CHAPTER IV

MAGIC OF FANTASY

Good literature demands from its readers an intensive commitment, a focussing of the conscious mind, the intellect and the emotions. Such a focussing is difficult for the reader to maintain. To achieve this intensity, an author often uses novelty, suspense and identification. In fantasy literature, this novelty is more easily achieved than in traditional literature. But the fantasy will not continue to charm the reader unless there is something more than mere newness. The author must create some kind of new intellectual opening of the mind. It is here that the writer of fantasy scores an advantage. Fantasy challenges us with perspectives which the reader has never had before. The reader's standard ideas and beliefs are suddenly overthrown. It is the novelty of fantasy that helps him to do so. This chapter tries to look at Fantasy as a form, its function permeating itself through different areas like the grotesque, the uncanny, elements of folk tale,
dreams, songs and subversion. They certainly startle and entice her readers to take a new step, a new vision. Kathryn Hume's discussion of fantasy as a functional form reveals this power of fantasy:

"...[S]uccessful fantasy persuades us to consider the situation as it were possible. Or it persuades us to wish that the violation of consensus reality could take place. Or it suggests to us that a rich experience awaits us if we recognize the metaphoric ways in which the substitution or contradiction is true on a nonliteral level." (Fantasy and Mimesis 167).

The Grotesque is a marginal position celebrated by Morrison. A fantasy always tests limits, says Gerardine Meaney who discusses Angela Carter's magic realist novels like The Magic Toyshop and Love. The same holds true for Morrison's portrayal of the grotesque as she blurs the edges of realism. Through this 'device' she hopes to achieve a break through the limits of permitted thought in story telling. The extreme forms of physical and mental deformity that she lists, are meant to challenge reality more sharply. Consequently the reader sees and understands the reality of the trials and tribulations of African Americans, especially those who made the long trek out of slavery in the American South.
Pauline Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* is one who nurtures her self on the ideal of prescribed beauty like her daughter. Her young and happy days are ruptured as a result of a mishap. This causes a deformity—a twisted foot. Morrison narrates the story of the misshapen foot. When she was young, Pauline William’s life was relegated to the red clay ridge of Alabama. She was the ninth child among eleven children. It was a rusty nail that pierced her foot when she was two years old. Morrison has her own way of looking at the accident. She says that this “...saved Pauline Williams from total anonymity.” (*The Bluest Eye* 88). What Morrison intends is an overturning of our adoration of the beautiful so as to reveal the plight of the deformed Pauline in an unkind world.

Subversion is used by Morrison when the twisted foot is granted vulnerability and an attraction which cannot be resisted by Cholly Breedlove when he sees Pauline for the first time. Till this point of the novel, Morrison has been giving us accounts of Pauline’s matchless ugliness. But now the broken foot is used as a signifier that annihilates all its significations. Cholly tickles her broken foot and kisses her leg: “Instead of ignoring her infirmity, pretending it was not there, he made it seem like something special and endearing. For the first time Pauline felt that her bad foot was an asset.” (*The Bluest Eye* 92). Morrison thus is successful in stifling the abhorred connotations of deformity.
Pauline's dragging of one foot becomes pronounced when she wears heels and is eventually worsened into a limp. This is actually the result of her disappointment in marriage. Cholly starts leaving her to loneliness, boredom and poverty. Morrison's suggestion is that Pauline herself takes the effort to make the slight defect reach the level of a deformity. Therefore, she certainly has to agree with the Irish poet Evan Boland who says: "Only a subversive grasp on the private reality, it seemed to me, could guarantee the proper tension with the public one." (From the Beast to the Blonde 411). Thus it was the distorted foot that gave her some space of her own in the patriarchal society. The deformity now has a transforming potential in helping Pauline to come to terms with reality, though her sense of reality is essentially pessimistic.

Cholly Breedlove descends to beastliness when he encounters his total helplessness to carry on with the struggle of leading a meaningless existence in the white man's world. During an overpowering moment of frustration when he realizes that he is alienated from all the support systems available to poor black people, he notices his eleven-year-old daughter, Pecola washing the dishes in the kitchen. Cholly's utter despair is converted into a sexual craving for his daughter when he notes her foot. It is the typical urge of the father to protect his child that
develops into passion. Cholly's act is certainly within the arc of perversion; but it speaks volumes about the author's real intention behind the writing of such a repulsive act. The foot here becomes a fetish. What Morrison herself says about this technique clarifies Cholly's inhuman attitude towards the foot:

"Fetishisation. This is especially useful in evoking erotic fears or desires and establishing fixed and major difference where difference does not exist or is minimal. Blood, for example, is a pervasive fetish: black blood, white blood, the purity of blood; the purity of white female sexuality, the pollution of African blood and sex. Fetishisation is a strategy often used to assert the categorical absolutism of civilization and savagery." (The Feminist Reader 39).

Morrison describes the short lived happiness Pauline enjoys as a young bride. Soon Cholly's interest in her vanishes and she finds relief in watching movies which keep up the illusions of beauty in which she drowns herself: "I remember one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine." (The Bluest Eye 97). Even this euphoria deserts her when she finds her front tooth has fallen down. Morrison's deconstruction of the grotesque - the misshapen foot being glorified by Cholly -
loses its acquired potential. Deconstructive theory is abandoned in favour of what Lacan calls the ‘imaginary’:

“The imaginary is typified, for Lacan, in the relation of the subject to his/her mirror image: that image both is and is not the subject where as the symbolic is triadic – signifier, signified, and signifying system – the imaginary is dyadic – image and signified.” (Feminisms 400).

The gap in the front row of teeth signifies an absolute come down for Pauline. Already disillusioned in marriage, she becomes even more conscious of her inability to aspire to be beautiful according to the patriarchal code:

“Here I was, five months pregnant, trying to look like Jean Harlow, and a front tooth gone. Everything went then. Look like I just didn’t care no more after that. I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly.” (The Bluest Eye 98).

Morrison moves on from the delineation of the grotesque features of Pauline Breedlove to the grotesque behavior of two other characters in the novel. Cholly Breedlove’s beastly treatment of his daughter continues. There is a second
time when he approaches his daughter. Morrison, simultaneously, lets the world know that race and class are not the only institutions that force a woman to pose an unquestioning submission to authority; Family too plays a prominent role. Luce Irigaray has rightly summed this up in *Ce Sexe*: “The family has always been the privileged locus of the exploitation of women.” (*Feminisms* 429).

Cholly’s aberrations from the normal are many. He just can’t understand the concept of family. He has a sense of freedom which disengages him from every other mortal of the world. In his young days he had rebelled against the whites by killing three white men. So, life in a jail was the least frightening for him. He had a peculiar understanding of the present which troubled him only when he was hungry. Thus his animal-like existence is the very result of his marginalisation:

“Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him.” (*The Bluest Eye* 126).
The novel has another repulsive character who becomes memorable because of his deviant behavioural patterns. He is Elihue Micah Whitcomb or Soaphead Church as he is called by people. He is a mulatto. He chooses the life of a misanthrope, but he hates people. His unnatural liking for used objects and disorder and decay of this world; his melancholic disposition and his obscene sexuality make him a bizarre figure. He blames God for creating an imperfect world. His job is to counsel people in dread. Ironically, he is the one who succeeds in making Pecola believe that her wish is granted at last. Morrison also specifies the kind of occupations which are available to Soaphead Church. Only the white collar jobs given to blacks are the choices open before him. The hegemonic cultural centres of the West thus crushed down even this mulatto whose ancestors have tried desperately to keep up their whiteness.

Morrison goes on to explore the relevance of the grotesque environment of Lorain in 1941. Harihar Kulkarni, whose comments upon Lorain’s underground invisibility and barrenness, says that The Bluest Eye is Toni Morrison’s ‘Wasteland’:

“Like Eliot, she too, in a limited sense, presents bleak, wastelandish human conditions characterized by grotesque environment which, like the
earth of 1941, is unyielding. She brings into focus a place ... composed of an imaginary cultural dissolution and fraught with brutal discrimination and stuns our conscience..." (IJAS, 23.2, (1993)1).

