

The Lecture-Brokers: The Role of Impresarios and Agencies in the Global Anglophone Circuit for Lantern Lecturing, 1850-1920

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Abstract

The lantern lecturing business diversified in a number of ways in the second half of the nineteenth century. At the bottom end of one kind of cultural scale were individuals that we now might think of as ‘citizen-scientists’ (or citizen-litterateurs, -travellers, -art historians, -church historians, -entertainers &c.), who were often to be found filling schedules within local literary and mechanics’ institutes, or, as these organisations gradually declined between the 1850s and 1890s, within museums, libraries, or local history and photographic societies. By contrast, the business of ‘popular lecturers’ – of speakers who could be relied upon to fill venues wherever they travelled – was a fully commercialised concern: theirs was a market increasingly dominated by discourses of celebrity; they tended to visit not only the usual run of lecturing institutes but also major town halls, theatres, and concert halls, and they frequently embarked on both national and international tours, a scale of enterprise that usually necessitated a support network comprising lecture agencies, managers, and impresarios. This article considers the work of three such agencies, whose networks incorporated much of the Anglophone world for over five decades: Major James Pond’s lecture bureau in the United States, Gerald Christy’s Lecture Agency in Britain, and R.S. and Carlyle Smythe’s lecture management business, which stretched from South Africa to New Zealand. Beginning by tracing the emergence of centralised popular lecturing systems in the United States and Britain from the 1850s, the article then discusses the emergence and

consolidation of these three businesses between the 1860s and 1920s, arguing that they should be regarded as key mobilisers of the global trade in celebrity lantern lecturing. The article describes for the first time the global foundations for the top end of the lantern business, and for lecturing practices that would come to be regarded as high status across international lantern cultures.

Keywords

Major James Pond, Gerald Christy, R.S. Smythe, Carlyle Smythe, lantern lecture, lecture agency, networks, lecture brokerage, network capital, mobilities

The substantial development of publications and major projects concerning the magic lantern in the past ten years has brought major advances in our understanding of this medium. So often parenthesised – in previous work from the history of science to film history – as ‘mere’ technological aid or precursor, the lantern played a constitutive role in several significant visual cultures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that has now finally been addressed, especially in relation to its social, cultural and performative dimensions. At its best, such work has enabled the creation of thoroughgoing institutional histories, especially in relation to major exhibition venues (Brooker 2013) and other public organisations making regular use of the lantern (Eifler 2010; 2019), as well as certain slide or equipment manufacturers (Borton & Borton 2015; Roberts 2017). In the wake of this plethora of new and increasingly international work, it has even become possible to glimpse some of the connecting threads that might constitute a long history or archaeology of this medium in relation to other media, technologies, publics, performance and screen practices (Huhtamo 2018). But while the businesses of key institutions and individuals are now becoming known, better revealing the remarkable heterogeneity of lantern usage across its long history, the

wider networks and circuits within which these influential groups operated have scarcely been considered. In part, this is because the sheer breadth of the lantern industry, permeating innumerable communities on a global scale, has only recently become apparent to media historians. However, our improved understanding of the lantern as a fully fledged mass-medium, especially between the 1870s and the 1920s, now begs questions about such connections between producers, exhibitors and venues, as well as between far-flung parts of the lantern-viewing world.

Asking such questions about connections rather than instances, networks rather than producers or receivers, has recently proven highly productive in related fields of cultural inquiry. In theatre history, for example, Christopher Balme and Nic Leonhardt have called for new research questions that ‘go beyond just tracing movement (although this also must be done) and perhaps see circulation as a cultural form or structure *sui generis*’ (2016, 5).

Drawing especially on Stephen Greenblatt’s work on cultural mobility (2010), as well as Lee and Lipuma’s influential discussion of ‘cultures of circulation’ (2002), this acknowledgement that networks are to some degree constitutive of the very institutions that are said to exploit them is still to be played out fully in theatre studies as in other areas, and is likely to have profound ramifications in studies of the lantern, too (Potter 2007; Balme 2015; 2016). This article argues that alongside invaluable work on lantern production and exhibition, we must now pay more attention to the lantern’s mobilities, and especially to variant forms of lantern ‘brokerage’: a term I prefer to ‘distribution’ because it better describes the essentially active processes of connecting-up that made possible the construction of local, national and international lantern networks. It does not attempt to detail the operation of all such networks at all scales of operation. Rather, in tandem with studies of theatrical brokerage (Leonhardt 2015), it focuses especially on the roles of prestigious managers, agents, and impresarios in

establishing and coordinating major international lantern exhibition networks – specifically those associated with big-name popular lecturers.

This is not to say that such transnational networks can be divorced from those operating within locally or nationally defined regions: rather, it is the interconnections between global networks and even the most parochial of lecture institutes that is of interest. As Veronica Kelly has noted of theatrical regions, these were always both ‘self-regarding, welded into imaginative unity through geography, personal relations and professional networks’, and ‘avidly outward-looking and globally focussed: emulously seeking self-renewal through innovation and the recruitment from other regions of fresh talent and exciting ideas’ (2016, 63). It was the appetite for fresh talent and exciting ideas in regions, variously defined, across the globe, that kept the lecture brokers in business from the 1860s though to the 1920s and well beyond, and that made the transnational movements of eminent lecturers between regions so profitable for all concerned. Considering the work of brokerage, therefore, gives us one way to trace connections between the transnational networks created by major lecture managers, impresarios and agencies and the countless local networks a lecturer might be exposed to in the course of a global tour.

While the exact roles of these individuals varied a great deal, they shared an ability to broker arrangements between lecturers, societies and venues, sometimes hiring others to fulfil key roles such as advance agents, tour managers, or lanternists. They were also highly adept at utilising modern infrastructural advances in order to conduct their businesses. The expansion of the train networks and subsequently of rapid and comfortable passenger shipping routes, for example from San Francisco to Hawaii, Auckland and Sydney, significantly opened up the possibility for lecturers to travel long distances in relatively little time,¹ but it also allowed agents to travel transnationally to secure fresh talent. Equally, communications technologies including modern postal services and telegraph cables permitted the rapid exchange of

messages, not only between agents and clients but also between news sources, allowing for the transmission of relevant publicity between far-flung newspapers. Mastering national and international transportation schedules and lines of communication therefore enabled lecture agents to identify individuals likely to draw the crowds, to meet and issue contracts with these performers, to publicise their performances within newspapers in the regions in question, to negotiate with the secretaries of lecturing societies and exhibition venues, and ultimately to transport their talent readily from venue to venue. The industry, that is to say, was founded on the intensified forms of mobility that were in rapid development from the mid-nineteenth century.²

The following section will describe the emergence and consolidation of the two largest Anglophone markets for big-name lecturers between the 1850s and early 1900s: the United States and Britain. Paying particular attention to the lecture agencies of Major James Pond in the United States and Gerald Christy in Britain, it will describe the emphasis on celebrity that came to dominate the top end of these markets, as well as the basic operations of the highly organised popular lecturing systems that evolved in both countries. The second section will show that outside of these two major Anglophone markets, a range of other brokerage practices predominated. Focussing on the lecture management provided by Robert Sparrow Smythe and his son Carlyle, whose operations across Australasia, South East Asia, and South Africa typified the transnational mobilities necessitated by this transcontinental market, it will describe the unique entrepreneurial model that developed in this context. Though this article is primarily concerned with the lecturing systems at work in these regions, the conclusion will consider the impact of these varied agencies on the business of lantern lecturing, showing that by the 1890s Pond, Christy and the Smythes had been largely successful in carving up the global Anglophone market for celebrity lecturing between themselves.

