Comics and Graphic Novels
International Perspectives, Education, and Culture

Edited by Adam I. Attwood

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Preface

Comics and graphic novels have become more popular since the mid-1900s with increasing numbers of television and movie adaptations. Engaging readers in various sociocultural issues through multimodal approaches can increase the reader's understanding of the given topics. The modality of comics and graphic novels has also been further adapted into computer games and other visual media to enhance the audience's engagement with the concepts, stories, ideas, and characters. Sometimes comics and graphic novels are focused on fantasy, sometimes on historical figures and issues, and sometimes they are focused on issues in readers' lived experience. These can address sociopolitical issues, cultural questions, and ideologies, and these can sometimes challenge readers to grow in their awareness of the given topic and reflect on the historical and contemporary understanding of those topics across time.

The chapter authors address various ideas through the lenses of comics and graphic novels from both historical and contemporary perspectives. There has also been an increase in overlap in the 2000s to 2020s between comics and graphic novels with interactive multimedia such as computer games and other software animation modalities. The Internet has substantially expanded international and intercultural exchange through these media, making comics and graphic novels more widely accessible. As comic book characters become an interactive experience with computer games, the audience has been able to take an active role in the stories and storytelling process. These stories also sometimes focus on histories and historical figures as ways to prompt reflection and discussion. Through these perspectives, the influence of comics and graphic novels internationally comes into focus.

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Chapter 3

Perspective Chapter: (Typo) Graphic Novels – Text as Pictorial Element of the Page in Cutting-Edge-Picture Book-Making

Vincenzo Maselli

Abstract

In the book *Arte come Mestiere,* Bruno Munari suggested that the shapes of letters and words are capable of creating dynamic and meaningful compositions as they can be used to emphasize the significance of the word itself. Starting from these thoughts and from the concept of "typographic landscapes" formulated by Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles (2019), the chapter aims to explore the communicative power of words and the narrative strength of typefaces through the analysis of (typo)graphic novels that blur the boundaries between text and images and experiment with the composition of typographic shapes to vehicle meanings and outline new paths of graphic design experimentation. The analysis focuses on two case studies: the graphic book *P!nocchio. Racconto grafico* by Stefano Rovai (2022) and the picture book *A Child of Books* by Sam Winston and Oliver Jeffers (2016).

1. Introduction

As stated by Martin Salisbury and Morag Styles [1], "Text as a pictorial element in itself is not new." The first verbo-visual experiments in which a text—usually a poetic composition—could be looked at and contemplated as well as "read" date back to the archaic Hindu and ancient Greek cultures, to the *technopaegnion*, to the *carmen figuratum* written by the Greeks and Latins [2]. In these poetic compositions, the text was positioned in such a way as to compose the drawing of an object directly connected to the main theme of the poem.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire chose the term *calligram*[1] to refer to the poetic practice typical of the Avant-garde Movements, commonly called visual poetry, concrete poetry, or experimental

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[1] The term calligram certainly has within itself the Greek root of 'kalos' (beautiful) and 'graphein' (writing), although there are those who recall also a possible combination between calligraphy and ideogram [3].

poetry [3], in which the words are arranged in such a way as to form an image or shape that represents the meaning of the text itself. This form of art required innovative use of typography and layout to create a visually appealing image that communicates the meaning of the text through its shape and arrangement. Whether we are talking about *technopaegnion*, *carmen figuratum,* or *calligram*, the main characteristic of these graphic projects lies in the juxtaposition between letter and figure, implemented with often divergent techniques and purposes [2], based on the recognition of an undeniable truth: words have a shape and visual presence on the page. In the book *Arte come Mestiere* (1970), the Italian designer, artist, and picture book-maker Bruno Munari suggested that the shapes of letters and words are capable of creating dynamic and meaningful compositions as they can be used to emphasize the significance of the word itself [4]. He wrote: "not only does each letter of a word have a shape of its own, but all its letter taken together give shape to the word [...]. When you read the word MAMMA [*mum* – editor's note] you see at once that it has quite a different shape from the word OBOLO [*offering* – editor's note]." That highlights an unequivocal truth of communication design studies: An artifact's form is the first element to be seen by users and the first capable of communicating, thus morphology becomes a natural and impactful communication channel. "The artifact – according to Francesca Ferrario [5] – sets up a relationship with the user starting from the outside, stimulating visual and haptic perception within a transmission that uses sight". But that is not all, the composition of a sentence or a long text itself can have a meaningful shape explicitly related to the subject or, quite often, used to vehicle the interpretation of the content and of the intention, perspective, and thoughts of the visual poet. Therefore, a calligram is not only poetic writing, a mere game of signs, and literary artifice, but it is also writing of thought and a form of typographic narrative [3].