The narrator of the novel is Claudia Mac Teer, a nine year old girl, who at the beginning and at the end of her account talks about the unproductful nature of her part of the earth. "I even think now that the land of the entire country was hostile to marigolds that year." (The Bluest Eye 160) Both Claudia and Frieda, her sister had planted seeds of marigold in the soil, hoping that Pecola's baby will not die. But they are disappointed. Again, we read of the unkind earth which refuses to give the poor blacks agricultural work at least. The result is that the blacks live in mortal terror of being driven out of doors:

"Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weakness and hang on, or to creep simply up into the major folds of the garment. Our peripheral existence, however, was some thing we had learned to deal with - probably because it was abstract. But the concreteness of being outdoors was another matter - like the difference between the concept of death and being, in fact, dead." (The Bluest Eye 18).
Thus, it is with this aim of making the reader understand the extent of marginalisation of the Afro-Americans that Morrison maps this sequence of the grotesque in the novel. She portrays the stark reality of their lives through her portrayal of grotesque men and women and an unfriendly environment here.

Sula in her second novel is also flaunted as a grotesque figure. This is clear from the mis-shapen birthmark on her face. It appears differently to different people – as a stemmed rose, a copper head, a rattle snake, a scary black thing, a black rose and a tadpole. Linden Peach in her study of Morrison’s fiction says that the changing nature of Sula’s birthmark reinforces her fluid self: “... Sula defies the assumption of a self that is knowable, centered and unified and posits instead a view of the self as multiple, fluid and relational.”(Toni Morrison 47).

For the very same reason, Sula is connected to the trickster figure in African and African American writing by Linden Peach. Her unnatural character is emphasized by bringing in different stories about her childhood- she played rough as a child, but never had any scars on her body as proof. Again, the novel tells us that no mosquito would ever bite her during picnics. Also when she drank beer,
she never got hiccups. Her oddness comes through another bodily deformity – she has a funny shaped finger.

Morrison’s world of fantasy and magic abounds in characters who are far removed from ordinariness. Such characters of Morrison function on two realms – the realistic and the fantastic. Sula thus has a counterpart in Pilate Dead of *Song of Solomon*. She too has the element of the grotesque in her though she is very much a part of the terra firma.

First of all, a physiological peculiarity makes Pilate stand out from the rest of the characters in the navel. She has no novel. Her mother passed away while giving birth to Pilate. Pilate moved out from the womb on her own. Macon Dead’s account testifies to her smooth abdominal skin:

“After their mother died, she had come struggling out of the womb without help from throbbing muscles or the pressure of swift womb water. As a result, for all the years he knew her, her stomach was as smooth and sturdy as her back, at no place interrupted by a navel”. (*Song of Solomon* 27).

Circe, the midwife was another eye-witness to this:
“Borned herself, I had very little to do with it. I thought they were both dead, the mother and the child. When she popped out you could have knocked me over. I hadn’t heard a heartbeat anywhere. She just come on out.” (Song of Solomon 244).

It was during her adolescence that Pilate realizes that she is almost an alien because of the absence of the navel. She had been then wandering as a picker along with a group of others when her strange body had become a source of talk. She was asked to leave them:

“Pilate left with more than her share of earnings, because the women did not want her to go away angry. They thought she might hurt them in someway if she got angry. And they also felt pity along with their terror of having been in the company of something God never made.”(Song of Solomon 144)

This happened a second time too with another set of migrants. Thus she starts hiding her defect and becomes a recluse: “...Every other resource was denied her:
partnership in marriage, confessional friendship, and communal religion” (Song of Solomon 148).

E. Raja Rao who writes about the aesthetics of marginality in Toni Morrison’s fiction, observes that Morrison toys with the idea of disrupting the biological order in men and women through her portrayal of Pilate:

“Toni Morrison not only wants a sea change in the social domain wherein she finds evils of great proportion, she also makes a stealthy entrance into the realm of God’s creation. What she concerned about in the creation is that a change be brought in the traditional design/make of men and women.... Pilate’s lack of a navel amounted to a positive disturbance in the female biological world.” (IJAS 34.2 (1993) 55).

Such a subversion of the biological sphere can be done only in a fantasy. This feature does not act as an index of her marginality. On the other hand, it assists her in creating a space for herself. It is Pilate who brings together Macon and Ruth, who had split in the very early years of their married life. But for Pilate’s intervention, Milkman would have been dead. Again, when Milkman and Guitar had been arrested on the charge of theft, she walked straight to the police station
and ungrudgingly released them both. As Hagar wanted to be herself through a ritual of funkiness, Pilate mortgaged everything she had and brought the second hand jewellery and cosmetics with which Hagar could begin a fresh lease of life. Thus Pilate’s ‘lack’ becomes a strength.

Pilate’s habits are queer. Her lips move all the time as she chews things:

“As a baby, as a very young girl, she kept things in her mouth – straw from brooms, gristle, buttons, seeds, leaves, string, and her favorite, ... rubber bands and India rubber erasers.” (Song of Solomon 30).

Once we read of Pilate pulling a piece of string from Hagar’s bedspread and putting it in her mouth. Another of her unusual habits is not to consume food for quite some time together. Hagar explains this to Milkman: “Mama can go for months without food. Like lizard.” (Song of Solomon 48)

Pilate has bizarre ideas about death:
“Ain’t nothing natural about death. It’s the most unnatural thing they is... people die when they want to and if they want to. Don’t nobody have to die if they don’t want to.” (Song of Solomon 140).

Beloved operates as a fantasy in different levels if the reader tries to interpret it in the light of an animal fantasy. Ann Swinfen’s study of the genre points out: “The animal fable often took the form of a miniature satiric comment on human foibles and human behaviour.” (In Defence of Fantasy 15). Morrison resorts to the use of such a fable in Beloved when Paul D narrates to Sethe the tale of Mister, the rooster on the farm. There were at least five roosters and fifty hens in Sweet Home. But Mister was different from the rest in that Paul D helped him come out of the egg shell. He had bad feet and looked evil. His comb was as big as a hand and was bright red in colour. The grotesque appearance of the bird does not hinder it anyway from mocking at Paul D; rather, the peculiar look of Mister intensifies the mockery: “Bloody too, and evil crooked feet flapping. Comb as big as my hand and some kind of red. He sat there on the tub looking at me. I swear he smiled...” (Beloved 76). Thus Paul D’s realization, that he is changed forever into “… something less than a chicken sitting in the Sun on a tub” (Beloved 76) comes with Mister’s tale.
The Grotesque is a recurring phenomenon in Morrison’s fiction. Beloved too has two such characters apart from Mister, the malicious rooster. For instance, Baby Suggs has a twisted hip. Again, Nan who cared for Sethe when her own mother was busy with work, had a stump in the place of an arm. The use of the grotesque in Morrison’s novels shows her own way of coming to terms with the reality of the oppressive world. Both Baby Suggs and Nan do not find their bodily deformity exercising any limitation in their way as they struggle to survive even in the face of severe exploitation. One feels that what Michael Dash observes about Alejo Carpentier’s magic realism is true of Morrison’s symbolism of the grotesque:

“...[A]n aesthetic of incompleteness offers an insight into a world where forms are unstable, where an ... adaptation...governs the existence of all things”. (The Post Colonial Studies Reader 334).

Kathryn Hume, an expert analyst of the genre of Fantasy, talks about the additive technique that assists a writer in bringing out the reality of everyday world in a vivid manner: “If the world presented ... reminds us that our own has much that we pass over unconsciously, then we can speak of an additive or augmented world.”(Fantasy and Mimesis 83). Thus, an additive technique is
used in a fictive world to present reality. So we have in Morrison's fiction, grotesque elements which we normally prefer to close our eyes to. *Jazz* too has such figures. For example, there is Neola Miller who takes care of Dorcas after her school hours. Neola has just one arm. The other becomes curled up when her fiancé leaves her. Another misshapen figure in the urban black world of 20's Harlem is a singer on the street who has a peg leg. Again, the skin of Dorcas with its complete absence of beauty is mentioned frequently by Morrison: "Little half moons clustered underneath her cheekbones, like faint hoof marks" (*Jazz*, 130) ... ugly though they may be, are loved by Joe.

*Paradise*, her latest novel can also be looked upon as an example of a feminist writer's use of fantasy. Elaine Showalter, for instance, dwells on feminists' obsession with freaks. Her theory certainly provides a clue to the presence of a large number of grotesque figures in her fiction:

"Looking at freaks in the 1940s and 1950s signified a woman artist's determination to confront the forbidden without flinching, to activate a powerful female gaze. Freaks and feminists were weirdly bonded." (*Sister's Choice* 135).
Accordingly, the very first grotesque figure in the novel is Sr. Mary Magna. When Mavis meets her for the first time, she is old. In spite of her infirmity, she has powerful eyesight. There is a halo of light around her. Though Mavis is unaware of the presence of ghost children in the convent, she hears the Mother asking Connie to feed them. The section called ‘Consolata’ explains why the Mother glowed so brightly. It is all because of Connie’s witchcraft to make her stay back in the world.

