READING FILMS:

WORDS ON THE SILENT SCREENS OF AMERICAN CINEMA

by

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VOLUME I

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Abstract

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In spite of frequent appearances of words on the cinematic screen, contributions of written language are often ignored or marginalized in discussions of film language. I investigate why verbal text is employed in the distinctly visual medium of film and how screen words function within the frames and on the fringes of a cinematic composition. The micro-level of analysis, the focus of the first chapter, highlights potentialities of word and image interplay within the pictorial space. On the macro-level of analysis, in the second chapter, the discussion of written language in film is situated in the context of narrative structures, cinematic tradition, authorship and ownership, and the relation to the audience. I categorize screen words into five kinds: 1) title sequences and end credits, 2) intertitles, 3) subtitles, 4) integrated verbal elements, and 5) words as the only images on the screen. Within the five categories, I outline types and functions of written language, as applicable to silent and sound films.

My primary concern, however, is with the verbal-visual angle of interpretation, so I limit the scope of my detailed investigations in the third and fourth chapters to silent films. I zoom in on the screen words in select American films—of the pre-sound era and of the post-World-War-II avant-garde. In the third chapter, the verbal practices of the first two decades of American cinema are illustrated with films created by the Thomas A. Edison Company. The written language use in the late teens and twenties is analyzed in the context of comedies directed by John Emerson and Buster Keaton and of Cecil B. DeMille's dramas. I also explore contributions of screen words to several silent avant-garde films of the late twenties and early thirties. In the fourth chapter, I focus on the verbal text of the silent creations of Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton, the filmmakers whose approaches to language in film, although formulated in the same climate of discourses about the politics of language, are diametrically opposed. The dissertation concludes with a functional typology of screen words.

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My gratitude and love go to Jacob Kolker and Helen Ustinova, my professors and, later, colleagues in Russia, who not only sensitized me to the nuances of English and introduced me to the pleasures of textual analysis but also instilled in me the belief that being a lifelong learner, always willing to expand horizons and to explore new perspectives, is a requisite for being a teacher and a scholar. I would not have made it this far without their mentorship.

I would like to thank Robert Haller, for granting me access to the library of Anthology Film Archives; David Shepard, for clarifying some issues with film restoration; Klaus Peter Dencker, Bernd Scheffer, and Christine Stenzer, for referring me to German-language sources on word-image relationships and on text in film; Gerhard Jäger and Corinna Jäger-Trees, for helping me to navigate the extensive labyrinth of Swiss libraries; Anna Kaplan and Ilya Pobelov, for assisting me with my hunt for rare films. This project owes much to a great number of film archivists and cinéastes without

whom many of the films I have discussed would not have been available for viewing.

I am deeply indebted to family and friends who provided a warm welcome when I needed a place to stay during my regular visits to New York after I had left for Switzerland two years before the defense: Stas, Noemi, Arielle, and Nessa; Alexey and Anna Kaplan; and Olga Aksakalova, who has been my best friend at the Graduate Center since our very first day in the English Program and who, I hope, will also be writing her Acknowledgments soon.

My parents have always offered unwavering support, psychologically facilitating their daughter's progress from the first college graduate in the family to an even bigger first. And of course I could not have completed my dissertation and, ultimately, my doctoral degree without the persevering love, enduring encouragement, and unconditional help of Roman, my soul's and my mind's companion and my most demanding and perceptive reader.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION FROM RUSSIAN INTO ENGLISH

The same Russian names have been variously transliterated into English in different sources cited in this dissertation. Whereas the bibliographical entries in the Works Cited preserve the spelling of the proper names used in the non-Russian-language sources, the text of the dissertation adopts the system of transliteration known as System I in J. Thomas Shaw's *The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-Language Publications* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1967). If several sources by the same author, published in Russian and in English, are cited, the English spelling chosen by the scholar himself or herself is used throughout this text. Similarly, the uniformly accepted English spellings of famous Russian personalities and places (e.g., *Sergei Eisenstein* and *Moscow*) are employed consistently in the text. As recommended by Shaw, System II is used in transliterating words as words, titles of works of literature and art, and citations of bibliographical material written in Russian. The proper names included in the titles of sources in Russian are also transliterated according to System II.

Transliteration Chart (Systems I and II)

	I	II		I	II		I	II
а	a	a	**к**	k	k	**х**	kh	kh
б	b	b	**л**	l	l	**ц**	ts	ts
в	v	v	**м**	m	m	**ч**	ch	ch
г	g	g	**н**	n	n	**ш**	sh	sh
д	d	d	**о**	o	o	**щ**	shch	shch
е	e/ye[1]	e	**п**	p	p	**ъ**	–	"
ё	yo	e	**р**	r	r	**ы**	y	y
ж	zh	zh	**с**	s	s	**ь**	–	'
з	z	z	**т**	t	t	**э**	e	e
и	i	i	**у**	u	u	**ю**	yu	iu
й	y	i	**ф**	f	f	**я**	ya	ia

Letter Combinations

	I	II
ей	ey	ei
ий	y	ii
ый	y	yi
ия	ia	iia
ье	ie	'e
ьи	yi	'i
кс	x	ks

[1] The spelling *ye-* is used initially (e.g., *Yelena*).

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NOTE ON FAIR USE

The figures that illustrate and clarify various usages of screen words and cases of verbal-visual interaction are low-resolution snapshots from digitized versions of the films. In no way can these thumbnail images cause harm to the copyright holders. On the contrary, it is my sincere hope that these minuscule snippets will whet the appetite of potential viewers, who would be eager to see the films in their entirety, unrolling in time, in much better picture quality and of much bigger size than the snapshots used here for purely scholarly purposes. The same fair use intention applies to figures that feature low-resolution, thumbnail versions of digital reproductions of art and literary pieces, which are essential in exemplifying research points I make.

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INTRODUCTION

Steeped in Language—So Is Film

I first saw Michael Snow's *So Is This* when doing research on film semiotics for a seminar in film theory, and I was totally blown away by the magnitude that written language could achieve in cinema. There I was—steeped in language as a doctoral student in English and deeply involved with poetic texts and disjunctive narratives—flabbergasted by the potentialities of white words appearing on the black screen, one by one. This silent film, devised in 1975 and completed in 1982, challenged the theoretical staples of discourses on film language and expanded the frames of cinema by seemingly undermining its essential features. As a verbal text, *So Is This* invited interpretations from a variety of theoretical angles, just as a work of literature would; at the same time, it was a cinematic entity that functioned in the spatial-temporal continuum of screen projection. Such an intriguing union of the linguistic and the filmic became a foundational push for my interest in written language use in cinema and ultimately spawned this dissertation project, "Reading Films: Words on the Silent Screens of American Cinema."

When I just started to familiarize myself with scholarly sources on written language in film, I realized that there were no comprehensive book-length studies, even though—cumulatively—a lot of scholarly pages, printed and electronic, had been devoted to the appearance of words on the screen. While the bold intrusion of written language into the post-war avant-garde film is not a matter of dispute, scholars mostly focus on the political and metatextual ramifications of this fact rather than investigate why filmmakers choose particular words and structures to complement, subvert, or substitute for representational images. While the verbal language of pre-sound cinema has hardly been neglected in scholarly criticism, the focus has usually been on intertitles exclusively. But

even their usages are mostly stereotyped, and a coherent and detailed timeline of their development is hard to find. Overall, while the presence of written words in an individual film is often acknowledged, their multifaceted contributions to the overall design of the cinematic construction are rarely analyzed at length.

Even more conspicuous is a lack of unified terminology that could facilitate scholarly conversation on written language in film. The concept of *intertitle*, which has been given around a dozen names in the English language, is perhaps most illustrative in this respect. The situation considerably worsens when types of intertitles are mentioned or when classifications are attempted. And intertitles are just one kind of words that can appear on the screen. Even the word *film* was not uniformly accepted in the silent era: *photoplay* and *motion picture* were more common. Incidentally, no general term that would encompass all kinds of written language in film exists as of yet.

At the very start of my project, I decided that the term *screen words* would suit the purpose perfectly. When my dissertation was nearing completion, I was overjoyed to stumble across the usage of this phrase in exactly the same meaning in Victor Oscar Freeburg's 1918 book *The Art of Making Photoplays*. Freeburg, who had received a PhD in English before becoming the first instructor ever to teach Photoplay Composition at Columbia University, in the mid-teens (Polan 42-43), singled out three classes of "words on the screen": words that are "an organic part of the picture, . . . are really in the subject which is photographed" (167); "sub-titles," i.e., words that are "entirely outside the pictures, words of whose existence no character in the plot is aware" (170); and "printed dramatic dialog" (175). Specifying various functions and pitfalls of these three classes, Freeburg nevertheless viewed "words as subordinate, rather than as coordinate, parts of a cinematic composition" and cautioned that "even when introduced as mere auxiliaries

screen words may accomplish a vast amount of harm in a photoplay" (177; italics mine). Freeburg's classification, which is in fact more intricate than many other contemporaneous versions, and warning against the over-reliance on screen words are characteristic of the attempts of photoplay and trade press writers to come to terms with the intrusion of language into film.

The major research question of my project is similar in spirit: I investigate why verbal text is employed in the distinctly visual medium of film and how screen words function within the frames and on the fringes of a cinematic composition. I intentionally limit the scope of my research to silent films, i.e., films with no incorporated soundtrack, for three reasons. First, the major characteristics of the uneasy relationship between language and image in film developed during the pre-sound era, when music, sound effects, or oral forms of verbal accompaniment were external to the film and were not necessary conditions for screening. Second, silent film was intentionally resurrected by avant-garde artists in the second half of the twentieth century—partially in response to what they thought of as the deleterious effects of sound, which hindered the appreciation of the visual, in the dominant Hollywood mode. Thus, it is fascinating to analyze what could have motivated these avant-garde filmmakers to resort to written language in the context of the aesthetic of silence and to compare the functions of words on the silent screens of pre-sound and sound eras. Third, the introduction of sound, and especially spoken language, drastically tipped the balance in favor of the verbal, while partially removing the need for screen words. To give the triad of the word, visual image, and sound its due, I would also need to examine the multifaceted contributions of spoken language, music, and sound effects. My originary and primary concern, however, is with the eye rather than the ear, and the introduction of a different channel of information

transmission would entail a radical modification of the verbal-visual angle of interpretation. These considerations account for the loci of the third and fourth chapters, which reflect two stages in the development of film: the pre-sound era and the post-World-War-II silent avant-garde.

Functions of screen words in silent films can be analyzed on two levels, and these determine the structures of the first and second chapters. The micro-level of analysis highlights word and image interplay within the pictorial space. A theoretical examination of the collaborations and tensions between words and images in film hinges on research into the nature of film language and especially on the structural units of film. When discussing film as a semiotic system and as an art form, film theoreticians and practitioners often resort to comparisons with others arts, out of and against which film has developed. Thus, in the first chapter, I investigate interrelationships between film and its artistic predecessors in which words have their say. I adapt research on word-image interplay in the other arts to film and create a schema for analyzing verbal-visual relationships in the cinematic medium.

On the macro-level of analysis, in the second chapter, the discussion of written language in film is situated in the context of narrative structures, cinematic tradition, authorship and ownership, and the relation to the audience. I categorize screen words into five kinds: 1) title sequences and end credits, 2) intertitles, 3) subtitles, 4) integrated verbal elements, and 5) words as the only images on the screen. Within the five categories, I outline types and functions of written language, as applicable to both silent and sound films. The immediate objective of the second chapter is to create a general typology that will be used as a framework for detailed discussions of select silent films in the third and fourth chapters. Particular uses of screen words in the second chapter are

illustrated with examples taken from films that will not be a focus of close analysis later, to avoid repetition and to showcase the relevance of the suggested typology, which does not preclude alternatives or additions, to cinemas of various genres, periods, and languages.

In the third and fourth chapters, I have opted to focus on silent films made in the United States because, technically, this project is written within the frames of a doctoral program in English and a doctoral certificate program in American Studies (as well as of a doctoral certificate program in Film Studies), but, most importantly, because I aspire to start creating a multifaceted picture, although necessarily restrictive and abstracted, of the development of different kinds of screen words in one country. This is a formidable task, which would require many more pages than a dissertation project can contain, but I hope to lay a solid foundation for this type of research. I do not claim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the films under scrutiny. Rather, by zooming in on the frequently overlooked aspects of language contribution while relying on the methodologies for discussing word-image interplay and the functional typologies developed in the first and second chapters, I strive to complement already existing research on American cinema, corroborating or questioning the ideas expressed elsewhere and throwing light on films that have not been favorites in scholarly criticism.

The choice of films in the third chapter has necessarily been arbitrary because it is impossible to encompass the whole range of cinematic products. A serious problem that a film scholar encounters when studying contributions of screen words to pre-sound cinema is the common practice of adding, removing, altering, and tampering with intertitles—during authorial rereleases and unauthorized distributions in the silent era and during the restoration processes undertaken by cinéastes, especially if a film is reconstructed from

several surviving fragments. Thus, film versions that are available for viewing now, in particular newly restored DVD editions, often feature intertitles that are dramatically different, in form and/or in content, from the ones embedded in the films during their original releases. While reviewing film literature, I have encountered numerous cases when analyses of and conclusions about authorial intentions and cinematic compositions are made on the basis of screen words that were never part of the film as the filmmaker created it. Thus, the survival status of the original intertitles, as determined from published archival research and insights of individuals involved in preserving and restoring silent cinema, as well as from my own intuition based on the large quantity of films from the period I have seen, is a major determining factor in my selection of surviving films for detailed analysis. In spite of every effort I have made to establish the authenticity of the verbal text of the films that have made it into the third chapter, a few aberrations may still have slipped in.

For the sake of reasonable continuity in the third chapter, I have chosen to illustrate the verbal practices of the first two decades of American cinema with films created by the Thomas A. Edison Company, a major player in the field. The written language use in the late teens and twenties is analyzed in the context of silent comedies directed by John Emerson and Buster Keaton and of two silent dramas directed by Cecil B. DeMille. I also explore contributions of screen words to several silent avant-garde films of the late twenties and early thirties.

In the fourth chapter, I have decided to focus on the verbal text of the silent creations of two filmmakers whose approaches to language in film, although formulated in the same climate of discourses about the politics of language, are diametrically opposed—Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton. Whereas Brakhage chose the path of

eschewing words to prevent them from creating an artificial wall between the viewers and the world of the visual, Frampton confronted language by giving it the lion's share of the screen. Such a directional choice of analyzing the screen words of only a few select films of only two filmmakers is motivated by my desire to illustrate that written language in avant-garde films deserves very careful scrutiny, which reveals many layers of meaning otherwise concealed.

In this project, apart from drawing on research and opinions of film scholars and critics from different countries and of various time periods, I also try to let filmmakers and screenwriters speak for themselves. This citational approach and a dual emphasis on screen words as linguistic units and as elements of a filmic structure necessitate a brief explication of Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the sign, which, in various metamorphoses and interpretations, has shaped discourses on film language. Gerard Genette's elaborations of five types of transtextuality facilitate situating films within a larger context of artistic tradition and cultural experience. Title sequences and end credits are analyzed within the theoretical framework of paratextuality and *titrologie*—the study of titles. The types of image-word interaction that I adapt to film derive from Leo H. Hoek's classification. Other terms and concepts that permeate discourses on verbal and visual modes of signification, textuality, language as power, and other areas prove useful in my analysis of the linguistic and bibliographical codes of screen words (to utilize Jerome McGann's terminology) and of the aesthetic, cultural, economic, and sociopolitical ramifications of written language use in film. The terms that are not yet firmly entrenched in the discursive vocabulary or are used here in specific meanings that require contextual clarification are listed in the appended glossary, which also includes terms that I introduce.

In crafting the functional typology of screen words and in analyzing the contributions of written language to individual films, I synthesize suggestions derived from secondary sources written in English and Russian (with occasional forays into German- and French-language materials), ideas expressed by filmmakers and screenwriters, and, primarily, my own viewings of films. In some cases I have elected to quote from the original source in Russian in my own translation, if I have found the existing English translations of particular passages or terminology inadequate or misleading. Extensive footnotes provide background and supplementary information on the artistic pieces and films discussed and direct the readers to additional secondary sources they may want to consult. I have chosen not to clutter quotations from the periods when gender-insensitive language was the norm with multiple insertions of *[sic]*. I trust the readers to make mental adjustments themselves.

Besides the films that are analyzed in detail, I have viewed most of the films whose screen words get a mention in the chapters. Only the films discussed by others that I have not been able to see and the films that are used solely to illustrate different kinds of titles are excluded from the appended filmography, which also provides the sources for the versions I have studied. To locate the films along the historical axis, I also list the year of copyright or, if not available, the year of original release. The figures that illustrate and clarify various usages of screen words and cases of verbal-visual interaction are snapshots from digitized versions of the films and, unlike production stills, correspond exactly, albeit of a much smaller size, to the shots one would encounter when watching an actual film. Overall, I hope that readers perusing these pages will have their verbal-visual frames expanded and will watch and read films from a fresh perspective.

CHAPTER ONE

Word and Image in Film and Other Arts

Investigations of the verbal-visual relationships in which screen words engage are impossible without forays into other arts and domains. The paradoxical uniqueness of film as an art and a medium stems from its ability to "take the cleverest advantage of its predecessors, encompass, transcend, and force them towards its singular ends" (Mariën 137). Throughout the history of cinema, theoreticians and practitioners have speculated about film's debt to or dominance over the other arts. Sergei Eisenstein called cinema a "genuine and ultimate synthesis of all artistic manifestations" (*Film Form* 181). Man Ray viewed cinema as "the junction of the seven arts" (133). Futurists claimed cinema to be the most advanced form of art (LeGrice 10); to illustrate this in a concrete form, Umbro Apollonio created an all-encompassing formula: "Painting + sculpture + plastic dynamism + words-in-freedom + composed noises + architecture + synthetic theatre = Futurist cinema" (qtd. in LeGrice 12). Hollis Frampton issued the boldest statement that "the whole history of art is no more than a massive footnote to the history of film" (*On the Camera Arts* 154).

How this "footnote" is woven into the nature of film art and how it influences screen words as part of film language will be the focus of this chapter. I investigate interrelationships between film and its artistic predecessors in which words have their say. I adapt research on word-image interplay in the other arts to film and create a schema for analyzing verbal-visual relationships in the cinematic medium.

FILM AND LITERARY LANGUAGE: ADAPTATIONS AND OPPOSITIONS

When the interaction between film and literature is mentioned, screen adaptations usually come to mind first. Not surprisingly, the processes of adaptation and translation involved in converting a literary work into a film have been extensively researched, most often with a focus on the narrative.[1] However, even though some of the films I am going to discuss are adaptations of literary works, my angle of analysis highlights word and image interplay as well as the role of screen words in the creation of the often non-conventional narrative. Thus, the findings within the field of screen adaptations will be invoked only when they are directly related to the functioning of screen words in particular films. Nor will I dwell here on the theoretical discussions revolving around the questions of reality and illusion in film and literature since these are at best tangentially related to screen words. By contrast, research on the differences and overlaps between literature and film as art forms and as semiotic systems[2] with their respective languages resonates more directly with my interests here.

A determining factor in analyzing any semiotic system is its closeness to natural language. Semiotics, the study of signs, received its major foundational push in Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal lectures on general linguistics, which, upon his death in 1913, were shaped into *Course on General Linguistics* by his colleagues and disciples

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[1] See, among others, Aycock and Schoenecke; Bluestone; Cartmell and Whelehan; Chatman; Corrigan; Naremore; and Stam and Raengo. Of especial interest is a recent study of the role of intertitles in the context of narrative in film adaptations in Elliott.

[2] The terms *semiotics* and *semiology* are sometimes differentiated, especially in the European tradition (see, for instance, Julia Kristeva's "The System and the Speaking Subject" in Moi 24-33). I will follow the established practice in the United States of conflating the two.

(Harris xii). Often called "the father of modern linguistics" (Ong 5), Saussure outlined several characteristic features of language as a structured system, out of which the nature of the linguistic sign is of most immediate relevance to this project. Saussure defined a linguistic sign as "a link between a concept and a sound pattern . . . a two-sided psychological entity" (66). Within a linguistics paradigm, Saussure suggested using the corresponding terms *signifié* and *signifiant.*[3] Saussure identified two major principles that govern the sign: first, its arbitrary nature due to the unmotivated connection between signifier and signified; second, the linear character of the signifier due to the necessarily temporal aspect of a sound (67-69).

Saussure's postulate about the arbitrariness of the sign has given rise to multifaceted discussions about the deceptive nature of language, especially prominent in postmodern discourses on language as power. If the linguistic sign is an artificial construct, the two facets of which have been arbitrarily conflated, then language as a system of signs is no better at representing the true reality. Writing sixty-five years after Saussure, Umberto Eco elaborated on this characteristic in more contemporary terms: "A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. . . . Thus *semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie*" (7). The power of language to lie and manipulate, while preserving the appearance of a stand-in for the truth, draws artists like a magnet, especially during political crises. To investigate this aspect of language, filmmakers often employ screen

[3] Roy Harris translates these terms as *signification* and *signal*. I will be using the alternative translation of the terms that is more popular in the United States—*signified* and *signifier* (see, for example, Wade Baskin's translation in Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959)).

words, which engage in representational games with images and spoken voice.

The linearity of language is a logical extension of the second major principle identified by Saussure, the linearity of the signifier: in Western languages, the actually pronounced/heard or written/read clusters of signs—words, phrases, and sentences—syntagmatically unroll in time, one unit perceived after another similar unit.[4] This feature of language has also acquired political interpretations: it has been linked to a tendency to overlook what does not fit into a historical paradigm endorsed by an authority, be it a ruling party or a dominant critical mode. As Frampton phrased it, such a linear perception can lead to "supine acceptance of history as a linear narrative" (*On the Camera Arts* 39).[5]

Saussure himself pointed out that literary language, as an integral part of the development of various political and cultural institutions, is "inseparable from political history" (22). And although Saussure insisted that the spoken word be the only true object of linguistics, he admitted that the written word often usurped the primary role; he also lamented that the representation of the vocal sign was given more importance than the sign itself, "as if people believed that in order to find out what a person looks like it is better to study his photograph than his face" (24-25). From Saussure's point of view, "the prestige of writing" could be easily accounted for: 1) in spite of the artificial connection between the word and its written form, the latter is a solid and long-lasting object and, thus, is easier to grasp and investigate; 2) in most cases, visual impressions

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[4] Visual poetry may seem to be a most notable exception, although its individual verbal elements still require linear reading, at least once.

[5] The politics of language will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters—to provide the intellectual and cultural contexts within which filmmakers were employing or eschewing screen words.

are clearer and easier to remember than auditory impressions; 3) literary language, with its dictionaries, grammars, and orthography books, is governed by written codes and is promoted through institutional writing (26). Not surprisingly, the term *signifier* has been appropriated by fields other than Saussurean linguistics to designate *written or visual form* rather than *vocal pattern*.[6]

Literature, of course, is inextricably linked to written language. Based on language, which is a first-order semiotic system, literature is a second-order semiotic system, where the linguistic sign, a unity of signifier and signified, itself becomes the signifier of a new sign.[7] In fact, denotation and connotation in literature are directly related to this process, as Roland Barthes illustrates in *Elements of Semiology*, borrowing Louis Hjelmslev's notion of connotative semiotics: "the first system . . . is the plane of *denotation*, and the second system (wider than the first) the plane of *connotation. . . . a connoted system is a system whose plane of expression is itself constituted by a signifying system*" (89-90). Conventional signification, i.e., denotation, and artistic expressiveness, i.e., connotation, are inherently present in discussions of the aesthetics of an art, and film is no exception.

Investigating the structural differences between literature and film, Christian Metz, a major theoretician of film language, posits that unlike in verbal arts, where a connotative value is added to mostly neutral linguistic units, aesthetic expressiveness in

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[6] I will be using the term *signifier* to mean *visual form* as well.

[7] The term *x-order system* can become convoluted and be interpreted differently across disciplines. For instance, all semiotic systems are called *fourth-order systems*, with language being "a higher-order semiotic system," in Caffarel et al. 9-10. The term *second-order semiological system* was probably first used by Barthes in his analysis of myths as signifying systems (*Mythologies* 114).

film is grafted onto the natural expressiveness of images: “literature is an art of heterogeneous connotation (expressive connotation added to nonexpressive denotation), while the cinema is an art of homogeneous connotation (expressive connotation added to expressive denotation)” (79). One can easily take issue with such a black-and-white distinction between the two arts because many verbal units have acquired a connotative value through historic use and, thus, can hardly be called neutral; and, as Metz admits himself, the most connotative images in film can *de facto* be realistic photographic representations denoting a location or an individual in a most non-expressive state. What Metz's differentiation in terms reveals is the dominant push behind the efforts of many film theoreticians to create a discourse on film language that would legitimize the claims of cinema as an art form and a semiotic system in its own right.

Many such attempts to articulate the essence of film language borrow the terminology and features of literature, and Russian Formalists are a prime example. Because cinema jumps from shot to shot, Yury Tynyanov likens it to poetry, which moves from line to line; the “new” cinema based on the principles of montage is analogous to free verse, which is characterized by a sharp sensation of rhythmic changes. Additionally, as in poetry, where every detail matters because of its expected contribution to a larger poetic structure, the totality of meaning of a shot is construed through the interrelationship among its constituents rather than through their separate individual meanings (70-74).[8] Under the influence of Russian Formalists, Eisenstein often creates

[8] Tynyanov's article is available in English as “The Fundamentals of Cinema” in *The Poetics of Cinema*, edited by Richard Taylor (Oxford: Russian Poetics in Translation, 1982; 32-54) and “On the Foundations of Cinema” in *Russian Formalist Film Theory*, edited by Herbert Eagle (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1981; 81-100).

parallels between devices of cinema and literature, mostly poetry: montage is similar to enjambment (*Film Sense* 55); haiku and tanka are like montage phrases (*Film Form* 32); film is destined to perfect the representation of the inner monologue or stream-of-consciousness technique pioneered by Edouard Dujardin and best exemplified in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (*Film Form* 103-05). According to Boris Eikhenbaum, the formation of internal speech is inherent in cinema viewing as a prerequisite for understanding how separate shots are linked together: the spectator must always create a chain of cine-phrases in order to make sense of the visuals on the screen. In silent film, where the audible word is absent, internal speech is facilitated by intertitles, which accentuate meaning (25).[9] Indeed, references to literature are not uncommon in discussions of intertitles and their functions, as will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Tynyanov's statement that a film shot is equivalent to a verse line (70) reflects a necessity for any language to identify a major unit through which the language operates. If in natural languages, such a unit is predominantly considered to be the word, film theoreticians and practitioners have most often proposed the shot. However, here the unanimity ends: to what a shot is equivalent or analogous has been a continuous subject of debate. Tynyanov's contemporaries, for instance, had conflicting views on this issue. Lev Kuleshov provides an analogy between a shot and a letter, mainly a Chinese ideogram, which is a complex but easily readable sign (*Kuleshov on Film* 62-63). Articulating his theory of montage as a collision of shots, Eisenstein speaks about a shot

[9] Eikhenbaum's article is available in English in three translations: as “Problems of Film Stylistics,” published in *Screen* 15.3 (1974): 7-32; as “Problems of Cinema Stylistics” in *Russian Formalist Film Theory* (55-80); and as “Problems of Cine-Stylistics” in *The Poetics of Cinema* (5-31).

as “a montage cell” (*Film Form* 37) incorporated into a montage phrase, like a word into a sentence (236-37).

Filmmakers across Europe also speculated on the structural nature of the shot. Reflecting a widespread interest in the plastic and rhythmic qualities of film, Abel Gance equates a shot to a musical chord, with mise-en-scène and framing acting as notes (Abel, *French Film Theory* 1: 210). Creating a “quasi-semiotic conception of film language,” Jean Epstein attributes to a shot the features of a linguistic sign: being arbitrary and precise, polysemous and single, shots and film images signify only in association with one another and are decoded according to the spectators' ability to “read,” itself dependent on their memory and perception (Abel, *French Film Theory* 1: 335-36). Early theorists, however, rarely engaged in a systematic analysis of a film shot as similar to or different from a linguistic unit.

A rigorous semiotic approach to formulating the nature of cinematic units was manifested several decades later, in Metz's five “radical differences” between the shot and the word. First, unlike words, shots are infinite in number. Second, words pre-exist in the lexicon, whereas shots are created by the filmmaker. Third, the receiver is presented with “a quantity of undefined information” when viewing a shot, contrary to reading a word. Fourth, a shot is like an actualized unit of discourse, but a word is a purely virtual lexical unit. And finally, whereas words are parts of at least one organized semantic field and their meanings are shaped in paradigmatic contrast to other members that could have been used instead, shots are rarely defined by potentialities of other shots used at exactly the same point along the filmic chain. Shots are more like statements: infinite in number, individually created units of discourse referring to reality (115-16). Overall, unlike

language, which works both through syntagmatic relations that "hold *in praesentia*" and associative, or paradigmatic, relations that "hold *in absentia*" (Saussure 122), cinema, according to Metz, is the art of presence perpetuated by the dominance of image and the exclusion of everything external (116). As Lynn A. Higgins points out, Metz comes to the conclusion in his article "Le cinéma, langue ou langage?" that cinema is not a language because it is not a system of signs and because in the image both the signifier and signified are equally visible and present (25). What happens to the "art of presence" when verbal language undermines the dominance of visual image and when the indexical nature of the film shot is called into question will be discussed when avant-garde films are analyzed.

Avant-garde films that make verbal text their cornerstone also blur Dudley Andrew's distinction between literature and film. Summarizing the theoretical trends of the 1980s, Andrew posits that a major difference between literature and film as signifying systems consists in the movement from signification towards perception and vice versa. Based on natural language, literary fiction starts with linguistic signs on various levels to build propositions that attempt to develop perception; human motivations and values are thrown out into the external world, "elaborating a world out of a story." Film generally works in the opposite direction: from images and, thus, perception towards signification, from the exteriority of observable facts and events to interior reasonings, "from the givenness of a world to the meaning of a story cut out of that world" (101). The opposition that stems from the difference between the major units—words and images[10]

[10] For an overview of the developments in "the comparative study of words and images," see Orban 8-23.

—constantly surfaces in the theoretical discussions of word-image interplay in the other arts that have much in common with film: painting and photography.

WORD-IMAGE INTERPLAY IN PAINTING: HISTORY AND FACETS

The similarities between film and painting have been mostly underscored by artists who have been fascinated by the possibilities of adding a plastic temporal dimension to the canvas-screen. However, as Maya Deren reminds us, the animated paintings of Hans Richter, Oskar Fischinger, and others made their entry into film by bringing in long-established non-specifically-cinematic techniques (61). Consequently, such painterly films would not help much in developing the ideas of this project. Instead, I will draw on theoretical investigations of paintings that incorporate verbal language.

Verbal text has been no stranger to the painting medium since ancient times, for a variety of reasons. On ancient Greek vases of the black-figure style, the names of gods and heroes were regularly added to explain the illustration of a theme or an event (Gombrich 215). In Early Christian art, the four evangelists were often identified through an inscription on the book, often in disproportionately big letters. The text in frescoes and mosaics helped to manipulate the point of view and distance. Inverted writing that faced an internal reader, an evangelist or a poet, created a naturalistic impression of verisimilitude. By contrast, if the text was to be read and contemplated, it faced the external viewer directly, making it difficult for the internal scribe to "write." Intentionally illegible writing was intended to represent distance in time and space between the scroll and the viewer, internal or external or both, or to simulate the exotic Hebrew script (Schapiro 126-37). Scrolls presented upside down, a version of inverted writing, could

have portrayed the Word from Heaven. Several centuries later, filmmakers would also capitalize on the various possibilities of presenting the written text to the viewers.

Although, as Meyer Schapiro points out, all the three types of script in a picture—inverted, direct, and illegible—survived into the Western Middle Ages (135), the comprehensibility of the text acquired primary importance. The script became a sort of a closed object, with nothing—either the scribe's hand or the pen—to obscure even a single letter from the viewer, who was supposedly witnessing the process of writing, even though a word could be divided into parts in the middle of a page due to an insertion of the hand (137). Overall, medieval imagery served the purpose of communicating the divine Word to the unlettered; the image was an accessible substitute, designed to be remembered not for its visual aspect but for its proximity to and approximation of the scripted text (Bryson, *Word* 1-3). The word was of a higher status because, invisible, God spoke not through images but through words (Morley 14). However, when more educated and sophisticated audiences were addressed, especially in manuscripts, literal illustrations were frequently coupled with allegorical commentaries—pictures that represented a symbolic meaning—or added figures and details not present in the written text (Schapiro 19).

In the Middle Ages, the partnership of word and image was most prominent in illuminated manuscripts. An overview of this rich collaboration extends beyond the limits of the current project,[11] although ornamental and symbolic features of medieval illustrations bear a direct relevance to “art titles” of the silent cinema, to be discussed

[11] For an extensive treatment of the subject of illuminated manuscripts, one could refer, among others, to Bland; Bologna; Calkins; and Harthan.

later. The art of an illustrated book, severely diminished by Gutenberg's invention of moveable type (Morley 14), was painstakingly resurrected by William Blake and pre-Raphaelites. Well before the publication in 1935 of the famous “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,' Blake lamented the loss of what Walter Benjamin would later call the “aura” of the work of art (22) and strove to remove the technological barriers separating words and images. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's investment in the painting-poetry collaboration and William Morris's book designs and typographical innovations, rooted in the illuminated manuscripts of the past,[12] paved the way for the creations of a whole pleiad of artists fascinated by the material encoding of the verbal text, termed the *bibliographical code* by Jerome McGann (*Textual Condition* 56).

By differentiating between the *linguistic code*, the actual language-based meaning, and the *bibliographical code*, non-linguistic, often sociopolitical meanings arising from the material arrangement of the text on a page and overall in a book, McGann postulates that both mechanisms operate together in a symbiotic whole (*Textual Condition* 56-61). The idea of an intertwined relationship between “form and meaning” is certainly not McGann's invention, yet his differentiation of the two “codes” provides useful analytical tools in discussing word-image interplay not only in books, but in films as well, particularly in avant-garde creations.

The multi-layered relationship between word and image in twentieth-century art has developed against the background of a centuries-long tradition of separating the two,

[12] For a discussion of Blake's resistance to the commodification of art, see Keach. Rossetti's and Morris's contributions are analyzed in McGann, *Dante*; Waggoner.

which originated in the Renaissance period, flourished through the Enlightenment, and reached a peculiar peak in Impressionism. Citing Giorgio Vasari, Norman Bryson explains that the Renaissance liberated life from the medieval repression of the textual and achieved optical truth, having discarded the bonds of discourse (*Word* 7).[13] If texts appear in Renaissance paintings, they are mostly employed to convey a sense of movement during the process of writing and to showcase the linear perspective, with the words foreshortened and the letters progressively diminishing in size and depth (Schapiro 155). The segregation of the verbal and visual domains was carefully maintained in the Enlightenment era, an age of scientific distinctions and classifications. As Simon Morley reminds us, because verbal language was based on concepts, it had no place in arts that appealed to the senses. Literature was associated with time, and visual arts worked with space—yet another reason to keep the two separate (16), the perspective promoted through Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's differentiation between temporal and spatial arts (Arnheim 177; Wall-Romana 135). On the whole, readable texts compel the viewer to focus on the plane rather than on simulated depth (Gombrich 215) and, thus, hinder the three-dimensional effect sought after in realistic paintings.

This separatist approach continued to dominate much nineteenth-century art, including that of the ultimate realists—Impressionists. While painting cityscapes, pervaded by signs and advertisements, Impressionists, according to Morley, are careful to smudge and blur parts where words could have been: their optics "seems to aim at a kind of verbal illegibility" (20). It is probably extreme to claim that Impressionists targeted

[13] When Bryson elaborates the semiotics of painting in *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, word and image interplay, however, is not discussed.

text intentionally to color it out, but whatever their motivations might have been, the fact remains: Impressionist canvases are word-free, with one notable exception—the artist's signature. The concept of signature, however, falls into a new realm—of the author-text-audience relationship—and will be discussed within this framework in the second chapter. Similarly, multiple aspects of the title will also be analyzed later.

It is not surprising that the word comes back into the visual arts when artists start abandoning the realist representation, and three-dimensionality in particular, as their major aspiration. And although Francisco Goya and Paul Gauguin had already practiced inscribing titles on their canvases, one can hardly disagree with John C. Welchman that it is the Cubist revolution that whole-heartedly admitted text into the bounds of the image (161) and became an impetus for the revival of interest in the word-image interplay within the frame. Paradoxically, it also enabled the real world of news and advertisement, so long ignored in realistic painting, to burst onto the canvas. The text in Cubist art represents a whole range of sources and categories: newspaper titles, often truncated; excerpted articles about current political events, e.g., the war in the Balkans; fragments of newspaper advertisements and billboard posters; lettering used in store signs and windows; music hall, theater, and cinema handbills; book covers; song sheets; brand labels and logos (Morley 39).

The ways and purposes for which words were utilized by Cubists also varied greatly. In the early teens, Georges Braque viewed verbal text as a compositional device that highlighted the visible graphic nature of writing and that enabled him to explore the play between simulated depth and flat surface (Morley 39), as is exemplified by *Hommage à J.-S. Bach* (1911-12) (figure 1.1). Pablo Picasso's collages, as Rosalind

Krauss suggests, illustrate Saussure's postulate that signs take on meaning only in opposition to each other: for instance, two very similar scraps of newspaper convey opposite meanings—light and opacity—due to their inclusion in the composition of the 1912 collage *Violín* (*Picasso Papers* 28) (figure 1.2). Incorporating the text enabled Picasso to comment on the ever-flexible connection between the visual sign and the referent, a "sudden arbitrariness of each pictorial element—a piece of newsprint able alternatively to signify light or dust or wood or water, depending on its relationship to its neighboring elements" (18). Such a slippage away from the fixity of resemblance opens up the visual image-sign to approximate a ceaseless play of the unmotivated, conventional linguistic sign (28).

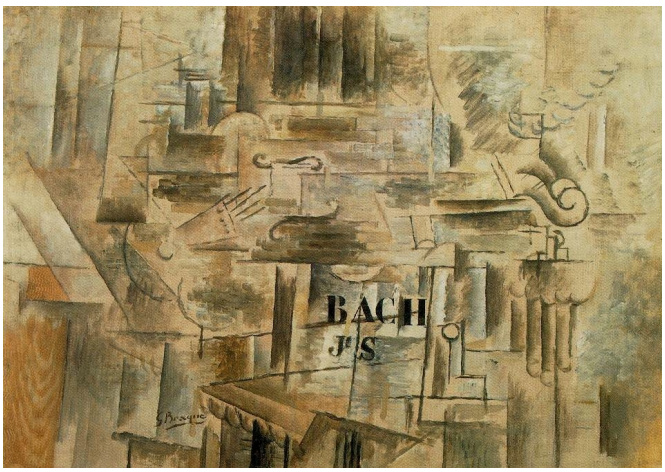
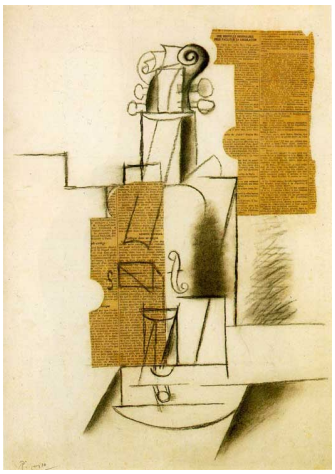


Fig. 1.1. Braque, *Hommage à J.-S. Bach*.


Fig. 1.2. Picasso, *Violín*.

The text in Picasso's collages was often intended to be read because his works abound in verbal and visual puns (Morley 42) and the intertextuality of some of his paper clippings can hardly be questioned. For example, Stéphane Mallarmé's ground-breaking "Un coup de dés" (1897) is visibly invoked in *Table with Bottle, Wineglass and Newspaper* (1912) (figure 1.3), where Picasso inserted a truncated headline from

Le Journal so as to read "Un coup de thé" (Krauss, *Picasso Papers* 36).[14] In *Glass and Bottle of Suze* (1912) (figure 1.4), legible newspaper fragments bring in various voices discussing contemporaneous events. According to Krauss, *Glass and Bottle of Suze* has been read in a variety of ways: as a visual representation of a conversation around a cafe table; as Picasso's own interest in and ideas on the issues, signaled by his choice of particular clippings; as Picasso's unmasking of the commodification and deceptive nature of the press, which disorganizes the space of the narrative, represents events selectively, and turns news into entertainment; as Picasso's challenge to the dominant discourse through juxtaposition and reconceptualization (*Picasso Papers* 41-43).



Fig. 1.3. Picasso, *Table with Bottle, Wineglass and Newspaper.*



Fig. 1.4. Picasso, *Glass and Bottle of Suze.*

I tend to agree with Krauss that both Picasso's collage and its critical interpretations can be doubly viewed through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of

[14] For other readings of "Un coup de thé" in *Table with Bottle, Wineglass and Newspaper*, see Andersen 270-74. For a detailed analysis and abundant illustrations of Picasso's interest in the written word, see Fisher et al.

dialogism: on the one hand, by creating a sort of unified narrative, Picasso seems to produce a counter-discourse to the dominant voice of the mass media, which presents information in dissevered bits and pieces; on the other hand, unifying the fragments from the perspective of a single consciousness leads to a re-monologizing (*Picasso Papers* 44) and undermines the polyphony of overlapping and interacting voices. A stance on language "as ideologically saturated, . . . as a world view, even as a concrete opinion ensuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (Bakhtin 271) has enjoyed popularity among artists and critics as a foundation of the belief that language wields power through authoritative discourses.

Once the word had been embraced by painters at the beginning of the twentieth century, it brought the controversies of the contemporary world represented in and by newspapers and journals. The "cheapening and dehumanizing impact of the mass media" (Morley 23), which often presented simplified conclusions and distorted information, led to questioning the credibility of the press. The printed word had become a political instrument and was inescapably ideologically charged (W. J. T. Mitchell 117). Language itself had become suspect, undermined by the developments in human thought. The expansion of exact sciences provided evidence of the complexity of the world, which mere words were unable to reveal. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels exposed language as a perpetuator of oppressive social hierarchies. Sigmund Freud demonstrated through his investigations of slips of the tongue and involuntary use of language that humans were not in conscious control of their thoughts and actions (Morley 24). Saussure's postulate of the unmotivated connection between signifier and signified, as discussed earlier, also did not help in trusting what was expressed through language. No wonder that many artists

preferred to have nothing to do with language and even decided not to entitle their works.

Artists who chose to welcome language into their canvases utilized verbal text for a variety of purposes. To analyze and classify such uses, art historians and critics developed quite an array of means. Welchman suggests a useful dichotomy of the modes of dependency between word and image: exclusionary and symbiotic. Ironically, when the image is intentionally disengaged from language to promote visuality, this apparent exclusion of the word is "doubly predicated on textuality: first, through the elaborate criticism that manufactures the separation; and second, through . . . the articulation of silence . . ." (10). Intentional silence, both literal and figurative, is a major actor in the artistic drama of the twentieth century and will be especially relevant to my analysis of post-World-War-II art, avant-garde films in particular.

The symbiotic relationship both overcomes and builds on the representational differences between words and images, on what W. J. T. Mitchell thinks Michel de Certeau might have called "heterology of representation"[15]:

> The "differences" between images and language are not merely formal matters: they are, in practice, linked to things like the difference between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between "hearsay" and "eyewitness" testimony; between words (heard, quoted, inscribed) and objects of action (seen, depicted, described); between sensory channels, traditions of representation, and modes of experience. (5)

[15] W. J. T. Mitchell refers to de Certeau's collection of essays, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (U of Minnesota P, 1986).

The otherness of the opponent-partner constitutes the basis of "a suturing of image and text" (28). The whole cannot be thus a seamless structure,but the quality and quantity of seams—ways of merging text and image—determine the nature of the relationship between the constituents, antagonistic or collaborative, clearly-cut or subtly interwoven.[16]

Word-image interplay also operates through differential relations identified by Saussure as the basis of the mechanism of language: "In a sign, what matters more than any idea of sound associated with it is what other signs surround it. The proof of this lies in the fact that the value of a sign may change without affecting either meaning or sound, simply because some neighbouring sign has undergone a change" (118). The perception of an image may vary dependent on the words that surround it or co-habit the same space; and vice versa, words may be interpreted differently when illustrated or questioned by different images. In such a sutured entity, everything becomes context, or rather co-text: only a willfully selected point of departure can identify the core and the surroundings.

TYPES OF VERBAL-VISUAL RELATIONS

Still it is possible to describe ways of integrating text into paintings and, by extension, of cataloging types of the word-image interplay in silent films. As a foundation, I will take Claus Clüver's terminology and Leo H. Hoek's early classification of types of interaction between visual and verbal signs: *transmedial*, *multimedial*,

[16] W. J. T. Mitchell suggests three types of typographic representations of such a visual-verbal structure: *image/text*— "a problematic gap, cleavage, or rupture in representation"; *imagetext*—"composite, synthetic words (or concepts) that combine image and text"; *image-text*—"designates *relations* of the visual and the verbal" (89). Although analytically enticing, such differentiations can easily become confusing and, thus, will not be adopted in this project.

mixed-medial, and *intermedial*.[17] A *transmedial* relationship exists between two different works belonging to different media (Hoek, "Image" 23-24). It is most prominently manifested in book-to-film adaptations and in ekphrasis, "the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system" (Clüver, "On Representation" 13), often narrowly defined as "the verbal representation of visual representation" (W. J. T. Mitchell 109). To keep the project focused on screen words, I will have to forgo a discussion of this type[18] and look into medialities that involve word and image interplay in one work.[19]

When one work employs both words and images, the technical differences between multimediality, mixed-mediality, and intermediality are based on two criteria: distinctiveness and coherence. In the *multimedial* mode, verbal and visual elements

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[17] In Hoek's "Image and Word: An Exciting Relationship . . . ," most probably translated from Dutch, dashes are used in the words *trans-medial*, *multi-medial*, *mixed-medial*, and *inter-medial* but are omitted in the words *multimedia* and *intermedia*. I have elected to retain the dash only in the terms *mixed-medial* and *mixed-mediality*.

[18] For analytical discussions of ekphrasis, see Caws, *Art*; Heffernan; Krieger; and W. J. T. Mitchell.

[19] The progression of the terms from *multi-* to *intermediality* was suggested in Clüver, "Interartiella studier," published in Swedish in 1993, although Dick Higgins had established a conceptual difference between *intermedia* and *mixed media* in "Intermedia," which appeared in 1966 and was republished in *Horizons* in 1984. Hoek added the term *transmediality* and created a table classification in "Image and Word," published in English as a translation in 1994. In the 2002 article "Timbres-poste et intermédialité," published in French, Hoek uses different terms to describe the concepts of *transmedial*, *multimedial*, *mixed-medial*, and *intermedial* relations: *transposition intermédiale*, *collocation intermédiale*, *jonction intermédiale*, and *fusion intermédiale* respectively (36-37). For a summary of these transmutations, see Vos 325-27. Since I am wary of using the adjective *intermedial* to refer to all the types of text-image relationship, the terminology for this project is adopted from "Image and Word," and descriptions are partly borrowed from "Timbres-poste et intermédialité." Further elaborations and examples are mine.

remain autonomous and retain both their distinctive features and individual coherence (Hoek, “Image” 24). In multimedial texts, word and image most often act as supplements to or descriptors of each other. Books with illustrations, labeled paintings on exhibit in a gallery, artists' books (for instance, a collaborative effort of painters and poets in *21 Etchings and Poems*, published in 1960), and captioned photographs can illustrate this type. When words and images are physically separated in such a way that either can be disregarded (e.g., photographs at the end of the book or a label at some remove from the painting), this kind of verbal-visual relationship can even appeal to those who would hate to allow verbal intruders to “disturb or call into question the purity of figurality” (Brunette and Wills, *Deconstruction* 5).

However, cases that usually belong to the multimedial type of interaction, for instance, a painting and its title (Hoek, “Timbres-poste” 36-37), may defy the self-sufficiency of verbal and visual elements: the artificial separation of the two would destroy the consolidated meaning, which, according to Hoek, is the feature of *mixed-mediality* (“Timbres-poste” 36). Artists love to play with our pre-conceived notions of what a caption, a label, or a subtitle should do, often in a self-reflexive gesture. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, Alphonse Allais's monochrome paintings that constituted *Album primo-avrilesque* (1897)—for example, *Première communion de jeunes filles chlorotiques par un temps de neige* [*First Communion of Chlorotic Young Girls in Snowy Weather*], created in 1883 (figure 1.5)—subverted the conventional way of looking at the relationship between the image and the caption-title. Allais's work not only anticipated the non-iconic abstract art of the eve of World War I (Welchman 108) but also predated the principles of Conceptual art, which, as Russell Bowman describes,

explores ways of conveying an idea or concept to the viewer through a real object, an image, or a linguistic definition (342). Compare it, for instance, with Joseph Kosuth's installation *One and Three Labels* (1965), which consists of a black and white photograph, a printed label and a photostat mounted on aluminum (figure 1.6), where the label is elevated from its usual subsidiary position to the status of the concept to be perceived and conceived.

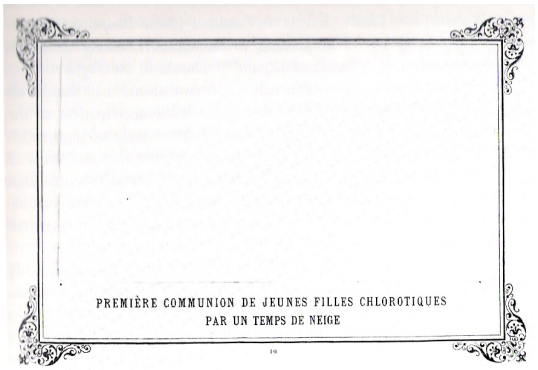


Fig. 1.5. Allais, *Première communion de jeunes filles chlorotiques par un temps de neige.*

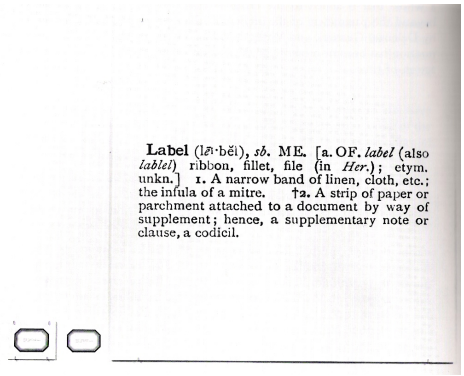


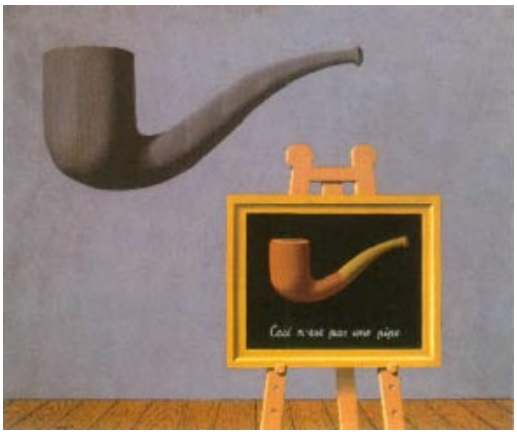
Fig. 1.6. Kosuth, *One and Three Labels.*

I view Allais's monochromes, and similar cases of paintings the comprehensibility of which is impossible without the aid of the title (see figure 1.24 later), as instances of mixed-mediality: the verbal and visual signs are still easily distinguishable, but their coherence as individual entities is disrupted due to their combined inclusion into the totality of space (Hoek, “Image” 24). Word and image are no longer merely supplements: instead, they question, oppose, mock each other and may baffle the viewer-reader with their apparent incongruity. The most famous and oft-discussed example is probably René Magritte's *La trahison des images* [*The Treachery of Images*] (1929) (figure 1.7), which presents (or represents?) a clash between a naturalistic image and a verbal statement: *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* questions the representational quality of the image of a pipe. But it is not just a one-way street of image undermined by language, when the subscript aims

to “divorce the figure from itself, to isolate it from its space and to set it floating . . .” (Foucault, *This* 37). Due to the heterology of representation, images and words are inadequate to “translate” each other: “Neither can be reduced to the other's terms: it is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to show, by the use of images, metaphors, or similes, what we are saying . . .” (Foucault, *Order* 10). When later Magritte paints a self-reflexive rip-off, *Les deux mystères* [*The Two Mysteries*] (1966) (figure 1.8), the conundrum of representation is aggravated through the doubling of “pipes” and the scale mismatch.



Fig. 1.7. Magritte, *La trahison des images.*


Fig. 1.8. Magritte, *Les deux mystères.*

Thus, in mixed-medial interactions, different-order signs do not just encroach on each other's domains but create intermediate hetero-areas of signification and perception. Hoek lists posters, advertisements, and comics as examples of such juncture (“Timbres-poste” 36-37). But these verbal-visual modes do not exhaust the boundless possibilities of mixed-mediality, which has been a particular favorite with artists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One such evidence is the genre of *tableau-poème* (painting-poem), developed in the 1920-30s, where script and painting merge in fashioning abstract shapes and legible words, as in Joan Miró (Morley 89) (figure 1.9), or where a poet and a painter contribute equally to the plastic whole, as in Michel Seuphor

and Piet Mondrian's *Textuel* (figure 1.10).



Fig. 1.9. Miró, *Une étoile caresse le sein d'une négresse* (1938).



Fig. 1.10. Seuphor and Mondrian, *Textuel* (1928).

Among more recent mixed-medial endeavors is *A Humument* (first published in 1970), Tom Phillips's treated book in progress based on the Victorian novel *A Human Document* by W. H. Mallock, many pages of which present in bubble-like clusters words and phrases singled out from different sentences, while the rest of the text is painted or pasted over with suggestive designs (figure 1.11). Women artists have exhibited a special interest in mixed-medial interactions of texts inscribed in and superimposed over female bodies, as, for instance, in Nancy Spero's *Notes in Time on Women* (1979), a gigantic scroll designed to cover the walls of an exhibit room (figure 1.12):



Fig. 1.11. Page 193 from Phillips, *A Humument.*

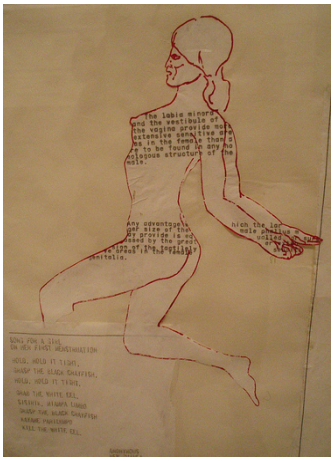


Fig. 1.12. Detail from Spero, *Notes in Time on Women.*

Yvonne Rainer's *Film about a Woman Who . . .* (1974), with her use of overlaid typed text, is an illustrative cinematic manifestation of this version of the mixed-medial approach (figures 1.13 and 1.14).



Fig. 1.13. *Film about a Woman Who . . .*: thinking? saying? illustrating?

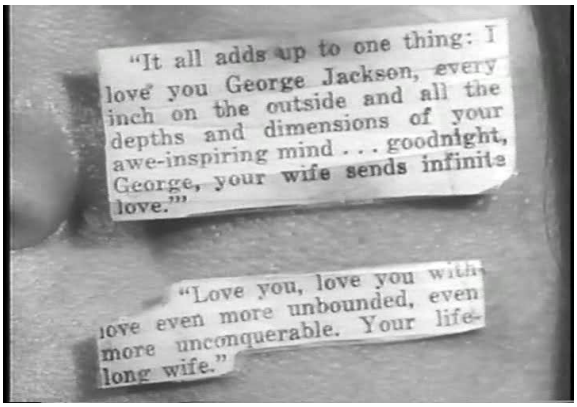


Fig. 1.14. *Film about a Woman Who . . .*: a verbal close-up.

In the fourth mode—*intermediality*—word and image completely lose their coherence and distinctiveness as separate entities (Hoek, "Image" 24) and together constitute a visually inseparable whole. Such a verbal-visual amalgam, a syncretic fusion, is manifested in typography, calligraphy, iconic alphabets, collages, and visual poetry (Hoek, "Timbres-poste" 36-37). This interaction is probably best summarized by Hugo Ball's statement, "The word and the image are one," although he wrote specifically about two arts—painting and poetry (66). As Morley notes, this mode is a good reminder that writing and image-making stem from common roots and employ similar instruments (13). Intermediality clashes headlong with a major principle that governed Western painting between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries, identified by Michel Foucault as "the separation between plastic representation (which implies resemblance) and linguistic reference (which excludes it)" (*This* 32).

It is hard to disagree with Foucault's nomination of Paul Klee, who interwove

shapes, lines, figures, and letters on a canvas-page, as the main demolisher of this principle in painting (*This* 33). The intermediality of Klee's approach is clearly illustrated, for instance, in *Villa R* (figure 1.15) and *Legende vom Nil* [*Legends of the Nile*] (figure 1.16). Inspired by Cubism's play with word fragments and Guillaume Apollinaire's visual poems, Klee experimented with presenting letters of the alphabet as abstract pictorial forms. For instance, Klee appropriated the letter *X* from the latticed scaffolding of Eiffel Tower in Robert Delaunay's paintings to employ it in his own *Inner Architecture* (1914) in no fewer than ten variations, all of which suggest but do not describe structural support (Aichele 113).



Fig. 1.15. Klee, *Villa R* (1919).



Fig. 1.16. Klee, *Legende vom Nil* (1937).

An intermedial treatment of words and images was also picked up by filmmakers, mostly in the second half of the twentieth century. The temporal dimension enabled Takahiko Iimura to create in *White Calligraphy* (1967) dancing images out of the first pages of the *Kojiki*, which, according to Basil Hall Chamberlain, is “the most important monument” of Japanese literature featuring “the mythology, the manners, the language, and the traditional history of Ancient Japan” (i). The Kanji characters, scratched into the

emulsion a symbol per frame (figure 1.17), reveal their painterly properties while moving in time (Möller 32) and spelling out history in white on black. In Peter Rose's "esoteric film" *SpiritMatters* (1984), the intermediality of the "monologue on the simultaneous perception of space and time," as Rose describes it, is based on two visual versions of the same text: the primary version was written directly on clear celluloid, after which the secondary version was refilmed as strips of celluloid on a light table ("SpiritMatters"). The originary inscription, rotated ninety degrees, is perceived as if moving vertically, creating various shapes and color patches superimposed over the stable secondary text, which Rose calls "subtitles" (figure 1.18).

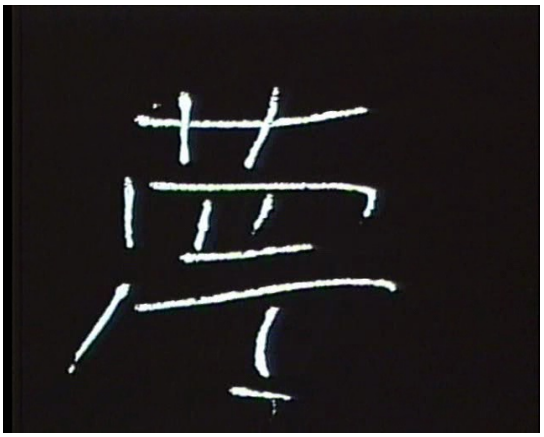


Fig. 1.17. *White Calligraphy*: *Kojiki* moving in time.

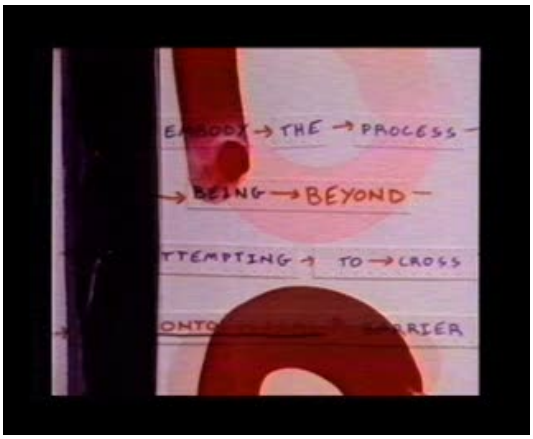


Fig. 1.18. *SpiritMatters*: the intermediality of two versions of the same text.

FILM AND POETRY: INFLUENCES AND COLLABORATIONS

The verbal and the visual often "became one" in the realm of poetry. Before the term *concrete poetry* was invented in the 1950s,[20] Apollinaire's "lyrical ideograms," or

[20] For descriptions and samples, see Clüver, "On Representation"; D. Higgins; Jackson et al.; Kac; and Solt. For conceptual differences between concrete and visual poetry, see Dencker.

"calligrams,"[21] challenged the eye with an intermedial fusion of script, image contouring, lines, and spacing, forcing the reader-viewer "to accept a global view of the written word" (Heller, *Design* 9) (figure 1.19). Such a suturing of the verbal and the visual brilliantly illustrates that "the medium of *writing* deconstructs the possibility of a pure image or pure text" (W. J. T. Mitchell 95). Throughout the ages, the triple role of a calligram, as pointed out by Foucault, has been to "augment the alphabet, to repeat something without the aid of rhetoric, to trap things in a double cipher" (*This* 20). Thus, the calligram aspires to efface the long-standing oppositions of the "alphabetical civilization"—to show and to name, to look and to read, to imitate and to signify (21).

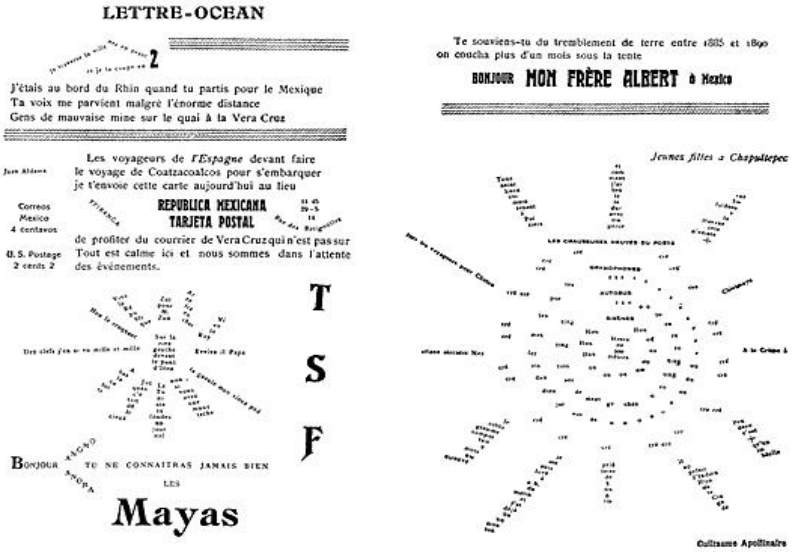


Fig. 1.19. Apollinaire, "Lettre-Océan" 'Ocean-Letter' (1914).

Visual poetry was not invented by Apollinaire: shaped poetry, *technopaegnia* (figure 1.20), dates at least as far back as the Hellenistic antiquity (Fantuzzi and

[21] The terms were used by Apollinaire himself and have been adopted by critics. For a detailed treatment of Apollinaire's work as a whole, see, for example, two books by Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928* and *Modern Visual Poetry*. A fascinating analysis of the word-image interaction in "La cravate et la montre" 'The Tie and the Watch' (1914) is presented in Gahl.

Hunter 40). A hybrid of verses and painting was popular, for example, in medieval manuscript miniatures, as in "Centaur," a Latin translation of a poem by the Greek astronomer Aratus of Soli, which is part of a Carolingian manuscript held in the British Museum (Schapiro 147) (figure 1.21). Yet, as Willard Bohn contends, Apollinaire introduced two major innovations into the texture of visual poetry: visually, photographic reproductions of calligrams written in the poet's own hand added plasticity and facilitated intimacy between the poet and the reader; linguistically, instead of a traditional utilization of individual verses as building blocks, Apollinaire consistently employed phrases, words, and letters to create figurative poetry, forcing the reader to decode the interplay of verbal and visual signs in an attempt to recreate the signification structures of the text (*Aesthetics* 50).

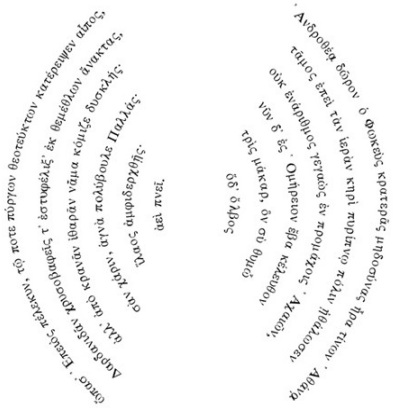


Fig. 1.20. Simias of Rhodes, "The Axe" (ca. 300 BC).



Fig. 1.21. Aratus of Soli, "Centaur," translated into Latin (ca. 9th century AD).

Apollinaire's was the spirit of challenge and change, and his synthesizing and defamiliarizing approach to image and text made him an ideal advocate for an art of experimentation, for which cinema held a great potential. Although Apollinaire did not live long enough to complete a film of his own, he published what P. Adams Sitney calls "an early parable—possibly the first—of filmmaking" as "Un beau film" in the journal

Messidor on 23 December 1907 (“Image” 98). Apollinaire's speech at Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier on 26 November 1917 encouraged his fellow poets to invest into producing a synthetic film form that would bring together fragments of a constantly changing world (Abel, *French Film Theory* 1: 113).

In Europe, “the meshing of film and poetry into an embodied medium” (McCabe 8) did not, however, revolve around word-image interplay; nor did it grow into embodiments of intermediality with a temporal dimension. Instead, artists relied on and invented philosophical and visual concepts that could underlie and permeate both modern poetry and film. Jean Epstein's *lyrosophie*, Walter Ruttmann's cinematographic poems, Germaine Dulac's debt to Symbolist and Decadent poets in emphasizing mental states (McCabe 8), Emile Vuillermoz's call for a visual and rhythmic equivalent of Apollinaire's *simultanéism* in poetry (Abel, *French Film Theory* 1: 114) were just a few manifestations of the interconnectedness of poetry and film that did not heavily rely on the direct inclusion of words into the shots. For instance, in *Emak bakia* (1926), dubbed *cinépoème* (figure 1.22), Man Ray creates a visual poem through revolving, repeated, and deformative movements, including that of legible neon signs. As Inez Hedges reminds us, *Emak bakia* is an extension of Man Ray's first, Dada, film *Le retour à la raison* [*Return to Reason*] (1923). The earlier film is also not indifferent to poetry: it incorporates a brief shot of a “poem” (100), where words are replaced by black bars, different in length and arranged in lines and stanzas (figure 1.23).



Fig. 1.22. *Emak bakia*: the genre *cinépoème* superimposed over the title.

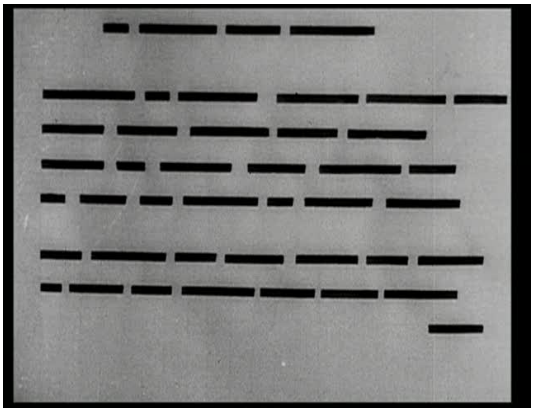


Fig. 1.23. *Le retour à la raison*: a wordless poem.

Man Ray's Dadaist experiment[22] with a wordless poem inserted into a *cinépoème* predates an interest among Conceptual artists in creating "wordless word paintings" (Marshall 162), exemplified by Ed Ruscha's paintings from the 1990s (figure 1.24), or color-coded word puzzles, as in Komar and Melamid's *Codes series* (1974). The latter's Pointillist quote from the Soviet Constitution about the freedom of speech, press, and assembly (figure 1.25), set next to a table that matches a circle of each color with a letter from the Russian alphabet (Zinik 79), is an "ideological abstraction," as the artists call it on their website (Komar and Melamid), and an ingenious mockery of the freedoms encoded but not practiced, of the words hollowed out.

[22] Sitney provides a fascinating theoretical comparison between Man Ray's experimentations with the rayograph, which demonstrated that the essential material element was the photosensitive surface and that the camera was not necessary in producing photographic images, and German Dadaists' beliefs that the foundational elements of poetry were sounds and letters rather than words ("Image" 100).

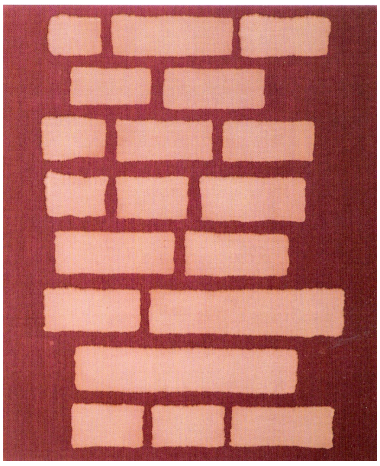


Fig. 1.24. Ruscha, *I Might Just Act Ugly If You Get Up on That Stand and Say Something Unpleasant to My Ears* (1997).

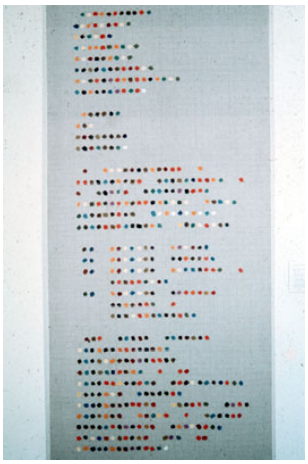


Fig. 1.25. Komar and Melamid, *Soviet Constitution, Freedom of Speech Chapter* (from *Codes series*, 1974).

Cine-poems based on poetic arrangements of visual signs, often with musical scores created to accompany the projection, were more common in the Europe of the teens and twenties than films structured around verbal poems, which were not unusual in the United States in the first quarter of the century. The interchange between poets and filmmakers took other forms as well, as literal collaborations and aesthetic influences. For instance, e.e. cummings, a poet-painter, contributed to the shooting script for *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1928) by Melville Webber and James Sibley Watson, Jr. The film was made under the influence of Ezra Pound's Vorticism and "his use of science as a model for poetic language and production in general" (Cartwright 156, 171). Pound's scientific-analytical propensity appealed to later avant-garde filmmakers as well. Frampton, who integrated mathematical concepts into his films, most notably in *Zorns Lemma* (1970), admired Pound's "unlearning" his art after ten years of learning it:

> Since the learning, the understanding of an art consists in the recovery of its axiomatic substructure, we can begin to say that the 'unlearning' that Pound cites as indispensable to new creation, consists in the excernment,

> castigation, and transvaluation of that axiomatic substructure. New composition, then, may be seen as an activity synonymous, if not coterminous, with the radical reconstitution of the embedding code. (*On the Camera Arts* 150)

A rethinking of the axiomatic substructure, or "unlearning," is related to what Yury Lotman calls *minus-devices* [*минус-приемы*]: intentional rejections of conventional features imposed by the dominant aesthetic system. In discussing the structure of a poetic text, Lotman draws a parallel with contemporary molecular physics, which views the concept of a *hole* as the absence of matter in a structural position that implies its presence and can be measured in negative terms. Thus, for instance, the absence of rhyme where it is expected should be treated as a presence of "minus-rhyme" and be assigned a special significance in the text (*Struktura* 101-11).[23] Minus-devices can work on various levels that range from a rejection of the conventional narrative codes of the Hollywood cinema by avant-garde filmmakers to an intentionally omitted letter in a word. For example, in William Burford's concrete poem "A Christmas Tree," appropriately shaped as a Christmas tree, the two narrowest parts of the tree—the top of the crown and the bottom of the stem—are formed by the words *Star* and *Huddld* respectively. The poem is a communal apostrophe to the *Star*, and *Huddld* symbolizes the unifying power of prayer.

Lotman's concept of *minus-devices* echoes the characteristics of "silence" in the

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[23] For an English translation of *Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta* [*Структура художественного текста*], first published in Russian in 1970, see Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literature at the U of Michigan, 1977). Lotman reinforced his concept of *minus-devices* in *Analiz poeticheskogo teksta* [*Анализ поэтического текста*] (1972), which appeared in English as Yury Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*. Trans. Barton Johnson (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1976).

verbal and visual arts. As Susan Sontag writes, "'Silence' never ceases to imply its opposite and to depend on its presence. . . . Not only does silence exist in the world full of speech and other sounds, but any given silence has its identity as a stretch of time being perforated by sound" (11). Silence in a work of art is often used in the mode of shock therapy, even and especially in the verbal medium. Thus, Sontag explains that Mallarmé used words to "clean up our word-clogged reality—by creating silences around things" (23). Barthes echoes the sentiment in *Writing Degree Zero*:

> Mallarmé's typographical agraphia seeks to create around rarefied words an empty zone in which speech, liberated from its guilty social overtones, may, by some happy contrivance, no longer reverberate. The word, dissociated from the husk of habitual clichés, and from the technical reflexes of the writer, is then freed from responsibility in relation to all possible context. . . . (75)

In a way, silence in Mallarmé is achieved through creating an un-verbal text, an image of empty space where traditionally verse lines should have been (figure 1.26).

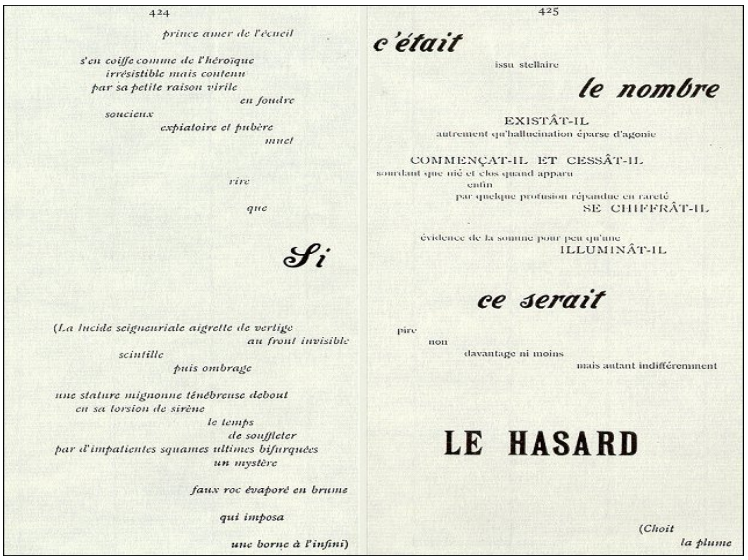


Fig. 1.26. Two pages from Mallarmé, "Un coup de dés."

With his refusal to maintain the conventional structuring and layout of poetry, Mallarmé is revered for inaugurating an era of typographic experimentation, which witnessed a proliferation of intermediality on an unprecedented scale in different media. Curiously, as Christophe Wall-Romana convincingly speculates, Mallarmé's "new topology for text and images" in "Un coup de dés" may have been influenced by pre-cinematic and early cinema developments:

> Cinema may have evoked for Mallarmé a potential integration of the artwork with sensorial experience and performance, across page (2-D), folio (3-D), and reading time (4-D). In his single reference to cinema, Mallarmé characterized this principle of integration as "déroulement"—unfolding, uncoiling, unreeling, or unscrolling. . . . (130)

Whatever the aesthetic precursors may have been to achieving the effect of multi-dimensionality, Mallarmé's visual scoring of the page with the help of different sizes and fonts not only distinguished his poetic language from the existing literary forms and from the quotidian use of language in the press (Drucker 51) but also enabled him to "separate the text into several registers, to link elements of the work throughout the entire sequence, across pages, gutters, and spaces, and to make figures or ideogrammatic constellations of words upon the page" (53). In his work, the visual stability of the vertical forms of the roman type is contrasted with the dynamism of the italics. Visual clues allow phrases stretched across pages to be read intact, although syntactic closures are suspended. Overall, Mallarmé's figuration is connected to presentation rather than representation: it brings something into being in the process of making it rather than describes an already extant something (53-59). Such meaning-making features of

typography will also be explored and exploited in modernist drama in print[24] and by experimental filmmakers, especially in the intertitles of the silent era and the language-based films of the post-World-War-II avant-garde.

TYPOGRAPHIC EXPERIMENTATION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, typographic experimentation fascinated representatives of many *-isms,* who explored the intermedial avenues of making an artistic statement and analyzed the materiality and subjectivity of language and image as social codes. For example, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti advocated words-in-freedom not tied by the wires of syntax ("wireless telegraphy") in his Futurist manifesto *L'immaginazione senza fili e le parole in libertà*, issued in 1913 (Bohn, *Aesthetics* 15). Marinetti called for the use of different-colored inks and various typographical characters —"italic for a series of similar, quick sensations, bold for violent onomatopoeia" (qtd. in Petrucci 100)—to launch a verbal-visual assault on Europe in order to awaken it from its old-age slumber, as he strives to achieve in his book *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (1919) (figure 1.27). In Wyndham Lewis's Vorticist manifestos, "violent typography . . . is the model of the shout" (Caws, *Manifesto* xx), enabling the creator to blast away the old conventions and to introduce volume and range into the muteness of the page (figure 1.28), a strategy that will be appropriated by makers of silent films.

[24] See an insightful study of the geography of the page in drama in Worthen.

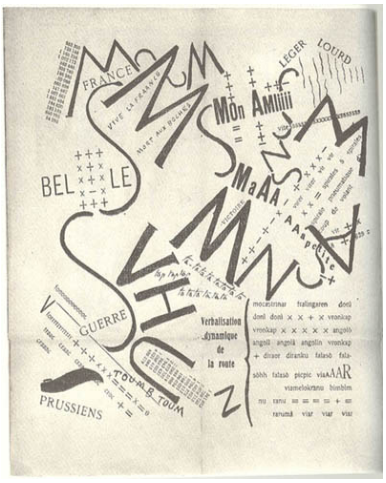


Fig. 1.27. From Marinetti, *Les mots en liberté futuristes*.

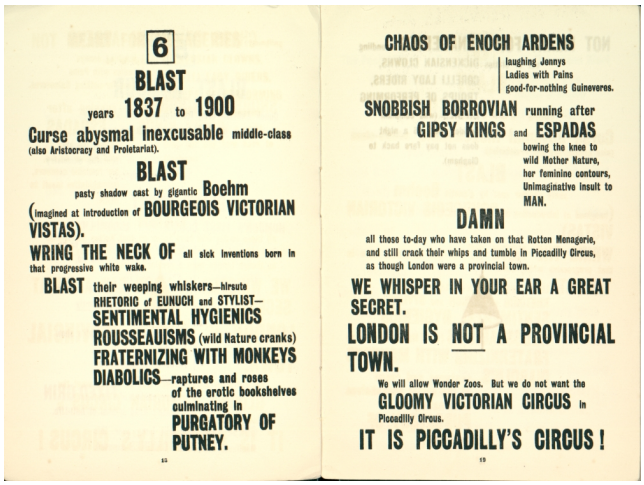


Fig. 1.28. Two pages from Lewis's magazine *BLAST* (1914).

Many other artists in the teens and twenties invested in typographic experimentation,[25] but nowhere did the intermediality of the print fuse so tightly with aesthetic philosophy and ideology as in pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. Futurists of different brands made the word their cornerstone, yet the properties of *word* as a concept were identified and treated in a multitude of ways. As Anna Lawton summarizes, the Cubo-Futurists' point of departure was the "return to the origins of language" (Introduction 18), and the poetic word was regarded as an object in itself with no fixed referent attached to it (13).

Proclaiming in his "Declaration of the Word as Such" (1913) that artists should be free to express themselves in a language that is not bound by any definite meaning, Alexey Kruchyonykh[26] laid the foundation for the theory of *zaum'* [*заумь*] (67), most

[25] See, for example, a visual overview of pioneers of modern typography in Spencer. Tristan Tzara's interest in the typography of advertising is discussed in detail in Drucker 193-215. El Lissitzky's innovations in graphic art and László Moholy-Nagy's new typography are analyzed in Margolin.

[26] The name was transliterated as *Aleksei Kruchenykh* in Lawton and Eagle's anthology *Words in Revolution* and is spelled as such in the citations.

often translated as *transreason* or *transrational language*. Typography was an essential component of crafting in such a language: instead of employing common letter-brands, "lined up in a row, humiliated, with cropped hair, and all equally colorless, gray," wordwrights should favor words "written in individual longhand or composed with a particular typeface" (Khlebnikov and Kruchenykh 63). Velimir Khlebnikov's *zaum'* revolved around morphemes, newly created and extant, which formed fresh words and phrases by attaching to or severing themselves from other units. His was a mystical interest in revealing the order of the universe, where morphemic units were reflections of universal qualities (Drucker 171). Driven to create his version of *zaum'* as an expressive language that would appeal to the psyche directly, without the props of the routine language practices, Ilya Zdanevich, who published in Germany and France as Iliazd, insisted that the primary attention should be given to sounds, which lead to the world of instincts and intuition (Drucker 172-74).[27]

In his dramatic plays called *dras*, Zdanenich elaborated a system of phonetic transcriptions to ensure the correct pronunciation of the transrational words (Lawton, Introduction 37) and defied linear reading by making the reader create "words" and "phrases" diagonally, vertically, in a circular fashion, and by navigating through spaces (figures 1.29 and 1.30). Zdanevich's embrace of the material qualities of sound and letter-image reflected his belief in *zaum'* as the thing itself, not its representation or symbolism: ". . . language is not a lie, not a mirror, not a phantom without force, it is complete power" (qtd. in Drucker 189). Zdanevich's understanding of the power of

[27] Eisenstein spoke about the relevance of *zaum* to his *October* (1927) and *The General Line* (1929) (*Selected Works. Volume I* 102, 105).

language was different from viewing language as a vehicle through which an ideology promotes its strategies of containment[28] and dominant narratives impose order. Yet the challenge of *zaum'* to deeply-embedded traditions and its ability to escape the bonds of definitive interpretation echo the advantages of silence that its proponents postulated in the postmodern era.

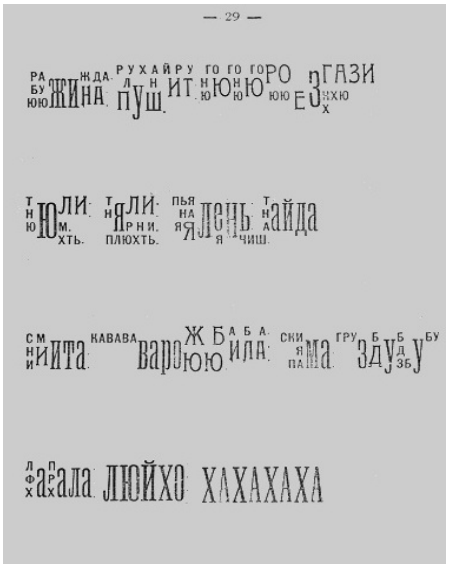


Fig. 1.29. From Zdanevich, *Ostraf Paskhi* [*Easter Iland*][29] (1919).



Fig. 1.30. From Iliazd, *lidantiU fAram* (1923).

Both Kruchyonykh and Zdanevich heavily engaged with the notion of *sdvig* [*сдвиг*]—shift or dislocation of an accepted norm. Kruchyonykh claimed that poets who intentionally disrupt the aesthetic conventions operate within the realm of *zaum'*, whereas shifts achieved in slips of the tongue or in word combinations that, through phonetic

[28] For an analytical investigation of strategies of containment, see Jameson, *Political Unconscious*.

[29] The word *island* in Russian is spelled *остров*, transliterated into English as *ostrov*. In *Ostraf Paskhi*, Zdanevich spells the word the way it is pronounced, which has influenced my translation—*Easter Iland*. Similar strategies of translating Russian titles that incorporate non-existent or intentionally misspelled words are employed throughout this chapter.

splicing, could randomly create unwanted words do not belong to art (Lawton, Introduction 38). Zdanevich defined *sdvig* as "displacing a part of the verbal mass into another position. *Sdvig* can be etymologic, syntactic, phonetic, morphologic, or orthographic, etc." (qtd. in Drucker 175). Such shifts highlighted sound, rhythmic, and other structural properties of language and evoked emotional responses, with an emphasis on the sexual or ridiculous, but as Johanna Drucker points out, the dislocations of Kruchyonykh and Zdanevich did not have the social significance of alienation, articulated in Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* [*остранение*] (175). Both theories—shiftology and defamiliarization—were manifestations of ideas and practices permeating the early twentieth-century art and were witnesses to close, yet continuously shifting, artistic partnerships and societies of the period.

In the post-revolutionary Russian empire, words and images often interacted in joint publications. Kruchyonykh and Zdanevich were active members of Company 41°, which in 1919 officially cemented the long-existing creative ties in Tiflis,[30] a bustling artistic center in the Caucasus (Lawton, Introduction 35). Kruchyonykh's poems in print were often interlaced with pictorial images created by Kirill Zdanevich, Iliazd's brother, as, for example, *Uchites' khudogi* [*Learn, Arters*] (1917) (figure 1.31). It was not unusual for 41° to publish a book with contributions from three and more members and associates of the group, as is evident from the Museum of Modern Art Collection in New York, which contains, among others, *Rekord nezhnosti: zhitie Ilyi Zdanevicha* [*Record of Tenderness: Hagiography of Ilya Zdanevich*] (1919), created by Igor Terentiev, Ilya Zdanevich, and Kirill Zdanevich (figure 1.32).

[30] Tiflis is now Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia.

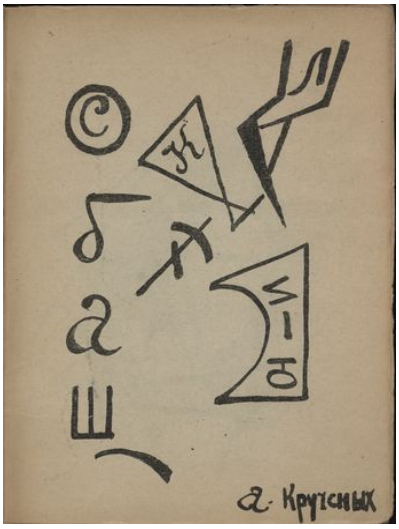


Fig. 1.31. From Alexey Kruchyonykh and Kirill Zdanevich, *Learn, Arters*.

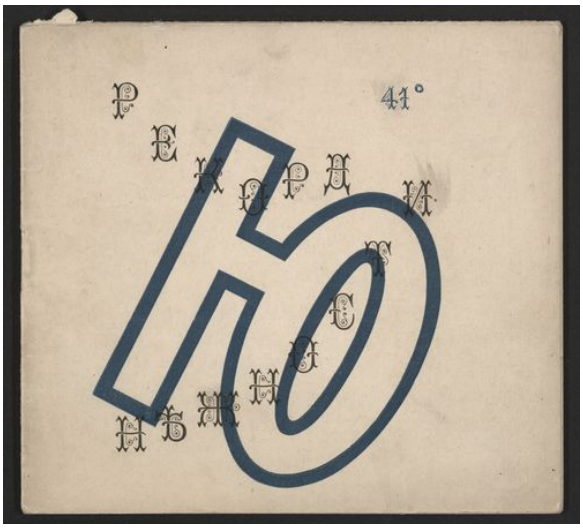


Fig. 1.32. Igor Terentiev, Ilya Zdanevich, and Kirill Zdanevich, *Record of Tenderness: Hagiography of Ilya Zdanevich*: the cover.

The most famous collaborative avant-garde enterprise in Bolshevik Russia—the Left Front of the Arts, abbreviated as "Lef"—was also the one officially approved by the new government. Trying to counter the influence of countless private publishing houses permitted during the New Economic Policy, the officials enlisted the help of Futurists and their associates who were sympathetic to Communist ideology.[31] It was a mixed blessing for the artists: they received nominal support but became subject to the editorial control of *Gosizdat*, the state publishing house, which was not interested in the avant-garde. From the appearance of the first issue of *Lef* in March 1923 until its demise in 1925, the contributors' main goal was to justify verbal experiments as essential to creating a new language for the new society, although other arts and modes of thought were represented as well—among others, by Isaak Babel, Sergei Eisenstein, Alexander Rodchenko, Viktor Shklovsky, Dziga Vertov (Lawton, Introduction 42-46), the names who were and would

[31] The politics and aesthetics of *Lef* and, later, *New Lef* are discussed in great detail in Stephan.

be directly involved in the creation of films. Insisting that artistic and social change is intertwined, Lef strove to create new people of the new order (Margolin 105). Ironically, their productions alienated the targeted working class masses, who were far less intellectually and aesthetically sophisticated. It is mainly due to the popularity of Vladimir Mayakovsky, who drew huge crowds, that Lef was able to survive until the end of the 1920s (Lawton, Introduction 43).

Mayakovsky, one of the authors of the notorious manifesto *Slap in the Face of Public Taste* (1912), broke up the standard verse line to expose the complex internal rhymes and to vary the rhythmic patterns and graphic layouts of his poems, relying on the word-as-image and the word-as-object (Stapanian 13). Vertov declared in the 1930s that Mayakovsky's art, similarly to folk art, strikes one as epitomizing "the unity of form and content" (*Kino-Eye* 183). Mayakovsky's strong interest in urban topography and signboard art (Stapanian 104) coupled with his initial enthusiastic support for the new order established him as a major contributor to ROSTA Windows before his joining Lef. The aim of The Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA), founded in 1918, was to bring news to the masses and to propagate the party line along the way. The headlines of the day were transformed into graphically appealing wall posters, which often consisted of four to twelve different frames that told the story and often satirized the enemies of the new state in the manner of *lubok*, a traditional style of folk prints. The ROSTA Windows appealed to the working people, who could hardly read but who could easily make sense of the pictures coupled with easy-to-remember slogans or short verses (figure 1.33). Since ROSTA posters were easily duplicable by stencil, they became a familiar and popular sight in the street iconography of the forty-seven cities where artists and poets

joined the project (Bonnell 199). The accessible multimediality of such posters became an inspiration for filmmakers as well. Thus, *Dekabryukhov i Oktyabryukhov* [*Dekabryukhov and Oktyabryukhov*] (A. Smirnov and O. Iskander, 1928), based on Mayakovsky's scenario, integrates sequences of multimedial animation reminiscent of ROSTA posters (figure 1.34).[32]



Fig. 1.33. Mayakovsky, *Nedelia profdvizheniia. Krepite profsoiuzy!* [*Trade Unions' Movement Week. Make Trade Unions Stronger!*] (1921).



Fig. 1.34. *Dekabryukhov and Oktyabryukhov*: ROSTA Windows on film.

Mayakovsky's books of poetry were also created in collaboration with avant-garde artists-designers of the era. The year 1923, for instance, witnessed a publication of two remarkable works of print art: *Pro eto* [*About It*] and *Dlia golosa* [*For the Voice*]. *About It*, an intensely personal account of Mayakovsky's relationship with Lilya Brik, disguised as an exposure of the complacent way of life during the New Economic Policy, gave Rodchenko an opportunity to enhance the visuality of the printed book with the

[32] The ending of *Dekabryukhov and Oktyabryukhov* is now lost. For discussions of Mayakovsky's contribution to cinema, see, for example, M. Burke; E. Henderson.

theatricality of photomontages (Margolin 106-07). Rodchenko's cross-media talents were well suited for the new age of aesthetic presentation. He invented a declamatory visual rhetoric for the covers of *Lef* and other magazines (e.g., *Kino-fot* [*Cinema-Photo*] and *Radio slushatel'* [*Radio Listener*]) and books. As Victor Margolin describes, "Rodchenko achieved the poster-like effect through balancing the bold forms of the title lettering and rules against additional text and images," using large hand-drawn letters in two contrasting colors against a light background (106) (figure 1.35). In a similar manner, Rodchenko approached titling in film when working with Vertov for the *Kino-pravda* [*Cine-Truth*] series in the 1920s (figure 1.36).[33]



Fig. 1.35. *Let: Avio-stikhi* [*Fli: Avia-Poems*]: the cover by Rodchenko.



Fig. 1.36. *Kino-pravda 7*: "shopwindows" and "streets."

In *For the Voice*, which included thirteen poems by Mayakovsky, El Lissitzky's Constructivist layout and illustrations made solely "with elements found in a letterpress

[33] For brief discussions of intertitles in Vertov's *Kino-pravda*, see, for example Lavrentiev 76-81; Margolin 103-05; and Tsivian, "*Man*" 87-88.

printer's typecase—wood and metal types; rules, bars, and bullets; a few dingbats; and one old engraved image of an imperial eagle" (Meggs 214)—have a double function of being optical phenomena and communicative signs. Each poem has a unique typographic identity, and the whole book is constructed as an architecturally designed totality with symbolic interpretations of the texts and with synesthetic effects (214-21), a true exercise in intermediality (figures 1.37 and 1.38).



Fig. 1.37. *For the Voice*: the cover.

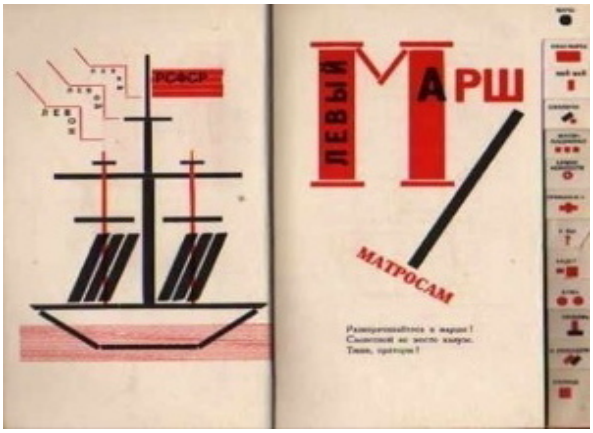


Fig. 1.38. *For the Voice*: pages 6-7.

Both Rodchenko and Lissitzky experimented with photographic design and its potentialities of inclusion into hetero-spaces of representation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, photography was embraced as lacking history (Morley 75), and in post-revolutionary Russia, photography was a perfect vehicle for the needs of the new order. Designing the issue of the *USSR in Construction* journal devoted to *Dneprostroi* (construction of the Dnieper dam and hydroelectric station), Lissitzky strove to integrate documentary photography, typographical devices, and a required amount of text in the form of quotes, titles, notebook pages, and other verbal inserts into a visually flowing whole, which was indicative of his interest in film as a narrative medium ideally suited for the new era (Margolin 171-75).

WORD-IMAGE INTERPLAY IN PHOTOGRAPHY

The variations of word and image interplay are perhaps most similar in photography and film. The most obvious parallel is the verbal intrusion of captions into photography and of intertitles/subtitles into film images. Barthes notes a historical reversal in the word-image relationship as displayed in photography: the image no longer illustrates the text; instead, the word is "parasitic on the image" (*Image* 25). Although many purist image-makers would certainly agree with such a definition of the word's role, Barthes's further observation about the contemporary state of affairs is more in line with the aims of the current project: "Formerly, there was reduction from text to image; today, there is amplification from the one to the other" (*Image* 26). This expansion of signification is often coupled with an acquisition of a connotative value.

Barthes discusses three types of connotation encountered in viewing a photograph: perceptive, cognitive, and ideological. As he claims, a photograph is perceived only when verbalized through an inner metalanguage, which connotes reality by categorizing it, thus giving rise to perceptive connotation. Cognitive connotation comes into play when one draws on the knowledge of the world—cultural, historical, or any other—when viewing a photograph. Ideological or ethical connotation introduces values and judgments into the reading of the image (*Image* 28-29). Whereas "perceptive connotation" is too obscurely defined to be of use in the analysis of the types of connotation that emerge through word-image interplay in photography, the other two types—cognitive and ideological—are quite applicable, albeit not sufficient. I suggest adding several other types—intertextual, evaluative, mixed-medial, emotive, and contextual—with a caveat that in many instances these types overlap.

Cognitive connotation may arise in seemingly simple cases of multimediality in captioned photographs. As Jefferson Hunter explains, a photograph's "entanglement with actuality" invites written text to specify the location in time and space and individual identity (6), which is prevalent in press photography and is frequent in photography exhibits. When the caption accepts this invitation, the denotation of the visual information is doubled via a verbal code. However, the interplay of the supplementary text and the photographic image can become historically and culturally inflected. Thus, for instance, an uncaptioned photograph of Manhattan might be perceived by a Manhattanite more neutrally than the same photograph with a caption that reads "New York City. September 10, 2001" because the latter will bring back the memories of the day after. The intensity of the connotative value will undoubtedly depend on the viewer's cognitive and experiential background.

Intertextual connotation also depends on the knowledge of the viewer, but it is intellectual knowledge more than historical or cultural signifiers that comes into play. A viewer is invited to speculate on the interaction of quotes and allusions, visual or verbal, with their verbal or visual counterparts. In Laurence Stallings's photo compilation *The First World War: A Photographic History* (1933), where the war veteran conveys the disillusionment of his embittered generation,[34] the photograph of German amputees sitting next to a swimming pool is captioned "A place in the sun." The phrase is so common now that only a few are aware that it became widely known only at the cusp of the twentieth century when it referred to Germany's political aspirations for more land and influence (Ammer 502). The intertextual irony of the phrase that accompanies the

[34] The ironies of the word-image interplay in Stallings are discussed in Hunter 19-21.

photograph is revealed fully only when one remembers the speech of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany delivered on 18 June 1901 in Hamburg:

> In spite of the fact that we have no such fleet as we should have, we have conquered for ourselves a place in the sun. It will now be my task to see to it that this place in the sun shall remain our undisputed possession, in order that the sun's rays may fall fruitfully upon our activity and trade in foreign parts, . . . for our future lies upon the water. The more Germans go out upon the waters, whether it be in races or regattas, whether it be in journeys across the ocean, or in the service of the battle flag, so much the better it will be for us. (qtd. in Gauss 181-82)

The amputees at a swimming pool grow into a symbol of Germany's future on the water through a seemingly innocuous phrase "a place in the sun."

The ideological value of captioned photographs has been widely recognized. In the first years of the new Soviet republic, Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin called for the use of photography with appropriate subtitles for propaganda purposes (Kenez 39). As historical evidence, photographs acquire a "hidden political significance," which may be enhanced by captions that give directives to the onlookers (Benjamin 27). The text thus "loads the image" (Barthes, *Image* 26) with an ideological message, which may be blatantly obvious or subtle. The same photograph captioned differently can easily serve the ideological needs of opposing parties: for instance, a photograph of a bombed city in ruins can be accompanied by a call for revenge on the perpetrator or for further steps to cement the victory. One political entity can also manipulate the same image by attaching to it a different text at different historical periods or when addressing different audiences.

Ideology is closely connected to the evaluation of a situation, yet evaluative connotation in this classification refers to passing a judgment, moral or aesthetic, on what is captured in the photographic image. Questions can also be used to imply or call for evaluation. This connotative function was especially popular in the moralizing intertitles of the silent era.

Non-evaluative descriptions of state and appearance can also acquire connotative value in mixed-medial juxtapositions via a direct contradiction between the word and the image, understatement, or exaggeration. An example of mixed-medial connotation achieved through understatement would be captioning a photograph of a shell-shocked officer with the sentence "He's disturbed in spirit."[35]

When a caption reflects the emotional state, either of the photographed or the photographer or both, the interaction between the word and the image, which would have been perceived more neutrally if alone, can acquire emotive connotation. In film, emotive connotation can also arise via juxtaposed images, without the use of intertitles, as was brilliantly illustrated through the famous Kuleshov effect: the audience attributed various emotions to the expressionlessly neutral face of an actor when it was intercut with various suggestive images. Kuleshov explains in "The Origins of Montage":

> The shot of Mosjoukin, always identical, was variously juxtaposed—now with a plate of soup, now with a prison gate, now with images suggesting erotic situation. I recall that there was also a montage with a child's coffin. In short, all sorts of combinations. Unhappily no stills or notes have been

[35] This captioned photo is part of Bertolt Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* [*War Primer*] (1955), as pointed out in Hunter 173.

preserved. (70)

The context provided by verbal text can also endow a captioned photograph with connotative value. As discussed by Adriana Baptista, the double title-caption ("Useless / Her father's nickname for her was '*useless*.'") that accompanies Tracey Moffat's photograph of a teenage girl washing a car extends the frames of the photograph by letting in the girl's past life, dominated by callous and sarcastic remarks made by her father. The girl's distant gaze, inflected by the caption, is now likely to be interpreted as suffering; her silence and the awkward immobility of her posture grow into a symbol of her life situation (264-65).

All the types of connotation arising from the word-image interplay in a captioned photograph illustrate the impossibility of assigning a single stable meaning to a photographic image, no matter how straightforward it may seem. The text serves to anchor and guide interpretation, frequently "constituting a kind of vice which holds the connoted meanings from proliferating" (Barthes, *Image* 39) but, on the other hand, sometimes giving rise to connotations that the viewer of the image could not have perceived otherwise. Not only the *studium*, the intended meaning of the photograph, can be manipulated via an inscription. The caption, if read first, can also determine what will become the *punctum*, the detail that grabs one's attention and remains in memory.[36]

The signification process is much more complex when a photograph becomes part of a photo-text.[37] The word-image interplay in a captioned photograph is augmented by

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[36] The terms *studium* and *punctum* are elaborated in Barthes, *Camera*.

[37] See Gidley for most recent analyses of word-image interaction in photographic anthologies and photo-texts.

its location in the collection and by the co-presence of other photographs and text: *radiant contextuality*[38] comes into play creating webs that connect words and images throughout the book. For instance, in *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937), captions, which indicate the location of the shot and provide a "quotation" by the central figure, link Margaret Bourke-White's photographs to Erskine Caldwell's essay and make the quoted sharecropper represent many other sharecroppers mentioned in the text, with the style of the language matching the style of the image (Hunter 73). In Brecht's *Kriegsfibel*, the intermingled visual and verbal codes work not only within each of the sixty-nine text-image composites (each "photo-epigram" is made of a newspaper photograph, sometimes with the original caption preserved, mounted on the black background and accompanied by Brecht's four-line poem) but also radiate to the title page, the dust jacket, the preface, the notes, and the translations of the captions if originally not in German. This "paratextual profusion" strives to teach the art of reading images, which, as Brecht indicates in the preface, is as difficult for an untrained reader as deciphering hieroglyphs (Long 198-207).

A film, perhaps, has the closest resemblance to a photo-book from the point of view of word-image interplay: although the art of the moving picture puts the image on the pedestal, it still draws on the expository and motivational power of the text. It is not a coincidence then that the creators of photo-texts resorted to parallels with filmmaking. The format of *Changing New York* (1939), according to Elizabeth McCausland, who supplied text for Berenice Abbott's photographs, was sought to simulate a documentary

[38] The coinage *radiant contextuality* borrows from McGann's notion of *radiant textuality*, articulated in *Radiant Textuality*, and from Bornstein's term *contextual code*, i.e., the placement of a poem within the collection (179).

film, where the commentary complements and accents the captured image. McCausland urged writers contributing to photo-books to create texts or captions as if they were scenarios and had a plot continuity (Hunter 87). Archibald MacLeish's *Land of the Free* (1938) refers to film directly in the photo-book itself: facing a photograph on the right-hand page, each left-hand page with a few lines of poetry has a blue horizontal line at the top, labeled "The Sound Track" at the very beginning of the book. Thus, the image and the text are to be perceived simultaneously, with the words functioning as voice-over commentary, overheard monologue, or conversation. The whole project becomes a photographic analogue of the newsreel series *March of Time* (Hunter 85), provocatively punctuated by the phrase "We don't know," located at six strategic points (Kaplan 32).[39]

Not all photo-texts embrace the sutured heterology of representation. Yet even photo-texts that preserve the autonomous nature of the image and text, most famously in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), make a statement about word-image interaction. By choosing to locate Walker Evans's uncaptioned photographs at the front of the book, even before the title page and physically separated from James Agee's text, which has few direct references to the photographs, the two contributors challenge the political and ethical conventions of the "hopelessly compromised and impure representational practice" of the photo-essay (W. J. T. Mitchell 94). As Agee explains in the preface, "a photographic and verbal record of the daily living and environment of an average white family of tenant farmers," guided by "individual, anti-authoritative human

[39] For a detailed analysis of the poetry-photography tandem in *Land of the Free*, see Kaplan 27-54. The photographs, taken under the sponsorship of the Farm Security Administration, were provided by Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, and Ben Shahn.

consciousness," is created with the help of two "immediate instruments": "the motionless camera, and the printed word" (Agee and Evans ix-x). He pointedly makes it clear that the "photographs are not illustrative. They, and the text, are coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative" (xi). Independence and collaboration are difficult to achieve simultaneously. However, such a purist approach to visual and verbal representation, as W. J. T. Mitchell argues, is governed by a collaborative rhetoric of resistance against "an effective surveillance and propaganda apparatus, one which creates easily manipulable images and narratives to support political agenda" (298). In the preamble, Agee is unequivocal about his attitude to "honest journalism":

> It seems to me curious, not to say obscene and thoroughly terrifying, that it could occur to an association of human beings drawn together through need and chance and for profit into a company, an organ of journalism, to pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings, an ignorant and helpless rural family, for the purposes of parading the nakedness, disadvantage and humiliation of these lives before another group of human beings, in the name of science, of "honest journalism" (whatever that paradox may mean), of humanity, of social fearlessness, for money, and for a reputation for crusading and for unbias which, when skillfully enough qualified, is exchangeable at any bank for money (and in politics, for votes, job patronage, abelincolnism, etc.). . . . (Agee and Evans 5)

Still, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* allows verbal signs to interact with images directly in the photographs themselves. Letters and writing enter most of the images in

the Birmingham section as advertisements, office signs, and inscriptions on the walls, reflecting the verbiage of the Depression era and sometimes highlighting the words' ironic incongruity with the environment. Thus, the elderly men do not seem to be very interested in the "Free dance" offer, and yet it may be the only entertainment available to them (figure 1.39). According to Judith Keller, throughout his career, Evans was fascinated with environmental signs as graphic elements, texts, and objects and collected them both physically and photographically (ix).[40] Evans's intense focus on the environmental writing reflected the times: the first half of the twentieth century in the United States witnessed an unprecedented proliferation of huge and small verbal signs in the streets and landscapes, created "with bold new alphabets, in lightbulbs, in neon, in smoke" (Codrescu 5).[41] In the photograph taken by Evans from the roof of a building (figure 1.40), the massive metal structure seems to balance on the electric advertisement below, as if signs had become the foundation of the city. In the twenties and thirties, urban signscapes appealed not only to photographers but to filmmakers as well, which is especially evident in silent actualities of city life.

[40] Frampton's similar fascination with urban signs will become the cornerstone of *Zorns Lemma*.

[41] See Codrescu for a thorough study of Evans's involvement with environmental signs.



Fig. 1.39. Evans, from *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.*

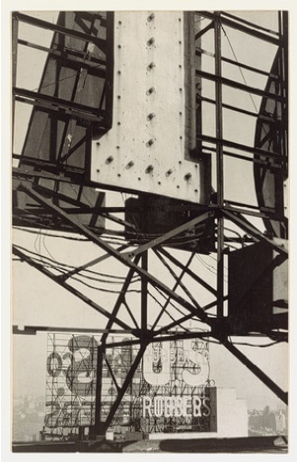


Fig. 1.40. Evans, *Signs, New York* (1928-30).

Incorporating words into photographic images can lead to a "documentary" clash pointing out the discrepancy between the promises and the actualities, propaganda and fact (Hunter 23). The deceptive nature of the language of politics and advertising is exposed when confronted with the brutal immediacy of images. Called by Hunter "the best known of antiword photographs" (25), Bourke-White's photograph (figure 1.41) shows a long line of unsmiling African Americans against the background of a huge billboard of a happy white family in a car with the domineering headline "WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING" and the hand-scripted slogan "There's no way like the American Way." The photograph, when viewed captioned, illustrates an amalgam of multimediality and mixed-mediality in the triad of image, incorporated word, and caption-title. The caption-title, which refers to the Louisville flood,[42] geographically anchors the image, acting as a descriptor (a case of multimediality); together with the visual picture, it mocks the verbal propagandizing of the billboard (a case of

[42] The photograph has been exhibited and published with various captions, among them "At the time of the Louisville flood," "Flood victims, Louisville, Kentucky, 1937," "Louisville flood victims," and "Bread line during the Louisville flood."

mixed-mediality). Such a combination of different medialities in one work is not uncommon (Hoek, “Timbres-poste” 36) and is most often achieved in sound film through the triad of image, screen word, and spoken word.



Fig. 1.41. Bourke-White, *At the Time of the Louisville Flood* (1935).

The similarities between word-image interplay in film and photography do not imply that these two arts are the same. The temporal dimension added in film is naturally a major differentiating criterion, the ramifications of which are multifaceted. Perhaps the most famous conceptual difference between photography and film is articulated by Metz, when he builds on Barthes's description of the photograph's quality as a presence that “has been there.” Metz argues that unlike still photography, where the place is present but the time is past, the cinema has greater projective power due to its narrative characteristic of “there it is” (5-6). This opposition is especially evident in postmodernity, as Mary Ann Doane maintains, following in the footsteps of Thomas Levin: the viewers have witnessed a shift “away from the discredited and anachronistic spatial indexicality of the photographic image (dislodged by the digital image) and toward temporal indexicality as a guarantee of the real” in film, where “time rather than space becomes the residence of

the real" (267). Additionally, movement in film and development of narrative made possible a stronger involvement of the viewers with character, which was very difficult to achieve in photography and painting and was much less intimated in theater (Cohen 9). The moving image thus engages in specific subtypes of mediality.

MEDIALITY IN FILM

Unlike most cases of multimedial and mixed-medial relations in painting and photography, where words and images create hetero-spaces perceived by the eye simultaneously, an interaction between intertitles and the adjacent visual shots in film extends the notion of "common space" in the direction of temporality.[43] The temporal nature of film calls for subdividing the categories of multimediality and mixed-mediality into several subtypes, which I will term *intraframe*, *contiguous*, and *radiant.*

Intraframe mediality in film corresponds to the descriptions and illustrations of multimediality and mixed-mediality in paintings and photographs provided earlier. *Contiguous mediality* comes into play when intertitles and integrated verbal elements complement or clash with visual images in the preceding or following shots. *Radiant mediality* is analogous to radiant contextuality, discussed earlier in reference to photo-books. Radiant contextuality, however, reflects a spatial dimension, whereas in film, webs of relations between words and images are created temporally. Because of temporal gaps, radiant mediality is often most difficult to perceive; filmmakers who want their audiences to recognize such dispersed connections resort to various devices of

[43] An attempt to include film in the taxonomy of word-image relations was made in Kibédi Varga, but it did not go further than subdividing verbal-visual objects that appear in a series into fixed and moving, the latter referring to cartoons and film.

highlighting the "entangled" words and images.

In Man Ray's *L'étoile de mer* (1928),[44] for instance, an explanation of the man's mysterious behavior can be first gleaned from a case of contiguous mixed-mediality—the famous transition from the phrase "Women's teeth are objects so charming . . ." to a shot of a woman's legs (figure 1.42). Such an interaction between an intertitle and an adjacent visual shot "generates a new level of signification, for the image of the woman's thighs, coupled with a mention of her teeth, brings into play the image of *vagina dentata*" (Sitney, "Image" 108). Several other cases of contiguous mixed-mediality, together with images that are not immediately juxtaposed with intertitles, contribute to the radiant mediality of "the dominant but invisible 'image' of the *vagina dentata*" (109).[45]



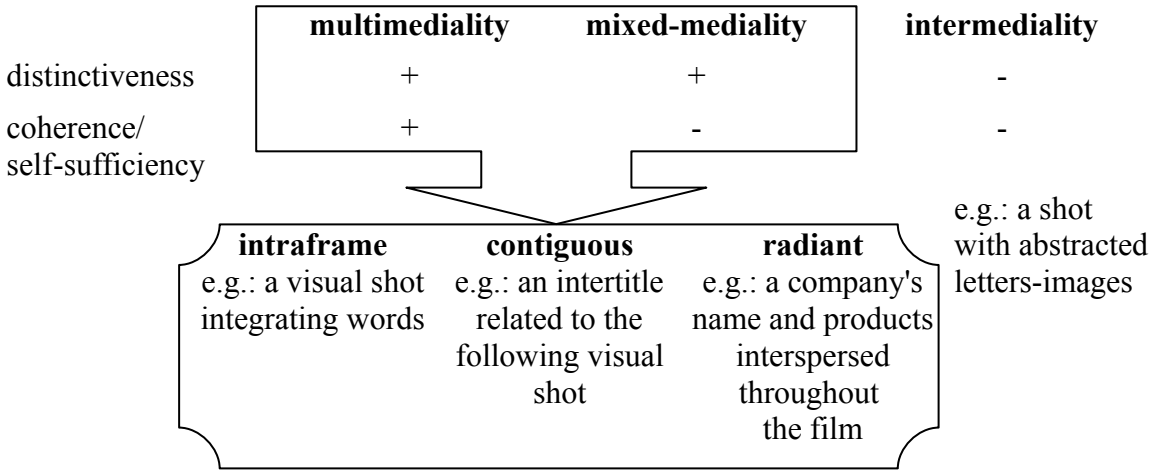
Fig. 1.42. *L'étoile de mer*: teeth versus legs and up.

[44] *L'étoile de mer* is often described as Man Ray's film adaptation of a poem by Desnos. Man Ray himself claimed that the film was based on Desnos's poem called "L'étoile de mer," which was eighteen to twenty lines long and contained all the images of the film (Sitney, "Image" 105). According to Hedges, however, the film does not draw on one poem. Rather, Desnos wrote a scenario, to which several intertitles were added later: these, if at all created by Desnos, do not belong to a single poem but evoke associations with different stages of his work or with the dominant poetic discourses of the period (103).

[45] Sitney's study of *L'étoile de mer* ("Image" 105-11) can serve as a model for an investigation of contiguous and radiant medialities, although of course he does not use these terms.

Now that all the subtypes of medialities have been introduced, a summarizing schema of types of verbal-visual relationships, which adapts Hoek's table ("Image" 24) to film, is in order. As a reminder, transmedial relations, which unite different works, are excluded from my classification. The arrow in the schema indicates that both multimediality and mixed-mediality can be intraframe, contiguous, and radiant:

Word-Image Relationship in Film



FILM AND THEATER: PARTNERS OR ENEMIES?

Like film, theatrical performances have a temporal dimension. It is not surprising that when film was struggling to define itself as an art, filmmakers and critics went out of their way to distance film from theater. At the very beginning of the twentieth century, the debates were perhaps most heated in France, where cinema was considered to be closely allied with theater and, thus, comparisons were unavoidable. Most art reviewers viewed cinema as a new form of theater, where the dramatist or the scenario writer was the real author. However, already in 1908, in his review of the first Film d'Art production, *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, Adolphe Brisson articulated a major aesthetic difference between cinema and theater: the distinctiveness of cinema was in the actor's performance

through gestures and movements, whereas theater was subordinated to words. Other French writers noted the prominence of camera framing in highlighting the actors' expressions through closer shots, which was impossible in the theater (Abel, *French Film Theory* 1: 19-20). Placing cinema midway between theater and photography, German-born Rudolph Arnheim pointed out that film takes greater liberties with space and time, whereas in theater any change has to be signaled by lowering the curtain or darkening the stage (29-30).[46]

Among Soviet critics and filmmakers, who were also writing and creating against the background of the close connections between theater and film in pre-revolutionary Russia (Youngblood 107), point of view was often designated as a major differentiating feature. Kuleshov argued that unlike in theater, where all techniques had developed to suit the needs of the audience seated before the stage, cinema could easily control the viewers: at a particular moment in time, everyone sees the action from one point of view —that of the lens (*Kuleshov on Film* 59). Since cinema enabled the spectator to see the details and to be transported to various times and places, Eikhenbaum declared the triumph of cinema over theater, the latter's deficiency being the immobility of the stage and, thus, of the perspective (29). Eisenstein's equation of cinematography with montage (*Film Form* 28) emphasized the cinema's power to manipulate the point of view through collision and conflict. Vertov's stance was perhaps the most radical in his attempt to promote the virtues of non-acted cinema and in his attack on theatrical elements in film,

[46] One has to admit, however, that in early film similar signals are used—most often in the form of intertitles.

no matter how innovative (*Kino-Eye* 20).[47] He also considered it a heinous act "to polish someone's literary shoes (they have high French heels, if the film's a hit) with cinematic wax" (36).

Yet it was theater's dependence on words that spawned most arguments against the influence of the older art on film. As André Antoine claimed in 1919, the suppression of the word was the absolute convention in film, just as the spoken word was the principal means of expression in theater (189). In 1912, the critic writing under the pseudonym of Yhcam noted the difference in the storytelling techniques: in the theater, a character can *tell* us about the events, whereas film spectators should *see* the sequence of actions; a monologue would be "the height of ridicule" in cinema (76). Elie Faure insisted that the only commonality between cinema and theater (as well as other communal gatherings) was that they involved "a collective spectacle having as its intermediary an actor" and that the most distancing factor was the absence of speech in cinema (259).

The introduction of sound, and with it speech, into film pushed the debates about the cinema-theater relationship onto a new level. Playwrights and stage actors flooded the cinema scene to facilitate the production of the best dialogue on screen (Abel, *French Film Theory* 2: 9). The whole essence of film—the immediacy and the rhythms of images unadulterated by words—was threatened.[48] René Clair voiced the widespread fears of

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[47] In *Kino-Eye*, Vertov consistently opposes *kinoks'* "factory of facts" to Eisenstein's "factory of attractions" (see especially 58-60), which grew out of Meyerholdian theater.

[48] Arguments for and against language in silent film will be part of the analysis of film language in the next chapter.

many film artists who had elevated silent cinema to an art: “the advent of theatrical dialogue in the cinema will irreparably destroy everything I had hoped for it” (“Talkie” 39). Clair was the leading opponent of the theater-film, whose popularity mushroomed in the early 1930s in France, when adaptations of all kinds became a mainstream practice. Publications about the inferiority of film to theater came to the fore, with calls to subordinate the techniques of silent cinema to speech and to elevate the status of the playwright (Abel, *French Film Theory* 2: 17). For example, Sacha Guitry, a leading proponent of the theater-film together with Marcel Pagnol, arrogantly claimed that only the beauty of theatrical and literary language could rescue films from oblivion (102).

In between the two extremes, filmmakers attempted to reconcile spoken words with cinematic aesthetics. Jacques Feyder formulated the essential difference between cinematographic sound cinema and photographed theater by assigning to words the subsidiary role: “*In the theater, the situation is created by words; in the cinema, the words should arise from the situation*” (39). Writing a few decades later, André Bazin echoed Feyder, stating that words are likely to be consigned to a lesser status in film since they are released by the action and not by a theatrical convention of verbal centrality (54).

Of course, discussions of the threats or potentialities of sound did not revolve exclusively on the cinema-vs.-theater axis. Thus, Gance optimistically wrote that the inclusion of sounds and words will enrich the visual poem of film through yet unexplored venues of nature and narrative, but the laws of the silent film would ultimately absorb the talkies and create a new language harmonizing sounds and images (41). While abhorring theatrical dialogue in film, Clair applauded “'unity of space' achieved through sound,” as

manifested in *The Broadway Melody* (1929), where the camera concentrates on Bessie Love's face as she watches from the window a departure that we do not see but that is indicated by a slamming door and the noise of a car driving off ("Art" 42).

Although innovative Soviet filmmakers repeatedly expressed their concern that sound could destroy montage and, thus, the essence of cinema (Kenez 135-36), the seminal statement on sound, signed by Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Grigory Alexandrov, mapped a new direction in the visual-aural relationship—contrapuntal, non-synchronized use of sound (Eisenstein, *Film Form* 258). Esfir Shub considered sound to be "organic raw material just like the film footage," to be utilized in non-played cinema (271). Vertov advocated "location sound recording" ("Speech" 302) that would help create "Radio-Eye" documentary cinema (303). Detailed discussions of sound-image interactions extend beyond the ambitions of this project,[49] but the tensions outlined above account for quite a few silent films produced in the sound era, which will receive their due attention later.

