In The Bluest Eye, Morrison expands a conventional literary genre: the bildungsroman. A bildungsroman recounts how an individual, often an extraordinary person, grows up. The bildungstroman has sometimes focused on artists, for example, or on especially intelligent or virtuous heroes. Novels that focus on more ordinary people often show a world in which their characters are the victims of powerful social or natural forces; Individual personality is not in focus. The Bluest Eyes traces the growing up of Pecola and Claudia, two ordinary African-American girls, and claims for them the status of earlier heroines in the bildungstroman tradition. At the same time, it illustrates the girls' struggles with social forces of racism and poverty. The story depicts two black families, the Macteers and the Breedloves, immigrants from the South, living in Lorain, Ohio. But its emphasis is on the children, Claudia and Frieda Macteer and Pecola Breedlove- their happy and painful experiences in growing up, and their formal and informal education that leads them to self understanding.

The novel begins with two prologues. In the first, the omniscient narrator foreshadows the progressive destruction of Pecola Breedlove by showing how the same familiar story appears to her in three different versions. The story about mother, father and their children Dick, Jane and Sally, comes from the primers, (books used to teach children to read during the 1940s and 1950s in the United
States and Canada). Morrison uses this technique to juxtapose the fiction of the white educational process with the realities of life for many black children. The ironic duality of the school and home-experience is reflected through the structure of the novel. It is the world of the first grade basic reader-middle class, secure, suburban and white which is complete with dog, cat, non-working mother and leisure time of father.

The first version of the story uses standard spaces and punctuation, with the structure of simple sentences:

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane. Play.

The second version uses much smaller space between words and omits both capital letters and punctuation, so that sentences run together though its world is still recognizable;
Here is the house it is green and white it has red door it is very pretty here is the family mother father dick and jane live in the green- and- white house they are very happy see jane she has a red dress she wants to play who will play with jane see the cat it goes meow-meow come and play come play with jane the kitten will not play see mother mother is very nice mother will you play with jane mother laughs laugh mother laugh see father he is big and strong father will you play with jane father is smiling smile father smile see the dog bowwow goes the dog do you want play with jane see the dog run run dog run look look here comes a friend the friend will play with jane they will play a good game play jane play.

The third version runs together not only the sentences but the words. This running of words appears like long collection of consonants and vowels seeming to signify nothing

"Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasreddooritisveryprettyhereisthefamilymotherfatherdickandjaneliveinthegreenandwhitehousetheyareveryhappyseejanesheshehasareddressshewantstoplayhowwillplaywithjaneseethecatitgoesmeow meowcomeandplaycomecomeplaywithjanethekittenwillnotplayseemothermoth erisverynicemotherwillyouplaywithjanemotherlaughslaughmothertallaughseefat herheisbigandstrongfatherwillyouplaywithjanefatherissmilingsmilefathersmil eseethdogbowwowgoesthedogdoyouwantplaywithjaneseethedogrunrundogrun looklookherecomesafriendthefriendwillplaywithjanetheywillplayagoodgameplay janeplay".
These three versions of the same prefatory passages of a reading primer show the symbolic representation of the three different life styles.

The first version of the paragraph indicates an alien white world, represented by Dick, Jane family that intrudes into the lives of the black children. The second version represents the lives of the MacTeer family which survives the poverty and the racism that it encounters in Ohio. The third version of the paragraph stands for Breedlove family; the breakdown of order in the language of the story suggests the breakdown of order in Pecola's mind which lives in a deformed world being exploited by the ruling class. As Klotman looks it up:

"First and foremost it serves as a synopsis of the tale that is to follow, revealing the psychic confusion of the novel. It also serves as an ironic comment on a society which educates and unconsciously socializes its children like Pecola with callous regard for the cultural richness and diversity of its people."²

In addition to this, in the last paragraph, individual space disappears as it does in the novel. The father intrudes on and violates the child's space. The clear structure of the story-book-world is wrecked as Pecola's life is wrecked. It appears as if "all the elements of the novel are here."³ The cat and dog motif appears in a sinister form in the novel. the black cat has blue eye, the blue eyes haunt Pecola and dog writhes as it dies of poison the sign that Pecola must look for in order for her eyes to become blue. Then Pecola, who is Jane of the First Version, invents the friend who comes to play with her as she enters the world of insanity.
The second prologue comes from Claudia Macteer's consciousness. Claudia tells the reader about Pecola's eventual fate and suggests that her tragedy corresponds to an interruption of nature's cycle, a spring season in which nothing can grow. Nothing that the 'why' of Pecola's fate is hard to deal with, Claudia decides to tell only 'how' it occurred.

"Quiet as it is kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigold did not grow; a little examination and much less melancholy would have proved to us that our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody's did -----------------. It was long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds..................... For years I thought my sister was right: it was my fault. I had planted them too far down in earth it might have been unyielding..................... There is really nothing more to say except wh., But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how'".4

It is evident that Morrison's narrative technique enables the reader to find out the why' in the how'. The novel is divided into four sections "autumn", "winter", "spring" and "summer" which come not in it proper order. The world of the novel is topsy-turvy. It also serves as prologues, these developmental seasonal sections alternate between two viewpoints.

Claudia MacTeer speaks in first person ("I") about experience in her childhood, particularly those connected with Pecola Breedlove. The omniscient narrator tells the reader about events that Claudia could not have seen or things that Claudia could not have known (The history of Pecola's parents. Pauline and
Cholly. The omniscient narrator entered into the mind of character for instance. The reader overhears what appears to be a conversation between Pecola and another child though the dialogue is printed in italics, to distinguish from other conversation because Pecola is alone. The omniscient narrator takes the reader into Pecola's thoughts. Driven to insanity by her utmost need for love, Pecola invents a companion for herself. The italicized dialogue records Pecola's conversation with this imaginary friend. The omniscient narration provides the reader with a descriptive and analytical context for Claudia's personal, emotional memories.

As part of the overall contrast between one girl's survival and another's destruction, each seasonal section of the novel includes details about Claudia Macteer and Pecola Breedlove. Every section either presents their experiences directly or explores the reasons that their experiences divulge. The first, section, 'autumn' shows the relationship within the MacTeer family and those in the Breedlove family. In "winter" both the narrators' stories testify to the racist damage to the African-American community. The community then unconsciously uses internalized racist standards to injure people psychologically. The third, section, "spring" has dual functions. First, it shows the vulnerability of the young girls to a largely brutal environment. Second, it explores the histories of the surrounding adults who both make up that environment and protect the girls from it. The shortest section "summer" presents the fruition of the circumstances detailed in the preceding three seasons.

