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**Historical Facts and Artistic Fiction
in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992)**

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Dedications:

This work is dedicated to

My beloved parents

Who supported me along my studies

Whose affection and encouragement

Enabled me to finish this work

My lovely brothers and sisters

My lovely aunts and friends

My friend and binomial

Sara

Fatiha

To

My lovely grand parents

My dear parents whose affection and

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My lovely brother and sister

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Abstract

The present dissertation has studied the Historical Facts and Artistic Fiction in Toni Morrison's Jazz (1992). Our major interest in this dissertation is to demonstrate the way the author resorts to historical facts in order to construct her fiction and how her literary imagination operates in recording the African American history and social issues. To achieve our purpose, we have relied on Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism, which studies any given literary work in relation to the historical context in which it is produced; it also puts emphasis on the cultural and social aspects of any historical text presented in a fictional way. We have divided our work into two chapters. The first has developed the main historical facts that Toni Morrison used in order to make a world understand the history of the Afro-Americans easily. The second one has discussed the artistic fiction in Toni Morrison's Jazz, where we examined her style of writing, the major narrative techniques she has relied on, and the important themes she tackled. We have provided a deep analysis of the main characters to shed light on the real experience and status of the African American people in the United States of America. Indeed, we have attempted to show how Toni Morrison built her fiction by using her own imagination and the way she resorts to important historical events in the history of the African American people and real facts to reflect their troubling experience in the United States of America. At the end of this dissertation, we have come to conclude that Toni Morrison resorts to real facts not only to trace or date the history of the Black Americans but also she used this kind of writing to empower the Black American people and demonstrate the worth of the Afro-American literary artistry.

Key words: Arts- Fiction- History- Real Facts- Black American.

Table of contents

Dedications.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
I. Introduction.....	1
1 - Review of the Literature.....	2
2 - Issue and Working Hypotheses.....	3
3 - Methodological Outline.....	3
Endnotes:.....	5
II. Method and Materials.....	6
1 - Method.....	6
2 - Materials.....	9
Endnotes.....	13
III. Results.....	14
IV. Discussion.....	15
Chapter One: Historical Facts in Toni Morrison’s <i>Jazz</i> (1992).....	15
1. History within the Story.....	15
2. The Most Important Historical Facts in Toni Morrison’s <i>Jazz</i>	17
Endnotes.....	31
Chapter Two: Artistic Fiction in Toni Morrison’s <i>Jazz</i> (1992).....	33
1. The Narrative Techniques Used in Toni Morrison’s <i>Jazz</i>	34
2. Analysis of the characterization in Toni Morrison’s <i>Jazz</i> (1992).....	37
3. Themes in Toni Morrison’s <i>Jazz</i>	40
Endnotes.....	50
V. Conclusion.....	53
VI. Bibliography.....	55

I. Introduction

The presence of the African Americans in the United States of America returns to many years; their history is a complex and multifaceted narrative that spans centuries and its beginning goes back to the discovery of the New World and the establishment of the thirteen colonies. It begins with the Transatlantic Slave Trade, from the 16th to the 19th century, when many 'Black' people were transported as slaves from Africa, which is their native continent to the white men's New World which is now America¹. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Afro-American people encountered the forced migration of Black individuals from Africa to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade where they were imposed to work under the laws of the White men and became slaves. They worked as servants in the crop field under the supremacy of the White people and this is affirmed by the statement of Paul Levenjo which states "more than 7, 4 million of slaves were taken across the Atlantic Ocean from 1600 to 1800"². They were brought involuntarily, kidnapped and shipped in an inhuman manner.

During the 17th and 18th centuries slavery was spread in America; it started when the first Indentured servants were brought to the British American colonies in 1619, mainly in the southern region of the country³. They were forced to work in the fields and harvests of cotton. Indeed, African slaves were victims of all sorts of violence, racism and segregation; they were seen as inferior by the white men, and have been subjected to all unimaginable horrors. Olaudah Equiano used to be a slave in the South of the United States of America. After his arrival to America in 1766, he asserts that he was convinced that "he has got into a world of bad spirits who would kill him, and when he looked around the ship, he saw large furnace or cupper boiling and a multitude of black of every description chained together, every one of their countenance expressing sorrow and dejection."⁴

African slaves tried everything to escape slavery, violence, racism, segregation and discrimination. The most adequate solution was to leave the rural South and move to the North of the country in order to evade the harsh conditions of life and hope for safety and a better life. The history of the African Americans has been the concern of many Afro-American writers, like James Baldwin, Lawrence Paul Dunbar and Toni Morrison, who attempt to describe the African American experience in the United States of America. Toni Morrison is an Afro-American writer; in her narratives, she intends to discuss

different issues concerning black people and sheds light on their struggle and desire to live a decent life in America.

This is what one can find in her sixth novel *Jazz* (1992), in fact the author tries to depict the real life, difficulties and tries to deal with their struggle and aspirations to affirm themselves as African American people who must have the same rights as the whites. Toni Morrison records the different historical facts that the “Blacks” witnessed in the United States of America in order to examine the realities of the Afro-American people.

1 - Review of the Literature

Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* received a large bulk of criticism; it has been a center of attention of many scholars. In fact, her work has been dealt with from different perspectives. For instance, Jennifer Andrews, a professor in the department of English at University of New Brunswick, Fredrektion in Canada states that: “*Jazz* is the subject of numerous, scholarly articles which explores a wide variety of topics including how Morrison uses Jazz music and its rhythms to shape her text.”⁵ Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* is a very interesting novel; it explores different themes, and Jazz music is used in a specific manner to shape the text of the narrative. Andrews asserts that “*Jazz* is Toni Morrison’s sixth novel and the second one of her great trilogy, which includes: *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992) and *Paradise* (1997), that gives description of the Afro-American history from the enslavement era onward.”⁶

Moreover, Rinaldo Walcott in his essay “Out of Kumbia: Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* and Pedagogical Answerability” relates Toni Morrison’s fiction to its European origins and compares it to Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. He claims :“if her novel *Jazz* is a rewriting of Scott Fitzgerald’s version of the Jazz Age, then this rewriting must occur by reference to a form that originated in Europe and is (in the cited instance) a product of white Americans.”⁷This is to say that if Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* is a rewriting of Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* which is a European product, as a result Morrison’s narrative would be originated in Europe too. In this

critique, the idea is that, since Toni Morrison's *Jazz* is a copy of Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and the latter is a European product, so automatically *Jazz* will be a European product too but written by an African American author.

Finally, John Galm believes that: "*Jazz* develops 'a call and response' technique that resembles a conversation, as well as Jazz music is important basis in the black tradition."⁸ The same point of view is shared by Anne Marry PaquetDeyris who states that: "[...] a call and response aspect is found in the narrative of *Jazz* because Jazz music is deeply woven into the themes of the novel."⁹ So, it is clear from the two last critics that Toni Morrison uses the same structure of Jazz music, "call and response", to build her fiction and intends to make reference to the importance of Jazz music in African American culture.

2 - Issue and Working Hypotheses

From the above review of the literature, we deduce that the aforementioned critics deal with different studies about Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992). Each critic focuses on a specific aspect. However, not much attention is given to both Historical Facts and Artistic Fiction in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992). We aim to add a new perspective where we are going to explore this theme. Our hypothesis aims to highlight the way Toni Morrison used real and historical facts to construct her fiction by using her own imagination in order to record the realities of the African American people and their anxiety. First of all, we intend to analyze the work from a historical perspective in relation to the story of *Jazz* and then we are going to examine the novel from a literary perspective.

3 - Methodological Outline

To reach our aim, we have divided the discussion of this research paper into two main chapters. The first one will deal with the historical facts in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, where we focus on how Toni Morrison used history within the story and the most important historical events which constructed the history of the African Americans in the United States of America, mentioned in the novel which are: The Great Migration and its causes as an important issue tackled in the novel, the 1917 East St- Louis Race riots, Harlem Renaissance as an important era and the Roaring Twenties. The second chapter, sheds light on the author's artistic and literary imagination in her narrative, where we intend to address the main

narrative techniques that the author uses to construct her fiction. We will also discuss the main themes tackled by Toni Morrison in relation to the African American's tragic experience in the United States of America and provide a deep analysis for each character; each one of these characters is connected with the real status of the 'Black' people.

To deal with this issue, we will rely on Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism as a theory to examine deeply Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and how did she construct her fiction from real historical events in a fictional literary work in order to capture the realities of African American's history and community.

Endnotes:

- ¹Fatiha, Barbar and Houria, HassaniMebrouki. “*Slavery in America: Origins Struggle andResistance (1619-1865)*”. Master Dissertation,Ahmed Draia University of Adrar, 2017, 19.
- ²Paul, Levenjoy. “Transformation in Africa”. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2000).
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- ⁴Mark, Michael and Smith, Stono. “Decommenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Trade”. Colombia: University of South Carolina, (2005).
- ⁵Jenifer, Andrews. “ReadingToniMorrison’s *Jazz*: RewritingoftheTallTaleandPlayingwiththeTricksterintheWhiteAmericanandAfrican- AmericanHumor Traditions” Canadian Review of American Studies. (1999): 87-188.
- ⁶Ibid
- ⁷Rinaldo, Walcott. “Out of Kumbla: Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* and Pedagogical Answerability”. Cultural Studies (1995), 325.
- ⁸John, Galm. *Jazz* “Encyclopedia of the Harlem. Edited by Cary Wintz and Paul Finklemer”. Routledge (2004), 612.
- ⁹Anne Marie, PaquetDeyris. “Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* and the City”African- American Review Vol, 35, Issue n°2. (2001), 219-231.

II. Method and Materials

1 - Method

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation explores the topic of Afro-American history as depicted in Toni Morrison's 1992 novel, *Jazz*. To attain a brief and clear study, we will rely on Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism. In fact, our choice of this theory is to discover how Toni Morrison resorts to real historical facts to construct her fiction relying on the realities of the African American history and society. Indeed, New Historicism considers works of literature as historical texts.

