

detailed account of shadow play could take a volume equal in size to the one under review, and one can understand the exclusion for practical reasons. But I would argue that there is no theoretical reason. Although clearly prehistoric shadow making is speculation, the wider subject is certainly not 'ahistoric': written accounts of shadow theatre shows stretch way back, and artefacts survive from several cultures. The shadow play typically lasts for two hours or (often) more, the images appear on a white screen in the dark and are produced by the illumination of a lamp; they are frequently coloured; there is accompanying narration and music, strong narrative (including traditional stories), and characters familiar to the audience. A closer analogy to cinema would be difficult to find. And as those who attended the recent MLS Convention will appreciate, at least one magic lantern culture – that of Japan – cannot be fully understood without recognising its debt to shadow play techniques.

So, potential researchers, don't be dissuaded from recognising the relevance of many media that do not happen to be contained in this

book but could equally well justify inclusion in the story. The magic mirrors and shadow theatres of the East will eventually take their rightful place. If you're looking down, hang on in there Will Day; it will take time – but it will happen!

It has taken a great many years to create a widespread understanding that screen techniques did not start with 1895 and the Lumières. In this contribution to that understanding Laurent Mannoni tackles, with resounding success, a myriad of related media techniques, spanning half a millennium. To quote David Robinson's Foreword, this is 'no cold, dry, academic study, but a pulsing, vital chronicle'.

1880–81 AND ALL THAT: A SLICE OF LANTERN LIFE

Stephen Herbert

BOOKS SUCH AS *The Great Art of Light and Shadow* will perhaps inspire some readers to dig out unknown lantern facts for themselves. Tracking down long-lost references in esoteric ancient books, à la Mannoni, takes a good deal of time, access to the very best libraries, and, arguably, a particular talent. So this is not something that all of us can participate in. On the other hand, researching lantern shows in old newspapers is something that can be done by anyone with the inclination and a little spare time. Naturally, most of us would be mainly interested in knowing about the magic lantern activities in our home town, or the place where we live now. At least one member of the Society, Damer Waddington, has taken this activity to its limit by checking the newspapers for his locality, in this case Jersey, from 1814 to 1914 inclusive. That requires considerable dedication, and more time than many of us are able to find. However, checking just one season isn't too demanding, and this gave me the idea of 'A Slice of Lantern Life'.

The proposal is that MLS members could check the newspapers of a particular town, in their local reference library, for lantern references from a given 'lantern season'. This information would then be centrally collated and analysed, and a report on the lantern activities thereby discovered would be published in the *Journal*. This idea was well received by members when mentioned at a recent Society meeting. The following are some suggestions for anyone who may be interested in taking part.

- Firstly, decide on the town or area to be researched. Check with your local reference library to ensure that it has newspapers for the area and period (for dates, see below), or that such newspapers are accessible at a location not too far away. A negative result is not a failure – it will also be important to know if a town or area does not have this information available.
- It is a good idea to take a preliminary look at some samples of the newspapers that you intend to use. Check at least one daily and one weekly title, if possible, to determine which gives the best coverage of local events, including lectures and shows. Check the advertising columns for forthcoming lectures, and check reviews of recent local events.
- I suggest that once you have decided on which newspaper(s) to research, you send me an e-mail or postcard (addresses at the end of this article) with that information. I can then alert any members who are proposing to cover the same ground.

If you haven't undertaken newspaper research before, here are some tips (and for those who have, there are also suggestions for managing the material for this particular project):

- Some newspapers will be available in their original form, and some as microfilm. There are good and bad points about each. Newspapers are usually easier to read (the small text can be rather trying on microfilm), but handling original papers can be

a problem if they are fragile (and they usually are). Newspaper pages must be turned slowly to avoid tearing, whereas on a microfilm reader it is possible to whizz from the reports page of one issue through to the same page of the next issue.

