L I T E R A T U R O Z N A W S T W O

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FROM FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATIONS
TO METAPHORIC DEFORMATIONS: THE ICONIC TEXT LAYOUT IN
CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVE FICTION IN ENGLISH[*]

A b s t r a c t. This essay seeks to analyse semiotisation of layout in narrative fiction and to demonstrate that various configurations of graphemes can be correlated with major types of iconicity distinguished in semiotic studies. The figurative typographic representation of the eponymous shark in Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* is as an instance of imagic icon, reflecting its peculiar ontological status. The parallel columns exploited in B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo* can be interpreted as a diagrammatic representation of processes happening simultaneously on the level of the presented world. Finally, in Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* the abundance of diverse typographic deformations, which vary from ostentatiously iconic to purely arbitrarily forms, constitutes a complex iconic metaphor of the creative process. Significantly, while the diagrammatic arrangement employed in *Albert Angelo* conveys its meaning via the typographic means only, the other two novels rely on the inevitable interplay between iconic and symbolic modes of signification.

The category of iconicity recurs in all the major studies of innovative page layout in narrative fiction (cf. MALMGREN 45, LEVENSTON 3, and MCHALE 184). Significantly, it is usually taken for granted, as it were, and simply defined, to quote Carl Darryl Malmgren, as "a correspondence of resemblance between the signifier and the signified" (45) without taking into consideration any taxonomy of iconic signs. Furthermore, this basic definition only partially accounts for semiotisation of layout in narrative fiction, as in the majority of cases this process involves not only "a palpable corres-

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pondence between the signifying and the signified reality" (MALMGREN 45) but also a complex interplay between the material and the verbal dimensions of a particular text. The aim of my paper is to fill in these lacunae in research on the semiotic potential of layout. Taking as my tutor texts three typographically innovative novels – Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*, B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo* and Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* – I will attempt to assess to what extent distinct forms of spatial arrangement of graphemes they represent can be correlated with major types of iconicity distinguished by Charles Sanders Peirce and to what degree the reader's perception of the iconic meaning is dependent upon the verbal clues.

Peirce originally defines the icon as "a sign which stands for something merely because it resembles it" (CP 3.362);[1] however, similarity, as Winfried Nöth points out, is not the only criterion of iconicity for Peirce: he distinguishes between "the genuine icon or pure icon as the ideal and at the same time unattainable borderline case of iconicity and the actually iconic sign, which he calls hypoicon" (NÖTH 19). The pure icon "does not draw any distinction between itself and its object" (CP 5.74); it is thus "an auto-referential or self-representing sign" (NÖTH 19). The hypoicon, by contrast, "represent[s] its object mainly by its similarity" (CP 2.276). Consequently, Nöth argues, "there is […] a scale of iconicity from hypoiconicity to pure iconicity, ranging from hypoicons that share only few features with their objects to genuine icons, which are no longer different from their objects, but at the end of this scale, the genuine icon is a mere abstraction" (NÖTH 19).

Peirce divides hypoicons into three broad classes: images, diagrams and metaphors. As defined by Peirce, images "partake of simple qualities" (CP 2.277); in other words, "the sign evinces an immediately perceptible similarity to its object of reference" (NÖTH 21). Diagrams, in turn, "represent the relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts;" and, finally, metaphors "represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else" (CP 2.277), representamen being Peirce's term for the form which the sign takes.[2] It would transpire that various types of typographic

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[1] In quoting from Peirce's *Collected Papers* I follow the standard method of referencing in Peirce studies, in which CP stands for *Collected Papers* and reference is made to the volume and the paragraph.

[2] This rough division has been variously interpreted and modified in later semiotic studies. While the distinction between imagic and diagrammatic iconicity is generally retained (cf. NÄNNY AND FISCHER, 6), the category of metaphor is often either subsumed under the concept of

arrangement observable in narrative fiction can be classified along the axis extending from imagic to metaphoric iconicity: typographic figurative representations occurring in *The Raw Shark Texts* approach the imagic pole, the parallel columns Johnson exploits in *Albert Angelo* are amenable to being interpreted in diagrammatic terms, while the "typographic overkill" of *Double or Nothing* can only be construed in metaphoric terms. Obviously, in each of these novels iconicity of the layout rests on its being a visual form constituted by a certain arrangement of graphic signs, which simultaneously function as arbitrary, symbolic *sensu* Peirce, linguistic signs. Thus, semiotisation of the layout inevitably involves the interplay between the meaning(s) conveyed via iconic and symbolic, visual and verbal means.[3]

