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The ship, the media, and the world: conceptualizing connections in global history

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Abstract

The study of transregional connections is central to the field of global history. This article reflects on the idea of connections from a conceptual viewpoint and treats them as mediators. This will be exemplified by studying the spatial and temporal dimensions of transoceanic steamship passages. The lives of crew and passengers did not go on 'stand-by' during such a passage. The case of the flight and eventual capture of Hawley Harvey Crippen will serve as a case in point. Suspected of murder in London, Crippen tried to escape to North America by transatlantic steamer. The captain, however, recognized the fugitive and informed both authorities and media. The ship, whose movements across the Atlantic contributed to the establishment of global connections, thus became tightly entangled in a global media landscape, with newspapers and readers from all over the globe focusing their attention on the small shipboard community. Simultaneously, the steamer became a profoundly secluded place for its passengers, who were cut off from the media flurry surrounding them. The article shifts the principal perspective of the murder case from a terracentric notion of history to a more sea-based narrative. It offers a new historical interpretation of the events and at the same time reconsiders the analytical concept of connections in a broader historical context.

Keywords Crippen, media, steamship, transregional connections, wireless telegraph

Introduction: conceptualizing connections in global history

In 1910, Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen, a London resident of American descent, came under the suspicion of having murdered his wife. He managed to escape from London before Scotland Yard could get hold of him. Crippen and his companion, Ethel Le Neve, fled to Antwerp. There, they boarded a steamship to Montreal, Canada. Their sojourn on the steamer, however, did not go unnoticed and a curious transatlantic manhunt unfolded. The pursuit and eventual arrest of Dr Crippen and his companion were embedded in a plurality of global connections

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provided, for instance, by the ship or the wireless telegraph. This article uses the Crippen case to look at the anatomy of these interrelated connections and to better understand their historical significance. It ultimately aims at contributing to a profound conceptualization of connections in global history.

In the subtitle of his seminal 2004 work on *The birth of the modern world*, Christopher Bayly introduced a reference to global connections and comparisons that has since become a kind of informal description of what the field of global history is all about.[1] Patrick O'Brien took it up in his prolegomenon to the first edition of the *Journal of Global History* two years later.[2] More recently, Sebastian Conrad has described the purpose of the field in his German-language introduction to global history in the same vein.[3] Following these and other researchers' suggestions, there seems to be a rough consensus in the field that global history should primarily concern itself with global connections and comparisons.

The two terms are fundamentally different in scope. For the historical sciences, comparison, be it global or not, is a method. It is an instrument of enquiry.[4] This leaves global or transregional connections as the principal objects of study of the field. Global history asks how such connections were created by historical actors and how they in turn influenced them in their actions and their perception of the world. Connections provide the building blocks for the phenomena of contact and exchange typically studied by historians in the field. It is a truism to state that some sort of connection is a precondition for all forms of exchange and interaction. When people, things, or ideas move, what they do is create a connection – sometimes fragile, sometimes more stable – between their origin(s) and their destination. In short, global history is interested in the significance of transregional connections in history.

Accordingly, connection as a term is in wide and prominent use in historical research. Connections are recognized as key elements in concepts such as transfers, entanglements, or contact zones, all of which have seen a fair share of theorizing in the last decades.[5] Often, however, the term is employed in a descriptive rather than an analytical manner and our conceptual understanding of transregional connections as the fundamental components of global exchange and interaction remains rudimentary. So far, too little attention has been given

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1 Christopher A. Bayly, *The birth of the modern world, 1780–1914: global connections and comparisons*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.

2 Patrick O'Brien, 'Historiographical traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history', *Journal of Global History*, 1, 1, 2006, p. 4.

3 Sebastian Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: eine Einführung*, Munich: C.H. Beck, 2013, p. 9.

4 The suitability of this instrument for the field of global history is not undisputed. The concept of *histoire croisée*, for instance, doubts that deeply interwoven subject matters can be meaningfully analysed by comparison. See Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Beyond comparison: *histoire croisée* and the challenge of reflexivity', *History and Theory*, 45, 1, 2006, pp. 30–50.

5 For transfers, see Michael Espagne and Michael Werner, eds., *Transferts: les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (xviii*[e]*–xix*[e] *siècles)*, Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988. For entanglements, see Shalini Randeria, 'Geteilte Geschichte und verwobene Moderne', in Jörn Rüsen, Hanna Leitgeb, and Norbert Jegelka, eds., *Zukunftsentwürfe: Ideen für eine Kultur der Veränderung*, Campus: Frankfurt am Main 1999, pp. 87–95; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected histories: notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies*, 31, 3, 1997, pp. 735–62; Shalini Randeria and Sebastian Conrad, 'Geteilte Geschichten: Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt', in Shalini Randeria and Sebastian Conrad, eds., *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Campus: Frankfurt am Main, 2002, pp. 9–49; Angelika Epple, Olaf Kaltmeier, and Ulrike Lindner, eds., *Entangled histories: reflecting on concepts of coloniality and postcoloniality*, special issue of *comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung,* 21, 1, 2011, pp. 7–104. For the notion of a contact zone, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation*, London: Routledge, 1992.

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to a more systematic and conceptually informed evaluation of the term. What is a connection? And, even more importantly, what is a global or transregional connection? How do local and global connections differ analytically? How do connections become historically potent phenomena? Do connections have a time and a space of their own? And, building on this, where is their place in history? Finally, how do they relate to that which is connected? Issues such as these implicitly inform many studies in global history but have rarely been addressed in a systematic fashion.

This lack of a feasible conceptual approach is a consequence of our perspective on connections. We usually think of connections mainly in terms of the people, places, or things that they bring into touch with each other. In practice, we conceptualize connections from their endpoints. Rather than considering the connection itself, we think about that which is connected. It is there that we look for effects of contact and exchange. The connection itself is part of the picture but remains in the background. We see it as an intermediary in the sense of actor–network theory, an enabler that brings its endpoints in touch but does not create or transform meaning by itself.[6] In this article, I claim that this way of thinking about connections should be amended. In order to better gauge the historical significance of transregional connections, we will have to think of connections as mediators rather than mere intermediaries (to stay in the terminology of actor–network theory). For Bruno Latour, 'Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry.'[7] This is what connections always do. They do not merely bring their endpoints in contact; they interject themselves as mediators and thereby gain a strong bearing on that which is connected.

If we conceive of connections as mediators, we will have to recalibrate our analytical focus. We will have to look more directly at that which connects: that which happens in between, during the communication process, between the endpoints. Connections should be seen as historical phenomena in their own right. At the same time, however, we must not lose sight of that which is connected. An exclusive focus on the connection itself would derive it of its principal quality. Thus, we need to consider connections and that which is connected in tandem and in constant mutual reference. What is more, connections develop their historical significance in the plural. They become meaningful and gain their mediating potential in reference to or difference from other connections or disconnections. The electric telegraph will serve as a simple example here. Its important role in nineteenth-century processes of globalization can only be understood in contrast to existing global disconnections and in reference to other forms of connections such as letter writing. The new communicational quality of telegraphic connections developed in reference to and difference from other kinds of global connections.[8]

Our conceptual understanding of the term 'connection' should bring all these points together. Global connections are mediators that themselves have an impact on that which is connected. The latter must not be mistaken for the connection itself. In order to identify mediating potential, connections and the connected need to be considered in tandem. Finally, connections exist in the plural and gain their mediating potential in relation to other forms of

6 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor–network theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 39.
7 *Ibid.*
8 See, for instance, the concept of dematerialization put forth in Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the nineteenth-century world: the telegraph and globalization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 30–7.

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connections and disconnections. Such an integrated concept of connections will allow us to look at processes of exchange and interaction from a fresh perspective. As shall be seen in the following, alternative historical narratives will come to light and will enrich our understanding of a connected past.