Among all theater-cinema connections, Brecht's employment of writing in placards, signs, and wall projections in his Epic Theater is most directly relevant for the analysis of screen words in film. For instance, in the 1932 staging of *Die Mutter*, Brecht juxtaposed projected photographs of pre-1914 world leaders with quotations from socialist classics for "documentary" and ironic effects (Hunter 170). In Brecht's performances, writing interrupted the plot by commenting on it, situated the events in an unfamiliar context, disturbed the ongoing reception of images, and demanded the

[49] For analyses of sound-image interaction, see Chion, *Audio-Vision* and *Voice*, and anthologies of writings on sound in film compiled by Altman, *Sound Theory*; Beck and Grajeda; Sider, Freeman, and Sider; and Weis and Belton.

audience's alertness and more active mental participation. Ultimately, the task of written words was to create the *Verfremdungseffekt*, distancing the spectators from the illusion of the immediacy of what was being seen (Gruber 188). Brechtian techniques of alienation, the form of which could have been adapted from silent cinema or vaudeville performances, will become favorites with post-World-War-II filmmakers who explored the manipulative power of language and created self-reflexive film discourses, Jean-Luc Godard and Alexander Kluge being perhaps two most famous representatives.

And yet, in spite of all the fascinating aberrations of the language-inspired and language-challenging experimental cinema, it is hard to disagree with Jacques Derrida that "if there is a specificity to the cinematic medium, it is foreign to the word" (qtd. in Brunette and Willis, *Deconstruction* 13). Undoubtedly, cinema has its own "language," of which words are only a part. It is a part, however, which contributes to the whole in multiple disguises. This chapter focuses on the word-image interplay in different arts as applicable to film. In the second chapter, I will provide a theoretical basis for discussing verbal forms in cinematic discourse and will attempt to create a functional typology of written word usage in film.

CHAPTER TWO

Written Language in Film: Types and Functions

Contemporary research into film language, a composite of methods and techniques of creating meaning, tends to marginalize or ignore the input of written language appearing on the screen. Perhaps the most illustrative example of this approach is James Monaco's guide to understanding how films "tell us what they tell . . . on several levels" (17). The main title of Monaco's book, *How to Read a Film*, which he has kept in all editions, has a trace of dramatic irony: the suggested ways of reading a film do not include any advice on understanding how actual screen words can contribute to the act of telling. This chapter strives to fill in this gap by situating the discussion of written language use in the context of narrative structures, cinematic tradition, authorship and ownership, and the relation to the audience.

I investigate reasons why filmmakers choose to incorporate written text both into films that focus on narrating a story and into films that fall under the umbrella term *avant-garde*.[1] I categorize screen words into five kinds: 1) title sequences and end credits, 2) intertitles, 3) subtitles, 4) integrated verbal elements, and 5) words as the only images on the screen. The concepts of the title and credits are analyzed within the theoretical framework of Gerard Genette's paratextuality and *titrologie*—the study of titles. Since the subject of film titles is only an emerging field,[2] I will also rely on the relevant discussions

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[1] Non-narrativity, or anti-narrativity, is put forth as a major differentiating feature of the avant-garde in cinema, with a caveat that the boundary between non-narrative and narrative films is blurry and unstable (see, for instance, Abel, *French Film Theory* 1: xvii and 330; Aumont et al. 70-71; Turim, *Abstraction* 4-5; and Wollen 102-03).

[2] To my knowledge, no book-length study of film titles exists as of now. In recent years, several PhD theses have been defended on title sequences in classical Hollywood film (see, for instance, Charney; Allison, "Promises"). Böhnke discusses both title sequences and closing credits. Titles in French films are analyzed in Rouxel-Cubberly.

of titles in literature and painting.

Within the five categories, I outline types and functions of written language, as applicable to both silent and sound films. The immediate objective here is to create a general typology that encompasses all kinds of films, to be used as a framework for detailed discussions of select silent films in the following chapters. Particular uses of screen words are illustrated with examples taken from films that will not be a focus of close analysis later, to avoid repetition and to showcase the relevance of the suggested typology to cinemas of various genres and periods.

LANGUAGE IN FILM: FOR AND AGAINST

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the uneasy relationship between film language and verbal language was often problematized in the context of film aspiring to become an art form. The purists of visual cinema were adamantly against any verbal intrusion because words were linked to literature and theater and, thus, could not belong in the emerging art. Germaine Dulac summarized this essentialist position best: the goal is to "divest cinema of all elements not particular to it, to seek its true essence in the consciousness of movement and visual rhythms" ("Aesthetics" 397).

A cinema free of verbal language was not advocated by avant-garde artists only. The universal appeal of narrative cinema purportedly rested on film's ability to create a visual language independent of the audience's linguistic backgrounds. As Yhcam pointed out in 1912, filmmakers did not need *Volapuc* or *Esperanto* because human drama, when presented visually, was understood by everyone. The glorious future of the art of cinema was in its gradual escape from the languages in which it was still enmeshed (77). The ultimate goal would be to create "a completely intelligible film" without any explanatory

[inter]titles, which were anti-artistic since they broke up the spectacle (75).

In fact, among all types of screen words, explanatory and dramatic intertitles were the ones derided most often as alien to the nature of film. Thus, Emile Vuillermoz accused Abel Gance of committing a cinematic "crime of high treason" in *Napoléon* (1927): the image was "a camouflaged 'tirade' leading artificially into a dramatic [inter]title" (402). Disdaining films that depended solely on verbal text for emotion and humor, Antonin Artaud called for visual situations whose drama would arise from a shock designed for the eyes and operating intuitively on the brain ("Cinema" 411). According to Benjamin Fondane, intertitles "had the contradictory function of trying to translate via readable signs what was stirring in our thought on the level of intuitive attention; they brought us from the poetic back to terra firma—that most arid ground" (48). To become an art, cinema had to learn to tell stories with emotional appeal without any words.

French theorists of the silent era were not the only ones to resent verbal intrusion so strongly. Across the ocean, Vachel Lindsay, who in 1922 published a revised edition of what could be called the first American book on film theory, *The Art of the Moving Picture*,[3] envisioned the ideal film to have no printed words. In his opinion, in spite of its many defects, *The Old Swimmin' Hole* (Joseph de Grasse, 1921) should be studied in all art schools because it was the first film that had general popular success while telling the story exclusively through "Photoplay Hieroglyphics," with no intertitles[4] appearing on the screen after the cast of characters was presented (10). Such an attitude to *The Old*

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[3] The first edition of the book came out in 1915.

[4] According to Jean Epstein, the claim to being the first intertitle-free film should be shared between *The Old Swimmin' Hole* and Lupu Pick's *Scherben* [*Shattered*], released in 1921 in Germany ("For a New Avant-Garde" 349). *Scherben*, however, has an introductory intertitle and one "spoken line."

Swimmin' Hole, however, was rather exceptional in the Unites States. Gerald Duffy, a scenario and intertitle writer in the twenties, summed up the professional view of *The Old Swimmin' Hole* in a nutshell: "That picture without [inter]titles was the strongest argument possible for the picture *with* [inter]titles" (qtd. in Brownlow, *Parade* 294).[5] According to Kristin Thompson, *The Old Swimmin' Hole* received mixed reviews: on the one hand, the film generated some interest owing to the no-intertitle novelty; on the other hand, the film was disliked because of its very thin plot and because the elimination of intertitles was artificial since the scenes were shot in continuity style ("Limits" 77-80).

With the advent of sound, most of the anti-word arguments were retargeted at spoken language and joined the long-thriving discourse advocating silence. As Rémy de Gourmont, a French writer and philosopher, wrote in 1907, the fact that the cinema did not pretend to speak and, thus, did not offend one's ears with the characters' customary nonsense was its major charm (49). Film theoreticians and directors took a more serious stand on the issue of silence in film: cinema is a silent art that should describe without words or phrases (Dulac, "Expressive Techniques" 305); cinema should give birth to means of expression worthy of the new god of Silence (L'Herbier 154); silence touches the masses as a genuine aid in looking and seeing (Delluc 163); "the elucidations of speech arrest the unconscious and spontaneous poetry of images" (Artaud, "Premature Old Age" 124). The introduction of sound brought into cinema an irreconcilable rivalry

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[5] In his recommendations to novice writers of photoplays, which was a common name for *motion pictures*, Epes Winthrop Sargent, a scenario writer and a major contributor to *The Moving Picture World* in the teens, presents perhaps the most balanced view on intertitle-free films: "The play without a leader [i.e., intertitle] is the ideal play, because here there is no interruption to the action. But there is seldom found a subject so adaptable to this idea that a leader is not required. . . . The object to be aimed at is not the leaderless script, but one containing as few leaders as possible, yet one which contains every leader that is necessary to a perfect understanding of the play" (164).

between image and speech (Arnheim 165) and crushed the artistic potentialities of silent film (129) because it was "precisely the absence of speech that made the silent film develop a style of its own, capable of condensing the dramatic situation" (187). Marcel Mariën's macabre pronouncement that with sound, cinema died as an autonomous art, having left behind a cadaver to be devoured by a gigantic industry (141), is reflective of the worst fears aroused by speech in film.

It would be a purist illusion, however, to assume that no filmmaker or critic allotted words their rightful place in the organic whole of the film. If in 1921, Jean Epstein claimed that the true film should do without texts working through *photogénie* ("Senses I (b)" 246), four years later he took a more moderate stance pointing out that intertitles helped to avoid tortuous and trite visual explanations and enabled directors to film many scenarios that would be unrealizable without text on screen. Most importantly, intertitles provided "a place for the eye to rest, a punctuation point for the mind." While conceding that intertitles in a good film are only "a kind of accident," Epstein resorted to an analogy with poetry to reinforce his point: "But on the other hand, advertising a film by stating that it has no intertitles, isn't that like praising the poems of Mallarmé because they don't have punctuation marks?" ("For a New Avant-Garde" 350). Robert Desnos argued even more strongly that letters belonged to film as naturally as faces did (98).

Unlike the majority of their French counterparts, experimental Soviet filmmakers manifested a higher tolerance for intertitles, although words were not considered to be primary constructive elements. Yury Tynyanov, who contributed several scripts to Soviet cinematography,[6] pointed out that words could either motivate links between shots or act

[6] See Heil for a detailed description of Tynyanov's scripts for *Shinel'* [*The Overcoat*] (1926), *SVD* (1927), *Obez'iana i Kolokol* [*The Monkey and the Bell*] (1930-32), and *Poruchik Kizhe* [*Lieutenant Kizhe*] (1927, 1934).

in a supporting role to the visual shot—as a contrast or an illustration (58). Lev Kuleshov explained that a good intertitle functions like a shot and should be treated as cinematic material similar to exposed pieces of the film, to be edited simultaneously with visual shots (*Kuleshov on Film* 91). Sergei Eisenstein stated that intertitles could be "perfectly and organically interwoven . . . into the texture of the film" to narrate "prose passages," while pictorial elements were in charge of creating the lyricism of the film, as well as to contribute to the dramatic action through montage and varying formats (*Film Form* 188). The myth of words being alien to film was most bluntly dispelled by Vsevolod Pudovkin: "The usual view of [inter]titles as an invading, adventitious element, to be avoided wherever possible, is fundamentally erroneous" (31).

Internationally famous American directors did not seem to spend much time theorizing about their work, and their explicitly expressed attitudes to screen words are not so well documented. Among the rare surviving records is Griffith's statement from 1926 that a few printed words can save a lot of precious feet of film (Elliott 88). In 1914, however, he asserted that cinema had found a universal language "beyond Babel, beyond words" (qtd. in May 60).[7] And in the 1928 article "How Movies Are Made," Griffith explains that he primarily introduced a close-up to remedy the "glaring fault" of "wordy [inter]titles" that interrupted the action (qtd. in Usai 11: 185). Still, Griffith's films offer prolific evidence of his being intertitle-friendly. Chaplin's creations were less

[7] Anita Loos claims that Griffith changed his attitude to [inter]titles under her indirect influence. According to Loos, when John Emerson was discussing the possibility of filming a comedy with Douglas Fairbanks on the basis of a story written by Loos, Griffith told him that it would not work because all the laughs were in the lines and people did not go to the movies to read. However, when *His Picture in the Papers* (Emerson, 1916) became an instant hit upon its first screening, Griffith invited Loos to furnish the already filmed *Intolerance* with [inter]titles. As Loos writes, "D. W. bade me put in [inter]titles even when unnecessary and add laughs wherever I found an opening" (98, 102-03).

verbose, for which he offered this explanation: “If you have a bit of a message it's better to put it over through business than through words—better for me, anyhow. In my silent films I always used to abbreviate the [inter]titles to a minimum” (qtd. in Wyndham 34).

It was screenwriters who discussed the usage of intertitles at length in photoplay manuals published in the US in the teens through thirties.[8] Not surprisingly, writers of photoplays emphasized that every movie should tell a story (Gale 3; Emerson and Loos 10), for which, they believed, words on the screen were indispensable. John Emerson and Anita Loos, perhaps the most famous screenwriting couple in the silent era, pointed out that a five-reel film[9] should incorporate around 230 intertitles, as exemplified

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[8] For a detailed overview of the discourse on film intertitling in the American trade press, especially in *The Moving Picture World*, see Liepa 122-57 and 234-68.

[9] How long a five-reeler would run depended on many factors. Sargent specifies that in the teens, one thousand feet was a standard convention for a reel of film because a projection machine had contained approximately that amount of film when titles had been released earlier as part of programs (145-46). According to Okuda and Maska, the average 35mm reel in the US was a thousand feet, “with a running time of 10 to 14 minutes, depending on the projection speed” (16). As James Card explains, “most silent films were produced by hand-cranked cameras,” which invariably resulted in individual variations of the tempo. It was also not unusual for film directors to request faster cranking for specific episodes. Additionally, the speed of projection depended on the scheduling of the show (53). Because filmmakers were aware of this tendency for speeded-up projection in the evening, to squeeze in an extra show, cameramen were sometimes requested to shoot faster “to offset the resulting frantic action” during the actual show (55). Card insists that the average speed of silent projection—sixteen frames per second—is nothing but a myth: “The historic fact is that more silent films were *intended* to be shown at speeds that were much closer to the sound projector's eleven and two-thirds minutes per reel than the legendary silent speed of sixteen frames per second, which drags the film along at sixteen minutes and forty seconds a reel!” (53). Card's statement is corroborated by the “note to the operator” that is included in the George Eastman House print of *The Love Flower* (Griffith, 1920), discussed by Charlie Keil: “This picture should be run eighty feet to a minute or twelve and one-half minutes to each reel” (“Love Flower” 57). According to Card's estimates, a silent five-reeler was intended to run for approximately sixty minutes. Sargent, however, maintains that film was passed through a projection machine at the average rate of a foot, which contained sixteen frames, per second (146); in his opinion, a five-reeler would then last around eighty-three minutes.

by their model photoplay *In Search of a Sinner* (43). To be comprehended, a word in an intertitle was usually allotted a foot of the film (E. H. Ball 24);[10] which translated into a range of 0.7-1 second per word in a reel, dependent on the projection speed. In 1915-28, intertitles comprised fifteen percent of the total number of shots per film in the US (Bordwell 60). Terry Ramsaye estimated that in 1926, a reel of a thousand feet required around 250 feet of intertitles (514), i.e., intertitles accounted for one quarter of an average film.

Of course, at no moment did screenwriters advocate an indiscriminate use of words, although the role of intertitles changed throughout the different periods of the silent era. In 1913, Eustace Hale Ball admonished writers against founding a story on explanatory printing, which would create weak movies (24). In 1920, Emerson and Loos explained that since the story was to be told pictorially, characterization was to be worked out in the acting (65); the intertitle was never to be used as an ending to the story unless the final profound or witty idea was impossible to express in pictures (107). In 1936,[11] in his effort to deter movie makers from resorting to words to solve the problems of adapting a story to the camera, Arthur L. Gale insisted that fewer intertitles make a better script (86). However, in spite of the commonly held view that cinema is visual in nature,

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[10] Sargent is even more specific about the space allotted to various verbal inserts: "A leader [i.e., intertitle] runs about a foot to the word with not less than three feet used. . . . The title usually runs ten feet. The tailpiece, which is usually The Board of Review tag, runs ten or fifteen. If there is both a tailpiece and a censor tag allow the fifteen. Letters run from ten to twenty-five feet or even more. Enough time is supposed to be allowed to give the slow reader a chance to get through the text. Written letters stay on the screen longer than those typewritten. Inserts run from five to ten feet, or long enough to permit the matter to be comprehended. Newspaper inserts run long enough for the fact to be grasped, but not always long enough to permit the entire frame to be studied" (148).

[11] Gale's manual provided scriptwriting advice for both silent and sound films.

the majority of those involved in making silent films would probably have agreed with Lindsay that in the context of narrative film, intertitle writing was "a commercial necessity" (10). The following historic fact serves as a telling example: when *The Old Swimmin' Hole* was screened in France, distributors added around fifteen intertitles to the film (Epstein, "For a New Avant-Garde" 349).

Most of the debates about written words in silent film were sparked by intertitles. Arguments against the usage of words in credits or as parts of visual shots were almost non-existent. The films that were praised for the absence of intertitles, however, were not language-free. For example, *Kammerspielfilme* scripted by Carl Mayer, a major feature of which is the suppression of [inter]titles (Eisner 177),[12] use language in a variety of forms. Apart from the credits, genre indication ("Ein Drama in fünf Tagen von Carl Mayer"[13] 'A drama in five days by Carl Mayer'), an introductory intertitle ("Ein Tag" 'One day'), and the only "spoken" intertitle-climax presented in unfolding cursive handwriting ("Ich bin ein Mörder" 'I am a murderer'),[14] *Scherben* integrates teletype text that announces an

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[12] Lotte H. Eisner observes that "Mayer, who did not leave a single novel or short story at his death, whose entire output as a writer went into the cinema, had an extraordinary visual gift: he immediately conceived action in terms of images" (27). The intimate scale of *Kammerspiel* enabled a portrayal of "psychological tensions and peripetias" without the aid of [inter]titles (179). Most characters, "whose intensity of expression comes close to pantomime," stop moving their lips because silent dialogue becomes pointless in *Kammerspielfilme*. When a visible moan or an incoherent sound escapes somebody's lips, the tension reaches its peak (195).

[13] A note on capitalization is in order: throughout the dissertation, the capitalization is preserved as it is in original intertitles and subtitles, when at all possible; because it is not tenable to imitate the bibliographical codes of title sequences, end credits, and integrated verbal elements in the printed text of this project, capitalization will be employed according to the rules of contemporary American English and those of foreign languages.

[14] The visual scene when the railwayman stops a train with his lamp to give himself up was tinted red in the original print, and the only [inter]title—with the verbal confession—"makes the screen almost burst" (Eisner 182).

inspector's arrival. The drama of *Hintertreppe* [*Backstairs*] (Leopold Jessner and Paul Leni, 1921) revolves around letters, missing and fraudulent, and includes a close-up of the inscription *Rechnunsgrat* on the doorbell.[15] A Genesis quote about the confused language in Babel serves as a motto of *Sylvester* [*New Year's Eve*] (Lupu Pick, 1924), which also incorporates words spelled by city lights.[16] The most effective use of words in Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (1924), which was released in the US as *The Last Laugh*,[17] is perhaps a rendering of the old man's subjective state through his reading a notice that he has been fired, with the letters getting out of focus and with the back-and-forth reading of the word, which is never shown in its entirety in one shot, that indicates the reason for his dismissal: “Altersschwäche” 'old-age infirmity'[18] (figures 2.1 and 2.2).

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[15] The recent, English-language, DVD release of *Backstairs* by Grapevine Video (2009) features an introductory title and two expository intertitles. The original German version of *Hintertreppe*, however, does not seem to have had any intertitles (Card 61; Paech 53), most probably with the exception of letters as diegetic inserts. Eisner even conjectures that *Hintertreppe* was conceived as an intertitle-free film earlier than *Scherben* (179), although *Scherben* was released first (Garncarz 80).

[16] According to Pick's Preface to the scenario of *Sylvester*, Mayer gave the film the secondary title “ein Lichtspiel” 'a light-play,' which was not only an allusion to the cinematic technique but also a reference to the chiaroscuro in a human being's soul (qtd. in Eisner 177).

[17] The original German print of *Der letzte Mann*, no longer surviving, might have had fifteen intertitles, apart from the only remaining intertitle that introduces an epilogue (Katz), a happy ending that the reluctant Murnau was pressured into adding (Eisner 98). According to Card, an original script of *Der letzte Mann*, discovered in 1990, has intertitles throughout, but it is unclear whether the film had ever been shown with these intertitles or whether they had been cut before the film was released (61).

[18] Curiously, the Kino DVD of *The Last Laugh*, released in the US in 2001, introduces an insert of the notice in English but omits the old man's prolonged reading of the reason for his dismissal.

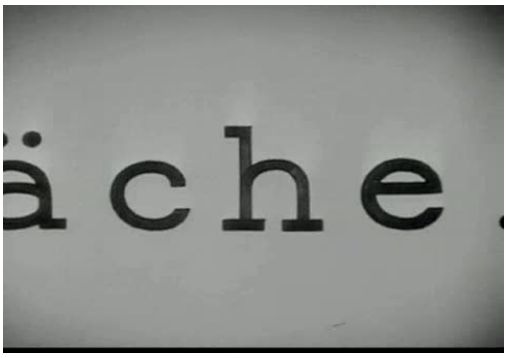


Fig. 2.1. *Der letzte Mann*: the pain of reading letter by letter.

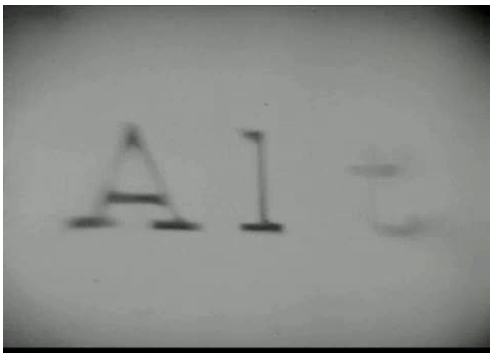


Fig. 2.2. *Der letzte Mann*: dizzying "old."

The Old Swimmin' Hole, as Thompson describes, "introduced diegetic written texts into the mise-en-scène whenever vital narrative information could not be conveyed without language," although some of the writings, such as scribbling a challenge for a swimming competition—in chalk on the bridge from which the main character is fishing, were insufficiently motivated ("Limits" 77-78). The biggest laugh in *The Old Swimmin' Hole*, according to Duffy, was provoked when Ray's character wrote on a slate "I'm through with wimmin" and then, upon falling victim to a romance, erased the resolution (qtd. in Brownlow, *Parade* 294). Arthur Robinson's intertitle-free *Schatten: Eine nächtliche Halluzination* (1923), familiar to US audiences as *Warning Shadows*, attaches archetypal labels to characters-puppets in an extensive prologue.[19] Praised by Dulac as a film where "image alone is king" ("Expressive Techniques" 306), Marcel Silver's *L'horloge* [*The Clock*] (1924) revolves around a pivotal inscription "Tant que ce balancier battra, mon coeur battra" 'While the pendulum swings, my heart beats.'[20] Besides integrating numerous street signs, Dimitry Kirsanoff's *Ménilmontant* (1926) is obsessed

[19] Eisner explains that [inter]titles included in some contemporary prints of *Schatten* were added by "a zealous distributor" (179).

[20] Although originally *L'horloge* was screened without any intertitles, it was rereleased and distributed in 1926 with intertitles. For a short description of *L'horloge*, see Chirat and Icart, item 460.

with verbal and visual representations of time, such as clocks with symbolic advertising (figure 2.3) or inscriptions on funeral wreaths, first easily readable and then collapsed to indicate a passage of time, decay, and forgetfulness (figure 2.4). Dziga Vertov's *Chelovek s kino-apparatom* [*The Man with the Movie Camera*] (1929) swarms with undercover intertitles in the form of posters, street signs, and smaller inscriptions of different kinds to the extent that Vertov was even accused of cheating when claiming that he had created a film without any intertitles (Tsivian, "*Man*" 102).[21]



Fig. 2.3. *Ménilmontant*: "the golden sickle" clock.



Fig. 2.4. *Ménilmontant*: inscriptions of decay and forgetfulness.

In a nutshell, in spite of all the arguments against it, verbal language managed to get its foot in the door, in various forms and disguises. I suggest singling out five broad categories of written language use in films: 1) title sequences and end credits, 2) intertitles, 3) subtitles, 4) integrated verbal elements, and 5) words as the only images on the screen. For an informed discussion of title sequences, usually the first category of language use that a viewer encounters when watching a film, I will first provide an

[21] The title sequence of *The Man with the Movie Camera* integrates the phrase "Film bez nadpisei," traditionally translated into English as "a film without intertitles." The Russian word *nadpis'* [*надпись*], however, can also be translated as "inscription." The inscriptions in *The Man with the Movie Camera* are analyzed in detail, among others, in Petrić 70-116; Roberts 44-90. Vertov's pendulum-like relationship with intertitles is discussed, for example, in Tsivian, "*Man*" 86-90.

overview of theoretical writings on the textual "boundaries" of a work of art and on the concept of the title.

PARATEXTUALITY: FRINGES OF FILMIC TEXT

The title of a work of art belongs to the *paratextual* space, defined by Gerard Genette in the context of literature as the surrounding verbal and visual accompaniment to the body of the text proper that ensures the text's presence in the world: "More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is rather a *threshold*, or . . . a 'vestibule' that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside . . ." (*Paratexts* 2). The paratext of a literary work comprises "a title, a subtitle, intertitles[22]; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals . . ." (Genette, *Palimpsests* 3).

Genette distinguishes several types of paratext dependent on its location, time of appearance, mode of existence, situation of communication, and illocutionary force. Spatially, paratext is divided into *peritext*, elements located within the same volume as the text proper, and *epitext*, distanced elements located outside the book and created in the media (e.g., interviews or conversations) or as private communications (e.g., letters and diaries). The temporal types of paratexts are *prior* (e.g., prospectuses or announcements

[22] According to Genette, a "subtitle" in a literary work means a second element in a double title. Thus, classical double titles usually put the name of the hero in the title, and the indication of the theme went into the subtitle. In contemporary scholarly works, the subtitle gives a literal interpretation of the theme while the title "evokes [it] symbolically or cryptically" (*Paratexts* 85). An "intertitle" is an internal title naming a book's sections, chapters, constituent poems, and so on (295).

of forthcoming publications), *original* (e.g., prefaces accompanying the first edition), and *later/delayed* (e.g., prefaces introducing a second or a more remote new edition). Paratexts can exist in *textual* (verbal, iconic, or material[23]) or *factual* (i.e., the public's knowledge of the author's biographical facts and of the date of publication) form. The sender of a paratextual message may be the author, the publisher, or a third party accepted by the author (most often in prefaces written by someone else and approved by the author for inclusion in the book). Accordingly, one can speak of *authorial*, the *publisher's*, and *allographic* paratexts. The illocutionary force of a paratextual message is related to its functions and aims and varies in different forms of paratext (*Paratexts* 4-12).

The paratextual types identified by Genette for a work of literature are quite easily transferable to film.[24] To stay focused on the actual screen words encountered by the audience in the process of watching a film in a movie theater, I will limit myself to the study of the peritext and will forego any further discussion of the epitext.[25] The peritextual space of a film is usually framed by title sequences and end credits. The peritext of title sequences may contain a title, a genre indication, the date of original creation, a cast of characters and credits, an epigraph or a quote, a dedication, the studio's logo and the director's signature, and the list can go on. Some of these components can be shifted into or duplicated in the end credits. Additionally, since internal titles, as well as marginal and infrapaginal notes, are present on Genette's list of paratextual instances, I suggest including some types of intertitles (e.g., those indicating division into parts) and

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[23] The term *material form* in Genette corresponds to McGann's *bibliographical code*, discussed previously.

[24] See, for example, Böhnke's adaptation of Genette's types to filmic paratexts.

[25] Nevertheless, investigations of the epitext, “a fringe of the fringe” (Genette, *Paratexts* 346), are a promising research avenue.

of self-reflexive remarks, which act like authorial notes, into filmic peritextual space.

For the same reason, in order to analyze films as they were presented to the audience at the time of their release, I will concentrate on original rather than prior or later/delayed paratexts, although it is often impossible to differentiate between original and posteriori types because film studios sometimes created several versions of the same film for distribution among different audiences. Such modifications of filmic paratextual elements corroborate Genette's statement that the paratext is an instrument of adaptation and manipulation (*Paratexts* 408-09).

An even more serious trap awaits scholars of silent films: viewing an unauthorized tampering with film material as part of the authorial creation. Genette clarifies that "something is not a paratext unless the author or one of his associates accepts responsibility for it" (*Paratexts* 9). Genette's discussion of posthumous allographic prefaces, whose aim is to provide different contexts—historical, biographical, artistic, and so on—within which the work was created (266-67), blurs, however, the borderline between a paratext and a non-paratext, especially in the cases when a work of art has entered public domain and can be republished without any consent of the author's "associates." When analyzing editorial notes, which, unlike prefaces, accompany a segment of the text, Genette himself recognizes this ambiguity: "Solely because it is allographic, the editorial note draws us toward another fringe of the paratext, for it consists of an external commentary (most often posthumous) that in no way involves the responsibility of the author" (337). In the realm of film, posthumous allographic prefaces often accompany early silent films remastered in VHS or DVD formats. Thus, for instance, in the DVD collection *The Chaplin Mutuals*, the title of each short is preceded by an editorial blurb of the following nature (figure 2.5):

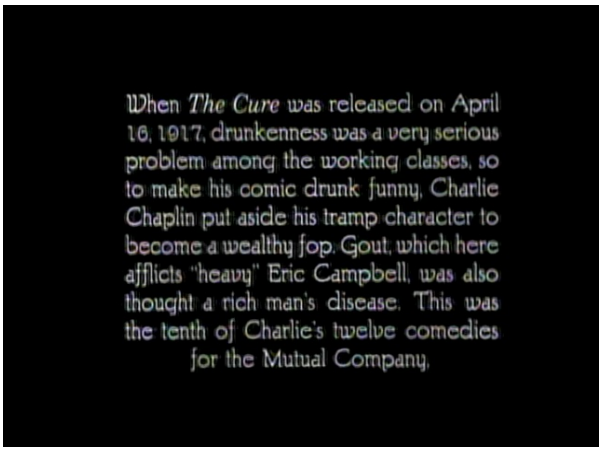


Fig. 2.5. The allographic preface to *The Cure* (Chaplin, 1917).

The practices of silent film distributors, who frequently violated the original by deleting or adding text and reediting film sequences, as well as the efforts of cinéastes to restore films from several surviving excerpts, account for the inescapable fact that the versions of early films available for viewing now may be dramatically different from the ones screened originally, i.e., many filmic texts may have been corrupted.[26] Thus, a caveat is in order: some of the verbal text, either its linguistic or bibliographical code or both, may not have been created or approved by film directors or studios. In my selection of individual films for close analysis I have discarded several otherwise intriguing samples of written language use exactly because it is highly likely that the intertitles of the available version(s) may have been altered or created anew. But the original authenticity of the verbal text in the films to be discussed cannot be guaranteed either.

TRANSTEXTUALITY OF TITLE SEQUENCES AND END CREDITS

In Genette's classification, paratextuality is only one type of *transtextuality*, i.e., "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts"

[26] For typical practices of reconstructing intertitles, see, for example, Read and Meyer 73-74.

(*Palimpsests* 1). Apart from belonging to the paratextual space, title sequences can potentially engage in four other types of transtextuality—intertextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality.

Genette explains that his definition of *intertextuality* is more restricted than Julia Kristeva's[27]: as the most explicit and easily identifiable type of transtextuality, intertextuality means "the actual presence of one text within the other" as quotation, plagiarism, or allusion (*Palimpsests* 2). The meanings created when the title of a film quotes another work of art (for instance, Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* (1942)) arise from an intertextual link. A different case of intertextuality[28] is presented in the title sequence of *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003), where Quentin Tarantino interweaves a quote and an allusion by choosing to attribute a proverbial statement "Revenge is a dish best served cold," which first appeared in print in an English translation of the eighteenth-century novel *Les liaisons dangereuses* [*Dangerous Liaisons*] by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, to the Klingon race (figure 2.6), as is done by Captain Kirk's archenemy Khan in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (Nicholas Meyer, 1982). The positioning of verbal text in a title sequence can create a multimedial allusion: the director's name dissecting the eye from right to left (figure 2.7) in the credits of Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965) invokes

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[27] In its most familiar interpretation, the term *intertextuality* was introduced by Kristeva in her reworking of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the *dialogic*—a mutually relativizing intersection of two or several texts within one literary work (Stam 20). Kristeva's own definition (or at least, Margaret Waller's translation) is rather technical: "The term *inter-textuality* denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources,' we prefer the term *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic—of enunciative and denotative positionality" (59-60). For an extensive survey of theoretical discussions of intertextuality, see G. Allen. Intertextuality in film is examined at length in Iampolski.

[28] I will use the term *intertextuality* in the meaning assigned to it by Genette.

the notorious sequence in Luis Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* [*An Andalusian Dog*] (1929).[29]



Fig. 2.6. *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*:
the quote and allusion intertwined.



Fig. 2.7. *Repulsion*:
invoking *Un chien andalou*.

Metatextuality is a relationship of critical commentary between a given text and another text, not necessarily cited or explicitly named. Two examples of this type of transtextuality, "the *critical* relationship par excellence," provided by Genette are *The Phenomenology of the Mind*, where Hegel evokes Denis Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau* [*Rameau's Nephew*], and Aristotle's *Poetics*, which speaks about *Oedipus Rex* (Genette, *Palimpsests* 4-5). I suggest extending the notion of metatextuality to include a self-reflexive commentary on a body of texts or on artistic practices. Thus, many foregrounded devices of avant-garde filmmaking may be viewed as a critical commentary on classical Hollywood cinema. For instance, Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967) and Hollis Frampton's *(nostalgia)* (1971) are considered by Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis to be metatextual critiques of the expectations cultivated by narrative conventions (208). Metatextual investigations of what is usually a straightforward correspondence between spoken voice and subtitling are at the core of many creations by Peter Rose: for example, in the video *The Pressures of the Text* (1983), the subtitles metamorphose from verbal gibberish in Latin alphabet through ideographic

[29] Filmmakers favor an image of the eye integrated into title sequences. For instance, the title of the film and the name of the director originate from the pupil of an eye in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958).

writing to crude drawings.

The title sequence of *The Man with the Movie Camera* can serve as a perfect example of metatextuality because Vertov pointedly opposed his film to the Russian cinematic practices that heavily borrowed from theater and literature. Thus, *The Man with the Movie Camera* promoted itself as a film "without inscriptions," "without a scenario," "without props, actors, etc. . . ." Experimenting with the "End" sign can also turn into various metatextual games, as in George Maciunas's Fluxus film *End After 9* (1966), which runs for one minute and six seconds. The film becomes a commentary on the expectations of an opening-middle-closure structure, where the middle is traditionally the core of the film: after staying on the screen for forty-seven seconds, the title "END AFTER 9" gives way to a flickering of numbers *1* through *9* with a total duration of one second, to be followed by the "END," which remains visible until the film runs out.

Unlike metatextuality, *hypertextuality* is a relationship uniting a given text, *hypertext*, and an earlier text, *hypotext*, upon which the later text is grafted "in a manner that is not that of commentary." Instead, the later text's existence itself depends on its appropriation of the antecedent, either through direct transformation or imitation (Genette, *Palimpsests* 5-6). Literary adaptations, remakes, parodies, and sequels are hypertexts incarnate (Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis 209-10). The title sequences of films-hypertexts may combine the features of intertextuality (the title may be an intertextual allusion to the hypotext, as a direct or modified quote) and hypertextuality (an explicit or implicit statement of the appropriation, often an image of the book that serves as the inspiration for the film).

The title sequence of Massimo Dallamano's *Il dio chiamato Dorian* [*The God Called Dorian*] (1970), released in the US as *Dorian Gray*, both explicitly acknowledges

the source ("A modern allegory based on the work of Oscar Wilde") and, by calling itself "a modern allegory," showcases the fifth type of transtextuality as well—*architextuality*. Genette points to a purely taxonomic nature of architextuality, when the text articulates its generic status or chooses to elude any kind of classification (*Palimpsests* 4). Since generic attributions guide the audience's expectations and, thus, reception (5), filmmakers may intentionally confuse the viewer by assigning the film to a genre to which, in fact, it does not belong by conflating several genres into one, by inventing a genre, and so on.

By calling his film *A Movie* (1958), Bruce Conner seems to state the obvious. Yet, owing to his synthesizing the various genres of found footage and to the "natural irony of the collage film, which calls attention to the fact that each element quoted in the new synthesis was once part of another whole, thereby underlining its status as a piece of film" (Sitney, *Visionary Film* 298), the mere possibility of a genre identification or a taxonomic differentiation between a part and a whole is questioned. Additionally, Conner metatextually challenges conventional paratextual markers. The author's name—"BRUCE CONNER"—stays on the screen for about thirty seconds at the very beginning, as if it were the title, followed by four consecutive shots "A / MOVIE / BY / BRUCE CONNER," the phrase that will reappear at the end of the fourth minute of the film, which runs for eleven and a half minutes, as the last credit-intertitle. Within this title-author frame, the first visual fragment is preceded by "End of Part Four" and concluded by "THE END"; the next collage sequence is prefaced by "MOVIE," inserted upside down as a mirror image, and followed, almost predictably, by "THE END"; from then on, "THE END" never reappears, whereas "MOVIE" introduces two more visual sequences. The rest of the film, while fusing various kinds of footage, remains language-free.

Several of the examples provided above corroborate Genette's statement that the

types of transtextuality should not be viewed as "separate and absolute categories without any reciprocal contact or overlapping" (*Palimpsests* 7). Yet the types outlined through analytical differentiation create a useful framework for investigating the functions of various kinds of screen words, not just title sequences. Before attempting to create a functional typology of title sequences, I will discuss the concept of the title itself.

WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

According to Leo Hoek, one of the founders of modern *titrologie*,[30] the title has grown into an artificial construct, a vehicle of reception or commentary, separated from the graphics of a page (Genette, *Paratexts* 55-56). Indeed, as primary representatives of a work of art, contemporary titles often stand on their own, especially in marketing and advertising, but also in the realm of criticism. However, in spite of the title's ability to become a subject of conversation as an entity, its very essence is directly linked to its physically-separable attachment to a larger whole:

> A title takes place only on the border of a work: were it only to be a part, like one of its internal elements or one of its pieces, it would no longer play the role of having title-value. Were it complete [sic] outside, detached and separated from the body by a distance greater than that which the law, right and code ordain, there would be no more title. (Derrida, "Title" 8)

Since systematic investigations of filmic titles are still ongoing, studies of the nature and functions of the title in literature and painting create a solid foundation on which one can start building a functional classification of film titles.

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[30] Genette credits Claude Duchet with coining the term *titrologie*, which can be translated as "titology," to designate a study of the title (*Paratexts* 55).

Providing Hoek's definition of the title ("A set of linguistic signs . . . that may appear at the head of a text to designate it, to indicate its subject matter as a whole, and to entice the targeted public . . ."), Genette notes that only the first feature—that of designation—is obligatory and, thus, serves as the primary function of the title. This act of baptizing is almost always motivated—by a preference, a tradition, or a compromise. But once the title has been fixed, it will be mostly used to designate a work of art in the meaning of "identification," where motivation for the original naming no longer matters (*Paratexts* 77-80),[31] unless, of course, the work falls into the hands of a scholar of titles. Thus, the very early films, which were approximately one to three minutes long and were shown continuously as part of larger programs, received their names so that lists could be created to facilitate commercial distribution (Gaudreault, "Des cris" 55).

I would like to introduce a small correction into Genette's description of the function of designation. It seems that the initial act of naming is *always* motivated, even when one's attempt to understand a relation between the title and the work proves to be a totally futile endeavor. The motivations of Dadaists and Surrealists, who were famous for creating titles that were completely unrelated to their paintings, may have been to "explode traditional categories of reference taken on by the identificatory name" (Welchman 237)[32] and ultimately to confuse the viewer-reader by its deliberate ambiguity and malfunction (Morley 85). Even if some Surrealist titles may have been chosen by lot, as Genette suggests (*Paratexts* 81), this mode of designation also reflects a definite

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[31] The part of *Paratexts* that discusses the title at length overlaps with Genette's article "Structure and Function of the Title in Literature," published in 1988.

[32] Welchman's *Invisible Colors: A Visual History of Titles* is a fascinating study of the history of titles in painting, even though the book makes no systematic attempt at classifying titular types and functions. For insightful discussions of the titles in painting, see also Gombrich; Marshall; and Morley.

stance, a motivation: to go against the tradition of "meaningful" titles.

If an artist chooses not to name the work, the obligatory function of designation is put into question. As any minus-device, a zero-title foregrounds the structural absence and, thus, makes a statement of refusal to follow the established practices or to be subject to classification and, by extension, commodification. In visual arts, un-titling becomes an argument against directing and limiting the perception of the viewer, in favor of visuality unbridled by language. As John C. Welchman reminds us, "a refusal of the titular *surplus*" was characteristic of many Abstract Expressionist painters in the 1950s, once their individual distinctive visual styles had been formed (269). Not naming in painting can also represent a claim of counter-nominality: "the world is not made up of nameable objects, but of visual perceptions opaque to names and language alike" (33).

When a work of art becomes an object of public display, on exhibit in a gallery or as an entry in a catalog, identification cannot be avoided, even if the painting or the sculpture have been designated to bear no title. Thus, a title is expected to act like the name of a human child in that it becomes "a social bond" that positions the entitled/named "as the referent in the story recounted by those around" (Lyotard 15). To the rescue comes a universal oxymoronic title "Untitled." E. H. Gombrich points out that the label "Untitled" does not provide a negative instruction; instead, it becomes an invitation to explore the work of art in its totality, without limiting oneself to the search of a head if a non-representational sculpture is entitled "Head" (225). Yet the commercialization of art demands that every piece should be easily identifiable by its title. As a result, "Untitled" can be, at best, accompanied by consecutive numbers or by the date of creation to differentiate among the many unnamed works by the same artist. At worst, it is followed by the curators' or distributors' own reading of the work in the form

of a second title. The laudable strategy of un-naming may indeed backfire, especially when the artists no longer have control over their own creations.

In the mainstream cinema, un-titling is a commercial impossibility. But avant-garde filmmakers may choose not to name their works or not to incorporate the actual words of the title into their films, as, for instance, is the case with Su Friedrich's silent shorts, *Gently Down the Stream* (1981) and *But No One* (1982).[33] Stan Brakhage, a major proponent of wordless visuality in post-World-War-II avant-garde filmmaking, at times practiced another strategy of minimizing the interference of words with vision—putting the title at the end of the film, although, as he lamented, if there were no words at the beginning of the film, the projectionist had nothing to focus on. As a result, some of Brakhage's films begin with the copyright inscription, whereas the title is only mentioned at the end (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 214). The projectionist had to manage without words and focus on the eye that filled the screen at the beginning of the almost-untitled film written by Samuel Beckett and directed by Alan Schneider, *Film* (1965), where the title is introduced only at the end of the film, inscribed within that same eye (figure 2.8):



Fig. 2.8. *Film*: the end-title.

[33] Both *Gently Down the Stream* and *But No One* integrate words scratched into the film emulsion. The verbal inscriptions in *Gently Down the Stream* are discussed, for example, in MacDonald, "Text" 15; Mayne 194-99. The text of the film is included in MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 236-40.

If the act of un-naming challenges the process of designation, the act of deliberate mislabeling or ambiguity undermines the second function of the title—that of description. Descriptive titles can refer to the subject matter (theme) or the way the theme is treated.[34] *Thematic* titles can literally describe the topic, sometimes revealing the denouement (e.g., the proleptic title of Lev Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*), can be metonymically attached to a less central or even marginal object, can be symbolically metaphoric, or can function by antiphrasis or irony (when the title is antithetic to the work or provocatively flaunts the absence of any thematic relevance)[35] (Genette, *Paratexts* 82-83).

Titles that focus on the way a theme is elaborated can take "the path of a genre designation" (e.g., *Tales*) or "display a sort of genre innovation" (e.g., *Unfashionable Observations*; *Approximations*) (Genette, *Paratexts* 86). I suggest calling such titles *architextual* to align them with the type of transtextuality that indicates the generic status of the text. Not uncommon are mixed titles that begin with a genre identification and move on to describe a theme (e.g., *Treatise of Human Nature*; *Portrait of a Lady*) (Genette, *Paratexts* 89); a thematic-architextual mixture can also be created in double titles (e.g., *Faust: Eine deutsche Volkssage* [*Faust: A German Folk Legend*]).

According to Genette, the category of elaborating a theme also includes titles that are at some remove from genre indication and focus on the text itself, like Raymond Smullyan's "simultaneously interrogative and self-referential title" *What Is the Name of This Book?* (Genette, *Paratexts* 87). Following John Barth, I will call titles that refer to

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[34] Accordingly, Genette suggests calling such titles *thematic* and *rhematic*, explaining that he borrows the terms *theme* (what is being talked about) and *rheme* (what is being said about it) from linguistics (*Paratexts* 78-79). I will not adopt the term *rhematic* because Genette's examples of the rhematic title do not conform to more traditional understandings of the term *rheme* (see, for example, Firbas; Halliday; and Jones).

[35] Many Dadaist and Surrealist titles fall under this category.

the work itself rather than to the subject *self-referential*.[36]

Among descriptive titles, the thematic type is most common. The aesthetic value of thematic titles was most often questioned in the twentieth century, although, as Theodor W. Adorno reminds us, already in the eighteenth century, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing expressed his aversion for titles that reveal the contents of a work of art (3). Reinforcing Lessing's point, Adorno states that a good title respects the work's "hiddenness." The work's substance should be captured, not put into words: for instance, Beckett's title *L'innomable* [*The Unnameable*] "not only fits its subject matter but also embodies the truth about the namelessness of contemporary literature" (4). A different way of enabling ramifying interpretations is through a title that "remains undecided, imprecise, unspecified, always to be specified" (Derrida, "Title" 9). Charles Baudelaire achieves this effect in "La fausse monnaie" 'The Counterfeit,' where the title can designate the referent of the tale (the false coin offered to the beggar), refer to the fictitiousness of the narrative itself, or name the author who does not entitle anything precisely (9-10).

Adding connotative value is perhaps another way to create "decent titles . . . into which ideas immigrate and then disappear, having become unrecognizable" (Adorno 6). In his classification, Genette singles out a connotative function,[37] which can be attached to the function of description through historical references (e.g., "the eighteenth-century

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[36] In fact, Barth provides a more elaborate classification: *self-referential* titles refer to the work itself rather than to the subject (e.g., *Film*); titles that name the name of the work are called *self-reflexive* (*The Title of This Book*); *self-demonstrating* titles exemplify what they say (*Book-Titles Should Be Straightforward*) (x-xi). I extend Barth's term *self-referential* to encompass the other two, much rarer, groups of titles.

[37] Genette vacillates between calling it a "connotative function" and "connotative value" (*Paratexts* 89-93).

flavor of long narrative titles à la Defoe"), genre allusions, or cultural effects of quotations, pastiches, and parodies (Genette, *Paratexts* 91). Connotations can also arise once a title is viewed within the context of the whole: for instance, in visual arts the title is often a "nodal point in a complex system of visual-textual switches" (Welchman 219).

The last function of the title identified by Genette is that of temptation: to stimulate the reader's curiosity but not to sate it. The seductive function usually builds on the connotative value of the title and is largely dependent on the receiver, whose likes may not conform to the author's idea of what the addressee finds tempting (*Paratexts* 92-93). The function of temptation can be linked to the ideology of marketable titles in Hollywood as described by Adorno: a commercially successful title is sure to be followed by a flock of imitators and quoters who hope to make a profit by "suck[ing] it dry" (9-10). Indeed, sequels, prequels, and marginal overlaps are often promoted with the title of the predecessor carried like a banner.

Genette's basic classification of the functions of the title—designation, description (often with connotative value), and temptation—can be elaborated to include at least one more function. Since a good title is "the microcosm of the work" (Adorno 4), a sociolinguistic knot, where all the strata of the text are interwoven into an amalgamated idea (Koshevaya 9), the title is characterized by linguistic economy and, thus, performs the function of linguistic compression. Linguistic compression can be defined as an increase in the information value of a language unit due to its inclusion in the textuality of a work (Savukova, "Urovni" 150). Providing an analogy between the economy of the title and economics, Jacques Derrida explains that the "title draws its title-value from its power to produce value and surplus through the economic operation, the operation of economy—or thrift and potentiation of surplus" ("Title" 20). The yarn of condensed

"meanings" begins to get unravelled in the context of the title-work interplay through various types of transtextuality and mediality, where applicable.

Linguistic compression in titles can be effectively achieved via abbreviations and acronyms. Thus, the enigmatic title of Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), when pronounced, yields "a perverse meaning Da Vinci is unlikely to have had in mind: 'elle a chaud au cul'" (Liebman, "*Un Chien*" 150). Since both the original painting and Duchamp's pastiche play on the nature of the gaze, *L.H.O.O.Q.* can also be read in English as an imperative—"look" (Gnaedinger).

The identified functions of the title in literature and painting—designation, description, temptation, linguistic compression—will be carried over into the emerging typology of the functions of film titles. I will also adopt to film three functional types of the title discussed above: thematic (describing the subject matter), architextual (indicating genre), and self-referential (referring to the text itself).

FILM TITLES: LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

In the process of categorization into types, two major points are usually taken into consideration: the form, or the structure, of the element and the function that the element serves. Accordingly, I will discuss two ways of classifying film titles: structural and functional. Since formally, the title in film is created both via linguistic units and through a physical arrangement in space and time, the structural typology will have two major divisions: the linguistic structure and the design.[38]

The linguistic structure of the title can prompt an interpretation independent of the

[38] The design of the title will be analyzed later in a larger framework of the design of title sequences because an artificial separation of the two is not very promising.

semantic meanings of the words that constitute it. The types of linguistic structures of film titles differ little from the ones used in other arts.[39] A significant part, if not the majority, of film titles in English, just like book titles, are structured around a noun or a noun phrase. As Derrida notes in reference to titles in literature, even though the title may not have the grammatical form of a noun, it still produces a nominalizing effect ("Title" 10). Since a title is a name, a noun phrase is a psychological expectation. The absence of a noun may create an additional degree of suspense: the audience would want to know to whom or to what a stand-alone qualitative description, expressed through an adjective (e.g., *Greedy*) or a participle (e.g., *Lost*), or an action, expressed through a verb (e.g., *To Have and Have Not*) or implied through an adverb (e.g., *Truly Madly Deeply*), can be applied in the film.

At this point in the development of cinema, it is possible to claim that some noun-centered structures have even become linguistic signatures of specific film genres. Thus, science fiction and horror titles are often structured as a noun designating an action, a locale, or a temporal indication coupled with a noun/nominalized adjective designating an agent or a collective (N + of + N): e.g., *Island of Lost Souls* (1932), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978), *Attack of the Puppet People* (1958), *Planet of the Apes* (1968), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978, 2004), *Return of the Jedi* (1983), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1996), *Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Revenge of the Sith* (2005). Many thrillers, detective and crime narratives, spy films, and film noir

[39] Theoretically, it is possible to create a comprehensive, but never complete, classification of film titles on the basis of their parts-of-speech components. For instance, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002) has a structure of a noun modified by a possessive pronoun and three adjectives: Pron + Adj + Adj + Adj + N. I see, however, little value in such a classification. Instead, I will try to outline patterns of correlation between a linguistic structure and a meaning associated with it in cinema.

titles have an Adj + N or a N + N structure: e.g., *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Big Heat* (1953), *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962, 2004), *The French Connection* (1971), *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Fatal Attraction* (1987), *Basic Instinct* (1992), *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Sin City* (2005). Of course, the same structures are employed in other genres as well, but the tendencies exist.

In fact, the titles of films created as parodies of a genre often have linguistic structures associated with the genre: for example, *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!* (1978) and its sequel *Return of the Killer Tomatoes!* (1988), both structured N + of + (N + N), are full of spoofs on science fiction and horror films. The two sequels to *The Naked Gun* (1988) (Adj + N), a parody of detective and crime film clichés, also jokingly highlight the vogue for sequels: *The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear* (1991) and *The Naked Gun 33⅓: The Final Insult* (1994). By calling his film *History of the World: Part I* (1981), Mel Brooks did not only parody the cinematic tradition of sequels but also made his fans desperately search for a non-existent and never-envisioned *Part II*, a "trailer" for which he included at the end of the film.

A combination of a noun and a number can intentionally mislead the prospective audience. For instance, more than a dozen people who have not seen *21 Grams* (Alejandro Gonzáles Iñárritu, 2003) have told me that the film must have the theme of drugs as its focus. Although drug use is briefly featured as a means of alleviating the pain of losing one's family, "21 grams" refers to the purported weight of the human soul, as revealed at the end of the film. When attached to a noun, a sign—a semantically empty element—can substitute for an adjective, inviting the viewers to decipher the meaning of such a descriptor, as in *The '?' Motorist*.

Additional meanings can also arise from linguistic structures that incorporate

other parts of speech. Personal and possessive pronouns can raise questions about the type of narrative (e.g., omniscient or limited) and the point of view. An expectation of a more personal engagement on the part of the audience can be signaled through a form of *you* and/or the usage of imperatives (e.g., *Catch Me If You Can; Idi i smotri* [*Go and See*]), if not directed at a fictional character (as in *Slide, Kelly, Slide*), as well as when the title is structured in the form of a question.

Titles with the least semantically-charged structures—numbers, single letters or acronyms, and signs—are perhaps most thought-provoking and suspense-evoking. The audience is forced to act as a detective by building hypotheses about possible referents of the number, letter(s), or sign in the film's reality and then by following the most promising leads, as in the quintessential example of Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) (figure 2.9). Often such units of the title are infused with symbolic significance, especially when they do not appear in the film itself. For instance, Snow's title <---> (1969), the graphic element of which is mimetic, symbolizes the back-and-forth movement of the camera at the core of the film and, thus, acquires a self-referential tint. A good title-to-be-specified may also disallow the exhaustibility of interpretations.



Fig. 2.9. *M*: the mysterious title.

For instance, Robert Breer's title *LMNO* (1978) suggests, rather straightforwardly, the English alphabet. The filmmaker himself explains that “LMNO is just a way of using

the alphabet without using ABCD, which has too many implications" (qtd. in Trainor 19). When I was watching this animation film for the first time, the promise of intermediality made me focus on nothing but the shapes of the objects that reminded me of letters: I was guided by the title and by a quick appearance of the main character's hat in constant motion, which definitely looked like the next letter in the sequence—*P* (figures 2.10 and 2.11). Only when the expected subsequent letters failed to take a clear shape, although a few of the objects could potentially be read as letters (e.g., a tennis racket as a *Q*, or a hammer as a *T*), did the frames of my vision extend. I noticed a conflict between the natural (fish, birds, the sun) and the artificial (an aerosol can, a hammer, a faucet) and started thinking of the ways the acronym could be deciphered, "elimination" springing to mind first and "luminous" (as a self-reflexive gesture towards cinema as an interplay of light and shade) following suit. As Breer acknowledges, LMNO indeed has "a lot of punning possibilities, like 'LMNO goldfish,' and . . . there's a goldfish that appears on the screen" (qtd. in Trainor 19).

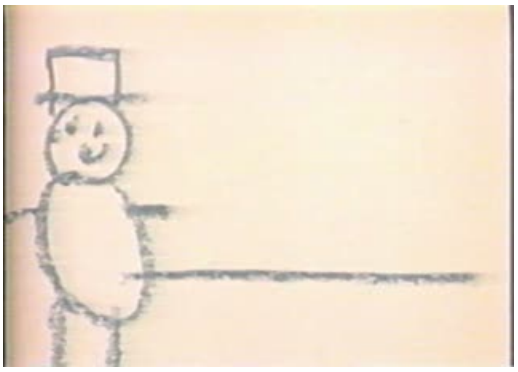


Fig. 2.10. *LMNO*: the hat.



Fig. 2.11. *LMNO*: the intermedial *P*.

Apart from evoking curiosity, letter- or sign-titles can become good selling points. Thus, Darren Aronofsky's choice of the Greek letter π as the title for his 1998 film was determined not only by its association with mathematics and numerology but also because of its marketability: "I can see it now: πs everywhere—stenciled on buildings

and street corners, billboards, napkins, match books, beer coasters" (qtd. in Dillon 48). If such easy and all-pervasive advertising may influence the selection of a title, another function of the title is called for—promotion.

Of course, promotion and temptation go hand in hand, but the function of temptation is responsible for a psychological or aesthetic appeal to the audience, whereas promotion covers the business side. The promotional power of the title was explored already in early cinema, as will be discussed in the following chapter, and became essential with the rise of narrative features in the teens. Thus, Epes Winthrop Sargent insists that a clever title, which helps to advertise the narrative although it does not make the plot better, should be brief for two reasons: a short, snappy title can be displayed to advantage on billboards and in newspaper ads and will be more easily remembered (105). The function of promotion accounts for numerous legal battles fought over film titles and is explicitly acknowledged in many court documents, as, for instance, in Rogers v. Grimaldi (1989):

> Titles, like the artistic works they identify, are of a hybrid nature, combining artistic expression and commercial promotion. The title of a movie may be both an integral element of the film-maker's expression as well as a significant means of marketing the film to the public. The artistic and commercial elements of titles are inextricably intertwined. (par. 14)

An effective promotional gimmick, as well as a means of achieving linguistic compression, often arises from a play with the linguistic structure. For example, titles can collocate incompatible grammatical and lexical units (e.g., *It Happened Tomorrow*), break idioms or modify set-phrases (e.g., *Lucky Number Slevin*), create portmanteau words (e.g., *Religulous*), intentionally misspell (e.g., *Inglourious Basterds*), incorporate

non-linguistic signs, often numbers, into the body of the word (e.g., *Se7en*) or use them to substitute for a word phonetically, possibly to create a symmetry of graphic form (e.g., *Jungle 2 Jungle*). Filmmakers can also violate standard grammatical or syntactical rules to imitate stereotypical linguistic behaviors, as, for example, in Marlon Riggs's *Black Is . . . Black Ain't* (1994) on in Spike Lee's *She Hate Me* (2004).[40]

A title in a foreign language can indicate a foreign setting, hint at the atmosphere of isolation and strangeness, or create associative webs of reference. Thus, the original English title of Robert Bresson's French film located in Paris, *Pickpocket* (1959), signals the existentialist condition of alienation, the effect augmented by Bresson's camera work, editing, and distancing narrative techniques (Kline 149-52). Godfrey Reggio's choice of the Hopi language for the titles of his "Qatsi trilogy"—*Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), *Powaqqatsi* (1988), and *Naqoyqatsi* (2002), respectively translated as "life out of balance," "life in transition," and "war as a way of life" (Ebert 459)—invokes the seminal investigations of Benjamin Lee Whorf, who, on the basis of his study of the Hopi language in the 1930s, formulated what is now known as "Whorfian hypothesis" or "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis": the structure of the language influences the ways the speaker of the language perceives the world.[41] Reggio's trilogy, called by Roger Ebert "a series of impressionistic documentaries contrasting the nobility of nature with the despoliation of

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[40] The Monster in *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935) pronounces the phrase "She hate me" when his newly created mate screams in horror at his advances. However, this reference was not intended in Lee's film. In fact, as the director reveals in a interview, he was not aware of this episode from *Bride of Frankenstein* when he was making the film. For the title, Lee added an *s* to the inscription that Rod Smart had sported on his jersey: "HE HATE ME." The filmmaker considered this to be "the sports world's greatest nickname ever" (Knight).

[41] For an overview of the ramifications and critiques of the hypothesis, see, for example, Gentner and Goldin-Meadow.

mankind" (459), reveals the omnipresence of images as a new language of social interaction, which determines how and what we think.

Titles in an invented language can point to a science fiction element of the film or symbolize the nonsensical absurdity of the situation. Both uses are brilliantly showcased in Georgy Danelia's *Kin-dza-dza!* (1986), where the social and technological structures on the planet Plyuk of the Kin-dza-dza galaxy grotesquely caricature the human condition. The main lexicon of the planet's inhabitants, visually presented as an abridged dictionary at the beginning of the second part of the film, consists of six words, which identify technical terms or are related to the social status, and of two more entries—*кю* (pronounced similarly to *kew*), a socially acceptable curse, and *ку* (pronounced similarly to *koo*), which stands for all other possible words. The title gets etymologically linked to the herb *kindza* ("coriander"), which doesn't play a significant role in the film other than serving as a failed substitute for nicotine when a central character runs out of cigarettes, tries to smoke a *kindza* joint, and exclaims "Kin-dza-dza!" in frustration.

FILM TITLES: FUNCTIONAL TYPOLOGY

Among the three functional types of film titles identified so far—thematic, architextual, and self-referential—thematic is most common in performing the function of description. Thematic titles can describe or refer to any element of the film's diegesis. An eponymous thematic title can provide the protagonist's or a central character's name (e.g., *Ramona*; *Forrest Gump*), sometimes tempting the prospective audience with a hint at an unusual situation (e.g., *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*). The title can also focus on a persona who never makes the appearance but nevertheless exerts influence on the characters and on the situation in general, as in Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940).

Instead of a proper name, the eponymous character can be identified by his/her

profession, hobby, title, position in society, and the like (e.g., *The Duchess*; *Taxi Driver*; *G. I. Jane*), in which case the title compresses the information by pointing out the protagonist and at the same time by hinting at situations in which the audience can expect to encounter the character. Characters may be designated in a manner that promises a certain development of the plot and/or hints at the genre (e.g., *Psycho*; *Nebelmörder,* known in English as *The Foggy Night Murderer*]); sometimes such titles defy generic expectations, when a crime or horror film turns out to be a comedy (e.g., *Killer Nerd*; *Dead Man Drinking*). Quite popular is the *Peeping Tom* title, which tempts the audience with a voyeuristic promise (the earliest film bearing this title was produced by American Mutoscope Company in 1897).[42] The promise has been developed into comedies, as in the film directed by Jason Todd Ipson in 2002, where the whole world goes nude, and into horror thrillers, as in Michael Powell's 1960 version of a young man murdering women to film their dying expressions of fear.

A thematic title can identify an inanimate object that plays a central role in the narration, sometimes endowing it with human characteristics through naming (e.g., the locomotive in *The General* (Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman, 1926)). If the object of the title does not appear until very late in the film, as in Paul Verhoeven's *Zwartboek* [*Black Book*] (2006), such a withholding builds up the suspense while frustrating any potential interpretations of the title prior to the object's appearance.

Filmmakers can use names in the title to create a meta- and architextual play on the conventions of the linguistic structure of hagiography: for example, “The Life of . . .” is expected to provide a biographical narrative of a hero, a saint, or at least a person of

[42] The phrase “Peeping Tom” has also been incorporated into longer titles, as in *Peeping Tom and His Telescope* (1903), *Peeping Tom in the Dressing Room* (1905), and *Bachelor Tom Peeping* (1962).

importance. *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979) and *The Life and Death of 9413—A Hollywood Extra* (Robert Florey and Slavko Vorkapich, 1927) are just two examples of films that create a fake hagiography.

Thematic titles can orient the audience in the spatial-temporal diegesis of the film. They can designate the locale (e.g., *In Bruges*; *On the Waterfront*), indicate the time of action (e.g., *Friday the 13th*), mention or hint at an event to take place at a certain time (e.g., *Karnaval'naia noch'* [*Carnival Night*]; *3:10 to Yuma*). In the cases of temporal titles, the date usually has a cultural or historic significance (e.g., *1918*; *Born on the Fourth of July*) and can be coupled with a symbolic interpretation of the event associated with the date (e.g., *1492: Conquest of Paradise*). Titles that indicate a duration or a lapse of time often hold a narrative promise that something should happen within or at the end of this interval (e.g., *48 Hours*; *28 Days Later*; *From Dusk till Dawn*); once the "mystery" is revealed, the audience's interest is refocused on *how* this something can be achieved within the specified time frame or *why* it should happen or come to an end.

Titles can also engage in a metatextual critique of spatial and temporal designations. For example, Alain Resnais's *L'année dernière à Marienbad* [*Last Year at Marienbad*] (1961) ridicules "the twin coordinates of filmic fiction" (Stam 35) by creating a dream world where the conventional notions of time and space are challenged. The temporal information provided in the title can be undermined by the actual duration of the film. Thus, the title and the beginning of Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* [*Cleo from 5 to 7*] (1962) promise to tell the story in real time, yet the film continues for ninety minutes, which underscores the subjectivity of time perception during a personal crisis. The title shot of Robert Nelson's *Bleu Shut* (1970) indicates that the film is going to last for thirty minutes (figure 2.12), with the promise foregrounded by the image of a clock

present in the upper right-hand corner throughout the whole film. As Nelson explains, "The clock came out of my own arduous struggle to sit through a lot of independent movies. I often have a powerful urge to look back to see how much is left on the reel. When I succumb, the reel always looks *huge*! I put the clock up there so that no one would have to turn around" (MacDonald, *Critical Cinema* 272). Nelson does, however, intentionally make the viewers "turn around": after the expected thirty minutes of real time have run out (figure 2.13) in the middle of a spoken monologue about "what the film has been about," the film continues, albeit for just three minutes.



Fig. 2.12. *Bleu Shut*: the promise of duration.

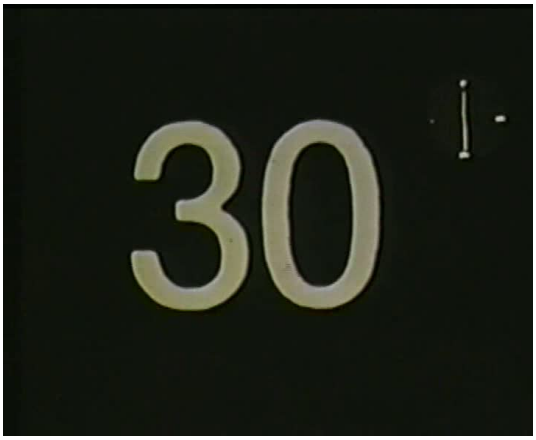


Fig. 2.13. *Bleu Shut*: the time is up!

Thematic titles can also highlight narrative elements of the plot – a core incident of the film (*Crash*) or a major unfolding action (*Heist*; *The Great Escape*; *Saving Private Ryan*). According to a 1913 photoplay manual, the best title "almost gives the entire story in a word or two or three" without revealing the denouement but leaving it "as the bait which attracts the spectator to the theatre" (E. H. Ball 36). However, Ball's advice seems to work and have worked best for titles that sell the script to a studio (i.e., for working titles) rather than for the ones that appeal to film audiences or distributors. His own career illustrates it: the films for which Ball is credited as a writer on the International Movie Database website have titles that identify the major character(s) or express the theme

rather than outline the narrative (*Beyond the Rainbow*; *The Voice on the Wire*; *Checkers*; *The Girl and the Inventor*; *Robin Hood*).

In spite of the narrative drive of many commercial films, titles naming the incident or describing the action are, however, quite rare among full features. Even action films seem to eschew such titles; if at all used, narrative titles are usually pithy and/or acquire connotative value in the context of the film. One possible explanation of this phenomenon could be the fact that narration is connected to the linguistic structures of full sentences or clauses, which are unwieldy in advertising and are not usually as catchy and appealing as titles created through noun or adjective phrases.

There is one narrative verb, however, that film titles have favored since the beginning of movies: *happen*.[43] The aesthetic value of this verb consists in signaling narrative action but withholding the filling. Titles with *happen* promise an exciting event, often presented in detail, and keep the audience guessing which part of the narrative can qualify for this hinted titular happening (e.g., *What Happened Was . . .* ; *It Could Happen to You*). In early cinema, titles beginning with "What Happened" sometimes catered to the audience's voyeurism with a promise of sexual undertones (e.g., *What Happened When a Hot Picture Was Taken* (1898); *What Happened to the Burglar* (1899); *What Happened on Twenty-Third Street, New York City* (1901); *What Happened in the Tunnel* (1903); *What Happened to the Milkman* (1903)). This might have been the reason why Frank Capra's Oscar-winning 1934 classic, based on Samuel Hopkins Adams's short story "Night Bus" (Wheeler 201), was entitled *It Happened One Night* and why the 1930 spoof on early sound cinema and on formulaic melodramatic plots—*Tomatos Another Day* by James Sibley Watson, Jr.—was alternatively called *It Never Happened* and *What May*

[43] The IMDB website lists more than three hundred titles with the verb *happen*.

Happen.[44]

Within the thematic type, most popular are titles that concisely describe the theme, often metaphorically (e.g., *Rear Window*; *Memento*). This trend in title naming has not changed much throughout the history of cinema. Sargent points out that the title "must be applicable to the story" but "must not be self-explanatory" to arouse the potential spectator's curiosity (106). Emerson and Loos provide guidelines announced at the beginning of the twenties by "[o]ne of the largest companies in the industry": the title must "fit the story," "have box office drawing power," and "be terse and clear" (39); i.e., the title's functions were to describe in a compressed form and to attract. E. H. Ball's definition of a perfect title corroborates these functions: "The ideal photoplay title is that which resembles a book name—short, hinting at much and yet concealing more, strong in phrase and appealing to sentiment" (40). In a nutshell, thematic titles can perform the major functions of a film title: designation, description, linguistic compression, temptation, and promotion.

Architextual titles that assign the film to a genre or a type of narrative are less numerous or varied than thematic titles and are more popular among avant-garde and independent filmmakers (e.g., Keith Sonnier's *Animation I* (1973); Melvin Van Peebles's

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[44] There is conflicting evidence about the spelling of the title and the directorial credit, which stems from the fact that the original titular shot, if at all included in the film during its initial release, does not seem to have survived. Lisa Cartwright states that *Tomatoes Another Day* was a collaborative project of James Sibley Watson, Jr. and Melville Webber (156). Richard Kostelanetz is of the same opinion (656). In the allographic titular shot of the film version available on Disk 1 of the DVD set *Avant-Garde 3: Experimental Cinema 1922-1954*, released by Kino in 2009, the title is spelled *Tomatos Another Day*, yet another alternative title—*It Didn't Happen That Night*—is listed, and the sole directorial credit is given to Watson, with Alec Wilder credited as the scenario writer. The allographic titular shot of the version available on Disk 2 of the DVD set *Unseen Cinema*, the title is listed as *Tomato Is Another Day* and the authorship is given to "J. S. Watson Jr. and Alec Wilder."

Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song (1971); Bruce Conner's *Report* (1967)). As in literature, where genre indications are more often delegated to a secondary title (Genette, *Paratexts* 56), the film's "genre" may be included into a title sequence, sometimes in the same shot as the title (figure 2.14), rather than become part of the object of commercial and critical discourse. James Benning's *Grand Opera: An Historical Romance* (1979) is a curious exception to the rule since it builds on architextuality both in the main title and the secondary title.

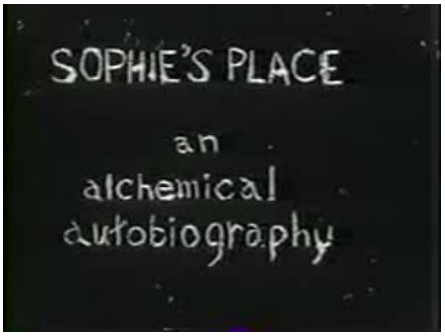


Fig. 2.14. *Sophie's Place* (Larry Jordan, 1986): the architextual secondary title.

Architextual elements in the title can, for example, introduce epic dimensions (e.g., *A Bronx Tale*) or poetic coloring (e.g., *Ballada o soldate* [*Ballad of a Soldier*]), point to the fictionality of the narrative or the blurred distinctions between fiction and reality (e.g., *Die unendliche Geschichte* [*The Neverending Story*]), and tempt the audience by a promise of excitement (e.g., many "Adventure(s)" titles). Some linguistic structures associated with a genre have also taken firm root in the cinema, as has the "Once upon a time" fairy-tale beginning (e.g., *C'era una volta il West* [*Once upon a Time in the West*]; *Once upon a Time in America*; *Once upon a Time in Mexico*).

Titles that contain the words *film* or *movie*, as well as the root *cine* and nouns that can act as substitutes (e.g., *remake*), are often located on the border of architextuality and self-referentiality. Common both in mainstream and independent cinema, such films make fun of genre conventions (e.g., Keenen Ivory Wayans's *Scary Movie* (2000) and its

sequels), challenge narrative and psychological expectations (e.g., *Film About a Woman Who . . .* (Yvonne Rainer, 1974)), incorporate self-reflexive gestures on various levels to twist the narrative and confound the audience (e.g., *The Last Horror Film* (David Winters, 1982)), foreground the process of filmmaking and elevate the status of a filmmaker (e.g., *Kino-glaz* [*Kino-Eye*] (Vertov, 1924)), play on the physical characteristics of the celluloid by incorporating them into the film's diegesis (e.g., *Broken Down Film* (Osamu Tezuka, 1985)), and so forth.

Titles that refer to the process of the actual making of the eponymous film are also self-referential; these are often documentaries or mockumentaries (e.g., *Hellzapoppin' Spooktacular: The Making of 'Ghouls Gone Wild'* (Chad Jones, 2005)).[45] Another way of creating a self-referential title is through the deictic indicator *this*, which can point to the film itself, among other possible referents, as in James Broughton's *This Is It* (1971) and Snow's *So Is This* (1982). Self-referentiality is also present in titles that incorporate the name of a prominent member of the cast or the crew. For example, as Russell Merritt observes, the title of Griffith's *Sunshine Sue* (1910) acknowledges the lead actress Marion Sunshine, who had been a vaudeville star for a number of years when Griffith hired her, although such a nod was in stark contrast to the Biograph practice of refraining from identifying the actors' names in the films themselves or in promotional materials (“Decree” 268).

Whereas a self-referential title points to the filmic work it entitles, there also exist numerous titles that manifest the cinema's preoccupation with itself: the process and art of filmmaking, the artificiality of the purported cinematic reality, the co-existence in the

[45] This title is also doubly self-reflexive because it incorporates the title of an earlier film, *Hellzapoppin'* (H. C. Potter, 1941), which is about making a movie and includes numerous references to other films and direct addresses to the audience.

transtextual space of cinematic references. To reflect this tendency in the world of cinema, it makes sense to single out another functional type of the title—*self-reflexive*.

Self-reflexive titles can be created through intertextual quoting or alluding to another film (e.g., *Maltese Bippy*; *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*). A direct evocation of a prior film can be combined with a self-pointing gesture in a fusion of self-referentiality and self-reflexivity (e.g., *The Last Remake of Beau Geste*). Titles that adopt the linguistic structure of the genre they parody (e.g., *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!*) can be called *self-reflexive* as well. Self-reflexivity is also present in titles that refer to the cinematic apparatus (e.g., *Projection Instructions*). Self-reflexive titles that name anything or anybody that is directly associated with the cinema as an industry (e.g., *Hollywood*; *Sunset Blvd.*; *Being John Malkovich*) are perhaps most frequent.

The numerous cases of self-referential and self-reflexive titles discussed above warrant putting forward another function of the title—self-reflexivity. It may be argued that this function is but a branch of description. However, research on self-reflexivity has taken firm root in film studies as a separate subfield,[46] and the role of the title in self-reflexive discourse deserves being singled out as a separate function.

So far, the functional types of film titles have been identified as follows:
a thematic title provides a glimpse into the film's diegesis; an architextual title classifies the film according to the genre and situates it in the domain of art and fiction;
a self-referential title points to the filmic text itself; a self-reflexive title places the film in the framework of the cinema as an industry and a mode of production. None of these types, however, reflect another vector along which titles may be created—the one that

[46] See, for example, Dillon; Jahraus and Scheffer; James, *Allegories*; Rosenbaum, *Placing*; and Stam.

directly addresses the audience or ensures the viewer's active participation.

The most common linguistic structures of direct address, as discussed earlier, are questions, imperatives, and phrases incorporating the personal pronoun *you* and its possessive variations *your* and *yours*. Film titles that employ these structures exert a psychological pressure on the audience to respond, engaging the reader of the title in an implicit dialogue; therefore, this functional type of title will be called *interlocutionary*.[47] Interlocutionary titles may challenge the addressee's habits and stances (e.g., *Thank You for Smoking*; *Never Say Never Again*), may hint at a complicitous or a friendly relationship between the audience and the film creators, especially when a form of the personal pronoun *I* is employed (e.g., *I Know What You Did Last Summer*; *You Can Count on Me*), may give direct commands that can also be interpreted as ways of introducing the audience to the film's universe (e.g., *Follow Me Quietly*; *Don't Look Now*). Film titles phrased as questions can intrigue with their ambiguity (e.g., *Who?* and *Why?*), press the audience to search for an answer to the posed mystery (e.g., *Who is Cletis Tout?*) or problem (e.g., *Who Killed the Electric Car?*), and engage in a conversation (e.g., *Why Change Your Wife?* and *Was Justice Served?*). When a question mark is omitted, the resulting question clause turns into a promise that a mystery will be revealed (e.g., *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*) or that the director will address a commonly asked question (e.g., *Pourquoi Israël* [*Israel, Why*]).

Such direct appeals, however, are not the only ways of engaging the viewers in an implicit dialogue. Sargent, who finds title-questions to be “too open and brazen” invitations to become curious, suggests a more subtle appeal—that of seemingly

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[47] Ursula Wiesemann, for instance, calls the first- and second-person pronouns *interlocutionary* (206).

oxymoronic titles, which the viewers are tempted to unravel (e.g., *He Married His Daughter*) (106), or abridged titles, which the spectators are encouraged to complete while watching the film (e.g., *Father Said They Shouldn't*) (104).[48] Employing personal pronouns appeals to the audience's desire to match them to the possible referent(s) in the film (e.g., *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* [*Two or Three Things I Know about Her*]); deictic indicators of time and space work similarly (e.g., *Being There*). Overall, interlocutionary titles are uniquely suited to perform the function of temptation: they arouse curiosity and acknowledge the importance of the audience, which helps achieve what Billy Wilder identified as the most vital thing for titles and title sequences: "to get the audience on your side, to work with you, to work for the film" (qtd. in Kirkham 20).

In creating a functional typology of the titles, it is impossible to encompass all the details of the roles that the title plays. The broad categories of types—thematic, architextual, self-referential, self-reflexive, and interlocutionary—perform the following functions, separately and through overlap: designation, description, linguistic compression, temptation, promotion, and self-reflexivity. When building a structural typology of film titles, with an emphasis on design and visual presentation, it is advisable to view titles in the context of title sequences.

TITLE SEQUENCES: DESIGN AND VISUAL PRESENTATION

Since films are moving pictures, the visual presentation of the linguistic structure of titles in film, unlike in books, has an additional temporal dimension. The design of

[48] The descriptors "oxymoronic title" and "abridged title" are mine. In his descriptions, Sargent only provides examples of clever and snappy titles that arouse curiosity in a subtle way. It is not clear whether *He Married His Daughter* or *Father Said They Shouldn't* have ever been filmed.

words in title sequences may be viewed from the following perspectives: the inscription of the words, typography, temporal presentation, interplay of the title and credits with other words, and interaction with visual images and actors.[49]

When applied directly to celluloid, the actual inscription of the title is most often type-printed, scratched, or painted.[50] Printed titles are a staple of cinema, and any deviation from the norm arouses aesthetic curiosity. Quite a few avant-garde filmmakers of the post-World-War-II era, among them Brakhage, James Irwin, and Len Lye, scratched titles and credits on the film stock. For example, the title of Lye's *Particles in Space* (1979) is presented as a sequence of scratched letters and clusters that simulate the chaotic movement of particles. Lye's scratching technique can perhaps be related to his habit of doodling, which, according to Roger Horrocks, the artist regarded as a vital method of discovery that served as a starting point for some of his paintings (47). Robert Huot's *Scratch* (1967), which is "nothing more than eleven minutes of dark leader with a continuous handmade scratch" (MacDonald, "Surprise!" 298), epitomizes the fascination of artists with a dance of light and rhythm made possible through scratching.

Hand-painted titles can create a more intimate space than printed titles, and this effect of cuteness and cosiness can be played upon. For instance, Ken Jacobs's *Little Stabs at Happiness* (1963), which begins with a hand-painted inscription of the title (figure 2.15), eventually proceeds to literalize the metaphoric title when the male

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[49] For an overview of films, video, and digital media where the visual presentation of the lettering—through movement and graphic style—makes words the leading character, see Scheffer and Stenzer; Stenzer. For "a survey of forms and functions of title sequences in film," see Stanitzek.

[50] With the development of video and digital technology, other ways of inscribing have become possible. I will forego a discussion of these types because my project mainly focuses on films created on film.

character stabs a cigarette out in between a boy doll's eyes (figure 2.16). The cute, non-threatening nature of the title shot is also achieved through the butterfly-shape of the capital letter *H* and the tinsel and confetti fluttering in the frame.

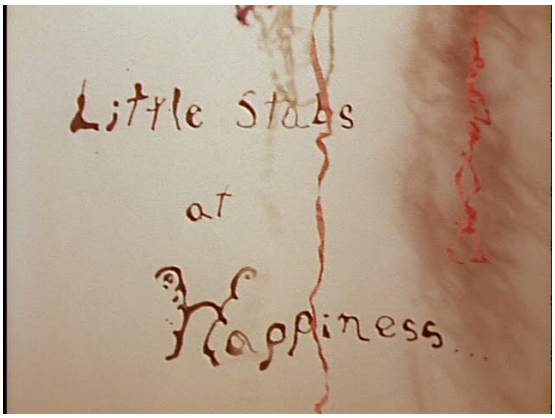


Fig. 2.15. *Little Stabs at Happiness*: the cute hand-painted title.



Fig. 2.16. *Little Stabs at Happiness*: a literal stab.

The typography of the title sequence is often designed to contribute to generating an emotional response and mimic or hint at the thematic content of the film. Thus, in horror films, red lettering on a black background in the title sequence is not infrequent, sometimes with added effects, for instance, of blood dripping or of letters turning into blood smudges, as in Zack Snyder's *Dawn of the Dead* (2004) (figures 2.17 and 2.18):



Fig. 2.17. *Dawn of the Dead*: yet intact.



Fig. 2.18. *Dawn of the Dead*: smudged out.

When preceded by differently-colored credits, the menacing red of the title can jolt the viewer into a horror-film state of mind. This effect can also be reinforced by a difference in the font and temporal presentation. Thus, in Peter Duffell's *The House That Dripped*

Blood (1971), the yellow-lettered names of the actors, printed in a neutral font without any changes to the size (figure 2.19), are followed by a blood-cluttered title (figure 2.20), which rapidly grows to fill the center of the screen:



Fig. 2.19. *The House That Dripped Blood*: the neutral credits.



Fig. 2.20. *The House That Dripped Blood*: the horror title.

When color play was still technically difficult, James Whale resorted to an overlapping of the fade-out of the horror star's name and the fade-in of the title, together with an uneven filling of the frayed letters, to establish a creepy mood in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) (figures 2.21 and 2.22).



Fig. 2.21. *Bride of Frankenstein*: the foggy fades.



Fig. 2.22. *Bride of Frankenstein*: the frayed letters.

Color choices for several credits in a title sequence can also foreshadow a larger color symbolism of the film. For example, the leading cast of Tom Tykwer's *Winterschläfer* [*Winter Sleepers*] (1997) are introduced via different colors to which their

characters will be wedded in the entire film.[51] Rene's minus-color—dirty white—is symptomatic of the lack of his long-term memory, for which he tries to substitute by constantly taking pictures. An even more radical minus-device is employed in the introduction of Theo: *Theo* is typed out letter by letter superimposed over the character's visual image, like the names of all the main characters have been; however, the character's name is not followed by the actor's name. This device strips the character of Theo of any identification, perhaps symbolic of his blinding obsession to find the identity of the driver (Rene) who has caused his daughter's eventual death from injury.

Temporal presentation can also enable the letters of a title sequence to illustrate the action described in the title. Thus, Saul Bass, a legendary figure in title design, made the letter *T* in *The Seven Year Itch* (Wilder, 1955) scratch as if to relieve an itch. The literalized *itch* with the scratching letter is spatially separated from the other words so that the viewers could not fail to notice the gimmick (figures 2.23 and 2.24).

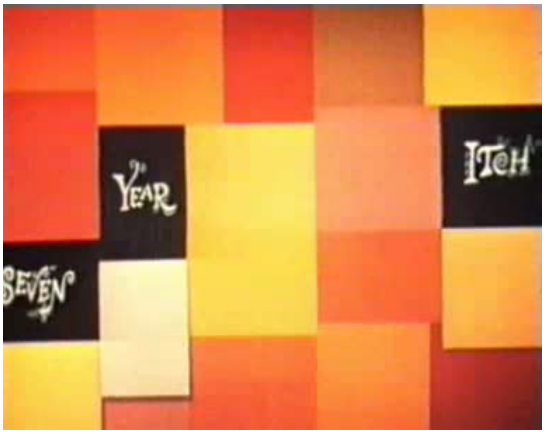


Fig. 2.23. *The Seven Year Itch*: an itch about to be demonstrated.



Fig. 2.24. *The Seven Year Itch* (fragment enlargement): the scratching *T*.

Writing the credits in another language can create a link to the film's reality. For example, in Mark Steven Johnson's *Daredevil* (2003), the blindness of the eponymous

[51] For a brief discussion of color symbolism in *Winterschläfer*, see Osborne 29-30; Schlipphacke 124-25.

character is highlighted through the names spelled by the lights of New York City in Braille, and only subsequently in English (figures 2.25 and 2.26):

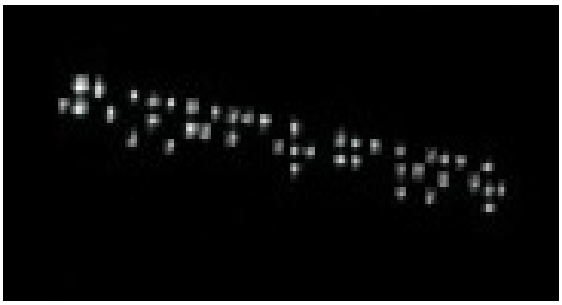


Fig. 2.25. *Daredevil* (fragment enlargement): in Braille first.



Fig. 2.26. *Daredevil* (fragment enlargement): in English.

The lettering of a title sequence can also allude to another alphabet, associated with the culture or nation whose representatives are portrayed in the film. Thus, Pablo Ferro, another title design guru, inverted the letters *R* and *N* in the title word *Russians* in *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* (Norman Jewison, 1966) to make them look like the letters *Я* and *И* from the Russian alphabet; he also substituted *G* with a hammer and sickle, as a satirical encroachment on the English alphabet. At the beginning of the title sequence, gradually increasing red lines also simulate an advancement of the "reds," while forming an intermedial *S* on the way, possibly to hint at *Soviet* or *socialist* (figure 2.27). As Steven Heller observes, this design of the title sequence was perfect to introduce a cold-war comedy about the Soviet "invasion" ("Mr Roughcut" 30). The words in the credit sequence of *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008) get linked by a horizontal bar (figure 2.28), a signature of the Devanāgarī script, which, according to Florian Coulmas, is used in many languages of India, including Hindi (126, 204).



Fig. 2.27. *The Russians Are Coming . . .* : the English alphabet under threat.



Fig. 2.28. *Slumdog Millionaire*: a horizontal bar invoking the script of India.

Varying font size in title sequences is a common device employed to highlight words of special importance and to single out the main characters or stars, an in Howard Hawks's *Red River* (1948) (figure 2.29):



Fig. 2.29. *Red River*: emphasizing centrality through size.

Playing with letter dimensions can also subtly imply that people can be manipulated through language into reassessing what is important and into believing the empty words of political speeches. In his first film project, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Stanley Kubrick, 1963), Ferro filled the whole screen with rough-hewn letters, which Kubrick found more effective than a refined script, against the background of military planes engaged in a sexual act (Heller, "Mr Roughcut" 29). In several credit shots, prepositions and conjunctions (semantically empty, non-signifying units) loom larger than the names (figure 2.30). Equally subversively, the statement of unintentional resemblance, which usually occupies the full length of the screen, is

squeezed into a right-hand column paragraph of what looks like a newspaper page (figure 2.31): thus, since the Cold-War mass media was known to propagate falsehoods, the overall fictitiousness of the characters and incidents can be taken with a grain of salt.



Fig. 2.30. *Dr. Strangelove . . . : WITH* looming large.



Fig. 2.31. *Dr. Strangelove . . . :* the "fictitiousness" of characters and incidents.

Not only font size is used to highlight stars and important elements. Temporal sequencing and repetition can also be tied into celebrity and authorship since beginnings and endings claim more perceptual attention and are more memorable than the middle.[52] The film studio's logo usually gets the first spot among all other verbal elements, to establish the rights and, at the same time, to act as a promise of reputable entertainment. In contemporary films especially, the name of whoever has the most drawing power is usually listed first, and may stay longer on the screen, even though he or she may not be the main or eponymous character. If the director's fame acts as a better magnet, then one is likely to encounter this name first, often repeated at the end.

When exceptions are made, words that usurp the firstness are thrown into high relief, as in *To Die For* (Gus Van Sant, 1995), where the superimposed title "LITTLE

[52] In educational psychology, this phenomenon is known as the *primacy-recency effect* or the *serial position effect*: "we remember best that which comes first, second best that which comes last, and least that which comes just past the middle" (Sousa 89).

HOPE, NEW HAMPSHIRE," a telling invented location, precedes the producer's and director's names. An extreme case is the preface to *Dr. Strangelove*, which relegates the Columbia logo to the second place and seems to stress the impossibility and unreality of the diegetic events, the impression soon to be undermined: "It is the stated position of the U.S. Air Force that their safeguards would prevent the occurence [sic] of such events as are depicted in this film. Furthermore, it should be noted that none of the characters portrayed in this film are meant to represent any real persons living or dead."

Another aspect of temporal presentation—progressive appearance of the title letters, defying simultaneity as the norm—can also be infused with significance. Guy Debord's palindromatic title *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978), which can roughly be translated from Latin as "We enter the circle by night and are consumed by fire," appears letter by letter from both ends in a mirror fashion (figures 2.32 and 2.33). This presentation not only makes the palindrome obvious but also emphasizes the power of the cinematic medium to critique the very nature of spectatorship since the film proper makes the viewers look at themselves as if in a mirror.

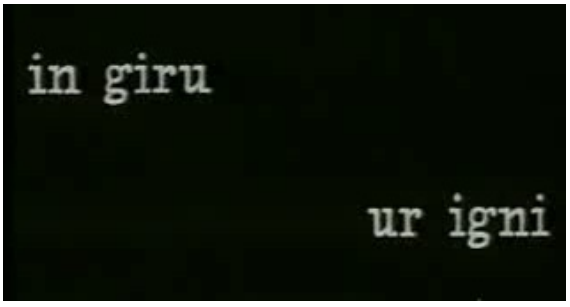


Fig. 2.32. *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*: the palindrome unrolling.

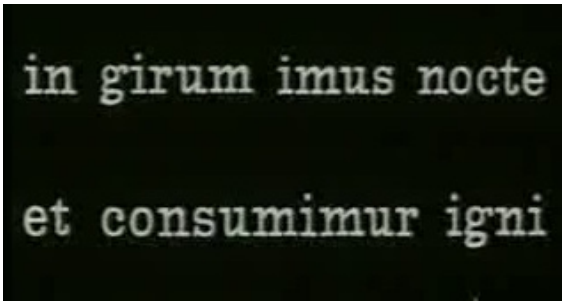


Fig. 2.33. *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*: the palindrome complete.

In Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), the letters themselves are revealed line by line, with the title presented in its entirety only at the very end of the sequence, together with the name of the director (figures 2.34 and 2.35):



Fig. 2.34. *Alien*: a gradual revelation.



Fig. 2.35. *Alien*: finally complete.

This strategy mimics the gradual revelation of the truth of the "rescue" mission, as well as the alien's unexpected appearance in different places. The words moving from the opposite directions towards each other in Ken Russell's *Altered States* (1980) (figure 2.36) reveal in the letters a composite image of a man floating in a water tank, indicating the split and constantly transforming state of mind, the theme of the film.



Fig. 2.36. *Altered States*: superimposed and split.

Including the title sequence into the same spatial-temporal plane as visual images allows for diverse interactions between the word and the image. Always popular, animation in title sequences can hint at the development of narration, position the characters in relation to other figures, and highlight their signature features, as in Steven Spielberg's *Catch Me If You Can* (2003), where arrows and the actors' names single out, among others, a hatted character played by Tom Hanks (figure 2.37), who is chasing after the constantly-changing Leonardo Di Caprio figure (figure 2.38).

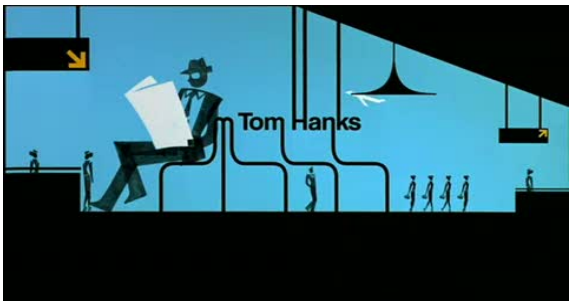


Fig. 2.37. *Catch Me If You Can*: the signature hat.

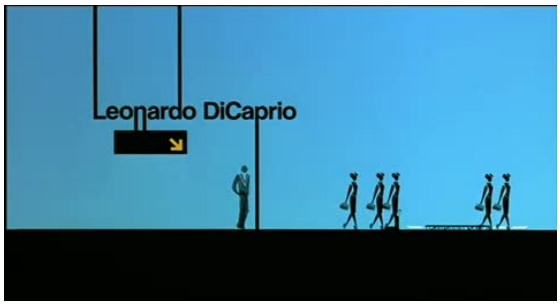


Fig. 2.38. *Catch Me If You Can*: about to be transformed.

Features of comics books and pop art, where words and images intermingle extensively, also appeal to film title designers, even when films themselves are not based on comics. Quite illustrative is John Frankenheimer's *99 and 44/100% Dead* (1974), a satire of the gangster movie with a title that parodies the Ivory Soap slogan "99 44/100% Pure." The title sequence, influenced by Roy Lichtenstein's art, includes rapidly flashing onomatopoeic words and interjections (figure 2.39) and actor names in speech bubbles (figure 2.40).



Fig. 2.39. *99 and 44/100% Dead*: the title flashed out word by word.



Fig. 2.40. *99 and 44/100% Dead*: the actor "presenting" himself.

Computer graphics, which are often combined with diagrams and formulas, have plunged the viewers into numerous film realities of scientists, hackers, and future worlds. Elements of business presentations graphics used in the opening credits of Harold Ramis's *Bedazzled* (2000) humorously illustrate a sociological study of humanity by labeling the individuals' characteristics and behavior (figure 2.41) in the world where the devil is about to make a contract for yet another soul. The sequence ends with several

descriptions of the main character (figure 2.42), which give the viewers an insight into his social position and psychological background:



Fig. 2.41. *Bedazzled*: a revelatory labeling.



Fig. 2.42. *Bedazzled*: the character's intro.

Cigarette package design is the appropriate foundation for the title sequence of Jason Reitman's *Thank You for Smoking* (2006), where the title is framed as if on a cigarette label (figure 2.43) and the cast and crew names are often accompanied by phrases associated with cigarette advertising (figure 2.44).



Fig. 2.43. *Thank You for Smoking*: a new brand of cigarettes.

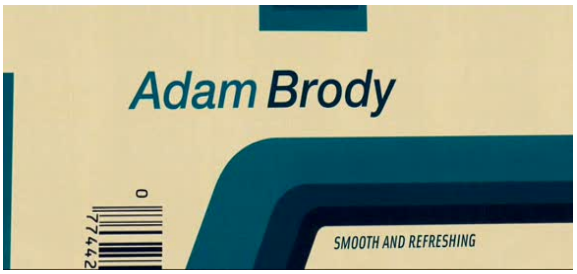


Fig. 2.44. *Thank You for Smoking*: smooth and refreshing … Brody.

Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) presents an attempt at marrying the typography of the drawn title sequence and the film's reality: the optical grid of "the arrowing Cartesian coordinates" that represent the global movement of the film (Deleuze 21) transitions into the facade of a New York City building (figures 2.45 and 2.46). The credits continue to be inscribed along diagonal lines, which also host the reflections of moving cars, until the position changes to the horizontal to mimic the movement of the street crowds.

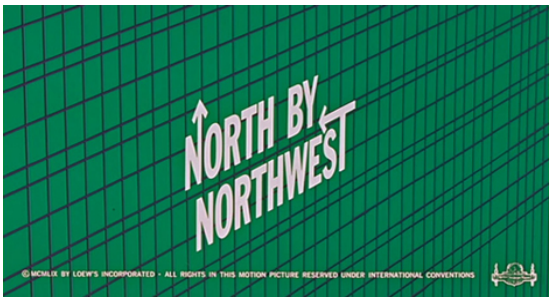


Fig. 2.45. *North by Northwest*: illustrating the coordinates.



Fig. 2.46. *North by Northwest*: the coordinates going diegetic.

The mediality of opening sequences is often created through a tripolar interaction of credits, other verbal elements, and images. A rapid montage of headlines, columns, and close-ups from tabloid newspapers and magazine covers (figure 2.47) in *To Die For* enabled Ferro to compress into a few minutes the background story and aspirations of the main character, who would do anything to jump to fame as a TV newscaster (Heller, "Mr Roughcut" 32). Ferro emphasized the importance of the mass media's overwhelming presence by superimposing his own credits over a newspaper article (figure 2.48):



Fig. 2.47. *To Die For*: the magazine cover fame.

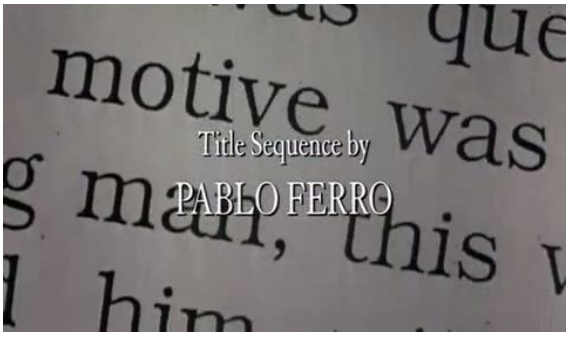


Fig. 2.48. *To Die For*: acknowledging the grandeur of words.

The characters and actor credits in *To Die For* are presented in a multimedial format. Those who have fallen prey to the blonde temptress's charms are quoted on a magazine page, as if engaged in a dialogue, with photos next to them (figure 2.49). The credits for Joaquin Phoenix, who plays a student seduced into killing Susanne's husband, overlay a photo of the woman's body, following a verbal-visual seduction shot (figure 2.50).

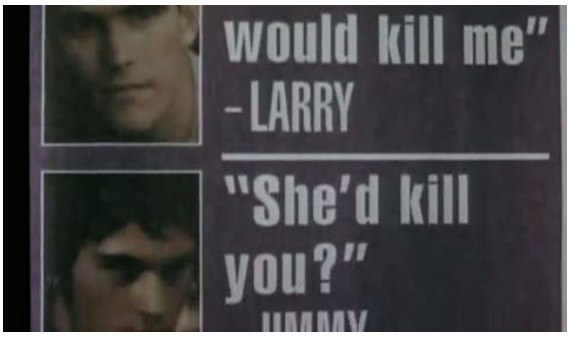


Fig. 2.49. *To Die For*:
the husband-lover interchange.

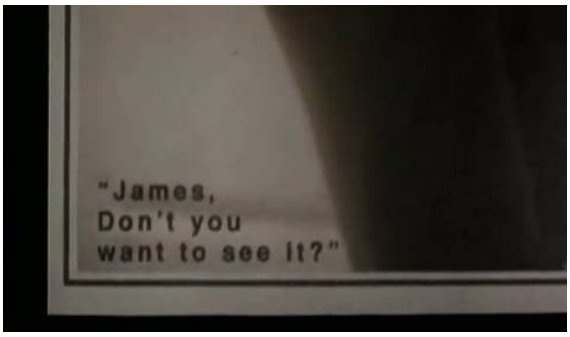


Fig. 2.50. *To Die For*:
the verbal-visual seduction.

When in Louis Malle's *Les Amants* [*Lovers*] (1958), Jeanne Moreau's name appears superimposed over *La Carte de Tendre,* Madeleine de Scudéry's seventeenth-century creation that mapped the roads of courtly love with its successes and pitfalls, one can read the shot as if it were the map of Moreau herself (figure 2.51). Since the entire title sequence unrolls against the same background, the map functions as "a political, symbolic, and utopic geography of this film" (Kline 39) as well as signals discourse on the feminine body and feminine subjectivity.[53]



Fig. 2.51. *Les Amants*: the multipurpose map.

In all of the examples of title sequences provided so far, credit titles are not part of the film's diegesis. They act as designated paratexts (Genette, *Paratexts* 407), framing the

[53] See Kline 34-53 for the implications of the *La Carte de Tendre* background.

"real" text. Traditionally, as Deborah Allison notes, the title sequence is either completely divorced from the diegesis by being inscribed on a plain background or the lettering is superimposed over diegetic footage as an independent plane ("Novelty"), although, as demonstrated earlier, the superimposed titling may interact with the diegetic images through commentary or interpretation.

Filmmakers can also explicitly showcase the porous boundary between the paratextual border and the film narrative. Thus, the eponymous character of Reitman's *Juno* (2007) turns into a rotoscoped figure in the drawn title sequence, when she crosses the boundary marked by a tree trunk (figure 2.52). When the credits are over, she returns to the live-action diegetic world, which is as full of store signs as the non-real world of the credits (figure 2.53). Since the word *drugs* is simultaneously present in both worlds, the viewer is manipulated into thinking that drug use would be a major theme of the film. Ironically, when Juno's mother learns about her teenage daughter's pregnancy (the real nexus of the film), she says, "I was hoping she was expelled or into hard drugs."



Fig. 2.52. *Juno*: leaving the diegetic space.



Fig. 2.53. *Juno*: entering back in.

In animated sequences, it is not unusual for character figures to toy with verbal elements of the credits. But when live actors in the diegetic reality interact with superimposed printed words, such title sequences highlight "the act of showmanship" and self-reflexively emphasize that the film is just a film (Allison, "Novelty"). In the striptease title sequence of Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* (1968), the first letters of the credits

appear flying out of Jane Fonda's hair as she removes her space helmet (figure 2.54), immediately to form “jane fonda” to her right. When the actress finally removes the last piece of her space clothing, letters rush in to cover up her naked body (figure 2.55), only to reinforce the idea of the show: the letters get flooded with light and start dancing.



Fig. 2.54. *Barbarella* (fragment enlargement): generating *jane fonda*.



Fig. 2.55. *Barbarella*: the prudence of letters.

Self-reflexive gestures in title sequences are more widespread in avant-garde cinema. After two false starts of Jacobs's *Blonde Cobra* (1963), a reworking of an abandoned project by Bob Fleishner and Jack Smith (Sitney, *Visionary Film* 315-16), we briefly see title cards stenciled by hand and then presented to us by Smith. What should be the director's credits (“a philm by Bobby Fleishner”) are glimpsed through a hand mirror held by Smith (figure 2.56) before we are shown the full card. The misspelling of the word *film*, as well as Jacobs's decision not to include his name in the title sequence, hint at the deceptive nature of cinema, which, as a mirror image, sheds light on the deceptive appearances of the “real” world. Smith overtly acknowledges the presence of the camera and, thus, establishes links between the film and the viewers, by smiling into the camera, by trying to fit the cards into the camera viewfield, and by deflecting the light with the help of the mirror to blind us for a few seconds. He also makes sure that we know who he is by placing the card “with Jacky Smith” next to his face (figure 2.57).



Fig. 2.56. *Blonde Cobra*: credits in the mirror.

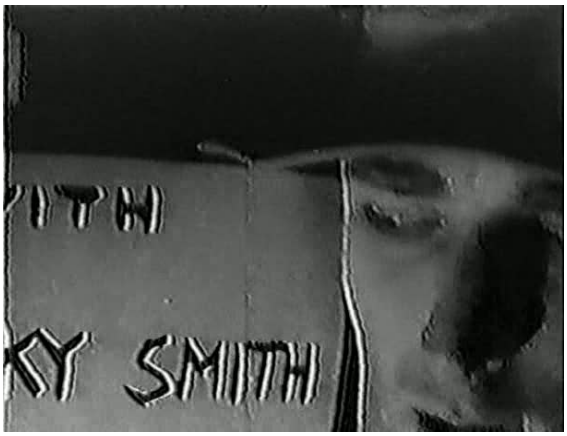


Fig. 2.57. *Blonde Cobra*: "with Jacky Smith."

In *Barbarella* and *Blonde Cobra*, credits are still extraneous to the film reality in spite of the interaction with the actors. Credits, however, can be placed within the film's diegesis, although sometimes only the title gets this privilege. For example, in Wilder's *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) the title is encountered written on a curbstone (figure 2.58), but the credits are superimposed over the moving image of the road surface. Quite popular for this diegetic purpose are signposts, billboards, and street lights. These may hypothetically belong to the diegetic space, if they never appear in the same shot as the film characters, or they may be part of the narrative scenery.[54] In Leon Gast's *Our Latin Thing* (1972), a music documentary about New York City Latino music culture, a boy glances at the credits inscribed as graffiti (figure 2.59) as he walks along a city street.

[54] See Allison, "Novelty" for numerous examples of credit titles "insinuated into the diegetic space" and "positioned within the diegetic space."



Fig. 2.58. *Sunset Blvd.*: the diegetic title.



Fig. 2.59. *Out Latin Thing*: credits as part of the urban scene.

In *Scorpio Rising* (1964), Kenneth Anger firmly places the title of the film and his own name into the film's diegesis—the words are studded on a motorcycle jacket (figure 2.60) and a leather belt (figure 2.61), signatures of the main character's outfit:



Fig. 2.60. *Scorpio Rising*: the title jacket.



Fig. 2.61. *Scorpio Rising*: the director belt.

The "END" of *Scorpio Rising* will also be studded on a belt, acting as a frame. In Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Delicatessen* (1991), the credits are artfully inscribed on objects scattered around what seems to be a storage room for old stuff. Each credit is associatively linked with an object, self-reflexively foregrounding the mode of film production: for instance, the credits for photography are etched into the metal of a rusty and dusty photo camera (figure 2.62) and music credits are presented as the label of a broken gramophone record (figure 2.63). The first close-up of the title sequence in

Delicatessen is a cut-off human hand, possibly discarded as useless in delicatessen meals, which is a direct reference to the film narrative.



Fig. 2.62. *Delicatessen*: photography.



Fig. 2.63. *Delicatessen*: music.

When a character creates the title in front of our eyes in the environment undoubtedly diegetic, the boundary between paratextuality and diegesis gets completely erased. As Allison notes in "Novelty Title Sequences," such an interaction between the actor-character and the title lettering often goes hand in hand with direct address to the audience. For instance, in Don Weis's *I Love Melvin* (1953), when Debbie Reynolds prepares to go on stage, she seems to sight the camera in the mirror (we see her reflection smile at us), which prompts her to write out the title of the film in red lipstick she was about to apply (figures 2.64 and 2.65).



Fig. 2.64. *I Love Melvin*: for the sake of the audience.



Fig. 2.65. *I Love Melvin*: a declaration of love and title.

TITLE SEQUENCES: FUNCTIONS

In most cases, the aspects of the visual presentation and the design of words in title sequences have a functional rationale behind them. Some of the functions of title sequences overlap with those of a stand-alone title: description, temptation, and self-reflexivity.

The function of description focuses on the film's diegesis and the way of presenting it to the viewers. The title sequence can provide a thematic introduction to the film: directly, as in *Thank You For Smoking,* or suggestively, as in *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), where the presentation of credits, with overlapping lines and missing chunks, forecasts a theme of fractured identity (figure 2.66). The title sequence can explicitly mention the temporal-spatial coordinates of the film's reality, as in *To Die For*, or it can hint at the time and location, often through references to historic events. Title sequences can pre-assign qualities to the characters, as in *Bedazzled.* Character introduction was quite popular in the era of silent films,[55] when the names of actors were paired not only with the names of characters for identification purposes, but also with the generic names (e.g., "The Girl") or with a descriptor, the latter practice probably borrowed from theatrical play scripts. For instance, calling a character "A Nervous Woman" in *The Marriage Circle* (Lubitsch, 1923) (figure 2.67) not only indicates her main descriptive feature but also hints at the kind of patients the doctors and the professor are likely to see. Actor names can also signal the genre: for instance, the inclusion of "John Wayne" and "Chief Yowlatachie" into a title sequence is a good indication that the film will probably have features of a western, as does *Red River*.

[55] Character introduction in silent films sometimes extends beyond the title sequence and becomes part of intertitles, examples of which will be discussed later.



Fig. 2.66. *Fight Club*: concealed and fractured.

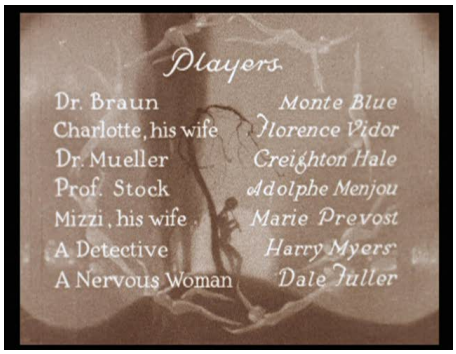


Fig. 2.67. *The Marriage Circle*: a "nervous" specialization.

Title sequences can also have explicit architextual indications when the film is assigned a genre. Rainer inscribed *Lives of Performers* (1972) as "a melodrama" to challenge the conventions of classical Hollywood melodrama (262), but also to introduce a string of narrative-loaded objects, which showcased a woman's perspective, into the atmosphere of the male-dominated avant-garde of the 1970s (72-73). A filmmaker can choose to indicate to what genre the work does not belong, as is the case with *Pickpocket*, where Bresson, in the tradition of confessional literature, explains that "the style of this film is not a thriller" and that the viewers will encounter a nightmarish reality of a youth unwillingly involved in the adventure of thievery (Kline 149). This architextual and self-referential explanation in *Pickpocket* is the ultimate paratextual beginning because it precedes even the shot with the production company logo. Architextual hints can also be located on the border of the title sequence and the film diegesis: for example, Chaplin prefaces the story of *The Kid* (1921) with "A picture with a smile and perhaps a tear," the fact that he found worthy recording in his autobiography (245).

Hypertextual statements about the sources, such as "based on a true story" or "adapted from . . .", as well as their counterparts that profess the work's fictional character, are also "appendages of the genre indication" (Genette, *Paratexts* 218), apart from fulfilling a legal function of preventing libel suits (217). The function of legal

protection, however, is more manifest in end credits, which include acknowledgments of all songs and soundtracks, as well as other copyrighted materials, used in the film.

As a paratext, a title sequence is positioned on the border of two realities—that of the movie theater and that of the film's diegesis. In order to grab the viewers' attention away from the hushed conversations, the opening credits often strive to tempt the audience by an original and catchy presentation. Even though there had been quite a few examples of unusual title sequences in the 1930s (Allison, "Novelty"), the function of temptation performed by title sequences became especially prominent on a large scale in the 1950-60s, "when the film studios were running scared from the advent of television, audiences were plummeting and newly empowered directors were doing the best they possibly could to overwhelm their audiences with the largesse of the cinematic medium" (Hall 221). Establishing the right mood is a corollary of temptation, which facilitates the viewers' passage into the realm of the film's reality.

Self-reflexivity in title sequences can take various disguises. It can bring to the fore components of cinematic production that are usually kept behind the scene, such as the title creation witnessed by the audience in *Blonde Cobra*. Self-reflexivity also steps in whenever cinematic conventions of title sequences are metatextually challenged or toyed with: for instance, when the two usually separate planes of credits and the film's diegesis are conjoined through an interaction between the actor and the credits, as in *Barbarella.*

Direct address to the audience in the title sequence, especially coupled with shattering the two-dimensionality of the words, is also self-reflexive. Thus, in Fairbanks's first film for United Artists, *His Majesty the American* (Joseph Henabery, 1919), the actor leaps through the title, which is by itself straightforward, and tells the audience through short intertitles that he is very excited about his premier with United Artists and hopes the

audience will enjoy the film (W. K. Everson 132). Although in Milos Forman's *Man on the Moon* (1999), Jim Carey's introduction of himself as Andy Kaufman is spoken rather than written, the play with written words allows for another level of self-reflexivity: the conventional unity of image, sound, and text is disrupted—through foregrounding—when the credits seem to be stuck, moving back and forth, as Carey tries to adjust the gramophone record (figure 2.68). Quite popular among film critics is the self-reflexivity of Welles's direct address about fakery and fraud in *Vérités et mensonges* (1973), promoted in the US as *F for Fake*, as well as the ramifications of his promise of the truth of the film, first spoken and then reinforced in writing (figure 2.69).[56]



Fig. 2.68. *Man on the Moon*: stuck credits.



Fig. 2.69. *Vérités et mensonges*: facts for fakery.

Directly referring to cinema is also a common self-reflexive aspect of title sequences, although it is done more frequently through visual images such as shots of cinematic equipment or scenes viewed through the lens of a camera. Bass took a more original approach in Gene Kelly's *That's Entertainment, Part II* (1976), which is a collage of clips from various films: the title sequence is an amalgam of sixteen design clichés, ranging from credits washed away from the sand shore (figure 2.70) to words being burned in wood (figure 2.71):

[56] See, for instance, Florschütz; Rosenbaum, *Placing* 178-83.



Fig. 2.70. *That's Entertainment, Part II*: washed away.



Fig. 2.71. *That's Entertainment, Part II*: burned in.

Invoking the names of other artists in the title sequence can establish connections with their practices or serve as a homage. Isidore Isou dedicates his *Traité de bave et d'éternité* [*Venom and Eternity*] (1951) to "GRIFFITH, GANCE, CHAPLIN, CLAIR, EISENSTEIN, Von STROHEIM, FLAHERTY, BUNUEL, COCTEAU" and other, unnamed, filmmakers who have developed the art of cinema, and he is explicit about his desire to be on the list: "Avec l'espoir qu'on considérera, un jour, l'auteur digne d'eux."[57] Isou's self-reflexive and self-referential title sequence is a vivid illustration of what Genette describes as a desire to get a virtual stamp of legitimacy and support from the dedicatees (*Paratexts* 135-36). The dedication turns into a preface, where Isou explains that his youth is the only reason why his current work, to be subsequently presented in several shots of book covers, is "ridiculed and ignored."

Although the functions of description, legal protection, temptation, self-reflexivity, and dedication are common to various degrees, they are still not obligatory in a title sequence. By contrast, the function of authorial signature is inherent in any credits. Even zero-credits make a statement about the filmmaker's stance on

[57] In the version of *Traité de bave et d'éternité*, available on Disk 2 of *Avant-Garde 2: Experimental Cinema, 1928-1954*, where the title sequence and the prologue are in English, this self-referential statement is translated as "This in the hope that some day the author will be considered worthy of being listed with the above."

authorship: as a metatextual critique of the copyright conventions or as a subscription to Roland Barthes's proclamation of "the death of the author" (*Image* 142). As discussed earlier, the temporal and spatial proximity to the title signals claims to authorship and, at the same time, entails responsibility for the product.

The linguistic structures "[a film] by . . ." and "a . . . film" epitomize the function of authorial signature in title sequences best. If today the blanks are inevitably filled in by the director's name, in pre-sound films it was not uncommon for the screenwriter[58] or the actor to be similarly credited, depending on who had the most weight in attracting the cinema-going public. James Card points out that fortunes were made at the box office not "through the name of any director" but because of the stars of the silent screen (128). As I will later illustrate, authorship in early cinema was universally attributed to film studios, which strove to include the trademark emblem in every title card and sometimes inserted their logos into visual shots as well to prevent the common practice of pirating prints.

The names of studios or production companies have been used by filmmakers to establish intertextual connections and to intimate collective authorship. Thus, Tarantino's calling his company "A Band Apart" (credited, for instance, in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*) harkens back to Godard's *Bande à part* [*Band of Outsiders*] (1964), which Tarantino considers to be "one of the greatest films in the world" (Peary 7). Anger begins his *Scorpio Rising* with a reference to the mischievous trickster in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (figure 2.72) and later intercuts a brief shot of Mickey Rooney, who played Puck in the Max Reinhardt film version of 1935, into the motorcycle race, as if he were "cheering them on to their deaths" (Sitney, *Visionary Film* 103).

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[58] I have already mentioned authorial signature in Pick's *Scherben*: "Ein Drama in fünf Tagen von Carl Mayer" 'A drama in five days by Carl Mayer.' *Sylvester* also credits Mayer as "author."



Fig. 2.72. *Scorpio Rising*: "What fools these Mortals be!"

The function of authorial signature may coincide with the function of ownership statement when the creator of a film, identified as such in a title sequence, owns the rights to the final work. More often, however, when authorship is attributed to an individual—the film director or screenwriter—ownership rights belong to the production company and are established as such in the title sequence. In the silent era, distributors frequently bought films from production companies for exclusive releases and sometimes acquired copyright as well. Thus, the Metro Pictures Corporation owned the copyright to several films created by Joseph M. Schenck Productions and Maurice Tourneur Productions in the twenties, as is evident, for example, from the Library of Congress Copyright Office catalog *Motion Pictures, 1912-1939*. The title shot of *The "High Sign"* (Buster Keaton and Eddie Cline, 1921) reflects this fact by assigning authorship through the phrase "Joseph M. Schenck *Presents* . . .", located at the top of the frame, and by establishing ownership at the bottom: "RELEASED EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH METRO PICTURES CORPORATION / COPYRIGHT BY METRO PICTURES CORPORATION."

Also closely related to authorial signature is the function of celebrity index. As illustrated earlier, positioning in the title sequence and typographical highlighting can indicate to an uninitiated viewer who the major star is. But the function also works prospectively: for novices or fairly unknown actors to be credited in a strong position,

i.e., at the beginning or end of the title sequence, or to be visually foregrounded may be indicative of their celebrity potential.[59]

Filmmakers may choose to highlight the contribution of someone who traditionally would not have received a prominent position. Thus, in *Dr. Strangelove*, Kubrick includes Ferro's name in the title sequence instead of the end credits. When crediting the music source, Lye repeats the phrase "Bagirmi tribe of Africa," whereas the director's name is only flashed once, to emphasize the importance of music and rhythm to the nature of *Free Radicals* (1958). Overall, any deviations from the contemporary rule of thumb—to include the most important figures into the title sequence and to relegate everybody and everything else into the end credits[60]—make a statement.

END CREDITS: FUNCTIONS

Title sequences share many of the functions—most frequently, authorial signature, ownership statement, celebrity index, and legal protection—with end credits. In mainstream films, the opening and closing frames of the film are usually marked by the company logo as an ultimate claim to ownership, whereas in independent cinema, the filmmaker's name often functions this way. End credits in Hollywood productions can provide a glimpse into the celebrity status of the cast and crew members through an

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[59] In the United States, as Dina Appleton and Daniel Yankelevits explain, the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Agreement does not specify the placement, size, positioning, or other aspects of on-screen credit for actors. These issues are negotiated by actors or their representatives with the production companies (129-30).

[60] Barbara Baker notes that contemporary title sequences usually incorporate so-called above-the-line credits, which include, apart from the stars, "the director, producer, screenwriter, editor, production designer, composer, director of photography, casting director and costume designer," whereas everybody else gets below-the-line credits at the end of the film (3-4).

inclusion of the “assistants to . . .” rubric. Sometimes the identity of the actor who has played a major role in the film is disclosed only in the end credits. For example, in *Hannibal* (Ridley Scott, 2001), Gary Oldman, who is playing Mason Verger, the man with a horribly disfigured face, decided to go unbilled in the title sequence because, as he explains in an interview, remaining anonymous was a fun trick to stay true to the character (Keier). A zero-credit can be an ironic indicator of celebrity as well: for example, Will Ferrell's uncredited role as a wedding crasher guru in *Wedding Crashers* (David Dobkin, 2005) seems to state that the actor is popular and recognizable enough not to need any further acknowledgment of the fact.