The change of seasons does not merely represent the linear movement in the novel; they are significantly ironic and brutal comments on Pecola's descent into insanity. The use of names of seasons to indicate the major parts of the novel also aids Morrison in telling Pecola's story. By beginning the novel with 'autumn', she
seems to hint that the world of the novel is topsy-turvy. Spring usually symbolizes
the beginning of things, the time of birth, and rebirth. Autumn, in contrast, is the
time of death and decay. Summer, commonly associated with life in full bloom or
ripeness, is a time of death, life in its final moments. These seasonal-divisions aid
the reader in understanding the fundamental decadence of life of the African living
in the United States. It helps in telling Morison's story of the wrapped psyche of an
adolescent African female living in a racist society.

The Bluest Eye uses techniques of involved flashbacks and a cyclical return
to particular events. Although the novel's narrative technique is accessible to many
readers, it does not present the events chronologically. It focuses on issues of its
time but develops them with psychological profundity and moral intensity. The
Bluest Eye, hence, goes beyond the mindset of its own time to establish many of
the basic terms for subsequent discussion of racist psychology.

The Bluest Eye is an innovative novel in which its experiments with form
are determined by the perspectives and approaches which it brings to the condition
of African-Americans at the tense interface between two cultures. One of these
perspectives is the way in which language is enmeshed with power-structures
pursued throughout the novel by the persistent contrasting of the Dick-Jane
mythology of the primer with the Breedlove family. Within this ironic interplay of
difference, the text, thus, brings in a particular perspective not only the impact of
white ideologies on the black community, but also the nature of whiteness and its
appropriateness to determine the contours of African-American culture and lived
experience.
The omniscient narrator shows the barrenness of Breedlove's family life, and its origin in racism. The Breedloves do not love themselves or one another, and ironically enough hate each other. Pauline Breedlove, lame in one foot, believed she is ugly and bears children who she thinks are ugly. "The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditionally stultifying it was not unique. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. You looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction."\(^5\)

In accounts presented as typical of African-American experience, the novel depicts a furniture store forcing Breedlove to accept damaged goods. These experiences destroy the confidence of Breedloves in themselves. Gradually, they accept the message of racism that they are ugly and inferior. The African-American community as a whole shares these racist experiences but some have supports that the particularly vulnerable Breedloves lack. The community senses the Breedloves' self-hatred and encourages it by agreeing that the Breedloves are ugly. This cycle of mutually reinforcing communal disapproval and self-hatred climaxes in 'summer'.

In "autumn" the Breedlove family as a whole is a scapegoat, but in "summer", when Pecola alone is chosen as scapegoat, her personality collapses into insanity. "winter" depicts the black community's internalization of white racist standards, and their effects on Pecola, Claudia recounts the community's idolatry of Maureen Peal, a light skinned, middle class child. Significantly, Maureen first
befriends to help or favor her and then verbally attacks Pecola. The omniscient narrator shows Geraldine, the middle-class mother of Junior (one of Pecola's schoolmates), projecting on Pecola everything that she is ashamed of, every thing that whites use to despise African-Americans. When Pecola visits Junior, Geraldine separates the children by throwing Pecola out of their home.

In "spring" Claudia briefly narrates what happens when the Macteer's lodger, Mr. Henry, gropes at her sister Frieda's breasts. When Frieda tells her parents, they are enraged and throw Mr. Henry out of their house. Claudia and Frieda believe that they must get some alcohol, the only force they can think of that will preserve Frieda from being "ruined". Their quest of liquor is one of the novel's few comic notes. The omniscient narrator relates Pecola's far more serious experience of sexual assault. Raped by her father and emotionally abandoned by her mother, Pecola falls prey to Soaphead Church, who promises her what she thinks will make her lovable, blue eyes.

To tell how the Breedlove parents come to fail their daughter Pecola, the omniscient narrator explores their histories and the development of their marriage. Cholly, Pecola's father has never been part of a family and he suffers an early, specifically sexual racist humiliation. Pauline, Pecola's mother, also suffers from isolation, although she belongs to a functional family, she loses both that family and the southern black community when she and Cholly move north in search of economic opportunity. Although Cholly and Pauline initially love each another, their love cannot withstand poverty, racism, and isolation from the community. Too countrified to fit into Northern urban women's circles, Pauline spends most of her time at the movies. From these films, she absorbs racist ideas of female beauty
and learns to dislike her own appearance when she looks at her new-born daughter, Pauline, "Knowed she the baby was ugly", for she sees herself in her child.

Emotionally abandoning her own family, Pauline creates an alternate, fantasy family from her workplace. She does domestic work for a white family, the Fishers. At their home, she has access to beautiful material goods; as their servant, she can use their status to deal with trades people who do not respect her in her own right. Pauline's emotional loyalties lie with the white children rather than with her own. When Pecola accidentally makes a mess and burns herself, Pauline knocks her down and runs to comfort the white child frightened by the commotion. Appropriately, Pecola has been trained to call Pauline by a name that does not make emotional claims. To her daughter, Pauline is not "Mother" but Mrs. Breedlove.

The wider community also fails Pecola. Having absorbed the idea that she is ugly, and knowing that she is unloved, Pecola desperately wants the blue eyes that she understands will make a child lovable in American society. She takes her request to Soaphead Church, pretending to be a hoodoo man. Because his experience of growing up in the West Indies resembles Cholly and Pauline's experience in the United States, he too lacks a solid sense of self. In fact, Soaphead has so little confidence that he can function sexually only with little girls. In spite of that, he understands how racism has damaged Pecola. Unlike Cholly and Pauline, Soaphead can articulate what has happened to him, and to Pecola. In a grotesquely humorous counterpart to Claudia's narration, he expresses his outrage at racism in a letter to God.
In "summer' Claudia, in the first scene, remembers the disastrous events leading to Pecola's madness. The community condemns Cholly, Pecola's father, for raping his twelve year old daughter. But the same community also ostracizes her, claiming that she must be guilty in some way. Frieda and Claudia share the community's attitude towards Pecola, but they pray to protect her baby from any evil spell. Naturally, their efforts do not succeed. One may notice it from the beginning of Claudia's narration in 'autumn,' the baby dies. In the next scene, the point of view shifts from Claudia to the omniscient narrator. Entering Pecola's mind, the narrator overhears a conversation. Although the dialogue sounds like a discussion between Pecola and another real person, no one else is present. Pecola has become insane. Lacking love from her family and her community, she has created an imaginary friend who seems real to her.

In the final passage, the viewpoint again moves back to Claudia. An adult now, Claudia considers the lasting damage to Pecola. In a symbolic representation of her ongoing isolation, the still-crazy Pecola continues to live at the edge of town that rejected her. Seeing her, Claudia meditates on the community's and her own participation in Pecola's tragedy.

