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# **‘WHAT A WEIRD WORD IT IS’: TYPOGRAPHIC MEANING-MAKING IN ROBERT NYE’S *THE LATE MR. SHAKESPEARE* FROM A MULTIMODAL PERSPECTIVE**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines typography as a semiotic mode involved in multimodal creation of typographic meaning-making in Robert Nye’s *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*. The semiotic principles of symbol, index, icon, and discursive import are employed to describe typographic meaning-making in Nye’s novel. The distinctive typographic features of weight, connectivity and curvature, slanted regular, abnormal hyphens, division slash, the inconsistent use of majuscules and minuscules come to exemplify the effect of salience as a narrative technique in typographic meaning-making. In addition, the interaction of the modes in the given text displays visual similarities either in terms of typography and sound (for example, mocking accent, animal onomatopoeia), in terms of the typeface and handwriting, or between regular type text and the one in italics, thus giving a special prominence to a multimodal analysis of Nye’s *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*.

## **Key words**

*Multimodal stylistic analysis; typographic meaning-making; typographic semiotic principles; semiotic resources; salience*

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## **Introduction**

The present research applies the notions of the social semiotic theory of multimodality to discuss typographic meaning-making in Robert Nye’s *The Late Mr. Shakespeare* (1998) and analyze which of the semiotic resources participate in the multimodal meaning-potential of the novel.

Multimodal texts such as novels, as well as their multifaceted nature and semiotic modes, have been analyzed from a variety of perspectives and by means of numerous approaches. Following the Hallidayan paradigm, Baldry and Thibault have, for example, elaborated on the experiential, interpersonal, textual, and logical dimensions of various sign systems that make up multimodal texts, in order to comprise language, gesture, music, and movement (Baldry and Thibault 2006;

Bystrov and Telegina 2023). Additional scholars have focused on those multimodal texts which contain verbal and visual modes (Kulchyska and Malyshevskaya 2022; McIntyre 2008; Post 2014; Rajabi 2020) and how they function for picture books and graphic novels (Matiishyn 2023; Nalkara 2018; Serafini and Clausen 2012). There have also been discussions of the verbal and acoustic potentials of screen-based texts (Doloughan 2010; Jewitt 2005), the tools of multimodal analysis ('multimodal metaphors') (Forceville 2007; Montoro 2010), multimodal cognitive poetics (Gibbons 2012), corpus linguistics approaches to multimodal texts (Adolphs and Carter 2013; Busse 2010), and even the way these texts are employed in language teaching (Álvarez 2016; Bearne and Wolstencroft 2007; Nørgaard 2011). An analysis of the typography in *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*, in terms of the iconic meaning-potential of typographic features and typographic semiotic principles, seems to be a promising issue from the perspective of multimodal stylistics and its toolkit.

The term 'multimodality' has its roots in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics with a particular focus on verbal language and with three different major kinds of meaning as three metafunctions of language: the experiential, the interpersonal, and the textual metafunction (Nørgaard 2011: 223). Furthermore, the textual metafunction presents "a world in which all the elements of the text cohere internally, and which itself coheres with its relevant environment" (Busse 2010: 471). The social, cultural, and other contexts in which functional social practices occur, and the search for the ways of describing their interaction in the context should be studied in a new social semiotic paradigm dealing with signs as carriers and representations of meaning. In short, voluntary visual images, design elements, color, and unusual typography are juxtaposed in the text as different meaning-making modes and thus forming a complex coherent whole, which can also be explained from a multimodal perspective. Comprehensive introductions of multimodality and the interaction of different modes involved in the construction of a multimodal text may be found in Van Leeuwen (2006), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), Nørgaard (2010b, 2011, 2018).

This paper engages with at least three main challenges. First, a written verbal text represents an interaction of verbal and visual modes as multimodal constructs "that could not have been created by one of the modes alone" (Nørgaard 2010a: 118) and may be analyzed according to different semiotic typographical principles. The social semiotics approach in multimodality research "seems to take for granted that *all* aspects of meaning-generating discourse need to be categorized as being, or belonging to, a mode" (Forceville 2021: 678). The second challenging task, which also merits explanation in terms of multimodality, is that how the reader interprets the meaning of visual elements, how they relate to the written text, and what functions they perform in it. As Nørgaard (2011: 223) claims, "multimodal meaning is more complex than the mere sum of the meanings created by the different modes involved in a given text". Additionally, any written text contains fonts with different boldness, colors, the visual blank space or typography in its own right and these modes tend to convey not exclusively verbal information (e.g. a different font-size may represent the beginning of a new chapter). Finally, the exploration of the semiotic potential of written texts

and their visually reinforced markers within the scope of multimodality studies may be relevant to a discussion of typography in terms of iconic typographic meanings.

