UDK: 821.111(73).09-31
Izvorni znanstveni članak
Primljeno: 3.9.2016.

Gordan Matas
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost
Sveučilište u Splitu
Filozofski fakultet
HR-21000 Split, Sinjska2
gmatas@ffst.hr

ASPECTS OF FRIENDLY LOVE IN TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE* AND *SULA*

Abstract

This work analyzes the concept of love among African American female friends. Their 'friendly' love, i.e. the strong emotional connection of female characters in both novels by Toni Morrison, was depicted as a necessary means in overcoming the racism and sexism that African American women were exposed to. Such friendships became a means of self-realization and emancipation for African American women who were subjected to repression both by white and black men.

Key words: African Americans, love, community, United States, racism, women.

The concept of friendly love i.e. love between two black female friends, features prominently in several novels by Toni Morrison. The author explored friendly love thoroughly in *The Bluest Eye,* and *Sula.* In *The Bluest Eye,* the concept of friendly love revolves around the protagonist Pecola Breedlove and her best friend Claudia MacTeer. These two characters are more developed than any other character in the novel. Claudia tells the story of when Pecola was twelve, Claudia was nine, and her sister Frieda was ten years old. The whole novel deals with the building and destruction of Pecola's personality as seen through the eyes of her friend Claudia. The novel opens with two prologues. In the first prologue, the omniscient narrator presents the gradual destruction of Pecola Breedlove by showing how a well-known story appears to her three times and how it reflects Pecola's decline and insanity. The famous story is a primer about Mother and Father and their three children, Dick, Jane, and Sally. The first version of the story is rather conventional – it uses standard punctuation and spaces. The second version uses much smaller spaces between the words and omits both capital letters and punctuation, so that the sentences run together. The third version of the story not only runs the sentences together but also the words. Consequently, the breakdown of order in the language of the story suggests the breakdown of order in Pecola's mind. Also, various parts of the third version of the story reappear throughout the novel to highlight the contrast between Pecola's family experiences and those of the primer's idealized white family. The second prologue is told by Pecola's best friend Claudia MacTeer. Claudia introduces the reader to Pecola's state of mind and her fate, suggesting that Pecola's tragedy corresponds to an interruption of nature's cycle. Claiming that the *why* of Pecola's tragedy is hard to deal with, Claudia starts telling only *how* it occurred. In this way, Morrison again provides empty spaces for her readers to participate in and to find the why in the how. The developments of the novel are told by two alternating narrators, the omniscient narrator and Claudia. The omniscient narrator also informs us that Pecola has invented an imaginary friend, since she was driven to insanity by her unmet need for love. Four sections of the novel, "Autumn, "Winter," "Spring," and "Summer," each provide material about Pecola and Claudia.

The narrative structure of the novel pushes the reader into Pecola's position, yet our inability to identify completely with Pecola leaves us feeling "winged but grounded" (Morrison 1994[a]: 158). Pecola's madness and silence as well as a complete lack of understanding of her position distance her from the reader. Since the novel does not provide a definitive reading of Pecola's story, we cannot position ourselves above her suffering. Morrison seems to suggest that we cannot even comprehend the horrors of Pecola's life. Claudia, however, offers her interpretation at the very end of the novel: "We are wrong, of course, but it doesn't matter. It's too late" (Morrison 1994[a]: 160). Therefore, Claudia leaves us with a sense of an inadequate reading of the novel and an inadequate understanding of Pecola's suffering. Eventually, Pecola lapses into a madness that places her outside the interpretative reach of both the reader and the narrators. In refusing to contain Pecola's suffering, the novel's use of the victim stereotype powerfully communicates to the reader the impossible subject position occupied by Pecola (cf. Terada). Instead of mobilizing the reader to political action, the grotesque presentation of Pecola's character refuses to draw any ideological lessons and thus produces a sense of inability in the reader and therefore the grotesque is the most appropriate mode for exploring the contradictory conditions of black feminine subjectivity (Thompson 1972: 57). Grotesque characters, marked as they are by a bodily lack of deformation, offer the perfect means of figuring the

qualities historically attached to black femininity.

