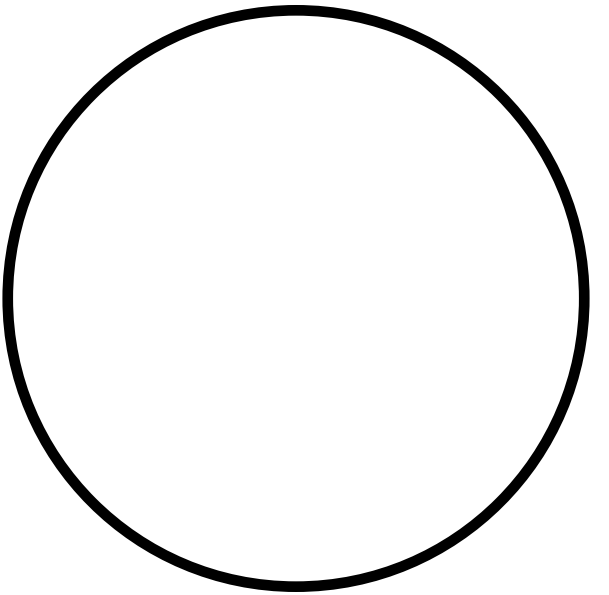
NEVER VISITED—THE MOON

LISA HARTLE MOURA / SOUVENIRS OF PLACES

2017



Souvenirs of Places Never Visited

—

The Moon

MASTER THESIS
SPACES & COMMUNICATION
AT HEAD-GENÈVE

2016

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—

The Moon

BY
LISA HARTJE MOURA

SUPERVISOR
ALEXANDRA MIDAL

A HEART-WARM THANK YOU TO:

ALEXANDRA MIDAL,
FOR EMBARKING WITH ME
ON THIS VOYAGE TOWARDS
THE MOON AND FOR
HELPING ME NOT TO
LOSE MYSELF IN BETWEEN;

MY DEAR FRIEND M.S. FOR
ALWAYS EMBRACING AND
NURTURING ALL MY LUNACIES;

&,
MOST IMPORTANTLY,
MY MOTHER FOR ALWAYS BEING
MY HOME AND SAFE HARBOUR
TO COME BACK TO.

○

DEDICATED TO ALL
THE SELENITES
OF THIS WORLD

CONTENTS

Prologue

Fry and Leela, *Futurama*, 1999[1]

“[A thousand years ago, in 1999] The moon was like this awesome, romantic, mysterious thing. Hanging up there in the sky where you could never reach it, no matter how much you wanted to. But you [Leela] are right. Once you’re actually here it’s just a big dull rock. I just wanted for you to see it through my eyes.”

What is it that makes us feel that we belong to a certain place? The sense of belonging to a place and a people, sometimes reduced to sentiments of nationality, and the influence of collective identity on the creation of self-identity is an issue widely studied, for example, by anthropology, psychology or sociology. But could it also be studied through the lenses of art or design? As creators of objects, images or sounds that are embraced by entire cultures, can designers and artists also be considered as developers of identities?

Don’t Brand My Public Space, a book edited by designer Ruedi Baur and political scientist Sébastien Thiéry, discusses precisely how design and graphic design in particular is often wrongly used to create manipulative strategies of public and political space identity and branding. Through the showcasing of specific places (e.g. Switzerland) and media, starting with a visual, historical and political analysis of the flag, it demonstrates how the production of visual symbols by designers become highly influential representations of space and collective identities and how, most of the time, these are superficially and reductively made to serve specific political or economical interests. This analysis urges designers and citizens in general for the understanding and reading of these visual strategies and symbols on a critical level, because they can potentially and long-lastingly become the identity of the place/people these symbols are merely supposed to be a representation of.

The acknowledgement of the power of visual symbols and the branding of spaces made me question and think what other mediums are used to convey an essence of a place and a people and how/why are they precisely absorbed by the cultures they represent. Born in a massively touristic place, Lisbon/Portugal, it almost immediately occurred to me the powerful symbolic and representative strength of the souvenir and, more

specifically, the commodified souvenir both for tourists as for locals as well.

In fact, the commodified souvenir as a symbol of identity of a place and a culture has been widely studied and researched by authors worldwide, to which the book *Souvenirs: the Material Culture of Tourism*, edited by professors Michael Hitchcock and Ken Teague, and the design-approach research studies developed by professor Margaret Woodward, *Souvenirs as Agents of National Image Space Formation*, for example, account for. While *Souvenirs: the Material Culture of Tourism* focuses on the analysis of the souvenir on a sociological/historical level and on the identity exchange through the commercialization of souvenirs between tourists and locals, Margaret Woodward's research fills in to similar questions by addressing the role of design and the designer on the creations, mostly visual, of a collective identity in Australia.

However, while researching and studying matters of identity of places represented by visual and popular culture one question remained unanswered: could these strategies of identity of places and people, studied and documented by researchers and historians, be used to create an accepted collective identity of imaginary, unvisited or uninhabited places?

The perception of the potential a souvenir and its designer have of representing and even being the identity of a place led me to speculate on the possibility of the creation of identities for places apparently no one has ever visited or of places that don't exist by the mere production of its souvenirs. But what place could this be?

Inspired by the 2005 BBC documentary *How to Start Your Own Country*, where, at one point, British writer and comedian Dan Wallace searches for land in the moon in order to start his own country, I have started to consider the creation or the perception of a perhaps existent identity for our closest neighbour: the moon.

"One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

Neil Armstrong, Apollo 11, 1969 [2]

20 July 1969 was the beginning and the end of many hopes and dreams worldwide. "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" was a moment that sealed centuries-long theories, conjectures and dreams about the moon. The prospect of everyone going to the moon started to seem possible and at the same time the moon was no longer unattainable—no longer a "terra incognita" [3]—and yet, the understanding of the moon as a source of unknowing and immeasurable energies, its mystique built around the mystery of night and day and the dreams and fantasies of flying to the moon prevail on everyone's psyche until this day.

Although not particularly imaginary, unvisited or scientifically unknown, the moon is still to this day an attractive enigma to most us. Consciously or unconsciously the moon still feeds a grand part of our imagination and particularly our imagination on space travel and space colonisation.

But what is it that makes us have a simultaneously personal and collective understanding and fantasy of the moon? How can it be that crossing countries, cultures, gender or age barriers the moon has an almost universal appeal and symbolic meaning? Could this mental image we have of the moon be an instinctive one or, on the other hand, could it be an intricately constructed image forged collectively? If so, when, how and who fabricated this conception of the moon and how does it manifest? Could

there be such a thing as a commodified souvenir from the moon that represents an identity to it?

Moon-related memorabilia, particularly the ones linked to the American and Russian space missions, could have been taken into account to discuss these matters of an identity for the moon. However, the decision of choosing a phenomenon prior to the period of American and Russian lunar missions was based on the fact that this period of "space-conquest" was mostly driven by political/economical and even war interests, publicly disguised by a long-time fascination for the moon. In the 1960's and even more after 1969, year of the first manned moon landing, the moon would mirror specific identities (e.g. the American and Russian identities) rather than allude to an identity of its own.

This way, by taking a massively popular and yet highly undocumented and unresearched phenomenon of the popular culture of the beginning of the 20th century, the Paper Moon, as a case study to address these questions of a collective identity for the moon, I will attempt to test this possibility and answer these questions through the analysis of the context, the medium and its recurrent use of symbolically charged visual elements, its social impact at the time and, in the end, trace a parallel to contemporary situations where collective identity and particularly its visual/graphic representation play a crucial role, along with the role of its producers/designers.

The Paper Moon, as a medium that emerged from popular culture in the beginning of the 20th century, is much more horizontal and democratic (i.e. no particular authority or government instigated a collective desire for the moon) and, therefore, less prone to serve other interests than the fantasy-driven collective interests and curiosities towards the actual moon, rather than to what it could politically represent.

The lack of information about the phenomenon of the Paper Moon could be understood as a limitation to its

analysis, however, it made it even more challenging and interesting to speculate on its inherent symbology/representation and to interpret people's actual written messages at the time on the postcards, without any pre-conceived notions of it. This unknown territory allowed for a certain freedom of assumption and even imagination regarding the images and feelings that triggered these people on to taking a picture on a moon made out of cardboard.

Although not studied in a scientific or theoretical level before, the Paper Moon has long been an interest and inspiration in amateur groups of postcard and photography collectors on the Internet. Photography collector and enthusiast Beverly Wilgus, who I had the opportunity to exchange some short insights regarding the phenomenon of the Paper Moon and who allowed me to share in this book a significant part of her and her husband's Paper Moon collection, is an example of that popular interest still to this day. The more than 300 examples of Paper Moon postcards collected from the books and from the Internet and the popular fascination towards these examples, apart from its vintage and nostalgic aura, prove how visually strong and inspiring the Paper Moon's iconography and particularly its fantasy for the moon still are in a time where image manipulation and illusion are no longer a question.

The popularity of this phenomenon at the time—and its cult until this day on the Internet—, the allure of its nostalgia and the exchange with some collectors of this kind of iconography of the Paper Moon allowed me to develop a simultaneously focused and dreamlike approach, in an attempt to, like the moon, show two sides of the subject. Most commonly reproduced as postcards, could these pictures of people on the moon in the beginning of the 20th century be perceived as souvenirs of the moon? And, as souvenirs, could they condense and represent, similarly to the commodity souvenirs we know of today, a collective identity for the moon?

1 Shaping Memory

Chris Marker, *Sans Soleil*, 1983 [4]

“I will have spent my life trying to understand the function of remembering, which is not the opposite of forgetting, but rather its lining. We do not remember, we rewrite memory much as history is rewritten.”

THE SOUVENIR

On the late 18th century, beginning of the 19th century, the French word “souvenir” gradually shifted from a sole understanding as memory, remembrance or the act of remembering to the understanding of it as also the object or medium of memory, which can be given or left behind to someone. Although its use in French is still divided between these main two meanings, its use within some languages like English, German or Portuguese is today almost exclusively associated to the objects or gifts acquired during a trip to some place out of the ordinary life (i.e. during vacation or on a touristic trip) that is/could be given to someone and it is on the understanding of a souvenir not only as an object catalyst of memories that I will be focusing on, but also on its understanding as a commodity [5], namely exchanged in the touristic industry.

Coincidentally, the semantic shift of the word souvenir dates to the same period historians name as “‘early’, ‘pre-’ or ‘developmental’ phase of modern tourism” [6]. At the time, travelling to foreign lands for educational and leisure purposes [7] was something reserved only for young noble Europeans.

Tourism has since evolved into the massive industry we know today, but, to the individual tourist, travelling is still mostly triggered by a curiosity for the personally unknown, unfamiliar or exceptional and, therefore, worthy of memory. Driven by a religious, historical or simply recreational interest, the tourist seeks for the new, even if provided by the old, and authentic a certain place has to give.

Authenticity is a label highly valued by tourists. After all, the effort to travel someplace else wouldn’t be worth it if it were simply to see a reproduction of it easily assembled back home. For example, a tourist doesn’t

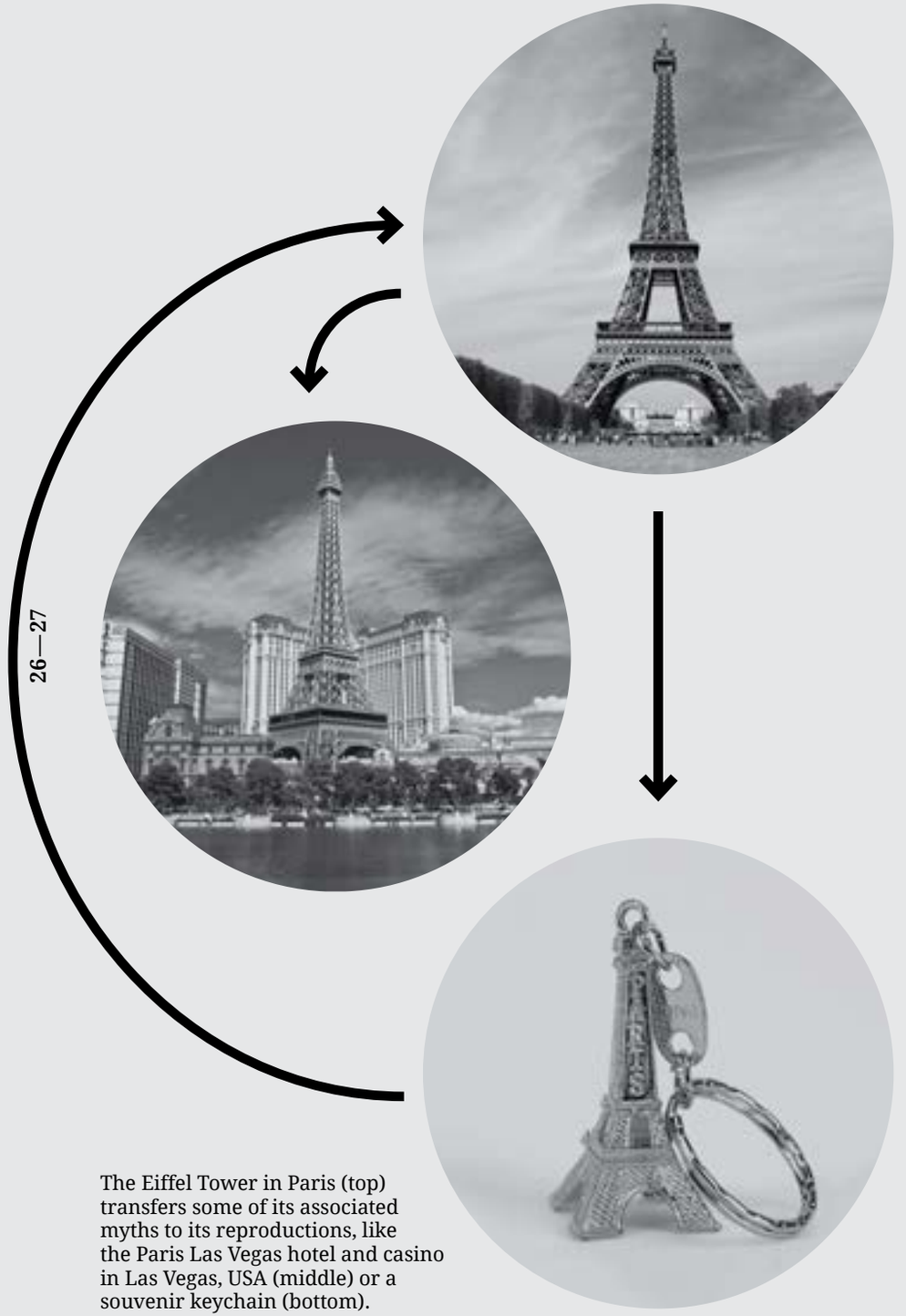
go to Las Vegas to see the real Parisian Eiffel Tower [8]. However, a tourist could go to Las Vegas to see the real or the authentic "fake Eiffel Tower". This search for the "real" or the "authentic", even in what is known to be fake, has everything to do with the identity of a place.

On this very question, French geographer Michel Lussault suggests that:

> "The identity of a space does not exist *sui generis* but is constructed, collectively invented by the actors of a given society who then may have the tendency to naturalize it in their use, make it an unchanging essence, at the risk of distorting, for example, what historical science has to say about the origins and development of a space. The identity of a place, area, or network… can thus be a matter of a mythical construction and constitutes one of those numerous mythologies peopling the acting imagination of human groups." [9]

It is impossible to perceive or describe the identity of a place in its entire complexity. The ones who attempt to do so incur in stereotypes, clichés or just simply in highly incomplete and superficial descriptions. However, this doesn't stop these "mythologies peopling the acting imagination of human groups" [10] from being told and shared within and outside the borders of a place, may it be through words, images or even objects.

The use of the concept "mythologies" is not an innocent one. "Mythologies" in this case has more to do with the meaning proposed by Roland Barthes in his essays compiled in the 1957 book *Mythologies*, than with the popularly known mythologies of Ancient Greece, for example. In his essays, Roland Barthes deconstructs certain signs, of a linguistic and/or visual nature, similarly to his predecessor semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure [11], but adds another layer to them: the myth. To Barthes,



The Eiffel Tower in Paris (top) transfers some of its associated myths to its reproductions, like the Paris Las Vegas hotel and casino in Las Vegas, USA (middle) or a souvenir keychain (bottom).

Traditional Portuguese
Barcelos rooster.

the myth is an elusive construction consciously built, mostly motivated by political or social agendas, that pervert the historically built meaning of a sign, by giving it a new and fictionalised history that becomes accepted and naturalised. By giving the example of the *Paris Match* magazine cover, Barthes exposes the fact that the sign used, a picture of a young black child saluting while wearing a French-uniform, is given a new meaning, its "mythical meaning", which is that of patriotism, the salute to a great French empire composed by every French person, without colour discrimination. Disregarding its positive or negative connotation, these mythologies, which Barthes explains can occur by using different strategies [12], are constantly used or reinforced, for example, by the media and are naturalised by people, becoming an apparently unchangeable essence to their identity and also to the identity of a space, like Michel Lussault mentions.

