

Fiendish Dreams: Reverse Engineering Modern Architecture

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Architecture and Design Research

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November 29, 2023
Alexandria, Virginia

Keywords: McCay, cartoons, animation, representation, dreams

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Abstract

Winsor McCay drew delightful drawings about the dreams of a Welsh rarebit fiend, ‘rare bits’ inspired by an overindulgence in cheese. *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend* was a Saturday cartoon that appeared in the *New York Evening Telegram* from 1904 to 1911, psychic twin to *Little Nemo in Slumberland* that appeared concurrently in the Sunday funnies of the *New York Herald* from 1905-1911. ‘Slumberland’ was a Neo-classical fantasy that closely resembled the idealized White City of the Chicago World’s Fair (1893), that inspired the architecture of Coney Island’s Dreamland (1905-1911), which beckoned to McCay as he drew from his house just across Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn. The capricious side of this architecture emerged in McCay’s cartoons.

A self-taught illustrator, McCay began his career in Detroit working in dime museums—worlds of wonder—filled with monsters, dioramas and sideshow performers whose livelihood depended on their ability to amaze an audience. Just this sort of rare and gifted fellow, McCay parlayed his entertaining lampoonery of Slumberland into some of the world’s first animations on vaudeville.

As with the Rarebit Fiend, Little Nemo’s dreams were brought on by overindulgence, in his case of too many donuts or Huckleberry Pie. But, this was merely a pretense for McCay’s fantastical ‘dream’ mode of thinking, a potentially useful body of knowledge that was simultaneously explored by Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust, who linked the mechanisms employed by the unconscious in dreaming to those at play in wit. Architectural drawing—seen through McCay’s cartoons and early animations—has a kind of ‘gastronomical’ alchemy that inadvertently became a treatise on the architectural imagination.

Fiend and *Little Nemo* affected the psychic mood of early modern Architecture—its ‘childhood’ in the *milieu* of White Cities—that was both added to and commented on by Winsor McCay’s pen. His cartoons portray the hidden ‘flavors’ of the buildings springing up a century ago. This ‘other’—surreal—aspect of the White Cities, seasoned with whirling iron Ferris wheels and Flip-Flop rides, newly invented elevators and electric lights—and even funhouse mirrors that made buildings suddenly seem very tall—were the ingredients that caused the fiend and Nemo to wake up, which ultimately became the culinary school of modern Architecture. McCay’s ‘fiendish’ depictions show us that the right blend of humor and awe is a recipe for happiness.

**Fiendish Dreams:
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General Audience Abstract

Winsor McCay made cartoons of the ‘nightmares’ of a Rarebit fiend with a witty, unflinching eye for detail. Those illustrations became a psychic twin to the architectural fantasies of a little boy in the ‘funnies’ section of the New York newspapers from 1905-1911. *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* continue to entertain and edify us, while inadvertently acting as a guide to how the imagination works. McCay’s celebrity as a cartoonist also led him to become one of the world’s first animators, amazing vaudeville audiences with depictions of Little Nemo that were suddenly larger than life, illuminated, and mobile.

Dreams were rediscovered in the early twentieth century as useful bodies of knowledge for understanding the self, seen through the writings of Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust, who linked the mechanisms employed by the unconscious ‘dreamer’ to those at play in wit. That thinking was surrounded by the atmosphere shown in McCay’s comedic sequential images, which in turn inspired the iconic dreamlike silent movies of Buster Keaton. A look at the birth of these art forms a hundred years ago provides insight into the psychic mood of early modern Architecture, but also to the imagining of today’s world (both material and virtual) using the digital tools that are just being invented. Although McCay’s cartoons are fiendish, they sustain the balance between dreaming and humor that is essential to imagining a happy modern life.

Dedication

To Bruno and Juan, who unflaggingly encouraged me keep at it.



Dreamland, Coney Island (1905)

Acknowledgements

Discovering the significance of Winsor McCay's glorious renderings of dreams to the making of Architecture took twenty two years—(so far, because it certainly will not end)—, a much longer time than is ordinarily accorded to a doctoral candidate. The framework for inquiry at Virginia Tech is a whirl of treatises and philosophical texts, initially set in motion in my heart and head by Marco Frascari. I am indebted to his vision, and to his generosity in sharing that vision with a group of serious-minded younger scholars in the unique atmosphere provided by the Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center (WAAC) with its 'secret' room that lives next to the library of Frascari's, who has ventured into the next world and left us his books. There are also the enigmatic echoes of things he once said in class that—at the time—made a beautiful impression even though their 'meaning' was ambiguous and strange. I am still discovering new ideas embedded in his writing, thoughts that were planted by him with the understanding that they, with a steady diet of curious reading and drawing, will continue to grow.

I am indebted to the poetic side of architecture, as 'seen' and playfully explored by Paul Emmons. His excursions into the architectural treatises we studied initiated us to being lovers of the past, making us feel as though we had been sustaining ourselves on only an anamorphic glance at texts of books that were partially cracked open. When suddenly those books were 'opened' wide by Paul, we felt joy in seeing words about the making of Architecture sing; as something that *must* be revisited, redefined, and something that through solemn and serious study will be made entirely new. A heartfelt thanks to Paul for not giving up on me, and for his encouragement (and steady diet of recommended readings)!

To all of the members of my committee, I am immensely grateful. To Federica Goffi, for her patient and steadfast care of Marco Frascari's legacy and her example, always before my eyes and ears, that continues to teach me what it means to be serious scholar. To Marcia Feuerstein, for her freshness and childlike curiosity about Little Nemo, and her enigmatic questions—"What is underneath the bed?" To Susan Piedmont-Palladino, for her enthusiasm about exhibition design as a fully legitimate 'daughter' of Lady Architecture, a capable Lady in her own right that through the honoring of objects from the past, is begetting a new relationship of ceilings and floors, walls and windows, 'portals' to rooms of the future. And, to Jodi La Coe, whose dedication and genuine love of the people and places around her is only surpassed by her talent for putting words together, and for making breathtakingly beautiful drawings.

In the matter of editing, I thank Michael Gavula—who has also ventured into the next world—an architect and poet who patiently read several chapters of the dissertation and made kind suggestions for the gentle rearrangement of words or phrases. His love of sentences was contagious.

Thanks especially to Bruno and Juan del Alamo—(my family)—who are both always enthusiastically making things, and so are understanding about the time it takes to do so. It is Juan's love of the history of Architecture, and our travel over the years to visit and photograph cities filled with marvelous buildings, that spawned the idea of going back to school. And, it is Bruno's love of making worlds with infinite patience—with a love of detail that rivals Winsor McCay's—that continues to inspire me, and everyone around him.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, by Winsor McCay, Sunday, March 19, 1906

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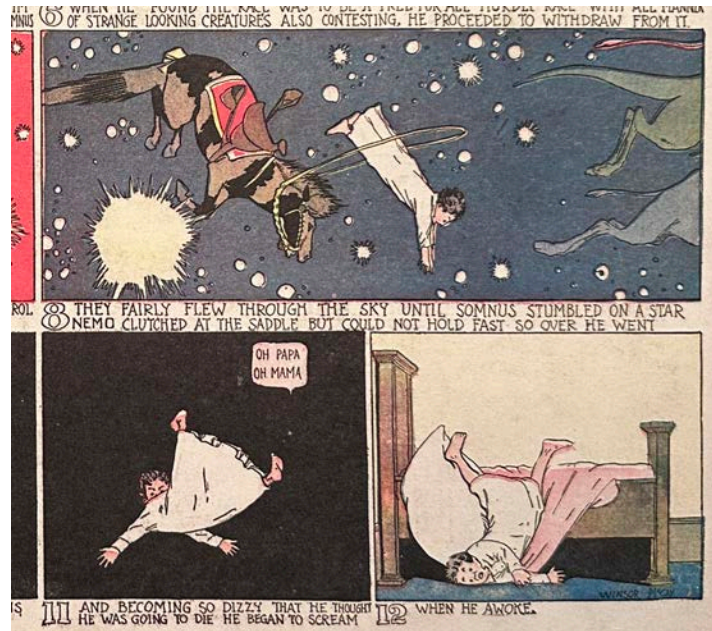
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Introduction



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday*, October 15, 1905

Close-up from the very first nightmare of Little Nemo.

A note about nightmares

Winsor McCay was a cigarette fiend who drew delightful cartoons about the dreams of a Rarebit Fiend, ‘rare bits’ that inspired him to imagine what was really going on in a kingdom he called ‘Slumberland’. Images of nightmares—or ‘night-mares’—in the hands of a talented cartoonist—can act as a kind of illustrated operator’s manual, a guide to the workings of the imagination. Winsor McCay, a self-taught illustrator, began his career working in Dime Museums. These were worlds of wonder, filled with dioramas and performers whose livelihood depended on their ability to amaze an audience. McCay was just this sort of rare and gifted fellow. His entertainingly weird—(yet edifying)—drawings are the subject of this dissertation.

I was lucky in my twenties, ending up almost by accident a designer at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. I worked with very talented people who were devoted to orchestrating beautiful exhibitions, and will always remember the preparation for those moments when the objects would take their place in galleries that had been transformed especially for that encounter. We all felt a kind of solemn joy in finally seeing what had so long been drawn and imagined. There was careful attention to lighting, to every detail, every measurement, the weight, texture and color of each thing. The view was especially important, along a specified path, through orchestrated portals. But I also learned that Architecture—in its alchemic sense—is more than that. It is being alert to the beauty of singular situations. There was inevitably a surprise or two during installation—and during construction—that required a bit of improvisation. Since we

were an in-house design department, we took advantage of that. When unexpected situations got shaken into our design, those oddities sometimes transformed into delight.



The red room at the Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center

The quote on the wall is from the notebook that Frascari kept while working on an exhibition of a dream house.

There was another significant exhibition that I had the privilege of participating in. In my early forties, I studied with Marco Frascari—(initially chairman of this committee who has sadly now passed away)—an architect and philosopher who was taught by Italian architect and exhibition

designer Carlo Scarpa at the Università IUAV di Venezia. Frascari put together an exhibition while teaching at the University of Pennsylvania called “The Architect’s Dream, House for the Next Millennium” that he, Claudio Sgarbi and Alice Min Too Chun designed together.¹ After he passed away, I participated in the re-presentation of this same exhibition at the Washington-Alexandria Architecture Center in Alexandria, Virginia for a conference inspired by Frascari’s thinking called *Ceilings and Dreams: The Architecture of Levity*.² The exhibition displayed Frascari’s mysterious model in the center of the room of a ‘dream house’ with a series of translucent mylar recto-verso drawings hanging next to it in space. Many of the Frascari parts of the drawings—(they all drew together on both sides of the paper)—had a transfer print of Little Nemo beside his bed ‘waking up’ in the margin. Little Nemo was the star of the cartoon in the Sunday funny pages of the *New York Herald* from 1905 to 1911 called *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, that was drawn by Winsor McCay. The whole ensemble was a translucent enigma. As I helped hang the drawings, I thought about Frascari’s ‘Little Nemo’ clues. It was as if he was referencing *Little Nemo in Slumberland* as a cartoon treatise on the architectural imagination.³

Memory holds the key to dreaming, and by extension also unlocks the secrets of making significant Architecture (and exhibitions). This dissertation includes the work of contemporaries of Winsor McCay who thought very seriously about the relation between memory and dreaming. In the late 1800s, people attributed the startlingly original work of an artist or inventor to their ability to recall the earliest memories of their youth.⁴ Original thinking and invention happen when authentic memories of early childhood bring back the audacity of youth because children are fearless about play. Children also feel things intensely, and can feel and see things clearly that tend to be tempered—or even forgotten—later. A look at McCay’s *Little Nemo in Slumberland* is a visit to the realm of original feeling and thinking (and playing) that can be extended to the desk

¹ The exhibition has since been made into a book: Marco Frascari’s *marco frascari’s dream house, a theory of imagination*, Edited by Federica Goffi (London and New York: Routledge, 2017). The picture above is a remnant of the exhibition at WAAC that still exists on one of walls several years after the exhibition took place. It is in a room where students pin up their drawings for review.

² This conference came into being through the inspired work of Paul Emmons and Jodi LaCoe, two imaginative professors at the school (at that time) who are on this committee.

³ After not seeing Marco Frascari for a period of time—due to my persistent work deadlines—I ran into him at a conference on *Synaesthesia* at Penn State University. Having learned about *Little Nemo in Slumberland* from a colleague at the National Gallery of Art (then Chief of Design), and after taking a beginner’s Italian class four times and not making any headway (because my original intent was to study Carlo Scarpa), I hit upon the idea of studying Winsor McCay because he was an American who only spoke English. I asked Marco if I could do my dissertation on *Little Nemo*, expecting to need to justify such seemingly obscure architectural representations as being worthy of study. Without a moments hesitation, Marco replied, “Ya. Do it.” It was only later, after he passed away, while hanging the recto-verso drawings that I realized he had been thinking about *Little Nemo* all along. (No surprise!)

⁴ Extending this tradition explored in the 1800s by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, Sigmund Freud and Marcel Proust—two of the contemporaries of McCay who explored the psychic territory of dreaming—each, in their own way, laid claim to childhood as the most significant aspect of our imaginative life.

of an architect seeking his “little childhood self.”⁵ Inhabiting this dreamer’s desk landscape is not so much about being “dreamy-eyed” in the naive sense of the phrase, as about being attentive, with eyes that take on an unexpected hue when a happy accident occurs, and ears that notice an oddly resonant phrase.

This dissertation is about architectural drawing as seen through McCay’s cartoons and early animations that show how the mind’s imagination works, its fantastical mode of thinking. But it is also a look at the psychic mood of early modern Architecture—the ‘childhood’ of modern Architecture—when the world was fascinated by the dreaming mind. It will characterize this atmosphere through the meditations on dreams and humor put forth by Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust, who were all pondering modern life—each through the thing they loved most—(psychiatry, philosophy and the modern novel)—at the same time that New York City was springing up, with its psychic twin, Coney Island—in the *milieu* that was both added to and commented on by Winsor McCay through drawing.⁶

Winsor McCay’s cartoons help us to notice that the profession is best practiced while being amused. This dissertation looks at drawing and dreaming and the imagination of modern Architecture circa 1910. At that time, Washington, DC., New York City and other young cities in America were being populated with memories of the Neo-classical White City that was erected at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, a kind of full scale model inspired by the Beaux-Arts. They all resembled the idealized image of Little Nemo’s Slumberland, but McCay’s cartoons also portrayed its hidden aspects. This ‘other’ side—the nightmares that Nemo was drawn into—were the subsoil of modern Architecture.

The transmutational nature of memory, how ideas get “put in the hopper” for the next design opportunity, are embedded in McCay’s cartoons. Although Winsor McCay’s realm was ruled by the mercurial King Morpheus, his cartoons hint that Memory, both long- and short-term, as mother to the Muses, may have been the “night-*mère*” galloping through the kingdom of Slumberland, the Lady⁷ that causes us all to fall, and then wake up.

⁵ Marco Frascari, *marco frascari’s dream house: a theory of imagination*, Edited by Federica Goffi (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 47. Frascari saw Little Nemo’s “intriguing nocturnal adventures” as a key to “understanding how, in any architect, there is always a little childhood self present.”

⁶ It is not dissimilar from the conversations happening today in 2023 as we contemplate the implications of ‘AI’—Artificial Intelligence. We are experiencing a tightening of the collective consciousness—a subjugation of our individual dreams—not unlike the one experienced in McCay’s time with the dawn of mass transportation (trains and trams), mass entertainment (magazines and movies) and mass communication (newspapers, telephones and radio).

⁷ Architecture was portrayed as a Lady in Renaissance treatises on Architecture.



*The concluding frame in an episode of Little Nemo in Slumberland,
New York Herald, from Sunday, February 3, 1907*

Part I

Ideas about dreaming 1899—1922

**The psychic mood of McCay's world
in the early days of modern Architecture**



1

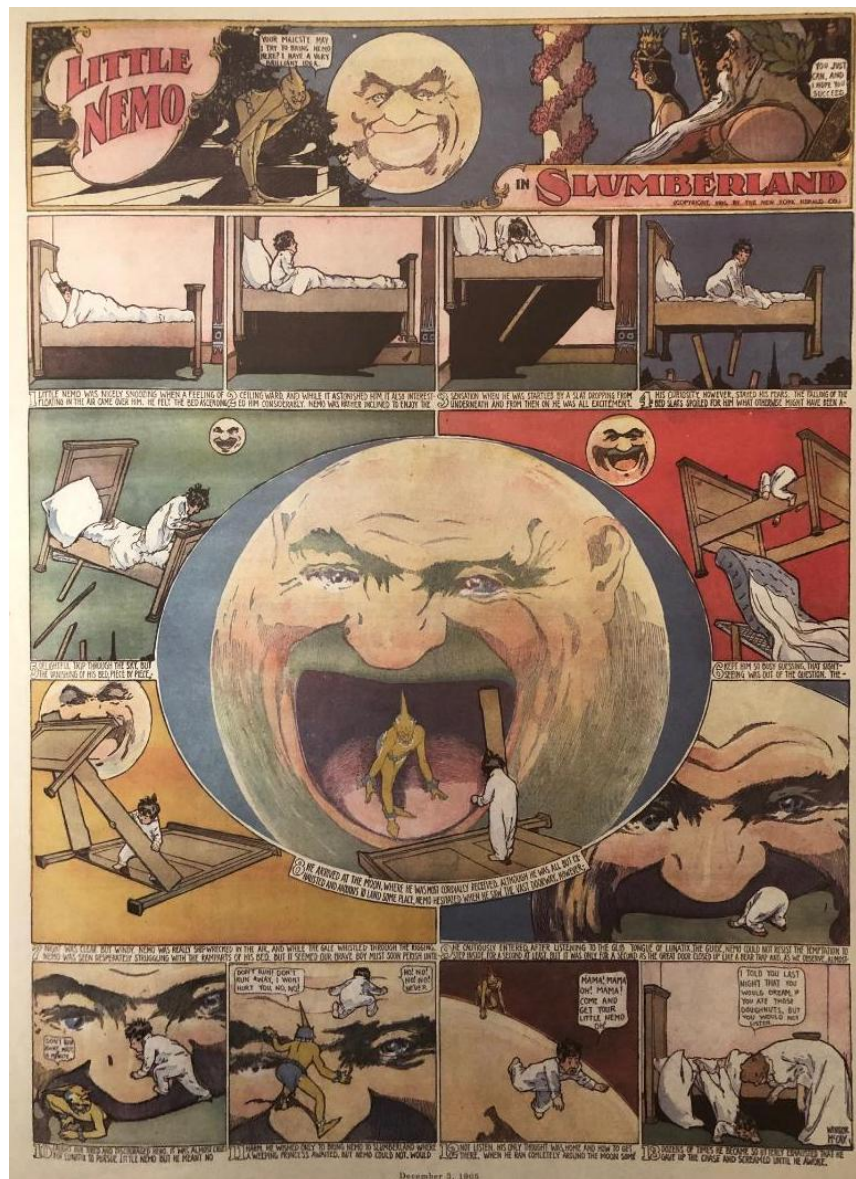
The boy who kept waking up



Portrait of Winsor McCay in 1906, a version of which appeared in the New York Herald on 17 February 1907

Winsor McCay

Little Nemo in Slumberland was a cartoon strip drawn by Zenas Winsor McCay that appeared in the funny pages of *The New York Herald* from 1905 to 1911. It featured drawings about dreaming, a popular topic in the early twentieth century. Early movies portrayed it, amusement parks pretended to *be* it, even science extended its realm to include it. Dreaming became more about the mind—not, as some ancients once thought, the soul—looking at its memory with imagination, and then waking up. Winsor McCay imaginatively pondered the nature of dreaming by drawing the penultimate episodes of a little boy’s dreams right before waking up. His portrayal of the boy’s dream images were equally as ‘real’ as the image of him waking up in bed, which was always shown in the final frame. The ambiguity of the states of waking and sleeping were part of the drama. McCay was able to render a reality that is ordinarily immaterial, ungraspable and fleeting into accessible images that became very much a part of the



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, December 3, 1905

material sensible world: into newspaper with a smooth surface and cut edges that were a distinct format, size and weight; paper that could be snapped and folded by a practiced hand; sounds which ranged from the thud of ‘the paper’ landing on the front porch to the crinkle of its pages being turned, each creak a sort of testament to the literal strength of the page; with an intoxicating whiff of freshly printed ink; and a riot of line weights in black surrounded by glorious dots of color.

In *Dreaming by the Book*, Elaine Scarry explores the way images that are “almost wholly devoid of actual sensory content” (such as dreams) gain “the vivacity of perceptual objects.” McCay

excelled at this. Scarry identifies three kinds of phenomena associated with the act of perception, what she discerns to be: *immediate sensory content* (the colored surface of a page of *Little Nemo*, or “the sweet fleeting notes of ‘Honeysuckle Rose’ on a Fats Waller’s piano recording”); *delayed sensory content* (instructions for a sound sensation such as the musical score for ‘Honeysuckle Rose’); or *mimetic content* (instructions for the mental act of conjuring an image, say, written in a fictional novel for “the figural rooms and faces and weather that we mimetically see, touch, and hear, though in no case do we actually do so.”) For Scarry, “imagining is an act of perceptual mimesis, whether undertaken in our own daydreams or under the instruction of great writers.”¹ One wonders how this kind of perceptual mimesis comes about under the ‘instruction’ of great cartoonists—or—great architects? Ordinarily—according to Scarry—the graphic arts incite us to imagine things through the first kind of perception, immediately, while the verbal arts incite mimetic perception, through various methods.² McCay’s drawings live in both worlds. He engaged the viewer to perceive things that did not really exist (dreams that were a mimetic perception), but he did it with immediacy. He pictured the art of picturing. This eventually came quite naturally to him after many years of practice. Understanding how McCay learned to draw will cast light on the dreaming process that he pictured. These qualities will be further elaborated in the dissertation with an eye toward the skill required by architects who are imagining a similarly ‘dreamlike’ world. McCay’s techniques evolved as he learned the value of his drawing’s allurements. With a generous assist from the research of John Canemaker, an animator, animation historian and professor at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts—and a recent biographer of McCay—, here is the story of how McCay learned to draw.

The early years

McCay was born in Ontario, Canada while his mother was visiting her parents, but she returned home shortly thereafter to Spring Lake, Michigan where McCay grew up. The year of McCay’s birth is unknown. At various times he claimed to have been born in 1867, 1868, 1869 and 1871, but, according to a Spring Lake census taken in 1870, he may have been born as early as 1866.³ It is thought that McCay prevaricated about his age because he married a much younger woman. She, Maude, was 14 at the event (pretending to be 18), and he was 24 (claiming to be 22), so McCay thought ‘imaginatively’ about both of their ages. The fact that his actual birth certificate likely went up in smoke during a fire that consumed his family home on a freezing night in 1871

¹ Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 3-6.

² Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, 7.

³ Jim Gettys, Nitrateville.com, July 7, 2016. cited by John Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 28; The census taken in 1866 listed him as being 4 years old, but the census taker was known for ‘rounding things up’.

likely helped this creative accounting of years, and it also interestingly inspired his vocation. Some neighbors sheltered his family during the fire and at the age of 4 or 5, Winsor made his ‘first drawing’.

...[He] picked up a five-penny nail which was lying on the windowsill and unthinkingly commenced to etch the catastrophe on the frosted windowpane.⁴

His first drawing recorded a spectacle. More importantly though according to family lore, Winsor became consumed with the desire to draw. John Canemaker, in his biography of McCay, notes that:

...[this] perhaps apocryphal story does predict McCay’s abilities to work quickly in a variety of media, even during occasions of stress and trauma, with cool detachment ... the fragile frost drawing that soon melted anticipated the temporality of the form McCay later chose as his major vehicle of expression: the easily discarded daily newspaper.⁵

In an age before recycling, one can also imagine the newsprint pages which McCay later made of *Little Nemo* being repurposed to wrap things, or stuffed into boxes for cushioning, or even used to light a fire. Regardless of their ephemerality, the images took hold of the public’s imagination. And likewise, after his initial iced etching—henceforth—McCay drew everything. Winsor’s mother claimed he could draw beautifully by the age of 6. His father related his inability to do anything else:

From the time he was a little fellow, all the while he was in school, he was drawing pictures. He used to get whipped in school for drawing sketches on the leaves of his books until I told the teachers it was of no use: nothing could stop him.⁶

In *A Complete Guide to Professional Cartooning*, Gene Barnes related what McCay said in 1925 about the source of his talent:

⁴ Kevin Scott Collier, *Boyhood Dreams—Growing Up in Spring Lake, Michigan 1867-1885* (Book Patch Publishing, 2015/2017), 21-23; Padraic O’Glasain, “Winsor McCay: Little Nemo’s Daddy,” manuscript, 1941, collection of Janet Trinker, 6-7; cited by John Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art*, 30; This unpublished manuscript is in the possession of the McCay family and was supposedly commissioned by McCay’s son, Robert. O’Glasain may have been a family friend and/or a newspaper crony of McCay’s.

⁵ John Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art*, 30.

⁶ Padraic O’Glasain, “Winsor McCay: Little Nemo’s Daddy,” 24; cited by Canemaker, 30.

He said it was about 15 percent talent and 85 percent hard work ... If he were outdoors and a horse and wagon happened to be near, he'd draw the horse, then the wagon. He'd look at the house across the street and draw its doorway, the gate, the fence.

A cat clawing in a garbage can as a subject was not beneath his dignity. Indoors he'd draw furniture; chairs in different angles, lamps, fireplaces, mantel-pieces, beds, silverware, glassware. He would study the wrinkles in drapery and clothing, the differences in shoes, and the shapes of hats.⁷

This serious study and pursuit of drawing enabled McCay to appear to be able to draw intricate details from his head ‘magically’ rather than copying something from life, a process he later referred to as ‘memory sketching’. McCay:

I have never made a drawing of a box car or a coach, but if I were given the order to make one, I'll wager I could get every important detail in the trucks as well as the rest. Why? Simply because I have studied these things with my eyes; I have put them up here in my cranium, and there they'll stay until I need them.⁸

Throughout his life of making drawings, McCay never lost his love of detail. It is one of the qualities that impresses his drawings into our imagination. McCay's amazing sense of detail was even noted by his father:

His work was true, even when he was a youngster. One day he drew a picture of a sleigh-load of logs. He got every bolt on the side represented in its proper place in the picture, and he didn't count them either. He just stood off a way from the sleigh and drew them. He even had the owner's markings on the ends of the logs.⁹

Despite the acknowledgement of McCay's talent by his parents, he was sent to Cleary's Business College in Ypsilanti in 1888. Not surprisingly, he rarely attended class, and instead “hotfooted it to Detroit.” In his words, “I would skip out, catch a train to Detroit and go down to Wonderland and draw pictures.”¹⁰ Sackett & Wiggins's “Wonderland and Eden Musee”, which opened in 1886, was the first dime museum that McCay drew in.

⁷ Eugene Byrnes, *A Complete Guide to Professional Cartooning*, 121; cited by Canemaker, 30.

⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, June 11, 1911; cited by Canemaker, 31.

⁹ O'Glasain, 24; cited by Canemaker, 30.

¹⁰ Canemaker, 35.

A dime museum was an establishment that “combined aspects of vaudeville, funhouses, and circus freak midway shows under one roof.”¹¹ An advertisement for Wonderland from 1892 gives a flavor of the ‘museum’ that McCay had been attracted to four years earlier. A visitor entered on the first floor into an Art Gallery and Cyclorama. Descending into the basement, the visitor would find wax figures posed to imitate famous sensational, historical and mythical scenes such as “Kemmler’s Execution by Electricity,” “Abraham Lincoln Giving Freedom to the Slaves” or “Rip Van Winkle Awakening from His Twenty Year’s Sleep.” Categories like history and myth were freely juxtaposed. The ostensible purpose of the museum was edification through wonder. Ascending to the second floor, a visitor would find Lecture and Curio Halls with changing attractions. This particular week offered Prof. Mathew’s [sic] Circus of Performing Goats, Billy Wells, the “man with the iron skull [who] allows stones and boards to be broken on his head,” and the Family Damm Orchestra of four child violinists. The third floor was a Taxidermist Hall oddly juxtaposed with Ladies’ Parlors “fitted up for the comfort and convenience of our Lady Patrons and their escorts. A matron always in charge.” The fourth floor was “The Finest Menagerie West of New York” featuring such animals as an African Lion, a South American Leopard, a Black Bear, an Alligator, a Pig Tail Baboon, etc. From the third and fourth floors, a theater could be entered featuring a live orchestra preceding acts such as:

*... Mildred, a mental telepathist, assisted by Rouclere, “terminating their entertainment with their original Psychognatism. First time in America;” followed by the sisters Mendoza, “queens of the air in their startling exhibition on the aerial bars;” and finishing with “The Great Salambo—The Sensations of all Europe.”*¹²

Wonderland was where McCay escaped from the sawmills of Stanton, a town north of Spring Lake where his family had moved in 1885, where his father was emerging as a real estate agent for property owned by a large lumber firm, and where his father expected him to return. Instead, McCay began developing a sensibility and appreciation for the marvelous, its allure thoroughly soaking his ‘cranium’. To earn money, McCay drew portraits of the more (one assumes) mundane inhabitants of Wonderland, its visitors, which he sold for 25 cents each. According to McCay, “The agreement was that I should draw pictures of patrons ... and get half the money ... I used to leave that place with my pockets bulging with money...” He himself started attracting attention, not just from his Ypsilanti schoolmates (who sometimes also ‘hotfooted’ it down to Wonderland), but from the carny barker known as the ‘Old Lecturer’ or ‘The Professor’, who started pointing out McCay as one of the museum’s attractions:

¹¹ Canemaker, 35.

¹² Detroit Public Library, Burton Historical Collection, E&M 74D4/792 “Wonderland Theater”; cited by Canemaker, 36.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, August 12, 1906

*The time will come when the pictures this young man draws of you will be valuable and you will always want to keep them. In a few years, you will not want to part with the likeness which he makes of you today...*¹³

Realism didn't at all play into 'Winnie's' (as his Ypsilanti friends called him) portraits of the patrons. As McCay put it:

*A great many women and girls had me draw their pictures, and even at that age I was wise enough to make all of them beautiful...*¹⁴

This was the second quality of McCay's drawings that remained with him. No matter the content, McCay's drawings were drawn beautifully with the intention of eliciting delight.

Up to this point, McCay was entirely self-taught. His local reputation gained him the attention of Professor John Goodison of Michigan State Normal School who offered to give him private lessons. This was the only formal art education that McCay received. According to McCay:

*[Goodison had] a new idea of teaching perspective [and so] with the enthusiasm of youth he gathered about him six youngsters who seemed to have a talent for drawing, the idea being 'try it on the dogs.' I was one of the 'dogs.'*¹⁵

Goodison's approach toward teaching perspective did not involve books. Objects were not copied from copies but rather drawn from real objects: actual geometrical solids and objects with similar geometric forms, leaves, and flowers. Linear perspective was taught as well as the projection of shadows and reflections. The course also included concepts about the harmony and contrast of color. Significantly, instruction was given from large scale crayon drawings as well as the blackboard, followed by drills when the students themselves drew their own lines, angles and plane figures on the blackboard.¹⁶

¹³ Detroit Public Library, Burton Historical Collection, E&M 74D4/792 "Wonderland Theater"; cited by Canemaker, 36.

¹⁴"Wonderland Theater"; cited by Canemaker, 36.

¹⁵ Winsor McCay, "Movie Cartoons," *Cartoon and Movie Magazine* 31 (April 1927), 11; cited by Canemaker, 37.

¹⁶ McCay, "Movie Cartoons," 11-12; Winsor's own advice on how to draw echoed the teaching of Goodison: "If I were teaching amateur cartoonists I would set up a cone, a sphere, a cylinder and a cube before my pupils and say, 'Draw nothing but these things for the next two months.' When you have learned to draw them well, you will be able to draw anything—including cartoons. For instance, if you can draw a sphere, you can draw automobile wheels and if you can draw a cube you can easily adapt it to the shape of an automobile. It is fundamentally important to understand the figures of solid geometry for every possible angle before you attempt to modify those figures. ... once you grasp the points of perspective, the rest is clear sailing."

This period of instruction overlaid ideas (new ideas for McCay) about the perception of form onto an intuitive understanding that he must already have had, since he drew things from life already with such veracity. He now saw the process of drawing as: first, a recognition of the solid geometrical forms underlying things that were beheld; and second, an application of the ‘points of perspective’ to the lines and shadows of those solids. Later in life, in an article in *Cartoon and Movie Magazine*, McCay went a step further to discuss the need for a sense of substance:

Any ordinary artist with an active imagination can learn to draw cartoons by first mastering perspective—lines, forms and shadows. When you draw the picture of a man standing on the ground, let him be on the ground, not somewhere up in the air. When you draw a building or a locomotive, make it look like what it’s supposed to represent. You need a sixth sense—a sense of substance—which tells you, for instance, that a well-constructed table stands firmly on the floor with all four legs; its top does not jut into the air like a sliding-board.¹⁷

A third quality of McCay’s drawings was developed when he mastered the art of perspective. He was able to, as Canemaker describes it, “support the illusion of a fantasy world and enhance its sincerity,”¹⁸ using perspective to establish his drawing’s authority.

Another (fourth) quality of McCay’s drawings developed from his experience making portraits at Wonderland and the blackboard drills in Goodison’s class, namely: the entertainment value of watching someone draw before your eyes. This would manifest itself later in McCay’s career when he drew billboards in front of a crowd, and then again when he translated that experience into ‘Lightning Sketch Acts’ on vaudeville, when he successively drew and erased—drew and erased—images on a blackboard as a way of making things evolve.

Impressed with McCay’s ability, Goodison recommended that McCay move to Chicago to study at the Art Institute to become an artist. He partially followed that advice. In 1889, McCay moved to Chicago, but instead of ending up at the Art Institute, he landed at the National Print & Engraving Company, a firm that specialized in “Show, Commercial & Railroad Printing.” McCay had not chosen the path his father laid out for him, so he needed to support himself. Consequently, he became a printer and learned the art of making stone lithographs, working in a “large room filled with men working with stipple gravers, chisels, gouges, and burnishers or in rooms with huge presses and drying trays and finely ground dry ink colors.” He roomed at a boardinghouse with Jules Guerin (1866-1946) who became a noted American muralist with commissions decorating the Lincoln Memorial and Pennsylvania Station in New York. Both men

¹⁷ McCay, “Movie Cartoons,” 11-12.

¹⁸ Canemaker, 37. Canemaker quotes McCay as saying, “I admit I cannot draw any better than average, but critics say my knowledge of perspective makes my drawings look snappy.”

were ambitious and poor, so they taught each other everything they knew. McCay taught Guerin perspective and detail. Guerin taught McCay figural drawing and color.¹⁹

At National Printing & Engraving Company, McCay learned the art of shameless hyperbole. Large circuses were a lucrative customer, requiring anywhere between 5,000 to 8,000 posters in every city they played. A promotional brochure from 1886 advertised:

*Two Continent, World-famous, New and Massive Circus, Museum, Aquarium, Menagerie of Trained Animals, and Congress of Living Wonders. A Stupendous and Majestic Constellation of Creation's Marvels Far Surpassing All Previous Enterprises...*²⁰

McCay often moonlighted to make extra money. According to one account, he was engaged by a local dime museum to paint signs for the freak shows exhibited from week to week:

*... guided by an imagination stimulated, frequently, by things stronger than water... [McCay] enlarged upon these designs, illustrating them with semi-caricatures of the bearded lady and the dog-faced boy ...*²¹

Another quality of McCay's drawings begins to appear in his advertisements for freak shows, one that he saw in the circus posters being printed during the day. His portraits from Wonderland where every patron was drawn as 'beautiful' became more akin to caricature. Traditionally, various features being distorted or exaggerated was a form of satire but, in an advertisement for a freak show, the distortions were meant to demonstrate a monstrous reality, an alluring one, worthy of payment for a view.

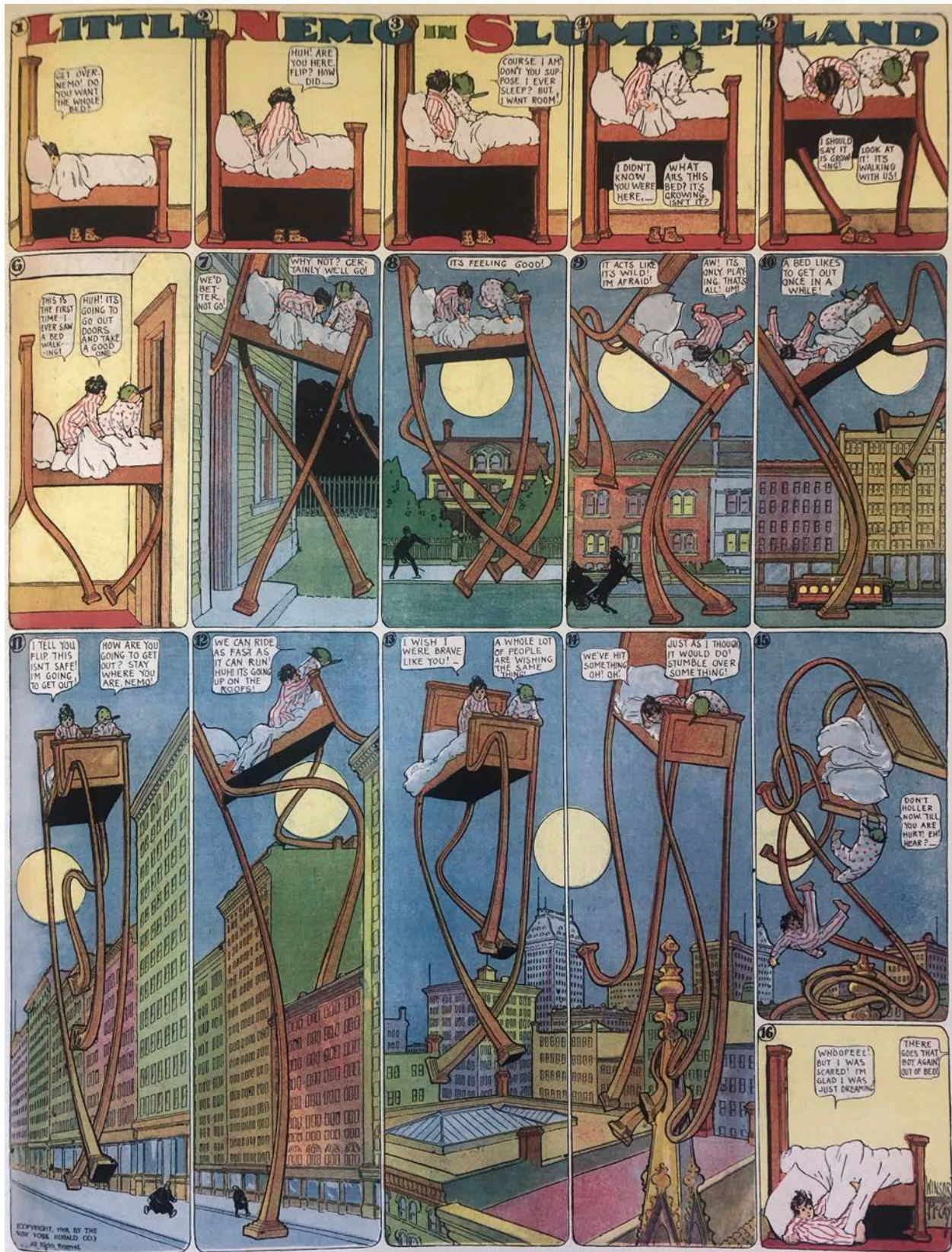
Amidst the grotesquerie of his moonlighting gig, it is thought that McCay joined the secret fraternal order of Freemasonry. His father was a lifelong Mason and was buried with full Masonic rites, and both his mother and father were second generation Scottish immigrants. A letter of sympathy with Masonic quotations was sent to Winsor's family upon his own death from Charles J. Wuest of Chicago who claimed that he and the late artist had joined the order when they were fellow apprentices at National Printing & Engraving Company.²² Freemasonry was frowned upon by the Catholic Church and vice-versa. Much has been made of the symbolism

¹⁹ Canemaker, 42.

²⁰ Ibid, 42.

²¹ Montgomery Phister, "People of the Stage: Winsor McCay," Cincinnati *Commercial Tribune*, November 28, 1909, Magazine section, 1; cited by Canemaker, 45.

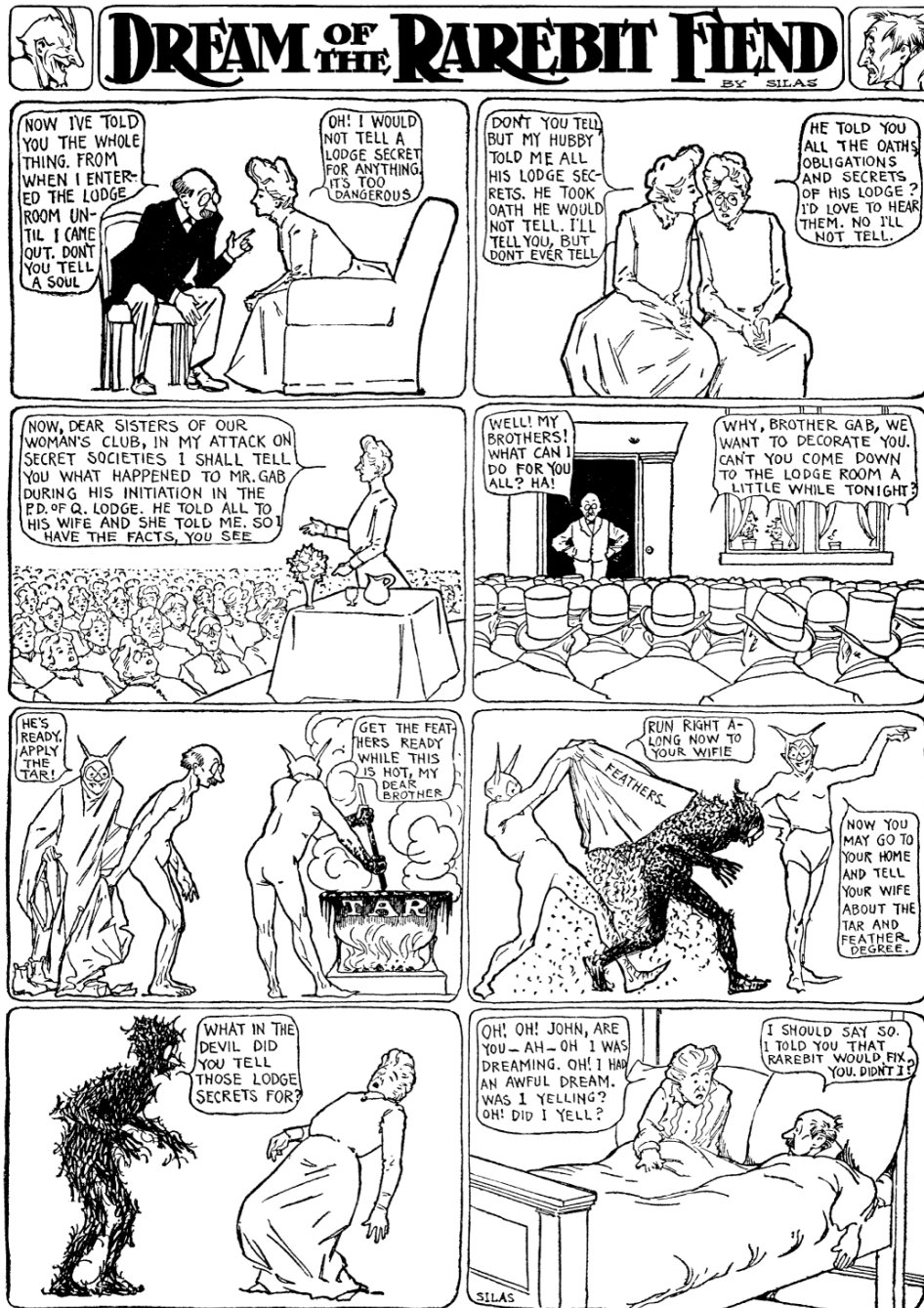
²² Canemaker, 42; The symbolism that appears in McCay's portrayals of dreaming may relate to Freemasonry, a topic worthy of further study.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, July 26, 1908

shown within one of his most famous comic strips, when the walking bed suddenly ‘trips’ on a church steeple and sends Nemo tumbling through the air.

In another serial strip that McCay is famous for, *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*, a man imprudently confides his men’s club secrets to his wife, who then has a nightmare about the consequences of betraying his confidence. She dreams that he is tarred and feathered by his ‘brothers’ as a result.



Dream of the Rarebit Fiend from a book of McCay's cartoons published in 1905

In 1891, McCay moved to Cincinnati to take a job on Vine Street at Kohl & Middleton's New Dime Museum. For the next nine years he worked in a small room on the fourth floor of the museum painting advertisements and posters of the weekly attractions. This was Cincinnati's version of Detroit's Wonderland, but it was always on shaky financial ground. It changed owners and names several times eventually ending up as Will S. Heck's Wonder World and Theater. McCay again took on extra work to pay the bills—because he now had a family to support—this time with Philip ('Ph.') Morton, the 'billboard king'.²³ William Apthorn ('Doc') Adams, later head of the art department of the *New York American*, who had once painted billboards in Cincinnati with McCay, recalled the astonishment that McCay engendered while he painted:

*...how he could draw a perfect outline without once stopping after he began, or without looking at the sketch at all until he had completed it. Unfailingly the sketch would be perfectly proportioned and exact in detail and execution. Seldom indeed was it that any part of his one-line figures had to be redrawn. The sight of him drawing an eight foot woman—almost two and a half feet taller than himself—in a single line from a position atop a sugar barrel is one sight I'll never forget.*²⁴

McCay reportedly did a little jig while humming to himself, rolling countless cigarettes as he pondered the canvas while mixing pigments before starting the outlines.²⁵ The billboards and the posters that McCay drew, particularly the "more curious of the monstrosities of the peculiar" eventually led the owner of the dime museum to ask McCay to draw ads for the city newspaper. It was apparently difficult to persuade the regularly employed newspaper artists to "devote their attention to these nightmares" and so McCay (or 'Mac' as he was now called) eagerly agreed to the challenge. He took his first lessons in 'process drawing' from Joseph Alexander, who was head of the art room at the *Commercial Tribune*. Since McCay was accustomed to using pencils, brushes and paint, he "took slowly to the pen at first," but eventually his proficiency led him to drop "small hints that he would not be averse to accepting a position on the staff of the paper."²⁶ McCay relates the transition:

²³ Jay Gilbert, "WEBN's Show Can't Hold a Roman candle to our 1898 Fireworks Display," Cincinnati Magazine, September 2016; cited by Canemaker, 52; Gilbert wrote of Ph. Morton: "By 1898 he'd become the Steve Jobs of roadside blight. Eventually every railroad and motorway in America had its view ruined by a Ph. Morton billboard."

²⁴ O'Glasain, 31; cited by Canemaker, 52.

²⁵ Ibid, 34; cited by Canemaker, 52.

²⁶ Phister, 1; cited by Canemaker, 55.

I was a long time finding out what kind of board, ink, pens, and other utensils were needed. I did not know that one should draw his cartoons bigger than they were to be made into cuts. I did not know about the quality and quantity of lines for good clear reduction.²⁷

When he was hired by Charles J. Christie, the editor for the *Commercial Tribune*, Christie said, “I’ll make a newspaper man out of you. The best god damned newspaper cartoonist in the country, that’s what I’ll make of you!” To which Winsor McCay replied, “Where can I hang my coat?”²⁸

Dime museums: an oddly poignant model for Architecture?

Having begun the story of Winsor McCay and his early career making drawings of the attractions in dime museums, this paper will take a closer look at the nature of those ‘museum’ drawings. His training, initially through constant sketching of everything around him, to learning perspective from Goodison, to apprenticing as a printer and then learning on the job in dime museums to make posters and billboards of coming attractions, is somewhat different than the education an architect would receive today. Architects are charged with making drawings of buildings, which are very much their own kind of dream: rooms filled with furniture and objects that are brought together in an arrangement suitable for the purpose of performing something. Buildings are specialized: one is for living, another for working, another for shopping; and some have the same motives as the old dime museums—places for marveling... museums, trade shows, World’s Fairs, theaters—even churches—which foster a special kind of thinking—the kind of thinking we do when dreaming. Marco Frascari defines the act of dreaming as “the creation of a *locus* of thought; it is what in Italian is called *far mente locale*, which is a form of reasoning done in a regional manner. Any dream is an act of construction that must be ‘construed’. Dreams are *loci* of narration developed within the labyrinth of reflections between the physical and metaphysical reality of things.”²⁹ All buildings—even the more practical ones like houses and grocery stores—can be designed as just this kind of *loci*.

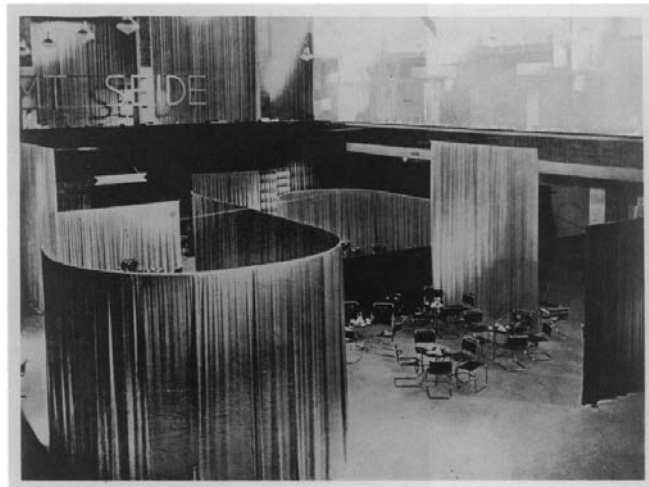
The ghost of the old dime museums that translated into places of wonder like Coney Island can be connected to the imagining of Architecture. This was the case for Lilly Reich and Mies van der Rohe when the aesthetic of the display of materials in trade shows of manufactured goods,

²⁷ Clare Briggs, *How to Draw Cartoons* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), 120; cited by Canemaker, 55.

²⁸ O’Glasain, 38-39; cited by Canemaker, 55.

²⁹ Marco Frascari, *Marco Frascari’s Dream House: A Theory of Imagination*, edited by Federica Goffi (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 47; Marco Frascari discusses this idea in a Chapter about ‘telling and casting’. “Images of dreams are closely linked to images of thought. ... The world of dreams is a living forest in which fantasy dwells and solves the riddle of architectural corporeality.”

displayed as a kind of wonderment, evolved into the Barcelona Pavilion (also an exhibition space), which then became the prototype for the design of houses.



Lilly Reich and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Cafe Same und Seide," for Die Mode der Dame (Women's Fashion) exhibition, Berlin, 1927. Museum of Modern Art, New York, Photograph Collection, gift of the architect.



Reconstructed Barcelona Pavilion, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (originally constructed in 1929). Photograph by the author.

In thinking about iconic display buildings as places for imagining and shaping the future, an influential architectural treatise comes to mind, one in which the fire of the imagination lives in the hearth of memory. For McCay, memory and imagination—‘memory sketching’—were thoroughly entwined, although today many people still think of memory as things that happened in the past, and imagination as something that inventors use when thinking about the future. A story about the alchemical process of the way memories mingle through imagination into ‘thought’—the way the “physical and metaphysical possibilities of things” can mobilize thinking—is a story of an iconic pavilion in relatively recent history, the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was housed in the ‘Crystal Palace’ in London, the largest building ever built at that time, with

100,000 objects from 14,000 exhibitors from around the world. It became the grand-daddy of places of wonder.

Gottfried Semper—Clues from the Crystal Palace

The Crystal Palace inspired the Architecture of the future, but it also clarified thinking about the way architecture evolved in the past. Gottfried Semper (German architect, 1803-1879) was a contemporary of Karl Marx (German-born philosopher, 1818-1883) and Charles Darwin (English naturalist, 1809-1882). They all thought about how the world developed and around 1850 wrote influential treatises. Semper traced the origin of architectural form in different cultures and in so doing, began to understand the hearth as the fundamental element of civilization and, consequently a motivating element of architecture.³⁰ While exiled from Germany as a result of siding with the revolutionaries in the May Uprising in Dresden in 1848, and in the wake of losing opportunities for architectural commissions—(he would likely have been executed for treason if he returned to Germany at that time)—Semper designed several exhibitions for the Crystal Palace. In this World's Fair that was entirely under one immense glass and cast iron roof, a demonstration of the latest manufacturing processes, Semper was especially

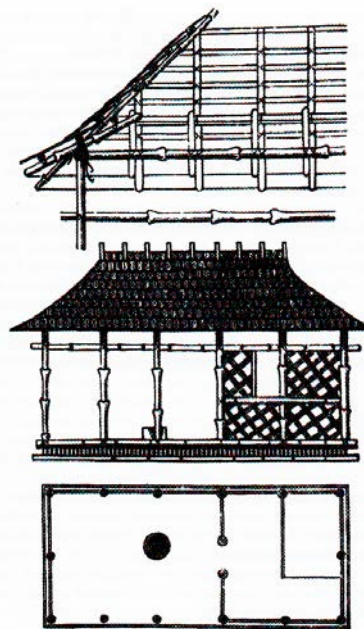


Louis Haghe, Crystal Palace—Queen Victoria opens the Great Exhibition, 1851.

The ceremony ended with a massed choir singing Handel's Hallelujah Chorus.

³⁰ Harry Francis Malgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996), 177-9.

taken with a primitive Caribbean hut from Trinidad on display there which beautifully illustrated a book he was working on, that spawned an essay on *The Four Elements of Architecture*. His understanding of the ‘development’ of Architecture in concert with the rise of civilization,—unlike Marx’s linking of ‘development’ to economic production (his ‘historical imperative’), and unlike Darwin’s understanding of ‘development’ as species differentiating themselves through struggle and survival—had to do with the persistent form of the original elements deployed to make it. Form seemed to persist in the imagination, even when the material and the means of making something had changed.³¹ Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (which led to Herbert Spencer’s ideas about social Darwinism, or “survival of the fittest”) and Marx’s *Das Kapital* were treatises based on the assumption that the ‘primitive’ was a condition that must ‘develop’ to achieve its teleological destiny. Semper saw the form language of primitive culture in a different light: as being intelligible. Semper: “Hellenic culture could only have arisen on the humus of many past traditions long since dead and decayed and from alien motives brought over from without and no longer intelligible in their original meaning.”³²



Gottfried Semper, “The Caribbean Hut,” from *The Four Elements of Architecture*, 1851

³¹ Malgrave, *Gottfried Semper: Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, 177-9; Before writing “The Four Elements of Architecture,” Semper had been working on a history of Architecture that was vast in scope. It traced the development of form in different cultures. In the years leading up to his publication of *The Four Elements of Architecture: A Contribution to the Comparative Study of Architecture* (1851), Semper attempted to assemble a history of architecture by reviewing eleven building types, each considered historically from its inception to modern times. He achieved twenty chapters which surveyed the domestic architecture of eastern Asia, India, Mesopotamia, Assyria, Persia and Egypt in ancient times. This was less than half of the first category of the eleven building types, but, it contained the seeds for his thinking about the development of a unified vision for its development.

³² Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and other writings*, trans. By Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 101.

Standing before actual examples of technology from the ‘past’ (like the hut) must have been a bright spot for Semper as he grappled with the dawning reality of his exile—from his wife and children—and from his former patrons. Here were the four elements of Architecture he had identified that would help to understand the ‘dead’ traditional forms that persisted: “Such was the bountiful soil from which the free hellenic poetry about the gods arose. Like mythology and almost as an illustration of it, the fine arts burst forth from the remnants of older indigenous, and imported motives divested of their roots.”³³ In the Caribbean hut, you could *see* the mound, the woven textile enclosure and the roof (three of the four elements) in one of its early forms—the hut—where the ‘meaning’ of the form was evident. In seeing cultures from around the world juxtaposed under one roof, he became wary of the ‘primitive’ label, but nonetheless saw it as a progenitor. He admits: “At the risk of falling into the same error that I criticize, I see myself forced to go back to the primitive conditions (*Urzustände*) of human society in order to come to that which I actually propose to set forth.”³⁴



Egyptian giants in the main transept, Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, 1851

³³ Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, 101.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

The Crystal Palace, as a display of technology from nations around the world, embodied every kind of fabrication: both ‘primitive’ and industrialized. Semper, interestingly, and contrary to the thinking of Marx and Darwin, believed that nations with older, more ‘primitive’ technologies often have the more refined form language. For this reason, the tendency to adopt older forms persists when technology ‘evolves’.³⁵ Semper became particularly devoted to the idea that textile walls were the original enclosures of ‘inside space’, and that the stone walls built to support them merely functioned as their armature. In *The Four Elements*, he writes:

*Architecture, like its great teacher, nature, should choose and apply its material according to the laws conditioned by nature, yet should it not also make the form and character of its creations dependent on the ideas embodied in them, and not on the material?*³⁶

In Semper’s way of thinking about the motives that shape the development of form³⁷, the stiff looking cartoon-like drawings carved in Egyptian stonework were not so much a result of an inability to draw realistically, as a homage in stone to the figures once woven into tapestry walls, which he saw as the *real* walls in our mind’s eye: the original walls hung in tent structures of nomadic tribes. So in a way, we could look at the carved and colored ‘drawings’ that appeared on walls as motives that traveled through time—civilization to civilization—via ‘cartoons’.³⁸ The exhibitions within the Crystal Palace were a form of representation that—for Semper—inspired fruitful thinking. Semper’s *Four Elements of Architecture* bestows the art of ‘representation’ itself with a crown: that the older form’s claim on the imagination remains as a motivating force, even when its function is no longer readily apparent. Forty years after the event, the architect Robert Kerr wrote that in this exhibition at the Crystal Palace, “...the constrained and pedantic ‘Fine Art of Architecture’ [had] stepped down from its pedestal to join hands with the ‘Minor Arts’ and became the new ‘Industrial Art of Architecture.’ The arts and crafts, once deemed ornamental

³⁵ Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, 102-110.

³⁶ Semper, 102.

³⁷ Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper*, 185; Mallgrave discusses the use of the word “elements” to designate the process of the evolution of form in his biography of Semper. He prefers the terms “motives” and “ideas” as a better choice because, “Certain technical skills are also associated with these motives. The hearth of prehistoric times gave rise to ceramic and metal arts. The roof spawned carpentry or the concept of a fixed structural framework. The notion of mounding first became developed through the building of dams and canals, but it also evolved into terracing, construction of masonry walls, and vaulting.” Most important to this paper, “The last element, the vertical enclosure ... [is a] spatial and dressing motive from its primitive inception as a mat-like divider to the painted and paneled dressing of Assyrian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, and Phoenician architecture.”

³⁸ Mallgrave, 201-204. Beyond Semper’s ideas about the motives for architectural form making, Semper was part of the controversy which raged at that time which debated how ornament should be treated in the Industrial Age. Should a carpet express its ‘flatness’ or was it legitimate to render things as three dimension with shading? Should an ornament be constructed, or should construction be ornamented? Writing at that time whirled around the 1851 London Exhibition of the Works and Industry of all Nations.

and inferior, were embraced by architecture in 1851, “no longer of unequal dignity with herself, but of altogether equal and similar comeliness of grace.”³⁹

Semper organized the display of woven rugs from Turkey in the Crystal Palace, (which likely added to his thinking about *real* walls), and also arranged canoes and animal skins from Canada.



Gottfried Semper, Sketch for the Canada exhibition at the Crystal Palace, 1850

His displays had to do with suspending artifacts (rugs and canoes), but also perhaps engendered the suspension of thought itself. Installations of textiles and canoes in a crystalline space brought moments of crystallization for Semper. Dangling objects, dangling thoughts—all manner of modification of things never seen (or sometimes even heard about before) with new crossovers of meanings—were juxtaposed in time, in preparation for the grand event. The processes within this kind of design: the drawings made on either side of the event, before and after it, the drawings for fabrication of parts that fit together, the installation ‘hang’, the carefully constructed

³⁹ Robert Kerr, Preface to the third edition of James Fergusin’s *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture* (New York, 1891), vi; cited by Mallgrave, 200.

armatures, the theatrical natural lighting, the sounds, the choreography of each visitor's movement and sight, even the smells that went into the making, orchestrated an environment for thinking.

The Crystal Palace—the Great Exhibition of 1851—allowed Semper's thinking about the relation of technology to the making of Architecture to coalesce. It was an early example of the way a new construction filled with objects by artisans could gel (or unloose) a viewer's thinking. The crafting of the artifacts shown in the Crystal Palace ranged from the skilled use of an adze to the finest silks made with mechanized machinery. Somehow the display of such objects, especially when the past was jumbled into the present—and when many possibilities for the final form of an artifact were seen all at once—had a profound effect on Semper. This kind of 'waking'—i.e. when artifacts or 'memories' from the distant or recent past—staged as motile objects in a building designed especially for them (a kind of 'dream'), is the particular type of Architecture considered in this dissertation, that is: design as a kind of armature for thinking—an engine for thought—wherein the views through doorways, the rooms themselves, their details, the 'setting', the materials, the color and the light enable the viewer to dramatize questions while gazing at things. This kind of design has been performed for all types of buildings, for example: a forum, a mediaeval cathedral,⁴⁰ a house, a library, or a theater. A by-product of this paper may be that key elements will come to light about the nature of making drawings for Architecture as a kind of 'gazing machine' for thinking by exploring facets of drawings made to document places like the Crystal Palace, although this was certainly not McCay's intent when he drew *Little Nemo*. *Little Nemo in Slumberland* was drawn as a comic strip to increase the *New York Herald's* readership, and as such, its purpose was to allure and enchant; not to be a contemplation on memory, or memory places or machines, and certainly not to preconfigure future Architecture. Nonetheless, many of his drawings were a kind of documentation of Coney Island and New York City while they were taking shape. This paper will look at these cartoons that depict the act of dreaming made by McCay that were inspired by Coney Island—that was itself a kind of dream—as a way to think about the drawings that can be made to imagine future buildings.⁴¹ It will be framed—kaleidoscopically—by ideas that were formed contemporaneously about dreaming during the run of *Little Nemo*, a little over 100 years ago.

⁴⁰ See Mary Carruthers *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* for a study on the role that the imagination plays in meditation and composition of thought, the relation of memory to imagination, and the architectural places that were designed with this in mind. She begins the book with a discussion about the classical "Art of memory" as laid out in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* ascribed to Cicero.

⁴¹ Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper*, 211. Interestingly, in a manual that Semper later wrote, "Practical Art in Metal and Hard Materials (ware): Its Technology, History and Styles," Semper set out a "Plan for an Ideal Museum," which had a conceptual framework based upon his four elements.

The early twentieth century's inventions set off a dawn of speed. Semper's 'hearth' was still flaming, but now in the combustion engines of locomotives and motor cars, and as the electric light behind a succession of images in rotating reels of celluloid, projecting pictures of dreams—and the scientific theories of the 1850s—onto screens that depicted the modern age as being ablaze. Coney Island's Dreamland was a spectacle lit at night by the smoldering filaments of more than 250,000 electric light bulbs. McCay drew it as the enigmatic lightning rod that it was, a place for ignition of the imagination. Fire..... light! The origins of civilization were again at play.⁴²

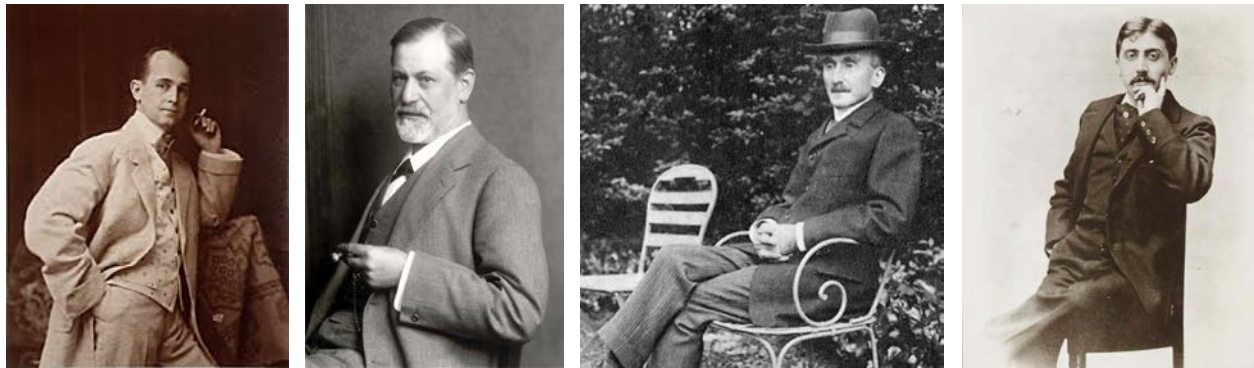
This dissertation focuses specifically on the cartoons that depicted things that McCay remembered: the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, the dime museums of Detroit, Chicago and Cincinnati, Coney Island, circuses and the early exuberant 'skyscrapers' popping up in New York City, with the hope that they will resonate with the high-brow discipline of Architecture.⁴³ This lower brow aspect of the profession loosens up its *doctrinaire* constrictions to expand the boundaries of what is possible. Its temporal aspects come to the fore because the impetus for the landscape depends upon the performances and objects on display within it.⁴⁴ This dissertation is a hopeful first step in a direction that points cartooning toward the realm of experimental architecture. It looks into the specific processes that McCay engaged to make his drawings so alluring, and the physical attributes that were the result. At the same time, it meditates upon their

⁴² Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-garde in France 1885 to World War I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955); The galvanizing effect of World's Fairs on a city, and on thought, was again in evidence in Paris fifty years later in the International Exposition of 1900. According to Shattuck this was a characteristic of Modernism, that it was markedly influenced by the "ethnological museums that were being filled with astounding art from Africa, the Pacific, and Egypt... Modernism coincided in significant fashion with primitivism." On the Eiffel Tower, erected for the fair, Shattuck wrote: "This great anomaly of modern engineering expressed all the aspirations of a period which set out to surpass its heritage. And it remained: styleless ... unhistoried, and soon as familiar as an *urinoir*..." The World's Fairs inspired a kind of anarchic understanding of the way forward. As a contrast: The Chicago World's Fair built a few years earlier in 1893 (which also had modern structures, like a great rotating Ferris wheel) was largely a Neo-classical fantasy. It inspired not modern Chicago, but a staid Washington, DC.

⁴³ Pavel Florensky, "Reverse Perspective," In *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art*. Translated by Wendy Salmond (London, Reaktion Books Ltd., 2002), 221-228. Another example of representational cross-pollination within sister disciplines (Theater and Architecture) is discussed by Pavel Florensky, though as a historical corrective rather than in a positive sense. He lamented the claims made by Alberti about the 'discovery' of the science of perspective as a way to represent architectural space in painting. Florensky maintains that it was already known and looks back to Vitruvius's "report about a staging of Aeschylus's tragedies in which Anaxagoras took part," where things are consciously rendered as theatrical and illusory. In Florensky's mind, using perspectival devices for making devotional paintings and frescos was a "point of departure" for Giotto. "When the certainties of theocentrism become suspect... ..then begins the attempt to replace realities that are growing muddled and obscured with simulacra and phantoms, to replace theurgy with illusionistic art, to replace divine actions with theater." On the bright side, however he notes: "One circumstance deserves our attention and our laughter. Even those artists who were theoreticians of perspective, as soon as they had stopped talking about the laws of perspective that they had prescribed—even though they already knew its secrets and surrendered to a direct artistic feeling in their representation of the world—would make crude 'mistakes' and 'blunders' against its requirements, every single one of them!" Cross-pollination must be exercised with caution, or at the very least, with visual footnotes (as McCay used in his wake-up scenes), or, obvious 'blunders'.

⁴⁴ This is a model for a 'thinking machine' that holds lots of possibility.

primary subject matter which was: dreaming. Dreaming is a process of making a hypothetical reality, a process in which every architect is constantly engaged. While McCay was ruminating on this topic, inking in cartoons—from roughly 1900 to 1920—(those things up there in his ‘cranium’ that had stayed there until he ‘needed them’), similar ideas about the nature of memory and dreaming were being considered through the ink escaping through the pen nibs of a doctor, philosopher and novelist, through writing.



The dreamers—Winsor McCay, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Marcel Proust

Four men with fabulous ideas about the past (memory) and the future (dreams)

The material that Winsor McCay selected to embody his thinking about dreams was set in Slumberland, a place that looked just like Dreamland in Coney Island. It pictured a place that was an intense sensory experience. But Slumberland wasn't identified specifically as the Dreamland of Coney Island. It was portrayed as the actual process of dreaming itself. Because of its likeness, it interwove the two. Three thinkers contemporary to Winsor McCay: Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust, attempted to understand the shaping of dreams, a difficult process to define and circumnavigate. Even Aristotle was challenged to find an appropriate method of study.⁴⁵ How does one think about something that largely vanishes? Sigmund Freud used acute observation, methods characteristic of a doctor. Henri Bergson—well-versed in Aristotle—largely took the philosopher's approach, deducing attributes through definitions and analogies, and then going a step further, beyond the intellect into the realm of representation (imagination). Marcel Proust depicted his own life as a continual waking dream by turning it into a novel—a very long one. In the biography of McCay, John Canemaker quotes Proust comparing 'reality' to dreams:

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *On the Soul and Other Psychological Works*, trans. Fred D. Miller Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), xviii. Despite difficulties, Aristotle's study of the soul (the dreamer) uses demonstration, division and analogy as a way to think about it. Some of Bergson's dream terms echo the attributes that Aristotle gave to Soul, such as cognition, perception, senses, and movement. Other of Aristotle's terms are found in Freud's thinking, such as desire, wish and touch.

*To my alarm it occurred to me that this dream had had the clarity of consciousness. Could consciousness, conversely, have the unreality of dream?*⁴⁶

The thinking of Freud and Bergson naturally extended itself to the verbal arts. In *Dreaming by the Book*, Elaine Scarry writes about “the way in which a poem or a novel is a set of instructions for mental composition ... [allowing] the image to seem to come into being by an agency not one’s own.”⁴⁷ T. S. Eliot (influenced by Bergson) wrote that the greatness of a poet lies in his ability to simultaneously embody the past and the present, just as a dreamer uses forms and images from memory to conjure a scene. What for Eliot was the relation of a new poet to all of the great poets who preceded them, could also be thought of as a dreamer who is preceded by all of their former selves. Eliot wrote about how to understand the greatness of a new poet:

*You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted...*⁴⁸

This idea of new forms being modified by older forms, and old forms in turn being “ever so slightly altered” by their newest incarnation is a powerful one, especially when considering the history of architecture as Semper conceived of it, i.e. as persistent motives that are crafted in new materials so that the original meaning lives on from one construction to the next. Dreams perform this act of attunement that Eliot describes. And ‘as-built’ drawings of Architecture, (even if the Architecture was the “really new work of art” that was Coney Island) also tune and refine our mental landscape as McCay’s drawings did. Eliot’s conception of poetry, like the thought of Freud, Bergson and Proust, appealed to the process of dreaming (or in Eliot’s case, poetry), not just to channel ideas from the past, but to *readjust* the relations of each past work of art “toward the whole.” In this sense, McCay’s drawings are significant to more than just Coney Island.

⁴⁶ John Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art* (Boca Raton, London, New York: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 90; The quote by Marcel Proust is from Philippe Robert-Jones, *Beyond Time and Place* (Oxford, New York, Melbourne: Oxford University press, 1978), 8.

⁴⁷ Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, 244.

⁴⁸ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” *The Sacred Wood: Essays On Poetry and Criticism* (West Valley City, Utah: Waking Lion Press, 2011), 34-5.

The call to wake up

Little has been written about waking up. Waking up remains mysterious if only because it seems so natural. It escapes our notice. It certainly doesn't merit the status of a process: the 'waking-up' process. Yet, without it, where does all that dreamwork go? Is it forgotten? Imagining Architecture is all of these things: drawing, dreaming, remembering... and waking. McCay's cartoons are compelling because they are beautifully drawn pictures of a beguiling landscape with the spell always broken at the end. McCay drew cartoons in his home in Sheepshead Bay—a stone's throw away from Dreamland in Coney Island—and then drove them into the city in a hired motorcar. One can imagine the music of the nearby carnivalesque goings-on occasionally drifting to his window as he drafted. None of his cartoon strips ever conclude without Nemo waking up in his bed. The physical nature of the threshold between the world of sleeping and the world of waking (the bed itself and Nemo's relation to it, for example, when he woke up falling out of it) was as important to McCay as the psychic ones, and the one pointed to the other. *Little Nemo in Slumberland* is a possible model for drawing buildings which are their own kind of 'bed' to wake up in.

The life of a building

Making good Architecture, good theaters, museums, and houses begins with the process of documenting (drawing) those buildings, sets and spaces that we admire. Through drawing, we gain the ability to see things in relation to each other and at the same time the ability to know their dimensions and understand how they are constructed. We also get a sense of the feel of a space, and in turn, identify things from the past that brought out that same feeling, like all of those things McCay had put into his 'cranium'. The "set of instructions for mental composition" that Scarry describes in the architect's world literally translates to a set of instructions for material composition. Construction drawings are necessary to the making of Architecture, but equally important are the 'dreamlike' drawings essential to imagining it. When Architecture functions as an armature for thinking, then this kind of architectural drawing is, in essence, the design of an armature for thinking.

In *Monsters of Architecture*, Marco Frascari identifies the life of a building as stages of representation, beginning with documentation of existing structures that bear a resemblance to what is about to be constructed, to documentation of the site that is about to be transformed, leading to drawings of what the building could possibly be, to shop and fabrication drawings communicating the process of construction, and finally to 'as-built' drawings of the finished

building. The building shares in the reality of each of these representations.⁴⁹ Three of these representations, the documenting of the existing, the wondering about what something could be, and the documentation of the new, all share the reality of dreams. It is a process of constant renewal.

In that sense, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* was a drawing of Coney Island that could become the impetus for its next iteration. Coney Island, as an exhibition of the fabulous, was cited by Rem Koolhaas in *Delirious New York*, as becoming a prototype for Manhattan. Interestingly, this documentation of existing structures was provided each Sunday from 1905 to 1911 not in an architectural periodical or journal, but by McCay in the Sunday funnies. Both the exhibitions at Coney Island and McCay's cartoons that depict it are the kind of representation,—thinking of Coney Island as a very large model or prototype, and *Little Nemo* as drawings of that imaginal construction—, that, in Koolhaas's thinking, both share a claim to the reality that became the fabric of New York City. McCay's cartoons are not measured drawings, but they document aspects of Dreamland, Luna Park and the many other psychic territories in Coney Island in ways more valuable than its dimensions in inches and feet. His cartoons communicate the psychic reality of the place. As a master of perspective, he intentionally shifted the vanishing points to great effect; and he fancifully engaged the kind of rotation that architects routinely use when generating sections and elevations from a plan. His imaginative use of drafting techniques aptly demonstrated the 'dimensions' of the Architecture he was inadvertently documenting every week.



Dreamland, Coney Island, 1905

⁴⁹ “The process does not end with construction of the building and its modification and restoration, but, in its cyclical practice, the survey drawings, i.e., the measured drawings of previously built or merely imagined buildings, become the basis for new designs that then produce new presentation, construction, shop, and publication drawings. Each one of the graphic hexad can be the beginning step of a new cycle of this infinite process of architectural semiosis.” Marco Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture, Anthropomorphism in Architectural Theory* (Savage, MD: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.1991), 93.

He let his pencil and pen do the thinking. It was prone to exaggeration and childish imaginings, but always executed with remarkable skill. Humor and delight were essential to the spectacle of Coney Island. In *The Banquet Years*, Roger Shattuck describes the qualities of dreaming and humor germane to the avant-garde as—

...exaggeration, a disproportion in detail that can, if skillfully executed, suggest both sympathy and mockery. The future of realism in the arts of the twentieth century may lie in the ease with which it can sustain the carefully timed commentary of humor.

The pervading note of humor that characterized McCay's drawings—and the avant-garde—became unsustainable after World War I. DaDa and Surrealism continued the trend toward hallucination as a valid method of expansive thinking (its own type of critical thinking), but without the air of partying and amusement. Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson wrote about both dreaming and wit as the keys in our waistcoat pocket that led to a true understanding of ourselves. The same was true of Proust.⁵⁰ Shattuck:

*The employment of dream techniques in the arts implied an effort to reach beyond the bounds of waking consciousness toward faculties that could grapple with unrestricted intuitions of time and space. These new realms of consciousness and expression were pursued with something approaching religious conviction by Bergson and Proust ...*⁵¹

This double act of representation—the drawing of dreaming—was experienced bodily by McCay's hand as it moved across the paper, and imaginatively as if his eyes, ears, nose and feet traversed the grounds of Coney's exhibitions.⁵² In Koolhaas's thinking, Dreamland became New York City. By extension then, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* did too. Can this kind of construed fantasy continue to be a model for Architecture today? This paper examines McCay's drawings of Coney

⁵⁰ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I, Swann's Way*. Trans. C. K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D. J. Enright, repr., New York: The Modern Library, 2003, 160. (Originally published in 1913.) Proust describes the discovery of the gate to his aunt's house as something unrecognized until he realized that the key had been in his 'waistcoat pocket' the whole time. His story is about something you had known all along, but only discovered circuitously, as if by accident. About a meandering family walk: "Suddenly my father would bring us to a standstill and ask my mother—'Where are we?' Exhausted by the walk but still proud of her husband, she would lovingly confess that she had not the least idea. He would shrug his shoulders and laugh. And then, as though he had produced it with his latchkey from his waistcoat pocket, he would point out to us, where it had stood before our eyes, the back-gate of our own garden ... And from that instant I did not have to take another step; the ground moved forward under my feet in that garden where for so long my actions had ceased to require any control, or even attention, from my will. Habit had come to take me in her arms and carry me all the way up to my bed like a little child."

⁵¹ Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, 32-3.

⁵² Paul Emmons, *Drawing Imagining Building* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 30-1. Emmons describes the close relationship of the paper of a drawing to the earth it represents with a reference to Casare Cesariano's interpretation of Vitruvius in 1521. Cesare "united these two approaches by comparing the architect walking his compass's legs on white paper to the architect physically pacing out the plan on a snowy site."

Island (and New York City and his other memories) in an effort to understand how that kind of drawing or ‘imaginal construction’ might inspire entirely new cities—and rooms—for tomorrow.



The Parachute Jump in Steeplechase Park was originally built for the 1939 World's Fair, then purchase and transferred to Coney Island.

Our newest drafting implements—drafting machines—have a built-in animation component that bears a remarkable resemblance to McCay’s method of drawing. His newspaper cartoons naturally evolved into vaudeville ‘lightning sketch acts’ which then became animated cartoons. There is a certain aura when things are ‘born’ so, taking a closer look at McCay’s process may inform our approach to architectural drawing and dreaming while using the computer today. In an effort to preserve the twilight glow of how we imagined things a hundred odd years ago in this too rapid dawning of the digital era, the first part of the dissertation takes a look at the intimate connections between dreaming and memory that were being postulated—the aura of ideas—that surrounded McCay as he drew. The second part of the dissertation examines McCay’s process and the physical aspects of the cartoons that he made. There was a good deal of cross-pollination going on: his remarkable drawings of the process of dreaming were a simulacra of the mutable landscapes of Coney Island, which then extended into early moving pictures. This dissertation spans the gap between early movies and cartoons; goes from cartoons to early movies; travels from early Architecture to cartoons, and by extension, (the last part of the equation), brings cartoons back into the representation of Architecture. If we—in this dissertation—include low-brow constructions like Coney Island within Architecture’s realm, then *Little Nemo in Slumberland* was everywhere and back.

What can we learn about making drawings of future rooms from McCay’s graphic fascination with dreaming? How did the drawing methods that he employed resonate with his contemporaries’ ideas about dreams? What is significant about his process of drawing—and his representation of the process of dreaming—when imagining Architecture?

Read on.

2

Foolish dreaming



Entrance to Dreamland in Coney Island¹

Dreaming is an ecstatic voyage², a search through an ocean of memories of people and places and things. What is the view of this ship from the harbor of our bed? A distinct impression was left in this pillow of oceanic foam—a hundred years ago—about memory, above a landscape of sheets whose wavy arrangement showed significant activity of minds (and limbs) that were fully engaged in dreaming. Here is the thinking about what dreaming was then.

¹ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York, New York: Monacelli Press, Inc., 1994), 44. Originally published in 1978.

² Josphe Cornell (1903-1972) was an American artist and film-maker known for his assemblages. He coined the term “ecstatic voyaging” for the process of finding odd bits of stuff for his pieces.

Sigmund Freud thought that we dream because there is a kind of detective that lives in our minds engaged in reenactment, sending us clues while we sleep about all of the things we are blocking out.

Henri Bergson thought that dreaming was a relaxed, slowed-down (and hence more productive) version of a process we constantly engage in while awake, a process of refining past memories into something new.

Marcel Proust thought that dreaming—and waking up from dreaming—was a summoning of moments from the past, each sealed away in tiny bottles (or teacups) filled with particular movements, sounds, images, textures and scents, ready to activate—when we least expect it—our childhood self, but with an entirely new and unexpected dimension.

Winsor McCay thought dreaming was an episodic adventure wherein a little boy assumed various costumes to enter Slumberland every night, only to be reconstituted in his bed, Star Trek transporter style, in the same position in which he exited that entirely different, but equally real world.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, March 4, 1906

Are any of the above thoughts useful for understanding modern Architecture?

Blunders and errors: a way to expand the map

Learning a new drawing technology can sometimes lead to surprisingly wonderful errors. While learning CAD, a digital software, I was drawing the plan of an Alexander Calder retrospective exhibition at the National Gallery of Art. I drew a circle in the vestibule with the intention of making a round platform in the middle of an adjacent room. As I was moving the circle into the room, it got stuck in a thick wall. I didn't know how to use the program yet, so it 'snapped' there by mistake. And, it eventually stayed there, snared in the wall, to form a window that was simultaneously a niche for hanging a beautiful mobile with shadows that floated across its circular sill and curved jambs.



Alexander Calder: 1889-1976, *Retrospective of the artists work, National Gallery of Art, 29 March - 12 July 1998*

The circle that got 'caught' in the thick wall is shown on the left.

The happy accidents that come about as we learn a new craft or technology can also be artificially induced using the crafts that we already know. Dipping a pen into a Modern poets' inkwell sets a context for McCay, Freud, Bergson and Proust. In *A Poet's Notebook*, Paul Valéry thought about the willful blurring of logic as a poet sits down to write:

*STUPIDITY AND POETRY. There are subtle relations between these two categories. The category of stupidity and that of poetry.*³

Lawrence Raab, a professor of poetry at Williams College, wondered about the choice of 'stupidity' by the English translator of Valéry's *Notebook*. In his imagining, the French word must certainly not have been '*stupidité*', so much as '*bêtise*' which has the connotation of 'foolishness' or fooling around. Foolishness is an apt description of a dreamer, with a mind that is freer than the rational mind. It is not bound by the attention required to process sense perceptions and spends the extra bits it saves by *not sensing things* to make sense of the overall picture, even if the story it patches together with vague, odd parts would ordinarily be rejected as illogical. Henri Bergson began his paper *Dreams* with a description of the way tiny sense perceptions are magnified into "such stuff as dreams are made on."⁴ There is only so much brain capacity available to us at any given time:

*The eyes, when closed, still distinguish light from shade, and even, to a certain extent, different lights from one another. These sensations of light, emanating from without, are at the bottom of many of our dreams. A candle abruptly lighted in the room will, for example, suggest to the sleeper, if his slumber is not too deep, a dream dominated by the image of fire, the idea of a burning building.*⁵

To continue with the idea of sublimated perception begetting a heightened imagination, Valéry writes:

OBSCURITY, A PRODUCT OF TWO FACTORS. If my mind is richer, more rapid, freer, more disciplined than yours, neither you nor I can do anything about it.

³ Lawrence Raab, *Why Don't We Say What We Mean? Essays Mostly About Poetry* (Tupelo Press: North Adams, Massachusetts, 2016), 52-61.

⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 1611. "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep."

⁵ Henri Bergson, *Dreams*, trans. Edwin E. Slosson (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1914), 19.

The obscured mind is richer, freer and more rapid. This idea applied to dreaming—and poetry is a kind of dreaming—is about suspending the desire for clarity and logic so that possibilities arise which would ordinarily be overlooked. Here is Valery, in a poem called *The Sylph*:

*Unseen unknown
I am perfume
Born on the wind,
Faded, alive!*

*Unseen unknown,
Genius or chance?
No sooner come
The task is done!*

*Unread ungrasped,
The finest minds
Will stumble there!*

*Unseen unknown
Glimpse of a breast
Through loosened shirts!*

This poem echoes Freud's ideas about dreaming. Valery's sylph is a mythical air spirit, whose seeming presence (or absence) is an irresistible enticement to put words together, a "glimpse of a breast through loosened shirts." Freud's sylph is living within and without the confines of her shirt, inspiring an awareness of subterranean desire. The poem is less a search for the subject of the dream than the unveiling of the dreamer's desire, his 'true' self. Freud's dreamers are not inhibited and thus actually are more aware than their awake counterparts since they can see and feel anything. In puzzling out the odd choices and strange links beheld in a dream, Freud discovered that very often the dream meant something. For him, the dream is not so much an expansion of the boundary of meaning, as a clue to help us realize our authentic selves.

Both Valery and Freud saw an advantage to ignoring the conscious mind—a too strict editor—to free us.

The classical fool, like King Lear's fool, is licensed to tell the truth, but never tells it directly. He must talk in riddles so that the King can discover the truth for himself by making his own connections. Wordplay is the fool's method of disclosure "to lead you to an overwhelming

question.” Valery has no objective. The poet subjugates his or her judgement, and remains alert to the possibility that something—anything—alluring can emerge on the page. Poets find things before looking for them.⁶



King Lear wakes up in the company of his fool.

What ordinarily might be perceived as a blunder—or not perceived at all—becomes fruitful. The poet is not exactly sure what the subject of his poem is until he begins writing it. Here is T. S. Eliot in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*:⁷

*Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent*

⁶ Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift* (New York: Avon Books, 1973) This book was written by Bellow as a way to understand his mentor, a poet named Humboldt in the book, who in real life was Delmore Schwartz.

⁷ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962) Poem: *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, originally published in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. T. S. Eliot attended Henri Bergson's lectures in Paris in 1910–11 and then returned to Harvard to undertake a PhD in philosophy to study Bergson's ideas about dreaming and time, which are elaborated in a succeeding chapter of this dissertation.

To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .

Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'

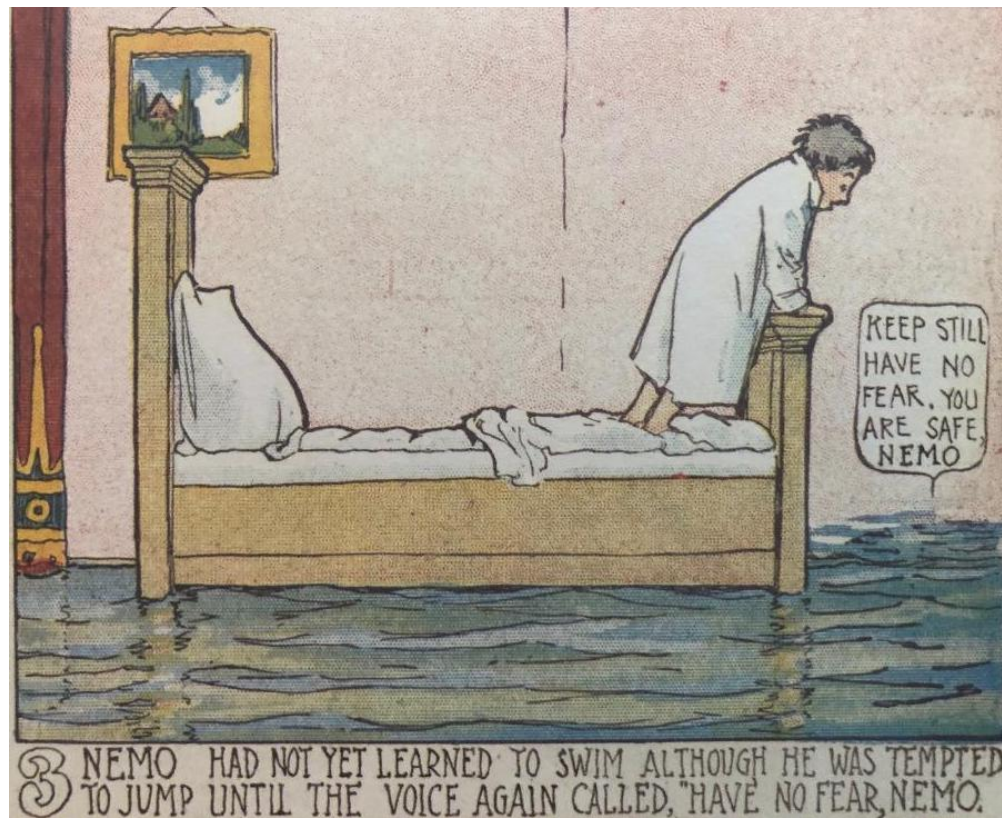
Let us go and make our visit.

A poet keeps discipline at bay—keeps logic in check—while the poem (dream) takes its shape without a subject. Whether by being deliberately ‘stupid’ or by ‘fooling around’, the act of composition is a process with a very generous tolerance for the incomprehensible. The process of revising—or re-envisioning—can only happen when something valuable has been unexpectedly stumbled upon. This idea, dubbed ‘involuntary memory’ by Marcel Proust, is discovered by the narrator of his novel *In Search of Lost Time* while absently dipping his cake in tea.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, October 29, 1905

The subtle relation between stupidity and poetry: We must be stupid enough to wander into something that allows us to leap into previously uncharted territory, and then loosely hold on to the new idea, ‘stupid’ or not. We may discover an phenomenon that we didn’t realize was interesting. We discover an origin by orbiting around it, and whether we find it or not, the orbiting itself turns into its own vibrant thing, a narrative sequence.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 5, 1905

Eliot again:⁸

*Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me.*

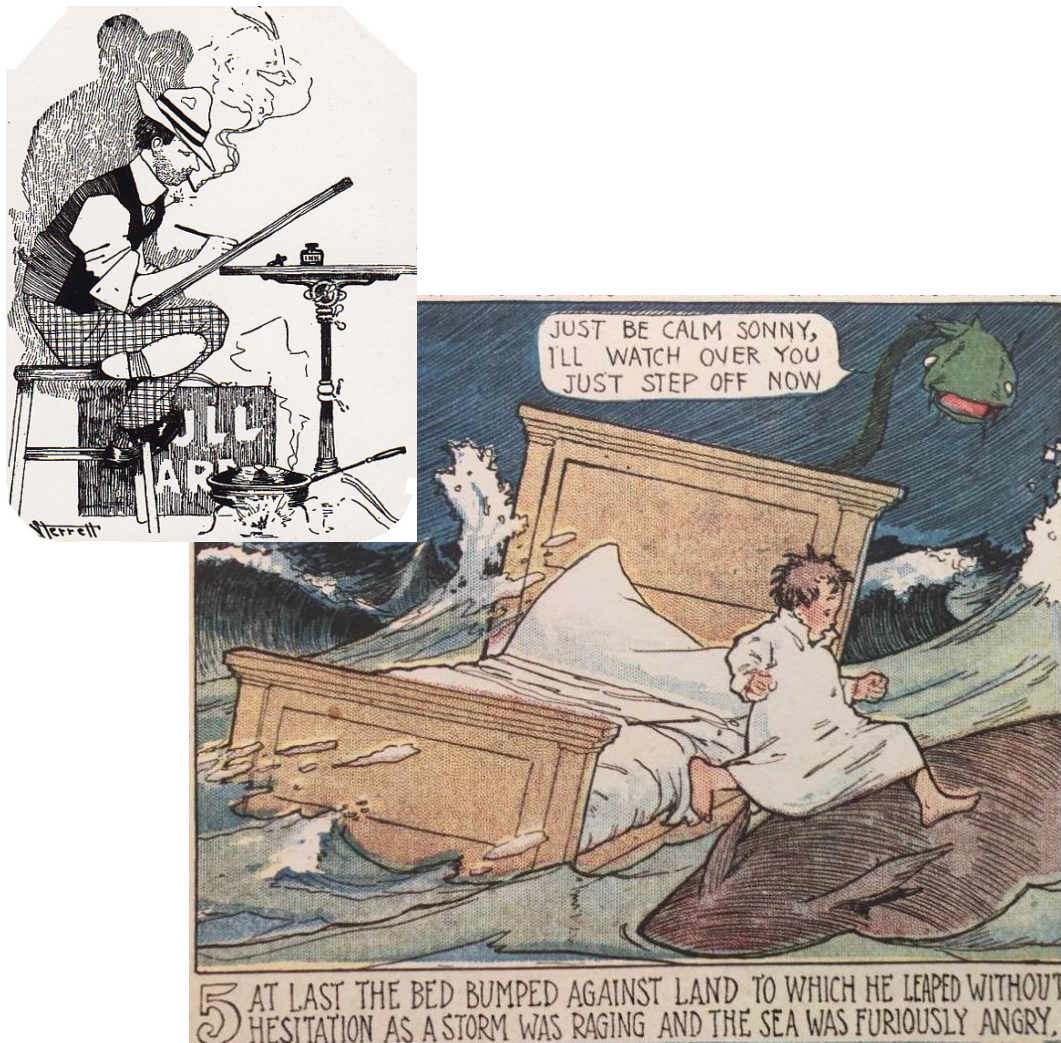
*I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.*

*We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*

⁸ T. S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, originally published in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*.

