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‘At the Mercy of the German Eagle’: Images of London in Dissolution in the Novels of William Le Queux

Antony Taylor

If remembered at all, the novels of William le Queux stand for a particular style of thriller fiction that was supplanted or replaced by the more gritty and realist writing of Graham Greene and John le Carre amongst others. Losing their significance in later years, his novels are variously read as capturing an age of innocence in Edwardian fiction, as a stage in the development of more mature thriller writing, and as an inspiration to other (sometimes) more competent writers like Peter Cheyney, Dennis Wheatley and Ian Fleming.¹ Despite the ‘over-claiming’ that characterised his flamboyant persona as an author (see the Introduction and Roger Stearn’s article in this special collection), the works of this writer represent the worst excesses of the German ‘invasion panic’ genre in the years before 1914. In numerous novels, serialised stories and reminiscences, he reached a wide audience alarmed by Britain’s declining role in the world and vulnerability to imperial rivals. Le Queux’s works were attuned to fears of the weakness of British military preparedness and to the difficulties of protecting Britain’s vulnerable coastline. In lurid and sensationalist prose, his narratives of invasion and national collapse addressed contemporary concerns about economic weakness, physical degeneration, and spiritual malaise in the mother country. Highly derivative in their plots and points of reference, Le Queux’s works, nevertheless, were widely read by contemporaries, inspired a host of imitators, and provided a catalyst for British debates about the economic, military and spiritual exhaustion of the empire in the face of new national and imperial rivals. Representing a style christened ‘defence alarmism’ or ‘next-war’ fiction, by Martin Ceadel, his novels fed into the wider sense of fin de siècle urban crisis at the end of

the nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth.² In line with the other contributors to this special edition, this article seeks to reassess the readership, reception and response to William Le Queux's novels of Britain in peril, and a capital city in decline.

While much has been written about the significance of Le Queux as an architect of the spy novel and thriller writing, and his broader relationship to the Harmsworth press, little attention has been devoted to his importance as a figure that brought together concerns about Britain's declining urban environment in the later nineteenth-century.³ Whilst making no claim to the mantle of social reformer or as a crusader for civic reform, his contribution to highlighting the degeneracy of urban society places him in the company of numerous social commentators and writers fixated on the supposed decadence of urban living, particularly in the capital. Standing outside any particular strand or platform in British politics, Le Queux's novels were very much an expression of a more generalised concern about the moral and physical pollutions of the metropolis, echoing anxieties evident across the political spectrum from the progressive flank of politics to the rural nostalgia of those who rejected urban living altogether. Not usually associated with urban panic novelists like George Gissing, Arthur Morrison, and Walter Besant, Le Queux shared many of their concerns about the collapsing urban fabric of the metropolis. For him, as for many other contemporaries, the unique problems of London framed these prevalent anxieties about national decline. This article, then, seeks to locate Le Queux's writings in a body of fiction that feared that the evident decay of the capital heralded a wider collapse of the nation, and, ultimately, of the empire itself.

Landscape, the environment, and geographical detail feature significantly in the fiction of Le Queux. An Alpine climber, self-proclaimed intelligence operative, and amateur spy, Le Queux famously researched the topographical background to his fiction with meticulous care. Such dedicated attention to the landscape is a marked characteristic of the

many authors working in the invasion panic genre. Secret maps featuring remote inlets, vulnerable road and rail networks and strategic crossroads are a staple of the genre. In both Le Queux's *Invasion of 1910* (1906) and Robert Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903) dealing with a thwarted German invasion of Britain, maps are not merely decorative, they sit at the centre of the novels, providing important illustrative material, plot devices and physical evidence of Britain's openness to invasion. East Anglia loomed large in a number of these invasion panic fictions, confirming the region's reputation for mysterious isolation, its role as an expression of quintessential Englishness and its vulnerability as 'the backdoor of England'.⁴ It was invaded at least three times by fictional foreign legions between 1900 and 1913..⁵ For the thriller writer E. Phillips Oppenheim, a Norfolk resident, the county was a haven of subterfuge, providing a bolt hole for a network of embedded German spies in his retrospective post-World War I novel of infiltration, *The Great Impersonation*.⁶ Even in these novels of coastal invasion, however, London remained a near and vulnerable presence. Carruthers, passing down the Thames in *The Riddle of the Sands* saw London surrounded by a 'cordon of scintillating lightships that watch over the sea-roads to the imperial city like pickets round a sleeping army'.⁷

Le Queux's close attention to detail in the deployments of imaginary German troop formations in East Anglia is well known. Much less, however, has been written about the role of the capital in his writings. For Le Queux, the capture of London was integral to German military occupation. Either buttressing the capital's will to resist, or undermining its capacity to withstand attack, the vigour and vitality of London was always at issue in his novels. This article locates Le Queux's attitudes to the metropolis in the context of debates about urban decadence. Drawing on contemporary fears about the capital and its dissolution, it considers the moral panics about London and Londoners and their relationship to Britain's martial decline reflected in his stories. Ranging across anxieties about anarchist and foreign

terrorism, attuned to fears of the mob, and suspicious about wealthy spy masters at large in governmental circles and polite society, Le Queux's fiction participates in the dissemination of concerns about London as a 'new Rome' in the process of lengthy and agonising disintegration..

Born in Southwark in 1864, Le Queux's intimacy with the capital is reflected in the close geographical knowledge of the metropolis that surfaces in all his novels, most notably in those that speculate about the capital's ability to withstand or resist attack. In common with other authors associated with the genre of popular fiction, Le Queux was extremely inventive about his personal past and about his family background and history. Growing up in modest circumstances and with roots in the metropolitan *mittelstand* (his father was a draper's assistant), his upbringing had some affinities with that of H.G. Wells who was also rooted in the small shop-keeping class, but was more honest about his origins.⁸ Like Morrison, Le Queux was inclined in later life to draw a veil over his family's poor circumstances and to reinvent more romantic accounts of his lineage that distanced himself from his place amongst the lower middle class and the metropolitan poor.⁹ These joint backgrounds created some affinities between the two writers. Both had social origins that were difficult to identify, giving them a freedom to experiment in their depictions of the metropolis. Morrison adopted a notably *déclassé* persona, allowing him to stand outside and above the social tensions of the capital; Le Queux affected a bright, cosmopolitan personality that gave his writings some of the attributes of a social observer, inflected by a journalistic distance, that enabled him to present London at first hand from the point of view of the slummer or the flaneur. Like the slummers, he could represent himself as an explorer in unknown social terrain.¹⁰ Moreover, his father's French origins made him attuned to the complexities of the capital and gave him a heightened awareness of the emigrant/*émigré* elements in metropolitan culture. Not usually associated with the social realist novelists of the period, Le Queux, like Morrison, covered

much the same territory, from poor warrens, slum-life, poverty, immigration through to the open-air street-life of the East End. Here his writings drew on the jeremiads of contemporary metropolitan writers like Besant, Arnold White and G. R. Sims, and provided a point of contact with pessimistic European prophets of the collapse of urban society.¹¹

