillingly into these organisations are bound by oaths and are certain to suffer death if they reveal their secrets.[115] The consequence is that in many of these novels it is almost impossible to read more than a few pages at a time without encountering a death sentence for the breach of a solemn oath. In Griffiths' *The Angel of the Revolution*, 'Ainsworth', a member of 'the Terrorists', is discovered to have accepted a large bribe from the Russian secret police and the promise of more if he can get another member of the group extradited to Russia. However, 'The Inner Circle learnt of this from one of [its] spies in the Russian London Police, and – well, Ainsworth was found dead with the mark of the Terror upon his forehead before he had time to put his treachery into action.'[116] As Natas, of the same text, notes: 'If you did betray my confidence

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[113] Ibid., p. 68. George Griffith's *The Angel of the Revolution* presents us with lyrical evidence of exactly this internationalism. 'At last, close on midnight, the President rose from his seats and asked Natasha to sing the "Hymn of Freedom."… all the rest rose to their feet like worshippers in a church… Arnold heard running through it, as it were, echoes of all the patriotic songs of Europe from "Scots Wha Hea" and "The Shan van Van Voght" to the forbidden Polish National Hymn and the Swiss republican song, which is known in England as "God Save the Queen." The prelude ended with a few bars of the "Marseillaise,"… As the air changed from nation to nation the singer changed the language, and at the end of each verse the others took up the strain in perfect harmony, till it sounded like a chorus of the nations in miniature, each language coming in its turn until the last verse was reached… then the opening chords of the Marseillaise rang out… as it were, out of the music, and a moment later the Song of the Revolution rolled forth in a flood. Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, p. 47.

[114] Ibid., p. 36.

[115] James, *Princess Casamassima*, passim. As Stevenson's young, repentant 'dynamitard' states in *More New Arabian Nights* (1885), 'I bound myself with an irrevocable oath.' Stevenson and Van der Grift, *More New Arabian Nights*, p. 287.

[116] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, pp. 18-19.

… there would be an inquest on you within twenty-four hours after you had told your story.'[117]

The high levels of organisational capability recall that invested in enemy offensives in invasion scare narratives, even if the aim here was to infiltrate organisations from across the globe and from there to subvert the global-capitalist order. This is certainly the aim and means depicted in Savage's *The Anarchist*. Following 'a century of agitation, fifty years of secret propaganda, [and] the never-ending presentment of Misery's cause to a callous world', the agents of Dr Stein have infiltrated the highest levels of contemporary governance and the households of the rich and powerful; and are often 'tied to [the] glittering formalities' of court whilst occupying senior bureaucratic positions.[118] The expressed intention of Dr Stein, the anarchist master conspirator, is nothing less than to 'merge labour-unions, secret societies, socialism and anarchistic uplifting in one organized protest against the tyranny of Money.'[119]

Satire and inversions of the genre

The affinities with the kinds of conspiracism examined in the last are pronounced. Another point of convergence, however, is the use of satire to subvert the conspiracist assumptions that structured popular-fictional accounts of anarchists and terrorists. There were very occasional expressions of this in the press, as when the *Birmingham Daily Post*'s light-hearted 'London Gossip' column speculated in 1891 that the looming Franco-Russian entente would lead the Second International to 'call upon their brothers in sedition to form an alliance amongst themselves – this alliance to consist of Socialists, Anarchists, and Nihilists – in opposing the entente cordiale between France and Russia, as the latter will be sure to impose her autocracy on the Republic.'[120] No elaboration followed.

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[117] Ibid., p. 18.

[118] Savage, *The Anarchist*, pp. 62, 67, 86.

[119] Ibid., p. 150.

[120] *BDP* (13 Nov. 1891), p. 5.

It was leading novelists that best subverted the genre's fantastical portrayals of superhuman agency and all-pervasive conspiracies. One example is Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907). Rather than forming an engine of a historical process that seems frighteningly inevitable, the anarchist grouping at the heart of the plot is a band of largely ineffectual radicals. Michaelis, the 'ticket of leave apostle', has been made fat by many years languishing in prison and is now entirely dependent for his existence upon the riches of an aging society lady. Ossipon, the young anarchist revolutionary, thinks and speaks more of fleshly pleasures than of destroying the systems of oppression he so regularly denounces in his speeches (the income from which finances his dissolute lifestyle). The Professor, the only one willing to actually blow something up for the cause, is isolated from real participation in a plot by virtue of his unwillingness to be controlled by anyone but himself. Verloc, the man who actually organises the 'anarchist bomb plot' at the centre of the novel, is no committed revolutionary. He is, in fact, the owner of a shop that sells pornographic images and works as an *agent provocateur* in the pay of a foreign embassy. The bomber himself, Stevie, is not an anarchist, but a congenital idiot; and yet, through his sensitivity to injustice, he represents the only figure with whom we might sympathise. The only character in the novel with any real integrity, Mrs Verloc (who married Verloc to provide her brother with a home and security) is driven mad by Verloc's implication in her brother's death and kills Verloc, subsequently committing suicide in the Channel herself. In these and multiple other ways Conrad illustrates that anarchists are all-too-human and that their visions of anarchism are perennially and fatally compromised.

The forces of order are no less compromised. Inspector Heat, whose responsibility it is to carry out surveillance on foreign radicals, uses and abuses Verloc as much as the unnamed foreign embassy that forces Verloc to carry out the bomb plot. Heat's superior, the Assistant-Commissioner, is less concerned with the threat posed by Verloc's group than the threat posed to his reputation by his slender social connection to Michaelis. Neither are evil men, but both are primarily motivated by their own interests rather than any high-minded commitment to public safety. Heat wants to avoid implicating Verloc in the bombing because his reputation for efficacy is based on the information

Verloc provides him with. The Assistant-Commissioner's only real desire is to get back out on the streets and to relive his colonial days, sadly cut short by a 'successful' marriage. The unnamed foreign embassy, whose government wish secretly to instigate an outrage in Britain, hoping that this will trigger a public reaction which would result in a tightening of restrictions placed on foreign radicals, are clearly mired in the most reprehensible methods of international politics and by no means the site of any morality or integrity.

The 'conspiracy' of *The Secret Agent* is not the work of evil, super-human geniuses; rather it is the work of fallible individuals, driven by human (rather than humanitarian) impulses which make it impossible for them to achieve anything. There may be a narrative of 'evil' intent underlying the plot, but it is situated at the periphery of the novel; and although some of the action is 'international', the plot itself is deeply local. No one travels and no one communicates over vast distances. These are, moreover, all thoroughly grounded and visible people. In imagining such a situation, Conrad not only refuses to conform to the conspiracist forms that had pervaded portrayals of anarchism and terrorism during the preceding twenty years; he stands it on its head, providing a kind of grubby, worldly inversion.

The other key example is G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908). Here, under mysterious circumstances, Gabriel Syme is recruited into a secretive, anti-anarchist police organisation run from Scotland Yard. At the beginning of the novel, we discover that rather than the diffident pseudo-anarchistic poet of his public persona, Syme's acquaintance Lucian Gregory is actually an important member of the local chapter of the European anarchist council. Immediately afterwards, by use of some clever blackmail carried out on Gregory, Syme infiltrates this organisation and discovers that its senior members are – in classic conspiracist style – only ever referred to by their code-names. The leader, 'Sunday', is a classic conspiracist figurehead. 'You would not know [his name…] That is his greatness', states Gregory: 'Caesar and Napoleon put all their genius into being heard of, and they were heard of. He puts all his genius into not being heard of and his is not heard of. But you

cannot be for five minutes in the room without him feeling that Caesar and Napoleon would have been children in his hands.'[121]

At his first meeting with Sunday, Syme also meets the other members of the council: Monday (the Secretary to the Council); Tuesday (Gogol, a hirsute Pole); Wednesday (the bon viveur Marquis de St Eustache); Friday (the livid, skeletal Professor de Worms); and Saturday (the physician Dr Bull). In his attempts to penetrate the society's operations, Syme helps to plan the assassination of the Czar and the French President. In the course of this planning, Syme becomes close to Tuesday, described as 'a common or garden variety Dynamiter', and immediately exposes him as a fraud. However, unbeknownst to Syme, Tuesday is also a Scotland Yard operative.[122] Soon after Tuesday's exposure, Friday lets on to Syme that he, too, is a Scotland-Yard man and the two combine forces to track down Saturday, who is all too soon found to be in the pay of the police as well. These three then race on to France, from London, hoping to prevent Wednesday from carrying out the group's mission to blow up the Czar and President. After a farcical chase, however, Wednesday reveals that his is not, in fact, a French Marquis, but a police agent like all the others. Monday then descends upon the scene, chasing them across the town, and eventually revealing that he is also an accredited detective. They return to England, joined by Tuesday, hoping to interrogate Sunday, the man who set them against each other – at which point the novel descends even further into fantastic farce, with the President escaping them by means of a cab, a hot-air balloon and even an elephant. The novel closes with the five meeting an exceptionally hospitable Sunday, who explains to them that he is 'the Sabbath… the peace of God.'[123] Syme soon after wakes up in Saffron Park, London, suggesting that the novel's subtitle, *A Nightmare*, should be taken literally.

Shot through with Christian allegories – the entire plot functions as an extended metaphor for the seven days of Job – *The Man Who Was Thursday* resists the temptation to provide a morally satisfying ending, in contrast to

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[121] G.K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday: a nightmare* (London: ALC Manor, 2009 [1908]), p. 23.

[122] Ibid., p. 47.

[123] Ibid., p. 143.

conspiracist narratives. Indeed, in writing of a world of anarchists peopled by anti-anarchists, Chesterton inverts the conspiracist form even more so than Conrad. The message is the same, however: the essential emptiness and unreality of the 'master-conspirator' trope. With Conrad, this is achieved with a totally de-centred narrative, wherein the events happen in spite of the characters' competing motivations and general ineptitude. With Chesterton, the trope is taken to its logical extreme, at which point it fizzles out into nothing, as if just a bad dream.

As with the satirical texts examined in the last chapter, such as Wodehouse's *The Swoop!*, these works attest to both popularity of conspiracist narratives in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain and the fact that not all of them were taken seriously or accepted uncritically. Equally, however, there was far less satirical commentary on the themes of terrorist activity than on the topic of espionage (perhaps because 'spy fever' gradually built up to the point where it, in the years immediately preceding the First World War, it began to have tangible consequences in the form of government policies and the institution of espionage agencies); and, more importantly, such high-literary works were only read by a minority of the public. What, then, was the public's reaction during *actual* terrorist-related incidents and events? The final section of this chapter considers this question.

CONSPIRACIST PANICS IN THE PRESS

Popular conspiracism in relation to terrorism found its fullest, if also most fleeting, expressions in those panicked periods which followed the occurrence of terrorist incidents, or indeed policing actions. At these points, conspiracist fears of terrorists' violent ambitions and their connections to hidden systems of subversion came together to dominate the British public sphere – burning briefly and brightly, but then receding into the shadowy realms of popular memory. This, however, was never simply a matter of 'irrational panic', though panic is certainly apt when it comes to describing these periods. Rather these were occasions when the conspiracist discourses suddenly sprang to the fore, providing a medium through which a variety of contemporary concerns regarding terrorism and a range of other social and political issues achieved

intense expression. There are two well-known examples: the arrest and trial of the 'Walsall anarchists'; and the events preceding and surrounding the Siege of Sidney Street.

The first is especially noteworthy, because in this instance public speculation also surrounded the actions of the police, and in particular the question of whether police *agents provocateurs* had conjured up the plot out of nothing. The specific details of the Walsall anarchist bomb plot are still uncertain, though recent accounts have clarified much of what was previously unknown.[124] In sum, in January 1892, a group of English and French anarchists were arrested in London and Walsall and subsequently charged with conspiracy under the Explosive Substances Act, 1883. Others were also implicated in the plot, and three more were arrested in January after further police investigations – though another, Auguste Coulon, was left conspicuously free by the police. At their trial in April, evidence was presented against the original six arrestees to the effect that they had been caught in possession of bomb-making instructions and bomb components, along with large amounts of anarchist literature advocating the propaganda of the deed – some of it allegedly written by one of the conspirators. In the end, four of the accused were found guilty and sentenced to lengthy periods of imprisonment, and two were acquitted.

So much, so simple: anarchists caught red-handed, plotting a terrorist outrage. However, Andrew Cook's recent work *M: MI5's First Spymaster* has recently complicated what was previously, in the hands of Bernard Porter and Alex Butterworth, only conjecture.[125] As Cook has demonstrated, William Melville of the Special Branch, seeking to connect domestic left-wing radicalism with continental-style political violence, almost certainly ordered

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[124] It was only in 2011 that a work (by Andrew Cook) with comprehensive access to Special Branch archival materials emerged, providing a thoroughgoing, fully evidenced – if still incomplete – narrative of events. Previously, Special Branch had claimed that their records for this period had been pulped during the Second World War. To date, Andrew Cook and an as yet unnamed serving Special Branch officer writing a PhD on the early history of Special Branch have been allowed full access, and the Metropolitan Police have still yet to grant any academics full and un-redacted access to these materials. Bernard Porter's lengthy quest for access (since the mid-1980s) is, accordingly, still ongoing. Butterworth, *World That Never Was*, p. 294; A. Cook, *M: MI5's First Spymaster* (London: The History Press, 2011); B. Porter, 'M: MI5's First Spymaster, by Andrew Cook', *English Historical Review*, 120:489 (2005): 1459-1460.

[125] Butterworth, *World That Never Was*, pp. 241, 293-301; Porter, *Origins of the Vigilant State,* pp. 102-103, 116-117, 126-133, 138-142.

Auguste Coulon (an informer in his pay since early 1890s) to incite the Walsall anarchists into terroristic activities.[126]

Several of the accused protested that the entire affair was a police plot, the product of *agents provocateurs*, and public suspicion fell heavily on the relationship between Coulon and Melville. Many wrote of this relationship in a highly suspicious tone, suggesting that the Walsall plotters had been duped by Coulon at Melville's behest.[127] David Nicholl, who had been arrested and subsequently released before the others' trial, published a pamphlet with subheadings such as 'Melville the Mysterious', 'Coulon the Spy' and 'How to Manufacture Plots', detailing what he thought had been a police plot to incriminate the Walsall plotters in the hopes of inflaming public opinion against anarchists by implicating them in acts of terrorism aimed at British targets.[128] *Commonweal* (of which Nicholl was the editor) subsequently noted that 'the police' were 'very clever at finding these things, especially when they [had] placed them there', a contention which would be repeated again and again in the British left-wing press.[129] *Reynolds's Newspaper*, for instance, gave considerable attention to the plight of the Walsall plotters (though this was partly due to the fact that its editor, Edward Reynolds, was acting as their

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[126] This, in spite of the inhibitions produced by the combination of Britain's liberal policing consensus and the institutional memory at Special Branch of several very recent incidents of inappropriate behaviour by officers and informers in provoking terrorist plots. Nevertheless, there were still members of Britain's secret policing establishment (indeed, the most senior) who were inclined towards the fabrication of evidence, and the employment *agents provocateurs* in the fight against terror. For the career of Edward Jenkinson as leader of section D of the Metropolitan Police, and his involvement in the provocation of Fenian plots, see: Butterworth, *World That Never Was*, p. 294. See, also: C. Campbell, *Fenian Fire: The British Government Plot to Assassinate Queen Victoria* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), passim. See, also: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/41262?docPos=4, *ODNB* entry for Robert Anderson, Assistant Commission of the Metropolitan Police (1888-1901), author of the Parnell forgeries, recovered 06 September 2014.

[127] See, for example: *Freedom* (May 1892), p. 34.

[128] D.J. Nicholl, *The Walsall anarchists: trapped by the police: innocent men in penal servitude: the truth about the Walsall plot* (London: David Nicoll, 1892).

[129] *Commonweal* (23 Jan. 1892), p. 13. For further examples of the 'provocateur' suspicion, see: *Justice* (28 Apr. 1894); *Liberty* (Mar. 1894), p. 20; *Liberty* (Sep. 1894), p. 68; *Freedom* (Oct. 1901), p. 59; and, *Torch* (Feb. 1895), p. 13. Nicholl and C.J. Mowbray (respectively: publisher and editor of *Commonweal*, a small-circulation anarchist journal) were later charged with 'maliciously soliciting and encouraging certain persons unknown to murder' the Home Secretary, Hawkins and Melville in the pages of *Commonweal*. At their trial, they accused the police of 'concocting their Walsall plot in conjunction with the provoking-agent Coulon': both were convicted. Cook, *MI5's First Spymaster*, p. 91. Mowbray, however, has also been accused of being in the pay of Special Branch. Webb, *Dynamite, Treason & Plot*, p. 25.

defence barrister).[130] Indeed, from the Walsall case onwards, 'Everyone on the left of British politics, right up to the ILP parliamentary fringe … assumed the worst' about the British police, and particularly the Metropolitan Police Special Branch.[131]

Yet, at the same time, it is equally apparent that the Walsall anarchists' trial had a strong impact on popular perceptions of anarchism in Britain. Within days of the conspirators' arrests the *Birmingham Daily Post* reported on the Walsall plot as 'a formidable conspiracy for the manufacture and dissemination of bombs', and 'startling revelations' were daily expected in the press.[132] Certainly, it is true that the anarchists' trial was carried out in a heated atmosphere, and public commentary was highly panicked. In the months preceding the trial, there had been another plot against the Russian Czar (this time, revolutionaries had attempted to blow up the Imperial train), a bombing in Paris and a 'widespread' conspiracy by anarchists was uncovered in Germany.[133] Coverage of this last event had included descriptions of hierarchically organised anarchist groupings, reminiscent of those found in popular literature, but which also suggested a potential hidden architecture for anarchist dissidence into which readers could fit the Walsall plotters.[134] Moreover, just before the trial, the famous anarchist bomber Ravachol had struck again in Paris, further inflaming the public's panicked imaginations, and perhaps contributing to the *Times*' decision to characterise the Walsall plotters as forming part of 'a great system' of terrorist conspiracy, the product of anarchism's 'lust of bloodshed.'[135] As an editorial in the *Bristol Mercury* noted in the aftermath of the plotters' trial, 'having put their principles into practice',

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[130] Porter, *Origins of the Vigilant State*, p. 133. For *Reynolds'* editorial opinions of the Walsall case, see: *Reynolds* (10 Jan. 1892), p. 8; ibid., (14 Feb. 1892), p. 3; ibid., (20 Mar. 1892), p. 3; ibid., (10 Apr. 1892), p. 1; and, ibid., (17 Apr. 1892), p. 6. *Reynolds'* also published reports of developments in case throughout the period of January to May 1892.

[131] Porter, *Origins of the Vigilant State*, p. 131.

[132] *BDP* (9 Jan. 1892), p. 5; *DC&A* (20 Jan. 1892), p. 2.

[133] For reporting on this attempt on the Czar's life, see, for example: *Western Mail* (12 Jan. 1892), p. 5. For reporting on the bombing of the Rue St. Germain in Paris, see: *YH* (25 Feb. 1892), p. 6; *Morning Post* (14 Mar. 1892), p. 5.

[134] For reporting on the anarchist conspiracy in Germany, see, for example: *LM* (13 Feb. 1892); *S&RI* (13 Feb. 1892), p. 6.

[135] Quoted in Butterworth, *World That Never Was*, p. 298. See, also: Cook, *MI5's First Spymaster*, p. 90.

'the Anarchists are at least becoming really interesting', and public perceptions of anarchism began to shift.[136] Two weeks later, in mid-April, newspapers across the country underwent a mini-panic, reporting on a gang of 'desperate and fanatical' anarchists, plotting a 'chloroforming and kidnapping' conspiracy in London – totally without evidence.[137] Later in April, the upcoming May Day demonstrations across the world began to be reported in the same articles as suspicions of anarchist plots to 'strike a heavy blow at the existing social order'.[138] As Alex Butterworth noted, after Walsall, British popular attitudes towards anarchism had changed 'at a stroke'.[139]

A more straightforward instance is the set of events that occurred over the Christmas and New Year period of 1910–11, culminating in the Siege of Sidney Street. On Friday December 16th, four officers of the London Metropolitan Police were shot and fatally wounded in the course of a robbery. The following day the crime was covered in a number of national newspapers, but with much speculation, given the almost total lack of evidence regarding the identities of the criminals. As David Speicher has noted, the lack of resolution to these events left 'a sort of blank canvas on which newspapers could decry the dangers of modern British life', and pre-existing concerns came to fill in the space left by the absence of evidence. Coverage of what became known as the 'Houndsditch Affair' reflected anxieties regarding the radicalising effects of poverty, as well as anti-Alien sentiment and burgeoning currents of anti-Semitism (see the next chapter for a fuller discussion).[140]

Speculation regarding the identity, nationality and political convictions of the criminals began to build in the days that followed the killings. As *The Daily Chronicle* editorialised on the 19th, 'We are glad to think that they are not English. Their barbarous methods, like their speech, are alien to our ways', further noting that this manner of criminality would re-open the debate over

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[136] *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* [hereafter, *BM&DP*] (6 Apr. 1892), p. 5.

[137] *BDP* (14 Apr. 1892), p. 8. See, also: *Berrow's Worcester Journal* [hereafter, *Berrow's*] (16 Apr. 1892), p. 8; *The Blackburn Standard and Weekly Express* (16 Apr. 1892), p. 7; *The Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser* (16 Apr. 1892), p. 7.

[138] See, for example: *BDP* (18 Apr. 1892), p. 5.

[139] Butterworth, *World That Never Was*, p. 298.

[140] Speicher, 'Terror, Spectacle and the Press', pp. 59-60. See, also, for example: A. White, *The Modern Jew* (London: William Heinemann, 1899); and, J. Bannister, *England under the Jews* (London: Elibron Classic, 2006 [1901]).

the arming of police-officers.[141] On the 20th, the same paper stated, without evidence, that 'They are Russians – probably Lithuanians. Men of the same race, it will be recalled, were responsible for the Tottenham outrage two years ago.'[142] (The 'Tottenham outrage' was an armed robbery and double murder, carried out by two men later found to have been Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire.) The same day also saw the first mention of 'Peter the Painter' in the *Daily Express*, which claimed that the suspects were Russians and were 'well-known in the Anarchist club in the street off the Commercial road … The club was an advanced Socialist and Anarchist meeting-place, frequented by Anarchists and revolutionaries, many of whom live in the immediate neighbourhood.[143] The Houndsditch Affair became a fully national issue in the following days, when the four fallen police officers were given a state-funeral in St Paul's Cathedral.[144] The grandeur of the funeral and the size of the procession through the East End to the City of London Cemetery was felt, to quote *The Times*, 'to show the depth of the impression made upon the public mind by this murderous outrage, which, coming after the similar affair at Tottenham, proves the existence in our midst of a social peril from which we have hitherto flattered ourselves upon being exempt.'[145]

The specific nature of this danger, however, emerged several days later, when the police raided a home in Stepney, thought to house the Houndsditch criminals. Crucially, the police also found guns and ammunition; bomb-making chemicals and manuals; Russian anarchist pamphlets; and 'a stack of correspondence in Russian postmarked from various locales across England'.[146] It was immediately reported as the discovery of 'a dangerous group of Anarchists' by *The Times*; of an 'Anarchist centre' by the *Daily Express*; and of an 'anarchist bomb factory' by *The Morning Post* and the *Daily Express*.[147] There

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[141] *Daily Chronicle* (19 Dec. 1910), p. 3

[142] Ibid., (20 Dec. 1910).

[143] *Daily Express* (20 Dec. 1910)*, p. 4.

[144] See, for example: *Times* (23 Dec. 1910), p. 1; *Daily Telegraph* (23 Dec. 1910), p. 1.

[145] *Times*, (23 Dec. 1910), p. 9.

[146] The anarchist pamphlets and Russian correspondence turned out to be innocuous, though this was only discovered to be the case a month later. Speicher, 'Terror, Spectacle and the Press', p. 62.

[147] *Times* (29 Dec. 1910); *Morning Post* (29 Dec. 1910); *Daily Express* (29 Dec. 1910). On the basis of the Russian correspondence *The Times* argued that an anarchist organisation had been

was, of course, some evidence for this; and yet the speculation ranged much wider and further, making the kinds of conspiracist connections typical of the popular terrorist genre. The best example is furnished by the *Daily Express,* which suggested that one of the robbers had been 'Gardstein', who was known 'to have been one of the five heads of the Anarchist movement in Europe and in no way an ordinary burglar. He was practically the head of the movement in England, the other four leaders having their headquarters in St Petersburg, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna respectively'. It went on:

> The burglary planned in Houndsditch was only one of a series which have taken place in the past nine months, the object of which has been to provide funds for Anarchist operations…. No shadow of doubt now remains that the murder of three City police-men was the work of Russian Anarchists. Evidence has been gathered, every scrap of which points in one direction: That the burglary plot was planned by Russian Anarchists, who wished to obtain money for carrying out plots still more dangerous to the public welfare.[148]

As coverage of the Houndsditch Affair was calming down, however, Britain was shocked by what became known as the Siege of Sidney Street. On the morning of January 3rd more than 250 armed and uniformed police, 250 plain-clothes police, 1,000 Scot's Guards and a Royal Horse Artillery detachment surrounded 100 Sidney Street, Stepney, in London's East End. The siege lasted for six hours, while the criminals trapped inside traded fire with the assembled forces surrounding the building. In the end, the building caught fire and those trapped inside died in the flames – which obscured their identities and ambitions, and ensured that they continued to occupy an ambiguous position in the popular mind. As *The Times* noted, the siege had been 'a bad omen for organised society … throughout the kingdom.'[149] Speculation was also rampant regarding the location of 'Peter the Painter', earlier mentioned by the *Daily Express* in connection with the Houndsditch Affair and now connected to the Siege of Sidney Street. 'The man called "Peter the Painter" turns out to be still at large', noted *The Daily Telegraph*. 'This fact is a greater public danger than if a full-grown Bengal tiger had escaped into the

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discovered, and speculated that this was not the only anarchist group hidden amongst Britain's urban landscape, also reporting the words of an official at the Metropolitan court, who argued Jewish immigrants from Russia were 'chiefly anarchists'.

[148] *Daily Express* (29 Dec. 1910), p. 6.

[149] *Times* (06 Jan. 1911), p. 10.

East-end from the zoo. The deadly and predatory human create is in this case much the more savage and competent animal of the two.'[150]

As Speicher has written, the popular panic surrounding the Siege of Sidney Street provides an interesting window into the functioning of anarchist outrages in the late Victorian and Edwardian public sphere. Turning on the occurrence of events that failed to provide satisfactory moral resolution – and particularly in the sense that the perpetrators of the 'evils' remained potentially at large and capable of renewed malignancy – the non-resolved, speculative space was filled by all manner of contemporary concerns, fears and prejudices. Indeed, it is not surprising that the Siege of Sidney Street has become one of the more famous examples of terrorist alarm in Edwardian Britain. The fame of Sidney Street, however – and indeed that of the 'Walsall plot' – has served to obscure a far more interesting example of popular conspiracist panic. Clearly, the alarm that surrounded the Houndsditch Affair and the Sidney Street Siege featured some of the tropes of the conspiracist style: an obsession with subterranean subversion and fears regarding international mobility and communications (and we shall turn to immigration in the next chapter). However, the panic that surrounded the arrest of the so-called 'the Mysterious Number One' in 1896 provides a far more powerful example of just how important these conspiracist ideas were. They combined only briefly, in bursts; but they did so in a compelling fashion, and its roots lay not in anarchism but in Fenianism and the Phoenix Park Murders of 1882.

Phoenix Park

In the early 1880s Ireland was in ferment. Agitation for land reform had been building throughout the 1870s and the foundation of the Land League in 1879 had triggered the Land War, an extended period of social conflict featuring tenant-evictions, rent boycotting and widespread violence, all reported sensationally in the contemporary British press. The Irish Parliamentary Party, led by Charles Parnell, had been advocating devolution since the early 1870s. However, since the merging of the British and Irish parliaments in 1800, Irish MPs in Westminster had represented a permanent minority in a Parliament

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[150] *Daily Telegraph* (06 Jan. 1911), p. 7.

which would not pass an Irish Home Rule bill into law until 1914.[151] In the meantime, authoritarian measures such as the Coercion Act of 1881 and the Perpetual Crimes Act of 1887 reinforced both the perception and the reality of severe social and political inequality in Ireland.[152] The parliamentary strand of the Irish nationalist movement seemed stuck in the face of an intransigent Westminster government, whose power was enacted through the persons of the Chief Secretary for Ireland and the Lord-Lieutenant, neither of whom were directly accountable to Irish MPs.

'Physical force' Irish nationalism had been building in strength during the 1870s and the years 1881–5 also saw a Fenian bombing campaign in mainland Britain carried out by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (hereafter IRB) with funding from its sister organisation in the United States, the Fenian Brotherhood. Founded in 1858, the leaders of the IRB and the Fenian Brotherhood were popularly known to have spent much of the 1850s in Paris. They had, ever since, dedicated themselves to the cause of an independent Irish Republic, achieved by means of armed revolution and were a truly transatlantic movement by the 1860s.[153] Between 1866 and 1870, the Fenian Brotherhood carried out several armed incursions into Canada (known as 'the Fenian raids', which ultimately failed); and in 1867 the IRB had carried out an insurrection in Ireland, which achieved little more than the arrest of many leading figures within the IRB in Ireland and England. Subsequent

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[151] In 1886, the Government of Ireland Bill's failure to pass in the Commons had also directly resulted in the collapse of Gladstone's short-lived third ministry. The Second Home Rule Bill's rejection by the Conservative controlled House of Lords in September 1893 had also contributed, indirectly, to Gladstone's decision to resign and retire in March 1894. Regardless, the Conservative dominated House of Lords seemed to many a permanent, impassable roadblock on the path to Home Rule. Irish self-government would not be passed into law until 1914, in the aftermath of the bitterly divisive Home Rule crisis of 1912-1914 – the closest that the UK has ever come to outright civil war outside Ireland. Even in 1914, the implementation of Home Rule was postponed due to the outbreak of hostilities on the continent that August. A. O'Day, *Irish Home Rule* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), passim.

[152] The original Coercion Act of 1881 resulted in the detention without trial of Charles Parnell in Kilmainham Jail in 1881. The 1887 Act resulted in the imprisonment of over twenty Irish MPs.
http://www.oxforddnb.com.oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org/view/article/21384?docPos=1, *ODNB* entry for Charles Stewart Parnell, recovered 09 September 2014.