The elements of the uncanny and the grotesque are fused together in *Paradise*. For instance, Connie practices her ‘power’ even during the killing in the convent by the men of Ruby. She realizes that one among the convent women is shot. She tries to bring her back to life: “Consolata rubs the fuzz on the woman’s head and begins to step in, deep, deeper to find the pinpoint of light.” (*Paradise* 289). She converses with the Dead too. For example, she once asks Sr. Mary Magna, who is no longer alive, why she is denied the happiness once promised by the Mother herself.

At a certain point in the novel, Morrison supports the reality of the supernatural. Consolata had a brief spell of an intense attachment with Deacon Morgan, who belongs to Ruby. She finally realizes that he will not come to her
anymore. In her state of dejection, she is granted supernatural power: "A sunshot seared her right eye, announcing the beginning of her bat vision, and she began to see best in the dark. Consolata had been spoken to." (Paradise 241). Another inexplicable feature about a new addition to the convent — Grace/Gigi is her unusually powerful eyes: "....[F]rom one hundred and fifty feet, you could see her eyes..." (Paradise 54).

The unbelievable is a predominant element in a Fantasy. Tzvetan Todorov's definition of Fantasy includes this element:

"The fantastic requires the fulfillment of these conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the character as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character... and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work... Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations" (The Fantastic 33)
These three prerequisites of a Fantasy are there in plenty in Paradise. For instance, Mavis Albright, in her pre-convent days, allowed her twin babies – Merle and Pearl to suffocate themselves to death in her car as she goes into a supermarket. Delusions of pursuit and persecution by her other children – Sal, Frankie, Billy James and her husband Jim Albright make her flee away from home. Once she settles down in the convent, she starts hearing Merle and Pearl in every room there: “In fact she had an outer-rim sensation that the kitchen was crowded with children- Laughing? Singing? – two of whom were Merle and Pearl.” (Paradise 41).

Sweetie Jefferson, who is part of Ruby, had to take shelter in the convent for a brief period of time. She too hears little babies crying in the convent. The reader also gets to know about Che, the baby of Arnette, who survived for a few days and “… then he surrendered himself to the company of Merle and Pearl”. (Paradise 250). The reader consequently feels that there is a whole brood of dead children in the convent. The Mother once asks Connie about these dead but alive children:
“They bunch around the door, but they don’t come in. I don’t mind in the day time, but they worry my sleep at night. You’re feeding them properly? They’re always so hungry.” (Paradise 48).

Todorov’s definition of the fantastic is discussed at length by Kathryn Hume. Hume thinks that if the reader is charmed by the fictionalized supernatural, then the work certainly falls into the category of a fantasy: “Doubt in the reader’s mind about the fictive events and refusal on the reader’s part to allegorize them: these are what matter.” (Fantasy and Mimesis 14). For instance, the reader cannot help recalling the story of the Exodus in the Old Testament, where Jehovah was always there to light up the way as Moses and Aaron led the Israelites out of captivity, when he reads about the Old Fathers being led by an unknown man. The allegorical elements disappear instantly as we read that this is a small man, in a black suit whose facial features just couldn’t be distinguished properly. In spite of his small stature, he has extremely loud foot steps. Only three among them could see him – Zechariah Morgan, Rector Morgan and a child. The place where the walking man disappears finally has a peculiarity:

“Exchanging looks, they... moved to the spot where they believed the walker had spread the items from his satchel. Not a thing in sight. Only a
depression on the grass. Big Pappa leaned down to touch it. Pressing his hands into the flattened grass, he closed his eyes. 'Here', he said. 'This is our place.'” (Paradise 98).

This is how the oven is built in the land chosen by the walking man.

The end of the novel, which can be gleaned from sections entitled 'Ruby', 'Lone' and 'Save-Marie' only if the reader exercises the effort, is sheer magic. 'Ruby' and 'Lone' describe the killing of five convent women. However, the last part of 'Lone' describes the mysterious disappearance of the dead bodies of these women. Different explanations given by people of Ruby are narrated in 'Save-Marie'. Most people believed that Ruby had been protected by the Almighty; so there was no proof of the assault. Billie Delia is the only resident of Ruby who counts on the return of the dead women:

"Billie Delia was perhaps the only one in town who was not puzzled by where the women were or concerned about how they disappeared. She had another question; when will they return?" (Paradise 308).
As predicted and hoped by her, the same section pictures each of the convent women alive again visiting her kith and kin. Gigi meets her Dad. Pallas goes to her mother – Dee Dee’s house to get her huaraches. What transfixes Dee Dee is Pallas’ way of going out: “Pallas didn’t turn; she left through the sliding glass door.” (Paradise 312). Mavis Albright too gets to see her daughter – Sally Albright. Mavis catches upon her children’s present. She finally realizes that Sal had never been interested in harming her and that her husband, Frank was the one who was abusive. As she takes leave, Sal had the same feelings as Dee Dee had on seeing Pallas leave:

“Was their meeting a dream: Sally watched her mother disappear into the crowd. She ran her finger under her nose, then held the cheek that had been kissed. Did she give her address? Where was she going? Did they pay? When did they pay the cashier? Sally touched her eyelids. One minute they were sopping biscuits; the next they were kissing in the street.” (Paradise 315).

Seneca, another inmate of the convent, is spotted at last by Jean, who was the sister Seneca had been frantically searching for as a five year old child. That was in 1958. In 1976 Morrison divulges the real story: Jean is Seneca’s own
mother. Jean had her at the age of fourteen. When the resurrected Seneca is finally seen by Jean, she refuses to recognize Jean. May be Seneca's action is deliberate as she has been all alone all these years just because of Jean's act of desertion. Seneca goes on carving lines on her hand as she sees Jean: Self-infliction is part of her derangement.

The last account is of Piedade who used to feature in Connie's unintelligible lecture to the convent women. The convent women have gathered together in the beach listening to the song of Piedade. This return of the Dead serves as a typical Morrisonian device of lashing against the violence directed at the evil inside the convent. The merging of the past and the present reveals that the convent women are not all that evil. The real blow had come from outside to each of them. Berating, injuring and tyrannizing words and actions of their own families had undone them. It is Magic Realism that assists Morrison to illuminate this betrayal. So Elezebeth Bartelme comments that the ghosts of the convent women certainly succeed in displacing the real:

"Morrison moves into the fantastical at this point, a notably difficult exercise to bring off. She does it with bravura and not for a moment we
doubt that Mavis is reunited with her daughter or that Gigi finds her father in prison.” (Bartelme: Book review of Paradise: Amazon.com).

The wickedness associated with the convent women is macabre in nature. It is the firm belief of the men of Ruby that the Vice inside the convent had brewed up evil in the all-black town which was till date perfect in every way:

“Outrages that had been accumulating all along took shapes as evidence. A mother was knocked down the stairs by her cold-eyed daughter. Four damaged infants were born in one family. Daughters reused to get out of the bed. Brides disappeared on their honeymoons. Two brothers shot each other on New Year’s Day. Trips to Demby for VD shots common. And what went on at the oven these days was not to be believed.” (Paradise 11). The quiet and the order of the community had been overthrown by the convent’s “… revolting sex, deceit and the sly torture of children.” (Paradise 8). How much real is the evil that hurts in the macabre-filled atmosphere of the convent is left to be guessed by the reader. This questioning of the real is certainly a feature of a fantasy, says Bessiere: “Fantasy tells of limits, and it is particularly revealing in pointing out the edges of the real.” (Le Recit Fantastique 62).
There are several instances of the macabre in *Sula*. Eva discovers that Ralph, her son, whom she calls Plum, is a drug-addict. She decides to free him once and for all from his misery by killing him: Once her mind is made up, she rocks him in her arms for quite some time. Meanwhile she lets her mind wander over the various incidents of Plum's life. She cries to her heart's content. Satiated at last, she resorts to the drastic art:

"Eva stepped back from the bed and let the crutches rest under her arms. She rolled a bit of newspaper into a tight stick about six inches long, lit it and threw it onto the bed where the kerosene-soaked Plum lay in snug delight." (Sula 47).

