

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Iconicity as a Principle of Imitation

This chapter attempts to discuss literary language as a semiotic system where meaning is embedded within a galaxy of signifiers as theorised by Lacan. It explores the various semiotic elements, suggesting metaphorical expressions that are utilised in the construction of Morrison's text. For instance, identifying mimesis in which literary texts imitate reality through the use of various signs such as myth, colour typographical features. Additionally, these elements are also considered essential in constructing discursivity. Furthermore, this section will also include a discussion on how various semiotic signs in literary texts suggest iconicity. Morrison's text refers to different semiotic systems in illustrating the notion of discursiveness. For instance, Morrison attempts to depict African-Americans' suffering and dependence on socio-economic levels using the elements of colour, mythologies, and typographical construction of her texts. These different elements serve as a platform to explore her literary works from an iconic perspective.

4.1.1 Greimas' Semiotic Structure and Iconicity

This section explores how Morrison's text view the world from a multi-dimensional and multi-perspective manner rather than the common binary perspective. Drawing on Greimas' model, arbitrariness in the literary language is viewed as the product of combining signs from various semiotic systems to create effective text with

discursive features. This concept is deemed as a significant source of iconicity because it corresponds to Lacan's interpretation of 'signifier' which views literary texts as consisting of a galaxy of signifiers.

In Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, the female protagonist, Pecola, wants to have blue eyes, blonde hair, and fair skin as evident in the following extract: "*A little Black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little White girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil of fulfilment*" (Morrison, 1970, p. 202). This extract demonstrates the heroine's wish to have blue eyes to view the world from a White perspective. Pecola's longing for blue eyes is far-fetched if we view Pecola's desire from the lens of conventional modern linguistic since this desire may not be possible and thus do not make sense of the world. Figuratively, the eyes that Pecola longs for is a metaphor, referring to the eyes of White people symbolising the idea of gaining love and independence on both the cultural and economic levels. This metaphor is presented via metonymy that is the protagonist, Pecola, who represents the women in the African-American community. In other words, Pecola's desire for Western beauty features can also be interpreted as a desire to live decently where they can be accepted for who they are in the community. Moreover, the idea of the blue eyes may be an icon of love, happiness and being loved that also refer to socio-cultural and socio-economic independence. The following extract illustrates how different things will be if she has a different eye colour.

"It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held in the picture, and knew the sights-if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say beautiful, she herself would be different"
(Morrison, 1970, p. 44).

The expressions *'her eyes, held in the picture'* are metaphorical, leading to a multi-layered interpretation resulting from the superimposition of several semantic levels. These expressions are presented metaphorically due to mapping between the source and several target domains such as the social and cultural issues of independence. They also suggest mental mapping between code and coded or form and meaning which is an attribute of iconic text. The metaphors here are of both imagic and diagrammatic icons because *'here eyes'* is a metaphor with metonymy that suggest imagic iconicity while *'held in the picture'* and *'those eyes of hers were'* suggest diagrammatic icons due to the analogy between the two structures.

In *Sula*, the negative deeds that the protagonist, Sula, commits throughout the novel, led the people of her community including her close friend, Nel, to underestimate her. Their act of underestimating and rejecting her is not considered as an offence or devaluation in human essence. Morrison purposely does not depict the protagonist as a villain or a good character so that she can leave her readers to interpret the character's behaviour based on the socio-cultural background of the story. The construction of the character Sula offers an insight into the structure of the novel as fragmented and impressionistically oriented. Rigney (1991) mentions that *Sula*, similar to other Morrison's works, subverts the notions of textual unity and defies totalised interpretation. Sula's vicious deeds are metonymically attributed to the painful life that she endured and may trigger the readers to sympathise with her. The following statement depicts her thought processes where she blamed herself about her good feelings when the little boy, Chicken, slips from her and falls in the river and died, *"Why didn't I feel bad when it happened? How come it felt so good to see him fall?"* (Morrison, 1973, p. 170). The killing of the boy is metaphorically projected in the narrative mapping unto the internal destruction of the African-American community and is

metonymically manifested through Sula's reaction when she throws the boy in the river without hesitation or remorse but feeling happy instead. Furthermore, the following cluster of texts presents a group of signifiers *'felt so good to see him fall'* which demonstrate the violation of the norm or the common human reaction to an act of killing.

In *Sula*, Morrison uses crow and raven's wings interchangeably to inform the events concerning the protagonist's deed when she was seen swinging the child before he slips from her hands and falls into the river. In the following extract, *'the hands of the women'* stand metonymically for women while the expression, *'like pairs of raven's wings'*, metonymically represents ravens which are gothic symbols of truth and wisdom in ancient civilization. Metaphorically, it is also used in the novel as a mediator between life and the afterlife. The use of *Raven* may refer to the enigmatic icon of worldview and fate. *"As Reverend Deal moved into his sermon, the hands of the women unfolded like pairs of raven's wings and flew high above their hats in the air."* (Morrison, 1973, p. 65).

In Morrison's *Beloved*, the dead *Beloved* is treated as a living being, metaphorically projecting a living ghost and as a galaxy of signifiers as proposed by Greimas' model and Lacan's theory. Specifically, *Beloved* is a metaphor and can be mapped via metonymic relation unto the repressed unconscious mind of the African-Americans. The mapping of metaphorical relations suggests a mapping between signified and signified highlighting the *Beloved* as one of the prominent icons of Morrison's characters. The following text demonstrates how other characters deal with the reincarnated ghost as a real human. *"Paul D looks carefully at Beloved to see if she was aware of it but she paid him no attention at all –frequently not even answering a direct question put to her"* (Morrison, 1987, p. 76). Here, the dead *Beloved* does not contrast the meaning of 'alive' as it is an icon of African-American history representing

the painful past. Beloved's ghost can also imply multi-layered interpretations where it can indicate the butchered dignity of African-Americans that must be resurrected as well as a stark reminder of the pain that they experienced that must not be forgotten. These concepts must be concretely represented for the next generation to learn and evolve.

During the era of slavery, African-Americans are treated like animals. In the novel, Sethe and several other characters, who stands—metonymically for African-Americans are treated like sub-humans. Shahrezaee and Zahra (2014) argue that Morrison emphasises the idea of dehumanisation among African-Americans in her work. She focuses on Sethe as one of her prominent characters who was raped and violated by White Americans. The metaphorical manifestation of 'Sweet Home' does not entail a positive feature but embodies the bitter slavery and painful experiences Black people have endured. It is *sweet* from the physical perspective—since Black men treated Sethe positively as mentioned in "*Sethe smiled. This is the way they were- had been. All if the Sweet Home men, before and after Halle, treated her to be a mild brotherly flirtation, so subtle you had to search for it*" (Morrison, 1987, p. 8). Furthermore, Sweet Home has negative connotations because it is a place for slaves where African-Americans are treated as inferior and abused. Rhodes (1990) argues that, for Sethe, Sweet Home is as harsh as the idea of slavery because the place robs the African-American desire to seek freedom. While the metaphor, Sweet Home, may seemingly denote America as a great country, it denies the rights for African-Americans to emancipate them from slavery and to gain independence at the socio-cultural and socio-economic levels. The mapping between *Sweet Home* and America serve as an icon for segregation and persecution as argued by Sistani (2016) who mentioned that the place is presented by the writer ironically. While the name refers to a good place, it

is the epitome of African-Americans' sufferings under slavery. Such a notion is void if this is analysed via the binary opposition of life and death in traditional modern linguistics.

4.1.2 Discursive Construction in Morrison's Text as a Source of Iconicity

This section expounds on the production of iconicity in discursive texts as seen in Morrison's work. The following text from Morrison's *Beloved* demonstrates how the author imports metaphors from various semiotic systems to implement iconic notes by utilising the existing discursive features of the text. The following extracted text metaphorically refers to the feeling of loneliness faced by Denver. The extract also contains a reference to the war-torn years where the text tells of the happy moments when Denver encounter *Miss Bodwin* – who metonymically stands for White women here – bought gifts for her during the time of war. Despite the dread of war and the bloodshed during that time, Denver is portrayed as happy. From the extract, Denver's sense of happiness and smile create a sense of irony within the text:

DENVER'S SECRETS were sweet. Accompanied every time by wild veronica until she discovered cologne. The first bottle was a gift, the next she stole from her mother and hid among boxwood until it froze and cracked. That was the year winter came in a hurry at supertime and stayed eight months. One of the War years when Miss Bodwin, the White woman, brought Christmas cologne for her mother and herself, oranges for the boys and another good wool shawl for Baby Suggs. Talking of a war full of dead people, she looked happy--flush-faced, and although her voice was heavy as a man's, she smelled like a roomful of flowers--

excitement that Denver could have all for herself in the boxwood. Back beyond 1x4 was a narrow field that stopped (Morrison, 1987, p. 34).