Network Capital: The Development of Popular Lecturing Systems in the United States and Britain

Popular lecturing had a highly significant role in Anglophone markets for high status entertainments during the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, though large numbers of lecturers, working locally, nationally and internationally, addressed a massive collective audience in this period, this aspect of cultural production has been largely overlooked. The exception to this has been a range of scholarship concerning the American Lyceum and Chautauqua circuits, which were the most developed Anglophone lecturing systems in the world from the 1860s (Ray 2005; McKivigan 2008; Wright 2013; Borton 2015). By contrast, the lecturing systems in Britain and its colonies have attracted little interest.³ Yet Anglophone lecture networks were in development across the world during the 1860s and 70s, with lecturing societies and venues growing in number and scale, so that by the 1880s and 1890s the scene was set for the substantial development of global tours that might incorporate not only Britain and the United States, but also colonised regions such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon, and South Africa.

The United States was relatively early in its embrace of this new class of professionalised celebrity-lecturers, with Angela G Ray identifying a significant shift taking place from the mid-1840s, and with increased pace from the 1860s, from a culture of ‘mutual education’ to one of ‘celebrity entertainment’. The early Lyceums, constructed in towns and villages especially in the North East, were intended to allow locals to engage in readings, public debate and the giving and receiving of lectures, but by the 1850s, ‘the development of circuits for travelling lecturers fostered the creation of “public lecturer” as an occupational category’ (Ray 2005, 13). The ‘popular lecturing system’, as Ray calls it, inaugurated a commercialisation of the Lyceum circuit, in which the publication of lists of professional

lecturers in papers such as the *New York Tribune* enabled the secretaries of local lyceums to begin to pick and choose big-name speakers that could draw paying crowds (33). In turn, this paved the way for a centralised system of lecture bureaus to coordinate and profit from such activities: established in 1868 in Boston, the Redpath Lyceum Bureau was the first to represent the lecturers themselves, and it pursued a policy of recruiting only the select few that were deemed likely to make a hit (39-40). During the 1860s and 1870s, many other American lecture bureaus followed suit, supplying both the Lyceums and the newer Chautauqua circuits. Although these operated at different regional scales and for particular niches of the market, they tended to share this investment in celebrity – a quality likely to make their talent sing across multiple markets.

Fees varied dramatically, depending primarily on the ticket prices that could be charged for more or less eminent speakers, though a standard charge for American Bureaus was likely to be 15-30% of the lecturer's profits (Borton 2015, 14). Those lecturers fortunate enough to find themselves on a prominent bureau list could rise to remarkable levels, especially when lecture tours coincided with a spike in their renown or notoriety. Among the brokers of the American Lyceum circuits from the 1870s, Major James Pond became especially well-known for his recruitment of the biggest names, an accomplishment ably mythologised by Pond at every opportunity (see Figure 1). His skills of self-promotion had been an important aspect of his empire since 1875, when he first acquired the Redpath Lyceum Bureau and began to expand the business. He interviewed regularly in newspapers and journals across the United States and internationally, tending to draw attention to his dealings with famous men and women, a strategy that became self-fulfilling when other famous men and women subsequently sought him out to manage their United States tours.

Figure 1: Portrait of Major Pond (Pond 1901, ii)

According to one 1892 interview with British journal, *Pearson's Weekly*, Pond's strategy for gathering so much talent was simple:

If a man or woman has written a remarkable book, the Major writes and tries to tempt them on to the Lyceum platform in order that the citizens of the great Republic may have the benefit of their literary culture and fascinating style. ("Workers and their Work," 13 February 1892, 9)

However, Pond was far from restricted to literary figures in his search for new celebrities, with a showman's eye, too, for topical items likely to catch the public imagination. Pond represented personalities of all kinds, from humourists and novelists to singers and actors, but his canny recruitment of explorers and war correspondents at the zenith of their fame and topicality was especially notable. As he wrote of his own role in promoting such men, '[t]o be attractions, heroes must make the history they relate' (Pond 1901, 548).

Recruiting these individuals was an international affair, with Pond taking trips to Europe each year to contract new groups of 'politicians, preachers, notable philanthropists and public men of every description,' with accounts of the extraordinary sums he was rumoured to offer to these individuals duly appearing in the international press ("Workers and their Work," 13 February 1892, 9). On the one hand, Pond's agency was thus occupied with securing talent for the very large and well-organised Lyceum market for public speakers, a feature that usefully generated publicity for upcoming tours. In 1901, following the publication of his book *Eccentricities of Genius: Memories of Famous Men and Women of the Platform and*

Stage, he even undertook his own international lecturing tour: ‘Stars I have Managed and Celebrities I have Met’ featured over a hundred lantern portraits of famous faces to accompany his anecdotes about them (“Scottish Notes”, 6 July 1901, 55). On the other hand, however, the less-publicised work of the agency was the routine business of securing the thousands of engagements across the United States that these speakers required. Already in 1892, Pond’s part of this business amounted to over three hundred separate courses of 5-10 lectures and many hundreds more individual lectures each year across cities in the United States (“Workers and their Work,” 13 February 1892, 9).

Large as this number of engagements might appear, this was a drop in the ocean of the massive market for Lyceums, Chautauquas and other American suppliers of public lecturing at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴ The scale of the Lyceum industry rivalled that of other major entertainment distributors in the United States, and in 1910 it consequently had a central place in the invaluable account of theatrical, vaudeville and moving pictures business agencies chronicled in Robert Grau’s *The Business Man in the Amusement World* (1910). Drawing from a range of industry-related publications, Terry Borton has shown that there were upwards of 6000 Lyceum courses in operation in 1906, each consisting of 5-10 lectures, with about 150 bureaus in operation, the top six of which were securing 18,000 dates each winter for all types of entertainment (2015, 7, 14).⁵

How many of these Lyceum engagements featured the lantern? A reliable figure may be impossible to establish, especially since even those lectures reported in the press do not always mention whether they had been illustrated by the lantern or by some other means. However, Borton’s survey of the American lecturing trade press 1891-1923 suggests that, at this stage at least, the lantern was very common, appearing in 21% of all adverts for lecturers

(2015, 12). A cursory survey of Pond's eminent lecturers from the late 1880s, as listed in his book, indicates that the percentage was considerably higher: the magic lantern, provided it was a high-quality apparatus featuring good images and handled by a professional operator, only added spice to the presentation, especially during lectures given by travellers, explorers and other adventurers. As one of his British interviewers paraphrased, 'Major Pond is a believer in Eyegate, and likes to have lectures illustrated by magic lantern slides whenever it be possible. He would like every mile he travels to take with him a detective camera' ("Workers and their Work," 13 February 1892, 9).