Transit: ship passages as global connections

For the purpose of this article, the wider ramifications of such a reconceptualization will be demonstrated with the help of examples from maritime history. With its established focus on maritime trade and communication, the field carries great significance for global history approaches. Regional and transregional connections, most importantly in the form of ship passages, are key elements of study for maritime historians. Often, however, maritime history's main focus has rested on the ends of the passage. It has been concerned with that which is connected, rather than with the connections themselves. For instance, the field has a long-standing interest in port cities as archetypical contact zones and melting pots.[9] They are seminal portals of global migration, trade, and intellectual exchange, and thus ideally suited to study what happens when different cultures get in touch. If one wants to widen this scope and incorporate port cities in a broader regional context, maritime history has introduced the notion of the seascape, which refers to a region connected across the sea.[10] Fernand Braudel's idea of the Mediterranean world has provided inspiration here.[11] In recent decades, the Atlantic world and the Indian Ocean rim have also been studied from a similar perspective.[12]

Both port cities and the seascapes that they are part of are products of myriad connections that originate or terminate there. This has, of course, been duly acknowledged in research.[13]

9 See, for instance, Dilip K. Basu, ed., *The rise and growth of the colonial port cities in Asia*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985; Frank Broeze, ed., *Brides of the sea: port cities of Asia from the 16th–20th centuries*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989; Frank Broeze, ed., *Gateways of Asia: port cities of Asia in the 13th–20th centuries*, London: Routledge, 1997; Lewis R. Fischer and Adrian Jarvis, eds., *Harbours and havens: essays in port history in honour of Gordon Jackson*, St John's, Newfoundland: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1999; Sandip Hazareesingh, 'Interconnected synchronicities: the production of Bombay and Glasgow as modern global ports *c.*1850–1880', *Journal of Global History*, 4, 1, 2009, pp. 7–31.

10 Brigitte Reinwald and Jan-Georg Deutsch, eds., *Space on the move: transformations of the Indian Ocean seascape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2002; Jeremy H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

11 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1949.

12 Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, *Globalization and history: the evolution of a nineteenth-century Atlantic economy*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999; Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The many-headed hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners, and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000; David Armitage and Michael Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic world, 1500–1800*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double-consciousness*, London: Verso, 2002; Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all nations: Atlantic pirates in the Golden Age*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004. Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: a history of people and the sea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, London: Routledge, 2003; Sugata Bose, *A hundred horizons: the Indian Ocean in the age of global empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006; Himanshu Ray and Edward Alpers, eds., *Cross currents and community networks: the history of the Indian Ocean world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007; Markus Vink, 'Indian Ocean studies and the "new thalassology"', *Journal of Global History*, 2, 1, 2007, pp. 41–62; Pier Larson, *Ocean of letters: language and creolization in an Indian Ocean diaspora*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

13 Recently and expertly, for instance, in Michael B. Miller, *Europe and the maritime world: a twentieth-century history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

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Nevertheless, the focus of such research has often remained on ocean littorals, on liminal spaces and contact zones that arise from transoceanic connections. Ship passages have for long been studied as enabling factors that bring A and B together, but rarely as arenas of study in themselves. Despite the defining role of global connections for the field, even in maritime history attention has concentrated on origin and destination, on the start and end of the process. In recent decades, however, maritime history has seen attempts to recalibrate its analytical focus. In several subfields – in particular in the context of studies on the maritime slave trade – more attention has been paid to the ship itself. Seaborne historical actors – sailors, pirates, or slaves – and their lives on board of a ship have slowly come to the fore.[14] These studies have identified the ship as a distinct historical environment and the passage as formative for the historical actors.

Ship passages have pronounced spatial and temporal dimensions defined by the space of the ship and the time of the passage. This makes it easier to see how the connection and that which is connected must not be confused or conflated. Even during the heyday of steam shipping, long-distance ship passages took time. In the late nineteenth century, a bundle of technological innovations had shortened the duration of a passage from, say, Europe to India dramatically. But passengers and crew still had to spend at least three to four weeks on board a steamship on this route before they would arrive at, for instance, Bombay. Although substantially shorter, crossing the Atlantic by steamer also took about ten days. This time on board was not 'dead' or 'empty', nor did people simply put their lives on 'stand-by'.[15] Such assumptions merely reinforce a terracentric notion that the only meaningful history – with the exceptions of battles or mutinies – occurs on land. Rather, as passengers, steerage, and crew shared the confined space of the ship during transit, interaction and exchange became practically unavoidable. Regardless of class and station, shipboard bodies were exposed to new and often deeply uncomfortable experiences; social networks and even cultures were formed within the community of the ship, in many cases outliving the duration of the journey; isolated physically from land, ships became spaces of potential transgression as well as conformity.[16] Therefore, the space and time of the passage provide an arena of transit in which we can study the connection as a mediator.

Ship passages usually existed in reference to or difference from other forms of global connections and disconnections. Telegraph cables, for instance, often ran parallel to shipping routes. Railways linked port cities to the hinterland. Or, as in the case study explored in the

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14 Most of these studies have been concerned either with the professional life of the crew, with pirates and pirate life, or with the significance of the so-called middle passage in the slave trade. See, for instance, Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-headed hydra*; Jonathan Hyslop, 'Steamship empire: Asian, African and British sailors in the merchant marine c.1880–1945', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 44, 1, 2009, pp. 49–67; Frances Steel, *Oceania under steam: sea transport and the cultures of colonialism, c. 1870–1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011; Marcus Rediker, *Between the devil and the deep blue sea: merchant seamen, pirates and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700–1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; Rediker, *Villains of all nations*; Michael Kempe, *Fluch der Weltmeere: Piraterie, Völkerrecht und internationale Beziehungen, 1500–1900*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010; Michael Kempe, '"Even in the remotest corners of the world": globalized piracy and international law, 1500–1900', *Journal of Global History*, 5, 3, 2010, pp. 353–72; Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus, and Marcus Rediker, eds., *Many middle passages: forced migration and the making of the modern world*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007; Maria Diedrich, Henry L. Gates, and Carl Pedersen, eds., *Black imagination and the middle passage*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Marcus Rediker, *The slave ship: a human history*, London: Viking Penguin, 2007; Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater slavery: a middle passage from Africa to American diaspora*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007; Paul Ashmore, 'Slowing down mobilities: passengering on an inter-war ocean liner', *Mobilities*, 8, 4, 2013, pp. 595–611.

15 Roland Wenzlhuemer and Michael Offermann, 'Ship newspapers and passenger life aboard transoceanic steamships in the late nineteenth century', *Transcultural Studies*, 8, 1, 2012, pp. 79–80.

16 See Tamson Pietsch, 'Bodies at sea: travelling to Australia in the age of sail', pp. 209–28 in this issue.

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following sections, the wireless 'whispered' across the ocean.[17] Ship passages were embedded in a plurality of connections. This becomes particularly tangible when we examine the different, and seemingly paradox, ways in which the people on board related to the world during such a passage. On the one hand, the ship, by the movement it provided for the people, goods, and information that it carried, created global connections. Ship passages were thus important constituents of globality and globalization. On the other hand, however, the ship was an isolated place during the open sea passage, its connection with the rest of the world thin and fragile. Before wireless technology became available on steamers, the only outside contact was short exchanges with other passing ships. And even with the advent of wireless telegraphy, the link to the world proved to be of low capacity and prone to different kinds of disturbances, as shall soon be seen below. Passengers and crew on long-distance ocean crossings thus created global connections by their movements, while at the same time their own contact to the outside world depended on a changing combination of connection (for example, by wireless) and disconnections (such as isolation at sea).

Owing to their pronounced spatial and temporal dimensions and their embeddedness in a plurality of connections, long-distance ship passages underline how the connection itself needs to be reconceptualized if we want to understand how global connections impacted on the course of history. By carefully dissecting a well-known London murder case and reassembling it from a different vantage point, I will try to make a case in point. In the following, I will shift the focus of the case's narrative from a land-based to a sea-based perspective. A transatlantic ship passage will take centre stage. I shall examine how historical actors in transit navigated the connectivity between the ship and the shore; how connections had their own space and time during which the people in transit did not go into hibernation but got on with their lives; how the phase of transit constantly related to the before and after of the connection; and how shipboard communities were, thus, inevitably part of the globalized world that they co-created, while they were at the same time caught in their own confined space.