T. S. Eliot was as thoroughly enthralled with the power of id as Freud was, but thought of poets (dreamers) more in this “finding without looking” sense, an intent that was less an oracular revealing of truth than an expansion of the map of what was possible. In other words, when we wake up, we have an opportunity—if we make it through the waking transition with a dream fragment or two—to see that sometimes, dreamed possibilities are worth thinking about.⁹ This is the appeal of Winsor McCay’s cartoons.

And they could provide the essence of a ‘stupid’ architect’s drawings.



(above left) Caricature of Winsor McCay drawing at his desk made by one of his fellow cartoonists.

(below right) Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, New York Herald, Sunday, November 5, 1905

⁹ “[A] dream is a hypothetical design of the unknown; thus, it is a substantial tool for acquiring knowledge.” Marco Francari, *eleven exercises in the art of architectural drawing: slow food for the architect’s imagination* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 152.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, March 21, 1909

The imagination thrives on the enigma

Fertile territory for the imagination has gradually diminished over the centuries. In late antiquity, when Christianity was establishing its identity, classically trained scholars looked at dreams as a way of *seeing*—a carry-over from antiquity—rather than as odd experiences one had while asleep. It was understood that not only can we see in a different way while dreaming, but that this is a natural and direct line to divine wisdom. Biblical texts share this quality of being ripe for interpretation because they often seem to conceal their meaning, preferring instead to suggest mysteries. Philo described ‘seeing’ in a dream as ‘faint’ or ‘obscure’, as a rock is dimly seen through wavy water or as a scholar ponders texts that are scarcely legible.¹⁰ Over the years, the Catholic church helped to downplay direct divine access by designating itself as an intercessor. It is a wonderful thing to gather with a group of like-minded people for prayer and mutual support—such as belonging to a church—but, its unfortunate side-effect (combined with the Enlightenment’s gradual embrace of empiricism) has downplayed our ability to understand how we see in our dreams. Our natural ability to understand *why* we dream has withered, yet our natural ability to dream is still very much alive.

There should always be more than this or that

Losing our ability to entertain multiple possibilities limits us to seeing the world in black and white. Things proved through the analysis of data are merely true or false. Designs for Architecture could be tested¹¹ as being viable based upon an agreed upon rule structure. But, dualistic thinking is antithetical to a productive dream (and design) life. If reason and unreason are the only categories available for judging our perceptions of the world (and our designs), then, day or night, dream knowledge is false knowledge. This dilemma has appeared at various times in the past when scientific thinking was flowering: Socrates thought that belief in the ephemeral

¹⁰ “To believe in the ephemeral fancies of dreams is a mad enterprise, a slap in the face of logic. If reason and unreason are the only categories available for judging our perceptions of the world and ourselves, then Socrates was undoubtedly right: dream knowledge is false knowledge. However ... rather than placing dreams within a binary framework that opposes logic to illogic, dreamers from Artemidorus to Freud have situated dreams neither in logic or in illogic but in imagination. For this tradition of thinkers, dreams can be occasions not for ‘belief’ but rather for reflection on constructions of self-identity ... the self is an imagined construct—that we are ourselves ephemeral fancies, continually in the process of further fabrication.” Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity, Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 92, 127.

¹¹ Designs may be tested by AI—Artificial Intelligence—for example, in the near future.

fancies of dreams could be madness.¹² The age of science that we live in today poses similar challenges. Mysteries once honored by the ancients, and then by the church, lose validity when they cannot be proved. Consequently, they have reappeared in the guise of children's popular literature. J. R. R. Tolkien divided the layers of narrative found in many works of fantasy into two complimentary parts: there is a 'secondary' (make-believe) world that coexists with a 'primary' (real) world, "and [it] must be returned to if maturity is to be achieved." *Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter* stories all share this make-believe quality that enable children to dwell among the subterranean fears and forces that are real but not nameable. A century ago, in *Little Nemo's* time, there was a similar seismic shift, but it wasn't so much about recognizing and

fighting the dark side of power as it was about losing the ability to wonder. A flurry of fairy books came after the industrial revolution. *Peter Pan* and *Alice in Wonderland* were antidotes to 'progressive' attitudes that removed mystery in favor of scientific fact. The writers of children's book recognized the difficulty of teaching children how to believe in their own innocence and inherent goodness in the absence of faith, and so fairies became the new guardian angels.¹³ Winsor McCay used fairies, clowns and messengers in his cartoons to this effect. A belief in goodness enables us to happily live in the society of others, but what is not ordinarily recognized about fantasy is that it engenders happiness by enabling us to hold diverse objects in view.

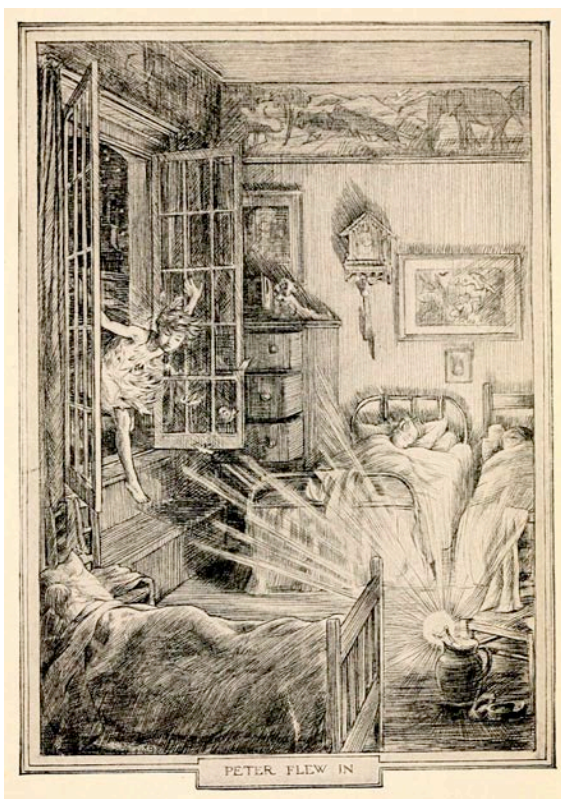


Illustration by Francis Tonkin Bedford for *Peter and Wendy*, a fantasy novel by J. M. Barrie (1911)

¹² Miller quotes from Plato's *Theaetetus*: "Madmen and dreamers believe what is false." Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 127. Nonetheless, Socrates also set a certain store in dreams. He discusses a persistent dream he has had, just before dying, with Cebes. Socrates: "In the course of my life I have often had intimations in dreams 'that I should compose music.' The same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words: 'Cultivate and make music,' said the dream. And hitherto I had imagined that this was only intended to exhort and encourage me in the study of philosophy, which has been the pursuit of my life, and is the noblest and best of music. The dream was bidding me do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor in a race is bidden by the spectators to run when he is already running. But I was not certain of this." Socrates proceeds to compose a few verses before departing to be on the safe side. Plato *Phaedo*, from *Plato Selections*, Ed. Raphael Demos, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 151-2.

¹³ Humphry Carpenter, *Secret Gardens--The Golden Age of Children's Literature*. repr., (Faber & Faber, 1985), 180-181.



Alice, illustration by John Tensiel for the fantasy novel *Alice in Wonderland*, Lewis Carroll (1865)

In every cartoon strip, Winsor McCay achieves this return to the primary (real) world by always making a point of waking Nemo up in the last frame. Nemo wakes up in the physical position that was imagined in his dream—upside down, standing up, having just fallen—and this is significant. His new orientation is a direct result of the point in the dream that caused him to wake up. Part of the power of dreams is that we *believe they are real* when we are having them. This empowers us to change.

In *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, Patricia Cox Miller suggests that the ability to simultaneously entertain multiple possibilities has always been a kind of antidote to dualistic thinking:

*...across the centuries, a dreamer's 'belief in what is false' has been understood otherwise. Rather than placing dreams in a binary framework that opposes logic to illogic, dreamers from Artimidorus to Freud have situated dreams neither in logic nor in illogic, but in imagination.*¹⁴

In the middle ages, imagination was intimately tied to memory.¹⁵ It was understood that imagination was the reconstruction of memories into something that would be useful for the next day's, week's, year's activities, a sort of mobilization of resources for future endeavors, a recognition. Miller:

*For this tradition of thinkers, dreams can be occasions not for 'belief' but rather for reflection on constructions of self-identity. Oneiric literature has been remarkable for its recognition ... that the self is an imaginal construct—that we are ourselves ephemeral fancies, continually in the process of further fabrication.*¹⁶



Still from Federico Fellini's 8-1/2 (1963). A film director dreams of escaping and flies over a traffic jam in the beginning of the film. He is 'blocked'.

Winsor McCay's evocative illustrations of dream thinking—the fascination of his time—can be seen in film fifty years later. Federico Fellini was a big fan of McCay's *Little Nemo* cartoons. In *I'm*

¹⁴ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 127.

¹⁵ Mary Carruthers. *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁶ Miller, 127.

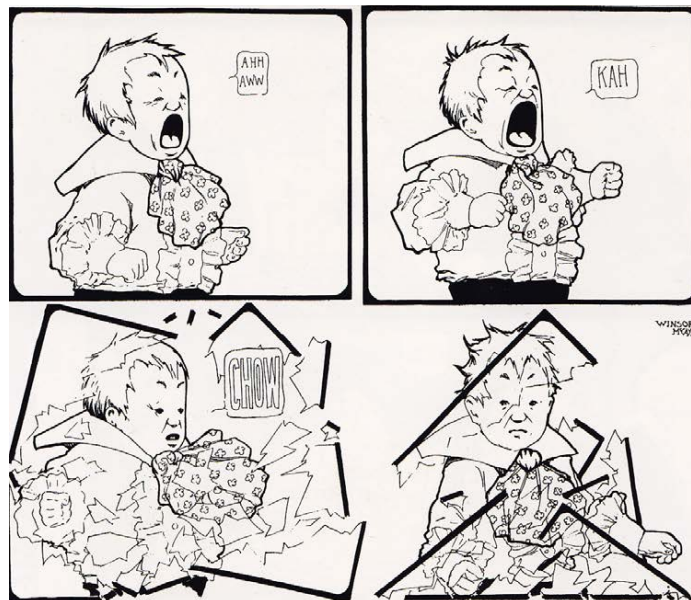
a *Born Liar*, a series of interviews conducted with Fellini before his death in 1992, he relates the sublimation of actual childhood memories of his hometown to the filmed memories he made of it. When he revisited the town, he discovered that the events in the films actually superseded the events of his real childhood. For him, life was only *real* when he was directing a film. He talks about ‘another’ director stepping in to make them, a different Fellini, a different person that follows directions from an unseen source. Fellini only felt truly alive when he was directing films, and the times in between left him feeling unreal and alienated. He only enjoyed life when he had complete control of the ‘scene’. His dream life became the primary one. Actors from his films—



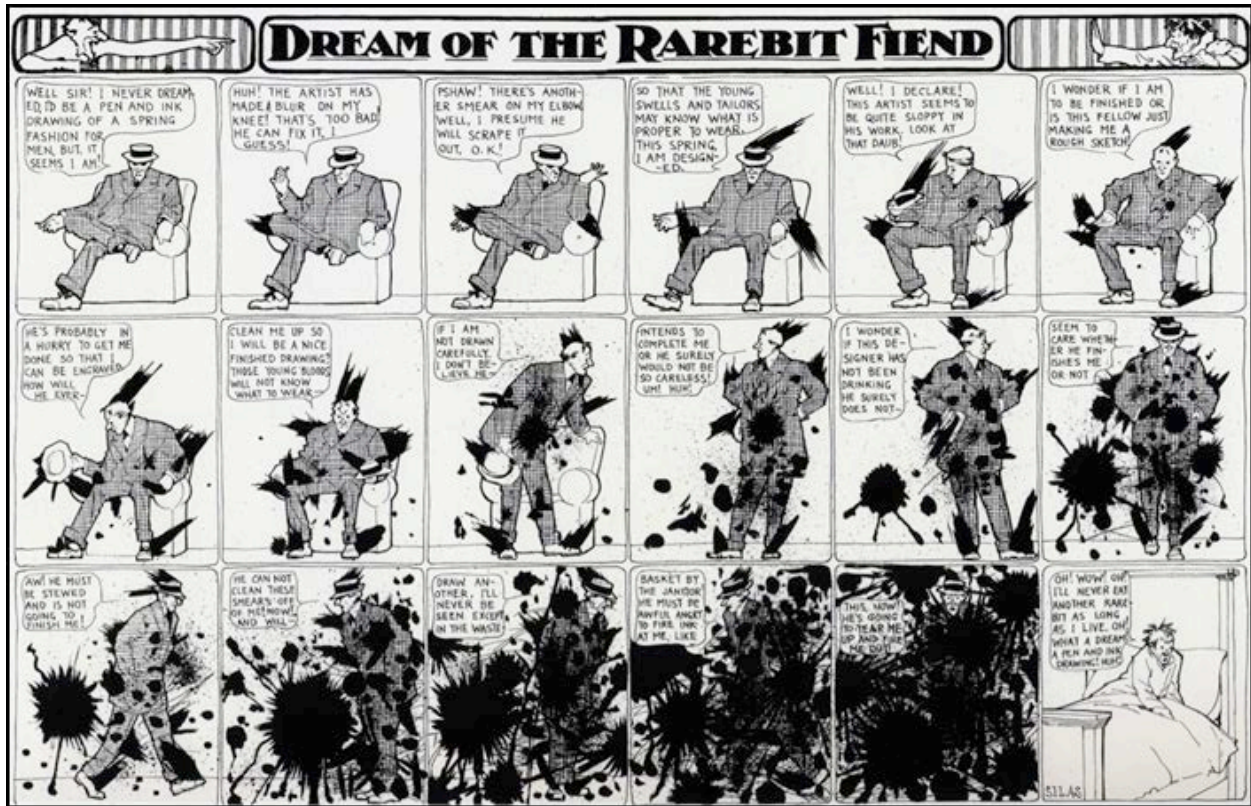
Donald Sutherland in particular—describe the experience as a kind of hell, as feeling like a puppet, where every movement, every facial expression was dictated by Fellini moments before or during the shoot. The actor was stripped of any knowledge of who his character was and where the scene was going. There was no story except the one that was taking shape within Federico’s imagination. The making of the film for Fellini was a kind of waking dream process, and the result (regardless of his actor’s discontent) is a perfect replacement of his formerly real

childhood memory with a new one. The new memory incorporates influences from additional sources.

McCay often commented on the process of cartooning in his cartoons, for example: when *Sammy Sneeze* shattered the boundaries of the frame with his sneeze,



Little Sammy Sneeze, September 24, 1905



Dream of a Rarebit Fiend, April 7, 1907

or random ink blots destroy the cartoon of the man being pictured in *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*. Each is a kind of dream of having a dream, whereby the original framework is exploded or blotted out. McCay's cartoons always end at the moment of waking with no further illustration of the events in the primary 'real' world, bearing a remarkable similarity to some of Fellini's movies—like *8-1/2*—which is a landscape of surreal vignettes as the director searches for the plot and a proper ending.



Still from Federico Fellini's *8-1/2* (1963) With no plot or end in sight, the characters of the film parade in front of the director.

In *8-1/2*, the story blatantly weaves the process of making a film with the story of the protagonist's real life: his uncertainty about what the movie should be, the nervousness, compounded by his neglected mistress and his estranged wife that visits him during the filming, angry that he is having an affair. It is a film within a film with an uncertain progression from scene to scene, a picture of the art of picturing.



Still from Federico Fellini's 8-1/2 (1963). The director is 'looking' for inspiration.

The film ultimately becomes the protagonist's (in this case, the handsome Marcello Mastroianni's) daydream of his wife as a devoted nun placidly accepting him for exactly who he is (*with* mistresses) and his realization that his life is a circus. *8-1/2* is an invented story that is an expanded dream of Fellini's 'real' story.



Still from Federico Fellini's 8-1/2 (1963) The director joins the parade.

As in *8-1/2*, McCay's alter ego—*Little Nemo*—experiences dream events that may have reflected some of McCay's real life dilemmas such as: initially, the search for his 'princess' or wife; then having found her, the sense that she is the sort of 'princess' that is demanding and two dimensional; his encounters with the king of imagination (King Morpheus); the discovery of his alter-ego (a vaudeville clown named Flip); his coming to terms with that alter ego as they navigate the strangeness of Befuddle Hall (a place in Slumberland) together, and a struggle for artistic license shortly before the end of the series. Winsor McCay's cartoons continue to live somewhere in the autobiographical documentary of Fellini's *8-1/2*. The ideas about dreaming that took hold a hundred years ago are still worth thinking about.

Imagining possibilities

Henri Bergson saw dreaming as an essential part of our nature. We are imaginative. We dream of things that appear strange to the waking eye—fleeting things that quickly become dim and are hard to recall—, things that are mysterious. We dream, and navigate through landscapes and rooms with our eyes seemingly wide open, but we cannot 'see' anything in the morning. The penultimate dream events do not translate to waking, except as a new memory.

In late antiquity, Macrobius saw dreams as worthy of interpretation (in a Freudian sense). He also saw them as a way to see the future (in a Bergsonian sense).

Macrobius divided dreaming into three categories:

1. Oracular: A parent or other revered figure appears in a dream to help us navigate the future;
2. Prophetic: The dream comes true as seen (the dreamer is their own revealer);
3. Enigmatic: The images are ambiguous and strange.¹⁷

The first two categories—Oracular and Prophetic— 'see' into the future. The ancients believed that the gods spoke through a dream to afford a glimpse into events that were about to occur. The Enigmatic is a different game. The enigma engages the viewer to imagine multiple possibilities and interpretations, as if the *imagining-of-possibilities* itself is a way to forge the future, and the past (as with Fellini). This third category is the most useful one for the imagining of architecture.

¹⁷ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 96.

Enigmas are a charm that we can hold to give us luck. The charmed viewer (designer) holds multiple possibilities in mind without eliminating any of them. A dream can mean one thing today and take on a different aspect tomorrow. This happens when things are not quite discernible. Our imagination loves the odd, evocative scribble. We do not interpret the scribble so much as imagine what it could represent.

* * *

Now you see it, now you don't

Marcel Proust talks about things that are concealed and then revealed as steeples in a landscape that one approaches on a road that meanders up, over and around the contours of hilly terrain. Each time the steeples are freshly viewed, they are seen in a new arrangement (like viewing sculpture in a gallery). And it is the same with all things in Time:

*... Time [which] seemed to dispose the different elements of my life, had, by making me reflect that in a book, which tried to tell the story of a life, it would be necessary to use not the two-dimensional psychology which we normally use but a quite different three-dimensional psychology ...*¹⁸

* * *

Where does the fabulous live?

Saint Augustine tells us that the soul “wanders through various images” in dreams. He draws a parallel between the visions of a saint and the inspired figurative language of a philosopher. Macrobius calls the Enigmatic dream a *narratio fabulosa*, a ‘fabled narrative’ whereby we explain things to ourselves by inventing a fiction.¹⁹

We are not all ‘saints’ in our own fabulous narrative but, as architects, we can we afford ourselves the possibility of being—if not exactly saints—then at least the authors of our own ‘fabled’ existence. Hypothetically, by night, we might craft a *narratio fabulosa*. Then by day, we could sketch. They both could become a dream port: opening a gap to see what can actually happen. Even in the architect’s world, there are legions of people who are the opposite of poets—project

¹⁸ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume VI, Time Regained*, Translated by C.K.Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D.J.Enright (New York: The Modern Library), 2003, 505-6. The thing that Marcel Proust discovers at the end of *In Search of Lost Time* is desire itself: the desire to remember his life as a thing with dimensions that fully resonate with each other (which is only possible when looking back).

¹⁹ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 92.

managers, clients with budgets, contractors, etc.—who don't want you to dream beyond the page. If architects are like poets when designing, then they must delay a precise construction, and only allude to it, keeping its existence at bay. This kind of imagining is difficult, especially when budgets and schedules are inevitably a part of the process. Here is Wallace Stevens in a poem called *The Man on the Dump*:²⁰

*Day creeps down. The moon creeps up.
The sun is a corbeil of flowers the moon Blanche
Places there, a bouquet. Ho-ho ... The dump is full
Of images. Days pass like papers from a press.
The bouquets come here in the papers. So the suns,
And so the moon, both come, and the janitor's poems
Of every day, the wrapper on the can of pears,
The cat in the paper-bag, the corset, the box
From Esthonia: the tiger chest, for tea.*

*The freshness of night has been fresh a long time.
The freshness of morning, the blowing of day, one says ...*

Winsor McCay gives us a clue about putting together daytime sketching with nighttime *narratio fabulosa*. He drew nocturnal cartoons about the very process of fabrication; he truly pictured the art of picturing. The 'foolish' first scribbles of a poet or the languid cartoons that a designer makes during the process of imagining a building can live in a world where reason and unreason are temporarily confounded.

Wallace Stevens again:

*On a cocoanut—how many men have copied dew
For buttons, how many women have covered themselves
With dew, dew dresses, stones and chains of dew, heads
Of the floweriest flowers dewed with the dewiest dew.*

What is this place where the demarcation between logic and illogic widens into a gap where things are dewy, glistening, emerge, are blurred, dimly lit, obscured, yet sparkling and remembered?

It is aptly called *Slumberland*.

²⁰ Wallace Stevens, "The Man on the Dump," from *Collected Poems* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1923)



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 3, 1907

What we believed about dreams a hundred years ago

If we pick up the pillows from under the heads that lay there a hundred years ago, and fluff them out, and lay them back into their place at the top of the bed, these thoughts align themselves in our minds—

We believed in clues that surfaced while we were asleep, that inscribed a process of refining every memory from our past into something entirely new. We believed that this process could summon moments from our past that could come about when we least expected them (sometimes even when we were awake); and, that these unexpected happenings while we were asleep (or awake) could linger. The echoes of nocturnal adventures manifested themselves in the particular shape that our limbs—and hearts—and minds—found themselves in, in the equally *real* world we woke up to. By just closing our eyes, we could blunder our way into new, uncharted, fertile territory.

We believed in these ‘ecstatic voyages’ that sprang from our own past. And, since they were from our own personal past, they were entirely original.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, March 11, 1906

3

Memories from a child's bed—
Sigmund Freud



Sigmund Freud visited the United States just once in 1909 to give five lectures at Clark University. He made a point of visiting Coney Island during the trip.

*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*¹

Winsor McCay and Sigmund Freud both dwelt upon the importance of the first years of childhood to the psyche and to dreams. Are we closer to the Incomprehensible when very small, in an enigmatic toddler period which, like eternity looming before and beyond us, seems entirely inaccessible to our memory?

Recollections from the crib

Freud believed in the strong emotional imprint made upon us as young children, an initial imprint that defines our emotional life that we consistently return to. This is similar to inhabiting drawings “between the lines,” understanding the emotional and psychic aspects of the things we are imagining.²

¹ Sigmund Freud, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,” 1910, in *Sigmund Freud - Selected Writings*. Translated in 1961 by James Strachey. Introduction by Robert Coles (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Book-of-the-Month-Club, Inc., 1997), 232. Freud selected this quote to conclude his essay on Leonardo da Vinci. He was an avid reader of Shakespeare.

² Marco Frascari, *eleven exercises in the art of architectural drawing: slow food for the architect's imagination*, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 43. In a chapter on the aesthetic *habitus*, Frascari discusses how to read and understand “between the lines.” He explains: “For architects, that which is ‘between the lines’ is more actual than the lines in themselves; ... Architects are not passers-by. They linger.”

There was a coincidental relation between Freud and McCay (likely not connected, but interesting nonetheless), regarding the documentation in sequential images that was taking place at the Parisian asylum for women, the Salpêtrière, and the developments in animation and early movies.³ In 1883, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), ‘The Napoleon of Neurosis’, established a laboratory for experimental psychology that employed time-lapse photography as a way of documenting hysterical patients’ bizarre movements and seizures. This laboratory was active during Freud’s visit a few years later.⁴



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *New York Herald*, Sunday, June 10, 1906

³ McCay’s little brother was institutionalized as an adult, and one wonders if his animations and cartoons might have been drawn with him in mind. In a recent movie, *Slumberland* (2022), inspired by McCay’s cartoon *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905-1911), Nemo’s alter ego, a little hobo clown called ‘Flip’ is supposed to be the real-life uncle of Nemo, who was theoretically based on McCay’s son. In the movie, the uncle has been trapped in his dream world since childhood, unable to wake up.

⁴ Lynn Gamwell, “The Muse is Within: The Psyche in the Century of Science,” in *Dreams 1900-2000: Science, Art, and the Unconscious Mind* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 16. Freud studied with Charcot in the winter of 1885-86.

The images documented by Charcot must surely have been eerie. Not so, the cartoons of Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. Even when he is depicting nightmares, they are beautifully drawn. They are more like 'screen memories', childhood memories where something harmless or seemingly insignificant has been substituted for something too disturbing to remember.⁵ Freud was convinced that 'primary processes' or, the 'unconscious' is formed at the very beginning of mental life.

*Primary processes are the earlier in time; at the beginning of mental life there are no others...*⁶

Dreams access a special domain of images, wherein the connections made—the story—is authored by the unconscious mind.⁷ The 'unconscious' is the domain that is *not* conscious, i.e., it remains free from the rule structure that the conscious mind has developed since childhood as a way to navigate the societal world. Freud:

*Dreams, then, think predominantly in images ... what are truly characteristic of dreams are only those elements of their content which behave like images, which are more like perceptions, that is, than they are like mnemonic presentations.*⁸

Marco Frascari placed the drawings of architecture-as-dreams in a similar world that behaves like perceptions (not mnemonic):

*Architecture, an extensively graphic divination activity, is the noblest prophecy because it is an elegant transaction of both the construed and constructed world of a culture and their proper existence is in the oneiric.*⁹

⁵ Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2011), 27. "Screen Memories" was a paper written by Freud in 1899.

⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by Dr. A. A. Brill, (New York: The Modern Library, Random House, 1920), 308. Can we establish a new mental life whenever we engage in developing new thought processes? This question (mine) heads in an entirely different direction from what Freud is discussing in the essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." But, it is an interesting question, especially regarding the dreaming of architecture.

⁷ Gamwell, "The Muse is Within," 22.

⁸ Ibid, 22. Gamwell quotes Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), SE 4:49-50.

⁹ Marco Frascari, *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow Food for the Architect's Imagination*, (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011),125. Frascari relates a story about Carlo Scarpa use of a kind of 'heaven-sent' nighttime drawing on p.130: "In 1966, Scarpa used the footprints left by people to formulate his conception for a new paving in the square fronting the cathedral in Modena. He was staying in a hotel facing the square and very early in the morning he was drinking his coffee and looking out of the window of the room. Overnight, a light snow had covered the square and the view of the trails marked by the people going to early Mass caught Scarpa's emotional imagination. He based his drawing for the layout of the stone patterns on his reading of early morning human traces."

McCay's *Little Nemo* represents the process of dreaming itself. Each cartoon sequence portrays the penultimate moments of a dream, juxtaposed to the moment of waking. It is McCay's *modus operandi* for uncovering all of the oneiric things that happen during the drawing process, and by extension, the best translations of architecture might also happen when using the techniques that our unconscious employs during the process of dreaming. Frascari, on the design process:

Design involves making patterns out of matter and thoughts and the spontaneous recognition that something has been designed. i.e. was intentionally made.

Was McCay picking up on a 'larger design' that was 'intentionally made' in his fascination with the liminal world of dreams?¹⁰

A special domain of images—a few illustrative examples

Belief in the genius and imagination of those who retain access to early childhood memories was revived in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's time (1772-1834), and similarly, was genius via access to dreamed text. Here are the first few lines of the famous poem 'dreamed' by Coleridge in which "all the images rose up before him as things"—



*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.¹¹*

(left) Image of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. From The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and The Vision of Sir Launfal (by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and James Russell Lowell), collected by H. G. Hall and Edward Everett Hale. Published by Sampson Low, 1906.

(right) The first few lines of Coleridge's dreamed text.

¹⁰ This question is not answered by Freud, who was an atheist. It is however addressed by Bergson, as will be seen in the next chapter of this dissertation.

¹¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, from *The Portable Coleridge*, the poem *Kublai Khan, or, A Vision in a Dream, A Fragment* (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), 156-8. The poem is introduced by Coleridge as being dictated to him during a nap, after taking an anodyne prescribed "in consequence of a slight indisposition." Coleridge: "The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if indeed that can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort." Unfortunately for Coleridge, his transcription upon waking was unexpectedly interrupted by a person on business, which prevented him from writing the entire vision down. He publishes the fragment anyway, at the request of Lord Byron.

Belief that access to barely accessible memories was a quality of genius lasted into the mid-twentieth century when Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977) revealed in *Speak, Memory*:

In probing my childhood (which is the next best thing to probing one's eternity) I see the awakening of consciousness as a series of spaced flashes, with the intervals between them gradually diminishing until bright blocks of perception are formed ...

Nabokov mentioned Freud when discussing his earliest memories, albeit unfavorably, as a “vulgar, shabby, fundamentally medieval world.”¹² He described in detail his play under a tent made in his crib:

*It was the primordial cave (and not what Freudian mystics might suppose) that lay behind the games I played upon awakening in the early morning I made a tent of my bedclothes and let my imagination play in a thousand dim ways with shadowy snowslides of linen and with the faint light that seemed to penetrate my penumbral covert from some immense distance, where I fancied that strange, pale animals roamed in a landscape of lakes. The recollection of my crib, with its lateral nets of fluffy cotton cords, brings back, too, the pleasure of handling a certain beautiful, delightfully solid, garnet-dark crystal egg left over from some unremembered Easter; I used to chew a corner of the bedsheet until it was thoroughly soaked and then wrap the egg in it tightly, so as to admire and re-lick the warm, ruddy glitter of the snugly enveloped facets that came seeping through with a miraculous completeness of glow and color. But that was not yet the closest I got to feeding upon beauty ...*¹³

Just as Nabokov was discovering the dreamy and delicate sensations in his crib-cave, McCay and Freud, as adults, pondered the power of their own earliest childhood impressions making “colossal efforts to distinguish the faintest of personal glimmers”¹⁴ each, in their own way: McCay, through drawing it, and Freud, through journeying back to both his own and his patient's recounting of it in dreams.

¹² Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), originally published, in different form by Harper & Bros., New York, in 1951, 19-20. Nabokov spoke warily of Freud: “I have ransacked my oldest dreams for keys and clues—and let me say at once that I reject completely the vulgar, shabby, fundamentally medieval world of Freud, with its crankish quest for sexual symbols (something like searching for Baconian acrostics in Shakespeare's works) and its bitter little embryos spying, from their natural nooks, upon the love life of their parents.” On the contemplation of non-being: “The cradle rocks above an abyss, and common sense tells us that our existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness.” On extraordinary vision: “Imagination, the supreme delight of the immortal and immature, should be limited. In order to enjoy life, we should not enjoy it too much.”

¹³ Nabokov, *Speak Memory*, 23-24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

Freud wrote an essay in 1910 about Leonardo da Vinci's very early life and its connection to his artistic activity called: "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood." In it, he exposes some hidden clues found in Leonardo's notebooks and paintings that directly link his memories of early childhood to his adult drawings and imaginings. In Freud's recounting, Leonardo was the bastard son of Caterina, a peasant woman who gave up Leonardo when he was very young to be raised by his father and step-mother. His father had made a match more suitable to his station but the legitimate couple was unable to bear children, so Leonardo was adopted and raised as their own, leaving Leonardo with enigmatic memories of his real mother who must certainly—since he was from the very beginning an extremely comely and talented child—have showered him with attention and kisses before giving him up. According to Freud, Leonardo left very few accounts of his personal life, but, in a passage about the flight of vultures in Leonardo's scientific notebooks, he digresses to an early memory which took the following shape:

It seems that I was always destined to be so deeply concerned with vultures; for I recall as one of my earliest memories that while I was in my cradle a vulture came down to me, and opened my mouth with its tail, and struck me many times with its tail against my lips.¹⁵

The smile that revealed nothing (and everything)

What of the oddity of this?

Freud thought it was entirely possible that a bird *did* land on Leonardo when he was a babe in a cradle and accedes that childhood memories often reach much further back than is generally thought possible. He also imagined a scenario in which his real mother, Caterina, saw a large bird land on her child and then recounted it to the young Leonardo enough times that it actually became his own memory. References to Egyptian mother goddesses with vulture heads—a mythology commonly known to educated youths like Leonardo—are mixed with the babe Leonardo's memory of suckling at his own mother's breast. Added to that is the extra passion that a young mother feels for her son (when there is no husband) and he is about to be taken away from her, resulting in repeated kisses struck on the babe's mouth. Hence the memory in the "special domain of images," according to Freud. Curiously, Leonardo's memory drew Freud—ever the psychoanalyst—toward the Mona Lisa and the shape of her unforgettable lips.

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood." In *Sigmund Freud - Selected Writings*, Trans. In 1961 by James Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Book-of-the-Month-Club, Inc., 1997), 164. Essay originally published in 1910. Leonardo's writing in Italian: "Questo scriver si distintamente del nibio par che sia mio destino, perchè nella mia prima recordatione della mia infantia e' mi pareva che, essendo io in culla, che un nibio venissi a me e mi aprissi la bocca colla sua coda e molte volte mi percuotesse con tal coda dentro alle labbra." (Codex Atlanticus, F.65 v., as given by Scognamiglio [1900, 22])



Leonardo da Vinci, La Gioconda (1503-1505) Louvre

In Freud's analysis, the young Leonardo was forced at a very young age to step into the missing father's erotic shoes. His compressed, very early, sexual evolution was a result of developing too soon and too strong a desire for his lost mother, which then, when properly repressed, became the fire for his imagination and his extraordinary talent for drawing and painting. Leonardo lived a life seemingly fulfilled with his artistic and scientific endeavors until, in his early fifties, he devoted four years to painting a portrait of the lovely Lisa del Giocondo and, according to Vasari—and Freud—did his best to keep her amused during the sittings so that he could fully capture her enigmatic smile.¹⁶ Because Leonardo never finished the painting—he was known for not being able to finish things to his satisfaction—it could not be delivered to La Gioconda's husband. 'She'—the painting—instead traveled with him to France and eventually was purchased by his patron, Francis I, to make her home in the Louvre. Freud cites several sources who believed Leonardo had fallen in love with Mona Lisa's expression, and having found it, proceeded to paint

¹⁶ Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," 198-199. Freud quotes some of the reviews of this famous smile. Freud, quoting Muntz, quoting Pierre de Corlay: '...the very essence of femininity: tenderness and coquetry, modesty and secret sensuous joy, all the mystery of a heart that holds aloof, a brain that meditates, a personality that holds back and yields nothing of itself save its radiance'. And, Freud quoting the Italian writer Angelo Conti upon seeing the picture in the Louvre brought to life by a ray of sunlight: 'The lady smiled in regal calm: her instincts of conquest, of ferocity, all the heredity of the species, the will to seduce and to ensnare, the charm of deceit, the kindness that conceals a cruel purpose, all this appeared and disappeared by turns behind the laughing veil and buried itself in the poem of her smile...'



Leonardo da Vinci, *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne* (circa 1503) Louvre

it into his next painting: *The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne*, which is a painting about motherhood. In Freud's words:

*... we begin to suspect the possibility that it was his mother who possessed the mysterious smile—the smile that he had lost and that fascinated him so much when he found it again in the Florentine lady.*¹⁷

But the curve of her lips is not the only resonance of form detected in the painting that gives a clue to what the painting might really be about. The vulture-fantasy is also there disguised in the shape of Mary's blue dress.¹⁸ If the shape was indeed a vulture's tail, and were it to flap, it would flap right into the child's mouth, exactly as in Leonardo's memory.

¹⁷ Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," 201.

¹⁸ Ibid, 206-207. Freud added a footnote in 1919: "A remarkable discovery has been made in the Louvre picture by Oskar Pfister... in Mary's curiously arranged and rather confusing drapery he has discovered the *outline of a vulture* and he interprets it as an *unconscious picture-puzzle*. Pfister: 'In the picture that represents the artist's mother the *vulture, the symbol of motherhood*, is perfectly clearly visible... The former of these parts might more or less represent the vulture's wing and tail, as it is in nature, the latter might be a pointed belly and—especially when we notice the radiating lines which resemble the outlines of feathers—a bird's outspread tail, whose right-hand end, *exactly as in Leonardo's fateful childhood dream, leads to the mouth of the child, i.e. of Leonardo himself.*'" [Italics are by Freud]

Seen through Freud's eyes, a powerful memory of a very early experience might resonate through-out the life of an architect.

Freud goes further and finds another peculiarity in the painting's composition: the heads of Saint Anne and Saint Mary are placed almost as though they are part of the same body. Saint Anne—though a grandmother—is a lovely woman, and Mary's head almost feels like a *pedimento*, the presence or emergence of an earlier image or sketch that has been painted over, or in Leonardo's case: altered, as if he had deliberated during the making of the cartoon of the painting about whether the mother should be facing the viewer or looking down at the child. Instead of eliminating one of them, he kept them both. The final work shows *two* mothers loving the boy: St. Anne (the step-mother who raised him) and Mary (Caterina) who is Leonardo's real mother, an idealized woman, and part of his early vulture memory.¹⁹ The painting seen in this way—like a sequential cartoon—holds two moments in time as one.

Eroticism and, in Nabokov's thinking, “crankish quests for sexual symbols” aside, Freud uses Leonardo as his example for the ‘primary processes’ created by early desires that set the imagination in motion, which, in Leonardo's case, remained the impetus for some of his greatest work. Interestingly, “the presence of a little childhood self” was noted by Marco Frascari as a requirement for making Architecture. In particular, this was Frascari's feeling when gazing at *Little Nemo in Slumberland*.²⁰

¹⁹ Freud's discussion of the painting of St. Anne, Mary, Christ and the little lamb is not particularly reverent. Freud, in fact, became a reference point for modern atheism. He acknowledged religion's role in the development of civilization, but saw it—in the words of Paul Ricoeur—as a shift from “private fantasy” to “public illusion”, thereby passing over ancient and middle-aged thinking about dreams as a kind of divine access to frame the process as a natural progeny of the Enlightenment. See Thomas L. Cooksey, “Sigmund and Monotheism: God, Jokes, and Eloquent Silence in Terry Johnson's *Hysteria* and Mark St. Germain's *Freud's Last Session*,” *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 79, No. 1-2 ([2014]), 196-212, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/soutatlarevi.79.1-2.196>.

²⁰ “The adventures of Little Nemo take place in a peculiar dream-place, Slumberland. In this dreamland, the great architecture of Classical America prevails in a powerful surrealistic dimension. In his short dreams—a tabloid-page long—Nemo has the most visually wielding and intriguing nocturnal adventures. Changes of scale in the urban environments and continually metamorphosing edifices dominate the architectural scene in Slumberland. This alchemic and weekly *mélange* of a recurring architectural dream is the paradigmatic environment for understanding how, in any architect, there is always a little childhood self present.” Marco Frascari, *marco frascari's dream house*, edited by Federica Goffi (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 47.

Fascinating monsters

Freud's experience with patient's dreams via his 'talking cure'²¹ enabled him to confidently make seeming oddities in Leonardo's painting, which is a kind of dream, coalesce into a revelation about its maker. Could Leonardo have created a kind of picture-puzzle by making the shape of Mary's dress a vulture silhouette? Is it possible that he would imbue his work with this kind of key to its real meaning as a conscious gesture, or—as Freud thought—as a subconscious one? Freud thought that Leonardo had a childlike playfulness, and this was another important aspect of his work. He was often commissioned to design and construct elaborate mechanical toys for court festivities. In Freud's words:

Indeed, the great Leonardo remained like a child for the whole of his life in more than one way; it is said that all great men are bound to retain some infantile part... ..he often appeared uncanny and incomprehensible to his contemporaries. ...Vasari tells us that he made similar things when he had not been commissioned to do so: "There (in Rome) he got a soft lump of wax, and made very delicate animals out of it, filled with air; when he blew into them they flew around, and when the air ran out they fell to the ground. ...for a peculiar lizard, ...he made wings from skin torn from other lizards, and filled them with quicksilver, so that they moved and quivered when it walked. Next he made eyes, a beard and horns for it, tamed it and put it in a box and terrified all his friends with it." ²²

Freud again:

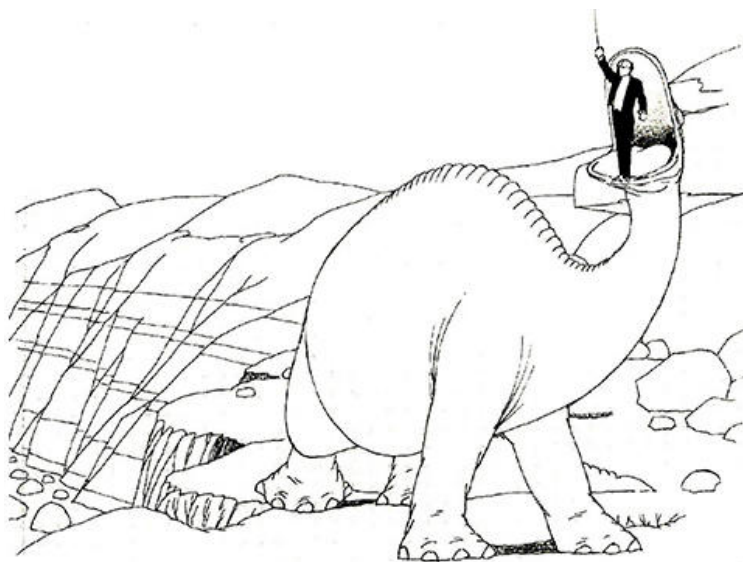
It is probable that Leonardo's play-instinct vanished in his maturer years ... But its long duration can teach us how slowly anyone tears himself from his childhood if in his childhood days he has enjoyed the highest erotic bliss, which is never again attained.

Like Leonardo, Winsor McCay retained his childhood play-instinct and liked to entertain people with fantastical beasts. He was a notable star on vaudeville who brought a sense of wonder and humor into his 'chalk talks', an act where he quickly drew and erased chalk cartoons of a man and woman to make them age quickly before the audience's eyes, a modern kind of *pedimenti*, turned into entertainment. Within a few years, his quick erasures and redrawing morphed into early animation. He choreographed a giant projection of a dinosaur, "Gertie," and gave her a

²¹ One of Freud's early mentors, Jean-Martin Charcot, used hypnosis as a way of curing his patients of their hysterical symptoms. Freud performed hypnosis on his patients initially, but later abandoned it and developed the 'talking cure' which consisted of asking his patients to lie down as if they were sleeping, and recount their dreams to Freud who remained in a chair hidden from view.

²² Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," 220. Footnoted by Freud as: Vasari, from Schorn's translation (1843, 39) [ed. Poggi, 1919, 41].

stubborn personality as he stood in front of the projection, cracking his circus-master's whip on stage, commanding her to perform for the audience while she stalled, munched on whole trees, drained a lake, and threw a boulder at a sea monster. At the end of the animation, McCay exited the stage and reappeared in the film as a cartoon version of himself, who stepped into Gertie's open mouth and was



Winsor McCay, Gertie the Dinosaur (1914), a movie that was initially shown as an interactive part of his vaudeville act.

transported by her onto her back, so that they could ride off together. Like Leonardo's two mothers, this was another two-ness, a real man/cartoon man. McCay used many of the same graphic devices as Leonardo when making things. He doubled forms, played with likenesses, and made unexpected substitutions that gave new meaning with a change of context. This representational realm of double meanings is a fruitful one: metaphorical—at times confusing—and also witty.

Freud meditated on the ability of wit (as well as dreams) to critique and evade the rational structures that have been imposed upon us. Freud:

*The tendency and capacity of wit to guard the pleasure-forming word and thought combinations against reason, already makes itself visible as an essential criterion in jests.*²³

Both wit and dreams allow the unconscious to fancifully elaborate on things—(identified by Freud as ‘wit-work’ and ‘dream-work’)—yet, they always return to the waking world:

*A fore-conscious thought is left for a moment to unconscious elaboration and the results are forthwith grasped by the conscious perception.*²⁴

In the case of wit, it brings amusement. In the case of waking up from a dream, it brings ‘musement’. Architectural dream-drawings live somewhere between the world of dreams (with all of their concealments and enigmas) and the world of wit (a kind of developed play).

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud discussed wit is the adult version of child’s play.²⁵ Children play as a way to explore mental formation.²⁶ Child’s play and the artistic imitation of play carried out by adults serve a similar function. It is a way of making a subject something that can be recollected and “worked over in the mind.”²⁷ This includes the artistic play of making drawings, which children naturally delight in. As Frascari noted in *eleven exercises*—

*... even concepts are drawings ... drawing forms are nothing but descriptions to which one tries to attribute the consistency of concepts.*²⁸

²³ Sigmund Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1917), 199.

²⁴ Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, 262.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 196.

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by Dr. A. A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1920), 245-49. Freud recounted a personal experience of living with a family that had a small baby boy of about year and a half. The child was well behaved, did not “disturb his parents at night, he conscientiously obeyed orders not to touch certain things or go into certain rooms, and above all he never cried when his mother left him for a few hours” though he was very attached to her. “This good little boy, however, had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small object he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business. As he did this he gave vent to a loud, long-drawn-out ‘o-o-o-o’, accompanied by an expression of interest and satisfaction.” This represented the German word for “gone.” When he was able to retrieve the objects, he would hail its reappearance “with a joyful ‘da’ [there]. This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return.” The game was related to the child’s “great cultural achievement,” his ability to allow his mother to go away without crying. “He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach.

²⁷ Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” 249.

²⁸ Frascari, *Eleven Exercises*, 40.

Freud distinguished adult play from child's play in that it is provided for an audience. Per Frascari, 'true' architecture is not aimed at an audience. It is closer to authentic play. This is a possible reason for Frascari's belief that we must return to our childhood selves to imagine and 'dream' architecture. Interestingly, Freud describes—not play—but the process of psychoanalysis as a way to unlock the restrictive structures of the mind through 'interpretation'.²⁹ He does not explore childlike, creative play as a way to achieve stability or 'binding'.³⁰ He in fact renounces the basic human desire for change and development, even though he has just discussed the natural retracing of development (through every form) in the fetus on the preceding page.³¹

Before the devastation of the World War, Freud had a happier take on the role of play and instinct in mental life, and particularly regarding artistic play. He wrote the essay on Leonardo da Vinci's extended childhood in 1910. But, before the War devastated Austria and his own family, Freud understood the condensation of things into childhood impressions (i.e. that the Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile was Leonardo's memory of his 'real' mother), as being similar to the 'brevity of wit':

The thought is put back for a moment into the infantile state in order to regain in this way childish pleasure sources. Wit would surely impress one with the idea that the peculiar unconscious elaboration is nothing else but the infantile type of the mental process.

It is the "return of the psychic life to the embryonic state."

Of the three writers—Freud, Bergson and Proust—, Freud is the one who elucidates most clearly the importance of play to a child's ability to discover, extend and form their own mental structures and forge a psychic framework for thinking.³² This primal 'childhood' type of thinking is an appealing recipe for the imagining of Architecture since it is—like dreams and wit—capable of revealing things ordinarily hidden by the conscious or rational mind.

Confusion of form

Cartoons as we know them—sequences of images that tell a story—were developed in tandem with moving pictures and animation. Early movie pictures were very short, delineated by the length of the film strip: 1000 footers and 2000 footers, or one reelers and two reelers. The

²⁹ Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 274-75. Freud uncovered why there are no lessons learned from recurring nightmares. He placed the impetus for recurring neurosis on an inability to have experienced proper anxiety before an unexpected, terrifying event. He postulated that we must relive the event in order to experience the proper anxiety which was originally denied.

³⁰ Ibid, 274-75.

³¹ Ibid, 276-78. Freud is notably pessimistic in this statement: "Those instincts are therefore bound to give a deceptive appearance of being forces tending towards change and progress, whilst in fact they are merely seeking to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new." He goes a step further to say that "the aim of all life is death." One wonders if the First World War, and the many patients he must have seen in the midst of its terrors, impacted the thoughts in this essay. He lost two of his sons that were sent to fight in World War I, and his daughter Sophie died of the flu epidemic shortly afterward.

³² Proust elucidates this idea as well in *In Search of Lost Time*, but he does it enigmatically.

likeness to reality was stunning to behold and did not require a story, initially, to amaze and entertain the audience. The short films were shown in vaudeville theaters as one of many acts alongside popular singers, dancers, comedians, magicians, ventriloquists, acrobats, strongmen, male and female impersonators, one act plays and illustrated songs. One of the earliest moving pictures, Auguste and Louis Lumière's *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1896), was shot from just beside the iron rails of train tracks as an approaching locomotive puffed its smoke in the distance, heading almost straight for the viewer. As the engine grew closer—close enough to run right into the theater—people were so frightened they climbed out of their seats in an attempt to get out of the way.³³ Or so the story goes.



Auguste and Louis Lumière's L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1896)

But unlike dreaming, its novelty soon wore off. As people adjusted to the idea of a two-dimensional moving depiction of scenes on a lit screen that they knew was *not* real, the one and two reelers waned in popularity. (When dreaming, we almost always think it's real.) Very quickly, the technology improved enough—and the filmmakers wisened up enough—to keep an audience's attention by telling a story, known as a 'feature'.³⁴ The stories were initially improvised on the spot, with only a beginning in mind, then became a written list of camera shots, and eventually developed into graphic storyboards. Ideas and techniques from vaudeville blew into moving pictures. Ideas from moving pictures pollinated early animation, which influenced cartoons, which became storyboards for pictures, and the other way round.

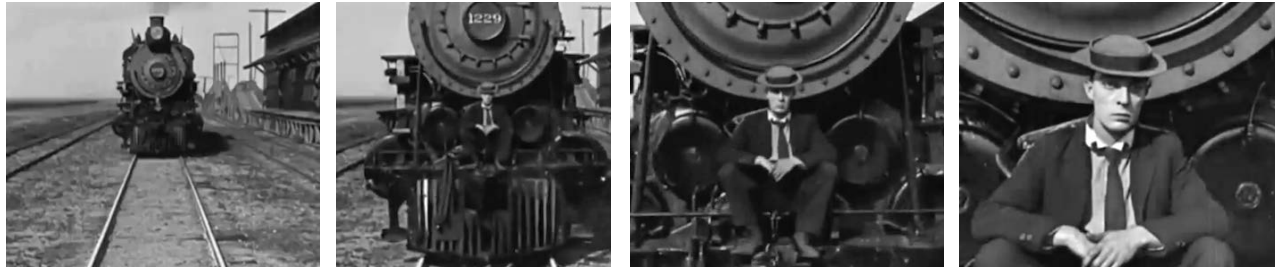
In a feature 25 years after Lumière's train, another train, remarkably similar to the one that sent audiences running from their seats, appeared on screen at a nickelodeon, a new kind of venue built especially for moving pictures.³⁵ As the train grew larger and nearer to the camera, this time with the camera situated—scarily!—just between the train tracks, the figure of a man came

³³ Louis Lumière later re-shot and presented a stereoscopic version of this same scene to make it seem even more real at a 1934 meeting of the French Academy of Science.

³⁴ Buster Keaton's account of why he went into "features" was simply that people paid more to see them.

³⁵ Around this time vaudeville theaters became less and less popular and—almost overnight—Nickelodeons were built by the thousands all across America.

into view perched right on the cow catcher at the nose of the engine. Instead of visually running into the theater, though, the train came to a stop immediately in front of the camera (the screen), and the figure became recognizable as Buster Keaton. He gave the audience a look, shrugged,



Buster Keaton, The Goat (1921)

nonchalantly dismounted, and exited stage right. He played off the image that he knew was embedded in the audience's mind, the famous scary train heading directly toward them.³⁶

Sigmund Freud, on wit: ³⁷

Humor resides in the form of the joke rather than its subject.

It is a doubling of an image: expected image versus delivered image. Keaton refers to this form of joke as an 'impossible gag'. His gags are numinous, going beyond the audience's thirst for entertainment to something eliciting awe and wonder. In a review of the recent release of many of Keaton's early films that had either been lost or badly damaged, Jim Kline described Keaton's refusal to accept the title of 'genius' when an interviewer suggested that "there was more going on in his films than mere comedy ..." Keaton would "either respond with a slightly befuddled look of surprise, or smile politely and wait for a change in the topic." Kline quotes film and theater critic, Walter Kerr in *The Silent Clowns* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1975):

Visual comedy, in the hands of its greatest practitioners, Chaplin and Keaton, was closer to the poetry of dreams than humor . . . [Keaton] made a few perfect visual movies, whose corny themes became actual filmed myths. He realized, from shot to shot, dreamlike entities from the American and universal subconscious, with a subtlety and power equalled in American films only by [D.W.]

³⁶ Keaton realized at an early age that the more serious his face was, the funnier the joke.

³⁷ Stokes, Charlotte. *Leonardo*, Vol. 15, No.3 (Summer, 1982), "Collage as Joke: Freud's Theories of Wit as the Foundation for the Collages of Max Ernst", 199-204. Freud's quote is footnoted in the article as: S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963),17.

*Griffith and [Orson] Welles. Dreams, like the movies of the great silent comedians, are like humor stripped of its formulas and restraints, but at their best and deepest they are not funny.*³⁸



Buster Keaton ("stoneface"), Steamboat Bill Jr. (1928)

Keaton's gags , according to Kline, were something that—

*... sprang directly uncensored, from an unconscious, mercurial realm of dreams ... and ... if Keaton had ever been asked by a Jungian analyst to comment on his use of dream imagery and mythic motifs in his films, he would have responded with one of his trademark blank pan stares.*³⁹

Ever keen to improvise, Keaton often claimed to do his gags in just one take. If the gag went awry, he changed the film to adapt, because it was often funnier than the planned one. The element of surprise was as key to the maker as it was to the audience.⁴⁰ This is similar to the way dreams create a narrative. There is less concern for the pre-meditated structure of the story than there is for one thing leading to another. Then, whoops! Where did that come from? Delight in the gag. The same was true of McCay. He drew at lightning speed, could in fact draw a character on an eight foot high billboard in one line with no mistakes. He made the act of drawing itself seem amazing. McCay's cartoons—like Keaton's impossible gags—were a curious kind of humor that was mostly awe for the deftness of the performance.

³⁸ Jim Kline, "Funny Sublime: The Uncanny Genius of Buster Keaton," *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, Vol.16, No. 2 (Summer 1997), 46.

³⁹ Kline, "Funny Sublime," 48.

⁴⁰ Keaton lamented the end of his ability to use what he termed 'impossible gags' when the storytelling aspect of pictures became the motivating force of action. His impossible gags were surreal elements in the film like: painting a hook on the wall and then actually hanging his hat on it, preventing an elevator from moving by stopping the indicator arrow, or jumping through an opening and disappearing even though the opening is a two-dimensional representation. These were gags that openly defied logic.

Clarity of form

Freud saw a connection between jokes and dreams and wrote about their similarities in *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (1917). The book focuses on wit in speech, but many of the concepts translate to dramatic and graphic humor. In reviewing philosophy's treatment of the subject, he cites Kant, speaking of the comic element in general:

... one of its remarkable attributes is the fact that it can delude us for a moment only ...

He cites Gerard Heymans's (1857-1930) explanation that—

... the mechanism of wit is produced through the succession of confusion and clearness.⁴¹

In other words, wit has the ability to surprise, to enable the mind to make a leap that the process and rigor of logic will not allow. He uses Heymans's example, which was a witticism from a story by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)⁴² who—

... causes one of his figures, the poor lottery agent, Hirsch-Hyacinth, to boast that the great Baron Rothschild treated him as an equal or quite FAMILLIONAIRE. Here the word which acts as the carrier of the witticism appears in the first place simply as a faulty word-formation, as something incomprehensible and wrong ... [Theodor] Lipps adds that the first stage of enlightenment shows that the confusing word means this or that, followed by a second stage in which one perceives that this nonsensical word that has first deluded us, then gives us its true meaning⁴³

One is reminded of Keaton sitting at the table with his new brothers-in-law in *My Wife's Relations* (1922). Keaton is prevented from taking his first taste of pasta due to his new brother-in-law's repeated requests to pass and serve everything on the table. Each time, the request happens when his fork is almost to his lips. After many passings of food and no nourishment, while exasperatedly viewing the repeated exercise by his brother-in-law of placing sugar cubes, one by one, into his coffee cup, Keaton finally loses patience. He grabs the coffee cup, pours *it* into the sugar bowl and stirs that up so he can eat in peace.

⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. A.A. Brill (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1917), 9. Freud footnotes Heymans's quote as: Heymans (*Zeitschr. F. Psychologie*, XI, 1896.) Gerard Heymans was an influential Dutch philosopher and psychologist who did experimental research into psychological processes.

⁴² Freud's quote is from a book by Heine called *Reisebilder* or *Travel Pictures* in a section entitled "Die Bäder von Lucca," or, "The Baths of Lucca," written in 1830 as a satirical tirade against his rival, August von Platen, who had mocked Heine's Jewishness.

⁴³ Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious*, 9-10.



Buster Keaton, My Wife's Relations (1922)

The 'logical' sugar cubes sweeten the coffee one by one, whereas the reverse process of dumping the coffee into the sugar bowl brings a nonsensical explosion of sweetness. The replacement of what is expected elicits delight.

McCay's cartoons have the look and feel of storyboards for movies, and actually illustrate the elements of dream-work laid out in Freud's book *The Interpretation of Dreams*.⁴⁴ Here is a summary (mine):

1. **condensation and compromise** (memories from real life are compressed together with great force to the extent that they lose any lingering logical connections to things, and are instead joined together through their similarities);
2. **pictorial representation / dramatization** (ideas lose the "prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts" and are instead transformed into situations, symbols and metaphors that are visual images);
3. **displacement** (images are disguised so that they are uncensored and 'slip through' the ever editorializing, rational mind); and, finally—
4. **dream composition** (though sublimated through sleep, the now weak rational mind still uses its creative powers to piece together a storyline with varying degrees of coherence).

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), trans. and edited by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1955).



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, December 24, 1905

According to Freud, this last element doesn't always happen, and when it does, we must tear down the facade of the story—as Sherlock Holmes did when solving mysteries—by ignoring the tale that is presented to us, and instead find the dream's message lying beneath.⁴⁵ Freud dubbed this careful disregard of the 'facade' as the work of analysis. Dreams that are hopelessly confused—i.e. not well-constructed because the sleepy frailty of the rational mind is prevented from building any sort of facade whatsoever—*those* dreams—are easier to interpret.⁴⁶ These four elements, with McCay's cartoons and Keaton's films serving as illustrations, will be explored in a later chapter on McCay and Keaton's vaudeville years.⁴⁷ It will be an excursion—through the ink of McCay's pen—from Coney Island's Luna Park and Dreamland (which glowed alluringly just

⁴⁵ The title of Keaton's movie *Sherlock Jr.* coincides with Freud's idea that dreams hold odd juxtapositions and associations that do not make sense until they are analyzed by the waking mind. The meaning is unlocked via the odd—often disregarded—clue rather than through logic, and the seeming nonsensical sequence is a mystery worth solving. This was the genius of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous creation, Sherlock Holmes, who used the methods of Dr. Joseph Bell of Edinburgh, renowned for his diagnosis based on astute observations that led to possibilities rather than probabilities. In this same vein of thinking, Freud was influenced by the writings of a Russian scholar who published an essay in a German art history journal on the correct attribution of old master paintings via careful observation of gestural signatures in paint, that could be seen more in the rendering of hands and ears, than in the formal aspects of the paintings that were traditionally used for attribution. Several years after the article's publication, purportedly by a Russian art critic, the author revealed himself to be an Italian doctor, Giovanni Morelli. The device became known as the "Morelli method" which is still used by art historians today. Freud may have been influenced as much by Morelli's odd method of presenting his theory as by the method itself, contributing to his ideas about displacement and disguise. Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method," In *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Pierce*, edited by Umberto Eco and Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

⁴⁶ See Freud's essay *On Dreams* (1901), written as a more accessible version of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *Sigmund Freud - Selected Writings*. Translated in 1961 by James Strachey. Introduction by Robert Coles (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Book-of-the-Month-Club, Inc., 1997) p. 48.

⁴⁷ The slapstick of the vaudeville stage is loosely related to a wobbly cobblestone that became the spark for memory in the final volume of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, also in an upcoming chapter. Today Proust is not remembered for his humor, but *In Search of Lost Time* has comedic elements when read in the original French, as noted by Roger Shattuck.

across Sheepshead Bay from McCay's house in Brooklyn)—to the cartoons in newsprint whirring through the presses—into Keaton's early silent films. This is a possible template for design.

My own nap time notes

Freud filled *The Interpretation of Dreams* with actual recounting of dreams from his (mostly) young female patients—with pseudonyms to protect their identities—much like dreams do, a form of displacement—and also with a very healthy portion of his own dream accounts.⁴⁸ In that spirit, I include here one of my own early morning scribbles, one that emerged from the detritus of my bedroom, that relates to this paper:

*Dream of Gill*⁴⁹

There was a girl who was making something wearing a purple sweater,⁵⁰ there was me, and there was an exhibition design in progress at the National Gallery. The last room was not laid out. The girl who was making something was not particularly fetching.. she was, however, productive. I told Gill that we were going to try and finish the lay-out of the last room, and that we might as well get him to help us, since he knew so much about laying out exhibitions. "Although," I said, "I know a lot from watching you do it for fifteen years. Basically, the most important works are always framed through an aperture, either a doorway or window." He seemed to agree.

Gill then said that he had read my abstract. He wondered about the last two attachments, titled something like "The Art of Field Observation of....." with pictures of a blue butterfly that

⁴⁸ Freud respected the identities of his patients, and also the identities of their families. In the farce *Hysteria* by Terry Johnson, it comes to light that a former patient, a 'Rebecca S.', was the daughter of an influential publisher. His uncovering of Rebecca's repressed early memories do not reflect well on her father, although they have a liberating effect upon the young woman. Freud is accused (in this farce) of changing the woman's diagnosis from repression of actual events to repression of her forgotten 5 year old desires for her father. He does this as a way of keeping his work from being blackballed. In the play, this change in diagnosis has a terrible effect upon the girl, who ends up in an asylum, and it also has a deleterious effect upon his published work, since the theory of repressed early sexuality is reflected throughout.

⁴⁹ This dream from 2013 is of former Senior Curator and Chief of Design at the National Gallery of Art, Gaillard Ravenel (1941-1996). From his obituary in the NYT: "...praised by the New York Times critic John Russell for employing 'a skill, a delicacy and a power of suggestion that are truly extraordinary' in fitting the hundreds of objects of an exhibition called *The Treasure Houses of Britain* into what Mr. Russell called the National Gallery's 'famously intractable East Building, in which—there is plenty of space to meet your friends but very little room for works of art.' " My first day of work coincided with the opening of *Treasure Houses*, for which I (regrettably) was tasked with making the demolition drawings to make room for the next show.

⁵⁰ I wore a purple sweater on the day of my interview for my entry job in the design department, which was that of "maquette maker", the person who makes tiny replicas of the works of art to be shown in an exhibition.

looked like paintings.⁵¹ Gill thought that they should not be included, and that they were almost laughable. “Where did those come from?” he asked. I replied that the idea came from the “Art of Memory.”⁵² Gill also said that he liked reading Walter Benjamin’s books (as in novels?) but he did not like reading his essays at all. I say that I’ve only read his essays.⁵³

Gill is young and enthusiastic. It is as if he hasn’t died. He has make up on like the actor who is getting ready to play Tristram Shandy, i.e. putty that has been placed on his face to slightly change the shape of his profile ...⁵⁴

The voluminous footnotes to my “Gill” dream resemble Freud’s analysis of his own dreams in *Interpretation of Dreams*, which are always much longer than the dream itself. The dream is only the impetus—the ‘dream stuff’—for what, in Freud’s mind, is far more important: the analysis. Freud was at heart a doctor, and, his analysis at times—although copiously documented and extrapolated—can seem far-fetched, even if rooted in the science of psychiatry.⁵⁵ I marvel that such revelations, like the ones in this dream about Gill—seemingly narrated to me from a man

⁵¹ Everyone was very saddened by Gill’s sudden death, and it colored my thinking. I was, in essence, a ‘blue’ butterfly with melancholy from my once glamorous life, learning from Gill, living with marvelous paintings at the Gallery.

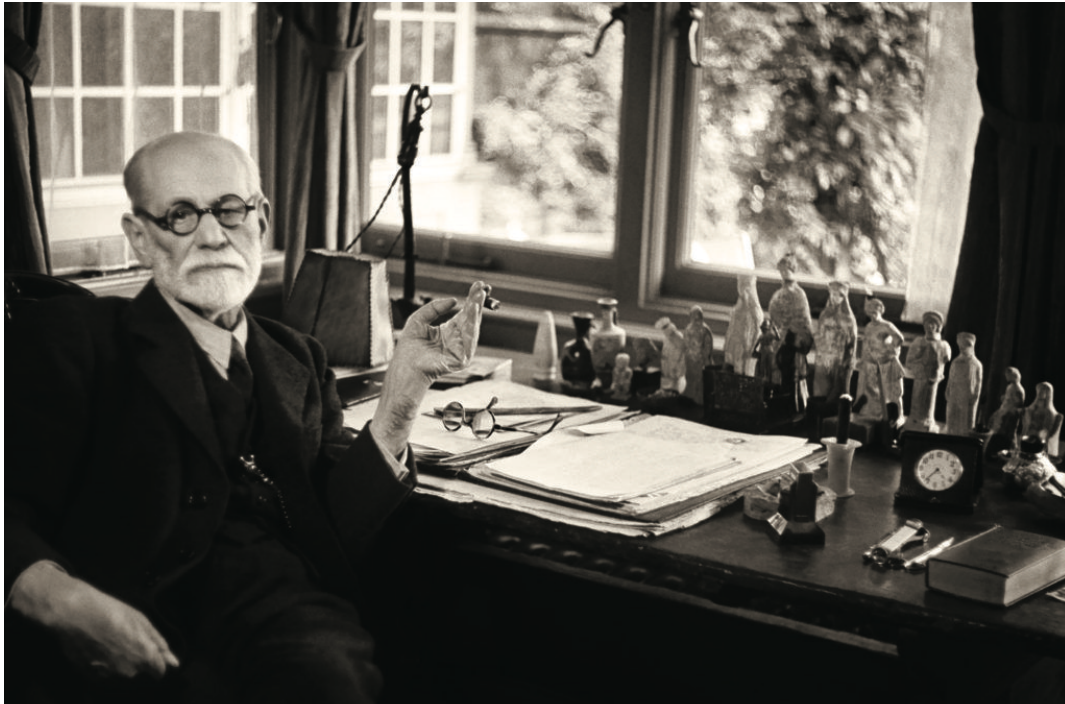
⁵² The Art of Memory, seen through Cicero’s story of Simonides, and then through Mary Carruther’s wonderful connections to the making of Medieval architecture, has many similarities to the art of making exhibitions.

⁵³ The essay by Walter Benjamin that I was focusing on at the time of the dream was *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, which ruminates on the value of a work of art being directly related to its uniqueness and authenticity, its ‘aura’. Gill seems to be directing me to focus more on the stories of Benjamin’s *Berlin Childhood*, circa 1900, when Benjamin attempted to scribe a map of the Berlin he was introduced to with his nursemaids as guides. Benjamin: “I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of my life—bios—graphically on a map... ..I have evolved a system of signs, and on the gray background of such maps they would make a colorful show if I clearly marked in the houses of my friends and girl friends, the assembly halls of various collectives, from the ‘debating chambers’ of the Youth Movement to the gathering places of the Communist youth, the hotel and brothel rooms that I knew for one night, the decisive benches in the Tiergarten, the ways to different schools and the graves that I saw filled, the sites of prestigious cafés whose long-forgotten names daily crossed our lips, the tennis courts where empty apartment blocks stand today, and the halls emblazoned with gold and stucco that the terrors of dancing classes made almost the equal of gymnasiums.” Benjamin dares to do this because he has read Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. “What began so playfully became awesomely serious. He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments; no image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside; that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance advances from the small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows ever mightier. Such is the deadly game that Proust began so dilettantishly...” Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, edit. by Peter Demetz, Trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book/ Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 5-6.

⁵⁴ *Tristram Shandy* is a novel by Laurence Sterne published in the mid-eighteenth century with a style known for both verbal and graphic double entendres. The changed profile is like a sonorous memory that slightly alters its profile to resonate with the current moment. Or maybe the other way around.

⁵⁵ Freud thought that our inability to remember our early childhood comes from the same censorious actions that the rational mind imposes upon our memories when waking, i.e. that the revelations brought about by certain memories need to be made inaccessible if we are to function successfully in our day-to-day lives.

that had passed away sixteen years before—were so perfectly germane to the subject of this dissertation. I knew nothing of Benjamin's *Berlin Chronicles*, and yet here in the dream, they were being recommended to me. (Had I seen them peripherally while thumbing through some book or other, and merely consciously forgotten it, as Freud thought?) When I finally read *Berlin Chronicles*, they pointed me in a new direction. Ironically, my belief in the oracular aspect of dreaming is based on empirical evidence, on my own experience of dreaming things that have 'come true'.



Marcel Sternberger, The last portrait of Sigmund Freud shown seated at his desk in Mansfield Gardens, London, with his beloved objet d'arts. Freud had recently escaped from the Nazi occupation just before World War II. (1939)

When Sternberger arrived for the photo session, Freud asked, "tell me why you want to bother with this ... this wasted face of mine at all? You know that an artist can be truly inspired only by true beauty."

Freud was not a religious man.⁵⁶ His philosophy was an outgrowth of the Enlightenment. If Freud was able to deduce that a dream image was seen somewhere, distractedly, the day before, or even in a book in the attic twenty-five years ago, then the revelations brought about by the

⁵⁶ The question about where dream fragments come from, literally from a person's own authentic memory, or from a realm beyond, is a very big one. Freud believed that everyone has access to a kind of oracular vision, with no intercessor (the role once played by the muses, or angels, or enlightened medicine men). He replaced the powerful dichotomy of heaven and hell with "the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of civilization," and saw religion as a primitive form of civilization. From James Strachey's introduction to *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton Company Inc., 1961), 6.

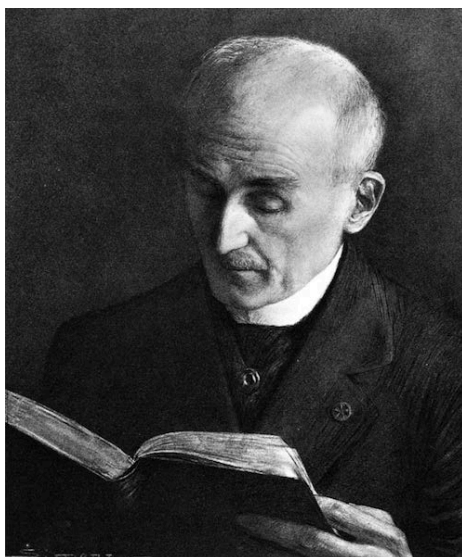
dream are proof of the excellence of our mind, its ability to record, assimilate, and resurrect memories. The people we dream about are parts of ourselves, characters in a play that unfold the story that we are repressing. Freud's ideas seem 'true'. The memory truly *is* amazing. But my own experience of dreaming is more akin to the older idea of dreams as a form of revelation,⁵⁷ images seen with wonderment coming from somewhere beyond, someplace Incomprehensible, a place that belongs more in the realm of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* poem, or, of religious belief, or Greek philosophy, a place seen with a childlike vision, like Little Nemo's Slumberland.

Was McCay picking up on a larger, teleologic design in his fascination with the liminal world of dreams? This question is not answered by Freud, who was a scientist who believed in facts, albeit the 'facts' discovered in dreams. It is however addressed by Henri Bergson which will be seen in the next chapter.

⁵⁷ I had another dream about Gill where the multi-colored light from prisms in the skylight of the design office shone onto a gargoyle that was hung above a coworker's (John Olson's) desk. In the dream, Gill assured me (from beyond, because he had already passed away) that both John and I would be "okay." In the dream, the prismatic light shone onto the gargoyle and bounced down onto John's desk. Shortly thereafter, (in real life), John miraculously survived a sudden heart attack while attending a wedding in Minnesota that just happened to be near the Mayo Clinic. He was attended by the son of the physician that invented open heart surgery, and survived a 14 hour operation—with his heart taken out and kept beating beside him during the operation—an extremely difficult surgery because he had been diabetic since early childhood. John was "okay." (And I was "okay," even though navigating some difficult matters of the heart.) There was no gargoyle hanging above John's desk when I had the dream, but—later—John found a gargoyle-like figure in the attic of the West Building which he put in the exact spot I had dreamed it. (I hadn't told John or anyone about my dream.) The dream "came true" in more than one way. Freud's argument that dream material always comes from our memories from the past, in this case, was not valid.

4

Transformative memories—
Henri Bergson



Henri-Louis Bergson, from *The Story of Philosophy* (1926)

When a scholar laboriously translates a cuneiform tablet dug up from a Babylonian mound ... chances are that it will turn out [to be] either an astrological treatise or a dream book. If the former, we look upon it with some indulgence; if the latter with pure contempt. For we know that the study of the stars ... led at length to physical science, while the study of dreams has proved as unprofitable as the dreaming of them. Out of astrology grew astronomy. Out of oneiromancy has grown—nothing

Edwin Emery Slosson, New York City, 1914 ¹

Worlds of wonder

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the study of dreams had a particular allure. There was a luxurious, heavy, velvet curtain hanging at the front of the stage—it's fringe of tassels brushing the wooden floor—and the seats were filled with people waiting for—they knew not what—for the gorgeous deceptions of an illusionist.

Winsor McCay and Sigmund Freud both chose the first years of childhood as the foundation for this 'illusion' that was crafted by the psyche in dreams.² Bergson was less interested in childhood

¹ Henri Bergson, *Dreams*, Translated with an Introduction by Edwin E. Slossin. (New York: B.W.Huebsch, 1914), 5. Quote is from the Introduction by Slossin to the English version. Edwin Emery Slossin was a literary editor and contributor to *The Independent*, a New York magazine, from 1904 to 1920. He was known as a leading popularizer of science. He interviewed Henri Bergson, on behalf of the magazine.

² "Youth demands images for its imagination and for forming its memory." Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 19. Originally published in 1975.

than in the purest possible description of how an adult experiences the dream process.³ He began his book *Dreams*, first presented as a lecture before the *Institut Psychologique* in 1901, by likening the process—although a faint echo of it—to ordinary waking perception.⁴ Bergson leads into the topic not unlike a Lecturer on a bally platform at a circus, drawing our attention to a side show, enticing us to see the acts of a psychic or conjurer: ⁵

*A dream is this. I perceive objects and there is nothing there. I see men; I seem to speak to them and I hear what they answer; there is no one there and I have not spoken. It is all as if real things and real persons were there, then on waking all has disappeared, both persons and things ...*⁶



Byron and Company. Show at Coney Island with a man “levitating” a woman on stage, ca. 1908. Museum of the City of New York. 93.1.1.3425.

³ Eric Matthews, *Bergson’s New Concept of a Person*, Essay from *The New Bergson*, edited by John Mullarkey. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), 119. Matthews sees Bergson as a phenomenologist, “though this is not a label he actually attached to himself.”

⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 21. Bergson did not give us a theory of dreams or explain *why* we dream, so much as unfold the experience of dreaming. It is a source for truth in the Gadamer sense, existing “in its own right because human passions cannot be governed by the universal prescriptions of reason.”

⁵ Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977). First published by The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited 1975. Davies began his career as an actor with the Old Vic Company in England, went on to become the publisher of the *Examiner* in Ontario, and eventually became a professor at the University of Toronto. References in this chapter to the phenomena of early twentieth century ‘Worlds of Wonder’ (where Winsor McCay began his career making banners for traveling circuses and dime museums) come from Davies’s accounts of life in the theater.

⁶ Henri Bergson, *Dreams*, Trans. Edwin E. Slosson (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1914), 1.

He pulls aside the curtain of his narrative, bows his head and proceeds—just as the outside Talker of a traveling show would have ducked into the tent—to lecture us about the ‘talent’ on display. As the audience listening to the Lecturer in a traveling show, we are entranced by Bergson’s charm and his way of speaking about the entertaining spectacles on display.



The billboards advertising freak shows above this Lecturer are similar to the ones painted by McCay in Cincinnati when he works for nine years at a dime museum. Known for his flair when painting, he often drew crowds. The photo above, of Coney Island in 1929, is by Edward J. Kelty. (artblart.com)

In Bergson’s patter, ‘ocular spectra’, ‘colored spots’ and ‘phosphenes’ whirl in the darkness of our vision to form images. The passing beams of light projected from the lantern of the night nurse as she passes by a patient’s bed inspire him to dream of the Paris exposition, which is *on fire!* Scissors struck against the tongs in the ears of a professor coincide immediately with a dream he is having: the peal of church bells call him into action during the Revolution of June 1848.⁷

⁷ Bergson, *Dreams*, 22. The professor Bergson refers to is Alfred Maury (1817-1892), a French scholar and physician who wrote about the effects of external stimuli on dreams, and who influenced Bergson’s thinking. This passage seems to presage Marcel Proust’s fascination with ‘involuntary’ memory.



Dreamland burnt down to the ground on Memorial week-end in 1911, the same year that Little Nemo in Slumberland ended its run in the New York Herald. They both capitalized on people's fascination with exaggerated or attenuated form. Known for her exaggerated proportions and having an infectious laugh, "Jolly Irene" weighed 689 pounds in her prime. She settled on Surf Avenue in Coney Island because she could no longer fit on the traveling circus train.—"Coney Island Congress of the World's Greatest Living Curiosities," from the blog of Seamus Liam O'Brian, <http://www.thewonderfulworldof.com>

Such stuff as dreams are made on: how the imagination works

Things persist in our imagination with an allure that naturally tends toward magnification. Bergson's account of the dreamer's ability to magnify tiny impressions sensed while sleeping bears a resemblance to Aristotle's idea of dreams. Aristotle believed that sense perception remained active during sleep. The things that persisted from waking perception could then be magnified during sleep. How does the perceptive faculty persist? He likened the process to objects in motion. Once bodies begin moving, they keep going:

... they are in motion even though what moved them is no longer in contact with them; for the mover moved some air, and this, since it was moved, moved other air in turn ... until the process comes to a halt ... Hence this must come about in perceiving, since actual perception is a sort of alteration. That is why the affection exists in the sense-organs not only while they are perceiving, but also when they have ceased to do so, both in the depths and on the surface. This is evident whenever we are perceiving something continuously; for when we shift our perception (for instance from the sun to darkness), the affection persists. For as a result we do not see anything because the movement brought about by the light still remains in our eyes.⁸

Images, sounds and temperature affect us while we are awake. Our body adapts to them and then when we sleep, the effects linger. The perceptions of the preceding day loiter on, waiting to experience the imagination. Aristotle mentions this after discussing the biological aspects of the sleep process (heating up, cooling down, inhaling, exhaling, moistness or aridity of bodily *stuff*). Almost as a side note, he remarks on the resemblance of sleep to choking and fainting:

For sleep is not any incapacity whatsoever of the perceptive faculty ... in fact, even some persons who have fainted have experienced imagination.

Imagination ignited during sleep is a given. He also mentions it after discussing the sleepy feeling one has after eating a large meal:

... the hot is cooled down, like a fire when logs are laid on it, until the food is digested ...

with a similar result:

The onset of this results in unconsciousness and subsequent imagination.⁹

Aristotle ties imagination to the acuity of our sense perception when it is not being overwhelmed by the brightness and glare of the waking world. Many of our perceptions cannot be ‘felt’ until sleep, when we finally have the ability to notice the tiniest details. Noticing them requires magnification, or, we could say, ‘imagination’.

⁸ Aristotle, *On the Soul and Other Psychological Works*, Translated and with an Introduction and Notes by Fred D. Miller, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) From the Section *On Dreams*, 116.

⁹ Aristotle, *On the Soul and Other Psychological Works*, From the Section *On Sleep*, 110-112.

Like Aristotle, Bergson understood the dreamer as someone with an amplifier, ready to pick up tiny reverberations and play them. These amplified tiny details from the day become the vague and indeterminate background for the dream, the dream material, the “stuff that dreams are made on.” How then does a story come about?



Vintage souvenir 8x10 of Jolly Irene

As Bergson phrases it:

What is the form that will imprint its decision upon the indecision of this material? This form is memory.¹⁰

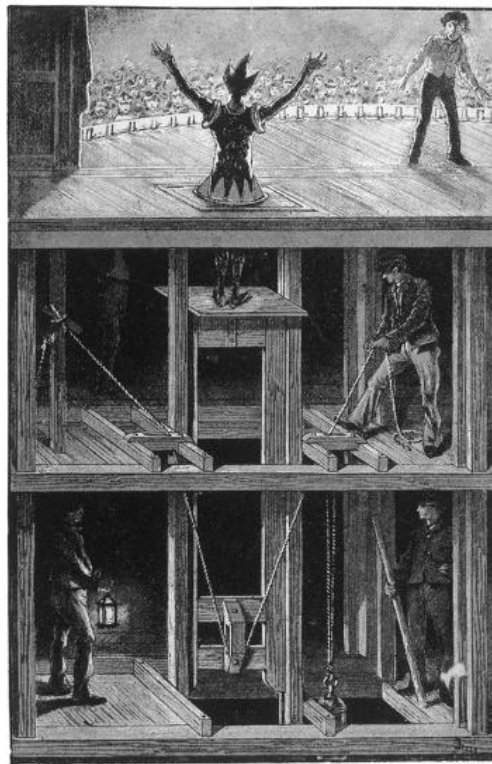
Memory! Bergson, like Freud, is certain that our memory has preserved everything. For Bergson, it is shaped like a pyramid, with a sturdy base for our action. Most memories are at the very bottom, and others—more frequently used—nearer to the top, ready to assist with each moment of decision. The mind summons up images from the past for use in the present. This is at the heart of Bergson, whose thinking about dreaming is such an apt metaphor for the design process, which begins with a program based upon the particulars of what will occur in the proposed building, a type of ‘housing’ generated from the remembered forms of past buildings. Bergson:

¹⁰ Bergson, *Dreams*, 29.

Yes, I believe indeed that all our past is there, preserved even to the most infinitesimal details, and that we forget nothing, and that all that we have felt, perceived, thought, willed, from the first awakening of our consciousness, survives indestructibly. But the memories which are preserved in these obscure depths are there in the state of invisible phantoms. They aspire, perhaps, to the light, but they do not even try to rise to it; they know that it is impossible and that I, as a living and acting being, have something else to do than to occupy myself with them. But suppose that, at a given moment, I become disinterested in the present situation, in the present action—in short, in all which previously has fixed and guided my memory; suppose, in other words, that I am asleep.¹¹

When the effort ordinarily required to pay close attention to the present moment is relaxed,

... then these memories, perceiving that I have taken away the obstacle, have raised the trapdoor which has kept them beneath the floor of consciousness, arise from the depths; they rise, they move, they perform in the night of unconscious a great danse macabre.



The trap door in action. Drawing from True et Decors by George Moynet.

¹¹ Bergson, *Dreams*, 34. Imagine here that Bergson's description of dreaming is a metaphor for a museum, with objects (memories) carefully archived in storage, in the dark, waiting to be called up by a curator for display. The exhibition is a dream. The exhibition design process, which begins with a group of artifacts, or memories, is a particularly apt metaphor for dreaming.

These phantom memories initially wait below or off-stage amongst the vagaries of lifeless costumes and scenery strewn about,

... vague images which occupy my sight ... indecisive sounds which affect my ear ...[and] indistinct touches which are distributed over the surface of my body.

There is a question about which of the off-stage hopefuls will get to play a part, and—

... among the phantom memories which aspire to fill themselves with color, with sonority, in short with materiality, the only ones that succeed are those which can assimilate with the color-dust ... and respond to the affective tone of our general sensibility. When this union is effected between the memory and the sensation, we have a dream. ¹²

(Or, we could say, we have a design for a building.) The above passage indicates a somewhat random assigning of roles. Whatever phantom memory best matches the indistinct perceptions of the past day—“the affective tone of our general sensibility”—will perform the night scene. Contrast this to Freud’s dreams, which have meaning and are in fact acting as a kind of provocateur, though in disguise, but still, ultimately acting as an agent to help us unravel the mystery of ourselves. The very next paragraph in Bergson’s *Dreams*, however, fills in his own idea of a dream’s significance. His dreams, like Freud’s, *are* purposeful. But, they are not clues being detected and pieced together so much as incomplete forms that are attracted to each other:

In a poetic page of the Enneades, the philosopher Plotinus, interpreter and continuator of Plato, explains to us how men come to life. Nature, he says, sketches the living bodies, but sketches them only. Left to her own forces she can never complete the task. On the other hand, souls inhabit the worlds of Ideas. Incapable in themselves of acting, not even thinking of action, they float beyond space and beyond time. But, among all the bodies, there are some which specially respond by their form to the aspirations of some particular souls; and among these souls there are those that recognize themselves in some particular body. The body, which does not come altogether viable from the hand of nature, rises toward the soul which might give it complete life; and the soul, looking upon the body and believing that it perceives its own image as in a mirror, and attracted, fascinated by the image, lets itself fall. It falls, and this fall is life.

¹² Bergson, *Dreams*, 35. In 1913, Bergson inserts an author’s note after this passage. “This would be the place where especially will intervene those ‘repressed desires’ which Freud and certain other psychologists, especially in America, have studied with such penetration and ingenuity. (See in particular the recent volumes of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, published in Boston by Dr. Morton Prince.) When the above address was delivered (1901) the work of Freud on dreams (*Die Traumdeutung*) had been already published, but ‘psycho-analysis’ was far from having the development that it has to-day. (H.B.)”

Bergson links the act of dreaming with a life beyond. He ties the two together:

I may compare to these detached souls the memories plunged in the obscurity of the unconscious. On the other hand, our nocturnal sensations resemble these incomplete bodies. The sensation is warm, colored, vibrant and almost living, but vague. The memory is complete, but airy and lifeless. The sensation wishes to find a form on which to mold the vagueness of its contours. The memory would obtain matter to fill it, to ballast it, in short to realize it. They are drawn toward each other; and the phantom memory, incarnated in the sensation which brings to it a flesh and blood, becomes a being with a life of its own, a dream.¹³

Phantom memories, on cue, walk into the space defined by the glow of the footlights and proceed to play their part.



LIONEL, HALF MAN HALF LION. AT DREAMLAND CIRCUS SIDE SHOW, CONEY ISLAND, N. Y.

A Lion's soul "recognizes himself" in a Man's body. Sideshow circus exhibit "Lionel," Half-Man/Half-Lion's real name was Stephan Bibrowski (1891-1932). It is thought he had the condition hypertrichosis, also known as 'werewolf syndrome', a rare condition that resulted in excessive hair growth. From the age of four to around ten, Lionel was exhibited in Europe. In 1901, he began touring with the Barnum and Bailey Circus in the United States, eventually settling in 1920 at Dreamland Circus Side Show in Coney Island.—Vintage souvenir postcard, Human Circus Exhibits Collections, Eugenics Record Office, Cold Spring Harbor, New York.

¹³ Bergson's use of the word's 'incarnate' and 'flesh and blood' convey a sense that the memories have a cosmic source. In *Epistles II*, Plato gives a hint about the unspeakable nature of certain truths, only communicable with eye contact while the teacher is talking with the student, while describing knowledge that might be deemed sacred. "There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like a light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born into the soul and straightaway nourishes itself... What I have said, in short, comes to this: whenever we see a book, we can be sure that if the author is really serious, this book does not contain his best thoughts; they are stored away with the fairest of his possessions. And if he has committed these serious thoughts to writing, it is because men, not the gods, 'have taken his wits away'." From Kieth Critchlow's essay, "The Platonic Tradition on the Nature of Proportion," in *Homage to Pythagoras: Rediscovering Sacred Science*, edited by Christopher Bamford (New York: Lindisfarne Books, 1994), 69.

Being awake

The imaginative faculties at work during dreaming are also in play while we are awake. According to Bergson, being conscious takes an extraordinary amount of effort because the calling up of memories to make sense of fragments of sights and sounds is also *exactly* how we operate when awake.¹⁴ It keeps us in a constant state of tension, an effort that must be given “without cessation” even when we are doing nothing. This process that we constantly engage in is nothing less than a gradual refinement, a way of discovering the essential nature of a thing. In the Renaissance, number and magnitude were used to describe things in terms of proportion and ratio (rather than being purely quantitative). Seeing things as proportional to each other requires the ability to find a reasonable approximation, what was termed the *loco di mezo*. In this view, the particular is not as important to clear thinking as the process of finding the essential. Essential to all understanding is the ability to distill common properties. The process of finding the *loco* is not unlike Bergson’s view of memory tuning.¹⁵ Bergson uses the example of his own dream:

Now the dreamer dreamed that he was speaking before an assembly ... Then in the midst of the auditorium a murmur rose. The murmur augmented; it became a muttering. Then it became a roar, a frightful tumult, and finally there resounded from all parts timed to a uniform rhythm the cries, “Out! Out!” At that moment he awakened. A dog was baying in a neighboring garden, and with each one of his “Wow-wows” one of the cries of “Out! Out!” seemed to be identical. Well here is the infinitesimal moment which it is necessary to seize.

And seize it he does. Bergson realized the immense amount of concentration required for every waking moment—not just the moment when we awake—to choose what memories to use, and which to exclude, to be able to discern that *that* wow-wow sound was the neighbor’s dog and not something else. In Bergson’s telling, imagination is the thing requiring very little effort, while being awake is arduous.

To be awake, you must take your—

¹⁴ For example, a newborn baby doesn’t know that the line she sees in front of her is actually a corner, a meeting of two planes, an edge. A young child understands what a “corner” is, but doesn’t understand how it is made, or what lies beneath it. To cite another example of this “extraordinary effort of recognition,” a newborn does not understand that the creature panting beside him is a dog, and that dogs are not human. A young child understands and recognizes a dog as a dog, but does not know his breed, or the possible problems that might lie around the corner when that dog meets a German Shepherd. The amount of effort required to be conscious increases as we learn more examples from the world of what might happen.

¹⁵ Silvio Belli, *On Ratio and Proportion: The Common Properties of Quantity*, Translation by R. Wassell and Kim Williams (Nexus: Architecture and Mathematics, Kim Williams Books, 2000), 35-6. Silvio Belli was co-founder of the *Accademia Olimpica*. He was a hydraulic engineer involved in the conversion of the Veneto from marsh to farmland. *Loco di mezo* can be translated in English to ‘middle place’ or ‘equilibrium point’.

... entire memory, all your accumulated experience, and you bring this formidable mass of memories to converge upon a single point, in such a way as to insert exactly in the sounds you heard with that one of your memories which is the most capable of being adapted to it. Nay, you must obtain a perfect adherence, for between the memory that you evoke and the crude sensation that you perceive there must not be the least discrepancy; otherwise you would be just dreaming.

He sums it up by saying that without the tension and positive effort required to be awake—i.e. paying attention, making precise judgements, coordinating our current movements with all of the memories of our past—we have left a faculty of mind abundant with perceptions that are rife material for the imagination.¹⁶ Returning to the analogy of Bergson’s dreaming to an architect’s dreaming, there is a way to imagine architecture that is like being awake—paying attention, making precise judgements, etc.—but, there is also the part that is more like dreaming, tapping into abundant minds with perceptions that are rife for imagining.

* * *



This bearded lady, cabinet card circa 1875, is an artifact that recalls the public imagination’s natural fascination with oddity. With oddity comes wonder about a story. The story of Josephine Boisdechêne, born with a genetic mutation, is that by the age of eight, she had grown a beard two inches long. She then became famous traveling around Europe with her father, married a Parisian painter, bore a hirsute son and moved with her family to America to tour with P. T. Barnum.—Project B Pop-Up Side Show Stars, <http://https://www.projectb.com/pages/project-b-pop-up-sideshow-stars#1b>.

¹⁶ Bergson, *Dreams*, 50.

Odd peripheral ‘stuff’

In addition to perception and memory, which operate similarly while either awake or asleep—albeit with different degrees of effort and concentration—Bergson identifies other characteristics specific to dreaming. They are: the dream’s incoherence, the altered state of time, and the odd and somewhat random choice of memories chosen for the story.¹⁷ How do these aspects of dreaming relate to an architect’s design process?

When awake, precision of adjustment is required to exactly match memories to situations (requiring enormous effort so that we can recognize what we are seeing hearing, touching and smelling, even when we are doing ‘nothing’). When dreaming, the relaxed state gives our sense of coherence a lot of play, sometimes leading to very odd situations and transitions from one scene to the next.

