NEVER JUDGE A MAN'S HEAD BY THE SIZE OF HIS HAT

A study of the life and lectures of an Australian lanternist

John Hyett

1. Photograph of Abbott from the 1901 book

2. Dowie in his later years as 'Elijah the Restorer' in the Christian Catholic Church in Zion, Palestine

Albert James Abbott (Fig. 1) appears very much a man of the late 19th/early 20th centuries. Attracted to fringe religions and many of the pseudo-scientific theories current at the time (some of which still have their loyal believers today) he lived the life of his beliefs, supporting himself in large part by lecturing on the subjects with many of his lectures illustrated by 'limelight views'.

The information regarding Abbott's life in this article is gleaned from various sources, mainly newspapers of the time, both articles and advertisements,[1] and a booklet entitled *The Life and Labours of Pastor A.J. Abbott* published in 1901, author not named but thought by many at the time to be Abbott himself. Some of the information in this booklet can be verified from other sources but no information has yet been found to verify many of the claims.

Abbott was born in Devon, England, *c.*1856 and migrated to New Zealand in 1859 with his parents and siblings. His father Thomas Abbott, a devoutly religious man and a member of the Plymouth Brethren, became a respected nurseryman in Christchurch.[2] Albert was the second eldest of ten children, two of whom died in early childhood, one during the voyage to New Zealand. He, his elder brother and the unnamed infant who died at sea were born in Devon while the remaining seven were born in New Zealand. In *The Life and Labours of Pastor A.J. Abbott* it was claimed that Thomas Abbott had accompanied Dr William Scoresby, the Arctic explorer, on his voyage to Greenland and the Arctic as a botanist. However this would seem impossible as Scoresby's last Arctic voyage was in 1822 and Thomas Abbott was not born until *c.*1830.

Whether other claims in the booklet are as fanciful it is hard to judge. Abbott claimed to have been considerably proficient in botany and had articles published in high-class botanical publications but none has yet been found. He also claimed to have been a gold medallist in the New Zealand Exhibition, gaining thirteen first and five second prizes from twenty-four exhibits. This led to him being appointed as an exhibition judge to the Christchurch Horticultural Society. A search of New Zealand papers of the time does show that he had at least one entry in the Exhibition – a collection of ferns[3] – but an examination of award winners, including the Jurors' awards, does not mention Abbott receiving any of the awards issued.[4] His father and older brother are often mentioned in reports of the Christchurch Horticultural Society and Albert is listed as having promised to present papers to the Society in 1887 and 1888.[5] He also claimed to have studied medicine at Christchurch University but dropped out due to ill health.

In 1876 Albert (aged 20) married Elizabeth Heslop,[6] a 33-year-old woman with a nine-year-old child. While she married him under her maiden name she had already been married to a Charles Miller in 1866.[7] In a later newspaper interview Albert claimed that at the time of his marriage she had told him she was a widow but after about six years – and three children – he began hearing rumours that the previous husband was still alive. When a man turned up claiming to be Elizabeth's husband she told Albert there was nothing to worry about as the man was already married to another woman when she married him so she could not therefore be his wife. After a time Albert left her but continued to give her a weekly allowance to support her and the children.[8] Ironically in later years in Melbourne, Albert was the marriage celebrant in six bigamy cases heard before the courts. Here it is interesting to note that another child (a daughter) was born to Albert and Elizabeth some 4-5 years after the split, and that both Elizabeth's parents died in their son-in-law's home, in 1888 and 1889.

In 1887 the Rev. J.A. Dowie (Fig. 2), founder of the 'Free Christian Church', visited New Zealand preaching divine healing. Albert, who claims to have always suffered ill health, but especially between 1884 and 1887, heard Dowie preach and was instantly cured by applying the principles of divine healing. During Dowie's second visit to New Zealand in 1888, on his way to America to establish the 'Christian Catholic Church', Abbott was ordained as a minister of the Free Christian Church[9] and elected as Secretary of 'The Christchurch Association for the Promotion of Healing through Faith in Jesus'.[10] Within a few months of being elected as Secretary he moved to Melbourne, Australia, to become a Pastor in the Free Christian Church there.