Obligated to include various legal statements to avoid copyright infringement suits and to abide by the protocols of cinematic production, filmmakers can self-reflexively play with stock phrases to infuse humor into the dreariness of the rolling credits. Thus, the viewers concerned about the well-being of the chicken whose head was about to be chopped off during the market scene in *Rush Hour 2* (Brett Ratner, 2001) can rest assured: the end credits state that “No chickens were harmed during the making of this film,” rephrasing the “No animals were harmed” disclaimer enforced by American Humane's Film & Television Unit. *Airplane!* (Jim Abrahams, David Zucker, and Jerry Zucker, 1980) concludes with the unavoidable copyright legend but adds to it a subversive finishing touch: “Unauthorized duplication, distribution, or exhibition may result in civil liability and criminal prosecution, so there.”

Dedication in end credits is also not uncommon, often to a cast or crew member who may not have lived to witness the complete production reach the audience or to someone who has inspired the project. Anger's *The Man We Want to Hang* (2002), a moving presentation of an exhibition of Aleister Crowley's paintings and drawings,

invokes Crowley's life and art both in the title sequence and end credits. At the beginning, a catalog card features Crowley as "an old master" (figure 2.73); the end credits finish with a simple but very effective multimedial sequence that includes "for Al," "93," and a drawing of a noose (figure 2.74). This end-combination sums up in a nutshell the ideas behind the film: Anger's life-long homage to Crowley, by whose philosophy of Magick the filmmaker has been greatly influenced,[61] the number that is a centerpiece of Magick (Kaczynski 62), and a signature drawing that connects to the title and the painting of a hanged man featured in the film.

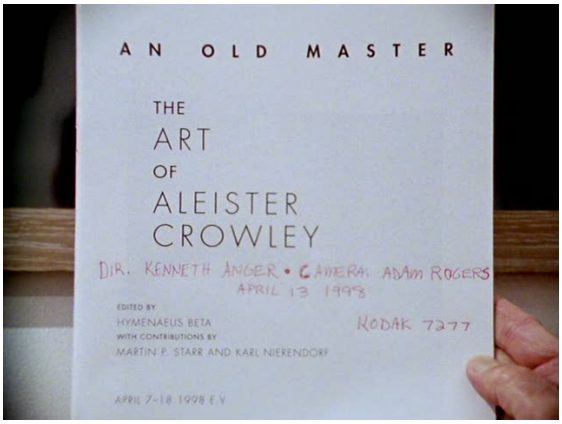


Fig. 2.73. *The Man We Want to Hang*: invoking "an old master."



Fig. 2.74. *The Man We Want to Hang*: the end dedication.

End credits fulfill yet another function—acknowledging the contribution and help of the many people and entities involved in the huge machinery of cinematic production. Tapping into the convention of dutifully giving acknowledgments, Stephan Elliott categorizes his thanks according to degrees of sweetness in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994): "Extra Special Thanks (with cream on top) . . .", "Special Thanks (no cream – cherries optional) . . .", "Quite Special Thanks (hold the sweetener) . . .", and "Thanks also to. . . ." In the same spirit, Elliott creates several funny

[61] For a brief discussion of *The Man We Want to Hang* and Anger's discipleship, see MacDonald, *Critical Cinema 5* 49-50.

credits, such as “Continuitywoman!” and “Best Naughty Boy,” as well as locates an interlocutionary spoof on advertising in between the cast and the crew—“THIS SPACE AVAILABLE Your Name Here.”

Acknowledging the audience at the finish of the film through direct address and through inclusion into the end credits acts as a psychological reward: the viewers are reminded of their importance to the world of movies. At the same time, such phrases can act as a dividing line between the film's universe and reality, returning the audience to the *terra firma* of their everydayness. Thus, together with cooking recipes for “Topping for brownies” and “Nobby buns,” the end credits of *Hot Shots!* (Abrahams, 1991) include “Things to do after the movie,” with a few tips on how to contribute to the life of the community. Just before the copyright and the statement of unintentional resemblance, the viewers encounter a provocative comment on the length of contemporary end credits: “If you had left this theatre when these credits began, you'd be home now.”

Since end credits tend to run for a long time, this space and time can be effectively utilized for multimedial entertainment: for instance, outtakes, bloopers, and music numbers. These, however, mostly respect the separate planes of printed credits and visual sequences. By contrast, the word “end,” which for a long time used to be the only component of the closing frame, has been integrated into diegetic visual shots in various ways. In *Blonde Cobra*, the ending indicator serves as an appropriate counterpart to the self-reflexive beginning: Smith's collapsing on the floor reveals another character holding a FIN-card. In the closing diegetic sequence of *History of the World: Part I*, Josephus's exclamation “That's a big ending!” draws the other characters' attention to the mountain they are approaching, and we see a huge “THE END” carved on it (figure 2.75). In *Science Friction* (Stan van der Beek, 1959), the “end” of the film coincides with the end of the

earth globe, which, after having been caught by a giant red hand, is being cooked in a frying pan as an egg (figure 2.76).



Fig. 2.75. *History of the World: Part I*: "That's a big ending!"



Fig. 2.76. *Science Friction*: ending in a fry.

It is becoming increasingly common to add a finishing touch to the narrative in a post-credits sequence, to entice the audience to sit through the credits in recognition of the contributions of the whole movie team. Verbal inscriptions integrated into such postscripts, which are mostly visual in nature, can refer to a character or event in the film's diegesis and/or create intertextual links. For example, in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Chris Columbus, 2002), the post-credits sequence pokes fun at Gilderoy Lockhart, a popular wizard-author and a fraud, who accidentally loses his memory because of a backfired memory charm (figure 2.77). The postscript in *Young Sherlock Holmes* (Barry Levinson, 1985) reveals that the evil mastermind in the film, known to us by the palindromic names Rathe and Eh Tar, is in fact alive, and his signature during a hotel check-in—"Moriarty"—links the character from the film to the archenemy of literary Sherlock Holmes (figure 2.78).



Fig. 2.77. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*: inscribing memory loss.

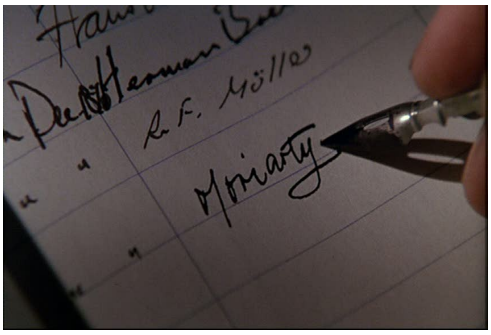


Fig. 2.78. *Young Sherlock Holmes*: the "literary" identity revealed.

Credits divided according to diegetic scenes, as in *History of the World: Part I* (e.g., "The Roman Empire," "The Spanish Inquisition," and "The French Revolution"), act as a concise summary of the film. The intermediality of the end credits in Rob Cohen's *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008) functions as a visual summary of the film's story, integrating brushstroke silhouettes of the characters into stylized landscapes; the sequence is built "around the Chinese calligraphy of the five elements—water, wood, earth, metal and fire" ("Featured Work") (figures 2.79 and 2.80).



Fig. 2.79. *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*: the *wood* on the mountains.



Fig. 2.80. *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*: the *earth* of Universal Pictures.

The functions of temptation and promotion are also not alien to end credits and post-credits sequences, when potential sequels are thrown into the picture. With the help of a short scene added after the credits have completed their run, viewers can be left wanting for a continuation of the story, having been led to believe that the ending is in fact just a beginning. In *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (Gore Verbinski, 2003), the monkey steals one of the cursed gold medallions from the treasure

chest, a clear indication that the tale will start anew. In *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008), a new character—Nick Fury, Director of S.H.I.E.L.D.—makes his entrance with a suggestion to discuss the Avengers Initiative.[62] Written words are rarely used for the purpose of temptation in post-credits sequences: at this point the viewers are usually tired of the scrolling printed matter, and only a sudden shift in perspective can hope to reclaim the attention of those who are on the point of leaving the movie theater.

However, filmmakers engage screen words in promoting their prospective work at the beginning of end credits. Thus, in *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai across the Eighth Dimension* (W. D. Richter, 1984), the end credits start with an imperative sentence advertising a continuation of the story (figure 2.81), to be called "BUCKAROO BANZAI AGAINST THE WORLD CRIME LEAGUE." After "THE END" carved in the mountain of *History of the World: Part I*, the viewers get bombarded with advertisements of *History of the World: Part II* (figure 2.82), to feature "Hitler on Ice," "A Viking Funeral," and "Jews in Space." The sequels have not materialized and might never have been actually envisioned, but this promotional technique has been keeping the fans' interest alive.



Fig. 2.81. *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai* . . . : promotion in action.



Fig. 2.82. *History of the World: Part I*: "SEE"—repeated three times.

[62] The Avengers Initiative will reappear, this time in written form as well, only at the end of *Iron Man 2* (Favreau, 2010), when Tony Stark, the Iron Man, is prevented by Nick Fury from reading the "Avengers Initiative / Preliminary Report" and learns instead that he has not been recommended for recruitment. The ultimate reference to the Avengers Initiative is to materialize in the film entitled *The Avengers*, scheduled for release in 2012, according to the IMDB website.

In summary, the paratextual fringes of the filmic text—title sequences and end credits—can overlap in performing the following functions: authorial signature, ownership statement, celebrity index, legal protection, dedication, self-reflexivity, temptation, and description. These functions, however, can be delegated to either the opening or the closing frame, with authorial signature and/or ownership statement claiming both positions in most cases. Additionally, end credits take on themselves the functions of acknowledgment and promotion, which are rarely, if ever, present in title sequences.

INTERTITLES: TYPOGRAPHY AND DESIGN

If the visual presentation of paratextual elements of silent cinema was rather uniform, with a few exceptions, intertitles utilized various designs, which transformed with the development of silent film. Whereas the evolution of intertitles and their substitutes in the United States and Russia will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, here a very brief outline of the origins of the concept and the related terminology is in order.

To my knowledge, the term *intertitle* was not used during the silent era. In the US, textual inserts were mostly referred to, often interchangeably, as *titles*, *title cards*, *sub(-)titles*, *captions*, *leaders*, and sometimes *interscriptions*, with dialogue intertitles frequently called *cut-ins*, *lines*, and *spoken inserts*.[63] It is difficult to determine when *intertitle* was employed for the first time in the English language. Claire Dupré la Tour claims that the term *intertitle* came into use in the early 1930s "to differentiate the

[63] See, for instance, E. H. Ball; Emerson and Loos; Lindsay; and Sargent for contemporaneous usage.

practice from the then new process of subtitling which provided, at the bottom of the image, a translation for speech in foreign-language sound films" ("Intertitles" 326-27), although she does not explain in which language the term originated. Gale's manual *How to Write a Movie*, published in the US in 1936, however, still uses the terms *subtitles* and *titles* interchangeably to designate *intertitles*. According to André Gaudreault, the corresponding term in French, *intertitre*, was introduced only in 1955, long after the concept had become a historical object (qtd. in Broeren 9).

Gaudreault argues that the umbrella term *intertitre* is quite unfortunate since it encompasses *textes intercalaires* [intercalary texts] of at least three distinct types: *titres* [titles], *sous-titres* [sub-titles], and *intertitres* [intertitles] proper. *Titres*, which contained the title of the film and/or a brief description of the action, were projected as slides via a separate magic lantern. The texts for such slides were often prepared by the manufacturer, and the exhibitor could choose to buy the titles together with the film. Similar to *titres*, s*ous-titres* identified the action to come, but, unlike *titres*, they were embedded into the film itself and did not require a separate projector. Gaudreault calls such embedded texts *sub-titles* because, naming scenes within one film, they functioned as secondary titles, subordinate to the main title of the film; at the same time, *sous-titres* mimicked the behavior of the main title, which distinguished the film among many others included in a long program. An illustrative example of *sous-titres* use was *La vie et la passion de Jésus-Christ* [*The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ*] (Pathé, 1902-05),[64] which consisted of more than twenty scenes, each preceded by an embedded title card with the logo: the

[64] Richard Abel names *Victimes de l'alcoolisme* (1902) as Pathé's earliest surviving film where the five tableaux are introduced by embedded intertitles, "whose text is printed out in black letters on white strips, like labels roughly pasted on a dark surface" ("Cinema" 72).

scenes could be purchased separately or shown continuously as one film. Whereas the axis of communication of *titres* and *sous-titres* is directed at the spectator, *intertitres*, like Janus figures, create a link along yet another axis—that between the preceding and following scenes. *Intertitres* explain to the viewer the relations and connections between visual shots that would usually have been pointed out by a lecturer ("Des cris" 53-60).

Although shedding light on the evolving uses of *textes intercalaires*, Gaudreault's categorization creates a problematic overlap of functionality and location: roughly speaking, *titres* and *sous-titres* have the same functions but different locations (outside and inside the film respectively), whereas *sous-titres* and *intertitres* have different functions but the same location. Such a fusion is emblematic of the terminological difficulties film scholars encounter when writing about, and trying to classify, intertitles.

I employ the general term *intertitles*, which is now firmly entrenched in film criticism, to refer to all embedded texts, other than title sequences and end credits, that are not integrated into diegetic visual shots and, if superimposed over images, are perceived as belonging to a separate non-diegetic plane.[65] As illustrated below, intertitles thus defined include title cards with and without images, texts scratched into film emulsion or painted on celluloid, superimposed titling, and, as a borderline case, could-be diegetic inserts. Calling superimposed printed words *intertitles* can raise some eyebrows because such text is no longer in between visual shots; however, from a functional perspective, superimposed titling is but a technologically more advanced version of

[65] I reserve the term *subtitles* to designate texts that act as instruments of translation from another language. When quoting, I replace *subtitles* and *titles* with the form *[inter]titles* when appropriate. Gaudreault's *titres* fall outside the scope of my analysis because they are not an inherent part of the film.

intertitle cards,[66] with a few additional features arising from the word-image interplay between the diegetic and non-diegetic planes. Similarly, texts that do not belong to title sequences or end credits but appear before the first or after the last diegetic visual shots are also treated as intertitles and will be termed here *introductory intertitles* and *concluding intertitles* respectively.

Potentialities of the word-image interplay in the typography and design of intertitles call for a rough division into two categories: intertitles with words only and intertitles where words interact with images. Image-free intertitles, which remained a mainstay of cinema throughout the silent era, were most often printed in white letters on a black background. Sargent explains that such a color distribution is less trying on the eye; besides, "a white ground will more quickly show the scratches that result from the passages of the film through the machine" (172). As Yuri Tsivian hypothesizes, intertitles that were a vehicle for the voice of the non-diegetic narrator had to be distinguished from the earlier form of written inserts, which originated from the world of the story: thus, the former were incorporated in the negative (white on black) whereas the latter were presented in the usual style of written material (black on white) ("K semiotike" 145). A reversal of the white-on-black norm, whether in silent or sound cinema, can signal an intentional return to the palette of a printed page, as is the case in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's adaptation of Theodor Fontane's 1895 novel *Effie Briest*, called *Fontane Effi Briest oder: Viele, die eine Ahnung haben von ihren Möglichkeiten und Bedürfnissen und*

[66] In the teens, Sargent also considered superimposed titling to be a type of leader, the term he used for *intertitle*. As he points out, "a white letter leader superimposed upon the action of the scene" was invented by Emmett Campbell Hall and was introduced by the Lubin company in 1915. The idea was dropped after its initial use, although "[i]n theory the superimposing of the leader was less of a shock than the withdrawal of the action" (166).

dennoch das herrschende System in ihrem Kopf akzeptieren durch ihre Taten und es somit festigen und durchaus bestätigen[67] (1974). The film, where every word comes from the novel, is formally based on transitions between shots through a white screen, with heavily used intertitles printed on white in a German Gothic script, "to simulate the reader's experience of turning a page of a book" (Watson 142).

The first intertitles in the world (at least known to me), however, seem to have been scratched into the celluloid directly. In Cecil Hepworth's *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900), after an automobile crashes headlong into the camera, and vicariously into the audience, a succession of the following shots flashes rapidly as a concluding intertitle (figure 2.83, to be read from left to right). This brief sequence effectively utilizes punctuation and underlining to convey a progression of emotions from questioning disbelief to anger to sarcastic resignation. Zero-punctuation at the end of the flashing thought also seems to signal the victim's premature expiration.

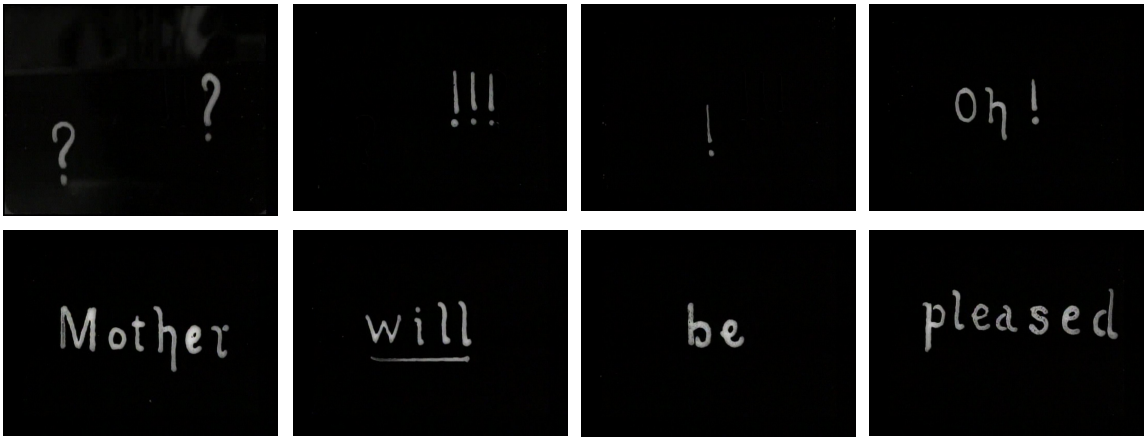


Fig. 2.83. *How It Feels to Be Run Over*: the last thought.

Punctuation was often infused with significance in printed intertitles as well: it

[67] Perhaps the longest film title ever incorporates a central motto from the novel: "Many who have a notion of their possibilities and their needs still accept the prevailing order by their actions, and by doing so, strengthen and confirm it" (Watson 142).

was employed "to suggest, symbolize, or emphasize" (Naficy 144); ellipsis could indicate declamatory pauses (Elliott 94); unfinished sentences with "and . . ." allowed for a flight of imagination in filling in details (W. K. Everson 140). Tsivian suggests that an inordinate number of ellipses (sometimes with more than three dots and located in random places in the sentences), dashes[68][*mupe*], question marks, and exclamation points exhibited the attempts of filmmakers to provide graphic equivalents of the rhythms and modulations of spoken voice and to make up for the absence of sound ("K semiotike" 150-52). The absence of an end punctuation or ellipsis were often characteristic of split intertitles. According to Pudovkin, spreading the unified content onto several intertitle cards, which were interspersed with visual images, helped to avoid interruption of the rapid flow of action, essential in montage (185). Split intertitles could also link separate visual scenes under one umbrella-sentence or unified thought. As William K. Everson notes, such [inter]titles were not very popular in the US: instead, filmmakers preferred the cumulative effect of a gradually revealed [inter]title within a single frame (137).

In creating a particular mood or suggesting an emotion, punctuation often cooperated with typeface and layout, and especially with what Pudovkin called "the plastic size" of the intertitle (34), i.e., a change in the size of the letters and words perceived in relation to one another. Indeed, experimental Soviet cinema often built on the suggestive and manipulative powers of size change, especially in films influenced by Constructivism. As Kevin Brownlow points out, American filmmakers started employing this titling method a bit earlier, for instance, in the 1919 film *Dangerous Hours*, directed by Fred Niblo (*Parade* 263), which, curiously, was about the influence of communist

[68] The Russian typographical tradition does not usually differentiate between an en dash and an em dash.

agitators on young Americans. An animated intertitle was another tool employed in the silent cinema to create the rhythm and liveliness of the wording.[69]

The typography of intertitles can also create references to fictional texts or real-life inscriptions. In *Un chien andalou,* the script of the intertitle "au printemps" 'Spring' (figure 2.84) is reminiscent of the advertising for the famous Parisian department store chain (Liebman, "*Un Chien*" 154). As Fèlix Fanés notes, since the intertitle introduces the final shot of the couple buried in the sand, blinded, the Parisian public of the time was likely to smile at the associative link with the pervasive slogan "Au Printemps, I buy everything with my eyes shut" (224). The intertitles in Guy Maddin's *The Heart of the World* (2000), a contemporary homage to silent-era films that revolves around a bizarre story of a Russian woman-scientist studying the heart of the world, imitate the typecasting of early film typography and visual presentation of the wording but also include letters that are reminiscent of the Russian alphabet (figure 2.85).

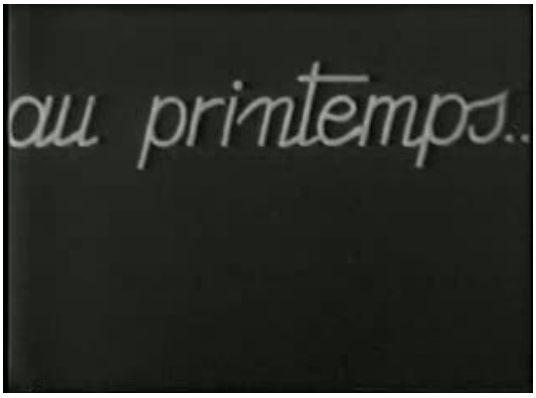


Fig. 2.84. *Un chien andalou*: the spring of the Parisian department store.



Fig. 2.85. *The Heart of the World*: the end *n* resembling the Russian *И*.

Studio logos were often embedded in intertitles to establish the claim to authorship and ownership, especially during the early phase when the director's name was

[69] Edwin S. Porter was among the first in the United States to create films with animated intertitles, which will be discussed later.

not yet a prominent screen word. W. B. Worthen's observation about the importance of print to modern drama rings true in reference to signature elements in intertitle cards as well: “Print inflects writing with certain properties, and with certain values as property, urging the singular, authorial and authorized identity of the work across its many reproductions, and so claiming the work's stability across time and space . . .” (7). Visually, the trademark logos were often presented as two pillars on which the intertitle rested (figures 2.86 and 2.87).



Fig. 2.86. *Troubles of a Grasswidower* (1912): the Pathé rooster.

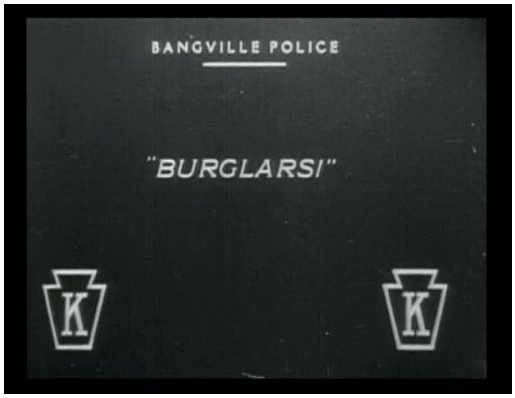


Fig. 2.87. *Bangville Police* (1913): the Keystone pillars.

Copyright anxieties were also exhibited in a way that “was inconsistent with the illusion of reality”: to prevent pirating of visual prints, production companies inserted their logos into the setting, with the practice surviving into around 1912 (Bowser, *Transformation* 138). Thus, Biograph's signature—encircled AB—is prominent in the first visual sequence of *In the Border States* (Griffith, 1910), as if the actors crowding the scene were intentionally creating a spatial gap for the logo to be seen (figure 2.88). The interior shots of *What Shall We Do With Our Old?* (Griffith, 1911) also feature the insignia, directly above the dying woman's head (figure 2.89).



Fig. 2.88. *In the Border States* (fragment enlargement): the logo in a spatial gap.



Fig. 2.89. *What Shall We Do With Our Old?*: the logo aligned with the head.

Eileen Bowser observes that if a trademark was part of an artificial set, it was not so obtrusive, but sometimes the incorporation of logos bordered on the absurd when, for instance, the heroine in *The Penniless Prince* (Thomas Ince, 1911) had to lift her skirt to step around a large IMP sign rooted in the ground (*Transformation* 138-39). This incident would have been a perfect metatextual trick in self-reflexive cinema, but I doubt that in the pre-sound film that strove to create an illusion of narrative realism this was the intention. Judith Buchanan notes several exemplary cases where the Vitagraph logo or its representative eagle with V-shaped wings is displayed in screen adaptations of Shakespeare: for example, on the canopy above Juliet's bed and above Juliet's sepulcher in *Romeo and Juliet* (J. Stuart Blackton, 1908), above the SPQR banners in *Julius Caesar* (Blackton and William V. Ranous, 1908), and as "a free-standing model of the Vitagraph eagle, with no pretence of narrative or thematic relevance to the scene, . . . incongruously holding the fort" in a no-actor scene in *King Lear* (Blackton and Ranous, 1909) (38).[70]

In intertitles, the intermediality of trademarks often worked in tandem with

[70] Bowser states that in the early teens, "the Biograph brand stood for the best" and "Vitagraph was second in reputation, even though it was the better-known brand in Europe at the time" (*Transformation* 105).

decorative elements to reinforce the proprietary function: some titles cards were designed to look like stationery with a crowning logo, as in *Suspense* (Lois Weber and Phillips Smalley, 1913), produced for the Rex Motion Picture Company (figure 2.90). In the Edison *Vanity Fair* (Charles Brabin and Eugene Nowland, 1915), as Kamilla Elliott describes, the words in narrative intertitles were framed by a white border, with "The Edison Studios" inscription in the bottom right corner, as if these were framed paintings with the artist's signature (17). More often, however, the Edison logo was inscribed into the corners of the frame, and the title of the film was located where a signature could have been, as in *A Serenade by Proxy* (C. Jay Williams, 1913) (figure 2.91):

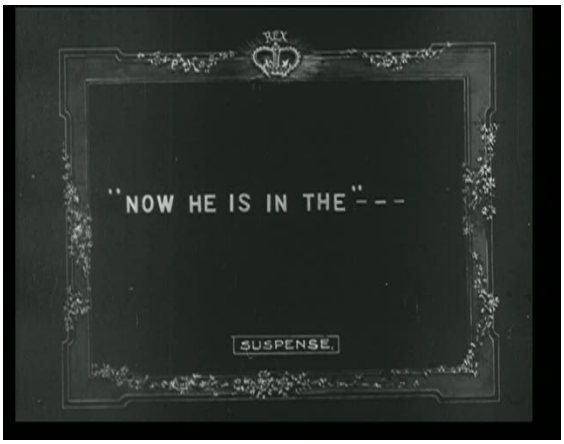


Fig. 2.90. *Suspense*: the royal stationery.

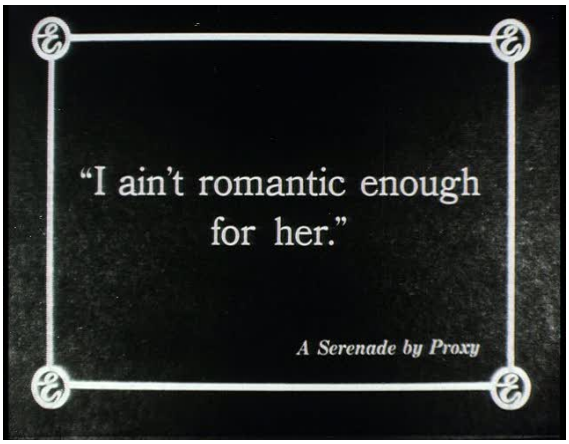


Fig. 2.91. *A Serenade by Proxy*: the Edison corners.

Decorative framing could also simulate the interior architecture of a theater stage. For example, in the Vitagraph *Her Crowning Glory* (Laurence Trimble, 1911), the title card features a stage curtain with tragedy and comedy masks pinned on the two sides (figure 2.92) and most of the intertitle shots preserve the same frame, with the curtain removed (figure 2.93).



Fig. 2.92. *Her Crowning Glory*: the curtains of a theater stage.

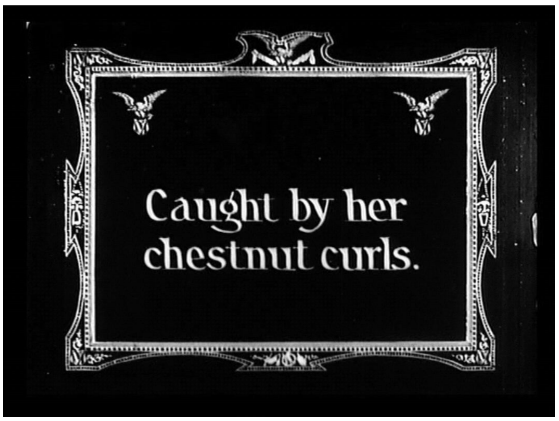


Fig. 2.93. *Her Crowning Glory*: the curtain-free frame.

When images enter the intertitle, the potentialities of the resulting word-image interplay are many-dimensional. Such "art-titles" were especially popular in the early twenties (W. K. Everson 133-34), although already in 1916, Triangle started using them rather extensively (Thompson, "Formulation" 187). For instance, in *Hell's Hinges* (Charles Swickard, 1916), the "church day" is illuminated by the sun's rays bringing light and hope to the world (figure 2.94). Illustrated intertitles, with drawings or photographed objects in the background, could serve to add emotion to the wording, to reinforce the description of a character or place, or, according to Emerson and Loos, to create atmosphere (40) and to introduce "allegorical and symbolical effects" (98). Victor Oscar Freeburg, who delivered lectures on photoplays at Columbia University in 1915-17,[71] however, cautioned that the symbolic effect should not disrupt "pictorial unity, emphasis, balance, and rhythm" and maintained that "much can be accomplished by keeping the style of the lettering and the background of the words in artistic harmony with the pictorial series" (178). In *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* [*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*]

[71] Freeburg records this fact in the foreword to his 1918 book *The Art of Photoplay Making*. According to Dana Polan, Freeburg was the first instructor ever to teach Photoplay Composition at Columbia University (42).

(Robert Wiene, 1920), the uneven angular letters interact with an angular geometric pattern reminiscent of the formal motif of the Expressionistic setting (figure 2.95).



Fig. 2.94. *Hell's Hinges*: the verbal-visual sun as a symbol of light and hope.

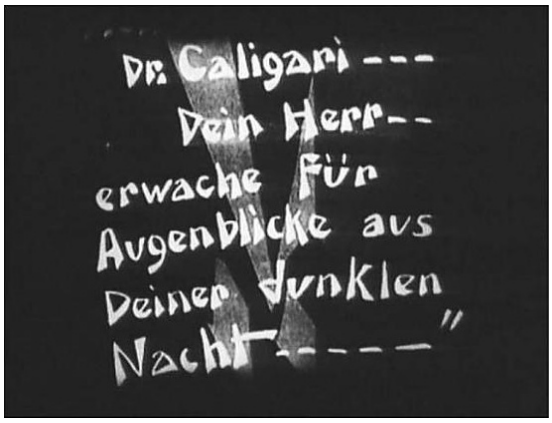


Fig. 2.95. *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*: the Expressionistic angularity.

Hell's Hinges showcases another, quite unusual, type of a multimedial set-up: the words and the drawing of a saloon scene, an iconic representation of the diegetic environment, are presented as two separate planes (figure 2.96). A similar set-up is used in the animated film *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (Winsor McCay, 1918), where the plane of words is superimposed over a diegetic drawing (figure 2.97).

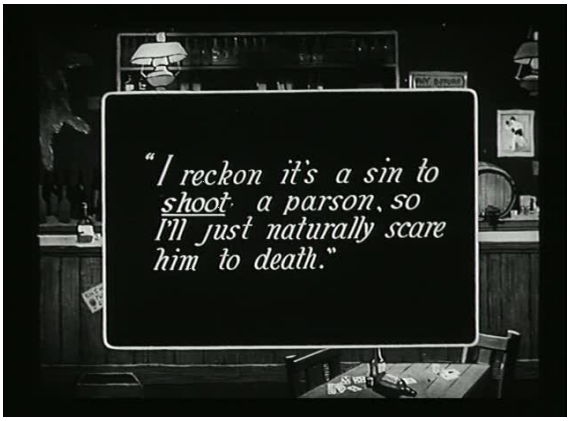


Fig. 2.96. *Hell's Hinges*: the environment where the words originate.

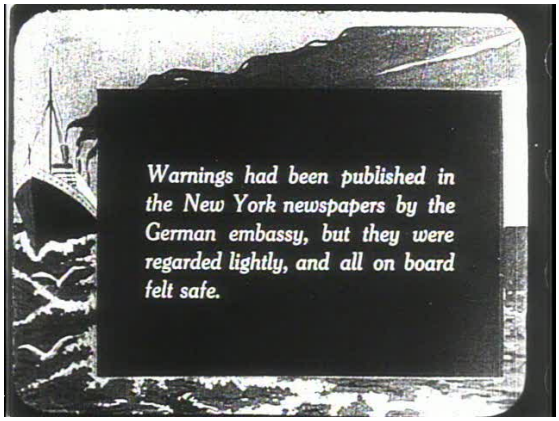


Fig. 2.97. *The Sinking of the Lusitania:* diegetic animation as a background.

Text superimposed over live diegetic action, which is very common in sound cinema, was a rarity in the silent era because, as W. K. Everson points out, the method

was still mechanically difficult and, more importantly,

> its wholesale use would have meant the total re-structuring of silent movies. With its acceptance, [inter]titles could no longer be used for punctuation, or as cutaways to cover up the lack of important shots that might have been ruined or, by oversight, not filmed at all. Finally, the need to compress the text to a bare-bones minimum would have put all of the grandiose [inter]title-writers out of business. . . . (136)

Another reason for the unpopularity of text superimposition, according to Brownlow, was the costliness of duping such films for foreign markets (*Parade* 299). Thus, the rare cases of superimposed intertitles were bound to attract attention and, as such, could be effectively used to foreground a multimedial visual scene.

After the introductory intertitles about the American pioneers' courage disappear from the screen in *The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze, 1923), the first two visual shots that incorporate superimposed text present a medium close-up of a boy playing the banjo and of a girl sewing in a covered wagon. The sheet music with lyrics superimposed over the boy's image (figure 2.98) imbues the silent screen with sound; at the same time, the modified version of "Oh! Susanna," where "I'm goin' out to Oregon" replaces "I've come from Alabama,"[72] intimates that the characters are on the move to Oregon. The song apparently appeals to the girl, who smiles and resumes her domestic pastime, while the superimposed text "Westport Landing—1848—since called Kansas City" (figure 2.99) establishes the current diegetic location and time. More importantly, however, as Jared Gardner observes, the frontal shot of the actress in a covered wagon "approximates the composition of Paramount's logo . . . repeating the film's opening portrait of the

[72] For the text and a cultural history of "Oh! Susanna," see Lott 203-07.

Paramount logo, this time *within* the film, as a leading actor in the drama that will unfold" (368-69).

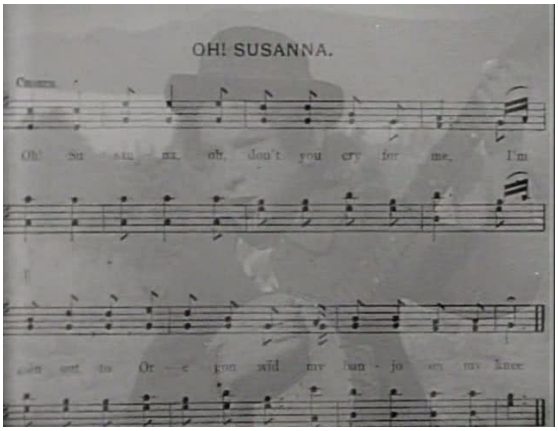


Fig. 2.98. *The Covered Wagon*: imbuing with sound and hinting at the destination.



Fig. 2.99. *The Covered Wagon*: verbal superimposition to foreground the importance of the visual composition.

Superimposed titling was also employed when the visual rhythm could have been destroyed if a title card had been inserted, especially in suspense and action sequences (W. K. Everson 136). A live-action background could add a documentary feel and a dynamic touch to the events referred to in the superimposed intertitle, as in *The Plastic Age* (Wesley Ruggles, 1925), where the text "After the famous Track Meet—the great event that was to mean so much for Prescott—and Hugh . . . . . ." elevates the importance of the running race presented visually (figure 2.100). Another reason for superimposition —matching the speaker and the words—is brilliantly illustrated in *Just Neighbors*[73] (Harold Lloyd and Frank Terry, 1919): in the middle of an incrimination-defense quarrel between two ladies, the word *Liar* flashes on the screen next to the image of a caged parrot, who could not refrain from commenting on the shouting match (figure 2.101).

[73] The film is called *Neighbours* on the title card included in the version of the film I have seen (as part of the *Slapstick Symposium* DVD Collection).



Fig. 2.100. *The Plastic Age*: the multimedial Track Meet.



Fig. 2.101. *Just Neighbors*: the parrot's opinion.

Comic strip speech balloons present another possibility of identifying the silent speaker. This technique, as Card claims, was introduced into cinema in 1920 in *The Chamber Mystery* (Abraham Schomer) (figure 2.102)[74] and did not find many followers (57-58). Bowser reports that already in 1906, *Looking for John Smith* and *Wanted—A Nurse*, both made by American Mutoscope and Biograph Co., integrated dialogue lines within the visual image in animated cartoon balloons ("Brighton Project" 523, 537).[75] Starting in 1911, as Rick Altman points out, speech balloons were inserted into visual shots as "an unexpected solution to the dialogue problem" in the *Mutt and Jeff* series, produced by Nestor Film Co. (*Silent Film Sound* 168).[76] Nevertheless, speech bubbles in silent films were as unpopular as superimposed titling, possibly for the

[74] A three-minute excerpt from *The Chamber Mystery* is available on the "Learning to Talk" disk of the *Discovering Cinema* DVD set (Flicker Alley, 2003).

[75] The description of *Looking for John Smith* in *Biograph Bulletin No. 77* does not quite corroborate Bowser's: "In one of the scenes the characters are made to speak their lines by means of words that appear to flow mysteriously from their mouths" (qtd. in Altman, *Silent Film Sound* 167). I have not seen this film, but it seems to employ an animation technique pioneered by Porter rather than comic-strip balloons.

[76] These experimentations even led to a 1917 patent by Charles F. Pidgin "for producing filmed cartoons without resorting to animation or drawings." The patented process "called for each actor to inflate, at the appropriate moment, a balloon carrying the words to be spoken" (Altman, *Silent Film Sound* 168).

same reasons. Word balloons resurface in sound cinema, although they remain quite rare, unlike superimposed intertitles. For example, thought balloons are used in *American Splendor* (Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, 2003), based on Harvey Pekar's life and work, to illustrate the hard choices the main character has to make (figure 2.103).



Fig. 2.102. *The Chamber Mystery*: speech balloons in pre-sound cinema.

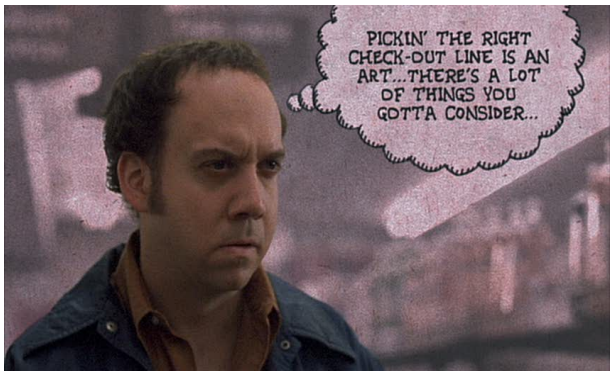


Fig. 2.103. *American Splendor*: the art of pickin' the right check-out line.

In their self-reflexive investigation of film language and traditional cinematic structures, *Ya kholoden. Nu i chto?* [*I'm Cold. So What?*] (1987), Igor Aleynikov and Gleb Aleynikov deconstruct the link between the speaker and the speech balloon. A traditional comic strip frame with one "speaking" character (figure 2.104), which then zooms out to reveal a second "interlocutor," is gradually transformed to showcase the artificiality of the addresser-message connection: the first character changes the positioning of his head, which breaks the visual alignment of the mouth and the balloon and makes it obvious that "to love" is actually drawn on the wall; the camera repositions itself to reveal a spatial gap between the wall on which the balloons are drawn and the moving character, who is now in the process of stabbing himself with scissors; finally, we see the suicidal character slide down the chair and become as immobile as the other figure has always been (figure 2.105), while the speech balloons remain visible on the wall as reminders of the shattered illusion of the unbreakable link between the speaker and the words. Curiously, this scene also illustrates a porous boundary between intertitles

and integrated verbal elements.



Fig. 2.104. *I'm Cold. . .* : the comic strip tableau.



Fig. 2.105. *I'm Cold. . .* : deconstructing the link between the speaker and the words.

Intertitles that combine photographs and text can mimic a newspaper style of reporting. Thus, in *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, the intertitles that pay tribute to victims who died on board the torpedoed ship (figure 2.106) fuse documentary quality with emotional appeal; they could have belonged on a front page or in an obituary column. The beginning of the film itself is a self-referential reportage of how *The Sinking of the Lusitania* was made, with words, situated against the background of animated drawings, explaining the procedure of creating these animations (figure 2.107).

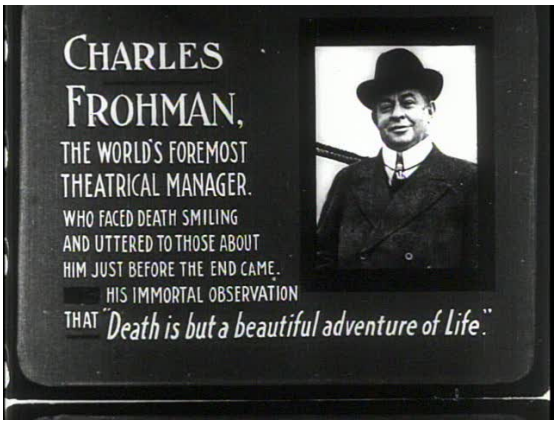


Fig. 2.106. *The Sinking of the Lusitania*: a multimedial tribute.

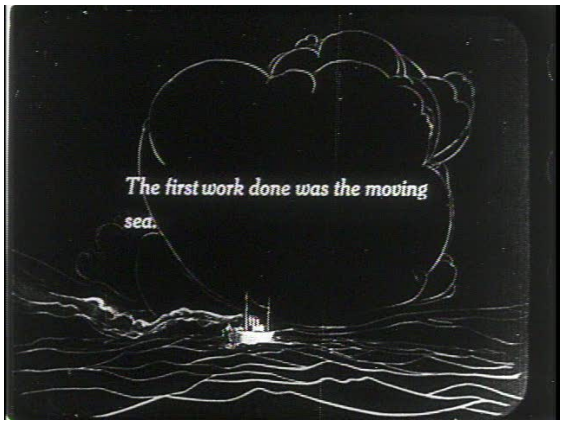


Fig. 2.107. *The Sinking of the Lusitania*: a self-referential illustrated intertitle.

Diegetic verbal-visual inserts represent a borderline case between intertitles and

integrated verbal elements. As Thompson explains, since inserts emerged from the world of the story, they differed from intertitles proper. For instance, newspaper pages and abstracts provide a realistic motivation for the written material, which, as a result, is placed within the film's diegesis ("Formulation" 188-89), similarly to other types of texts created by the characters. Such verbal-visual inserts sometimes correlate with the Cubist practices of admitting text into the boundaries of painting, as discussed previously, especially for the purpose of introducing multiple vocalities.

Emerson and Loos point out that letters, telegrams, printed newspaper material, and the like can help explain the action, develop the narrative, and vary the visual presentation (18, 41). Calendars, diaries, newspaper front pages and inserts of printed matter about specific events can be employed to show dates and the passage of time. According to Thompson, letters allow for a beginning *in medias res,* mentioning or hinting at past events and setting up potential developments ("Formulation" 188). Letters can also reveal the inner life of characters (Haugmard 83), like diaries often do, although, as Tsivian observes, this feature was often compromised when the same handwriting appeared in letters written by characters of different ages, social status, and personality traits. Even when a letter was supposedly penned by someone in an agitated state, shaky handwriting was a rarity: "credibility was sacrificed to readability" (*Early Cinema* 190). When only a portion of a letter needs to be made available to the viewer, Sargent recommends writing something inconsequential above and below the essential material to create an impression of verisimilitude (155).

In early cinema, such handwritten or typed inserts were often located in between visual shots as finished documents in lieu of intertitle cards, preceded by a long shot of somebody writing, receiving, or reading something. However, according to Emerson and

Loos, such written material works best when it is first presented in the process of its creation, for instance, when "the letters appear on the paper in a typewriter carriage as some one writes the document out" (18), as in *The Lodger: A Story of the London Fog* (Hitchcock, 1927) (figure 2.108), or when the viewers watch the character's hand write a letter or a message, as in *The Manxman* (Hitchcock, 1929) (figure 2.109). This type of presentation belongs to the category of integrated verbal elements, to be discussed later.

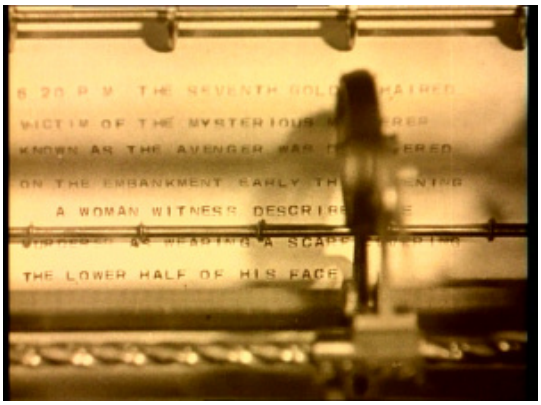


Fig. 2.108. *The Lodger* . . . : following the creation of a crime report.

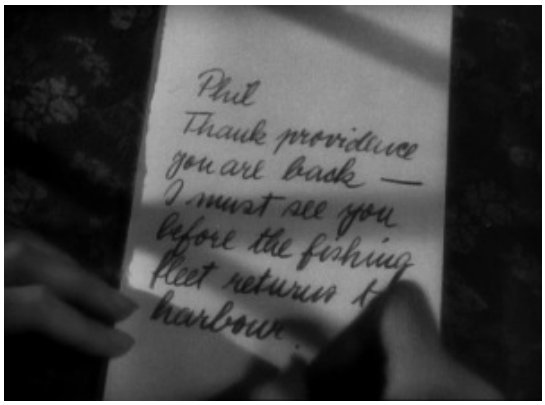


Fig. 2.109. *The Manxman*: witnessing personal writing.

INTERTITLES: BASIC TYPES

In Anglophone film discourse, two basic types of intertitles are traditionally singled out—*expository* and *dialogue*.[77] Roughly, exposition is the task of a non-diegetic narrator/author to make it easier for the audience to understand the film. Dialogue intertitles, as their name suggests, present in written form what would be spoken lines in sound cinema. In the Russian tradition, the related terms have been borrowed from the theatrical practice: *remarka* [*ремарка*], which is closely related to stage directions that provide description and exposition, and *replika* [*реплика*], which is the character's spoken

[77] When discussing intertitles, many scholars refer to this categorization from Thompson, "Formulation" 183. Sometimes the terms *explanatory* and *spoken* are used instead.

part.[78] The major difference between the two types is in the communication frame of reference: an expository intertitle and *remarka* address the viewer/reader, whereas a dialogue line and *replika* are primarily directed at diegetic characters.

Although not heavily involved in cataloging intertitles, filmmakers and screenwriters of the silent era sometimes mentioned two similar types as well. For example, Emerson and Loos advised photoplay writers "to use explanatory [inter]titles, with as clever and forceful wording as possible, whenever the action necessitates explanation" and to relay "clever dialogue" to the audience (37). Sargent discussed two major categories of intertitles: straight leaders, which were placed between visual scenes and subdivided into fact leaders, time leaders, and break leaders; and cut-in leaders, which were inserted in a scene most often as spoken words of a character (163-64).

In Soviet Russia, Pudovkin differentiated between continuity and spoken intertitles: the first type "removes the superfluous from the scenario, . . . shortly explains essentials to the spectator and prepares him for clearer apprehension of the subsequent action . . ." (33); the second type "introduces living, spoken speech into the picture" and should feature "good literary treatment and, certainly, as much compression as possible" (33). Boris Eikhenbaum[79] praised dialogue intertitles [надписи разговорные],

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[78] For instance, Tsivian uses the terms *nadpis'-remarka* and *nadpis'-replika* ("K semiotike"); Anna Anosova employs the alternative *titr-remarka* and *titr-replika*. As discussed above, the exact equivalent of the term *intertitle* has not taken root in Russian. *Nadpis'* and *titr* are used interchangeably for this purpose, which is problematic from the perspective of analyzing word usage in film: *nadpis'* [*надпись*] also means *inscription* and, thus, can be applied to integrated verbal elements; the word *titry* [*титры*], mostly used in the plural, also means *credits*, both at the beginning and the end of a film.

[79] Eikhenbaum's creative contribution to cinema was realized in intertitles for Cheslav Sabinsky's *Katerina Izmaylova* (1927), an adaptation of Nikolay Leskov's novella *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda.* The film has not been preserved in its entirety.

if they were inserted as short captions at moments of a conversation shown on the screen and crafted in the graphics that conformed to the laws of cinema. At the same time, he considered narrative intertitles that presented the author's discourse of explanatory, not complementary, nature [надписи повествовательного характера, надписи «от автора», разъясняющие, а не дополняющие] to be alien to film as they were unwelcome substitutes for what could be presented visually and interrupted the flow of internal speech (25). In general, however, discussions of intertitles focused on what they could achieve or should not do, without much regard for different types.

I find the traditional division into expository and dialogue intertitles problematic for several reasons. First, although having many facets, exposition does not cover the whole range of functions that intertitles of non-diegetic character perform. Eikhenbaum notes this in “K voprosu o titrakh” 'About [Inter]titles,' published in 1926: advanced montage techniques have rendered verbal explanation almost obsolete, but non-explanatory intertitles sometimes introduce additional meanings according to the constructive principle, when an effectively positioned intertitle changes the meaning of the visual shot (qtd. in Broudeur-Kogan). Eikhenbaum's “constructive principle” was formulated under the influence of experimental Soviet films, famous for their underlying montage foundations.

Bohdan Y. Nebesio also refers to the Soviet avant-garde when proposing the category of montage intertitles, as different from expository and dialogue intertitles. Montage intertitles became “elements essential to the creation of the visual rhythm of the individual sequences and of the whole film” (693). Eisenstein, for example, espoused the contribution of intertitles to visual and emotional rhythm through “weaving the [inter]titles into the very thick of the action, dramatizing them with montage and varying

proportions within the frame . . .” (*Film Form* 188). Even before the advent of Soviet montage, in 1914, intertitles took on themselves the role of a visual entr'acte in Yevgeny Bauer's film *Slezy* [*Tears*]. At the preliminary screening, Alexander Voznesensky, who had created the script without a single intertitle, rejected the continuous flow of images without any intertitle-pauses, even though the narrative could be easily followed, and suggested inserting a few intertitles to provide visual pauses and to supplement the action psychologically (Nebesio 693; Tsivian, “Early Russian Cinema” 19).

Although singling out montage intertitles as a category separate from expository and dialogue intertitles may seem promising, dialogue lines can actually aid the rhythm of the sequence and become a montage tool. Nebesio himself provides several examples of such intertitles, translated into English, from Alexander Dovzhenko's *Zemlia* [*Earth*] (1930). He states that “the main function of these [inter]titles is neither expository nor dialogue” (694), although these exclamatory utterances are in fact either “pronounced” by the individual characters or are attributed to the members of the crowd, and, as such, are indicated by a dash—a Russian cinematic convention that signals a dialogue intertitle.

The umbrella term *dialogue intertitle* is in fact a partial misnomer and is a second reason why the basic division into expository and dialogue intertitles is not satisfactory. Verbalizing a character's thoughts on the silent screen is not uncommon, and such intertitles act, as Thompson notes when discussing *The Light That Came* (Griffith, 1909), as “a sort of 'voice over'” (“Light” 92).[80] Sometimes it is impossible to differentiate

[80] As Thompson describes, the intertitle “WHEN THE LIGHT COMES HE WILL SEE ME AS I AM, AND I WILL LOSE HIS LOVE,” enclosed in quotation marks, is inserted before Martha, who has a disfiguring scar on her face, enters the sitting room where the blind man she loves is waiting. Saddened by the sight of her scar in the mirror, Martha slightly moves her lips; however, the lip movement, which is not enough to match the intertitled sentence, is indicative of her silent thinking because she “would not speak her thoughts aloud in Carl's presence” (“Light” 92).

between the lines spoken and the ideas flashing through one's mind, especially when the character is alone or at a sufficient distance from the others in the visual shot. Tsivian states that it is not essential for the audience whether the character actually pronounces the phrase or just thinks this way because the flow of the viewer's internal speech[81] absorbs the intertitle irrespective of the mode of "utterance" ("K semiotike" 148). Although this is probably true in most instances, a character's habit of talking to himself/herself, as opposed to just thinking, may prove vital for the development of the plot or for understanding the situation. What is more important is that the communication axis of both an inner monologue and a soliloquy is different from that of a dialogue line —the words are not meant for another character in the diegetic world. Thus, a term is warranted that would encompass, but not merge, character-generated lines directed at diegetic addressees and at the audience.

Diegetic inserts are another reason for calling the basic classification into question. As discussed above, letters, telegrams, and other inserts, when presented in between live-action shots, still have the form of title cards and often explain the action or drive the narrative forward, an essential function of exposition. However, terming such intertitles *expository* contradicts the main characteristic of expository intertitles—their location outside the film's diegesis. In this respect, Nebesio's decision to single out such inserts as a separate type—diegetic intertitles (694)[82]—makes perfect sense and serves as a terminological cue to a more consistent typology of intertitles.

I suggest categorizing intertitles into three broad types: *non-diegetic*, *semi-diegetic*, and *diegetic*. *Non-diegetic intertitles* encompass all verbal texts that enter

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[81] Tsivian refers to Eikhenbaum's concept of internal speech.

[82] Nebesio calls both expository and dialogue intertitles *extradiegetic* (683).

the film from outside the diegesis and represent the voice of the "author" or omniscient narrator, including but not limited to expository intertitles in their traditional meaning. *Semi-diegetic intertitles* combine the non-diegetic form of title cards with the diegetic content of characters' utterances or thoughts.[83] Verbal inserts that are created in the film's reality and are wedged in between live-action shots constitute the third type—*diegetic intertitles*. Functional responsibilities are often shared among the three types, although each type can perform functions that are unique to its kind.

NON-DIEGETIC INTERTITLES: FUNCTIONS

A majority of non-diegetic intertitles are employed within the context of narrative. A useful framework for investigating intertitles from this perspective is presented in Tom Gunning's adaptation of Genette's three intertwined meanings of *narrative* to film: *story* (a succession of events, the content), *narrative discourse* ("the actual arrangement of signifiers that communicate the story"),[84] and *the act of narrating* ("traces of telling" that reveal the narrator's address to the audience). To reflect the visual nature of film, Gunning adds an overarching concept of *narrativization*, "which would be something of a tautology in a literary text where the signs are naturally predisposed to telling, [but which] regulates the balance between mimetic and narrative functions in the filmic

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[83] The idea for the term *semi-diegetic* is borrowed from Joost Broeren, who says that dialogue intertitles "might be called semi-diegetic" (19). Petr Mareš notes the double status of the imprecise term *dialogue intertitles*: "on the one hand, they present what is a component of diegesis, on the other hand, however, they report about the presented world, they are external in relation to it" (428-29). But Mareš's candidate for a better term—*discourse intertitles* (424)—is not satisfactory either because of the multiple meanings of the word *discourse*, which can encompass any type of utterance.

[84] In narratology, the differentiation between the chronological succession of events, *fabula* [*фабула*], and their narrative presentation, *siuzhet* [*сюжет*], was first articulated in detail by Russian Formalists (see, for instance, Bahn and Bowlt; Erlich).

sign" (*D. W. Griffith* 14-18). The textuality of intertitles forms an essential part of the filmic narrative discourse, which, as Gunning explains, enables the viewer to construct the story and gives access to the act of enunciation (15). Intertitles can also effectively contribute to the process of narrativization through word-image interplay and cues that they provide as to the narrative importance of particular visual elements.

Narrative discourse, according to Genette, has three facets that relate either to the story or the act of narration: tense, mood, and voice. *Tense* negotiates the temporal relations between the story and the actual arrangement of narrative elements, employing three ways of manipulating the story: order, duration, and frequency. *Mood* largely corresponds to the Anglo-American term *point of view* and determines to what parts of the story readers or viewers have access. Through *voice* narrative discourse is connected to the act of narrating, when the presence of the narrator is subtly implied or foregrounded (Gunning, *D. W. Griffith* 15-16).

Although by default non-diegetic intertitles imply the voice of the narrator, another facet of narrative discourse can be a primary function. Expository intertitles are often responsible for the tense of narrative discourse. From the perspective of "order," intertitles can orient the viewers in the spatial-temporal diegetic continuum by indicating the time and/or place and by positioning events within the story relative to each other.[85] Superimposed intertitles in sound cinema have retained this use, which is sometimes twisted to create additional meanings.

For example, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Fran Rubel Kuzui, 1992), the introductory scene with the spatial-temporal marker "Europe: The Dark Ages"

[85] Rudolf Arnheim, for example, noted the use of intertitles as a primitive way of establishing the simultaneity of actions (28).

(figure 2.110) is followed by a visual sequence with the intertitle "Southern California: the Lite ages" superimposed over a group of skinny girls (figure 2.111). The parallel linguistic structures are scripted differently to reflect the times that they present; in the neologistic expression of the second intertitle, *Lite* seems to be foregrounded, surrounded by the de-capitalized *the* and *ages*, which highlights the verbal "dark-lite" play and, through spelling, characterizes the shallowness and diet craze of the contemporary world.



Fig. 2.110. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: a traditional temporal-spatial marker.



Fig. 2.111. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: *lite* as a characteristic feature.

Substitutes for traditional temporal descriptors reveal a connection to the film's topic, as is achieved in *A Good Year* (Ridley Scott, 2006), where *vintages* serve as period indicators that separate the past and the vastly different present (figures 2.112 and 2.113):



Fig. 2.112. *A Good Year*: the idyllic countryside past.



Fig. 2.113. *A Good Year*: the present of the City of London.

The exact timing of the events in *A Good Year* remains unclear and, thus, acquires an atemporal coloring: there is no point of departure for either *ago* or *later*; *a few* and *many* are also quite vague references. Explicit spatial-temporal markers can be coupled with non-specific indicators to create a humorous effect. Thus, in *Monty Python's Life of*

Brian, "Judea A.D. 33," which locates the diegetic world in the place and time of the most famous crucifixion in history, is followed by "Saturday Afternoon" and "About Tea Time," which hint at a religious practice (Saturday as a holy day for Jews) and a stereotypical cultural tradition (tea drinking in England).

Filmmakers may also choose to employ traditional temporal indicators for purposes of confusion and disorientation, a characteristic feature of Surrealism. The intertitles of *Un chien andalou*—"Eight years later," "Around three in the morning," "Sixteen years before," and "In the spring"—defy the function of situating the events along the storyline. In particular, no sixteen years could have elapsed between the diegetic situations separated by the intertitle since no change of scene occurs: the viewers' expectations of a jump in time are disrupted through contiguous mixed-mediality. Similarly, the visual shots do not corroborate the time indicators in the other instances, which provides a metatextual commentary on the cinematic tradition of clarification and contributes to the perplexity aroused by the film as a whole. The juxtaposition of the "Once upon a time" introductory intertitle and the following eyeball-slicing scene warns the viewers from the very beginning that the convention of a fairy-tale cinematic narrative will be shattered and a comfortable gazing at the screen will be frustrated.[86]

Intertitles that indicate a change in time and/or place merge "order" and "duration" since they integrate the scenes within the spatial-temporal continuum and at the same time achieve temporal compression. Screenwriters of the silent era advocated place and time lapse intertitles to help avoid confusion (Emerson and Loos 18) and to bridge substantial gaps in the narrative flow (Gale 92). Film scholars also single out the

[86] For brief discussions of intertitles in *Un chien andalou*, see Finkelstein 132; Hammond, "Available Light" 19; Orban 158-60; and Sitney, *Visionary Film* 5-6.

interrelated functions of continuity and compression performed by intertitles: Jan Mukařovský points out the usefulness of intertitles in transitioning between the scenes (187); Tsivian notes a frequent insertion of intertitles to cover up an ellipsis (*Early Cinema* 180) and an over-exploitation of letters "to establish links over time" (183); Thompson refers to the primary sources of the teens that recommend using intertitles to avoid what are now called jump cut continuity errors ("Formulation" 184); Torey Liepa observes that condensation and continuity were two major "functional benefits of inserted textual material" (242).

Closely related to the function of compression is another manipulation of "duration"—narrative summary, where the voice of the narrator becomes quite distinguishable. Brad Chisholm states that intertitles in charge of this function "label events, clarify actions, and sometimes direct us toward the proper interpretation of a given scene" (139). In early cinema, narrative summary was perhaps the most frequent use of intertitles. As Elliott observes, at the turn of the twentieth century, intertitles offered information that could not be deduced from visual scenes and acted as a translation tool from the still foreign language of the film medium (91-92). With the development of the visual aspects of film language and the audience's cinematic sensibilities in the teens, condensed verbal explanations of the forthcoming action on screen led to verbal-visual redundancy and, as Thompson points out, were lambasted as ridiculous practices that weakened the dramatic sense of the plot and destroyed the suspense. As a result, many intertitles of this kind metamorphosed into what could be literary chapter headings, such as "The crowning insult" or "An opportunity for revenge" in *The Fatal Opal* (George Melford, 1914) ("Formulation" 185).

Intertitles analogous to literary chapter headings reappear in post-war cinema. For

instance, in Kluge's early films, as Peter C. Lutze points out, such intertitles "provide a general, if often vague, clue as to what may happen in the subsequent segment; or they may suggest a level of abstraction from which to interpret the specific events that will follow" (83). Under the influence of Brecht's epic theater, Kluge used such headings to imbue his film *Abschied von gestern* (1966), known internationally as *Yesterday Girl*, with an epic dimension (110). In George Roy Hill's *The Sting*, the Oscar's best picture in 1973, the formulaic plot is segmented by "old-fashioned intertitles that link the historical diegesis . . . with the cinematic sign" (Michaels 52). The intertitle cards—"THE SET-UP," "THE HOOK," "THE TALE," "THE WIRE," "THE SHUT-OUT," and "THE STING"—are even presented as illustrated book pages, which are turned over to reveal the diegetic action, and are similar in design to the title sequence and end credits.

Narrative summary was often the major function of introductory and concluding intertitles. The rules of the "art of beginning your story," according to Emerson and Loos, include arousing curiosity, briefly explaining the essential background facts, and giving a clue to the theme of the story, all of which should be achieved in an introductory intertitle so that the audience could follow the plot easily and with interest (94-95). Contemporary cinema usually achieves all of this in a title sequence thanks to the interplay of word, image, and sound, but superimposed introductory titles were not infrequent during the first several decades of sound cinema. For instance, the narrative in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) starts with a history of the Maltese Falcon superimposed over a bird statuette, with an ellipsis (figure 2.114) bridging the introductory intertitle and the following shot of San Francisco (figure 2.115).

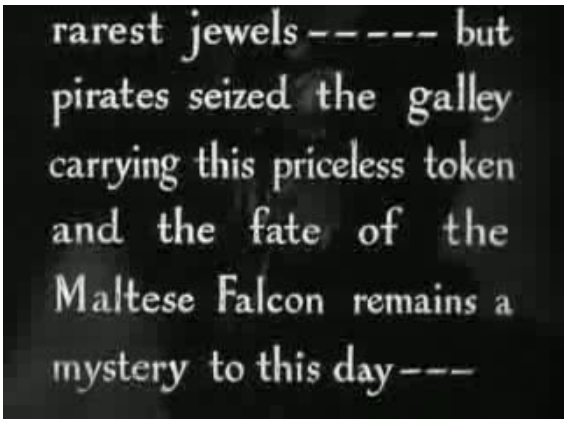


Fig. 2.114. *The Maltese Falcon*: the introductory story.



Fig. 2.115. *The Maltese Falcon*: a bridge to the present.

Narrative summaries in concluding intertitles often act as epilogues. In Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974), the eponymous character's fate is sealed by two screens of superimposed titles located just above his head: “Lucien Lacombe fut arrêté le 12 Octobre 1944” 'Lucien Lacombe was arrested on October 12, 1944' (figure 2.116) is finalized by “Jugé par un tribunal militaire de la Résistance, il fut condamné à mort et executé” 'He was tried by a military court of the Resistance, sentenced to death and executed.' The dealth-sentence epilogue intertitle clashes with the visual of the very much alive Lucien, who is lying in the grass and enjoying the moment of looking at naked France, after having helped the Jewish girl he probably loves (we are never privy to his feelings) escape the German police. The two-minute verbal-visual “One Year Later” epilogue of Steven Brill's *Little Nicky* (2000) summarizes the humorous and amorous adventures and current status of all the major characters. It also includes self-reflexive references to Hollywood actors that have not been involved in the film (figure 2.117), appealing to the viewers' outside knowledge and highlighting the act of narrating.



Fig. 2.116. *Lacombe Lucien*:
a verbal-visual disjuncture.



Fig. 2.117. *Little Nicky*:
a self-reflexive comparison.

Early filmmakers also resorted to narrative summary to describe a state of affairs that was difficult to present visually (Chisholm 139) and to substitute for action that was "unfilmable" because of its impropriety, such as murder or sex (Liepa 253). Censoring of photoplays precluded filming of spicy scenes (Emerson and Loos 86), whereas verbal hints could pass the censorship boards. Censorship is brilliantly ridiculed in the sound film *Hellzapoppin'*, where, as Gloria Withalm notes, an intertitle that reads "CENSORED" is inserted at the moment of a likely use of a four-letter word and is followed by the projectionist's referring to the Hays Office ("Self-Reflexive Screen" 135). When an unflattering descriptor is about to be pronounced a few minutes later ("Kitty is a . . ."), one of the characters stops the censorship insert midway—so that only "RED" is visible—and concedes to describe the situation in other words.

Apart from their involvement with the temporal relations in the film, non-diegetic expository intertitles can give free reign to the voice of the narrator in providing all sorts of information related to the diegetic story. Character introduction was a favorite in silent cinema, sometimes with a comedic effect. W. K. Everson provides an example of the two-reeler *Cowboy Ambrose*, starring Mack Swain, which presents the villain as having been "arrested for shop-lifting in a plow-store" (134). In Marcel L'Herbier's *L'inhumaine* [*The Inhuman Woman*] (1924), many characters are introduced by their most

salient feature as they appear or are noticed at the reception, with the intertitles bearing the actor's name (figure 2.118) and followed immediately by a close-up (figure 2.119):

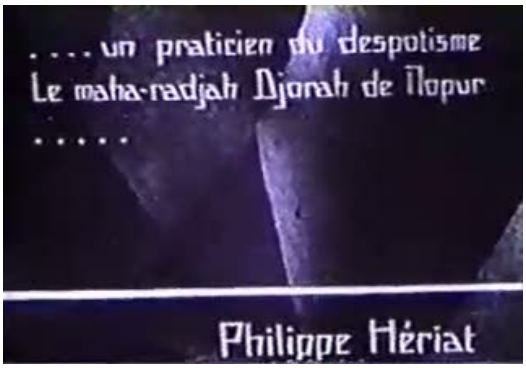


Fig. 2.118. *L'inhumaine*: the verbal presentation of a practitioner of despotism.



Fig. 2.119. *L'inhumaine*: a practitioner of despotism incarnate.

Locations can also be introduced evaluatively, with a description of their influence on human behavior, as is the case with the art-title presentations of New York (figure 2.120) and Long Island (figure 2.121) in Alfred Santell's *Orchids and Ermine* (1927).



Fig. 2.120. *Orchids and Ermine*: New York's evening environment.

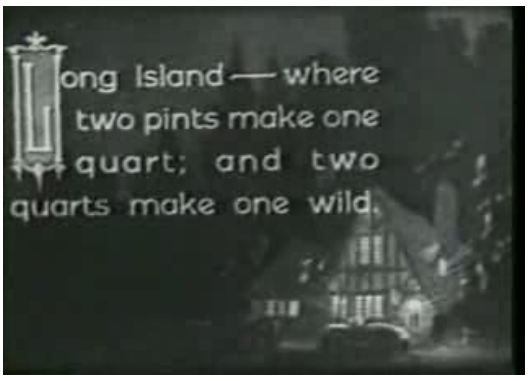


Fig. 2.121. *Orchids and Ermine*: Long Island's "debauchery."

Expository intertitles can also introduce a theme, sometimes utilizing the related lingo. Thus, Hitchcock prefaces the dramatic action of *Spellbound* (1945) by describing the method of psychoanalysis, where "[t]he analyst seeks only to induce the patient to talk about his hidden problems, to open the locked doors of his mind." The multiple layers of the human mind, which can be quite faulty, are presented through a momentary overlap of the introductory intertitle with an attributed quote from Shakespeare

("The fault . . . . . - is not in our stars, but in ourselves . . . . .") and the following intertitle that reveals the axis of the story (figures 2.122 and 2.123). In the silent era, a theme was sometimes revealed in the secondary title, as in *The Burglar's Dilemma* (Griffith, 1912), where the title shot also includes "The Abuse of the Third Degree."[87]

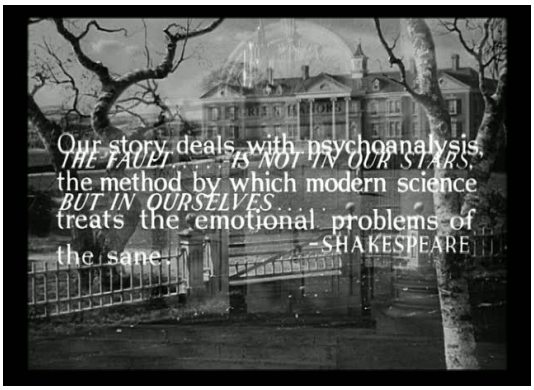


Fig. 2.122. *Spellbound*: a verbal-visual revelation of multiple layers.

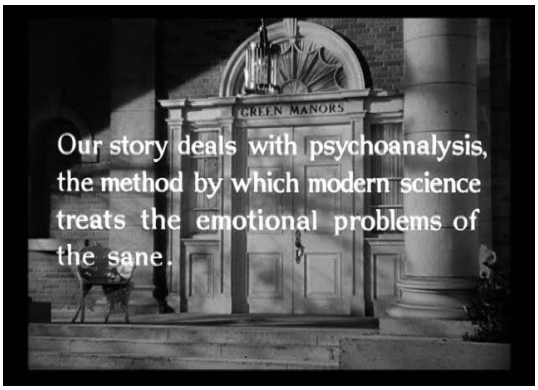


Fig. 2.123. *Spellbound*: describing the story's axis.

[87] Unless noted otherwise, examples of intertitles and secondary titles from Griffith's Biograph shorts (1908-1913), with capitalization preserved, are taken from the copyright material deposited at the Library of Congress, as listed in *The Griffith Project*, published under the general editorship of Paolo Cherchi Usai. According to Gunning, the intertitles for Griffith's films created from 1908 through September 1909 have not survived ("Death Disc" 117). The intertitles for Griffith's Biographs began to be deposited with paper prints starting 14 October 1909 (Merritt, "Mountaineer's Honor" 109). No paper prints were deposited, and thus virtually no definitive statement about the intertitles can be made, in the period between *Fate's Turning* (copyrighted 25 January 1911) and *Iola's Promise* (copyrighted 11 March 1912) (Merritt, "Fate's Turning" 260). A note of caution: many of Griffith's films with Mary Pickford that are stored at the Library of Congress as "paper prints" are actually 16mm reductions of film copies from Pickford's own collection, which "generally either lack intertitles or include inauthentic ones added years later" (Simmon, "Woman" 175). Additionally, after Biograph's demise in 1917, many of its titles were reissued in reedited versions with new intertitles by Aywon Film Corporation (Brewster, "Twisted Trail" 43). As a result of these perturbations, most of the intertitles featured in DVD collections of Griffith's Biographs differ from the ones that were featured in the original releases. For example, *The Burglar's Dilemma*, which is included on Disk 1 of *D. W. Griffith. Years of Discovery: 1909-1913*, released by Image Entertainment in 2002, does not have the secondary title "The Abuse of the Third Degree": instead, it features the double introductory intertitle "REPRESENTING THE MANIPULATION OF THE THIRD DEGREE – THE FALLACY OF CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE"; the other intertitles are also completely reinvented.

Expository intertitles where "voice" dominates not only introduce the diegetic world to the viewers but also guide them along the narrative way. They can record facts and statistics and provide precise data (Gale 21), which imparts a documentary feel to the presentation. They can emphasize the significance of a visual element—just by naming it or through repetition. As Thompson observes, expository intertitles can direct the audience's expectation of the climax and resolution ("Formulation" 186). Similarly, they can signal a change of the character's fate, as does "But it is always darkest just before the dawn"[88] in Emerson's *Reaching for the Moon* (1917). A punch, which is often conveyed not by the action but by the idea behind the action,[89] can also be delivered through an intertitle (Liepa 241).

The narrative guide's voice of expository intertitles often finds it difficult to abstain from evaluative or interpretative commentary, although this may be veiled. For instance, as Walter Kerr notes, a generalizing, archetypal quality can be imparted to events ("The storm") or characters ("The tramp") through the use of the definite article (30). Such *the*-structures can also grow into symbols,[90] which was especially characteristic of intertitles in Griffith's films (W. K. Everson 139-40). Intertitles can

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[88] This phrase, which introduces Alexis's being recognized as King of Vulgaria, the culmination of his "reaching for the moon," is linked to the later non-diegetic intertitle "At dawn," which prefaces the duel that results in Alexis's waking up from the nightmare of being king.

[89] Writing in the teens, Sargent equates *punch* and *idea*: "Punch is the *idea* back of the narrative. It makes narrative interesting through idea. In this it differs from motivation, which makes for interest through explaining the reason for action. . . . Punch in action . . . is the effect of action heightened by our knowledge of facts" (93, 96).

[90] Gilbert Adair makes an interesting observation about the usage of *the* in the American literary tradition, which could be extended to American film as well: "One is probably intended to interpret the 'the' of these titles as the signifier of some species of the Ideal, no doubt pseudo-Platonic in its presentation but all too rapidly debased and trivialised in its expression" (158).

disproportionately blow up the size and importance of depicted events, as is the case with William K. Howard's *Captain Fly-By-Night* (1922), where straightforward bandits are constantly called *conspirators* and their banditry is described as a plot to overthrow the government: in a nutshell, the intertitles "try hard to make an epic out of a quickie" (W. K. Everson 140). The contiguous mixed-medial interplay of the intertitle and the visual shot can add an ironic coloring to the verbal text: for example, in Griffith's *The Mothering Heart* (1913), "A chance meeting on the way home" is followed by a scene where "the idle woman," identified as such in the preceding sequence, is apparently waiting for her new interest to walk past the spot on the road where she has positioned herself.

Commentary can be explicitly woven into the texture of narrative exposition. William Hart's films, as W. K. Everson notes, are abundant in intertitles that romanticize the West and paint villains the blackest color (132-33). Griffith's predilection for moralizing is notorious.[91] In *The Mothering Heart*, the intertitle "With success comes the turning away from homely joys" forecasts the development of events and at the same time provides a generalizing reason for a change in the character's attitude to family life. In his narrative commentary, Griffith frequently resorts to metaphorical language, as in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915): "Pride battles with love for the heart's conquest."

When literary tropes and/or rhythmic structures become the core of the verbal

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[91] Lea Jacobs, however, notes a tendency in Griffith's late Biographs of eschewing moralizing: the "films of these years seem less concerned to render explicit moral judgments, and sometimes seem to go out of their way to back away from them. . . . When the films are sententious in 1912-1913, judgments are much more likely to be directed against the 'do-gooders' or moral reformers, precisely the agents of moral authority . . ." ("Change" 125).

text, exposition steps back to foreground the poetic quality of the wording.[92] I will call such non-diegetic intertitles *poetic*, following Liepa (141).[93] Poetic intertitles appear not only in cinematic adaptations of poems. For example, the intertitles that were inserted into the originally intertitle-free *Slezy* [*Tears*] served as a lyrical accompaniment to visual imagery, without any direct relation to the action (Tsivian, "Early Russian Cinema" 19). Thompson notes a frequent usage of poetic generalizations as preludes to films of the late teens and twenties ("Formulation" 187), as in Maurice Tourneur's *The Blue Bird* (1918), which begins with a florid passage split into two successive intertitles ("Tradition whispers that in the sky is a bird, blue as the sky itself, which brings to its finder HAPPINESS. But everyone cannot see it; for mortal eyes are prone to be blinded by the glitter of wealth, fame and position, and deceived by the mocking Will-o'-the-Wisp of empty honors." and "But for the fortunate ones who seek with open eyes and hearts, with the artlessness, simplicity and faith which are richest in childhood, there is an undying promise; and to them the Bluebird lives and carols, a rejoicing symbol of HAPPINESS and CONTENTMENT unto the end."). Shorter poetic intertitles also rely on various figures of speech. For instance, in David Kirkland's *The Love Expert* (1920), written by Emerson and Loos, repetition and inversion create a poetic mood: "Then came the night, / Fair, eldest child of love, / The wondrous night." In *The Birth of a Nation*, the structural contrast between the two parts of the intertitle "While the women and children weep, a great conqueror marches to the sea" is reinforced through alliterative *w* and *r*.

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[92] According to Sargent, "[i]n drama the poetical quality of the leaders is a distinct asset. . . . The essentials are a smooth movement to the accent and an avoidance of a succession of harsh sounds or sequence of rising or (not and) falling accents" (171).

[93] Liepa considers poetic intertitles to represent "an interesting 'third' form beyond exposition and dialogue" (141).

Non-diegetic expository intertitles can also reveal the point of view of the narrative discourse. Although it was mostly semi-diegetic intertitles that helped the viewers to understand what a character was "saying" or thinking, the omniscient narrator sometimes made the audience privy to the character's thoughts by presenting them through indirect discourse. For example, the double intertitle[94] of *When Love Forgives* (Griffith or Anthony O'Sullivan, 1913) presents the character's state of mind by naming her overwhelming feeling and giving the reason for it: "JEALOUSY – SHE THINKS THE LETTER WAS FROM ANOTHER SWEETHEART." Point-of-view intertitles cater to what Per Persson calls "the spectator's striving for psychological coherence in the discourse" (228). It is always easier to make sense of someone's behavior when we know the motivations behind the actions. Griffith, among other directors, does not like to keep the audience in the dark about the inner forces that drive the characters in his shorts, often locating such intertitles at the beginning of the film: "LADY MARGARET BELIEVES HER HUSBAND'S LOVE IS GROWING COLD" (*Taming a Husband*, 1910); "THE PHENOMENAL SUCCESS OF THE BROTHER'S PLAY AROUSES THE OTHER'S JEALOUSY" (*The Burglar's Dilemma*); "THE NARROW-MINDED FATHER DENIES HIS DAUGHTER ALL ASSOCIATIONS EXCEPT HER CHAPERON" (*A Change of Spirit*, 1912); "HER ASPIRING WAY – THE MAID SCORNS SO HUMBLE A SUITOR" (*Love in an Apartment Hotel*, 1913). As Merritt points out, relying on Gunning's research, Griffith's *Sweet Revenge* (1909) incorporates perhaps the earliest intertitle that imbues a film image with a psychological dimension:

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[94] Double intertitles, which were popular in the early teens, presented two kinds of information, usually separated by a horizontal bar: most often, two non-diegetic cues that performed separate functions or a combination of exposition and dialogue. Liepa, who mentions the short-lived history of such intertitles because of their cumbersome structure, calls them "split titles" (106-07), whereas I reserve the term *split intertitles* for cases where the unified content is distributed onto several intertitle cards, as discussed earlier.

"GLOATING, SHE FOLLOWS WITH 'HER MINDS [sic] EYE,' THE BEARER OF MALICE" tempts the viewers to read the subsequent visual shot as a combination of what the female character is imagining and what is really happening ("Sweet Revenge" 106).

Expository intertitles can present paraphrased dialogue in summary format, which, as Chisholm phrases it, "enables us to grasp the essence of a conversation without having to suffer through every word of it" (139). For example, a probably lengthy and tearful conversation in *The Mothering Heart* is presented to the viewers in a nutshell: "The young wife explains he has lost all right to her love." In Charles L. Gaskill's *Cleopatra* (1912), an expository intertitle both presents the character's motivation and reveals the essence of a forthcoming conversation: "Fearing that the news of Cleopatra's arrival may cause Antony to break his resolutions to stop the war, Ventidius persuades Diomedes to tell Antony the scandals concerning her." Paraphrased dialogue can shed light on the emotional state of the "speaker" and on the social hierarchy of the people involved in a conversation through the use of volitional verbs such as *beg*, *plead*, *demand*, and the like. James Keane's *Richard III* (released in 1912 and copyrighted in 1913), the oldest American feature film that has been preserved in its entirety (Loehlin 173), features several intertitles of this kind to showcase Gloster's position of power: for example, "Gloster demands admission to King Henry's cell" and "Gloster orders the young Princes to be taken to the Tower."

As noted above, all non-diegetic intertitles rotate around the narrator-viewer communication axis. Yet some intertitles demand a more invested involvement of the audience. Like titles that engage the viewers in an implicit dialogue, intertitles that perform a similar function will be called *interlocutionary*. Interlocutionary intertitles can directly address the viewers to draw their attention to specific themes or elements of the

plot and to tune them to the mood of the film, which is especially characteristic of introductory intertitles. For example, *A Modern Musketeer* (Allan Dwan, 1917) begins with the following appeal to the audience's prior knowledge of the Gascon adventurer: “Do you remember D'Artagnan of France? Can you recall the thrills you got from the adventures of that famous swash-buckling gallant of three centuries ago?” In *Just Neighbors*, the pronouns *we* and *our* are employed to ease the viewers' identification with the plight of the Bridegroom and to entice them to share the perspective of the narrator through a reference to an experience familiar to all the parties involved (figure 2.124). In the same intertitle, however, this bond is undermined when the viewers are reminded of their exteriority through an implied opposition between *you* and *we* in the sentence located below the horizontal bar: “You note that we begin well.”

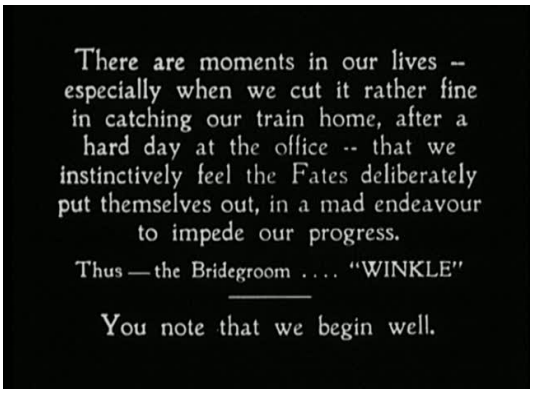


Fig. 2.124. *Just Neighbors*: an interlocutionary involvement.

Direct address is not the only way interlocutionary intertitles engage the viewers. Humorous remarks that are superfluous to the story are presented for the viewers' enjoyment and act as a psychological break. More often, however, photoplay writers strove to infuse humor into exposition to win the audience over to the narrator's side. Louella O. Parsons, the author of the 1915 *How to Write for the 'Movies,'* states that “some of the biggest laugh getters owe their success to the clever words in the leaders” (qtd. in Liepa 259). W. K. Everson notes that the increasing popularity of gag-writing

spilled into intertitles in the twenties. An example from a Mack Sennett comedy he provides—when the intertitle "They were glad to see her back again" is followed by a shot of Phyllis Haver, with her back to the camera, smiling at the viewers over her shoulder (134)—combines the visuality of a direct address to the audience and a mixed-medial pun.

Apart from *expository, poetic,* and *interlocutionary*, I suggest singling out another type of non-diegetic intertitles—*transtextual*—whose major function is to refer the viewers to sources outside the film. Arguably, transtextual intertitles are located in the overlapping area between expository and interlocutionary intertitles: on the one hand, when deciphered, various kinds of transtextual references—intertextual, paratextual, metatextual, hypertextual, and architextual—can help to clarify what the film is aiming to tell; on the other hand, the "when deciphered" clause necessitates the viewers' active engagement.

Intertextually, quotes can provide interpretive clues, invoke an authoritative outside voice, and accord cultural dignity, especially when attributed to a recognized master. In fact, "quotes" can sometimes be made-up pastiches, created to mimic somebody's style. When the origin of the quote is not identified, the intertitle receives an additional layer of an interpretive riddle. For instance, as Lutze reminds us, Alexander Kluge is fond of unattributed quotes, the relation of which to the filmic text is difficult to figure out (84, 110). Such phrases and sentences enclosed in quotation marks showcase the act of narrating, at the same time problematizing authorship attribution (84). When intertextual relations exist between sources in different languages, establishing the connection(s) becomes even more complicated.

In *Abschied von gestern*, the final close-up of the heroine is followed by a

concluding intertitle, enclosed in quotation marks: “Jeder ist an allem schuld, aber wenn das jeder wüßte, hätten wir das Paradies auf Erden” 'Everyone is to blame/responsible for everything, but if everybody knew that, we would have paradise on earth.' However, locating the origin of the quote and, thus, perceiving the intertextual dimension requires substantial knowledge from the viewer. Lutze refers to Enno Patalas, who identifies this sentence as a quote from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (227). In fact, *Crime and Punishment*, although dealing with existential guilt, does not contain the sentence a “translation” of which Kluge presents in German. The sentence is not even a direct quote in its entirety: instead, it is most probably an abridged paraphrase of two passages from *Brat'ia Karamazovy* [*The Brothers Karamazov*] from the part where Alyosha presents to the readers Zosima's hagiography. The first one—“. . . life is paradise, and we are all in paradise, yet we don't want to know about it, and if we wanted to know, then already tomorrow would witness a paradise on earth”—is spoken by Zosima's elder brother when he addresses their mother. The other—“. . . everybody is to blame for everybody and everything . . . once people understand it, the kingdom of heaven will stop being a dream and will become reality”[95]—is part of the mysterious visitor's conversation with Zosima. The latter seems closer to the “quote” in *Abschied von gestern* but does not utilize the unreality of the subjunctive mood, unlike the former and the “quote” itself. The question, however, remains whether Kluge himself was aware

[95] The original, non-abridged, lines in *Brat'ia Karamazovy* run as such: "Мама,—отвечает ей,—не плачь, жизнь есть рай, и все мы в раю, да не хотим знать того, а если бы захотели узнать, завтра же и стал бы на всем свете рай." (352) and “А о том, продолжает, что всякий человек за всех и за вся виноват, помимо своих грехов, о том вы совершенно правильно рассудили и удивительно, как вы вдруг в такой полноте могли сию мысль обнять. И воистину верно, что когда люди эту мысль поймут, то настанет для них царствие небесное уже не в мечте, а в самом деле.” (369)

of the portmanteau nature of the "quoted" sentence: the filmmaker used the sentence again, as an intertitle that invoked Dostoevsky, in his 1994 televised conversation with Heiner Müller ("Ich schulde"). In its German version, the "quote" also pops up in web searches as part of various lists of famous quotes, so it may have become part of the intellectual folklore as a quintessential Dostoevskian idea.

Transtextual intertitles can also be included in the paratextual space of the film. Intertitles that indicate division into parts act as an alienating device reminding the audience that they are watching an artificial construct. Norman Mailer labels twelve sections of *Maidstone* (1970) with numbers, followed by, often through overlap (figure 2.125) or superimposition, terse chapter headings. Pompous ("A MEETING OF HIGH OFFICIALS"), matter-of-fact ("INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CAST"), humorous ("THE GRAND ASSASSINATION BALL"), intertextual ("The Silences of an Afternoon," a possible allusion to Maya Deren's avant-garde classic *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), and "THE DEATH OF THE DIRECTOR," a definite reference to Barthes's "The Death of the Author"), these internal titles contribute to the multi-genre mocumentary of a film director running for president. The "romantic" section—"RETURN OF AN OLD LOVE" (figure 2.126)—is the only one labeled by a spelled-out numeral rather than a number, which formally singles it out among the other parts, yet any expectations of its especial significance to the narrative remain frustrated.



Fig. 2.125. *Maidstone*: a paratextual label-commentary.



Fig. 2.126. *Maidstone*: romance highlighted through a spelled-out numeral.

Segmenting intertitles can be employed to highlight interart connections. The verbal sections of Marcel Broodthaers's *Un voyage en mer du Nord* [*A Voyage on the North Sea*] (1974), labeled "Page 1" through "Page 15," with "Page 5" repeated twice, intercut still shots of the different planes of a photograph and a painting and, within the textuality of the whole film, contribute to deconstructing a series of oppositions: book vs. film, photography vs. painting, abstraction vs. realistic representation, progression vs. stasis, and so on.[96] Supporting the architextual effort of the title, five division intertitles in Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin: die Symfonie der Großstadt* [*Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*] (1927), called "acts," assign to the film the status of a musical-theatrical performance.

Self-reflexive intertitles can provide a metatextual commentary on narrative and genre conventions and invite the viewers to compare the film they are watching to the cinematic tradition. For example, in *The Cake Eater* (J. A. Howe, 1924), as Kerr describes, one intertitle "interrupts the horseplay to announce that someday someone will make a film showing cowboys at work, 'but the public isn't ready for it yet.' A second exclaims: 'Another novelty! A girl comes to a ranch who isn't a school teacher'" (114). In *Hot Shots! Part Deux* (Abrahams, 1993), a comedic spoof on Rambo-style war movies, the superimposed intertitles during a shooting scene tally the body count and progressively compare the displayed results to the numbers in *RoboCop* and in *Total Recall* until, finally, the award goes to *Hot Shots! Part Deux*, "bloodiest movie ever."

Intertitles are also employed by filmmakers to parody deficiencies of film production. *Hoodoo Ann* (Lloyd Ingraham, 1916, written by Griffith under the

[96] For an insightful discussion of Broodthaers's interart endeavors in different media, see Krauss, *Voyage*.

pseudonym “Granville Warwick”), makes fun of continuity errors and of “the not infrequent misspellings of early-teen inter-titles” (Thompson, “Formulation” 213). Created by Loos,[97] the intertitles in *Hoodoo Ann* exaggerate verbal and verbal-visual inconsistencies that were quite common in films of the period. In a crudely-made western, which the characters watch in a local cinema, the lead female character is introduced as “No purer lily ever blew than little Rose the prairie violet.” The misspelled intertitle “Fathers dear old tin pale” is visually reinforced by a prominent substitution of a tin pail (figure 2.127) by a wooden bucket in the contiguous scene (figure 2.128):



Fig. 2.127. *Hoodoo Ann*: leaving with an “old tin pale.”



Fig. 2.128. *Hoodoo Ann*: sporting a wooden bucket substitution.

Another intertitle of the western, “With deadly aim straight at the heart of his enemy,” precedes the scene of a gun firing into the ceiling (figure 2.129) and incongruously making the lead man clutch at his heart a second later. The apostrophe mishap is foregrounded via integrated verbal elements as well: the movie poster located at the cinema entrance spells the film's title as “Mustang Charle'ys Revenge” (figure 2.130).

[97] Ben Brewster notes that in 1916, “[inter]title writing is only just beginning to be distinguished from the writing of the scenario itself. . . . Loos' [sic] contribution might thus be anything from writing a completely new set of [inter]titles to editing some of the [inter]titles included in Griffith's scenario.” Brewster also points out that *Hoodoo Ann* originally had a self-reflexive epilogue, which does not seem to have survived (“Hoodoo Ann” 3, 5).

Hoodoo Ann itself also incorporates misspelling in an expository intertitle to mimic a common way of referring to cinema: “To 'the movin' pitchers.'”



Fig. 2.129. *Hoodoo Ann* (fragment enlargement): “straight at the heart.”



Fig. 2.130. *Hoodoo Ann*: about to watch *Mustang Charle'ys Revenge*.

SEMI-DIEGETIC INTERTITLES: NATURE AND FUNCTIONS

While the four types of non-diegetic intertitles—expository, poetic, interlocutionary, and transtextual—perform numerous functions, semi-diegetic intertitles seem to be less diverse from a functional perspective, although, as Thompson points out, dialogue intertitles[98] outnumber expository intertitles in the mainstream cinema of the late teens and twenties (“Formulation” 188). Character-generated lines started making regular appearances around 1911 (W. K. Everson 129), although some filmmakers incorporated dialogue much earlier: Gaudreault notes perhaps the first use of a character-spoken line —“Open Sesame”—in Pathé's *Ali Baba et les quarante voleurs* [*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*] (Ferdinand Zecca, 1902) (qtd. in Broeren 17); Porter's *The Ex-Convict* (1904) featured probably the first “spoken lines” in the US. As illustrated earlier, the pioneering

[98] A terminological reminder is in order: what most scholars, including Thompson, call *dialogue intertitles* corresponds to my term *semi-diegetic intertitles*. In citations and quotes, the traditional term *dialogue intertitles* will be preserved.

intertitles in Hepworth's *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900) were of the semi-diegetic type since they presented the road accident victim's flashing thoughts. The percentage of dialogue intertitles in the US grew consistently in the teens: from 2% of all intertitle occurrences in 1908 to 30% in 1913 to 50% in 1916, according to statistics compiled by Liepa, based on a sampling of extant films (107-08).

Such a proliferation of semi-diegetic intertitles was of course not accidental. Direct dialogue started to weave its way into films at a time when acting styles were becoming more restrained and close shots were getting more frequent (Dupré la Tour, "Intertitles" 328). Liepa argues that dialogue intertitles were essential in the transformative shift of the industry to *features,* multiple-reel films,[99] since longer films allowed for an introduction of more characters, and their speech, into the story (112-14). Thompson explains that dialogue intertitles "made narration less self-conscious" ("Formulation" 183), which one was of the reasons why, in the teens, filmmakers started to build on the advantages of motivating verbal language use as spoken lines (188). Salt praises dialogue intertitles for "a great contribution to narrative speed, economy, and construction" (291). Semi-diegetic intertitles—dialogue lines, soliloquies, and inner monologues—also gained acceptance and popularity with the audiences because they afforded glimpses into the character's psychology and personality, although Kerr makes a valid point that many silent films still lacked "that last plunge into psychic depths that language takes, the thickness that comes of knowing a man in his thoughts" (47).

With the appearance of dialogue lines, filmmakers encountered a problem of

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[99] As Robert S. Birchard observes, when features began to be produced in the US, it was common to think that "longer was better if features were to play in legitimate theaters at advance prices. However, as the novelty of feature films wore off and they began to play movie houses for ten and twenty-five cent admissions, exhibitors forced producers to standardize their features at five reels . . ." (16).

identifying the speaking character.[100] Whereas expository intertitles outlined the boundary between semantic blocks of visual text (Tsivian, "K semiotike" 146), locating dialogue lines at the beginning or the end of a scene,[101] which was the initial practice, was quite awkward.[102] Dialogue intertitles that prefaced a scene often listed the name of the character together with a spoken line and sometimes even included the name and the reply of the opposing character.[103] As a result, they looked like excerpts from a playscript and "robbed the succeeding scenes of their spontaneity" (W. K. Everson 129-30).[104] Character names outside the quotation marks stayed on as late as 1914, when most dialogue intertitles were already intercut in the scenes, which Bowser attributes to an influx into the film industry of theatrical producers, who stuck to the familiar practices of play scripts (*Transformation* 144).

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[100] Soliloquies and inner monologues did not give rise to such confusion because the character was either alone in the shot or at a sufficient distance from the others. This is another reason to distinguish between dialogue lines, which can potentially be attributed to the wrong character, and soliloquies and inner monologues, which have an unambiguous source, and to avoid *dialogue intertitles* as an umbrella term.

[101] Thompson observes that inserting a dialogue line before the scene where it was spoken was more prevalent, but sometimes a dialogue intertitle was delayed until after the scene so as not to obscure the change in a character's attitude or behavior, which was signaled visually, as in Griffith's *What's Your Hurry* (1909) ("What's Your Hurry" 86).

[102] Noting that, unlike intertitles that involved dialogue, diegetic inserts were almost always cut into the scene in the early teens, Gaudreault suggests that the difference in placement may be accounted for by the fact that in the case of inserts, "we are faced with a visual element emerging in a chain which is itself of a visual nature (the expressive material then remains homogeneous)," whereas a dialogue line acts a heterogeneous element, which belongs to the domain of sound ("Taming" 12).

[103] Sargent strongly advocated against the usage of leaders that included speeches of two characters because such intertitles were verbose and signaled the laziness of the writer, who could not invent a single cue that would suggest both question and reply (168).

[104] Brewster notes that prefacing each cue with the name in two-speaker intertitles, as in *The Spoilers* (Colin Campbell, 1914), foregrounds the act of narration ("When Kings" 55), which is an unwelcome attribute in semi-diegetic intertitles.

Blending dialogue into the visual scene, while making sure that the spectators could identify the source of a spoken line, was thus a major undertaking. In the beginning stages of the dialogue invasion, when semi-diegetic intertitles were still used sparingly to present only vital lines, Sargent recommended that the intertitle be preceded by at least ten seconds of the visual sequence and followed by at least five because the audience had to see the effect of the spoken lines. He also suggested cutting dialogue in as a substitute for the middle of a character's speech, with the beginning and the ending of the speech presented visually (qtd. in Liepa 153-54). Buster Keaton's practice of inserting semi-diegetic lines went along these lines. As the actor-director reminisced in an interview, "You spoke, and in the cutting room you simply ran the film through your fingers down to where . . . your mouth opened, and the second syllable you'd cut, slapping your [inter]titles—it explains what you are talking about. And, when you come back, you pick it up just as your mouth is about to close" (qtd. in Terkel 108).

Also thinking that the dialogue should be inserted in the middle of pantomimed speech, Gale outlines four ways of identifying the intertitled speaker, to be used by photoplay writers: "(1) shift in viewpoint from a medium shot of the group to a close view of the speaker, concentrating audience attention on him; (2) a pause in the flow of action; (3) a break in the action of the speaker (he stops playing and chalks his cue); (4) a shot from his viewpoint showing another character's reaction to what he says" (92). Analyzing *Der Student von Prague* (Stellan Rye and Paul Wegene, 1913), promoted in the US as *A Bargain with Satan*, Susanne Orosz distinguishes six main practices of identifying the addresser and the addressee: through editing, when the intertitle in quotation marks follows a shot where only the speaking character is visible; through character movement, when the conversing characters move from the background to the

fore; through positioning and distance, when the characters engaged in a dialogue are located close to or move towards each other and maintain eye contact; through cultural and social body language, facial expressions, and lip movements; through addressing a character in the intertitle itself; and through contextual clues in the visual shot (147-49).

Lip movement was perhaps the most controversial way of cueing spoken lines. Its benefit of unmistakeably identifying the speaker was counterbalanced by several disadvantages. As Tsivian notes, lip movement predetermined a dialogue insertion spot, which was an undesirable quality since intertitles were often written post factum, during the editing process, to make up for the deficiencies in the visual presentation. In addition, some filmmakers and viewers did not find intense lip and jaw movements, which became the focus of the camera, aesthetically appealing.[105] There was yet another argument against this dialogue indicator: even if intertitles had already been written before the shooting began, few actors bothered to learn the lines that the audience would not hear anyway; thus, when directors insisted on an imitation of a conversation, the actors would speak random lines and sometimes curse. As a result, during the movie presentation, sentimental scenes were often disrupted by uproars of laughter from members of the audience who could easily read lips and could figure out what the actors were actually saying ("K semiotike" 147).[106] Such unintentional mixed-mediality undermined filmmakers' efforts to achieve realistic representation.

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[105] Arnheim also advocates against the use of "the monotonous motions of the mouth," which "can only hamper the expressive movement of the body" (187).

[106] Atom Egoyan and Ian Balfour also point out the frequent discrepancy between what the actor was actually saying and the intertitled text in silent film (Introduction 21). Brownlow notes that sometimes the language was "too hot for any [inter]titles"; therefore, lip-reading, essential for full enjoyment of such films, gave rise to a new sport of the "cuss word puzzle" (*Parade* 297).

An effect of realism—vernacular and phenomenological (Liepa 253)—is one of the functions of semi-diegetic intertitles, which made it easier for the audience to identify with characters who were presented as talking and thinking beings. Revealing what Walter J. Ong calls the "conscious interiors" (74), as well as the psychology and motivations behind someone's actions, is a related function of dialogue lines, soliloquies, and inner monologues. Liepa notes that dialogue also provides access into the character's linguistic consciousness (261) and can be employed "as a means of individuation" (67). The misspelling of familiar words—an "eye dialect"—can signal an uncultivated voice (69), as can structures that are incorrect from the point of view of standard grammar. *The Covered Wagon* provides plentiful illustrations of such dialogue lines: for example, "'Them wagons from Liberty is liable never t' git here —why don't we start without 'em?'"[107] or "'Sorry, Will—knowed ye was sot on sparin' that critter—but some bacon grease got on my finger an' it slipped.'" A choice of words, and their spelling, can reveal a child's perspective, as does *mamma* in *Two Little Waifs* (Griffith, 1910): "WE WANT TO GO TO MAMMA."

Punctuation in semi-diegetic intertitles can also help understand the personality and/or state of the speaking or thinking character. In *The Love Expert*, the predominance of exclamation points and question marks at the end of lines pronounced by Babs, the eponymous character, reflects her vivacious nature and interpersonal skills. Besides, all her semi-diegetic thoughts are punctuated exclusively with exclamation points. Curiously, in the script of *The Love Expert*, included in Emerson and Loos's manual *How*

[107] Double quotation marks originally used in semi-diegetic intertitles, intertitles-quotes, and subtitles are replaced by single quotation marks throughout this project when the whole text or its substantial part is being quoted. The original quotation marks in such intertitles and subtitles are not preserved when I quote single words or short phrases.

to Write Photoplays, many of these semi-diegetic intertitles—identical in their linguistic codes to those of the film—end in periods rather than exclamation points. The only non-diegetic intertitle that indirectly reveals Babs's feelings also ends in an exclamation point in the film ("So Babs got shipped off to Aunt Emily in Boston—of all places in the world for a Love Expert!"), whereas the version in the script has a period at the end. The buoyant vivacity of Constance Talmadge's character was undoubtedly reinforced through punctuation.[108]

The bibliographical code of dialogue intertitles was also effectively used to approximate the sonic qualities of speech. As Thompson observes, small letters could indicate whispers whereas large font was reserved for shouts ("Formulation" 188). For instance, in the first part of *Queen Kelly* (1929), which Erich von Stroheim had filmed before he was fired, Kelly's timid confession that she also keeps picture postcards of the prince under her pillow ("'– I have *two!*'") is presented in letters much smaller than the ones in the other intertitles. By contrast, when Queen Regina V claims ownership of the prince, the intertitles with the same linguistic code ("'Mine!'") change their bibliographical codes through increasing font size—until the letters fill the whole screen. Thompson also argues that letters jumping out of line could suggest drunken speech, as in John Griffith Wray's *Beau Revel* (1921), and the temporal presentation of spoken lines could signal the speed and the resonance of the utterance through dissolves, fades, or instant flashes ("Formulation" 188). In Paul Leni's *The Cat and the Canary* (1927), the scream that originates as a dot from the woman's mouth rapidly grows in size, with the

[108] In the film version I have viewed (which seems to be missing an extended sequence and has one scene cut short), out of seventy-nine semi-diegetic intertitles attributed to Babs, thirty-three end in an exclamation point and twenty-seven are questions of various formats.

exclamation point skewed (figure 2.131), until it occupies the whole screen as a stand-alone, not superimposed, intertitle. I can venture a guess that Hitchcock might have been so impressed by this scene in *The Cat and the Canary* that the famous shower scream of Janet Leigh in *Psycho* (1960), which we do not hear either because of the screeching violins as background music, is presented from the same angle, with a very similar positioning of the actress's head (figure 2.132).



Fig. 2.131. *The Cat and the Canary*: the visual approximation of a scream.



Fig. 2.132. *Psycho* (fragment enlargement): an intertextual reference?

Semi-diegetic intertitles were frequent in film adaptations of literary classics, which tended to include famous dialogue lines from the original (Salt 291) to appeal to cultured viewers. Liepa discusses another method of cultural uplift as utilized in Gaskill's *A Daughter of Pan* (1913): the film featured thirty-nine intertitles, all dialogue, "written in an archaic form, with frequent use of terms such as 'thou,' 'couldst,' and 'thy,' lending the lines a pseudo-historical sensibility, as well as a high culture authoritative voice" (116). Transtextual appeal to the audience's knowledge of classical mythology and its interpretation in literature is showcased in *L'étoile de mer*. As P. Adams Sitney explains, when the character is gazing at the starfish in the glass paperweight, his words "Si belle!" 'So beautiful!' have an ambiguous diegetic referent – the woman or the starfish; but they suggest to the discerning ear and mind an allusion to Cybele and, thus, reinforce the *vagina dentata* implications ("Image" 108-09).

Semi-diegetic intertitles are also directly involved in the narrative discourse. Upon their proliferation in the teens, as Thompson argues, dialogue intertitles took over many of the functions previously performed by expository intertitles (“Formulation” 183). Obviously, semi-diegetic intertitles are ideal for presenting a point of view and, thus, make obsolete such expository remarks as “He thinks that . . .” or “She tells him to. . . .” Since dialogue accompanies human interaction, according to Liepa, its verbalized presence in silent cinema can signal key moments of conflict (74). Additionally, central characters and key ideas can be identified as such through dialogue intertitles, especially if the majority of verbal text is expository (115). Semi-diegetic intertitles can also manipulate temporal relations. For instance, as Thompson points out, dialogue intertitles begin, end, and are interspersed throughout a flashback in the character's courtroom testimony in *The High Cost of Living* (1912, Solax), forming what would be a voiceover narration in sound cinema (“Formulation” 182) or what could have been presented through the omniscient narrator's exposition.

As text that originates from diegetic characters, semi-diegetic intertitles are more palatable to viewers who resent direct verbal guidance from a non-diegetic narrator. However, they still manipulate the audience into making judgments about the situation and into taking sides. The role of semi-diegetic intertitles in the narrative discourse, especially in revealing temporal relations and the point of view, is complemented by their contribution to the realism and psychologism of cinema. Their transtextual appeal to the viewers' knowledge of the culture and arts, as well as their potential ideological coloring, adds to their multifunctionality.

Whereas semi-diegetic intertitles are located on the border between the diegesis and the outside commentary, diegetic intertitles are unambiguously placed within the

world of the story—both in their origin and their visual presentation. As such, they will be discussed in more detail later, in the context of integrated verbal elements.

INTERTITLES AS WRITTEN LANGUAGE: SHARED FUNCTIONS

Since the core of intertitles is verbal text, their usage is motivated not only by their role in a particular film but also by their being representatives of written language. As such, intertitles are involved in ideological, psychological, and metatextual tasks. From the point of view of ideology, intertitles can become an effective tool of wielding power and influence. As Liepa argues, intertitles enabled film manufacturers to win control over the presentation of the filmic text and, by extension, over the medium that was gaining immense popularity (414). When intertitles were absent or scarce, exhibitors could manipulate the audience's perception and interpretation of pictorial images. On purpose or unintentionally, a lecturer, who provided an explanatory narrative, could twist and warp the film by ascribing random meanings to the images.[109] On the other hand, not all exhibitors were able to provide verbal accompaniment as a lecture or title cards shown through a separate lantern when these were called for to clarify the narrative. Thus, embedded in the film itself, intertitles were more reliable instruments of bringing home to the audience what film manufacturers wanted them to comprehend.

The presence of a lecturer encouraged oral interaction: the viewers could potentially ask questions and have them answered, both by the lecturer and other members of the audience. As Ong explains, “the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups” (74), which encourages an exchange of opinions. A written text, by

[109] For discussions of the challenges that lecturers often faced, see, for example, Altman, *Silent Film Sound* 133-43.

contrast, is unresponsive and “cannot defend itself as the natural spoken word can” (79). Indeed, reading intertitles may turn the process of watching a film into a solitary activity, thus enforcing silent discipline and submission to the authoritative text. Dupré la Tour argues that the practice of intertitles led to “a radical change in the reception of films”: spectators, who used to converse with each other and make comments in the early years of cinema, increasingly plunged into silence (“Intertitles” 329).

This, however, can only hold if all the members of the audience are literate in the language presented on the screen and do not need anybody's help in deciphering written signs, which was not the case in many movie theaters either in the United States or in Russia in the teens and twenties. In post-revolutionary Russia, it was not unusual for the audience to read intertitles in chorus and to endow the silent actors and actresses on the screen with voice, according to Viktor Shklovsky's account of Dovzhenko's reminiscences (464). During film screenings in Soviet worker clubs, members explained details to each other and spoke intertitles “for the apparent benefit of those who could not read” (Kepley 121). Card remembers that some American spectators were in the habit of reading intertitles out loud (302-03). Card also praises “speechless cinema” for teaching young Americans to read, faster and more efficient than schools did (55). Therefore, for some viewers, watching a film with intertitles incorporated a no-frills and no-pressure reading lesson, which was a manifestation of another function of verbal text in film—education and cultural uplift.

Intertitles in film adaptations of literary classics, intertextual references to literary sources and cultural artifacts, as well as verbal puns and games, appealed to more educated audiences and served to legitimize cinema among the middle class and bourgeoisie, whose patronage became an important source of revenue in the film

industry.[110] At the same time, as Liepa notes, dialogue intertitles that approximated vernacular languages had a drawing power for working class spectators (284). Thus, incorporating verbal text had commercial purposes as well.

Commercialism and patriotism happily co-existed in war "documentaries" manufactured in Russia during World War I, when cheating with the help of intertitles was rampant. Since foreign films were scarce and audiences were craving for cinematic entertainment as well as for reports from the front, Russian film studios responded by attaching phony titles to old images, thus concocting specious "documentary footage." For instance, visual shots of a German cruiser, borrowed from old newsreels, were accompanied by intertitles like "German cruiser, sunk by our British Allies" (Kenez 18-22).[111] Just like captions to photographs or titles to paintings, intertitles directed the interpretation of the images and could easily manipulate the audience into taking a desired stance. A related agitational power of intertitles was later exploited in full by experimental Soviet filmmakers.

Perceptually and psychologically, intertitles act as pauses and breaks in the visual narrative, as punctuation marks in the film discourse. As Anna Anosova hypothesizes, verbal text is more emotionally neutral than pictorial images and, thus, is able to relieve the tension built up visually. Kluge argues that intertitles provide a welcome pause in the flow of images, which stimulates the brain to develop brief independent fantasies

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[110] For an overview of the film industry's aspirations to attract educated audiences, see Liepa 169-73.

[111] American studios were also not averse to similar practices during the Spanish-American War. As Charles Musser explains, Biograph relabeled the previously filmed footage of battleships *Iowa* and *Massachusetts* in response to the explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana Harbor on 15 February 1898: the "documentary" film was advertised as *Battleships "Maine" and "Iowa"* and became an instant hit (*Emergence* 240-41).

(qtd. in Lutze 111). Vsevolod Meyerhold, according to Tsivian, insisted that intertitles made it possible for the word to resound through the whole film while providing the viewers with a place to rest from pictorial images (“Early Russian Cinema” 19).

Intertitles in sound cinema often serve metatextual purposes as a commentary on current film practices and a reminder of the history of cinema and theater. Kluge and Godard inserted intertitles, certainly antiquated by the sixties, to remind viewers that they were watching a film, to distance them from the diegetic action, ostensibly in the way Brecht had employed placards to produce an alienating effect. As Bill Nichols illustrates, a similar technique is deployed in Judith and David MacDougall's documentary *The Wedding Camels* (1980), where intertitles that pose interview questions are interspersed with the interviewees' filmed answers. In this film, intertitles also “mark off one scene from another, to develop a mosaic structure that necessarily admits to its own lack of completeness even as individual facets appear to exhaust a given encounter” (30). As a result, through highlighting the fragmentary nature of interviews and documentaries, the film undermines their tacit claim to reveal the whole truth (31). As a related metatextual gesture, Rainer chose to employ intertitles in *Lives of Performers* as an alternative to sync sound (201), which was emblematic of her penchant for conflict and contradiction and of her rejection of the classical Hollywood narrative.

The diverse functions that various types of intertitles have performed throughout the history of cinema—within the context of the film's narrative and as bridges to the external reality and other arts, as representatives of written language in the world of images and oral communication, as interlocutionary devices and self-reflexive reminders —underscore the questionability of the popular claim that intertitles are just temporary scaffolding to be fully discarded once cinema has completed building its arsenal of

expressive means.

SUBTITLES: FUNCTIONS IN NON-FOREIGN-LANGUAGE FILMS

Most cinema-goers are used to verbal text abundantly superimposed over images at the bottom of the screen—subtitles, which translate into the targeted language the spoken words that the spectators hear. Subtitles are mostly employed to make foreign-language films accessible to the domestic audience, and, as such, they signal foreignness. Discussing translation and adaptation issues that arise in the process of converting spoken language to subtitles in films that have originally been made for audiences that speak a language other than the language of subtitles, however, opens up a new avenue for research, impossible to receive due attention within the frame of this dissertation.[112] In this section, I will attempt to analyze the functions of subtitles in non-foreign-language films, where the main spoken language is that of the domestic audience.

Filmmakers routinely employ intertitles as instruments of translation when parts of the film present characters speaking in a foreign language. Only a few, however, venture to build on the silent cinema's methods of imitating voice modulations visually. Although such doubling—through auditory and visual channels—may seem superfluous, it can be an effective means of emphasizing the character's state or presenting a conflictual situation. In Tony Scott's *Man on Fire* (2004), the plain translation (figure 2.133) of the main character's inquiry, voiced in Spanish, grows in size, employs only capital letters, and relocates to occupy a more prominent position on the screen

[112] See, for example, a recent study of the aesthetic and cultural ramifications of subtitling and dubbing in Betz.

(figure 2.134) when the same inquiry is repeated, in an angrier and louder voice:



Fig. 2.133. *Man on Fire*: a plain subtitled inquiry.



Fig. 2.134. *Man on Fire*: subtitles indicating the character's anger.

In an even more radical gesture, partial English subtitles are employed to accompany lines spoken in only slightly accented English during a telephone conversation from which the character learns that the girl he thinks he has lost is alive. His counterpart's spoken words are doubled in written form, with subtitles employing ellipsis and moving around the screen, to foreground the life-for-a-life contractual offer and to preclude any misunderstanding (figure 2.135, to be read from left to right).



Fig. 2.135. *Man on Fire*: an audio-visual contractual offer.

Since subtitles are traditionally white, color variations can highlight words and phrases not to be missed. This technique is illustratively utilized in Salvador Dalí and José Montes-Baquer's *Impressions de la haute Mongolie* [*Impressions of Upper Mongolia*] (1975), which features subtitles in Catalan translating Dalí's words spoken in

French. Only once do the subtitles turn green when Dalí's pseudo-documentary narrative mentions the pseudo-Latin name of the hallucinogenic mushroom (figure 2.136) that "grows" only in Upper Mongolia. The "champlinclis histratatus domus biancus" subtitle repeats the spoken phrase exactly, thus both signaling a language other than French and Catalan and, through color and auditory-visual doubling, reclaiming the viewers' attention to the verbal text, which then proceeds in the usual manner (figure 2.137).



Fig. 2.136. *Impressions de la haute Mongolie*: pseudo-Latin scientificity.

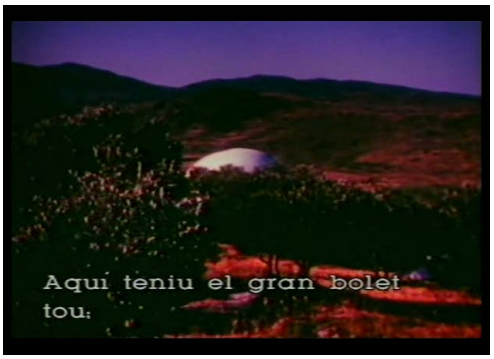


Fig. 2.137. *Impressions de la haute Mongolie*: back to normal white Catalan.

As symbols of translatability, subtitles can be employed to undermine the naïve belief that various experiences of others can be easily accessible through translation. This function of subtitles is brilliantly illustrated in *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989), where, as Scott MacDonald argues, the filmmaker "refuses to participate in the conventional tendency to try to simplify and 'clarify' complex cultural experiences for the film audience" (*Critical Cinema 2* 357). The title of Trinh's film already signals a cultural difference: in Vietnam, the individual's last name precedes the first name. English subtitles supposedly aid comprehension of the women's accounts, in heavily accented English, of what may seem to be their own experiences of living in Vietnam. However, the temporal disparities between subtitles and spoken monologues, when written words stay for too long or too short a time on the screen, and their asynchronous presentation subvert the simple link between the graphics and the voice.

This brings to light what David MacDougall calls “a false sense of cultural affinity,” which is often perpetuated by regular subtitles, and undermines our complacent belief in the ease of knowing the world of others (175). As written language, subtitles claim the attention of the viewers, who, consequently, tend to cease listening to the broken English of the women's voices. This perceptual superiority of subtitles symbolizes a common tendency to prefer the simplicity of translated, and adapted, accounts to the complex nature of the original voice.[113]

Subtitles have the power to elevate vernacular dialect and slang to the level of languages. Thus, subtitled lines in standard English provide a clarifying translation of the Cockney rhyming slang in Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998). However, the film immediately starts questioning and poking fun at the acceptable standards of politeness when subtitles turn to “translating” dialogue that is perfectly understandable to any English speaker (figure 2.138; the lines at the top of the snapshot are pronounced and not visible during a normal screening). Subtitles also give legitimacy to what is most often a concocted language, especially in science fiction films. For example, in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Robert Wise, 1979), the Klingons' obvious gibberish[114] is subtitled to present a coordinated attack (figure 2.139). Subtitles can also endow animals with the ability to think and/or speak, as in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (Brooks, 1993): when Broomhilde, quite a heavy-weight, is about to jump on her horse from a balcony, the subtitles translate the horse's neighing as “'She's got to be kidding!'”

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[113] For detailed analyses of *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* and Trinh's investment in the issues of cultural translation and translation as power, see MacDonald, *Critical Cinema 2* 355-77; Naficy 145-47.

[114] In later *Star Trek* installments and various reference works, Klingon was developed into a full-fledged language with its pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. For an official version of the Klingon language, see Okrand.



Fig. 2.138. *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*: "please remove yourself from this bar" as an "English" equivalent.



Fig. 2.139. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*: the legitimized language of the enemy.

Subtitles can become symbols of a need for interpretation or a longing for authentic communication, when they accompany what may seem to be a perfectly normal and legible conversation. In an iconic balcony scene from Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* (1977), subtitles reveal the characters' real feelings and thoughts while they engage in a banal intellectualized blather, trying to impress each other and sensing that they both look ridiculous in their efforts (figure 2.140). In Patricia Rozema's segment "Desperanto" of the six-part collage film *Montréal vu par* . . . (1991), subtitles make visible a desperate desire for human contact and understanding. As Rozema describes, the English-speaking character, daydreaming at a francophone party, visualizes subtitles as her saviors in awkward social situations and manipulates them at will—for instance, slipping one into her drink (figure 2.141) and moving others around the frame (67).



Fig. 2.140. *Annie Hall*: "intellectual schmucks" in conversation.