Before these bizarre assemblages of images which present no plausible significance, our intelligence (which is far from surrendering the reasoning faculty during sleep, as has been asserted) seeks an explanation, [and] tries to fill the lacunae. It fills them by calling up other memories which, presenting themselves often with the same deformations and the same incoherences as the preceding, demand in their turn a new explanation, and so on indefinitely.

Bergson’s example is a field of green with white spots. It could be a grass lawn with white flowers, or equally, balls on a billiard-table. In the dream, the lawn can actually transform into the billiard table, and this transformation would seem perfectly acceptable to the dreamer.¹⁸ It would only seem odd to someone writing down the dream the next morning. Similarly, we expect coherence in time when we are awake, so that we can operate socially, and live a life “... in common with

¹⁷ Bergson, *Dreams*, 51-55.

¹⁸ This is remarkably similar to an example by Raymond Roussel (French novelist and playwright, 1877-1933) of how he used metonymy to write his books, in a posthumous memoir: *Comment j’ai écrit certains de mes livres*. He used a special method that employed the removal and substitution of text to generate wildly imaginative stories. Roussel was ardently admired by the surrealists, although he cared little for them in return. Roussel’s method is remarkably similar to the example chosen by Bergson to describe the kind of ‘coherence’ at work in the dream process. Here is the English translation of Roussel’s example: “I chose two almost identical words (reminiscent of metagrams). For example, *billard* [billiard table] and *pillard* [plunderer]. To these I added similar words capable of two different meanings, thus obtaining two almost identical phrases. In the case of *billard* and *pillard* the two phrases I obtained were: 1. *Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux billard* [The white letters on the cushions of the old billiard table], 2. *Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux pillard* [The white man’s letters on the hordes of the old plunderer] ... The two phrases found, it was a case of writing a story which could begin with the first and end with the latter.” One wonders if Roussel’s choice of using white objects on a billiard table for his example was an indirect reference to Bergson’s recounting of dream transitions.

our fellows.”¹⁹ Our calibration of time, when relaxed and dreaming, is like a watch without a spring. Time can accelerate at any speed and feel perfectly normal.

In a few seconds a dream can present to us a series of events which will occupy, in the waking state, entire days.

Why do we choose entirely insignificant, even forgettable, events to represent something that seems important in the dream? Bergson, again, attributes this to the state of relaxation:

... the events which reappear by preference in the dream are those of which we have thought most distractedly ... The ego of the dream is an ego that is relaxed; the memories which it gathers most readily are the memories of relaxation and distraction, those which do not bear the mark of effort.

The unremarkable observations that we notice peripherally during the day become the dream-stuff.²⁰

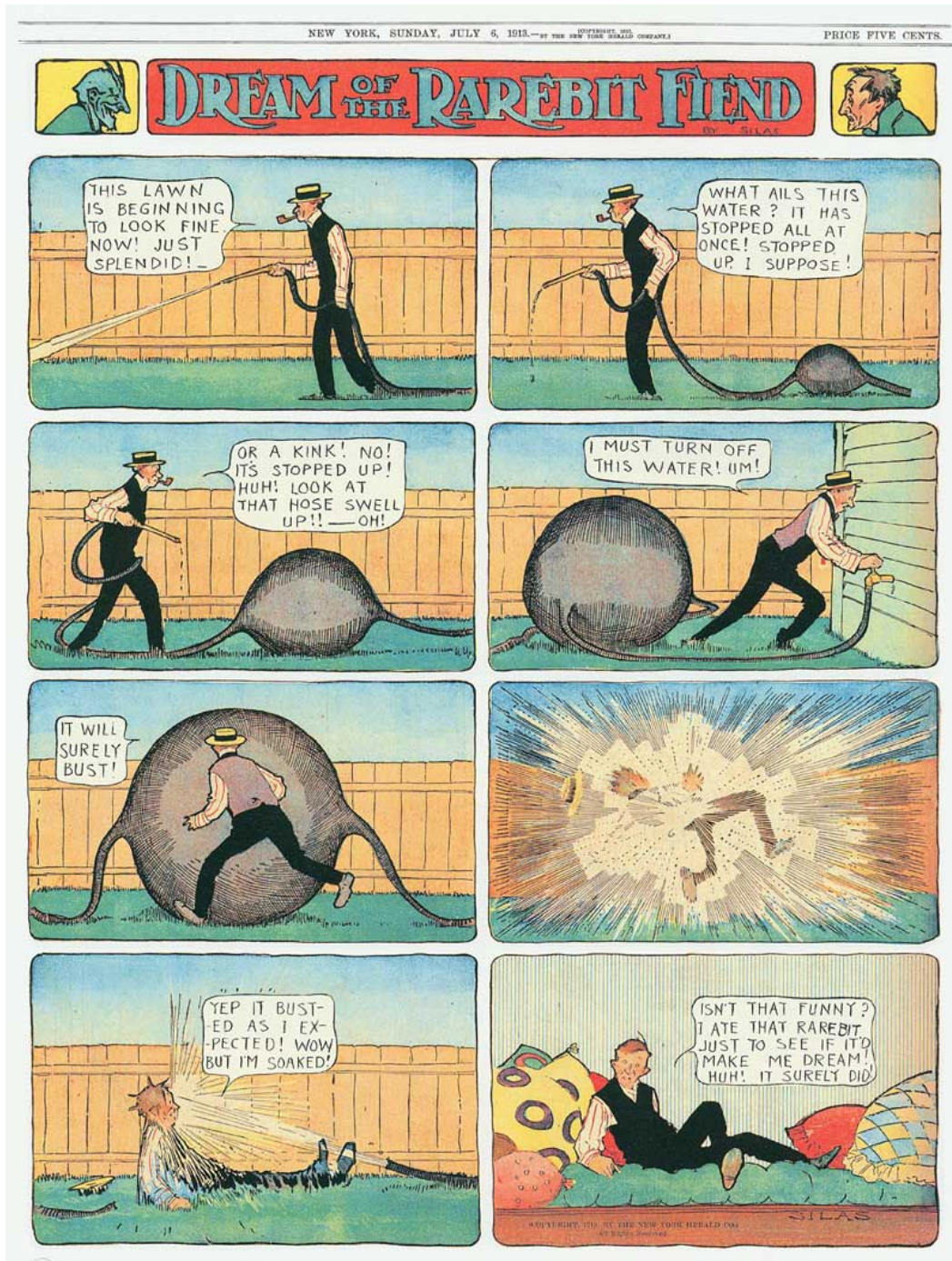
Quite another thing is the ability of the dreaming mind to transform these distracted bits of memory—not necessarily intriguing enough for the waking mind to notice—into something entertaining and interesting in the dream, something that really feeds the imagination, even if it is frightening. Bergson does not really discuss this, but suffice it to say that the dreaming mind has an eye for detail. It’s not the big broad picture that captures our attention so much as the characteristics of its parts. Without the utmost attention to detail, there can be no illusion, and consequently, no intrigue. We see every detail that passes before our eyes, even if we do not consciously remember it, and that is what makes our dreamer-self such a good illusionist.²¹

¹⁹ Bergson’s understanding of waking time bears some resemblance to his understanding of dream time. It accumulates. Past moments bear. It does not merely regulate and tick by. He uses the term duration (*durée*) to express that it is most important to understand that we endure, if we are to be free: “...but it will be seen that the more the effect seems necessarily bound up with the cause, the more we tend to put in the cause itself, as a mathematical consequent in its principle, and thus to cancel the effect of ‘duration’. That under the influence of the same external conditions I do not behave today as I behaved yesterday is not at all surprising, because I *change*, because I *endure*. We are therefore free.” Dream experiences may be a way of occasioning this change if we are stuck. See Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, with an authorized translation by F.L.Pogson, M.A. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928) First published in 1910, 209.

²⁰ Freud and Bergson agree on this.

²¹ Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders*, 227-233. This observation has been stolen from Davies portrayal of a conjurer and a Cambridge graduate sharing their respective accounts of the same event in a London Theatre. The conjurer is the one, between the two, who really understands the art of illusion. The Cambridge graduate is filled with inauthentic ideas that he has read in books.

Illustrators of illusion

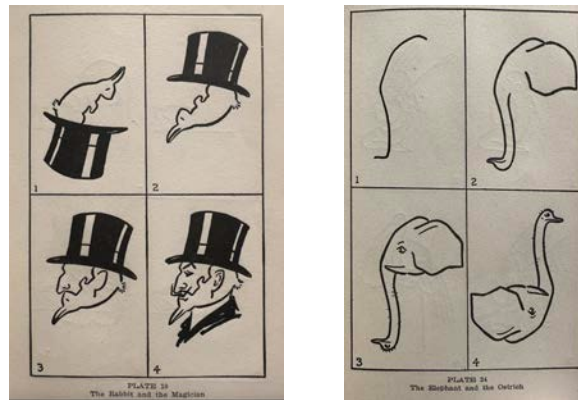


A tiny bulbous section of hose, scarcely noticed during the day, became the dream-stuff.—New York Herald, Sunday, July 6, 1913

Winsor McCay performed with this understanding of the art of illusion in his lightning sketch acts. Some of the attributes of chalk talks actually parallel and illustrate Bergson's conception of how illusions are created in dreaming. Details that seemed irrelevant suddenly become significant

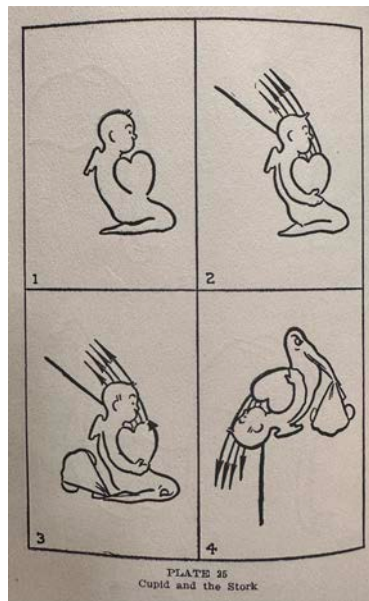
in what was termed an “upside-down picture.” In the manual *How to Chalk Talk*, Harlan Tarbell writes:

*Upside-down pictures have a charm all their own because of the sudden and unexpected effects created. They embrace not only the interesting work of making a picture, but a surprise finish also. The audience thinks it sees the finished picture when the performer stops, but when he turns it upside down another and an entirely different effect magically appears, a new climax is reached.*²²



In “The Rabbit and the Magician,” details are added after the flip. In “The Elephant and the Ostriche,” the details are added before the flip for a surprise finish. In either case, an insignificant detail suddenly assumes significance in understanding the reoriented image.

Equally surprising is a sideways turn.



²² Harlan Tarbell, *How to Chalk Talk* (Chicago: T. S. Denison & Company Publishers, 1924), 51.

Sometimes the Chalk Talker used “Evolution Pictures” as a way to entertain and keep the audience guessing. A detail in a picture which was apparently complete then tells a story by getting turned into something else. The patter or talk designed to accompany the drawing was thought to help deliver the punch.²³



*When grandpa was a little boy
A lot of hair grew on his head;
But now it's walked down on his chin—
At least, that's what my grandpa said.*

Thinking about the dreamer as a kind of illusionist connects the Chalk Talk (or lightening sketch act) to the act of dreaming. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine McCay’s cartoon ‘treatises’ (*Little Nemo* and *Rarebit Fiend*) about dreaming to find clues about how an architect’s imagination might work. McCay’s newspaper cartoons about dreaming overlapped his Chalk Talk performances. Both of them employed surprising transformations as a way to engage their audience. If we short-circuit and go directly from the Chalk Talk to an architect’s imagination, and pretend that an architect’s exploration of an idea might be drawn by hand as a kind of Chalk Talk, then the following connections could be considered with the “audience” as the design team—or even the client. [Here is a synopsis of Tarbell’s recommendations for a good performance]:

- Open the program with a novelty picture, one that can be drawn quickly, something to break the ice and put the audience on friendly terms.
- There are different paces for the Chalk Talk, depending on the audience. A good chalk in vaudeville should close with a bang for a round of applause. A Chautauqua lecturer chalk talks with less speed than the vaudeville man.
- The Talk must be presented in an entertaining style.

²³ Tarbell, *How to Chalk Talk*, 31-39.

- There must be variety. A program of all comedy or heavy dramatic work would not be interesting. Contrast is needed.
- Sometimes a little thing, apparently insignificant, gets the most attention. Your comedy may be sad, and your sad points may be the laugh of the evening. Experience counts in understanding how to put things over.
- To close the program and leave the audience well satisfied and happy, no matter how many tears you have brought forth during the program, close with a note of good cheer.²⁴

A good Chalk Talker was an illusionist that understood the way our minds perceive things and was good at helping the audience imagine things through an orchestrated sequence of lines. Coming back around to how to create an illusion through dreaming (and through drawing), it is very much about gaining an effect through an interesting and entertaining make-up of parts, the sequence of making the parts, and the utmost attention to detail. Before drawings were made on the computer, there was a good deal of looking at drawings that were upside down. (People rarely see their computer screens upside down or sideways.) Architects of a certain age cannot, in fact, design without a pencil or pen in their hand. They cannot talk about or understand the pieces and parts without sketching them. Without knowing it, they still have the skill of the Chalk Talkers of vaudeville days.

* * *

Profound slumber

There are special types of dreams that fall outside the categories listed above, when artists claim their work has been dictated with exactitude from a dream. Bergson put these special dreams into perspective. He cited an anecdote of—

*... Tartini, a violinist-composer of the eighteenth century. As he was trying to compose a sonata and the muse remained recalcitrant, he went to sleep and he saw in a dream the devil, who seized his violin and played with master hand the desired sonata. Tartini wrote it out from memory when he woke. It has come to us under the name of “The Devil’s Sonata.”*²⁵

Coleridge claimed that his poem “Kubla Khan” had been dictated during a dream. This gave Bergson pause. Artists had been authenticating their genius via a claim to dream inspiration for centuries, so a bit of skepticism on Bergson’s part, if he was to be taken seriously, is warranted.

²⁴ Tarbell, *How to Chalk Talk*, 17-21.

²⁵ Bergson, *Dreams*, 29-30.

Artists like this are not really asleep, he claimed. They are in a state of self-induced wakeful-sleep, through opium, or by sleeping through the entire day and waking at nightfall (the method of Marcel Proust). This kind of borderland is—quite naturally—fertile territory for the imagination, and an understandably desirable place for an artist to inhabit, but this is not the ‘special type’ of dream Bergson was interested in. Profound slumber is the place in which *his* special dreams originated. Bergson:

*We know almost nothing of this profound slumber. The dreams which fill it are, as a general rule, the dreams that we forget. Sometimes, nevertheless, we recover something of them. And then it is a very peculiar feeling, strange, indescribable, that we have returned from afar in space and afar in time. These are doubtless very old scenes, scenes of youth or infancy that we live over then in all their details, with a mood which colors them with that fresh sensation of infancy and youth that we seek vainly to revive when awake.*²⁶

Bergson’s allusion to this profound slumber, this strange, indescribable, peculiar feeling is thoroughly investigated by Marcel Proust in his novel *In Search of Lost Time*—with this idea of a sudden unexpected resurrection that he named ‘involuntary memory’. Proust must surely have read this passage from Bergson’s *Dreams*, and taken it to heart. The next chapter about Proust delves into that deeper aspect of the imagination.

Bergson ends his lecture on dreams with an ardent call for “psychical research” into the mysterious phenomenon of profound slumber:

... to explore the most secret depths of the unconscious, to labor in what I have just called the subsoil of consciousness, that will be the principle task of psychology in the century which is opening. I do not doubt that wonderful discoveries await it there ...

This is the counterpart to his concern for a kind of profound wakefulness, which he had been promoting for some time before publishing *Dreams*. Bergson gave a speech on *Le bon sens* eighteen years earlier at an awards ceremony in 1895 at the Sorbonne. According to Hans Gadamer, his speech contained—

*... his criticism of the abstractions of natural science, of language and of legal thinking, his passionate appeal to the inner energy of an intelligence which at each moment wins itself back to itself, eliminating ideas already formed to give place to those in the process of being formed.*²⁷

²⁶ Bergson, *Dreams*, 55-56.

²⁷ Hans Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 23.

Bergson went on to accept the presidency of the British Society for Psychical Research. In his opening address to the Society, on May 28, 1913, in hinting at the possibility of telepathy, he gives a wonderful summary of his ideas about waking perception, which are germane given that he understands perception, memory and reasoning to be fully alive both when we are awake and when we are asleep. Here is a distinctly British, distinctly scientific, report from the *London Times*:

... one of the rôles of the brain is to limit the vision of the mind, to render its action more efficacious. This is what we observe in regard to the memory, where the rôle of the brain is to mask the useless part of our past in order to allow only the useful remembrances to appear. Certain useless recollections, or dream remembrances, manage nevertheless to appear also, and to form a vague fringe around the distinct recollections. It would not be at all surprising if perceptions of the organs of our senses, useful perceptions, [which] were the result of a selection or of a canalization . . . [arise] in the interest of our action, but that there should yet be around those perceptions a fringe of vague perceptions, capable of becoming more distinct in extraordinary, abnormal cases. Those would be precisely the cases with which psychical research would deal.²⁸

The above passage can be seen as a kind of end-around for science, which hints about a way for the scientific study of dreams and telepathy to lead us towards proof of vision beyond the visible world. Considering the imagination as a powerful agent for action of any sort, the kind of action that boils up a war, or enables a child to love and be loved, and realizing that the structures we live in—the structures we inhabit intimately—ultimately becomes the structure of our logic seeking mind, it makes sense to pour over the details of our most expressive and imaginative faculty (the dreamer), and to see how the two (the logic seeker and the dreamer) relate to each other.²⁹ According to Edwin Slossin, the American professor, author and editor, who wrote the introduction to the English edition of *Dreams*—and who shared Bergson’s enthusiasm for bridging the gap between science and the public’s grasp of it—Bergson confessed to committing himself to the question of immortality—vision beyond the visible—because “... he of late [had] become quite convinced of it.”³⁰

²⁸ Bergson, *Dreams*, 12. The *London Times* account is cited by Edwin Slossin in the Introduction.

²⁹ See Bergson’s *Time and Free Will*.

³⁰ Bergson, *Dreams*, 11.

Flash nap

Bergson's call to "explore the depths of the unconscious" in the twentieth century fully plays out in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, and then in succeeding novels such as the mid-century fiction of Saul Bellow. Both authors claim a gentle version of telepathy that is always at work in the act of making things. Bellow's novel, *Humbolt's Gift*, is essentially a modern American paperback version of Proust's *Search*. It is condensed and easy to read. The ideas of Paul Valery (a contemporary of Bergson) about how poetry emerges also surface in *Humbolt's Gift*. In the book, Saul Bellow describes this "labor in the subsoil of consciousness" as he searches for his next novel. He's not at all sure he should even write a next novel, but he knows that there is something important about living in Chicago where he grew up, and that he can't get the enigmatic life story of his mentor, Humbolt Fleisher (who in reality is the poet Delmore Schwartz) out of his mind.³¹ Thoughts of Valery float through the narrator's mind as he navigates a series of terror-inspiring situations dreamed up by Rinaldo Cantibile, a mobster he is indebted to, with an imagination that far outpaces his own. He thinks of something in Valery's notebook: "*Trouve avant de chercher.*"

This finding before seeking was my special gift. If I had any gift.

Bellow is not always cautious about the ideas that surface in his mind. He wanders from Valery to Plato's myth of Er. He 'wanders' into Plato's belief in reincarnation, and that the soul is supposed to be sealed by oblivion before it returns to earthly life. He wonders—

Was it possible that my oblivion might be slightly defective?

His mind is constantly wandering in search of something, but the mobster figure of Cantibile, who is far more inventive and splendid than the narrator, is always there to check the authenticity of his thoughts:

*Because of this kind of idea I now found myself under Cantibile's gaze. He examined me. He also looked tender concerned threatening punitive and even lethal.*³²

³¹ Saul Bellow, *Humbolt's Gift* (New York: Avon Books, 1973), 66. In the story, Charlie Citrine is the narrator. He thinks to himself while driving to meet a Chicago mobster to settle a debt: "I hadn't yet decided in what order to proceed. I never decide such things but wait for them to be revealed ... my mind was in one of its Chicago states. How should I describe this phenomenon? In a Chicago state I infinitely lack something, my heart swells, I feel a tearing eagerness. The sentient part of my soul wants to express itself. There are some of the symptoms of an overdose of caffeine. At the same time I have the sense of being the instrument of external powers. They are using me either as an example of human error or as the mere shadow of desirable things to come. I drove."

³² Saul Bellow, *Humbolt's Gift*, 188.



McCay connects the new skyscrapers growing up in New York City with the idea of a search. In the top frame, at the top of a building, Nemo exclaims: "They are looking for us! We must get down from here!"—New York Herald, Sunday, September 29, 1907.

Cantabile is Citrine's alter ego; checking him, waking him up, bringing him into the present moment by threatening to kill him while forcing him into a bathroom stall, or parading him through a Playboy Club, or taking him up in high winds to a building under construction with no exterior walls:

My chief worry was how to get down. Though the papers underplay it people are always falling off. But however scared and harassed, my sensation-loving soul also was gratified. I knew that it took too much to gratify me. The gratification-threshold of my soul had risen too high. I must bring it down again. It was excessive. I must, I knew, change everything

In the novel, Bellow is constantly searching for something, trying to understand what had happened to Humbolt Fleisher, his deceased mentor. Why had Humboldt failed to ever write again? Why did he drink himself to death? Why the spectacular failure? Through all of this questioning runs a fascination with sleep: that between the conceiving of something and doing of it there is actually a very brief instant of deep sleep, a kind of flash-nap. This resonates with Bergson's thinking about the act of conscious thought, of summoning the past in service to the present moment and it also echos Proust's "search." Bellow is the dreamer, feeling out his past, and the mobster in the story is his wide-awake counterpart. Bellow is terrified of the mobster, but he is more terrified of his inability to act. His most authentic feeling is the sadness he feels in watching the old Chicago neighborhood where he grew up disintegrate:

I know such tough guys. This very neighborhood produced them. Informers to the metaphysical-historical police against fellows like me whose hearts ache at the destruction of the past. But I had come here to be melancholy, to be sad about the wrecked walls and windows, the missing doors, the fixtures torn out, and the telephone cables ripped away and sold as junk. More particularly, I had come to see whether the house in which Naomi Lutz [his childhood sweetheart] had lived was still standing. It was not. That made me feel very low.³³

Bellow's autobiographical protagonist is a 1970s version of a man playing out Bergson's conception of change as something entirely personal. In this sense, it echos Proust's writing. It is interesting to note that the scientific psychic research called for by Bergson was actually conducted by a series of novelists. Bergson sees something he calls 'duration' as a "coincidence of our ego with itself"³⁴ requiring the ability to see where our own ideas come from. That is to say, because change is entirely personal, we are entirely free; not bound by any particular style or rules of the game. We are free to understand things through our *own* story. Bergson's thinking is especially relevant today as we contemplate the implications of Artificial Intelligence, which is not at all personal. It is the opposite of personal. This idea of freedom was cherished by Bergson. All of his writing about images, imagination, time, sleep and dreaming—about the body's individual formulation of our memories as a call to act in the present moment—and about figuring out which thoughts are entirely our own, and which are not, resonate strongly with the process of making—not only ourselves—but things, and places for things. In other words, for making Architecture.

* * *

³³ Saul Bellows, *Humbolt's Gift*, 76.

³⁴ Mary Whiton Calkins, "Henri Bergson: Personalist," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol.21, No. 6 (Nov., 1912), 666-675.

Before leaving this chapter and seeing Bergson’s thoughts about dreaming flower into the writing of Marcel Proust,³⁵ (whether or not Bergson and Proust would have endorsed that connection), there should be a last word about Bergson’s thinking about how dreams—particularly their similarity to the process of being awake—carried over to his thinking about a kind of creative evolution, one that goes beyond Darwin’s evolution and his “survival of the fittest.”³⁶ Darwin’s ideas still shape so much of our current thinking: on politics, economics, culture and society, as well as our understanding of the natural world. But Bergson’s idea of creative evolution is something an architect can think about, as a maker of environments that can act as a kind of ‘holiday’ to our normal way of thinking (and hence, can be an extremely powerful point of influence), environments that, like dreams, might act as a new axis on which our thoughts could pivot.



The pivoting images of Bergson’s day, piloting thoughts about the imagination. The New Improved Sciopticon, a magic lantern nicknamed the “peacock,” Pettibone Manufacturing Co., Cincinnati, Ohio patented in 1888.

³⁵ “...with the roseate dreaminess of the setting sun, ceaselessly changing yet remaining always in harmony, around the less mutable colours of the flowers themselves, with all that is most profound, most evanescent, most mysterious—all that is infinite—in the passing hour, it seemed to have made them blossom in the sky itself.” Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I, Swann’s Way*. Trans. C. K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D. J. Enright. repr., New York: The Modern Library, 2003. Originally published in 1913.

³⁶ Barbara Kingsolver, *Unsheltered*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 319-323. Kingsolver sums up Darwin neatly as four principles. First principle: Individuals within a population are variable; Second principle: Traits in their variation are inherited; Third principle: Death. More lives are born than are granted to live; and, Fourth principle: Survival is not haphazard. Creatures vary in their ability to survive, not by chance but owing to the traits they inherited from their progenitors. Kingsolver’s interest is similar to Bergson’s: people have an inability to adopt new ways of thinking when it upsets the status quo (as Darwinism did). Unfortunately, the status quo was able to appropriate Darwinism into Social Darwinism.

Creative evolution

Creative evolution stems from Bergson's concept of 'duration'. He divided philosophy into three parts. The trifurcation led to understanding reality as a continual renewal, a contingent of 'duration'. The types of reality are:

1. Ancient—Reality is perceived as states of being (eg. infancy, childhood, adulthood, old age).³⁷
2. Enlightened—We gain the ability to determine relative movement, so reality becomes a continuous relation of time and space.
3. A "new" conception—Bergson's conception—We understand reality as flux.

In Bergson's conception, we are not just a series of snapshots of states. We are not a predictable series of points in space and time. We are, rather, capable of creating ourselves, of collapsing the points to continually effect change, because we understand change to be the ultimate reality.

Form is only a snapshot view of a transition. What is real is the continual change.

He links the older views to language:

... the mind derives ... three kinds of representations: (1) qualities, (2) forms of essences, (3) acts. To these three ways of seeing correspond three categories of words: (1) adjectives, (2) substantives, (3) verbs, which are the primordial elements of language.

All *three* of these symbolize states, even the verbs. "He is running," really means: "He is in the state of running." The structure of our language reinforces our stable views of mobility.³⁸ We are stuck.

³⁷"Examine closely what is in your mind when you speak of an action in the course of accomplishment. The idea of change is there, I am willing to grant, but it is hidden in the penumbra ... it is by this, and by this only, that the complex act is distinguished and defined. We should be very much embarrassed if we had to imagine the movements inherent in the acts of eating, drinking, fighting, etc ... the mind manages to take stable views of the instability." Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Authorized translation by Arthur Mitchell, Ph.D. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1924), 303. First published in 1911.

³⁸ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 302. Foucault also thinks about the relation of language to painting. In *This Is Not a Pipe*, Trans. James Harkness (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983), 9, Foucault sees it as an infinite relation. "It is not that words are imperfect or that, when confronted by the visible, they prove insuperable, inadequate. Neither can be reduced to the others terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say..."



Animal Locomotion: Plate 44 (Man Taking Off His Boater Hat), photographed and directed by Eadweard Muybridge, 1887

The cinematographic view

In 1911, Coney Island burned to the ground, and Winsor McCay left the *New York Herald* and the original *Little Nemo in Slumberland* behind. Also in 1911: Bergson's book, *Creative Evolution* was published. Moving pictures had just been invented. Not surprisingly, this new and amazing portrayal of reality was incorporated into Bergson's thinking. He describes the process of a reel of film, a series of individual snapshots, rolling through an apparatus which reconstitutes the mobility of previous events.

Such is the contrivance of the cinematograph. And such also is our knowledge. Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to re-compose their becoming artificially. We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality ... Perception, intellection, language so proceed in general. Whether we would think becoming, or express it, or even perceive it, we hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us. We may therefore sum up what we have been saying in the conclusion that the mechanism of our ordinary knowledge is of a cinematographical kind.³⁹

³⁹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 306.



Animal Locomotion: Plate 156 (Woman Leaping Over Stool), photographed and directed by Eadweard Muybridge, 1887

Bergson is setting up an idea about self-creation, and he does not see the new technology as a part of that. He rather uses it as a metaphor for an older way of thinking. And perhaps there is a rightness to this. Any new technology first imitates the older model. Cars were horseless carriages with engines of a certain ‘horsepower’; CAD (computer-aided design) produced sets of drawings that looked exactly the same as hand drawings. Older technology (for a brief marvelous period) costumes the new way of doing things. Bergson and McCay shared a fascination with that new world in transition, by writing about it or drawing it. McCay embraced the transformation, turning the dreamland that surrounded him to cartoons about dreaming. And he evolved his vaudeville act into an animated movie. (Moving pictures were getting longer and longer, and turning into something that would put all of vaudeville out of work.)

But Bergson was not so enamored. Bergson grappled with the turning of ‘ordinary’ knowledge into ‘extraordinary’. And, he was not satisfied with the cinematographical method of thinking. He wanted a picture of reality that was *real*, a better reality, with the right rhythm, a reality that was created with the imagination, an imagination that believed in its own splendid skill, understood its own character, and its ability to make its own wishes come true.⁴⁰ He was not enthused with the delusion of moving pictures. He saw it as a kind of nonsense or pretending about realism, with motion that was choppy and comical:

⁴⁰ Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders*, 166-167. The descriptors have been stolen from a passage by Davies of nineteenth century romantic theater, and the importance of mirage and its stunning effect. Davies’ characters are from a romantic theater that is becoming extinct.

It leads to a mind that, never able to satisfy itself and never finding where to rest, persuades itself, no doubt, that it imitates by its instability the very movement of the real. But though, by straining itself to the point of giddiness, it may end by giving itself the illusion of mobility, its operation has not advanced it a step, since it remains as far as ever from its goal. In order to advance with the moving reality, you must replace yourself within it ... you will always experience the disappointment of the child who tries by clapping his hands together to crush the smoke ... Philosophy perceived this as soon as it opened its eyes. The arguments of Zeno of Elea, although formulated with a very different intention, have no other meaning⁴¹

We are confronted with a similar feeling of false pretending today, when we look at renderings of future buildings made in the computer. Only, they are not “straining to the point of giddiness” with an “illusion of mobility,” so much as presenting an illusion that is stultifying in its perfection, inhabited by people who are, theoretically, *caught* in action, i.e., ‘real’.



(left) *The Cameraman*, Buster Keaton (1928)



(right) *Mary Pickford with a movie camera* (1916)

Movies circa 1907 were a few people with a camera and just the outline of a story, shot from beginning to end on the roof of a building in broad daylight. The art of editing was just beginning. Had Bergson waited a decade or two, and had he been in the viewing room watching a version of a film that was *almost* complete, where things had been cut out and removed but for a few shots that would be taken and incorporated,⁴² it might have been a source of astonishment, for he would see that everything was different than he had seen it when it had been filmed. The

⁴¹ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 307-308.

⁴² *Ibid*, 152

skill of the cutting, the juxtapositions, and the varieties of pace would have been a marvel. He would have witnessed something closer to his concept of the flow of personal time.⁴³

Bergson's understanding of reality as flux came from his roots in Greek philosophy. Bergson:

*Plato expresses it in his magnificent language when he says that God, unable to make the world eternal, gave it Time, a moving image of eternity.*⁴⁴

Aristotle wrote that there is—

*... in the movement of the universe an aspiration of things towards the divine perfection, and consequently an ascent toward God ...*⁴⁵

Bergson refers elliptically to the Absolute, and sees a kind of rushing consciousness expressed with infinite variability in all kinds of creatures and plants as they invent ways to sustain their feeling of happiness in the world. He is most concerned about being in a constant state of renewal:

*The liveliest thought will freeze in the formula which expresses it.*⁴⁶

There is a sense of larger purpose to be gained from continual re-invention. Architectural dreaming lives in this domain where the inventions—the vision of a few—create the mental landscape for many. For Bergson, though our creations and contributions are personal, there is ultimately a greater good for our fellow conscious beings, and perhaps even for the suprasensible world.

The dog food level of things

Bergson's call for 'psychical research' into the mysterious phenomenon of profound slumber is answered in the twentieth century through the development of the novel and the birth of cinema. Just so, toward the end of *Humbolt's Gift*, the protagonist visits a professor who is

⁴³ Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders*, 152.

⁴⁴ Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 318.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 322.

⁴⁶ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Chapter II, 138, as quoted by Mary Whiton Calkins, *Henri Bergson: Personalist*, *The Philosophical Review*, Vol.21, No. 6 (Nov., 1912), 673.

performing for him as a kind of analyst, and he tries to understand the psyche, sleep and dreams, and what it all means. He has read a pamphlet. (He dares to use the word ‘soul’)—⁴⁷

“Yes,” said Professor Scheldt. “The soul, when you sleep, enters the suprasensible world, or at least one of its regions. To simplify, it enters its own element.”

“Now, as we sleep, the pamphlet says, the words that we have spoken all day long are vibrating, and echoing about us.”

“Not literally, the words,” Dr. Scheldt corrected.

“No, but the feeling-tones, the joy or pain, the purpose of the words. Through the vibrations and echoes of what we have thought and felt and said we commune as we sleep with the beings of the hierarchy . . . we’ve said such stupid and dull things, that the higher beings hear only babbling and grunting and TV commercials—the dog-food level of things. This says nothing to them. What pleasure can these higher beings take in this kind of materialism, devoid of higher thought or poetry? As a result, all that we can hear in sleep is matter creaking and hissing and washing, the rustling of plants, and the air conditioning. So we are incomprehensible to the higher beings. They can’t influence us and they themselves suffer a corresponding privation. Have I got it right?”

“Yes, by and large.”

The mysteries of matter “creaking and hissing,”—(and what is architectural dreaming if not exactly that?)—these mysteries are mined by Marcel Proust in *In Search of Lost Time*, in what could be considered the longest, and perhaps the most notable manifestation of Bergson’s quest to understand the nature of imagination.

⁴⁷ Saul Bellow, *Humbolt’s Gift*, 267.

5

Igniting memory—
Marcel Proust



Portrait of Marcel Proust in 1908, by Otto (Popperfoto)

Imagination grows from memory

Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust both hovered around the notion that imagination grows from memory, but each dramatized it differently: Bergson through his love of ideas, and Proust through his love of words. For things to have beauty, they must be made with love, and so the first and primary love of each is significant. Edgar Degas once complained to Stéphane Mallarmé that he was having trouble writing poems, though “he was full of ideas.” “My dear Degas,” returned Mallarmé, “poems are not made out of ideas. They are made out of words.”

This dissertation attempts to understand architectural drawing—a.k.a. McCay’s cartoon treatise of the imagination—through the ‘ideas’ (and words) of Freud, Bergson and Proust. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to the subject of imagination which, in Proust’s mind, is how imagination works. Sights, sounds and taste merge together to remind us of things from our past. We imagine something that is not there, but the resulting meld is present as something new.

Bergson is sometimes compared to Lucretius, because he liked to speak figuratively. Unlike other philosophical texts that set forth a logic based upon definitions and premises, many of Bergson's ideas—particularly in *On Dreams* and *Laughter*—were described as metaphors, and so he became popular with the general public. It was appealing because it captured the nature of imagination itself.

Bergson, on the importance of trying to understand the force of the comic:

*... the receding wave leaves behind a remnant of foam on the sandy beach. The child, who plays hard by, picks up a handful, and, the next moment is astonished to find that nothing remains in his grasp but a few drops of water ... Laughter comes into being in the self-same fashion.*¹

And Bergson, on dreams:

*... he was extending his arm toward what in his dream appeared to him to be the image of a young girl. Little by little this image melted into that of the full moon ...*²

Bergson's philosophy captured the ideas floating around France at that time, circa 1900, into a kind of net, and set them free, ideas about reality understood as the process of change itself. *Dreams* and *Laughter* both have surfaces that shimmer and they are short enough to read in one sitting. They offer a glimpse into his more scholarly works which are less lyrical and so are difficult to comprehend. The scholarly works *do* analyze—take apart, and then reassemble, as a classical philosopher must—the quality and shape of the world as a representation.³ But, the

¹ The full quote: "Such is the truceless warfare of the waves on the surface of the sea, whilst profound peace reigns in the depths below. The billows clash and collide with each other, as they try to find their level. A fringe of snow-white foam, feathery and frolicsome, follows their changing outlines. From time to time, the receding wave leaves behind a remnant of foam on the sandy beach. The child, who plays hard by, picks up a handful, and, the next moment is astonished to find that nothing remains in his grasp but a few drops of water ... Laughter comes into being in the self-same fashion. It indicates a slight revolt on the surface of social life. It instantly adopts the changing form of the disturbance." Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on The Meaning of the Comic*, Authorized translation by Cloudsley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 200.

² The full quote: "... he was awakened by a flash of light projected from the dark lantern of the night nurse. Such are often the dreams provoked by a bright and sudden light. Very different are those which are suggested by a mild and continuous light like the moon. A. Krauss tells how one day on awakening he perceived that he was extending his arm toward what in his dream appeared to him to be the image of a young girl. Little by little this image melted into that of the full moon which darted its rays upon him. It is a curious thing that one might cite other examples of dreams where the rays of the moon, caressing the eyes of the sleeper, evoked before him virginal apparitions. May we not suppose that such might have been the origin in antiquity of the fable of Endymion—Endymion the shepherd, lapped in perpetual slumber, for whom the goddess Selene, that is, the moon, is smitten with love while he sleeps?" Henri Bergson, *Dreams*, Translated with an Introduction by Edwin E. Slossin. (New York: B.W.Huebsch, 1914), 20,21.

³ Robert Klawitter, "Henri Bergson and James Joyce's Fictional World," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol.3, No. 4 (1966), 429-437.

imagination has nothing whatever to do with the neat packaging that logic provides. It lives instead in the realm of novels.

To be a writer in the early twentieth century was to be markedly influenced by Bergson's ideas about the self. It was present, irrevocably *there*—needing to be either discredited or embraced—addressing the process of how we tell ourselves stories, and of how that process enables us to find our authentic self. Bergson's call for “psychical research” at the end of his lecture (turned book) *On Dreams*, was to “explore the most secret depths of the unconscious, to labor in ... the subsoil of consciousness.” That became not only the principle task of psychology in the succeeding decades, but inadvertently, a call to modern writers to explore what Bergson called ‘the immediate data of consciousness,’⁴ a critical aspect of how imagination grows from memory.

His thinking directly influenced T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. Eliot was initially hostile to his thinking,⁵ but later came around to it by writing about the importance of tradition to poetry. Joyce seemed only to enjoy poking fun at it. Joyce in *Finnegan's Wake*:

... ‘quality’ and ‘tality’ are the same thing in the sophology of ‘Bitchson’.

It was really Marcel Proust whose writing breathed life and color into the form of Bergson's thought. It is Proust who animated the pretty, fluttering, languorous progress of the butterfly—elaborating Bergson's philosophy of fugitive images that alight on a series of soft, fragrant surfaces—“an idle butterfly, dawdling on the cup of a flower”⁶—by writing phrase upon phrase, on a succession of pads of paper, on his lap, in his bed, in the bedroom that was a semblance of all his many bedrooms, which were reconstituted every morning, or evening, when he awoke.

⁴ Matthew Taunton, “Modernism, Time and Consciousness: The Influence of Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust,” British Library website, 25 May 2016, <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/modernism-time-and-consciousness-the-influence-of-henri-bergson-and-marcel-proust?mobile=off>

⁵ Philip Le Brun, “T. S. Eliot and Henri Bergson,” *The Review of English Studies*, Vol.18, No. 70 (May, 1967), 149-161. T. S. Eliot initially protested-too-much. He eventually came more to Bergson's way of thinking and wrote “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in which he maintained that the greatness of the new is an incorporation rather than a rejection of the past. Eliot says in the essay: “This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.” For Eliot, the traditional poet, or artist of any sort, with this sensibility is not a conformist; “what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it.”

⁶ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume II, Within a Budding Grove*, Translated by C. K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D. J. Enright (New York: The Modern Library), 2003, 516. This passage about the butterfly refers to Marcel's first glimpse of a girl he thinks he is falling in love with, Albertine. “For it was the one that I would have chosen above all others, convinced as I was, with a botanist's satisfaction, that it was not possible to find gathered together rarer specimens than these...”

A family fascination

Proust and Bergson were related, literally. Bergson was married to Proust's cousin.⁷ But a gulf separated them, which may have been the fact that they were much alike.⁸ They both wrote about the important role that memory plays in forming things in our mind, and they both valued the solitude and the quiet necessary for thinking about it. In a story related by Bergson, he complained at one time or another to Proust about noise, and in response, Proust sent him a pair of his favorite kind of ear-plugs. Bergson was proud to say that he never used them.⁹ They also shared an appreciation for humor. A “far cry from the gloomiest book ever written,” according to Roger Shattuck, Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time* is often not just ‘lost in time’ but also ‘lost in translation’. Like Freud and Bergson, his interest in dreaming—(or in his case, daydreaming, falling asleep and waking up)—is commingled with humor, but his comic tone remains hidden to many in the English translation. According to Shattuck, in the original French, he consistently provides comic relief in his asides. He may suddenly, for example, provide a dissertation on monocle styles;¹⁰ or get caught—slapstick style—in a revolving door;¹¹ or, narrate his first kiss as the sudden incongruous consciousness of the size of his *amour's* nose, as it grows nearer and nearer. ‘Marcel’ and ‘the Narrator’, (who are actually the same person, although we are kept in suspense about that for several volumes), form a contrasting pair like the classic comic and straight man. His sense of timing is always too slow or too fast. Too fast: he loses interest in the girl just as she becomes available to him. Too slow: when the timing is perfect he becomes paralyzed.¹² According to Shattuck, the novel begins with a comic vaudevillian stumble. In the very beginning of the book, he “fumbles his timing in falling asleep.” Then, it ends with an ironic

⁷ Proust was a page boy at Bergson's wedding to his cousin, Louise Neuberger. Bergson was twelve years older than Proust, and, in addition to the years that separated them, they were divided by politics. Proust was passionate about the Dreyfus Affair, and Bergson resented the cultural war that came about because of it. The Dreyfus Affair was a scandal that began in 1894 when captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French artillery officer, was falsely convicted and sent to life imprisonment for purportedly communicating military secrets to the German embassy in Paris. He was imprisoned for almost five years. Since Dreyfus was of Jewish decent, the affair from 1894 to 1906 divided France into pro-republican, anticlerical Dreyfusards and pro-army, mostly Catholic “anti-Dreyfussards.” It radicalized French politics. Eventually, Dreyfus was exonerated and reinstated in the French Army, where he served in World War I.

⁸ Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, Translated by Euan Cameron (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000), 128.

⁹ Among Proust's notes in *Le Carnet de 1908* were these: “Bergson did not like to be preceded by anyone or questioned, and he preferred to be left alone by friends and colleagues. Scarcely lavish in his use of footnotes in his books, he occasionally inserted them in order to indicate his independent position with regard to those doctrines that one might absent-mindedly compare to his.”

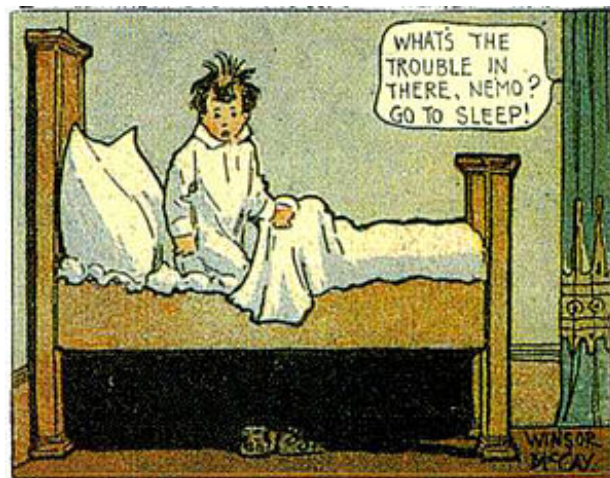
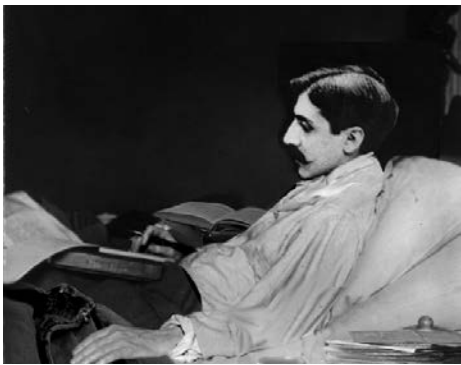
¹⁰ Roger Shattuck, *Marcel Proust*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 75.

¹¹ Shattuck, *Marcel Proust*, 78.

¹² *Ibid*, 77.

twist. “At the close, he picks the wrong time to settle down to producing a work of art.” He believes he is near death.¹³ His vision is comic, and hence human.

Regardless of the separateness of Bergson’s and Proust’s personal lives and their shared comic sensibility,—sad, because they might have enjoyed talking with one another about time, memory, and the mysterious connection between the two,¹⁴—Proust seems to have woken up one day with the conviction that in order to truly know himself, he *must* make his own personal ‘Bergsonian’ search through his past by writing a semi-autobiographical novel. When the first part of *In Search of Lost Time* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*) was published in 1913, people referred to it as a Bergsonian novel. Not surprisingly, Proust denied this, although he admitted an unconscious rapport.



Marcel Proust and Winsor McCay shared a fascination with the triggering of the imagination.

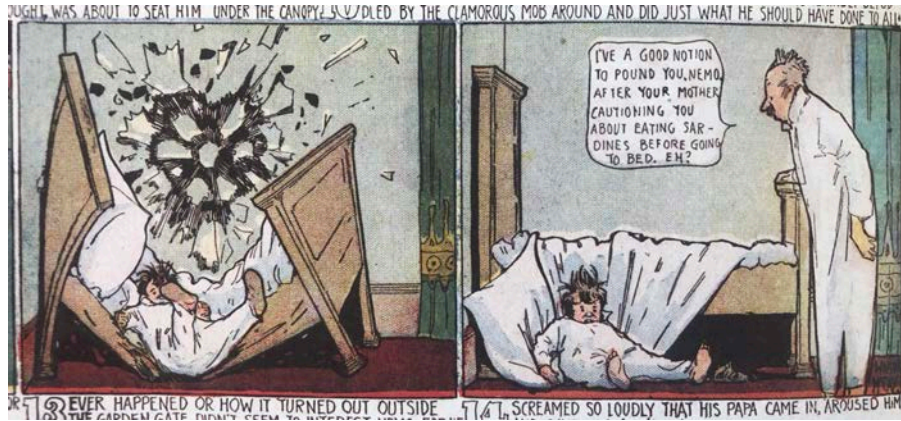
The imagination of little Marcel and Little Nemo happened—in bed

Bergson had an obvious influence on Proust, but there may also be a hidden and unexpected one from Winsor McCay. McCay’s famous cartoons of a boy dreaming in his bed are published just after Freud’s and Bergson’s works on dreams, and just before the publishing of Proust’s novel. McCay inhabited a world apart from the literary minds in Paris and London and had no real formal education, only his intuitive fascination with representing the dreamworld with a remarkable facility for drawing. It is quite possible that Proust was aware of *Little Nemo* because the *International Herald Tribune* was published in Paris, extending McCay’s fame across the Atlantic.

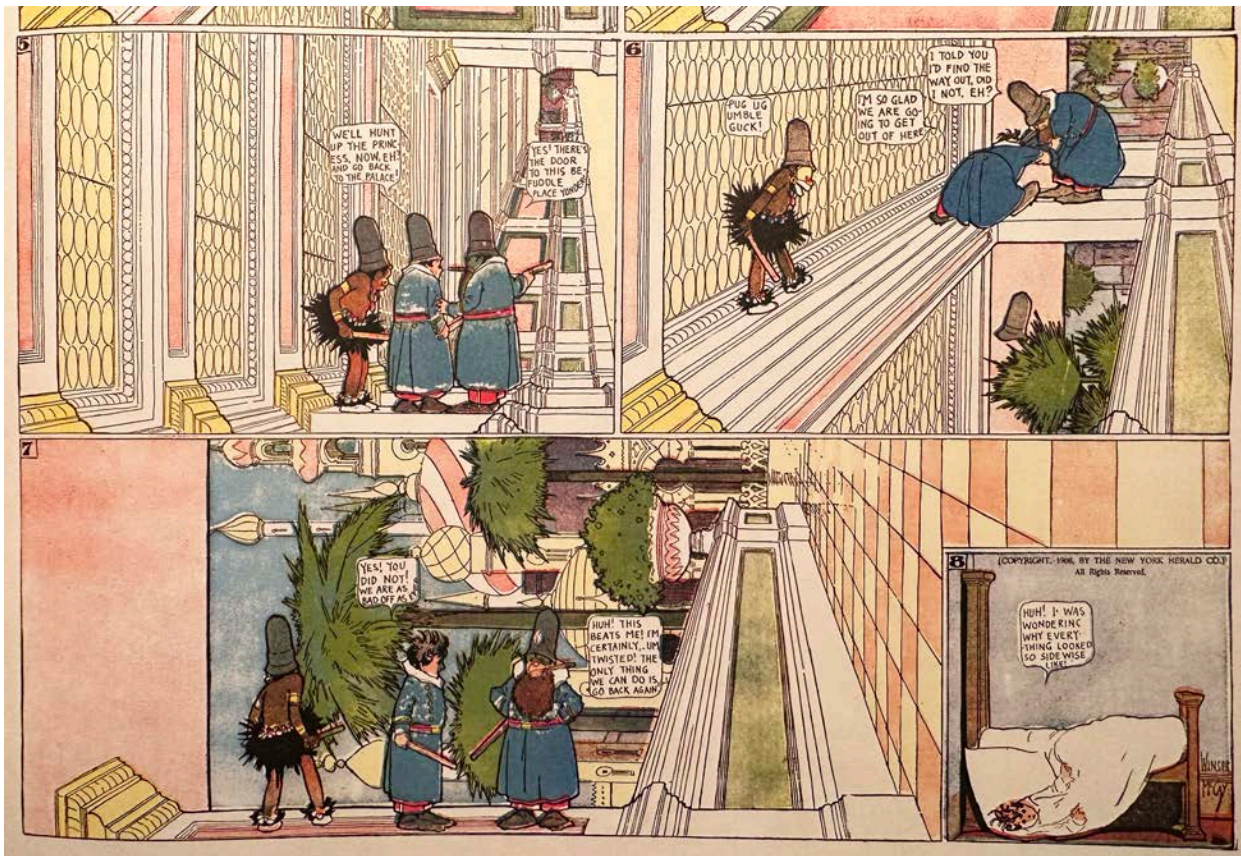
¹³ Shattuck, *Marcel Proust*, 77.

¹⁴ Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life* (New York: Vintage International, 1998).

In any case, the young Nemo dreamed himself through a nocturnal progression of rooms that expanded, bloomed, and pivoted in a way remarkably similar to little Marcel's rooms in *In Search of Lost Time*. He often woke up with his limbs crazily askew. Were his limbs in the shape of his dreamed fall (as McCay supposed), or was the fall precipitated from the shape to which his sleeping body had unconsciously arranged itself (as Bergson supposed)?

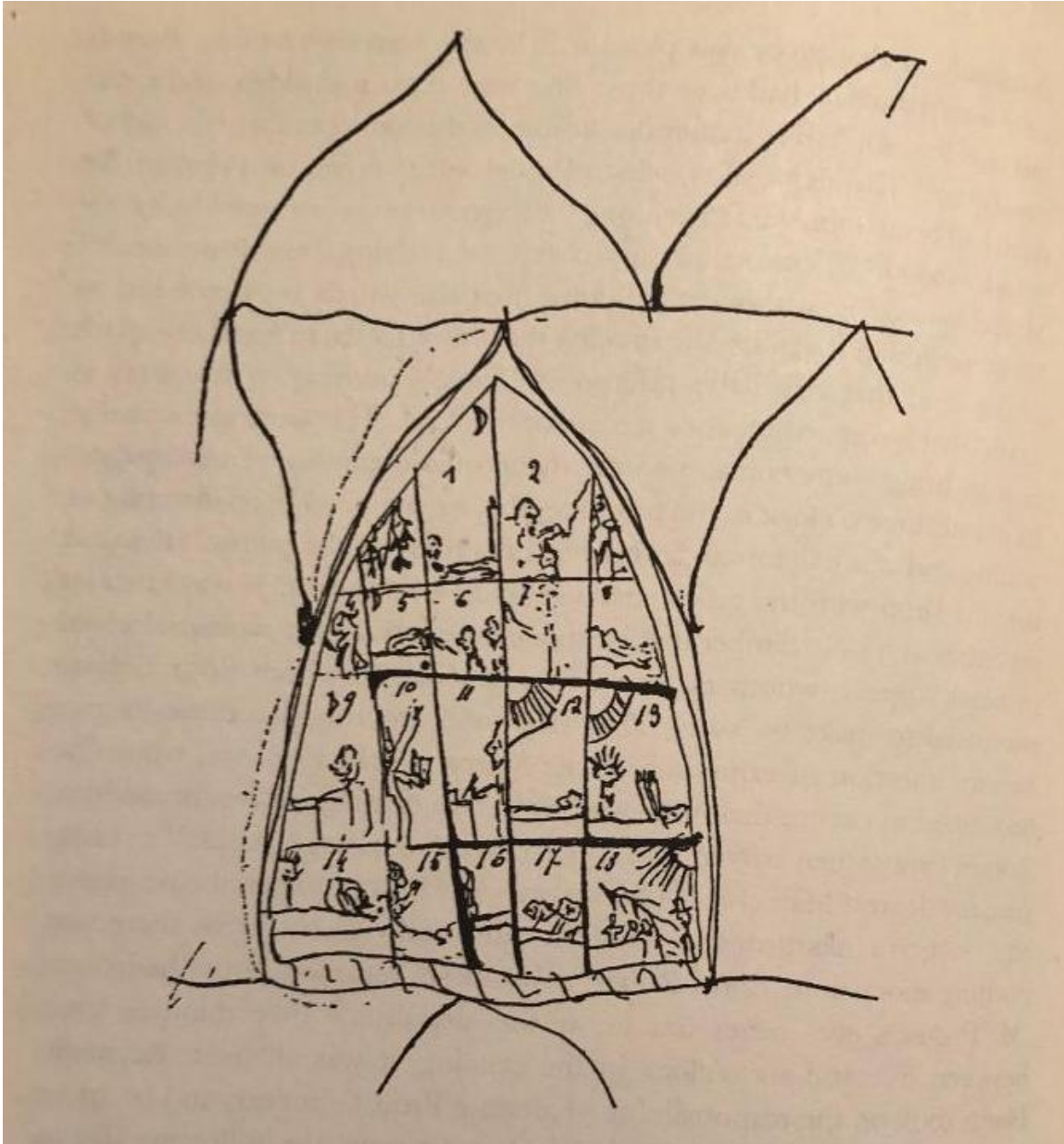


Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, January 14, 1906



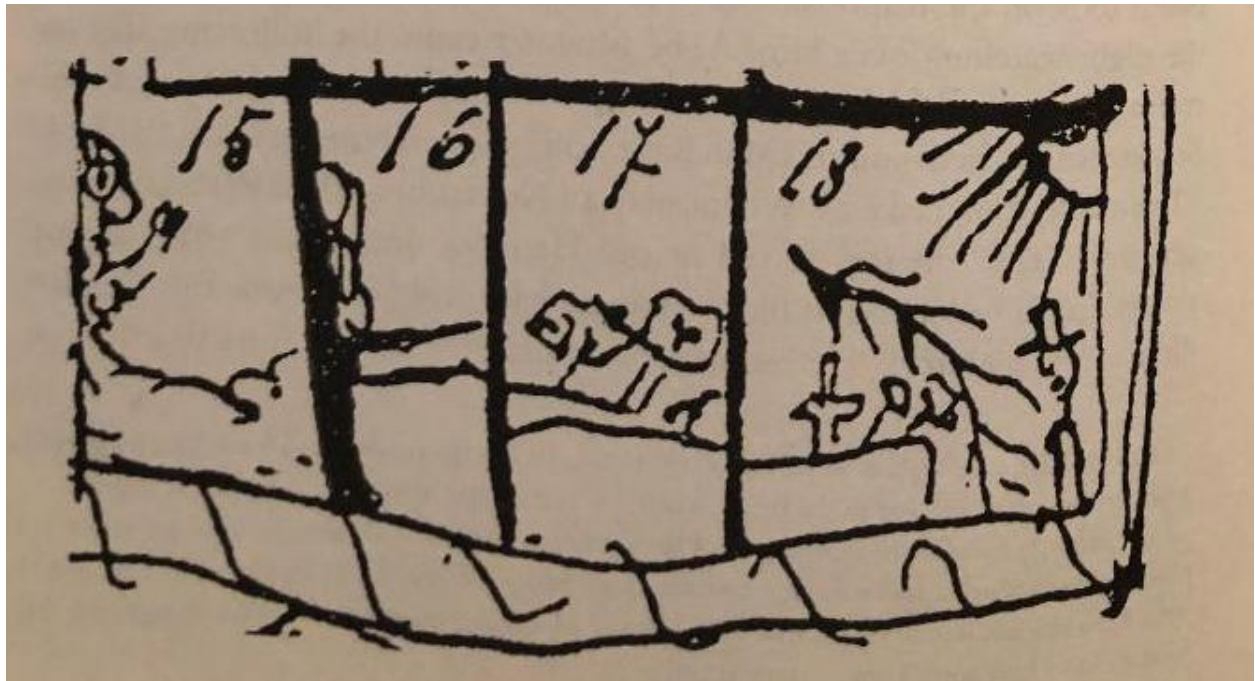
Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, February 23, 1908

Proust marveled—as McCay did—about trying to understand where your arms and legs were, and how that led to understanding the particular bed you were in, and the room, and the time you were awakening to. The cartoons about *Little Nemo* and the story of young Marcel in *In Search of Lost Time* unexpectedly resonate.



Sketch made by Marcel Proust in July 1910 for his friend Reynaldo Hahn

In 1910, Proust drew a sketch for his friend Reynaldo Hahn, illustrating his own death as a kind of cartoon strip. It shows a sequence of time-lapse squares set into what looks like the stained-glass window of a cathedral. In the captions, Marcel is called ‘Buncht’, and Hahn is referred to as ‘Bunchtnibuls’.



Close-up of sketch made by Marcel Proust in July 1910 for his friend Reynaldo Hahn

The captions for the final squares read as follows: (15) “Doktor-medic with spectacles tells Buncht that he is going to die”—not unlike McCay’s inept Doctor Pill in *Slumberland*—; (16) his death—in a peculiarly thin frame, “Death of Buncht (this window has suffered much);” (17) “Bouquets have been placed on the bed where Buncht lies dead;”—and finally, in the lower right-hand corner, in the last frame (where Little Nemo would have woken up), the square bears the caption: (18) “Tomb of Buncht upon which lie flowers, with trees and hawthorns above, and sun now that causes him no harmch. And his Bunchtnibuls, wearing a top hat, comes to the little Kemetry to pay his last respects to Buncht.”¹⁵

If the lower squares are compared to the final cells of a page of *Little Nemo in Slumberland*—in which Nemo unfailingly wakes up—it seems that Proust forecasted for himself, albeit humorously, a death that was a kind of final awakening.

¹⁵ Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, 778-79. Footnoted by Tadié as: *Correspondance*, Vol. X, Edited by P. Kolb, Plon, 1970-93, 122-4. The odd cartoonish words sound alot like *Finnegan’s Wake*, “...the sophology of Bitchson [philosophy of Bergson] while driven as under by a purely dime-dime urge [driven asunder by the underlying demiurge] is not without its cashcash charackteristicks...” Quoted by Robert Klawitter in the aforementioned article. They are also reminiscent of other early cartoons of the time, which made a point of spelling words incorrectly, particularly words that began with “C”, spelled phonetically with a “K”.

That moment of awakening

Like McCay, Proust goes a bit further than Bergson to ponder not just the activity of dreaming, but also the process of awakening. This is an important aspect of how and, more importantly, *why* imagination grows out of memory. It effects change. McCay and Proust both condense awakening into a hyper-intense point in time. A generous amount of ink flows from their respective pens, elaborated in shapes with gutters (McCay) and commas (Proust) around exactly that pregnant point, the ‘wake-up!’ point, the point with infinite depth. For McCay, the depth of the event is its occurrence every Sunday in the same format in the Sunday funnies. For Proust, it is a depth that stretches over six volumes. The ‘process of waking’ was discussed only obliquely by Bergson, but Bergson is still there, peeking through Proust’s narrative. Bergson refers to it as a process similar to the soul’s fall into an inanimate body, as told by Plotinus. Proust, of course, uses more words. Bergson’s one paragraph about the soul falling into—choosing—a body, blossoms into page upon page of paragraphs in Proust’s novel. (One sentence is several pages long.) It is there in the famous Madeleine passage:

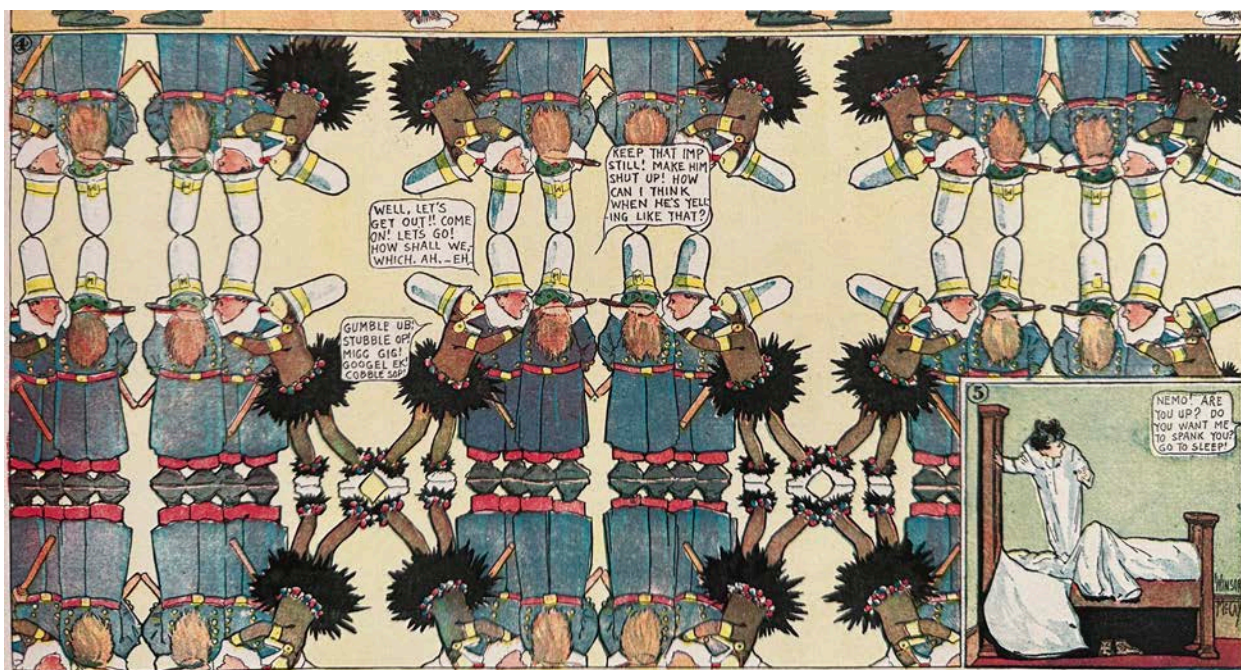
And suddenly the memory revealed itself ... The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because perhaps so often I had seen such things in the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks’ windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because, of those memories so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the shape of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a long distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recognition.¹⁶

Proust extends this “vast structure of recognition”—i.e. waking—to architecture, that is, to a discussion of *rooms*; bedrooms from the past that are returned to every night, revisited, though each one in succession has been immured to one’s perception through the accommodating force of Habit, which renders each in due course as being familiar enough to become comfortable and thereby ‘habitable’. Bergson’s thinking about Habit—the mind’s ability to fill in details based on

¹⁶ Marcel Proust, (1913), *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I, Swann’s Way*. Trans. by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D. J. Enright. (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 63-64.

just a few clues from the present, which are conflated with all the similar instances from the past—is a key part of his optimistic philosophy of conscious change. It is linked by Proust to the process of simply ‘waking up’ in a room. Of this propitious moment:

I was more destitute of human qualities than the cave-dweller; but then the memory, not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived, and might now very possibly be, would come like a rescue from on high to draw me up and out of the abyss of not-being, from which I could never have escaped by myself: in a flash I would traverse and surmount centuries of civilization, and out of a half-visualized procession of oil lamps¹⁷, followed by shirts with turned down collars, would put together by degree the component parts of myself.¹⁸



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *New York Herald*, Sunday, January 26, 1908

¹⁷ Proust nods to John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1989), first published in Kent, England by George Allen, Sunnyside, Orpington in 1880, written as an essay “thrown together” during the preparation of the third volume of *Modern Painters*, which he wrote as a response to criticism of Turner’s paintings. He wrote *Seven Lamps* as an outcry against the destruction of medieval buildings that he loved, that were being torn down in Normandy and Italy. “His whole time has been spent lately occupied in taking drawings from one side of buildings, of which masons were knocking down the other.”

¹⁸ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I, Swann’s Way*, Translated by C.K.Moncrieff, Revised by William C. Carter (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 6. Compare this passage to Bergson, in *Dreams*, 35: “... souls inhabit the worlds of Ideas. Incapable in themselves of acting, not even thinking of action, they float beyond space and beyond time. But, among all the bodies, there are some which specially respond by their form to the aspirations of some particular souls; and among these souls there are those that recognize themselves in some particular body. The body, which does not come altogether viable from the hand of nature, rises toward the soul which might give it complete life; and the soul, looking upon the body and believing that it perceives its own image as in a mirror, and attracted, fascinated by the image, lets itself fall. It falls, and this fall is life.”

Proust alludes to Bergson, who references Plotinus (and hence, Plato). This, in its most grand conception, is the ultimate goal of designing Architecture: an ‘awakening’ wherein the world as we know it goes beyond the daily unfolding of the newspaper’s unrelenting litany of events, a “rescue from on high to draw [us] up and out of the abyss of not-being.”¹⁹

How to get away from the fresh trivialities of the day

Imagination grows from memory, i.e. ‘Lost Time’. It does not spring from the here and now, from the day to day things that constantly demand our attention. The first major event in *Swann’s Way*, (the first Volume of *In Search of Lost Time*), comments on this idea. The comment is made by Monsieur Swann himself, and it takes place while Marcel is a little boy waiting to fall asleep in the little town of Combray. He spends a lot of time in bed, whether in waking up or falling asleep, and he realizes early on that he can time travel through reading books. (This becomes significant at the end of the novel when he effectively ‘time travels’ back to this very evening that he is lying in bed by chancing upon a copy of the same book his mother read to him on that night.) Falling asleep is hard for little Marcel because his parents often entertain dinner guests. He inevitably gets sent to bed early—he is about six or seven—and then suffers from the fear that his mother will forget to come upstairs to give him a goodnight kiss.²⁰ He is ultra aware of the dinner party happening below, and is super-conscious of each guest, one of which becomes a kind of mentor to him. The mentor, Charles Swann, is the son of an old family friend of Marcel’s grandfather.

But, back to the newspaper’s litany of events (and how to get away from them)—During an after dinner visit one evening, M. Swann tries to explain to Marcel’s great aunts, Céline and Flora:

Suppose that, every morning, when we tore the wrapper off our paper with fevered hands, a transmutation were to take place, and we were to find inside it—Oh! I don’t know; shall we say Pascal’s Pensées? ²¹

And in the story, the great aunts take no notice of what Swann is trying to say; are in fact, full of misconceptions about M. Swann, never dreaming—because he was unfailingly modest and considerate—that they were conversing with someone whose company has been requested at

¹⁹ Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 6.

²⁰ Many ordinarily intrepid readers abandon the book early on because they can’t get past this “mama’s boy” passage. This chapter of the dissertation assumes the reader hasn’t made it beyond this point.

²¹ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume I, Swann’s Way*, 33. Pascal’s *Pensées* are a collection of fragments that were published after Pascal died. He was preparing an Apology on the Christian Religion.

manors belonging to the Crown, who has recently dined with nobility, is a member of the most exclusive clubs, but who nonetheless enjoys visiting with old family friends (like Marcel’s great aunts), and would regularly sit down at the piano to play for them. It is not only the fresh trivialities found in newspapers that we must escape, but sometimes also the misconceptions of the people around us. This echoes the genius of Jane Austen, in her portrayal of the daily anguish experienced by Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as she patiently,—and, never losing her manners to rebuke or lash out against the stupidity of her mother and younger sisters—patiently endured the vicissitudes of desire: of her mother’s desire for her daughter’s marriage to wealth, and her younger sister’s regrettable desire for frivolity and dancing. Like Austen, Proust heightens the suspense of his narrative with an accounting of how nearly impossible it is for clear vision or logic to effect events because we are blind from the exhaustion of day to day living, especially when surrounded by the opinions of people who—

... pack the physical outline of what we see with all of the ideas we have already formed ... Our social personality is a creation of the mind of others. ²²



James Pettibone, Magic lantern slide reel with aluminium slide holders and electric arc lamp, Cincinnati, Ohio, c. 1888. © La Cinémathèque française. Photo: Stéphane Dabrowski.

Proust sums up Bergson’s idea of the ancient philosopher’s view of ‘states’:

*Perhaps the immobility of the things around us is forced on them by our conviction that they are themselves, and not anything else, and by the immobility of our conceptions of them.*²³

The sleeping mind is the antidote to all of this immobility. Every night is an opportunity to re-think the situation. A disorienting profusion of forms available to the sleeping mind get forced through a kind of funnel to reconstitute themselves into the present moment when we wake up.

²² Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 21. Proust tells a similar story about M. Swann’s penchant for seeing the people we know in paintings of the Old Masters, and his eventual realization that it was a likeness of a woman painted by Botticelli that he was in love with, not his wife Odette, who so closely resembled that image.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6.

This is similar to the process described by Bergson that we constantly engage in when fully awake, but in sleep the profusion of forms seems wilder. Here is Proust's description of waking up:

*For it always happened that when I awoke like this, and my mind struggled in an unsuccessful attempt to discover where I was, everything would be moving around me through the darkness; things, places, years ...*²⁴

This brief 'dissertation' on waking is important enough for Proust to use as the central theme of the six volumes that follow. It is the main idea, introduced on page six of 3,616 pages. For Proust, this quickening of the mind that takes place—requiring significant effort,—is a process of re-orientation. Here is the part that resembles Little Nemo waking up in bed. He goes on:

*My body, still too heavy to move, would make an effort to construe the form that its tiredness took as an orientation of its various members, so as to conclude from that where the walls lay and the furniture stood, to piece together and to give a name to the house in which it must be living. Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, knees, and shoulders, offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept; while the unseen walls kept changing, adapting themselves to the shape of each successive room that it remembered, whirling through the darkness.*²⁵

To live and work for a series of years in a museum with its succession of changing exhibitions, as I did, is to experience just this sense of seeing rooms expand and retreat, sprouting walls dressed with paintings, and spawning floors that support evanescent, transparent glass envelopes for objects of enormous beauty. And the memory of those many cherished objects—and the theatrical sets dreamed up for their display—remain in my imagination—though they sometimes adapt themselves to newer exhibitions—but are also sometimes completely struck down, demolished and cleaned up. Here is Proust again describing his experience of trying to identify which bedroom he is in:

*And even before my brain, lingering in consideration of when things had happened and of what they had looked like, had collected sufficient impressions to enable it to identify the room, it, my body, would recall from each room in succession what the bed was like, where the doors were, how daylight came in at the windows, whether there was a corridor outside, what I had had in my mind when I went to sleep, and had found there when I awoke.*²⁶

²⁴ Proust, *Swann's Way*, 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

All of this mobility—this shifting and sliding of walls in various directions to reveal this or that moment or view from the past—happens in a moment. Is it the velocity of our thought—that our attention to the moment requires—that makes waking up, and then being awake, so strenuous? (Perhaps that is why sometimes we feel groggy when we first awaken. And then again, it is why we are overcome by sleepiness at the end of the day.) According to Bergson, we must apply this force of attention at every moment to recognize anything at all. It is no wonder we fall back into our comfortable conceptions and ‘states’ when contemplating the day’s events. We are undergoing events with a kind of endurance. And in addition to all of the re-orienting and re-positioning from moment to moment, we desire so much more! Is it our intense desire for the unattainable—in the case of little Marcel, for his mother’s cheek and a goodnight kiss; or in the case of M. Swann, for the attentions of his elusive courtesan, Odette—that make us blind to the deeper, truer reality of things? Or is this just a habit of mind?

It is this deeper reality that the dreaming soul, and certain buildings—houses, churches, mosques, museums, libraries—have access to in their time away from Time.

These shifting and confused gusts of memory never lasted for more than a few seconds; often in my brief spell of uncertainty as to where I was, I did not distinguish the various suppositions of which that uncertainty was composed any more than, when watching a horse run, we isolate the successive positions of its body as they appear in a kinoscope.²⁷



Muybridge Zoopraxiscope, Horse Galloping, 1893. The zoopraxiscope was an early device for displaying motion pictures. Created by photographic pioneer Eadweard Muybridge in 1879, it may be considered the first movie projector.

²⁷ Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 7-8.

Whirling rooms

In the early twentieth century, there was an entirely new mode of speed and collapse of distance.²⁸ Proust marveled at the changing relations of steeples to each other as they were viewed from the window of a train and he relished the new freedom of hiring a motorcar to escape the city for an afternoon. What we take for granted today was entirely new and fantastic in 1910. Speed confounded all ideas of logic and steady progression. It transmuted space, time, and *thought*. It is no wonder that both Bergson and Proust were re-thinking the old habits of mind. The old mind was changing; changing quickly. Proust, on the dizzying process of merely inhabiting his bedroom:

...that room where the slender columns that lightly supported its ceilings would part, ever so gracefully, to indicate where the bed was and to keep it separate; sometimes again that little room with the high ceiling, hollowed in the form of a pyramid out of the two separate stories, and partly walled in mahogany, in which from the first moment my mind was drugged by the unfamiliar scent of vetiver, convinced of the hostility of the violet curtains and of the insolent indifference of a clock that chattered on at the top of its voice as though I were not there;²⁹ while a strange and pitiless mirror with square feet, barring obliquely one corner of the room, cleared for itself a site I had not expected to find inhabited in the quiet surroundings of my normal field of vision: that room in which my mind, forcing itself for hours on end to leave its moorings, to elongate itself upward so as to take on the exact shape of the room, and to reach to the summit of that monstrous funnel, had passed so many anxious nights while my body lay stretched out in bed ...

Thankfully, Proust eventually finds peace, and the room becomes ‘habitable’:

... until habit had changed the color of the curtains, made the clock keep quiet, brought an expression of pity to the cruel slanting face of the mirror, disguised or even completely dispelled the scent of vetiver, and distinctly reduced the apparent loftiness of the ceiling. Habit! That skillful but unhurrying manager who begins by letting the mind suffer for weeks on end in a temporary

²⁸ Albert Einstein developed his theory of general relativity between 1907 and 1915. Although it did not apply specifically to dreams, his language about things being relative, and about speed, influenced thinking in every field. If velocity of thought is the relativity of our position to a particular point, say, the earth’s core, the waking mind would live on the surface. In its hyper-tensioned state, it would be able to feel the spin of the outermost shell of the planet. Our waking thoughts, in this way of thinking, whirl at 1040 miles per hour. The sleeping mind is more rooted to the earth’s core, able to identify particular instants in time, and see them all at once., in the words of Proust “...the successive positions of its body as they appear in a kinoscope...”

²⁹ The phrase, “the insolent indifference of a clock that chattered on at the top of its voice as though I were not there” emphasizes Bergson’s idea that Time progresses as gusts of memory, rather than moving in quantifiable increments.

*abode; whom the mind, for all that, is fortunate in discovering, for without the help of habit it would be powerless, by its own efforts, to make any room seem habitable.*³⁰

Beds—and rooms!—are so important to both McCay and Proust. An architect's read through McCay's cartoons and Proust's *Search* brings up the questions—What time is it really? What time are we falling from? What time are we *in*?—, things that can be best answered by slowing down and 'drawing out' things with a pen or pencil, by stretching the window of time to include the past. The defense of imagination from mechanical waking thought is to effect a sleeper's transmutation of space and time. Architects are challenged to divorce themselves from the comforts of habit to live in the uncertain, chronologically fluid 'bedroom' of a disoriented mind. Then, theoretically, a protracted awakening follows, to an enchanted room with a bed, a chest of drawers, a window overlooking the street, and a door to or from a distant time. But, for an architect, it must in the end be the obverse of Proust's bedroom, with a fresh color of curtains that is *instantly* appealing and appreciated, a quieted clock and a merciful mirror, and all this without any assistance from the accommodating force of Habit.

A waking dream

In the landscape of a future room, an angel of certainty will ultimately peer over the architect's shoulder to keep the disorienting, whirling world still. Proust was an insomniac. So—through drawing—must the architect be. Here is Proust's description of the working mind, the artist's mind, when it has finally reached its destination:

... my body had turned about for the last time and the good angel of certainty had made all the surrounding objects stand still, had set me down under my bed clothes, in my bedroom, and had fixed, approximately in their right places in the uncertain light, my chest of drawers, my writing table, my fireplace, the window overlooking the street, and both doors. But, it was no good my knowing that I was not in any of those houses of which, in the unknowing moment of waking, if I had not caught sight exactly, I could still believe in their possible presence; for memory was now set in motion ...

Ignition of memory. It was at that time of night or morning—with a now mobile imagination—that Proust set his mind to remembering his young life in Combray and to writing his novel. Without an alarm clock, we do not rationally decide when to wake up. It just happens. This is important since part of his confabulation in *Search* is that the sudden tumbling back to 'Lost Time' was effected involuntarily, not by an artificially suspended awakening in bed, but by the

³⁰ Proust, *Swann's Way*, 8-9.

unexpected taste sensation of a *petite madeleine* cake dipped in lime-blossom tea. This was the same tea, and the same wet cake that he once enjoyed by the bedside of his Aunt Léonie—(yet another old aunt)—who shared a little piece with him while she lay ensconced, as she thoughtfully chewed, surrounded by her pillows in her sitting room—which he so fondly remembered—in the lime tree lined avenues of Combray. Is it sweet crumbs and delicious tea or a languorous inattention to the alarm clock that would enable architects to resurrect the stories buried within? Must architects have ‘*madeleines*’? Or should they keep their minds ‘asleep’ and dreaming, ignore their habit of sublimating the impressions of the rooms they inhabit, and so bring things to light. Here is T. S. Eliot again, who wrote in 1915, just after the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time* was published, about what it all meant:³¹

*And would it have been worth it, after all,
 Would it have been worth while,
 After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
 After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—
 And this, and so much more?²—
 It is impossible to say just what I mean!
 But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
 Would it have been worth while
 If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
 And turning toward the window, should say:
 ‘That is not it at all,
 That is not what I meant, at all.’³²*

It is almost as if Eliot, who shared Proust’s fascination with Bergson, wrote this poem just after reading *Swann’s Way* (first published in 1913), with his reference to novels, teacups, pillows, shawls and magic lanterns. Proust wrote a beautiful passage about the traveling of Golo, a character from his magic lantern that floated around his bedroom in Combray, chimerically slipping from surface to surface through the flowing folds of the curtain, to land on the door knob. Dreams, the dreaming of architecture, the architecture itself, and the memory of it, whimsically filled the undulating surfaces of the rooms in Proust’s imagination to land on a door with a knob that rotated and unlocked. Architects have the opportunity to evoke the same “charming mistakes of

³¹ Matthew Taunton, “Modernism, Time and Consciousness: The Influence of Henri Bergson and Marcel Proust,” Like Proust, T. S. Eliot was thoroughly soaked in Bergson’s thinking that time was not propelled forward by the tick of the clock so much as impelled by the “data of consciousness,” i.e. memory. T. S. Eliot went back to school to study Henri Bergson. He attended Bergson’s lectures in Paris in 1910–11 and then “returned to Harvard to undertake a PhD in philosophy that grappled with Bergson’s ideas.”

³² T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962) Poem: *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, originally published in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*.

childhood,”³³ where fantasy lives, to fill in the gaps that surround us. Our rooms, our ‘Michelangelo’d rooms’³⁴, the museumed minds that we own, are part of an intellectual, but also a uniquely *felt* seeing of the world.

And of seeing ourselves too. In Volume II, *Within a Budding Grove*, there is a further elaboration on the projections of a magic lantern, of a former reality that is always fading, and how dreams initiate us into mysteries—



“...we bring to bear on the spectacle of life only a dubious vision, extinguished anew every moment by oblivion, the former reality fading before that which follows it as one projection of a magic lantern fades before the next as we change the slide, all those mysteries which we imagine ourselves not to know and into which we are in reality initiated almost every night, as into the other great mystery of extinction and resurrection.”³⁵

There is a memory that little Marcel has of M. Swann entering the garden in Combray at night where Marcel’s family (including the old aunts) are sitting in the evening after dinner, as he emerges from the shadow of the greenery:

Even the simple act of ‘seeing someone we know’ is, to some extent, an intellectual process. We pack the physical outline of the creature we see with all the ideas we have already formed about

³³ Marcel Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 22.

³⁴ “In the room, the women come and go, talking of Michelangelo” —refrain in the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, by T. S. Eliot.

³⁵ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume II, Within a Budding Grove*, Translated by C. K. Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D. J. Enright (New York: The Modern Library), 2003.

*him ... In the end they come to fill out so completely the curve of his cheeks, to follow so exactly the line of his nose, they blend so harmoniously in the sound of his voice that these seem to be no more than a transparent envelope, so that each time we see the face or hear the voice it is our own idea of him which we recognize and to which we listen ...*³⁶

Perhaps architecture, more than we realize, is always seen through precedents.

Perched upon stilts

‘Seeing things again’ is the same process evoked in the mind of the client (aided by the architect) when initially laying out a house: walking together as giants on wobbly, uncertain stilts, peering down into a plan inhabited by certain objects that he or she has selected as important to the story ... a grand piano, a loom, an antique table, an old Cadillac.

Proust ends *Search* with a realization. An immense joy involuntarily washes over him as he realizes that an idea has been carved out from his many seemingly idle moments—his loves, and griefs—whose resurrection through art will enable him not to fear death, and to finally give back something of value to others.

The last pages of his novel do not focus upon his initial hero, M. Swann, whose way of being he examines at length in Volume I, *Swann’s Way*. His gaze comes to rest instead on the Duc de Guermantes, whose aristocratic and ultimately superficial way of being he describes in Volume III, *Guermante’s Way*. They are two paths; two ways of being in the world. ‘Swann’s way’ is a melancholy way, where romanticism and longing for things impossible to attain nevertheless enable a person to think deeply, to see things below the surface and ultimately, to be free. M. Swann marries an elusive courtesan, Odette, and consequently becomes somewhat shunned from aristocratic society. Hence he is ‘free’. (But first, he is a slave to his desire for her.) Swann’s ‘way’ is ultimately deeper in the sense that however melancholic, he remembers *everything* and holds it in mind all at once, through the eyes of a lover. The ‘Guermantes’ way’ has nothing to do with love. It is about form: society’s form, aristocratic form, ancient form, with little regard for unique circumstances and individual beings or loves. Marcel suffers desire for most of his life (and most of the novel) as Swann has, but towards the end seems to recover from it, at a cost. Sadly, he has become numb. Happily, Marcel feels desire again at the very end of the story through a series of ‘involuntary resurrections’. His desire this time though is not for a woman, but to accomplish a work that will reveal a thing “which ordinarily, throughout our lives, is invisible to us,” the form of Time. As he faces the prospect of this immense undertaking and questions his strength to

³⁶ Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 23-24.

I understood now why it was that the Duc de Guermantes, who to my surprise, when I had seen him sitting in a chair, had seemed to me so little aged although he had so many more years beneath him than I had, had presently, when he rose to his feet and tried to stand firm upon them, swayed backwards and forwards upon legs as tottery as those of some old archbishop with nothing solid about his person but his metal crucifix, to whose support there rushes a mob of young seminarists, and had advanced with difficulty, trembling like a leaf, upon the almost unmanageable summit of his eighty-three years, as though men spend their lives perched upon living stilts which never cease to grow until sometimes they became taller than church steeples ... making it in the end both difficult and perilous for them to walk and raising them to an eminence from which suddenly they fall.³⁷

Falling was a position that Little Nemo's body often found itself in at the end of a dream as he was awakening, and in which Marcel Proust now found himself:

And I was terrified by the thought that the stilts beneath my own feet might already have reached that height.³⁸

He realizes, if he has enough strength and time, that he can in fact achieve a marvelous resurrection of things from the past,

...even if the effect were to make them resemble monsters,³⁹ to describe men as occupying so considerable a place which is reserved for them in space ... a place ... prolonged past measure, for simultaneously, like giants plunged into years, they touch the distant epochs through which they have lived, between which so many days have come to range themselves—in Time.⁴⁰

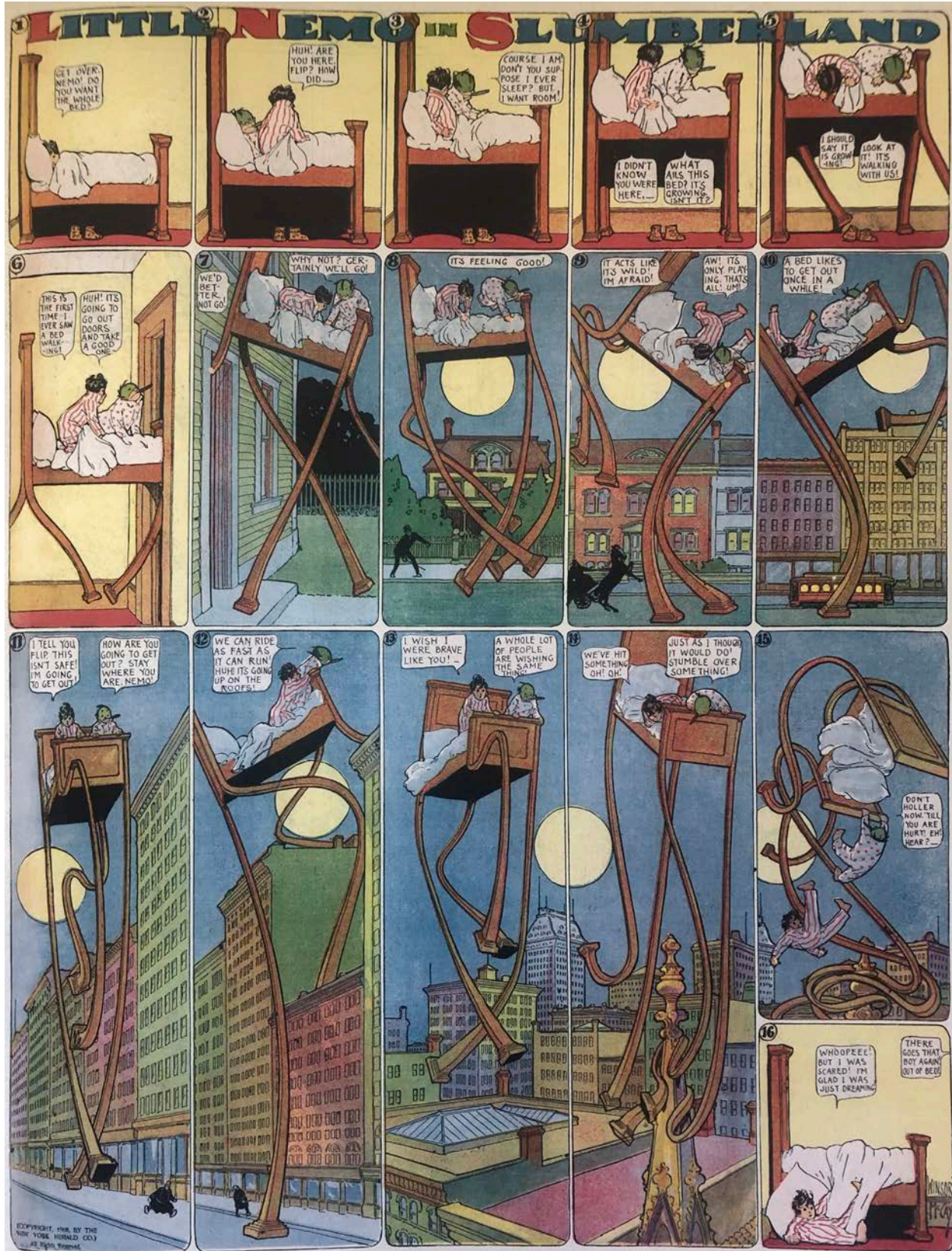
Proust is happy to have found a purpose, but he is not completely sure of the consequences. The end of the novel seems like an apology for his switch from the Swann to the Guermantes way. Likewise, these things—buildings—that have grown from an architect's memory, if they become a 'type'... Are they just monsters made within our lifetime? What will be the consequence?

³⁷ Proust, Vol. VI, *Time Regained*, 531.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 531.

³⁹ Marco Frascari describes "monsters" in his book *Monsters of Architecture*: "...the semiotics of monsters crosses the boundaries of many disciplines, and fascinates writers, philosophers, moralists, and artists. Like Proteus, the monster changes its form, assuming different aspects in response to diverse stimuli and within varying contexts... ..monsters are enigmas better left unsolved." Proust had to contend with the likeness of his characters to people he knew.

⁴⁰ Proust, *Time Regained*, 531-532. Unlike his hero, M. Swann, Marcel does *not* marry his heart's desire, Albertine, which causes him a volume of painful remembrance, but does not unmoor him from society's estimation of him.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, July 26, 1908



A beautiful woman from the past painted by Vermeer, weighs things—consequences—on a scale.

Loco di mezo

“Prolonged past measure.”⁴¹ The architect, like the novelist—in this vast dimension of Time—must choose a point, or points, at which to start making measurements. The phrase ‘*loco di mezo*’ was used in the Renaissance as a way to describe a mathematical approximation of a point, often seen in a series of numbers as it gets nearer and nearer to exactitude, which at that time, was the number 1. This is particularly true of irrational numbers like pi or square roots, since they can be represented as relationships, but not as ‘numbers’.

$$\frac{1}{4} \quad \frac{1}{3} \quad \frac{1}{2} \quad \mathbf{1} \quad \frac{2}{1} \quad \frac{3}{1} \quad \frac{4}{1}$$

You could say that Little Nemo’s ‘points’ in *Slumberland* are the precise moment of his waking up in bed, and the moments that led up to it.

Marcel’s ‘point’ in *Search* would be also placed in bed, unintentionally rediscovered at the party he attended at the very end of the novel at the aforementioned Duc de Guermantes’s house. His transportational moment—(not unlike his taste of the *madeleine*—another portal point)—was discovered by accident while escaping the goings on of a party. He hid in the *Duc’s* library and

⁴¹ Proust, *Time Regained*, 531-532.

happened upon a book, an old copy of the very same book his mother had read to him in bed, on that special night long ago in Combray. This point was the same as Little Nemo's, that is, a point in time when they were navigating nightmares at about six years of age.

Little Nemo's *loco di mezo* was illustrated every Sunday from 1905 to 1911 in the special 'funnies' section of the newspaper separated out from the 'fresh trivialities' of the news, a point always the same, but infinitely variable.



Close up of Johannes Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*, c.1664

Marcel's point to measure from—his *loco*—resurrected both by the random discovery of this book by George Sand (the book he discovered at the end of the novel by accident in the library)—and by the taste of the madeleine dipped in tea—was *the* pivotal moment in his life. Never repeated, and discerned by him only in retrospect, it was the moment that changed his life forever. His mother realized on that special night that his odd behavior was beyond his control, i.e. that he had a nervous condition, and so should be allowed special care. He never led a normal life thereafter. His mother would henceforth enable his eccentricities rather than fight them.⁴² From

⁴² Marcel's moment, his moment-from-which-measurement-would-be-taken, was a result of a series of nightmare-like events, similar to Little Nemo's. Every night he went through that an agony of desire for the his mother's kiss, without which he could not sleep. But this particular night, his mother, who ordinarily suffered terribly at the notion that little Marcel needed to forget this childish nonsense,—(inspired by the grandmother's concern and worry for the child),—was given the unexpected blessing by her husband to allay their son's trembling and sobbing, and in fact, was given a dispensation to spend the entire evening beside him in his bedroom, and to read to him a new novel (ironically given to him by his grandmother): George Sand's *François le Champi*. Interestingly, *François le Champi* is a story about a mother's love that crosses the boundaries of what is appropriate. This is the book he happened upon in the library years later.

that point—that *loco*—things could be measured, mirrored, flipped, rotated, collapsed, retraced, made metaphorical, made mythic. The comforting first reading of Sand's *François* was a kind of death, a death of what could have been a normal childhood, and then a normal life. But from that same point his novel emerged, as a new tree springs from the death of a seed; or, as imagination ripples out from the place where a pebble glances the surface of a stream. Looking at McCay and Proust tells us that imagination doesn't just grow from memory, it can be measured from a very specific point in time (albeit one that happens again and again). Essential to the analysis of a building might be: what is its *loco di mezo*? Or, looking at an architect's life, what was their *loco*?



