I confess I am of two minds: one reads *Mrs. Dalloway* as highlighting Virginia Woolf as typesetter on holiday, expertly crafting ephemeral type in the sky into Septimus’ visions; the other mind says “No! It is all about cinema!” and insists that a cinéaste would read Septimus’ visions as animatographic shorts, akin to the trick films shown in picture palaces, or to early avant-garde films. With luck, putting the printing press and film-making in imaginative play may bring my two minds together. Engaging with the cultural confluence among printing, typography, and cinema in these decades may lead us to consider how typesetting’s play with words and the play of words in moving pictures merge in creative ways.

Perhaps placing ourselves before a fantastical recreation of Hatchards’ bookshop window will prove a good starting place for our investigations; we may begin with books, type, and typography and see where they lead us.

Figure 1. LKH’s imagined fantastical recreation of the book shop window in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

**TYPOGRAPHICAL REVIVAL OF THE TWENTIES**

Typography was in the air in London in the first decades of the twentieth century, and not just in the skywriting passages of *Mrs. Dalloway*. *The Times Printing Number*, reprinted from the 40,000th issue of Tuesday, September 10, 1912, sparked that interest in well over 200 pages plus dozens of pages of advertisements. The chapter “Private Printing Presses” may well have been a spur to the Woolfs; for them, the early decades of the twentieth century involved hatching the Hogarth Press. (See Figure 2.) The informative *Times* tome provided a rich resource for aspiring amateurs; beginning with a chapter “The True Importance of Printing,” it contains a section on “Typography” with detailed chapters:
I. Printing Surfaces and Their Preparation, II. What Type is: How it is Manufactured, III. Type Design: Accuracy or Alinement, and IV. Type Faces: Old Style and Modern. Other sections demystify Colour Printing, Papermaking, Bookbinding, Printing Machinery, Commercial Printing, Printing Ink—and Technical Education: Schools for Training Printers. Even the advertisements are valuable, including ones for key print journals, The Imprint (li) and The British Printer (lxviii).

Fifteen years later, on October 13, 1927, to be precise, another Times Literary Supplement Printing Number, with articles on “Modern Typography,” “Text and Illustration” and “The Beautiful Book,” (63 pages) offered an overview of the renaissance in printing interest since the first number, a renaissance in which Hogarth Press participated:

A revival of interest in printing might be inferred from the number of books and articles that have been written about it within the last few years. Mr. Stanley Morison and Mr. D. B. Updike stand at the head of these writers. A review, The Fleuron, entirely concerned with printing, has published one number in each of five consecutive years. The Bibliographical Society, besides taking up an idea started by the Medici Society and holding annual exhibitions of modern books, has periodically discussed modern printing in its organ, The Library. The second decade of this century (whatever future times may think about its achievement in the art of printing) will stand out as a period in which there was enough interest and good will to get printing talked about and written about and studied by many, instead of being neglected by all but a few. (3)

The 1927 TLS Printing Number praises Hogarth Press and places it in good company:

The names of certain publishers—the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses, Chatto and Windus, Cape, Constable, Heinemann, the Nonesuch Press, the Golden Cockerel Press, Benn, the Hogarth Press, Cecil Palmer, Secker, Elkin Mathews and Marrot, and the Bodley Head, for instances—are almost warrant that any book produced by them will conform to the conditions laid down by Spencer and Reynolds. (16)

Though all but one of the articles in the TLS Printing Number are unsigned, the style and content suggest the influence—and perhaps the pen—of the American expatriate
Beatrice Warde; she was at the center of typographical discourse in London at the time; her mantra, articulated in a highly influential 1932 speech, was that “printing should be invisible,” that it should aspire to transparency, to be “the crystal goblet which is worthy to hold the vintage of the human mind” (“The Crystal Goblet” 17). Thanks to such print pioneers, journals and books about printing proliferated during the early twentieth century; examples include Imprint, The British Printer, The Fleuron and, from the other side of the Atlantic, The Inland Printer and The Printing Art.

For the Woolfs, this time was culturally and personally dynamic, as their initial honeymoon with printing bifurcated in distinct ways. Leonard Woolf began to focus more on the publishing business, as we see in the 1927 series he published in The Nation & Athenaeum on the “World of Books,” collected into a book by that title published by Hogarth Press. On the other hand, Virginia Woolf, I hope to show, brought fantasies of printing, typesetting and typography into her fiction.