In the following sections, I will shortly outline the origin of visual poetry and then focus on the features of typographic narratives with the peculiar characteristic of *sequentiality*, hence on the creative use of typography in examples that combine graphic design choices concerning the organization of words within the page, typefaces' dimensions and styles, the relationship between text and image and a certain narrative complexity to create a visual experience that conveys content in an innovative way. In order to demonstrate the expressive possibilities of this form of graphic design, I will describe two (typo)graphic novels: the graphic book *P!nocchio. Racconto grafico* by Stefano Rovai [6] and the picture book *A Child of Books* by Sam Winston and Oliver Jeffers [7].

2. The origins: the calligram from Apollinaire to Lissitzky

Salisbury and Styles refer to Lewis Carroll's "the mouse's tale" as the first calligram, as the visual poem, which appears in his 1865 novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "exist in the shape of a tail and plays on the tale/tail spelling" [1]. In the novel, the mouse introduces its story by saying: "Mine is a long and sad tale!" [8] and typography contributes to illustrate the intended pun between mouse's physical feature (its tale) and the action it is about to perform (tell a tale). In other words, the text is formatted to visually resemble its content (**Figure 1**).

With the Avant-garde Movements of the twentieth century—especially with Cubist literature and subsequently with Creationism and Ultraism—the combination of pictorial and verbal text has become increasingly common, and several artists and designers took control of the overall design of the page and developed a poetics that engage both visual and verbal elements [2]. The collapse of the traditional structures of expression affected the artistic manifestations of this period generally and
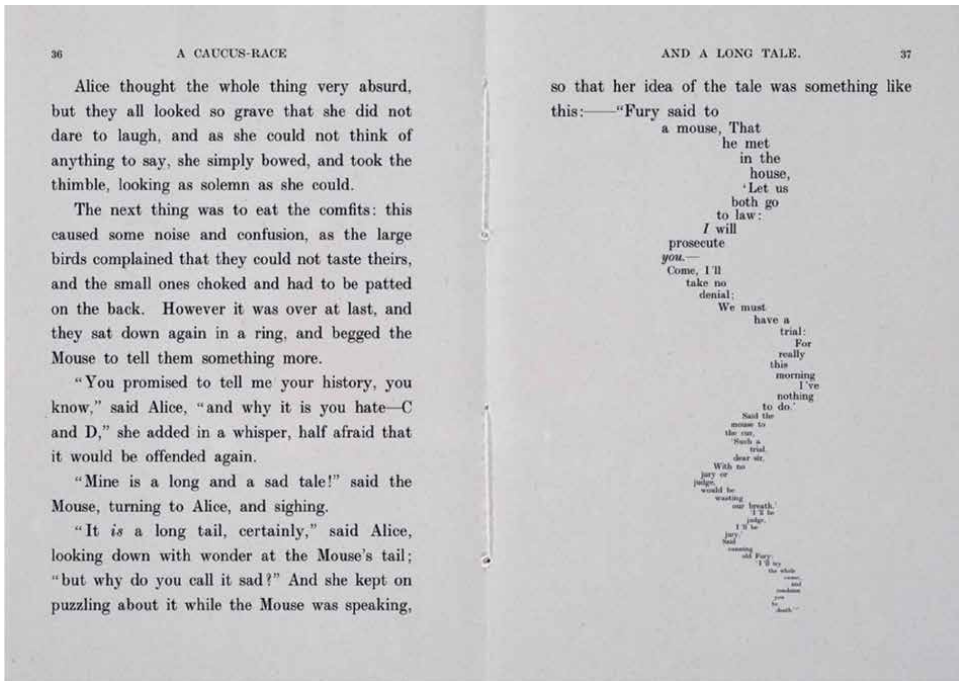
Figure 1.
"The Mouse's tale". Lewis Carroll, Alice's adventures in wonderland – 1865, p. 37 © Lewis Carroll (Licensed under CC BY 4.0).

inaugurated a new, well-known chapter of the history of art in which artists used to explore the world with different eyes, trying to "uncover the process by which we see and respond" and to demonstrate that "what we know is not made apparent […]in what we see" [9]. On the one hand, Cubist painters rejected Impressionism and any links binding them with the concrete word and headed toward abstract art; on the other, Cubist writers "gradually moved away from symbolism" [9].

One of the poets and artists best known for creating some of the most famous calligrams in the history of literature was the French Cubist poet Guillaume Apollinaire. He was actively involved in the above-mentioned process of artistic renovation that affected not only Cubism but also Futurism, Orphism, and all Avant-garde Movements that escaped art as fictional artifice and demystified its relation with nature. Born in Rome in 1880, Apollinaire had a life as short as it was intense[2], and among his best-known *Calligrams* are those collected in the book *Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre 1913–1916* [10]. Apollinaire's calligrams were a true form of communication as they recalled a layered system of graphic components which, on the one hand, express the poetic and graphic design skills of the artist; on the other, they represent a snapshot of his time since they metaphorically and metonymically decode political and social images, intentions and messages [2]. Metaphor and metonymy and their combination are—according to the American art historian Willard Bohn—the semantic lines along which picture poems unfold, the "basic mode of communication" of this form of visual-verbal expression [11]. In the essay *Metaphor and Metonymy in Apollinaire's Calligrams,* he wrote, "one topic may lead to another through their