[153] Both of these organisations were commonly referred to as 'the Fenians', and popularly construed as a single organisation. By the 1860s, there were Fenian 'circles' in South America, Canada, the USA and the Irish diaspora in mainland Britain, with truly global reach. Both of these organisations were commonly referred to as 'the Fenians', and popularly construed as a single organisation. For an excellent discussion of the origins, public perceptions, and campaigns against 'the Fenians', see: Whelehan, *Dynamiters*, pp. 1-27.

attempts to rescue these men – the episodes of the Manchester Martyrs and the Clerkenwell Prison bombing – were only dubiously successful, given the resultant crackdown by the British state on Fenian 'circles' in Britain.[154]

Given the ever-present and troublesome spectre of Irish nationalism, it is no surprise that the audacious double assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Henry Burke in Dublin's Phoenix Park on May 6th 1882 pushed popular fears of the Fenians' violent ambitions to newly fevered heights (see Fig. 3.1).[155] But it was also because the so-called 'Phoenix Park Murders' were carried out by a small Irish Republican grouping, the Irish National Invincibles (hereafter the INI), a terrorist splinter-group operating outside the authority of the IRB which was then largely unknown to the British public.[156] In the years that followed these assassinations, speculation as to the true extent and power of the INI and the wider Fenian movement was rife, fired by the experience of the mainland bombing campaign and the ongoing publicity given to acts of anarchist and Nihilist terrorism on the continent. In particular, the arrest of one of the INI's leaders, Patrick Tynan, otherwise known as 'the Mysterious Number One', in Boulogne in September 1896 triggered an outburst of conspiracist panic unprecedented in the history of the British public sphere.

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[154] In 1875, Fenian agents had sailed a rescue boat around the world and back from New Bedford, Massachusetts to Western Australia, in order to spring six transported Fenians from a penal colony, an escapade popularly known as the Catalpa Rescue. A.N. Mulligan, 'A forgotten 'greater Ireland': The transatlantic development of Irish nationalism', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 118:3 (2002): 219-234.

[155] The intended target, Burke (Permanent Under Secretary to the Irish Office – effectively the head of the Irish civil service), was heavily implicated in the application of the British government's coercion policy during the Land War of 1879-1882. Cavendish, Chief Secretary for Ireland, was the second son of the Duke of Devonshire and married to the Prime Minister's niece. Cavendish, a Liberal, was intimately connected with the British political establishment, having been private secretary to Gladstone during his first premiership, and later Financial Secretary to the Treasury during his second. Cavendish and Burke were high status targets, being (respectively) the most senior Irish civil servant, and effectively the most senior political figure with responsibility for Ireland in the British government. Molony, *Phoenix Park Murders*, pp. 20-27.

[156] The Invincibles were later be labelled by *The Yorkshire Herald* as 'the highest development of militant Fenianism'. *YH* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 4. See, also: *GH* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 6. It was already well established in the public sphere, in the early 1880s, that the Fenian organisation was active in Britain, Europe and America. See, for example: 'The Fenian Organisation', *S&RI* (29 Oct. 1881), p. 14.
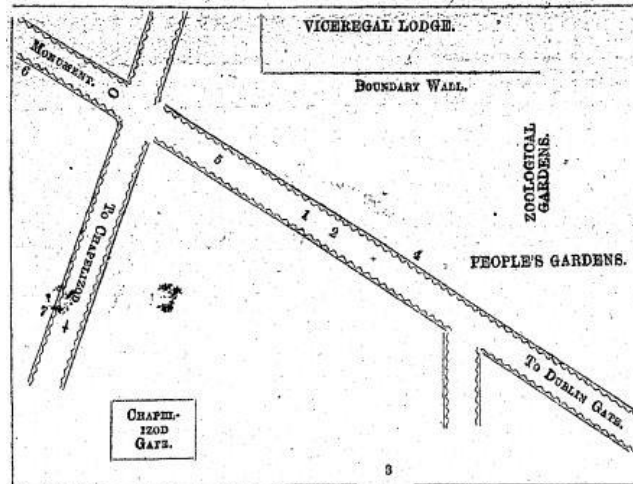
THE PHŒNIX PARK MURDERS.

ANOTHER INFORMER.—ASTOUNDING DISCLOSURES BY TOWN COUNCILLOR CAREY.

DETAILS OF THE MURDERS OF LORD F. CAVENDISH AND MR BURKE.

INTENSE EXCITEMENT.

THE LAND LEAGUE AND THE ASSASSINATIONS.

SKETCH PLAN OF THE PHŒNIX PARK AND SCENE OF THE MURDERS.

Our Sketch-plan shows the main road from Dublin to the Phœnix Monument. The Figures 1 and 2 represent the positions of the bodies of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr Burke when discovered. The localities mentioned by the carman Kavanagh in his evidence are also indicated:—(3) Island Bridge Gate on the Conyngham road. (4) Gough Statue. (5) About where the car-driver Kavanagh was standing with his horse when he heard the cry, "Oh!" (6) At this point there is a circuitous road leading into the Fifteen Acres, which joins that marked " to Chapelizod", at the spot indicated by No. 7. Having passed out of the Park by the Chapelizod Gate, Kavanagh took the route stated by him towards Inchicore.

FIG. 3.1: *Northern Echo* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 3.

The 'Mysterious Number One'

Although members of the INI went into hiding in the aftermath of the killings, seventeen conspirators were arrested in January 1883. Three of the accused turned Queen's evidence, five were executed and the rest sentenced to long terms of penal servitude. However, during the conspirators' trials, it emerged that the INI's senior leadership had all avoided capture, and as a result contemporary press coverage featured a potent sense that the INI itself was still operational. Of particular interest to the British police and public was the organisation's leader, transatlantic paymaster and operational commander 'who [had] put in motion the machinery of the murderous organisation of the "Irish

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Invincibles'".[157] This was the anonymous 'Number One'.[158] Prior to the public identification of 'Number One' as Patrick Tynan, speculation regarding his identity, as well as his authority within the INI and the wider Irish nationalist movement of 'No. 1' was rife and not particularly accurate.[159] The ambiguous,

[157] *Freeman's* (18 Apr. 1883), p. 6. 'No. 1' was widely reported to have fled to America in the aftermath of the murder. Though there was significant variation in reporting of his movements. Reportedly, 'No. 1' fled to the United States via Mexico. *YH* (26 Mar. 1883), p. 5; *Liverpool Mercury etc* [hereafter, *LivM*] (03 Apr. 1883), p. 5; *Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, and Yorkshire* [hereafter *LG*] (04 Apr. 1883), p. 3; *Cheshire Observer* (07 Apr. 1883), p. 3. He was, reportedly, hotly pursued by London and Dublin detectives. *Bristol Mercury* (16 Apr. 1883), p. 8. 'No. 1' was also widely reported to have ended up in Brooklyn, New York. *Freeman's* (18 Apr. 1883), p. 6. 'No. 1' was also, at times, thought still to be in, or to have returned to Britain and also Ireland to recommence his reign of terror *AWJ* (05 Mar. 1883), p. 3; *N-EDG* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 4; *NE* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 3; *S&RI* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 3; *BM&DP* (22 Feb. 1883), p. 8; *AWJ* (20 Feb. 1883), p. 2; *GH* (03 Mar. 1883), p. 5. 'No. 1' was, during February 1883, even falsely reported to have been captured by the Canadian authorities. *NE* (23 Feb. 1883), p. 3; *YH* (23 Feb. 1883), p. 5. He was also rumoured to have been arrested in Liverpool, later in the same month. See, for example: *Manchester Times* (24 Feb. 1883), p. 3. The arrest of 'No. 1' was also regularly reported to be imminent during the period of the Phoenix Park trials. See, for example: *Freeman's* (05 Mar. 1883), p. 5; *NE* (05 Mar. 1883), p. 3; *IJ* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 3; *DC&A* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 6; *AWJ* (09 March 1883), 5; *North Wales Chronicle* (10 Mar. 1883), p. 5. However, police denials of such rumours were also regularly re-printed. See, for example: *AWJ* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 3; *DC&A* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 5.

[158] Testimony at the various conspirators' trails had revealed that conspirators did not *necessarily* know each other's' names, instead referring to each other by numeric indicators which indicated seniority and authority within the organisation. *Reynolds's* (18 Feb. 1883), p. 8; *LM* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 6; *LivM* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 7; *Standard* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 5. 'Number One' was very quickly elongated by the press to either 'the mysterious "No. 1,"' or 'the notorious Number One'. See, for example: *Morning Post* (11 May 1883), p. 3; *GH* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 6. See, also: *DC&A* (11 May 1883), p. 5; *LM* (11 May 1883), p. 4; *N-EDG* (06 Apr. 1883), p. 4; *GH* (06 April 1883), 9; *LM* (06 Apr. 1883), p. 8; *Standard* (06 Apr. 1883), p. 5; *Cheshire Observer* (14 Apr. 1883), p. 8; *LG* (14 Apr. 1883), p. 3; *BM&DP* (16 Apr. 1883), p. 8. It is worth noting that the idea of a 'No. 1', as a central, organising figure whose identity was unknown even to his closest collaborators, did not originate with the INI trials. In November 1882, after the murders but before the trials, the *Leicester Chronicle* had published an editorial, entitled 'The Central Assassination Committee'. This article speculated that though several men had been correctly convicted for the recent Maamtrasna murders, these prosecutions had focused on the 'the hands in this case – not the head', and that, in combination with other recent acts of violence, the Maamtrasna murder pointed 'more or less, strongly to one central organisation.' Without claiming specific knowledge of this assassination bureau, it strongly suggested this assassination committee functioned as part of a secret, centralised and pervasive Irish nationalist terrorist organisation.[158] It also specifically referred to a leadership known by numeric monikers, with a leader called 'Number One'. *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury* (25 Nov. 1882), p. 8.

[159] *NE* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 3. The *Manchester Times* reported that the *Freeman's* was in possession of definite information that Number One was called 'Tyner' and not 'Tynan' on the 31st. *Manchester Times* (31 Mar. 1883), p. 3. Articles such as *N-EDG*'s 'DESCRIPTION OF "NUMBER ONE"', definitively placed this Irish-American man as the 'individual... who organised and supplied the assassination committee with money and weapons to carry out the murders which were planned and executed in Dublin during the last eighteen months.' This article also suggested that 'Number One' was responsible for more than just the Phoenix Park Murders. *N-EDG* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 4. Number One was also, occasionally, referred to as 'French-Irish-American', having been born of French parents, been raised in Ireland and subsequently spent time in America. See, for example: 'THE IDENTITY OF "NUMBER ONE"', *AWJ* (20 Feb. 1883), p. 2. These reports were, however, reported to have been dismissed by the police. See, for example: *Freeman's* (22 Feb. 1883), p. 8. Without any evidence

undecided position occupied by 'Number One' at this point was aptly summarised by the *Leeds Mercury* which stated in February 1883 that the organisation behind the Phoenix Park murders was merely one part of 'the great confederacy which had the unknown "Number One" at the head of one of its branches, and political agitators of the PARNELL type at the head of another.'[160]

Such statements chimed with suspicions that 'Number One' was 'an organizer, having higher rank than other agents, but still subordinate to a superior executive.'[161] Certainly, 'No. 1' was reputed to be an internationally travelled figure, who had access to an apparently 'boundless supply of money' and who had personally directed the Phoenix Park operation.[162] However, though 'Number One' was widely reported to have closely superintended the planning and execution of the assassinations – to such an extent that the Invincibles seemed merely to have been 'a tool' in his hands – he was also widely reported not to have been their leader.[163] As such, the idea of 'Number One', the leader of an organisation whose members were organised into hierarchical 'rings' or 'circles' and did not necessarily know each other's true public identities, quickly became closely associated with the Phoenix Park Murders and the INI.[164] In this way, even at the earliest stages, the INI and

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being presented, 'No. 1' also widely reported long to have been 'an extreme politician' who had long been seriously involved… in the Irish secret societies'. *Berrow's* (21 Apr. 1883), p. 6. He was also reportedly willing to 'suffer death unflinchingly in that cause, and not consider he had made any sacrifice'. *Wrexham Advertiser, and North Wales News* (26 May 1883), p. 7.

[160] *LM* (27 Feb. 1883), p. 4.

[161] *IJ* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 3.

[162] *BM&DP* (20 Feb. 1883), p. 5. 'No. 1' was also, elsewhere, described as having access to 'seemingly unlimited means, derived in large drafts in his favour from America'. *N-EDG* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 4. Number One's access to unlimited funds was widely reported at this point. See, for example: *GH* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 6. 'No. 1' was also widely reported to have 'resided in France and Germany for lengthened periods at different times' See, for example: *N-EDG* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 4; *AWJ* (20 Feb. 1883), p. 2.

[163] See, for example: *GH* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 6. 'No.1' was reported to have 'supplied all the funds, [and] superintended the arrangements'. *Standard* (19 Feb. 1883), p. 5.

[164] As *The Northern Echo* reported in March 1883, 'The Irish [were] not alone in their modes of violent agitation.' In February 1883, the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Morning Post* both reported that the INI had an 'inner ring', which made leadership decisions, and an 'outer ring', which carried out the orders of the 'inner ring'. *GH* (21 Feb. 1883), p. 7; *Morning Post* (21 Feb. 1883), p. 2; *AWJ* (22 Feb. 1883), p. 3; *NE* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 3. The Invincibles were, in fact, regularly referred to as 'the Inner Circle of the Fenian Organisation'. See, for example: *BM&DP* (22 Feb. 1883), p. 8; *Hampshire Advertiser* (07 Mar. 1883), 2. In early March 1883, *The Northern Echo* compared the INI to the Andalusian anarchist terrorist organisation 'The Band of the Black Hand' an organisation whose members were 'numbered, [and] names seldom used', whose

'Number One' were portrayed as unsettlingly potent and invisible in their own right, but also as only a small part within the wider and global structure of Irish nationalist terrorism.[165]

Although the 'Number One' of Phoenix Park was extensively described and discussed in the British press from the moment he was first reported as having been mentioned at the INI trials, he was only decisively identified as Patrick Tynan in late March.[166] By this point, the trope of 'Number One' had been decisively established, and though the biographical details of Tynan's life emerged in the first weeks of April, these were almost entirely reported through the prism of the 'Number One' trope: the conspiratorial, implacable zealot of the dynamite method.[167] Indeed, by the end of May 1883, though the press had spent a month describing Tynan's life in some detail, they had already reverted to their previous habit of referring to 'Number One', rather than Tynan; and by October 1885, when a letter from Tynan was published in

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'inner circle [was] divided into other smaller circles, each under a local leader whose acquaintance with the organisation [did] not extent beyond his immediate chiefs.' Internal justice was meted out by secret tribunals for traitors, who were 'condemned, beaten, stabbed, shot, and afterwards buried.' *NE* (03 Jun. 1883), p. 3.

[165] The INI's cells were also reported to exist throughout the United Kingdom. *AWJ* (03 Mar. 1883), p. 6; *NE* (05 Mar. 1883), p. 3; *IJ* (06 Mar. 1883), p. 3. This last article referenced the existence of 'a reserve fund of fully £5,000, and… at least 12,000 revolvers and about 50,000 rounds of ammunition at their command.'

[166] A Central News Agency report, claiming knowledge of extradition papers served to the French government for one 'Mr. T----n', was published on March 23rd, 1883, containing a description of a photo whose recounted description matched that of the photo later used to identify Number One during the Phoenix Park trials. *Freeman's* (23 March 1883). On the same day reports of extradition papers being served to the American government for the same 'Mr. T---n' were also published in different newspapers. *LM* (23 Mar. 1883), p. 4; *LM* (23 Mar. 1883), p. 8. This descriptor was soon lengthened to 'P---r T---n' (the first name would later prove to be wrong, but not far wrong). *YH* (26 Mar. 1883), p. 5; *DC&A* (26 Mar. 1883), p. 3; *LivM* (26 Mar. 1883), p. 6; *AWJ* (27 Mar. 1883), p. 2; *Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald* (27 Mar. 1883), p. 7; *DC&A* (27 Mar. 1883), p. 6. The *Bristol Mercury* would also, soon after, wrongly unmask a man by the name of 'Tayner' as the real Number One. *BM&DP* (27 Mar. 1883), p. 5. Ipswich Journal would also falsely relate Number One's name as 'Tyner' on the 27th of that month. *IJ* (27 Mar. 1883), p. 4. Patrick Tynan was first named in connection with the Phoenix Park murders as one of three men whose extradition from the United States had been requested. *YH* (29 Mar. 1883), p. 5.

[167] See, for example: *LG* (04 Apr. 1883), p. 3. Tynan, so the press related, had taken 'part in every agitation' for the cause of Irish nationalism. *BM&DP* (16 Apr. 1883), p. 8; *Standard* (16 Apr. 1883), p. 3. Tynan's previous activities also reportedly involved a previous, unsuccessful attempt on Thomas Burke's life. *DC&A* (08 Mar. 1883), p. 5. Tynan was reported to be an 'arch scoundrel'. *YH* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 4.

United Ireland, the press overwhelmingly chose not to entitle their articles using Tynan's name, preferring instead to refer to the 'Number One'.[168]

Given that conspiracies and plots featured strongly in Ireland's history of insurrectionary violence, it was by no means unreasonable to suspect that the INI and 'Number One' were merely one part of the wider constellation of 'physical-force' Irish nationalism. However, reporting of the Phoenix Park murders tended to imply a level of co-ordination among the various terrorist and insurrectionary factions of the Irish nationalist movement, and between these and the parliamentary movement, which was simply not feasible, let alone warranted by the evidence available to the public. Tynan's attraction, rather, rested on his apparently anonymous power, and an ability to manipulate the murky world of Irish nationalism. Just such an attraction flared up once more on his arrest more than a decade later in 1896.

"Number One" and "The Great Conspiracy"

With the benefit of hindsight, the facts of the 1896 'Number One' panic seem relatively simple. Patrick Tynan, a notorious Fenian who had been wanted by the British government in connection with the Phoenix Park murders since 1882, was arrested by French police in Boulogne on Sunday September 13th. Two of his co-conspirators were arrested by the Dutch police in Antwerp on the same day, having previously fled from Rotterdam (in Belgium, having somehow been spooked by their police watchers) and a further plotter was arrested in Glasgow by the British police. The entire international operation was co-ordinated from Scotland Yard by Chief inspector William Melville and Assistant Commissioner Robert Anderson, with the active co-operation of several continental police forces. However, despite the operation's success

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[168] For 1883, see, for example: *Wrexham Advertiser* (26 Mar. 1883), p. 7. For 1885, see: *BDP* (16 Oct. 1885), p. 8; *N-EDG* (16 Oct. 1885), p. 2; *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* [hereafter, *HDC*] (16 Oct. 1885), p. 3; *NE* (16 Oct. 1885), p. 3. This practice was common throughout the period between the Phoenix Park Murders and his capture in 1896. See, for example: *AWJ* (14 Mar. 1889), p. 5. However, this was not uniformly the case. Other newspapers simply included reports of Tynan's letter along with other Irish news, under either 'The State of Ireland' heading, or simply 'Ireland'. See, for example: *Morning Post* (16 Oct. 1885), p. 2; *Lloyd's* (18 Oct. 1885), p. 2; ibid., (25 Oct. 1885), p. 12. The developing prominence of 'Number One' over Tynan himself was, in the long-term, almost certainly also helped by the fact that Tynan was paid little attention by the British press from 1885 until the publication of his book in 1894. P. J. Tynan, *The Irish National Invincibles and their times* (London: Chatham and Co., 1894).

Tynan and the other two conspirators arrested on the Continent were never extradited, in all probability due to the British government's unwillingness to set the precedent that political crimes were 'extraditable' offences. The Glasgow conspirator's prosecution was also dropped due to insufficient evidence; or more probably because any trial would have necessitated a public admission by Scotland Yard that it was running a comprehensive secret surveillance operation (bordering on a system of espionage) in the eastern United States, which would have caused major problems for Anglo-American diplomatic relations.[169] The panic which these events caused was only brief, beginning on Monday September 14th and largely over by Friday 18th. Nevertheless, this episode was reported in the British press with a potent mixture of creative conspiracism and outright panic which, at times, distorted the actual details of the plot almost beyond recognition.

News of Tynan and his compatriots' arrest broke on Monday in the *PMG* and the *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (hereafter *Freeman's Journal*), which printed reports which were both mutually and internally contradictory, to the general gist that Patrick Tynan, 'the notorious … long sought-for Number One' had been arrested the previous day in Boulogne by French police, with the aid and co-operation of the Criminal Investigation Department (hereafter CID). Under the headline 'Sensational Arrests', the *Freeman's Journal* reported that two (and at another point three) other 'highly important' arrests of Irish-Americans allegedly involved in a 'dynamite conspiracy' had been made over the preceding weekend – on the 12th and 13th in Glasgow and Rotterdam.[170] *The Pall Mall Gazette* also reported that four men had been arrested in total, and that 'Detective Inspector Bryan, of Scotland Yard' had been in Antwerp for several days and had discovered the headquarters of 'a band of dynamiters' (see Fig. 3.2).[171] This was reportedly a house, within which Bryan 'came upon a quantity of materials for the

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[169] This, perhaps, is another reason why the extradition of the continental trio was never properly requested.

[170] 'Patrick Kearney' was reported arrested in Glasgow on Sunday September 13th and another unnamed man, confidently expected to 'turn out to be a man prominently connected with the extreme section in the United States', was reported to have been arrested in Rotterdam, who had also recently arrived on the Continent. *Freeman's* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[171] *PMG* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 6.

manufacture of dynamite, believed to be intended for use in England'.[172] In a separate report, it was noted that 'A large quantity of infernal machines and incriminating correspondence was seized' and that those implicated in the existence of this headquarters had reportedly fled Antwerp upon the appearance of the police, and were arrested in Rotterdam.[173] Given the international dimensions of the plot, the *PMG* immediately speculated that the CID must have been in receipt of information from an informer, operating among the conspirators in their New York haven.[174]

The *PMG* article also claimed that Tynan had arrived in Genoa (not Boulogne, as reported in the *Freeman's Journal*) and subsequently proceeded to Paris, with 'his movements … watched by Scotland Yard detectives' from the moment he arrived in Europe, in spite of the fact that he was using 'one of his many aliases'.[175] The *PMG* also carried the summary of a Press Association interview with 'one of the chief inspectors at Scotland Yard', who confirmed that all four arrests had resulted from the same investigation into the same conspiracy, and disclosed that 'The whole of the prisoners were traced step by step from America by the special branch at Scotland Yard.'[176] *The Freeman's Journal*, in contrast, had reported that Tynan had been 'pounced upon by the police' almost as soon as he arrived in Europe, while also printing a Reuters

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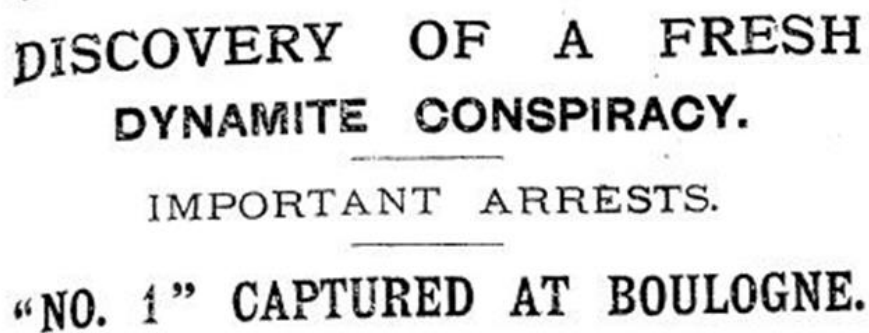
[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] The mention of Tynan, specifically referred to as 'the famous "Number One" of the Dublin Invincible Conspiracy', was explicitly calculated to emphasise the 'sensational character of this… new development of the dynamite policy'. By the end of the second paragraph of this article, before even recounting any of the known details of the plot, the *Freeman's Journal* article had already speculated that the British authorities' reticence was the product of 'their belief that there are others implicated in this supposed plot besides those on whom they have already laid hands'. Ibid., p. 5. The *Freeman's Journal* reported that Tynan had only recently arrived in Boulogne on a German-American liner (though from whence was not recounted) and he was reported to have been operating under the alias 'George Gordon'. This was widely repeated on the 15th. See, for example: *N-EDG* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. Tynan was also said to have used the alias 'Linden'. See, for example: *Freeman's* (14 September 1896), 5 Subsequent to the recounting of events by its London correspondent, it also printed contradictory reports from Reuters in Boulogne, and from a correspondent in Glasgow. These stated that rather than having just arrived, Tynan had been in Europe for over a month, only arriving in Boulogne from Paris the preceding on Friday (the 11th). The *Reuter's* telegram also stated that in Paris, The *Freeman's* Glasgow correspondent also stated that the Glasgow arrestee was named 'Edward Bell', making no mention of any 'Patrick Kearney'. *Freeman's* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 5. These facts were widely reported on the 15th. See, for example: *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3; *LivM* (23 May 1883), p. 5.

[175] *PMG* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 6.

[176] Ibid.

telegram *on the same page* which stated that Tynan's 'movements had been watched from the time he arrived on French territory' during the preceding month, though offering no information as to how Tynan had entered France.[177]

Both the *Freeman's Journal* and the *PMG* reported that Tynan had visited Paris prior to his arrest, though for different lengths of time and slightly different reasons. *The Freeman's Journal* reported that Tynan had 'remained for some days consorting with a number of members of the dynamite faction', though the question of precisely which dynamite faction was left unanswered, and that at the point of his arrest in Boulogne he had been in possession of incriminating letters and a considerable sum of money. The *PMG* noted that Tynan was reported to have 'met with various associates connected with the Fenian cause', including 'Bell' who was later arrested in Glasgow.[178] The chief inspector interviewed by the *PMG* was also reported to have refused to comment as to whether the presence of the conspirator 'Bell' in Glasgow bore any connection to the impending visit of the Tsar. The space left by this refusal to comment would, in the coming days, see an outpouring of conspiracist discourse regarding the scope and scale of the conspiracy, and its potential connection to a wider, co-ordinated set of terrorist operations. The *PMG* entitled its article without reference to 'Tynan', signifying the importance of the trope of 'Number One' over the identity of the man himself (Fig 3.2).

DISCOVERY OF A FRESH DYNAMITE CONSPIRACY.

IMPORTANT ARRESTS.

"NO. 1" CAPTURED AT BOULOGNE.

FIG. 3.2: *The Pall Mall Gazette* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 6.

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[177] *Freeman's* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[178] The *Pall Mall Gazette* report also named the Rotterdam arrestee as 'Wallace', a man who connected with this same conspiracy. *PMG* (14 Sep. 1896), p. 6.

Thus, on September 14th, it was becoming clear that three (more likely four) men had been arrested in three countries as part of an operation co-ordinated by the British CID, aimed at preventing 'dynamite outrage' from being carried out in Britain. One of the men arrested was definitely thought to be the 'Number One' of the Phoenix Park murders, Patrick Tynan. However, the identities of the other men had not been established. From the press reports, it was also not clear what the precise objectives of the conspiracy were (other than what might be surmised from the 'Irish-American' nationality of the plotters and the fact that Tynan was involved). Reference had already been made to the potential significance of the fact that one of the conspirators had been arrested in Glasgow. This confused situation continued throughout coverage of the Tynan plot.

The following day, Tuesday September 15th, the British press gave a huge amount of coverage to the plot, with dozens of articles and full pages given over to the emerging, fragmentary details of the movements, plans and circumstances of the plotters' arrests (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4). As the headlines reproduced below attest, many of these articles were wildly speculative in relation to the identity of the plotters, the scope of the plot itself, and the plotters' connection to a possible, wider terrorist organisation.

ALLEGED NEW DYNAMITE CONSPIRACY.

EXCITING ARREST OF "NUMBER ONE."

IMPORTANT PAPERS SEIZED.

FIG. 3.3: *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3.

THE FENIANS.

—

A NEW CONSPIRACY.

—

ALLEGED PLOT

AGAINST

THE CZAR.

—

AID FROM NIHILISTS.

—

INTENDED OUTRAGES ON BRITISH SOIL.

—

FOUR ARRESTS.

—

INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS.

—

SEIZURE OF EXPLOSIVES.

—

FIG. 3.4: *Liverpool Mercury* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

The conspiracy was widely reported to be 'gigantic … extensive and diabolical', brought about by a Fenian terrorist organisation that spanned the Atlantic and involved operatives travelling throughout Europe and staying in various cities, including Paris, Boulogne, Rotterdam and Antwerp as well as several others in Germany and Austria. The plot was also widely reported to have involved the approval – and very likely the co-operation and operational support of – continental Anarchists and Russian Nihilists resident in the United States.[179] According to the *Freeman's Journal*, moreover, the police were certain that they had 'discovered … absolute evidence that one of the more recent developments of the scheme aimed at an outrage upon the person of the Czar on the occasion of that potentate's visit to Britain'.[180]

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[179] *LivM* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[180] This was predicated upon two largely unconnected 'facts'. Firstly, the Tsar was soon to visit Glasgow and one of the conspirators was arrested in Glasgow. Secondly, Tynan was reported to have been captured in possession of correspondence with exiled Nihilists described as representative of 'frequent consultations and apparent concord between the American Fenians and the Russian Nihilists, and to have met and discussed his plans with continental anarchists. See, for example: ibid.; *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3; *S&RI* (15 Sep. 1896), 5. This last, from *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, was an almost (but not entirely) word-for-word reprint of

A report from Glasgow that Monday, also printed in *Freeman's*, claimed that the police were in possession of definite facts which left 'no doubt the conspiracy was of that character'.[181] The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* also noted the 'practical certainty that one of the main objects aimed at was an outrage upon the Tsar during his visit to this country', and that while it was 'a puzzle why Irish Fenians should plot against the lives of the Tsar and Tsarina … the facts disclosed in London and elsewhere leave no doubt the conspiracy was of that character'.[182] It was also reported by the *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* that deciphered letters found on those arrested in Rotterdam had indicated the plot against the Queen and Czar and that a lack of success in Scotland would be followed by attempts on his life in Paris.[183] It further reported via a telegram from Per Dalziel's Agency 'that during the past month the Anarchists of Paris and throughout the country generally had been holding secret meetings, and that there had been a good deal of movement amongst them', suggesting, at the very least, that the continental anarchists knew that something was brewing.[184]

The assassination element was reported as having been 'readily adopted by the Fenian organisation as a master stroke with which to crown their fell designs', given their republican principals and their desire to please their new collaborators in 'terror'.[185] Accordingly, as the *Yorkshire Herald* stated, it was felt reasonable by many newspapers to speculate that Tynan had come back to Europe to superintend Nihilist or Invincible operations, and to create a reign

those reports published by the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* of the same day. Strikingly similar language was used in the *Yorkshire Herald* in respect of the purported Nihilist connection, but the report of the 15th published therein differed significantly in other respects. *YH* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 4. See, also: *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *LM* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5. The Czar was due to visit Balmoral on the following Monday, the 21st. Leith Police, heavily involved in preparations for the Tsar's visit were even specifically reported to have stated that they knew 'nothing… of the reported plot against the Czar's life.' *LivM* (23 May 1883), 5; *YH* (15 September 1896), 5. Other reports had also quoted 'the best-informed officials' as attaching little credence to this idea. See, for example: *S&RI* (15 September 1896), 5.

[181] *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[182] *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3.

[183] *S&RI* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[184] Ibid.

