

Hello, good morning, good afternoon—whatever time it is where you are—and welcome, again, to **sleep and her brother death**, the monthly bootleg screening series from bed that invites us together to watch films, videos, and other clips, that, of course, we could all just as easily watch on our own, and still might.



Ratna and I took a break in July and re-watched or revisited the first half-a-year of programming, so I've been drafting notes for those programs and intermissions that I didn't put out earlier—the way things go, etc.—and because the passing of time is a spiral, or a branch, or a Meccano set imaginatively assembled by a child, this program departs from the second intermission, in May—a screening of **The Way Things Go**, by Fischli and Weiss.



And, the way things go is that while, idiomatically, we “went fishing”—you know, to give ourselves a chance to rest and reflect—all either of us did was open up more cans of worms than we'd probably care to admit.



But, as I have been framing, and plywood-ing, and drywalling, and painting, what has been on my mind is the link that my friend Hazel sent to me after that second intermission—a [new-to-me clip from a classic but one-starred mid-80s Hollywood film](#) called **The Money Pit**, starring Tom Hanks, who I immediately mis-remembered as Steve Martin—same difference, I guess?

(Mine wasn't much of a movie-watching family.)

In any case, it's absurd, of course, and slapstick funny, and it turns out that it's loosely based on **Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House**, an earlier

Hollywood comedy with Cary Grant, which deep-pocketed action is set in motion because Grant's character doesn't want to listen to his wife!

(Of course, the losses are ultimately recouped by the quick wit of—no kidding—their maid, who is not rewarded in the least! This all comes from Wikipedia, the summary was enough...)



And, it turns out that that movie is based on a 1946 novel that expanded on a short story published in the same year, originally called “Mr. Blandings Builds His Castle” and based on the writer Eric Hodgins's own disastrous try at Xanadu! All in, from castle to money pit, the story and sense wobbles over time and by title from what-a-fool-I-be memoir to winking and inevitable gentrification, without a man down. **TM**



But, of course, it doesn't change that the scaffold

debacle is just the kind of thing that—if I would have seen it as a child—would have become an obsession for awhile, the same way that I was and am still enthralled by **Buster Keaton's One Week**, which, when I finally saw it, after knowing the ending first, was as good, or even better than I had anticipated—you know, the way things go.

But rather than paying further attention to any of these multiple and bland iterations of personal purpose, I picked up Hazel's partner Cait [McKinney]'s very-nearly perfect, and very-personal-but-also-broadly-resonant-study of that most singular of houses—**Pee-wee's!**

(Another classic that I missed, not just because we weren't a movie-watching family, but also because we were a recognizably-didactic-and-educational-media-only family—this does not ring so succinctly, I admit.)



red ink indicates errata, in this case, a failure to link the breakfast machine in the first version of these program notes, the way things go, etc.

So it was as an adult that I learned that I didn't even know that "I know you are, but what am I?"—my favoured schoolyard catchphrase—had even come from anywhere, but of course it does! Nothing comes from nowhere, and that defense comes from Paul Reubens!



Like other kids born in the mid-80s, I heard and said that so often, so when I get to the part where Cait talks about how pulling a Pee-wee doll's string to release that retort turns the doll into "a miniature defender of his child-handler kin," it hits me like the proverbial ton of bricks—the "I" in that phrase was always another, even if I didn't know it, and even if it usually sent me crashing into a fountain of my own making anyways.



(In [an early work that I love](#), Hazel [Meyer] puts it neatly: "no theory, no cry"...)

And maybe this all seems a bit off-topic, but looking back is not only good for (self-)reflection (and healing the child within, lol), it's also useful here—I can now recommend Cait's book, which wasn't published at intermission two. So: **I know you are, but what am I? On Pee-wee Herman** is [now available everywhere!](#)



And, that book led me to a sweeter re-invention of the Hodgins-Grant-Hanks mousetrap, which was another new-to-me video clip, this time, [Pee-wee's delightful morning routine facilitated by his Playhouse-as-apparatus](#).

(Back on topic, see...)

The best part, for me, is watching Pee-wee at the bathroom mirror, pulling faces like Bruce Nauman, taping his nose—fucking around joyfully, right?—while scores of inanimate objects—dinosaur toys, etc.—get animated by wires and motors and

gravity to crack his eggs and toast his toast!

(Because we were a didactic and educational family, I spent hours in the sandbox of an engineering-slash-physics computer game that—if it was going to be fun—asked you to set gears and switches and marble runs, to create a zanier but still-functional mousetrap. A goal always simpler than the machine, but a double-edged sword for me afk...)

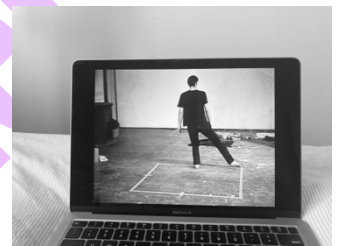


But sort of like **One Week**, anticipating the logical conclusions spoiled little for me! I watched Pee-wee, and laughed, and a week later, I watched him again—and laughed.



(I mean, the memento mori sneaks in mid-way through Pee-wee's breakfast—of course, all most earnest dreams are visited eventually by the twin terrors of ill-timing and time passing—by which I mean the cruelties of the social—but any and every breakdown is mercifully bypassed by this clip.)

So, after all that, today's screening pairs Bruce Nauman's [Dance or Walk on the Perimeter of a Square](#) (1967) with [a compilation of Buster Keaton's "best" stunts](#), as decided by someone else on YouTube—to match my machine to my goal, I'll agree.



The first opens on a taped square with that film sound, before a steady metronome starts but also outlasts the action, which fades to black, Nauman dancing or walking forever.



And the second? It opens on a roof and ends on The End, but only because that's how all silent films end.