By shifting the narrative focus to the sea, to the ship, and ultimately to the relation between the ship and the world, a different story will emerge. Not only will its locus change and the environment of the ship become of more importance, but the central cast of the story will also be transformed. As shall be seen, the murder victim, and with her the suspected killer and his mistress – all central *personae* in the land-based narrative – will move into the background, while other protagonists will push towards the centre of attention. Love, jealousy, and murder will be displaced as the principal motifs of the case by an entirely different sensation: the tension between global connectivity and isolation, between being part of the world and being confined on a ship. By adjusting our vantage point and joining the actors on board the SS *Montrose*, we will find that the murder case will point us to one of the central concerns of global history: the significance of the connection itself.

The ship: the SS *Montrose*

In the summer of 1910, a murder case electrified London.[18] Cora Crippen, an ambitious but largely unsuccessful music hall singer (also known under her stage name, Belle Elmore), had

17 *Daily Mirror*, 27 July 1910, p. 7.
18 If not indicated otherwise, the reconstruction of the case and of Crippen's life story is based on Filson Young, *The trial of Hawley Harvey Crippen*, Edinburgh: William Hodge, 1950; Julie English Early, 'Technology,

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gone missing and was later found dead, buried in the coal cellar of her house in north London. Cora was the second wife of the American homeopathic doctor Hawley Harvey Crippen. After his practice in New York had failed, Crippen had taken up a position with Munyon's, a producer of homeopathic patent medicines. In 1897, Munyon's sent Crippen to London to build up a new branch office there. Cora accompanied her husband to London and started to pursue a stage career. It seems that the doctor's attempts to manage his wife's career lost him his job with Munyon's in 1899. Two years later, Crippen took up a position at Drouet's Institute for the Deaf, a dubious institution that sold quack cures to deaf people. There, the doctor employed a typist called Ethel Le Neve. After some time, Crippen and Le Neve fell in love with each other and began a romantic relationship. Crippen's marriage had already been dysfunctional for a while. Cora Crippen was clearly of a different temper from the quiet doctor. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* does not shy away from describing her as 'a tipsy, plump, and unfaithful shrew with inordinate vanity and a miserly streak; her docile and submissive husband chafed at her dominion'.[19] When Cora found out about Crippen's affair with Le Neve, she threatened to make it public knowledge in London. Then, in January, after a dinner with friends at their house, Cora Crippen disappeared. When Cora's friends started to enquire about her whereabouts, Crippen said that she had gone back to America to recuperate from an illness. Later he added that she had died there. After some time, Cora's friends became suspicious and alerted Scotland Yard to her sudden disappearance.

On 8 July 1910, more than five months after Cora's disappearance, the Yard sent Chief Inspector Walter Dew to the Crippen home at 39 Hilldrop Crescent in north London. Dew interviewed Crippen about Cora's whereabouts. Confronted with contradictions in his explanations, the doctor eventually conceded that he had made these stories up as he had been too embarrassed to admit that Cora had simply left him. For the moment, Dew was satisfied with the new, more credible explanation. Crippen, however, seems to have been unsettled by Scotland Yard's interest in the case and, together with Le Neve, he absconded from London. When the Yard found out about his flight they searched the house at 39 Hilldrop Crescent. In the course of this, the search party dug up the coal cellar and eventually discovered a mutilated body that had been buried there. The pathologist Bernard Spilsbury established that these were the remains of Cora Crippen. The body contained hyoscine, a drug used to calm down and sedate patients. Administered in higher doses, however, hyoscine is lethal. Later it was found that Crippen had bought the drug shortly before Cora had disappeared.

Scotland Yard started to search for the fugitives in the United Kingdom and abroad. International wanted posters of Crippen and Le Neve were issued and printed in newspapers all over Europe – at first with little avail. In the meantime, Crippen and Ethel Le Neve, who apparently did not know about the murder charge against her lover, fled from the United

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modernity and "the little man": Crippen's capture by wireless', *Victorian Studies*, 39, 3, 1996, pp. 309–37; Jonathan Goodman, *The Crippen file*, London: Allison & Busby, 1985; Nicolas Connell, *Walter Dew: the man who caught Crippen*, Stroud: The History Press, 2005; Nicolas Connell, *Dr. Crippen: the infamous London cellar murder of 1910*, Stroud: The Amberley Press, 2013; Martin Fido, 'Crippen, Hawley Harvey (1862–1910)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/39420; Tom Cullen, *Crippen: the mild murderer*, London: The Bodley Head, 1977; Erik Larson, *Thunderstruck*, New York: Broadway Books, 2007; 'Hawley Harvey Crippen, Killing > murder, 11th October 1910', *The proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's central criminal court, 1674–1913*, http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=def1-74-19101011&div=t19101011-74 (consulted 22 July 2014).

19 Fido, 'Crippen'.

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Kingdom and crossed the Channel bound for Antwerp. There, they booked a passage to Montreal in the Dominion of Canada on the steamer *Montrose*.

The *Montrose* was built in 1897 for Elder, Dempster & Co. The steamer was 135 metres long and had a gross tonnage of 5,440. It sported one funnel and four masts and was propelled by a single screw. After its launch it was employed as a passenger liner between the United Kingdom and Canada. Following a stint as a transport during the Boer War, the *Montrose* was rebuilt to 7,094 gross tons. In 1903, the ship was sold to the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company and refitted to accommodate 70 second-class and 1,800 third-class passengers. In the following years, the *Montrose* plied the Atlantic on slightly changing routes, mainly between the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Canada. In 1905, the steamer was rebuilt again to 6,278 tons.[20]

On 20 July 1910, the *Montrose* left the port of Antwerp to sail for Montreal. The passenger list included a Mr John Robinson and his son, who had booked their second-class passage less than three hours before departure.[21] Crippen and Le Neve had boarded the *Montrose* under assumed names and disguised as father and son. The doctor had shaved off his beard. Le Neve was wearing her hair short and had put on an ill-fitting boy's suit. However, only a few hours after the *Montrose* had left Antwerp the ship's captain, Henry Kendall, noticed something odd about the couple. The murder of Cora Crippen had been all over the news. Kendall became suspicious and looked for a wanted poster of Crippen and Le Neve in the newspapers brought on board in Antwerp. Legend has it that he used a piece of chalk to white-out the moustache that Crippen was still sporting on the poster.[22] What he saw then confirmed his suspicion and after some more observation he decided to inform the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company at Liverpool by wireless telegraph: '3 PM GMT Friday 130 miles west Lizard have strong suspicion that Crippen London Cellar Murderer and accomplice are among saloon passengers. Mustache taken off growing beard. Accomplice dressed as boy. Voice manner and build undoubtedly a girl. Both traveling as Mr. and Master Robinson. Kendall.'[23]

The company in turn sent word about Crippen's discovery to Scotland Yard. The police had been criticized heavily for letting the suspect escape from London in the first place. Questions as to the proper police proceedings had even been asked in Parliament.[24] To make up, the Yard now acted quickly. Chief Inspector Walter Dew boarded the *Laurentic*, a brand-new and much faster ship, which could intercept the slower *Montrose* before it actually reached Canada.[25] While Dew pursued Crippen across the Atlantic, Scotland Yard communicated with the Canadian Dominion Police to prepare for Crippen's arrest. This was to take place before the doctor could actually set foot on Canadian soil. Before the steamer entered the St Lawrence, Dew was to come on board disguised as a pilot in order to make the arrest.

However, it was not only the police who were now on Crippen's heels. In these early years of the technology, wireless radio could only cover comparatively short distances. Kendall had

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20 'Ship descriptions – M', *The ships list*, http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/descriptions/ShipsMM.shtml (consulted 22 July 2014).
21 *Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 28.
22 This is the most widely spread version of the discovery. The German newspaper *Berliner Tageblatt*, on the other hand, reported that a ship steward, who had lived opposite the Crippens' north London house, had recognized the fugitive. *Berliner Tageblatt*, 30 July 1910, p. 5.
23 Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 28.
24 *Hansard*, HC Deb, 20 July 1910 vol. 19 cols. 1240–1.
25 Many newspapers printed maps depicting the courses of the *Montrose* and the *Laurentic*. See, for instance, *Daily Mirror*, 27 July 1910, p. 3; *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1910, p. 7.