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, indicates a black girl's quest for white standards. It deals honestly and sensitively with the damaging influence of white standards and values on the lives of the black people. Morrison tells the story of a young black girl, Pecola Breedlove, who wants to have blue eye, a symbol of white beauty. Pecola believes that such eyes would make her beautiful, acceptable, and admirable. But her eyes cannot be changed into blue eyes in reality despite her desperate longing for them. Her quest for blue eyes culminates in madness. In The Bluest Eye, what Morrison analyses is the powerfully destructive effects of
institutional racism on individual African-Americans and on the African-American community, and the psychological damage done by it on individuals. It also explores familial rape much more thoroughly and realistically. In its brilliant synthesis, The Bluest Eye shows the interconnectedness of racism, psychological damage, and rape.

The Bluest Eye, explores a black community in a particular time and place- Lorain, Ohio, in the 1940's- and shows that the events there result from the wider social reality of racism and poverty. At the same time, it also connects its characters and events to the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone. Morrison shows in it racism as the primary source of oppression and its damaging effects on the black community at large and on black families in particular. She chooses as the basic theme and subject of her first major work, the obsession of blacks with an American standard of beauty that seems both inescapable and destructive as she herself states:

"The concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the western world."  

The ideals of beauty and romantic love are two of the most oppressive ideas in the history of mankind, they spring from envy, flourish in insecurity, culminate in disillusionment. The idealized images of feminine beauty depersonalize women, and the impact of these images is enormously exaggerated by the imagery of media, and they oppress the black women who cannot even aspire for white ideals that surround them.
"Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another-physical beauty. Probably the most destructive idea in the history of human thoughts".  

Beauty is as much a political as an aesthetic concept while ugliness in not merely a matter of appearance. It is a manifestation, in Western thinking, of an inner ugliness and a spiritual and moral failure, if not an innate evil:

"That which was 'white' (or Anglo, male, Christian, wealthy) was extolled and infused with connotations of benevolence and superiority, while that which was not white (or not Anglo, female, non-Christian, poor) was debased and associated with male violence and inferiority.”

Pecola Breedlove, the protagonist of the novel, searches painfully for self-esteem as a means of imposing order on the chaos of her world, because a sense of self-worth and the correlative stability that would accompany it are unavailable to her in the familial or wider environment, she creates a subjective world of fantasy. Ironically named, the Breedloves do not give her a life of love: familial, romantic or personal. Pecola is loved neither by her parents nor by friends nor by school teachers. She believes that if she has blue eyes she would be loved by all. She witnesses white children loved both by the white and black adults. Hence, she determines to achieve beauty and acceptance by acquiring blue eyes. The case of her quest for blue eyes is described thus:

"Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat
discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time."

Pecola believes that it is blue eyes alone which will help her in restoring her self-respect. As she has no blue eyes, she suffers from self-scorn that creates a kind of scar on her heart. The Bluest Eye delineates how Pecola is repeatedly exposed to psychological violation, and how physical violation completes the psychological destruction. Morrison observes:

"When the strength of race depends on its beauty, when the focus is turned to how one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble...................... The concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the Western World, and has nothing to do with our past, present or future. Its absence or presence was only important to "them" the people who used it for anything they wanted." 

The belief that black was not valuable or beautiful was, however, one of the cultural hindrances to black people throughout their history in America, and this belief informs the tragedy of Pecola Breedlove. The protagonist of the novel comes from the poor family that is virtually cut off from the normal life of community. The Breedloves despise themselves into ugliness for the women of that family. Pecola's mother Pauline, who works as a domestic servant in a beautiful house, hates the ugliness of her house, her daughter, her family and herself and, what is worse, blames her sense of unworthiness on being black and poor. Having
inherited the myth of unworthiness, the Breedloves can only live the outlived saga
to its expected conclusion.

The racial predicament in which Pecola and her parents are placed is
exquisitely expressed in the main body of the novel which is divided into four
chapters named after four seasons: autumn winter, spring and summer. Morrison's
purpose in showing us the psychic state and the resultant behavior of Pecola under
the pressure of white domination is to expose the vicious genocidal effects of
racism on the black girls, thereby raising the question of what it means to be black
in a racist society. As Shelby Steel puts it:

"to be black was to be a victim; therefore not to be a victim
was not to be a black."\(^{11}\)

The experiences of black children growing up amid the standards of larger,
white society are conveyed through a number of images which are both grotesque
and ordinary. Blue eyes, which are Pecola's unfulfilled dream, seem to stem from
the background in surrealistic dominance:

"Pecola Breedlove believes that exchanging her brown
eyes for blue ones will make her beautiful and loved. The
people who influence Pecola as she grows up are clearly
the source for this harmful idea. As appearance approved
by dominant white society, such people damage both
themselves and others."\(^{12}\)

The tangible Shirley Temple Doll, with which the girls play, has Blue Eyes. The
Furthermore little daughter of the employer of Pecola's mother has blue eyes. The
image remains, in the same way, like a painfully blinding light, an instrument of torture throughout the novel.

The Shirley Temple Cup and the Mary Jane candies allow Pecola to carry the image through her very being, to become one with it for short periods of time, however, she believes that seeking after and obtaining the bluest eyes, the most irreproachable feature in the world, will allow permanent union with those currently transitory features. Hating her black self, she yearns for blue eyes because she believes that will extinguish her position as pariah and give her love and security that are desperately missing from her life. Thus, Pecola sincerely believes that blue eyes are a panacea for all her ills. "It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes........were different. If she looked, beautiful may be (her father) would be different and (her mother) too. May be they'd say' why look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We must not do bad things in front of that pretty eyes." 13

The bluest eyes thus become the metonymical representation of the myth. Having blue eyes means, having every thing love, acceptance, friends and family in short, a truly enviable place in the society.

The Bluest Eye examines the destructive effects of institutional racism on individual Africans Americans and on the Africans American community. Institutional racism means something more and different from prejudice in individual people. Personal prejudice is manifested in unjust, cruel action by individuals. Institutional racism, on the other hand, can be unintentionally perpetuated by people who simply have not thought about racial issues, or people who cannot progress beyond what they were taught. Institutional racism refers, for
example, to systematic exclusion of a whole racial group, from cultural studies and histories, or the presentation of the group in a way that makes them seem inferior. When, the shopkeeper Mr. Yacobowski, does not want to touch Pecola's hand because she's black, that is individual prejudice. When, the standard textbooks in American schools before 1970 did not mention. African-American, except to say that they were enslaved until 1865, when Pecola has only Dick, Jane and Sally as models-that is institutional racism.