Like the moving picture trade from the mid-1910s, the massive size of the domestic American Lyceum market operated as a centre of gravity for the international lecturing business, with lecturers flooding to it from across the Anglophone world. If a speaker had sufficient fame or reputation it really did not matter where they were from, provided they were capable of addressing primarily Anglophone American audiences in articulate English.⁶ Under these commercial pressures, the Lyceum and Chautauqua circuits became increasingly cosmopolitan from the 1860s through to the 1920s, creating what Tom F. Wright has called 'an interface with world cultures,' due both to the nationalities of their speakers and the range of exotic subject matter dealt with (2013, 6). A great deal of this trade was transatlantic, as in Pond's case, but lecturing networks extended in all directions, with an enormous variety of voices occupying American platforms at any one time.⁷ One might say, adapting John Urry's discussion of mobility systems in the modern world, that businesses such as Pond's sustained a high amount of 'network capital': they accrued financial benefit from an unusually high degree of mobility, now stretching across the Anglophone world, and were able to sell this quality on to those audiences with sufficient spending power to buy into it (2007, 194-203).

Notably, however, the Lyceum empires managed by the American bureaus rarely seem to have extended into foreign markets. Occasional reports in newspapers outside of the United States bemoaned the fact that there was no regional or national popular lecturing system to match the Lyceum circuit (“The Much Travelled”, 20 January 1894, 8); however this does not imply that other regions had no comparable means of managing the network capital associated with big-name and international lecturers. Pond recounted that he had only twice managed tours in Britain, perhaps because there was little reason to do so given the extent of the American market, but also because, had he done so, he would have certainly encountered determined competition from British agencies with a better knowledge of the local terrain. Britain’s lecturing networks had gone through an evolution comparable to that in the United States, though the establishment of agencies comparable to the American lecturing bureaus, with their penchant for celebrity speakers, appears to have taken place approximately fifteen years later.

This is not to say that public lecturing was a later trend in Britain; indeed, the early Lyceums were initially modelled on British Mechanics’ Institutes: civic organisations with a scientific emphasis created to foster mutual improvement among newly industrialised working communities, but which, from the 1840s onwards, had primarily supported middle-class audiences (Royle 1971). Institutions such as these, as well as the burgeoning range of literary institutes and other relatively well-to-do lecturing societies, would form the primary market into which British lecturers began to establish professional careers from the mid-nineteenth century in Britain. This would be the world’s second largest Anglophone market for public lecturing, and when British colonies established Mechanics’ Institutes and other societies in the following decades, it would extend Anglophone lecturing circuits decisively across continents.⁸

Touring lecturers, some using lanterns, were not uncommon during the 1840s and 50s, but by comparison with speakers likely to appear at major metropolitan institutions, the reputation of this profession remained very poor, still tarnished, for some, by associations with the showmanship of the phantasmagoria, or with quasi-scientific subjects such as phrenology or mesmerism. For T.H. Purdon, lecturing in 1855 on the subject of the magic lantern to an audience in Belfast, such ‘abuses’ of the lantern had only recently been supplanted by more ‘useful’ scientific subjects, adding that ‘itinerant lecturers had latterly used it for the illustration of their subjects, such as geology, astronomy, &c’ (“Church of Ireland Young Men’s Society”, 7 March 1855, 3). Speaking at the Working Men’s Institution at Retford the following year, no less a personage than the Duke of Newcastle praised the ethos of mutual improvement that had survived in such societies, but had sharp criticism for the new generation of professional lecturers who, he claimed, ‘were going up and down the country merely to serve their own ends by what is called “cramming,” with what was neither good in itself nor could be profitable to those who might hear them’ (“The Duke of Newcastle on Lectures,” 29 November 1856, 3). The Duke was referring, here, to the method of some lecturers to ‘cram’ information on a requested topic shortly before giving a lecture, then regurgitate it in a crude and undigested manner, an increasingly common critique during the 1850s as the numbers of lectures given by this new generation of touring professionals increased (“A Lecture on Lectures,” 27 March 1858, 2).

Notwithstanding such criticisms, lecturing institutes showed a steadily increasing dependence on touring performers, and it therefore became more important to legitimise this emerging professional trade. Joseph Simpson, who had been lecturing in working men’s institutes since the early 1850s (“Local Intelligence”, 14 October 1851, 3), would prove central to this

undertaking when he established *The Institute and Lecturers' Gazette* in 1861 as the self-proclaimed 'new organ for lecturers' ("Magazines and Serials", 23 November 1861, 10). Published monthly, and explicitly intended to connect up the growing numbers of professional lecturers with the country's many lecturing institutes, the *Gazette* survived until 1889, and served during this long period as the industry's major trade publication and its most effective means of brokerage between increasingly diverse lecturing societies, professional lecturers, and the developing class of lecture managers and agents. As its editorial proudly announced upon its twenty-fifth anniversary, the journal had been the dominant voice presenting 'the more important workings of the Institutional world, and the announcements of the principal caterers for the instruction and entertainment of the public, every question affecting the interests of the profession being zealously watched and ventilated' ("A Quarter of a Century", 1 October 1886, 2577). Unaccountably overlooked by researchers, the *Gazette* represents most clearly the scale and organisation of British lecturing networks in these years, marking, for example, the shift in the trade from the working men's institutes of the early 1860s to generations of new public halls, literary societies, churches, and public libraries by the 1880s.

Typical issues were no more than eight pages long, and included large numbers of advertisements for lecturers and other performers, alongside reports from local societies, editorials, articles and correspondence concerning key debates in the trade. The September and October editions seem to have been especially significant, since these carried the engagement lists for the best-known lecturers, as well as information on societies still trying to fill schedules for the upcoming winter season (see, for example, "Mr B.J. Malden's Engagements", 1 October 1886, 2575). The journal also published an annual *Handbook for Lecturers*, which included a list of institutions and schools that were likely to hire them: a

useful way of reaching out across a large but dispersed market.⁹ As the years passed, the *Gazette* devoted an increasing amount of advertisement and column space to theatrical, drawing room and popular entertainments, matching the drift within lecturing institutes to shows more likely to attract large audiences, but it retained a primary emphasis on the work of popular and educative lecturing.

