CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
1.0. Preliminaries

Toni Morrison occupies a very special place in African-American’s literary history as a black female writer who has depicted the tragic condition of Black people, specially women in America and shows the victimization of Black people within the context of social life. However, Toni Morrison has been a crucial figure amongst critics and a variety of theoretical perspectives has often surrounded her writing. In this study, the researcher will explore the Feminism features in Morrison’s novels, demonstrating her as a central figure of Feminism, and also try to find out the feminist tendencies in her writings.

The current chapter will therefore present the study with an overview of the literary movements. It is a short overview of the study with reference to African-American literature. It will specify the aims, objectives, and significance of the study. It will also state the research hypothesis and limitation of the study. It will throw light on the fictional style of Toni Morrison. The Chapter will explore the school of Black feminism. A brief life history of Toni Morrison as a Black feminist writer along with an outline of the novels under scrutiny will be presented as well.
1.1. An Overview of Study

Women have always been subordinate across cultural boundaries. Men need them, love them, adore them and write about them, but they do so in relation to their own lives. In this respect, women have always been the ‘second sex’.

Prejudice and discrimination on the basis of skin colour is another problem from which black women have suffered a lot. A number of novelists, both the black and the white, have expressed this problem through their writings. It is rather a strange phenomenon that on the one hand we declare ourselves to have become more civilized, liberal and flexible and, on the other hand, many of us are still bound with blind traditions that make a person racial, devoid of humanity. Toni Morrison is one of the Afro-American novelists who has a deep insight into the racial problems that are being confronted by the blacks since their existence.

Being an Afro-American woman, Toni Morrison has boldly projected Afro-American feminism in her writings. She declares that a feminist is one who is awakened about a woman’s life and problems. Her novels highlight black women, differentiated in terms of not only male standard and poverty but also more importantly Euro-American women’s standard.
Today, the feminist literary criticism is the direct product of the 'Women's movement' of the 1960s. This movement was literary from the beginning, in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence.

Feminist criticism since the 1970s has been remarkable for the wide range of positions that exist within it such as the role of theory, the nature of language, the value or otherwise of psychoanalysis etc.

The major effort in feminist criticism in the 1970s went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural 'mind-set' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality. In the 1980s, the mood changed in feminism. First of all, feminist criticism became much more eclectic. It means that feminist criticism began to draw upon the findings and approaches of other kinds of criticism such as Marxism, structuralism, linguistics, and so on. Secondly, feminist criticism switched its focus from attacking male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the female world and outlook, and reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was switched to the need to construct a new canon of women's writing by rewriting the history of the novel and
of poetry in such a way that neglected women writers were given new prominence.

Black feminism was, and is always fluid and diverse, focusing in various ways on the convergence of race, gender, sexuality class, spirituality and culture.

The roots of a distinctly black feminist conscience began during slavery and during the campaign of abolitionists to end slavery. Defined as "chattel", forced to be "breeders" against their will, and denied the rights as citizens, as humans, black women were constantly confronted with a system that sought to destroy them both as humans, and as women.

Black feminism argues that sexism, class oppression, and racism are inextricably bound together. Forms of feminism that strive to overcome sexism and class oppression but ignore race can discriminate against many people, including women, through racial bias.

Feminists such as Alice Walker (1983) believed that black women experienced a different and more intense kind of oppression than that of white women. They point to the emergence of Black feminism [after earlier movements led by white middle-class women], which they regard as having largely ignored oppression based on race and class. Patricia Hill-Collins (1991) defined Black feminism, in Black Feminist Thought,
as including women who theorize the experiences and ideas shared by ordinary black women that provide a unique angle of vision on self, community, and society.

Black feminists contend that the liberation of black women entails freedom for all people, since it would require the end of racism, sexism, and class oppression. There is a long-standing and important alliance between postcolonial feminists, which overlaps with transnational feminism and third-world feminism and black feminism. Both have struggled for recognition, not only from men in their own culture, but also from Western feminists.

E. Frances White (2001) believes that feminist movement’s relationship needs to revise the concept of “the family”. It acknowledges that, for Women of Color, the family is not only a source of male dominance, but also a source of resistance to racism. Barbara Smith (1983) in her book, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, believed that Black women till now, are unwilling to jeopardize their racial credibility (as defined by Black men) to address the realities of sexism and few Black women are willing to bring up homophobia and heterosexism, which are, of course, inextricably linked to gender oppression.
Starting around 2000, the "third wave" of Feminism in France took interest in the relations between sexism and racism, with a certain amount of studies dedicated to Black Feminism. This new focus was displayed by the translation, in 2007, of the first anthology of US Black feminism texts.