Designer Ruedi Baur, in the book *Don't Brand My Public Space*, addresses a similar conclusion to the impact of design and specifically graphic design as a producer of visual symbols and visual strategies on the consolidation of these social myths and on the construction of new identities:

> "Signs of recognition, representation, identity, brands, rallying signs, and, often, signs of exclusion… their use transcends the mere question of informing citizens of identifying public affairs. The point is not merely to facilitate an accurate reading of the territory and the initiatives enacted by political institutions, but indeed, in many cases, to transform the perception of reality by creating an artificial identity in order to replace it." [13]

Powerful communicative instruments and easier to sell than just words, objects and images are widely used by the touristic industry as signs that condense and give

shape to cultural myths and group memories. Like flags that identify nations, commodified souvenirs, created mainly by the touristic industry, are pre-charged with symbolism and pre-determined by their producers/sellers—and then validated by who acquires/purchases them—as part of cultures and their identities, sometimes unquestionably accepted by the cultures to which they are intended to be a portrait of. For example, a Barcelos rooster bought during people's, mostly tourists, summer trips to Portugal has become not only a souvenir of people's actual holiday or specific place/event where it was bought, but also a souvenir of the ancient fictional story[14] of the city of Barcelos and, by applying Barthes' logic of the myth, it has become a sign of the myth of a country and a population rooted in tradition and folklore. The point here does not rely on evaluating if this myth is true or false, but rather on understanding that this construction, actively forged throughout the years and especially during a time of dictatorship[15], has since unquestionably become an unofficial symbol of Portugal and the Portuguese, being coined and advertised as authentic by its own culture.

A NARRATIVE

Nicky Levell, professor and anthropologist, while analysing the phenomenon of souvenirs in India, affirms that "a souvenir is predicated on the tale that can be told"[16]. This demonstrates the effective narrative power a souvenir holds. These "tales" Levell addresses can be of different natures and can cohabit: they can be intimately related to the souvenir, the circumstances and the person who acquired it or the person who it was given to (e.g. date, place, person, etc.), becoming either more factual

Portuguese postcard nr. 52 from a series of postcards named *Costumes de Portugal* (Portugal's traditions) from the second quarter of the 20th century.

or fictional in the sense that the memories it triggers can be, for example, romanticised and embellished with some fantasy (e.g. the memories of Ed Bloom in Tim Burton's 2003 movie *Big Fish*); they can be inherent to the popular culture which first created the souvenir, where fact and fiction can be sometimes blurred (e.g. the legend of the Barcelos rooster); or they can be a symbol of a greater history, fictional or not, that reinforces myths of a certain culture and its collective memory (e.g. the Barcelos rooster as symbol of Portugal and the Portuguese).

A souvenir has the ability to carry or trigger a memory narrative of a place and, to a certain extent, be its own identity[17]. Effective in different ways than other souvenir commodities (e.g. magnets, key chains, snow globes), postcards, by relying mostly on its graphical and visual nature, can also give shape to personal and collective memories and, therefore, to its narratives. For example, the postcard from Lisbon with a "varina" (fishwife – popularly known as an iconic local character), similarly to the Barcelos rooster, is fuelled by these accepted and naturalised myths of Portuguese folklore and tradition. It is a symbol of personal memories (e.g. the place and who I was with at the moment I bought it – fact), but also of the collective memory of stories of the time "varinas" would roam through Lisbon yelling prices and types of fish, a fictionalised story to which I fill in the gaps with my imagination, as I have never actually experienced it. A souvenir, like the memories it entails, is therefore a combined effort of fact and fiction, and it is mostly within the realm of fiction that entire myths and identities are built[18].

This way, I must wonder: are there any limits to the fiction a souvenir holds? Who fabricates this fiction? Would it be possible, for example, to have souvenirs of things that never happened? Or souvenirs of places never visited or of places that don't even exist?

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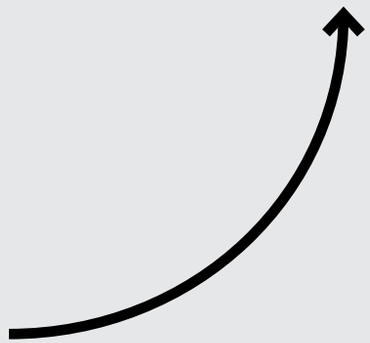


2 Mass-producing Fantasy

Hans Magnus Enzensberger [19]

“Postcards are the journey itself.”

THE POSTCARD

Particularly famous during the 20th century, before being somewhat overthrown by the advent of the portable digital camera and, nowadays, by the smartphone, the postcard had a seamlessly fast development, considering it was only introduced as an official medium of correspondence in 1869 in Austria.

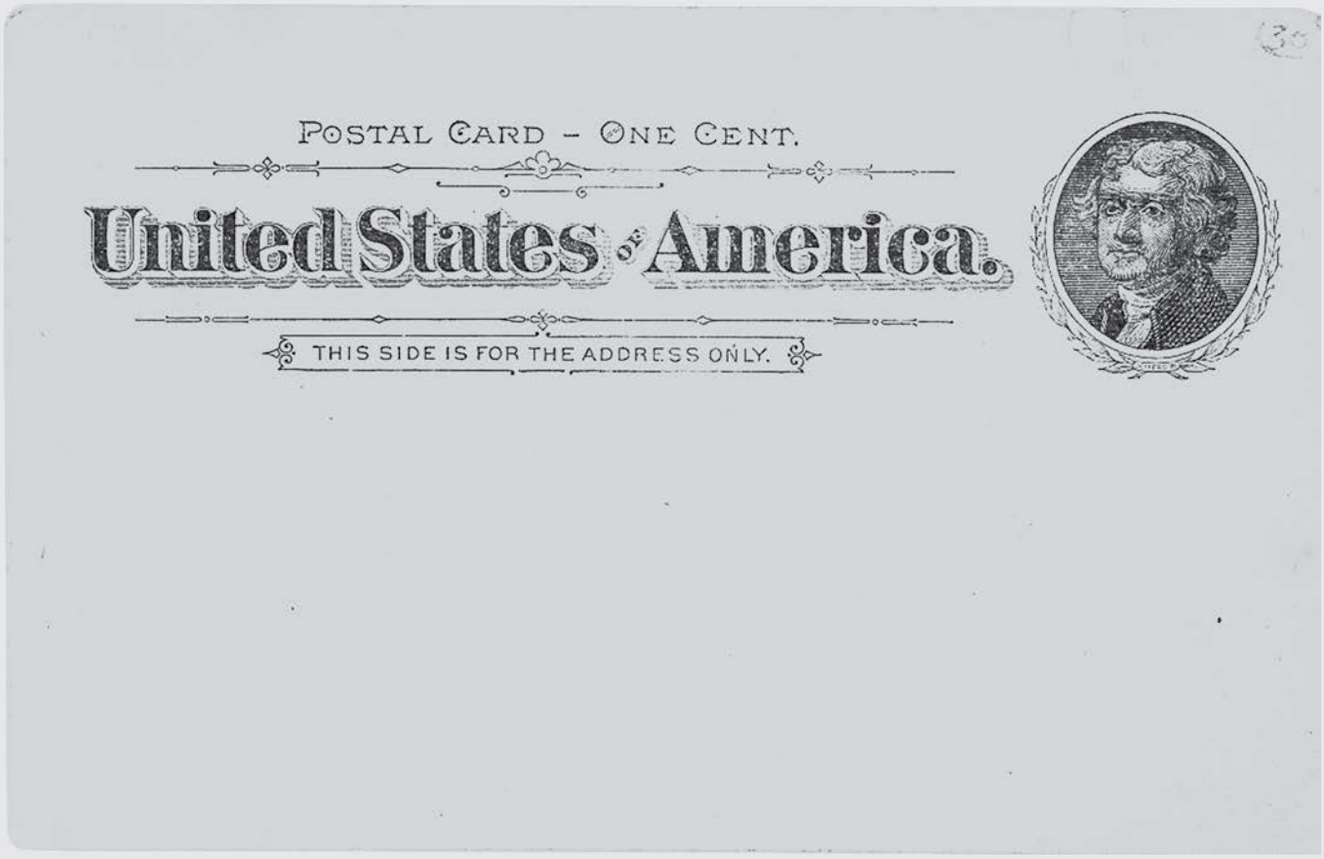
A clear descendant of illustrated envelopes and cartes-de-visite [20], the postcard, although used as an alternative form to letters already in the 1860’s in the United States, was only widely and officially accepted in different countries and used from 1870 on (e.g. Germany and UK in 1870; USA in 1872). Because it allowed for shorter messages and to leave behind the formalities custom to letters, the postcard became very popular among soldiers who would like to send short messages to their loved ones during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870/71.

In the U.S., some privately owned companies, like the one owned by H.L. Lipman [21], were allowed to print postcards, although more expensive and, unlike the ones produced by the Government, without the seal of “Postal Card”.

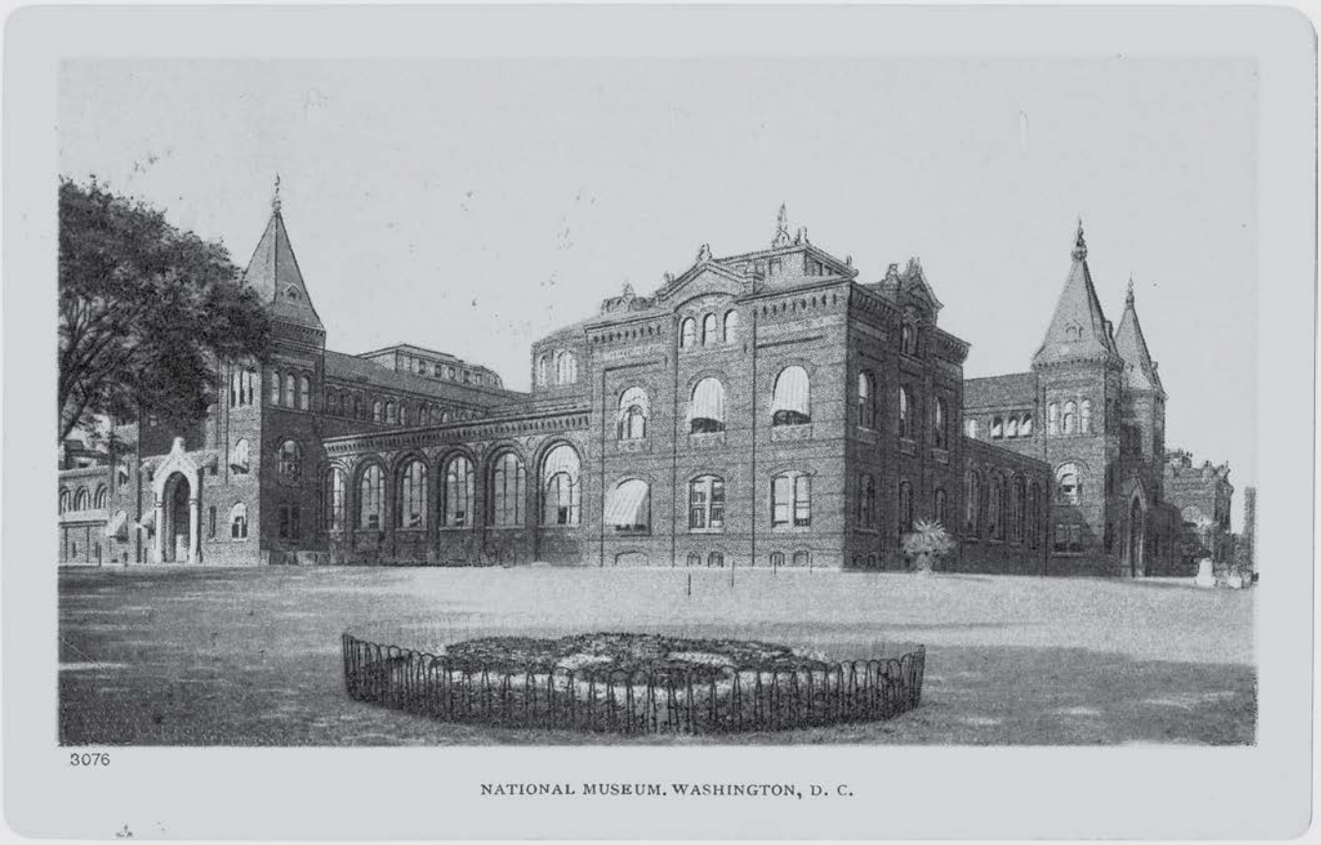
These first mass-printed postcards wouldn’t have anything else but the stamp box and the address line on one side and the other side would be left empty for a message, but illustrations would soon take over and be an important, if not vital, asset on a postcard, both used by companies as advertisement as by the people to accompany their messages. The messages would be initially written on the image side and the other side would have only the address and the stamp. However, in 1902, in Britain, the practical “divided back” was introduced: the image would be on one side and the message, stamp and address would be arranged in the back.

Front
Postcard of Notable Sites in Washington DC, U.S. (1886-1898).

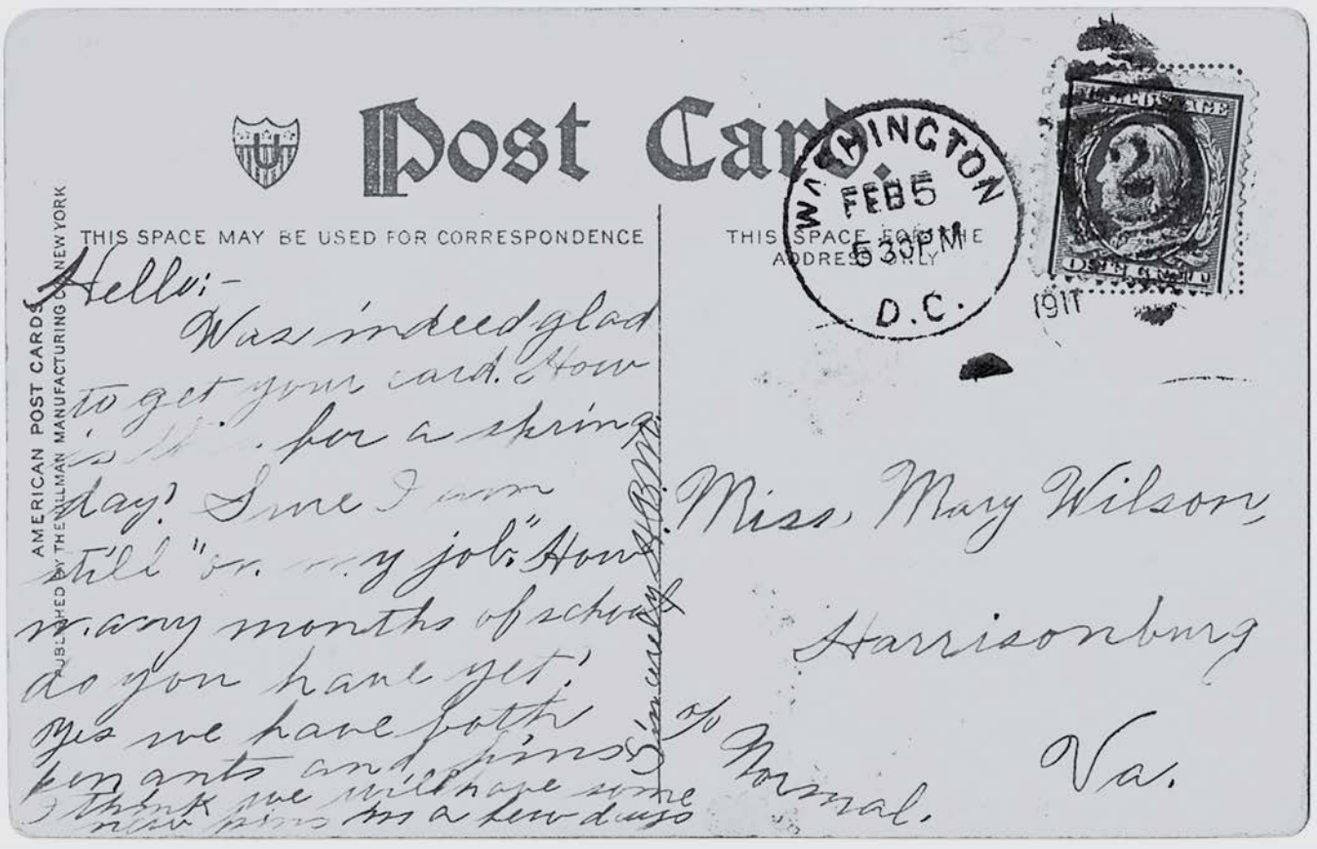
Back
This postcard still didn't use the "divided back" layout.



Front
Postcard of the National Museum, U.S. (5 February 1911).