The metropolis revealed in the writing of Le Queux reflected the moral panics and worries about the declining health of the population that were a commonplace of the period. Drawing on concerns for health and vitality prevalent in regard to the fitness of the nation, such ideas were a feature of those movements that advocated citizen armies or military conscription to bolster national defence. A coalition of advocates of Empire Day, increased investment in the army and the navy, and drawing on the support of powerful friends in the 'yellow press' that featured 'the gloomiest forecasts of veteran soldiers and sailors', these pressure groups commanded a wide platform in the years before the Great War.¹² Le Queux's most outspoken public utterances were in regard to these agendas and aligned with their platform of restoring the vitality of the nation in order to bolster national defence. His writings might be regarded as a transitional point in this regard, shifting fears about invasion away from the French empire, to the threat of a unified and expanding Germany in the years before the Great War.¹³ A self-proclaimed adviser to the National Service League, his views echoed those of other zealots in the cause of national service that the better health of the young and compulsory military training would foster a nation in arms that could withstand a German invasion. 'It was not only a question of home defence which was concerned, but it was a question of the manhood and vigour of our youth' commented Colonel C.E. Yate at a meeting at Leicester Working-Men's Club.¹⁴ Exponents of national service envisaged a regenerated population revived by 'physical exercise and manly pastimes in the open spaces of the nation, ensuring a sound physique for those who do the work of the nation'.¹⁵ These contemporary fears and preoccupations are satirised in Katherine Mansfield's short story

‘Germans at Meat’ in which well-fed Germans guests at a small pension in the Swiss Alps deride Britain’s defences: ‘you have got no army at all, just a few boys with their veins full of nicotine poisoning’.¹⁶

Many of these ideas are given a high profile voice in Le Queux’s fiction about London in crisis and ‘at the mercy of the German eagle.’¹⁷ For writers charting the decline of Britain’s ability to defend herself, London became a barometer. In Chesney’s *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) pre-invasion London is a place of peace and prosperity, a site of nostalgia for the cowed inhabitants of a German-dominated Britain: ‘we thought we would go on building and multiplying forever’.¹⁸ For many writers, London’s decline matched that of a broader national and imperial malaise. These attitudes had roots in the eugenicist, pure breeding and physical health obsessions that found a wide audience in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁹ Le Queux’s writings on the capital drew on a cache of images, staples of the period that highlighted London as an expanding octopus, or a succubus, growing without restraint, and home to a displaced and aimlessly wandering urban horde, expanding beyond governmental, civic and planning control.²⁰ Le Queux’s writings, however, transcended the expansive and elaborate imagery that Nicholas Daly has detected in the earlier part of the century to describe unprecedented population increase in large cities, and concentrated instead on close scrutiny of the geography and topography of an altered metropolitan environment.²¹ In his vision of an imagined city of the future, in which the country falls victim to a socialist takeover, London has grown to unimaginably gigantic proportions, stretching as far as St Albans and Ware to the north, Berkhamstead and Reading to the west, and embracing to the east Billericay and Brentwood. Epping Forest has been levelled and amalgamated into ‘villadom’. ‘A country in itself’, rather than a city, for Le Queux, the expansion of the city made it almost impossible to subdue, either by foreign invaders, or domestic governments.²² In many of Le Queux’s descriptions of London in

crisis, the expansion of the poor neighbourhoods in particular fostered the growth of a sickly and degraded urban population, refreshed only by tides of incomers from the rural areas:

London, the ever-growing gigantic London, had sapped the very marrow in the bones of the inhabitants, rendering them liable to disease, and so unfruitful that each family rotted out in two or three generations. But for the constant influx of fresh blood from the country, London would long ago have been a City of the Dead.²³

Moreover, Le Queux followed the ideas of Max Nordau, who emphasised the neuroses bred by city-living and the detrimental effects the pace of urban life had on the mental capacities of city dwellers. For Nordau, the frenzy of urban life created a kind of psychological displacement and distress amongst its inhabitants with implications for politics, society and culture.²⁴ Like Nordau, Le Queux depicted the urban population as an unstable, fickle and constantly shifting crowd, prey to anxiety and marked by disease, nervousness, and moral malaise. This theme of urban decline dominated his novel, *The Unknown Tomorrow* (1910), about a future socialist takeover of Britain:

The physique of the people had decidedly deteriorated. For the most part the men were thin, shrunken and round-shouldered, with deep-set eyes, hollow cheeks and pale, cadaverous faces, countenances which plainly told of an unhealthy and degenerate stock. The women were lean, flabby, pale undeveloped, mere bundles of nerves given to shrieking and hysteria.²⁵

Underpinning Le Queux's accounts of metropolitan dissolution are images of the Paris Commune. Turmoil in Paris in 1871 in response to the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War led to the overthrow of the municipal authorities and the installation of rule by ultra-radicals and socialists. Thereafter, the Paris Commune was an explicit or implicit presence in much of the invasion panic fiction of the period.²⁶ The events of the Commune

and the barbarism of its suppression proved highly influential for contemporaries in their depictions of the urban crisis of the late nineteenth-century. For many authors, the Commune became the embodiment of dysfunction and disintegration that characterised the new social forces apparently pushing Europe's cities to the brink of social breakdown. It provided an image of a city rent by disparities of wealth and power, leading inevitably to social collapse when faced by the pressures of external threat. The Commune was of particular significance to Le Queux who claimed his father was a veteran of the French army in the Franco-Prussian War, and provided a point of reference for other writers exposed to its impact.²⁷ For observers of the physical and moral collapse of the capital, it was a portent of the rise of the ungovernable urban crowd, and of the collapse of civic authority. George R. Sims, writing about poverty in London, asserted that the metropolitan poor could yet 'give us a taste of the lesson the mob has tried to teach now and again in Paris, where long years of neglect have done their work.'²⁸ In both John D. Mayne's *The Triumph of Socialism* (1908) and Le Queux's *The Unknown Tomorrow* abortive German invasions accentuate internal problems in Britain on the model of the enfeebled second French empire.²⁹ The prototype of this kind of fiction is Bracebridge Hemyng's *The Commune in London or Thirty Years' Hence* (1871). In this novel of a British Commune set in London, a French invasion unleashes the forces of radicalism which roam unchecked across the capital, establishing a shambolic Commune when elements of the army mutiny in Hyde Park.³⁰ For Hemyng, the Paris Commune presented an awful warning that Britain ignored at its peril: 'No lesson was learnt by the tremendous and not very recent humiliation of France in 1870, and the terrible reign of the Communards in Paris in the succeeding year brought with it no warning.'³¹ For many British writers, there was a certain fascination in anticipating how Britons might react in the face of invasion, social breakdown and civil disorder. The hero of F. N. Maude's *New Battle of Dorking* (1900), after witnessing a French landing at Portsmouth, urges his fellow Britons in

a stirring oration not to imitate the behaviour of the French during the Commune: ‘The French believe that our people will do just as theirs did during the Commune of 1871: rob, burn and murder for sheer rage. Let’s show them that we are made of sterner stuff.’³² Le Queux owed much to previous generations of invasion panic authors, from whom there was a strong legacy of assumptions about French revolutionary zeal and anti-clericalism in descriptions of a French army of occupation in London stabling its horses in churches or billeting its infantry in exclusive West End Clubs.³³ The Commune references in Le Queux’s works are overt. Whilst much attention has been devoted to Le Queux’s interest in the open order battlefield tactics of the future anticipating German operations in the First World War, far less attention has been paid to his fascination with the evolving science of urban warfare in major cities.³⁴ In both *The Invasion of 1910* and *The Unknown Tomorrow*, irregular guerrilla warfare in London unfolds in a similar manner to the events of the Commune. Streets are barricaded, ‘heroes’ of the barricades emerge, petrol bombs rain down on cowed German troops, snipers pick off invading soldiers, and ambushes are orchestrated in ‘the maze of narrow London streets’.³⁵ As with many contemporaries, the *petroleuses* of the Commune exerted a particular fascination. Le Queux sought a similar militant incarnation for the women of the East End and South London:

Women – wild infuriated women – have now made their reappearance north of the Thames. In more than one instance, where German soldiers have tried to take refuge in houses, these women have obtained petrol and, with fiendish screams of delight, set the houses in question on fire.³⁶

The *petroleuses* were often depicted as debased Mariannes, and became regular feature of novels dealing with the threat posed by socialism and the insurgent urban crowd. They recur in Le Queux’s *The Unknown Tomorrow* and were a feature of American novels concerned with financial and ‘red’ panics.³⁷ With depictions of ungovernable and unbridled women free to

roam the public spaces of London at will, they carried undertones of the uncontrolled presence, heightened visibility and metropolitan confidence of the 'new woman' and consolidated fears about the free love and anti-marriage ideas articulated by the Communards.³⁸

Ruins as a symbol of the downfall of London, are a constant presence in Le Queux's invasion panic fiction. Behind much of this imagery lay the devastating consequences of the Commune.³⁹ Again, with echoes of a levelled and devastated Paris in the aftermath of the subjugation of the Commune, they symbolise the ruination of the nation and of the empire. In the aftermath of conflict, London was often represented as a blasted shell, its downfall symbolised by the destruction of buildings and architecture that were representative of its financial and cultural success, notably the Mansion House and the Royal Exchange. At the conclusion of *The Invasion of 1910*, London is destroyed: 'On every hand is ruin and devastation. While streets of houses rendered gaunt and windowless by the now spent fires meet the eye everywhere. In certain places the ruins are still smouldering.'⁴⁰ These prophecies of urban disintegration and social collapse were frequently expressed through the figure of Macaulay's 'New Zealander', sketching the ruins of St. Paul's from the broken arch of London Bridge. A wry comment questioning the longevity of the Anglican Church, the picture of a touring colonist in the future visiting the devastated city became a potent image for the potential fall of London.⁴¹ Edwardian popular fiction was populated with numerous images of a blighted and empty city where future archaeologists and anthropologists puzzled over the remnants and relics of the capital fallen and decayed.⁴² The image linked to unsustainable expansion and wealth was variously used to express concerns about London's encroachment on the capital's green urban spaces and to demonstrate the tensions generated by extremes of poverty and wealth in London.⁴³ Set pieces in the invasion panic genre and recurring in Le Queux's works are the destruction of the Palace of Westminster, the

ransacking of the Bank of England, and the destruction of the Mansion House and the British Library.⁴⁴ In most invasion panic novels statues of warrior generals and leaders of the past are cast down to lie like broken classical icons amongst the ruins of the city. In *The Invasion of 1910* images of greatness fallen abound in the destruction by German shelling of the statue of the Duke of Wellington in Hyde Park, and the toppling of the Landseer lions around Nelson's Column; the destruction of Edward the Confessor's tomb by shelling in *The Great War of 1897* heralds the downfall of the state itself.⁴⁵ In imitation of the Commune, and the attacks on the Austerlitz column and Napoleon's statue in the Place Vendome by iconoclasts, there was often systematic desecration of statues that symbolised the dignity and valour of the nation by defeatist and 'red' mobs unleashed by the chaos. In Le Queux's *The Unknown Tomorrow*, the statue of Disraeli is broken up by British socialists in London.⁴⁶ In *The Commune in England* the statues of the Duke of Wellington and Prince Albert are also destroyed as part of a purge of the icons of authority by radical iconoclasts.⁴⁷ A related image was that of patriotic jingo mobs, unleashing reprisals against the statues of statesman who had opposed conscription to the army and the rearming of the nation. Gladstone's statue was a particular target and was destroyed in *The Siege of London* from 1882 by jingo mobs during a French invasion.⁴⁸ Even after order is restored, the battered monuments of the capital stand as awful warnings of the potential for violence and disintegration that might erupt at the heart of government. The narrator in the anti-free trade tract, *The Great Bread Riots of 1890* remarks after witnessing social breakdown in London following starvation brought about by untrammelled foreign competition 'even now when I pass through Trafalgar Square, and see how the fluting of Nelson's Columns was chipped by the bullets from the machine gun, I cannot help feeling a thrill of horror and something of the old sense of shame, such as men felt in the first days of the Great Bread Riots'.⁴⁹

The plots of most of the invasion panic novels significantly featured the presence of German agents and ‘fifth columnists’, inserted covertly into the British establishment, or operating as part of a broader conspiracy within the German migrant and émigré community.⁵⁰ The large presence of German migrants employed in the service sector of restaurants and cafes in London was perceived as a particular cause for concern by some contemporaries. Many were depicted as members of secret legions and rifle clubs engaged in small arms practice and trained to prepare the way for an impending German invasion of Britain.⁵¹ There was an elision in much invasion panic fiction between the newer threats posed by German migrants and older established fears relating to anarchists and political émigré groups that had sought refuge in London since the 1840s. For many authors writing in the spy fiction genre, plot-lines about anarchists and radical subversives were interchangeable with narratives about German subterfuge in Britain. Refugees constituted two sides of the same coin, providing an undifferentiated threat in a capital depicted as ‘the asylum for all the scum of the earth.’⁵² Le Queux, in common with other contemporary writers, wrote extensively about the anarchist threat and the political intrigues of an international socialist underground plotting to undermine the nation. In his *Whither thou Goest*, (1920) an anarchist cell in London orchestrates a plot involving political assassination in Spain in a conspiracy masterminded by a criminal genius in St. John’s Wood, but involving willing dupes in Soho.⁵³ Many plot devices in invasion panic fiction that revolved around nests of German spies were an updating of this older anti-anarchist narrative. Soho, where exiles from a number of European countries congregated, and where social and cultural life was much coloured by the presence of migrants, became a particular stage-set for stories of refugee subterfuge, conspiracy and espionage.⁵⁴ Here the contradictions of cosmopolitanism were apparent, in which the glamorous, outward facing nature of the capital was undermined by the darker, more insidious presence of aliens and political refugees. In a short story written in

1902 about a female double agent ensnared in a nihilist conspiracy, Le Queux wrote about the foreign colony near Oxford Street in Soho in the following terms: ‘Unutterably dismal, its denizens are a very shabby colony, mostly the scum of continental cities, who, owing to various causes, have been compelled to flee from the police to seek a safe asylum in the region between Shaftesbury Avenue and Oxford Street’.⁵⁵ In the novels of E. Phillips Oppenheim, Soho was also the place where the German Waiters’ Union, meeting in the suspicious le Café Suisse, provided a front for the mobilisation of ex-German servicemen intent on organising a rising of 290,000 Germans resident in Britain.⁵⁶