In overall terms, a multimodal analysis, as simultaneous employment of verbal and non-verbal semiotic narrative modes of signification, incorporates a written text with a wide range of typographic resources into its texture. Consequently, multimodal stylistics employs a variety of semiotic modes with the aim of constructing typographic meanings in literary texts, as well as drawing attention to typography and such sub-modes as layout, color, and other visual markers which have become meaning-making semiotic resources.

### The Basic Tenets of Typography within the Multimodality Paradigm

Before we present a more specific typographic analysis of *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*, methodological clarification is needed as regards the notion of typography. Contemporary literary theorists have manifested a theoretical interest in multimodal texts with visual images and a variety of graphic design elements where a prominent place is given to typographically realized meanings.

Typography, as one of the semiotic modes of significance to the multimodal creation of the meaning of the text, is usually defined as “the visual side of written verbal language which may be meaningful in itself as well as in multimodal interaction with wording” (Nørgaard 2011: 226). The visual side of printed verbal language reveals its semiotic essence, and more importantly, needs to be analyzed irrespective of its source of production. Even if the printing typography in the text is conventional, however, it has its semiotic significance. A new role is given to typography in Van Leeuwen’s *Towards a Semiotics of Typography*:

A new typography has emerged which no longer sees itself as a humble craft in the service of the written word, but as spearheading innovation in graphic design, and which no longer sees typography as an ‘abstract art’, but as a means of communication in its own right (Van Leeuwen 2006: 142).

The very term ‘typography’ can be defined in different ways. In the broad sense of the word, varying from printed calligraphy to handwriting, typography is “the art and technique of arranging type to make language visible” (Serafini and Clausen 2012: 4). According to Barthes’s theory, typography is approached as the secondary poetic organization of the planar written surface and typographic signs are analyzed as elements of an independent plastic organization with its own meaning production (Barthes 1990: 136). Written language is materialized in some particular form: a particular typeface or font with the aim of making language visible. In attempting to model the ‘grammar’ of typography, Stöckl suggests it as an open (non-static) resource for text-analytical purposes. He claims that “[t]he meaning of typographic resources lies in their wide range of flexible communicative functions, in their pragmatic and aesthetic impact over and above the

provision of pure legibility” (Stöckl 2005: 208). In short, in his view, typography should realize and develop the particular communicative potential of the text.

According to Van Leeuwen, typography has mostly been seen not only as a mode but also as a medium, “a collection of distinct, individual typefaces, with distinct provenances, to be listed alphabetically, as in the word processor, or at best grouped together on the basis of historical principles and ‘influences’, rather than systematically” (Van Leeuwen 2006: 145). As Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 142) claim, “typography should be viewed not as a static grammar, but as an open resource, whose users creatively shape and extend its sign repertoire and the signs’ functions”.

The analysis of typographic meaning-making within the multimodality paradigm is based on four typographic semiotic principles, these being ‘symbol’, ‘icon’, ‘index’, and ‘discursive import’; with the first three ones being represented in Peirce’s tripartition of signs. All these notions were borrowed and described by Van Leeuwen (2006) and later comprehensively discussed in Nørgaard (2009) who suggested a network of the distinctive features of letterforms. Such distinctive typographic features as *weight* (bold ↔ regular; bold ↔ light), *expansion* (condensed/narrow ↔ expanded/wide), *slope* (sloping ↔ upright), *curvature* (angular ↔ rounded), *connectivity* (connected ↔ disconnected), *orientation* (horizontal orientation ↔ vertical orientation), *regularity* (regular ↔ irregular) need to be identified in order to deploy the iconic meaning potential of typography in Nye’s *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*. Thus this paper will examine typography in a literary text in which particular attention will be paid to the semiotic principles of *index*, *icon*, and *discursive import*. The novel’s typeface selected for analysis varies from conventional typeface to a ‘typographically experimental’ one by introducing various semiotic resources and narrative techniques.

