TYPOGRAPHY AS A REGIME OF READING/LOOKING

Typosography as a regime of reading/looking in Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye (1970)

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Abstract: This paper aims to investigate the significance of typography in Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye. With this view, the research deployed multimodal theory and multimodal stylistics theorized and developed by Kress & Van Leeuwen, Van Leeuwen’s social semiotics, and Norgaard’s multimodal stylistics. The key features of typography and layout such as typeface, type styles, punctuation, salience, information value, discursive import and visual negation were put into practice in reading the novel. Typography was viewed as a semiotic resource along with genre as another semiotic resource. The findings of the research indicate the opposition between the verbal and visual modes in the novel. More specifically, Morrison helps the reader visually experience the dominance of eye and vision in America through activating his or her visual imagination. The paper also suggests that the blank space of the page is a suitable opportunity for battles of cultures, visual and verbal supremacy. Finally, the paper concludes that the act of reading The Bluest Eye is simultaneously an act of seeing and looking at, too.

Subjects: Introductory Literary Studies; Interdisciplinary Literary Studies; Literary/Critical Theory

Keywords: typography; The Bluest Eye; Toni Morrison; genre; multimodal analysis

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper reads Toni Morrison’s novel, The Bluest Eye (Morrison, 1970) by focusing on page layout, typeface, typestyle, spacing, punctuation, capital and lowercase in this novel because Toni Morrison played with them. For example, she removes the spaces between some words and lines; she writes some words in capitals and some words in italics; she cuts some texts and paste them somewhere else. Sometimes, she removes the punctuation and makes it difficult to read the novel quickly. The reader has to both read and see the text and words. Morrison wants to show that there are two types of families in America: the American middle class families and African-American families. Nowadays, the authors write their novels with more images, illustrations, different page spaces, typefaces and typestyles. With the growth of technology, texts cannot be written only in words. Novels and texts need more than words.
1. Introduction

Although it is said that typography lacks a universal definition (Walker, 2001), some scholars have attempted to define it. To Morison, it is the art of “arranging the letters, distributing the space and controlling the type as to aid to the maximum the reader’s comprehension of the text” (Morison, 1955, p. 3). Typography is the visual communication and making language visible (Cullen, 2012; Altman in Tselentis, 2011; Walker, 2001). Other scholars hold that written texts inevitably involve more than the words (Dicerto, 2018; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Despite disagreements about definition of typography, it is now argued that typography should be viewed as an independent semiotic mode with “its own, typographically realized meanings, alongside and simultaneously with those realized by the author’s words.” (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 26) As an independent semiotic mode, typography provides an “economy of expression” and the communication of “complex and multilayered messages in a single moment” (Billard, 2016, p. 4583). Cullen (2012) advises writers to merge “communication with aesthetics—one without the other limits the potential to convey information effectively and beautifully.” (p. 12) The importance of typography lies in the fact, due to its potential meanings, it can affect the reading and perception of texts (Gallagher, 2018, p. 2). Literary texts are more likely to draw on the resources of typography to convey the intended meanings and effects. As such literary texts are regarded as a suitable candidate for being characterized as multimodal. Multimodal literature has the advantage of conveying “complex and multilayered messages in a single moment” (Billard, 2016, P. 4583). Gibbons (2012a) refers to those literary texts which deploy “a multitude of semiotic modes in the communication and progression of their narratives” (p. 420). Page provides a list of semiotic modes such as “language, image, color [sic], typography, music, voice quality, dress, gesture, spatial resources, perfume and cuisine” (Page, 2010, p. 6). More specifically, typefaces can express “values such as association, style, identify, differentiation, and beauty” in addition to the encoded textual meaning (Leonidas, 2012, p. 50). Meaning arises from the “integrated use of the two semiotic resources” (O’Halloran, 2004b, p. 1) of verbal and visual.

Among Morrison’s oeuvre, The Bluest Eye is probably the only novel which avails itself of a variety of typographical and layout resources in the hope of communicating and conveying intended themes to its readers. It juxtaposes African-American oral storytelling genre, American educational genre, official narratives, Bildungsroman genre and Western genre of the novel to present a multimodal text. In fact, Toni Morrison in The Bluest Eye (Morrison, 1970), deploys a range of typographical and layout resources to create an experimental and hybrid text wherein the verbal and visual modes perform their own communicative functions individually and collectively. The multimodality of The Bluest Eye renders it a suitable object for multimodal stylistic analysis. With this in view, the research makes use of multimodal theory and stylistics. More specifically, the present research aims at exploring the significance and functions of the typographical devices in the thematic and formal structure of the novel. By implication, this study goes towards suggesting that the imposition of word on the blank space of a page could be related with power relations in literature (particularly in minority literature)1 and community. As Van Leeuwen (2008) notes, “we use space in acting out social practices” (p. 88). Moreover, the spatial arrangement of the page by an author could be viewed as an intervention in the selection and manipulation of the literary genre for some specific purposes.

