

Media Tycoons and their Global Public: The Case of Gordon Bennett and the *New York Herald*

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For an entire week James Gordon Bennett Jr. (1841–1918) had his *New York Herald* staff sit anxiously at the end of the newspaper's own telegraph cable. Knowing full well that the *Herald's* owner always wanted to have the last say in editorial matters, the newspaper's editorial board was anxiously waiting for Bennett's reply concerning an innovation they had suggested. Eventually, Bennett sent a cryptic telegram from Paris, from where he had been running his media empire, comprising four newspapers and a submarine cable company, since high society in New York had ostracized him. The telegram read: 'send two mocking-birds by special messenger.' While two mockingbirds were duly sent to Paris, still no news reached the *Herald's* New York office on their suggested business directive. Another fortnight passed without a word from Gordon Bennett. Finally, the cable spat out another telegram. It read: 'send mocking-bird food!' Confusion reigned among New York's newspaper elite, but no news ever came concerning the board's directive and so the matter was dropped.¹

Endless stories exist about James Gordon Bennett Jr., proprietor of the *New York Herald*, at the time of worldwide renown, and son of James Gordon Bennett, the paper's equally famous founder. As it turned out, the birds were a gift for a French lady who had doubted the melodious merits of the American mockingbird. Upon arrival in France, it appeared that the birds required a special diet which could not be found in France—hence the second telegram.² At a time when exorbitant tariffs meant that only the elite could conduct

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¹ Don C. Seitz, *The James Gordon Bennetts, Father and Son, Proprietors of the New York Herald* (New York, 1974), 237–8.

² *Ibid.*

their business by cable, Gordon Bennett cared about neither the cost nor his newspaper's business directive.³ Over time, stories like these have turned Gordon Bennett, as he came to be called in distinction from his father, into the eccentric figurehead of rich American expatriates in Europe.⁴ In terms of wealth, Gordon Bennett was on a par with America's giants of business such as the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Mellons. In Europe he socialized with the old continent's royals, such as Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany. He belonged to a class of white men of European background who could make the entire world spin at their bidding.

Gordon Bennett was undeniably an eccentric. He had mocking-birds sent around the globe and staged 'startling adventures that do not seem quite sane when narrated in cold blood'.⁵ At the same time, he was a key figure in giving the business of news and its readership a global, albeit *Western* global, perspective. Gordon Bennett was a news entrepreneur with a particularly transnational journalistic imagination and access to exceptional technological and financial means. In contrast to William Randolph Hearst at the *New York Journal*, Joseph Pulitzer at the *New York World*, and Adolph Ochs at the *New York Times*, Gordon Bennett not only used global communications technology to spread 'all the news that's fit to print', according to the famous motto on the masthead of the *New York Times*—he owned it. He used his imaginative, financial, and technological resources to create a vision of the world as a space of exploration and adventure, and a playground of speed. Meanwhile, his newspapers passed on this particular vision of the globe, these 'pictures in the head' of Gordon Bennett, in the terminology of Walter Lippmann, to *Herald* readers all around the world.⁶ Through his reporting, Gordon Bennett brought some groups, especially a (predominantly male) Euro-American elite, into a closer imagined community, making them world citizens participating in a Western vision of a global public.⁷

³ Simone M. Müller, 'Beyond the Means of 99 Percent of the Population: Business Interests, State Intervention, and Submarine Telegraphy', *Journal of Policy History*, 27/3 (2015), 439–64.

⁴ Charles W. Calhoun (ed.), *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* (Wilmington, Del., 1996); William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton, 1994).

⁵ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 240.

⁶ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York, 1922).

⁷ Gordon M. Winder, 'Imagining World Citizenship in the Networked Newspaper:

To this day, scholarship as well as public memory has given Gordon Bennett credit for little more than his flamboyant lifestyle and eccentric behaviour.⁸ Biographies of Bennett developed a sensationalist storyline celebrating him by highlighting his nickname as 'the Commodore' and exaggerating his wild lifestyle.⁹ He remained little more than his famous father's son, who could never live up to the ingenuity of the acclaimed inventor of the penny papers and news sensationalism, as in Seitz's study of the two and, similarly, in Kluger's *The Paper*.¹⁰ Media and communications studies have also shunned Gordon Bennett. In their seminal works, *The Creation of the Media* and *The Power of News*, neither Paul Starr nor Michael Schudson mentions the younger Bennett.¹¹ He is similarly neglected in Christopher Daly's *Covering America* and Emery and Emery's *The Press and America*.¹² In studies of journalism in the long nineteenth century the *New York Times* usually receives preferential treatment over the *Herald* (or the *Tribune* and the *World*), and Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst over Gordon Bennett, although the fame and fortune of Pulitzer and Hearst were secondary to Bennett's up to the turn of the twentieth century.¹³ Digital databases and easy access to primary sources explain the predominance of the *New York Times* in historical scholarship.¹⁴ In fact, 'much of the modern

La Nación Reports the Assassination at Sarajevo, 1914', *Historical Social Research*, 35/1 (2010), 140–66.

⁸ Used mainly in British English, the expression 'Gordon Bennett!' expresses utmost surprise, incredulity, and puzzlement.

⁹ Al Laney, *Paris Herald: The Incredible Newspaper* (New York, 1947); Albert S. Crockett, *When James Gordon Bennett was Caliph of Bagdad* (New York, 1926).

¹⁰ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*; Richard Kluger, *The Paper: The Life and Death of the 'New York Herald Tribune'* (New York, 1986); Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York, 1987), 12–60. In contrast to Schudson, both Menahem Blondheim and John Nerone dispute the assertion that James Gordon Bennett was the sole inventor of the penny press: Menahem Blondheim, *News over the Wires: The Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information in America, 1844–1897* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 21–30; John Nerone, *The Media and Public Life: A History* (Cambridge, 2015). In general, more serious studies exist on the father: see James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett's 'New York Herald' and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse, NY, 1989).

¹¹ Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995; repr. 2002); Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York, 2004).

¹² Christopher Daly, *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism* (Amherst, Mass., 2012); Michael Emery and Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1988).

¹³ James M. Morris, *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power* (New York, 2010).

¹⁴ Walter Lippmann, Charles Merz, and Faye Lippmann, *A Test of the News: An*

history of journalism has been a history of the *New York Times*, which most people did not read', as Hamilton and Tworek point out.¹⁵ But large parts of the nineteenth-century literate world read the *New York Herald* and its Paris edition.

This essay proposes to write Gordon Bennett back into a more serious history of journalism and to inspire new research on a news entrepreneur and his newspapers of worldwide renown. Both were essential to the emergence of modern journalism. At a time when the number of daily newspapers nearly quadrupled, Gordon Bennett and his *Herald* formed and defined the important New York news market. Before the double act of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, Gordon Bennett was the powerful independent publisher who stood out. Bennett, finally, highlights the transnational facet of 'news' and journalism in the decades leading up to the First World War. As an American news and communications entrepreneur based in Paris, he ran newspapers which were known in large parts of the world. Gordon Bennett pushes us to reconceptualize modern journalism as emerging in a news world that was transnationally interconnected and globally minded.

Going beyond his colourful character, this essay presents Gordon Bennett as a shrewd and successful news entrepreneur who merged the business of news circulation with that of news production. He ran a transatlantic media and communications empire that comprised submarine telegraph cables as well as newspapers. During his reign, the *New York Herald* and its *Paris Herald* edition, forerunner of today's *International New York Times*, were two of the most important English-language newspapers and were read widely around the world.¹⁶ The Commercial Cable Company, in turn, successfully created a business duopoly on the important North Atlantic telegraph market, and by the 1900s had become one of the world's leading communications infrastructure enterprises. This combination of content and infrastructure allowed Gordon Bennett to carve out

Examination of the News Reports in the 'New York Times' on Aspects of the Russian Revolution of Special Importance to Americans, March 1917–March 1920 (New York, 1920); Gordon M. Winder and Schmitt Michael, 'Geographical Imaginaries in the *New York Times*' Reports of the Assassinations of Mahatma Gandhi (1948) and Indira Gandhi (1984)', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 45 (2014), 106–15.