As mentioned above, the figurative representation of the eponymous shark, consisting of graphemes arranged into a shark-like shape and recurring in various forms throughout Steven Hall's debut novel *The Raw Shark Texts* can be construed as an instance of imagic icon,[4] whose meaning rests on direct resemblance to what it signifies. However, while in the case of such typical imagic icons as figurative sculptures or onomatopoeic words, the meaning of the sign resides primarily in its visual or auditory realisation, the reader's recognition of what the peculiar configuration of graphemes is supposed to imitate in *The Raw Shark Texts* is guided by the explicit clues provided in the verbal sections, Hall relying on double (verbal and visual) coding in his representation of this element of the storyworld.

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diagram or simply avoided (cf. ELLESTRÖM, 81). This reduction of Peirce's original model to the binary distinction between broad categories of imagic and diagrammatic iconicity represents one extreme in research on iconicity; the other end of the scale, so to speak, is represented by a model recently proposed by Lars Elleström, who extends the original Peircean tripartite classification – in, as he drily observes, a rather un-Peircean manner — into a four-component scale by suggesting that the category of diagram, denoting for him "a relational *icon*," could be divided into strong and weak diagrams, occurring in-between images and metaphors in his model of iconicity.

[3] Naturally, the category of iconicity need not be applied only to the material dimension of the literary text, some scholars going so far as to suggest that iconicity constitutes the essential quality of literature as such. Jorgen Dines Johansen, for instance, argues that literature can be defined as "the kind of discourse which may iconically represent, i.e. imitate almost any other discourse" (52). This first degree iconicity is distinguished by Johansen from second degree iconicity, which relies for its effect on "the ways in which [literature] arranges its parts on different level of the text, whether it be the metrical structuring of stressed or unstressed syllables, some symmetrical organisation of plot, or binary or ternary thematic structures and their transformations in the text" (JOHANSEN 53). As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the iconicity thus understood can, for instance, be observed in narrative structures (see MAZIARCZYK).

[4] The term *icon* is usually employed in current research on iconicity as an "umbrella" term for all iconic signs, including those which, in strictly Peircean terms, should be labelled hypoicons.

The narrator of *The Raw Shark Texts* is a man named Eric Sanderson, who in the dramatic opening of the novel relates how he has regained consciousness after a blackout, whose cause is initially unspecified, only to discover that he has completely lost his memory. In his quest for self-identity he is guided by his former self – the First Eric Sanderson, who apparently has not only foreseen the onset of amnesia but has also taken some measures to protect the narrator, the Second Eric Sanderson, from its consequences as well as a possible recurrence. The novel suggests two possible explanations for the narrator's condition: a psychiatrist Dr Randle, whom the narrator starts seeing following the note left by his former self, believes that his amnesia is a reaction to a tragic death of his girlfriend in a diving accident; the First Eric Sanderson claims that he was attacked by a conceptual shark, which feeds on human memories and which will continue hunting the narrator until he completely loses his sense of identity.

As the narrative progression in *The Raw Shark Texts* is based on the principles of suspense and inexplicability, the latter explanation is provided only after the narrator's close encounter with the mysterious creature forces him to question the validity of Dr Randle's explanation. Significantly, it is in his representation of this event that he first incorporates visual resources into the so-far fairly conventional verbal homodiegetic narration. He gets the first glimpse of the shark on the dead TV screen: "there was something distant and alive in the depths of the white noise — a living glide of thoughts swimming forward, a moving body of concepts and half felt images" (HALL 57). These words are followed by a graphic device — a thin rectangular frame containing in its upper left hand area variously sized letters spelling the word "distance" grouped together in the manner suggesting some indistinctive shape. While the context suggests that the frame stands for the TV screen, the significance of the typographic arrangement it contains remains obscure at this point and becomes apparent only after the narrator switches back to the purely verbal and highly dramatic description of being violently attacked by something that has apparently burst out of the TV screen. The narrator's room suddenly dissolves and he finds himself fighting for his life in what feels to him like a close encounter with a shark:

> Something huge rushed fast in the water under my body, pulling me in a mini whirlpool twist of unravelling thought drag in its wake. The thing from the static. *Jesus*. I kicked faster, scrabbling against liquid, trying to pull up a solid thought of dry land in my mind. […] Coming up for air and coughing out: *shark*. The word coming in a tangle-breathed shudder and then me screaming:

help. Shark. Help me. Me screaming: *oh God oh God oh God* and kicking and thrashing and thrashing and screaming. (HALL 60)