"The Autumn" section might be the most significant part as it contrasts the MacTeer and the Breedlove households. The contrast between the two families is further highlighted when Pecola stays with Claudia's family for a few days. During that period of time, we see all the differences between the unsupportive and abusive Breedloves and the caring and protective MacTeers in the treatment of their children. Even though Morrison contrasts the two girls' childhoods and families, it does not make them into opposites.

The role of Claudia in telling the story is important as it not only conveys the necessary information about Pecola's and her own family and community, but it also informs us about the mores of the time. One of the most important pieces of information that he hears from Claudia is that the African American community as a whole shares a racist attitude towards other black members of the community who happened to have darker skin than theirs. "Winter" presents the black community's internationalization of white racist standards and their effects on Pecola. Claudia informs us about the community's idolatry of Maureen Peal, a light-skinned girl who is favored just because of the lighter shade of her skin. In "Spring" Claudia recounts the horrible events leading to Pecola's insanity. Although the community condemns Cholly, Pecola's father, for raping his twelve-year-old daughter, they also ostracize her, stating that she also must be guilty in some way.

The black women characters in the novel are constructed around bodily deformity or a lack, such as Pecola's lack of blue eyes, or Pauline's missing teeth and deformed foot. Such a presentation of black femininity as a lack marks the novel's departure from the Black Aesthetic concept of a black subject as a self-present plenitude. According to this presentation Pecola's story can be read as a frightening amplification of the black woman's absence from the categories of both 'man' and 'woman', since she lacks not only a phallus, but also the blue eyes that signify femininity. Aware of her inadequacy as an object of desire Pecola wonders: "How do you get someone to love you?" (Morrison 1994[a]: 21). Unable to see herself as a desirable object, Pecola tries to imagine herself as the subject of desire, but she fails to achieve that. In order to overcome this feeling of lack and absence Pecola turns to fantasy, which includes eating and identifying with Mary Jane candies: "To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, to eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane. Three pennies had bought her three lovely orgasms with Mary Jane" (Morrison 1994[a]: 43). It is obvious that Pecola is confusing buying with becoming, the signifier with the signified, and because of that Pecola is able to grasp black femininity only by means of a hysterical collapse of desiring subject into the object of desire. Commenting on Pecola's desire for blue eyes, Claudia is also trying to answer the question that troubles her: "What did we lack?" (Morrison 1994[a]: 62). Throughout the novel Morrison shows how it is important to provide the appropriate role models for black girls and women, and these are not white role models. Claudia partially succeeds in resisting the ideal of feminine desire that white middle-class society imposes on black girls and women and although "all the world had decided that a blue-eyed, golden-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured," Claudia has only one desire, to "dismember" the doll (Morrison 1994[a]: 20). Claudia manages to deconstruct her society's codes of desire, but she is not able to practice a desire that exceeds these codes. She transfers her hatred of white dolls to white girls and thus becomes a participant in the white middle-class objectification of femininity. Being part of the culture that privileges Mary Jane and Shirley Temple, a black woman's desire

is limited "from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred to fraudulent love" (Morrison 1994[a]: 22). Each expression of black feminine desire, whether Pecola's longing for blue eyes, Frieda's love of Shirley Temple, Claudia's hatred of white dolls, Maureen's adoration of Betty Grable, takes the white woman as its object. Also, the very title of the novel establishes the white woman rather than the black man as the other against which the black woman is judged to be lacking. This emphasis, like the structural emphasis on the Dick and Jane primer, presents the complex and simultaneous interaction of racial and gender dynamics in the formation of black feminine subjectivity. The novel's portrayal of black feminine identity thus discloses the destructive power of the white cultural construction of blackness as absence (cf. Napier). With the help of the thematic selection and structure, the novel shows how black femininity is produced and read as a sign of invisibility in the white American symbolic system. The scene in which Pecola goes to the candy store dramatizes the Western construction of black femininity as a sign of absence. The white storekeeper, Mr. Yakobowski, does not see Pecola "because for him there is nothing to see" (Morrison 1994[a]: 42). His attitude towards black women is obviously informed by white racist standards which contribute to the 'invisibility' of black femininity: "At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. How can a fifty-two-year-old white immigrant store-keeper with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth . . . *see* a little black girl" (Morrison 1994[a]: 42).