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[2] Guillaume Apollinaire died in Paris at the age of 38, in 1918.

similarity ("the metaphoric way") or through their *contiguity* ("the metonymic way"). Thus, in a series, a given topic/statement/image either resembles its neighbor or is somehow associated with it" [11]. It is difficult to identify which one of these forms triumphs in Apollinaire's calligrams as they consistently combine painting—that is highly metonymic—with lyric poetry—that is inherently metaphoric. This polarity does not work as a contrast but as a mix that makes calligrams a hybrid genre. Again, Bohn stated that "to the extent that it is metaphoric, [a calligram] incorporates the traditional bias of lyric poetry. To the extent that it is metonymic, it reflects the influence of Cubism" [11]. What Apollinaire reached to structure with his innovative visual poems, therefore, are visual metaphors in which shapes, symmetries, balances, and contrasts—among the many possible graphic compositional elements—relate to verbal messages and improve their impact. "In figured verse – wrote Charles Boultenhouse in 1965 – the shape of the poem in the main metaphor of the poem" [12].

In "La colombe poignardée et le jet d' eau" ["The stabbed dove and the jet of water"—editor's note], for example, Apollinaire denounced the war through a calligram that exploits a symbolic motif, the shape of a dove. The "shape" of the poem is the first, more direct reading level: the dove is peace. The typographical elements used provide a further reading level to support this intention: the bold "C" represents the dagger handle, and the words "et toi" ["and you"—editor's note] in the center of the dove mark the wound: everything could symbolize the peace killed by war. Under the dove lies the fountain, of which the jet of water—drawn by the distribution of the verses starting from a central axis—can be clearly recognized. The symmetry of the composition is given by the capital "O," which plays on the homonymy with the French word *eau* [*Water*—editor's note] and seems to be the source from which the jet comes out, and by the design of a basin which also suggests the shape of an eye (**Figure 2**) [13]. Both the dove and the fountain are visual metaphors that seem to have been visually generated as in other calligrams, and he used pictorial elements of life at the front clearly connected with imagery of the war, such as cannons, helmets, and boots [11].

Apollinaire's calligrams paved the way for other experiments and pushed the boundaries of typography beyond the mere communication of information, playing with more creative and expressive layouts and compositions and with the hybridization of typography, photography, and illustration. Throughout the twentieth century, especially with the development of Modernism and "new typography" [14], graphic design pioneers such as Jan Tschichold, László Moholy-Nagy, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and El Lissitzky contributed to the promotion of a more esthetic approach to typography. In Moholy-Nagy's design for a 1924 advertising poster, the artist presents a photograph of a car running on a track made up of letters that make up the writing "Pneumatik," emphasizing the new plasticity recognized in the typographical element and served, in this specific case, to the advertising of a product (**Figure 3**).

According to Moholy-Nagy, typography needs to get rid of "preconceived frameworks," and the typographical line has to be liberated and made to work in combination with photography, which he used to consider "the new storytelling device of civilization" [15]. As he wrote in the essay *The New Typography* (*Die neue Typographie*—original title) of 1923: "We want to create a new language of typography whose elasticity, variability, [and] freshness […] is exclusively dictated by the inner law of expression and [by] the optical effect" [15]. In the typographic composition and in its dialog with photography lies the effectiveness of the message in the contemporary graphic design process.

The new dimension of typographic art is the subject of further thought in the essay *Unser Buch* written by El Lissitzky in 1927 [16], in which the designer credits Filippo Tommaso Marinetti for having started the modern typographic revolution, creating
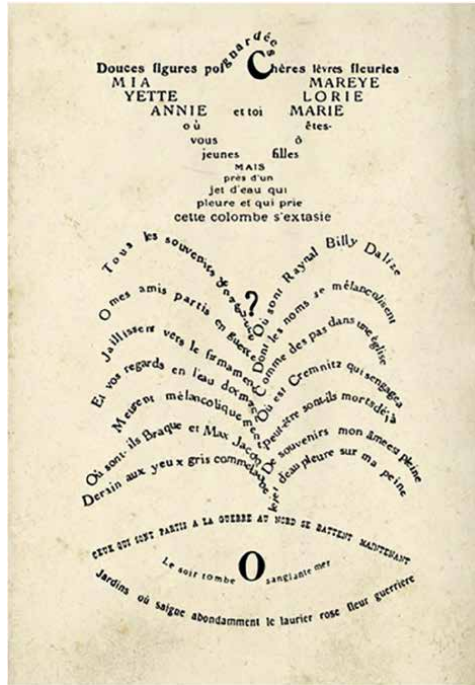
Figure 2.
"La colombe poignardée et le jet d' eau". Guillaume Apollinaire, Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre 1913–1916 – 1918 © public domain.
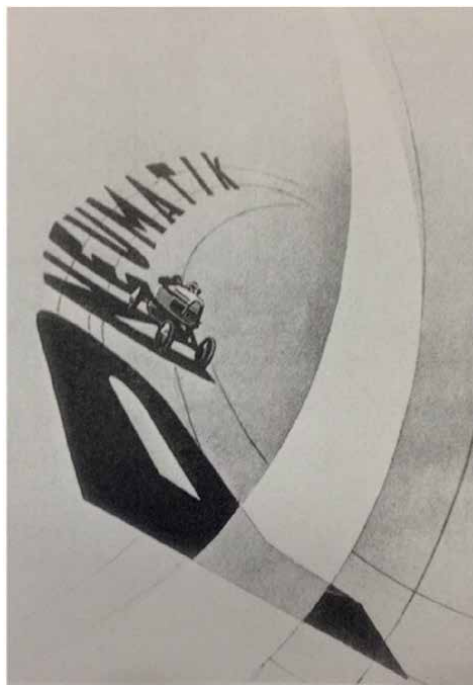