At this point in the analysis, the notion of ‘symbol’ also requires explanation. In the broad sense of the word, symbolicity is mainly connected to verbal language. Taking into account Peirce’s notions of ‘habit’ and ‘convention’ as the determining ground of symbols, the typographic semiotic principle of ‘symbol’ in the text under study may be revealed in the arbitrary use of typography by the author of the novel and may also be useful for handling the parts of the verbal text that are printed in conventional plain black typography. As Elleström rightly points out, “the concept of symbol must be scrutinized from a truly broad perspective and in a methodical way that does not start from but rather ends with verbal language” (Elleström 2022: 2). For example, plain black typeface ‘Garamond’ in *The Late Mr. Shakespeare* is used to create the iconic typographic meaning of the ‘typographically conventional’ as “any creative typographic layout gives rise to a kind of iconic signification that exists in literary texts” (Erkazanci 2007: 54).

Another important concept, which is related to typography as a multimodal issue, is that of ‘salience’. As typography is not restricted only to letter forms, it results from the interplay of a number of non-verbal features: size, sharpness of focus, tonal and color contrasts, placement in the visual site, or even the appearance of a potent cultural symbol. In other words, salience performs a specific communicative function, that is to make words, phrases or clauses stand out from the ones that surround them by means of different sizes, fonts, sets, and

weights. Thus, the use of typography points to the visibility of the written text, its notational iconicity (Krämer 2003), and the visual appearance of the letters give rise to their specific functions in the novel.

As a result, the present paper concerning typographic meaning-making in Robert Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare* raises the following research questions: to analyze (1) the multimodal interaction of verbal and visual modes in meaning-making; (2) how semiotic principles of symbol, index, icon, and discursive import contribute to the typographic meaning-making in Nye's novel; (3) how typography may create indexical and iconic meanings in many subtle and unusual ways; and (4) how these individual strands of indexical and iconic meanings of typography can be combined with and related to the verbal mode of the novel.

### **Typographic Meaning-Making and the Interdependence of Semiotic Principles in Robert Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare***

Combining Kress and van Leeuwen (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001) and Nørgaard's multimodal approaches to the analysis of the verbal narrative (Nørgaard 2009; Nørgaard 2010a; Nørgaard 2010b) with the complex interaction of semiotic resources in the novel, this research will focus on typographic meaning-making and typographic semiotic principles in Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*.

The novel is shaped by the texts of the present as much as by the inclusions of the past, including everything ever written about Shakespeare, and everything the novelist's imagination incorporates into the portrayal, from a mock test on the author to a recipe for pudding, from medical nostrums and remedies to a manuscript page of the play *Sir Thomas More*. An important aspect of the meaning-making potential in this novel, which encourages a multimodal analysis, is created by making use of a number of entries such as the quotations from the plays and sonnets, drawings, different scripts, holograph manuscripts, or even the stage.

The concept of 'salience', which is used to describe semiotic means of expression in the focus of attention of the addressee, makes the textual environment and its elements (words, phrases or paragraphs) stand out from others – be it of different typefaces, weight, slant, size or color. In the current study, the term 'salience', adopted from Van Leeuwen's *Towards a Semiotics of Typography*, is meant to "foreground key elements of a text and background less important elements" (Van Leeuwen 2006: 144).

Salience, as a narrative technique and an adequate analytical property for providing a systematic analysis of literary texts, not only extends the existing multimodal studies but also helps enact the commonly employed concept of 'foregrounding' or 'motivated prominence', the linguistic phenomenon outlined by Halliday in his *Linguistic Studies of Text and Discourse*. In search of an integrated approach to language and style and in comparing *foregrounding* with that of *prominence*, Halliday concludes that:

[f]oregrounding, as I understand it, is prominence that is motivated. It is not difficult to find patterns of prominence in a poem or prose text,

regularities in the sounds or words or structures that stand out in some way, or may be brought out by careful reading; and one may often be led in this way towards a new insight, through finding that such prominence contributes to the writer's total meaning. But unless it does, it will seem to lack motivation; a feature that is brought into a prominence will be 'foregrounded' only if it relates to the meaning of the text as a whole. This relationship is a functional one: if a particular feature of the language contributes, by its prominence, to the total meaning of the work, it does so by virtue of and through the medium of its own value in the language – through the linguistic function from which its meaning is derived (Halliday 2002: 98).