The attack ends with the narrator losing consciousness. When he wakes up the following morning, the smashed furniture seems to confirm that what he experienced was not a hallucination but an actual event in the material world, so he decides to read the First Eric's letters that he started receiving shortly after his recovery. The very first letter he reads emphatically establishes the novel's major premise:

> The animal hunting you [the narrator] is a Ludovician. It is an example of one of the many species of purely conceptual fish which swim in the flows of human interaction and the tides of cause and effect. […] The Ludovician is a predator, a shark. It feeds on human memories and the intrinsic sense of self. Ludovicians are solitary, fiercely territorial and methodical hunters. A Ludovician might select an individual human being as its prey animal and pursue and feed on that individual over the course of years until that victim's memory and identity have been completely consumed. (HALL 64)

As can be seen, it is the verbal section that explicitly identifies the creature attacking the narrator as a shark and thus guides the reader's interpretation of typographic figurations that appear before and after the passages quoted above, for as might be expected, the shark continues hunting Eric, its intrusion into the material aspect of storyworld being always represented via the combination of verbal and visual resources.

In the majority of cases the graphic representation of a shark takes the form of a single typographic image, which consists of discursive fragments (words or sentence parts) arranged in the shape evoking the figure of the shark, their verbal meaning suggesting that they are scraps of Eric Sanderson's memories. These "typographic images" interrupt the verbal narration in the manner described above, their occurrence being coordinated with, and thus apparently dependant on, the verbal clues. A significant exception to this pattern is constituted by a sequence of pages included in the final sections of the novel representing the final confrontation with the Ludovician. In order to defeat the creature, Eric Sanderson has to enter the conceptual realm and start perceiving it as if it were the material one so that the hunt for the Ludovician becomes the hunt for a physically perceptible shark involving the use of a hunting boat sailing on the ocean etc. In the course of the hunt, ostentatiously modelled on the second half of Steven Spielberg's blockbuster *The Jaws*, the boat is hit by the shark and Eric falls into water.

At this point the verbal narration is suspended and gives way to a 40-pages-long visual representation of the shark slowly approaching Eric. The very first pages of this section are blank, which can be interpreted as an iconic representation of Eric's loss of consciousness or as an imagic icon of an empty sea. Then a grey, weakly coloured shark-like typographic form appears: its shape, size and location on the page change from page to page, so that the whole section becomes a flipbook representing the shark's movement. It is on these pages that the imagic typographic arrangement becomes an element of narration in its own right, no longer dependent on the verbal narration, with the illusion of the shark moving within the space of the page being achieved via the exploitation of the physicality of the book and the sequential ordering of pages it prescribes.

Even though verbal narration dominates in *The Raw Shark Texts*, typographic interruptions perform an important function in Hall's representation of its storyworld: they throw into sharp relief the shark's peculiar ontological status within the storyworld and foreground the novel's basic premise by transposing it to the material organisation of the text. As mentioned above, the shark is a conceptual fish which — as we learn from the First Eric Sanderson's letters and from the Second Eric's relation — lives in the abstract realm of human communications, memories, ideas etc. and yet is apparently capable of crossing the barrier between the conceptual and the material, not least because it comprises both aspects, as emphasised by the verbal descriptions, which ostentatiously mix concrete and abstract categories:

> Less than fifty yards behind us and keeping pace, ideas, thoughts, fragments, story shards, dreams, memories were blasting free of the grass in a high-speed spray. As I watched, the spray intensified. The concept of the grass itself began to lift and bow wave into a long tumbling V. At the crescent of the wave, something was coming up through the foam – a curved and rising signifier, a perfectly evolved idea fin. (HALL 160)

As this passage suggests, the intrusion of the Ludovician into the physical world of Eric Sanderson involves materialisation of abstract concepts, Hall's use of the term *signifier* suggesting that its peculiar ontological status could be theorised in Saussurean terms. In her interpretations of *The Raw Shark Texts* N. Katherine Hayles argues that in the Ludovician Hall dissolves the distinction between signifier and signified: "graphic and verbal representations of 'conceptual shark' depict it as formed through the collapse of signifier and signified into one another" (119). However, the application of Saus-

surean terms seems to offer only a partial theorisation of shark's mode of being. The Ludovician could perhaps be interpreted as the fusion of signifier and signified, though only on the level of the presented world (on the level of the text it can only be represented by means of signifiers), if it were described as mere materialisation of the concept of the shark within the storyworld. However, it is more than that: both verbal descriptions and graphic representations suggest that it is a fusion of the material form (that of the shark) and the conceptual content (dreams, ideas, memories, etc.) that are not directly related to each. By the same token, the typographic representations of the shark could perhaps be described as collapsing the signifier and the signified if they were tautological compositions in which the spatial arrangement of graphemes reflects the symbolic meaning they convey. However, as mentioned above, they go beyond this basic form of iconic typographic arrangement. In view of its pictorial quality Hall's "typographic shark" needs rather to be described as an iconic super-signifier (an image) composed of symbolic signifiers (words).