Here, the text is displayed as diverged to fulfil the quality of discursiveness in order to convey a message concerning the relevant socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions adopted by African-Americans. In a broader sense, the gift bought by *the White woman* shows a metaphorically mapping unto the economic independence of White people. The gifts brought happiness to African-Americans which indirectly suggest the lack of their independence at the socio-economic levels. Furthermore, the extract is also a reminiscence of a nostalgic past – of the sweet memories of Denver's past – unlike the present situation she is living in where she is restricted to the constraints of White people. Denver is also mentioned to navigate many secrets, metaphorically mapping unto the deprivation of the African-American race. For instance, the mention of when she sneaks into her mother's room to steal some cologne which is a gift received by her mother from Miss Bodwin, the White woman. Additionally, there is also Denver's secret concerning the boxwood bushes. The content of Morrison's texts was observed to contain an abundance of various topics and contents that can lead to multi-levelled meanings which is one of the defining qualities of an iconic text. The following text selection is a comparison between African-Americans' conditions before and after the arrival of a schoolteacher. The elaboration details the torments of slavery, which was formerly psychological, but is now both psychological and physical when the schoolteacher runs the plantation after the death of Mr Garner:

It was some time before he could put Alfred, Georgia, Sixo, schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, smell of hickory, notebook paper, one by one, into the

tobacco tin lodged in his chest. By the time he got to 124 nothing in this world could pry it open (Morrison, 1987, p. 133).

Morrison uses the diversity of subjects such as the metaphors 'the taste of iron', 'the sight of butter', 'smell of hickory' and 'notebook paper' in this extract. She also adopts the use of 'the tobacco tin' to metaphorically to unto Paul D's heart and to show that all his memories are locked away in his tin. The tobacco tin is one of the significant metaphors introduced in the text via metonymy. It can be strongly attributed to Paul D who stands for the somewhat ruined identities of African-American people. Hence, in this case, Paul D serve as an icon among Morrison's characters.

The following extract is another example concerning discursiveness where it demonstrates how various topics are employed to delineate the suppression of African-Americans' and their experiences. This text refers to Halle's descend into insanity upon witnessing the men raping Sethe and experiencing Sixo's death. The discursive text offers an insight into the many differences experienced by the African-Americans' during the time when Mr Garner s in charge and after his death when the schoolteacher takes over the rein of Sweet Home. The text is metaphorically constructed to refer to the past experiences of Baby Suggs via the metonymy '*the preacher's hand*' which stands for the preacher. The story of Baby Suggs' name is formulated metaphorically:

Good, 'cause I got a lot of digging up to do." But the news they dug up was so pitiful she quit. After two years of messages written by the preacher's hand, two years of washing, sewing, canning, cobbling, gardening, and sitting in churches, all she found out was that the Whitlow place was gone and that you couldn't write to "a man named Dunn" if all you knew was that he went West (Morrison, 1987, p. 173).

The above extract includes a subtle account of the lives of the previous slaves who were in Sweet Home. The text possesses discursive quality and is observed to import metaphorical subjects from different semiotic fields such as '*preacher's hand, two years of washing, sewing, canning, cobbling, gardening*'. This flashback tells of the history of Baby Suggs and how and why she was named Baby Suggs by Mr Garner Jenny Whitlow. Her name originated from her bill sale where the name 'baby' refers to Niger's who do not possess freedom. Furthermore, the extract also discusses the time when Mr Garner took Baby Suggs to live with the Bodwins in Ohio at 124 Bluestone because she can work as a cobbler, gardener and seamstress, creating a text with iconic perspectives through the use of various topics. Moreover, the metaphorical manifestation of Baby Suggs can also serve as one of Morrison's icons due to the character's metaphorical manifestation where via metonymy, she is seen as a representative of those who suffer from slavery and the lack of freedom and hope. The story narrates the bitter and horrifying experiences faced by the Black community on the plantation. The women were raped, the slaves were burnt alive i.e., Sixo and Paul A, the stealing of mother's milk and multiple psychological violence acts inflicted upon them to silence their voices and rob them of their rights as human beings. So, the discursiveness of literary text has very significant role in the process of iconization. The following text is yet another demonstration of the aspect of discursiveness utilises by Morrison to give depth to the African-Americans' longing to live freely:

Think what spring will be for us! I'll plant carrots just so she can see them, turnips. Have you ever seen one, baby? A prettier thing God never made. White and purple with a tender tail and a hard head. Feels good

*when you hold it in your hand and smells like the creek when it floods,
bitter but happy* (Morrison, 1987, p. 237).

The extract is quoted from the second part of Morrison's *Beloved* where Morrison employs the stream of consciousness technique to metaphorically show how Sethe does not talk about her dead daughter as being dead but addresses her as the *Beloved* – as if she was still alive. The author metaphorically refers to spring as youth and the beginning of life. For the character Sethe, spring is a beautiful season where she can plant various types of vegetables such as turnip, carrot, with different colours white and purple. The extract is shown to shift from one topic to another to confirm the notion of discursiveness using various metaphors discursively: spring, carrots, turnips, white and purple.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison exploits the use of language to decentralise and destabilise White culture as it is the more dominant culture and is considered to be a central culture of the American continent. However, Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* attempts to assimilate the African race into the larger American culture without undermining the White race. She offers an insight into the aggressions Pecola encounters socially and domestically. In the novel, Morrison's choices of language (speakerly, aural, colloquial) and her reliance for full comprehension of the codes embedded in the Black culture demonstrates how she cleverly manipulate language use to raise awareness among her readers. She states that her attempts to shape silence while breaking it are also simultaneously attempting to transform the rich and complex nature of the Black American culture into a language worthy of the culture (Morrison, 1970).

Metaphorical and metonymic expressions are strongly and universally constructed in her novels to thematically reflect the suffering of African Americans.

Bloom (2010) theorises that *The Bluest Eye* is completely lucid and successful in universal terms, even if one chooses not to share in Morrison's origins or her ideologies. Morrison's metaphoric and metonymic dimensions may iconically reflect the resistance of Morrison's characters to White ideology in terms of gender, social, cultural, ethical and environmental situations. *The Bluest Eye* represents change iconically. This phenomenon is metaphorically evident when the character Pecola wants blue eyes (via metonymy attributed to African Americans) to view the world freely in some sort of a continuum. In doing so, she eliminates the existence of a binary point of view that overshadows her life such as superiority versus inferiority where the former represents Whiteness and the latter represents Black culture. Correspondingly, the former also represents the hegemony in independence when it comes to socio-economic and cultural levels to live a decent life. On the other hand, the latter represents persecution and dependence. Thus, by gaining blue eyes Pecola would view the world without being influenced by race:

But long before the sound of their lowing and the sight of their preening, the building was leased to a Hungarian baker, modesty famous for his brioche and poppy-seeds rolls. Earlier than that, there was a real state office there, and even before that, some gypsies used it as a base of operations. The gypsy family gave the large plate-glass window as much distinction and character as it ever had (Morrison, 1970, p. 32).

The extract discursively explores the history of Pecola's house by outlining metaphorically how the building used to be a Hungarian bakery for pizza, a place where gypsies lived and a real state office. The writer uses a variety of subjects to present the text with discursive qualities through the adoption of metaphorical elements such as

Hungarian baker, brioche and poppy-seeds rolls, the gypsy family and large plate-glass window to create a text with iconic notes. The following extract is a reflection on how African-American women suffer due to the subjugated circumstances they have to live by. Cholly metonymically represents African-Americans' history, which is presented through the use of metaphors such as *Aunt Jimmy's condition* and *M'Dear's infallibility* as seen below:

The three women sat talking about various miseries they had had, their cure or abatement, what had helped. Over and over again they returned to Aunt Jimmy's condition. Repeating its cause, what could have been done to prevent the misery from taking hold, and M'Dear's infallibility (Morrison, 1970, p. 135).