Toni Morrison’s statement (1931-), “Well, it’s like we started out being sold, got free of it, then sold ourselves to the highest bidder” in 2003, expresses the social heritage of African American women. This is the history of slavery which greatly affected the psyches of African-American women and the psychological impact of slavery have held them captivated long after slavery was abolished. Africans were brought to the colonies in America by European colonizers in the seventeenth century in order to be used as slaves. Bell Hooks (2004) claimed that in the beginning, mostly men were used as slaves, but as the slave trade gathered momentum, females made up one-third of the human cargo aboard most ships. Slave owners found female slaves more profitable than male slaves. They could be used for breeding as well. Another reason why African women were favored by slave owners was because they were used for both hard field labour and domestic work.

Rape has been used frequently in Toni Morrison’s novels. Rape or other physical brutality inspired fear in the psyches of African females. It
is important to know that the punishment inflicted on women was intense even more than the punishment their men suffered. Women were not only whipped and mutilated but also, they were raped. Women suffered a lot from men’s brutal treatment. Female slaves have shown great resistance to men’s oppression. They resisted the sexual assaults of white men, defended their families and participated in work stoppages and revolts. However, the black female slaves did not advocate sexual equality. Since they were stripped of their femininity because of their status as workers and thus masculinized, they longed to be treated with the same regard and consideration they believed was due them as a woman’s privilege in patriarchal society.

In the nineteenth century, industrialization had brought a view of womanhood as passive and inferior. Women were not supposed to work outside the home; they were to take care of their children and their household. For the female slave it was impossible to relate to this image of womanhood; since they worked alongside black men in the fields and shared housework with them, they were not able to conform to this patriarchal ideology. This situation gave rise to a myth of the female slave as a matriarchal figure.

Black women were seen as independent and self-reliant but their self-reliance was forced upon them rather than chosen. Slave families
were often broken up because of the sale of either the husband, wife, or child.

The study of Toni Morrison’s novels is based on observation and analysis of the status of women as the preserver of the American society. It also analyses the crucial roles played by women in the historical development of a nation. The African literature largely is male dominated. Therefore, the woman in African literature is always portrayed as gentle, passive and timid. The male writers offer very few images of women restricting them up to the domestic tasks only. The African women writers on the other hand offer more dynamic representation of women. The women writers like Toni Morrison have posed some of the traditional attitudes towards women and their position in society. By doing so these women writers have presented women as free-spirited and strong willed to have their own status in society.

Feminism is becoming an increasingly accepted part of ordinary social and political discourse, even if it is not viewed in the same light by everyone. However, feminism now, as in the past entails a variety of widely differing approaches. Yet, in spite of the diversity, feminism is often represented in everyday discussions and somehow concerned with ‘equality’. In this study, following the feminism theorists’ point of view,
the researcher tries to find out the black feminist features in Toni Morrison’s selected works.

1.2. Objectives of Study

This study attempts to cover the following objectives:

- The researcher attempts to find out the major features of Feminism in Toni Morrison’s novels with special reference to representative novels: *The Bluest Eye, Sula, Beloved and Song of Solomon.*

- A critical analysis of the author’s novels will be done.

- The major aims and objectives of this research are to explore the feminist themes, tendencies and attitudes within Morrison’s works.

- This research will bring out the significances of deep psychic realities that Black women experience and their sufferings in a particular social context.

- The objective of the project is also to deal with the major crises and social concerns of African women and enable the reader to understand the novels in depth and detail.

- Finally, the objectives of the study will be achieved in the light of the research analysis.
1.3. Significance of the study

Feminism also known as the women’s movement or women’s liberation is a series of campaigns on issues such as reproductive right, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment and sexual violence. The goals of movement vary from country to country. As far as Toni Morrison is concerned, the researcher will come to know how much she has been affected by feminist thinking.

This critical study enables us to have a look at Morrison’s novels from feminist point of view and it helps us to find answer to questions such as: Is she a feminist writer? If the answer is, “yes” how much and how far is she?

This research will bring out the authenticity of Morrison’s novels “The Bluest Eye”, “Sula”, “Song of Solomon” and “Beloved” through feminism. In fact the detailed study of her novels through feminist characteristics enables the reader to have better understanding of the novels and to enjoy them.