Therefore, Pecola is observed as a sign that is easily read and dismissed not only by Mr. Yakobowski, but also by other black characters who have internalized white middle-class values and construed emotions. Mr. Yakobowski's denial of her presence is just one in a row of similar events: "Nothing in his life even suggested that the feat was possible, not to say desirable or necessary" (Morrison 1994[a]: 42). Furthermore, Pecola experiences similar treatment from a number of black characters: Geraldine dismisses Pecola with a single glance because in Pecola's physical appearance she can see the symbols of everything that is considered ugly and unfavorable about being black. Therefore, Morrison's task is to constantly remind her readers that blackness and the black body is not ugly or less valuable; such standards are pure prejudice imposed upon her readers by dominating white racist standards. Furthermore, Morrison shows how the ugliness of the entire Pecola family is bestowed on them by white culture: "It was as though some mysterious, all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had accepted it without question" (Morrison 1994[a]: 34). Morrison's first novel, as well as her other novels, gives a critique of the white cultural definitions of blackness, which is in keeping with the black Aesthetic program. Morrison's intention is in line with Black Aesthetic theorists who believe that it is their role to overturn the Western construction of blackness as absence and also to replace it with a new, positive construction of blackness. With the help of friendly love, Claudia is one of a few women in the novel who manage to resist the white construction of the black woman's body as unworthy: "We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses relayed to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness" (Morrison 1994[a]: 62).

The novel uses the seasonal cycle as an organizing device in support of alternative black femininity. The novel's division into four sections corresponds with the natural cycle of four seasons. However, the natural cycles seem to be opposed to culture, thus indicating that (white) culture is in discrepancy with nature. From the very beginning of the novel we notice this opposition, as Claudia introduces us to Pecola's

problem: "It was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not sprout" (Morrison 1994[a]: 9). The opposition between the natural realm and the human realm is continued in the novel as we learn that Pecola's budding sexuality awakens not in spring but in autumn. Similarly, "Summer" begins with Claudia saying; "I have only to break into the tightness of a strawberry and I see summer" (Morrison 1994[a]: 146). Such an opposition of nature and human distortion illustrates the novel's presentation of culture as a distortion of the natural order. Barbara Christian, in her discussion of the nature/culture problematic in the novel, writes that the novel's structure is "cyclical as nature, [and] defies linear analysis." Furthermore, Christian contrasts the cyclic form of the novel, sanctioned by the seasonal cycle, with the linear "march of words epitomized by the Dick and Jane prose" (Christian 1980: 144-145). The linear progression of growth and development is disrupted since Pecola finds it impossible to gain access to her society's model of femininity. The novel's ironic evocation of the bildungsroman reveals its inability to structure the story of a black girl's sexual maturation. Where the bildungsroman failed, the inverted seasonal cycle was instrumental. The story of Pecola and her life that involves rape and her dead baby is better charted by the inverted seasonal cycle which begins with autumn and ends with summer. Several critics have commented on the novel's seasonal framework as a means of affirming a mythical vision of nature that opposes the artificiality of white middle-class culture. Barbara Christian argues that the seasons "reinforce the mythic quality of life" (Christian 1980: 143), presenting time as a "unified entity" rather than a linear chronology (Christian 1985:57). Christian's argument resembles Bonnie Barthold's description of cyclic form as a means of achieving a mythic vision of temporal continuity. According to Barthold, a mythicized representation of black femininity usually involves a celebration of procreation, which ensures the continuity of the temporal cycle of nature (Barthold 1981: 100).