In The Bluest Eye, Morrison shows the psychological damage done by institutional racism, which, supported by acts of personal prejudice to destroy, gradually erodes the self esteem of all the characters as they internalize the mainstream's picture of them as unimportant, inferior, and ugly. Pecola's parents and Soaphead learn to hate themselves, and thus lose or never develop their potential to be responsible, nurturing adults for African-American children. Even Claudia, who shows the strongest resistance to the attack on her self image, recounts going through a stage of accepting racist picture herself. Education-system is implicated in racism with Morrison showing all white primer stories at the beginning of the novel, and later by Pecola's dismal experiences in school. Even more important, however, is the informal education conveyed by the movies. The pervasive influence of Hollywood films runs through the novels. 'The MacTeers' boarder flatters Frieda and Claudia by pretending to mistake them for Greta Garbo and Ginger Rogers, white movie stars. Pecola drinks as much (white) milk as she can from the MacTeers Shirley Temple mug. (Temple was a white child-star of the 1930s) Mrs. Breedlove learns to despise her own looks while watching romantic movies featuring Jean Harlow, a platinum blonde actress. When a black person, Bill Bojangles for example, appears in these movies, he literally
dances attendance on the white characters. Only one movie with an African-American theme is mentioned, Imitation of Life; and it concerns the black character's hatred of blackness. The movie's message denigrates African-American women's importance, their beauty and their worthiness to be loved.

Racism permeates every fiber of those whom it destroys; no aspect is too private to escape. Even those aspects of humanity usually considered instinctual sexual drive and protection of the young are distorted and destroyed in Soaphead, Cholly, and Pauline. The male characters' combination of perverted sexuality and diminished ability to protect makes them particularly damaging to little girls. Soaphead sexually abuses only vulnerable girls. Cholly's sexuality is more obviously violent. The interruption of his first sexual experience by white racists teaches him to connect sex with power, violence and hatred. In the novel's most horrific example of victims creating new victims, Cholly tries to show love for his daughter, but he ends up raping her.
REFERENCES


2. **Klotman Phyllis, Pick and Jane Shirley Temple** Sensibility in The Bluest Eye, Black American Literary Forum, 13(1979), 124


13. **Toni Morrison,** *The Bluest Eye,* p-34.
Toni Morrison's two earlier novels, the Bluest Eye and Sula, depict the growth and development of female characters. In the first, A black girl named Pecola must bear the consequences of her community's internalized racism, and she is driven to madness. To find hope in the Bluest Eye, the reader must focus on the female narrator who grew up with Pecola, and who has survived. Sula also examines female identity but with less vulnerable heroines. Whereas Pecola's isolation leads to her doom, Sula Peace and Nel Wright live in stable families and form a friendship that supports their growth into womanhood. In addition, Morrison's examination of the environment for this friendship, the black community, is much more nuanced and complex than in the Bluest Eye. Though it has tragic elements, a simple term such as "tragedy" cannot accurately represent the wide range of experiences depicted in Sula. Above all, Sula concerns persistence of women's friendship, of individual growth, of spirit.

Sula portrays the friendship of Nel Wright and Sula Peace in the context of their community, called the Bottom. The Bottom was an African-American settlement in the hills above medallion, Ohio, until it was bulldozed for a golf course. Before presenting critical events in the life of the Bottom from 1919 to 1965, the narrator mediates on the meaning of this community's life and death.
Morrison has followed a two-part structure in Sula. Part one contains chapters titled with consecutive years from 1919 to 1923; its final chapter skips to 1927. In part two of the novel, chapters include 1937, 1939, 1940 and 1941 before making a similar jump to 1965. "1919 describes" the life of Shadrack, a World War I veteran who creates a peculiar annual ritual, 'National Suicide Day' to control his fear of death and change. 1920 "focuses on the history of Nel Wright's grandmother and her mother Helen, and Nel's realization of her own personhood. (Although Sula is the title character, her name does not appear until near the end of 1920'. 1921 concentrates on the character of Sula's grandmother Eva, who shapes the environment in which Sula grows up. "1922" presents the origins and development of the essential bond between Nel and Sula as well as Shadrack's special regard for Sula. "1923" contains the death of Sula's mother Hannah and the growing estrangement of Sula and Eva. In "1927" Nel marries Jude Green and Sula leaves the Bottom from the wedding reception, not to return for ten years.

Part two opens with Sula's return to the Bottom, where she quickly outrages community standards by showing no interest in marriage, putting Eva in nursing home and having sex with Nel's husband, Jude (Jude soon leaves the Bottom). Against the background of growing community disapproval of Sula's sexual freedom, "1939" examines the course of Sula's only serious romantic relationship. In "1940", Nel visits the dying Sula, and after her death, Sula reflects that she wants to tell Nel about the experience. "1941" describes a disastrous accident (a collapsed tunnel), that claims the lives of many townspeople who have mockingly joined Shadrack's National Suicide Day Parade. Shadrack himself escapes. "1965"
centres on Nel, mourning the deterioration of the Bottom, Nel visits the nursing home when the woman who was one of the town's strongest forces, Eva still lives. On her way home she senses Sula's presence and realizes for the first time that her long mourning for the loss of her husband Jude has been mistaken; she has nearly been missing Sula. The novel closes with her cry of grief. Although Sula is arranged in chronological order, it does not construct a linear story with the cause of each plot event clearly visible in the preceding chapter.

Instead, Sula uses 'juxtaposition', the technique through which collages are put together. The effects of a collage on the viewer depend on unusual combinations of pictures which do not fit smoothly together, yet they create a unified effect. The "pictures" are unusual. Sula's collage is separate events or character sketches. Together, they show the friendship of Nel and Sula as part of the many complicated, overlapping relationships that make up the Bottom.

Morrison presents the novel from the perspective of an omniscient narrator who knows all the characters' thoughts and feelings. An omniscient narrator usually puts the reader in the position of someone viewing a conventional portrait or landscape rather than a collage. (In such situations, the viewer can perceive the unity of the whole work with only a glance). To create the collage like effect of Sula, the omniscient narrator never reveals the thoughts of all the characters at one time. Instead from chapter to chapter, she chooses a different point of view, character, so that a different person's consciousness and experience dominate a particular incident or section. In addition, the narrator sometimes moves beyond the consciousness of single, individual characters, to reveal what groups in the
community think and feel. On the rare occasions when it agrees unanimously, she presents the united community's view. As in the Bluest Eye and Jazz, the community has such a direct impact on individuals that it amounts to a character.

In narrative technique for Sula Morrison draws on a specifically modernist usage of juxtaposition. Modernism was the dominant literary movement during the first half of the twentieth century. Writers of this period abandoned the unifying omniscient narrator of earlier literature to make literature more life-like, in which each of us has to make our own sense of the world. Rather than passively receiving a smooth, connected story from an authoritative narrator, the reader is forced to piece together a coherent plot and meaning from more separated pieces of information.