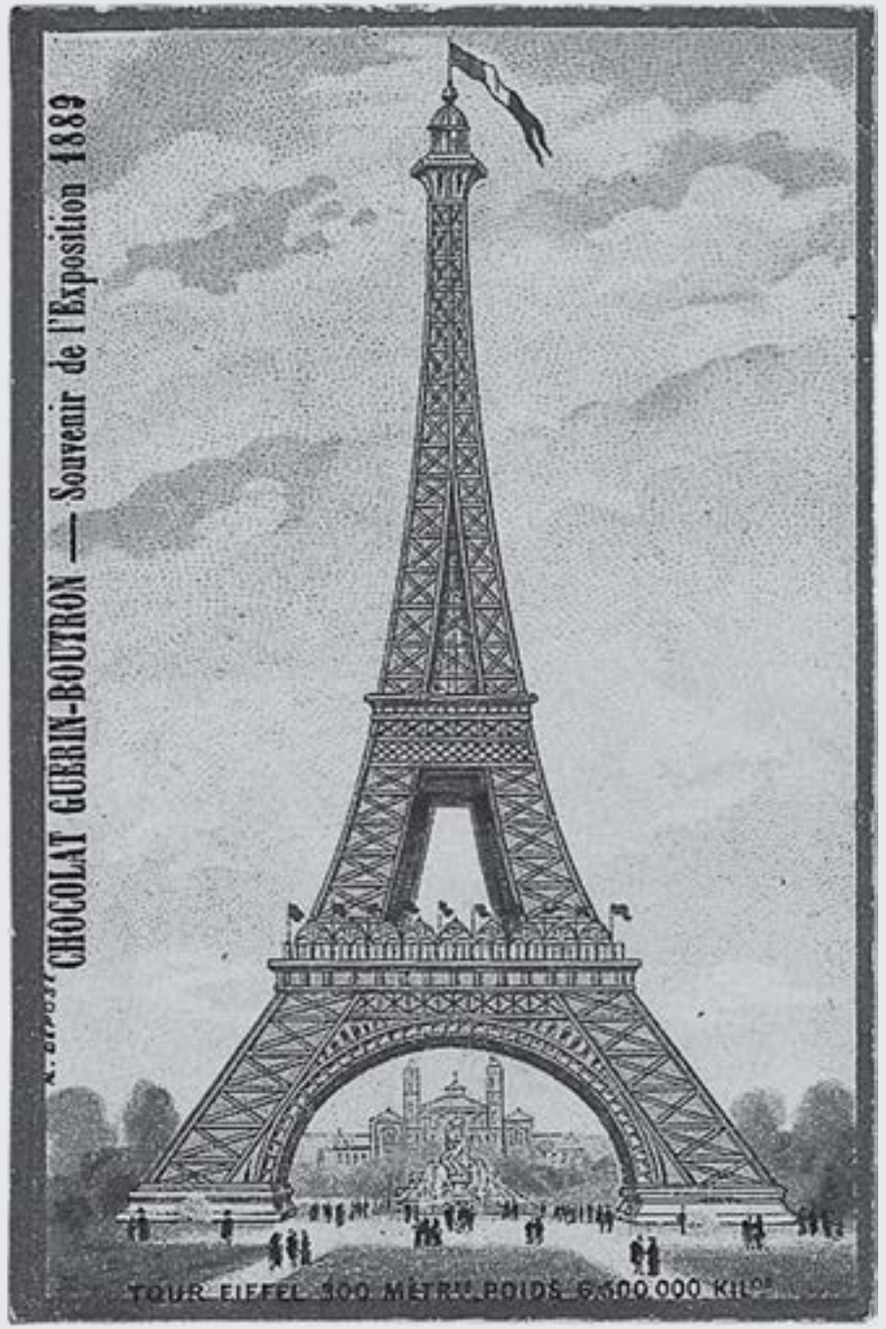
Back
Message arranged in the back with address and stamp.



In 1875, at the World Congress of Universal Postal Unions in Switzerland, some standard dimensions of the postcard were established, and international circulation of the postcard was permitted.

The range of postcard's motives was quite varied since the start: some romantic or humoristic, while others more serious with institutional or advertising illustrations. Propelled by the advancements on photography, one of the most common trends was the landscape/view postcard, which would show pictures or illustrations of landmarks, streets, buildings, etc. Although not the precursor of this type of postcards, but probably the one that made them worldwide known, the Exposition Universelle de Paris in 1889 presented not only the actual Eiffel Tower, but also representations of it in countless postcards and other memorabilia, most of them with the label/title of *Souvenir de l'Exposition Universelle*. The craze crossed the Atlantic, and, in 1893, in the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the picture postcard was introduced in the United States.

"The vast majority [of postcards] were produced by photomechanical means, reproductions of original photographs printed in ink from lithographic stone, metal, or glass plates, or by letterpress halftone." [22] These mass-printed cards could be in colour or black and white. Apart from the mass-produced printed postcards—mostly printed in Germany and in the U.S.—another considerable number of postcards were actual photographs, at one point also known as "real-photo" postcards, which were the result of a chemical reaction caused by light in a light-sensitive surface. Like the photography we know from not so long ago, the postcards were reproduced from negatives onto sensitized photo paper and then cut to the standard postcard size. The "real-photo" postcards were always monochrome—black or brown in tone that would fade into sepia and distinguishable from mass-printed postcards because of their continuous tone and lack of dot



Advertisement postcard for Chocolat Guerin-Boutron distributed in the Exposition Universelle de Paris 1889 with an illustration of the Eiffel Tower and its characteristics.

Souvenirs distributed in the Exposition Universelle de Paris 1889 representing a view of the Eiffel Tower and its surroundings.

or grain pattern — but, in some cases, the photographer or a specialized artist would paint them in order to add some colour to the setting. The difference in the production of postcards was also visible in the number of copies made. The printing process would mass-produce copies of a single postcard, while the “real-photo” postcards would be sometimes reduced to 12 copies or less, and some would be even unique.

Photography was still relatively new and some photographs, because of the low sensitive paper/surface and lack of lighting — electricity would only be a common household feature later on —, would take hours. The complexity of the photographic process demanded specialized equipment and knowledge, so its production was mostly in the hands of professional photographers and only a privileged number of people could afford to take a picture of themselves and keep it as a souvenir, either in the form of a cabinet card[23] or a tintype[24]. The process was so complex, that some photographers would send their negatives or plates from the U.S. to Germany in order to be properly developed and reproduced or printed.

Package of AZO photographic paper developed by Eastman Kodak Co.'s. The name Gaslight photo paper referred to the possibility of its use in gaslight illuminated areas.

Photographers established their photo studios in towns across the U.S., specializing in postcard photography. The popularity of the medium was also due to the advances on postal services.

PORTRAITS OF AN IDENTITY

At the turn of the 20th century, George Eastman, an American producer of photographic glass plates and founder of the Eastman Kodak Company of Rochester, New York, understood the potential of photography as a mass-medium and developed a series of ground-breaking technologies—smaller cameras that would be easier to carry; roll film, lighter and more light-sensitive than the formerly used glass-plates; paper-stock with pre-printed postcard backs, etc.—that would completely transform and exponentiate the newly formed photographic market and all its associated markets and institutions, including the postal service in Europe and in the U.S., which would sometimes provide distribution of postcards more than once a day to nearly every part of the country.

The multiple technological advancements and products proposed by George Eastman's vision, which would carry the name "Kodak" later on, resulted on a democratisation of the medium. It was no longer something only available to the privileged few; it was something controlled by either professional or amateur photographers and available to virtually every person everywhere.

Due to the development of Kodak's photo-stock with a pre-printed postcard back, the "real-photo" postcard was much easier to produce in the U.S., becoming so common that most photographers, professional or amateur, would be valuable documenters and portrayers of the country. Most newspapers, instead of investing in printing technologies for pictures, would distribute postcards of newsworthy situations, like floods, fires or other disasters or events. Every single city or small town would have its own photographer and photo-studio and photographers would travel throughout the country searching for events: wherever people would ask, they

would document their houses, their workplaces/metiers and their family.

The once fairly popular cabinet cards slowly gave way to the hugely successful “real-photo” postcards. Although technically similar, the postcard’s main intent was to be posted and sent to someone.

Families and friends were sometimes left behind in other countries, states or cities and the means of transportation and telephones hadn’t evolved enough to make it a regular thing to visit or to communicate with them, so taking a portrait postcard and send it was the closest they could find to do so.

Going to the photographer’s studio and taking a picture postcard to keep as a souvenir in the family’s photo-album or to send to loved ones with a heartfelt message for Christmas or New Year’s became a ritual in the United States, particularly among rising middle and lower classes who couldn’t afford classical portraiture reserved only for the fortunate wealthy. Photographic portraiture “was surely in part an act of self-definition, status and validation. For many, during an era of massive immigration, it represented the creation and affirmation of a new American identity.”[25] The same way painted portraiture was among noble Europeans and wealthy Americans throughout history a sign of recognition and affirmation of status and social importance — a distinction to the “common people” — photographic portraiture made it possible for nearly everyone to affirm themselves and their image also as worthy of lasting forever, even if just in paper. But more than just the act of being remembered by a picture, it is important to understand that a portrait would also represent a sense of belonging, acceptance and even ownership of a place or a culture and its habits, specially to the mass of immigrants who had left everything behind — country, family, house — and entered the U.S during the 19th and 20th century. Turning these portraits into postcards and send them to the families and

Portrait postcard of an immigrant family in the U.S.

Creative scenarios were built for people to take their pictures with (top). Another creative trick was the use of illustration with photography during the developing process (bottom).

friends left behind in Europe, showing themselves inserted in this new world, would serve as an extra validation of this self-proclaimed identity. The thousands of portraits taken at that time allow me today to see them not only as single portraits of people, but also as a wider portrait of a country and its singular identity.

The Golden Age of "real-photo" postcards in Europe and in the U.S. was around 1905-1915—its decay in popularity is believed to be linked to the first World War—and because of the advance on the technology involved in photography, the subjects portrayed, unlike classic oil painted portraits or cabinet card photography, weren't forced anymore to hold a serious or inexpressive pose and face while taking the picture. It is not uncommon to see people portrayed in some photo-studio in a holiday resort smiling for the camera. Although usually set in front of plain backdrops, some photographers painted themselves or hired painters to create different and more imaginative settings for the pictures, like Mr. Rensler, a photographer who opened a postcard studio in Cincinnati, in 1906, as mentioned by the American author John Baskin[26].

The creation of more imaginative and even "out of this world" settings used in portraiture could derive from the societal shift professor and historian Woody Register states while explaining the rise of the amusement park in the American society:

> "Dreams and desires achieved a new significance in the vocabulary and consciousness of western Europeans and Americans at the turn of the 20th century. Psychologists and Darwinian naturalists, political economists, folklorists, sociologists, writers and artists were divorcing their analysis, understanding, and representation of the unconscious forces and motives that drive human behaviour from the moral cosmology of Christian theology."[27]

Going to the amusement park, the holiday resort or the fair became part of the European and North American culture of the beginning of the 20th century. Entertainment, fun and pleasure would be guiltlessly felt by everyone at least once in their lives and photography and “real-photo” postcards weren’t indifferent to this new cultural demand.

“Dreams and fantasies could be indulged through inexpensive postcard images of all kinds”[28] and photography and “real-photo” postcards started being seen as much more than simple reproductions of reality: they started being perceived as doors for imagination—photo-collages with illustration or dreamlike backdrops are among the many examples of basic forms of image manipulation of the time. Plus, they would hold the ability to tell stories through those images, working as souvenirs of people’s dreams and fantasies. One particularly popular setting used in that time period exuded more charm and triggered more fantasies and dreams than anyone other: the fondly named “Paper Moon postcard”.

Unposted “real-photo” Paper Moon postcard. Date and place unknown.

Harold Arlen, *It's only a paper moon*, 1933

"Say, it's only a paper
moon sailing over a
cardboard sea
But it wouldn't be
make-believe
If you believed in me"

THE PAPER MOON

More than a movie[29], a song title or a mere example of vintage times and nostalgic feelings, the Paper Moon was once a conveyor and fulfiller of people's fantasies beyond country, border or nationality.

Not much is known for sure about how, when or where the phenomenon of the Paper Moon started, but Paper Moon collectors Beverly and Jack Wilgus[30] state that this setting was once known by the name of "Man in the Moon". Many of the messages found in postcards would refer to them as such and only later on started being popularly called "Paper Moon", perhaps inspired by the title of the 1933 song *It's only a Paper Moon*[31].

Widely successful from around the 1910's until the 1920's and mostly in the U.S.—although it is possible to find some examples from Germany, France, Australia and the U.K. and from the 1930's—the craze for this setting was so intense that many photographers were forced to create their own moon backdrop.

The Paper Moon setting consisted mainly on a device, usually a crescent or a waning moon, made out of cardboard or wood and attached to some kind of hidden base, so that the moon and the person usually sitting or standing on it would seem to be floating in front of a dark background. Some backdrops, instead of a uniform black background, would have a starry, sometimes cloudy, sky instead. Purists would say that this wouldn't be possible, because the moonlight doesn't allow to see the stars or clouds surrounding the moon, but this apparently didn't bother the photographers or the people to take a picture on the moon in a sky with clouds and stars, in a sort of heavenly atmosphere.

Others would draw particular elements in the sky, such as planets, the Halley's Comet[32] or some sort of

flying apparatus, like the Wright brothers' airplane[33] or even a Zeppelin[34]. Almost 40 years before the first men in space, some would even predict the future by depicting a little Earth in the starry sky similarly to the images we are now accustomed to see of the Blue Planet, while others would have a more romantic sight and would have angels blessing their love. The ones perhaps less dedicated into making a space-like scenery would adapt their mountain or landscape settings and let more earthly views frame their accomplishment of flying to the moon.

A Paper Moon could have just a simple and small moon in a sometimes not well arranged space or could be a highly detailed scenario that would take people in the air by the mere illusion of, just like the song, standing on the moon over a magnificent cardboard sea or a bright city.

Some photographers would add some extra information, possibly as a way of advertising the studio or responding to customers' requests. For example, plates with the name of the amusement park/fair or the town/studio where the picture was taken would be added to the actual scenario. In some cases, photographers would write something in the negative that would appear in the picture, probably if asked for a specific saying or information. Some moons would also bear a ribbon with a poetic/romantic or just a popular saying, the title of a song about the moon or a humorous and joyful comment.

Not every postcard of that time period was mailed. Some might have been given to someone personally, kept for themselves or have been just forgotten somewhere. However, the ones that were posted would hold messages of love and caring, humour, memories or just simple "hellos".

► (continues p. 101)

Stars/clouds

Sioux City, USA (1912). Melanie (Lutz) and son Gerald Adam.

Planets (Saturn)

Unknown place (1912).
Lady with a dog.

Planets (Saturn)

Unknown place and date.
Lady with a banjo.

Halley's comet

Unknown place (1910). Hope's Anti-Comet Pills were advertised as an Elixir for Escaping the Wrath of the Heavens.

Zeppelin

Summit Beach Park, USA (ca. 1930). Woman with two children.

Airplane

Place and date unknown.
Girl with a hat.

Airplane

Unknown place (1910). From the collection of Leonard Lauder.

Earth seen from the moon

St. Paul and Minneapolis, date unknown. From The Kregel Photo Parlors; amateur, supplies, developing and finishing.

Angels

Unknown place (1910). Two men holding hands.

Lakes and snowy mountains

Place and date unknown. Girl on the moon between the mountains.

Lakes and snowy mountains

Place and date unknown. Two men on the moon between the mountains.

Unarranged spaces

Unknown date and place. Two teenagers in costume.

Cardboard sea

Place and date unknown. Two men on the moon over a cardboard sea.

Cardboard sea

Unknown date and place. Two little girls posing in front of a cardboard sea background.

Cities

Picture possibly taken at Owl Studio, 206 Market, opposite the Commonwealth Hotel in Harrisburg, USA. Unknown date.

Cities

Unknown people most likely related to the Shepard family of West Virginia. Unknown date.

Event name

Unknown place (1915). Picture probably from a small studio in a local event.

Town name

Spokane, USA. Unknown date.
Part of a series of real-photo
postcards taken in the same studio.

Town name

Spokane, USA. Unknown date.
Part of a series of real-photo
postcards taken in the same studio.

Town name

Poplar Bluff, USA, unknown date.
Picture of a little black girl.

Town name

Oshkosh, Wisconsin, USA (1912).

Town name

Douglas County Fair, Waterville, USA (1913). Picture of Alvin John Stall (age 2) and father John Franklin Stall (age 34). The fair would later become the North Central Washington District Fair.