Echoes of fears about anarchism transposed easily onto narratives of German super-spies and agents manipulating radicals and reform fronts to further German ends.⁵⁷ In much invasion literature, in the manner of anarchist conspirators, German spy cells are bound together into clandestine fraternities by terrifying oaths and recognise each other through secret signs and symbols.⁵⁸ Throughout popular and sensation fiction, German agents were the hidden catalysts behind reform causes subverting platform agitations to sow disorder and disarray. In Walter Wood’s *The Enemy in our Midst* (1906), widespread disorder breaks out in London when German *agents provocateurs* infiltrate and incite violence during a march of the unemployed in Hyde Park.⁵⁹ Similarly, in both A.J. Dawson’s *The Message* (1907) and Coulson Kernahan’s *The Red Peril* (1908) peace campaigners in the first instance, and networks of anarchists and physical force radicals in the second, become the unwitting pawns of German conspiracies. *The Red Peril* presented the image of pre-existing anarchist networks suborned by German spies, and used as conduits to transport bombs into Britain by covert German intelligence networks as part of a rising.⁶⁰ Most shocking to contemporaries was the degree to which mobs incited by anarchist agitators overran the capital under siege or attack. *The Morning Post*’s review of Le Queux’s *The Great War in England of 1897* summarised the ensuing chaos following a combined Russo-French onslaught on the capital:

‘In London, the heart of the empire, where one would naturally expect an overwhelming expression of loyalty and the military spirit, lawlessness reigns supreme. The Anarchists burn and sack the public buildings, pillage the shops, scattering bombs of picric acid right and left. The police are useless and only at night a regiment of hussars from Hounslow cuts down the rioters’.⁶¹ In Le Queux’s wartime stories written after 1914 German conspirators construct much the same deadly apparatus as previous generations of anarchist terrorists, deploying ‘infernal engines’, exploding walking sticks, and pipe bombs to blow up munitions trains.⁶² Building these overlapping themes into his novels, Le Queux devised conspiracies in which seemingly anarchist conspiratorial actions were merely the cover for more intricate German plots. In his *The Terror in the Air* (1920) a high-tech German bomber rains terror on European and North American cities but masks its aims by distributing anarchist leaflets and hiring a crew that speaks the artificial language of esperanto, much beloved in anarchist circles. As leaflets threatening an imminent ‘social revolution’ rain down on London, a policeman on Hampstead Heath speculates ‘some o’ these silly anarchists up to their old tricks...I thought they were all finished and done with long ago.’⁶³ In part, this was a plot device, designed to build suspense and to keep the reader guessing.

Imperial agendas that were a feature of the period underpinned concerns about the health of the metropolis. In common with other invasion fictions of these years, Le Queux’s novels of national decline began with imperial contraction and decay, influenced by revelations about the poor health of many of the recruits who volunteered for service in the Boer War.⁶⁴ Images of empire were also present in the vision of German barbarism meted out to irregular troops and the civilian population in the manner of the brutalities of German colonialism in German South-West Africa.⁶⁵ In *The Invasion of 1910* in Essex and Suffolk, civilian villages were torched and the bodies of guerrilla troops ‘left swinging from telegraph poles’.⁶⁶ These visions of unprovoked aggression, heavily mediated through the memory and

experience of German violence in their imperial possessions, persisted into the Great War itself, when they provided the model for alleged German atrocities in Belgium recorded by Le Queux in his numerous propaganda tracts.⁶⁷ Frequently, ghosts of failed previous empires haunted the invasion panic genre. Often in such writing demoralised Britons, in a metropolis declining into decadent irrelevance, proved incapable of defending the capital under attack.⁶⁸ Images of London as a new Rome abound in Le Queux and were a feature of other panic fiction of these years. In much of this literature Britain stood in a long line of failed empires, from Egypt via Greece, Carthage and Rome: 'Rome mastered the whole known world till it became rotten at the heart, and then the Gauls and the Goths crushed its life out'.⁶⁹ In William Francis Butler's *The Invasion of England*, Germany had remained true to the bloodline and fighting traditions of 'her Gothic and Frankish forefathers, England had bent the knee before the golden idols and sensuous worship of the degenerate days of Rome'.⁷⁰ Elsewhere, Britain's fate was that of a nation subordinate to Germany in line with 'what Greece was to Persia, Rome to Carthage, and Britain to Holland in the seventeenth century'.⁷¹ These ideas reach their fullest expression in Saki's *When William Came* (1913), in which Britain becomes a German province. Here in the aftermath of a German victory, effete and demilitarised society figures cavort at exclusive Roman-themed parties with their conquerors, whilst the poor seek solace in the diversions of the music hall.⁷² Throughout much of this fiction the martial vitality of the capital's youth is sapped by enfeebling doctrines like socialism and neo-paganism that replicated the debilitating effect of Christianity on the Roman empire. In Le Queux's *The Unknown Tomorrow*, the well-meaning but misguided socialist who sets the events of a British revolution in train is named Henry Harland, after the decadent aesthete who edited the *Yellow Book* in the 1890s. In such portrayals Le Queux eschewed his own youthful period of exuberant bohemianism in Paris.⁷³ Throughout such fiction, bohemians, reluctant to embrace reform of the army and navy, and dismissed as

‘lispering renegades’ by the militarist labour politician, Robert Blatchford, were condemned as complicit in Britain’s decline.⁷⁴ In regard to these themes the titanic clash in Le Queux’s *The Invasion of 1910* between the German army and British volunteers on the Roman road system, the Ickfield Way, outside Newmarket was highly symbolic.⁷⁵ In much British invasion panic literature, energy and vigour in the metropolis had been sapped and drained to the margins and the White settler colonies, leaving the imperial centre a desiccated husk.⁷⁶ Reduced to a hollowed out shell, London is ripe for conquest and occupation: salvation is through reinforcements from a physically vigorous, colonial army. In *The Invasion of 1910*, and *The Great War in England in 1897*, London is saved through the resistance of the local indigenous populace, buoyed by an intervention from colonial troops. When the counterattack begins in *The Invasion of 1910*, it is led by ‘colonial uniforms side by side with the costermonger from Whitechapel or Walworth.’⁷⁷ Here the peoples of the empire and the mother country are united in a common endeavour, in a union lauded in *The Great War in England in 1897*: ‘The fate of England, nay of our vast British empire, was in the hands of those of our stalwart sons of many races who were now wielding valiantly the rifle and the sword’.⁷⁸ Whereas in some invasion panic fiction, Ireland took the opportunity of warfare to seek independence, Le Queux projected a roseate view of the empire, in which Ireland remained loyal and Irish troops from both religious communities put aside their differences and rallied to the aid of the imperilled mother country.⁷⁹

