

FREDERICK J. KIESLER

## SOME TESTIMONIAL DRAWINGS OF DREAM IMAGES

Today, when a deliberate flight into pseudo-fantastic imagination is cultivated, the drawings of Stiles are here reproduced as honest attempts to convey the phenomena of dream images devoid of artistic perjury.

Since the winter of 1937, we have been at work on investigations covering the field of VISION in the Laboratory for Design-Correlation at Columbia University. Among other curios, I found a small book containing extraordinary drawings. Some of these with the author's explanations are reproduced here. "Dreams," as the official title page announces, was published in 1927 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. The author and designer is Professor Percy Goldthwait Stiles.

I quote: "The material for this collection of dreams was begun in the fall of 1927. The dreamer had just graduated from a scientific school and entered upon a year as assistant in a biological laboratory. (...) The dreamer is now past fifty, and he still finds pleasure in making additions to his considerable collection. (...) He is not at all satisfied with his power to recall the scenes and activities of the night: it is his impression that a great deal that is curious and striking is just beyond recovery. (...) The author of this collection is not a trained psychologist. He has not made any extended study of dream literature but has chosen to remain an amateur rather than attempt to qualify as an expert in the field. (...) During the last ten years, more or less, the dreamer has made many slight sketches to give prominence to certain features of his stories. Some of these drawings were made many years after the date of the dreams they are designed to illustrate. But if a dream is recalled and recorded, it seems to acquire a timeless character, and just as much confidence is felt in depicting the dream of many years ago as in presenting the most recent one."

What I like and esteem in this booklet is the caustic self-criticism of the author and the frank admission of his standing as a layman. This gives his report an authenticity for which one must be thankful. However, my interest in his drawings deviates from this: what Stiles was most concerned with was the psychological enigma of his dreams, their origin and meaning; what I am most interested in are his drawings as documents of design iconography. Because his attention was concentrated mainly on the meaning of his dreams, the drawings could flow with a minimum of mental interference, and this accounts for their validity.

**Authenticity of Uninvented Designs**

The ingenuousness of Stiles' drawings is not the naïveté of children's drawings, of the insane, of the percipient of telepathic reconstructions or of the "artiste-peintre" trained in automatic self-expression. His drawings have the honesty of a byproduct, in this case, that of a layman wholly concerned with revealing the psychic content of his dreams; the real quality of his communication does not lie in the content but in the manner in which it is told. In emphasizing only the drawings, I may be betraying his confidence, but it is in the interest of a more

documentary investigation.

One should be grateful that his designs are not stylized like the dream-drawings of Jung's psychopaths. *Their* technique is decorative and never varies in style, whereas *his* is integrative and changes with each presentation. His drawings are totally *uninvented*. His drafting technique shifts with each document in the most arbitrary, ordinary, and commonplace manner. This is the way we all draw instinctively.

Stiles makes no attempt at symbolism, as do the "designing" patients of Jung. There are no snakes, crosses, hypnotic eyes, the mara, or any fashionable precipitate of sex frustration. Yet, despite his advantages over the dream-drawers, it remains inherent in the nature of the material involved that all dream drawings are only derivations of memory recollections. *Direct dream imprints do not exist.*(1)

**Five Orders of Dream Records**

What does exist is the imprint as memory. Dream records may, therefore, be divided into five orders: the *first* being the dream itself; the *second*, the memory-print; the *third*, any design made from it (Stiles); the *fourth*, an interpretative drawing of a past dream using standard symbols (Jung); the *fifth*, a consciously invented dream composition (Grandville). Stiles' designs inevitably fall in this category: namely that of the *third order*. The tantamount question remains: how closely can a design represent an *after-image* of the memory flash?

