

## On the Side of the Angels

### *Witness and Other Works*

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Susan Hiller's *Witness* (2000) is experienced as an unfolding topology. The installation is first seen through the frame of its entrance: an open forest of silvery wires and dangling ovoids, filling the top half of a room. A dim, faintly perceptible sussuration emanates from the space. There may be people inside, causing waves in the fronds, or standing slightly bent, hand to head. A few steps in, the environment clarifies further: the "forest" is made of flat round speakers, like microphones or radios, each hanging at the end of its speaker wire. The denser stratum of the oval speakers forms a thick, complex horizon, like a printer's matrix. These irregular endpoints delineate the variable band of human ear-height (from walking children to the very tall). The interface between the lower void of the room and its upper striations thus takes the shape of a formalised wavy sea – an impression reinforced by the whispering ambient sound. We are inside a kind of *mappa mundi*; a map or image of the world. This takes seconds to apprehend somatically, the body instantly reaching for the relevant analogies.

The fourth dimension, time, the medium of this interaction, is further complicated when the visitor fully enters and explores the grove of wires. One first chooses and grasps a single speaker, and holds it to the ear. Each speaker produces a different result at a different time. Inviting this action, Hiller choreographs together the experiences of plucking a fruit, smelling a flower, holding a conch shell to "hear the sea", or tuning a radio.

Every speaker transmits a voice telling a story. The voices speak in a great range of languages; eventually, one realises that they are all relating stories of close encounters with UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects), or Flying Saucers. Before examining these testimonies – and Hiller's orchestration of them – in more detail, consider the range of positions available to the listener with which to categorise this late 20c phenomenon: UFO sightings. They may be fictional, illusory or hallucinatory (a somewhat different category); or physically real. If the latter, they may be interpreted as man-made, natural, extra-terrestrial or supernatural.

Accounts of moving lights in the sky have a long history in the west, as elsewhere. C. G. Jung argued in 1959 that the (then) current epidemic of UFO sightings, the first of its kind, should be interpreted as a genuine spate of visions: new clothing for a very old type of psycho-religious experience. Jung commented that "spontaneous psychic phenomena" of this kind are well-attested in the experience of hermits, who could evaluate such "numinous fantasy images" either positively or negatively. Many, though by no means all, of the experiences related in *Witness* happened to people while they were outside the social world – on their own, at night, in transit along a country road, by a lake or river, or crossing a desert.

Anyone can see how great the work is, on attempting to fit language into visions, visions in which these things which are united in nature are separated, and things separated in nature are united... It is no mean achievement to pass on to another something of a strange nature that has stirred in one's own soul, for [by] this phantasy things which are expelled from the order of being, and things which never in any possible way existed, are brought instead into being – nay, even things which have not a nature capable of existence...  
Synesius of Cyrene (d. 412 AD)<sup>1</sup>

vulgar minds (?)... have heard of horses of fire and chariots of fire appearing in the sky, described and doubtless perceived with such distinctness that the listener almost imagines he too beholds the movements of embattled hosts upon the plains of heaven.  
Dr Moore (1855)<sup>2</sup>

Today... men pay an extraordinary amount of attention to the skies, for technological reasons. This is especially true of the airman [pilot], whose field of vision is occupied on the one hand by the complicated control apparatus before him, and on the other by the empty vastness of cosmic space. His consciousness is concentrated one-sidedly on details requiring the most careful observation, while at his back, so to speak, his consciousness strives to fill the illimitable emptiness of space.  
C. G. Jung (1959)<sup>3</sup>

*Panic dissolves the bonds of a little society, characterized by a high degree of reinforcement and involution, placed*

*to the city.. [It] thus typically attacks a model of order and disrupts it.*  
Philippe Borgeaud (1988) <sup>4</sup>

*The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.*  
Tzvetan Todorov (1970) <sup>7</sup>

Consider the classical account of panic, understood as an attack by the god Pan. Longus described such “Pan-ic” visions as a disordering of the senses:

*On a sudden all the land seemed to be on fire; then anon their ears were struck with an impetuous clattering of oars as if a great navy were coming... there others lay like dead men. A man would have thought he had seen a kind of nocturnal battle, when yet there was no enemy there.* <sup>5</sup>

Compare these testimonies in Witness:

*I was glowing. Everything was glowing... It was a marvel. [track 11] <sup>6</sup>*