New Historicism

According to Meriem Webster's Dictionary, New Historicism is "a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to its culture, society or ideology in a given time."¹⁰ In other words, the concern of New Historicism is based on the powerful relationships between historical, cultural, literary works and the society that produced it in a given time. In fact, New Historicism was first introduced by the American literary, historian and author Stephen Greenblatt in 1980. For Stephen Greenblatt, "New Historicism is a set of practices of cultural poetics which is a type of literary analysis that aims to discover the original ideology behind significant historical and biological facts about the writer"¹¹. That is to say, New Historicism's purpose is to go beyond the life, the environment and experience of the authors in order to understand their texts and messages, as well as, it is about understanding how history and culture shape literature, and how literature, in turn, reflects and critiques its historical moment. This approach emphasizes the association of texts, providing a richer understanding of both the literature and the historical context.

The first appearance of the concept of New Historicism is in 1970's and early 1980's; however, the latter did not receive much attention until the late 20th century. New historicism examines literary works, including *Jazz* by Toni Morrison, through a historical lens. This theory is based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the contexts of both the history of the author and the period when the literary work is written.

New Historicism highlights history as a subject of research. It differs from the traditional historicism in that traditional or old historicism considers history as universal or general, while New Historicism considers it to be "cultural." According to Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, "new historicism can be differentiated from old historicism by its lack of faith in objectivity and permanence and it stresses not upon the direct recreation of the past, but rather the process by which the past is constructed or invented."¹² In other words, in traditional historicism, there is often an assumption that we can objectively recreate the past and understand it as it truly was. This approach tends to focus on historical facts and events, believing that these can be directly represented in literature. On the other hands, New Historicism challenges this idea. It argues that our understanding of history is subjective and influenced by various factors, such as culture, power relationship and individual perspectives. New Historicism emphasizes the process of how history is constructed through narratives, rather than simply trying to recreate past events. This means that literature is seen as reflection of historical context in which it was created, shaped by the influences and biases of that time. Briefly, New Historicism encourages us to look at literature not just as a window into the past, but as a complex interplay between history and narrative, recognizing that our understanding of history is always mediated by the perspectives of those who interpret it.

One of Stephen Greenblatt's arguments is that: "there is real social world that gives a special form as well it influences the text it produces."¹³ The idea means that the historical, cultural and social contexts in which a text is created play a crucial role in its form, themes, and meanings. Greenblatt emphasizes that literature is not a vacuum; instead, it reflects the complexities and dynamics of the society from which it emerges. This perspective aligns with New Historicism, where the interplay between text and context is the central understanding of literature. Essentially, Greenblatt argues that the realities of social world inform and give shape to the narratives and structures found in literary works.

New Historicism deals with the relationship between texts and the cultural system in which they are produced. In other words, the focus of this theory is to study any given historical period by taking into consideration the cultural context in which it is produced. New Historicists believe that: "[...] it makes no sense to separate literary texts from the real context around them because such texts are the product of

complex social exchanges or negotiations.”¹⁴ This quotation highlights the idea that literary texts cannot be fully understood in isolation from their historical and social contexts. This means that the literature we read is shaped by the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the time in which it was created. For instance, when analyzing a novel like Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*, it is important to consider the Harlem Renaissance and the struggles faced by African Americans during that period which is the 1920’s. The themes, characters, and narratives in the texts are influenced by the realities of that time, including systemic oppression, social changes, and cultural movements. New Historicists argue that literature is a product of complex social exchanges and negotiations, meaning that the relationships between individuals, communities, and historical forces play an important role in shaping the text. By examining the connection between literature and its context, we gain a deeper understanding of how personal and collective histories inform identity and relationships within the narrative. This perspective encourages us to see literature as a reflection of the world, rather than a separate or isolated entity.

Thus, New Historicism looks at how literature is influenced by the culture and history of the time it was created. Furthermore, it examines how the unique cultural elements of a particular society are reflected in the literature. This approach indicates that the text is shaped by the events, social issues, and dynamics of that particular time in history. Basically, New Historicism argues that to fully understand a literary work, we need to consider both the cultural context and the historical circumstances surrounding its creation. This helps us see how literature is not just an isolated art form but is deeply connected to the world in which it exists. While New Historicists believe that history and reality are shaped by language and its codes. In other words, the way we understand historical events is influenced by the language used to describe them. Additionally, it emphasizes that literary works cannot be fully understood or analyzed without considering the historical context, cultural background, and social conditions in which they were created. Essentially, it emphasizes the importance of connecting literature to the specific time and place of its production to grasp its meaning and significance fully.

2 - Materials

Biography of the author

Toni Morrison, whose original name is Chloe Anthony Wofford, is an African American writer. She was born on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio in the United States, the second eldest daughter, to George Wofford and Ramah.¹⁵ Her parents were both of African American descent. Her father worked as a welder and her mother was a domestic worker.

Morrison's childhood witnessed the period of the Great Depression of the 1930s. She grew up in an atmosphere filled with African American folklore and music. Her family was, as Morrison states, "intimate with supernatural."¹⁵ and influenced by myths, signs, visions and foreseeing the future.

Morrison loved reading books because of her parents who instilled in her the love of writing and reading. She preferred reading French, Russian, and English classical books including Jane Austen (1775-1817), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). Morrison was fascinated by their style and the way they depicted their experiences in their works. Thus, she was motivated to write in such way in her works, using her African American culture.

In 1949, Morrison graduated from Lorain high school with honors and went to Howard University in Washington, where she studied English and Classical Literature.¹⁶ She graduated from Howard University with a degree of Arts in English in 1953 and continued her education in Cornell University where she got her Master's degree in 1955. Then she moved to Houston where she worked as a teacher in Texas Southern university.¹⁷

In 1957, Morrison worked as a teacher of English in Howard University, in 1964, she went to Syracuse, New York where she worked as an editor for a Random House Company.¹⁸ In 1968 Morrison's career as editor flourished; she became the senior editor for Random House and was the only African American to hold that position. Toni Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970, which tells the story of a young African American girl who longs for blue eyes and believes that beauty is tied to whiteness. This novel set the stage for her later works, which often dealt with the themes of race, identity, and the complexities of the African American life. Her second novel *Sula* (1973), explores the friendship between two women in a small African American community. *Song of Solomon* (1977) that brought her

widespread acclaim and won the National Book Critics Circle Award. This novel explores themes of heritage, identity, and the search for self within the African American experience. *Beloved* (1987), which is her celebrated work and won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988. The novel is haunting exploration of the legacy of slavery and its impact on individual and collective identity. It tells the story of Sethe, an escaped slave who is haunted by the ghost of her deceased daughter. In 1993, Toni Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, becoming the first African American woman to receive this honor. The Nobel Committee praised her for her vision and poetic contributions to literature, particularly in how she addresses the complexities of African American life.

Throughout her career, Morrison continued to write novels, essays, and plays, including *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1997), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012), and *God Help the Child* (2015).¹⁹

Toni Morrison passed away on August 5, 2019, but her legacy endures through her profound impact on literature and her exploration of themes that resonate with the African American experience.²⁰ Her works continue to be studied and celebrated for their rich narratives and deep insights into identity, community, and history.

Summary of Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992)

Jazz is Toni Morrison's sixth novel published in 1992 which is a rich and complex narrative set in Harlem during the 1920s, a time marked by the Harlem Renaissance. It narrates the story of a couple named Violet and Joe Trace who were married over twenty years. The events of the narrative glide between the past and the present time and shift from the rural South in Virginia and the urban North. Joe and Violet met in the South, in one of the cotton fields where they were working. In 1906, the couple joined the waves of the African Americans who migrated from the Southern region to the urban City in the North for the desire of better and descent life, to escape the harsh conditions of living and violence that they faced in the South.

However, the two migrants did not find the easy and safe life that they imagined before migration. The couple did not gain the appropriate works and they are not paid enough as they hoped. Violet, worked as an unlicensed hairdresser while her husband worked as a cosmetics salesman. Things became worse between Violet and her husband because of Joe's betrayal with a young girl of eighteen years old. After a few months the teenage girl, named Dorcas, in her turn betrayed her lover Joe with a younger man of her generation; this pushed Joe to commit a crime and killed his teenage lover by shooting her at a party. Dorcas, a young and beautiful woman, represents not only desire but also the pain of loss and longing.

Violet entered in a great depression after she discovered the betrayal of her husband with another woman. She went to the funeral of the dead girl and tried to destroy her face with a knife. After this illegal act, people called her "Violent" instead of "Violet Trace". As a result, Violet started a new adventure and attempted to imitate Dorcas in her way of dressing, hair-cut, make-up and even in the band of music she liked more. She also dated another man to make her husband jealous but the latter did not show any reaction as if love has frozen within him. This situation led her to realize that the personality of the dead girl was suitable neither to her age nor to her personality. Moreover, her character provides insight into the challenges faced by women in that era, as well as the impact of societal expectations on personal identity.

In fact, the story of *Jazz* unfolds through a non-linear structure, revealing the characters' histories and the impact and the impact of their choices. Morrison explores themes of love, community, loss, identity, and the complexities of human relationships emphasizing how the characters' lives are shaped by their personal experiences and the broader historical context of African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance.

Toni Morrison uses the fragmented narrative structure, which allows her to depict the complexity of memory and the interplay between past and present. The novel ultimately reflects on the nature of love, the pain of loss, and the search for identity within the vibrant yet challenging landscape of Harlem. *Jazz* by Toni Morrison is a profound exploration of love, community, and the historical realities faced by African Americans, all intricately woven through the rhythms of jazz music.

Endnotes

- ¹⁰Merriam-Webster. *Merriam-Webster's Pocket Dictionary*. 11th ed. New York: Merriam-Webster, 2012.
- ¹¹Nath Lekha Dhakal, "Revisiting History: African Experience in Toni Morrison's Novels" (Master's thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012), 25.
- ¹²J. N Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, eds., *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History* (New Jersey: 1993).
- ¹³Nath Lekha Dhakal, "Revisiting History: African Experience in Toni Morrison's Novels" (Master's thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012), 27.
- ¹⁴Ibid, 28.
- ¹⁵Biography.com Editors. "Toni Morrison." Biography.com. A&E Networks Television, 31 Jan. 2017. <http://www.biography.com/people/toni-morrison-9415590#related-video-gallery>. 07 Mar. 2017.
- ¹⁶"Toni Morrison," in *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, n.p., n.d.
- ¹⁷Ibid, 15.
- ¹⁸Ibid, 16.
- ¹⁹Ibid, 17.
- ²⁰Ibid, 17.