¹⁵ John M. Hamilton and Heidi Tworek, 'The Natural History of the News: An Epigenetic Study', *Journalism*, 18/4 (2017), 391–407, at 399.

¹⁶ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 131.

new 'global' forms of journalism. In his global perspective, however, Gordon Bennett cared less about worldwide coverage than about extraordinary news reporting that he often commissioned and claimed was global.

Methodologically, this essay locates the individual, Gordon Bennett, within his social and institutional networks, integrating various scales and scopes, while separating Gordon Bennett and his journalistic vision from the *Herald's* readership.¹⁷ Gordon Bennett's perspective on news, journalism, and what later scholars have called the 'public' was equally influenced by his identity as a New York news entrepreneur, a rich, Gilded Age American in Paris, and a cosmopolitan who travelled and encompassed large parts of the globe. At the same time, Bennett's own western-centrism informed and limited this journalistic vision of the globe.

Making the 'Herald' the Most International Paper of All

Journalism in the United States had already undergone several phases of popularization when Gordon Bennett entered the news business in the 1860s: the mobilization of the popular press in the Revolutionary era, the spread of small-circulation papers through villages and towns in the early republic, and the advent of the penny press in larger cities in the 1830s. Each of these changes had widened the scope of interest and readership.¹⁸ Gordon Bennett added yet another layer when he made the *Herald* the most international of all American newspapers.

The *New York Herald*, originally set up as a penny paper, was a creation of the last phase of American news restructuring. With the advent of the penny papers in the 1830s, newspaper editing expanded rapidly in the United States.¹⁹ Then a reduction in the cost of paper and print opened up new avenues for journalism. Alongside the political party papers, several publishing entrepreneurs had a new idea in the early 1830s: at a penny a copy, they could sell newspapers to a wider market, including working-class readers. This would generate increased profits from advertising and afford more influence over public opinion. Although not quite America's first

¹⁷ Heather Ellis and Simone M. Müller, 'Editorial. Educational Networks, Educational Identities: Connecting National and Global Perspectives', *Journal of Global History*, 11 (2016), 313–19.

¹⁸ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 254.

¹⁹ Schudson, *The Power of News*, 38.

popular commercial newspapers independent of political parties, these penny papers were the first in the United States to provide extensive coverage of local news and to turn news itself into entertainment. Alongside the *New York Sun*, established in 1831, the *New York Herald*, set up by James Gordon Bennett Sr. in 1835, soon became the most important of these penny papers.²⁰ During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the *New York Herald* had the largest circulation of any newspaper in the world.²¹ By 1861 it was selling 84,000 copies daily.²² The paper's revenues were so large that James Gordon Bennett Sr. could afford to have sixty-three reporters covering the American Civil War. A single newspaper employed far more correspondents than all other newspapers in the Confederacy at the time (the *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune* each sent about twenty correspondents to cover the Civil War), or even the news agency Associated Press, serving almost the entire American news landscape.²³ When the older Bennett died in 1872, he left his son 'the richest newspaper in America'.²⁴

The penny papers were essential in creating a shared local or even national identity, an imagined community, as Benedict Anderson calls it.²⁵ According to James Carey, communication has two functions: transmitting information as well as serving the social function of building solidarity and reaffirming common values within a community. Communication is the transmission of information as much as it is a ritual.²⁶ In the 1830s journalism in the United States shifted from being a 'miscellany of facts and fancy about strangers far from home, practical information for doing business, occasional political essays and bits of folklore, to a miscellany about one's own community, both its local manifestation and wider connections'.²⁷ The papers helped to create a form of American public. A generation

²⁰ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 131–5.

²¹ *Ibid.* 131.

²² Karen Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News: New Journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth-Century American Newspapers and Fiction* (Kent, Ohio, 2005), 144.

²³ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 135; Jean K. Chalaby, 'Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention: A Comparison of the Development of French and Anglo-American Journalism, 1830s–1920s', *European Journal of Communication*, 11/3 (1996), 303–26, at 308.

²⁴ *The World*, cited in 'Mr. James Gordon Bennett', *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc.*, 13 Mar. 1880.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. (London, 2006).

²⁶ James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston, 1989).

²⁷ Schudson, *The Power of News*, 47.

later, Gordon Bennett took his father's approach across national borders to mirror the wide connections that this American public now had with the world. After the American Civil War the country increasingly looked outwards, socially, culturally, and politically. One of the most important migration movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was that of Europeans to North America, which peaked in the 1850s, 1880s, and again in the 1900s. Annually, between 260,000 people in 1850 and 1,000,000 at the height of the migration in 1911 immigrated to the United States.²⁸ In turn, rich Americans started travelling abroad, primarily to Europe. Mainly white, Anglo-Saxon, American males, Gordon Bennett's peers at the New York yacht club joined their British and Continental European counterparts on their 'grand tour' through Europe.²⁹ Newly arrived travellers in Paris were invited to register with the Paris edition of the *Herald* so that their presence could be reported in the paper and made known to other Americans in town.³⁰ Apart from a short drop during the Civil War, numbers constantly increased, exceeding the 100,000 mark in 1885. By the start of the First World War, almost a quarter of a million Americans were travelling abroad.³¹

Politically, the United States also expanded beyond its natural territorial borders formed by the two oceans. By the late nineteenth century, the country had extended its westward expansion into the Pacific and turned it into a policy of colonization and protectionism, especially towards the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii.³² America increasingly found its place in the world. Bennett's papers mirrored this development in their news reporting. 'By cable telegrams, special written correspondence, and newspaper reports from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australasia', the *Heralds* gave their readers an 'ample, most interesting and very important budget of foreign

²⁸ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009), 235–7; published in English as *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Princeton, 2014), 154–7; Dirk Hoerder, 'Migrations and Belonging', in Emily S. Rosenberg (ed.), *A World Connecting 1870–1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012), 435–592, at 459–61.

²⁹ Foster R. Dulles, *Americans Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel* (Ann Arbor, 1964); David McCullough, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* (New York, 2011).

³⁰ Simone M. Müller, *Wiring the World: The Social and Cultural Creation of Global Telegraph Networks* (New York, 2016), 140.

³¹ Brandon Dupont, Alka Gandhi, and Thomas J. Weiss, 'The American Invasion of Europe: The Long-Term Rise in Overseas Travel, 1820–2000', *NBER Working Paper Series* (May 2008), 19.

³² Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven, 2009).

news'.³³ Bennett, equally, brought his vision of the globe home to an American readership as much as he brought the Americans into the world.

Gordon Bennett was introduced to the news business by his father from early childhood onwards. His father had a child's desk installed in his own office, so that his son, who was primarily brought up in Europe by his mother, had a place to 'work' when he came to visit New York. Bennett Sr. clearly intended to bring his eldest son up to 'run' the *Herald*.³⁴ Meticulously, Gordon Bennett learnt everything about journalism 'from the manufacture of paper to the intricacies of press machinery, type, or telegraph'.³⁵ In 1866, the year in which a permanent transatlantic telegraph cable was laid, Gordon Bennett partly took over the news-reporting business from his father. One of his first actions on the news market was to establish the *New York Evening Telegram*, an evening edition of the *Herald* which was sold for one cent, instead of three cents like the mother paper. Another early business decision was to hire Samuel L. Clemens, then already famous as the author Mark Twain, to write regularly for the *Herald*. From 1868 until his death in 1910, Twain produced about two hundred articles, letters, and interviews for the *New York Herald*.³⁶ Both papers, the *Herald* and the *Evening Telegram*, became fully Bennett's own when his father died in 1872.³⁷

In 1887 Gordon Bennett established a Paris edition of his paper, followed by a short-lived London edition in 1888. While the Paris *Herald* flourished, its London edition was a financial and editorial failure. With his 'new modes' of journalism, Gordon Bennett created a stir among British society in general and the British clergy in particular. The English assailed him for editing a *daily* newspaper on a Sunday too.³⁸ As the *Times of India* reported, immediately upon first publication of the London *Herald*, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London joined forces to protest against the American's 'encroachment upon the observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest, of worship and of religious teaching'.³⁹ In 1889 the London *Herald* was discontinued. Besides his trouble

³³ 'Our News Budget from Abroad: Electricity and our Special Pens and Penciling', *New York Herald*, 29 Dec. 1869.