*The Late Mr. Shakespeare* (1998) is the second Shakespearian novel from the pen of the English author Robert Nye (1939 – 2016). He previously wrote the novel *Mrs. Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1993) which is narrated from the viewpoint of Anne Hathaway Shakespeare and which shares a number of experimental features with the subject of our present analysis. Nye was a particularly prolific author writing not only novels, but poetry, theatrical plays and books for children. His arguably most well-known and most acclaimed novel *Falstaff* (1976) provides a bawdy, rollicking back-story to one of Shakespeare's most beloved characters who features in the two *Henry IV* plays and the comedy *Merry Wives of Windsor*.<sup>1</sup>

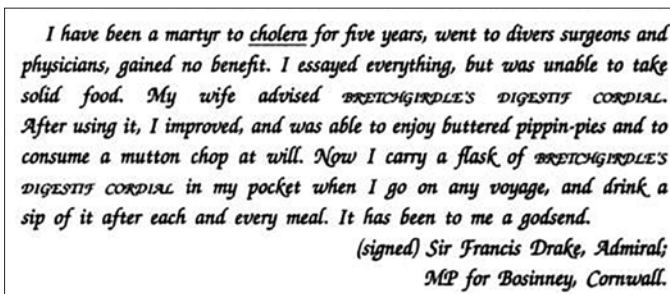
Part fact, part fiction, or even part fantasy, *The Late Mr. Shakespeare* is a post-modern novel about the life of the playwright. The narrator Robert Reynolds, alias Pickleherring, presents his life story as a boy actor in Shakespeare's troupe, hoping to dispel many rumors and lies about the life of his older friend and mentor. Robert Nye has written this fictional biography using a variety of legitimate sources, but relies most on a healthy dose of sheer tall-tale-telling and bawdy reconstructions of Elizabethan London. His reconstruction of Shakespeare's childhood and the infamous "lost years" in particular abound with rich detail about life in suburban Stratford. Pickleherring, "who feels free to play with the facts and uses his imagination to create stories" (Valdivieso 2005: 59), also offers provocative theories about the sources for Shakespeare's greatest characters and speeches, and gossip commentary on other luminaries of the Elizabethan stage, such as Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and the mysterious Dark Lady of the sonnets.

Nye always tries, on the one hand, to support the narrative with documentary evidence about Shakespeare's works and demonstrate the reliability of the representation, and, on the other hand, gives a key role to that played by his imagination, thereby separating himself from the so-called facts. As Valdivieso notes, "Shakespeare's life, Robert Nye is telling us, can hardly be represented in history books and biographies, not only because of the difficulties inherent to the task of writing the past, but also because he has become, like the characters he created, part of the popular imagination of the English mind" (Valdivieso 2005: 57).

As Savu asserts, such fictional biographies are "only a sample of contemporary fictions that rework past authors, voices, and styles, highlighting the palimpsest texture of (life) writing, the ways in which it is shaped by other texts and bears

the traces of intertextuality” (Savu 2009: 21-22). From a multimodal perspective, the playful strategy of postmodern texts employs paragraphemic stylistic means including typographic variations, which effect their interpretation (Tykha 2016: 65). The status of paratexts becomes prominent in that regard although such devices as titles, prefaces and epigraphs have been referred to by Genette (1997: 7) as being iconic (such as illustrations) or material (such as typography).

As part of its meaning-making, the novel *The Late Mr. Shakespeare* incorporates verbal storytelling and visual elements, and contains a holograph manuscript as a recommendation written in cursive script and read by John Shakespeare, William’s father, who suffered from indigestion. In Figure 1, visual reproduction as a semiotic resource in the novel is an example of the distinctive feature of ‘regularity’, i.e. the regular nature of the typeface with sloping resembling the sloping of handwriting and demonstrating the iconic meaning potential of letterforms. Thus, this authentic handwriting is not only employed iconically but also manifests the iconic nature of the typography. The slope of the typeface also projects the meaning potential of authentic writing as if Sir Francis Drake had actually written those words.