III. Results

In dealing with Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992), it is noticeable that this work is a fictional literary work, where the author uses her own imagination in recording the African Americans' reality and social issues.

From the careful examination of the novel, we have deduced that Toni Morrison resorts to real historical facts, not only to trace or date the most important events in the history of her nation, but also she uses this kind of writing in order to demonstrate their troubling experience, to empower the Black American people and display the worth of the Afro-American literary artistry.

Thus she wants to tell the readers what really happened because the real history of the Blacks has been misinterpreted by the White Americans she wants also to affirm the African American culture and society.

In order to achieve a succinct study, we have relied on Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism as a theoretical tool to analyze Toni Morrison's *Jazz*. The use of New Historicism as a theory is relevant in our research, since Toni Morrison's narrative is considered as a historical novel, where the author uses the most important historical events in the history of the African Americans in the United States of America to construct her novel. However, this literary theory puts emphasis to the context in which a work is created focusing on the historical and cultural circumstances and surrounds both the text and its author. Also, we have observed that Toni Morrison has focused on the social aspects of the Black American community by stressing on the importance of their culture, society and history through demonstrating the Worth of African American artistry.

IV. Discussion

Chapter One: Historical Facts in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992)

African American literature reflects the most important issues that faced the Blacks in the United States of America. Black authors, like Toni Morrison, have used literature to express their ideas, empower their culture and depict historical events in his/her literary works seeking to get attention of the readers to the matters they want to solve.

Through our detailed analysis of Toni Morrison's sixth novel, we have observed that *Jazz* is a historical narrative conveyed through fiction. Toni Morrison highlights the key historical events that have impacted the history of Black Americans. In this chapter we are going to tackle two main subjects. The first one, analyses the history of the Black Americans within the story of *Jazz*, while the second one examines the main important historical events mentioned in Toni Morrison's narrative which are the Great Migration (1916-1970), the 1917 East St. Louis Race Riots, Harlem Renaissance (1920), and the Roaring Twenties (1920).

1. History within the Story.

In this part of the first chapter we are going to examine the way the African American author, Toni Morrison, has used history or historical events in her narrative, *Jazz*.

Indeed, through her own imagination and literary work, she wanted to make the world understand and know the history of her nation by dating and tracing the most important historical events which constructed the history of the Afro-Americans. Toni Morrison also aimed to capture the real traumatic experience that the Blacks have witnessed in the United States of America by telling the readers of her narrative what has really happened at that time, due to the misinterpretation of Black history by the Whites specifically and by the world at large. Thus, as it can be seen, Toni Morrison, in her narrative, explores history, culture, and society to affirm these aspects and empower Black individuals by demonstrating the significance of African American literature and arts.

In dealing with Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, we have deduced that she has mentioned four important historical events that played a great role in the construction of the history of her nation; which are the Great Migration, the Race Riots in East St. Louis, Harlem Renaissance and the Roaring Twenties.

New Historicism can be applied in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, since this theory considers works of literature as a social and cultural construct in which Toni Morrison has created her work. In addition, by analyzing the characters' lives through the lens of New Historicism, we can explore how the novel reflects the cultural movement and the social struggles that define African American history during the 1920s. As well as, it allows for a deeper understanding of how historical forces shape personal identities and narratives within the novel. Overall, *Jazz* reflects the social and the cultural aspects and circumstances of the African Americans. In fact, Toni Morrison deals with the marginalized people who are the African Americans and it is clear that most of the characters she creates such as Violet, Joe, Dorcas and Alice Manfred are Blacks and of course they face all sorts of violence, racism and segregation, therefore she feels sympathy towards them. New Historicism as well, stresses its sympathy towards the inferiority and the ignorance of the Black Americans who were in fact marginalized and emphasizes their struggles against social norms and historical injustice. To sustain this argument, the American author Griffith states in his book *The American Version of Cultural Studies*: "New Historicism shows its sympathy for disadvantaged- marginalized people".²¹

2. The Most Important Historical Facts in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

2.1 The Great Migration (1916-1970)

The Great Migration was the relocating of more than six million African Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North which started from 1916 to 1970. Driven from their homes due to the lack of economic opportunities, segregation, many Black Americans headed north searching to build new place for themselves as well as looking for economic, political and social opportunities to create their own culture.²²

The aim of the Migrants is to escape the harsh conditions that they lived in the South such violence, racism and segregation; however, the Blacks were forced to work as slaves in cotton fields which were cheap labors for that they gain low wages. In fact, these social and financial issues are due to many facts:

First practices of Jim Crow Laws that are the laws imposed by the White men restored across the South in the 1870s just after the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era.²³ Jim Crow Laws contain social customs which put into consideration racial segregation. From 1881 to 1964, these laws separated Black Americans from White Americans in 26 states, from Delaware to California and from North Dakota to Texas.²⁴

Second, Black codes which are designed to limit the Afro-Americans' freedom especially the sharecropping system which offered little in the way of economic opportunity.²⁵

Third, the spread of the Ku Klux Klan which is a single organization whose members are related together by common dedication to preserve White Supremacy; they advocated and promoted economic and political domination by the Whites.²⁶ In fact the Ku Klux Klan caused the intimidation, violence and even the hanging of the African Americans. Finally the most serious cause was the Race Riots of 1917 which lasted 13 days and left many damages on the Black Americans.

Toni Morrison makes reference to this event in her novel *Jazz* (1992), as it is exemplified by Joe and Violet Trace who joined the first waves of African Americans during the Great Migration. As many of the Afro-Americans, the Traces worked in the cotton fields in the Southern region of the United States of America under the supremacy of the White Americans from their young age. Looking for freedom,

better ways of living and feeling more secure, the Traces decided to escape the harsh conditions of life in the South by moving to the Urban North.

Toni Morrison in this narrative deals with the feeling of freedom which is expressed by the couple Joe and Violet Trace who take the train like many other African Americans who try to move to the urban areas in the North and West from 1916 to 1970. This can be illustrated from the novel as it follows:

Joe stood up, his fingers clutching the baggage rack above his head. He left the dancing better that way and told Violet to do the same. They were hanging there, a young country couple laughing and tapping back at the track.²⁷

The narrator wants to demonstrate that Joe and Violet, as well as the other Black passengers on the train, spent most of their time being anxious. However, once the train approached the destination, which is the city of New York, the feeling of hope and freedom started to come to their minds and the couple imagined the shacking of the train tracks as a music to dance in the way to their new life.

In a critical observation of how people arrived in the City the narrator states: “Some were slow about it and travelled from Georgia to Illinois, to the city back to Georgia out to San Diego and finally sharing their heads, surrender themselves to the end no other. They came for a visit and forgot to go back to tall cotton or short.”²⁸

In this quotation, Toni Morrison reflects on the journey and experiences of African Americans. The phrase “some were slow about it” suggests that the process of moving or adapting took time for some individuals. The mention of traveling “from Georgia to San Diego” highlights the vast distance and the idea of migration in search of better opportunities. The phrase “finally sharing their heads” can be interpreted as a change in perspective, indicating that they have come to a new life and that they have to accept their new identity. The line “surrender themselves to the end no other” suggests a sense of resignation or acceptance of their circumstances. Lastly, “they came for a visit and forgot to go back to tall cotton or short” implies that once arrived in a new place, they became so absorbed in their new lives that they forgot their origins or the life they left behind. In this regard Deborah H. Branes, who is a student in Howard University where she is specialized in literature of Black women writers and authored dissertation on the works of Toni Morrison. She explains:

We are told for example, that the once-happy Joe and Violet Trace begin their descent into marital discord after succession of ameliorative moves that take further and further from their cultural roots like so many other real-life (and fictional) African Americans, the Traces reify the ambitions of the rural black who believed that the urban North was the promised land of

opportunity, equality and plenty..... Accordingly, in this and other novels Morrison portrays culture shock as traumatic, yet inevitable consequence for upwardly mobile, migrating or rootless blacks”.²⁹

Deborah H. Branes discusses the journey of the couple Joe and Violet Trace, who experience marital discourse as they move away from their cultural root. The sentence “ameliorative moves” relates to their attempts to improve their lives, but these moves ultimately distance them from their heritage. Branes emphasizes a common theme in Morrison’s writing: the belief among many rural Blacks people that moving to the urban North would provide opportunities and better life. However, this migration often cause “culture shock” which is seen as a traumatic experience. The idea is that even if people are looking for stability by leaving their origins behind, they may face challenges that come with losing their cultural identity. Overall this quotation highlights the complexities and emotional struggles faced by African Americans who seek a better life but encounter the painful realities of cultural disconnection and identity loss. As the narrator says: “the wave of the black people running from want and violence crested in the 1870s; the 80s; the 90s but was steady stream in 1906 when Joe and Violet joined it.”³⁰

Indeed, this quotation captures the urgency and persistence of the African American migration experience, reflecting both the historical context of their struggle and the continuing search for better life.

2. 2 The Race Riots in East ST. Louis (1917)

The 1917 East St Louis riots is another important event that Toni Morrison makes reference to in her novel *Jazz*. The Race Riots in East St. Louis in 1917 were an important and violent conflict including racial tensions between white residents and the growing of African American population. Theses tensions were caused by the Great Migration, during which many Blacks Americans moved from rural South to Northern cities like East St. Louis in search for better jobs opportunities and living conditions. New Historicism highlights the idea that a literary work cannot be analyzed apart from its history. The concern of this approach is to focus on the relationship between any given literary work and its cultural system in which it is produced.³¹ In fact, this approach allows us to examine how the riots were not just a spontaneous outbreak of violence but were deeply influenced by the socio-political climate of the time, including the effects of the Great Migration, economic competition, and entrenched racial prejudices.

Toni Morrison in her novel makes reference to the July 1917 East St Louis, this event includes music uses as a mean for Black people to contest and fight for their civil rights. Furthermore, Morrison weaves historical context into the lives of her characters. The novel captures the atmosphere of the Jazz Age, a time marked by both cultural flourishing and racial violence. Through her characters' experiences, Morrison reflects the deep-seated racial tensions and the impact events like the East St. Louis riots on the African American community.

For instance, the characters often grapple with theme of identity and belonging, shaped by the historical realities they face. Morrison uses the background of the riots to highlight the struggles of Black Americans during this period, illustrating how violence and trauma influence personal relationships and community dynamics. By embedding these historical references within the narrative, she not only brings attention to the past but also connects it to the ongoing issues of race and identity in America.