The extract taken from Chapter Eight, provides a flashback on Cholly's life, detailing the events of Miss Jimmy's illness when Cholly was a teenager. She was admitted under the care of M'Dear who used to be a local physician. The variation of subjects used to describe Cholly's history is an iconic perspective of African-Americans because it is a product of content interaction and discursive forms. Therefore, these extracts demonstrate that Morrison's text navigates through various semiotic domains by employing the use of signs that draws on metaphoric and metonymic relations. The mapping between the source and target results in metaphors, while partial mapping yields metonymic relations. The occurrence of such mapping also implies the relationship between form and meaning which is a prominent feature of the iconic text.

4.1.3 Intertextuality and Iconicity

One of the features of discursiveness text is intertextuality where the meaning of the text does not occur without the interference or influence from other texts. Examples of intertextuality can be found *In The Bluest Eye* where the following text describes Soaphead via the metaphorically structured text. "A cinnamon-eyed West Indian with lightly browned skin, he was called by the townspeople Soaphead Church" (Morrison, 1970, p. 165). Such metaphorical allusion about a man of God and from the church provides insight via metonymy concerning the hypocrisy of those who work in the church. Pecola seeks help from him when she wanted to attain blue eyes to get rid of the status, she lives in. The metaphor of a churchman serves as one of Morrison's many icons in *The Bluest Eye*. Moreover, Morrison also metaphorically alludes to the great works of Shakespeare's namely, Hamlet and Othello, which are some of the most prominent literary tragedies to confirm or to map unto the notion of victimisation. The mention of Ophelia, in this case, suggests the tendency to contrast between Shakespeare's victim and Morrison's Pecola. The metaphorical allusion to Iago can also map unto White authority, victimising the African American community. Examining the parallels between the characters in *The Bluest Eye* and Shakespeare's characters, give us some insights into Morrison's writing style through their sharing of similar traits (Roark, 2015). The following extract shows how intertextuality or intersubjectivity has a strong significance in meaning production:

Thus he chose to remember Hamlet's abuse of Ophelia, but not Christ's love of Mary Magdalene; Hamlet's Frivolous politics, but not Christ's serious anarchy. He noticed Gibbon's acidity, but not his tolerance.

Othello's love for the fair Desdemona, but not Iago's perverted love of Othello (Morrison, 1970, p. 167).

In Morrison's work, the allusion to other prominent literary works such as Shakespearean tragedies can add to the strength and texture of the story besides tailoring subtle iconic dimensions to these works. Intertextuality can add iconicity to the text via the metaphorical references to other texts to highlight the interpretational dimension of Morrison's literary works. The following extract is discursively in reference to De Gobineau's hypothesis in assigning superiority to the White race over the Black race. The extract conveys an insight concerning the idea of racism which acknowledges that White people are superior to Black people but delivers a strong racist notion by praising the biological features of White people who are described as having stronger intelligence and physical power than African-Americans. These superior features of the White people are claimed to contribute to the great achievements of pioneering civilisation throughout history. *De Gobineau's hypothesis* is metaphorically utilised to map into the notion of racism and racialism, rendering the text iconic because it leads to multi-levelled interpretation about the compulsory servitude in the lives of African-Americans' as described in the excerpt below:

With the confidence born of a conviction of superiority, they performed well at schools. They were industrious, orderly, and energetic, hoping to prove beyond a doubt De Gobineau's hypothesis that "all civilizations derive from the White race, that none can exist without its help, and that a good society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it (Morrison, 1970, p. 166).

In *Sula*, Morrison manipulates her language through the adoption of folk language in a vernacular manner that is neither exotic nor comical. It is also not microscopically analysed in order to redirect the judgment of political culture among American-African writers (Morrison, 1973). The extract contains discursive features that metaphorically alludes to wartime and Gabriel Heater who used to be a radio commentator during World War II. The commentator reminds Shadrack of the painful experiences during the time of combat in the Great War. The mapping between World War II and the present situation of the novel may create a text that provides iconic meaning by mapping between the painful experiences of both periods alongside the meaning assigned to the lives of African-Americans.

And if only you had not looked at me the way the soldiers did on the train, the way you look at the children when they come in while you are listening to Gabriel Heater and break your train of thought-not focusing exactly but giving them an instant, a piece of time, to remember what they are doing, what they are interrupting, and to go on back to wherever they were and let you to listen to Gabriel Heater (Morrison, 1973, p. 105).

The following extracted text takes place in the year 1965 where Sula's death happened simultaneously also referring to National Suicide Day, coloured people and a coloured man who teaches mathematics at the high school. Therefore, these metaphors map unto the suffering and depressed situation of the African-Americans' status quo. These different topics suggest an iconic perspective concerning the year 1965 as outlined in the passage below:

Things were so much better in 1965. Or so it seemed. You could go downtown and see coloured people working in the dime store behind the counters, even handling money with cash register keys around their necks. And a coloured man taught mathematics at the junior high school. The young people had a look about them that everybody said was new but which reminded Nel of the deweys, whom nobody had ever found (Morrison, 1970, p. 163).

Another type of reference is demonstrated in the shift of perspective as found in the following extract. A new character by the name of Helene Sabat was introduced as a metaphor for those who were born in a place called the Sundown House. Her mother used to be a creole 'whore' which led her to be raised by her grandmother. Her mother is a metaphor that suggests the mapping unto the internal destruction of the African-American community through the inclusion of metaphors such as '*Sundown House*'. Furthermore, there is also a metaphorical reference to the Virgin Mary via metonymies '*eyes of a multi-coloured*' and '*mother's wild blood*' as an icon of mercy.

It had to be as far away from the Sundown House as possible. And her grandmother's middle-aged nephew who lived in a Northern town called Medallion was the one chance she had to make sure it would be. The red shutters had haunted both Helene Sabat and her grandmother for sixteen years. Helene was born behind those shutters, daughter of a Creole whore who worked there. The flowered carpets of the Sundown House and raised her under the dolesome eyes of a multicolored Virgin Mary, counseling her to be constantly on guard for any sign of her mother's wild blood (Morrison, 1973, p. 62).

The selected excerpts discussed in this section outline a variety of topics or inter-text that can serve as metaphorical references, coinciding with Lacan's notion of literary text consisting of a galaxy of signifiers. Such construction adds depth to the interpretational perspective of literary text and further describes the idea of discursiveness via reference to other texts. This description of discursiveness aids the interpretational dimension of the text attributed to shared traditions, social values and cultural norms. Thus, the structure of discursive and intertextual texts is considered important ingredients of iconicity through the mapping between various domains that share an interrelation with mental mapping between form and meaning.

4.1.4 The Myth of Motherhood and Iconicity

In the Semiotic system, myth is considered a type of metaphor that is included in literary texts for aesthetic purposes and more importantly. Using myth is essential to add depth to literary work. In the following text, Sethe is manifested as a metonymy to represent woman slaves. The expression '*too thick*' is a metaphor mapping the supposedly strong emotions a mother feels towards her children. Therefore, the metaphor '*too thick*' suggests the iconic note to Sethe's feelings towards her daughter as shown in the following extract:

"Your love is too thick," he said . . . "Too thick?" she said . . . "Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all." "Yeah. It didn't work, did it? Did it work?" he asked. "It worked," she said. "How? Your boys gone you don't know where. One girl dead, the other won't leave the yard. How did it work?" (Morrison, 1987, p. 164-65)

Paul D attempts to understand the concept of motherhood which he has never experienced and will never experience before. Sethe who is met with a dead-end without any other options realises that the only way to protect her child from slavery is to kill her baby. Her mother, whom Sethe barely remembers, murdered all her children except Sethe because these children were a result of rape by the evil White masters. It is not a common practice for slave women to kill their children unless something is threatening their life. *Beloved* is an attempt by Morrison to express the African-American quest for subjectivity and freedom (Sistani, 2016). In this sense, the idea of infanticide is improbable unless the novelist aims to construct her character from the mythological perspective in addressing the unconscious voice of African-Americans. What Morrison does with myth is to allow and bring her readers to confront the trauma of history: "Myth serves as a subtle response to communal consciousness to discuss a profoundly traumatic event" (Antolović: 2013). Although Sethe commits what would be considered an unimaginable crime towards her baby and her people, this act does not insinuate that she is mad in any way. After her imprisonment, she proceeds with her daily life normally where she worked, cooked and took care of her family. The event of killing her newborn baby was not planned because she wanted all of them to be together on the other side. This plan is seen as Sethe desperately attempts to explain to her dead daughter *Beloved* through the metaphorical text:

How could she have left her? And Sethe cried, saying she never did, or meant to – that she had to get them out, away . . . That her plan was always that they would all be together on the other side, forever
(Morrison, 1987, p. 241).