Almost all of the drawings of Stiles have the capacity to develop magnetic power, stimulating the observer to visualize the image of the second order (memory), and through a sudden transparency, the apparition of the

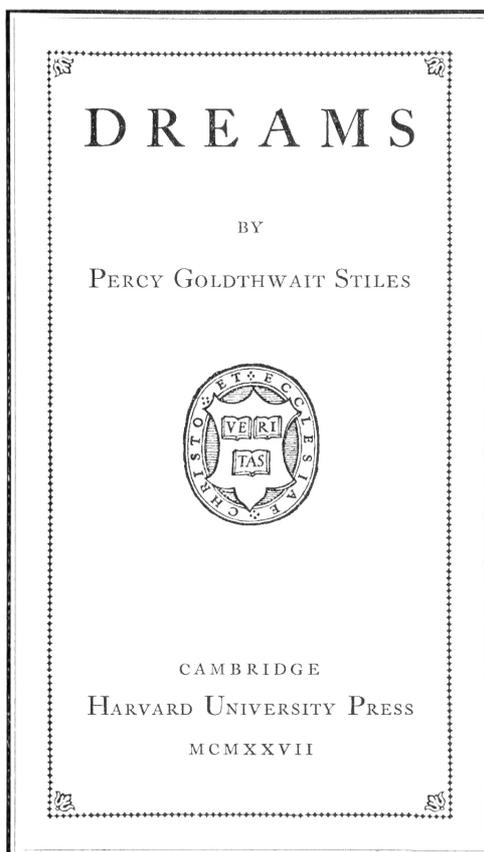
original dream-image. The unusual lucidity of his drawings relaxes the observer's mental attitude sufficiently to establish contact with the original source of dream-vision.

The deceptive illogic of dream imagery is also found in Stiles' drawings, but they deny the deliberate distortions of memory associations which usually constitute the stigmata of all dream drawings. His appear so natural, yet their psychic content is devastating. They are restrained in workmanship, but uncanny in their lack of imitative detail. In fact, they show an amazing Gestalt-Reality.

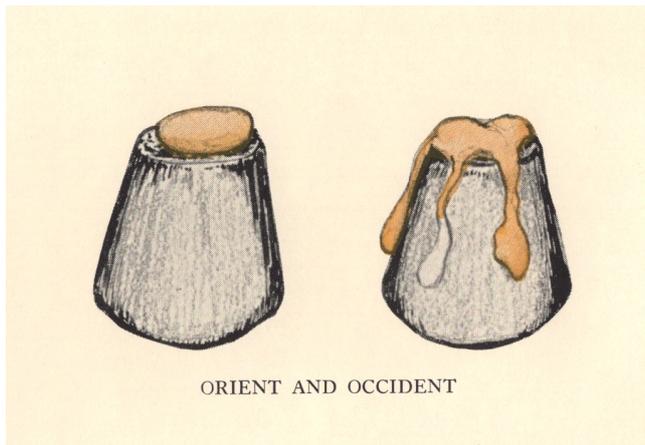
Happily, these drawings lack that type of pre-inspiration which is so characteristic of fictitious dream-paintings. Techniques have been especially invented by dream-reporters to simulate authenticity by imitating the strokes of chance scribbling or by deep modeling of forms. This is done in order to give the impression of typical deep-sleep dream visions, whose chief optic characterization is a light-shadow acuity with details of almost microscopic precision.

(1) I hope to publish a report "On the possibility of obtaining direct records of dream images" from a work in progress.

(from VVV no. 1, June 1942)



# PERCY GOLDTHWAIT STILES – DREAMS (I)



ORIENT AND OCCIDENT

Here is a dream in which color appeared particularly significant. Someone presented the writer with a precious stone, and at the same time spoke of its interesting history. The gem had been treasured by two prominent families in India and had then come into an English household. It was a discoidal jewel, and clear like a topaz. It was not faceted, but somewhat rounded like a drop of thick fluid. It was about as large round as a cent. The recipient of this choice gift treated it with scant respect. Placing it upon a block of charcoal, in shape a truncated one, he attacked it with flame and blowpipe.