Fig. 2.141. *Montréal vu par* . . . : how marvellous to understand!

A character's interaction with subtitles bridges the gap between the diegetic space

and the non-diegetic nature of superimposed text and at the same self-reflexively highlights our expectations of the separateness of the two planes. When in *À quoi tu penses-tu?* (Didier Kaminka, 1992), as Withalm describes, a French couple communicates with an American couple via subtitles, in "every reaction shot, the subtitles are running from the right to the left in mirror writing and the characters have to step over the letters until, finally, the young man steps on one word and crashes it" ("You"). In *The Man with Two Brains* (Carl Reiner, 1983), when an Austrian policeman, who has been speaking to Steve Martin's character in subtitled German, realizes that they can communicate much better in English, he turns around to face the police car and asks to stop the subtitles so that they could have "more room down there"—an extensive drunk test will indeed require all the space the subtitles have been utilizing.

As symbolic instruments of translation, subtitles in non-foreign-language films signal foreignness and otherness, reinforce spoken lines, legitimize linguistic "aberrations," reveal existential misunderstanding and an urge for contact, and engage in subversive metatextual, self-reflexive, and cultural games. Unlike superimposed intertitles, however, subtitles remain linked to oral language, which, by sanctioning their existence, paradoxically undermines its own authority. As escorts to spoken language, subtitles are rare in silent cinema, where they can only accompany or become part of semi-diegetic intertitles.

INTEGRATED VERBAL ELEMENTS: NATURE AND FUNCTIONS

It might come as a surprise to visual purists that verbal elements have been incorporated into pictorial shots since the dawn of cinema, even earlier than the first intertitles made their entry. At the turn of the twentieth century, according to Tsivian,

inscriptions were often integrated into the diegetic setting as labels and signs ("K semiotike" 145); verbal text was also employed in various formats as a backdrop against which the action was developing. Such an insistent verbal presence in the visual medium gives rise to the same question Peter Brunette and David Wills ask in reference to Derrida's deconstructive strategies: "whether what is supposedly foreign to the system was not in fact part of it, as potential or constitutive force, from the beginning, and not just an accident that befell it along the way" (*Screen/Play* 9). As it is impossible to enumerate all the possible ways in which verbal text appears in the real world, it would be ill-conceived to attempt such a never-to-be-completed list for integrated verbal elements in film. Instead, I will outline general tendencies of written language use in the diegetic space.

There are several major dimensions to consider when analyzing integrated verbal elements: the verbal text's addressee, its legibility and comprehensibility, and its interaction with the other verbal and visual components of the shot. When the immediate filmic space does not include any characters who can potentially read verbal signs, the addressee is unmistakeably the viewers, who are invited to contemplate the role of the written text. Such verbal inscriptions and insertions are not infrequent in non-narrative avant-garde films, where language interacts with visual imagery without an active participation of human characters.

Anémic cinéma (Duchamp, 1926) and *Ballet mécanique* (Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy, 1924) are perhaps the most often discussed avant-garde creations that incorporate verbal text to play with the illusory depth of visual imagery and flatten the surface. With its puns and false analogies between verbal signs and images (figure 2.142), *Anémic cinéma* has been viewed as claiming equality between verbal and visual

representation, as foregrounding the weakness of language, as revealing the folly of three-dimensional representation, as playing with the concept of reference and with sexual connotations, as analyzing the perceptual and conceptual links between reading and seeing, and the list goes on. *Ballet mécanique*, which exhibits a fascination with the Cubist treatment of verbal and visual objects, delights in dissecting and inverting the intertitle "on a volé un collier de perles de 5 millions" 'pearl necklace worth 5 million stolen' and in the intermedial play of flashing and rotating entities (figure 2.143) whose shapes remind us of both the letter *O* and the zeros of the millions implied in the phrase.[115]



Fig. 2.142. *Anémic cinéma*: verbal and visual spirals.



Fig. 2.143. *Ballet mécanique*: the intermediality of shapes.

Integrated verbal texts that directly address the audience can serve ideological purposes and are quite common in political films. In Robert Kramer's *Ice* (1969), which presents political writings on the human body and many intertitles that discuss, among other things, people's blindness to their un-freedom, false consciousness, and imperialist

[115] Verbal elements in *Ballet mécanique* are analyzed, among others, in Moritz 128-29; Sitney, Introduction xii; and Standish 153-55. For discussions of word-image interplay in *Anémic cinéma*, see Judovitz; LeGrice 40-44; Liebman 150; K. Martin; Sitney, "Image" 102-05 and Introduction xii-xiv. Michelson even treats the "white relief inscriptions, pasted on black cardboard disks" as "punning intertitles" ("'Anemic cinema'" 65).

wars, the world power is allegorically represented through a sexual act between two toy models: a missile, which has recently attacked a placard inscribed "3rd world," and a robot labeled "ruling class" on the front and "empire" on the back, which has just been trampling small human figures (figure 2.144). In *Science Friction*, where space race and, by extension, science race lead to the end of the Earth, a fake newspaper page with the headline "Race to space fascinerates" folds itself into a missile and flies into space (figure 2.145), to be later followed by other newspaper pages, sculptures, architectural elements from paintings, animal and human figures, and landmark buildings.[116]



Fig. 2.144. *Ice*: the union of powers.



Fig. 2.145. *Science Friction*: a mass media missile.

In Nick Macdonald's *The Liberal War* (1972), which focuses on the causes and consequences of the US involvement in Vietnam, the viewers remain the addressee of the verbal text when humans seem to interact with or even create the words, but we do not see any diegetic face deciphering the message. Thus, when the domino theory is presented to us through actual dominoes spelling "US," a human hand places next to each letter a toy weapon, which would need only one "shot" to collapse the whole construction (figure 2.146). As David E. James observes, Macdonald utilizes found objects to illustrate

[116] For a discussion of the politics of *Ice* and *Science Friction*, see James, *Allegories* 220-24 and 142-43.

events and conditions, “literalizing the para-metaphoric language of the war's discourses.” His refusal to use documentary footage or “represent the war iconically” turns into a critique of the mass media's manipulation of the military experience (*Allegories* 210). Macdonald also stresses everybody's involvement in politics: for instance, through the ambiguity of the domino “us/US” and by creating a collage of the politicians' heads crowning a cut-out of his own Bachelor's diploma (figure 2.147).

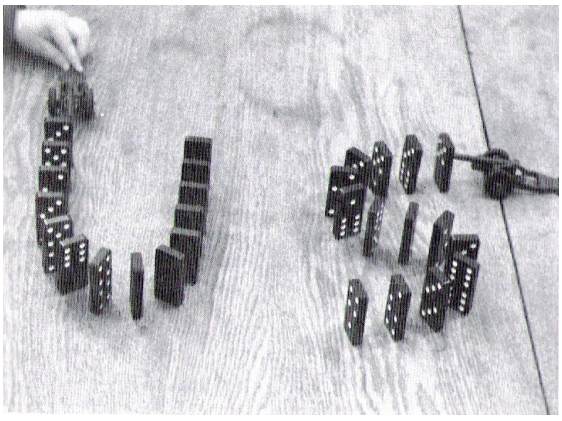


Fig. 2.146. *The Liberal War*: literalizing the domino theory.

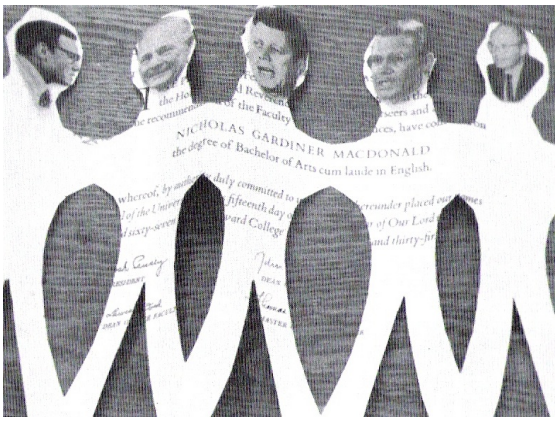


Fig. 2.147. *The Liberal War*: everybody is involved.

Macdonald's strategy of literalizing concepts is akin to what Noël Carroll defines as *verbal images*: a presentation of pictorial images in such a way as to suggest words or strings of words that could literally and metaphorically describe the depicted situation. Producing “the recognition of the words behind the images” (*Theorizing* 188), verbal images can offer to the viewers a new perspective on a particular scene or on the film in its entirety.[117] Thus, in *Un chien andalou*, as Stuart Liebman argues, the verbal image of the woman's repeated stretching and contorting her tongue (figure 2.148) suggests an exploration of “the outlying reaches of the French 'tongue'” and reveals the existence of

[117] Whereas in *verbal images* the pictures evoke the words, in *primed verbal images* “the accompanying words lead us to focus on specific features of the pictures” (Carroll, *Theorizing* 187). Verbal images, however, are only tangentially related to actual screen words and, as such, will not be a focus of close analysis in this project.

an underlying verbal subtext behind many visual scenes ("*Un Chien*" 145). Verbal images are often used to introduce humor into a visual scene, as in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*, where a "cross-eyed nurse" (figure 2.149) is on the mission to dispose of the Bride.



Fig. 2.148. *Un chien andalou*: stretching the tongue.



Fig. 2.149. *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (fragment enlargement): a "cross-eyed nurse."

The power of film to advertise through inclusion of verbal text in the dynamic visual space have long been noted by commercial enterprises. Cigarette manufacturers seem especially keen on making their products feature prominently on film. *Admiral Cigarette* (William Heise, 1897), one of the earliest surviving commercials in the US, advertises the eponymous product through three types of text: the title that remains on a painted background throughout the whole film; the cigarette brand inscribed on a huge pack (figures 2.150), from which a figure emerges to shower cigarettes on the company; and the banner ("We all smoke.") unveiled by the diversely clad smokers (figure 2.151):



Fig. 2.150. *Admiral Cigarette*: the treasure pack of "Admiral Cigarettes."



Fig. 2.151. *Admiral Cigarette*: united we smoke.

Lye's *Kaleidoscope* (1935) organically integrates the flashing and dancing words of an ad for Churchman's cigarettes (figure 2.152) into the rhythm of animated shapes and colors, together with a rotating cigarette itself, which looks remarkably like the “I” used in the brand's name (figure 2.153).

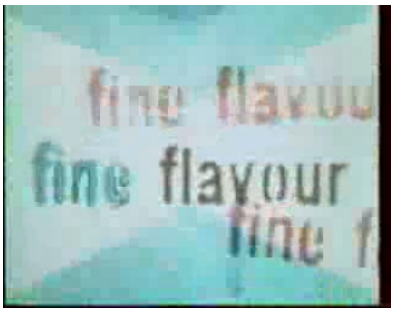


Fig. 2.152. *Kaleidoscope*: a sensual appeal through rhythm and color.



Fig. 2.153. *Kaleidoscope*: the intermedial “I” of a Churchman cigarette.

Most brand advertising in fiction films is not explicit but such embedded marketing is no less effective, especially among teenagers, who are prone to imitate whatever the fun and the famous do, wear, or smoke.[118] Paula Marantz Cohen even claims that a “movie-inspired consumer culture” provided a pool of product choices “through which people who had no other means of asserting their will or expressing themselves in tangible ways could construct their lives as Americans” (15), although it is a bit unusual to praise profit-oriented film advertising for helping to create national identity. Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly might have been making fun of this advertising trend in what is probably the most famous number of *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), a big part of which unfolds against the background of a store window that features a call to smoke “Mahout” cigarettes (figure 2.154), a brand that, to my knowledge, has never existed. Another

[118] Margaret Winstanley, Stephen Woodward, and Noni Walker cite instances of embedded cigarette brand advertising in *Beverley Hills Cop* (1984), *Superman II* (1980), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985), and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (1989), among many other Hollywood feature films. For an overview of product placement in Hollywood films, see Segrave.

curious verbal feature of this sequence is that the names of the stores are written below the windows so that the viewers could actually see them while Don is dancing in front of them (figure 2.155). The presence of such readable store signs may serve as a designation of public space, a function that David Henkin assigns to street signs in general (41).



Fig. 2.154. *Singin' in the Rain*: *mahout* as a cigarette brand.



Fig. 2.155. *Singin' in the Rain*: store names located below to be visible.

Indeed, written text meant for the public eye can help differentiate the public from the private in the film space. Thus, city actualities abound in signs, billboards, ads, and the like, which both illustrate the attributes of public life and add a documentary quality to the scenes. *Berlin: die Symfonie der Großstadt*, for instance, includes a short sequence that cleverly illustrates the pervasiveness and dynamics of verbal text in city life: what looks like a fruit or vegetable cart momentarily blocks the view, its inscriptions multiplying already numerous verbal signs (figures 2.156 and 2.157).



Fig. 2.156. *Berlin* . . . : people still in the picture.



Fig. 2.157. *Berlin* . . . : verbal signs overtaking the scene.

Filmmakers incorporate verbal text into visual scenes to introduce names and denote location and/or time, mainly for the benefit of the viewer. If taken from real life, such inscriptions are particularly effective in endowing the scene with realism, not only in documentaries. For example, the first seconds of the Edison *Captain Nissen Going through Whirlpool Rapids, Niagara Falls* (1901) leave little doubt as to the setting through a shot of the *Maid of the Mist* (figure 2.158). In silent cinema, as Tom Conley states, integrated markers help to sustain narrative continuity while avoiding interrupting intertitles (xiii). Such diegetic indicators remain widespread in sound cinema and can be manipulated to hint at a symbolic reading. Thus, in *The Maltese Falcon*, Sam Spade's name is insistently presented as a mirror image (figure 2.159) and, with a little flight of imagination, can be read as *Oedipus* in the context of a psychoanalytic interpretation of the film. In fact, Frank P. Tomasulo calls Sam Spade a "fictional Oedipus" (79), although he does not read the mirrored inscription in this way.



Fig. 2.158. *Captain Nissen . . .* : establishing location.



Fig. 2.159. *The Maltese Falcon*: Spade-Oedipus.

Inverted or partially visible signs can contribute to connotative descriptions of characters and situations. The diegetic characters may not be aware of such potentialities when the verbal text targets the viewers. In Lang's *Scarlet Street* (1945), when Chris Cross passes a delicatessen store, only "delicate" is first visible (figure 2.160), which

reveals Chris's nature. During his initial encounter with Kitty, when they are about to have a drink, Chris is standing with his back to what should be an "Absolutely no credit" warning, but the left "ab / no" part is in shadow and can hardly be seen (figure 2.161). We are looking at Chris from Kitty's perspective, which underscores the core of her attitude to him—as a source of credit,[119] of which he is at first blissfully ignorant. In *A Serious Man* (Ethan Cohen and Joel Cohen, 2009), a parable of life, faith, and a sense of purpose, the obscured last letter of the "no divin[g]" warning, which is inscribed on the side of the drained pool in the scene of Arthur Gopnik's whiny complaints that HaShem has given him nothing, can suggest a reading that would deny divinity its existence.



Fig. 2.160. *Scarlet Street*: the "delicate" nature of Chris Cross.



Fig. 2.161. *Scarlet Street*: Chris Cross as a source of credit.

Seemingly random texts, when incorporated into scenes that feature the characters, often provide a veiled commentary on the developing narrative. In *U Turn* (Oliver Stone, 1997), when Bobby is calling up his acquaintances and relatives to raise the money that would enable him to escape the stifling heat and madness of Superior, Arizona, the left of the shot is occupied by a huge "save lives" sign warning the readers

[119] See Conley 20-45 for a more complex reading of the "solutely / credit" sign and many other examples of the verbal text's contributions to the film hieroglyphics of *Scarlet Street*. See also Kline 99-101 for symbolic readings of partially visible texts in Claude Chabrol's *Le beau Serge* (1958).

that "death rides the highway" (figure 2.162). Considering that Bobby, who is stuck in the town because his radiator hose has blown up, is about to get involved in a series of violent deaths, the skeleton behind the wheel uncannily predicts his own future as well. Constantly stressing the mind-boggling effect of the heat, Stone plays with our visual perception in this telephoning sequence as well: when the visual angle of a long shot changes, the sign seems to disappear to reveal another inscription, with a nicely visible word *American* (figure 2.163), although the camera's focusing on various little details subsequently makes it clear that the location is completely different.[120]



Fig. 2.162. *U Turn*: "death rides the highway" as a prophetic sign.



Fig. 2.163. *U Turn*: *death* turns *American*.

Verbal signs can play with a character's visual perception, as in *Leaving Las Vegas* (Mike Figgis, released in 1995 and copyrighted in 1996), where the sign "THE WHOLE YEAR INN" turns into "THE HOLE YOU'RE IN" under Ben's intoxicated gaze, revealing his condition to him and to the viewers. The idea of signs "communicating" to a character gets literalized in Mick Jackson's *L.A. Story* (1991), where a freeway signpost, a written

[120] Anosova even assumes that the character is still standing in the same location and, consequently, the "death rides the highway" sign might have been just a mirage. Such a misperception can be easily accounted for: the sequence is edited in such a way as to insert a medium close-up of Bobby still wearing a jacket and still talking on the first phone—after we have already been given a long shot of the second location, with a different phone and with the jacket already off. Besides, Bobby's final telephone conversation is visually prefaced by "the mirage" sign seen through the window of the other party on the line, who is presumably in Las Vegas.

incarnation of the city's voice (figure 2.164), guides the main character through a maze of life and love situations (figure 2.165).



Fig. 2.164. *L.A. Story*: the voice of the city.



Fig. 2.165. *L.A. Story*: follow the sign.

Verbal elements can also directly present a character's way of thinking and decision-making process, especially in films about artificial intelligence. Jason Holt argues that we fear the Terminator when it's an enemy not only because of its physical force, but also because its visual field reveals its superiority in storing and processing information, efficiently and error-free (135-36). The Terminator's visual field can also reveal the adaptability of and a change in its programming, as in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (James Cameron, 1991): a computerized scan of the shooting scene where the Terminator has destroyed scores of police cars confirms zero human casualties.

Including verbal texts into the space of radiant mediality can lead to contextual connotations. For example, in *21 Grams*, the inscription “Faith Jesus Saves,” emblazoned on Jack's truck, which, as he is convinced, has been given to him through a lottery by God, is shown partially throughout the film but gets fully revealed only in the episode that precedes the accident in which Jack runs over Christina's family while driving this very truck. As a result, the dark irony of the saving-killing opposition is unmistakeable.

The verbal text of book covers and pages presents a rich source of metaphorical interpretations and intertextual references, apart from the hypertextuality of literary

adaptations. For example, the propensity of the French New Wave filmmakers for quotations and allusions, especially characteristic of Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut,[121] is often overtly manifested through books introduced into the film diegesis. Invocations of literary characters and situations enable filmmakers to draw analogies, to reinforce motifs, or to open up new avenues of interpretation. For example, in *21 Grams*, Paul finds Sam Shepard's *Cruising Paradise* (figure 2.166)—a collection of stories about loneliness, loss, and lives in crisis—in Christina's room. It is ironically fitting for Christina to keep in this book Polaroid reminders of her happiness in the family she has lost (figure 2.167), as it is appropriate for Paul, who is in a way a surrogate of Christina's husband, to discover the couple's photographs. The title of the book also reverberates with the film's exploration of the various hells of human life, punctuated by Christina's attempt to alleviate the pain of losing her family with the help of a drug that, according to her supplier, would take her "straight to heaven."



Fig. 2.166. *21 Grams*: *Cruising Paradise* in the hell of life.



Fig. 2.167. *21 Grams*: reminders of Paul's surrogate status.

[121] For a discussion of literary connections in the French New Wave, see, for example, L. Higgins. Godard's "hybridization" and fascination with language are analyzed, among others, in Sontag 147-89. Jefferson Kline investigates the ramifications of incorporating Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in Truffaut's *Jules et Jim* (1962) (14-23) and various intertextual references, including books, in Chabrol's *Le beau Serge* and *Les cousins* (1959) (87-118) and in Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1960) and *Pierrot le fou* (1965) (184-221). The "erratic alphabet" of *À bout de souffle* is also decoded in Ropars.

In *21 Grams*, we have an unobstructed view of the book cover because of the positioning of the camera, which is looking over Paul's shoulder. Thus, a diegetic character is presented as the primary addressee of the verbal message. In Yevgeny Bauer's *Tysiacha vtoraia khitrost'* [*The 1002nd Ruse*] (1915), the character addresses the viewers directly by showing them a book (figure 2.168). The diegetic intertitle of the book's title page (figure 2.169) reveals that the book is a manual for old husbands empowering them to recognize a thousand and one ruses of young wives. The dramatic irony of the insert works on at least three levels: the title of the book, *Oriental Wisdom. A Thousand and One Female Ruses*, is an intertextual reference to *A Thousand and One Nights*, which has wives' infidelity as the initial driving force of the framing narrative; a simple comparison of the titles of the book and the film reveals that the old husband is to encounter a trick that he will not be able to recognize; and the author's name—"Abracadabra, a great wise man of the Orient"—betrays to the viewers the real "value" of the manual.

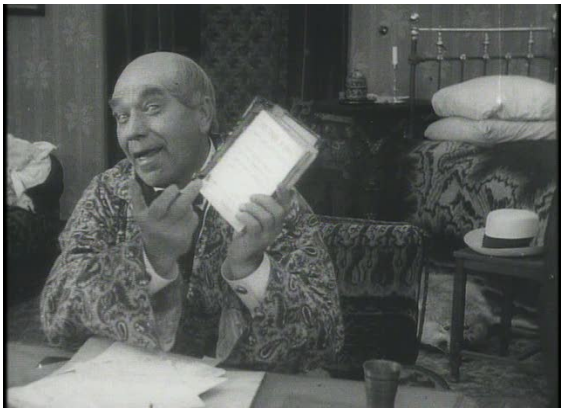


Fig. 2.168. *The 1002nd Ruse*: recommending the book to the viewers.

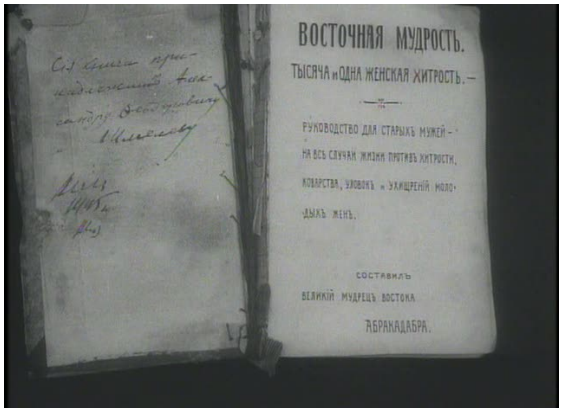


Fig. 2.169. *The 1002nd Ruse*: the diegetic insert targeting the viewers.

It is quite unusual, however, for the audience to be in a privileged position of knowledge as compared to the character who does the reading. More often, the viewers read together with diegetic addressees: simultaneously, if we are looking at the written text incorporated into a visual shot from a character's point of view, or with a little delay,

in cases of diegetic intertitles. Thus, in *Vampyr: Der Traum des Allan Grey* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1932), we discover explanations of the strange happenings together with Allan Grey and later with the manservant, who read *Die Seltsame Geschichte der Vampyre* [*The Strange History of Vampires*]. Frequently, the viewers see only a part of the written text, which, by virtue of it being singled out among other parts, acquires a special importance, to be discerned by the viewers.

Filmmakers also like to play with the audience's instinctive desire to know what the character learns through reading. The tricks include but are not limited to showing the character in the process of reading but not providing a close-up of the text; inverting or obscuring the text, if presented in close-up; and encoding the text in a language that the audience is unlikely to understand. The usual rationale for these techniques is to hold the spectator in suspense, as E. H. Ball advised regarding the contents of telegrams and letters (69-70). However, making the characters read what the viewers cannot see may highlight the very concept of reading rather than the verbal content. In early cinema, according to Dulac, reading books was sometimes a sign of intellectualism (“Expressive Techniques” 309). Similarly, a character's illiteracy can be revealed if the verbal text is being held upside down. Fake reading is popular in detective and spy films, when a newspaper serves as a shield that enables the “reader” to observe the surroundings undetected, whereas a hole in the paper or an upside-down text betrays the real intentions. Presenting a character engrossed in a book or a newspaper when in the company of others can suggest a lack of communication. In Dulac's *L'invitation au voyage* [*Invitation to a Journey*] (1927), the main character's loneliness and boredom are hinted at, among other signs, by a shot that presents her husband reading a newspaper, with his back to the viewers and paying no attention to his wife (figure 2.170).



Fig. 2.170. *L'invitation au voyage*: reading to avoid communication.

Unlike reading, writing is more often legible. We usually witness the words being inscribed, although sometimes the written text, or part of it, gets revealed at a later point in the film, suspense being a major reason for the trick. Epistolary writing, as Tsivian observes, was abused in the silent era, when some filmmakers thought that a diegetically motivated letter was always a better tool than an intertitle in providing information about the development of the plot. Consequently, the number of letters written by diegetic characters was disproportionately unrealistic (“K semiotike” 145). Epistolary writing, however, can be effectively employed to counter the tradition of omniscient narration. Gaining direct access to the characters' inner worlds through letters and diaries, viewers “are affected by the intimacy, immediacy, and intensity of their interiority” (Naficy 135).

In sound cinema, the interiority of personal writing is sometimes reinforced orally when the character is voicing the text being written in front of our eyes. Wim Wenders builds on this effect of immediacy when he begins *Der Himmel über Berlin* [*The Sky above Berlin,* promoted in the US as *Wings of Desire*] (1987), with a hand writing out and a voice pronouncing “Als das Kind Kind war” 'When the child was a child' (figure 2.171). As the voice is quicker than the hand, the spoken and written texts then diverge, only to be reunited in the next stanza of the song (figure 2.172). Since this sequence precedes the opening credits, Daniela Berghahn assigns to it the function of a

motto, which, reverberating throughout the film, foregrounds "the act of storytelling itself and the transformation of reality through childlike imagination" (329). Such a divergent-convergent relationship between the verbal and spoken texts also represents a trend in filmmaking worldwide to reveal ruptures and disjunctions between voice and text, the verbal and the visual, which will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of experimental American films of the 1960-80s.



Fig. 2.171. *Der Himmel über Berlin*: the initial unity of voice and writing.

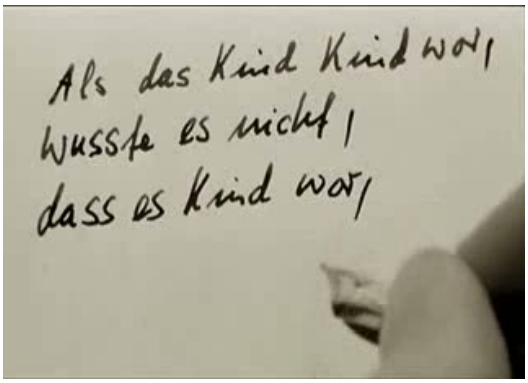


Fig. 2.172. *Der Himmel über Berlin*: voice and writing converging again.

Writing in film can become a manifestation of creative impulse and the power (or inadequacy) of the word to pin down the intangible. In Bernardo Bertolucci's *Stealing Beauty* (1996), the poetic lines that Lucy is presumably writing down are presented to the viewers as superimposed titles, moving across and beyond the frame in various directions (figures 2.173 and 2.174):

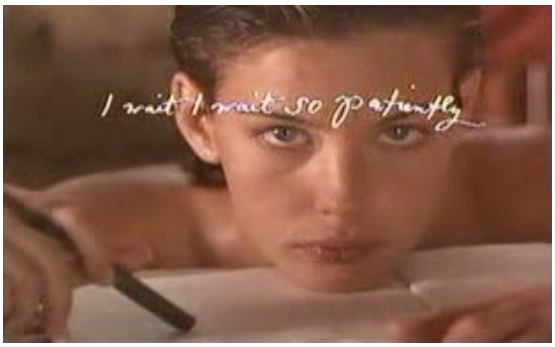


Fig. 2.173. *Stealing Beauty*: a thought to be penned down.



Fig. 2.174. *Stealing Beauty*: flights of imagination.

The white lines, which precede the movement of the pen, thus act as Lucy's thoughts in a flight of imagination. As Anosova observes, such a fancy presentation would have been just a gratuitous trick, if Lucy had not proceeded to destroy the poem in the flame of a candle, as a confirmation of the evanescence and intangibility of thought and fantasy.

However, as Henri-Jean Martin illustrates in *The History and Power of Writing*, writing is more often associated with permanence and authority, which originated from the times when laws and regulations started to receive written form (47). Writing is thus perceived as invested with the power that oral or pictorial incarnations of human thought lack. In film, such a power of the written word has often been illustrated through visual shots of legal documents, incriminating letters, signed confessions, and similar inserts. The actual process of writing can also signal the agent's authority. In Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927), the accusatory power of the written word is ingenuously brought to the fore in the visual sequence where Jesus silently scripts the sins of those who are about to stone an adulterous woman. We first witness the words being written down in Hebrew (figure 2.175), for historical authenticity; then, for comprehensibility, they are transformed into their English equivalents—*thief* (figure 2.176), *murderer*, and *adulterer*. There is no eye contact between the accuser and the accused even though they are in close proximity. Meyer Schapiro's analysis of a German medieval miniature, which portrays Christ silently writing on the dust his response—*terra terram accusat*—to the crowd's accusations of an adulterous woman, can be applied to this scene from *The King of Kings* as well: “by calling upon the accusers to read his mute writing, Christ evokes in them a corresponding inner speech, the voice of conscience” (189).



Fig. 2.175. *The King of Kings*: Hebrew for historical authenticity.



Fig. 2.176. *The King of Kings*: English for comprehensibility.

Filmmakers employ various inventive means of elevating the status of the written word. In Carl Boese and Paul Wegener's *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* [*The Golem: How He Came into the World*] (1920), the smoky letters exhaled by the demon Astaroth (figure 2.177) form the word that will have the power, when written on a parchment and inserted into a capsule on the Golem's chest, to animate the clay creature. In Gregory Hoblit's *Hart's War* (2002), the air bombing and shooting stop only after the prisoners of war have lined up to spell *POW* with their own bodies (figure 2.178). As Anton Kaes points out, the letters forming the threatening demand "du musst Caligari werden" 'you must become Caligari' in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* intrude in the pictorial image to encircle the psychiatrist as an illustration of his taking on Caligari's identity (52).[122] In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, writing in the air reveals the secret of Voldermort's past when the anagrammatic name "Tom Marvolo Riddle" rearranges into "I am Lord Voldemort." In these and many other examples, the metaphoric powers of writing are illustrated through a dynamic conflation of the verbal and the visual.

[122] Eisner singles out this scene as a manifestation of "the unity of composition" created by the images and words: "du musst Caligari werden," written in distorted Expressionistic lettering, "flash[es] and undulat[es] across the narrow entrance to a garden of flat spiny trees" (21).



Fig. 2.177. *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam*: the life-bringing word.



Fig. 2.178. *Hart's War*: the life-saving *POW* abbreviation.

Tampering with written words, such as destroying a person's name or a political slogan, can forecast a literal demise of the individual or the political power. In *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*, where naming is foregrounded in various ways and connected to power relations, the Bride wipes *Bill* off the window after the sword master has drawn it with his finger (figure 2.179). In the same film, crossing out the names on the Death List Five signals a death achieved. During the mysterious character's first appearance in *V for Vendetta* (James McTeigue, 2006), he slashes his signature *V* on a sign reading "[Strength] Through Unity, Unity Through Faith" (figure 2.180), which, as we learn later, is the totalitarian government's slogan. This motif of damaging the written slogan, the act performed by various characters, reappears several times and culminates in the people rebelling against the government.



Fig. 2.179. *Kill Bill: Vol. 1*: erasing the name to foretell death.



Fig. 2.180. *V for Vendetta*: a signature destruction of the signature slogan.

Integrating verbal elements into the diegetic space can reveal filmmakers' self-reflexive intentions. In *Hellzapoppin'* (December 1941), a movie-making comedy that is full of verbal and visual spoofs on other films, a central character passes by a sled with a "rosebud" inscription (figure 2.181) and mumbles to himself "thought they burned that," invoking the last scene of *Citizen Kane* (Welles, May 1941), where the mystery of the "rosebud" is supposedly revealed to the viewers and where the burning sled is of an almost identical design (figure 2.182):



Fig. 2.181. *Hellzapoppin*': "thought they burned that."



Fig. 2.182. *Citizen Kane*: "rosebud" engulfed in flames.

When the French woman of Alan Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) wanders into the Casablanca cafe, the reference to Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1943) "points to the gulf that separates" the two situations and the two narrative traditions (L. Higgins 20). A "*re-vision* of what . . . held Wilder's attention: the transition from human hope to putrefaction" (Nochimson 170), *Mulholland Dr.* (David Lynch, 2001) begins with a "Mulholland Dr." sign lit by a car's headlights (figure 2.183), to feature *Sunset Bl* in the next sign (figure 2.184). This self-reflexive gesture is reinforced through the abbreviations: the *Dr.* of Lynch's title is reminiscent of the *Blvd.* in the title of Wilder's film. Another verbal reference introduces the femme fatale undercurrent when the amnesiac character starts calling herself *Rita* after noticing Rita Hayworth's name on a

film poster of *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946), reflected in a mirror. Self-reflexivity through film posters works similarly to the intertextuality of book covers, with an added nod to the star system.



Fig. 2.183. *Mulholland Dr.*: a titular sign.



Fig. 2.184. *Mulholland Dr.*: a self-reflexive sign.

Integrated verbal elements can also contribute to self-referential jokes and acknowledgments. For example, the "Society of St. Vincent de Paul" sign featured prominently in Martin Scorsese's *The Color of Money* (1986) integrates two names involved in the film: the diegetic character of Vincent, played by Tom Cruise, and the actor Paul Newman, who is playing Fast Eddie Felson, Vincent's mentor in pool hustling. Quite common are aliases and name choices—for minor characters or objects—that refer to film crew members or their relatives/acquaintances: for instance, the spaceship *U.S.S. Kelvin* in *Star Trek* (J. J. Abrams, 2009) was named after the director's grandfather, with its registry number corresponding to Harry Kelvin's birthday.[123] The purest case of self-referentiality is an inclusion of the film's title into the diegetic space, as in Brooks's *Blazing Saddles* (1974), where two movie theater marquees flash "Blazing Saddles."

The examples above have illustrated that the functions of integrated verbal

[123] This fact is recorded in the audio commentary to *Star Trek* in the Two-Disk Special Edition DVD, released by Paramount in 2009.

elements are too diverse to hope for a comprehensive typology; however, I have tried to identify some major trends of and reasons for written language use inside a visual shot. In avant-garde films with a focus on formal devices, verbal text can serve to destroy the illusion of three-dimensionality and to showcase intermediality. Verbal elements can be integrated into pictorial shots for advertising, ideological, intertextual, and self-reflexive purposes. In narrative films, verbal elements that are placed in the same diegetic space as the characters but remain ignored can act as indicators of public space, provide veiled commentary on the narrative discourse, and, especially when truncated or inverted, can give rise to symbolic readings of the characters and situations. When interpreted in the context of the whole film, integrated verbal texts can become loaded with connotations. Verbal text that is accessible to the characters but withheld from the viewers can build suspense and reveal communication issues. When diegetic characters create or react to verbal text, we can get a glimpse into the character's state of mind and inner workings. Tampering with the verbal text can predict narrative developments whereas the power of words can be manifested through a process of writing.

Most integrated verbal elements share three characteristics. First, because they are embedded, such verbal texts do not undermine the visuality of the scene or break narrative continuity. The second characteristic is a direct consequence of the first: the meanings, and even presence, of integrated verbal elements can be easily overlooked and underestimated in what is traditionally perceived as a visual medium to be watched, not read. An extra effort and, quite often, multiple viewings can be required to decipher the meanings created by such written language. Third, their incorporation in visual shots endows such verbal elements with more stability from the perspective of film distribution and storage. Intertitle shots can be lost or can deteriorate, which in fact has happened to

many films of the silent era;[124] their linguistic and bibliographical codes can be easily modified in the process of distribution and translation. Spoken dialogue and voiceover can also be drastically changed when dubbing or subtitling. Unless the visual shot itself is corrupted, integrated verbal elements remain intact.[125] These characteristics can perhaps explain why many of the films referenced above and to be discussed later abound in integrated verbal elements.

WORDS AS THE ONLY IMAGES ON THE SCREEN

Whereas title sequences and end credits, intertitles, subtitles, and integrated verbal elements are common screen words in pre-sound cinema, the last category—when words are the only images in a film or in an extended sequence—starts appearing only in the avant-garde cinema of the second half of the twentieth century. This category has its roots in the discourses about the politics of language and in the avant-garde's rejection of classical Hollywood imagistic and editing codes.

By highlighting the structural device of the flicker[126]—single frame exposures that

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[124] Preserved negatives mostly contained indicators of where an intertitle had to be inserted because intertitles were usually "produced after the negative had been edited but before positive prints were made" (Dupré la Tour, "Intertitles" 330). Added in a hurry as last bits, intertitles were often not washed properly in the labs, and the remaining hyposulfate led to a disintegration of the film (Card 103; Pierce 9).

[125] Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer point out that pieces of writing embedded in visual shots are often invaluable in establishing the country of origin of the film (55).

[126] As Noël Burch notes, the return of the flicker in the avant-garde cinema of the 1960s was partially a metatextual and social commentary on the link between the non-trembling and non-flickering visual field, which was fairly standard after 1909, and "a system of representation complying with the norms of bourgeois novel, painting, and the theater" ("Primitivism" 485). *Word Movie* is also known as *Fluxfilm 29* because it "was part of the *Fluxfilm Program* assembled by George Maciunas in 1966" (MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 6). For a scholarly exploration of the Fluxus movement, see, for example, H. Higgins.

produce rapidly alternating words-images—Paul Sharits's sound film *Word Movie* (1966) "elegantly and powerfully problematizes language and image illusion" (Gidal, *Materialist Film* 15). Because words flicker at such a rapid speed, viewers can make out only parts of a portion of them, even though the process of recognition is facilitated by the fact that sequential words share at least one letter that stays centrally on the screen and that there are only around 50 words repeatedly used in this film, which lasts less than four minutes.

The variable sequencing in *Word Movie* results in multiple word combinations, including word duplications with overlap (e.g., "SLASH - SLASH" (figure 2.185)) and portmanteau neologisms (e.g., "SPACELL"). In a few cases, the words are positioned in such a way that their parts are cut off (e.g., "[G]REEND" (figure 2.186)) and/or misaligned (e.g., "VESSEL - FLESH" (figure 2.187)). The transparent comprehensibility of linear verbal communication is shattered. At the same time, because our attention is drawn to the fact that semantically unrelated words share the same letter(s), the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and signified is foregrounded.



Fig. 2.185. *Word Movie*: perceptual duplication.



Fig. 2.186. *Word Movie*: portmanteau word, cut off.



Fig. 2.187. *Word Movie*: verbal misalignment.

Perceptually, our gaze is likely to rest on the central letter that stays longer on the screen, which gives us temporary grounding in this flood of words, reminiscent of the strategy of spotting employed in *pirouettes*, which, as Kenneth Laws explains, "prevents dizziness by providing a fixed focus for the eyes" (67). Such a focus can also engender

vertical reading: some viewers are bound to try to create words out of the central letters that follow each other at a slower speed than the single frame words-images. Thus, building the film out of the cinematic blocks of letters and word fragments, Sharits metaphorically comments on the minimal units of film language and makes manifest his interest in the "micromorphological level of construction" (256).[127] The visual verbal fragments and the soundtrack, which alternates two different texts, read by a man and a woman one word at a time, are likely to suggest to us that we have seen the words that do not in fact appear on the screen. As a result, individual viewers create unique meanings out of associative links that arise among the words that they are able to single out visually and aurally. Therefore, no fixed narrative or statement is possible.

In most films where words are the only images on the screen, the soundtrack is indispensable to the cinematic structure. In Peter Rose's *Secondary Currents* (1982), we are invited to conceptualize the screen words as subtitles to the "foreign-language" spoken text, which is pure gibberish. Rose metatextually exposes the inadequacy of subtitled translation in a film-going experience through underscoring inescapable differences in melodic rhythm and duration and through disappearances of the spoken voice while subtitles continue. The increasing incomprehensibility of the visual narrative is achieved via unconventional arrangements of the text on the screen, letters forming non-sensical words and phrases, graphic figurations approximating concrete poetry (figure 2.188), and verbal signs filling the whole screen and becoming an abstract background against and out of which emerges the final statement "I FEAR / I DISSOLVE / MY VOICE / EXPLODING / MEANING," each component presented in a

[127] For an overview of Sharits's work and writings, see, for example, the Paul Sharits issue of *Film Culture* 65-66 (1978); Liebman, *Paul Sharits*. The sound-image interactions in Sharits's films are explored in Ragona, "Paul Sharits's Cinematics."

different black-and-white design (figure 2.189). Such artistic tampering with the bibliographical code of the verbal text highlights the power of the visual form, that is, of the signifier itself, to conceal or distort semantic meanings and acts as a visual representation of the entropy of language.[128]

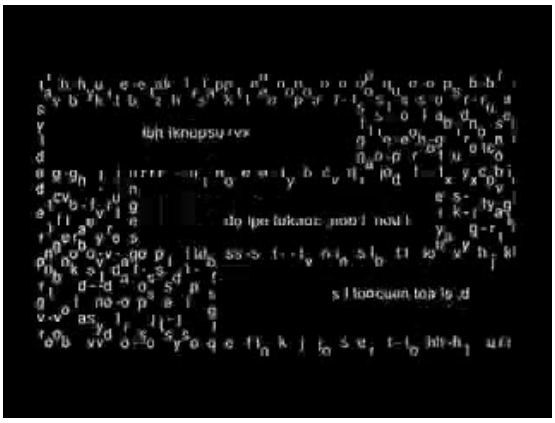


Fig. 2.188. *Secondary Currents*: the concrete poetry of gibberish "subtitles."



Fig. 2.189. *Secondary Currents*: the black and white of the verbal invasion.

The architextual designation of *Secondary Currents* as "a film noir" and a sequence of black leader with no spoken or subtitled voice present self-reflexively draw the viewers' attention to film emulsion, the essential element in the production of films, as well as metatextually ironize the genre conventions. Martin Mirko's 2008 video *Noir* also builds on genre expectations of a dark crime film by keeping the screen black throughout. While the background soundtrack includes the sounds of a police helicopter and gunshots—the typical environmental noises of a gangster neighborhood in Los Angeles—the off-screen dialogue of awakened residents who are trying to understand what crime has been committed this time is the sole narrative of the film, duplicated in subtitles. Although sometimes the screen words help the viewers make out the phrases

[128] Rose called *Secondary Currents* "a dark metaphor for the order and entropy of language" ("Secondary Currents"). For a discussion of the film and a version of the text, as it appears on the screen, see MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 157-58 and 162-74.

that are drowned out by the helicopter noise, it is obvious that written language is highly inadequate in presenting the oral speech of excited and scared people, who mumble or speak very fast, curse, and are not very coherent in expressing their thoughts. The bracketed ellipsis—"[. . .]"—dominates the subtitled text. The spelled-out approximation of a character's three-second imitation of the onomatopoeic sound of gunshots is particularly absurd: "Ah. . . / Baw. . . / Baw. . . / B. . . / L. . . / W. . . / Ah. . . / Balaa. . . / Bl. . . / B. . . / L. . . / A. . . / W. . . / L. . . / A. . . / A. . . / W. . . / W. . . / L. . . / W. . . / B. . . / L. . . / W. . . / L. . . / B. . . / L. . . / Ba. . . / Bah. . . / Bow. . . / Baw. . . ."

Whereas in *Noir* the viewers are invited to reconstruct images based on their cinematic knowledge of crime scenes and on the off-screen dialogue and background noises, the screen words substitute for visual images in Joseph Ernst's 2007 *Hip Hop Video*. Black letters on a white screen form phrases that describe shots of a stereotypical hip-hop video, succeeding one another in accordance with the rhythm of the hip-hop soundtrack. The intentionally non-specific image descriptors succinctly outline the major components: men singing and dancing; women, often skimpily clad and sometimes in silhouette (figure 2.190); sports cars; flashy and expensive accessories known as *bling bling* (figure 2.191); and money. Although with slight modifications, mostly in the soundtrack and definitely in the title, the video could arguably be applicable to many other dance videos that inundate television screens all over the world, *Hip Hop Video* foregrounds features characteristic of contemporary hip-hop: objectification of women and conspicuous consumption.[129] An authorial evaluation of the value of such videos is subtly expressed through descriptors such as "Nothing," repeated twice, and "Even more

[129] Summarizing the observations of several scholars, Julie Sze states that "hip-hop has moved away from its political roots as a social and cultural movement that critiqued racism, capitalism, and oppression by focusing on conspicuous consumption" (227).

money."

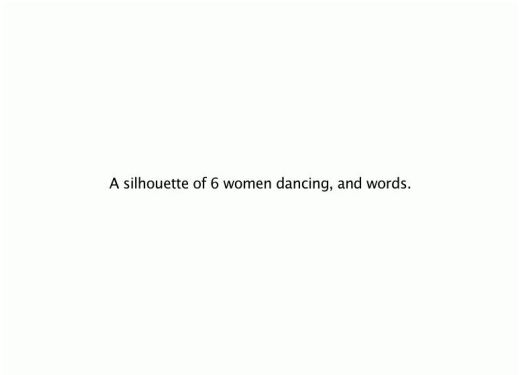


Fig. 2.190. *Hip Hop Video*: particulars do not matter.



Fig. 2.191. *Hip Hop Video*: epitomizing bling bling.

Artists also use words as the only images on the screen to project a direct message to the audience, with no visual distractions. In the video *Television Delivers People* (Richard Serra and Carlota Fay Schoolman, 1973), the interlocutionary text, unrolling on the screen as end credits do in film, notifies the viewers that they are the product of television, duped by commercial advertising, popular entertainment, and news programming into accepting the status quo (figures 2.192 and 2.193). As Serra explains, "I decided that there was something worthwhile to say directly to people, and I just chose devices for presenting the material that I thought could reach a large audience" (73). Soothing muzak "sweetens" the sour truth, reminding the alert viewer that not only television promotes brainwashing: it is not uncommon to think of muzak as "a form of mass control technology which numbs the listener in order to promote uniformity and placidity" (Gilbert and Pearson 129). Owing to its directness and ease of production, Television Delivers People has spawned several imitations, among which are recent videos *YouTube Delivers People* (Patrick Carrie) and *Internet Delivers People* (Ramsay Stirling, 2008).

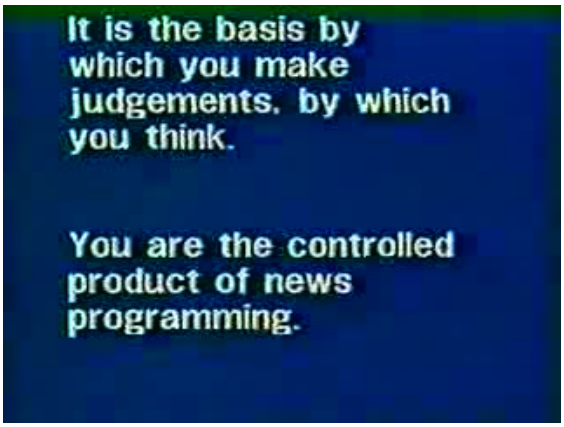


Fig. 2.192. *Television Delivers People*: a direct address to the audience.

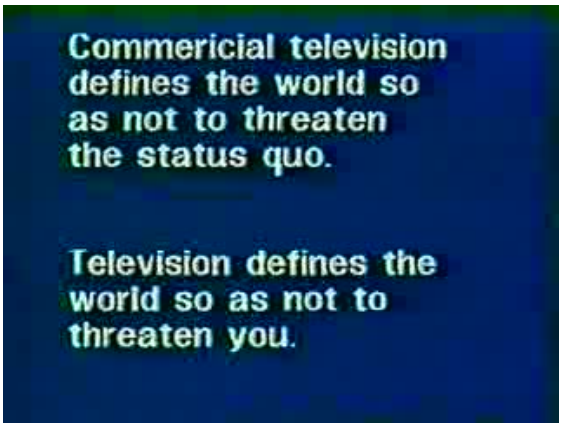


Fig. 2.193. *Television Delivers People*: equating *the status quo* and *you*.

The silence of the words is not disturbed in Snow's *So Is This* (1982), which is a self-referential, self-reflexive, metatextual, interlocutionary, autobiographical, and sociopolitical exploration of the marriage between words and the film medium. With words and contractions appearing on the screen one at a time, in variable durations and font sizes, *So Is This* establishes its own rhythm of reading, subverting the conventional expectations of lingering on notional, and especially multisyllabic, words and of skimming over relational words (articles, prepositions, deictic indicators, link verbs, etc.) (figure 2.194). Unlike in the process of reading a book, we are completely at the mercy of the filmmaker, who controls our perception of the text. Yet our active participation is a requisite because we are forced to reevaluate our hypotheses about what the sentences would wind up to be and because of a variety of interlocutionary devices Snow employs.

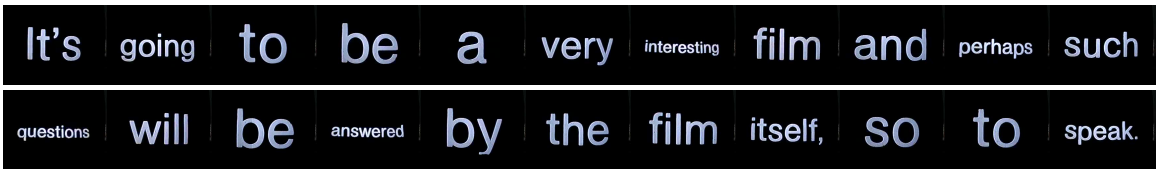


Fig. 2.194. *So Is This*: highlighting the importance of "small" words, one at a time.

In a jab at proliferating critical analyses and authorial explications of artistic creations, Snow claims that *So Is This* is self-sufficient in this respect (see figure 2.194)

and incorporates—in the film itself—explications of the advantages of this word-film union:

> One of the interests of this system is that each word can be held on the screen for a specific length of time. You can't see what's coming, a sentence could take an unexpected turn. The words could change to black on white or be in colour. Words in capitals could be used and different typefaces. Words could fade in and out or slide on and off. Images or sound could be introduced. Notice how each word is a different size? Some words could get so attenuated or so big that only a section of them would be shown on the screen. Or they could get extremely tiny. The decision has been made to concentrate on the distinctive capacity of film to structure time: the word as the individual unit of writing, the frame as the smallest unit of film. In this film writing is lighting (Japanese?). This is white light, it contains all the colours.

Writing words in light enables Snow to bend the spatial-temporal continuum to his will by conflating and yet opposing size and duration: for example, the word *tiny* is written in big letters but stays on the screen for only a fraction of a second. Flashing "undesirable" words as single frames, after warning the younger audience to shield their eyes, Snow makes fun of censorial zeal: "Since this film was tits originally composed ass The Ontario Board of Censors has started to inspect so-called Experimental Films. eg. This. Its difficult to cock understand why but it seems as if their purpose is to protect you from this." At the same time, this sequence ironically imitates a subliminal advertising technique[130] by "promoting," through concealing, words associated with sex.

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[130] For classic popular books on subliminal advertising, see, for example, Key; Packard.

Repetitions of the same phrase "It was essentially an introduction to this" at various speeds, "in an attempt to please everybody," highlight the fact that film is capable not only of representing written language but of approximating the temporality of oral speech as well. Snow includes transitional phrases, such as "Next," and verbal equivalents of temporal silences, such as "Pause," that are typical of oral discourses and stage directions. He also incorporates verbal equivalents of the segmenting aspects of the bibliographical code of a written text, such as "New paragraph" and "Third paragraph." However, Snow shatters the illusion of coherent continuity by introducing an oral-written conflation "This is the start of a new paragraph" and by placing "Sixth paragraph" before "Fifth paragraph."

The text of *So Is This*, projected on a big screen, engages the audience in the process of communal reading, a historical flashback to silent era intertitles. The concept of a flashback is literalized when Snow invites the viewers to "look back": the part of the film that we have already seen flashes, speeded-up, before our eyes, with color added to some words while others are seen as if on a flickering screen, discernible as a rectangle (figure 2.195) or a circle (figure 2.196).[131] As MacDonald insightfully observes, such modifications in color and light "confirm the film's implicit critique of both the film-rhetorical device of the flashback, which in fact distorts and manipulates as fully as it recalls, and the psychological mechanism of memory to which film flashbacks are meant to be analogous" (*Screen Writings* 139). Such light patches are the only images in the film other than the words themselves and appear, without any words inscribed in them, a

[131] As Snow explains, "it is a real looking back; it's a photographing of the projected film which isn't the same as re-doing it, and it's also a selective re-shooting because I single framed it. I was trying to catch most of the "this" words as I filmed, trying to make new arrangements. Again, it's a theme and variation thing; a new elaboration of what's already been stated" (Hoolboom 18).

few other times: for example, preceding the statements “Images or sound could be introduced” and “In this film writing is lighting (Japanese?).”



Fig. 2.195. *So Is This*: *this* as the major actor in the screen drama.



Fig. 2.196. *So Is This*: the flashback warning in focus.

Privileging the deictic indicator *this* over any other word in the film, Snow engages the viewers in a never-ending referential game, constantly shifting possible referents to which *this* can point and creating multilayered areas of signification, aided by the unattached positioning of *this* on the screen and the intertextual references *this* evokes. If Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* is explicitly mentioned in the French paragraph of *So Is This*, James Broughton's *This Is It* (1971), a “parody of cosmology,” as Sitney calls it (*Visionary Film* 78), is hovering in the background, as are many other artistic and critical endeavors concerned with the nature of the sign in different media. At the very beginning of the film, Snow playfully clarifies what the signifier is in his film: “This is the title of this film. The rest of this film will look just like this. The film will consist of single words presented one after another to construct sentences and hopefully (this is where you come in) to convey meanings. This, as they say, is the signifier.” It is, of course, not that simple because *So Is This* signifies not only through linguistic units, themselves being a dual entity of signifier and signified, but also through light play, duration and rhythm, and—metatextually—through the very fact that it is still a film,

albeit based on words.[132] In fact, Snow viewed the mutual relevance of language and film as training to see:

> I don't think it's tragic that we're trapped in language. I don't think we could do what we're doing without it. Language demonstrates its efficiency all the time. It works. Many people function totally verbally in that all they do is recognize that it's a tool. But they don't see it—because they haven't been trained to see. And that's one of the things the history of painting does for you; having seen the fantastic accomplishments of Monet, one can see light in a different way. It's a shaping for seeing. (Hoolboom 19)

Films that banish all images from the screen other than words themselves intentionally sever the perceptual link between physical reality and verbal reference and destroy cinema's indexical root in photography. Making linguistic units, based on an unmotivated connection between the signifier and signified, the major signifiers in film undermines the communicative mode of cinema, where photographic images traditionally have a motivated connection to the denoted reality. In such films, Christian Metz's five "radical differences" between the shot and the word (115-16) do not hold. Dudley Andrew's distinction between literature and film—the movement from signification towards perception and vice versa, respectively (101)—is no longer valid. Not juxtaposed

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[132] In this brief introduction to the ways *So Is This* functions, I have just scratched the surface of this film, focusing on what screen words can do as opposed to words on a traditional book page. For more discussions of the film, see Hillier; MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 136-39; and Testa, "Axiomatic Cinema" 47-60. Snow's own comments on *So Is This* are available in "Present Tense Situation." The text of *So Is This*—both as a "score" that "indicates the number of frames (time on the screen) to be shot of each word, and a space of black between words" and a typed transcript in a paragraph format—is included in Snow, *Collected Writings* 209-20 and, in a word-per-line format, in MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 140-55.

against photographic images, verbal elements take on themselves the double role of words and images, adding another layer of signification, and draw the viewer's attention to unique properties of cinema.

In this chapter, I have created a framework for discussing types and functions of five categories of screen words, which, as illustrated, can be applied to readings of both silent and sound films. Detailed qualitative analyses of verbal language use in several dozen pre-sound American films, representative of various periods and genres, will become the core of the third chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Screen Words in Pre-Sound American Cinema

The history of American cinema in the silent period has been extensively researched, with a focus on the development of film language, on production and distribution practices, on individual directors and actors, and on many other aspects. The evolution of intertitles and their functionality in the overall design of a film, however, have rarely been allotted more than a couple of pages in book-length publications. Other types of screen words have not received even this minuscule attention. The goal of the chapter is to highlight this neglected dimension of verbal language use in pre-sound American cinema.

My major aspiration here is to investigate the functional contributions of screen words in select silent films and to trace evolutionary patterns of verbal language in the pre-sound era, utilizing the methodologies for discussing word-image interplay and the functional typologies developed in the first and the second chapters. The choice of films for analysis has necessarily been arbitrary, often determined by the survival status of the original intertitles,[1] because it is impossible to encompass the whole range of cinematic products.

Thus, David Wark Griffith's and Charles Chaplin's oeuvres, which, owing to the oft-noted verbosity of the former and the sparsity of intertitles in the latter, may seem to be perfect objects of study in this chapter, will be excluded. As discussed in the previous chapter, the original intertitles in most of Griffith's Biograph shorts (1908-1913) either have been lost or survive only in print format. On the whole, as Lea Jacobs observes,

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[1] As noted earlier, there is always a risk that even the intertitles I judge to be original may in fact be alternative versions of later rereleases or recent recreations that differ substantially from the shots embedded in the original films.

Griffith "was notorious for tinkering with his films," which often resulted in multiple versions of the same title ("Way" 85).[2] Chaplin's Keystone, Essanay, and Mutual films have been reedited, with intertitles deleted and newly created, by different distribution companies, which makes it virtually impossible nowadays to determine what intertitles the films featured during the original release.[3] Chaplin took control over the negatives of his films starting in 1918 ("Restoring Chaplin"), but he rereleased many of his features during the sound era, with musical scores, either replacing the intertitles with a voiceover narrative, as is the case with *The Gold Rush* (1925, reissued 1942),[4] or deleting some scenes, and thus intertitles, in the process of reevaluating the film, as happened with

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[2] The use of verbal language in Griffith's features has nevertheless been extensively analyzed. An attempt to classify intertitles in *Broken Blossoms* (1919) is made in Chisholm. The intertitles in *Judith of Bethulia* (1914), *Home, Sweet Home* (1914), and *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) are discussed, with a focus on dialogue, in Liepa 434-57. The sources for the historical intertitles in *The Birth of a Nation* are researched in Stokes 190-200. For discussions of the intertitles in *Intolerance* (1916), see, for example, Hansen 134-217 and Dupré la Tour, "Intolerance" and "Written Word." It should be noted that the intertitles in the available prints of *Judith of Bethulia* are from the 1922 reissue (Usai 11: 194), all extant versions of *The Birth of a Nation* derive from the 1921 reissue (Kaufman 93), and several intertitles in *Intolerance* were revised when the film was reassembled in 1921 (Merritt, "Intolerance" 45).

[3] As Walter Kerr laments, "Chaplin's [inter]titles had been few and terse; during the 1920's his early two-reelers suddenly exploded with the bad puns and labored wisecracks of the period, as [inter]title-writers put their minds to the problem of making Chaplin 'funnier'" (310). See also Glenn Mitchell's explication of the problems encountered by film scholars in authenticating intertitles in Chaplin's Keystone films and David Shepard's discussion of the restoration of Chaplin's Mutuals. Thus, according to Shepard, the intertitles featured in the 90th Anniversary Edition of *Chaplin Mutual Comedies*, released by Image Entertainment in 2006, are gathered from several different prints and are "replicas in the style that most people think of as the original [inter]titles, although they are not the original [inter]title styles."

[4] The silent version of *The Gold Rush*, copyrighted in 2003 by Roy Export Company Establishment, which owns the copyrights to all the films made by Chaplin starting in 1918, and released on DVD by Warner Home Video, features intertitles whose linguistic codes are very close to the original, digitized lists of which can be viewed in the Charlie Chaplin Archive in Bologna. The bibliographical codes, however, are most likely to have been reconstructed.

the 1971 rerelease of *The Kid* (1921). Many of the intertitles from the original releases of Chaplin's features exist as digitized lists in the Charlie Chaplin Archive in Bologna, so it is enticing to compare various authorial versions. However, this would require more space than this chapter can afford and a totally different angle of interpretation.

As a result of this exclusion, individual films of other mainstream directors—John Emerson, Buster Keaton, and Cecil B. DeMille—will illustrate verbal language use in the late teens and twenties. Screen words in avant-garde creations of the late silent era will also receive their due attention. The first two decades of American cinema, however, will only be represented by the practices of the Thomas A. Edison Company, a major player in the field. Such a focus on one company, although necessarily restrictive, will provide a reasonable continuity of the development of screen words at the dawn of cinema.

BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERTITLES IN THE US

When discussing the use of intertitles in American cinema, film scholars note some developmental trends, although, as of now, there is no unanimity about phases and dates. This section serves as a brief overview of such observations to provide a historical background for the discussion of select individual films.

According to André Gaudreault, American filmmakers first began to feel a need for an external narrative voice in their work during the years 1902-04, when the stories they wished to tell were becoming more complex because the number of shots in a film was increasing (“Showing” 277). By 1904, fictional narratives outnumbered actualities and scenics, and the trick film had all but disappeared (Hansen 44). Editing devices were yet to be developed; therefore, cinema relied on two major ways of making stories comprehensible: lecturers and intertitles (Gaudreault, “Showing” 277). The period of

1902-04 also witnessed a rise of independent exhibitors, who were *de facto* in control of the film once they had acquired it; film sequences were edited and arranged into programs and could be accompanied by live narrators, music, and/or sound effects (Gunning, *D. W. Griffith* 59). A lecturer's commentary on the images was thus outside the control of manufacturers, although, as Tom Gunning points out, some production companies sent synopses of their films to exhibitors in the form of lectures, in an attempt to avoid misinterpretation (*D. W. Griffith* 93).

It is no surprise then that the first intertitles in the US appeared exactly within this timeframe. Based on his survey of the entire Library of Congress collection of films preserved as paper prints, Kemp Niver concluded that Edwin S. Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Slavery Days,* created in July 1903,[5] is the earliest American film that featured intertitles (Thompson, "Formulation" 183). Most likely inspired by the English example of George Albert Smith's *Dorothy's Dream*, offered for sale in the US by the Edison Company as *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* (February 1903), Porter introduced each scene by a title that did not explain the following action but rather labeled it relying on the audience's foreknowledge of the narrative (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 243-44).

Reliance on the spectators' prior knowledge was a distinct characteristic of pre-nickelodeon narrative cinema when films based on front-page newspaper stories, plays, nursery rhymes, fairy tales, popular songs, and comic strips became a staple of cinematic production (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 7-8, 341-45; Testa, *Back and Forth* 11, 102-04). A viewer's ignorance of such external referents most likely resulted in the incomprehensibility of the narrative, unless the show included a detailed lecture. For

[5] The release of the film was delayed until September 1903 because of investigations of a copyright for the title *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in motion pictures (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 244).

those familiar with the referenced story, a movie viewing turned into "a ritual of confirmation" (Burch, "Porter" 97). Films that illustrated a well-known simple story fared well without any intertitles when the main title was sufficient to cue the viewers to the narrative, as, for example, was the case with *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Edwin S. Porter and George S. Fleming, 1902), a film version of a famous fairy-tale.

The nickelodeon era, which received its name from storefront movie theaters that commonly charged five cents for admission, "created a revolution in screen entertainment" (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 325). As Charles Musser clarifies,

> The new exhibition mode was made possible by a large and growing, predominantly working-class, audience; the existence of rental exchanges, which facilitated a rapid turnover of films; the conception of the film program as an interchangeable commodity (the reel[s] of film); a "continuous" exhibition format; a sufficient level of feature production to meet demand for frequent program changes; and the relative independence of film exhibition from more traditional forms of entertainment. (326)

The multi-faceted nickelodeon revolution[6] and a concurrent development of simple editing techniques had an ambiguous influence on intertitling practices. On the one hand, the working-class spectators, many of whom were immigrants with only limited abilities of reading in English,[7] preferred films with no or few intertitles (Liepa 310), and their preference guided the acquisition policies of rental exchanges and exhibitors. The

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[6] According to Musser, the nickelodeon boom started in 1905 (*Before the Nickelodeon* 325) and was beginning to decline by late 1907 (272). Gunning labels the years of 1904-08 as "the rise of the nickelodeon" (*D. W. Griffith* 59). Bart Testa identifies the years of 1907-08 as "the start of the Nickelodeon era" (*Back and Forth* 11).

[7] See Liepa 44-47 for literacy rates in the US at the beginning of the twentieth century.

immense popularity of chase sequences, created through “the syntagmatic juxtaposition of shots linked by spatial and temporal proximity,” precluded the need for a verbal explanation (Gaudreault, “Showing” 278). Gaudreault even calls chase films and the nickelodeon “two sides of the same coin” because they both manifested the beginnings of the predominant role of story films in cinema (“1904-1905” 134).

On the other hand, to bring the same audiences back to the nickelodeons, film programs had to change frequently, which resulted in a huge commercial interest in constantly renewed repertoire. Chase sequences alone could not quench diverse appetites. There were not enough well-known stories that could be adapted to the screen without the aid of verbal explanations and that would still be comprehensible. Additionally, as Musser points out, a 1908 copyright court case and President Theodore Roosevelt's copyright legislation of 1909 undermined the film industry's practice of freely borrowing song lyrics, comic strips, and stage plays; therefore, adapted stories were often disguised and, as such, could not be easily recognized by the audience (*Before the Nickelodeon* 420-21). Visual narrative methods had not yet developed sufficiently to ensure the legibility of newly created story-lines and of more complex renderings of pre-existing narratives. Starting in 1907, this led to a crisis in film narrative. As Eileen Bowser explains, one manifestation of this crisis was a renewed demand for lecturers (*Transformation* 19) or for longer and more frequent intertitles “to fill the gaps in the means of expression” (139), when production companies and exhibitors did not want to run the risk of commercial failure for lack of (reliable) lecturers.

Gifted lecturers who could clarify the visual narrative in an entertaining manner drew huge crowds into movie theaters, but such talents were rare and not all exhibitors were willing to pay the additional cost (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 395-96).

However, there was another benefit to lecturers: they "came to symbolize claims asserting the educational value of the medium, in keeping with a middle-class discourse of uplift" (Hansen 96). In New York City, Mayor McClellan's edict of December 1908 that Sunday shows would be allowed only if "motion pictures illustrat[ed] lectures of an instructional or educational character" (qtd. in Gunning, *D. W. Griffith* 153) pushed the need for a lecturer to a new level.

Although the edict did not remain in force long, the film industry's concerns about improving their image, which was tarnished by accusations of depravity (Gunning, *D. W. Griffith* 154), resulted, among other things, in an eventual incorporation of moralizing intertitles and in an attempt to attract middle-class and bourgeois audiences by adapting established literary classics. The quest for more educated spectators was a major push behind what Gaudreault calls the second phase of the need for external narrative voice, which began in 1908. Filmmakers started producing more complex narratives, adaptations and new creations alike, which were often incomprehensible to the public without an accompanying verbal clarification. The main advantage of intertitles over lecturers was that the former ensured uniformity and, thus, film manufacturers' control over their work, although embedded intertitles significantly increased the costs because films were sold by the foot ("Showing" 277-79).

In the nickelodeon era, intertitles predominantly functioned as chapter headings: a visual tableau was preceded by an expository intertitle (Salt 287), which, according to William K. Everson, robbed "these simple films of even their limited surprise and dramatic potential." Intertitles in this period were often used to cover up spatial-temporal gaps before dissolves and fades became common practice. The format—white lettering on a black background, sometimes framed by a white border that incorporated a trademark—

was rather uniform, although there were a few creative cases of animated intertitles (129).

In the early teens, with the development of more complex narratives, intertitles became increasingly utilized for purposes of clarification at various points of the film. At the same time, dialogue intertitles started making considerable advances and were already common, albeit still outnumbered by expository intertitles, in 1913 (Salt 291). In 1910, hybrid intertitles, which included both exposition and dialogue, enjoyed popularity as a novelty, but filmmakers soon learned to incorporate expositional material into characters' lines (Keil, *Early American Cinema* 65). Dialogue intertitles were still mostly placed in advance of a conversation scene, sometimes with the character's name added for identification purposes, up until 1914, when dialogue lines started to be regularly intercut in the middle of such shots (Bowser, *Transformation* 143-45). Dialogue intertitles had their immediate precursor in the "talking pictures" of 1907-08, when actors situated behind the screen spoke the "parts" of the characters on the screen. However, once the novel effect had worn off and movie theaters had started employing amateurs instead of specially trained dramatic actors, who were not keen on wasting their talents behind the screen, the practice fell into decline (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 398-401).

Starting in 1909, diegetic inserts also became increasingly popular. In the teens, the long-preferred formats of letters and notes were complemented with "newspapers, telegrams, business cards, social announcements, and legal documents" (Keil, *Early American Cinema* 67). At the same time, filmmakers started playing with the inherent capability of inserts to restrict information available to the viewers in order to build suspense and create narrative twists. Letters were often utilized to develop characterization and highlight salient features, and entire films sometimes revolved around letter writing (67-69). Epes Winthrop Sargent, however, warned that incorporating

multiple diegetic inserts could substantially reduce profits when the film was exported because adequately translated substitutes needed to be made in every language (161).

The early teens, starting with 1911, also witnessed a development that signaled the beginnings of the star system—introductory sequences with credit titles naming the players (Bowser, *Transformation* 145-47). Simultaneously, scriptwriters began receiving their due in introductory credits, which both appeased the writers' desire for fame and enabled producers to capitalize on the popularity of well-known names (Liepa 189-90). By the beginning of 1912, intertitles began to integrate the film's main title, which helped to orient spectators who missed the beginning of the film. The practice ultimately turned out to be an invaluable tool for scholars in identifying films because beginning and ending credits were the first to succumb to the wear and tear of time (Bowser, *Transformation* 143). Undoubtedly, adding the film's title to intertitle cards served copyright purposes as well.

Intertitles in the early teens were not, however, welcomed by all or without any reservations. Kristin Thompson notes a widespread idealizing of films with no intertitles in 1913-16 (“Formulation” 186). Bowser dates the beginning of this trend to eliminate intertitles two years earlier: it became so pervasive already in the second half of 1911 that Sargent, when writing for *The Moving Picture World*, had to urge filmmakers against being stingy with intertitles that clarified the plot. As Bowser points out, there were two compelling reasons for eschewing intertitles: first, intertitles that told in advance what was going to happen ruined the suspense made possible by the newly developed editing techniques; second, intertitles, since they were external to the narrative, could easily destroy the illusion of actually seeing the events instead of being told a story. Whereas filmmakers of the twenties strove to create films without intertitles in search of the visual

purity of form,[8] filmmakers of the teens who limited intertitles to the minimum were mostly interested in preserving the illusion of reality. Only films based on poems were exempt from this artistic tendency (*Transformation* 140-42).[9] Diegetic inserts were not subject to the elimination practice because they came from the world of the story. Instead, as Thompson observes, diegetic inserts became more frequent and versatile in the transitional period to features ("Formulation" 188).

It did not take long for the intertitle pendulum to swing in the other direction. Whereas unsophisticated one-reelers could do without intertitles, with the establishment of feature films, "the desire for title-less films yielded to an approach that emphasized cleverly written inter-titles" (Thompson, "Formulation" 186). The vogue for Loos-style intertitles, which "relieved the image from the burden of carrying all the humor" and acted as a "satirical counterpoint to the action on the screen" (Tibbetts and Welsh 90-91), survived throughout the silent era.[10] Whereas expository intertitles were mostly used to establish situations, dialogue intertitles, which became the majority in the late teens and twenties, dominated within scenes (Thompson, "Formulation" 187-88). Art backgrounds, which counterpointed or complemented the verbal language of the intertitle, were mostly reserved for exposition at the beginning of a sequence. Artistic embellishments also performed a function of smoothing the transition between the visual sequence and the

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[8] As discussed in the previous chapter, unlike in Europe, only one attempt at a narrative film without intertitles was made in the United States in the twenties—Joseph de Grasse's *The Old Swimmin' Hole* (1921).

[9] For example, the alternation between visual images and intertitles adds to the poetic rhythm of Griffith's *The Unchanging Sea* (1910) and *The Sands of Dee* (1912), both based on Charles Kingsley's poems (Bowser, "Unchanging Sea" 69; Gunning, "Sands of Dee" 98).

[10] For a brief overview of Anita Loos's rise to fame as an intertitle writer, see Hefner 109-11.

intertitle shot (Brownlow, *Parade* 298-99).

By 1918, intertitling had grown into an institutionalized practice in the film industry (Liepa 146). In the early twenties, the heyday of art-titles, intertitle writers began receiving screen credit (W. K. Everson 133-34), which became the norm in the middle of the decade. In the mid- and late twenties, as Lewis Jacobs notes, flowery and lengthy passages gave way to more succinct phrases under the influence of foreign films that were praised for their effort to minimize intertitles (especially Murnau's *The Last Laugh*) and in response to experimentation in literature, exemplified by the telegraphic style of Joyce's *Ulysses* (*Rise* 329-30). In the late silent era, intertitles and visual shots often formed complex verbal-visual sequences, where intertitles acted as "fragments and dependent clauses of hybrid sentences in which filmed scenes function[ed] as the main clauses" (Elliott 93). All of these developments were of course trends with many exceptions. Nevertheless, intertitles had become so firmly entrenched in the US cinema by the late twenties that even the advent of sound did not result in an immediate demise of the intertitling practice.

BEFORE THE INTERTITLE: INTEGRATED VERBAL ELEMENTS

Screen words had appeared in the US cinema as an inherent part of motion pictures almost a decade before the first intertitles were embedded in the projection prints. Creations by the Edison company, a major competitor in the emerging industry,[11] incorporate language in visual shots to a variety of ends and serve as a perfect platform

[11] Edison submitted a patent application for a kinetograph, a motion-picture camera, and a kinetoscope, a peephole-viewing device, in 1891 and built the earliest commercial motion picture studio in the US—"the Black Maria" in West Orange, New Jersey—in 1893 (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 31-32).

for investigating the roles of integrated verbal elements in films that did not yet rely on intertitles.

Already in 1893,[12] one of the earliest demonstration films[13] created for the Edison Company by William K. L. Dickson[14] and William Heise, prominently features verbal language: the comprehensibility of *The Barber Shop* depends on the orienting sign that advertises "the latest wonder" of "shave and hair cut for a nickel" (figure 3.1). Since one can spend a substantial portion of the film, which runs for approximately twenty seconds, reading the sign, *The Barber Shop* is ideal for continuous kinetoscope viewing: to get all the details of the action that involves four men in a barber shop, the viewer has to watch the film more than once because the verbal text claims perceptual attention first. In fact, a copy of *The Barber Shop* that circulates on the Internet is forty seconds long because exactly the same footage is repeated twice. The sign in the film also has an inadvertent self-referential coloring: the customers of kinetoscope parlors, which opened in the US in 1894, paid twenty-five cents at the door to be able to view moving pictures in five machines (Nasaw 130); therefore, the sign could refer to "the latest wonder" of the process of watching a barbershop operation, just for a nickel.

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[12] The years of production, the film titles, and the director's (or the filmmaker's) credits for many of the Edison films mentioned here are based on the allographic titular introductions available on the DVD set *Edison: The Invention of the Movies*, released by Kino Video in 2005. I add the definite article to several titles and omit it from several others, in accordance with the Library of Congress copyright data.

[13] For a review of Edison's demonstration films, see Musser, "At the Beginning" 15-21.

[14] Dickson had been a major driving force behind technological experiments in Edison's laboratory until he left Edison's employ in April 1895 (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 29, 51).



Fig. 3.1. *The Barber Shop*: "the latest wonder."

Edison did not only stage demonstrations of various activities but also brought in entertainers of all sorts to film in the Black Maria and in the makeshift studio organized on the roof of the Raft & Gammon headquarters in Manhattan (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 50, 69). Most of such performing acts remained wordless, with film titles either simply naming the popular entertainers and, thus, serving identification purposes or supplementing the names of the performers with short descriptions of their acts: for example, just in 1894, Dickson and Heise[15] created, among others, *Annabelle Butterfly Dance*, *Annie Oakley, Caicedo with Pole*, *Carmencita*, *The Corbett-Courtney Fight*, *Hadj Cheriff*, *Glenroy Bros.*, *Louis Martinetti*, and *Sandow*. Some films, however, embed language in visual shots for promotional purposes. Thus, in *Robetta and Doretto, [no. 2]*[16] (Dickson and Heise, 1894), which presents the "Heap Fun Laundry" vaudeville act of the two comedians,[17] the name of the act is inscribed in big letters on the top part of the stage

[15] In early cinema in the US, the most common method of production was the collaborative system, which usually involved "the stage manager and cameraman, who worked together in an informal and nonhierarchical manner" (Musser, *Emergence* 6).

[16] The film is more widely known as *Chinese Laundry Scene* (Musser, "Ethnicity" 43).

[17] Edison filmed three scenes with Robetta and Doretto, known as "the Chinese comiques," but only one survives (Musser, "Film Notes" 1: 19).

set (figure 3.2), although the quality of the surviving print makes it difficult to make out the letters now. When in 1896, J. Stuart Blackton was filmed making a lightning sketch of Edison, the "N.Y. World cartoonist" made sure that his name was a constant presence in the frame, together with Edison's (figure 3.3). The act of showmanship is emphasized at the very end of the film, when Blackton steps aside and takes a bow, with the drawing and the inscription in unobstructed view. The thematic title—*Inventor Edison Sketched by World Artist*—adds a grandiose dimension to the filmed event, even though *World* originally refers to the *New York World* newspaper, for which Blackton was working.[18]



Fig. 3.2. *Robetta and Doretto, [no. 2]*: "Heap Fun Laundry" identification.



Fig. 3.3. *Inventor Edison Sketched by World Artist*: self-promotion.

In Edison's simplest narrative films with rudimentary story-lines, integrated verbal language—most often, in the form of signs, location identifiers, and advertising posters—helps to orient the viewers in the filmed space. In *Cripple Creek Bar-Room Scene* (James White, 1899), a prototypical western title, the indoor location is unambiguously signaled by a huge jar inscribed "Red Eye" (figures 3.4 and 3.5), which, according to Mark H. Waymack and James F. Harris, was a cheap whiskey popular among American

[18] The film was such a huge success that it convinced Blackton to enter the movie business with his partner Albert E. Smith, which led to the foundation of Vitagraph in 1897 (Musser, "Film Notes" 1: 25).

frontiersmen (24), and by wall posters that advertise other drinks. The embedded brand advertising in *Cripple Creek Bar-Room Scene* is not so blatant as in the Edison *Admiral Cigarette* (1897), discussed previously (see figures 2.150 and 2.151), but also manifests a very early realization of the potency of screen words to promote various products.



Fig. 3.4. *Cripple Creek Bar-Room Scene*: names of drinks signaling the location.



Fig. 3.5. *Cripple Creek Bar-Room Scene* (fragment enlargement): "Red Eye" as a signature drink.

Many other Edison films indicate the nature of the indoor space through signs posted on the walls, sometimes doubling the information implied by the title. In *The Old Maid Having Her Picture Taken* (Edwin S. Porter and George S. Fleming, 1901), the photographer's studio, already signaled by the title, features a centrally located sign that says "Your picture taken while you wait" (figure 3.6), which would usually be placed at the outside entrance to attract potential customers. A more noticeable "misplacement" occurs in *Appointment by Telephone* (Porter, 1902): in the first of the three scenes, the sign on the door that reveals the character's business occupation, not mentioned in the title, non-realistically faces the inside of the room (figure 3.7), most probably to facilitate its reading by the spectators. The goof is "corrected" in the third scene inside a café, where the glass window appropriately features "Cafe" in a mirror image: this was perhaps deemed possible because the audience could still easily recognize the inscription.



Fig. 3.6. *The Old Maid Having Her Picture Taken*: the indoor space identified by the title and the sign.



Fig. 3.7. *Appointment by Telephone*: the broker's sign for the sake of the audience.

Orienting signs that identified indoor locations were still popular in the Edison films after the intertitle had already made its entry and sometimes remained the only representatives of screen words in intertitle-free films of 1904-05. In multi-shot films of the time, thematic titles foreground the narrative situation and/or the character rather than the location. When fictional films take place in various spaces, filmmakers and viewers cannot depend on the title for spatial orientation; as a result, integrated verbal elements often come to the rescue. For example, in *Nervy Nat Kisses the Bride* (Porter, 1904), the "ticket office" window and "time table" posted on the wall indicate a train station (figure 3.8), which makes it possible for the viewer to infer the location of the next scene as a train car. During these years, verbal language is starting to get more realistically integrated. In *The Strenuous Life; or, Anti-Race Suicide*[19] (Porter, 1904), the "private office" in the establishing interior scene should be read from the outside, as it would be in real life (figure 3.9). This film also brilliantly illustrates intertextual connotation that arises from the interplay between the title and the visual content. The title, as Musser

[19] Double titles were borrowed by cinema from stage melodrama, together with other characteristics such as an absence of character motivation and chance propelling the plot (Musser, *Emergence* 5).

reminds contemporary viewers, refers to President Theodore Roosevelt's doctrine of the strenuous life, which, according to him, was necessary to keep the leadership position in the world, and to Roosevelt's declaration that married women of northern European stock had to bear at least four children to prevent "race suicide." *The Strenuous Life; or, Anti-Race Suicide* humorously comments on Roosevelt's pronouncements by portraying the changing reactions of the father in the process of discovering that he would have to care for quadruplets ("Film Notes" 2: 4).



Fig. 3.8. *Nervy Nat Kisses the Bride*: setting the stage for the eponymous kiss.



Fig. 3.9. *The Strenuous Life . . .* : a realistic location sign.

Inscriptions on flat background sets against which an action is filmed are used in Edison's early films not only as location indicators. The narrative situation of *Dog Factory* (Porter, 1904), based on the trick of the "Patent Dog Transformator," which turns dogs into frankfurters and back, would be incomprehensible[20] without the verbal support of the signs that label dog breeds under which sausages are arranged and of the "dogs made while you wait" and "dogs mixed to order" inscriptions (figure 3.10). Besides, the

[20] The audiences at the turn of the twentieth century, however, were quite familiar with similar "sausage machines," which, as Gunning explains, had been a "joke apparatus" in vaudeville and circus shows for decades before it became a standard attraction in early cinema ("Mischief Gags" 98). Such devices were also featured, for example, in Lumière's *Charcuterie mécanique* (1895), Biograph's *Sausage Machine* (1897), and Edison's *Fun in a Butcher Shop* (1901).

German word *Transformator* betrays the nationality of the factory owners, and the dog breeds chosen by the customers reveal the latter's personalities (for example, a thug asks for a “boston bull” but, dissatisfied with the dog's lack of aggressivity, points to the “fighting bull” sign and is subsequently attacked by his newly created pet). Edison also utilized backdrops to promote his own products: for example, Porter's *Street Car Chivalry* and *The Unappreciated Joke*, both copyrighted 8 August 1903, are filmed in the same setting that incorporates commercial advertisements of Edison's inventions placed above the passengers' heads (figure 3.11).

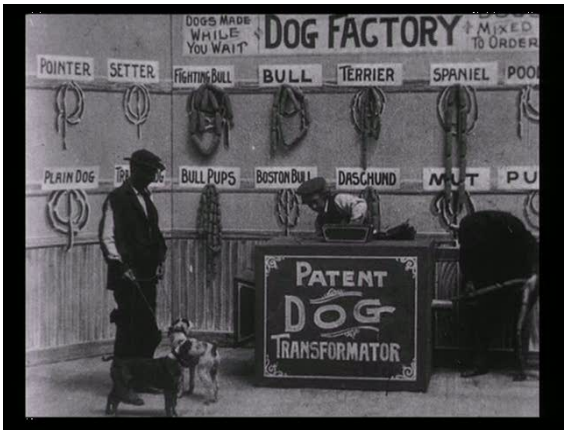


Fig. 3.10. *Dog Factory*: a verbally dependent narrative situation.



Fig. 3.11. *The Unappreciated Joke*: Edison's self-promotion.

Outdoor locations in the Edison actualities, which constituted a significant portion of the company's output in the first ten years of its existence, teem with city signs. It is possible that in many instances verbal language enters such films by accident, simply because it is present on city streets in a variety of formats. The non-staged “fire” films, which, according to Musser, “fulfilled the cinema's mandate as a 'visual newspaper'” (“Film Notes” 1: 36), often include fixed and mobile verbal signs. While watching *Going to the Fire* (Heise and White, 1896), filmed in Newark, New Jersey (Musser, “Film Notes” 1: 27), the viewers can infer the name of the street along which the fire brigades are rushing from the “Clinton Ave” route of the streetcar. In *The Burning of Durland's*

Riding Academy (Edwin S. Porter and James Blair Smith, 1902), where the camera repeatedly pans to reveal the aftermath of a big fire in Manhattan,[21] the ruined buildings still sport numerous posters and ads, many of which had been partially scraped off even before the fire started (figure 3.12), as well as more permanent big-lettered signs that dominate the upper stories of Manhattan (figure 3.13). As a result, this documentary footage can be metaphorically read as portraying the resilience, and at the same time constant renewal, of the city's pervasive verbal signage.



Fig. 3.12. *The Burning of Durland's Riding Academy*: renewable signs.



Fig. 3.13. *The Burning of Durland's Riding Academy*: resilient city signage.

However, some verbal inscriptions that became part of filmed outdoor scenes were definitely included by the Edison Company for a purpose. *Black Diamond Express, no. 1* (Heise and White, 1896) and *New Black Diamond Express* (White, 1900) belonged to a series of films that, as Musser specifies, promoted express trains as a symbol of technological advancement and, specifically, the Lehigh Valley Railroad, a business partner of the Edison Company ("Film Notes" 1: 27). In both films, the name of the railroad, inscribed on a sign strategically located in the frame, comes into focus when the

[21] As Musser points out, the title was later changed to *Firemen Fighting the Flames at Paterson* to sell the film as "documentary footage" of the better known fire that had occurred a week earlier (*Before the Nickelodeon* 193). The alliteration of the title must have also made it more poetic and memorable.

train approaches the camera (figures 3.14 and 3.15). The importance of verbal advertising is more obvious in the 1900 film: in 1896, the cheering crowd is much more prominent than the sign, whereas the later film centrally places the promotional inscription, which is much better visible and stays in focus longer than in the earlier version.[22]



Fig. 3.14. *Black Diamond Express, no. 1*: cheering the progress.



Fig. 3.15. *New Black Diamond Express*: promoting "Lehigh Valley Rail Road."

Some "visual newspaper" items also intentionally included verbal language to help the spectators understand what event was being presented on film. Thus, the documentary footage of *Troop Ships for the Philippines* (James White and Fred Blechynden, 1898),[23] which is a continuous shot of a passing naval vessel, finishes when the name of the ship—"Australia"—gradually disappears from view (figure 3.16). In

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[22] The Edison Company also produced spoofs on railroad advertisements. Thus, *A Romance of the Rail* (Porter, 1903) humorously refers to the attempts of Lackawanna Railroad, nicknamed "The Road of Anthracite" because it was a major coal carrier, to present itself as a clean line perfectly suited for leisure travel (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 263-64). In *A Romance of the Rail*, "Lackawanna Railroad" is featured as a railroad sign and as an inscription on the male character's trunk, which he places in a conspicuous spot at the beginning of the film.

[23] As Musser points out, the Spanish-American war was instrumental in extending the cinema's capacity as a visual newspaper: the war provided American filmmakers with a subject matter that was of continuous interest to the public; at the same time, "motion-picture showmen evoked powerful patriotic sentiments in their audiences, revealing the new medium's ideological and propagandistic force in the post-novelty era" (*Emergence* 225).

Electrocuting an Elephant (Smith or Porter, 1903), which documented a front-page news event attended by fifteen hundred people (Musser, "Film Notes" 1: 38), the camera is positioned to capture the banner that names the location—"Luna Park . . . the heart of Coney Island"—and advertises the date of the venue's public opening (figure 3.17).



Fig. 3.16. *Troop Ships for the Philippines*: identifying the event through the vessel name.

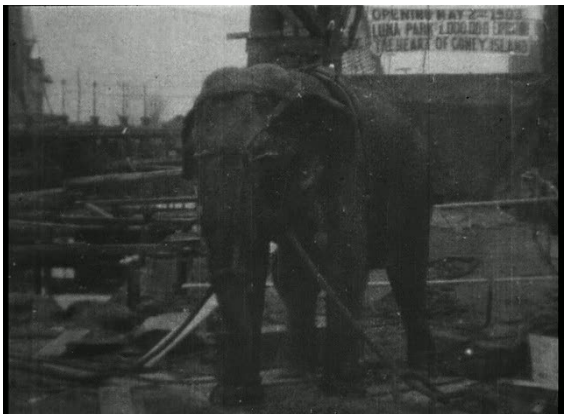
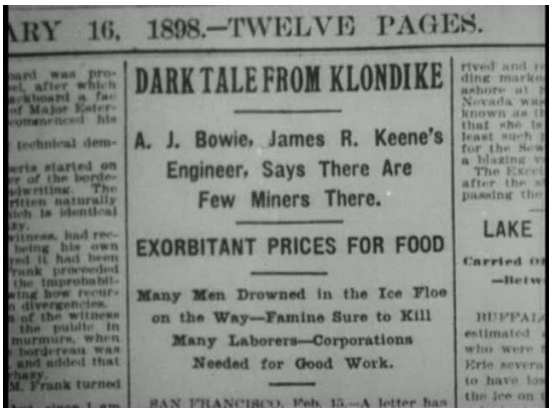


Fig. 3.17. *Electrocuting an Elephant*: Coney Island—a place for entertainment and execution.

In *Gold Rush Scenes in the Klondike* (Thomas Crahan and Robert K. Bonine, 1899), the cinema's function as a visual newspaper gets reinforced by an introductory shot of a newspaper page (figure 3.18), which is probably one of the earliest diegetic inserts in the American cinema. Since, according to Musser, the negatives of the footage shot in July-August 1899 were given to the Edison Manufacturing Company for sale on the open market because Crahan, the organizer of the Klondike Exposition Company, faced financial difficulties ("Film Notes" 1: 32), it is not clear when and by whom the newspaper insert, dated 16 February 1898, was added to the film. But its placement as an introduction, with the foregrounded "Dark Tale from Klondike" and "Exorbitant Prices for Food," determines the interpretive angle of the film: the people carrying banners and parade signs (figure 3.19), barely legible in the deteriorated print, are now viewed as demonstrating against the hard living conditions, to be presented in two subsequent visual

scenes, although a year-and-a-half temporal gap separates the newspaper report and the filmed footage.


ARY 16, 1898.—TWELVE PAGES.

DARK TALE FROM KLONDIKE

A. J. Bowie, James R. Keene's Engineer, Says There Are Few Miners There.

EXORBITANT PRICES FOR FOOD

Many Men Drowned in the Ice Floe on the Way—Famine Sure to Kill Many Laborers—Corporations Needed for Good Work.

LAKE

Fig. 3.18. *Gold Rush Scenes in the Klondike*: providing an interpretive angle on the subsequent scenes.



Fig. 3.19. *Gold Rush Scenes in the Klondike*: protests "illustrating" the "Dark Tale from Klondike."

Newspaper pages and headlines gradually became a persistent presence in silent films (and still survive in the twenty-first-century cinema) as a token of the power of the press to propagate news and to impose its angle of interpretation. Thus, *Films of the San Francisco Earthquake* (Bonine, 1906)[24] opens with three diegetic inserts—two from *The Evening Telegram* and one from *The World* (figure 3.20)—with headlines about the fire, deaths, doom, and terror that engulfed San Francisco. The emotive connotation created through an interplay between the headlines and the visual shots of the flames and ruins was an effective tool in raising funds to help the victims of the earthquake, a fact noted by Musser ("Film Notes" 2: 10). A long sequence with a streetcar carrying a banner about money collection and donations (figure 3.21) undoubtedly served the same purpose.

[24] *Films of the San Francisco Earthquake* is not a separate film but, as its title indicates, a selection of highlights of several shorts filmed by Bonine in the aftermath of the earthquake of 18 April 1906 (Musser, "Film Notes" 2: 10).



Fig. 3.20. *Films of the San Francisco Earthquake*: appealing to emotions.

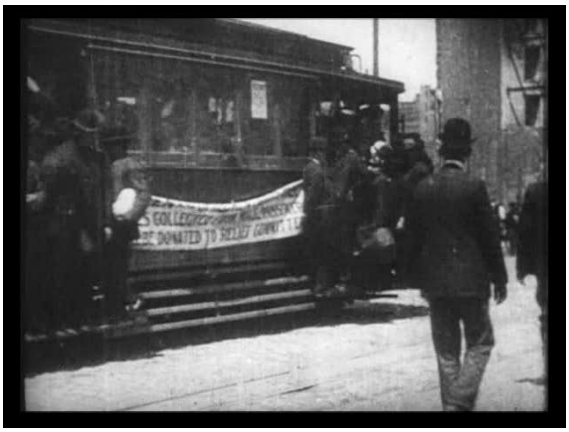


Fig. 3.21. *Films of the San Francisco Earthquake*: signs encouraging donations.

The Edison films are historical proofs of the pervasiveness of newspapers in urban communities. As David Henkin states in reference to New York, daily papers reinforced the urban culture of sociability in two ways:

> First, they became a regular feature of the verbal cityscape, rendering new forms of social knowledge visible in the public spaces of the city to a broad and impersonal readership. Second, newspapers constituted their own public space, an arena of print exchange where strangers appeared, circulated, browsed, and presented themselves before the urban crowd. (104)

Public acts of reading newspapers, presented in long shots with no content visible, are featured, for example, in *The Barber Shop*, *What Demoralized the Barber Shop* (Heise, 1898), *The Unappreciated Joke*, *Street Car Chivalry*, and *The Rivals* (Porter and J. Searle Dawley, 1907). The newspaper's role in bringing strangers together is prominent in the comedy sketch *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife through the New York Herald Personal Columns* (Porter, 1904), which begins with a personal ad (figure 3.22)[25] and

[25] It was probably less costly to create an intertitle than a realistically looking diegetic newspaper insert.

proceeds to illustrate the plight of the "French nobleman" attacked by scores of "wealthy American girl[s]" in search of matrimonial bliss.

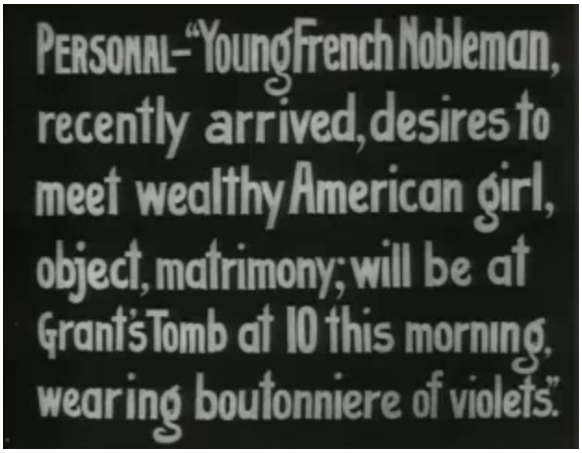


Fig. 3.22. *How a French Nobleman Got a Wife . . .* : personal ads in public space.

Whereas visual newspaper issues often focused on fires, fictionalized narratives also included fire scenes but had to provide a twist to ensure the spectator's interest (Musser, "Film Notes" 1: 38), as was the case with *Life of an American Fireman* (Porter, Fleming, and White, 1903).[26] Of immediate relevance to this project is the second sequence of the film, which incorporates one of the earliest close-ups of a found object that depends on verbal instructions to perform its function: a New York fire alarm box (figure 3.23) stays in the frame for almost fifteen seconds before triggering a rush of activity. In this manner, the "sound" of alarm in a silent film is inferred through somebody's manipulating an inscribed object. *Life of an American Fireman* also illustrates the common practice of integrating trademark signs into the setting[27]: the

[26] The fire rescue scene in *Life of an American Fireman*, with the overlapping action presented from two angles, remains a bone of scholarly contention (for a summary of these debates, see Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 223-35).

[27] For example, *What Happened in the Tunnel* (Porter, 1903) features the Edison trademark on the windowpane of the interior of a "railway car" and in *The Interrupted Bathers* (Porter and Fleming, 1902), an Edison trademark sign is stuck in the grass on the water edge.

Edison trademark is hanging, as if it were a painting or a framed photograph, to the right of the window (figure 3.24) and even swings side to side in two later scenes—when the door is opened and when the water hits the flames.



Fig. 3.23. *Life of an American Fireman*: an inscribed object as a substitute for sound.

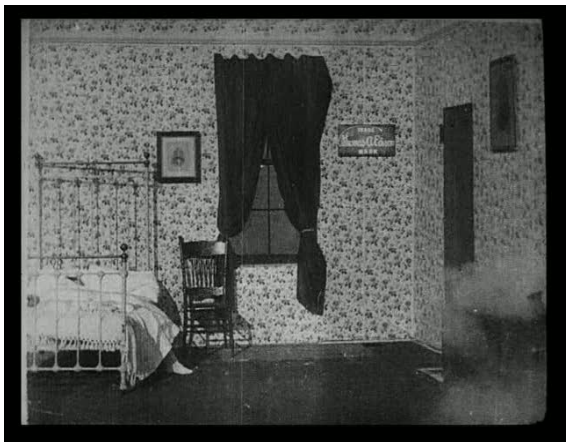


Fig. 3.24. *Life of an American Fireman*: the trademark as part of the indoor setting.

Besides "found" verbal elements that already existed in outdoor environments, the Edison early films already incorporated signs specially created to set the stage for the narrative, as in *Turning the Tables* (Alfred C. Abadie and N. Dushane Cloward, 1903), where the bathing boys, who disregard the conspicuously posted "no-bathing" sign (figure 3.25), force a policeman to violate the law as well. The mixed-mediality of a situation where the warning message of a verbal sign is ignored can be effectively used to reveal some features of the character's personality. The trick film *Another Job for the Undertaker* (Porter and Fleming, 1901) makes fun of the rube, a comic strip character appropriated by the Edison Company (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 165), whose illiteracy causes his death (inferred from the title and the final shot of a funeral procession) because he disregards the "Don't Blow Out the Gas" sign posted above the gas lamp in his hotel room (figure 3.26). This film also metaphorically illustrates the power of the written word to save the lives of the "initiated."



Fig. 3.25. *Turning the Tables*: the warning sign to stage the situation.

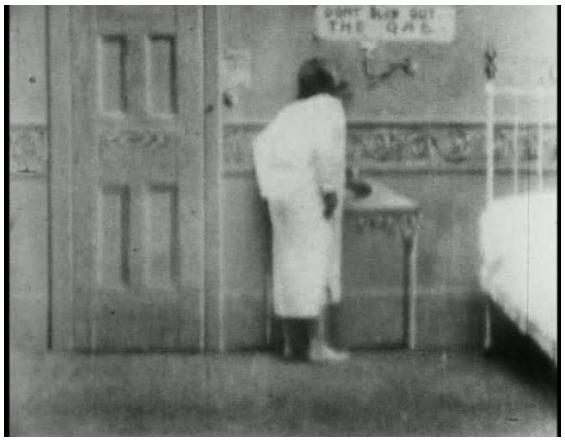


Fig. 3.26. *Another Job for the Undertaker*: revealing illiteracy.

In early cinema, numerous jokes were made not only at the expense of country bumpkins but also of ethnic characters, especially Irish and Jewish[28] (Musser, "Ethnicity" 43-52). To facilitate recognition of such characters, common ethnic names were often integrated into visual shots as well as into the title.[29] In *The Finish of Bridget McKeen* (Porter, 1901), the efforts of a sturdy maid to light a stove result in an explosion that blows her to pieces. The subsequent picture of the tombstone[30] with the epitaph "At rest / Here lies the remains of Bridget McKeen who started a fire with Kerosine" (figure 3.27) clarifies who the character was and what foolish act caused her death.[31] In *Cohen's Fire Sale* (Porter and Wallace McCutcheon, 1907), which stereotypically portrays the Jewish

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[28] For a review of early films that contained aspects of anti-Semitism or manifested a sympathetic attitude towards Jews, see Erens 29-73.

[29] Early films that unfavorably portrayed African Americans and American Indians did not have to rely on verbal language to indicate the characters as such.

[30] Although tombstone inscriptions are a frequent verbal presence in cinema, they are not used for humorous purposes too often. James Card provides another "delightful" example from *The Headless Horseman* (Edward D. Venturini, 1922), which starred Will Rogers: "Here lies the body of John Mound; lost at sea and never found" (105).

[31] Musser states that the can the character uses to start the stove is marked "kerosine" (*Before the Nickelodeon* 171), but the inscription is not visible in the version that is part of the *Before the Nickelodeon* DVD, released by Kino International in 2008.

owner of a millinery shop as an astute yet unscrupulous businessman, the name *Cohen* becomes a saturated signifier[32]: it is written on the shop's window (twice), on the huge parcel with merchandise received from France (figure 3.28), and on the safe inside the shop. This thirteen-minute film does not need any intertitles to narrate the story because all the elements impossible to convey through action are presented as integrated verbal elements: the Jewish neighborhood is also signaled by the store sign "Levi Bros.," painted on the theatrical backdrop; the dumping barge, where the newly arrived merchandise is mistakenly taken, is identified by the placard "Ashes received here"; the milliner's motivations for setting his shop on fire are revealed through the advertising signs "Fire Sale" and "Entire Stock Below Cost / Slightly Damaged by Water," as well as through a close-up of the document read by the Cohens, the back of which bears a logo or a trademark that is barely visible in the deteriorated print but is most probably that of an insurance company.

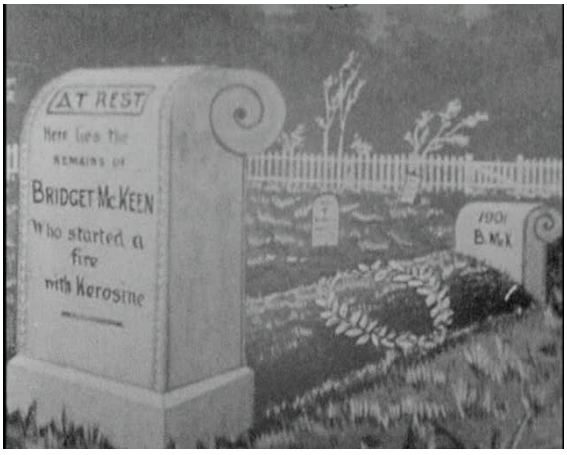


Fig. 3.27. *The Finish of Bridget McKeen*: reinforcing the ethnic stereotype.



Fig. 3.28. *Cohen's Fire Sale*: naming and showing the protagonist.

Politicians were also not immune to ridicule in early cinema. Thus, in two films created in the Edison studio that referred to Theodore Roosevelt—*Terrible Teddy, the*

[32] The term *saturated signifier* was suggested in this context by Stuart Liebman.

Grizzly King (Porter, 1901) and *The "Teddy" Bears* (Porter and McCutcheon, 1907)—integrated verbal language serves to undermine the "heroism" of his actions. In the earlier film, based on a political cartoon series (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 163-64), Teddy's hunting escapade is recorded for promotional purposes by two men who wear "my press agent" and "my photographer" tags. The later film, which, as Musser observes, is a spoof on the widely publicized incident of Roosevelt's sparing a bear cub during a hunting trip and on the commercial craze for stuffed versions of the cub, induces the viewers to disapprove of the killings of the adult bears, whose family life resembles that of humans (349-51) and whose residence even displays a "God bless our home" sign.

In the Edison films, not only trademark signs and self-advertisements served self-reflexive and self-referential functions. In *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*[33] (Porter, 1902), a country rube excitedly reacts to the projected images in a movie theater, which are introduced by the title card that reads "The Edison Projecting Kinetoscope" (figure 3.29) and by individual film titles *Parisian Dancer*, *The Black Diamond Express* (figure 3.30), and *The Country Couple*. As Musser clarifies, *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* was a remake of *The Countryman's First Sight of the Animated Pictures* (Robert Paul, 1901, UK), with earlier Edison titles serving as the films shown in the diegetic theater (*Before the Nickelodeon* 192-93). *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* is also an invaluable historic record showing how external title cards were integrated into film projections in 1902, the practice mentioned in the previous chapter. It is possible to

[33] The character of Uncle Josh originates from Cal Stewart's performances, recorded on Edison cylinders in the late 1890s and early 1900s, as Uncle Josh Weathersby, a stock farmer who narrates his comic encounters with urban modernity. These recordings were extremely popular with the public both as entertainment and a "cultural survival kit" for recent immigrants and rural migrants (Smith 28-29; Kenney 33). When Uncle Josh first appeared on the screen, in *Uncle Josh's Nightmare* (March 1900), Porter placed a sign "UNCLE / JOSH" on the left of the visual shot to identify the character.

infer from the momentary black pauses that surround the language inserts that a separate projector was used for the title slides, which were not yet embedded in the filmstrip. The bibliographical code of such title cards, with black and white reversed, would soon be borrowed by Porter for intertitles.



Fig. 3.29. *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*: projected self-referentiality.



Fig. 3.30. *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show*: Edison's film in Edison's film.

EDWIN S. PORTER: THE ADVENT OF THE INTERTITLE

Porter, who was hired by the Edison Company in 1900 because of his substantive knowledge of cinematic practices and his mechanical ingenuity, shortly became a filmmaker in his own right, although he had had little camerawork experience. His technical expertise was a major reason for producing films that relied on special effects, camera tricks, and editing (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 157-60). It is no surprise then that Porter became the first filmmaker in the Edison Company to embed intertitles into the filmstrip.

As noted before, it is widely accepted that Porter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1903) was the first American film to feature intertitles. The fourteen scenes in the film, whose title

card reads *Uncle Toms Cabin or Slavery Days*,[34] are preceded by the following intertitles: "Eliza Pleads With Tom To Run Away" (figure 3.31), "Phenias Outwits The Slave Traders," "The Escape of Eliza," "Reunion of Eliza and George Harris," "Race Between the Rob't E.Lee and Natchez," "Rescue of Eva," "The Welcome Home to St.Clair Eva Aunt Ophelia and Uncle Tom," "Tom and Eva in the Garden," "Death of Eva" (figure 3.32), "St. Clair Defends Uncle Tom," "Auction Sale of St.Clair's Slaves," "Tom Refuses to Flog Emaline," "Marks Avenges Death's Of St.Clair and Uncle Tom," and "Tableau. Death of Tom."

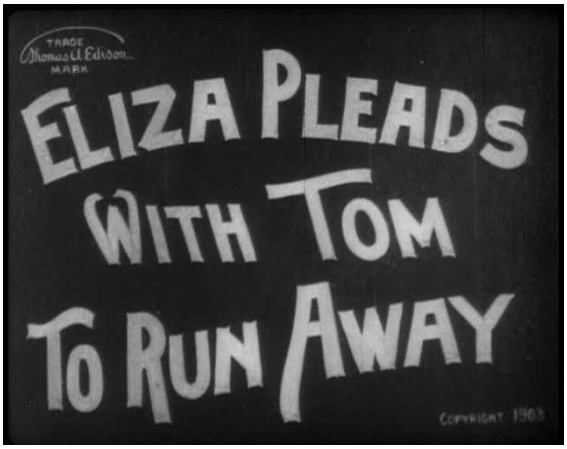


Fig. 3.31. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: beginning *in medias res*.

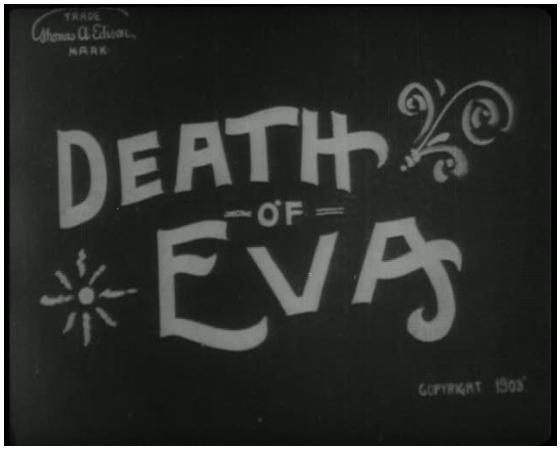


Fig. 3.32. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: vignettes from announcement cards.

Such announcements of what is to come do not act as narrative summaries but serve as hypertextual references to an already familiar story: the abundance of names, without any explanation of who these people are, and rapidly changing snippets of action in various locales would have been totally confusing to spectators without any prior knowledge of Harriett Beecher Stowe's novel or its stage versions, which were frequently

[34] Here, the spelling and capitalization of the title and intertitles, when distinguishable, are preserved. With the problematic punctuation, especially apostrophes, and name misspellings (e.g., *Phenias*, *St.Clair*, and *Emaline* instead of *Phineas*, *St.Clare*, and *Emmeline*, respectively), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* paved the way for the tendency that would plague intertitles well into the teens, as previously discussed.

performed at the time.[35] The hypertext of Porter's film was incomprehensible without the audience's familiarity with the hypotext. The last two intertitles make it perfectly clear that creating suspense was not Porter's goal: “Tableau. Death of Tom” prefaces the illustration of Tom's death, which was already announced (“Marks Avenges Death's Of St.Clair and Uncle Tom”) and acted on in the previous scene. The placement of the death scene at the end must have been borrowed from the theatrical versions: as Janet Staiger explains, “Uncle Tom's death provided the potential for a grand finale in an allegorical tableau, a highly popular feature of late nineteenth-century drama” (*Interpreting* 108).

Linguistically, the intertitles are structured either as complete sentences with verbs in the present, which, as Gaudreault observes, was a characteristic feature of description cards that, projected through a separate magic lantern, explained the images shown (“Des cris” 56-57), or as noun-phrases, which acted very much like the titles of separate films. The bibliographical code of the intertitles, with capitalizations and occasional vignettes (see figure 3.32), also resembles that of title slides (compare with figures 3.29 and 3.30) and announcement cards that identified acts in vaudeville performances. The major feature that distinguishes the intertitles in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* from their exterior precursors is the incorporated Edison trademark and copyright year. Thus, the technical novelty of embedding intertitles did not seem to have showmanship attraction as the main motivation because the spectators may not even have noticed any difference between the intertitles and slides projected separately. The intertitle's primary role was then to establish the manufacturer's control over the product and to ensure that different

[35] For analyses of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, including the film's narrative structure and its reliance on the audience's foreknowledge, see Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 242-45 and Staiger, *Interpreting* 105-19.

audiences were watching the film with the same verbal explications.[36]

The presence of intertitles in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did not preclude an integration of verbal elements into visual shots. In the second scene, where "Phenias Outwits The Slave Traders," Porter centrally places a reward poster (figure 3.33), which presumably promised money for help in capturing runaway slaves. The opposition between the sign and Phenias's aiding Eliza reinforces his positive characterization: he chooses humanity over financial benefits. In the "Rescue of Eva" scene, the partially visible inscriptions on the stage set (figure 3.34) refer the viewers to the previous scene, "Race Between the Rob't E.Lee and Natchez," which helps to identify the location as the "Rob't E.Lee" boat

[36] The fact that the title cards in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* incorporate Edison trademark and copyright year is actually a reason for doubting the widely accepted theory that the film featured the first embedded intertitles in the US. It is possible that these titles cards might have only been added for copyright purposes to the paper prints, from which the film has been eventually restored, although, according to the catalog *Motion Pictures, 1894-1912*, published by the Library of Congress Copyright Office, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has only one copyright number: i.e., the scenes are not copyrighted separately (65). As Bowser reports in 1978, after watching with a group of other film historians about 690 fiction films made in the years 1900-06 (most of which were created by the Edison and Biograph companies), the "copyright records demonstrate that titles were assigned to each shot of the early multi-shot films, and frequently each shot was copyrighted separately under its title, but whether these were printed into titles on the film or supplied by a narrator, we do not yet know. . . . The earliest films we found in the group examined which did have original intertitles on the prints appeared in August, 1904, in *The Widow and the Only Man,* from Biograph, and *The European Rest Cure*, from Edison, in September 1904" ("Brighton Project" 523). If *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was very popular, indeed featured intertitles, then it is not clear why it took a year for other films with intertitles to appear. Only in one other Edison film created in 1904-1905 (among those I have viewed) does an intertitle incorporate the trademark and copyright year (the introductory intertitle in *The Whole Dam Family and the Dam Dog*, copyrighted May 1905), whereas this was common practice for the title shots. For example, the title shots of *The Kleptomaniac* (Porter, 1905) and *The Miller's Daughter* (Porter and McCutcheon, 1905) bear the copyright inscription and the trademark, but their extant original intertitles—"The Thief" in *The Kleptomaniac* and "WIFE & CHILD OF ARTIST" in *The Miller's Daughter* —do not. These, however, are just logical speculations. Since I do not have any definitive evidence to counter the statement that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the intertitle pioneer in the US, I will proceed under this assumption.

docked in New Orleans. The “livery / [. . .]eed stable” and “lager / beer” signs in the “Auction Sale of St.Clair's Slaves” scene perform the function of denoting a location more directly. Another verbal element—the Edison trademark—is displayed in the majority of visual shots as pinned on the walls and tree trunks and stuck in the ground.



Fig. 3.33. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: declining the reward.



Fig. 3.34. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: an indirect location identification.

Whereas *Uncle Tom's Cabin* pioneered non-diegetic intertitles in the US, *The Messenger Boy's Mistake* (October 1903) features perhaps the earliest diegetic intertitle in Porter's oeuvre. In this film, the humor of the situation is created through an incongruity between the contents of the parcel a young woman receives and its accompanying note (figure 3.35), the combination of which enrages the recipient. The note is presented at a moment unusual from the contemporary point of view: we first see the woman reading (figure 3.36), and only when she turns towards the messenger boy do we get a chance to read the note ourselves. The diegetic intertitle inserted after, not during, the process of reading makes it possible for the viewer to notice that the boy is having a hard time figuring out which of the two packages is meant for the woman. The significance of the insert itself is emphasized through duration: it stays on the screen for one fifth (about twenty seconds) of the whole film. Porter creates suspense by withholding information: together with Maud, we are eager to discover “the enclosed,”

but we cannot see the contents of the parcel when the woman opens it and, thus, are left guessing why she flies into a rage. Only when Harold enters the room does she angrily show him men's undergarments.

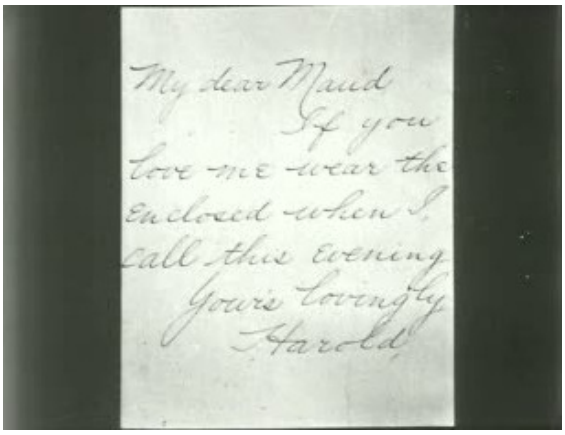


Fig. 3.35. *The Messenger Boy's Mistake*: Porter's first (?) diegetic intertitle.



Fig. 3.36. *The Messenger Boy's Mistake*: which parcel should fit the note?

Filmed the following year, *The Ex-Convict* (November 1904) employs perhaps the earliest semi-diegetic intertitles in the US. We first learn about the main character's plight when he is being discussed: "That Man is an Ex-Convict"[37] (figure 3.37). A similar linguistic structure is used towards the end of the film, but its semantic content signals a beneficial turn of events for the character: "That Man Saved My Life."[38] Another semi-diegetic intertitle—"Have You Reference"—explains why the man cannot get a job

[37] Consistent with the early practice, quotation marks are not yet used to differentiate exposition from dialogue lines.

[38] Gaudreault speculates that this dialogue line might not have been present in the exhibition copies and might have been included only as a paper print for copyright purposes (*From Plato* 192-93). Bowser, however, states that *The Ex-Convict* had intertitles, including "That Man Saved My Life," on the projection prints ("Brighton Project" 523). The catalog *Motion Pictures, 1894-1912*, published by the Library of Congress Copyright Office, lists the following titles under which the separate parts of *The Ex-Convict* are copyrighted: "Leaving home," "The burglary," "Discharged," "Looking for employment," "Discouraged," "Desperation," "A friend at last," "The rescue" (18). It is obvious from the catalog entry that the intertitles and the copyright titles of separate parts intersect but do not match: in particular, the semi-diegetic intertitles are not listed as copyright titles.

even when the required number of workers, presented through a sign on the wall, has not been reached (figure 3.38). Only when the young girl identifies the man as her savior does it matter who pronounces the words; the other two semi-diegetic intertitles reveal the social obstacles that the ex-convict has to overcome to be able to provide for his family. None of these lines (even "Have You Reference") are uttered by or addressed to the main character, which stresses his silent and, thus, subordinate and powerless position. Instead, expository intertitles—"Discouraged" and "Desperation"—reveal the character's inner state and motivation for contemplating a burglary.

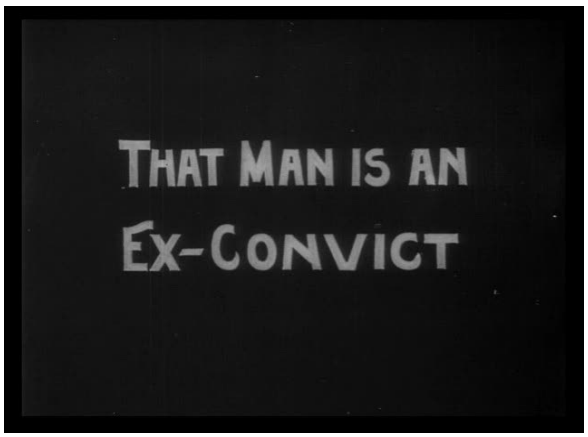


Fig. 3.37. *The Ex-Convict*: a fateful label.



Fig. 3.38. *The Ex-Convict*: not wanted.

Like most dialogue lines in early cinema, such intertitles in *The Ex-Convict* are not inserted at the moment of speech but introduce the scenes in which they are spoken and, together with the four expository intertitles, serve as chapter headings. Porter makes it clear who will pronounce "That Man Saved My Life" by semantically linking the line to the first expository intertitle—"The Rescue"—and, at the same time, foreshadows another meeting of the main character and the girl. The last intertitle—"A Friend at Last"—reveals the omniscient narrator's evaluation of the social situation but can also be read as a thought that enters the titular character's mind. Overall, *The Ex-Convict* has an unusually high ratio of semi-diegetic to non-diegetic intertitles for the period.

Semi-diegetic and diegetic intertitles, however, remained a rarity in Porter's films in the first two thirds of the decade, when non-diegetic intertitles were much more popular. In *European Rest Cure* (copyrighted September 1904),[39] which, according to Musser, is a comedic reworking of the "documentary" travelogue genre, with the scenes unified by a character rather than by a customary narrator/travel guide and with several insertions of documentary footage made earlier by James White and James Smith (*Before the Nickelodeon* 285), the intertitles act as chapter headings concisely summarizing visual scenes. The introductory intertitle[40]—"All Aboard"—prefaces an embarkation scene that features the main character bidding a teary good-bye to two women on the gangplank of what is probably a ship of the Cunard Steamship Company, a guess based on the "[. . .]RD SS. CO." written on the gangplank (figure 3.39). The next intertitle—"Au Revoir" (figure 3.40)—introduces a theme of foreignness while ushering in documentary footage of the Steamship *Etruria* leaving the harbor, with a big crowd waving in farewell. Porter, or the cameraman whose footage might have been borrowed,[41] makes an obvious effort to ensure that the viewers can read the name of the ship: the camera, which has been static during the whole scene, starts panning left to follow the movement of the ship so that the word could stay in the center of the frame as long as possible. The integrated verbal elements—"[. . .]RD SS. CO." and "Etruria"—unite the

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[39] The film was copyrighted under the title *European Rest Cure*, although the title shot states "The European Rest Cure." The title is listed as *European Rest Cure* in the *Edison* DVD set.