**TYPESETTING & ITS DISCONTENTS**

Dropping dead down the aeroplane soared straight up, curved in a loop, raced, sank, rose, and whatever it did, wherever it went, out fluttered behind it a thick ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed upon the sky in letters. But what letters? A C was it? An E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the aeroplane shot further away and again, in a fresh space of the sky, began writing a K, an E, a Y perhaps? (MD 20)

By playing with type, mocking the limits of typesetting with skywriting’s three-dimensionality, fluid lines, curves and arabesques, the skywriting passage in Mrs. Dalloway provides “a K, an E, a Y perhaps” to fantasies for typesetting that challenge the actual letterpress process. Replacing the “linear railway line of sentence” upon which typesetting insists, Woolf dramatically breaks free to create the skywriting aeroplane that can flourish type across the sky, celebrating a fluid typesetter, freed from the confines of linear limits:

> The aeroplane turned and raced and swooped exactly where it liked, swiftly, freely, like a skater—
> “That’s an E,” said Mrs. Bletchley—or a dancer— (MD 20)

> …it soared up and wrote one letter after another—but what word was it writing? (MD 21)
“Look, look, Septimus!” she cried. For Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself.

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! (MD 21)

Another passage in Mrs. Dalloway may be read anew through the perspective of our day-dreaming typesetter:

The word “time” split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. (MD 68)

In this evocative scene, Septimus’ flights of fancy may be read as fantastical typesetting, as he enacts a surreal or supernatural—or somehow magical—composing process that relies less on painstaking labor with a composing stick than upon a magic wand. Portraying Septimus effortlessly composing in the park, Virginia Woolf, the typesetter of Prelude, Paris, and The Wasteland, provides wish fulfillment for typesetters as she breaks all the rules of type composition by composing without attention to pesky points, leads or lock in. Septimus as typesetter/poet embodies not drudgery, but magic; the experimental performance art of animated typography crafts an immortal ode in the air of Regents Park. Taking modernist ‘automatic writing’ a step further perhaps into the new technology of automatic type composition, Septimus becomes akin to a monotype machine, forging blocks of type into animated words that do much of the work for him.

All this flying type wafts us back to our starting site for words: Hatchards’ shop window, where a saga of fine arts printing awaits us. Approaching the books in the window from an historical angle, knowing that Hatchards’ book shop ordered books from the Woolfs’ fledgling Hogarth Press and from John Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield’s short-lived Heron Press, what might we expect to find? Dare we imagine Clarissa perusing Prelude or Monday or Tuesday through the glass?

Figure 4. A closer shot of the hypothetical book shop window.
FROM PERFORMANCE ART TO FINE ARTS PRINTING UNDER GLASS: BACK TO THE BOOK SHOP

Pausing at Hatchards’ window display, Clarissa’s musings are tied to a particular book, spread open:

Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards’ shop window? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open:

Fear no more the heat o’ the sun
Nor the furious winter’s rages. (MD 9)

Ah, of course, this is not a book from Hogarth or Heron Press, but a book of Shakespeare’s play, Cymbeline, one we can identify as a fine press publication of 1923. The edition, spread open in Hatchards’ book shop window, is, I assert, the exquisite fine arts press
printing of The Players’ Shakespeare edition printed from the Folio of 1623 in London in 1923 at Shakespeare Head Press. This volume was published by Ernest Benn Ltd in two numbered editions, one on Kelmscott hand-made paper. (See Figure 6.) At 10” x 13,” an open spread of 19” by 13” would no doubt draw the attention of any window-shopper. (See Figure 7.) When Clarissa gazes in Hatchards’ shop window, she encounters an example of high culture fine arts printing—under glass. Yet, it is surely noteworthy that she does not enter the bookshop to purchase the book. Rather, this section highlights window shopping and not buying the book (an interesting comment on the book business). Woolf’s vignette is about stealing a few lines—and from the high art limited edition at that! The narrative dynamics of Mrs. Dalloway free the fine phrases from behind the glass in a suggestive move. Is it pure chance that Clarissa window-shoplifts the phrase “Fear no more” from where it is set in print and propels the words across London, a quotation let loose to migrate and mutate? Undone from the linear line of print, throughout Mrs. Dalloway the “Fear No More” passages change every time they fly by. It is telling that the quotation does not become a set formulaic phrase, but a morphing, kinetic set of phrases, phrases that move, combine with new phrases and contexts, and thus stay alive in their passageway across London and through the reader’s mind.