³⁴ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 216.

³⁵ 'Mr. James Gordon Bennett', *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc.*, 13 Mar. 1880.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 218, 370.

³⁷ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 226.

³⁸ 'Sunday Newspapers', *Times of India*, 8 Apr. 1899.

³⁹ 'London Herald', *Times of India*, 6 Mar. 1889.

with the Church, Bennett's form of journalism did not find favour in London. British readers at the time, Crockett argues, neither cared much about American topics in their morning news nor liked to 'have it spread before them in Yankee fashion'.⁴⁰ Given the success of the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, France seemed much more susceptible to Gordon Bennett's American forms of news reporting, despite repeated complaints about 'the *américanisation* of the French press and its tendency towards *newyorkheraldisme*'.⁴¹ Eventually, the successful *Paris Herald* would also teach the English papers, according to a journalist from the *Omaha World Herald* from Nebraska in 1891, 'that life is not deprived of all blessings simply because a man is interviewed by a reporter'.⁴²

This transatlantic network of *Herald* papers mirrored its owner's Euro-American hybridity. Gordon Bennett was the son of Scottish and Irish immigrants to the United States. Born in the United States in 1841, he had spent most of his childhood in Europe, where his mother had fled trying to escape New York high society's sneering at the older Bennett's work as an editor.⁴³ Returning to New York as a young adult, Gordon Bennett was himself soon driven from the country. In 1877 his behaviour at a New Year soirée held by his fiancée's father made him a social outcast from American high society and a permanent émigré to Europe. Rumour has it that on New Year's Day Bennett arrived late and drunk at his fiancée's family mansion. Forgetting himself and the assembled guests, he mistook the fireplace for the water closet. The scandal and subsequent duel with his fiancée's brother, followed by a supposedly wild flight aboard the *Herald's* yacht, were widely reported in the American press.⁴⁴ The story also made it as far as Britain and India.⁴⁵ From then on and throughout his lifetime, Gordon Bennett spent most of his time in Paris or on board one of his yachts, roaming the world's oceans.

⁴⁰ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 360; Crockett, *When Bennett was Caliph*, 9.

⁴¹ Chalaby, 'Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention', 309.

⁴² 'English Newspapers', *Omaha World Herald*, 24 Aug. 1891.

⁴³ 'Mr. James Gordon Bennett', *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc.*, 13 Mar. 1880.

⁴⁴ 'James Gordon Bennett: The Cheerless Treatment Accorded to Him by his Sweetheart's Brother', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 Jan. 1877; 'Mr. Bennett's Ocean Journey: Picked up from the "Herald" Yacht and a Pleasant Trip across from New York World', *Boston Daily Globe*, 15 Feb. 1877.

⁴⁵ 'Our Illustrations', *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 20 Jan. 1877; 'Affairs at Home', *Times of India*, 2 Feb. 1877.

Already before Gordon Bennett's flight, the *New York Herald* was the most international of the US newspapers. Until the early twentieth century it outdid other New York papers, such as the *New York Times*, in gathering and disseminating foreign news.⁴⁶ By 1837 the *Herald* already had one 'correspondent' each in Jamaica and Key West in addition to six correspondents based in Europe.⁴⁷ Although not all correspondents were proper foreign hires, but often also stringers who received a fee for every news item that found its way onto the pages of the *Herald*, the older Bennett became known as the originator of 'organized European correspondence'.⁴⁸ By the turn of the century the *Herald* maintained one of the largest teams of foreign correspondents.⁴⁹ The importance and institutionalization of foreign correspondents grew over the course of the nineteenth century. In 1878 Gordon Bennett landed a coup by hiring the French journalist Ivan de Woestyne, who had formerly reported on the Russo-Turkish war for *Le Figaro*. Now, as Bennett made public, the renowned journalist was to cover the Afghan war exclusively for the *Herald*.⁵⁰

Another star foreign correspondent of the *New York Herald* was John Russell Young (1841–99). Young had entered Bennett's service in 1871, leaving behind the *New York Tribune* as well as the law profession. Bennett sent him first to Europe to report 'in the interest of the *New York Herald*' and in 1877 to accompany the American General Ulysses S. Grant on his round-the-world tour. Young then became US Minister to China in 1882. Returning to news reporting in 1885, he served as editor for both the Paris and the London editions of Bennett's *Herald*.⁵¹ The *Herald's* fame in foreign news reporting carried as far as India. The *Times of India* exclaimed in 1879, 'how true it [was] that [they] really never

⁴⁶ Kevin J. O'Keefe, *A Thousand Deadlines: The New York City Press and American Neutrality, 1914–17* (The Hague, 2013).

⁴⁷ Michael Schudson, 'Discovering the News', in Elliot King and Jane L. Chapman (eds.), *Key Readings in Journalism* (London, 2012), 13–23.

⁴⁸ Frederic Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872* (New York, 1873): 451; Carl Sandburg, *Storm over the Land: A Profile of the Civil War* (San Diego, 1942), 87; John M. Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting* (Baton Rouge, La., 2009).

⁴⁹ Hamilton and Tworek, 'The Natural History of the News', 397; Richard R. John, 'Letters, Telegrams, News', in Celeste-Marie Bernier et al. (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Letters and Letter-Writing* (Edinburgh, 2016): 119–35, at 127–8.

⁵⁰ 'Afghan War', *Times of India*, 30 Nov. 1878; 'Foreign News', *Times of India*, 18 Dec. 1878.

⁵¹ 'Obituary', *Daily News*, 9 Jan. 1899.

knew what was going on in England till [they] read the foreign newspapers!—referring explicitly to the *New York Herald*, which had just published an interview by Captain Boyton, ‘of aquatic fame’, with Queen Victoria, which contained ‘some more than usually startling facts’.⁵²

Foreigners also saw the *New York Herald* as the main point of contact when they wanted to get their version of a story across to an American or even Western public. In October 1874, for instance, Marshall Bazaine sent an exclusive letter to ‘Mr. J. Gordon Bennett, Director of the New York Herald, N. Y.’ explaining his rather delicate situation. François Achille Bazaine was a French general and, from 1864 on, had been Marshal of France. In October 1870 he had surrendered the fortress city of Metz and the last organized French army during the Franco-Prussian War. In 1872 the government of the French Third Republic sentenced him to death for his surrender, later commuted to twenty years’ imprisonment, from which he escaped in August 1874.⁵³ The ‘impartiality’ that the *New York Herald* had shown in reference to the ‘severe trials’ Bazaine had had to endure and ‘the marks of kindly sympathy’ that he had received from Bennett’s representatives in Europe moved him ‘to offer a public acknowledgement’.⁵⁴

Similarly, Don Carlos of Spain sought out the *New York Herald* as his news medium in 1874 when addressing ‘the Christian Powers’ about his status as ‘King of Spain de jure, and reigning, de facto in all the vast extent of the Monarchy’.⁵⁵ Don Carlos was the lead figure of the Spanish Carlist movement that had stirred up a civil war over monarchical rule in Spain. The third Carlist War lasted from 1872 to 1876 and was an attempt to challenge the legitimacy of Isabella II’s rule. While the Carlists managed to establish a temporary state in the Basque region, they lost the war in 1876.⁵⁶ In 1874 Don Carlos made use of the *Herald* to enlist foreign sympathy, acknowledgement of the legitimacy of his claim, and possibly foreign (military) support. By way of New York, the ‘Manifesto of Don Carlos’ then also made

⁵² ‘News Travels’, *Times of India*, 21 Feb. 1879. In his Anglo-French comparison, Chalaby claims that in terms of information, Anglo-American news reporting was generally superior to other national newspaper cultures at the time: Chalaby, ‘Journalism as an Anglo-American Invention’, 305.