2. A review of literature on The Bluest Eye

Since its publication in 1970, The Bluest Eye has been the focus of a variety of studies by a number of different scholars within American and African-American literature and outside of America. The following section is a historical survey of the researches most relevant to the topic of this paper. Regarding the hegemony of whiteness and its associated values, Byerman (1982) holds that in The Bluest Eye the ideological hegemony of whiteness has been so firmly entrenched in the African Americans that the Breedloves have accepted and internalized their own “ugliness” and they do not even resist it (p. 449). Butler- Evans (1989) states that “Contrasts between the Dick- and- Jane world and the ‘real’ world of the Breedloves are structured around several sets of binary oppositions: White/Black, affluence/poverty, desirability/undesirability, order/chaos, valued/devalued” (p.
Bishop (1993) believes that in longing for the bluest eye and possessing it, Pecola becomes the “bluest I,” which indicates Morrison’s powerful pun on the title of the book. The possession of the bluest eyes means salvation (p. 254). Kester (1995) argues that “blue eyes stand as a pars pro toto, a synecdoche for a white little girl whom a racist culture would consider beautiful” (p. 77). According to Towner (1997) the words in the primer “scream their [white] simplistic morality, and their normalcy” (p. 124). Salvatore (2002) refers to the paired characters in The Bluest Eye and states that Morrison portrays characters who create their own identities within determinism and existentialism by a deep engagement with both intellect and emotion, along with community support. Thus, Morrison has transformed the Bildungsroman into a dialectical form. Gibson (2007) in “Text and Countertext in Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye” holds that “The text says we are oppressed by the values of the ruling class; the countertext says we participate in our own oppression usually to the extent of being literally the very hand or arm of that oppression” (p. 38). Dittmar (2007) in her paper titled “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?” The Politics of Form in The Bluest Eye” argues “The Bluest Eye exists within the power structures which control our lives.” (p. 77) Smith writes that “The Bluest Eye is certainly born out of the racial self-consciousness of the 1960s. But the novel also evokes the advantages and liabilities black migrants from the South encountered as they adapted to their new lives in the North (in this case, Lorain, Ohio) during the postwar era.” (Smith, 2013, p. 19) According to Roynon (2013) The Bluest Eye is primarily about the causes and devastating consequences of intraracial racism in which African Americans humiliate and dislike the others due to insidious, destructive value system learned from whites’ oppression of blacks (p. 16). Eaton (2013) maintains “In The Bluest Eye, Pecola has no agency, as do the other girls in the novel” (p. 54). Regarding the structure of The Bluest Eye as modern, even postmodern, Wagner-Martin (2015) argues that Morrison’s text is a difficult one due to the incorporated layers of separate stories, often without explanation or signal (p. 14). In The Bluest Eye there is a structural dialogue between the epigraphs taken from the Dick-and-Jane reading primer that idealize white family norms and the text of Pecola’s wretched childhood (Wyatt, 2017, p. 7). Yancy (2017) states that readers at the very beginning of The Bluest Eye encounter a string of sentences without punctuation which demonstrates familial and ontological fractures in Pecola Breedlove’s life (pp. 175–6). The Primer in The Bluest Eye is a powerful irony since it looks like a fairy tale/fake narrative in comparison with the life of the Breedlove family (Yancy, 2017, p. 195). Beavers (2018) believes that “race, gender, and class combine to foreground the central role white supremacy and patriarchy play in Pecola’s victimization and how they buttress Cholly’s decision to participate in that victimization” (p. 19). Sofiani et al. (2019) state that in The Bluest Eye, it is very difficult for Pecola to develop her own identity because the influence of the contexts gives negative self-image, lack of self-esteem, anxiety, and trauma (p. 262). Emmanouil and Etim (2019) research shows in a novel such as The Bluest Eyes, one can locate the textualisation of queer acts such as paedoophilia, phytophilia or dendrophilia, zoophililia, sceptorphilia and polyamorous relationship, among others (p. 281). Escott (2019) argues that whiteness is represented as being equal to transhumanism which makes Pecola seek solace outside her race. Whiteness is equated with perfection and blackness is construed as a blemish (p. 121). Mohoci (2019) states that in Morrison’s first novel, The Bluest Eye, race is presented as the root of individual and social psychosis (p. 60). From a new angle, Hubers (2019) analyzes the use of crime and criminal activity throughout several of Toni Morrison’s books including The Bluest Eye and concludes that African American women and children are the leading victim demographic, typically victimized by African American male adults, with whites being conspicuously absent (p. 73).

Almost all studies carried out about The Bluest Eye have shed light on a variety of issues such as race, violence, victimization and black consciousness. As Roynon (2013) puts it generally speaking, critics have so far explored many themes in Morrison’s The Bluest eye such as the resonances of World War II, the meaning of “home” in African-American experience, the ease with which a community scapegoats vulnerable individuals, or the strategic engagement with the classical myths of Demeter and Persephone, and of Tereus and Procne (p. 22). However, no research has attempted to conduct a multimodal analysis of text as a hybrid text experimenting with typographical resources to make meanings and incorporating a range of discourses and texts into its texture.
3. Theoretical method
To explore the function of typography and layout in the process of meaning-making in The Bluest Eye (Morrison, 1970), this paper opted for multimodal analysis and stylistics. The main theoretical framework most often used in multimodal stylistics is Halliday’s social semiotics/systemic functional grammar (SFG) as elaborated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (Pillière, 2014). In addition to Van Leeuwen’s theory, the research will also use Nørgaard’s (2019) multimodal stylistics of the novel.

There is now a universal agreement that all texts employ more than one semiotic mode to some extent (Baldry & Thibault, 2006, p. 58). This applies even to more conventional texts, including print ones, which have traditionally been assumed to be monomodal (Lee, 2014, p. 349). Consequently, all texts are multimodal and their analysis requires a theory of multimodality. A multimodal framework, among other things, puts stress on stylistic choices associated with writing such as font and layout (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). Within this approach, the author is viewed as a text producer and designer employing the available resources. As a motivated producer, the author reflects on the choices open to them in their meaning-making attempts. According to Halliday (2013), “All human activity involves choice: doing this rather than doing that. Semiotic activity involves semiotic choice: meaning this rather than meaning that.” (p. 15) Following Halliday’s view of language as social semiotic, Fontaine holds that the choice must be interpreted “semiotically” (Fontaine, 2013, p. 3). In social semiotics, linguistic meaning-making is viewed as a “social phenomenon influencing and influenced by the context in which it occurs.” (Nørgaard et al., 2010, p. 3) As a result, any choice becomes “a function of context” (Nørgaard et al., 2010, p. 2). Social semiotics is distinguished from other forms of semiotics in its emphasis on how ‘individuals, with their social histories, socially shaped, located in social environments, using socially made, culturally available resources, are agentive and generative in sign-making and communication” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 54).

Multimodal stylistics combines literary stylistics with multimodal theory in its attempt to analyze multimodal texts by paying attention to the visual elements such as the choice of typeface, colour, lay-out, illustrations and so on. These visual elements are considered to be as important as the linguistic text and the role of multimodal stylistics is to demonstrate how the different semiotic resources interact to produce meaning (Pillière, 2014).