Just as the trees lift and pass along life, the words lifted from the spread pages of Cymbeline are passed along throughout the June day, moving in some inexplicable magical, kinetic way across the town, from the page to the mind of Clarissa and to the mind of Septimus. Words seem to have a mobile life of their own, a life Virginia Woolf describes so well a decade later in “Craftsmanship”: “Perhaps that is their most striking peculiarity—their need of change. It is because the truth they try to catch is many-sided, and they convey it by being themselves many-sided, flashing this way, then that” (97). Words are alive, active: “they have been out and about, on people's lips, in their houses, in the streets, in the fields, for so many centuries” (95). Like birds, words must fly: “when words are pinned down, they fold their wings and die” (97). It is no wonder that the birds sing in Greek to Septimus, or that words soar and sweep like starlings into an ode. Phrases in Mrs. Dalloway fly in aerial acrobatics, free as birds, across London, freed from the limited edition in which they were pinned or printed, in order to be murmured on living lips.

Coming back to Hatchards’ shop window again, after our free flights, what new questions spring upon us? Something feels not quite right. What is it? Here is that pesky other mind again murmuring about the cinema—hinting that a book shop is not quite the right site, because in this cultural moment of London of the 1920s, the world of cinema was omnipresent—and it too was full of words. Attending a silent film screening in the 1920s, viewers encountered words and typography in the posters advertising the films, the programmes (with notes) that accompanied many screenings, the advertising slides that were put up between reels and films, and the film titles and inter-titles. Perchance, we need a bookstore next to a picture palace (say, the New Gallery picture palace where the London Film Society had its beginnings in 1925). How can we reconcile a book shop window and the picture palace marquee and lobby?
THE PUBLISHERS’ ADVERTISEMENT

T H E P L A Y E R S’ S H A K E S P E A R E is an edition of Shakespeare’s dramatic works printed internuncial from the First Folio of 1623 (since that long is replaced by s and the former I, V, X, and others, are made to accord with modern use) and illustrated by artists interested in the modern stage, whose object has been to aid in creating for the reader the atmosphere of the ideal dramatic representation. The Introductions are by Mr. Harley Granville-Barker. The volumes have been printed at the Shakespeare Head Press, Stratford-upon-Avon, under the direction of Mr. H. H. Newton, and the coloured illustrations have been carried out in facsimile collotype by Messrs. Whiteningham & Grog. The fore edges are by Messrs. Emsley Walker. The edition is under the art-oversight of Mr. Albert Rutherston.

This volume is illustrated by Mr. Albert Rutherston.

There are two editions. The one, strictly limited to one hundred signed copies for sale and six copies extra sale, numbered respectively 1 to 100 and 1 to VII, is printed on Batchelor’s Kelvin soft hand-made paper and bound either in vellum or in rags Morocco by Zach Lidott.

The other edition, printed on pure rag paper, is strictly limited to four hundred and fifty copies for sale and fifty copies extra sale, numbered respectively 101 to 550 and VII to LVI, of which this is number 327.

The publishers are Ernest Benn Limited, 8 Bourvrie Street, London.

The Tragedy

of Cymbeline

Aethus quarum

SONG.

Guil. Fear no mor the boaste o’th Sun,
Nor the furious Stormes rage,
Tou h ye worldly task, bat, don,
Home art gone, and tas thy waies.
Golden Laid, and Goldes all must,
As Chimney-Sweaters come to dust.

Arvi. Fear no more the frowne o’th Grey,
Tou art past the Tiris’s stroke,
(Car no more to clath and crait,
To thee the Reads is in the Oakes,
The Keeper, Learning, Physicke must,
All falleth too and come to dust.

Guil. Fear no mor the Lightning flash,

Arvi. Nor th’ all-dreaded Thunderstone

Guil. Fear no Slander, Courtey raish.

Arvi. Tou hast finit, Joy and more.

Both. All Lovers young, all Lovers must,

Consign to thee and come to dust.

Guil. No Excorior harme thee,

Arvi. Nor no Wretch-craft charme thee.

Guil. Ghost unaid forbeare thee.

Arvi. Nothing ill come see thee.

Both.Quest consumption beare,

And forsworn be thy grace.

Figure 6. Cymbeline press announcement from Ernest Benn Ltd.

Figure 7. Cymbeline Song page in the fantasy window.

Figure 8. LKH letterpress images of “Fear No More” phrases.