[185] *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

of terror.[186] Indeed, an attempt on the lives of the Czar and the Queen was widely reported to have been greeted with 'cordial approval' by 'French and other continental Anarchists' with whom Tynan was said to have been in contact with while in Paris.[187] The *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* even published a Central News Agency report which went as far as to state that the plot, *in toto*, had originated 'in the United States, [where] the Irish-Americans had combined with the extreme Anarchists, and that the two had arranged to work together in future.'[188]

As internationally co-ordinated and directed as this plot was suspected to have been, however, it was immediately reported to have been countered by an equally international counter-operation. Triggered by information received from informants in the United States, a number of different European police

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[186] *YH* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 4. Such an 'evil purpose' led the *Herald* to conclude, in the same report, that Tynan and his terrorist compatriots were 'enemies of civilized society,' who 'must be hunted from their dens at all hazards and at all costs'. Some reports admitted confusion as to why this should be the case. In the midst of this otherwise credulous report, however, the *Herald* also characterised these speculations as 'hardly… founded on fact.' Ibid.

[187] *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. However other elements of the plot – such as the suggestion that 'Kearney and Haines' might have sent bombs from Antwerp to France – were, at the same time, speculated not to have resulted from any anarchist connection. Ibid. Questions began to be asked almost immediately, on the 15th, as to the location of any bombs which might already have been produced and despatched. See, for example: *S&RI* (15 September 1896), 5. Yet more reports, however, claimed that that, though actively engaged in the plot to assassinate both the Czar and Queen Victoria, the two men arrested in Rotterdam were actually anarchists. See, for example: *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *YH* (15 Sept. 1896), p. 5

[188] *S&RI* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. Most other reports on the 15th did not actively impute anarchist participation and some even went so far as to deny it, simply noting their probable agreement with the aims and methods of the plot. See, for example: *N-EDG* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. There was also confusion, amongst reports published on the 15th, as to the quality of the plotters' tradecraft – felt in some reports to have been terrible, and in others to have been worryingly perfected. The *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, in a report which made no reference to the police having had any knowledge of the plot prior to this point, somewhat credulously reported that Tynan's capture in Boulogne had been effected because he had had the bad luck to arouse the suspicions of his hotelier, who coincidentally happened to be the father in law of the local resident Scotland Yard detective. Tynan reportedly claimed to be a Freemason, as well as able to speak several foreign languages fluently. Apparently, upon becoming drunk and incapable of supporting these claims, his hotelier decided that this suspicious character must be Tynan, or some other dangerous political radical. Having sent for his son in law, Mr. Ripley, the Scotland Yard man, he apparently spent the night in the room adjacent to Tynan's with a loaded revolver, and took part in Tynan's arrest at four o'clock the following morning. *N-EDG* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. The overwhelming feeling, however, was that the Fenians had been taken 'every precaution, shipping separately and taking different routes, Tynan, for example, going by way of Turin'. This last contrasting earlier reports than Tynan have arrived in Europe via Genoa and Paris, or had travelled directly to Boulogne. *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. Some reports even contradicted themselves on the very same page, on this matter. See, for example: *YH* (15 Sep. 1896), pp. 4, 5. The 'cleverness' of Tynan's arrest, moreover, was also widely noted to have been remarkable, given his use of multiple aliases and having effected an 'almost complete' disguise. *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. The quality of the 'Number One' conspirators' tradecraft would remain permanently unresolved.

forces were reported to have collaborated in monitoring the progress of the plot, under the quiet and careful direction of Chief Inspector William Melville and Assistant Commissioner Robert Anderson, from Scotland Yard in London. Scotland Yard detectives – reportedly men of the 'special branch' – were stated to have shadowed the plotters all the way from their American bases, across the Atlantic and throughout their various continental wanderings, supported all the way by the relevant national police forces, each man reporting back to London whenever anything happened, never allowing the plotters out of their sight for a minute.[189] Ultimately, 'when the plotters had practically reached the supreme stage of their plans, and […] it was deemed by the police to be inimical to the public weal that they should be allowed longer tether, it was determined to draw tight the meshes that had been woven around them and catch them like rats in a trap.'[190]

Though most reports made very general statements to the effect that a 'gigantic plot for the perpetration of dynamite outrages in Great Britain' had been stymied by the work of Scotland Yard and its continental equivalents, the

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[189] This operation was reported to have resulted from information garnered by Scotland Yard agents and informers working amongst the Fenians of the United States 'for some times past'. *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. See, also: *LivM* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. This information had tipped off Scotland Yard to the fact that 'a gang of desperadoes [had] been engaged in America in preparing' an 'extensive and diabolical plot', 'to perpetrate dynamite outrages in [Britain] and to establish a reign of terror'. . Upon receipt of this information, Scotland Yard had, reportedly, 'Gradually and quietly [drawn] a complete network… round the plotters'. *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. Scotland Yard detectives, reportedly men from 'the special branch' had shadowed the plotters, dogging their every movement, travelling 'through the Netherlands, Germany, Austria etc.' *S&RI* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. Each of those eventually arrested had reportedly been 'traced step by step'. *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. These myriad shadowings, carried out by British detectives 'With the cordial co-operation of the French, Belgian and Scottish police', had all reportedly been co-ordinated from Scotland Yard by 'Messrs Anderson and Melville, sitting in their offices at home and directing police operations… constantly informed of what was in progress'. *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. See, also: *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3; *LivM* (23 May 1883), p. 5. Each contributor to the operation was described as having 'reported to headquarters in London, where Assistant Commissioner Anderson and the redoubtable Inspector had charge of operations [of] which the object was to draw the meshes of the law tightly round the chief conspirators.' *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3.

[190] *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. These 'rats', though, were reported only to have been part of a much wider problem. It was suggested, in some reports published on the 15th, that amongst the Irish community there was 'nothing since the Parnell divorce case' which had produced such dismay 'as the arrest of the man Bell… simultaneously with the capture of the notorious Invincible Tynan.' *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. See, also: *YH* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. Such reports mentioned growing discontentment amongst the London Irish, claiming that 'if the miserable squabble among the [Irish] Parliamentary Party did not cease the more advanced men would throw up constitutional agitation entirely and adopt more sinister means to their end.' Young men in London 'were [reportedly] leaving the National League branches' and joining secret societies.' *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

details of the plot went largely unexplored in the early days of the panic.[191] It was widely reported that the plot had originated amongst the Fenian societies rooted in the Irish-American diaspora, and the plotters were thought to have been headquartered in Antwerp, where two conspirators had been arrested.[192]

The *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* summed up the state of play in the first days of the panic rather well, on the 15th, with an editorial published which found itself capable of the following conclusions. It could reasonably 'be assumed that the seat of the conspiracy was America, that its chief organisers were the men who directed former murderous conspiracies under colour of serving the cause of Ireland, and that its destined victims were probably the Queen and the Czar.'[193] As the *Yorkshire Herald* opined on the 15th, there was no doubt that 'a big plot [was] being brewed'.[194] Though speculative, such statements would become common currency in the days which followed, given that, as the *PMG* noted in an editorial on the 15th, the details of the plot were 'provokingly obscure"[195]

The following days, Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th September, featured a disappointing lack of new information, which fuelled further

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[191] *LivM* (25 May 1883), p. 5. See, also, for example: *S&RI* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[192] This headquarters was widely reported to have been a house converted into a covert location for the manufacture of dynamite, stocked with all the requisite chemicals and equipment. See, for example, *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3. The bombs which may or may not have already been produced in this manufactory were noted to have been intended for use in Britain, though specific targets for demolition were not mentioned at this point. Ibid. Whether or not bombs had already been made was something which any reports dwelt on in the course of the 16th, though other reports provided glimpses into the murky, conspiratorial world of Fenian secret societies in the late Victorian period, detailing involvement in previous plots. A report which the *Freeman's* reprinted from the *Globe* (via the Press Association) gave detailed the conspiratorial resume of one of the men arrested in Rotterdam (Kearney), featuring involvement in the Glasgow gasworks bombing of 1892 and a murder plot in New York against a fellow Fenian. *Freeman's* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5. However, the immediate following report quoted the Glasgow police as having forced Kearney to admit to having been involved in the bombing of the gasworks in Tradeston in Glasgow, in 1883. The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, in this vein, also noted that there were 'at present three released dynamitard's in Glasgow', one of whom had recently visited America and Ireland, though the implications of this information were left implicit and unexplored. *HDC* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 3.

[193] *N-EDG* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 2. Tellingly, the *Gazette* neither presented nor even referenced the existence of any evidence in support of these assertions.

[194] *YH* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 5

[195] The *Pall Mall Gazette* even reacted against the tendency to speculate, noting that the purported combination of 'Fenians acting in unholy alliance with Anarchists… aimed generally at [an attack on] the foundation of society and government' was 'alluring, but by no means convincing… even for those not over-endowed with the faculty of thought.' Cutting to the core of the matter, the *PMG* opined that such speculative thinking 'appears to attribute to the supposed plotters an importance that may not be theirs.' *PMG* (15 Sep. 1896), p. 1.

speculation about the nature of the plot. Likewise, Chief Inspector Melville and Assistant Commissioner Robert Anderson's still unknown whereabouts provided further fodder for suspicions that the plot was far from entirely nixed.[196] In the absence of definitive information as to Melville's location and activities, it was speculated that the country would soon be 'startled by the discovery of fresh ramifications of the fiendish plot', an assumption which drew upon the fact that the CID was reportedly 'concentrating the whole of its force upon the task of investigation'.[197]

Despite the CID's reportedly rigorous detective work – some reports even suggested they had 'been aware for three years past that a dynamite plot [had] been hatching' – other members of the gang were still reportedly at large, though their location was apparently 'impossible' to discover.[198] Confusion continued to reign. For example, on the 16th the *Freeman's Journal* printed a report to the effect that rumours of a plot to blow up Marlboro' House and the Prince of Wales had been 'entirely discredited' on the same page as a separate report which confirmed that these were definitely one of Tynan's proposed targets.[199] 'Number One' moreover, was now being definitively reported as something more than a Fenian leader, and the plot as 'a Nihilist-Fenian joint conspiracy'.[200] As the *Freeman's Journal* recounted via a 'Paris correspondent of

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[196] Inspector Melville's whereabouts were reported to be unknown, and all attempts to reach him had failed. Speculation regarding Melville's location was rife, mainly focusing around the assumption that he and his principal subordinate must have departed for one or another continental port, in order to continue his investigations. See, for example: *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 7.

[197] Quotes, respectively, from: *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 7. Reports from Brussels also noted that fifteen more individuals, scattered throughout various European capitals, were suspected of involvement in the plot, of whom ten had set out from the United States. This was felt to suggest that alternative attempts upon the life of the Czar were being prepared, one supposedly in Breslau. See, for example: *LivM* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 4; *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 7. An American was also reportedly still being shadowed in Glasgow by Irish detectives, and 'Systematic' searches of certain Irish districts of Glasgow were being carried out, due to their infestation with 'sympathisers with the dynamite movement', though no further arrests were expected, Irish detectives had, in fact, reportedly been in Glasgow for over a year, in order more 'closely [to] watch the movements of the dynamitards'. *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[198] *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 7, (see, also: p. 8). This, in spite of the essential work being carried out by 'men willing to play the part and earn the wages of the spy'. *LivM* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 4.

[199] *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5. See, also: *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), pp. 7-8.

[200] See, for example: *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

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the "Daily News"': 'The gang with which he acts is proclaimed … to be a gang of international Anarchists bent on removing the Czar'.[201]

The 'Fenian and Nihilist bodies' had reportedly 'united for a common purpose … within the past three months' with the objective of assassinating both Queen Victoria and the Russian Csar.[202] Moreover, it was reported that Tynan and the other conspirators' movements had not been discovered by informers amongst the American Fenians, but amongst 'agents amongst the Anarchists of the United States'.[203] However, at the same time suspicions also began to emerge that the anarchist-Nihilist complexion of the plot was simply a ploy by the English police calculated to ensure Tynan's extradition to Britain.[204] This, moreover, was confused by the simultaneous publication of

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[201] *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5. This seemed to be confirmed by reports of 'secret meetings in Belgium with continental sympathisers' to which 'the men carried mysterious letters of introduction'. *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 8.

[202] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[203] Ibid., p. 7.

[204] *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 8. Moreover, the 16th was also the first day upon which it began to emerge that Tynan might not be extradited to Britain. Whereas doubts had existed from the moment of his arrest as to whether the extradition treaty between France and Britain covered offences such as those of which Tynan was accused, reports from this day also suggested that 'no demand had been received from the British Government for the extradition of Tynan.' *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5. The ambiguous legal position and perceived intentions of the English government were most explicitly related that day by the *Glasgow Herald*, which reported that 'Much will depend upon the nature of the charge which is preferred,' arguing that 'Should it be possible to connect him definitely with the dynamite preparations at Antwerp', it would be possible to have him extradited. *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 7. Commentary began to flare up again, on the 17th, regarding the potential extradition of Tynan. Once again, questions were asked firstly for which offence Tynan would be charged, and secondly whether the French (as was their right) would acquiesce to any demand for extradition on the basis of an avowedly political offence. *N-EDG* (17 Sep. 1896), p. 3; *GH* (17 Sep. 1896), p. 5. In contrast, in the case of Kearney and Haines, there was reportedly no doubt that they would be extradited. In some newspapers, it was suggested that the close co-operation of the police might have some positive impact on the French government's decision in relation to the extradition, albeit without certainty. *Standard* (17 Sep. 1896), p. 3. Further reporting of scepticism amongst the Continental press as to the purported anarchist and Nihilist aspects of the plot also continued to be reported on the 17th, when *Standard* reported that the French press were openly sympathising with the 'Fenian' plot. Moreover, the German press was speculating that the English press was only 'making a great commotion about the matter, in the hope that England may curry favour with the Czar.' One German newspaper reportedly went so far as to describe Chief Inspector Melville as '"garrulous and self-advertising, the foster-father and harbourer of the Anarchists,"', the man who had and 'got up the plot' all by himself. However, elements of the German press were also reporting that the semi-official French press were deliberately focusing on the 'pronouncedly Irish Revolutionary nature' of the plot, 'lest the Czar Nicholas should give up, at the eleventh hour, his intention to visit the Promised Land of the bomb throwers.' Moreover, the Austrian press reportedly supported the assertion that the plot was of a decidedly anarchist character. *Standard* (17 Sep. 1896), p. 3. On the 18th, it began to be definitively reported that Tynan would be removed to Ireland once the British authorities had secured his extradition from France. *AWJ* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *BN-L* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *HDC* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 4; *LM* (18 Sep. 1896); p. 5;

further reports that the French and English police were also not taking the anarchist-Nihilist element of the plot seriously, though still suggesting an attempt upon the life of Queen Victoria far more likely given the Fenian origin of the conspiracy.[205] During the 16th, doubts also began to emerge as to whether Tynan actually was 'Number One'. Indeed, it was reported on the 17th that Tynan was not Number One, but rather an imposter who, for the preceding fourteen years had 'posed as "No. 1.".'[206] One report even suggested that Tynan was not Number One, but instead "K", another member of the Invincibles referred to in the 1883 Phoenix Park trial.[207]

Facts of this nature were reportedly well-known to the chiefs of the Dublin and London secret police, and the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* even suggested that it was quite possible 'that there never was an actual "Number One"' and that it was 'fourth-fifths a certainty that, if there were, Tynan [was] not the man.'[208] Doubts as to Tynan's personal involvement with continental Anarchists were also growing, as interviews between Tynan and the procureur in Boulogne were 'said to have tended to show that he was in no way

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LivM (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *S&RI* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5. However, this narrative continued to be complicated by reports that while the French police were deeply indebted to the 'special branch' for their aid in the suppression of 'Anarchist desperadoes', the French press were deliberately spreading the story that the purported assassination element of the plot was itself a deliberate ploy by the British authorities to embarrass the French authorities prior to the Czar's visit, and to implicate Tynan in the activities of anarchists in order to provide a direct political incentive to his extradition. *AWJ* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *BN-L* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5. By the 19th, the question of Tynan's nationality also began to complicate the extradition request, as information received from New York was found to show that the records of the Court of Common Pleas showing that Tynan had been 'a citizen of the United States since August, 1888.' Ibid., (19 Sep. 1896), p. 5. If Tynan were an American citizen, it would prove considerably more difficult to extradite him, as the US ambassador in Paris would be duty bound to do all he could to prevent Tynan's extradition. *S&RI* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5. Discussions of comparable extradition cases continued to illuminate the potential for Tynan both to be, and not to be extradited. See, for example: *N-EDG* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 4; *LM* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5. At the same time, problems with the extradition of Kearney and Haines began to be reported. As they had been arrested in Rotterdam (in the Netherlands) but the crime committed in Berchem (in Belgium) the British authorities would only be able to extradite them if the Dutch authorities were requested to 'surrender' them by the Belgian government, with the Belgian government subsequently allowing them to be extradited to Britain, which was by no means certain. *LM* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *S&RI* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[205] *Freeman's* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *GH* (16 Sep. 1896), p. 7.

[206] Some suggested that Tynan was merely a 'go-between', or an agent of the police. *N-EDG* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 4. See, also: *S&RI* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[207] *N-EDG* (17 Sep. 1896), p. 3. Tynan was, reportedly, not Number One, but instead "K", another member of the Invincibles referred to in the 1883 Phoenix Park Trials.

[208] Ibid., (18 Sep. 1896), p. 4.

connected with the French Anarchists'.[209] Nevertheless, reports continued to be published which suggested that the plotters had sought to attack the Houses of Parliament, Mansion House, the Royal Exchange, the National Gallery, the British Museum, St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey as well.[210]

From Friday 18th September onwards, press attention on Tynan and the plotters began to fade and the panic receded.[211] On the 19th and in the weeks and months which followed most papers printed full summaries of all that was known and suspected, recounting facts, speculation and multiple possible narratives. The *Leeds Mercury,* for example, reported that the execution of a major dynamite conspiracy had been prevented and that the assassination of the Czar was strongly suspected to have been one of the objectives of the plot.[212] It also reported that the plot was to be carried out jointly by Irish American Fenians and Russian Nihilists, but that this connection had not been established with certainty. Tynan was definitively reported to be the 'Number One' of the Phoenix Park Murders and it was also stated with certainty that the other plotters were connected to previous dynamite outrages.[213]

On Saturday 19th the *Newcastle Weekly Courant* summed up what was known about the plot, its objectives and its leader:

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[209] *BN-L* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *S&RI* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 5.

[210] See, for example: *N-EDG* (18 Sep. 1896), p. 4.

[211] On this day, the *Pall Mall Gazette* printed a column devoted to Tynan's previously unknown youthful poetic aspirations, with several examples of his poetry given, entitled "NUMBER ONE" AS A POET. *PMG* (24 Sep. 1896), pp. 1-2.

[212] *LM* (19 Sep. 1896), p. 4.

[213] See, for example: *YH* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *PMG* (24 Sep. 1896), pp. 7-8; *YH* (19 Sep. 1896), p. 18. The appearance of Edward Bell, the Glasgow plotter, at the Bow Street magistrate's court was widely reported on the 25th, 26th and 27th, alongside the government's decision not to press for the extradition of Kearney and Haines from the Netherlands. *BM&DP* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 8; *DC&A* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 13; *Freeman's* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *Standard* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 6; *YH* (25 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *Berrow's* (26 Sep. 1896), p. 5; *Reynolds's* (27 Sep. 1896), p. 6. Later, during October, November and again in January, the press recounted verbatim summaries of the proceedings of Bell's trial. *GH* (10 Oct. 1896), p. 7; *Morning Post* (10 Oct. 1896), p. 7; *Standard* (10 Oct. 1896), p. 3; *GH* (07 Nov. 1896), p. 3; *N-EDG* (11 Nov. 1897), p. 3; *BN-L* (12 Jan. 1897), p. 5; *Western Mail* (12 Jan. 1897), p. 6; *PMG* (18 Jan. 1897), p. 8. Some of these accounts dwelt lengthily and in great detail upon the organisational infrastructure of the organisation said to have sent the conspirators to Europe from America. See, for example: *BN-L* (14 Nov. 1896), p. 5; *Morning Post* (14 Nov. 1896), p. 7. The charges against Bell, the Glasgow conspirator, were suddenly dropped in January 1897, as the Solicitor-General stated that in the light of new evidence, the case against Bell, alone, was insufficient to secure a conviction under the existing indictment. See, for example: *The Star* (23 Jan. 1897), p. 1. The jury, at this point, obligingly returned a verdict of not-guilty and Bell was set free. *Illustrated Police News etc* (30 Jan. 1897), p. 2.

> The practically simultaneous arrest of four alleged ringleaders in a gigantic plot for the perpetration of dynamite outrages in Great Britain […and the news] that an attempt upon the life of the Czar was amongst the daring objects of the gang will probably be received with surprised interest throughout the civilised world. In the arrest of Tynan, the notorious "No. 1" […] the police have nipped in the bud an entirely new plan of desperate outrages, the success of which would in all probability have created a reign of terror in this country […] The police regard the plot as being of huge proportions and most serious character.[214]

During the following weeks coverage of the plot gave way to extensive coverage of the extradition proceeding (or lack of proceedings) against the continental conspirators and by mid-October the panic had receded, making what the *Hampshire Telegraph* described as the 'pricking of the bubble of the "great dynamite plot truly complete'.[215] From this point onwards Tynan and the plotters simply vanished into history.

Clearly, coverage of the 'Tynan plot' exhibited many of the popular conspiracist tropes discussed earlier in this chapter. What is also striking is the importance of confusion and doubt. As long as questions remained open as to the completeness of the police's work in foiling the plot, a space was clear for speculation as to the threat still posed by Tynan and his compatriots. Likewise, while the identity of the plotters themselves, their movements and the extent to which they were in contact with (and motivated by) their connections to other radical terrorist groups remained unconfirmed, speculation as to whether the plotters had intended to assassination both the Queen and the Tsar could persists – and which it did. What ran through all of this speculation, and facilitated its grouping into one coherent conspiracist discourse, was the figure of Tynan as 'the mysterious Number one', in a sense the conspiracist lynchpin of this particular burst of sensational speculation. This figure, as presented by the press in 1896, was not simply a reflection of previous popular knowledge regarding Tynan. It was also strongly inflected with the same assumptions of organisation, hierarchy and authority that pervaded contemporary literary discussions of the global (and globalising) nature of terrorism.

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[214] *NWC* (19 Sep. 1896), p. 2.

[215] *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc* (17 Oct. 1896), p. 4.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the fact that popular fears of Fenian and anarchist terrorism were very high during the 1880s and 1890s, and though the public became extremely panicked at certain times, fantasies of malignant organisation, leadership and terrorist pervasion never really 'dominated' the public mind in the way that spy fever did. Indeed, while panics did occur around the time of the Walsall trial, the arrest of Tynan and the Siege of Sidney Street, nothing comparable happened when, for example, Theodule Meunier and Jean-Pierre Francois (notorious anarchist terrorists) were arrested by William Melville in 1892 and 1893. Indeed, in the case of 'the Mysterious Number One', the peak of the panic lasted only a day or so, and the fever died down soon afterwards.

This itself was commented upon at the time: as the *Penny Illustrated Paper* seems to have been at pains to point out in 1911, less than a month after the Siege of Sidney Street, popular interest in terrorist incidents very often took a back seat to more mundane concerns, anxieties and fears.

Shade of Sidney Street Anarchist : "That's more than the papers did for me."

FIG. 3.5: *Penny Illustrated Paper* (28 Jan. 1911), p. 97

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As the *Hampshire Advertiser* had earlier written in 1883, commenting on the Phoenix Park Murders, which had taken place only a year before: 'It is thus that interest in passing events ebbs and flows.'[216] Equally, it is worth remembering that satires and subversions of these conspiracist ideas also circulated in the late Victorian and Edwardian public sphere. As Conrad and Chesterton's works demonstrate, the tendency towards conspiracist narration was not universally loved.

Nevertheless, as has been shown, media fears of anarchist subversion were closely connected to wider fears of left-wing subversion, operating along a conspiracist continuum or spectrum of suspicion. At the extreme end of this spectrum, far distant and yet still intimately related, was the popular 'terrorist' literature of the day, a diverse genre which mediated popular fears of subversive internationalism and anarchist terrorism, and that presented the spectre of left-wing forces uniting across the globe. Doubtless these texts must be taken with a pinch of salt. Few, perhaps, would really have suggested that a global anarchist insurrection was as imminent as writers such as Richard Savage and George Griffith suggested in their novels. Even so, the fact that both these authors, along with their more literarily worthy peers, such as G.K. Chesterton, were highly prolific and popular (i.e. sensitive to the prevailing winds of popular sentiment) stands as evidence for the idea that their highly speculative works reflected the building senses of suspicion with which the internationalist Left was approached in the later Victorian period.

Anarchism, however, was also entangled with the issue of immigration, which itself was bound up with the status of Jews both within Britain and the wider world. The thesis now considers the conspiracist anxieties and prejudices that surrounded just this set of issues.

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[216] *The Hampshire Advertiser* (7 Mar. 1883), p. 2.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RACE, MIGRATION AND PLUTOCRACY

> The Jew may govern the money market, and the money market may govern the world. The minister may be in doubt to his scheme of finance till he has been closeted with a Jew. A congress of sovereigns may be forced to summon the Jew to their assistant. The scrawl of the Jew on the back of a piece of paper may be worth more than the royal word of three kings or the national faith of three new American republics. But that he should put Right Honourable before his name would be the greatest of national calamities.[1]

> We should like to see such men excluded by the people; not on the grounds of religious faith, or on account of their refusal to take a trumpery oath… but simply because we believe the trading system of Moses and Co. is more than sufficiently represented already by Christians in the House of Commons… this [should] not be arrived at for the behoof of an Austrian loan-monger or a partner in the monstrous sweating establishment of Moses and Co.[2]

> He [the Jew] holds his own, and elbows the Anglo-Saxon out of his way, by the support, which he finds in the corporate cohesion that distinguishes his race.[3]

> … the Jew wins and must win in what are called modern conditions.[4]

Between 1830 and 1900, the relationship of Jews to the British state and British society underwent a profound transformation.[5] By the late Victorian period a largely middle class and prosperous 'established' Jewish community had emerged. Some of its members were not only conspicuously wealthy, but also highly influential in British society and politics and in international finance. Famously, the Rothschild Bank was so powerful in international finance that it was widely viewed as representative of Britain's global financial power *tout court*, though by the end of the period the Rothschilds were by no means the only

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[1] T.B. Macaulay in 1831, quoted in G. Himmelfarb, *The Spirit of the Age: Victorian Essays* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 80. Macauley was mobilising heavy sarcasm here to evoke and lambast contemporary British anti-Semitism.

[2] *Reynolds' Newspaper*, quoted in Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 77.

[3] *The Truth* (21 Mar. 1878), p. 375.

[4] *Eye-Witness* (28 Mar. 1912), p. 472.

[5] For the history of Chinese labour importation into the Transvaal between 1903 and 1910, see: Bright, *Chinese Labour in South Africa*, passim; K. Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884-1926* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 79-108; P. Richardson, *Chinese Mine Labour in the Transvaal* (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1982), passim. For a wider view of the uses of indentured labour in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, see: D. Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), passim.

successful and powerful owners of a 'Jewish' bank in London.[6] At the same time, restrictions were removed on Jews' ability to occupy parochial, municipal, parliamentary and university offices, all part of a gradual and fitful process of 'emancipation'; and Jews eventually entered both the House of Lords the and House of Commons, including of course as Prime Minister.[7] By 1900, then, Britain's 'established' Jewish community had a presence in many facets of social, political, economic and institutional life in Britain.

However, emancipation and integration were complicated processes, and the assumption of a place in national life by Britain's established Jewry did not come without considerable ambiguities and tensions. Indeed, just as Jews were 'joining the nation' in this period, new conceptions of the nation were emerging that described Britain as a collective body bound together by a shared linguistic, religious and cultural heritage, in contrast to more established senses of the nation as a civic, if also class-based, community.[8] Moreover, both longstanding Conservative-Anglican traditions and a rising tide of nonconformity within Liberal politics placed Protestantism at the core of the constitution. In this context, Jews – construed as distinct in terms of both race and religion – were at once outside and within the nation. Accordingly, although viewed in some quarters as evidence of integration and assimilation, the increasing social, financial and political prominence of Britain's Jewish

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[6] Between 1870 and 1879 fourteen percent of all *non-landed* British millionaires were Jews, most of their fortunes drawn from mercantile finance and stock-exchange success. See: W.D. Rubenstein, 'Jews among Top British Wealth Holders, 1857-1969', *Jewish Social Studies*, 34:1 (1972): 73-84; R. Davis, *The English Rothschilds* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); and, S. Chapman, *The Rise of Merchant Banking* (London: Routledge, 2006 [1984]).

[7] For the processes of emancipation, integration and assimilation, see: Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, passim; J. Garrard, *The English and Immigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), passim.

[8] For these later Victorian senses of nationhood, see: J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For British Victorian nationalism and its relationship to anti-Semitism, see: Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora*, pp. 80-86. This is not to diminish the emancipation process, merely to note its cultural complexity: after all, such novel constructions of the nation were as much reflective as they were formative of popular ambivalence on the subject of Jews and their place in Britain and the world. For arguments against emancipation, see, for example: *The Truth* (21 Mar. 1878), 375; G. Smith, 'England's Abandonment of the Protectorate of Turkey', *Contemporary Review* (Feb. 1878): 603-621. For arguments in favour of Jewish enfranchisement see, for example, T.B. Macauley, *Civil Disabilities of the Jews* (1831), reproduced in Himmelfarb, *Spirit of the Age*, pp. 80-90; J.H. Stallard, *London Pauperism amongst Jews and Christians* (London: Saunders, Otley & co., 1867). For an example of arguments against Jewish emancipation see, *Reynolds's Newspaper*'s arguments against David Salomons' attempt to enter Parliament, as discussed in: Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 77.

community was often considered incompatible with its status as a religious minority. By the 1880s the Jewish community's many successes were often portrayed as indicative of undue and disproportionate influence, exerted by a community that was avaricious, clannish and closed.[9] Benjamin Disraeli was a key figure in these debates. Born Jewish but later baptised a Christian, Disraeli's rise to the pinnacle of British politics in 1868 as Prime Minister brought questions of Jews' ambiguous racial and religious status to the fore, even if such matters were always strenuously contested, not least by Disraeli himself. Equally, speculation regarding the influence of 'Jewish money' over the British press featured prominently in liberal responses to Disraeli's foreign policy, as did representations of his Tory populism as a cynical manipulation of the masses in the service of Jewish interests.[10]

Clearly, emancipation did not equate to integration or assimilation; far from it. Even before the 1890s, identifiably conspiracist discourses of only partly visible, internationally networked Jewish influence that posed a threat to the nation enjoyed currency; and these discourses were already politically promiscuous, circulating on both sides of the parliamentary divide. As the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, T.H. Escott, noted in 1885, it was not unusual to believe that 'English society, once ruled by an aristocracy is now dominated by a plutocracy. And this plutocracy is to a large extent Hebraic in its composition. There is no phenomenon more noticeable in society than the ascendency of the Jews.'[11]

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[9] See, for example: *The Economist* (19 Jun. 1875), p. 772; G. Smith, 'Can Jews be Patriots?', *Nineteenth Century* (May 1878), pp. 875-887. For the ambiguous literary representation of Jews in Victorian British literature, see: G. Eliot, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), A. Trollope, *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873); idem, *Phineas Redux* (1874); idem, *The Way We Live Now* (1875); and, idem, *The Prime Minister* (1876).