The novel begins with Pecola's entry into the procreative cycle and when she first begins menstruating, her friend Frieda informs her that she can now have a baby. Her reproductive capacity does not help her to sustain the continuity of a natural cycle. We have already witnessed the disjunction and illogicality between the movement of Pecola's story and the movement of the natural cycles: Pecola begins menstruating in autumn, is raped in spring, and gives birth to a stillborn baby in summer! Also, nowhere in the novel are black women celebrated as biological embodiments of the natural continuum; rather, the reproductive function of the black women characters constantly goes wrong. The examples include Pauline's rejection of her own daughter Pecola in favor of her mistress's daughter, or Geraldine's transference of maternal love from her son to her cat. Therefore, the novel's treatment of reproduction demands to be read *against* a mythical vision of femininity as a source of natural renewal. Also, the novel questions a mythical vision of nature not only because such a vision equates the feminine with procreation, but also because it tends to *dehistoricize political oppression.* Before she has internalized her community's naturalistic world view, Claudia attempts to direct the course of natural and human events. That is why she plants marigold seeds, hoping that if they sprout, Pecola's baby will stay alive. However, the failure of her attempt proves to her that: "[t]he Earth itself might have been unyielding. We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his plot of black dirt. Our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair" (Morrison 1994[a]: 9). The disturbing comparison of a child planting seeds to a father raping his daughter gives

rise to the despairing sense that no human agency has value, that all human acts are powerless against the unyielding course of nature.

At the end of the novel, Claudia's voice, enlarged from "I" to "we", speaks for her entire community: "The soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live. We are wrong, of course, but it doesn't matter. It's too late (Morrison 1994[a]: 160). In viewing Pecola's tragedy as an irreversible fact of nature, the black community is able to find an excuse for inaction. Claudia is aware of Pecola's innocence and loves her unconditionally; therefore, she questions the black community's mythical naturalization of oppression, but she does not conceive an alternative notion of human action that can resist fatalism. As she concludes, "it is too late" (Morrison 1994[a]: 160), this sort of pessimistic vision excludes the novel from the positive tradition that Black Aesthetic theorists wanted to achieve. Throughout the novel we can notice that a notion is present in the novel's critique of black folk values which sharply departs from Black Aesthetic ideology that demanded literary affirmation of the black community's power to challenge white middle-class ideology. The black community in the novel lacks the means to oppose racial oppression that mars their everyday life. Not even their folk rituals, which they use as a means of resistance, can bring any resolve to their problems. Therefore, they are ready to sacrifice Pecola in a ritual that will help purge the community's self-hatred and the negative image of themselves that they contain. It seems that the community's sense of self-worth depends on their construction of Pecola as a scapegoat: "All of us – all who knew her – felt wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness" (Morrison 1994[a]: 159). The only one who provided love and understanding to Pecola were her two friends: Claudia and Frieda. However, being children they were incapable of providing a safe haven for Pecola. Their opponents, including the white and black racist community, prejudices and internationalized racism, were too strong for them to overcome in their quest to help Pecola.

In *Sula,* Morrison depicts the growth and development of the female characters – the most prominent female characters being Sula Peace and Nel Wright. The novel also examines female identity and female friendship. *Sula* portrays the friendship of Nel Wright and Sula Peace in the context of their community, a town called the Bottom. The Bottom was an all-black settlement in the hills above Medallion, Ohio, until it was bulldozed for a golf course. *Sula* begins with a wide focus. The novel starts by telling us of the death of a neighborhood child and then we learn of the origin of the place and the social conditions such as slavery and racism that still affect the settlement. At the same time we are introduced to the friendship between Sula and Nel who provide one another with support crucial to establishing and maintaining their identities in somewhat hostile contexts. The friendship between Sula and Nel is affected by their attitudes toward the traditional role for women. This role included a particular emphasis on motherhood. Also, very often in the novel Morrison presents how women use motherhood as an excuse for not facing their own feelings. Sula Peace is the central character and the driving force of the novel who affects every other character in the novel. From an early age, she forms an unbreakable attachment to Nel Wright but loses her faith that others can be trusted when she overhears that her mother, Hanna, does not like her at all. Later, Sula watches her mother burn to death, with no feelings for her. The only emotional connection that Sula manages to establish in her life is the friendship with Nel. Sula is radically different from the

other female characters of the novel, particularly because she does not care about motherhood, family and enjoys sexual relationships with numerous partners, both black and white.