*... it landed on the roof of the car... the heat was intense. Our hair was standing straight up and we felt... like we were being dehydrated. It was awful, frightening, like our brains were being sucked out. My fear was that I would be pulled out of my body. I put my hand out of the window and touched something spongy that burnt my hand. I thought that we were going to die. [03.20, text]*

The aesthetic effect of listening to these voices, in the forest of speakers, has little to do with our categories – fact or fiction – for the evidence of UFO sightings. Whatever we think about these things, the testimonies confront us directly with their ancestral category: the experience of the fantastic, defined by Todorov as “hesitation”. This sense of hovering on a threshold, unable to choose between competing sets of contexts, strongly characterises our response to these stories: the feeling that “*I nearly reached the point of believing...*” Roger Caillois, the theorist of play, situates this effect more plainly in the world of signs, evoking Foucault’s *Order of Things*: *The fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an irruption of the inadmissible within a changeless everyday reality.* <sup>8</sup>

Many of the witnesses speak of this sense of rupture (*I rubbed my eyes in disbelief... I thought we were dreaming*). The impact of such “breaks” in reality may be often highly emotional. Jung describes a typical “roller-coaster” transition, from fear or apprehension at the start of the vision to ecstasy, awe or calm at its centre. These emotions appear in the testimonies; terror and shock are most often reported, but the coloured lights of the object are often described as beautiful, and many describe a sense of cosmic wonder:

*He told me he was “asphyxiated with fear” [Zimbabwe, 01.12]*

*I was so frightened that I have blocked out some of my memory of the sighting [USA, track 6]*

*I was so shocked, I felt out of my mind [Japan, 02.01]*

*We felt as if we could not move or speak, because we were so shocked by the sight [Papua New Guinea, 03.24]*

*I still have the scar on my face to this day. Whenever I touch it I feel a tingling sensation and I experience a wonderful feeling of oneness, of unity with the earth itself [Sweden, 04.25]*

*I felt afraid, but not a normal fear, more like a sense of awe [Brazil, 07.16]*

*It was the greatest joy I have ever known. I felt a cosmic consciousness [Sweden, 04.26]*

*This incident revealed something rare and inexplicable [Uruguay, 08.26]*

*It was absolutely awe-inspiring to see it... such a beautiful-looking thing [UK, 09.23]*

A sense of release at a moment of change in everyday reality is in itself not mysterious. The mind has evolved to require (and accommodate) such breaks from consciousness. They occur involuntarily, everyday in sleep, and are consciously sought after in the varieties of

ecstatic experience: religious, aesthetic, sexual. These all climax in the end of desire, the little death. All involve a hiatus of the ego. The “text of the self” is suspended, producing a release from oppressive self-consciousness. This loss of self is often characterised by the release of a flood of emotion – perceived as positive or negative *jouissance* – depending on whether the subject embraces or fears the experience.

When the Greek diarist Aristides describes a close encounter with Asklepios, god of healing, his own religion, pursued over many years, provides him with the “script” for this meeting. Even so, when the encounter arrives, its physical markers are those we now associate more with terror; he is literally beside himself.

As with sleep, as one emerges from the hiatus, one must fabricate some account of where the self has been. This explains several points about the structuring of the testimonies in *Witness*. The returning ego must write itself back into being; more precisely, it writes itself in retroactively, over the space in the immediate past where it lay in hiatus. In so doing, it manufactures a kind of memory, a dream-experience, a “holding fantasy” which effectively sutures together the edges of the break in consciousness. The dream can thus be thought of as a repair, or darn, to the ego; producing “wrinkles” in reality around the repair. Traditionally, dream-experience identified itself as dream, through the fantasy conventions used to enact the suture: transformations of scale, of colour, impossibly hybrid things, reversals and displacements. Many of these elements appear in the *Witness* stories: incredible movements, weird colours, shape-shifting machines and alien variations on the human form. The presence of “typed” elements of fantasy is especially clear in stories of encounters with aliens, which may begin like dreams (*I was lying in bed...* [05.38; 10.12; 10.13]), or resemble older tales of visits with elves or “little people” (*They took me to a huge pavilion where couples were dancing* [09.17; 09.24]).