Figure 3.
"Pneumatik". László Moholy-Nagy – 1924 © public domain.

compositions that alter the morphology of the typefaces and the organization of the text on the page. Lissitzky's vision of typography as a form of visual communication, however, deepens and overcomes the experimental approach explored by Marinetti. While appreciating Futurism and Marinetti's spirit of rupture with the past and the rejection of typographical—as well as literary—conventions in favor of more expressive and less rational compositions, Lissitzky highlighted the communicative function of typography. The Futurist typographical revolution started with Marinetti's visual compositions collected under the name of "Parole in Libertà" ["Words in Freedom"—editor's note], "in which the words have no syntactic-grammatical link between them and are not organized into sentences" [17]. The configuration of the letters on the page and the graphic treatment of the words did not aim, in Marinetti's compositions, at visually reproducing meaningful verbal statements and expressions but were linked to the sonority of the words, often onomatopoeic, creating a combination between visual and phonetic qualities of the words, between music and visual arts. According to Lissitzky, typography can be arranged as a tool capable of orienting the reading of the message. As written by Caterina Toschi: "In [Lissitzky's] conception the word is used not only as a sound depending on time, but as a representation to develop a type of visual poetry conceived in relation to the space of the page" [14].

3. From the calligram to the (typo)graphic novel

The typographic narrative conveyed by a calligram can be applied in a wide range of contexts and creative sectors and involves graphic uses of letters and words that differ in their approach and in the way they communicate. There are numerous examples of typographic narratives in areas of application such as:

- advertising and marketing through advertising campaigns and posters in which the creative use of the typographic element captures the public's attention;

- corporate branding: logos, promotional materials, and packaging that can exploit typography to tell the story, clarify the vision, and communicate the mission of a brand;

- educational materials, presentations, and learning contents which, through typographic narratives, make complex concepts or specific information more accessible and engaging;

- websites, applications, animations, and videos can incorporate motion graphic narratives made of words and typefaces to guide the user experience, convey information in a visually appealing way, and improve the use of content;

- physical environments, such as museums, exhibitions, or art installations, can use typography to guide visitors or create immersive experiences;

- editorial projects and books that use typographic narratives to make stories more engaging, convey specific levels of interpretation, and improve the reading experience.

The first book, based on a typographic narrative, dates back to Futurism. In 1914, Marinetti collected in a small volume entitled *Zang Tumb Tumb* (**Figure 4**) a series of visual poems that he had written and published in the Parisian newspaper *L'Intransigeant*

Figure 4.
Zang Tumb Tumb by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti – 1914 © public domain.

in 1911, using the same compositional criterion as his "Parole in Libertà." The book tells a few episodes of the 1911 war in Libya from an unprecedented point of view in which, as suggested by the title, the mechanical sounds of war—artillery, bombings, explosions—are the protagonists of the visual story. Punctuation is abolished, and so are traditional syntactic rules; extensive use is made of onomatopoeic terms to reproduce the sounds of war, and the shape of words evokes sounds, noises that amplify the impact of the story in the moments of maximum intensity. In this book, "typography reflects the raw and evocative power of language. Rather than following established rules of syntax and punctuation, letters live and express themselves on the page" [17]. The graphic revolution of Futurism was not limited to the page but involved the entire book, leading to the construction of the first sequential typographical narrative.

Below, I will focus on sequential typographic narratives that renew the editorial category of graphic novels, and for this reason, I define these graphic artifacts as typographic novels. I will analyze two examples of typographic novels in which the shape and layout of the words do not tell a concept or a self-contained story, as happens in Apollinaire's classic calligram, but a complex sequential narrative. The experience of the calligram is enriched by adding the sequential component and by creating an archipelago of typographic "episodes" that dialog with each other, thus ensuring the correct reading of the narrative flow. Typographic novels can take on different configurations, but, in all cases, they keep integrating the focus on the graphic organization and disposition of words, the choice of typefaces, the dimensions, and typographic styles to create a new kind of visual experience.