Morrison clarifies the reader's doubts whether Eva has been motivated by any evil thoughts while killing Plum. She makes Eva explain the sordid act. Unable to shelter him as a mother should, she puts an end to his life. When young, she had been deserted cruelly by her husband, BoyBoy. This happens just five years after her marriage with him. She has three children. Penniless, but undaunted by poverty and illness of her baby boy, she devises her own means of building a house and earning a livelihood. Her act is certainly gruesome though it
reveals her empowerment. She mutilates her leg to get insurance money:

"Somebody said Eva stuck it under a train and made them pay off." (Sula 31).

The macabre again finds place in elaborate descriptions in Song of Solomon and Beloved. These accounts have something in common as all of them recreate the truth of history. The Seven Days (Black Nationalists), Malcolm X, Emmet Till, the bombing of a church in which four black girls were killed in Birmingham, Margaret Garner's escape from her white master — Archibald K. Gaines and her desperate act of killing her fourth child using a butcher knife are all part of black history. All these different historical incidents are incorporated into Morrison's fiction. This mingling of history with fiction is itself a feature of Fantasy, but, when the macabre and the gruesome details of history are recounted in fiction, Morrison has a special aim in doing so. According to Norris Clark, Morrison's fiction, unlike most revolutionary black literature of the 1960's and early 1970's, closely adheres to reinterpreting the black American experience. Speaking about her use of American history, Clark notes:

"Those episodes...help to create not only the truth of history, but more specifically, provide a context in which black feelings and thoughts are accurately rendered. The use of black historical episodes...provide a
sense of joy, of living in this world, despite the incongruities, and triumphing over them as most black Americans have.” (Minority Voices 4.2 (1980) 57).

Beloved is truly a slave narrative, if we look at the depiction of the agony experienced by the slaves when they were punished by the white master. Accordingly Morrison talks about a brutal practice of placing an iron bit above the tongue of the slave:

“...[H]ow offended the tongue is, held down by the iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it... The wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back. Days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on the corners of the mouth but nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye.” (Beloved 71).

Both Paul D and Sethe’s own mother were punished this way.

In its merging of history with fiction, Beloved becomes brutally frank. Morrison has the abolition of slavery as the pivot around which the whole story winds and unwinds. At the same time, she is able to show that the institution of
slavery continues to be there in the minds of the whites, thus making us feel the powerful sway of the white hegemony. There are ever so many references to the acts of cruelty practised by the slave owners beside the one mentioned above. For example, two girl children of Baby Suggs were sold and taken away from her even before they had their adult teeth. Every Negro slave’s body betrays some mark of the iron hand of slavery. Thus Sethe’s own mother has a circle and a cross burnt on the skin of the rib. Sethe too has been whipped on her back and the mark is as big as a chokecherry tree.

The white master had such a low opinion of his servant that he thought he/she is just an animal. Lillian Smith writes:

“...[T]hese dark women whom they dehumanized in their minds, and fathered by them children who, according to their race philosophy, were ‘without souls’ – a strange exotic new kind of creature whom they made slaves of and .... sold on the auction block.” (Killers of the Dream 103).

Thus we read of the school teacher writing a book about Negro servants where Sethe’s human and animal characteristics were entered. He even uses a measuring tape to measure the bodies of slaves on the farm. This animal-like
concept of the slaves may have been there in their minds when the nephews of the school teacher take Sethe’s milk.

A demon lover is featured as an inseparable part of the world of make-believe by Charles Perrault. He declares fairy tales to be part of French literature. In 1697, Perrault writes of Bluebeard, who is a demon lover:

“Bluebeard is a bogey who fascinates: his very name stirs associations with sex, virility, male readiness and desire. His bloody chamber, which his latest wife opens with the key he has forbidden her to use, reveals the dead bodies of her many predecessors, and warns her of her impending doom.”

(From the Beast to the Blonde 241).

Perrault’s Bluebeard is cleverly woven into one such figure in Paradise – the Friend of Dovey, wife of Steward Morgan of Ruby. Steward and Dovey have a little house on St. Matthew Street apart from their ranch. The Friend of Dovey meets her in the garden of their house. Their first meeting is marked by a sign of persimmon coloured butterflies in large numbers. Unlike Bluebeard, the Friend has no evil intentions. But his name, age and his whereabouts remain mysterious to Dovey. He was always ready for a chat and a bite with her.
On closer analysis, the figure of the Friend seems to fill in a void in Dovey's life as a woman. He was a sympathetic and attentive listener: "Thing was, when he came, she talked nonsense. Things she didn't know were in her mind. Pleasures, worries, things unrelated to the world's serious issues." (Paradise 92). Even after the little house is taken over by K.D., her husband's nephew, her Friend continues to visit her in a dream.

At a certain point, Dovey wonders whether Steward's successful life had given him the boldness to raid the convent. Though the dissatisfaction she feels in her married life is stated in a low key, her instinctive longing is expressed by Morrison: she craves for the companionship of the Friend. Talking about such a figure of a dark stranger in Lessing's Fiction, Gerardine Meaney says:

"He marks the point at which a culturally defined femininity is exceeded... He also marks the limit of Lessing's fiction, the point at which it encounters and attempts to vanquish the irrational." ((Un)Like Subjects 34)
Theorizing further about the mysterious stranger/friend, Meaney remarks that the happiness a woman gets from the union with such a fantastic creature is momentary:

“The encounter with feminine darkness through an ostensibly male figure and the temporary achievement of ‘wholeness’ though union with that figure in one of the recurrent patterns... characteristic of women’s fiction” (Unlike Subjects 36). Dovey’s Friend is unreal, but he certainly helps her to traverse the vacuum created in her by Steward.

An entire chapter is devoted to the use of the uncanny by Freud, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe in T.E Apter’s Fantasy Literature. According to Freud, the uncanny belongs to the class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known by us or felt by us. On the other hand, Apter’s view is that it is arbitrary to relate the uncanny to the arousal of repressed material. Apter explains that the uncanny touches upon material that is frequently ignored because it is too elusive to fit into normal thought. The uncanny material is elusive because it is unstable, incoherent and indefinite. Morrison’s fiction abounds in the use of the uncanny cited by Apter. An example can be mentioned from The Bluest Eye where the uncanny effect is said to strike upon the fascination of confusion:
There is M'Dear, an old midwife who comes to help Aunt Jimmy. She is a 'doctor' who practices black magic. She is strange because old age has left no mark on her:

“She must have been over six feet tall. Four big white knots of hair gave power and authority to her soft black face. Standing straight as a poker, she seemed to need her hickory stick not for support but for communication.”

(The Bluest Eye 108)

The inexplicable retains its charm in Sula too. For example, the three little children adopted by Eva when she took them in, had different names of their own. But Eva preferred to call them deweys. Gradually they seemed to merge into a single personality which puzzled everyone but Eva:

“They spoke with one voice, thought with one mind, and maintained an annoying privacy. Stouthearted, surely, and wholly unpredictable, the deweys remained a mystery not only during all of their lives in Medallion but after as well” (Sula 39)
At Nel's wedding, the community comes to a perplexing conclusion about the deweys that they will never grow. They have been forty-eight inches tall for years. Again, their mystery is maintained even when they died. They followed Shadrack, along with several others, into an unfinished tunnel. Strangely the bodies of the deweys were never found afterwards.

The ghost in Beloved is another such figure who seems to ignore the laws of reality. This stirring of primitive beliefs is explained by T.E. Apter:

“The uncanniness of the blurred distinction between imagination and reality, or of imagination coming to life, is closely allied to the primitive belief in the omnipotence of thought. Also, it is allied to the overaccentuation of psychic reality, and an inability to trust one's apprehension of reality. The uncanny quality of ghost stories stems from the fact that in regard to death and to dead bodies our present beliefs and fears retained their primitive character.” (Fantasy Literature 40)

The ghost lets herself participate in the actual everybody experiences of 124; but has ever so many peculiarities which are intellectually perplexing:
“Beloved, inserting a thumb in her mouth along with the forefinger, pulled out a back tooth. There was hardly any blood,... Next would be her arm, her hand, a toe. It is difficult keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself.” (Beloved 133).

Again, the last part of the novel describes Sethe, Denver and Beloved skating together, at which nobody is adept, but they never fall down. Another such unbelievable incident makes Sethe realize finally who Beloved is. That happens when Beloved hums a song which Sethe used to sing to her children: “I made that song up and sang it to my children. Nobody knows that song but me and my children...” Beloved turned to look at Sethe. ‘I know it’, she said.” (Beloved 176). The last two pages of the novel describe the slow disappearance of the ghost after having brought havoc into the lives of Sethe, Denver and Paul D. Beloved certainly was successful in making them remember the past and relive their unspeakable experiences, thus making them all go through a cathartic phase.