More sinister motifs to do with penetrating the skin, breaking and re-ordering the body, also have pre-industrial ancestors. For example, in old Siberia, candidates for the role of shaman, were represented as experiencing ceremonial dismemberment. Compare the activities of the alien *Mutende-ya-ngenge*, which “sometimes captures human beings, cuts them open, then closes them up again and makes them forget what happened” [Africa, 01.04] with legends recorded in the eleventh-century by the demonologist, Gervasius of Tilburg: [*There are*] men and women who fly about at night, penetrating the skins of fellow mortals and oppressing them whilst they sleep [with] nightmares... [*they also*] break the legs of slumbering mortals and then put them together again...”

Such motifs acknowledge a fundamental principle in the construction of dreams and visions. When the ego undergoes hiatus, the virtual experience is remembered in a fragmentary or partial way. There is no such thing as a “whole” dream. The dream-memory is like a part of a greater whole, the rest of which has been lost (compare the parallel illusion of “completeness” associated with waking consciousness). In fact, this fragmentary perception is to do with the necessary conditions of (re-)writing the ego back into the world. However, there are wider implications here, realised in Hiller’s installations, about the nature of waking visions, and their atmosphere of inexplicable mystery.

[All] was revealed in the clearest possible way... For I seemed almost to touch him and to perceive that he himself was coming, and to be half-way between sleep and waking and to want to get the power of vision and to be anxious lest he depart beforehand, and to have turned my ears to listen, sometimes as in a dream, sometimes as in a waking vision, and my hair was standing on end and tears of joy [came forth], and the weight of knowledge which is a burden – what man could even describe these things in words? But if he is one of the initiates, then he knows and understands. Aelius Aristides (c. 129–179 AD) <sup>9</sup>

The candidate's limbs are removed and disjointed with an iron hook; the bones are cleaned, the flesh scraped, the body fluids thrown away, and the eyes torn from their sockets. After this operation all the bones are gathered up and fastened together with iron... His bones are then covered with new flesh, and in some cases he is also given new blood. G. V. Ksenofontov (1955) <sup>10</sup>

In dreaming, the distortions around the suture are usually clear: no culture mistakes dreaming and waking experience, though, of course, they may be valued and assessed quite differently, as equivalent realities or as totally disconnected. But in the case of the waking vision, the witness is naturally convinced of its reality, and must convey this in the fabric of the story. The witnesses therefore represent the UFO sightings as real and fantastic *at the same time*; the rupture is located in the world, and so the suture must also be located there. Hence the nearly universal use of rationalist narrative as a framing device firmly to locate the event – and the listener – in a specific place and time:  
*it was shortly before 23.00 on February 15th, 1994... on Tuesday December 10th, at 7.20 in the evening... By 2.30am, we were in the Nullabor Plain... At a point six miles from the shore of Nagasaki Prefecture...*

*We are now close upon the Norwegian coast – in the sixth-eighth degree of latitude... It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the tenth of July, 18\_\_*  
 Edgar Allan Poe, *Descent into the Maelstrom* (1841)

This exactitude about details recalls the conventions of the classic realist novel, the scientific or news report, the police statement, and, of course, testimony in a court of law; allusions present in the many connotations of the word, *witness*, whose oldest religious sense was “to be present at a marvel”.<sup>12</sup> Realist framing devices have been applied since the nineteenth-century to fictional and factual accounts of the paranormal. Edgar Allan Poe pioneered this technique in his classic tales of horror.

Like earlier witnesses of ghosts and phantoms, Hiller’s informants supply their names, ages, occupations, and geographical and temporal coordinates. They name other witnesses. Some assert their sobriety. Their scene-setting starts with details apparently tangential to the main drama, but which are actually essential corroborative elements in building a secure “bridge”, rooted in mundane reality, into, and then away from, the rupture itself.

*I now feel I have reached a point of this narrative at which every reader will be startled into positive disbelief. It is my business, however, simply to proceed.*  
 Edgar Allan Poe, *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* (1845)

Then comes the point of suture, and the point of resemblance to the fragmentary nature of the dream. Oneiric (i.e. dreamlike) fragmentation in these visions presents itself in terms of enigma and mystery attached to the *absent part of the history* of the object itself. Each phenomenon is described as inexplicable on several levels: its behaviour, its arrival and departure, its physics and chemistry, its visual appearance (veering between mechanical, organic or celestial), but it is also seen as a kind of clue, and so recognised as partial. In short, the witnesses testify to a lack, a missing mechanism, or withheld portion of narrative, that would somehow enable them to make better sense of the experience. Many of those who put their stories on the internet, end their narratives by asking for an explanation, or failing that, a fellow witness. At the same time, paradoxically, the power of these exact descriptions of the fantastic resides in the fact that no “rational” explanation can be forthcoming: the enigma at the centre is held open, and most of the stories conclude as they started, with a step-by-step bridge back into the mundane.