3.1 *P!nocchio. Racconto grafico* by Stefano Rovai

In 2022, the Italian graphic designer Stefano Rovai designed a typographic novel providing a graphic translation of the book *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo

Collodi, published for the first time in 1883, but he radically revolutionized it on a graphic level. Starting from the name "Pinocchio," Rovai suggested the experimental vocation of his work: the character of Pinocchio, through his name, finds its formal translation in an exclamation mark (!), an essential but highly evocative typeface that summarizes the graphic designer's ability to lead a "graphic synthesis" of a story (**Figure** 5). By referring to the typographic experimentations of the twentieth-century artistic Avant-garde Movements, Rovai reconstructed Collodi's novel as a visual poem by mixing words, letters, and images in an effective and intense synthesis. The only protagonists of its graphic transposition are letters and words, but he altered the spatial distribution of the elements that make up the page, hybridized different typographical codes and styles in a multiple and varied set of typefaces, punctuation marks and glyphs, in which serif and sans-serif letters, calligraphic and italics, round and bold strokes mix together. Rovai played with interlines, spacing, and dimensions; that is, he transformed each page into a surrealist typographic illustration in which typographic elements have an esthetic and morphological "scenic" value even before the linguistic one. The tale of the adventures of a wooden puppet finds a new stage in Rovai's book: the two-dimensionality of the page, in which Rovai transferred and revealed the dynamism of Collodi's tale through creative and brave use of typography. Rovai allowed the readers to immerse themselves in the story and to attribute different meanings to the same content, thanks to the use of diverse typographical styles, the unusual disposition of typefaces within the pages' space, and a correct alternation of full and empty spaces.

P!nocchio. Racconto grafico stresses the concern on the importance of typography and provides an opportunity for further exploring the value of the dynamic and expressive linguistic and esthetic experimentations inaugurated by the Avant-garde Movements of the twentieth century. But Rovai pushed the research on the
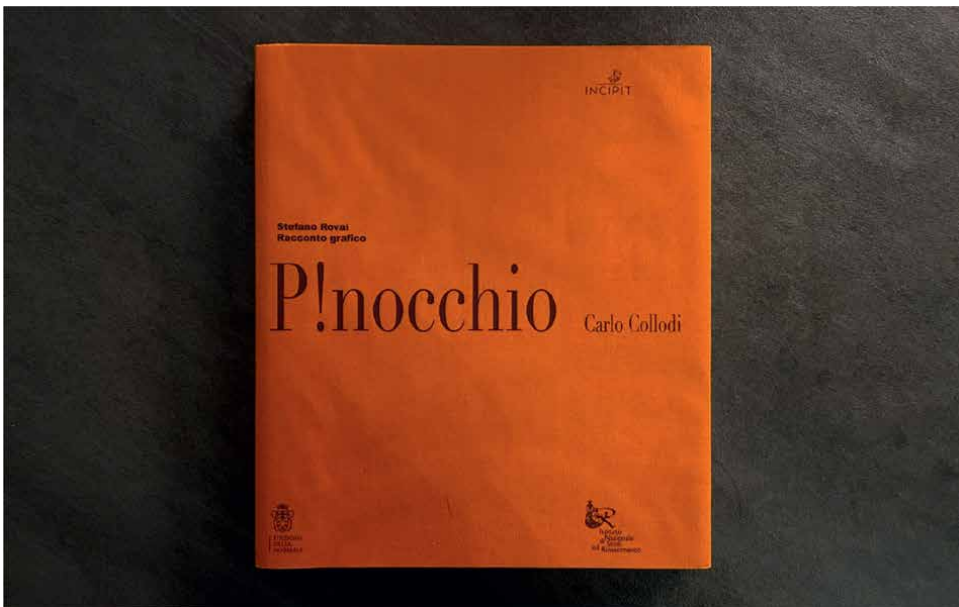

Figure 5.
P!nocchio. Racconto grafico by Stefano Rovai – 2022 © courtesy of Stefano Rovai.

relationship between word and image and on verbo-visual writing to the extreme limit. "The crossings, (and the) systematic overlaps and integrations" between the text to be seen and the text to be read, in Rovai occur "in the name of continuity" [18]. The letters emerge from the page, tilt, overlap, and contract. They are the protagonists of different visual solutions but linked in a unitary design vision throughout the book, in a sequential story that applies the complex experimentation of the relationship between text and image to all pages. Each sentence and page of Rovai's book is at the same time a speaking illustration, a self-contained "typographic adventure" and a crucial piece of the story, in which the typefaces—by varying styles, size, kerning, and even the direction of writing—recreate on a visual level the sensations and emotions suggested by the narrative (**Figures 6** and 7). Rovai's typographic "Pinocchio," therefore, lends itself to interpretative paths of a different but convergent nature:

- it is an opportunity to experiment with the expressive potential of typefaces as a form of communication, showing how typographic design, as a "visual representation of thought" [19], fits into the contemporary design scenario with its own rules, declinations, and applications;

- it is a graphic remediation of a well-known work of literature and, in this sense, takes charge of its themes, further problematizing them thanks to the graphic choices that characterize the artifact;

- it is a particular form of *intersemiotic* translation and adaptation [20–22] in which a consolidated system of linguistic signs is transformed into a system of

Figure 6.
P!nocchio. Racconto grafico by Stefano Rovai – 2022 © courtesy of Stefano Rovai.