⁵³ Robert Christophe, *La Vie tragique du Maréchal Bazaine* (Paris, 1947).

⁵⁴ ‘Ex-Marshall Bazaine’, *Times of India*, 8 Oct. 1874.

⁵⁵ ‘Manifesto of Don Carlos’, *Times of India*, 11 Sept. 1874.

⁵⁶ Jeremy MacClancy, *The Decline of Carlism* (Reno, Nev., 2000).

it onto the pages of the *Times of India*.⁵⁷ Both examples illustrate that by the early 1870s the Gordon Bennetts, father and son, had established the *New York Herald* as a news medium of great renown that foreign individuals sought out when they wanted to address the American public. For Gordon Bennett this was the very basis from which to expand even further. By the late nineteenth century the paper itself boasted that it was ‘the most largely circulated journal in the world’.⁵⁸

On the Marriage of Communications Technology and News

What distinguished Gordon Bennett from other newspaper entrepreneurs of his time was his strong affinity with technology. Gordon Bennett made a virtue out of his dependence on the latest forms of global communication while running two American newspapers and one, albeit short-lived, British newspaper from Paris by linking technological infrastructures, the medium of the newspaper, and news content. The telegraph in particular played a key role in shaping Gordon Bennett’s perspective on news. For him, this communications technology was not only the fast-writer, the ‘tachygraph’ as Claude Chappe had intended to call his invention of optical communications machinery, but also the far-writer, the ‘telegraph’.⁵⁹ In the second half of the nineteenth century telegraphy’s ‘annihilation’ of time coincided with an extension of the distance covered in a form of modern news reporting that now spanned the entire globe.

Technology has always been integral to the efficient distribution of *timely* news.⁶⁰ In what geographer David Harvey has called a ‘time–space compression’, new media, such as the telegraph, separated message and messenger.⁶¹ Information now moved faster than goods and people in a way that seemed to ‘annihilate’ time and space, or so contemporaries often claimed. This loss of materiality in communications enabled new forms of market interaction, such

⁵⁷ ‘Manifesto of Don Carlos’.

⁵⁸ Sandburg, *Storm over the Land*, 87.

⁵⁹ Daniel Probst, *Evolution der Medien: Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Überlegungen am Beispiel der Telegraphie* (Stuttgart, 2004).

⁶⁰ Vanessa Ogle, *The Global Transformation of Time: 1870–1950* (Cambridge, Mass., 2015).

⁶¹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, Mass., 1989); Roland Wenzlhuemer, ‘The Dematerialization of Telecommunication: Communication Centres and Peripheries in Europe and the World, 1850–1920’, *Journal of Global History*, 2/3 (2007), 345–72.

as futures trading, that relied on information about goods that the investors never possessed.⁶² Telegraphy also promoted standardization in timekeeping, transportation, and stock market prices through tickers.⁶³ For the media sector, the telegraph inaugurated a 'new phase in the history of communications'.⁶⁴ News became timelier and new forms of business enterprise, the news agencies, sprang up in relation to these new technological possibilities that allowed faster and further news distribution. News agencies were the first multinationals of their time. They collected but also filtered news when passing it onto their customers, the newspapers. The news agencies were also the main sources of international news for small and middle-sized papers that could not afford to maintain their own (foreign) correspondents, as the *New York Herald* did.⁶⁵

Electrical telegraphy had arrived in the United States in the 1840s, almost a decade later than in Europe.⁶⁶ When it came, newspaper entrepreneurs were among the first to embrace this new technology, which initially represented both an opportunity and a threat. Telegraphy was a threat because it might provide timelier news directly to the public and displace newspapers. It was an opportunity if telegraph dispatches could be used to stir excitement and sell more papers.⁶⁷ James Gordon Bennett Sr. seized the opportunity. He supported Samuel F. B. Morse on his initial scheme of government ownership, arguing that 'government must be impelled to take hold' of the telegraph and develop it as part of the Post Office.⁶⁸ After the US Congress declined to

⁶² Alexander Engel, 'Buying Time: Futures Trading and Telegraphy in Nineteenth-Century Global Commodity Markets', *Journal of Global History*, 10/2 (2015), 284–306; Jonathan Ira Levy, 'Contemplating Delivery: Futures Trading and the Problem of Commodity Exchange in the United States, 1875–1905', *American Historical Review*, 111/2 (2006), 307–35.

⁶³ David Hochfelder, "'Where the Common People Could Speculate": The Ticker, Bucket Shops, and the Origins of Popular Participation in Financial Markets, 1880–1920', *Journal of American History*, 93/2 (2006), 335–58; Alex Preda, *Framing Finance: The Boundaries of Markets and Modern Capitalism* (Chicago, 2009); Alexander J. Field, 'The Magnetic Telegraph, Price and Quality Data and the New Management of Capital', *Journal of Economic History*, 52/2 (1992), 401–13.

⁶⁴ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 153.

⁶⁵ Oliver Boyd-Barrett, *The International News Agencies* (London, 1980); id. and Terhi Rantanen (eds.), *The Globalization of News* (London, 1998); Heidi Tworek, *News from Germany: The Competition to Control World Communications, 1900–1945* (Cambridge Mass., 2010).

⁶⁶ Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge Mass., 2010), 49–52.

⁶⁷ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 170.

⁶⁸ Bennett, quoted in Robert L. Thompson, *Wiring a Continent: The History of the*

purchase the rights from Morse, James Gordon Bennett and other news tycoons stepped in financially to help Morse raise funds for a line from Boston to New York.⁶⁹ Telegraphy had a steep take-off in the United States, where by 1850 there were 12,000 miles of telegraph lines, as against 2,215 miles in Britain. By 1853 there were 23,000 miles of telegraph lines in the USA.⁷⁰ Between 1846 and 1848 New York became the centre of an emerging telegraph network, with connections north to Boston, west to Buffalo, and south to Washington DC and beyond.

In mid century half a dozen of New York's most prestigious papers decided to pool their resources to cut costs. The *New York Sun*, the *Herald*, the *Journal of Commerce*, the *Express*, the *Courier and Enquirer*, and later also the *New York Tribune* entered into a working agreement to share the expense of telegraph dispatches and news gathered from ships arriving in New York harbour. This new Associated Press, initially called Harbor News Association, soon developed into the most powerful news service in the country. It held command over European news, relayed by telegraph from the seaports in eastern Canada where it was first received, by controlling this telegraph route, and obtained national news via a network of agents, not news reporters, who rewrote items from local newspapers and transmitted them to New York. By the early 1850s the New York Associated Press was providing two columns of news to major dailies throughout the United States. It was the telegraph that enabled it to do so.⁷¹

A generation after this first marriage of terrestrial telegraphy and news, Gordon Bennett also came to rely on the latest innovation in communications technology, ocean telegraphy, to run his news empire. In 1866 the successful completion of a permanent transatlantic submarine cable ushered in a new era of global communication by offering transoceanic 'instantaneous' communication.⁷² In the years

Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832–1866 (Princeton, 1947), 31; Richard R. John, 'Private Enterprise, Public Good?', in Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (eds.), *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004), 328–54, at 341.

⁶⁹ Starr, *Creation of the Media*, 170.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 169.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 174; Jonathan Silberstein-Loeb, *The International Distribution of News: The Associated Press, Press Association, and Reuters, 1848–1947* (Cambridge, 2014), 14; Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 62–3.