[10] For Disraeli's populism as 'Jewish' manipulation, see, for example: *Daily News* (23 Jul. 1878), p. 65; *The Nonconformist* (17 Jul. 1878), p. 705. (Even *The Jewish Chronicle* commented, in July 1876, that 'Benjamin Disraeli belongs to the Jewish people*, despite his baptismal certificate. His talents, his virtues and shortcoming alike, are purely of the Jewish cast.' Jewish* Chronicle (15 Aug. 1876), p. 312. For questions of Disraeli's ethnic/religious status, see: T.P. O'Connor, *Lord Beaconsfield* (London: W. Mullan and Son, 1879), pp. 607-609, 663, 671; F. Harrison Hill, 'The Political Adventures of Lord Beaconsfield', part iv, *Fortnightly Review* (Aug. 1878), p. 269; A. Boyle, *The Sympathy and Action of England in the Late Eastern Crisis and What Came of Them* (London, 1878), p. 11. For an example of suspicions regarding Jewish press ownership during Disraeli's premiership, see: E.A. Freeman, *The Ottoman Power in Europe; it's Growth and Decline* (London: Macmillan & co., 1877). See, also: *The Truth* (22 Nov. 1877), p. 620.

[11] T.H.S. Escott, *Society in London* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1885), pp. 86-87. For an extended discussion of 'plutocracy' in this period, see: A. Taylor, *'Lords of Misrule': Hostility to aristocracy in Late Ninetieth- and Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Palgrave: 2004), ch. 5.

As we will see in this chapter, such forms of conspiracism continued to circulate in this fashion throughout the latter years of the Victorian era and on into the Edwardian period: if conspiracist associations and connections had been made before, then during the period 1880-1914 they intensified still further. This should be emphasized, for conspiracism had no particular political base, so to speak. Crucially, it prospered among those who *themselves* were the subject of conspiracist speculation. If the radical Left was the subject of conspiracist accusation and speculation, as the last chapter demonstrated, then this same constituency also subscribed to conspiracist narratives regarding international capitalism. International capitalism and international socialism: both were sites of conspiracism, and in each case we find much the same tropes and motifs relating to highly mobile, pervasive agents and hidden architectures of influence and power. In particular, from the 1880s onwards, large sections of the British anti-Imperialist Left were beholden to the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse, something detailed in the first section of this chapter.

Yet conspiracist discourses that described and condemned the actions of secretive Jewish cabals were never the sole preserve of left-wing radicals. From the middle of 1900 onwards, the mainstream of the Liberal Party appropriated the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse, toning down its more overtly anti-Semitic qualities, focusing on the exertion of undue influence over public opinion and state policy by plutocratic constituencies and fusing it with a humanitarian critique of contemporary Conservative governance. As we shall see, the wartime Liberal Party's humanitarian discourse was subsequently applied to the post-Boer war policy of Chinese labour importation, where expressions of disgust with 'Chinese Slavery' regularly referenced the insidious international influence of Jewish plutocrats, not least via reference to 'Park Lane', the metropolitan home of Jewish millionaires.

At the same time, another feature of Britain's global and networked modernity emerged as a related site of conspiracist-inflected prejudice and speculation: namely, Jewish immigration. The arrival of roughly 150,000 eastern European Jews between 1880 and 1914 brought questions of Jews' ability and willingness to integrate and assimilate into the national spotlight. The tendency of Britain's 'new' Jewry to live together in densely populated, 'ghettoized' communities in the poorest areas of urban Britain, clinging to their

religion, culture and language and to monopolize particular trades made them both highly distinctive and visible. As we shall see, Britain's new Jewry became a prime target for conspiracist suspicion: indeed, their relatively sudden arrival both stimulated and reinforced pre-existing tendencies to view Jews as irredeemably different. Anti-Alien discourses, in particular, played strongly upon these descriptions of Jewish difference, mediating contemporary concerns regarding international mobility and connectedness, along with the darker sides of existence in the modern urban environment.

Finally, in another striking example of the multiple valences of these kinds of discourses, anti-Alien conspiracism fed back into other forms of conspiracism discussed in this thesis. Both anti-anarchist and Germanophobic discourses were expressed against the backdrop of popular anti-Alienism. The infiltration of terrorists and spies, along with the insurrections they enacted, were routinely linked to the global movement of peoples, which itself was couched in terms of a threat posed to the homogeneity, stability and security of the nation. Such anti-Alien discourses, which were found throughout British popular culture, shared many of the underlying concerns visible in the 'Jewish responsibility' and 'Park Lane' discourses: namely, that these were questions of international mobility, agency and connectedness, of assimilability and integration, and the ability of secretive and powerful individuals or groups to subvert the constitution, the will of the nation and the course of history.

This chapter thus argues that during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, conspiracist discourses pertaining to race moved back and forth across the political spectrum, whilst highlighting how these discourses served to popularise conspiracist thinking in relation to migration, capitalism and an internationally networked world. The chapter will conclude by arguing that by the end of the Edwardian period conspiracist thinking had moved from the fringes of the British public sphere to the core. It begins with the Boer war and the question of 'Jewish responsibility'.

'JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY'

> Rosenbach and Mosenthal
> Gazed beyond the river Vaal;
> Saw a land of peace and plenty,
> Dreamed of ten per cent, or twenty,
> Look and sighed and longer for war,
> > "This," they said in perfect Yiddish,
> > "Must undoubtedly be British. –
> Should have been so long before.
>
>
> Bernheim, Hirschorn, Peiser, Beit,
> Wisely didn't stay to fight.
> Only when the blows are ended
> And the brown crowns are mended,
> > Joseph, Abrahams, and Joses,
> > Britons by descent from Moses
> Will be richer than before.[12]

Written amidst the nadir of Britain's military fortunes in late 1899, John Hobson's *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects* (published in 1900), represents the fullest expression of the conspiracist discourse that lay at the heart of the British anti-imperialist Left in the late Victorian period.[13] Describing a shady nexus of financial and political influence in Southern Africa, Hobson's central chapter, 'FOR WHOM ARE WE FIGHTING?', speaks most clearly to his authorial purpose, firmly locating the causal agency behind the conflict in an insidious nexus of 'Jewish money' and plutocratic influence.[14] According to Hobson, during the 1880s and 1890s almost all facets of social, political and economic life in southern Africa had fallen 'into the hands of a small group of international financiers, chiefly German in origins and Jewish in race'.[15] These mine-owning plutocrats, so Hobson argued, found the mining taxes levied by the Transvaal Republic onerous, and seeking ever more profits

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[12] Two of four verses, from a sarcastic poem published the Liberal weekly, *The Speaker,* in early 1902. *The Speaker* (08 Feb, 1902), p. 529.

[13] J.A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1900). Hobson also wrote an article, published in January 1900 in *The Contemporary Review*, entitled 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa'. The two articles can, effectively, be treated as a single text, though this section makes also exclusive reference to the former, rather than the latter. J.A. Hobson, "Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa", *Contemporary Review*, 77 (Jan. 1900).

[14] Hobson, *War in South Africa*, pp. 189-197. For an excellent discussion of this particular conspiracy theory and its contributors, see: Hirshfield, 'The British Left and the "Jewish Conspiracy". See, also: C. Hirshfield, 'Labouchere, Truth and the Uses of Antisemitism', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 26:3 (1993): 134-142.

[15] Hobson, *War in South Africa*, pp. 189-190. The result, as Hobson noted, was that 'not Hamburg, not Vienna, not Frankfort, but Johannesburg [was] the New Jerusalem.' Ibid., p. 193.

had formed a secret cabal, conspiring to bring the Boer Republics under British (and by extension their own) control. Beginning with the Jameson Raid (winter 1895–6) and continuing through their direction of the British and southern African press's increasingly aggressive anti-Boer posturing (which had exerted a significant, jingoistic influence on the contemporary public opinion), these cabals had ensured that the imperial government felt forced to undertake a recklessly aggressive policy that led directly to the South African War (1899–1902). In short, Hobson placed the issue of Jewish money and Jewish agency at the heart of his analysis of the relationship between contemporary capitalism, imperialism and British politics in an era of mass enfranchisement.[16]

Hobson, of course, consistently sought to define himself as something other than an anti-Semite throughout his career; and he was indeed much more than the garden-variety anti-Semite: an important critic of late Victorian and Edwardian High Imperialism, he was also a pioneer of New Liberalism.[17] However, in *The War in South Africa,* Hobson leant very heavily on a series of conspiracist motifs, most of them typically anti-Semitic: namely, the insidious nature of Jewish financial power; the illicit and furtive nature of Jewish political influence; and the Jew and the Jewish race as 'cosmopolitan' – that is, as somehow above or beyond any sense of loyalty to a nation and therefore inherently suspect and untrustworthy.[18]

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[16] For a wider view of Hobson's life and work, see: P.J. Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism and Finance, 1887-1938* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

[17] J.A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London: Grant Richards, 1901); idem, *Imperialism: a study* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1902). This ambiguous discursive relationship to anti-Semitism was very common in the pronouncements of pro-Boer, anti-Imperialist and anti-Alien commentators throughout the period. For an excellent discussion of this topic, see: Lara Trubowitz, 'Acting like an Alien: 'Civil' Antisemitism, the Rhetoricized Jew, and Early-Twentieth-Century British Immigration Law', in E. Bar-Yosef and N. Valman (eds.), *'The Jew' in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 65-79.

[18] The question of Hobson's anti-Semitism has also excited considerable academic interest over the years. This thesis seeks to make no substantial contribution to this particular debate, other than to remark that Hobson's analysis and selection of evidence clearly suggest that he believed in the existence of a particular 'Jewish' mode of financial behaviour, the derivation of which Hobson never explored in print, but which generated a particular, stereotypical – but not exclusive – set of roles for 'the Jew' within the operation of a liberally governed internationally networked economy. Clearly, significant elements of Hobson's analyses were conspiracist, but it is equally clear that Hobson did not consider himself to be an anti-Semite, though he was undeniably influenced by the anti-Semitic climate of the contemporary anti-Imperialist Left, and prone to expressing himself via discourses born of anti-Semitic modes of thought. The apposite question is not so much the boundaries of Hobson's beliefs, but the definitional boundary of the term 'anti-Semite' in the British context.

In doing so, Hobson placed Jewish influence within the ambiguous and undecided terrain characteristic of late Victorian popular conspiracism: that is, as globally diffuse, pervasive and indistinct yet at the same time locally discrete and identifiable, operating through potent loci of 'public' power and also in the quotidian arena of everyday life. Hobson could quite comfortably argue that 'their strength does not consist in numbers', and immediately afterwards discuss the large number of Jewish names in the most recent Johannesburg census returns. Moreover, while locating power in the pinnacle of British and southern African society (by the likes of 'Beit, Barnato, Eckstein &c.', all wealthy financiers), *The War in South Africa* also featured extended discussions of the insidious dominance of Jewish 'shopkeepers, market salesmen, pedlars, [and] liquor dealers' in the mundane transactions of life in southern Africa. Likewise, Hobson chose to excoriate the actions of avaricious 'financial capitalists, of which the foreign Jew must be taken as the leading type', consistently referring to the non-British ('Russian, Polish and German') origins of the 'international financiers' supposedly exerting 'the dominance of international finance' over southern African life. In sum, Jews were everywhere. Their power and influence was variously exerted, but also palpably co-ordinated and programmatic. South African society was, as such, little more than the workings of a 'rich and ably organised syndicate'. [19]

To be sure, Hobson's analysis was grounded in (if not restrained by) certain basic facts of economic life in southern Africa: people of Jewish descent were indeed prominent in the financing and ownership of extractive industries. Jewish financiers, some of them of non-British origin, did indeed control substantial portions of southern Africa's extractive industries and

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[19] Hobson, *War in South Africa*, pp. 189-194. This 'syndicate', he suggested, operated 'through branches in all the little towns, lending sums of money or furnishing credit through retail shops, which they control, to the neighbouring Boers, and thus obtaining mortgages upon their farms… a very large proportion of the Transvaal farmers are as entirely in the hands of Jewish money-lenders as is the Russian moujik or the Austrian peasant… the industrial and agricultural future of the Transvaal is already hypothecated to this small ring of financial foreigners, who not merely own or control the present values, but have, by buying up mining properties and claims of a contingent future value, secured an even more complete security over the economic future.' Ibid., pp. 193-194. Alfred Beit, Barney Barnato and Hermann Eckstein were all famous Jewish "Randlords", who had made their huge personal fortunes building mining operations in the Transvaal gold-fields. www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1464 *ODNB* entry for Barnett Isaacs Barnato, recovered 09/08/2014; www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30676?docPos=1 *ODNB* entry for Alfred Beit, recovered 09/08/2014.

media concerns, via a closely interwoven network of ownerships and directorships which connected them back to such financial powerhouses as the Dresdner Bank and the Rothschild family. Moreover, Jewish mining magnates and Imperial administrators, such as Alfred Beit and Lionel Phillips, had been deeply involved in the financing and planning of the Jameson Raid. At the same time, Jews did own several influential British newspapers; as has been described Britain's 'established' Jewish community was, by the end of the nineteenth century, becoming increasingly prominent, prosperous and conspicuously influential. However, these facts, upon which much of the late Victorian conspiracist analysis of 'Jewish' influence functioned, did not substantially differentiate these Jewish actors from their non-Jewish peers, either in southern Africa or in Britain. As such, Hobson's conspiracism lies in the potency, pervasiveness and sheer presence that he accorded to *Jewish* magnates and the broader *Jewish* community, which amounted to a characteristically conspiracist sense of omnipotence and omnipresence.

Hobson was by no means alone in this. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, accusations of Jewish conspiratorial power were nothing new to British politics in the late Victorian period. The mid-Victorian Left – broadly construed to include parliamentary Liberals and radicals, as well as the non-parliamentary Left – had always been prone to anti-Semitic conspiracism when it came to describing the darker side of global capitalism and imperialism.[20] Nevertheless, until the end of the nineteenth century, discourses of truly pervasive Jewish influence were rare in the public sphere.[21] Indeed, though they had a lengthy heritage, the influence of conspiracist discourses regarding Jewish press ownership had limited popular purchase prior to the late 1890s. However, from around the point at which war with the Boer Republics came to seem inevitable in early September 1899, to the point at which the conflict began to turn decisively in Britain's favour around a year later, conspiracist

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[20] Both the *Northern Star* and the *Poor Man's Guardian*, for example, regularly commented on the wealth and influence of Britain's established Jewish community during the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. William Cobbett, too, was often prone to using anti-Semitic clichés which would not have seemed out of place on the lips of continental anti-Semites. Even Marx and Engels' used the term 'Jew' as shorthand for speculators and mercantile financiers. Hirshfield, 'The British Left and the "Jewish Conspiracy"', p. 97. See also, E. Silberner, "British Socialism and the Jews," *Historia Judaica*, 14 (1952): 31-34.

[21] Excepting, perhaps, those points at the height of their popularity as a goad with which Liberals sought to taunt the Conservative government during Disraeli's second ministry.

discourses of Jewish agency suddenly became pervasive in the public sphere; and it was of this 'Jewish responsibility' discourse that Hobson was representative. Indeed, during the first year of the conflict (broadly, September 1899 to mid-1900), 'Jewish responsibility' discourse moved from the fringes of British politics to its very centre.

'Jewish responsibility'

During the early period of the South African War, the various strands of the anti-war movement in Britain were, by and large, unified on only three issues. These were the belief that the war was unnecessary; the idea that the conflict would damage Britain's international reputation; and the suspicion that the preceding decades' events in southern Africa had been steered away from their natural course by a secretive, avaricious and immensely powerful cabal of Jewish mine-owning plutocrats. Although the anti-war movement never came to occupy a single platform on the basis of the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse – a testament to the fact that anti-Semitism was never dominant in Edwardian England – this discourse nevertheless exerted a profound influence on the public debate regarding the causes of the South African War during 1899–1902.[22]

The primary conspiracist argument made by those opposed to the war in this period was that of Jewish benefit: simply, the suggestion that as plutocratic Jews stood to gain the most from the South African War, then it must have been fought at their instigation. Indeed, from around September 1899, the British public sphere was awash with references to the 'Jewish' character of those who would benefit from the war. As the Liberal fire-brand David Lloyd George noted in December 1899, those responsible for the conflict were popularly thought to be the so-called 'Randlord class', 'a community of Jews six thousand miles away in Johannesburg who ran away

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[22] Indeed, though previously limited to the pages of anti-imperialist newspapers and the prognostications of parliamentary radical Liberals, during the first year of the South Africa War, the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse entered the mainstream of British politics with considerable force: enough that the *Manchester Guardian* felt forced to reprove the conspiracism of those who saw 'a traitor under the coat of every Jew'. *MG* (28 Mar. 1900), p. 4.

when the fighting came for their own cause'.[23] Importantly, at this point this community was mainly suggested to be of a southern African character, if generally of a German-Jewish origin, later summarised by William Redmond as 'the Jews and financiers of Pretoria and Johannesburg.'[24]

Arguments of this sort fed upon the belief, long popular on the radical Left, that powerful Jews had been secretly steering the course of events in southern Africa and for many years; and this crystallised during the early months of the war into accusations that Jewish plutocrats had deliberately driven Britain into conflict with the Boer nations.[25] Radical, outright anti-Semites such as Henry Labouchere (long serving Liberal MP for Northampton and owner-editor of his journal, *The Truth*) and Henry Hyndman (leader of the Social Democratic Federation and publisher of its organ, *Justice*) had long been arguing for the existence and danger of this influence.[26] However, during the period of the South African War, the belief that, as John Burns (socialist Liberal MP for Battersea) put it in February 1900, 'Wherever we go in this matter [the War] we find the same thing … the financial Jew, operating, directing, inspiring the agonies that have led to this war' became entirely commonplace.[27]

Suspicions of Jewish influence also bled into much more direct accusations of corrupt and subterranean Jewish influence on British policy. It was often suggested, for example, that Joseph Chamberlain and Alfred Milner were 'in the hands of … Jewish financiers and capitalists', particularly in pro-

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[23] Quoted in Hirshfield, 'The British Left and the "Jewish Conspiracy"', 103. William Redmond also made similar arguments somewhat later, stating that the real beneficiaries of the South African War had been the "Randlord" class. HC Deb., 16 Jan. 1902, vol. 101, c. 124.

[24] HC Deb., 16 Jan. 1902, vol. 101, c. 124.

[25] *Reynolds's* (05 Jan. 1896), p. 6; ibid., (19 Jan. 1896), p. 1; Even local papers occasionally joined in. See, for example: *East London Leader* (2 Jun. 1883), p. 4. See, also: J. Callaghan, *Socialism in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 19; Hirshfield, 'Labouchere, *Truth* and the Uses of Antisemitism', pp. 134-142.

[26] See, for example: *The Truth* (22 Nov. 1877), p. 620; ibid. (27 Jan. 1896) p. 372. See, also: *Justice* (06 Jun. 1885); and, ibid., (5 Jul. 1890).

[27] HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 731-828; HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 731-828. Even the normally sedate parliamentarian John Morley, Gladstone's masterly biographer, reputedly stated that 'a ring of financiers … mostly Jewish, are really responsible for the war.' Quoted in H. Mitchell, 'Hobson Revisited', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 26:3 (1965), p. 401. See, also, *MG* (18 Dec. 1900), p. 7.

Boer, anti-war pamphlets.[28] Crucially, although arguments that Jewish 'Randlord' money was behind everything that happened in southern Africa (or as Burns put it, that 'the trail of the financial serpent is over this war from beginning to end'), few went further than to suggest that the British people had been drawn into the conflict 'by powerful trading companies, controlled by clever, rich influential men' who meant 'practical business'.[29] Rather, the majority of those who spoke of Jewish 'responsibility' for the conflict tended to avoid aiming accusations at particular individuals, preferring to evoke a more diffuse, impersonal sense of Jewish power and influence. It was a mode of causal understanding that directly descended from classic conspiracist motifs of Jewish press ownership and talk of 'semitic lords of the press' and their 'propaganda'.[30]

In evoking the exertions of a deeply distorting Jewish influence on the shape and character of the British public sphere, such discourses conceived of Jewish press ownership as a grave threat to the national constitution, in ways which resonated strongly with pre-existing Liberal concerns regarding the manipulability of the 'naïve' mass electorate by cynical politicians and press barons. As Hobson noted in a *Contemporary Review* essay published in 1900, entitled 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', the perception that 'a certain conspiracy of rich men seeking their private advantage under the name of the Commonwealth' had become commonplace in the early 1900s.[31] In his 1901 book *The Psychology of Jingoism*, Hobson made clear the nature of this

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[28] See: J.S. Galbraith, 'The Pamphlet Campaign on the Boer War', *Journal of Modern History*, 24:2 (1952): 111-126.

[29] HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 731-828; HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 731-828; and, Galbraith, 'The Pamphlet Campaign on the Boer War', p. 119. See, for example, John Burns, HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 731-828; and, HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, cc. 731-828. Burns continued to propound such arguments long after the conclusion of hostilities, stating, in February 1904, that 'the raid and the war were the result of wealth and were the consequence of money taking the place of government, and commercial pro-consuls with German names governing Africa in the interest of the Jews.' HC Deb., 17 Feb. 1904, vol. 130, c. 94. Timothy Healy (at that point, IPP MP for North Louth) was similarly persistent in applying this analysis of Jewish influence over political processes. See, for example: Timothy Healy, HC Deb., 27 Jul. 1900, vol. 86, c. 1638; HC Deb., 11 Dec. 1900, vol. 88, c. 556; HC Deb., 24 Jul. 1902, vol. 111, cc. 1180-1181. See, also: Francis Channing, Liberal MP for Northamptonshire Eastern, HC Deb., 29 Apr. 1901, vol. 93, c. 115.

[30] *Justice* (30 Sep. 1899); Philip Stanhope (Liberal MP for Burley), HC Deb., 18 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, c. 186. See, also: C.P. Scott, Liberal MP for Leigh and editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, HC Deb., 19 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, c. 328.

[31] Hobson, 'Capitalism and Imperialism in South Africa', p. 17.

Jewish threat to the constitution, noting that 'the businessmen who mostly direct modern politics require a screen … [and] they find it in the interests of the country, patriotism. Behind this screen they work seeking private gain under the name and pretext of the commonwealth'.[32] In this way, accusations of Jewish responsibility for the war were enmeshed within wider descriptions of Jews as a 'secret order established at the heart of every nation, and each branch of the community supports the other branches internationally,' as *Reynolds' Newspaper* put it in September 1899.[33] Indeed, the entire 'Jewish responsibility' discourse was deeply wedded to that anti-Semitic tradition which – above and beyond any critique of Jews' infiltration and subversion of *British* institutions – portrayed Jews as inassimilable, irrevocably alien and always an insidious and parasitic influence on their hosts.[34]

Jewish responsibility discourse was in no way restricted to the parliamentary Liberal opposition. In fact, this particular conspiracist discourse was exceptionally promiscuous politically speaking and was propounded by a wide range of commentators.[35] In October 1899, the *Independent Labour Party News* accused Jewish capitalists of having engineered the South African War to depress poor whites' wages on the Rand for their own benefit.[36] Irish Parliamentary Party members were similarly prone to conspiracist speculation on the causes of the war. Swift MacNeill (IPP MP for South Donegal), for example, suggested in October 1899 that a 'charge of corruption should rather be levelled against the German Jew Syndicate who wish this war in order to

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[32] Hobson, *Psychology of Jingoism*, p. 131. Liberal MPs continued to make anti-Semitic conspiracist statements about Jews benefiting from the conflict well after its conclusion. See, for example: Arthur Markham, HC Deb 20 March 1902 vol 105, 635-636; HC Deb., 22 Mar. 1905, vol. 143, c. 848.

[33] *Reynolds's* (03 Sep. 1899), p. 6. *Reynolds's* was particularly prone to this. See, also: Ibid., (25 Feb. 1900), p. 1.

[34] Constant reference was made to the 'Jewish' origins of those who owned South African mines. See, for example: HC Deb., 18 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, c. 186; HC Deb., 20 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, cc. 474-475; HC Deb., 28 May 1900, vol. 83, c. 1568. This was the construction of 'the Jew' as 'cosmopolitan', a figure of 'no patriotism and no country'. For cosmopolitanism, see: H. Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews, 1900-1950* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 17. See, also: Henry Labouchere, HC Deb., 28 Mar. 1901, vol. 92, c. 150.

[35] For excellent, if now somewhat dated, surveys of the anti-War movement and the pro-Boer pamphlet campaigns, see: J.W. Auld, 'The Liberal Pro-Boers', *Journal of British Studies*, 14:2 (1975): 78-101; and, S. Koss (ed.), *The Pro-Boers: the anatomy of an anti-war movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

[36] Quoted in Hirshfield, 'The Anglo-Boer War', p. 623.

raise the price of their stocks and funds.'[37] Welsh Liberals, including Lloyd George and John Bryn Roberts (Liberal MP for Eifion), were similarly active in arguing that the war was an example of pernicious, pervasive Jewish influence.[38]

Separate as the strands of this conspiracism might seem, it is important to remember that they were often expressed in single statements, with complaints of excessive Jewish influence almost always drawn against the background of more general anti-Semitic conspiracist discourses. For example, Harry Quelch, Henry Hyndman's editor at *Justice*, defended his paper's editorial line against accusations of anti-Semitism in November 1899 with the argument that: 'We have denounced this as a Jew-Capitalist war, and seeing the prominent part Jew-capitalists have taken in the Johannesburg agitation, and seeing their intimate relations with Cabinet ministers here at home and the vituperative fury of their organs in the press, we consider the terms fully justified.'[39] Similarly, when speaking of the causes of the South African War in October 1899, the *Independent Labour Leader* (edited by Labour leader Keir Hardie) also stated that broadly speaking, 'Modern imperialism is really run by half a dozen financial houses, many of them Jewish, to whom politics is a counter in the game of buying and selling securities'.[40]

Furthermore, elements of the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse – particularly those pertaining to Jewish press influence and the construction of the Jewish diaspora as a homogenous yet also diffuse, parasitical body upon the nation and empire – flowed directly into later popular debates pertaining to race and migration in the South African context. In particular, as we shall now see, these claims also combined in the post-Boer war debate about 'Chinese slavery', when reference was made to an infamous hotspot of metropolitan

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[37] HC Deb., 20 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, cc. 474-475. MacNeill persisted in this analysis throughout the war. See, for example: HC Deb., 28 May 1900, vol. 83, c. 1568. See, also: Timothy Healy, HC Deb., 27 Jul. 1900, vol. 86, c. 1648; HC Deb., 07 Feb 1900, vol. 78, cc. 864-865; Michael Davitt, former IRB member turned Parliamentarian for the Irish Parliamentary Party, HC Deb., 17 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, c. 125; William O'Doherty, HC Deb., 29 Apr. 1901, vol. 93, c. 100.

[38] HC Deb., 27 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, c. 774.

[39] *Justice* (4 Nov. 1899), 7.

[40] Quoted in Hirshfield, 'The Anglo-Boer War', p. 623.

Jewish wealth – Park Lane – which became a metaphor for Jewish power more generally.

'Chinese Slavery' and 'Park Lane'

Gold production in southern Africa shrank dramatically after 1899 and failed to recover in the immediate post-war period due to an acute shortage of cheap native labour caused by the South African War, and which persisted much beyond the cessation of hostilities in May 1902. This caused serious problems for the Edwardian imperial economy, which had become increasingly dependent on Witwatersrand gold production during the 1880s and 1890s. The simplest solutions – forced native labour, or the employment of poor whites to undertake unskilled mining – proved unworkable. Forced labour was unsustainable and would not be tolerated by domestic political opinion. At the same time, despite the popularity of white labourist demands for southern African jobs to be retained for white workers, those same white workers resolutely refrained from taking up unskilled employment in the Witwatersrand mines. The Conservative and Liberal-Unionist government was thus faced with a seemingly insoluble conundrum: the absolute imperative of finding a cheap supply of labour for the mines and the impossibility of finding that labour anywhere in southern Africa.[41]

Unfortunately for the imperial government, any choice it made was likely to cause serious problems. On the one hand, the sensible economic course, labour importation, was electorally toxic. White-labourist discourses were becoming increasingly popular in Britain and southern Africa and importing cheap non-white labour would be viewed as a betrayal of wartime government promises of jobs and land for white men. On the other, the sensible electoral course, the encouragement of white employment in the mines, would likely prove economically catastrophic. White men would not do

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[41] For the history of Chinese labour importation into the Transvaal between 1903 and 1910, see: R. Bright, *Chinese Labour in South Africa, 1902-10* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), passim; K. Grant, '"Chinese Slavery" in South Africa and Great Britain, 1902-1910', in idem., *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884-1926* (London: Routledge, 2014), 79-108; P. Richardson, *Chinese Mine Labour in the Transvaal* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1982), passim. For a wider view of the uses of indentured labour in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, see: D. Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), passim.

unskilled work and with insufficient cheap labour the mines would become financially unviable. Moreover, without southern African gold, the imperial economy would grind to a halt. No matter what their choice, the government faced a troublesome political situation, and so it proved.

The Government's decision, embodied in the Transvaal Labour Importation Ordinance of 1903, inaugurated the 'mass' importation of indentured labourers from China into southern Africa. Unsurprisingly, the policy was seen as a betrayal of wartime Conservative promises to white-labourist constituencies. Moreover, the conditions under which these imported labourers worked were soon subjected to popular outrage, described by many as amounting to slavery, and in particular 'Chinese slavery'.[42] The government fell afoul of both white working-class opinion and middle-class humanitarian sentiments: a combination which, alongside popular resentment of the government's poor record in the South African War, contributed strongly to the Liberal landslide of 1905.

Investigations of the 'Chinese slavery' issue have tended to focus on the humanitarian and white-labourist currents of contemporary opinion, or the relationship of these debates to wider trends in British attitudes towards race, immigration and imperial identity.[43] However, a significant portion of this debate was carried out through conspiracist discourses of Jewish plutocratic influence and in ways which have not previously been addressed. Although 'Chinese Slavery' was perhaps first and foremost a moral and humanitarian problem for the public, the spectre of Jewish plutocratic influence underpinned the entire debate: ultimately, it was this that was thought to be driving the implementation of policies which ran against popular sense of the good. This was not quite the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse that came to prominence during the war; but, in the form of references to Jews and in particular to 'Park

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[42] Indeed, as the Lord Bishop of Hereford argued in the House of Lords in March 1904: 'Those of us who move about in the common ways hear more of the common views than some of the leading members of the Government; and what we hear is that in the mind of the English people the real issue is the moral issue. It is the issue … of slavery.' HL Deb., 21 Mar. 1904, vol. 132, c. 120. See, also: Bright, *Chinese Labour*, pp. 70-94.

[43] See, for example: Bright, *Chinese Labour*, pp. 38-69; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, pp. 79-108; and, Richardson, *Chinese Mine Labour*, passim.

Lane', it was nevertheless premised around a critique of Jewish plutocratic influence that directly descended from the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse.