Alice Manfred stood for three hours on Fifth Avenue wondering at the cold black faces and listening to drums saying what the graceful women and the marching men could not[...] It was July 1917 and the beautiful faces were cold and quiet; moving slowly into the space the drums were building for them.³²

This passage Toni Morrison captures a moments of reflection and connection to the cultural and historical context of July 1917, which is significant for several reasons. Alice Manfred's experience on Fifth Avenue symbolizes a deeper engagement with the African American community and its struggle during the Harlem Renaissance. The "cold black faces" represent the pain and resilience of the Afro-American populations, particularly in light of the recent Race Riots in East St. Louis, which has a profound impact on the community. The mention of "drums" serves as a powerful metaphor for the heartbeat of the community, expressing emotions and stories what word cannot convey. The "space the drums were building for them" implies a sense of unity and a cultural space being created through music shared experience.

On July 1917, ten thousand people marched to protest the lynching and the police treatment of black people across the Southern states. The march was precisely held as a reaction to the violent riots in East St Louis, where the Whites killed Black people including Dorcas' parents, and burned down their houses.

Since this was a silent protest, the only sound to accompany it was the beat of the drums. Alice thinks the drums are transporting [...] what the graceful women and the marching men could not.”³³ Toni Morrison in this passage highlights the limitations of traditional forms of expressions and representation in conveying the true emotions and experiences of the African American community. The “graceful women” and “marching men” symbolize the outward appearance of strength, dignity, and resilience. However, despite their grace and the organized nature of their march, they are unable to fully articulate the depth of their pain, struggles, and collective history. In Morrison’s words:

“ They suddenly, like a rope cast for rescue, the drums spanned the distance, gathering them all up and connecting them; Alice, Dorcas, her sister and brother-in law, the boy Scout and the Frozen black forces, the watchers on the pavement and those in the windows above.”³⁴

Alice finds consolation in the faces of the Black protesters and the drums put it all in focus for her; they are all combating for their rights and freedom; as, they are all gathered to fight against the violent riots. Moreover, this passage supports Morrison’s attention to show the importance of community and shared experiences especially through the medium of music. The drums serve not only as a form of gathering but also as a means of gathering and connecting individuals, reinforcing the idea that art can play an important role in fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity among people facing similar struggles.

In addition, through our examination of the novel, Toni Morrison deals with two main causes of the 1917 East St. Louis Riots. The first cause is that Black veterans of the First World War started the riots, and the narrator begins the explanation with a collective, anonymous phrase, and it is exemplified in the novel when the narrator says:

“Some said rioters were disgruntled veterans who had fought in all-colored units, were refused the service of the Young Men Cristian Association, over there and over here, and came home to white violence more intense than when they enlisted and, unlike the battles they fought in Europe, stateside fighting was pitiless and totally without honor.”³⁵

This quotation shows that the Black veterans of World War One started the riots, and that they had risked their lives for their county. In fact, this passage is presented in a third person narrator, so that the narrator’s voice combines with that of the Black veterans, as well as, with those in the Black community who believes the veterans started the riots. Furthermore, “some” in this quotation, shows that if Black

veterans did start the riots, various people within the Black community believe they did so because of a lack of power and respect. Therefore, the narrator's voice combines and clashes with various groups within the Black community like the veterans, workers, and also their white dominants.

The second one is that the white people in the North started the riots because they were afraid that black migration would trouble their lives. Indeed, the White Americans who live in the northern cities were scared of losing their domination and power, which is the point that Toni Morrison wants to demonstrate in her novel. As we have seen in the previous illustration from the narrative that states: "Others said (the rioters) were whites terrified by the wave of the southern Negroes flooding the towns searching for work and a place to live."³⁶ it is clear that the northern Whites caused the riots for fear that they were being overtaken by too many Black Americans .In this passage, Toni Morrison shows that the Whites are scared, thinking that they are losing jobs and housing and that the city in general is changing considerably because of the presence of the African Americans.

2. 3 The Harlem Renaissance (1920)

The Harlem Renaissance is an African American artistic and intellectual movement that flourished in the 1920s. It also marked a cultural period during the 1920s when the African Americans celebrated their heritage through music, art, literature and politics. In addition, the Harlem Renaissance is an important historical moment that Toni Morrison scrutinizes in her novel *Jazz*. Jean Tomer, Rudolf Fisher, Wallace Thurman and Claude McKay are among the authors who marked this movement and defended the African Americans' culture, traditions and civil rights. Following the Civil War, a large number of African Americans moved to the North and they found Harlem, a City in New York, as a suitable place to live in. This period occurs just after the Great Migration where millions of African Americans migrated to the large Northern cities in search for safety, economic opportunities and freedom.

The Harlem Renaissance was also called the "New Negro Movement". In fact, African American authors, artists, poets, and intellectuals found new ways to express their pride for their culture. Thus, the Afro-Americans found that Harlem Renaissance as a suitable concept to take their rightful place in society and contribute to their culture in significant ways that the time had come for them. Nevertheless,

the movement reached its highest point in the late 1920s, and its influence continued until the 1930s and beyond.

Harlem Renaissance is clearly related to New Historicism theory by examining how the novel *Jazz* reflects the cultural and social dynamics of that era. New Historicism emphasizes the relationship between literature and the historical context, and the Harlem Renaissance serves as a crucial backdrop for understanding the characters' identities and experiences. In her novel *Jazz*, Toni Morrison's main characters such as Joe and Violet Trace, migrated to the City of Harlem (New York) hoping for a better way of living such as good job, better housing...etc. Indeed, Toni Morrison in one of her interviews says that her purpose in *Jazz* is "to tell a very simple story about people who do not know that they are living in Jazz age and to never use the word."³⁷ This quotation reflects Toni Morrison's intention in her narrative to depict the lives of her characters in a way that focuses their experiences without explicitly labeling their context as the "Jazz Age". By stating that she wants to tell "a very simple story," Morrison suggests that the focus is on the everyday lives, struggles, and the relationships of her characters rather than on the broader cultural movements of the time. The idea that they "do not know that they are living in Jazz age" highlights a sense of disconnection between the characters and the historical period they inhabit. It emphasizes how individuals might not recognize that they are living in a significant cultural period, specifically the Jazz Age. In fact, in the narrative, the Harlem Renaissance represents an important era of the 1920s, since Harlem is seen as a place of a great importance for the migrants and a promised land during the Twenties. Toni Morrison in her novel *Jazz* describes Harlem to be a free place where there is not Whites' control as it is a beautiful location in America and the world in the twentieth century. In this regard the American author of Harlem Renaissance Gilbert Osofsky highlights that:

Prior to World War One, the neighborhood was already the largest colony of the colored people, in similar limits, in the world and it continued to expand. By 1920 the section of Harlem bordered approximately by One-Hundred and Thirtieth streets on the South. One Hundred and Forty-fifth Streets on the North and West of Fifth to Eighth Avenue was predominately Negro and inhabited by some 73,000 people.³⁸

Gilbert Osofsky wants to say that Harlem is the biggest and strongest community in the North America with its strongest dimension, and that it was inhabited by most of the Afro-Americans especially

during the 1920s. Furthermore, he remarks that Harlem was a unique among the various urban areas that the Black Americans migrated to, not only because of its population numbers but also because it was a respectable, elegant place to live in. Unlike the slum-like areas, Blacks were relegated to in other cities; Harlem was a perfect place to live in New York. No doubt, these physical surroundings helped to anticipate the feeling of Black pride and historical momentousness that came to be associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

Therefore, Toni Morrison's *Jazz* plays an important role in the reconstruction of the history of the Afro-American people because Toni Morrison is considered as one of the authors that brought to the modern readers the realities about the Black American history. During the Harlem Renaissance, Afro-Americans started to have access to some fields of life such as: economic, educational and social opportunities that had previously been denied to them.

In *Jazz*, characters such as Violet, Joe Trace, Dorcas and Alice Manfred were hunted by their past. Violet suffers from her mother suicide. Likewise, Joe meditates on his unsuccessful attempts to have Wild, his step mother, acknowledges him as her son. Dorcas shifts through the traumatic memories of her Father's and mother's death. While Alice faces the power of her repressed feeling about her husband's infidelity over thirty years ago. Toni Morrison supports the idea that history has not an end and a conscious historical connection is absolutely necessary for the psychological well-being of the individual and community. In reality, this connection is important because of the historical era in which *Jazz* is set. This is a time of massive migration from South to North with the new image of the black individuality. In *Jazz*, Joe declares himself as a "New Negro". The New Negro means someone who is confident or self-assured and who has freed himself from White people to define his life and aims. The Harlem Renaissance might also be seen as a time breaking when "newness" became a culturally a dominant aspect that marked not only progress but also trauma. James Weldon Johnson who is an American writer and civil rights activist, who started working in 1917 as a leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He suggests that the problematic metaphors of "New Negro" offered a limited and unstable model of assertive manhood he explains:

Whatever promises the new man who has for the future, his name and the necessity for his creation imply some inadequacy in the past. Like the New Year's resolution or the "turning over new leaf", the debate of the New Negro announced dissatisfaction with the old Negro. And since the New/Old dichotomy is a mere convenience of mind- Afro-Americans were really so-called Old Negro was merely carried within the bosom of the New as a kind of self-doubt, perhaps self-hate.³⁹

James Weldon Johnson in this quotation explores the concept of identity and transformation within the African American community during the Harlem Renaissance. The phrase "whatever promises the new man has for the future" refers to hope and potential that the "New Negro" embodies –an individual who is assertive, self-confident, and proud of their heritage. However, Johnson points out that this promise is rooted in recognition of inadequacies in the past, especially the negative connotation associated with the "Old Negro".

The "New Negro" represents a shift away from the stereotypes and limitations that were historically imposed on African Americans. Johnson suggests that the dissatisfaction with the "Old Negro" is not just a rejection of the past but also a reflection of internal struggles, such as self-doubt and perhaps self-hatred. The dichotomy between "New" and "Old" is described as a "mere convenience of mind," indicating that these labels simplify a much more complex reality. The "Old Negro" is not entirely separate from the "New Negro"; instead, elements of the past are intertwined with the present, suggesting that the journey toward self-acceptance and empowerment is complicated by historical experience.