**Figure 1.** The iconic meaning potential of authentic writing and the distinctive feature of regularity in *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*

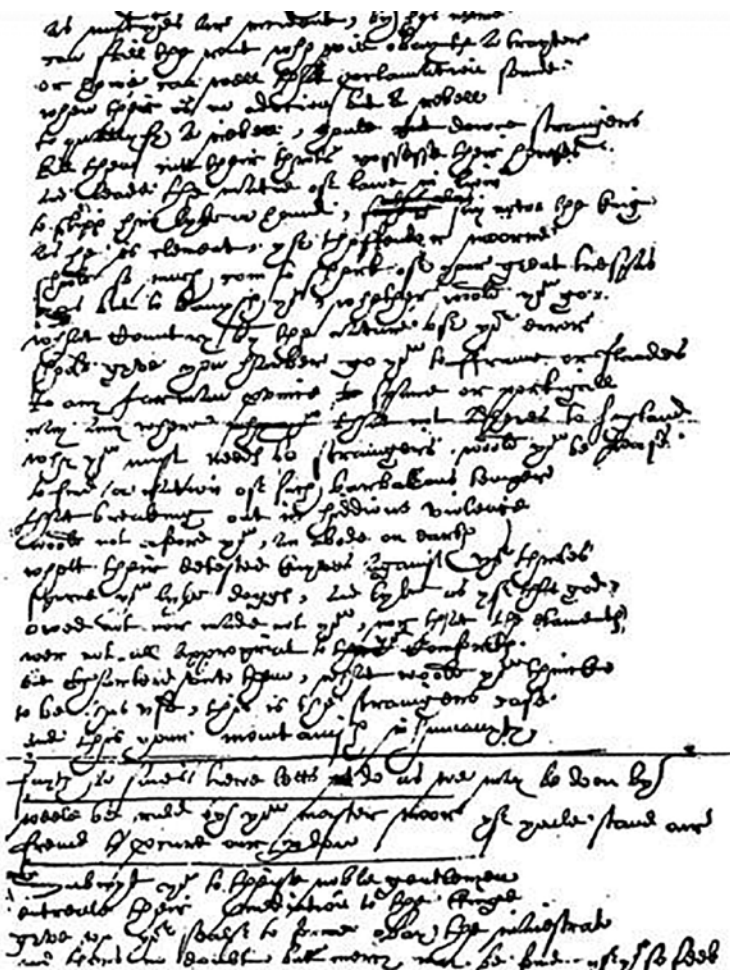
The use of the semiotic principle of *index* may be seen “when the typographic signifier shows traces of its own material coming into being and can hence be seen as a marker of the person, tool, etc. that produced the text” (Nørgaard 2018: 87). Moreover, “the meaning-potential of the index resides in a basically physical and causal relation between the typographical signifier and the signified, as in the archetypal example of the relation between smoke and fire” (Nørgaard 2018: 82).

In Figure 2, such typographical distinctive features as weight, connectivity, and curvature appear powerful and visually salient displaying iconic similarities of handwriting. The indexical typographic meaning of “the presence of the Shakespeare’s hand” draws the attention of the reader to certain typefaces. Furthermore, Shakespeare’s handwriting may be used to connote cultural knowledge and values which are usually associated with the Elizabethan era and thus pay tribute to Shakespeare’s works.

At the same time, one may notice illegible graphic traces and some irregularities in graphic form on this single page. As the narrator Pickleherring confirms,

“When my master’s mind was white-hot it was a wonder that the page did not catch fire beneath his hand, so fast his pen ran. He wrote the first two acts of *Macbeth* in a single day” (Nye 2000: 241). Shakespeare’s handwriting and letterforms may arguably be seen as an indexical marker of Shakespeare to signify a possible iconic similarity between its disintegration and the disintegration of his state of mind. It should be noted that, in contrast to the indexical meaning of handwriting as a signifier of Shakespeare, the iconic typographic meaning of ‘mental disturbance’ is far more dependent on the multimodal interaction of typography and wording.

This is the example in which two types of typographic meaning, namely indexical and iconic meanings, occur simultaneously. We have thus demonstrated how Shakespeare's disintegrating handwriting in Nye's novel might even be interpreted as an iconic typographic signifier of Shakespeare's mental condition.



**Figure 2.** A page written by ‘Hand D’ (William Shakespeare) in Nye’s *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*

The effect of salience can be assessed across different paragraphs with distinctive typographic features. For example, in (1), the meaning-making semiotic principle is best categorized as *iconic*. As Nørgaard states, “in the case of iconicity, the signifier resembles or imitates the signified” (2018: 82). Consequently, a certain humorous effect of baaing and bleating is created by the foregrounded (salient) rearrangement of the letters *ab eb ib ob ub* and by the typographic distinctive feature ‘division slash’ in order to explain to the readers the ‘correct’ pronunciation of the syllables. In this example, the italic characters signify the use of sonic salience as a different kind of visual salience to construct the iconic typographic meaning of ‘animal onomatopoeia’:

- (1) Here is Shakespeare’s alphabet, both large and small, followed by a barbaric regiment of monosyllables: *ab eb ib ob ub / ba be bi bo bu*. (I read the chant straight across at the second line. See where Holofernes comes from, with his baaing and his bleating?) (Nye 2000: 110).