Sethe's deed of killing her baby transforms her mercy and sanctity into evil resulting in her being an outcast among her people. She does not want to be like her mother-in-law whose children were taken by the White authority, leading her to attempt an escape from the house of servitude. This escape successfully transitions Sethe from being an ordinary slave to a liberated woman looking for freedom for her children and her. She remains a mother who gives love and affection to her remaining daughter, her people and a man who feels the strength of her love and is proud to have his story next to Sethe's: "*Her story was bearable because it was his as well – to tell, to refine and tell again*" (Morrison, 1987, p. 99). Therefore, Sethe is considered one of the important metaphorical characters in Morrison's works. She is an icon of hope and an optimistic vision for the future, reflecting opportunity for slave women. She is also a representative for African- American women who experienced the horrors inflicted by the White community in America. Sethe's behaviour reflects that the painful experience she encountered serves as a reminder for African-American women to strive through a life that is worth living.

Sethe does not find her crime intimidating at all as evident in the way she behaves toward her other children. In the story, Sethe's sons Howard and Bugler had left home, not because of their mother's mistreatment but their fear of the house being haunted by *Beloved's* ghost. While Denver remains in the house with her mother, Sethe consciously endeavours to create an atmosphere for her daughter Denver to feel love and affection. When Paul D mentions that Denver has grown, Sethe does refuse to acknowledge this fact. The following text is metaphorically constructed by deviating from the grammatical norms with the use of double negatives '*Grown don't mean nothing to a mother*' and tautology '*A child is a child*' suggesting the mapping between mental concepts and the structure of forms which is a prominent feature of iconicity:

She's grown. [Paul D] I don't care what she is. Grown don't mean nothing to a mother. A child is a child. They get bigger, older, but grown? What's that supposed to mean? In my heart it don't mean a thing (Morrison, 1987, p. 45)

In the extract, Sethe's answer portrays her natural maternal instinct who love all her children where even if they have grown up, she will still view them as her little children. Antolović (2013) theorises that Sethe's character share similarities with the mythic figure of Asaase Ya, the mother of the trickster, who had a sword that would fight by itself and obeyed Aberewa's commands: "When she ordered the sword to fight, it slaughtered everyone it encountered. When she commanded the sword to stop fighting, it did" (Lynch & Roberts, 2004, p. 12). Sethe's deed of killing her daughter was done to protect her child from servitude and to express the desperate destruction that had occurred as a response to the horrifying deeds of the White race. She is also the mother of a trickster in this sense. Morrison utilises African mythology to revive the memory of her ancestors, and to unify the identity of African-Americans, especially women. In the African culture, the mother is an extremely important figure in society. She gives life and looks after the future generation. Women also have respectable status in the community in terms of politics especially when they gain wealth from trade, weaving material and cultivation (Rhoads, 1993).

However, slavery forces African-Americans to be at the mercy of White masters who strip them of their power and decent ways of living where suicide is the only way out of drudgery. Morrison uses her fiction in a systematic political struggle to empower women and her people. Baby Suggs faced a devastating life when she lost all her children. However, she strives to find a way to survive and heal from the terrible wounds

from the loss of her children. She becomes a preacher and mother for her daughter-in-law and all the slaves in search of freedom. While she is not a normal biological mother, she is an icon portrayed by Morrison as having the rhythm full of passion and affection:

She led Sethe to the keeping room and, by the light of a spirit lamp, bathed her in sections, starting with her face. Then, while waiting for another pan of heated water, she sat next to her and stitched gray cotton. Sethe dozed and woke to the washing of her hands and arms. After each bathing, Baby Suggs covered her with a quilt and put another pan on in the kitchen (Morrison, 1987, p. 93).

The metaphorical presence of Baby Suggs is desirable for both Sethe and her daughter-in-law, Denver. Even after her death, she left them with sweet memories and embodies the sign of great motherly love and its glorification. Baby Suggs is a metaphor via metonymy - '*ancestors and an elder there*'- symbolising the ancestors and the traces of her noticeable presence in the lives of the other African-Americans. In the following extract, Morrison employs Baby Suggs as an important figure in her writing process where her existence is seen as a crucial factor in shaping a new African-American identity:

There is always an elder there. And these ancestors are not just parents, they are sort of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom. . . . It was the absence of an ancestor that was frightening, that was threatening, and it caused huge destruction and disarray in the work itself (Morrison, 1987, p. 343).

Beloved is incarnated in a physical body when Baby Suggs is dead, providing an insight that the great motherly figure of Baby Suggs which also reflects the crucial message that the writer aims to convey. In order to incorporate some kind of order in a dishevelled life with the arrival of *Beloved*, Denver seeks advice from her grandmother who urges her to go into the world. Denver's venturing into the world invites the spirit of ancestors back, as the community becomes active in the act of preserving life again:

She did not see the women approaching, accumulating slowly in groups of twos and threes from the left. (. . . .) Some brought what they could and what they believed would work. (. . . .) and then Ella hollered. Instantly the kneelers and the standers joined her. They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning, there were no words. In the beginning, was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like (Morrison, 1973, p. 257-259).

Through Baby Suggs, Morrison offers the values of those who are old and the wise, the glorified, and tendering mothers, who may have answers to questions even after death, making *Beloved* leave and disappear. Thus, Morrison's message here alludes to the fact that woman constitutes a vital role that holds the community together. Metonymically, Sethe and Baby Suggs are representatives of African-American women while their metaphorical manifestation is in their function as icons representing the voice of African-American women and inspiring the fight for freedom towards independence at the socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions.

4.1.5 The Myth of Plantation and Iconicity

In *Beloved*, Sweet Home is an essential idea about the memory of African-American lives. Morrison mentions that it is not just a setting but a symbol that helps her clarify helping her to clarify the different stages of Black people's lives. Sweet Home is a powerful metaphorical tool used by Morrison to point towards the recollection of African-Americans' past.

Initially, Sethe lives at Sweet Home without any pressure from the Slaveowner, Mr Garner. Antolović (2013) states that the plantation Sweet Home resembles the Garden of Eden where most slaves are men except the only female slave, Sethe, who is allowed to decide whom she can and want to marry. The slaves on Sweet Home are not treated as properties, unlike other plantations, thereby, making it a paradise for slaves because they are not abused physically or mentally here. The Sweet Home men are kept in place by abstaining from marriage, except for the lucky one – Halle. The men cannot leave the farm when Sixo, the wise one, realises that the place is no longer a paradise when the schoolteacher arrived. Halle and Sixo used to be praised by Garner. In the following text, Mr Garner is seen as a metaphor mapping unto the so-called moderate White Americans who can serve also as a metonymy representing a portion of the White authority. "*Garner called and announced them men- but only in Sweet Home, and by his leave. Was he naming what he saw or creating what he did not? That was the wonder of Sixo and even Halle...*" Furthermore, 'Sixo' and 'Halle' are also metaphors within metonymy, representing the African-American people. On the other hand, Halle is the first character to leave Sweet Home before disaster strikes in the form of the arrival of the Schoolteacher and his nephews. The Sweet Home is not considered as paradise anymore; it is something like demons have overtaken it. The memory Morrison's characters have at Sweet Home is as if they are in a paradise. For that reason,

Sweet Home can be a physical and psychological icon for African-Americans. Morrison presents the notion of paradise via the metaphor 'Sweet Home' which is a fragile ground for African-Americans as it deprives them of freedom. She conveys this message through the character Denver: "*How come everybody run off from Sweet Home can't stop talking about it? Look like if it was so sweet you would have stayed*" (Morrison, 1987, p. 13). Even though slaves have sweet memories in Sweet Home, they cannot enjoy freedom which is part of human nature and something all human beings are entitled to. Thus, the metaphorical manifestation of Sweet Home during the time of Mr Garner is iconic. Where the time of the Schoolteacher and his nephew can reflect the icons of the hegemony and persecution of White authority. Both icons of Morrison's characters represent White Americans.