[40] In the version of *European Rest Cure* available on the Library of Congress website, the first two intertitles—"All Aboard" and "Au Revoir"—follow rather than introduce the first two visual scenes respectively.

[41] Musser, however, does not mention this scene in the list of documentary footage borrowed by Porter (*Before the Nickelodeon* 285).

first, acted, and the second, documentary, scenes by appealing to the audience's knowledge of the ocean liners that served the New York harbor.[42]



Fig. 3.39. *European Rest Cure*: "Cunard Steamship Company" abridged.



Fig. 3.40. *European Rest Cure*: a theme of foreignness.

After bidding *adieu* to *Etruria*, the camera "switches" its location to the deck of a boat that moves along the New York waterline, which sports names of various companies and their products. This footage is excerpted from the actuality *Skyscrapers of New York City, from the North River* (Smith, 1903),[43] and the excerpt may have been selected because it prominently features the piers of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Lehigh Valley Railroad, both representatives of the travel industry within the United States and Edison's partners. Thus, although mostly a fictional story, *European Rest Cure* manifests the business acumen of the inventor, who, as Jay Newell, Charles T. Salmon, and Susan Chang explain, "turned product placement into an ongoing business that provided twin benefits of reducing out-of-pocket production expenses while providing promotional

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[42] *Etruria*, which belonged to the Cunard Steamship Company, made regular trips between Liverpool and New York at the turn of the twentieth century ("S/S Etruria").

[43] *Skyscrapers of New York City, from the North River*, which is a continuous view from Pier 14 to the Battery Park promenade, can be viewed online on the Library of Congress website. A two-minute excerpt is available on Disk 5, "Picturing a Metropolis: New York City Unveiled," of the *Unseen Cinema* DVD collection, released by Image Entertainment in 2005.

services for customers of his industrial businesses" (580).

Judging from Musser's list of films from which Porter borrowed footage for *European Rest Cure* (*Before the Nickelodeon* 285), the next scene, introduced by the intertitle "Dropping The Pilot," comes from *Pilot Leaving "Prinzessen Victoria Luise" at Sandy Hook* (White, 1903).[44] We watch a man climbing down a rope ladder and hanging there for a while (figure 3.41) before a small boat fetches him. This extensive excerpt, with a focus on an unknown pilot, may seem a bit out of place in *European Rest Cure* if one misses the intertextual connotation at work here. The contemporaneous spectators familiar with John Tenniel's political cartoon "Dropping the Pilot" (figure 3.42), which was first published in *Punch* in 1890 and commented on the forced resignation of Otto von Bismarck from the government of Kaiser Wilhelm II ("Dropping"), must have appreciated Porter's sense of political humor in presenting his own version of the *Kanzler*, who had long been in charge, leaving the ship of the German state. Thus, the non-diegetic intertitle "Dropping The Pilot" is primarily transtextual in character.



Fig. 3.41. *European Rest Cure*: "Dropping the Pilot" as an intertextual reference.



Fig. 3.42. Tenniel, "Dropping the Pilot," aka Bismarck's resignation.

[44] The name of the ship is misspelled in the title under which White's film was copyrighted. The correct name is *Prinzessin Victoria Luise*.

After the pilot has been dropped, *European Rest Cure* focuses exclusively on the main character's misadventures on his way to and in "Europe," which is presented through painted sets: "The Storm," generalized through *the*, makes him sick to his stomach; he is dropped on his head while "Kissing The Blarney Stone," is seduced into can-can dancing while "Doing Paris," slips off a mountain path while "Climbing The Alps," becomes a victim of a "Hold Up, in Italy," detours into Africa and falls all the way down while "Climbing The Pyramids of Egypt," and is subjected to mud rubbing and cold water splashing in "MudBaths of Germany." When the American tourist finally returns to "Home Sweet Home," he is barely able to walk and is in definite need of a rest cure from his European rest cure. Anne Friedberg even claims that the film "professes an antitravel message," where "the foreign is presented in very clumsy faux-virtual landscapes, coded in a set of familiar xenophobic clichés" (100).[45] It seems to me, however, that the fictional part of *European Rest Cure*, similarly to many other Edison films, pokes fun at the main character, who, just like a country bumpkin unfit for urban life, feels out of place in Europe, although the other members of his tour group are able to enjoy the sights and activities.

In *The Seven Ages* (February 1905), non-diegetic intertitles enable Porter to rely on Shakespeare's famous classification of the seven ages in *As You Like It* while creating kissing scenes in various contexts. The hypotext, however, is not followed too faithfully: Porter inserts an intermediate "age" between the Shakespearean "infant" and "school-boy"— "Playmates"—and dispenses with the sixth age that "shifts / into the lean

[45] David Levy is less categorical in his evaluation of the film's message: "It is not clear whether Porter was aiming his satirical hose at inept Americans abroad or the perceived menace of travel in Europe. . . . The apparent xenophobia that located Egypt in Europe really ought to be considered in the context of the huge success enjoyed by motion pictures that dealt with travel and foreign places" (117).

and slippered pantaloon" (2.7) to suit his purpose of showcasing diverse kisses. As Musser notes, "[t]he repetition and diversity of age groups undermines the kiss's exclusively sexual dimension" and reveals Porter's concern with the family (*Before the Nickelodeon* 304), which probably explains why the scene where sexuality could have been highlighted—"Lovers"—presents a still tableau rather than a moving image (figure 3.43). As another deviation from the classic, Porter introduces an eighth age through an interlocutionary intertitle (figure 3.44), which makes the viewers ponder the life situation of an old maid who only has a cat to kiss. Porter himself does not seem to approve of such a surrogate of the family.



Fig. 3.43. *The Seven Ages*: the static nature of the lovers' kiss.



Fig. 3.44. *The Seven Ages*: addressing the audience.

In 1905, Porter created several films that featured a novel technique—animated intertitles, or "jumble announcements" (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 318), in which letters cavorted around the screen in various fashions until they formed the phrases. As Musser explains, "[t]hese animations were shot in reverse motion and upside down, beginning with the final title and proceeding to chaos. The results were then used tail first to give the desired effect" (531). The animation, which was probably first used in *How Jones Lost His Roll,* copyrighted in March and released in May 1905, made the intertitles stand out and claim the audience's attention much more than the following visual shots,

"inverting the normal relationship between image and title" (318). Animation, however, is not solely responsible for the enjoyment of this film because it works collaboratively with the linguistic code of the intertitles, which, in turn, engages in a multimedial partnership with images.

The intertitles in *How Jones Lost His Roll*, mostly interlocutionary, engage the viewers through direct address by equating Jones to *you*: 1) "IF YOU MET MR SKINFLINT"; 2) "A SUBURBAN NEIGHBOR"; 3) "AND HE GAVE YOU THE GLAD HAND" (figure 3.45); 4) "AND MUCH TO YOUR SURPRISE"; 5) "ASKED YOU TO HAVE A DRINK" (figure 3.45); 6) "WHEN INVITED TO DINNER"; 7) "YOU ALMOST DROPPED DEAD"; 8) "AFTER FILLING YOU"; 9) "UPON CHEAP WINE"; 10) "HE PROPOSED A FRIENDLY" (figure 3.45); 11) "GAME OF CARDS"; 12) "LOSING ALL YOUR MONEY YOU"; 13) "BET EVERYTHING YOU HAD" (figure 3.45); 14) "AND YOU WERE COMPELLED"; 15) "TO GO HOME LIKE THIS"; 16) "WOULD'NT IT MAKE YOU MAD?" (figure 3.45).[46] The intertitles indeed tell the complete story of Jones/you being swindled out of his/your possessions and, at the same time, make fun of the main character, whose utmost surprise at Mr. Skinflint's "generous" invitation should have put him on the alert. The division of the sentences into chunks and the duration of the intertitles help to build up anticipation of what is to come: for example, "HE PROPOSED A FRIENDLY" takes the longest (seven seconds) to unroll, while making the viewers long for an explanation of the miser's strange behavior; "LOSING ALL YOUR MONEY YOU" prefaces Jones's foolhardy decision to continue

[46] The catalog *Motion Pictures, 1894-1912*, published by the Library of Congress Copyright Office, lists the following titles under which the separate scenes of *How Jones Lost His Roll* are copyrighted: "Jones Meets Skinflint," "Skinflint treats Jones," "Skinflint's cheap wine," "Invitation to dinner," "Game of cards," "Jones loses," "Jones goes home in barrel" (27). This is yet another proof that the intertitles embedded in the film itself often did not match the titles under which separate scenes were copyrighted.

the game, which is highlighted through the metamorphosis of *every thing* into *every-thing*, triggered by *y* temporarily leaving the frame to fetch the hyphen.[47]



Fig. 3.45. *How Jones Lost His Roll*: animated diversity.

If the intertitles mostly present the point of view of Jones/you, the visual scenes explain the why and the how of Mr. Skinflint's behavior. The first scene, which follows the "glad hand" phrase, shows the "suburban neighbor" offering his hand in greeting after he is stopped short by the sight of the banknotes Jones is counting in full view on the porch. The drawing of a hand covering up the other in the bottom part of the intertitle (figure 3.45) foreshadows the probability that the money is likely to change hands. The long visual scene of "FILLING YOU / UPON CHEAP WINE" shows Mr. Skinflint repeatedly

[47] Porter's play with words in movement and with interlocutionary address predates by approximately two decades animated intertitles in Dziga Vertov's films and rotating verbal puns in Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma.*

and surreptitiously pouring the wine from his glass into a bowl that has been placed next to his chair (and in the foreground) by his maid. The "FRIENDLY / GAME OF CARDS" involves seating Jones with his back to the mirror so that his opponents—Mr. Skinflint and wife—could easily see his cards and could coordinate their game by exchanging and disposing of their own unwanted cards under the table. The last visual sequence fulfills the "linguistic" function of a noun or a noun phrase that should follow the deictic indicator *this*: "GO[ING] HOME LIKE THIS" means using a bottomless barrel to make up for the missing pants. Indeed, who "WOULD'NT" be mad?

In *How Jones Lost His Roll*, as in many other films created by Porter, the interplay between the title, the intertitles, and the visual imagery gives rise to intertextual connotation: if in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), Christian, an everyman, loses his roll in "a pleasant arbor" (79), where he falls asleep, which is allegorically interpreted as "forgetfulness: some sleep when they should keep awake, and some forget when they should remember" (399),[48] in Porter's film, Jones, the *you*-character, loses his money and clothes because of the "forgetfulness" caused by too much drink and gullibility.
The name Jones and his dealings with the "SUBURBAN NEIGHBOR" can also get linked to the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses," although Susan Jipson Matt specifies that the phrase originated only in the 1910s as the title of a popular comic strip (42).

In *The Whole Dam Family and the Dam Dog* (copyrighted May 1905), animated titles are used less extensively than in *How Jones Lost His Roll*, but Porter also integrates other verbal elements into the film. The non-animated introductory intertitle, which bears the Edison trademark and copyright year, directly appeals to the viewers' knowledge of

[48] The exact phrase "lost his roll" is used in *The Pilgrim's Progress* at this very moment of allegorical interpretation: "Here Christian lost his roll" (399).

the popular series of postcards on which the film is based: "DO YOU KNOW THIS FAMILY?" The individual members of the Dam family are then presented through what Gunning calls "emblematic close-ups"[49] (qtd. in Musser, *Emergence* 316), which showcase amusing facial expressions and behaviors. The unfortunate family name stays constantly in the frame on the name cards that identify each person (with the exception of Mrs. Dam, presented as "Herself"), highlighting the homophonic wordplay of "Mr. I.B.Dam" (figure 3.46) and "Miss U.B.Dam." After everybody has been introduced, Porter employs animation to provide an evaluative commentary on the characters: the jumbled phrase unrolls into "THE WHOLE DAM FAMILY" through an intermediate stage of "THE HOLE MAD FAMILY" (figure 3.47), to be followed by a family portrait. The introduction of the most important character, singled out in the title, is reversed: a dog's silhouette gets assembled from pieces while the phrase "AND THE DAM DOG" stays solid on the screen, until both explode and disappear from the frame. The dog's combustive nature is then illustrated in the final visual sequence of a family dinner, where the dog, having been kicked out of the family patriarch's chair, pulls the tablecloth with all the dishes onto the floor. The entertainment value of the film derives from the extensive character introduction in a multimedial format[50] rather than the final one-shot incident.

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[49] Porter's *Laura Comstock's Bag-Punching Dog* (1901) opens with perhaps the earliest emblematic close-up in the US cinema: a portrait-like view of Comstock and her dog Mannie in the upper part of the shot (Musser, *Emergence* 316). The bottom half is occupied by a sign that reads "Miss Laura Comstock's Bag Punching Dog." Mannie starred in many Edison films, including *The Whole Dam Family and the Dam Dog* and *The Terrible Kids* (Porter and McCutcheon, 1906).

[50] Sigmund Lubin appropriated this format for his own remake, entitled *I.B.Dam and the Whole Dam Family*, released July 1905. This film does not have animated intertitles and finishes on the dog jumping over the frame and disappearing from the field of vision. It is Lubin's remake that is included in the first volume of *The Movies Begin* DVD set and in the DVD *Landmarks of Early Cinema*, although both allographically introduce it by the title of the Edison film, *The Whole Dam Family and the Dam Dog.*

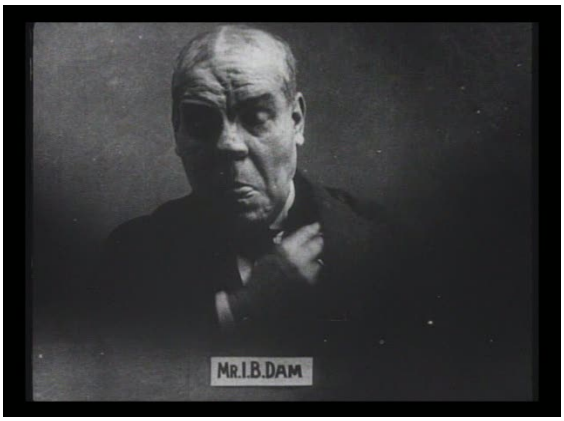


Fig. 3.46. *The Whole Dam Family*. . . : "I.B.Dam"!

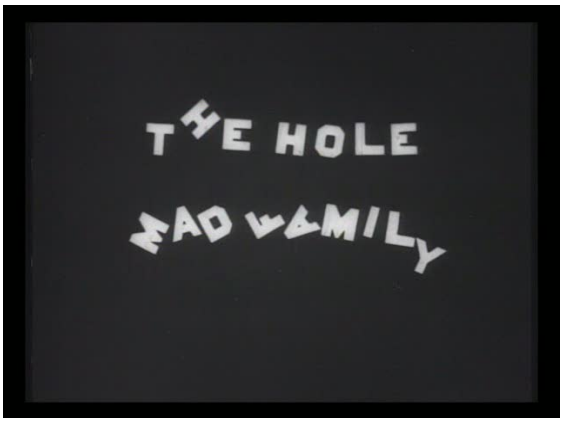


Fig. 3.47. *The Whole Dam Family*. . . : an evaluative commentary.

Animation also served Porter well in the actuality *Coney Island at Night* (copyrighted June 1905), which enabled him to showcase his skill at filming illuminated nocturnal scenes and, as Lauren Rabinovitz notes, offered Edison a chance to advertise electricity itself (178). The title of the film appears bulb by bulb, as if the gradually forming letters were spelled in electric light (figure 3.48), yet another innovation of Porter's. The same technique is used for the intertitle "THOMPSON & DUNDY'S LUNA PARK," whereas "DREAMLAND" is created through a convergence of multiple lights, to be switched off letter by letter.[51] The third amusement park that operated on Coney Island in 1905—Steeplechase—does not get an intertitle of its own but is featured as an integrated verbal element: the name, which is writ in light on the Giant See-Saw, the park's signature attraction,[52] gets into view when the camera makes a panoramic sweep over the grounds. "Luna Park" is also visible during the sweep (figure 3.49), as are the

[51] My analysis is based on the four-minute version of the film that is mastered from the prints held at the Museum of Modern Art; it can be found on Disk 2 of the collection *Edison: The Invention of the Movies* (Kino Video, 2005). The three-minute version of the film that is part of the "Picturing a Metropolis" disk of the *Unseen Cinema* DVD set, released by Image Entertainment in 2005, is mastered from the Library of Congress prints and does not include the animated title and intertitles.

[52] For an overview of Coney Island attractions throughout history, see Denson.

names of individual attractions and eateries. *Coney Island at Night* is not only a magnificent spectacle but is a perfect venue for advertisement as well.



Fig. 3.48. *Coney Island at Night*: the gradually appearing title, writ in light.



Fig. 3.49. *Coney Island at Night*: embedded advertisement.

Porter's next film with jumble announcements—*Everybody Works But Father* (November 1905)—did not sell many copies, and the technique was soon abandoned (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 320), although Porter ingenuously employs animation two years later, in the phone conversation scene of *College Chums* (copyrighted November 1907), which he made together with Dawley. As Bowser explains, Porter shows both parties simultaneously while emphasizing the great distance between them (*Transformation* 65).[53] Porter places cameos of the characters clutching phones to the sides of the upper part of the split screen while the bottom half represents a painted bird's-eye view of rooftops and pinnacles. The black space separating the two serves as a background against which the semi-diegetic lines of the conversation cover the distance between the angry woman and her fiancé, whom she has seen with another woman in a park. The phrases emanating from one character and moving towards the other not only

[53] In *The Story the Biograph Told* (1904), Biograph attempted to achieve an effect of simultaneity via double exposure while showing the husband and the wife engaged in a phone conversation with each other. However, as Musser points out, the clarity of the image was compromised (*Emergence* 357).

make it clear who says what but also reveal their inner states, both through the linguistic and bibliographical codes.

Porter hints that something is amiss from the very start of the conversation by spatially separating the letters in the woman's greeting (figure 3.50). Her anger and domineering position are highlighted through her monopolizing the conversation and the curtness of her responses (e.g., "DONT DARLING ME"), as well as through a visual victory of her emphatic line ("YOU DID NOT") over his interrupted "SURELY I," the latter having been crushed and scattered in a headlong crash with the former (figure 3.51). The fact that the man is taken aback before he invents an obvious lie as an excuse is emphasized via his visual stammering: "WHY WHY THAT THAT WAS ER ER MY SISTER." Since the phone conversation is the only time verbal language used in the film,[54] it also signals a key axis of the conflict upon which the subsequent burlesque story will rotate.



Fig. 3.50. *College Chums*: the menacing greeting.



Fig. 3.51. *College Chums*: the visual victory of the woman's line.

In *The Night before Christmas* (December 1905), Porter animates drawings—in the sleigh ride scene—rather than words but uses verbal language to indicate a

[54] Gaudreault points out that *College Chums* was conceived to be accompanied by a live dialogue of the actors hidden behind the screen ("Showing" 275), but such accompaniment could obviously not be arranged for all shows.

hypertextual link to Clement Clarke Moore's Christmas poem, which as Musser explains, was well-known at the time (*Before the Nickelodeon* 340). Select lines from the poem are integrated as intertitles. Untypically for the period, the first intertitle (figure 3.52) appears more than two minutes after the beginning of the film and is intercut in the visual scene of the adults taking a brief rest from the beehive of activity, with children about to enter the frame in order to start hanging out the stockings. Hypertextually, this filmed scene is the opposite of the line from the poem that precedes the text included in the intertitle: "Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse" (2). The first and the third lines of the poetic intertitle finish with a comma in disregard of the original poem and of the rules of punctuation, although the quotation marks confirm that this is a quote from the hypotext. End commas are also inserted in the other four intertitles where no punctuation mark is warranted. The reasons for this are unclear, but it might have been done to facilitate the reading of the intertitle through end pauses signaled by commas.[55] The second intertitle about the children "'. . . nestled, / All snug in their beds . . .'" enters into a mixed-medial relationship with the following scene, where the children are intent on defying the poem by engaging in a pillow fight. Immediately afterwards, Saint Nicholas is shown looking out the window and then crossing out several names from the list in his big book, while putting checks or question marks next to other entries, so the audience is left wondering for a moment to which group the disobedient children will belong. The third intertitle is semi-diegetic in nature: about to embark on a long journey, Saint Nicholas is cheering on his reindeer. The only case of visual-verbal redundancy in *The Night before Christmas* is the fourth intertitle, which doubles the scene of Saint Nicholas arriving at "the

[55] Porter divides the original lines from Moore's poem in two parts so they can easily fit on the screen: the endings of the first and the third lines of the intertitles correspond to the caesuras in the poem.

house-top." The last intertitle, which humorously describes the physique of the gift-bringer, seems to be incongruously inserted after he disappears from the room up the chimney and before the children come down to discover the presents. But, in fact, it predates the last shot of the film, a close-up of Saint Nicholas, with "Merry Christmas To All / And To All A Good Night" written underneath (figure 3.53), which is the ending of Moore's poem.[56] This visual shot is perhaps one of the earliest moving Christmas cards in history. Overall, Porter's adaptation of the poem effectively plays on the hypertextual and mixed-medial juxtapositions to present an enjoyable picture of the holiday eve and, at the same time, to uncover poetic misconceptions about human behavior.

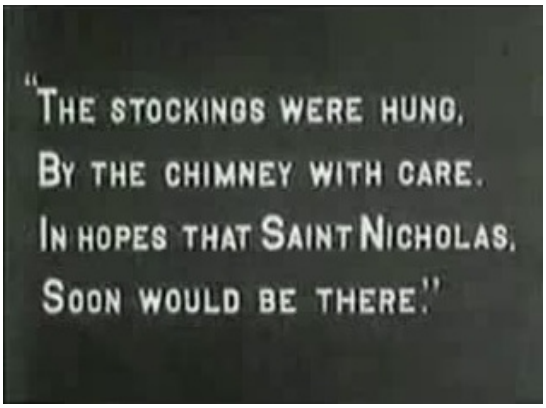


Fig. 3.52. *The Night before Christmas*: end punctuation in disregard of the original.



Fig. 3.53. *The Night before Christmas*: a moving Christmas card.

In 1906-07, the Edison films had few intertitles (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 356), which was reflective of the nickelodeon audience's tastes for films where action and humor did not have to be interpreted through verbal intrusion. Besides chase films, bad-boy pranks[57] and simple crime films with a humorous touch perfectly

[56] Different versions of Moore's poem in print read "Happy Christmas" or "Merry Christmas" alternatively.

[57] For an illustrative example of a bad-boy film, see *The Terrible Kids*, which advertises Orange & Passaic Valley company through an inscription on the tram, the location of an extensive prank, and serves as a witness to pervasive city signage in the scene that involves a man whose job is to remove outdated posters and ads.

satisfied these criteria. In *Getting Evidence* (Porter and McCutcheon, shot in September and copyrighted in October 1906), which has no intertitles, the title shot explicitly assigns the film to the detective genre through an architextual secondary title, one of the earliest in the US film practice (figure 3.54). The first visual shot confirms the man's occupation through the non-realistically integrated sign "Hawkshaw Private Detective," which faces the inside of the detective's office so that the viewers would have no difficulty reading it (figure 3.55). Such a triple verbal indication of what the film will be about—through the main and secondary titles and the integrated sign—manifests what Musser calls "intratextual redundancy," which was essential for making the intertitle-free films accessible to the nickelodeon audience (*Before the Nickelodeon* 356). Naming the detective *Hawkshaw* also contributes to this redundancy.[58]

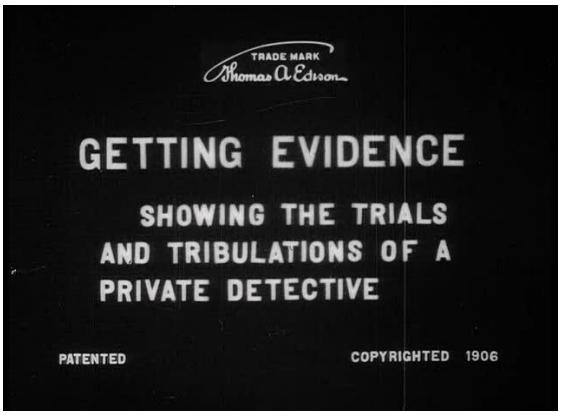


Fig. 3.54. *Getting Evidence*: doubling genre indication in the title shot.

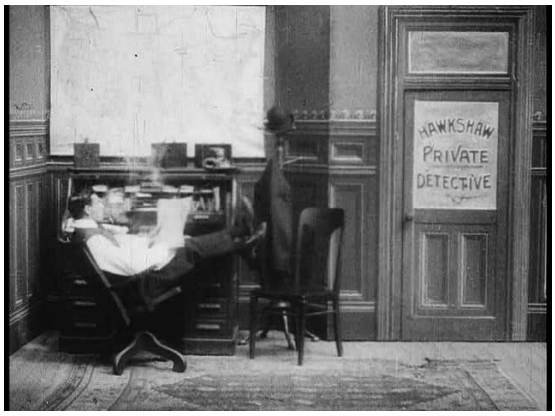


Fig. 3.55. *Getting Evidence*: genre confirmation through a sign.

A Little Girl Who Did Not Believe in Santa Claus (Porter and Dawley, 1907) also operates without intertitles but employs multimediality to introduce its three central characters: the eponymous girl (figure 3.56), Santa Claus (figure 3.57), and "THE LITTLE

[58] The word *hawkshaw*, which originated as the name of the detective in Tom Taylor's play *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* (1863), the most popular play of the English playwright, became part of the US slang in the meaning of *detective* in 1888, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary ("Hawkshaw").

BOY WHO DID." Linguistically, the first sentence continues into the second shot, making "SANTA CLAUS" the object of belief rather than an active character, unlike "THE LITTLE GIRL" and "THE LITTLE BOY" in the surrounding shots. The boy and the girl are also contrasted through their beliefs, which are accounted for in the subsequent visual sequences by the difference in their financial situations: the girl, who comes from a poor family, has never received a Christmas present. Intent on helping the girl and making her believe, the boy reads to her from *The Night before Christmas*, featured prominently on the screen, and, during the Christmas night, ropes Santa Claus up and threatens him at gunpoint into taking some gifts to the girl's house and into conjuring a Christmas tree for her too. Thus, the subtle aspects of the multimedial introduction are reinforced by the dramatic action. The play with the articles—*a* in the title and *the* in the introductory shot—hints that the girl the viewers encounter is just one of many who are skeptical for the same reason. As Musser explains, the film was loosely based on a well-known incident of 1897 when the editor of *The New York Sun*, in response to a letter from a girl asking, on behalf of her friends, whether Santa Claus existed, replied, "Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist" ("Film Notes" 3: 4).



Fig. 3.56. *A Little Girl Who . . .* : the eponymous character.



Fig. 3.57. *A Little Girl Who . . .* : Santa Claus as the object of non-belief.

The external narrative voice returns to Porter's films in 1908, as is exemplified by *Fireside Reminiscences*, created in collaboration with Dawley in January. According to Musser, *Fireside Reminiscences* reworked the widely popular song "After the Ball," in which a man explains that he is single because he once abandoned his sweetheart believing her to be unfaithful and learned only years later that his "rival" was her brother ("Film Notes" 3: 5). The chapter heading intertitle that begins the film, "PARTED BY A BROTHER," is supposed to remind the audience of the song, yet it is ambiguous due to the usage of the indefinite article. I did not know of the song when I was first viewing the film; as a result, I was under the impression that the separation between the husband and the wife in the subsequent visual scene was caused by the husband's brother. This made me side with the "deceived" husband throughout the whole film and admire his willingness to forgive his wife at the end of the film, the scene marked by the "RECONCILIATION" intertitle. The contemporaneous viewers familiar with the hypotext may have felt differently about the main character's loneliness, self-induced by his unwillingness to listen to his wife's explanations. *Fireside Reminiscences* also features a temporal compression intertitle, "THREE YEARS LATER"; this type of intertitles will become increasingly common in the teens and twenties.[59]

The multi-faceted use of screen words, especially integrated verbal elements, in the Edison films of the pre-nickelodeon and nickelodeon years manifests the importance of verbal language to the visual medium of the era—much to the contrary of the

[59] In the teens, Sargent warned aspiring scriptwriters against overusing such time-jump indicators: "Scripts that bristle with 'Three Weeks Later,' 'The Next Day,' 'After Many Years,' and the like are not purchased as often as they are shown on the screen; many of these time leaders shown in finished plays being [sic] added as a result of overproduction of negative and constant cutting. If the spectator is constantly required to adjust his mind to the new period, he will be too busy to follow the story" (65).

widespread misconception that early cinema was language-free. Porter's intertitles and their relationship to visual images also do not conform to the stereotype of uniform intertitles—expository chapter headings—noted by many film scholars as signatures of early cinema. Besides, the transtextual references of Porter's film titles and intertitles extend beyond the immediate hypotexts on which the central story-lines may have been based and, as such, seem to target a well-educated and politically aware audience.

SCREEN WORDS IN THE EDISON ONE-REELERS

Porter's reputation was on the wane by mid-1908, when the almost complete transformation of cinema into a form of mass communication "involved changes in the methods of representation, film production, exhibition, reception, and distribution." Porter was unwilling to immerse himself in this process, which led to his dismissal from Edison's employ in November 1909 (Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon* 372, 458). The Edison Company continued producing films for another decade, but these one-reelers have rarely been discussed in detail. Indeed, the filmic quality of the Edison productions in 1909-14 is generally inferior to that of Griffith's shorts, which have received most critical attention among all the films of the period.[60] However, for the purposes of this project, the Edison films are much more valuable because a few of them seem to retain the original intertitles, which are representative of the common practices of the time, whereas the intertitles for most of Griffith's Biograph shorts have not survived.

Charlie Keil states that "from 1909 onward in particular, [inter]titles and inserts functioned as an integral but compromised solution for addressing problems of narrative

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[60] For book-length publications on Griffith's work for Biograph, see Gunning, *D. W. Griffith*; R. Henderson; Niver; Pearson; and the first seven volumes of *The Griffith Project*, under the general editorship of Usai.

legibility" (*Early American Cinema* 61). However, screen words contributed much more than a "compromised solution" to clarifying the narrative in the Edison one-reelers. In *The House of Cards* (December 1909),[61] which is staged in a frontier town,[62] the first three intertitles of the film—"SENDING GOLD TO THE BANK" (introductory), "THE BANK IS CLOSED FOR THE DAY," and "TOM GAMBLES WITH THE RANCHMAN'S MONEY"—introduce the narrative situation and set the conflict in motion. Integrated verbal elements —the partially concealed "GOLD [. . .]ST BANK" sign, the half-visible word "CARDS" on the porch of the bar/gambling place, and ads ("Chew Battle Ax Tobacco" and "Tom and Jerry") in the interior scene (figure 3.58)—reinforce the information conveyed in the intertitles through location indicators. According to John Cowie Reid, "Tom and Jerry" was a well-known American drink, "a hot concoction of rum and water, spiced and sweetened." Its name derives from W. T. Moncrieff's stage play *Tom and Jerry, or Life in London*,[63] whose pirated versions started playing in New York and other American cities in 1825 (83). The intertitle reveals the main character's name at the moment when the "Tom and Jerry" ad is located in the frame above Tom's head, with only the owner of the

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[61] Who directed *The House of Cards* is currently unknown. Some online sources attribute the film to Porter, although he had already left the Edison Company when the film was released.

[62] Although western novels had already been popular in the nineteenth century, the genre of westerns in cinema started to form only in 1908, made possible by the rise of film studios, which encouraged shooting on location, and by longer footage allotted for individual films. As a uniquely American phenomenon, westerns gave the US cinema a competitive edge on the international market (Bordwell and Thompson 341). *The House of Cards* builds on the emerging vogue for showing the lives of frontiersmen but focuses on human drama rather than manifests an interest in location shooting.

[63] The play was based on Pierce Egan's immensely popular monthly publications *Life in London, or The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn Esq., and His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, Accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in Their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis* (first published as a bound book in 1821), which narrated the adventures of contemporary rogues (Reid 50).

place in between (figure 3.59), which can signal that Tom's behavior in the film is going to be as morally questionable as that of the eponymous character in *Tom and Jerry*.



Fig. 3.58. *The House of Cards*: the house where morals are tested.



Fig. 3.59. *The House of Cards* (fragment enlargement): "Tom."

The interior barroom scene also features a partly visible sign,"A HO[. . .]R THE BOYS," which, if read "A HOUSE FOR THE BOYS," could be linked to the title of the film through the word *house*. Tom's moral fall and loss of honor, metaphorized through the titular phrase "the house of cards,"[64] begins here. He ignores the plea of the owner's daughter, whom he passionately embraces in the previous scene, and the advice of the man, who seems to be an authority figure among the frontiersmen, to stop gambling. The semi-diegetic intertitle inserted in the middle of the barroom scene—"PLAY 'HOME SWEET HOME'"—cannot be attributed to any particular individual but reflects a collective wish to hear the song played by the fiddler who has just entered the bar. The choice of the

[64] Before the phrase "the house of cards" acquired its contemporary meaning, it had been frequently connected to moral unsoundness. See, for example, the use of the phrase in Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69):

> You've no reward nor punishment to give
> I' the giving or the taking honour; straight
> Your social fabric, pinnacle to base,
> Comes down a-clatter like a house of cards.
> Get honour, and keep honour free from flaw. . . . (442-45)

song can reveal the frontiersmen's melancholic mood or signal that it is late and the bar will soon be closing. This intertitle could have also served as a cue for the musician accompanying the show.[65]

The authority figure gets identified only in the next visual scene, located in the same place but with all the customers gone, as "THE SHERIFF OF CEDAR GULCH." A diegetic intertitle is employed to "help" the sheriff declare his love to the owner's daughter, which also underscores the sheriff's fear of being rejected because he pins the letter to a pole, while the girl is not looking, and leaves the bar. The letter is scripted quite realistically, with the colloquial phrases "I am dead gone on you" and "[m]y life aint worth much" hinting at the sheriff's educational background. The fact that he signs "a love letter" with his full name—"Rattlesnake Jim"—and adds his sheriff's title reveals that he indeed could not have written many love letters and is probably being honest with the "Little One." Although he is insecure when it comes to love life, his courage is indicated by the plaque "killed by Rattle Snake Jim, Sheriff of Cedar Gulch" hanging on the wall of his room. The "God bless our Home" sign shows his religiosity and, by extension, moral strength.

The sheriff's love for the girl is tested when he agrees to help his rival after, according to the intertitle, "THE GIRL PLEADS WITH THE SHERIFF TO SAVE TOM." Another diegetic insert of the film—an embezzlement warrant, which was probably written on a real form used by the Californian justice system (figure 3.60)—not only discloses Thomas Crawford's legal trouble but also adds a nice touch of realism to the filmed story. The third diegetic intertitle—the sheriff's letter to Tom (figure 3.61)—is less realistically

[65] For the role of popular songs as accompaniments to silent films, see, for example, Altman, *Silent Film Sound* 220-26.

motivated than the others because Tom reads the letter in the sheriff's presence in the barroom scene introduced by the expository intertitle "THE SHERIFF GIVES TOM A CHANCE FOR HIS LIFE." Besides pushing the narrative forward, this letter shows the sheriff's tough side: underlining for emphasis and the abruptness of "Understand?" reveal the difference in tone when compared to the letter he has written to the girl.

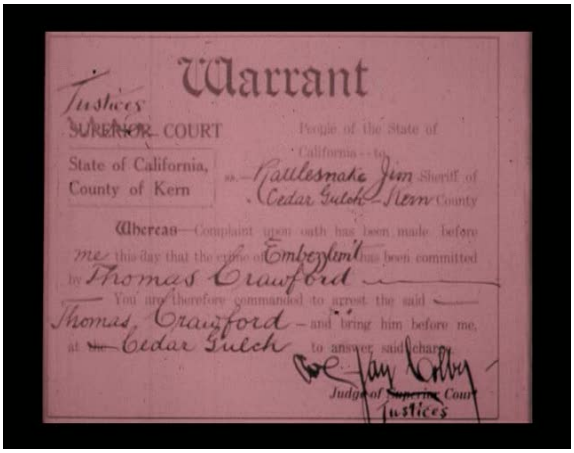


Fig. 3.60. *The House of Cards*: for the sake of realism.

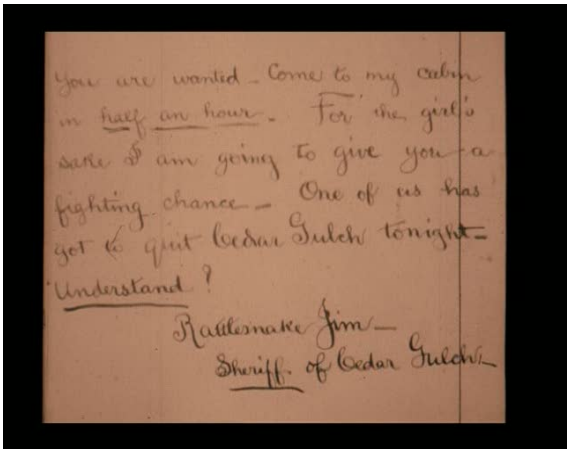


Fig. 3.61. *The House of Cards*: revealing the sheriff's tough side.

The viewers are kept in suspense about "the fighting chance" Tom is given, reinforced by the intertitle "A NOVEL DUEL," which prefaces Tom's appearance in the sheriff's cabin. The semi-diegetic intertitle "'THERE IS A RATTLESNAKE IN THIS TABLE,'" enclosed in quotation marks and inserted at the very moment the sheriff is explaining the nature of the duel to his rival,[66] also gets linked to the sheriff's name and, thus, makes it symbolically clear that the gambling man does not have a chance against the lawman, who is called *sheriff*, not *Jim*, in all the expository intertitles. No more words are needed to show Tom's defeat: he loses the duel (by withdrawing his hand from the table in fear of the snake) and, thus, the girl, who chooses the sheriff in spite of her initial love for the

[66] Discussing a sample scenario of the western in the teens, Sargent notes that the rattlesnake is a great dueling device because it smacks of the west and is "a synonym for a swift and painful death" (236).

one who is now morally and spiritually fallen.

At Bear Track Gulch (Harold M. Shaw, copyrighted in 1912 and released in 1913) also focuses on the lives of frontiersmen, but in this western, verbal language heavily contributes to light-hearted humor as well as reflects important developments in the fields of credits and authorial signature, apart from fulfilling the usual expository role. The opening paratextual shots (figures 3.62 and 3.63) establish the rights of the Edison Company to the ownership of the film—through the trademark, the copyright information, and the Edison logo inscribed in the corners of the frame—and assign the authorship to the scriptwriter, R. P. Janette, whereas the director's name is not mentioned, which is consistent with the practices of the time. The title of the film signals the location as well as the genre: *gulch* appeared frequently in westerns of the teens.[67] The second shot, an example of what I will call a *paratextual introductory intertitle*, is located on the porous border of the paratext and the story itself: on the one hand, it includes four actors' names along with the characters they are playing; on the other hand, it incorporates what would usually be an introductory intertitle ("Bear Track Gulch makes ready to welcome its first female visitor.")[68] that sets up the narrative situation. The bibliographical code—the Edison corners and the film's title located on the right-hand side at the bottom of the frame—will be shared by all the intertitles in the film.

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[67] *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch* (Griffith, 1913) is perhaps the most famous of all the *gulch*-titles of the teens.

[68] Throughout this project, when examples of intertitles are listed in parentheses or surrounded by dashes, the original end punctuation is preserved.



Fig. 3.62. *At Bear Track Gulch*: establishing ownership and authorship.



Fig. 3.63. *At Bear Track Gulch*: on the border of the paratext and the story.

Identifying three of the four characters by name rather than by a description (e.g., "The stage driver") is unusual: for recognition purposes, this requires that the names be further inscribed either as part of the intertitles or as integrated verbal elements. In the first visual sequence, the viewers recognize "Old Pete Griffin" among a dozen other frontiersmen with the help of the letter that he receives, which begins "My dear Griffin." Identifying the character is obviously not the only reason for using a diegetic intertitle: the letter informs of the arrival of Mr. Lorraine, "an invalid," and his daughter, "a school-teacher by profession." The enormous joy expressed by everyone around upon hearing the news can only be explained through an inference that Mr. Lorraine's daughter is going to be the first female visitor at Bear Track Gulch because the arrival of a male "invalid" is highly unlikely to be as exciting. The two new characters that are about to appear are then introduced in a *paratextual intertitle*, i.e., an intertitle that lists the names of the actors and the characters whom they are playing,[69] which confirms the guess that the girl is more important to the development of the narrative: listed first, she is called

[69] As Sargent notes, such intertitles that introduced new characters and advertised the actors who played them were "devised by Horace G. Plimpton for the Edison company at a time when the use of programs was less common and when identities were just becoming known" (165).

"Alice Lorraine" while Mr. Lorraine is called "Her father."

Among all the frontiersmen who, in their Sunday best, gather to meet the new arrivals, another character mentioned in the paratext is singled out through an intertitle that paraphrases the conversation played out on the screen: "Jack volunteers his cabin." In the next scene, to make sure that the viewers have successfully identified "Jack Turner" and to reinforce his desire to help the "invalid" and his daughter, the audience is shown a diegetic insert of the note that Jack writes and hands to the girl (figure 3.64). The third central male character identified by name in the paratext—Big Slim—is presented as such to the audience as the third member of the "comitey" who bring an official letter to Miss Lorraine inviting her to become a teacher at the "skool" the "kamp" is about to organize (figure 3.65). The realism of these two diegetic intertitles, which we watch Jack Turner and Pete Griffin write, respectively, is undermined by the fact that both are penned in the same hand, although an obvious effort has been made to modify the handwriting. Such glitches in verisimilitude were common at the time,[70] and must have been one of the reasons why, as Keil observes, there were warnings in the trade press against too much reliance on the insert as "a narrational crutch" (*Early American Cinema* 66).

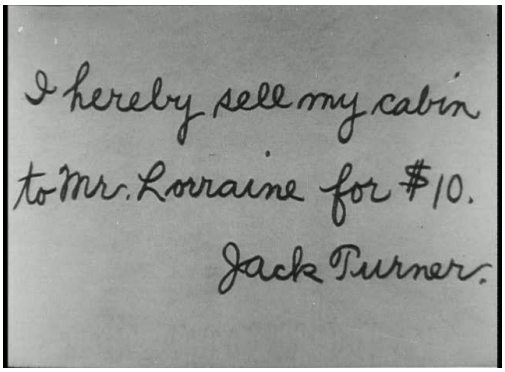


Fig. 3.64. *At Bear Track Gulch*: declaration of name and good will.

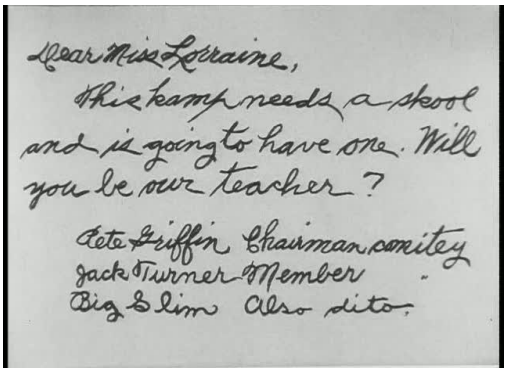


Fig. 3.65. *At Bear Track Gulch*: the "comitey" of central characters.

[70] Sargent laments one company's careless practice of using identical handwriting both for an initial letter and a reply (153).

Big Slim's real name gets revealed on "[t]he first day of school": in response to the teacher's semi-diegetic question whether this is his real name, Big Slim complements "Big Slim" written on the chalkboard of a newly established classroom with "Percy" (figure 3.66), which causes an uproar of laughter among the other students. Other integrated verbal elements in the same visual sequence of tough frontiersmen acting as school kids also serve humorous purposes. A prominently featured sign warns the students that "no drinks [are] sold durin skool hours" (figure 3.66). When it is time for a "recess," indicated by a sign that substitutes for the sound of a bell, everybody but Jack rushes out of the classroom (figure 3.67), just as kids would do. The usage of the noun *boys* in the expository intertitle that introduces the whole segment of organizing a school ("The boys decide that the Gulch needs a school.") reinforces the analogy.



Fig. 3.66. *At Bear Track Gulch*: the humor of integrated verbal elements.



Fig. 3.67. *At Bear Track Gulch*: the only one not in a rush.

Whereas Jack's courtship of Alice is presented visually, his feelings about the girl and motivations are revealed non-diegetically. At first, the viewers learn that "Jack is a regular visitor but bashful." His devotion to the girl is tested on "[t]he day Jack decided to tell of his love": unnoticed, he catches a glimpse of the photograph Alice is crying over and "thinks Alice is homesick and yearning for 'someone' in the East." The viewers are in a privileged position of knowing, from the letter that Alice has just been reading, that she

is crying over an old photograph of her father, who died soon upon arrival at Bear Track Gulch. Thus, the audience is eager to find out if and how the misunderstanding will be cleared up. Unselfish in his desire to provide Alice with the means that Jack thinks she would need to travel back home, he comes up with a plan described in an intertitle as "'Salting' a mine at Alice's door"[71] and illustrated by the "comitey" trio digging a precious mineral stone into the ground. "The subterfuge successful," Alice receives a money bag after her "claim is sold at auction," at which, not surprisingly, Jack outbids everyone. When "Alice gets Jack to engage her seat in the stage-coach," the viewers cannot help identifying with his despair. Only when Alice is "[r]eady to go" does Jack pluck up his courage to inquire about the photograph. The girl's response—"'That was a picture of my father!'"—settles the matter, to the huge relief of both parties, and the viewers are as happy as all the frontiersmen that the "first female visitor" is there to stay. The feeling of a close-knit community is reinforced verbally through three signs—"POSTOFFICE," "SALOON," "HOTEL"—posted on the wall of the same cabin where the "skool" was.

The Totville Eye (C. Jay Williams, November 1912) also features the lives of people in a small community, with a focus on the role of the local newspaper. The opening paratext of this film is similar to that of *At Bear Track Gulch*: the ownership insignia are the same, and the authorship is also attributed to the scriptwriter ("by Bannister Merwin") rather than the director. The paratextual introductory intertitle presents two main characters—"Old Scotty" and "Young Sammy"—and locates them in "[t]he composing room." Because of the *old/young* opposition, the viewers have no difficulty identifying the characters in the first visual scene, although Scotty is far from

[71] "Salting a mine" was a common deceptive practice of planting gold in various forms in a barren mine to attract buyers (Parker 122-24).

being “old,” especially if compared to “[t]he editor,” introduced in the following *hybrid paratextual intertitle*, i.e. an intertitle that combines a character-actor presentation and exposition (figure 3.68) or a semi-diegetic line. Since“[t]he editor” is located below a non-diegetic expression of Scotty's point of view, the intertitle foreshadows a potential conflict between the two, to be subsequently presented. In the “editorial room,” identified through a mirror inscription on the door, different views are illustrated through two different styles of newspaper headlines: *The Totville Eye*, with its block letters and simple layout, is a loser in Scotty's opinion but is dear to the editor's heart (figure 3.69).

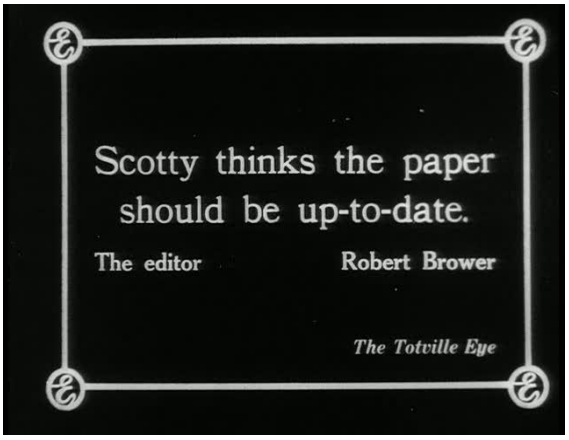


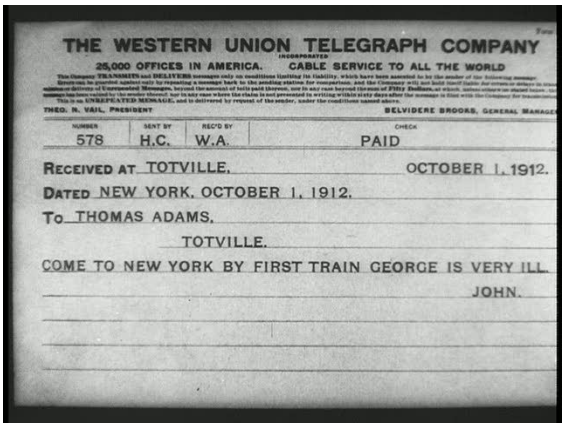
Fig. 3.68. *The Totville Eye*: signaling a conflict between Scotty and the editor.



Fig. 3.69. *The Totville Eye*: illustrating two views on the newspaper.

Undaunted, Scotty leaps at the opportunity to improve the situation when his boss leaves for New York upon receiving a telegram. The diegetic insert of the telegram, printed on a real Western Union form (figure 3.70), performs several functions simultaneously: it presents the events as contemporary by dating the telegraphed message “October 1, 1912”; it provides a realistic motivation for the editor to leave and, thus, pushes the narrative forward; it reveals the editor's name and presents him as a sympathetic human being because he hurries off to see a sick relative or friend; it advertises the company “that controlled most of Edison's telephone and telegraph patents” (“Edison Companies”); and it may also humorously invoke a brother inventor,

Thomas Adams, who, according to Michael Redclift, promoted his chewing gum as "Adams New York No. 1" (27). When the printing blocks for the current issue of *The Totville Eye*, okayed by the editor (we see a huge *OK* written on the version the editor gives to Scotty), get accidentally destroyed, prefaced by the intertitle "A serious mishap," Scotty sends Sammy on a hunt for "real live" news (figure 3.71).[72] The usage of the adjective *live* in this intertitle is contrasted with the name of the newspaper and, by extension, of the town: *tot*, used in the name of the invented locale, is German for *dead*. Scotty and Sammy are thus on a quest to shake up the dead newspaper and wake the village from its deathly slumber.


THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

25,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD

NUMBER 578 | SENT BY H.C. | REC'D BY W.A. | CHECK PAID

RECEIVED AT TOTVILLE. OCTOBER 1, 1912.

DATED NEW YORK, OCTOBER 1, 1912.

TO THOMAS ADAMS,

TOTVILLE.

COME TO NEW YORK BY FIRST TRAIN GEORGE IS VERY ILL.

JOHN.

Fig. 3.70. *The Totville Eye*: a multifunctional telegram.

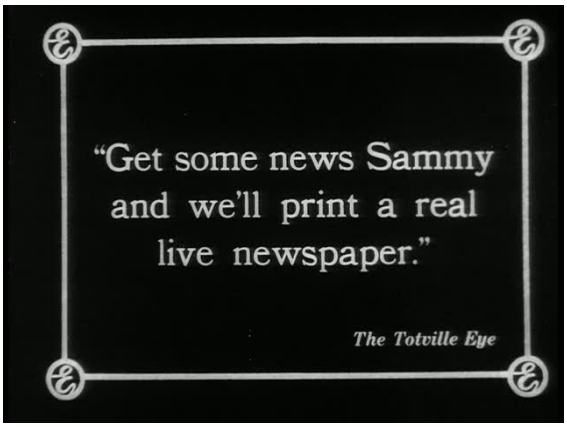


Fig. 3.71. *The Totville Eye*: contrasting *live* and *tot*.

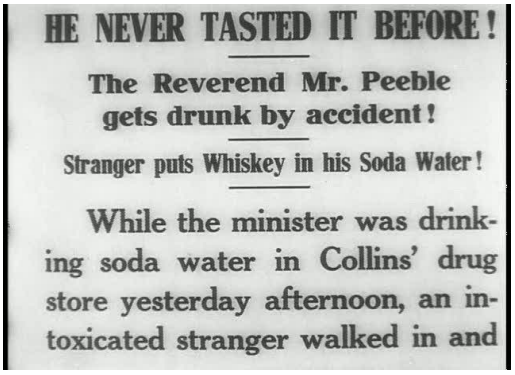
The real human interactions that Sammy witnesses or overhears are prefaced by hybrid paratextual intertitles and, in combination, engage in the radiant mediality that encompasses the diegetic inserts of printed news as well as developments, both narrated and illustrated, of each instance. The first incident, at "[t]he village drug store," is initiated by an intoxicated man who is introduced a few scenes earlier as a "printer

[72] This semi-diegetic intertitle ("'Get some news Sammy and we'll print a real live newspaper.'") is placed five seconds before Scotty pronounces it in the visual scene and, thus, acts as a subchapter heading.

looking for employment.” His expertise as a printer was not wanted in *The Totville Eye* editorial room, but Scotty's kind gift of a coin enabled the unemployed man to get alcohol-happy in the nearby drinking place and to acquire a bottle to go. When the man passes by “The Totville Eye Office” sign, a stand-in for the editor and the current outdated practices, the man shakes his head in disapproval (figure 3.72). Ironically, the unwanted printer still contributes to revolutionizing the paper by unwittingly instigating the first occurrence of “real live” news. The man surreptitiously pours whiskey into the soda of the minister who is preaching to him about the dangers of alcohol. Later, when the minister's career and reputation are on the verge of being destroyed (“The minister accused of intoxication by the trustees.”), the angry trustees are appeased and get a chuckle when the minister's disgraceful behavior of patting a prudish lady on the cheek and slapping her husband on the shoulder is explained in the freshly printed issue of *The Totville Eye* (figure 3.73).



Fig. 3.72. *The Totville Eye*:
the sign as a stand-in for the editor.



HE NEVER TASTED IT BEFORE!

The Reverend Mr. Peeble gets drunk by accident!

Stranger puts Whiskey in his Soda Water!

While the minister was drinking soda water in Collins' drug store yesterday afternoon, an intoxicated stranger walked in and

Fig. 3.73. *The Totville Eye*:
the first piece of “real live” news.

“A lovers' quarrel,” complete with a return of the ring, also creates a sensation because, as we learn from *The Totville Eye* article, “Tom and Flossie” are “[t]wo of Totville's most popular young people, who became engaged six months ago.” Enraged at having their personal affairs exposed, Tom and Flossie storm into the printing room, but “Scotty saves the day” by creating a new printing block, which, when presented to the

young people (figure 3.74), helps them remember that they love each other, quarrel or no quarrel. The power of the printed word is illustrated in reversing the event-news dichotomy: what first gets "reported" (figure 3.75) makes the news happen.



Fig. 3.74. *The Totville Eye*: Scotty "saves the day."

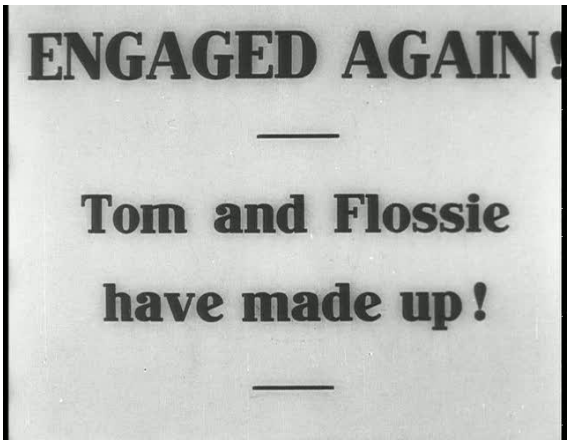


Fig. 3.75. *The Totville Eye*: reversing the event-news dichotomy.

The third human interaction, prefaced as "[m]ore news" in a hybrid paratextual intertitle, is socially rather than humorously charged: the presentation of two new characters—"A hard-hearted landlord" and "His tenant"—indicates a social and moral conflict. As a transtextual intertitle informs us a few scenes later, the fresh issue of *The Totville Eye* helps the "hard-hearted" and "hard-fisted Squire Jenkins" (figures 3.76 and 3.77) "[t]o see ourselves as others see us."[73] The shocking realization of his reputation jolts him into reforming his attitude to "poor widow Dugan" and, by extension, to the poor and the needy. Overall, the fragments of the three newspaper columns that

[73] This proverbial phrase originates from the last stanza of Robert Burns's poem "To a Louse, On Seeing One on a Lady's Bonnet, at Church" (1786), which presents the speculations of the narrator who is watching a louse crawling through the finery of a well-dressed lady:

> Oh wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursel's as others see us!
> It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
> And foolish notion:
> What airs in dress and gait wad lea'e us,
> And even devotion! (43-48)

relay the "real live" news complement the information provided in the hybrid paratextual intertitles and corresponding visual scenes. The beneficial influence of the new version of *The Totville Eye* on the life of the community is illustrated in the final sequence: upon his return, the "dumbfounded editor" receives thanks—instead of anticipated complaints—from those affected.



Fig. 3.76. *The Totville Eye*: shocked into an understanding of his own nature.

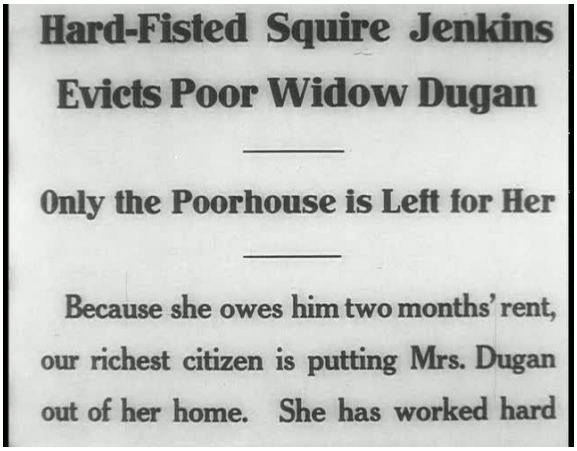


Fig. 3.77. *The Totville Eye*: the socially charged piece of news.

When silent one-reelers are mostly set in natural surroundings, integrated verbal elements are usually absent or few, which is indicative of the inseparable link between writing and civilization. In *One Touch of Nature* (Ashley Miller,[74] 1914), declared to be "A Comedy by Courtenay Ryley Cooper" in the title shot, verbal language is present only in intertitles. The secondary title of the film, included in the introductory paratextual intertitle, hints at the narrative axis of the film: "A case of nerves" is likely to be ameliorated by "one touch of nature." The title of the film is repeated as part of the

[74] On Disk 4 of *Edison: The Invention of the Movies*, the allographic title shot of *One Touch of Nature* names Edward C. Taylor as the director of the film, whereas elsewhere, including in Musser's comments to the disk, the directorial credit is given to Ashley Miller ("Film Notes" 4: 3).

original phrase from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (3.3.174)[75] in a hybrid paratextual intertitle that also introduces "Freckles" (figure 3.78).[76] The intertitle, immediately followed by a shot of Freckles fishing near a small waterfall (figure 3.79), signals a watershed in Mr. Bradley's life, who is about to be cured of his "bad temper."

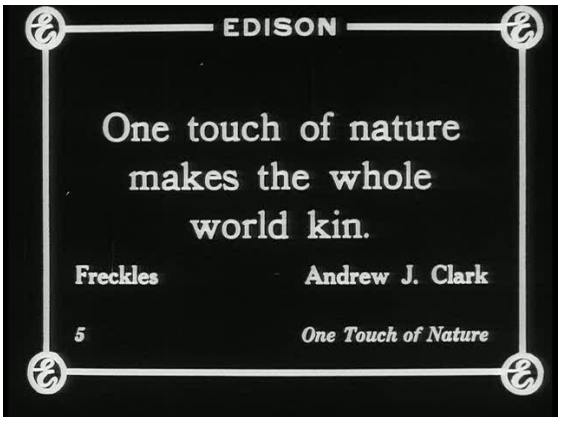


Fig. 3.78. *One Touch of Nature*: the etymology of the title, non-attributed.



Fig. 3.79. *One Touch of Nature*: signaling a watershed through a waterfall.

While most of the intertitles in the first part of the film provide a non-diegetic glimpse into Mr. Bradley's thoughts ("Everything annoys him." and "Interested in spite of himself.") or explain what contributes to his bad temper ("Stalled!") and how he reacts ("Mr. Bradley's bad temper starts something."), after Mr. Bradley gets involved in the

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[75] Films entitled *One Touch of Nature* or *A Touch of Nature* were rather popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century, which is indirect evidence that the filmmakers and audiences must have been familiar with the quote. It is quite surprising then that Russell Merritt, when discussing the Biograph film *One Touch of Nature* (Griffith, 1909), calls the title "one of those ill-fitting, instantly forgettable Biograph names," although he proceeds to decode the connotations of the words *touch* and *nature* in the context of the film ("One Touch" 169).

[76] The intertitle cards in *One Touch of Nature* are numbered, starting with the introductory paratextual intertitle. Another change in the bibliographical code is Edison's full name located at the top of the frame. Intertitles of the same design are also consistently used in, for example, *The Adventure of the Hasty Elopement* (Charles M. Seay, 1914) and *The Wonders of Magnetism* (director unknown, 1915). Whether the numbers were part of the intertitles when the films were projected remains unclear, even though it was common practice, according to Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer, to indicate the sequencing of the intertitles with the help of numbers (55).

nature-inspired, carefree activities of Freckles, including a game of "'[m]umbley peg,'" the man's state of mind is described by one expository intertitle: "Back to boyhood." Nor does he feel the need to "speak" after his semi-diegetic wish ("'Now if only I had a smoke.'") is fulfilled by Freckles ("'Ever smoke dried grape vine?'"). Significantly, the newspaper that Mr. Bradley had on him when he first saw the boy never gets read but is converted into a receptacle for berries that Freckles picks ("'I'll get some berries.'") when "[l]uncheon time" comes. The opposition between civilization and nature is best illustrated in *One Touch of Nature* through a case of contiguous mixed-mediality, where the "business engagement" turns out to be frivolous splashing (figures 3.80 and 3.81). The only diegetic intertitle in the film—an excerpt from Mr. Bradley's note to his wife, which Freckles subsequently delivers—solidifies Mr. Bradley's determination to escape civilization for a short while: "and I think, dear, I'll stay out here in the woods for a day or two. Perhaps it will improve my temper." The film, however, is not so naïve as to assume that a permanent return to nature is plausible: having been awoken by a fly or a mosquito "[i]n the morning," Mr. Bradley is relieved to find a blanket covering his body and his wife sleeping next to him under a tree and is overjoyed when Freckles, a "friend in need," brings them some food and drink.

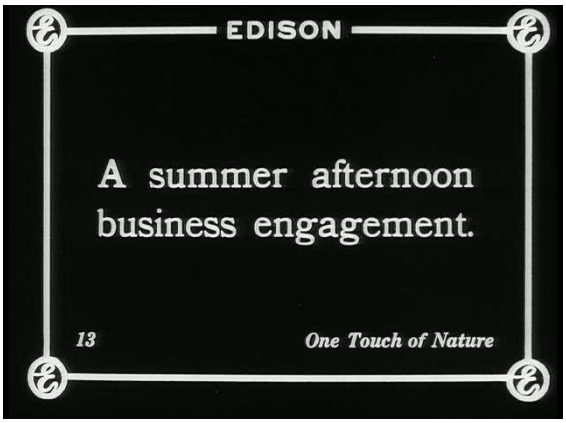


Fig. 3.80. *One Touch of Nature*: ordered civilization.



Fig. 3.81. *One Touch of Nature*: carefree nature.

Dramas made by the Edison Company in the early teens are also full of verbal language, as is exemplified by *The Passer-By* (Oscar C. Apfel, June 1912). The introductory paratextual intertitle in this film (figure 3.82) is unusual because one of the two characters it introduces—"HIS MOTHER"—does not appear in person in the first two visual shots, although her domineering presence is established through her portrait hanging above the mantelpiece in the room where the "farewell bachelor dinner" is taking place and through a note explaining that the portrait is a wedding gift to the son and his bride (figure 3.83). The eponymous character is introduced in the other paratextual intertitle as "[t]he first to pass," to underscore his chance appearance in the house—as a last-minute substitute for a friend who has failed to come. The greater is the shock everybody in the room experiences when they realize, at the end of the film, that it is the woman of the portrait who has ruined the passer-by's life. The viewers who are able to read the visual and verbal language of cinema are, however, in a privileged position of reconstructing this connection gradually.



Fig. 3.82. *The Passer-By*: assigning prominence to "HIS MOTHER."

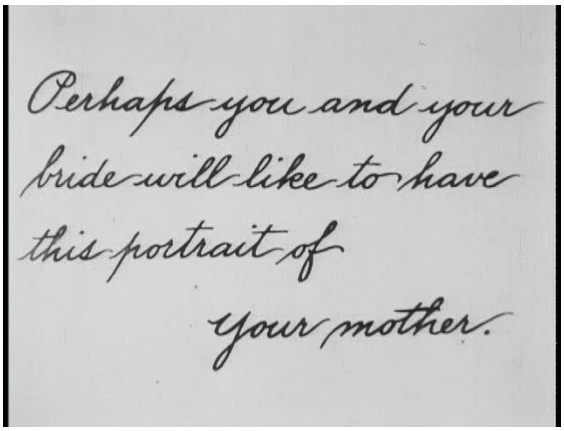


Fig. 3.83. *The Passer-By*: a telling wedding gift.

The distribution of different types of intertitles reinforces the narrative structure of the film, which is built on a visual flashback accompanying the passer-by's story. The present of the "farewell bachelor dinner" features diegetic and non-diegetic intertitles but

does not include any semi-diegetic intertitles, which are reserved exclusively for the story narrated by the passer-by. The transition from the present to the passer-by's past is signaled both verbally ("After dinner stories. The passer-by tells his reluctantly.") and cinematographically: from a long-shot position, the camera pulls forward to a close shot of the passer-by from waist up, who transforms, through a dissolve, into a younger self hosting a party, revealed by the camera pulling backward.[77] The same camera technique is employed to return the passer-by to the present, with words no longer needed to explain the cinematographic device. Significantly, the woman's portrait looms in the background when the story begins and finishes (figure 3.84), unnoticed by the passer-by until, upon the completion of his tale, he turns around to leave. His realization that it is the same woman is confirmed by the calling card that the passer-by has just been handed by "THE BRIDEGROOM," which is inscribed with the same name, with "Jr." added, as that of his successful rival mentioned in the fateful letter that the passer-by received while hosting his bachelor party many years ago (figure 3.85).



Fig. 3.84. *The Passer-By*: "HIS MOTHER" looming in the background.

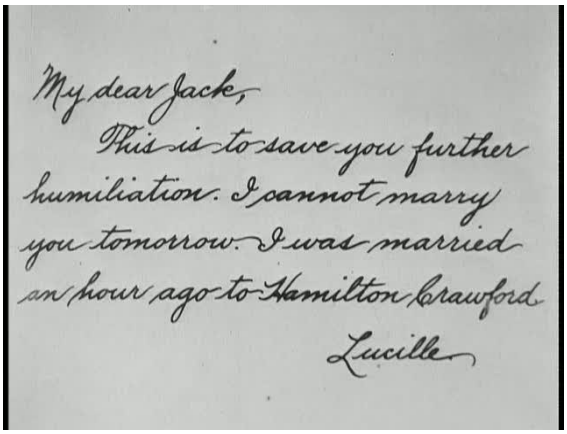


Fig. 3.85. *The Passer-By*: "Hamilton Crawford" as the successful rival.

[77] According to Richard Koszarski, this "surprising camera movement which directs out attention to the narrator and his story" was quite innovative, although flashbacks were already common in 1912 ("Passer-By" 147).

Unlike the viewers, none of the diegetic characters have access to both notes, signed by “Your mother” and “Lucille” (figures 3.83 and 3.85 respectively), to be able to identify the same handwriting. Such matching, however, is not easily achieved because the notes are temporally separated and because, as discussed previously, it was not unusual for the same member of the film crew to create diegetic inserts supposedly written by different people. The visual illustration of the flashback also does not give away the finale completely. The woman briefly appears three times (as a framed frontal photograph, an almost motionless figure facing the camera, and a walking woman in a long shot) and is never presented from the same angle the portrait shows her. Thus, although the verbal and visual hints are scattered throughout the film, many viewers will still have a revelatory moment of recognition at the very end, when the passer-by tears the “Hamilton Crawford, Jr.” card to pieces.

In the flashback, the semi-diegetic intertitles, enclosed in quotation marks, narrate the intermediate steps in the passer-by's downfall from a “winning” stock speculator who “formed a pool to corner the market” to his being “wiped out”; they also explain how his feelings for the woman have caused his financial demise. Diegetic intertitles indirectly reveal his emotional turmoil—through the substitution of the word *buy* for the word *sell* in passing on the business order (figures 3.86 and 3.87)—when he lays eyes on the woman's name in “Society Notes.” Only once does the flashback deviate from the consistency of the character's point of view, the reasons for which are difficult to fathom: there is one hybrid intertitle, which combines the omniscient narrator's voice (“Reduced to actual privation.”) and the passer-by's narration enclosed in quotation marks (“'I took a final plunge on borrowed money.'”). Overall, however, the verbal and visual devices in *The Passer-By* cooperate effectively in creating a consistent narrative of a fatal love.

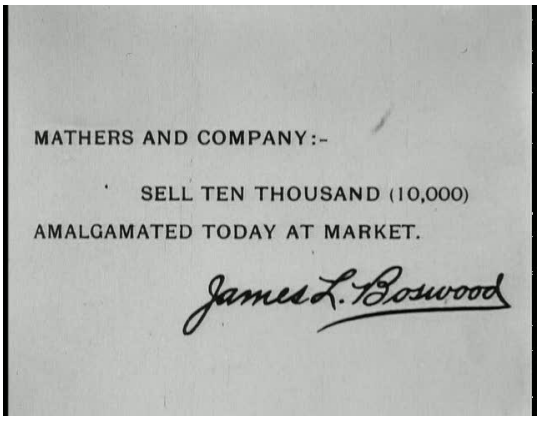


Fig. 3.86. *The Passer-By*: the initial order to sell.



Fig. 3.87. *The Passer-By*: transformed, under the influence of emotions, into *buy*.

The advancement of dialogue lines becomes more evident in the Edison films of the mid-teens. For example, in the light-hearted comedy *Black Eyes* (Will Louis,[78] September 1915), there are twelve semi-diegetic intertitles, eleven non-diegetic intertitles (inclusive of three paratextual ones), and four diegetic inserts (an invitation letter, a telegram, a newspaper ad, and an excerpt from a newspaper article). Created only a few months later, the "Red Cross Seal Drama" *The Lone Game* (Edward C. Taylor, December 1915) includes only three non-diegetic intertitles, whereas there are twenty-seven semi-diegetic intertitles and eight diegetic ones. These two films also showcase a developing trend to differentiate semi-diegetic and non-diegetic intertitles through the bibliographical codes: semi-diegetic intertitles, enclosed in quotation marks, are inscribed on a plain black background (figure 3.88), whereas non-diegetic intertitles still feature the familiar Edison frame in *Black Eyes* and the Edison logo (figure 3.89) in *The Lone Game*, with the main title included in both. Removing the company insignia from the semi-diegetic intertitles must have resulted from a desire to create the illusion of

[78] *Black Eyes* is one of the earliest films of the Edison Company that includes the director's name in the title shot ("Director Will Louis"), together with the authorship credit given to the scriptwriter ("A Comedy by Lee Arthur").

realism, without the distractions of non-diegetic visuals.[79]

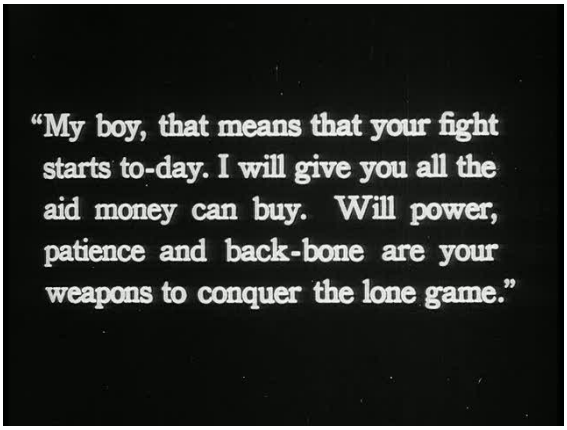


Fig. 3.88. *The Lone Game*: a semi-diegetic intertitle, on a plain background.

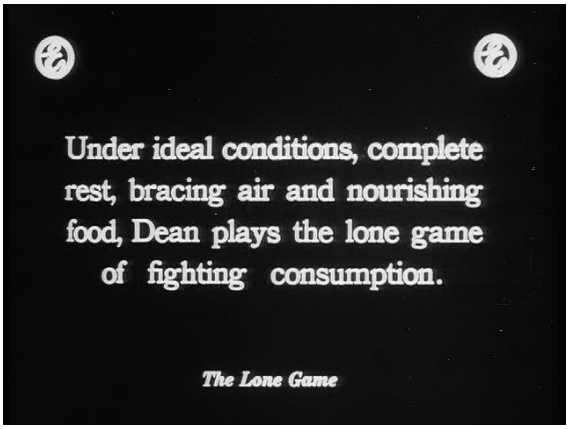


Fig. 3.89. *The Lone Game*: a non-diegetic intertitle, with the Edison logo.

The functionality of intertitles in *Black Eyes* and *The Lone Game* are also indicative of the changes in the role of the verbal language in cinema. Most of the non-diegetic intertitles in the comedy consist of or include temporal indicators ("5:00 P.M."; "7:00 P.M."; "Hubby arrives home first."; "Ten minutes later."; "The next morning." ; "Some time later. . . ."), with one specifying the place ("At Trenton. . . ."). The other non-diegetic phrases build suspense about what is immediately to follow, instead of giving away the narrative situation or providing a point-of-view motivation, which was mostly characteristic of the intertitles in the previous years. These suspense-builders are also partially responsible for the laughs of the comedy: ". . . Foster hands Willard another apple" is a humorous transtextual reference to the Forbidden Fruit offered to Adam, with the fun-seeking business partner acting as Eve; "How his partner's

[79] At approximately the same time, as Sargent notes, the Kalem company used italics, and no frame, for spoken leaders, whereas straight leaders, i.e., non-diegetic intertitles, were given a border and printed in Roman (164). Ben Brewster states that already in 1912, dialogue lines in some companies' films lacked the decorative frame and company trademark, characteristic of expository intertitles, so that "audiences could feel they had understood the words spoken by the characters without having had to read them" ("When Kings" 55).

scheme worked" is explained by the Western Union telegram that informs the husband of "another appointment" and requests that he "attend French case" after 10 p.m.; ". . . The 'tired business man's' busy evening" is followed by a visual sequence of a wild party. The brunt of narrative exposition, where visuals are not enough to provide a clear picture, is born by the dialogue lines and diegetic intertitles.

In *The Lone Game*,[80] a film "[p]roduced in co-operation with the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis," as is indicated in the title shot, the semi-diegetic and diegetic intertitles sustain the fictional narrative quite naturally, but they become heavy-handed (figure 3.90; see also figure 3.88) when they unite forces with the non-diegetic intertitles in educating the public about tuberculosis (see figure 3.89). The moment a central character, unable to secure money for a private clinic, dies of the disease, all the screen words begin to serve the promotional purpose of raising funds for the Red Cross: non-diegetic intertitles ("The annual Christmas concert for the Red Cross Seal Fund."), semi-diegetic intertitles ("'It is for us who are saved to point out to others the right road to health.'" and "'Ladies and Gentlemen:—All contributions, no matter how small or how large, will be thankfully received for this great humane enterprise.'"), diegetic intertitles (a Christmas card[81] (figure 3.91) and a check in $500 to the order of "Red Cross Seal Fund"), and integrated verbal elements (a huge banner that reads "Benefit Concert / Red Cross Seal Fund"). *The Lone Game* was just one of a series of Edison's promotional films that were sponsored by governmental organizations and

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[80] The title of the film—*The Lone Game*—must have been borrowed from Thomas Crawford Galbreath's book *T.B.: Playing the Lone Game Consumption*, published in September 1915 by *Journal of the Outdoor Life Publishing Company*.

[81] The card, which concludes the film, reveals only the first two digits of the year ("19[. . .]"), possibly so that the film could be shown again to raise funds in the years to come.

commercial entities (among them, *The Stenographer's Friend* (1910), whose secondary title was *What Was Accomplished by an Edison Business Phonograph*; *Hope—A Red Cross Seal Story* (Charles J. Brabin, 1912); and *The Wonders of Magnetism*), in which screen words advertised products and services and educated the public.[82]

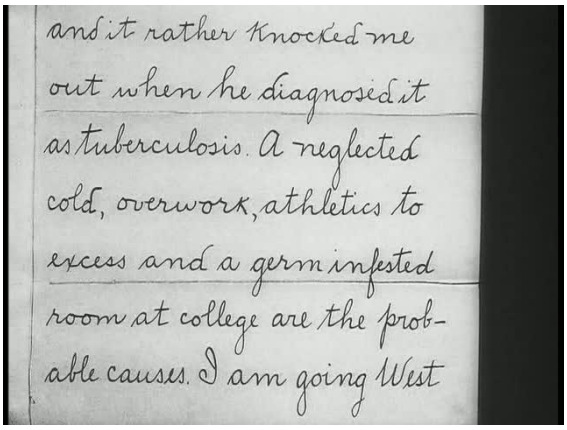


Fig. 3.90. *The Lone Game*: educating the public through a diegetic letter.



Fig. 3.91. *The Lone Game*: a promotional card, valid for the 20th century.

The evolution of verbal language in the Edison one-reelers partially conforms to the typical practices of the time, as outlined in the section "Brief History of Intertitles in the US": the gradual increase in semi-diegetic intertitles, which mostly take on themselves the function of clarifying the narrative; the proliferation of diegetic intertitles, which push the narrative forward, account for the characters' actions and reveal their personalities, specify the diegetic date and place, and advertise; the developments in ownership attribution, authorship signature, and celebrity indication in title shots and paratextual intertitles, with copyright anxiety taking a more elegant form of the Edison logo, rather than the Edison trademark, embedded in the visual shots (e.g., in *The House of Cards* and *The Passer-By*). The functionality of non-diegetic intertitles changes dramatically between 1908 and 1915: while in the earlier films, non-diegetic intertitles

[82] For brief discussions of sponsored films, see Newell, Salmon, and Chang 581-82; Segrave 14-18; and Simmon, "1910" 44-47.

mostly introduce and develop the narrative situation and conflict, often presenting the characters' points of view, the mid-teens witness a shift towards building suspense and orienting the viewers in the spatial-temporal continuum. Integrated verbal elements join intertitles in many of their functions, provide transtextual clues and glimpses into the social and commercial life of the period. Working together and with visuals, screen words also engage in different types of multimedial and mixed-medial relations. Obviously, these Edison films go contrary to the trend, mentioned in the section "Brief History of Intertitles in the US," of excluding intertitles in the mid-teens.

ELEVATING THE STATUS OF INTERTITLES: ANITA LOOS, JOHN EMERSON, AND DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS IN THE MID-TEENS

If some one-reelers could entertain without the help of intertitles, feature films, which were on the rise in the mid-teens, could not survive without verbal language to sustain narratives that now lasted over an hour. Intertitles, however, were increasingly becoming much more than just "narrational crutches," contributing to the witty humor of the films and adding transtextual commentary. The films created by "the great triple alliance"[83] of Anita Loos, Douglas Fairbanks, and John Emerson illustrate this development most vividly.

His Picture in the Papers (February 1916), directed by Emerson, was Loos's first feature film as a scriptwriter. Loos had scripted many of the shorts for Griffith, starting with *The New York Hat* (December 1912), which she called one of her "lucky firsts" (56), but she was catapulted to recognition and fame through her contribution to features that

[83] The descriptor comes from an article in *Photoplay* published in December 1917, as quoted in Tibbetts and Welsh (83).

starred Fairbanks. For Loos, the intertitle "meant the power of the editorial comment, the thrust of a personal satiric vision conveyed by the pungent slang of the wisecrack" (Tibbetts and Welsh 91). In 1922, Vachel Lindsay named her the only person who had "won distinction" in the field of intertitle writing, as well as "one of the four or five important and thoroughly artistic brains in the photoplay game," together with "the distinguished John Emerson" (10). In her interview with Louella Parsons, however, Loos acknowledged Fairbanks's heavy involvement in the writing of the features directed by Emerson: "Neither John nor I should get entire credit for those early pictures of Doug's, for he sat in on the writing, and contributed as much as we did" (qtd. in Vance 31).

The title shot of *His Picture in the Papers* (figure 3.92) assigns celebrity status to the actor rather than the director or the scriptwriter and establishes the ownership of the film by placing "TRIANGLE - FINE ARTS presents" at the top and "COPYRIGHT 1916 TRIANGLE FILM CORPORATION"[84] at the bottom. The title shot also includes a statement that has implications of censorship: "PASSED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW." The major objective of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, which was organized in 1909 in response to Mayor McClellan's edict, was to alleviate the concerns of citizenry and authorities that motion pictures were a danger to the morals and, at the same time, to protect the emerging medium of expression from overzealous censors (Barrett 175-78). As Wilton A. Barrett, the Board's Executive Secretary in 1926, explained, this statement "does not necessarily mean the Board approves or recommends the picture upon which the legend appears. In all cases it means that in the opinion of the reviewing committee the picture will not have a morally subversive effect upon large

[84] Triangle-Fine Arts was "one of the three production arms of Triangle Film Corporation" (Tibbetts and Welsh 88).

numbers of persons in different sections of the country" (181).[85] No matter whether the Board's practices were censorious or protective against censure, the inclusion of the legend in a title sequence signaled a greater societal involvement with cinema than the film industry had experienced before.



Fig. 3.92. *His Picture in the Papers*: the actor as a celebrity in the title shot.

The introductory intertitle of the film, interlocutionary in its exposition, which was a signature of Loos's style,[86] presents Proteus Prindle as a "shining disciple of [the] modern art of 'three-sheeting'," i.e., of "[p]ublicity at any price [which] has become the predominant passion of the American people" (figure 3.93).[87] Instead of immediately showing him on the screen, however, Emerson includes a visual shot of a procession

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[85] Sargent provides a nice summary of what the National Board of Review would not pass: "In general the board bars from stories all pictures based on crime and the commission of crime, all immorality and immoral acts, the lewd, the lascivious, the vicious, the cruel, the irreverent and the irreligious. But while these factors are all barred, many of them may be used if done with proper care—if used to point a moral, lascivious and irreligious themes excepted. These are always barred" (343).

[86] In *Everybody's* of May 1917, Loos's intertitles were called "a mere comment outside the picture . . . addressed to the audience like the aside of our fathers' theater" (qtd. in Tibbetts and Welsh 91).

[87] John C. Tibbetts and James M. Welsh note that the films created by Emerson, Loos, and Fairbanks felt like "parts of a systematic examination into the fabric of American society" (85) and discuss the affinities between Loos's portrayal of the ridiculousness of American life and the writings of H. L. Mencken and George Santayana (99-100).

carrying signs that advertise Prindle's Products (figure 3.94).[88] Only then do we encounter "Proteus Prindle, who not only manufactures but eats the 27 varieties," in his room, the walls of which are covered with posters of Prindle's Products. This delayed visual presentation makes it clear how much the public image of Proteus Prindle rests on the products he manufactures, which will be emphasized throughout the film via integrated verbal elements and diegetic inserts of his "Prindle's Macerated Morsels," "Prindle's Perforated Peas," "Prindle's Dessicated Dumplings," "Prindle's Toasted Tootsies," and similar comic spoofs of advertising slogans that excessively rely on alliteration.[89]

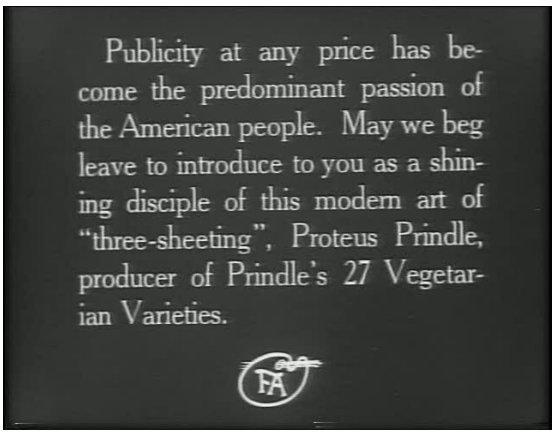


Fig. 3.93. *His Picture in the Papers*: an interlocutionary introduction.



Fig. 3.94. *His Picture in the Papers*: advertisements as stand-ins for the character.

The value of Prindle, however, is constantly undermined. When "Pearl and Pansy

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[88] The snapshots of the visual diegetic scenes come from the version of *His Picture in the Papers* that is included on Disk 1 of the DVD set *Douglas Fairbanks: A Modern Musketeer*. This version has a much better image quality than the one released by Unknown Video in 2004. However, according to the website of Flicker Alley, which released the *Douglas Fairbanks* set in 2008, their version of *His Picture in the Papers* has "reset original-text intertitles" ("Douglas Fairbanks"), whose typography, spatial arrangement, and punctuation differ from the original design; the diegetic insert of the "demand note" written by the Weazels has also been reconstructed. Thus, the snapshots of the title shot and of the non-diegetic and semi-diegetic intertitles included here are from the Unknown Video version, which most probably preserves the original bibliographical and linguistic codes of the verbal inserts.

[89] "National brand advertising in mass-market campaigns, lampooned through Prindle's Varieties, [was] a relatively new phenomenon" in the mid-teens (Stamp 173).

Prindle, known as '28' and '29,' give a pink tea to push the other 27 varieties," the potential buyers surreptitiously dispose of Prindle's Products, in disgust. The two daughters of Proteus Prindle, called "a Triumph for the Vegetarian Diet" on the front page of *Vegetarian Gazette*, which the proud father makes sure to have encased in glass and framed, are too overweight to be attractive and credible promoters of vegetarianism. The only two likeable characters are "traitor[s] to the cause": Pete Prindle, introduced in a hybrid paratextual intertitle as "the nonconformist member of his father's famous family," played by Douglas Fairbanks, who "prefers pugilism to pushing Prindle's Products" and uses Prindle's Products boxes to hide ingredients for cocktails he enjoys in his office; and Christine Cadwalader, who prefers beefsteak and Pete to "predigested prunes" and her fiancé Melville, a "vegetarian nut" selected by her father, "the great railroad magnate, who adores Prindle and lives on his products." The most humorous and subversive are two multimedial cases that present unorthodox uses of Prindle's Products: Cassius Cadwalader's life is saved by "Prindle's Life Preserving Lentils" (figure 3.95), tucked in his breast pocket, when he is stabbed by a member of the Weazel gang with a knife of the "warranted cutlery" brand, which should have guaranteed the desired result (figure 3.96); in a later scene, Pete effectively employs bottles of "Prindle's Prohibition Punch" as a weapon against the Weazels, exclaiming/thinking "'At last a use for a Prindle Product!'"



Fig. 3.95. *His Picture in the Papers*: life-preserving lentils, literally.

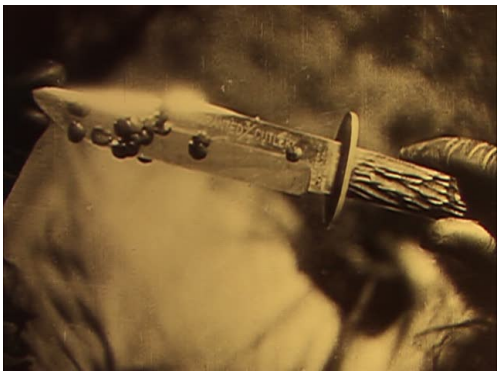


Fig. 3.96. *His Picture in the Papers*: "warranted cutlery" that failed.

True to the film's title, newspaper pages are another frequent diegetic insert. In order to marry Christine, Pete has to get his picture in the papers, which will prove that he will have "made good," as his father explains. Pete's ideas of "making good," mostly inspired by newspaper articles he reads, are, however, different from what his father expects. He stages a car accident, which only gets him his name mentioned in the paper (figure 3.97), although he gives his photo to all the reporters who visit him in the hospital ("'I am Peter Prindle, son of Proteus Prindle. I was raised on Prindle's Products and here's my photograph.'"). At the Sharkey Athletic Club, which, according to the poster Pete sees, is in "Bridgeport, Conn." and where he has a hard time getting on "a dollar and one cent," he defeats "Battling Burke, champion" in a boxing match, but when, "[a]t last," his picture is being taken, the place gets stormed by the police.[90] When Pete gets his picture in a paper for promoting Peruna,[91] three bottles of which have made "a new man" out of "an invalid since birth," his father, not at all appeased, shouts in anger: "'Idiot! Out of my sight! How could anyone raised on Prindle's Products be an invalid from birth? Get out!'"

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[90] Organizing public prizefights was illegal in many states at the time (Rodriguez 34). *His Picture in the Papers* gives the contestants fictional names (Battling Burke, the Harlem Kid, the Australian Wombat), but the referee, presented as "'Mr. Terry McGovern, referee!'" and shown in close-up, was indeed, according to a *New York Times* article of 22 November 1915, the real Terry McGovern ("Stage a Prizefight"), the Terrible Terry who had held bantamweight and featherweight championship titles at the turn of the twentieth century (Roberts and Skutt 186). The fight between McGovern and Joe Gans in Chicago in 1900 was filmed by the Selig Company and later promoted as *Gans-McGovern Fight*, the only "genuine moving picture film[. . .] representing genuine prize fights on the market" (*1903 Complete Catalogue* 43). The real Sharkey Athletic Club, located in New York, gained its lasting artistic fame through George Bellows's lithograph *A Stag at Sharkey's* (1917), which was based on his 1909 oil painting of a fight at the "saloon that surreptitiously doubled as a boxing arena" (Myers 182).

[91] As K. Patrick Ober observes, "the phenomenal sales of Peruna, which may have been the most prominent proprietary product" in the US, exemplified "the role of alcohol in the popularity of many patent medicines throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth"; alcohol constituted more than 20 per cent of its content (72).

Very soon Pete "is struck with another idea," which is literalized in a heavy object hitting him on the head. The object turns out to be an ad of Mme. Vera Carewes, "clairvoyant of the century," whose help Pete decides to enlist. Instead, however, he winds up on board the boat bound for Vera Cruz, drunk and "safely asleep." Although this unintentional detour leads to a newspaper publication about Pete's "indulg[ing] in fisticuffs" with the police of Atlantic City (because he refused to be arrested after having swum ashore in "'. . . perfectly respectable pajamas!'"), his name is withheld "on account of the eminent respectability of his family," despite his plea to the reporter who happened to be on the site of the incident (figure 3.98).[92]



Fig. 3.97. *His Picture in the Papers*: the finger needed to point out the fame.

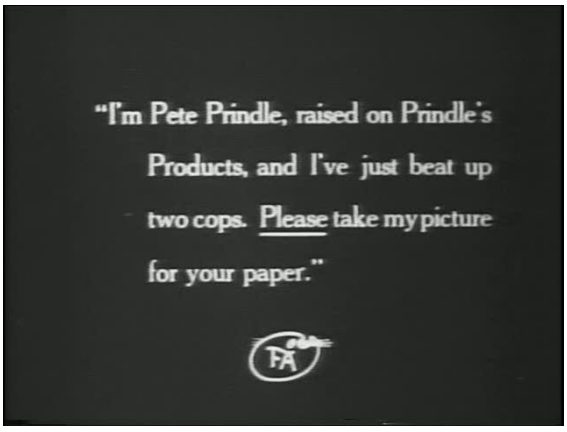


Fig. 3.98. *His Picture in the Papers*: the plea underlined for emphasis.

As the last intertitle of the film tells the audience, repeating the main title, Pete finally gets "[h]is picture in the papers"—with no premeditation on his part and not suggested by a verbal text. Instead, he prevents the imminent wreckage of a train by

[92] The newspaper insert mentions the name of the steamer as well: "[t]he son of a famous and wealthy New York manufacturer . . . sailed on the Esperanza, bound for Vera Cruz. . . ." A year before *His Picture in the Papers* was made, both Vera Cruz and *Esperanza* were news items in New York papers, in connection with the Mexican Revolution and civil war: *Esperanza* transported refugees from Vera Cruz to the United States (see, for example, *The New York Times* articles "Consul and Others in Saltillo Safe" of 10 May 1914 and "Will Protect Refugees" of 21 September 1914).

fighting off the Weazels, who have “diabolical[ly] design[ed]” to get revenge on Cadwalader. In the last visual sequence, the common vice of newspaper reporting—exaggeration—is humorously highlighted in the three consecutive diegetic inserts of front pages, where Pete's heroism grows in dimensions: from saving “a thousand people from sure death” and disarming “two dozen railroad bandits” to saving “1500 people” and fighting “fifty crooks” to saving “2000 people.” The film also make a subtle analogy between newspapers and Prindle's Products: Pete finds a better use for the newspaper as well—as a shield to hide his and Christina's kissing, while the parents are supposedly reading (figures 3.99 and 3.100).



Fig. 3.99. *His Picture in the Papers*: engrossed in reading about Pete's fame.



Fig. 3.100. *His Picture in the Papers*: newspaper as a shield for a kiss.

The humor of *His Picture in the Papers* often depends on arch juxtapositions, both verbal, mostly in non-diegetic intertitles (e.g., “Having banqueted at home, Pete sneaks off to get something to eat.” or “Next day Pete is punctually late as usual.”), and mixed-medial, as in the sequence of the “sanitary kiss” (figures 3.101 and 3.102) or in the contiguous mediality of Pete's “keeping his regular hours” at noon by getting out of bed. The non-diegetic intertitles mostly serve in the film as witty narrative guides. Besides, they provide a metatextual commentary on the genre expectations: for example, “Contrary to all rules of romance, love had no effect” accompanies Pete and Christine's

bonding over a beefsteak. Intertextual references are also incorporated: when a member of the Weazel gang is about to throw a home-made bomb targeting Mr. Cadwalader, the non-diegetic intertitle enclosed in quotation marks—"'Pop goes the Weazel!'"—deliberately misspells[93] the famous nursery rhyme "Pop Goes the Weasel"[94] to foreshadow the fact that the perpetrator will become the victim of his own device.

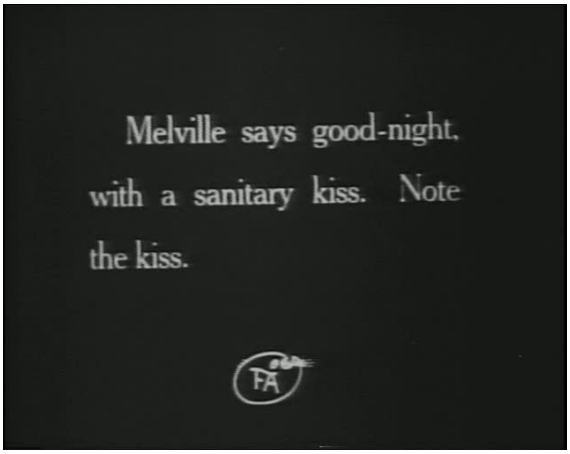


Fig. 3.101. *His Picture in the Papers*: warning the audience about the kiss.



Fig. 3.102. *His Picture in the Papers*: the "sanitary kiss."

The jokes in semi-diegetic intertitles, however, are sometimes belabored—perhaps, because most of the characters are rather plain (e.g., "'If he is sweet, me for a lemon!'" and "'Serves you right! Before I'm through I'll get your whole gang!'"). Most of the semi-diegetic intertitles in *His Picture in the Papers* are dialogue lines. Loos also includes public announcements at the Sharkey Athletic Club, two thoughts that either run through Pete's mind or are articulated out loud with no sentient creature around ("'At last

[93] In one of the intertitles in the Flicker Alley version, *Weazels* is unintentionally misspelled: "One of the Waezels presents a demand note."

[94] According to *The Routledge Dictionary of Historical Slang*, "pop goes the weasel!" was a proletarian, mostly Cockney, catch phrase in the 1870-80s ("Pop"). For different versions of the origin of the phrase, see Jack 161-62.

a use for a Prindle Product!'" and "'Whiskers!'"[95]), and the interlocutionary "'Ain't he the REEL hero?'"[96] which introduces the scene where the grateful passengers surround their rescuer. Overall, there are fifty-one non-diegetic intertitles, including paratextual ones, thirty-two semi-diegetic intertitles, and one hybrid ("Pete hastens to tell Christine, 'it'll be a cinch this time.'"). Non-diegetic intertitles prevail in the first part of the film, when the characters and situations are introduced, and all but disappear when Fairbanks's physical agility takes the central stage. Thus, the film effectively balances the cerebral witticism of screen words and the dynamism of visual sequences.

The high ratio of non-diegetic to semi-diegetic intertitles in *His Picture in the Papers* is unusual for the period. In several other Fairbanks features directed by Emerson, with the intertitles written by Loos, semi-diegetic intertitles vastly outnumber instances of external voice.[97] In the two-reeler *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (June 1916), created from the "[s]tory by Tod Browning,"[98] as the filmic paratext informs us, semi-diegetic and non-diegetic intertitles are close in number. In the version of *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*, available as an extra on *The Gaucho* DVD, released by Kino Video

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[95] After Pete has been thrown off a train for not qualifying as "a fat man with whiskers," for whom his discounted "ticket calls," he is overjoyed to see a goat, whose beard makes for excellent whiskers.

[96] Stamp notes that the intertitle "Ain't he the REEL hero?" suggests the "cinematic construction" of Pete's heroism because he is reproducing the railroad heroics made popular in serials such as *The Hazards of Helen* (174), which ran from 1914 to 1917.

[97] For instance, *Reaching for the Moon* (Emerson, November 1917) features thirty-five non-diegetic, ninety-one semi-diegetic (half of which fall on Alexis's dream), and seventeen diegetic intertitles (excluding several repetitions and borderline cases of integrated verbal elements).

[98] *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* was initially directed by W. Christy Cabanne and then remade by Emerson with the assistance of Browning (Vance 36).

in 2001,[99] there are seventeen dialogue lines, including a hybrid paratextual intertitle, and twenty-two intertitles that are not enclosed in quotation marks, including a paratextual and three hybrid paratextual ones. However, not all of these twenty-two intertitles are purely non-diegetic. Three of them—"Japs on the leaping fish! Get the cans! At last a clue!"; "Smuggling! The secret is mine!"; and "Opium."—are inserted when Fairbanks's character is alone in the scene and most probably render his thoughts. Thus, two types of semi-diegetic intertitles are distinguished in this version of the film through the bibliographical codes: dialogue lines are enclosed in quotation marks while thoughts are not.[100] Additionally, because the semi-diegetic thoughts are printed like non-diegetic intertitles, the external narrative voice and Coke Ennyday's thoughts seem to become conflated in their excitement at untangling the mystery.

This typographical distinction between dialogue lines and semi-diegetic thoughts is not preserved in the version of *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* that is available on Disk 1 of the DVD set *Douglas Fairbanks: A Modern Musketeer*.[101] Unfathomably, however, the first intertitle in the visual sequence of the discovery on the beach ("Japs on the leaping fish! Get the cans! At last a clue!") is not enclosed in quotation marks while the second ("'Smuggling! The secret is mine!'") is. Overall, the changes in the

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[99] The Kino version of *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* is almost the same as the public domain version, available through Internet Archive. The Kino version, however, boasts a much better picture quality and includes a letter that explains the case with which Coke Ennyday is asked to help the Secret Service (". . . We are greatly mystified by the presence of a gentleman down here rolling in wealth, without any visible means of support . . ."), which is missing in the public domain version.

[100] This typographical differentiation is yet another reason to avoid *dialogue intertitle* as an umbrella term for all character-generated lines.

[101] *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* features "reset original-text intertitles" in the Flicker Alley version ("Douglas Fairbanks").

bibliographical codes of the intertitles from the Flicker Alley version include spatial arrangement, font, capitalization, and punctuation (commas, hyphens, exclamation points, ellipses, and quotation marks, both double and single).[102] The results of this transformation are manifold. In the Flicker Alley version, "'Opium!'" expresses the joy of Coke Ennyday upon tasting the contents of the bag left behind by the gang, whereas, ending in a period, the intertitle merely explains the nature of discovery. Inserted in the scene where the police try to open the door of the supposed crime scene, "'Nobody home'" in the Flicker Alley version makes the policemen's stupidity even more glaring since they turn away upon "hearing" somebody pronounce the phrase. At the same time, the connoted meaning of the phrase—"the house of the mind is untenanted"[103]—gets lost in the transformation because only the non-diegetic narrator could have made such a joke at the police's expense; in addition, the capitalized *H* in the Kino version ("Nobody Home.") also signals that the phrase could not have been said by a diegetic character. In the Flicker Alley version, the last intertitle— "'No, Douglas, you had better give up scenario writing and stick to acting.'"—is ascribed to the "scenario editor," identified through the inscription on the door of his office. In the Kino version, this last intertitle acts as a self-referential commentary because it expresses the opinion of the omniscient narrator, who warns the viewers in the previous intertitle that the story is not over yet ("But not the end of this story."[104]).

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[102] In the Flicker Alley version, some commas are removed to conform to contemporary rules of punctuation, and a hyphen is used more consistently in the word *fish-blower*.

[103] Sargent claimed that the phrase "Nobody home" should not be used in intertitles because its slang meaning "the house of the mind is untenanted" would be impossible to translate adequately when adapting the film to foreign markets (172).

[104] This narrative-guide intertitle in the Flicker Alley version finishes on an ellipsis ("But not the end of this story . . .").

Whereas their bibliographical codes differ greatly, the linguistic codes of most intertitles in the Flicker Alley version are the same as in the Kino version, with a notable exception of the paratextual intertitles: three are changed into regular exposition because the actors' names (Tom Wilson, A. D. Sears, and Alma Reubens) have been removed; one of these is completely reworded as well (figures 3.103 and 3.104); and the hybrid intertitle from the Kino version that contains a dialogue line and a paratextual presentation of "Inane- The little fish-blower of Short Beach," as played by "Bessie Love," is split into two separate intertitles in the Flicker Alley version, which makes the actress's name stand out. In the Flicker Alley version, Bessie Love even shares the fame with Fairbanks in the title shot ("Triangle Film Corp. presents Douglas Fairbanks and Bessie Love in . . .") (see figure 3.110 later), to which Fairbanks would have been unlikely to agree[105] and which could not have had much commercial value in 1916, when Bessie Love was little known.[106]

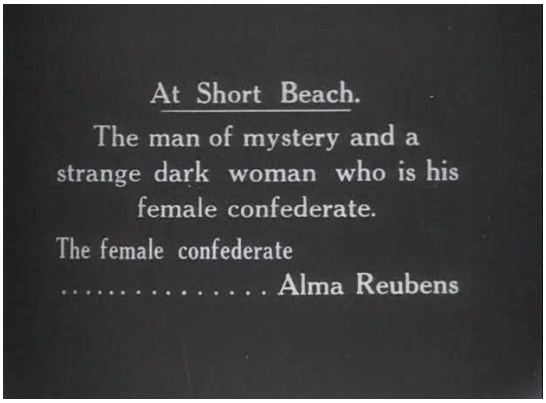


Fig. 3.103. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (the Kino version): a hybrid paratextual intertitle.

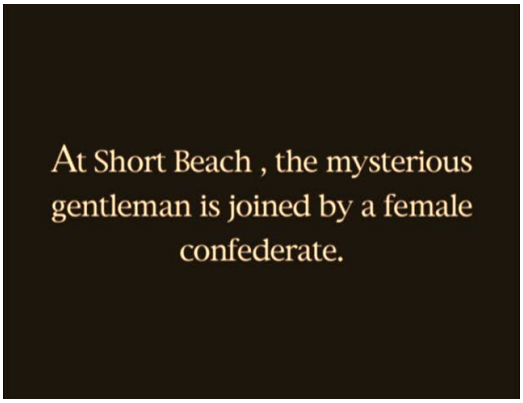


Fig. 3.104. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (the Flicker Alley version): an expository intertitle.

[105] See, for example, Richard Schickel's exploration of Fairbanks's life as a celebrity.

[106] Bessie Love became a real star after her role in *The Broadway Melody* (Harry Beaumont, 1929), for which she received an Oscar nomination. As Richard Barrios contends, Mary Pickford won that Oscar "for being a star longer than anyone could remember" (74).

Several intertitles in *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* are transtextual in nature. For example, the fight between Coke Ennyday and the "man of mystery" is built on clichés of the crime genre. Their stand-off begins with the semi-diegetic line "'At last we meet face to face,'" although they have already met before—in the scene where Coke shows a photograph to the "man of mystery," asking "'Is this you?'" and getting a response "'Yep, that's me!'" Pronouncing "'The best man walks out!'" as a consolation to the scared Inane (a telling name!), Coke enters the room where his opponent is waiting and, following the non-diegetic intertitle "The duel in the dark," switches off the light. As Sargent points out, "the duel in the dark," where two men shoot at random, was an old way of settling the score (236). In *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*, however, Coke simply battles his opponent into an unconscious state.

Through radiant mediality, the film creates a humorous parallel between Coke Ennyday and Sherlock Holmes. Coke Ennyday is called "the world's greatest scientific detective" in the introductory paratextual intertitle. As the second intertitle informs the viewers, "[e]ven the Secret Service was often forced to appeal to Coke Ennyday," just as Holmes's professional expertise was sought after by Scotland Yard, although the police are even more inept in *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* than in Conan Doyle's stories (for example, "[t]he police lost their way" is illustrated by the police patrol wagon driving in circles around a small square). In two non-diegetic intertitles, the detective's name is written in single quotes, which are incidentally lacking in the Flicker Alley version,—possibly to make sure that the viewers get the connotation that arises from the pronunciation of the name. Holmes's notorious cocaine habits are exaggerated to the extreme in Coke Ennyday: his normal day has four phases ("sleep / eats / dope / drinks" (figure 3.105)), and his waking hours are structured around cocaine, a huge can of which

sits on his table (figure 3.106).[107] Himself being "[f]ull of hop," i.e., on opium, the detective wins the victory over the opium-smuggling gang in the Chinese laundry called "Sum Hop" by injecting syringes with dope into his Asian opponents and by blowing opium powder all over them.[108] Because the words *hop* and *leap* belong to the same semantic field, the eponymous *Leaping Fish* acquires a verbal link to opium as well: the mystery consists in the fact that inflatable fish-floats offered for water entertainment (numerous signs in the bathhouse and on the beach advertise riding the Leaping Fish at 25 cents per hour) are used to transport dope.

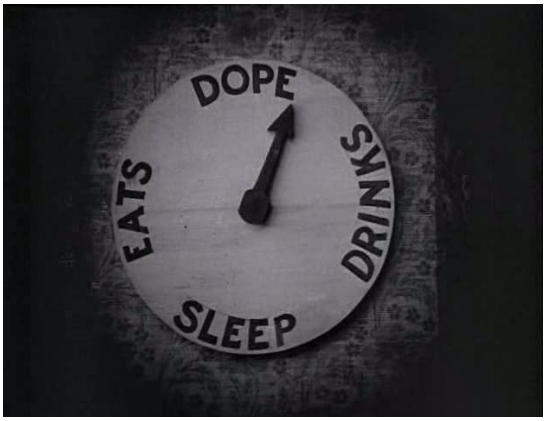


Fig. 3.105. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*: the detective's clock.



Fig. 3.106. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*: cocaine always around.

In *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*, non-diegetic intertitles also frequently enter

[107] The detective's first name, a common nickname for Coca-Cola, is also a reminder about the origins of the signature American product. As Paul Gootenberg describes, the original Coca-Cola, "concocted by Atlanta pharmacist John Pemberton in 1886," would never have become immensely popular without the essential ingredient of Peruvian coca, a source of cocaine. Only in 1903 was cocaine removed from the drink. In the early twentieth century, "hundreds of imitators thrived throughout the states with patchwork kola and coka brand names . . . while others, such as a drink called simply 'Dope,' capitalized on the popular soft drink's drug connotations" (198-99). The story in Griffith's *For His Son* (1912) revolves around a soft drink containing cocaine —called *Dopokoke*.

[108] See Boyd 113-14 for a discussion of *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* from the perspective of drug trafficking in the US and the "Asian menace."

into contiguous mixed-medial relationships. Thus, the intertitle “Quietly Coke Ennyday stole out on the trail”[109] is followed by a visual shot of Coke Ennyday's associate blowing a horn while the detective is starting his automobile.[110] “Without a moment to lose 'Coke Ennyday' arrived at the scene of action” prefaces the scene of the detective stopping his checkered automobile midway for a game of checkers, yet another humorous reference to Holmes—his passion for chess. Several intertitles that contain metaphorical expressions get literalized in the visual shots, which contain what Noël Carroll calls *primed verbal images* (*Theorizing* 187): for example, Coke moves around hopping as he is “[f]ull of hop”; “[t]he gentleman rolling in wealth” is first shown as sleeping (figure 3.107) and then rolling in a bed made with banknotes (figure 3.108):

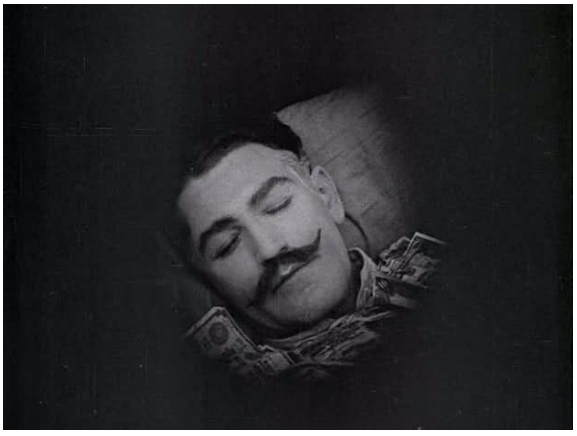


Fig. 3.107. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*: “the gentleman rolling in wealth.”



Fig. 3.108. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*: rolling in wealth literalized.

[109] While the Kino intertitle (“Quietly Coke Ennyday stole out on the trail.”) explains that the detective has decided to take up the case and is linked to the phrase “'Coke Ennyday, is on our trail!'” pronounced later by “the man of mystery,” the intertitle from the Flicker Alley version (“Quietly Coke Ennyday stole out on the rail.”) does not make much sense in the context.

[110] The words *quiet* and *quietly* were popular in the silent era for the purpose of mixed-medial juxtaposition: for example, in *When the Clouds Roll By* (Victor Fleming, 1919), also starring Fairbanks, the intertitle “In his quiet way the janitor aids in the conspiracy” introduces a scene of the janitor banging heavy objects against a tiled floor.

Such burlesque improbability is given license because, paradoxically, this script will not be filmed: *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* begins and ends with Fairbanks reading something out loud, which turns out to be a scenario of his own invention, unequivocally rejected by the scenario editor in the film's finale—one of the early instances of self-reflexivity in cinema.

The quotation marks around the title in the title card of the Kino version actually hint that the title is a quote from or a reference to something, which we learn to be a scenario. The fact that the title is also underlined and allotted a separate shot with a decorative frame (figure 3.109), after the initial "Triangle Film Corporation presents Douglas Fairbanks in" is written on a plain background, contributes to the impression that "'THE MYSTERY OF THE LEAPING FISH'" could be the title of a printed work.[111] In the Flicker Alley version, the title is part of the initial shot (figure 3.110) and is not enclosed in quotation marks, which results in the loss of any connection to the scenario presented by Fairbanks to the editor in the film. In the opening credits, consistently with the practice of the mid-teens to attribute individual authorship to the story-writer, the Kino version bills Browning above Emerson, whereas the Flicker Alley version elevates the status of the director, placing Emerson's name first, as is more typical of contemporary cinema. On the whole, a comparative analysis of the title sequences and intertitles, and especially of their bibliographical codes, reveals that the reconstructed version of the Flicker Alley edition modernizes the verbal language and its visual presentation and, in the process, divests the narrative voice of the full strength of its editorial power.

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[111] Karen Latham Everson maintains, however, that the original title card has not survived (104). Among archival sources for the film, Everson mentions (but does not date) the George Eastman House reissue print "with soundtrack, music and sound effects" (102). It is possible then that the title card included in the Kino version may have been added during that reissue.



Fig. 3.109. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (the Kino version): the typographical link to the diegetic scenario.



Fig. 3.110. *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish* (the Flicker Alley version): the newly recreated title shot.

After Fairbanks parted ways with Emerson and Loos, the films in which he starred continued to welcome witty contributions of verbal language, in stand-alone intertitles and in cooperation with visual images. Comedies written and intertitled by Loos in the late teens and twenties also proceeded in a similar vein, although Loos herself admitted that the films she and Emerson made, "not having Doug's athletic prowess to take into account, . . . became merely illustrated [inter]titles" (179).[112] An interaction of words and images for humorous effects was explored by many other filmmakers of the twenties, including Buster Keaton, who got initiated into the movies within the frames of the American studio system but whose treatment of intertitles and integrated verbal elements somewhat differed from standard industry practices.

[112] Loos's reminiscences in *A Girl Like I*, published in 1966, which focus on her unique contributions to the world of cinema and her hobnobbing with the famed, should, however, be taken with a grain of salt. For instance, in her recollections of how *His Picture in the Papers* was screened for the first time, Loos seems to be conflating descriptions of several films, none of which is in fact *His Picture in the Papers*: "One [inter]title I remember came at a point where the villain had blown up a factory, wrecked the police station, cut the main artery leading from the power station, and destroyed communications through an entire city. At which juncture the villain declared, 'I will have to resort to violence!'" (101). The intertitle "'It is no use, we shall have to resort to violence'" is actually inserted in *Reaching for the Moon* after yet another attempt on "King" Alexis's life.

THE VERBAL LANGUAGE OF BUSTER KEATON'S COMEDIES

In the early twenties, Buster Keaton created both two-reelers and features. Thompson posits that in Keaton's comedy features, "almost every expository [inter]title that begins a scene also makes a verbal joke of its own" ("Formulation" 187). Unlike Loos, Emerson, and Fairbanks, however, Keaton was mostly in favor of eliminating intertitles if the action could possibly speak for itself, as he stated in a 1960 interview. According to Keaton, Chaplin and he had friendly contests about who would do a feature with the smallest number of intertitles: Chaplin won "with something like twenty-one [inter]titles" while Keaton had twenty-three. Keaton also claims that the maximum number of intertitles he ever used in a seven-reel feature, which lasted for approximately an hour and half, was fifty-six, whereas the average in the mid-twenties was 240 intertitles (Terkel 109). The exact figures that Keaton provides about the intertitles in his features should, however, be taken with a grain of salt: in the versions I have viewed, the smallest number of intertitles—thirty—is included in *Sherlock, Jr.* (Keaton, 1924); there are more than sixty, although still under a hundred, intertitles in *Battling Butler* (Keaton, 1926), *College* (James W. Horne, 1927), *The Cameraman* (Edward Sedgwick, 1928), and *Spite Marriage* (Sedgwick, 1929).[113]

[113] This count does not include diegetic intertitles, which, most probably, were excluded from the numbers provided by Keaton as well. The numbers of intertitles in Chaplin's features are also far from Keaton's estimate: according to the digitized lists of intertitles available at the Charlie Chaplin Archive in Bologna, only *The Kid* (1921, 6 reels) and *The Pilgrim* (1923, 4 reels) featured around sixty intertitles during their original releases, while the rest of Chaplin's features had close to or more than a hundred. Thus, judging by the surviving versions, Keaton emerges as a definite winner in this contest. Ernst Lubitsch, as Thompson notes, also preferred to convey narrative information visually, mostly through the nuances of acting and camerawork, rather than with the help of numerous intertitles ("Lubitsch" 395, 399-402, 406). *The Marriage Circle* (1923), nevertheless, incorporates ninety-eight intertitles (nine non-diegetic, seventy-four semi-diegetic, and fifteen diegetic, excluding repetitions and borderline cases of integrated verbal elements).

Considering Keaton's tendency to get rid of intertitles whenever possible, each instance of verbal language usage assumes an even greater significance.[114] In the two-reeler *One Week* (September 1920), his first film release without Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle,[115] which Keaton considered to be the major boost to his reputation (Bishop 56), hearty laughs are mostly provoked by physical action.[116] By contrast, intertitles are responsible for describing the situation and revealing the characters' attitudes, and integrated verbal elements subtly comment on the action and foreshadow narrative developments.

Paratextually, *One Week* includes both an opening and a closing frame. However, unlike the title shot, which establishes the authorship of Joseph M. Schenck production company and the ownership of the distributor Metro Picture Corporation, while highlighting the star's name (figure 3.111), the closing shot only includes "THE END" inscription, with no decorative embellishments or vestiges of ownership. Thus, upon completion of the film, the viewers are left thinking about the diegetic story, and, hence, Keaton's character, rather than being intrusively reminded of the film's producer and owner. Keaton co-directed *One Week*, as well as many other two-reelers, with Eddie Cline (Brownlow, "Buster" 175), which is documented in the second shot of the title sequence in *One Week*: "Written and directed by 'BUSTER' KEATON and EDDIE

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[114] According to Keaton, the intertitles in his films were written by him and his scenario staff (Brownlow, "Buster" 205).

[115] *The "High Sign"* was Keaton's first two-reeler without Arbuckle, but it was shelved for about a year before its release in 1921 because Keaton was disappointed with the film (Knopf 48).

[116] Keaton explained in a 1958 interview that he had also preferred "action laughs" in sound films and had fought against the tendency in the industry to overemphasize "funny sayings and puns" (Bishop 53).

CLINE"[117] (figure 3.112).



Fig. 3.111. *One Week*: the star, producer, and owner sharing the title shot credit.

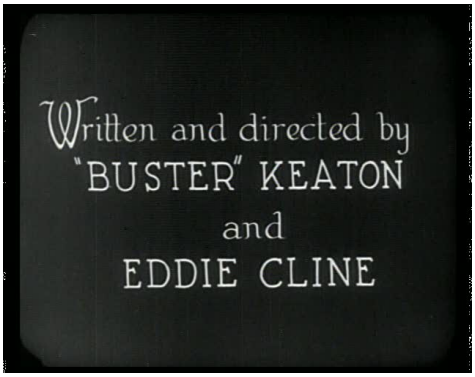


Fig. 3.112. *One Week*: creative authorship in a separate shot.

The importance of temporal structure to the film, signaled by the title *One Week*, is corroborated by the initial visual shot that features a "TO-DAY IS"-calendar page informing the viewers of the date: Monday the 9th. The following expository intertitle with a poetic twist—"The wedding bells have such a sweet sound but such a sour echo."—both establishes the narrative situation and foreshadows its development. Now the viewers are keen on finding out what can possibly go wrong with the newlyweds within the first week of their matrimonial bliss. A hint at a potential problem comes from the second non-diegetic intertitle, which introduces "Handy Hank, the fellow she turned down," who looks like a disgruntled bully. However, Handy Hank turns out to be the driver trusted to take the couple on a "just married" ride (figure 3.113). His revenge on the chosen one is, thus, likely to be more elaborate than just an expected beating. It is

[117] Exactly the same shot with "written and directed" credits is recycled, for example, in *The "High Sign"* and *The Playhouse* (1921), although the version of *One Week*, released by Image Entertainment in 2000, does not include this shot. The quotation marks around *Buster* remind the viewers that it is not a real name. The actor-director was born Joseph Frank Keaton and was nicknamed *Buster*, which meant *stage fall* in vaudeville slang, because he was always falling down. As Robert Knopf argues, relying on newspaper clippings from Keaton's mother's scrapbook, the story that Harry Houdini christened the baby *Buster*, upon seeing the six-month-old land unharmed at the foot of a flight of stairs, is just a myth cultivated by the Keaton family (19-20).