All the four novels mentioned, have special features which are different and worth exploring. The main aim of the research project is to make explicit the touching lives of the Black-American women who suffered all kinds of inequalities.
1.4. Statements of Hypothesis

Feminism is an important literary movement and this research will be an analysis of the selected works of Toni Morrison from feministic point of view.

As far as feminism is concerned several theories come to mind, such as Is Toni Morrison a feminist writer and how far is she a feminist and goes with the canon of American literature. These theories need to be examined and studied. It needs to be determined how far Toni Morrison, an essentially fictional artist, is combining political consciousness and aesthetic sensibility.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

Every research has limitations and the present research is not an exception. This research takes up four selected novels of Toni Morrison across cultural boundaries to expose her concerns about gender oppression. The said research has nothing to do with religion. It will bring out Toni Morrison’s concerns about racism, which oppressed the Black men and women for generations.
1.6. Methodology of the Research

The methodology of this research is documentary. It has been chosen according to the aims, objectives, significance of research and research potentiality.

In this research, the investigation begins with study of Black Feminism. Then a brief study of the works of the author will be given and later four selected novels of the author; *The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon* and *Beloved* will be studied. Some previous reviews and critical studies related to the subject will also be studied and with the help of the entire data collected, the researcher will try to analyze the novels thematically, structurally, stylistically and evaluate the author’s novels in the light of Feminism.

1.7. Toni Morrison and her Works

Toni Morrison achieved the impossible by becoming the first African-American to win the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993. She has added substantially to the body of African-American literature through both her fiction and critical essays. Her critical essays add immensely to the canon of African-American aesthetics. They enlarge on the theme of
African-American woman novelist’s role. They give a clear understanding of black life, society and culture.

Morrison, a woman of immense talent, comes from a family of industrious and hard working black people, who fought racial oppression and an inferior socio-economic status. Her maternal grandparents left Alabama and travelled to Ohio in search of better educational opportunities for their children. Her father, a Georgian by birth, also fled the state’s hostile racial climate and settled in Ohio. Morrison, the second of four children, was named Chloe Anthony Wafford. She grew up in Lorain, Ohio, during the great depression. Her childhood world was not dominated by black responses to white oppression. In Lorain, where everyone was poor, there was not much of segregation on class basis, and overt racial hostility was not prevalent.

Her recollections of the richness of black lore, music, myths and the cultural rituals of family and community are memorable. Her grandfather played the violin and her mother sang in the choir. Storytelling, especially of ghost stories, was a shared activity for men and women in her family. As a teenager, Morrison read the European literary masters, English, Russian and French.

Morrison excelled in her studies; she received an undergraduate degree in English from Howard University, where she changed her name

Her works deal with major contemporary social issues like racism, class exploitation and sexism. If nothing she did, in the way of writing novels, was about a village, about a community, or about us, then it was not about anything. She was not interested in indulging herself in some private, closed exercise of her imagination that fulfilled only the obligation of her personal dreams.

Morrison through her novels presents the non-linear African-American socio-historical reality, fragmented by a historical past of disconnection and ruptures. Her works offer a fresh perspective on black life, their history and genealogy. The major focus of her works is
apartheid, slavery and racism, and their psychological and social effects on the blacks over the ages. Not only restricting themselves to the effects of these practices, writers like Toni Morrison have traced the historical development of these ideologies. Morrison’s novels show the victimization of black people within the context of racist social order. The social history found in her novels is the history of daily inescapable assault by a world that denies minimum dignity to the Blacks.

The overriding theme of her novels is the sense of identity of a black person trying to recover his history and culture, which had so far been suppressed due to white narcissism. The questions, which come to one’s mind on reading her novels, are: What is history without representation? What is the identity of the person for whom reading and writing were prohibited? The reality of dehumanization of black people is one for which there are no adequate words.

Complexity of how people behave under the pressure of white hegemony has been of interest to Toni Morrison. She has produced some of the intense studies in the strains that a madness inducing white society puts on its black members in America.

In *The Bluest Eye* Pecola goes mad, Cholly rapes his daughter. In *Song of Solomon*, Guitar joins a band of racial avengers, and in *Beloved*,
Sethe kills her daughter. All these characters represent the mad, anarchic and destructive tendencies affiliated by the psychological wounds caused by racial discrimination.