Le Queux’s work defies categorisation on a simple left/right axis. He is most frequently depicted as an incarnation of traditional, established conservative values, a simple ‘patriotic English gentleman’ baffled by a rapidly changing Britain on the eve of the Great War and adamant in his opposition to socialism, radicalism and Bolshevism.⁸⁰ Le Queux shared some of the Conservative abhorrence of the incoherent and ungovernable democracy of the capital, where, in the words of Lord Salisbury, ‘all that is worthless, worn out, or

penniless, naturally drifts to London'.⁸¹ His depiction and misrepresentations of his own career contributes to the image of himself as a natural Conservative and establishment figure. Elsewhere the invasion panic genre more generally has been represented as providing the foundational tracts for the radical right in Britain.⁸² Le Queux's reverence for an older, more genteel, London, unpolluted by developers, and the 'jerry-building Vandal', places him in the company of the French rightist figure Edouard Drumont who constructed a similar narrative around notions of an uncorrupted 'old' Paris.⁸³ In truth it remains difficult to compress Le Queux's ideas into any one single part of the political spectrum. His work might more easily be claimed as representative of a populist sensibility. The term is sometimes used of other sensation fiction writers, notably Edgar Wallace, for his emphasis on rough justice and vigilantism which is a feature of fiction of this type.⁸⁴ There is something of the lynch mob or a street gang waging a vendetta about the paramilitary militias that retake London in *The Invasion of 1910*, wielding hatchets and chair legs and bearing colourful names like 'the Bayswater Braves' and the 'Southwark Scalphunters'. The term 'populist' has been directly applied to the novels of Le Queux by Petra Rau.⁸⁵ In many ways, the contradictions of Le Queux may best be understood in terms of this populist stance. Like many populists he cloaked himself in the guise of the irreverent outsider or internal exile, uttering unpalatable truths rejected by mainstream politicians, a style that harmonised well with the outlook of the Harmsworth press and which is consonant with his relative isolation in the world of letters and failure to establish a literary school.⁸⁶ In line with much populist thinking, Le Queux invested a great deal in the notion of an idealised and imagined 'people' as the saviours of the nation. In *The Invasion of 1910*, it is the honest, homogenous population of South London (a community he knew well) who spearhead the final defeat of the invading Germans. The East End is too racially compromised to provide a lead.⁸⁷ There is a strong 'nativist' strain to this thinking. In Le Queux's novels, the new migrant groups are too 'alien' to align their interests

with the rest of the population. London prevails when they depart and flee the city, leaving resistance in the capital to the local community, purified of outsiders. In *The Invasion of 1910*, the Jewish population depart the city *en masse*, seeking sanctuary in Essex. Depicted as unreliable and prone to hysteria, in Le Queux's *The Terror of the Air* morale in the capital under aerial bombardment breaks down when panic erupts amongst the Jewish and immigrant communities: 'The scene was bad enough in the purely English districts, but in the East End, in Soho, and similar quarters where Jews and foreigners of all types were still herded together, swamping the native population, the panic was indescribable.'⁸⁸ As with others platforms driven by a populist outlook, le Queux was suspicious of the state, seeing it as a screen, manipulated by powerful, shadowy, forces. Conspiracy theory and his opposition to Germany were, in part, representative of his hostility towards centralised, technocratic elites; for Le Queux, Germany symbolised the ultimate technocratic society.⁸⁹ Le Queux placed his faith in the British cult of the amateur (his own amateur interests in early radio technology and aeronautics place him in this category) and strong heroic leader figures, who emerged organically from the people. An incipient Caesarism was central to this agenda and is reflected in allusions to Nietzsche throughout his work.⁹⁰ Le Queux's reverence both for British volunteerism and strong leadership are at the heart of *The Invasion of 1910*. Ultimately, the saviours of Britain are locally organised irregular guerrilla militias, the League of Defenders, led by Gerald Graham, an aristocratic messiah figure, scion of an old county family, the 'Yorkshire Grahams'.⁹¹ Located on the land, a backbench MP not a professional politician, and remote from the centres of power and government, Graham shares some of the characteristics of the eighteenth-century Country Party, acting as an antidote to the alien cosmopolitanism that had brought about the failure of the nation and reflecting contemporary agendas for rule by disinterested businessmen or the non-party aligned.⁹²

Le Queux's ideas spanned the political divide and may be explained by the nature of the metropolitan context in which he operated. The London that emerges from Le Queux's writings is one in which speculative financial interests predominate. As Tamara Wagner has pointed out, the theme of the dangers posed by speculation and investment provided numerous plot devices in late nineteenth-century literature, overlapping with populist preoccupations with the iniquities and injustices of the banking sector.⁹³ A strong strain of anti-finance rhetoric is apparent throughout Le Queux's work. This in part derives from his own parlous financial circumstances and experience of 'impecuniosity', a word that recurs frequently in his novels.⁹⁴ This narrative links up with evangelical images of London as rotten and degraded, its financial institutions typified by a malignant, restless energy that paved the way for its impending physical collapse: 'London was foul and rotten to the core, steeped in sin of every imaginable variety', was the verdict of William Delise Hay in *The Doom of a Great City*.⁹⁵ In Le Queux's novels the world of financial interests is an immoral one and financiers who feature in them are speculators who prey on the innocent and the gullible. In tune with many contemporary depictions of high finance, Le Queux saw a cosmopolitan financial caste as the true dynamic in social relations, and the aristocracy as an encumbered, hollowed-out group dependent on their largesse.⁹⁶ For him, cosmopolitanism posed as many dangers as advantages. In his fiction, even the more positive characters connected with the city are driven by greed and low morals. In his novel of financial corruption, *The Sins of the City*, Henry Ellis is described as 'a thoroughly hardened individual and for a City man he was moderately honest. He would not rob a fellow creature openly....But the ways of the City, or in other words, "business" had told upon him and if a good thing came his way, without being too particular about the nature of that good thing, he was quick to snap at it'.⁹⁷ Le Queux saw high finance as routinely unpatriotic and depicted the wealth of the City as unreliable during periods of crisis or in wartime. In both *The*

Invasion of 1910 and *The Unknown Tomorrow*, wealthy financiers and speculators are the first to leave an imperilled Britain or conspire to channel their investments abroad.⁹⁸ In *The Invasion of 1910*, they come late to the fray, extending help and support to the battling metropolitan population fighting a German invasion only at the last minute.⁹⁹ In line with many populist platforms, a strong strain of anti-semitism underpinned this thinking. Le Queux is in a long tradition when he depicts high finance as a screen behind which sinister forces manoeuvre. The cast of ‘rich robbers – rent-mongers, interest-mongers, profit-mongers, whole classes of parasitic creatures’ who bring the country down in *The Unknown Tomorrow* are not dissimilar to the groups he targeted elsewhere in his fiction.¹⁰⁰ In *The Unknown Tomorrow* there are overt expressions of anti-semitism throughout the book. At the height of the revolutionary rising, fighting rages around the symbolic monument erected in Hyde Park to a prominent Jewish financier, Julian Lubiminsky.¹⁰¹

In common with much populist politics, Le Queux’s invasion panic narratives also reached an audience on the left of the political spectrum. Usually such fiction was viewed by radicals and progressives as symptomatic of a streak of ‘melodrama’ and histrionics in the psyche of politicians, most notably amongst those swayed by irrational impulses towards Britain’s imperial rivals. It was also used to describe the arcane conspiracy theories that proliferated on the right. In the labour press the Zinoviev letter that brought down Britain’s first Labour government in 1924 was compared to a plot from the novels of Le Queux.¹⁰² Nevertheless, Le Queux did attract readers and disciples outside a conventional jingo readership. A playful familiarity with some classics of socialist and radical literature is on display throughout Le Queux’s fantasy of a future socialist dictatorship, *The Unknown Tomorrow*.¹⁰³ Thriller fiction more broadly was reviewed in the pages of the early socialist and labour press (E. Phillips Oppenheim was a particular favourite) which also bemoaned the working-class propensity to prefer such fiction over classics of politics and philosophy.¹⁰⁴