From Sethe's perspective, Sweet Home matches the concept of heaven as a place dwelled by the innocents, but this heaven is only partial. Thus, Sweet Home is an important symbol in the novel which stands for the sweet memories of the African-American lives. Thus, the home becomes an icon for them as the only place that slaves do not get tortured physically and mentally until the coming of the Schoolteacher; for that reason, critics compare it with paradise.

4.1.6 The Myth of *Beloved's* Rebirth as an Iconic Source

The story of *Beloved* revolves around the notion of rebirth and reincarnation of the murdered baby girl. The novel constitutes an allegorical character in the novel that stands metonymically for the African-Americans painful history. Sethe (her mother) kills her daughter due to her great motherly love. She also does not give her daughter a real name which metaphorically maps unto the status of Black individuals who are treated like sub-humans. Sethe is aware that the baby will come back and demand justice

where the strong relationship between Sethe and *Beloved* is because *Beloved* reminds her of her past and blames her of the reaction when the schoolteacher reaches Sweet Home. The novel opens with: "*124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom*" (Morrison, 1987, p. 3). This sentence shows that *Beloved* dwells in the place called 124, which is metaphorically a place of residence for African-Americans. The expression '*baby's venom*' is a metaphor mapping the pain of the reincarnated *Beloved* that she causes to 124 residents. Morrison presents *Beloved* in a metaphorically complex way as a ghost that can communicate with people. The idea of incarnation goes against logic and may add to the complexity in the construction of the novel. However, the myth of *Beloved* is crucial in the construction of the novel; it is the representation of African-American history that is characterized as full of pain and calamities. Morrison selects the idea of a reincarnated child as a myth to add depth to the painful history of African-American people. In this sense, *Beloved* is Morrison's representation of complex symbolic relationships between the physical and social bodies, offering insights into African-Americans' socio-cultural crisis (Pooley, 2004). Thus, the metaphorical manifestation of *Beloved* suggests an iconic perspective that is achieved via the similarity between her metaphorical appearance in Morrison's text and the concepts in the mind of readers, representing *Beloved* as the horror, pain and suffering of African-Americans.

4.1.7 Myth as an Iconic Source in *Sula* and the *Bluest Eye*

Morrison uses mythical elements in her novel to mainly confirm the idea of her universal themes concerning the people of her race. For instance, Shirley Temple is a vital mythical element in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*. This myth is what is seemingly a universal concern. It is impossible to describe African-Americans' experiences from non-mythically as the inaccuracy of 'linear' is the denial of past and

present reality in favour of "an Obscure vision of some distant future" (e.g., the struggle to become Shirley Temple) (Davis, 1982). The mythic consciousness is often enough to the minority where there is a danger that may become imprisoned by the view that oppression is 'fated'. Morrison aspires to capture universal aspirations without denying concrete reality where she employs mythical elements to give depth to the thematic concepts of African-Americans. The construction of a myth preserves people's identities without accepting violation and oppression. In this process, mythical structures are convenient in the search for identity and freedom for people of her race besides adapting to the historical circumstances surrounding this search. She gives value to myth as a design to her novel without restricting or ignoring reality, elucidating the suffering of African-Americans.

Popernack (2009) states that Morrison is aware of not giving privilege to either the sensibility of history or myth but utilises them to explore African-American identities and mythology without negatively implicating the White. Her novels revolve around a central mystery, exposing with each gyration the alternating pieces of Black history and Black myth. The simple language in Morrison's *Sula* does not entail that the message is simple. Within the language, mythical elements are used to explicate the African-American voice seeking equity and justice to gain independence. Thus, existence of a mythic imagination in Morrison's novels serves as essential factor to rub against the realistic elements of her work. The following extract from Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* denotes this mythical allusion:

Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-White Shirley Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk,

and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face
(Morrison, 1970, p. 17).

Shirley Temple is an important metaphorical allusion in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. For the protagonist Pecola, Shirley Temple is the epitome of beauty according to the standards of the White race. Morrison employs Shirley Temple as an iconic myth to give an account of how home racism has affected the identity of the Black community. In this novel, Morrison uses another myth metaphorically to convey a particular idea about African-Americans as evident in the excerpt below:

Quit as it's kept, there were no marigold in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that marigold did not grow (Morrison, 1970, Prologue).

Marigold serve as a mythical element that carries a deep meaning for the characters, Claudia and Frieda, where they wanted to plant it as an attempt to protect Pecola's unborn baby. Metaphorically, such myths, '*marigold*' and '*grow*', symbolise life and rebirth. The use of such myths might add iconic notes to the text. In *Sula*, Morrison alludes to many important myths as metaphors.

The following text clarifies the idea that there is a reference to the birthmark which is a metaphor in the text mapping unto *Sula's* fate: "*The birthmark was to grow darker as the years passed, but now it was the same shade as her gold-flecked eyes*" (*Sula*, 53). The birthmark creates a mythical atmosphere where Aristotle's Poetics mentioned that this mythical atmosphere helps the protagonist reach the stage of recognition of what is behind his or her drudgery, leading to the climax of the story. Additionally, the birthmark can be metaphorically expressed as a symbol of love and emotion but when the mark gets darker, it implies impending danger or the poison which

Sula has planted in the minds of many people due to her behaviour. Thus, the birthmark can serve as an icon representing the fate of Sula and is metonymically attributed to African-American's fate within a racist community. The following text refers to the myth of the death of robins as another type of metaphor where robins are associated with the spring season as well as life. Thus, their death is a bad omen referring to the death of the protagonist metaphorically. Metonymically, Sula's death might stand for the death of the African-Americans' voices and will. The metaphorical construction of text through metonymical relations that attribute *Sula* to African-American women that suggest iconicity can be perceived in the following scene:

"At Eva's house there were four dead robins on the walk [...] When Sula opened the door she raised her eyes and said, "I might have knowed them birds meant something. Where is your coat?" (Morrison, 1973, p. 91).

In the following extract, the metonymic references to God as the *Creator* and *sovereign* indicates that God is watching and knows what is happening to Sula and her people. The expression, *this enormous house*, is a metaphor within metonymy referring to the place where people live. *"The creator and sovereign of this enormous house ... was Eva Peace, who sat in a wagon on the third floor directing the lives of her children, friends, strays and a constant stream of boarders."* (Morrison, 1973, p. 30). Sokoloff (1986) states that Morrison fundamentally creates a matriarchal community where the ancestor becomes a source of truth and vitality, permitting her progeny to prevail. Eva's history is connected to the family and community and the stark fact of her missing leg is linked to her heroic efforts to preserve her children against disease and poverty. Thus, Morrison's use of mythical elements are not for the sake of embellishment as expressed

in Aristotelian Poetics but to provide depth to the content creating an iconic dimension to the text. In the forewords of *Beloved*, Morrison (1987) mentions that she wants to kidnap her readers and transport them into an alien place to share experiences never shared before of a people who have suffered from the bitterness of slavery. The metaphorical use of myth in Morrison's text is significant in reinforcing the iconic dimensions of her text.

4.1.8 Typographical Features and Iconicity

In this research, we will discuss metaphors in the light of Lakoff and Jonson's (2003) belief that metaphor is not realized in utterances and word-levels only but cognitively. A pictorial or visual metaphor occurs when a visual element (tenor/ target) is compared to another visual element (tenor/ target), which belongs to different category or frame of meaning (Nørgaard et al., 2010, p. 108). It is noticed that iconicity is the product of multi-semiotic systems, which is the feature of literary text, which is a product of the unconscious. Falquina (2014) notices that literary language is constructed of images and these images are products of the unconscious without the intervention of the conscious mind. There is analogy between form and meaning mediated by a concept created in cognitive part. Iconic text is charged with meaning because of its nature activating memories and fantasies on the part readers in order to give multi-levelled interpretations about archetypal, social and cultural perspectives (Fili, 2018). The structure of text plays a very essential role to add depth in the production of meaning due to the notion of imitation in which the structure of text (whether verses or deviated from norms) imitate the meaning it produces which is a crucial feature of iconic text. Thus, an icon does not have the same meaning as the words of a language but it is like a structure and within those structures, multi-meanings exist.