Morrison’s *Beloved* draws our attention to the psychological turmoil experienced by the character Sethe in the context of slavery. All the history that the readers have learnt about slavery is stretched out on a giant canvas, the separation of women and children from men, the treatment of slaves, both male and female, children and adults, as beasts of burden, the sexual exploitation of African women by white men. The character Beloved herself is a spiritual manifestation of history. She is the embodiment of sixty millions or more dead, enslaved Africans, who has returned to reclaim her space, and haunts us throughout the narrative with her enigmatic appearance.

In *Song of Solomon*, Milkman undertakes a long journey from city to the countryside in the quest of his identity. After tracing his roots in Detroit, where he was familiar with Pilate’s version of the Solomon song, he goes to Pennsylvania where his father grew up and then to Shalimar, Virginia, where his grand father was born and children still sang of Solomon. Milkman deciphers the twin text of history (hidden in the song) and genealogy. The novel evokes the history of black immigration and chain of economic expropriation from hinterland to village, from village
to metropolis. The end of milkman’s journey is the starting point of black races’ history in America, the confrontation with the reality of slavery coming at the end of the novel marks the end of Milkman’s penetration into the historical process.

Morrison in each of her novels highlights the effects of cultural subjugation of blacks in a racist society. Through her novels, she presents the distorted emotions produced by living in a world where white standards and values are presented to blacks as uniquely important and, at the same time, impossible for them to achieve. In *The Bluest Eye*, black girlhood assumes tragic propensities, when it borrows identity models from the mandates of white culture. We see how Pecola is forced to long for blue eyes like those of the white children, so that she would be loved and accepted by both blacks and whites.

Further, Morrison’s status as a black woman writer cannot be neglected. There is an acute lack of historical accounts of black women as autonomous and determining participants during the period of slavery, emancipation and reconstruction. In *Beloved*, by drawing attention to the circumstances under which Sethe makes her escape, Morrison gives women’s experience of slavery a voice and most importantly a language. Sethe here is an active historical agent as opposed to a passive victim or
absence. Morrison is the second American woman and first African-American to achieve the status of distinction in the mainstream of American literary tradition. The works of this versatile writer portrays black women who have nothing to fall back on, not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, in their struggle to discover the authentic black female self.

In Sethe, Nel, Pecola and Hagar, Morrison highlights the misery of black women who are victims of both sexist and racist oppression. To what extent women can go in order to help their family is evident in Eva’s sacrifice of her leg (town gossip says that she deliberately stuck it under the train so that she could sue the railroad). Morrison’s most articulate statement in regard to female oppression appears in *Sula* when Nel and Sula first meet: “Because each had discovered years before 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.” Within this statement are found both the dilemma of the novel and the solution to the dilemma. African women are oppressed, and to escape their oppression, they must become self-propagators.
1.8. Review of Related Literature

There is a considerable body of literature, which describes and analyzes Toni Morrison’s works in the light of Feminism. This part of study presents a short review of literature and presents feminist perspective in analyzing Toni Morrison’s writings.

One of the major books illustrating different aspects in Toni Morrison’s writing is *Toni Morrison: Contemporary Critical Essays* edited by Linden Peach in 1998.

Linden Peach (1998) in his New Casebook, *Toni Morrison: Contemporary Critical Essays* features eleven critical essays on the novels of Toni Morrison. Linden Peach's introduction provides an overview of each essay, identifying the theoretical perspectives from which each critic approaches Morrison's writing. Peach briefly yet clearly explains the origin and layers of sub-theories within each critical school. In addition he specifies how the writers of these essays have modified traditional critical theories to interpret African-American literature in general and Morrison's fiction in particular.

Cynthia Davis (1982) interpreted the "psychic violence" shown by many of Morrison's characters because of western society's systematic denial of the reality of Black lives. Drawing upon existentialist and Marxist ideology, Davis showed how the white society objectifies black
members of society that they cannot form a "recognizable public self," exemplified by Morrison's pattern of misnaming people and places. Along similar lines, Barbara Rigney (1998) examines the "illusion of unified selfhood" in *Hagar's Mirror: Self and Identity in Morrison's fiction*. Form a feminist perspective, Rigney posits that the notion of an "integrated self" is made of concept, as opposed to the merging of identities in the female triads of *Sula*, *Beloved*, and *Song of Solomon*. In addition to her poignant study of mirror symbolism, Rigney brings out the significance of naming and making in developing or shattering the self.