Many advertisements for lecturers carried details of the magic lantern apparatus used to illustrate their performances, and these also became more common as the years progressed. A full survey of this publication along the same lines as Borton's work in the US trade magazines is beyond the scope of this article; however, one sample issue for October 1889 included ten advertisements for lecturers, seven of which were illustrated by lantern, with the lantern also being advertised in relation to a 'limelight recital.' Other issues during the late 1880s varied between 50% and 80% of lecturers using the lantern, suggesting the growing significance of the lantern to the trade. Benjamin Malden, Britain's most prestigious lecturer from the late 1870s, was notable for his full-page adverts in each issue, which helped reinforce his reputation for the grand 'dioramic' lantern projections that accompanied his presentations.

The *Gazette* also played a part in steering the British market gradually towards the forms of celebrity-lecturing that were already beginning to predominate in the United States. This was partly because such a small-scale publication, in the hands of just a few writers and the editor, inevitably tended to focus on relatively well-known or close-at-hand figures. Initially these included those already associated with the *Gazette*, with Simpson himself taking the opportunity to advertise his editorship during his own lectures. But during the 1870s the most eminent names in the British touring lecture trade steadily occupied more advertising space in

the journal, with men such as Malden therefore coming more prominently to the attention of subscribers (including the society secretaries for whom it was primarily intended). This trend was reinforced by the inauguration of the Lecturers' Association in 1868, with C.J. Plumptre, a King's College, London, Professor of elocution as President, and Simpson, along with William Stokes, of Royal Polytechnic fame, serving as Secretaries. There had been many other lecturing associations established in Britain from the 1820s, but these had tended to be regionally based, serving a select number of institutes in each case, and were often short-lived. The new Association differed because of its close association with large metropolitan institutes such as the Royal Polytechnic and the Birkbeck Institution on the one hand, and with the *Gazette* on the other, which had already fostered nationwide links with regional lecturing societies and which now handled correspondence for the Association too.

The *Gazette* and the Lecturers' Association therefore helped to set in place the conditions allowing the legitimisation of the itinerant British lecturing trade during the 1860s and 70s, bringing respected professional speakers from nationally important venues to institutes throughout the country.¹⁰ They also enabled more systematic communication between lecturers and lecturing societies of all kinds, creating a trade-based network that might exercise a degree of oversight and quality control over the lectures and the venues in which they were given. In one of its final 1889 issues, the *Gazette* was still offering words of advice 'to Secretaries,' promoting mixed programmes of lectures, concerts, dramatic and musical recitals as a means to stave off bankruptcy ("A Word to Secretaries and Entertainers, by Truth", 1 October 1889, 2945).

Unlike the United States, where the bureau trade frequently made open bookings and sought to engage the general public in large commercial halls, the bulk of bookings in Britain

worked through smaller subscription- or congregation-based societies, with the various Free Churches remaining an especially significant market into the 1900s. By now, however, most Mechanics' Institutes had closed, and arguably the journal had less purchase on the new generations of public libraries, churches, colleges, schools, and university extension courses, which drew more extensively on other types of networks. Notably, the same year that the *Gazette* closed – 1889 – saw the launch of the *Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger*, a publication which quickly replaced it as the chief organ of the lecturing trade, and which further reinforced the longstanding trend for lecturers to adopt the magic lantern.

But perhaps the major reason for the demise of both the *Gazette* and the Lecturing Association (whose annual dinners were regularly cancelled for lack of interest in the late 1880s), was the upsurge at this time of a new generation of commercial lecture agencies. Lecture agencies had been present in Britain for some time – several had advertised in the *Gazette*'s pages promising to supply institutes with high-class entertainments – precisely the job that the journal itself had long sought to accomplish (“English and American Bureau and Agency”, 1 October 1886, 2573); “The Lecture and Entertainment Company,” 1 October 1889, 2942). But at the top end of the market, which big-name lecturers like Malden had occupied for many years, new bodies such as Gerald Christy's Lecture Agency now introduced a model of celebrity lecturing akin to Major Pond's in the United States, which represented a more fundamental challenge.

In place of the old system of brokerage represented by the *Gazette*, Christy and others now actively sought out and contracted big-name speakers of all kinds, advertising directly within newspapers in order to solicit the attention of all kinds of venues, from modern commercial

halls to Free Church halls, with their various programmes of social outreach. The Lecture Agency had been in operation since 1879, but after Christy took over its offices on the Strand in 1889, it would become a key mobiliser in the British market for celebrity lecturing across the next five decades (“The Lecture Season”, 22 September 1911, 7). As one of Christy’s platform luminaries, the novelist Coulson Kernahan, would later claim, ‘Mr Gerald Christy may be said to control the lecture field and practically to be without a rival,’ with the majority of big names on the circuit from the late 1890s becoming (as he termed them, applying the name of the most famous of the century’s many minstrel troupes) “Christy Minstrels” (Kernahan 1917, 165).

Figure 2: Portrait of Gerald Christy (Blathwayt 1913, 361)

Christy performed occasionally himself, during 1891 dressing in Japanese costume to deliver lantern lectures concerning his year-long stay in that country (“Odd Volumes”, 10 April 1891, 5). But he achieved fame as an agent for other performers, becoming widely known in Britain as ‘the Major Pond of England,’ an eminence he retained in a career that lasted until his death in 1944 (“What People Listen to”, 21 October 1897, 8) (see Figure 1). Although he never developed Pond’s gift for self-promotion, occasional interviews appearing in the British press, alongside surviving trade publications from the Lecture Agency, give a clear sense of his philosophy of public lecturing. This was characterised quite simply by an emphasis on celebrity, and on reputations built through previous experience in fields other than public speaking. An 1897 interview in the *London Daily News* made his commercial angle on the market for public speaking abundantly clear:

‘One noticeable thing to-day is the almost total extinction of the professional orator,’ said Mr Christy, in answer to my questions. ‘There were formerly a number of men who could prepare orations on almost any given subject. “Tell me what you want to hear about,” they would say, “and I will speak on it.” Nowadays their business has gone; the public will not hear them. Lecturing, like all other professions is getting more and more into the hands of the specialist. Before anyone can succeed on the platform to-day, he must have made his name known in some other way, so that the public curiosity is excited about his personality.’ (“What People Listen to”, 21 October 1897, 8).

Christy’s critique echoes earlier complaints about professional speakers ‘cramming’ for lectures, rather than speaking on subjects they knew well, but it is targeted here at the respectable class of men and women that might have advertised in the *Institute and Lecturers’ Gazette*, many of whose careers were by now coming to an end. Though he certainly overstates the demise of the ‘professional orator,’ who was in fact finding new places to speak in public libraries, colleges, and universities across the country, his emphasis on subject specialism and the significance of public personality neatly encapsulates a business model not dissimilar to Pond’s.