The language of 'Park Lane' was nothing new in discussions of plutocratic influence over the British national life. By the late nineteenth century Park Lane, running north-south along the eastern boundary of Hyde Park, had long been associated with conspicuous wealth, social prestige and political influence.[44] However, during the late 1890s the connection between 'Park Lane' and plutocracy became increasingly inflected with conspiracist senses of specifically Jewish influence over the nation and state; and it was during the course of the South African War when the term 'Park Lane' came to operate as a form of shorthand for the kinds of Jewish influence postulated by the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse.[45] (Indeed, by October 1899, the 'Park Lane' narrative of Jewish plutocratic influence was already established enough that Richard Haldane, Liberal MP for Haddingtonshire, felt moved to state that those driving events in southern Africa were 'not plutocrats… nor do they, or those who are backing them, live in Park Lane.')[46] From around 1901 onwards, the term 'Park Lane', along with its imputations of Jewish plutocratic influence, came to acquire a close popular association with the policy of Chinese labour importation.[47] In 1901, Keir Hardie had argued that the most powerful advocates of Chinese labour importation were 'men living in Park Lane, some of whom are unable to speak the English tongue'.[48] These men,

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[44] G.R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics, 1895-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 13.

[45] See, for example: Henry Campbell-Bannerman (Liberal leader and leader of the opposition), HC Deb., 06 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, c. 810; Timothy Healy, HC Deb., 07 Feb. 1900, vol. 78 c. 861; William Harcourt (Liberal MP for Monmouthshire Western), HC Deb., 05 Feb. 1900, vol. 78, c. 602; Joseph Chamberlain (Colonial Secretary), HC Deb., 05 Feb 1900, vol. 78, c. 616; Fred Maddison, Liberal MP for Sheffield Brightside, HC Deb., 17 May 1900, vol. 83, c. 481; William Harcourt, HC Deb., 17 Jul. 1901, vol. 97, c. 707; Winston Churchill (Conservative MP for Oldham), HC Deb., 17 Jul. 1901, vol. 97, cc. 749-750; Keir Hardie (Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil), HC Deb., 17 Jul. 1901, vol. 97, c. 757; Francis Channing (Liberal MP for Northamptonshire East), HC Deb., 29 Apr 1901, vol. 93, c. 115; Henry Labouchere, HC Deb., 29 Jul 1902, vol. 112, c. 69; and, John Burns, HC Deb., 15 May 1902, vol. 108, c. 402.

[46] HC Deb., 19 Oct. 1899, vol. 77, c. 319.

[47] The association between Park Lane and inequitable labour relations went slightly further back. See: Swift MacNeill, IPP member for South Donegal, HC Deb., 08 Aug. 1900, vol. 87, c. 1003.

[48] Keir Hardie, HC Deb., 17 Jul. 1901, vol. 97, cc. 757-758.

Hardie went on, had previously 'dictated the policy of the Government, and [were] now dictating the policy of the settlement.'[49]

In this way, form the very beginning, the moral drama of 'Chinese slavery' acquired a definite Jewish villain, which duly featured in the election campaign in 1905.[50] The sense of villainy was palpable in this campaign, as demonstrated by comments made by the Conservative MP, Robert House, recently re-elected to his West Toxteth constituency, which are worth quoting at length. Describing the recent election campaign, Houston noted that:

> The walls of nearly every constituency in the kingdom were decorated with pictorial and highly coloured posters illustrating the abject and servile condition of these wretched Chinese labourers. In his own division of Liverpool… a procession was introduced through the streets. That procession consisted of abject creatures dressed as Chinese coolies, with pig-tails and all, chained together by the neck, and under the control of a task-master with a lash. This procession was followed by… a crowd of "Unemployed British workmen" carrying banners on which it was inscribed "This is what we fought for in South Africa.[51]

All this, Houston added, 'was characterised as slavery introduced into South Africa at the behest and in the self-interest of a group of German Jew-millionaire mine-owners, the privileged and pampered protégés of a corrupt Conservative Government.'[52] Other forms of political 'advertisement', including pamphlets and posters, made similar emotive appeals to the memory of the war-dead, while also pointing to the role of sinister Jewish influence. This included poster images specifically depicting nefarious Jews, as in a Liberal Party election poster from 1905 entitled 'THE WAR'S RESULT: CHINESE LABOUR' (see Fig. 4.1). The spectral figure of a pith-helmeted British 'Tommy Atkins' asks 'Is THIS what we fought for?' Meanwhile, a corpulent, hook-nosed – evidently Jewish – plutocrat figure lurks in the background shepherding Chinese labourers towards what we must assume are Transvaal mines.

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[49] Ibid.

[50] In Parliament, at least, this was even before the term 'Chinese Slavery' was ever associated with the policy of indentured labour importation. The first parliamentary use of the term 'Chinese Slavery' came in February 1904, a month shy of three years after Hardie's original intervention. See: John Burns, HC Deb., 17 Feb., 1904, vol. 130, c. 95.

[51] HC Deb., 22 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, c. 600.

[52] Ibid.
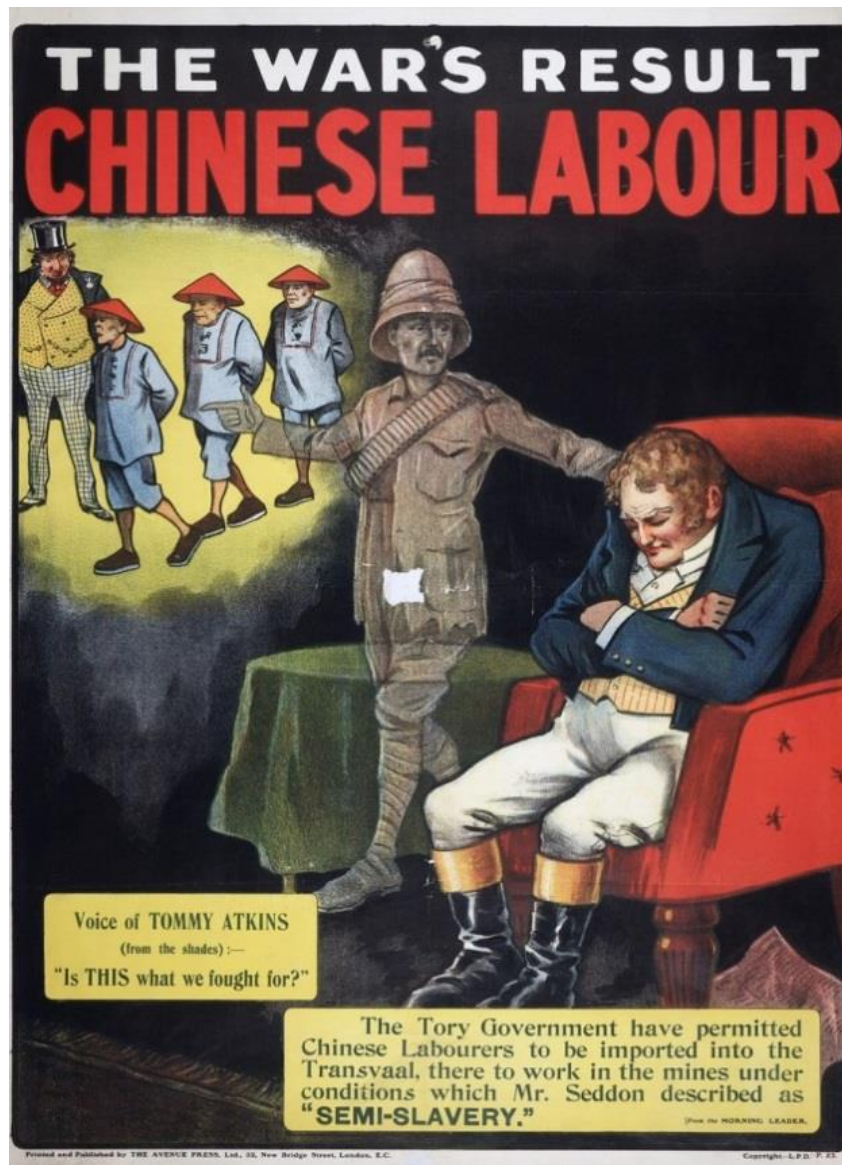
FIG 4.1 'THE WAR'S RESULT: CHINESE LABOUR'. LSE digital library 12/08/2014. http://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:viq268kem

Parliamentary commentary on Chinese Slavery, both before and after the election, functioned along exactly these lines, and it here where 'Park Lane' discourse of Jewish influence and power featured most prominently, and once again couched in terms of a 'Jewish' threat to the constitution. In February 1904, Herbert Samuel (Liberal MP for Cleveland) voiced his concern that, if implemented without the 'formal consent' of the electorate, mine-owners would work against the introduction of self-government in southern Africa, fearful of a subsequent backlash against labour importation.[53] Samuel went on:

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[53] HC Deb., 16 Feb. 1904, vol. 129, c. 1506.

> There was the official ostensible Government of the Crown, [in South Africa] represented by the High Commissioner, the Lieutenant-Governor, and the Legislative Council. But there was also another Government – unofficial, intangible – a government appointed by no warrant, and embodied in no individuals, the Government of the mine owners… governed less by Downing Street than by Park Lane.[54]

Invocations of an all-powerful – if also 'intangible', as Samuel put it – 'Park Lane' influence were thus entirely compatible with both popular humanitarian concerns and white-labour discourses.[55]

This was more than simply a matter of suspicions regarding the exertion of covert influence by powerful men: the Park Lane discourse was always inflected with the postulation of a 'Jewish' threat to the constitution and the proper functioning of the political nation more generally; or more prosaically, that 'Downing Street had now abdicated and Park Lane was supreme'.[56] *The Manchester Guardian* described this as 'the forces of cosmopolitan finance' that had 'formed an empire within an Empire', which was thought to be a 'serious … menace to the supremacy of the British Crown in South Africa.'[57] What was required, it suggested, was 'the creation of a real industrial democracy' in place of a 'close cosmopolitan oligarchy'.[58] As Henry Labouchere argued in July 1903, it seemed that in the face of mass popular opprobrium the government was nevertheless entirely in thrall to the influence and opinions of cosmopolitan mine-owners.[59] This last quotation contains an important assertion, germane to the development of conspiracist discourses in relation to race and migration. Although 'Chinese slavery' was never viewed as an immigration issue, this discourse nevertheless represents a re-appropriation, or reversion, of the Jewish threat into British circumstances. In contrast to

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[54] Ibid., c. 1518.

[55] For other examples of the dovetailing of various issues relating to 'Chinese slavery' under conspiracist narration, see, also: William Redmond, IPP member for Clare East, HC Deb., 17 Feb. 1904, vol. 130, cc. 61-62; and, Edmund Haviland-Burke, IPP member for King's County Tullmore, HC Deb., 26 Jun. 1905, vol. 148, c. 209.

[56] HC Deb., 16 Feb. 1904, vol. 129, c. 1518. See, also, Charles Fenwick (Liberal-Labour MP for Wansbeck), HC Deb., 17 Feb. 1904, vol. 130, c. 71. A number of Irish MPs also made such arguments. See, for example: Joseph Devlin, IPP member for Kilkenny North, HC Deb., 21 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 390-391; Thomas Shaw, Liberal MP for Hawick district of Brughs, HC Deb., 17 Feb. 1904, vol. 130, cc. 44-47. This connection between Park Lane and political governance was made as early as August 1902. *MG* (22 Aug. 1902), p. 4.

[57] *MG* (16 Mar. 1903), p. 4.

[58] Ibid. (7 May 1903), p. 6.

[59] HC Deb., 27 Jul. 1903, vol. 126, c. 361.

those anti-Semitic discourses most visible in the period of Disraeli's second ministry, or the peripheral, global loci of the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse, the 'Park Lane' discourse concerned itself with a central metropolitan location associated with conspicuous wealth and influence.

As elsewhere, this conspiracism did not pass without critical comment. Such was the prevalence of this anti-Semitic conspiracist thinking that in March 1904, the Marquess of Lansdowne (Liberal Unionist member of the government) was moved to note that:

> I suppose your Lordships have all been treated to literature on the subject. I have received a document headed with these words – "Will the British people allow the Imperial Government to assist cosmopolitan speculators to drive British workmen from the Transvaal in order that they may replace them by Chinese slaves?" That sounds extravagant and ridiculous, but does it really in essence go much beyond the speech of the noble and learned mover of the Resolution…?[60]

Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, had already warned his fellow parliamentarians prone to falling into anti-Semitic conspiracism back in March 1903 that in 'talking about the lust of gold of the mine-owners, and about their wretched greed', it was not possible to 'separate these mine-owners, whatever you may think of them, from the rest of the British and Dutch population of the colony.'[61] Likewise, the Conservative Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, commented on the prevalence of this discourse: 'Sir', he protested in March 1904, 'more than one speaker on the other side has hinted that the statements made by us to show that you cannot get the white man and the black man to work together on equal terms are statements made in the interests of that mysterious locality, Park Lane'.[62]

Barring the tendency of parliamentary Liberals' to refer to Chinese slavery as having been instigated for those 'cosmopolitan capitalists' who wished 'to build palaces in Park Lane', negative comment on the issue of Chinese Slavery died down after 1905.[63] For five years and more, however,

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[60] HL Deb., 21 Mar. 1904, vol. cc. 132, 209.

[61] HC Deb., 24 Mar. 1903, vol. 120, c. 102.

[62] HC Deb., 21 Mar. 1904, vol. 132, cc. 343-344.

[63] HL Deb., 27 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 978-979; HC Deb., 22 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 597-598. At the same time, however, self-congratulatory comment on the government's hopes to rid the nation of its connection to slavery flourished. See, in particular, debates around the King's Speech in February 1906. HC Deb., 19 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 191-201; HC Deb., 20 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 217-82; HC Deb., 22 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 531-86; HC Deb., 23 Feb.

'Park Lane' discourse constituted a reworking of the anti-Semitic conspiracism that had been so forcefully expressed in the years surrounding the South African War. And even if the anti-Semitic elements of this discourse subsequently became far more covert, receding into the background, they would never fully disappear. 'It proves how easily an intelligent race such as the British are can be gulled by vile newspaper concoctions – of falsehoods which were paid for by some interested parties who favoured the pseudo British patriots – the footmen and lackeys of the Continental (sic.) Lemites' wrote the Tory MP William Urie in May 1907, in a pamphlet on the Transvaal mines and the policies of Liberal Government:

> For doubtless it was the powerful influence of those pseudo patriots that brought about the Anglo-Boer War for their own selfish objects and villainous ends. The sacrificing of the lives of 78,000 brave men, most of whom were the sons of British parents, was a small matter, a mere trifling affair in the eyes and minds of those corrupt specimens of humanity… who have prostituted whatever manhood they were ever possessed of by acting towards European workmen with the basest of ingratitude. For both before and during the war between Boer and Briton the European workmen did voluntarily give their service in the protecting and saving – intact – of the Transvaal gold mines. Then at the termination of hostilities European workmen were discarded and Mongolian labour imported, so that the miserable horde of Semite adventurers could make more profits by employing their cousins, their uncles, and sons from China.[64]

Evidently grand narratives of malign Jewish power in South Africa and Britain still had some purchase and would continue to do so well into the late 1900s and early 1910s, as we shall now see in the case of the Marconi and Indian Silver scandals. But by this point popular anti-Semitic conspiracism had migrated once again, moving to the right of the political spectrum. Although the importance of the scandals has been the subject of some argument, at the very least they demonstrate that Edwardian radical Right were more than happy to appropriate conspiracist discourses for their own purposes.

1906, vol. 152, cc. 624-99; HC Deb., 26 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, c. 870, c. 883. The incoming Liberal ministry's commitment to ending 'Chinese Slavery' dampened down interest in the topic. The realisation that this would not be a simple process must similarly also have discouraged the government form harping on this issue. Conservative and Liberal Unionist MPs were also understandably reluctant to dwell on such a toxic electoral issue. This does not, however, mean that they did not comment, or to attempt to debunk the 'Jewish responsibility' conspiracy theory. See, for example: Mr John Ryder, The Earl of Harrowby, former Conservative MP for Gravesend, HL Deb., 27 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, c. 968; Joseph Chamberlain, former Colonial Secretary, HC Deb., 23 Feb. 1906, vol. 152, cc. 689-690.

[64] W.A. Urie, *Opinions on Current Topics: the Transvaal Mines of Gold; Chinese Labour and the Liberal Government; Fall of Leviathan, &c., &c.* (East Ham: South Essex Printing & Publishing Co., 1907), pp. 6-7.

The Marconi and Indian Silver scandals

> … secrecy set the tongue of scandal wagging.[65]

The Marconi and Indian scandals came to the public's attention in the summer
and autumn of 1912 and both turned on accusations of insider trading by
senior members of the Liberal Government, some of them Jewish, via their
relationships with prominent Jewish financiers and financial houses.[66] In the
case of the Marconi Scandal, the allegations were relatively well-founded. In
the case of the Indian Silver scandal, they were almost completely baseless. The
Marconi affair revolved around the question of whether Herbert Samuel,
Rufus Isaacs, David Lloyd-George and Lord Murray had inappropriately used
their ministerial positions to acquire prior knowledge of the impending
agreement of a highly lucrative contract between the British government and
the Marconi Company for the construction of a chain of wireless stations that
would connect the British Empire together across the globe for their own
pecuniary advantage.[67] Although forgiven by a committee of enquiry, it does
seem that there was at least some level of shady practice had taken place – at
least, in relation to the exercising of parliamentary privileges, rather than
corruption, strictly speaking.[68] Similarly, the Indian Silver scandal turned on
accusations that 'Jewish' politicians and financiers had colluded together to
purchase, quite secretly, silver for the Indian government, and in particular that
Edwin Montagu (under-secretary of state at the Indian Office and son of
Samuel Montagu, the first Baron Swaythling) had exchanged financial
information for political loans.[69] In hindsight, it seems that none of the accused
acted in bad faith, or did anything illegal or corrupt. Indeed, it seems that the
Montagus and Samuels were attempting to circumvent the power of the
'Indian Silver Ring' – which had in recent years been using the public facts of

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[65] *MG* (12 Apr. 1913), p. 8.

[66] For a detailed discussion of the Marconi and Indian Silver scandals, see: Searle, *Corruption in British Politics*, chs. 8 and 9.

[67] See Henry Norman's indictment of the Government's behaviour in relation to the Marconi contract: HC Deb., 11 Oct. 1912, vol. 42, cc. 667-750.

[68] B.B. Gilbert, 'David Lloyd George and the Great Marconi Scandal', *Historical Research*, 62:149 (1989), 395.

[69] www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35074?docPos=1, *ODNB* entry for Edwin Montagu, recovered 22/09/2014; www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35076/?back=,35074 *ODNB* entry for Samuel Montagu, first Baron Swaythling, recovered 22/09/2014.

Indian governance (i.e. its annual need to purchase silver for its currency) to speculate – and minimise the cost to the government of purchasing specie for the India Office.

In both cases, then, prominent Jewish members of the government were heavily involved; in both cases, the press and Parliament underwent brief 'panic'-like spasms of concern; in both cases, small pieces of seemingly insignificant information were brought together to create the grounds for a scandal; and in both cases, as soon as these details became public, those inclined towards conspiracist speculation pounced.

Commentary on the Marconi scandal in the mainstream press and in Parliament was relatively measured and calm, albeit suspicious and speculative.[70] It took time for outrage at the issues raised in the Marconi Scandal to build, although references to fluctuating Marconi stock had been published as early as March 1912.[71] It was only in early August that the anti-Semitic weekly periodical *Eye-Witness* (previously edited by Hilaire Belloc, now by G.K. Chesterton) involved itself, wading straight in with accusations of financial malpractice in articles entitled 'The Marconi Scandal' on August 8th and 15th, immediately (albeit indirectly) accusing Godfrey Isaacs (prominent businessmen and financier), Herbert Samuel (Postmaster-General) and Rufus Samuel (Solicitor-General) of involvement in a 'Jewish' financial conspiracy,

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[70] See, in particular: Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) Martin Archer-Shee, HC Deb., 25 Nov. 1912, vol. 44, cc. 824-5; and, HC Deb., 11 Oct. 1912, vol. 42, cc. 690-750.

[71] Indeed, the mainstream press seems arguably to have been somewhat uninterested in the Marconi affair. *The Times*, for example, wrote its first editorial on the Marconi Scandal in May 1913, many months after the affair 'broke' in late summer 1912. *The Manchester Guardian* was slightly quicker off the mark, publishing its first editorial three months earlier, in February, and wrote its first report on the Indian Silver Scandal in December 1912, when the select committee appointed to enquire into Sir Stuart Samuel's behaviour was convened. *Times* (08 May 1913), p. 9; *MG* (01 Feb. 1913), p. 10. *The Times* commented frequently on the rising price of Marconi shares between March and April 1912, noting their rising price. See, for example: *Times* (08 Mar. 1912), pp. 19-20. See, also: *Outlook* (20 Jul. 1912), pp. 3, 7, 24, referenced in Gilbert, 'David Lloyd George', p. 300. Herbert Samuel's refusal to answer questions about the Marconi contract until after the details had been agreed with the company certainly did him no favours later, causing exasperation in Parliament, which later (when accusations of financial corruption were levelled) spilled over into suspicions and speculations regarding Samuel's role in the affair. See, for example, HC Deb., 07 May 1912, vol. 38, c. 367; HC Deb., 08 May 1912, vol. 38, c. 40; HC Deb., 16 Jul. 1912, vol. 41, cc. 206-7. However, when the contract was published, in July, Samuel was open in every way that he could have been. See, for example: HC Deb., 29 Jul. 1912, vol. 41, cc. 1662-3. Nevertheless, the combination of a lack of competitive tendering and the length of the contract (five years) led to immediate criticisms, and by August a select committee tasked with investigating the circumstances of the contract negotiations had been announced. See, for example: *Times* (29 Jul. 1912), p. 4.

connecting the brothers together in a plot to use their privileged ministerial positions for their own avaricious aims.[72] The case was subsequently kept alive by *Outlook*, a city business paper, until the intervention of the *National Review* in September and October, which also immediately mobilised conspiracist motifs of illicit Jewish influence in the corridors of power.[73] After a lull, the scandal reared its head again in the pages of the *National Review* in February and March, 1913 when Leopold Maxse (the paper's owner/editor) raised the issue of Lloyd George's involvement and subsequently devoted an entire issue to the scandal.[74] The climax of the Marconi scandal came in May and June 1913, as the select committee appointed to investigate the process by which the contract had been agreed began to take evidence, and as Lloyd George and Rufus fought to keep their ministerial positions in the Commons chamber.[75] Certainly there was enough comment for *The Spectator* to fall foul of a *Manchester Guardian* editorial, which noted shortly after that while *The Spectator* had not published anything libellous, 'when the likes and mud were flying … it [had] widened the circulation of the lies by quoting or referring to them.'[76]

In contrast to the Marconi affair, the Indian Silver scandal achieved some popular purchase in the mainstream media. By November 14th 1912, only two weeks after details of the purchase of silver for the Indian government by the Samuel's family firm had emerged, Samuel Montagu was forced to deny accusations of a conspiracy between himself and his brother to profit unfairly

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[72] 'The Marconi Scandal', *Eye-Witness* (08 Aug. 1912), p. 230; ibid., 'The Marconi Scandal', (15 Aug. 1912). From its inception in 1911 onwards, *Eye-Witness* had followed much the same conspiracist path as the *Nation Review*, portraying the Jewish race as both inassimilable and distinct, a concentrated source of illicit influence, at the same to as diffuse and dispersed, 'cosmopolitan' and international. For the early history of *Eye-Witness*, see: C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, pp. 28, 34.

[73] Referenced in Gilbert, 'David Lloyd George', pp. 302, 304. Subsequent, angry parliamentary exchanges between Lloyd George and George Lansbury in October 1912, led to increased suspicions, and quotations of the *National Review* article of that month – which seems to have piqued the perennial anti-Semitic Germanophobe Leopold Maxse's interest. HC Deb., 11 Oct. 1912, vol. 42, cc. 667-750.

[74] *National Review* (Feb. 1912), pp. 904-908; ibid. (Mar. 1913), passim.

[75] HC Deb., 19 Jun. 1913, vol. 54, cc. 542-669.

[76] *MG* (23 Jun. 1913), p. 6. *The Spectator* was not alone in falling foul of the *Manchester Guardian*, *The Times* having only a month earlier been castigated for promising 'a Navy scandal' to take the place of the Marconi scandal, involving 'allegations… made of personal connections of Ministers and others with would-be contractors.' *MG* (9 May 1913), p. 8. (The *Guardian* was never convinced of the accusations in the Marconi case, referring to Leopold Maxse's coverage as a 'heap of politico-financial garbage'. Ibid. (01 Feb. 1913), p. 10.) See, also: ibid. (14 Feb. 1913), p. 8.

by his actions as a Government minister.[77] By that time, *The Times* had published so many reports on the Indian Silver scandal that John Maynard Keynes (then working at the India Office) felt moved to write a letter to the editor, explaining the propriety of Edwin and Samuel Montagu's actions in breaking up the 'Indian Silver Ring'.[78] The *Pall Mall Gazette* was entirely committed to the idea of holding the 'guilty' to account by mid-1913.[79] There was also more suspicious and speculative commentary by parliamentarians, such as Major Glyn, who noted the influence of Jewish families within radical Liberal politics and their infiltration of the establishment through finance and then ennoblement.[80] Indeed, over 90 parliamentary questions were asked on the issue during the winter of 1912–3.[81] However, it was only in December 1912 that full-blown conspiracism began to be in evidence, when *Eye Witness* began questioning the Montagu family's involvement with the purchasing of Indian Silver.[82]

Some argue that the importance of the Marconi and Indian Silver scandals has been exaggerated. Certainly, suggestions that the nation hurled itself into paroxysms of anti-Semitism are exaggerated. Equally, however, significant portions of the coverage mobilised conspiracist tropes of illicit Jewish influence. Leo Maxse's *National Review*, ever wont to decry the state of the nation, railed against the 'impenetrable secrecy of Ministers', the insidious influence of Jewish ministers and financiers, 'heavy Hebrew control of several "British" newspapers', and the 'Hebrew Press' throughout 1912 and 1913.[83] For *New Witness*, moreover, the Indian Silver and Marconi scandals were indicative of the Jewish threat to the nation; or more especially, of a particularly 'Jewish' kind of internationally networked, secretive, plutocratic corruption, opposed to the common good of the people. So-called 'Jew

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[77] HL Deb., 14 Nov. 1912, vol. 12, c. 959.

[78] *Times* (26 Oct. 1912), p. 15. See, also: ibid. (14 Nov. 1912), p. 17.

[79] For the *PMG* campaign against 'the guilty', see, for example: *PMG* (31 Oct. 1912), p. 7.

[80] See: *National Review* (Dec. 1912), p. 552.

[81] D. Sunderland, *Financing the Raj: The City of London and Colonial India, 1858-1914* (London: Boydell Press, 2013), p. 96.

[82] *Eye-Witness* (26 Dec. 1912), p. 226. See, also: HC Deb., 08 Jan. 1913, vol. 46, c. 1185.

[83] *National Review* (Jan. 1912), p. 688; ibid. (Mar. 1912), p. 15; ibid. (Apr. 1912), p. 189. See, also: Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 78.

wreckers' perverted the operation of the free market, thereby destroying proper 'trade and business' in service to their greed.[84] In particular, there were constant suggestions of conspiracy and intimations that prominent, wealthy Jews had been less than honourable in their dealings, secretly negotiating deals which, in the words of Maxse's *National Review*, were 'advantageous to the chosen – shall we say people?'[85] As ever, these specific conspiracist accusations were complemented by wider discourses of Jews as inassimilable and inherently untrustworthy, as summed up in *New Witness* on October 9th, 1913, which argued that:

> Beyond all possibility of a doubt Rufus Isaacs – of a notorious Jew financial family, insolvent member of the Stock Exchange, skilful commercial lawyer, knowing every turn of company law practice – was the planning brain and the crafty will in the whole [Marconi] transaction… The mean treachery of the Isaacs person is, of course, manifest. But that is of less moment. Isaacs had it in his blood and tribe… Israel, like the leopard, changes his habitat but not his spots.[86]

These were, moreover, accompanied by wider conspiracist imputations of global Jewish influence.[87] By early 1913, *New Witness* was publishing a regular feature written by F. Hugh O'Donnell (former the leader of the Irish Nationalists), entitled 'Twenty Years After', which on February 6th 1913 prophesied the existence of:

> a Jew King of opium, and a Jew King of railways, and a Jew King of petrol, and a Jew King of silver, a Jew King of soap, and a Jew King of salt and soda and nickel ; while lesser Princes and Powers of the Oriental Immigration showed their swarthy profiles in equal distribution of patronage among the subjugated natives. I heard that they ran India, exploited China, corresponded with the Hechts and Erlangers and Camondos and Schiffs and Guggenheims etc. etc. in three or four continents, advised the monarchy on law and justice, hold what is commonly called the Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Ways of Communication. Why, why did not Mr Speaker wear the robe of the Grand Rabbinate? The tribe had recently induced those Christian to spend £230,000,000 and tens of thousands of Christian lives in order to

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[84] *Eye-Witness* (08 Jan. 1914), pp. 308-309. See, also: ibid. (08 Aug. 1912), p. 230; ibid. (27 Mar. 1913), pp. 643-644; ibid. (1 May 1913), pp. 801-802; ibid. (24 Jul. 1913), p. 352; ibid. (30 Oct. 1913), p. 801; and, ibid. (13 Nov. 1913), 46.

[85] *Eye-Witness* (26 Sep. 1912), p. 455.

[86] *Eye-Witness* (13 Oct. 1913), p. 718.

[87] *Eye-Witness* also published letters from F. Hugh O'Donnell (former the head of the Irish Nationalists) in the first half of 1912, which referenced 'the vast and increasing domination of this gifted Asiatic tribe in almost every department of English life', and which stated that 'the Jew wins and must win in what called modern conditions.' Quoted in: Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 75.

secure its African mines and investments. Canaan-on-Thames was, indeed, a Promised Land.[88]

Only a month earlier, the *Review's* Marconi campaign had culminated, in typically anti-plutocratic and conspiracist style, with the suggestion that 'Much has been said, much has been written, about the pauper alien, and in many cases he is a curse and a pest, but he is nothing like so dangerous to our national well-being or to our national security as plutocratic aliens.'[89]

Even in this more measured coverage and discussion, then, popular conspiracist motifs were still very much in evidence. Fears of secretive, internationally networked forms of influence and unassimilable constituencies, presented as threatening to the nation and the proper functioning of political processes, were still circulating in relation to Britain's established Jewry. Equally, these discourses had mutated and were now being mobilised by the radical Right, mediating concerns regarding national decline and the rise of Germany. Maxse and the *National Review* were indicative of this trend and his anti-press and anti-party feelings were often expressed through resort to the idea of Jewish influence controlled from Berlin. As he wrote in January 1912, the 'Potsdam press', 'knowingly or unknowingly, is wire-pulled in the interests of Germany and against the interests of this country largely through the instrumentality of cosmopolitan Jews who repay the excessive hospitality they enjoy here by, to use a well-known phrase, "working for the King of Prussia".'[90] The British press was full of 'Hebrew journalists at the beck and call of German diplomats', and the City was full of 'cosmopolitan financiers domiciled in London in order to do 'good work' for the Fatherland'.[91]

Evidently the anti-Semitism of the Edwardian radical Right coexisted very comfortably with anti-Alien sentiments and Germanophobia. Partly this

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[88] Quoted in: Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 75.