Moreover, Le Queux's works commanded a broad readership and remained a staple of lending libraries into the inter-war period. They circulated widely in the slums of Salford, and were amongst the favourite selection available in Miners' Institute lending libraries in South Wales into the 1930s.¹⁰⁵ The strong strain of anti-statism on the left that manifested itself in opposition to the Prussian-style technocratic state provided a niche for many works of this nature.¹⁰⁶ In addition novels and stories written by labour sympathisers that warned of the dangers posed by the breakdown of democracy, flawed national leadership, and collapsing state institutions echoed many of the concerns and preoccupations of the invasion panic genre.¹⁰⁷ Informal citizen militias of the kind advocated by Le Queux and embodied in his League of Defenders also found their champions on the left. In his numerous writings on defence, warning that 'all Europe is to be Teutonised' Robert Blatchford became something of a counterpoint to Le Queux, refracting his dire predictions for a labour audience and receiving approving mention in Le Queux's own work for his slogan 'Britain for the British.'¹⁰⁸ Whilst alert to the corruptions of militarism, exponents of volunteer citizen armies recalled the role of working-men in setting up volunteer legions like the Garibaldi Legion, extolled their ability to protect working-class communities from punitive state action and opposed the 'sweated' soldiers of conscript armies.¹⁰⁹ These ideas even generated their own strain of leftist invasion panic fiction that echoed that of the right, most notably in the Bolton socialist, Allen Clarke's *Starved into Surrender*, which used the prospect of a Russian invasion to highlight deficiencies in British food production, the scarcity of arable land free from aristocratic control, and the danger of dependency on foreign imports: 'We've made our country into the workshop of the world; turning our kitchen gardens into an engine-house and cinder heaps, and helping to buy our bread elsewhere; to be dependent on foreign nations for our food; an asinine policy which has landed us into this miserable fix'.¹¹⁰

Le Queux's work eludes categorisation. Contradictions abound throughout the over one hundred novels he penned: he was a partially-French cosmopolitan who hated migrants, a nostalgic who embraced modernity, an anti-statist who advocated conscription, a populist who disliked the popular pastimes of the people, an Edwardian arriviste who expressed disdain for the establishment he joined, and an erstwhile bohemian who had nothing but contempt for aesthetes. Nevertheless, there is one constant theme throughout his work. Seldom seen as a contributor to the metropolitan panic novel, Le Queux pursued a populist path in his vision of an embattled London, brought low by a decadent leadership but saved by a population purged of bankers, bohemians, outsiders, immigrants and defeatists. Behind many of the images of London under internal, or external, siege, lay continuing anxieties about the Paris Commune that featured in a previous generation of invasion panic literature, linking mid-Victorian fears of radical or Irish insurgency prompted by French invasion, with later imagined German invasion narratives. For Le Queux, the physical environment of London determined the country's ability to fight back against potential occupation. The lasting significance of Le Queux is as a propagandist of such notions. A conspiracy theorist and early exponent and populariser of ideas about the detrimental effect of the environment on the physical health of the British population, he helped disseminate to a wider audience a critique of urban development that was formative for the platform of the radical right at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whilst not instigating these ideas, the importance of his works lies in the way in which they communicated them to a wider audience. Analysing these themes in Le Queux's fiction, this article exposes the vein of anxiety about the defence of London in the invasion panic genre, and raises questions about the degree to which contemporaries believed the nation might turn to the capital for its salvation in its hour of need.

¹ See Phil Baker, *The Devil is a Gentleman: The Life and Times of Dennis Wheatley* (Cambridge: Sawtry, 2009), p. 60; Brian Diemert, *Graham Greene's Thrillers and the 1930s* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 64-5; Graham Greene, *The Ministry of Fear* (London: Penguin, 1979 [1943]), 65 and Peter Cheyney, *Dark Duet* (London: Penguin, 1949 [1942]), 63.

² Martin Ceadel, 'Popular Fiction and the Next War, 1918-1939', in *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*, ed. Frank G. Loversmith (Hassocks: Harvester, 1981), 161-3.

³ See for the role of Le Queux in the literary tradition of espionage, David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 286; David Stafford, *The Silent Game: The Real World of Imaginary Spies* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1988), 14-29 and Julian Symonds, *Bloody Murder, From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 215-16.

⁴ See P.D. James, *Talking about Detective Fiction* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2009), 114 and William Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910* (London: Pearl Necklace Books, 2014 [1906]), 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-61, A.J. Dawson, *The Message* (London: E Grant Richards, 1907), 138-9 and Horace W.C. Newte, *The Master Beast: Being a True Account of the Ruthless Tyranny inflicted on the British People by Socialism, A.D. 1880-2020* (London: Rebman Ltd., 1907), 47-52.

⁶ E. Phillips Oppenheim, *The Great Impersonation* (London: British Library, 2014 [1920]), 66-7. The south coast was another place of concern for an impending German invasion during the war: see Catriona Pennell, "'The Germans Have Landed': Invasion Fears in the South-East of England, August to December 1914', in *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. H. Jones, J. O'Brien and C. Schmidt Supprian (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 95-118

⁷ Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009 [1903]), 13.

⁸ Chris Patrick and Stephen Baister, *William Le Queux: Master of Mystery* (Chippenham: Antony Roe Ltd, 1996), 3-9.

⁹ P.J. Keating, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 167-70, and for recent revelations about Arthur Morrison's past, Stan Newens, *Arthur Morrison: The Novelist of Realism in East London and Essex* (London: Laughton, 2008), 36.

¹⁰ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), ch. 1 and James Adderley, 'Is Slumming Played Out?' *The English Illustrated Magazine*, 10, 4 (1893), 834-41.

¹¹ J. Findlater, 'The Slum Movement in Fiction', *National Review*, vol. 35 (1900), 447-54 and Jock Macleod, *Literature, Journalism, and the Vocabularies of Liberalism: Politics and Letters, 1886-1916* (London: Palgrave, 2013), ch. 4.

¹² F.W. Hirst, *The Six Panics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen and Co., 1913), 2-3.

¹³ See for this change, I.F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 136-149.

¹⁴ *The Nation at Arms*, 1 April 1909, 130, Lord Reginald Brabazon, 12th Earl of Meath, *Social Arrows* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1887), 9-17, and for the National Service League, see Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (London: Collins, 1986), 202-12, R.J.Q Adams and Philip Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain 1900-1918* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1988), chs. 1-2 and Keith Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), ch. 1.

¹⁵ *The National Service Journal*, 1 June 1906, 9.

¹⁶ Katherine Mansfield, *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Constable, 1945), 198.

¹⁷ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 178.

¹⁸ George Tompkins Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1871]), 3.