Advertising

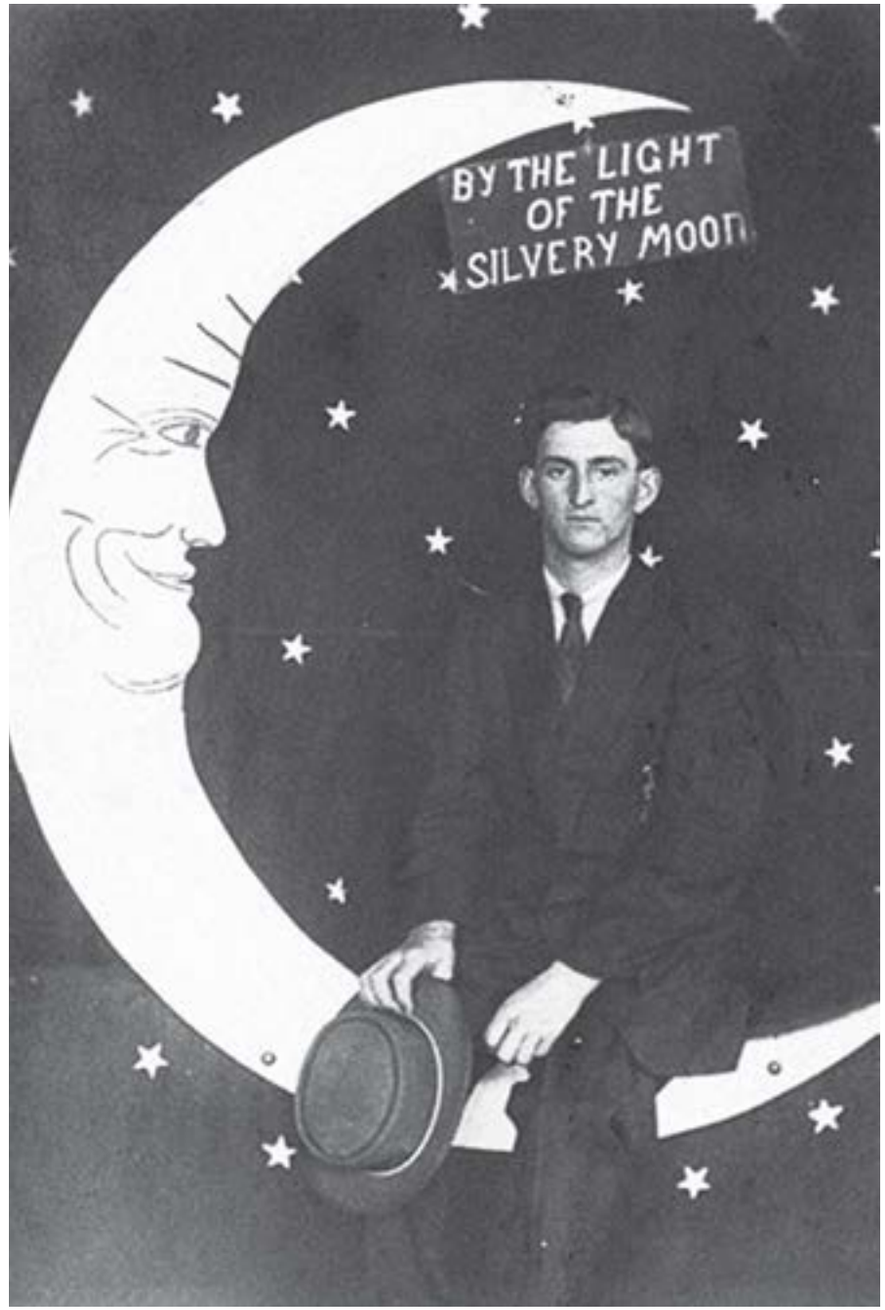
Atlanta, Missouri, USA. Unknown date. E. C. Cunningham–Agent for High Class Motor Cars advertising postcard.

Popular sayings

Hot Springs, USA. Picture of a couple probably after the 1920's, considering the clothing style, with the saying "Up in the Moon".

Popular sayings

Unknown place (1910). Couple posing on a Paper Moon with the saying "Going to the Fair."



Song titles

The postcard is from David Smith to his aunt Miss Rosie Smith. *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* was the title of a 1909 song popular for many years after.

Song titles

Unknow date and place. *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* was the title of a 1909 song popular for many years after.

Song titles

The moon has two banners: one reads “Everybody’s doin’ it”, the title of a 1912 dance tune by Irving Berlin; the other reads “I am out for a good time”.

Humouristic sayings

Postcard from Edna Martz, addressed to Mrs. Geo Troyne. The picture was taken in Muscatine, USA, with joyful sayings written on plates in the moon.

Humouristic sayings

Unknown place and date. The moon has a banner saying “I told you so”, possibly to attest as proof of actually having travelled to the moon.

Messages of love and caring

"Dearest Lillian, How do you like my new picture? Dearest, I may be down to see you Saturday about 6 P.M.. Will close with love and kisses. From, Papa." Brighton, UK (1912).

Messages of love and caring

"For Mrs Thomas Whalen ans. soon. I had three cards taken so I thought I would see you me and the folks. For the family from your sister Dora." Unknown date and place.

Messages of love and caring

"To My SweetHeart R.W.K." Signed: Cora L. King. Unknown place and date.

Messages of love and caring

"Your baby girl Mannie". Unknown place and date.

Messages of humour

Despite its current meaning, which refers to showing the bottom, the use of the expression “Mooning” here alludes to a more dreamlike scenario.

Messages of humour

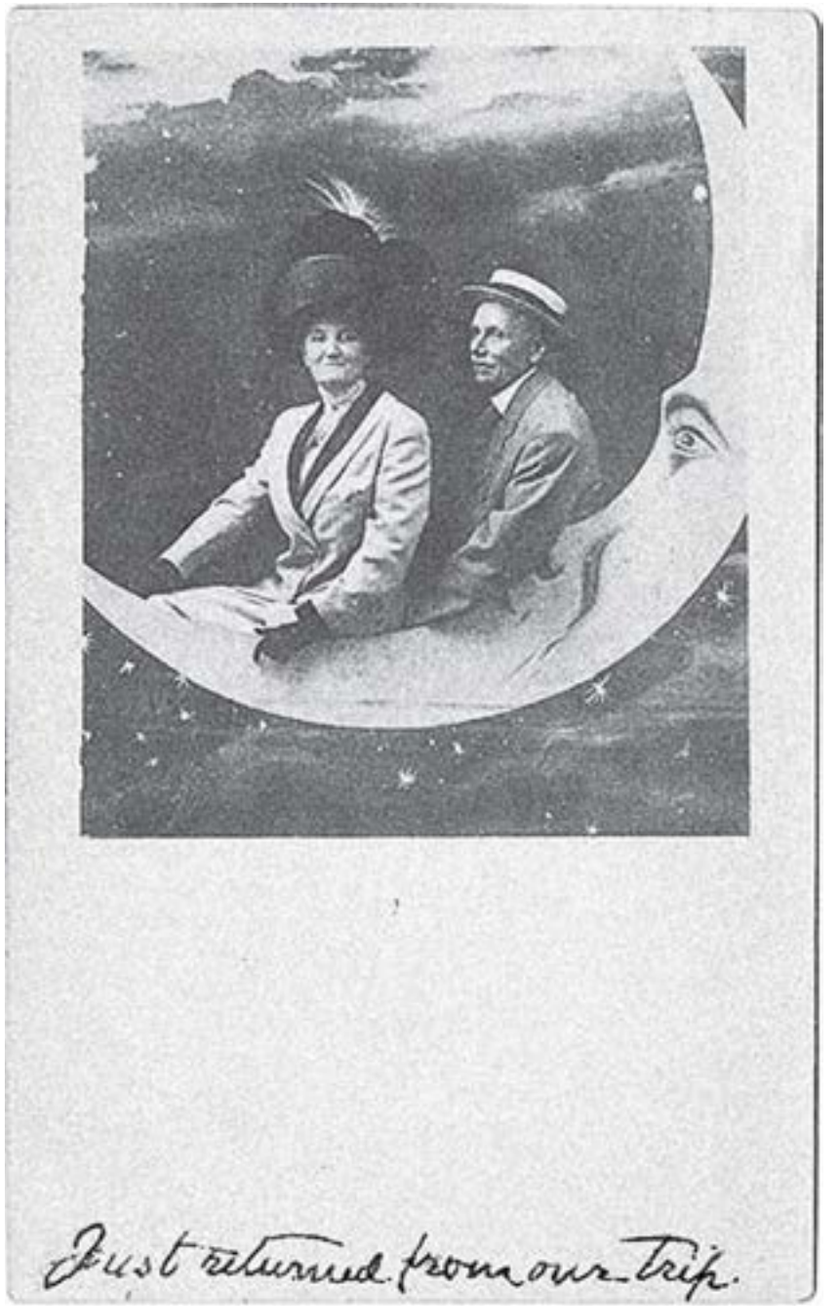
“Mrs. Daisy Dixon if you keep these out of your card album. Dont judge us by our looks, as we were in the rain al day so were about wilted and don’t show up to a good advantage. Bill Seavor.”

Messages of nostalgia

"Memories of happy Carnival moments in 1931." Written in German. Maastricht, Netherlands (1931).

"I was there"

"Did you ever see the man in the moon. If you have not you have got him now. As Ever." Mailed to Miss Alpha Minard from Fargo, North Dakota, USA (1911).



“I was there”

“Just returned from our trip.” Unknown place and date.

“I was there”

Front “How would you like to be the man in the moon?” Commercial postcard sent from Bridgeton, USA (1911).

“I was there”

Back “How would you like to be the man in the moon?” Commercial postcard sent from Bridgeton, USA (1911).

The most common elements depicted in “real-photo” postcards from the beginning of the 20th century were landscapes or views from cities/towns, as American historian Rosamund B. Value shows:

> “Resorts and big cities’ (…) audience consisted of tourists, travellers, and visitors whose implicit message was: I was there; this is where I vacationed; this is what it’s like. Or for residents, this is my town; this is a place worth coming to. For visitors, status and sophistication were associated with travel. For locals, pride of place was enhanced by postcard images.” [35]

Could this also be the case in a “postcard from the moon”? Like the city or landscape picture postcards used by locals as a sign of local pride or by tourists as a sign of showing they had the honour of experiencing such a place, people could have Paper Moon postcards as a sign of “I was here” or rather “there” on the moon and some of their messages played with this fantasy of actually being on the moon. Almost as if it were their homeland, the moon, and the Paper Moon as a representation of it, would be taken as their own, even if minutes later others would be ready to reclaim it for themselves, too.

Albrecht Dürer, *Virgin on a Crescent Moon* (1511).

Albrecht Dürer (1498-99)

Albrecht Dürer (1516)

Unknown artist (ca. 1480)

AN ICONOGRAPHY FOR THE MOON

The sight of someone sitting on a crescent moon may seem to a younger generation today as an innovative depiction of the moon by one of Hollywood's biggest cinema enterprises—DreamWorks. However, long before DreamWorks, and even the Paper Moon, this kind of imagery had already been depicted by many artists, such as German painter Albrecht Dürer, in the 16th century, who drew a Virgin Mary with her son on a crescent moon numerous times. A common depiction in paintings, drawings and sculptures throughout history, the Virgin Mary on a crescent moon derives from the vision of St. John as mentioned in the Bible (Apocalypse 12:1): "a woman clothed in the sun, and the moon was under her feet." The moon was also profusely depicted in a popular medium that we are able to date back to the 15th century: the tarot card.

Created in the 15th century in Italy to serve as regular playing cards, the tarot cards have since been embedded with mystique and with either religious or pagan symbols that can vary between different tarot decks. Interpreted as a symbol of mystery and an omen for imagination, the early examples of the XVIII card—the Moon card—would depict the moon with someone holding it on the hand (e.g. Visconti Sforza deck, 15th century); with a goddess[36] sitting/laying over a crescent moon (e.g. Minchiate deck, 17th century); or the moon with a frowning face (e.g. Tarot de Marseille deck, 18th century). Apart from the occultist and divination purposes it now serves, these moon cards attest to the fascination the moon and, most importantly, its iconography have been exercising on people since early times. Although Italian physicist, astronomer and mathematician Galileo Galilei had drawn already in the 16th Century quite

detailed and scientifically realistic studies of the moon's surface, there has always persisted this sort of childish representation of it with a smiling or frowning face, alluding to old believes and legends[37] about the once inexplicable features of the moon. Curiously enough, tarot cards would sometimes represent these two conceptions of the moon—the popular and the scientific—by depicting, for example, a faced moon with an astronomer lit by its moonlight, evidencing that science and popular knowledge were not distinct and separated, but rather influenced by one another. The resemblances between the old depictions of the moon, like the ones in old tarot cards, and the imagery of the Paper Moon make me think that, more than coincidentally, these early illustrations could have indeed inspired and persisted as the popular way of seeing the moon and, therefore, evoke such desire and fascination on people to have their own picture sitting on it, just like an ancient goddess would, centuries later.

Top left Visconti Sforza deck (1450)
Top right Tarot de Marseille (18th century)
Bottom François Poilly deck (1660)

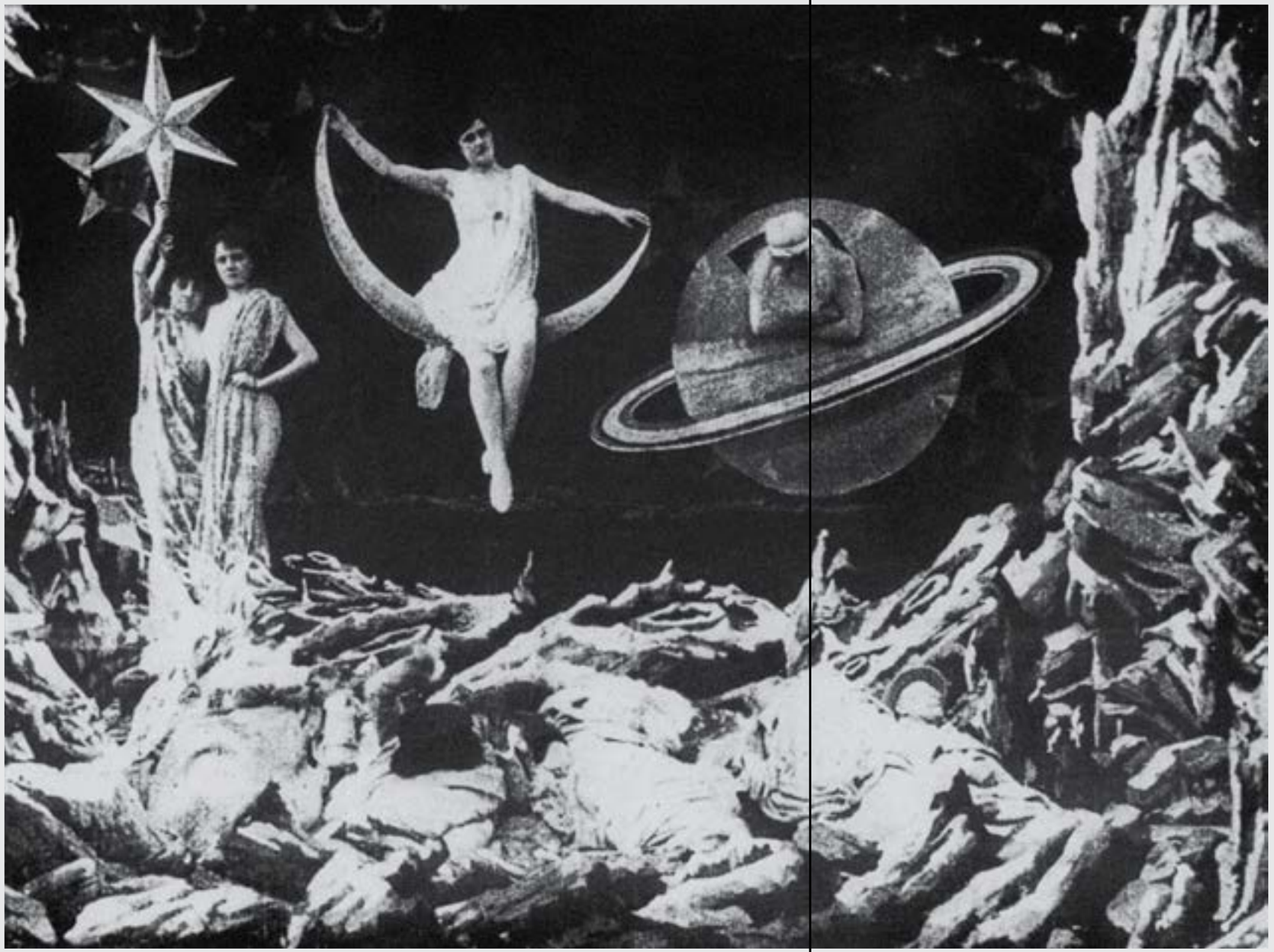
Still from Georges Méliès' movie *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) that shows the astronomer's rocket landing on the moon and hitting the face of the man in the moon.