Handy Hank who hands the happy husband a note from "Uncle Mike" that informs "Dear Nephew" of a wedding present: "a house and lot No. 99 Apple Street." Only after the groom has read the note does the camera change position to reveal another sign attached to the car: "good luck—you'll need it" (figure 3.114). This multimedial development signals to the attentive viewer that the wedding present of a house is likely to test the newlyweds' luck. Yet another sign, on the back of the car, ironically comments both on the groom's tying the knot and on Hank's behavior: "another good man gone wrong" becomes visible only when the spurned contestant is leaving the moving car in an attempt to join the winner's bride, who has earlier managed to escape into another car, while her husband, caught in between the two cars, has been swept away by a motorcyclist.



Fig. 3.113. *One Week*: "just married."

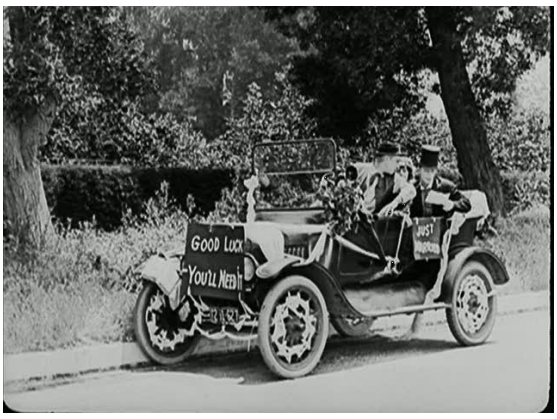


Fig. 3.114. *One Week*: "good luck—you'll need it."

The interplay between the first semi-diegetic intertitle ("'Here's your house!'") and the surrounding visual shots reinforces the viewers' guess that the uncle's wedding gift will be a source of trouble: when the perplexed bride and groom are staring at the houseless lot marked with a sign "99," a man standing on a truck draws the couple's attention to the huge box he dumps at their feet. The medium shot of the delivery man, before and after the dialogue line, is an iris shot (figure 3.115), the same format as that of the subsequent close-up of the "Directions" envelope (figure 3.116), which is attached to

the box next to the trademark "Home / Portable House Co."[118] Thus, the company's representative, who is wearing an *H*-embroidered pullover, is presented as nothing more than a prop designed to give directions. The directions that we read together with the couple, as a diegetic insert, are very simple: all one needs to do to "give this house a snappy appearance" is "put it up according to the numbers on the boxes."



Fig. 3.115. *One Week*: the directions of the H-embroidered delivery man.



Fig. 3.116. *One Week*: the verbal directions.

It is the numbers on the boxes that inspire Handy Hank's real revenge: he changes *1* and *3* into *4* and *8* respectively, which supposedly results in the groom's assembling the house into a surrealistic construction on the third day. Number confusion also leads to the ultimate destruction of the house: the couple is informed that they have to move ("'You're on the wrong lot. Yours is across the railroad track.'") because what they think to be a 99-sign is in fact a 66-sign (figure 3.117); the house, transported on barrels, gets stuck on the tracks and is reduced to a pile of lumber by a rushing train. The demise of the construction is hardly surprising to an attentive viewer because when the moving procession approaches the railroad, a "C. Ganahl Lumber Co." sign is prominent in the

[118] As Martha Banta notes, "the ready-made house was one of the prizes scientifically managed production systems offered to the general public in the first decades of the twentieth century. Families were meant to be masters of their own do-it-yourself fate. Mail-order catalogues promised dream houses that could be assembled in record time. . . . Keaton's film demystifies this perfect system . . ." (9).

background (figure 3.118). Giving up on the "house," Keaton's character sticks a "For Sale" sign next to the pile; when the couple is about to leave along the tracks, he returns for a moment to deposit the "Directions" envelope, presented in an iris shot the way the close-up of the envelope first appeared in the film (see figure 3.116).



Fig. 3.117. *One Week*: surprised by another direction-giver.



Fig. 3.118. *One Week*: foreshadowing a pile of lumber.

Numbers are also closely linked to the narrative organization of *One Week*. The calendar pages—from Monday 9 to Sunday 15—fulfill the promise of the title that the diegetic action will last exactly a week. The film is divided into seven parts by a repeated ceremony of signaling the turn of another day: an iris-out to mask the action of the day gone by, an iris-in to show the old calendar page removed by a hand, an iris-out to focus on the new date, and an iris-in to present the visual scene of the next day. The routine is embellished several times with other verbal elements. Thus, irising-out on the sheet of paper placed on the ruined piano prefaces a diegetic insert that reveals what the bride has been looking forward to playing (figure 3.119); the title of the song, "The End of a Perfect Day,"[119] contributes to the mixed-medial commentary on the "success" of the groom's endeavor to bring the piano into the house on the third day, Wednesday the 11th.

[119] Carrie Jacobs-Bond's "The End of a Perfect Day," created in 1910, "had sold 5 million copies in sheet along with uncounted recordings and piano rolls" by the early 1920s (McHenry 42).

Friday the 13th (figure 3.120), the inevitable approach of which was signaled to a savvy viewer at the very beginning of the film, starts with the chapter heading intertitle “The House-Warming.” Our expectations of a disaster are not frustrated: a storm turns the house into a spinning “merry-go-round,” as one of the drenched and motion-sick guests calls it when he ironicizes the collective experience (“'. . . It'll be better when you put in your hobby-horses.'”). When at the end of the week, the house is destroyed on the way from lot 66 to lot 99, a hypothesis may arise that numerical evils—Friday the 13th and the truncated number of the beast *66*—have joined forces to prevent the couple from creating their new domestic world within seven days.



Fig. 3.119. *One Week*: the end of a “perfect” day.

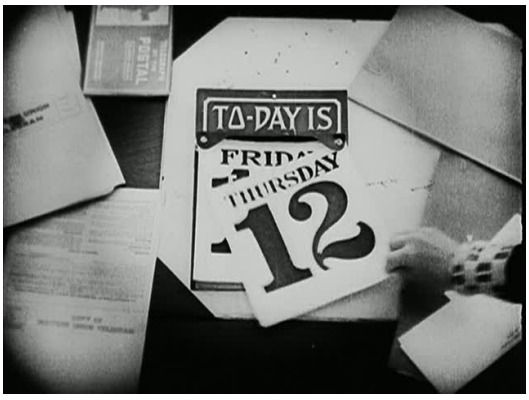


Fig. 3.120. *One Week*: the ominous date about to appear.

There are not many intertitles in *One Week* because the comedy is built on physical gags and stunts,[120] which are mostly responsible for the laughter. Only once is a physical stunt aided by an intertitle: responding to the bride's call “'Breakfast is ready!'” the groom, who is about to saw off the section of a wooden beam that extends beyond the outer wall and on which he happens to be sitting, pronounces “'I'll be right down!'” and applies the saw—to find himself on the ground seconds later. During the fourth day, an action gag revolves around Keaton's character writing: we see him paint a letter *M* on the

[120] Keaton's physical gags in *One Week*, are discussed, for example, in Knopf 40-49.

right side of what used to be the middle of a living-room rug, which the groom places at the foot of the staircase, and are left wondering for a brief moment what kind of mess we will witness this time. It immediately becomes clear that the groom is writing upside down (figure 3.121); upon completion of the inscription, he turns the cloth 180 degrees to make a *WELCOME* doormat out of it. This sole instance of writing in the film[121] is followed by a visual scene of the bride taking a bath. As a result, the viewers feel as if they were welcome into the house—and not just as guests, who would not have access to the intimacies of body washing. However, the voyeurism has its limits, and when the bride is about to reach out to grab the piece of soap that she has dropped on the floor, a hand appears in front of the camera's lens (figure 3.122) and proceeds to block almost the whole view while the bride is retrieving the soap, for which she then gratefully smiles at the camera. The 180-degrees rotation of the *welcome* inscription also foreshadows the unwelcome news, broken to the couple during the sixth day, that they have built the house on lot 66 instead of lot 99.



Fig. 3.121. *One Week*:
about to welcome viewers.



Fig. 3.122. *One Week*:
self-reflexively blocking the view.

When the characters are too tired on the day after the house-warming party,

[121] On day three, the groom signs what contextually should be delivery papers, but we do not see any details because the scene is filmed in a long shot: Keaton's character is lying under the piano at the moment of signing.

intertitles prevail over intense physical action. The sixth day begins with a warning that the spinning disaster might have been just a false climax ("—And after the storm") to iris-in on the pitiful state of the house. A brief conversation between the bride ("'Now look at the darned thing!'") and the groom ("'I guess it's not used to the climate.'") reveals the former's ultimate frustration and the latter's poker-face equanimity coupled with sympathy. The groom's treatment of the house as an animate being, contrasted with the bride's reference to it as a "thing," elevates the house from the status of a mere prop and almost turns it into a creature that needs to be protected from "the climate." It is all the more unfortunate that the creature will be destroyed on the seventh day by a symbol of modernity, the train. Saturday the 14th finishes with the couple's quiet preparation for the move, after they learn about their lot of having to change their lot ("'You're on the wrong lot. . . .'"), with only a few snickers expected from the audience. Overall, the sixth day features four intertitles (one non-diegetic and three semi-diegetic) and is only outnumbered by the first day with five intertitles (two non-diegetic, one semi-diegetic, and two diegetic), which results from the latter's introductory nature, traditionally supported by verbal exposition. The two days together account for around three-fifth of the intertitles in the whole two-reeler (four non-diegetic, seven semi-diegetic, and three diegetic),[122] while the last day of visual destruction is completely intertitle-free. Such a preference for concluding a film with continuous visual action, unhampered by an intrusion of intertitle cards, is also showcased in *The Navigator* (1924).

The Navigator, Keaton's favorite feature film on par with *The General* (1926)

[122] It is obvious from the mere numbers that Keaton's two-reeler *One Week* (fourteen intertitles in total) is much less dependent on verbal inserts than, for example, Emerson and Loos's two-reeler *The Mystery of the Leaping Fish*, which incorporates forty-one intertitles.

(Bishop 50),[123] also tends to tell the story and evoke laughter through physical action rather than words, although the six-reeler begins with three introductory intertitles ("Our story deals with one of those queer tricks that Fate sometimes plays."; "Nobody would believe, for instance, that the entire lives of a peaceful American boy and girl could be changed by a funny little war between two small countries far across the sea."; and "And yet it came to pass. The spies of the two little nations were at a Pacific seaport, each trying to prevent the other getting ships and supplies."). Considering Keaton's predilection for eschewing intertitles, the verbosity of this exposition is surprising; its location before the first visual sequence most probably accounts for such an exception to the-fewer-words-the-better rule.[124] Besides locating the action "at a Pacific seaport," the presentation of the diegetic story as a queer trick played by Fate raises expectations of something absurdly unusual, which is reinforced by the scale mismatch achieved through adjectival descriptors: "the *entire* lives of a peaceful American boy and girl" versus "a *funny little* war between two *small* countries" and "*little* nations" (emphasis mine). Through an intertextual reference "And . . . it came to pass," Keaton also endows the story with Biblical dimensions (the phrase is used fifty times in Genesis alone).

Overall, the non-diegetic intertitles in *The Navigator* are quite long because most of them combine the functions of the narrative guide and of the humorous evaluation of the situation. When Keaton's character, Rollo Treadway, decides to get married, upon

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[123] For a detailed analysis of *The General*, with a focus on its themes and visual style, see N. Carroll, *Comedy*. Keaton's frustration with the new intertitles included in the print of *The General* released in the sixties is recorded in Gillett and Blue 220-21.

[124] In Keaton's other features created in 1923 and 1924, introductory exposition is also rather lengthy: for example, in *Our Hospitality* (Keaton and Jack Blystone, 1923), there are five introductory intertitles, including "The Prologue"; *Sherlock, Jr.* (Keaton, 1924) has two.

seeing a couple kissing in a "just married" car, and to spend the honeymoon in Honolulu, an intertitle informs us that, in his preparation for the journey, he has overlooked one little thing—"to notify the girl" (figure 3.123). Using the pronoun "he" instead of the character's name generalizes the situation into a quintessential male-female interaction, where traditionally the girl would not have had a say (and the girl does not even have a name in the film), especially if the man was rich. The situation of power wielding, however, gets predictably reversed: the girl, who is introduced in a paratextual intertitle as the daughter of the "wealthy ship owner who has just sold the Navigator," rejects the offer of marriage ("'Certainly not!'"), most probably because the aspirant to her heart is called a sap in another paratextual intertitle (figure 3.124) and is shown to behave as an absent-minded effete heir to the fortune,[125] which the girl does not covet. The word *sap* also contributes to a self-referential joke: the first feature in which Keaton starred, also as a millionaire's son, was entitled *The Saphead* (Herbert Blaché, 1920).

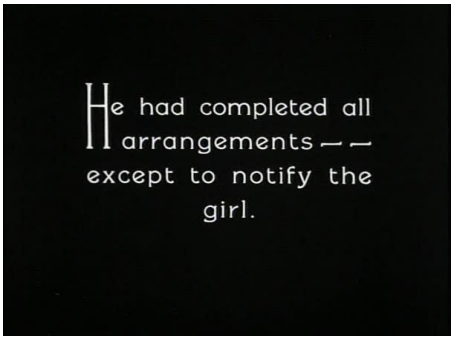


Fig. 3.123. *The Navigator*: an overlooked trifle in getting married.

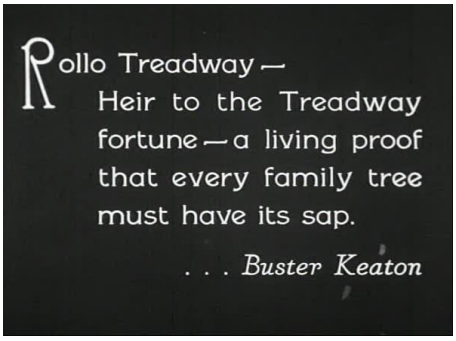


Fig. 3.124. *The Navigator*: authorial voice labeling the character.

[125] Viewing *The Navigator* as an "epic of modernity," Eric L. Reinholtz interprets Keaton's character accordingly: "Marx's capitalist-turned-proletarian, as his name suggests, Rollo Treadway becomes a stinging metaphor for the alienated individual trapped on the circular treadmill of the industrial age: peddling along in ignorant bliss, oblivious to the reality that he will never taste the fruits of his own labor" (276). Keaton's character and the girl, however, are able to adapt to the hugeness of the ship by relying on mechanical devices of their own invention, which is best illustrated by the gadgets they install in the galley. As Daniel Moews puts it, "the childishly small couple grow into adults" (121).

Rejected by the girl, Rollo decides to go on a honeymoon alone. The absurdity of the situation is highlighted through a parallel with the incompatibility between words and music (figure 3.125). If modern viewers are still able to get the joke because the titles of the songs mentioned stand in direct contradiction to each other, the audiences of the twenties must have also been familiar with what David Ewen calls the "immortal waltz" "Kiss Me Again" from the 1905 operetta *Mlle. Modiste* (Victor Herbert and Henry Blossom) (203) and the sentimental, ballad-type parlor song "Alice, Where Art Thou."[126] Later in the film, Keaton incorporates another verbal reference to music: when the exhausted characters are trying to get some sleep in the ship's lounge, the ship's rock and rolling triggers the phonograph into starting the record of "Asleep in the Deep" (Arthur J. Lamb and Henry W. Petrie) as performed by Wilfred Glenn (figure 3.126). Rollo and the girl, who have already had a share of spooky misadventures on board the ship, are startled into wakefulness by the singer's bass, conveyed in superimposed intertitles[127] that

[126] "Alice, Where Art Thou," created by Wellington Guernsey and Joseph Asher in 1861, was such a pervasive song in the US and Great Britain that it wove its way into many literary works, including "Emmy" (1912-13) by Jessie Fauset (p. 465), *Of Human Bondage* (1915) by William Somerset Maugham (ch. 107), and, most famously, *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce, where, as Zack Bowen explains, "Bloom's description of Parnell's whereabouts as being of the '*Alice, where art thou* order' is a reference to the song which relates the quest of a forlorn lover for his mate" (311). *Mlle. Modiste*, with its signature "Kiss Me Again," was adapted to film as *Mademoiselle Modiste* (Robert Z. Leonard, 1926) and as *Kiss Me Again* (William A. Seiter, 1931). Lubitsch's *Kiss Me Again* (1925), however, is not based on the operetta.

[127] Song lyrics integrated into films as intertitles became a common feature in the late silent era. Rick Altman points out this trend: "Regularly used as cues to change music, intertitles would in the twenties sometimes take on an entirely new relationship to the film's musical accompaniment. . . . While the intertitle breaks the film's visual continuity, aural continuity is maintained by the music. . . . Repeatedly, music or lyrics are spelled out while characters sing (e.g., "You're in the Army Now" in King Vidor's 1925 *The Big Parade* and the "Prisoner's Song" in Buster Keaton's 1928 *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*) or while phonographs play (e.g., "Asleep in the Deep" in Keaton's 1924 *The Navigator* and "Always" in Paul Fejos's 1928 *Lonesome*)" (*Silent Film Sound* 372).

emphatically change size and arrangement (figure 3.127).

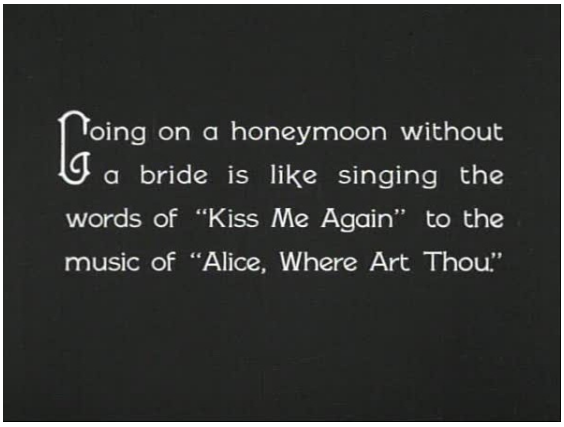


Fig. 3.125. *The Navigator*: commenting on the absurd incongruity.

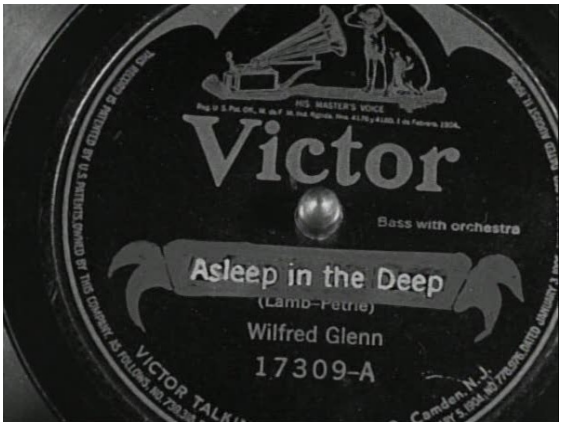


Fig. 3.126. *The Navigator*: music as a foreshadowing device.



Fig. 3.127. *The Navigator*: the bass presented through superimposed intertitles.

The last line played by the phonograph before the lid falls down—"BEWARE"—acts as a warning both to the characters and the viewers, who expect the narrative to develop in parallel with the song, where the "two lovers" find peace "[u]nder the billows."[128] This expectation almost comes to fruition at the end of the film, when the couple sink under water as the last resort in their fight with the cannibals, but, since this is a comedy, they rise again—standing on top of a submarine. The words from "Asleep in the Deep" also prospectively shape the perception of Keaton's character in the "rescue" scene: when he emerges out of the water in a deep-sea diving suit, the cannibals, who have captured the girl, scatter in fear of the strange creature from the deep. Thus, in *The*

[128] For the text of "Asleep in the Deep," see Herder 19.

Navigator, the verbal language tied to music foreshadows narrative development, unlike in *One Week*, where the music reference ironicizes the events past.

The non-diegetic intertitles whose main function is locating the story along the temporal continuum are also based on verbal jokes or engage in contiguous mixed-mediality. The ship's ineffectuality is contrasted with its name: “The next morning found the Navigator drifting helplessly at sea.” The word *navigator* will be first shown integrated into a visual scene on this very day. Trying to attract the attention of the patrol boat, the girl advises Rollo, who has found a heap of various flags, to put up “that bright one,” which turns out to signify quarantine and scares the patrolmen away. When Rollo is furiously rowing forward in a lifeboat inscribed “S.S. Navigator,” trying to catch up with the patrol boat, the girl is running along the deck to follow his progress, and we see the name painted on the starboard (figure 3.128). However, the navigating role is assumed by Keaton's character, who attaches a rope that hangs from the ship's anchor to the lifeboat and continues rowing with the ship in tow (figure 3.129):



Fig. 3.128. *The Navigator*: *Navigator* unable to navigate.



Fig. 3.129. *The Navigator*: assuming the role of the navigator.

In another non-diegetic intertitle, signaling bedtime incorporates a reminder of the proper outfit for a regular evening ashore (figure 3.130), but “sea-going tuxedoes” turn

out to be sailors' uniforms (figure 3.131),[129] which justifies calling Rollo and the girl "the crew" in the next non-diegetic intertitle, a combination of exposition and interlocution: "Weeks later—still drifting. We now find the crew with a safe and quiet place to sleep." The safe haven is revealed to be the engine room, which is indeed quiet because the ship is drifting.[130]

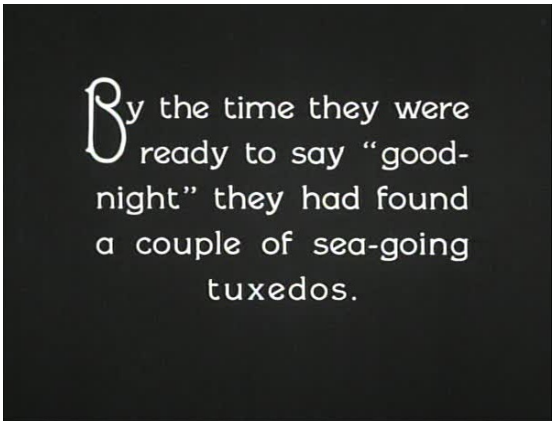


Fig. 3.130. *The Navigator*: a reminder of life ashore.



Fig. 3.131. *The Navigator*: "kissing" in "sea-going tuxedos."

Some of the semi-diegetic intertitles in *The Navigator* are also included mainly because they are contrasted with the contiguous visual shots. Perhaps the funniest juxtaposition is Rollo's line "'I think a long walk would do me good'" prefacing his crossing the street on foot instead of being driven in a car, the way he arrived at the girl's house, which is located exactly opposite his. This semi-diegetic intertitle, however, also

[129] Note the positioning of the shadows in this visual shot: the two figures seem to be on the point of embracing and kissing each other. The first real kiss will only materialize inside the submarine.

[130] Robert Stam mentions the use of another temporal indicator in *The Navigator*: Keaton's character's casting an anchor is followed by the intertitle "ten seconds later," which stays on the screen for about ten seconds and precedes a visual shot of the anchor floating to the surface. Stam posits that indicating such a minuscule temporal ellipse "becomes absurd in a situation of straight continuity" and, thus, acts as a self-reflexive device (147-48). The two versions of the film I have viewed—from the DVD released by Kino in 1999 and from the Internet Archive—do not include this intertitle.

succinctly manifests the boy's spoiled and pampered character. Another phrase uttered by Rollo—"'We're safe! I've anchored the ship.'"—is also infused with dramatic irony because the inadequately small anchor, which most probably is made for a lifeboat rather than a big steamer, is shown to be just scratching the bottom in the preceding visual shot.

Most of the other semi-diegetic intertitles in the film are employed to explain twists in the narrative development (e.g., "'We are sinking! It's just a matter of time until we're captured.'"), including the spies' conversation at the very beginning of the film that details their plans to destroy the steamship. In one instance, semi-diegetic intertitles link scenes located in two different places and interact with an inscription integrated into yet another visual shot: Rollo, sitting in a car, tells the driver that he should be taken to pier two; the ship owner, who is about to leave his house, tells his daughter to stop at pier 12 because he needs "some papers off the Navigator"; in the following visual sequence, the opening of the gate transforms "PIER 12" into "PIER 2" (figure 3.132). Such a conflation of the numbers, reminiscent of the tampering with numbers in *One Week*, ultimately leads to the improbable outcome of Rollo and the girl finding themselves on the same ship.



Fig. 3.132. *The Navigator*: unintentional tampering with numbers.

A related device of visual obstruction is utilized later in the film: when Rollo is groping in the dark, we see him stumble across a box inscribed "giant fire crackers"

(figure 3.133); then the camera switches position from the frontal to the side view to reveal another box, the inscription on which—"candles"—the boy reads (figure 3.134), which makes him safely assume that the contents of both boxes will help them to fight the darkness. When the Keaton character is in the process of lighting one of the "candles," he accidentally kicks yet another box, revealing the full inscription—"Roman candles"—to the viewer, but he himself remains oblivious to the truth.



Fig. 3.133. *The Navigator*: notifying the viewer.



Fig. 3.134. *The Navigator*: deceiving the diegetic character.

Most of the integrated verbal elements in *The Navigator* are directly tied to the development of the narrative—be it a minor episode or the major storyline. Only in one scene is verbal language included exclusively for the purpose of evoking laughter. When Rollo goes under water in a deep-sea diving suit, in an effort to fix the leak that is threatening to sink the ship, he first installs a "danger / men at work" sign to warn absent-minded passers-by (figure 3.135). For all we know, this precautionary measure may have been recommended in "Instructions for Deep Sea Divers," which the boy has studied, with his eyes popping out in the process (figure 3.136).



Fig. 3.135. *The Navigator*: a warning to potential passers-by.



Fig. 3.136. *The Navigator*: reading "Instructions for Deep Sea Divers."

The Navigator, with its running time of about an hour, incorporates only forty-five intertitles (twelve non-diegetic, thirty-two semi-diegetic, and one diegetic). However, it features an extensive title sequence, evidence of the growing importance of verbal language in fulfilling the functions of authorial signature and ownership statement. The film begins with the signature lion logo of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio (figure 3.137),[131] which was founded in May 1924, when the owner of Metro Pictures, Marcus Loew, purchased Goldwyn Company and Louis B. Mayer's Productions (Eyman 78). Such an ultimate statement of studio ownership, so familiar nowadays, was in the initial stages of formation in the mid-twenties, only beginning to replace, and more often to complement, the more traditional device of inscribing the studio's insignia into

[131] See Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis for a semiotic analysis of the MGM logo (30). The logo has become an inspiration for various spoofs: Monty Python's *And Now for Something Completely Different* (Ian MacNaughton, 1971) begins with a similarly designed logo where a roaring rabbit replaces the lion and "Playboy productions" substitutes for the MGM motto "ars gratia artis"; in *Silent Movie* (Mel Brooks, 1976), the logo of "Big Pictures Studio" features the motto "ars est pecunia" 'art is money,' which encircles the studio chief, who is making plaintive roaring sounds while smoking a cigar. The irony of the MGM motto has often been noted: as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith puts it, "it was MGM more than any other film studio which most clearly articulated entertainment as an artistic goal (and source of profit)" (74).

the decorative frame of the title shot.[132] It is quite possible, however, that the MGM opening is a later addition to this version of *The Navigator* because, as Scott Eyman explains, Mayer's name was added to the newly formed company only a year after the merger, although from the very beginning the contract had stipulated that Mayer, as the vice president and general manager of Metro-Goldwyn, could prominently display his name in prints and advertising as well as put "A Louis B. Mayer production" on any film made by the company (79, 85). The title shot of *The Navigator*, designed in a nautical theme (figure 3.138), indirectly confirms this hypothesis because it states "A Metro-Goldwyn Attraction" at the bottom.



Fig. 3.137. *The Navigator*: the signature logo, probably a later addition.



Fig. 3.138. *The Navigator*: the nautical design reflecting the theme.

The creative authorship of the film is attributed not only to the directors—Donald Crisp[133] and Buster Keaton—but also to the story writers (Clyde Bruckman, Joseph Mitchell, and Jean Haves), who are allocated a shot of their own but whose names are written in a smaller font than those of the directors, credited in the previous shot. The title

[132] For a history of Hollywood studio logos, of Warner Brothers in particular, see Grainge 72-79. For a discussion of the functions of studio logos in movie trailers, see Kernan.

[133] In a number of interviews, including the one with Christopher Bishop, Keaton expressed his regret about asking Crisp to help with *The Navigator* because the "topnotch dramatic man," who had been hired to direct dramatic scenes, was only interested in inventing gag scenes for Keaton, which were not at all welcome (59).

sequence also acknowledges the contributions in photography as well as mentions the names of the technical director and the electrician.[134] There are no cast credits: the central characters are introduced later, in paratextual intertitles.[135] The title sequence finishes with a copyright statement, another reminder of who owns the film: "Copyrighted MCMXXIV in United States of America and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn Distributing Corporation. All rights reserved under International Convention of Buenos Aires." The inclusion of *United States of America* and *International Convention* either signals that this version of the film was meant for foreign markets or anticipates a wide international distribution of the version that also circulated on the domestic market.

In *The Navigator*, the viewers get a heavy dosage of screen words at the beginning but are spared the intrusion of verbal language in the final twenty minutes. The last intertitle ("Where ignorance is bliss — —"), which prefaces the scene of Rollo getting equipped for underwater works,[136] appears during the thirty-ninth minute of the

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[134] The same crew, with the exception of Crisp, is also credited in *Sherlock, Jr.*, released in May 1924; only the "technical director" is called "art director" in the earlier film. In the features he directed, Keaton did not seem to mind sharing the credits with other people. As he said in an interview with Kevin Brownlow, "I'd put one of my writers' names—or something like that—on there. Says directed by. . . . Give 'em a promotion. I did that with . . . Clyde Bruckman" ("Buster" 175). Bruckman received a directorial credit together with Keaton in *The General.*

[135] In the second half of the twenties, Keaton's films employed two alternative practices of crediting actors: for example, in *The General*, "*THE CAST*" is included in the title sequence, whereas in *Steamboat Bill, Jr*. (Charles F. Reisner, May 1928), the last film Keaton made independently, before he signed a contract with MGM, the central characters are introduced in paratextual intertitles.

[136] This combination of the intertitle and the visual sequence can ironically illustrate Cecil B. DeMille's speculation on the differences between experts and amateurs, which he voices when discussing his usage of color photography in *Joan the Woman* (1916): "The great advantage that amateurs have over experts is that the experts always see mountainously insuperable obstacles of which the amateur is blissfully ignorant. The amateur sees only the result he wants to get; and if he drives hard enough, he may often get it" (175).

film; the only words the viewers encounter in this intertitle-free section of the film is the sign "danger / men at work," which, as discussed earlier, is not related to the development of the narrative. Thus, Keaton manages to build the dramatic tension—and the comedy—of the kidnapping, rescue, and fight for life without the aid of words.

WHEN LAUGHTER IS NOT THE GOAL:
SCREEN WORDS IN CECIL B. DEMILLE'S DRAMAS

While screen words are often responsible for provoking laughter in comedies, this function is subdued or absent in films that present situations in a more serious manner. What verbal language strives to achieve in this context will be analyzed on the basis of Cecil B. DeMille's two silent dramas. In his autobiography, DeMille narrates that he ventured into movies in 1913—to become director-general of the newly created Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company. Lasky had been a rather successful theatrical producer,[137] and DeMille had acted in and written for the theater, but neither had any experience in film production, apart from one day that DeMille had spent in an Edison studio watching the process of filming (65-71).The name of the company revealed their policy that they would make only features— "pictures several reels long, telling a well-constructed story, well acted, and intended not as conglomerate items on the daily changing programs of the nickelodeons or as 'chasers' in the vaudeville houses, but precisely as 'feature' attractions which could stand on their own merits as a real and new form of the drama" (76).

[137] Another co-founder of the company, Samuel Goldfish, Lasky's brother-in-law, had been a successful glove salesman before joining the venture (DeMille 68). He would later organize the Goldwyn Pictures Corporation, together with Edgar Selwyn, and would change his own name to Goldwyn (177).

Consequently, the idea for the first film made by the company came from the theater: *The Squaw Man* (DeMille and Apfel, 1914), an adaptation of a play by Edwin Milton Royle that had had a successful run on Broadway a few seasons before, became the first feature film produced in Hollywood,[138] which was then a "somnolent village" where the enterprising easterners were offered a large barn to serve as their studio (DeMille 71, 79). DeMille repeats the oft-quoted sentiment that *The Squaw Man* revolutionized the movie industry, partially because it featured the stage star (Dustin Farnum) who had played the main character in the 1911 revival of the stage play, which signaled the changing attitudes of serious theater people to movies (101). It was hardly, however, a revolution in cinematography because it was very static and theatrical in its visual presentation.

DeMille's first film heavily depends on intertitles in elaborating the story and providing insight into the characters' thoughts. Unfortunately, as Robert S. Birchard states, the credits and intertitles in the surviving prints of *The Squaw Man* are from a reissue version because they reflect "the graphic style of the Lasky films of the 1915-16 period" (8).[139] According to Birchard, many of the films directed by DeMille in the mid-teens—for example, *The Virginian* (1914), *The Cheat* (1915), *Carmen* (1915)—also underwent transformation in the area of intertitles when Paramount rereleased them in

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[138] As Robert M. Henderson points out, the first motion picture "made within the boundaries of what came to me known as Hollywood" was Griffith's *In Old California*, filmed in 1910 (98). Biograph also describes *In Old California* as the first film made in Hollywood (Usai 11: 190).

[139] Birchard also points out that in the original release, the actors "received screen credit in an elaborate cut-out display." An excerpt from *The Squaw Man* with original intertitles is included in the 1931 Paramount promotional film *The House That Shadows Built* (377).

1918 (18).[140] DeMille's major religious epic of the late twenties, *The King of Kings*, had three releases within a short period of time.[141] The two films that will be discussed in this section, however, are likely to feature original intertitles: the social drama *Old Wives for New* (1918) and the religious-allegorical drama *The Ten Commandments* (1923).

Old Wives for New, based on David Graham Phillips's well-known 1908 novel of the same name, was, in DeMille's own words, essentially "the story of the damage which a lazy and slovenly wife can do to her marriage" (209).[142] DeMille, however, turned it into such "strong stuff" that there was serious opposition in New York to releasing it (214), although the filmmaker had undertaken the project after repeated requests from

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[140] In the 1918 rerelease of *The Cheat*, the rich villain's name and nationality (Japanese) were changed to make him Burmese because Japan had become an American ally in World War I. This led to a loss of the connection between the villain's name (Tori) and his trademark (a shrine gate, called *torii* in Japanese), with which he brands the woman to claim his ownership over her (Higashi, "Ethnicity" 127). Birchard mentions that "the terse [inter]titles of the original were inflated for literary effect." It is the 1918 version that is now in circulation (70).

[141] *The King of Kings* premiered in New York in April 1927 as an eighteen-reeler (Birchard 216). In response to the Jewish community's concerns, changes were made in ten out of eighteen reels, including rewriting several intertitles and introducing a foreword (224-26); the revised version was released in January 1928, and the changes went to each of the four roadshow companies (Herman 25). For the general release in September 1928, *The King of Kings* was cut to twelve reels (Birchard 216). The roadshow version became publicly available in December 2004, as part of the Criterion DVD set. Until 2004, as Birchard notes, only the shortened version of *The King of Kings* had been in circulation (226). The ramifications of the intertitles in this version of the film are discussed, for instance, in Babington and Evans 110-26; Grace 48-50; Herman 15-16; Reinhartz 14, 21, 216.

[142] *Old Wives for New* is often considered DeMille's ultimate plunge into commercialism, which is why he addressed these accusations in the autobiography: "The reader may, if he chooses, consider that [agreeing to produce *Old Wives for New*] my original sin. He may write down, sadly or smugly as suits his mood, the date on which I bade a last good-by to integrity and art. I wish that integrity and art and life were as simple as they are made by pundits. . . . Certainly any director would rather produce only subjects of his own choosing. He would also like to have an unlimited, unquestioned budget. . . . And then he will not be a director for very long, as some very good directors have found, to their own sorrow and the public's loss" (212-13).

Lasky to do a contemporary story "of great human interest" (212). According to Sumiko Higashi, before *Old Wives for New* went into distribution, it had been subjected to in-house censorship: apart from proposed cuts of risqué scenes and of signs of Charles Murdock's fastidiousness, the memo addressed to Lasky included a suggestion to delete the introductory intertitle (figure 3.139). As Higashi explains, such requests reflected the apprehension of the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation,[143] which was starting to target a broader audience, that the average, less-than-genteel, spectator would misconstrue the references to the dowdiness of married women. Although the introductory intertitle and the scenes that show Murdock's disgust at his wife's slovenly habits remain in the surviving copy of the film, another censorial suggestion—to indicate, contrary to the scenario, that Murdock did not pursue an affair with Viola—was heeded (*Cecil* 160). Most probably, this resulted in the insertion of a non-diegetic intertitle that provides the viewers with a glimpse into Viola's mind (figure 3.140), which is rather out of place because the psychology of a woman-escort is definitely not central to the film.

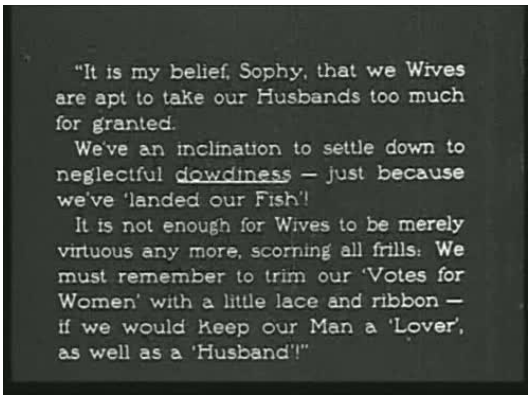


Fig. 3.139. *Old Wives for New*: the interlocutionary sermon.



Fig. 3.140. *Old Wives for New*: for the sake of censors—no affair!

[143] The Famous Players, headed by Adolph Zukor, merged with the Lasky Company in June 1916, with Zukor becoming President of Famous Players-Lasky and, soon, of Paramount as well (DeMille 155-56). The company was renamed Paramount-Famous-Lasky in 1927, when it had already integrated production, distribution, and exhibition (Dick 18).

The quotation marks around the introductory intertitle of *Old Wives for New* can be interpreted as signaling a quote from the novel that is being adapted to the screen or a diegetic wife's admonition to the diegetic Sophy, who, as the spectators will learn in a few minutes, has indeed "settle[d] down to neglectful dowdiness." In fact, as Higashi points out, it is not even a paraphrase, let alone a quote, from the novel; nor can it be attributed to any character from the film (*Cecil* 147). Thus, the quotation marks are used as a trick to conceal the authorial voice, which can be easily read as anti-feminist and patriarchal. The introduction to the diegetic story then serves as a warning to female spectators, which is supposedly coming from their own midst, that the institution of marriage is being threatened by the fights for the right of women to vote[144] and that the salvation lies in the frills of "a little lace and ribbon." Whereas the issues of voting will not be taken up in the film, the pleasures of consumerism certainly will.

The authorial voice, veiled in the introduction, is more blatant in non-diegetic intertitles, where it describes the situation and the characters ("After Three Weeks of 'Gypsy' Freedom - Murdock the Cynic, the Disappointed, comes at last to know what a woman - the Right Woman - can mean to a lonely man."), evaluates their motivations (figure 3.141), and comments on human nature ("The Rejuvenation of Sophy – Where Murdock's Complaint has Failed - Blagden's Flattery Wins."). In several non-diegetic intertitles, explanatory statements are titled with metaphorical headings, such as "The 'Catspaw'" or "'While the Cat's Away'" (see also figure 3.141). Sometimes the metaphors

[144] The women's suffrage movement was at its peak in the teens, resulting in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920. As Higashi mentions, *Old Wives for New* generated such a flood of indignant letters from wives that it prompted DeMille and his writer Jeanie Macpherson to create a story with the roles reversed. The comedy *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919) was filmed from the point of view of a discontented wife; yet it still taught the woman a lesson "to reduce unreasonable demands on her mate" (*Cecil* 150).

stand on their own, without any need of explication, as in “The Green Eyes of Jealousy” and “The 'Hydra-Head' of Scandal.” The authorial voice both mocks and laments the inevitable involvement of the press in the lives and deaths of the rich: the section of the film that deals with rumors propagated by newspapers is introduced with the intertitle “The 'Extra - Extra!'”[145] Inserts of newspaper pages, which completely misrepresent the events that the spectators have already witnessed (figure 3.142), confirm that sensationalism rather than the truth was often considered to be the driving force of reporting at the time the film was made.



Fig. 3.141. *Old Wives for New*: revealing the true motivation.

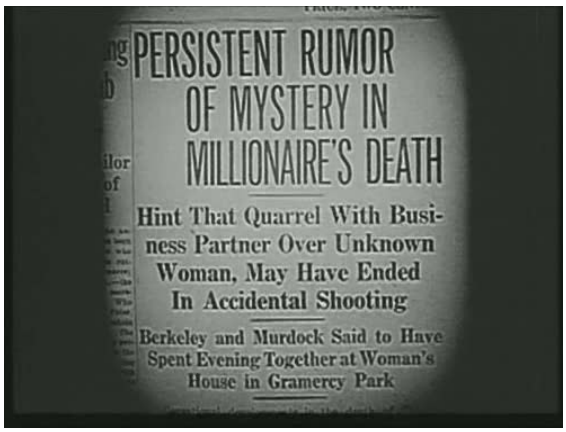


Fig. 3.142. *Old Wives for New*: rumors propagated by the press.

In an earlier scene of the film, newspapers serve another purpose—of revealing the interests of the Murdocks' children and of promoting consumerism. The breakfast scene, prefaced by the ironic intertitle “'Home, Sweet Home,'” is dominated by newspapers (figure 3.143), which preclude any conversation: the daughter is more interested in the latest fashion of pajamas (figure 3.144) and the son's attention is occupied by the page devoted to automobiles. This alienation of the father does not come

[145] The pervasiveness of the “Extra! Extra!” shouts in the American cities of the teens and twenties, with which street vendors notified potential buyers of the sensational news printed in an extra, not regular, issue of the newspaper they were selling, is perhaps best illustrated in Robert E. Sherwood's short story “'Extra! Extra!'” (1926).

as a surprise, however, because Charles Murdock is introduced in the first paratextual intertitle of the film as "an 'Oil King'—whose name spells *Genius* to the Financial World —and *Pocket-Book* to his Family."



Fig. 3.143. *Old Wives for New*: the "sweet home" of newspapers.



Fig. 3.144. *Old Wives for New*: revealing and promoting consumerism.

DeMille puts a nice spin on introducing the other central characters by drawing the audience's attention to their hands as representative of their profession or way of life and by prefacing these introductions by a non-diegetic intertitle that performs the function of the narrative guide: "The Five Pairs of Hands that Were to Weave the Threads of his Destiny." The multimediality of the close-ups and the concise, and sometimes witty, descriptions of the paratextual intertitles (figures 3.145 and 3.146) are intended to influence the viewers' attitudes to the characters from the very beginning:



Fig. 3.145. *Old Wives for New*: establishing the character's background.



Fig. 3.146. *Old Wives for New*: presenting the character's occupation.

DeMille does not seem to consider suspense to be essential to this film since the intertitle that introduces Juliet Raeburn as “the most fashionable of New York Dressmakers” also names her as the one “who was finally to cut the Thread of his Fate,” which is literalized in the following shot of her hands cutting a cloth.

Old Wives for New as a whole is based on juxtapositions, often with the aid of screen words. Murdock's unhappiness is revealed at the very beginning of the film when, talking to his dog, he compares his situation to that of a happy-go-lucky couple he sees in the street: “'They don't own the house they live in—and they haven't any automobile, but they are happier than I am—because they have *Love!*'” Sophy Murdock is presented in two incarnations in the same scene: as an attractive girl of eighteen, whose photograph (figure 3.147) causes her husband to reminisce about their first meeting in the countryside, and as an overweight and hypochondriacal matron, who interrupts his daydreaming by the demanding question “'Charles Murdock—what on earth are you 'mooning' about?'” The two Sophies even share the same shot, created through double exposure, where the vision of the happy past near a stream is fading to give way to the gloomy present in a room cramped with furniture and nicknacks (figure 3.148).

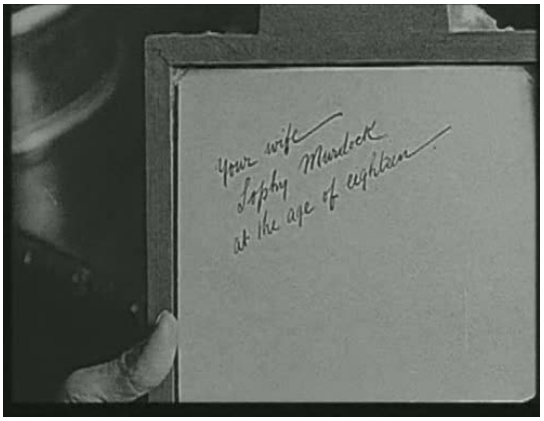


Fig. 3.147. *Old Wives for New*: a reminder of the happy past.


Fig. 3.148. *Old Wives for New*: the older Sophy scaring off the young Sophy.

Only after we have seen Sophy in her youth will the “old wife” be contrasted with

other women. Thus, “Two Kinds of Firelight” are illustrated by a shot of Sophy dozing off in her bed with a book and by a scene of Murdock and Juliet sitting at a fireplace in the woods. Juliet and Murdock's chance meeting in the fashion store “Dangerfield's” is prefaced by a close-up of Juliet's elegant ankle boots and his daughter's remark “'Did you ever see such well-groomed feet in your life—she's the head of the establishment.'”

The personalities of the central characters are revealed as much through their appearance as through their speech. If Sophy behaves and talks like a bully (“'You ought to be ashamed, Charles Murdock, trying to look like a boy—you are a married man with grown children!'”), Juliet's lines are meant to show her kind nature (“'Did you see him—he had such a cunning face! I never killed anything in my life before!'”), reinforced by her relief that the bear did not die by her hand. Murdock's utter frustration with his dowdy spouse is also voiced in a semi-diegetic intertitle: “'Instead of making life a hell for yourself and for me - why don't you keep your home clean and your family happy—and it wouldn't do any harm to clean yourself and wash your hair!'” DeMille, however, makes it a point to insist on the central male character's honesty and decency in dealing with women. Murdock proposes a divorce (“'Sophy—it's a degradation for two people to go on living together who no longer care for each other! I propose that you will take half of all we've got—and that you and I shall release each other.'”) before Juliet appears on the horizon. He shaves off his moustache only at the insistence of his son, who playfully wants to pass his father as his brother. When Murdock is about to introduce his son to Juliet (“'May I introduce my—'”), the youngster finishes the line for him (“'—his honored younger brother.'”), despite his father's pantomimed remonstration. Tortured by this deception, Murdock reveals the truth to Juliet when they kiss for the first time after he saves her from the boat before it plunges into the rapids. Even though both are clearly in

love, Murdock's being officially married leads to their separation until their union, eagerly anticipated by the audience, is consummated at the very end of the film.

Quite a few semi-diegetic intertitles in *Old Wives for New* approximate sonic qualities of speech. When Berkeley, Murdock's business partner, is shot by the jealous lover, his life's ebbing away is signaled by a slight change in the bibliographical code of his repeated command: "'Telephone—!'" gives way to "'Tele - phone—!'" Underlining is often used for emphasis in dialogue lines (e.g., "'. . . But just you remember this, Charles Murdock, I'll never divorce you - never!'" and "'. . . I'm married, Juliet, I am not that boy's brother - I'm his father!'"), although some non-diegetic intertitles also include underlined words, which then acquire a symbolic significance in the context of the film (see *dowdiness* in figure 3.139). Underlining is coupled with capitalization to put an even stronger emphasis on the future that awaits the murderess if she does not collaborate in hiding the scandal (figure 3.149). Sharing the hushed-up truth with Sophy in the crowded "Dangerfield's," Berkeley's wife is both cynical and dramatic, ending her remark in a whisper, which is indicated by a smaller font and italics (figure 3.150).

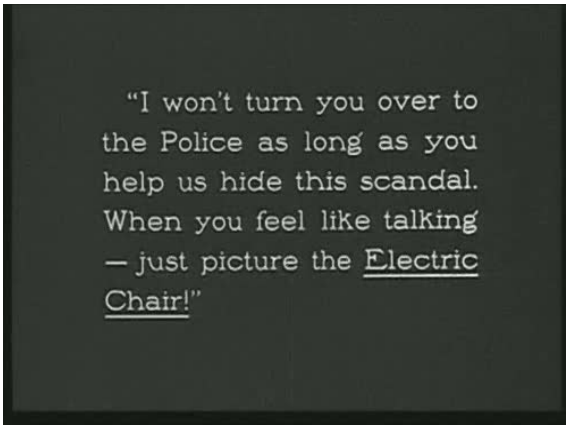


Fig. 3.149. *Old Wives for New*: underlining in tandem with capitalization.

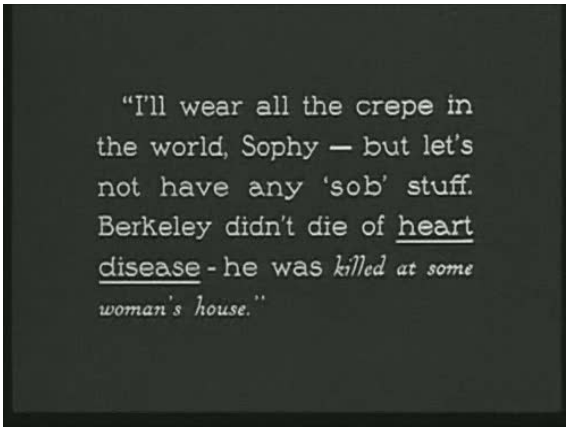


Fig. 3.150. *Old Wives for New*: the truth revealed in a whisper.

The underlined verb in Murdock's line "'Can they make me forget?'" interacts with other screen words and visual images in the mode of radiant mediality to reveal a

central symbol of the film: the persistence of memory. As discussed above, the husband, who now feels unloved, finds solace in remembering the happy days of being loved by and being in love with young Sophy. The photograph that evokes these memories, however, is destroyed by the older Sophy after her husband reproaches her for her slovenly habits. Still married, Murdock cannot act on his love for Juliet; nor can he let go of the "month of happiness" that he spent communicating with her in the woods. In desperation, Murdock agrees to join his business partner in a night café, but only after being assured that Berkeley's lady friends can make him forget. The poetic transtextual intertitle that introduces the café scene incorporates a quote from Edward Fitzgerald's influential translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (rubai 39), with the word *bitter* underlined for emphasis (figure 3.151), which explains once again that Murdock responds to the mocking "Voice of the Café" only in order to forget his bitter existence. The only toast that we "hear" Murdock pronounce in the café is "'To the death of - Memory!'" The death of memory is ingeniously enacted by Viola, who writes "Memory" on a balloon and pops it with a burning cigarette (figure 3.152).



Fig. 3.151. *Old Wives for New*: invoking Omar Khayyám.



Fig. 3.152. *Old Wives for New*: killing Memory.

Despite Viola's efforts to make Murdock forget, he is reminded of Juliet by the flowery perfume that Viola is wearing ("'My perfume reminds you of someone - doesn't

it? I used to be a model at 'Dangerfield's' and the lady that owned the place used it.'"). His sensory memories are visualized with the help of the same flowers that synesthetically stood for the fragrance Murdock was enjoying when he had found a handkerchief embroidered *JR*, inadvertently dropped by Juliet on the dead bear (figures 3.153 and 3.154). The memory of Juliet is so strong that Murdock denies himself the pleasure of Viola's company ("'No, I can't forget—I will only see you to your apartment.'"); this semi-diegetic intertitle may have also been included to assure the censors and the puritanically minded audiences that the positive character did not engage in an extramarital affair. The diegetic insert of the initials on the handkerchief appears two more times in the film—to reveal Blagden's plan to lay his hands on the money that Sophy would get after the divorce. First we see Murdock's "crafty secretary" fish the handkerchief out of his boss's pocket; later Blagden plants the handkerchief on Murdock's desk just in time for Sophy to notice and snatch it. This memory of Juliet, so dear to Murdock, will in fact act as a catalyst for the dramatic action, which will eventually finalize in two marriages: of Sophy and Blagden in New York, prefaced by "Old Wives for New," and of Juliet and Murdock, who are showered with flowers when they are floating in a gondola in Venice.



Fig. 3.153. *Old Wives for New*: fragrance presented synesthetically.



Fig. 3.154. *Old Wives for New*: the flowers of the perfume that brings back memories.

Although *Old Wives for New* is a drama, it has some elements of humor in it. All of them come at the expense of Sophy and are created through the interaction of words and images. After Sophy has informed Murdock that she will never give him a divorce, she is shown in their marital bed, eating chocolates and reading the Bible: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2.24). Upon seeing her lawful husband, who stops to close the door to the bedroom from the outside, Sophy demandingly gestures to him to occupy the vacant part of the bed. When Murdock refuses to obey, she scoffs and goes back to reading but then pulls an offended face and consoles herself with yet another chocolate. "The Rejuvenation of Sophy," arranged by the scheming Blagden, is presented in several stages. Early in the morning, Sophy is rolled back and forth on the floor by two nurses. At "10 A.M." she is subjected to a treatment in the process of which only her suffering face is visible. At "11 A.M." she is stuffed into a corset. And at "1 P.M." Sophy appears before Blagden's eyes in all her rejuvenated glory, ready to be proposed to ("'Have you ever thought, now that you have your divorce, that sometime—you <u>might</u> - marry again?'"). The last intertitle of the film ("'Where are the children—I must kiss them goodbye!'"), inserted in the scene of Sophy and Blagden's wedding celebration, is followed by two brief shots of the daughter and the son kissing their own sweethearts, oblivious to their filial responsibilities.

If the project of *Old Wives for New* was imposed on DeMille by the management, the motion picture on a religious theme—*The Ten Commandments*—grew out of a contest. As DeMille writes in his autobiography, the public was invited to suggest topics for his new film, and a religious theme turned out to be quite popular, including the idea that became the cornerstone of the film: "You cannot break the Ten Commandments—

they will break you."[146] According to the filmmaker, the theme "stirred and challenged in me the heritage of being Henry DeMille's son; a theme that brightened memories of his reading the Bible aloud to us and teaching his sons that the laws of God are not mere laws, but are the Law" (249-50). Both of these sentiments are incorporated into the film itself as intertitles, the latter as a conclusion to the authorial introduction (figure 3.155) and the former as part of the non-diegetic intertitle that prefaces the non-believing brother's final downfall (figure 3.156). The first part of the authorial introduction, in its interlocutionary moralizing, makes a sweeping gesture of connecting the World War, which was not yet known as the First World War, to the disregard of the Ten Commandments in "our modern world": "Our modern world defined God as a 'religious complex' and laughed at the Ten Commandments as OLD FASHIONED. ¶[147] Then, through the laughter, came the shattering thunder of the World War. ¶ And now a blood-drenched, bitter world—no longer laughing—cries for a way out."[148]

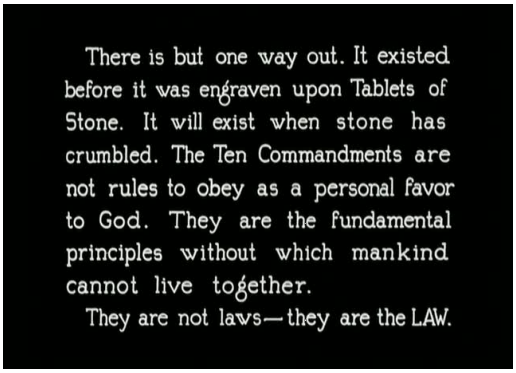


Fig. 3.155. *The Ten Commandments*: establishing the premise of the film.

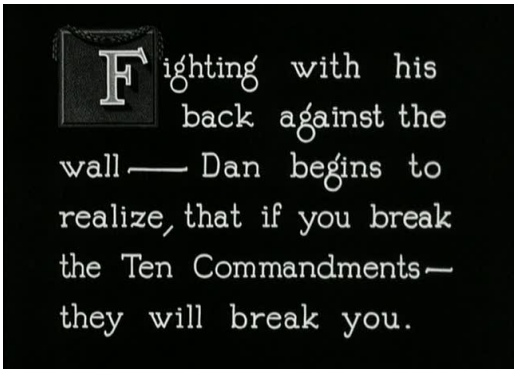


Fig. 3.156. *The Ten Commandments*: the theme underpinning the film.

[146] On the rise of religious fundamentalism in the US in the twenties and on DeMille's appeal to fundamentalists, see Higashi, *Cecil* 179-93.

[147] The symbol ¶ is used here instead of a paragraph break in the original intertitle.

[148] The American Bible movies of the 1920s "focused on the moral bankruptcy of the nation and paralleled the sins of ancient Israel with the sins of people in the early twentieth century, blaming immorality for the First World War" (Homan 91).

The Ten Commandments has a bipartite structure, which is signaled already in the title sequence via "Cast of the PROLOGUE" and "Cast of the STORY." Both casts include minor characters, most probably to acknowledge and capitalize on the celebrity status of the actors. Thus, Charles Ogle, who has had hundreds of screen roles, gets credit as "THE DOCTOR" in spite of his very brief appearance in the film, whereas the actor playing the detective who searches Mary's room and informs her that her husband is wanted for murder remains uncredited, although his part is more substantial than Ogle's. It took me some time to figure out to which character "THE OUTCAST" in the modern story referred, but the viewers in the early twenties must have easily recognized Agnes Ayres as the leper in the recreation of the Biblical scene of cleansing, which appeared towards the very end of the film.[149] Understandably, DeMille did not use the noun *leper* as an identifier of the actress who had starred in many features, including DeMille's own *Forbidden Fruit* (1921) and George Melford's *The Sheik* (1921), with Rudolph Valentino as her counterpart in the latter. I would have been similarly unsure about the character identified as "THE BRONZE MAN," played by Noble Johnson, if I had not consulted the photoplay edition of *The Ten Commandments*, based on Macpherson's script, which provides more detailed descriptions of the characters (MacMahon ix).

As DeMille explains, Macpherson was the only writer responsible for the scenario. Although an episodic structuring of the film, based on separate commandments and written by different authors, had been initially considered, DeMille finally decided in favor of a "dramatic unity of construction" (250). As an indicator of dual creative

[149] In this scene in the Bible, however, the leper is referred to as a *he* (Matt. 8.3-5). According to the photoplay edition of *The Ten Commandments*, the scene in the film is meant to represent the modern-day Mary's visualization of the story while John is reading it to her, as a parallel to her own misfortune (MacMahon 234) because she thinks that her husband has given her leprosy.

authorship, Macpherson is billed as the story-writer in the same shot where DeMille is credited as the director, although his contribution is appropriately accorded a larger font. The "Assisted by" rubric in the following shot includes, apart from the "Art Director," "Photographers," "Technical Director," and "Assistant Director," the name of Anne Bauchens as the "Cutter," an early instance of acknowledging the film editor's role in the final product.[150]

The multiple co-owners of *The Ten Commandments* are listed only in the title shot (figure 3.157). The fact that the production is presented by both Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky indicates the film's exceptional status: as Birchard points out, it was part of the merger agreement that Zukor would put his name on East Coast productions and Lasky would "present" films made in the West, but Zukor could opt for the dual credit on "films of special interest or prestige" (145). The title shot, however, does more than just give credit to the producers and distributors. A prominent position at the top, where a studio logo would have usually been placed, is occupied by a sketch of the tablets on which the Ten Commandments will be carved, thus co-opting the giver and the receiver of the Commandments as creators of the film. The Paramount logo, which is relegated to the very bottom of the title shot, will fully occupy the final shot of the film instead. The

[150] As DeMille points out, Bauchens edited all of his pictures starting with *We Can't Have Everything* in 1918. He formulates his understanding of the role of the editor in the following way: "In the motion picture industry, film editors used to be known as cutters. The present generation of film editors dislikes that term, and they are right, for what the word 'cutter' brings to mind is someone with scissors and pastepot. A film editor needs much more than those tools. He needs a well-developed dramatic sense, an ability to think and feel in tune with the director and his grasp of the story as a whole, and a high degree of ingenuity. Why? Because the whole tempo and feeling and even meaning of a scene can be altered by cutting out a few frames of film here or adding a few there, not to mention rearranging the order of the shots. I have seen unedited film, played by good actors, directed by a good director from a well-written script, utterly confusing and even meaningless on the screen, until it had passed through the hands of a skilled editor—one like Annie Bauchens" (119).

brick-wall background motif of the title shot remains the same in the title sequence and also appears on the intertitles of the prologue, starting with the opening quote about "hard bondage, in mortar and in brick" (figure 3.158), until it gives way to the open-waters motif in the intertitles that narrate the division of waters and the crossing of the Red Sea (see figure 3.176 later).[151]



Fig. 3.157. *The Ten Commandments*: the Commandment tablets ousting the logo.

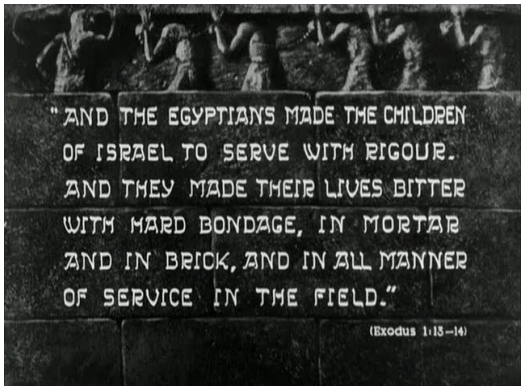


Fig. 3.158. *The Ten Commandments*: the wall of bondage.

The liberation open-waters motif of the art titles, however, is soon replaced by an enclosed-space background of the mountain folds, when the people who have escaped Egyptian bondage enslave themselves to the Golden Calf (figure 3.159). At the same time, the contrast between the people who "had forgotten their god" and Moses, who is receiving "two tables of testimony," is also emphasized by the difference in the art titles: the words describing Moses' experience are written against the background of the mountain shape, with the sky visible in the upper left-hand corner (figure 3.160). Once Moses joins the people and sees their massive corruption, the art titles become uniform—of the enclosed-space type—with no differentiation whatsoever.

[151] Higashi notes that the disappearance of the wall in the art titles signals the liberation of the Hebrews. She also discusses the contributions of color to the spectacle and symbolism of the film ("Antimodernism" 96). The version I have viewed, the 2006 DVD release by Paramount, is black and white; the DVD includes one sequence in color—the Exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea.

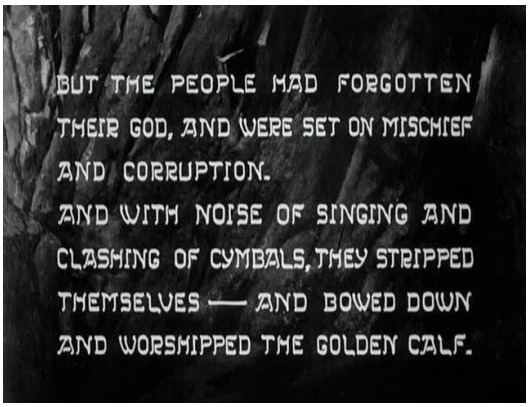


Fig. 3.159. *The Ten Commandments*: newly enslaved—by the Golden Calf.

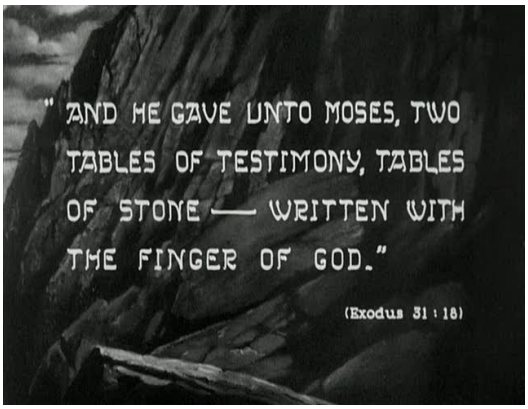


Fig. 3.160. *The Ten Commandments*: the freedom of the outside.

There is much more variation to the art titles, both non-diegetic and semi-diegetic, in the first section of the prologue, in spite of the unifying brick-wall motif. For example, the tenth plague—the slaying of the firstborn—is metonymically visualized through a sword (figure 3.161). In other cases, the silhouette on the art title visually approximates or symbolizes the diegetic figure or object. Thus, when the Bronze Man brings in the body of the Pharaoh's son, the semi-diegetic intertitle that confirms the death ("'MIGHTY PHARAOH—THY SON IS DEAD!'") integrates an image of a tomb effigy. The same silhouetted image will reappear on the expository intertitle that informs the viewers that the reason the Pharaoh decides to pursue the people of Israel is his gods' inability to bring his son back to life (figure 3.162).

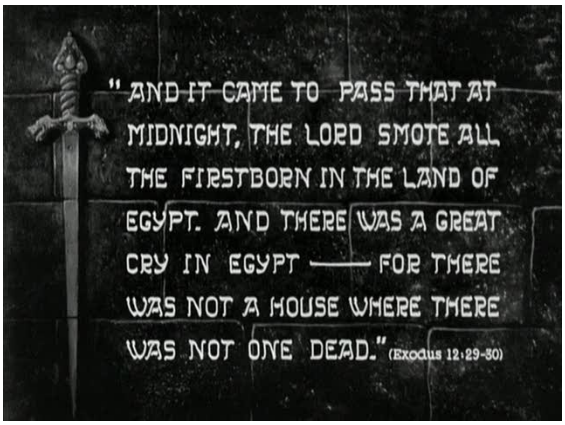


Fig. 3.161. *The Ten Commandments*: the sword as a metonymy for the tenth plague.

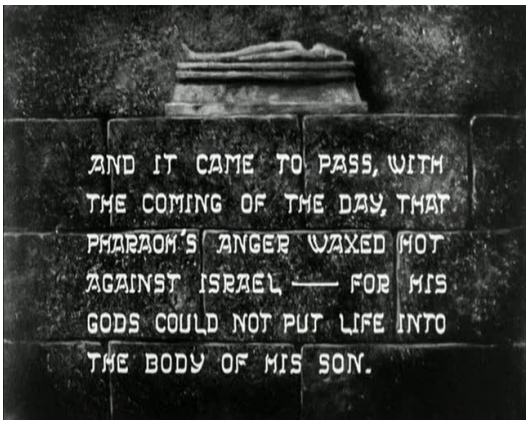


Fig. 3.162. *The Ten Commandments*: the tomb effigy as "the body of his son."

The non-diegetic verbal-visual introduction of Aaron features a rod with an equilateral triangle sitting on top (figure 3.163). When the “priest of Israel” appears accompanying his brother Moses in the following visual sequence, Aaron clutches a similarly shaped rod (figure 3.164). Nowhere in the Bible is there a reference to Aaron's rod having a triangular head. This image, however, is recorded in Macpherson's script, where Moses and Aaron are described in the following manner: “A gleaming-eyed, unshorn old man with profuse white locks and billowing beard, clad in a plain desert robe and carrying a desert pilgrim's staff. With him a shorter graybeard as old or older, more ceremoniously dressed in cap and figured garments, upholding an emblematic rod surmounted by a triangle” (MacMahon 25).



Fig. 3.163. *The Ten Commandments*: the iconic stand-in for the priest of Israel.



Fig. 3.164. *The Ten Commandments*: Aaron and the rod in the diegesis.

Different triangular shapes are incorporated in various art titles of *The Ten Commandments*. Thus, two overlaying triangles, with a cross sign in the center, which form the basic shape of the Star of David, decorate the non-diegetic intertitle that introduces Moses into the story (figure 3.165) and all the four semi-diegetic intertitles that present Moses' lines before the division of the waters. The pillar-of-fire intertitle features a triangle that radiates light (figure 3.166), which seems to follow the alchemical tradition of using an upward-pointing equilateral triangle as a symbol for fire, as described in Carl G. Liungman (312). Considering that the Ten Commandments are

delivered to Moses as bursts of fire[152] (figure 3.167) and that the film finishes on the symbolic conversation between Mary and John about the power of light to vanquish imagined signs of leprosy ("'Why, John—in the light, it's gone!'" and "'Yes—in the LIGHT—it's gone!'"), it is not completely far-fetched to hypothesize that triangles in *The Ten Commandments* stand for divine power in its various manifestations.[153]



Fig. 3.165. *The Ten Commandments*: the sign of Moses.



Fig. 3.166. *The Ten Commandments*: the triangle of the pillar of fire.

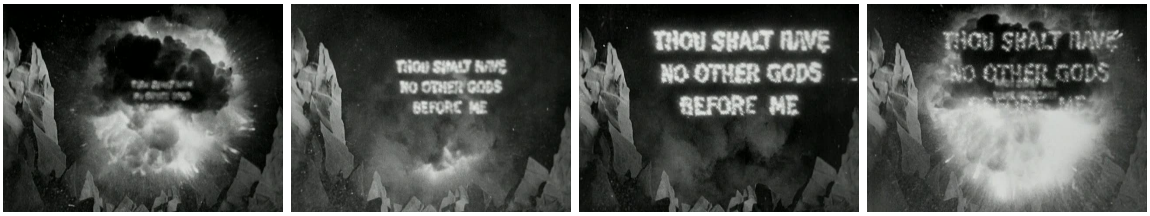


Fig. 3.167. *The Ten Commandments*: the fiery bursts of the commandments.

The design of the intertitles in the prologue contributes not only to the multiplicity

[152] In the scene of cleansing, visualized by Mary in the modern story, the typography of the semi-diegetic intertitle is designed as if the words pronounced by Jesus ("'I WILL—BE THOU MADE CLEAN'") were radiating light or were made of fire.

[153] The triangle also happens to be a very important symbol in Freemasonry. As Albert G. Mackey records, the "equilateral triangle appears to have been adopted by nearly all the nations of antiquity as a symbol of the Deity. . . . The equilateral triangle is to be found scattered throughout the Masonic system" (1053). Whether DeMille, who, according to his autobiography, belonged to the Masonic Grand Lodge of New York (407), indeed embedded some Masonic symbols in *The Ten Commandments* is, however, a research question that is beyond the scope of this project.

of verbal-visual references to the divine. The lettering of the words themselves simulates the glyphs of modern Hebrew script, a reference to "the children of Israel." DeMille names the "quest for authenticity in films," i.e., making sure that "what goes *into* a picture is authentic for the time and place in the story," as a major characteristic of his filmmaking style (115-16). Accordingly, when carving the commandments into what will become "the tables of stone," Moses is using a much older script that strongly resembles Samaritan (figures 3.168 and 3.169), which, according to Florian Coulmas, is the only surviving offshoot of the Canaanite alphabet, Old Hebrew having become extinct (460).[154] It is certainly not "an invented writing," as Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans claim while arguing that DeMille's film had to be "de-ethnicised" to appeal to a wide audience (35). The manner of representing the Ten Commandments through the first ten letters of the alphabet, which stand for numbers *one* through *ten* respectively, is also common in the Jewish tradition (Frankel and Teutsch 174).[155]



Fig. 3.168. *The Ten Commandments*: the word of God in the Samaritan script.



Fig. 3.169. *The Ten Commandments*: complete yet abbreviated.

[154] Canaanite was one of the three main branches of North Semitic writing, together with Phoenician and Aramaic. Modern Hebrew, the square script, derives from Aramaic (Coulmas 456, 459-60).

[155] It is not uncommon for Torah shields, for instance, to list the Ten Commandments via the first ten letters of the Hebrew alphabet. For some illustrations, see Schwartz.

In telling the story of Exodus and the Ten Commandments, DeMille understandably relies on the Biblical text, the excerpts from which are signaled by quotation marks and parenthetical references to the chapters and verses from Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers. Out of the fifty-four intertitles in the prologue—excluding the individual commandments (see figure 3.167) and the final command (figure 3.170), which are presented as fiery letters originating from the epicenter of lightning blasts—twenty-six are presented as quotes. Most of these intertextual references, especially the ones that are non-diegetic, are almost exact quotes, sometimes with slight changes in punctuation[156] (e.g., "'AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WENT INTO THE MIDST OF THE SEA UPON DRY GROUND—AND THE WATERS WERE A WALL UNTO THEM ON THEIR RIGHT HAND, AND ON THEIR LEFT.' (Exodus 14:22)") or elliptically omitted phrases. Several of these intertextual references, however, are paraphrases from the chapters and verses indicated. In the semi-diegetic intertitles that paraphrase the original text, the quotation marks are not so misleading because their usage is determined by the cinematic convention. Such non-diegetic intertitles, however, are evidence of the artistic license, practiced by DeMille to create a unified verbal-visual composition, more readable and dramatic than it would have been if it had included only exact quotes. The non-diegetic intertitle that refers to "Exodus 12:41-36" (figure 3.171) is illustrative of such creative appropriation. Going backwards from verse 41, the elliptical "quote" starts with the signature phrase "AND IT CAME TO PASS," which begins two

[156] A comparison among different versions reveals that whereas some sentences and phrases are exact quotes from the King James Version, others seem to have been taken from the American Standard Version. The intertitle that introduces the prologue (see figure 3.158), for example, employs the phrase "bitter with hard bondage" from the former and the spelling and the punctuation of the phrase "in mortar and in brick" from the latter.

other intertitles, including the next one in the film (see figure 3.162), and thus contributes to the Biblical rhythm of the prologue. The intertitle finishes on "JEWELS OF SILVER, JEWELS OF GOLD, AND RAIMENT,"[157] which are foregrounded because of their future contribution to the creation of the "GOLDEN CALF."

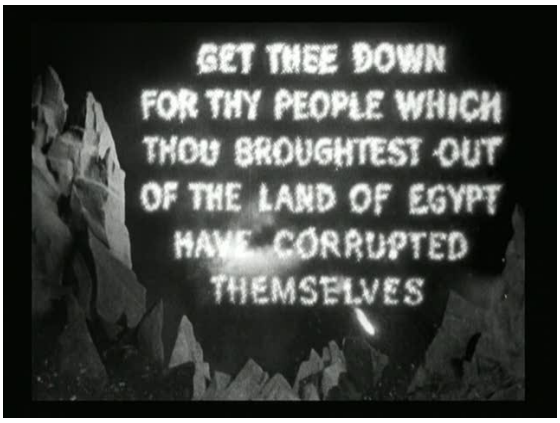


Fig. 3.170. *The Ten Commandments*: God's voice from Exod. 32.7, unreferenced.

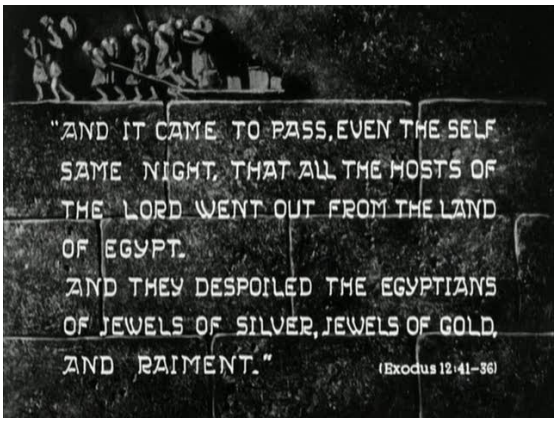


Fig. 3.171. *The Ten Commandments*: the artistic license of a paraphrase in quotes.

In several cases, verbal changes are introduced in "quoted" passages of the prologue to link them more directly to the spectacle of the contiguous visual scenes and/or to the modern story of the film. Thus, whereas original verses 19-20 from Exodus 14 focus on "the pillar of the cloud," DeMille replaced it by "the pillar of fire" (see figure 3.166)—most probably because the fiery color was much more dramatic and spectacular (figure 3.172) than the "cloudy" color could ever have been. As Higashi reminds us, DeMille's team had been experimenting with various color techniques, and the audiences of the early twenties "were enthralled by the use of color in scenes of the exodus [sic]" (*Cecil* 184). In another "quote" ("'AND WHEN THE PEOPLE SAW THAT MOSES DELAYED, THEY MURMURED AND CAME UNTO AARON, SAYING: UP, MAKE US GODS WHICH SHALL GO BEFORE US! AND AARON TOOK THEIR

[157] This phrase about the jewelry and raiment is actually part of verse 35, not mentioned in the intertitle.

GOLD AND CAST IT INTO THE FIRE AND FASHIONED A GOLDEN CALF.' (Exodus 32:1)"), substituting the adjective *golden* for the original *molten* ("a molten calf," incidentally, appears first only in Exod. 32.4) puts the word*s gold* an*d golden* into high relief. Worshipping gold becomes an important thread unifying the prologue and the modern story. Immediately after Moses has received the first two commandments "THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME" and "THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE,"[158] the people of Israel are shown collecting jewelry to fashion "A GOLDEN CALF," to whom they will soon bow down (see figure 3.159) and whom they will call "THE GOLDEN GOD OF PLEASURE." The same opposition (gold vs. true god) is manifested in the pre-Exodus scene where the Pharaoh replies to Moses, who warns Rameses about the imminent deaths of all the firstborn in Egypt unless the people of Israel are set free, by calling attention to the golden sandals of his son (figure 3.173).[159]

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[158] Having been raised in the Episcopal Church, to which there are references throughout his autobiography, DeMille chose the Protestant version of the Ten Commandments. For a comparison of the Hebrew, Catholic, and Protestant versions, see Ehrlich 20-22.

[159] "Rameses, the Magnificent" is also allotted a design of his own in the non-diegetic introduction and in the semi-diegetic intertitles: a winged solar disk flanked by two snakes—a representation of the Egyptian sun-god, and, by extension, of the pharaoh, who is being protected by uraei. This design was widely adopted by neighboring nations, as is evidenced in their art (Keel and Uehlinger 257, 276). Overall, Egyptian iconography permeates the prologue. As Higashi observes, the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 served as an intertextual background for the visual spectacle of *The Ten Commandments*. DeMille also visually referenced Gustave Doré's illustrations for the King James Bible; an expensive edition of this illustrated version was quite popular in the US (*Cecil* 180-86).

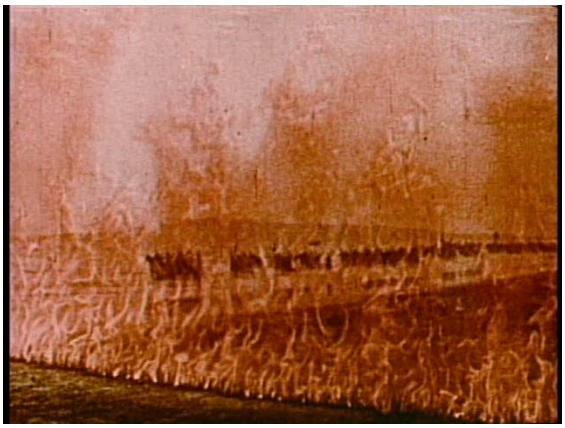


Fig. 3.172. *The Ten Commandments*: the spectacle of the pillar of fire.

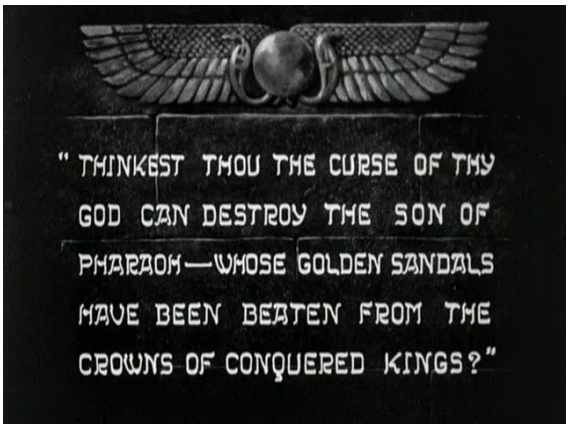


Fig. 3.173. *The Ten Commandments*: gold vs. true god opposition.

"The golden calf" and footwear[160] will also feature prominently in the first sequence of the modern story, which, superimposed over the last scene of the prologue, begins with the mother reading to her sons the ending of the Biblical story that was presented in the first part of the film ("'—and there fell of the Children of Israel that day, about three thousand men.' (Exodus 32:28)"). Dan, who has been bored and restless during the reading, challenges his mother's and brother's faith by pointing out that the Ten Commandments cannot help him mend his shoe, a close-up of the gaping sole of which illustrates his complaint, and by punning on the homophones *sole* and *soul*: "'I'd like your Ten Commandments better, if they could mend this sole—instead of the one Mom's worried about!'" His mother's angry reply revives the opposition of the prologue: "'If you're setting a pair of shoes above your God, Dan McTavish—you'll get just what the Children of Israel got, when they worshipped the Golden Calf!'" In the modern world, the unique "Golden Calf" has metamorphosed into a more common "Golden Eagle" of

[160] As Maureen Turim argues, "plac[ing] shoes above God becomes an obsession of the film's visual imagery," which is manifested in close-ups of footwear and in references to shoes and feet in intertitles ("High Angles" 69-70). In *Old Wives for New*, dainty and expensive shoes and boots are frequently displayed in close-ups as well, contributing to promoting consumer culture.

five-dollar coins.[161] Dan's good-humored line (figure 3.174) and imitation of prayer, both verbal ("'Nice Golden Eagle—hatch lots of little eagles, and bring them all to Papa!'") and visual (figure 3.175), suggest that the modern idol is still worth worshipping. Dan's bowing down to the "Golden Eagle" is constructed similarly to the earlier scene of the Pharaoh's prayer, where Rameses is beseeching the gods of Egypt to "call back life into the body of [his] son" and is burning incense before a statue whose head of a scarab[162] is presented in a close-up. Thus, Dan's behavior at the beginning of the modern story conflates the idolatry and gold-worship of the "Children of Israel" and of the Pharaoh.

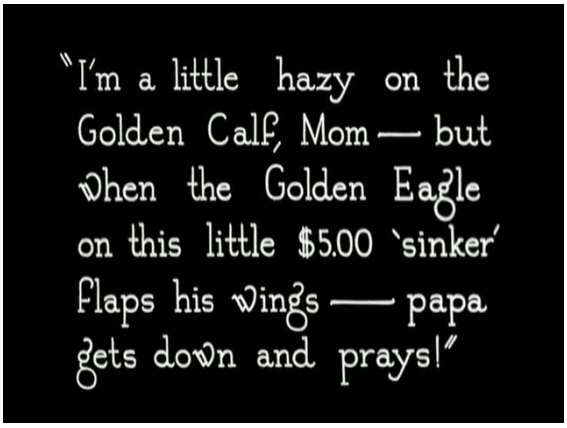


Fig. 3.174. *The Ten Commandments*: the metamorphosis of the "Golden Calf."



Fig. 3.175. *The Ten Commandments*: praying to the "Golden Eagle."

When John tries to reason with his brother ("'Laugh at the Ten Commandments all you want, Danny—but they pack an awful wallop!'") and insists on being serious about it, Dan finally loses his temper ("'Oh forget it! How do I know there is a God? And as for the Ten Commandments, they never got me anything, and they can go plumb to—!'"), the blasphemy of which infuriates his mother to such an extent that she demands that her son

[161] Five-dollar coins, which had various designs on the obverse but always an eagle on the reverse, were minted between 1795 and 1929 and had less than a quarter ounce of gold ("Five Dollar Gold Coin").

[162] In Egyptian mythology, the scarab is associated with Khepri, a manifestation of Ra as the rising sun and a symbol of rebirth and everlasting life (Turner and Coulter 269).

either “ask His forgiveness—or leave!” Caught between two fires, John changes the addressee of his admonitions and utters a line (“'You're holding a Cross in your hand, Mom—but you're using it like a Whip!'”) that signals, through parallel structure and capitalization, another important opposition in the film: fear versus love. Dan's atheistic refusal to apologize (“'I'll apologize to you, Mom, but not to God—because I don't believe there is one!'”) and his departure from the house finish the first scene of the modern story, where the main conflicts are played out mostly verbally, with visual images acting as appropriate illustrations.[163]

The verbal-visual interplay of the first sequence not only signals the conflicts of the story but also succinctly outlines the characters' traits—through their behavior, what they say, and how they say it. As Birchard describes, the personalities of the mother and the son have undergone significant transformation between Macpherson's script and the film. In the “era of fundamentalist revival and mother worship in the popular arts,” DeMille downplayed the bigotry and intolerance of Martha McTavish, which were strongly suggested in the script; this, in turn, made a vicious villain out of the modern character of Dan, contrary to Macpherson's intentions. The evolution of John's address to the mother is fascinating in this respect. In the original treatment of the theme, the “ideal type of man of high and steadfast principles,” as Macpherson described John's character, was supposed to say “You yourself are breaking the Third Commandment, mother, by preaching narrowness and intolerance in the name of God, you are taking the name of the Lord in vain.” In the final script, John's line was a bit less inflammatory (“You can't make people love God with fire and brimstone, Mother! You're trying to make Dan fear God—

[163] DeMille manages to pack twelve intertitles, all semi-diegetic and quite lengthy, into the five minutes of the first sequence.

not love him!")[164] but still stronger than the version that made it to the screen (181-83). However, a similar phrase from the script survived in its entirety into the film in the scene where the dying mother is taking on herself the blame for Dan's breaking the Ten Commandments and ultimately causing her death[165]: "'It's your hair, Danny, my own little Boy! Whatever you've done, is all my fault. I taught you to fear God, instead of to love Him—and LOVE is all that counts!'"[166]

The distribution of the words *fear* and *love* throughout the film is subtly subversive in molding the spectators' attitudes towards the characters. In the prologue, "FEAR" begins four semi-diegetic intertitles, all of which mention God as a source of fear or as help against fear (figure 3.176). The word *love* is used in the Biblical part only once when it refers to the Pharaoh's love for his son: "'MY FIRSTBORN, WHOM I HAVE LOVED, HEAR ME! THIS DAY SHALL ISRAEL BE GROUND UNDER THE CHARIOTS OF EGYPT! THUS SHALT THOU BE AVENGED UPON THEIR GOD!'" Although the Pharaoh's cruelty is highlighted in the film with his first spoken line ("'IF A MAN CLOG THE WHEELS OF THE PHARAOH—HE SHALL BE GROUND INTO THE DUST!'"), an emphasis on his parental love and blinding grief, which are not part of the Biblical text, seems almost to redeem his decision to pursue the people of Israel, whom he has allowed to leave Egypt.

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[164] See MacMahon 117.

[165] Mrs. McTavish gets buried under the debris of the south wall of the church that Dan has undertaken to construct with a major purpose of making money by diluting the concrete with sand and by smuggling jute.

[166] See MacMahon 181-82.

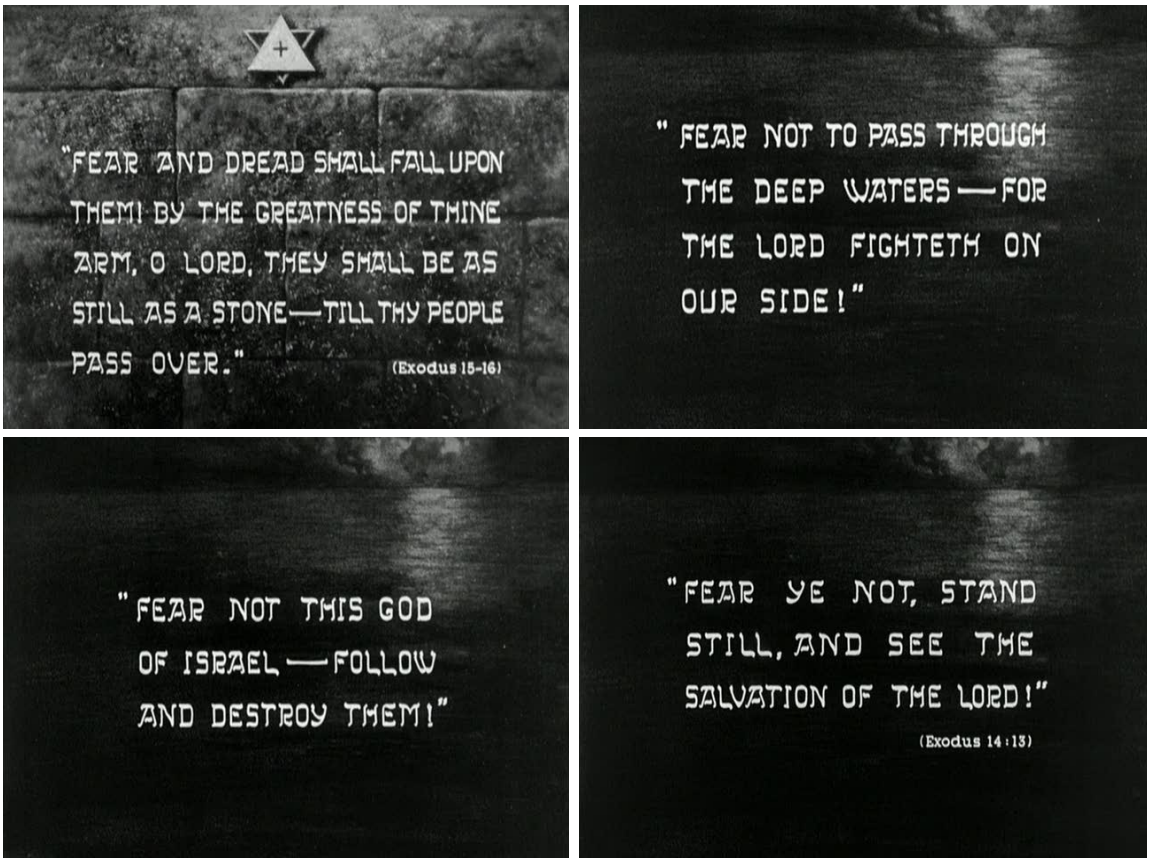


Fig. 3.176. *The Ten Commandments*: "FEAR" dominating the prologue.

In the modern story, *love*, referring to human relationships (three of the intertitles link the word *love* with John's feelings towards Mary), is a more frequent word than *fear*. The latter is used only in one other case apart from the scene where the dying mother absolves her son of his sins: John consoles Mary, who is terrified at the possibility of having contracted leprosy from Dan, her husband, with the words "'You're not branded with anything—but FEAR!'" The capitalization of the word *fear* harkens back to the way it was written in the prologue and, at the same time, contrasts it with "LOVE" in the mother's line and with "LIGHT" in the last intertitle of the film, discussed above. According to John, Mary's only hope is in turning to the God of the New Testament ("'Mary, there is only one man who can help you—a Man you have forgotten!'"), a source of light, love, and forgiveness—not fear. Thus, the ending of *The Ten Commandments*

definitely sets the stage for DeMille's next religious epic, *The King of Kings*.[167]

John's profession as a carpenter also signals his closeness to Jesus, of which his mother reminds him ("'John dear—some mighty fine men have been carpenters!'") when John loses heart ("'I guess being a carpenter, is just about all I'm good for!'"), in despair that Mary has mistaken his own proposal of marriage for that of Dan's and that he is losing her to his brother, who is intent on breaking all the Ten Commandments just to prove it to be the road to wealth and success. The contrast between the two brothers is poetically summed up in the following non-diegetic intertitle, which also signals the passage of time and a change of fortune for Dan (figure 3.177): John remains "just a Carpenter" (note capitalization) while Dan destroys his soul bit by bit. We first learn that John is a carpenter when Mary, trying to escape her pursuers after having stolen Dan's hot dog, stumbles across the porch of John's workshop (figure 3.178) and seeks rescue inside. This episode also serves as a narrative hint that John will ultimately become her savior.

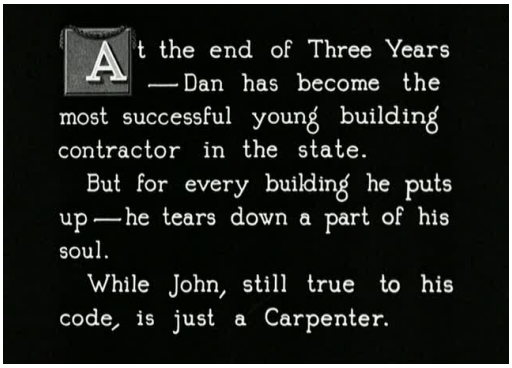


Fig. 3.177. *The Ten Commandments*: two brothers contrasted.



Fig. 3.178. *The Ten Commandments*: about to be rescued by a carpenter.

[167] The final sequence of *The Ten Commandments* originally included an image of Christ dissolving into and out of the scene of the sunrise over the city, but it was cut to widen the appeal of the film to those who recognized the Ten Commandments but not the New Testament (Birchard 189). The deleted sequence is very similar to the final shot of *The King of Kings* (390). DeMille himself talked about "the trilogy of religious dramas": *The Ten Commandments* was the story of "the Giving of the Law"; *The King of Kings* narrated the story of "the Interpretation of the Law"; and *The Sign of the Cross* (1932) presented the story of "the Preservation of the Law" (305-06).

The way the carpenter sign is presented to the audience reveals Mary's thinking process.[168] First, in a medium shot, Mary is seen glancing at the sign (see figure 3.178). Then there is a cut to a diegetic insert of the bottom part, brightly and evenly lit, but a shadow quickly advances to obscure the word *carpenter* and, thus, to highlight the inviting phrase *walk in* (figure 3.179). Considering that the girl does not change her position while reading the sign and that the whole bottom part remains equally lit when she decides to open the door, this shadow becomes a representation of Mary's traveling gaze and her decision to accept the "invitation." In the final sequence of the film, Mary is not the addressee of the message sent by the carpenter sign, which is partially obscured in a different way. After Mary, who has decided to drown herself, has deposited her good-bye note through John's window, the shot is framed in such a way that we see only the *enter* part of the word *carpenter* (figure 3.180). The synonymous *walk in* and *enter* contribute to creating a parallel between these two scenes, both set in a pouring rain and both presenting John as Mary's savor.



Fig. 3.179. *The Ten Commandments*: representing the subjective gaze.



Fig. 3.180. *The Ten Commandments*: creating a parallel through *enter*.

[168] We become privy to Mary's thoughts a few other times in the film: for example, when she is visualizing the leprosy-cleansing scene or when she is contemplating suicide by drowning and her bedroom dissolves into the image of the water.

After the mother's death, caused by Dan's thieving building practices, Dan's troubled mind is also exposed through integrated verbal elements. After the mother draws her last breath, John and Mary are shown grieving over her body, but Dan gets distracted and horrified by “Thou shalt not steal,” which appears on the stone table that has been prepared for but has not yet been inscribed with the Ten Commandments (figure 3.181). In a similar manner, Dan is reminded of another commandment that he has broken when he is trying to drown the pangs of conscience and panic in liquor after he has shot and killed his lover. Searching for yet another bottle in a cabinet, Dan discovers his mother's portrait, which, earlier in the film, John brought as a gift from the mother for his brother's new apartment, and drunkenly admits that his mother may have been right (“'Oh, Mommy—I wish I'd listened to you—if I could only start all over again!'”). The lettering of his mother's “response”—“Thou shalt not kill”—appears superimposed over her portrait (figure 3.182).



Fig. 3.181. *The Ten Commandments*: the first sign of Dan's conscience.


Fig. 3.182. *The Ten Commandments*: the mother's silent reprimand.

The lines from Rudyard Kipling's “Mandalay” (1890) (figure 3.183) that Dan recites upon visualizing his mother's silent reprimand, “adding” exclamation points and dashes to the original, not only reflect his embittered entrenchment in non-belief but also ironically comment on his fatal relationship with Sally Lung. The den of the “Eurasian,”

as she is identified in the cast of the story, is full of incense and idols—a perfect escape from the Ten Commandments for Dan, who is seduced by what Sally herself calls "the Chinese Love-Drink 'Ny-gar-pay'—distilled from a thousand Lotus flowers!" Despite the warnings of his partner ("'Go easy, Son! This Sally Lung is half French, and half Chinese. The combination of French perfume and Oriental incense is more dangerous than nitroglycerine!'"), the prosperous businessman prefers a luncheon at his exotic mistress's place to the lunch that his wife brings him. What Dan does not know, however, is that Sally has escaped from a leper colony—by hiding in one of the bales of jute that he has been smuggling from Calcutta to San Francisco. As DeMille editorializes, "there's more than one way of paying duty," and Dan's enchantment with Sally, who is interested only in his expensive presents and who represents a world antithetical to the Ten Commandments,[169] leads to his ultimate destruction. During Dan and Sally's last encounter, prefaced by the intertitle "The Red Commandment," the woman's final words are in stark contrast to those of Dan's mother: Sally takes vengeance on her contaminated lover-murderer by predicting his imminent death ("'Danny, dear—I'll tell the Devil, you won't be far behind!'"). Her prediction comes true when Dan's boat, symbolically named "Defiance,"[170] crashes against a tall rock (figure 3.184), which, as Dan visualizes, bears a huge image of the Commandment tablets. Thus, as promised in an earlier intertitle (see figure 3.156), the Ten Commandments finally break the one who has broken them.

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[169] For a discussion of how "Sally makes explicit the xenophobic nativist anxieties that underwrite DeMille's version of the nationalist epic," see Gardner 383-85.

[170] The church that Dan has been building with rotten concrete is similarly called "a monument to his defiance of God's law" in a non-diegetic intertitle that highlights his wickedness: Dan is said to flourish "like a green Bay-Tree," a reference to Psalm 37.35 ("I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree").

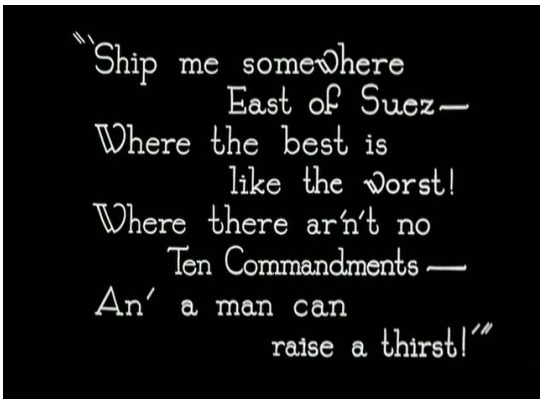


Fig. 3.183. *The Ten Commandments*: appropriating the East-West commentary.



Fig. 3.184. *The Ten Commandments*: symbolic defiance crushed.

If Dan's state of mind is revealed through Kipling's poem, Mary has an Oscar Wilde volume, opened on "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," with dry flowers on top, on her bedside table (figure 3.185). Only the title of the poem is barely decipherable, and, as in the case with the quote from Kipling, the author's name has to be inferred by the audience. With its leitmotif "each man kills the thing he loves," "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1898)[171] reflects both a literal turn of events in the film and Mary's ambiguous feelings towards the brothers. When Dan sees and snatches the flowers, he shouts hysterically "'Don't think you're going to John. . . !'"—an indication that Mary has kept the flowers that John has given her during his misinterpreted proposal of marriage. After Mary has set her mind on suicide and is about to leave the room, her gaze falls on the book and the flowers,[172] and she feels compelled to scribble a "good-bye" note on another page of the volume, with the poem "Hélas!" Again, the text of the poem is very difficult

[171] The eponymous prison from Wilde's poem ("Reading") is homophonically linked to the building inspector ("Redding") who is in league with Dan. After the collapse of the church, Redding shows Dan an article from *The Stingaree* entitled "State Prison—Perhaps" and mentions *prison* in a semi-diegetic intertitle ("'Don't be an idiot! That's a fine way out for you—but you're not going to leave me holding the sack. If I go to prison—I want company!'") after preventing Dan from shooting himself.

[172] The diegetic insert of the open book is exactly the same as the one we see before Dan snatches the flowers (see figure 3.185), a goof in realistic representation.

to read when Mary is writing, but its final lines (“. . . And must I lose a soul's inheritance?”) are zoomed in on when John is reading the note (figure 3.186), which Mary sneaked in through his window. The source of Mary's despair is, thus, linked to her fear of losing her soul, although she may not be fully aware of it.

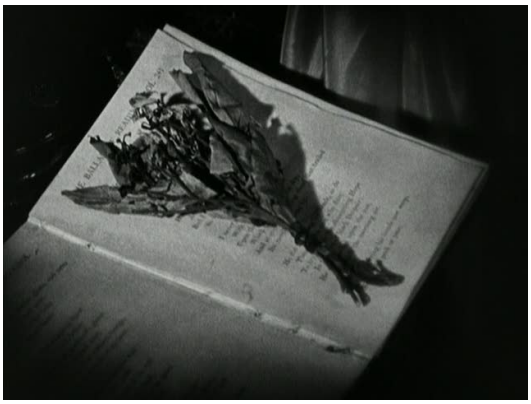


Fig. 3.185. *The Ten Commandments*: love's token against the background of “The Ballad of Reading Gaol.”

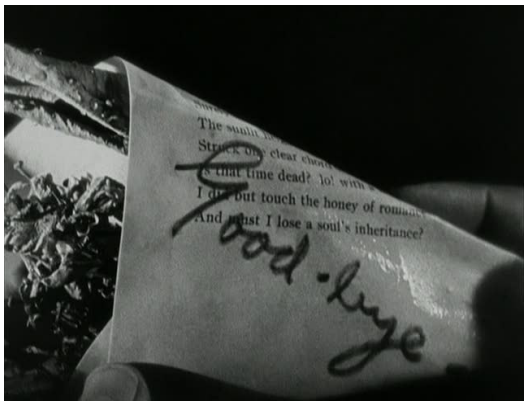


Fig. 3.186. *The Ten Commandments*: “good-bye” linked to the feared loss of the soul.

Whereas Dan's and Mary's inner turmoil takes the center stage in several scenes of *The Ten Commandments*, we never look at the world through the subjective lens of John's mind. His attitude to the people and to the situations is presented through semi-diegetic lines that are addressed to or heard by others (e.g., “'You're right, Dan, I do love Mary. But I won't forget that she is your wife—I hope YOU won't forget it either!'”) or through his deeds. His righteous character does not seem to be in need of development or to have a dramatic potential, essential for a moralizing drama. Therefore, in spite of John's unrequited love and the loss of his mother, it is quite difficult to identify with his character or to empathize with him. By contrast, Dan's spiraling fall is consistently the focus of attention, with the majority of the non-diegetic intertitles of the modern story (six out of eleven) evaluating his behavior directly and with several others, including a quote from the New Testament (“'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' (Matthew 16:26)”), providing a more generalized

commentary that is applicable to Dan.

Many instances of integrated verbal elements and diegetic intertitles are also linked to Dan's name. Mrs. McTavish yields to John's plea to allow Dan to join the supper table after she looks at the napkin holder engraved “Danny.” Dan becomes the suspect in the murder of Sally because his initials are inscribed on the hat that he leaves at the crime scene and that the detective later shows to Mary. The “DANIEL McTAVISH / CONTRACTOR” sign appears for the first time in the film when John is examining a crack in the wall of the church under construction (figure 3.187), which is evidence of Dan's unscrupulous building practices. Another copy of the same sign is placed even more prominently at the entrance through which Mrs. McTavish enters the church before it collapses. Dan's mother is shown lovingly touching the sign (figure 3.188), as she is obviously happy that her son has undertaken the construction of a church; and when a worker signals to her that the entry is forbidden, she proudly points to the sign and says “'I'm sure it's all right for me to go in—I'm Mrs. McTavish, Dan's Mother!'” In a way, the sign with her son's name acts as the key that allows her entry where others would not have been let in and, thus, indirectly contributes to her death.



Fig. 3.187. *The Ten Commandments*: a crack in the church that Dan is building.



Fig. 3.188. *The Ten Commandments*: the sign of her motherly pride and death.

In the diegetic intertitles, Dan's name becomes linked to bankruptcy, in a letter

from the bank that informs Dan of a shortage of funds, and to a prospective prison sentence, in an article in *The Stingaree,* a weekly whose motto—"We throw light into dark places" (figure 3.189)—ironically resonates with the theme of light discussed above. Although Dan's name does not feature in this article, the description ("a certain contractor, whose pearls were real—but whose concrete wasn't") is specific enough to scare Redding into a decision to offer the "little scandal sheet" $25,000 to prevent it from identifying the contractor by name. The letter and the article induce Dan to seek monetary help from Sally and, having received none, to use force in getting back the pearls that have received such publicity. If Sally had not been enraged by Dan's behavior and remark that he is through with her for good, she probably would not have disclosed her identity as the escapee from "Molokai Leper Island" by drawing Dan's attention to the newspaper article she was reading earlier (figure 3.190),[173] a move that pushed Dan to kill her. The escapee's name is not identified (". . . Who the woman in the case is or why she is wanted is not disclosed. . . ."), in a curious parallel to the article from *The Stingaree.*



Fig. 3.189. *The Ten Commandments*: a variation on the theme of light.



Fig. 3.190. *The Ten Commandments*: a terrifying disclosure.

[173] DeMille's attention to detail seems to have failed in the case of this diegetic insert, where the name of the island is spelled "Molokai" and "Molakai." The insert also incorporates a self-reflexive joke: "Almost worthy of a movie plot is the background of this particular activity by the government agents." The history of the leper colony on the Hawaiian island of Molokai is documented in Tayman.

If Sally Lung's character is constructed as an embodiment of "malevolent mongrelism" and "ethnic femininity," which deserves to be eliminated as a threat to the fabric of American society (Negra 190-91),[174] Mary's scoffing at the Ten Commandments stems from her being part and parcel of the modern world, unflatteringly described in the introduction to the film. Her first semi-diegetic line reveals an effervescent personality because the girl does not lose a sense of humor even when being chased for having stolen a hot dog: "'I haven't eaten since yesterday! And as I was passing Dugan's lunch wagon—a hot dog ran out and bit me!'" When Dan, from whom Mary has stolen, silently reproaches her by taking the "Thou Shalt Not Steal" panel from the wall and pointing to it (figure 3.191), she unabashedly responds "'Nobody believes in these Commandment things nowadays—and I think Elinor Glyn's a lot more interesting!'" and hangs the panel back, with the inscription facing the wall. Mary's modernity is self-reflexively signaled through her invocation of Elinor Glyn, whose romance books, according to Patricia Mellencamp, focused on the erotic interests of emancipated women and who, after having accepted Lasky's invitation to come to Hollywood in 1920 as a screenwriter, became the nation's authority on passionate love and sex appeal (215-17). Mary's love of jazz and dancing, another signature of a modern woman, leads to a clash with Mrs. McTavish, who breaks the record with "I've Got Those Sunday Blues," which has been sacrilegiously played on Sunday in disregard of yet another commandment, against her Bible, an excerpt from which she shows to Mary and

[174] When Sally first appears in the film as a figure whose face is concealed, she is shown emerging from a canvas sack, having ripped the cloth and the inscription it bears (*San Francisco*) from the inside. This visual shot can be read as a verbal image that metaphorizes ripping the fabric of American society.

Dan (figure 3.192).[175] Mary's marriage to the fellow unbeliever does not, however, make her happy in the long run. Yet, unlike Sally, Mary finds peace and, supposedly, true happiness at the end of the story, sitting, with her hair covered, at John's feet—as a variation on the theme of the repentant Mary Magdalene.



Fig. 3.191. *The Ten Commandments*: a future thief's anti-thievery message.

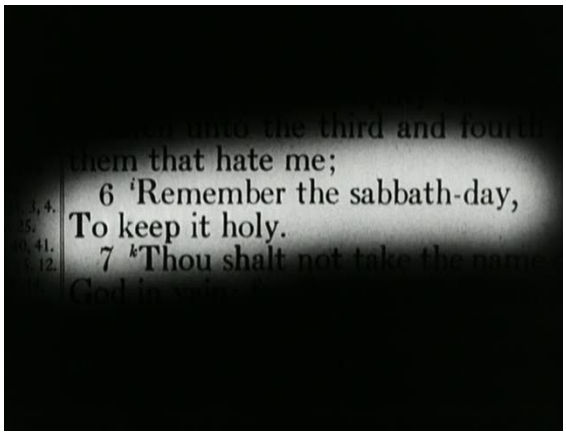


Fig. 3.192. *The Ten Commandments*: another commandment broken.

In the two dramas of Cecil B. DeMille, the screen words are active contributors to the act of narrating, where the authorial voice addresses the audience through interlocutionary sermons; evaluates characters and situations, often presented in juxtaposition; endows notions and objects with symbolic meanings, which arise through radiant mediality and a play with the bibliographical codes of the intertitles; appeases censors; and promotes consumerism. The characters' personalities and thoughts are revealed not only in semi-diegetic intertitles, but also with the help of integrated verbal elements and diegetic inserts. The semi-diegetic intertitles, which vastly outnumber their

[175] The ordering of the commandments in this diegetic insert is unusual: in the Biblical part of *The Ten Commandments*, as well as in all the versions of the Bible I have consulted, including the King James Version and the American Standard Version, "Thou shalt not take the name . . . God in vain" precedes, not follows, "Remember the Sabbath day" (Exod. 20.7-8). Whether the creators of the insert were using a version of the Bible unknown to me or were consciously subverting the rigidity of the ordered commandments, unbeknownst to or approved by DeMille, remains speculative.

non-diegetic counterparts, also push the narrative forward, signal major conflicts, and approximate sonic qualities of speech. The intertextual references, sometimes modified for dramatic purposes, bring in the authority of the Bible and literary sources while disclosing the characters' motivations and providing commentary on the story.

By the mid-twenties, the functional range of intertitles had been largely established, and American narrative films of the late silent era extensively relied on the potentialities of written language in telling the story and entertaining the audience. Screen words, however, were not confined to mainstream films created within the studio system. Verbal language was also utilized in the twenties and early thirties by avant-garde directors who aspired to explore features of the cinematic medium as an art and a vehicle for political statements in order to subvert the established practices of the narrative-driven Hollywood cinema.

WORD AND IMAGE INTERPLAY IN THE PRE-SOUND AVANT-GARDE

If experimentation characterized cinema from its very birth, the term *avant-garde* can hardly be applied to very early filmmakers. As Jean Cassou insightfully observes, the creators of the cinematic avant-garde should be addressed with the specific question "Against and in spite of whom do you produce?" rather than the generic "Why do you create?" (217-18). I tend to agree with Thompson that "it is only after the formulation of classical Hollywood norms was well advanced that we can meaningfully speak of an avant-garde alternative" ("Limits" 68). The classical style of Hollywood cinema was standardized in the teens (69); therefore, films that consistently, and not episodically,[176]

[176] Keaton's *One Week* is not an avant-garde film, even though it has an episode where the cameraman's hand intrudes in the diegesis by obscuring the view while the naked bride is trying to retrieve the soap that has slipped out of her hands (see figure 3.122).

challenge the cinematic tradition can fully qualify to be called *avant-garde* only starting with the twenties.[177]

As Bruce Posner, the curator of *Unseen Cinema*, a superb DVD collection of American avant-garde films,[178] discusses, the years 1925-29[179] were not only the "'Golden Era' of Hollywood silent feature films but [also] an equally vibrant period of avant-garde film activity throughout the country with significant films by Watson and Webber, Vorkapich, Florey, Steiner, and Flaherty leading the way" ("Grand Experiment" 40). Quite a few American avant-garde creations from that time had Expressionistic and/or Cubistic settings. If a narrative was incorporated, it often had a Surrealistic streak. Two films in particular were inspired by Gothic writings of Edgar Allan Poe—*The Fall of the House of Usher* (1928) by Melville Webber and James Sibley Watson, Jr., and Charles F. Klein's *The Telltale Heart* (1928).

The Fall of the House of Usher, called by the chairman of the National Board of Review "the most outstanding contribution to motion pictures as an art form since *Caligari*" (qtd. in Horak, "First" 46), does not have a single intertitle—most probably,

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[177] The same view of the beginnings of avant-garde film in the US is presented in *Lovers of Cinema: The First American Film Avant-Garde, 1919-1945*, edited by Jan-Christopher Horak.

[178] The full name of the seven-disk DVD set—*Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-Garde Film, 1894-1941*—reveals a different understanding of the term *avant-garde*. Curiously, the accompanying catalog, edited by Posner, dates the beginnings of the avant-garde a year earlier in its title *Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-Garde Film, 1893-1941*.

[179] Perhaps the most widely discussed American avant-garde film of the early twenties is *Manhatta* (Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, 1921). For detailed analyses of the film, including its intertitles, which are rooted in Whitman's poetry, see, for example, Horak, "Paul Strand" and Suárez. Another avant-garde film with poetic intertitles from the early twenties—*The Enchanted City* (Warren Newcomb, 1922)—is discussed in Schneider.

because “the plot is of little consequence,” as Watson's scenario explicates (qtd. in Cartwright 160). The filmmakers, as Watson records, had not read Poe's story for ten or fifteen years when they started the project; therefore, they felt free to treat the literary source as “raw material” (qtd. in Davis 123). The viewers are warned from the very beginning that they can hardly expect a coherent adaptation of Poe's text: the title, the epigraph, and the opening of the story are dynamically presented in fragmented multiple exposures that converge and diverge against a foggy background (figure 3.193). The devices of fragmentation, multiples exposure, and repetitive movement become the staples of the visual presentation of the emotional and psychological states of the characters and, by extension, the audience. As Lisa Cartwright observes, Watson's correspondence with e.e. cummings at the end of 1925, where they exchanged ideas for films that would be similar in form to the poetry of cummings, must have informed *The Fall of the House of Usher* as much as the innovations of the European cinematic avant-garde (169-71).



Fig. 3.193. *The Fall of the House of Usher*: do not expect a coherent narrative!

The Fall of the House of Usher also makes extensive use of integrated verbal elements as substitutes for sound during the sequence of the highest tension when Madeline is in the process of getting out of her coffin. The first set of letters, which dissolve in and out in their rotating movement to form the verb *beat* above the image of a

coffin (figure 3.194), appears after a brief shot of two hands trying and failing to reach Madeline, who is lying under a shroud. In the immediately preceding shot, Roderick is shown staring inwardly while the black-hatted figure, with no face visible, is turning the blank pages of a big volume (figure 3.195), an artistic interpretation of the scene from Poe's story where the first-person narrator is reading from “Mad Trist” to Usher (123-26). To signal an overwhelming increase in volume, the letters soon occupy the whole screen —first against a black background and then superimposed over the turning pages of the book (figure 3.196), reestablishing the connection between Roderick's imagination and the blank pages being “read” to him. The last onomatopoeic verb that is incorporated in the film—*shriek*—emanates from the book's turning pages in jumbled letters, with the complete word appearing simultaneously for only a split second (figure 3.197).



Fig. 3.194. *The Fall of the House of Usher*: the beating of the coffined heart.



Fig. 3.195. *The Fall of the House of Usher*: focusing on the tortured soul.



Fig. 3.196. *The Fall of the House of Usher*: the sound growing in volume.

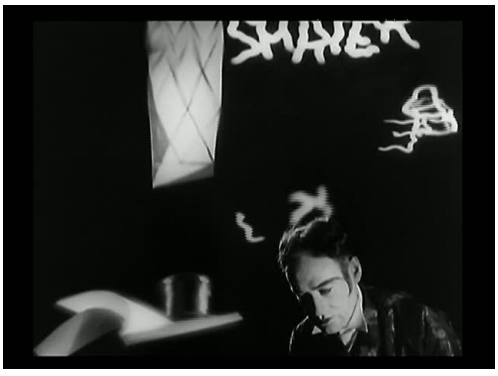


Fig. 3.197. *The Fall of the House of Usher*: a shriek emanating from the book.

The other three onomatopoeic verbs that Watson and Webber encode in the film through fragmentation, dissolves, and rotating movement—*crack*, *rip*, and *scream*—are part of Poe's story as well (125-26). Even the past tenses of *crack* and *rip* in the original ("he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder" (125)) are recreated by the filmmakers. Thus, "rippd" is distinguishable for a brief moment in the beehive of quickly moving letters. The word *crack*, which signals the final breakthrough and precedes the shot of Madeline raising the lid of her coffin, receives the most versatile artistic treatment in the film. At first, it is presented in a manner similar to that of *beat*, with the letters whirling around, straight and upside down. Then the letters start appearing one at a time to form the word in a mirror image, until the addition of *d* indicates the completed action, intermedially presented as cracks obscuring the inscription "crackd" (figure 3.198). It is the lid "decorated" in this manner that Madeline is shown lifting in the contiguous shot.



Fig. 3.198. *The Fall of the House of Usher*: the evolution of *crack*.

Klein's *The Telltale Heart*, which is called in the title sequence "A picturization of Edgar Allan Poe's immortal classic of the same name," is more dependent on words than Watson and Webber's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, although, as David E. James notes, the visual presentation of "the distorted subjectivity of the insane man" in Klein's film is very complex in its intertwining of the Expressionistic mise-en-scène, reminiscent of Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and the manipulation of filmic material with a focus on visual and aural obsessions (*Most Typical Avant-Garde* 34). *The Telltale Heart* also pays homage to *Caligari* via the angular typography of the title sequence (figure 3.199)

and the intertitles. Additionally, the authorial introduction (figure 3.200) implicitly contrasts its disclosure of the narrator's madness with the narrative structure of *Caligari*, where the storyteller's insanity is revealed only at the end.



Fig. 3.199. *The Telltale Heart*: the angularity reminiscent of *Caligari*.

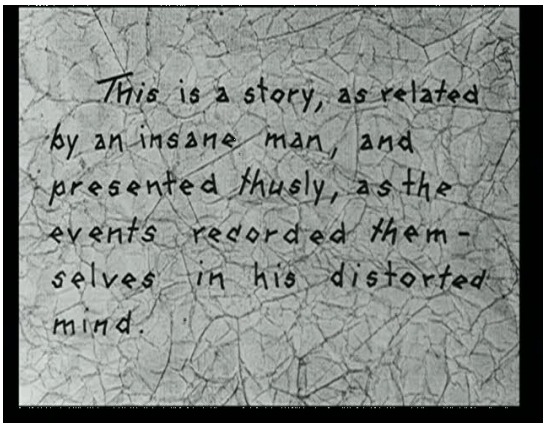


Fig. 3.200. *The Telltale Heart*: the narrator's insanity revealed at the start.

The title sequence and the introductory intertitles of *The Telltale Heart* simultaneously imitate and disrupt Hollywood conventions. The title shot, the first in the film (see figure 3.199), has three components that are typical of the title shots of mainstream productions of the time: "Maurice Barber," who "presents," i.e., who has financed and/or has the ownership rights to the film; "Otto Matiesen," the star whose high celebrity index is supposed to draw audiences; and the title of the motion picture.[180] The two names prominently featured in the title shot were not, however, box-office drawers. There is little available record of Maurice Barber's involvement with producing

[180] For comparison, the title shot of Watson and Webber's *The Fall of the House of Usher* lists the title, the literary source ("A Film Version of Poe's Story"), and the directors' names introduced by "by," an indication of authorial signature. As a side note, the title sequence of the version of *The Fall of the House of Usher* that is included in the *Unseen Cinema* DVD collection is newly reconstructed. The original title sequence seems to be preserved in the versions available on Disk 1 of the DVD set *Treasures from American Film Archives* and on Disk 2 of *Avant-Garde 2: Experimental Cinema, 1928-1954*.

any other films[181]; thus, his reputation could certainly not have competed with those of more famous producers and studios. Otto Matiesen was, according to Frank Thompson, "a struggling actor" in the twenties; he agreed to play the leading role in Paul Fejos's *The Last Moment*,[182] released in February 1928, without any financial remuneration, "just for the exposure" (163).

In the title sequence, the cinematographer's name, in a smaller font, is mentioned in the same shot as the director's (figure 3.201), which was also not infrequent in the Hollywood practice. "The Players" shot (figure 3.202), however, is quite unusual in two respects. First, it includes only the last names of the actors, which can elevate the players to the status of celebrities recognizable by their last names only. More likely, however, such a verbal presentation is meant to blur the boundary between the diegetic role and the actor: thus, the viewers will encounter "The insane Matiesen," "The old man Herford," "Detective de Fuerberg," and "Detective Darvas" in the film. This actor-character merging can easily account for the second peculiarity of "The Players" shot: two actors are identified as seemingly playing the same character of "Detective." In fact, there are two detectives in the film, but they often behave as if they were one, with intentionally

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[181] The only record I have been able to find of Barber's involvement with cinema is his article of 1922, "Requirements of Financing," footnoted in Staiger as a reference about outside financing of American film industry in the early twenties ("Hollywood Mode" 314-15, 461-62).

