


[Main Page](#)
[Contents](#)
[Print View](#)
**Éva Gyetvai**
**Rethinking American Exceptionalism: Trees of Life in Morrison's *Jazz***

Éva Gyetvai is a teaching PhD student at the Department of American Studies, Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: [eva.gyetvai@t-online.hu](mailto:eva.gyetvai@t-online.hu)

The systematic looting of language can be recognized by the tendency of its users to forgo its nuanced, complex, midwifery properties for menace and subjugation. Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.

– Toni Morrison, Nobel Lecture, December 8, 1993

David Ryan in a recent essay on rhetorical devices and photographic manipulation of public opinion by US foreign policymakers in the wake of 9/11 quotes Archbishop Rowan Williams's article, "End of War." Archbishop Williams recalls the moment when the significance of the right choice of language occurred to him while answering the phone soon after the suicidal terrorist attacks had destroyed the Twin Towers in New York City and damaged the Pentagon in Washington D.C., killing thousands of civilians and service personnel. The voice called the Archbishop in Welsh, which he could speak well. Under the weight of the recent calamities in the US and the official rhetoric of bullying revenge following them, he, however, hesitated to respond in Welsh because "he knew if he responded in Welsh, the conversation would continue in that language" (Ryan 6).

It seemed a telling metaphor at that particular moment. Violence is a communication, after all, of hatred, fear, or contempt, and I have a choice about the language I am going to use to respond. If I decide to answer in the same terms, that is how the conversation will continue. (Williams 267)

US Administration chose to respond in the violent language of military retaliation to the violent call of terrorism. After years of bleeding, code-switching appears ever more impossible, and the ideals of American exceptionalism seem to be running amok globally. In its desire for code-switching from violent to non-violent communication in US foreign policy making, Ryan and Archbishop Williams's "telling metaphor" of call and response echoes Toni Morrison's earlier urge for scholars and artists to embrace language that is aware of its subtle oppressive qualities ("Nobel" 269) and to "develop nonmessianic language to refigure the raced community, to decipher the deracing of the world ("Home" 792).

In this essay, I will argue that in *Jazz* Morrison develops her non-messianic, nonviolent language most daringly by the remaking of the violent, racist, hand-me-down lynching lexis into the nonviolent, non-racist language of everyday use for private and public matters, while still retaining its race-specific drawl. *Jazz* achieves to mobilize the vocabulary and spectacles of institutionalized lynching of black people without ever presenting an actual lynching scene. Instead, the themes of lynching, jazz, and love are intertwined in it through the repetitive recombination of the textual elements of lynching imagery and through the reconfiguration of lynch trees as trees of life in order to remake a potential narrative hope for union, peace, and love for Joe and Violet Trace. With the insights offered in *Jazz*'s historiographic fiction,<sup>[1]</sup> I will suggest a rethinking of US exceptionalism – the messianic narratives of which seem to have been begging the same hope for union, peace, and love for all of us on this planet under American/US

moral, political, and economic leadership.

As both historical documents and literary texts demonstrate, code-switching – whether between violent and nonviolent, racist and non-racist, or messianic and non-messianic language and performance – has been an existential survival demand (call) as well as a creative practice (response) in African American cultural experience.<sup>[ii]</sup> Olaudah Equiano’s legendary account of his experience of “the violence of the African trader, the pestilential stench of a Guinea ship, the seasoning in European colonies, or the lash and lust of a brutal and unrelenting overseer” (Equiano 14) is among the first texts that describe the enslaved Africans’ sense of linguistic, geographical, and cultural loss and “astonishment” at the “magical” ways of European slave traders, whom he first expected to eat or sacrifice him (Equiano 18). The institution of seasoning of would-be American slaves fresh from Africa shows that European traders and their American customers also perceived of these allegedly dangerous cultural differences based on ignorance Equiano describes in his *Interesting Narrative*. Most enslaved Africans brought to the New World, came to the American Colonies after a period of seasoning in the Caribbean islands because the Europeans who had settled in there were reluctant to import their slaves directly from Africa as they believed that Africans were brutal, cannibalistic savages, whose presence would jeopardize the safety and security of their new homes. Instead, they tended to buy slaves who had already been trained and broken; that is, seasoned.<sup>[iii]</sup> Ironically, the practice of seasoning both forced and taught Africans to keep switching codes relentlessly between their African and American consciousnesses in order to survive. The recognition of and theorizing about this initial demand and need for enslaved Africans to switch between traditions (African tribal and American plantation), selves (free and enslaved), and languages (tribal and English) is another dynamic view of W.E.B. Du Bois’s concept of “double-consciousness” (Du Bois 615). When at a conference celebrating the publication of Cornell West’s *Race Matters*, Morrison reads Du Bois’s observation about double-consciousness as “a strategy, not a prophecy or a cure” (Morrison, “Home” 792), she appears to embrace a similarly dynamic vision of African American racial experience.