Madhu Dubey (1994) challenges black feminist/nationalist readings of *Sula* in *No Bottom and No Top: Oppositions in Sula*. However, Dubey acknowledges that the novel both "affirms the newness of the ideal black subject" and analyzes heterosexuality through the fulfilling relationship shared by Nel and Sula. Dubey's strongest point is that *Sula* actually "plays feminism and nationalism against each other" while resisting pressure to conform to "Black Aesthetic discourse."

*Knowing Our Place: Psychoanalysis and Sula*, by Houston Baker (1991), presents a primarily Freudian analysis of a chapter in *Sula*, which titled “1922”, begins with "It was too cool for ice cream". Baker explains the sexual connotations of this remark in light of Sula's and Nel's
pubescent stage; comments on their desire for the "PHALLUS", and identifies three "burials" that take place in this passage. Jennifer Fitzgerald's *Selfhood and Community: Psychoanalysis and Discourse in Beloved*, draws and intriguing parallel between traditional psychoanalytic discourse and the discourse of slavery. Fitzgerald utilizes object relations theory to explain the "psychic trauma[s]" that the characters experience as they progress psychologically from objects to subjects and eventually to "reciprocal self-love".

In his essay on *Beloved*, Rafael Perez-Torres (1993) discusses the novel's postmodernist characteristics in *Knitting and Knotting the Narrative Thread-Beloved as Postmodern Novel*, even as he warns against limiting Beloved with such a label. Although his study is commendable, many readers, particularly those not familiar with recent postmodernist critical theory, may find Perez-Torres's terminology and logic difficult to comprehend. On the other hand, the excerpt from Ashraf H.A. Rushdy’s (1992) article *Daughters Signifying History: The Example of Toni Morrison's Beloved* uses new historicism to illuminate the reports surrounding the Margaret Garner story that inspired Morrison to write Beloved and "keep in touch with the ancestor".

Susan Willis (1990), the author of *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience*, suggests that Toni Morrison’s fictions
seek to repair the alienation of the (black) self from its culture. It ruptures of culture transmission and continuity through tropes of funk ‘include metaphors drawn from past moments of sensual fulfillment as well as the use of lack, deformity and self-mutilation as figures for liberation.’ Using these eruptions of funk - ‘the intrusion of the past in the present’ – Morrison posits an alternative social world. One in which “otherness” no longer functions as an extension of domination (as it does when blackness is beheld from… racist bourgeois society, or when the crippled, blind and deformed are compared to the terrorizing totality of a whole, and therefore “perfect”, body).’ Instead, the worlds of otherness that Morrison weaves permit ‘a reversal of domination’ and transform ‘what was once perceived from without as “other” into the explosive image of utopian mode.’ These utopian worlds, Willis shows, are figured in three-woman households, Morrison’s specifying version of the dystopian three-woman household in Faulkner’s Absalom! Absalom!

Willis’s close reading of Morrison’s canon reveals that Morrison’s ‘highly sensual descriptions’ function to explode the effects of alienation and repression and stave off the advent of reification’, because ‘sensuality is embedded in a past which is inaccessible to sexual repression and bourgeois culture.’ Morrison’s lyrical language, in other words, reinscribes a sexuality fundamental to the text of the Afro-
American past. This linguistic ‘retrieval of sensuality allows an alternative social mode and historical period to be envisioned.’ Black utopia, then, can be summoned to being by a black and sensual language, a language ‘prior to the advent of capitalism and bourgeois society’. A language similar in function to black song, ‘the unwritten text of history and culture’.

Willis (1990) shows how geographic or physical spaces function in Morrison’s work as figures of history, a transfer that is ‘symptomatic of a time when a people’s past no longer forms continuity with the present.’ It is this gesture, which ties Morrison’s work, especially *Song of Solomon*, to the great Latin American modernist novels, such as *La casa verde*. Willis argues that the matter of discontinuity and rupture of the self from its cultural traditions is ‘resolved’ through a trick of structure similar to the effect that mythic structure has upon otherwise irreconcilably opposed forces. Willis concludes that the synchronic relationship defined in geographic space stands for a diachronic relationship. The most interesting feature about these modernist texts is that, in reading them, the reader, like Milkman, restores diachrony to the text; and, in so doing, realizes the historical dialectic, which the text presents as inaccessible.
Morrison’s figure of history, allows her characters to step out of fetishized relationships into black, as it were, underground community of restored, integral relationships.