5
TITLES, SUB-TITLES, INTER-TITLES: SCREENING WORDS

One portal between print and film may be in the connections, richer than we may initially suppose, between silent film and typographical experiments. As a scholar immersed in silent films of the 1920s for quite a while now—and more recently with the book arts—what could be more natural than to find myself drawn to those typographical elements of early cinema: the title cards or inter-titles or subtitles? Because Woolf was not only involved with typesetting and composing during this decade, but also increasingly drawn to cinema, how would she have encountered those mini-texts—the original flash fiction—that filled the silver screen with such regularity? What would Virginia Woolf as typesetter think of title cards and inter-titles? Was she thinking of those ubiquitous bits of text when she penned her indictment of adaptations in her 1926 article, “The Cinema”: “so we spell them [novels] out in words of one syllable written in the scrawl of an illiterate schoolboy” (E3 350)? Perhaps. Yet, Woolf does suggest a legitimate role for words in the films of the future: “Something abstract, something moving, something calling only for the very slightest help from words or from music to make itself intelligible” (E3 351). Did she grow more pessimistic? At any rate, when she revised the passage for publication in the Nation and Athenaeum she added the clause: “yet justly uses them subserviently” (E3 594).

Chagrined that Woolf failed explicitly to mention the title card in her writings, I looked wider afield. Certainly, references to intertitles abounded at the time; mainstream film’s flub ups with inter-titles became the stuff of jokes early on: the timing was off, or there were too many cards retarding the action, or they were unnecessary, telling you what was rather obvious. Within mainstream film, Anita Loos played a key role revolutionizing title cards to be witty words/works of art in their own right: “The sub-titles must only explain what cannot be told in action. It should be more than a mere explanation—should contain a laugh or a bit of fine writing” (Loos, 40). Trying to recall which modernist writers or cinéastes approached the topic of the titles, I searched my cache of film notes to reveal that Iris Barry, Jean Epstein, and Dorothy Richardson—pioneers in film theory—provided some valuable insights about the cards in the 1920s. Iris Barry, first a poet discovered in the little magazines by Ezra Pound, and then acclaimed by Ivor Montagu as the first film critic in England, was well poised to make judgments about the role of sub-titles in film; her Spectator articles of the mid twenties mention sub-titles regularly. Her May 17, 1924 column in praise of The Marriage Circle, opines “There is a minimum of subtitling, and the progress of the plot is not dependent on the letterpress” (788). In her June 14, 1924 column she berates the “horrible sub-titling” of the English captions to The Niebelungs, noting “one is forced to close one’s eyes while the lettering is displayed in order to enjoy the film fairly at all” (955). She notes in her November 15, 1924 column that “there are no sub-titles in Warning Shadows” (734) and her critique of “The Peter Pan Film” on January 24, 1925 focuses on the cards: “…it is a thousand pities and a great weakness in the film itself that the action should be held up again and again to allow a quite unnecessary sub-title, however charming, to occupy the screen. People go to the cinema to see pictures, not to read printed words” (115). Barry’s “A Guide to New Films” of May 16, 1925 complains about the sub-titles, too: “—though alas! It has been thought necessary also to describe every scene in wordy sub-titles. The most stupid person can recognize a gull, or a rotting ship, when he sees one on the screen, and it would be nice if the sub-titles could be eliminated” (805).
Barry took sub-titles seriously enough to devote a thorough and thought-provoking chapter, Chapter V: Sub-titles, to them in her landmark book, *Let’s Go to the Pictures* (1926), in which she makes a startling offer:

The making of sub-titles might well be held to be a new form of literary style. The sub-title must be crystalline, packed with meaning, allusive, condensed, a work of art and elegance and simplicity, in fact, I think the vers-librists would make good title writers: they write fresh active pictorial phrases, they avoid redundancies, elaborations, cliches. Producers in America will have no trouble in discovering the best people in this school of poetry and in harnessing them. I myself have taken past exercise in vers libre and for fear of seeming artful or impertinent, I frankly offer myself as an apprentice sub-titler for a period of six months to any film company that cares to have me. Brevity would be my motto and eloquence (not flowery eloquence but the small sweet voice) my ambition. (82)

Her suggestion that the imagists and free verse writers would be ideal for the job shows that at least some thinkers were alert to potential literary/cinematic cross-currents. How exciting it would have been if silent film had taken her advice to link modernist writers (particularly ones from the little magazines and modernist poetry) with title cards; perhaps not only Iris Barry, but even H. D., Dorothy Richardson, T.S. Eliot, and perhaps Virginia Woolf herself could have been tempted to the silver screen as writers of those highly charged flash/flicker fictions. Perhaps if sound film had not interrupted the aesthetics of silent films in 1929 and banished the title cards to oblivion, the merger between literature and cinema would have taken the intriguing turn she imagines.