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sent his first message to Liverpool briefly before the *Montrose* got out of radio reach. Any further communication between the British Isles and the steamer had to be relayed by other ships. And so it comes as no surprise that the news was soon leaked to the press. Newspaper editors around the globe quickly learned of Crippen's whereabouts and now accompanied Scotland Yard's hunt for Crippen with the most detailed and lurid news coverage. One telling example of many can be found in the *Daily Mail* of 25 July, where the detection of Crippen and Le Neve was described with a particular sense of drama:

> Friday afternoon must have been a dramatic time on board the ship. Ireland was a hundred and fifty miles astern, and Canada lay in front. The captain … sent a message – reaching Scotland Yard on Friday night – that he believed he had Dr. Crippen and Miss Le Neve on board. From the time that message was despatched a ceaseless, unobtrusive scrutiny must have been directed towards the couple, for a few hours later another message arrived from the captain to the effect that it was now known with certainty that 'Master Robinson' was in reality a woman.[26]

Through this and countless other newspaper reports about the *Montrose*, an emerging global public could follow the dramatic events around the doctor and his mistress closely, while Crippen and Le Neve themselves, although under 'ceaseless, unobtrusive scrutiny', remained totally ignorant of their global media presence until their eventual arrest on 31 July. In this peculiar situation, the need to reconceptualize connections becomes manifest. The doctor and his mistress were not merely making a simple connection between Europe and North America. Rather, they were entangled in a web of connections and disconnections involving several ships travelling on different routes and at different speeds, as well as the wireless telegraph working over relays. Each of these connections linked ship and shore in a particular way and combined to create the specific situation on board.

The wireless: more than just an 'electric constable'

In the year 1910, wireless telegraphy was still a relatively young technology. Experiments in the transmission of radio signals had been abundant in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the closing years of the century, Italian engineer-cum-entrepreneur Guglielmo Marconi was only one of several inventors to bring the technology to maturity and to file a patent for it.[27] In 1901, however, it was Marconi, who entered into an agreement with Lloyd's insurance company, the most important maritime insurer, whereby Lloyd's would only insure ships that were equipped with Marconi wireless systems. This deal gave a great boost to Marconi's company and accelerated the expansion of wireless telegraphy in the shipping business.[28] In the early years of the twentieth century, the Marconi system was by far the most widespread wireless telegraph system in use on ships. However, competing technologies operating on different patents, such as the German Telefunken system, existed and started to make significant inroads on the market from 1909 onwards. Until the regulations of the so-called 'Titanic conference'

26 *Daily Mail*, 25 July, p. 7.
27 For a brief description of the history of wireless telegraphy, see Anton A. Huurdeman, *The worldwide history of telecommunications*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Interscience, 2003, pp. 199–216.
28 Peter Hugill, *Global communications since 1844: geopolitics and technology*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, pp. 93–4.

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in 1913, these competing systems could not communicate with each other – a fact that constituted a significant safety issue as it limited the communicational capacity of a ship.[29]

At the time of Crippen's flight in 1910, most intercontinental passenger steamers were equipped with a wireless telegraph apparatus. In the case of the *Montrose*, it was a Marconi system. The ship's Marconi operator, Llewellyn Jones, could communicate with Marconi land stations or other ships with Marconi equipment on board within a radius of a few hundred nautical miles (depending on weather conditions). Thus, around 1910 the communicational capacity of the wireless was still limited by reach and incompatible systems. Nevertheless, with the advent of wireless, the ship's place in the world had been transformed. Its isolation on the open sea had come to an end – at least in some respects. Before wireless technology, a ship was practically isolated from the rest of the world when it moved out of sight of harbour or coast. Once on the open sea, there was no way to communicate with either origin or destination. The ship became its own confined space. The only exception were so-called 'speakings' with other ships encountered during the voyage.[30] On these occasions, information (and sometimes goods) were traded and letters could be exchanged. This practice, however, only slightly relieved the separation of the ship and the world. Depending on the courses and positions of the speaking ships, the news received were often as old as one's own information, and the letters posted would not reach their addressees for quite some time.

In the early years of the twentieth century, wireless communication ameliorated the isolation of the seaborne vessel in some aspects. Messages could now be exchanged between ship and shore (or between one ship and another) as long as one was within radio reach.[31] The main beneficiaries were captain and crew, as information on the weather or other important developments could now be traded.[32] Wireless also became a means of calling for help in case of emergency. The availability of information from the outside also had direct implications for passengers on longer hauls. Ship newspapers, which were a common feature of long-distance ship passages from at least the early nineteenth century, now changed in style and content.[33] Publications such as the *Cunard Daily Bulletin* or the *Aerogram* were produced by the crew (not any longer by the passengers themselves) and, besides the usual shipboard chatter, contained the latest news of the world coming in by wireless. More affluent passengers could also send and transmit private messages with the help of the resident wireless operator.

In the episode considered here, however, wireless telegraphy was not only used to provide weather updates for the crew and news for the passengers. The novel technology made it possible to inform the shipping company and then Scotland Yard regarding the whereabouts of a fugitive murder suspect. It was instrumental in setting up the transoceanic hunt for Crippen and finally allowed for his arrest while he was still on board the *Montrose*. The wireless acted as a kind of 'electric constable'. The metaphor of the 'electric constable' originally refers to the

29 Heidi J. S. Evans, '"The path to freedom"? Transocean and German wireless telegraphy, 1914–1922', *Historical Social Research*, 35, 1, 2010, p. 213.

30 The term has been borrowed from Lloyd's List, a publication detailing, among other things, the comings and goings of ships in many ports around the world. The List also gave an incomplete account of ships' 'speakings' on the open sea.

31 See also Simone M. Müller and Heidi J. S. Tworek, '"The telegraph and the bank": on the interdependence of global communications and capitalism, 1866–1914', *Journal of Global History*, 10, 2, 2015, p. 268.

32 See, for instance, the weather messages in the early editions of the *Cunard Daily Bulletin*, RMS *Ivernia* from Liverpool to Boston, 26 April 1904, p. 2.

33 Johanna de Schmidt, '"This strange little floating world of ours": shipboard periodicals and community-building in the "global" nineteenth century', in this issue, pp. 229–50; Wenzlhuemer and Offermann, 'Ship newspapers'.

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electric telegraph in its conductor-bound form.[34] Soon after its first practical employment for the coordination of railway trains, the telegraph came to public attention because of the role it played in the arrest of a murderer in London. On New Year's Day 1845, a man named John Tawell poisoned his mistress, Sarah Hart, with prussic acid at her house in Salt Hill near Slough. Witnesses saw him leave the house after the murder and head for the local railway station. There, he boarded the train to London Paddington. When the station superintendent was informed about the murder of Ms Hart, he used the newly installed telegraph to send word to London. He informed the staff at Paddington that a suspected murder was on his way to London, giving his description and the number of the carriage he travelled in.[35] Thanks to the telegram, Tawell could be apprehended. The unusual method of arrest was widely covered in the news and earned the telegraph the nickname of 'electric constable'.

In the Tawell case and several similar stories, the telegraph's policing power came from its potential to seemingly bend the relationship between time and space (usually by outpacing trains).[36] Returning to the hunt for Crippen, similar powers can, of course, be claimed for the wireless telegraph. The technology rendered it possible to inform the authorities about his whereabouts and to prepare for his arrest on arrival. And yet the situation was different. The electric telegraph merely outpaced the train. The wireless could penetrate the isolation of the ship during its movement. It provided access to the connection itself and therefore impacted on the framework of the passage. Again, the importance of understanding connections in the plural becomes clear. The ship and the wireless (just as the train and the electric telegraph) have very different mediating capacities. The policing powers of the telegraph can only be understood if we consider these forms of connections in combination and in tandem with that which has been connected.