W.E.B. Du Bois’s observation about double consciousness is a strategy, not a prophecy or a cure. Beyond the dichotomous double consciousness, the new space this conference explores is formed by the inwardness of the outside, the interiority of the “othered,” the personal that is always embedded in the public. In this new space one can imagine safety without walls, can iterate difference that is prized but unprivileged, and can conceive of a third, if you will pardon the expression, world “already made for me, both snug and wide open, with a doorway never needing to be closed.” (Morrison, “Home” 792)

Morrison’s explicit words here repeat what *Jazz* enacts: the need for scholars, students, writers, and readers to stop envisioning literature and “academic life as straddling opposing worlds or as escapist flight” by carving away the “sheer malevolence embedded in raced language so that other kinds of perceptions were not only available but were inevitable (Morrison, “Home” 789). What can or should a scholar of American Studies then do to remain both free and situated?

### **The Ethics of Looking and Telling**

To demonstrate some ways Morrison’s fiction may empower her colleagues and readers “how to resist acts of racial persecution today without sowing illusions or being drawn into the rhetoric of a racist and undemocratic system” of US exceptionalism (Apel 475), Dora Apel’s eye-opening review of the *Witness: Photographs of Lynching from the Collection of James Allen and John Littlefield* exhibition series<sup>[iv]</sup> will serve as an initial critical, creative, and conceptual framework to think about our scholarly positions as students of American Studies. Besides Apel’s visual-cultural insights on racial power relations manifested in the dialectic of *looking* and various *denials of looking* at lynching spectacles and in exhibition halls (457–469) and as revealed in the *uses and abuses* of lynching memory in contemporary US (469– 475), I will also follow the literary scholar Philip Page’s and the historians Carl Pederson’s and Philip Fisher’s arguments proposing that involuntary passages have determined the course of the formation of African American cultural consciousness to reinvent a past and a future and to forge a cultural identity.

Page's, Pederson's, and Fisher's cultural–historical hypotheses mutually reinforce one another and fly straight into the face of [1] the frontier myth energizing the grand narrative of US exceptionalism, held mainly responsible for [2] a missionary sense and puritan rhetoric of American moral superiority among nations. By recalling the language and imagery of lynching and slavery, Morrison's novels (mainly *Beloved* and *Jazz*), along with the *Witness* exhibitions, appear to shake the third formative narrative of US exceptionalism: [3] the ethos of republican hope. This particular exceptionalist scheme claims that the US Republic will last for ever unlike any other republics in history, because Americans are democratically inclined in their minds and hearts, and also because it was American intellectuals and statesmen of the American Revolution (War of Independence) who put the egalitarian philosophies of the European Age of Reason into social practice. [v]

In “On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11,” Apel makes clear that anybody (Morrison and I, too) using lynching narratives and/or lynching imagery for intellectual, political, or aesthetic purposes gambles with history and with the dignity of millions of (black and white) people at very high stakes. First, I can risk assuming either the positions of the white executioners and onlookers in the postcards or of the photographer's viewing position, seemingly neutral but as immoral as that of the “white killers or voyeuristic spectators who turn to face the camera and the hanging, burned, and/or bullet-riddled black bodies” (458). Despite the recognition of my manipulative and potentially belittling power as a later-days commentator, in agreement with Apel, I must deter myself of not looking, which was my very first reaction to what I could see in these picture postcards of spectacle lynching and read in *Beloved* and *Jazz*. Apel credibly elaborates on the impasse in evaluating the photographer–commentator's role:

The photographer who records the gruesome spectacle is implicated as rendering a service to the lynching community through the taking, reproduction, and sale of lynching postcards as commemorative souvenirs that record the race-color-caste solidarity and lethal “superiority” of the white community. But the passing of time, the changing contexts for the presentations of the photographs, and our own subject positions change how we perceive the photographs. Most of us reject the complicity implied in assuming the position of the photographer and recognize a much different issue at stake today in this legacy of representation, namely, the responsibility of historical witnessing. The photographer renders a service to history. (459)

The author's urge for “responsibility of historical witnessing” (ethics of looking) – the will to “rememory” the past – is very much in tune with what Morrison is trying to accomplish in and by her creative as well as theoretical work; most notably in *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, *Playing in the Dark*, “Nobel Lecture, and “Home:” the ethics of telling.

### **The Flight from the Lynchtrees: Birds of Migration**

In *Jazz*, the background historical facts [vi] and the fictional characters interact, and together relate to the narratives of US exceptionalism. The novel is set in the time of the so-called Great Migration, when the sight, sound, touch, and smell of slavery and lynching were still deeply ingrained in – and had effectively formed – both Black and White cultural consciousness of racial power relations in America. Joe and Violet Trace board the Southern Sky to get to the City (New York) in 1906. The story is related in the winter and spring of 1926 in Harlem with vivid memories going back to and coming up from the Post-Reconstruction South. (Though the novel covers the larger period between 1855 and 1926.) [vii] For Joe and Violet, parallel to the urge to search for a place of their own is the urge to search for an acceptable past of their own. This need of temporal and spatial mobility creates the novel's narrative structure, while re-enacting the melodic structure of jazz. The one extra-literary point the novel thus brings to mind instantly is the possibility that migration and jazz have a lot in common and can say more about African American cultural–historical experience than the myth of the frontier at the heart of American exceptionalist narratives can. By this key notion of the frontier, here I will primarily mean the freedom to leave behind any miserable place in an anticipation of a better future. [viii]

As Philip Page in the preface to his *Reclaiming Community in Contemporary African American*

*Fiction* reminds us of Margaret Atwood's proposition, every country and civilization may have a "unifying and informing symbol: "for Canada, it is survival; for the U.S. the frontier (Page 1). The frontier was the creative edge of the ideal "democratic space" by which, according to the historian Philip Fisher, the U.S. invented its national identity (72). Fisher goes on to say that for the narrative of the frontier to work, movement should be free, voluntary, and apparently beneficial to the individual in motion. Arguably, spatial, horizontal, and, in general, physical, mobility in American civilization has been the key to vertical, upward socioeconomic mobility (Schlesinger 1942) or success, and to freer political as well as artistic self-expression. Fisher convincingly argues that the U.S. was founded on the principles of an open, transparent grid on which each individual was assumed to be free to move to any node: in addition to "representation, the essential features of a continuous and democratic social space were the absence of limits, openness to immigration and expatriation, [and] internal mobility" (Fisher 74). Among the many realities that have caused this model to be an unrealized American dream, or a haunting nightmare to many, black slavery is "clearly the most radical contradiction possible" – concludes Fisher (87). [\[ix\]](#)

In Page's prompt explication, the frontier then had two incompatible meanings: one for European Americans and another one for African Americans. Beginning with the Middle Passage, movement for Africans (and African Americans) was not free but forced: neither was it a pursuit of a dream nor did it bring about a rebirth in a new time. Instead, it meant expulsion from African time – circular and inclusive – to European time – linear and alienating (Page 1–3). In other words, emigration was not an optimistic pursuit for a new home but the almost unbearable loss of home, community, family, and identity (Du Bois 613–619). By quoting Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* ("We were landed up a river ..."), Houston A. Baker Jr. asserts:

Moved to introspection by apparent "blankness" that surrounded him, the black, southern field slave had scarcely any a priori assumptions to act as stays in his quest for self-definition. He was a man of the diaspora, a displaced person imprisoned by an inhumane system. He was among alien gods in a strange land. ... For the black slave, the white externality provided no ontological or ideological certainties; in fact, it explicitly denied slaves the grounds of being. (Baker 244)