Albert's stepson married in New Zealand in 1889[11] and along with his wife and mother and Albert's four children, was living in the same building in Melbourne with Albert in 1892 when Elizabeth complained to the Free Christian Church about her treatment, claiming she had been treated worse than a cast-off mistress.[12] There was an allegation that Albert was having an improper relationship with his stepson's wife but nothing was ever proved. However the scandal split the church and Abbott formed the 'Free Christian Assembly'.

In 1894 Albert's second son died after a long illness aged 16 (the death notice states 17 but this does not match his birth date). The notice refers to him only as the second son of A.J. Abbott with no reference to his mother or siblings.[13]

Another scandal arose in 1896 with allegations that Albert had been seen kissing one of his flock, but, as he explained, these kisses were only 'holy kisses' and had no further implications – and this did not seem to deter his largely young and female band of his admirers within the church. At this time one of his protagonists in the Church claimed that Abbott had forged his signature on his application for a marriage celebrant's licence. Although he had reported it to the police he refused to take it any further and the police did not take any action.

Abbott continued to preach, write religious tracts and act as a marriage celebrant. At one stage he was reported to have conducted some 800 marriages in a six-month

3. Annie Turner (left)

4. Advertising slide for Albert J. Abbott (held by the author) (above)

period, i.e. about 30 a week. The earliest advertisement found regarding lectures by Pastor Abbott in Australia was on 27 September 1890 when he lectured on divine healing.[14] The earliest reference found in which Abbott referred to himself as 'Professor Abbott' was an advertisement for a lecture in 1894 on 'British Nation – (Israel Revisited) – Will Rule the World'[15] which had: "thrilling scriptural and historical proofs. Illustrations and diagrams." In December the same year he was advertising himself as a 'Botanical Artist' and offering "Lovely enamelled Christmas and Birthday Cards. Preserved Ferns, Flowers. Any name (4 words) in Gold. Unqualified satisfaction. Post Free 1s. Professor Abbott".[16] As Professor Abbott he began advertising phrenological lectures and readings such as 'Wonderful Phrenological Character Delineations'.[17] He kept this going for many years, offering advice on suitable jobs and careers.

The earliest record found for Pastor Abbott using a lantern was an advertisement for "A Beautiful Lime Light Service 'Creation – Restoration'" in November 1901.[18] In April 1902 he presented an illustrated lecture on 'Paul's Brilliant Life' with his son C.M. Abbott acting as the lanternist.[19] By 1903 he was advertising lectures, free to the public, on topics such as 'Christ and Humanity One: Evil Universally Terminates' and 'Miracles Past, Present, Future – Divine and Satanic' but none of these is shown as being illustrated.

Around 1905 he became involved with Mrs Annie Turner (Fig. 3), 'Christian Clairvoyante' and Herbalist. When Annie sued her husband for divorce in 1909 on the grounds of his desertion, Turner defended the suit on the grounds that he did not desert his wife but her relations with Pastor Abbott led to him leaving the house. The evidence pointed to Pastor Abbott often being present in the home, carving the meat at the table – even when the husband was present – while Annie and the children called him 'Pa'. At one stage Turner and Abbott came to blows but as Abbott explained it was not a regular fight: "He tried to strike me, but I quickly put him on the floor and shook him a little".[20] Of course the relationship between Albert and Annie was strictly business, as he was acting as her agent and used her premises to conduct marriage ceremonies. This relationship continued until Annie's death in 1921.

By January 1906 Abbott was giving limelight lectures in Adelaide on 'Mind and Brain', 'Use Brains Aright, How to Succeed', 'Spirit Personality' and 'Ministering Spirits' for an admission charge of 6d per lecture. At this time he also lists himself as 'Principal, Mental Science College, Melbourne'.

During a service in February 1906, Pastor Abbott was attacked by a woman wielding an umbrella. The woman, Mrs Rebecca Haldane, had been a member of the Free Christian Assembly in 1895 and had initially laid a complaint against Abbott in 1896 but later withdrew it. At some stage she had visited Abbott's wife to ask her forgiveness "because, as he was her husband, I knew I had wronged her". She was subsequently fined five shillings (5s) with £1 1s costs for the attack, mainly it seems because it was during a church service. It is interesting to note that in 1897 Rebecca gave birth to a daughter whom she named Alberta Abbott Haldane.