⁷² On 'instantaneity' see Florian Sprenger, 'Between the Ends of a Wire: Electricity,

thereafter, cables were laid from Europe as far as India, South-East Asia, Australia, Latin America, and Africa. Simultaneously, landline systems became denser, reaching into tiny towns in places as far afield as the Habsburg Empire, British India, and the US West. By the time Gordon Bennett fully entered his father's newspaper business in the 1870s, almost any major commercial centre could be reached from Europe and the American East Coast by telegraph through a network comprising, at that time, roughly 100,000 miles of ocean cables. Coincidentally, submarine telegraphy and Gordon Bennett's news entrepreneurship came of age at the same time. In the 1880s and 1890s, when Gordon Bennett launched novel news formats, popular connections were duplicated and even triplicated. The expanding ocean network became ever more densely linked with landline connections. In addition, technological developments such as duplex and quadruplex telegraphy allowed two or even four messages to be transmitted simultaneously from both ends of the wire. By 1900 thirteen Atlantic cables processed as many as 10,000 messages daily.⁷³ Today we should not be surprised *that* Gordon Bennett ran his different papers from aboard his yachts, from Paris, or any other place he happened to be, but how easily he was able to do so.

Submarine telegraphy became key for how Gordon Bennett ran his news business. The submarine telegraphs allowed him to exploit not only the technology's speed, but also its reach. Given his personal situation as an (enforced) expatriate, the electric wires that connected the Old World and the New came as a blessing, and the first Atlantic cable of 1866 became 'the wire that changed [his] world'.⁷⁴ His orders sent by cable had almost the same weight and timeliness as if he were in the next room at the *Herald's* New York office. Communications technology expanded his workspace and 'annihilated' the in-between. Overcoming the 'apparent disadvantages of remoteness and absence', technology allowed Gordon Bennett to be 'always omnipresent in the *Herald*

Instantaneity and the World of Telegraphy', in Michaela Hampf and Simone Müller-Pohl (eds.), *Global Communication Electric: Business, News and Politics in the World of Telegraphy* (Frankfurt a.M., 2013).

⁷³ Simone M. Müller, 'From Cabling the Atlantic to Wiring the World: A Review Essay on the 150th Anniversary of the Atlantic Telegraph Cable of 1866', *Technology and Culture*, 57/3 (2016), 507-26.

⁷⁴ Gillian Cookson, *The Cable: The Wire that Changed the World* (Stroud, 2003).

office'.⁷⁵ Despite everything that the mockingbird incident—when he had snobbishly ignored the enormous cost of sending a telegram for a private conversation while neglecting business matters—tells us about how he conducted his business, such arbitrariness must have been the exception rather than the rule. Until his death, Bennett kept a close eye on the *Herald's* news reporting, and maintained firm control over it. Al Laney, a journalist on Bennett's *Evening Telegram* and the *Paris Herald*, reports how Bennett's executives 'were required to sit at the end of a cable which connected with Bennett wherever he happened to be, and a never ending stream of editors and reporters was kept shuttling back and forth across the ocean at his command'.⁷⁶

During the reign of James Gordon Bennett Sr., 'foreign correspondents' were primarily local stringers with other primary occupations, or Americans travelling abroad following the well-established convention of writing letters to newspapers. Gordon Bennett's foreign reports, by contrast, were produced by his own New York staff. He sent them around the world and had them employ the telegraph to report back immediately on the local situation.⁷⁷

Throughout Bennett's lifetime, the *New York Herald* maintained its position as one of the leading US newspapers—despite Bennett's absence from New York.⁷⁸ This success as a powerful, independent publisher was based not only on communications technology, but also on a shrewd business move: the merger of news content and infrastructure. For Gordon Bennett it was not enough to use the global telegraph network; he needed to own a stake in it. Early on he realized that the telegraph had one major technological disadvantage: its limited capacity. The telegraph could not be used if the line was busy transmitting someone else's message. Government messages usually took priority. For all other customers, the situation easily turned into a race to the telegraph office, when being the first to transmit news mattered. In 1860 the older Bennett had the entire books of Genesis and Revelation telegraphed between Niagara and New York at a cost of \$700. He wanted to keep a monopoly over the line between those two points in order to be the first to report the

⁷⁵ 'James Gordon Bennett', *New York Times*, 15 May 1918.

⁷⁶ Laney, *Paris Herald*, 17.

⁷⁷ On the old Bennett's foreign correspondents see Hamilton and Tworek, 'The Natural History of the News', 397.

⁷⁸ 'J. G. Bennett dies in Beaulieu Villa', *New York Times*, 15 May 1918.

visit by Albert, Prince of Wales, to Niagara Falls.⁷⁹ Gordon Bennett sought other means to keep control over the line.

Gordon Bennett saw his access to long-distance communications seriously threatened after Jay Gould, railroad magnate, financier, speculator, and not necessarily a friend of Bennett's, entered the American telegraph and news business in the 1870s. In 1879 Gould took over the New York paper the *World*—a growing rival to Bennett's *Herald*. By 1881 Gould also owned telegraph provider Western Union. Now he controlled 90 per cent of the telegraph market in the United States and owned his own paper. For Gordon Bennett, who ran the *Herald* from Europe, this control had an immediate impact on his news business: anything he cabled from Europe went through Western Union's hands. While Gould's ownership of Western Union stirred anti-monopolist disputes and debates over state ownership of telegraphs, Gordon Bennett and others also started worrying about the news market.⁸⁰ Critics feared that after his takeover of Western Union, Gould would also show an interest in Associated Press, America's prime provider of foreign news. Gould's move was supposedly part of a scheme to control four out of AP's seven newspapers to force them into an exclusive working agreement with Western Union. This would have secured Gould an absolute monopoly over transmitting and distributing news in the United States.⁸¹

Among the fiercest anti-monopolists and opponents of Gould were the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*.⁸² Disputes between Gould and Bennett, launched in their respective news organs over the 1880s, revealed the inherent and deep-seated dislike the men harboured for each other. Bennett condemned Gould's conduct of his telegraph business as 'the most gigantic system of organized robbery in existence in any civilized country'.⁸³ Gould, in turn, published a letter which he sent to all major American newspapers but the *Herald*, and in which he portrayed 'Bennett, the libertine' as the social derelict of New York's respectable and honourable men, whose entire life had been 'one of shame'.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ 'The Humours of Newspaper Enterprise', *Times of India*, 17 Aug. 1895.

⁸⁰ On Gould and anti-monopoly see John, *Network Nation*, ch. 5.

⁸¹ Blondheim, *News over the Wires*, 157–68; Maury Klein, *The Life and Legend of Jay Gould* (Baltimore, 1986), 394.

⁸² 'His Majesty Jay Gould', *New York Times*, 23 Feb. 1881.

⁸³ *New York Herald*, 1882, cited in Klein, *Jay Gould*, 313.

⁸⁴ 'Mr. Gould to Mr. Bennett: A Caustic Open Letter', *Washington Post*, 2 Apr. 1883.

At this time, silver-mining tycoon John William Mackay, whose interest in telegraphy was supposedly roused by his wife's exorbitant cable bills, approached Bennett about a transatlantic submarine cable project. He estimated that the prospect of federal anti-monopoly legislation in the United States would aid the scheme in its fight against Western Union and that Bennett, who ran his papers from Paris, would be the transatlantic connection's best customer. In 1883 Bennett and Mackay launched the Commercial Cable Company and had two Atlantic telegraph cables laid by Siemens Brothers, a London-based company with German origins. The Commercial Cable Company opened for traffic on New Year's Eve in 1884 and successfully established a duopoly on the Atlantic cable market. For Gordon Bennett, the Commercial Cable Company secured fast and easy access to the world's communications network, unimpaired by business rivals. Essentially, he ran his own communications network providing the infrastructure for his media content.⁸⁵ Bennett's papers mirrored this entanglement of infrastructure and content. For years, both his papers carried on their editorial pages a circular device, a representation of the globe, advertising the Commercial Cable.⁸⁶

Discovering the Entire World as a Source of News

Telegraphy meant not only fast but also far communication for Gordon Bennett, who was himself a passionate traveller. When Jules Verne wrote his piece 'The Day of an American Journalist in 2889', he probably modelled his hero, Francis Bennett, publisher of the *Earth Herald*, on Gordon Bennett. Verne's Bennett travels around the world in aero-cars and submarine tubes. His reporters send in stories from other planets, something 'the real-life Bennett would have commanded if he could have', according to John Hamilton.⁸⁷ In line with the increasing worldwide reach of the communications network, Bennett also saw the entire globe as a source for news. As the 'Commodore' of his papers, as he was called by his employees because of his passion for yachting, Bennett always 'kept watch for rising storms all over the world'. Whenever he sensed that 'a war, a revolution, or some other great event was impending, even though

⁸⁵ Müller, *Wiring the World*, ch. 4. ⁸⁶ Crockett, *When Gordon Bennett was Caliph*, 7.