Renita Weems (2000) states in Barbara Smith’s Home Girls that black women writers have not been taken seriously. Being a woman makes her writing marginal and being black makes it minor and that she is both makes it alien. Toni Morrison has been taken seriously, to the point that she was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1993. Morrison’s work has been extensively read and admired by people of various cultures and races. Weems claims that Morrison is able to portray the essence of the black female experience and shows the diversity in Black people’s experiences. However, not all criticism has been in Morrison’s favour. Some critics have argued that her use of a European way of writing can be seen as a betrayal of her African-American origins. Others have said that her characters are thinly drawn stereotypes with no social context. However, in an argument put forward by Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1993), Morrison’s greatness as a writer is shown in her ability to create a densely lyrical narrative texture that is instantly recognizable as her own and to make the particularity of the African American experience the basis for a representation of humanity tout court. Her novels are never about the Black community of Lorain, Ohio, in the thirties and forties,
even when they are apparently set there. Morrison’s work is always symbolic of the shared human condition, both engaging with and transcending lines of gender, race, and class.

Linden Peach (1998), states that feminism has deconstructionist approaches to Morrison's work, as illustrated in Barbara Rigney's essay, and are normally based on developments in contemporary critical theory which occurred in the 1970s and 1980s and which complicated common assumptions about the self and about race as meaningful categories of literary study. Because of these developments, it has become difficult to conceive of the self as united, coherent, stable and known, and to envisage black women writers as a homogeneous bloc. Rigney's essay is an extract from her book, The Voices of Toni Morrison, in which she argues that Morrison's work is distinguished by reformulations of self, identity and history and by her radical use of language. Drawing explicitly on the work of European theorists such as Luce Irigaray, Toril Moi, Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous, who have undermined common assumptions about the self, which they attribute to Western humanism, Rigney stresses the multiplicity of the self rather than concepts associated with the integrated self. She applies recent thinking about the concept of the self to Morrison's work and emphasises those concepts in traditional Western thought – ‘oneness’, closure, autonomy, self-containment -
which are not applicable to African-Americans because of their sense of division and fragmentation.

The strength of Rigney's essay is its acknowledgement that Morrison's action originates in a zone outside of Western literary criticism so that French feminist theory needs to be employed with deference to African-American cultural paradigms. Thus for money, Morrison's language, in line with French feminist thinking, implies the primacy of the maternal and the semiotic, the world of the mother passed down to the daughters, repressed by the symbolic, the Law of the Father. But Rigney is careful to point out that in Morrison's novel the maternal space described by Kristina and Cixous becomes ambiguous, fraught with danger as well as with desire. In her action, daughters, such as Beloved, can be the primary aggressor and there is concern with, even fear of, maternal aggression.

Rigney’s essay includes useful suggestions as to how the application of French feminist theory to African-American literature, withstanding parallels between the European postmodern notion to self and the African-American condition, must be flexible enough to acknowledge ways in which Western ideas of self and other are descended. She illustrates this with reference to three areas: the way names are allied to a culture and history rather than to individual personalities; the ambiguity
of matriarchal power; and the forging of characters with the identity of the community as a whole or with the concept of blackness.

Several subsequent French feminist approaches have developed Rigney's reflections on the difficulties of applying white feminist philosophy to black writers. Katherine Payant, who takes up Rigney's argument that Morrison's fiction includes the linguistic disorder, which is truly feminine, distinguishes Morrison from white feminists and black feminists such as Alice Walker (writers who feel themselves committed to the survival of the black people, male and female. While white male power is often given short shrift by white feminist writers, the uneasy alliance between black men and black women is a recurring subject in Morrison's action because of their common experience of white oppression. The abuse by black men is explained, if not excused, in Morrison's work by the way they have been emotionally and sexually crippled by institutionalised racialism. As Payant also points out, Morrison is more willing than many white feminist writers, to acknowledge wrongdoing by women.

In Linden Peach’s New Casebooks (1998), Madhu Dubey in her essay No Bottom and No Top; Oppositions in Sula, argues that the black feminine difference from the Black Aesthetic is at the heart of Sula. Like Rigney's essay, Dubey's is an extract from a book-length study, Black
Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic. Dubey employs feminist and deconstructionist criticism within a historical cultural frame-work. Sula is seen as challenging the binary oppositions that constitute Black Aesthetic discourse. It is argued that the novel employs a black feminist perspective to undo the masculinised bias of nationalist ideology. Sula is seen as rejecting the black nationalist view of the male as the prime victim of racialism - a role which assigns women a secondary role as healer of the black man's damaged masculinity - and in its critique of heterosexuality rejects one of the key principles of black aesthetic discourse to depict male-female relationships as complementary unions. While recognising that aspects of the novel, such as the victimisation of women within the roles society allow them and the depiction of black men, invite a feminist reading. Dubey argues that Sula plays feminism and Black Nationalism against each other. The notion of unresolved contradiction is proposed as the central designing principle of the novel, suggesting that even though it undermines hierarchical binary structuring by refusing to valorise any one term, it is complicit in the structural dualities of Black Nationalist discourse.