*I know that this was something very real and very important.*  
 [China, 02.20]

Turning from the components of the installation to its significance as a whole work, as Hiller herself comments, at the end of her notes on the *Witness* files: *What’s coming through these voices is far richer than the subject matter of their stories...*<sup>13</sup> The whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts, for Hiller’s art is “collective” in every sense of the word. Here, as has been her longstanding practice, ingredients are chosen and collected with an

unerring eye for their secret possibilities, then expertly choreographed into something entirely new and unexpected. Wonder and revelation, as well as analyses of these states, lie at the heart of this art.

The effect of the testimonies *en masse*, arranged into a giant polyphony of “nonsense music” in the original languages, transforms the individual accounts by changing the stresses between these key aspects: the “corroborative” rationalist framing, hesitation in the face of the fantastic, emotional engagement, and the sense of oneiric or fragmentary perception. The listener in *Witness* instead receives a primary impression of wholeness, because the work makes manifest the global range, breadth and intensity of such visions. The work asserts the continuing validity of visionary experience as an inherent faculty of mind, irrespective of its science-fictional or scientific costume. The “occult dimension” – meaning that which is hidden or invisible – is revealed as an active social and psychic category, a site central to the experience of art.

Alfred Gell defined the occult as: *the place where things are when they are not happening*,<sup>15</sup> and clearly UFOs belong in this dimension, emerging magically from it to disrupt our own, and returning to it just as mysteriously. However, it would be equally true to say that the occult is the proper home less for the UFO itself than for its *missing explanation*; that presumed explanation whose absence tugs so persistently at the witnesses. If the occult is where the UFOs and aliens are “when they are not happening”, then this is where the unavailable part of their narrative must be also. This will be the case no matter what genre of explanation we envisage: whether the visitors are technologically superior aliens from Orion, angels, humans or devils.

In the context of the installation, *Witness*, the pattern of “lack” at the heart of each account is literally trans-figured by being lifted into the self-contained parameters of the work of art. *Witness* provides its *own* occult dimension: the hundreds of voices are perceptibly present in the “same” space as the single enigmatic account, speaking in one’s ear. Both become part of the consciousness of the listener, whose active participation, and serial attention to these complexly fragmented testimonies, sets up a mobile field which transcends individual lack. We could say instead that it is the listener’s awareness which apprehends this lack as narrative desire, moving ceaselessly through the piece, and so generating pleasure. What Barthes would call a “wavy meaning” is produced – *jouissance* set off like a string of firecrackers in the head.

Formally, one theme that emerges is the artist’s interest in the necessary tension inherent in oneiric suture – the effort of holding together the edges of two different realities – and the hesitation at the heart of our experience of the fantastic – predicated on the opposite realisation that it is not possible to bring these edges completely together. The seam will always show, however consciousness tries to stitch it, but the seam is also a doorway into the suspended space of the fantastic, and therefore to be prized as a means of release, whether it is seen as a path to the sublime (a complete absence of figuration), or as liberation into the repertoire of dreams (absolute figuration).

*The cultural symbols of occult power... Gods and spirits, or disembodied magical influences, such as mana, cannot be considered the occult order per se, but are only images of it. Being products of the human mind, they are knowable absolutely, while it is of the essence of the occult that it is not known, that it cannot be grasped in itself.*

*In positing any array of spirits, powers and mystical forces, men create an imaginary world to which they, as its originators, have privileged access. A spirit is not and cannot be an unknown quantity because, as a spirit, it is a figment of human thought processes; it exists only inasmuch as it is known... the spirit [is] the knowable image or representation of something that is in its essence unknowable.*  
Alfred Gell (1974)<sup>14</sup>

*The [work] is varied through a certain number of substitute objects standing in a strict relationship to [each other]: they are similar (since they are all spherical) and at the same time dissimilar (they are all [calling] something different)... [These] substitutes are declined in every sense of the word; revealed like states of the one identity; offered like propositions none of which can hold more meaning than another, filled out like successive moments in the story.* Roland Barthes (1963)<sup>16</sup>