[89] *National Review* (Jan. 1913), pp. 723-724.

[90] Ibid. (Jan. 1912), p. 679.

[91] Ibid. (Apr. 1912), p. 189. Indeed, as Leopold Amery (prominent imperialist author and, since 1911, Liberal Unionist MP for South Birmingham) suggested in July 1913, the main result of the Marconi affair was to demonstrate to the public the moribund and corrupted nature of the British political classes, arguing that certain members of the establishment had had 'one object throughout… to see that as little of the truth as possible should come to light'. Speech by Leopold Amery, to a Unionist meeting at Finsbury Town Hall, July 9th, 1910. Reported verbatim in: *Times* (10 Jul. 1913), p. 5. Amery went on to state that 'Ministers were not frank' they were inadequate, disingenuous and insincere.' Ibid.

went back to the South African War and the 'Jewish responsibility' discourse described above, when Hobson and others had focused not just upon Jews but on German Jews in particular; but it also chimed with the wider popularisation of conspiracist discourses relating to spy-fever and the radical international Left. Nevertheless, these discourses, which conflated a variety of different threats to the nation, shared a similar conspiracist form: a consistent resort to motifs of Jewish loyalties and motivations as irreconcilable within the national community, and of the Jewish community as an internationally networked, 'cosmopolitan' constituency, forever inassimilable within the nation, however integrated or outwardly 'British' they might become. As we shall now see, though aimed at a different 'new' Jewish community, such forms of conspiracist narration were an important, constituent element of late Victorian and Edwardian anti-alien discourse.

CONSPIRACISM AND ANTI-ALIENISM

From around 1870 onwards, driven by economic depression, oppressive laws and outright anti-Semitic violence, nearly 150,000 Jewish immigrants – or 'aliens', as immigrants were known – arrived in Britain, as part of a much wider pattern of emigration which saw around two million Jews leave their homes in the southern and western Russian Empire and in eastern and central Europe.[92] More than any other form of immigration, it was Jewish immigration that prompted the rise of so-called 'anti-alienism' and the sponsorship of bills in Parliament designed to restrict immigration into Britain. Congregating together into small and densely-populated 'ghetto' communities, Britain's new Jewry was a highly visible presence. More than this, its tendency to maintain Jewish customs, language and religion drew attention to the distinctiveness of Jews, which in turn invariably posed questions about their ability to assimilate into British life.

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[92] For an overview of Jewish immigration and its impact on Britain during this period, see: Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, pp. 139-353

Despite its prominence, however, this mass of newly arrived Jews was only rarely the subject of direct and full-blown conspiracist narration – at least, beyond the pages of popular fiction. A large portion of the conspiracist commentary that did relate to immigration came from radicals on both sides of the political spectrum: those on the Left tended to highlight Conservative hypocrisy in importing Chinese labourers into the Transvaal whilst seeking to restrict Jewish immigration at home; those on the Right tended to see all Jews, rich and poor, in much the same light: as irrevocably different and therefore unable to assimilate. Furthermore, most anti-alien references to rich Jews were drawn in contrast to the powerlessness and poverty of the 'new' Jewry. John Burns, for example, speaking in a debate on a failed Aliens bill of 1904, noted that the 'political power and financial influence of … rich Jews was so great that they could pull the government from Dan to Beersheba.' Were it within his power, he contended, 'He would pass an Aliens Bill for the rich Jews of Bayswater, Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead, Park Lane and Throgmorton Street.'[93]

Indeed, it was only a very small minority that sought to connect the 'very great influence the Jewish community could claim to have upon the British Press' to the continuance of Britain's 'open door' immigration policy, to quote Samuel Forde Ridley, Conservative MP for Bethnal Green in 1904.[94] Moreover, the majority of those who did argue that Jewish plutocratic influence was working against the anti-alien movement tended only to tip their hats in this direction, as Winston Churchill did, again in 1904, when he made vague suggestions that the Aliens bill of that year had been dropped at the behest of powerful Jewish Conservatives.[95] Finally, those critical of

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[93] HC Deb., 25 Apr., 1904, vol. 133, c. 1149. See, also: Edmund Haviland-Burke, IPP MP for King's County Tullamore, HC Deb., 21 Mar. 1904, vol. 132, c. 329.

[94] See, for example, Forde Ridley, MP for Bethnal Green South West, HC Deb., 25 Apr. 1904, vol. 133, c. 1120. Once again, this particular form of conspiracist narration was politically promiscuous: while Forde Ridley had argued that the Jewish owned press was against immigration restriction, John Burns argued the opposite. See, John Burns, HC Deb., 25 Apr. 1904, vol. 133, c. 1158.

[95] HC Deb., 02 Aug. 1904, vol. 139, c. 571. Admittedly, this was not an entirely unreasonable suggestion. Several prominent Jewish Conservatives had promised to withdraw their funding from the Party is concessions to religious émigrés were not granted. See, for example: *Jewish Chronicle* (26 May 1905), p. 27.

immigration consistently sought to dissociate themselves from 'anti-Semitism' as such. As David Glover has written, anti-aliens were permanently 'haunted by the fear of having [their] ideas dismissed as those of a crass-anti-Semite', in the manner of continental figures like Wilhelm Marr, Otto Bockel, Adolf Stoecker or Louis Martin.[96]

There was, then, never any simple relation between anti-Semitism, anti-alienism and conspiracism, and both anti-aliens and those in favour of the status quo expressed themselves through a highly contested and complex racial and political language. Nonetheless, the borders between these discourses were highly porous, and studious denials of 'anti-Semitism' often acted as cover for all manner of anti-Semitic criticisms of the 'new' Jewish community. Crucially, a significant portion of this made consistent resort to conspiracist tropes and idioms that categorised the 'new' community as a homogeneous, parasitic body living off the nation, unable and unwilling to assimilate, and thereby forming an inherently suspect and potentially subversive constituency. Notable anti-alien polemicists such as Arnold White plied their trade in exactly this space: while paying lip service to differentiations between the kinds of Jews living in England, they also presented 'the Jew' as a universal type. Indeed, if White acknowledged that a distinction existed between rich and poor Jews in his *Problems of a Great City*, published in 1886, by the time he published *The Modern Jew* (1899) the importance of any such economic distinctions had been cast aside:

> Amid the rivalries and quarrels of Europe there is one subject of common interest to the nations of Christendom which threatens to master and mate other questions of international concern. I speak of the waxing power of the Jewish race, [and] their aloofness from the nations among whom they dwell.[97]

Clearly, conspiracist diagnoses of the threat posed to the nation by its Jewish immigrant community might sit very comfortably alongside the conspiracist 'Park Lane' and 'Jewish responsibility' discourses.

To be sure, British public sentiment regarding the persecution of eastern-European Jews was overwhelmingly humanitarian, focusing on the inherent injustices of an illiberal and authoritarian Tsarist system. The British

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[96] Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora,* p. 84.

[97] White, *The Modern Jew*, ix.

press was nigh-on universal in its condemnation of the Russian pogroms of the period. However, this moralistic humanitarianism did not necessarily connote any particular sense of philo-Semitism, particularly when it came to discussions of 'aliens' and the 'new' Jewry. As has already been noted, although the legal and political position of Jews in England was largely settled by the 1880s, wider questions regarding Jews' social, economic and cultural place within the British nation remained unanswered; and though only rarely overtly or explicitly anti-Semitic, coverage of the problem was also peppered with statements categorising Jews as, at the very least, unlikely to assimilate.

These attitudes, which characterised Jews as clannish, secretive and unwilling to abandon their identity, were visible in the anti-alien discourses of the period leading up to the passage of the Anti-Aliens Act of 1905, which, for the first time, granted the Home Office powers to register and control the inflow of immigrants.[98] In 1882 *The Spectator* was a lone voice, when it stated that 'Jews everywhere are foreigners … separated from the people by lines which though sometimes indefinable are ineffaceable'; but when Arnold White made much the same point in 1892 ('They [immigrant Jews] never assimilate. In fact, instinct, language and character, their children are aliens') he was by no means alone.[99] White and his anti-alien peers, such as Joseph Banister and William Henry Wilkins, were representative of a growing tide of anti-alienism within British politics, which became increasingly organised and electorally important.[100] Indeed, questions of Jews' ability to integrate, coupled with their

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[98] G.C. Lebzelter, 'Anti-Semitism – a Focal Point for the British Radical Right', in P. M. Kennedy and A.J. Nicholls, *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914*, (London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981), p. 95. See, also: Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 58; H. Strauss, *Hostages of Modernization: Studies in Modern Anti-Semitism, 1870-1933/39* (London: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), p. 339.

[99] *The Spectator* (21 Jan. 1882), p. 83; A. White, *The Destitute Alien* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892), p. 84. Five years earlier, in 1887, White had attended the East End meeting at which the first public calls for alien restriction had been made – sitting alongside Lord Brabazon and several local MPs, all of whom spoke of the need for statutory restriction. Garrard, *English and Immigration*, p. 27.

[100] White was one of the founding leaders of the Association for the Preventing the Immigration of Destitute Aliens (hereafter APIDA), formed in 1891, just as an identifiable group of anti-alien East End Conservative MPs became active through the 'Parliamentary Immigration Committee' and a consensus on the need to act against pauper immigration emerged in the Lords. The APIDA, significantly, included several Liberals and trade unionists in its membership. In 1901, fifty two MPs began to meet in a new 'Parliamentary Alien Immigration Committee', which immediately began to demand statutory immigration restrictions. Garrard, *English and Immigration*, pp. 31, 38. For the Parliamentary Alien Immigration Committee's activities in attempting to bring immigration to public attention in

portrayal as irrevocably distinct and different, were central to anti-alien discourse from the 1890s right up to this end of the period under study, particularly so in debates on the passage of anti-alien legislation. Simply put, it was popularly believed, to quote the Conservative MP Ridley once more, that 'that Jews do not assimilate easily', and that Britain's 'new' Jewry would *never* assimilate, forever remaining 'a community proudly separate, racially distinct, and existing preferentially aloof'.[101]

On one level, the Jewish inability to assimilate was felt to result from race and religion. Jews embodied, so it was claimed, 'the seed of Abraham, *pur sang*'; and though they might 'have adopted English habits and the Christian faith', they still retained 'the racial traits and physiognomy of their ancestry.'[102] In other cases, it was thought to be a matter of religion: some believed that the rigours of the Talmudic tradition, with its focus on the regulation of life in the immanent world, had created a race uniquely qualified for success under modern international capitalism. Because of this, they were, in the words of White, entirely wedded to 'cosmopolitan and materialist influences fatal to the English nation'.[103] 'The Jew' was felt to lead a double life: 'in industry he is a purely economic competitor, while his communistic feelings run in the direction of race patriotism rather than trade organisation.'[104] Such perceptions of Jewish racial and religious difference formed a stereotype of 'the Jew' as particularly instrumental in his social behaviour: Jews, in short, were thought to be moved by 'only one dominant passion, the love of gain.'[105] Characteristics of economy and energy would otherwise have been celebrated in any British

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1893, see: *Times* (21 Mar. 1894), p. 5. For the developing House of Lords consensus, see: HL Deb., 03 Jul. 1890, vol. 346, cc. 632-42. In 1892, the same year that the Trades Union Congress passed its first motion in favour of immigration restriction, Arthur Balfour (then First Lord of the Treasury) also notified the Commons of that 'a Bill dealing with alien immigration' was 'in an advanced state of preparation'. HC Deb., 20 May 1892, vol. 4, c. 1447.

[101] HC Deb., 02 May 1905, vol. 145, cc. 785-786. White, *The Modern Jew*, xiii.

[102] Ibid., p. 3. See, also: B. Potter, 'East London labour', *Nineteenth Century*, 24 (Aug. 1888), pp. 161-83.

[103] White, *The Modern Jew*, xii.

[104] *Board of Trade. (Alien Immigration.) Reports on the Volume and Effects of Recent Immigration from Eastern Europe into the United Kingdom* [C.7406] (1894), p. 42.

[105] W.H. Wilkins, *The Alien Invasion* (London, 1892), pp. 66-7. For instrumentality, see: C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London,* series 1, vol 3 (London, 1902), p. 132.

worker, but not in this case.[106] Rather, given Jews' tendency to colonise particular trades or particular economic functions, and their seeming inability to integrate within the wider nation, Jewish economic successes were thought to represent a subversion of the normal relations between economics and society.[107] Jews came to be categorised as both separate from the body of the nation, yet also parasitic upon it, and were popularly associated with infection, poison and contagion: an 'alien immigration plague'.[108]

A language of 'floods' and 'invasions' was also commonplace, including in works of social investigation, which flourished during the 1880s and 1890s. In Charles Booth's opinion, for example, as expressed in *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1902), Jewish displacement of native communities constituted the most important change in social conditions in the East End between 1887 and 1902: 'It has been like the slow rising of a flood, street after street is occupied. Family follows family.'[109] Indeed, it was during the period of Booth's investigations when the term 'alien invasion' entered the popular lexicon.[110] William Henry Wilkins even entitled his 1892 book on immigration *The Alien Invasion*.[111] Claims of an alien invasion were central to the programmes of organisations like the short-lived Association for Preventing the Immigration of Destitute Aliens (1892–93), the British Brothers League (founded in 1901), the Londoners League (in 1902) and the Immigration Reform Association.[112] In 1902, in his very first contribution to parliamentary debates on the issue of

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[106] Some commentators did applaud 'the single eye with which the Jew will always strive after what is profitable'. C. Russell and H.S. Lewis, *The Jew in London* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1900), p. 5.

[107] As John Hobson noted, in *Problems of Poverty* (1891), 'the foreign Jews are engaged in producing articles of commerce which but for their presence would be produced by native workers under better industrial conditions.' J.A. Hobson, *Problems of Poverty* (London: Methuen, 1891), p. 63. See, also: S. Fox, 'The Invasion of Foreign Paupers', *Contemporary Review* (Jun. 1888), p. 865; D. Schloss, 'The Jew as Workman', *Nineteenth Century* (Jan. 1891), pp. 96-109. Sweating, in particular, was seen as a peculiarly 'Jewish' form of economic activity. See, for example: Booth, *Life and Labour*; Russell and Lewis, *The Jew in London*; and, W.H. Wilkins, 'The Immigration of Destitute Foreigners', *National Review* (Sep. 1890).

[108] J. Banister, *The Jews in England*, 3rd edn. (London: 1907), p. 81. For Jews as poison, see for example; Major William Evans Gordon, HC Deb., 29 Jan. 1902, vol. 101, c. 1274. For infection, see, for example: *PMG* (29 Nov. 1901), p. 5.

[109] Booth, *Life and Labour*, pp. 1-2.

[110] Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 141.

[111] Wilkins, *Alien Invasion*.

[112] T. Villis, *Reaction and the Avant-Garde: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy in Early Twentieth Century Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 147.

immigration, Major Evans Gordon (leader of the British Brothers League and Conservative MP for Stepney) spoke of 'English families … ruthlessly turned out to make room for foreign invaders', characterising the past twenty years' immigration in exactly these terms: an 'alien invasion'.[113] This much was echoed by the Bishop of Stepney, who noted in 1905 that the 'East End of London was being swamped by aliens who were coming in like an army of locusts eating up the native population or turning them out. Their churches were being continually left like islands in the midst of an alien sea.'[114]

As this last comment suggests, narratives of immigrating Jews 'flooding' local communities and 'colonizing' particular urban areas sat easily alongside complaints of Jews having colonized particular trades. Indeed, descriptions of outright Jewish colonisation of London's East End became increasingly common during the 1890s and early 1900s. Both newly arrived Jews and native Englishmen received the same impression 'of a corner of Eastern Europe transplanted to London.'[115] This sensation must have been difficult to avoid, given the demographic impact of Jewish immigration on London's East End. Whereas in 1880 somewhere around 30,000 Jews lived in the City, Houndsditch and Old Castle Green, by 1914 there were almost 120,000 Jews living in Stepney alone – all part of a Jewish population which was young and exhibited high birth rates and low infant mortality.[116] It is hardly surprising that even the socialist *Clarion* admitted in 1896 that walking through the East End was a strange experience, 'because within half-an-hour's walk of the City Boundaries we were in a foreign country.'[117] Not for nothing was Whitechapel known as 'Jew-town', even by Jews: as Sir William Marriot noted in 1893, having recently walked through the East End, 'There are some streets you may go through and hardly know you are in England.'[118] In short, by the turn of the

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[113] HC Deb., 29 Jan. 1902, vol. 101, cc. 1273-1274.

[114] Quoted by William Evans Gordon: HC Deb., 02 May 1905, vol. 145, c. 717.

[115] Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 167.

[116] Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, pp. 170-171.

[117] *Clarion* (22 Aug. 1896), p. 268.

[118] For a Jewish description of the East End, and Whitechapel in particular, as Jewish colony, see, for example: *Jewish Chronicle* (05 Jun. 1903), p. 13; William Marriott, HC Deb., 11 Feb. 1893, vol. 8, c. 1205.

century, the East End of London was regularly and being described as a foreign land.[119]

Importantly, given the argument made in the following section on popular literature, senses of Jewish infiltration and colonization were often complemented by the suggestion that immigrant Jews were importing with them an inclination towards continental forms of political agitation, which were neither appropriate nor necessary in the British context. This popular association of anarchist and terrorism with immigration had a long history: the *St James Gazette* stated in 1887 that 'the vast majority of these foreign Jews are nihilists and anarchists'.[120] Moreover, in introducing one of the first 'aliens' bills in 1894, even Lord Salisbury (in Opposition) spoke of the need to restrict Jewish immigration, which he claimed brought with it continental forms of revolutionary political, and 'those who live in a perpetual conspiracy of assassination'.[121] More than any other area of England, the East End of London had, since the 1880s, inspired fears of revolution and upheaval, and the perceived threat from foreign radicalism imported into Britain was always closely bound up with senses of the East End of London as a refuse for the unwanted human detritus of Europe. Indeed, it was during the 1880s that the nature and position of the working classes, and the 'outcast classes' became matters of serious public concern for the first time since the decline of the Chartist movement.[122] As Harry Levy-Lawson (Liberal Unionist member for Mile End) noted in 1905, arguing for the introduction of immigration restrictions: 'The truth is that we get the floating scum—those who would go anywhere and do anybody and those who are a burden to their own

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[119] Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, p. 166. Some saw this process as a perpetual phenomenon, by which the England they knew would come to be irrevocably altered. In 1902, William Stanley Shaw – an early figurehead of the British Brother League – argued that by 1913 London would be so infiltrated and overrun by Jewish influence, that it would simply be known as 'an important Jewish city on the Thames'. Quoted in: Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 28.

[120] Quoted in Garrard, *The English and Immigration*, p. 25.

[121] HL Deb., 06 Jul. 1894, vol. 26, cc. 1047-55. The bill passed its second reading, in spite of the Liberal government's opposition, but failed after the William Harcourt, Liberal whip and Chancellor, 'stated in emphatic language—in very unusually forcible language—that he would not find time for the discussion of this [Aliens] Bill.' Description of Harcourt's comments by Lord Salisbury: HL Deb., 14 Aug. 1894, vol. 28, c. 889. Three private members bills were introduced in 1897 and 1898.

[122] G. Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London: a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), passim.

community, if not a burden to the public at large… And who are left here? The derelicts of Europe.' He then added: 'One feels that this unrestricted flow will be likely to weaken and vitiate the whole stream of our national life.'[123]

At the same time, highly publicised terrorist incidents in Britain, such as the trial of the Walsall anarchists, the regular arrests of continental anarchists and later the Siege of Sidney Street, reinforced this sense of the immigrant community as politically different from Britain. Eastern-European Jewish immigrants were portrayed as at best, to quote from White's *The Destitute Alien* (1892), 'politically unfit to be suddenly transplanted into those democratic institutions for which we have adapted ourselves by a long course of self-governing liberty'.[124] At worst, the immigrant Jew was 'a bad citizen, a breaker or evader of the law, a sedition monger and, in the last resort, an enemy of this country.'[125] The likes of White might invoke the possibility of a 'Jewish imperium inside the English Empire', created under the noses of a complacent public misinformed by a predominantly Jewish owned press, but ultimately it was the political and civic dimension that formed the most common complaint: namely, that Jews would never assume the status of true, upstanding British citizens.[126] As the *St James Gazette* put it in 1887:

> Take the colony as it stands. Eliminate the idea that it represents an invasion and treat its members neither as foreigners nor as paupers. Look at them as citizens, ratepayers, heads of families and trades people. Inquire how far they fulfil the ordinary duties of civilised life as members of a free and independent community. The answer to that question might be given in a sentence: they never forget that they are Jews and that other people are Gentiles. They are a people apart. Long as they may live among us they will never become merged in the mass of the English population.[127]

More than fifteen years later such fears were still being expressed in Parliament, including by Liberals. In 1904, for instance, Henry Norman, MP for

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[123] HC Deb., 02 May 1905, vol. 145, cc. 734-740. The perception of Jews as bad, burdensome, see: Garrard, *English and Immigration*, pp. 23-26. Such beliefs were reinforced by the fear that only the worst class of immigrants were staying in Britain, as expressed in the report of the Select Committee on Alien Immigration, published in 1889, which noted that: 'the better class of immigrants only arrive in transit to other countries but the poorest and worst remain here'. Quoted in Garrard, *English and Immigration*, pp. 28-29. See, also: ibid., p. 62.

[124] Quoted in White, *Destitute Alien*, p. 189.

[125] *Jewish Chronicle* (08 Oct. 1897), p. 18.

[126] White, *The Modern Jew*, p. 167.

[127] *St James Gazette* (04 Apr. 1887), p. 4.

Wolverhampton South, argued that any parliamentarian wishing to develop an understanding of the alien invasion taking place in Britain should simply:

> go a couple of hundred yards from the House, [and] take a ticket by railway to the East End of London, which would be reached in twenty-five minutes, he would find railway time tables posted up there in Hebrew characters, the bills of the places of amusement distributed in the streets printed in Hebrew, and the public entertainments given in Yiddish. If he pursued his investigation a little further, he would discover a foreign Press of the most extraordinary character in this country, of which little was known—a Press in which was advocated with great impunity all kinds of revolutionary doctrine. He could not see how "good enough citizens" could be raised in such conditions.[128]

Portrayals of the immigrant Jewish community thus featured consistent resort to conspiracist motifs of infiltration, colonization and invasion. This was not the conspiracism of the 'Jewish responsibility' and 'Park Lane' discourses. Nor were these the full-blown conspiracist narratives to be found in the popular 'invasion' and 'espionage' literature of the period, or indeed the conspiracism found in contemporary terrorism panics. However, these portrayals of Jewish immigration were connected to all of these in several important ways. Firstly, speculations regarding immigrant communities' position in relation to the nation mediated wider issues raised by the experience of mass migration, in ways which were, at times, associated with the negative portrayal of the diaspora as a homogenous threat to liberal democracy.[129]

Secondly, as we shall now see, senses of the East End as colonized by foreign immigrants formed the backdrop for many narratives of insurrection and dissidence found in the popular literature of the period. As White argued in 1899, though a 'quarrelsome people' with ideas 'as various as the ideas of other English-men', the Jewish diaspora still retained a racial affinity that functioned somewhat akin to crystallisation: all that was required for unity to emerge was the exertion of pressure against the diaspora.[130] Such senses of the Jewish community (and of immigration as a whole) underwrote much of the conspiracism of this period, which functioned on the assumption that several foreign and potentially insurrectionary constituencies existed within the fabric

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[128] HC Deb., 25 Apr. 1904, vol. 133, c. 1109.

[129] See, particularly: A. White, *English Democracy; its Promises and Perils* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1894), passim.

[130] Ibid., p. 153.

of the British nation. That Jews were increasingly seen as 'a state within a state' did much to support this.[131] As will be shown, these depictions of resident insurrectionary constituencies depended entirely on popular discourses pertaining to the arrival of a people who were, as one MP put it in April 1904, 'in religion, blood, character, social habits, and political ideas, antagonistic to British feeling'.[132]

Anti-Jewish alienism in popular literature

> Why, lass, here I am, a strong, British working-man, but trained to no special trade, because I've been a soldier, a decent labourer, in fact ; and here are you, a bonny English lass, starving – an' for what ? Because we've given a welcome to every bit of foreign scum that's too filthy to be kept in its own country. Why, it's only this very morning that I stood an' watched a shipload of aliens land at St. Katherine's Dock. Their own countries don't want 'em, but it seems as if we do, an' so they come. An' we let 'em come an' shove Englishmen out ; we let 'em bring disease an' worse, we let 'em get into our workhouses, where no decent Englishman will go, an' they drift into our prisons – an' very comfortable some of 'em seem to find it, too ! I tell you, my lass, my blood boils, an' there are lots like me who think the time's come to act, an' say that if Government won't stop the mischief, we will !"[133]

Although Jewish immigration was rarely the subject of outright conspiracist narration during the period 1880-1914, there were certainly profound resonances between portrayals of both Park Lane and penniless Jews. In both cases, portrayals centred on the description of a secretive, clannish and closed community; in both cases, the stereotypical Jew was constructed as an essentially different figure, resistant to any meaningful kind of integration with the British nation. Both were described through a common idiom, a cluster of related terms, which reinforced the sense that Britain's Jewry, old and new, formed an inherently suspect community, living parasitically upon the body of the nation. In particular, the immigrant Jewish community was regularly constructed in the popular imagination as a possible source of insurrectionary agency, profoundly different in its racial, religious and political proclivities – a dangerous residuum which, if left unregulated, might cause serious problems for the British state in years to come.

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[131] Russell and Lewis, *Jew in London*, p. 9.

[132] HC Deb., 25 Apr. 1904, vol. 133, c. 1126.

[133] Wood, *Enemy in Our Midst*, pp. 7-8.

Late Victorian and Edwardian popular literature, however, seems to have featured no solely 'Jewish' conspiracist narratives. Or at least not in the way that the dynamite literature of the period featured secretive terrorist masterminds working in service of terrorist objectives; or in the way that the spy thrillers of the period described hidden architectures of agency peculiar to espionage. This is not to say that Jews, Judaism and Jewish communities were never visible in the conspiracist literature of the period. Rather, this is to note that there were no outright anti-Semitic narratives of Jews attempting to take over the world *for the sake of Jews*, or to subvert the British nation and its empire, in service to Jewish interests *described as Jewish*. The picture was much more complicated than this and Jews were, curiously perhaps, much more pervasive than this. Secretive, powerful Jewish figures were a regular feature in the conspiracist popular literature of the period. Often they were the master-spies and terrorist masterminds of the novels described in the preceding chapters. Moreover, revolutionary immigrant constituencies (very often described as predominantly Jewish) were just as common in these texts.

At its most simple level, conspiracist depictions of race and immigration tended to mediate popular concerns regarding the relationship of race and nationality to the contemporary politics of labour and trade. Indeed, the vast majority of those conspiracist authors who discussed immigrants or immigration propounded views favourable to 'white labour' discourse. Walter Wood's *The Enemy in our Midst* (1906), for example, was deeply bound up in senses of the native population as being 'pushed out' by immigrant communities, describing native jobs stolen by alien immigrants, alien colonization of particular trades, aliens taking up 'native' housing stock and alien landlords rack-renting natives out of their homes. The hero of the novel, John Steel, is a down-on-his-luck former soldier, kept from work by a wave of immigrants. As Steel remarks early on in the novel, 'Here I am, a free-born Englishman, and yet in the capital of my own country I can't get a job ! I'm living in an alien colony, in an alien house, and I've got an alien landlord ! 'Home, sweet home!'[134] Wood's choice for the title of his first chapter, 'An Englishman in Alienland', was certainly consonant with these senses of

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[134] Wood, *Enemy in Our Midst*, p. 8.

invasion and colonization, situating alien immigration as a violation of the treasured English motifs of the security of home and family.

In *The Enemy in Our Midst*, however, Wood was concerned with more than just describing the pain of 'native' British communities displaced from their homes and employment by the arrival of several hundred thousand foreign immigrants – 'the scum of Europe'.[135] Wood made constant references to official intransigence and incompetence, in ways which allow us to situate Wood as a polemicist for National Efficiency, particularly in relation to military preparedness.[136] Wood's main purpose, however, was to describe immigration as a significant weakness in Britain's ability to defend itself against potential future invasions. Specifically, Wood argued that Britain's uncontrolled border allowed for the possibility that enemy nations might infiltrate military formations into Britain under the cover of Britain's lax immigration policy. Accordingly, in *The Enemy in Our Midst*, the decisive battle is not fought between British forces and raiding invaders. Rather, it is fought between Germany's infiltrated 'Alien Army' (which executes an attempted coup d'état at the beginning of the novel) and the shambolic defending forces positioned in and around London. Explicitly playing upon contemporary fears of an insurrectionary immigrant community, this was, in the words of Le Queux, the fear that Britain might one day find that 'an enemy had landed on our shores with every chance of a successful march to London, while … the revolutionary spirit had broken out among the criminal class, and lawlessness and murder were everywhere rife.'[137]

The Enemy in Our Midst was, perhaps, the most overtly anti-alien of all the texts of this type, and it certainly drew the most directly conspiracist connections between contemporary patterns of immigration and threats to the nation. Wood's work, however, was by no means alone in its depiction of alien

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[135] Wood, *Enemy in Our Midst*, p. 16. Or what Joseph Banister would have described as England's 'cowardly Jew-dominated rulers', and its 'Yiddish conquerors and their reptile Press'. Banister, *England under the Jews*, pp. 1, 2, 86.

[136] As Wood wrote in the introduction to the novel, in 1906: 'A recent number of the *National Review* contained a sensational article by a "German Staff Officer" on the "Functions of the German Navy," in which it was… argued, in case war should threaten, that Germany should swiftly land a part of her army on the British coast… How such a raid might be effected is told in this story.' Wood, *Enemy in Our Midst*, p. 5.

[137] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 47.

communities as an insurrectionary threat to the security of the nation. Indeed, the depiction of alien communities abounded in the invasion genre throughout the period under study. The Channel Tunnel invasion literature of the early 1880s, for example, described the infiltration of trained soldiers, disguised as 'restaurateurs, bootmakers, milliners etc.' over long periods of time, ordered to embed themselves into the daily life of the British nation and wait for their orders, upon receipt of which they would rise up to sabotage and subvert British efforts to combat invasion.[138]

But while the trope of Channel-Tunnel subversion had provided a specific thematic spur to the depiction of infiltrators at the nation's borders, the imagining of insurrectionists infiltrating the nation's inner urban environment became increasingly common after 1900. Louis Tracy's *The Invaders* (1901), for example, depicted French and German soldiers dropping 'from the sky' to 'cut down or shoot every policeman or other person in their way'.[139] These men, however, had only just donned their khaki uniforms, having lived in Britain for many years before.[140] In similar fashion, both of Le Queux's invasion novels (published 1894 and 1905) demonstrated his fascination with the idea of an enemy fifth column, describing the actions of saboteurs and military spies embedded within Britain's immigrant population. Indeed, such descriptions were commonplace right up to the end of the period under study. *Great Was the Fall* (1912), for example, described an insurrection by 40,000 trained German soldiers posing as immigrants who, on the appointed day, all claim to be going on holiday but in fact travel up to Hull to join forces with 60,000 invading troops that had just landed on the North coast.[141] In this way, immigration was directly linked to the invasion scares that were discussed in Chapter Two: they were both part of the same conspiracist repertoire of subversive forces.