[182] Although *The Last Moment*, now lost, played in many theaters in the US and received widespread critical attention, it was mostly praised for Leon Shamroy's camerawork and for the innovative treatment of the cinematic narrative (James, *Most Typical Avant-Garde* 452; Jacobs, "Experimental Cinema" 115-16) rather than Matiesen's part. At the beginning of 1928, Matiesen had another leading role—that of Napoleon—in the two-reeler *The Lady of Victories*, directed by William Roy Neill, which was part of the series "The Great Events," whose aim was to demonstrate the dramatic potential of Technicolor (Slide 35-37). In *The Telltale Heart*, Matiesen is superb in his role of the insane man.

the same gestures and facial expressions, and, as James puts it, “moving mechanically like robotic dolls” (*Most Typical Avant-Garde* 34).



Fig. 3.201. *The Telltale Heart*: conventional credits.



Fig. 3.202. *The Telltale Heart*: playing with names.

There may have also been a cinematographic reason for using the last names only. The title sequence thematically prefigures the play of light and shade in the film, symbolic of throwing light into dark niches of human psyche: the transition from one verbal shot to the next is achieved through a partial fade-out and fade-in, during which lighted spots that are common to the contiguous shots stay on the screen (figure 3.203). The difficulty of matching the lighted fragments to the complete texts might also have influenced the decision to forego the actors' first names in the credits.

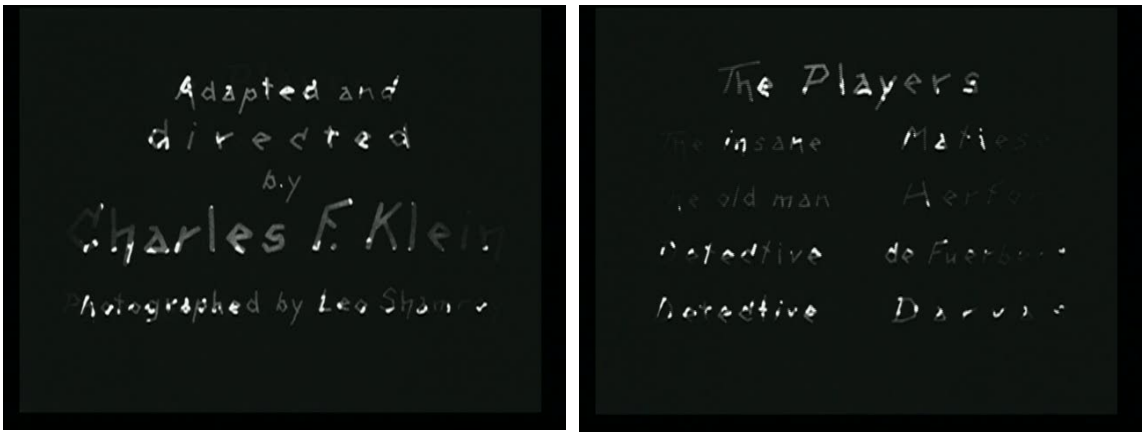


Fig. 3.203. *The Telltale Heart*: transitioning through light.

Unlike the fragmented and multiply exposed text of Poe's story in Watson and

Webber's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, Klein's incorporation of the beginning of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is more straightforward, with the sentences staying on screen long enough to be read and then slowly scrolling up to make room for the rest. Although this presentation promises a coherent narrative, slight modifications of Poe's original, signaled already by the removal of the hyphen from the title, foreshadow changes to the story as well as emphasize the insanity of the narrator. Apart from omitting several sentences and words to make the paragraphs shorter and more readable on the screen, Klein switches some phrases around (e.g., "observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story" in Poe's original [172] is replaced by "observe how calmly—how healthily I can tell the whole story" in the film, where *healthily* thus receives more weight) and utilizes a more expressive punctuation (e.g., the exclamation point and question mark in "You fancy me mad?—Madmen know nothing!" substitute for the periods in the original, which does not have a dash either [172]). The madman's interlocutionary confession is reinforced by an image of unblinking eyes (figure 3.204), over which the words start rolling when the text pinpoints the main cause of the narrator's nervous exhaustion—the old man's eye, "the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it." The eyes staring at the audience through the diaphanous film of the text are as unnerving as the eye with a film over it must have been to the narrator. The very end of the intertextual introduction is also edited to create a transition to the visual sequence via what conventionally would be a temporal intertitle (figure 3.205): in Poe's original, "that night" does not finish the last sentence that we see on the screen but appears only later in the text (172-73).

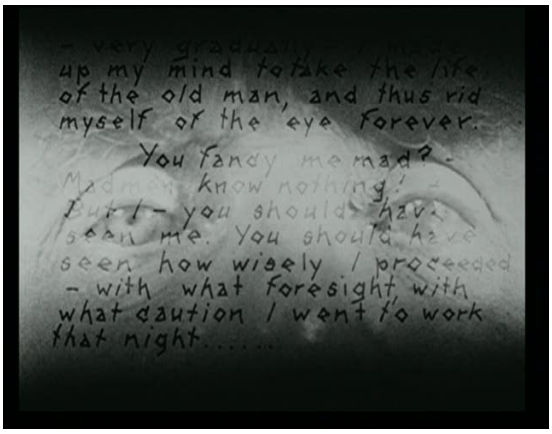


Fig. 3.204. *The Telltale Heart*: multimedial eyes with a film over them.



Fig. 3.205. *The Telltale Heart*: transitioning to the visual story via a temporal intertitle.

All of the intertitles within the visual sequences are semi-diegetic and mostly act as structural pillars in revealing the emotional turmoil of the insane narrator. The first semi-diegetic line, however, is pronounced by the old man, whose terrified state, revealed through the punctuation and increasing font, sets the mood for the film (figure 3.206). The narrator's mood swings between terror and deceiving equanimity are made obvious through his thoughts and dialogue lines, some of which have roots in Poe's original (figure 3.207) while others are totally invented, as, for example, the insane man's friendly address to the old man, whom he has just killed ("I will give you a beautiful grave, my poor friend").

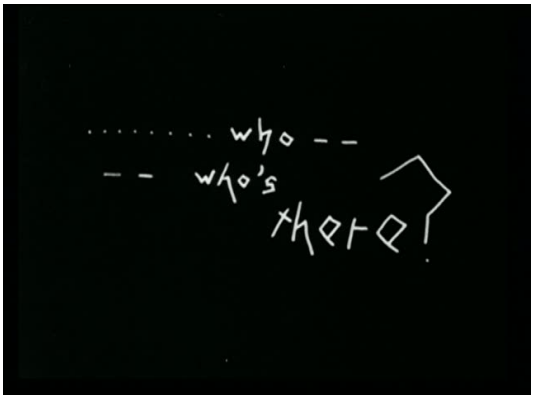


Fig. 3.206. *The Telltale Heart*: setting the mood of terror.

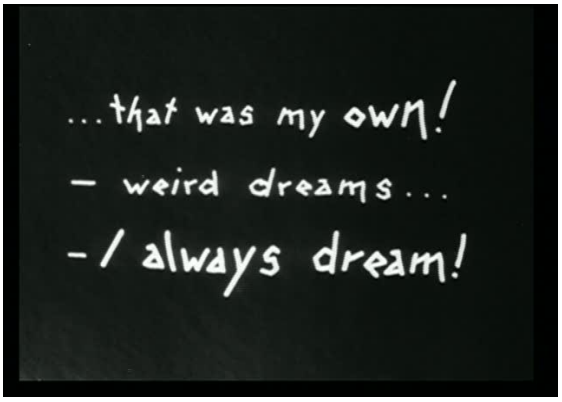


Fig. 3.207. *The Telltale Heart*: appropriating Poe's text to reveal the emotional state.

The semi-diegetic lines also brilliantly illustrate the changing attitude and tone of

the detectives, who identify themselves as “officers of the law” in a split intertitle where the phrases are interspersed with the visual shots of the speakers (figure 3.208):

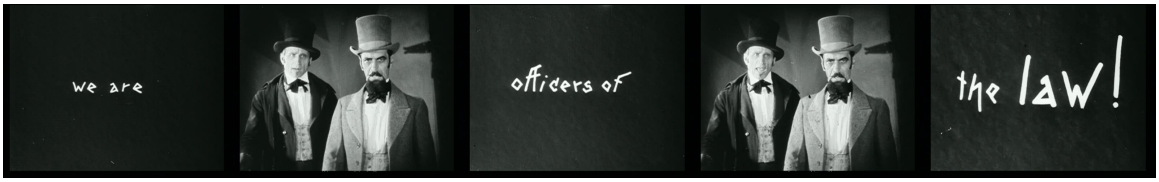


Fig. 3.208. *The Telltale Heart*: presenting the “officers of the law.”

The representatives of power then continue speaking in split intertitles, weightily emphasizing the importance of every phrase they pronounce and intimidatingly raising their collective voice, which is manifested through the increasing size of the letters, at the end of each sentence. Only when they declare the narrator's innocence after looking into his eyes through an enormous magnifying glass (figure 3.209) and discovering no guilt there (figure 3.210) do they start speaking in “soft” voices, represented through smaller-sized letters that do not differ in scale, and their sentences no longer require split intertitles (“We are utterly convinced of it.” and “Sorry! So sorry!”).



Fig. 3.209. *The Telltale Heart*: examining the eyes as windows to the soul.

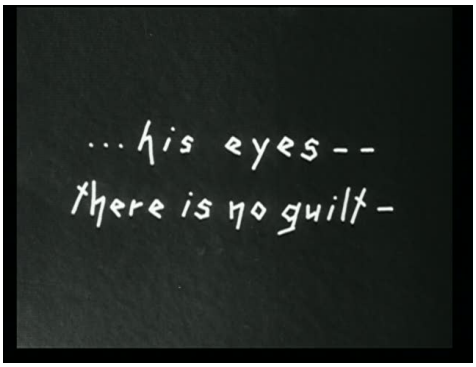


Fig. 3.210. *The Telltale Heart*: not guilty!

Once the narrator receives a non-guilty verdict, he seems to take over the position of power by “imitating” the vocality of the detectives: he raises his voice in an imperative sentence and splits his sentence into two intertitle cards (“Wait! there is one thing . . .” and “. . . just one little thing you have not seen . . .”). He also becomes verbally obsessed

with vision, using the verb *see* in three intertitles: the phrase just quoted is followed by "You see! his Gold! secure and undisturbed!" and then by ". . . . so you see—I am innocent!" The senses of the eye and the ear soon become inextricably intertwined as the narrator starts "hearing" the heart beat, which is presented visually as his nodding rhythmically while he is in the process of entertaining his fatigued guests by sentiments like "Crime—always avenges itself!" It does not take long for his flight of imagination and memories of the murder to erupt in his tortured brain in a whirlwind of superimposed and fragmented images of the old man's face, eyes, screaming mouth, and a banging hammer. Unable to contain himself any longer, the narrator, who is facing the camera and, thus, is addressing the viewers, shouts out his confession in bursts of several interspersed intertitles, the text of which mostly overlays terrifying images of the old man's eyes (figure 3.211). The superimposition of the phrase "It's the beating . . ." over a close-up of an eye for a moment merges the eye and the heart, the visual and the auditory reception, the seeing and the feeling, before it gives way to the last words of the film (and Poe's story)—"it's the beating of his hideous heart!!"—inscribed against the background of a banging hammer.

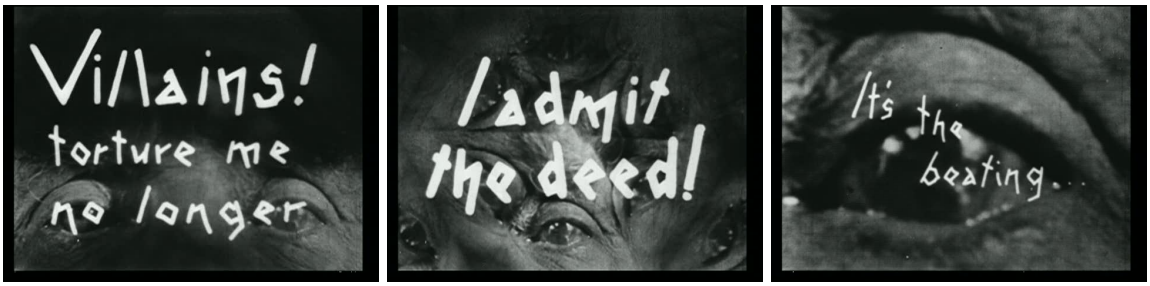


Fig. 3.211. *The Telltale Heart*: eyes as witnesses to madness and murder.

The visual presentation of the narrator's final plunge into the madness of memory and imagination takes the viewers' own memories back to the murder scene, where the insane man first realizes that he is bothered more by the beating of the old man's heart

(". . . . his heart—it's his heart . . . . the beating of his damned heart!") than his eye. The unconquerable desire to destroy the source of his emotional torture is manifested in the word *kill*, which, inscribed on the celluloid in rapidly changing sizes and formats during a frantic montage sequence (figure 3.212), both represents the narrator's pulsating thought and seems to act as an external push to murder.



Fig. 3.212. *The Telltale Heart*: verbalizing and visualizing the obsession.

The interiority of the narrator is taken to an abstract level in Henwar Rodakiewicz's *Portrait of a Young Man* (1931), where there is no narrator or story in the conventional sense and where words are used exclusively as paratexts. As the artist explains in his notes dated 1969, the footage for the film was compiled over six years with no organizing principle in mind: "Motivation entirely to capture keen experiences no matter what the subject matter. A constant winnowing for the significant detail. Eventually thought occurred that the footage revealed the person. Film accordingly so titled and edited" (qtd. in Posner, *Unseen Cinema* 15). To warn the viewers that his film is not a traditional narrative through which a character's personality is presented, Rodakiewicz includes a lengthy introduction, which spreads over three consecutive intertitles, about the nature of his artistic creation (figure 3.213).

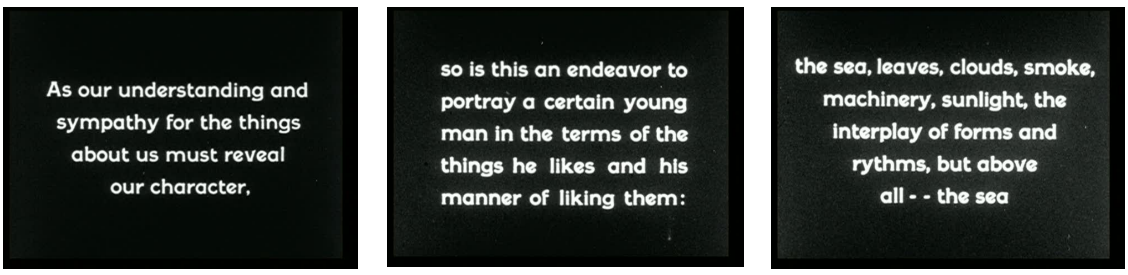


Fig. 3.213. *Portrait of a Young Man*: this is what the film is about.

The misspelling of the word *rythms*, no matter whether accidental or purposeful, brings to the fore the structural motif of the 54-minute film: capturing natural and mechanical rhythms that reveal and construct the "portrait of a young man," with no human being ever appearing in the frame. The importance of music and rhythm to the film is emphasized via an architextual addition to the title: in the title sequence, superimposed over the background of light playing on the water surface, the titular inscription "PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN" dissolves into "In Three Movements," which then is followed by the authorial signature "by Henwar Rodakiewicz." The word *movements* also appears in three paratextual chapter divisions. All three intertitles are also superimposed over images of nature in flux: the ocean surf, fluttering leaves, and the interplay of light and water (figure 3.214). This elevates the status of natural phenomena in the evocation of an inner landscape, although images of moving machinery, brief sequences of which are inserted within the first and third chapters, also contribute to shaping the artist's state of mind.[183]



Fig. 3.214. *Portrait of a Young Man*: movements of nature reflective of inner landscape.

The title of Rodakiewicz's film may be intertextually linked to Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, first published in the United States in 1916. In formulating his aesthetics of art, Stephen Dedalus, the young artist of Joyce's novel, foregrounds the

[183] For a more detailed description of the visual sequences in *Portrait of a Young Man*, see MacDonald, "Attractions" 60-61.

rhythm of beauty, which he defines as "the first formal esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole or of an esthetic whole to its part or parts or of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part," although his understanding of beauty is linked to "an esthetic stasis" rather than a kinetic emotion or a physical sensation (159). In a 1932 article, Rodakiewicz also notes that the individual rhythms of parts are essential in constructing a subjectivized whole: "In creating a film of nature that represents the cameraman's individuality, the importance of selection cannot be overestimated" (qtd. in Horak, "First" 37). But by focusing on movement, the "young man" in Rodakiewicz's film seems to be in disagreement with Joyce's "young man," whose philosophy of art elevates stasis.

In addition to offering a metatextual commentary on the traditions and conventions of Hollywood, some avant-garde filmmakers also provided more explicit criticisms of the established order, which crushes the disempowered. Robert Florey and Slavko Vorkapich's *The Life and Death of 9413—A Hollywood Extra* (1927) targeted the common practice of ignoring the needs of and abusing aspiring actors who crowded Hollywood studios: their lives are ironically equated to saintly martyrdoms via the hagiographical title. The film relies on multiple integrated verbal elements to create the contrast between the dreams and the realistic plight of the eponymous extra, who loses his identity the moment the number is branded on his forehead. Unfortunately, as Brian Taves explains, the film survives only in "shortened and mutilated versions" (98).[184]

[184] The visual presentation of *The Life and Death of 9413—A Hollywood Extra* has been frequently analyzed. The contribution of verbal elements to the film's message is mentioned, for instance, in Jacobs, "Experimental Cinema" 114; James (*Most Typical Avant-Garde* 39-40); Taves 95-98. James argues that the thematic and formal parallels of Florey and Vorkapich's film with earlier and later Hollywood creations suggest that the avant-garde "should be understood as the realization of dissenting impulses and countermovements on the margins of the dominant mode of film production and even interstitial in its hegemony" (*Most Typical Avant-Garde* 41-47).

Political undertones were also present in many actualities of the early thirties. As Lewis Jacobs points out, American experimental "city symphonies" were in part influenced by Vertov's Kino-Eye theories of documenting life thematically without an artificially constructed narrative or professional actors. Among other films created in this vein, Jacobs mentions his own *Footnote to Fact* ("Experimental Cinema" 120-21). According to Jacobs's letter of 12 November 1946 to Frank Stauffacher, who was organizing screenings of independent films between 1946 and 1954 as part of the "Art in Cinema" series under the auspices of the San Francisco Museum of Art (MacDonald, *Art in Cinema* 1),[185] *Footnote to Fact*, completed in 1933, was supposed to be the first part of a four-section film "intended to document the depression of the thirties, which was to be called As I Walk . . . and was to be post-synchronized, using sound in a stream of consciousness technique—including snatches of jazz, natural sounds, modern poetry and inner monologue" (qtd. in MacDonald, *Art in Cinema* 56). However, because of the Depression, the other three parts were never finished, so the first part was to be treated as a separate, complete film. *Footnote to Fact* thus remained a silent film, whose architecture, as Jacobs explains in the same letter, is structured around movement (56).

In *Footnote to Fact*, rapid montage sequences of images infused with language, framed by shots of realistic and abstract movement, comment on the verbal-visual juxtapositions of New York during the Great Depression. Scenes of manual labor and of marches of protest are interspersed with shots of the unemployed, the homeless, and the

[185] *Footnote to Fact* was screened in 1947 as part of the Eighth Program of the "Art in Cinema" series (MacDonald, *Art in Cinema* 134-35). This fact corrects, at least by several years, Robert Haller's statement in the allographic preface to *Footnote to Fact* in the *Unseen Cinema* DVD collection that Jacobs had misplaced the film by 1940 and it "was unseen and undiscussed until Anthology Film Archives discovered the original negative in the 1990s." *Footnote to Fact* has indeed received little critical attention.

drunk aimlessly lingering or sleeping in the street. Bargain signs and forced-sale notices coexist with political slogans, such as “Down with Fascism” and “Defend Soviet Union”; city denizens study real prices and ignore “free offers” of sandwich men (figure 3.215). The anguished face of a young woman rocking back and forth serves as the unifying visual motif, which first appears at the very beginning of the film, after the image of a newspaper boy advancing towards the camera, and is constantly spliced into scenes of street life. The last kaleidoscopic sequence, a split second per shot, is incorporated after the woman stops rocking and before she commits suicide by gas inhalation.[186]



Fig. 3.215. *Footnote to Fact*: the montage diversity of city signage.

Although many of the multimedial shots, especially advertisements and store

[186] Jan-Christopher Horak even calls *Footnote to Fact* “a portrait of a young woman” and hypothesizes that documentary shots of street life were meant to represent the woman's thoughts and images flashing through her mind (“First” 34).

signs, are inserted exclusively for the audience's sake, with no diegetic readers or viewers in the picture, the inhabitants of the city are shown to be in constant interaction with the city signage. For example, through contiguous mediality, we infer that the gaze of a young boy is focused on the Republic Theater, the home to Billy Minsky's Burlesque (figure 3.216). Burlesque on Broadway was a definite sign of the Depression, when only cheap entertainment survived and flourished. As Robert C. Allen observes, because legitimate theater was devastated and burlesque enjoyed economic buoyancy, Minsky realized an entrepreneurial idea, unheard of before, of putting burlesque on Broadway: he acquired the Republic Theater in 1931 to enliven it with "the Minskys' brand of stock burlesque: strippers, cooch dancers, and four comics, giving two shows daily with ticket prices ranging from 75¢ to $1.50" (250).

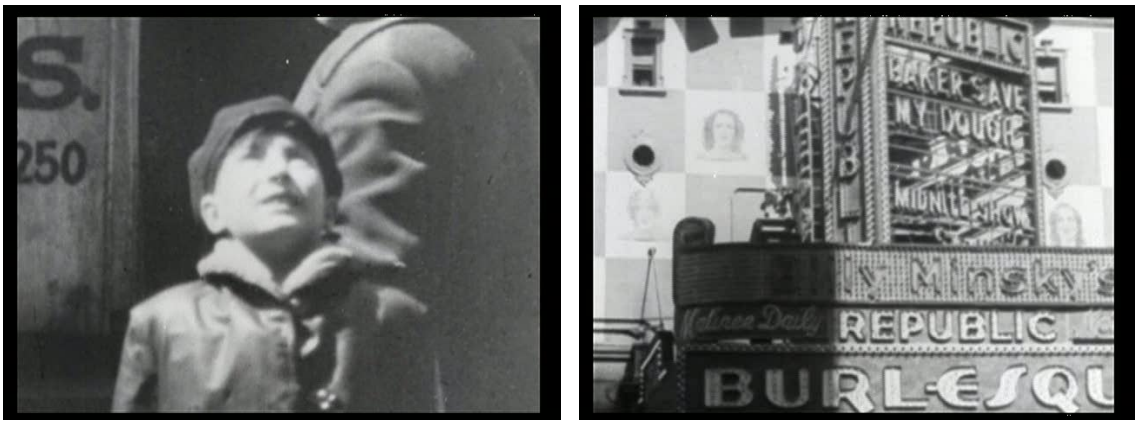


Fig. 3.216. *Footnote to Fact*: entranced by a promise of cheap risqué entertainment.

In another brief visual sequence, an old woman's attention is caught by a poster for the film *Afraid to Talk* (figure 3.217). Based on Albert Maltz and George Sklar's successful stage play *Merry-Go-Round*, Edward L. Cahn's *Afraid to Talk* (1932) is an urban criminal drama of political, administrative, and law enforcement corruption that flourished in the Depression years. Self-reflexively focusing on the poster for a socially aware film, Jacobs acknowledges Hollywood's contribution to raising issues about the

helplessness of innocent working people in the face of the corrupt machinery of power. Jacobs must have also included the title of Cahn's film to hint at the dominant feeling of fear during the Great Depression. In *Footnote to Fact*, the fear of unemployment is particularly emphasized. The placard "We demand unemployment insurance" carried by marching protesters is prominently featured twice. At another point in the film, the sign advertising "unemployment relief restaurant" advances towards the camera, and the faceless man's hands seem to be offering smaller-sized promotional material to the viewers (figure 3.218).



Fig. 3.217. *Footnote to Fact*: encoding the dominance of fear.



Fig. 3.218. *Footnote to Fact*: offering unemployment relief to the viewers.

A bit earlier in *Footnote to Fact*, a similar advancement towards the camera and, thus, the spectators, is performed by a poster for *Forgotten Men* (figure 3.219), which was released in the US in May 1933.[187] The poster for Bud Pollard's film is appropriated by Jacobs as a reference to Franklin D. Roosevelt's famous radio address broadcast on

[187] According to Koszarski, Bud Pollard built his feature *Forgotten Men* around newsreel footage of the First World War and interviews with "disgruntled war veterans" (*Hollywood* 303). It is possible that the several images of warfare that appear towards the end of *Footnote to Fact* either come from Pollard's film or are included as a direct reference to it.

7 April 1932, which outlined some concepts of the New Deal.[188] The same poster reappears, immediately followed by the "unemployment relief restaurant" placard, in the last kaleidoscopic sequence, as a silent accusation of sins of omission committed by the people in power towards those most vulnerable in desperate times, who cannot afford to pay even bargain prices and whose children play with trash, such as discarded empty boxes from "Kodak Film" (figure 3.220).



Fig. 3.219. *Footnote to Fact*: an intertextual reminder of political promises.



Fig. 3.220. *Footnote to Fact*: toying with boxes from Kodak film.

Filming the life and plight of the "forgotten man" is thus viewed as an artist's social responsibility. As Jan-Christopher Horak notes, Jacobs began his project *As I Walk* while shooting in New York for the Film and Photo League ("First" 33), which spoke of his direct involvement with politics.[189] The multimedial title sequence of *Footnote to*

[188] In what is often dubbed the "forgotten man" speech, Roosevelt stated that the nation's prosperity at a time of crisis depended on supporting the poorest members of society: "These unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power, for plans like those of 1917 that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid" (67).

[189] For a brief history of the Workers Film and Photo League of America (1930-35), which was founded as part of the Comintern with the goal of awakening the political consciousness of the working class by producing politically committed documentary artwork, see, for example, Campbell.

Fact (figure 3.221) and the title itself imbue the film with a documentary feel and, at the same time, emphasize the importance of words to Jacobs's method of recording reality in moving images. The first paratextual image of the film is a trash can lined with newspapers and filled with broken toys, which gets closed by a hand with a lid inscribed "Footnote to Fact." Because of the titular inscription, the lidded trash can uncannily resembles a film container and, thus, by linking *trash* and *footnote*, emphasizes the fact that the film's major focus is the marginalized, the discarded, the "forgotten." The camera then pans left to reveal what looks like an alphabetical keyboard[190] and, below it, Jacobs's authorial signature and year, written in chalk on what could be the back of a broken chair or a portable board. In his eight-minute film, Jacobs brilliantly delivers on his paratextual promise of creating a visual-verbal newspaper that highlights aspects of life that are often just footnoted or plainly discarded.



Fig. 3.221. *Footnote to Fact*: the multimedial paratextual promise of recording facts.

CONCLUDING NOTE: THE VERBALITY OF AMERICAN SILENTS

From its very inception and until the dawn of sound, silent American cinema incorporated words and rarely remained a purely visual phenomenon, irrespective of the genre or the filmmaker. Even before the concept of the intertitle was developed, film

[190] The film also incorporates several close-ups of typing hands in montage sequences.

titles and words integrated into visual shots were invaluable advertising tools and served as departure points essential for the audience to make sense of the moving picture. When narratives became more complex and films started relying on intertitles to frame and push forward the visual story, integrated words joined forces with non-diegetic and diegetic verbal inserts in ensuring the legibility of the filmic construction and in providing commentary and transtextual references. When the arsenal of verbal means became enriched by semi-diegetic intertitles, the mentality and psychology of characters, who were sometimes "speaking" even when the audience would have preferred to see rather than to read, came to the fore. Screen words, both on their own and through interplay with images, provoked laughter in comedies, introduced humor to more serious films, and reinforced the dramatic effect of the visual narrative.

Experimentations with the bibliographical codes of intertitles and integrated verbal elements infused the visual medium with sound and subjectivity, served as a platform for interpretive clues, and contributed to building symbolism through radiant mediality. Overall, suturing and juxtapositions of the visual and the verbal enabled filmmakers to create compelling narratives, to express opinions directly or to guide audiences in making their own judgments, and to make self-reflexive gestures.

A perceptive analysis of screen words unveils layers of sociohistorical information embedded in silent America cinema—clues to the economics, politics, culture, and linguistic behaviors of the time. The paratextual development of title sequences and end shots and the evolution of trademarks and logos provide insights into the changing attitudes to cinema as an entertainment, industry, and art, both on the part of the audiences that went to the movies as well as of those involved in producing films and making them available to the public.

READING FILMS:

WORDS ON THE SILENT SCREENS OF AMERICAN CINEMA

by

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CHAPTER FOUR

Silent Words in American Avant-Garde Film:

Stan Brakhage and Hollis Frampton

With the advent of sound, the functional importance of written language in classical Hollywood cinema seems to have been diminished: in sound films, dialogue and voice-over contribute to narrative development, reveal character motivations, and become vehicles of authorial commentary. On the other hand, the role of screen words has become more subtle and complex because written signs are woven into the texture of the film together with visual images, spoken language, music, and sound effects. The New Wave cinema in France, and especially the work of Jean-Luc Godard, brought the triangulation of the word, visual image, and sound into distinct focus, widely experimenting with voice-over, jarring editing, writing imagery, and intertextual references to foreground the act of narrating and the manipulative power of language. Such a shift of creative interest in French cinema from "mimesis to textuality,"[1] which started in the fifties, has received an extensive treatment in film scholarship.[2]

Much less detailed critical attention has been paid to the ways this paradigmatic

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[1] Robert Stam succinctly outlines this development: "Interest is progressively displaced from mimesis to textuality, from the picture or fiction depicted to the act of writing itself. Since the concept of writing is performative, rather than one of mere transcription, it implicitly undermines the mimetic view which regards the work as a mirrorlike reflection of preexisting reality. . . . [Many] directors of the French new wave . . . began as writer-critics who found it quite natural to see writing articles and making films as simply two forms of expressive *écriture*" (17).

[2] For investigations of the French New Wave cinema's investment in language and writing, see, for example, L. Higgins, Kline, Ropars, and Sontag 147-89. Godard's own speculations on cinematic *écriture* are recorded, for instance, in Sterritt and in two French-language volumes of *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*.

shift manifested itself in North America, where filmmakers who were creating outside the studio system were also heavily invested in self-reflexively challenging the seamless triad of word, visual image, and sound of Hollywood-style narrative.[3] To give such films their due, however, I would need to consider the multifaceted contributions of sound and, thus, to modify the critical approach and the verbal-visual angle of interpretation adopted in this project. I will, therefore, devote this chapter to American films that repudiated the dominant Hollywood mode by returning to the silent roots of cinema. In the second half of the twentieth century, the pre-sound era was often idealized as promoting the universality of the visual, not yet hindered by spoken language. The aesthetic of silence was especially appealing at the time of political crises, when the power of language to control and deceive became particularly prominent. Thus, some experimental filmmakers, among whom Stan Brakhage is perhaps the most famous, chose the path of eschewing language to prevent it from creating an artificial wall between the viewers and the world of the visual. Not surprisingly, when the silent films of the era are discussed in film literature, the contribution of language is rarely mentioned. Yet, even Brakhage's silent films are not devoid of screen words, the rare occurrences of which make them especially fascinating to analyze.

On the other end of the spectrum are creations by avant-garde filmmakers who preferred to confront the manipulative power of language by giving words the lion's share of the silent screen. Most representative of this trend is the oeuvre of Hollis

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[3] Among American avant-garde filmmakers who privileged textuality over mimesis and explored the image-word ruptures in sound films, one can name, for example, John Baldessari, James Benning, Hollis Frampton, George Landow, Yvonne Rainer, and Peter Rose. Similar contributions to Canadian cinema were made, among others, by R. Bruce Elder, Richard Hancox, Michael Snow, and Joyce Wieland.

Frampton, who strove to alleviate the "syndrome of logophobia," which, as he wrote in 1981, had been "pandemic throughout recent practice in the visual arts" (*On the Camera Arts* 166). The majority of Frampton's films that focus on language integrate voice-over, but the parts that revolve around screen words are often silent, as in *Surface Tension* (1968), *Zorns Lemma* (1970), and *Gloria!* (1979). A notable exception in this respect is the completely silent *Poetic Justice* (1972), in which written words substitute for a visual narrative. This chapter will explore how Frampton elevates and undermines language in the same breath and how screen words function while dominating representational images.

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE: CONTROL AND REBELLION

Discussions of language use in cinema can hardly ignore discourses on the politics of language that inform the intellectual and artistic spheres. At times of wars and anti-war protests, witch hunts, economic and existential crises, the role of language as "the arena and instrument of power" (Frampton, *Circles* 10)—as a vehicle of repressive authority and as a potential means of interrogating dominant ideology—is catapulted into prominence. Issued during the Depression Era, James Agee's evaluation of language as "a Rube Goldberg articulation of frauds, compromises, artful dodges and tenth removes" (Agee and Evans 209) was as applicable to the Cold War years. Allen Ginsberg's pronouncement in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" (1966) that "the war is language"[4] perhaps serves as the most vivid metaphor for the primacy of language on political and aesthetic

[4] See, for example, Paul Carroll's insightful analysis of Ginsberg's "mantra of American language," created by the poet in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" to oppose the corrupt language of politicians and commercials.

battlefields.

The written word in particular became the center of discourses on control and rebellion. Intellectuals of various convictions and –isms, especially in postwar Europe but also in the United States, wrote about the power of written language to establish and uphold authority, often at the expense of the truth. As Simon Morley points out, Jean-Paul Sartre observed, under the influence of Martin Heidegger, that the written word "was far more likely to be a vehicle for falsehood than the spoken one, for in the spatial and temporal void between the two sides of written communication any number of duplicitous and destructive motives could prosper" (101). Claude Lévi-Strauss argued in 1955 that "the primary function of written communication is to facilitate slavery" and that writing is "indispensable for the strengthening of dominion" (299-300). Walter J. Ong called writing "a particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself" (12) and stated that written language is more powerful than oral speech because written discourse "cannot be directly questioned or contested" as it "has been detached from its author" (78).

While the ruling classes produce authoritative discourses that demand total affirmation (Bakhtin 343), heteroglossia contributes to "verbal-ideological decentering" (370) and fosters conditions for non-conformist thinking. Thus, constructing multiple counter-discourses becomes an act of rebellion against the dominant mode of thought or representation. As Lynn A. Higgins describes, the works of those who create against the doxa are characterized by "a negative impulse, a desire to undermine and dismantle, to defamiliarize received discourses and narratives" (13). Choosing silence and non-representation could thus be treated as political gestures, as counter-strategies against appropriation and commercialization. As discussed in the second chapter, the

ultimate paratextual link between a work of art and the world of interpretation—the title —was sometimes subverted when artists refused to name or intentionally mislabeled their creations.

Zero-titling often went hand in hand with another strategy of non-appropriation—abstraction. In his "social study of abstract expressionism," Serge Guilbaut argues that one may view Abstract Expressionists as players in a "game of concealment": this new form "seems to have provided a way for avant-garde artists to preserve their sense of social 'commitment' (so important to artists of the Depression generation) while eschewing the art of propaganda and illustration. It was in a sense a political apoliticism" (2). Aesthetically, abstraction can be characterized by "an urge to cancel the translation of visual into verbal"; yet this pursuit of the viewer's silence ironically results in a "discursive wealth generated by the perplexities posed by abstract art" (Carvalho Homem and Fátima Lambert, Introduction 15). No publicly displayed art can escape a trap of verbal mediation. As Susan Sontag summarizes, "Practiced in a world furnished with second-hand perceptions, and specifically confounded by the treachery of words, the artist's activity is cursed with mediacy" (5). Still, abstraction, "an art of pure signifiers detached from meaning as much as from reference" (Wollen 95), and attempts at banishing the deceptive language of dominant narratives infused aesthetic counter-discourses that were characterized by what Peter Wollen calls "the suppression of the signified" (95).

Other centrifugal aesthetic and intellectual forces took a different approach by focusing on how language works and how narratives are created. Ferdinand de Saussure's investigations of the nature of the linguistic sign, and especially his postulates on the unmotivated connection between the signifier and the signified and the linear character of

the signifier, were taken up with new vigor as a stepping stone to challenging the truths of the statements issued in the language appropriated by parties in power and to questioning the possibility of creating stable and uniform interpretations. As Michel Foucault wrote in 1969, "in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature . . . attention has been turned . . . to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity. . . . one is now trying to detect the incidence of interruptions" (*Archaeology* 4).[5] Foucault pointed out that a major methodological problem of such new histories was the relation of the signifier to the signified (12). The indeterminacy and fluidity of meanings were also at the core of Jacques Derrida's philosophy of language. Drawing on Saussure's postulate that language is based on differential relations,[6] Derrida, however, put writing into focus. In Derrida's view, the written word, in the act of substituting for live speech and for the referent, makes it clear that language dwells in absences. Writing is a representative of the trace, *différance*, which is originary to any meaning and opens up signification (*Of Grammatology* 62, 65, 167). Exploring these differences, deferrals, and ambiguities challenges the logocentric mode of thinking, which considers only presences and searches for stable meanings and for "the transcendental signified" (12, 49).

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[5] Fredric Jameson calls a search for breaks and shifts a characteristic feature of postmodernism, which is "an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (*Postmodernism* ix).

[6] According to Saussure, "Just as the conceptual part of linguistic value is determined solely by relations and differences with other signs in the language, so the same is true of its material part. The sound of a word is not in itself important, but the phonetic contrasts which allow us to distinguish that word from any other. That is what carries the meaning. . . . no linguistic item can ever be based, ultimately, upon anything other than its non-coincidence with the rest" (116).

Explorations of discontinuities and ruptures came to the fore in various arts as well. When the signifier-signified dichotomy was undermined, language was often at the core of such artistic endeavors. The visual arts witnessed a proliferation of mixed-mediality, when the individual signification of the words and images was disrupted through their inclusion in a totality of the shared space, and of intermediality, when the verbal became the visual in a syncretic fusion. Writing in 1985, Russell Bowman singled out six basic categories of language use in the American art of the past three decades: "words as formal devices, words as signs, words employed as juxtaposition or association, narrative, exploration of language structure, and, finally, language as direct sociopolitical commentary" (336). Although, as Bowman himself admitted, these categories were fluid and often overlapped (336), the very fact of the various uses, many of which questioned the received truths about language and society, indicated what Simon Morley called the "'linguistic' turn in art" (139),[7] which was contemporaneous with the linguistic turn in philosophy, as analyzed in the famous

[7] Such an "eruption of language into the aesthetic field," as Craig Owens noted in 1979, while focusing on Robert Smithson's art and writing, was "coincident with, if not the definitive index of, the emergence of postmodernism" (126). In *Picture Theory*, published in 1994, W. J. T. Mitchell discusses an opposite direction in the development of word-image relationship: he argues that "the momentous historical shift in the late 1980s . . . brought the postmodern era to an end and brought the pictorial turn into focus" (366). In Mitchell's definition, "the pictorial turn" is "not a return to naive mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial 'presence': it is rather a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality. It is the realization that *spectatorship* (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance, and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of *reading* (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that visual experience or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable on the model of textuality" (16). For a recent collection of essays on the pictorial turn, see Curtis.

collection of essays edited by Richard Rorty in 1967. Even Abstract Expressionism, with its non-representational drive and its interest in inward subjectivity, allowed language in: as Bowman discusses, the cursive script and doodled letters and numbers in Abstract Expressionist canvases entered into juxtapositions with gestural painting (336).

Pop Art both derived from and interrogated the language of advertisement, which had become more pervasive and seductive in its verbal-visual appeal. Words and their typographies were appropriated from ads, cartoons, comic books, and political posters. Pop artists often reworked commercial signscapes into an ironic commentary on the social and economic values propagated in the streets and in the mass media.[8] The influence of the verbal-visual techniques of Pop and graffiti art on filmmakers is evident, for example, in mixed-medial images and sequences of Manuel DeLanda's *Ismism* (1979). As Scott MacDonald describes, *Ismism* records DeLanda's street art, focusing on his "graphically remarkable redesigns of cigarette advertisements" (figure 4.1) and on "graffiti work he did under the tag *ismism*" (*Critical Cinema* 335-36).[9] The film incorporates several statements about language and art, the individual words and phrases of which were filmed in different locations and then "strung together by the editing" (Rosenbaum, *Film* 73), as in "use / illegal / surfaces / for / your / art" (figure 4.2).

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[8] For a substantive overview and ample illustrations of how language was incorporated in Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Funk Art, Chicago Imagism, as well as in the works of the various inheritors of Dada and Surrealism sensibilities, see Bowman. Another useful survey of the word-image interplay in the art of the second half of the twentieth century is presented, for instance, in Morley 101-98.

[9] DeLanda created *Ismism* as a silent film. The version of *Ismism* available on the *Cinema of Transgression* videocassette has a soundtrack, which has not been approved by the author ("Manuel DeLanda").



Fig. 4.1. *Ismism*: defaced cigarette ads.



Fig. 4.2. *Ismism*: the verbal-visual *surfaces*.

Conceptual artists took the idea of integrating language into their works to an extreme by "substitut[ing] the model of the linguistic sign for that of the image" (Morley 139). In Conceptual Art, aesthetic visuality became subsidiary to the thinking process, to the idea behind language as a discursive medium. Making the reader-viewer speculate on the ways of representing, encoding, and receiving reality through objects, images, and linguistic definitions,[10] such art fostered a reevaluation of the deceptive sufficiency of official reports and narratives. At the same time, as Morley points out, this anti-aesthetic approach and focus on the concept rather than the image was also partially motivated by the refusal to produce commodifiable art pieces, which would be "an unjustifiable luxury on political grounds" (147-48).

Yet a different approach—a focus on the visual form of the word as a subject of visual art—characterized Ed Ruscha's work, often associated with California Pop, although he identified himself neither with Pop Art nor with Conceptual Art (129).[11]

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[10] Definitions also find their way into films: for example, in Larry Jordan's 1986 *Sophie's Place*, the introductory sequence includes an etymological definition of philosophy.

[11] Ruscha's self-identification is linked to his being on the outside: "I've been able to ignore the isms that happen. Really, a survivor is someone who has escaped the isms or otherwise walked out on them. Why be a card-carrying member of any ism?" (249).

Ruscha explained that he realized the futility of completely divorcing the meaning of the word from its visual form, yet he was trying to elevate the word itself over what it represented in the world (153). Ruscha's love of language (57) and fascination with street iconography (124) and the printed word (151) fueled his art, where words became central; sometimes they were the only images on the canvas and, thus, questioned the distinction between the signifier and signified.[12] The two films Ruscha has made—*Premium* (1970) and *Miracle* (1975)—do not, however, revolve around screen words.[13]

Ruscha's channeling the power of language into disorienting the viewer-reader by creating paintings to be read and books to be seen (303) represented another aspiration of socially conscious art—to jolt the beholders into a more active state of perception and conceptualization. As Ruscha maintained, the "artist has to open his work to the interpretation of the public, and the public's reaction is part of the work of art" (153-54). Ruscha's works, thus, acted as what Roland Barthes called "writerly texts" (*S/Z* 4-5), which resisted definitive interpretations and consumable meanings. Their ambiguities and inconsistencies ensured their integrity in the environment of seemingly straightforward narratives and of "readerly texts" (Barthes, *S/Z* 4-5), which were easily understood because they conformed to the dominant mode of discourse and representation.[14]

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[12] Avant-garde films of the period where words are the only images on the screen were discussed at the end of the second chapter.

[13] For a brief discussion of *Premium* and *Miracle*, see James, *Most Typical Avant-Garde* 282-83; and Ruscha 62-63, 70-73, 79-84.

[14] While inviting the viewers-readers to interpret his art, Ruscha refrained from providing any instructions and had a preference for art that remained an interpretive enigma: "I've always had a deep respect for things that are odd, for things which cannot be explained. Explanations seem to me to sort of finish things off" (305).

Other artists deconstructed language by juxtaposing words that differed by very few letters but signified vastly different concepts, by focusing on the visuality of individual letters, especially in the graffiti movement, and by simulating discourses that are presented as having no real meaning (Bowman 342). Recreations of meaningless blabber especially appealed to filmmakers. For example, the core of Peter Rose's sound film *Secondary Currents* (1982), as discussed in the second chapter, is an exploration of the tenuous relationship between the nonsensical voice-over and the visual text that supposedly acts as subtitles. In the video *The Pressures of the Text* (1983), which is an introduction to *The Pleasures of the Text*, the multimedia performance work whose title alludes to Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text*, Rose exposes the vacuity of the academic jargon by progressively sliding into gibberish. Similar in spirit but with a focus on the instructional mode, George Landow mocks didacticism and authoritative voice in *Remedial Reading Comprehension* (1970) and *New Improved Institutional Quality: In the Environment of Liquids and Nasals a Parasitic Vowel Sometimes Develops* (1976), a reworking of *Institutional Quality* (1969).[15]

In the verbal arts, intermediality incarnate—when the written word was treated as a visual phenomenon—ruled Concrete Poetry, which flourished in the United States in

[15] George Landow is also known as Owen Land. For descriptions of Landow's films, see Sitney, "Autobiography" 232-40 and *Visionary Film* 365-66. Landow's "convoluted anecdotes and interlocking system of iconic/verbal/formal puns" in *On the Marriage Broker Joke as Cited by Sigmund Freud in* Wit and Its Relation to Time Unconscious*, or Can the Avant-Garde Artist Be Wholed?* are analyzed in Arthur 146-48. The still legible beginning of the text of *The Pressures of the Text* is included in MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 160-61. Rose's works that deconstruct language are briefly discussed in MacDonald, "Experimental Cinema" 440-42.

the 1950s-60s.[16] In the 1970s, the emergence of what became labeled as "Language Poetry"[17] signaled an amalgamation of interest in disrupting the conventional semantic, syntactic, and, thus, communicative, norms of language as a political gesture. These writers strove to "lay bare language's inherent capacity to construct belief" and to explore "analogies between the structure of language and social reality" (Silliman et al. 268, 270). As Michael Palmer[18] observes, in the environment of poetry, "the words we hear are both the same and different, recognizable and foreign, constructed in fact like language itself on the play of identity and difference" (266). Creating disjunctions and surprising links, highlighting gaps and silences, and stripping the letters of the alphabet of the layers of convention are just a few features that associates of the Language School (as well as many other poets before and after) share with avant-garde filmmakers that make language the cornerstone of their works.[19]

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[16] Concrete Poetry created in the United States is illustrated and discussed, for example, in Solt and in the Internet collections of the Sackner Archive of Visual and Concrete Poetry and of UbuWeb.

[17] Writers who were grouped together by critics under the label of "Language Poetry" or "Language School" were themselves not too enthusiastic about the umbrella term. Aware of the problematic implications of group identity, they preferred to speak of "overlapping affinities" instead (see Silliman et al. 272, 261). For a comprehensive collection of writings on Language Poetics, see Andrews and Bernstein. For a recent discussion of the movement, with an extensive list of scholarly sources, see Izenberg.

[18] While listing representatives of the Language School, Jed Rasula mentions Palmer among "affiliates once removed" (261). Palmer's relationship to the group is discussed in Silliman et al. 273. For an analysis of ways Palmer investigates and constructs identities of the letters of the alphabet, see Savukova, "From *A* to *a*."

[19] According to P. Adams Sitney, Abigail Child's film series *Is This What You Were Born For?* (1981-89) had the closest affinity to the poetics of the Language School: "Not just its disruption of syntax on the soundtrack but its insistence on the political nature of syntactical dissonance, on the visual as well as the auditory level, recalled their program" (*Eyes* 277). Only one part of this series—*Both* (1988)—is silent.

Such was the *zeitgeist* of the aesthetic and intellectual discourses that influenced the avant-garde of the period and partially determined the centrality of the word in some films and the anti-language agenda of others. The latter, especially evident in Brakhage's oeuvre, was closely related to the renewed appreciation for the aesthetic of silence.

THE AESTHETIC OF SILENCE:

STAN BRAKHAGE AND THE SPARSITY OF WORDS

"Silence is a metaphor for a cleansed, non-interfering vision . . ." (Sontag 16). This phrase could have been attributed to Stan Brakhage, whose manifesto, published in 1963, was called *Metaphors on Vision* and whose filming "a world before the 'beginning was the word'"[20] became an influential phenomenon in the American avant-garde culture. Brakhage was not creating his silent films in a sound-infused vacuum.[21] As P. Adams Sitney reminds us, "a new aesthetic of *silence* within the American film experience" was propagated in the postwar period through a distribution

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[20] The sentence "Imagine a world before the 'beginning was the word'" concludes the opening paragraph of *Metaphors on Vision* (*Essential Brakhage* 12). As Fred Camper points out, the beginning of *Metaphors on Vision* "has often been misconstrued as staking an impossible claim for recapturing the pre-linguistic eyesight of children, when in fact he [Brakhage] makes it quite clear that he's pursuing a necessarily imperfect adult attempt to re-envision such eyesight even after, or in spite of, the acquisition of language" (72).

[21] John Cage's investigations into the nature of silence in music were contemporaneous with Brakhage's explorations of silent vision. Brakhage, however, was much less influenced by Cage than by the poetics of Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Charles Olson, and Robert Duncan (see, for example, Elder, *Films*; James, "Film-Maker"; Sitney, "Brakhage"). As Brakhage wrote in a 1962 letter to Sitney, "Cage has laid down the greatest aesthetic net of this century. Only those who honestly encounter it . . . and manage to survive (i.e., go beyond it) will be the artists of our contemporary present" ("Respond" 242-43).

of early silent films, most of which were shown without a sound accompaniment, by the Circulating Library of the Museum of Modern Art (*Visionary Film* 62). Many avant-garde artists intentionally made some of their films without any soundtrack as a tribute to silent cinema as well as in response to discourses about the debasement of language. Additionally, as Morgan Fisher pointed out in a 1981 interview with Scott MacDonald, it was tempting for independent artists to make silent films because it was much cheaper (*Critical Cinema* 365). Thus, "the history of independently made film of the postwar period is that of a transvaluation of values through which an enforced reversion to an artisanal mode of production (that of the silent, 16 mm format) enables the conversion of necessity to virtue" (Michelson, "Frampton's Sieve" 153).

Brakhage was perhaps most consistent in his choice of the silent medium and in his ardent advocating of language-free cinema. According to R. Bruce Elder's interpretation of Brakhage's philosophy, the filmmaker subscribed to the belief that "language imposes a deadening weight of tradition on experience" and argued that language, based on generic nouns and qualifiers of nouns, "promotes categorical thinking," which involves reasoning in and about words and is divorced from reality (*Films* 160, 150). Many of Brakhage's works are infused with moving abstract imagery because "all representations are congregations of 'nameable forms'" and film, as Brakhage believed, "needed to be released from the domain and domination of language" (Elder, "Moving" 400).[22] Brakhage himself suggested that "there is a pursuit of

[22] Brakhage did not like it that his films were often called abstract. As he explained, "all of what other people would call my abstract films, which as you know I don't regard as abstract at all, are the most concrete pieces of my making, because they come most directly from my synapses and my thinking" (Brakhage, Johnson, and Shedden 33).

knowledge foreign to language and founded upon visual communication, demanding a development of the optical mind, and dependent upon perception in the original and deepest sense of the word" (*Essential Brakhage* 12) and insisted that viewers "of imagery are . . . less visually subservient in reception than readers who are, after all, strung along a line-of-words . . ." (199).

Elder, who became Brakhage's close friend in the late eighties (Sitney, *Eyes* 345), maintains that Brakhage understood "the escape from language in mystical terms as a quest for divine vision." Turning inwards—"away from language towards silence"—was the only way to know the divine *energeia* ("Moving" 418-19). Although Brakhage experimented with sound in several of his films,[23] he came to the conclusion that his creations were in as much need of a soundtrack as a painting would be in want of recorded music as a supplement (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 49). Any sound would in fact adulterate vision: as Brakhage explained when presenting *Deus Ex* (1971) to an audience, sound makes the brain switch over to the ear and usurps the primacy from the light pouring into the eye ("How They Were Loving" 10-11). How Brakhage's works explore and develop the faculty of vision has been frequently discussed in film literature. My task here is to analyze the rare instances when Brakhage decided to admit words into the realm of his silent films.

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[23] A most illustrative example is *Scenes from under Childhood, Section One* (1967), which was initially created with a soundtrack. Brakhage, however, eventually decided that the entire work should be silent, although he also kept the sound version of the first section "for study purposes," as is noted in the allographic titular shot of the film version included in the DVD set *By Brakhage: An Anthology, Volume Two*. As Brakhage explained at one of the Sunday salons he hosted between 1993 and 2002, an excerpt from which is available on Disk 1 of the DVD set, he had realized that the whole film should be screened silently because otherwise one would pay too much of a price visually to hear the sound.

Even when a filmic text strives to remain completely language-free, words are still integrated into the credits. As discussed in detail in the second chapter, the function of authorial signature, including a zero-credit, is inherent in any paratext. Brakhage's creations are no exception, although his way of establishing authorship in most early and some later films—scratching "by Brakhage" into the emulsion of black leader—was primarily meant as a metatextual commentary. Brakhage explains: "when I first signed films it was because I was making the personal statement really, that is, my signature. . . . to scratch a signature on film had some very powerful meaning at that time that really distinguished it from the Hollywood film or any other kind of film" (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 213).[24] Brakhage regarded scratching titles on film also as a kind of signature. Although the origin of the idea to scratch on film was quite prosaic—a lack of money to pay for the title and credits to be attached to *Desistfilm* (1954)[25]—Brakhage immediately realized the implications:

> I stumbled therefore into, or was given a gift of, the scratching of titles directly onto the film surface, which had this effect that from the beginning the viewer was given the rhythm of the very projector that was going to show them the rest of the film. They were given the sense of the film surface itself, they were given handwriting. Even when the titles were printed, they were given some sense of that what we call signature, or the

[24] Morley calls the predilection for scribbling in the arts of the period a manifestation of "the desire to evoke a primal and 'demotic' form of writing . . . representing a kind of abasement of writing, one that eschewed the sophistications of typography and mechanical lettering and the pleasures of clarity and comprehension in favour of the authenticity of the direct and deliberately artless scrawl" (110).

[25] The title and credits in *Desistfilm* are scratched in print letters, not in cursive script.

very soul of the maker in writ.[26]

Brakhage also remarked in an interview with Frampton that he utilized his signature, which took him hours to scratch on film, to emphasize his unique style of offering "an *extensive* view of human personality" (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 175).

A scratched signature in cursive script becomes the final visual image in, for example, *Cat's Cradle* (1959), *Wedlock House: An Intercourse* (1959), *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959), *Mothlight* (1963), *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (1971) (figure 4.3), and *The Wold Shadow* (1972). Elder reminds us that Brakhage believed that "a being larger than the individual self was the maker of his artistic works" and stated in his *Metaphors on Vision* that the phrase "by Stan Brakhage" was to be understood as "by way of Stan and Jane and the children Brakhage" ("Brakhage" 88). Around the mid-seventies, however, as Brakhage reveals, he began feeling that signing his films in such a manner was egocentric. At approximately the same time, Brakhage began copyrighting his films, mostly because he was starting to worry that he was leaving his children nothing ("Gift" 63).[27] Thus, working outside the frames of the studio system and priding himself on being an amateur filmmaker who was making home movies ("Pauline Kael"), Brakhage nevertheless started to follow some of the Hollywood practices by combining authorial signature and ownership statement in a copyright shot. Then a Brakhage "logo" emerged—for example, in *Desert* (1976), *The Dante Quartet* (1987), *Glaze of Cathexis* (1990) (figure 4.4), and *Delicacies of Molten Horror Synapse* (1990)—

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[26] This is a transcribed quote from a video interview that is part of "Brakhage on Brakhage 1," available on Disk 1 of *By Brakhage: An Anthology, Volume One*.

[27] In 1990, Brakhage provided an additional reason: he felt protective about his work because some of his films had been too much tampered with ("I Did Not Want" 109).

which signified an established authority[28] and in a way put Brakhage on the same playing field with huge studios, whose logos were instantly recognizable.

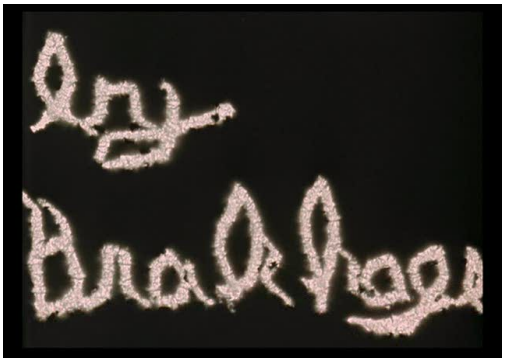


Fig. 4.3. *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*: signature as a challenge to the norm.

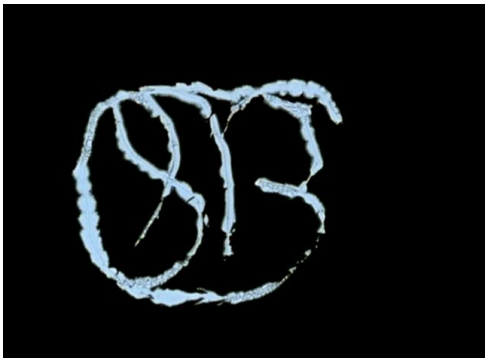


Fig. 4.4. *Glaze of Cathexis*: a personal logo as a sign of recognition.

The nondescript type-set font of the copyright shots in many of Brakhage's films (e.g., *The Stars Are Beautiful* (1974), *Delicacies of Molten Horror Synapse*, *Glaze of Cathexis*, *Black Ice* (1994), and *The Dark Tower* (1999)) may seem to bear witness to the filmmaker's aversion to language as an intruder on the faculty of vision and his desire to keep the words completely on the outside. Indeed, Brakhage decided "to bracket the films with copyright at the beginning and end, [his] hope being that this would be no more intrusive than a frame" ("Gift" 63). However, the copyright inscription and the title are more artistically scratched or hand-painted and, as such, contribute to the feel of homemade-ness and strong emotional involvement in, for example, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1981) (figure 4.5), *Night Music* (1986), and *Rage Net* (1988).[29] In *The Dante Quartet*, the chosen paratextual typeface (figure 4.6), which approximates a

[28] Other avant-garde filmmakers of the period (Hollis Frampton and Su Friedrich, among others) also concluded some of their films with personal logos.

[29] Legibly printed titles were a requirement of the copyright office, so Brakhage's films sometimes had both printed titles and handwritten titles ("I Did Not Want" 109).

medieval script, is thematically linked to the title and the film proper.[30]

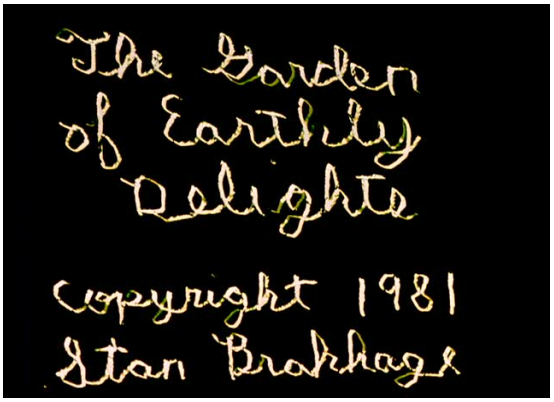


Fig. 4.5. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*: a move towards approximating the norm.



Fig. 4.6. *The Dante Quartet*: approximating a medieval script as a thematic link.

An ornate script is also employed in the paratext of *Dog Star Man*, made in 1961-64. Inspired by Pound's *Cantos* (Brakhage, "Chicago" 39), which to Brakhage was "the single most important book" (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 224), *Dog Star Man* is Brakhage's own "film epic" (Brakhage, Johnson, and Shedden 32). According to the filmmaker, it evokes poetic and symbolic[31] rather than dramatic relationships ("Pauline Kael"). The design of the paratext (figure 4.7), including the title and the segmenting intertitles, is a fitting homage to the bibliographical code of *The Cantos*, which integrated hieroglyphics, ideograms, and drawings. The paratextual design, however, is not Brakhage's creation. As is revealed in the recent documentary *Rocaterrania* (Brett Ingram, 2009), Brakhage asked Renaldo Kuhler, a reclusive artist-illustrator who had been and still is creating a fantasy world in his notebooks, to design titles for *Dog Star*

[30] *The Dante Quartet* is one of the few films where Brakhage incorporates handwritten intertitles that act as transtextual chapter headings, which are exhaustively discussed in Elder, "Moving" 426-36. For an analysis of the four-part structure of *The Dante Quartet*, see also Sitney, "Tales" 105-15.

[31] The mythopoeic dimensions of *Dog Star Man* are analyzed, for example, in Elder, *Films* 144-46 and Sitney, *Visionary Film* 189-203.

Man because, as Kuhler explains, Brakhage admired his calligraphy. Kuhler's Rocaterrania has its own alphabet and language, created as an amalgam of different languages and scripts. It is possible that the idea behind this intermedial fusion appealed to Brakhage as an appropriate approximation of Pound's visual aesthetics.

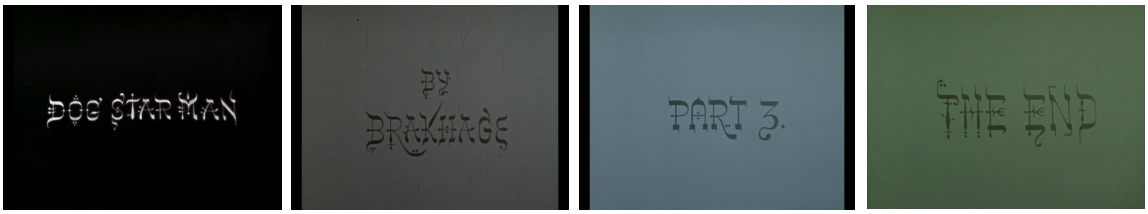


Fig. 4.7. *Dog Star Man*: ornate calligraphy—an exception rather than the rule.

What remains unclear is why Brakhage did not give Kuhler any credit in the paratext of *Dog Star Man*, although Brakhage incorporates his thanks to "HIGH ALTITUDE OBSERVATORY BOULDER, COLO." (in a typography also possibly designed by Kuhler) for the solar photography that he bought from them.[32] When Brakhage integrates music in his sound films, the composer is usually credited, as are (Joel) Heartling and (Stephen) Foster in *I . . . Dreaming* (1988) and Rick Corrigan for his "Requiem" in *Crack Glass Eulogy* (1991). In the closing paratexts of *Stellar* (1993) and *Black Ice*, Brakhage acknowledges the contribution of Sam Bush, the optical printer, elevating him to the status of a "visual musician." The absence of any reference to Kuhler in *Dog Star Man* can serve as an indirect proof that Brakhage indeed considered the contributions of optical technology and of music[33] much more important to his films than any verbal input. Ironically, the authorial signature in *Dog Star Man*—"BY BRAKHAGE"—was also

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[32] Brakhage spoke of this purchase from the High Altitude Laboratory in a conversation with Pauline Kael ("Pauline Kael").

[33] Brakhage often wrote about the affinities between music and his film aesthetics. In a 1993 interview with Suranjan Ganguly, the filmmaker was definitive: "Of all the arts, music is closest to film . . ." ("All That Is" 22).

created by Kuhler.

Among Brakhage's films of the 1950s-60s, *23rd Psalm Branch* (1967) drastically stands out in its incorporation of various kinds of screen words. Such an aberration in Brakhage's practice could not have failed to attract attention, and much has already been said about language use in this film.[34] Thus, my analysis of the functionality of words in *23rd Psalm Branch* will necessarily draw on the observations already made but will also highlight inferences and verbal elements hitherto largely overlooked.

23rd Psalm Branch belongs to a series of *Songs* that Brakhage created in 8mm in the sixties.[35] Pound's "Salutation the Second"—"Go, little naked and impudent songs, / Go with a light foot !" (18-19)—was a direct inspiration, both as an artistic endeavor and a social commitment. When discussing his own *Songs*, Brakhage often referred to the last stanza of "Salutation the Second," where Pound urged his songs to "go to practical people — / go ! jangle their door-bells !" (36-37), in a paraphrase "ring the doorbells of the bourgeoisie,"[36] emphasizing the artist's social function. At the same time, Brakhage

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[34] William C. Wees, for example, devoted a whole article to language use in *23rd Psalm Branch* ("Words and Images in Stan Brakhage's '23rd Psalm Branch'"). In his "careful scrutiny" of the words that appear in the film, Wees, however, ignores the verbal language of Part 2, rationalizing his decision in the following manner: "because words appear as images only in Part 1—the part explicitly dealing with war—we will concentrate our attention on that part and on its unique (for Brakhage) use of verbal texts in visual form" (41).

[35] According to the allographic titular shot of the DVD version of the film, *23rd Psalm Branch* "was enlarged to 16mm and rereleased in 1978, when, Brakhage said, he felt 'the war inclination of this society . . . once again'" (ellipsis in orig.). My analysis of the film is based on this version.

[36] For example, Brakhage uses the phrase "ring the doorbells of the bourgeoisie" in an interview that is part of "Brakhage on Brakhage 3," available on Disk 2 of *By Brakhage: An Anthology, Volume One*.

treated the concept of *song* as an equivalent of finding his own voice in the universe. On the occasion of his 60th birthday, Brakhage revealed to Suranjan Ganguly:

> . . . I believe in song. That's what I wanted to do and I did it quite selfishly, out of my own need to come through to a voice that is comparable with song and related to all animal life on earth. I believe in the beauty of the singing of the whale; I am moved deeply at the whole range of song that the wolf makes when the moon appears, or neighborhood dogs make—that they make their song, and this is the wonder of life on earth, and I in great humility wish to join this. ("All That Is" 23)

Most of the films in the series are called simply *Song I* (1964), *Songs II & III* (1964), and so on; only the titles of three songs (*XV Song Traits* (1965), *Song XXIII: 23rd Psalm Branch*, and *American Thirties Song* (1969)), as Sitney reports, pun on the relation of the number to its subject (*Visionary Film* 210). Just as footage is sometimes recycled from one song to another, so can Brakhage's short description of *XV Song Traits* be helpful in understanding the implications of the title of *23rd Psalm Branch*. The filmmaker describes *XV Song Traits* as a "series of individual portraits of friends and family, all interrelated in what might be called a branch growing directly from the trunks of SONGS I-XIV" (qtd. in Sitney, *Visionary Film* 210-11). The twenty-third film in the series metaphorizes the idea of a tree in its title, hinting both at the common root and at a new direction to be taken. I also cannot help linking Brakhage's title to the silent film by Sidney Peterson and James Broughton entitled *The Potted Psalm* (1946), a surrealistic investigation of archetypes, which Brakhage called "a much more honest film and a much more meaningful film . . . than the 'Andalusian Dog'" (*Film* 56). If the *psalm* of Peterson and Broughton's title can be *potted* like a plant, in its orthographic closeness to *palm*, then

why can't the *psalm* of Brakhage's title be a branch or have branches?[37]

In the same vein, as William C. Wees notes, "psalm branch" puns on the religious associations of "palm branch," a symbol of victory and triumph ("Words" 42). Brakhage, however, simultaneously undermines the possibility of a festive mood by directly referring to Psalm 23. According to J. Clinton McCann Jr., Psalm 23, "undoubtedly the most familiar psalm in the book of Psalms," is most often invoked "in situations of extremity and loss" and, as such, "has gained its reputation as 'a funeral psalm'" (44-45). It is doubtful then, as Wees speculates, that Brakhage incorporates the references to this psalm into the title "to invoke God's protection before undertaking the film's journey 'through the valley of the shadow of death'" ("Words" 42). Considering that through *23rd Psalm Branch*, Brakhage strives to clarify to himself and to everyone else that war is a natural disaster because "the proclivity to war moves through human beings" ("Stan Brakhage" 116), it seems more likely that Brakhage questions the major assumption of Psalm 23: namely, that in his role as a shepherd, the Lord "leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (3). Constantly inserting images of Hitler, Mussolini, and other political leaders who shepherded their flocks into the paths of murder and destruction and hinting at the dangers of crowd mentality, Brakhage warns the viewers against what he thinks is the false belief that the government can be relied on to stop the war. As the filmmaker explains, it is each person's responsibility to "seek to alleviate the sufferings of others" instead of trusting politicians' promises ("Stan Brakhage" 116).

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[37] According to Marie Nesthus, James Broughton was one of the "exemplars and mentors to the young Brakhage." In the mid-sixties, Brakhage and Broughton remained in touch; Broughton dedicated his book of poetry—*Tidings* (1965)—to Brakhage (138). The disjunctive development of *The Potted Psalm* is discussed, for instance, in Sitney, *Visionary Film* 44-47.

Thus, in its invocation of Psalm 23, *23rd Psalm Branch* seems to be both a funeral liturgy for war victims and a prayer to each and everyone to reassess their individual stance on war and suffering.

The word *Song* appears in the film as part of a diegetic insert, with the words *River* and *Light* placed directly above and below respectively (figure 4.8). The textual insert is flashed several times on the screen interspersed mostly with flickering shots of flying planes, explosions, hand-painted stretches of film, "3500 B.C. Upper Egypt figures representing a war in two movements,"[38] Hellenic and medieval illustrations of battles, excerpts from Latin phrases framed in such a way as to preclude legibility, Brakhage's head posed against the background of a Roy Lichtenstein poster featuring a gun barrel,[39] and an aerial shot of a city, sometimes with a superimposed location intertitle —"NAGASAKI"—rapidly advancing towards the viewers (figure 4.9). In this brief glimpse into the history of art, Brakhage emphasizes the fact that conflict and war have not only been part of human existence since the very beginning but have also been deemed worthy of artistic depiction and of literary narratives. During this sequence, there may seem to be an opposition between the verbal triad of *River*, *Song*, and *Light*[40] (when bundled together, these words seem to refer to natural phenomena) and man-inflicted

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[38] Brakhage explains what these figures are in a 1967 letter to Guy Davenport (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 89).

[39] In these shots of a Pop artist's poster depicting a gun ready to fire at the filmmaker and the viewer, Brakhage is likely to be punning on the two meanings of the word *pop*, creating a variation of what Noël Carroll calls a *verbal image* (*Theorizing* 187-211).

[40] Wees treats the triad "River/Song/Light" as a single ideographic character that "evokes a multitude of meanings and associations, among which would be the notion of the film as a song composed of light flowing past our eyes like a river" ("Words" 45).

disasters, visually represented as various manifestations of wars. Brakhage, however, deconstructs this opposition to highlight his belief that war is a natural disaster. He includes images of light that has an artificial source in this sequence and throughout the film: for example, blinding light accompanying nuclear explosions and electric light in household lamps and city illumination. The benevolence of the two flowing rivers that frame the city in the aerial shot (see figure 4.9) is questioned because of the cognitive connotation brought into the picture by the location identifier: after the nuclear blast in Nagasaki, the waters were dangerously despoiled by radioactivity. Water is also presented as a threat to humankind in earlier images of floods, raging surfs, and overflowing dams.

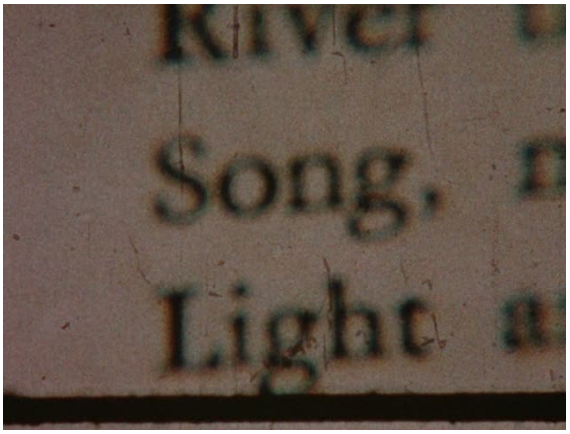


Fig. 4.8. *23rd Psalm Branch*: the verbal triad as a visual image.

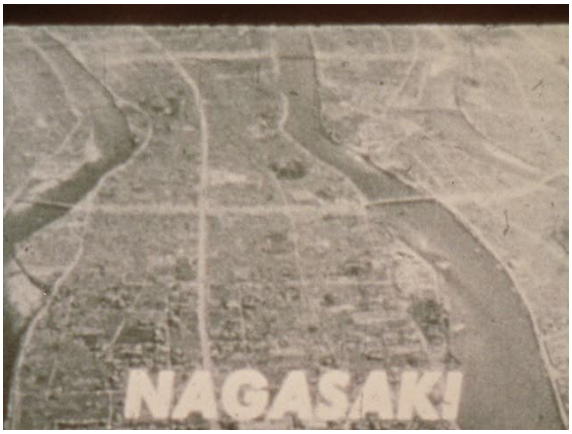


Fig. 4.9. *23rd Psalm Branch*: the cognitive connotation of a man-made disaster.

Only when an illegible printed page is turned over and the camera focuses on Louis Zukofsky's signature (figure 4.10) does Brakhage give us a hint that the textual insert comes from Zukofsky's book, which is in fact *"A."*[41] The poet himself and his wife soon appear in the frame apparently engaged in a lively conversation, followed by several flickering images of the Nagasaki aerial shot and patterned fabric, until the camera

[41] Zukofsky's *"A"* was first published in its entirety in 1978. In 2001, Brakhage named *"A"* among the few completed epic poems of the twentieth century, together with Stein's *Stanzas in Meditation* and Ronald Johnson's *ARK* ("Chicago" 39).

quickly pans right on the book page to reveal the next words in the lines that start with *River*, *Song*, and *Light*: “River that must . . . / Song, my song, . . . / Light as my love. . . .” *Song* is thus focalized as the addressee of an invocation, whereas *River* is mysteriously put under an obligation, yet unknown, and *Light* turns out to be an adjective rather than a noun that signifies a heavy-laden concept. The camera pans right even further after a series of images from concentration camps and juxtapositions of Zukofsky's face with those of the incarcerated during the Second World War[42] to allow the viewers a glimpse at the continuation of the lines: “River that must turn full after I stop . . . / Song, my song, raise grief to music / Light as my loves' thought, the few . . . ” (figure 4.11). It is almost impossible to grasp all the three lines in one viewing; additionally, the first and the third lines are partially cut off. As a result, the viewer's attention is likely to focus on the line that runs along the middle of the frame—the line that twice contains the word *song* and that is central to Part 1.[43] The words then get out of focus as the camera pulls away, and the book is closed to reveal Zukofsky's signature once again.

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[42] It has been noted that Brakhage is thus pondering on Zukofsky's possible fate if the poet had lived in Europe during the war (Camhi 102; Elder, *Films* 118; Sitney, *Visionary Film* 219).

[43] Brakhage himself spoke of the centrality of Zukofsky's figure and the line “Song, my song, raise grief to music” in the first part of *23rd Psalm Branch* (Wees, “Words” 45). Sitney calls the line a “motto for transforming into art his [Brakhage's] compound agony over the Vietnam War and over the mass protests against it” (“Tales” 115).

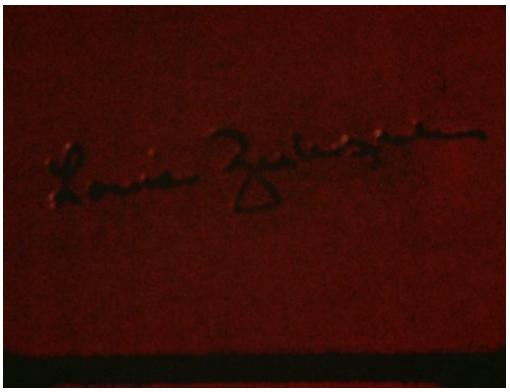


Fig. 4.10. *23rd Psalm Branch*: signature identifying external authorship.

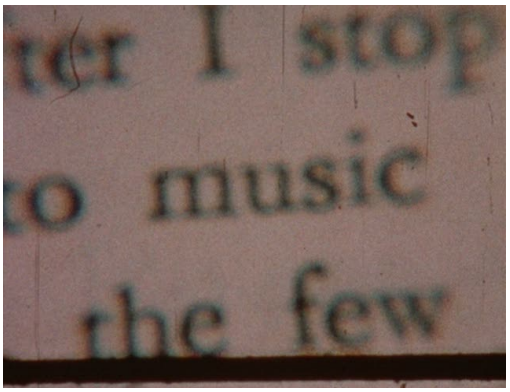


Fig. 4.11. *23rd Psalm Branch*: focus on mediating grief through art.

By gradually revealing the three lines that begin section 11 of *A*, and still concealing the endings of the first and the third lines (*dying* and *sick* respectively), Brakhage effectively exemplifies the principle of differential relations that governs language: the words constituting the lines can be interpreted in a variety of ways dependent on the context (of the neighboring words and interspersed images) within which they are presented. As such, language cannot be trusted and is especially dangerous when manipulated by people in power. Brakhage is unequivocal in his stance on the matter: "Except for poets, I think language is a damnation of human sensibility and in the blind mouths of politicians is destroying us all" (Brakhage, Johnson, and Shedden 36).

23rd Psalm Branch is replete with intertextual references, but only in the section that focuses on Zukofsky does Brakhage identify the author of the text he appropriates. The first verbal elements that the viewers encounter after the paratextual presentation of the title, about two and a half minutes into the film, are barely legible scribbles. The enigmatic phrase "Take back / Beethoven's 9th, then, / he said" gets scratched into the black leader before our eyes (figure 4.12). Preceded by a barrage of horrific documentary images of human corpses and followed by visual shots of peaceful landscapes torn apart

by explosions of various sorts, this interlocutionary appeal seems to be contrasting the heights of human achievement, as illustrated by Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and the lows of human nature that result in destruction. Humanity is judged for its sins of war: until people learn to curb their predisposition to aggression and violence, they do not deserve momentous works of art; nor do they have the right to appropriate masterpieces for political purposes, as has been the fate of the Ninth Symphony, and especially the "Ode to Joy."[44]

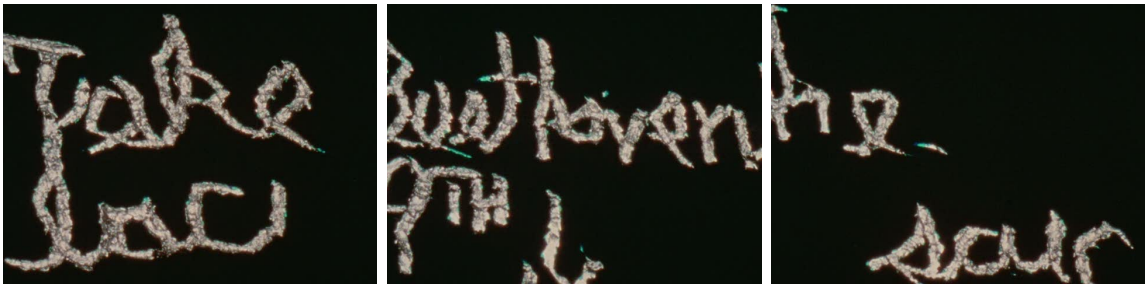


Fig. 4.12. *23rd Psalm Branch*: "Take back Beethoven's 9th, then, he said"—written before our eyes.

According to Wees, when Brakhage was making *23rd Psalm Branch*, he had forgotten that the idea to "take back" the Ninth Symphony originated from Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, which the filmmaker had read in the mid-fifties ("Words" 43, 49). It is hard to say how much of the original context Brakhage remembered, but his way of integrating the idea into the film, without any explanation, is remarkably similar to the situation described in Mann's novel. The "he" in Brakhage's inscription is the composer Adrian Leverkühn, Mann's protagonist, who, anguished by the suffering of his dying nephew, declares that the good and noble should not be and that he will take back the Ninth Symphony, providing no further clarification to his interlocutor, the "I" of the novel. Analyzing the origin of this idea in the novel, Berthold Hoeckner explains that,

[44] See a study of the political history of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Buch.

from the very beginning, Mann intended to link the loss of hope to a stylistic breakthrough that characterizes Leverkühn's last work, *The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus*, a negation of the "Ode to Joy" (225, 244). By incorporating words into the texture of the film, for him a radical stylistic change, Brakhage seems to be making a statement that his resorting to language stems from his loss of hope in the good of humanity. In a letter dated 1946, Mann called *The Lamentation of Doctor Faustus*, which he was "imagining and composing" at the time, "an ode to sorrow" (378). Thus, the implicit reference to Mann's "ode to sorrow" and the explicit incorporation of Zukofsky's invocation to "raise grief to music" verbalize the overwhelming mood of anguish in *23rd Psalm Branch*.

23rd Psalm Branch was conceived in response to the introduction of television into the Brakhages' home. As the filmmaker explains, the TV set "was our only specific connection to Society with a capital 'S' or something we were expected to be responsible for" ("Stan Brakhage" 109). Bombarded by commercials, dramas, and newsreels about the US intervention in Vietnam, Brakhage felt the hypnotic power of the light flickering on the television screen:

> . . . it presented an image in a way so similar to the experience of remembering that the effect was as if my brain was in the television set and I was viewing my own experiential data and would therefore feel automatically like acting on it as I would upon my own experiences. . . . And I began intensively remembering this war of my childhood and then, making this film out of only those images that I could remember having seen as a child and directly inspired by the orders in which I remembered them, and the rhythms in which they were flashed forth. (110-11)

Thus, childhood memories of the Second World War, experienced through documentaries and newsreels, became a background against which Brakhage created his cinematic study into the nature of war, substantiated, as Sitney reports, by reading war memoirs and battle descriptions and by analyzing war reports and political speeches in the mass media (*Visionary Film* 217).

Brakhage became so overwhelmed by the project that he even wanted to abandon it, of which there remains a verbal trace in Part 1 in the form of a scratched inscription "I can't go on." But Brakhage soon realized that he could not get out of it because he had to clarify to himself, and then to others, why he simply had to make that film ("Stan Brakhage" 111). Visually, "I can't go on" (figure 4.13) is scratched into the emulsion before our eyes in the same trembling hand as was the reference to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; it thus reveals the pain Brakhage is going through trying to create his own "ode to sorrow." It takes Brakhage considerable effort to convince Brakhage, with the help of words, that he must go on. This schizophrenic encounter[45] is visually presented as an alternation of two modes of writing, both in Brakhage's own hand: scratched inscriptions in black leader (see figure 4.13) and writing in ink on white paper (figure 4.14). As Wees comments, these modes "are like two inflections of the filmmaker's voice, or two characters speaking from a single impulse" ("Words" 46).

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[45] Jameson considers schizophrenic writing to be a feature of postmodern thought. Building on Jacques Lacan's description of schizophrenia "as a breakdown in a signifying chain," Jameson explains: "when the relationship of signifiers among themselves . . . breaks down, when the links of the signifying chain snap, then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers. . . . If we are unable to unify the past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life" (*Postmodernism* 26-27).

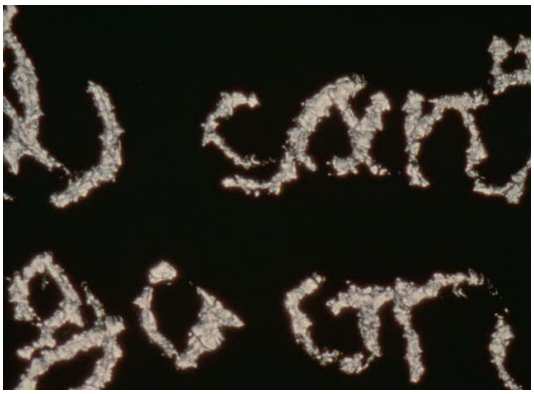


Fig. 4.13. *23rd Psalm Branch*: verbalizing the pain of making the film.

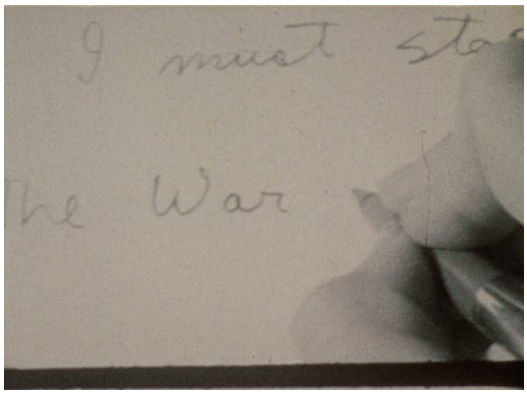


Fig. 4.14. *23rd Psalm Branch*: echoing the pain in a different mode.

After about five minutes of documentary footage, dotted patterns, and direct painting on film, the camera focuses on a whitish sheet of paper. The pen in Brakhage's hand paraphrases the earlier sentiment—"I must stop! . . . ."—and then writes on two new lines "The War is as these" and "thoughts" respectively, until it is interrupted by the white scribbles on black, which rapidly morph the word *ideas* into *images*. Influenced by this interruption, the pen strikes out the final *s* in "thoughts" and starts another word on the same line, but the black leader returns with two more concepts, now separated from each other by a black screen—*rhythm* and *pattern*. Prompted by the alter ego, the pen writes "/ patterns are—" following "thought," which mysteriously takes the spot of what used to be "thoughts," as if the act of striking the *s* out with the pen has led to a complete disappearance of the unwanted letter. As the pen finishes writing "as" on a new line, it stops momentarily, reconsiders, and goes back in time to the spot where it started most recently. Now, only "/ patterns" completes the line initiated by "thought," and "are—" begins a new line, finished by "as endless as." After the pen begins the next line with an ellipsis, it pauses briefly, continues the line with "precise as eye's" and finishes the sentence on a new line with "hell is!"

Deprived of a chance to read the note again in its entirety, the viewers are forced

to rely on their immediate memories trying to grasp the revised and elliptical message, whose bibliographical code not only reveals the filmmaker's own confusion and anguish but also highlights the concepts with which Brakhage is operating in his study of the war. In the black-on-white part, the capitalized *War* is clearly a key concept in need of defining and understanding. Brakhage also draws the viewers' attention to the forms of the verb *to be*: *is* is underlined in both cases it appears ("The War <u>is</u>" and "hell <u>is</u>"); *are* changes position in the revised version from being the last on one line to being the first in the next line. It seems that Brakhage is underscoring the inescapable immanence of war, its state of being as inherent in humanity as *ideas*, *images*, *thought(s)*, *rhythm*, *pattern(s)* —the other concepts (or, rather, different names for one all-encompassing concept) that are foregrounded in the verbal text, via a change in the writing mode (scratched white-on-black) or through revision and repetition. In a 1966 letter to Robert Duncan, Brakhage weaves all of these concepts together (and underlines the root *be*!) to articulate the underlying structure of *23rd Psalm Branch*:

> . . . I am now editing images of crowd shapes and formations of armies, movements thereof, from the newsreels of the '30's, working along a line of the Greek sense of the word "idea" ("picture"/"pattern") to work these semblances of the war of my childhood's-weekly-attendence [sic] into a strip of film that will now reveal the shape, the taking shape of 'World' conflict <u>and</u> . . . the physiological rhythms of my inner conflict remembered, pieced together, spliced. I hope these parts of "23rd Psalm Branch" to take their continuities as current reflection of the child's view of images of war—to be of the very rhythm the optic nerve pulses in its firing forth these pictures dredged from memory fund, and to be of the

> orders of that act of remembering . . . this is the closest I am enabled to come, at this time, to make visible the being of war's cause." ("Letters to Robert Duncan" 23)

In spite of the dominance of visuals in his films, Brakhage cannot help relying on language in articulating "the being of war's cause"—partially in an attempt to escape, at least briefly, "eye's hell." Wees points out that the ending of Brakhage's note is an adaptive borrowing of the concluding stanza from Olson's poem "In Cold Hell, in Thicket," where Brakhage shifts Olson's emphasis on "words" ("precise as hell is, precise / as any words") onto the faculty of vision ("as endless as / . . . precise as eye's / hell is!") ("Words" 46). There is much more, however, to this intertextual reference than immediately meets the eye.

Olson's "In Cold Hell, in Thicket" (1950) opens up another avenue of interpretation, which reinforces the observations I have made earlier. As Paul Christensen reminds us, the title of Olson's poem, which later gave its name to a book of poetry, "refers to the opening of Dante's *Inferno*, the 'selva oscura,' the dark wood Dante wanders into in the middle of his life" (510). The man/he/I begins speculating on the question "Who am I?" when imprisoned by the branches of the thicket (the word *branch(es)* occurs three times in the poem), where

> All things are made bitter, words even
> are made to taste like paper, wars get tossed up
> like lead soldiers used to be
> (in a child's attic) lined up
> to be knocked down, as I am. . . . (155)

An inevitable conclusion is reached that "hell now / is not exterior, is not to be got out of,

is / the coat of your own self" (158) and that neither prayer nor death are "any longer / usable" (157). And only when human beings realize that they "are now their own wood / and thus their own hell and paradise" (158-59), that their present is dwarfed by remembrances, histories, and external instructions will they be able to "raise the thickets of this wilderness" (156), to walk over their own bones and enter an open field.[46]

Although lacking an optimistic strand of rebirth, characteristic of "In Cold Hell, in Thicket," *23rd Psalm Branch* certainly echoes Olson's poem—in its reliance on internal memories and received histories, in its incorporation of verbal concepts that "taste like paper," in its rejection of the usefulness of prayer to an external power, and in its postulate that it is everyone's responsibility to probe deep into themselves in order to realize what their natural predispositions (especially for violence and war) are, so as to be able to counteract them. In fact, at one point during the process of writing, the camera frames the text in such a way that we read "I must stop / the War" (see figure 4.14). Inflected by Olson's interpretation of the thicket and its branches, the title of Brakhage's film acquires additional meanings: the *Branch* can then also stand for an imprisoning coat of wood, an obstacle that prevents people from understanding that hell is their own making. And *Psalm Branch* is a variation of this imprisonment: prayers for external protection and guidance lead nowhere. The importance of Olson's poem to Brakhage's film is also signaled by the fact that a repetition of the sequence when the pen in Brakhage's hand is writing ". . . precise as eye's / hell <u>is</u>!" concludes Part 1.

Brakhage's conventional handwriting, black on white, intervenes in the visuality

[46] This is of course a simplistic interpretation of Olson's poem. I only mention points that are directly related to Brakhage's *23rd Psalm Branch*.

of Part 1 for the first time long before he writes "I must stop! . . . ." before our eyes. Images of clouds from above and aerial shots of cities and landscapes are interrupted by two brief insertions of whitish paper inscribed "Oh Ja," revealed to be "Oh Jane" in the second case. The addressee—Brakhage's wife Jane—materializes shortly, with the camera positioned to capture her head and naked torso from above. Other excerpts from what seems to be a personal letter reappear several minutes later, after more fleeting shots, including those of the sky, plane wings, the Brakhages' naked children, and rock formations.[47] The rapid movements of the camera and the framing obscure most of the letter, which is presented to us in flickers interspersed with visual shots of Jane, plane wings, and bird's-eye-view panoramas. The camera slows down and pauses so that we could make out some phrases, constructing them out of individual flickers: "dear Jane," "the checker-boards and zig-zags of Man," "crystals," and, finally, "nature." Wees hypothesizes that the letter may be "describing what the earth looks like from a very high altitude, and that the writer is making some attempt to find meaning in the natural and man-made shapes seen below, just as the film as a whole is seeking the meaning of shapes taken by natural and man-made forces of destruction" ("Words" 43). The initial introduction of the letter through "Oh Jane" suggests that Brakhage, who is presumably the writer, experienced strong emotions (possibly of awe or anguish) while observing the earth surface from a plane and speculating on the man-nature symbiosis and on the ways humans shaped the planet.

The nouns that we are able to make out in the letter to Jane also engage in the

[47] Brakhage wrote in a letter to Davenport in May 1966 that looking at rocks was a way for him "to maintain *stabile*" (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 79).

radiant mediality of the film—they link to the filmed images of Jane and of Brakhage's daughter Crystal, of natural phenomena and of man-made creations, and of variously shaped patterns. Additionally, some of the nouns that Brakhage selects to highlight in his letter have metaphorical underpinnings. The "zig-zags of Man," as Elder insightfully observes, may function as Brakhage's ironic commentary on the belief of the psalmist in Psalm 23 that he is being led along righteous, straight, paths (*Films* 115-16). The word *crystals* also had to Brakhage a very special significance, best (and still enigmatically) discussed in his letter to Guy Davenport, written in December 1966. After having immersed himself in the study of the war and dictatorship societies, Brakhage comes to the conclusion that politics, history, and religion

> express prime human rock consciousness *as wall* (between consciousness and UN—[politics and history] 'coming on' in terms of alternatives . . . religion, of the three, only occasionally penetrating into itself complexly enough to touch its crystal-nature and thus root itself in a growth process —tho', still, one of secondary necessity to human being, as we do not, cannot, recognize our chemical existence nearly so much as our organic make-up) . . . thus, all these 'forms' (which should really be called 'shape-makers') damn themselves: and, I'm afraid, aesthetics (at least as it is preserved—chemically fixed—) is part-and-parcel of this damnation. (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 87; ellipsis in orig.)

And television ("the actual technical means each man woman and child is at the mercy of in T.V.-land IS the crystal" (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 104)) seems to epitomize this crystalline damnation.

Apart from the semantically charged words in the letter, the camera insistently

draws the viewer's attention to the definite article *the*. We first encounter “the” all on its own, after the “dear Jane” address. The image of the definite article flickers three times, interspersed with shots of what might be a close-up of a plane wing with a geometric pattern (figure 4.15), before the camera moves along the line to reveal that “the” qualifies “checker-boards.” A bit later, the camera focuses on “and the,” where “the” is located directly below “checker-” and does not seem to be attached to any noun. Such a privileging of the word *the* over all the others is quite puzzling. Considering that Zukofsky's *“A”* and the poet himself feature prominently a bit later in the film, it is possible that by focusing on “the” at the beginning of the letter to his wife, Brakhage is intertextually punning on Zukofsky's first major work, “Poem Beginning 'The'” (1926). The triple repetition of “the” before the camera finally reveals the following noun can indicate the inadequacy of language to express the ideas or visions of the writer, who has a definite picture in his mind but is struggling to find its verbal equivalent.

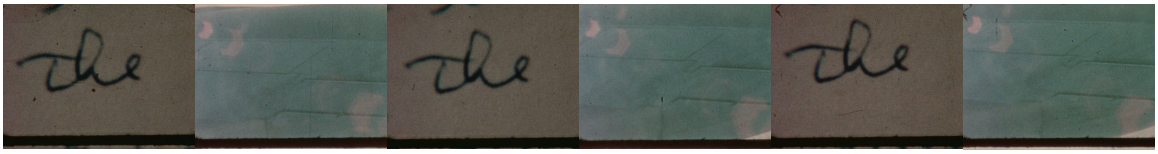


Fig. 4.15. *23rd Psalm Branch*: a verbal-visual disconnect.

The word for which Brakhage finally settles—“checker-boards”—also connects *23rd Psalm Branch* to Gerald Oster's research of phosphenes, the geometric patterns one can “see” with the eyes closed. As Oster describes in his 1965 article published in *Applied Optics*, “A pressure phosphene can be produced simply by closing the eyes and applying pressure with the fingers to the outer edges of both eyes. Everyone obtains the same pattern; at first the field acquires a general whitish glow, then after about 3 sec a scintillating checkerboard design is obtained” (1368). Brakhage's intense interest in all

kinds of vision—"open-eye, peripheral and hypnagogic vision, along with moving visual thinking, dream vision and memory feedback" (Ganguly, "All That Is" 21)[48]—might have led him to read Oster's contemporaneous scientific investigations into the nature of optical art.[49] The checkerboard design mentioned by Oster might have stuck with Brakhage not just as one of many phosphenes but as a metonymy for closed-eye vision. The importance of the checkerboard concept and, by extension, of the closed-eye vision in *23rd Psalm Branch* is manifested through checkerboard patterns in aerial shots, on a black-and-red cloth in the Zukofsky sequence, and in various arrangements of dots. Thus, the verbal stammering, expressed through the repetition of "the" in the process of presenting the letter to the viewers signals this disconnect between the visualizing power of the human brain, "before the 'beginning was the word,'" and the highly inadequate vocabulary at one's disposal.

Unlike the "I must stop! . . . ." note that the pen in Brakhage's hand is writing before our eyes later in Part 1, the letter to Jane is incorporated as a text that had been created before the filming began; and in his editing, Brakhage is manipulating the process of reading more than of writing. Throughout Part 1, the filmmaker is challenging the

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[48] In Brakhage's own words, "Hypnagogic vision is what you see with your eyes closed —at first a field of grainy, shifting, multi-coloured sands that gradually assume various shapes. It's optic feedback: the nervous system projects what you have previously experienced—your visual memories—into the optic nerve endings. It's also called closed-eye vision" (Ganguly, "All That Is" 21).

[49] In his analysis of Brakhage's investment in "filming" various kinds of vision, Wees mentions Oster's investigations of phosphenes, as presented in Oster's 1970 article "Phosphenes" (*Light* 70-71), published in *Scientific American* several years after *23rd Psalm Branch* was completed. Wees, however, does not directly connect Oster's research to Brakhage's filmic practice. Craig Dworkin briefly touches upon "the luminous dance of phosphenes" in Brakhage's films (but not in *23rd Psalm Branch*), referring to Oster's article "Phosphenes," which he dates 1980 (135-38, 147).

viewer's ability to recognize words and construct phrases and sentences that would make conventional sense. Brakhage utilizes yet another way of obfuscating verbal elements when he splits the screen in four[50] in an extended sequence between the first and the second appearances of ". . . precise as eye's / hell is!" Almost at the beginning of this sequence, which is based on fragments from Part 1, the left-hand half of the screen features the duplicated title—in two identical frames—in the manner it appeared at the very beginning of the film: "23RD" rapidly scribbled before our eyes; "Psalm" and "Branch" (figure 4.16) presented as whole pieces of a handwritten scribble and a block-lettered inscription[51] respectively. Because the right-hand half of the screen remains black, it is easy to read the words, although their positioning off center is psychologically disconcerting. Our expectations of legible continuity are frustrated, however, when the next verbal elements—"Take back / Beethoven's 9th, then, / he said"—appear in the right-hand half of the screen upside down and moving backwards, while the left-hand half of the screen is busy with flickering visuals (figure 4.17). As a result, the words are almost impossible to decipher. Brakhage seems to take pity on the viewers at the end of the split-screen sequence when the phrase reappears in its normal temporal order in the left-hand half of the screen.

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[50] See Sitney, *Visionary Film* 219 and Elder, *Films* 120 for an explanation of how Brakhage created the screen split into four quadrants.

[51] Wees observes that, compared to the trembling and flowing letters of the first two elements of the title, the stiff, "spikey printing" of the word *Branch* gives it "a branchlike appearance" ("Words" 42).



Fig. 4.16. *23rd Psalm Branch*: duplicating legible words.

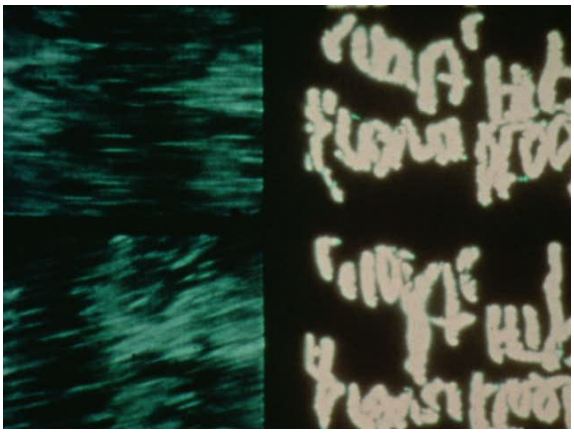


Fig. 4.17. *23rd Psalm Branch*: frustrating any attempts at recognition.

The opposition between the legibility of the words in the left-hand half of the screen and the emphasis on the visuality rather than comprehensibility of the words in the right-hand half provides an analogy with the two hemispheres of the brain, which are responsible for processing different kinds of information and storing different kinds of memories that may or may not form a unified picture.[52] Besides, such variable repetitions of the words and images at the end of Part 1 suggest a cyclical nature of events and discourses, which differ in detail and in presentation but not in essence. As Elder points out, "the circularity of the passage . . . relates to the idea that war and violence are natural disasters that belong to the order of existence" (*Films* 120). This repetitive turn also brings together in filmic proximity the intertextual references of "Take back / Beethoven's

[52] In 1996, Brakhage stated that his work was devoted to filming thinking that is not confined to the two hemispheres of the brain: "There's thinking with words, numbers, symbols, which is essentially left-brain thinking, there's thinking musically, gestalt, composition which is right-brain thinking. Then there are streamings of unnamable or resistant to namable shapes, forms and even colors which I believe is the largest part of thinking. It is composed of the electrical synapting neuron feedback of the entire body. I am attempting to give as close to representation as I can get in the form of film of that kind of thinking" ("OJ Simpson" 129). When making *23rd Psalm Branch*, Brakhage might have been aware of the pioneering split-brain research on human patients, published results of which started appearing in the early sixties (see Gazzaniga for the timeline and milestones of split-brain research).

9th, then, / he said" and ". . . precise as eye's / hell is!" whose sources are unidentified in *23rd Psalm Branch*.

The concept of the source becomes the dominant thread of Part 2, which Brakhage termed in a sales catalogue a "searching-into the 'sources' of *Part I*" (qtd. in Sitney, *Visionary Film* 212). Brakhage considered Part 2 to be more complex than the first because "seeking out the source of anything is more complex" ("Stan Brakhage" 112). Accordingly, the paratextual sequence introducing Part 2 includes the title, which appears in the same way as at the beginning of the whole film, "Part 2," and "to source," which is scratched into the emulsion before our eyes. Such a dedicatory inscription to a concept defies the tradition of dedications to humans and may suggest that Brakhage is more concerned with his inner feelings about the war and the film rather than with contributions of particular individuals to this work, although of course one's mode of thinking is necessarily influenced by others. In fact, Brakhage explained during a presentation of the film that he had felt the need to create Part 2 "to search out the sources of why [he] might possibly have to make this film" ("Stan Brakhage" 112).

There is yet another interpretation of the word *source* that could underlie this dedication. According to Marilyn Brakhage, the filmmaker's second wife, Brakhage tried to probe deep into the thought process, which to him "included and was most essentially this source, the part of the mind where . . . if you meditate . . . you could be aware of this flow of undefined shape and color that was at the source and ground for all of the later imagery and language and everything that comes from that" ("LAFF"). Indeed, searching for this ur-origin of visual and verbal perception, of modes of behavior that expose the human proclivity to violence and war is an artistic-psychological source for *23rd Psalm*

Branch.[53] The "to source" scratching is immediately followed by the visual shot of a Tiffany lamp advancing towards the viewers and then by various images of night lights in movement. This contiguous mixed-mediality is indicative of Brakhage's hope that he can reveal that the source is light ["The brain IS light (wave/particle) in electric (synaptic) movement" (Brakhage, "In Consideration" 60)] by investigating the source through "light moving in time."[54] In the 1996 article "In Consideration of Aesthetics," curiously dedicated to Marilyn Brakhage, the filmmaker even maintains that "source-as-light" is at the core and should be the focus of any film: "All interferences with The Light (all shaped tones and formal silhouettes) ought to be an illumination of source-as-light (or at least be subservient, as symbol, say, representatives of Time, to Light's life . . . as is, to be sure, the almost equal space of Black in the projection of every split second of lighted frame)" (61; ellipsis in orig.).

Brakhage's investigations of the source in Part 2 are divided into several sections, each verbally introduced. The filmmaker conceived the structure of Part 2 to be "a series of short films that go together and that are rather like sonnets" ("Stan Brakhage" 112). The "sonnets" are called "(of) Peter Kubelka's Vienna," "My Vienna," "A Tribute to Freud," "Nietzsche's Lamb," "East Berlin," and "Coda." The first visual image of the first section, "Peter Kubelka's Vienna," is a lamp, which alternates with shots of Kubelka playing the recorder and symbolizes that the Austrian experimental filmmaker is one of

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[53] Brakhage's striving to convey "the 'primordial elements' out of which images and words evolve" is discussed, for example, in Elder, "Moving" (418).

[54] Brakhage found the title of Wees's book *Light Moving in Time* to be the "most aesthetically hopeful definition of Film" ("In Consideration" 60).

the sources for *23rd Psalm Branch*.[55] This lamp-as-a-symbol-of-source visualization was already incorporated in Part 1: when Zukofsky first appears in the frame, a lighted lamp conspicuously forms the background against which Zukofsky's head is positioned.

The antithetical relationship between the first two "sonnets" of Part 2 is signaled through both the linguistic and bibliographical codes of their titles. The title that refers to Kubelka is neatly written out before our eyes by the same hand and with the same pen as the "I must stop! . . . ." note was in Part 1. In fact, Brakhage establishes a tenuous connection between the title and an already extant text: before the writing process begins, the tip of the pen is placed on a whitish piece of paper with almost completely cut-off, and thus illegible, words at the very top of the frame and the preposition "of" easily discernible on the left-hand side. When the pen starts writing, the camera moves to the right eliminating "of" from the screen. Once the title is completely written out, the camera pauses long enough for the spectator to have a very good view of the text (figure 4.18), which serves as a chapter-heading intertitle, on one hand, and is temporally linked to the previous verbal narrative, unknown to us, on the other. The neatness of "Peter Kubelka's Vienna" is in stark contrast with the white-on-black, scratched title of the second "sonnet," where "Vienna" is barely decipherable and could be even mistaken for "Vietnam" (figure 4.19). The visual opposition between these titles is reminiscent of the schizophrenic encounter in Part 1, where Brakhage is "conversing" with Brakhage.

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[55] Presenting Part 1 of *23rd Psalm Branch*, Brakhage explains: "This whole style in itself is very inspired by Peter Kubelka's work and particularly *Arnulf Rainer* which made me realize something of my own physiology, of how images do come in memory, in structured rhythms . . ." ("Stan Brakhage" 111).



Fig. 4.18. *23rd Psalm Branch*: the neatness and orderliness of "Kubelka's Vienna."



Fig. 4.19. *23rd Psalm Branch*: the messiness and illegibility of "my Vienna."

Echoing the neatness and legibility of the "Peter Kubelka's Vienna" inscription, the section itself may seem to convey "a sense of well-being, of a harmony not riven by violence," as Elder suggests (*Films* 121).[56] Brakhage, however, implies that the orderliness of life in Kubelka's Vienna derives, at least in part, from external regulation. Thus, the repetitive shots of the cafe / hotel sign (figure 4.20) coexist with similarly repetitive shots of the regulation sign "HALTEN VERBOTEN / Ende" (figure 4.21), which is roughly equivalent to "the end of the 'No Stopping' zone," and with insistent images of walk and stop pictographs of pedestrian signals.



Fig. 4.20. *23rd Psalm Branch*: peaceful city signage.



Fig. 4.21. *23rd Psalm Branch*: regulating the life of the city.

Regulation is immensely facilitated by language, especially by language in print, and Brakhage sneaks in at least two references to printed words. Kubelka and a young

[56] For descriptions of the visuals in different sections of Part 2, see Camhi 103-08; Elder, *Films* 121-26; and Sitney, *Visionary Film* 220-22.

boy are repetitively shown walking along the street, as if following the double-decker bus inscribed “KURIER” (figure 4.22). *Kurier* was an Austrian daily newspaper established in 1945 as a mouthpiece for the United States, one of the four Allied forces to occupy Austria, and was heavily used to promote pro-American and anti-Communist views (Wagnleitner 92-95). Although by the time Brakhage visited Vienna in the mid-sixties, the newspaper became officially independent, its origin was a powerful reminder of the Second World War and the ideologies promoted by a victorious party. Closer towards the end of this section, Brakhage twice incorporates a shot of the Johannes Gutenberg Monument, reminding the viewers of the inventor of moveable type, a huge step in the direction of print mass media. By filming the monument from the back, Brakhage makes it apparent to the viewer that Gutenberg is facing a Cinzano advertisement (figure 4.23). As Fred Camper points out, “much of Brakhage's humor is based on rendering isolated objects or figures—signs of human (or animal) presence and will—as strangely anomalous, odd intrusions” (86). Accordingly, such a presentation of Gutenberg—as if he were contemplating a drink—can act as a humorous comment on how Gutenberg might have felt if he had lived to witness his invention being used for such ignoble purposes as alcohol advertisement.



Fig. 4.22. *23rd Psalm Branch*: following the *Kurier*.



Fig. 4.23. *23rd Psalm Branch*: Gutenberg contemplating a drink.

Just as the neatness and legibility of the "Peter Kubelka's Vienna" title prefaces a structured life portrayed in the section itself, the messiness of the "my Vienna" scratching ushers in an extremely confusing, seemingly unrelated series of images, which are not confined to a specific diegetic space or time. Some of these images are repetitions of the visual shots we encountered in "Peter Kubelka's Vienna" and in Part 1, as well as borrowings from *XV Song Traits.* As Elder observes, such a lack of a unified diegetic locale "shifts the film's contents into the filmmaker's mind" (*Films* 123). In Brakhage's inner landscape there is little place for language. Apart from the integrated verbal elements that were part of the visual scenes he remembers (such as Gutenberg facing the Cinzano sign) and some almost illegible city signs, no screen words appear in this "sonnet."

Integrated verbal elements reappear in "A Tribute to Freud" and "East Berlin" as location identifiers, heavily laden with connotation. It is possible that Brakhage might have borrowed the title of Hilda Doolittle's memoir *Tribute to Freud* (1956) to name the section where he records his pilgrimage to Sigmund Freud's house in Vienna and his wanderings about the city along the route Freud usually took (Elder, *Films* 124; Sitney, *Visionary Film* 220). Brakhage, however, did not mention his appropriation of H.D.'s title when he explained that the relevance of Freud to *23rd Psalm Branch* was the "process of memory":

> I walked on the streets where he [Freud] had walked all his life . . . and it was really a sense of homage to Freud, and I took these pictures, and then I didn't know what I was going to do with them. But then I realized after Part One was made that it was a footnote in *The Interpretation of Dreams* where he speculates . . . what the processes of forgetting and memory

> might be, the condensation of memory and so on. And this had been a major inspiration—I hadn't read it for years, but I realized that through my own coming to it, this speculation was, I think, very accurate and so I just said, a tribute to Freud. . . . ("Stan Brakhage" 122)

After we see "A Tribute to Freud" written out before our eyes, as "Peter Kubelka's Vienna" was, the section begins with an extensive sequence of black leader, which incorporates momentary white scratches reminiscent of light flashes and various squiggles and lines painted in dark brown on a lighter brownish surface of the film (figure 4.24). The ending of the section is very similar. Such a frame to the "sonnet" dedicated to Freud suggests the depths of unconsciousness where preverbal shapes float.[57] The first diegetic image of the section is the wall of a building, photographed in the dusk, that bears a street address—"9.Schlickgasse" (figure 4.25). The image flickers three more times interspersed with a mustard-colored screen. This location sign identifies the building on the corner of Schlickgasse and Berggasse in Vienna, which has housed a traditional Viennese restaurant, "Zum Rebhuhn," for more than a century now and which is a few steps away from Berggasse 19, where Freud had lived and worked before the Nazis forced him to leave Vienna in 1938.

[57] The following section, "Nietzsche's Lamb," also finishes in the same manner and is, thus, linked to a representation of the unconscious, of the electrical impulses that underlie mental activity.



Fig. 4.24. *23rd Psalm Branch*: pre-verbal floats of the unconscious.



Fig. 4.25. *23rd Psalm Branch*: rooting the section in a memorable location.

When Brakhage made his pilgrimage, the Sigmund Freud Museum was not yet in existence (it would open in Berggasse 19 only in 1971). Brakhage was very disturbed that "the number one Viennese Nazi" was living in Freud's house[58] and that only a little plaque noted the fact that Freud had lived there ("Stan Brakhage" 122). Perhaps this is why Brakhage chose the building on Schlickgasse 9, which Freud must have passed while on his daily walk and where he might have eaten, rather than Berggasse 19 as the location identifier. Not only does the shot with the "9.Schlickgasse" sign reappear several more times in this section, but Brakhage also includes several close-ups of an elaborate ironwork round lantern that is very similar to the one that is decorating the building now. Brakhage also filmed the lights from a cafe on Ringstrasse (probably Cafe Landtmann) that Freud used to frequent.[59] Thus, various lights, lamps, and lanterns incorporated into this section act as visual indicators that Freud was another source for *23rd Psalm Branch*.

The "East Berlin" section is also sprinkled with location identifiers that can be

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[58] Brakhage mentioned this during one of his salon talks, which was held on 31 August 1997. A video excerpt of the salon talk is available on Disk 1 of *By Brakhage: An Anthology, Volume Two.*

[59] Brakhage records this fact in his salon talk held on 31 August 1997.

easily missed by uninitiated viewers. After an extensive sequence focusing on the play of light and color, the first representational image is that of an elaborate chandelier of the type one usually sees inside theaters. Immediately after, the frame gets filled with night illumination, and among the lights one can discern the inscription “am / BERTOLT BRECHT / PLATZ,” soon to be followed by the illuminated logo of the Berliner Ensemble, which seems to be floating in black space (figure 4.26). Thus, through very inconspicuous contiguous mediality, Brakhage refers to another source of his *23rd Psalm Branch*—Bertolt Brecht's play staged at the Berliner Ensemble, the theater company that Brecht founded in 1949 in East Berlin and that in the mid-sixties was called “Das Berliner Ensemble am Bertolt Brecht Platz.”[60] In fact, the chandelier that starts this mixed-medial sequence is very similar to, and might be the same as, the one that is hanging on the ceiling of the theater auditorium now. In November 1966, Brakhage writes that Brecht's production of *The Resistable* [sic] *Rise of Arturo Ui* in East Germany “demonstrated beautifully” for him that Hitler's and Mussolini's Nazi salute was “a direct extension of standard 'discovery' gesture” (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 84). Images of Nazi salutes abound in Part 1 of *23rd Psalm Branch*. Whereas Godard and Kluge, among other experimental European directors, were adapting Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* to their films, for Brakhage, the Brechtian theatrical production provided a visual proof that striving for power and proclivity to violence were inherent in human nature.

[60] For an overview of the history of the Berliner Ensemble in the fifties and sixties, see Bentley 253-54.



Fig. 4.26. *23rd Psalm Branch*: Bertolt Brecht's production at Berliner Ensemble as another source of the film.

The Berliner Ensemble is located just across the Spree river from the train station, the S-Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, whose illuminated inscriptions Brakhage makes sure to include in "East Berlin" (figure 4.27). Brakhage, however, frames the initial shot in such a way as to cut off the location name and to leave only "FRIED" visible, giving rise to potential misinterpretations. The laughable "fried station" is unlikely to have been a target of Brakhage's framing, but "BAHNHOF FRIEDE"—i.e., "peace station"—may as well have been an ironic commentary. During the Cold War, the Friedrichstrasse station was one of the eight border crossings between West and East Germany, the only one located inside East Berlin. Westerners could formally cross the border there, after arriving by train. As Brian Ladd narrates, "Friedrichstrasse was the typical departure point for the fortunate East Germans who received permission to travel to the West, and for Westerners ending family visits. Departing travelers were processed through a new annex to the station. The building, a place of painful leave-taking, acquired the nickname 'Palace of Tears'" (15). Only a moment later does Brakhage slightly pan the camera to the right to reveal the following letter *R*—"BAHNHOF FRIEDR"—but still he does not disclose the whole inscription. Instead, the camera goes back to the blackness of the night, sprinkled with lights, and catches an illuminated clock face that fixes the time as ten. Immediately after, Brakhage integrates a shot of what looks like a crude picture of a crossbow. In fact

this is an image of the German Democratic Republic's coat of arms, rotated counterclockwise (figure 4.28). Thus, a simple change of perspective and poor lighting turn the symbol of a peaceful unity of workers (hammer), peasants (wreath of corn), and intelligentsia (compasses)[61] into a weapon. This visual pun is also an ingenious reminder of the military roots of the concept *coat of arms*.[62] Overall, the political implications of the Friedrichstrasse station and Brakhage's verbal and visual references to the peace-war dichotomy tie perfectly into the texture of *23rd Psalm Branch*.



Fig. 4.27. *23rd Psalm Branch*: inscriptions on the "peace" station.



Fig. 4.28. *23rd Psalm Branch*: the GDR's coat of arms presented as a crossbow.

The illuminated inscriptions of the Friedrichstrasse station, apart from commercial advertisements, also include "Neues Deutschland" ("New Germany"), the name of the newspaper that was the official mouthpiece of the SED party, which was at the helm of the German Democratic Republic (Spilker 100). The communist-socialist ideology promoted in *Neues Deutschland* was in direct opposition to *Kurier*, a reference to which is integrated in "Peter Kubelka's Vienna." Thus, Brakhage not only weaves into his film

[61] For a description and brief history of the GDR's coat of arms, see Reichel 28-30.

[62] In the German language, the nouns *Waffe* (*weapon*) and *Wappen* (*coat of arms*) stem from the same root (Kluge 381, 384).

the victims and political after-effects of the Second World War; he also hints at the role of language in fostering oppositions of the Cold War.

"East Berlin" soon becomes a play of constantly metamorphosing patterned dots until the section finishes on the already familiar dark-brown squiggles painted on a lighter brownish surface (see figure 4.24), framed by extended sequences of black leader. Before Brakhage proceeds to the last section, he includes the title of the whole film again, which appears in the left-hand half of the frame, as once before in the sequence with the split screen (see figure 4.16). This time, however, the lettering is tinted yellow-orange-red, and the black background is hand-painted over with flashes of the same colors plus green (figure 4.29). It is the first and last time that scratched words appear in *23rd Psalm Branch* in color, as if they had become infused with the whole range of emotions that the film has been trying to express.[63] The title of the last section of the film is scratched before our eyes in the traditional white-on-black mode, but the letters are so close to the bottom of the frame that they are partially cut off, as if to intimate that "coda" is extending beyond the frame of what we can actually see (figure 4.30). Like "Nietzsche's Lamb," the section between "A Tribute to Freud" and "East Berlin," "Coda" is wordless.

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[63] While presenting *23rd Psalm Branch*, Brakhage spoke about the connection between color and emotion that is inherent in memories: "In an act of intensive memory, . . . every image . . . arises in banks of flashes of certain tones and colors that become very complex. . . . But I took simple ones that I could deal with. And we have it in the language; most people aren't aware of this consciously, in remembering or just in looking that their eyes are putting out a color, but we do say that a man sees red when he's angry and I found this a true term, a very blunt and general term but a true one that in anger, there are various shades of red and then other colors that don't even have names that came primarily to the mind's eye and with certain rhythms. Then we say 'green, he's green with jealousy,' or 'sickly green,' or 'green is a go signal.' And those all turned out to be true, to certain aspects of the color green. . . . Well, I could only stick with just the general area of those colors but I did try to make that an integral part of the expression" ("Stan Brakhage" 111).

23rd Psalm Branch concludes with Brakhage's scratched signature, also partially cut off at the bottom of the frame.



Fig. 4.29. *23rd Psalm Branch*: the emotionally colored title.



Fig. 4.30. *23rd Psalm Branch*: "coda" extending beyond the frame.

"Coda" is the only architextual intertitle in *23rd Psalm Branch* reminding the viewers that the film strives to be a musical composition as a psalm-song. Elder suggests that the last section is called "Coda" because "it follows the film's apparent conclusion" and "effects a nearly complete rupture with the rest of the work" (*Films* 126). Among all the names of the sections, "Nietzsche's Lamb" is the most mysterious. As Sitney clarifies, it puns on two names—of the nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and of the Austrian happening-maker Hermann Nitsch (*Visionary Film* 221).[64] One of the action performances in Nitsch's Orgien Mysterien Theater in the sixties included disemboweling and tearing to pieces a dead lamb, which aesthetically mimicked a sacrificial act and was "the symbolical action for the basic excess experience (ecstatic end-point of the abreactive orgiastic). . . . identical with an extreme break-through of instincts," as Nitsch explains in his 1964 "Lamb Manifesto" (748). In fact, according to

[64] Elder hypothesizes that "Nietzsche's Lamb" could be read as a metaphor of "Europe sacrificed to the *Übermensch*" (*Films* 124).