4. A multimodal analysis of genre and typography in The Bluest Eye (1970)
Having introduced and discussed multimodal analysis, definition and components of typography above, the research will move on to a multimodal analysis of Morrison’s The Bluest Eye (Morrison, 1970). The analysis will focus, first, on Toni Morrison’s use of the master genre of Bildungsroman in which other subgenres are embedded and, second, on her selection of typographical resources such as typeface, line spacing, italics, salience, discursive import, layout, foregrounding, and visual negation.7 Regarding the level of analysis, the research will concentrate on the micro-typography (typeface), meso-typography (the level of lines and text blocks) and macro-typography (the level of the page).

Genre is another semiotic resource which could be deployed in meaning making. As such genres are best seen, not as types of text, but as semiotic resources that can be used in many different contexts (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 126). The Bluest Eye (Morrison, 1970) is primarily about two African-American families, the MacTeers and the Breedloves, whose lives are narrated from the perspective of Claudia MacTeer. More particularly, this homodiegetic narrator recounts the events of one year, 1940, in the lives of both families. However, the novel centres on the tragic story of Pecola Breedlove, an ugly little black daughter who longs for the bluest eye in the world. Since Morrison puts Pecola’s physical, moral, psychological and educational development at the center of the novel, she selects the genre of Bildungsroman as the overarching framework in the fictional space of the novel. As a text producer, Morrison finds the master genre of Bildungsroman as a suitable space wherein she implants other sub-genres such as songs, letters, African American oral storytelling and confession to set up a story world in which genres are positioned in vertical and/or horizontal relations to each other. The Bluest Eye is a hybridization of the various genres
and Morrison’s juxtaposition of all these genres and discourses brings about a disruption in the White master narrative. The characteristic of such an “interrogative” carnival text, is its “tendency to employ a range of discourses which may function oppositionally or dialectically” (Stephens, 1992, p. 124). Accordingly, one of the fundamental features of The Bluest Eye is the opposition among different voices in its narrative structure, which is actualized through the verbal and visual arrangement of those genres and texts. The adjacent but jarring genres in The Bluest Eye point to the existence of conflict between African Americans and White Americans. Weiss and Wodak (2003) contend that genres can be used to exercise or challenge power (p. 15). Therefore, texts are not “mere words” because “they embody a rather complex set of power relations and hierarchies” (Jordan-Zachery, 2009, p. 16). Storytelling is one of the semiotic resources in the hands of colonized people “to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Said, 1993, pp. xii, xiii).

After the selection of the genres, Morrison seeks to find other semiotic resources to demonstrate the existent configuration of the voices and (di)visions inside America. Thus, she finds typography and page layout as two beneficial tools to help readers visualize the status of minorities of caste and class in America.

Typography is considered as another semiotic resource in meaning-making process. Baldry and Thibault (2006) define a semiotic resource as “a system of possible meanings and forms typically used to make meanings in particular contexts.” (p. 18) Meaning in hybrid texts can therefore be seen as a series of choices from the available semiotic resources available to the author, that is, “meaning is choice from a system” (Jewitt, 2009, p. 23). This focus on semiotic resources reflects multimodality theory’s emphasis on the openness and potential meanings of different modes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 122) instead of a fixed and highly constrained regularity (Gunther, 2010, pp. 7–8).

As it was already mentioned scholars and theorists are in disagreement about a unified definition of typography. However, they define typography in their own ways. According to Fei (2004), typography is the materialization of language in words in printed text and a “visual experience” (p. 228), consisting of systems of Font and Layout. The system of Font in typography has three sub-systems including type, size and colour and the system of layout includes the systems of Spacing and Justification (pp. 226, 234). Butteric (2010) defines typography as “the visual component of the text” which reinforces the meaning (p. 16). Felici defines typography as covering both typeface, type size, etc. and elements such as line length, line spacing (leading) and space between letters (kerning) (Felici, 2003). Nørgaard (2019) differentiates typography from layout and argues that typography is the graphic appearance of an instance of writing in terms of shape, size, color, whereas layout is the overall spatial page design of a given text, including line spacing, space between letters, margins, the placement of verbal and visual elements as well as the linking of these elements (p. 67). Typographic attributes or cues include “typeface choice, size, color, and font style” and they can be conceptualized as “semiotic resources” used to “realize textual or expressive meanings in addition to interpersonal and ideational meanings” (Tsinos & Kouroupetroglou, 2016, p. 1). The primary goal of using typographic attributes in a text is to distinguish parts of the text and to create a well-formed presentation of the content in order to augment the reading performance, attract the reader, and render semantics through the visual channel (Tsinos & Kouroupetroglou, 2016, p. 6). In the present study, typography is generally taken as the visual appearance of the text of the novel as a whole. The analysis of typography centres on the meaning-making potential of the visual side of verbal language. In this connection, various typographic features such as the use of italics, boldface and majuscules (i.e., capital letters) as well as of different typefaces and of lettering in different colours are considered and systematized (Nørgaard et al., 2010, p. 31). The analysis often combines Stöckl’s levels of analysis with Van Leeuwen’s distinctive features1 to suggest a multimodal stylistic toolkit which provides analytical tools and concepts to explore typography in the novel as practiced by Nørgaard (2019). In analyzing the typography of a given text, it suffices to focus on “most salient features in the given context.” (Nørgaard, 2019, p. 79)
The narrative structure of the novel divides into four sections entitled Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer. The general distribution of chapters in each section is as follows: the first chapter concerns the MacTeers and the following chapters focus on the Breedloves. Apparently, the novel has two families as its subject, but, actually, Morrison juxtaposes the story of three types of family lives, that is, the storybook life of Dick and Jane Primer, the MacTeers, and the Breedloves. The narrative configuration of these families forces Toni Morrison to find the mere linguistic mode insufficient and think up a typographical and spatial design which can more effectively depict the difficult conditions of African-American families and, more particularly, the tragic situation of a little African-American girl, Pecola, debilitated and deranged by those around her.