The world: a global public

The flight of Hawley Harvey Crippen and Ethel Le Neve thus took place in an unusual field of tension between global integration and isolation. Information received via wireless allowed both the police and the public to learn the pair's whereabouts. Newspapers from all over the world renewed their interest in the London murder case.[37] Not only did they follow the run of the *Montrose* and the intercepting course of the *Laurentic* in great detail,[38] but the papers also re-examined the entire case. Journalists talked to former London neighbours of the Crippens, tried to unearth novel information about Miss Le Neve, and reconstructed Cora Crippen's unimpressive stage career. One central focus of the media rested on the ship itself, where Crippen and Le Neve, ignorant of their media presence, slowly steamed into a trap set up by

34 Richard Pike, ed., *Railway adventures and anecdotes: extending over more than fifty years*, London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., and J. Derry, 1884, p. 92.

35 *The Times* (London), 3 January 1845, p. 7.

36 For a more detailed argument in this regard, see Roland Wenzlhuemer, 'Verbrechen, Verbrechensbekämpfung und Telegrafie: kriminalhistorische Perspektiven auf die Entkoppelung von Transport und Kommunikation im langen 19. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 301, 2, 2015, p. 363–6.

37 While this article mainly quotes from those British and US American newspapers that had the most direct interest in and access to the case (in particular the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, *The Times* (London), and the *New York Times*), extensive reports on the Crippen hunt have been found in dozens of newspapers from all across the globe – from Europe (e.g. *Le Matin*, *Die Neue Zeitung*, *Berliner Tageblatt*) to the American west coast (e.g. the *Los Angeles Times*), from Asia (e.g. the *Times of India*) to Australia (e.g. the *Sydney Morning Herald*), to name but a few examples.

38 E.g. *Daily Mirror*, 27 July 1910, p. 3.

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Scotland Yard. It was a peculiar and somewhat novel situation. Roused by the media coverage in newspapers all over the world, a global public started to take great interest in the case and focused its attention on a tiny ship on the Atlantic, the narrow habitat of its subjects of desire, on which the doctor was 'sailing into [the] clutch of the law'.[39] The chase for Crippen became a matter of 'world interest'[40] or, as J. B. Priestley stated in *The Edwardians*, 'It was hot news indeed, something was happening for the first time in world history.'[41] Ever-increasing global connectivity clashed with the maritime isolation of the fugitives and produced a peculiar situation of unidirectional observation. The media themselves frequently referred to the novelty and absurdity of the situation – during the passage as well as after the arrest. As early as 27 July, well before the arrest, the *New York Times* informed its readers about the extraordinary circumstances involved in this case: '[Crippen and Le Neve are] steaming in almost pathetic helplessness towards the St. Lawrence and capture.'[42]

On the same day on the other side of the Atlantic, the *Daily Mirror* speculated about the 'sensations of the hunted Crippen and his companion caged in a floating trap'.[43] It presented to the eager public a fictional inner monologue of Crippen:

> A harbour is the first place watched. One thirsts, one longs, when something is behind one, to get on to the sea. There's a sense of escape in the very wash of the environing waters! But the clever criminal resists the sea. Mysterious voices nowadays whisper across it; invisible hands stretch out upon it; viewless fingers draw near and clutch and hold there. Better a minor lodging in some big city. For I begin to see that the Captain has an odd look in his face.[44]

A few days later, on 30 July, the *Daily Mail* quoted from *Liberté* in Paris: 'It is admirable and it is terrible. … [F]rom one side of the Atlantic to the other a criminal lives in a cage of glass … exposed to the eye of the public.'[45]

On the same day, the *New York Times* tried to explain the incredible interest that both media and public took in the chase. The author compared the set-up to a play in a theatre. He argued that 'chance has arranged scene and circumstance' along a rule that playwrights often resort to as well:

> That rule is to let the audience or the spectators know exactly what is going to happen, while the people on the stage, or those of them upon whom interest is fastened, move forward to their predestined sorrow or joy in complete ignorance of coming events. The theory is that this gives to the observers a pleasant sense of superiority – of ability to see things hidden from others. That must be at least an approximation to the truth.[46]

It might not come as a big surprise that author and playwright J. B. Priestley came up with a similar analogy from the world of the theatre. He stated:

> The people, who have a sure instinct in these matters, knew they had seats in a gallery five hundred miles long for a new, exciting, entirely original drama: *Trapped*

39 *Los Angeles Times*, 29 July 1910, p. 1.
40 *Daily Mail*, 30 July 1910, p. 6.
41 J. B. Priestley, *The Edwardians*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970, p. 197.
42 *New York Times*, 27 July 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 33.
43 *Daily Mirror*, 27 July 1910, p. 7.
44 *Ibid*.
45 *Daily Mail*, 30 July 1910, p. 6.
46 *New York Times*, 30 July 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 37.

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> *by Wireless!* There were Crippen and his mistress, arriving with a smile at the captain's table, holding hands on the boat deck, entirely unaware of the fact that Inspector Dew … was on his way to arrest them. While they were looking at the menu, several million readers were seeing their names again in the largest type.[47]

These comparisons to a theatre production highlight a central aspect of the case. Observing the ignorant couple from a distance, equipped with a host of information and privileged knowledge that the two lacked, was a key feature of the global reception of events. Both the success of the arrest and this form of observation depended on the secrecy of the operation. No news about the hunt for Crippen were to reach the *Montrose*. The *Daily Mail* stated in this regard:

> Wireless messages are being flashed to and fro between the detective and the captain of the ship ahead. The tension in the Montrose must be extreme. How difficult it must be to keep the secret that a couple of passengers are suspect can only be realised by those who have made long voyages. If they are still at liberty life must be a tragic farce. In some mysterious way there may have crept among the passengers an indication that something is wrong.[48]

These extracts of contemporary media coverage illustrate that, after having learned about Crippen's whereabouts, the attention of the press – and thus of the global public – soon focused on the stage of the ship itself. However, during these early days of the hunt for Crippen, the media had no direct access to the *Montrose*. All they could do was speculate about the situation on board and build a story around this inaccessible core. The *Illustrated London News* sported a particularly interesting example of what such a larger story could be comprised of. It printed a series of photographs (see Figure 1) showing how Willy Clarkson, a well-known theatrical costume designer, would disguise a girl as a young man.[49] This was packaged as advice to Ethel Le Neve, whose disguise as a boy had been all too easy to see through. The interplay of connections and disconnections becomes particularly tangible in this episode. Soon, however, the media and public alike would not have to speculate about what was happening on board of the *Montrose* any more. Again, with the help of the wireless and courtesy of the captain, journalists eventually gained direct access to the hitherto isolated space of the ship.

The gatekeeper: Captain Henry Kendall

On 28 November 1965, Henry George Kendall died aged ninety-one in a London nursing home. His life had been eventful. He began his maritime career in his teenage years and had seen violence and abuse early on.[50] In May 1914, he was given command of the RMS *Empress of Ireland*. Later in the month the ship collided with a Norwegian freighter and sank at the mouth of the St Lawrence – not far from where Crippen had been arrested four years earlier. More than a thousand lives were lost.[51] Kendall himself was thrown overboard and survived. His obituary in *The Times* made no mention of all of this.

47 Priestley, *Edwardians*, p. 200.
48 *Daily Mail*, 25 July 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 29.
49 Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 34.
50 Larson, *Thunderstruck*, pp. 1–2.
51 *The Times* (London), 1 June 1914, p. 8.

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Figure 1. Series of photographs detailing how the theatrical costume designer Willy Clarkson would transform a young lady into a boy. Source: Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 34.

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It read: 'CAPTAIN HENRY GEORGE KENDALL, who in 1910 as master of the liner Montrose radioed to Scotland Yard that the murderer Crippen was on board, died in a London nursing home yesterday. He was 91.'[52] These few lines illustrate that Kendall's name remained tied to the Crippen case for the rest of his life and beyond. The sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* could not compete in this regard. Indeed, Kendall played so central a role in the capture of Crippen that he received the £250 reward advertised by the Home Office, 'but never cashed the check. He had it framed instead.'[53] This can be considered testimony that Kendall himself also saw the Crippen case as an important landmark in his life.