The uncanny just doesn’t confine itself to Beloved in the novel. For example, when Nelson Lord, Denver’s friend asks her about the details of Sethe’s jail sentence, she decides to find courage to ask her mother the same question. And when she does ask, she finds her hearing power deserting her. Denver was
just a child then. This continues for two years until Denver is able to hear
suddenly the steps of the baby's ghost making its way up the stairs. During these
two years of complete absence of sound, Denver is blessed with strong vision:

"For two years she walked in a silence too solid for penetration but which
gave her eyes a power even she found hard to believe. The black nostrils
of a sparrow sitting on a branch sixty feet above her head, for instance."

(Beloved 103).

The ghost mocks this return of her auditory power through deliberate acts: "From
then on the presence was full of spite. Instead of sighs and accidents there was
pointed and deliberate abuse." (Beloved 104). One is reminded of the ghost of the
dead Catherine in Wuthering Heights. However, Emily Bronte is solely interested
in presenting monstrous symbolic conflicts in her novel. She sees the ghost and
the violent figures of both Catherine and Heathcliff as the domiciling of the
monstrous in the ordinary rhythms of life and work, thereby making these figures
at the same time less monstrous and more disturbing. On the other hand, the
reader can best explain Morrison's use of the unbelievable as a feature of magic
realism. It is exaggeration actually; but only that can assist the writer who uses
fantasy to bring out the stark reality of slavery. Discussing the technique of magic
realism, Muriel Wasi writes: "A sort of literary folklore emerged, that was touched by hyperbole, but that was understood and accepted in places where it had grown up." (The Hindu 4 July 1993, weekly ed:IX).

Toni Morrison can be looked upon as one among the leading folklorists in America if the reader tries to glean the descriptions of folklore in her fiction. It is the base from which all other literatures have ever grown. Besides needing it to know thoroughly history, language, literature, anthropology, psychology, sociology and all studies those disciplines suggest, one needs it for no other reason than to understand one's culture. This reason acts as a unifying force in Morrison's Fantasy: the elements of folk tale in her fiction nourish the distinctive cultural identity she wants to convey to her readers. Morrison re-imagines folk tales by analyzing and attempting to revive the parameters of black history. The revival of folk elements thus marks a powerful disruption of the linear history of Afro-Americans from which folk elements have always been excluded. Only a fantasy can offer a canvas for their picturization. Morrison is prompted to incorporate folk elements into her depiction of Fantasy because of her reverence for her Ancestor/Race. She herself acknowledges this:
“There must have been a time when an artist could be genuinely representative of the tribe and in it; when an artist could have a tribal or racial sensibility and an individual expression of it.” (Literature in the Modern World 326).

The folk song is used in Song of Solomon by Morrison. This song helps Milkman to discover his roots. He realizes that the same song is sung and played by children of Danville in the South. Milkman hears it a number of times during his trips there. Parts of the song are already familiar to him as Pilate’s song. At Danville, Milkman discovers that the song has an oral tradition which signifies that it is much more than a mere children’s game song. Milkman is able to understand finally that Solomon and Ryna are Milkman’s great grandparents. They had twenty one children. Jake was one among them. Jake and the Indian wife of his – Singing Bird were the parents of Macon Dead. All these are discovered by him with the help of the song and some enquiries in Danville. The folk song thus acts as a pivotal force in the novel. One sees here the orally transmitted chanting unfurling the saga of black heroism. Story and history merge at this point. Besides recording history, the folk song also offers Milkman the excitement of knowing an ancestral talent that borders on the impossible. Legend shows that there were African slaves who could if they willed it, fly back to
Africa. Milkman's great grandfather Solomon did just that. This newfound knowledge thrills him and explains his fascination for flying.

*Tar Baby* abounds in the graphic descriptions of a folklore that attains mythic proportions. The legend is all about a Caribbean island—Isle des Chevaliers. The story has a history of three hundred years. As soon as the island was seen by slaves who were shipwrecked, they were struck blind. On one side of a hill on the island, one hundred French soldiers rode one hundred horses. The rain forests of the island are marshy and swamp women are believed to haunt these places. In the backdrop of such a saga of storied men and women, the white American family of Valerian Street is introduced to us. The Streets have the Childs, their Negro servants living with them. The novel centers around Jadine, the breathtakingly beautiful niece of Sidney and Ondine Child. She is a successful model too. Her fascination for Son, a Negro brings to surface a clash of her admiration for white culture with her own traditional, inherent values. Finally when she takes the decision to give up Son, he metaphorically joins the blind slaves of Isle des Chevaliers. The folktale is thus used as a special device by Morrison: Jadine's inability to respond to the pleas of Son to be a true Afro-American leads to Son's disappearance into the historical past of the Caribbean island. He embraces his racial culture thereby granting himself integrity and self-
sufficiency. Leonard W. Roberts, an expert scholar of American Folklore discovers this direct link between folktale and race:

"These old stories ring true to the eternal essence of our nature. They appeal to our rational and irrational instincts, to our visions and dreams, and may in some cases connect us to our primitive origins. The race is richer in human and cultural values for its splendid heritage of old magic tales." (American Folklore 172).

Ann Swinfen mentions a certain type of fantasy which belongs to an intermediate area of imaginative experience. Such a fantasy involves the movement of characters in and out of some form of secondary world. One distinct type of secondary world in this fantasy is the world of time displacement. The time fantasy is a comparatively recent development says, Swinfen. A traditional from that is akin to modern time fantasy is the dream vision as is emphasized by her. This has special relevance to Toni Morrison’ fiction as the perception of the secondary world in her Fantasy has an indistinct and dreamlike quality. This is the reason why she gives prominence to dreams in her fiction. Likewise, in Sula, we see the central women characters getting acquainted with one another for the first time in dreams: "...[I]t was in dreams that two girls had first met." (Sula 51).
The interesting feature about these ‘day dreams’ is that their dreams always include the presence of a friendly being:

“They were solitary little girls whose loneliness was so profound it intoxicated them and sent them stumbling into Technicolored visions that always included a presence, a someone, who, quite like the dreamer, shared the delight of the dream.” (Sula 51).

Again, when Nel dreams of the imminent arrival of a prince, somebody else too sees the dream along with her:

“...always, watching the dream along with her, were some smiling sympathetic eyes. Someone as interested as she herself in the flow of her imagined hair, the thickness of the mattress of flowers, the voile sleeves that closed below her elbows in gold-threaded cuffs.” (Sula 51).

Sula has a recurring dream of the Clabber Girl Baking Powder Lady who disintegrates into white dust. This dream is symbolic of her end. Just before her death, she has dreams of cobalt blue that put her at ease.
Milkman in *Song of Solomon* has waking dreams. His childhood dreams of witches are described in the novel. His encounter with Circe, the old woman who has taken care of Macon and Pilate when they were orphaned, takes place in the realm of a dream:

“...[W]hen he saw the woman at the top of the stairs there was no way for him to resist climbing up toward her outstretched hands... In a dream you climb the stairs. She grabbed him.... But he knew that always, always at the very instant of the pounce or the gummy embrace he would wake with a scream...Milkman closed his eyes, helpless to pull away before the completion of the dream.” (*Song of Solomon* 239 – 240).

Swinfen’s account of the time fantasy which is similar to the dream vision always includes the presence of a spirit. Circe in Morrison’s novel answers to this feature of dream vision. Swinfen makes this more palatable by her explanation:

“In the majority of the dream vision poems the poet or dreamer visits the world of the dead or is guided to some other secondary world by a spirit, so that the time barrier is crossed in the sense that inhabitants of different periods of time meet and converse.” (*In Defense of Fantasy* 45).
In *Tar Baby*, Morrison once again uses dreams as an element of fantasy. For instance, Jadine has a recurring dream of large hats. It produces in her a feeling of shame and revulsion. Later in the novel, Jadine pours her heart out to Son, the black young man who intrudes into the privacy of L'Arbe de la Croix. She tells him that she wore a large hat as a girl of twelve when she attended her mother’s funeral. The reader senses therefore that this dream of Jadine belongs to the personal, interiorized, subjective realm of her psychic life and the psychoanalytic interpretation of the dream brings back the child's despair and shame for having been forced to take up the role of a grown up at such a tender age.