The gem was readily fused, almost as if it were wax. Its substance ran down the slopes of the cone and congealed in three irregular beads. Two of these were the color of the original stone, the third was water-clear. When this detail was observed, the dreamer perceived in it a reference to the former ownership of the jewel. The two beads of amber recall the two families of Oriental complexion, the single bead without color bears some relation to the British period. As usual in such perceptions of analogies in dreams, the symbolism seemed have a deeper significance at the moment than it did when reviewed by daylight.

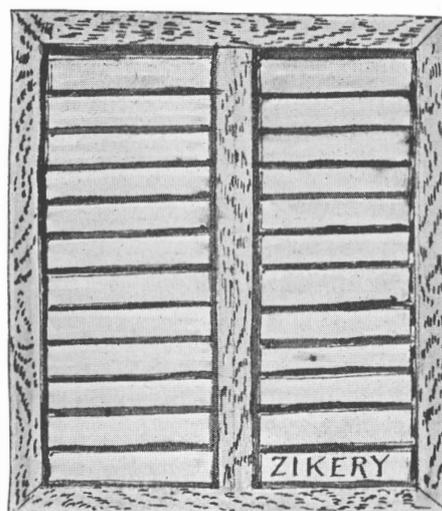


MUTATION

The features of a dream picture have a frequent tendency to undergo mutations. Bergson has pointed out that the dissolving-view principle is again and again represented. Objects are recognized at one moment as existing in a certain form and the next they are differently conceived. For example: two swimmers were seen making their way toward the beach just in advance of a crested wave. Then the motion ceased and the picture resolved itself into two men seated in chairs having high backs. The arrest of the peaks of the wave furnished material for chairs.

Another illustration of a rather more complex sequence may be supplied. The dreamer was asked by his housekeeper to dispose of some worms which she had swept up in cleaning a room. They were brought to him in a paper bag. He proceeded to heat water in a square pan which he placed on the gas stove, and into this he shook the worms. They appeared much like the worms found in apples, that is, each was about three quarters of an inch long, had a red head, and was deeply segmented. Under the influence of the hot water the segments fell apart and looked like white beads. They maintained for a little a grouping such that the eye could reconstruct each worm, then the segments

mingled promiscuously. Finally they swelled and darkened, with the result that the water was all absorbed by them and the pan seemed to contain baked beans.

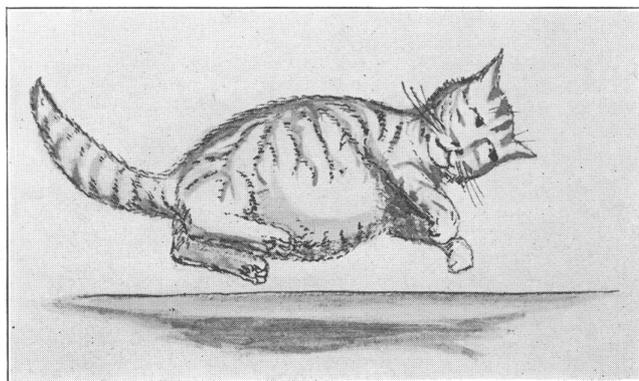


THE KITCHEN BULLETIN

Here is a specimen dream in which a new word was so placed as to compel consideration. The dreamer strolled into his kitchen and discovered on the wall behind the stove an appliance which he had not seen before. Within an oak frame there were two vertical columns of reversible wooden slats, about twenty in all. The arrangement was much like the devices used to describe the routes of trains.

In the present case all the slats showed unmarked black surfaces until the lowest one in the right-hand column was reached. Here in white letters appeared the strange word *Zikery*. The dreamer supposed that the slats were to be used in making memoranda of articles to be ordered from the grocer. *Zikery* might well be some sort of breakfast food. But he did not feel a great deal of confidence in his guess. If the order of the names on the slats was an alphabetical one, then the position of the solitary *Zikery* was appropriately at the end of the list.