The captain was, of course, one of the main protagonists in the story – not so much in the land-based narrative, but certainly in its sea-based counterpart. He was instrumental in keeping the passengers ignorant of the hunt and setting up the 'cage of glass'. When the captain had seen through the doctor's disguise, he started to control the flow of information to and from the ship via wireless telegraph. He made sure that no messages about the Crippen case, let alone the ongoing chase, could reach the audience on the ship via this channel. Kendall sent a written note to the Marconi operator on the *Montrose*, saying: 'that all message [*sic*] re Dr. Crippen to any person or persons on board the above ship are to be filed, but not delivered, at the same time notifying me of their contents'.[54]

Kendall also took further measures to make sure that the other passengers would not discover Crippen themselves and thus blow the cover. In a telegram he later explained: 'When my suspicions were aroused as to Crippen's identity I quietly collected all the English papers on the ship which mentioned anything of the murder, and I warned the chief officer to collect any he might see. This being done, I considered the road was clear.'[55]

The captain informed only a select few of his crew. All other people on the steamer, including of course Crippen and Le Neve, remained ignorant of the situation. Kendall thus became the central gatekeeper in this situation, controlling all channels between the ship and the world. Initially, his shutting off of the ship worked both ways – no potentially revealing information came in and nothing went out. But after a few days this balance started to tip. It seemed that after some time the steamer race between the *Montrose* and the *Laurentic* was no longer dramatic enough to bind the attention of the global public. For several days, the chase between the two ships had been depicted in numerous charts, the wonders of wireless telegraphy had been described to a flabbergasted readership, and Captain Kendall had been introduced in much colourful detail – but about the situation on board the papers could only speculate.

After all these alleys had been explored, new media input became necessary and thus reporters started to send wireless telegrams to Kendall in order to gather inside information directly from the *Montrose*. Perhaps surprisingly, Kendall obliged. In the first days, the captain had already doubled as a private detective. He had Crippen and Le Neve clandestinely observed. He invited them to the captain's table for dinner, and started to make jokes in order to make Crippen laugh so that Kendall could see whether the doctor was wearing false teeth and could add more detail to the description of the doctor's disguise.[56] Later he had someone from the crew secretly take photographs of Crippen and Le Neve. One of these

52 *The Times* (London), 29 November 1965, p. 12.
53 Larson, *Thunderstruck*, p. 376.
54 Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 30.
55 *Daily Mail*, 31 July 1910.
56 *Ibid*.

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Figure 2. Crippen and Le Neve on board the *Montrose*, secretly photographed through a porthole. Source: Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 38.

photos (see Figure 2) is particularly revealing regarding the shift of cast in the sea-centred narrative when compared to the terracentric story. The photo had been clandestinely taken by a crew member through a porthole. Crippen and Le Neve, the latter in her ill-fitting boy's suit, were caught on camera from behind when strolling down the deck. Neither their faces nor any other trait testifying to their identity were visible on the photograph. The picture is therefore much more revealing about the practices of Kendall and his crew than in what it has to say about the fugitives' routine. Seen from a sea-based perspective, Crippen and Le Neve had ceased to be among the leading cast. They had been relegated to objects of curiosity, while others, such as Kendall and his crew, had taken centre stage as the main protagonists of the play.

Then, a few days before the scheduled arrest, Kendall's performance reached a new dramatic level when he himself started to send messages to the media.[57] In these telegrams he described how he had discovered the two fugitives, how he had confirmed his suspicions, and how he had kept them ignorant of the whole situation. He dedicated many lines to the detailed description of his various observations. Many papers quoted extensively from Kendall's

57 The metaphor of a play or performance has been inspired by Greg Dening's seminal work on William Bligh and his role on the *Bounty*. Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's bad language: passion, power and theatre on the 'Bounty'*, Cambridge: Canto, 1994.

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messages, in which he closely described Crippen's and Le Neve's behaviour. On 30 July *The Times* reprinted one of the captain's messages from the *Daily Mail*:

> I am still confident Crippen and Le Neve on board. Crippen has shaved his moustache, and is growing a beard. He has no suspicion that he has been discovered. Passengers are also ignorant of the identity of the couple. Le Neve refrains from talking. They have no baggage. They are always together and very reticent with other passengers. Crippen has stated that he is a great traveller and has been many times in the United States. They spend most of their time reading books obtained from the ship's library. They are very sleepless at night. … They spend much time in their cabin. Both appear bright in presence of other passengers, but show signs of worry when alone together. … This is the first account that has been transmitted from this ship to any paper.[58]

In this message Kendall focused mainly on a factual description of the fugitives' situation and behaviour. Only occasionally did he bring in more colourful, emotional elements: he hinted at their guilty conscience when he referred to their sleeplessness and the 'signs of worry'. But, all in all, the factual description prevailed. This changed in his following messages. Only a day later, the *Daily Mail* extensively reprinted a more colourful telegram alive with lurid detail:

> I warned [my chief officer] that it must be kept absolutely quiet, as it was too good a thing to lose, so we made a lot of them, and kept them smiling. … Le Neve has the manner and appearance of a very refined, modest girl. … Her suit is anything but a good fit. Her trousers are very tight about the hips. … They have been under strict observation all the voyage, as if they smelt a rat, he might do something rash. I have not noticed a revolver in his hip pocket. [Crippen] continually shaves his upper lip, and his beard is growing nicely. I often see him stroking it and seeming pleased, looking more like a farmer every day. … He sits about on the deck reading, or pretending to read, and both seem to be thoroughly enjoying all their meals … [Crippen] is now busy reading 'The Four Just Men', which is all about a murder in London and £1000 reward.[59]

By now, Kendall had moved away from mere factual report. He created suspense by describing the discovery of the suspects and how he kept them in the dark. He wrote about Crippen's pleasure about growing a beard. And the climax comes, of course, with the reading list and the remark about *The four just men* alluding to Crippen's very own situation. In another message, Kendall described how he had searched their cabin secretly and how he had discovered that Le Neve used a piece of her undergarment to wash her face in the morning.[60] From these messages is seems clear that Kendall had reinterpreted his role as captain and gatekeeper and was keen to provide the outside world with all sorts of information about Crippen and Le Neve – no matter how trivial it might be.

The pilot: Chief Inspector Walter Dew

Kendall (supported by some of his crew and the Marconi operator) was not the only gatekeeper, the only person who fed the global public with information about the hunt

58 *The Times* (London), 30 July 1910, p. 6.
59 *Daily Mail*, 31 July 1910.
60 Cullen, *Mild murderer*, p. 126.

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for Crippen. When Crippen had escaped from London, Scotland Yard had been scorned by politicians and the media for its alleged incompetence in the case. Now, the Yard tried to turn the tables and use the very same media to repair its reputation. Fuelled for many days by the yellow press, the public anxiously waited for the climax of the chase, the planned arrest of the doctor at the entrance to the St Lawrence. Already days before the arrest, accommodation in the region was booked out by journalists and spectators in anticipation of events to come.[61] Scotland Yard scrupulously planned this showdown – not only in terms of setting up the trap but also with regard to getting the right media coverage. On the day of the arrest, the police organized a boat for about fifty journalists. The steam tender *Eureka* was to be kept out of sight of the *Montrose* until the arrest had been made. Then it would rendezvous with the *Montrose* and the journalists would be brought on board to do their work.