Figure 7.
P!nocchio. Racconto grafico by Stefano Rovai – 2022 © courtesy of Stefano Rovai.

"a-linguistic" signs through a process of negotiation, renouncing some aspects typical of the starting system to obtain a certain result in the target system[3];

- it is the perfect manifestation of what Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote in the Manifesto of Futurism of 1913: "We will therefore use, on the same page, [...] also 20 different typefaces, if necessary. For example: italics for a series of similar or fast sensations, round bold for violent onomatopoeias, etc. With this typographical revolution and this multicolored variety of typefaces I aim to double the expressive power of words" [23].

The rewriting led by Rovai of one of the most emblematic works of Western children's literature is unique in the complex articulation that characterizes it: the visual and verbal story conveyed by letters, numbers, signs, and counts more than 300 typographical illustrations, making Rovai as a co-author of a multi-handed story. Rovai's volume inspired an exhibition that evolved into a typographic installation held

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[3] The operation of transforming a text into an expressive form that uses different linguistic systems – such as images – preserving the content, has been the subject of analysis by semiologists who have formulated different taxonomies. The Russian linguist and semiologist Roman Jackobson defined 'intersemiotic translation' the translation mechanism that allows linguistic signs to be interpreted in non-linguistic systems, as happens, for example, between literature and cinema [20]. Algirdas Julien Greimas proposed the term 'transposition' by focusing attention not on the variation in the identity of the story, but on the variation in the experience of perception that is made of it. Transposition, according to Greimas, implies that a content is experienced in a different sensorial dimension, thus it implies a different epistemological path [21]. Umberto Eco adopts the terms 'adaptation' or 'intersystemic interpretation' (Eco 2013, 21) to refer to the passage "from matter to matter of expression, as happens when a poem is interpreted (thus illustrated) through a drawing" [22].

in the spring of 2022 at the Marino Marini Museum in Florence (Italy). The immersion in Rovai's typographical adventure was amplified, enveloping the visitor with words, typefaces, and punctuation marks that exploded on the walls and projected onto the floor, becoming actors performing on a theater stage.

3.2 *A child of book* by Oliver Jeffers and Sam Wilson

A Child of Books by Oliver Jeffers and Sam Wilson is a picture book that mixes up the main canonical design elements of a graphic novel (texts and images), finding another form of expression that gives new dignity to typography. The adventures of the protagonists come to life in a visual universe made of hand-drawn images and calligrams, creating an editorial product that gives a new dimension to the text: the pictorial one. *A Child of Books* tells the story of a little girl with a passion for reading, sitting on a raft above a sea of typed words (**Figure 8**). A wave drops the girl off at a boy's house, where she asks him to follow her. The two set out to walk along a path of words, climb "mountains of make-believe," find treasures in a cave, "lose (themselves) in forests of fairy tales" where the trees are books sprouting stories, flee from a monster and sleep in clouds made of words [7]. Then, they return to a city of buildings arranged like books on a shelf, with signs that say, "Our house is a home of invention where anyone at all can come, [...] for imagination is free" [7].

Throughout the book, the text and pictorial elements of the page merge and hybridize. Characters sit alongside and within "typographic landscapes" [1], as they travel on a sea made of words, walk on a path full of writings, run away from a monster created by the overlapping of typographic elements, descend from a rope that—literally—tells the story of Rapunzel, and enter a cave created by the accumulation of letters and words (**Figure 9**). The letters and words that give shape to these landscapes mix the texts belonging to 40 classic works of children's literature and
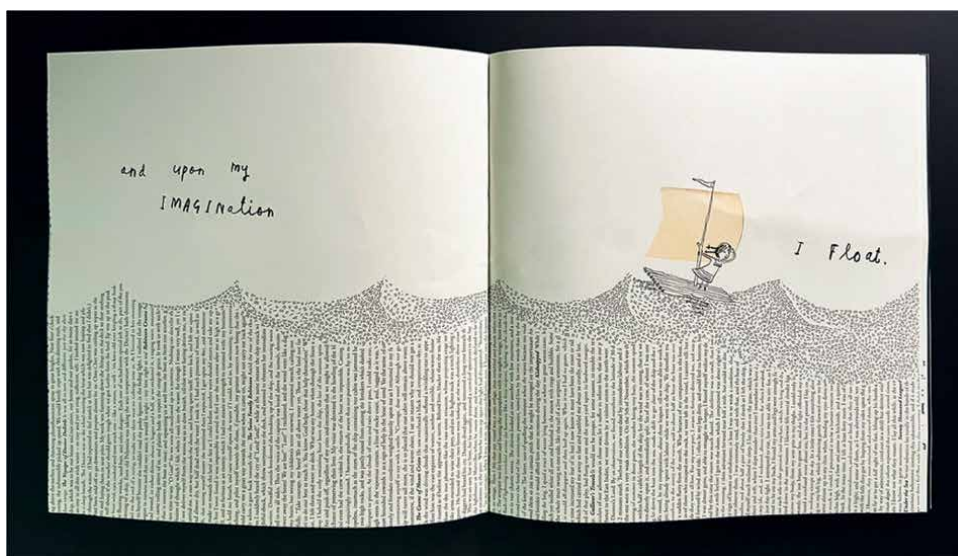

