

*All Watched Over By...*

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The following are notes toward a film of the type described in my book, *Thoughts and Visions*, in the chapter, “Hypnagogic Art”.

Initially, all we have is a dark screen. Hold for at least five seconds. Then we hear sounds of a big outside: long grass moving in a breeze, maybe the occasional sharp twitter of one or two birds in the distance. Then the title materializes: formal white letters on the same black background: “All Watched Over By...”. Credits should be few and presented in the same formal lettering, though, of course, smaller. The sound continues throughout. Toward the end of the credits, the sound of girls’ voices becomes just barely audible.

We open onto a panoramic view of a vast meadow — rolling hills covered with grass a couple of feet high. Bright daylight. Clearly it is spring or early summer. Here and there, red flowers are nodding in the breeze (there may be other flowers as well, but the flowers should not steal the show).

Far off in the distance, and below us, we now see the source of the voices: two figures running irregularly toward us through the grass. After more seconds, we see that they are two girls, holding hands. They are laughing, obviously full of joy. When they are close enough, we see that they are both wearing the same dresses — white, with a pattern of big yellow flowers with large petals.

When they are within, say twenty or thirty feet of the camera, they sink down onto the grass, releasing their hands, but still laughing. It must be clear that there is no sexual relationship between them. Maybe they are twins. Or sisters. Or cousins. They are in their early teens, at least one is a blonde. Both are radiant with youthful beauty.

The question of their language is important. It definitely should not be a language that an American or English audience will recognize. Thus, e.g., not French, or German, or Japanese or Chinese. Perhaps some Eastern European language — Romanian or Albanian — or even a made-up language. The distance provided by the fact that we do not know what they are saying, is essential.

We watch them talk animatedly. Perhaps they are talking about boyfriends. It is clear how happy they are. Slowly, the camera begins moving upward. We see the rolling fields stretching far away, hear the twitter of the birds, hear the girls continuing to talk and laugh. And as the camera moves upward, there come into view two enormous disk-shaped spaceships, as though-suspended overhead. *Suspended* gives exactly the right impression though, of course, it is not literally true. The ships must have the *presence of clouds*: big, silent, magnificent, up in the sky, and, in this case, motionless. We must get a shock when they come into view.

The ships have no lights. Nothing on them moves. Perhaps a few tiny *square* (that’s right, square) window-like indentations. Their color is dark, steely gray, encased in a kind of thin fog, possibly because they are farther from us than it seems. No sound comes from them. The sound of the wind in the grass continues as before.

The question of the size of the ships is very important. Too small implies they might be coming toward us, hence may be a threat to the girls, an impression we don’t want. Too big makes the scene almost comic, or terrifying, neither of which we want. My recommendation: each ship occupy a little less than 20% of the width of the screen.

The question of their shadows on the ground must also be dealt with. Clearly, nothing can change in that regard once the ships are in view, since we want it to be clear that they have been there all along. Perhaps the shadows would not have been noticeable before, at the least because

of their size, and because of the rippling surface of the grass.

We in the audience must be confronted by conflicting questions and feelings: on the one hand, we feel the benign, protective, watching-over-ness of the ships. On the other, there is the obvious fact that they are alien: what kind of creatures are inside them? Are the girls in danger? But sometimes, it appears that the girls know the ships are there, e.g., when they lie on their backs, and seem to pay not attention to them. But then what country, what planet are we on? What kind of a world? There is the enormous silence and motionlessness of the ships, the girls' laughter and chattering, the breeze in the grass. Is the girls' joy somehow connected with the ships? How long have the ships been there? Hours, days, weeks, forever? We don't know.

The film ends as the camera pulls away: the two little figures in the midst of all that grass and all those rolling hills, and the two great, benevolent, lovely ships overhead.

## **Development of the Idea**

We can easily imagine a series of short films, each presenting flying saucers in a different light. One might be about a little boy, perhaps aged three or four, playing behind his house in the rural suburbs on a summer afternoon. There is a dirt path and tall brown grass on either side, with lots of flowers and weeds. He wears a little striped shirt and shorts, perhaps white socks and sandals, and is going his merry way on a summer afternoon, trying to catch butterflies, trying to catch some creature he hears moving through the grass, and suddenly there appears near him a saucer (dark gray, smooth, no windows, no lights, no sound), just hovering a few yards from him. And he, being a little kid, just thinks it's another kind of creature. He tries to touch it, the saucer backs up a little. He laughs, tries to catch it, it stays out of reach. Eventually something more interesting passes by — a frog, perhaps — and he goes after that, with the saucer following him at a distance. But it is absolutely essential that the little saucer not be “cute”, or “child-like”. Its movements are slow and very steady, except that once or twice it suddenly changes position instantaneously: one moment it is a few feet above the ground, several yards behind the child; the next it is a yard on one side of him. As in the previous film, ambiguity is here essential: we must wonder if it is really menacing, or merely curious, or perhaps hostile. As with the girls, the bafflement for the audience is the kid's eventual indifference to its presence, and what the reason might be.

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## All Watched Over By ...