Historical memory movement which is to move away from the past is considered as the symbol that governs modern views of the Harlem Renaissance, and this historical memory is spotlighted in Toni Morrison's novel. In *Jazz*, both of the two main characters Joe and Violet Trace have a desire to make a link with their past and try to live with it in order to be able to face their trauma and problems that they have endured in the South and be able to live a new life in the North without being afraid of the future.

In the novel, we have noticed that Harlem is a new place for Joe. He cannot even tell his friends Giston and Stuck and his near brother, Victory things he would easily have said about his boyhood. Due to his horrible and painful past, he is not able to speak even to his friends what he has experienced during his childhood. For example, in the narrative he says "I changed once too often. Made myself new one time too many. You could say I have been a New Negro all my life."⁴⁰ the phrase "I changed once too

often” suggests a sense of regret or realization about the choices he has made throughout his life. Joe reflects on the idea of transformation and reinvention, indicating that he has tried to create new identity for himself multiple times. The expression “made myself new one time too many” implies that this constant reinvention has come at a cost- perhaps leading to confusion, loss of self, or an inability to settle into a stable identity. When Joe states, “You could say I have been a New Negro all my life,” he acknowledges his lifelong struggle with identity and pressures of societal expectations. The term “New Negro” refers to the emerging sense of pride and self-assertion among African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance, but for Joe, it also highlights the burden of constantly trying to adapt and redefine himself. This statement reflects the complexities of identity formation, where the desire for renewal and progress is interconnected with the weight of past experiences and the societal context in which he exists. Furthermore, for Joe this new life is like a problem that brings pain. Thus, he feels the need to tell all his unspoken dreams and memories. Unfortunately, Violet cannot fulfill this role, so Joe puts his neediness on an eighteen year self-absorbed young woman named Dorcas, who reminds him of Wild, who perhaps is his mother. Since Joe was given up by his mother the day he was born.

2.4 The Roaring Twenties (1920):

The Roaring Twenties is the last point that is going to be discussed in this first chapter and that Toni Morrison makes reference to in her novel *Jazz*. Before we analyze it in relation to the novel, we have provided a brief definition of it. The Roaring Twenties, also known as the Jazz Age, refers to a decade of the 1920s in the United States and other Western countries where years when America witnessed great changes and broke with the First World War (1914-1918), as it assisted in the birth of a modern national lifestyle. In fact, this epoch is characterized by significant social, cultural, and economic changes. This era is known first for its economic prosperity that is marked by a booming economy, with increased industrial production and consumer spending. This led to a rise in the standard of living for many Americans. Second, cultural flourishing, this period saw a vibrant cultural scene, especially in music, literature, and the arts. Jazz music became particularly popular, influencing dance and social gathering. Artists and writers, including figures like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Langston Hughes, emerged during this time, contributing to a rich cultural tapestry. Third, social changes, in fact the decade was also a time of significant social changes. Women gained the right to vote in 1920, leading to shifts in gender roles and expectations, the emergence of what is known as the 'flappers'. This latter is associated with the women who freed themselves from the conservative ways of living, which means that women of that time advocated short dresses, short hairstyles, listen to jazz and challenged the previously accepted mores of society in every regard, as they freed themselves from responsibility and anxiety. Furthermore, this period saw the 18th Amendment which prohibited in 1920 the manufacture and the sale of alcohol, leading to the rise of speakeasies and organized crimes. This era of Prohibition created a counterculture that defied the law and contributed to the cultural landscape. Lastly, The Roaring Twenties saw a migration from rural areas to cities, as people sought job opportunities and a more vibrant lifestyle. This urbanization contributed to the development of new social dynamics and communities.

Indeed, Toni Morrison's *Jazz* explores the Roaring Twenties, particularly evident in the character of Dorcas. As a teenager, Dorcas begins to break away from her aunt's old-fashioned way of living and adopts a new fashion that suits her personality. More, she desires to be more attractive, admired and wanted by men: "Dorcas dances well- not as fast as some others, but she is graceful in spite of those

shaming shoes, and she is provocative.”⁴¹This quotation shows Dorcas’s unique qualities as a dancer. It suggests that despite she may not dance as quickly as others, her gracefulness shines, even when faced with challenges, such as wearing “shaming shoes”. The mention of “provocative” implies that her dancing draws much attention and evokes strong feelings, possibly challenging societal norms or expectations. Overall, this reflects her individuality and strength, showing that beauty and talent can manifest in various ways, regardless of external judgments. Alice Manfred, Dorcas’s aunt, is a conservative and authoritarian woman. As a child, Dorcas was raised by her in a way that was both beneficial and oppressive, instilling good manners and education. However, Dorcas is now trying to break away from everything her aunt taught her. Toni Morrison observes:

Sneaking out to that party with her best friend, Felice, ought to have been hard to arrange, but Alice Manfred had overnight business in spring- field, and nothing could have been easier. The only difficulty was in finding something foxy enough to wear.⁴²

This quotation introduces the character Alice Manfred, who is portrayed as having some freedom to make choices, as her overnight business allows her niece Dorcas to sneak out. The phrase “ought to have been hard to arrange” suggest that there are societal expectations or rules that could make such as an act difficult, but the reality is that Alice’s absence creates an opportunity for Dorcas.

The mention of finding something “Foxy” to wear indicate a desire to impress and a sense of youthful excitement about attending the party. The use of the word “Foxy” implies a playful, flirtation attitude, which aligns with the theme of love and identity. Overall, this passage deals with the exploration of personal freedom and the complexities of relationships during the Jazz Age.

In fact the novel captures the lively spirit of the Jazz Age, highlights the music, dance, and artistic expression that characterized the period. The jazz music itself serves as a backdrop for the characters’ lives, influencing their emotions and interactions. The Roaring Twenties was a time of important social change, particularly for African Americans. Toni Morrison in her narrative addresses themes of migration, urbanization, and the search for identity as her characters such as Joe and Violet Trace, navigates their lives in Harlem, a cultural center during this time. Moreover, the novel delves into the complexities of love and relationships, reflecting the period that shifts the social norms. Characters like

Joe and Violet struggle with their pasts and their connections to one another, showing the tensions and freedoms of the time.

Morrison weaves historical references and events into the narrative, grounding the characters' personal stories within the broader socio-political landscape of the 1920s. This context helps illuminate how historical forces shape individual identities and community dynamics. In fact the theme of identity and community are the central aspects in the story, as characters confront with their sense of self amidst the vibrant yet tumultuous backdrop of the Roaring Twenties; that is to say, the characters are trying to understand who they are while surrounded by the exciting but chaotic environment of the Roaring Twenties. It highlights the struggle of personal identity amidst a vibrant cultural backdrop. In this sense, community plays a crucial role in shaping their experiences, as they seek belonging and understanding in a rapidly changing world.

To conclude, this chapter has discussed two main topics: in the first topic we explored History within the Story, where we examined the way Toni Morrison resorts to historical events to build her narrative *Jazz*, in the second topic we examined the four important events that Toni Morrison develops in her novel; such as, The Great Migration (1916-1970), The 1917 East St. Louis Riots, the Harlem Renaissance (1920) and The Roaring Twenties (1920). In fact, this novel repairs the traumatic experience and misery that the African Americans have been through such as racism, violence, segregation and the lack of job opportunities. Because of these social issues, the African Americans decided to leave the South and go to the North to escape these traumas. As we have spoken about the July 1917 East St Louis Riots where music was used as a form of expression for their needs and wants. Jazz music is used in this narrative to show the complexity of African American life in the early twentieth century. Moreover, the 1917 East St. Louis is according to Toni Morrison has two main causes. The first cause that of the Black veterans of the World War One who caused the riots to fight for their country. The second, one is that of the Northern Whites who were scared of the Southern Negroes to put their power and domination. The third event is Harlem Renaissance. Harlem in the narrative refers to a unique place for the characters where they can find better ways of living. The Roaring Twenties is the last event that we have examined in our chapter. In fact, this event is more illustrated by the character of Dorcas who has been raised by her

aunt Alice Manfred in an oppressive way by following a conservative way of life. However, Dorcas tries to break these conservative behaviors by adopting new lifestyle that suits more to her personality.

Endnotes

²¹Griffith, Kelley. *Writing Essays about Literature: A Guide and Style Sheet*. Boston: Thomson. Higher,

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Novels” (Master thesis, Tribhuvan University, 2012), 54.

²² “The Great Migrants,” *History. com*, edited March 4, 2010.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷ Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 30.

²⁸Ibid, 32.

²⁹Deborah, H. Branes. “Moving on up: The Madness of Migration in Toni Morrison’s Fiction: Contemporary Criticism”. Ed. David Middleton. New York: Garland Publishing, (2000):283-296. Quoted in Nath Lekha Dakhal: “Revisiting History: African Experience in Toni Morrison’s Novels” (Master’s thesis, Thribhuvan University, 2012), 140.

³⁰Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 33.

³¹ Ibid, 07.

³²Nath Lekha Dakhal:“Revisiting History: African Experience in Toni Morrison’s Novels” (Master thesis , Tribhuvan University, 2012),25.

³³ Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 53.

³⁴Ibid, 53.

³⁵Ibid, 58.

³⁶Ibid, 57.

³⁷ Ibid, 57.

³⁸ Tomas Le Claire, “Interview with Toni Morrison: Art of Fiction,” *The Paris Review*, no.117.

⁴⁰Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of Ghetto* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 115.

⁴¹James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Da Capo, 1991), 280.

⁴²Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 129.