Figure 8.
A CHILD OF BOOKS. Written & Illustrated by Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston © 2016 Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston. Reproduced by permission of Walker Books Ltd.

Figure 9.
A CHILD OF BOOKS. Written & Illustrated by Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston © 2016 Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston. Reproduced by permission of Walker Books Ltd.
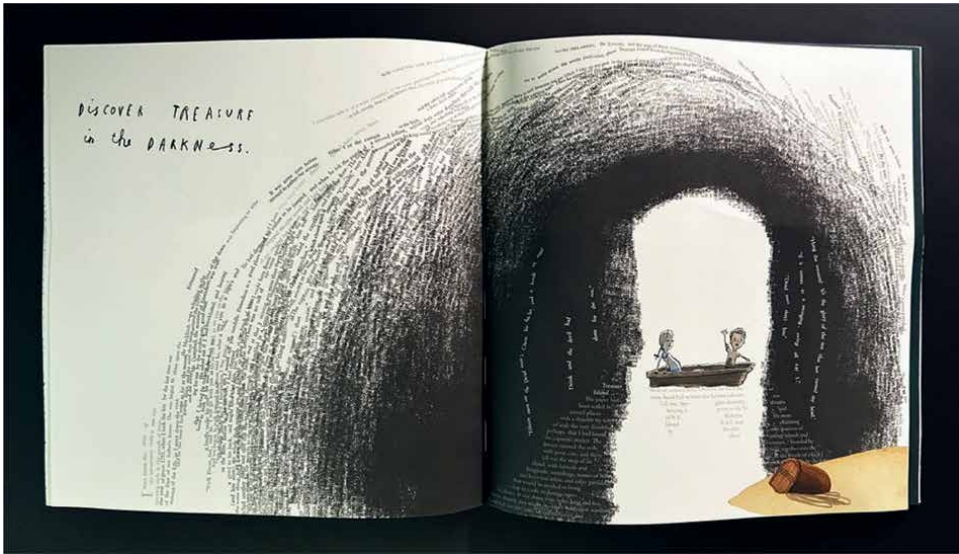
lullabies[4]: *Gulliver's Travels, the Swiss Family Robinson, Peter Pan and Wendy,* fairy tales, and many more are woven, drawn, imagined into amazing backgrounds or meaningful element of the illustrated composition. These landscapes, therefore, are much more than that they blur the boundaries between text and image and create a new form of relationship between these two graphic forms. "The book evolved and emerged through ongoing dialog between pictures and words, working together in the same physical space" [1].

Jeffers and Wilson's contribution to the evolution of typographic picture book is immense, and their work marks a milestone in the articulated and still evolving panorama of experimental graphic novels for the innovatively designed word-mage interplay. Nevertheless, it is easier to recognize the role(s) of typography in their novel than in the previously described example. If, in Rovai's book, the complete absence of pictorial images creates a new experience in which the readers have to acquire a new code of reading and watching typography, and so they have to interpret it in a new subjective and unusual way, Jeffers and Wilson retrieve the classic linguistic canons of the picture book—whose evolution in narrative and figurative terms remains easily understandable—but add, thanks to the typographical element, new levels of reading. The "typographic landscapes" of *A Child of Book* are:

- quotations from the classics of Western literature, whose texts, in this context, are used to draw the significant elements of the landscape, attributing to each illustration a meaning linked to the narratives involved in the image;

- objects of significance that dialog with the narrative of the book. The relationship between the narratives "told" by the typographic element and the morphological manipulation that is made preludes the implicit interpretation of the