Like Pond, too, Christy was highly selective in his choice of lecturers, claiming that he received applications from ‘ambitious neophytes’ on a daily basis, almost all of which he was obliged to turn down, regardless of the potential quality of the lectures: only the ‘well-known man’ could get engagements, he continued to argue (“Notes – Mainly Personal”, 11 August 1899, 2). Membership of the Lecture Agency was highly prized by platform performers in general, since it furnished instant access to the most established and wealthy lecturing

societies across Britain. Each year, the Agency would issue a full prospectus of the speakers and entertainers who had managed to get on its books to local ticket agents and lecture societies, as well as releasing more prominent names across the regional British press.¹¹ An example of 'Christy's List' from 1899 typifies the eminence and variety of speakers on offer on his books (see Figure 2), including not only lecturers but also a range of musicians, singers and dramatic reciters, as well as the cinematograph, in the form of Maskelyne and Cook's touring show.

Figure 3: Example of 'Christy's List' (*The Scotsman*, 17 July 1899, 1).

The lecturers ranged from mountaineers like Edward Whymper and war correspondents like Frederick Villiers to humourists like Max O'Rell, the majority of whom by now had adopted the lantern. For example, the Rev. Haskett-Smith's lectures on the Middle-East were always illustrated with his own photographs; Villiers included many of the snapshots and sketches he had produced as war correspondent during assorted campaigns; Richard Kearton's lectures on natural history were profusely illustrated with his own wildlife photography: all such material was projected by the lantern, which had become indispensable across a full range of subject matter by this time.

During the 1900s, the Lecture Agency also issued a bi-annual 'Advance Date Book', intended for use by society secretaries in order to keep track of their bookings, but also including prominent advertising for those on the list. By 1911, the Agency's self-published booklet, *Concerning Popular Lectures*, addressed its market of lecture societies as a whole, suggesting the best methods of setting up new institutes and sustaining subscription rates in existing ones. 'You must have the right men if popular lectures are to pay their way,' argued the booklet, gesturing, of course, to its own provision of such men:

Lecturers of a kind are as common as spring poets. It is our business to see that you have nothing on your syllabus to empty the hall. To bring in subscribers you should rely upon the quality of your lectures rather than the number[...] We will repeat it: our reputation is at stake with our recommendations. Let us have an idea as to the class of audience you expect to get and we will tell you the type of man to secure its approval. Here is our *raison d'être* as an Agency. (*Concerning Popular Lectures*, 1911, n.p.)

Seeking to secure its position as the only agency in Britain with the history and reputation to provide these high-quality speakers, the Lecture Agency was no doubt responding to the emergence of other substantial organisations seeking to accomplish similar aims, and it published several other useful guides for society secretaries during the 1910s.¹² The immediate competition included the Lecture League, founded in 1909, which had also set out to support and secure the business of new lecture societies and which subsequently released its own lecturer lists (“The Lecture Revival Movement”, 29 May 1909, 10). By 1913, the first (and only) *Lecture Year Book*, again prominently targeted at the lecture societies, would include full-page advertisements for Lecturers from both Christy’s Agency and the League, as well as others from another substantial group, the Institute of Lecturers (Stewart 1913).¹³ This publication also suggests something of the dominance of the lantern in popular lectures by this time: of the 32 men and women who advertised within it, no less than 30 delivered lectures with the lantern, many promising images from their own photographs or making a special feature of the spectacle offered by their images.

In a typically flattering interview with one of his own lecturers in the popular magazine *Great Thoughts* in 1913, Christy maintained his argument about celebrity lecturing, claiming that

‘[p]eople now want to see people who have done things, not just written about them,’ and emphasised the large numbers of explorers, adventurers and war correspondents who remained on his books (Blathwayt 1913, 360). This was a tendency that would only be reinforced during the First World War, when Christy was appointed as Honourable Secretary for the War Lectures Committee, which organised lectures illustrated by ‘photographic slides taken at the front’ for free on behalf of the War Relief Fund (“Lectures on the War”, 19 November 1914, 3).¹⁴ In the increasingly competitive British market for big-name speakers throughout the 1910s, including the war years, the focus on celebrity as the most obvious marker of network capital remained, with Christy just as willing to look overseas for talent as Pond had been. The Lecture Agency also began to develop an international market, supplying speakers not only to Britain but also to Holland, Germany, and Australia (“The Lecture Season”, 22 September 1911, 7), with clients such as the travel lantern lecturer Oliver Bainbridge pursuing a global career (Stewart 1913, 20-21). However, the bulk of those lecturers that had undertaken transcontinental tours from the 1890s onwards did so by securing contracts with different managers, agents or bureaus in each region, with Pond’s and Christy’s agencies proving very popular with the biggest names in the United States and Britain respectively. In other parts of the Anglophone world, however, where the markets for public speakers were not so extensive, and lecturing societies were often dispersed over much larger areas, a different a mode of business operated, requiring lecture managers and impresarios to be as mobile their lecturers.

‘The Much Travelled’: R. S. and Carlyle Smythe and the Australasian Celebrity Lecture Circuit

From the point of view of the lecture-brokers, the fundamentals of the business were similar across the world. Within each region of a tour were numerous lecturing societies and

exhibition venues in search of fresh talent: the job of impresarios working there was to maximise the number of these connections, both by promoting as many attractive speakers as possible and by soliciting the admiring attention of as many society secretaries and venue managers as possible. Major Pond's reach across the American Lyceum circuit and Gerald Christy's dominance within British churches and lecturing societies thus rested upon their ability to recruit, promote, and distribute celebrity speakers effectively. Across Australasia in the same period, the dominant figures in the lecture brokerage business were Robert Sparrow Smythe (see Figure 3) and his son, Carlyle, whose base in Melbourne, like Pond's in New York and Christy's in London, was an ideal hub for commercial and civic traffic in their region.¹⁵ However, whereas Pond and Christy were able to build highly centralised and systematised agencies in these cities based upon established national popular lecturing systems, with performers and large numbers of venues close at hand, the Smythes' network was far more fragmented and dispersed. Their market stretched across a broadly defined Australasian region from South Africa to New Zealand including parts of India and Ceylon, and they also maintained a presence as impresarios in the major Anglo-centres of London and New York. In terms of their mobility and transnationalism, as well as their dependence on technological advances in transport and communication, the Smythes were arguably the most sophisticated entrepreneurs at work in the lecturing trade across the Anglophone world.