View of Delft, *Johannes Vermeer* c.1659-1661

Another reverberating point

In *Search*, Proust talks about another such moment, a death, as seen through light. A writer, Bergotte—who in the story has an influence on the young Marcel—is at the end of his life. He is well known; he almost never goes out; he covers himself in shawls and traveling rugs; he doesn't sleep well; he has nightmares; he tries a succession of narcotics to help him sleep and he has shattering attacks of dizziness. But one day, he hears about a favorite picture of his on display at an exhibition in Paris, Vermeer's *View of Delft*. It has been reviewed by an art critic as having—

... a little patch of yellow wall (which he could not remember) [that] was so well painted that it was, if one looked at it by itself, like some priceless specimen of Chinese art, of a beauty that was sufficient in itself...⁴³

The writer, Bergotte—(or we can also think Proust)—eats a few potatoes, takes a swallow from a new brand of narcotic to calm his nerves, and sets off to see it.⁴⁴ Upon entering the exhibition, he has an attack of dizziness; recovers himself; walks dismissively by other “arid and pointless” works *en route* to the Vermeer, and:

At last he [comes] to the Vermeer which he remembered as more striking, more different from anything else he knew, but in which, thanks to the critic’s article, he noticed for the first time some small figures in blue, that the sand was pink, and finally, the precious substance of the patch of yellow wall. His dizziness increased; he fixed his gaze, like a child upon a yellow butterfly that it wants to catch, on the precious little patch of wall.



Close up of Johannes Vermeer’s View of Delft

He sinks down onto a circular settee; blames the undercooked potatoes for his vertigo; repeats to himself “Little patch of yellow wall ... little patch of yellow wall” and dies. But not before

⁴³ Proust, Vol.V, *The Captive and the Fugitive*, 238-244.

⁴⁴ Proust’s story of Bergotte is similar to his own condition at the end of his life, and so his description of Bergotte’s inner thoughts are significant. On the night of Proust’s death, according to his maid Céleste, Proust “dictated some sentences to do with Bergotte’s death: a partially incoherent passage, into which he put himself, and he described the activity of the doctors dancing attendance on the dying man: ‘They stood out among themselves, giving each other an imposing position in the background, but a gloomy one ... they approached the patient, held endless conferences among one another, but as to talking to *him* about his condition ... no, medicine was not something for the sick. How incredibly rude, said Bergotte.’ ” (Quoted by Jean-Yves Tadié in *Marcel Proust: A Life*, 776.) In the last hours, Proust seems to have merged with Bergotte, the invented character in his novel. Since he was feverishly editing that particular volume of the novel right up until the end, this is not surprising.

realizing that in a “celestial pair of scales” there was in the one pan, the too-dry books he had lately written which needed to be gone over with a few more layers of color; and in the other pan, “the little patch of wall so beautifully painted in yellow.”⁴⁵

It is interesting that Proust chooses this Vermeer painting as the one which causes Bergotte’s epiphanous death. Though he is looking at a landscape, the interior scene of *Woman Holding a Balance* is superimposed in our mind by his choice of the “scales” metaphor.



Two resonating Vermeer paintings

We imagine the woman with a white satin hood who looks as if she is with child, reminding us of the Virgin as she peers at a tiny, delicate scale. She stands in front of a painting that shows a resurrected Christ above her head. But this superimposition is only alluded to with Proust’s metaphor about Bergotte’s last thought. It is not described and attributed; it is perhaps more powerful as a ghost. Painters had been capturing the transitory quality of late evening light for several centuries, eventually leading to Turner and the Impressionists, Impressionists who painted light as if it were moving just a little bit, as if the very glistening of surfaces was the thing that imprinted reality onto the membrane of our memory. But Proust did not choose the light of a Turner or a Pissarro for Bergotte’s last vision. He chose the light of a Vermeer. Or, more importantly, of *two* Vermeers that resonated with each other in the passage about Bergotte’s death.⁴⁶

The final Volume, *Time Regained*, which, like Pascal’s *Pensées*, was published posthumously from a collection of drafts, is a description of revisiting the house in Combray—the house where he had

⁴⁵ Few would accuse Marcel Proust of a miserly tendency toward color or word-count, although in his last few words uttered before he died, he seemed to be empathizing with Bergotte. The last Volume of *Search* was in progress when he died, and likely, in Proust’s thinking, needed “a few more layers of color.”

⁴⁶ One would think that the paintings of his own time better represented his appreciation for Ruskin, who he had translated into French while this novel incubated, and who, in a way, taught him how to see. But, an appreciation for Vermeer was just being reignited in Proust’s time. Vermeer had been forgotten. Perhaps this is why Proust chose him.

read his first novel with his mother on that pivotal night. Marcel has his own bout of “little yellow wall” sadness. He is struck by “the incuriosity that is brought about by time.”⁴⁷ In the novel, he is visiting his aunt’s house in Combray with Gilberte—interestingly, the daughter of M. Swann—now a grown woman who is a good friend of his, but once, when he had stayed in Combray as a little boy, his first love. He now feels anesthetized to desire, and with this numbness has come a calm, but also a loss of the ability to see and feel things deeply, to experience the sudden unexpected rush of a beating heart.

This is what accounts for the gradual disappearance of certain nervous affections,

—the nervous affections once so worried over by his grandmother and mother—

... that our nervous system grows old.

Despite, or perhaps because of his ennui, he alludes briefly to something in the shadows at the end of the hall:

*I saw at the end of the corridor, in a little sitting room which faced in another direction, what seemed to be a band of scarlet—for this room was hung with a plain silk, but a red one, ready to burst into flames if a ray of sun fell on it.*⁴⁸

There is no mention of missing anyone’s presence or their kiss. It is only a red silk seen in shadow, made as a casual observation as he is describing the landscape of rooms. Anyone visiting their childhood home (that the family no longer lives in) may suffer from this kind of anesthetization. Their earlier loves were beautiful, but they can no longer be recalled. Proust:

*... loving is like an evil spell in a fairy-story against which one is powerless until the enchantment has passed.*⁴⁹

The final passage in the novel rectifies Marcel’s numbness through a series of unexpected sensations that give us a sense of how to feel things again. An architect must be sensorially alert to gain this kind of retrospective vision, to complete their search for what the next building should be, to activate their imagination.

⁴⁷ Proust, *Time Regained*, 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

The wobbling cobblestone

The novel's *dénouement* shows how imagination grows from memory, though the novel itself is its full demonstration. It animates the process of re-enchantment. How do we, as makers of architecture, enable its future inhabitants to come alive again, to really feel beauty as they once had? How do we remove the barriers to our past “as if by magic?”⁵⁰ Marcel suffers a kind of gloom as he enters the courtyard of the aforementioned party in the mansion of the Duc in Combray, the gloom—we could say—of a blocked imagination. He is disheartened by the “sterile lucidity” of his mind in revisiting the town that has come to represent his childhood.⁵¹ Then an unexpected event helped him to start feeling again, a prelude to a chain of resurrecting incidents (the discovery of the book among them) that restore him to his ‘true’ self.

I had entered the courtyard of the Guermantes mansion and in my absent-minded state I had failed to see a car which was coming towards me; the chauffeur gave a shout and I just had time to step out of the way, but as I moved sharply backwards I tripped against the uneven paving-stones in front of the coach house. And at the moment when, recovering my balance, I put my foot on a stone which was slightly lower than its neighbor, all my discouragement vanished and in its place was that same happiness which at various epochs in my life ... as, at the moment when I tasted the madeleine, all anxiety about the future, all intellectual doubts had disappeared ... were removed as if by magic.⁵²

He tries to understand this sensation, this transportation and syncing of the present moment with a moment in the past. Why does it fill him with happiness?

The simple act or gesture remains immured as within a thousand sealed vessels, each one of them filled with things of color, a scent, a temperature that are absolutely different from one another ...⁵³

Because the vessels are securely tagged, packed, and archived in oblivion, far away in darkened time and atmosphere with no connecting link to the present moment, when we unexpectedly discover them—when there is suddenly a beam of light—and forms become distinct through trembling motes of dust or water vapor, we feel:

⁵⁰ Proust, *Time Regained*, 255.

⁵¹ Because Marcel developed severe asthma at the age of nine, his family could no longer visit Combray, so the town represented a certain Eden to Proust. He had only been there as a young child.

⁵² Proust, *Time Regained*, 255.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 260.

... that purer air which the poets have vainly tried to situate in paradise and which could induce so profound a sensation of renewal only if it had been breathed before, since the true paradises are the paradises we have lost.⁵⁴

Twoness in time

What were these resurrecting moments? Although Proust became enamored with form, he believed that the ‘magic’ that imagination weaves from memory is entirely personal. It is the private sensations that we have lost—that remain unaltered—that offer a renewal, those fragments of time that are still in a pure state, that have *not* been made arid, i.e. have *not* been modified over the years by our intellect and its tendency to refine things in a utilitarian way.

*From ourselves comes only that which we drag forth from the obscurity which lies within us, that which to others is unknown.*⁵⁵

This idea of authenticity is actually different than Bergson’s. Like Bellows, like Valery, something must be found before you look. It must be something genuinely experienced, and then unexpectedly called back, something that our mind—which is always repackaging things to suit our current state of mind—has inadvertently missed. Nature herself encourages involuntary memory when we dream at night. And it can also happen by day, if we are open to it. And that unexpectedness brings about originality, and truth, and authenticity:

... she who, often, had allowed me to become aware of the beauty of one thing only in another thing, of the beauty, for instance, of noon at Combray in the sound of its bells, of that of the mornings at Doncières in the hiccups of our central heating.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Proust, *Time Regained*, 261.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 276.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, September 29, 1907

At the very end of the novel, Proust realizes he must search for his childhood self if he is to activate the artistic creative process, and make a “search for a lost time.” He recognizes that his imagination holds the key to accessing his childhood vision, as well as his creative poetic self, before it was beset by the disillusionments of his life. He is happy to have finally found a purpose, even though, ironically, he will probably not have the ‘time’ to achieve it. After the peculiar series of revelations in the *Duc’s* library at the end of the novel, he realizes that something is ‘hidden’ in

his childhood that will form the basis for his art.⁵⁷ His imagination is sparked by a ‘sensorial condition’, the kind of condition that Marco Frascari claims can turn architectural dreaming/drawing into—

*...showers of ‘gifts’ and [that] this complex and felicitous showering of gifts is the basic nature of architecture itself.*⁵⁸

Proust’s thinking about the creative process, his involuntary resurrections or *moments bienheureux* were inspired—unexpectedly—by various sensual and perceptual encounters with the world. The unexpectedness of the sensations gave him access to his inner child. The time to which he was transferred was not necessarily a specific moment in his childhood, so much as the infraordinary things embedded into his memory, i.e. “*tout Combray*.” He lived in a time when the past still had a strange seductive quality. George Cattau described it as—

*...a certain way of living ‘in a fraternal community with all the great minds of all time’; in a certain humanism, a certain friendly concern for the testimony of defunct civilizations; in a discreet tendency in favor of certain survivals and superannuated forms; in a certain sense of the living past familiarly linked with daily life; in a certain natural intimacy with faded things, a certain feel for their presence...*⁵⁹

It was not so much any particular time that was important, as the intellectual and emotional state of mind that the depth of time evoked. Roger Shattuck quotes George Poulet about this rich state of mind: “Proust’s narrative ‘juxtaposes’ discontinuous images ‘exhibited side by side’ as in a museum. ‘Thus time yields to space.’”⁶⁰ Architecture is understood as providing a deep, timeless framework for thinking and feeling.

By just tasting the madeleine, Proust was able to access his childhood vision of the town of Combray, and with the impression of a first love, he retained his fervor.⁶¹ This sensorial

⁵⁷ Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2011), 68, 75.

⁵⁸ Marco Frascari, *eleven exercises in the art of architectural drawing: slow food for the architect’s imagination* (London: Routledge: The Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 42.

⁵⁹ Georges Cattau, *Marcel Proust*, Translated by Ruth Hall (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968).

⁶⁰ Roger Shattuck, *Marcel Proust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 115. This is a beautiful description of the architectural framework for exhibition design.

⁶¹ Cattau, *Marcel Proust*, 94-95.

transpiration is similar to Frascari’s description of the way “body and mind merge” in the conceiving of architecture through drawing. He explains:

In an amalgamation of senses, architecture takes place within experience, which comes to life through drawing factures. As a phenomenon, this process can be observed, noted and reinterpreted...⁶²

In understanding how to make sense of a “projected architectural object,” Frascari notes that this *mélange* “happens because in the reality of the constructed world the distinction between ‘sensation’, ‘perception’, and ‘emotion’ are mere cognitive abstractions.”⁶³ He references Pavel Florensky’s musings about the merging of the real and the imaginary in woodblock prints, which became a meditation on ‘imaginary points’. Florensky saw the way the ink bleeds through the paper and this caused him to investigate, according to Frascari—

...the two-sidedness of the ‘incarnation of the abstract in a visible material point’ and, furthermore, he points out the value of the ambiguous duality of perception that takes place in our perception of the world. Some parts are visible and others are ‘visible in the abstract’ because of touch or other perceptual indicators. For Florensky, the crucial evidence demonstrated by the xylography [woodblock print] is the existence of two worlds, a perceptible one and an imperceptible one and how they can exist on the same surface.⁶⁴

Likewise, Proust’s *madeleine* is two moments juxtaposed in space. Proust’s *moments bienheureux* were this kind of creative encounter, ‘perceptual indicators’ of a an invisible ‘lost’ childhood vision.⁶⁵

⁶² Frascari, *eleven exercises*, 130. Frascari defines the meaning of ‘facture’ on page 10: “In Italian, ‘facture’ is *fattura*, and the word carries mostly the same meaning as in English, however there is an additional meaning worthy of note: *fattura* is also the casting of a spell of the evil eye, a process based on the power of the invidious gaze.” He goes on to explain: The *fattuchiere*, the sorcerers that perform the *fatture*, have been applying neuropsychology *anti litteram*, they have always known that there is no Cartesian separation between mind and body.”

⁶³ Frascari, *eleven exercises*, 130. Perhaps this is how (and why) the unconscious can ‘condense’ them, in a Freudian sense. They are abstractions.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 166. Frascari quotes from an article by Krill Sokolov and Avril Pyman, “Father Pavel Florensky and Vladimir Favorsky: Mutual Insights into the Perception of Space,” *Leonardo*, vol. 22, No. 2, 1989. Pp. 237-244.

⁶⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 2017), 256-58. Freud’s description of a a ‘dream picture’ is very close to Proust’s ‘involuntary resurrection’. It is “the path from the mental images to the sensory perceptions of the same.” It has to do with the processes of condensation and displacement, which are a kind of freeing via “vivid sensory intensity.”

More than that even, they were a galvanizing kind of explosive revelation or, one could even say, a ‘shock’.⁶⁶ Proust’s choice of the madeleine’s ability to conjure his most powerful involuntary memory does not take him back to one specific moment in his childhood. It brings him “*tout Combray*,” which is to say that it brought back the whole of Combray, the whole of his childhood and its accompanying pristine vision, his innocence, and, his genius.⁶⁷ It was a return to Eden.⁶⁸ Here is the ‘madeleine’ *moment bienheureux*, the pregnant passage:

And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And as in the game where the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little pieces of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch and twist and take on color and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, solid and recognizable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann’s park, and the water lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.⁶⁹

There remains a need for us to see objects with our own eyes to understand our past. Unless this process takes place, we find the thoughts and expressions we entertain are not authentic; they are a long way removed from who we are. Ideally, it is not so much that we invent history, as that we translate it from impressions we have personally received.⁷⁰ (This thought is taken from a passage by Proust on being a good writer.) It is an argument for preserving the older tradition of making buildings—as well as the older buildings themselves—so that our experience of the past is

⁶⁶ George Stambolian, *Marcel Proust and the Creative Encounter* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), 4.

⁶⁷ Martens, *The Promise of Memory*, 73.

⁶⁸ Shattuck, *Marcel Proust*, 111-12. Combray was Edenic because the Prousts had to stop going there when Marcel was nine years old because of his severe asthma (that plagued him for the rest of his life). “It provides the eternal standard of a world not yet sundered by soul error. Once upon a time we were all believers in the completeness of our own existence.” In Combray, Marcel was “still in the age of belief,” when one had faith in one’s own observations about the world (and one’s own conclusions).

⁶⁹ Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 63-64.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 291.

personal, i.e. genuine. In *Search*, a careless motorcar knocked Marcel off balance and caused him to trip on a cobblestone, behaving as a kind of soft rope that, when pulled, drew back the heavy curtain that was obscuring his memory to reveal the paving stones of the baptistry of St. Marks in Venice from years ago.

In this *one* night, the series of tiny apertures acted as pinpoints that all behaved as *loci di mezo* similar to the oculus in a *camera obscura*. Like dreaming, these showed reverse images in a darkened room through tiny portals of intense light—a series of suprasensory impressions—that linked Marcel’s actual surroundings at the party to things in his past. First, in the courtyard, his foot pressed on the stone; then, in the Library, the shrill noise of water running through a pipe evoked—

*—a noise exactly like those long drawn-out whistles which sometimes on summer evenings one heard the pleasure steamers emit as they approached Balbec from the sea, made me feel—what I had once before been made to feel in Paris, in a big restaurant, by the sight of a luxurious dining-room, half-empty, summery and hot—something that was not merely a sensation similar to the one I used to have at the end of the afternoon in Balbec when, the tables already laid and glittering with linen and silver—*⁷¹

He found himself in a kind of waking dream, a writer’s dream. First he visited his aunt’s old house in Combray and noted a scarf hanging there, “a red one, ready to burst into flame if a ray of sun fell on it.”⁷² Then, his dismay at not feeling anything seemed to melt away because the step on the uneven cobblestone performed as a kind of lever that activated a series of memories that burst into flame, wrestled with each other, as well as with the present scene: the library of the Duc de Guermantes with its sonorous water pipe; the vast windows of the restaurant at Balbec looking out on the sun slowly setting beyond the steamers in the bay “emitting their cries”; and the luxurious restaurant in Paris with its lovely linens and tinkling spoons. They all resonated with each other to resurrect his former, authentic self. Proust admits—

*And if the present scene had not very quickly been victorious, I believe I should have lost consciousness.*⁷³

The importance of seeing the real thing

⁷¹ Proust, *Time Regained*, 266.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 267.

How do we, as architects, enable this sort of waking dream; this prolonged ‘wake up’ scene with the sliding walls and ceilings; this glimpse of red silk waiting to be illuminated by a ray of sunlight; this series of involuntary sensations that will transport us back to the sensation loving and sensitive souls of our youth? What will be our uneven cobblestone, our tinkling pipe, our beautifully starched and luxurious linen napkins, our own beatific bound books with pages that open us up to our very first selves? What will lift the veil, the barrier between today and yesterday that resist “absolute contact between reality and our intelligence?”⁷⁴ Architectural drawing is a kind of waking dream, wherein everything that preceded it is, in the words of T. S. Eliot:

*... in a kind of suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to ... a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.*⁷⁵

This kind of alchemy was practiced by Winsor McCay, as can be seen in his drawings of Nemo in Befuddle Hall. He combined impressions from circuses, dime museums, vaudeville, movies, world's fairs, Coney Island and New York City into fabulous ‘dreams’. If we see those reconstituted impressions as Proust did—i.e. the *revisited* sensations that “induce so profound a sensation of renewal” because they had been “breathed before,”—then we “might discover true paradises ... the paradises we have lost.” What are dreaming and drawing but representations of things that can then be revisited? T. S. Eliot again, in an essay he wrote while he was studying Bergson at Harvard, in 1919:

The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted ...

Hints about McCay's alchemical practice can be seen in his first animation, where the characters are drawn before our eyes. But before going there, a word about John Ruskin's influence on Proust.

⁷⁴ Proust, *Time Regained*, 420.

⁷⁵ T. S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” Essay from *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (West Valley City, Utah: Waking Lion Press, 2011), 38. The essay was first published in 1919 in the literary magazine *The Egoist*.



Self portrait by John Ruskin, 1875

Voluntary versus Involuntary summoning

Marcel Proust's *Search* was a kind of waking dream, an unfolding of Bergson's supposition that our 'selves' are layers, an accretion of emotive moments in our life. But Proust's thought distinguished itself from Bergson's. His idea that the ignition of thought through an 'involuntary memory' was brought about by the sensitivity to places and things that echo the past—and that the most powerful conjurations happened only when those sensations had been 'lost' (rather than steadily incorporated into the self)—i.e. were 'pure'—came from John Ruskin. In a chapter in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, "The Lamp of Truth," Ruskin discusses the importance not so much of an analysis of truth, as a desire for truth. In a premonition of Proust's invention of the concept of 'involuntary memory', we catch Ruskin discussing 'voluntary summoning' as he distinguishes between 'fallacy' and 'fancy'. Ruskin:

...the action of imagination is a voluntary summoning of the conceptions of things absent or impossible; and the pleasure and nobility of the imagination partly consist in its knowledge and contemplation of them as such, i.e. in the knowledge of their actual absence or impossibility at the moment of their apparent presence or reality.⁷⁶

This inspired Proust, but, ultimately his conception of things 'summoned' is different. Proust's memories coexist with the present. There is a twinning of moments past and present. Past things

⁷⁶ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1989), first published by George Allen, Sunnyside, Orpington, Kent, in 1880, 32-33. Ruskin cautions against fallacy: "But in architecture another and a less subtle, more contemptible, volition of truth is possible; a direct falsity of assertion respecting the nature of material, or the quantity of labour." Proust's story about this kind of deception revolved around sorting through and reconstructing memories of his grandmother and his girlfriend Albertine in *In Search of Lost Time*. The original construction of his memory of his grandmother was false—due to his previous preoccupation with Albertine.

are not ‘absent’. In *Marcel Proust and the Creative Encounter*, George Stambolian describes the important influence of one of Proust’s philosophy professors, Alphonse Darlu, to his thinking about the nature of our mind and our memories of childhood.⁷⁷ The influence of Darlu on Proust’s evolving ideas about the nature of the artistic creative process can be seen in a letter written in 1905 to one of his former classmates, Fernand Gregh:

*Do you recall what they told us about the Metaphysics of Aristotle? How before him the error of the materialists was to believe they could by analysis find reality in matter, how the error of the Platonists was to search for it, outside of matter, in abstractions; that it could not be an abstraction, that it could not however, be matter itself, but was rather that which, in each individual thing, is in some way behind matter, being the sense of its form and the law of its development.*⁷⁸

Strombolian concludes that, for Proust, “The true reality of man is his *esprit* which, particularly in the artist, is alone able to seize and to express what is analogous to it—the ‘spirit’ of each thing or, as Proust often notes elsewhere, its ‘essence.’”⁷⁹

Proust developed Darlu’s philosophical stance about the unity of multiplicity and that “identity lies in succession” into his belief in *moments bienheureux*. He came to this by falling in love with Ruskin’s “succession of lamps.” Proust first read Ruskin’s *Seven Lamps of Architecture* while sitting within the Louvre. He was immediately wildly enthusiastic.⁸⁰ He found something akin to Darlu’s (and Bergson’s) thinking in the pages of Ruskin, that is, that the world was essentially divided into two. It was a dichotomy between appearance/illusion and essence/truth.⁸¹ The idea in Ruskin’s writing that made him a kind of hero to Proust was that he defined the role of the artist (or craftsman, or architect) as one of a translator or intermediary. According to Jean-Yves Tadiés, a

⁷⁷ Stambolian, *Marcel Proust and the Creative Encounter*, 10,17. Proust studied with Darlu in 1888 at the age of seventeen. Darlu stressed the importance of seeing unity in multiplicity and that identity lives in the successive, i.e. it is a creative imagination of the self. (This resonates with Bergson’s thinking.) Darlu’s philosophical position was situated between two extremes. On the one hand, “materialistic positivism which was then officially in vogue, and which claimed ... to explain thought by the mechanism of the brain, the movements of the soul by physiological modifications, and to see the mind only as a kind of emanation or property of matter,” and on the other hand, “the mystical tendency which ... refused to apply to the mind the law of determinism, placed the soul in an empyrean cut off from reality, postulated the ordering of the universe by divine will, and founded ethics and morality on religious beliefs.” Darlu’s concept of the mind was *esprit*—which in French means the world of thoughts and perceptions, and can also indicate the ‘spirit’ in a more religious sense. It was “real without being material, [and] ideal without being abstract.”

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁰ Jean-Yves Tadiés, *Marcel Proust: A Life* Trans. By Juan Cameron, (New York: Viking, 2000), 347.

⁸¹ Tadiés, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, 341-42.

biographer of Proust, Ruskin believed that “Eternal reality is established by talent—[in] a universe waiting to be decoded or translated,” and that the poet was “a sort of scribe to whom nature was dictating a more or less important secret.”⁸² This idea also related to the human past—the past communicated through historical buildings, and a person’s own personal past,—the idea that Proust echoed at the end of *In Search of Lost Time* when, through the aforementioned series of sensations that activated Marcel’s romantic memory, he was teleported back into past places through sights and sounds that led him to the overwhelming conclusion that he must make his search through ‘lost time’ to recover the essence of himself. He must, he thought, as an artist, decode himself.



Exterior of the Ducal Palace, Venice, *John Ruskin 1845 or 1852*

The magical atmosphere that surrounded Proust when he was reading Ruskin did not end with *The Seven Lamps*. He began researching everything Ruskin knew about French cathedrals so that he could write an article on him for *La Revue de Paris*. He traveled to Italy in 1900, and proceeded to read *The Stones of Venice* in St. Mark’s baptistry where “for an hour during a storm ... [he was]

⁸² Tadiés, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, 342.

overcome with a kind of ecstasy.”⁸³ Proust later remembered the event: “...those moments of storm and darkness when the mosaics gleamed only with their own material light, with an ancient, internal, terrestrial gold.”⁸⁴ After that, he retraced Ruskin’s observations of Venice stone by stone. He became enamored with Ruskin’s idea that pleasure accompanies the discovery of truth, and, even though he was unwell during his trip to Venice, he later recalled “yet Venice was nonetheless etched into me and, when I remember her, I still enjoy a deferred pleasure.”⁸⁵ The first in the series of involuntary *moments bienheureux* at the end of *Search*, (the ones that led him to understand the importance of the creative process having to do with establishing contact with his childhood self)⁸⁶, is in fact the uneven cobblestone that he stepped upon while avoiding being hit by a motorcar on the way to the Duc’s party. That familiar ‘unevenness’ is what put him in the mindset of his earlier days when he was in love with Ruskin in Venice, and, importantly, he experienced the earlier emotional outlook with an immediacy that happened unexpectedly.

For Proust, the authenticity of these perceptions was the element of chance. This distinguished his own ideas from Ruskin’s. After his trip to Venice, Proust went on to translate Ruskin’s *Bible of Amiens* into French, published in 1906. In the Introduction, he implies that the first view of anything is essential. (We may extrapolate that the first view of anything is a ‘childlike view’.) He spends two pages musing about the best way to approach the cathedral for the first glimpse: “I have never been able to decide which was really the best way to approach the cathedral for the first time.”⁸⁷ He gives options depending upon the weather and the amount of time that the traveler has. He stresses the importance of being in the right mood: “... stop for a moment along the way ... buy some of the tarts and sweets in one of the charming little pastry shops on the left ...”⁸⁸ For Proust, the first view of anything makes an indelible impression that will be revisited later, and so it is especially important.

The passion that Proust had for Ruskin was initially an all encompassing infatuation. After reading him, he made a pilgrimage to all of the architecture and paintings that Ruskin recommended be seen for their beauty. But, in coming to know Ruskin intimately (by translating him), he discovered the idolatry that Ruskin warned against. In the Postscript to the translation he writes:

⁸³ Tadiés, *Marcel Proust: A Life*, 348.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 366. Tadiés quotes a passage from a letter, Nordlinger, *Lettres*, p.ix.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 362-65. Tadiés quotes a passage from a letter written by Proust to André Gide on the 23 April 1921 in *Corr.*, vol. XX, p.208.

⁸⁶ For Proust, this included memories from early adulthood.

⁸⁷ Marcel Proust, *The Bible of Amiens: Proust by Way of Ruskin*, Introduction and notes translated from *La Bible d’Amiens* (1906) into English by R. A. Goodlake Lowen (Middletown, DE: Bell & Clews, 2022),16-17.

⁸⁸ Proust, *The Bible of Amiens: Proust by Way of Ruskin*, 17.

... the true dual between his idolatry and his sincerity took place not at certain hours of his life, not at certain pages in his books, but at every moment, in these deep, secret regions almost unknown to us, where our personality receives images from our imagination, ideas from intelligence, words from memory, affirms itself in the continual choices it must make, and in some way incessantly decides the fate of our spiritual and moral life. In those regions, it seems Ruskin never ceased to commit the sin of idolatry. And in the very moment he was proclaiming sincerity, he was himself lacking in it, not by what he said but by the way in which he said it ...⁸⁹

In short, Proust loved Ruskin's prose, loved the architecture that he admired, but found his moralizing tone disingenuous. It was 'voluntary' or pre-formulated.⁹⁰ Ruskin's ideas and writing style found their way into *In Search of Lost Time*, but the idea of accessing a child's way of seeing things via an unexpected and unpremeditated, *involuntary* resurrection perhaps came from his disenchantment with Ruskin. The critique of Ruskin's insincerity is essential to Proust's thinking.⁹¹ Frascari's idea that for authentic architectural dreaming to take place, "there is always a little childhood self present,"⁹² perhaps has to do with drawing with an openness, without a moralizing bias, drawing in a way that unexpected *moments bienheureux* can take place.

McCay's drawings about the process of dreaming in *Little Nemo in Slumberland* resonate with Proust's understanding of the creative encounter. At the end of *Search*, his waking dream—the uneven cobblestone, starched napkins, tinkling pipes, and favored childhood book—transport the narrator right back to his childhood in Combray. The transformational shock of the series of *moments bienheureux* echo the event that Nemo encounters every night in his dream, the one that causes him to wake up. Frascari references Pavel Florensky's idea that the dream one is in just before awakening has special significance:

... the hypnopompic dreams, the awakening dreams, are the ones accomplishing the conversion from the sphere of the real into imagination ... a dream, in itself, can last a short instant in time,

⁸⁹ Proust, *The Bible of Amiens: Proust by Way of Ruskin*, 58.

⁹⁰ This was like the aforementioned view of M. Swann held by Marcel's aunts, Celine and Flora.

⁹¹ Proust, *The Bible of Amiens*, 19, 173. Proust's humor can be seen in the introduction when he mentions how the sun's rays are visiting the statue of the Virgin's shoulders at the entrance, and "it was to its momentary caress that she seemed to address her centuries-old smile, this smile which Ruskin considers, as you have seen, that of a flirt..." Ruskin's description: "And, coming right up to the porch, everybody must like the pretty little French Madonna ... with her head a little to one side, and her nimbus a little to one side also, like a becoming hat. She is a madonna of decadence despite of or rather by reason of all her prettiness."

⁹² Marco Frascari, *Marco Frascari's Dream House: A Theory of the Imagination*, Edited by Federica Goffi (London: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 47.

*but the corresponding time in the dream can last from seconds to millennia. Dreams are gates open within the barrier separating the imaginal from the real.*⁹³

Proust also fleshes out the importance of ‘waking up’ from the disillusionment caused by the worship of idols. Various characters in the novel who he initially placed on a pedestal because they were inaccessible to him, inevitably all fall (like Ruskin). Likewise, on his journey, Nemo also discovers some deceptions like, for example, that a “pretty little maid” that he is admiring is actually a two-dimensional cardboard stand up. One is reminded of Toto pulling the curtain back to reveal Oz. Interestingly, a great deal of deception is foisted upon children in their younger years—Santa, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy—because of their willingness to enter into fantasies. The ‘childhood self’ that Proust elevates as ‘authentic’ in his novel has the ability to believe in many possibilities while dreaming, but, is also be able to evade deception because he is looking backwards with an adult point of view.

Proust writes *Search* like a third person narrator because he sees into other people’s minds and knows about events that he does not participate in. At the same time, he writes in the first person. There is an impossible ambiguity in the way the story is told, so that, without realizing why, the reader is aware that this is a special kind of remembering. Throughout most of the story, the protagonist has no name. (It is finally revealed two-thirds of the way through the novel in *La Prisonnière*.) We at last understand that the main character’s name is ‘Marcel’, and can confirm that the novel is, in a sense, autobiographical. Similarly, the protagonist in *Little Nemo* is ‘Nemo’, which in Latin means ‘no one’.⁹⁴

Proust’s vision of the child within enables us to see mysteries which can only be explained in other worlds. What is important is the depth of this state of seeing. According to George Cataui, “Proust proclaimed that art brings us the proof that there exists something beyond the nothingness.” He quotes Proust:

*Perhaps the resurrection of the soul after death is conceivable as a phenomenon of memory?*⁹⁵

⁹³ Frascari, *eleven exercises*, 159.

⁹⁴ Martens, *The Promise of Memory*, 80.

⁹⁵ Cattai, *Marcel Proust*, 80-82.

The imagination sees things clearly

Regardless of Proust's disenchantment with Ruskin's sincerity, Ruskin's writing demonstrates his ability to see and comprehend the sensibility of craftsmen through drawing the stones that they carved. His drawings penetrate; they are not made with hurried strokes. They've taken time; and the sunlight and shadow must have altered as he drew. It is easy to imagine him compensating for the passing of a cloud overhead, of shifting his position, of resting to take a drink or stretch out, or, of abruptly finishing the day's work as the first few raindrops fell, to continue the next day. Then, when he took up his pad again, he saw the same thing in a different light and finished it with a new understanding.

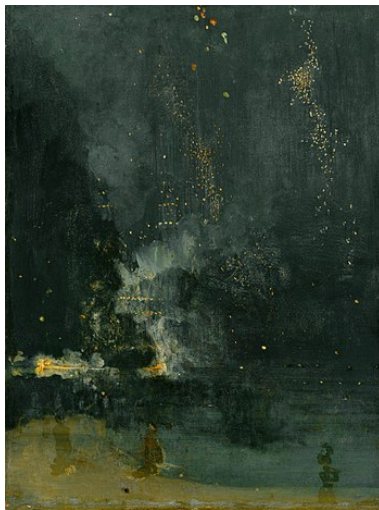


Mountain Rock and Alpine Rose, *John Ruskin 1844-49*

With this kind of sensitivity and attention to detail, it is understandable that Ruskin fell in love with the medieval way of building. All of its eccentricities and the marks of so many individual craftsmen—so many different points of view—influenced his thinking about architecture. His drawing and painting gave him the perspective of one who makes things, not one who critiques them. His writing was an inside view of making.

Proust was also a sensitive soul, and, like many who are not quite sure what they have a talent for, who only know what they *don't* seem to have a talent for—in Proust's case, a soldier, a lawyer, a librarian, a public servant—he discovered in Ruskin a kindred spirit, a Romantic spirit. And so he set out on the unlikely task of translating Ruskin's work into French as one who only spoke and read a moderate amount of English. He devoted seven years to the task—much of it writing in bed—enlisting the aid of a friend and that of his mother to help him understand the nuance of Ruskin's prose. He was successful. But rather than then assuming the role of scholar, (which he had inadvertently become), his devotion to Ruskin's thought led him instead to writing a novel. And it was a perfect romance in the sense that what Ruskin saw and learned through translating buildings and landscapes into drawings; Proust saw and learned through translating Ruskin's English into French.

By falling in love with Turner, Ruskin came to understand the transition that architects and painters were making from Romanticism to Modernism. By falling in love with Ruskin, Proust came to understand the transition that Bergson was making—its own kind of Modernism—into a new understanding of the self.



Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket, *James Abbott McNeill Whistler c.1875*

Ruskin held his ideas very dear. There is a story of a criticism he made of one of Whistler's paintings, *Nocturne in Black and Gold*, that had been dashed off in an atmospheric way, seemingly similar in feeling to a Turner seascape. Holding something very dear (like Turner's landscapes), and suffering the unknowing glances of spectators who hold a poor imitation in high regard because they cannot really *see* the difference between the authentic and its imitation, made Ruskin suffer. His criticism of Whistler led to an actual trial. Whistler sued for libel in 1878 because of the unkind remarks made by Ruskin—and Whistler won. Here is the transcript:

Defense of Ruskin: "Oh, two days! The labour of two days, then is that for which you ask two hundred guineas!"

Whistler: "No;—I ask it for the knowledge of a lifetime." (Applause) ⁹⁶

Ruskin was unable to attend the trial because he was suffering a kind of breakdown. Whistler's applauded response was ironic, because (although true) it echoed Ruskin's own thinking about Turner's work. Ruskin began *Modern Painters* as a defense of Turner, who was under scrutiny for not being true enough to nature. But, Ruskin differentiated idolatry—of which he was accusing

⁹⁶ Susan Phelps Gordon, "Heartsight Deep as Eyesight: Ruskin's Aspirations for Modern Art," Essay from the exhibition catalogue *John Ruskin and the Victorian Eye* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 118. The trial transcript is a quote from James Abbot McNeil Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (New York, 1867), 5.

Whistler, who in his opinion was more concerned with style and pictorial invention than anything else—from the layering of impressions intended solely to reveal something authentic about nature, which revealed the Divine.



A First Rate Taking in Stores, J. M. W. Turner 1818

Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843) presaged both the painting of Whistler and the writing of Bergson. His love of Turner had to do with Turner's ability to remember the beauty of all the seascapes he had ever seen (in the way that painter's notice them) and synthesize them suddenly using a little bit of imagination (ie. memory). The fluidity and expressive brevity of the brushstrokes was also a part of the beauty.

The greatest thing a human soul ever does in the world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion—all in one.⁹⁷



Ship at Sea, J. M. W. Turner, 1830

⁹⁷ Gordon, "Heartsight Deep as Eyesight: Ruskin's Aspirations for Modern Art," 122-3.



The kitchen in the house in Illiers-Combray. As a child, Marcel Proust spent holidays with his aunt and uncle in Illiers, France. Their restored residence is now the Marcel Proust Museum. Photograph by Marina Faust.

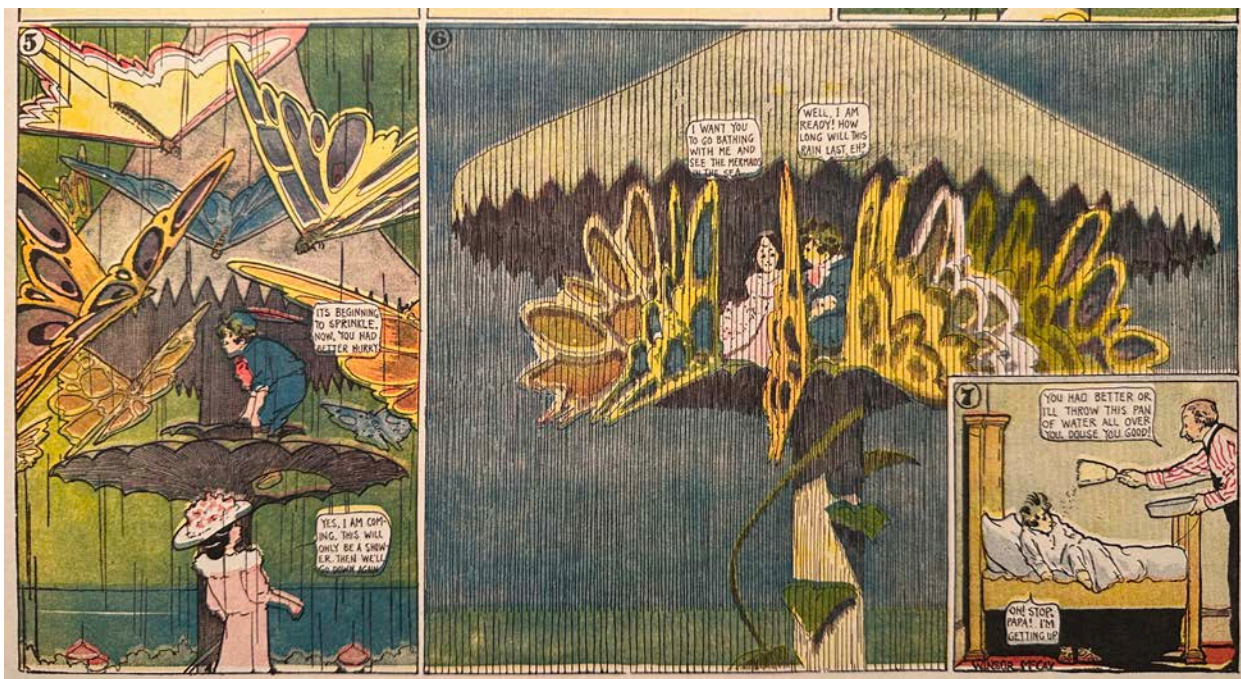
A teacup's dream (interlude)

A backward glance in time lends—if not clarity—then at least another dimension to the present. A tagged teacup is summoned from deep storage in a museum, patient and surrounded by layers of padding, living on a dark shelf. Then suddenly it is boxed and crated and flown to a distant museum. There is a sudden rush of the teacup's heart as it finds a rhythm with the number of steps or miles it must navigate to find its way to be exhibited in a new venue, passing through unexpected thresholds. Finally, as it is gently carried up a stairway, its heart beat slows down enough—as it is carefully unpacked by preparators in an exhibition space—to begin its dream.

In what room will this cup of lime blossom tea dream?

How does imagination grow from memory? McCay illustrated countless dream landscapes with Little Nemo waking up at the end. The places that lent inspiration for those drawings were the exhibition halls of Coney Island's Luna Park and Dreamland. Through a kind of reverse engineering then, his cartoons might generate new rooms for architecture today: a sort of resurrection of dream palaces from a hundred odd years ago superimposed onto the early modern landscape of New York City.

According to Marcel Proust, it will happen unexpectedly—involuntarily—if the architect is to effect a state of mind like McCay's—a dreamer's state of mind. Imagination *will* grow from memory when there is a merging of the materials at hand, of water droplets and the sound of rain with the specter of Coney Island's glowing lights in the distance, and the memory of its peculiar landscape mixed into the form that is the city of New York, with a dose of the White City of the Chicago World's Fair, and the Wonderlands of Detroit and Cincinnati.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, August 12, 1906

Every architect has their own individual atmosphere of material happenings mixing into archived memories of the places they have seen under construction—and built—as they contemplate the making of their next building. What will be the wobble that flows into the lines of an architect's pen making marks on a drawing?

After absorbing the exuberant, loose and friendly lines of Winsor McCay, no longer available every Sunday in the paper but, thankfully compiled in beautiful full-scale reproductions; and,

after reading the beautiful novel produced by Marcel Proust about how imagination grows—lives—sustains itself—on memory; or, after reading just those passages highlighted in this section on Proust, it is possible to see that the best drawings an architect can draw may be cartoons.⁹⁸

What is the nature of an architect's cartoons? The second half of this dissertation looks at the characteristics of *Little Nemo* and *Rarebit Fiend* in an attempt to find out.

⁹⁸ Paraphrase of a comment made by Professor Olivio Ferrari about drawing details while he was teaching Architecture at Virginia Tech.

6

Visual atlas

Visual Atlas

To fill out this dissertation, this inquiry into the imagination of Architecture via cartoons and animation by Winsor McCay, it is worth taking a closer look at the pictures that surrounded him while he was drawing *Rarebit Fiend* and *Little Nemo*, and to note that McCay—who had an amazing ability to draw anything and everything in perfect perspective—had an ongoing kaleidoscopic view of multiple perspectives. We've looked at three thinkers from McCay's time. For each of these thinkers there was a significant and complimentary famous artist who explored similar themes. Their visual representations asked the same questions:

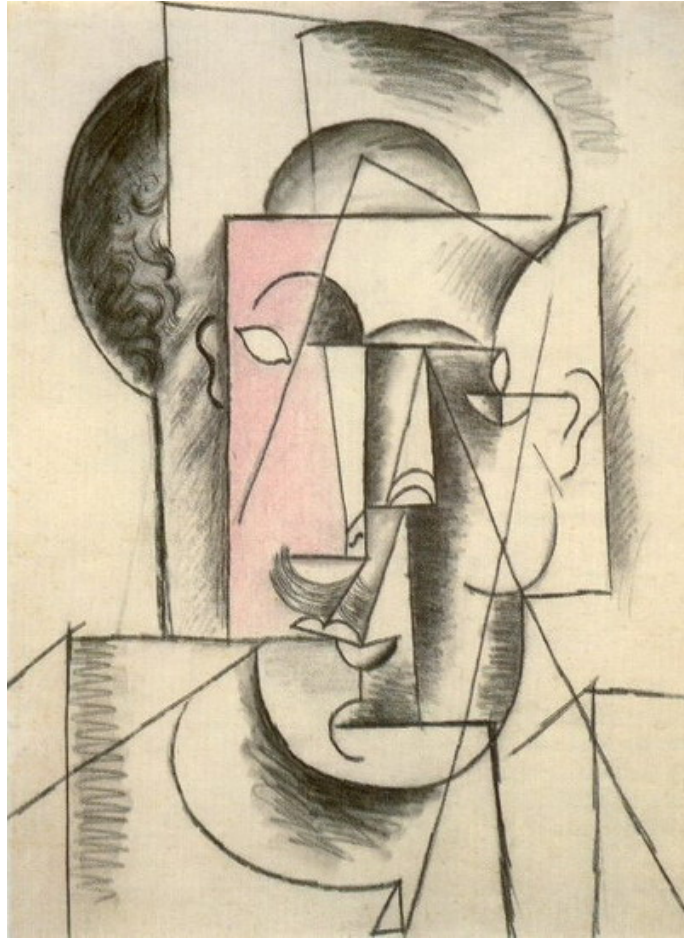
What are dreams? What is imagination? What is reality?

In pursuit of this kind of knowledge, what are the characteristics of these queries when drawn, or painted or in the case of film, storyboarded?

Freud / Picasso / Braque

The dreams mapped out by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* come from the psyche. For Freud, *everything in the dream is already there*. The psyche holds a recording of every detail heard, smelled, felt or seen since very early childhood, even those things which were too insignificant to 'remember'. The dreamer is a master of arrangement, composing fragments of our archeological selves as a way of maintaining balance. Read—our childhoods made us all a little bit nutty, and our unconscious (the dreamer) speaks to us while we are sleeping as a way of compensating for things we *could not have known or realized* when we were little, or even things not completely processed from a few days ago.

Freud's artistic counterparts could be Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who drew and painted things with a multiplicity of viewpoints. Different points in space could all be seen at the same time. There was photography, faithfully documenting the effect of light on a chemical surface for a prescribed duration of time through a lens in a particular position, but a more revelatory image would render several things at once, imaginatively. Likewise, Freud thought that a man could dream about a forgotten picture he saw in a book in an attic long ago, and it would be absolutely relevant to the events of the present, could in fact be superimposed upon images from the present to create a multi-dimensional view of the subject, like a painting by Picasso or Braque. For Freud, dreams come from our incomprehensibly faithful recording of the past, mysteriously rearranged into a story in the present. The story is not always clear, so the odd juxtapositions hold multiple possibilities. And, there is often a heady undertone of powerful emotions like sex or conflict.



Pablo Picasso Tête d'homme (1910)

In an essay “The Moment of Cubism,” John Berger describes it this way:

The concept of ... ‘action at a distance’, entered now, unacknowledged, into all modes of planning and calculation and even into many modes of feeling ... For the first time the world, as a totality, ceased to be an abstraction and became realizable.¹

¹ John Berger, “The Moment of Cubism,” In *Landscapes: John Berger on Art* (London, New York: Verso, 2016), 117. Extended quote: “The developments which converged at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe changed the meaning of both time and space. All, in different ways, some inhuman and others full of promise, offered a liberation from the immediate, from the rigid distinction between absence and presence. The concept of the field, first put forward by Faraday when wrestling with the problem—as defined in traditional terms—of ‘action at a distance’, entered now, unacknowledged, into all modes of planning and calculation and even into many modes of feeling. There was a startling extension through time and space of human power and knowledge. For the first time the world, as a totality, ceased to be an abstraction and became realizable.” It is interesting that, according to Berger, just as painting was being called ‘abstract’, the world ceased to be so.

The vast upheaval of life, of time, by modern physics; the interconnectedness of electricity, train and airplane travel; and the replacement of live theatre and musical performance with cinema, radio and mass-circulating newspapers; the replacement of religion with psychology; a new landscape intertwined with roadways built for motor-cars; of density; of speed led to a kind of euphoria. But it also led to despair. Picasso, Braque, Fernand Léger and Juan Gris, tried to capture this spirit of the entirely new on canvas just before the Great War. George Braque:

*The things that Picasso and I
said to one another during those years will never be said again,
and even if they were,
no one would understand them any more.
It was like
being roped together on a mountain.²*

The cubist presentation of objects or forms from several points of view, ironically, made the forms seem more obscure. The painting is evidently an image that has been painted on canvas, nothing more, and it is not confused with the likeness of the form it represents. The viewpoint of a Renaissance picture is outside the picture plane, making the rendering seem realistic, because it is similar to what our eye sees. A cubist work does not fix the eye in any one place. The canvas is an enigma. Appearances of objects in the canvas are clues rather than renderings.

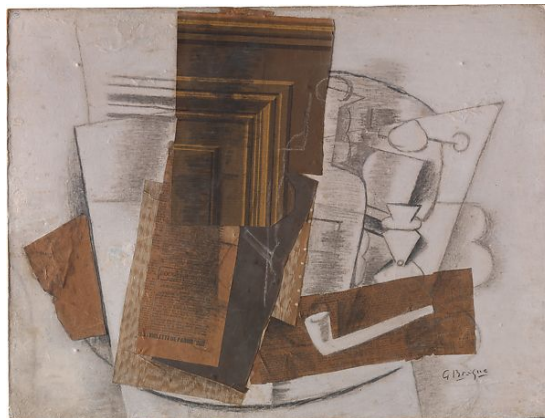


Pablo Picasso Still Life with a Bottle of Rum (1911)

² Berger, "The Moment of Cubism," 113.

Braque and Picasso used collage as signs that did not imitate, but rather, referred to the objects they were portraying. In this sense, they are dreamlike. Elements of the forms they represented can be interchanged with any number of associations. A face, a hand, a table, a drink, a person moving behind. The “cube” in cubism was not about making things simple and geometric, so much as turning the canvas into something that revealed multi-dimensional dynamic relationships and situations rather than recognizable static scenes.³ Braque and Picasso took Cézanne’s prismatic view of color and form, and turned it into dream-like fragments that acted as recognizable indicators.

Freud and Picasso both had a fascination for African art, sculpture and masks. It was informative rather than deceptive. It had little to do with appearances and likeness, more to do with ideas: a rational, geometric breakdown of the forms that were being represented.⁴ Picasso used this as his point of departure, initially scouted by Cézanne, toward the representation of three-dimensional forms on a two-dimensional canvas. In like manner, Freud broke dreams down into discreet fragments, which, like a geometric form, could assume a multitude of identities, depending upon its pictorial space, its arrangement and context. ‘Abstract’ non-representational forms assume an identity, or multiple identities, simply through the merest glimpse of a profile or a suggestive placement. Freud’s dreams and Picasso’s cubist paintings and collages were a kind of simultaneous vision. Freud thought the dreaming mind could act as a trickster. Likewise, Picasso liked to play in his collages with materials that were obviously ill suited to each other. The shape of a bottle might be constructed from newsprint rather than a piece of green paper, which multiplied the associations.



Georges Braque Bottle, Glass, and Pipe (Violette de Parme) (1914)

³ Berger, “The Moment of Cubism,” 132.

⁴ John Golding, “Cubism.” In *Concepts of Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 67. An analysis of ceremonial masks from the Ivory Coast helps elucidate Picasso’s process: “...two circular shells or cylindrical pegs can come to represent eyes, a vertical slab of wood can become a nose, a horizontal one a mouth, and so on, while the rectangle of wood to which these elements are fixed becomes the underlying structure ...”

Braque would cut out the shape of a pipe, discard the shape, and then paste the paper with the outline of the pipe into his collage. Reference to the pipe was now not only rendered by shape, but bore the connotation of something missing; again, increasing possibility. It became an awareness of something through its absence, “*C’eci n’est pas une pipe...*”



René Magritte *The Treachery of Images* (1929)

... which René Magritte played with as an idea later. But, Picasso and Braque had their own difficulties with intrusive images. Picasso described a particular painting that Braque was working on:

I remember one evening I arrived at Braque’s studio. He was working on a large oval still life with a package of tobacco, a pipe, and all the usual paraphernalia of Cubism. I looked at it, drew back and said, ‘My poor friend, this is dreadful. I see a squirrel in your canvas.’ Braque said, ‘That’s not possible.’ I said, ‘Yes, I know, it’s a paranoiac vision, but it so happens that I see a squirrel. That canvas is made to be a painting, not an optical illusion. Since people need to see something in it, you want them to see a package of tobacco, a pipe, and the other things you’re putting in. But for God’s sake get rid of that squirrel.’ Braque stepped back a few feet and looked carefully and sure enough, he too saw the squirrel, because that kind of paranoiac vision is extremely communicable. Day after day Braque fought that squirrel. He changed the structure, the light, the composition, but the squirrel always came back, because once it was in our minds it was almost impossible to get it out. However different the forms became, the squirrel always managed to return. Finally, after eight or ten days, Braque was able to turn the trick and the canvas again became a package of tobacco, a pipe, a deck of cards, and above all a Cubist painting.⁵

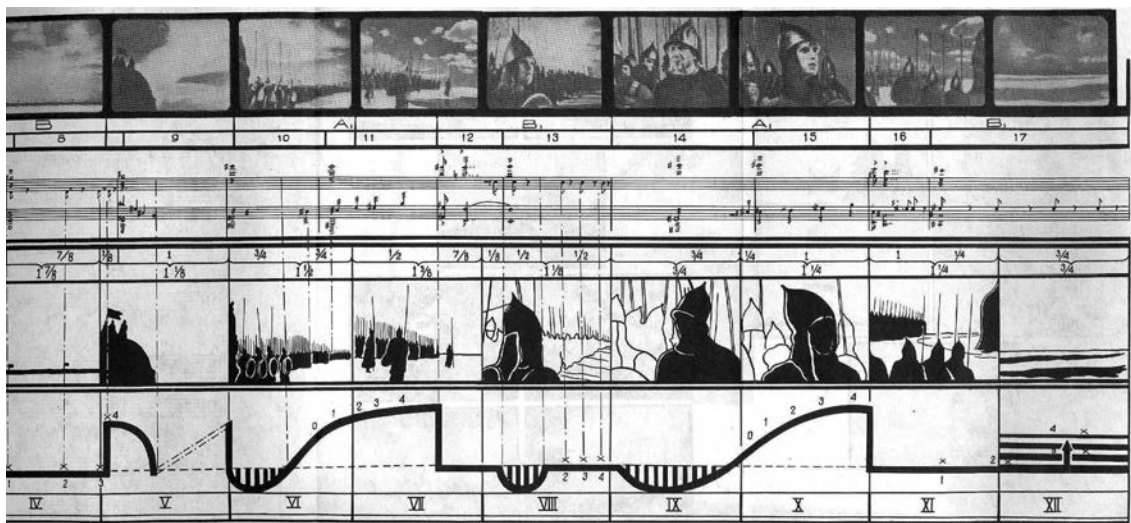
⁵ Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, 68. This story resonates with the pre-formulated view of M. Swann through the eyes of Marcel’s aunts in Proust’s *Swann’s Way*. We see what we *think* is there, not what is actually there.

We have peeled back the bits of paper glued by Freud, Picasso and Braque—an ‘architectural’ matrix—to discover some of the answers posed by *Demoiselle* in 1907.⁶ The representation transformed from a kind of mirror, or window, looking onto a scene or figure or still life, into a fertile territory from which things could emerge and be recognized.

* * *

Bergson / Eisenstein

We can next see through the lens of Henri Bergson, who, as it turns out, thought of dreams a lot like Aristotle did.⁷ The mind likes to put things into categories, and as things get added, the nature of the category itself is redefined. For Bergson, everything is constantly being refined and reformed. The dreamer summons. What appears at nighttime is based upon the malleable impressions of a conscious mind at rest, but still sensing. Dreams are a process of magnification when the senses are sublimated. Dreams exaggerate vague and imperceptible sense impressions that the unconscious mind picks up, that the conscious mind is not aware of. Dreams do not serve a specific purpose, and hence have no ‘meaning’ *per se*, except that the glimpse of these vagaries enables a kind of deepening, a sense of continuous renewal.



Sergei Eisenstein, *Sequence diagrams for Alexander Nevsky (1939)*

⁶ *Les demoiselle d'Avignon* (*The Young Ladies of Avignon*), originally titled *The Brothel of Avignon*, was painted by Picasso in 1907. The ladies appear to be wearing masks whose primitivism moved Picasso to “liberate an utterly original artistic style of compelling, even savage force.”

⁷ Bergson submitted a short paper on Aristotle with his dissertation entitled “On the Concept of Place in Aristotle” for his doctoral degree at the University of Paris in 1889.

Bergson as an artist could have been Serge Eisenstein, who made films and thought largely about montage. For him, the in-between was important. Meaning came about through juxtaposition and our mind's propensity to meld things together into a new entity. Seeing a film is like dreaming. We cannot resist the urge to meld everything together into a continuous story, even while asleep. Our conscious perception does this too, and the stories we see as 'reality' unfold with as much imagination as our dreamed perceptions do. Our minds synthesize stories whether asleep or awake. We constantly engage in creating vignettes of the present, using vignettes from the past (and vice versa).



Stereoscopic viewer
American, unknown maker
Designed by Oliver Wendell Holmes and Joseph Bates
20th century
Monarch Library, Bard Graduate Center

Stereoscopic viewers are the simplest example of this, merging slightly altered perspectives from the left and right eye. They became enormously popular at the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 in London. The new stereoscope was fitted with two lenses, one for each eye and one for each framed view, with a wooden stand to hold the representations at exactly the right distance to aid the mind in merging the two. It essentially gave the representation more depth, and made it seem three dimensional—or 'real'—since the thing was seen from two slightly different points of view at the same time. Post cards displayed on a rack for purchase became two square juxtaposed frames of a scene. After visiting an attraction, a tourist would be left with an impression of a double, rather than one discreet image.

When looking at a page from *Little Nemo* with about 8 to 12 different viewpoints, the mind's eye uses its natural facility for melding. A newspaper is generally held about a half an arms lengths from the eyes, the same distance as a book.

called a zoopraxiscope. In the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 (which McCay attended in Chicago) in the "Zoopraxographical Hall," Muybridge gave talks on animal locution. Muybridge's paper discs were patterned after phenakistoscope discs, which were an early kind of storyboard based on circular motion, that through spinning, gave the viewer an illusion of animation.



*Part of McLean's Optical Illusions or Magic Panorama, 1833
When spun, the disc displays the illusion of a ball passing between a frog and a man.*

These early simulations of motion were developed by scientists who were fascinated not just by the optical deception of motion that could be produced by spinning, but also by anamorphism. They essentially were making a reverse model of the mind's representation of time and space. To perceive motion with the eye at a relatively fixed point, a series of spinning images that gradually represented a change in position of a figure's arms or legs made it seem like the figure came to life. Reversing this logic, the moving eye then, would see the figure or landscape come to life, merely by seeing it from multiple perspectives. A movie is hard to remember after a period of ten years or so, unless it is viewed several times. Perhaps this is because it is viewed from a fixed point. A lasting impression is only really made in the mind when the *eye* is in motion. Thought exists through action. Cognizance comes about through seeing a sequence. Is it the repetitive aspect of

multiple views that impress us with a memory, or is it the fact that the mind is engaged in the act of merging them together? In other words, *memory = merging*. In either case, whether through eye movement brought about through body movement, or through image melding, thought is action.⁸ Here is McCay's take on it—



Dream of the Rarebit Fiend

Although our thoughts are formed through action, our references remain static, like Bergson's "states," due perhaps to the structure of our language. "She is running" is not an imagining of all of the different shapes that are formed by mobile arms and legs, with ripples of muscle, in succession. We simply imagine that "she is a state of running." Our mind's eye merges things into a static representation of it.

⁸ This is a case for seeing things while perambulating through a museum, i.e., taking advantage of the way we truly cognize things. Perhaps this is why we must dream. Only through simulated action can we reformulate our thoughts with any lasting degree of force.

While Muybridge was using multiple cameras to capture motion in succession, other artifacts of early photography—even the documentation and memory of tourist attractions as a double image, for example—were closer to a static impression of movement. Waterfalls, since they were exposed over a period of time, rendered water as a strange ghostly white substance. Here the image is pre-merged, and hence rendered as almost blank. A recent example of this feels more clever.



Hiroshi Sugimoto Theater, part of a series on time-eluding photography. “One afternoon I walked into a cheap cinema in the East Village with a large-format camera,” recounts Sugimoto. “As soon as the movie started, I fixed the shutter at a wide-open aperture. When the movie finished two hours later, I clicked the shutter closed. That evening I developed the film, and my vision exploded behind my eyes.”⁹

In early photography, clouds escaped being captured by film when they were moving across the sky. The sky looked blank. Only if the clouds were fluffy immovable stuff hovering on the horizon, could they be seen in the photograph.

⁹ The quote is from the website of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, California, where an exhibition of Sugimoto’s photographs, *Theaters*, took place in November 2023.

This brings us back to Sergei Eisenstein:

*In themselves, the pictures, the phases, the elements of the whole are innocent and indecipherable.
The blow is struck only when the elements are juxtaposed into a sequential image.¹⁰*

Perhaps we are more capable of “striking the blow” when we are asleep or when we are drawing. In the end, our conscious mind is more like Sujimoto’s theater. The capacity of the mind to sequence images has something in common with the unconscious, and with Synthetic Cubism. Juan Gris described his process of constructing a field with latent abstract forms, and bringing out a representation, through a comparison to Cézanne’s method of painting:

*Cézanne turns a bottle into a cylinder ... I make a bottle, a particular bottle out of a cylinder.
Cézanne works towards architecture, I work away from it ... I make a composition with a white
and a black, and make adjustments when the white has become a paper and the black a shadow.*

He goes a bit further to explain that:

*What I mean is that I adjust the white so that it becomes a paper and the black so that it becomes
a shadow.*

Gris’ process is very similar to Bergson’s description of whirling phosphenes of color taking shape in a dreamer’s mind. The cubists set the tone for the importance of making an evocative matrix where everything—in anytime—can simply be. Eisenstein’s representation—his storyboarded query about reality—was based upon the idea that the imagination is a mind prone to making adjustments. If dreams are nothing but a meld of fragments that get assembled into a story that seems to make sense, then knowledge comes about when things merge, or, you can say, when things emerge.

* * *

¹⁰ Sergei M. Eisenstein, “Montage and Architecture” *Assemblage 10* (December 1989), 111-131.

Proust / Klee

Dreams can be seen through the rumination on memory in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. Like Freud, Proust thought that *everything was there*, but that it seemed remarkably different when looking in the opposite direction. Things pop up in reverse that were once barely noticed. Only later, are they are recognized as being significant. For Proust, we are constantly enduring a metamorphosis of past memories that evolve and change meaning. Memory seems to make us travel backward into a kind of dream.

Proust can be linked to Paul Klee. For Klee, everything was movement and countermovement. Life itself was a winding and unwinding that brought about images and meaning. He was interested in learning how to originate form at its most essential, and he used drawing as a way to decode the elemental forces of growth and nature. In 1914, he said:

*Ingres is said to have created an artistic order out of rest; I should like to create an order from feeling and, going still further, from motion.*¹¹

Klee taught drawing at the Bauhaus. Although his drawings are fantastical and whimsical (and some think 'surreal'), the writing in his Notebooks is analytical and almost scientific. In the preface to the English translation of his notebooks Giulio Carlo Argan writes that Klee was in constant pursuit of the absolute work of art, a work that he never achieved. Like Proust, Klee is trying to escape the ordinary experience of reality and makes his search (through drawing and painting) in a 'lost dimension'. He tries to animate ambiguous images and give them meaning and form:

*For the threat does not come from the vitality of the unconscious, but on the contrary, from carrying within us something that is dead, which, being corrupted, corrupts us.*¹²

The writing in the Notebooks, which are Klee's theory of form, narrate his search for meaning as he pursued his unaccomplished 'perfect' creative work, very much like Proust did in *In Search of Lost Time*.

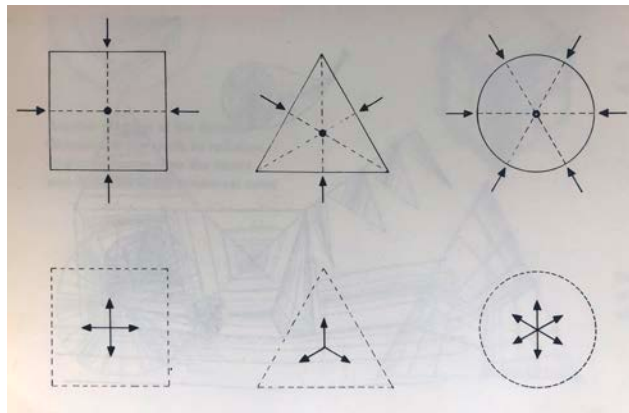
¹¹ Paul Klee, *Paul Klee Notebooks, Volume 1, The thinking eye*, Trans. Ralph Manheim from the German edition, 'Das bildnerische Denken' (Benno Schwabe & Co., Basle, 1956), (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co, 1961). Quote is in the first page of the book.

¹² Paul Klee, *The thinking eye*, From the preface by Giulio Carlo Argan, 12.

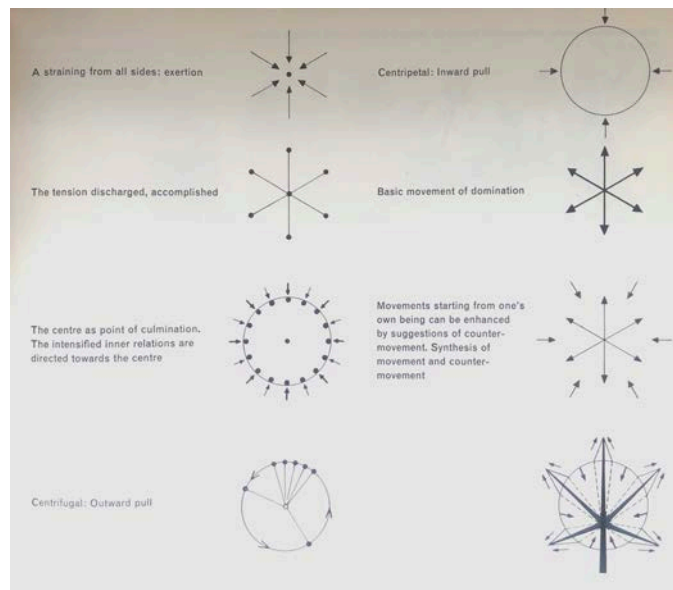
Proust discussed the point in time that was animated by his taste of the little *madeleine* (the point in time it transported him to). Klee also ruminated a great deal about a ‘point’. The point is resting. For the point to become a line, it must have an impetus. Some sort of primordial movement (such as desire, or a need to withdraw or escape) acts as an agent onto a point, and then a line comes into being, an active line that is free.

*It goes out for a walk, so to speak, aimlessly for the sake of a walk.*¹³

Klee also gives a presentation of basic forms, their tensions and inner relations.



You can see one of the whimsical drawings from the other side of the page peeking through.¹⁴



¹³ Klee, *The thinking eye*, 105. “The most highly-charged line is the most authentic line because it is the most active.”

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 32.

He developed the circle diagram further to include all kinds of straining and exertion both in and out, eventually leading him to an understanding of how a leaf can grow in several directions at once. His description:

The articulating energies and impulses illustrated by the example of a leaf (growth in several directions). Union of material tension and ideal tension (ie. simultaneous presentation of essence and appearance).¹⁵

The diagrams are so simple, yet the words so difficult to comprehend. Klee discusses various adjustments that happen when different kinds of motion are intermingled. He describes a combination of rigid and free rhythms as:

... Interpenetration of endotopic and exotopic treatment, of essence and appearance moving in rhythm, suggest[ing] the focal movement.

Here is the delightful cartoon that is the result: ¹⁶



When the drawing is freehand, the lines have a personality. Klee seems unable to resist having a few recognizable elements pop in. This is similar to Bergson's description of dreaming, when you first fall asleep:

¹⁵ Klee, *The thinking eye*, 33.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 35.

... spots spread and shrink, changing form and color, constantly displacing one another. Sometimes the change is slow and gradual, sometimes again it is a whirlwind of vertiginous rapidity. Whence comes all of this phantasmagoria? ¹⁷

Bergson's dreams, like Klee's lines are:

... slight modifications that occur ceaselessly in the retinal circulation ... ¹⁸

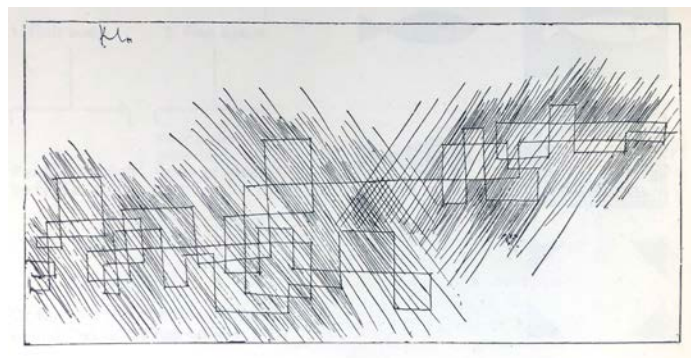
Which echo Proust's rooms:

... that room in which my mind, forcing itself for hours on end to leave its moorings, to elongate itself upward so as to take on the exact shape of the room, and to reach to the summit of that monstrous funnel ... ¹⁹

... the frighteningly elongated, and then distinctly reduced lofty ceiling which his mind was able to adjust so that the room became habitable. Klee is also concerned, not just with expanding and contracting boundaries, but with orientation. Orientation also has to do with movement: front-back, left-right, above-below. On a succeeding page, after a brief discussion of direction and movement, he notes that

... a clash is possible. ²⁰

Here is the resulting drawing by Klee, demonstrating two directions of movement that overlap in a rhythmic combination of forms. He gives it the title *Village in the rain*:



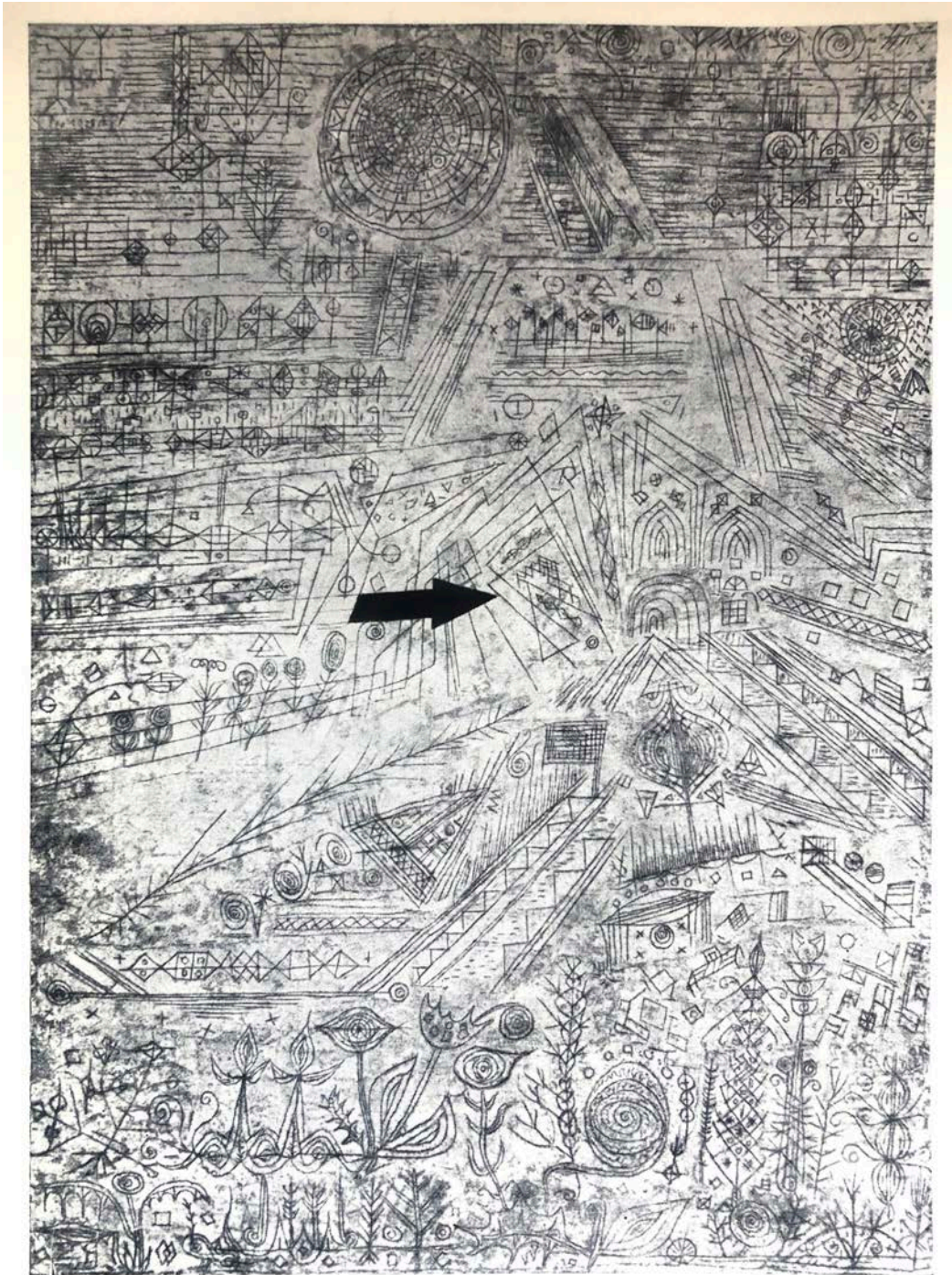
¹⁷ Henri Bergson, *Dreams* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1914), 16.

¹⁸ Bergson, *Dreams*, 17.

¹⁹ Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, 8-9.

²⁰ Klee, *The thinking eye*, 45.

He eventually gets to a drawing in oil with a very pronounced arrow, titled *Arrow in garden*. He discusses the reason for the weight of the arrow. It is in the center, but activates the many sided motions of the total space,²¹ a bit like the Proust's *madeleine*.

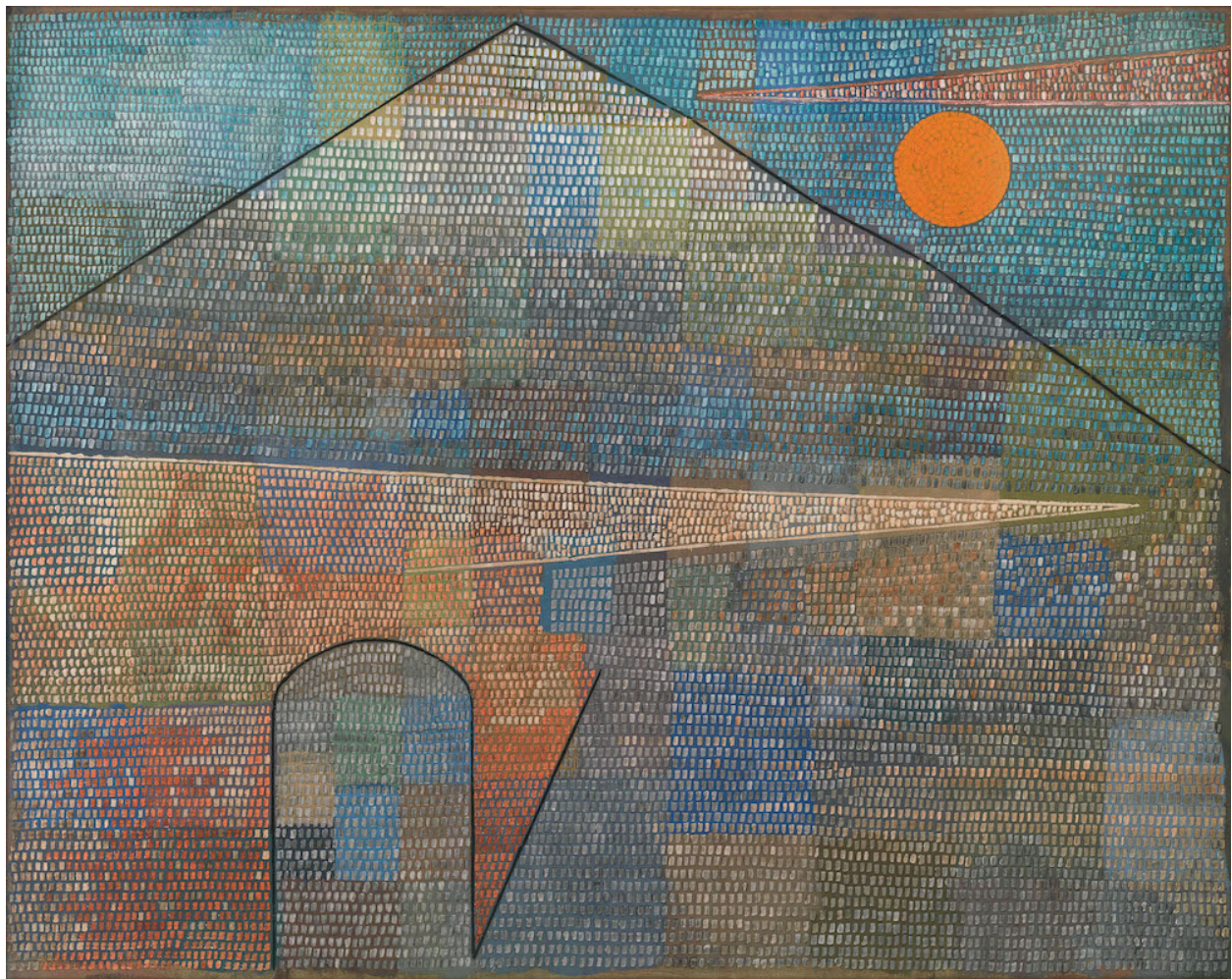


²¹ Klee, *The thinking eye*, 45.

The Notebook is filled with delightful drawings, but, is difficult to understand. One has the sense that he made an authentic search to find balance. He uses words like ‘essence’, ‘inner being’, ‘becoming’ and ‘orientation’. Thankfully, the words do not at all diminish the allure of his drawings. The drawings enable the words to become enigmatic.

Here is the beginning of a lecture he gave on the occasion of an exhibition at the Jena Kunstverein, on 26 January 1924:

... as a painter I feel quite in command of the means to move others in the direction in which I myself am driven, I feel that it is not within my powers to map such paths so surely through the word.

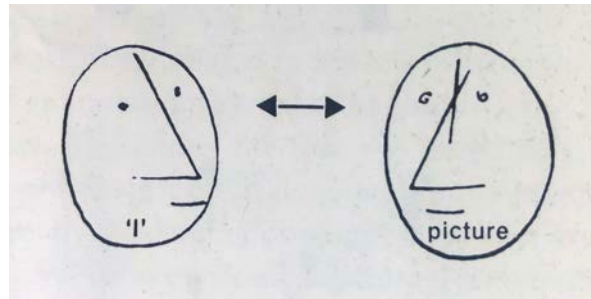


Paul Klee Ad Parnassum (1932)

Klee wrote about orientation with respect to viewing pictures. (This might also be a way to view dreams).

The picture as mirror image of the creative artist; the dimensional concepts are made to fit him.

*I and the picture look each other in the face.*²²



Together, the draftsman and the picture are free. There is no prescription. Finding a path has only to do with points that are filled with the desire to move. In *Creative Credo*, Klee says that

*Art does not reproduce the visible but makes visible.*²³

This kind of drawing, even if it had recognizable elements, would not imitate the way a particular view would realistically appear. It would instead allow the pencil to reveal an alternate reality.

*It gives the schematic fairy-tale quality of the imaginary and expresses it with great precision ...*²⁴

rather like the odd details that emerge in a dream. McCay's drawings combine the elements of motion and rest that Klee has identified as a "coming to being" in a cartoon that is *not* abstract, but *does* have schematic fairytale characters expressed with great precision. He is dreaming about drawing, rather than writing about drawing. He is drawing about dreaming..

In the hands of Klee and McCay (and Proust), the pen on paper is always intelligent. It promotes possibility.

²² Klee, *The thinking eye*, 57.

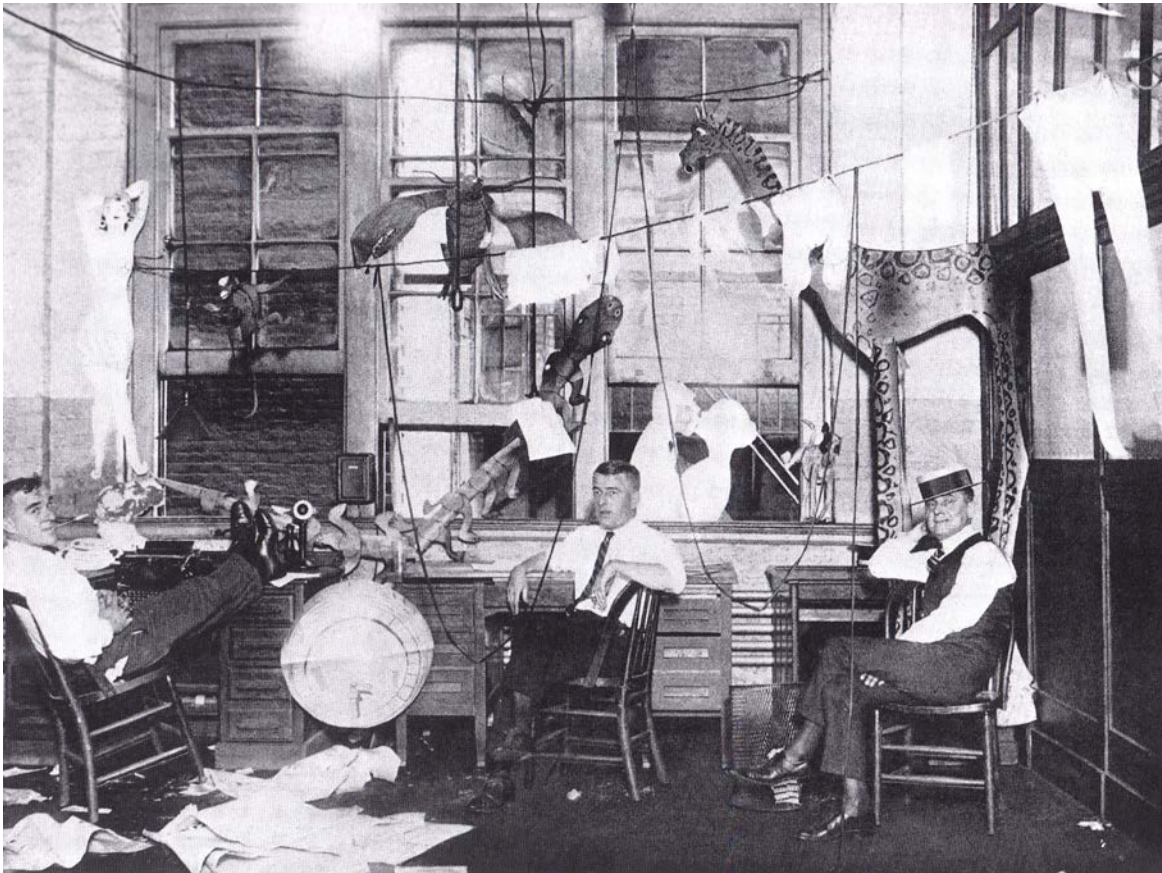
²³ Ibid, 76. Chapter 10 of *The thinking eye*, the 'Creative Credo' was first printed in *Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit*, edited by Kasimir Edschmid: Erich Reiss Verlag, Berlin 1920.

²⁴ Ibid, 76.

A whirlwind summation of this atlas—about dreaming in the early 1900s—and about the nature of imagination, and (even) reality is:

1. a psychologist/painter (Freud/Picasso/Braque) arranged forms, often simultaneously from multiple points of view, into one enigmatic scene with associations that suggested things;
2. a philosopher/film maker (Bergson/Eisenstein) celebrated the continuous, cogent entities that emerged from the mind's propensity to wed things together; and,
3. a novelist/painter (Proust/Klee) looked at the same things backwards and forwards, and noticed how motion itself has a relationship with desire, the desire of things to be something.

They all—in one way or another—explored different aspects of the transmutation of dreaming; they all contemplated the motion and direction of thought; and, they all landed squarely in New York City in 1913 at the Armory Show.



Winsor McCay's office at the American in 1913 was nicknamed "The Chamber of Horrors," a reference to the room of Cubist paintings at the Armory Show. McCay is on the right tipping his hat.

The Armory Show

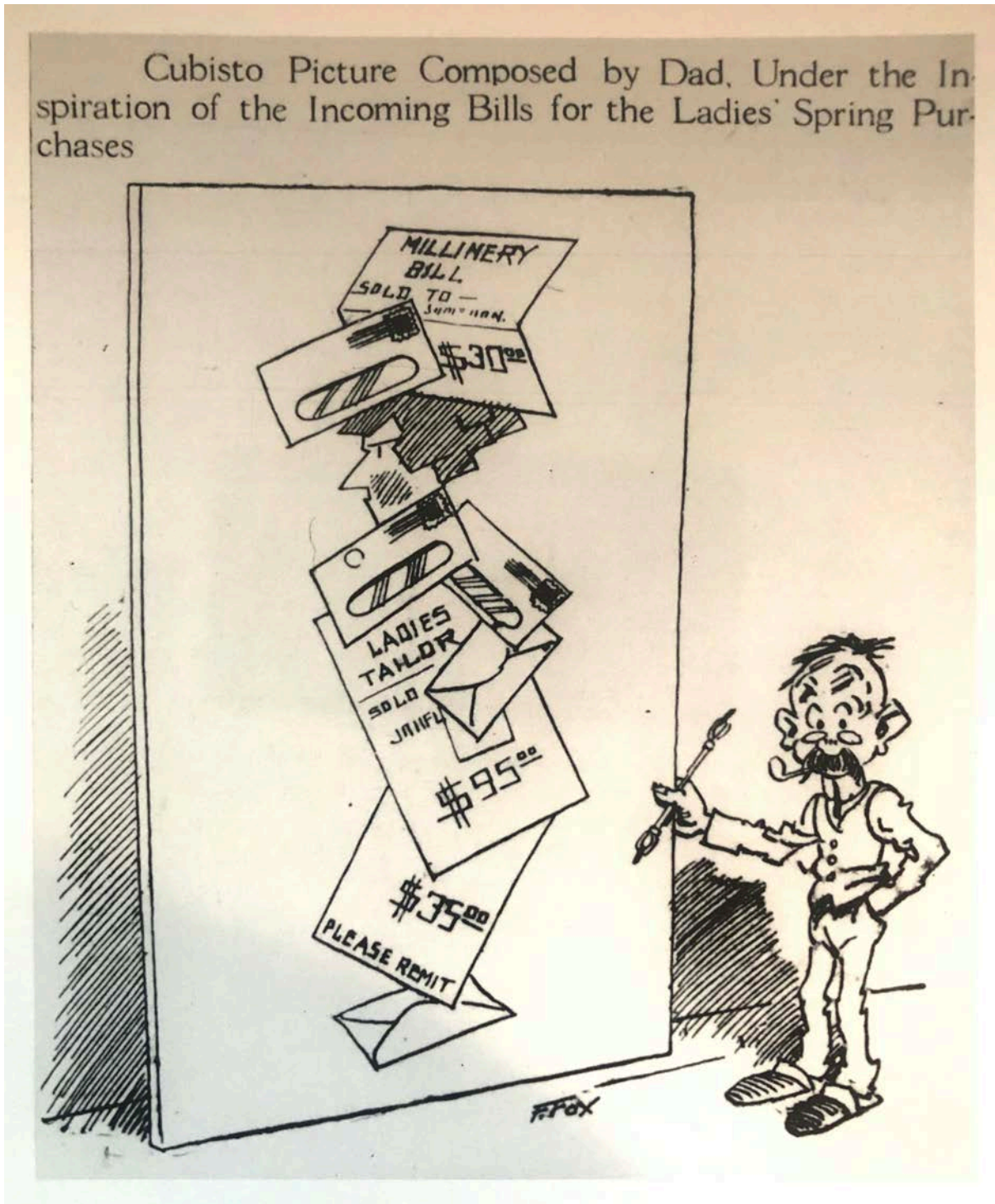
As *Little Nemo* was again falling out of McCay's inkwell, this time known as *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams* at William Randolph Hearst's paper, the modern blockbuster exhibition as we know it was born. The 1913 Armory Show, also known as the "International Exhibition of Modern Art," reverberated through New York. The most shocking section, the room that housed the Cubist and Futurist paintings became known as the "Chamber of Horrors." Winsor McCay's office at the *American* jokingly became known to the staff by that same name.



Cubist Artist: AH, IF YOU COULD ONLY SEE THINGS
AS I DO, MY DEAR!

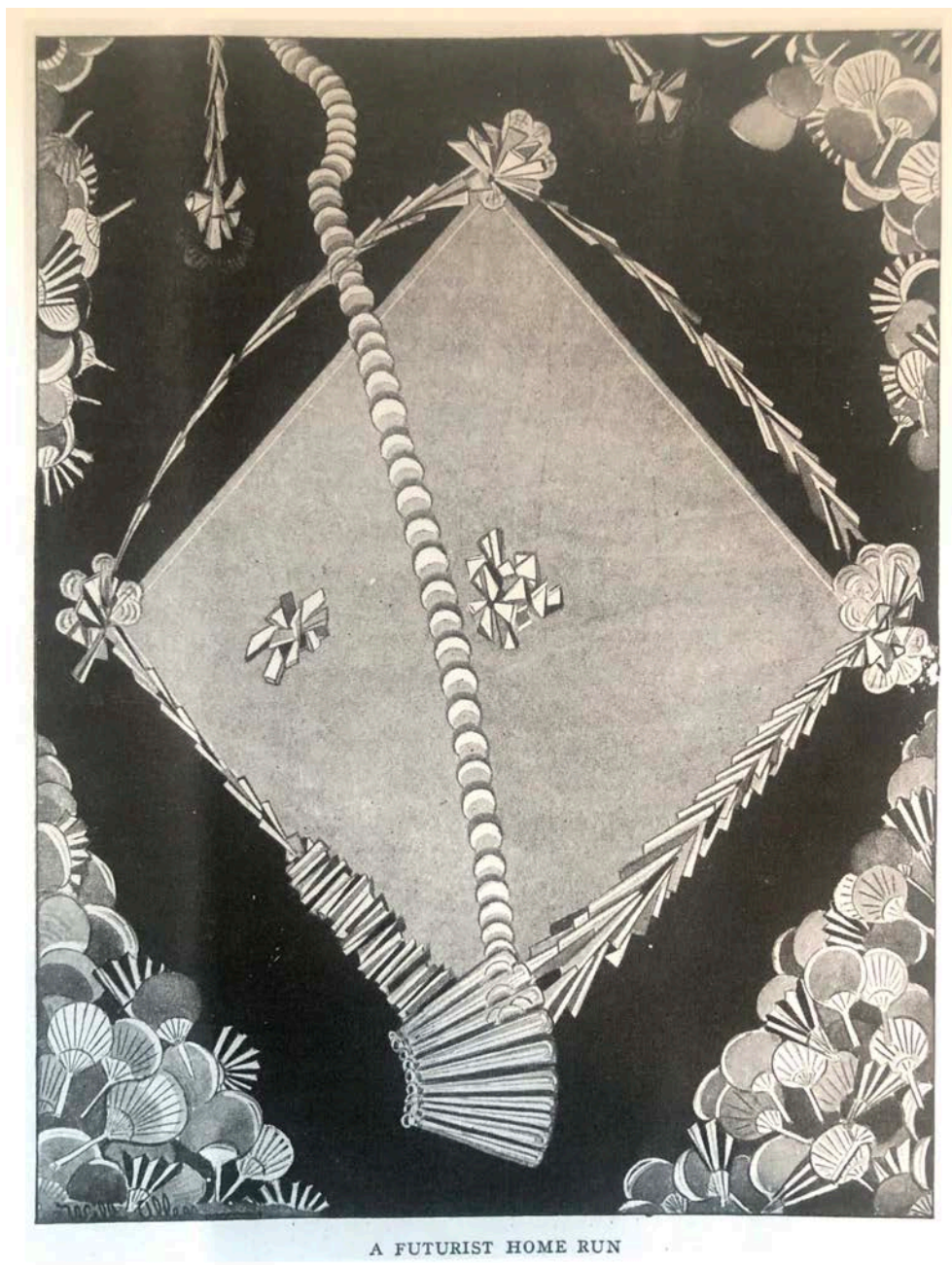
Rea Irvin, Life, March 20, 1913

Until 1913, the official art scene largely took place in the cafés and salons on the European continent. When Cubist paintings were first seen in New York, there was an *un*-official, less intellectual, but still imaginative and skillful reaction seen in print.