Morrison, who wrote her master's thesis on two modernists, Faulkner and Virginia Wolf, uses juxtaposition as a struggling device in Sula. Though relatively short for a novel, Sula has an unusually large number of chapters, eleven. This division into small pieces creates an intended choppiness, the uncomfortable sense of frequently stopping and starting. The content of the chapters accentuates this choppy rhythm. Almost every chapter shifts the focus from the story of the preceding chapter by changing the point of view, character or introducing sudden, shocking events and delaying discussion of the characters' motives until later. In "1921", for example, Eva, douses her son Plum with kerosene oil and burns him to death. Although the reader knows that Plum has become a hero in addition, Eva's reasoning is not revealed. When Hannah, naturally assuming that Eva does not know of Plum's danger, tells her that Plum is burning, the chapter ends with Eva
almost nonchalant: *Is? My baby? Burning?*¹ (p.48). Not until midway through the next chapter "1923" does Hannah's questioning allow the reader to understand Eva's motivation. Juxtaposition thus heightens the reader's sense of incompleteness. Instead of providing quick resolution, juxtaposition introduced new and equally disturbing events. Paradoxically, when an occasional chapter does contain a single story apparently complete in itself, it too contributes to the novel's overall choppy rhythm. In a novel using a simple, chronological mode of narration each succeeding chapter would pick up where the last one left off with the main characters now involved in a different incident, but in some clear way affected by their previous experience. In Sula, however, some characters figure prominently in one chapter and then fade entirely into the background. The first chapter centres on Shadrack, and although he appears twice more and has considerable psychic importance to Sula and symbolic importance to the novel he is not an important actor again. In similar fashion, Helen Wright is the controlling presence of the third chapter, "1920", but barely appears in the rest of the book. These shifts are more unsettling than if Shadrack and Helene were ancestors of the other character, generations removed, because the reader would then expect them to disappear. Their initial prominence and later shadowy presence contribute to the reader's feeling of disruption. The choppy narration of Sula expresses one of its major themes, the fragmentation of both individuals and community.

Different plot events become important depending on what a reader chooses as the central theme of a novel. Sula offers several choices: (I) The functioning and death of the Bottom, (II) Three generations of women in the Peace
and Wright lines, (III) The growth and development of Sula and Nel as individuals. (IV) The friendship of Sula and Nel. (V) and the relationship between Sula and Bottom.

The character Sula unifies these thematic concerns, as the title suggests. Two factors heavily influence Sula's development: her friendship with Nel and her relationship to the rest of the Bottom. In turn, Sula is a defining force in the community and continuing influence on Nel. (Even after Sula's death midway through the novel, Nel's character develops because of Sula) Sula has a triple plot-1. the life of the community, 2. the development of Sula, 3. and the growth of Nel.

Sula begins with a wide focus: - (I) the novel starts by telling us of the death of a neighborhood, the Bottom. We then learn of its origin and the social condition (slavery, racism) that created it and always affected it. (II) Sula next presents the stories of Shadrack, Helen Wright, and Eva Peace. On the realistic level, Helen governs the Wright household (where Nel grows up) and Eva governs the Peace household (where Sula grows up). These major figures symbolically represent different forces active in the bottom. The first plot developments thus delineate the environment for Sula's and Nel's lives. The succeeding chapters present events critical to forming Sula's "experimental," impersonality in the immediate context of the Peace household and in the larger context of the Bottom. The first event is Sula's meeting Nel; the second, the girls' involvement in the death of another child, Chicken Little; the third, Sula's overhearing that her mother does not love her.

Sula and Nel provide one another with support crucial to establishing and maintaining their identities in somewhat hostile contexts. Nel escapes her mother's
stifling conformity to middle class norms in the less conventional Peace household with Nel, Sula experiences the sense of order and control not present in Peace home, as well as the love that her mother cannot offer her in a wider context, the girls' friendship originates in their separate discoveries of being "neither white nor male" and realizing that "all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them" Nel and Sula thus join forces to affirm for each other the personal worth that the surrounding racism and sexism deny. When Nel and Sula silently agree to keep their involvement in a playmate's drowning a secret, their reliance on each other is confirmed. For each, the other is the only person who knows her completely.

Sula's connections to Nel and the community weaken in chapters "1923" through "1941". Nel's path first diverges from Sula's in "1924", with her decision to marry Jude Greene. Sula leaves the town directly from the wedding reception. When she returns ten years latter the reader sees that Sula and Nel have continued on different paths. In "1937" , Sula and Nel represent two modes of being. Nel accepts usual social roles rather than identifying and acting on her own feelings. Her opposite, Sula, consults only her own feelings and disregards all community expectations. Confrontations between these ideas show how lives generate most of the rest plot.

The first 'confrontation occurs by accident (when Nel walks in while Jude and Sula are having sex); the second, by Nel's design, (when she visits Sula's deathbed), the third confrontation surprises Nel and is likely to surprise reader too because it takes place many years after Sula's death, during Nel's visit to Eva in the nursing home.
On Sula's return in "1937", Nel realizes how much she has missed her friend's humor, originality and emotional support. She does not join in the community's condemnation of Sula's sexual freedom and independence (Sula insults the town by sleeping once and only once with each of its willing men). When Nel finds Sula having sex with Jude, however, she too condemns Sula. After Sula is rumored to have slept with white men, she becomes a complete outcast. "1939", the last chapter focused mostly on Sula, shows her inability to maintain a stable, mature connection with a man even when she loves him. Nel sees Sula only once after their rupture, when the thirty year-old Sula is dying. The visit simply renews their disagreement over values. Sula dies alone.

Although Sula's death occurs in the middle of the novel, she retains her importance as the unifying force of the narrative. Sula's essence remains after her death when the reader overhears her thought, "Wait I'll tell Nel" (149). When she dies, the plot dealing with her development is finished, and her direct involvement with the plot is suspended until the very end. However, her death directly affects the other two plot-strands. "1940" and "1941" show respectively Nel's and the Bottom's self-destructive responses to Sula's death. Deprived of both friend and husband (Jude has left), Nel denies her deepest feelings of loss and grief. She lives an emotionally empty life for the next twenty five years. A considerable part of the community makes an analogous choice to reject its connection with Sula, with similar results. When a significant part of the Bottom celebrates Sula's death, it dies in the collapse of the tunnel on National Suicide Day. The death of Sula leads
to the literal death of almost a third of the Bottom, and foreshadows the death of the neighborhood.