By September 1906 'Professor A.J. Abbott M.R.P.S. etc. (British Institute of Mental Science)'[21] was touring New Zealand lecturing on 'Mind Reading, Mental Development and How to Succeed in Life', accompanied by limelight illustrations, as well as on 'The Spirit of Man and Spirit Personality'. In November he was giving consultations in Hobart and provided phrenological charts at a cost of 2s 6d, 5s to 21s. He also lectured on 'Tremendous Facts and Forces of Spirit Personality – Marvellous Realities of Angelic Ministry, Divine Relationship, Spirit Communion' and providing limelight illustrations for Annie Turner who was giving demonstrations of 'Future Life and Trance Address'.

At some stage Albert's eldest son, Albert Lancelot, changed his surname to Miller, that of his stepbrother, possibly indicating a rift with his father. His marriage in 1908 is registered under the name of Miller and when his mother died in 1929 the death notice lists her as the "dearly beloved mother of George B. and Albert L. Miller, Alfred (deceased) and Clayton M. Abbott and Mabel V. (Mrs T Stevens)".[22]

Little is then heard of Abbott until March 1909 when Annie Turner was appealing a conviction for "using the subtle craft to impose upon" a police constable, for which she had been fined £10. Appearing as a witness in defence of Annie Turner, Abbott stated in response to a question by the crown lawyer: "I have not taught at any university. I am a professor of botany, physiology, anatomy, theology and mental science. I profess to understand those sciences, and am prepared for any test". Annie claimed to earn around £10 a week as a clairvoyant and another £10 as a herbalist. This was at a time when the basic wage in Australia had been set in 1907 at £2 2s as the minimum on which a married worker with three children could be expected to live. The appeal failed and the conviction was upheld.

Perhaps this conviction led to Abbott and Turner moving to Sydney where, in September the same year, Turner was charged on two counts of intent to deceive and impose while Abbott was charged with having aided her. In the evidence it was stated that at a public meeting in the Protestant Hall there were some 400 women and about 8 men present, paying a silver coin donation at the door. A similar number were present at the same venue a week later. The case was dismissed.

In February 1910 a lecture on the 'Character of Christ' with "16 beautiful portraits and 20 photos of spirit forms from England and America" was advertised at 6d and 1s admission. In March he was advertising Professor Abbott's "Amusing, Instructive Lecture 'Love, Courtship and Marriage' with limelight and blackboard illustrations and platform examples", again at 6d and 1s admission.

On 6 March 1911 Tuckett and Styles, Auctioneers, Collins Street, Melbourne, held an auction sale of "Scientific, Historical and Theological Books. Large Lantern, Limelight Generator, 2 Saturators, Bioscope Instrument, Large Sheet, Splendid Collection of Slides of Professor Abbott". Nine days later Professor Abbott along with Mrs A.F. Turner and child (her 12-year-old son Colin) were listed as passengers aboard RMS *Otranto* sailing from Sydney to London. A fellow passenger on board sent notes regarding the voyage

5. Plate 2 from Houghton, Chronicles of Spirit Photography.[30] *Abbott copied several of these images in his spirit slides (some now held by NSFA)*

to his local newspaper. For 10 April 1911 he wrote: "Tonight Professor Abbott gave a lecture on deck on Phrenology; nothing newer expounded than when my dear father got my head read in London over 35 years ago. Some of the passengers are very much opposed to Professor and Co., and there is some feeling; there is also a good deal of unpleasantness over the actions of the sports committee in certain matters, so things generally are a little upset". This was followed on 21 April with: "Mrs Turner, with Professor (?) Abbott in the chair, gave another demonstration of clairvoyancy on the deck tonight, but I had heavy correspondence and no opportunity to listen to their rubbish; the only result was more unpleasantness and I was glad to learn they were leaving the ship tomorrow at Marseilles".