Through most of the novel Sula maintains a far more radical stance against heterosexuality. Her frequent heterosexual encounters convince her that a lover can never be a friend (Morrison 1994[b]: 121). Nevertheless, a close analysis of Sula's experience of sexual intercourses reveals an irreducibly contradictory sequence of responses. Although she does not seem to invest a lot of emotions in her heterosexual relationships, sexuality is extremely important to her as it is the "only place where she could find what she was looking for" (Morrison 1994[b]: 121). Such a statement confuses the readers even more when we know that Sula stated earlier that she is looking for the "other half of her equation" (Morrison 1994[b]: 121) and that this desire is not satisfied by her male lovers. Just the opposite, the orgasms with men make Sula aware of a profound loneliness in which she fuses not with her male lovers but with herself (Morrison 1994[b]: 123). Although sex does not fuse Sula with her male lovers, it does provide her only means of achieving a strong, centered self: "particles of strength gathered in her like steel shavings drawn to a spacious center, forming a tight cluster that nothing, it seemed, could break" (Morrison 1994[b]: 123). This cluster eventually falls apart, reinforcing her sense of solitude. Every moment of this sequence undoes the previous moment, oscillating between two contradictory perceptions of heterosexuality as the most meaningful and the most disappointing experience in Sula's quest for self.

Barbara Smith uses this scene in her reading of *Sula* as "an exceedingly lesbian novel" (Smith 1977: 170). Her reading disregards all the parts that present heterosexual intercourses as the medium of Sula's encounter with herself. Another problem with Smith's reading is not that a lesbian analysis of *Sula* is reductive, as Susan Willis (Willis 1985: 232) and Deborah McDowell (McDowell 1985: 186) argued, but the fact that Smith does not clearly define her use of the term lesbian novel. Smith states that *Sula* "works as a lesbian novel not only because of the passionate friendship between Nel and Sula, but because of Morrison's consistently critical stance toward the heterosexual institutions of male/female relationships, marriage and the family" (Smith 1982: 166). Her definition does not clarify the difference between a feminist and a lesbian critique of heterosexuality. Nonetheless, Smith's essay does help to account for the novel's ambivalent treatment of Nel and Sula's relationship and friendly love. When Morrison published *Sula* in 1974, no novel considered important to the American literary tradition of fiction had explored the concept of friendly love, i.e. a life-long emotional attachment between two women friends. Nel and Sula's friendship constitute the novel's strongest challenge to Black Aesthetic discourse which described this as one of the functions of black women writers - to depict black male-female relationships as necessary. Although Sula initially finds a man to satisfy her "craving for the other half of her equation" (Morrison 1994[b]: 121), it is eventually a woman, Nel, who seems to be Sula's object of desire, being: "the closest thing to both and other and a self" (Morrison 1994[b]: 119). Nel sees herself as a fairy-tale heroine, waiting for a prince. Contrary to her, Sula occupies the masculine place, imagining herself as a prince on a horse.

Feminist readings of *Sula* indicate that Sula's characterization seems discontinuous from earlier representations of women in fiction. Most of these readings disregard Sula's romance with Ajax (especially the fact that Ajax's desertion of Sula makes her aware that there are no more new experiences to her, which leads to her death), for

it seems to diminish the novel's presentation of Sula as the symbol of a new black femininity. What feminists like to point out, however, is Sula's unconventional ending as exemplified by Sula herself: "I know what every black woman in this country is doing. Dying. Just like me. But the difference is, they dying like a stump. Me, I am going down like one of those redwoods" (Morrison 1994[b]: 143).

Roseann Bell commented on this new black femininity that was portrayed in *Sula*: "It should not be surprising that *Sula* is regarded as an important statement in contemporary discussions on the Black Aesthetic," for Sula's character "suggests a positive way of freeing our fettered minds from the oppressive tentacles of a past which . . . prevents us from progressing and projecting a new vision" (Bell 1976: 95). Bell also claims that the newness of Sula's character cannot be fully appreciated without reference to Black Aesthetic theories of the radical black subject. It has to be said also that the 'newness' of Sula is not fully readable within an exclusive nationalist or feminist framework. Instead, it seems to display the novel's appropriation of both ideologies. While Sula rejects the old image of blacks as victims and looks for a new identity free of the past racial oppression, she perceives the present moment as full of possibility, thus challenging the communal static vision of the past.