Unlike the neighborhood, Nel finally recognizes the centrality of Sula to herself. In "1965" Nel visits Eva in a nursing home. Eva brings up Chicken Little's death, an event Nel has not thought of in years. Eva disturbs Nel by accusing her of having participated as much and therefore being responsible as Sula. On her way home, Nel passes Shadrack, who witnessed the whole incident. Then she feels a breeze, which she identifies as Sula's continuing presence. For the first time, she realizes that she has been grieving not for the loss of Jude; but for her loss of Sula. Understanding what Sula's death has meant to her completes Nel's growth because it restores her to an authentic life of feeling. Nel's cry of grief for Sula closes the book.

Sula is specifically African-American female bildungsroman i.e. a novel about the growth of a character into adulthood. Because of its genre, then, the development of Sula's plot consists of the development of its character. Sula continues the innovation in the genre of the bildungsroman that the Bluest Eye began. Like the preceding novel, Sula shows two girls rather than concentrating on the single character of the traditional bildungsroman. As in the Bluest Eye, only one of the pair survives and continues to develop. Sula carries this innovation further, however, because it divides its attention much more evenly between the pair. In the Bluest Eye Claudia has only a minor role in Pecola's life and serves mostly as a witness (by narrating Pecola's story). On the other hand, Sula shows the girls' importance to each other as fundamental. Traditionally, the
bildungsroman ends when the main character's most important development has taken place. In the nineteenth century, the bildungsroman focused on young female characters, paths to marriage (Jane Austen's, Emma and Louisa May Alcott's Little Women exemplify this tendency). The Bluest Eye violates our expectations of the bildungsroman by arresting its main character's emotional development when she is only twelve. Like several other twentieth-century works, Sula constructs another variation by showing Nel's marriage not as the sign of her maturity, as in the nineteenth century works, but as a sign of her immature willingness to submerge herself in another identity. (Sula does not damn marriage as an institution; it merely presents this marriage as built on wrongheaded ideas).

In its most important change of conventions, Sula extends the traditional bildungsroman past the physical death of its main character. In this way, it expresses African-American spirituality, the persistence of the spirit of the dead constitutes an important part of the African sacred cosmos that underlies African-American culture. In Sula, Sula continues to exist after her death. This persistence is not limited to Nel's perception of the spirit near the end, for that might be interpreted as only Nel's wishful thinking. Instead, the omniscient narrator shows us the persistence directly. Just before her death, Sula thinks, "Well, I will be damned.............. it did not even hurt." What'll I tell Nell'. Sula exists, not as a transfigured soul purged of earthly traits, but as the identical personality, with the same curiosity and the same interest in Nel. In Sula, Morrisan depicts everyday workings of the African sacred cosmos. Situated in the spiritual context, the
growth of female identity, the bildungsroman becomes specifically African-American.

Sula depicts the making of black female self. Sula, the protagonist of the novel, proclaims' "I do not want to make somebody else I want to make myself." (p. 92)

Toni Morrison, here depicts the protagonist, Sula's quest for 'home' and 'wholeness' and her coming to terms with her identity as a black and as a female. Morrison, in this connection, also demonstrates the difficulties which black women face when they try to explore different aspects of the self. In this novel, Morrison is more interested in the struggle for individual rights in general and women's rights in particular than with the rights of African people as a collective. Sula is presented as a black female who believes that she can create an identity for herself and that she exists "beyond the community and social expectation."

Sula is fundamentally a women's novel in the sense that it concerns itself with the feeling and affairs of women and the roles they assume, whether by choice or by force. It chronicles the fortune of women in two matriarchal households within the black community whose lives represent the range of choices possible for black women in white America. Central to the novel is the relationship between two women Sula and Nel and what follows from that friendship. Sula is a non-conformist, with a grandmother who set fire to her own son because he was a drug-addict, while Nel is a conventional person. There are many more grim and gothic instances such as Sula's inadvertent killing of a Chicken little boy, the immolation of her grandmother etc. which, of course, are based entirely on the black American
past with a strong thread of love and tenderness running through it. Even though a good deal of the action of the novel derives from the consequences of male and female relationships, it is the self-perception of women and their subsequent reactions to self-concepts that are central to it.

Morrison starts 'Sula' at the very point where she closes the Bluest Eye, which is the evolutionary process of her canon of writing. By 'Sula' Morrison searches the 'space' for women on sexist perspective in society, on the other hand, 'racism' depicted in her first novel is quest for 'individual self' not for a group identity, a change that mirrors the developmental stages of the consciousness of African women in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Here, Morrison is influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, the French existentialist, who professes that 'man is nothing but what he makes of himself;' but that in his freedom he 'carries the weight of the world on his shoulders.' Morrison's protagonist, Sula, expresses either the 'efforts of will' or a 'freedom of will', a desire to live a richer life although it is dangerously free. Here the danger emerges from the nature of what is an existentialist perspective. For, it is freedom that is not without responsibility for the neighborhood, involving angst.

By creating the character of 'Sula' Morrison shows the plight of Afro-American women' and their degradation. It has given currency to these women to become self-propagators. They have "intense desire to give births themselves as persons." their individual quests for selfhood are precipitated by different personal needs and reflect different attitudes towards the human condition. But their ultimate objectives are the same-"a cleaner understanding of self, and
expanded room in which to hum their own melodies and sing their own lyrics." There is a formidable struggle, for they live in societies which censure individual expression especially for women. All the same, they flourish and evolve into a prototype for psychic wholeness and individual autonomy.

Infact Sula, the protagonist, herself is an image of feminine psychology and metaphysics that will help carry the human psyche further into the light of conscious articulation and self-knowledge. Sula embodies a connection between feminine archetypes that have been held down, repressed within the feminine collective unconscious.

In Sula, Morrison analyses what constitutes a healthy, viable community and a sound individual, because Sula depicts the life and death of a neighborhood (Bottom) and of the individuals like Sula. In Morrison's world-view communities and individuals always influence each other. There is an interpersonal relationship between them; individuals are irrevocably part of communities, regardless of whether either side acknowledges it. Here, Morrison describes the health of the Bottom by treatment of individuals, particularly those, like Sula, Shadrack, Tar Baby; Plum etc. They do not fit in its social norms. Besides retaining the relationship between the conventional and the unconventional on the large community scale, Sula exposes it on the smaller individual level, through the friendship of Nel and Sula. Concentrating on females, the novel asks what makes a girl or woman strong and whether strength is sufficient to make an individual psychologically healthy.
Morrison captures in Sula the oppression of African women and their struggle for individual freedom on terms of gender. The manner in which she chooses to explore the nature of women's oppression is unique. She creates two female characters- Nel Wright and Sula Peace-neither of whom is complete in herself. The idea that Nel and Sula represent two halves of one person reverberates throughout the novel. Here, Morrison defies traditional male-centered interpretations of female development and calls out for an expansion of the woman-centered paradigm. The novel describes the development of Sula and Nel into womanhood. Its central theme, the girls' friendship, plays a crucial part in the formation of their identities.