Notes for a Short Film

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Initially, all we have is a dark screen. Hold for a long time. We hear sounds of a big outside: long grass moving in a breeze, maybe the occasional sharp twitter of one or two birds in the distance. Then the title materializes: formal white letters on the same black background: “All Watched Over By...”. Credits should be few and presented in the same formal lettering, though, of course, smaller. The sound continues throughout. Toward the end of the credits, the sound of girls’ voices becomes just barely audible. After the credits, return to a dark screen for several long seconds, with the sounds continuing.

We open onto a panoramic view of a vast meadow — rolling hills covered with grass a couple of feet high. Bright daylight. Blue sky, no clouds. Clearly it is spring or early summer. Here and there, red flowers are nodding in the breeze (there may be other flowers as well, but the flowers should not steal the show).

Far off in the distance, and below us, we now see the source of the voices: two figures running irregularly toward us through the grass. After more seconds, we see that they are two girls, holding hands. They are laughing, obviously full of joy. When they are close enough, we see that they are both wearing the same dresses — white, with a pattern of big yellow flowers with large petals.

When they are within, say twenty or thirty feet of the camera, they sink down onto the grass, releasing their hands, but still laughing. We see that they are somewhere between ten and twelve years old. Maybe they are twins. Or sisters. Or cousins. One is a blonde. Both are radiant with youthful beauty.

They speak an unrecognizable foreign language. It sounds vaguely Eastern European — perhaps like Romanian or Albanian — although it is neither of these.

We watch them talk animatedly. Perhaps they are talking about boyfriends. The camera begins moving slowly upward. We see the rolling fields stretching far away, hear the twitter of the birds, hear the girls continuing to talk and laugh. And as the camera moves upward, it slowly reveals to our view two enormous disk-shaped spaceships, as though suspended overhead. *Suspended* gives exactly the right impression though, of course, it is not literally true. The ships have the *presence of clouds*: big, silent, magnificent, up in the sky, and, in this case, motionless. We get a shock when they come into view.

The ships have no lights. Nothing on them moves. Perhaps they have a few tiny *square* (that’s right, square) window-like indentations. Their color is dark, steely gray, encased in a kind of thin fog, possibly because they are farther from us than it seems. No sound comes from them. The sound of the wind in the grass continues as before.

We in the audience are confronted with conflicting questions and feelings: on the one hand, we feel the benign, protective, watching-over-ness of the ships. On the other, there is the obvious fact that they are alien: what kind of creatures are inside them? Are the girls in danger? But sometimes, it appears that the girls know the ships are there, e.g., when they lie on their backs, and seem to pay not attention to them. But then what country, what planet are we on? What kind of a world? There is the enormous silence and motionlessness of the ships, the girls’ laughter and chattering, the breeze in the grass. Is the girls’ joy somehow connected with the ships? How long have the ships been there? Hours, days, weeks, forever? We don’t know.

The film ends as the camera slowly pulls away: the two little figures in the midst of all that grass and all those rolling hills, and the two great, benevolent, lovely ships overhead.

## **Development of the Idea**

We can easily imagine a series of short films, each presenting similar spacecraft in a different light. One might be about a little boy, perhaps aged three or four, playing behind his house in the rural suburbs on a summer afternoon. There is a dirt path and tall brown grass on either side, with lots of flowers and weeds. He wears a little striped shirt and shorts, perhaps white socks and sandals. He is going his merry way, trying to catch butterflies, trying to catch some creature he hears moving through the grass, and suddenly there appears near him a saucer (dark gray, smooth, no windows, no lights, no sound), just hovering a few yards from him. And he, being a little kid, just thinks it's another kind of creature. He tries to touch it, the saucer backs up a little. He laughs, tries to catch it, it stays out of reach. Eventually something more interesting passes by — a frog, perhaps — and he goes after that, with the saucer following him at a distance. But it is absolutely essential that the little saucer not be “cute”, or “child-like”. Its movements are slow and very steady, except that once or twice it suddenly changes position instantaneously: one moment it is a few feet above the ground, several yards behind the child; the next it is a yard on one side of him. As in the previous film, ambiguity is here essential: we must wonder if it is really menacing, or merely curious, or perhaps hostile. As with the girls, the bafflement for the audience is the boy's eventual indifference to its presence, and what the reason might be.

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Notes:

Question of running time: certainly less than 15 minutes.

Should be a poem? A scene? A movie painting? (Yes, maybe. With the question of whether the saucers are menacing or benign left hanging. Must be background music. Get Heim to write it. See below) Two girls run through a meadow while overhead, in the distance, hover two flying saucers. They are very big, we somehow know, but they are also very far away, just large enough for us to tell that they are flying saucers. The girls are wearing white dresses with a pattern of large yellow flowers, both dresses the same. The meadow is spotted with red flowers (poppies). The scene is full of their gayety, joy, and of the protective presence of these strange spacecraft.

We want to get across the innocence of this strange world, where everything is always good, warm, happy, protected. The girls' gladness, and laughter, their zigzag path, the sound of the grass against their dresses. Unnoticed the gray disk machines in the blue sky, like hummingbirds or dragon flies... Are the girls cousins perhaps?

The Brautigan poem is in the book I have.

Possibilities:

"I can only report what I saw..."

"What country, what world, what distant sun..."]