

The Lesbian Continuum and Trauma as Expressed by Toni Morrison's *Sula*

African American women are poorly attributed in literature as they are representative of two western minority subdivisions: race and gender. Partnering those differences with the formulated intimacy that is seemingly resultant of locked-in familiarity, relationships lacking sexual concourse and representative of platonic boundaries are formed, making this demographic one of the least addressed literary elements of our time. That is not to say that literature that espouses black female-female relationships doesn't exist, but rather that it receives little recognition. In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, the close relationship between Nel and Sula represents the African American subdivision of the lesbian continuum ideal that was first identified and written about exhaustively by Adrienne Rich in *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. Of similar substance, Barbara Smith's *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism* includes *Sula* as representation of her claims of the existence of a comprehensive bond and relationship that often forms between black females. Nel and Sula, both come from exclusively trauma-laden backgrounds and experience the devastating effects of a shared, harrowing experience that grows with them into adulthood and, contrary to Smith's prose, represent a relationship of intimacy formulated by trauma resultant of their subculture, as opposed to a relationship contrived wholly of this grouping and its effects. *Sula* should be read as an expressional adaptation of the African American female bonds that form from traumas specific to the societal implications of the gender and race of African American women and its relation to the lesbian continuum.