Chapter Two: Artistic Fiction in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992)

History has witnessed many written works which intertwined literature and civilization, though they are considered by some critics as two different and separated fields. One of these works is *Jazz* by Toni Morrison. The latter, aims to discuss some important historical events deeply and writes about a specific era in the African American life, as she states in the foreword of her novel, *Jazz*: “I was interested in rendering a period in African American life through a specific lens.”⁴³ in order to construct her fiction by using her own imagination and art. One of the most important characteristics of her fictional work is the fact that she builds her narrative in a way that the experience of her novel's characters reflects the African Americans' real experience and status in the United States of America. Professor Sture Allen argues: “In her depiction of the world of the black people, in life as legend, Toni Morrison has given the Afro-American people their history back, piece by piece.”⁴⁴

It is worth noting that Toni Morrison never wrote the history of her life; however, she wrote mainly about the history of her nation. “Toni Morrison argues that the authenticity of her presence in the series of talks about life writing is the connection of her literary heritage with slave narratives- the autobiographical narratives of Black slaves or ex-slaves.”⁴⁵ This is to say that Toni Morrison does not only trace or date the historical facts, but she uses this kind of writing to empower the Black American people and demonstrate the worth of the Afro-American literary artistry. In this regard, “Toni Morrison's art aims at the racial memory of her people.”⁴⁶ This statement argues that her relying on the act of imagination intends to empower the history of her people, and her depiction of real facts in a fictional representation, aims to make the world understand easily the history of the African Americans and their real experiences.

In this second chapter, we are going to highlight the way Toni Morrison resorts to real facts to build her fiction, and examine the major narrative techniques she uses and the important themes she discusses. We are also going to provide a deep analysis of the main characters of the novel.

1. The Narrative Techniques Used in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

Toni Morrison in her novel writes about historical, social, and cultural matters in which the urban and the real life of Black Americans are represented in a fictional work. In order to analyze the strategy that Morrison utilizes, we notice that the writer uses a unique and special style of writing which attracts us and pushes us to examine the major narrative techniques she uses to build her narrative.

Toni Morrison is inspired and borrowed the plot of her novel from the photographer's James Van Der Zee's book "the Harlem Book of the Dead" which tells the story of a dead girl who was shot by her lover in a party: "Seeing a photograph of a pretty girl in a coffin and reading a photographer's recollection of how she got there."⁴⁷ Toni Morrison reveals the basic plot of her novel in the first page of her book, which is an unusual technique in literature; it can be seen as the starting point of Toni Morrison's novel, which is mainly about the life of those people touched by the dead girl, Dorcas. As we know a plot can be either a simple plot, which contains a rising action, a climax, and a falling action, following a chronological linear, or it can be a complex plot which does not follow a chronological linear, making reference to the past through the use of flashbacks, then it comes back to follow the present events. Consequently, we can say that the plot of Toni Morrison's *Jazz* is a complex plot, because it does not contain any rising action, or climax or falling action.

From our close reading of the novel, we see that it is full of flashbacks and memories from the past era; the narrator makes reference to the past by flashbacks and memories of the characters. It is noticeable when Dorcas met Joe in Malvonne's apartment; she remembers when her mother slapped her on her face: "Maybe her nothing was worse since she knew her mother, and had even been slapped in her face by her for some sass she couldn't remember. But she did remember and told him so, about the slap across her face."⁴⁸ Then, the narrator returns to the present time and continues to tell us the rest of the events in the present moment: "she cries again and Joe holds her close. The Iroquois sky passes the windows and if they do see it, it crayon-colors their love."⁴⁹

Stream of consciousness is one of the narrative techniques used by Toni Morrison in her novel. According to the psychologist William James, this technique: "is reserved for indicating an approach to

the presentation of psychological aspects of characters as an unconnected and disorganized flow of thoughts, ideas and feelings.”⁵⁰, as it is the case of Violet when she thinks about Joe and Dorcas’ affair:

what did she see, young girl like that, barely out of high school, with unbraided hair, lip rouge for the first time and high heeled shoes ?and also what did he? A young me with high-yellow skin instead of black? A young me with long wavy hair instead of short? Or a not me at all. A me he was loving in Virginia because that girl Dorcas wasn’t around there anywhere was that it? Who was it? Who was he thinking of when he run in the dark to meet me in the cane field? Some-body golden, like my own golden boy, who I never ever saw but who tore up my girl as surely as if we’d being the best of lovers? Help me god, help me if that was it because I knew and loved him better than anybody except True Belle who is the one made me crazy about him in the first place. Is that what happened?⁵¹

Toni Morrison also uses inner or internal monologue, which refers to the internal dialogue or the inner voice, it is when one can hear himself talking in his head without actually speaking or forming sounds. This technique helps the characters to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings without speaking out loud; this is noticeable in the passage when Violet talked to herself by saying:

Violet is me! The me that hauled hay in Virginia and handled a four-mule in the brace, I have stood in a cane field in the middle of night when the sound of it rustling hid the slither of the snakes and I stood still waiting for him.⁵²

In addition, when reading the novel, we notice that Toni Morrison uses different voices to tell her story. The first narrator is an unknown one, we do not even know if he is a man or a woman, a white or a black person. The American literary critic and professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. sustains this idea in one of his interviews about *Jazz*: “the multiple and self-contradictory omniscient narrative voices are undetermined, it is either a male or a female, neither a young nor an old, neither rich nor poor.”⁵³ In an interview of Angeles Carabi with Toni Morrison, she answers and explains her choice of narrator by stating that “the voice is a voice of a talking book [...] I deliberately restricted myself using an “ I “ that was only connected to an artifact of the book [...] As though the book talking, writing itself in a sense.”⁵⁴ which means that Toni Morrison does not use a clear voice or an actual person within the novel, but she wants to leave the floor to the reader to finish reading the novel, and discover who the narrator is. Indeed, Lyn Neary, in an interview with Toni Morrison, declares that the latter “does not want her reader to get any comfort in knowing the personality of the narrator is a man or a woman, Black or White or a person at all.”⁵⁵ Keeping the narrator ambiguous and unknown is done in order to push the reader to read the

novel deeply and look for the teller of the story in each sentence of the novel. As a result, it is clear that the narrator is omniscient. An omniscient narrator refers to a person who has knowledge of everything in the novel, even though he is unknown, but he entirely captures the real life of the characters, describes them gives us as readers more information about them and transmits their feeling and thoughts. As the omniscient narrator states: “I watched everything and everyone and tried to figure out their plans, their reasoning, long before they do.”⁵⁶ In addition, Toni Morrison uses another narrator’s voice which is the voice of all the characters, where each one of them takes a speech to tell a part of the story, his own story. This is exemplified through Joe when he took the speech and told us his first meeting with his teenage lover Dorcas, he states:

All I know I saw her buying candy and the whole thing was sweet. Not just candy the whole thing and picture of it. Candy’s something you lick, suck on, and then swallow and it’s gone. No. This was something else. More like blue water and white flowers, and sugar in the air. I needed to be there, where it was all mixed up together just right, and where that was, was Dorcas.⁵⁷

In this sense, Toni Morrison resorts to the voice of the characters and gives each one of them a chance to tell his own story and justify his illegal and bad deeds in order to push the reader to sympathize with the characters and avoid value judgments although they committed illegal and brutal acts, because all human beings are prone to make such mistake and they are born with imperfections.

When reading Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*, we observe that the content of the novel has to do with Jazz music starting with the name of the novel. The choice of the title is made in order to make reference to the importance of this kind of music in the African American culture.

In fact, “Jazz develops a “call and response” technique that resembled a conversation.”⁵⁸ It is a compositional technique usually used in jazz music, it resembles a conversation: the call is a phrase of music, answered by other different phrases. As an illustration of call and response used in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*, Violet states:

Plenty of time I have carried the welt given me by a two-tone peckerwood because I was late in the field row the next morning. Plenty time, plenty, I chopped twice the wood that was needed into short leg and Kind line so as to make sure the crackers had enough and wouldn’t go hollering for me when I was bound to meet my Joe Trace.⁵⁹

In this regard, we may say that this kind of sentences give more beauty, value and uniqueness to her narrative, and the use of this technique as a structure constructs her novel. Toni Morrison intends to make reference to the importance of Jazz music in the African American culture and gives more value to the Afro- American literature.

2. Analysis of the characterization in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992)

Toni Morrison created the characters of her novel in order to make the world understand the physical and the psychological trauma of the African Americans in the United States of America. Through her novel, she captures the sufferings, bad experience, and the desire for safety and better life. In this part of our research paper we are going to focus on the major characters who are mainly Violet, Joe and Dorcas. Violet is described as a really skinny, dark skinned woman of fifty years old. She works as an unlicensed hairdresser and seems to be worn down by life's difficulties. She also seems to suffer from obsession, depression and loneliness. This suffering is caused by the fact that she is far from her family in the South, and she decides to not have children. Indeed the important thing she gets out is never and never have children what ever happened, no small foot would rest on another while a hungry mouth said: "Mama?"⁶⁰ Even Joe is not ready to have children because he thought that: "city life would have better without them."⁶¹

Violet finds herself alone she regrets the decision to not have children. Her husband's betrayal with Dorcas worsens their relationship. This makes her a silent and lonely woman in her marriage, as she enters a difficult psychological state. Violet's fear to lose Joe is back to her father's abandonment of the family which causes the suicide of her mother. It was a bad tragic experience for Violet, who enters in a great depression.

Because of Joe's betrayal, Violet commits a violent act by destroying the face of her husband's lover, Dorcas, with a knife. Alice Manfred who is Dorcas's aunt states:

She didn't need the name to be afraid or to know who she was: the stars of her niece's funeral. The woman who ruined the service, changed the whole point and meaning of it and was practically all anybody talked about when they talked about Dorcas's death and in the process had changed the woman's name.⁶²

The feeling of a betrayed woman raises Violet's curiosity and pushes her to know more and more about the dead girl. She tries to imitate her in her way of dressing, and dancing, even in the band of music orcas likes. Violet also starts to date another young man to make Joe jealous, the man she dates run away because of her age and dressing. This act led Violet to realize that Dorcas's personality is not suitable to her age.

Joe Trace, Violet's husband "was born and raised in Vesper in Virginia, in 1879."⁶³ Joe is portrayed as a simple and kind man, who works as a cosmetics salesman; he is an orphan and is adopted by the Williams, Rod and Frank. He gives himself the Trace's last me because as Rod Williams told him his parents disappeared without "Trace". Joe also suffers from loneliness, because of Violet's silence, as it is stated in the novel: "overtime her silence annoys her husband then puzzles him and finally presses him. He is married to a woman who speaks to her birds."⁶⁴ Perhaps this is the reason of his betrayal.