Concerned with the unconscious mind, Freud's theories brought about a paradigmatic shift in Western concepts of the self and identity. His model of the psyche emphasizes duality and repression. The rational,
conscious mind (the Ego) which interacts with the world outside itself and is associated with order is envisaged as repressing the irrational, passion unconscious (the ‘id’). Although there is a third element (the ‘superegos’) concerned with moral judgments where parental influence in particular is contained, it is part of the ego and in many cases is indistinguishable from it. Even though much of Freud's work is contentious and is privileged on the authority of the phallus as master signifier, many of his basic concepts such as the ego, complexes, sexual repression, wish-fulfilment, secret desire, however much they have been challenged and revised, often occur in our thinking and criticism.

The notion of the mind as divided between a rational and irrational part may not have begun with Freud, but psychoanalytic criticism of literature undoubtedly did. He saw literature as expressing the unconscious desires of its authors and although this characterized psychoanalytic criticism in the first half of twentieth century, contemporary psychoanalytic criticism has shifted the focus from the neuroses of the author and the psychoanalysis of characters to a concentration on the text.

The assumptions are that repressed wish fulfilment, psychic conflict, dream and fantasy, for example, are sufficiently universal that they can
be written into the text in such a way that we will be aroused by them, will identify with them or at the very least become interested in them.

Much feminist psychoanalysis is a critique or revision of Freudian paralysis or a reaction against it. According to Freud, the child is fused with the mother in what he calls the pre-oedipal stage. However, it is in the oedipal stage when the child re-enacts the desires ex- in the Oedipus myth that the child acquires its gender identity. At this stage, the child identifies with the father - a process by which' the female accepts castration and a sense of lack because she is unable to identify fully with the father, and the male child, identifying with the father, fears castration. According to much feminist psychoanalysis the construction of female identity occurs through the mother-daughter relationship within the pre-Oedipal stage, the importance of which Freud neglected. The first Psychoanalyst to argue for greater understanding of women's relationship with the mother was Melanie Klein in her articulation of what she described as object relations theory. According to object relations theory, an infant’s identity is constructed through a process of projection and introjections learned at the mother's breast. Emotions are projected on the breasts, which are then interjected back into the infant's psyche. For example, different emotions are associated with the offered and the withdrawn breast. The infant thus learns to project emotions on external
objects, including people, with which it comes into contact. They then become phantasm objects. These ‘imago’, as they are called, are then interjected back into the infant's psyche.

In Linden Peach’s New Casebooks (1998), we come across Houston A. Baker’s essay, which is a short but pithy extract from his book, *Workings of the Spirit: The Poetics of Afro-American women’s writing* (1991). In employing a Freudian psychoanalytic framework to discuss the significance of a particular scene in *hula*, he demonstrates how Freudian psychoanalytic criticism has shifted from what Freud himself envisaged as psychoanalytic criticism - a concern with the author's neuroses - to a preoccupation with dream, psychic conflict and repressed wish fulfilment in the text. While Baker focuses initially on Sula and Nell’s relationship with the phallus and the Law of the Father, his essay soon assumes a broader theoretical base, exemplifying the difficulties of approaching texts from a traditional psychoanalytic African-American perspective.

In Jennifer FitzGerald's essay (1993), *Selfhood and Community: Psychoanalysis and Discourse in Beloved*, extracted from *Modern Fiction Studies* (1993), too, is a psychoanalytic reading of a Morrison novel, Beloved, which criticizes psychoanalytic criticism for having isolated psychic experience from the diversities of ethnicity and class.
Psychoanalytic theory is based on a particular bourgeois model of family life - the nuclear family - that developed in the wake of the industrial revolution. The difficulty of approaching Toni Morrison's work through a classic psychoanalytic model was first suggested by Behrman’s study of the grotesque in the work of Morrison and Gayl Jones. In their work, Behrman argued, absurd distortions are employed to reach readers beneath the usual level of consciousness in order that they might become more aware of the non-rational nature of social values and norms, which lead to schizophrenia, incest and murder. FitzGerald's essay is a considerable advance on Behrman’s work; its psychoanalytic method is clearly stated from the outset and is applied within a carefully conceived framework. She reads the novel through various discourses, including pre-oedipal discourse of object relations psychoanalysis (especially in relation Beloved’s obsession with Seth), slavery, the good mother, masculinity, and black solidarity.