⁸⁷ Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye*, 77.

the sky was clear, he would send a correspondent there'.⁸⁸ Starting in the 1870s, Bennett expanded the geographical scope of the *Herald's* reporting and taught its readership to take an increasingly international perspective in its news consumption.

This shift towards more global news reporting was intricately connected to a shift in how people read news. The period between the 1860s and the 1880s witnessed the development of an international reference code system in news readership which was essential for deciphering swiftly arriving telegraph news dispatches coming in, for instance, 'by Atlantic telegraph'.⁸⁹ In 1866 the *Birmingham Daily Post* was still bitterly complaining about receiving telegraphic news of the 'death of John van Buren' (son of the former US President Martin van Buren), someone it neither knew nor wanted to know about. Moreover, it advised that the Atlantic telegraph's news reporter deserved a 'whipping for his stupidity' for sending such 'scrap as this'.⁹⁰ There was still a wide gap between readers in Europe and North America in terms of awareness of news. Fifteen years later, as international news reporting on the death of US President James A. Garfield illustrates, this gap had narrowed. Garfield was shot on 2 July 1881. He survived but was severely injured and died weeks later, on 9 September 1881. During those eleven weeks, the status of the President's health was meticulously reported in the British press by Atlantic telegraph. People in Britain learnt about the President's temperature, his pulse rate, what and how often he ate, and how he slept at night. They were virtually at the President's deathbed—and interested in reading about it.⁹¹ Gordon Bennett was one of the key figures in the development of this international reference system in news readership. Although readers had never seen certain places or met particular people from far away, reading about them regularly in print provided a point of recognition. Bennett gave them an image of the world in their heads through reading.

In the *New York Herald's* reporting, alongside international political news such as the Carlist War or the Franco-Prussian War, news about the 'discovery' of the globe became a particular feature.

⁸⁸ 'Bennett a Figure in many Anecdotes: Stories of his Peculiarities Told by Acquaintances', *New York Times*, 15 May 1918.

⁸⁹ Simone Müller-Pohl, "'By Atlantic Telegraph": A Study on Weltcommunication in the 19th Century,' *Medien & Zeit*, 4 (2010), 49–54.

⁹⁰ 'Miscellaneous', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 Oct. 1866.

⁹¹ Müller-Pohl, 'By Atlantic Telegraph', 51.

By the late nineteenth century the greatest cartographic and cataloguing enterprises of the age of exploration were coming to an end. The mapping of the globe was mostly complete; few blank spaces remained. As popular media emerged, however, they lavished increased attention on the 'conquest' of these few still uncharted places. Adventurers who had once emphasized the scientific aspect of their explorations now joined forces with sensation-seeking newspapers in order to increase their fame and profit. The nexus between the age of extreme expeditionary culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the golden age of popular newspapers was 'a marriage made in heaven', according to Emily Rosenberg.⁹²

Gordon Bennett was not only at the forefront of this alliance of mass entertainment and adventure but also played Cupid in making the match. In 1872, barely into his first year of independent news reporting at the *Herald*, he had already landed 'one of the most sensational stories of his time': the search for the English missionary David Livingstone.⁹³ From his departure in 1865 Livingstone had kept European readers informed by letter of his travels and discoveries in Africa, such as the quest for the source of the Nile, which he was conducting on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society. On the other side of the Atlantic, the *New York Herald* had started reporting on Livingstone in detail in 1867.⁹⁴ Late in 1869 Livingstone had dropped out of Euro-American sight: 'Where is Livingstone?' ran one of the *Herald's* headlines in September 1869.⁹⁵ By February 1870 the *Herald* had declared 'the great explorer sacrificed to superstition'.⁹⁶ Search missions seemed half-hearted until Gordon Bennett equipped his news reporter, Henry Martin Stanley, then acting out of Madrid, with a *carte blanche* at the banks to 'go and FIND LIVINGSTONE!'⁹⁷ In December 1871 Gordon Bennett announced an official 'expedition of the *New York Herald* in quest

⁹² Emily Rosenberg, 'Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World', in ead. (ed.), *A World Connecting*, 815–999, at 963.

⁹³ David R. Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World Power* (Evanston, Ill., 2007), 38.

⁹⁴ 'A Mission to Africa', *New York Herald*, 11 June 1867; 'Africa: Doctor Livingstone Reported Safe and Journal in the Interior', *New York Herald*, 23 Nov. 1867; 'Dr. Livingstone Still Alive', *New York Herald*, 20 Apr. 1868.

⁹⁵ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 271; 'Africa: Where is Livingstone?', *New York Herald*, 19 Sept. 1869.

⁹⁶ 'Africa: Livingstone's Death again Reported—The Great Explorer Sacrificed to Superstition', *New York Herald*, 3 Feb. 1870.

⁹⁷ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 279.

of the great African traveller', and from then on articles, editorials, and letters from Stanley adorned the New York paper almost on a weekly basis.⁹⁸ In January 1872 the *Herald* reprinted an article from the *Irish Times* claiming that the Irish press was speaking only in the 'most laudatory terms' of the enterprise, which was 'wholly unique in the annals of journalism' and superior to the rich English papers. It pointed to the indifference on the part of the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* as to the missionary's whereabouts.⁹⁹ By March 1872 the *Daily News* in Brighton, England and the *Leavenworth Times* in Kansas were also speaking of the *Herald's* 'bold adventure of modern journalism', as the paper did not fail to report.¹⁰⁰ On 2 May 1872 the *Herald* ran its infamous headline: 'The Triumph of *Herald* Enterprise—Dr. Livingstone with Mr. Stanley at Zanzibar.'¹⁰¹ Readers of the *Herald* were thrilled to read that the famous missionary, who had supposedly been lost on the 'dark continent' for three years, was alive and well and had, moreover, discovered the source of the Nile.¹⁰² But for the *Herald* Stanley's adventurous reporting was also 'a new thing in the enterprise of modern journalism' and a 'bold adventure in [the] cause of humanity, civilization, and science', as the paper boasted.¹⁰³

Livingstone, however, was neither Gordon Bennett's only coup nor the sole target of Stanley's voyage. Instructing Stanley, Bennett had advised his reporter to take the route via Baghdad and India to Zanzibar and to 'write up something about the Euphrates Valley Railroad'.¹⁰⁴ As the first stage on his voyage, Stanley went to Egypt to cover the opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869. Then he enjoyed a trip to Upper Egypt as the Khedive's guest and made his way from Cairo to Constantinople and Odessa through the Caucasus on to 'Persia' before he crossed over to Bombay, from where he took the boat to Zanzibar. The entire voyage took about fifteen months; every step of the way he reported by telegraph and letter to Bennett and the *Herald*.¹⁰⁵ Stanley's stories, exclusive to the

⁹⁸ 'Dr. Livingstone: The Expedition of the *New York Herald* in Quest of the Great African Traveler', *New York Herald*, 22 Dec. 1871.

⁹⁹ 'Ireland: The Irish Press on the *Herald's* Livingstone Expedition', *New York Herald*, 31 Jan. 1872.

¹⁰⁰ 'The *Herald* and Dr. Livingstone', *New York Herald*, 18 Mar. 1872.