¹⁹ Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), ch. 2. and for contemporary physical health obsessions, J.P. Muller, *My System: 15 Minutes Work a Day for Health's Sake* (London: Ewart, Seymour and Co., 1912), 37-8 and Carey A. Watts, 'Physical Culture as "Natural Cure": Eugen Sandow's Campaign against the Diseases and Vices of Civilisation c. 1890-1920', in *Global Anti-Vice Activism, 1890-1950: Fighting Drink, Drugs and 'Immorality'*, eds Jessica Pliley, Robert Kramm and Harald Fischer-Tine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 32-52.

²⁰ See J.A. Hobson, *The Social Problem: Life and Work* (London: Nisbet and son, 1901), 12-17, Charles F.G. Masterman, *The Heart of the Empire: Discussions of Modern City Life with an Essay on Imperialism* (London: T.

Fisher Unwin, 1901), 12-19, and Arnold White, *The Problems of a Great City* (London: Remington and Co., 1886), chs, 3 and 6.

²¹ Nicholas Daly, *The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century City. Paris, London, New York* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), ch. 1

²² Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, p. 215. There are echoes here of Sidney Webb's description of London as 'a whole kingdom in itself': see Alex Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London 1868-1906* (London: Boydell, 2007), 34.

²³ William Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow* (London: Wright and Brown, 1907), 23.

²⁴ Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969 [1895]), 34-9 and for discussion of Nordau's ideas in the British radical press, the *Labour Leader*, September 7, 1895, 3.

²⁵ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 63.

²⁶ See Matthew Beaumont, *Utopia Ltd: Ideologies of Social Dreaming in England, 1870-1900* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 137-45.

²⁷ Patrick and Baister, *William le Queux*, 3.

²⁸ George R. Sims, *How the Poor Live* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1889), 44.

²⁹ Mayne, *The Triumph of Socialism*, ch. 7 and le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, pp. 11 and 21.

³⁰ Bracebridge Hemyng, *The Commune in London, or Thirty Years Hence: A Chapter of Anticipated History* (London: C.H. Clark, 1871), 7.

³¹ *Ibid*, 5.

³² F. N. Maude, *The New Battle of Dorking* (London: Grant Richards, 1900), 22-3.

³³ 'Grip', *How John Bull Lost London or the Capture of the Channel Tunnel* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882), 86, 93-4.

³⁴ John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans since 1890* (London: Abacus, 2006), 56-8, 72-3 and Peter Fleming, *Operation Sea lion* (London: Pan, 1975), 28-30.

³⁵ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 38-43 and *The Invasion of 1910*, 215, and 156-165.

³⁶ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 254

³⁷ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, pp. 41 and 43 and see G.A. Henty, *A Girl of the Commune* (New York: R.F. Ferro and Co., 1895), 333-5.

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- ³⁸ Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London*, p. 41 and David A. Zimmerman, *Panic! Markets, Crisis and Crowds in American Fiction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 49-59.
- ³⁹ David Skilton, 'Gustav Dore's London/Londres: Empire and Post-imperial Ruin', *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Inquiry*, 30, 3 (2014), 225-37. The image of London in ruins is in a long tradition: see Arthur J. Weitzman, 'Eighteenth-Century London: Paradise or Fallen City', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36, 3 (1975), 469-80.
- ⁴⁰ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 254.
- ⁴¹ For a discussion of the significance of Macaulay's New Zealander, see Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 212-15.
- ⁴² 'Prof Blyde Muddersnook', 'When the New Zealander Comes', *The Strand Magazine*, 1911, in *England Invaded: A Collection of Fantasy Fiction*, ed. Michael Moorcock (London: Star Books, 1977), 25-35.
- ⁴³ *The Clarion*, 22 June, 1906, 1 and *Land and Labour*, 1 February 1892, 3.
- ⁴⁴ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 173, Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 49-50 and Le Queux, *The Great War in England in 1897* (London: Pearl Necklace Books, 2014 [1894]), 480-488.
- ⁴⁵ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 175 and 177 and Cecil Degrotte Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke, 1987), 34. There is an echo of attacks by the Irish terrorist organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, on monuments and public buildings in London in the middle 1880s in this literature: see Guy Beiner, 'Fenianism and the Martyrdom-Terrorism Nexus in Ireland before Independence', in *Martyrdom and Terrorism: Pre-Modern to Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Dominic James and Alex Houen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 109-3.
- ⁴⁶ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, p. 46. For images of iconoclasm during the Paris Commune, see Patrice Higgonet, *Paris: Capital of the World* (Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press, 2002), 67.
- ⁴⁷ Hemyng, *The Commune in London*, 28, 40.
- ⁴⁸ 'Posteritas', *The Siege of London* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1885), 32-3. Gladstone's statue is also broken up as a reprisal for allowing the country's defences to wither in Hemyng, *The Commune in London*, 6-9.
- ⁴⁹ St. Loe Strachey, *The Great Bread Riots, 1890, or what became of Fair Trade* (Bristol: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1885), 60.

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- ⁵⁰ David Glover, *Literature, Immigration, and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siecle England: A Cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 190-91; Peter Mills, 'Popular Conspiracism in Britain, c. 1880-1914', (Ph.D Thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2015), 79-88 and Stafford, *The Silent Game*, 23-9.
- ⁵¹ Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (Oxford: Berg, 1991), 32-4 and 161-3 and David French, 'Spy Fever in Britain, 1900-1915, *Historical Journal*, 21, 2 (1978), 355-70.
- ⁵² E. Phillips Oppenheim, *The Great Secret* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1907), 254.
- ⁵³ For 'dynamite romances' and the popular fiction generated by the anarchist threat, see Antony Taylor, *'London's Burning: Pulp Fiction, the Politics of Terrorism and the Destruction of the Capital in British Popular Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), ch. 2.
- ⁵⁴ See Judith R. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven: Yale, 2012), ch. 1 and 103-107.
- ⁵⁵ William Le Queux, 'One Woman's Sin' in *Stolen Souls* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1902), 185.
- ⁵⁶ Oppenheim, *The Great Secret*, 204-206.
- ⁵⁷ Haia Shpayer-Makov, 'A Traitor to his Class: The Anarchist in British fiction', *Journal of European Studies*, 26, 3 (1996), 299-325.
- ⁵⁸ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, pp. 22-23, Oppenheim, *The Great Secret*, 194-206 and Eby, *The Road to Armageddon*, 34.
- ⁵⁹ Walter Wood, *The Enemy in our Midst: The Story of a Raid on England* (London: John Long, 1906), 15.
- ⁶⁰ Coulson Kernahan, *The Red Peril* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1908), 51-8 and for peace and disarmament campaigners as the unwitting pawns of German interests, Dawson, *The Message*, 134-42.
- ⁶¹ *The Morning Post*, 16 October 1894, 2 and Le Queux, *The Great War in England*, 289-92.
- ⁶² William Le Queux, *The Bomb-Makers* (London: Leopold Classics Library, 2011 [1915], 12, and 44. For the intelligence services and attempts to tackle anarchist conspiracies at the end of the nineteenth-century, see Basil Hume Thomson, *Queer People* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), 47.
- ⁶³ William Le Queux, *The Terror of the Air* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1929 [1920]), 24 and 56-7.