*Jadine sees once a vision of a tar skinned, big built lady in a supermarket.* The lady epitomizes Afro-American femininity with its attendant culture and heritage. Jadine herself offers a stark contrast to this lady. She had just been chosen as the cover girl for the magazine – Elle and she decides to organize a party. It’s during her shopping for the party that she meets the black lady clad in a canary yellow dress. Till then, Jadine has thought of herself as an achiever in the white man’s world. She has even tried to emulate other young girls among the white Americans. But the vision spoils everything for Jadine. The black lady’s
gaze is so powerful that even her eyelashes have been burnt. All that she purchases from the shop are three eggs. And as she is about to disappear, she spits at Jadine. Morrison uses the vision as a warning to Jadine for having thrown away her native culture. Jadine realizes then that she wants that black woman to honour her:

“She couldn’t figure out why the woman’s insulting gesture had derailed her – shaken her out of proportion to incident. Why had she wanted that woman to like and respect her. It had certainly taken the zing out of the magazine cover as well as her degree.” (Tar Baby 47).

Again, the vision acts as a device in the hands of the author. It makes Jadine come to terms with reality: she will never be held in awe by other black women if she continues to cast aside her racial background.

Later, when Jadine tries to distract Son from his fascination for Eloé, his hometown, she notices that several women, representing her race, come crowding to her room at night.
"...they were paying attention only to each other so that must have been/why and how Cheyenne got in, and then the rest: Rosa and Therese and Son’s dead mother and Sally Sarah Sadie Brown and Ondine and Soldier’s wife Ellen and Francine from the mental institution and her own dead mother and even the woman in yellow.... They stood around in the room, jostling each other gently – there wasn’t much room – revealing one breast and then two and Jadine was shocked.” (Tar Baby 257-258).

The woman in yellow again puts up the eggs for her to see. The picture conveyed by the waking dream is used by Morrison as an emblem of black womanhood which Jadine has thrown away in favour of modernity and an irresistible urge to imitate the whites. At the end of the novel, Jadine has taken the final decision to go on with her confrontations of the black woman in yellow and the host of women who come crowding her. She tells herself that her racial background shouldn’t pull her down while getting to the top.

In Beloved the dream experience is reserved for Denver alone. She has a dream every night about Sethe coming to cut her head off. The slain head is then taken by Sethe so that she can braid her hair. Morrison uses this to signify Denver’s utter loneliness in 124. The feeling of dejection that comes to her after
her mother becomes preoccupied with the ghost tears her apart. Consequently she indulges in dreams of her father. These dreams are nothing but constructs of her own imagination. She herself pieces together fragments of information about her father and deliberately forms dreams which she enjoys. In both instances, dreams extend an invitation to Denver to escape from reality.

Kathryn Hume talks about the importance of dreams in Fantasy. The telescopic tricks that dreams play on reality make a work of fiction enter the realm of Fantasy, says Hume:

"Dream is the commonest challenge to everyday reality. Literature relying on dreams can remind us of this loophole in our rationality, and challenge our casual assurance, particularly if the dream world asserts its own substantiality." (Fantasy and Mimesis 127).

Thus Mavis Albright in Paradise has a recurring dream of a lion cub who comes to eat her up. These dreams have as much validity as real life for Mavis. Here Morrison uses the dream to depersonalize Mavis's psychological problem – her relationship with her children. She is paranoiac about them: thinks that they too oppress her like her own husband.
Soanne Morgan in the same novel dreams of her two sons leaning on the Kelvinator and telling her that the feathers don’t belong to the sink. Hume’s interpretation of the dream as a projection of the unconscious mind which can eventually establish lifelong value – structure for the individual can be applied to Soanne Morgan’s dream. It is this dream that makes it clear to her that her sons are trying to tell her that the convent women don’t belong there at all. Hume’s explanation that the dream vision “…could help people get access to unconscious projections of meaning” (Fantasy and Mimesis 171) becomes valid here.

Muriel Wasi is of the opinion that the writers of Magic Realism, despite belonging to various countries, have something in common:

“All their work is in English, they are situated at crossroads from which they reflect, and reflect on, new forms; they are rootless; they are amphibians, who dwell in two half-houses,...they are defined by being indefinable;, the situations and images they describe are universal.” (The Hindu 4 July 1993, weekly ed:IX).
Accordingly magic realist strategy makes use of even music to say something about social, historical or psychological realities of the post-colonial and postmodernist subject who resides in 'half-made societies' as Naipaul calls them. Thus Music in Morrison’s fiction is made to serve new purposes.

Morrison’s world of Fantasy projects both the charm and the disappointment of Afro-American life. Music helps her to make this presentation in a convincing manner. Besides, songs are central to Black culture. According to Pawtricia Hill Collins, Music has even granted the Afro-American woman a boldness which can never be exercised in the reality of her despondent life. “African-American music as art has provided a second location where Black women have found a voice.” (Black Feminist Thought 99). There are several instances in The Bluest Eye which prove this right. The only way Mrs. Mac Teer can express her anger is by singing. When she is depressed, she breaks into a song about trains and Arkansas. Also, there is Poland who sings the blues when she is sober. Thus these songs had an integrating function as both Mrs. Mac Teer and Poland are representatives of the new black migrant to the city. Their rural past make them glorify the values of a black folk culture and they do this through their songs. Hazel V. Carby who studies the sexual politics of women’s blues says: “The music and song of the women blues singers embodied the social
relations and contradictions of black displacement: of rural migration and urban flux.” (Unequal Sisters 242.)

As the lexical echo of the title of Toni Morrison’s third novel, Song of Solomon suggests, it contains a number of instances to show singing and songs as an inseparable part of Negro life. In the early part of the novel, we read of Robert Smith, an insurance agent’s attempt at flying from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior. A small crowd watches the scene with apprehension. In the midst of this crisis, a black woman wrapped in an old quilt, breaks into the lowest female voice imaginable. Yet she delivers the song in a controlled tune:

“O Sugarman done fly away
Sugarman done gone
Sugarman cut across the sky
Sugarman gone home....” (Song of Solomon 6).

When Mr. Smith is about to take off, he loses balance and the crowd cries out. At the peak of tension, the poorly clad black woman starts singing again.
The carelessly dressed black woman who makes her song a foil to the moment of tension is none other than Pilate Dead, the central woman character of the novel. Apart from other roles that she superbly plays, she is also the keeper of the blues tradition in the novel. Trudier Harris, who makes a study of the folk elements in Morrison’s novels says this of Pilate:

“In singing, ‘O Sugarma’ she serves as the herald for Milkman’s birth. In singing with Reba and Hagar, she articulates the pain Macon feels and soothes his wounds. In singing at Hagar’s death, she voices the pain of loss in sound rather than lyrics. And in singing the ‘Song of Solomon’, she places stress on the intricate ties to African and Black American history that unite all generations of those scattered in the Diaspora. In her voice is the blending of secular and sacred traditions, natural and supernatural concerns.” (Fiction and Folklore 114)

Magic Realist writers interweave a sharply etched realism and descriptive details in representing ordinary events together with fantastic and dream-like elements. For instance, a cultural form characteristic of Blacks like the blues song is used by Morrison, infusing in it the elements of dream to make Sethe remember her past. Therefore, the blues becomes a discourse that articulates the
cultural and political struggle of blacks. Thus in, *Beloved* Sethe is not sure whether her early days were spent in Louisiana or Carolina, but she is certain that her mother and her friends used to be happy all the time as they sang together inspite of being disillusioned by racism. She remembers the song as though it is a dream.

How migration affected black men and black women in distinctively different ways is another thought that has been given due consideration by Hazel V. Carby. She sees the manifestation of this difference in male blues and women’s blues. It was easy for men to hop freight trains and get away: “The train... symbolized freedom and mobility for men in male blues songs..” ([Unequal Sisters](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Unequal+Sisters) 243).

Paul D in *Beloved* resorts to such songs in which the sound of the train whistle is sure to hasten the rural-to-urban movements and the mere singing of such Railroad Blues gives him happiness.

Music provides the thematic unifying structure of Toni Morrisson’s sixth novel, *Jazz*. The novel gives us various descriptions of the experiences of characters. All these accounts are given to us by an Omniscient Narrator. These
descriptions have an overlapping nature. Another striking quality is their conversational tone which brings in a vocal quality to the entire narration. Similarly, jazz too demands keen listening. So, if one is to discover meaning from the novel, one has to know what the jazz experience is. For instance, inside a black club where a jazz set is there, what one sees is: “There the smoke is thick, the vocal interactions loud and status is negotiated on the basis of colour.” (Teaching African American Literature 213). Like the forceful music of jazz, it is the persistent sound of the narratorial presence that dovetails more and more revelations into the story.