The very first page on which the novel opens is a fragment from the Dick and Jane Primer, which “millions of American schoolchildren, up until approximately the 1970s, used to learn how to read.” (Bloom, 2010, p. 27). The Primer back then introduced readers with the “image of the world as a universally happy, secure, clean, and orderly place in which boys and girls behaved and the parents, who never argued or got sick, loved each other and their children every minute of every day” (Bloom, 2010, p. 27). In fact, the Primer represented and publicized a typically happy, functional, American family. Typographically speaking, the Primer as re-used in the novel contains short sentences printed in normal sabon-roman typeface which is conventionally a typeface for setting books (Brighurst, 2004). The life represented in the Primer is a “storybook life”, standardized and homogenized. Then, immediately, a second version of the same Dick and Jane Primer follows the first one, but with a change: it is unpunctuated. The third version which immediately follows is re-typed with a few more changes: it is both unpunctuated and un-spaced. In other words, the space between the individual words and lines (kerning and leading) is negated and the reader confronts the first instance of “visual negation” (Nørgaard, 2019, p. 151). Visual negation happens when the continuity of prose is negated. The visual negation may be employed to realize meanings such as “silence’ and ‘void’” (Nørgaard, 2019, p. 155). More explicitly, the text becomes visually dense and, as a result, unreadable. Perhaps it is a visual parallel of that great “void” in American psyche and culture which is the absence of the non-white, non-middle class people living in America, particularly African Americans whose eyes cannot “read/see” the Primer. The illegibility and unreadability of the Primer only happens to the African-American viewers because they cannot find/see themselves in the depicted image of America. The reading experience is, in the long run, divided between a linear experience and a non-linear experience. According to Lemke the linear reading is a “more time-sensitive semiotic” (in Fei, 2004, p. 229) and non-linear experience is more “space-sensitive semiotic”. Indeed, “the co-deployment of these two modalities in a multimodal text can lead to meaning expansions as well” (Fei, 2004, p. 229). The “reading path” becomes a combination of reading and viewing. In short, the act of reading turns into a kind of viewing/vision which is particularly pertinent to the domination of the novel by the Eye/viewing/vision, especially remembering that the Dick and Jane Primer coming at the very beginning of the novel and the subsequent chapters belong to the gaze of the dominant discourse of the white society. As a consequence, the reading experience in The Bluest Eye is done through horizontal (left to right) and vertical axes (up to down) which might signify the presence of two or more discourses along one another.5

The elimination of the punctuation mark of “full stop” or “period” here removes, in Patt’s term, the boundary, finality, distance and separation of sentences (Patt, 2013, pp. 98–102) and, as a result, calls into question the standardized and homogenized version of life in the Primer. Therefore, the removal of punctuation becomes a semiotic choice whose connotations challenges the values of beauty, happiness and the American Dream promoted in the Primer. One could interpret the removal of “space” and “period” in the Primer as demonstrating the shift away from integration to disintegration, or from transparency to opacity and obscurity, which is applicable to the case of African Americans, in general, and Pecola, in particular. Patt (2013) considers punctuation as a semiotic resource and as a part of typography of the text (p. 60). Accordingly, the dual functions of punctuation marks are “separation and specification” (Patt, 2013, p. 109). In other words, the central communicative value of punctuation at word-level is “its disambiguating function” (Patt, 2013, p. 140). All in all, the omission of the punctuation marks throws the text into confusion.
After the Primer section, the novel moves to a prologue introducing the MacTeer family. The prologue is cast in two time perspectives of “then” (a child’s point of view, past time, 1940) and “now” (an adult’s point of view). To put it differently, a “narrating self presents the earlier life-events of an experiencing self.” This type of narration is a “dissonant narration” that “emphasizes the altered perceptions made possible by a gap in time between experiences and narration, [permitting] the narrating self to deliver judgments or make reflections” (Keen, 2015, p. 39). The whole prologue is represented in italic soban-roman. According to Pilâtre (2014) italics is “a visible sign of difference” which “literally slow[s] down the reading process, inviting the reader to linger over the passage that is marked out in this fashion.” The italicized prologue of information about both families of the MacTeers and the Breedloves immediately follows the regular soban-roman of the Primer and anticipates the forthcoming sections of the novel. The placement of an italicized prologue dealing with grief-stricken African-American families after a regular soban-roman Primer depicting a happy white American family throws into great relief the opposition between two types of lifestyles within America. Here, the use of typography foregrounds a contradiction inherent in America, which of course, preoccupies Morrison’s subsequent novels.

After an italicized prologue about Claudia’s family and Pecola’s condition, what follows is a section entitled “Autumn” which itself divides into three chapters: the first chapter is largely concerned with Claudia’s and Frieda’s (her sister) encounter with new experiences such as Pecola’s menstruation, Shirley Temple® and the other two chapters deal mainly with the Breedlove family. The typeface and typestyle of this chapter are, consecutively, soban-roman but in normal style, with punctuation and kerning. In the Autumn section, Toni Morrison places two short fragments from the Dick and Jane Primer at the head of the Chapters 2, 3. The first thing a reader has to do is make their way through those illegible blocks of texts and then move into the body of chapter. We call those short fragments “epigraphs” which precede the story of each chapter. One can even claim that this layout is very similar to headline and body text in a newspaper. More specifically, Toni Morrison uproots an excerpt from the Dick and Jane Primer which is about “House” and implants it at the beginning of chapter 2. The re-contextualized piece of Dick and Jane Primer is in italicized, capitalized and un-spaced soban-roman format. It is unreadable and requires more effort to figure it out:

HEREISTHEFAMILYMOTHERFATHER
DICKANDJANETHEYLIVEINTHEGREE
NANDWHITEHOUSETHEYAREVERYH

This italicized, capitalized and un-spaced soban-roman text describes an “Ideal” house in the Dick and Jane Primer. The body text of the chapter written in regular soban-roman details Breedloves’ “house” which is an “abandoned store” (Morrison, 1970, p. 33). Nærgaard (2009) argues that “the visual contrast between the text in regular type and the text in italics may be seen as iconically signifying difference in terms of meaning.” (p. 151). The incorporation of words, phrases and texts from the Primer into The Blue Eye is an instance of “discursive import” which is the inclusion of the typeface and pieces of texts and clippings from other sources along with the discourses current at the time of those clippings and borrowings (Nærgaard, 2019, p. 109). The concept of “discursive import” helps the analyst to explore the import of associations, meanings and connotations of a specific typeface deployed in the original domain to its re-use in the target domain (Van Leeuwen, 2005b, p. 139). The notion of discursive import is very much similar to the concept of re-contextualization used in discourse studies. Re-contextualization happens when the Primer both as a text and a discourse is taken out of its educational context of schools (re-structuring) and national context (rescaling) and is re-contextualized in the narrative context of a black Bildungsroman within the order of discourse of the institution of black literature (re-structuring) and local context (re-scaling). The purpose of re-contextualization is to show “degrees and forms of dialogicality in texts” wherein ‘a word, discourse, language or culture undergoes “dialogization”’ (Fairclough, 2003, p. 42) and relativization. The re-contextualization of the Primer makes it less authoritarian and universal.
The visual rhetoric that Morrison selects for her novel is as follows: the main typeface is sabon-roman but typeface styles are either regular or italic. Brighurst states that sabon has long been a favourite of typographers for setting book text, due to its smooth texture, and in large part because Tschichold's book typography remains world famous (Brighurst, 2004, p. 104). The selection of the regular sabon-roman for the original Primer suggests the calmness, orderliness, smoothness, symmetry of a typical American family life depicted in the Primer. However, when Morrison re-locates the Primer at the top of the second chapter, she alters the original typography into something new: lowercase sabon-roman to capital letters; regular style to italic; punctuated to unpunctuated; normal spaced individual words to zero spaced words. The alterations in typography and page layout suggest that the so-called “House” of the Breedloves is devoid of any security, prosperity, harmony, affection, happiness and integration. Below, Table 1 shows the contrast between typography in the original and altered versions:

| Original typography of the Primer | Altered typography of the Primer |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Here is the house.               | HEREISTHEHOUSEITISGREENANDWH    |
| It is green and white.           | ITEITHASAREDDOORITISVERYPRETT   |
| It has a red door.               | YITISVERYPRETYPRETYPRETY         |
| It is very pretty.               |                                  |

Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) specify and define “information value”, “salience”, “framing” and “linking” as the elements of layout. “Information value” refers to the meanings associated with how textual elements are arranged within the space of the page. For instance, elements at the bottom of the page are often associated with reality, while those at the top are generally associated with the ideal (p. 179). Regarding the information value of the first page of Chapter 2 of the Autumn section, a fragment of the Primer dealing with the “Ideal” house has been placed at the top of the page but the body text showing the “real” house of the Breedloves has been put at the bottom. The placement of capitalized, italicized un-spaced words at the top of the page is an instance of “salience” in layout, too. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) indicate that some elements can be made more eye-catching than others. The reader’s attention could be grabbed through different ways; for example, through size, colour contrasts (red is always a very salient colour), tonal contrast—in short, through anything that can make a given element stand out from its surroundings (in Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 150). Sadokierski states, “when an author breaks the conventions they have established for their novel, we assume it is for a particular purpose” (in Nærgaard, 2019). Morrison’s main purpose is to de-familiarize the Primer and help the reader to pay closer attention to the concept of “HOUSE” in the Primer by comparing it with the “house” in the African-American life and observe the dissonance between the American Dream and the reality of America.

Chapter 3 of the Autumn section in The Bluest Eye is devoted to the condition of the Breedloves. Here, Morrison implants another fragment from the Dick and Jane Primer at the head of the chapter. The family members of the Primer including mother, father, Dick and Jane are happy and live happily in a green and white house. On the contrary, the Breedloves live in a “storefront” because “they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly.” (Morrison, 1970, p. 38) As it is seen from the top of the first page of Chapter 3, Morrison has deliberately distorted the visual appearance of the text of the Primer in a manner that the readers cannot read the text quickly unless they put more effort into it. The ideal family in the Primer is described in italic sabon-roman in contrast to the miserable family of Pecola Breedlove that is depicted in conventional black sabon-roman. Hence, a change from the punctuated, spaced, lowercased regular sabon-roman into unpunctuated, unspaced, capitalized, italicized sabon-roman. These transformations have rendered the text verbally unreadable and visually marked. As White (2005) asserts graphic devices defamiliarise the appearance of the page since they do
not “merely serve to remind us that we are reading a book. They may also supplement, broaden and multiply the reading process by increasing the difficulty of perception, and enforcing the expenditure of extra time in order to understand a passage” (pp. 10–11). With respect to the use of italics, Nørgaard (2019) holds that different kinds of visual salience, i.e. that of italics (realized by the distinctive feature of sloping), is often used to signify a different kind of salience, namely an emphasis on wording (p. 99). Here, through deploying various typographic features such as the use of italics, majuscules (i.e., capital letters) (Nørgaard et al., 2010, p. 31), Morrison accentuates the significance of each word in the Primer, making them more attention-grabbing, and creating more meanings. The key words emphasized by Morrison are FAMILY, MOTHER, FATHER, DICK, JANE, GREEN, WHITE, and HOUSE. All these words are “readable/seeable” only to the white people but “unreadable/un-see-able” to African-Americans who are deprived of a similar understanding of those key words due to imposed poverty, racism and exclusion. The use of italics and capitals “can add salience to word-meaning, potentially indicating emphasis or sound, or perhaps signalling internal thoughts” (Gallagher, 2018, p. 167).