Sub-titles intrigued other writers and theorists in the modernist moment. Jean Epstein, writing in *Cinéa-Ciné-pour-tous*, claimed, “Obviously, in a good film an intertitle is only a kind of accident” (350) though he thought they served a function: “For you can’t deny that watching a film absolutely free of intertitles is, for psychological reasons, depressing; the intertitle is above all a place for the eye to rest, a punctuation point for the mind” (350). In “Captions” in *Close Up* September 1927, Dorothy Richardson asserts, “The artist can no more eliminate the caption than he can eliminate himself. Art and literature, Siamese twins making their first curtsey to the public in a script that was a series of pictures, have never yet been separated” (55), though she concludes, as many film writers of the day did, that “the test of the caption is its relative invisibility. In the right place it is not seen as a caption; unless it lingers too long upon the screen” (56). At Hogarth Press, Eric Walter White in 1928 published *Parnassus to Let: An Essay on Rhythm in Film*, which briefly addresses subtitles: “Producers have at last learnt the danger of retarding the visual action by subtitle after subtitle, and have even found it possible, as in the case of *Warning Shadows*, to produce quite intelligible films without any subtitles at all. Except in the case of comedies where a good joke is never amiss, it is safe to say that, the fewer and shorter the subtitles, the more chance for the film itself” (White 16–17). White pointed to avant-garde films such as *Warning Shadows* that make the experiment of omitting title cards, rather than films that experiment visually or kinetically with title cards. It was rather disappointing that even rather highbrow critics when they considered title cards could not imagine rich or wild artistic potential for the cards.
My next stop on my sub-title scavenger hunt was to seek out film historians; in an exchange of emails, David Peters corroborated my sense that the study of film title cards has been neglected and under-theorized. He also enlightened me about why my searches within typographical history for information about title cards had been fruitless. According to an email from Peters of May 25, 2014, “title cards were produced by lettering men who were trained as sign painters. They delighted in letterforms in a different and more playful way. They typically worked on contract and the product they created was intended to be ephemeral.” Thus, the title card crafters for early film had more in common with the “sandwich men shuffling and swinging” (MD 4) than with Beatrice Warde and the tradition of fine typography.

This new angle brings us to sign painters and poster artists; most noteworthy is the role of E. McKnight Kauffer, the famous modernist poster artist. Kauffer played a role in film as well; he was brought in by Ivor Montagu (one of the founders of the London Film Society) to re-design the title cards for Hitchcock’s *The Lodger* in 1927, making dazzling art titles using the eccentric Neuland typeface designed by Rudolf Koch for the lettering (Ecob, “Murder most Typographical”). In a connection that may ring bells for interdisciplinary studies, Kauffer designed the logo for the Film Society and the new Wolf Head logo for the Hogarth Press.

All this whet my appetite, encouraging me on my mission to find more experimental connections between film and type, in hopes of finding adventures sub-titles might have had, especially in avant-garde film, taking them in innovative directions. I kept reminding myself that innovators there were throughout the silent film era, as cinema invented itself, and I had a nagging sense that experimental subtitles out there had eluded my attention. All the painters and poets who were drawn to cinema must have embodied words into films in inventive ways, such as moving typography and kinetic words, I insisted. Surely more exciting experiments were made!

**BACK TO THE PICTURE PALACE**

It was clearly time to re-screen films from the 1920s—ones I thought I knew well, but which required for this project a renewed focus on the inter-titles. It began to dawn on me that I—like so many critics I had read—had been guilty of impatiently skimming by the words to get to the pictures. Re-screening key films, reversing priorities to foreground the words, led me to fresh insights. Adrian Brunel, of London Film Society fame, crafted hilarious title cards that wittily wrecked havoc with mismatched film clips in his charming burlesque films, such as *Crossing the Great Sagrada* (mocking travel films) and *Cut it Out* (on censorship). Some more adventurous cards in mainstream films actually move or

![Figure 9. *The Lodger* title card by Kauffer.](image-url)
contain moving type, such as the title card in F. W. Murnau’s 1927 film, *Sunrise*: “Couldn’t she get drowned?” in which the letters of the word “drowned” actually move and dissolve. Even early on the title cards were never merely the transparent shift between shots, but had a life of their own. Re-screening films reminded me that nowhere was that life of their own more apparent than in avant-garde films, where artists and poets played with the new medium of cinema.