- It is cheaper, and usually easier, to copy out relevant parts, rather than try to arrange for photocopies to be made. Try to copy the whole of an advertisement or report, keeping original typeface and punctuation eccentricities if possible. A laptop PC is useful, but hand copying is fine – although it does of course mean that the material needs to be typed out at a later stage.
- Include as much information as possible, but (if it is available) the following should be seen as more or less essential: date(s), venue(s) and title(s) of each show or event; any names of individuals or organisations associated with the show; and the location of the reference (title of paper, date of issue, page number). If you need any more advice on organising the information, or on computer file formats to use etc., please get in touch with me.
- I would suggest a twin-column method of entry, with lantern-related material entered in one column and supplementary material (notes on panoramas, Pepper's Ghost shows, etc.) in the other. If your time is limited, the second column could consist of just brief notes to help give some context to the lantern information.
- Lectures were frequently advertised as including 'Limelight Views' or 'Diagrams with the aid of the optical lantern'. Of course, it is possible that many advertised lectures that didn't specify the use of the lantern nevertheless did make use of it. When we publish our results, we shall have to bear in mind that the references that we find to the lantern being used in lectures are not necessarily a complete record of all such instances.
- Although most of our research is likely to be in the UK, overseas members are encouraged to participate too. We need more information about lantern activity in all countries.

If we have enough response to this project, it should be possible to discover some previously unknown travelling lanternists and showmen. We should also find more details of the activities of already-known lantern lecturers. And perhaps we shall get a better idea of the actual number of lantern shows and lectures in towns, villages and cities in the 'lantern season' of the autumn/winter/spring of – well, how about 1880–1881? I don't know of any reason that would make that particular season impractical to research (e.g. the Great Gasbag Shortage of 1880, or the 1881 Limelight Operators' Guild Strike – I made those two up), so I would suggest September 1880 to May 1881 inclusive as the dates to look for.

Do try to take part! Don't leave this to others – your input will be invaluable in putting together this 'Slice of Lantern Life'. There is a particular thrill in reading about lantern shows that took place in one's own 'neck of the woods'. Let me know which area you intend to research, and make a date now to visit your local library.

And finally, a few words about the follow-up project to the *Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern*. An online database is now being

NOTES

1. Laurent Mannoni, *Le Grand Art de la Lumière et de l'Ombre: Archéologie du Cinéma* (Paris: Nathan, 1995). A review by David Francis appeared in *NMLJ* Vol. 7 No. 3 (November 1995).

compiled, which will include new entries and important corrections. These will also appear in paper form in future issues of the *Journal*. So if you have a Whirlyscope lantern attachment that isn't in the book, or if you know of an interesting inventor, showperson or slide-making process that we didn't cover, we are very keen to hear from you. Information may be sent to me either in the form of notes or as a 'finished' entry (typed entries by post, electronic entries by e-mail, in any language). If you send information by e-mail, please use the 'body' of the message only – no attachments. Illustrations, on paper or as image files, are also welcome. Please be sure to cite the references used, and include copyright information for pictures.

When we have a reasonable quantity of material, the database will appear on the Society's website.

One of the benefits of a Society such as ours is the results of the work of its members: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Or it should be – so set to it: pencils sharpened, quills cut, and pocket spyglass at the ready. The lantern world awaits your discoveries!

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REVIEW: *LIVING PICTURES*

Richard Crangle

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29 Bradford Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 9AN. UK £20;
rest of Europe £24; rest of world £28.

IN THE STRANGE and often secluded world of academia, one of the favourite words of the age is 'interdisciplinary'. A piece of work which is interdisciplinary is generally seen as a Good Thing, though there is always the problem that nobody is quite sure what the word really means. It should, perhaps, indicate work that takes a wide-ranging look at whatever it's supposed to be studying without being limited or tangled up by the boundaries which fence round most areas of academic study (English scholars don't talk to History scholars, and so on, even though they may read the same books). All too often, though, 'interdisciplinary' tends to mean that one area of study 'borrows' material which 'belongs' to another, uses it for its own ends, tosses it back when it's finished, and never actually crosses the boundary at all. The academic discipline of Film Studies, for example, often treats the magic lantern and other 'pre-cinema' media as curious ancestors which can make for interesting or amusing comparisons with the cinema industry, but which aren't really worth understanding in their own right.