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- ⁶⁴ G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 60-2. In a number of texts loss or enfeeblement of the empire is a consequence of French or German invasion of Britain: see 'Grip', *How John Bull Lost London*, 86 and Charles Gleig, *When all Men Starve* (London: John Lane, 1898), ch. 3 and 36-9.
- ⁶⁵ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), ch. 1.
- ⁶⁶ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 162.
- ⁶⁷ William le Queux, *German Atrocities: A Record of Shameless Deeds* (London: Newnes, [1914]).
- ⁶⁸ For these classical images of London as a new Rome see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 207-21 and Elliot Mills, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Hamilton, 1905), 4, 13, 30 and 60.
- ⁶⁹ John D. Mayne, *The Triumph of Socialism and How it Succeeded* (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2003 [1908]), 65.
- ⁷⁰ William Francis Butler, 'The Invasion of England Told Twenty Years After by An Old Soldier' excerpted in *British Future Fictions: The Next Great War*, 8 vols, ed. I.F. Clarke (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), VI, 91.
- ⁷¹ Newte, *The Master Beast*, 33.
- ⁷² 'Saki', *When William Came* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997[1913]), 56, 57-8 and 166.
- ⁷³ John Atkins, *The British Spy Novel: Styles in Treachery* (London: Calder, 1984), 50 and for the decadence of the 1890s, Karl Beckson, *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1992), ch. 2. For Le Queux's own period of bohemianism in Paris, see Patrick and Baister, *William Le Queux*, 7-10.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid, 133-34 and Robert Blatchford, *Stunts* (London: The Clarion Press, 1922), 197.
- ⁷⁵ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 101.
- ⁷⁶ Le Queux had an incarnation and a strong readership in the white settler colonies: see an interview with Le Queux in *The Queenslander*, 27 January, 1912, 20 and for reinvigorated colonial manhood, Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity, 1688-1980* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1981), chs, 3 and 5.
- ⁷⁷ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 251
- ⁷⁸ Le Queux, *The Great War in England*, 492.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 361. Ireland seeks independence in Mayne, *The Triumph of Socialism*, 47 and the London Irish are fanatical supporters of the London Commune in the hope of gaining their own republic in Hemyng, *The Commune in London*, 24-5.

⁸⁰ See the entry in Donald McCormick, *Who's Who in Spy Fiction: The A-Z of Espionage Thrillers and Their Creators* (London: Sphere Books Ltd, 1977), 138 and William Le Queux, *Things I know about Kings, Celebrities and Crooks* (London: E. Nash and Grayson, 1923), 16.

⁸¹ Quoted in Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London*, 42

⁸² Alan Sykes, *The Radical Right in Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2005), 11.

⁸³ Le Queux, *The Great War in England*, 487. For Drumont, see Higgonet, *Paris*, 90-94.

⁸⁴ David Glover, 'Looking for Edgar Wallace', *History Workshop Journal*, 37 (1994), 154.

⁸⁵ Petra Rau, *English Modernism, National Identity and the Germans, 1890-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 59 and for Le Queux's vigilante militias, Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 125.

⁸⁶ See S.J. Taylor, *The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe, Rothermere and the Daily Mail* (London: Phoenix Giants: 1996), 143.

⁸⁷ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 207-241.

⁸⁸ Le Queux, *The Terror of the Air*, 71, and for the Jewish population abandoning London in its hour of need, Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 236.

⁸⁹ Conspiracy theory abounded during this period aimed at both religious and secular forces, see the Rev. Robert Middleton, *The Power behind the Scenes in the Great War* (London: Protestant Truth Society, 1914), 8-10.

⁹⁰ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, p. 91. See for Nietzsche, Michael Bell, 'Nietzscheanism: The Superman and the All-too-Human', in *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. David Bradshaw (London: Basil Blackwell, 2003), 56-74.

⁹¹ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, p. 202. These militias bear some similarity to the League of Frontiersmen, irregular amateur volunteer units that also inspired John Buchan: see David Trotter, 'The Politics of Adventure in the Early British Spy Novel', in *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence*, ed. Wesley K. Walk (London: Routledge, 1991), 30-54.

⁹² Such Caesarist figures often recur in fiction where socialism threatens the nation: see Ernest Bramah, *The Secret of the League: The Story of a Social War* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1907), ch. 20 and for the British amateur as defender of the nation, Eby, *The Road to Armageddon*, ch. 9, Stafford, *The Silent Game*, 28-9 and G.R. Searle, *Country before Party: Coalition and the Idea of 'National Government' in Modern Britain, 1885-1987* (London: Longman, 1995), ch. 6. .

⁹³ For anti-banking rhetoric, see P.J. Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism and Finance, 1887-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 3, W.D. Rubenstein, *Elites and the Wealthy in Modern British Society* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1987), ch. 11 and Tamara S. Wagner, *Financial Speculation in Victorian Fiction: Plotting Money and the Novel Genre, 1815-1901* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), 1-29.

⁹⁴ See Roger Stearn, 'Still Mysterious: William Le Queux Revisited' in this special edition, and Patrick and Baister, *William le Queux*, 168 and 243-5.

⁹⁵ William Delise Hay, 'The Doom of a Great City', in *British Future Fictions*, ed. I.F. Clarke, 8 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), VIII, 26.

⁹⁶ See the figure of Lord Saxham in *Whither thou Goest*, 16.

⁹⁷ William Le Queux, *The Sins of the City* (London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1907), 51.

⁹⁸ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 64 and 111-112.

⁹⁹ Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910*, 255

¹⁰⁰ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 60.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 34 and 41 and 132-135.

¹⁰² *The Co-operative News*, 7 October 1898, 117-18 and *The Labour Magazine*, 1 June 1925, 75.

¹⁰³ Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 90-92, 103, 105, 110-11.

¹⁰⁴ *Teddy Ashton's Northern Weekly*, 20 October 1906, 6 and *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 25 December 1898, 2. Nye Bevan was an avid reader of Le Queux: see Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working-Classes* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 332-3.

¹⁰⁵ Robert James, *Popular Culture and Working-Class Taste in Britain, 1930-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 149 and Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (London: Penguin, 1990) [1971], 179-81. Le

Queux appealed to a mainly adult audience: there is no mention of his work at all in the two hundred volumes listed in the Manchester Lads' Club Library: see the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 24 March 1906, 4.

¹⁰⁶ R.L. Outhwaite, *The Land or Revolution* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1917), 77-84.

¹⁰⁷ Steven Fielding, 'Novels for "Thinking People": Fiction and the Inter-war Broad Left', in *The Art of the Possible: Politics and Governance in Modern British History, 1885-1997: Essays in Honour of Duncan Tanner*, ed. Chris Williams, and Andrew Edwards (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 98-119.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Blatchford, *Germany and England: The War that was Foretold* (London: Associated Newspapers, 1914 [1909]), 7 and Le Queux, *The Unknown Tomorrow*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ See J. Bruce Glasier, *The Perils of Conscription* (London: National Labour Press, 1915), 9; Harry Quelch, *Social-Democracy and the Armed Nation* (London: Twentieth-Century Press, 1907 [1900]), 7; A.A. Watts, 'Socialism against Militarism', *The British Socialist*, 15 July 1913, 296-303 and for an overview, Matthew Johnson, *Militarism and the British Left, 1902-1914* (London: Palgrave, 2013), ch. 1.

¹¹⁰ Allen Clarke, *Starved into Surrender* (London: C.W. Daniel, 1904), 144.