HEREISTHEFAMILYMOTHERFATHER  
DICKANDJANETHELYLIVEINTHEGREE  
NANDWHITEHOUSETHEYAREVERYRH (Morrison, 38)

With reference to the page layout, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) write that the page is structured along the vertical axis in a manner that the top (up) visualizes “promise” and “glamour”, while the bottom (down) visualizes the product itself, “factual information”. In other words, “what has been placed on the top is presented as the Ideal, and what has been placed at the bottom is put forward as the Real.” The ideal means “idealized”, hence also as most salient part. The Real is then opposed to this in that it presents more “down-to-earth” (pp. 186–7). The same holds true for African Americans who look up to the image of family in the Primer which promises a bright and prosperous future in America. Understandably, Morrison puts much emphasis on the individual words as glamorous words of a product promoted in an educational setting for readers and viewers. However, those glamorous words become illegible to African-American readers and viewers because the promise and the dream inherent in the Primer signify nothing to them. The Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) analysis of the Primer and the chapter reenacts the relationship between the dominant and dominated discourse within the novel. In terms of SFL, the typography of the Dick and Jane Primer and the relevant chapter could be taken as a clause which performs three metafunctions: On the textual level, the Primer depicts the theme of the whole chapter (the background information) and the chapter as the Rheme (foreground information); on the ideational level, the Primer acts as an Actor and the rest of chapter as a Goal; and finally, on the interpersonal level, the Primer is the subject and the chapter is the predicate. This analysis holds true for the other chapters headed by fragments from the Dick and Jane Primer in The Bluest Eye.

The decrease of space between individual words renders the text visually negated. Cullen (2012) argues that the decrease or increase of space is semiotically significant because “key spacing goals are balance and consistency.” (p. 86) The key term, here, is “balance” which is omitted in Morrison’s act of altering the typography of the Primer above to suggest that the African-American family structure is not balanced and harmonious. Space itself could be viewed as a punctuation mark (Patt, 2013, p. 70) and the function of punctuation is to structure, specify and separate the segments in writing (Patt, 2013, p. 109). The omission of word space from the Primer suggests the lack of structure, specification and separation in an African-American family structure. This in turn leads to the dissolution of the African-American family. The ultimate result is a confused and disorganized family, something that happens to the Breedlove family.

The Winter section consists of two chapters: chapter 1 is about Claudia and Chapter 2 is about Pecola’s family. Chapter 2 is headed by another fragment from the Primer which is about CAT of
the house. The theme of the typographically altered Primer is PLAY which is foregrounded in the text through the deployment of capitalized, italicized, unpunctuated and un-spaced typeface and style. Morrison parodies the promise of PLAY in the Primer by highlighting the PLAY of CAT in the White family house in opposition to the misery of black girls in their unfulfilled lives. Unlike the CAT in the Primer, the African-American girls are deprived of play. Morrison makes it explicit that pets are more likely to live a happy life in America than African Americans because even African Americans “don’t have home towns, just places where they were born” (Morrison, 1970, p. 82)

The Spring section which follows the Winter section consists of four chapters: Chapter 1 focuses on Claudia, Frieda and Pecola. Chapter 2 is devoted to Mrs. Breedlove, Pecola’s mother. At the top section of the first page of the chapter is another fragment from Dick and Jane Primer whose main actor is also MOTHER who is VERY NICE:

SEEMOTHERISVERYNICE
THERWILLYOPLAYWITHJANEMOTHER
ERLAUGHSLAUGHMOTHERLAUGHLA (Morrison, p.110)

Morrison renders the original typography of the Primer text unreadable and unrecognizable by altering typeface style (changing normal style to italic), punctuation (changing minuscule to majuscules), kerning and leading¹⁹ (the omission of space between individual characters and individual lines). All these changes render the Primer into a confusion. Tselentis (2011) states “typography is a lot about the form, and in a way, harmony; but it can be disharmonious.” (p. 117) Iconically, the total removal of space renders the text visually negated, which might represent the mental confusion of Mrs. Breedlove who is caught between two lifestyles: one a life of poverty in Cholly’s house (her husband) and the other a life of luxury in her master’s house (The Fisher family). The only solution open to her is to go to the movies, sit there and fantasize about her desires. Pauline Breedlove says that “The onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show” (Morrison, 1970, p.123 italics original) In the chapter devoted to Pauline Breedlove, the visual rhetoric consists of the same typeface with two styles: normal sabon-roman and italic soban-roman. In fact, in this chapter the reader faces three voices: the voice of the Primer; the voice of the narrator and the voice of Mrs. Breedlove. The first voice (the voice of the Primer) is visually unconventional (unpunctuated, italicized, un-spaced and capitalized); the second voice (narrator) is typographically conventional (normal sobon-roman, punctuated, spaced) and the third voice (the voice of Mrs. Breedlove) narratively unconventional but typographically conventional (Mrs. Breedlove’s internal talking and thinking in italic soban-roman). It is believed that italic is more liberal (Haenschen & Tamul, 2019, p. 9). Gallagher (2018) holds that italics might be used to signal “internal thoughts” (p. 167).

Chapter 3 of the Spring section is concerned with Cholly Breedlove, the father of the house:

SEEFATHERHEISBIGANDSTRONGFATH
ERWILLYOPLAYWITHJANEFATHER
ISSMILINGSMILEFATHERSMILEMILE (Morrison, 132)

In the Primer textbook, the FATHER is BIG, STRONG, and SMILING, too. This ideal image of father bears no resemblance with the image of father in an African-American family. As Dixon (2007) observes “the White power structure” has caused “domestic conflicts, which further led to high absenteeism and abandonment of their families by African-American men” (p. 22). Here, Morrison alters the typography of the Primer from a visually readable text to a visually unreadable tangled mass of characters, or to use Solomon’s term (Solomon, 1994), an “optical disturbance” (p. 49). To an African-American man, the image of the father in the Primer is incomprehensible because he cannot conceive himself as BIG, STRONG and SMILING within the White supremacy and racism. To put it differently, the African-American man is visually negated and invisible. Unlike the father in the Primer, the body text of Chapter 3 focuses on Cholly who is neither “big” nor “strong” nor
“smiling”. Having drunk alcohol, he returns home and rapes his own daughter, Pecola. He even tries to burn up his own family (Morrison, 1970, p. 189). Therefore, no one is secure, smiling, and happy in this so-called “house” because it is not a house at all.