¹⁰¹ 'The Triumph of *Herald* Enterprise: Dr. Livingstone with Mr. Stanley at Zanzibar', *New York Herald*, 2 May 1872.

¹⁰² Spencer, *Yellow Journalism*, 38.

¹⁰³ *New York Herald*, cited in Spencer, *Yellow Journalism*, 79.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon Bennett, cited in Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 279.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 281–2.

Herald, boosted the paper's circulation and profits. The explorer Stanley, in turn, became a modern celebrity. In 1874 London newspapers emulated the *Herald's* profit-making scheme. The *Daily Telegraph* teamed up with the *Herald* to sponsor yet another African expedition led by Stanley.¹⁰⁶

Another 'uncharted' geographical region of particular interest to Bennett was the North Pole. As early as 1879 he supported US Navy Lieutenant George De Long's ill-fated voyage to the North Pole, providing him with his own ship, the *Jeannette*. In 1881 De Long discovered several islands which he claimed for the United States, among them Bennett Island. When De Long and the ship went missing, Bennett sent out a search party, but it returned without finding any trace of the *Jeannette*. Later, people learnt that she had been closed in by the ice and had eventually sunk. On their journey home, nineteen of the crew members, including De Long, died.¹⁰⁷ Bennett never lost interest in the Arctic. In 1909 the Americans Frederick A. Cook and Robert E. Peary raced for the North Pole. The *New York Herald* and the *New York Times* built up the competition between the two explorers' teams to increase sales by publishing sensational stories. Gordon Bennett paid Cook \$25,000 for his exclusive story. When Cook cabled that he had reached the pole, the story of how this 'courageous explorer' had been 'fighting famine and ice' to reach 'the great goal' was all over the front page of the *Herald*. Days later, when Peary also cabled news of his success to his sponsor, the *New York Times*, the paper dismissed Cook as a fraud and picked a fight with the *Herald*.¹⁰⁸

Using the stories of Livingstone, De Long, Cook, and others, Gordon Bennett established the role of the press in the creation of 'the modern image of the unknown', emphasizing exhilarating stories of rivalry, hardship, and tragedy over facts.¹⁰⁹ The global spread of newspapers and communication networks was one essential component in creating formulae of spectacularity that dominated visions of adventure by the early twentieth century.¹¹⁰ Another one was financial liquidity. Stanley remembers Gordon Bennett telling him

¹⁰⁶ Rosenberg, 'Transnational Currents', 964.

¹⁰⁷ *New York Times*, 'The *Jeannette's* Long Cruise', 21 Dec. 1881; also Victor Slocum, *Castaway Boats* (Dobbs Ferry, NY, 2001); A. A. Hoehling, *The 'Jeannette' Expedition: An Ill-Fated Journey to the Arctic* (London, 1969).

¹⁰⁸ Müller, *Wiring the World*, 140; Rosenberg, 'Transnational Currents', 965.

¹⁰⁹ Beau Riffenburgh, cited in Rosenberg, 'Transnational Currents', 966.

¹¹⁰ Rosenberg, 'Transnational Currents', 966.

that his philosophy of news reporting was to 'publish whatever news will be interesting to the *world* at no matter what cost', and he certainly proved this point with Livingstone, De Long, and Cook.¹¹¹

News Races around the World

In the 1890s global or world news assumed a different format. Mirroring technological developments, media sensationalism and readership were no longer created by discoveries of the unknown, but by stories of speed. The essential question was no longer whether a far distant place could be reached, but how quickly. The French author Jules Verne, who twenty years earlier had famously written about his transatlantic voyage on the cable-laying ship *Great Eastern*, had soon after invented the ingenious character Phileas Fogg and sent him *Around the World in Eighty Days*.¹¹² New York *World* reporter Nellie Bly accepted a challenge to attempt the same thing in 1889. She made it in seventy-two days, keeping *World* readers informed, by telegraph, of every step of the way.¹¹³

Gordon Bennett both reflected and encouraged this trend in his editing of the *Herald*. Around the turn of the century, he shifted his focus from stories of global discovery to stories of global speed. He returned to yacht racing and, over a decade, sponsored the Gordon Bennett Cups for international gas air balloon, car, and aeroplane races across Europe.¹¹⁴ In 1900, when the automobile was still being developed, Gordon Bennett instituted what his French contemporaries christened the James Gordon Bennett Cup for a race in which the best types of automobile manufactured in different countries competed for international recognition. The races were held annually, in a different country each year. When Alberto Santos-Dumont, the Brazilian inventor, experimented with his tiny dirigible over Paris, Bennett offered encouragement by publicizing him. In 1906 Bennett initiated an international air balloon race (Coupe Aéronautique Gordon Bennett), which soon also became

¹¹¹ Stanley, cited in Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 280 (emphasis added).

¹¹² Jules Verne, *A Floating City* (London, 1871); id., *Around the World in Eighty Days*, trans. George M. Towle (London, 1873; repr. 1874).

¹¹³ Nellie Bly, *Nellie Bly's Book: Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (Gloucester, 2008).

¹¹⁴ e.g. the Goelet-Bennett Cup of 1895 at Cannes, sponsored by Ogden Goelet and Gordon Bennett: 'Yacht Racing at Cannes', *Glasgow Herald*, 15 Mar. 1895.

an annual event. Similarly, after the Wright brothers had successfully demonstrated that flying with heavier-than-air machines was possible in 1903, Gordon Bennett in 1909 presented a trophy for the world's first air race. For some years, this Gordon Bennett trophy annually brought together the best airmen in the world.¹¹⁵

With these races, Bennett turned his own hobby and passion for speed, technology, and sports into a news item and social event. During the first air race at Reims stands were built to include a 600-seat restaurant as well as barber, beauty, and flower shops. Telegraph and phone lines connected the venue to most major European capitals during the week-long event.¹¹⁶ In news reporting, emphasis was put on how quickly sportsmen could traverse the globe, and how far they could go.¹¹⁷ The *Herald* put sports news on the front cover.¹¹⁸ Bennett's news scheme caught on immediately, as other papers ranging from the *Times of India* to the *Duluth News-Tribune* of Minnesota also gave thorough coverage to the various races.¹¹⁹ Indeed, by the late nineteenth century, news about racing became so important to a particular readership that the *Times of India* published the story of Gordon Bennett's purchase of a yacht 'for the purpose of competing against the English yachts at Cowes regatta', alongside news of the seventy-third anniversary of the declaration of Greek independence.¹²⁰ Car (equipment) manufacturers such as Fiat, Michelin, and Napier as well as pilots and drivers prided themselves on their (successful) participation.¹²¹ Car, balloon, and yacht races in the news all around the globe were connected with one name, that of Gordon Bennett.

As the *Herald's* news turned to stories of speed, Gordon Bennett's cable company did everything possible to annihilate any kind of distance. Even before Bennett's acquisition of the Commercial Cable Company, the *Herald* had enjoyed the reputation of being

¹¹⁵ Crockett, *When Gordon Bennett was Caliph*, 5–6.

¹¹⁶ Society of Air Racing Historians, 'The History of Air Racing: 1909 Reims Air Race' (<http://www.airrace.com/1909-reims-rs.html>) [accessed 27 May 2016].

¹¹⁷ Henry S. Villard, *Blue Ribbon of the Air: The Gordon Bennett Races* (Washington, 1987); Don Berliner, *Airplane Racing: A History, 1909–2008* (Jefferson, NC, 2009).

¹¹⁸ 'A Short History of the *International Herald Tribune*', 8 Mar. 2012.

¹¹⁹ 'Conquest of the Air', *Times of India*, 14 Jan. 1907; Haskin Frederic, 'Conquest of the Air', *Duluth News-Tribune*, 8 June 1909; the same article was also printed in the *Idaho Daily Statesman*.

¹²⁰ 'Foreign News', *Times of India*, 2 May 1894.