Figure 4: C. Hewitt. c.1860. *R. S. Smythe*. Available at State Library Victoria.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/175633674>)

R S Smythe had emigrated from London to Melbourne in 1855, where he began work on the parliamentary staff of the *Adelaide Advertiser*, before embarking on a peripatetic career as musical impresario and lecture manager in the early 1860s ("Mr R S Smythe", 9 July 1898,

25; O'Connor, 10 October 1891, 10). After conducting several tours in Australia, in 1863 he managed the tour of a magic and musical show through Japan, China, Ceylon, Singapore, and Malaysia, then for four years toured India, Ceylon, Mauritius and South Africa with a group of musicians, specialising in performances at military stations. In 1868, after his first return to London in search of fresh talent, he toured with the Anglo-German actor Daniel Bandmann, whose son, Maurice, would subsequently manage a theatrical empire stretching from Gibraltar to Japan (Balme 2015).

Smythe would continue to tour with a range of musicians, actors, reciters and entertainers throughout his career, but he became best known as a lecture agent following his 1872-1877 tour with fellow Melburnian Rev. Charles Clark, with whom he travelled through Australasia, the United States, Canada, and South Africa, a professional relationship and friendship which persisted on and off for the following 25 years ("Charles Clark. Preacher, Orator, Lecturer", 2 April 1903, 3). Smythe's experience of the American Lyceum circuit would prove instructive: during the 1880s and 1890s he developed a commercial strategy based on big-name speakers and also cultivated a talent for self-publicity that echoed Pond's. He became widely known in the Australasian press as 'the Moltke of Managers', after celebrated German field-marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, whose strategic mind and logistical skill in managing troops Smythe was considered to have applied to the touring trade. However, he was best known in the newspapers as 'The Much Travelled', with reports often referring to him only by this epithet. He interviewed regularly, and by 1891, professed a commercial philosophy of lecture management that resembled Pond's and Christy's: 'I am the only manager who deals exclusively with stars,' he claimed during one interview, 'and I make it a rule always to secure the best man in his line. There is no entrepreneur who knows the

Australian Colonies so thoroughly, or who has had so many opportunities for noting the changes and fluctuations in the public taste' (quoted in O'Connor, 10 October 1891, 10).

Like Pond's and Christy's agencies, Smythe's empire was thus founded on an intimate knowledge of lecturing societies and venues, only across an extraordinarily large area, coupled with a dedication to securing the biggest names on the Anglophone platform.¹⁶ But while his home location in Melbourne was ideal for managing tours across the southern hemisphere, the distance from London and the large American cities made it difficult to attract talent. 'Even now,' he argued in 1891, 'when a man can go from Europe to Australia in about a month, an Australian manager is heavily handicapped in his efforts[...]for he has every European and American manager in competition with him, and by no means on equal terms' ("In Search of Talent", 24 October 1891, 5). Lecturers were well aware that significant time would be lost on the long journey to the antipodes and when they arrived the small number of large towns and the great distances between them seriously curtailed their profits.

By 1898, the competition for celebrity lecturers had sharpened further, Smythe complaining about the dominance of major British lecturing institutes such as the Birmingham Midland Institute or London Institution, the many 'syndicates or committees that organise courses of lectures' in the British provinces, and especially the financial power of the 'great American bureaux' and '[Christy's] Lecture Agency in London, with a long list of attractions,' any of which might prove a far more attractive proposition for a popular lecturer ("Public Amusements at Home and in the Colonies", 14 April 1898, 6). Even in the modern age of weekly mail and cable communication, Smythe found it essential to revisit Europe on a regular basis in order to meet prominent men and women and contract them to an

Australasian tour: by 1905 he had reportedly travelled back and forth between London and Melbourne no less than twelve times (“A Story of Travel”, 10 November 1905, 3).

From 1889, R.S. Smythe was assisted in this work by his son, Carlyle, fresh from a degree at the University of Melbourne, who, along with a number of advance agents in each region, took on much of the touring and management activity in the 1890s through Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. During the 1900s and 1910s Carlyle would be partly based in Europe, where he was better able to secure the talent the business required. Describing himself as a prominent ‘Dealer in Brains’, Carlyle was a more retiring figure than his father, less given to self-publicity, but together they brought a sequence of celebrity speakers to Australia and New Zealand from the 1890s to the early 1910s (“A Dealer in Brains.”, 28 September 1920, 5). These included tours by eminent lantern lecturers such as Henry Stanley (on his various African expeditions, 1891-2), Rev. H.R. Haweis (educational, musical and religious subjects, 1895), Rev. Haskett-Smith (the Holy Lands, 1895-6, 1900), Frederick Villiers (war correspondent, 1895, 1899, 1901), Harry Furniss (British parliamentary sketches, 1897), and Frank T. Bullen (seafaring and adventure, 1906). All of these lecturers had also appeared prominently on Christy’s list in the preceding years (see Figure 2), and some, such as Haweis, Haskett-Smith and Villiers, had also toured the American Lyceum circuit to acclaim under Pond’s management.

The Smythes’ business thrived on the recruitment of these tried-and-tested speakers, whose reputations had preceded them to some extent in the globalised Australian press. The priority was to secure big names, so the absence of the lantern for some speakers, including Mark Twain, who toured Australia, New Zealand Ceylon, India, and South Africa accompanied by R.S. and Carlyle in turn during 1895 and 1896, was not a problem, provided they could draw

the crowds.¹⁷ When Haweis attempted to lecture in darkness so that his lantern images of catacombs would show more clearly, R.S. reportedly remonstrated that ‘the people...pay their money to see the lecturer – they can see a lantern show any day’ (Haweis 1896, 151). However, while the lecturer’s visibility was always a primary concern for the Smythes, the majority of their speakers did use lantern illustrations: even Stanley, who did not typically use the apparatus during his British and American tours, added a final section to many of his lectures in Australia, where he would talk to a sequence of lantern slides depicting his experiences of Africa (“Mr Stanley’s Last Lecture”, 16 March 1892, 3).

Whereas the major bureaus and agencies of the United States and Britain were systematically able to offer substantial portfolios of lecturers to a broad clientele of lecture societies, the Smythes’ mode of operation remained relatively piecemeal and entrepreneurial, relying on the showman’s knack of determining those lecturers likely to make a hit across Australasia, then securing them for short tours, one by one, with an appropriate financial offer. In his fascinating account of ‘Star Lecturing in Australasia’, Haweis outlined the advantages of entering such a contract with R.S. Smythe:

The public trust him, and will always go to his first nights. His method is simple. He secures what he considers a good man, advertises him on the scale of the great operatic companies—pays his travelling expenses (not his hotel bills) whilst on business, and takes *half* the net profits. (1896, 148)

The 50% fee was extraordinarily high by comparison with British and American agencies, but as Haweis also explained, the grand scale of these tours, booking out major venues in

larger cities and spending extravagantly on publicity, created a steady stream of profit for lecturer and impresario:

The big fish once landed, the cooking of him for public use is swift and thorough. For weeks before his approach stupendous statements appear in alluring newspaper paragraphs introducing the name of the approaching lion—Pears' Soap and Mother Siegel's Soothing Syrup are not in it with Smythe's trumpet blasts. Then hoardings and handbills suddenly herald the coming man. In every town I entered, my name in letters two feet long, white on a pale blue ground, stared me in the face, at the railway stations, on the omnibuses, at the hotels. The descriptive handbills were wonderful. One might suppose the whole civilised world was one vast listening ear, waiting for the least whisper that might fall from my lips (149).