Hayles' suggestion that the typo-graphic representation of the shark fuses the signifier with the signified seems to stem from a general tendency to associate words with the abstract and images with the concrete. As W. J. T. Mitchell reminds us,

> the relationship between words and images reflects, within the realm of representation, signification, and communication, the relations we posit between symbols and the world, signs and their meanings. We imagine the gulf between words and images to be as wide as the one between words and things, between (in the largest sense) culture and nature. (43)

It is this frequently presumed gulf between words and images that Hall simultaneously subverts and exploits in various ways in his typographic figurations of the shark. On the one hand, composed of graphemes as they are, graphic representations of the shark undermine the distinction between words and images and thus reflect its peculiar morphology as it is presented in the verbal sections, which, as we have seen, describe it as having a flesh that looks like that of an actual shark and being composed of memories, concepts and ideas. On the other hand, the inclusion of the typographic representation of the shark coincides with the moments when it physically attacks Eric Sanderson. In other words, its becoming a palpable presence in his material world finds its reflection in the intrusion of the visual into the verbal representation.

In its use of graphemes as building blocks for a figurative representation *The Raw Shark Texts* transposes to the realm of narrative fiction the classic technique of visual poetry (cf. BOHN 23); B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo*, by contrast, employs a layout associated rather with prose: the division of the text into parallel columns. This split-text format ties in with diagrammatic iconicity: the spatial arrangement of blocks of graphemes indicates how strands of the text they are a material embodiment for are related to each other and thus functions as a diagram of the relation between the elements of narrative they verbally represent. Just as the "typographic shark" recurs throughout *The Raw Shark Texts*, the parallel columns occur only in two sections of *Albert Angelo*, which in its major part employs a more con-ventional layout, only occasionally interrupted by other innovative typo-graphic forms including the notorious holes cut in the middle of two sub-sequent pages. As in both double-column sections the same semiotic mecha-nisms operate, I will focus on Johnson's major exploitation of this format in his 33-pages-long depiction of a school lesson.

Significantly, this section of *Albert Angelo* opens *in medias res* with what appears to be a long passage taken directly from some book on architecture, its status of quotation signalled by the appropriate punctuation mark: "*'2. The Development of the Gothic Style Seen as an Immanent Process. The improvement of Romanesque groin-vaults came about as a result of a ratio-nal consideration of the geometric construction of the arches and the surface of the cells*" (JOHNSON 66). Printed in italics and strategically located in the right-hand half of the page, this quotation continues for almost two pages until it suddenly stops, its last line coinciding with the appearance in the left-hand half of disjointed phrases, beginning in consecutive lines with the 3-em dashes and printed in the regular font:

> — No, but I will do!
> — … then he came round
> to my place and you know
> what my Dad is, I mean, he
> wouldn't …
> — Rah!
> — … than I thought it
> would be, just went in easy
> like, and …   (JOHNSON 68)

As the reader quickly discovers, these are utterances of pupils who suddenly entered the classroom provoking angry reaction of the eponymous protagonist, who has to earn a living as a substitute teacher. His response is represented in the right hand column as "*Damn! Knew I shouldn't have started another section. Bloody sharp on the breaks here. Not a minute over all the week*" and as "Get out! Out! What d'you mean by coming into my class and making such a hell of a row? Eh? Eh! Get out and line up outside, and be dead quiet until I tell you to come in. DEAD quiet, d'you understand?" (JOHNSON 68-69) in the left-hand column. The italicised passage is printed in parallel to the above-quoted disjointed phrases, which turn out to be words and sounds produced by the pupils entering the classroom. This opening section establishes the pattern followed for the next thirty pages: the left-hand column represents what Albert and his pupils say, the use of 3-em dash as opening for the utterances attributable to the latter helping the reader to identify the speaker. The right-hand italicised column, in turn, represents Albert's thoughts, which vary from responses to the pupils' behaviour, through reflections on teaching to sexually-stimulating memories of his love affair. Thus, the double-column organisation of the text becomes a narrative device, an iconic diagram of external and internal processes occurring concurrently on the level of storyworld. Glyn White points out that