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[4] See [24] for the complete list of classic works of children's literature featured in *A Child of Books*.
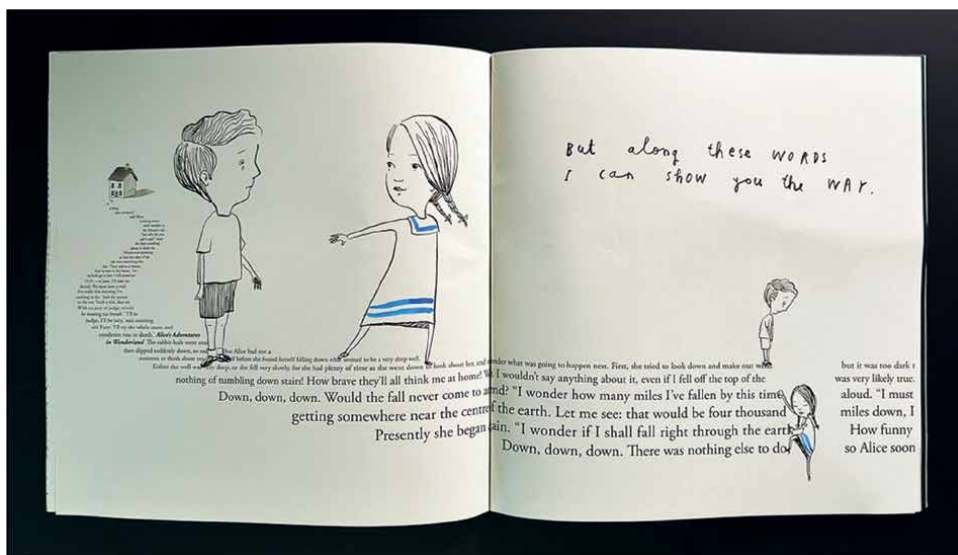
Figure 10.
A CHILD OF BOOKS. Written & Illustrated by Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston © 2016 Oliver Jeffers and Sam Winston. Reproduced by permission of Walker Books Ltd.

protagonists' adventures, paths, emotions, objectives, and evolutions—often unconscious. For example, the text from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, and specifically the part of the story in which Alice goes down the rabbit hole—that is the beginning of her fantastic journey—draws the path on which Jeffers and Wilson's characters walk to begin their adventure (**Figure 10**);

- educational tools. The use of this graphic expedient in an illustrated book finds a legitimate justification for its important pedagogical value. A child of a book entertains, transports in an imaginative world, inspires, but mostly, educates as "reading is the foundation of every child's education, and fostering a love of story is the first step in creating a reader" [24]. Young readers will be inspired to create, question, explore, and imagine in this breathtaking visual poem on the benefits of reading and sharing stories. It can be an immersive and unforgettable experience.

4. Final thoughts and future challenges

The analysis conducted aimed to spotlight the expressive potential of typography as a pervasive form of "a-linguistic" communication whose intrinsic value lies in its design characteristics even before its applications. In the framework of this premise, this contribution reflects on the transversality of the graphic project and on the intrinsic value qualities of type design. The choice of two case studies that lend themselves to a multiplicity of interpretations is instrumental, therefore, in formulating some considerations on the role of the graphic designer in the set-up of an editorial project, in this specific case of a graphic novel: placing itself at the point of intersection between writing and image, between graphic design and visual communication, the projects of Rovai, Jeffers, Wilson and many others amplify the relevance of the creative contribution of graphic design as it allows, in these specific examples, to

remediate a classic of literature, and to build from scratch an "intersystemic" story (text and image) whose objective is to underline the value of the medium itself, the book and the reading. In both cases, things become more complex since, as stated above, typographic novels are a form of experimentation that adds an element to the concept of calligram and visual poetry: "sequentiality," and consequently requires a design which must guarantee connection and visual coherence, and must ensure the readability and interpretability of typographical illustrations. In a typographic novel, the typeface that becomes an image, typical of calligrams, evolves into words or sentences that become visual stories, giving them new dignity as design artifacts and new purposes and challenges to the discipline that deals with its construction process, typography. The described typographic novels, in fact, show two of numerous possible configurations and narrative approaches, many of which are yet to be discovered.

Experimentation is open to other forms, but a fundamental critical issue of this type of editorial product is still unresolved: the translation into a foreign language. To date, this problem has not yet found a solution and becomes a constraint from an international market sales perspective, since translating texts would mean redesigning the entire product and altering the integrity of the text transformation in image, inevitably rooted in the culture of the linguistic system of origin, and therefore different from context to context. In the book *Art and Text* (2019), Aimee Selby, Dave Beech, Charles Harrison, and Will Hill write: "to give text a pictorial form reveals complex contradictions between visual representation and linguistic description, and reminds us that language is a fragile and illogical construct, bound to its subject by cultural compact alone. While we take for granted the equivalence between the word and its subject, they are not linked by any actual resemblance, but only by the shared perception of meanings inherent in language" [25].

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Comics and graphic novels are important components of popular culture and have international influence. They engage readers across all age groups and across fiction and non-fiction genres. They address many cultural and social ideas, histories, languages, and concepts with engaging stories and narratives. This book provides international perspectives on comics and graphic novels in various contexts for education that may inform social cognition, curriculum theory, and cultural studies. Interdisciplinary perspectives are highlighted to showcase research, theory, and practices in the use of comics and graphic novels. Complexity within this genre is discussed to provide new and updated perspectives on the theory and practice of comics and graphic novels for their reflection of and influence on culture, their multimodal role in content area literacy, and their influence across social contexts.

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