Julie Wilson-Bokowiec, Nitsch's artistic conception of action performances derived in part from Nietzsche's writings. For the Austrian artist, "'IS' becomes an existential mantra, a word which unlocks the doors of 'experience'. . . . The notion of 'IS' transcends words and speech, communicating directly with the senses, the instincts, and the unconscious" (112). It is not clear whether Brakhage had been familiar with Nitsch's conception of art before Nitsch organized a performance for the filmmaker in 1965 in Vienna[65] and whether Brakhage sensed the affinity of their ideas. But the fact that Brakhage implicitly referred to Nitsch's theater in his *23rd Psalm Branch* and even incorporated footage of the performance (there are many shots of a skinned lamb in the section) suggests that Brakhage must have felt Nitsch's direct relevance to his film.

Overall, the chapter-heading intertitles that name sections in Part 2, and especially "A Tribute to Freud," are meant to create, in tandem with the visuals of the sections, a charged context in which, as Brakhage hoped, the viewers' minds would be working in the same way his was working.[66] *23rd Psalm Branch*, however, is quite exceptional in its social commitment and in Brakhage's desire to reach his audience with a message while exorcising his own demons.[67] Most often, as Brakhage stated repeatedly at various stages of his career, he did not think about potential viewers when he was creating his films or

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[65] The fact is recorded in the promotional materials ("O. M. Theater") published by the Film-Makers' Cinematheque, which has evolved into Anthology Film Archives.

[66] Brakhage spoke about this function of the [inter]title during his salon talk held on 31 August 1997.

[67] Brakhage writes in a 1997 letter to Davenport: "*23rd Psalm Branch* has freed me from all the propagoosing-and-gandering this society has stuck me with since I was a child and thus taken to be voodoo doll of its Nat'l stance and war-shaping messages. Otherwise, I don't know of what use the work is but that it, in its final form, will free others viewing it as it has me in the making of it" (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 90).

his titles. Even when he was discussing *23rd Psalm Branch* with an audience in 1967, Brakhage confided: “I don't, when I'm working, think about audiences at all because they're not there. That's not real to me at that moment. I'm making the thing so it will do what I need it to do” (“Stan Brakhage 124). In 2002, when responding to the question whether he needed an audience to know what the word *wold* meant, as a dictionary entry or to him personally, so that they could understand the film *The Wold Shadow* (1972), Brakhage said, “No, I don't need an audience at all.”[68]

Many of Brakhage's titles are poetically mysterious. Looking back in 2002 at the nature of his titles, Brakhage speculates: “I think maybe because I am a frustrated poet, maybe I've been too loose with language, that I have used a kind of poetic language for my titles almost as if to say 'well, I can at least have that.'” In the same breath, Brakhage acknowledged the danger that the “words can run away with, and dominate and again distort even more than a soundtrack can, the vision.”[69] Accordingly, titles were the only verbal explication to which Brakhage allowed direct entry into most of his films, although he spoke and wrote volubly about his creations. In a 1962 letter to Duncan, Brakhage repeated his oft-voiced sentiment that the “title of the film is the only statement I care to make on the film,” while priding himself on minimizing the number of words in his films: “There are less words in all my work than in the total work of any other film-maker known to me” (“Letters to Robert Duncan” 20-21). In the mid-seventies, Brakhage experimented with relegating the titles to the end—“the words come gentler &

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[68] This confession is part of the “Remarks” to *The Wold Shadow*, available on Disk 1 of *By Brakhage: Anthology, Volume One*.

[69] This comment is also part of the “Remarks” to *The Wold Shadow*.

interfere with vision less, if they occur at the end of the film, even though the people maybe know the title of the film they're going to see"—but discovered that this presented a technical problem because the projectionist had nothing to focus on (*Brakhage Scrapbook* 214) and that "this was giving the word the last word" ("Gift" 48).

In the mid-nineties, as a veteran of avant-garde filmmaking, Brakhage finally acknowledged the importance of words to his films:

> I have found, across years of photography and editing, that the verbal can open into the visual, like a swing gate in the mind, or sprung door, revealing plethoras of inexplicable and often utterly unexpected visitations. It is my only excuse for titling my films—that words can announce Light's-life, as it were, and prompt a chaotic display of illumination into Vision . . . and at the same time can tutor chaos into rhythmic mimic of cathectic thought. ("Having Declared a Belief" 52; ellipsis in orig.)

In an ironic swap, the making of *The "b" Series* (1995), a series of five individually titled sections, began with the words.[70] As Brakhage explained at a presentation of the film in 1996, the "titles for *The b Series* arrived before there was any imagery to go with it. So in a sense, all the imagery I've been making is an attempt to live up to that title, that doesn't mean to represent it, because words are one thing and film is another. But just that

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[70] Brakhage underscores the inter-relatedness of the sections in his description of the film: "This film is a series of five little hand-painted and elaborately step-printed sections which are individually titled but so inter-related I've decided they should always be shown in this order together, but each such a *distinction* of the essentially un-nameable subject matter they variously facet that they should retain the character of individual pieces within their shared context . . . a context I've attempted to represent by a small 'b' for my name 'Brakhage'" ("*The 'b' Series*"; ellipsis in orig.).

it be living to that title visually" ("OJ Simpson" 129).

It is no coincidence then that Brakhage's only film that he intended to be untitled integrates many scratched words in the body of the film—so as to keep alive the possibility of this "swing gate" or "sprung door." Because the initial paratextual shot of this 1992 silent film includes a dedication—"FOR MARILYN"—and, accordingly, the film is copyrighted under the title *For Marilyn*,[71] the work usually goes under the name *Untitled (For Marilyn)*. It is described by Brakhage himself as an "untitled hand-painted film—a hypnagogic four-part thought process interwoven with scratched words in thanks to and praise of God."[72] In a 1993 interview, Brakhage called the film his current favorite[73] and explained its history:

> I've always wanted to go to church with my children but churches don't like young children these days, so I've felt excluded from a full family participation. When I was in Helsinki about two years ago, I went to a Greek Orthodox Church, but its doors were locked, so I photographed through the window, and later began to paint on the film. The more I worked on it, the more I began to feel my church is right *here*, where I am with my family—the four of us gathered together in the name of

[71] The film is listed under the title *For Marilyn* in the Copyright Catalog available on the Library of Congress website.

[72] This catalogue description is available in the allographic titular shot of the DVD version of the film available on Disk 2 of *By Brakhage: An Anthology, Volume One*.

[73] In the "Remarks" to *Untitled (For Marilyn)*, recorded in 2002 and available on Disk 2 of *By Brakhage: Anthology, Volume One*, Brakhage called it his "very favorite film."

something holy. And I believe in that. (Ganguly, "Stan Brakhage" 149)[74]

Brakhage's explanation resolves the seeming contradiction between the dedication to Marilyn and the last phrase scratched onto the film—"Praise Be / to God." Brakhage offers his thanksgiving and praise to a higher power, in whose search he has been engaged throughout his life,[75] for allowing him to realize, through the process of creating the film, that his family is the force that energizes his life and creativity. The dedication "For Marilyn" should also be viewed in relation to Brakhage's psychological state and to his investment in examining vision that is created by the mind's eye. As Brakhage revealed in 1996, "Not till I was with Marilyn in the life form that we share with our children, Anton and Vaughn, could I work with these abstractions without a danger of losing my mind."[76] Thus, not only did Marilyn become a stabilizing force in Brakhage's life in the late eighties, after he had gone through a painful divorce with Jane,[77] but his

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[74] Brakhage elaborated on the origins of the film when he showed it under the title *Original IV* in Boulder, Colorado in June 1992. As Bart Testa reports, Brakhage explained that his "children were growing now, and he thought, at least momentarily, they should have some experience of religion. So, he visited a local church but arrived just as services were ending. People were leaving in a bunch just as he approached the entrance. He saw terrible rejection of him in the congregants' faces and never returned" ("Two Religions" 96).

[75] Brakhage stated in 1996: "my work has been largely preoccupied with birth, sex, death, and the search for God, as I put it, I think, thirty years ago. . . . And I think that remains the same" (recorded in "Brakhage on Brakhage 4," available on Disk 2 of *By Brakhage: Anthology, Volume One*). Brakhage attempted to explain what he personally meant by the word *God* in his 1995 article "Having Declared a Belief in God . . . ."

[76] This transcribed quote comes from "Brakhage on Brakhage 4," available on Disk 2 of *By Brakhage: Anthology, Volume One*.

[77] Brakhage speaks about the overwhelming rage he experienced when he was divorcing Jane, for example, in the "Remarks" to *Rage Net* (1988), available on Disk 2 of *By Brakhage: Anthology, Volume One*.

new family also provided a solid grounding in reality. The dedication to Marilyn is also an acknowledgment of the fact that the film would not have taken its current shape, or have been completed at all, without her.

The four parts of *Untitled (For Marilyn)* are indicated by the corresponding number of vertical white bars scratched in the black leader (figures 4.31 and 4.32):

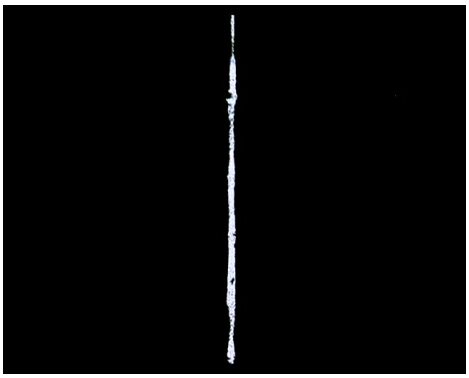


Fig. 4.31. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the first image and sign of the film.

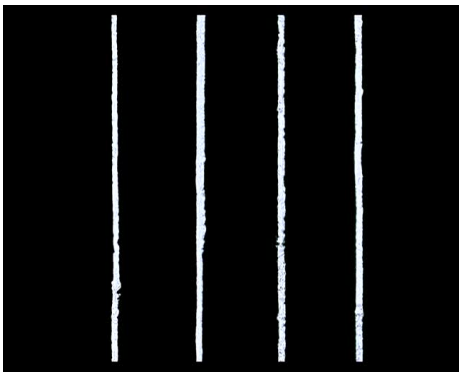


Fig. 4.32. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: four bars for the sake of visual continuity.

Together with these section dividers, the words that are scratched onto the film in the first and last parts act as constant reminders of the materiality of the film. In fact, scratched words in Brakhage's oeuvre, as the filmmaker reveals, have a different status than other manifestations of language:

> Words appear on film throughout my work. By scratching them I try to be true to the way words vibrate and jiggle when they appear in closed-eye vision—which doesn't happen very often. Also, by scratching them I can at least make them more intrinsic to what film is—they become carriers of light. Photographed words relate more to memory recall or just to the open-eyed present. (Ganguly, "All That Is" 21)

All the words in *Untitled (For Marilyn)* are "carriers of light." In the first part of the film, language contributes to what Brakhage calls "public or social . . . outcry

vis-à-vis the church and myself" (Ganguly, "Stan Brakhage" 149). The first part starts with several shots of the inside of a spacious building[78] photographed through a window, and of a closed window, followed by a strip of hand-painted film, with a few more glimpses of the window. This positions the filmmaker as an outsider looking in but not allowed inside. The first verbal-visual "sentence" begins immediately after: "I am / [painted film] / here / where / [painted film] / where / [painted film] / is She." Presented in its completeness, the "sentence" forms an interlocutionary statement that opposes "I" and "She" and indicates a search of the "I" for the "She." However, Brakhage subtly deconstructs this opposition by making us witness the writing of "I am / / here"[79] and "is She": as scratched glyphs appear one by one, we read "I am / / her" (figure 4.33), before the last letter *e* turns the personal pronoun *her* into the deictic location indicator *here*, and "is I" (figure 4.34), before further scratching transforms "I" into "She."[80]

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[78] The building is most probably the Greek Orthodox Church that Brakhage mentioned to Ganguly ("Stan Brakhage" 149).

[79] Consistently with the convention adopted in this dissertation, a forward slash indicates a transition from one shot to the next. Here, a double forward slash (/ /) indicates an omission of the painted film sequence from the "quote."

[80] These scratched words are written out at a rapid speed and stay on the screen only for a brief moment, so one could question whether my detailed readings of Brakhage's word usage, in this film and elsewhere, are justifiable. Here is Brakhage's stance on the matter: "all the reading is, as I understand it, between the lines. The blasphemy is to pretend anything else, certainly in the art process" ("Gift" 53). In response to a question whether it is necessary to see a film several times, Brakhage replied: "For me it is, and in fact I don't like to even discuss a film that I haven't seen at least 25 times and still want to see again" ("Gift" 54).

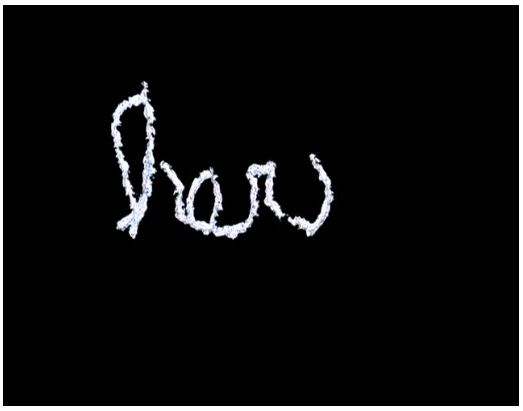


Fig. 4.33. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: "her" about to become "here."



Fig. 4.34. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: deconstructing the "I" vs. "She" opposition.

Brakhage "explicates" the referent of "She" in the following verbal-visual sequence: "She / The / THE / / Mother / / Church." Switching from the cursive script of the first "The" to the block-lettered "THE" signals a different state of being—something solid, authoritative, unquestionable. Indeed, would anyone dare question "THE / / Mother / / Church"? After ruminating on the question ("where / / is She") in an extended sequence that visualizes his mind's eye, Brakhage does dare. This is the answer he provides in the first part of the film: "in all this / THIS / / THAT / / I / / AM / / here / where / / She was / He was / / is / that / / that / is / / the Savior / / of all / to me / of me / / all of / / all of / / which / / I am." Fragmented, ambivalent, and seemingly repetitive, the answer is more elusive than the question itself.[81]

However, the beginning of the answer—"in all this / THIS"—provides a reliable hint at a possible interpretation. "THE / / Mother / / Church," or, rather, its equivalent or substitute, is located everywhere: in the hypnagogic thought process encoded in the painted film, in the rare representational images that Brakhage leaves unpainted and that

[81] Repetition, of course, is never exact and always brings in new shades of meaning. Brakhage admired Stein's "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" and often discussed its implications, as is recorded, for example, in Chodorov 166-67.

serve as photographic memories or symbols, in the play of light that is film, and in everything else that "this / THIS" can stand for. In a radio program he hosted in 1982, Brakhage said, in response to Ingmar Bergman's famous statement that "art lost its basic creative drive the moment it was separated from worship," that the pursuit actually remained the same, but "the cathedral has become the mind; not in the sense of ego-centric, or a giant monument, which it also unfortunately is too often thought of, but as an endless way through to the universe and to forces and patterns that we don't understand" ("Test"). This solipsistic drive is evident in the explicit occurrences of the personal pronoun "I" and its forms; in the implicit conflation of "I" and "She," revealed in the process of writing; in the repetitiveness of "I am," which frames (i.e., begins and ends) the verbal contribution of the first part; in the presentness, solidity, and brightness of "I / / AM" (figure 4.35), compared to the pastness, trembling, and colored obscurity of "She was" and "He was" (figure 4.36); in the print quality of "I / / AM," whose bibliographical code equates it with the free-standing "THIS" and "THAT," the deictic rulers of language, and with "THE," attached to "Mother / / Church"; and in the all-inclusiveness of "I am," which encompasses "all" ("all of / / all of / / which / / I am").

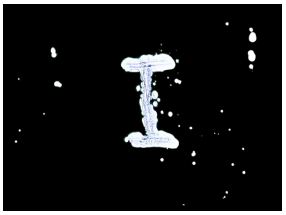


Fig. 4.35. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the solid and bold "I AM" of the present.

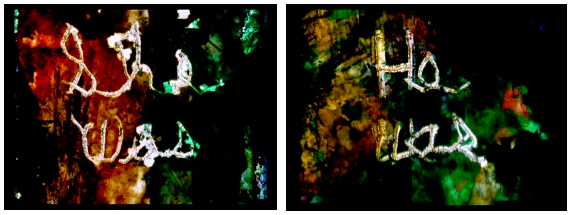


Fig. 4.36. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the indeterminable referents of the past.

The solipsism of the verbal language of the first part is revealed even in a scratching aberration: when "to me" is being spelled before our eyes, the letter *m* receives an extra glyph, which also persists when "to me" is replaced by "of me" (figure 4.37). No

matter whether this strange supplement is accidental or intentional, the word *me* becomes larger and more mysterious than the usual self, an impenetrable enigma of the cathedral of the mind. At the same time, because of this extra glyph the letter *m* consists of four vertical bars and is thus prospectively linked to Part IIII (see figure 4.32), where the concept of the self will be taken up anew.



Fig. 4.37. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: an extra glyph of the self.

In this context, the representational images of the inside of the church and the church cupolas (figure 4.38) that are sometimes flashed amidst the painted sequences serve as symbols of a search for God, rather than metonymies of organized religion. *Untitled (For Marilyn)* is definitely not a paean to "THE / / Mother / / Church" in its traditional sense. It is as unlikely that "the Savior" (figure 4.39) here suggests the referent that is firmly established in the minds of Christians. As repeatedly noted earlier, Brakhage has always stood against doxified language and categorical thinking, promoted through nouns and qualifiers with pre-determined meanings.[82] "THE / / Mother / / Church" and "the Savior" contain the only three nouns in the first part of the film. It is sadly ironic that Brakhage's use of these particular nouns provoked an angry outburst when this film was shown in the summer of 1992 to a group of experimental filmmakers and critics. As Bart

[82] In 1996, Brakhage called movies his church. He provided the following explanation: "That's where I go and can sit in auditoriums and commune with people, in some deep sense share the same tears and the same joys with people in the darkness in the theater, all of us staring at the light" (recorded in "Brakhage on Brakhage 2," available on Disk 1 of *By Brakhage: An Anthology, Volume One*).

Testa narrates, Brakhage was attacked for "the film's apparent religious tenor and intent" in the context of the argument that no religion should seep into avant-garde films ("Two Religions" 90).



Fig. 4.38. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: hardly a metonymy of organized religion.

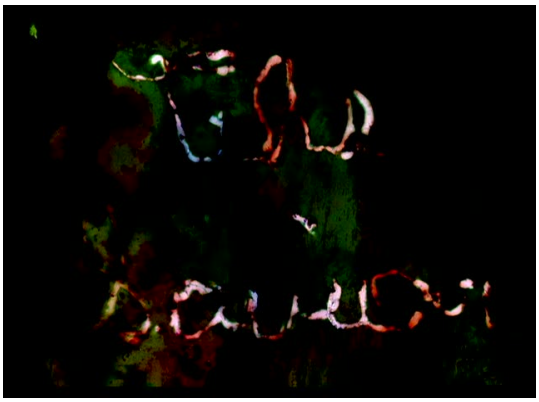


Fig. 4.39. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the obscurity of who/what "the Savior" might be.

Whereas the first part of *Untitled (For Marilyn)* deals with a social conflict, an implicit questioning of organized religion, the fourth part, where words again enter the frame, presents a resolution of the internal quest for the divine. As Brakhage explains, "the last part is a private invocation of myself and Marilyn, Anton and Vaughn, and then thanks to God. The two parts in between move from the one to the other" (Ganguly, "Stan Brakhage" 149). Unlike the first part, where representational images and a painted film strip intervene between the vertical bar that indicates number *one* (see figure 4.31) and the first "I am," the fourth part immediately begins with "I." More exactly, the four vertical bars (see figure 4.32) momentarily give way to one shortened bar, as an implied reference to the first part; only then does the vertical bar metamorphose into a print upper-case "I," familiar to us from the "I AM" statement of the first part (see figure 4.35). Brakhage, however, immediately says "no" to the official and imposing "I" and replaces it with a more intimate handwritten "I" (figure 4.40).

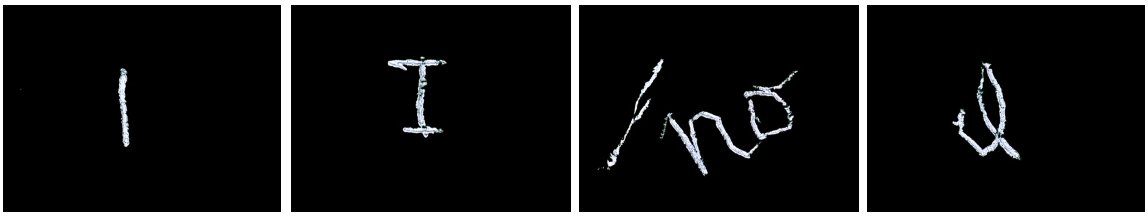


Fig. 4.40. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the metamorphosis of "I."

Unlike the first part, which is built on juxtapositions of "I" with third-person pronouns, the last part is interlocutionary in its repetition of second-person pronouns. Just as the first "I" in the last part, the first "You" is also discarded—it explodes into light-dust (figure 4.41)— because its upper-case "Y" makes it too official. A much smaller, all lower-case "you" (figure 4.42) appears after an extended painted sequence. As Brakhage reveals, "At one point I felt so emotional that I wrote—'You'—but that didn't look right, and I felt I needed a small 'y' since it was Marilyn whom I was addressing" (Ganguly, "Stan Brakhage" 150).

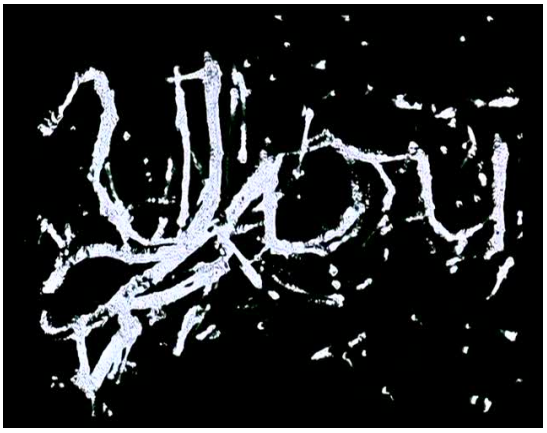


Fig. 4.41. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the official "You" exploded.



Fig. 4.42. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: the intimate "you" as a fitting counterpart.

The last appearance of "I" in the fourth part and in the entire film is easy to overlook: "I" becomes "the" in the same manner that "I" was transformed into "She" in the first part. The definite article, however, remains unattached and is rapidly replaced by "\THEE" (figure 4.43). Just as in the case of the progressive change from "her" to "here"

in the first part, the letter *e* again brings with it a total change in meaning, a subtle commentary on the artificiality of language and the unmotivated connection between the signifier and signified. Although Brakhage resorts to language to express his gratitude, he still intimates that language cannot be trusted to convey the emotions and feelings fully. At the same time, the process of writing establishes a connection between words that would not create a "sentence" in speech. In the last part of *Untitled (For Marilyn)*, "I" merges with "THEE" as a symbol of what Brakhage calls "the largesse and the wonder" of the life together with Marilyn and the children.[83] The children, who make this holy union complete, are explicitly referred to as "the children / Anton / and / Vaughn." Such a usage of names substantiates the argument made by Elder in a different context: Brakhage seems to believe that, unlike common nouns, which codify human thinking, proper nouns "moderate the deleterious effects of language" (*Films* 486).

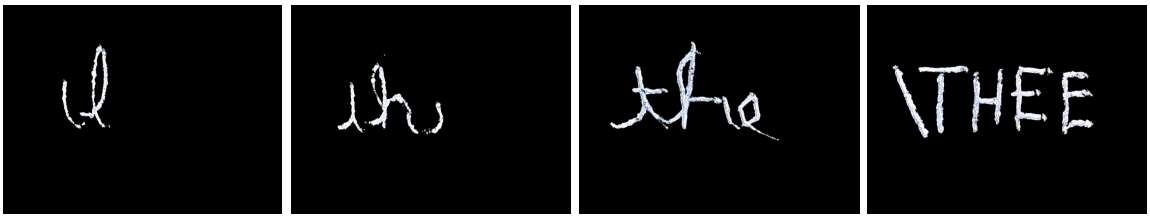


Fig. 4.43. *Untitled (For Marilyn)*: "I" becoming "THEE" through "the."

No representational, nameable images intrude into the last part of *Untitled (For Marilyn)*, just as no social organization can satisfy the internal quest for God. It is art and the family that can bring one closer to the divine. Answering Ganguly's question what the scratched words represent in *Untitled (For Marilyn)*, Brakhage explains: "It's a way of saying thank you. By the end of the fourth part I'm so overwhelmed that I want to give thanks for the peace that has come with my discovery of this film church" ("Stan

[83] As recorded in the "Remarks" to *Untitled (For Marilyn)*.

Brakhage" 150).[84] It is revealing, yet surprising, that Brakhage, the foremost critic of language in the realm of "light moving in time," relies on words in his favorite film, where he creates and discovers the "film church."

Apart from scratched words and chapter-heading intertitles, some of Brakhage's films integrate other verbal elements: partially visible and barely legible book and magazine pages (e.g., in *Cat's Cradle*, *The Riddle of Lumen* (1972), and *Star Garden* (1974)), advertisements (for example, "Elase Ointment" on the measurement tool in *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes* (figure 4.44)), commercial and city signs (e.g., in *The Wonder Ring* (1955) and *The Riddle of Lumen*),[85] tombstone epitaphs (e.g., in *The Dead* (1960)), and brand labels of foods and household products (e.g., in *Star Garden*). Rarely are the words and phrases the focus of the camera's attention, but language often lurks on the periphery of photographic shots and representational images. Curiously, however, language is prominent in one of Brakhage's earliest silent films, the comedy *The Extraordinary Child* (1954), which is full of specially crafted inscriptions, posters, and notes (figure 4.45).

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[84] In the "Remarks" to *Untitled (For Marilyn)*, Brakhage confesses that at the end of the film he experienced for the first time "something close to an epiphany."

[85] *The Riddle of Lumen* is, in fact, considered by many film critics to be Brakhage's response to Frampton's *Zorns Lemma* (see, for example, Michelson, "Frampton's Sieve" 158; Sitney, *Eyes* 326).



Fig. 4.44. *The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes*: the ad ignored.

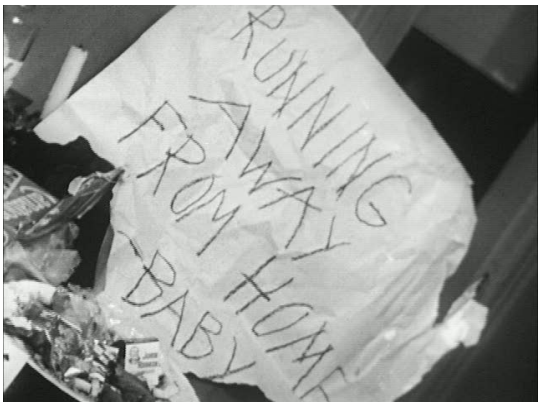


Fig. 4.45. *The Extraordinary Child*: writing as a sign of the baby's extraordinariness.

As a filmmaker who has gained his fame and notoriety for exploring unnameable and language-free envisionments, Brakhage, nevertheless, gives words plenty of chances to contribute to his silent creations. In Brakhage's films, screen words function as authorial signature, ownership and dedicatory statement, metatextual commentary, poetic invocation, sociopolitical observations, intertextual references, personal memories, interpretive clues, segmenting and chapter-heading intertitles, symbolic location identifiers, interlocutionary carriers of emotion, and intimations of the nature of language. Brakhage encourages the viewer's memories and imagination by intentionally obscuring the writing and making texts disappear too soon to be comprehended in full. The verbal elements introduced by Brakhage into his films engage with and become visual images in the context of radiant mediality. The play with the bibliographical code of his utterances enables the filmmaker to create connections between disparate concepts and to contrast what seem to be the same words. By emphasizing differential relations that govern language and by fragmenting and partially erasing utterances, Brakhage undermines stable interpretations and questions pre-packaged meanings. Brakhage himself summarized his ambiguous attitude to language in 1993: “There are some things words

can do that I treasure very deeply, but my development of language is not ordinarily consonant with vision" ("Fearful Symmetry" 125).

HOLLIS FRAMPTON: ALLEVIATING THE SYNDROME OF LOGOPHOBIA

Whereas Brakhage mostly devoted his art to exploring vision unadulterated by sound and language, Hollis Frampton's films welcomed words into the frame and onto the soundtrack on a regular basis. Frampton intimated that Brakhage was a victim of logophobia (*On the Camera Arts* 167); Brakhage stated in a conversation with Annette Michelson that Frampton "strains cinema through language" ("Frampton's Sieve" 151). Considering various meanings of the word *strain*, Michelson develops Brakhage's comment into an insightful characterization of Frampton's career as a filmmaker: "Embracing cinema, Frampton was to bring to the practice of filmmaking, pursued independently of its industrial constraints, an implementation of language as one system which might extend, reshape, and clarify the limits and parameters of the medium" (152). In his famous essay "Film in the House of the Word," written in April 1981, three years before his death, Frampton revealed the social underpinnings of language use in his films:

> Now we are not perfectly free to make of language an agonist in a theater of desire which is itself defined by the limits of language. Every artistic dialogue that concludes in a decision to ostracize the word is disingenuous to the degree that it succeeds in concealing from itself its fear of the word —and the source of that fear: that language, in every culture, and before it may become an arena of discourse, is, above all, an expanding arena of power, claiming for itself and its wielders all that it can seize, and

relinquishing nothing. (*On the Camera Arts* 167)[86]

Frampton had a background in poetry, fine arts, and photography when he turned to filmmaking in the sixties. According to Frampton himself, his antecedents had always had "a great deal to do with language—not just literature, but linguistics and the philosophy of language—on the one hand, and the sciences—especially the exact sciences, rather than the social sciences—on the other" (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 178).[87] Like Brakhage, Frampton was fascinated with Pound's poetry. Frampton's personal acquaintance with Pound, and especially his witnessing Pound's reciting and verbally annotating *The Cantos*, made him realize that he himself was not a poet (Phillips 64).[88] As Frampton narrates, when he arrived in New York in 1958 as an "aspiring young poet," he was "unable to find a meaningful relationship between poetry

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[86] Frampton's essay "Film in the House of the Word" first appeared in *October* 17 (1981) and then was included in a collection of Frampton's writings *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Video, Texts, 1968-1980*, published by Visual Studies Workshop in 1983. The twelve essays from *Circles of Confusion* were recently republished in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton*, which, according to its editor Bruce Jenkins, presents "a range of additional writings, including introductory remarks and lectures, production notes and proposals, correspondence and interviews" ("Collecting" ix). If I include a reference from *Circles of Confusion* in this chapter, it means that the passage cited has not made it to *On the Camera Arts*.

[87] "Interview with Hollis Frampton," originally published in *Film Culture*, is incorporated into the chapter on Frampton in MacDonald's *Critical Cinema*, together with "Interview with Hollis Frampton: The Early Years" and "Interview with Hollis Frampton: 'Zorns Lemma,'" which first appeared in *October* and *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* respectively.

[88] Frampton regularly visited Pound in St. Elizabeths Hospital, but, as Barry Goldensohn reminisces, Frampton's "relationship with Pound was a source of great strain in keeping his world coherent: on the one hand, fascination, charisma, the flattery of Pound's attentions, and, on the other, doctrines that had less and less correspondence with his life" (11, 13).

as it was then practiced and anything [he] was interested in," although the "dance with language went on" (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: 'Zorns Lemma'" 34).

Language remained to Frampton a constant attraction, "the code of codes and the veil of veils" (Phillips 70). Frampton considered the "enormous parsimony" of language to be a major reason for its centuries-long domineering position: "One reads only to recall the set of symbols, the code, and the code itself indexes the culture. The image does not have that kind of parsimony" (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 163). Of course, Frampton recognized that contemporary culture was also witnessing a proliferation of photographic, advertising, and television imagery. As Christopher Phillips notes, "for Frampton, the variable combination of scriptive and photographic elements gradually emerged as a privileged formal device, one allowing the manipulation of precisely those channels which organize and articulate so much of contemporary experience" (71).

One of Frampton's earliest silent films, *Clouds Like White Sheep*, integrated superimposed titling. As Frampton described it to MacDonald, in this 1964 "huge film in black and white negative, all clouds and skies which dissolved from one to another . . . typewritten 'poetic' phrases appeared in different places in the frame. I had it printed on color positive stock—all in Mallarmé azure—a monochrome blue film, very long, fifty minutes"[89] (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: The Early Years" 104). Because the film is now lost, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct the poetic phrases

[89] In a complete filmography of Frampton's films, based on his unpublished curriculum vitae of 1982, *Clouds Like White Sheep* is dated 1962 and its length is indicated as 25 minutes. The dates for Frampton's other films are also taken from this filmography, published in *October* 32 (1985): 167-69.

that Frampton superimposed over the idyllic cloudscape. But the title of the film, which at first sight creates the illusion of romantic nature, simultaneously undermines it—provided one is perceptive enough to the title's intertextual links.

The French equivalent of the phrase Frampton borrowed for the title of his film is originally part of Charles Trenet's romantic song "La Mer" (1946), but it is Georges Franju's documentary *Le sang des bêtes* (*The Blood of the Beasts*) (1949), which incorporates the song, that is most likely to have been the source for Frampton. In *The Blood of the Beasts*, a powerful documentary about slaughterhouses on the outskirts of Paris, "La Mer" constitutes the soundtrack while the slaughtered sheep are being disemboweled and the gore is being cleaned. In a horrifying juxtaposition, as Jeannette Sloniowski describes, "images show sheep being held in pens awaiting the slaughter in the morning while the singer croons 'fleecy clouds like white sheep' and 'shepherd of the azure sky.' . . . Ironically, 'the azure sky' is black-and-white" (182). *The Blood of the Beasts* was subtitled and first screened in the US in 1952 by Cinema 16, a film society based in New York (MacDonald, *Cinema 16* 170-71 and *Critical Cinema 3* 25). It is not clear when Frampton saw *The Blood of the Beasts* for the first time, but he immensely admired it and drew on it as an inspiration for his own slaughterhouse film, *Autumnal Equinox* (1974), which is part of *Solariumagelani*, itself part of *Magellan* (B. Simon 22). Thus, Frampton's impressions and memories of *The Blood of the Beasts* must have been at the core of *Clouds Like White Sheep*, which puts a totally different spin on what may otherwise seem to have been a fluffy romantic film.

Interrogating the verbal-visual relationship in Frampton's films often entails an incorporation of voice-over. However, unlike many other filmmakers who simultaneously utilize the auditory and visual aspects of language while exploring word and image

intersections and juxtapositions, Frampton exhibits a tendency to silence the soundtrack when screen words occupy the frame—possibly to avoid sensory overload[90] and to give the written text a full chance to be comprehended as a message and savored as an image. In *Surface Tension* (1968), the third, and final, part presents the silent image of a goldfish swimming in a narrow tank, positioned on a beach and periodically partially obscured by the surf. Over the visual image, Frampton superimposes a text that describes a film in three parts, with printed words appearing at variable rates and sometimes in flickers (figures 4.46, 4.47, and 4.48). The text is an elliptical translation, with some factual discrepancies, of the monologue spoken in German in the second part of the film and supposedly mimed in the first; as such, the superimposed lines function on the surface as delayed subtitles.[91] *Surface Tension*, as the title partially suggests, explores various tensions and resonances: in particular, between the gestural, auditory, and written modes of communication and perception; fictional narrative, documentary, and poetic presentation; flatness and depth; passage of time and movement through space; translatability and illegibility; and control patterns and disjunctures.[92]

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[90] Frampton explains: "Sensory overload turns into mental underwear. One of the things I've always liked about films is . . . the exactitude of limitation and standardization of the conditions under which films are seen and the fact that, instead of including many more senses, you are helped as much as possible to limit yourself to a very intense concentration in the use of 1 or 2 senses" (Snow, "Hollis Frampton" 10).

[91] The second and third parts of *Surface Tension* are included in *Screening Room with Hollis Frampton*, which was part of the television series hosted by Robert Gardner in the seventies and is now available on the DVD *Screening Room Series—Experimental Collection*, produced by Documentary Educational Resources.

[92] For the text of the third part of *Surface Tension*, see MacDonald, *Screen Writings* 50. Frampton gives his own view of the film in MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: The Early Years" 118-22; Snow, "Hollis Frampton" 10-11. For critical analyses of the film, see Jenkins, *Films* 150-57; Ragona, "Hidden Noise" 101-04.

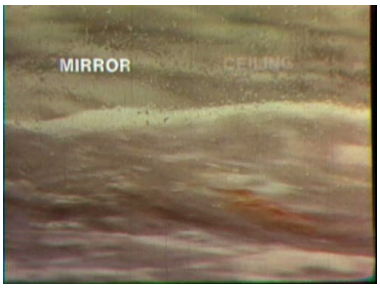


Fig. 4.46. *Surface Tension*: an opaque mirror of the film image.



Fig. 4.47. *Surface Tension*: arousing voyeuristic fantasies.



Fig. 4.48. *Surface Tension*: a mixed-medial confusion of the species.

The silent section of Frampton's arguably most famous film, *Zorns Lemma* (1970), which grew out of an interest in spatial paradoxes of the verbal presence within the image, partially under the influence of Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic cinéma*, incorporates Frampton's photographs of city signage, mostly taken in Manhattan over a period of seven years. The section, which begins with stand-alone letters of the alphabet (with *u/v* and *i/j* counting as conflated letters), is followed by 108 sets of alphabetically arranged environmental words, each shot staying on the screen for one second. Gradually wordless images replace environmental words in the alphabetical slots, resulting in an additional—empty—verbal set at the very end of this silent section. Although Frampton aimed at a random sequencing of alphabetized shots in order, as he explained, to "avoid imposing my own taste and making them into little puns" (Gidal, "Interview" 94), some suggestive "phrases" still emerge (figure 4.49). *Zorns Lemma* has been read as mathematical calisthenics dressed in filmic clothes, a cryptic autobiography, a city symphony, a temporally oriented guessing game, an exploration of verbal-visual tensions, a battle between the two hemispheres of the brain, a questioning of the nature of the alphabet and thus of language itself, a debt to Sergei Eisenstein's likening shots to words, a metatextual investigation of cinematic editing, and an extended metaphor of the history

of cinema, among other conjectures.[93]



Fig. 4.49. *Zorns Lemma*: a provocative exception to the rule of random sequencing.

The verbal text of the silent part of *Gloria!* (1979), which presents the filmmaker's "propositions" about his maternal grandmother, evaluating his memories of and feelings about her (figure 4.50), is computer typed before our eyes on a green screen, suggestive of a videographic display and symbolic of the green color of Irishness. Bracketing the text with two examples of early silent cinema that feature Irish wake jokes and inserting an audio of the "quacking ducks" Irish tune that his grandmother remembered hearing at her wedding, Frampton highlights both generational differences and genealogical ties, while meditating on the nature of memory and belief structure, death and resurrection, authorship and transtextuality, and the history of cinema. Frampton intended *Gloria!* to be shown on the final day of the entire screening cycle of *Magellan*: his massive project, which remained unfinished, was to span 36 hours of film, its film sections to be screened in calendric order. *Gloria!* concludes—and the entire *Magellan* would have concluded—with a dedication to Frampton's grandmother, typed in the same computerized manner but on a black background (figure 4.51), the white-on-black textual presentation reminiscent

[93] *Zorns Lemma* has been extensively analyzed in film literature (see, for example, Bershen; Jenkins, *Films* 190-234; Turim, *Abstraction* 86-91; Weiss, "Frampton's Lemma"). Frampton's own notes on the film are included in Dusinberre and Christie 109-11; Gidal, "Interview" 93-101; MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton: 'Zorns Lemma'" and *Screen Writings* 56-66.

of silent cinema intertitles.[94]

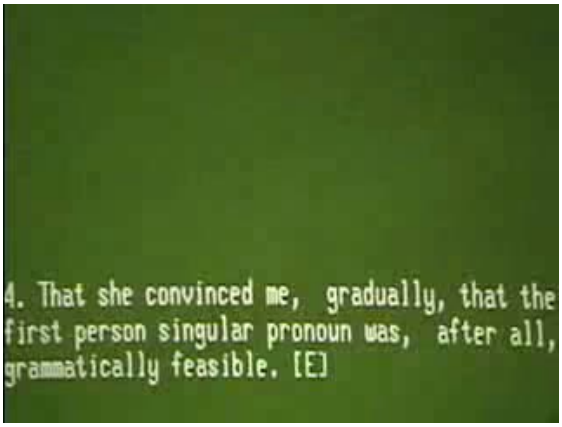


Fig. 4.50. *Gloria!*: memories of constructed identities.

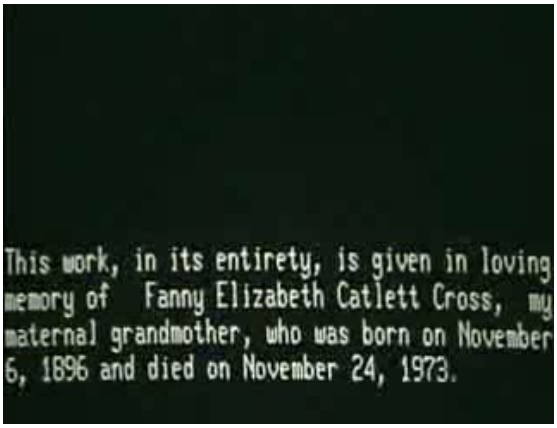


Fig. 4.51. *Gloria!*: in memoriam.

The silent sections of *The Surface Tension*, *Zorns Lemma*, and *Gloria!* can theoretically be analyzed as stand-alone entities. However, because the silent sections are not screened separately from the other, sound, parts, excerpting in this way would distort the web of interconnecting links within the films by disregarding the influence of sound and audible language on the viewers' perception and conceptualization of the screen words. I will, therefore, focus on the functions of language in Frampton's silent film *Poetic Justice* (1972), his most logophilically verbose creation. One could potentially argue that analyzing *Poetic Justice* on its own is also a sort of excerpting because the film belongs to the *Hapax Legomena* cycle,[95] which encompasses seven films, created in

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[94] For discussions of *Magellan*, which include descriptions of *Gloria!*, see, for example, B. Henderson; Jenkins, *Films* 288-318; Sitney, *Eyes* 259-70; and Zryd. Frampton's own ideas about the film project are recorded, among others, in Dusinberre and Christie; and B. Simon. Contributions of verbal language—in the form of optically reversed intertitles—to the silent film *More Than Meets the Eye* (1979) are analyzed in Jenkins, "Red" 88-90.

[95] As Reno Odlin points out, Frampton was originally planning to use *Hapax Legomena* as the title of a collection of his short poems, which never materialized (Frampton, "Letters from Framp" 53).

1971-72.[96] Films constituting a cycle, however, can be, and often are, screened and discussed as self-contained units, with an understanding that larger implications may be at work.

Positioned second in the *Hapax Legomena* cycle, which is a cinematic meditation on different arts and media as well as on different kinds of film, *Poetic Justice* plays with the idea of a merger between literature and cinema, represented by the medium of the screenplay. The fact that *Poetic Justice* is included in *Hapax Legomena* suggests, however, that its cinematic form is not easily definable. As Frampton explains,

> *Hapax Legomena* is Greek scholarly jargon; it means 'said one time.' . . . It refers to words that are found but once in the entire corpus of a literature. Sometimes they are found just once in the entire body of work of a poet. . . . They are always very problematical because it is difficult to say what a *hapax legomena* means. You have only one context, so the denotation of the word is always conjectural. (Gidal, "Interview" 103)

There seems to be a contradiction between the terms *poetic justice*, which serves as the title of the film and has a definite meaning, and *hapax legomena*, which is supposed to describe the title of the film. Whether there is in the film any vice, to be punished, or virtue, to be rewarded, is highly debatable. Thus, the seemingly fixed meaning of the term *poetic justice* is challenged, and it indeed becomes a *hapax legomenon*, highly dependable on the context of the film.

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[96] For detailed discussions of *Hapax Legomena*, see, for example, Jenkins, *Films* 234-87; MacDonald, "Hollis Frampton's 'Hapax Legomena'"; Sitney, *Eyes* 107-22. Frampton reveals his approach to *Hapax Legomena* in Gidal, "Interview" 101-14; MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 158-73.

Neither “poetic justice” nor “hapax legomena” appear in the film in their linguistic forms. The paratext of *Poetic Justice* consists only of the filmmaker's logo (figure 4.52), which concludes the film and is separated from the last diegetic image (figure 4.53) by two seconds of black leader:

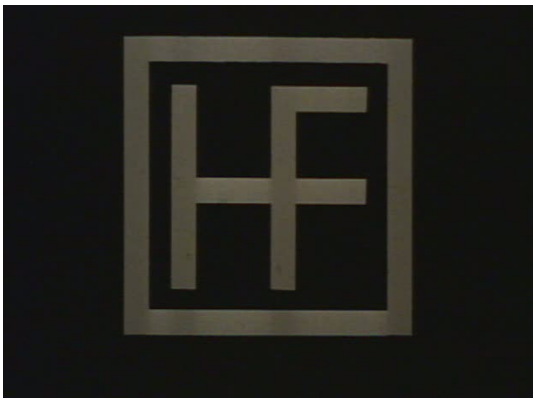


Fig. 4.52. *Poetic Justice*: Frampton's logo as an impersonal signature.



Fig. 4.53. *Poetic Justice*: the final diegetic shot—an empty authorial glove.

As Frampton pointed out in 1978, *(nostalgia)* (1971) was his last film that integrated a title at the beginning. In the filmmaker's opinion, paratextual elements were always problematic:

> . . . was the title part of the film, or was it simply a filing system? Was the logo part of the film, or simply a maker's mark? There was always, in my mind, a nascent conflict between the title as a graphic sign, on the one hand, and the illusionist space of the photographic image on the other. Finally, I decided to solve the problem by annihilating it. (MacDonald, “Interview with Hollis Frampton” 161)[97]

Through temporal proximity, Frampton's signature, impersonal in its codified format, is

[97] In the same interview, Frampton also stated that *(nostalgia)* was the last film in which he used the logo, separated by the darkness from the last image (MacDonald, “Interview with Hollis Frampton” 160-61). So it is not clear whether the logo was added to *Poetic Justice* at a later point or whether Frampton was misremembering.

linked to the rubber glove that covers the last page of the script in the last diegetic shot and highlights the elusive issue of authorship, implicitly raised in the film.[98]

In an image-word reversal, the shot with the stack of blank pages (figure 4.54), always arranged in the same way, performs in *Poetic Justice* the role of segmenting intertitles. As the first diegetic image of the film, this shot precedes the "title shot" of the first tableau (figure 4.55), separates the four tableaux from each other, and intervenes between the two shots with page #240: without and with the glove (see figure 4.53). As Frampton explains, the four tableaux of the film represent "four modes of consciousness" (Gidal, "Interview" 112); therefore, the blank pages are necessary to facilitate a switch to another mode.

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[98] When *Poetic Justice* was published in book form in 1973, Frampton chose as a concluding image a variation of the glove shot: the glove, lit from a different angle, is lying over a stack of blank pages instead. According to Frampton, when he was offered to publish the film in book form, he agreed because the irony of the reversal of the traditional adaptation sequence (book to film) appealed to him (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 162). Apart from the alternative glove shot, there are a few other differences in the visual images of the book and the film. Unlike the film, the book includes a title shot as the cover page, Frampton's handwritten signature instead of the logo, and Frampton's envoi. The aspect ratio of the book pages is not the same: the upper and bottom parts of the images are slightly cut off. There is only one shot with page #225 in the book, whereas the film includes two shots, with a variation in the second one. But the major difference between the images of the book and the film, which definitively proves that Frampton either rephotographed the handwritten pages for the book or used alternative takes that had not made it to the film, is the arrangement and the number of pages on the table. At the beginning of the film, page #1 is the only page lying on the table; the stack gradually grows when the new pages are added. In the book, all the pages of the script, starting with page #1, are placed in turn on top of the same stack of blank pages, which never gets bigger. Thus, the placement of the glove on top of the blank pages at the end of the book is consistent with the arrangement pattern throughout. The difference in arrangement patterns can possibly symbolize the difference between the medium of a film, which moves in time and where the memories of the images are built sequentially and depend on the contiguous shots, and of a book, the pages of which can be read and viewed in random order and in relative isolation.



Fig. 4.54. *Poetic Justice*: a wordless segmenting intertitle.

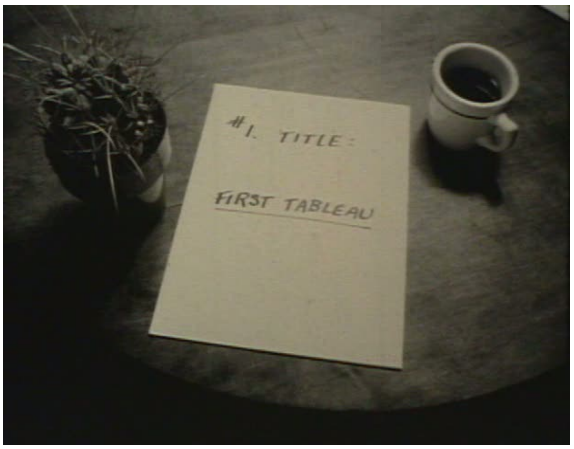


Fig. 4.55. *Poetic Justice*: the first page of the script.

It is not unusual for mainstream films, especially for book adaptations, to begin with a printed or handwritten text from the literary source and then to switch to a visual presentation of events. Setting up the viewers' expectations in a similar manner, *Poetic Justice*, however, never makes this conventionally necessary move in the direction of narrative visuals, the traditional diegetic world of Hollywood productions. The first-order diegesis of *Poetic Justice* is a table top, with a potted plant[99] situated on the left and a cup with tea or coffee placed on the right of a script, the pages of which are laid out one by one—to be relished by the invisible reader, whose direction of the gaze coincides with that of the film viewers. Whatever narrative there is in the film, it develops exclusively in the imagination of the viewers, prompted by the written words they read.

Frampton plays to our expectations of a coherent narrative by providing a setting and a set of characters and by specifying camera movements within the second-order, never-to-be-visually-represented, diegetic space. Appropriately, the first second-order diegetic image of the first tableau is numbered two (figure 4.56)—because the number

[99] Peterson and Broughton's *The Potted Psalm* must have appealed not only to Brakhage.

one is reserved for the paratext of the "TITLE: / FIRST TABLEAU"[100] (see figure 4.55), which serves as a threshold between the first-order and second-order diegeses. Analogous to the practice of using an establishing shot in Hollywood cinema, the "LONG SHOT" of "A BLOOMING LILAC IN EARLY LIGHT" creates a hint at the spatial-temporal coordinates of the second-order diegesis. Again in accordance with the cinematic tradition, the long shot gives way to a "MIDDLE SHOT" of "ROOM INTERIOR" and then to a "CLOSE-UP" of "A SMALL TABLE." So far, Frampton has made it easy for the viewers to visualize the setting, the editing, and the camera movement not only through specifying the kinds of shots but also by including occasional directions about continuity between the shots: "(SLOW DISSOLVE TO...)" from the long shot to the middle shot and "(ZOOM IN AND DROP TO ...)" as a transition to the close-up. At this point, the first-order and second-order diegeses almost coincide because the verbal description on page #4 partially matches the representational picture of "A POTTED CACTUS" and "A COFFEE CUP" on "A SMALL TABLE" (figure 4.57). The frames of the first-order diegesis seem to expand and the picture seems to become clearer because we now know that the potted plant is actually a cactus and that the cup has coffee in it and because we think we know that the table is located "BELOW A WINDOW." In fact, the table that Frampton has filmed, as he reveals, is not really by a window, which an attentive viewer can deduce from the lighting of the scene, where the shadows are not parallel to each other and play a little. So the whole set-up is artifice ("Hollis Frampton at Binghamton University").

[100] Forward slashes are introduced into the quotes from *Poetic Justice* instead of the line breaks on the pages of the script.

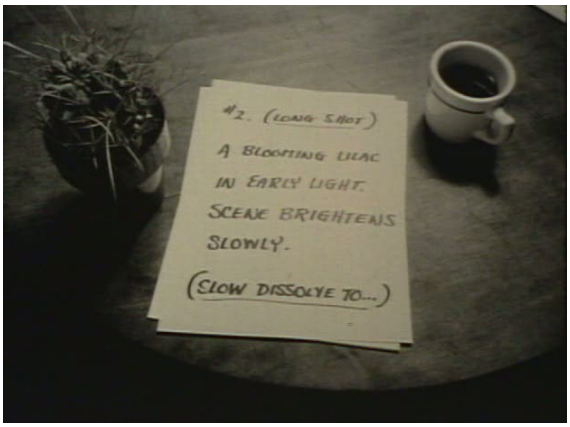


Fig. 4.56. *Poetic Justice*: the first second-order diegetic image.

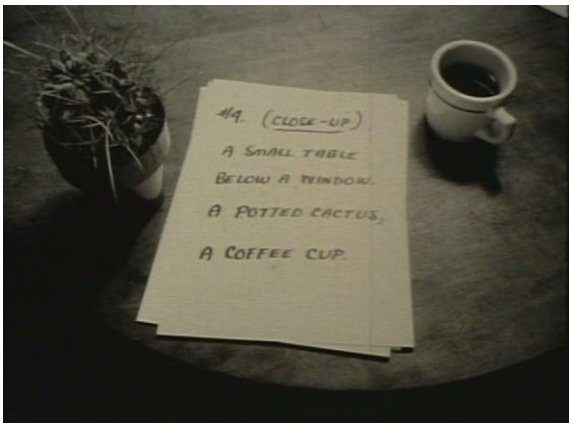


Fig. 4.57. *Poetic Justice*: the verbal-visual match, almost.

In a mainstream narrative film, the shot with page #4 would become a perfect moment for transitioning to the visual diegetic narrative of the second order. In *Poetic Justice*, however, what follows is the next page of the script, which introduces two characters: "#5 (CLOSE-UP) / MY HAND PLACES / A BLACK-AND-WHITE / PHOTOGRAPH OF / YOUR FACE ON A / TABLE." The synecdochic presentation juxtaposes the real hand of the second-order diegetic narrator and the picture of "YOUR FACE," while both remain just images of words on the screen.[101] As Allen S. Weiss notes, Frampton builds on the linguistic fact that the "fundamental polarity in language is structured according to the difference between the shifters 'I' and 'you,' upon which the pragmatic functions of communication are founded" ("*Poetic Justice*" 51). The addressee of the message—the invisible reader of the first-order diegesis—supposedly knows what the hand and the face look like. Since the viewer shares the addressee's gaze, she/he becomes involved in the interlocutionary situation and is invited to project her/his own image onto the photograph.

[101] Because all the images in *Poetic Justice*, with the exception of the first-order diegesis, are imaginary, it might seem appropriate to enclose the words *image*, *see*, and others related to perception in quotation marks. I have chosen not to do it—partially to avoid cluttering this section with quotation marks and partially to play the game in which Frampton wants to engage the viewers.

The gender indeterminacy here is essential because the "YOU" remains completely within the imaginative, second-order space throughout the film.

Paradoxically, by using the second-person pronoun, Frampton aims at a seemingly opposing goal of distancing the spectators from the film diegesis, of reminding the viewers that they are watching a film as an artificial construct. The filmmaker explains: "Writing in the second person creates an automatic disjunction between the imaginative space of the work and the real space in which the spectator finds himself[102]. . . . One accepts the first and third person as lying entirely within the imaginative space of the text, presumably by convention. It's like the convention of the literary past tense" (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 163). The defamiliarization effect in *Poetic Justice* is achieved through a disruption of the first-person/third-person axis in the second-order diegetic narrative, whereas the interlocutionary involvement is grounded in the conflation of the spectator and the invisible reader from the first-order diegesis. A third-person character is still present in the second-order diegetic space, but her/his identity hinges upon her/his connection to "YOU" because this character is called exclusively "YOUR LOVER."

Frampton calls the first tableau "a straight, very low-grade, high-school instruction scenario of action. It's what's being talked about within that illusory action which doesn't exist" (Gidal, "Interview" 112). Through the usage of articles, this "straight, very low-grade" text, however, subtly disrupts yet another convention—that of continuity. In the whole tableau, which presents sixty pages, the definite article does not

[102] Frampton's usage of the masculine pronoun *himself* in reference to the *spectator*, which reflects the linguistic norm of the gender-insensitive language of the seventies, unintentionally undermines the all-inclusiveness of the gender-indeterminate "YOU."

appear a single time. All the nouns are qualified by an indefinite or zero article. The very first images of the second-order diegesis illustrate this tendency of severing ties between the shots. There is no grammatical connection between "A BLOOMING LILAC" in the establishing shot (see figure 4.56) and "A / LILAC" in the following "MIDDLE SHOT" ("ROOM INTERIOR. / OPEN WINDOW. A / LILAC IS SEEN / OUTSIDE. (ZOOM IN AND DROP TO . . .)"). Frampton makes sure to emphasize this fact by highlighting the article through its separate placement—on the preceding line—from the noun it qualifies. The usage of the indefinite article with the word *window* in the following zoomed-in close-up (see figure 4.57) is even more incongruous because it is supposed to be the same interior scene and, thus, the same window. This practice of grammatically isolating second-order diegetic scenes is consistent in the first and fourth tableaux and is present in the second tableau as well.[103] The viewers, therefore, seem to be encouraged to readjust or completely recreate their mental pictures of the scene with every consecutive shot.

Singular countable nouns in *Poetic Justice* are frequently accompanied by a zero article. Enclosed spaces, room apertures, surfaces, and furniture items often enjoy a free-floating state and become an abstracted background against which the second-order diegetic narrative develops. For example, the "MIDDLE SHOT" of page #8 is described as "ROOM INTERIOR WITH / WINDOW. YOU WALK / SLOWLY THROUGH SCENE / AND EXIT."

[103] Ironically, a strong desire for continuity may have been behind the inconsistencies between the text of *Poetic Justice* as reproduced in MacDonald's *Screen Writings* and the film itself. In MacDonald, the definite article substitutes for the indefinite article in script pages #19, #84, #88, #92. The indefinite article is inserted in script pages #15 and #116. Overall, the reproduction of the text is far from being exact. The semantic and structural changes to the second tableau drastically distort the text of the film. Other discrepancies include alternative words (*sifting* vs. *shifting* on page #52 and *forward* vs. *upward* on page #90), punctuation, line arrangement, spelling, and missing or incorrect camera directions.

This way of outlining the setting is reminiscent of the shorthand conventions of stage directions. Frampton, however, constantly shifts between a zero article and an indefinite article when qualifying the same nouns (for example, "YOU . . . WALK TO WINDOW" on page #10 and "YOU STEP TO A WINDOW" on page #32), never giving the viewers a chance to settle comfortably into a consistent mode of visualization.

A zero article is employed only once with the word *camera* ("SQUINTING THROUGH / CAMERA"), whereas this noun is used more than a dozen times in the film. This single usage precedes the only two images that we unequivocally see through the eyes of a character: a "BIG CLOSE-UP" of "A BLUE JAY,[104] OUT OF / FOCUS" on page #16 and a "BIG CLOSE-UP" of "A BLUE JAY, COMING / INTO FOCUS" on page #18. Together with the character, we watch the blue jay fly away. The character is, not surprisingly, "YOU"—represented in this episode by the face ("#15 (CLOSE-UP) / YOUR FACE IN PROFILE / SQUINTING THROUGH / CAMERA."), the hand ("#17 (BIG CLOSE-UP) / YOUR HAND, FOCUSSING."), and the eye ("#19 (CLOSE-UP) / YOU LOWER A CAMERA / FROM YOUR EYE."). This scene marks the only instance in *Poetic Justice* when the conflation of the viewer and a character occurs in the second-order diegetic space. There are other cases when we are invited to follow the gaze of a character, who is "LOOKING OUT" (page #42) or "LOOKING DOWN" (page #57), but there are no verbal indications that the description of the following scene matches exactly what the character sees. Thus, Frampton implies that an image can be communally shared only when mediated by the lens of a camera.

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[104] Frampton writes the name of the bird in such a way that it is not clear whether it is spelled as one word (*bluejay*) or two words (*blue jay*): the space between *blue* and *jay* is much smaller than the space between any other two words in the shot.

In the first tableau, "YOU" is the only character who actually handles a camera, although it is "MY HAND" that places three photographs of "YOUR FACE" for the spectator's perusal at the beginning of the tableau, with an implication that "I" is the photographer. The order in which the photographs are laid out in three consecutive shots is suggestive of the development of photography: from "BLACK-AND-WHITE" to "HAND-TINTED" to "COLOR" (pages #5 through #7). These straight photographic representations, however, do not seem to appeal to the character of "YOU," whose "HANDS SLOWLY / TEAR EACH PHOTOGRAPH / INTO EIGHT PIECES" (page #29) and then "MIX TORN / FRAGMENTS AND PUSH / THEM INTO A PILE" (page #31).

No reason for the dissatisfaction is provided, consistent with the film's policy of withholding any point-of-view motivations. We never know what the characters think, and this motivates the viewers to project their own feelings and rationalizing onto the situations they are invited to visualize. Only two words that denote emotions are employed in the film: the verb *smile*, used multiple times when "YOU" and "YOUR LOVER" are in the presence of or in close proximity to each other (figure 4.58); and its antonym *frown*, used in parallel structures in two analogous situations ("#23 (CLOSE-UP) / YOUR FACE, FROWNING" and "#59 (CLOSE-UP) / YOUR LOVER'S FACE, / FROWNING"). The first *frown* describes the reaction of "YOU" to the three photographs. The second *frown* reveals the dissatisfaction of "YOUR LOVER" with the result of his/her effort to "RECONSTRUCT PHOTOGRAPHS" from the torn fragments (figure 4.59). "YOUR / FACES ARE COMPLETE / BUT FRAGMENTS ARE / INCORRECTLY SORTED" suggests a photographic mode different from conventional portraiture—collage, primarily associated with the avant-garde. An opposition is thus created between "YOU," who seems to reject straightforward representation, and "YOUR LOVER," who fails in an attempt to recreate it.

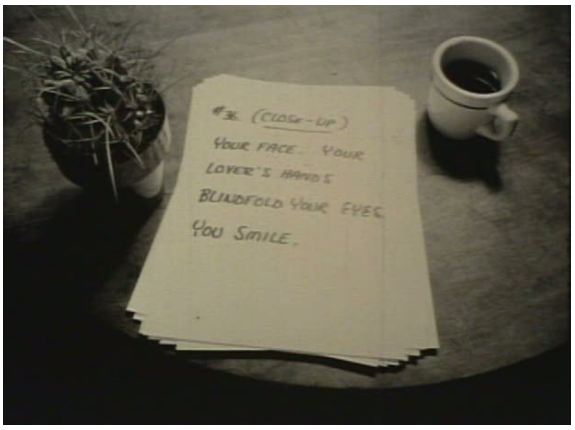


Fig. 4.58. *Poetic Justice*: "YOU" smiling at the touch of "YOUR LOVER."

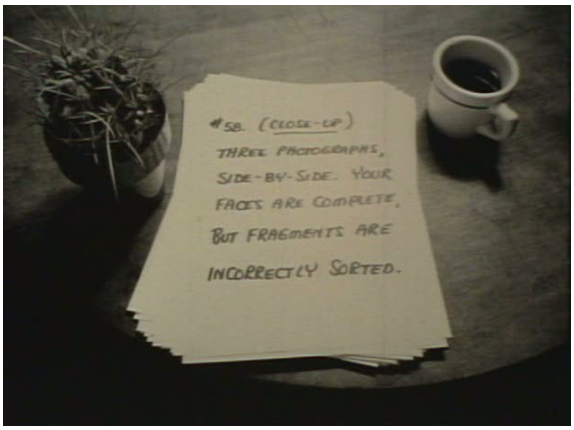


Fig. 4.59. *Poetic Justice*: the unsatisfactory collage of photographs.

The development of events in the meantime hints at an alternative explanation of why "YOU" has destroyed the photographs, even though the character is constantly carrying a camera around. When "YOU" finally gets to use a camera, after two failed attempts to capture a blue jay on film, the character is shown "FILMING A HOUSE" (page #47). By employing the verb *film*, Frampton both underscores the common roots of photography and cinema and contrasts the two media. The filmmaker viewed the early history of photography "as the struggle of the art to purge itself of temporality" (*On the Camera Arts* 27), whereas temporality is inherent in cinema. The destruction of the photographs by "YOU" can thus be viewed as an act of showing the character's (and by extension, the viewer's) preference for film over photography. In this respect, *Poetic Justice* is unmistakeably linked to the first *Hapax Legomena* film—*(nostalgia)*—where the spectators watch photographs sequentially burn on a hot plate, while listening to a description and a background story of the next photograph to appear.[105] Frampton,

[105] For an insightful discussion of *(nostalgia)*, structured around "a series of systematic displacements between language and image, between flatness and depth, between stillness and motion," see Sitney, "Autobiography" 228-32. The text of the voice-over narration, which is read in the film by Michael Snow, is included in Frampton, "(Nostalgia)."

however, never uses the nouns *film* or *cinema* in *Poetic Justice*, whereas the word *photograph* is frequent in the first tableau and dominates the second and fourth tableaux.

In the first tableau, the second-order diegetic characters are consistently present in the scenes. In the second tableau, only "MY HAND" is real in the second-order diegetic space, whereas "YOU" and "YOUR LOVER" appear exclusively on the photographs that "MY HAND" is holding in exactly half the number of shots. These close-ups alternate—with a persistent structural rhythm—with the long shots of the setting, devoid of human figures. The absence-presence duality in the tableau is also highlighted through the adjective *empty*, which occurs eight times in the second-order diegesis. All the movement is oxymoronically relegated to the third-order diegesis of still photographs (figure 4.60).

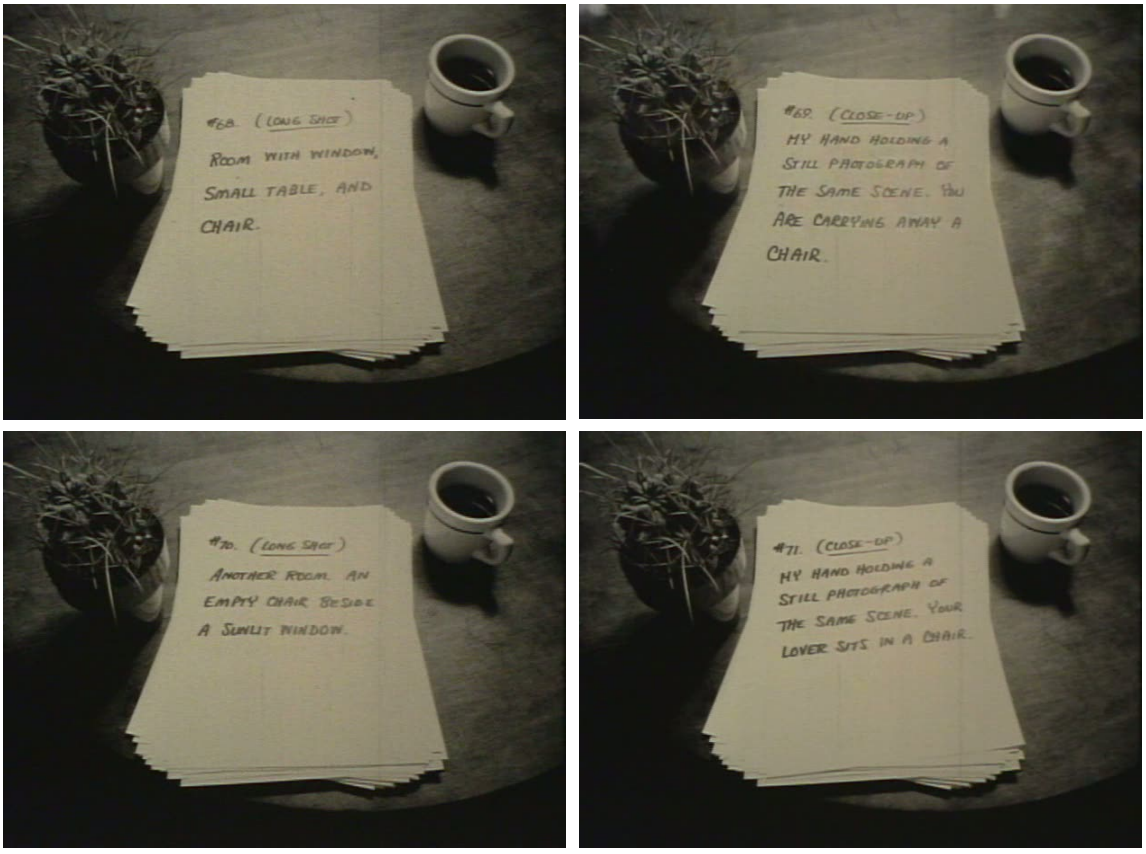


Fig. 4.60. *Poetic Justice*: alternating between the absences in the second-order diegetic setting and the presences in the third-order diegesis of still photographs.

Peter Gidal calls the spatial structure of the second tableau "[t]he frame within the frame within the frame . . ." ("Interview" 112). Frampton's own description considers both spatial and temporal dimensions:

> In the second tableau there are two things going on. One is a kind of illusory cinema, a kind of fooling around, a sort of seduction. . . . All written down again, but you have to wait for the still photograph to find out what's happening in the movie, because all of the cinema shots are empty, and then the hand holds the still up, and so forth. But none of that is actually going on either. So you have a kind of memory thing working. . . . (Gidal, "Interview" 112)

The "memory thing" is indeed hard at work trying to continue constructing a narrative,[106] which was relatively easy to do in the first tableau. Ironically, the major stumbling block to this effort is the phrase that is repeated in every other shot.

The structuring motif of the second tableau—"MY HAND HOLDING A STILL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SAME SCENE"—basks in ambiguity. The diegetic referent of "THE SAME SCENE" cannot be pinpointed exactly: is it the second-order exterior/interior scene that precedes the phrase in each instance or the third-order scene with "YOU" or "YOUR LOVER" that was presented prior to the second-order scene? The first hypothesis finds

[106] Non-narrativity is often identified as a major feature of avant-garde film. Frampton, however, felt uneasy about dichotomizing film into narrative and non-narrative. He preferred to view narrative film as "a category, a subset within the set of all possible films that have been made" and, when discussing *Hapax Legomena*, gave the following reason for his preference: "In that case, if I'm making a film, it seems to me I needn't necessarily concern myself with whether it has overtones or scents or [sic: should probably be *of*] narrative or narrative myths in it. In fact, it does. These new films are very concerned with, not making narratives, but with the problems and paradoxes of narrative, as with other things" (Gidal, "Interview" 105-06).

support in the sequential structure of the second tableau, which begins in the second-order diegetic space ("#62 (LONG SHOT) / HOUSE EXTERIOR WITH / OPEN WINDOW."), and in the primary status of the second-order diegesis, which is supposedly independent of the third-order diegetic space of the photographs. Thus, the photographs of "THE SAME SCENE" should logically be rooted in the second-order diegetic scenes.

This assumption is, however, regularly undermined by the adjective *empty,* frequent in the second-order diegesis: how can "YOUR LOVER" possibly sit in a chair in the same scene where the chair is empty (pages #70 and #71, see figure 4.60)? Yet, Frampton's preference for an indefinite article still allows for such a possibility by expanding the frames of the second-order diegetic space: "YOUR LOVER" may as well be sitting in another chair in the scene where there is "AN / EMPTY CHAIR BESIDE / A SUNLIT WINDOW." When the scale of emptiness increases, such an expansion of the contiguous shot becomes more problematic: "YOU" can still "LIE ON / A SOFA" (page #81) in the same scene where there is "AN EMPTY SOFA OPPOSITE WINDOW" (page #80), provided the room is big enough to hold two sofas, but "YOU" cannot "STAND . . . HOLDING A CAMERA" (page #113) in "AN EMPTY BEDROOM" (page #112), unless the viewer is film savvy enough to visualize the figure in superimposition.

The whole ending of the second tableau, where the five consecutive second-order diegetic shots (##112, 114, 116, 118, and 120) show "EMPTY BEDROOM," presents a serious challenge to the first hypothesis—not only because a figure situated in a space that is empty is a perceptual contradiction. Starting with page #116, the second-order diegesis ("EMPTY BEDROOM. THERE / IS NO CAMERA IN THE / ROOM.") suddenly begins to respond to the preceding shots of the third-order diegesis, in particular to the presence of a camera on page #113 (". . . YOU STAND IN A / ROOM, HOLDING A CAMERA.") and

page #115 (". . . YOUR LOVER STANDS / IN A ROOM, HOLDING A / CAMERA."). The last two second-order diegetic shots include the same text as page #116 (with the line breaks different on page #118), prompting the shift of the viewer's attention to the third-order diegesis, where "YOU STAND NAKED / IN A ROOM" (page #117, see figure 4.61), "YOUR / LOVER STANDS NAKED / IN A ROOM" (page # 119), and "YOU AND / YOUR LOVER EMBRACE, / NAKED, IN A ROOM" (page #121). There is no camera in the room of the second-order diegesis to record an erotic encounter, but the third-order diegesis continues to unfold before our voyeuristic eyes—that is, in our voyeuristic minds.

The validity of the second hypothesis—that the diegetic referent of "THE SAME SCENE" is the previous third-order diegetic scene—is also questionable. Just as the alternations of the second-order and third-order diegetic spaces constitute the structure of the second tableau, the shots with "YOU" and with "YOUR LOVER" take turns in the third-order diegetic narrative. The viewer is again forced to expand the frames of the shots in order to include both figures, where possible. The indefinite article comes to the rescue a few times, as it does in the situation where "YOU / ARE CARRYING AWAY A / CHAIR" (page #69) in the same scene where "YOUR / LOVER STANDS ON A / CHAIR" (page #67). But when the third-order diegetic action takes place in different interior locations (for example, "YOUR / LOVER [IS] CLIMBING STAIRS" on page #91 and "YOU STAND / NEAR A SOFA, HOLDING / A CAMERA" on page #93), the sameness of the scene is highly unlikely, unless superimposition or collage are employed. Only in the last shot of the second tableau do the two characters appear together simultaneously, "EMBRAC[ING], / NAKED, IN A ROOM." Perhaps to highlight this break in the established mode, this shot is included twice, with the two contiguous occurrences separated by camera flares, the usual

mode of transition between consecutive shots in *Poetic Justice*.[107]

Thus, the referent of "THE SAME SCENE" remains forever floating and is entirely up to the viewer to envision, adjust, and recreate. Frampton encourages such shifts by diversifying the bibliographical code of the structural motif. Not only are there minute differences among all the thirty handwritten instances of the phrase, but Frampton also arranges the phrase in four different ways on the page, which is always of the same format: "MY HAND HOLDING A / STILL PHOTOGRAPH OF / THE SAME SCENE," "MY HAND HOLDING A / STILL PHOTOGRAPH OF THE / SAME SCENE," "MY HAND HOLDING A STILL / PHOTOGRAPH OF THE SAME / SCENE," and "MY HAND HOLDING A STILL / PHOTOGRAPH OF THE / SAME SCENE" (figure 4.61).

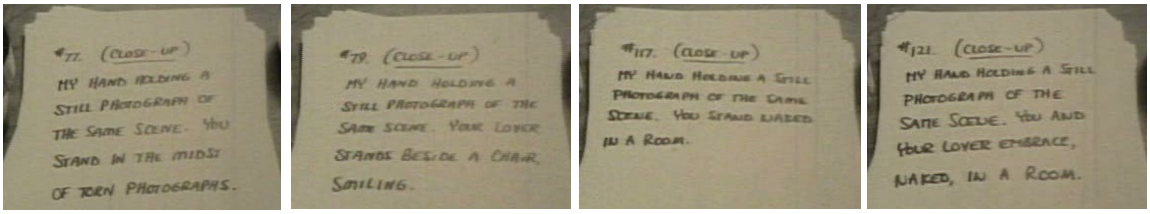


Fig. 4.61. *Poetic Justice* (fragment enlargements): versions of "THE SAME SCENE."

The variations in the tightly ordered structure of the second tableau manipulate the viewers into establishing connections not only between contiguous shots, as if across the rows in a table, but also between shots that are arranged along the column axis. The

[107] According to the filmmaker Daniel Barnett, camera flares "occur when light strikes the film *without first passing through the lens*" and "almost always mean something *cinema-referential.*" Unlike camera flares, lens flares "are caused by light entering camera lens directly and hitting the film without first reflecting off the subjects being photographed." Lens flares appear on the image as "a starburst pattern . . . or a floodlight, with streaks of radiance darting on a diagonal through the frame, often with the shape of the physical aperture echoed by the glass elements of the lens itself" (39). When *flares* are discussed in the context of experimental filmmaking, most often *camera flares* are meant. MacDonald points out that "by the early 1970s flares and end-of-roll perforations had become a modernist signature in a body of work that aligned itself against the illusionism of the popular cinema" (*Garden* 426).

filmic signifier of the "SAME SCENE," although it is verbal, is no longer just linear—an explosive challenge to the linear character of a linguistic signifier and to the linearity of narrative. In fact, I will argue that, even though *Poetic Justice* is silent, the principles according to which the second tableau develops are similar to the concept of vertical montage, theorized by Eisenstein as a contrapuntal mode of the sound-image relationship:

> Where the montage structure of the *pictorial element* is concerned, we now have not only the familiar 'sideways annexation' [pristroika] of sequence to sequence on the horizontal plane, but also an 'upward superstructure' on the vertical plane above each depictive sequence, in the form of a new sequence in another dimension: the sound sequence, i.e. a sequence whose link with the depiction is not subsequent but simultaneous. (*Selected Works. Volume II* 332)[108]

Frampton closely studied and often polemicized with Eisenstein's writings on montage and on the image-sound interaction and planned to explore ways of creating vertical montage in *Magellan*.[109] Frampton's understanding of vertical montage as "the simultaneous availability of essentially covalent chains of causal linkage of one kind or another" (B. Simon 16) is quite applicable to the second tableau of *Poetic Justice*, where,

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[108] Eisenstein's explications of the concept of vertical montage, which was developed in his film *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), are available in English in two translations: as the sections called "Synchronization of Senses" and "Form and Content: Practice" in *The Film Sense*, translated by Jay Leyda; and as the section "Vertical Montage" in *Selected Works. Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage*, translated by Michael Glenny.

[109] For Frampton's references to Eisenstein, see, for example, "Film in the House of the Word" in *On the Camera Arts* and the interview with Bill Simon. Frampton's forays into vertical montage in sound films are discussed in detail in Ragona, "Hidden Noise."

instead of sound-image inter-correspondences, different-order diegetic spaces interact in guiding the viewers' conceptualization of the scenes they visualize.

The ending of the second tableau, where the third-order diegetic action with erotic overtones is taking place in the second-order diegetic "EMPTY BEDROOM," epitomizes most vividly, in my view, the overarching structural theme of *Hapax Legomena*, which Frampton described as a descending curve of an emptying of the frame complemented by an ascending curve in which the frame is filled with something else, "an emptying out of a retinal, or material, or illusionistic, repleteness and its gradual replacement with a repleteness which is of a purely mental order . . . the replacement of a physical resonance in the object with a resonance within the mind."[110] As Frampton clarifies, this kind of movement is repeated within each individual piece, sometimes several times, and over the whole *Hapax Legomena* cycle ("Hollis Frampton at Binghamton University"). These descending and ascending curves seem to intersect at the end of the second tableau of *Poetic Justice* almost palpably.

The close focus on the third-order diegesis with the naked "YOU" and "YOUR LOVER" at the end of the second tableau prepares a transition to the third tableau, which consists entirely of middle shots, dissolving into each other, of "LOVE MAKING." This semantic and pragmatic continuity suggests that the third tableau may as well serve as a continuation of the third-order diegetic narrative, presented on a series of photographs in the second tableau. The camera, however, seems to have zoomed in on the action, as a result of which the frames of the photographs have disappeared and the distinction

[110] This and other citations from "Hollis Frampton at Binghamton University" are transcribed quotes, which omit speech hesitations and repetitions.

between the second-order and third-order diegetic spaces has collapsed. Instead, the second/third-order diegetic scenes in the "BEDROOM" integrate another frame—a window outside which all sorts of still and moving pictures unfold, having no logical connection to each other. According to Frampton, in "the third tableau, essentially surrealist . . . the big window is seen as a screen or as a real window or as a Renaissance imaginary window within which an image can take place. A kind of hypnagogic series, you see. Another mode of understanding. The images there are patently hypnagogic" (Gidal, "Interview" 112).

Based on the imagery seen outside the window, Frampton's interpretation of the word *hypnagogic* is much closer to dictionary definitions—representational images that one visualizes in the intermediary state between wakefulness and sleep—than Brakhage's artistic view of hypnagogic vision, manifested, for example, in *Untitled (For Marilyn)*. The hypnagogic images that Frampton selects range from familiar (e.g., "LITTLE GIRLS / SKIPPING ROPE" on page #133) to bizarre (e.g., "A CLUTTER OF NUDE / PLASTER MANNEQUINS" on page #171). The very first shots of the third tableau make it clear that the possible spatial-temporal coordinates for the images "OUTSIDE THE WINDOW" will constantly shift: "SPRUCES AND / JUNIPERS UNDER SNOW" (page #123) are unlikely to be found in the same location as "PEACOCKS STRUTTING / ON A TURF GREEN" (page #124) or "MEN AND WOMEN IN / EVENING DRESS" (page #125) (figure 4.62).

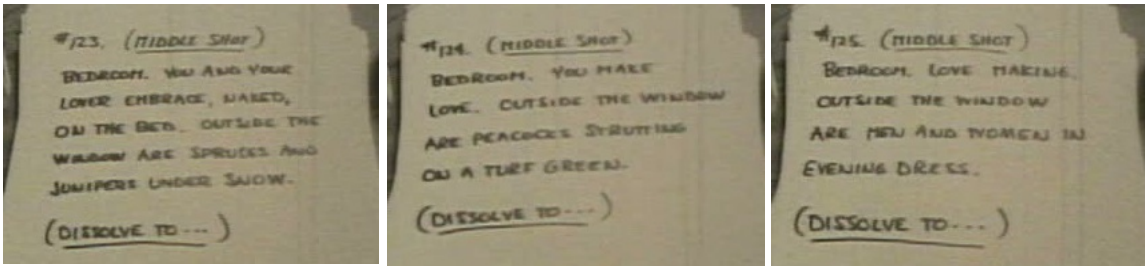


Fig. 4.62. *Poetic Justice* (fragment enlargements): spatial-temporal shifts.

Drastic changes of scale are to be expected, as the contrast between "RINGS OF SATURN, / LOOMING" (page #132) and "RED AND WHITE CORPUSCLES" (page #143) illustrates. The distance between the window and the objects or figures outside is also indeterminable. Frampton points out that it is impossible to tell, for example, whether the "INVERTED ENAMEL / SAUCEPAN" (page #157) is located on the window sill or "a hundred yards away" and explains that in the verbal environment, the "difference between the spatial close-up and the psychological close-up is easy to sustain as a tension in language because the declarative sentence itself separates the figure from the ground. It's not so easy to sustain an ambiguity of that type in film." Similarly, verbal descriptions permit indeterminacy in numerical quantities, as in "SIX OR SEVEN / ZEBRAS, GRAZING" (page #155), whereas in the photograph, "one can always count the zebras" (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 163).

The descriptions of hypnagogic images often explicitly state or suggest colors, making this tableau the most colorful section of this black-and-white-film. Invoking different representatives of flora and fauna enables Frampton to introduce a whole array of hues, tints, and shades without limiting himself to naming only select colors: peacocks, hyenas, pigeons, daisies and mallows, parrotfish, zebras, and other creatures and plants crowd the space "OUTSIDE THE WINDOW." The colors that Frampton explicitly names are green, red, white, silver, lavender, and blue. Three of these—red, green, and blue—are known as "additive primary colors" in color light theory: the field where they overlap in equal quantities is white, and almost any color can be produced when different intensities of the three are mixed. First demonstrated by James Clerk Maxwell in the middle of the nineteenth century, this underlying principle of mixing light, often called the RGB mode,

has been instrumental in the development of color photography and cinematography.[111]

Frampton was well familiar with color light theory[112] and considered that all filmmakers owe a considerable debt to Maxwell,[113] whom he called "the Father of the Analytical Theory of Color" (Snow, "Hollis Frampton" 7). A subtle reference to Maxwell is integrated in the third tableau of *Poetic Justice* as well: "RINGS OF SATURN, / LOOMING" points to Maxwell's work "On the Stability of the Motion of Saturn's Rings," which in 1856 received the Adams Prize "for the best Essay on some subject of Pure Mathematics, Astronomy, or other branch of Natural Philosophy" at the University of Cambridge (Maxwell 288). Thus, Frampton's incorporation of *red*, *blue*, *green*, and *white* into the third tableau serves as a reminder of the physical nature of light and as an extended metonymy for film, which we usually watch projected on a white screen. In his lecture on the nature of cinema, Frampton states: "Our rectangle of white light is eternal. . . . it seems that a film is, first, a confined space, at which you and I . . . are staring. It is only a rectangle of white light. But it is all films. We can never see *more* within our rectangle, only *less*" (*On the Camera Arts* 125). In *Poetic Justice*, we see these colors outside the bedroom window, which can also stand for the movie screen. Silver, another color Frampton explicitly names, is also associated with the filmmaking process

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[111] The primary colors in pigment mixtures are red, yellow, and blue. For descriptions of color light theory and the differences between mixing light and mixing pigments, see, for example, P. Ball 40-41, where Maxwell's contributions are also discussed, and Begleiter 35-36.

[112] Frampton's knowledge of additive and subtractive primaries is evident, for example, in his "Notes on *Zorns Lemma*" (60).

[113] Frampton entitled one of his films *Maxwell's Demon* (1968).

because film emulsion contains silver halide crystals.[114]

The importance of natural and physical sciences to the third tableau is underscored through the images that few people, other than specialists in the related fields, are likely to see when falling asleep or to be able to visualize when sitting in a movie theater staring at the screen with handwritten pages on it: "AN AUTOMATIC / TURRET LATHE IN / OPERATION" (page #129); "A DISPLAY OF / OPHTHALMOSCOPES" (page #135); "SMOKING INGOTS OF / REFINED COBALT" (page #145); "WALLS AND TURRETS / OF OBSIDIAN" (page #148); "A SPINNING BRASS / ANEMOMETER" (page #153); "CRYSTALS OF PURE / NICOTINE" (page #165); "A BLUE ARC STRUCK / BETWEEN ELECTRODES" (page #173); "STALAGMITES OF / TINTED PARAFFIN" (page #174). At the same time, the inclusion of such phrases encourages a wilder play of imagination.

When one is not sure what a physical object verbally labeled via a noun looks like, one can, often subconsciously, resort to a variety of strategies. A visual image can arise on the basis of associational links that derive from the descriptors of the noun or the semantic structure of the word. For example, even if one does not know what an anemometer is, reading the phrase "A SPINNING BRASS / ANEMOMETER" can still give rise to a generic image of an instrument in motion. One's attention can also focus on the meanings and repercussions of the words that surround difficult-to-visualize verbal descriptions in an attempt to establish a connection. In the third tableau, the text on all but the initial two pages and the last one begins with the words "BEDROOM. LOVE MAKING."

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[114] Frampton mentions silver halide crystals when comparing the thermodynamic procedures of film and video: "Photons impress upon the random delirium of silver halide crystals in the film emulsion an illusion of order; electrons warp the ordered video raster, determinate as a crystal lattice, into an illusion of delirium" (*On the Camera Arts* 262).

It is natural then to assume, if one knows a little about film language and, specifically, about Eisenstein's "intellectual montage" (*Film Form* 82-83), that the descriptions of the physical objects and life forms, in motion or at a moment of rest, as seen "OUTSIDE THE WINDOW," shed metaphorical light on the erotic encounter in the "BEDROOM."

To convey the importance of the concept of montage to the third tableau, Frampton includes oblique references to at least two famous scenes in Eisenstein's films. In the context of the tableau, "PEACOCKS STRUTTING" on the second page evokes one of the most widely known instances of intellectual montage—the cross-cutting between the strutting Kerensky and the mechanical peacock in *Oktiabr'* [*October*] (1927). The instruments and machines in motion, juxtaposed with "LOVE MAKING," remind one of the sexual implications of the cream separator sequence in *General'naia liniia* [*The General Line*] (1929), alternatively called *Staroe i novoe* [*The Old and the New*].[115]

Encountering a verbal description that is difficult to visualize, the viewer can also momentarily abandon the imaginary world of the second/third order diegesis and

[115] In 1971, Frampton called cinema "the Last Machine . . . the last art that will reach the mind through the senses" (*On the Camera Arts* 136). His understanding of the cinema as a machine, "the largest and most ambitious single artifact yet conceived and made by man" (137), was partially shaped under the influence of Eisenstein's films and writings. Discussing the congruence of "a universal natural language" and "a perfect machine" in 1981, Frampton invokes Eisenstein: "Eisenstein was at once a gifted linguist and an artist haunted by the claims of language—and also, by training, an engineer. It seems possible to suggest that he glimpsed, however quickly, a project beyond the intellectual montage: the construction of a machine, very much like film, more efficient than language, that might, entering into direct competition with language, transcend its speed, abstraction, compactness, democracy, ambiguity, power—a project, moreover, whose ultimate promise was the constitution of an external critique of language itself. If such a thing were to be, a consequent celestial mechanics of the intellect might picture a body called Language, and a body called Film, in symmetrical orbit about each other, in perpetual and dialectical motion" (*On the Camera Arts* 169).

concentrate on the bibliographical code of the words, on the objects that surround the handwritten script in the first-order diegesis, and on the play of shade and light. Such induced shifts between mental visualization and visual perception upset the illusion of continuity and remind the spectators of their outsider position. Another important consequence of the viewer's inability to create an image that would match the given verbal description is a realization of the fact that there is a gulf between the verbal and the visual modes of signification, that there can never be an exact correspondence between the verbal label and the visual representation. A similar purpose is served in the third tableau when two different objects in need of visualization are described with the help of the same word (e.g., "TURRET LATHE" and "TURRETS / OF OBSIDIAN") or have the same root (e.g., "SEA ANEMONES" (page #167) and "ANEMOMETER").

By creating a filmic universe where images depend on words, Frampton enters into a conversation with Brakhage.[116] The first color that Frampton explicitly names in the third tableau, on the second page of the section (page #124, see figure 4.62), is green. This may seem strange given the RGB color mode that he invokes, where red comes first. The word *green*, however, directs the viewers to the beginning of *Metaphors on Vision*, which Frampton invokes, for instance, in his essay "Film in the House of the Word":

> "How many colors are there in a field of grass," Stan Brakhage asks in *Metaphors on Vision*, "for a crawling baby who has never heard of

[116] Even before Frampton received the first letter from Brakhage in November 1971, which led to more letters, phone calls, and meetings between the two (Nesthus 153), Frampton had become interested in and had expressed his admiration for Brakhage's works, as is evident from his letters to Odlin ("Letters from Framp" 45, 48, 49, 51). As Brakhage said on 19 February 1972, when introducing his film *The Act of Seeing with One's Eyes*, on which Frampton had written the program notes, "[c]onversation between us is literate and very intensive" ("How They Were Loving" 22).

> green?"[117] We are prompted to enter into complicity with the author: the word is anaesthetic, truncating the report of an innocent sensorium, depriving thought of that direct Vision of a universe of ideal forms that would pierce, sweep away, the clutter of denatured simulacra created by language; and so the infant, traversing the fulsome excellence of a Garden that somehow exists without the intervention of the Word, must see an infinitude of colors. (*On the Camera Arts* 166-67)

The third tableau of *Poetic Justice* is replete with various shades and hues of green and blue (since, as Frampton mentions, "there are natural languages that make no distinction between 'green' and 'blue'" (*On the Camera Arts* 167)), which outnumber any other color: "SPRUCES AND / JUNIPERS UNDER SNOW" (page #123, the first page of the third tableau); "PEACOCKS STRUTTING / ON A TURF GREEN" (page #124); "STRANDS AND / BLADDERS OF KELP" (page #127); "A CALM INLAND / SEA" (page #130); "A PARK OF BAY / TREES" (page #137); "SMOKING INGOTS OF / REFINED COBALT" (page #145); "A PEARL NECKLACE / ON GREEN BAIZE" (page #154); "FERN SHOOTS" (page #161); "A BLUE ARC STRUCK / BETWEEN ELECTRODES" (page #173). In response to Brakhage's claim that words prevent people from seeing "a world alive with incomprehensible objects and shimmering with an endless variety of movement and innumerable gradations of color" (*Essential Brakhage* 12), Frampton recreates a version of this world—entirely in our minds but prompted by the verbal descriptions of natural phenomena and of man-made objects the filmmaker provides.

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[117] Brakhage's exact wording is as such: "How many colors are there in a field of grass to the crawling baby unaware of 'Green'?" (*Essential Brakhage* 12).

Most curiously, when the color green is first explicitly named in the third tableau, Frampton chooses peacocks to strut "ON A TURF GREEN." According to Joen Wolfrom, male peacocks are the only creatures whose feathers have the type of structural coloring called *space lattice interference*, when "intense colors appear due to light waves being reflected, refracted, and diffracted through [an] intricate submicroscopic multi-layered lattice" (43-44). Thus, a play of light generates the coloring of the peacock's feathers—an apt metaphor for the play of light generating color in cinematography.[118]

The only other color, besides the ones already discussed, that Frampton names explicitly in the third tableau—lavender ("LAVENDER SEA / ANEMONES" on page #167)—has a bluish tinge in one of its most common variants and is often perceptually confused with other colors, among which is lilac. The word *lilac* brackets the first three tableaux of *Poetic Justice*: the first tableau, and thus the second-order diegetic narrative, begins with "A BLOOMING LILAC / IN EARLY LIGHT" (page #2); the third tableau finishes with "YOU AND YOUR / LOVER SLEEP. OUTSIDE / THE WINDOW IS A LILAC / IN BLOOM" (page #180). The diegetic narrative seems to have come full circle, a daily round of awakening and sleep. A lilac figures several more times in the first tableau and seems to appeal to a blue jay, which selects it as a landing point (page #13 and page #33) and which "YOU" tries to capture on film twice. Based on Frampton's foregrounding a lilac bush and a blue jay, Sitney suggests, quoting lines with "the lilac-scent" and "feathered guests" from "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," that *Poetic Justice* "opens with a tacit acknowledgment

[118] I have no direct evidence to prove that Frampton was familiar with the space lattice concept. However, just a year before *Poetic Justice* was completed, a New York publisher released Hilda Simon's book *The Splendor of Iridescence: Structural Colors in Animal World*, where she discusses the space lattice structure and its occurrence in peacocks (75-76, 123-125).

of Walt Whitman's domination over elegies for erotic and imaginative loss in the American tradition" (*Eyes* 112). A reference to *Leaves of Grass* is quite appropriate in the context of the film that makes the viewers visualize the "color" of grass.[119] It seems to me, however, that, more than to "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," Frampton alludes to "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," which has turned lilac in bloom into one of the most popular and variously interpreted symbols in American literature.[120] The enduring presence of the blooming lilac provides a grounding for *Poetic Justice* in the literary tradition and, at the same time, implies that the other images Frampton verbally introduces into the film are not just straightforward signifiers and that *Poetic Justice* cannot be confined to a single reading.

After the highly intense hypnagogic phase of the third tableau comes to a close with "YOU AND YOUR / LOVER SLEEP[ING]," the beginning of the fourth tableau reminds the viewers where their experience of the film started: "FIRST ROOM. SMALL / TABLE BY OPEN / WINDOW" (page #182). The first tableau seems to be replayed, with variation, when we read "MY HAND PLACES / A STACK OF PHOTOGRAPHS / UPON A TABLE" (page #183), "YOUR HANDS LIFT A / STACK OF PHOTOGRAPHS" (page #186), and "YOUR LOVER'S HANDS, / SHUFFLING A STACK OF / PHOTOGRAPHS" (page #189). The syntactic structures and the semantic filling of the text on these pages refer the viewers to "MY HAND PLACES A / COLOR PHOTOGRAPH / OF YOUR FACE ON / A TABLE" (page #7), "YOUR

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[119] MacDonald finds the third tableau of *Poetic Justice* to be closely related in form to "catalog poems like Whitman's *Song of Myself*, no. 6 ("What Is the Grass?"), and Wallace Stevens's 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird'" ("Poetry" 11).

[120] Among many sources discussing the symbolism of "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," see, for example, K. Burke.

HANDS PICK UP / PHOTOGRAPHS . . .” (page #22), and “YOUR LOVER'S HAND, / SHIFTING A FEW FRAGMENTS” (page #52). The three characters are back in place, performing actions that we have already seen them do. This is not a *déjà vu*, however, as the synonymous, paradigmatic variations indicate. Rather, it is more like a dream where the memories are usually processed into a metamorphosed recreation of the lived reality.

Unlike in the first tableau, the “YOU” and “YOUR LOVER” characters are together in the same diegetic environment. To describe their reactions to photographs, Frampton uses the structures identical to those in the first tableau (page #23 and page #59), but instead of frowning at the sight of photographs, the characters smile (“#187 (CLOSE-UP) / “YOUR LOVER'S FACE, / SMILING” and “#190 (CLOSE-UP) / YOUR FACE, SMILING”). The moment, however, “YOU RAISE A CAMERA / TO FILM YOUR LOVER'S / FACE” (page #192), the earlier opposition between cinema and photography reappears: “A PHOTOGRAPH IS RAISED / TO HIDE YOUR LOVER'S / FACE” (page #193). The rest of the tableau, with the exception of the last page of the script, incorporates different-order diegetic spaces in each shot. Just as “MY HAND [WAS] HOLDING A STILL PHOTOGRAPH” in the second tableau, “YOUR LOVER'S HAND IS / HOLDING A STILL PHOTO- / GRAPH” in the fourth. Yet, whereas the photographs in the second tableau were always “OF THE SAME SCENE,” the images in the fourth tableau change.

The pattern of these changes reinforces the characters' ambiguous identities, which seem to morph into each other. Frampton describes the fourth tableau as “a series of ambivalent postures in which 'oneself' or 'You and' are perfectly interchangeable, a kind of dream” (Gidal, “Interview” 112). The first photograph “YOUR LOVER'S HAND IS / HOLDING”—“OF YOURSELVES, / MAKING LOVE” (page #194)—refers the viewers to the voyeuristic intrusion of the “I” character into the love making scene in the penultimate

shot of the third tableau: "#179 (MIDDLE SHOT) / BEDROOM. LOVE MAKING. / OUTSIDE THE WINDOW / I AM AIMING A / CAMERA." The photographs that we see next suggest that the union in flesh must have resulted in a merger of personalities—well, at least in a dream that follows the union of flesh. Starting with page #195, "YOUR LOVER'S HAND IS / HOLDING" photographs that alternately feature "YOUR LOVER" and "YOURSELF" in identical situations: "EMBRACED BY A STRANGER," "ASTRIDE A MARE," "POSED BEFORE A MONUMENT," "STRIKING A MATCH," "DIVING IN CLEAR WATER," and so on. Many of these descriptions can be found in any dictionary of dreams and have a variety of interpretations. It is unlikely that Frampton expected the viewers to be familiar with the symbolic values of these "dreams." Rather, he wanted the fourth tableau to be perceived as a dream (who will fail to connect "FALLING FROM A HEIGHT" (pages #207 and 208) to a state of dreaming?), where no narrative conventions hold and where subjectivity is in flux.[121] The identity shifts materialize most vividly in the photographs "OF YOUR LOVER, / DRESSED IN YOUR CLOTHES" (page #231) and "OF YOURSELF, / DRESSED IN YOUR LOVER'S / CLOTHES" (page #232).

The "I" character reappears in the film towards the end of the fourth tableau, after photographs present "YOUR LOVER" and "YOURSELF" "ASLEEP" (pages #233 and #244). In a reversal of the established role of "I" as an image maker, in this dream within a dream the character is a subject in "A STILL PHOTO- / GRAPH OF YOURSELF, YOUR / LOVER AND ME ENJOYING / A PICNIC ON THE GRASS" (page #235) and, subsequently, the focus of the camera's eye in the photographs "OF MYSELF, FILMING / YOU AND YOUR LOVER"

[121] For a detailed discussion of the "formations of subjectivity and sexual identity" in the film, see Weiss, "*Poetic Justice*."

(page #236), "OF MY HAND, / WRITING THIS TEXT" (page #237), "OF MYSELF, / FILMING THESE PAGES" (page #238), and "OF MY OWN FACE" (page #239). What Frampton called "a kind of floating 'I,' a hypothetical filmmaker who is just as ambiguous a person in the film as the other two people" ("Hollis Frampton at Binghamton University") finally seems to become conflated with the real filmmaker, who wrote this text and filmed these pages that we have been reading while watching *Poetic Justice*. Frampton, however, destroys this momentary delusion, encouraged by the self-reflexive multimediality, when the last page of the script (#240 (CLOSE-UP) / MY HAND COVERS A / STILL PHOTOGRAPH OF / MY OWN FACE.") is covered with an empty rubber glove (see figure 4.53).

The film, thus, ends in the first-order diegetic space, where it began. Frampton felt the need to resolve the tension of *Poetic Justice* with something physical, of the same order as the cactus and the coffee cup. His own hand, however, "would have busted the bubble" of the universe that has been completely imaginary. This is how Frampton accounts for the chosen substitution:

> However you may have felt about this, you really just have been looking at these successive pieces of paper placed on a table. I would have felt it was hokey if I really had finally broken through, as if I really had—like some kind of *deus ex machina* in the flesh—actually reached with my hand into this universe with something that didn't belong in it. The idea of the glove was that that was the kind of hand that belonged in that universe. ("Hollis Frampton at Binghamton University")

Vestiges of the real filmmaker are still self-reflexively incorporated into the film. At least four times (one in the third tableau and three in the fourth) the viewer can detect a very brief movement of the hand removed from the lens between the contiguous shots

(figure 4.63):



Fig. 4.63. *Poetic Justice*: the hand of "A STRANGER" intervening between the shots.

Traces of Frampton's arranging the pages on the table are visible in seven consecutive shots where edges of sheets of paper occupy the upper right-hand corner of the frame. To draw the viewer's attention to a change in scenery, Frampton even includes two different shots with page #225: one in the format sustained throughout the film, and the other with another sheet peeking out (figure 4.64). In mainstream cinema, a retake usually replaces, not supplements, the inadequate original. In *Poetic Justice*, the survival of the two versions not only highlights the process of filmmaking but also underscores a radical shift in creative interest—from the norm to the aberration.

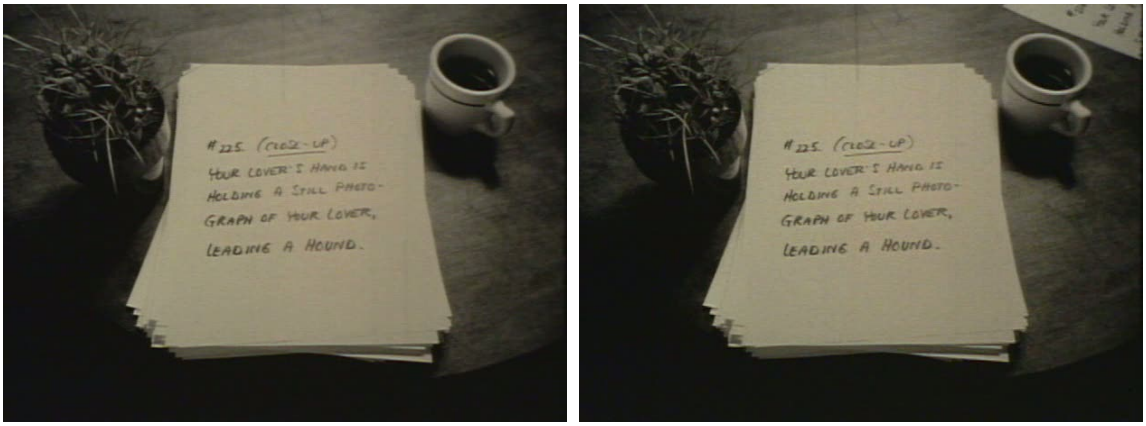


Fig. 4.64. *Poetic Justice*: page #225—the retake reversing conventional rules.

That the aberrations in *Poetic Justice* are intentional is evident from Frampton's mentioning "flares, a couple of repetitions" (Gidal, "Interview" 113) and "those few little bits of business in the upper right margin of the frame and the withdrawing of the hand

from the lens" (MacDonald, "Interview with Hollis Frampton" 162). These aberrations introduce an unorthodox movement into the film, countering the still life of the script pages and the frozenness of still photographs, invoked so frequently in the tableaux. The very meaning of the word *tableau*, which is selected to name the segmenting titles of the four parts of the film, suggests motionlessness. As Frampton once said, when discussing the truthfulness of photographs, "[t]ime seems, sometimes, to stop, to be suspended in tableaux disjunct from change and flux" (*On the Camera Arts* 30). Ironically, the tableaux in the film move—sequentially and simultaneously, inside and across the frames—as a corroboration of Frampton's statement that a "still photograph is simply an isolated frame taken out of the infinite cinema" (*On the Camera Arts* 134). And this is perhaps the poetic justice of *Poetic Justice*.

Frampton originally envisioned *Poetic Justice* to be presented like silent-era intertitles, "graphic type on the frame," but realized that he wanted the film "to have some kind of real substance, and then to generate at least a suspicion, a kind of paradoxical suspicion, that something or other—like what seems to be delineated in the imaginary movie—had taken place, that there is some kind of basis in reality for this imagination" ("Hollis Frampton at Binghamton University"). Frampton's decision in favor of a multimedial environment for *Poetic Justice* is evidence for the fact that in his films, words cannot be viewed apart from the visual images with which they share, simultaneously or sequentially, the screen.

Frampton projects words onto the silent screen to raise questions about the nature of film and its ontological relationships with other arts, to expose the sociopolitical ramifications of language as the domineering mode of communication, and to challenge spectatorial passivity, when, as he phrases it, "you're sitting at the table and roast beef is

falling straight into your mouth and down into your stomach" (Gidal, "Interview" 106). Frampton investigates language as a system of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, and his films that dwell in language are often highly ordered, vertically and horizontally, with intentional aberrations. Frampton's screen words not only establish intertextual links with other films and works of literature but also point to scientific discoveries and physical phenomena. The viewer's perception and conceptualization of Frampton's creations are influenced by verbal language that takes the form of paratextual elements, superimposed titles, optically reversed intertitles, computerized text appearing before our eyes, delayed subtitles, words integrated into the diegesis of the film and acting as substitutes for visual narratives.

CONCLUDING NOTE: THE COMEBACK OF SILENT LANGUAGE

In Hollywood films of the post-World-War-II era, screen words were mostly diegetic and belonged to the category of integrated verbal elements, with the exception of title sequences and end credits. Written language—in all its manifestations—made a dramatic comeback in the American avant-garde starting in the sixties, when intense discourses on language as power and on the signifying modes of cinema permeated artistic circles. Even filmmakers who were most articulate about the deleterious effects of language, the stance epitomized by Brakhage, employed screen words in their silent films for a variety of purposes. Other filmmakers, like Frampton, preferred to interrogate language directly and to tap into its potential to expand the frames of cinema by making words the central players in the silent drama.

Intentionally silent films of the American avant-garde and its associates highlight collaborations and tensions between words and images and investigate the roles verbal

language plays in our perception of and integration into the world of conventions and signs. Bruce Baillie, John Baldessari, Wallace Berman, Manuel DeLanda, Su Friedrich, Takahiko Iimura, James Irwin, Larry Jordan, Charles Lane, Marie Menken, Peter Rose, Paul Sharits, Phil Solomon—all these filmmakers allowed language in when exploring the potentialities of silent film in the sound era. Future detailed analyses of screen words in their films will hopefully profit from the investigative strategies applied in my exegesis of written language in Brakhage's and Frampton's films.

CONCLUSION

Screen Words: Functional Typology

In fact, there can be no conclusion to the study of screen words. Careful viewings of other films are sure to provide additional insights into what written language can achieve in the cinematic medium. Rehearsing all the eureka moments I have experienced while watching the films from a verbal angle and while articulating my findings in the chapters will hardly benefit the readers. What I will provide here instead is a schematic summary of functions that various kinds of screen words perform—an expanded version of the provisional typologies developed in the second chapter and elaborated on after detailed analyses of the individual films in the chapters devoted to silent American films.

FUNCTIONS OF TITLE SEQUENCES AND END CREDITS:

1. description of the diegetic world (spatial-temporal coordinates; thematic introduction; character introduction; assigning prominence to specific characters; . . .)
2. architextual (genre) indication
3. authorial signature
4. ownership statement
5. celebrity index
6. acknowledgment of outside influences and control (dedication; legal protection; references to censorship and sponsorship)
7. temptation (in title sequences) and promotion (in end credits)
8. self-reflexivity (highlighting cinematic production; disruption of filmic conventions; direct address to the audience; . . .)

SHARED FUNCTIONS OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF INTERTITLES:

1. wielding power and influence
2. enforcing silent discipline through submission to authoritative text
3. education and cultural uplift
4. commercial gains through appealing to more educated audiences and to vernacular speakers
5. patriotism and propaganda
6. perceptual and psychological breaks
7. (in sound cinema) metatextual commentary on film practices and reference to history of cinema
8. warding off censors as a counterbalance to visual innuendo

FUNCTIONS OF NON-DIEGETIC INTERTITLES:

I. expository type

1. orientation in the spatial-temporal continuum (sometimes with characterization of the times and mores) vs. intentional disorientation and confusion
2. continuity and compression
3. character introduction, sometimes evaluatively
4. location introduction, sometimes evaluatively
5. theme introduction
6. intertextual reference to a familiar narrative to serve as background knowledge of the story
7. narrative summary

8. literary chapter headings
9. narrative guide (hinting at a conflict and future developments; raising expectations; building suspense; . . .)
10. evaluative/interpretative commentary and editorializing
11. point-of-view motivations
12. paraphrased dialogue, sometimes revealing the hierarchy of power and the characters' emotional states

II. poetic type

1. adaptations of poems
2. quotations from poems to establish the mood
3. metaphorical language of generalizations outside the diegesis
4. lyrical accompaniment to visual imagery

III. interlocutionary type

1. direct address to the audience
2. humorous psychological breaks
3. carrier of emotion

IV. transtextual type

1. providing interpretive clues
2. invoking authoritative voice
3. according cultural dignity
4. shattering the diegesis and reminding the viewers that they are watching a film
5. establishing interart connections
6. metatextual commentary

FUNCTIONS OF SEMI-DIEGETIC INTERTITLES:

1. vernacular and phenomenological realism
2. revealing collective desires, pleas, etc
3. revealing the characters' motivations and conscious interiors
4. means of individuation and characterization
5. identifying central characters and stressing power relations
6. explaining twists in narrative development
7. signaling key moments of conflict
8. manipulating temporal relations
9. manipulating the audience into making judgments
10. approximating the sonic qualities of speech
11. introducing sound and incorporating shared cultural experience through songs

FUNCTIONS OF INTEGRATED VERBAL ELEMENTS (AND DIEGETIC INTERTITLES):

I. if the audience is an immediate addressee

1. the effect of realism (also diegetic intertitles)
2. documentary quality and phenomenological truth of language pervasiveness
3. character and location identification (also diegetic intertitles)
4. means of characterization, especially if directional or warning signs are disregarded
5. orienting signs
6. temporal orientation (also diegetic intertitles)

7. explaining and commenting on the narrative situation (also diegetic intertitles)
8. signs as stand-ins for people and entities
9. presenting an artificial intelligence character's thinking process
10. providing an ideological angle
11. advertising and product placement (also diegetic intertitles)
12. differentiating between public space and private areas
13. substitute for sound (also diegetic intertitles)
14. symbolic readings of partially visible or inverted inscriptions
15. playing with illusory depth and showcasing intermediality
16. playing with the concept of reference
17. literalizing metaphoric language
18. infusing humor
19. functioning as a motto
20. contextual connotations through radiant mediality
21. self-referential jokes (also diegetic intertitles)
22. foregrounding the act of storytelling
23. manifestation of a creative impulse

II. if a character is an addressee

1. pushing the story forward (also diegetic intertitles)
2. revealing the character's condition (also diegetic intertitles)
3. providing direct access to the character's inner world through letters
4. metaphorical interpretations and intertextual references of book covers and pages (also diegetic intertitles)

5. dramatic irony (also diegetic intertitles)
6. holding the viewers in suspense by withholding information available to the character (also diegetic intertitles)
7. illustrating the power of the written word
8. tampering with words as a means of forecasting the demise of the associated entity

III. if the audience witnesses the process of reading without seeing the content

1. a sign of the character's intellectualism or unwillingness to communicate
2. public acts of reading as a sign of urban community
3. betraying the real intention or condition of the “reader” (spying, sleeping, etc)

FUNCTIONS OF SUBTITLES IN NON-FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILMS:

1. signaling foreignness
2. imitating voice modulations
3. foregrounding crucial conflicts
4. reclaiming the audience's attention through a change in the bibliographical code
5. undermining the belief in easy translatability of cultural experiences
6. metatextual commentary
7. elevating dialect and slang to the level of language
8. giving legitimacy to concocted language
9. symbolizing a longing for authentic communication
10. endowing animals or objects with intelligence

FUNCTIONS OF WORDS WHEN THE ONLY IMAGES ON THE SCREEN:

1. questioning the nature of the cinematic sign and destroying the indexicality of cinema
2. metaphorically exploring structural units of film language
3. severing the perceptual link between physical reality and verbal reference
4. foregrounding the properties of cinema
5. highlighting the unmotivated connection between signifier and signified
6. destroying expectations of a coherent narrative
7. questioning the linearity and transparency of verbal communication
8. showcasing the gulf between oral and written speech
9. highlighting the bibliographical code as a meaning-making aspect
10. visually representing the entropy of language
11. substituting for visual imagery
12. projecting a direct message
13. challenging the parameters of the normal reading process
14. distorting the spatial-temporal continuum
15. making fun of censorship
16. providing transtextual links and commentary

In summary of this conclusion, if a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose, then language is language is language is language, especially if it performs the dual role of linguistic units and filmic elements.

GLOSSARY

actualities: An early film genre documenting events as they happen, with no explicit commentary.

allographic paratext: A non-authorial blurb, preface, or epilogue that is included in the **paratextual** space and provides context within which the text proper was created.

architextuality: Genre assignation; a type of **transtextuality**.

bibliographical code: Non-linguistic, often sociopolitical meanings arising from the material arrangement of the text within the frame and overall in the film; the material encoding of the **linguistic code**.

concluding intertitle: An **intertitle** that appears after the last diegetic visual shot.

contiguous mediality: An interaction between words and images located in adjacent shots of a filmic text.

diegetic intertitle: A verbal insert that is supposedly created in the film's diegesis and is wedged in between live-action shots.

double intertitle: An **intertitle** that presents two kinds of information, usually separated by a horizontal bar—most often, two non-diegetic cues that perform separate functions or, as a **hybrid intertitle**, a combination of exposition and dialogue.

flares: occurrences of light striking the film directly; most often used as a self-reflexive device.

hybrid intertitle: An **intertitle** that combines a semi-diegetic line and non-diegetic exposition.

hybrid paratextual intertitle: A **paratextual intertitle** that combines a character-actor presentation and exposition or a semi-diegetic line.

hypertextuality: A relationship between a given text, a *hypertext*, and an earlier text, appropriated through transformation or imitation, a *hypotext*; the very existence of the hypertext stems from the hypotext; a type of **transtextuality**.

intermediality: A relationship between words and images within one work in which elements constitute an inseparable whole, a syncretic fusion of the verbal and the visual.

intertextuality: The presence of one text within another as a quote or allusion; a type of **transtextuality**.

intertitle: An embedded text that is not part of the title sequence or end credits and is not integrated into a diegetic visual shot; when superimposed over diegetic images, it is perceived as belonging to a separate non-diegetic plane.

intraframe mediality: A verbal-visual interaction within one shot of a filmic text.

introductory intertitle: An **intertitle** that appears before the first diegetic visual shot.

linguistic code: The language-based, semantic meaning of the verbal text.

mediality: An interaction between words and images; four types: **transmediality**, **multimediality**, **mixed-mediality**, and **intermediality**.

metatextuality: A critical commentary on another text, not necessarily named; a self-reflexive commentary on a body of texts or on artistic practices; a type of **transtextuality**.

mixed-mediality: A relationship between words and images within one work in which the verbal and visual signs are easily distinguishable but their coherence as individual entities is disrupted because the consolidated meaning stems from an opposition between words and images.

multimediality: A relationship between words and images within one work in which verbal and visual elements retain their distinctive features and individual coherence, acting as supplements to or descriptors of each other.

non-diegetic intertitle: An **intertitle** that incorporates text from outside the diegesis representing the voice of the "author" or omniscient narrator.

paratextual intertitle: An **intertitle** that lists the names of the actors and the characters whom they are playing.

paratextuality: Fringes of the text proper, the non-diegetic frame that ensures the text's presence in the world; a type of **transtextuality**.

primed verbal image: A pictorial image whose specific features are highlighted via accompanying words.

radiant mediality: An interaction between words and images scattered throughout a filmic text, often giving rise to symbolic interpretations.

semi-diegetic intertitle: An **intertitle** where the diegetic content of characters' utterances or thoughts is presented in the non-diegetic form of title cards or speech balloons.

split intertitle: An **intertitle** whose unified content is distributed onto several title cards, interspersed with visual images.

titrologie: A study of the title.

transmediality: A relationship between two texts that belong to different media.

transtextuality: All relationships, explicit or implicit, between a given text and other texts; five types: **intertextuality**, **paratextuality**, **metatextuality**, **architextuality**, and **hypertextuality**.

verbal image: A pictorial image that suggests words or strings of words that could literally and metaphorically describe the depicted situation.

FILMOGRAPHY

The filmography excludes the films referenced by others that I have not viewed myself and the ones used as examples of different types of film titles. The *silent* or *sound* subdivision refers to the original release of the film. For consistency, the entries list directors only; the directors' names are spelled in accordance with the original title shots or title sequences if such survive. The early and avant-garde filmmakers who were solely or collaboratively responsible for the film are also listed as *directors*. When the director's name is unknown, the production company is listed. The entries include the year of copyright (based on the data provided by the Library of Congress Copyright Office, in the cases of American films) or, if not available, the year of original release. The media sources for the films are indicated to clarify which version(s) I have studied and to help the readers locate the films more easily. Several versions of a film are mentioned only if there are differences and if I have viewed all of them. The DVD collections from which several films have been included in the filmography are listed as a separate section.

Both “silent films” and “sound films” sections are arranged alphabetically by the title. Films in Russian are alphabetized by their transliterated titles. When the referenced version of the Russian film does not contain English subtitles, the original Russian title is indicated in square brackets. Instead, an English translation is included in square brackets when the referenced version of a film in Russian is subtitled in English. Films in other languages are alphabetized by their original titles, with an English translation included in square brackets if the version viewed is subtitled. If the referenced version of a film that was originally released in a foreign language incorporates only English-language intertitles and credits, the film is alphabetized by its title in English, with the original title included in square brackets.

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Anémic cinéma. Dir. Marcel Duchamp. 1926. *Unseen Cinema.* Disk 3.

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Backstairs [*Hintertreppe*]. Dir. Leopold Jessner and Paul Leni. 1921. *Ladies of the German Cinema: Sappho / Backstairs.* Grapevine, 2009. DVD.

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Dog Factory. Dir. Edwin S. Porter. 1904. *Treasures.* Disk 2.

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