> For the reader this is internal monologue *plus*; the text gives access to the external world of the character too, structuring two other aspects of representation as well (what he hears, and what he actually says). The reader has to relate clips of dialogues from a number of speakers to the continuous stream of Albert's thoughts which, chronologically, must be simultaneous. This simultaneity works by the specific graphic device of parallel lineation in which space *equals* time. (WHITE 98)

In his reading of this section of the novel White foregrounds its mimetic character and thus contests McHale's privileging of the metafictional dimension of parallel organisation (MCHALE 192), and its concomitant impact on the reader. The latter – White argues, following McHale in this respect – is forced to improvise the order of reading and constantly switch from one column to another, as "it is literally impossible to read both columns at the same time" (WHITE 99). However, the reader is actually enticed to attempt a synchronous reading only at some points in this section of *Albert Angelo*, Johnson's use of the double-column format for mimetic purposes being on the one hand more subtle and on the other less challenging to the reader than

White makes it out to be. As Johan Thielemans observes, "mostly the text alternates, so that the order in which the columns should be read is clear" (85); in visual terms, the block of text in the left-hand column is usually accompanied by blank space in the right-hand half of the page, which only occasionally contains a short phrase commenting on something in the left-hand column, or its last line coincides with the first one of the text in the right-hand half. When the right-hand column dominates, this set-up is obviously reversed. It is only at one point that the two columns are full and the reader has to decide which of them to read first. Not accidentally, at this point Albert is lost in his eroticised reveries and his pupils, whom he has earlier told to copy from the board the names of three types of igneous rock he has been lecturing on and who have noticed his "dozy look" (JOHNSON 88), are getting restless. The fully-developed double-column layout thus signals the fact that the two processes each of them represents proceed simultaneously but independently, fragments of the pupils' utterances in the left-hand column being actually unrelated to the thoughts of Albert, who arguably does not hear or at least consciously register what they are saying: his reveries are suddenly interrupted by an angry exclamation "*Bloody noise*" (JOHNSON 88), which is continued in the left-hand column as "What the hell d'you mean by making up so much noise! Silence!" (JOHNSON 89). The partial overlapping between the two columns observable at other points indicates that one column registers a reaction to the other. It might thus be argued that the fluctuation between the two columns is an attempt at a graphically mimetic representation of the human mind, with its partial ability to produce, register and reflect on verbal stimuli simultaneously and its much more developed ability to switch instantaneously between the external and internal perspectives.

While in the two novels discussed so far one dominant form of layout deformation can be identified, no such approach is possible in the case of Federman's *Double or Nothing*: almost each page of this book is a separate visual unit, variability of layout constituting the major principle of its material organisation. As might be expected, Federman not only employs spatial forms comparable to those exploited by Hall and Johnson, but he also combines them with a number of other typographic deformations, such as vertical and diagonal orientation of graphemes or imposition of abstract geometrical shapes on the text. Consequently, different meanings and functions can be attributed to his typographic manoeuvres on the level of individual pages. However important these "local" uses of spatial arrangement are, it is

at the "global" level of the whole book that the "typographic overkill" of *Double or Nothing* on the one hand acquires a value in itself and on the other becomes a complex iconic metaphor bringing together the novel's central concerns.

The typographic instability of *Double or Nothing* ties in with Federman's ostentatiously self-conscious multi-faceted exploration of the creative process. As Kutnik points out, in *Double or Nothing* Federman "turns intro-spection and questioning into a procedural principle and, while constructing a linguistic structure which is both imaginatively and concretely a self-apparent artifice, submits his own performance, both mental and physical, to close and methodical scrutiny;" consequently, his novel reveals "the four basic forces which are brought into play in the creation of a literary work: memory, imagination, language and artistic awareness" (KUTNIK, *The Novel as Performance* 176).

The page layout provides yet another testing ground for Federman's metafictional explorations. Just as he investigates various novelistic con-ventions on the verbal level of *Double or Nothing*, he explores a variety of ways in which the text can be organised on the page. Malmgren argues that despite its visual variability two major classes of typographic devices can be distinguished in *Double or Nothing*: Federman departs from the conventional layout either by "turning the page into an iconic sign of its content" (180) or by "waging war with conventional syntax" (181). Indeed, *Double or Nothing* contains a number of typographic devices that can be interpreted as instances of imagic or diagrammatic iconicity; however, contrary to what Malmgren suggests, actually only few of them operate on the level of the whole page. These instances of iconic pages include the rectangular frame built of lines of capitalised text to evoke the four walls of the room in which the narrator is going to work, the "zigzag," noodle-like design framing a discussion of superiority of noodles over potatoes as staple food and the arrangement imitating the shape of a ship.