If you look at any walls spotted with various stains... you will be able to see in it a resemblance [to] different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys [and] hills. You will also be able to see divers combats and figures in quick movement, and strange expressions of faces, and outlandish costumes, and an infinite number of things, which you can then reduce into separate and well-conceived forms. With such walls... it comes about as it does with the sound of bells, in whose clanging you may discover every name and word that you can imagine.  
Leonardo da Vinci (c.1490)<sup>17</sup>

I saw myself in a world of light. Mountains and deserts were a rainbow of colored light, red, yellow, white, blue. I experienced an overwhelming nostalgia for them. I became as though struck by madness and was carried outside myself by the violence of the presence and the deep emotion I experienced...  
Shamsoddin Lhaiji (15th c), quoted in Susan Hiller, *Dream Screens* (1996)<sup>18</sup>

Civilisation regulates the transition [in humans] from one [mental] state to another. Thanks to art, the multiple states of the human being must, in spite of everything, become livable possibilities. The only reality in art is furnished by the hallucinatory experience... We were determined to become one with our hallucinations.  
Jean-Jacques Lebel (1966)<sup>19</sup>

In experiences which appear to be partly hallucinatory, the subject's environment may actually be entirely hallucinatory, even when the subject reports no obvious reason for suggesting this to be so. Celia Green (1975)<sup>20</sup>

This concern is common to several of Hiller's earlier works; notably *Belshazzar's Feast* (1984), *Magic Lantern* (1987), *Bright Shadow* (1994) and *Dream Screens* (1996). Each presents a situation wherein the spectator is invited to make images from ambiguous visual or aural cues, unfurling over time. Such pieces investigate the mind's capacity to see a pattern, to doubt that it sees it, and to be fascinated by this movement. Hiller's web-based piece, *Dream Screens*, consists of eighty-four separate colour fields, to be changed at will by the viewer, in any order. This is accompanied by a complex soundtrack, which interleaves spoken passages, loosely based on memories of films, all of which have the word *dream* in their titles. The sound fades in with a statement in Morse code: "I am dreaming". Then Hiller's voice relates the plots from the films as if they were her own experiences. Or the viewer may decide to hear other women's voices, narrating the text in Japanese, French, Russian, German or Spanish. The "drum-beat" pattern of the Morse code fades out, and turns into another rhythm, a pulsar signal, from a far galaxy. The voice tells more film-stories; the pulsar gives way to a human heart-beat... Woven into all this are other pieces of spoken text, drawn from ancient and modern meditations on the nature of dreams and dreaming.

The result is a kind of matrix, navigated by a shifting first person. This strange "I" moves as if in a fragmented dream, through a remembered cinematic "multiverse", whose extremes are designated by changes in scale and code; from the microcosmic ("brainwaves") to the cosmic (pulsar); from the meta-fictional to the somatic (heart-beat). Another web-page shows the colours as a map of the site, around a diagrammatic wheel or web, like a medieval map with Jerusalem at the centre. Below, the names of the colours, listed in columns, generate a Poundian *poesis*; *Venetian Red*, *Dragon's Blood*, *Saffron*, *Bremen Blue*. The concrete history of "colour-in-the-world" is concentrated into this array of names, weightless on the screen, elegantly suggesting the ancient global geographies of trade and manufacture. The viewer realises that the apparently fixed visual spectrum of colours and names contains unexamined layers of fantasy, artifice and metaphor. As one explores this shifting web of sounds and memories, the colours and their associative powers work hypnagogically, stretching and releasing relations between eyes, ears, memory and place.

This kind of investigation into changes of state is central to Hiller's sister installations, *Wild Talents* (1997) and *Psi Girls* (1999). As in *Witness*, these are multi-media environments which unlock and expand the meaning of found sources: here, moments of paranormal imagery from late 20th century Western cinema, sourced and reworked by Hiller. The clips have been edited, looped, extended, unified with colour filters, magnified and bent around two huge screens (*Wild Talents*), or sequenced rhythmically over five screens (*Psi Girls*). Like *Dream Screens*, each has a complex soundtrack acting as commentary and frame. The repeating sequences of *Psi Girls* are accompanied by ecstatic gospel clapping, and end with a burst of white noise. *Wild Talents* includes intoned voice-overs, visual texts, and a separate visual commentary: part of a documentary showing children (visibly) experiencing (invisible) religious visions. This runs simultaneously on a small television, standing in the installation space, festooned with religious fairy lights.