Typography refers to the visual side or design of printed words in a text. It refers to the semiotic dimension that plays a crucial role in demarcating the meaning of literary texts. The visual aspect of printed language is essential in meaning-making especially when it interacts with other modes of meaning in the complex process of semiosis (Nørgaard, 2009). Typographical features are considered as signifiers within semiotics, conveying certain meanings by which the themes of literary works can be developed. Therefore, the visual structure of literary texts is considered vital in meaning production. A similar narrative is repeated in the novel several times using different typographical features to confirm the idea of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the African-Americans. In the following text, the sentences are presented without commas, full stops and with two hyphens separating *green*, *and*, and the *White house*. Such parallelism between form and meaning suggest iconicity where it is likened to a stream of words from a child's point of view.

*Here is the house It is green and White It has a 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
(Morrison, 1970, Prologue).*

In the following text, the typographical features create a kind of analogy between text and the meaning that they imply. The use of colons and abundant hyphens add certain emotions and feelings as seen in the following text:

*Grown people frowned and fussed: "You-don't-know-how-to-take-care-
of-nothing. I-never-had-a-baby-doll-in-my-whole-life-andused-to-cry-
my-eyes-out-for-them.Now-you-got-one-a-beautiful-one-and-you-tear-it-
up-what's-the-matter-with-you?" (Morrison, 1970, p. 19).*

In the extract above, when the little girl was gifted a doll for Christmas, she is not sure of how to act towards the doll which she prefers not to have. The doll metaphorically stands for the social structure which African-American women fail to cope with. Morrison uses hyphens as spaces between words to convey emotions of happiness and at the same time expresses the hesitation that the girl experiences when she receives the doll. Therefore, the text is constructed to create an analogy between form and meaning, which is one of the traits of iconicity.

Morrison's style is also characterised as sinuous because it is incorporated with verses. The following verses from *The Bluest Eye* make the typographic structure of her work unique:

I got blues in my meal barrel

Blues up on the shelf

I got blues in my meal barrel

Blues up on the shelf

Blues in my bedroom

'Cause I'm sleepin' by myself

(Morrison, 1970, p. 49).

The verse above describes Pecola's desire of having blue eyes to be loved and is deemed to possess an iconic note because it is the product of imagination that creates similarity between form and concept. The repetition of the term '*blue eyes*' stands for the structure of the White community, confirming the idea of longing for social, cultural, and economic independence. In the following verse from Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola expresses her awakening from the imaginary world she is immersed in and facing reality. Moreover, Morrison uses a typographic strategy in her text that

stylistically create a surprise for her readers concerning the sense of nausea experienced by the people of her race, metonymically represented by Pecola. Morrison uses verse form to expose the depth of suffering in the African-American psyche. Pecola feels that she is lost in a world that has robbed her rights to live with dignity and be loved like any other White girl. In the following extract, Morrison makes sense of Pauline's inner world, explicating to her readers the terrible living conditions of African-Americans. The verse below portrays the painful experiences that African-American people face in a biased society:

*Precious Lord take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.
When my way grows drear
Precious Lord linger nearer,
When my life is almost gone
Hear my cry hear my call
Hold my hand lest my fall
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.*

(Morrison, 1970, p. 112).

Capital letters were also employed by Morrison to emphasise specific things or characters and are considered a contemporary style. Although this may be considered ungrammatical, it caters to the beauty and unique features of her work. The metaphor

of God's mercy '*who greatly ennobled human nature by creating it dear god*' is presented in uppercase to reflect the clear and intense feelings concerning the plight of the African-American race. Such typographical features can lead to iconicity via similarity in the visual representations of the text. Since the above text is a letter addressed to God, the capitalised title of the letter may convey certain emotions that provide insight as to how racism becomes a norm where which treats African-Americans are treated as inferior.

Att: TO HE WHO GREATLY ENNOBLED HUMAN NATURE BY CREATING
IT Dear God: "*The purpose of the letter is to familiarize you with the facts
which either have escaped your notice, or which you have chosen to ignore*"
(Morrison, 1970, p. 174).

In *Sula*, Morrison utilises a strange language style which is uncommon in fiction. In the extract, "O Lord, Sula, she cried, girl, girl, girl girl girl." It was a fine cry-loud and long-but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow." (Morrison, 1973, p. 174), the repetition of the word girl reflects the spontaneous way of talking in layman's term. She creates dialogues that are common and lively where such a method of constructing text adds to the content. Furthermore, using hyphens, commas, quotation marks, and rhetorical questions are semiotic markers in Morrison's text. These uses of punctuations indicating elaboration can make her language iconic where the structure of form suggests certain emotions. The extract gives an insight into the last moment between Sula and Nel when Nel realises that she likes Sula too much and her mourn for Sula's death is deeper in sorrow than when she found her with her husband Jude. Metaphorically, Sula's death stands in for the death of African-American's sense of defiance and rebel against social settings and traditions. The incorporation of

quotations is also important to draw the attention of the reader as demonstrated in the following: "A small boy stood at the Victrola turning its handle and smiling at the sound of Bert William' "Save a Little Dram for Me." (Morrison, 1973, p. 79). This text gives an account of Nel and Jude's wedding where everyone is happy including Sula. Morrison refers discursively to Bert William who was a comedian in the 1800s whose sounds bring a smile to the boy. The quotation within the text foreshadows smiling as a step forward to fulfil the dreams of African-Americans.

Morrison exploits the other aspect of typographical features such as capitalising the name of the characters in African folklore to convey emotions. *High John the Conqueror*' was an African-American folk hero who wield magical power but was captured and sold as a slave to White Americans. He fell in love with the Devil's daughter and agreed to the condition of planting and reaping sixty acres of land. He achieved his task with a magical axe and escapes with his Beloved to gain freedom. Using capitalisation to indoctrinate the importance of folklore in African-Americans socio-cultural issues is observed as a small step toward freedom and independence. Abdulrahman (2014) argues that Morrison refers to the Black's ancestral cultural heritage as a means of survival and emancipation. The partial similarity between form and content indicates partial iconicity.:

..., as well as to order Van Van, *High John the Conqueror*, *Little John to Chew*, *Devil's Shoe String*, *Chinese Wash*, *Mustard Seed* and the *Nine Herbs From Cincinnati*.. (Morrison, 1973, p. 126).

Additionally, the use of poetic language within prose is said to add to the aesthetic dimension of literary works. The lack of uniformity in the language style of Morrison' *Beloved* confirms the notion of fragmentation and loss experienced by African-

Americans where the poetic style in Morrison's novel suggests the motivating force leading to iconicity. The following verse shows the difficulty of faced by the Black community due to the lack of essential needs to enjoy a decent life and independence as shown in the following verse:

Little rice, little bean,

No meat in between.

Hard work ain't easy,

Dry bread ain't greasy.

(Morrison, 1987, p. 48).

This verse expressed Paul D demonstrates his deep pain and suffering which also metaphorically, stands for those of African-Americans through aesthetic rhyme, music and rhythm. Using verses is essential in confirming the notion of 'unspeakable' where painful past cannot be communicated via ordinary speech but using poetry which is characterised as economic by which the character can escape from painful experiences as explicated by Lacan on the process of deferral in signification.

Additionally, the following verse is a product of the plight of African- Americans in Sweet Home. The use of poetic language, in this case, is to represent the content for the whole race. The effect of poetic language can lead to iconicity which is important in creating sensations, feelings, and images in language that enables the mind to encounter them as close to reality as possible. In this way, poetic iconicity bridges the “gap” between the mind and the world. Thus, it is the poem that accomplishes the poet’s purpose achieves poetic iconicity, becoming an icon of reality in its semblance of felt life (Freeman, 2009). The poetic verse in Morrison's work is as depicted:

Lay my head on the railroad line,

Train come along, pacify my mind.

If I had my weight in lime,

I'd whip my captain till he went stone blind.

Five- cent nickel,

Ten- cent dime,

Busting rocks is busting time.

(Morrison, 1987, p. 48).

The text "*you-Black-bitch-what's-the-matter-with-you*" highlights the discrimination between White and Black people. The following text contains hyphens instead of spaces as semiotic markers to create a certain effect on readers and adds content to form, implying that the characters are fragmented and produces child-like thoughts and speech since hyphens represent pauses. This fragmentation also leads to disintegration in the theme of the novel. Presenting text in this way suggests the analogy on a mental level between the code and the coded by creating an iconic meaning. "*Even when she slipped in cow dung and broke every egg in her apron, nobody said you-Black-bitch-what's-the-matter-with-you and nobody knocked her down*" (Morrison, 1987, p. 164).