Similarly, the typographic salience of uppercase characters and abnormal but meaningful hyphens in the following example (2) are employed to give emphasis to certain words in the excerpt. The iconic typographic meaning of a ‘mocking accent’ is created visually by the typography thus providing an almost comic self-portrait of the narrator:

- (2) What a weird word it is, this ALCOHOL. In my father’s kidskin dictionary it says that it comes from the name of a certain black powder of lead ore which the ladies in Barbary once put upon their eyelids: AL-KA-HOL (Nye 2000: 215).

In passages (3) and (4), the visual salience of italics and verbal irony are clearly employed iconically:

- (3) Who is Shakespeare? What is he? (that all our swains commend him). Yes, good reader, *what* is Shakespeare? That is the question my book is trying to answer. *What is Shakespeare?* Where is he to be found? (Nye 2000: 38).
- (4) As *you* say, madam, and about time too, not to speak of providing a ‘simple answer’ to a ‘simple question’.  
*The Dark Lady: who was she?* (Nye 2000: 288).

Nye initiates his own search for a real Shakespeare compiling the sum of the stories about his biography (Example 3), however, his searches for the Dark Lady from Shakespeare’s sonnets unfortunately failed (Example 4). Her secret identity has, of course, troubled many literary critics and historians, and her elusive identity has remained a mystery for centuries.

In the examples above, the use of italics is realized by the distinctive feature of ‘slanted regular’ (sloping) to signify the mode of wording. Such a use of italics

is fairly conventional and is hence a feature of texts that readers do not in all probability tend not to notice all that much. The use of italics is employed for such functions as signifying proper names, foreign words, words quoted in direct speech, contrast and emphasis. Awareness of conventions is not enough, however, to make sense of this example. As a matter of fact, italics appear to provide quite a number of different kinds of meaning in Nye's novel. The reader's ability to decode instances of italics largely depends on the multimodal nature of meaning-making in the passages.

As a result, the visual contrast between the text in regular type and the text in italic characters "may be seen as iconically signifying difference in terms of meaning" (Nørgaard 2018: 100–101). Irrespective of the fact that readers usually do not pay much attention to italics realized by the distinctive feature of sloping, typographic salience in the instances above needs to be decoded and interpreted.

The semiotic principle of *discursive import* concerns the typographic signs and their associated meanings that "are imported into a context where they did not previously belong" (Nørgaard 2018: 104). These typographic signs usually demonstrate to what extent they can change or modify the meaning of the text. An example of this is the use of the trinitarian formula "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" referring to the three persons of the Christian Trinity and which is often followed by an 'Amen'. This formula is mentioned in the novel where (with the omission of 'Amen') Robert Nye presents Shakespeare's Lord's Prayer. In terms of multimodality, the semiotic principle of discursive import and its "visual manifestation" (Bystrov et al. 2023: 114) is conveyed by such distinctive features as the use of italics and Old English (Black-letter) fonts or Medieval calligraphy (Figure 3).

Here is Shakespeare's Lord's Prayer, his *Patemoster* cut out in black-letter, with above it his *In nomine*, in Gothic script: **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, & of the holy Ghost.**

Figure 3. Italics and Blackletter fonts in Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*

The typographic discursive import constructs the high modality of a given excerpt as a means of visual communication. Furthermore, the effect of the discursive import is one of aligning the readers with Shakespeare, so that they see what he sees. More generally, the Old English font visually reinforces the iconic typographic meaning of a 'different text', thereby reminding the readers of the discursive import which is so significant for the whole novel.

We have attempted to demonstrate, at this point, how indexical typographic meaning is created when a typographic signifier holds traces of its own materialization and may consequently be seen as a marker of the person who is being talked about. We have also shown how typographic signifiers display visual similarities with what is signified by a given text.