The chief happenings of the novel- Joe Trace’s and his wife Violet Trace’s migration to the city of Harlem in 1926, his falling in love with an eighteen year old girl called Dorcas, his murder of Dorcas and Violet’s attempt at disfiguring Dorcas’ dead body are all recorded in a nutshell by Morrison in the beginning of the novel itself. From then on, the novel starts its meandering expansion of the same tale. This is discovered by Paula Gallant Eckard who talks about the montage effect in story telling created by Morrison which provides her readers with a true jazz performance.
Musicologists offer us plenty of definitions of jazz. One of them says that in jazz "...the melody is introduced and then subsequently unraveled and embellished...[Musicians play against each other, each establishing a unique sound in the ensemble which is sometimes developed in long solo pieces...]" (Toni Morrison 114). This points towards a common emphasis in jazz: "It has always been at improvisation...that jazz writing has aimed." (American Folklore 314) For instance, Joe Trace seems to put up with all the eccentricities of Violet, his wife. The extramarital affair of this dutiful and tolerant husband confuses the reader if he does not read the following account of Violet's childhood which is full of misery because of an uncaring father and the suicide of her mother. The large number of siblings she has also helps to fit in the pieces of the puzzle. Violet is neurotic, the reader discovers. Again, the reader is jolted when Joe's own childhood is revealed - her mother was a wild woman who deserted him soon after his birth. He made repeated unsuccessful attempts at reaching out to her. Besides, Joe was a thoroughbred countryman who goes to the city just to please his young wife. All these details about Joe are given in a haphazard manner. That is, chorological and logical accounting are avoided by the writer. Inspite of this, the narration helps to redefine Joe Trace. Such an amalgamation of different sub-stories is reminiscent of the jazz technique: ".......In jazz, therefore, signifying
plays an integral role as musicians improvise and signify upon each other”.

(Teaching African American Literature 181).

Apart from the improvisation employed at the level of characterization, the plot too shows the use of the same technique. Just like the redefining of each character, the elaboration of incidents from different points of view that are mouthed by the same Narrator is another major technique of the novelist. For example, the Narrator lets us into a piece of gossip – there is this scandal that Violet Trace has tried to steal a child: “Quiet as it is kept she did try to steal that baby although there is no way to prove it.” (Jazz 17)

This is followed by a lengthy description of what exactly has happened. Though Violet’s innocence comes through the narration, a strange loud laugh of Violet is stressed by Morrison. Her glee surfaces when she thinks of her delight in discovering whether the baby was a boy or a girl after taking it home. This is again followed by the account where the crowd takes to task the elder sister of the baby for entrusting it with a stranger. Being a hairdresser, Violet has gone there to keep an appointment. She had even forgotten her bag while admiring the baby. Violet’s own vehement denial of the accusation is given next. Again, the crowd’s suspicious thoughts are enlisted:
“Why would she walk that far, if she was just playing, rocking the baby? Why not pace in front of the house like normal? And what kind of laugh was that? What kind? If she could laugh like that, she could forget not only her bag but the whole world.” (Jazz 22).

This is how plot moves in the novel with the result that conclusions formed in the mind of the reader are negated sometimes or supported at other times. Any novel that experiments with the portrayal of tales of folk/race will have to rely on this technique, says Brathwaite. He has discovered elements of Jazz in the West Indian novel:

“[T]hose...literary works that grapple most closely with folk forms and folk experience, contain elements of improvisation.” (The Post-Colonial Studies Reader 327)

Subversion as a technique used by Morrison assists her aptly in her delienation of fantasy. Rosemary Jackson, a theorist of fantasy too feels that Fantasy is nothing but subversion. She prefers to look at fantasy as a means for dealing with what has been repressed and therefore is inexpressible: “The fantastic
traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture; that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made ‘absent.’” (Fantasy 4). Morrison’s special method reflected in the structure of The Bluest Eye is itself reminiscent of Rosemary Jackson’s belief that fantasy has subversive qualities. This novel uses the American primer as an introduction – first with double spaces between the lines and with proper punctuation marks. The next paragraph repeats the same account without the punctuation marks and the double spaces. The third paragraph has the same lines. But it has neither the punctuation marks nor the spaces between words. A total contrast is there on the next page where such peculiarities, in typing are avoided completely when Pecola’s grim world is given to us. The Eurocentric ideals of beauty and familial contentment are subverted by giving the reader representative passages from the primer as chapter headings, which are followed by the deeply disturbing accounts of Pecola’s family. For instance, the rosy picture of the good white mother in the primer is subverted by the pathetic account of Pecola’s mother – Pauline Breedlove by juxtaposing one with the other. Another reason for this subversion of the heavenly joy of Dick and Jane’s family in the primer is that Morrison wants to ridicule the patronizing way in which whites always used to introduce black literary texts. Linden Peach, who has made a thorough study of Morrison’s fiction, says:
"At the outset of the novel Morrison adapts the eighteenth and nineteenth century convention whereby work by a black American often carried a preface from a white writer confirming the authenticity of the black authorship." (Toni Morrison 24).

The Bluest Eye uses subversion not only to mock the white code in aesthetics, but to ridicule patriarchy as an institution. Patriarchy hands down the precept that the beautiful should be adored. Pauline Palmer, the feminist theorist notes:

"Psychoanalytic theorists such as Mitchell and Kristeva ...present men and women as equally subject to psychological and cultural pressures, enacting scripts learnt from infancy." (Contemporary Women’s Fiction 70).

Accordingly, the Breedlove family who comes to settle down in Lorain, Ohio, chooses to live in a storefront because they are poor, black and ugly. To the head of the family – Cholly Breedlove, ugliness is his own self. For the children – Sammy and Pecola and the mother – Pauline Breedlove, ugliness is a mask to be put on so that they can relate to others. They perceive their own ugliness in the keep-away attitude of the people they come into contact with. Morrison flaunts
the terrible ugliness of this family inverting the ideal of Beauty praised by her counterparts who are unable to free themselves from the illusion of good looks valued in a patriarchal set-up. Morrison describes the Breedloves thus:

"The eyes, the small eyes set closely together under narrow foreheads. The low, irregular hairlines, which seemed even more irregular in contrast to the straight, heavy eyebrows which nearly met. Keen but crooked noses, with insolent nostrils. They had high cheekbones, and their ears turned forward. Shapely lips which called attention not to themselves but to the rest of the face." (The Bluest Eye 34).

This device — talking poignantly about 'the bad looks' of a marginalized family succeeds in bringing out the reality — the callousness of the white and also the affluent blacks of Ohio in admiring, only the standard Western concept of beauty.

Magic Realism is a critique of the possibility of representation in that it blurs the boundaries between what is 'magic' and what is 'real' and thus calls into question accepted definitions of either. In Sula for example, Morrison uses the magic realist strategy of subversion to overthrow our concept of reality. The beginning of the novel offers us the first instance of this. The white master fools the black slave by promising him a piece of bottom land, but gives him a piece of
hill land instead. The white man gives hill land a new name —'Bottom' and easily convinces the poor slave that it is indeed the very bottom of heaven. But the joke on the black is inverted by Morrison. Her theory is, that the blacks can certainly look down upon the whites from their heaven:

"And the hunters who went there sometimes wondered in private if may be the white farmer was right after all. May be it was the bottom of heaven."

(Sula 6).

Racial exploitation acts as a counterforce upon the exploiters themselves. The reality of their mockery and exploitation becomes an instrument of ridicule itself. Jackson comments upon this subversive function of fantasy: "What could be termed a 'bourgeois' category of the real is under attack. It is this negative relationality which constitutes the meaning of the modern fantastic." (Fantasy 26).

Morrison equates blackness and reality when Shadrack's attempt to know whether he is real or not is described to us. He encounters his serious black face in the toilet water. This relentless nature of the colour —black gives him a sense of reality. "A black so definite, so unequivocal, it astonished him." (Sula 13). The
author’s aim is to subvert the white man’s habit of pretending that blacks don’t exist at all.