Hiller's background materials for these pieces include research on two distinct historical figures, whose careers and ideas subliminally inform the meaning of the works. Her titles come from Charles Fort's last book, *Wild Talents* (1932),<sup>22</sup> and his vision of a future where *Psi Girls* do battle. The second figure is the Polish psychic Stefan Ossowiecki (d. 1944), who harnessed his initially chaotic childhood "wild talents" into an ability to find lost objects and people.<sup>23</sup> Their lives demonstrate how technological society has re-constructed the human paranormal and recuperated the waking fantastic. Such cultural metamorphoses are the deeper subjects of *Wild Talents* and *Psi Girls* (as they are for *Witness*). The viewer's first point of entry to this real subject-matter is to do with Hiller's re-framing of the visual conventions peculiar to contemporary cinema.

The *prima materia* for each work is the selection of film-clips. These all use the "magic" of cinema to show young people demonstrating uncanny or paranormal powers: telekinesis, levitation, the animation of inanimate objects. Hiller finds unexpected significance embedded in this material, as in *Witness*. Where the testimonies in *Witness* used rationalist corroborative detail to frame their occult matter, the equivalent in the film-clips is the realist *mise-en-scène* of cinematic narrative. The original film-makers engaged in one kind of "stitching", to erase the "strings" around the magical or impossible action (the glass pulled off the table, the hidden flame under the boiling cocoa, etc.), by which we might see the trick being done. In this way, scenes of magic are represented as apparently seamless, and so surreal, collages of the real and unreal.

In a surreal still image such as a painting, the surreality depends on what the viewer perceives as missing connections between the anomalous elements. Hence the sense of mystery such images evoke, as with the "missing" explanations of the UFOs. But in a work of surreal cinema, the audience does not experience this bafflement, because we are well aware that whole teams of people are at work behind the camera to produce the effect. Special effects of this kind have become a particular category of *jouissance* in their own right, precisely because of the release they offer into acknowledgement of artifice, a kind of collapse of the suspension of disbelief. Hiller herself has called them "moments of pleasure."<sup>25</sup> Todorovian "hesitation" in the face of the fantastic becomes speculation about the exact nature of the conjuring. By removing each piece of magic from its original narrative framework, Hiller restores this suspension, and so creates a hallucinatory focus.

The elements of *Psi Girls*, for example, appear now as a set of mythemes:<sup>27</sup> each a constellation, a term in the same series. The orchestration of the five "terms" – like balanced units in a looped musical phrase – means we no longer see their individual impossibilities in terms of the parent movie genre (horror or otherwise).<sup>28</sup> The kind of transformative re-alignment accomplished in *Witness* through the play with scale is here achieved through strategies of repetition and dissociation.

Our apprehension of the repressed artifice – the conjured relationship between the real and imaginary in each quoted scene – begins to change. Just as the rationalist bracketing of the accounts in *Witness* is transmuted into a common sense of wonder, so the realist *mise-en-scène* of cinema is eclipsed, and so transcended, in *Wild Talents* and *Psi Girls*. We no longer perceive the suturing in the scenes from a film-going audience's viewpoint, as connoisseurs of trickery.

*Instead of rejecting... whatever is archaic, obsolete, or off the beaten path, [the] creative mind integrates it with normal logical processes in what seems a "magic" synthesis, from which the new, the unexpected and the desirable emerge.*  
Silvano Arieti (1976)<sup>21</sup>

*The Future of Warfare. Girls at the front – and they are discussing their usual not very profound subjects. The alarm – the enemy is advancing. Command to the poltergeist girls to concentrate – and under their chairs they stick their wads of chewing gum. A regiment bursts into flames, and the soldiers are torches... Reinforcements are smashed under cliffs that are teleported from the Rocky Mountains. The snatch of Niagara Falls – it pours upon the battlefield. The little poltergeist girls reach for their wads of chewing gum.*  
Charles Fort (1932)<sup>24</sup>

*[The horror movie] is a field in which there is in some sense no original... but only variant; a world in which, therefore, the meaning of the individual example lies outside itself.*  
Carol Clover (1992)<sup>26</sup>