Chapter 4 of the Spring section deals with DOG in the Primer text. DOG is running and playing in the Primer:

SEETHEDOGBOWWOWGOESTHEDOG
DOYOUWANTTOSTOPDOYOUWANT
TOPLAYWITHJANESEETHEDOGRUNR (Morrison, p.164)

Unlike the Primer, the body text of the chapter highlights the fact that Soaphead Church (a character in the novel) kills the dog in the rented house. Soaphead is the one to whom Pecola goes to being given the bluest eye (Morrison, 1970, p. 174). Soaphead is a light-skinned character who is said to be capable of helping the unfortunate to “overcome Spells, Bad Luck, and Evil Influences” (Morrison, 1970, p. 173). Encountered by Pecola who cannot speak, Soaphead holds out his own advertising card which reads “If you are overcome with trouble and conditions that are not natural, I can remove them; ... I am a true Spiritualist and Psychic Reader, born with power, and I will help you.”(Morrison, 1970, p. 173) Soaphead Church, like Pecola, hates his Blackness. In fact, he comes from an English lineage of “mixed blood” and is a strong Anglophile. The confusion and disorganization in the African-American family, in general, and in the Breedloves, in particular, has reached a point at which Pecola, raped by her own father, goes to Soaphead to find a way of this confusion. As Yancy (2017) puts it: “What is it about a community, indeed an entire society, such that a young Black girl who had been recently molested by her biological father can only receive help to overcome her corporeal malediction through the care and understanding of another pedophile” (p. 199) The irony of the African-American life becomes more poignant when one learns that Soaphead is the one who convinces Pecola to kill the dog in the rented house. As such, even pets have no security in the African-American life. In a sense, by granting Pecola the bluest eye and leading the innocent and naïve little girl to kill the dog, Soaphead Church is the main force that kills Pecola psychologically in opposition to Soaphead’s own claim that he is a spiritual healer.

The last section of the novel entitled Summer contains two chapters. Chapter 1 deals with Claudia and Frieda’s amusements and concerns. Claudia says that we thought “about the money... the seeds, and ... what people were saying.” (Morrison, 1970, p. 188). However, the hot topic that people are talking about is Pecola’s being impregnated by her father, Cholly. It is written in normal sabon-roman, observing punctuation and spacing rules, signifying the smoothness and calmness of the texture and life of Claudia. Chapter 2 of the Summer section totally focuses on Pecola’s internal dialogue. At the top of the first page of the chapter is placed another fragment from the Dick and Jane Primer:

LOOKLOOKHERECOMESAFRIENDTHE
FRIENDWILLPLAYWITHJANETHEYWI
LLPLAYAGOODGAMEPLAYJANEPLAY (Morrison, 193)

The key word in the Primer above is the coming of a FRIEND to PLAY with JANE. Morrison parodies this part of the Primer by changing its original normal sabon-roman style to italic sabon-roman, removing the space and punctuation. Through chapter positioning, page layout and different typeface style, Morrison creates contrast and emphasis within Chapter 2 itself and between Chapters 1, 2. Solomon (1994) observes, “Contrast can be created by combining type style, spacing and ornamentation in different ways.” (p. 48)
Chapter 1 represents Claudia's thoughts about summer, seed planting and growing and people's gossips. It is in normal sabon-roman with punctuation and spacing because it is conventional; whereas Chapter 2, devoted to Pecola, alternates between the normal sabon-roman and italic sabon-roman because Pecola has developed a split personality switching between a normal Pecola and an imaginary Pecola. In fact, Morrison deploys the resources of typography to encode Pecola’s perspective on the characters, situations and events. She represents Pecola’s emotional, cognitive and moral engagement with her own self and the world around herself exclusively through internal dialogue. The constellation of the normal sabon-roman style and italic sabon-roman style creates a representation that seems ironically isomorphic in that Pecola misperceives herself as an agentive character in dialogue with a second character (mostly submissive vis-à-vis Pecola) who determines the path of her life. In this chapter Pecola is both a narrating agent (or teller) and a perceptual agent (or reflector).

After the epigraph from the Primer, what follows is the body text of Chapter 2 which is wholly devoted to Pecola speaking directly to herself without narrator’s intervention (internal focalization). She has developed a double personality: a real Pecola and an imaginary Pecola or invented friend. Pecola is constantly switching between these two identities. To depict Pecola’s continuous switch of identities, Morrison devises two type styles to represent these two opposite personalities: Normal sabon-roman for the ‘real’ Pecola and italic sabon-roman for “imaginary” or “invented” Pecola (or imaginary interlocutor). The major point to be made is that Morrison preserves normal sabon-roman for the “conventional” part and italic sabon for “unconventional or different” part of the dialogue:

Let’s talk about something else.
What? What will we talk about?
Why, your eyes.
....
Prettier than Alice-and-Jerry Storybook eyes?
Oh, yes. Much prettier than Alice-and-Jerry Storybook eyes. (Morrison, p. 201)