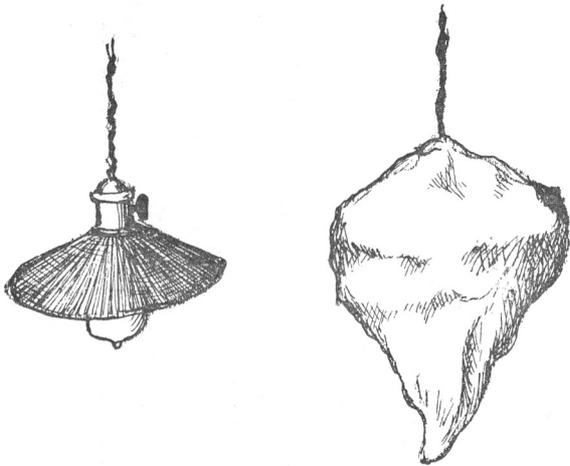
An oddly inflated cat was seen by the dreamer, at first with amusement but presently with disquiet. The animal was tossed up from the floor in a series of little rebounds such as a football might have shown. What was at first taken to be playfulness was shortly recognized to indicate distress. Waking, the recorder found that his own abdominal walls were uncomfortably tense; he had a prosaic stomach ache.



INFLATION

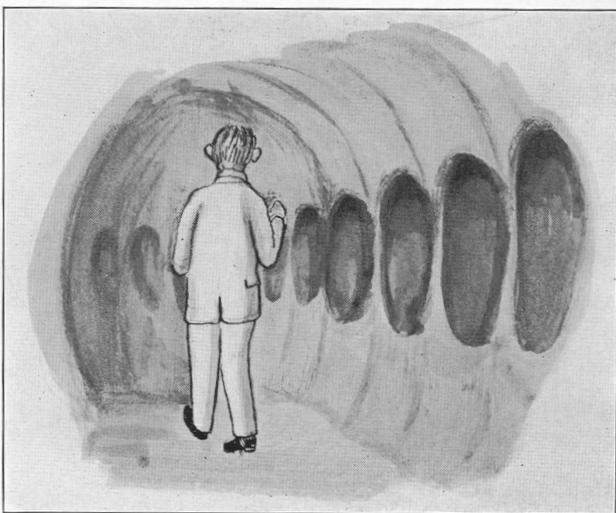
An overburdened alimentary tract was once pictured as follows. There had been immoderate indulgence in buttered popcorn. In the dream the various rooms of the house were found disfigured by deposits of grease. A striking

detail remembered was an electric light which with its shade was completely enveloped in a mass of what appeared to be lard. The substance depended after the manner of a stalactite. There was no distinct sense of repletion upon awaking.



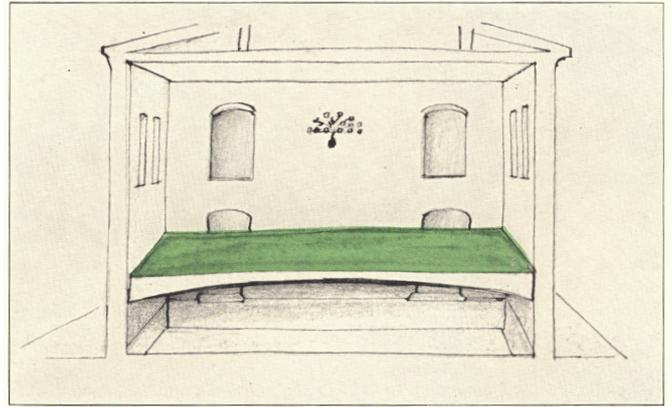
AN OVERBURDENED SYSTEM

One dream of probable peristaltic causation deserves to be related in some detail. The dreamer found himself in the chapel of the Old South Church where a meeting was going on. Doctor Gordon shortly made the announcement: "We will unite in prayer for fifty minutes." The reaction of the subject was strong and undisguised. "That is too long," he said to himself, and rose and left the room. But he did not find his way to the street; he wandered through strange apartments. Once he crossed a square room which he believed to be a stage in the tower. He saw gas-jets burning feebly at a few points. Twice he passed lavatories. He saw stolid watchmen who ignored him. He entered a long, low gallery with a series of dark recesses in its right-hand wall. He thought that he was now within the cornice of the church and that those hollows corresponded with ornamental projections on the outside.