A FANTASY-DRIVEN REALITY

Perhaps the most common face known today in popular culture of the "man in the moon" is the one imagined by French illusionist Georges Méliès in *Le Voyage dans la Lune*[38]. Before the success of the 1902 movie in Europe and in the United States, a faced moon and Paper Moon-esque scenery had already starred in another Méliès' film: the 1898 short-movie *La Lune à un Mètre*[39]. Set by astronomers dreaming or visiting the moon, both movies, similarly to the iconography of the moon in tarot cards, represent at times a full moon with a face—in *Le Voyage* with an actual person's face that gets struck by the astronomers' rocket and in the 1898 movie a mechanically animated moon with an illustrated face—whenever it seems that the astronomers are dealing with the planet itself and, other times, they represent a crescent moon with a woman laying on it. It is curious to watch that, whenever the crescent moon with possibly a goddess is shown, the movies' stories change from a perspective of dealing with the moon to the perspective of a spirit or a dream of it (i.e. in *Le Voyage dans la Lune* the astronomers are clearly sleeping on the moon when the crescent moon with a goddess appears and in *La Lune à un Mètre* the crescent moon is mostly a frame to the deity that seems to inhabit it). This iconography of the moon persisted then throughout centuries and evolved from being an illustration on a paper to becoming an image projected on a big screen for the masses. Also, the perception of it as being related to dreams or fantasies was an understanding than would trespass both mediums.

Méliès cited being inspired by many others before him whose work was driven by a fantasy about the moon, such as: Jules Verne in *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Around the Moon*; French novelist and playwright Adolphe

Still from Georges Méliès' movie *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) representing the goddess in the moon, the stars and the planets while the astronomers are sleeping on the moon.



Stills from Georges Méliès' movie *La Lune à un mètre* (1898) representing a mechanically activated faced moon and the goddess on the moon.

d'Ennery in a stage adaption of Verne; French composer Jacques Offenbach in the 1875 operetta *Le voyage dans la Lune*; or British writer H. G. Wells's in the book *The First Men in the Moon*. The moon filled literary, stage and cinema plots, as well as people's imagination throughout Europe and the U.S. in the 19th century until the 20th. But the moon played also an important role in another popular attraction: the amusement park.

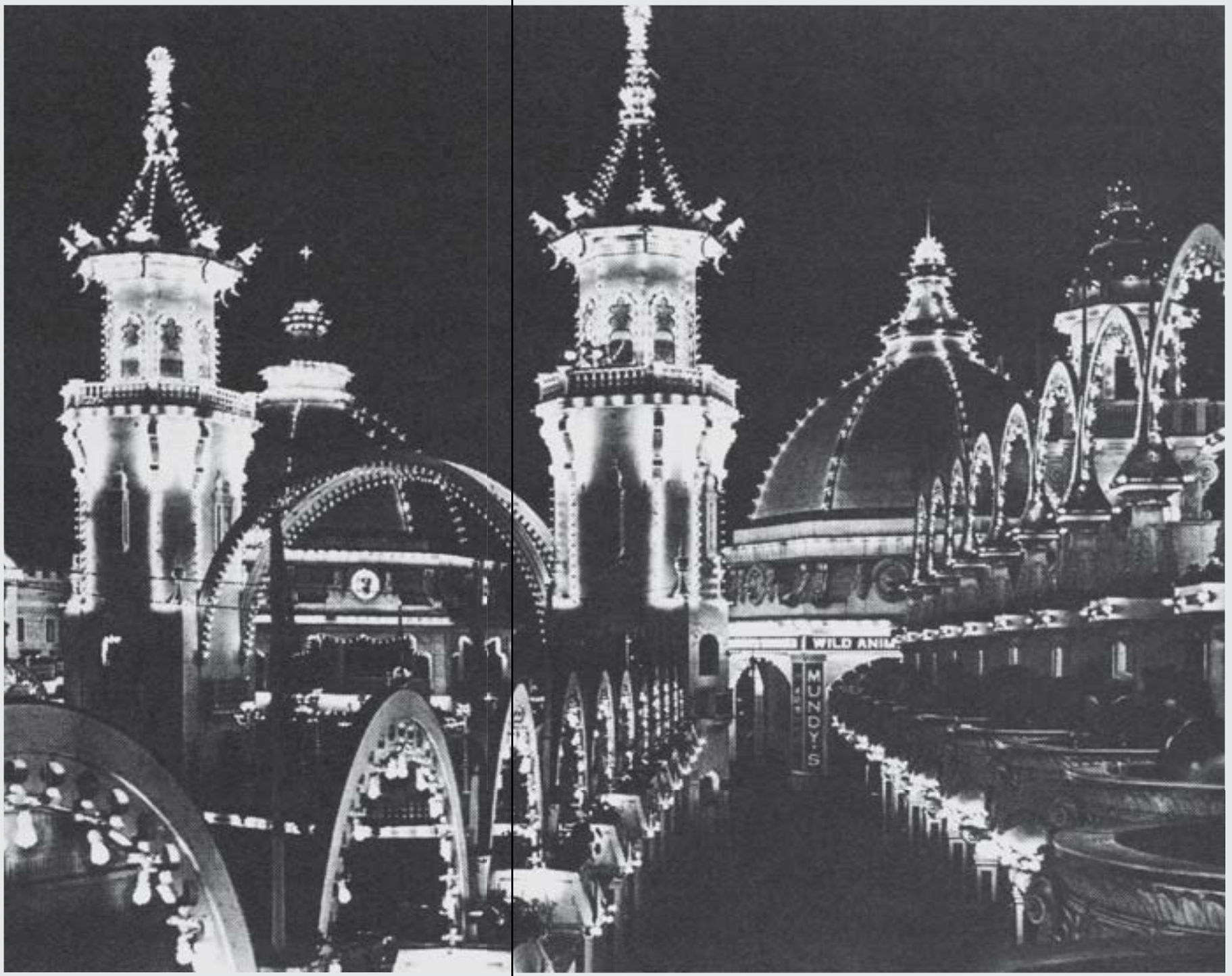
Considered a probable inspiration to Georges Méliès, the hugely successful attraction *A Trip to the Moon*, designed by Frederic Thompson and inaugurated in 1901 in the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, paved the way for the creation of Coney Island's iconic Luna Park, in 1903.

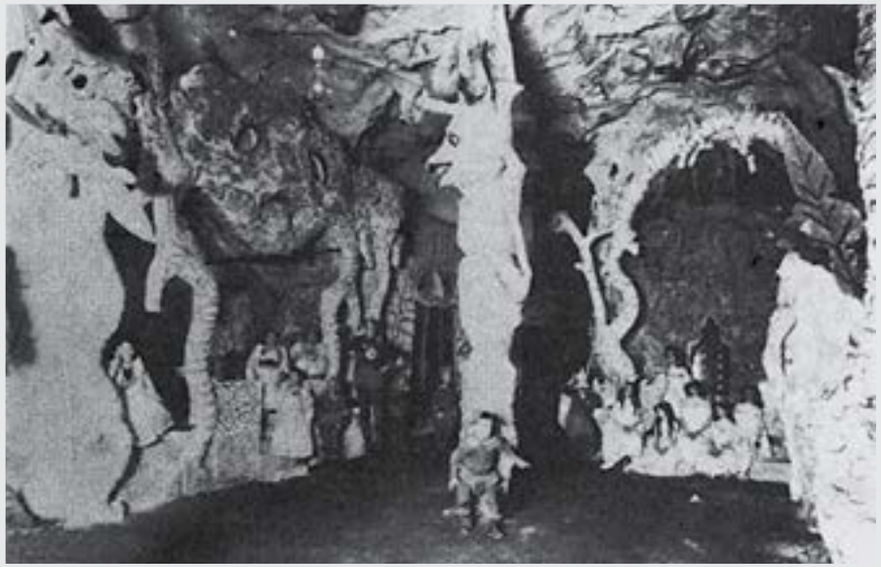
Luna Park's main attraction[40], *A Trip to the Moon*, was a show where the public was an active part of. Preceded by a lecture in a darkened auditorium guided by a person from the Aerial Navigation Company, explaining the notions of anti-gravitation and aerial flight—pseudoscientific notions also proposed by H.G. Wells in his book in order to make the illusion of a flight to the moon plausible—, people were invited to go on board of the airship Luna and because of ingeniously made illusion-artifices, such as real-life three-dimensional stereopticons[41], they believed they were embarking on a flight to the moon[42].

> "Once on board of the great airship, her huge wings rise and fall, the trip is really begun and the ship is soon 100 feet in the air. A wonderful, widespread panorama of the surrounding sea, Manhattan and Long Island seems to be receding as the ship mounts upward. Houses recede from view until the earth fades from sight, while the Moon grows larger and larger. Passing over the Lunar satellite the barren and desolate nature of its surface is seen. The airship gently settles, the landing made, and the passengers enter the cool caverns of the Moon…"[43]

Luna Park's program for the 1907 season with a woman sitting on a waning moon. This Luna Park was inspired by the original Luna Park in Coney Island, New York, and it was open from 1907 to 1911 in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.

Night view from Coney Island's Luna Park in New York. Frederic Thompson would boast about its technological investment and, indeed, at night, the illuminated towers and spires were remarkably fascinating and groundbreaking.





Top The spaceship Luna crossing the city of Buffalo's skies and flying over the Niagara Falls on Frederic Thompson's 1901 *A Trip to the Moon*, presented in the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo.

Bottom View from the interior of the moon caves, with the Selenites inhabiting the space.

60,000 people were said to have visited Luna Park on its opening night on 16 May 1903, brightly illuminated by more than 1 million lights and surrounded by more than 1,000 towers, spires and minarets. A guide to Coney Island would report in 1907 that more than 60 million people visited Coney Island since its opening to personally experience Frederic Thompson's vision of the moon. Before being irretrievably destroyed by fire in 1914—similarly to Dreamland, another amusement park in Coney Island, years before, setting up Coney Island's gradual decay until its effective ending in the 1930's—Luna Park's visitors would be immersed in what Frederic Thompson fantasized or gathered from the collective's imagination about the moon, about its geography or its inhabitants—the Selenites, a direct reference to Jules Verne's books—, but not as a mere spectator. Much like a tourist in foreign lands, the astronauts of *A Trip to the Moon*, as the visitors were called, would interact with every aspect of this otherworldly atmosphere and perhaps more effectively, as no one had ever stepped on the moon at the time, allowing them to confront it with their own personal dreams and fantasies of the moon. After a 20-minute long expedition through inhospitable caves, moon-forests and golden lunar palaces, with midget Selenites serving green cheese and lunar stores showing riches of the moon's civilization, people would be slowly led by the guide back to the fantasy-driven reality of Luna Park, where they could continue their voyage to other attractions.

Despite the lack of concrete proof, postcard collectors and aficionados suggest that the Paper Moon phenomenon could have started or assumed the worldwide proportions we know of today precisely in Luna Park[44]. It is not hard to understand why this assumption is made, as Woody Register points out "Luna [Park] founded a new and lasting paradigm for outdoor amusements—an architecturally unified

and exotic garden of enchantment, which mocked the drab circumstances of everyday life and specialized in the experience of imaginative escape and thrilling fantasies."[45] After all, who wouldn't want to keep a proof, a souvenir of this otherworldly experience? Who wouldn't want to share with others the feat of visiting the moon?

Children, men, women, families, friends, lovers and sweethearts, dogs, cats, soldiers and officers, immigrants, celebrities, "freaks", exotic people, working people, thinkers, patriots, banjo players, people in sensual poses, people in costume, people with props… Everyone wanted to share the same yet singular view of the moon.

Children

Pictures of babies at the time would be taken with the mother hiding under a black cover, but here the photographer was able to hide it.

Children

Haverhill, Massachusetts, USA (1907). Portrait of Mariner F. Small at 7 years old.

Children

Unknown place and date.

Men

Unknown place and date.

Men

Rochester Minnesota (1911). Sent by L.M. White, telling the Milvog Haser (?) that he is waiting his turn to be admitted to the hospital.

Women

Unknown place and date. Two women, possibly friends, posing for their picture on the moon.

Women

Unknown place and date.

Women

Top Unknown place (1911).
Bottom Unknown place and date.

Women

Unknown place or date. On the back it is written “Hattie Newman”.

Families

Unknown place (1927). The person who published this image online commented: “Great Grandpa Eason & Family. My mom’s mother is the little girl on the left.”

Families

Unknown place and date.

Friends

Unknown place and date.

Friends

Unknown place and date. The way people are dressed it seems that these friends were on a party.

Friends

Unknown place (1909). Message written in German with only some parts understandable.

Sweethearts

"To Miss Beatrice Kerr. With Best Wishes from Ellis (Florance) and Ellis (Victor)." Unknown place and date.

Sweethearts

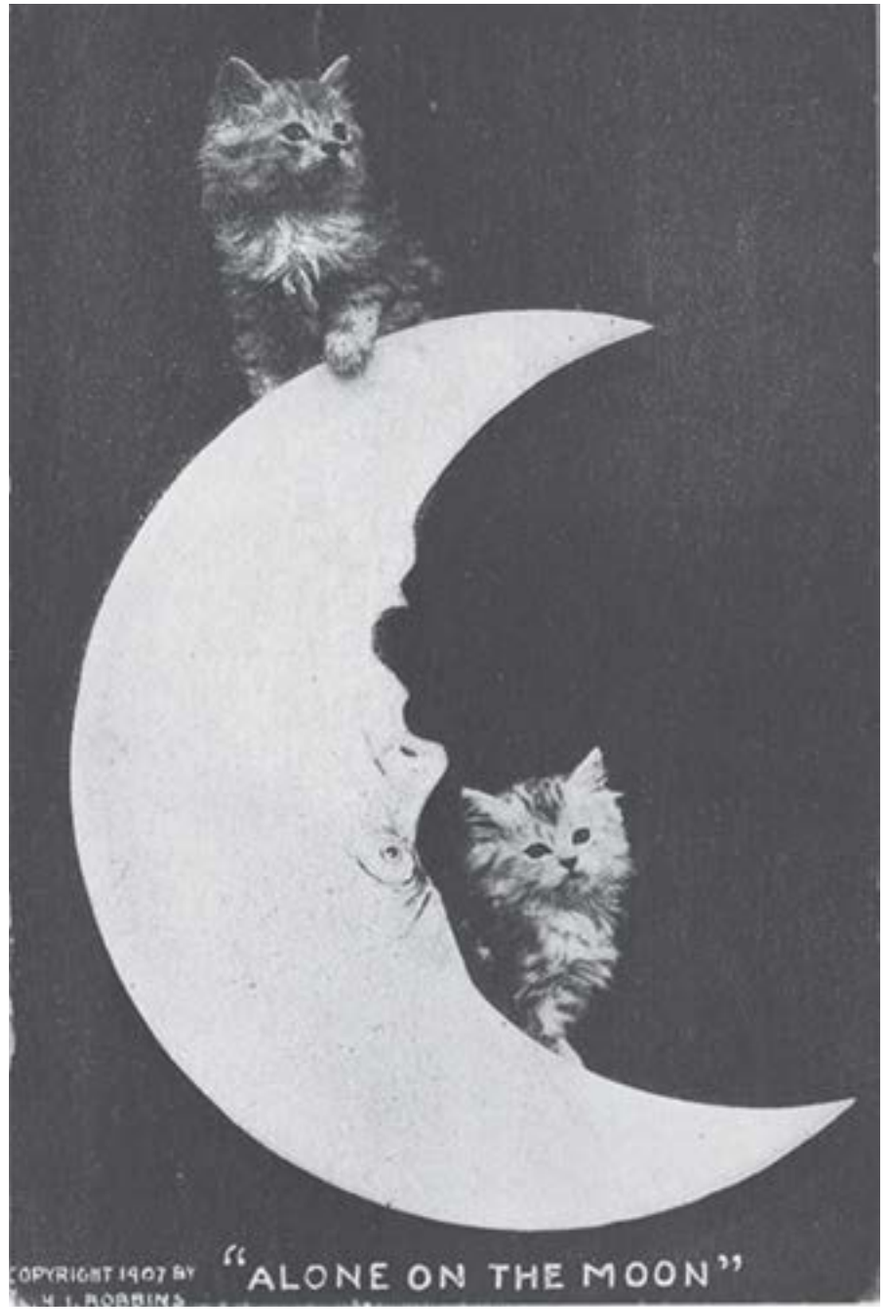
Unknown place and date. Couple holding hands on the moon.

Sweethearts

Unknown place, possibly around the 1940's.