Dorcas is portrayed as a pretty teenaged girl. She was adopted by her aunt Alice Manfred, after her parent's death, "who were killed in the riots with over two hundred people. The race riots took place in East St. Louis on July 1917. Many Whites were killed."⁶⁵ The reason of these riots as some said:

The rioters were disgruntled veterans who had fought in all colored units, were refused the services of the YMCA, over there and over here, and came home to white violence more intense than when they enlisted and, unlike the battles they fought in Europe, stateside fighting was pitiless and totally without honor. Others said that they were whites terrified by the wave of southern Negroes flooding town.⁶⁶

The aunt wants to raise her niece Dorcas in a strict and oppressive way. She protects her from everything "Alice had been raising her, correcting her since the summer of 1917 [...] she worried about how to keep the heart ignorant of the hips and the head in charge of both."⁶⁷ But "resisting her aunt's protection and restraining hands, Dorcas thought of the life below the rash as all the life there was."⁶⁸ Dorcas was drawn with jazz music and dancing, two things that her Aunt Alice hates and she states that:

It was the music. The dirty, get- on- down music the women sang and the men played and both danced to, close and shameless or apart and wild. Alice was convinced and so were the Miller sisters as

they blew into cups of Postum in the kitchen. It made you to unwise disorderly. Just hearing it was like violating the law.⁶⁹

She adds: “it was not real music, just colored flock’s stuff: harmful, certainly embracing of course, but not real not serious.”⁷⁰ At the age of seventeen, Dorcas falls in love with an old married man, Joe, and she might have thought he could take the place of her dead father for a moment, and perhaps considers him as an escape from the protection of her aunt. A few months later, Dorcas betrays Joe with a younger man of her generation, and this was the cause of her tragic end and the depression of Joe after shooting her at the party.

Throughout the creation of the characters of the novel, Toni Morrison wants to capture and depict the traumatic experience of the Afro-Americans in the United States of America. We notice that most of her characters are Blacks who suffer from a ‘mental displacement, since all of them are orphans, adopted by a grandmother an aunt or a step father.

The “mental displacement”⁷¹ causes an unhappy life, instability and a sense of enslavement even in their adoptive families. All the characters suffered from a psychological trauma. According to the novel, Violet experienced her father’s abandonment of the family, which caused the suicide of her mother in the river. Joe is also an orphan, and was adopted by Frank and Rod William. “Dorcas also lived the same situation when her father was killed in the Race Riot on July 1917.”⁷² She was adopted by her aunt Alice Manfred.

3. Themes in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

To examine the themes of the novel, we have relied on the theory of New Historicism which “takes into consideration the study of the relationship of any given historical text in relation to its cultural and social context.”⁷³ As we have noted above Toni Morrison relies on her own imagination to empower the history of her nation and sheds light on the tragic experience and misery of the African American people.

This is what we find in Toni Morrison's narrative. It explores key issues connected to the African Americans society, culture and experience in the United States of America. These issues are mainly neglected by the White American writers. Toni Morrison's *Jazz* is deeply historical, it is not only about tracing and picking up historical events, but it sheds light on the major Black issues that the Afro-American people experienced in America, by using her own imagination which can help in the understanding of history. In *Jazz* the writer mainly writes about violence, crisis of identity, betrayal disillusionment, and the role of Jazz music in the Afro-American's culture.

3.1 Violence in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

Violence can be defined as a bad act which can cause destruction, pain or suffering. It is a major issue discussed in Toni Morrison's sixth novel *Jazz*, and this issue is expressed in different ways and settings in the novel.

First, it is practiced in the rural South of the United States of America before the Great Migration of the main characters of the novel as well as other African Americans. The Afro Americans in general and the characters of the novel in particular were exposed to all sorts of physical and psychological violence, especially Violet who is forced to do difficult work in the fields and plantations, as she states: “Violet is me, the me that hauled hay in Virginia and hauled a four-mule team in the brace.”⁷⁴ Indeed, she was beaten every time she was late in the field row, as she also states: “plenty time. Plenty time I have carried the welts given me by a two bone pecker wood because I was late in the field row the next morning.”⁷⁵

Second, violence is also practiced after the Great Migration when the African Americans moved from the rural South to the urban North where the narrator says: “the waves of black people running from want and violence crested in the 1890s, the 80s and the 90s but was a steady stream in 1906 when Joe and Violet joined it.”⁷⁶ The migrants were not welcomed by the Whites in the City: “they were terrified by them”⁷⁷ this is one of the causes of the riots which took place East St. Louis in 1917, as some say: “ they were Whites terrified by the waves of the Southern Negroes flooding the towns.”⁷⁸ The riots resulted in great damages and: “Over two hundred deads [...] so many Whites killed the papers would not print the number.”⁷⁹

Third, Violet in her turn committed a violent act, after she discovers her husband’s betrayal with the young girl. She goes to the funeral of the dead girl and tries to destroy and slash her face with a knife. As a result, her name becomes violent instead of Violet. Finally, as we notice the city is considered as the Promised Land for the migrants which seemed to be able to provide a better and safer life, but in reality, the city is full of violence as it is stated: “you have to understand that what is like taking in a big city: I’m exposed to all sorts of ignorance and criminality, still this is the only life for me.”⁸⁰ It is also claimed that:

Every week since Dorcas’s death, during the whole of January, February, a paper laid pair the bones of some broken woman man kills wife. Eight accused of rape dismissed. Woman and girl victims of woman commits suicide. White attackers. Five women caught. Woman says man beat. In jealous rage man.⁸¹

It means that violence is spread everywhere in the United States of America and the City is not a really place to escape violence.

3. 2 Identity Crisis in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz*

Identity is an important concept that Toni Morrison develops in her narrative *Jazz*. Before we analyze this term according to the novel, first we have to define it in general. Identity is a term that has a complex definition, and it has been demonstrated to be difficult. Stephen Lawler, author of *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* mentions that “it seems impossible to provide a single overarching definition of

the term since there are various ways of theorizing the concept, each of which develops different kind of definitions.”⁸² In other words, the term identity has different definitions, each has his/her own way to define it and/or interpret it. Although, at this position it is practical to try to give a general definition for the concept of identity

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary identity is “the set of qualities and beliefs that make one person or group different from others.”⁸³ This means that identity compasses the unique characteristics, values, experiences, and perspectives that shape an individual or a community’s sense of self. For individuals, identity can include aspects such as personality traits, cultural background, personal beliefs, and life experiences. For groups, identity might involve shared traditions, values, or social norms that create a sense of belonging among members. Essentially, identity is what makes someone or a group unique, highlighting the differences that exist in a diverse society. In addition, we create our identity by collecting features that apply to our inner and outer selves such as skin color, gender, profession, sexual preferences, religion and language. The combination of these features then distinguishes us from other people.

As an African American female writer, Toni Morrison tries to show to people, who are still making a difference between the African and the White American people, that there is no distinction between them. She also denies the existence of multiculturalism in the United States of America, and claims that there is a racial difference between people with a diverse ethnical background. In one of her interviews, Toni Morrison affirms that “literary language with her work is an instrument of national regeneration.”⁸⁴ This illustration shows that Toni Morrison writes in order to make a place for the African literature in the American literature to defend the Afro-American people and she tries to put stress on the notion of cultural pluralism instead of racial differences. In other words, Toni Morrison denies the idea of racism and tries to put an end to those differences that exist between the Afro-Americans and the White people. This is why her novel is free from white characters, wanted to give a remarkable space for the black Americans and depict the Afro- American’s realities.

The novel is also about social matters. Thus, the search for identity is one of the central subjects that Toni Morrison examines in her novel. We can notice, that the major characters in her narration such

as: Joe, Violet Trace and Dorcas have experienced loss of maternal tenderness that led them to search for their identities. In fact, Joe and Violet Trace are both victims of the trauma caused by racism. Their past lives affected their present lives in struggling to find their real identities. Because of racism, Joe and Violet Trace try to achieve wholeness, completeness, self-ownership and to search for individual sovereignty. This happened to the two characters near the end of the novel; for instance, when Felice says that she believes that Joe still loves his wife and Violet tells her that she lost herself along the way. The following examples illustrate the conversation between Felice and Violet:

We the world for if you can't make you can't make it up the way you want it?'
"The way I want it?" "Yeah. The way you want it. Don't you want it to be something more that what it is? "What's the point?" I can change it.'
"That's the point. If you do not, it will change you and it will be your fault cause you let it. I let it. And messed up my life.'
"Messed it up how?"
"Forget it.'
"Forgot?"
"Forgot it was mine. My life. I just ran up and down the streets wishing I was somebody else.'
"Who? Who'd you want to be?"
"Not who so much as what. White. Light. Young again."⁸⁵

This conversation reveals to the reader that Violet is not a crazy woman, as the other hairdresser thinks and demonstrates that her identity has been taken away from her. In addition, it shows the differences that exist between two generations of Afro-Americans before and after the Great Migration. That is to say, the first generation refers to the people who still live in the South under the terrible conditions of slavery, while the second generation refers to the one taken to the City, where they were hoping to begin a new life. However, they learn that the freedom that they are searching for cannot be found in the city because of the presence of racism. Their sad memories also stood as an obstacle to follow their lives.

Identity is also illustrated in the novel by the character of Golden Gray who also has difficulties to find peace with his identity. Golden Gray is the son of a White woman and a Black man; he grows up with questioning his identity and sense of belonging. When Golden Gray discovers that his father is a Black man, he feels that his father has polluted his identity as a white man, so he tries to kill him, but he is haunted by the idea that, even if he succeeds in killing his father; his whiteness will never be fully

recognized. He realizes that he will never be black or white; as result, he finds himself in a destroyed world.