There were also evocations of foreign powers manipulating Britain's alien communities at a distance. As the German master-spy protagonist of *The*

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[138] See, for example: C. Forth, *The Surprise of the Channel Tunnel* (London: H. Wightman & Company, 1883), p. 6.

[139] Tracy, *The Invaders*, p. 9.

[140] Ibid.

[141] Naval Officer, A (pseud.), *Great Was the Fall* (London: J. Long, 1912), passim.

Enemy in Our Midst states while watching a procession of the unemployed demonstrating in Hyde Park: 'The time is swiftly drawing near – the hour has nearly struck … The fire is certainly smouldering … A mere spark would set the whole train a blaze! And what a conflagration it will be! The world's history has no parallel for it!'[142] Tellingly, the German invasion that follows is supported not only by an implanted enemy formation (the 'Alien Army') but also a wider radical insurrection among alien communities. Once again, Wood was not alone in this. Le Queux's *The Great War in 1897* sees an outbreak of anarchist disorder (described below), and the onset of a bomb-throwing campaign which, though not directed by German agents, serves as cover for a highly targeted German campaign of demolition.

Depictions of national vulnerability to resident alien constituencies also mobilized contemporary fears regarding urban degeneracy and the volatility of what became known as the 'residuum' – the degenerate by-product of life in modern, urban conditions. This residuum was felt to be profoundly different from the rest of the population, as described in James Hocking's *The Madness of David Baring*:

> The people dressed differently, walked differently, and, what was more, they had a different expression on their faces. He could not define the differences, but he felt it. The look in their eyes, the cast of features, was to him strange. This did not apply simply to the very poor who swarmed in the masses and back street, but was evident among those who kept shops, and lived in comfort… as far as he could judge, the great masses seemed to live for the animal pleasure of the present moment.[143]

The 'smouldering fire' noted above, from in *The Enemy in Our Midst* – also reminiscent, incidentally, of Henry James' description of 'an immense underworld people with a thousand forms of revolutionary passion and devotion … a wonderful, immeasurable trap' – was the looming social conflict posited by so many commentators, which threatened to drive the nation to its ruin. Often, in the conspiracist popular literature of this period, such conflict was reified into the causal effect of immigrant or 'alien' communities: a tendency of which Wood's *The Enemy in Our Midst* was merely the fullest realisation, but which ran beyond those texts which imagined enemy nations' invasions of the British Isles.

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[142] Wood, *Enemy in Our Midst*, p. 8.

[143] J. Hocking, *The Madness of David Baring* (London: George Newnes, 1900), p. 79.

Indeed, the association between immigration and revolutionary insurrection was equally common in the dynamite literature of the day. In a chapter entitled 'Dark Hints', Edward Fawcett's *Hartmann the Anarchist* (1892) referenced this feeling several times, noting that 'In many quarters a severe reaction had set in against Liberalism, and a stronger executive and repressive laws were called for. At the opposite extreme flew the red flag, and a social revolution was eagerly mooted.'[144] George Chetwynd Griffith's *The Angel of the Revolution* went even further in this respect, noting that the weakened social bonds consequent upon the liberal status quo had allowed 'the Terrorists' such space and material for agitation that 'Under the whole fabric of Society lay the mines which a single spark would now explode, and above this slumbering volcano the world was trembling.'[145] Savage's *The Anarchist* made similar references, directly connecting the experience of immigration with insurrectionary politics:

> The protected and manufacturing states are flooded with the scum of Europe — alien labor, and the human refuse of the Continent! The red propaganda is vigorously pushed in these regions. The visible results of organized capital in building up a plutocracy enrage these mouthing would-be assassins![146]

Indeed, in Griffith's *The Angel*, the sense of an invisible insurrectionary community was absolutely explicit. As the narrator of *The Angel* notes, the hierarchies of control and authority within the subterranean network of 'the Brotherhood' had been patiently laid, year after year, beneath 'the foundations of Society … complete in every detail.' However, though 'the first spark had been applied, and the first rumbling of the explosion was already sounding in the ears of men', the leaders of the world are described as pitiful, even complicit: 'they little knew how much of it is imported'.[147] At the crucial moment when Britain is vulnerable to foreign invasion, 'Hundreds of thousands of civilians vanished … and in their place sprang up orderly regiments of grey-clad soldiers, who saw the red knot in each other's button-holes, and welcomed each other as comrades unknown before.'[148]

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[144] E. Fawcett, *Hartmann the Anarchist* (London: Edward Arnold, 1893), p. 5

[145] Griffith, *Angel of the Revolution*, p. 63.

[146] Savage, *The Anarchist*, p. 170.

[147] Griffith, *The Angel of the Revolution*, p. 142.

[148] Ibid., p. 319.

In *Hartmann the Anarchist*, the consequence of allowing alien communities to exist is that once the eponymous anti-hero unleashes his terrible onslaught upon the capital, the disaffected 'refuse' of society rises up in insurrection and at an instant the 'whole organization of society' seems to have 'fallen through.'[149] As the narrator wanders the stricken streets of London, a 'cruel mob' made up of 'red-capped ruffians followed by armed companies of marauders with their wildest passions unchained' becomes 'master of the streets'.[150] In these ways, contemporary concerns regarding immigration were associated with conspiracist connections between imported radicalism and the potential for insurrection.

Even the more nuanced and satirical works of the genre, such as Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), played upon the theme of imported radicalism, and novels such as Grant Allen's *For Maimie's Sake* (1884), and Stevenson and Van de Grift's collection *New Arabian Nights* (1882) reinforced the sense that alien radicals and terrorists walked the streets of London on a daily basis, passing through the hustle and bustle of daily life without surveillance, untroubled by any sense that the Government might seek to expel or control them. As in H. Barton Baker's *Robert Miner, Anarchist* (1902), many of these texts conjured the sense of an urban environment peppered with immigrant radicalism, whether in the form of 'frowsy clubs in Fitzroy Square' and 'secret dens in Soho' (both popularly associated with émigré Communards and anarchists since the mid-1870s), or shady 'foreign clubs' in the attics of Oxford Street.[151]

There was also a strong didactic element, not least in the connection drawn between immigration and the paucity and inadequacy of England's counter-espionage and secret-policing capacities. Many 'invasion' and 'espionage' authors described England's 'open-door' immigration policy as facilitating the infiltration of secret agents, agitators and revolutionaries. Indeed, that so many authors in the invasion and espionage genres chose to describe their enemy master-spies as Jewish is no coincidence. Negative

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[149] Ibid., p. 174.

[150] Fawcett, *Hartmann*, pp. 168, 173-174.

[151] Baker, *Robert Miner, Anarchist*, pp. 156-157.

stereotypes of 'the Jew', both Park Lane and East End, as rootless and mercenary, cosmopolitan and degenerate provided a convenient counterpoint to the physical prowess and moral backbone of the English secret agent, who was invariably rooted in national cultural traditions (public schools and the ancient universities) and tied to the land. Le Queux's *The Great War in 1897* (1894), for example, features the master-spy Karl von Beilstein, 'a polished cosmopolitan' hailing from the Jewish quarter in Frankfurt'.[152] *Spies of the Kaiser* (1909) makes thinly veiled referenced to Jews working in Britain at the Kaiser's behest and led by Herman Hartmann, a man 'with grey eyes full of craft and cunning, a prominent nose, and short-cropped grey beard'.[153] Playing upon more traditional fears of Jewish infiltration of the aristocracy, such depictions of Jewish spies resonated strongly in anarchist tales, such as Savage's *The Anarchist* (1894) and Guy Boothby's *The League of Twelve* (1903), which portrayed powerful anarchists infiltrating high society and then blackmailing members of the aristocracy.

It is, equally, no surprise to find that within the invasion genre there were also references to general, often quite vague, senses of insidious Jewish global power. Even John Buchan's *The Thirty-Nine Steps* tipped its hat to this trope: the character Scudder notes that 'The Jew is everywhere … if you're on the biggest kind of job and are bound to get to the real boss, ten to one you are brought up against a little white-faced Jew in a bath chair with an eye like a rattlesnake.'[154] Buchan would later, in *Greenmantle* (1917), give his hero Hannay similar feelings, encapsulated in Hannay's statement that 'the Jew is at the back of most German enterprises.'[155] As has been noted, the more literary of these texts tended to subvert these narratives of Jewish agency as often as they propounded them. In *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, for example, Scudder's anti-Semitic conspiracy theory is dismissed as unbalanced by Sir Walter Bullivant, England's spy-master; and the course of events adheres to a conventional spy-thriller plot,

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[152] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 26.

[153] Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser*, p. 28.

[154] Buchan*, Thirty-Nine Steps*.

[155] Buchan*, Greenmantle*. Having noted this, it must also be remembered that Hannay's enemies in all of Buchan's writings tended to be true-blooded Aryans, and as David Stafford has noted, 'The notion of a Jewish world conspiracy [in these works] is clearly peculiar to Scudder.' Stafford, *Silent Game*, p. 64.

wherein the German master-spy's racial credentials are impeccably Aryan. Nevertheless, these narratives placed Jews and Jewish communities in a different world to non-Jewish characters: almost invariably, they are financiers, morally reprehensible enemy spies, mercenaries or revolutionaries.

The result was the sense that British society had been fundamentally undermined and was teetering on the brink of collapse, something best captured by Le Queux in *The Great War in England in 1897*. A chapter entitled 'Bomb Outrages in London' describes the sudden emergence of anarchist and socialist agitators who, as soon as London is threatened by foreign forces, gather together to advocate 'outrage, incendiarism, and murder' (Fig. 4.2).

FIG 4.2: 'Anarchist Riots in Trafalgar Square'. Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 44.

Police attempts to put an end to this insurrectionary 'demagoguery' only result only in 'a terrible uprising'.[156] The 'scum of the metropolis' emerge and within a day the forces of order are vanquished: Downing Street is blown up and the National Gallery burned to the ground.[157] Enemy spies have penetrated the nation; enemy saboteurs cripple Britain's military infrastructure; insurrectionary constituencies rally and rise up. In the end, only narrowly does England avoid defeat.

With the benefit of hindsight, of course, such fears of alien communities living, plotting and waiting seem absurd. Yet, even in 1914 the events of the Paris Commune were still within living memory; and as was seen in Chapter Three, the memory of the Commune still exerted a powerful impact on perceptions of the radical Left, and clearly did so in the case of what were perceived to be volatile domestic constituencies. Moreover, incidents such as the Haymarket bombings of 1886 ensured that mass protest and violent insurrection were always closely associated in the popular mind. (Indeed, Timothy Messer Kruse's recent research would seem to suggest that some of these fears might even have been warranted, albeit only at specific times and in very specific instances.)[158] At the same time, the Fenian mainland bombing campaign of 1881–5 and the near constant unrest in Ireland throughout the later Victorian and Edwardian periods were always rhetorically associated with insurrectionary Irish nationalism, historical and projected. Finally, the highly visible and near continuous series of arrests, trials and deportations of anarchists kept suspicions of domestic radical Left wing constituencies current in the popular politics of the nation. Put another way, all these conspiracist fantasies had some kind of factual-historical purchase in the popular mind.

Yet, as we shall now see, at the end of the Edwardian period, the conspiracist figure of the Jewish alien began competing with another alien figure, the figure of the Chinaman; and the trope of nefarious, plutocratic Jewish influence with the trope of the Yellow Peril. It marked another twist in the development of conspiracism up to 1914.

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[156] Le Queux, *Great War in England in 1897*, p. 44.

[157] Ibid., 45.

[158] Messer-Kruse, *Haymarket Conspiracy*.

> the only man who can outwit a Jew in business is a China-man – don't
> forget.[159]

> Had I been recognised in that den my life would not have been worth an
> hour's purchase; for I have used it before now for my own purposes, and
> the rascally Lascar who runs it has sworn vengeance on me.[160]

Variously identified as the 'Mongol Menace', the 'Chinese puzzle' or the 'Yellow Peril', by the end of the Edwardian period the Chinese international diaspora and its penetration into the life of the British nation and its empire were becoming increasingly visible in the public sphere: the subject, that is, of periodically intense and anxious discussion in the press, Parliament and popular literature.[161] Driven by the spectre of rapid Japanese modernisation from 1868, the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), Russian defeat at Japanese hands in 1905 and the Revolution of 1911 (felt to presage China's emergence as a modern nation state), discussions of Chinese affairs became increasingly current and were often shot through with 'Yellow Peril' discourses that drew on the racially inflected conspiracism discussed earlier.[162] This particular variant found its fullest expression in the 'Yellow Peril' literature of the period, which explored anxious narratives of infiltration and subversion by 'yellow' forces.

Importantly, British discussions of Chinese issues were always heavily influenced by non-British 'white settler' contexts. Britain's Chinese population numbered only a few thousand by 1911. By contrast, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US had all experienced major influxes of Chinese immigrants. Each had passed anti-Chinese measures and each had seen ballooning 'Yellow Peril' fears, all of which exerted tangible influences on British attitudes towards immigrant Chinese communities.[163] More directly, the importation of indentured Chinese labourers into southern Africa had brought questions of

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[159] M.P. Shiel, *The Dragon* (London, 1913), p. 12

[160] A. Conan-Doyle, 'The Man with the Twisted Lip' (1891), in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and the Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 117.

[161] Auerbach, *Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 59.

[162] For popular perceptions of the Boxer Rebellion, see: P.A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 191-197; R.G. Forman, 'Peking Plots: Fictionalizing the Boxer Rebellion of 1900', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27 (1998): 19-48.

[163] Chinese Freemasonry (the Chee Kong Tong benevolent society) was regularly confused with the 'Tong' gangs of New York and San Francisco. Auerbach, *Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, pp. 64-65.

the relationship between race and labour in 'imperial' politics to the forefront of popular debate between 1903 and 1905 (as discussed above). The development of a global news network in this period also ensured that the British reading public were intimately aware of such issues and in the latter years of the Edwardian era the supposed 'threat' posed to domestic white labour by Chinese immigrants became increasingly current (though earlier Victorian audiences were never entirely ignorant of the relationship between race and labour beyond British shores).[164] In this context, from the late Victorian period, discourses of race, law and immigration tended to situate questions of Chinese labour as but local instances of a global phenomenon. As Joseph Havelock Wilson, the leader of the National Sailors and Firemen's Union noted in 1908: 'The trouble is not local, it is universal, and that, of course, increases the peril'.[165] These conspiracist narratives thus had concrete origins in the experience of Chinese migration much beyond Britain's shores, but in contexts of which the British public were well aware.

Accusations of 'yellow' conspiracies were heavily dependent upon a widely circulating conspiracist idiom that depicted the Chinese immigrant community as characterised by conspiratorial clannishness and separation, alongside wider senses of global connection and mobility. Based on the perception of Britain's Chinatowns as densely populated sites of racial, cultural and linguistic difference, these idioms turned on the description of a stark physical and geographical opposition between 'white' and 'yellow' populations. While it has been suggested that Britain's Edwardian Chinatowns were far less exclusively 'colonised' than has previously been assumed (or was assumed at the time), the important point is that at the popular level, the Chinese community was *perceived* as inhabiting tightly demarcated and easily identifiable urban spaces: that is, living in 'yellow' colonies amidst 'white' nations.[166] As a letter to the *Times* noted in October 1900, 'colonies of Chinese are silently forming and working in our very midst'; or again, as it was put in a letter to the

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[164] British parliamentarians had been discussing the issue of Chinese immigration into British colonies since the late 1880s. Sir. George Baden-Powell, for example, had elaborated on the threat to racial threat posed to Anglo-Saxon civilization by 'Mongolian' civilization. *Times* (26 May 1888), p. 5.

[165] *The Seaman* (03 Jan. 1908), p. 8, quoted in Auerbach*, Race, law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 39.

[166] J. Seed, 'Limehouse Blues: Looking for Chinatown in the London Docks, 1900-1940', *History Workshop Journal*, 62:1 (2006): 58-85.

East End News in 1908: 'it seems we are drawing to a time when these foreigners will take absolute command of this locality.'[167]

At the same time, though perceived as physically finite, by virtue of their close association with maritime communities these spaces were also thought of in terms of international connectivity and porosity and the indeterminate status of transient populations.[168] Their maritime locations also made for further associations with latent criminality and morally subversive influences: in particular, sites of nefarious activity such as the opium, prostitution and gambling dens that peppered Britain's docklands and which were seen as a 'Chinese' innovation at the end of the Edwardian period.[169] Such associations only heightened the sense that Britain's Chinese community was an unknowable 'problem' constituency. As we shall see, these communities and their subversive qualities and global connections came to be loaded with hidden significance in an emerging 'Yellow Peril' literature.

The individual 'Chinaman' was similarly described through a set of homogenizing stereotypes. Although drawn, at least in part it seems, from a 'native' inability to differentiate between 'exotic' individuals on a physical basis, linguistic differences certainly played a role.[170] Perhaps inevitably, given the problems of communication and recognition, 'the Chinaman' came to be as seen as taciturn and inscrutable, characterised by a 'profoundly hidden' and potentially very different inner life.[171] This was a complex and confused idiom, however. On the one hand, the tendency to label all Chinese labourers as 'Coolies', which tended to efface the differences between individuals, carried with it assumptions of docility, compliance and inability to carry out skilled work.[172] On the other hand, the trope of 'John Chinaman' also featured. 'John Chinaman' was seen as a highly industrious and creative, if also cunning,

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[167] *Times* (20 Oct. 1900), p. 7; *East End News* (8 Sep. 1908), p. 3. See also, ibid. (11 Sep. 1908), p. 4. This sensation continued on well beyond the period covered by this thesis. See, for example: T. Burke, *Limehouse Nights* (London, 1916).

[168] Seed, 'Limehouse Blues', p. 59.

[169] *Illustrated London News* (23 Jan. 1909), pp. 126-7; *Times* (26 Nov. 1913), p. 7.

[170] As the *East London Observer* noted in April 1909, 'all Chinamen, to English eyes, look very much alike'. *East London Observer* (10 Apr. 1909), p. 3.

[171] Seed, 'Limehouse Blues', p. 79.

[172] Auerbach*, Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 18.

corrupting and sly, living on low wages and even lower morals, and therefore able survive in worse conditions than any white worker.[173] As with Jewish migrants, so with the Chinese: simply that these qualities were seen as an immoral perversion of the proper functioning of the economy.[174] Both of these stereotypes conceived of the Chinese and Jewish migrant as subversive forces, overturning the proper functioning of the economy: an inversion in fact only strengthened by the 'Park Lane' discourse, which made both 'the Jew' and 'the Chinaman' largely synonymous with the cynical and unpatriotic exploitation of the international labour market for plutocratic means.[175] (As was noted in the *East End News* in 1908: 'We cried aloud in England when the Chinaman was in South Africa. Why should we say nothing when they on our own shores seem to be prospering better than our own?'[176]) As will be seen, homogenised stereotypes of the Chinese migrant – conceived of as a rootless, unchanging and inassimilable expression of the 'yellow' type – formed a canvas upon which the imputation of conspiratorial ways could easily be drawn.

During the immediate pre-war years, concerns regarding the impact of Chinese labour migration escalated significantly, attracting much broader popular interest. Incidents such as the 1911 Seamen's Strike, the main aim of which was to prevent ship-owners' subversion of the racial labour hierarchy by hiring cheaper Chinese sailors, demonstrated a profound sense of concern at the subversive potential of international Chinese labour migration.[177] Moreover, depictions of 'Chinese labour' during this period were almost universally informed by the sense of an upcoming global racial conflict, a

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[173] See, for example: T. Naylor, *The Truth about Chinese Labour in the Transvaal* (London, 1904), passim.

[174] Auerbach*, Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 18.

[175] See, for example: statements of the General Federation of Trade unions and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, opposing the introduction of Chinese labour into the Transvaal. Quoted in: *Times* (20 Feb. 1904), p. 6; ibid., (26 Feb. 1904), p. 6.

[176] *East End News* (19 Jun. 1908), p. 6. This much was as visible in Britain in the period of the National Sailor's and Fireman's Union's anti-Chines activism (broadly, 1908-1911) as it had been in during the 'Chinese Slavery' debates (1903-1905). See, for example, suggestions that Chinese indentured labourers might be introduced into the domestic agricultural labour market: *The Chinese Labour Ordinance: A Speech Delivered by Mr. J. Fletcher Moulton, K.C., M.P. in the House of Commons on March 21st, 1905* (London, 1905), p. 6. See, also: L. Tabili, *"We Ask for British Justice": Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 91.

[177] Auerbach*, Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 65.

significant element of which was the emergence of outright conspiracist accusations against the Chinese community. This was exemplified by Herman Scheffaeur's 1911 'exposé', published in the *London Magazine*, which suggested that the arrival of Chinese migrants in Britain signified the onset of a 'vast and convulsive Armageddon to determine who is to be the master of the world, the white or yellow man'. It would soon be presaged by 'the awakening of the vast Mongolian Empire', which was 'teeming with vitality … suddenly eager for expansion, perhaps conquest, for world-power, if not for revenge for wrongs inflicted upon it by nearly every European power'.[178] For Scheffauer, London's Chinatown was central to this supposed rising, in that in 'dark little courts among the London Docks… the future of the colossal Mongolian Empire is discussed, measures and resolutions adopted, and conspiracies arranged by these humble Chinese democrats in touch with the exiled brethren in Singapore, Australia, America and Japan.'[179]

Scheffauer was certainly a xenophobic commentator, for whom anything 'Chinese' was at best inherently associated with moral repugnance and underhand ways, and at worst probably part of a global 'yellow' conspiracy against Western Civilization. Scheffauer was by no means alone, however: during this period suspicions regarding the sinister and unacknowledged connections between Chinese immigrants living in Britain and secret, worldwide Chinese organisations such as the 'White Lily' became rife.[180] Outbreaks of internecine violence within the Chinese community in London in 1912 were thus reported as consequent upon the actions of secret gangs (the 'White Lily', 'Tongs' and the 'Triads') with connections all the way back to China, and whose disputes had arisen from something other than local matters.[181] As the *East End News* reported, the power of the 'White Lily' was thought to extend:

> over the whole of China, and wherever Chinamen may settle there will be found members of the same, and one of the roles of 'The While Lily' is that whenever a certain course of action is decided upon against an individual or individuals, there is no rest or peace for those upon whom has devolved the order to carry into effect the edict issued. In strength,

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[178] Quoted in Auerbach*, Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 66.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid., p. 59.

[181] See, for example, *Times* (29 Apr. 1912), p. 5; *East London Advertiser* (20 Apr. 1912), p. 3.

the 'White Lily' Society is said to far exceed that of the Masonic Order the world over.[182]

Moreover such connections also fed into wide perceptions of rising Asiatic nations. Count Armfelt, for example, wrote that the Japanese would 'never rest until they have built an Empire of the West that shall rival the power and grandeur of Great Britain.'[183]

However, while increasingly current during the period 1911–4, speculative fantasies of impending racial conflict which would determine the course of the world had long been brewing in popular literature. The late 1890s and 1900s witnessed the emergence of Yellow Peril literature, much of it fantastical and frightening. In particular, M.P. Shiel and James Mackay wrote of a looming racial conflict between the 'white' and the 'yellow' man, partly using the invasion trope.[184] At the same time, Guy Boothby began the process by which 'evil genius' characters were given an Asiatic hue.[185] These writers, moreover, set their works against the backdrop of popular beliefs that posited covert connections between Britain's Chinese communities and global Chinese conspiracies. Indeed, describing conspiratorial agencies and intentions that chimed with the idea that Chinese taciturnity masked a different inner world of motivations, such narratives often functioned around characters that were essentially obscure, slippery and deceptive.

The front covers of M.P. Shiel's two highly conspiracist novels leave the reader in little doubt as to the global nature of the Yellow Peril (Figs. 4.3 and 4.4). Presenting the reader with a man of round face, flat nose and slit-like eyes, all drawn in a series of single serpentine lines, knelt atop the globe and replete in oriental robes, Shiel's *The Dragon* (1913), clearly, if crudely, evokes a sense of global ambition and danger. Bent upon one knee, with arms

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[182] *East End News* (16 Apr. 1912), p. 4.

[183] E. Armfelt, 'Oriental London', in G.R. Sims (ed.), *Living London: Its Work and its Play, its Humour and its Pathos, its Sights and its Scenes*, vol. 1 (London: Cassell, 1901-3), p. 86. It must be admitted that many commentators sought to differentiate between the Chinese and Japanese, they did not do so particularly well, though the quality the distinctions was highly variable. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the 'Yellow Peril' was never an undifferentiated Eastern threat, but rather a relatively specific sense of the threat from the Chinese. Indeed, Armfelt's 'Oriental London' was exemplary of exactly these distinctions.

[184] G. Mackay, *The Yellow Wave* (London: Pearson, 1895); Shiel, *The Dragon*; ibid., *The Yellow Danger* (London: John Long, 1898).

[185] G. Boothby, *Doctor Nikola* (London: Lythway Press, 1977 [1896]). See, also: Taylor, 'And I am the God of Destruction!'.

outstretched and claw-like fingers spread wide, palms and gaze downwards, this animal-like character is grasping downwards towards a vulnerable world.

FIG 4.3: Shiel, *The Dragon*, front cover.

The front cover of *The Yellow Danger* (1898) had been still more explicit, depicting a stereotypically oriental character (bald except for a long and winding pony-tail) with a fang-like moustache. The figure is kneeling on the globe, but behaving even more aggressively, with claw-like fingernails grabbing into the earth.
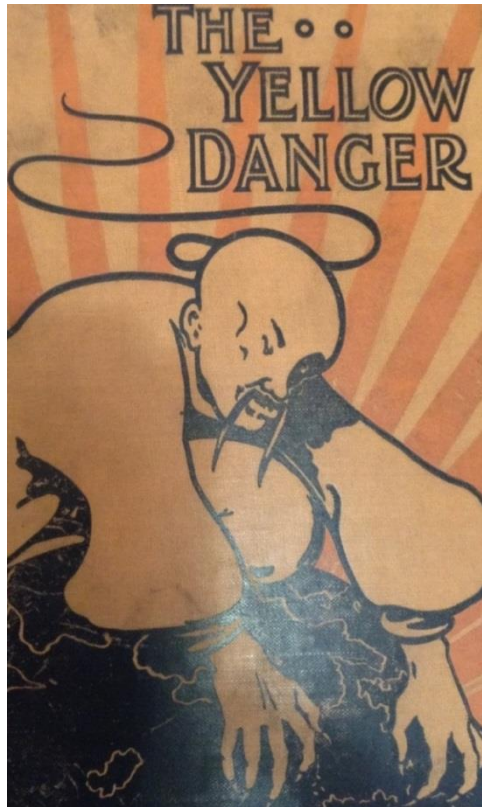
FIG 4.4: Shiel, *The Yellow Danger*, front cover.

As is obvious, these portrayals reified both the sense of threat from an ascendant East and the subversive power of the 'yellow' diaspora. In a similar spirit, Shiel's two works were deeply Manichaean, describing a world characterised by diametrically opposed forces: the open and honest 'whites' nations pitted against the evil intent and agency of the 'yellow'. The latter was described in classic popular conspiracist terms as the 'great tentacles which the Mongolian race [have] stretched over Europe.'[186] Such was made absolutely explicit in *The Yellow Danger*, whose leading Asiatic character describes the racial opposition between whites and Asians as follows: 'white people are a freak … not a positive type … Europe and Asia are just like twins in structure; and … the two islands, England and Japan, the negative and positive terminals of a cell, the continents being the plates, Europe the white zinc, Asia the yellow

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[186] Shiel, *The Dragon*, pp. 226-227. Both George Mackay and M.P. Shiel also constantly referenced the purported size of the Asian population as a threat. Ibid, p. 12, as a threatening presence. Within the Manichaean conceptions of historical change which drive such narratives, it is incumbent upon each race to prepare for a coming conflagration, to 'stand face to face in dreadful hate', saying 'One or the other must quit this earth'. Indeed, these narrative worlds are saturated in the sense of a looming conflict, 'a wrestle between East and West, as Li Ku puts it. Li Ku's plan is to trigger a pan-European war, which would devastate the Continent, weakening it to a state where the East could overwhelm it. Shiel, *The Dragon*, p. 34.

copper.'[187] Such oppositional thinking also informed plot structures: these novels also featured 'yellow' master-conspirators and equally capable 'white' opponents. Li Ku-Yu of Shiel's *The Dragon* reflected the 'yellow' qualities described above in hyper-charged conspiracist form: he is taciturn, inscrutable and withdrawn, yet also intimately connected with international systems of communication, agency and authority. As befitted their Manichaean structure, Shiel's novels pitted their evil 'yellow' geniuses against 'white' heroes who were morally upstanding and physically impressive characters. In *The Dragon*, Li Ku-Yu is pitted against the Prince of Wales, who 'from boyhood … had thought that Li Ku-Yu was born to modify things – would invade India and Siberia – and that he, the Prince, was somehow ordained to checkmate him'.[188] In contrast to Li Ku Yu, the Prince is brave, honest, fair and athletic; a sportsman and cross-country runner, with 'no resemblance to the men of the House of Hanover – his face open as a summer's day', with 'no weak line from whatever angle one glanced'.[189] It is exactly the same kind of drama that can be found in the espionage fiction of the time, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Arthur Sarsfield Ward was another important author of 'yellow peril' fiction in this period. Better known as Sax Rohmer, he was the author of the Fu Manchu stories, which began with the publication of *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu* (previously published in serial in *Collier's Weekly Magazine* in 1912.) Rohmer masterfully tapped into the zeitgeist, channelling contemporary fears regarding the existence of supposedly 'yellow' characteristics – in particular rootlessness and international connectivity, individual taciturnity and a racial genius for conspiracy – into the body of one master-conspirator: Fu Manchu, 'the yellow Peril incarnate'. As with his predecessors, Fu Manchu personified the 'cruel cunning of an entire Eastern Race', combining it with 'all the resources … of a wealthy government' bent in service to his conspiratorial aims.[190] The character Fu Manchu thus demonstrates one of the key discursive functions of conspiracist narration: the concentration of problems, threats and anxieties into singular, identifiable and therefore *beatable* character-vehicles.

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[187] Ibid., p. 16.

[188] Ibid., pp. 217, 19.

[189] Ibid.

[190] S. Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* (London: Allison & Busby, 2000 [1913]), p. 15.