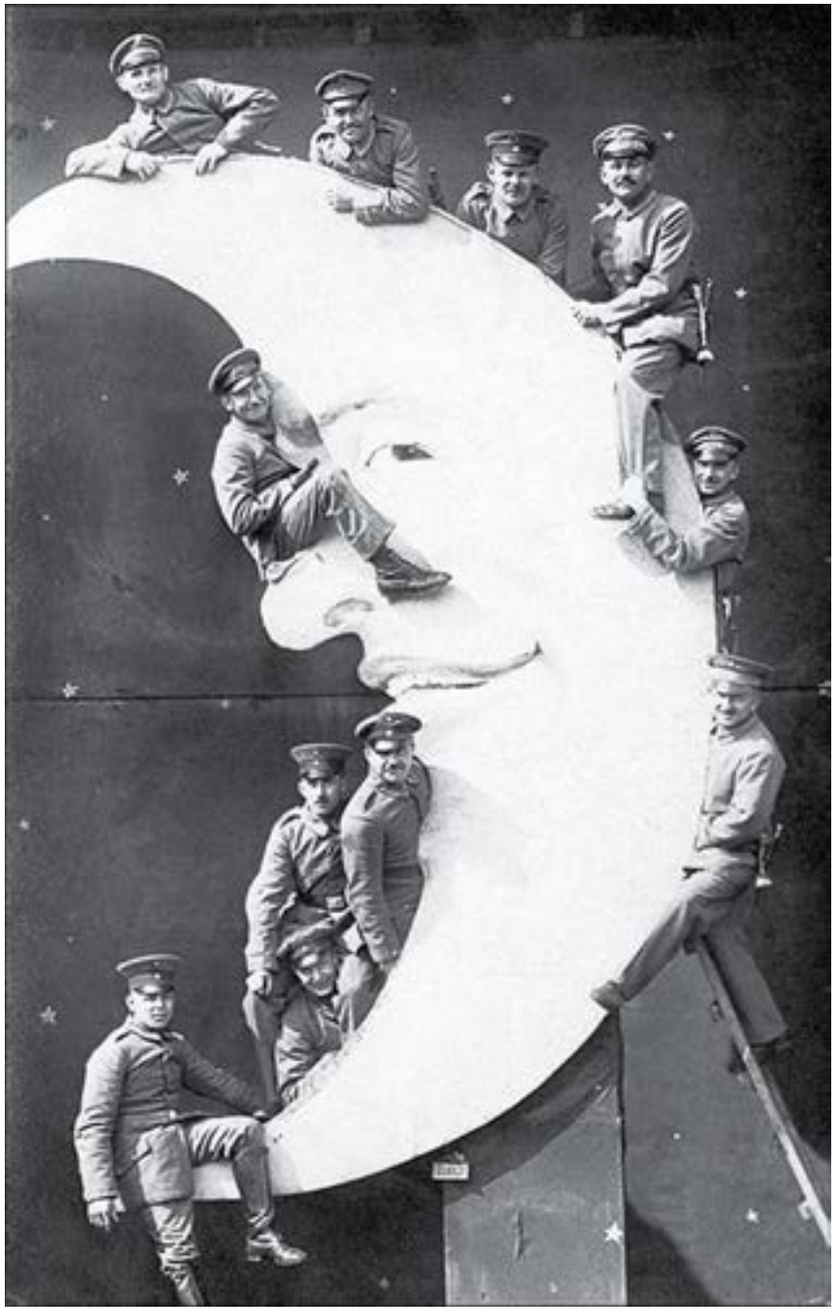
Dogs

"Dear friend Myrtle, hope these few lines will find you feeling better. Mrs. Howard Slemmons. This is Busters picture—the only card I had on hand." Creston, Ohio, USA (1914).



Cats

Commercial postcard mailed from Massachussets, USA (1907). The card has two kittens on a moon that is upside down.



Soldiers and officers

Munsterlager, Germany (1915). This moon is part of a series of pictures of a group of soldiers on the moon taken by a photographer named Schubert.

Soldiers and officers

Munsterlager, Germany (1915). With a plate saying “Mondsüchtige bei der Arbeit” (addicts to the moon at work).

Soldiers and officers

Unknown place, 1914–1918. World War I Soldier. The front reads “Dewdy Lesson” “Wining Indiana”. The back reads “Dudy”, “Dewdy Lesson” and “Duway”.

Immigrants

St. Kilda, Australia, 1920–1930. Gladys Sym Choon and her mother, So Yung Moon, sit on a moon display. Illustrative of the experiences of a Chinese migrant family in Australia.

Celebrities

Unknown place (1915). Commercial postcard with the picture of Sybil Carmen as she appeared in the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic

Celebrities

Commercial postcard from the UK (1905). Miss Marie Georges, from the postcard collection: Celebrities of the Stage.

Celebrities

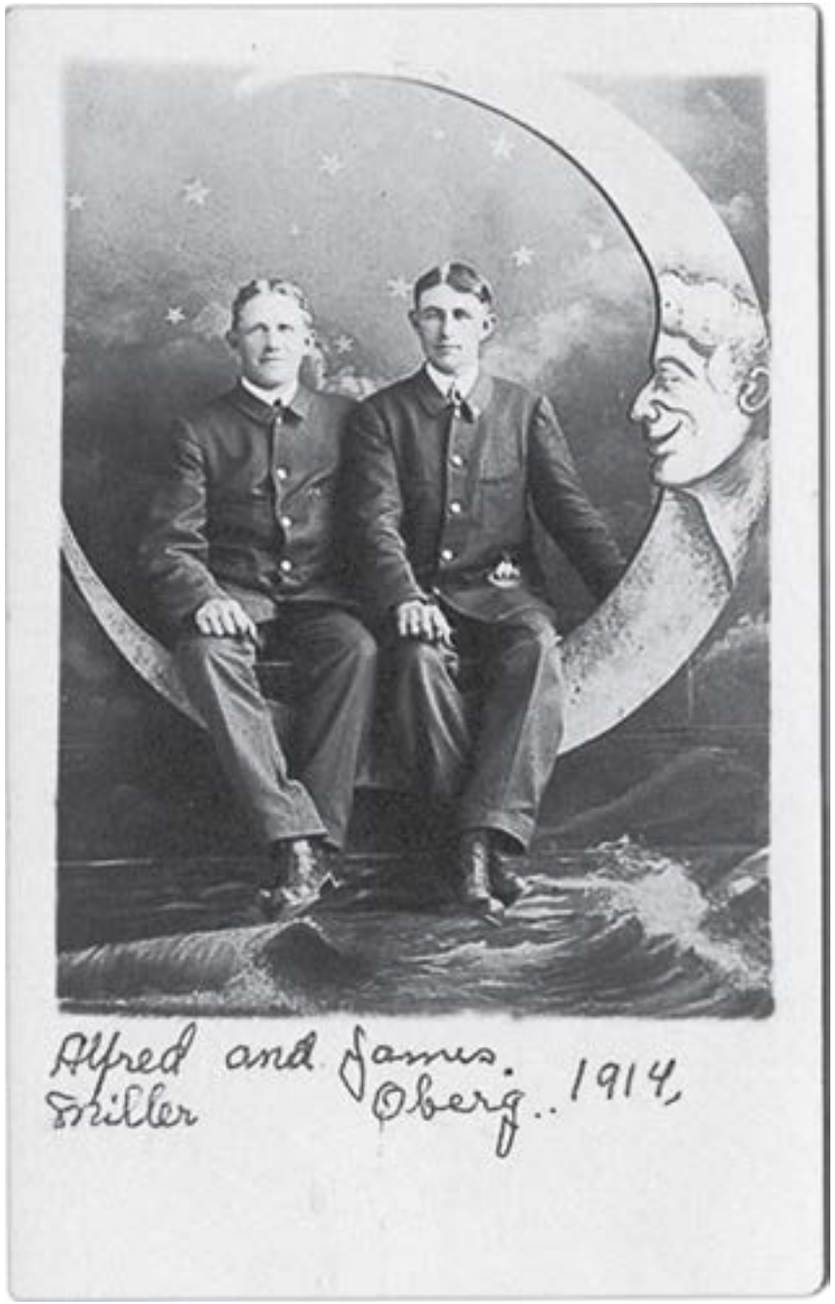
London, UK, unknown date. Commercial postcard of actress Miss Gabrielle Ray.

“Freaks”

Unknown place (1920’s). Circus “freak” card of Little Baby Viola: weight 512 LBS.

“Exotic” people

“Saku-bona! - mushla Xmas, mushla New Year”. Durban, Natal, South Africa (1894). Cabinet card from the private collection of Jack M. Ord.

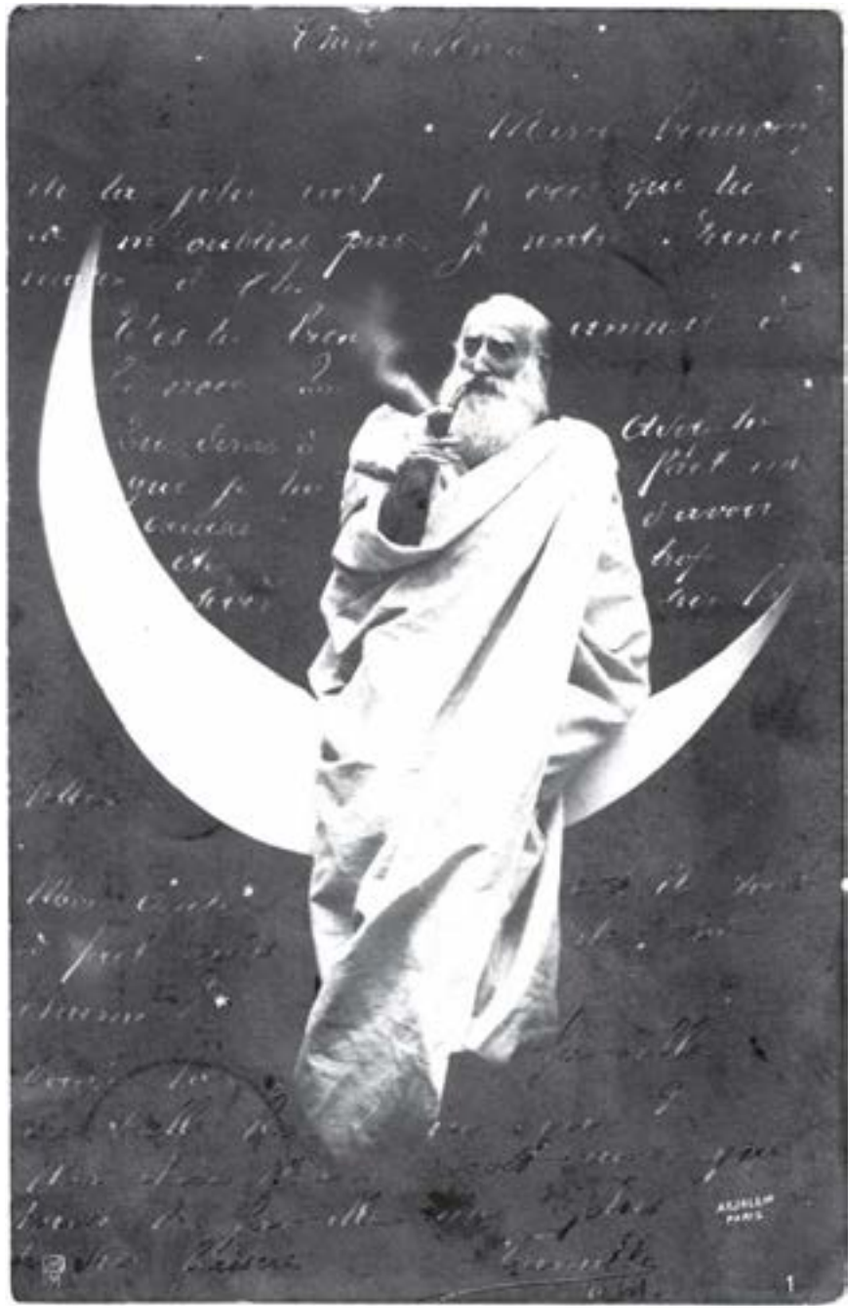


Working people

Minneapolis (1914). The uniforms that Alfred Miller and James Oberg wear make it seem that they were both street car conductors of the city.

Working people

Unknown place and date.
Picture of what appears to be a streetcar conductor.

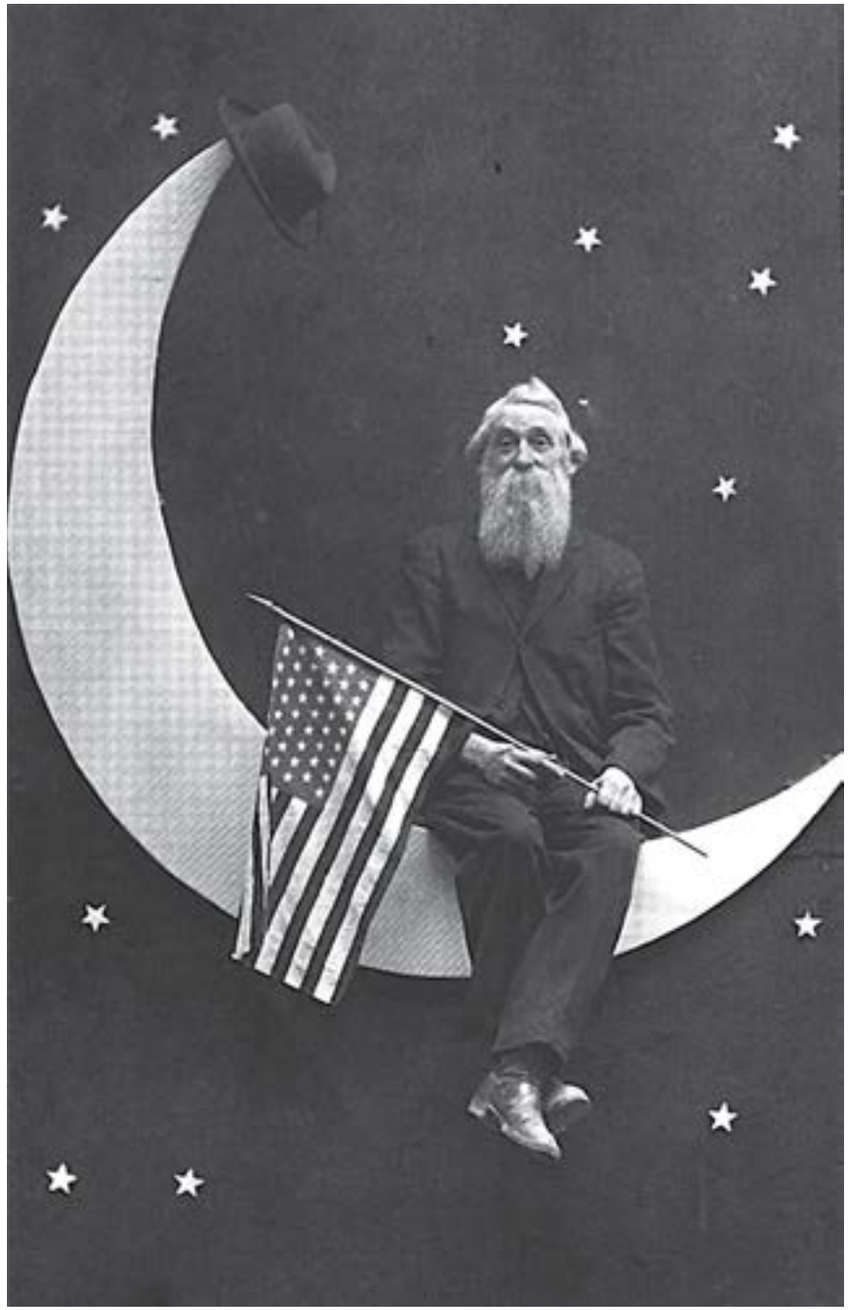


Thinkers

Belgium, date unknown.
Commercial postcard, presumably produced in Paris, sent to mademoiselle Marie Dupuis.

Patriots

"With best wishes From Albert."
Blanchard's Studio, 150 Market St.
Lynn, Massachussets, USA (1910).