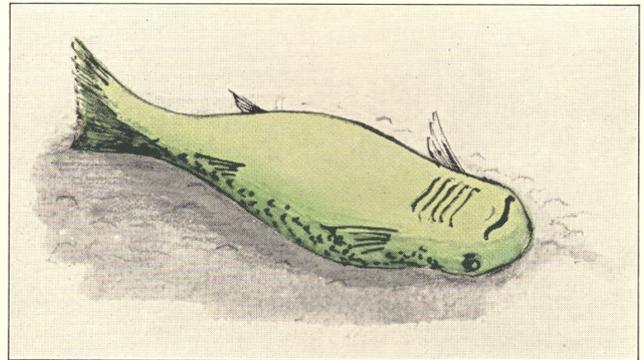
THE COLON

Breathing is a function which is often influential in the shaping of dreams. Its rhythm may at any time make its appearance. Once a movable floor was viewed with curiosity. It was about forty feet long in width. It was in the lobby of a large concert hall. This floor could be brought to the level of the entrances from the street and many people could take their places upon it. It would then be raised to the second story and discharge its passengers to the hall. It was, in short, a great elevator, but without sides, in consequence of which the doorways were unguarded when the floor shifted its position. Was it not an image of the diaphragm monotonously raising and falling? It may have been so, but no explanation is afforded of the fact that the moving floor was covered by a thick green carpet.



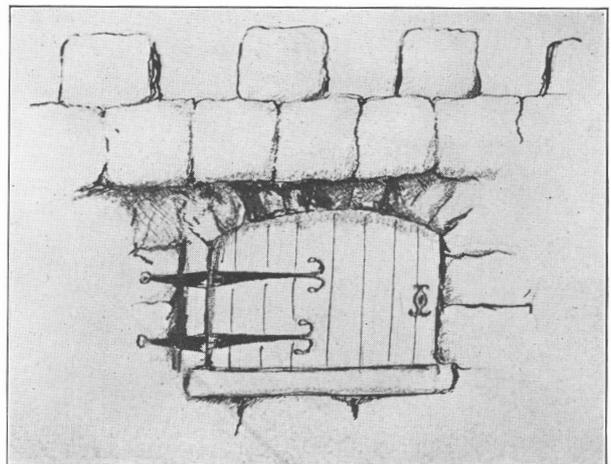
THE DIAPHRAGM

A small fish of somewhat unusual appearance was seen lying dead upon a gravel driveway. It was greenish yellow. Instead of having gill-slits on both sides, it had a single row of them ventrally placed. When he woke, the dreamer found that his nose was stopped. He could not breathe—neither could the "poor fish."



BREATHLESS

Once the dreamer's attention became fixed by a door of ancient and massive construction which was in the wall of a castle. It was high-up—in fact, just below the battlement. The iron hinges were large and elaborately designed. The door seemed to communicate a mood or atmosphere; it was one of oppression and helpless confinement. When awake, the subject found that he was suffering from a severe headache, an unwonted experience for him. The pain was definitely localized at the base of the skull, where the configuration was remarkably like that of the castle wall with the overhanging battlement. People often describe headaches as being like the pressure of bands of iron, and the suggestion is apparent in the long hinges of the door.



HEADACHE

# An Oneiric Library (IV)

(...) The train approaches the end of the line. It enters a long and narrow corridor whose floors are meticulously waxed and whose high walls are made of a beautiful yellow and shiny wood. On the right, the tracks overlook a city, while on the left there is a series of large stalls built in the same way as the corridor, separated from each other only by a partition and lined from top to bottom by library shelves filled with countless volumes. At each stall the train stops and all the travelers come down to look for a book, a single one, which they do not find. This operation must be of the first importance to judge by the feverish activity of my travel companions. I search myself, without really knowing what I am supposed to find. (...)