F. Fox, New York Evening Sun, April 8, 1913.

A hundred years later, we still have paper newspapers, graphic novels, movies, trains, planes and automobiles. But our fascination with motion has worn off. We no longer throw our heads back



Life, July 10, 1913

in delight at the marvel of speed and motion. Or sneer at the depiction of it. We get a sense that early modernism was greeted by an audience with a sense of humor.

THE EVENING SUN, THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1913.

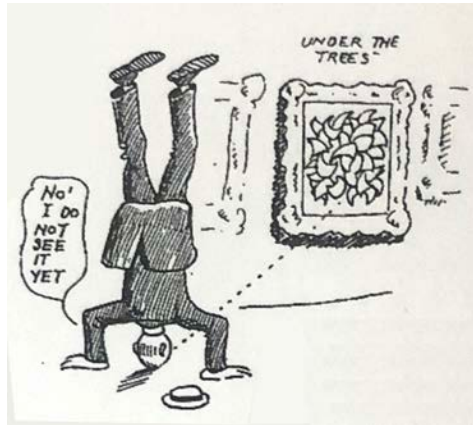
SEEING NEW YORK WITH A CUBIST



The Rude Descending a Staircase
(Rush Hour at the Subway)

J. F. Griswold, New York Evening Sun, March 20, 1913.

Modern Architecture came onto the American scene during a time when, in the ‘funny’ papers, (as well as in the ‘Chamber of Horrors’), the scene itself was the thing that moved, elongated, and flipped into view.



Thomas E. Powers, “Art at the Armory by Powers, Futurist”
New York American, *February 22, 1913*

Even though Dreamland was a recreation of the White City at the Chicago World’s Fair, Coney Island, as a flight from logic, was setting the tone for modernism with its celebration of a moving eye (riding on the loop-de-loop), elongating forms (fun house mirrors) and the experience of being somewhat out of control (in the Barrell of Love).



The Barrell of Love ride in Coney Island

Freud and Bergson extended their thinking about dreams to the mechanisms at work in wit, which was McCay's stock-in-trade as a maker of amusing cartoon anecdotes and funny bits for vaudeville. He thought that his animated drawings were significant enough to eventually live in museums, but likely could never have guessed that this kind of 'amusement' could someday become central to imaginative thinking and dreaming about Architecture, and to truly 'intelligent' design.



Cliff Stennet's caricature of Winsor McCay featured in the New York Herald, February 10, 1907 in the article: "Here Are Men Who Make Evening Telegram Readers Laugh."

Part II

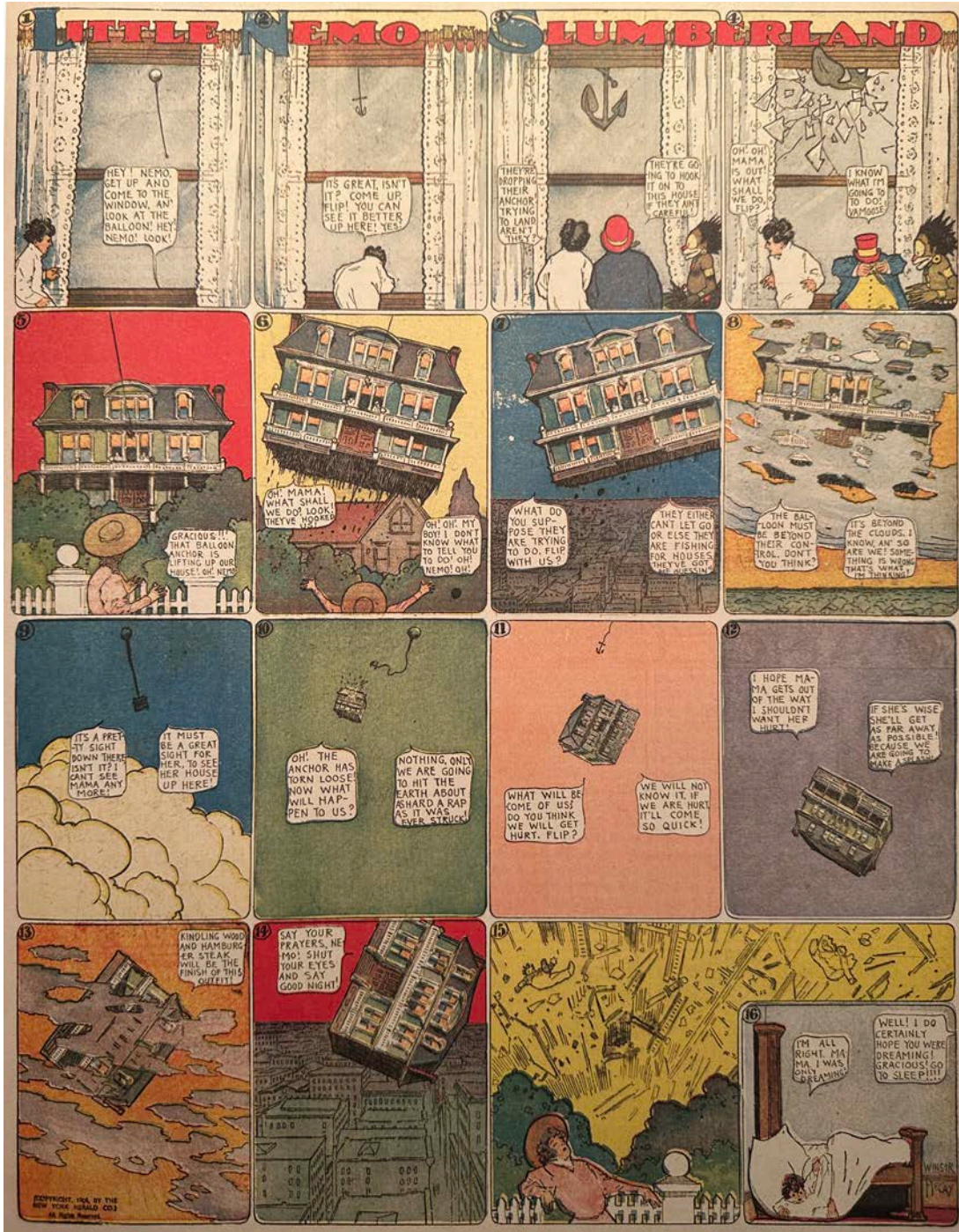
Winsor McCay's cartoons

Seen as drawings of early Modernism

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7

Cartoons to moving pictures—
on the dynamics of moving bodies



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday*, September 20, 1908

The dawn of animation

Winsor McCay inadvertently explored ideas that were emerging in the twentieth century about the dimension of time in space. He explored them not through definitions and theories—(think Einstein)—or through infiltrating the art salons in Paris—(think Picasso, Hemingway and

Gertrude Stein)—but by making drawings on countless sheets of paper as a pioneer of early cartoon animation. McCay wholeheartedly believed that his animations were in the category of fine art and that they would change the view of it, but it didn't play out as he expected. Today, a hundred years later, the 'animation' function in digital drawing software is making McCay's early explorations significant, not to modern art, but to modern Architecture.

A story about Architecture

I became an exhibition designer by accident after attending architecture school for eight years. My approach to exhibition design was with vision that had been altered by Bauhaus thinking. The world of exhibition design *is* the world of an architect, albeit a moon orbiting around the mother planet. Having emerged from the chrysalis of a Bauhaus school—or graduated from architecture boot camp—which it sometimes felt like—i.e. after being stripped down and then built back up in unison with other fledgling architects—or in any case—having gone through this transformation, my vision was changed to seeing everything in terms of Architecture.

Equipped with my new way of seeing, I entered a world that had been created by artists and curators. I learned that an exhibition designer's primary concern is what the visitor sees (specific arrangement and presentation of objects), how the visitor sees things (psychic mood provided by backdrop, color and dramatic use of light),¹ and how the visitor moves from object to object—how the visitor animates—the space. This was an extension of the mind's eye into the spaces we inhabit, which sounds like a plausible definition for Architecture. William Lethaby claimed that Architecture is the matrix of civilization.² What are the qualities of this matrix that we invent?

Let us pretend we have spent a rainy afternoon inhabiting the Museum of Modern Art in New York City that has lined its walls with reverently lit paintings by Mark Rothko. After a few hours of standing in front of the canvases, we wander out into the streets of New York. The rain subsides and a light fog settles into canyon-like avenues. The sun comes out and casts a perpendicular glow of orange-pink on the city walls. We are likely to notice that the foggy walls of the canyon are shimmering rectangles of color—*just like Rothko's landscapes*.³ This is a reason to

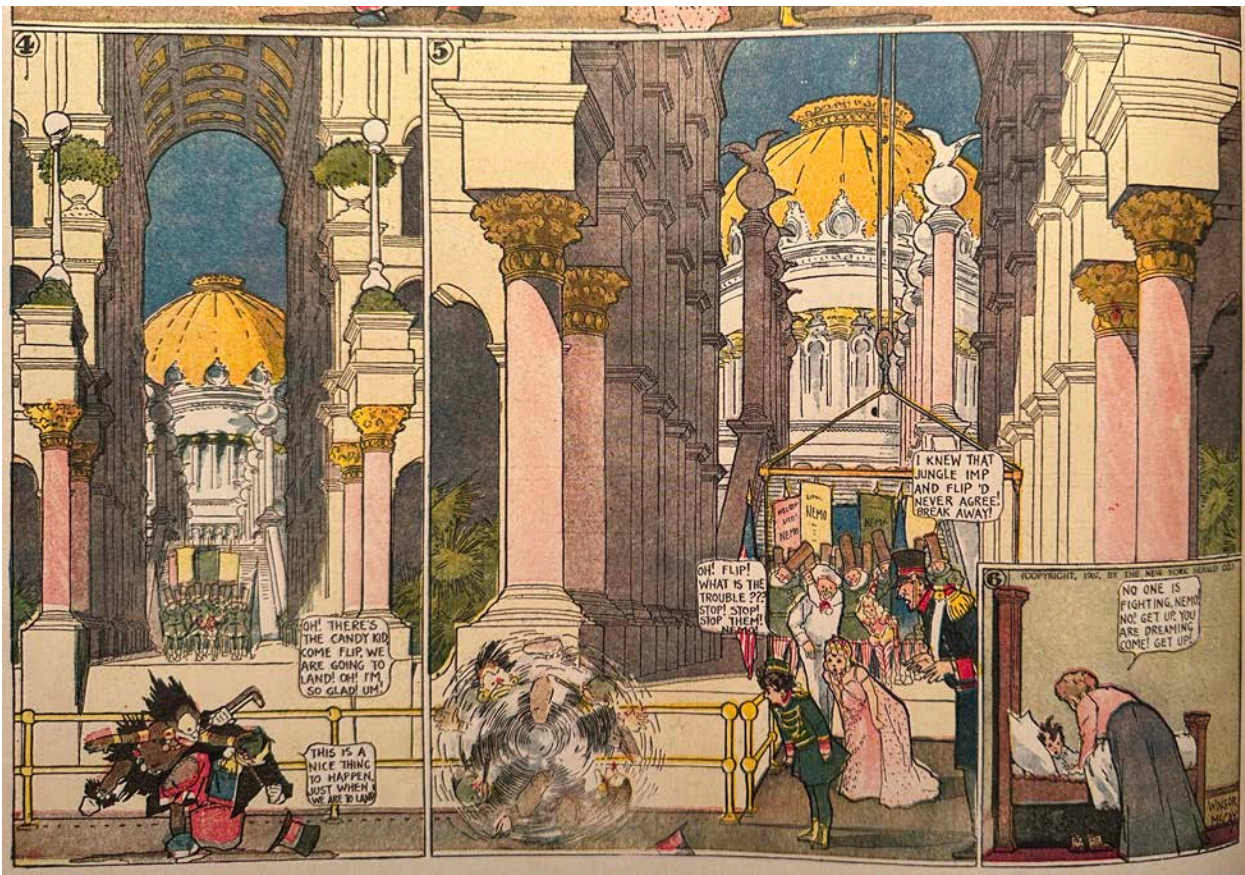
¹ The phrase "psychic mood favorable" comes from an article written by Claude Bragdon on theater design. "The Artist-in-the-Theatre", Claude Bragdon, *The American Magazine of Art*, Vol.20, No.10 (October, 1929), 547.

² Lethaby, W. R. *Architecture: An Introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, London: William and Norgate, 1911), 7. William Richard Lethaby, an architect and historian from the Arts and Crafts movement who helped lay the ground work for early modernism, gave architects a key to enriching the forms they had inherited by looking at cross cultural symbols in his treatise *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*.

³ This was an idea put forth by Jeffrey Weiss, who was the head of Twentieth Century Art at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC.

go to museums to see modern art. Abstract landscapes open up possibilities. They enlarge the field of our perception. Architecture can also have the quality of an abstract landscape, or, she can perform her role as a Lady providing a place for the arts. Lethaby continues:

Good architecture is masterly structure with adequate workmanship; the highest architecture is likely to have fit sculpture and painting integrally bound up with it. If architecture was born of need it soon showed some magic quality, and all true building touches depths of feeling and opens the gates of wonder. ⁴

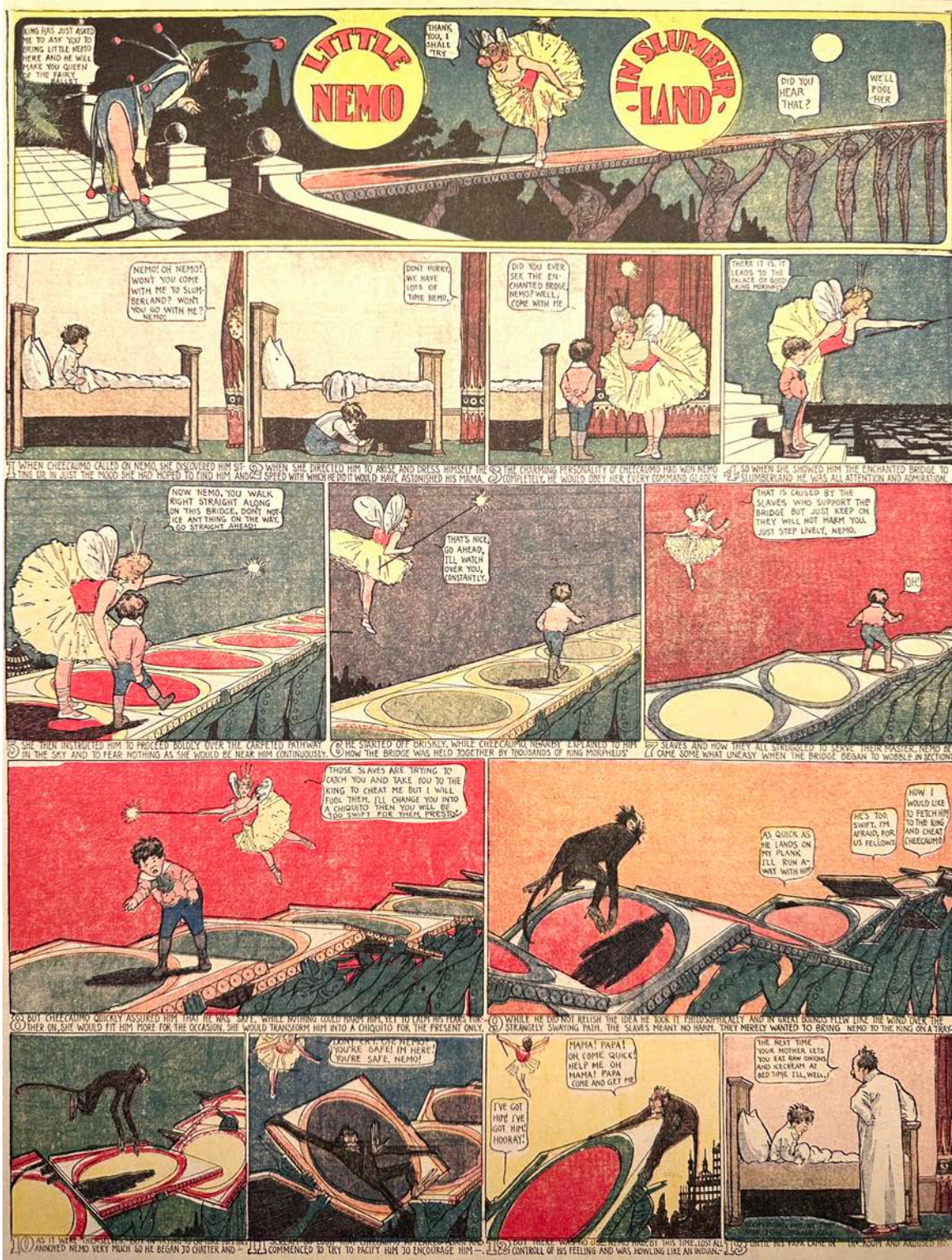


Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, July 21, 1907

McCay's rendering of a 'gate' mixes a neoclassical promenade with what appears to be a ramp lowered from the crane of a passing ship.

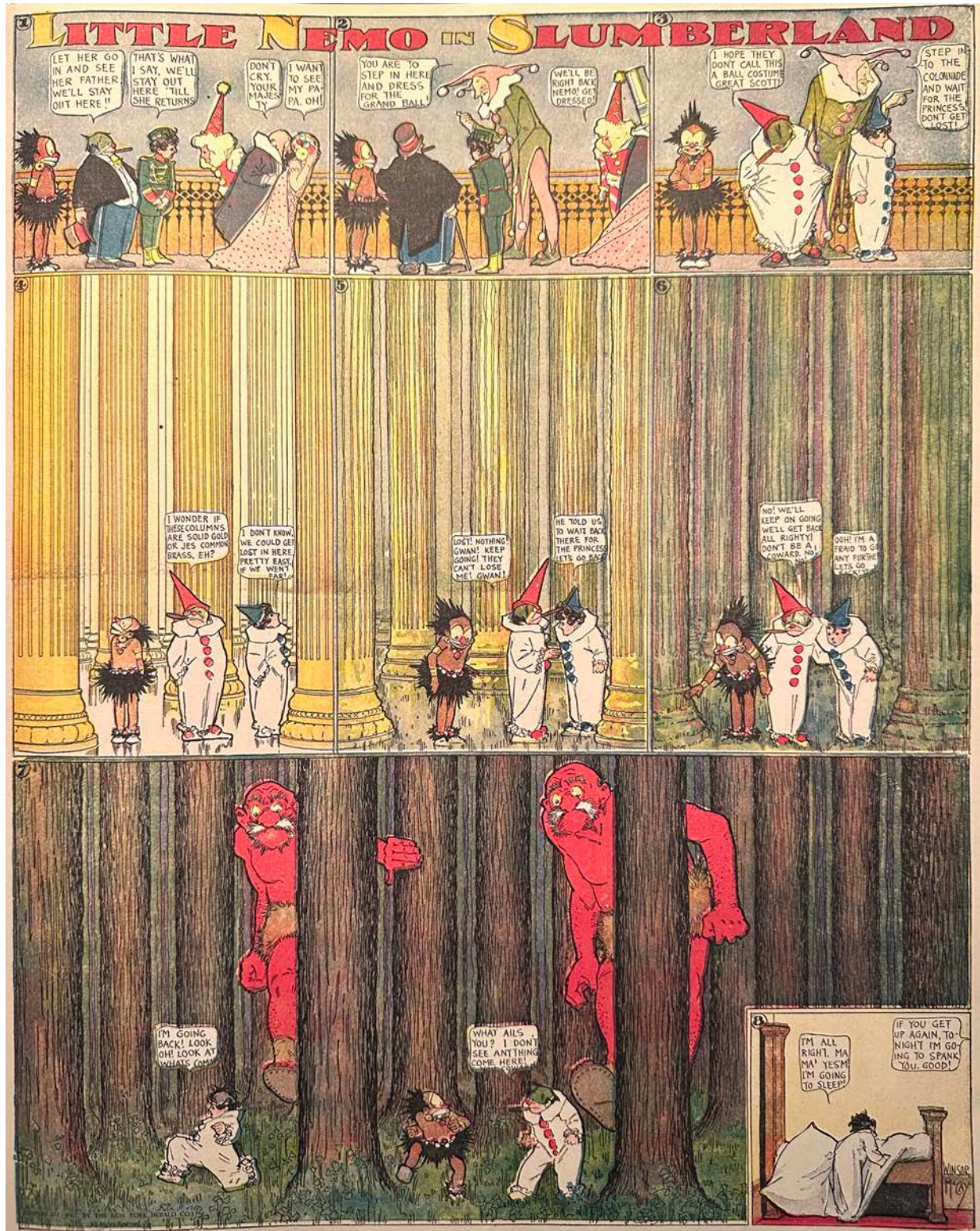
Architecture itself, *without* paintings, conjures feelings of wonder. The two combined, doubly so. McCay's drawings of architecture capture this 'magic quality'. They touch us with their beauty. McCay was a master of perspective, but he was also prone to rendering buildings in a way that added an emotional caste to the 'dream', turning it into a nightmare.

⁴ Lethaby, *Architecture: An Introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building*, 8.



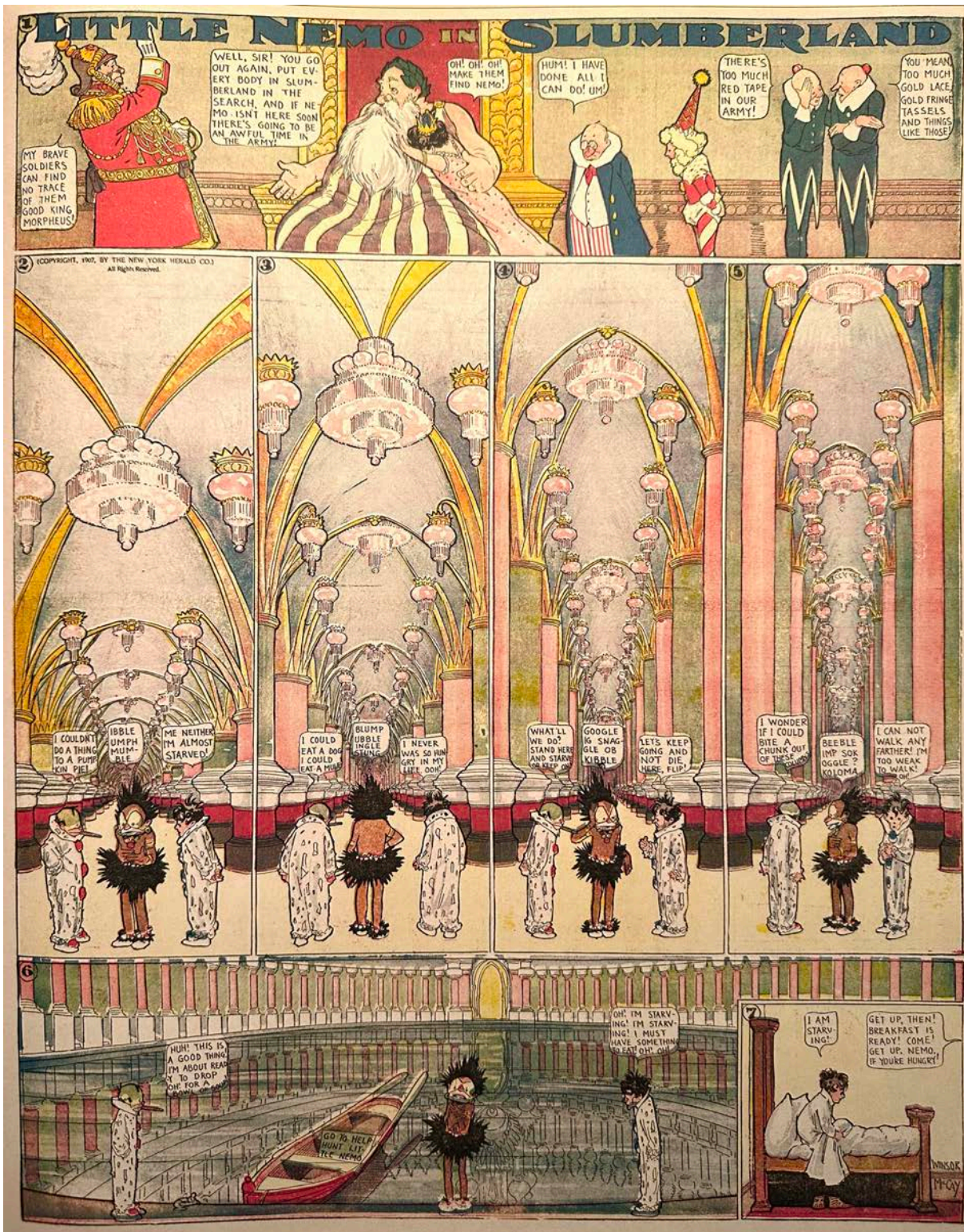
Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 12, 1905

An enchanted bridge leading to the palace of the good King Morpheus suddenly becomes unstable.



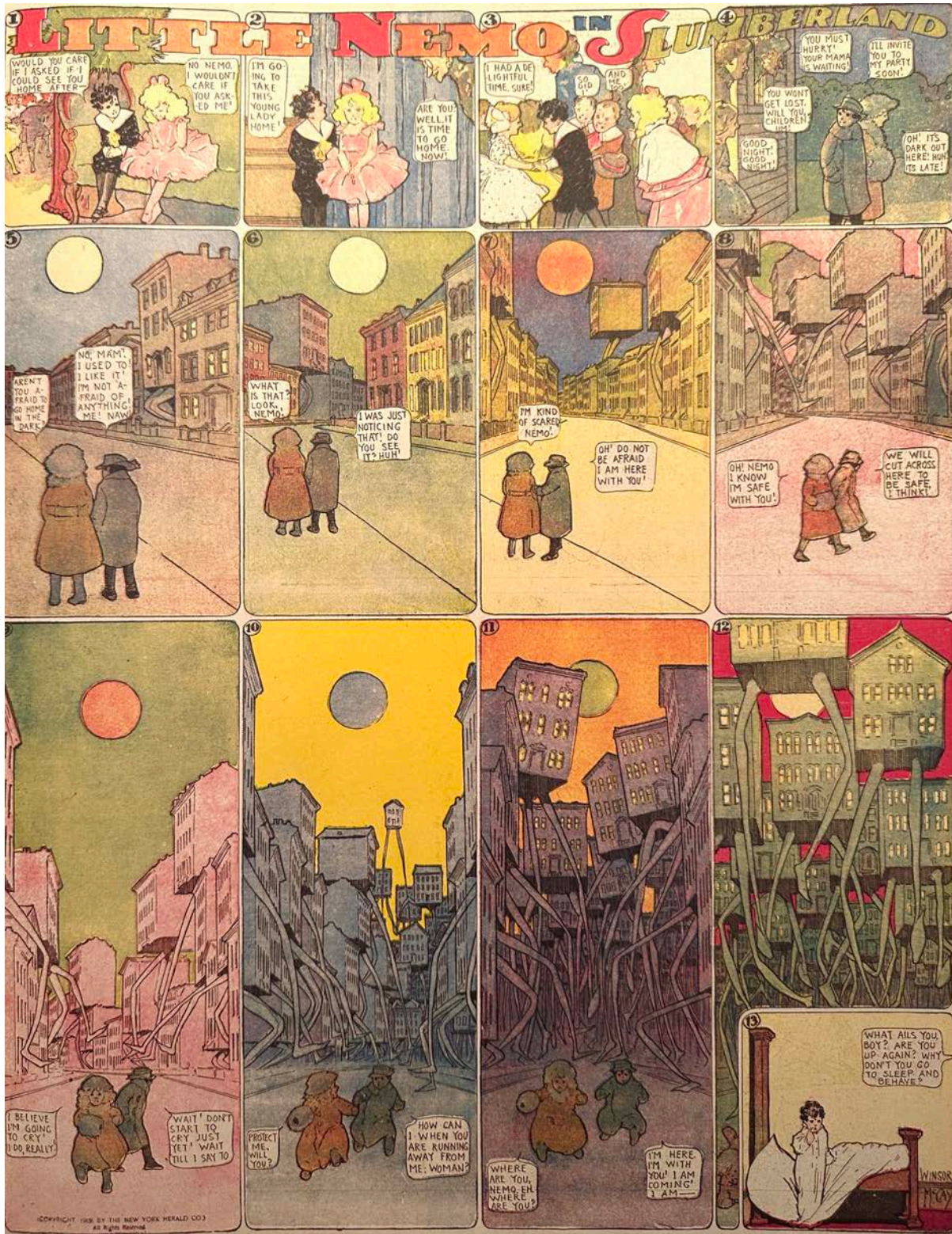
Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, September 8, 1907

When they arrive at the palace, Nemo and his friends are asked to wait in a hall of columns and cautioned not to get lost. The columns morph into a forest and a scary red giant begins to chase them.



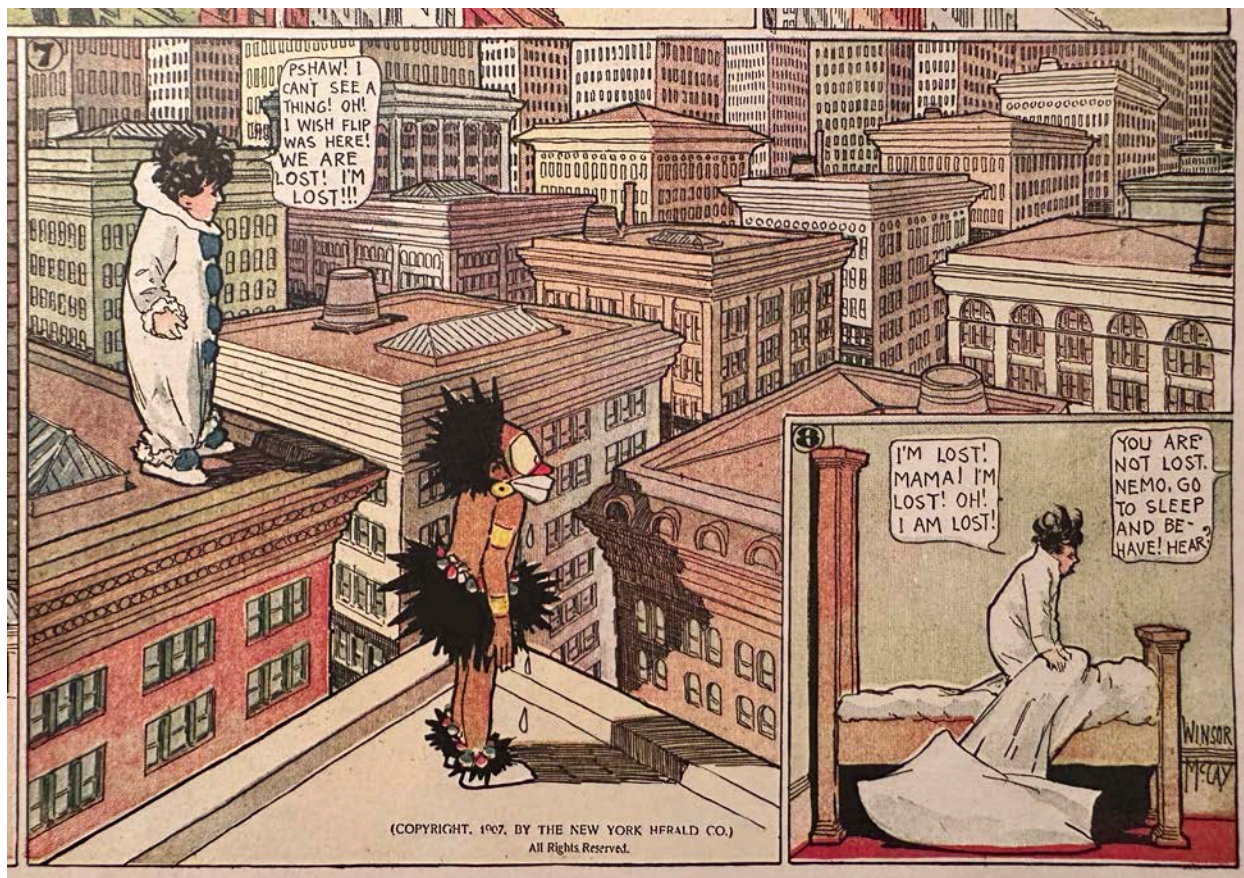
Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 17, 1907

Nemo and his friends do become lost in the halls of the palace, starving for food. Flip wonders if he can “bite a chunk out of these columns.” As the enfildade of columns gets taller, Nemo, Flip and Impie grow thinner.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, March 12, 1909

Even the comforting streets of his 'real' life become ominous. Houses grow feet and stampede away...



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, September 22, 1907

...to be replaced by the rapidly growing buildings of New York City. Nemo imagines himself at the very top. From that height, there are no recognizable streets. One must jump from one unidentifiable plane to the next.

Not only did the neoclassical halls of Slumberland unexpectedly morph into something scary, but Nemo's new New York landscape was also disorienting. Nemo felt perpetually lost. Why did McCay depict Nemo's destination, King Morpheus's Slumberland—which was merging with the reality of the city he lived in—as a nightmare? The nightmare was frightening but still beautifully—and seductively—drawn. Perhaps he was making his cartoons more interesting to keep readers on the edge of their seats. Or, the propensity of animation, whether seen through a beam of light projecting onto rotating reels of drawings on celluloid—or those same frames captured simultaneously on one page—is one of seeing the process of transformation, of one thing changing into another. It is the underside—a fiendish interpretation—of Bergson's *élan vital* and Proust's *moments bienheureux*—the blessed, happy, lucky moments—the breakthrough moments—that one feels when seeing things from our past transformed into something new. And it is a commentary on modern life, the forces that were evolving into modern cities and modern

Architecture. McCay's career as an illustrator in dime museums had accustomed him to drawing 'monsters' to entice people to come inside. Perhaps he was continuing this vision of advertising the fantastic. But, where were the happy visions of modernism, the glorious glass ceilings of the Crystal Palace, the iconic Eiffel Tower, or the glowing 250,000 electric lights of Dreamland not a stone's throw from McCay's house in Sheepshead Bay? The question arises: would the design of a modern building benefit from making drawings of it as a kind of nightmare?

Before thinking further about McCay's depiction of modern life—modern Architecture—it is necessary to tell a story about modern art. The two are bound together.

A story about modern art

Karsten Harries tells it as art's emancipation from non aesthetic concerns.⁵ Art was first divorced from religion, then from representation, and finally from any implied or obvious meaning. What emerged was art as a

*... self sufficient presence that should no longer mean but simply be.*⁶

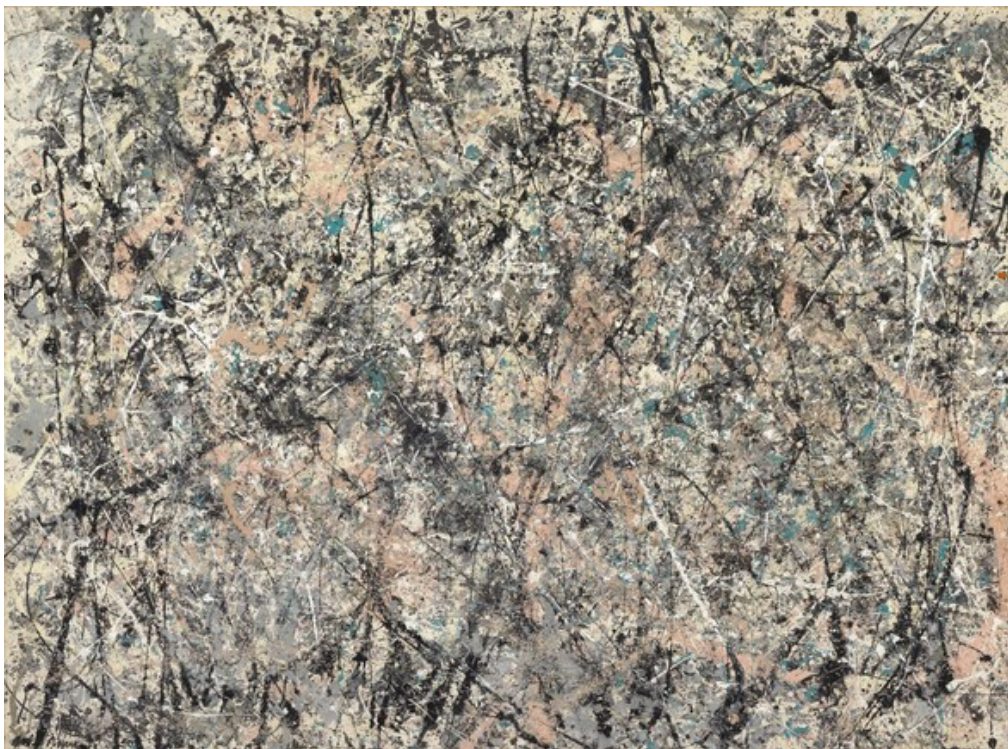
This is confusing to the general public who at some basic level have a desire to understand what they are seeing, and enjoy witnessing the talent of artists with particular skill in mirroring the world. The idea of "art for art's sake" separates artists from their public and becomes a sort of members only club. A guest at this club finds it hard to enjoy themselves with what appear to be inside jokes with little to no explanation. But the idea of art freeing itself from any sort of dogma or preconception is a nice one, even if it no longer seems to serve any purpose or bear any meaning or represent anything significant to the person in the street.⁷ When asked about non-figurative—possibly subversive—painting by Françoise Gilot, his soon to be wife and a painter in her own right, Picasso laughed and replied:

⁵ Karsten Harries, *The Broken Frame: Three Lectures* (Washington, DC.: The Catholic University Press, 1989), xi. Karsten Harries was a professor of philosophy at Yale University who wrote about the philosophy of art. *The Broken Frame* is about the foreshadowing of the modern movement in the 18th century.

⁶ Harries summary avoids the details of particular manifestos of early modern art 'isms' and takes the view of the observer. An example of an 'ism' is Neoplasticism, which sprang directly from 'religious' objectives. Neoplasticism was a belief in the power of painting (like Mondrian's) to act as a blueprint for society, specifically by enlightening architects and enabling them to create a map for society to achieve a kind of universal harmony through the use of pure color and straight lines.

⁷ This dissertation takes the approach that the perceptions of the person on the street *are* significant to an understanding of both modern architecture and modern art.

*Naturally, nonfigurative painting is never subversive ... You can't impose your thought on people if there's no relation between your painting and their visual habits. I'm not speaking of the connoisseur of painting. I mean the average person, whose visual habits are pretty conventional. He sees a tree in a certain fashion, in accordance with habits he formed in childhood. Someone who has a very cultivated vision may see a landscape of Aix as a Cézanne, a landscape of Arles as a Van Gogh. But in general, people see nature in conventional fashion and they don't want anyone tampering with it. They are willing to be shown things that resemble nothing because those things correspond to a kind of invertebrate, unformulated inner dream.*⁸



Number 1 (Lavender Mist) Jackson Pollack 1950

Take the example of *Lavender Mist*, a painting by Jackson Pollack. It has come to be labeled as ‘abstract expressionism’. Without thinking about the exact meaning of this label, we get the image of a man in an alcoholic fervor with a cigarette casually dangled from his lips splashing paint feverishly upon a canvas with a slight regard for order and a rebellious attitude towards making any kind of pretty picture. How is this ‘abstract expressionism’? Is it a non-objective and wildly ‘expressive’ use of paint or is it a controlled orchestration of drips that enable us to

⁸ Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, (New York: New York Review Books, 2019), 64. Originally published in New York by McGraw-Hill in 1964. Picasso goes on to explain; “...if you take a commonplace way of seeing and try to change the slightest detail in it, everyone shouts, ‘Oh, no, it’s not possible. That’s not the portrait of my grandmother.’” It is not the quality of abstraction or nonfiguration that people found disturbing so much as the mixture of that with the prescribed tropes, the prescribed order for classical painting of figures, still lifes and landscapes.

appreciate a meadow or grassland—to really notice how marvelous they are—a ‘lavender mist’? It is an expression that is bigger than any particular meadow, so in that sense, it is abstract. It is an ideal that could be any meadow or even seaweed on a beach, or any number of beautiful natural things. It is a way of tuning our vision. We are attuned to the world by the art and music we admire. Abstract painting and modern architecture enable this noticing of the rhythms and patterns that might ordinarily escape our attention. Architects heighten our correspondence with the world in the way they surround us with rooms filled with carpets, tapestries, paintings and sculpture... or rooms that are gloriously empty that simply frame our view of the land outside and of the sky above. Architecture also modulates sound—the sound of our footsteps on marble—the sound of steam heat—the sound of the wind outside or raindrops pattering on the roof.

Walt Disney fulfilled McCay’s ambitions for animation to live in the realm of fine art, ‘fine’ in the sense that it would provide a kind of attunement with the world around us. His *Fantasia* uses music as inspiration for both figurative and abstract animations, enabling the viewer to understand them through the simple pleasure of seeing (and hearing) them together. There is never any doubt in the hearer’s mind that the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor by Johann Sebastian Bach was written by someone with a gift for musical composition, and there is a kind of synesthetic enjoyment of the abstract animation that accompanies it. It is naturally appealing. But, there is often doubt in the mind of the public about the talent of a painter who made an abstract painting. “I could have made that!” is often the response, rather than, “Wow! I could never make something so realistic and beautiful as that!”. The latter might be heard while viewing a painting by Vermeer or Leonardo—or when looking at the cartoons of Winsor McCay—images that are obvious manifestations of talent because they look so ‘real’. But, a painting that holds easily identifiable, realistic characters or forms are actually constructions that are entirely of the imagination. Abstract animations—like abstract paintings—are actually the more ‘real’ of the two, in the sense that they are simply what they are: ink and paint on paper or canvas.

Going with the idea that representation—abstract representation—gives us an ability to enhance our perception of the things around us, we find ourselves in the digital age. The newest form of digital representation available to architects is a musical one—that of moving through the spaces in our plan. After building a model in the computer of a building, we can designate particular points of view or ‘scenes’. The computer then seams together the scenes to effect an animation. We can vividly imagine what it is like to enter a room or walk down a gallery or hall but we cannot fully imagine the rhythm of the halls until we represent them. Representation is

everything.⁹ Looking at McCay’s cartoons and animations make us wonder if fully imagining a building in all of its aspects, visible and invisible, requires more than the representation of plan, section, elevation and static perspective views.

How to represent time

Hallways can be represented as elevations of flanking walls, or, as plans and reflected plans of floors and ceilings, but how wonderful to understand them as a musical achievement! The traversing of the path via animation activates this fascination and sense we have of meter and pattern because it is a representation that incorporates time. It imagines ‘time’ not just as an efficient understanding of repetitive tasks—Taylorism¹⁰—, or a way of getting from here to there—egress¹¹—, but as a musical phrase. We can only truly see the things that we are able to represent. We can represent architecture as efficient diagrams of production (Taylorism), or as requirements for an effective means of escape (egress),—or—as musical phrases. Architects can immerse themselves in beautiful representations of time. As Paul Klee said in his Notebooks—“Why not?”¹² Why not lay down an evocative matrix—a kind of architecture—for our drawings and see what springs out of it?¹³ Why not add the dimension of time to our renderings?

In *Gertie*, McCay’s animation for vaudeville in 1914, a dinosaur with a big personality is asked by McCay (who is standing in front of the screen cracking his whip like a circus master) to perform various things for the audience. She ignores his commands and instead dances to the music standing on her hind legs and waving her arms back and forth. This was McCay’s early foray into inking a drawing that moved to sound. His newspaper cartoons did not have a soundtrack

⁹ Plato’s ideal is based on a fundamental understanding of the primary role that representation plays in how we think, i.e. all of our particular experiences are merely representations of ideal forms. Conversely, Hume wrote that all generalized ‘ideals’ are merely representations of our particular experiences. In either case, representation plays a key role. See Richard Padovan’s elaboration of this thought in *Towards Universality; Le Corbusier Mies and De Stijl* in the chapter *Furniture of the Mind*.

¹⁰ The corridors we live in are an outgrowth of Taylorism. Frederick W. Taylor was an American engineer credited with a management system that organized the plans of factories with efficiency in mind. His vision shaped the architecture of factories and eventually, spread to all other forms of modern building.

¹¹ Egress is an architectural imperative dictated by code.

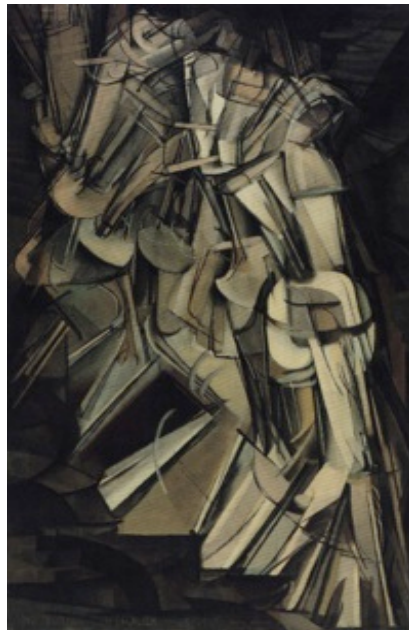
¹² Paul Klee has the comment “Why not?” when contemplating likenesses that arise in his drawings. From the *Notebooks*, Klee’s recounting of the drawing exercises he gave at the Bauhaus.

¹³ John Golding, “Cubism,” in *Concepts of Modern Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981, Revised from original published in 1974), 71. Juan Gris experimented with this process just before the great War, an idea that became known as Synthetic Cubism, expanded upon by Paul Klee. “In the first place there was the ‘architecture’, by which he meant the abstract composition or substructure of a painting ... shapes originally suggested to him by his geometric experiments and by the angular strips of *papier collé*. This ‘flat coloured architecture’ was the *means*. ...The end, on the other hand, was the representational aspect of the canvas or subject; this was sometimes suggested by the flat colored architecture itself, but on other occasions would be imposed onto it.”

because the sequence of cells were captured on a page (like a traditional architects drawings). But, when the lines began to move, it seemed natural for them to be synced with music.

Beyond ‘reasonable’ cubism

There is the possibility of synthesizing the senses (as above) and then there is the kind of ‘animation’ that is a collapse of time in space. Cubism, a century later, is still not wholly understood or embraced by the public as worthy things to adorn the walls of a museum. But it can be hijacked by architects to enable and inspire beautiful spaces. The gradual abstraction of art became a conversation by and for artists about art, which then became ethical and political.¹⁴ It might instead be a gift to designers.



Marcel DuChamp
Nude Descending a Staircase (N^o 2), 1912
Shown in the Armory Show in NYC in 1913.

Marcel DuChamp was criticized by his own brother and cousin for submitting *Nude Descending a Staircase* to the 1912 *Salon des Indépendents*. They rejected him from their exhibition because, according to them, nudes could only be shown in repose. He, in their minds, was not serious about what they termed ‘reasonable’ cubism. But what a lovely understanding of stairs! And how much more beneficial to an architect’s understanding of what a stair can be.

¹⁴ The current trend in museums is for works of art to be historically equitable. The attunement of vision described by Picasso—his ‘questions’—now have a moralizing tone, like Ruskin’s.

What then was ‘reasonable’ cubism, and likewise, why were all these ‘isms’ springing up in modern times? Impressionism, fauvism, cubism, futurism, purism, orphism, vorticism, rayism, surrealism, suprematism, neoplasticism. Were they a reaction to Einstein’s theory of special relativity, published in 1905? Or were they a response to photography’s ability to capture images with seemingly greater realism than any drawing or painting? Or was it just the speed of modern life, the steam engine, the motor car, the aeroplane, the telephone, the radio. The ‘isms’ tried to represent the revolutionary transformations taking place in the world as a way to see something hopeful and new. André Salmon, a Cubist poet, wrote:

*All is possible. Everything is realizable everywhere and with everything*¹⁵

Natalia Goncharova, a Russian member of the avant-garde., wrote:

Everything, everything, everything, everything

According to Picasso, ‘Impressionism’ was the real break with tradition. It was the painter’s emotion and sensation, their attitude to color, that mattered most and

... every man could recreate painting as he understood it from any basis whatever ...

According to Picasso, Impressionists liberated themselves from the rules and then, there was no more painting. Picasso lamented the end of “beauty, so-called, [being] by definition, contained in all those rules,” an order that had been set down by the Egyptians, the Africans, and the Greeks. What became known as ‘Cubism’, was, in Picasso’s memory, a deliberate effort by Braque and him to—

... search again for an architectonic basis in the composition, trying to make an order of it ...

by abandoning color, emotion and sensation, and—

*... everything that had been introduced into painting by the Impressionists ...*¹⁶

—everything, that is, in McCay’s drawings: color, emotion, sensation, those things that Lethaby admired in Architecture, that “magic quality [that] touches depths of feeling and opens the gates of wonder.”

¹⁵ John Berger, “The Moment of Cubism,” in *Landscapes: John Berger on Art* (London, New York: Verso, 2016), 121.

¹⁶ Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, 66-7.

Despite his love of pure order and form in nonfigurative painting, Picasso added ‘attributes’ to his pictures, that is: something recognizable to anyone.

They were put in ... to hide the pure painting behind them. I've never believed in doing painting for 'the happy few'. I've always felt that painting must awaken something even in the man who doesn't ordinarily look at pictures, just as in Molière there is always something to make the very intelligent person laugh and also the person who understands nothing ... in my work, just as in Shakespeare, there are often burlesque things and relatively vulgar things. In that way I reach everybody. It's not that I want to prostrate myself in front of the public, but I want to provide something for every level of thinking.

But he also provided recognizable attributes in his painting as a subversive act:

When I paint, I always try to give an image people are not expecting and, beyond that, one they reject ... that is, I give a man an image of himself whose elements are collected from among the usual way of seeing things in traditional painting and then reassembled in a fashion that is unexpected and disturbing enough to make it impossible for him to escape the question it raises.¹⁷

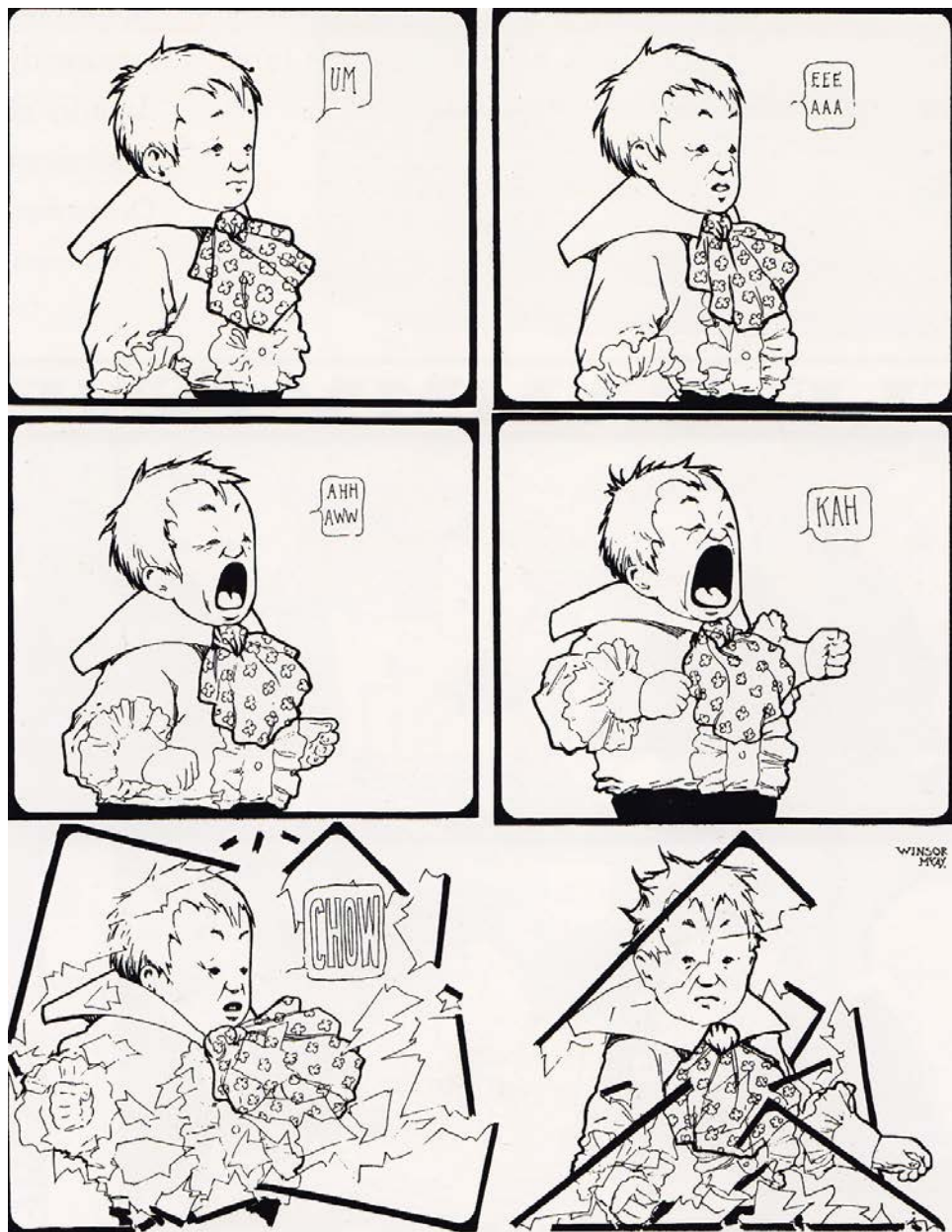


Les Femmes d'Alger *Pablo Picasso 1907*

McCay was doing these things concurrently with Picasso, so people who may not have ordinarily looked at modern paintings were confronted with those same questions, the ones that came about when elements were reassembled in unexpected and disturbing—fiendish—ways. John Calvin introduces McCay’s cartoons in *Masters of American Comics* with this statement:

¹⁷ Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, 64.

Though most Americans were not fully aware of modern art until the Armory Show in 1913, they had already seen the essence of modernism in McCay's comics without knowing it.

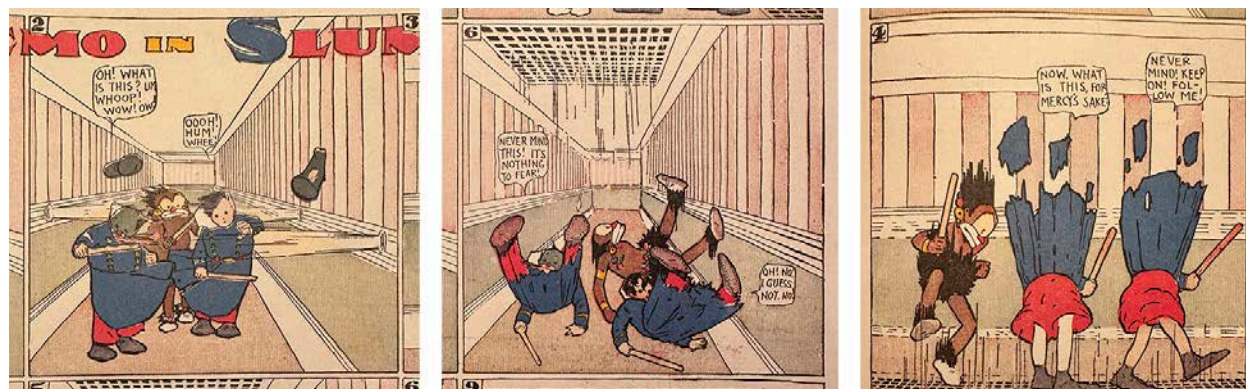


Little Sammy Sneeze (New York Herald), *Winsor McCay* 1905

The 'essence of modernism' did not always require a talent in drawing—like the talent that McCay so obviously had—to make it. The speed of modern life, the fourth dimension, an anti-naturalistic kind of reality—'Modern Art'—is too succinct a phrase to encompass all the things that were going on. But if one could sum it all up while imagining an early film's motif of a whirling newspaper showing the passage of time, we can see that Winsor McCay was a modern

artist, albeit one that unfurled his talent on the newsprint page. His abiding fascination was the depiction of motion, i.e. the new relation of ‘space’ and ‘time’. The 1905 episode of McCay’s *Sammy Sneeze* predates Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (begun in late 1906). *Sammy* is a little chuckle, an amusing tidbit, while *Les Femmes* is radical,—hated by many—, irreverent to the female body, and ‘unfinished’. His canvas poses questions similar to *Sammy*’s ‘sneeze’. They both brought about a new almost cataclysmic change in attitude toward representation in Western Art.¹⁸

McCay was not an artist the way Marcel Duchamp, Picasso, or Braque was. He wasn’t intellectual. He didn’t conspicuously open up boundaries for defining painting or worry about the tradition of Western Art, although he considered his work to be groundbreaking in that sphere. But he pushed the boundaries of drawing. He drew as many lines as Picasso and Braque, and far more often than Duchamp ever did. In the end, his influence may be the greater, since he became a father of animation. Importantly, his renderings of buildings focused on the emotional impact of them upon their inhabitants. Following in the footsteps of modern art, Architecture today has often become expressive built works in the landscape that have no human scale. Daniel Libeskind, Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid have built giant works of abstract sculpture (as buildings) that seemingly fulfill Picasso’s and Braque’s search for “an architectonic basis in the composition, trying to make an order of it.” But there is little attention paid to a building’s effect on its future inhabitants as McCay’s drawings of ‘nightmares’ show. Here is a series of close-ups from a page of *Little Nemo* that demonstrate the effects of an ambitious set of diffusers from a building’s mechanical system:



Close-ups of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (New York Herald), *Sunday, March 8, 1908*
The cartoon shows a series of unexpected air bursts that were orchestrated at Coney Island to make people laugh when they were waiting in line.

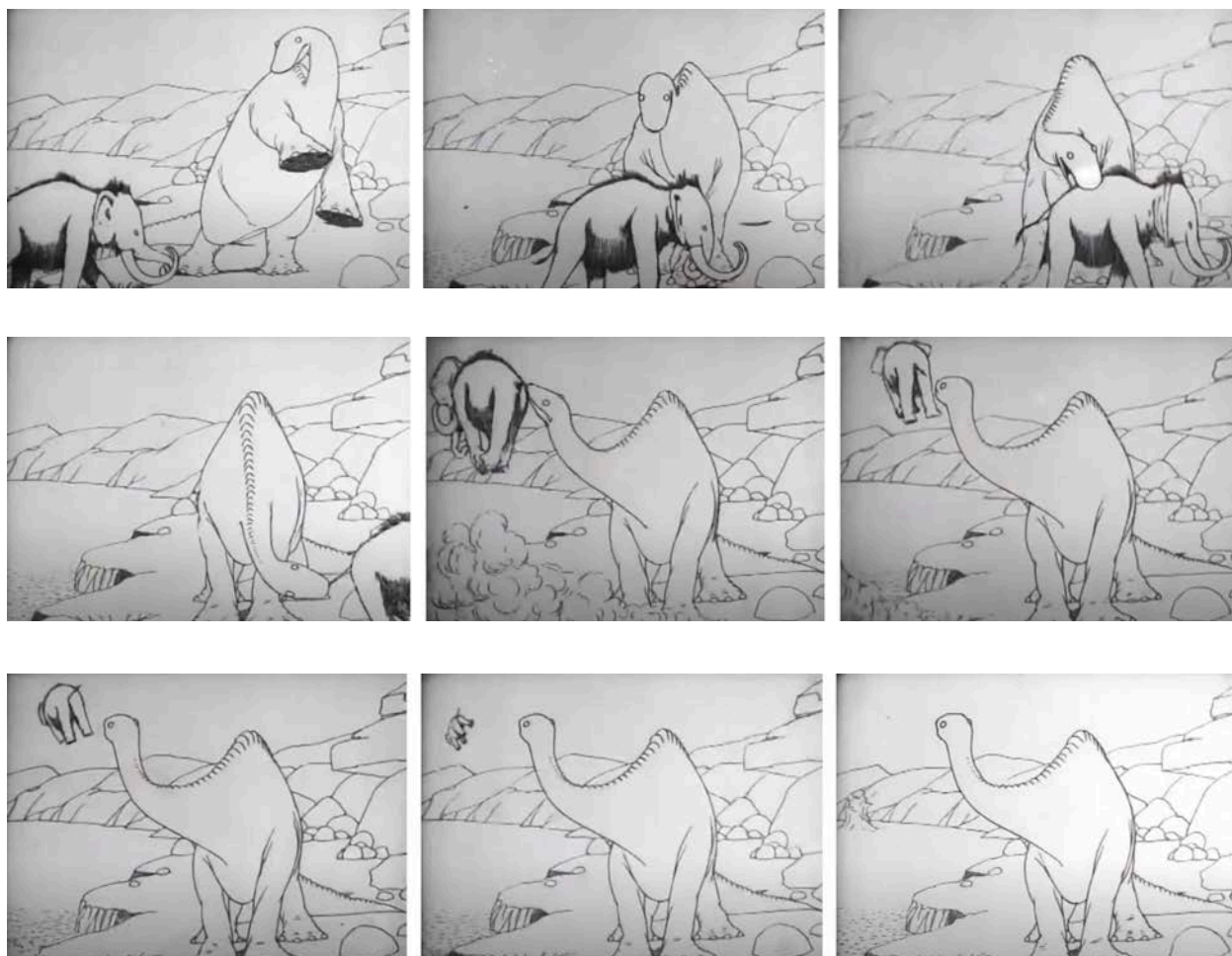
Animation is especially important to architects because the experience of an imagined building is a choreographed one. Picture a cartoon celebrating the movement of an amusement park ride,

¹⁸John Golding, “Cubism,” 50.

but, slowed down, as a movie projector that has just been switched off. Imagine hearing the click-click of the film strip as it loses momentum, ticking down to a speed that is slow enough to see the individual frame. The stuttering contraction settles into stillness. The moments make sense when they are ordinarily seen whirring together. Now the individual frame it lands upon looks bizarre.

It leads us to wonder: How does time move—?

And, what happens when we run the film backwards?



Stills from Gertie the Dinosaur 1914

First seen as a part of McCay’s vaudeville act, Gertie used the Split System and the Mutoscope action viewer to render things moving in space. Gertie was his third animation. Little Nemo came out in 1911, and How a Mosquito Operates came out in 1912.

In *Gertie*, McCay used a technique called “The Split System,” which involved mapping out the trajectory of things in time, dividing them “into discreet segments” and then beginning the

drawing “at the end of the sequence, working backwards in screen time.”¹⁹ This, combined with his extraordinary ability to show things in perspective—receding into the distance—enabled him to show the dinosaur Gertie pick up a mastodon and throw her into a lake (one of a series of petulant responses to McCay’s commands for her to perform for the audience).

Four years later, there was a particular gag at the end of the film *Moonshine* (1918) by Buster Keaton and Fatty Arbuckle in which “...Arbuckle act[s] as an omnipotent movie director who, several times during the action, points out that all the players are involved in an artificially staged production.”²⁰ At the end of the film, Arbuckle is tied to a chair loaded with dynamite and the shack is “blown to smithereens,” only to be reassembled via Keaton’s special effects. “The film action suddenly reverses, the shack miraculously reassembles, and Arbuckle emerges intact.”²¹ Film historian Donald Crafton makes the conjecture that seeing an explosion backward in time may have mirrored the reverse engineering technique McCay used while making his 1914 animation *Gertie*. McCay and Keaton were both “working backward, flipping” the process of time.



Moonshine, 1918

Written and directed by Roscoe Fatty Arbuckle, Edited by Herbert Warren and Buster Keaton

Crafton thought it was likely that Keaton met McCay either in the “cramped quarters of the dressing rooms” or during auditions and rehearsals and that he likely queried McCay about his animation techniques since he was known for his inquisitive mind and “he would insist on taking Fatty Arbuckle’s camera apart and putting it back together before he would be filmed for the first

¹⁹ Donald Crafton. “McCay and Keaton: Colligating, Conjecturing, and Conjuring.” *Film History, Inquiries, Speculations, Provocations* 25, 1–2, 2013, 38.

²⁰ Jim Kline, “Funny, Sublime: The Uncanny Genius of Buster Keaton,” *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* 16, 2, Summer 1997: 47.

²¹ Kline, “Funny, Sublime,” 47.

time.”²² Crafton found evidence that *The Three Keatons* appeared at a venue of one of the early screenings of *Gertie* in New York.²³

Inspired by the animations and cartoons of McCay, Buster Keaton made a moving picture about a building, albeit one that was blown apart and reassembled.

Einstein must surely have been delighted by Fatty Arbuckle’s, Keaton’s and McCay’s depiction of the special relativity of moving bodies in time and space. Using McCay’s *Little Nemo* cartoon strips (which oftentimes were a representation of Coney Island) as an example, would the architecture that emerged from those drawings today be a new version of Coney in a contemporary guise? Or a young New York?

* * *

Light of the now

The significance of these modern artists—Picasso, Braque, Duchamp, McCay—to an architect is this: that the representation of time is linked to the representation of space.

SPACE ⇐ ⇨ TIME

Space and time are linked and are also re-arrangeable. In other words:

Everything is here. Everything is now.

According to Bergson, the conscious mind prefers synthesis. Memory, to the conscious mind, is accessed as an organized system of conclusions that have been drawn before. Although there may be a new memory inserted at the end of the chain now and again, basically, the past is past. ‘Now’ is fleeting. But Memory, to the dreaming mind, freely associates the two.

The dreaming mind prefers things to be in a constant state of play. It accesses memory as points in time and space like the individual frames in a cartoon strip. Things have not been synthesized to illustrate a significant view. They are many views at once. Consequently, the various points can be free-associated. Creations of the dreaming mind are the result of anti-synthesis, followed by a

²² Crafton, “McCay and Keaton: Colligating, Conjecturing, and Conjuring,” 36-37. See Crafton for more on his research and “conjecturing to fill in the missing details.”

²³ Ibid, 31–32.

re-synthesis. These new arrangements are illuminating. Winsor’s cartoons separate an event into a series of moments and particular actions in settings that, when strung together, represent a new imagined event. Seen on a full page such as his newspaper cartoons were, the succession of cells became a composition. Many times, his cells would elongate or change shape to accommodate the subject matter within.



Little Nemo in Slumberland (New York Herald), *Sunday, January 19, 1908*

Nemo and his friends have entered Befuddle Hall. Stairways go dramatically up or down. Sometimes Nemo is so tiny that the furniture seems huge. In the next frame they become the giants, and the furniture is tiny.

The newspaper ‘funnies’ page is like an ideal sheet in a set of architects construction drawings. It is best to fill the sheet with drawings that change scale including details that explain a section cut

through an adjacent elevation. The wall is shown as ‘big’, but is smaller. On the same page, we zoom in to see the detail, which appears bigger.

When the transition occurs from the dream state to the conscious state, a new conclusion is presented to the mind that is drawn from the very same points that were previously fused together as a conclusive “something else”. This is the moment of waking. A new memory is added to our consciousness.

While McCay was drawing *Little Nemo*, Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher, wrote about Einstein’s theory of relativity. In Hamburg, he discovered Aby Warburg’s Library of the Cultural Sciences.²⁴ Due to the zeitgeist—he was Jewish—he left Germany and expanded his thinking from mathematics to include the study of language: how different cultures represent things to themselves. His work was comprehensive. He was interested in every language and every thought, including the way human beings understand ‘time’. Here is his description of African tribes who only have words for ‘Now’ and ‘Not-Now’:

In many African languages every action is split into its parts, each of which is rendered by an independent sentence. The action is described in all its particulars, and each of these particular actions is expressed by a special verb. An event, for example, which we should express by the single sentence: “he drowned,” must here be rendered by the sentences, “he drank water, died”; “to cut off” becomes “to cut, to fall”; the action of “bringing” becomes “take, go there.” ... [This] points to a fundamental peculiarity of the time representation in these languages. Since they only make the simple distinction between now and not-now, only the relatively small segment of consciousness that is immediately illumined by the light of now, can truly exist for them. Hence the whole of an action cannot be apprehended either in thought or language unless the consciousness literally “actualizes” it in all its details, thrusting each of its stages, one after another, into the light of the now.²⁵

Dreaming is exactly the light of the now. When the modern Western mind is awake, the beginning already encompasses the end with an orientation toward a particular goal. Our waking minds conclude this to be ‘reality’. But when asleep, we are closer to Cassirer’s African tribes’ comprehension of space and time. The sequence of actualized images and actions is each brought out of shadow momentarily to describe what is ordinarily hastily apprehended by the analytical mind as a forgone conclusion. The dreaming mind has the ability to separate and record events as a series of ‘nows’.

²⁴ Aby Warburg was an art historian who focused on historical rituals and myths as a way of understanding today’s culture.

²⁵ Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Translated by Ralph Manheim (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955), 221.

Nemo is invited to float on an individual chunk of ice, and isolated incident:



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland (New York Herald), Sunday, December 17, 1905

Nemo is frightened by the prospect of breaking away from land, to float on an expanse of sea which has no other points of reference.

He feels a bit unmoored.

He doesn't know where this individual bit of dream stuff will lead...²⁶

²⁶ McCay's cartoons have the same quality as dreaming. Everything, everything, everything in the news landed in *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. Many of them are arctic landscapes. A new history of the battle for the North Pole, *Battle of Ink and Ice: A Sensational Story of News Barons, North Pole Explorers, and the Making of Modern Media* by Darrell Hartman reveals McCay's newspaper's (*New York Herald's*) involvement in two American explorer's quest to find the North Pole. The publisher's description: "In the fall of 1909, a pair of bitter contests captured the world's attention. The American explorers Robert Peary and Frederick Cook both claimed to have discovered the North Pole, sparking a vicious feud that was unprecedented in international scientific and geographic circles. At the same time, the rivalry between two powerful New York City newspapers—the storied *Herald* and the ascendant *Times*—fanned the flames of the so-called polar controversy, as each paper financially and reputationally committed itself to an opposing explorer and fought desperately to defend him. The *Herald* was owned and edited by James Gordon Bennett, Jr., an eccentric playboy whose nose for news was matched only by his appetite for debauchery and champagne. The *Times* was published by Adolph Ochs, son of Jewish immigrants, who'd improbably rescued the paper from extinction and turned it into an emerging powerhouse. The battle between Cook and Peary would have enormous consequences for both newspapers, and help to determine the future of corporate media. *Battle of Ink and Ice* presents a frank portrayal of Arctic explorers, brave men who both inspired and deceived the public. It also sketches a vivid portrait of the newspapers that funded, promoted, narrated, and often distorted their exploits. It recounts a sixty-year saga of frostbite and fake news, one that culminates with an unjustly overlooked chapter in the origin story of the modern *New York Times*". The seemingly innocent story of Nemo venturing toward the North Pole where Santa lives is a subtle reinforcement of capitalism's many guises.



Little Nemo in Slumberland (New York Herald), Sunday, Sunday, December 17, 1905

The 'snapshot' above of time in Nemo's dream shows a series of 'nows': Nemo in bed talking with one of Santa's elves (it is near Christmas), Nemo floating on a perilous iceberg, Nemo climbing the crest of a hill, Nemo inside one of the North Pole's glorious chambers, Nemo surveying Santa's workshop with its rows of toys, and finally, in bed with his mother waking him up.

Nemo's dreams resemble a visual language of thinking, a series of 'nows' as described by Cassirer of the more primitive languages:

Zeno's paradox applies to the form in which these languages express motion and action; the flying arrow is fundamentally at rest, because in every moment of its motion, it possesses only one fixed position ... The developed consciousness of time frees itself from the difficulty and paradox by creating entirely new means of apprehending a temporal 'whole'.

The entire page of frames is apprehended as a whole, and the page is added to Nemo's consciousness when his mother wakes him up.

Time is a substantial aggregate, pieced together from distinct moments, but is apprehended as a functional and dynamic whole: as a unity of relation and causality.²⁷

Via dreaming, we enable ourselves to expand our matrix of understanding. Since ordinary logic is absent—or at least very weak—when we are asleep, things can be pushed further than our conscious minds would ordinarily allow. Freud defines our conscious mind as a gate-keeper. When swung open, the map of possibility is expanded. It is the same thing that happens when we veer from our ordinary path of travel, or take a wrong turn. We discover new streets and houses that were previously undisclosed to us, even though they might have been just one or two streets off of our routine path—and consequently out of our view—for years. We can understand more about how the streets we know are actually connected to each other by periodically venturing off of them. This is the restorative quality of sleep. The terrain is put into perspective through the exploration of new paths.

If an architect explores the dimensions of an imagined building in this fashion, it may also become a way to also explore the dimension of Time. A point in time can relate to a new point in space. We can know spaces in a new way by seeing them in time, point by vertiginous point.

* * *

An example can be seen in Alfred Steiglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, a small but prominent art gallery where Steiglitz introduced photography as 'fine art' to the States in 1905. Rather than displaying the work in the salon style, where a view of the whole could be seen at a glance, Steiglitz showed the new work individually, piece by

²⁷ Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 222.



View of the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, *New York, New York 1906*
Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz in Camera Work, No. 14

piece. Each work was a world of its own. The objects on display were spread out on the walls to be viewed underneath a floating ceiling plane which gave the room a sense of ambiguity. There was an abstract cloud of timelessness, of pure geometry hovering above, rather than the usual enclosed cubic form where walls tied into ceilings with crown moldings in a defined room. The base moldings in the room were covered up; the colors muted; the temporal frame was removed; there was no context to set the work in a particular period of time. Each piece became an actor in an enigmatic dream. To add to the discreet space for each work, a series of light fixture hung down from the ceiling, to make the pieces on the wall glow. Each piece seemed to emit its own light. Stieglitz's theatrical approach subtly said to the viewer: this is not an operatic stage set where all of the players are standing in their designated position for the grand finale. This is a more dreamlike presentation, where unexpected juxtapositions are possible. Individual melodies may be heard one by one.



291 Picasso-Braque Exhibition, *New York, New York 1915*
Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, *The Met*

He eventually had to move next door for financial reasons, and he changed the name to the “291 Gallery.” The new space included all kinds of modern art including a Braque-Picasso exhibition in 1915. The new space retained its ‘floating’ ceiling and was similarly stripped of all historical references. The abstract room lent itself to the arrangement of the cubist pieces alongside older African works.

Cassirer talked about an African tribe’s special terms to describe time:

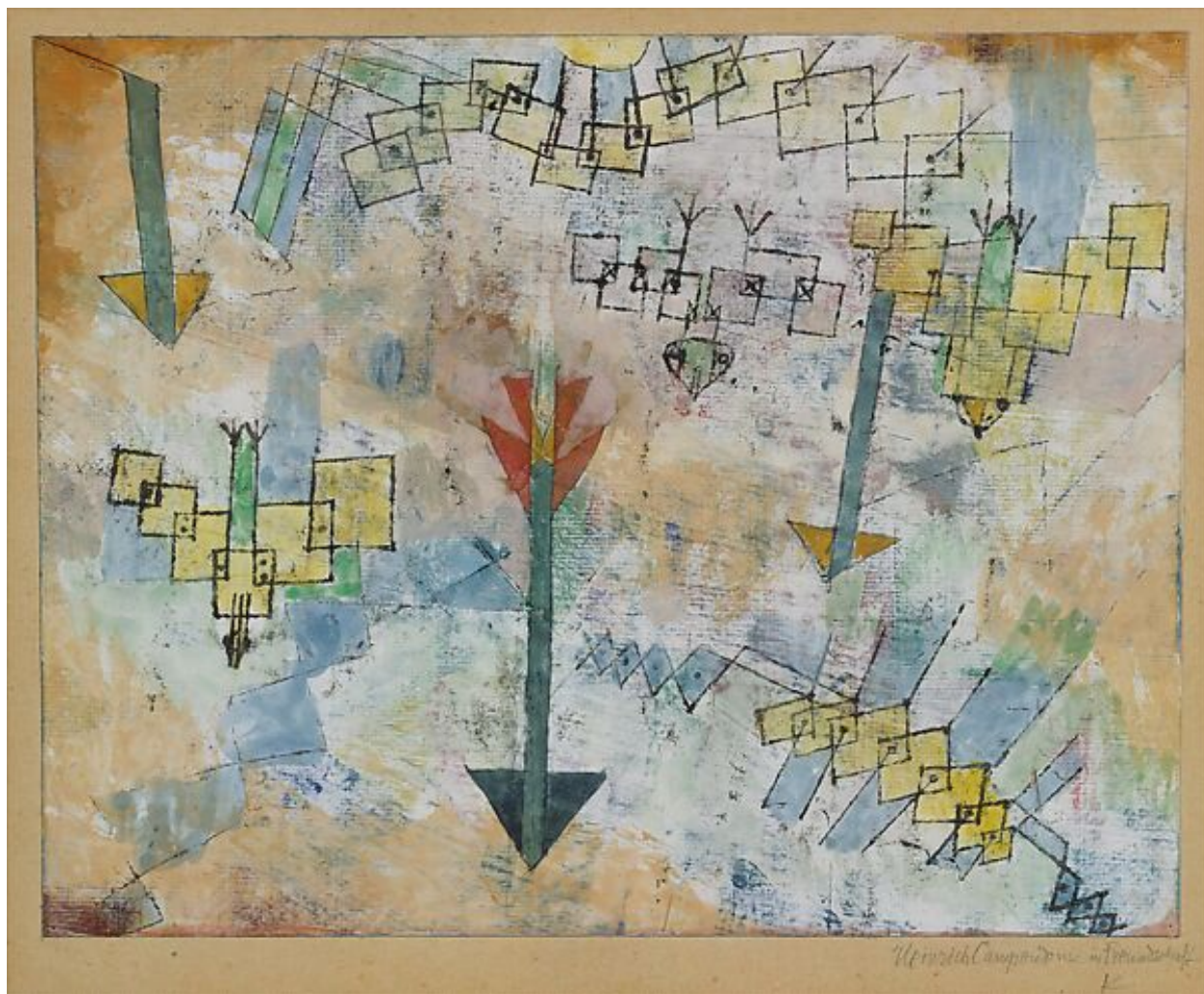
‘here’ — ‘there’

‘near’ — ‘far’

*‘now’ — ‘not now’*²⁸

²⁸ Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 215.

In Zeno's paradox, we are always living in one moment of time. But, as in a painting by Paul Klee, there can be multiple arrows that appear on the same canvas.²⁹



Birds Swooping Down and Arrows Paul Klee 1919
Collection of The Met

McCay's most interesting 'arrow' moment is the one that wakes us up. The 'wake up' allows the features of the new landscape to be added to our mental map. Memory can only record things that happen to us, so new memories can really only be added in the light of the now. We must dream them and wake up to them. It is a way of making each moment a world of possibility, rather than living with the certainty of a predictable outcome.

²⁹ While studying with Marco Frascari (1945-2013), originally the Chairman of my committee, he enigmatically instructed me to look at Paul Klee's paintings, and "pay attention to the arrows." It sent me in a new direction. My memory is that we were discussing the idea that time moves backwards in a dream, as Fr. Pavel Florensky believed it did.

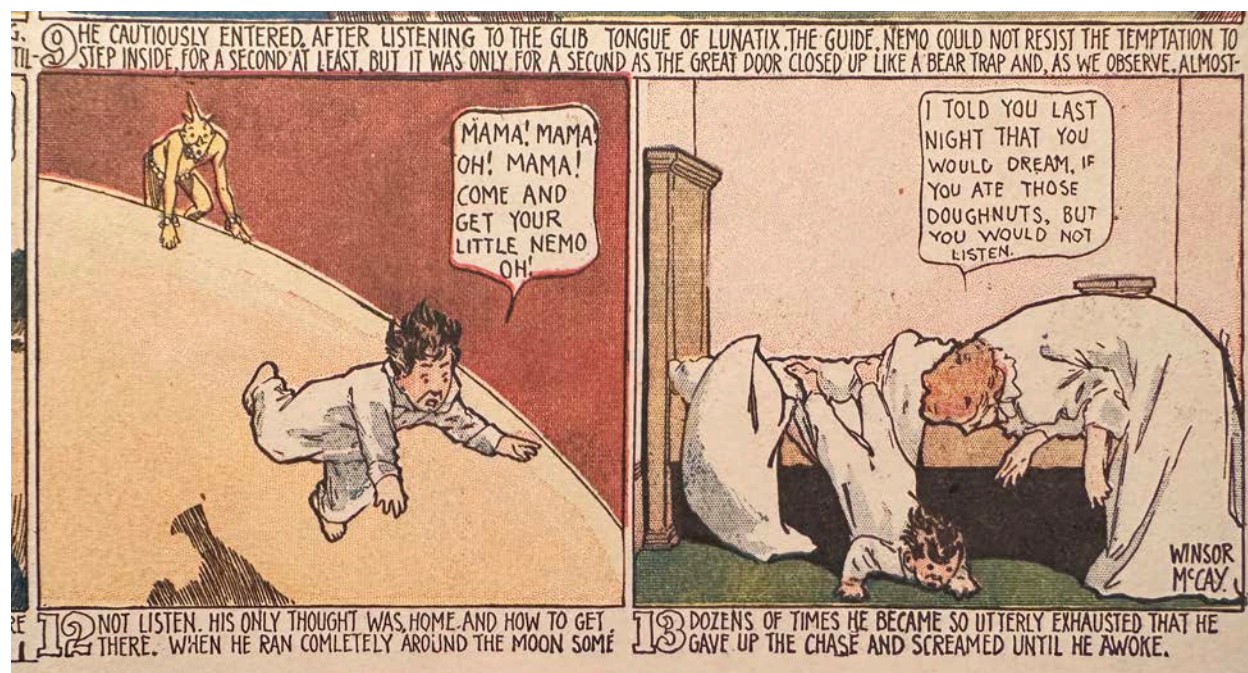
Cicero described a similar process of inventing spaces that he called “the artificial art of memory,” ‘artificial’ because it required artifice, ie. was artful. It enabled an orator to recall key points during an extemporaneous speech. The orator had the ability to argue more effectively because his ideas had been made into images that could easily be rearranged. The reading of McCay’s cartoons—an architect’s reading—is a search for this kind of process: how to make compelling rooms where each image is a point, and each point is a ‘now’. The series of points that we set up in our models—the points with a direction or ‘view’—that are then sewn together to become an animation, can simulate a logical progression through the space, or an enigmatic one. In addition to the formal presentation to the client, when we are just ‘dreaming’ to ourselves, the drawings could be something else entirely. They might also be individual points in time that are not logical, composed on a page—a dreamlike simulation of here, there, up, down, now and not-now—all at once.



Little Nemo in Slumberland (New York Herald), Sunday, November 4, 1906

This transmutation of King Morpheus’s palace could also be thought of as an exploration of elevators, which were just being invented. Nemo’s chair magically floats up onto the stage where the King reigns. At the same time, Flip is lowered through a trap door into oblivion below.

The other ‘artificial’ aspect of Cicero’s art of memory is its necessity for strange, emotive images, the kind you can’t forget. McCay’s images are unforgettable because they are so imaginative and beautifully drawn, but also because they show landscapes inhabited by unforgettable characters, theatrical characters. An architect’s digital renderings might also have theatrical ‘scale figures’ that indicate more than the overtly measurable dimension. Returning to Picasso’s earlier statement, “When I paint, I always try to give an image people are not expecting and, beyond that, one they reject ... that is, I give a man an image of himself whose elements are collected from among the usual way of seeing things in traditional painting and then reassembled in a fashion that is unexpected and disturbing enough to make it impossible for him to escape the question it raises.”³⁰ McCay’s images are also unexpected and disturbing. Suppose that every month, when we tear the wrapper of our *Architectural Record* with fevered hands, a transmutation were to take place, and we were to find inside—Oh! I don’t know; shall we say *Little Nemo in Slumberland*?³¹



Little Nemo in Slumberland (New York Herald), Sunday, Sunday, December 3, 1905

This is what happens when you are guided by Lunatix.

There is one final image for the end of this chapter on the dynamics of moving bodies, about the transmutation of time and space, of the transmutation of everything, everything, everything...

³⁰ Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, 64.

³¹ This is a paraphrase of the quote in the previous chapter on Proust made by M. Swann when discussing the escape of the trivialities of the day through hypothetically discovering Pascal’s *Pensées* when unwrapping the newspaper. Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 33.



Little Nemo in Slumberland (New York Herald), Sunday, October 22, 1905

In another cartoon that meditates on the strangeness of elevators, the bed sinks down through the floor. And, it is as if McCay has a fiendish fondness for 'doing mushrooms'. Aspects of the modern world felt like a hallucination.

8

The dream stuff

When things get strange

Previous chapters planted a kind of tripod and lens in the years just before the first World War to peer at the nature of dreams and muse about the philosophical ideas of the day. Dreams are stories that we tell ourselves, stories with transitions that make sense in the dream but are often incomprehensible when we awake and remember them. McCay's cunningly drawn illustrations of how the last few moments of a dream merge into the first few moments of waking focus us on the most critical of those transitions, when Nemo wakes up. He rigorously conforms with the format he originally set up where the 'wake up' scene is always in a cell at the bottom right corner of the page, and the dream events start at the top and lead down to that (albeit with lots of options for the composition of the preceding cells). An inkling of the way McCay 'dreamed up' architecture has yet to take shape. Before that, we must think about dream representation itself. This could be a delay tactic, while the writer tries to understand why Marco Frascari chose *Little Nemo in Slumberland* to demonstrate how an architect "dreams architecture", or conceives "a building through an act of dreaming that is the longing of architects who are not interested in a one-person show."¹ This chapter could be a collection of thoughts on the topic of dreaming and drawing closer in form to Montagne's *Meditations* (or Pascal's *Pensées*), or, it could just be a disjointed chapter that is hard to follow ... similar to how a dream that has been written down in a notebook seems, when it is reread several days later. Where does this natural willingness to enter into a world with *strange* connections (which when dreaming are never mistaken for an apparent lack of connection) spring from? In dreaming, why is the principle of connectivity shifted away from a more straightforward 'normal' logic, to a merging of things into something new and enigmatic? Like *Alice in Wonderland*, is the shift into a world of non-sense for pure entertainment or an indication that the story being told is about logic's limits? Is the dream the mind's way of exploring possible outcomes by including absurd constructions? Or, is the dream "a foil for epistemological inquiries into the nature of perception" itself? This last idea appears in a drawing made by Marco Frascari for the design of *A Dream House for the Next Millennium*, a drawing that includes two transfers of *Little Nemo* in his bed. In the first image he is sleeping. In the second, he wakes up.²

Presentation drawings of Architecture are usually a story that is easy to follow where certain ideas are amply described and demonstrated by the perspectives on view. For clients to "move through the space" in a state of 'eyes and ears up' readiness as the building unfolds, if they are to experience it with the same attentive feeling one has during a fascinating dream (or nightmare), one wonders what would happen if the designers simulated some of those illogical 'dreamlike'

¹ Frascari, *marco frascari's dream house: a theory of the imagination*, 45. One interpretation could be that Architecture is a continuation of past traditions, as well as being something entirely 'new'.

² Frascari, 6, 104.

connections? McCay's cartoons of *Little Nemo* achieve their allurement with little concern for logic. His 'plots' are baggy. But his drawings are ingenious because they celebrate things as enigmas: exaggerated wishes, fears and frustrations that lead to strange circumstances, much of it having to do with the consequences of odd proportions or metamorphosis. This is like Buster Keaton's early silent films in which the plot was almost irrelevant. We watch them to enjoy the grace and skill of Keaton as each particular situation or stunt unfolds ... as if the sticky piece of paper that he can't get off of his foot as he is sweeping becomes an entertaining metaphor for any number of 'sticky' situations we might come upon in our work.



Still from Sherlock Jr., Buster Keaton (1924)

Could McCay's cartoons be used as storyboards for choreographing an architect's presentation—to a client, or to themselves—in this way, i.e. by using them as templates for the way textual 'subject matter' gets connected in enigmatic ways, or does the act of drawing/dreaming up a building have more to do with making enigmatic material connections, literally by finding through drawing/dreaming—an enigmatic way to connect stone, wood, metal and glass —(or paper and shoes)—together? Or could it be both? In his theory of imagination, Frascari lays out a possible method:

*In architecture, the infraordinary is the source of detailing; it is the principle locus of meaningful events in architectural artifacts. The links between dream and the infraordinary essence of architectural imagination are unequivocally and intensely substantial; while the connections that architects and dreamers have traditionally made are ill-defined and tautological. To overcome these setbacks, I must contemplate dreams as a mode of thought. Architectural dreams are recurring dreams, which allow a slow construction of construed reality. They are a quest for an embodiment of the natural human thought patterns in stone, brick, glass, plaster, wood, and steel. Ordinary materials become extraordinary when emerging in the reality of construction if they have been part of a recurring dream.*³

Little Nemo is a recurring dream, a recurring highly architectural dream, that celebrates the ordinarily overlooked habit of waking up in the same bed every morning. Dreams themselves seem to get ordinary situations and places and ordinary objects—through an alchemy of odd juxtapositions and changes in scale—somehow—to speak to us. Georges Perec, on the ‘infraordinary’:

*What we need to question is bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our utensils, our tools, the way we spend our time, our rhythms. To question that which seems to have ceased forever to astonish us. We live, true, we breathe, true; we walk, we open doors, we go down staircases, we sit at a table in order to eat, we lie down on a bed in order to sleep.*⁴

Little Nemo in Slumberland illustrates the dreaming process as just this kind of questioning and quest for embodiment. Ordinary things are exaggerated, diminished, changed, or superimposed in such a way that their context gets recalibrated. As a newspaper man, McCay was surrounded every day by what Perec described as “the big event, the untoward, the extra-ordinary, the front-page splash, the banner headlines.”⁵ Part of McCay’s job had to do with illustrating those splashy events by making editorial cartoons. But his consistent return—in the funnies—of *Nemo* to the same little bed, in the same nightshirt, at the exact same scale gave context to *Nemo*’s nightly imagining of the world that was ‘really’ being constructed, the ordinarily overlooked situations and quotidian things that *enabled* the headline events to take place, played out as either nightmares or fantasies in *Nemo*’s mind.⁶

³ Frascari, *dream house*, 48.

⁴ George Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. by John Sturrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 205-7.

⁵ Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, 207.

⁶ Perec, 207. On the overlooking of the quotidian, Perec describes it this way: “In our haste to measure the historic, significant and revelatory, let’s not leave aside the essential: the truly intolerable, the truly inadmissible. What is scandalous isn’t the pit explosion, it’s working in the coal mines. ‘Social problems’ aren’t ‘a matter of concern’ when there’s a strike, they are intolerable twenty-four hours out of twenty-four, three hundred and sixty-five days a year.”

Suspending the preceding questions in our mind, this chapter meditates on dreaming (and drawing) first, as an anecdotal account of our natural appetite for short cartoonish stories; second, as a list of short ‘one-reel’ movies about dreams made shortly before and during the first few years of *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland*; third, as a story that Freud recounted about a patient who made drawings of dreams that leads to a story about drawings of dreams made by Marco Frascari and Claudio Scarbi, then to a glimpse of some other characters emerging from inkwells in Nemo’s time. But before the chapter’s meditations begin, it is necessary to tell a bit more about the story of Winsor McCay’s ‘drawing life’.

* * *

McCay’s newspaper years

We left off the story of Winsor McCay in 1898 when he was joining the staff of the *Commercial Tribune* after learning how to draw in pen and ink for reproduction in newsprint while making ads for the wonders at his Dime Museum. Just before this, in 1896, he saw his first motion picture as a demonstration of Edison’s Vitascope projection device shown in the Dime Museum. As Frank Grayson, author of the book *Pioneers of Night Life on Vine Street* (1924) remembered it:

The picture was dim and heavy, and it would have taken the entire census taking force of the United States Government ten years to have counted the flickers in it. In the picture the train was headed directly toward the audience. On the opening night of the picture’s run there was a larger audience than usual, having been attracted by the advance notices [likely McCay’s posters]. ... When the picture was flashed and the monster locomotive was seen bearing down ... there was a wild scramble to get off the track. One fat man in the middle of the house leaped to his feet and yelled “Stop her! Oh my gosh!” When the picture flashed off it was found that a man in the front row had fainted. ... It was two hours after leaving the museum that those who were present at this epic-making event regained clear vision.⁷

⁷ Canemaker, 49.

The extraordinary realism of this moving picture made it dreamlike, and may have influenced some of the drawings McCay did (as another side gig) for *Life* magazine just after joining the staff of the newspaper. This editorial cartoon shows Uncle Sam throwing tiny tin-like soldiers at a Filipino's head poking through a sheet in a kind of game, using a carnival stand as a motif. It also shows McCay's skill with the pen, and the cinematographic quality that his drawings were capable of. We see one dynamic moment in time captured. The shadow of Uncle Sam even seems to foretell the next moment since the shadow 'grabs' the next soldier to be cast.



Life, March 9, 1899—"Is the Game Worth the Candle?" (Collection Ray Winsor McCay)

Three years later his portrayal of motion developed into the use of a sequence of cells to depict a cinematic series of moments in time on one page, a kind of simultaneity.