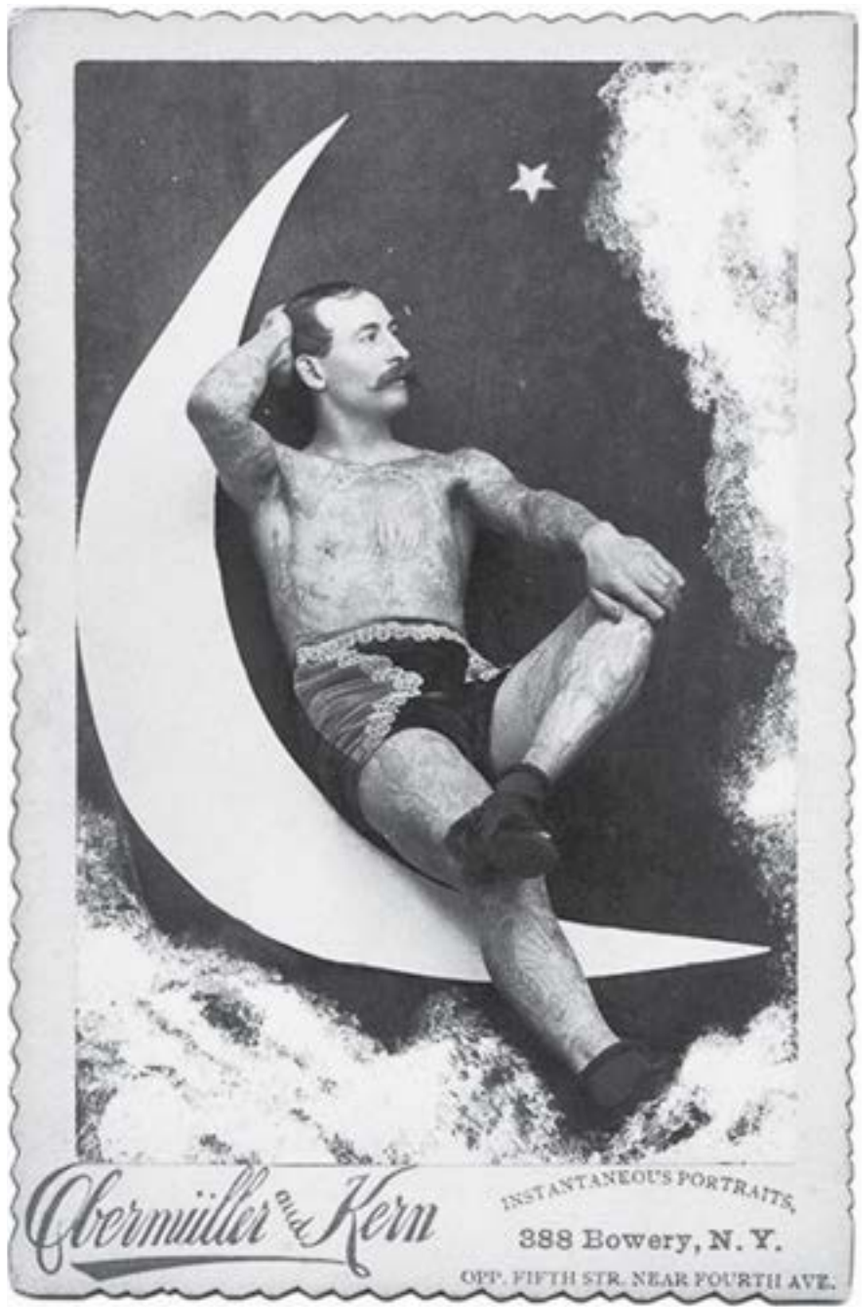


Patriots

Unknown place and date.

Banjo players

Unknown place and date.
Woman with a banjo.



People in sensual poses

New York, date unknown.
This tatooed man could possibly be part of a circus crew.

People in costume

Place unknow, after 1928, year of the creation of Mickey Mouse by Walt Disney, which seems to be the mask used by this little boy.

A rare example of two pictures from the same person on the same setting/day.

People in costume

Pittsburg, Kansas, date unknown. These women seem to be in costumes for Halloween and the lady on the right wears a costume that could allude to night/day and to the moon.

People with props

Unknown place and date. The man seems to be having a good time with his drink on the moon.

People with props

Bridgeport, Connecticut, USA (1910). This man could be possibly work in a telephone company or just chose a prop from the studio for his picture.

MOONVENIRS [46]

As John Baskin tells in the story about the American studio photographer Mr. Rensler:

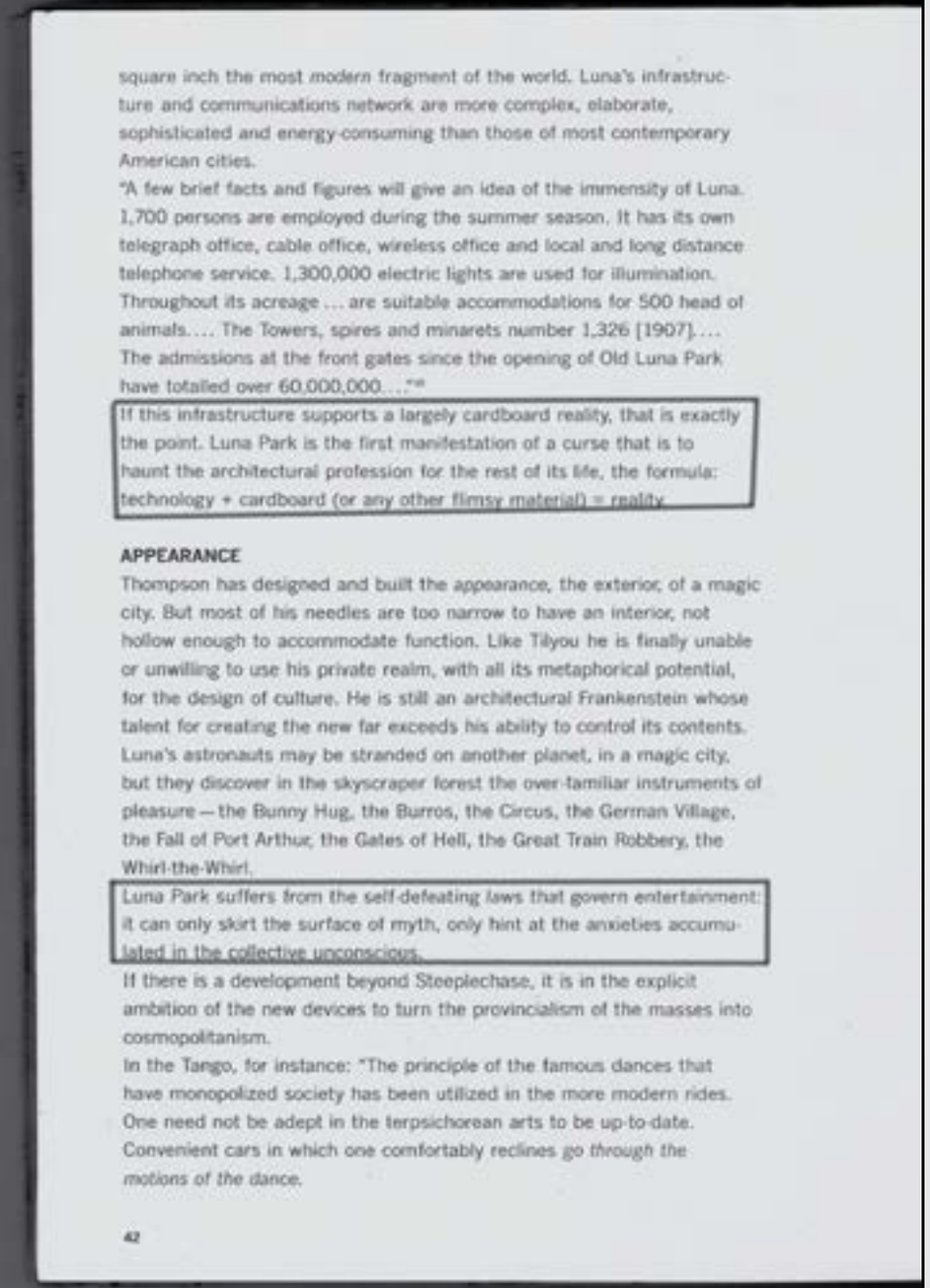
> "The customers were infatuated with the moon. They sang songs about it, counted the days until it was full again, and wanted their pictures taken with it as a backdrop. It was as though they were noticing it for the first time." [47]

More than a satellite orbiting the Earth, the moon became the Paper Moon. As John Baskin refers "It was as though they were noticing it for the first time." and indeed they were. The Paper Moon became an experience on its own and, perhaps nurtured by the almost universal wish of reaching for the moon, it became so widely popular and embraced by people across countries, despite wealth, gender, age or nationality. Unlike distant places, the moon was and is there for everyone to see and own, even if just a moon made out of cardboard was the closest they could physically get to it.

On the subject of Luna Park and its architecture of fantasy, architect Rem Koolhaas claims:

> "Luna Park is the first manifestation of a curse that is to haunt the architectural profession for the rest of its life, the formula: technology + cardboard (or any other flimsy material) = reality." [48]

More than a "curse" to architects and architecture, this quest for reality, even in what is undoubtedly created by fantasy, and for the moon "haunted" people's imagination everywhere. This mere semblance, translated by Koolhaas into a formula nurtured by pseudoscientific truths,



square inch the most *modern* fragment of the world. Luna's infrastructure and communications network are more complex, elaborate, sophisticated and energy-consuming than those of most contemporary American cities.
"A few brief facts and figures will give an idea of the immensity of Luna. 1,700 persons are employed during the summer season. It has its own telegraph office, cable office, wireless office and local and long distance telephone service. 1,300,000 electric lights are used for illumination. Throughout its acreage ... are suitable accommodations for 500 head of animals.... The Towers, spires and minarets number 1,326 [1907].... The admissions at the front gates since the opening of Old Luna Park have totalled over 60,000,000...."[8]

If this infrastructure supports a largely cardboard reality, that is exactly the point. Luna Park is the first manifestation of a curse that is to haunt the architectural profession for the rest of its life, the formula: technology + cardboard (or any other flimsy material) = reality.

APPEARANCE

Thompson has designed and built the appearance, the exterior, of a magic city. But most of his needles are too narrow to have an interior, not hollow enough to accommodate function. Like Tilyou he is finally unable or unwilling to use his private realm, with all its metaphorical potential, for the design of culture. He is still an architectural Frankenstein whose talent for creating the new far exceeds his ability to control its contents. Luna's astronauts may be stranded on another planet, in a magic city, but they discover in the skyscraper forest the over-familiar instruments of pleasure — the Bunny Hug, the Burros, the Circus, the German Village, the Fall of Port Arthur, the Gates of Hell, the Great Train Robbery, the Whirl-the-Whirl.

Luna Park suffers from the self-defeating laws that govern entertainment: it can only skirt the surface of myth, only hint at the anxieties accumulated in the collective unconscious.

If there is a development beyond Steeplechase, it is in the explicit ambition of the new devices to turn the provincialism of the masses into cosmopolitanism.
In the Tango, for instance: "The principle of the famous dances that have monopolized society has been utilized in the more modern rides. One need not be adept in the terpsichorean arts to be up-to-date. Convenient cars in which one comfortably reclines *go through the motions of the dance.*

42

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York – A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*.

electricity and illusion-making devices, was indeed so powerfully imprinted in people's minds that they embraced this fantasy so willingly by becoming part of it. It was as though people really wanted to be fooled by this clearly fantasy-driven business for the masses. These Paper Moon postcards were souvenirs of a place they believed to experience, even if no one had actually visited it, and yet the myths, dreams and experiences built around it were nothing but real, so why not cherish the memory of that somehow?

The notion of a photo as evidence of the truth has been gradually destroyed. However, at the time, photography was assumed as a means for what was real and truthful (e.g. the use of "real photo" postcards as news), and their makers would embed these "real photo" postcards with meaningfulness by charging them with an aura of being the real thing, contrary to an illustration or even a mass printed postcard, which could be easily manipulated and lose its uniqueness. After all, every single "real photo" Paper Moon postcard represents real people and a real moment combined with a real fantasy of longing for the moon.

In the beginning of the 20th century, travelling from the U.S. or Europe to foreign distant lands would be for some just as unattainable as going to the moon. Woody Register even states that "at a time when many Americans were engaged in remaking distant lands and peoples in their own image [in the Buffalo Exposition in 1901], [Frederic Thompson's] *A Trip to the Moon* implicitly poked fun at the popular enthusiasm for or against overseas expansion; only a Moon Calf could take its colonial dreams seriously."[49]

Regardless of being based on mockery, Frederic Thompson's *A Trip to the Moon* and the popular Paper Moon postcard as a possible souvenir of it were indeed fuelled by similar sentiments to those of visiting foreign lands. The sense of discovery, exploration and its

validation with a portrait taken on site were part of a ritual tourists still follow today—although portraits have since been replaced by *selfies*. However, more than the landscape postcards or views from cities/towns used by tourists as proof and physical memory of their travel, as mentioned by Rosamund B. Value[50], the Paper Moon postcard was able to combine both its aspect of a souvenir of the otherworldly travel experience of going to the moon and the sentiment of local pride, since the personal imagination of the moon, allied with the collective fantasy of it, would make them all part of its identity.

In the end, the Paper Moon postcard would be just like the song “But it wouldn’t be make believe, if you believed in me”. This widespread myth of visiting the moon, by the sheer quantity of examples we know today—and the more than 300 examples analysed—, allow me to see them beyond the fact of being a personal fantasy, but rather as a collective truth and identity regarding one place and the imagination associated with it built around a sentiment of fantasy.

Epilogue

Astronaut Bill Anders, Apollo 8, 1968 [51]

“We came all this way to explore the Moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth.”

Souvenirs of places never visited: the moon hints to an apparent paradox. After all, how is it possible to talk about souvenirs—both the memories and the objects that give shape to them—of places never visited or of experiences one apparently never had? In other words, how is it possible to remember something that never happened?

The deconstruction of this paradox starts not on the study of it through the lens of psychoanalysis, which explains the creation of “false memories”, but on the understanding of the souvenir not only as a personal keepsake, but also as a conveyor of the myths of the places and people commodified souvenirs are both a part and a symbol of. One could say that a souvenir becomes only a souvenir once someone deposited on it a personal memory, otherwise it would only be an object devoid of memories and, therefore, not a souvenir. However, entire industries, and in particular the touristic industry, revolve around the production and commodification of souvenirs by pre-determining some of their symbolic charges. This means that these objects sold in souvenir-shops or local markets already have a narrative, even before they are acquired. Like the graphic signs and strategies created by graphic designers and political institutions Ruedi Baur mentions, these souvenirs are charged with what was fabricated as an identity of the place they are supposed to be a symbol of—its myths, collective memories, essences, etc. This way, it is possible to have a souvenir of a place never visited by considering its pre-determined and shared symbolic charge or identity of the place it represents.

What could be, then, a souvenir from the moon and what could be its symbolic charge/identity, if, apart from 12 astronauts, no one has ever walked on it?

Enter the Paper Moon. The Paper Moon and, more specifically, the Paper Moon postcard, is one possible answer to these questions. By analysing the historical development of the medium of the postcard—its graphical and iconographical aspect, its relationship to

photography and portraiture, its use as a souvenir and its communicative aspect—it is possible to conclude that the postcard was very early used as a souvenir and as a representative and part of places/people and their identities, both personal and collective. But, could this also be the case for Paper Moon postcards?

A phenomenon of the popular culture of the beginning of the 20th century, the Paper Moon is surrounded by myths and assumptions. One of these assumptions resides on the possibility of the Paper Moon having started in Luna Park, a massively popular amusement park opened in 1903 in Coney Island, New York, inspired by what was thought to be the moon at the time. Although a fascination for the moon and a depiction of this fascination are demonstrably prior to the Paper Moon postcard, a context filled and inspired by the lunar fascinations of Georges Méliès, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Frederic Thompson and the guiltless acceptance of leisure/pleasure/fun at the time might have directed and conditioned people's dreams and fantasies towards the moon. Facilitated by the advancement, democratisation and mass-production of the means, the Paper Moon postcard exposed a collective admiration, presented by everyone's individual fantasies, regarding the moon and it exposed what I consider as a collective identity for it, built around a sentiment of fantasy. The more than 300 Paper Moon pictures and postcards found attest to this interpretation.

The Paper Moon postcard, and the sheer amount of examples found, is a valuable piece of information on its own. Although widely ignored in the research community, the graphic and semiotic analysis of each Paper Moon individually, its comparison to the many examples found and the crossing of it with its context (i.e. where, when, who, how), allowed me to trace a collective portrait of "the people from the moon" and its driving forces. It allowed me to perceive the Paper Moon as an intricate alliance of many factors that inspired the popular

culture of the time, like, for example, technology (e.g. the representation of airplanes) and fantasy (e.g. moon with a face) combined with a collective desire of reaching for the stars and the moon.

The promises of dreamlike or authentic experiences as places, the artifices and vocabulary[52] used then to create and brand the experience of a distant place—or even otherworldly place—don't differ that much from the touristic campaigns of today. In other words, the myths built around the fantasized trip to the moon are not so different from the myths that have been widely developed and sometimes inadvertently naturalised by the inhabitants of places right here on Earth.

But why use the moon to address matters of identity? The strategy to talk about the moon to address matters of the world is not a new one, for example, Cyrano de Bergerac did it in his satire *The Other World: Comical History of the States and Empires of the Moon*, in the 17th century, by discussing topics of religion while on the moon and H.G. Wells in his book *The First Men in the Moon* by projecting on a fiction on the moon pressing matters of the time regarding colonisation and the industrialised society.

In this case, speculating about the fabrication of an identity for the moon and assuming it as true by the mass of people who nurtured it in the beginning of the 20th century allows for a relativization of the subject, by not focusing on specific examples of identities on Earth which can be discarded for its specific context (i.e. identities constructed on a context of dictatorship or other strong manifestations of nationalism), and also allows to the perception of the creation of identities as powerful and influential instruments of social conduct, no matter the subject they are attached to—not even if it is the moon. If we are able to create and accept a collective identity for the moon, one can assume as possible the creation and naturalisation of identities to virtually anything and it

Top Donald Trump with a campaign saying on a cap

Bottom American comedian Stephen Colbert in a pre-election 2016 Donald Trump satire showing off a cap saying “Make Mars Great Again” in allusion to business magnate Elon Musk’s intent of sending people to Mars.