At many points the layout tautologically reinforces and visually re-presents the meaning already conveyed by verbal means. This principle of visual iconic reinforcement usually operates within a limited area of the paginal space and can thus be related to narrative interruption, which Marcel Cornis-Pope has identified as the key procedure in *Double or Nothing* (CORNIS-POPE 85), in that it constitutes a sudden transition from a purely verbal to verbo-visual representation. The "walled" text, for instance, con-tains a short section in which the narrator ponders on whether he will

manage to "survive on the edge of the white precipice" (FEDERMAN 1), the vertical arrangement of graphemes in the last word imitating its literal meaning. At the same time, on the very same page the standard layout is subverted by non-iconic devices, such as a division into small segments, whose position within the blank paginal space is manipulated.

This co-presence of iconic and non-iconic typographic forms, which resist iconic reading and appear to be simply designed to disrupt the conventional layout, can be observed on other pages, local rather than "paginal" iconic arrangements recurring throughout *Double or Nothing*: the passage describing the walk through the subway descends and rises diagonally across a section of the page (FEDERMAN 56), a roll of toilet paper is represented by the words "rolls rolls" arranged into a circular shape (FEDERMAN 76), the reference to a tunnel is accompanied by an appropriate diagrammatic representation (FEDERMAN 78) and so on. Even though each of these iconic typographic devices is combined with other forms of typographic arrangement, they are frequently singled out in critical analyses, which tend to conflate the image with the referent in the manner theorised by Mitchell and described in more detail in my analysis of Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*. Eckhard Gerdes, for instance, argues that the curled word *rolls* "draws attention to itself, and it does what it is: the word *means* t.p. [toilet paper] and *looks* like a roll of t.p." (131). Likewise, Anne-Katherine Wielgosz interprets the celebrated example of discourse on noodles arranged into the spiral shape as the convergence of sign and its referent:

> the rearrangement of words turns into an iconic representation of meaning, which introduces recursiveness into the signification process because the signs – all the words about noodles – turn into their own referent (the image of the noodle, in which the spiral forms the space of that very image). (94-95)

While the self-referential and recursive dimensions of Federman's iconic designs cannot be denied, both Gerdes and Wielgosz seem to go too far in their "referential" readings: the fact that spatial arrangement of graphemes resembles some real-life object does not make it this object. The fissure between the two is intentionally disclosed when the typographic arrangement of graphemes clashes with their verbal meaning, as happens, for instance, in the passage describing the projected convergence between narrative personae of the protagonist/narrator:

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And little by little we'll coincide. We'll overlap. HE & I.
TO
GE
TH
ER
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<div align="right">(FEDERMAN 31)</div>

Susan Suleiman points out that "the denotation of 'together' is contested by the fragmentation of the word on the page, just as the denotation of 'overlap' is contradicted by the large amount of white space above and below it" (221). Thus, just as he discloses the artificiality of the mimetic discourse, Federman foregrounds the inevitable gap between the iconic sign and its referent and indirectly reveals the illusory character of the referentiality often attributed to the former. He thus prevents the reader's unproblematic reconstruction/projection of the story: "whether redundant or conflicting, the meanings created by the visual configurations always act as a disruption, dispersion, or 'pulverisation' of the narrative" (SULEIMAN 221).

Significantly, Federman's use of iconic images and diagrams is far from systematic and is not subordinated to some general principle operating throughout the novel and indicating stable correlation with the represented world or narration of the type observable in *The Raw Shark Texts* and *Albert Angelo*. Each of them constitutes rather a singular instance of sudden intrusion of visual representation into the conventionally symbolic novelistic discourse and prevents, as Gerdes (131) points out, an unproblematic immersion into the fictional world. As mentioned above, the analyses of the material dimension of *Double or Nothing* tend to focus on these fairly simple iconic designs, even though other forms of typographic deformation actually dominate in it. This preference for the iconic figures can be attribute to the relative ease with which they can be described and interpreted, whereas many other elements, belonging to a general class of devices designed to subvert conventional syntax (MALMGREN 181), resist such an approach and do not suggest any interpretive key to the typographic form.