Haweis lectured for fifty engagements with Smythe in Australia, New Zealand, and Ceylon, and found he was only booked to play large venues in large cities, where a significant and well-heeled crowd might attend. With his celebrity firmly established across Australasia, he ultimately left Smythe in order to manage his own tour in smaller towns, but experienced little financial success in this venture, finding 'the halls were mere sheds, the 'managers' being a sort of folk who never heard of me' and that 'I had often to make my public,' playing for several nights in a row before substantial audiences would come and see him (181).

Smythe's business model was designed primarily for large urban audiences, meaning that the profits for each engagement were maximised, even if much time was to be wasted travelling between them.

The logic of big names, big venues, and relatively short runs in major cities was sustained following R.S.'s retirement in the mid-1900s and death in 1917, when Carlyle continued in the business, securing John Foster-Fraser (travel lectures, 1909), Roald Amundsen (polar exploration, 1912), Villiers, for a fourth tour (the War, 1916) and Arthur Conan Doyle (spiritualism, 1920), among other lantern lecturers.¹⁸ He was doubtless assisted in this enterprise following a period in the mid-teens working as the Australian representative for Christy's Lecture Agency, where he was also instrumental in securing a global profile for Christy's business ("Dramatic Notes", 1 March 1913, 33; "Music and Drama", 14 August 1915, 8). During the first two years of the War, he seems to have joined Christy in his involvement with the War Lectures Committee, for a while becoming especially involved with the provision of lectures for wounded Australians in the London area ("War Lectures", 13 January 1916, 10).

It remains unclear how far the Smythes were in competition with the major British and American agencies and bureaus, and how far their businesses had depended on mutual compromise and collaboration. It was certainly the case that Pond, Christy and the Smythes shared many of their biggest name lecturers, especially British performers, and also true that R.S. had complained about the competition from Christy and the American Bureaus. But R.S. had also spent a brief spell as the guest of Major Pond in New York during 1893 while 'searching America for platform personalities' ("Lecture Platform Notes", 26 March 1893, 7), a connection which ultimately brought Twain to Australia, when Pond called him to make arrangements ("Greater Britain", 22 September 1894, 7). And Carlyle's connection with Christy certainly strengthened after his father retired, suggesting that his operations in Australasia became, for a while at least, an effective extension of the London Lecture Agency. But whether they were working in competition or collaboration with the major

agencies and bureaus, it was the Smythes' unique knowledge of the broad Australasian region coupled with their remarkable mobility across the globe that sustained the business, enabling them to broker talent to venues across continents for over fifty years.

Conclusion: Undertaking the Global Lecture Tour

For the average celebrity lecturer, perhaps starting out in the profession following a career in journalism or the military, the global tour was likely to be a daunting proposition. With many lecturers travelling to the United States, Britain, and their Dominions as well as other parts of the world, the business required constant movement from venue to venue, ideally minimising the travel time and maximising the number of engagements undertaken. The job of managing travel timetables, arranging advance bookings and securing positive publicity in each location meant that it was more or less impossible for most lecturers to arrange their own tours, alongside lecturing several nights a week. On top of this, given the unreliability of the equipment and expertise that might be found in each new venue, a further consideration was the transportation of a lantern and lanternist, as well as any other equipment or illustrative material that might be needed. For most, a small company was needed to support touring shows, often including the lecturer, lanternist, a tour manager, and an advance agent hired in each region of the tour, a retinue similar, but on a smaller scale, to most theatrical tours at this time. A few lecturers managed much of this activity themselves: the American medical lecturers Anna Longshore Potts and Charles Harrison, for example, were managed by Charles' brother, George, during their two global tours in the 1880s and 1890s, hiring lanternists and advance agents in the course of their travels (Kember, forthcoming; Wells 2018; Brookes 2015). A key advantage of this practice was that the lecturers and their manager managed to secure the bulk of the profits for themselves. However, most big-name

touring lecturers chose to enter contracts with lecture impresarios and agents, following the itineraries set for them in each region in exchange for a substantial share of the profits.

Once it became possible to link the networks established by Pond, Christy, Smythe and others in this type of way, numerous big-name lecturers opted to undertake global tours. Most often, this type of transnational celebrity was initiated following success in one national or regional context, but the scale, duration, and shape of the tours varied immensely depending in part on the point of departure and the interest taken by the global press. The growth of highly connected regional newspapers, and later of a wide range of illustrated periodicals, enabled celebrity discourses to circulate quickly across continents, meaning that far-flung audiences might become familiar with big-name speakers long before they arrived in a region, therefore creating any number of ready-made markets. For example, Henry Stanley had lectured on his African expeditions in Britain and the United States during the 1870s and 1880s, but the global circulation of news concerning the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition during 1889 made him a highly attractive proposition across the world, setting in place a bidding war between agencies upon his return from Africa in April 1890. Pond, who had engaged Stanley to speak prior to the Expedition, ultimately secured him again for \$1000 a lecture across 110 engagements in the United States between November 1890 and April 1891, a record sum for his clients (“Lions of the Lyceum”, 30 January 1898, 4). Stanley returned for a briefer British tour with Christy’s lecture agency, and by the end of 1891 was lecturing in New Zealand prior to his tour of Australia, now under the management of R.S. Smythe.

Similarly, Winston Churchill took advantage of the celebrity prompted by his infamous escape from Boer captors in December 1899 with a lecture tour. Churchill’s story of wartime derring-do had been widely covered in the world’s Anglophone press, but in this case the

transnational ambitions of his lecturing tour were quickly curtailed. Within a few months of returning from South Africa he had been recruited by Christy to give his profusely illustrated lantern lecture, 'The War as I Saw It', which would prove by some distance Christy's greatest hit of the Boer War ("Mr W.S.Churchill's Lecture", 31 October 1901, 2; "Mr Winston Churchill, MP", 9 March 1901, 5). Pond, seeing the opportunity, contracted Churchill to take on 50 engagements across the United States from December 1900 to tell his story first-hand, with a fee reckoned by some newspapers to be as high as £15,000 plus expenses ("Great Offer to Winston Churchill", 28 July 1900, 4; "Churchill in Clover", 11 September 1900, 4). However, reportedly disliking the hard work and travel and insisting on more pay, Churchill returned home shortly afterwards to continue touring the British provinces ("Lecturer goes on Strike," 29 December 1900, 3).¹⁹ Churchill certainly didn't make it as far as Australia with his lecture, but embracing the prospect of capitalising on a ready-made market, Christy's Agency dispatched Henry Neville, the war artist for *The Graphic*, to Australia with a Boer War lecture with exactly the same title in March 1902, featuring over 200 slides of Neville's snapshots and sketches of the campaign ("The War as I Saw It", 5 June 1902, 2).

