

From Rupture to Reconnection: Migration, Memory, and Culture in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

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Abstract

Jazz demonstrates Toni Morrison's meditations on the historical, social, and cultural event of the Great Migration in the United States during the early decades of the twentieth century. Set in the 1926, the heyday of the Harlem Renaissance, however, the narrative of *Jazz* seldom refers to blacks' artistic and cultural achievements of the time and instead focuses on the ordinary lives of its black characters, who migrate to Harlem in pursuit of better conditions. Through the depiction of the characters' spiritual and marital crises, *Jazz* probes into the impacts of this geographical relocation on African American lives. In the novel, Morrison portrays the Great Migration as a time of rupture and suggests the need of historical and cultural (re)connection for her black characters to resituate themselves in the North. Therefore, this thesis deals with the process from rupture to reconnection in the lives of the characters in *Jazz* and explores Morrison's use of memory and black oral traditions in the novel in an attempt to clarify the author's abiding concern with African American history and culture.

Key words: historical connection, cultural connection, migration, memory, representation of history, oral tradition, self and community