![Figure 10. Title card from *J’accuse*.](image)

My re-screenings found, quite emphatically, that iconic avant-garde films, such as *J’accuse*, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *Anémic Cinéma*, and *The Fall of the House of Usher*—just to name a few—experiment with the potential of words and title cards in visual ways. In Abel Gance’s stunning 1917–1918 *J’accuse*: human soldiers spell out the title of the film with their bodies. (See Figure 10.) The emotive use of actual soldiers from the front spelling out an indictment of war resonates with Woolf’s point in “*The Cinema*”: “—there they are in the flesh. If into this reality he [the director of the future] could breathe emotion, could animate the perfect form with thought, then his booty could be hauled in hand over hand” (*The Cinema* NE4 E4 595). The film uses words and title cards in innovative ways, as when the phrase “*J’accuse*” is written into the diegetic space of the film through handwriting lessons. In Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1918–19, expressionist title cards were hand painted. (See Figure 11.) In one of that film’s radically innovative scenes, words break out and cross the boundaries between title cards and moving images; the phrases entwine in the diegetic space, haunting the research-obsessed head of the asylum as he is tempted to take on the role of the monk “Caligari.” The phrases swirl about the landscape and disappear and reappear. (See Figure 12 below.) Again, a quote from Woolf’s “*The Cinema*” comes to mind: “then as smoke can be seen

![Figure 11. A hand-painted title card from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.](image)
pouring from Vesuvius, we should see wild and lovely and grotesque thoughts pouring from men in dress suits” (The Cinema Arts E4 351). Germaine Dulac, in Smiling Madame Beudet (1922), uses minimal subtitles; she presents magazines and book texts diegetically to trigger mini-avant-garde fantasy films that reveal the mind of the subject. Erotic lines from a poem by Baudelaire serve as title cards contrasting with the shots of the mundane realities of Madame Beudet, trapped in bourgeois boredom, for example, and the printed magazine photograph of a handsome tennis star becomes an animated projection superimposed to carry off her irksome husband. Rene Clair’s 1924 Entr’acte enacts play with title cards in its self-referential tease with FIN, The End. (See Figure 13.) Using film tricks, such as film reversal and stop motion, Entr’acte shows us a character with a magic wand ‘disappearing’ other characters and, finally, himself, and when the film reaches FIN in big letters on the white screen, the character breaks through the screen to deny the ending. However, his disruption is contested, and he is kicked back through the ruptured title card screen which comes back together magically as the film reverses, to read FIN once again. This startling humor undercuts conventional expectations of the title card and narrative closure. Marcel Duchamp’s 1924-6 film, Anémic Cinéma, presents his clockwise spiraling proto-Rotoreliefs (hypnotic designs that appear to be 3-D spiraling gyres), alternately with phrases full of puns spiraling counter-clockwise. (See Figure 14.) Katrina Martin clarifies the structural plan of the film: “The film’s nine linguistic configurations are written in spiral form on rotating discs and shown separately between each of ten ‘optic discs’ in revolution. In 1926, this spiraling image alternating between graphic and verbal is itself a pun on the alternating images and titles of silent film” (54). Eerily hypnotic and mesmerizing, the film demonstrates the potential of the moving,
linguistically complex inter-title. P. Adams Sitney notes in “Image and Title in Avant-Garde Cinema,” “by and large the cinematic experience during the silent period was one of an alternation of reading and looking at images in an illusionistic depth. Duchamp carries this to an extreme limit; for every image there is a verbal passage, or between every two images, a title” (103). The Fall of the House of Usher (1928), directed by James Sibley Watson Jr., Melville Webber, and e.e. cummings, from the Edgar Allan Poe story, brings text and typography into active play. (See Figure 15.) Experimental editing and cinematography create dynamic montages of words and images. As the character reads, words—such as CRACK and SHRIEK appear and disappear in distorted shapes and in chaotic rhythms.