Examples such as these suggest a fluid global market for celebrity lecturing, highly influenced by matters of topical importance, as well as by the global reach of Anglophone newspapers. Capitalising upon the ready-made markets in the United States, Britain and across Australasia, the networks established by individuals such as Pond, Christy, and Smythe were fully developed by the early 1890s, and only required the showman's understanding of a 'good draw' to function profitably. To some extent, individuals like Stanley and Churchill could be relied upon to manage their own celebrity to best advantage, but it was primarily the job of the lecture-brokers to translate this global currency into good audiences for each region. For career lecturers such as Villiers and Haweis who spent many

years touring Anglophone lecturing societies across the world, passing between the respective ambits of Pond, Christy, and the Smythes became a routine part of the business, but they still relied upon the regional expertise their agents provided in order to make a hit, venue to venue. In 1895, one of R.S. Smythe's Australian interviewers professed a fascination for this skill in relation to the management of Haweis' tour:

It is marvellous how the much-travelled agent engineers his platform curios. Himself perfectly acquainted with the peculiar sensibilities of each colony, he drills his star as to what topics it is expedient to introduce or omit in this or that town, what propositions to emphasise, and what rocks to avoid. Interviews are managed with journalistic skill, and no opportunity is missed from start to finish to catch the public ear and win the public approval. This is the business of every showman[...] ("Town Talk. Beguiling the Public", 26 April 1895, 2)

The engineering of celebrity to fit each lecture platform was an intrinsic aspect of the work of brokerage, requiring the mapping of transnational networks onto regional networks, with agents like Smythe ultimately responsible for this work of connecting-up. Adopting Greenblatt's terminology, we might profitably regard such shows as 'contact zones', nodes within broader networks 'where cultural goods are exchanged' and where 'a specialized group of "mobilizers" – agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries – often emerges to facilitate contact' (2010, 251). A fundamental job within any history of the lantern seeking to account for the operation of this fragmented industry is to identify these mobilisers at all scales of enterprise, regional, national, and transnational, and to determine their roles within the institutions that depended upon them. On the widest global stage, and for the most eminent Anglophone celebrities, recognising the importance of the still little-known empires

of brokers such as Pond, Christy, and the Smythes is central to this undertaking. It will also be central for understanding the development of the global commerce in celebrity, and for tracing the links between this business and the concurrent growth of a global trade in images.

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¹ By the 1890s the journey from San Francisco to Honolulu took about two weeks, then the onward journey to Auckland was about ten days. The full journey from London to eastern Australia took about a month, provided the Suez route was taken.

² For a comparable account of theatre history, see Leonhardt and Scholz-Cionca 2017, 113-134.

³ Exceptions are provided by some excellent work on the functioning of Mechanics’ Institutes and local lecture societies. See, for example, Hewitt 2012.

⁴ For work on the broader business model adopted by American lecture agents, see McKivigan 2008, 113-152.

⁵ At this point, according to Borton, five years after Pond’s death, the James B. Pond Bureau was still at the upper end of this growing market, but amounted to no more than 5% of it. The business still depended principally on an ability to secure the most eminent celebrity names for prestigious platforms.

⁶ It was by no means certain that celebrity speakers would prove eloquent on the public platform. Major Pond recorded that, while Matthew Arnold’s American lectures proved a financial success, ‘nobody ever heard any of them, not even those sitting in the front row.’ (Pond 1901, 323).

⁷ For example, Evan Roberts has described the global tours of Maori lantern lecturer, Wherahiko Rawei, which led ultimately to a longstanding lecturing career in the American Chautauqua circuits of the 1910s and 20s (Roberts 2013, 6).

⁸ In Australia, for example, attempts to create a Mechanics’ Institute in Sydney began as early as 1826: “Church and School Corporation”, 1 July 1826, 2. In New Zealand, discussions about the formation of a Mechanics’ Institute in Auckland began in 1841: “Auckland Mechanics’ Institute”, 10 July 1841, 1.

⁹ These were advertised regularly within the journal, but I have not yet been able to track down any copies, and would be grateful for any leads on these volumes.

¹⁰ Reports of the annual dinners are especially interesting in indicating some of the most active and eminent personnel in the trade, year by year. The report of the second annual dinner of the Lecturers’ Association in 1869 reads like a list of eminent professional lecturers at work in the London institutes, and they were joined by representatives from several provincial institutes (“Lecturers’ Association”, 15 May 1869, 4).

¹¹ For examples of Christy’s list across the decades, see: “The Lecture Agency, Ltd.”, 10 June 1897, 6; “The Lecture Agency, Ltd.”, 6 July 1899, 1; “Lectures and Services”, 22 November 1911, 4; “List of Popular Lectures”, 19 June 1924, 3.

¹² These included the occasional journal, *The Platform Bulletin*, and wall calendars for each lecture season. Again, I have not yet been able to track down any examples of these publications. For a list of the Lecture Agency’s publications up to 1914, see *The Lecture Agency Advance Date Book July 1914 to June 1916*, 1914, n.p.

¹³ For information on the competition, see “The Institute of Lecturers”, 11 April 1914, 4.

¹⁴ The Committee was chaired by one of Christy’s most famous lecturers, John Foster-Fraser, who would later tour the United States as part of the attempt to shore up American support for the war effort in Europe (“Sir John Foster Fraser in America”, 20 November 1918, 4).

¹⁵ For information on the strategic importance of Melbourne as a commercial hub, see Belich 2009, especially chapter 11.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the Australian market for popular lantern lecturing in this period, see Hartrick 2017, 48-52.

¹⁷ For Twain's recollections of Carlyle, see Twain 1895, 521-522. For international reports, see "A Chat with 'Mark Twain.'", 21 October 1895, 3 (Australia), "Mark Twain in Ceylon.", 31 December 1895, 23, and "Greatest Humourist of the Age", 2 February 1896, 11 (India).

¹⁸ Only a tragic accident, which led to his death in 1925, seems to have curtailed the trickle of lantern lecturers heading to Australia under Carlyle. For Conan Doyle's account of touring with Carlyle, see Conan Doyle 1921.

¹⁹ For an account of the escape and Churchill's subsequent capitalisation on it, see Millard 2016.