The excerpt of text below commences with capitalised alphabets to prove the existence of the character in the world when she is dead. The lack of punctuation in this passage is significant. The absence of commas and full stops show disorganised thoughts, illogical and produced by a child. Metaphorically, the passage reflects the mapping unto the fragmented African-American history. The manifestation of a dead character in literature tends to lead readers away from the logical binary opposition and adopt Greimas's relations in the semiotic square. Furthermore, the lack of punctuation

marks in the text below is one of the semiotic qualities that may lead to the creation of text with simple language with deep or multi-levelled content:

I AM BELOVED and she is mine. I see her take flowers away from leaves she puts them in a round basket the leaves are not for her she fills the basket she opens the grass I would help her but the clouds are in the way how can I say things that are pictures I am not separated from her there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too a hot thing" (Morrison, 1987, p. 248).

Moreover, Morrison also employs the use of rhetorical questions and exclamations marks to significantly shape the iconic perspective based on the notion of analogy between form and meaning. The author uses rhetorical questions to vent her feelings indirectly referring to the persecution of African-Americans by the White owners who prevented them from seeing their women. Paul D narrates Sethe's story when she escaped from the schoolteacher after Mr Garner's death: "*Who could be fooled into buying a singing nigger with a gun? Shouting Seven-O! Seven-O! because his Thirty-mile Women got away with his blossoming seed" (Morrison, 1987, p. 270).* Albeit, during Garner's time African-Americans suffer from mental persecution in which they dwell in dependency on socio- cultural and socio-economic levels. In the following extract, there is a mapping Also, the text has exclamation marks and hyphens to convey a certain effect. Thus, the meaning potential is communicated through the materialisation of text by the selection and production of its typographical designs which are considered to be semiotic resources available to producers and consumers of contemporary picture books (Serafini & Clausen, 2012). Therefore, the construction of

typographical design suggests certain social and emotional meanings, creating an analogy between form and meaning, which is a prominent feature of iconicity.

For a text to be considered as a discursive import, virtual images and verbal expressions are its basic constituents. Discursive import occurs when typographic signs and their associated meanings are imported into a new context. A text with virtual and verbal dimensions interacts as a multimodal ensemble to create a comprehensive meaning of the text (Nørgaard et al., 2010). Literary texts are considered multimodal because metaphors possess a multimodal cognitive perspective where verbal and pictorial metaphors are examples of how conceptual metaphors are indeed mental constructs. These constructs are capable of manifesting themselves in more than one semiotic mode (Nørgaard et al., 2010). Literary texts also contain symbols from different semiotic systems and can be classified as discursive texts. Morrison constructs her text from various semiotic systems by drawing on different metaphors and symbolic myths, leading us to explore her novels from an iconic perspective.

4.1.9 Colour as an Iconic Pattern in Morrison's text

In Morrison's novels, colour is used as an icon where it is exploited as symbols of metaphorical construction where it either refers to independence and decent ways of living or indicate dependence on socio-economic and socio-cultural terms as well as death and destruction of human values. In a broader sense, the use of colours is very significant factor in the texture of literary text due to the inspiring values they bear and, taking part in shaping the iconic dimensions of literary text. For instance, in Morrison's text, there are many references to the types of colours metaphorically. These colour metaphors are associated with certain values, resulting in iconic dimensions.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, there is a fragmentation in the African-American's family ties, specifically, between a mother and her children. The white dress of the child ghost may metaphorically indicate the desire of the child for warmth and affection from her mother. The selected text discusses the mother-daughter relationship between Denver and her mother Sethe where this kind of relationship is against the system of slavery as it was set up by the White authorities to disrupt mother-children relationships. The white dress is a colour icon for the pureness of a newborn baby and the beginning of life. The use of this colour refers to the desire of Sethe and Denver to live with optimism because the colour alludes to positive connotations. The use of the colour white is as seen in the excerpt below:

What was unusual (even for a girl who lived all life in a house peopled by the living activities of the dead) was that a white dress knelt down next to her mother and had its sleeve around her mother's waist. And it was the tender embrace of the dress sleeve that made Denver remember the details of her birth-that and the thin, whipping snow she was standing in, like the fruit of common flowers (Morrison, 1987, p. 35).

In the following text, there are colour metaphors used to refer to particular socio-cultural ideas. The white and mint-green colours are mentioned where the emergence of these colours coincide with the presence of *Beloved* which annoys Paul D. The metaphors 'White' and 'green' stands respectively as icons for purity and life. The death of white petals metaphorically reflects the mythologised idea of how a mother's love can become a killer. However, the presence of mint-coloured berry may iconically stand for the desire of Sethe and Paul D to move on in search of independent life.

Beloved was shining and Paul D didn't like it. Women did what strawberry plants did before they shot out their thin vines: the quality of green changed. Then the vine threads came, then the buds. By the time the white petals died and the mint-colored berry poked out, the leaf shine was gilded tight and waxy. That's how Beloved looked-gilded and shining (Morrison, 1987, p. 76).

In *Beloved*, one of the main characters, Denver shows a sense of inferiority by praising White features, referencing the indoctrination of slaves as an effect of White authority. The following text highlights this fact:

She had good hands, she said. The White girl, she said, had thin little arms but good hands. She saw that right way, she said. Hair enough for five head and good hands, she said. I guess the hands made her think she could do it: get us both across the river..... She said there ain't nothing to go by with White people.. (Morrison, 1987, p. 90).

In the text above, Denver praises the White girl whose beauty is standard in comparison with African-American girls, contradicting the rights and beauty of African-American women.

"When Halle came in I asked him what he thought about the schoolteacher. He said there wasn't nothing to think about. Said, He's White, ain't he? I said, but I mean is he like Mr Garner?" (Morrison, 1987, p. 230).

In the extract above, the question about a White man on whether he looks like Mr Garner or not indicates white as an icon with negative connotations while Mr Garner is associated with positive connotations. For slaves, the White man stands for control,

hegemony and persecution. The extract consists of two questions: the first, which has the priority "He's White, ain't he?" and the second question implying that Mr Garner is an exceptional person in the White community, representing racism and slavery. Via this metaphorical construction, Morrison shows how the White race views people of dark skin negatively.

White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. But it wasn't the jungle Blacks brought with them to this place from other (livable) place. It was the jungle White folks planted in them. And it grew (Morrison, 1987, p. 234).

White people can also be an icon representing the source of suffering and pain that African-Americans have experienced. In the year 1874, slavery had ended but White people were still exercising persecution by lynching, raping, burning, and whipping Black people. On the other hand, African-Americans are depicted as icons of pain and suffering itself. In Morrison's *Beloved*, the system of slavery has a terrifying impact on the slaves, leading them to be alienated from the community and being treated as subhuman. In the extract above, Stamp Paid feels guilty because he converses with Sethe about the unhappy memories of Sweet Home where perhaps White people were responsible for the bad life that Black people experienced.

Morrison's message in *Sula* is complex yet it is manifested in simple language. The extracts below contain colour icons that may socially explain the desire of African-Americans for equity and justice. The focus on the colour in describing Morrison's protagonist adds depth to the theme of her novels. The events of Sula's betrayal,

drowning the boy and Sula's indifference when she watched her mother burning do not indicate that Sula is completely evil since Morrison did not want her readers to sympathise with her but merely present the events to her reader only to judge. Nassief (2019) states that Sula's behaviour is an attempt to seek her people's love and an invitation to rebel against social conventions. "A good White farmer promised freedom and a piece of bottomland to his slave if he would perform some very difficult chores" (Morrison, 1973, p. 5). In this extract, there is a comparison between White and Black via using metaphorical constructions. Whilst White people are icons that can own lands, the prospects of gaining land for the Black depends on how hard his or her slave works. This text provides iconic evidence of the economic independence of the White race and the dependence of the Black race. In the following text, there are negative references linked to African Americans indicating that whenever they are present the gloomy atmosphere comes around. Such notions are delineated via the underlined metaphorical expressions as follows:

Although most of the people remembered the time when the sky was Black for two hours with clouds and clouds of pigeon, and although they were accustomed to the excesses in nature-too much heat too much cold, too little rain, rain to flooding-,.... (Morrison, 1973, p. 89).