Being traumatized by the dehumanizing gaze of the White beauty and having been raped by her father, and unlike Jane who has a friend to play with, Pecola has no friend to play with. Pecola has now “stepped over into madness” (Morrison, 1970, p. 206) Pecola’s chapter acts as an epilogue for her tragedy. The prologue was the Primer. In between, there are four acts. In the drama of her life, she is left alone on the stage to converse with her own self. Pecola has become double (Yancy, 2017, p. 199, emphasis original). As Dickerson (2001) argues, Pecola’s “body, which has been the vortex of a hateful social prejudice and a devastating paternal love, is reinscribed in a self-reflexive dialogue of italicized and roman print that constitutes a fleshing out of double consciousness.” (p. 202). Pecola becomes a narrating character. That is, she is, in Meister and Schönert’s terms, ontologically a homodiegetic but epistemologically a heterodiegetic narrating character (Meister & Schönert, 2009, p. 16). More explicitly, she exists within the narrated world but she visualizes her own body from outside. To wit: She approaches and perceives her own body and the world outside from an external angle. Despite having the chance of approaching her own body from outside, Pecola is not cognitively and emotionally superior vis-à-vis other characters and the surrounding objects and phenomena. Stylistically speaking, the rather extended monologue (or dialogue) between “real” Pecola and imaginary Pecola is represented in free direct thought. Direct discourse is shorn of its conventional orthographic cues. This is the typical form of first-person interior monologue (Rimmon-Kenan, 2005, p. 113). Wales elaborates more on this stylistic feature by stating that free direct thought is “particularly common in interior monologue …, where the lack of reporting clause leads to a smoother text, and reinforces the absence of an apparently controlling narrator. The words are supposed to represent only those thoughts that pass through the character’s mind, so point of view is limited” (Wales, 2011, p. 175). The stylistic function of direct thought is to have a “more direct way of entering into the character’s mind” (Nargaard et al., 2010, p. 90). It takes on the purity of dramatic language being performed and acted on the stage. This dramaturgical apparatus is in agreement with the title of the novel, the bluest eye, and the dominance of vision, viewing and audience.
5. Conclusion
This study aimed at exploring the function of typography as a reading strategy in Morrison’s The Bluest Eye (Morrison, 1970). With this in view, it opted for multimodal theory developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), Van Leeuwen (2006), Van Leeuwen (2005), and Nørgaard (2019). The analysis focused on the use of typeface, line spacing, italics, punctuation, salience, discursive import, layout, foregrounding, and visual negation. The level of analysis was limited to the micro-typography (typeface), meso-typography (the level of lines and text blocks) and macro-typography (the level of the page). Morrison selected Sabon-roman as the basic typeface for her novel but with different type styles. She also appropriated and re-contextualized the text of the Dick and Jane Primer as the master text which is throughout the novel parodied and altered typographically. Morrison adjusts the typeface, type style, line spacing to correspond with her intended meanings whenever the need arises. By placing a block of typographically marked text at the head (it can be taken as a newspaper headline) of each chapter, Morrison provides a chance for the reader to activate their visual imagination whereby a “third dimension” is added to “the two-dimensional art” (Solomon, 1994) of typography. In fact, the design and layout of the pages (that is, the visual mode) of the novel overshadows the verbal mode. The reason is that the central discourse of the novel is the discourse of vision, the dominance and supremacy of the visual over the verbal. The positioning of fragments of the Primer at the head of each chapter indicates their priority and their impact on reading the body text of the chapters.

In the hands of Toni Morrison typefaces become grounds for battles of visual cultures. Therefore, typefaces become, to use Billard’s term “inherently ideological” (p. 4577). By parodying and distorting the Dick and Jane Primer, Morrison challenges, to couch it in Billard’s term “the White Anglo-Saxon identity as the default brand of the nation and rebrand American identity as ethnically diverse” (p. 4578). The contrast is between the “normal” family (like the white family in the Dick and Jane Primer) depicted in official documents, handouts and primers, on the one hand, and the “abnormal or dysfunctional” family (like the Breedloves) depicted only in unofficial texts such minority literature, on the other hand.

Morrison’s use of the genre of Bildungsroman as a semiotic resource allows her to incorporate a set of other texts into her novel. Among these texts, the Primer stands as a master text representing the dominant culture. The Primer is the default text or culture but The Bluest Eye is not a default text. Morrison has attempted to make her novel and her characters to be read and seen. In fact, the novel performs its own content; that is, the novel should be viewed as simultaneously a constative and a performative speech act. Not only does it make a statement about the identity of the African Americans in the American community but it also performs that identity through its typographical innovations. If the novel did not use the typographical resources to highlight the paradigm of vision in American community, it would not be described as an experimentally successful novel in proposing the dominance of White gaze in the American culture.

Overall, the novel is preoccupied with eyes/I(s), vision and division. Morrison not only challenges the simplification of the social space in American society but also opens a window on how and where the African Americans live. In fact, unlike Claudia who states that she cannot explain the why of Pecola’s tragic story, in particular, and tragic lives of African Americans, in general, Morrison, through her novel, sheds light on the how and the why of the disaster of African Americans through the discourse of the novel and the dominance of the logic of vision in the White ontology and epistemology which renders an African-American subject into an object of vision, that is, a reified, an exotic and objectified “Thing”.

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Notes
1. Toni Morrison refers to the literature by “minorities of caste and class” (in Drake, 2011, p. 303).
2. Due to the space limit here, the definitions of these terms will be provided during the analysis of the different sections of the novel.

3. The features that Van Leeuwen feels are worthy of consideration are: expansion, weight, slope, curvature, connectivity, regularity, orientation, and a special category of non-distinctive features (Van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 148-50).

4. In the current research, Dick and Jane primer is treated as a proper name, so it is written with capitalized P.

5. Kress and Van Leeuwen introduce the notion of scanning which clarifies their earlier claim that readers tend to read in a left to right and up to down pattern (Fei, 2004, p. 230).

6. The little girl with blue eyes, golden curls, and a bright smile which was promoted in the 1930s by the dream-making Hollywood, may have more to influence people’s buying and entertainment choices. In appearance and temperament, Shirley Temple was like the Jane character in the primer, a model child. (Bloom, 2010, pp. 34–5).

7. The term visual rhetoric has been adopted from Graphic design scholar De Cosio (1998) defines rhetoric quite simply as the “art of communicating effectively and persuasively” (p. 265). In typography and design, typeface stands in for authorial voice.

8. Morrison’s selection might not have been accidental given the fact that she took a job as a textbook editor for a division of Random House. In 1967, Morrison was promoted to senior editor.

9. Kerning: The fine adjustment of space between individual characters in a line of text. The aim of kerning is to visually equalize spaces between letters so that the eye moves easily along the text. Leading: The amount of space created between lines of text. Closer leading fits more text on a page, but decreases legibility. Looser leading spreads text out (Ambrose & Harris, 2006).

10. For the ease of discussion, we hypothetically separate Pecola’s personality into “real” and “imaginary”; whereas it is too difficult to decide which Pecola is real and which one is unreal.

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