Right Still from the series *Futurama*, where an inhabitant of the moon, characterised as a “redneck”, wears a cap saying “The Moon shall rise again”

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These three pictures, to which two are not coincidentally humouristic, evidence the extreme situations nationalistic visual symbols can assume and influence people’s collective and personal identity.

is on the understanding of this possibility that relies the interest and the strength of this line of thought. To discuss the possibility of an identity for the moon, collectively fabricated throughout centuries and represented, for example, by the commodified souvenir of the Paper Moon, also allows for an opening of the spectrum of the areas involved on the construction of identities.

Although politics, for example, are unquestionably directly related to the creations of identity of places and people, art and design are either not associated to it or are reduced to the understanding of it as instruments in service of a greater political and social interest (e.g. the case of German director Leni Riefenstahl and her propaganda movies for the German National Socialist party before WWII). However, in a wider sense, artists and designers create an identity for themselves and for each and every project they produce. Every art and design project, small or big, personal or commercial, is a self-contained universe of references, myths and stories — personal and collective — that translate and communicate an identity of its own.

As French ethnologist and anthropologist Marc Augé claims:

> "In urban space, and generally in social space, the distinction between reality and fiction becomes blurred. Town planners, architects, artists, and poets ought to be aware of the fact that their fate is linked and their raw material is the same. That is, without the imaginary, there is no city, and inversely. From that point of view, society and utopia are intertwined. The imaginary gauges the intensity of social life." [53]

Fantasy and imagination are, indeed, the motors of the understanding here suggested as a collective identity for the moon.

The mentioning of the animated series *Futurama* — more specifically its second episode "The series has landed", which is based on a trip to the moon in a time where it is seemingly banal to travel to the moon —, in the beginning and throughout this dissertation, is not innocently made. This particular episode is somewhat guided by Marc Augé's premise of fantasy and imaginary in social life, and, albeit its humoristic and satirical nature, it pinpoints many of the issues here presented, such as the commodification of souvenirs for the moon and the notion of an identity for the moon based on a fantasy and on myths similar to the ones expressed by the Paper Moon. However, in the series, this identity was gradually replaced by another identity that is the result of a mass-touristic exploration of the moon and its symbols. Besides its many references — Georges Méliès' *Le Voyage dans la Lune*, the Apollo missions or Frederic Thompson's Luna Park, etc. — the episode critically analyses this shift of vision/perception of its identity on people's minds. In *Futurama*, the fantasy and the wonder regarding the moon — personified by the character Fry, a 1999 cryogenically frozen teenager who wakes up in the 31st century — were channelled to the synthetic and fallacious amusement park built on the moon. This amusement park has become the moon itself in people's psyche and it has stripped all of its mystique, myths and history for the sake of business and entertainment. Curiously enough, one particular character portrayed in this episode bears a cap with the saying "The moon shall rise again", which is almost word for word the same saying as the one used to inflate patriotism in the 2016 campaign run by candidate Donald Trump, while running for United States' office: "Make America great again" and the satirical cap used by American comedian Stephen Colbert in 2016: "Make Mars great again". The coincidence of the medium used in these cases — a baseball cap — ironically reinforces the communicative and branding power of objects to

convey and symbolise myths built around sentiments of nationalism and collective identity.

Identities, as speculated by the episode of *Futurama*, can assume a level of great power and influence but also of ridicule. Collective identities and specifically synthetically forged collective identities can become naturalised traits of people's own identities. These can be translated in inspiring and fantasized gems such as the Paper Moon postcard in the beginning of the 20th century or they can be messengers of extremist and alienating thoughts and actions like the subliminal ones an innocent baseball cap or a flag are symbols of.

In the end, identities of places/people are collectively built and accepted, however, the singular power artists and designers have to materialise and give shape to these identities should not be addressed lightly and inadvertently. Flags or postcards are not weapons in themselves, but its underlying messages and idealistic visual symbologies can be just as strong and impactful.

Notes

PROLOGUE
(p. 16)

1 Excerpt of a dialogue between the television series characters Fry and Leela while on the moon, before seeing the Earth on the moon's horizon and being fascinated at the sight of it just as astronauts did 30 years earlier, in Groening, M. (1999). 'The Series Has Landed', *Futurama*. [TV series] Season 1, episode 2. United States: Fox Broadcasting Company.

2 Astronaut Neil Armstrong on the moon landing, Apollo 11, 1969.

3 Term used in cartography to refer to unknown lands or territories, also used when referring to unknown subjects in other fields.

CHAPTER 1
SHAPING MEMORY
THE SOUVENIR
(p. 24)

4 Marker, C. (1983). *Sans Soleil*. [film] France: Argos Films.

5 "For the consumer, a commodity is merchandise, something to be purchased. For the businessman, a commodity is a product or service that a consumer feels is interchangeable with any other of the same type." [online] Available at: www.dailywritingtips.com/commodification-vs-commoditization [accessed August 2016].

6 Gyr, U. (2010). *The History of Tourism: Structures on the Path to Modernity.* [online] Available at: www.ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-on-the-road/the-history-of-tourism [accessed August 2016].

7 The Grand Tour, as it was called, consisted on a one to three years voyage where instruction and amusement were inserted in equal measures in the education of a promising subject of the European aristocracy of the time.

8 Paris Las Vegas is a hotel and casino in Las Vegas, USA. It is known for its reproduction of the Parisian Eiffel Tower.

9 Lussault, M. (2007). *L'homme spatial. La construction sociale de l'être human*. Paris: LeSeuil, p. 93, quoted in Baur, R. and Thiéry, S. (2013). *Don't Brand My Public Space*. Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, p. 229.

10 Ibid, p. 229.

11 (1857-1913) Swiss linguist and semiotician frequently named as one of the founders of both linguistics and semiotics. Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics—the study of signs and their use or interpretation—consider the sign as composed by the signifier (things that give meaning, i.e. word or an image) and the signified (what is evoked in the mind; mental concept). A sign can be an icon (physically resembles what it stands for; a literal sign), an index (implies some other object or event; an implied sign) or a symbol (conventional or arbitrary relation to the signified; a learned sign).

12 The strategies listed by Barthes are: inoculation, removing history, identification of the other with the self, tautology, neither-norism, quantification of quality and statements of fact without explanation.

13 Baur, R. (2013). *The conspicuous absence of a planetary flag*. In: Baur, R. and Thiéry, S. *Op. cit.*, p. 68/69.

14 A token for luck, the Barcelos rooster is based on a local legend that tells the story of a pilgrim that rested in Barcelos (Portugal) on his way to Santiago de Compostela (Spain). While there, some serious crimes took place and, being an outsider to the village, he was arrested as the culprit for the crimes and sentenced to death by hanging. Unable to defend himself, he pointed to a cooked rooster laying on a table nearby and shouted in front of everyone in the village that the rooster would crow at the hour of his hanging as proof of his innocence. Indeed, at the time of his hanging, the dead rooster crowed and, being possibly a sign of God, everyone believed in his innocence. Although a legend from the north of the country, the Barcelos rooster is popularly accepted as a symbol of Portugal and is available throughout the country in many souvenir shops and public institutions, not to mention in peoples' houses.

15 António de Oliveira Salazar's dictatorship in Portugal lasted for more than 40 years (1933-1974) and has since its start addressed a politics of conveying Portugal and the Portuguese, through massive internal and international campaigns developed by the SNI (Secretariado Nacional de Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo—National Secretary of Information, Popular Culture and Tourism), as a country and a people of modest costumes, based on tradition and, similarly to other European dictatorships of the time, based on a maxim: "God, Fatherland, Family."

A NARRATIVE
(p. 30)

16 Levell, N. *Reproducing India: International Exhibitions and Victorian Tourism* in Hitchcock, M. and Teague, K. (2000). *Souvenirs: The Material Culture of Tourism*, London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., p. 36.

17 Take, for example, the case of the "I Love New York" icon present in a multitude of souvenirs, designed by Milton Glaser in 1977 as part of a touristic campaign, that has become a symbol, beyond its branding aspect, of the city of New York until this day.

18 The interest here does not rely on the psychoanalytical creation of "afterwardsness", or false memories, as studied, for example, by Sigmund Freud, but rather on a construction of collective memories that can become cultural myths, like the ones expressed by Roland Barthes.

CHAPTER 2
MASS-PRODUCING FANTASY
THE POSTCARD
(p. 36)

19 Hans Magnus Enzensberger in Beyer, A.; Schneider, U.; Oesterle, G.; Gold, H. (2006). *Der Souvenir – Erinnerung in Dingen von der Reliquie zum Andenken*. [Exhibition Catalogue] Museum für Angewandte Kunst Frankfurt. Köln: Wienand Verlag, p. 321.

20 "Cartes-de-visite (or CDVs) were part of a major shift in the 1860s from glass and metal photographic media to treated paper mounted on cardstock. Cheaper than daguerreotypes and tintypes, CDVs, which originated in France, made photography accessible to more people, and were ideal for giving away as gifts or calling cards." [online] Available at: www.collectorsweekly.com/photographs/cdvs [accessed July 2016].

21 Inventor of the pencil with eraser and creator of the first envelope company in the U.S.

22 Value, R. (2004). *As We Were – American Photographic Postcards 1905-1930*. New Hampshire: David R. Godine, p. 21.

23 "First introduced in the 1860s, cabinet card photographs were similar to cartes-de-visite, only larger. (…) cabinet card photos got their name from their size—they were just the right size to be displayed on a cabinet. Cabinet cards reached their peak of popularity in the 1870s through the 1890s." [online] Available at: www.collectorsweekly.com/photographs/cabinet-cards [accessed July 2016].

24 "Patented in 1856, tintypes were seen as an improvement upon unstable, paper daguerreotypes and fragile, glass ambrotypes. (…) Tintypes were also popular with tourists at resorts and arcades, so much so that the medium persisted well into the 1930s. (…) The chief disadvantages of tintypes, other than the lack of a negative, was that the images they produced were dark to begin with and tarnished with age quickly." [online] Available at: www.collectorsweekly.com/photographs/tintypes [accessed July 2016].

PORTRAITS OF AN IDENTITY
(p. 49)

25 Value, R. *Op. Cit.*, p. 97.

26 Morgan, H. and Brown, A. (1981). *Prairie Fires and Paper Moons – The American Photographic Postcard 1900-1920*. Cambridge: Hal Morgan, Inc. p. XI.

27 Register, W. (2001). *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements*. New York: Oxford University Press., p. 24.

28 Value, R. *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.

THE PAPER MOON
(p. 56)

29 Reference to Peter Bogdanovich's film *Paper Moon* (1973), starring Tatum and Ryan O'Neill. In the film, Addie (Tatum O'Neill) wishes to take a picture with Moses (Ryan O'Neill) on a Paper Moon backdrop in a fair and ends up having her picture taken alone.

30 Self-proclaimed vintage photography lovers and collectors, Beverly and Jack Wilgus have an online platform where they share their newest acquisitions, among certain curiosities or researches related to their findings. Several of the images here reproduced can be found on their platform at [online] www.flickr.com/photos/20939975@N04 [accessed June 2016].

31 With music by Harold Arlen and lyrics by E.Y. Harburg and Billy Rose, the song was part of a Broadway play called *The Great Magoo.* The play's plot was based on the ambitions and love among the workers at Coney Island. E.Y. Harburg recalls in an interview that "(he) tried to think of a cynical love story [like the directors asked], something that this kind of a guy would sing. But (he) could never really be cynical. (He) could see

life in all its totality, its reality." [online] Available at: www.everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=506253 [accessed July 2016].

32 The Halley's Comet crossed the Earth's atmosphere in 1910 and it held great admiration and surprise at the time. Some myths proliferated, such as the myth that its tail would have poisonous gas and people on Earth would die by inhaling it. There are a few examples of advertising Paper Moons to "help escape the danger".

33 The Wright Brothers achieved the first powered, controlled and manned flight in 1903. It was a worldwide known feat and the prospect for air travel and even moon flight seemed possible.

34 The Zeppelin was a rigid airship invented by Ferdinand von Zeppelin around 1900. After many models and flight attempts the Zeppelin first started to get the attention of the world in 1908 and became a huge strategic power for the German army during WWI (1914-1918) as well as a means of transportation after the war.

35 Value, R. *Op. Cit.*, p. 73.

AN ICONOGRAPHY FOR THE MOON
(p. 103)

36 Possibly goddess Selene or Diana. Selene, also known by its Latin name "Luna", is part of the Greek mythology. Selene is the personification of the moon as a goddess, usually depicted as a woman with a crescent moon on her head driving a chariot with two white horses. Diana is considered the Roman equivalent to the Greek goddess Artemis. Originally only a goddess of wild animals and hunt, Diana then absorbed some of the characteristics of the Greek goddesses Selene and Artemis, both related to the moon, and became the Roman deity of the moon as well.

37 Different cultures throughout history saw different things on the moon and built entire stories around what they thought they were seeing. These different interpretations varied according to the geographical position on Earth, and therefore to a different perspective towards the moon. For example in Europe and in the U.S. the moon's dark spots—the "maria" or "seas"—seemed like the face of a man or a standing man, whereas in Eastern Asia these spots looked like a rabbit, or, in India, like two handprints.

A FANTASY-DRIVEN REALITY
(p. 107)

38 In English: *Trip to the Moon*. The movie is considered to be the first science-fiction film to be ever made.

39 In English: *The Astronomer's Dream*. The movie is pointed out as the inspiration for the title of a giant telescope exhibited in the 1900 Exposition Universelle de Paris, to which some souvenirs distributed at the time still account for.

40 Although embedded in a similar fantasy coat, other Luna Park attractions wouldn't be directly related to the moon, but rather on a general concept of otherworldliness.

41 Famous in the 1900 Exposition Universelle de Paris, the stereopticon was a usually handheld apparatus where a card with two apparently equal pictures laid next to each other were inserted and because of an optical illusion appeared to the viewer as a three-dimensional view of the one depicted in the photographs.

42 Newspapers of the time account for people suffering from motion sickness, although the airship was static, and a woman was reported crazy for believing she had not returned from the moon, once she exited the attraction.

43 Excerpt of *Guide to Coney Island* quoted in Koolhaas, R. (1994). *Delirious New York – A Retroactive Manifesto*. New York: The Monacelli Press, p. 39.

44 By 1915, several other Luna Parks opened in Berlin (Germany), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Rome (Italy) and Melbourne (Australia), as well as other amusement parks around the world that would follow the model initiated by Frederic Thompson.

45 Register, W. *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

MOONVENIRS
(p. 159)

46 Name given to a shop of Moon Souvenirs in Groening, M. (1999). 'The Series Has Landed', *Futurama*. [TV series] Season 1, episode 2. United States: Fox Broadcasting Company.

47 Morgan, H. and Brown, A. *Op. Cit.*, p. XI.

48 Koolhaas, R. (1994). *Delirious New York – A Retroactive Manifesto*. New York: The Monacelli Press, p. 42.

49 Register, W. *Op. Cit.*, p. 75.

50 Value, R. *Op. Cit.*, p. 73.

EPILOGUE
(p. 165)

51 Astronaut Bill Anders, Apollo 8, 1968

52 "[Showmen, psychologists, artists, press agents, etc.] deployed a new strategic vocabulary—words such as play, thrills, pleasure, personal satisfaction (...) and fun—to frame the promise of the economic world of goods." in Register, W. *Op. Cit.*, p. 12.

53 Augé, M. (1997). *L'impossible voyage. Le tourism et ses images,* Paris, p. 168-70 quoted in Baur, R. and Thiéry, S. *Op. Cit.*, p. 229.

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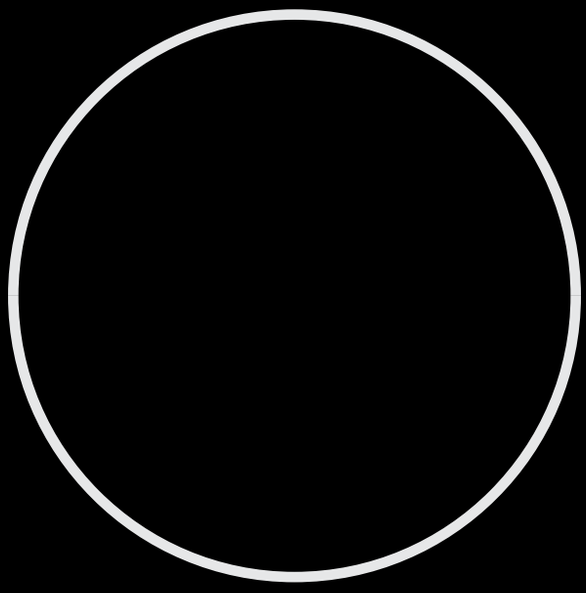

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