

FROM THE IVORY TOWER

Lydia Jakobs

Dear readers, since I subscribe to the George R. Sims school of column writing, as my poor editor can attest, the first piece of news I want to share with you is actually personal. Sims, the notorious Victorian journalist, dramatist and Bohemian knew that the secret of success for any aspiring author is “to talk about your own – and that if a [wo]man desires others to write about [her]him, [s]he should industriously write about [her]himself.”¹ In that vein, I am happy to report that late last year, I successfully defended my PhD thesis on the eccentric Mr Sims and adaptations of his ballads for the magic lantern and film. However it seems that Mr Sims and I will not part ways just yet, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

In other news, a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) has just started work at the University of Marburg. In typical German research fashion, it is entitled rather exhaustively: *Performative Configurations of the Art of Projection for the Popular Transfer of Knowledge. Media Archaeological Case Studies in the History of Useful Media and the Screen*. To analyse the transfer of knowledge through projection and performance, researchers will focus on three distinct types of lantern events and study their specific media archaeological contexts: the transformation of phantasmagoria shows from a form of scary



1. Looking at the detail – Ora Pro Nobis

entertainment to a form of sharing knowledge (1820-1830); the dissolving view, which serves as an example of spectacular performance events designed for popular education (1858-1888); and the widespread use of the art of projection in popular education and teaching (1870-1919). MLS member and *Illuminago* co-founder **Ludwig Vogl-Bienek** is senior researcher on the project that also aims to make material stored in German archives more readily accessible to the rest



2. Comparing slides, side by side – Ora Pro Nobis

of the lantern world. And they have just the way to do it, the online resource *eLaterna* – *Historical Art of Projection*.

The *eLaterna* Archive was developed as a platform for model editions of series of lantern slides by the Trier Center for Digital Humanities (TCDH) and the Department of Media Studies at the University of Trier. You can take a look at it at <https://elaterna.uni-trier.de/>. The beta-version offers researchers more than a basic view of digitised slides. In **archive editions**, you can study high resolution digital reproductions of a slide set as it survived in a specific collection – with individual slides photographed from multiple angles – and browse related material (readings, negatives, sheet music, postcards).² The picture viewer allows you to zoom in to study the smallest of details (see Fig.1) and shows you how the slides would look projected onto a screen. For mechanical slides, *eLaterna* shows animated videos of the slide mechanisms set in motion. **Critical editions** collate multiple versions of a slide set (from one or more collections) and include a scholarly introduction and commentaries. Critical editions also allow you to display your own selection of slides side by side for close comparisons (see Fig. 2). So far, *eLaterna* Archive showcases several archive editions and one critical edition of the Bamforth set *Ora Pro Nobis*. But that selection is set to grow as other research projects or individual editors add their results and collections and fill the resource with material.

Which brings me back to myself. I'm currently working to bring the various life model slide adaptations of George R. Sims's melodramatic ballads *In the workhouse: Christmas Day* and *The Road to Heaven* onto the *eLaterna* platform. So, prepare your tear ducts for images of starving paupers and homeless children. In less uplifting news, the German postal service has somehow managed to lose a rather large package of



3. Lost in the post – from The Arctic Circle

13.5kg that contained a lantern and several sets of slides – among them one of my personal favourites, *The Arctic Circle* (Fig. 3) – which I had bought at the Birmingham Convention. So much for German reliability and the start of the Lydia Jakobs Collection ...

NOTES

1. Sims was also notoriously late handing in his weekly contribution to *The Referee*. The quote is taken from Paul Pry, 'Lions of the Day in their Dens. No. 14 – Mr Geo. R. Sims in Regent's Park', *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal*, 17 September 1890, p.137 (with slight modifications made by yours truly)
2. For a longer description of the photographic standard, I refer you to my column in *TML* 11, June 2017, pp. 7-8

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32. *SMH*, 9 November 1929, p.31
33. *Evening News*, 19 July 1922, p.10
34. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/martin-alfred-horatio-11067>
35. *Sunday Times*, 23 September 1928, p.4
36. *SMH*, 28 February 1925, p.4
37. *SMH*, 29 July 1922, p.9
38. *SMH*, 14 December 1929, p.4
39. *SMH*, 28 December 1929, p.16

40. *SMH*, 1 October 1932, p.19
41. *SMH*, 12 November 1932, p.10
42. *SMH*, 29 April 1936, p.13
43. *Broadcaster* (Fairfield, NSW), 7 November 1935, p.1
44. *Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate* (Parramatta NSW), 8 April 1935, p.2
45. *SMH*, 27 May 1939, p.7
46. *SMH*, 24 August 1940, p.17
47. *SMH*, 6 February 1943, p.1

48. *SMH*, 27 July 1935, p.4. Probably the British Institute of Mental Science founded by Albert Ellis [ref. 21]
49. *SMH*, 1 June 1935, p.3
50. A series of these adverts appeared in *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia* (Sydney) and *The Methodist* (Sydney) during 1931 and 1932, for example 7 August 1931 p.4 and 10 October 1931 p.8, resp.

51. *SMH*, 19 April 1934, p.1
52. *SMH*, 23 June 1932, p.15
53. See <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/de-groot-francis-edward-frank-12881>
54. *Australian Worker* (Sydney), 29 March 1939, p.4
55. *SMH*, 31 August 1940, p.18
56. *SMH*, 16 January 1941, p.12
57. *SMH*, 13 February 1941, p.3