Another example of the semiotic principle of discursive import is the use of the musical notes font which contains a list of special musical symbols including lines, notes, clefs, rests, accidentals, time signatures, ties, and slurs (Figure 4). In

the novel, one can find the words with the music of *O Polly Dear*, a ballad sung by the narrator's mother to get him to sleep, and later sung two times by the narrator himself to Mr. Shakespeare. As a multimodal construct, the musical notes font signifies both sonic salience and the iconic typographic meaning of a 'different text' which is imported into a literary text.



Figure 4. Musical notes font in Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*

In Figure 5, the author of the novel skillfully combines the cultural values of the past with that of the present in Chapter One Hundred entitled as *In which Pickleherring lays down his pen after telling of the curse on Shakespeare's grave*. This old script upon the gravestone can therefore be used to foreground the iconic typographic meaning of the "imperishable memory of William Shakespeare". Nye also presents the last poem written by William Shakespeare inscribed upon his gravestone retaining the original script and the modern version of the curse as an epitaph written out in modern spelling, punctuation and italics (Example 5):

**GOOD FREND FOR IESVS SAKE FORBEARE,  
TO DIGG THE DVST ENCLOSED HEARE:  
BLESTE BE Y MAN Y SPARES THES STONES,  
AND CVRST BE HE Y MOVES MY BONES.**

Figure 5. The epitaph written on Shakespeare's grave  
(adopted from *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*)

- (5) *Good friend, for Jezu's sake forbear,  
To dig the dust enclosed here!  
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,  
And cursed be he that moves my bones.* (Nye 2000: 396)

In the example below (6), the analysis of letter spacing as the meaning-making device makes the word F A R E W E L L stand out from the others which end on the capitalized word and becomes a layout unit on its own. This excerpt corresponds to the last words of the narrator Pickleherring who created a multiple portrait of the playwright. Nye has done this in true postmodern fashion, wherein many different and contradictory Shakespeares are possible:

- (6) An  
ever  
writer  
to a never reader  
F A R E W E L L (Nye 2000: 399)

Formulating his farewell gesture, Nye employs the typographic distinctive features of expanded uppercase letters and space between letters ('kerning') which are iconically positioned, which all refer to the end of the narrator's arduous work.

In summary, the multimodal dimension of typography, visual salience, and typographic meanings has become one of the semiotic resources in understanding the multimodal ensemble in Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*.

## Conclusion

In a similar way to stylistics and style, the notion of 'typography' in multimodal stylistics extends the stylistic tool-kit to incorporate appropriate tools into general issues of typographic semiosis and the multimodal analysis of typographic meaning-making in Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*. With the aim of approaching the semiotic significance of typography as the visual side of printed verbal language, this research focuses on typographic semiotic principles and typographic meaning-making in Nye's novel. In our treatment of typography above, we have employed Van Leeuwen and Nørgaard's semiotic principles of symbol, index, icon, and discursive import that participate in the construction of typographic meaning-making.

Thus, typography is conceptualized in the novel as a semiotic mode which makes written verbal language visible and which is foregrounded by typographic meanings. As a result, the revealed indexical and iconic typographic meanings turn out to be relevant to the multimodal analysis of the given text. Such semiotic resources as layout, illustrations, and visual images participate not only in the multimodal creation of typographic meaning-making of the literary text but have become an integral part of Nye's novel.

In this paper, the effect of salience as a narrative technique is used to reveal the multimodal meaning potential of typography by foregrounding different typefaces, italicized words, capitalized items, and musical notes. The distinctive typographic features of weight, connectivity and curvature, slanted regular, abnormal hyphens, division slash, expanded uppercase letters, and space between letters give a special prominence to the multimodal analysis of Nye's *The Late Mr. Shakespeare*. In addition to this, the visual similarities between typography and sound (e.g. mocking accent, animal onomatopoeia), between the typeface and handwriting, as well as between the text in regular type and that in italics play a significant role in addition to the verbal mode of the novel. In the examples of iconic and indexical principles, they both may occur simultaneously within one piece of narration to make it a complex coherent whole. With typographic discursive import, the significance of social and cultural contexts is highly apparent in order to understand its significant role in typographic meaning-making.

In summary, the social semiotics approach in multimodality research may lead to a further analysis of the multimodal interplay of the modes of wording and visual art within the framework of cognitive multimodal poetics.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For more on the Shakespeare books by Robert Nye, see Livingstone, David (2019) *In Our Own Image: Fictional Representations of William Shakespeare*. Olomouc: Palacký University.

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