Varied as they are, these "typographiphobic" disruptions can be roughly grouped into some recurrent forms. One strategy Federman employs is simply to scatter blocks of text across the paginal space. As McHale notices, *Double or Nothing* abounds in "various irregular, free-form, 'purely expressive and improvised' typographical forms" (187). While on most of such pages, the conventional orientation of graphemes is retained, on some of them blocks of text can be horizontally or diagonally orientated so that the

reader is forced to physically manipulate the book in order to read them. The reader is forced to re-adjust his or her manner of reading in many other ways. As Malmgren notices, "on one page the reader is advertised to start at the bottom of the page and read up from it proceeding from left to right (p. 127); the very next page has to be read from bottom to top *and* right to left" (181). Yet another recurrent set is constituted by pages where text is formed into some arbitrary shapes: rectangles, hourglasses etc. Finally, on many occasions, the visual unity of many pages is disrupted by areas of blank space arbitrarily dividing the text either along the vertical or the horizontal axis.

Naturally, each individual manifestation of these recurrent spatial configurations is different and, furthermore, *Double or Nothing* contains a number of devices that are singular in their appearance, such as the page where the text on the character named Loulou is laid out in such a manner that it constitutes a huge L followed by a sequence of much smaller *oulou* composed of *o*s, *u*s and *l*s respectively or the page where the capitalised phrase "ALARM CLOCKS," repeated line after line, cuts across the text along vertical axis. Finally, it is not only the layout that Federman manipulates in *Double or Nothing*, as he practically explores all the possibilities that the typewriter offers: some sections of his novel are capitalised, others underlined.

Thus, it is typographic irreducibility that lies at the core of *Double or Nothing*. Significantly, just as it happens on the other levels of his novel, Federman's manipulation of the material form involves a number of paradoxes, beginning with the most obvious one: the singularity of each page is the only constant element they share. With each page (not just iconic devices as suggested by Gerdes) drawing attention to itself, Federman foregrounds the usually disregarded materiality of the written text and precludes the reader's unproblematic reconstruction/projection of the storyworld. As Lisbeth Rieshøj Amos points out, "the only thing that undoubtedly remains 'real' is the physical existence of the book we are holding in our hands" (16). Paradoxically, the extreme physicality of *Double or Nothing* can at the same time be construed as the assertion of the writer's shaping presence. The material form of the novel foregrounds its having been created (rather than simply typed) by means of a typewriter, the first edition having been photographed from the manuscript text (cf. GERDES 131). Again, paradox reigns supreme in *Double or Nothing*, as it simultaneously denies access to the "real" Federman via multiplication of narrational selves and points to his

undeniable act of typing as its own origin. As Kutnik notices in the afterword to his Polish translation of *Double or Nothing*, the typewritten form endows the novel with the properties of the hand-made artefact (KUTNIK, "Tłumacz po słowie" iv).

One consequence of this foregrounding of the writer's literally under-stood craftsmanship is turning of the reader's attention from whatever glimpses of the story *Double or Nothing* offers to its material form, which acquires a value in itself and, in a sense, approaches the status of the Peircean self-representing, pure icon. At the same time, Federman's typo-graphic devices can be iconically correlated with his novel's major motifs, not only on the "local" level of individual pages but also on the "global" level of the overall material construction of the whole book, the meta-referential and heteroreferential functions of typographic devices being inextricably bound up in his "real fictious discourse." For Wielgosz his "spatial displacement of words" ties in with the psychological process of "the displacement of psychical intensities" (WIELGOSZ 94), the (un)con-scious avoidance of the painful topic of the past. The overall material form of *Double or Nothing* with its typographic variability thus becomes a com-plex iconic metaphor for the narrator's (Federman's?) grappling with the past and the creative process in general. As Kutnik observes,

> by making readers suffer the agony of reading the text backward, upward, and in any number of other, even more twisted ways, the recorder allows them to experience the agony of the mind trying to communicate an experience beyond comprehension and description. (*The Novel as Performance* 185)

Thus, on the one hand, the typographic form of *Double or Nothing* "clearly points to the fact that words and the traditionally static arrangement of these simply do not suffice when attempting to capture the unspeakable historical truth" (AMOS 18); on the other, it throws into sharp relief the improvisatory and performatory aspects of the process, represented by the figure of "noodling around" and self-consciously foregrounded in the novel:

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Variety that's the spice of life Though after a while it ge
ts repetitious A guy must vary if he wants to survive Must
invent Let it happen by itself Let the damn thing shape it
self by itself Create new forms New noodles Improvise any
thing Improvise on a puff of smoke QUICKLY And keep going
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(FEDERMAN 5)

The material form of *Double or Nothing* with its variability and unpredictability can thus be construed as a metaphoric icon of the process of improvisation, a material embodiment of "the novel as performance," to use Kutnik's succinct formulation of the central element of Federman's aesthetic.