The main actor on the side of the law was Chief Inspector Walter Dew, the same policeman who had already investigated the disappearance of Cora Crippen in London.[62] After Crippen's discovery on the *Montrose*, Dew had boarded the *Laurentic* in Liverpool in order to intercept the escapee before he could set foot on Canadian soil. Dew had been chosen for the job because he had met Crippen before and could identify him beyond any doubt. During the Atlantic passage and the subsequent wait for the *Montrose* at the mouth of the St Lawrence, Dew and Kendall were in frequent contact via wireless, preparing the arrest. Dew was in charge of affairs and this was duly noted by the press and the public:

> Captain Kendall, of the Montrose, kept Inspector Dew thoroughly informed of his disguised passengers' movements during Friday afternoon and Saturday, and the detective despatched instructions to guard against the possible use of poison or other means of suicide. This news and a hundred alarmist rumours intensified curiosity and induced the Press correspondents to sit up all Saturday night at Father Point with a special watchman placed over Inspector Dew![63]

When the ship approached the St Lawrence, Dew and his Canadian colleagues got active. They were rowed to the *Montrose* and came on board disguised as pilots. It is a fitting metaphor. Just as the pilot takes over control of a ship in difficult waters, Dew took over responsibility from Kendall when the hunt for Crippen climaxed. Once on board, Dew was in charge of affairs. *The Times* described the arrest in great detail. Crippen, who was on deck together with Le Neve and the ship's surgeon Dr Stuart, seems to have wondered about the large number of pilots being rowed to the *Montrose*. When the pilots had come on board, they walked in the direction of Crippen and Le Neve. 'Then as Inspector Dew got a good, quick look at Crippen and the girl he gave the preconcerted signal, and the constables made the arrest.'[64] Immediately afterwards, the *Eureka* with the journalists came alongside the *Montrose*, the press people being allowed on board in order to conduct interviews and take photographs.[65] For hours they besieged the wireless telegraph room in order to get reports quickly to their newspapers all over the globe. Information transmission was fast enough to allow even

61 *Daily Mail*, 27 July 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 35.
62 For more background on Dew's life and career, see Connell, *Walter Dew*.
63 *The Times* (London), 1 August 1910, p. 7.
64 *Ibid*.
65 *Lloyd's Weekly News*, 31 July 1910, p. 1.

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Figure 3. Dew and Crippen leaving the *Megantic* in Liverpool. Souce: *Daily Mirror*, 29 August 1910, p. 8.

Australian newspapers on the other side of the world and more than half a day ahead in time to run the story in the issue of 1 August.[66]

After the arrest, Crippen was taken to Quebec gaol, where he had to wait for his extradition to England under the Fugitive Offenders Act of 1881. In mid August, Dew eventually accompanied Crippen and Le Neve on board the White Star Line's SS *Megantic* bound for Liverpool. Dew had taken precautions for their arrival in England later in the month. The police expected a curious crowd to wait for Crippen at the pier. Therefore, the party was to disembark via the crew gangway. Maybe unsurprisingly, they were spotted nevertheless and a widely circulated photograph was taken at the occasion (see Figure 3). Again, this picture illustrates vividly how during the ocean passages the cast of the narrative had changed. The photograph clearly places Walter Dew and not, as could be expected, the cloaked Crippen at the centre of attention. Just like Captain Kendall, the inspector had become one of the chief protagonists of the chase.

The London Cellar Murder: a land-based account

Shifting our analytical focus onto the *Montrose* and its relation to the world brings a new narrative to the fore that emphasizes the role of different protagonists, spaces, and timelines. It underlines the mediating potential of the connection itself. This becomes particularly obvious when we compare the new narrative to the established land-based understanding of the Crippen case, which focuses mainly on London. Crippen had planned to start a new life with Ethel Le Neve in his native North America. This plan, however, was not to materialize, as we

66 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1910, p. 9.

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have seen. Crippen and Le Neve were shipped back to England on the SS *Megantic*. In London, they were brought before the Old Bailey in separate trials. After a long and detailed process, the judge and jury found Crippen guilty of the wilful murder of his wife.[67] He was sentenced to death.[68] On 23 November 1910 Crippen was hanged at Pentonville prison. Ethel Le Neve, on the other hand, was acquitted and emigrated to America on the very day of Crippen's execution.

The case fascinated many contemporaries and attracted a lot of attention and news coverage. Several factors contributed to this. The figure of Cora Crippen, for instance, proved to be unusually colourful. The aspiring but largely unsuccessful music hall singer seems to have had a temper. Her eventful life and gruesome demise provided excellent material for the boulevard papers of the day.[69] Then there were the circumstances of the murder and of the body's discovery. Poison was involved, which made the murder particularly insidious. Moreover, the body had been mutilated, which indicated a high measure of ruthlessness and brutality. The floor of the coal cellar at 39 Hilldrop Crescent had been dug up to unearth the victim's remains. Scotland Yard had taken photographs of the scene and documented the case in lurid detail.[70] All of this held the London public in awe for quite some time. What is more, state-of-the-art forensic procedure was employed in the case. Spilsbury used a scar that had been found on the body to confirm the identity of the deceased.[71] Finally, of course, there was the peculiar way in which Crippen had been arrested with the help of the wireless telegraph. In the year 1910 this was a brand-new technology that had only been available for a few years. To many it seemed as if progress itself had eventually brought Crippen down.

In combination, all these elements explain the great attraction that the London Cellar Murder seems to have had on the British. From a spatial viewpoint, it is a land-based story. In fact, it is London-centred: both its beginning and its end took place in the British capital. Jonathan Goodman, who published a comprehensive file on the Crippen case in 1985, displays a map of north London on the opening pages of the book. The map places important loci of the case in relation to each other: the house at 39 Hilldrop Crescent; the Jones Brothers Department Store, where the victim's pyjamas had been bought (important evidence in the trial); Kings Cross railway station, from where Crippen and Le Neve fled London; and Pentonville Prison, where Crippen was interned and eventually hanged. The central place of the capital in the story also reverberates in the case being named the North London Murder or the London Cellar Murder. Of course, other places featured as well: Dieppe, where Crippen had spent a holiday with Le Neve after the murder; Antwerp, to which Crippen and Le Neve fled before booking their passage; Canada as their assumed destination; and Liverpool, where Crippen was attacked by an agitated young man when being brought back to England for the trial.

In the popular narrative, these are the main locales of the case. They were connected and brought in touch in several different ways. Ships served merely as links. The *Montrose* took the absconding couple to Canada and the *Megantic* brought them back after they had been intercepted by Inspector Dew travelling on the faster ship *Laurentic*. Wireless telegraphy provided a different kind of connection. It brought London, Canada, and the different ships

67 Young, *Trial of Crippen*.
68 'Hawley Harvey Crippen'.
69 *News of the World*, 17 July 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 18.
70 Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 9.
71 Larson, *Thunderstruck*, p. 367.

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involved into direct contact. However, both the ships as well as the telegraph were mere facilitators in this largely land-based story. The *Montrose*, for instance, was a facilitator of flight from London to Canada, while the wireless telegraph was eventually a facilitator of arrest. The established narrative of the case itself is terracentric. It unfolds on land and it thrives on the different ways in which its locales are brought into contact with each other. In its traditional form it is a story about places and how they were connected. The connection itself is missing. Its mediating character, its spatial and temporal dimensions, its embeddedness with other forms of connections and disconnections only become visible when we recalibrate our analytical focus and tell the story from a different angle.

Conclusion: passages as mediating connections

A few days before Hawley Harvey Crippen was executed at Pentonville prison, the *Daily Mirror* and *Lloyd's Weekly News* printed a photograph of Ethel Le Neve in boy's clothes (see Figure 4).[72] Interestingly, however, the picture had not been clandestinely taken on board of the *Montrose*. It was a studio photograph. The story goes that Le Neve, who had already been acquitted, had come to Bow Street Police Station to ask whether she could borrow the boy's trousers she had worn during the passage. Apparently, she had been offered money to dress up as Master Robinson again and to re-enact parts of the passage for a professional photographer.[73] The picture shows an androgynous Le Neve sitting on a chair and looking into the distance. The *Daily Mirror* even labelled the photograph with the far-fetched claim that 'It will be noticed that she bears a strong likeness to Dr. Crippen.'[74]

The photographical re-enactment of Le Neve's time on the *Montrose* testifies to the tension between being connected and being disconnected at the same time while on board. Wireless technology and Captain Kendall had made it possible for the global public to partake directly in the events on the ship. And yet the connection was thin and fragile. Wireless telegraphy only provided a low-capacity link to the world at the best of times. Its reach was limited. As the principal gatekeeper, Kendall controlled and filtered all communication. Therefore the ship's integration with the globalized world that it co-created was incomplete; it only worked in one direction. Crippen, Le Neve, and the other passengers, as well as the better part of the crew, remained ignorant of the global media spectacle focusing on the *Montrose*. Inside information was fed to the media, but only whetted their appetite for more. Photographs could be taken clandestinely, but were of limited quality and expressiveness. This is why, once full access to the story's protagonists was granted, certain details had to be re-enacted on land and under studio conditions.