In a wider context, the girls' friendship originates in their separate discoveries of being 'neither white nor male' and realizing 'that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them? They find in each other something they like intimately:

“Each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be. Their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on. Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers (Sula's because she was dead, and Nel's because she was not) they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for”. (page 52)
It is also evident that Sula meets and develops her intense friendship with Nel at the age of twelve. Each girl receives from the other security, love and identity blatantly denied to them in their homes. As a result:

"Their friendship was as intense as it was sudden. They found relief in each other's personality. Although both were unshaped, formless thing, Nel seemed stronger and more consistent than Sula, who could hardly be counted on to sustain any emotion for more than three minutes."

(p. 53)

Naturally, in the company of each other they discover their own consciousness; start to learn who they are, and what they want to do individually and collectively. Their friendship is based on their need for one another.

"In the safe harbor of each other's company they could afford to abandon the ways of other people and concentrate or their own perceptions of things.......................Joined in mutual admiration they watched each day as though it were a movie arranged for their amusement". (p.55)

Sula's experimental personality is moulded by some critical events, first Sula's friendship with Nel, second the girls' involvements in the death of another child, and third, Sula's overhearing that her mother does not love her. Shortly afterwards, Sula loses her trust in herself. When her playmate Chicken Little slips from her grasp as she swings him round and round, he drowns in the river as she
and Nel watch in paralyzed inaction. (Shadrack witnesses these happenings but does not betray the girls' secret). From this point on, Sula lives an "experimental" life, paying no attention to social conventions or moral questions.

Sula watches her mother burn to death with no apparent grief, only interested in the way that Hannah is "dancing". Her only connection is to Nel. In each other's company, they overcome certain basic difficulties which they had experienced as young girls. For instance, when they see a set of Irish bullies taunt Nel, Sula takes out a paring knife, slashes off the tip of one of her fingers and warns then "If I can do that to myself what you suppose I'll do to you?" (p.55)

Sula's self-mutilation symbolizes castration and directly contests the white male sexual domination of black women which their taunting-threatening evokes. Her act, coupled with words of warning represents the refusal- no matter how high the cost-to accept and cower in the face of domination. Self-preservation by means of self- mutilation is a quality of Sula which she inherits from her grandmother Eva. This is how Sula teaches toughness to Nel in addition to adventurism. In this sense, Sula solves the immediate problem, and they become "blood sisters":

"Sula has responded with violence which is a family trait. Nel reacts by refusing to consider herself really as a part of the moment".6

Another factor which is responsible to bind Sula to Nel, is Hannah's remark. "I love Sula. I just do not like her" (p.57). What Hannah means to say is that her relationship with her daughter is only a biological one and nothing more than that.
She would do things for (Sula) but she is not particularly interested in her. After her (Hannah's) husband's death she has come to live with her mother, Eva, with all the essential needs provided by her mother, Hannah buries herself in amoral activity. Sula's life like that of Eva borders in an arrangement that requires control not love and Sula is lost in the noise and numbers of the storage house. Hannah, Sula's mother, is guilty of indifference.

After learning that her mother dislikes her, Sula naturally looks out for the company of Nel. Their ultimate initiation occurs on the river bank, immediately after Sula's rejection by her mother and very shortly after the "blood rite". The initiation confirms their unity, their sexuality, and their joint responsibility for what is about to happen. On the other hand, unlike Sula, Nel Wright comes from a different background. Her mother Helen Sabat Wright is an impressive woman. She is the daughter of a Creole whore. It is her grandmother, Cecile, who took Helen away from her mother and counseled her to be constantly on guard for any signs of her mother's wild blood. As a result, Helen is obsessed with middle-class respectability. Disliking noise, dirt, and sex, she marries Wiley Wright, whose profession allows him only short visits to home. Helen thus has complete control of the household. She is uninterested in their daughter's personality, seeing her only as a raw material out of which she can make a model little girl. Helen tries to recreate Nel in her own image, or rather, in the image of the conventional female role, to become a middle-class house wife, Nel must have certain qualifications. She makes Nel go to steep with a clothespin in her nose to make it less broad, less obviously African. On a train trip to south for Cecile's funeral, Nel witnesses
Helen's unsuccessful attempt to pacify a racist white conductor with a subservient smile, when Nel sees that all the black passengers despise her mother's fear and her smile, Helen has lost her stranglehold on Nel. As a result, Nel comes to her senses believing:

"I'm me,"Me".........."I', me

I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel,

I'm me, Me.  (p.28)

Thus, she comes to terms with herself. Nel now realizes that she can define the shape she is, she knows that she is entirely separate from her parents and that the name they gave her does not have to define her. It is this new found "me-ness" that allows Nel to cultivate friendship with Sula in spite of her mother's discouragement and warning. Nel's personality survives Helen's pruning only because she receives crucial support from Sula's at this juncture in her life. Sula and Nel provide each other with support crucial for establishing and maintaining their identities in somewhat hostile context. Nel escapes her mother's stifling conformity to middle-class norms in the less conventional Peace household. On the other hand, Sula, in presence of Nel experiences the sense of order and control not present in the Peace home, as well as the love that her mother fails to offer her. In due course of time, they live in such a way that they appear to complement each other. Each completes the incompleteness of the other's personality. Morrison states: *If they were one woman they would be complete.* though their mother and grandmother see that their physical needs are met, none cares or gives time to the girls' emotional needs. Naturally, they develop "spiritual bond" with each other,
however, their friendship does not last long. The moment Sula hears about Jude and Nel's marriage, she feels alienated from her. Once Nel marries, she becomes just another person. Sula leaves medallion the moment she hears about Nel's marriage to Jude Greene.

But here, Morrison points out the friendship of these two Medallion girls to analyse the problem of one's loss of identity as a direct result of the Bottom's limiting definition of women as subservient, self-sacrificing beings. Nel assumes the traditional role the community prescribes, and retains her social reality, though her personal identity is non-existent. Sula, by contrast, is a free-spirited woman whose determination to define herself places her at odds with the culturally rich black community. Here is the psychological dilemma out of touch with the historic black past. In their quest for wholeness both women find their world rife with contradictions and tensions. As M. L. Montgomery observes, Nel and Sula; "experienced a profound sense of alienation in a patriarchal world which evolves no terms for their existence."