At one of these stops, I am led into the restrooms, where I find some packages wrapped in cellophane and seemingly uninteresting. However, I consult the people around me before throwing them away and that serves me well because S. points out to me that these packages contain drawings. And indeed I am amazed to discover a wide variety of drawings done by me at different times in my life, as well as a book inscribed by Paul Eluard, all things that I had lost a few days before. I absolutely cannot manage to remember the title of the book, in all respects similar to a children's grammar, which I persist in calling "Immortal Disease," despite Eluard's objections. (...)

(Dream of Max Morise in *La Révolution surréaliste*, nr. 4, July 15, 1925)

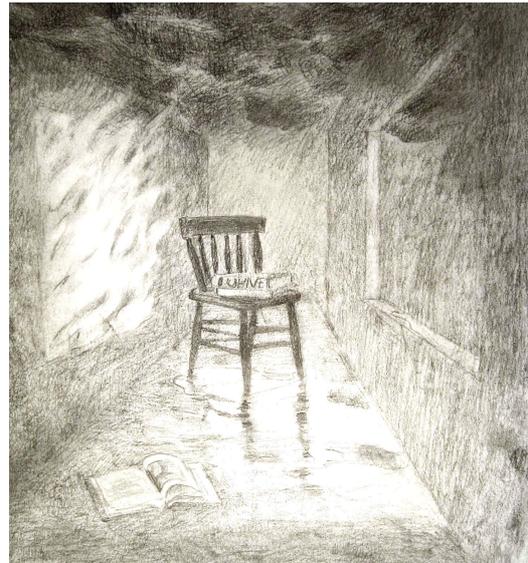
I see books with geometric figures in very vivid colors on their covers. These volumes are works by Plato and Newton.

Dan Stanciu, dream of October 24, 1976

I am looking at a library shelf with many volumes of poetry by a famous French poet (I know him and also know that he is well-known, but his name does not appear in my dream). The volumes are very thin (they are chapbooks), their covers are colored in pleasant pastel colors, and on the spine (because now I look only at their spines, without removing them from the shelves) each has a title like *Paul à Marseille*, *Thérèse à Naples*, *André à New York*, etc. (I make up now those names and places, because I don't remember the ones in the dream; in any case, the title of each book is composed of a man's or a woman's name and the city where that person happens to be.) The explanation appears immediately: the poet goes through a troubled and unfortunate time in his life (a war, or something similar) and is overcome by a strong feeling of loneliness. He realizes that all his friends and close ones are far away. Thus, each book he writes bears the name of a friend, along with the name of the place where he or she is.

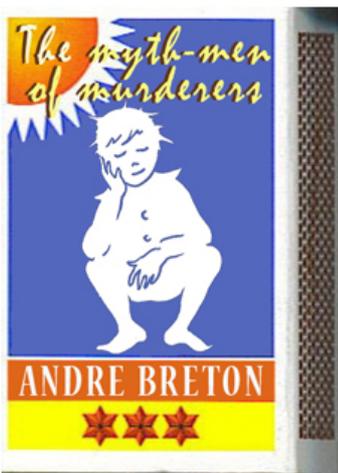
Then I open one of the books. The text has an unusual appearance. Each letter "O" in the text is a very small photo (although very clear, without requiring the use of a magnifying glass) that depicts a man's or a woman's head, always different and in different positions, but each time wearing a hat. The light was very carefully directed when the photos were taken, so that the oval of the face is very well outlined, and there is no doubt that those represent the diphthong "O with a hat."

Dan Stanciu, dream of November 24, 1981



In this dream what stayed with me was this scene. A chair in a narrow room with art books stacked on and around it. The left wall is on fire and through the right water comes into the room. I am mesmerized watching to see which: the fire or the water will reach the chair and the books first.

Katherine Kean, dream of 2015 (© 2015, Katherine Kean)



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Dreamed book cover (designed after "Solstickan," a brand of Swedish matches) and Amazon blurb (retrieved somewhat creatively from memory). Niklas Nenzén, dream of 2008.

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