The representation of Sula's self as temporally discontinuous also places Sula within an alternative fictional rhetoric of the grotesque. The grotesque mode in the novel contains transgressive and creative possibilities. Mary Russo discusses the concept in her essay "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory": "The grotesque body is . . . the body of becoming, process and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism" (Russo 1986: 219). Due to Sula's identity and bodily indeterminacy, we can read her character within the Bakhtinian articulation of the grotesque as a fictional mode that opposes the centered, closed, static individuality of classic realist fiction.

Through the relationship between Sula and Nel, the novel fuses their opposing values of presence and community with absence and individuality. The final fusion of these elements is presented at the end of the novel: "All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude." And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. "We was girls together," she said as though explaining something. : 'O Lord, Sula,' she cried, 'girl, girl, girlgirlgirl' " (Morrison 1994[b]: 174).

The reunion of Nel and Sula suggests a resolution of the novel's thematic contradictions. Nel's final sentence is described as "a fine cry" that has "no bottom and no top, just circles and circles of sorrow" (Morrison 1994[b]: 174). The image of a circle symbolizes a circular return to the beginning of the novel. The final statement that Nel's cry has no top or bottom recalls the beginning of the novel that recounts the nigger joke of the Bottom on top of a hill. Also, Nel's cry circles back to her girlhood with Sula presented at the beginning of the novel. The circular return to childhood, which produces a new understanding of the events, highlights the structure of the entire novel. In that respect, the novel is misleading as it creates the impression that it follows the linear chronology. However, as Barbara Christian has stated, each of these years is "the focus of intertwining circles of other times, other events" (Christian 1980: 155). Together with its temporal amalgamation, the novel's structure also presents an interplay of individuality and community, absence and presence. What is important to point out here is that the novel is structured around events that create an absence of meaning in the text that is later open for different

interpretations. The novel's construction of meaning is presented not only as a dialectic of absence and presence, but also as a collective effort that involves readers, characters and a narrator. This procedure is in line with Morrison's idea of providing empty spaces for her readers to fill out and thus construct meaning for themselves: "My language has to have holes and spaces so the reader can come into it" (Christian 1984: 125). Consequently, the structural absences that are meant to be filled by competing interpretations throw the text open to collective production. Furthermore, the collective construction of meaning in the novel is clearly contrasted with the transmission of meaning that the novel attributes to predominantly white American culture. Using the concept of the nigger joke, Morrison illustrates the slave owner's monopoly of meaning. Because of this, the master possesses the right to assign values in a dualistic and hierarchical concept that reinforces his own politically privileged position. Past and present as well as individuality and community are all present in *Sula.* In that respect, the novel shows that it relies on the binary structuring of Black Nationalist discourse. The novel's central pair, Nel and Sula, also reflect the Black Nationalist opposition of community and individuality, past and present, while they unhinge the opposition of black feminist nationalist and white ideology.

Black feminist literary theory proceeds from the assumption that black women experience a unique form of oppression in discursive and nondiscursive practices alike because they are victims of sexism, racism and by extension classism. However, as Elizabeth V. Spelman and Barbara Smith demonstrate separately, one oversimplifies by saying merely that black women experience sexism and racism: "For too say merely *that,* suggest that black women experience one form of oppression, as blacks – the same thing black men experience – and that they experience another form of oppression, as women – the same thing white women experience" (Spelman 1979: 42). Such an approach erases the specificity of black women's experience, constituting her as the point of intersection between black men's and white women's experience. As an alternative to this position, black feminist theorists argue that the meaning of blackness in this country profoundly shapes the experience of gender, just as the conditions of womanhood affect the experience of race. Since the conditions of black women's oppression are so specific and complex, black feminist literary theorists seek particularized methodologies that might reveal the ways in which that oppression is represented in literary texts. These methods are necessarily flexible, holding in balance the three variables of race, gender, and class and destabilizing the centrality of any one. They also call into question a variety of standards of evaluation that mainstream feminist theory might naturalize. Also, black feminist critics demonstrate that the meaning of political action, affection, work etc, varies depending on the material circumstances that surround and define one's point of reference. Generally speaking, black feminist literary theory can be defined more broadly by arguing that it seeks to explore representations of black women's lives through techniques of analysis that suspend the variables of race and gender in a mutually interrogative relation. Traditional black feminist fiction is one theoretical conception that is tackled by black feminist theorists. Critics such as Hazel V. Carby, Dianne Sadoff and Mary Helen Washington also consider how race, class and gender affect the meaning of literary influence and the politics of literary reception of African American literature. In her essay " 'Taming All That Anger Down': Rage and Silence in Gwendolyn Brooks's *Maud Martha*" (Washington 1984: 249-262), Washington explores these three variables in their revision of the fiction of literary tradition. A similar approach to the issues of race, gender and class can be