The story of Crippen's flight and eventual capture is an extraordinary episode in modern history. Nevertheless, I argue that, despite its extraordinariness, it can serve us well in highlighting the importance of looking at ship passages as transformative arenas of transit. Seaborne ships are not merely extraordinary locations divorced from regular space and time, as Michel Foucault's much-cited dictum of the ship as 'the heterotopia *par excellence*' suggests.[75] Rather, the pronounced space and time of the ship passage allows us to study it as a

72 *Daily Mirror*, 21 November 1910, p. 15; *Lloyd's Weekly News*, 20 November 1910; Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 74.
73 Goodman, *Crippen file*, p. 74.
74 *Daily Mirror*, 21 November 1910, p. 15.
75 Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics*, 16, 1, 1986, p. 27.

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Figure 4. Ethel Le Neve posing as Master Robinson for the studio camera. Source: *Daily Mirror*, 21 November 1910, p. 15.

mediating connection with a strong bearing on the people and places it connects. The passage on the *Montrose* emerged as a long, distinct phase, during which the protagonists were confined to a narrow physical and social space, limited in their actions and movements. In this regard, the connection they made isolated them from the rest of the world. At the same time, the passage was embedded in a web of other forms of connections such as wireless communication and press reports. The ship passage constituted one element in a plurality of connections.[76] This peculiar tension created an arena of transit in which the protagonists on board negotiated their past and their future.

The transit space of the Atlantic crossing was intimately related to both origin and destination in many different ways. For Crippen (and to a lesser degree for Le Neve, who remained ignorant of the murder charge) it was a period of limbo in which he tried to leave Europe behind but could not do so. For the media and the global public, the observation of Crippen and Le Neve on the steamer provided opportunity to reassess their characters and

76 See also Frances Steel, 'Anglo-worlds in transit, *c.*1870–1914', pp. 251–70 in this issue.

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eventually their deeds in London. For Scotland Yard a successful interception was a means of re-establishing its reputation back home. And for Captain Kendall the passage provided the opportunity to reinterpret his duties as the ship's master and extend his control beyond the space of the ship. The time on the *Montrose* was, therefore, a highly formative and transformative period for all actors involved and must be understood in its relation to origin and destination, before and after.

Shifting our perspective from that which is connected to the connection itself, from the land to the sea, has transformed the narrative of the case and broadened our understanding of a connected past. The London Cellar Murder has turned into an ocean race. The cast of the story has been expanded. As active protagonists Crippen and Le Neve have faded into the background, while others such as Kendall or Dew have moved to centre stage. The local environment of the ship is key to the sea-based narrative. While a global public entertained itself with the Crippen hunt and the behaviour of doctor and mistress on board the *Montrose*, the ship itself became a 'cage of glass' for the two fugitives: a cage of glass that bound them and presented them to the world at the same time – without them knowing anything about it. The ship promised freedom and opportunity as it moved across the globe; in reality, however, it turned out to be a very narrow space.

The significance of the local highlights the mediating character of global connections, in this case exemplified mainly by the steamship passage. The Crippen case illustrates vividly how we should think of global connections as mediators rather than intermediaries. The scene of the crime was London. The chief suspect was of American descent and tried to escape to his native North America. Typically, the steamer passage would be thought of as the connection that brought origin and destination, Europe and America, in touch. Here, however, much of the story was played out in between, on the ship, during the connection. The main protagonists acted on board and with the means available on the ship, which was at that time a moving but largely isolated space. This space existed in a web of both global connections and disconnections.

Thanks to both the drama of the story and its rich documentation, in the Crippen case the mediating character of the passage becomes tangible. In accordance with other recent scholarship, the articles in this issue demonstrate that long-distance ship passages must be considered as places and times of history-making that had a formative impact on the lives of those on board.[77] Readjusting our analytical focus and considering the ship and the world in tandem will amend our understanding of how connections work by looking both at the connections and at that which is connected. As already pointed out, ship passages serve as tangible examples here owing to their spatial and temporal dimensions, the vividness of the transit, together with their embeddedness in a web of other forms of global connections and disconnections. However, the insights gained have broader implications. They contribute to a more general reconceptualization of our understanding of connections that takes them seriously as distinct, powerful historical phenomena in their own right.

While not all forms of connections have spatio-temporal dimensions as tangible as a transoceanic ship passage, they all have distinct spatial and temporal traits that constitute them

77 See, for instance, Tamson Pietsch, 'A British sea: making sense of global space in the late nineteenth century', *Journal of Global History*, 5, 3, 2010, pp. 423–46; Michael Pesek, 'Von Europa nach Afrika: Deutsche Passagiere auf der Dampferpassage in die Kolonie Deutsch-Ostafrika', *WerkstattGeschichte*, 53, 2009, pp. 68–88; James R. Ryan, '"Our home on the ocean": Lady Brassey and the voyages of the Sunbeam, 1874–1887', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32, 2006, pp. 579–604; Wenzlhuemer and Offermann, 'Ship newspapers'.

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as mediators rather than intermediaries. Contact and exchange take their time and occupy a certain space. The space of a connection has a strong bearing over how people or places can be connected, what can be communicated, how stable a connection can be. The time of a connection has much to say about matters of synchronicity and the embeddedness with other forms of connections. The telegraph played a central role in the Crippen hunt and can serve as an additional example here. Contemporaries celebrated the telegraph for its alleged ability to 'annihilate time and space'.[78]

Current research, however, has shown that telegraphy's dematerialized information transmission could not annihilate time and space – if anything, it essentialized time and bent space.[79] Rather, the telegraph inserted itself in a set of existing communication technologies. It worked in relation to and difference from railways and steamships, letters and telephones. Telegraphy became embedded with other forms of connections. Its distinct communicational qualities reflected its spatial and temporal dimensions, as well as its being part of a plurality of global connections. In our example, the wireless telegrams passing over the Atlantic Ocean in different directions have to be understood in relation to other information reaching the ship, such as the newspapers taken on board in Antwerp. The telegrams' communicational capacity was limited. They were supposed to be short and to the point. Therefore very little information was actually transmitted, which later had to be repackaged and reinterpreted. Wireless messages did not go from A to B directly. They were broadcasted, went over relays, and could thus develop a spatial life of their own. Their transmission, however fast it might be in comparison to other methods of communication, took some time, especially when practices such as encoding, decoding, and relaying are considered as well. Think, for instance, of the journalists occupying the wireless apparatus after Crippen's arrest when their employers were already eagerly waiting for news from the ship to share with the world.

What has been exemplified here for the ship passage – and in lesser detail for the wireless telegraph – reflects on our understanding of connections in a more general way. A reconceptualization of connections in the way proposed in this text will allow us to make better assessments of how the character of a connection impacts on the people or places that are connected. We will be able to say in more certain terms what qualitatively distinguishes global connections and renders them the key analytical elements of global history. In doing so, such a reconceptualization will contribute to a sharpening of the approach to global history research.

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78 For the origin and application of the phrase, see, for instance, Iwan R. Morus, 'The nervous system of Britain: space, time and the electric telegraph in the Victorian age', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 33, 119, 2000; Jeremy Stein, 'Annihilating space and time: the modernization of fire-fighting in late nineteenth-century Cornwall, Ontario', *Urban History Review*, 24, 2, 1996; Jeremy Stein, 'Reflections on time, time-space compression and technology in the nineteenth century', in Jon May and Nigel Thrift, eds., *Timespace: geographies of temporality*, New York: Routledge, 2001.

79 See, for instance, Roland Wenzlhuemer, '"Less than no time": zum Verhältnis von Telegrafie und Zeit', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift für Historische Sozialwissenschaft*, 37, 4, 2011.

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