So a new journal like *Living Pictures*, which declares an aim to 'stimulate research and interdisciplinary studies in relation to popular forms of visual entertainment before 1914', sets itself a challenging task. On the basis of this first issue, it succeeds pretty well. It might, just possibly, still seem a little like a Film Studies journal which is trying to branch out a bit (three of the five main articles, plus the annotated bibliography, are primarily about moving pictures), but perhaps that depends on one's point of view. There is certainly enough coverage of things which aren't film-based to justify its claim to be 'a multi-disciplinary journal ... to complement the work of more specialised and media-specific publications'.

Of course, it has to be said that *Living Pictures* is first and foremost an academic journal, and that means that it won't be to everyone's taste. The editors and contributors have successfully avoided most of the excesses of jargon and obscure expression which blight so much modern academic writing, but there are still a few references to things like 'potentially transgressive spaces', 'dialectical moments' and 'the interactive nature of different mediated forms' which may have the lay reader reaching for the dictionary. But on the basis of this first issue, the ideas are good enough and most of the writing is clear enough to make it a rewarding read for anyone with a serious interest in the histories of the various optical media.

At first sight, the items which are perhaps likely to be of greatest interest to MLS members are a fine piece by our own Mike Simkin on the marketing techniques of the panorama showman Albert Smith, and J.N. Maskelyne's three-part article on 'Natural Magic',

reprinted (though not identified as such) from *The Leisure Hour* of 1878. The latter, even if it does perpetuate the old myths about Kircher and Robertson, is especially valuable in the way it places the lantern in a very broad context of the techniques of optical trickery and illusion. An excellent and elegantly written article by Reena Suleman on the Victorian cartoonist and photographer Edward Linley Sambourne is also stimulating: while not lantern-related as such, its account of the use of a new technology (photography) in relation to other arts throws some useful sidelights on the position of the lantern, as both the 'influencer' and 'influencee' of other media. And one item in particular, the first part of Stephen Bottomore and Deac Russell's annotated bibliography of publications since 1995 on 'Projection, Early Film and Allied Arts', is an invaluable and long overdue aid to the study of all media since the various centenaries of cinema (slightly) shook up the way we view them.

But really, to list those articles which are likely to be most interesting to a given group of people is to miss the point of an enterprise like *Living Pictures*. Truly interdisciplinary research and publication allows subjects to come together in ways which are not familiar or expected, and so allows us to think about our own interests in relation to other subjects. Media such as the lantern, photography, panorama, early cinema and so on never existed in isolation from each other. If we are going to stand a chance of understanding them more fully, we shall have to be able to think about them in their wider contexts.

So items like Tom Gunning's fascinating and challenging article on the nature of early moving pictures (which successfully brings together automata, spiritualism and the author of *The Wizard of Oz*), C. Paul Sellors' detailed and finely-focused discussion of the early film trade in one district of Manhattan, or Alison Griffiths' piece on ethnographic films in relation to the various World's Fairs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, all have things to offer the reader who approaches without mental boundaries. And another reprint, a strange article taken from *All the Year Round* of 1874 on physically deformed women displayed as freaks, might seem a bizarre inclusion, but in listing and discussing its 'odd women' it does point out some important aspects of the 19th-century interest in visually strange things.

Although the selection of subjects covered by *Living Pictures* might at first glance seem quite random, it doesn't take too long to begin thinking of connections. That is the mark of a successful interdisciplinary approach. It doesn't necessarily matter whether the connections themselves are of great importance; what really matters is the way of thinking about a wider range of subjects than just 'our own'. If it can keep up the standard it displays in this first issue, *Living Pictures* should live up to its promises.