Life, November 5, 1903—"Saved." (Collection Ray Winsor Moniz)

The many poses of horses echo the motion studies of Eadward Muybridge, published in 1887, and they also echo the sequential pictures that appeared in *Life*, *Harpers Weekly* and *Stuff and Nonsense* of McCay's favorite cartoonist A. B. Frost (1851-1928) in the mid 1880s.



Harpers Weekly, 1883 by A. B. Frost—“A Slippery Day”

McCay thought Frost was “the greatest comic draftsman in the history of this country.”⁸ A glimpse of Péc’s ‘infraordinary’ can be seen here as the ordinary activity of walking becomes comedic simply because the surface a man traverses is slippery. His portrayal is made more vivid because we see things as a series of moments in time.

In his biography of McCay, Canemaker points to the “Saved.” sequence in *Life* not only for its remarkable detail (in the first panel, the ladies in the automobile are crying, and in the second panel one of them feints), and not only for its philosophic meditation on the forces of mechanized machinery and ‘horse’ power, but also for his cinematographic portrayal of the events happening in series. Canemaker’s experience as an animator and filmmaker helps us see things through the eyes of a fellow maker:

The viewer’s point of view is like that of a movie camera pulling ahead of the action. In the third panel, the ‘camera’ moves to the left, ahead of the second car and the attacking Indians. In the fourth panel, we are still moving forward of the car, now surrounded by Indians, two of whom attempt to reach out to stop the auto as one would a runaway stallion. In the distance are the original automobile and passengers and two riders who fell out (in the third panel) of the currently besieged car. The fifth panel surprises the viewer as much as it does the unsuspecting Indians when the car explodes. . . . Far in the background, the auto containing four riders picks up the two who have witnessed their car’s self-destruction. The final panel in this highly animated continuum features a large smoldering hole in the ground surrounded by litter and debris. Driving toward us is the remaining auto with six frightened passengers, watching the Indians (who managed to survive) ride away into the distance.⁹

McCay packs so much into one page that it takes several ‘readings’ to discern what is going on, (a quality that moving picture do not have, since their action is generally easier to follow). Yet, the detailed rendering is realistic even when he is portraying the fantastic explosion in the fifth panel where the horses are seen as ghosts of themselves in a flash of light and “pieces of the machine fly outward from the white-hot center.”¹⁰ McCay was developing his talent for rendering hyperbole and he also foreshadowed the wide screen cinema format to come.

In 1900, McCay took his talent for making striking images to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* where over the next three years, he became the head of the art department. We get a sense of how he came to make the “Saved” cartoon, because he was often sent on the road to cover a story. Drawings

⁸ Canemaker, 56-9.

⁹ Ibid, 63.

¹⁰ Ibid, 63.

had to be made on the spot and then it was a race back to the newspaper to be the first to publish it. There was usually a throng of newspaper men competing for this privilege through either sketching or photographing the newsworthy event. McCay related a particular story of a nighttime scene when “the cameramen were out of luck. It was dark and flashlights were not so hot in those days.”¹¹ Here is a piece of a story about how McCay drew a newsworthy event that shows the excitement that skittered across McCay’s life at that time:

...while writers were working under lanterns and torches on dry goods boxes, beer kegs and barrels with operators wiring their stuff over the loops hooked by linemen up telegraph poles ... I could not get my sketches to Cincinnati until 4 in the morning on a milk train! And ... they had had some mighty fine Lawrenceburg beer in the hotel bar of the town. ... I stayed only long enough to start on my third mug, when he [Emerson, a fellow newsman responsible for hustling McCay’s group to and from the scene] came rushing in and beckoned me away from the gang. “Follow me and say nothing,” he warned. He led me into a lumber yard, through dark passageways, to a huge, hot, black locomotive. ... A paper was signed and I was ordered into a way car and told to get busy ... We oozed out of the lumberyard as quietly as a cat could creep ... Then we had the right of way for 53 miles to Cincy.¹²

McCay traveled the fifty-three miles in forty-eight minutes. When he arrived, six artists helped him hastily ink in his pencil sketches which enabled the *Enquirer* to be the first to “scoop the country pictorially.” The tremendously sad part of this story has been omitted which is that the scooped event was a lynching. In McCay’s portrayal, he was granted permission to ride in the cab with the engineer and crew (rather than the way car) to admire the engine, because they “were so delighted over the lynching that I could have ridden on the smokestack.” McCay told this story as a demonstration of the excitement of ‘getting the story’. It was taken for granted that a mob taking the law into their own hands was exciting and newsworthy and McCay showed no embarrassment or reflection on that issue in relating the story. This is indicative, tragically, of the time.

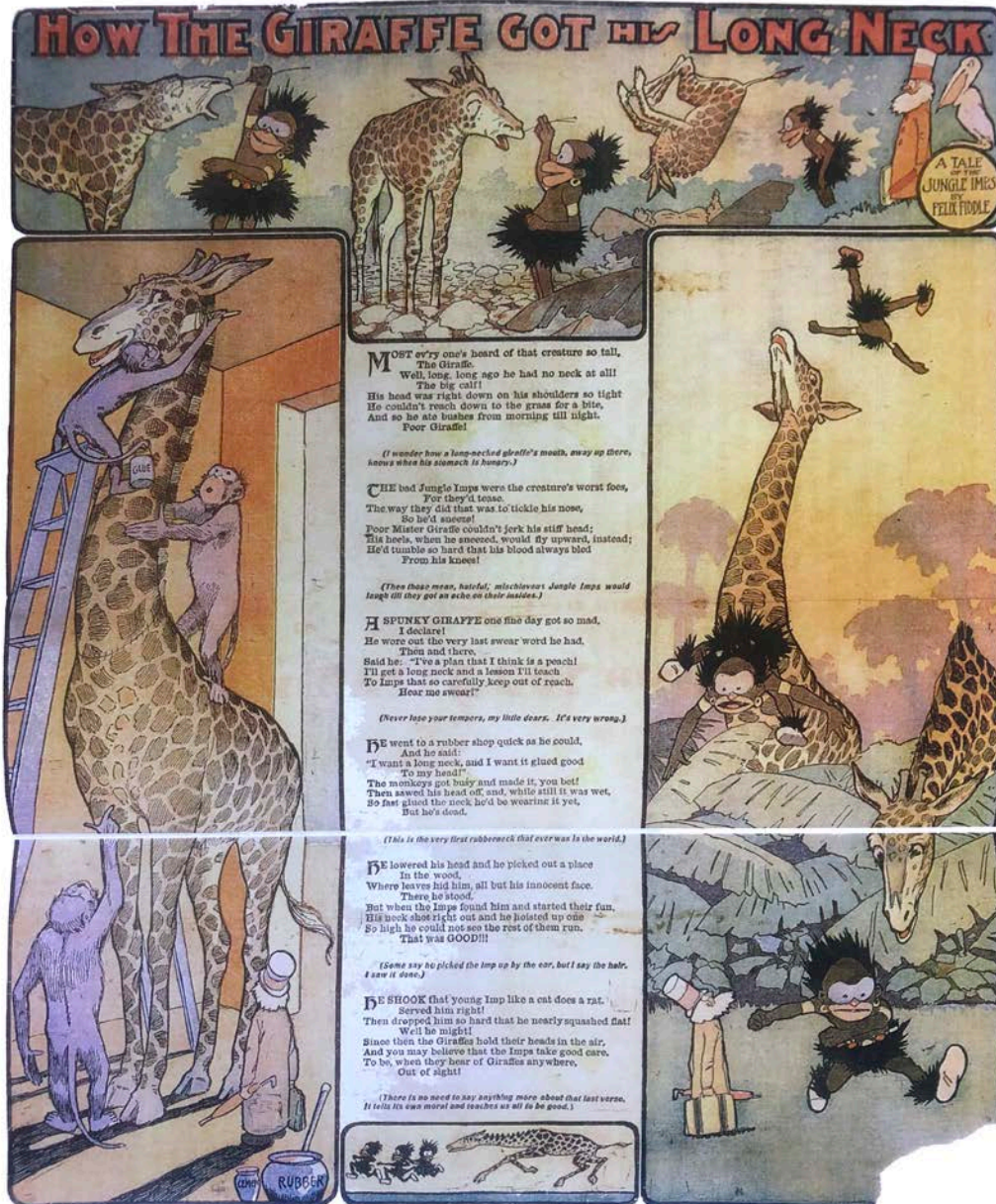
So, McCay’s drawings continued to convey a sense of the extraordinary. What were once advertisements for dime museums, collections of strange things meant to inspire amazement, now became ‘actual’ events, a newspaper recounting of things that were amazing. As a newspaper artist/reporter, he illustrated things as a way to inspire emotion—and readership—rather than as a way to uncover the everyday events—taken for granted—that enable those strange events to take place. A kinder sensibility would come later in his career in episodes of *Little Nemo*, most obviously when Nemo is struck with a social consciousness about the plight of

¹¹ Canemaker, 65.

¹² *Ibid.*, 67-8.

the poor, but also perhaps in the very depiction of nightmares as a constant underpinning of the day to day things in our waking reality. In the drawings for *Little Nemo*, we get to see the ambitious, beer swigging, (and thrill seeking) McCay grow up.

At the end of McCay's time at the *Enquirer*, McCay made his first foray into the realm of comic strips in a serial entitled *The Tales of the Jungle Imps by Felix Fiddle*, which were illustrations of poems written by the Sunday editor of the *Enquirer*, Randolph Chester (1869-1924).



Cincinnati Enquirer, February 15, 1903—"How the Giraffe Got Its Long Neck" (Collection Ray Winsor Moniz)

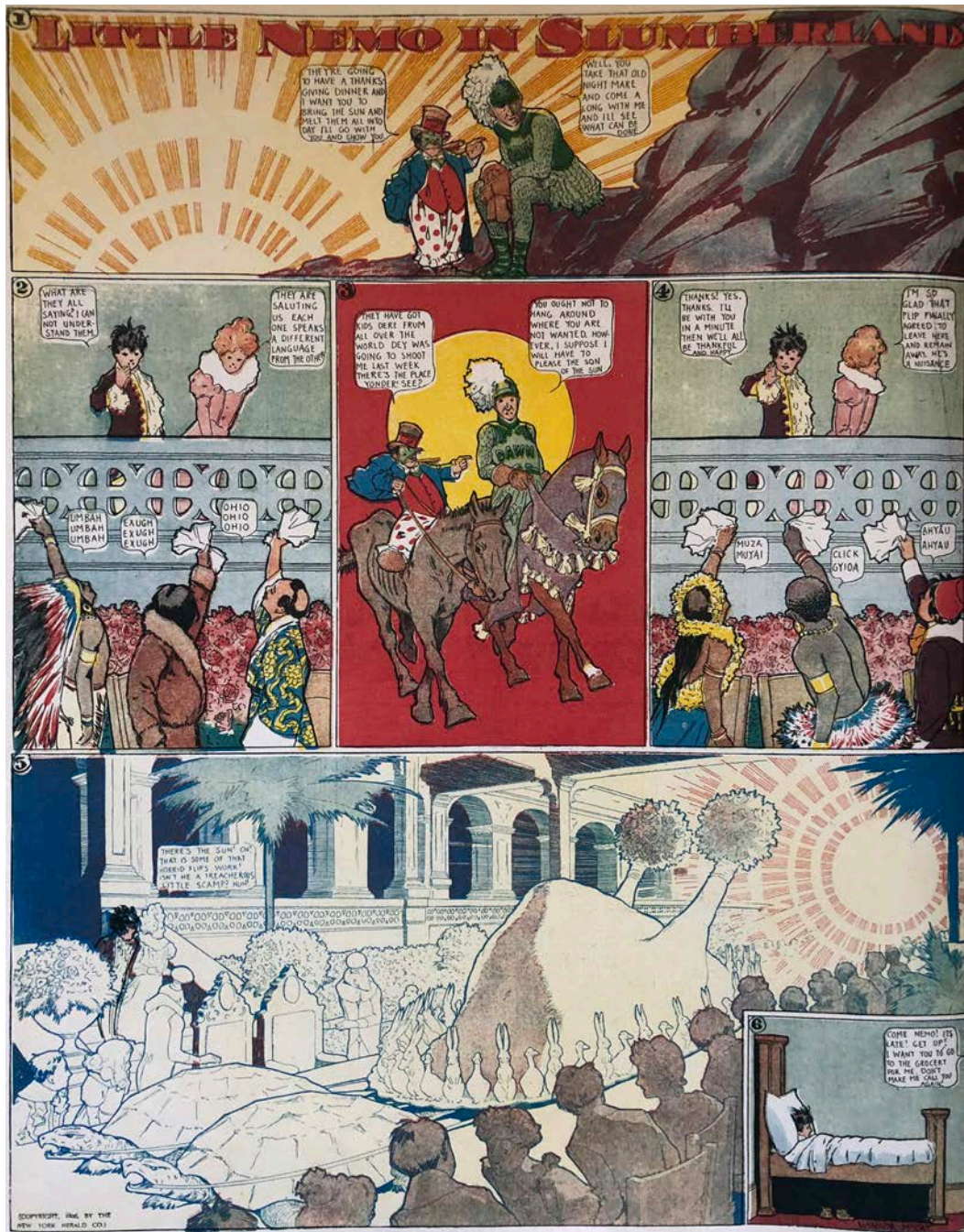
According to Canemaker, McCay's illustrations may have been inspired by illustrations for Rudyard Kipling's (1865-1936) *Jungle Book* (1893), and by the search for the missionary David Livingstone (1813-1873), thought to be lost in Africa, and 'found' in 1871 by the explorer Henry M. Stanley (1841-1904). Stanley uttered the famous greeting, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" which hinted in a single sentence at a whole outlook predicated on an idea about civilization and 'primitive' culture.¹³ McCay's illustration portrays three Jungle Imps as mischievous tormentors of an innocent giraffe who is given a longer neck by intelligent and industrious monkeys who fabricate a longer neck for him. The giraffe is then able to hide in the foliage and defend himself against the Imps by hoisting them up or throwing them flat on the ground. All of this is viewed impassively by Felix Fiddle, an elder scientist who observes the goings on, suitcase and umbrella in hand.

By today's standards, the text for this tale is disturbingly racist. The Jungle Imps are 'mean', 'hateful' and 'bad'. The tale concludes with a moral: "And you may believe that the Imps take good care to be, when they hear of Giraffes anywhere, out of sight!" If the Imps were simply representative of naughty children, then Randolph Chester's rhyme might not be so disturbing, but in 1903 we know that is not the case. The Jungle Imps look a lot like the tribesman that were imported to World's Fairs and to Coney Island as 'ethnological' curiosities to be stared at as if they were part of a zoo.

Interestingly, a few years later, McCay chose a Jungle Imp (named 'Impie') to accompany Nemo and his nemesis 'Flip' in the adventures depicted in *Slumberland*. It is as if Nemo had three components in his being: 1. Nemo himself, an innocent little boy with an active dream life; 2. Flip, his own worst enemy, a hobo who initially tried his best to keep Nemo out of Slumberland and who constantly threatened to end the adventure by bringing Dawn; and 3. 'Impie'. Impie was initially stolen from a tropical island by Flip. Then, after stealing him, Flip berated him and tried to teach him how to behave (while we know that Flip himself was nothing but trouble). Eventually they became a trio who navigated the enchanted circumstances in *Slumberland* together. McCay's portrayal of Impie's chief when they visited the island was more respectful than Chester's portrayal of the imps shown in *Jungle Imps*. The chief was respectful, hospitable and even affectionate to Nemo and Flip while they are visiting the island, although some of his tribesman were cannibals and tried to eat them. After being kidnapped, Impie joined Nemo's adventure, and was subjected to all of the confusions and trials that beset Nemo and Flip, although he generally just seemed to be tagging along. He rarely spoke. The occasional things that did come out of his mouth were unintelligible gibberish, as if it was difficult to understand our 'primitive' selves. It is a different language. Here is a page from November 25, 1906 before Flip had stolen Impie from the island. It shows a great banquet with nations from around the

¹³ Canemaker, 69.

world in attendance that King Morpheus (King of Slumberland) hosted, coinciding with what in 'real' life was Thanksgiving. On the preceding Sunday, Flip had been apprehended from the banquet by Morpheus's guards, almost executed by a firing squad, and then saved by Little Nemo. (This was the first indication in the series that they might become 'friends'.) But a week later, Flip is still fuming. The strip from November 25 began with Flip cooking up revenge with his cousin 'Dawn'. He wanted to "bring the sun and melt them all into day."



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 25, 1906

The representatives from around the world (including one that looks like Impie) wave to Nemo and the princess (daughter of King Morpheus). Nemo asks, “What are they all saying? I cannot understand them.” The princess replies, “They are saluting us. Each one speaks a different language from the other.” Flip is able to bring the dream to a close while riding his ‘night mare’ next to Dawn. The penultimate cell begins losing its vivacity as the sun rises. The color gets bleached away. It is a scene where turtles are slowly pulling a giant turkey for the feast. One is reminded of the Latin phrase “*Festina lente*” which means “make haste slowly,” used by the Romans as a reminder to proceed with caution. It was one of Augustus’s favorite sayings who also said, “Better a safe commander than a bold.” Jean de la Fontaine (1621-1695), a French fabulist, alluded to the motto in his famous fable “The Hare and the Tortoise,” a reworking of Aesop’s fable when the turtle won a race against a hare by carefully plodding forward. The hare was over-confident and fell asleep supposing that he would win. Interestingly, the giant turkey was shown surrounded by attentive hares that were being pulled along by the tortoises.¹⁴ Was McCay making some sort of reference to the nightly work our minds do every night when we fall asleep? McCay’s cartoons were boundless in their use of symbols, just like our dreaming minds. Anything was fair game.

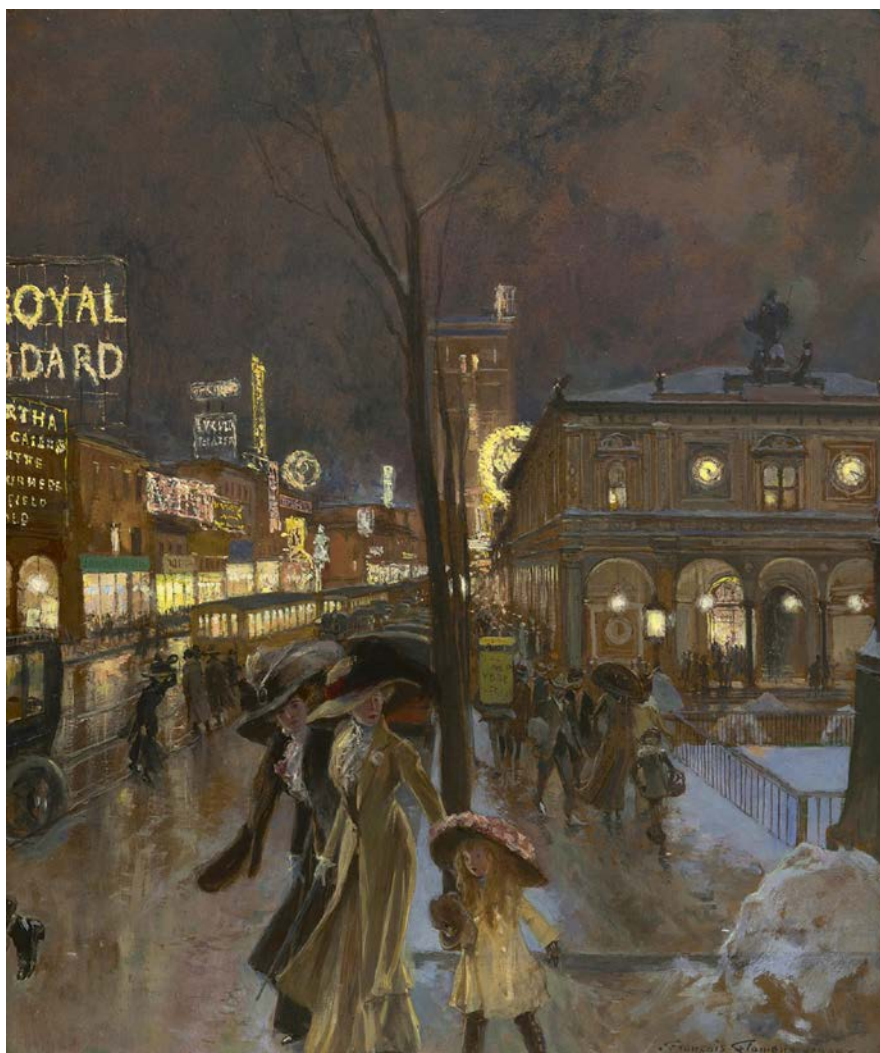
We have jumped ahead into McCay’s serial tale of *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, which gave its readers lots to thoughtfully chew on each Sunday. But McCay didn’t dream up these comics until he moved to New York City. On October 14, 1903, in Cincinnati, McCay received a wire from the art director of the *New York Herald* asking him to “come at once and do some election stuff.” McCay consulted the editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* for advice, received his blessing, and moved to New York. It was for the *Evening Telegram* (the nighttime edition of the morning *Herald*,) that McCay began doing a serial comic strip of *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*, which was essentially the precursor to *Little Nemo*. In a 1907 interview, he explained his inspiration:

...*You know how a cigaret [sic] fiend is when he gets up in the morning and can’t find a dope stick? Well, I drew a picture once showing a fiend at the north pole without a cigaret and about ready to die. I introduced some other characters who happened to have paper and tobacco and a match, but the only match went out before they got a light. Then I had to frame up a finish and I made it into a dream. My employer suggested that I make him a series of pictures and make them as rarebit dreams and you know the result...*¹⁵

¹⁴ This last digression of the symbolism of the turtles and hares has not been relegated to a footnote because, in the dream mode of thought (which this chapter is attempting to be), every digression and detail is significant.

¹⁵ Winsor McCay, *Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973), ix; The quote is from the publisher’s note. The book is a reproduction of the work originally published by the Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York, in 1905. McCay’s cartoons would disseminate into various media beyond their appearance in the newspaper including books, vaudeville, musicals and early movies.

The *Herald* office building was a Neo-classical structure designed by McKim, Meade and White on a trapezoidal plot of land circumscribed by 34th and 35th Streets, Sixth Avenue and Broadway, in the section of the city known as ‘Tenderloin.’ The architects had modeled the building loosely after Palazzo del Consiglio in Verona with bronze bell ringers on the roof inspired by Calducci’s clock tower in the Piazza San Marco in Venice. Most notably, sculptures of owls with eyes that glowed with electric light were placed on the edges of the roof.



François Flameng (1856-1923), A winter evening in a crowded Herald Square at the New York Herald Building, 1909

Canemaker notes with irony that the *Herald* was not known for its wise reporting of events so much as being the “darling of the cotillion and club sets” and “by treating gossip as news.”¹⁶ The two-story Press Room could be seen at the bottom through plate glass windows on

¹⁶ John K. Winkler, *William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Hastings House, 1955) 69; cited by Canemaker, 79. Pulitzer, Hearst and Bennet all competed for readership with fabulous cartoons... and fabulous buildings! One wonders what the architects must have thought when the *Herald*'s owner, James Gordon Bennett (1795-1872), requested the owl sculptures. Owls were his favorite bird.

Broadway and up under the eaves of the building is where the type-setting took place. McCay's office was located a few streets down Broadway on 39th Street. One imagines that he spent time walking back and forth on Broadway, drawings in hand. After two years, he moved his young family to Sheepshead Bay, almost an hour away by train. Sheepshead Bay was in Brooklyn, very near to Coney Island, and reminded the McCays of an amusement park by the same name in Cincinnati. As McCay became more famous, he was granted the opportunity to work from home as much as he liked. His drawings were sent by messenger or sometimes, McCay would have his chauffeur drive him into town to deliver them himself.

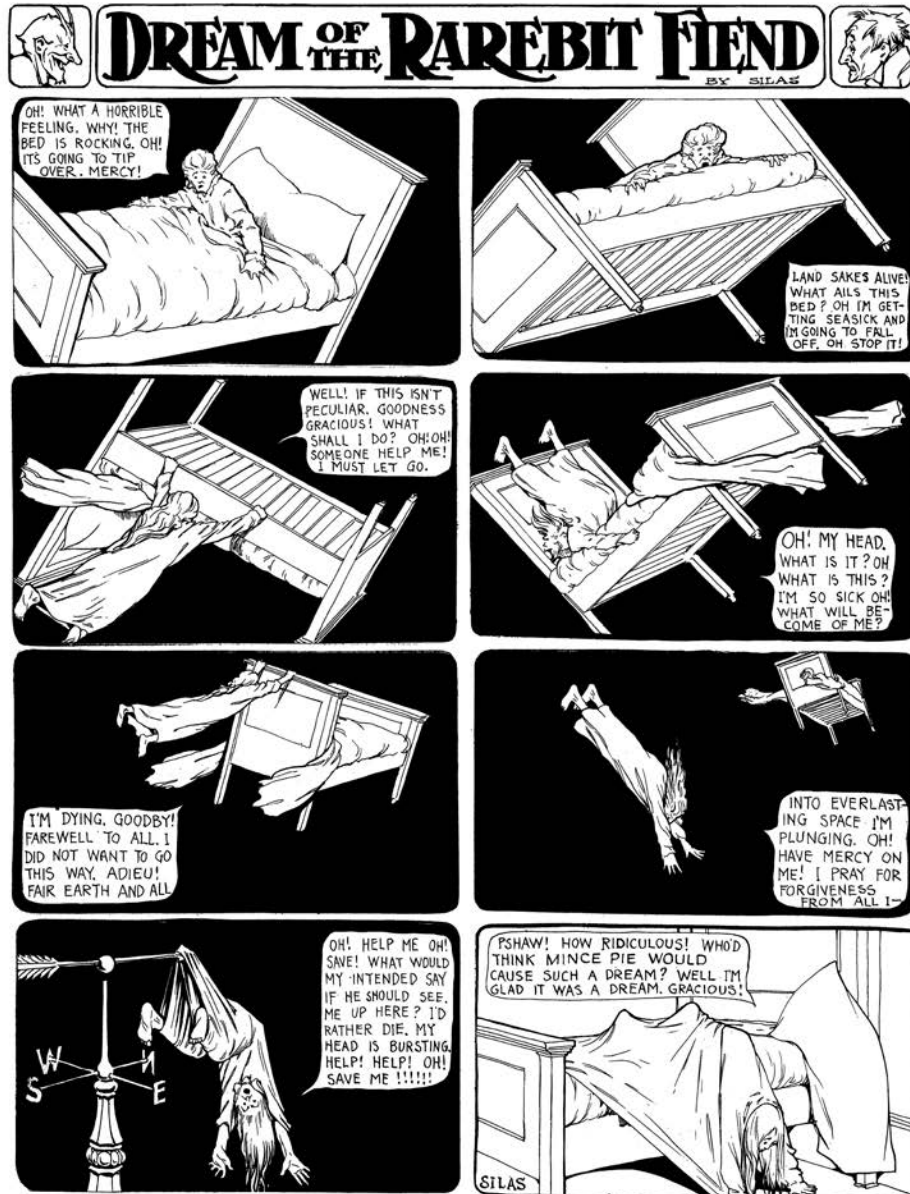
The cartoon strips that catapulted McCay from a well-known illustrator to a world-famous cartoonist were both—significantly—about dreaming. The *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* sequences are self-contained (like dreams usually are remembered to be) and do not show much information about their settings apart from what little information is needed to tell the story. However *Little Nemo in Slumberland* explored oneiric terrain as a continuous story with the terrain itself as an essential element. The settings for *Slumberland* are elaborate and seem to be inspired by Dreamland in Coney Island, by the White City of the Chicago World's Fair, and by the Herald Building itself.¹⁷ McCay reputedly did not draw from any building in particular so much as all of the buildings living in his memory. A young neighbor who was a friend of his son Robert later recalled:

No inspirational copy was required for detail and authenticity in creating his fabulous and intricate architectural and scenic backgrounds and marvelous perspective handlings, of which he was a master, such as the average artist would need for that type of work. ... His most characteristic working position was one that I had seen him assume so often: one end of his drawing board resting on his lap, the other on the edge of his desk. At times he would lean forward with his bent left arm or just the elbow resting on the board, his chin in the palm of that hand, while between two extended nicotine-stained fingers would be burning away his favorite 'little cheroots' from which the smoke softly ascended discoloring the underside of his hat brim. His working right hand, drawing away in lightning fashion, never seemed to make a false move.¹⁸

Such was the position that McCay dreamed in.

¹⁷ McCay, *Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend*, vii. (From the Introduction)

¹⁸ John A. Fitzsimmons, "My Days with Winsor McCay" Manuscript, 1974, 5-9; cited by Canemaker, 135-6.



Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, *New York Evening Telegram*, July 1, 1905

The precursor to Little Nemo in Slumberland. Dream of the Rarebit Fiend appeared from September 1904 through 1911 in the Saturday edition of the New York Evening Telegram, considered to be the evening edition of the New York Herald. They both contributed to the enormous popularity and sales of James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s newspapers.

The funnies

Rarebit Fiend's and *Little Nemo's* appeal had something to do with intertwining, according to Cammie Ledbetter “the storylines of run of the mill, flawed humanity with the sub-conscious motion, twinge of regret and the gasp of breath right before a scream, taking us to a strange new world that, somehow, wasn't all that unfamiliar ... The endless possibilities that are the nature of

dreams provided McCay with a never-ending supply of conflicts and climaxes...”¹⁹ It is a funny thing about McCay’s comics, that even though they portray nightmares, they remain especially alluring.

* * *

Every Sunday after having endured the ritual of attending Sunday Mass—which undoubtedly made a lasting impression, a good one, all told—but, nonetheless, with a childlike preference for play, my sister and I looked forward to the second and more immediately enjoyable ritual—also shared by the family—of reading the Sunday funny papers. This activity was similarly devotional and meditative, but not performed as a series of standing, sitting and kneeling sequences; rather, our bodies were thrown down into a horizontal sprawling position; and, after spreading the funnies before us, chins nested in the palms of our hands, we proceeded to *read* them. Our eyes absorbed full pages of colored drawings, one by one. I took an especially long time. Bewildered by my monopolization of these drawings, my father accused me of “memorizing the comics,” with a hint of worry that I perhaps couldn’t read very well. (I was the slow daughter.) What was taking so long? I carefully read even *Mary Worth*, an episodic strip about a somewhat boring middle-aged lady.

Likewise, every Saturday, my sister and I miraculously woke up at 6:30am—in time to turn the knob of the television set ‘on’—to watch the test-patterns before the first cartoons started. We endured our less favorite cartoons, the really early ones, because we didn’t want to miss any of them, bad or good.²⁰ Eventually, our favorites came on towards noon: *Fractured Fairytales*, *Dudley Do-Right*, *Bugs Bunny*, *Porky Pig*, *Tom and Jerry*, *The Roadrunner*, *Foghorn Leghorn*, *Mr. McGoo*. Our parents understood our desire for entertainment and we were allowed to watch all of them.

Reading the comics on the floor—(we also watched TV from the floor)—was natural. The prone position was similar to our nightly sleeping position. It was not ladylike, but perfectly suited dreaming. Week-ends were for relaxing, and we relaxed by rigorously consuming comics and cartoons.

Were ancient Egyptian children equally attentive to the beautiful cartoon strips on their carpeted floors and walls? The linear stylized stories were beloved enough to keep their woven form language even when translated into bas-reliefs on stone, and presumably, also retained their color.

¹⁹ Winsor McCay, *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend: The Saturdays*, Edited by Cammie Ledbetter (Miamisburg, Ohio: Checker Book Publishing Group, 2007), 5-6. The quote is from Cammie Ledbetter, graphic artist and associate editor, in the introduction to the book.

²⁰ Contrast this with the frequent desperate runs for the bus made on school mornings because we had trouble getting out of bed. The cartoons were irresistible.

The stone friezes may have been painted, as the friezes on Greek temples were.²¹ The stiff forms might not have been an inability to draw and carve realistically so much as a respect for what woven figures look like. Gottfried Semper conceived stone walls as mere armatures for the ‘real’ walls of a building: the beautiful carpets that hung upon them. In Semper’s thinking, real walls will always be a manifestation of the original carpets woven to adorn the dwellings of nomadic tribes, forever embedded as an archetype in our memory. This remains the appropriate dressing for a proper wall. Just so, my sister and I were devoted to the floor carpeted with the funnies and the illuminated wall with cartoons on the television screen.

* * *

Early twentieth century dreams

Just after Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* and Einstein published his theory about what happens to time when things are in motion (relativity), there was a magnetic draw to one-reel silent films and newspaper comics about dreams not unlike the quantum state achieved by my sister and me as we sped from our beds at a certain velocity to position ourselves in front of the TV set on the floor. The time-dimension that moving pictures added to still photography was a perfect fit for representing dreams. More than two hundred pre-World War I, one-reel silent films made in America and Europe were about dreaming.²² Here are the titles and ‘dimensions’ of the some of the earliest ones:

The Artist’s Dream, 1899, United States, Mutoscope Co., 219 feet

The Astronomer’s Dream, 1899, United States, S. Lubin, 1,200 feet

An Artist’s Dream, 1900, United States, Edwin S. Porter, Edison Manufacturing Co., 1 min., 3 sec.

Rêve du Rajah (The Sultan’s Dream), 1900, France, George Méliès, 150 feet

Uncle Josh’s Nightmare, 1900, United States, Edison Manufacturing Co., 2 min., 27 sec.

²¹ Gottfried Semper—(mentioned earlier as an architect who wrote about the origins of architecture)—lived during the “polychromy” controversy, when it was discovered, to the horror of some, that the Greek temples had traces of colored wax pigment nestled in the interior coffers. The gleaming white marble of the temples would have made a lovely substrate to shine through wax pigment, but, neoclassical architecture was thought of as monochromatic form in light. To lose its quality of pure form would be to lose the authority of its language.

²² Lynn Gamwell, *The Muse is Within, The Psyche in the Century of Science, Essay in Dreams 1900-2000, Science, Art and the Unconscious Mind*, edited by Lynn Gamwell, catalogue published in conjunction with the exhibition at Bingham University Art Museum (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 297.

Glutton's Nightmare, 1901, Great Britian, Cecil Hepworth

The Horrid Nightmare, 1902, country unknown, distributed by Edison Manufacturing Co., 50 feet

Le Rêve du Maître de Ballet (The Ballet Master's Dream), 1903, France, George Méliès, 155 feet

Le Voyage dans la Lune, 1903, France, George Méliès

Dorothy's Dream, 1904, United States, George A. Smith, 570 feet

Le Rêve d'Horloger (The Clockmaker's Dream), 1904, France, George Méliès, 170 feet

Le Cauchemar du Pêcheur (The Angler's Nightmare), 1905, France, George Méliès, 290 feet

The Dream of the Racetrack Fiend, 1905, United States, American Mutoscope & Biograph Co., 627 feet

The Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, 1906, United States, Edwin S. Porter, Edwin Manufacturing Co., 470 feet

Opium Smoker's Dream, 1906, United States, Robert W. Paul, Edison Manufacturing Co., 260 feet

The Opium Smoker's Dream, 1906, France, Société des Establishments L. Gaumont, 495 feet

Nel Paese dei Soqui (In the Dreamland), 1907, Italy, Società Italiana Cines, 387 feet

The Tramp's Dream, 1907, Great Britian, Lewin Fitzhamon, Hepworth Manufacturing Co., 450 feet

The Magic Mirror, 1908, France, Pathé Frères, 475 feet

Le Rêve d'un Fumeur d'Opium (The Dream of an Opium Fiend), 1908, France, George Méliès, 345 feet

A Sculptor's Welsh Rarebit Dream, 1908, United States, Edwin S. Porter, Edwin Manufacturing Co., 590 feet

Freud refers to the popular saying “Dreams come from indigestion”²³ in *Interpretation of Dreams*, and there are several movies devoted to that topic. At a more serious level, Freud and Bergson’s ideas about the nature of dreams seeped into to the psyche of the general public because they were amazingly represented. There was a shameless borrowing back and forth of dream themes

²³ Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, Translated and edited by James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1955), Originally published in 1899, 54.

between cartoonists and filmmakers. Directors such as George Méliès and Edwin S. Porter experimented with trick shots using superimposition, dissolves and editing to simulate dreamlike transitions. The artifices of filmmaking so perfectly accommodated the wacky transitions in dreams that it made the topic irresistible.²⁴ Likewise, McCay's cartoons were like storyboards, skillfully executed, showing the possibilities for film to imitate the dreaming mind's propensity for odd juxtapositions. Edwin S. Porter's *The Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* uses McCay's cartoon strip—literally—as its storyboard. Both became part of a new collective dreaming, as entertainment.

Although everyone was experimenting with transitions—the piecing together of moments in time captured on tiny rectangles of film—the “endless possibilities that are the nature of dreams” and the “never-ending supply of conflicts and climaxes” was the actual *dream stuff*. As formulas and plots for early moving pictures evolved—and the number of Nickelodeons quickly outpaced the number of vaudeville venues—where did the actual *dream stuff* come from? Did it come from ingesting too much mince pie—opium—or cheese?

Here are stills from the 1906 film *The Dream of a Rarebit Fiend* directed by Wallace McCutcheon and Edwin S. Porter. Credits for ‘writing’ are now attributed to Winsor McCay (which is the *Rarebit* cartoon seen a few pages ago)



A man is seen at a restaurant overindulging in beer and Welsh rarebit, a kind of cheese fondue eaten over toast.



He leaves the restaurant and emerges onto the street. Intoxicated, his gait is unsteady. Then, the street itself becomes unstable. A lamppost wobbles back and forth. He eventually staggers to his bedroom.

²⁴ Lynn Gamwell, *The Muse is Within, The Psyche in the Century of Science*, Essay in *Dreams 1900-2000, Science, Art and the Unconscious Mind*, 297.



He puts his nightshirt on and goes to bed. Then... he pops back up to notice that his shoes are walking away from the bed. His lamp falls off the table. The chairs and table also fall and seem to scurry away from the bed of their own accord. He is incredulous.



As he falls asleep, the camera zooms in to his head on the pillow. Fiendish demons appear to stand on the top of it, heckling and prodding him with their pitchforks and axes. He covers his head with a sheet to make them go away. The bed rises up and begins to quiver and shake.



The bed rocks back and forth, then whirls around before flying out of the window.



Once the bed is in the air careening over the city, the protective sheet flies away. He is also in danger of flying off. He holds on for dear life.



The bed is too precarious. He falls and gets caught on a wind vane which spins around. The spinning motion seems to reunite him with his bed which shoots back through the window. He wakes up.

Everything is back in its place... shoes, chairs, table, lamp... and him... in bed.

Unlike Edwin Porter's film, McCay's cartoons do not picture the man eating the Welsh rarebit before going to sleep. That part of the story is only implied—or, we could say 'hidden'—alluded to when the man wakes up. Sigmund Freud also thought that 'dream stuff' came from something that happened the previous day, something that was hidden or unnoticed.

* * *

Tachistoscopic dreams

Freud's original manuscript for *The Interpretation of Dreams* was completed just a few years before Winsor McCay began his cartoon analysis of the same topic. Freud's book was presented as a scientific theory, a representation of the dreaming mind grounded in studies dealing with the 'problem' of hysteria, with clues for a cure to be found in a patient's dreams. Proof of concept were based upon the dreams of his patients and of his own. Winsor McCay had a brother Arthur, who, for reasons unknown, was locked away in an asylum as a 30 year old adult. So, McCay may have been familiar with Freud's theory and practice, and then consciously used it as a source for inspiration. Admittedly, McCay's cartoons were likely drawn solely to entertain newspaper readers, and any representation of the psychiatric element of the dreaming mind was incidental. (Dreams are commonly perceived as entertainingly weird.) But, the process of drawing is so much like the process of dreaming, that perhaps one *must* draw to fully understand it. For this reason, McCay's imaginative illustrations of the process are significant.

Taking McCay's cartoons as a serious representation of dreams leads to an interesting passage in a Chapter on "Materials and Sources of Dreams" from *The Interpretations of Dreams*, specifically about the importance of material gleaned from the previous day, what Freud termed 'recent

material', that is: the selection by the dreaming mind of seemingly insignificant details from the day before. A footnote added to the *Interpretations*, twenty years later in 1919, is worth noting since it pertains specifically to drawing:

An important contribution to the part played by recent material in the construction of dreams has been made by Pötzl (1917) in a paper which carries a wealth of implications. In a series of experiments Pötzl required the subjects to make a drawing of what they had consciously noted of a picture exposed to their view in a tachistoscope (an instrument for exposing an object to view for an extremely short time). He then turned his attention to the dreams dreamt by the subjects during the following night and required from them once more to make drawings of appropriate portions of these dreams. It was shown unmistakably that those details of the exposed picture which had not been noted by the subject provided material for the construction of the dream, whereas those details which had been consciously perceived and recorded in the drawing made after the exposure did not recur in the manifest content of the dream. The material that was taken over by the dream-work was modified by it for the purposes of dream-construction in its familiar 'arbitrary' (or, more properly, 'autocratic') manner ... it is worth remarking on the contrast between this new method of studying the formation of dreams experimentally and the earlier, crude technique for introducing into the dream stimuli which interrupted the subject's sleep.

A number of things relate to McCay's drawings in this footnote.

First: the scientific study of dreams was influenced by the technologies that McCay was a part of, namely early film animation, ie., the subject was exposed to a fleeting image. In the 20 years since 1899, the presence (and power) of the fleeting image made its way from being a curiosity—for McCay, a curiosity he used for his vaudeville act—to an integral part of the cultural understanding of a valid, marked happening. By 1919, it was perceived as something capable of making an impression equal to the 'real' events of the day.

Second: the conclusions from Pötzl's study place McCay's work (loosely) in the realm of science, since drawings of dreams are seen as evidence of dream-work. Loosely, because they are imaginative constructions, not actual dreams, so far as we know. (But, what are dreams, if not imaginal constructions?)

Third: by extension, the cartoons *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* show, according to Pötzl, "details which had not been noted by the subject" of the fleeting image during the previous day. At least, they were not noted 'consciously' by the subject.

This third point is particularly interesting. It implies a sort of recto-verso quality to memory. The ‘recto’ mind makes notes of impressions during the day and dutifully fits them into the rational framework of the world. The ‘verso’ mind has its own agenda for the recording of impressions. The memory records aspects of a fleeting image simultaneously in a series of recto-verso ‘drawings’—etched into the mind—which, when exhibited in the dream, carry associations significant to both sides. What we get is the ability to make multiple associations for each ‘image’. Freud discussed this in terms of repressed or displaced ideas, because he became fascinated with the power of things not readily seen by the conscious mind. Since his investigation began with a study of hysteria—and particularly hysterical women who were reacting to a repressive environment—he did not fully explore the links between recto and verso impressions the way, say, an art historian or an architect might. Picture Braque’s missing pipe... or Magritte’s. Interestingly, McCay characterizes this idea of the ‘flip’ of a representation into an actual character named ‘Flip’.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, March 18, 1906

Flip is preventing Nemo from getting to Slumberland to see the princess, who is the daughter of King Morpheus. Flip causes Nemo to wake up (interrupting his journey) simply by appearing in the dream. The clowns fool Flip into giving his costume up by implying that Flip will get to see the Princess that way. Flip excitedly gets into the game: “Go and see the princess, eh? Now you are talking!” Then the clowns cart Flip (who is now dressed in Nemo’s outfit) away. Nemo puts on Flip’s costume and has his face painted to look like Flip. He puts on Flip’s hat, the one that says “Wake Up.”



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, March 18, 1906

Nemo, now disguised as Flip, is just about to get into an elaborate carriage to go see the princess when he inadvertently catches sight of himself in a mirror. (He sees himself in the mirror dressed as Flip with the "Wake Up" hat on.) He wakes up.

McCay played with the idea that dreams reveal the ‘flip’ side of things. Several decades later, Marco Frascari played with that same idea in an exhibition of a Dream House.

Frascari-Chun / Scarbi dream

On the subject of ‘flips’, in 1992, Professor Marco Frascari was invited by guest curator Daniel Friedman to join the exhibition *The Architect’s Dream: Houses for the next Millenium* at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. Professors Alice Min Too Chun and Claudio Scarbi joined him in the effort, and they used the convention of recto-verso drawing as a way to imagine it. Frascari and Chun did drawings on vellum for the *recto-design*, and Scarbi answered with four drawings for the *verso-design*. The drawings are translucent, and a ghosted image of each can be seen through the other side. Interestingly, Frascari’s and Chun’s recto-side is titled:

I. The Recto: Little Nemo is a friend of Dionysus.

Water powers the house, lifts up weights, and turns the wheel. Two cellars (one for wine, the other for the salami and other foods) ground the building. The top floor, a terrace with a double crane, is crowned by a compassed weathervane.²⁵ The bathrooms are carefully designed and the kitchen is the most important room. Other spaces exemplify or suggest rather than determine or impose.

Scarbi’s verso-side is titled:

II. The Verso: Plan of flight for a vague house.

This house will last forever. It will never be completed, always quasi-built. A corner of the building sits on a mundus next to a fig-tree and an apple-tree. The tower is approximately 21x21 and 72 feet high. The mundus is 21x21 and 63 feet deep. High-tech furnishes the house. High-tech feeds the mundus. The house is self-sufficient. Sleeping, cooking, love-making, sitting, chatting, bathing, peeing, eating...are everywhere in the tower. The underground floor is a room filled with water and steam. On the ground floor, the walls are dedicated to the revolving

²⁵ An image of Nemo getting caught on the weathervane in his famous cartoon of the walking bed pops into mind.

*sun. On the first floor things lose their names and bolognas hang everywhere. On the top floor, under the ark—a water tank—an Eolic organ plays.*²⁶

The drawings were later published as Frascari's treatise on the architectural imagination. In a Chapter entitled "The Analogical Monster," Frascari talks about 'dragooning' Claudio Scarbi—

... to follow [his] dream in the design of the house tower.

The dream tower is imaginary, but Chun and Frascari's recto-drawings—though whimsical—bear a resemblance to something that could be built. According to Frascari,

To contrast the trump-like quality unfolded on the recto-side, the verso discloses the 'virtual wickedness' given in the visual representation of architecture.

He explains that representation has a twofold nature, a 'seeing as' (this would be like the construction drawings of Little Nemo's physical bed—plan, section, elevation), and a 'seeing in' (a dreaming process, also constructive, but in a different way).²⁷ Freud's recounting of Pötl's experiment relates to Scarbi's *verso* imagining of the dream house, to the side that reveals 'virtual wickedness'.

The relationship between dreaming and drawing can easily be seen as a part of the design process. When an architect is searching for a particular design solution, the world becomes a display of examples—hidden in plain sight—that suddenly pop out. For example, if the problem is how to resolve the joining of repurposed columns of unequal height to a level lintel, an ordinarily unnoticed condition will become apparent, that the columns must somehow be augmented. Just as the recto mind searches for things, the verso mind may have certain problems uppermost in mind. In Freud's view, things seen by the verso mind will be consciously unremembered, and thereby secreted away for that night's dreaming episode.

²⁶ Marco Frascari, *Marco Frascari's Dream House, A Theory of Imagination*, Edited by Federica Goffi (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2017), 4. The book is based upon the original exhibition, which took place from November 19, 1993 to January 23, 1994. See the book for reproductions of the recto-verso drawings, and Frascari's explanation of how and why he, Chun and Scarbi designed their Dream House as a *numinous* building. In the design brief, Frascari attributes his use of the word '*numinous*' to Rudolf Otto, a German scholar of religion. The root of the word '*numen*' is Latin, connected with the word '*sacer*' (holy) indicating the holy dimension of magic.

²⁷ "The 'seeing-in' (*disegno inferno*) is a cognitive representation that results in physical and metaphysical perceptions under the *lume natural*. In this light (*lume natural*) not only do objects leave impressions on the percipient, but the percipient leaves an impression on the objects as well." Marco Frascari, *Marco Frascari's Dream House, A Theory of Imagination*, 98-99.

The choice of “details which had not been noted by the subject” might also have become ‘dream stuff’ because they were not attentively stored in a logical framework. The insignificant details seem to remain, in a sense, motile, like Paul Klee’s lines. Their motility then, makes them the candidates for dream-work.

All of the above, seen in McCay’s time, rely heavily on a viewpoint where science carried the weight of validity. But, seen in medieval times, or from many other world views, this ‘other’ mind would have been recognized as a kind of divine or suprasensory vision. Whether scientific or beatific, this vision, this act of representation—this making the invisible into something visible—is critical to the making of good architecture. The ‘dream stuff’, the things we don’t notice during the day, the tachistoscopic things, the bolognas that “lose their names” are suddenly everywhere and become the material that enlarges our imagination.

Perhaps every salami or bologna in the dream house can partake in a dream representation (that has another dimension) if you believe in the power of the imagination, a belief that the ominous (or comic) forms made by their shadows on the wall may mean something, and a belief in the memories conjured by their smell, (Proust’s idea), a smell that harkens back to the scent that wafted up through the open stair treads that led down to the cellar of your great aunt’s house.

The power of suggestion

Frasconi, Chun and Scarbi designed a dream house with a model and a series of recto-verso drawings. Each kind of representation suggested things to them during their design process. (The imagination thrives on suggestion.) The model suggested something that would be many times bigger. It suggested a playful logic of construction during the making of it. It suggested how its form would change as you walked toward or around it, or the shadows that it made. The drawings were potentially much more literal in their description via plan and section, and perhaps this is why they were consciously developed as recto-versos. Vague lines peeking through backwards from the ‘other side’ meant seeing a hidden dimension.

Claude Bragdon (1866-1946), a New York architect from Rochester who later became a set designer in New York City considered this question of “how to suggest things” in theater. Just before the stock market crashed in October 1929, he wrote about ‘Artists-in-Theatre’, his term for the combined duties of art director, scenic designer and lighting designer, as the resurrection of an earlier occupation. In the Elizabethan era, the court appointed a ‘Master of Revels’ to design and choreograph pageantry for royal assemblies and plays. Similarly, an Artist-in-Theatre gives—

... a work of dramatic art its physical embodiment; he is responsible for the design of the stage picture, together with the execution of its every detail—scenery, costumes, properties—and for the lighting above all. By a harmonization of these various factors he endeavors to achieve a unity of effect which shall subtly suggest the spirit of the play, and induce a psychic mood favorable to its reception.

The role of Artist-in-Theatre came about in the 1920s with the advent of ‘the new stagecraft’ which was an increased use of three-dimensional scenery rather than painted backdrops. Of earlier scene-painting:

Those were the palmy days of deceptive or dioramical scene painting, in which solid objects were so cleverly simulated on a flat surface, and the translations between three dimensions and two so artfully made that it was sometimes impossible to tell where one ended and the other began. The scene painter of that period prided himself on his mastery of all the tricks of the trade whose prime object was deception of the eye. His arrogant confidence in his ability to achieve just this is amusingly illustrated in an anecdote an actor once told me about an old scene painter of this fast vanishing school. There was a scene which for some reason required the presence of three grand pianos on the stage at once. These were being laboriously brought on and hauled into position when the painter in question said, waving everyone aside with a magnificent gesture, ‘Take ‘em all away! I’ll paint those pianos on the backdrop so that the audience’ll think they’re real!’

Like most set designs today, the new stagecraft practiced by Bragdon created its illusion “by means of synthesis and symbolization” of primary built forms rather than through an illusionistic representation in paint. The eye was encouraged to travel with the actor as he navigated the set, rather than to be drawn into the scenery painted with its illusory vanishing points.²⁸ Bragdon’s description of new stagecraft seems dreamlike. But, what if the way we see and understand things while dreaming is actually more like drawing on layers of paper than it is to constructing “primary built forms?” It is entirely possible that a hundred years after the moment that Cubism

²⁸ Claude Bragdon, *The Artist-in-the-Theatre*, *The American Magazine of Art*, Vol. XX, October, 1929, Number 10, 547.

theoretically altered everyone's way of seeing, we still prefer to see illusions on a sheet of paper or illusions on an illuminated screen.²⁹ Perhaps those are closer to what the dreaming mind 'knows'.

Bragdon wrote about Winsor McCay in Scribner's magazine in 1934, the year that McCay died. By this time, Walt Disney was America's best known cartoonist and McCay's first animated movies were twenty years old. Bragdon looked back to one of the 'fathers of animation':

To Winsor McCay ... best remembered for his "Little Nemo in Slumberland," belongs the credit for having made the first animated picture: In pure line, on a white ground, a plant is seen to grow up and unfold into a flower; a young man turns and plucks it and hands it to a girl. That is all there was of it, but I shall never forget my excitement when I saw it. And no wonder! I was witnessing the birth of a new art.³⁰



Sequence of cells from the animated film Little Nemo, (1911)

²⁹ Henri Bergson, *Dreams*, 1. Henri Bergson's description of the mind when it is just falling asleep is oddly similar to what an architect sees when they are drawing in the computer on an illuminated screen that has a black background: "First, in general, a black background. Upon this black background occasionally brilliant points that come and go, rising and descending, slowly and sedately. More often, spots of many colors, sometimes very dull, sometimes, on the contrary, with certain people, so brilliant that reality cannot compare with it." Architects drawing in the computer draw with brilliant points of light.

In *Dreaming by the Book*, Elaine Scarry also discusses the allure of seeing bright points of light in a darkened field of vision that is like a computer screen: "Imagine nothing, just an empty expanse of black—the dusky emptiness in the midst of which images form but which are being kept away at the moment. Keep them all away. Now introduce a sudden pinprick of light that streaks down from one upper corner to the opposite corner below and disappears." The spot is a glowing point that is not so much aimless as ecstatic. She calls this 'radiant ignition': "Imagine this dark space with sudden flares and lights—bursting, then disappearing, streaming across the field of mental vision or arcing through. Imagine all this against, not black, but slate-gray. Imagine, this time, the same flaring, glistening, bursting, disappearing against a uniform expanse of the softest blue. And now the same lights against a uniform white mist ..." Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 77-78. Scarry could be describing a dream by Henri Bergson, or a person drawing on a computer screen, but is in fact making a lovely diagram of Homer's *Iliad*, through laying bare the text so that the adjectives and verbs that "ignite light in our minds" are what we now see: "Glistening burnished helmets shone, streaming out of the ships ... The glory of armor lit the skies and the whole earth laughed, rippling under the glitter of bronze. And in their midst, the brilliant Achilles began to arm for battle ..." For Scarry, the ignition of our imagination during the story is a kaleidoscope of metaphors for 'light'; but also the very idea that brilliance can 'ignite' other aspects of the story, like the speed of Achilles, known as being a 'fiery', 'brilliant' runner. The story is truly being drawn in the mind, point by brilliant point. McCay's early animations had this illuminated, brilliant quality.

³⁰ Claude Bragdon, "Mickey Mouse and What He Means," Scribner's Magazine (July, 1934): 40.

He goes on to say—

*It seems a pity that McCay, with his skilled technique and delightful fancy, should not have continued in this field which he had made his own. Walt Disney has so far eclipsed him that McCay's animated cartoons are remembered only by old-timers like myself.*³¹

The early movies that simulated dreams used the kind of ‘deceptive’ scenery spoken of in Bragdon’s anecdote about the old scene painter painting pianos “so that the audience’ll think they’re real!” i.e., they used artfully deceptive scenery that was painted using the technique of perspective. McCay’s cartoons and early animations perfectly characterized dreamlike productions that preceded the 1920s. Like the vanishing scene painter, his style of rendering used classic pageantry and motifs from vaudeville, circuses, amusement parks and the White City of Chicago, and his cartoons have the look and feel of the earlier stage sets because he was a clever master of perspective. But, the content itself—the ‘dream stuff’—is shown as the verso of the kind of drawing taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It is very much a presentation of a buildings ‘other’ side. Good design at its heart is a mysterious process. It is like dreaming. Frascari wrote:

*... the ‘dream’ is a hypothetical design of the unknown; thus, it is a substantial tool for acquiring knowledge.*³²

Is the ‘dream stuff’ like an illuminated two-dimensional film that we watch when sleeping, a verso drawing based upon unnoticed impressions missed by our conscious minds? Or, are we navigating a theatrical set when we dream made out of three-dimensional ‘primary forms’ as the Artist-in-Theatre did? Bergson, Proust and McCay all noted the fact that sometimes our body’s position and the sublimated sensations it picks up in bed *match* our body’s position and sensations in the dream. This indicates that it is the latter, or at least our minds fool us into thinking it is so. In the latter scenario, we travel with the actor (ourselves) as we navigate what feels like a ‘real’ set. (Picture a dog sleeping with their faint bark and their leg muscles twitching.) But, perhaps when dreaming a building the way that Winsor McCay did, his representations—enigmatic two-dimensional cartoons on a newsprint page or the multiple pages that flipped into illuminated animations—so closely imitate the dreaming mind that perhaps dreaming essentially *is* a drawing

³¹ Bragdon tells the story of how the things living on Walt Disney’s desk entered into his cartoon animations: “In 1920, when he was employed in a commercial art studio in the Middle West, he used sometimes to work late at night. Toward midnight he often heard scratching against the metal wires of the waste-baskets which held the discarded lunch boxes of the staff. The mice were after their evening meal. From being merely interested Disney became fascinated with the little creatures. He tamed a number of them and soon had them living together in a cage. One became so friendly that he allowed it on his desk while he worked. So though the actual idea of the Mickey Mouse saga came to him only afterward, while he was traveling on a train between New York and Hollywood, its germ had already been planted in his mind.” Bragdon, “Mickey Mouse and What He Means,” 41.

³² Marco Frascari, *eleven exercises in the art of architectural drawing: slow food for the architect’s imagination* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 152.

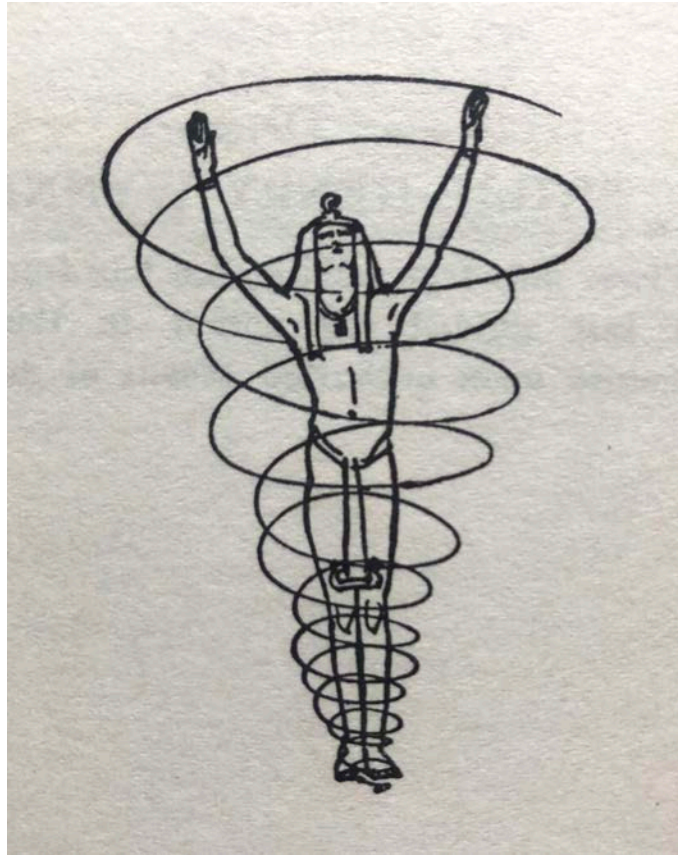
on a sheet of translucent paper, or a series of drawings on translucent paper whirring in front of a beam of light. When viewed, it wakes us up to the invisible manifestation of the building that is being imagined.

Is McCay's imagination of theatrical spaces with characters and a story a valid theory of the architectural imagination? Drawings about the origins of architecture often had this characteristic in the past. Here is Marc-Antoine Laugier's (1713-1769) frontispiece for *An Essay on Architecture*.



It tells the story of the text to come.

Here is another frontispiece by Claude Brangdon for his exposition on architecture called *A Primer of Higher Space (The Fourth Dimension)* written in 1913:



Brangdon's very first sentence in the essay betrays the same kind of excitement we saw in McCay's animation two years before:

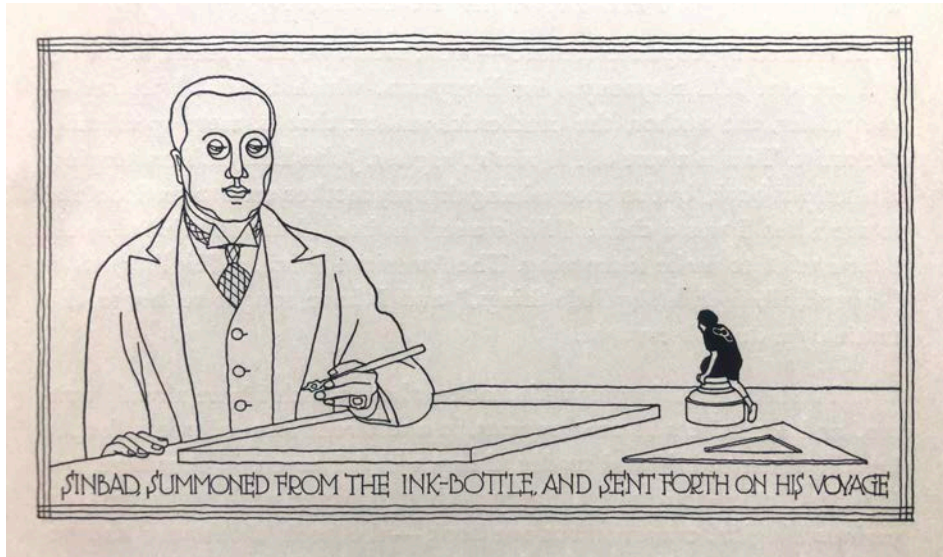
Adventure with me down a precipice of thought, sustained only by the rope of an analogy, slender but strong. This rope, anchored in the firm ground of sensuous perception, extends three paces in the direction of the great abyss, then vanishes at the giddy brink. Let us examine this straining simile foot by foot and strand by strand.

(This echoes McCay's lines in his first animation *Little Nemo* (1911) that disappear by shrinking away or exploding.) Aside from illustrating ideas about representation, McCay's drawings cannot easily be transformed directly into a diagram, or a plan, or an elevation. But, they *do* supply a storytelling element for some of the forces at work in the making of architectural drawings. McCay's drawings are their own kind of treatise, albeit published as an animated cartoon or in the Sunday finnies, about a theory of imagining. They act as a kind of frontispiece for a treatise on imagining architecture, a guide showing us to how to enter into the story. (But his frontispiece was so excited about the story, that the rest of the text became unnecessary!)

McCay inspired other cartoonists to reflect (and entertain) by making drawings about the process of making cartoons. Max Fleischer (1883-1972), another newspaperman turned cartoonist, drew a whole series of wild drawing adventures that starred the Inkwell Clown in 1919. The character was inspired by his brother Dave, who had worked as a sideshow clown at Coney Island.



Claude Brandon also got into the spirit of characters emerging from an inkwell on another treatise about representation published in 1924, *The Frozen Fountain*.



He writes in the introduction:

To my fictional protagonist I have given the name of Sinbad, not alone for the reason that this Arabian voyager had many strange adventures in strange lands, and might have unchronicled others, but the name itself seemed appropriate because—well, aren't we all? I mean of course bad sinners. It is a synonym for Everyman, which is what I wanted—the reader, the author, the candlestick maker: that is more specifically, the artist.³³

This echoes Nemo's name which means 'no one' in Latin. Bragdon goes on to explain his reason for introducing a character into his illustrations for the book:

This is a sort of Pilgrim's Progress. John Bunyan's masterpiece is a serious book, but so entertaining that my mother used to read it aloud to me when I was a child. This is a serious book, but with Sinbad's help I have tried to make it amusing. The American Spirit, as Kipling says, is "stirred, like a child, by little things," ...³⁴

Many possibilities arise out of a childlike view, not least about the unlimited realities seen in animated cartoons, ideas about the fourth dimension, and about the dimensions of time in space.³⁵

The ink has a life of its own.

³³ Claude Bragdon, *The Frozen Fountain: Being Essays on Architecture and the Art of Design in Space* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1932), 1-2; The book was originally published in 1924.

³⁴ Bragdon, *The Frozen Fountain*, 1-2.

³⁵ Bragdon, 1. Bragdon and Fleischer's resonance with McCay are topics worthy of their own investigation.

9

Leaps of cognition—
the rhetoric of drawing dreams

Digital models as ‘dream’ representations

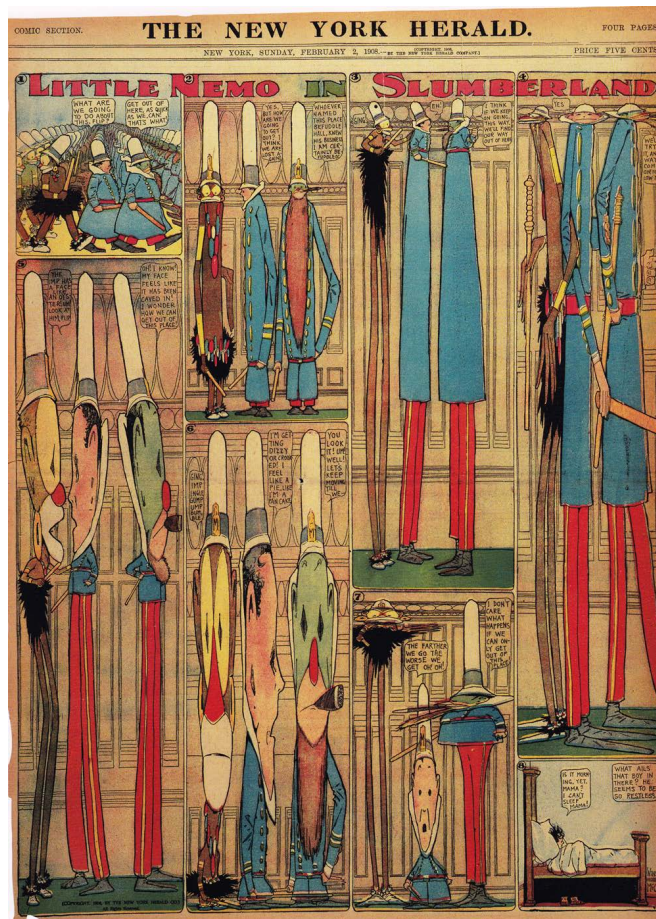
When Nemo, Flip and the Jungle Imp are playing around as Keystone Kops, they come upon a place called Befuddle Hall. Behind the curtain telling them to “Keep Out” is a set of stairs that go dramatically up, and then a set of stairs that go unfathomably down. In the next two cells they themselves shrink to the size of mice and then grow into giants.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday*, January 19, 1908

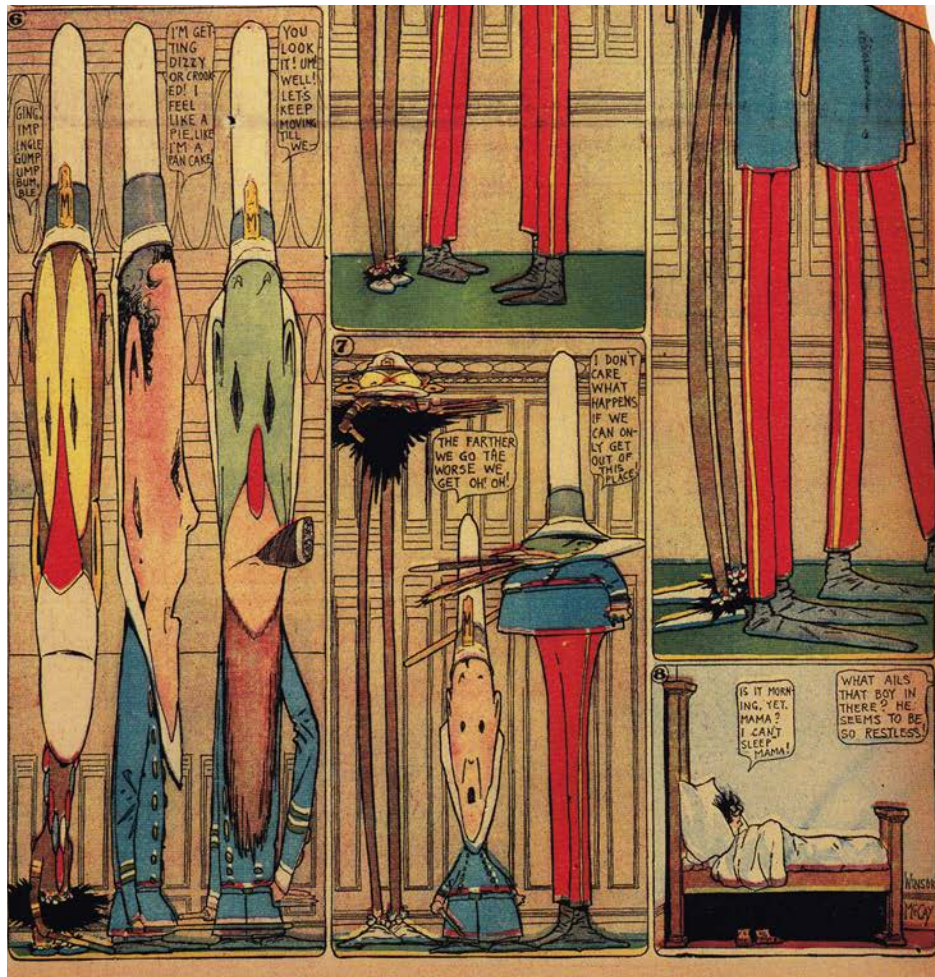
Dreams are imagined constructions. They represent a possibility for something that is being built: our conscious life.¹ Likewise, representations—‘dreams’—made by an architect are imagined constructions which represent possibilities for a building that is being imagined. The fabrication of those stories depends upon the tools we use to build them. Zooming forward a hundred years, McCay’s drawings can inspire a digital model of a building to ‘tell’ its hypothetical story in five ways:

- 1) Plasticity - It has the ability to easily shrink and grow.
- 2) Orientation - It has the ability to flip sideways, upside down, inside or outside.
- 3) Concatenation - It has the ability to easily join things: pieces and parts, or sequential views.
- 4) Improvisation - It has the ability to realize an accidental possibility.
- 5) Characterization - Recognizable images (reconstituted memories) can be easily added.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday, February 2, 1908*

¹ Patricia Cox Miller. *Dreams in Late Antiquity, Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 59. On the technology of the self: “In the context of fabrication, sending, and interpretation of dreams, the angels, like the dreamers, formed part of what Michel Foucault has called a ‘technology’ of the self, a hermeneutics of self-knowledge that enabled the dreamer to express a sense of ‘an upward expansion of the individual’ ...”



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, February 2, 1908

Plasticity

Nemo's experience of Befuddle Hall (there were eight Sundays of them) was: up and down, expansion and contraction, and a tendency toward plasticity. When Nemo's dreams were drawn, it seemed to come from the desire of McCay's hand as it held the pen. Today's hand holds a computer mouse, but in either case, it is a swoop of the wrist that makes a mark on the surface in front of you.² When building forms appear in a digital model it is fun to exaggerate and finalize their size, playing with their dimensions like stretching a rubber band.³ The proper length is decided intuitively, the way a good story is told.

² The movement of one's arm when wielding a mouse is not unlike the stilted movements of a dreamer's limbs when they are in the midst of a nightmare.

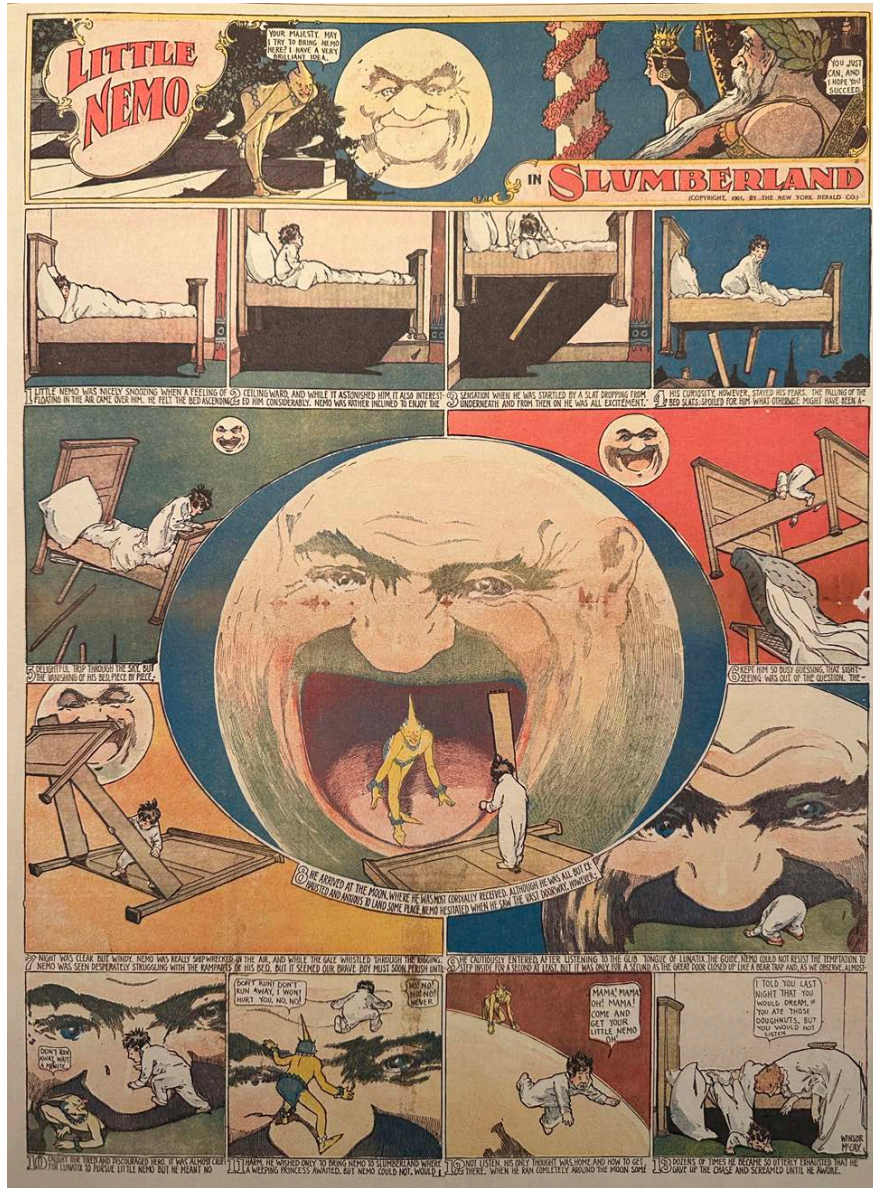
³ The descriptions in this chapter of drawing digital models are derived from my experience using the software "Sketch-up."



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday, March 1, 1908*

Orientation

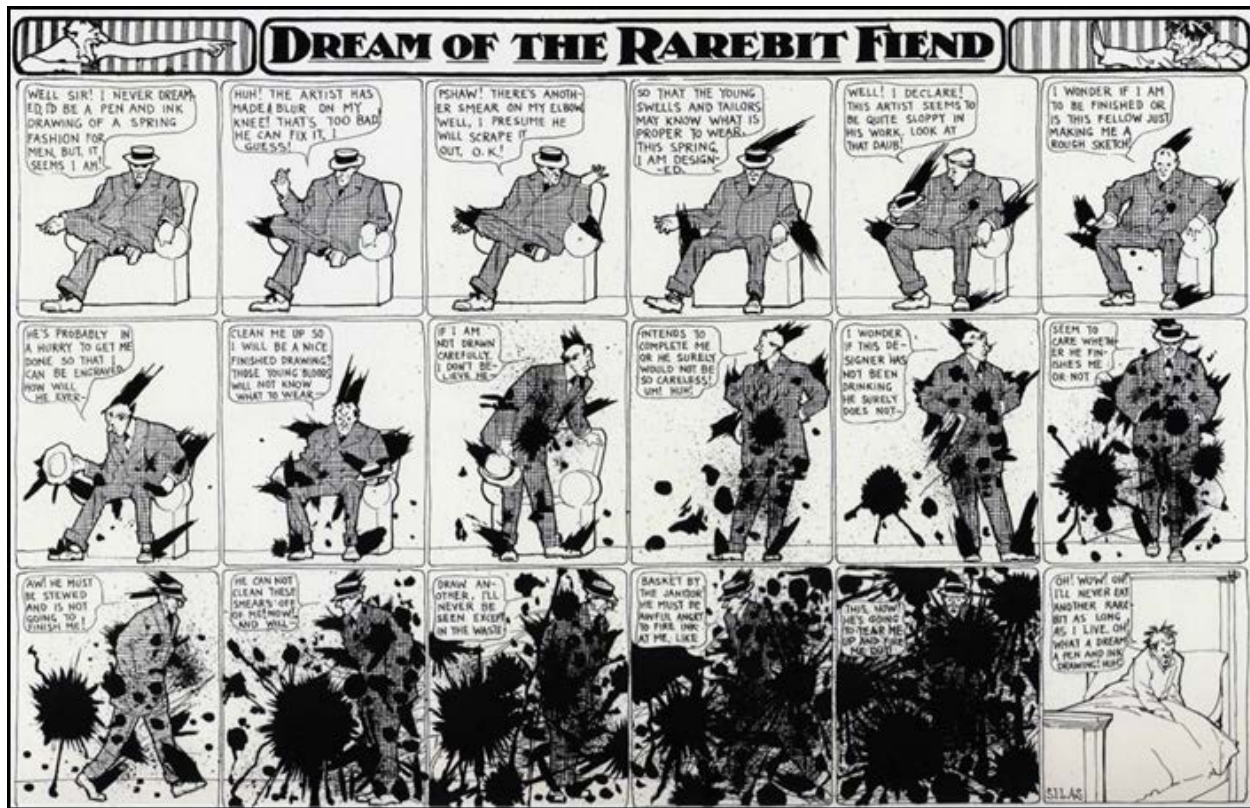
Nemo also experiences Befuddle Hall as if the camera angle has been rotated to disorient the person viewing the image. Consequently, it is upside down or sideways causing you to lose your balance and fall. Nemo's dreams are shown on the page as storyboards with multiple 'camera' angles. He zooms in, zooms out, pans left and right, looks from above or below, and rotates. All of this is possible when you survey a physical model and photograph it, but digital models allow you to truly 'live' inside the them.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday, December 3, 1905*

Concatenation

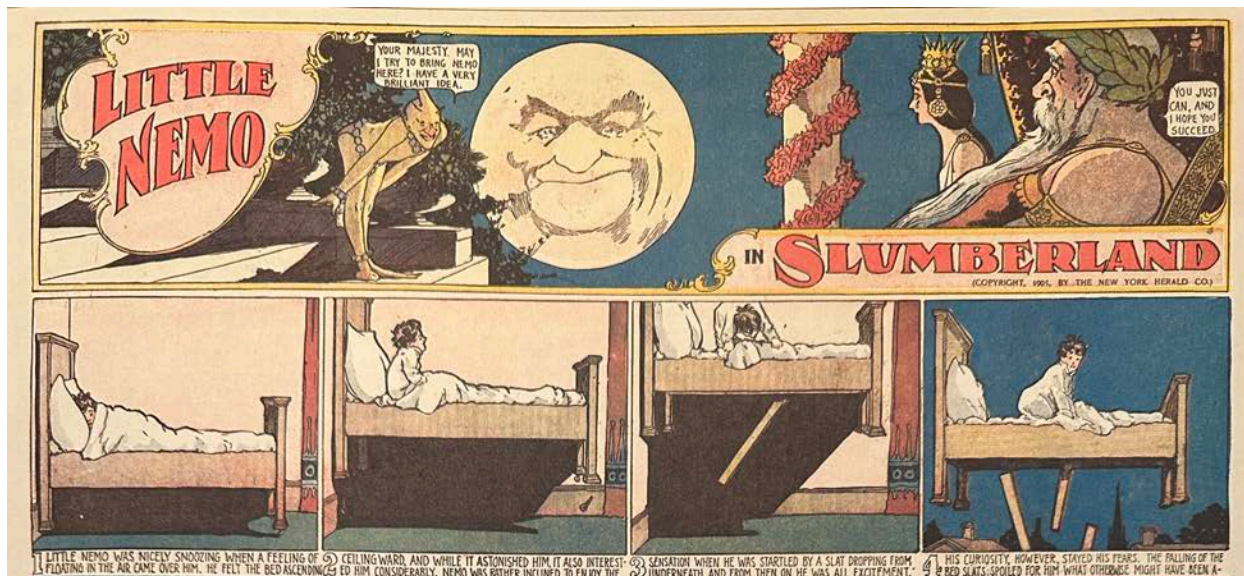
Nemo's bed takes off so that he can visit the moon. You see all of the views in series, cinematographically, as if you were also flying. The 'bed' can fall apart or be assembled. It generates shadows as it moves. A digital model can simulate shadow from every moment in the year, from anywhere in the world, and you can make shadows move in fast or slow motion over the topography of the room's landscape. This drawing is also a kind of Beaux-Arts Analytique, showing the moon's nose from far away, and then close-up, all at once. We can imagine not just the assembly of the bed (as it falls apart), but also the composition of the moments in time (views of the building) on one page.



Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, New York Evening Telegram, April 1909

Improvisation

Nemo (and the Rarebit Fiend) sometimes entered a dream world that seemed to have been generated by an accident of the pen: an ink blot or a stray line that changed the story. The process of drawing was inspired at the dreamer's desk: pencil lines got smudged, or a hot cigarette ash fell on the sheet of paper and burned in a mark. Digital models are also prone to accidents. Things get exaggerated and become ludicrous before they find their proper size, but sometimes they grow into something unexpectedly wonderful and change altogether. The seaming together of scenes that are set as vectors sometimes cause the models to whirl in an unexpected direction, much like Dorothy's house before she landed in Oz. The scenes may also cause the viewer to unexpectedly burst through walls. Although a designer may 'fix' these things for a presentation, they are always a delight to see, and may in the end generate a new location for a doorway or a new way to enter a room. Adding textures and images to walls is also somewhat unpredictable. They may magnetically adhere to a surface at the wrong scale, or unexpectedly repeat themselves. They behave erratically when adhered to curves. All of these things are, of course, correctable. As you make the adjustments though, new ideas come to mind.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, December 3, 1905

Lunatix, a guide with a glib tongue, asks King Morpheus if he can bring Nemo to Slumberland. Shortly thereafter, Nemo is “nicely snoozing when a feeling of floating in the air comes over him.”

Characterization

The early episodes of *Slumberland* frequently show messengers appearing to Nemo when he has just fallen asleep. Clowns, imps, fairies—or this case ‘Lunatix’ (above)—come to Nemo and guide him to King Morpheus.⁴ In Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, Morpheus is portrayed as the son of Sleep:

*... mildest of the gods, most gentle Sleep, Rest of all things, the spirit’s comforter, Router of care
... soother and restorer ...*⁵

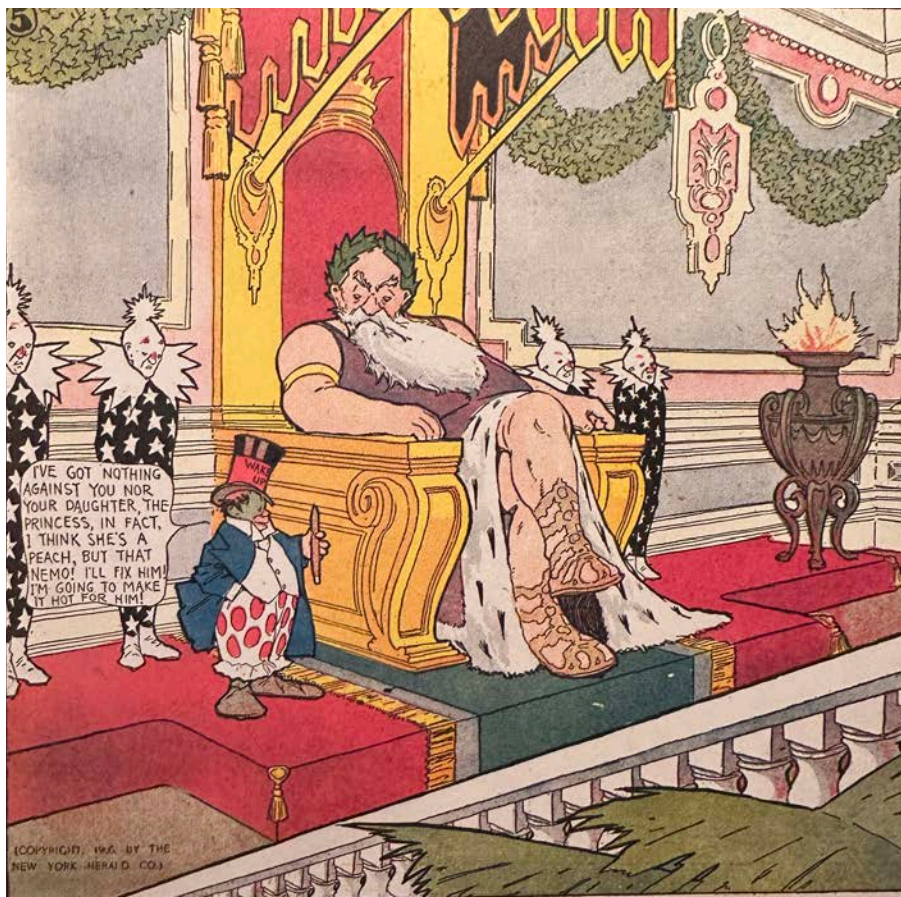
Morpheus is the consummate actor, the best of Sleep’s sons at pretending to be human. He is supremely convincing at imitating:

*... their garb, their gait, their, speech, rhythm, and gesture.*⁶

⁴ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 59. McCay seems to remain faithful to Graeco-Roman ideas about the imaginal figures who exist outside oneself, and help stage self-dramatizations. Miller: “In the Greek magical papyri, oneiric angels ‘extended the individual upward’ by functioning as ‘detectives of the heart’s secrets’ ” The moon-goddess Selene sends angels, and psychic terrain is also explored via lunar daemons.

⁵ Miller, 6.

⁶ Ibid, 6.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, October 21, 1906

He is asked by Sleep to fly to the woman Alcyone's bed and pretend to be her dead husband. The woman does not know whether her husband has died and has been in a prolonged state of unresolved mourning. Here is Ovid's description of Morpheus:

*His beard was wet, and water streamed from his sodden hair, and tears ran down as he bent over her: 'O wretched wife, do you not recognize your husband? Have I changed too much in death? Look at me! ... I am dead Alcyone.'*⁷

And it works. Even though the dream is not 'real', and the ghost of her husband is gone when she wakes up, she knows that it is 'true'. He has gone on to the next world. McCay's drawings depict a search for Morpheus (an actor). He endlessly engaged in picturing the act of transformation.

Digital models of architecture frequently have scale figures inserted into them to help bridge the gap from model to reality. How much more interesting it would be for those scale figures to shed

⁷ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 6.

their anonymity, and instead become message-bearing figures ... Hermes, say, or Ariadne. Why not populate our models with characters that make them more interesting?

The most accessible representations tell stories. The design office should be a place to fabricate stories with dream logic as a way to open up the field of possibility. Picasso included recognizable elements in his paintings, and so did Paul Klee. The recognizable—storytelling—element made their paintings more readable for the spectator that was not clued into the *milieu* of modern art and architecture; it imbued the work with possible ‘meanings’. Had the paintings been completely abstract, they may not have had any meaning at all, except to a select few.

* * *

McCay’s representations of dreams, thought of as the ‘flip’ side of life, the *verso* side that, as Frascari noted, discloses ‘virtual wickedness’⁸, is not a substitute for the models made out of actual material *stuff*. An enlightened design office is full of material samples: beautiful pieces of stone, wood, glass, metals, and textiles that call out to the architect, “Make me into something!” Ideally there should be a shop where actual models are being constructed and marveled about, in addition to full scale mock-ups on site, and rapt attention to the building during all of its phases of actual construction. The element of cartooning may again enter into the cycle of documents that share the reality of the building if interesting accidents occur during construction (as they inevitably do). Not the lethal ones of course, but the strange occurrences that suggest an interesting dimension of the building not previously suspected.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday*, May 23, 1909

A model of Slumberland is brought in for Nemo and the princess to see.

⁸ Marco Frascari, *Marco Frascari's Dream House: A Theory of Imagination*, 98-99.

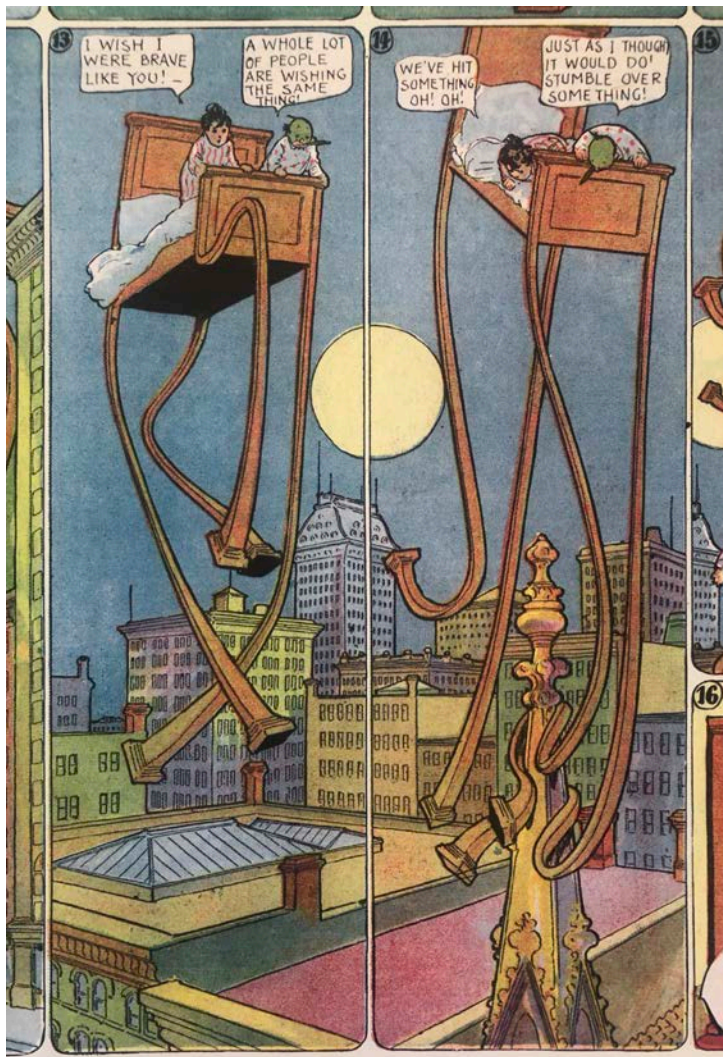


Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, May 23, 1909

...but it is actually Slumberland itself that gets assembled by giants before Nemo's and the princess's eyes. Nemo is eager to enter.

The interpretation of dreams (and architectural representation)

Many stories can come about from a single representation, just as an image in a dream can be seen to have multiple meanings.⁹ Constructing a representation—a model or drawing—as something with infinite potential is often not easy in the design office if we are searching for the ‘right’ solution. But, designers mustn’t confine themselves to a binary framework that is right or wrong, logical or illogical. Many possibilities are more fruitful than a single ‘right’ one and the final built design can exhibit as many possibilities as the preliminary sketches, if the designer is careful patient enough to wait for things to cohere. It is a beautiful moment in the design of a project when everything suddenly becomes simple, and yet also has richness.



In digital models, a vocabulary of elements can be built that lend themselves to multiple meanings. As architects, it is advantageous to make highly adaptable elements for practical reasons. The intelligent designer already does this when thinking in terms of building tolerances. Renovations are modifications of existing spaces. Buildings are not perfectly straight or true and the spacing between columns is generally imperfect. But, making a vocabulary of highly adaptable elements is not just practical, it also becomes a kind of apparatus for meaning. Within digital models can be built in a language of ‘components’ that are defined with ‘attributes’ that adapt to particular circumstances. These component parts are more suitable to the building process. Windows can be designed to elongate or shrink to fit. The same is true for

⁹ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 74. Dreams can frustrate anyone expecting a clear interpretation because of the “image’s impulse to multiple significance.” St. Augustine expected texts to have multiple meanings, and so he “reveled in the convergence of infinite relationships that oneiric images set in motion.”

doors and walls. Stretching and shrinking is inherent to the language of dreams, and also useful when putting together materials with tolerance. Different stories come about when the size of the components is adjusted, especially when they are very tall or short, wide or skinny.

The precision of ambiguity

Another aspect of the architectural ‘dreaming’ process that plays out when drawing with digital tools is the need for precision. This seems antithetical to the software program’s encouragement to exaggerate (or diminish) the various facets of a form intuitively. However, once dimensions are pondered and decided upon, the parts of the components that ultimately link together must be precise or the model will quickly become a nightmare. When architecturally ‘dreaming’, fluid thinking must be joined together with exactitude. How interesting if the same is true of the dreaming mind! (That part was not discussed by Bergson or Freud.)