¹²¹ 'All Night Ballooning', *Times of India*, 29 Sept. 1906; 'Richard Brasier's Motorcars', *Times of India*, 8 Dec. 1905.

the fastest news journal.¹²² With the Commercial Cable Company, speed of transmission became almost an obsession. As one of the first cable companies, it ignored safety rules concerning the places where cables could come to land. In 1884 it ran a cable almost to the gateway of New York, with a direct line to Wall Street.¹²³ The application of Muirhead's duplex system allowed messages to be sent simultaneously from both ends of the cable. This made them the fastest means for transatlantic communication that existed.¹²⁴ Just as Bennett embraced ocean cable technology, he also took on the telephone and wireless as soon as they became available.¹²⁵

Upon learning of Marconi's experiments with the wireless, Bennett brought him to America to use his device in reporting the America's Cup yacht race in 1899. He became the first to employ the wireless in news reporting.¹²⁶ In the 1890s Bennett became obsessed with speed in his news reporting. He staged events, such as an interview conducted by cable between the Old World and the New, or Anglo-American cable chess matches across the Atlantic. The Commercial Cable Company provided the connection and the *Herald* was the first to report the events.¹²⁷ Bennett gave ample space in his newspapers to these miracles of the age. On 6 July 1903 the Commercial Cable Company's successful attempt to encircle the earth in nine minutes filled the headlines. The completion of an around-the-world cable system enabled the *Herald* to receive the latest news directly from points as far from its New York and Paris bases as the Philippines, California, and Asia.¹²⁸

Global technologies of communication were the key to Bennett's conduct of business as well as his success. The instantaneity and speed of the global cable network allowed him to run his different newspapers with their headquarters in London, Paris, and New

¹²² 'A Miracle of Journalism', *Times of India*, 21 Feb. 1881.

¹²³ 'Completion of Bennett-Mackay Cable', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 21 Oct. 1884.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ See e.g. 'Belgian Elections: By the Herald's Special Telephone', *Paris Herald*, 17 Oct. 1887.

¹²⁶ Seitz, *James Gordon Bennetts*, 372; 'A Short History of the *International Herald Tribune*'.

¹²⁷ 'Telegraphing Extraordinary', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 Jan. 1888; 'Chess by Cable', *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 16 Mar. 1895; 'The Cable Chess Match: Great Britain v. United States. The Trophy Won Back', *Glasgow Herald*, 15 Feb. 1897; 'Our London Correspondence', *Glasgow Herald*, 6 Apr. 1897.

¹²⁸ Charles L. Robertson, *The International Herald Tribune: The First Hundred Years* (New York, 1987), 26.

York from wherever he happened to be. It also allowed Bennett to make his news sources just as global as the technologies' reach. Finally, with this change in creating news from stories of discovery to stories of speed, Bennett recognized an important general trend with regard to technological developments, but also visions of the world.

*Conclusion: Journalism with a Global
Perspective or a Global Public (Sphere)?*

Did Gordon Bennett create a global public (sphere)? Or, rather, a version of journalism tailored to an elite international readership equipped with a news reference system that allowed them to crave and adopt a 'global' perspective in their news consumption? Clearly the latter if we take 'global' to mean geographically all-encompassing, and 'public sphere' to mean a 'discursive' space open to all.¹²⁹ Still, Gordon Bennett is the key figure in giving American journalism a global perspective, which makes him stand out against William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, or Adolph Ochs. This powerful independent publisher took the globe, the global even, as a source for news and an inspiration for his news formats. The African continent, the North Pole, and the Spanish peninsula were all sources of news for the *Herald*. By editing his papers, Gordon Bennett created an international reference system for readers to decode news about the world coming in from all around the globe. By repeatedly reading about faraway places, cultures, and people the *Herald's* rather elite readership became familiar with them and could then easily form an imaginary of the world in their heads. Gordon Bennett brought the world home to the *Herald's* readership, if only as Bennett himself saw it.

Bennett created these imaginaries of the world in the heads of his readers by means of modern technology. First submarine telegraphy and later also telephony and wireless telegraphy were important in reporting stories about the entire world as quickly as possible and in running a New York newspaper from Europe. While other leading newspapers at that time paid for the standard news service of the different telegraph providers, Gordon Bennett owned his own submarine telegraph company. The Commercial Cable

¹²⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, 1989); Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia, SC, 1999).

Company secured the *Herald's* market advantage in international news reporting throughout Bennett's lifetime. Bennett's obsession with speed and modern technology was why the *Herald* led the way in modern news reporting at the turn of the century, from stories of discovery to sensationalist stories of speed. Meanwhile, Gordon Bennett still fell short in creating or even responding to a global public or *Weltöffentlichkeit*. His limits were those of his day and age, of the very modern technology he used, and of his own self-perception as a newsmaker.

Modern communications technology both facilitated and limited the global perspective of the *Herald's* journalism. Privately and professionally, Gordon Bennett was obsessed with speed, the annihilation of time and distance, and the technology that allowed him to experience such global placelessness. At the same time, this 'annihilation' of space and acceleration of the speed of communication had paradoxical results. Not only did it come at an enormous cost for its users, making telegraphy the rich man's mail,¹³⁰ it also widened the gap between those places connected to the global communication system and those outside it. According to Hobsbawm, this 'intensified the relative backwardness of those parts of the world where horse, ox, mule, human bearer or boat still set the speed for transport',¹³¹ most strikingly illustrated in the case of the missing David Livingstone. In an age when New York could telegraph London, Buenos Aires, or Tokyo in a matter of minutes, it was striking that it was eight to nine months before the *New York Herald* received Livingstone's letter, and even more striking that the *London Times* could reprint the letter on the very next day.¹³²

Photojournalism, as exemplified by the *National Geographic* magazine, further emphasized this distinction between 'civilization' and 'backwardness'.¹³³ It helped to create 'the wildness of the "Wild West"' as well as the 'darkness of the "dark continent"', according to Hobsbawm.¹³⁴ Bennett's news reporting brought some parts of the globe, in particular a (predominantly male) Euro-American elite, into a closer imagined community, making them world citizens

¹³⁰ Müller, 'Beyond the Means of 99 Percent of the Population'.

¹³¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875* (New York, 1996), 60.

¹³² Müller, *Wiring the World*, 141.

¹³³ Stephanie L. Hawkins, *American Iconographic: 'National Geographic', Global Culture, and the Visual Imagination* (Charlottesville, Va., 2010).

¹³⁴ Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 60.

participating in a Western vision of a global public.¹³⁵ At the same time, its revelation of different modes of speed also helped to restructure the world into different levels of 'civilization'. While the readership of the *New York Herald*, the *Paris Herald*, and the *Evening Telegram* could read all about Bennett's vision of the world, this did not make the whole world part of the *Herald's* news public, or even of a larger one. Rather, the *Herald's* public was limited as well as limiting in terms of race, class, and gender.¹³⁶

Bennett himself did not strive to change these limitations or to educate his readers to become enlightened world citizens. On the contrary, as an editor Bennett was quite unresponsive towards his readership. During his age of news reporting, journalism in general and editing a newspaper in particular were an intensely personal matter.¹³⁷ Given Bennett's eccentric personality, this applied especially to the *Herald*. On his death, the *New York Times* revealed a secret that was well known among newspaper entrepreneurs, namely, that Gordon Bennett 'issued the *Herald* for a circulation of one—himself'.¹³⁸ Gordon Bennett's unresponsiveness towards his readership, his consumption community as Daniel Boorstin calls it, must make us question the very notion of a public sphere if it means a discursive space.¹³⁹ How can we speak of a 'global public' if it hinges upon the whim of one man? Clearly, the *Herald's* global perspective was Bennett's and not that of its readers.

¹³⁵ Winder, 'Imagining World Citizenship in the Networked Newspaper'.

¹³⁶ See Fraser's response to Habermas: Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25–6 (1990), 56–80.

¹³⁷ Schudson, 'Discovering the News', 16.

¹³⁸ 'James Gordon Bennett', *New York Times*, 15 May 1918.

¹³⁹ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience* (New York, 1974).