FitzGerald's essay was written before she had the opportunity to read Barbara Schapiro's psychoanalytic reading of Beloved, offered without FitzGerald's reservations about the appropriateness of European psychoanalytic theory to African-American writing. Schapiro extends the pre-oedipal psychoanalytic model in interesting ways by drawing on Jessica Benjamin's *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and
the *Problem of Domination* (1988). Benjamin modifies object relations theory to form what she calls intersubjective theory as a complement to intrapsychic theory. She maintains Klein's emphasis on primary relationships in self-development, but argues that the self develops through relations. Schapiro’s essay is particularly useful follow up reading to FitzGerald’s essay discussing how Beloved explores the intersubjective and intrapsychic effects of growing up as black in an environment where intersubjectivity is severely curtailed. Benjamin’s location of domination in the breakdown of the boundaries which maintain the atonement of self and other is especially appropriate to the psychoanalysis of white racialism and intraracialism among black people.

FitzGerald’s essay offers a more specifically Kleinian reading of Beloved than Schapiro’s paper. For example, Schapiro argues that the mother is made incapable of recognizing the child, and the child cannot desire for recognise the mother… In the case of Beloved, the intense desire for recognition evolves into enraged narcissistic omnipotence and a terrifying tyrannical domination. She sees the infantile range in the novel as a form of frustrated murderous love. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, argues that Beloved’s excessive dependence corresponds to the symbiosis of mother and infant, which Klein describes. While Schapiro argues that the intense neediness of the infant’s own love becomes
dangerous when it fails to receive the affirmation it claims, FitzGerald’s emphasis upon Beloved’s ambivalent feelings, which is closer to the letter of Kalinin theory. In Kalinin theory the infant has from the beginning of post-natal life a relation to the mother (although focusing primarily on her breast) and is imbued with the fundamental elements of a object relation i.e. love, hatred, fantasies, anxieties and defences. Klein’s thesis that the infant copes with internal conflicts by directing feelings of gratification toward a proffered breast and of frustration toward a withdrawn breast, provides the basis for FitzGerald’s reading of the way Beloved projects emotions on Sethe and the woman on the ship, …. split into “good” feelings, such as love (when each woman is idealised) and “bad” feelings (when she believes each has abandoned her).

FitzGerald’s essay offers a number of interesting contrasts with some of those we have already considered. It places more emphasis than Ringed, for example, on the fact that mothering is not a private act, independent of the economic, political or social conditions, which affect the circumstances of parenting. Her reliance on object relations theory – that the psyche is constructed within a wider system of relations than parent-child – inevitably provides a different perspective, too, on how social, cultural and political forces become internalized from Cynthia
Davis’s sociological reading of Morrison’s early work. Like a number of the writers in this selection, FitzGerald stresses Morrison’s interest in community, but her emphasis on ‘communal mothering” offers not only an alternative to the more usual sociological or mythic readings of community, but a challenge to the individualism and autonomy privileged by classical psychoanalysis. Identity, FitzGerald argues, is not constructed within the narrow confines of the hegemonic nuclear family but in relation to the whole community.

FitzGerald's essay, then, takes us beyond the idea of split identity in the self to the way in which Beloved dramatizes a larger, more powerful sense of a schism in the black community as a whole created by the impact upon its needs and desires of a particular historicized context. Such a movement is an important development in the psychoanalytic discussion of African-American literature. It is a further example of how the application of even different psychoanalytic approaches to black writing, as in Baker's and FitzGerald's essays, inevitably involves the critic in a questioning of the specific historical contexts in which classic, psychoanalytic theory developed.
1.9. CONCLUSION

In this preliminary chapter, we discussed the objectives, scope, significance and limitations of the study. Further, we had a look into the outline of the thesis, the methodology and a brief view regarding feminism and black feminism in particular.

The chapter also included a review of related literature and finally, discussed the essential details of the literary life of Toni Morrison and her literary works.

In the following chapter, we will go through Toni Morrison’s first novel *The Bluest Eye*. This chapter brings into focus the feminist features of the novel.