In Sula, Morrison explores the consequences of moral judgment on both the macro and the micro levels. On the large scale, the novel analyses what happens when community decides that a person is evil. On the small scale, it depicts the consequences of Nel's decision that she is morally good and Sula bad (after the incident with Jude), delineating the effects on both the women's friendship and on Nel's individual development. Thus, the novel seems more interested in the consequences of moral judgment than in encouraging the reader to exercise that judgment.
In Sula, Morrison has little interest in passing moral judgments on characters. Although Sula and Nel make opposite choices, the novel does not use this difference on the moral ground. The emphasis of the novel documents the destructive experiences that follow from Nel's decision to accept a limiting social role. It also documents, the destructiveness in Sula's disregard of all social limits. Like Cholly in The Bluest Eye', Sula is 'dangerously' free because she has no firm self. Nel remains Sula's only emotional tie. Sula has nothing to guide her, whatever she can imagine; she does as an artist with no art. She simply helped others to define themselves. When Sula returns to medallion, she comes with an open manifesto:

_I don't want to make somebody else._

_I want to make myself (p.92)._  

In her effort to make herself, to attain self-fulfillment she spares none. Once she disconnects herself from a need to belong to a circle of people, her responsibility to the community also gradually diminishes as she becomes disproportionately responsible only to herself for what she thinks, feels and does. Since Sula's definition of self is divorced from the community, her actions become divorced from any sense of respect for the other person.

To stir Jude's imagination Sula provides him with her own critique of black man's world. She finds an unattractive, unhealthy, static pattern in Nel and Jude's interactions. Nel and Jude do not grow as individuals because the role of supportive wife does not challenge either of them. Through her portrait of Nel, Morrison shows the despise and anguish of the abandoned wife. Nel's reaction to
the loss of Jude reveals how completely she has subscribed to his dream of a wife. Who would serve to "complete him? Without Jude, Nel envisions a future devoid of joy, Helen Wright's daughter has simply not been taught to anticipate life without a man.

Without Sula, Nel has little imagination and without Nel, Sula has little direction. Thus both of them are the two necessary ingredients for self exploration and fulfillment. In her conventional view of life, Sula makes a distinction between sex and friendship—a view that Nel, in her conventionality, does not share. For Sula, sex though 'pleasant and frequent' is 'unremarkable' unlike her remarkable friendship with Nel. What is important for Sula is the friendship she had nurtured and developed with Nel in the midst of a world that promised nothing but disintegration. For Sula, love is synonymous with freedom. Only with Ajax does she become possessive perhaps because she found some one who protected his freedom more than she did. But to Nel, love means security. In fact, she marries Jude not out of love but because they have common need for security. Frustrated with racism as he looks for a job, Jude turns to Nel out of rage. Jude's pain attracts Nel because it is a sign that he needs her, a symbol of security.

Since Sula grows up with a definition of sex as non-competitive and non-threatening, she places little significance on her primal activity with Jude. Her friendship with Nel is more important to her and, therefore, she seduces Jude to test Nel's loyalty. But as Nel's loyalty lies with her security, she turns away from Sula, such a reaction encourages Sula to draw herself further away from the community and to act in a destructive manner, both to the community and to
herself. Sula does experience the love of her boyfriend Ajax, a black man who likes Sula because she never liked to be possessed by any one else. However, once Ajax senses that Sula was turning possessive, he leaves her. Through her promiscuous life Sula benefits the community. On account of her defiance of the community's life style; she forces the community to re-examine its values.

Sula stresses the self-reliance and the need to search and probe for wholeness. Having chosen to be an independent individual, she defies those social agencies and institutions which curb the freedom of the individual. Claiming autonomy for woman, she rejects the patriarchal values adopted by her community which thwart the freedom of women in excising their rights. Women, in her opinion, are capable of dreaming their own dreams and hence they need not dream through their husbands, and they need not be victimized for their husband's failures. She regrets that women's lives have become narrow, restricted, unenlightened and spiritless. She attacks women who have chosen to live a mean, undignified life out of fear. "Freefall" symbolizes their choice of freedom. They do not mind falling down if and when someone interferes and cuts their web, they are unaware of their own worth and redemptive powers of nature. Women, she feels, need not live in thrall to "male need, desires, male rules."

Sula desires to discover herself; her willingness to 'leap' forward is antithetical to Nel's version of self-discovery. Her hatred for male-supremacy takes a peculiar turn and manifests itself in her philosophy of sexuality. In her opinion sexuality has nothing to do with ethical values, and it should be as freely available to women as it is to men. Sula gets condemnation for her rebellious ideas. Her
indulgence in free sex seems partly inspired by her urge to defy community and partly by her experimental nature. When Nel says; *You can't do it all, You a woman and a colored woman all that you cannot act like a man, you can't be walking around all independent like, doing whatever you like, taking what you want, leaving what you don't.* Sula replies- *You say I am a woman and colored A'n't that the same as being a man?* (p. 42)

Sula is an acutely sensitive, enigmatic and defiant woman whose nonconformity is a living criticism...........of the dreadful lives of resignation other women live. She is "the modern preternaturally sensitive but rudely thwarted black girl in today's society." As a young girl she so startles the community with her extreme emotional impulses that her growth into a strange, strong and independent woman is all but predictable. She rejects behavioral standards of all kinds and attempts to 'rely solely on herself'. It is to herself and only to herself that Sula wishes to be good. She firmly believes that "Being good to somebody is just like being mean to somebody you do get neither for it." (p.144-145)

Sula lives out of her own fantasies, creates her own realities, and sets her own personal objectives. In short, she is motivated by a firm sense of 'Meness;' She openly challenges the limitations imposed on her individuality and, much to the consternation of the community, vengefully disregards time-honoured conventions and traditions, She categorically rejects the standards 'others' used to measure her life. The profundity of Sula's defiance is a reflection of the sharp contrast between who she is and what the Bottom decrees for its women. Thus, Sula is a pariah
whose values often stand as the polar opposites of those adopted by her provincial society.

Sula's rebelliousness manifests itself in several ways. Unlike other Medallion women, she rejects traditional notions of family eschewing marriage, babies and grandparental care. She feels no obligation to please any one. As she confesses to Nel; "I got my mind and what goes on it" (p.143). Her determination to achieve self fulfillment allows her "to live in the world" (p.142) but not be caught up in the side web of the life of Bottom. Thus, her entire life represents a rejection of traditional notions of feminine "responsibility, but rejection is an automatic response of rebellion.

"Morrison allows her reader to become aware not only of different perceptions of values but also the motivations behind these values".9

The above analysis obviously focuses on Morrison's thrust on how different, negative and egocentric a woman character can be. This is more so in the case of Sula who seems to represent the militant side of feminism. However, for all the elegance, and masterstrokes of authorial genius Morrison has in no uncertain terms played upon the principle of binaries or opposites through her use of contrast. She has definitely used contrast as a technique to her advantage, especially in delineating the figures of Sula and Nel, only to cite one of the many instances in the book.

REFERENCES

All further references to Sula are to this edition.