My re-created list of films experimenting with title cards could go on and on…

All of this is quite eye-opening, but now, we must ask, “Where has this brought us for Woolf studies?” I suggest that such film play demonstrates that experimental title cards and kinetic words within diegetic space were concepts available to Woolf in her most experimental/typographically-informed and cinematic decade. The most obvious link is with the Director in The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari hearing/seeing words that charge him: “You must become Caligari” which has parallels with Septimus hearing voices sending him to the Prime Minister and seeing “signals” in the skywriting scene. But all of the kinetic typographical experiments invite us to consider ways Woolf may have been encouraged to make the leap from the printing press with moveable type to kinetic typography and the flight of words in her fiction of the 1920s—and beyond. Certainly, it indicates that Woolf’s experiments in fiction

Figure 15. Screen shot of wacky words from The Fall of the House of Usher.
can be productively read in the context of experiences and experiments in typesetting and in cinema.

**The Unity of the Mind**

The sight of two people coming down the street and meeting at the corner seems to ease the mind of some strain, I thought, watching the taxi turn and make off. Perhaps to think, as I had been thinking these two days, of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind. (AROO 95)

In this essay, has it not it been a bit of a strain to ricochet back and forth between discourses of film studies and discourses of typography and type-setting? “Clearly the mind is always altering its focus, and bringing the world into different perspectives” (AROO 96); yet, it is a struggle and a strain to keep the two discourses apart. However, it is also a strain to bring them together. Film is not printing. Literature and cinema are not identical twins separated at birth by technology; though there is slippage between the two fields, there is no easy fit. However, the fault line between the two is full of dynamic energy.

Hatchards’ bookshop window and the New Gallery silver screen are two launching pads for words in *Mrs. Dalloway* in a London which becomes a vast pulsing network of communication; time and space provide no barriers. Messages move from Bourton in the 1890s to Regents Park in this realm of hypercommunication. Everyone seems to be signalling, texting, through spider web lines, skywriting, and more as words dance off the page in a hyperkinetic choreography. Woolf’s London is full of ever-changing wafting words; it is a moving tapestry of vignettes and texts: from sandwich men to newspaper headlines that in turn move into a child’s game, notes sent, rumours circulating, love poems corrected in red ink, letters read and unread, William Morris in brown paper, bills before Parliament, placards, *Othello, Antony and Cleopatra*, dispatch boxes, a leather bag stuffed with pamphlets, the click of the typewriter, and telephone message pad—and hundreds more. The mobile active words as moving images brought to life in avant-garde films may have modeled for Woolf the vibrant moving quality that makes its way into her fiction. That fiction supplies the “unity of the mind” that can use whimsy and magic and lovely letters and imaginative play to do what has been so difficult to do in this essay: put typography and cinema in play together. So, at last, my two minds form a truce, to witness and celebrate Woolf as she texts and projects both printing and film—transformed—into her writing. For, it is precisely within the

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Figure 16. *Choreotypography* title card.
elastic allusive web of Woolf’s writing that readers can witness her fascinating cinematic choreotypography.

Figure 17. LKH’s fantasy photo collage of the Entr’acte Fin card as it would have been projected in the space of the New Gallery picture palace.

Notes

1. Later in life Beatrice Warde recorded her experience of kinetic typography, a vignette that, though peripheral to this essay, is well-worth perusal and celebrates the kinetic:

“There is a basic difference between a thing that moves along the time dimension by change (a dancer, or a succession of sound waves) and a thing that stays still and makes you do the moving (a painting, or a sentence of type). If I was particularly aware of that difference when I say McLuhan’s bold (pseudo-vocal, imitation-shout) ‘glosses’, it was because I had seen, in the previous summer, a remarkable demonstration of what the Electric Age can do for the 26 soldiers of the alphabet. It was something which would have sounded inconceivable and patently self-contradictory in any previous century…

“But let me tell you how it hit me, one evening last summer, as I was on my way to a theatre in New York. On the other side of Broadway, at 46th Street, was an electric sign, 70 X 72ft. overall, made up of solidly massed electric light bulbs, surmounting a luminous panel. See figure 1—but remember you are only seeing a ‘figure’, as remote from actuality as a figure of speech is from physical fact. Now imagine that final cap-A miming its resentment at being left out of the line, and finally muscling in, squeezing back its indignant fellow letters.