Emily Dickenson wrote:

*It is true that the unknown is the largest need of the intellect, though for it, no one thinks to thank God.*¹⁰

Do we dream because of a need to discover the unknown? Why are we drawn to things that are elusive and mysterious? Does the unknown have precise dimensions? In an earlier chapter, *Foolish dreaming*, we heard Lawrence Raab discuss the ‘unknown’ as a poet’s love of ambiguity, (Paul Valery’s ‘*bétise*’ poet). Raab continued this thought through an appreciation of a poem by Thomas Hardy, *The Shadow on the Stone*. Ambiguity is raised to:

... [the] highest, most authentic imaginative level.

Hardy speaks of the moving shadows of leaves on a nearby tree which allow a gentle play of light on his wife’s headstone to evoke a sense of her presence behind him. He wants to look to see if she is actually there, or not there, but he resists:

*Yet I wanted to look and see
That nobody stood at the back of me;
But I thought once more: ‘Nay, I’ll not unvision ...’*

¹⁰ Raab, Lawrence. *Why Don’t We Say What we Mean? Essays Mostly About Poetry*. (Tupelo Press: North Adams, Massachusetts, 2016), 3-10. From the introductory chapter on “Not Knowing.”

Raab cites John Berger’s definition of authenticity in literature as coming from a writer’s single faithfulness to the ambiguity of life’s experiences. ‘Authenticity’ comes from a resistance to clarity, and the embrace of ambiguity.

Nay, do not unvision

McCay’s cartoons live in this liminal territory. He draws images that are multivalent, and like a poet, he makes images that transcend the everyday. Though he draws specific events, he keeps things mysterious. Raab believes that the characterization of ambiguity requires precision, and when we find ambiguity held within a poem, that is the guarantor of its authenticity. Continuing with the analogy of the dreamer being like a poet: the dreaming mind then, although usually linked with a sense of unreality and a lack of logic, necessarily has a certain rigor.

Good poets play with words and phrases that compel them because they are mysterious. It is not so much turning facts into something that sounds poetic, as letting particular facts surprise you in the process of finding the right words. In dreaming too, perhaps this element of surprise is key. The surprised poet is the authentic poet; the surprised designer too.

Raab cautions us not to confuse authenticity with ‘truth’. This is important to the dreamer/poet metaphor, because we always wonder if what we dream is ‘true’. Raab finds the answer to the truth dilemma again in the precision of the good poet. A good poet can have multiple personas.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, January 14, 1906

Raab uses Fernando Pessoa as his example, a poet who was known for inventing imaginary writers who all wrote in different styles. This requires a mind capable of assuming different identities, and being able to distinguish them. We generally think of just two identities. Our subconscious mind is ‘the other’, and our conscious self is ‘the one’. But what if there are more?

Raab describes this as the poet’s “struggle with the facts” wherein the distance between real life and the poem creates a space, a “staged reenactment” that creates a possible scenario.

Could the pieces and parts of a building be designed like a rabbinic anecdote where twenty-four dream interpreters in Jerusalem had twenty-four different interpretations and “all were fulfilled?”¹¹ A single dream produced twenty-four texts. What would be the advantage of such prevarication?

Useful bodies of knowledge

McCay sent Nemo to a twilight palace set in Greek antiquity. He sought King Morpheus, so named presumably because of his ability to transform the dreamer through all of the visions one encountered in his kingdom of slumber.¹² It is worth looking at some of the pages in Patricia Cox Miller’s *Dreams in Late Antiquity* to find what was traditionally thought about all of the possible relationships set into motion by a single dream:

*... the interpreters of dreams, whether classifiers or allegorists, directed their attention less to theories of the source of dreams than to schemes for translating dream images into useful bodies of knowledge.*¹³

How do we interpret what we see? Or a better way to think of it would be: how do we imagine what we see? Miller clarifies:

*... both Augustine and Macrobius placed the riddling of dreams in the arena of the soul’s imagination rather than in the province of the intellect’s ratiocination.*¹⁴

In order to really understand things, it is necessary to contemplate and identify mysteries rather than deducing logical conclusions. Dreams can be seen as philosophical expressions that according to Macrobius:

¹¹ Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 74.

¹² Miller, 4. Miller refers to Macrobius’s commentary on Scipio’s Dream: “Macrobius thought that a vision of the entire cosmos lay encoded in a dream: monotheist and polytheist, martyr and philosopher alike subscribed to the figurative world of dreams.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 94. Miller: “Also, both took the allegorical language of sacred texts to be pertinent to the soul’s semiotic consciousness which, in contrast to the mind’s ability to receive direct flashes of awareness, needs such an allusive language of indirection in order to investigate the meaning of things.”

... *respect the secrets of nature by veiling them as images.*

Dreams are occasions for an understanding made through opening fields of possibility rather than by confining them.

The mind likes to hover

Our dreams have a vast store of memories from which they can choose to tell an enigmatic story with multiple meanings. St. Augustine discussed his own memory in *Confessions, Book X*:

*Great is the force of memory, O Lord, I know not what, to be amazed at, profound, and of infinite multiplicity. And yet it is my mind: it is myself.*¹⁵

He goes on to describe the various categories of things in his memory: things known through images, things known directly, basic skills and know-how, or—

... *by means of I know not what notions or notations [per nescio quad notions nel notationes] as are emotions; for the memory retains them even while the mind does not experience them, although whatever is in the memory must also be in the mind.*

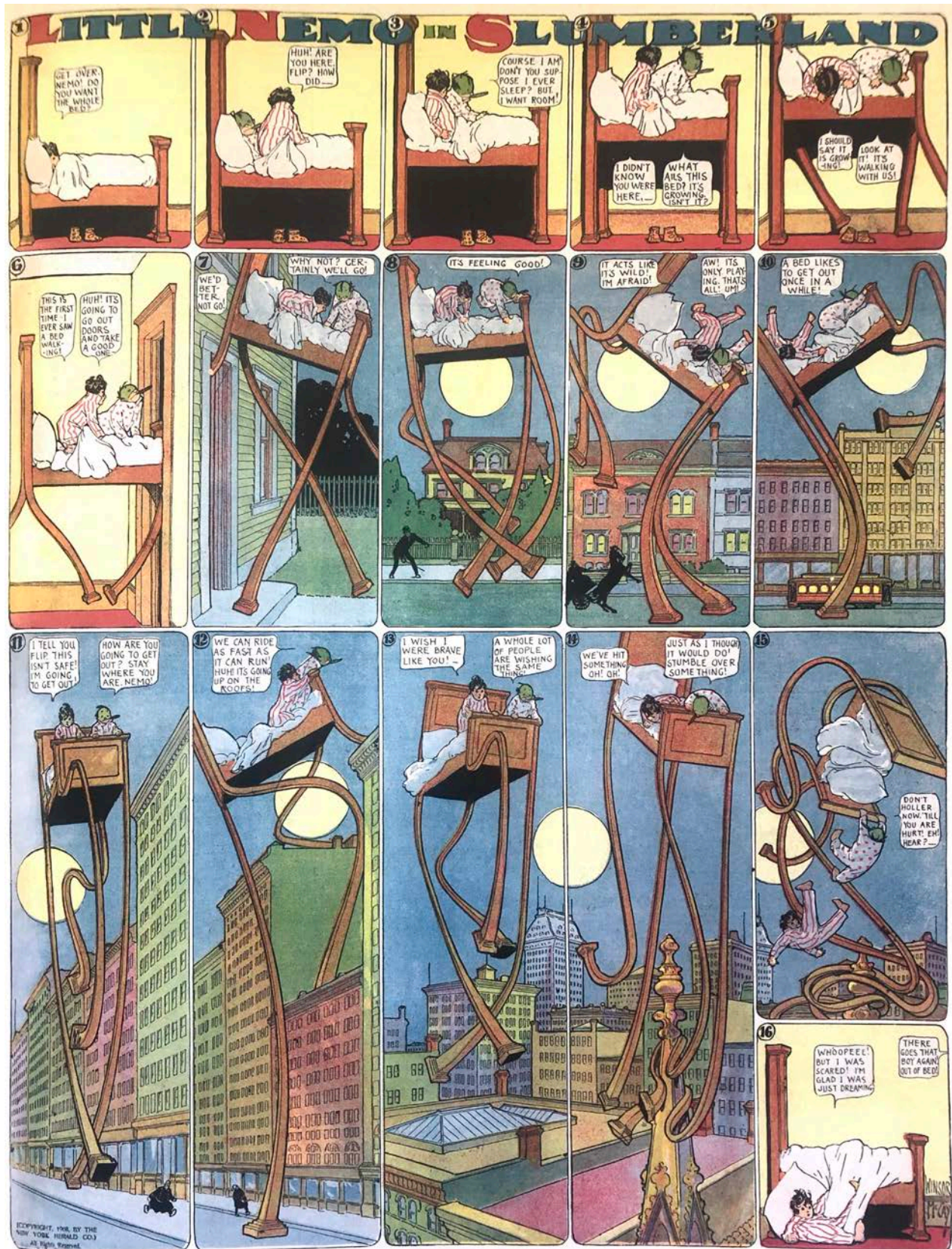
In *The Craft of Thought*, Mary Carruthers describes Augustine as a greater rhetorician than philosopher due to his classical training.¹⁶ It is evident in his choice of the phrase ‘notions and notations’, two words that are homophonic but mean different things. According to Carruthers, the linkage of these two words does not clarify his meaning, but blurs it. The mind must hover between a ‘notion’—an idea—and a ‘notation’—a descriptive mark—to understand the role of emotion in making memories. This is a method used by classical rhetoricians, who are:

... *in their composing more tolerant of the polyvalence of words, the energetic leaps of cogitation.*¹⁷

¹⁵ Mary Carruthers. *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31.

¹⁶ Carruthers. *The Craft of Thought*, 32. Carruthers thoughts about Augustine as a rhetorician (more than philosopher): “... perhaps that is why he so often contradicted himself, and why his definitional vagueness, as in the phrase ‘nescio quad notions nel notationes’ in the passage just quoted, is so characteristic.” And again: “Perhaps in Augustine’s mind the conceptual fuzziness produced by the homophony served to correct, but without canceling, a distinction that is more often apparent in abstract argument than in cognitive practice. He does freely say (and this is also characteristic of him) that he doesn’t quite know what he’s describing.”

¹⁷ Carruthers, 32.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, July 26, 1908

This blurring of meaning enables readers to hover and find their own meaning. Consequently, the writing makes a deeper impression.

McCay inadvertently illustrated Augustine’s “I know not what notions and notations—as emotions” in the famous Sunday cartoon where his bed posts grow into legs that walk out of his bedroom and into the night. The moon is there in the sky as the story unfolds but, as the fantastical—now unweildy—legs suddenly trip upon a church steeple (with religious—emotional—overtones), the moon goddess *hovers* between the two cells.

Care for inexpressible things

Carruthers attributes Augustine’s tentative approach toward definition to his classical rhetorical training, that is, he combs the “vast cloisters of his memory” using techniques that activate the memories into a kind of thinking machine.¹⁸ He is enabling certain reverberations to happen, reverberations that can take place in a carefully ordered mind. But, he admits that the mind contains certain abstract concepts that are not derived from memories of sense-impressions or memorized texts, and so some historians consider him to be a Neoplatonist.¹⁹ If so, his reasons for avoiding clarity may be more than just his rhetorical habits. Plato had an idea about certain things not being expressed in text, that they must be passed on in a direct way from master to apprentice, for a written text might be too easily misconstrued. This direct form of communication can also happen when viewing a non-verbal representation. The viewer can make a direct translation from a drawing, or painting, or model. The object speaks directly. Ludwig Wittgenstein also had an idea that some things should not be expressed in words, that words would in a way kill the unspoken thing. So, there is something to be said for this idea of ‘seeing’ in a dream, that the dreaming eye understands the inexpressible. Inexpressible things abound in McCay’s drawings, which could also be said of an architect who knows how to dream. Words can never express ideas that peer out from a drawing or model.

Many stories come about from renderings that are sketchy. They are ‘sketchy’—or—difficult to exactly make out.²⁰ For Augustine, ambiguity enabled the soul to “wander through various images” as if the searching mind (or the imaginative mind) is made more susceptible to inspiration. McCay was a fantastic renderer. He could draw anything—beds morphing into creatures that walked through cities—anything imaginable—everything, and in glorious detail.

¹⁸ Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 29.

¹⁹ Carruthers, 32. Carruthers concedes this, but seems skeptical.

²⁰ Miller. *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 92. Dream images are like the images of biblical text, which conceal meaning like ‘shadows’.

But, he was also interested in the concept of ‘sketchiness’. How did his drawings emerge on the page? You can see it in his first animation, *Little Nemo* (1911) which he made to be a part of his vaudeville act.



Initially, Flip is drawn by McCay’s hand, emerging from the tip of his pen. This part is filmed in black and white, which was the technology of the day.



Then, it becomes colorful. Things fall into the frame, indiscriminate pieces that come together and become Impie.



Impie and Flip dance around together to the live music that was provided for McCay and his film during the ‘act’. Each frame was hand colored, so the color shimmies and shakes with the musical score as well. A dash appears between them. Then another and another. The fluttering cloud of short little lines seems to be a part of the energy between them as they dance. The random fluttering of the little lines gradually becomes more ordered. They swirl in response to some larger force and behave more like iron shavings do when a magnet is introduced in their vicinity.



Then the lines are magnetically drawn together to form the shape of Little Nemo.



Having appeared, Nemo takes control. He waves his arms up and down which causes his companions to grow and shrink as if they were distorted by a fun-house mirror. (McCay seems to be using his *Herald* cartoon as a storyboard for his movie.)



As Nemo and Impie shrink down to nothing and suddenly disappear from the drawing, *another* mysterious line appears in the lower left hand corner.



This single line has the presence of an animate being with a life of its own. Nemo fixes his gaze on the thing as it floats up and moves around him. He reaches for it with his hand.



He catches it, and the ‘line’ turns into a pen, *his* pen. Oriented toward the ‘paper’, he begins to draw.



As he finishes the drawing, a dot appears on the paper to his left and then grows up into a flower that blooms. Meanwhile, his drawing of the princess comes alive.



Nemo picks the flower. As the stalk of the flower shrinks away, a crowd of dots flow up from the bottom of the page. As he extends the flower to the princess, the strange dots float up into her gown to decorate it. They become polka-dots.²¹

Again: McCay’s hand begins drawing a character, presumably his animus, Flip. The hand darts back and forth between the paper and a bottle of ink that is offscreen. When Flip is suddenly free of McCay’s pen and hand, he exists in his own world. The drawing has its own ‘life’. Forms float down from the top, dots float up from the bottom, and joy inspires a floating series of lines that appear in the middle to congeal as Nemo, who is magical, and has the power to draw things on his own. In this short animation, McCay seems to be implying that his drawings were in a sense,

²¹ The cartoon made for vaudeville was expanded into a short movie that includes interesting shots of McCay with his artist friends. The movie is available on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8qow7jTyoM>

drawing themselves... with errant dashes and dots that came together on the sheet of paper in front of him.

McCay's first animation is a thrilling argument for architects still 'thinking' through drawings made with pencils and pens. To date, drawings made in the computer cannot surpass the evocative power of sketches made by hand, in their composing, more tolerant of ambiguity, more capable of taking energetic leaps of cogitation.²²

A word about pieces and parts

Dreams are *parts* that are *articulated* and given a new context. They are then *joined together* to yield multiple meanings. An architect's design process is just the same: an oneiric imagination of articulated parts that are set into new contexts, and then joined together to give meanings ... the kind of meanings not describable using words.

The oneiric imagination of architecture can enable a sort of wisdom if the articulation is mindful of the true nature of the structure. It is easy to go astray while drawing in the computer and get lost in extruding or repeating, focusing on making alluring forms as a kind of enchantment. But the forms being talked about in this dissertation have more to do with the imaginative articulation and joining of parts. The real joy of the mind's eye is not just a well-proportioned, beautiful form, but in seeing how the parts are put together, through the celebration of joints.

McCay's skill at simulating dreams on the page, more than any of the other seductive things he did with the pen and brush, may have had most to do with how he joined the parts together, how he composed the parts. A closer look at composition is in the final chapter on Befuddle Hall.

Meaning

Some people understand Architecture as a kind of text with meaning. After reading Robert Venturi's *Learning from Las Vegas*, Karsten Harries broached the idea that modern architecture lost its ability to imbue architecture with meaning because it rejected ornament and instead became concerned with appreciating the 'aesthetic' of form. Appreciating only the aesthetic of a space is to be devoid of style. Lacking a 'style' that manifests the humanity of a particular time is to lose an understanding of how things fit together to give each person a role, and of understanding a

²² Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 32. I am paraphrasing Carruthers's tribute to Saint Augustine.

way of fitting into the whole.²³ Seen from a modern architect's point of view (versus from Venturi's, who was a post-modernist), modern architecture is not so much the rejection of ornament, as the rejection of falsely decorating—or even hiding—the joining of materials. 'Decoration' should be as a soldier is decorated for exemplary service. It is an ennoblement. (It is not the decorations seen peeking out of an Interiors magazine.) The problem is: Architecture is in danger of becoming just the phenomenon of writing a story, in a graphic way, onto a place, with objects interspersed. But this does not feel like oneiric Architecture.

In visiting the sequence of rooms in a building, we are told a 'story', are able to construct a narrative through the careful placing of significant materials into a fabric. How does this presuppose an Architecture of the future? 'Decoration' in its noble sense, via the significant arrangement and joining of materials in a context that holds many meanings, is a possibility.

Looking at the syntax and grammar of a classical building we come to understand 'language' as a completely different thing than telling a particular story with a moral (think Ruskin), than of an underlying desire for overall unity and structure within a whole. It is the making of a whole.²⁴ Karston Harries again:

*The Orders were conceived by Renaissance masters as bodies of mutually dependent constraints; obeying one of these constraints, an architect is forced by inner logic to obey them all...*²⁵

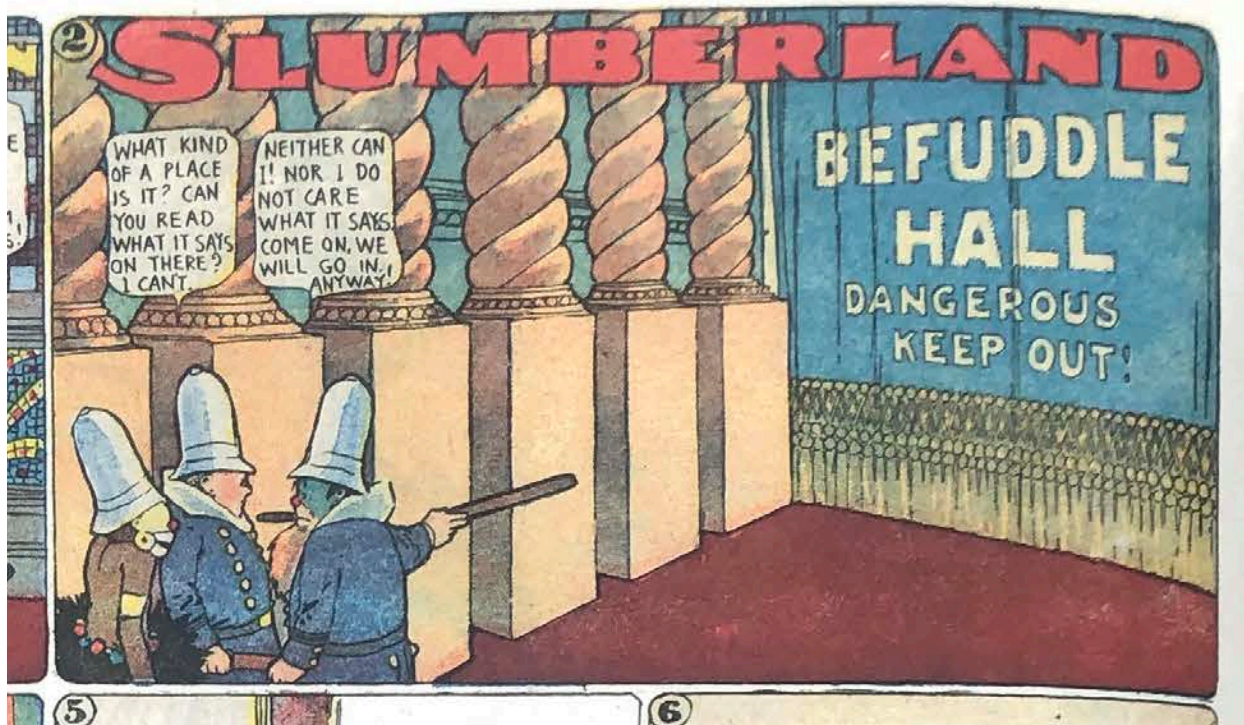
Therein lies the unspoken imperative that governs the pen (or virtual pen) of every designer as they go about imagining all of the parts and pieces of what will become rooms in a building. *That* is the story, you the 'reader' of a modern building might say. Is it fathomable to overlay onto this already demanding and rigorous assemblage yet another meaning, another possible meaning? Yes. This is our art: to enable multiple meanings. There are constraints, but there is also freedom. A vision cannot emerge unless it is guided by logic, but even more, unless it defines a logic of its own. Logic is a boundary that is meant to be transcended. It is not a justification.

Wonderful buildings must follow the course of gravity—as a river always flows down—in order to achieve the majesty of a waterfall that somehow achieves a grandeur that transcends 'logic'. *That* is the story of modern Architecture.

²³ Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 85.

²⁴ The Romans broadened the classical Greek vocabulary to extend meaning to multiple building types. The temple vocabulary articulated churches, houses, baths, and forums. This can also be seen as a virtue of modern architecture. Its vocabulary has multiple interpretations.

²⁵ Harries, 86.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, January 19, 1908

“... by means of I know not what notions or notations as are emotions; for the memory retains them even while the mind does not experience them, although whatever is in the memory must also be in the mind.”—Saint Augustine, Confessions, Book X

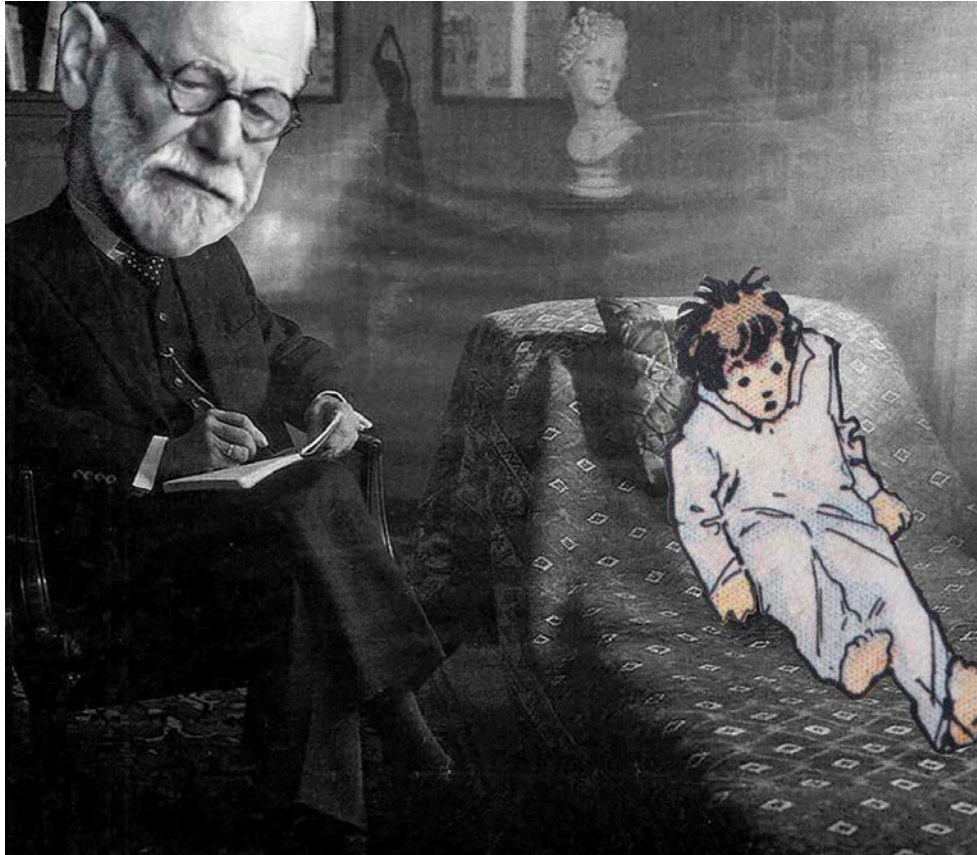
Behind the curtain

What is behind the curtain that says “Keep Out of Befuddle Hall?” McCay seems to beckon us to draw the curtain aside. After all of this backstory about memory and imagination and dreams, and how we dream, and even *why* we dream, and, after touching upon old and new technologies of drawing, we will finally get to ‘Befuddle Hall’ in Slumberland in the last chapter to see how McCay composed things, and unlock his secrets about maintaining a state of ‘not knowing’. Or perhaps there will just be a whole new set of questions and interpretations, but... as Flip says, “C’mon! We will go in anyway!”

But first, a story about Winsor McCay and Buster Keaton in vaudeville.

10

McCay and Keaton
(and Freud)
in vaudeville



Freud analyzes Little Nemo and takes notes about his nightmares. Nemo will in turn make drawings of Freud's.
Digital collage © Linda Heinrich (1921)

Anecdotes with a hidden reality

There are many possibilities for architectural dreaming when different modes of representation interact and play off of each other. To the traditional architect's practice of taking notes and making drawings can be added the *au courant* practice of making videos with our pocket phones. This chapter will consider the possibilities for architectural dreaming that arose when McCay's cartoons became storyboards for the earliest movies.¹

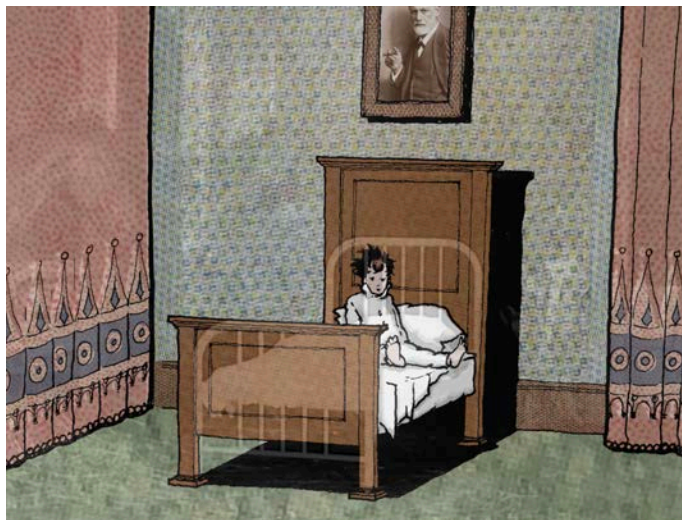
The modes under consideration for mixing up are:

notes,
drawings,
and movies.

¹ This chapter was presented at a conference on the *Architectures of Hiding* at Carleton University, September 24-25, 2021. A version of it will be published in an upcoming book. "Impossible Gag." In *Architectures of Hiding: Crafting Concealment | Omission | Censorship | Erasure | Silence*. Edited by Federica Goffi, Pallavi Swaranjali, Rana Abughannam, Émélie Desrochers-Turgeon (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2023).



This particular study of representational chemistry began with Sigmund Freud's careful notes about his patients' dreams that he formulated into his book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which then seeped into the Western mind's thinking about art ... as did Henri Bergson's—and Proust's—to influence disparate artistic output like Picasso, Braque, Eisenstein, Klee, Duchamp—and—Winsor McCay and Buster Keaton.



The Freudian ideas presented by Winsor McCay as cartoon dream sequences ultimately inspired Buster Keaton to make impossible and absurdly dreamlike events seem 'real' in his silent movies of the 1920s.



To recap: Imaginative architecture springs from the same place that humor and dreams come from, referred to by Freud as the 'unconscious'. Per Freud, visual language does not develop as a rational process. To understand the language of the unconscious mind, he studied the mechanisms of comedy while simultaneously identifying the characteristics of dreaming. Ironically, he superimposed a kind of understandable rationale for both. But Freud wasn't thinking specifically about *architectural* imagination. This chapter discusses the three together: humor, dreams and architectural representation, all of which challenge our perceptions.

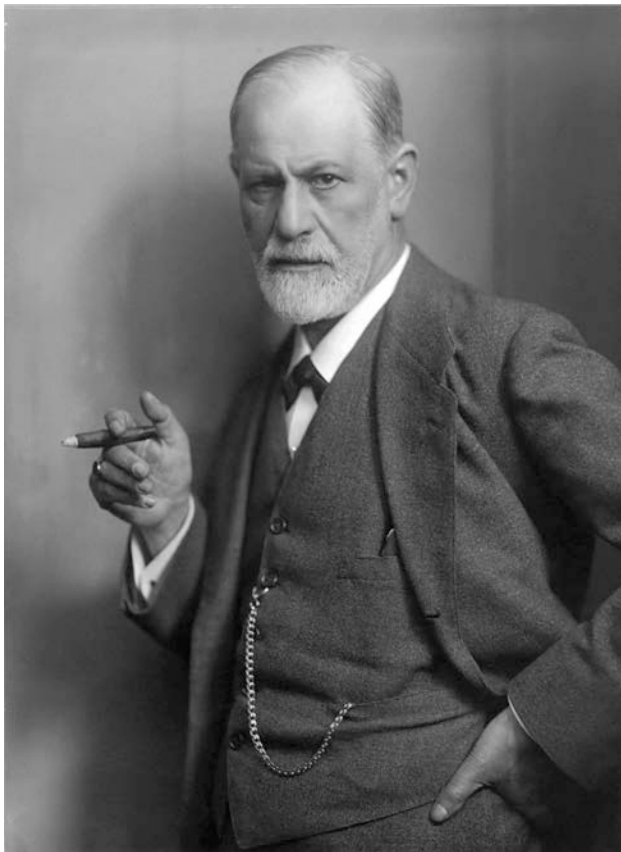
(above) *Nemo morphs into Keaton while Freud looks on*
Drawing and digital collage © Linda Heinrich (1921)

(below) Still from Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* (1928)

Looking up and beyond this blur of “notes, cartoons and movies,” an outline will—hopefully—gradually come into focus that is the dreamlike process of imagining architecture. This is a completely different kind of representation than the kind that tells a linear story or explains events or shows objects in a logical way. This kind of architectural drawing would contain hidden moments to be discovered that flip one’s habitual perspective, and achieve this using the dream’s natural language of visual representation.

Notes and anecdotes

Freud broke down the process of how we dream into four “elements of dreamwork.” Here, again, is a summary (mine):



- 1) Pictorial representation—*Memories are transformed into metaphors, or ideas.*
- 2) Condensation and compromise—*Memories lose their conscious logical connection.*
- 3) Displacement—germane to this chapter—*Images are disguised or hidden in an unexpected context.*
- 4) Dream composition—*The conscious mind in its sleepy, weakly rational state still enters the dream to ‘piece together’ a story, even if it is unwieldy.*

The elements work together. For memories to become transformed into metaphors, they must first lose their ‘logical’ connection. Then they can then easily disguise themselves within a hidden context. Metaphors—ideas—then lurk within the story, which may or may not make sense. The dream offers many possible interpretations of which one is never certain, ideas that unfold over time. To an extent, all metaphors are a kind of hiding. Freud thought that certain ideas needed to be disguised as a way to get them past a kind of security protocol set up by the conscious mind.



Stills from Sherlock Jr., Buster Keaton (1924)

Freud was like a criminologist. He insisted that dreams held clues with hidden meaning. He believed that we consciously hide things from ourselves as a way of enabling us to carry on with the day to day.

Freud's main question was: What was the conscious mind hiding?

Winsor McCay and Buster Keaton discovered things hidden in our dreams that were not recognized by the hyper-observant eyes of a hunter, tracker, detective, doctor or psychoanalyst.² Instead they became visible through the process of drawing and re-enacting them, after, that is, they inadvertently popped into view.

McCay and Keaton understood that hidden comic situations were initially discovered through the happy accident—and then, delighted with that discovery—they proceeded to choreograph those ‘accidents’ into a finished drawing or movie—not dissimilar to the dreamy compositions we naturally make for ourselves every night.

² Carlo Ginzburg, “Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and the Scientific Method,” *The Sign of Three*. Edited by Umberto Eco and Thomas Alberti Sebeok (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1983).



The Three Keatons - Joe, Myra and Joe Jr., 1900

The backstory of Keaton and McCay

The Three Keatons were famous vaudeville comedians, with Joe Jr. as the smallest—a miniature of his father—complete with matching fright wig, Irish beard, vest, and slap shoes.

The great Houdini, known for escaping from impossible situations—straight jackets and chains—was friends with the Keatons. Keaton’s parents were in a traveling show with Houdini when Joe Jr. was born. It was called *The Keaton & Houdini Medicine Show Company*. In vaudeville lore, Houdini witnessed the son, Joe Jr., accidentally fall down a set of stairs one day to emerge at the bottom unscathed. As Harry picked him up, he remarked how the kid could really take a “buster.”³ The

³ Although the story of Houdini’s discovery was passed down, it has more recently come to light that Buster’s naming came about when the British comedian George A. Parday witnessed the event and exclaimed: “Gee whiz! He’s a regular buster!”—from a review in *The New York Times*, February 3, 2022 by David Kamp entitled: *How Buster Keaton Turned Slapstick—and Movies—Into Art*. But the vaudeville and the movie star business are naturally mythological. The story of Houdini giving Buster his name was one told repeatedly by Keaton himself in interviews over the years.

name stuck. Buster became famous not only for his acrobatic grace, but also for his impassive expression, a quiet way of both suspending and putting over the joke.⁴

Rows of faces in the vaudeville audiences followed the tiny Buster as he was literally kicked across the stage by his father. It was known as an unusually rough, knockabout act.⁵ Dreams—like humor—are situations stripped of formula and restraint.⁶ The early twentieth century was an era of unprecedented change and, the giddiness only added to the roar of progress ... almost, in fact, enabled the bruises that accompany the play of childhood go unnoticed.⁷

To recap McCay's story, several decades earlier—in Spring Lake, Michigan—that other child—Winsor McCay made his tracing of the catastrophic event of his childhood home burning down into the ice on the windowpane at a neighbors house—a merging of two planes of reality—and his first memory of making a drawing. After that (as mentioned earlier), he did nothing but draw. But unlike Keaton who, even while being repeatedly hurled across the stage, remained faithful to the family act, McCay ran away from his father's real estate business to pursue his own vocation, and became a famous cartoonist. Winsor “ran away and joined the circus” which, in his particular case, meant seeing the Chicago World's Fair, and then ending up in Cincinnati drawing for nine years at a dime museum.⁸

⁴ That's not to say that Buster wasn't cable of smiling off camera. “For the benefit of those who have heaved the jolly chuckle and bellowed the lusty laugh at the antics of this solemn-faced funmaker, let us assure you that if there are smiles more spontaneous and friendly than Buster's, we'd like to see them.” From an interview conducted by Margaret Werner, a lady “fresh from the Underwood” in *Movie Weekly*, vol.3, no.40 (November 10, 1923). In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, Edited by Kevin W. Sweeney (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 9-10. She continues: “But here's what's really agitating all of us, Mr. Keaton. How can you possibly go through all that clowning and make us all nearly pass out with mirth, and all the while keep your face as straight as a stick. What's the trick?” “There's no trick to it, really,” he replied. “You see, when I was pulling my stuff on the vaudeville stage, it would look terrible for me to grin from ear to ear every time I did something funny. That queers it, you know.”

⁵ W. E. Mulligan, “The Man Who Never Smiles,” In *Pantomime*, vol.1, no.2 (October 5, 1921), In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, 8. “It happened that Buster's ability to take punishment without feeling ill effects were soon discovered, and his father sewed a trunk handle inside his coat. Grabbing this trunk handle, his habit was to pick the youngster up and hurl him against any nearby scenery. Nothing ever suffered but the ‘drops’ and ‘props’. Buster never was even so much as bruised.” And from Arthur B. Friedman, “Buster Keaton Interview,” (1956) In *Film Quarterly*, vol.19, no.4 (Summer 1966): 2-5, Copyright 1966 by the Regents of the University of California, In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, 13,—Keaton says: “Well, we just did a rough, knockabout act. I'd just simply get in my father's way all the time and get kicked all over the stage.”

⁶ Jim Kline, “Funny, Sublime: The Uncanny Genius of Buster Keaton,” *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Summer 1997), 46. The phrase is taken from a young film critic's review in *The New York Times*, quoted in Walter Kerr's book *The Silent Clowns* (New York, Knopf, 1975).

⁷ Unfortunately, the Keatons were constantly being harangued by the Gerry Society, an organization against child labor. But, this phrase refers in the larger sense to everything happening in the ‘childhood’ of the twentieth century.

⁸ A dime museum was circus sideshows that didn't travel, housed within a building.

Winsor also had a flair for showmanship. He drew and painted very big drawings for circus billboards, attracting onlookers by drawing the figures in one stroke with no hesitation or preliminary sketching. McCay would—

*... do a little jig, rolling countless cigarettes to stimulate his thought. As he jiggled and hummed a little tune, McCay would mix his pigments and begin his sketches ... [and] in a short time, the figures would appear ...*⁹

When he eventually landed in New York as a highly accomplished draftsman, he became what Hollywood movie stars are now, a celebrity. McCay's celebrity extended even to Europe. His parlay of his newspaper fame into "Lightning Sketch Acts" on vaudeville made perfect sense. As noted earlier, McCay played with some of the same themes as the cubists such as simultaneity and investigating how things would appear when time and space 'collapse', but as a popular cartoonist rather than a fine artist.

And so in vaudeville, McCay and Keaton inevitably crossed paths. On January 25, 1914, for example, New York newspapers advertised several acts at the Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre. One was Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur*, and another was *The Three Keatons*.

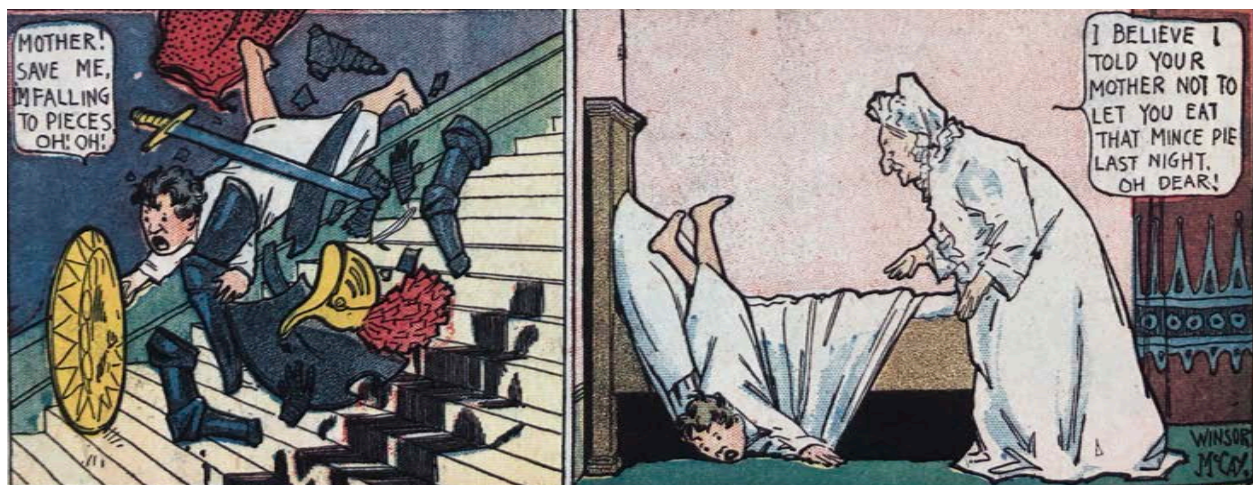


Two very famous hobos.

⁹ John Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art* (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis, 2018), 24.

By this time, McCay was in his mid 40s and Buster was 18.¹⁰ Let us pretend that Winsor befriended Buster, and made him a drawing—or two—that etched themselves into his fertile and young acrobatic mind. McCay seems already to have been influenced by Keaton’s persona. Interestingly, the alter-ego of Little Nemo in *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, the little hobo ‘Flip’, looked a lot like Buster.¹¹

As the flip of Nemo’s ego, a character that was—just like Buster—‘flipped’ up and down, in and out of situations, Flip was able to play out the mischievous aspects of Little Nemo, who otherwise was a good little boy (except that he sometimes ate too much pie). Meanwhile Buster got thrown by his father into the scenery or down into the orchestra pit, as wicked little boys deserve.



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, New York Herald, Sunday, November 18, 1906

The happy accident

There are certain events in life which bring us immense happiness.

Combine happiness with the element of surprise—or absurdity—and the happiness becomes delight.

¹⁰ Donald Crafton brought together these interesting facts in an essay about McCay and Keaton. In January 25, 1914, New York newspapers advertised two acts at the Hammerstein’s Victoria Theatre, (two of many; there were a series of acts). The first act of note was “moving picture sketches” by Winsor McCay—who was by then a very highly paid celebrity cartoonist—performing twice a day in the fourth spot, reviewed by Sime, *Variety*’s lead reviewer, as “the best thing in a comedy film ever put on.” (This was likely McCay’s animation act *Gertie*.) The other was *The Three Keatons*, performed twice a day on the same program as McCay, in the sixth slot, which received no reviews. Donald Crafton, “McCay and Keaton: Colligating, Conjecturing, and Conjuring,” *Film History*, Vol. 25, No. 1-2, “Inquiries, Speculations, Provocations” (2013), 31. <https://www.jstor/stable/10.2979/filmhistory.25.1-2.31>.

¹¹ This is my own observation. It is not something that McCay said.

Many things make us smile, but the surprise element is the thing that makes us laugh. We make a sudden leap that we didn't expect. Life is absurd! We get the joke. The unexpected—always lurking beneath the rational unfolding of life—

—*always* hides in our dreams. Impossible events take place, and we find ourselves waking up in the posture defined by those events. We are transported to an unexpected venue: to the feathery and cottony landscape of our once familiar—and now again familiar—bed. We sigh with relief because it was only a dream.

Everyone dreams.

Dogs dream.

(Are they surprised when they wake up?)

What sets us apart as humans is our ability to turn this 'waking up' scenario into jokes and tricks of the imagination. We are *inspired* by the happy accident.

* * *

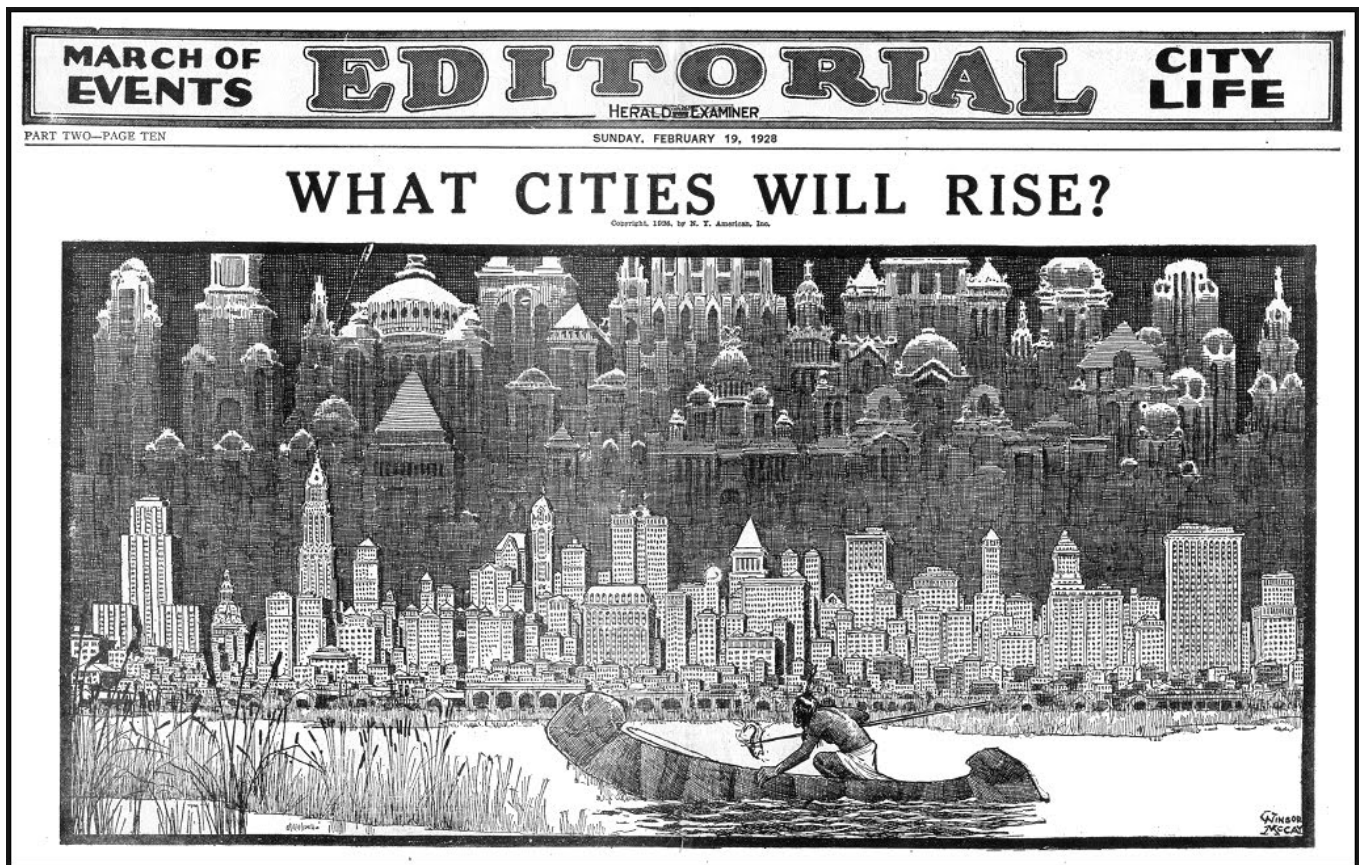
How things played out

We will never know if Winsor McCay actually shared a drawing or two with Buster Keaton, but he seemed to 'share' them by drawing the character who looked just like Buster—(Flip)—into Little Nemo's adventures every Sunday. And he also—inadvertently—drew loose storyboards for some of Keaton's future silent movies.

Unfortunately in the next few years, McCay, after his *Gertie* act, mistakenly rebuffed a call from William Randolph Hearst.¹² Hearst, who owned the paper in which McCay was a celebrity at that time—(McCay left Bennett's *Herald* in 1911 to go to Hearst's *American*)—eventually curtailed not only his vaudeville privileges, but also his role as a cartoonist in the Sunday funnies. Hearst largely confined McCay's talent to the editorial page, although McCay never lost his zest for producing show-stopping drawings.¹³

¹² "It seems that Hearst made an attempt to phone McCay backstage to confer with the artist about an editorial he was illustrating. The minion who took the call casually told the powerful press lord that McCay "can't come now. He's busy." Hearst flew into a rage and cancelled the Victoria's advertisements; on the next day the *Morning Telegraph* stated, "Hearst to Stop Vaudeville Engagements of Cartoonists." Canemaker, *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art*, 189.

¹³ There was a continuation of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* in Hearst's papers called *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams* that ran from 1911 of 1914. After the end of *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams*, McCay drew cartoons for the editorial page until 1924.

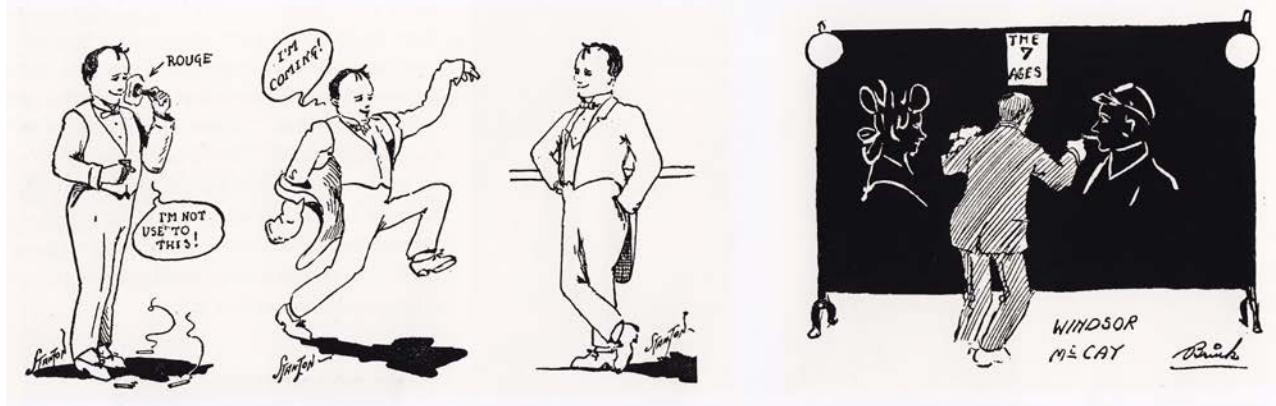


McCay eventually returned to the Herald and continued to draw editorial cartoons like this one.

Meanwhile Buster and Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle teamed up to make brilliant, funny movie shorts. They didn't have a script or storyboard. They showed up at a particular location with a camera, an idea how to begin, a rough idea of the ending, and started rolling.



Keaton joined 'Fatty' Arbuckle in March of 1917, and appeared in 14 'Comiques', before being called to serve in WWI.



(above left) Cartoon by F.L. Stanton Jr. showing McCay backstage on vaudeville, Atlanta Constitution, June 11, 1911.

(above right) Cartoon by the staff artist for Toledo Blade, March 27, 1907, showing McCay in action at the Valentine Theater.

But back to 1907 and McCay on vaudeville. His “Lighting Sketch Act”, called *The 7 Ages*, was McCay one-upping Father Time by simply erasing chalk outlines and then redrawing them so that the characters visibly aged in a matter of seconds.

In 1911, he replaced that act—momentously replaced it—by him one-upping himself. *Little Nemo* was one of the world’s very first animated cartoons. His tracing of the same figures over and over again—with slight adjustments made upon each translucent sheet, and no background—led not only to an understanding of the truly marvelous joys of sketching, but to a visual echo of the way dreaming minds translate memories into metaphors.



Still from *Little Nemo*, animation shown in vaudeville in 1911.



A few years later, he appeared on stage dressed as a circus impresario in front of the curtain for *Gertie*. To revisit that fabulous show: He cracked his whip! The curtain swept back to reveal a billboard-sized dinosaur on an illuminated drawing surface that—of course—(by then everyone knew)—moved!

Gertie the dinosaur was somewhat resentful of McCay's whip-cracked commands. She put him off by throwing a mastodon named Jumbo into a lake. McCay casually demonstrated the potency of heightened perspective, especially when things disappeared into the distance (like Jumbo).



Stills from Gertie the Dinosaur animation shown in vaudeville in 1914.

Eventually Gertie drained the lake to quench her enormous thirst. After that, McCay disappeared behind the curtain to appear as a cartoon version of himself in the animation. Gertie helped him up onto her back, and they rode away together into the cartoon landscape. This was McCay truly 'entering' into the world of his drawing, something an architect must do when they are dreaming up a building: disappear behind the curtain.¹⁴



Still from Buster Keaton's Three Ages silent movie (1923). Buster is seen as a cave man riding a dinosaur.

¹⁴ Perhaps this is why Befuddle Hall was shown behind a curtain.

Segway to Keaton riding across the movie screen on a dinosaur's neck dressed as a caveman in—not *The 7 Ages*, but the—*3 Ages*. Keaton is referencing both McCay's *7 Ages* and *Gertie*. But, in this movie he is just quoting McCay more than using his drawings for inspiration.

The real afflatus came to Keaton via McCay's elaboration of the surreal act of just waking up. Waking up seems so natural. But it is anything but. Freud didn't really talk about this, but McCay—and then Keaton—emphasized the 'waking up' aspect of dreaming. McCay faithfully included this moment in every page of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend*. Little Nemo and the fellow who had overindulged in Welsh rarebit were transported from a strange position in a strange scene—reliably—to that same physical pose in bed.

Keaton uses this idea most dramatically in *Sherlock Jr.*, a movie where he is an inattentive projectionist at a theater.



Still from Buster Keaton's Sherlock Jr. silent movie (1924)

He fell asleep during the movie, which allowed a doppelgänger to slip out of his body and into the theater. He was extremely concerned about the man taking advantage of the woman in the movie, so he decided to rescue her... and was able to literally jump into the movie screen to cross the fourth wall.



Still from Buster Keaton's Sherlock Jr. silent movie (1924)

What was Sherlock Jr. (a budding criminologist) sniffing out here?
Was this a new kind of “Freudian slip”?

The pen and camera make impossible things real

In *Sherlock Jr.*, Keaton openly stole McCay’s most elaborate theme, the hidden power of imagined context. But, whereas *Sherlock Jr.* used McCay’s cartoons as a kind of storyboard by sticking to the *dénouement* of a surreal change in context as the wake up scene—very closely—, his signature comedic acts came about through his simple delight in happenstance. In later life, Keaton actually lamented the public’s demand for silent pictures that had a plot and script.¹⁵ He instead favored the—what he termed—“impossible gag” that came about in the early years of pictures when they were just having fun thinking up stuff for the camera.

Some of McCay’s cartoons also celebrated this suspension of disbelief.

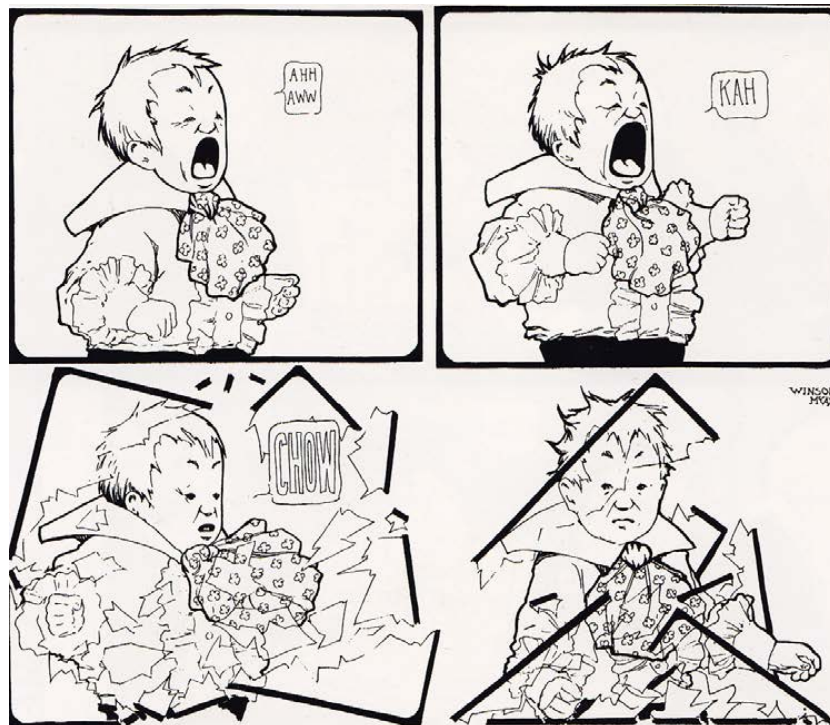
¹⁵ Keaton discussed the scenario department’s lack of a script. “We never had a script; we never did have one . . . we didn’t need a script. I knew in my mind what we going to do, because with our way of working, there was always the unexpected happening. Well, any time something unexpected happened and we liked it, we were liable to spend days shooting in and around that.” From Arthur B. Friedman, “Buster Keaton Interview,” (1956) In *Film Quarterly*, vol.19, no.4 (Summer 1966), In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, 18.

An ink blot probably blurted onto McCay's drawing as he hurried to meet his deadline—



Close-up from Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, New York Evening Telegram, April 1909

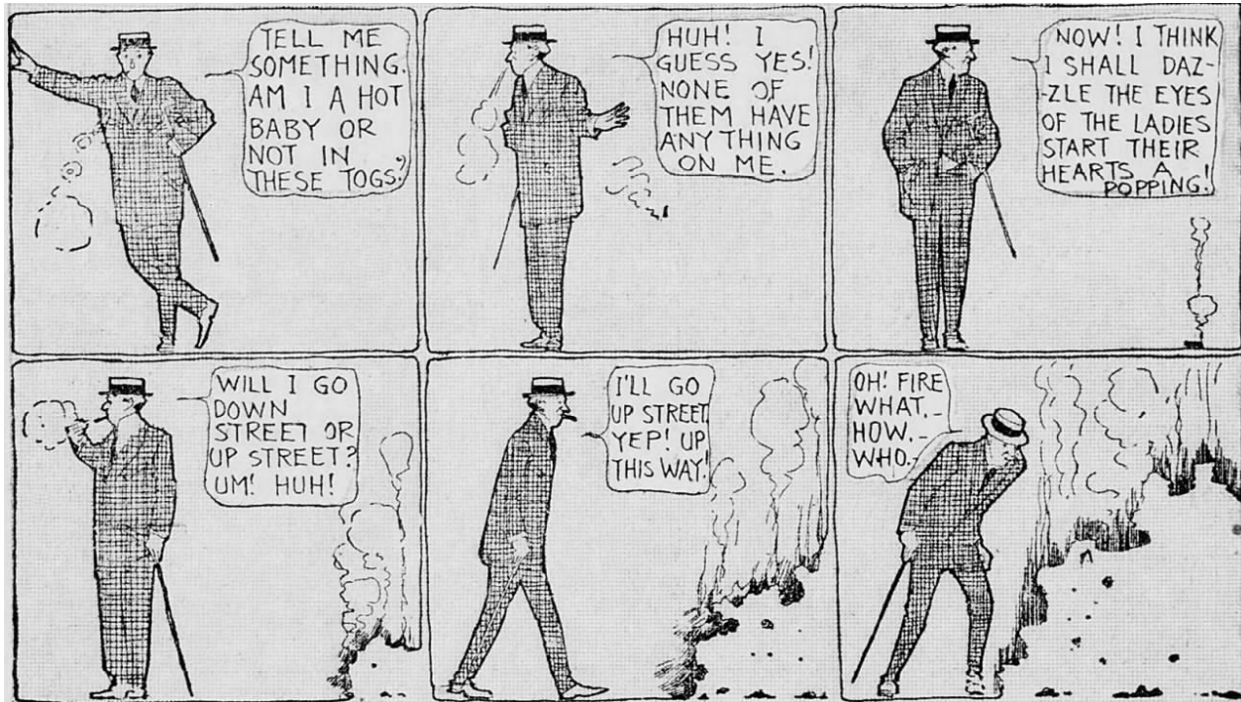
—and took it over.



Close-up from Little Sammy Sneeze (New York Herald), Winsor McCay 1905

Seen earlier in a section on how cubism resonated with McCay's work, the lines of this cell were unexpectedly shattered by Little Sammy's sneeze. Kah-CHOW!

The real cigarette ash that fell onto McCay's drawing (he was a cigarette fiend)—



Close-up from Dream of the rarebit Fiend, New York Evening Telegram

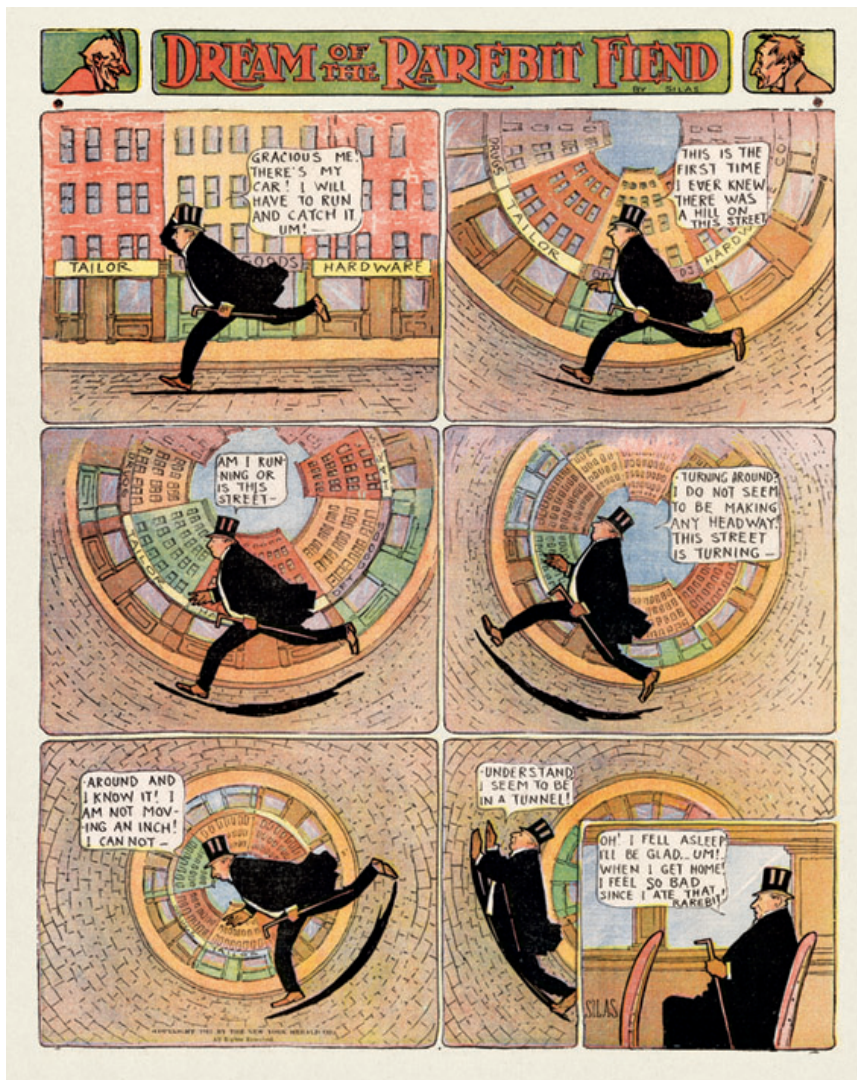
—became part of the story.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, February 11, 1906

Characters became truly two dimensional, and were uncovered to be so.

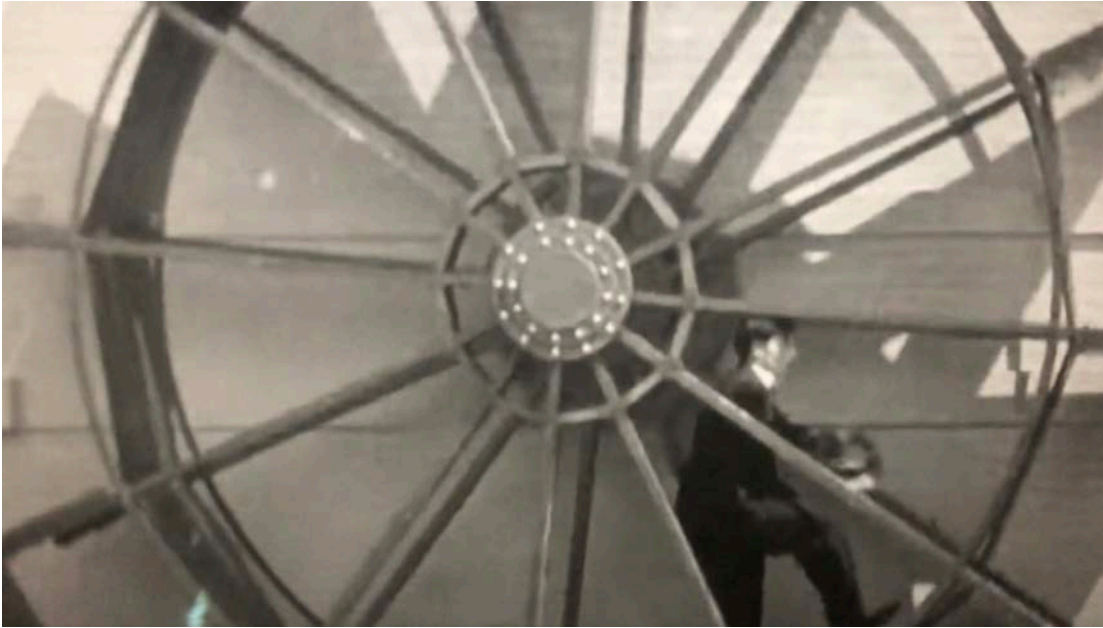
The convention of organizing the street that was being rendered into a circle did what all circles do. It spun, faster and faster until the main character couldn't keep up with the background. The original storyline whirled away, forgotten.



Dream of the Rarebit Fiend, New York Evening Telegram

In just this way, Keaton delighted more in the acrobatic flopping imposed on him by a paddlewheel than in the larger arc of the narrative in *Daydreams*, a movie that revealed not the puzzle of modern life, so much as the familiar complexity of “getting the girl,” a theme also explored by McCay. Here is a segment of Keaton running on a paddle wheel, i.e. running, but not getting anywhere¹⁶ that mimics the earlier cartoon by McCay, as if the cartoon was a storyboard for the movie—

¹⁶ Jim Kline, “Funny Sublime: The Uncanny Genius of Buster Keaton,” *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* Vol.16, No.2 (Summer 1997), 48. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jung.1.1997.16.2.45>.



Still from Buster Keaton's Daydreams silent movie (1922)

Here is another whirling scene.¹⁷



Still from Buster Keaton's The Boat silent movie (1921)

¹⁷ This scene of Keaton's later inspired Fred Astaire to do the same thing in a room where he seemed to dance on the walls and ceiling. A rotating set was built for Astaire to dance in.



Stills from Buster Keaton's The Navigator silent movie (1924)

After Buster's straw hat got blown away by the wind (twice), a top hat unexpectedly appeared from a mysterious hand in the doorway—with no reason—only a rhyme with what took place earlier, when he donned a straw hat from that same doorway. One can imagine this being filmed by mistake or as a joke by one of the prop guys; then kept, because it was funny.



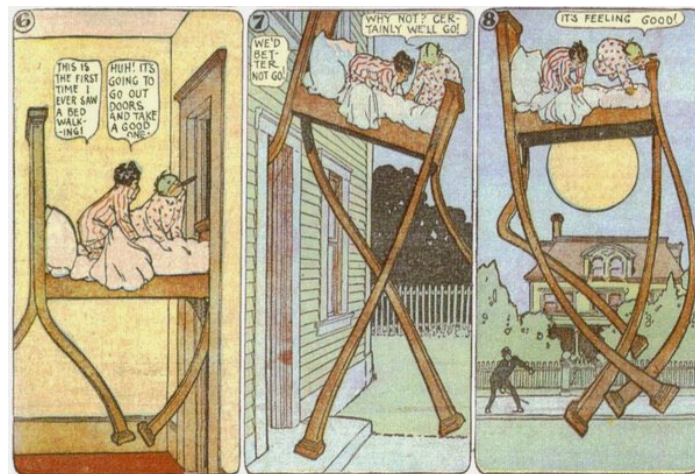
Stills from Buster Keaton's The 'High Sign' silent movie (1921)

A two-dimensional hook painted onto the wall became something Buster could literally hang his hat on.



Stills from Buster Keaton's *Steamboat Bill Jr.* (1928)

The bed became a vehicle that propelled both Nemo and Keaton into strange circumstances. They clownishly delighted in making the bed move on its own. Buster's bed was propelled by a hurricane wind into a horse barn ...¹⁸



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *New York Herald*, Sunday, July 26, 1908

... and Nemo's bed grew legs that walked. The bed, where dreaming takes place, literally activated an alternate reality.

The camera and the pen made their own reality.

¹⁸ This is an example of how a memory from early childhood can become an inspiration for a person's work. When Buster was tiny, he was swept by a hurricane wind from the hotel room where his family was staying while doing a gig in Kansas City. His parents were not there, but Buster flew up into the sky and was carried a few blocks by the wind before landing safely in the street.



Still from Buster Keaton's The Electric House silent movie (1922)

Recipe for health

McCay and Keaton placed emphasis on the comic appeal of the hidden by revealing our ability to laugh, to put things into context. We laugh when we suddenly discover a connection not previously seen, or we laugh because something suddenly seems ridiculous. We laugh with relief that life is larger than a particular logic.

It is not so much about discovering “the facts” that are hidden (as Freud attempted to do), as about the hidden flavors that a fine cook coaxes from a roast or a Rarebit with the proper seasoning.



Recipe for healthy architectural dreaming

Henri Bergson thought that dreams were created by our mind's eye catching onto—and elaborating on—vague impressions.



Buster 'catches on' to a tram as it flies by at terrific speed. He was extraordinarily athletic.

Marco Frascari wrote:

*An architectural drawing is at its best when filled with ... vague places where things might come about through revelation.*²⁰

Impossible gags live in vague surroundings where absurdities can become real. Whether it is a dream or something comic (or both), Freud understood it as a visual language that springs from a nebulous, fruitful reality. But is it Rorschach's ink-blot, or McCay's and Keaton's, that helps us to gain an aspect of health?

In an interview by Arthur Friedman in 1966, Buster Keaton explained how he developed his gags:

*Well, just . . . that's a natural thing to do, and you're always trying to invent new things, new ways to get a laugh, odd pieces of business and things like that.*²¹

²⁰ Marco Frascari, Paper (draft) for the *Synaesthesia* symposium, organized by the Department of Architecture of the Pennsylvania State University in Fall 2003.

²¹ Friedman, "Buster Keaton Interview," (1956) In *Film Quarterly*, vol.19, no.4 (Summer 1966): 2-5. In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, 16.

As architects, we could ‘naturally’ suspend our disbelief as a way to entertain the possibility of making our accidental discoveries into bronze, travertine or gold.



A door from the Querini Stampalia, museum in Venice renovated by Carlo Scarpa.

This is pure fancy on my part, but it comes from my own experience of happy hours spent on construction sites, places where odd things frequently happen. Carlo Scarpa’s door in the *Querini Stampalia* could be imagined as an example of a “vague place where things come about through revelation.” In my confabulation, Scarpa saw a temporary wooden door slipped into place almost haphazardly by a carpenter as a temporary enclosure during the renovation, made from available left-over pieces on the construction site. I imagine him noticing its enigmatic, accidental beauty, and then deciding to celebrate that by making it into stone and bronze. Or perhaps while doing a drawing of that doorway, his tracing paper accidentally landed above a drawing of a plan of the garden outside. He noticed how amazing it looked as a door. All architects have accidental discoveries like these. Every project has at least one amazing, unexpected material occurrence. But we haven’t got Scarpa’s (or McCay’s or Keaton’s) desire to translate it into noble materials. Why not?

In *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus describes this kind of reality as

*... of all things most to be desired. It is present whenever an amiable dotage of the mind at once frees the spirit from carking cares and anoints it with a complex delight ...*²²

Or a simple one.

²² William Willeford. *The Fool and His Scepter: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience*. (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 24. Thanks to Donald Kunze for sharing this reference, and to Claudio Scarbi for the question about the reality of the impossible gag.

Just as Winsor ennobled the ink blot that landed by mistake onto his drawing, and Keaton developed his accidental six-month-old fall down the stairs into the absurd up-and-down tumbling memorialized on the moving staircase in *The Electric House*, these celebrated oddities can be marvelous! And, there is no time limit. Something discovered by accident on site today could be used in a different project ten years from now, as long as we represent it to ourselves so that it stays with us.

* * *



In Sherlock Jr., Buster's dream self, (his ghostly twin), views the silent movie going on in the theater below from the projector's booth.

Dreamer's storyboard

Sherlock Jr. is both a film about having a dream, and a film about making a film. In “Funny Sublime, The Uncanny Genius of Buster Keaton,” Jim Kline describes a series of transitions that take place in a movie within a movie:

“Keaton plays a frustrated film projectionist who falls asleep in the projection booth and dreams a ghostly image of himself which rises up out of his body, and then watches in astonishment as the characters in the film being screened transform into recognizable characters from the dreaming Buster's waking life. After this ‘Ghost Buster’ has observed this cinematic transformation take place, the doppelgänger runs out of the projection booth and into the movie theater, attempting to jump into the movie screen itself ... [then,] as the viewer watches in stunned amazement, Keaton is thrown from one incongruous movie scene to the next ...



... he is first pitched into the middle of a busy city street ...



... then to a mountain precipice ...



... next to a lion's lair ...



... a desert expanse ...



... the middle of the ocean ...



... a snowbank ...

... and finally back to the original setting of the film being screened.”²³ The sleeping projectionist in *Sherlock Jr.* slips from one context to another—illogically.

Buster Keaton always thought it best to tell a story through action. Keaton discussed the shift to dialogue after the ‘talkies’ began:

*In other words, where dialogue came natural we used it, but we didn't depend on jokes or puns, trying to make darn sure we didn't get long dialogue scenes. We'd do anything in the world to break them up. The only time we ever had to resort to them, of course, was in plot. You start the first part of your picture laying out the plot. Well, you're stuck using a lot of dialogue to get it set. But we used to tighten that up as sharp as we could so we wouldn't waste much time on it.*²⁴

Keaton thinks in images as an architect does. All of the scenes bear a remarkable resemblance to a salient feature of *Little Nemo*, that the form of his limbs and the expression of his face and body remain exactly the same as the scene changes from one context to another. In *Sherlock Jr.*, the progression is extensive: from projector's booth to street to precipice to lion to desert to ocean to snow, and back to projector's booth. In McCay's one page cartoon, the scene just changes from Nemo's bed to Slumberland and back to bed. But the motif is the same, and it enables us to realize how both cartoon strips and moving pictures, in Kline's words:

*. . . more than any other art form, [have] the ability to capture the look, the feel, and the surreal logic of the unconscious dream world.*²⁵

The above sequence in the movie took a clever bit of artistry and patient precision. The initial bounding of Sherlock Jr. through the ‘fourth wall’ of the theater screen was achieved by actually removing the screen, and lighting the stage so that it ‘looked like’ there was a screen. By now the audience had grown used to seeing things on a screen. This was similar to Keaton's earlier play with audience expectation when he did a take of the Lumière's train headed straight for the theater. (A silent movie by Lumière was one of the first movies to be shown in vaudeville. When it was first shown, people ran out of the theater because it was so ‘real’. Keaton re-enacted the same shot of a train heading for the audience with him on the cow catcher. The train pulled to a stop, now with him in full view. He shrugged his shoulders as he stared at the audience and hopped off.) His years in vaudeville kept the audience's response at the forefront of his mind, as did the precision required to take a fall and not get hurt. The succeeding transitions shown above

²³ Jim Kline, “Funny Sublime: The Uncanny Genius of Buster Keaton,” *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* Vol.16, No.2 (Summer 1997), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jung.1.1997.16.2.45>.

²⁴ Friedman, “Buster Keaton Interview,” 19.

²⁵ Kline, “Funny Sublime,” 49.

of the dream sequence—the movie within a movie—of *Sherlock Jr.* required an inordinate amount of exactitude in measuring to make sure that he was in exactly the right position as he transitioned from one context to the next. Our dreaming minds have that same precision, which is a sharp contrast to the way we ordinarily think about its careless regard of reality. “Oh, it was just a dream.” The dreaming mind is simultaneously loose about what makes sense, and precise about fitting together the disparate pieces and parts.

In summary, Freud's copious *notes* led to an understanding of the structure of dreams,

which led to marvelously drawn *cartoons* about dreams,

which led to carefully constructed *movies* with metaphors hidden within the “fluid setting” of a dream.²⁶ *Sherlock Jr.* beautifully illustrates Freud's elements of dreamwork, as if Keaton left us a clue to ...

What really happens?

In *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, Slavoj Žižek tells us:

There is a certain self-reflexive strain in the detective novel: it is a story of the detective's effort to tell the story, i.e., to reconstitute what “really happened” around and before the murder, and the novel is finished not when we get the answer to “Whodunit?” but when the detective is finally able to tell “the real story” in the form of a linear narrative. ²⁷

The modern novel has merged the realist novel (a story told in a sequence of events that happen to a protagonist) with the detective story (an extended story with a protagonist that assembles a series of clues that lead to a flashback). The old realist novel, a story told in ‘real’ time, has been replaced with a new fascination for a discontinuous recounting of time wherein things do not entirely make sense until the very end of the book. Even at the end, sometimes they still leave the reader with a sense of mystery. The detective's job is to reconstruct a story of events as they actually happened, rather than as the murderer would have us believe. The modern novel reconstructs a story, rather than straightforwardly unfolding it in linear time. This can also be true for the design process.

²⁶ William Willeford, *The Fool and His Scepter: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience*, 201. Willeford uses this phrase in a chapter about the hero fool called *The Comic Dimensions of Folly: Buster Keaton's The General*.

²⁷ Žižek, Slavoj, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 42.

Zizek transmutes (through the lens of Jacques Lacan) a quality of the subconscious that was brought into the public view by Sigmund Freud in his *Interpretations of Dreams*, shortly before our hero Nemo appeared on the scene. Zizek quotes this passage from Freud to illustrate the inscrutability of modern storytelling. Freud is not describing the modern novel—like Proust’s *Search*—which was just coming into existence. He is describing the unconscious:

The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learnt them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts. If we attempt to read these characters according to their pictorial value instead of according to their symbolic relation, we should clearly be led into error.

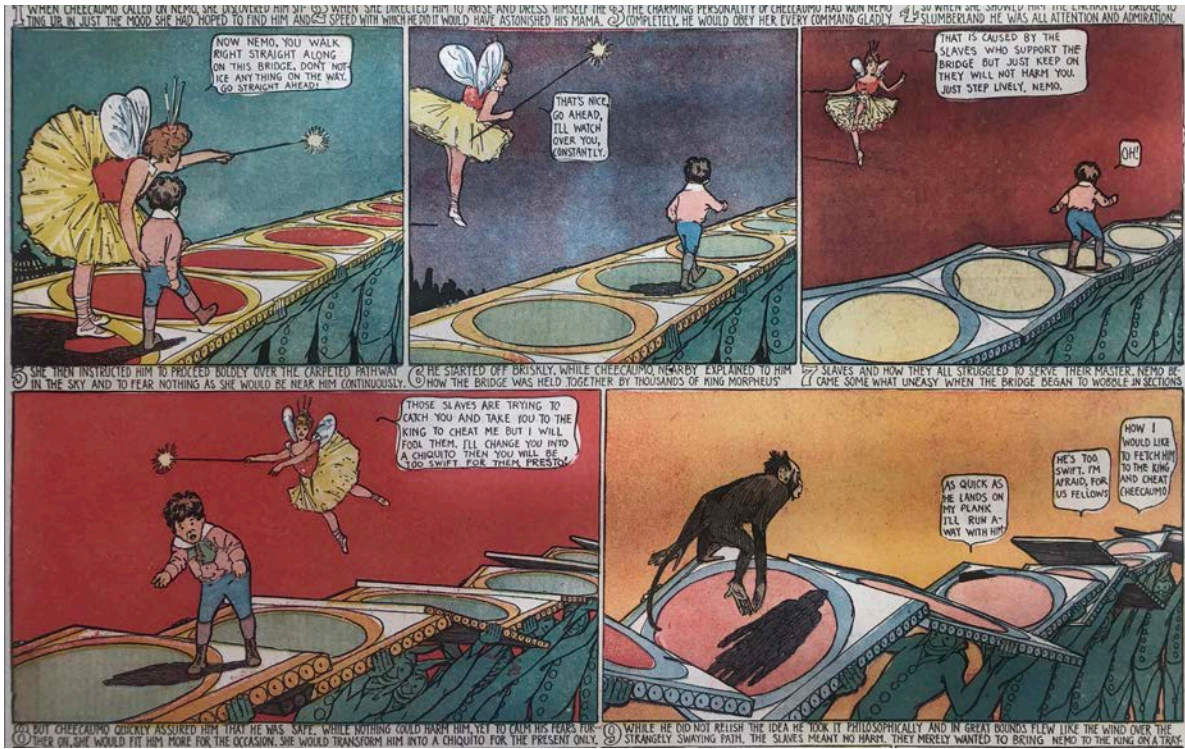
The subconscious is blind to ‘pictorial value’. Its clinical reading of a situation is fully cognizant of the actual power of the players, stripped of their masks, stripped of their alleged storylines. A naive person does not realize that people even use masks. A savvy person is fully aware of masks, and sees beyond them to read the situational power structure. For most of us, our subconscious is our savvy side. We can consciously listen or not to its retelling of events, to “what really happened,” but only if we have the skill to decode the way it presents things to us.

What is ‘true’?

One might say that McCay, as an artist who drew prolifically, spent an unusually large percentage of time tapped into his unconscious mind. Aside from the fact that his topic was itself ‘dreaming’, his depiction of Little Nemo’s dream life seems to relate to what was happening in McCay’s ‘real’ life. That is to say, if we strip his pictographic script—his rendering of characters and imagery of its ‘pictorial value’—we might get a read on what was happening in McCay’s life. The change in context is a doubling: cartoon boy / real boy.

Here are some of the goings-on in *Little Nemo* that might reflect McCay’s real life.

As Marcel stepped out of his carriage onto a cobblestone that wobbled away his ennui at the very end of *Search*, the unexpected wobbly terrain of Nemo’s—can we say sanity?—also threw him off balance. The cells held up by invisible men start to fold. Did this happen to McCay when rendering cartoons day after day?



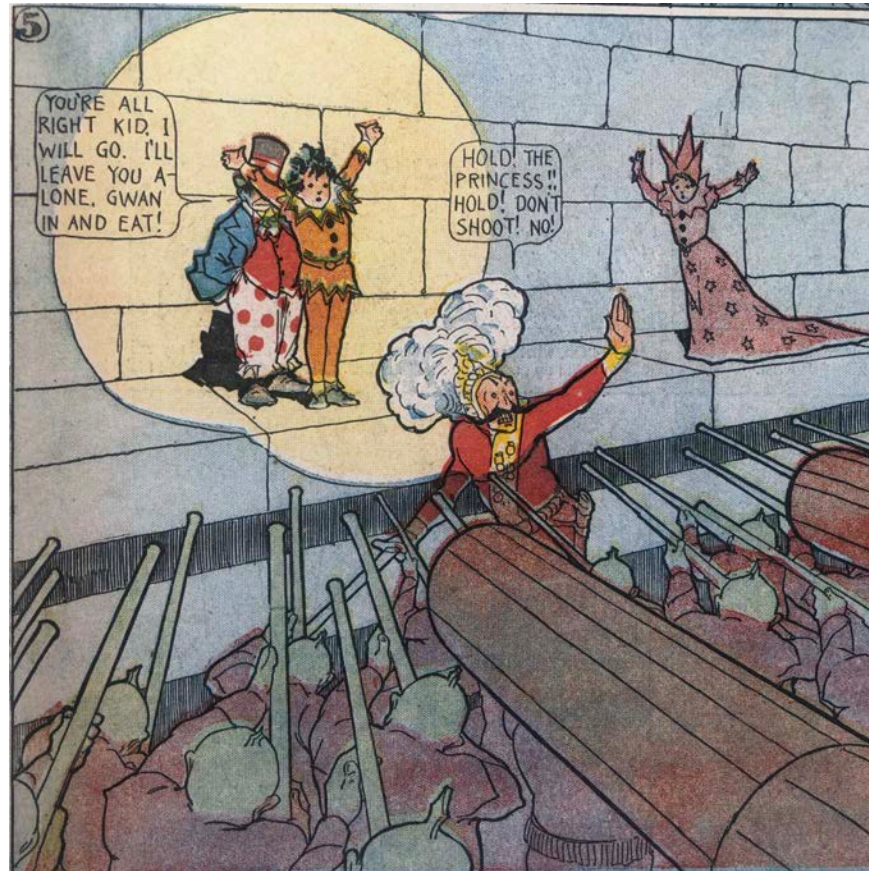
Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 12, 1905

Nemo seemed always to be confounded by women. Queen Crystalette gets shattered when he leaps forth “blind and deaf with infatuation” to kiss her.



Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 19, 1905

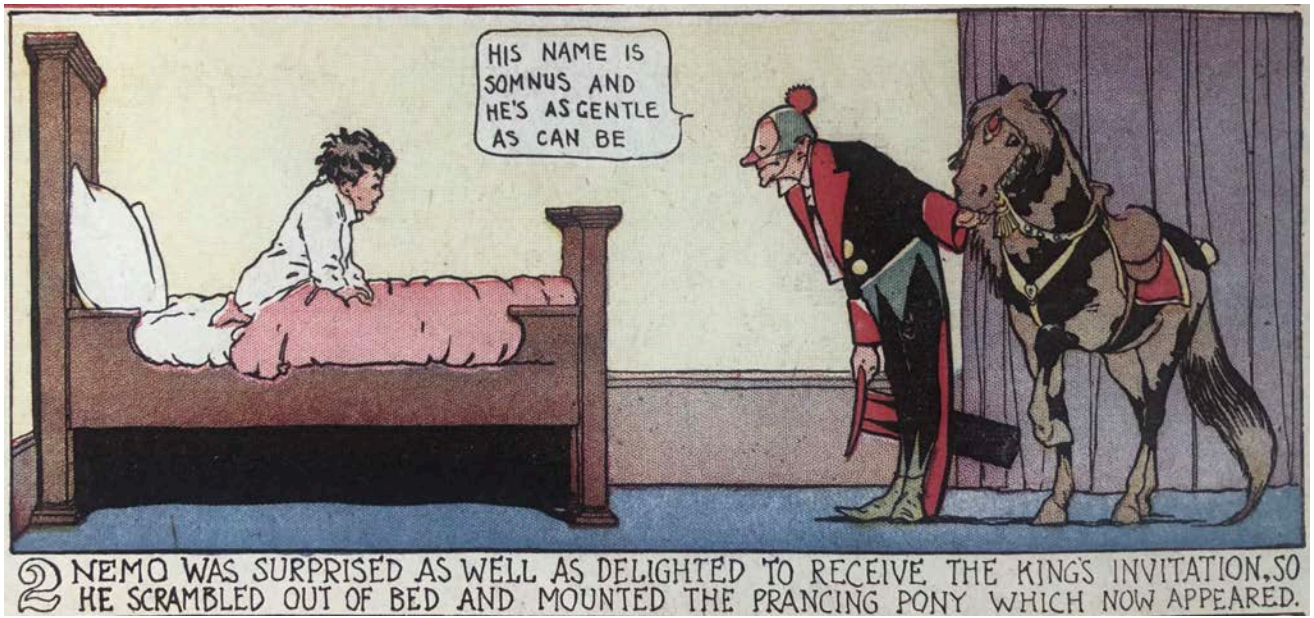
Nemo came to a gradual understanding and friendship with Flip through his adventures in Slumberland as he reckoned with his freer, boyish side. The drawings may have helped McCay understand himself too.



Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, *Sunday, November 18, 1906*

The princess wants Nemo to come to dinner. As Flip is being dragged off to a firing squad, she says, “Come! Nemo, to the banquet hall, they will take care of him, come!” But, Nemo breaks away and steps in from of Flip just as the guns are getting ready to fire.

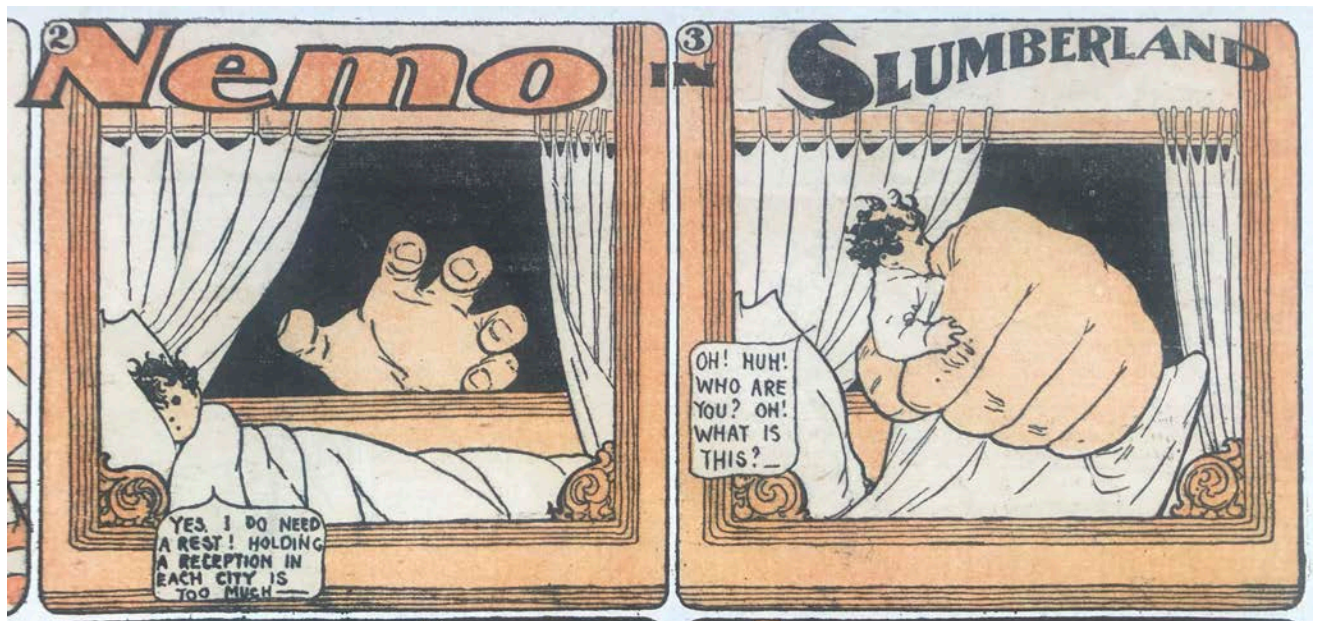
After Nemo’s rescue of Flip from death, he and Flip are henceforth thrown into situations *together* (and the Imp too), at least initially, when his imagination was allowed to run wild. McCay eventually goes on a balloon trip with the princess to survey all of the cities where the cartoon was being featured. (This may have been a business decision by the *Herald* to increase the strips interest to cities other than New York.) But, regardless, *Little Nemo* became more of a travelogue with social commentary, and gradually became less dreamlike. (But it was still imaginatively drawn!) Perhaps it was at this point that McCay may have shifted his interested to his vaudeville career and animations. In one of the last episodes for the *Herald*, he reprised his very first Little Nemo sequence, but this time with a different cast of mind.



Close-up from the very first episode of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, October 15, 1905

What began as a journey on Somnus, a “night horse” that he was *invited* to ride to Slumberland—and who subsequently lost control because her “spunk was up”—thereby precipitating him to wake up as he fell out of bed—

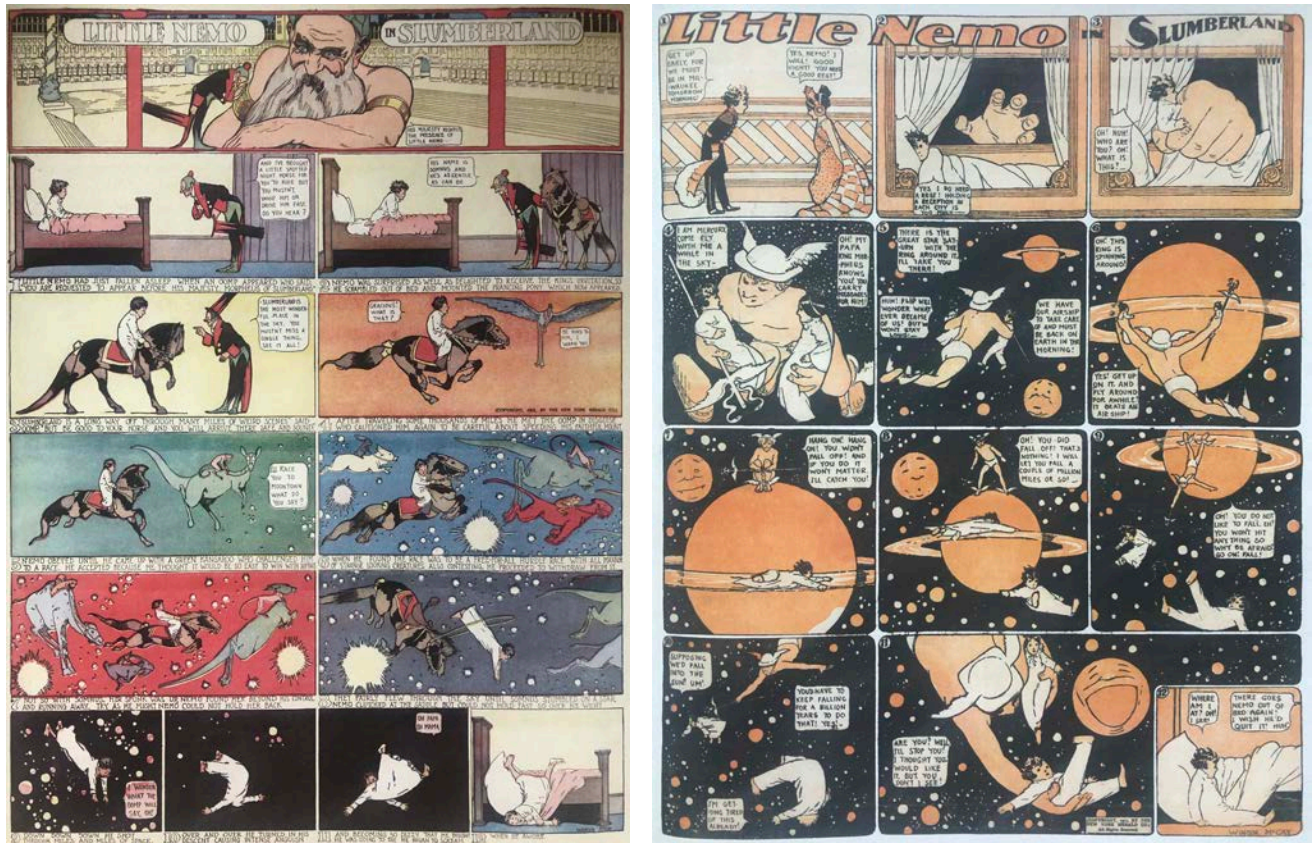
became more of a *snatching* by Mercury.²⁸



Close-up from the one of the last of Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, April 30, 1911

²⁸ Nemo’s bed is now a kind of sleeper car in a train, as McCay’s likely was when he was “holding a reception in each city” at the end of his time at the *New York Herald*.