One of the crucial ways in which characters like Fu Manchu – and his companions in the espionage and terrorism literature of the period – were made visible was through their colonization of the British urban landscape. Crucially, Fu Machu operates secretly from London's East End, plotting to overthrow the British government from the heart of the Empire, epitomising the potential threat posed by Chinese communities living inside London. Although visible to the onlooker, only the trained eye could see the invisible strands of conspiracy woven by 'Secret China', which encompasses a comprehensive collection of anti-Western agents.[191] Fu Manchu controls 'the most formidable secret society in the world', the Si-Fan, to which 'fully twenty-five per cent of the coloured races belong.'[192] Although small in number, in Rohmer's world the London Chinese community (embodied in the person of Fu Manchu) represents an insidious sense of racial omnipresence:

> We mark such and such a man as one alive to the Yellow Peril and we warn him – if we have time. Perhaps he escapes; perhaps he does not. But what do we know… of those others who may die every week by his murderous agency? We cannot know everyone who had read the riddle of China. I never see a report of someone found drowned, of an apparent suicide, or a sudden though seemingly natural, death, without wondering. I tell you, Fu Manchu is omnipresent, his tentacles embrace everything.[193]

In this sense, Fu Manchu is entirely dependent on the immigrant landscape and opportunities, both ethnic and physical, of the East End; but also on the position of London within the Empire. This urban landscape seems designed for conspiracy, full of cellars and alleyways, blank darkness and suggestive half-light, 'every shadow [populated by] fantastic horrors … every sound a signal of dead.'[194] As Sascha Auerbach notes, using their position in this subterranean world, just beneath the surface of the 'overt' world, just beside the 'heart' of the Empire:

> Fu Manchu and his allies… threatened to destroy the British Empire through the very elements of its foundation. The same avenues of finance, trade, migration, and cultural exchange that linked Britain to Asia became conduits down which those who sought to dominate Britain travelled to the imperial metropolis. The web of empire, co-opted by the Chinese mastermind Fu Manchu, became his web of destruction, and in

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[191] Ibid., p. 47. See, also: Taylor, 'And I am the God of Destruction!', p. 78.

[192] Quoted in: Taylor, 'And I am the God of Destruction!', p. 79.

[193] Ibid., p. 75.

[194] Ibid., p. 47.

the metropolis itself, those who represented the West in its struggle against Chinese domination "die like flies".[195]

Fu Manchu's operations at the heart of the Empire can be seen as one of the fullest realisations of conspiracist discourses as they related to race, migration and plutocracy. In mobilising tropes of immigrant infiltration, insidious and invisible (to all but the initiated) subversion, Sax Rohmer's works epitomise the senses of degeneration and decline that the conspiracist tendency – as concerned with race, conspiracism and the Empire – concerned itself in the early twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

The forms of conspiracism described in this chapter were politically and culturally promiscuous. Although anti-alien and anti-plutocratic discourses were never solely expressed through conspiracist forms, it is equally true that conspiracist fears of infiltration, subversion and invasion were highly visible and had considerable purchase in the public sphere. Anti-alienism, for example, was strongly inflected with anti-Semitic conspiracist descriptions of Jewish plutocracy, relying upon the description of a stereotypical and uniform 'Jew', whose very nature and remarkable power posed a threat to the constitution of the nation. As such, it is apparent that the Jewish responsibility/Park Lane discourses sat at one extreme end of a suspicious and speculative spectrum of expression. Moreover, although there were periods in which conspiracist narrations of Jewish agency became less visible at the popular level, and receded on the radical Left of British politics, the conspiracist tendency lived on in the burgeoning anti-Semitic conspiracism of the radical Right. Indeed, ideas of 'Jewish' influence over the political nation and its economy, and of immigrant communities in general, permeated the invasion, terrorist and espionage fiction of the later Victorian and Edwardian period. At the same time, it is apparent that depictions of Chinese immigrant communities bore a striking resemblance to earlier conspiracist forms of anti-Alienism. And these were starting to be given fantastical form in the 'Yellow Peril' literature of the later Edwardian period, which itself exhibited many

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[195] Auerbach, *Race, Law, and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 75.

concerns with subversive constituencies living parasitically within the British nation.

Considered together, it becomes apparent that these more fanatical and fantastical variants of contemporary anti-alienism and Sino-phobia cannot be dismissed as the paranoid ramblings of radical fringe elements. Nor, indeed, can the anti-Semitism of the 'Jewish responsibility' phase be dismissed as an aberrant moment of popular insanity. Indeed, these 'fringe' elements that periodically achieved high visibility within the public sphere operated, throughout the period, in close and constant dialogue with dominant concepts of national identity, constitutionality, race and labour, which were placed under profound stress by the experience of a highly networked and interconnected modernity.[196]

While conspiracism never dominated the British public sphere, when it came to the discussion of ideas of race, migration and plutocracy, conspiracist modes of thought and expression exerted a profound influence on contemporary debates, and that the structure of these debates were remarkably similar to those regarding Britain's vulnerability to German power (Chapter Two) and international left-wing dissidence (Chapter Three). Conspiracism was, in this sense, at once marginal and central: both disreputable and operant at the core of British public debate. In July 1905, the then Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, in the Commons, in support of his Government's efforts to pass the Aliens Bill into law, stated that:

> it would not be to the advantage of the civilisation of the country that there should be an immense body of persons, who, however patriotic, able, and industrious, however much they threw themselves into the national life, still by their own action remained a people apart and not merely held a religion differing from the vast majority of their fellow country-men, but only inter-married among themselves.[197]

This was conspiracism alive and well at the very heart and pinnacle of British politics. For Balfour, as for so many others, there was something incredibly – and potentially – dangerous in others people's difference.

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[196] Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora*, p. 104.

[197] HC Deb., 10 Jul. 1905, vol. 133, c. 155. Balfour had already argued, in May that year, that the government had a 'right to keep out everybody who does not add to the strength of the community – the industrial, social and intellectual strength of the community.' HC Deb., 2 May 1905, vol. 146, c. 803. For Balfour, though immigration had not yet become a 'national danger', this was the direction in which continued mass immigration would take Britain. HC Deb., 10 Jul. 1905, vol. 133, c. 155.

CONCLUSION:

CONSPIRACISM CONTINUUMS

The thesis ends in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War. This is not to suggest that conspiracism somehow diminished or went way. Quite the contrary: as the introduction noted, from August 1914 onwards it entered a new phase of development. On the one hand, the imposition of wartime censorship between 1914 and 1918 radically altered the nature of the public sphere in Britain, curtailing the kinds of aggressive debate and questioning that had been apparent before. On the other, the British government's huge propaganda efforts drew heavily on the conspiracist examples and tropes of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. It was thus during the war years when the culture of conspiracism that this thesis has sought to recover reached an unprecedented intensity – indeed, this is so much so that the terms 'hysteria' and 'paranoia', terms which this thesis has so far sought to avoid, are appropriate.

After August 1914, 'spy fever' blossomed into full-blown Germanophobic hysteria. In late 1914, national newspapers published all manner of conspiracist claims: that London 'German' clubs in London were storing arms; that German bakers were lacing North London's bread and the water supplies with arsenic; and that German spies had caused the sinking of British ships in the North Sea. Moreover, these were published alongside letters demanding that every German waiter in Britain be sacked and calling for a boycott of all establishments owned by Germans, or which still employed Germans. But this conspiracism went beyond the paranoia of newspaper pages and concerned readers and letter-writers: outright anti-German riots broke out on five occasions during the war years, in August and October 1914, May 1915, June 1916 and July 1917; and on at least two of these occasions (August and October 1914), the violence was triggered by the circulation of conspiracist discourses regarding the threat of poisoning and sabotage.[1] Moreover, as the war intensified in 1915, so did the paranoia that cast an increasingly dense cloud of suspicion around Britain's Anglo-German community. Public

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[1] Panayi, 'Germans in Britain', p. 65. Those of May 1915, which occurred subsequent to the sinking of the *Lusitania*, took place throughout Britain, resulting in the wholesale destruction of property, and numerous arrests. Ibid., p. 68.

demands for loyal addresses were published subsequent to the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, compelling many prominent Germans to send 'loyalty letters' to *The Times*; and as Viscount Haldane's enforced resignation in 1915 demonstrates, even members of the British cabinet were not safe from this climate of paranoia.[2] There were petty consequences as well: the UK Kennel Club officially re-named the 'German Shepherd' dog breed the 'Alsatian'.[3]

This was not, however, merely the panicked violence and prejudice of a nation in the midst of an intensely traumatic conflict which, right up until August 1918, regularly seemed to threaten national oblivion, whether through the grinding battles of attrition on the Western Front, or through sudden collapse, facilitated by sabotage and subversion. In fact, at the same time as these public forms of conspiracism exerted a powerful influence on the course of the wartime national consciousness, conspiracist logics flourished in government. Despite the fact that German saboteurs never so much as knocked over a beer bottle in wartime Britain, fears of sabotage and subversion pervaded the corridors of power in Westminster.[4] The Aliens Registration Act and Defence of the Realm Act passed in August 1914 – which required all aliens aged over sixteen to register with the police, and gave the State sweeping powers amounting to martial law – resulted directly from the conspiracist climate of the war's early days; as indeed did the General Staff's August 7th decision to recommend the internment of all Austrian and German men between the ages of 16 and 40 then residing in Britain.[5]

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[2] *ODNB* Viscount Haldane: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33643?docPos=2, recovered 05/09/2014. The 'loyalty letters' of 1915 were triggered by a public demand for loyal addresses to the King from his Anglo-German subjects by Arthur Pinero, published in *The Times* immediately after the sinking occurred. W.E. Mosse and J. Carlebach, *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), p. 27

[3] French, 'Spy Fever in Britain', pp. 363-370; T. Kushner and D. Cesarani, 'Alien internment in Britain during the twentieth century: An introduction', in T. Kushner and D. Cesarani (eds.), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1993), pp. 1-24; Panayi, 'Germans in Britain', pp. 63-76.

[4] On the very first day of the war, members of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch were sent to investigate reports of railway demolition in Kent by Basil Thomson, Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard, only to discover the culvert in question still intact. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 53.

[5] This decision was undertaken in spite of the fact that no administrative plans whatever had laid out for such an undertaking. Six days after the decision in favour of internment, 1980 people had been arrested. Two weeks later the figure had risen to 4300. For information on

And this culture of panic and paranoia persisted into the middle years of the war. From Admiral Lord Charles Beresford's unsubstantiated public claims that by September 1914 many spies had already been caught by the authorities but discharged for lack of evidence, to Maurice Hankey's warnings in 1916 that '25,000 able-bodied Germans and Austrians [were] still at large in London' (who might be tasked with 'knocking on the head simultaneously most of the Cabinet Ministers'), belief in Germany's power to subvert the British state was visible long after the outbreak of hostilities.[6] Prior to the war, Britain's 'secret state' had previously been so under-funded that the Government's use of its intelligence functions was later compared to a man 'who kept a small brain for occasional use in his waistcoat pocket and ran his head by clockwork'; but it was now significantly enhanced.[7] During the conflict, however, MI5, MI6 and the Metropolitan Police Special Branch were all vastly increased in size and given considerable powers.

Unsurprisingly, William Le Queux, who felt vindicated by the turn of events, flourished during the war, producing spy-thrillers at an even greater rate than before. Le Queux was soon joined in his work by the British wartime propaganda machine, which had involved many of Britain's most prominent popular authors. It consciously mobilised discourses of secret German agency in order the bolster both security efforts and national morale. Even after the war, these discourses continued to exert a profound influence on espionage literature. In 1919, for example, E. Phillips Oppenheim penned *The Great Impersonation*, suggesting that (in stark contrast to Headon Hill's foundational 1899 novel *Spies of the Wight*) English agents had been actively and successfully battling Imperial Germany's malignant influence on British society for many years. Other more literary works, such as Somerset Maugham's collection of espionage stories, based on his 'Ashenden' character, drew similarly from the experience of the war years, conjuring the spectre of a Germany that had been highly active in espionage, and of British forces as comparably capable and committed.

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this, and the general context of internment, see: P. Panayi, *Enemy in our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (London: Berg, 1991), ch. 3; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 53.

[6] Quoted in Ferguson, *Pity of War*, p. 14. See, also, Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p. 55.

[7] Ibid., p. 5.

Equally, conspiracist Germanophobia began to shift into a different, more intense register. During the early years of the war, conspiracist discourses had largely operated within the discursive boundaries of Britain's Edwardian 'spy fever'; but during the latter years a 'Hidden Hand' theory began to emerge. This held that Britain, since the Middle Ages, had been under the control of a hidden social entity whose influence pervaded all aspects of British life, and was now preventing a British victory in the war. As the prominence of individuals such as Arnold White, John Henry Clarke and Leopold Maxse in the propagation of this discourse suggests, this was a thinly veiled form of anti-Semitic conspiracism, particularly visible in the pages of the *National Review*, the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail*, and which was reminiscent of the Edwardian anti-plutocratic 'Park Lane' conspiracism examined in the previous chapter.[8] Indeed, 'Park Lane'-style conspiracism was certainly visible during the early years of the war in the pages of G.K. Chesterton's *Witness*, which wrote in late 1914 of 'the predominance [within Britain] in the realms of finance and industry, and even of politics, of aliens whose allegiance, if they possess any allegiance, belongs to hostile states.'[9] Such prejudices were confirmed by the perception that communities of resident aliens from allied nations would be exempted from conscription on the basis of their position as a separate entity within British society – or as one commentator noted, their unpatriotic dictum that 'Nobody interferes with us.'[10]

While anti-Semitic riots had occurred during the latter years of the First World War, 1919 marked the years in which violent anti-Chinese feelings peaked, driven partly by 'the well-established anxiety of international [Chinese] conspiracies' that mediated more local concerns regarding alien moral influence and the control of local businesses.[11] Wartime anti-Chinese prejudice, linked to the 'Park Lane' discourse, had been visible in trade union calls for Chinese exclusion which drew upon the memory of the 'Chinese Slavery'

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[8] The proprietor of this last, Lord Northcliffe, ever the Germanophobe, would complain in his last two wills that he had been poisoned by German ice-cream. K. Wilson, 'Hail and farewell? The reception in the British press of the first publication in English of *The Protocols of Zion*, 1920–22', *Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 11:2 (1992): 171-186. *Andrew, Secret Service*, p. 9.

[9] Quoted in Holmes, *Anti-semitism and British Society*, p. 123.

[10] Quoted in ibid., pp. 127-128.

[11] Auerbach, *Race, Law and "The Chinese Puzzle"*, p. 152.

debates. This was apparent in 1916 TUC meeting, which conjured the spectre of the Chinese sailor as an unassimilable outsider, and referenced the 'so-called patriotic ship-owner' in ways that recalled the subversive power of the Jewish plutocrat.[12]

Although predominantly the preserve of the radical Right, this 'Hidden Hand' discourse was given some level of official sanction by the fact that a significant portion of Britain's wartime propaganda concerned itself with tropes of German power exerted through Jewish influence.[13] However, this was not merely the tactic of a wartime Government cynically pandering to the prejudices of its subjects. The trope of the 'Hidden Hand' operated at the very core of the British secret state. A Christmas card designed by the deputy head of MI5 in 1917 included a simple subscript beneath the image of a masked Britannia impaling the 'loathsome figure of Subversion', which read: 'THE HIDDEN HAND'.[14]

Beyond the exigencies of state-security during the war, G.K. Chesterton's *Witness* (later re-named *New Witness*) and *The National Review*, in particular, carried this conspiracist discourse of German-Jewish subversions on from the early years of the war right through into the 1920s. Following the translation and dissemination of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1920 – first published in Russia in the early 1900s, it was usually known as *The Jewish Peril* in England – the British radical Right started to pay serious and vocal attention to the issue of 'Jewish Power'; and many Tories began expressing a belief in the existence of an organised conspiracy on the part of Jews against the British Empire.[15] Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the prominence of Jewish radicals in early Soviet period, between 1918 and 1922 fears of a global Bolshevik revolution quickly came to be inflected with overtly anti-Semitic conspiracism and were soon common currency among the public at large. Ever the bellwethers of the populist instinct in inter-war British politics, Winston Churchill and Leopold Maxse best capture these beliefs. In February 1920,

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[12] Ibid., pp. 104-105.

[13] For an excellent discussion of this, see: Holmes, *Anti-semitism in British Society*, pp. 121-140.

[14] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, frontispiece.

[15] G.C. Lebzelter, 'Anti-Semitism – a Focal Point for the British Radical Right', in P.M. Kennedy and A.J. Nicholls (eds.), *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 97.

Winston Churchill wrote in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* that 'international' Jews had been 'the mainspring of every subversive movement of the nineteenth century', and would continue to be so.[16] Maxse, a year earlier, had written that 'Whoever is in power in Downing Street, whether Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals, Coalitionists, or pseudo-Bolsheviks – the International Jew rules the roost'.[17]

Evidently, conspiracism continued and prospered much beyond the chronological confines of this thesis; but it is here, in the period 1880–1914, where the thesis has sought to substantiate its argument. In sum, this thesis has argued for the existence of popular conspiracism as an identifiable strand of popular culture evident in the British public sphere in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. It has defined popular conspiracism as a general, if variously expressed, tendency to perceive and describe conspiracies, and has developed this definition in relation to three key 'sites': namely, invasion scares and espionage; terrorism and left-wing dissidence; and international finance, plutocracy and immigration. In doing so, it has sought to demonstrate both the fundamentally connected and interrelated nature of these three thematic concerns and the way they mobilized a common mode of conspiracist expression and understanding.

It has also sought to outline three key elements, at once discursive and contextual, that structured popular conspiracism in this period. Firstly, it has argued for popular conspiracism as a discursive form that invests immense causal and explanatory power in singular and (almost) omnipotent human agents or groups. A crucial contextual feature here was the intensification of a truly global and interconnected world of flows of information and people, and capital and goods. Secondly, it has argued that popular conspiracism was shaped by the increasingly bureaucratized if also democratically probed borderlands created by late Victorian and Edwardian liberal governance, whereby increased and ever more 'official' secrecy mixed with growing transparency and accountability in governance. Crucially, popular conspiracism involved investing powers of omniscience and omnipotence in actors

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[16] W. Churchill, 'Zionism versus Bolshevism', *Illustrated Sunday Herald* (8 Feb. 1920), quoted in ibid., p. 101

[17] L. Maxse, 'The Second Treaty of Versailles', *National Review*, LXXIII (Aug. 1919), p. 819.

otherwise depicted as hidden, and as operating via shady networks of association. Thirdly, this thesis has argued that popular conspiracism involved the exercise of speculation and sensationalist conjecture that fed upon and was nurtured by the dense, rapid and information-rich public sphere of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. An abundance of facts thus mixed with various theories that sought to make sense of them, not least by embedding them in bigger, connected narratives of understanding regarding casual agency and malign potency.

On a more methodological note, this thesis has sought to maintain a general focus on the 'popular' level of expression, drawing primarily upon popular literature and the popular press, much of which has tended not to be considered by historians as worthy of attention. However, in order to situate such 'popular' discourses as an important facet of late Victorian and Edwardian society it has also made extensive reference to the wider cultural and political context in which these texts and discourses circulated.

Most historians agree that in the period after 1880 some of the optimism of the mid-Victorian period began to recede and that this was a period characterised by an increasingly anxious turn of mind. As a mode of thought and expression, this thesis has presented conspiracism as spectrum or continuum that encapsulated something of the anxious and fearful popular consciousness of the period 1880–1914, along with other more extreme registers which have received much less critical attention to date, especially those found in popular literature. The stories found in the latter might in fact be thought of as approaching 'conspiracy theories'; but the argument here is that they never existed separately from more modest and speculative expressions; and it is here, in terms of grasping the richness of conspiracist forms of expression that the historiography of this period has suffered most. And it is here where, accordingly, this thesis has sought to make a novel historiographical contribution, at once recovering some elements of late Victorian and Edwardian popular culture that have previously been dismissed as 'paranoid' marginalia, whilst reappraising others in their light.

This said, this is not to argue for the 'centrality' of popular conspiracism to the cultural history of this period. Conspiracism was

ambiguously situated in the British public sphere: never quite dominant, yet never truly absent; at once normal and mundane, yet also marginal and exceptional. Indeed, in this context terms like 'central' and 'peripheral' break down, for conspiracism partook of many forms of expression and could be quite brief (as in the some of the panics examined here) or more established, as in the literary genres the thesis has examined. As such, it is here where this thesis seeks to make its most overtly interpretive contribution: namely, conspiracism as a heuristic device for the exploration of late Victorian and Edwardian popular culture, one that encapsulates many popular forms of expression, of varying degrees of intensity and longevity.

The broader significance of this thesis is threefold.

Conspiracy theories

As was explored in the introduction to this thesis, in the past twenty or so years academics have steadily become more and more interested in the study of conspiracy theory. Historians, however, have largely remained aloof from this tendency. Certainly, classic studies by Richard Hofstadter, J.M. Roberts and Geoffrey Cubitt have continued to exert an influence on historical understandings of conspiracy theory and its place within society and culture. However, they have played little to no role in the development of what feels like a suddenly burgeoning field, 'conspiracy studies', whose major contributions have tended to come from philosophers, such as David Coady, and social scientists, such as Jovan Byford. In short, while other disciplines have begun to reassess the question of what exactly conspiracy theory is, and what it is that conspiracy theory does at the social level, historians have yet to turn to conspiracy as a site of proper academic interest. In consequence, recent debates in 'conspiracy studies' have suffered from a deficit of historical context, and historians have yet to take advantage of the exploratory possibilities offered by the study of conspiracy theory as a discursive form through which popular concerns are mediated. This thesis, therefore, seeks to make two direct contributions to current and past debates within the emerging field of 'conspiracy studies'.

The first arises from the contention that historians have, for far too long, contented themselves with complacency about conspiracy theory, dismissing it as an irrational irrelevance, unworthy of sustained critical attention. This is visible in historians' tendency to dismiss conspiracy theory as, in J.M. Roberts' memorable phrase, an 'aberration of a maturing bourgeois society'; or in Richard Hofstadter's famous words, a 'paranoid style'. On a more simple level, this is visible in the severe deficit of historical studies in the field of 'conspiracy studies' which go beyond the use of tired labels or the tendency to debunk. Clearly 'conspiracy theory', as broadly defined by philosophers, is not a 'healthy' form of rationality, at either the personal or the political and popular level. However, despite its dubious intellectual qualities and the insalubrious political associations, conspiracy theories do exist and prosper. It is, undeniably, a feature of human association, which powerfully reflects – and reflects upon – matters of concern to society at large. Part of the argument of this thesis, then, is that historians must rise to the task of studying conspiracy theories, not merely to debunk – though this certainly has its place – but also to describe and understand conspiracy theory as an important facet of life in the modern world.

The second contribution leads on from this, suggesting a path which we might take and this lies in this study's use of the term 'popular conspiracism' over the term 'conspiracy theory'. In defining 'conspiracism' as a set of discursive tropes, motifs and dispositions, and in arguing that together they constituted an identifiable strand of British popular culture in the later Victorian and Edwardian period, this thesis has sought to offer a new way of thinking about conspiracy theory. Crucially, this is one that avoids the tendency either towards intellectual dismissal or towards empiricist debunking, instead examining popular conspiracism at the level of culture and society. Popular conspiracism, as a heuristic tool, sits comfortably across both thematic concerns and across disciplines. It might be used in the analysis of individual conspiracy theories, or to situate sets of belief and tendencies within what might be called a conspiracist continuum, running from simple suspicion to full blown conspiracy theory.

While classic modernisation theory has held that the march of 'progress' – in all its variously described economic, technological, political and social forms – was a uniform, positive and linear process, the past thirty years has seen the rewriting of such narratives, and an increased focus on the darker sides of modernity and the peculiar, uneven nature of modernization, when and where it takes place. This thesis speaks directly to such research agendas by focusing on an element of British culture, popular conspiracism, which does not fit within these classic 'modernisation' narratives, and in term of its direct approach to the description of the negative consequences (both real and imagined) of life under an internationally networked modernity. Indeed, while the novel technologies and technical innovations of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods clearly had their evangelists, this thesis's exploration of popular conspiracist narratives of secret and malign agencies seeks to provide another dimension to appraisals of social and political change in this period as fraught, anxious and unstable.

Indeed, popular conspiracism was not merely a depressive, dark or obscure form of modern culture. Rather, popular conspiracism reified contemporary fears into concrete and tangible figures, such as the master-spy, the terrorist master-mind, and the foreign criminal genius, the better to bring them to light, and the better to juxtapose them in relation to idealised types, such as the English secret-agent and the master-detective. While this certainly did involve a level of didactic preaching and the expounding of extreme prejudices of almost every sort, late Victorian and Edwardian popular conspiracism – certainly in its most charged forms – sought fundamentally to expose problems in British society and to make arguments for remedying them. Popular conspiracism represented more than a paranoid or fantastical way of looking at the world. In a deeper sense, popular conspiracism represented a different way of talking about, analysing and criticising, *but also living with*, the consequences of a global and fractious modernity. In short, by arguing for the existence of a particular and popular discourse of agency and causality that embraced three concerns that British culture found most troubling and difficult to resolve, this thesis provides a novel contribution to the study of modernity in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

In particular, this thesis speaks to works published in the last twenty years that have sought to complicate modernizing narratives of secularisation. The existence of popular conspiracism contributes another element towards what most historians now agree was a hugely complex, non-linear process, which is scarcely understandable in terms of a shift from religious immaturity to secular, rational maturity. Instead, historians have sought to recover more complex mixtures, operating on various levels: of disenchantment *and* re-enchantment, for instance, or of growing religious indifference and secularism *and* revitalised religious activism.[18]

In a kindred interpretive fashion, this thesis has sought to argue that popular conspiracism simply does not fit comfortably within narratives which would seek to categorise it as entirely rational, or irrational, religious or secular, enchanted or disenchanted. Through its obsession with immensely powerful, perceptive and singular figures, possessed of qualities that *almost* amounted to omnipotence and *almost* to omniscience, popular conspiracism clearly recalls 'divine' modes of understanding, and cannot entirely be reconciled within a linear narrative of progressive secularisation. Simply put, its persistence complicates any sense of increasing popular 'rationality' in the later Victorian and Edwardian period.

However, at the same time these almost omnipotent/omniscient figures are equally difficult to characterize as echoes or residues of a 'religious' cultural heritage. Though doubtless god*ly*, these figures are nonetheless firmly human in both the nature of their power (entirely dependent upon modern technology) and concern. The existence of conspiracist modes of thinking points emphatically to the complex formulation and nature of popular beliefs, fears and anxieties in modern culture, and the way they evade the easy binaries of 'religious/secular', 'enchanted/disenchanted' and 'rational/irrational'.

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[18] See, for example: C. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA; London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). See, also: D. Nash, *Christian Ideals in British Culture: Stories of Belief in the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and M. Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Finally, the thesis also speaks to wider debates regarding the limits of modern liberalism, and more specifically regarding the interplay of accountability, secrecy and public debate under modern liberal democracy. Simply put, there will always be a tension in this area. On the one hand, there is the need for systems of transparency and accountability to play a constitutive role in the processes by which the public grants its consent to the operations of the government. On the other hand, few would deny the necessity of at least some level of 'official' or 'state' secrecy in the operations of those institutions and individuals tasked with the protection of those liberal democracies from that which threatens them. As recent debates triggered by Edward Snowden's revelations regarding the extent of surveillance carried out by the National Security Agency have demonstrated, this tension generates extremely important, if difficult and sensitive, questions within liberal democracy. However, what has been lacking in these debates is a proper sense of historical perspective, not only in relation to the institutional workings of secret institutions under liberal democracy, but also the *popular and cultural consequences* of official secrecy under liberal governance.

As has been explored in the first chapter of this thesis, the peculiarly paradoxical position of official secrecy under liberal governance is that its existence is a matter of public record, so that the nature and qualities of the individuals and institutions which it covers remain obscure, yet partly known, placed as they are beyond the normal processes of accountability that govern the operation of most other functions of government. The discursive space opened up by this curious positioning both invites speculation and denies the possibility of resolution, permanently placing the 'officially secret' in an ambiguous, undecided position. In the later Victorian and Edwardian period, as has been shown by many studies, the basis of public trust in secret operations of the state was based on two principles: the gentlemanly code of honourable secrecy and – running roughshod over the details – the principle of economy. However, among those constituencies where trust in ministers' integrity was weaker, such spaces incubated conspiracist discourses regarding corrupt and malign behaviour by secret government institutions and the powerful individuals who ran them.

In short, this thesis is important to debates regarding the tensions and ambiguities of liberal democracy because it illustrates one of its key consequences: the extent to which discourses regarding modern systems of official secrecy create breeding grounds for conspiracy theory. This is certainly no argument for absolute openness; but it does suggest the supreme importance of rigorously policing the boundaries of the officially secret in the maintenance of public trust in the institutions and agencies of state.

A final and obvious point: popular conspiracism is still with us today, and in forms even more attuned to the internationally networked, global nature of modern life. From the literary novels of Thomas Pynchon to the more trashy tales of Dan Brown; from the profusion of Cold War conspiracy theories and the huge audience of the 9/11 'Truther' movement, to the popularity of espionage thrillers such as the Bond franchise and the more 'realistic' Bourne series; not to mention speculative discourses regarding the threats of radical Islamist terrorists, both at home and abroad – contemporary popular culture remains characterised by suspicions regarding the existence of networks of hidden agency and secret, malign actors possessed of great power and perception, each working towards the subversion of established liberal-capitalist moralities and ways of life. Arguably, conspiracism is more important and current than ever; but even if it is not (and these things are difficult to measure in any precise way, of course) it is hoped that the present thesis can shed some light on our troubled present.

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Belfast News-Letter – (BN-L)

Berrow's Worcester Journal – (Berrow's)

Birmingham Daily Post – (BDP)

Blackburn Standard and Weekly Express

Bristol Mercury and Daily Post – (BM&DP)

Bury and Norwich Post, and Suffolk Herald

Cheshire Observer

Commonweal

Daily Chronicle

Daily Express

Daily Mail

Daily News

Daily Telegraph

Dundee Courier & Argus – (DC&A)

East End News

East London Advertiser

East London Leader

East London Observer

Eye-Witness

Freedom

Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser – (Freeman's)

Fun

Glasgow Herald – (GH)

Hampshire Advertiser

Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc. – (HT)

Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser

Huddersfield Daily Chronicle – (HDC)

Illustrated London News

Illustrated Police News etc.

Ipswich Journal – (IJ)

Jewish Chronicle

Justice

Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, and Yorkshire –
  (LG)

Leeds Mercury – (LM)

Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury

Liverpool Mercury etc. – (LivM)

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper – (Lloyd's)

Manchester Guardian – (MG)

Manchester Times

National Review

Newcastle Weekly Courant – (NWC)

North-Eastern Daily Gazette – (N-EDG)

Northern Echo – (NE)

North Wales Chronicle

Outlook

Pall Mall Gazette – (PMG)

Penny Illustrated Paper

Punch

Reynolds's Newspaper – (Reynold's)

Sheffield & Rotherham Independent – (S&RI)

St James Gazette

The Economist

The Graphic

The Morning Post – (Morning Post)

The Seaman

The Standard – (Standard)

The Star

The Speaker

The Spectator

The Times – (Times)

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