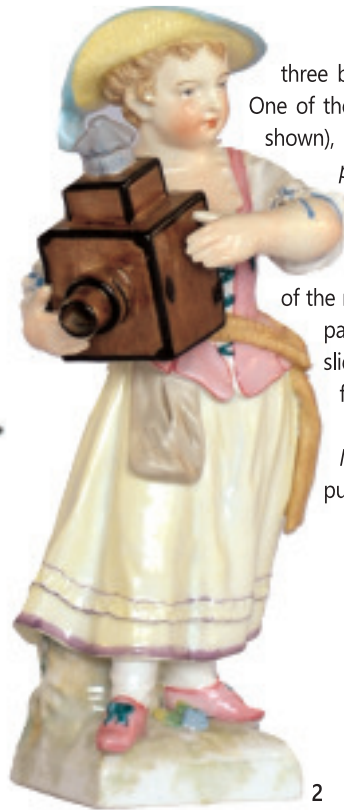


The Magic Lantern



2

three beautiful examples here (the third is on page 2). One of the figurines is based on a Bouchardon print (also shown), a plate named 'L'orgue de Barbarie' in *Etude prises dans le bas peuple ou les cris de Paris* published in Paris, 1737-46 (Fig.4).

We know that in the 19th and early 20th centuries women were involved in most aspects of the magic lantern – presenting shows, giving lectures, painting slides, taking photographs and making slides from them, etc. One interesting contribution from the beginning of the 19th century is a little book called *Signor Topsy-Turvy's Wonderful Magic Lantern* by the sisters Ann and Jane Taylor, published in 1810 (Fig.3). A popular genre at this



3

LADIES OF THE LANTERN

Mary Ann Auckland



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This edition of *The Magic Lantern* focuses on women and the magic lantern. We feature some remarkable ladies of bygone days – Julie Grandsart-Courtois, Anna Longshore-Potts and Edith Greer – who used the magic lantern in their very different fields. And we also feature more modern proponents of the art, including Anita Lear, Mitsue Ikeda-Tanaka, Machiko Kusahara and newcomer Faveola Kett. In Britain, 2018 is being celebrated as the centenary of the magnanimous decision to award (some) women the right to vote – but the contents of

this issue move well beyond a single political event in one country, and emphasise that the role of women in the world of the lantern has been a long-standing and worldwide one.

Where to start? It has even been suggested that the very earliest known image of a simple projecting lantern, with no lens, which appears in a work by Giovanni da Fontana from around 1420, shows a female figure holding the lantern (Fig.1) – though it has to be said that there is some 'scholarly debate' on that. Certainly from the 18th century onwards images and figurines definitely show women with magic lanterns, many inspired by the 'savoyards'. Mike Smith has kindly provided the

time showed things happening 'the wrong way round' – such as a fish catching a fisherman. The introduction, in verse, explains that the magic lantern scenes are upside down – and once told it is a new invention, the audience enjoys the novelty. It then describes 23 'slides' where the norms are reversed (see also Jeremy Brooker's article in *The Magic Lantern Gazette*, 25:2, Summer 2013). Here are the first two verses:

*I can't tell the story for truth, but 'tis said
That the first Magic Lantern that ever was made,
Perplex'd the inventor extremely;
For houses, and people, and all that he shew'd,
In spite of his efforts, could only be view'd
Upside down, which was very unseemly!*

*At length out of patience, and quite in despair,
He thought the best way to pass off the affair,
Was to bring it at once to a sequel;
He therefore gave out he'd invented a shew.
So wonderful, magical, comic, and new,
As nothing in nature could equal.*

Perhaps it's time to take a new look at the history of the magic lantern, which (like much of the rest of our history) has tended to assume that the main developments, inventions and steps forward were the work of men. Perhaps, like the operation of the lantern itself, it's a case of viewing things from an alternative point of view, in order to get them 'right way up'!



4(a)



4(b)

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Figures on this page:

1. Giovanni da Fontana's image, c.1420
2. Lady carrying a magic lantern, made by KPM, Berlin, c.1911
3. Title page of Signor Topsy-Turvy's Wonderful Magic Lantern (1810)
- 4.(a) Old woman carrying a magic lantern, probably manufactured by Frankenthal, Germany, c.1750/60, modelled on (b) the Bouchardon print.