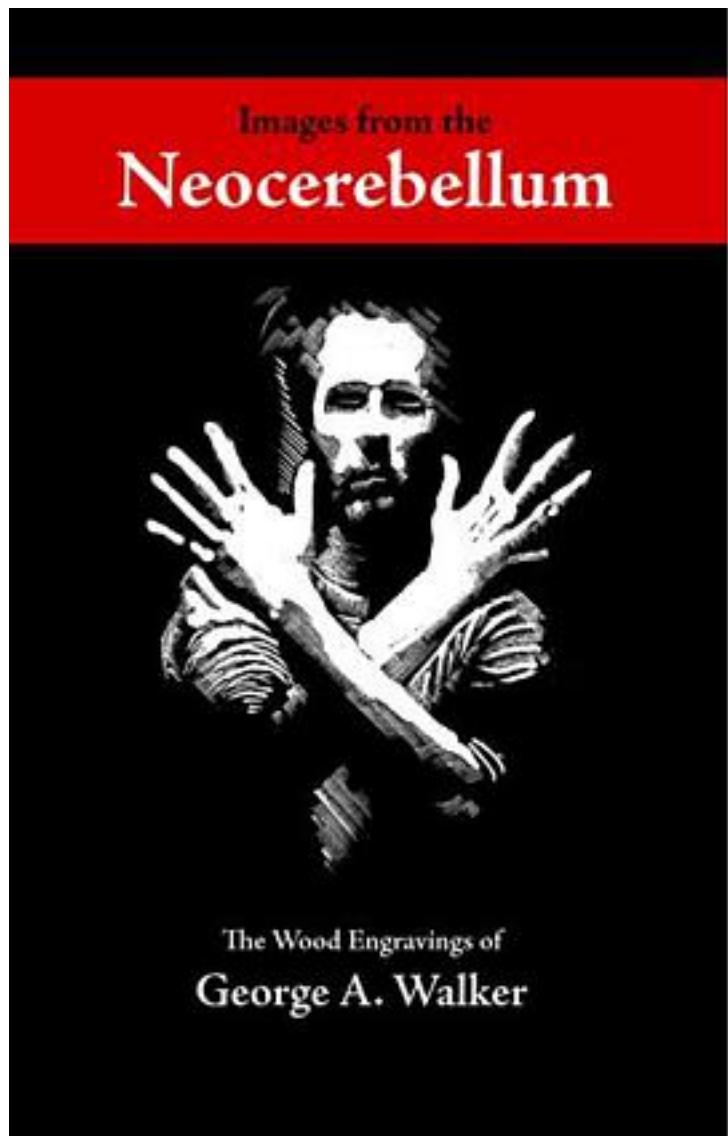


Images from the Neocerebellum



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For over twenty years George A. Walker has compulsively maintained a visual dream diary of images remembered from his resonant sleep. Inspired by Carl Jung's theories of dreaming and the dream's relation to the unconscious Walker began to explore the dioramas encountered in his enchantment, distilling them into single black and white images in an effort to capture unconscious moments in time. Many of these same images have subsequently been transferred onto endgrain wood blocks and hand printed in limited letterpress editions. As Walker claims, dreams are the bones of the psyche, which is where all our understanding of self begins and ends.¹ Why is it that the black and white image is so compelling? The human eye consists of rods and cones that process the reflected light of our world. These signals are then translated into colour and form for processing by the brain. The rods, however, are considered one of the most primitive organs in the eye and are sensitive only to black and white. These rods are the first component of the eye to be activated at birth and this explains why infants respond readily to high contrast black and white images. It could be said, then, that human beings are hard-wired² to read black and white artwork. It is this instinctive physical attraction that drives Walker's exploration of the high contrasts intrinsic to wood engraving prints. The neocerebellum is the part of the cerebellum that controls visual-spatial, procedural learning and the preparation of complex movements such as would be required in the engraving of lines on a wood block. Many psychologists believe the cerebellum is where our dreams originate. Since the cerebellum is in control of the emotions and self-awareness it is one key to understanding how the brain organizes its unconscious self. In the United States, Walker is known for his many collaborations with the bestselling novelist Neil Gaiman, author of "Anansi Boys, American Gods" and "Neverwhere" and the creator/writer of the monthly cult DC Comics horror-weird series, "Sandman." Walker has published two Biting Dog Press editions of Gaiman's writing - "Murder Mysteries" and "Snow Glass Apples." In Canada, Walker is perhaps best-known for the ninety-six wood engravings he created to illustrate the Cheshire Cat Press edition of Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" (1988) which was printed by hand in 177 copies by Walker's long-time mentor Bill Poole at the Poole Hall Press. "Wonderland" was followed, in 1998, by yet another Cheshire Cat edition of "Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There" which may have given rise to Walker's current reputation as the Mad Hatter of the Canadian graphic arts, an artist of sustained and wacky integrity half way between Jose Posada and Krazy Kat³.

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