While Abbott and Turner were in Europe, lectures continued at The Christian Assembly which listed Professor A.J. Abbott as President and Mrs Annie Turner as Vice-President.[23] These often took the form of a 'Trance Address' by Mrs Burton (secretary) channelling various departed sprits. Abbott and Turner (and child) returned to Sydney on 12 October 1911 aboard the *Orsova* from London.[24]

Over the next decade Abbott appears to have worked as Turner's manager, as no references have been found for Abbott working on his own. Turner continued to practise clairvoyancy and to channel spirits, including that of the pacifist journalist W.T. Stead who lost his life when the *Titanic* sank. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle later reported that Stead had made the following prophesy through Turner (whom Conan Doyle regarded as the greatest all-round medium in Australia) in February 1914: "Now, although there is not at present a whisper of a great European war at hand, yet I want to warn you that before this year, 1914, has run its course, Europe will be deluged in blood. Great Britain, our beloved nation, will be drawn into the most awful war the world has ever known. Germany will be the great antagonist, and will draw other nations in her train. Austria will totter to its ruin. Kings and kingdoms will fall. Millions of precious lives will be slaughtered, but Britain will finally triumph and emerge victorious."[25] No newspaper reports of the time were found to confirm that this prophesy was made. In April 1916 Turner again channelled Stead and it was prophesied that: "... the war would end in November. Before that, however, the German fleet would come out and there would be a tremendous naval battle when Jellicoe and tens of thousands of brave men would sink to the bottom of the sea."[26] The war, of course, continued for a further two years and, although the Battle of Jutland took place about two months after the prophesy, the death toll was nowhere near as high with some 8,500 deaths between the two combatants – and Jellicoe lived on.

Despite such minor setbacks the business must have been quite profitable. Turner had a large house built in St Kilda Road, Melbourne, and purchased a new Super Six Hudson in 1918 which she drove from Melbourne to Sydney in two and a half days.[27] When Annie Foster Turner died on 13 August 1921 she left an estate valued at £17,276 comprising real estate of £14,400 and a personal estate of £2,876.[28] In her will she left the bulk of her estate to her children with legacies to other relatives, employees and friends. The largest of these legacies were sums of £100 to each of her sisters and to her manager Albert James Abbott.[29]

During the rest of the 1920s Abbott continued to lecture on spiritualism (Fig. 5) and expound the views of the British Israelites. None of the advertisements found during this period indicate that his lectures were illustrated by lantern slides. He continued to dispense herbal remedies, as a consulting medical botanist in conjunction with Annie Foster Turner's daughter,[31] later claiming to be a 'University Botanist (N.Z. and Lon.)'.[32] He also continued to practise phrenology, offering to discover dormant abilities and to guide people into the right professions.[33] In 1928 Abbott rebutted a claim by Dr Martin, a lecturer in psychology at Sydney University (and founder of the Australian Institute of Industrial Psychology which gave vocational guidance through psychological assessments)[34], that phrenology was "a blind alley lacking the scientific basis of psychology" with the statement that you should: "Never judge a man's head by the size of his hat, for often small brains are very clever, and a great many large brains are owned by idiots!"[35] This was, of course, at odds with a fairly widely-held theory of Eugenics in some scientific circles of the time that cranial capacity was an indicator of intelligence.