3.3 Betrayal in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

Betrayal is another issue in *Jazz* by Toni Morrison. Most of the main characters face and suffer from betrayal. As a first illustration, there is Violet who is betrayed twice: once by her husband, Joe, who betrays her with a young girl of eighteen years old for the reason that: "her silences annoy and puzzle him."⁸⁶ The Second betrayal is the part of Malvonne, a neighbor of the Traces in Lenox Avenue. After a long conversation with Joe Trace, who convinces her to rent him her apartment, which allows him to use it as a den for his forbidden love with another woman, Joe confesses that: "Violet takes better care of her parrot than she does him. The rest of the time she's cooking pork that he cannot eat or pressing hair he can't stand the smell of [...]."⁸⁷ At the end, Malvonne accepts the request of Joe Trace and betrays her neighbor Violet, who enters in a great depression because of this betrayal. She remembers her father's abandonment and the suicide of her mother and she considers this abandonment as a betrayal of the family. Violet is not the only character that experiences betrayal, her husband Joe also enters in a same depression as his wife because of the betrayal of his teenager lover, Dorcas. The latter betrays him with Acton, a young man of her generation. As a result, Joe Trace commits a crime and kills Dorcas by shooting her at a party. Then he suffers from regret and depression:

In the spring of 1926, on a raining afternoon, anybody passing through the alley next certain apartment house on Lenox might have looked up and seen not a child but a grown man's face crying along with glass pan. A strange sight you hardly ever see: me crying so openly. It's not a thing they do.⁸⁸

Toni Morrison examines the theme of betrayal within the Black community by making reference to the fact that it is right that the first Africans brought to the United States of America originated from Africa, but the children who are the following generations are African Americans originating from the United States of America, but those Africans are not considered Native Americans; that is, it is an indirect betrayal. As it is claimed:

Some said that the rioters were disgruntled veterans fought in all colored units, were refused the service of the YMCA over there are over here, and came home to white violence more intense than when they enlisted and unlike battle they fought in Europe, stateside fighting was pitiless and totally without honor.⁸⁹

It means, the Afro-Americans' youth fought in Europe side by side with the Whites, but in their return to the United States of America, they faced a great intense of violence instead of getting their civil rights as American Citizens, which is another betrayal for the Black community.

3. 4 Disillusionment in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

Disillusionment is the concept strongly connected to the real life of the African Americans. Toni Morrison discusses this concept in relation to the main characters of her novel *Jazz*. Joe and Violet, among many African Americans who migrated to the Urban North with the hope for a better life, housing, safety, hospitality, and in order to escape violence, racism, segregation and harsh conditions of life in the South, but in reality the couple is disillusioned, because they do not find the life that they aspired to. First of all, the newcomers were not welcomed by the Whites as it is mentioned in the novel: "they were Whites terrified by the waves of southern Negroes flooding in the towns."⁹⁰ In other words, the Whites refuse to accept the migrants because they see them as inferior, threat, savages and the suitable work for them is to work in the plantations and fields with cheap wedges.

The new life that the Blacks look forward to, is very difficult to achieve under such conditions because as we have explained above, life in the City is not easy and safe like they have imagined: "Nobody says that it's pretty here nobody says it's easy, what is decisive and if you pay attention to the street plans, all laid out, the city can't hurt you."⁹¹ Adding to that, violence that they want to escape is also present in the City even with more intensity than in the South because of their dark skin, they were exposed to all sorts of horrors, criminality and ignorance, as it is shown in the narrative:

Every week since Dorcas's death during the whole of January and February, a paper laid bare the bones of broken woman. Man kills wife. Eight accused of rap dismissed. Women girl victims of. Woman commits suicide. White attackers indicated. Five women caught woman says man beat. In jealous rage name.⁹²

Furthermore, the migrants mainly, Joe and Violet, do not find an easy life in the urban North. Violet is obliged to work all day as a hairdresser and gains few dollars, while Joe had to work two Jobs during the day, he works as a salesman of cosmetics, and in the evening he works in a hotel.

In short, migration to the urban North was seen as a dream and the Promised Land for the Southern Black Americans and they want to reach it, but in reality, it is an illusion for the migrants who are not welcomed in the City. The latter is a den of violence, discrimination and racism, and life there is not easy as they hope for.

3. 5 The Role of Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

Jazz music is a very important art in the African American culture; it plays a great role to expose their tradition, culture, identity and literature. Toni Morrison in her novel *Jazz* uses Jazz music to shape her text and make reference to the importance of culture. As Jennifer Andrews claims: "Morrison uses jazz music and its rhythms to shape her text, since jazz music is a very important art that shapes the American culture and literature."⁹³

The author uses jazz music not as a musical background or decorative reference but "she wants the work, *Jazz*, to be a manifestation of the music intellect, sensuality, its history, its range and its modernity."⁹⁴ Morrison's use of music, songs and voice is deeply connected to the African American traditional aesthetic or artistic forms.

Indeed, the use of music in her fiction interplays between the shape of the text and the content of the novel. By making reference to the importance of jazz music and the Afro-American culture and relating *jazz* to the language used in the novel, this gives a specific rhythm to the sentences when hearing and reading them. As it is cited in the introduction of ' *Essays on Works of Toni Morrison's Jazz* ' which is published in 2014: "through the use of music in her fiction, Morrison points the fact that mechanisms of embodied consciousness are also deeply connected to music as it is revealed by the interplay between the form and the content in her work."⁹⁵

Toni Morrison remembers when her mother sang, the way other people muse. A constant background drift of sound that Toni Morrison took for granted like oxygen. For her, Jazz music is important as oxygen, Morrison adds that: "Like the music that came to be known as "Jazz", she took from everywhere, knew everything, gospel, classic, blues and hymns."⁹⁶

More than that, music in this novel is described both in positive and negative ways. On the one hand, it is used as a tool for the Afro-American people to express themselves freely, in the other hand, it is expressed negatively. One of the most striking and clear examples in *Jazz*, when Violet and Joe Trace migrated from the rural South to the urban North for the want of freedom and to experience new life, they feel free even before they arrive to the City. Their freedom starts strongly when they are on the train, from Vesper (Virginia) to the City. The influence of Jazz music is exemplified in the novel by the fact that the couple spend half of their way to the city dancing on the train, by hearing the imaginary music found in their minds, as it is argued in the narrative:

Joe stood up, his fingers clutching the baggage rack above his head. He felt the dancing better that way, and told Violet to do the same. They were hanging there, a young country couple, laughing and tapping back at the track.⁹⁷

Jazz music is also used in the novel as a means of expressing freedom and civil rights. This is illustrated by the march or the protest of 1917 which was held by the African Americans. It was an answer to the violent riots that took place in East Saint Louis that occurred in 1917. It was a silent march and the only sound heard in the protest was the beat of the drums. We notice that the music has been used as a means of protestation and request for their freedom and civil rights. In contrast, the jazz music is seen as a disapproval tool which is exemplified in the novel by Dorcas's aunt, Alice Manfred. Although Alice finds herself sympathizing with the African Americans who ask for their rights, she fears that this music can destroy the principles of her community and create more hostility among the White and Black people. Alice is persuaded that:

[T]he music was getting worse and worse with each passing season the Lord waited to make Himself known. Songs that used to start in the head and fill the heart had dropped on down, down to places below the sash and the buckled belts. Alice thought the lowdown music had something to do with the silent black women and men marching down Fifth Avenue to advertise their anger over two hundred dead in East St. Louis, two of whom were her sister and brother-in-law, killed in the riots.⁹⁸

It means that Alice Manfred fears from this music, which probably results in real danger for her community, because her niece Dorcas is killed at her young age at a party where jazz music is mostly played.

To sum up in this chapter, we have examined Toni Morrison's sixth novel *Jazz* from a literary perspective. In fact, we have discussed the way the author constructs her narrative by recording real facts and experiences of the African Americans in the United States of America. The first part of this chapter examines the major narrative techniques that Toni Morrison used in terms of plot and structure of the novel. Her unique style of writing attracts and pushes us to go deeply in her fictional work. The second part of the chapter provides a deep analysis of the main characters of the novel that are strongly connected to the real status of African Americans' tragic and traumatic experience in the United States of America. The third part sheds light on the key issues that Toni Morrison tackled in the novel in relation to the issues concerning the Black people and their experience in the United States of America, both in the rural South and the urban North such as: violence, struggling for their identity, betrayal, disillusionment and the role of jazz music in self-expression, freedom and civil rights experience.

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- ⁸⁸Ibid, 49.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid, 30.
- ⁹¹ Ibid, 57.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Ibid, 8.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid, 74.
- ⁹⁵ Jennifer, Andrews. *Reading Toni Morrison's Jazz: Rewriting of the Tall Tale and Plying with the Trickster in the White American and African- American Humor Traditions*. (*Canadian Review of American Studies*, 1999), 87-188.
- ⁹⁶Toni, Morrison. *Jazz*, (New York: Vintage, 1992), Foreword.
- ⁹⁷Krestin, W Shands and Giulia, GrilloMikrut. *Living Language Living Memory: Essays on the Works of Toni Morrison*. (Sweden: Elanders, 2014), 9.
- ⁹⁸Toni, Morrison. *Jazz*, (New York: Vintage, 1992), Foreword.

V. Conclusion

This dissertation discusses historical and artistic fiction in Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992). The novel emphasizes the most important historical moments in the history of the Afro-American people and their presence in the United States of America, as it focuses on the key issues related to the traumatic experiences of the Black American society and culture. Toni Morrison resorts to real historical facts to construct her fiction by using her own imagination in recording the African American history and social issues. In our analysis of the novel, we try to study the major historical facts mentioned in the narrative and examine the aesthetic, the beauty and a Morrison's use of her own imagination to construct her work.

The first chapter has focused on the important events from history such as the Great Migration (1906), the 1917 East St. Louis riots, The Harlem Renaissance (1920), and the Roaring Twenties (1920) which had great influence in forming the American history in general and the African American one in particular. The second chapter examines the novel from the literary perspective through which we attempt to shed light on Toni Morrison's unique style and analyze the major narrative techniques she used to construct her fiction. We also provided a deep analysis of the characters that the author has created in her work, which are strongly connected to the African American urban life. Moreover, we highlight the key issues that Toni Morrison tackled in her narrative in relation to the African American experiences which are violence, African Americans' identity crisis, betrayal, disillusionment, and the role of jazz music in self-expression, freedom and civil rights expression.

Toni Morrison, in her novel *Jazz* writes about historical, social and cultural matters in which she exposes the historical realities and the experience of the Black Americans that are represented in a fictional work, in intent to expose the wilderness of the African American culture and history. Overall, through our analysis of this novel, we have come to conclude that Toni Morrison's fictional work is about revealing a period in African American life through specific lens.

At the end of this dissertation, we would like to remind that in addition to our analysis on the issue of historical facts and artistic fiction by Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, further research may be carried out on Toni Morrison's literary works on different other issues, since Toni Morrison is known as a very talented

African American author who plays a great role to empower the Black American people and demonstrate the worth of Afro-American literary and artistry heritage

VI. Bibliography

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