“What rooted me to the spot for the fifteen minutes or so before that dynamic letter and picture drama repeated its sequence was what happened when that sun (fig. 3) slid away to the left and the whole white sheet of 4104 bulbs went black. Something then began pushing that black area leftwards. It was a lower-case p, and it was having a hard job. When the right half of the sign was a white sheet again, the little p was butting in vain against the remaining mass of blackness. Undismayed, it drew back to the right-hand edge of the sign. Reculer pour mieux sauter? Yes; it then ran up on the obstacles, and that final collision impact did the trick. The whole sign was now white; and four other letters toddled out to play on it. So there were p, l, a, y having fun as children do in the schoolyard: first spinning round independently, then ganging up to play odd-man-out; for p, a and y formed up and left l out in the cold. As I remember it, they had meanwhile decided to be capital letters. It must be so, for I can never forget how L straightened himself out into a crowbar, wedged his way in between P and A, then resumed his normal angular shape, maliciously taking the opportunity to give A a spank on the bottom as he settled in.
“Do you wonder that I was late for theatre that night when I tell you that I saw two club-footed Egyptian A’s, such as those in figure 5, walking off arm in arm with the unmistakable swagger of a music-hall comedy team? I saw base serifs pulled together as if by ballet shoes, so that the letters tripped off literally sur les pointes. I saw a cap C stretching its lower jaw clear across the screen and pulling in the letters a n d a. I saw the word changing its mind about how it should look (cap> lower case? Italic?) even more swiftly than a woman before her milliner’s mirror.

“After forty years of study of letter forms, after forty centuries of the necessarily static alphabet, I saw what its members could do in the forth dimension of time—flux, movement. You may well say that I was electrified” (81–82).

2. Not only the articles, but the related Letters to the editor are worth perusal:

“Books & the Public” p. 714–15. Feb 26, 1927
On the Reluctance to Buy Books.” Petter Ibbetson p. 753. Saturday, March 5, 1927
Ambiguites of the Book Trade.” (917–919)
The Role of the Literary Agent.” Michael Sadleir Saturday April 2, 1927. Also p. 92 1–2 letters to the editor (includes a housekeeper)
Ambiguites of the Book Trade: II. The Circulating Library. 10–11 April 9, 1927. Sadleir
Mass-Suggestion & the Book Trade.” Basil Blackwell 73—also letters to the editor
The Printed Word” Jeffrey E. Jeffrey April 30, 1927 p. 105 (mention movies)
Stanley Unwin letter to the editor in reply to Clive Bell p. 109 April 30, 1927
Are Books a Necessity?” 143 Saturday May 7, 1927
Letter to editor from Clive Bell, 145–7
Reviews p. 314 refers to “The Mask” article “The Censor and Poor lago”
3. “sorts” may be an in-joke about type-setting, here.
4. See Hankins article, “Printing Prelude.”
5. At Virginia Woolf conferences I shared my limited edition letterpress artists book, a hypothetical chapbook of the poetry of Septimus Warren Smith, Revelations in Vision and Song. To free the type from the linear, I composed some of the lines (all from Mrs. Dalloway) into spiraling shapes (using Adobe Illustrator) and had them made into copper plates that I then used to letterpress pages for the chapbook.
6. Laura Marcus refers to the debate about subtitles in a few pages of her The Tenth Muse, and presents some of the same sources (such as Iris Barry), but from a different angle. Her interest is in the “preoccupation with word and image, and with concepts of inscription, light-writing, and hieroglyphics” (9) whereas I am intrigued by the typography and flash fiction quality of the cards in their own right—and in the experimental interplay of the printing-press and film; I find most compelling the zone of intersection between the cards/words and moving images, where the title cards become moving images, rather than separating the two. (See Marcus, 9, 291, 335.)
7. For a dazzling survey of key intertitles from silent film, including ones from Sunrise, see D. W. Gardner’s blog: http://www.harrietwragg.com/?page_id=68
8. For a picture of Anita Loos inspecting a title card, See Helen Wragg’s website: http://www.harrietwragg.com/?page_id=68
9. At the conference I shared clips from films; in print I can show stills and describe the clips, but for the full effect, I urge you to see the films. Today one can find most of these films on line rather than only in film archives, and many have been restored so they retain some of their original splendor.

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——. Review of “The Fleuron.” *Nation & Athenaeum* January 8, 1927. “All lovers of good printing will rejoice…”


**JOAN MAZZA**

**WHY DO YOU LIVE ALONE IN THE WOODS?**

August afternoon, light fades earlier each day. This day, a slight breeze moves a few leaves, a branch waves. Silence is huge in the humid air.

No phoebes, no titmice calling, no crow chatter in the distance. Too early for crickets. Far from traffic. Sensory deprivation a treat, as in a Lilly tank. Is this how deafness feels?

Then the distinctive two-note coughing of Canada geese, their V obscured by trees, though I see them rowing between clouds, encouraging each other until the sound fades. I hold the image as if deaf and blind, to soak in silence.