As can be seen, in many cases the innovative departures from conventional layout are not purely iconic, as the reader's interpretation of their significance is guided by the symbolic *sensu* Peirce, verbal clues. This interdependence of spatial and verbal modes of signification is (literally) made conspicuous in tautological arrangements, where the organisation of the graphemes mimes their own verbal meaning in the manner exemplified by Federman's "local" iconic arrangements. Even more common than such direct links between the verbal and the visual layers of the text are contextual clues which are located in the vicinity of a particular typographic device, as happens in the case of Hall's "conceptual shark." An analogous mechanism can also be observed in Federman's "global" use of "typographic overkill" as an iconic metaphor for the spontaneous creative process: he self-reflexively foregrounds the improvisatory aesthetic of *Double or Nothing* on its verbal level. A significant exception to this dependence on verbal clues is naturally constituted by Johnson's diagrammatic arrangement, in which the text is split into parallel sections in order to represent simultaneity: it is simply introduced in the text without any direct verbal explanation as to what it signifies.

Naturally, it would be too sweeping a generalisation to claim that diagrammatic arrangements are self-explanatory, though in the particular case of *Albert Angelo* the correlation between the parallel layout and simultaneity is fairly easy to notice. By the same token, not all the forms of typographic deformation can be construed as instances of iconicity. As the example of *Double or Nothing* demonstrates, they can be arbitrarily imposed on the text to foreground its visual materiality. Interestingly, the variability of Federman's typographic manoeuvres calls for the reading in which the extremes of the scale of iconicity paradoxically meet. On the one hand, the overall typographic form of *Double or Nothing* can be construed as a metaphoric icon, which parallels rather than mimes directly its performatory mode of narration; on the other, its unpredictability draws attention to itself and thus endows the novel with the properties of the Peircean genuine icon. It thus foregrounds the tension between the iconic and the autotelic, which is actually observable in *The Raw Shark Texts* and *Albert Angelo* as well. Even

though both of them employ the text layout to represent some aspects of the storyworld, the very departure from the conventional layout cannot but draw the reader's attention to the materiality of the text he or she is reading.

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OD PRZEDSTAWIEŃ FIGURATYWNYCH DO METAFORYCZNYCH ZNIEKSZTAŁCEŃ:
IKONICZNY UKŁAD GRAFICZNY TEKSTU WE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ PROZIE
ANGLOJĘZYCZNE

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Celem artykułu jest analiza procesu semiotyzacji układu graficznego tekstu w prozie nar-
racyjnej i wykazanie, że różne konfiguracje grafemów mogą być skorelowane z głównymi typami
ikoniczności wyróżnianymi w badaniach semiotycznych. Figuratywne przedstawienie typogra-
ficzne rekina-pożeracza myśli w powieści *Pożeracz myśli* Stevena Halla jest przykładem obrazo-
wego znaku ikonicznego, który odzwierciedla jego szczególny status ontologiczny. Równoległe
kolumny tekstu wykorzystane w powieści B. S. Johnsona *Albert Angelo* można zinterpretować
jako diagramatyczne przedstawienie procesów zachodzących jednocześnie na poziomie świata
przedstawionego. Z kolei w powieści *Podwójna wygrana jak nic* Raymonda Federmana nagro-
madzenie zniekształceń typograficznych, które obejmują zarówno ostentacyjnie ikoniczne formy,
jak również czysto arbitralne układy tekstu, stanowi złożoną metaforę ikoniczną procesu twór-
czego. Podczas gdy struktura diagramatyczna wykorzystana w powieści *Albert Angelo* przekazuje
znaczenie jedynie za pomocą środków typograficznych, pozostałe dwie powieści opierają się na
nieuniknionej wzajemnej zależności między ikonicznym i symbolicznym trybem tworzenia
znaczeń.

Streścił Grzegorz Maziarczyk

Key words: text layout, iconicity, semiotisation, *The Raw Shark Texts*, *Albert Angelo*, *Double or
        Nothing*.

Słowa kluczowe: układ graficzny tekstu na stronie, ikoniczność, semiotyzacja, *Pożeracz myśli*,
        Albert Angelo, *Podwójna wygrana jak nic*.