Once the page brimmed with possibility. The Oomp tells him, “Slumberland is the most wonderful place in the sky. You mustn’t miss a single thing. See it all!” But by the end of the series at the *Herald*, McCay’s lines have lost their affectionate feeling, and become tumid. Nemo complains that “holding a reception in each city is too much.” His cells are filled in with only one color. Mercury hurls him into one of Saturn’s rings to whirl dangerously out of control. “I’m getting tired of this already!” says Nemo, spinning out from Saturn’s ring and plummeting down through space. Here are the two pages together with the earlier one on the left, and the later on the right:



The dream-self, or in this case Little Nemo, was able to point out aspects of ‘real life’ that McCay could not, just like Federico Fellini could only understand his childhood and consequently, his life, when it was reimagined through his movies.

A new way to represent things

The same is true of architectural representation. We can ‘think’ about buildings by rendering the ones that are already built. If we first represent our favorite building—or the one we are imagining—as cartoons, it might be easier to ‘see’ them, and to—we could say—‘dream’ about them. There might be an unexpectedly intense shadow that reveals something with its anamorphic profile, or a side view of the facade which reveals it as a facade. In either instance,

the ‘reality’ of the structure is revealed by the viewer’s situation. The relation of the parts (the reality) is sometimes more discernible through the surprise view, rather than the ‘main’ view, as when Nemo wakes up from his dream.

In the Sherlock Holmes stories, the odd detail is privileged over expected logic. Representation via the animation of a digital model favors this kind of discovery. This is especially true while learning a new software (and making wild mistakes!) but, no matter the proficiency, unexpected views are always coming about.

McCay was so excited about animation in its infancy that he envisioned the young art surpassing all other forms of art. He talked about his hopes in the *Detroit News*:

*The future successful artist will be ones whose pictures move. By that I mean a creator of subjects who first paints his pictures which are later photographed and then thrown upon the screen by means of the moving picture machine ... I believe the public is becoming a little weary of going to art museums where they can only see some unanimated object, at the most, and I can safely predict that these so-called revolutions in art that I have originated will within the next generation achieve great popularity.*²⁹

Unfortunately for McCay, it wasn’t museums filled with inanimate objects that waned in popularity, it was his beloved vaudeville.

For animation to be a worthwhile form of architectural representation, it is necessary to think about a building as an already existing entity, even if it is not yet built. This is the thing that models are especially good for, whether physical or virtual. A model enables a designer to discover unexpected aspects of its nature—a thing not as easily discovered through a plan or section. How does light move through the model? What is the reflectivity of the surfaces and what unexpected things happen as a result of that? Are there unexpected shadows? Unexpected views? Is there a surprising way to enter or exit? Where do we want to linger? Animation is a way to discover the dream-self of the building, rather than its naive self, the “real story” rather than the obvious one.

²⁹ Quote from July 22, 1912 in the *Detroit News*, Canemaker, 163.

One more time?

The architect's art is: looking at things again. The family dinners I experienced growing up began with saying grace, a ritual “thank you” for the food on the table. But the real ‘grace’ had more to do with our unspoken understanding that suppertime was a forum for telling stories about the funny things that happened that day.³⁰

Life is a sad affair if we see the events of a day—of a life—of a building—as so many unalterable and defining moments, proof of either this or that. What life should really be is the stories we are able to tell about it using the events of the day as grist for the mill. In the end the story always has a greater reality than the event.³¹ The same can be said for an architect's drawings.

What of historically significant artifacts and iconic works of Architecture? Do we dare set those marvels in a newly invented context? They will be in an invented context regardless of our best intentions to tell an ‘accurate’ story. Whether or not we draw them as inventions that do not closely mirror ‘reality’, it is up to the architect to tell a good story that feels fresh, whether it is a drawing of the Pantheon in Rome, the Mosque of Cordoba, the Eiffel Tower, Mies's Barcelona Pavilion, or Corbu's Villa Savoye.³² Ideally it would be as refreshing as Keaton's retelling of how he got the name ‘Buster’, through his fabulous falling up and down the moving stairs in *The Electric House*.



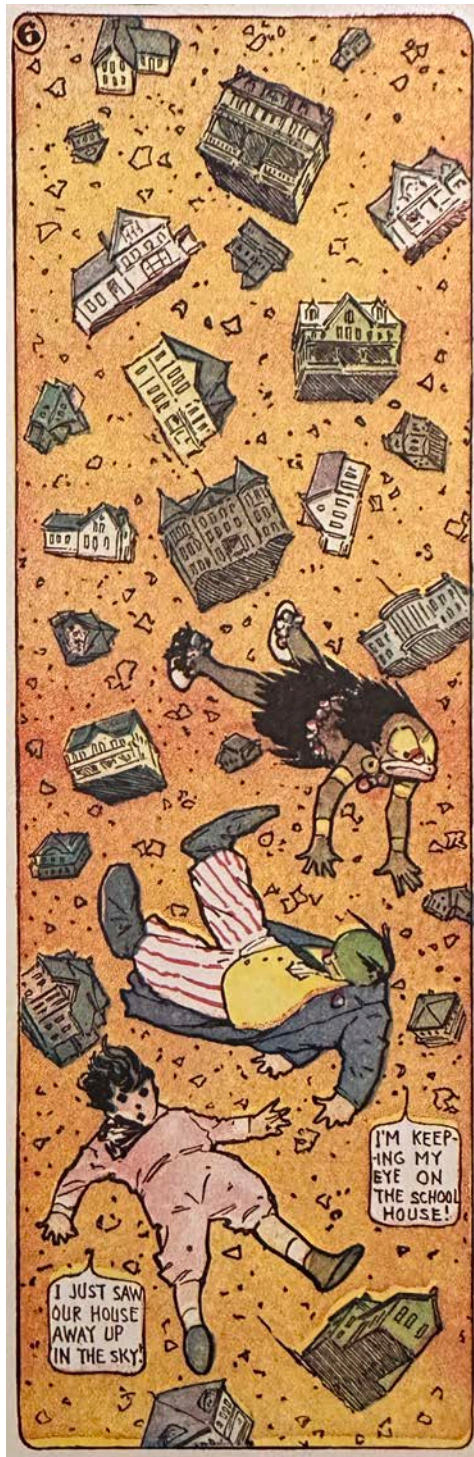
Buster Keaton's The Electric House silent movie (1922)

³⁰ The movie version of *A Funny Thing Happened at the Forum* was a chance to see Buster Keaton again.

³¹ Obviously some tragic events must be told without any form of levity so that they do not happen again. And, it is not advisable to lie to yourself as an excuse to make the same the same errors in judgement.

³² Holland Cotter, “Putting Art, and Faith, on Display,” Art review from the *New York Times* (February 4, 2022)

Looking back a hundred years at Freud, his wonder at the dreamer's ability to spin an evocative tale by piecing together forgotten fragments, at our ability to even *have* an inventory of details that are so intact; at Bergson's idea that we are constantly engaged in a process of recombining and refining our own narratives; at Proust's belief in the reverberating power of a simple isolated sensation—the wobbling cobblestone that put him into an earlier Venetian state of mind as he stepped out of his carriage to go to a party in Combray—; and finally at McCay's and Keaton's beautiful elaboration of happy accidents and the singular moment of waking, we see that the very act of retelling is the thing with grace. The retelling is the thing that ultimately lives in our hearts.



Hurry!

We're almost at the end of this dissertation!

We need to see King Morpheus in Slumberland ...

*Close-up from
Little Nemo in Slumberland
Sunday, October 25, 1908*

11

Befuddle Hall

After visiting vaudeville and early moving pictures; after circling around the dreams had by Freud and Bergson and Proust; and thinking about dreaming as drawing—how dreams tell stories—and how imaginative stories are actually memories refining themselves; seeing dreams and drawings as similar forms of representation; the relation of dreaming to the mechanisms of wit; and looking at how other artists who were contemporaries of McCay were responding to this same maelstrom of pace and space and time in the very early twentieth century; we at last arrive at the last chapter of this paper. Having set the scene, we get a glimpse into the kind of drawings that were being made during the early years of modern Architecture, with some stories thrown in for flavor. This final chapter is about the mechanics of McCay’s drawings, ‘mechanics’ in the sense described by Buster Keaton as why making films appealed to him so much—

The mechanics of it. The way of working—fascinating. One of the first things I did was to tear a motion picture camera practically to pieces, and found out [about] the lenses and the splicing of film and how to get it on the projector.¹

Freud said:

...humor resides in the form of the joke rather than its subject.²

The joke must be appropriate, cleverly worded or ‘acted out’ to have the desired effect. The performance matters more than the actual content, whether it is the artful form of language, the form of a silent movie or the form of cartoons.³

To get a sense of the world of drawings in the days of early modern Architecture, let us ‘see’—review one last time—how McCay did it.

¹ Arthur B. Friedman, *Buster Keaton: An Interview*. From *Film Quarterly*, vol.19, no.4 (Summer 1966), 2-5, Copyright 1966 by the Regents of the University of California, In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, Edited by Kevin W. Sweeney, (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 17.

² Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their relation to the Subconscious* Trans. By James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton 1963), 17.

³ “...people have sexual feelings—true, but not funny nor very profound. But this idea couched in an apt set of words, or juxtaposed to another idea, or associated with a specific individual might be funny or indeed profound. Form in this context is the configuration in which the parts of the idea have assembled. How efficiently a joke is communicated, how appropriately stated, and how cleverly worded are the gauges of its success.”—and, on the drawings of Max Ernst—“Thus, by using Freud’s original verbal devices to create visual ambiguities, Ernst was able to turn Freud’s contention that the ambiguities of language make jokes possible into pictorial form.” Charlotte Stokes, “Collage as Jokework: Freud’s Theories of Wit as the Foundation for the Collages of Max Ernst” *Leonardo*, Vol.15. No.3, (Summer 1982), 199, 203. Stokes could just as well have been writing about McCay’s work.

Nemo's story leading up to Befuddle Hall

Little Nemo in Slumberland had all the elements of a good story. The very young protagonist was appealing and easy to relate to. His name was 'Nemo', Latin for 'no-one' or 'anyone'. He looked cute in his nightshirt. He appeared to be in a series of situations that needed to be resolved. His psychic world was filled with scary things as he searched for Slumberland, in his mind a place that looked a lot like the White City from the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 (that he visited while living in Chicago), or like Dreamland in Coney Island, which was just across Sheepshead Bay where he lived in Brooklyn while he was drawing *Little Nemo*.

The following illustrations are an abbreviated diary of Nemo's mental state and the events that led him to discover the room labelled "Befuddle Hall—Dangerous—Keep Out!", which was a part of Slumberland. It was not what he expected. There are full pages of cartoons each Sunday, but these are just snapshots from particular pages on his journey there, to give a gist.



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, New York Herald, Sunday, October 22, 1905

Nemo discovered that mushrooms have an effect similar to the cookies found by Alice in a jar tagged "Eat me." These mushrooms were strictly forbidden by an imp, but Nemo touched them anyway. His bed shook and sank. Things got out of proportion. He shrank down to mushroom size. There was a dark and looming magisterial figure who sent the imp—a certain King Morpheus—who had a daughter that needed a playmate. Nemo's 'real' papa was there when he awoke in his 'real' bed, bidding Nemo to stop eating raisin cake.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, October 29, 1905

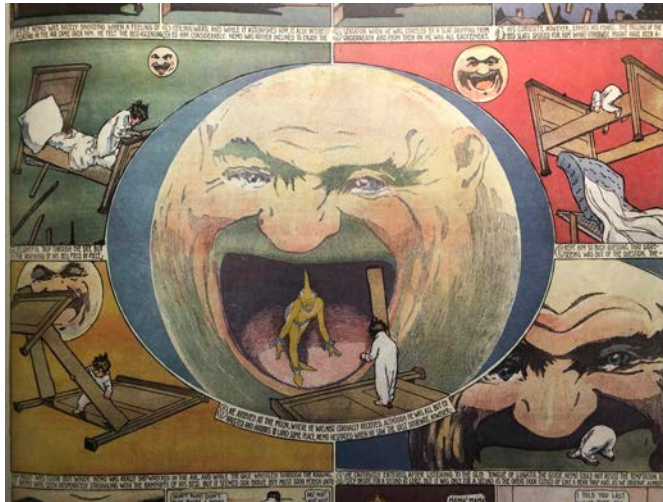
One week later, a clown in cahoots with the imp impelled Nemo to find King Morpheus and his princess who were now across some sort of chasm. It was suggested that he mount some precarious stilts. He was then knocked off balance by a crowd of birds that wouldn't stop kissing him. He tripped, fell and woke up. His mother came to his bed this time to chastise him for eating too many peanuts.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 5, 1905

By the following week, his desire to find King Morpheus had become the voice of a sea monster that was calling him, "You are wanted in Slumberland." The sea monster appeared as his room filled up with water. He stepped onto a whale in an attempt to get to Slumberland, thought better of it, abandoned the whale, and found himself at the bottom of the sea riding that monster. His own scream woke him up. As he was coming to, his mother told not to eat Huckleberry Pie.

A month later, Nemo was a Lunatic. (The word ‘Lunatic’ is derived from the sway of the moon, *la luna*.) A feeling of floating came over him. As Nemo’s bed rose into the air, its structure fell apart. He entered the mouth of the moon. Nemo called to his mama “to come and get your Little Nemo! Oh!” When he awoke, she gave him an “I told you so” and suggested that he not eat donuts before bed.⁴



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, December 3, 1905

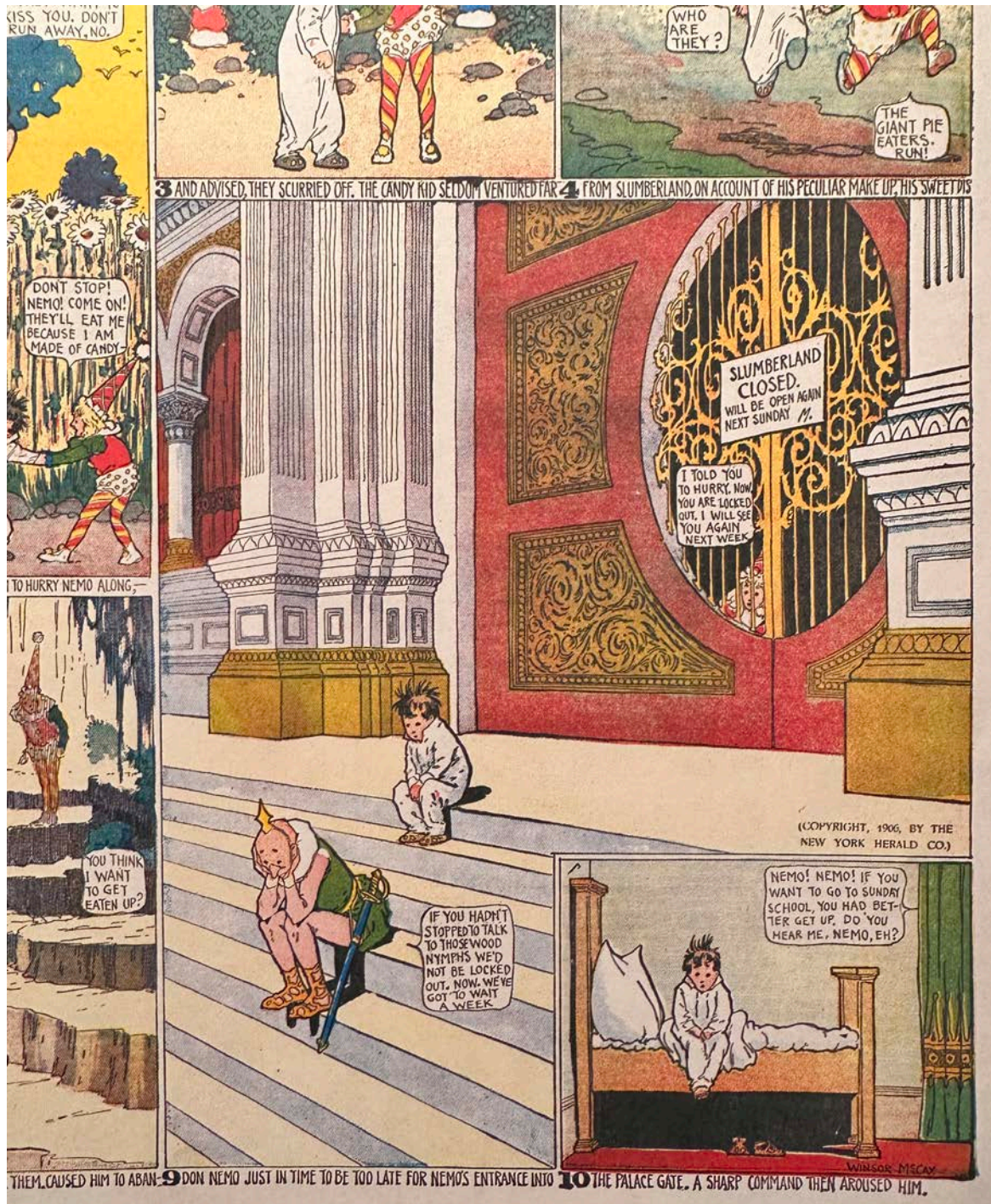
Apparently his Mama rescued Nemo from the moon’s sway, because the next week he began to more seriously pursue the princess by gearing up in knight’s armor, and, likely due to the cumbersome gear, fell down the steps. He always found himself in the same nightmare under the influence of Morpheus, being drawn to Slumberland. He always got back up and tried again—or rather—he always fell asleep and tried again.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, December 10, 1905

⁴ The scenes of the bed falling apart as Nemo rises up toward the moon bear a remarkable resemblance the sequence in Walt Disney’s *Jack in the Beanstalk*, when the magic bean germinates and grows up into the clouds carrying Donald and Mickey and Goofy’s bed with it. They fall apart in just the same way.

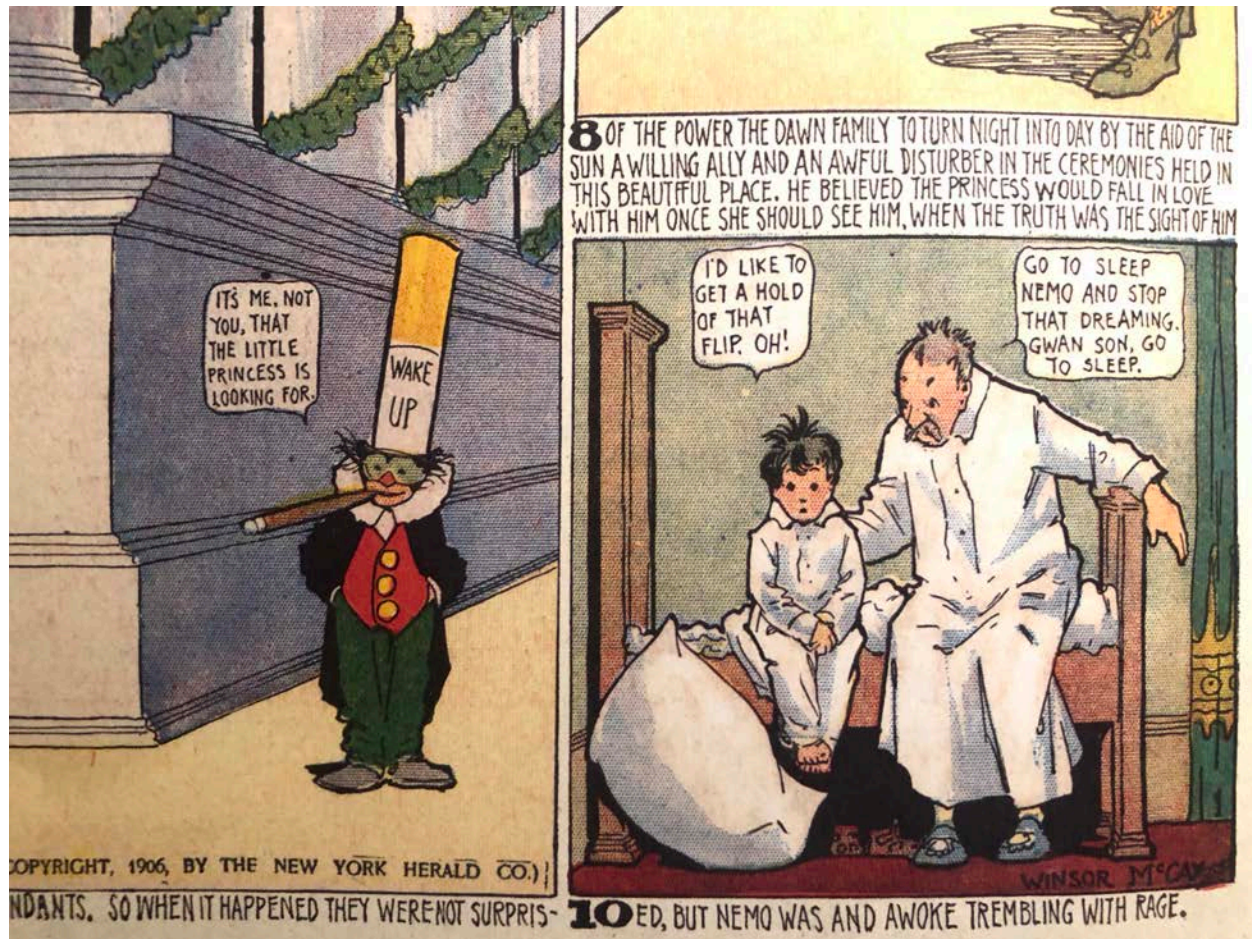
Several more Sundays of adventure went by—



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, *New York Herald*, Sunday, February 26, 1906

Although Nemo was lured by King Morpheus to Slumberland by, it remained closed to him. The 'dream' of Slumberland—so far, a quest imposed by someone else—crystalized into *his* objective. Nemo *also* wanted to find Slumberland, and the nightmare shifts to his inability to find it.

Suddenly—an antagonist entered the scene, the vagabond named ‘Flip’ who wore a hat that said ‘Wake Up’. He announced to Nemo, “It’s me not you that the little princess is looking for.” *This* was the thing that now woke Nemo up. For the first time, his return to reality was not precipitated by the circumstances of his nightmare—generally falling down in one way or another—but rather, by the simple appearance of Flip.

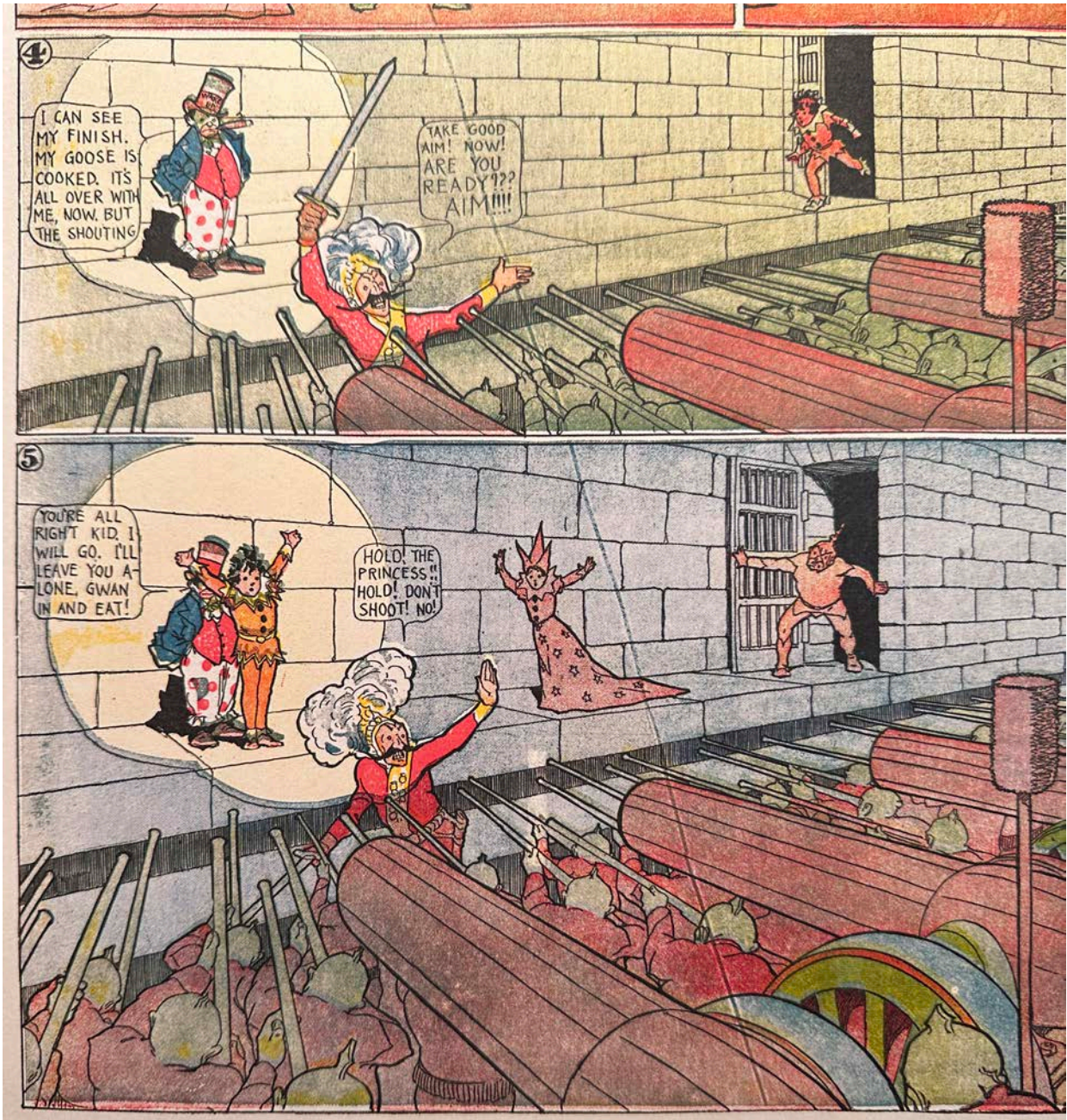


Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, March 4, 1906

Flip’s arrival solidifies Nemo’s wish to truly remain in the dream.. He is angry, “I’d like to get a hold of that Flip. Oh!”

His papa suggested that he stop dreaming altogether.

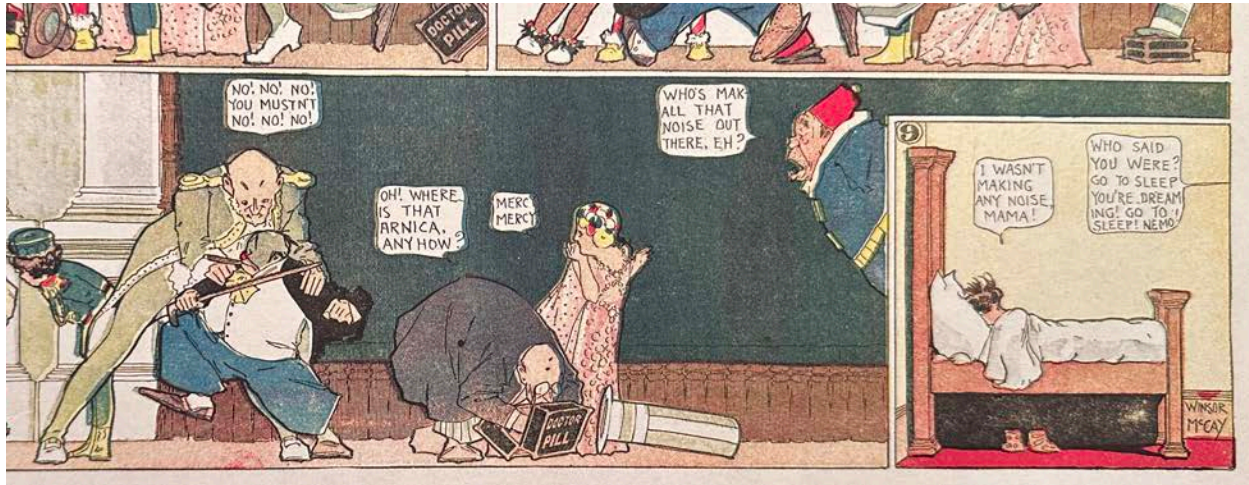
Zoom forward in time to November of 1906. Nemo has not only arrived in Slumberland (finally) but, he has met the princess despite Flip's best efforts to wake him up. (She was not without resources.) She blindfolded Nemo to prevent him from seeing Flip and when *that* didn't work, in an effort to end up with the right suitor, the princess tried to have Flip shot by a firing squad.



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 18, 1906

But Nemo intervened.

This nearly catastrophic event enabled Nemo and Flip to finally become friends. A jungle imp got added to the mix—(perhaps Nemo’s primitive side?)—so, Nemo, Flip and Impie were now a threesome. Undeterred, the princess then sent her father’s personal physician ‘Dr. Pill’ to drug Nemo to prevent his waking up. (She wanted him to remain in the ‘dream’.)



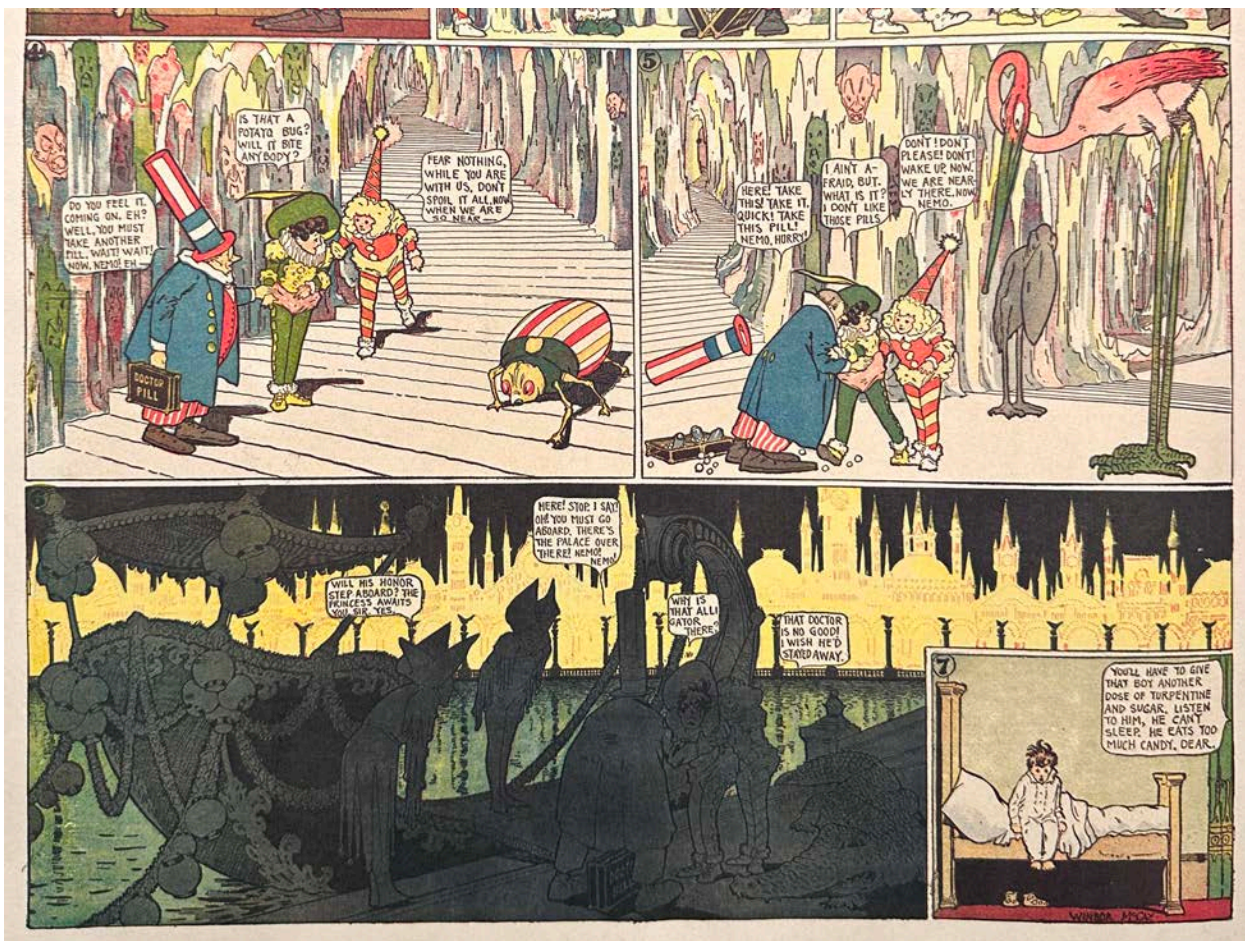
Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, August 25, 1907

Doctor Pill rooted through his bag for the ‘medicine’, Arnica (which is a pain reliever that can become poisonous in large amounts). After Dr. Pill’s remedy, things started to get pretty weird. Nemo, Flip and the Imp suddenly found themselves drawn into gradually more and more confusing places, distorted parts of the palace that they couldn’t find their way out of. They are suddenly dressed as clowns in a jungle of incredibly tall columns that morph into a dense forest. Nemo says ”Ooh! I’m afraid to go any further. Let’s go back!”



Close-up from Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, September 8, 1907

We can read the story so far in several ways, as: Nemo straining to escape his moral conscience—his duty to marry and be part of a structured, conventional society, a desire for emancipation—or—as the flirting with paranoia of a youth who dabbles with mushrooms—or—as the renunciation of the orderly coherent development of an imagined world to an advance that is helter-skelter, frenzied, as the classic analytic patient proceeds in the throes of associative freedom—or—as the speed and disorientation of modern life (Delirious New York!)—tall buildings, elevators, motorcars, balloonatics, etc.—or—as the confusion of night and day, a fluid temporality brought on by the 250,000 electric light bulbs of Coney Island glowing just across the bay—or—as the unity of opposites when he and Flip become friends—or—as the psychic mood of early modern Architecture. Nemo thought he was looking for a place that was like the White City, a Neo-classical dream. But, it seems instead that he landed in a palace of Befuddlement.



Close-up from *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, New York Herald, Sunday, June 10, 1906

Part of the charm of *Little Nemo* is the way it lends itself to ambiguity. The cartoons have the marvelous ability to be many things at once. Interestingly, the physical characteristic of drawings

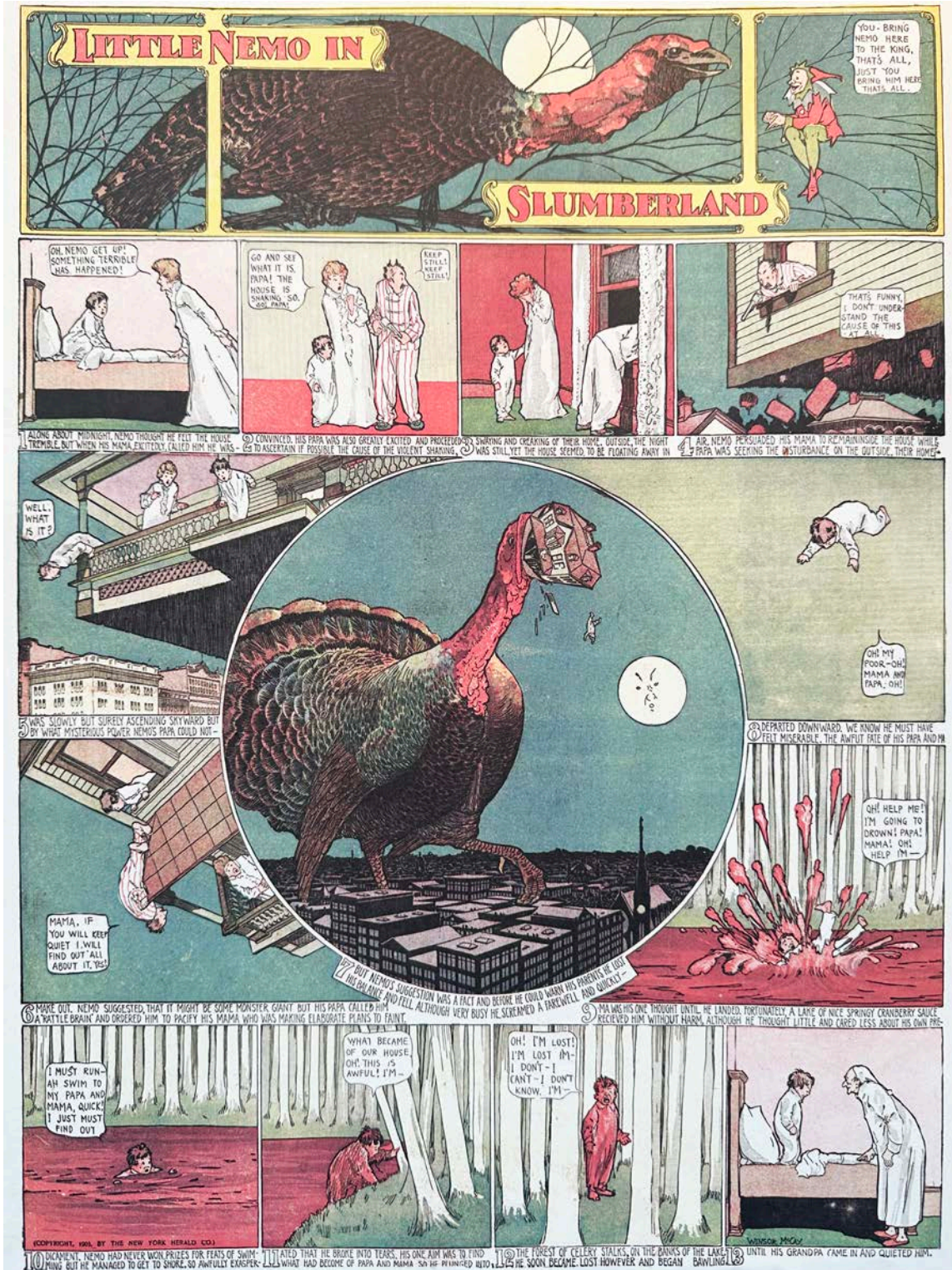
that hold so much possibility is not an abstraction or loose unidentifiable scribble. The settings are easily recognizable as rooms, palaces, gardens, oceans, even specifically as Coney Island, New York City, and the Atlantic beach... and the characters are readily identifiable as a little boy, an imp, a clown, a hobo, a little princess, a mythical king, and yet, the realistically drawn images have a dreamy, fairytale quality. They live outside the rules of everyday life, and return to it—return to bed—reliably at the end of each page.⁵

The story of Nemo ends up encompassing the opposite of what is initially supposed. At the beginning, once he is drawn into allure of Slumberland, he is trying to get there to ‘rescue’ the princess, but Flip keeps causing him to wake up. His ultimate befriending of Flip gives him the ability to perceive the duality of his circumstances. Flip is a remnant from his youth vying with Nemo for his anima, the princess.⁶ Flip is also a version of Winsor in his adult life on vaudeville.

McCay’s talents are guided by his desire to entertain—via amazement—through scale, splendor, weirdness, beauty, light, and being out of balance. These are the things that really impress our imagination and stay with us. Our waking minds—our bodies—rely on a steady stream of habitual scales, a *lack* of splendor, an expurgation of the weird, a sublimation of beauty, a continual adaptation to light and dark and a constant realignment of all of our senses to maintain balance—*vis-a-vis*—Proust’s discussion of how his bedroom became ‘habitable’ only through the accommodating force of Habit. Our dreaming minds inhabit the ‘weird’ world where emotion makes an impression. Impressions made with ‘dangerous’ sensations—like those found in McCay’s fantastic drawings—make certain aspects of the buildings of that time more discernible. McCay had a knack for scooping up all of the prurient beams of light spilling out from the doorway of the twentieth century to illuminate his stories ... dangerous sneezers, dangerous dreams of overindulgence (Rarebit Fiends), Keystone Kop chase scenes, weird circus monsters, Coney’s Island’s rollercoaster going out of control, the centrifugal force of whirling rides, sudden unexpected changes in scale, Nemo growing to the size of building, then shrinking to the size of a mouse as if life was suddenly a giant funhouse mirror. What emerges is the ‘other’ side, the (fiendish) dream of modern Architecture.

⁵ “[Vico’s] theory of cognition holds that images not only represent something but also capture something of (participate in the nature of) what is represented ... Vico also advocates the setting of a mental vocabulary of images, premising that human understanding needs human images to be developed, and abstract categories can be reached only through such representations.” Marco Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture: Anthropomorphism in Architectural Theory* (Savage, MD: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 45-6. Frascari discusses the benefits of constructing alternate systems of representational knowledge. For a description of the way knowledge and critical thinking are equally beholden to ‘lived’ images and ‘imagined’ ones, see Frascari’s discussion of Carlo Lodoli and Giambattista Vico. *Little Nemo* lived in this enigmatic territory and is a pleasurable way to access Lodoli’s and Vico’s thinking about the dangers of rationalism.

⁶ In real life McCay’s ‘princess’ was only 14 when he courted and married her when he was the age of 23. They lied about their ages.

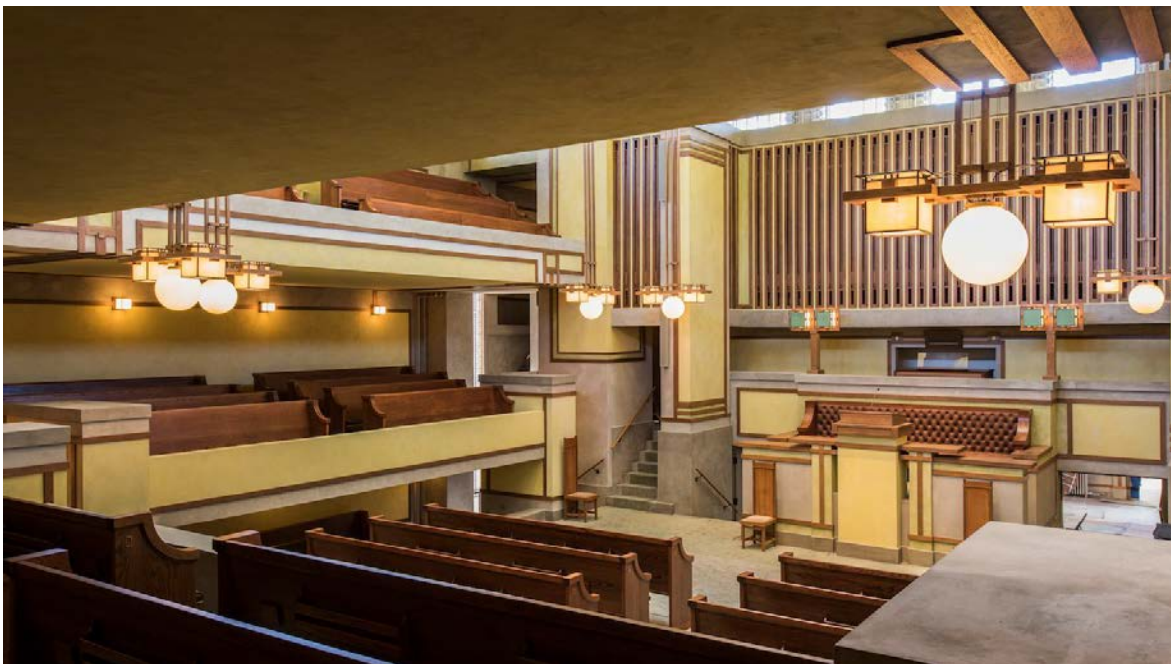


Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, November 26, 1905

As Nemo's house floats into the air, the porch cantilevers out in a modern way. His 'meal' (the turkey) then causes him to fall and land in a forest of celery stalks.

McCay rendered things in lots of ways. And it's not to say that the alluring quality of his drawings shouldn't be attributed to his happy lines, his attention to detail, his palette—(those wonderful newsprint colors and dots!)—but, the thing that imbued his drawings most with the dreamlike qualities that are discussed in this dissertation—the things that a modern architect might usefully have employed—at that time—when peering into a 'dream' to make “a hypothetical design of the unknown”⁷—was perhaps a mere matter of composition. McCay was always artfully engaged in flipping.

Seeing sideways and upside down

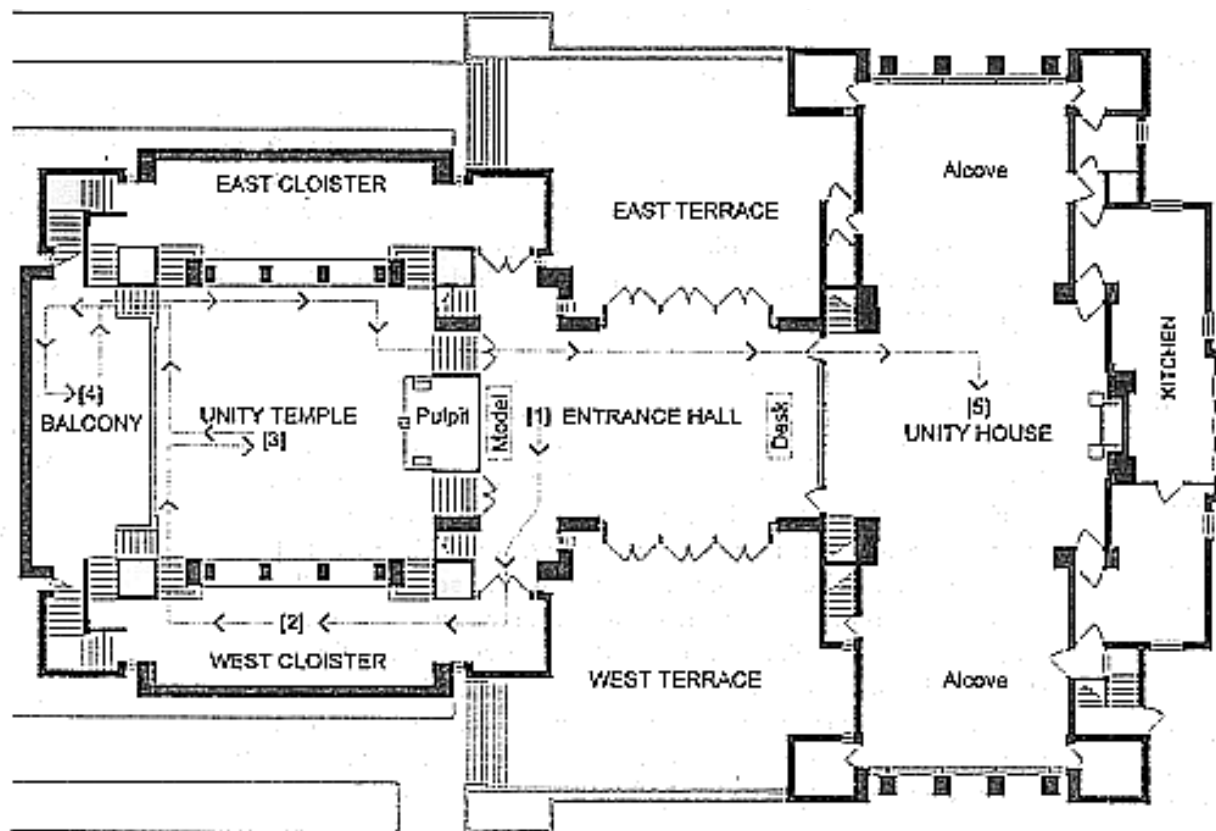


Interior view of Unity Temple from the balcony looking toward the pulpit

When asked about the genius of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple (designed in 1905), Philip Johnson described the entrance into the central gathering space as a right turn which leads to a view of steps that lead up to an elevated platform. This simple act of turning and viewing enables a surprise dimension. Wright's transformation is done so artfully that it appears to happen without artifice.⁸ The inhabitants of Unity Temple process to their seats, are open and ready to be inspired—unaware that this pivotal turn in their thinking was choreographed by Wright.

⁷ Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture*, 46.

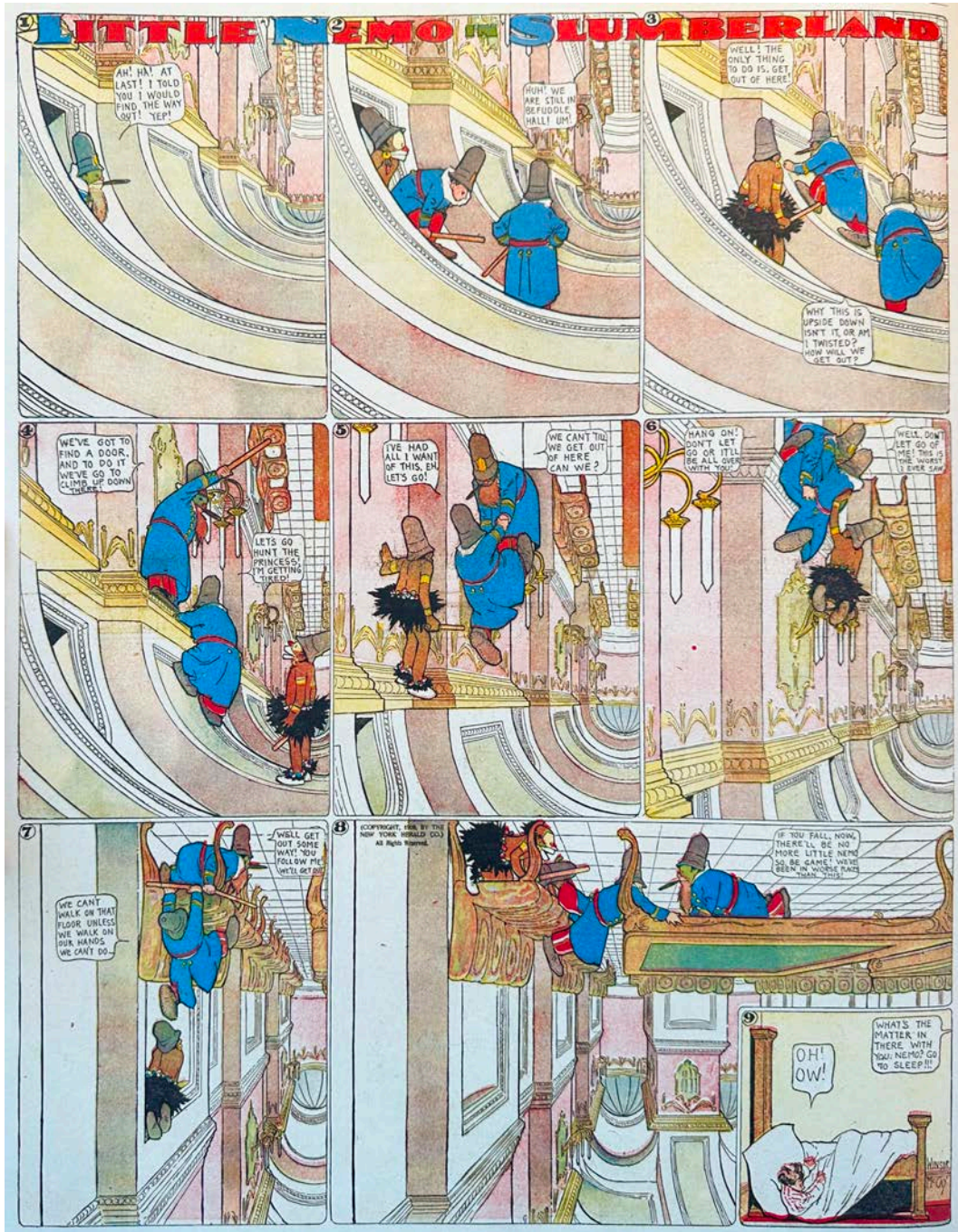
⁸ Julavitz, Heidi. *The Folded Clock*. New York: Doubleday, 2015. The above is a quotation from a review in *The New York Times Book Review*, March 29, 2015 by Eula Bliss, about the author's way of allowing the reader to see things through her eyes.



The plan above shows a diagram of a potential circumnavigation of Unity Temple, something Wright referred to as the “path of discovery.” Wright had this act of turning and viewing uppermost in mind. Turning leads through openings that frame important views, that “hold the view.” This simple act draws you into a room and initiates a particular theme, like contemplation or listening. It highlights that theme. It is more likely to be remembered when discovered in this way. It is more naturally embedded into a visitor’s memory because there is a little element of surprise, and, because it is framed.

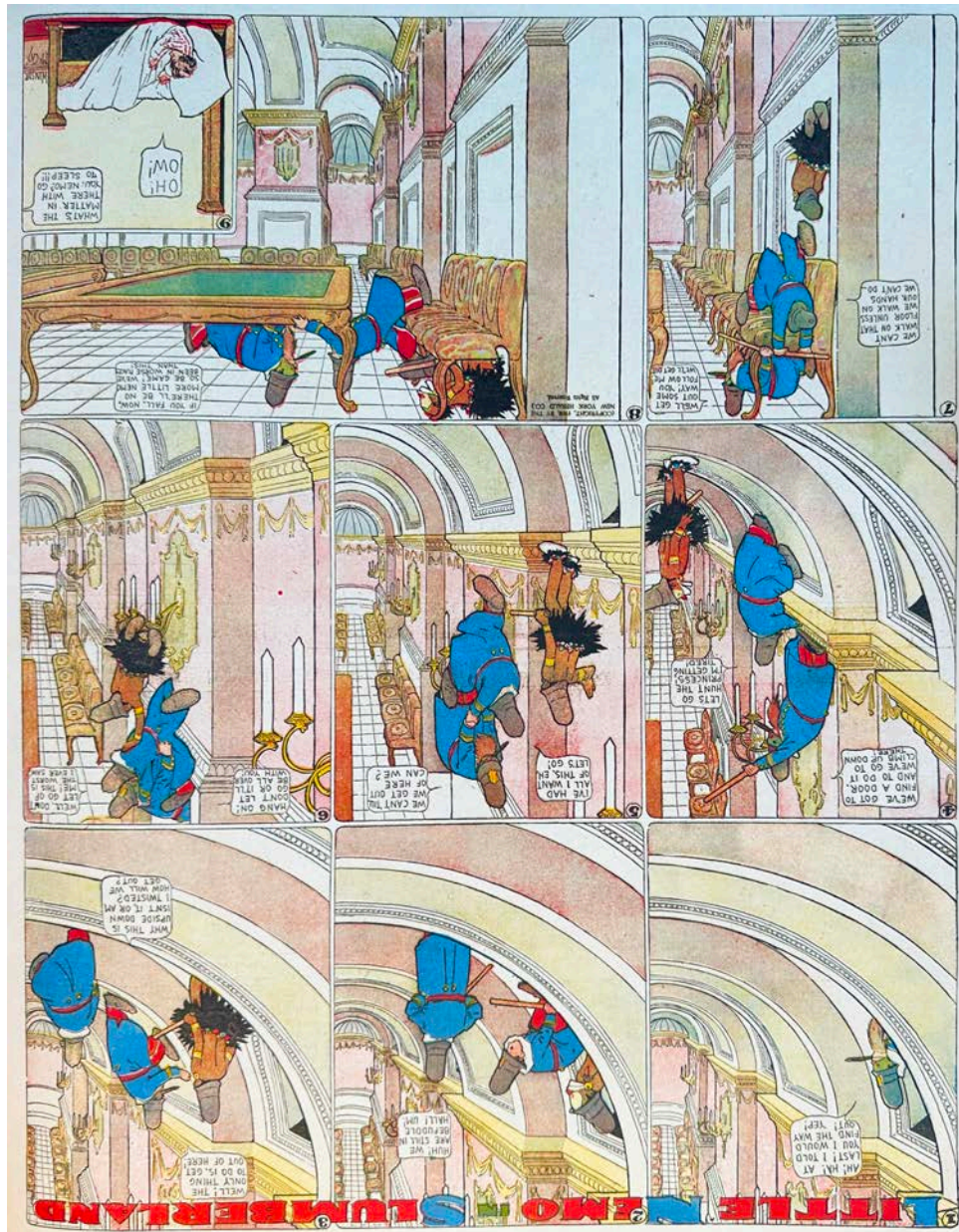
When looking at McCay’s cartoons of Befuddle Hall—storyboards, you could say, about being inside it—instead of making a simple right hand turn, *we* are turned sideways, or upside down. We enter into Winsor McCay’s realm. Through an obvious bit of artifice, the ‘turned’ view becomes an intrigue.

On Sunday, February 16, 1908, Nemo, Flip and Jungle Imp pull back the curtain to enter the room called ‘Befuddle Hall’. Mr. Wright used the turning viewpoint to re-orient his visitors toward the spirit. McCay used it to dis-orientate them—and us.



Inside Befuddle Hall Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, February 16, 1908

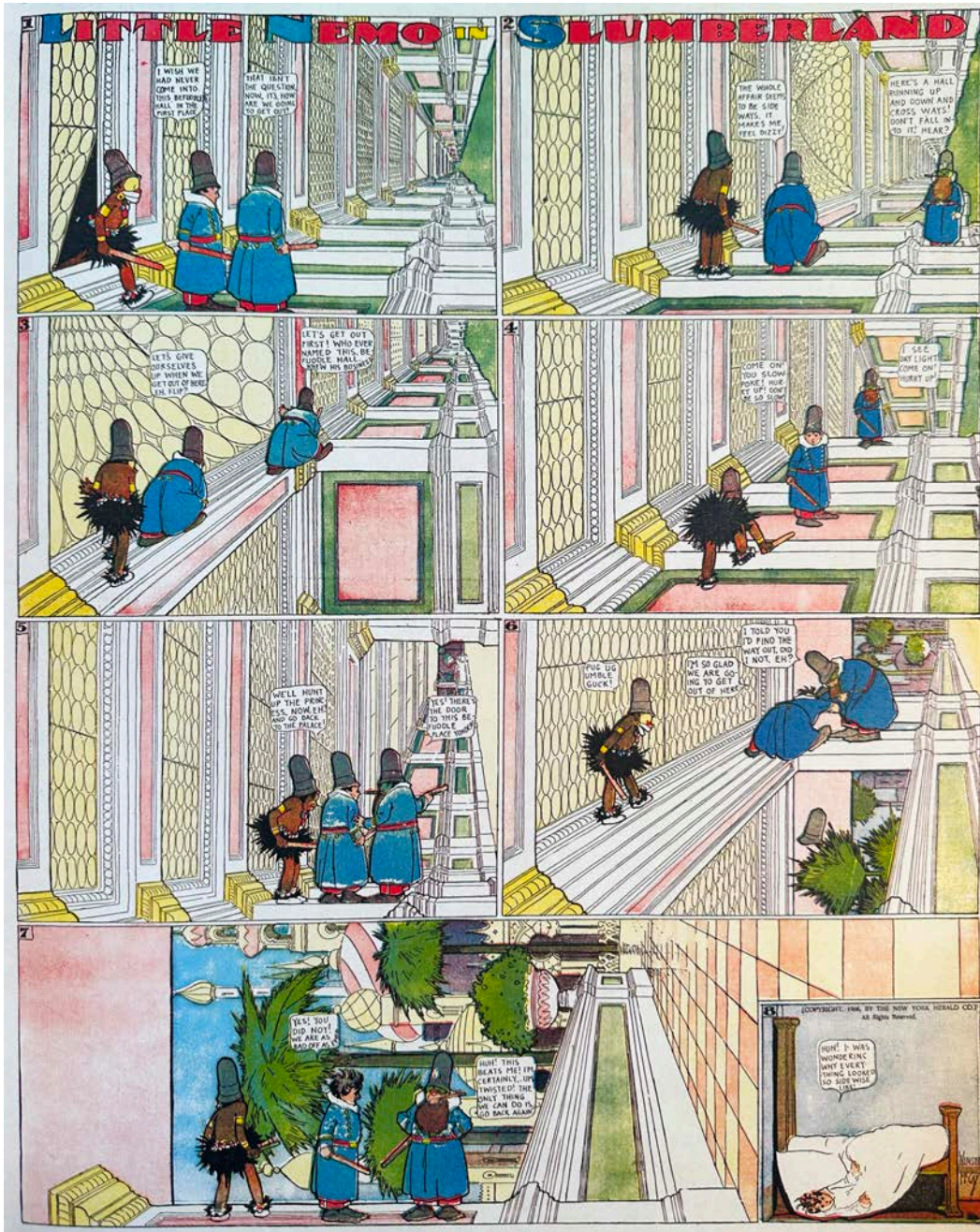
McCay rotated the building in section rather than plan. This simple reorientation of the setting makes it indiscernible. Is this a ceiling or a wonderful interior that is like a western Arizona landscape? How are the chairs managing to stick to the ceiling ... or is that a floor? The upside down gravity is mysterious. Nemo and friends are challenged by this new kind of gravity that makes it difficult to climb up (or is it down?) the walls, but necessary if they are going to use the door. The furniture obeys the gravity of the room. The characters obey the gravity of the page.



Upside-down view of the same page

When you look at the same page upside down—which surely every child reading this comic *did* as they lay sprawled on the floor on Sunday morning—a far more subtle shift in perspective becomes apparent. In the sequenced views, McCay gradually shifted the vantage point from that of a six year old child looking up, to the perspective of giant looking down. It is interesting that this shift is not as perceptible the first way. The cartoon seems to tell us that different qualities of the picture are seen in the two orientations. In the ‘page-logic’ upside-down view, we notice the forms themselves in an effort to discern what the room *is*. In the ‘room-logic’ view (with the page upside down), we notice the gradual change in perspective because we do not have to spend our visual skill putting together the meaning of the forms in the picture.

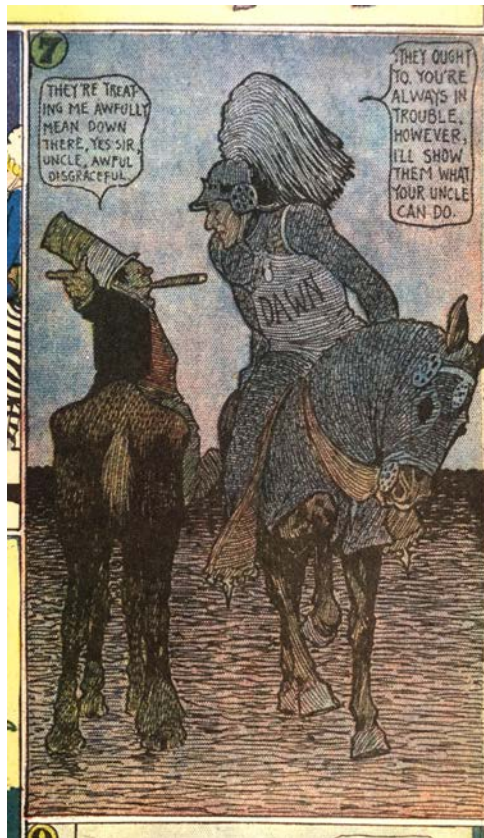
The view of the rooms we inhabit changes our understanding more than the practical reality of our ability to actually navigate the terrain. The next Sunday in the Befuddle Hall series is a play on being sideways. The sideways orientation allows Nemo and his friends to find their way out of Befuddle Hall, but their prolonged visit has caused the entire *world* to turn sideways. They must retrace their steps to regain sanity. We know the trick, but we are still surprised and disturbed to see the palm trees growing sideways. The repetition in the cells makes us feel as if Nemo and his friends have been inhabiting the sideways world for a very long time.



Inside Befuddle Hall Little Nemo in Slumberland, New York Herald, Sunday, February 23, 1908

The upside down world[] as a 180 degree turn[] operates with the same logic as the waking world. And we are used to this kind of flipping. Our brain flips our retinal view automatically. Things behave with respect to gravity, it's just a question of who's gravity (the Room's or Nemo's). In a way, the sideways world is the more disturbing.

McCay likes flipping. He chose 'Flip' as the name for Nemo's nemesis (turned friend). The 'flip-flop' is a fluctuation, a change of direction, an attitude. Heart 'flip-flops' are disorienting. You can 'flip your lid' when you are violently angry, or 'flip your lip' which is to idly talk nonsense, or look at the 'flip side', which was originally the reverse or 'other' side of a phonograph record.⁹ A 'Flip Flap' was a somersault in vaudeville. It has the feel of comedic improvisation, of making things up as you go along, of not being in control or knowing what's next. Flip's original goal was to wake Nemo up each Sunday to prevent his arrival in Slumberland to find the princess. It grew into more than that.



Flip is the nephew of 'Dawn'[] who rides a horse and sweeps in with the sunlight. Flip is a grumpy, stogie smoking hobo related to a sort of dawning of thought. He has a gravelly sense of humor that changes from frustration to enlightenment[] as if to say: flip it over, look at it from a different perspective[] literally. The drawings themselves flip between prankish and philosophical, even though the allusions to Keystone Kops, vaudeville, circuses and clowns give a sense of comic timing more than anything too terribly serious.

Being able to see sideways or upside down is practical. This kind of perceptual aptitude is critical if you are a pilot navigating an airplane (the old fashioned way[] by looking at the landscape) or a technologically savvy surgeon doing an operation through a laparoscope. In either scale, pattern recognition is key. The misreading of an image is not humorous, but catastrophic. It is also a component in understanding digital data. A Brooklyn

*Close-up of Little Nemo in Slumberland,
New York Herald, Sunday, March 11, 1906*

⁹ These definitions are taken from the *Dictionary of American Slang*. Compiled and edited by Harold Wentworth, Ph.D. And Stuart Berg Flexner, M.A. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1960) The dictionary centers on the slang of the worlds of jazz, Prohibition, the armed forces, teen-agers, business and politics, the underworld, and various fields of entertainment.

painter, Daniel Kohn, was asked to collaborate with genetic scientists at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York to help them evaluate chunks of abstract digital data. When asked in an interview, Mr. Kohn suggested that more important even than the clues that come from pattern recognition is *how* we choose to look. “It’s about frameworks of recognition; how you choose to look, rather than what you’re trying to see.”¹⁰ A designer rendering in this way will find unexpected things. Architects are constantly flipping things. There are upside down flips like ‘reflected ceiling plans’, and sideways flips when plans are rotated to cut and project a section.

Nemo went on a search for Slumberland, but instead of finding a well-ordered Neo-classical White City, he discovered Befuddle Hall.

Revisiting Freud’s quote about our mental map:

Now let us, by a flight of the imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past. . . an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. ¹¹

It is important how we choose to look at our ‘Rome’.



Brion Cemetery and Sanctuary in San Vito d'Altivole, Italy by Carlo Scarpa

Scarpa portrayed a cemetery as “the other side” of life.

¹⁰ Benedict Carey, *Learning to See Data*. New York Times. March 29, 2015.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Trans. and edited by James Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1961), 17.

Putting Flip into the story to stop Nemo from getting to Slumberland made the story more interesting. Nemo needed an antagonist, but he also needed contrast. Part of the chemistry of Buster Keaton and Roscoe ‘Fatty’ Arbuckle was the contrast between Roscoe’s breadth and Buster’s size, and between Roscoe’s constant smiling and Buster’s stone face.¹² Contrast is a chemistry that works. It’s good to have a ‘Flip’. Most buildings—a house, for example—are seen as rooms that each have a particular logical function, an entryway, a living room, a dining room, a *bed* room, but, it might be more interesting for a house to have a Nemo/Flip or a Buster/Fatty, a theme with its ‘other’ side. It could be a way to propel the story of the house, one that would be more compelling, and more mysterious.

The emotional impact of drawing

According to Henri Bergson, the memory, and by extension, the *imagination* is naturally inclined to exaggerate and condense. For example, if we sit on the couch and stare absently at the far side of the room, and we see a diffuser come into view, what our awake minds are doing is also simply that: exaggerating and condensing. Without thinking about it—seemingly with no effort at all—we recognize that thing as a ‘diffuser’. And we know all kinds of things about it. We know the comforting sound it makes when heating the room. We know the occasional clank that it sometimes makes when it first comes on. We understand its simple shape and the design of its grill. According to Henri Bergson, the kind of seemingly absent-minded effort required to reach back into our memories and attach the image and sound of that rectangle on the wall to the concept of ‘diffuser’ and heating and temperature modification—and understand all of our expectations of a ‘diffuser’—requires a great deal of instantaneous effort, the effort of searching through the condensed versions of ‘rectangles’ and ‘diffusers’ and ‘heating’ that we have seen and heard all our lives, and then exaggerating the most pertinent images enough to enable us to recognize what it is that we are seeing and hearing. If the diffuser made a strange noise (or god forbid, a sudden movement), we would immediately be on the alert. It turns out we are paying attention after all. Little wonder that we are exhausted at the end of the day and need to sleep.

The dreaming process that we fall into when asleep is a lot like drawing. It is a kind of representation that generates new forms and understandings.¹³ When we dream, exaggerating and condensing things also has to do with increasing the intensity of emotion to ‘feel’ it. A new

¹² W. E. Mulligan, “The Man Who Never Smiles,” From *Pantomime*, vol.1, no.2 (October 5, 1921). The Interview is published in *Buster Keaton Interviews*. Edited by Kevin W. Sweeney. (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 8.

¹³ “A dream is a mode of production by which the images (*subnotioni*) can be manipulated through dimensional and scale changes (*augmentazioni* and *diminution*), combinations and analogies (*proportioni*) resulting in the generation of new forms and understandings.” Frascari, *Monsters*, 46. Freud discussed condensation in words like ‘famillionare’ (used by a man describing the friendship he struck up with a wealthy person) and ‘alcoholidays’. A visual version of would be a monster like a bird-headed man. The combination is a new personality.

understanding is reached, not just through dimensional manipulation, but also through its emotional impact. McCay's drawings are especially good at portraying this.



Still from The Sinking of the 'Lusitania' (1918)

Our memory, thought of as 'imagination' is most capable of expanding when our minds are free from noticing and attending to the things at hand, free from the ordinary restraints of keeping everything in the correct proportion. They remind us that our memory is most impressed when things are emotionally magnified. McCay engaged romantically in the act of drawing. One wonders, while McCay was making his ink drawings, how the pen felt in his hand. Was the ink sometimes like a river erupting, all foam and raging white-flecked waves? What was the sound of his brush falling on the surface of the paper? Was it a 'whoosh?' Here is a still from an animation that McCay made in 1918 called *The Sinking of the 'Lusitania'*. It depicts the reverberation and power of War. The animation is striking, and its boldness only adds to the heartbreak of the event. The sheer emotion that McCay elicits from a viewer as they take in his ability to fill the page with a glorious magnification of dark and light, with the contrast of delicate line weights and confident thick black brush strokes, is then magnified again by the animation of the drawing.



Still from The Sinking of the 'Lusitania' (1918)

It adds to the emotion that, in this case, showed the dawning of the United States involvement in World War I.

* * *

The end is the beginning

Keaton discussed how his story material came about as a condensed process engaged in by a small and talented crew.

Just the scenario department. We all sat down for our ideas, and if somebody gets one, why we all set out to work on it and see how—what opportunities—and the main thing with laying out a story is, it's easy to get a start, the finish is always the tough thing. So, the minute somebody had an idea—we said what is it going to lead to? We don't go the middle of the story; we jump right to the finish. So the finish—this would be the natural finish—says now does that give us any opportunities for gags? ... Basic idea, and when we got that finish and knew what we were heading for, then we went back and wrote the middle.¹⁴

Keaton described how important it was for those intervening gags to be just right.

¹⁴ From Arthur B. Friedman. *Buster Keaton: An Interview*. From *Film Quarterly*, vol.19, no.4 (Summer 1966):2-5, Copyright 1966 by the Regents of the University of California.

Make it exciting, fast action sometimes, and a couple of outstanding gags. We've got to be able to place those gags naturally, 'cause one of the worst mistakes you could make in those pictures was dragging in a gag by the heels. A misplaced gag, even though it's good, it's wrong to do.

In other words: find the ending, and then let the rest fall into place. Keaton's story is remarkably similar to the description by one of his contemporaries (entirely unknown to him) of the dreaming process itself. This description is by Pavel Florensky, a Russian orthodox priest, philosopher and scientist. While Keaton was enjoying a celebrity unheard of before moving pictures as a movie icon, Florensky, in the autumn of 1922, was dictating a book about an entirely different kind of icon in the wee hours of the night, hidden away in a Theological Academy in a small town in Russia while the Bolshevik regime installed an entirely new reality everywhere around him. The two lived in entirely different worlds, although Keaton's films were extremely popular in Russia.¹⁵ Here is Florensky, describing a dream that ends with the ringing of an alarm clock. He notes this interesting phenomenon: that many people have the experience of having their dreams end with the ringing of an alarm clock, and that it makes perfect sense in the dream:

It's a spring morning and I'm going for a walk through green meadows, and I come to the neighboring village. I see the villagers dressed in Sunday clothes, carrying their prayerbooks, a big crowd of them all heading for the church. Today is Sunday and Divine Liturgy will soon begin. I decide to go to Liturgy but I'm a bit warm from walking, so I decide first to rest in the cemetery next to the church. I start to read the epitaphs, and then I notice the bell ringer start to go up the bell tower. The bell must be rung to start the service, but it still hangs unmoving. Then the bell begins to sway and suddenly it peals out in loud, piercing sounds—so piercing, in fact, that I awake to find that the piercing sound is my alarm clock ringing.¹⁶

A coincidence? Here is Florensky, again, with a scientific explanation of the mechanics of a dream:

We dream (let us say) a sequence of persons, places and events whose causal linkages reside not in some 'deep comprehension' of those persons, places and events but, instead are found in the empirical surfaces of the dream. We plainly understand, in the dream, how one event causes

¹⁵ Keaton: "I was a box-office draw in the darnedest country in the world. Russia. I was a bigger box-office attraction than Chaplin in Russia." Christopher Bishop. *An Interview with Buster Keaton*. From *Him Quarterly*, vol.12, no.1 (Fall 1958): 15-22. The Interview is published in *Buster Keaton Interviews*. Edited by Kevin W. Sweeney. (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 57.

¹⁶ Fr. Pavel Florensky. *Iconostasis*. Translated by Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev. (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000) 38-9. Florensky was born in 1882, three years before Buster Keaton. Father Florensky was eventually imprisoned in Siberia. It is only recently that this writing has been translated into English.

another, and how (possibly quite absurdly) two or more events are connected because the first one is causing the next ones to occur; moreover, as the dream unfolds toward some conclusive event, some dénouement to the dream's entire system of cause-effect. Let us call this conclusive event X; and let us say, too, that X occurred because of some previous event T, which in turn, was caused by S, whose cause was R, and so on: going from effect to cause, from latter to prior, from present to past, until we arrive at the dream's starting point, some usually quite insignificant meaningless event A: and it is this event A that is understood in the dream as the first cause of the entire system.¹⁷

There is a strong reverberation here with the way Keaton came up with his story material, a flipping of time, ie. that the stories we tell when we are asleep move in a reverse direction. And for Florensky it is also a reversal of space. Florensky was ardent about the spiritual dimensions of seeing the flip side of perspective through icons. (He was an orthodox priest, so he took icons very seriously.) He saw the spiritual power of icons as the placement of the point of view behind the painted board, ie. that when we gaze at an icon, we are always aware of the idea that God is looking at us, rather than the other way around.¹⁸

Like Marcel Proust in his *In Search of Lost Time*, Florensky argues that the aim of a dreams *dénouement* is about understanding, or waking, which comes about when we think backwards.

Now, what makes the dreamer awaken? When we look at this question from the viewpoint of waking consciousness, we might want to say that it is omega (the noise or the light) that awakens us. From within the dream, however, it is plainly the conclusive dream event X—the dénouement—that, precisely because it ends the dream, awakens us ...

¹⁷ Fr. Pavel Florensky. *Iconostasis*, 36.

¹⁸ Fr. Florensky is not enchanted with perspectival views being incorporated into church frescos. He mentions Giotto (who introduced the supposedly new method of perspective into his frescoes in the upper church of St. Francis of Assisi) as being “inclined towards a superficial outlook on life in the spirit of the Renaissance.” In Florensky’s thinking, Giotto’s perspective was a method used in the semi-theatrical presentation of mystery plays, a more secular version of a religious ritual performed in the Middle Ages. The landscapes in the frescos developed from illusionistic decoration or ‘scenery’ for the plays. He quotes Alexandre Benois, “In some of the frescos we are probably seeing scenes from these spectacles captured directly.” In their mimicry, they have nothing to do with looking for an appearance of the divine. Fr. Florensky, “Reverse Perspective,” article written in October 1919 in the form of a lecture for the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and Antiquities of the Lava of the Trinity and St. Sergius, in *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art*, Trans. Wendy Salmon, Edited by Nicoletta Misler (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2001), 220-3. In contrast, he traces the history of the icon to the methods used by ancient Egyptians for making a painted sarcophagus “i.e., a wooden case painted inside wherein is placed the mummy...,” prepared in the same way as the slightly concave shaped board of the icon, “wrapped in strips of linen first soaked with glue and then layered with powdered gypsum... ..to step firmly on the soil of symbolism.” The face “is created in and by light.” He saw the funerary mask as “truly the *appearance* of the deceased, a heavenly appearance ... an appearance wholly apart from earthly cares and illumined by heavenly light.” Fr. Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 160-4.

The dream's dénouement and its external cause—is under no circumstances an accidental occurrence.

But note what we are saying: the same event is being differently seen by two consciousness: by waking consciousness, it is omega, while by dream consciousness, it is X.¹⁹

There is a reverberation here, a vibrating twoness in time. Florensky rejects the idea that the dream's end is anything but the overarching inspiration for all of its contents, and it is a remarkably bold statement that we have the ability to perceive time in the reverse.

The dream dénouement is therefore not some independent event glued from the outside onto the dream's causal chain: in some unfathomable way, it never interrupt's the dream's logic and shape and whole pattern of interlocked details. A dream is unquestionably a complete truth, a self-enclosed coherence, in which the dénouement is predetermined from the very start in such a way that we may say that the end determines both the beginning and everything that occurs between the beginning and the end ... so we may say that the composition of the dream is teleological: its events occur because of the dénouement, in such a way that the dénouement will not be left hanging in the air but will, instead, exhibit deep programmatic rationality.²⁰

Keaton had this ability—when he was making his movies, like the dream, and like McCay's cartoons—even though they live in the realm of entertainment for a mass viewership—to exist in space and time like the icon. It is a—

... beholding that ascends. Our seeing rises above everything around us, for we recognize that we are, in this act of seeing, existing in the icon's space in eternity ... we recognize the vision as something that, in essence, exceeds the empirical world, as something acting upon us from its own dominion.²¹

* * *

¹⁹ Fr. Florensky, *Iconostasis*, 36-7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

Doubleteness

Winsor McCay gave us a humorous recounting of his drafting circumstances while working on the animated images for the *Little Nemo* film. The animation required a total of 4,000 drawings made on translucent rice paper.



Still from Little Nemo, a movie that included a story about how the animation was made.

Translucent rice paper can be registered over the drawings beneath it, not unlike a film that has been double exposed. This is another dimension of drawing discussed by Florensky.²² In *The Cameraman*, one of Buster Keaton ‘pet’ pictures, he plays an inexperienced film maker who uses a second-hand motion-picture camera as a way to impress a girl who works in the newsreel department of MGM. In the movie, he has been rejected upon sight by the office because his old camera is one of the oldest models at the time—a Pathé. The girl says: ²³

“There’s only one way you can do anything. You gotta go out and photograph somethin’ of interest. And if they see it and they can use the film you shoot, they’ll buy it from you.”

With his nonexistent skill as a newsreel cameraman he encounters all kinds of problems including an unintentional double exposure. The negative of this film (in actual fact) had deteriorated when Buster was interviewed about it by George C. Pratt in 1958. Buster lamented:

²² Fr, Florensky on what it means in geometrical terms to depict a certain reality: “...the power of any three- and even multi-dimensional image is exactly the same as the power of any two- and even one-dimensional image... ..moreover, the resulting map can be established by an infinite number of correspondences, arithmetical or analytical, as well as geometrical. ...Generally speaking, any continuous figure of any number of dimensions and with any perimeter, can be mapped on any other figure also with any number of dimensions and with any perimeter: anything you like in geometry can be depicted on anything you like.” Fr. Florensky, “Reverse Perspective,” In *Beyond Vision: Essays on the Perception of Art*, 255-6.

²³ George C. Pratt, “‘Anything Can Happen—and Generally Did’: Buster Keaton on His Silent Film Career,” In *Image*, vol.17, no.4 (1974): 19-29; reprinted in “*Image*” on the Art and Evolution of the Film: Photographs and Articles from the Magazine of International Museum of Photography, ed. Marshall Deutelbaum (New York: Dover, 1979), 195-204, In *Buster Keaton Interviews*, 45-7.

That's a shame because some of the biggest gags are there.

The 'lost' gags of *The Cameraman* are wonderful—and surreal—simply because Buster's character (the cameraman) is inexperienced. Keaton describes the storyline:

Then I got over to the Hudson River and got a shot of a battleship, and then a parade on Fifth Avenue, and I double-exposed it by accident. So I had the battleship comin' down Fifth Avenue and the parade comin' down the Hudson River.²⁴

It is only in Keaton's memory now. It is probably exactly because of Keaton's memory, though, that this funny story about an accidental double exposure became a feature film. Experience includes the rack up of a lifetime of accidents, accidents that a novice couldn't imagine. It is important to hang onto the 'involuntary disclosures'—the gags—Keaton valued as the really important things. Otherwise a filmmaker—or cartoonist—(or architect)—might lapse into formula. Keaton was aware of the plots that were starting to become formulaic in dramatic moving pictures. He even parodied them. He was resistant to his own comedic films lapsing into the characterization of 'farce'. According to Keaton—

Farce comedy as a rule is based on a simple misunderstanding or mistaken identity. There's always a couple of characters in the show, and if they come out and say, 'Wait a minute, this is the case,' all the problems would be solved. And, [there is] a farce tempo. In all farce comedies, everybody works automatically faster than they do when they're telling a legitimate story. They take things bigger. People get hysterical easy.²⁵

One of silent movie's greatest directors was conscious of the dangers of farce. Perhaps this is part of McCay's thinking too as he unveiled the farcical side of Slumberland. It wasn't all gleaming Neo-classical white columns. It was befuddling. Keaton's stories are not easily resolved by pointing out the incorrect context. The story gets resolved within the logic of the strange circumstances, like a dream. At no point during a dream do we think to ourselves; "Gosh! If I was awake I would realize that all of this stuff is just made up!" The dream always resolves itself within its own setting.

²⁴ We see the architecture of a battleship floating into the landscape of New York City.

²⁵ *Buster Keaton Interviews*. Edited by Kevin W. Sweeney. This is discussed by Sweeney in the Introduction. xiii, xiv.



Still from The Camera Man silent movie (1928)

A side note about Time

I recently visited the West Building of the National Gallery to visit the familiar paintings that still hang in the rooms I once ‘lived’ in. The stairs to the design office hide behind an unmarked door in one of the galleries and I reminisce about those days spent traveling in and out of that door countless times throughout the day. On a recent visit, I had to take a break from looking at objects, because the act of looking so intently at things stirs the appetite. I needed a coffee and snack. And then in the cafeteria that is underground in the connecting link between the East and West Buildings, is a place where the background rush of the fountain brings a little bit of sunlight and delight into what would ordinarily be just a basement under 4th Street, a basement with rumbling buses and cars traveling overhead. As I was sitting there with my cappuccino and pastry, I had a little moment like Proust’s as he dipped into his cup of lime-blossom tea.

When the East Building opened in 1977, the staff that had formerly lived in its entirety on the ground floor of the West Building got divided in half. The executive staff, the curators, the librarians, the scholars and editors all moved into new offices with a breathtaking view of the Capitol and Mall in the East Building. The practical staff, ie. the exhibition design office, the silkscreen studio, the conservators, the photographers, the matters and framers, the caretakers of the Print and Drawing collections, and the architects who took care of the buildings were all tucked into the spaces still left on the ground floor of the West Building, those spaces that could only be accessed through hidden doors with views of either the sky or the greenhouses tucked behind the moat, a wall that obscured the view of windows on the ground floor from the street.

And the engineers, the ‘lighting guys’, the carpenters, masons and painters all had offices in the basements of either the East or West Buildings. To visit the head engineer with a question was to descend into a landscape of air washers and generators and metal cutters, a bit like being in a submarine.

But the “tea dipping” story. As I sat there thoughtfully drinking my cappuccino while gazing at the fountain, I was transported back to a time when the various offices in the West Building—the practical folk—met for coffee every day. If there was a question that came up while making the rounds of the galleries, the ones under construction or those being installed or the ones that were simply on view, then it would be answered at “coffee.” Each department had its usual table. The conversation was practical. The atmosphere was jolly. We all met there every day whether we were the Chief or just the new intern.

The story is important because it brushes upon one of the reasons our exhibitions were wonderful. We were an in-house staff. We had no idea of the “time equals money” equation. We didn’t think that way. We were there with the simple agenda of making beautiful exhibitions.

Buster Keaton touched upon this idea when discussing the fact that in the 20s they didn’t work from a script when making pictures. In his way of thinking, scripts led to a prescriptive way of working, not unlike the architecture designed by offices that bill by the hour. (It’s an unavoidable consequence of writing proposals, and paying salaries and rent, and unfortunately, it seeps into the very process of design.) But, regardless, Buster attributed the success of his films to the fact that there was an in-house “scenario” department, paid to make two films a year and not required to make a dollar to dollar prediction of how they would do it. Things were simple. They could be spontaneous, and, then they could preview the film and make changes. On the making of *Our Hospitality*, *The Navigator* and *The General*:

... there was never a script on any one of those pictures ... And our detail work in things like Hospitality and The General, period pictures, had to be correct. We did our own research right up there in the scenario room. We were very particular about details, costumes and backgrounds, props and things like that. And never had a script. Because when we had what we knew was a story, and had the material and opportunities to get our high spots, we’d bring in our cameraman, our technical man who builds our sets, the head electrician and the prop man—those boys on weekly salary with us—we didn’t just hire ‘em by the picture, they were right there. ²⁶

²⁶ George C. Pratt. “Anything Can Happen—and Generally Did”: Buster Keaton on His Silent Film Career” from *Image*, vol.17, no.4 (1974): 19-29; The Interview is published in *Buster Keaton Interviews*. Edited by Kevin W. Sweeney. (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2007) pp.34-6.

On some of those films sometimes, things did not go right. This happened in our design department too. A former director of the gallery, J. Carter Brown—incidentally the director who enabled our design department to exist in the first place—had a particular interest in the color of the walls because it is so important to how all of the colors in the paintings look. On one occasion, after mocking up large swathes of color to help us make our decision, we ended up repainting the whole room to make sure it was exactly right. It sounds luxurious. It *was* luxurious, but, worth the cost of the extra cans of paint.²⁷ Keaton had the same experience:

And with us, we may lay out a routine in a nice set we've built for this and we start out in this thing and we find out we're not getting any place. The material is not working out the way we thought it would ... we could feel it. Not only [that], looking at our own rushes, we could feel it also. Now, in a broom closet or or somethin' like that, we're liable to find a very good routine. So we shift right then and there. We just devote our time on that and the thunder with the big set. We didn't care about production. We didn't give a darn about that. So—if we were workin' by the script, you see, that would throw the whole thing right out of the window ... We didn't know when we started whether we was goin' to have the camera up five weeks or ten weeks. And it didn't make any difference. We owned our own camera. We're not paying rent on anything All our people are on weekly salary anyhow ... We've just got two pictures a year to make and that's all there is to it.

Not every museum can afford to have a design department, but even a small one is a better recipe for good exhibitions than none at all. Keaton thought that the ideal size of a scenario department was three good people. And in the end, that can pay off. Here's Keaton again, on the surprising cost of a film insert of “a man's hand coming in and picking up a book off of a desk” under the new system of studios that now work from scripts, with all of the budgeting happening scene by scene:

Now that's not a big lighting job. That's not a big set job. It's nothing. That cost me twenty years ago exactly \$8,000 ... Where it didn't cost us [in the early 1920s] only the piece of film we bought, which is \$.68—something like that. That was the difference. So if I don't work to schedule at MGM, I wreck the studio, according to their system.

How lucky we are that Keaton got to spend time for a while—on salary—in his own scenario department. The same is true of McCay. He was an in-house guy who got to spend as much time as it took to make beautiful drawings. Drawings of early modern Architecture should be made on

²⁷ It should be noted that we created entire worlds, rooms, ceilings, walls, even floors, as well as pedestals and special cases for our designs. It was not just a matter of choosing the right color of paint.

a steady diet of Welsh rarebit, raisin cake, peanuts, Huckleberry Pie and donuts in a world divorced from Time. Then the ‘scenario’ department can get it just right.

A fiendish dream (and conclusion)

The fantasies of architecture drawn by Winsor McCay can be read in reverse, beginning with the moment he woke up. The aspects of dreaming discussed in this dissertation are critical to understanding the ‘other’ side of the White City, which became modern Architecture. Winsor McCay’s *Dream of the Rarebit Fiend* and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* show a representation of the fantastical that became (but was never the same as) the reality of the things built during that time. It shows the ‘dream stuff’, the unexpected ‘other’ side of McCay’s surroundings, an amalgam of Chicago’s White City, dime museums, vaudeville stages, Coney Island, Dreamland, and the first skyscrapers in New York City, with their enigmatic new elevators and electric light. It shows how things were noticed, magnified and distilled. It shows how happy accidents that came about during the ‘dreaming’ process were kept and elaborated, how important it was to make mistakes and keep drawing, and that the ‘mistakes’ of the imagination were its very essence. We saw a glimpse of his design office—The Chamber of Horrors—and how he played off of the other forms of representation that surrounded him. McCay lived in a world where it was possible to make an unimaginable number of drawings, to make drawings that explored the possible realities of the things that were being ‘dreamed’. He drew every day, and whether it was a cartoon for the newspaper or exploring the new art form of animation, he took the time to ‘see’ things, to render the unexpected view.

Seen through the lines of McCay’s world, modern Architecture evolved alongside drawings that were alert to the metaphors that were hiding in plain sight, which led to abundant dreaming. Drawing was a spontaneous revelation, a shift in context, one that delighted us. Through McCay’s drawings, a hidden architectural reality became part of the conversation—one that usually hid in dreams—a deeper reality that was ordinarily obscured by the traditional forms inherited from Palladio and Thomas Jefferson.

* * *

Freud gave us an idea about the way dreaming can turn our view of the past into a palimpsest by choosing to tell a story through odd details that were recorded by us, but not spun into a rationale for why things took place and what happened.²⁸ These odd details can be seen in McCay's drawings.

Bergson gave us an idea about the way both our subconscious and conscious minds are masters of exaggeration, condensation and realignment. When freed from the effort of being awake—because our conscious minds are required to react to the circumstances at hand—we quite naturally enter into a 'dream' mode. Fantasy is not only attainable through dream representation, it is preferable. McCay's drawings still sing this idea beautifully.

Proust dwelt upon the revelations that come about from twoness in time. Things could not be properly drawn or understood unless seen as a series of resonating characters, places and events that gain a deeper meaning only when revisited. There was a 'seeing' (and feeling), and then a 'seeing' (and feeling) *again*. But in reverse. McCay celebrated the enlightenment that comes about by flipping things, through flipping space and time, and through seeing them co-exist on the page. Seeing two worlds existing on the same page—Sunday after Sunday—a continual re-invention—was an entertaining kind of remedy for the positivistic world in which modern Architecture was born. McCay made a beautiful animation that showed us 'how' he drew *Little Nemo*. The drawing gained a life of its own soon after the first lines were put down. McCay seemed to indicate that he was merely a spectator. The thing that had life was the dream, the drawing itself.

The depth of drawings circa 1899-2022 set the stage for modern Architecture. We have 'reverse-engineered', that is to say 'dreamed' about the beginning of modern Architecture by living in McCay's architectural fantasies. Having entered into McCay's world, we know that it is not the events (or buildings) themselves that define who we are so much as how we reinvent them, as if to say: drawing—and architecture—are a series of second chances.

This brings us to the end of this dissertation—

²⁸ Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture*, 28. Frascari relates a story told by Andrea Memmo (based upon the stories of Carlo Lodoli (d.1761), a "Socratic Franciscan friar") about a sculptor who reveres beauty being punished with exile to an island of monsters. He regains the desire to live by isolating individual beautiful details from each monster (like an eyebrow, for example) and then assembles them in his work. "Bringing together those anatomical details with imagination or constructive fantasy, the sculptor was able to produce a perfect whole body ..."

—and this closeup of Little Nemo as his dream chariot melts into his bed.



“Wake up!”

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