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MEDIA ARCHEOLOGY AND MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES

Arqueología de los media y placas de linterna mágica


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Shows that combined the projection of images, the recitation of texts and the interpretation of music gained important sociocultural relevance in many scientific, educational and popular contexts internationally in the 19th and 20th centuries. In order to reach their goals, these sessions used a new device that received names such as «phantascope», «megascope», «solar microscope» or «projection lantern», and which led to a very popular new form of social communication known by the term «magic lantern».

The clear influence of the magic lantern on contemporary culture contrasts with its marginal presence in the academic field. Fortunately, in the last two decades there has been a shift in these trends that is in line with its cultural relevance, largely due to the boost and renovation impulse introduced by media archeology, a transversal discipline that cites, among its precursors or main sources of inspiration, authors such as Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky or Marshall McLuhan, and which, together with scholars such as Erkki Hutahmo, Jussi Parikka or Siegfried Zielinski, has developed an interesting set of interdisciplinary practices that Simone Natale (2012) describes around three main principles: 1) a criticism of the idea of a linear progress in the evolution of the media and of the idea that they are the consequence of an organized evolution that goes from simple to complex structures and from primitive to sophisticated concepts; 2) a focus and research into episodes of media history that have been undervalued or understudied, in order to provide innovative explanations that make it possible to uncover underlying phenomena in the history of social

media; 3) a certain theoretical and methodological freedom that turns media archeology — consequently described by Zielinski (2008) as «un-archeology»— into a set of fragmentary studies that are connected transversally or tangentially and that do not intend to constitute a systematized corpus.

Although the principles listed by Natale reveal the strengths of media archeology in their goal to provide a new understanding of the history of social media, Timothy Druckrey has also detected the internal weaknesses of this interdisciplinary: «The mere rediscovery of the ‘forgotten’, the establishment of oddball paleontologies, of impractical genealogies, uncertain lineages, the ‘excavation’ of antique technologies or images, the account of erratic technical developments, are, in themselves, insufficient to the building of a coherent discourse methodology” (Druckrey 2006, 60).

For this reason, it is necessary to keep promoting a disciplinary openness of media archeology so that it can incorporate new theoretical and methodological contributions. This is an aspect that this monographic issue of *Fonseca Journal of Communication* has taken into account in its attempt to become a publishing platform that may be used to present and discuss the studies carried out by all the researchers with an interest in magic lantern slides¹ and who are working closely with the people in charge of museums, archives, film libraries or private collections all across Europe. This initiative wants to improve the scientific approach to the magic lantern and the conservation of its heritage mainly in two different areas: a) the study of the historical relevance of slides as a source of knowledge and a resource for its transmission in a wide range of fields, and b) the exchange of information about filing practices so that tools can be designed to catalogue, classify and provide access to magic lantern slides in all sorts of cultural institutions that work with this piece of our heritage.

In *The magic lantern as a means of advertising. Historical review of news, anecdotes and patents*, María Begoña Sánchez Galán studies the connections between the magic lantern and modern advertising. In an attempt to avoid the increasing saturation of advertising —which could already be seen in daily newspapers and on the walls of the streets of large cities at the end of the 19th century—, advertisers, projectionists and a large group of inventors started to use the magic lantern as a means to exhibit their advertisements with the express intention to associate their messages to the world of show business and entertainment, and these characteristics are also present in 21st century advertising.

For their part, Joe Kember and Richard Crangle defend in *Folk Like Us: Emotional Movement From the Screen and The Platform In British Life Model Lantern Slide Series* the idea that one of the main reasons behind the success of magic lantern shows in the last third of the 19th century was that they were often conducted by individuals who were similar to the members of the audience. With a special focus on the series of magic lantern slides called *Life Model*, which also reached their peak of popularity at that time, Kember and Crangle analyse the way in which the slides and the shows were designed to promote identification with their audiences, which allowed audiences to compare the moral lessons conveyed by many *Life Model* sets with their own daily experiences.

Representations of the Extraordinary Human Body: Making Sense of The Nuttall Collection of Lantern Slides, by Ine van Dooren and Sarah Dellmann show a set of exceptional cases of representation of the human body based on the collection of magic lantern slides by the medicine professor George Henry Falkiner Nuttall. The authors provide a context for the portraits created by Nuttall between 1880 and

¹ In the context of research projects such as *A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slide Heritage as Artefacts in the Common European History of Learning* (Joint Programming Initiative in Cultural Heritage. European Commission, PCIN-2015-18), *B-magic: The Magic Lantern and its Cultural Impact as Visual Mass Medium in Belgium, 1830-1940* (Excellence of Science: EOS-30802346) or *Dinámicas de renovación educativa y científica en las aulas de bachillerato (1900-1936): una perspectiva ibérica* [Dynamics of Educational and Scientific Renewal in Secondary School Classrooms (1900-1936): An Iberian perspective] (Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, HAR2014-54073-P).

1930 which will allow us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the objects included in the slide collection of G. H. F. Nuttall and his strategies of visual production.

The magic lantern in Barcelona: the phantasmagoria shows of the optician Francesc Dalmau (1844-1848), by Cèlia Cuenca Córcoles, analyses in detail the magic lantern shows that Francisco Dalmau (1810-1886) presented to the audiences of Barcelona in the 1840s, thus completing one of the many aspects of this multifaceted optician. Based on his case, Cuenca provides new information about the development and the presence of the lantern in Barcelona, including for example the introduction of dissolving views, and she focuses on a time period that had not been extensively explored by historiographers of social media.

'...To Not Only Tell, But Also To Show, To Show Plenty...' *The Magic Lantern As A Teaching Tool In Art History Around 1900*, by Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk, studies the way in which the magic lantern became an excellent tool for the teaching of History of Art around the year 1900, in a context of profound pedagogical reforms that promoted visual education. Their contribution analyses both the technological progress that facilitated the large-scale distribution of magic lantern slides and the debates that transformed the relationship between teachers, students and the work of art as an educational element.

«*To transform the blackboard into a blank screen*»: *magic lanterns and phantasmagorias in nineteenth-century Spanish secondary schools*», by Daniel Pitarch, explores the way in which the equipment acquired by the first Spanish national network of secondary schools included, in almost all cases, a magic lantern. The article by Pitarch researches the types of lanterns and slides that could be found in those collections of devices during the second half of the 19th century, as well as their uses. To do so, he offers several valuable examples of materials that are currently preserved in the educational centres, and he presents contemporary texts about the educational uses of the magic lantern.

Finally, the text *The projection of images in the Spanish secondary school classrooms in the first third of the 20th century*, by Carmen López San Segundo, Beatriz González de Garay Domínguez, Francisco Javier Frutos Esteban and Manuela Carmona García is inscribed within the framework of the research project 'Dynamics of Educational and Scientific Renewal in Secondary School Classrooms (1900-1936): An Iberian perspective' (HAR 2014-54073) and it summarizes a study of content analysis applied to the group of educational visual messages projected in the Historical Secondary Schools in Spain. The results of the study reveal relevant aspects of the role that those elements of material culture played in the transformation of scientific teaching in the Spanish secondary school classrooms during the first third of the 20th century.

We would not wish to end this introduction to the monograph without expressing our gratitude to all the researchers who submitted their proposals, as well as to *Fonseca Journal of Communication* and, very particularly, to its editor, Dr. Begoña Gutiérrez San Miguel.

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