observed in Sadoff's "Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston" (Sadoff 1985: 4-26). Washington argues that the material circumstances of black women's lives require one to develop revisionist strategies for evaluating and reading their work. Furthermore, Washington appears eager to prove that early reviewers and black critics failed to realize the significance of race and gender for both a black woman writer and a young black urban girl. Because of this failure, they trivialized Brooks and her novel. Nevertheless, contemporary reviewers were more supportive of Brooks's novel. However, even those supportive reviewers, according to Washington, failed to detect the author's repressed anger while examining the subtext of color prejudice, racial self-hatred and powerlessness that are present in every chapter of the novel. In her discussion of the historical conditions that demarcate the lives of black women in the 1940s and 1950s, Washington presents ways in which Maud's oppression resembles Brook's own marginal position within the publishing industry. In her essay, Washington also comments on Brooks's unwillingness to portray black women as heroic figures as a sign of her oppression by a racist and sexist literary establishment, which is something that Morrison clearly managed to overcome in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* in her representations of friendly love as one of the means of black women's emancipation.

References

Barthold, B. (1981). *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean and the United States.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

Bell, R. (1976).“Review of *Sula*”. *Obsidian*, 2, Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 95-105.

Christian, B. (1980). *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood.

Christian, B. (1985). *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers.* New York: Pergamon.

McDowell, D. (1985).“New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism”. In Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism* (pp. 186-198). New York: Pantheon.

Morrison, T. (1984). “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation”. In Mari Evans (ed.), *Black Women Writers 1950-1980: A Critical Evaluation* (pp. 339-346). New York: Anchor Books.

Morrison, T. (1994). *The Bluest Eye.* New York: Plume.

Morrison, T. (1994). *Sula.* New York: Plume.

Napier, W. (ed.) (2000). *African American Literary Theory: a Reader.* New York: New York University Press.

Russo, M. (1986).“Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory”. In Teresa de Laurentis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies,* (pp. 213-229). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Sadoff, D. F. (1985). “Black Matrilineage: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston”. *Signs,* 11, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 4-26.

Smith, B. (1977).“Toward a Black Feminist Criticism”. In Gloria Hull, (ed.), *But Some of Us Are Brave* (pp. 157-175). New York: Feminist Press.

Spelman, E.V. (1979). “Theories of Race and Gender: The Erasure of Black Women”. *Quest*, 5, 36-62.

Terada, R. (2001). *Feeling in Theory: Emotions After the “Death of the Subject”.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Thompson, P. (1972). *The Grotesque.* London: Methuen.

Washington, M. H. (1977). “Teaching Black-Eyed Susans: An Approach to the Study of Black Women Writers”. In Gloria Hull, (ed.), *But Some of Us Are Brave* (pp. 208-220). New York: Feminist Press.

Willis, S. (1985). “Black Women Writers: Taking a Critical Perspective”. In Coppelia Kahn Greenin (ed.), *Making a Difference* (pp. 211-237). New York: Methuen.

ASPEKTI PRIJATELJSKE LJUBAVI U ROMANIMA TONI MORRISON *THE BLUEST EYE* I *SULA*

Sažetak

Ovaj rad analizira koncept ljubavi među afroameričkim prijateljicama. Njihova 'prijateljska' ljubav, tj. jaka emotivna povezanost ženskih likova u oba romana Toni Morrison prikazana je kao neophodno sredstvo u prevladavanju rasizma i seksizma kojima su Afroamerikanke izložene. Takvo je prijateljstvo postalo sredstvo samoostvarenja i emancipacije afroameričkih žena koje su podložne represiji kako bijelih, tako i crnih muškaraca.

Ključne riječi: Afroamerikanci, ljubav, zajednica, Sjedinjene Države, rasizam, žene.