Black refers to depression and sorrow because it is associated with the impending pain and persecution iconically while Black clouds and Black pigeons represent the death of Sula after a painful life. In the following extract, the metaphor 'White family' serves as an icon of superiority that has needed to be prioritised: "So when his curiosity was high enough he picked two bottles of milk off the porch of some White family and went to see her." (Morrison, 1973, p. 127). Morrison's *Sula* shows that the Black

community resides in the Bottom, which is above the valley without interaction with White people. Thus, using the metaphors 'White ' and 'Black' in Sula serve as icons that reinforces the ideas about socio-cultural and socio-economic levels.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison uses colour as a metaphor to account for the African Americans' norms of living under a racist White community. The metaphorical expression 'Black dirt' refers to the protagonist ' Pecola' "*We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of Black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of Black dirt" (*The Bluest Eye*, Prologue). The text makes a comparison between two events metaphorically where the narrator compares between dropping seeds of marigold which would not grow and Pecola's pregnancy from her father's seeds when he raped her. Black dirt is mentioned twice to emphasise the idea of negative connotations attached to the colour Black. The seeds never grow, mapping into Pecola's unborn baby and the marigold, implying that the colour Black can be utilised as an icon indicating the misfortunes of African Americans. The following extract depicts the metaphor, 'hunger for property, which is related to the metaphor of colour ('Black people'). The perceived notion that the socio-economic status of African Americans is dependent on the Whites, is projected through the colour Black in the text. The text shows how African Americans are powerless to a place and need to keep themselves from going outdoors.*

Knowing that there was such a thing as outdoors bred in us a hunger for property, for ownership. The firm possession of a yard, a porch, a grab arbor. Propertied Black people spend all their energies, all their love, on their nests (Morrison, 1970, p. 16).

In *the Bluest Eye*, Morrison uses verses to realise colour metaphors. The following verse contains repetition of the colour metaphor 'blue' to be a significant icon for the protagonist 'Pecola' who desires blue eyes as shown below:

*Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes.
Run, Jip, run. Jip run, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes.
Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run
With their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty
Blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes. Blue-like Mrs. Forrest's
Blue blouse eyes. Morning-glory-blue-eyes.
Alice-and-Jerry-blue-storybook-eyes. (Morrison, 1970, p. 44).*

The text above shows that she is obsessed with having blue eyes to be happy and have independence. Blue colours have positive connotations according to the social standards set up by the White. So, the metaphor of the colour 'blue' can be considered as a colour icon denoting love and being loved as evident in the following text:

Watching the figure etched against the bright blue sky, Cholly felt goose pimples popping a long his arms and neck. ... If the devil looks like that, Cholly preferred him. He never felt anything thinking about God, but just the idea of devil excited him. And now the strong. Black devil was blotting out the sun and getting ready to split open the world. (Morrison, 1970, p. 132).

The above extract consists of two-colour icons. The first icon is blue which stands for the colour of the sky and the beauty of nature. It is the colour of the eyes of those girls who are being loved and who are socially and economically stable, making

Morrison's protagonist obsessed with this colour. Black colour is associated metaphorically with the devil and ugliness, reflecting behaviour and a way of living where it is not merely a colour.

Colours in Morrison's novels are manifested as pictorial, auditory and mental icons indicating multi-levelled perspectives, honing the imagination of readers. These colour icons serve as starting points to stimulate fantasies and memories on the part of readers, shifting the text dimensions of the novels into an orchestra that exceeds the prime properties of the semantic field. Colour icons contain multiple semantic dimensions, bearing positive connotations such as white representing the White race and blue which stands for the colour of the White people's eyes. On the other hand, colours that bear negative connotations include black, which for Morrison, is not a skin colour but iconically stands for an entire race. The colour icon plays a significant role in delineating the status of the person or the community where the colour black represents cultural devaluation, socio-economic dependence, humiliation and subjection while other colours like white and blue stand iconically for cultural hegemony and socio-economic independence. Thus, the employment of colour icons in the fabric of Morrison's novels creates a mental image that conjures multi-layered interpretations where skin colour does not refer to the appearance or a skin hue, but it reflects particular behaviours and social, economic and cultural status.

The following Figure 4.1 demonstrate how discursive text is constructed in Morrison's novels to present a text with iconic qualities. Literary texts make references to various semiotic systems where these references are employed metaphorically. In other words, various signifiers are incorporated from various semiotic systems to confirm the notion of discursiveness and intertextuality. These variety of the semiotic systems includes the use of colour, myth, and typographic features of the text. These

signs are incorporated in Morrison's works to confirm the notion of discursiveness which interrelates with iconicity. This process aligns with Lacan's idea on the galaxy of signifiers. Moreover, in literary texts, the metaphorical use of various signifiers suggests iconic notes seen in Hiraga's model linking the process of metaphorisation with the process of iconisation since both require a mapping between two or more entities.

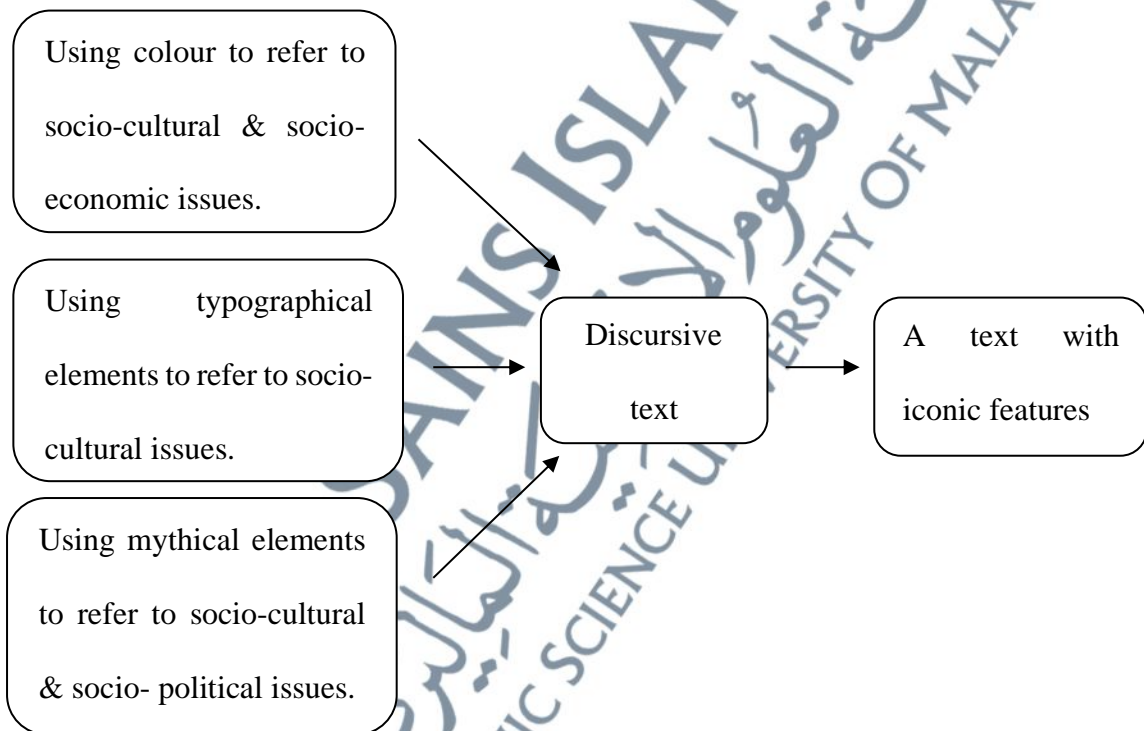


Figure 4.1: The Interrelationship between Iconicity and Discursiveness

Thus, the discursiveness in Morrison's literary text serves as an essential role in producing an iconic text. This chapter highlights the factors that contribute to the construction of text with discursive qualities using colour, myth and typographic

features as well as the concept of intertextuality. These features or strategies are also considered as belonging to various semiotic systems. The discursiveness of the language of literary texts is also observed to be constructed according to Greimas' square, opposing the binary theory of the signifier-signified relationship that supports Lacanian theory. Lacan mentioned that literary texts are products of a galaxy of signifiers rather than a product of the binary relationship between code and coded. Therefore, the language of literary texts is a multi-semiotic system with iconic perspectives. Morrison exploits language to use to make audible the silenced voices of African-Americans, inviting her readers to explore the ideologies as well as socio-cultural and socio-economical dimensions of African-Americans through the different periods and settings of the three novels. Morrison's text can be concluded as icon that represents the torment and plights of the Black community.