Lecturing on British Israel theory Abbott was at first not affiliated to any group but by 1925 he lectured under the banner of the British Israel World Federation (BIWF).[36] A BIWF Sydney Branch had been operating since at least 1922[37] and during the next 14 years this and the BIWF NSW branch both claimed to be the only authorised representatives and affiliates of British Headquarters, with Abbott as President of the Sydney Branch. An advertisement for the NSW branch in 1929, calling itself the "registered and sole authorised representative in Sydney of Headquarters 6 Buckingham Gate London" was immediately followed in typical Professor Abbott style by one for the BIWF "No.1 Sydney branch 1st registered in Australia fully authorised ... Branches all Dominions 6,000,000 members, London Headquarters 6 Buckingham Gate. Chief Patroness HRH Princess Alice. Sydney President Prof. A.J. Abbott"[38] and a few days later by another stating "1st legally registered and authorised ... President Prof. A.J. Abbott Honorman in Theology, Botany (Gold Medalist NZ) oldest member here of London Headquarters."[39] In 1932 the Rev. W. Breach, the organising Secretary of the NSW Branch, briefly formed his own branch[40] before joining with Abbott as the Chairman of the Sydney Branch.[41] This relationship lasted until 1934 when Abbott and Breach had a dispute over control of the Merrylands Free Church, resulting in the Rev. Breach being locked out of the building, later throwing a brick through the window and challenging Abbott to take action against him.[42] He later sued Abbott for £1,000 but this was settled when Abbott withdrew a letter circulated regarding Breach.[43] It was during this dispute, in a letter replying to accusations by Breach, that Abbott stated: "I positively never was a spiritualist".[44] Abbott continued to lecture for the BIWF and announced in an advertisement in 1939 that "British Israel 'Sydney' united with 'NSW' branch. Rev. A.J. Abbott lectures free, any branch or church. 3000 fine slides (100 Palestine to Pyramid)."[45]

However it seems Abbott was premature with this announcement as the BIWF NSW branch continued into the 1940s as a separate entity[46] finally dropping the NSW Branch name in 1943.[47]

Most of the lectures advertised by Abbott in the 1930s relate to his work with the BIWF, some with lantern illustrations, while others related to his belief in phrenology. In 1935 he advertised a lecture on "'Absolutely Safe Vocational Guidance – Lantern and Blackboard Pictures – Phrenology surpasses Psychology' presented by Professor Abbott, Fellow British Institute".[48] Another lecture around that time was "'Does Phrenology Correctly Read Our King?' – Lantern Illustrations".[49] He also advertised in 1931 "Scientific Phrenology, discover Brain Power. Scientist 60 years, Medical Diagnosis, Finest Herbal Stock 21/-".[50] As Abbott was born in 1856 he would have been 75 years old in 1931, meaning he had been a scientist since the age of 15. In April 1934 he delivered an illustrated lantern lecture on "'Great Masters Paintings Reproduced' Taken by Professor Abbott. Italy, France, Britain",[51] presumably during his four-and-a-half month trip to Europe in 1911.

Professor A.J. Abbott appeared as a speaker at a public meeting of the New Guard to celebrate the Prince of Wales' Birthday on 23 June 1932.[52] This was a proto-fascist organisation[53] mainly active in NSW between 1931 and 1932 that had interrupted the ceremonial opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in March 1932 by slashing the ribbon and declaring the bridge open "in the name of the loyal and decent people of New South Wales" before Premier Lang could perform the opening. No other evidence has been found linking Abbott with the New Guard and possibly he addressed the meeting because of his loyalty to the British Crown and his belief in the British Israel movement.

In 1939 'Professor Abbott M.R.Ph.S.' was advertising vocational guidance in *The Australian Worker* (Sydney) using "Phrenology (Mind Logic) only exact method, far beyond Psychology".[54] These advertisements were placed regularly every week from March through to the end of May. Little is found of Abbott in the 1940s, a lecture on 'Abundant Prophecies of the Present War' in August 1940,[55] another on 'British Victory Prophesied' in January 1941[56] and a final lecture 'Is Britain Israel?' in February 1941.[57]

Albert James Abbott died on 23 May 1941 at East Brunswick, Victoria, aged 85, and his ashes are in the Garden of Remembrance, Fawkner Memorial Park, Victoria – a man generally consistent in his beliefs throughout his life and possibly a follower of Mark Twain's adage: "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story".

THE SLIDES

Of the 3,000 fine slides Abbott claimed to own in 1939 only a few hundred still exist as part of his collection. Of these 152 are held by the National Sound and Film Archives (NSFA) in Canberra and comprise about 50 spiritualist-related slides, slides of leading spiritualists of the day and slides purporting to show spirit visitors from the other side. There are also three diagrammatic slides showing divisions of the skull to assist with phrenological assessments and several commercially produced slides from various series and makers that Abbott has renamed to illustrate various attributes of phrenology. Most of the remaining slides are circular slides in wooden frames. Those whose makers can be identified are American slides, either T.H. McAllister or McIntosh Battery Co. These are of a religious, comic or general nature.

