A first reading of Morrison’s fiction makes it clear that her depiction of mother-child relationship and especially the mother-daughter relationship is seriously disturbing and unconventional. The mothers in her fiction either resort to acts of violence or reject and abandon their children to survive unloved and unmothered in a racist and sexist society. As a reader, it becomes difficult to decipher the coded meaning of their love, which is articulated through distorted expressions. A critical reading of these novels also suggests that a study of the Eurocentric ideologies of motherhood is not sufficient for an appropriate analysis of Morrison’s concept of motherhood because these texts need to be understood against a distinct socio-cultural background.

By late eighties and mid-nineties, contemporary feminist thinkers challenged the views of the earlier feminists who linked the institution of motherhood with the idea of women’s oppression. Many contemporary thinkers also formulated new theories which associated the mother-daughter relationship with female empowerment. This critical paradigm is relevant as it also throws light on Morrison’s idea of the significance of motherline in her novels. Patricia Bell Scott’s edited anthology *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*, Patricia Hill Collins’ *Black Feminist Thought* and Andrea O’Reilley’s *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* made the task of finding answers to the questions concerning black motherhood a little easy. Along with these collections, many short stories, poems, autobiographical narratives and songs written by black women also helped with useful information and study material for this research on black motherhood by providing deep insights into the inner life of these women in their roles as mother and daughter.

Turning back to the real purpose of a preface, I would like to mention that this thesis is the result of a research carried out to comprehend and explore Morrison as a maternal theorist who acknowledges the significance of black motherhood through her characters who celebrate their real powers as mothers in their life. The first chapter introduces the trauma theory and details the impact of trauma on varied spheres of black slave women’s lives as individuals and particularly as mothers. The chapter further makes a comparison between white and black motherhood on the
basis of old and contemporary theories laid down by eminent feminist thinkers like bell hooks, Nancy Chodorow, Sara Ruddick and Patricia Bell Scott. It also constructs a strong background to understand the roles and functions of black mothers who find it difficult to exercise their basic maternal rights in a hostile society that renders it impossible for them to experience the bliss of maternity.

The next four chapters are individually devoted to a thorough critical exploration of Morrison’s four novels- *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved*, *Sula* and *A Mercy*- establishing her as a radical writer who philosophizes, redefines and reconfigures the issues of African-American women’s freedom in America. In doing so, she evolves as a voice that instructs on many other important concerns such as those of race and gender through startling representations of the relationship between individual and society. All the four chapters read the mother-daughter relation in the novels either as a form of empowerment or try to relate it to the issue of well-being of these women, that is either achieved or lost in their connections and disconnections with their ancestral motherline. The last chapter recognizes the power of black motherhood that finds its difficult articulation after many political and socio-cultural obstacles, yet affirms the novelist’s vision celebrating black womanhood through black motherhood.