Eva takes up a number of boarders. Once she allows a handsome, quiet man to live in her house; many gossiped that he was half-white. But Eva’s verdict was that he was all white: “That she knew blood when she saw it, and he didn’t have none.” (Sula 39). Here Eva overturns the superiority-complex of the White. The man’s name is Pretty Johny. Eva gives him a new name — ‘Tar Baby’ thereby upsetting the pre-conceived notions about the good looks of whites: “Eva looked at his milky skin and cornsilk hair and out of a mixture of fun and meanness called him Tar Baby.” (Sula 40).

Till the end of the novel, the inversion of the word ‘Bottom’ is retained. Bottom, thus in 1965 becomes much sought after by the whites. Rich white folks start building homes there. New television stations also come up there. A golf course is going to be built there.

In Tar Baby also, Morrison uses subversion as the most powerful tool in chiselling a world of blacks. For instance, her quizzical twist helps her to bring the colour white shining on a black man’s face:
“Yardman’s face was nothing to enjoy, but his teeth were a treat. Stonewhite and organized like a drugstore sample of what teeth ought to be.” (Tar Baby 42).

Again, it is subversion that brings in a displacement of the real in this fantasy. For example, Valerian builds a greenhouse in his Caribbean retreat to usher in Death. He also inverts the tension in his house by building a separate wash house where order prevails. As the end of the novel draws near, Valerian realizes that his attempt at creating a haven has been futile. His subversive efforts were unrealistic. Instead, he should have known really what kind of people his wife and his son were:

“He thought about innocence there in his greenhouse and knew that he was guilty of it because he had lived with a woman who had made something kneel down in him the first time he saw her, but about whom he knew nothing, had watched his son grow and talk but also about whom he had known nothing. And there was something so foul in that, something in the crime of innocence so revolting it paralyzed him”. (Tar Baby 242)
Morrison makes use of subversion to bring about a role reversal in the white master – black servant relationship. The mammy figure of the novel – Ondine Childs is declared to be the real mistress of the home by the novelist. This happens during a domestic crisis. Ondine announces: “The first time in her life she tries to boil water and I get slapped in the face. Keep that bitch out of my kitchen. She is not fit to enter it. She is no cook and she is no mother”. (Tar Baby 207). Morrison thus proves that power relations are reversible and revisable in a fantasy. Ondine shouts out: “Yes my kitchen. I am the woman in this house. None other. As God is my witness there is none other. Not in this house”. (Tar Baby 209).

Song of Solomon paints the events of a century. Milkman’s great grandfather – Solomon/Shalimar practised flight showing the whole world that he could thus get away from the white master forever. Almost one hundred years later, during Milkman’s time, subversion is again practiced by the residents of Milkman’s town. The town had only one coloured doctor. The Negroes of the street started calling the Mains Avenue, where the doctor resided, Doctor Street. When the city legislators made some reforms, they renamed it as Mains Avenue. They had notices pasted all over stating that the road will be hereafter known as Mains Avenue and not Doctor Street. The Southside residents, all Negroes, out of
jest decided to obey the order of the white master verbatim and started calling it Not Doctor Street. The charity hospital of the town was called Mercy Hospital, but coloured patients were not allowed there. Hence the blacks substituted its name by No Mercy Hospital. Similarly the rough part of the town was called Blood Bank as there was a lot of bloodshed there. Macon Dead’s Packard is paraded before the blacks as a symbol of his wealth. It never raced along streets, never had a punctured tire, was never stopped suddenly to greet a friend, never had any warmth or gaiety inside. The blacks inverted its signified luxury and comfort by calling it Macon Dead’s hearse.

Guitar Bains, Milkman’s constant companion does not enjoy the privileges of birth like his friend. His miserable life is the result of an accident in which his father is killed in a sawmill where he worked for a white master. Guitar’s total helplessness in directing his hatred at whites is inverted into a strong and abiding love for blacks: “What I’m doing ain’t about hating white people. It’s about loving us. About loving you. My whole life is love.” (Song of Solomon 159).

Once when Guitar talks in a lighthearted manner about tea to Milkman, he figures out that Lipton tea, packed in little white bags, is a craze among Northerners. Whiteness thus is longed for by the Negroes themselves. Morrison
here laughs at the folly of the blacks who invert the hatred for their tyrannical masters to a ridiculous liking of white colour.

Their conversation casually turns to eggs. Guitar again points out that multiplying his own race and perpetuating its legacy is just not possible for blacks:

“’Nope Can’t be no egg. It ain’t in him. Something about his genes. His genes won’t let him be no egg no matter how hard he tries. Nature says no. ‘No you can’t be no eggs, nigger. Now, you can be a crow if you wanna. Or a big baboon. But not no eggs. Eggs is difficult, complicated. Fragile too. And white.’ (Song of Solomon 115-116).

Eggs are mostly white in colour, points out Guitar when Milkman tries to refute his theory by talking of brown eggs. Guitar’s pet theory makes use of subversion in that nature has destined the colour of Negroes to be black; therefore it is impossible for a Negro to be an egg which is usually white. Using the technique of subversion, Morrison makes Guitar understate the progenitive ability of the egg and highlights, its whiteness and fragility. As a contrast, the Negroes are black and strong.
An inverted view of the canons of the white master can be best shown in a fantasy – *Beloved* too proves this to be true. This is also a form of post-colonial resistance:

“In words such as ‘refusal’, ‘subversion’, and ‘intervention’, Bhabha ascribes a *more* active agency to the colonized... He maintains that resistance is an effect of the contradictory representation of colonial authority, a native appropriation of its ambivalent strategies of power”. (The *Post-colonial Studies Reader* 101).

For example, Morrison makes fun of the whites when she talks about the excitement of the blacks at the carnival. The blacks rush to the carnival knowing for sure that the whites can be seen in nonsensical roles there:

“Breathless with the excitement of seeing white - /people loose: doing magic, clowning, without heads or with two heads, twenty feet tall or two feet tall, weighing a ton, completely tattooed, eating glass, swallowing fire, spitting ribbons, twisted into knots forming pyramids, playing with snakes and beating each other up.” (*Beloved* 48).
Morrison also presents blacks’ general contention that the degree of meanness in the whites can be judged by looking at their mouths. So Denver says: “She said there ain’t nothing to go by with white people. You don’t know how they’ll jump. Say one thing, do another. But if you looked at the mouth sometimes you could tell by that.” (Beloved 77). The slaves – the buffalo men, punished brutally by the whites had their own way of ending the lives of their tormentors. They sang about their frustrations thus making them come alive and killed those memories by killing their masters at least in their songs. Frantz Fanon writes:

“Face to face with the white man, the Negro has a past to legitimate, a vengeance to exact; face to face with the Negro, the contemporary white man feels the need to recall the time of cannibalism.” (The Post-colonial Studies Reader 326).

Fanon’s revelation finds detailed supportive explanation in Beloved. Morrison laughs at the white man’s fear of the uncivilized jungle in the minds of the blacks. She uses subversion to explain the idea further. She says that the jungle grows in the minds of the blacks because of the white man’s efforts and finally the jungle gets at them. The uncivilized animal-like instincts are those of the whites: “The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums
were their own.” (Beloved - 199). Similarly, in Jazz Morrison ridicules the whites whose homes are decorated and redecorated by black women who are richer than the whites themselves. Morrison states in the same novel that the white master will love something only if it is inferior in status and power. In Paradise, Anna Flood, when four years old was taught not to fear a scorpion as it was equally scared of a human being. Anna applies the same lesson to her fear of white policemen. Once again, it is Morrison herself who laughs at the whites through the devise of subversion: It’s just their fear of the blacks that forces the white policemen to take up guns:

“...[T]he scorpions’ tail was up because it was just as scared of her as she was of it. In Detroit, watching baby-faced police handling guns, she remembered the scorpions rigid tail.” (Paradise 116).

Throughout the portrayal of the various strands of Morrison’s model of fantasy – the grotesque, the uncanny, elements of folk tale, dreams, songs and subversion, Morrison shows herself unconcerned about drawing any line between the real and the unreal. The despicable nature of the grotesque, the impossible touch of the uncanny, the mythic patterns of the folklore, the association and symbolism of dreams, the emotionally charged and deeply personalized music of
country blues, the bright and forceful music of Jazz and the subversive twist used by Morrison herself breach the boundary between the real and the unreal. Despite their puzzling nature, these elements of Morrisonian fantasy define Afro-American culture with more clarity. A mere recognition of the ordinary and extraordinary elements in their community granted the Afro-Americans a space of their own, albeit their marginalisation.