A further 138 slides and a lantern by J. Wrench are held by the author on permanent loan from Albert's descendants and in trust for the Abbott family if they ever wish their return. Again most of these slides are commercial slides, many of American manufacture, and some may be associated with one of the lectures that Albert advertised ('Palestine to Pyramids') (Fig. 6). There is one slide that has been re-labelled to illustrate an attribute of phrenology and five advertising slides by his son, who worked for some time for Reilly Slides, an advertising firm in Melbourne. There are also some part sets of children's slides and a series of slides showing images of classical statues. These appear to be from various makers and sets – some may be *tableaux vivant*s rather than photographs of the original statues (see also Table 1).

6. Palestine – T.H. McAllister slide, possibly one of the 'Palestine to Pyramid' lecture

Table 1. *An analysis of Abbott's known slides*

1. *Three-inch circular wood cased slides*
   NSFA: 39 slides – 28 identified as American origin (72%), 11 cannot be identified for origin
   Author's holding: 44 slides – 32 identified as USA origin (72%), 12 unidentified as to origin
2. *Glass slides*
   All the glass slides are standard British slides of 3¼ x 3¼ inch size (which includes Australian slides as Australian manufactured slides followed the British pattern)
3. *Mechanical slides*
   These include slipper slides, lever slides and rackwork slides. Few can be identified for origin of manufacture but there are both British and American slides in the collection

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. The Australian newspapers were accessed online at the National Library of Australia *Trove* website http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper and the New Zealand papers online at http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast
2. *'The Life and Labours of Pastor A.J. Abbott' by the author of 'Popular Preachers of Our Day', 'Life and Ministry of the Rev. Dr Talmage' &c., &c.*, McCutchen & Co., Richmond,1901
3. *The Press* (Canterbury, NZ),13 April 1873, p.3
4. M. Mosley, *New Zealand International Exhibition, 1882: Record, containing retrospect of the colony, sketch of exhibitions, complete description of exhibits*. The examination of the Jurors' awards was kindly carried out by Geoffrey Baker, Senior Curator, State Library of NSW, on my behalf.
5. *Star*, 16 July 1887, p.3
6. NZ Births, Deaths and Marriages Online (https://bdmhistoricalrecords.dia.govt.nz/search/)
7. Ibid.
8. *Examiner* (Launceston, Tasmania), 22 February 1906, p.7
9. *Life and Labours* ... [ref. 2]
10. This is another unverified claim. There was a body called 'The Association for the teaching of Divine Healing through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ' based in Auckland at the time (*New Zealand Herald*, 3 December 1888, p.10) but no record has been found of a similar body in Christchurch
11. NZ Births, Deaths and Marriages Online [ref. 6]
12. *Barrier Miner*, 28 November 1892, p.3
13. *The Age*, 8 June 1894, p.1
14. *The Age*, 27 September 1890, p.5
15. *The Age*, 10 November 1894, p.9
16. *The Age*, 15 December 1894, p.10
17. *The Age*, 25 January 1895, p.8
18. *The Age*, 23 November 1901, p.14
19. *Argus*, 5 April 1902
20. *The Age*, 9 November 1909
21. The British Institute of Mental Science was founded by Albert Ellis, along with his wife Ada and his brother Frank, and provided postal tuition in phrenology, palmistry and astrology. In later years they issued diplomas in the same subjects
22. *The Age*, 21 September 1920, p.1
23. *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, 6 May 1911, p.24
24. *SMH*, 13 October 1911, p.10
25. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1921, chapter XI
26. *Truth* (Melbourne edition), 8 April 1916, p.3
27. *Melbourne Punch*, 7 February 1918
28. *Argus*, 17 December 1921, p.20
29. Will of Mrs Annie Foster Turner, Herbalist. Public Records Office Victoria, File No.180/957
30. G. Houghton, *Chronicles of Spirit Photography*, E. W.Allen, London, 1882
31. *SMH*, 13 December 1921, p.6

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.

3. Lost in the post – from The Arctic Circle

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 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

(Continued from page 6)

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, 24
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