For young Olaudah, and for millions of others sharing his fate, the American African Diaspora thus stands for the end of freedom, for the loss of perspective. Chattel slavery meant the slaves' exclusion from history, and it threatened them with social and physical annihilation. For slaves, America did not mean the chosen rejection of an undesired space but the forced eradication of a desired one. For them, in America, there was no desired place either where they were or anywhere else; that is, there was no desired frontier. As reversal of the American myth of the frontier, movement for most slaves was not a chosen quest but a forced passage. Page boldly proposes: "the unifying symbol for African American culture is not the frontier but their passage itself" (2). In this sense, Violet and Joe are two vulnerable migrating birds; birds of passage with a confused sense of bearing who keep fleeing from one troublesome perch to another, switching codes all the time. *Jazz* starts and ends with strong bird imagery and action. At the beginning, Violet sets her tropical caged birds free out of window in the cold January weather in New York whereas at the end, a new bird pleurably makes itself at home with them. Among other things, these birds in *Jazz*, may stand for Violet and Joe's migrant life of coerced flights (moves, changes) and irrepressible desire for nesting (home), and also symbolize southern rural African Americans' disoriented search (via attempts of 'self-seasoning') for a bearable living place in northern urban housing.

The idea that passage is the informing symbol of African American experience has many implications. For one thing, both the Middle Passage and the Great Migration had double consequences: first, slaves were denied their African past; and then, ex-slaves had to repress (forget and "disremember") their slave pasts simply to get on with living. Because of these passive or active denials of looking back into old space and time – in agreement with Page's thesis – African American identities have historically been unsettled and kept in their transitory condition: constantly replaced, misplaced, and displaced in literal as well as figurative passages from one attempted identity to another (Page 3). Violet and Joe also leave the segregated South with its unbearable sharecropping country, Jim Crow legislation, and Ku Klux Klan atrocities in a hope to find a "democratic social space" in the City: an integrated space where people could act "on a first-come first-serve basis" (31). Both Joe's and Violet's migrant lives of many places and changes (Joe changes eight times, once too many) appear to uphold the premise that involuntary

passages have determined the course of African American cultural becoming. Here is what Joe says about the circumstances of their farewell to Dixie:

“Then I got a job laying rail for the Southern Sky. I was twenty-eight years old and used to changing now, so in 1901, when Booker T. had a sandwich in the President’s house, I was bold enough to do it again: decided to buy me a piece of land. Like a fool I thought they’d let me keep it. They ran us off with two slips of paper I never saw nor signed.”

“I changed up again the fourth time in 1906 when I took my wife to Rome, a depot near where she was born, and boarded the Southern Sky for a northern one. They moved us five times in four different cars to abide by the Jim Crow law.” (126–127)

Joe and Violet seem to have hoped for a better future up in the North (in the City). Morrison does not explicitly say whether the push or the pull factors triggered the Great Migration, though. Despite the narrator’s brief musing over the historical causes of successive waves of northern migration in the 1880s–1890s and well into the first decades of the 1900s’ (30–36), the detailed life-shots are what eventually convince the reader that migrating black people were rather “running from want and violence” (33) in the South than merely hoping for greater economic prosperity and more comfortable living in the North.

In Violet’s life story section (89–114), just as throughout the whole novel, Morrison masterly mixes tiny personal things, local anecdotes, and historical events to consider what were the things they “had not been able to endure or repeat” before leaving their homes en masse.

What was the thing, I wonder, the one and final thing she had not been able to endure or repeat? Had the last washing split the shirtwaist so bad it could not take another mend and changed its name to rag? Perhaps word had reached her about the four-day hangings in Rocky Mount: the men on Tuesday, the women two days later. Or had it been the news of the young tenor in the choir mutilated and tied to a log, his grandmother refusing to give up his waste-filled trousers, washing them over and over although the stain had disappeared at the third rinse. They buried him in his brother’s pants and the old woman pumped another bucket of clear water. Might it have been the morning after the night when craving (which used to be hope) got out of hand? When longing squeezed, then tossed her before running off promising to return and bounce her again like an Indian-rubber ball? Or was it that chair they tipped her out of? Did she fall on the floor and lie there deciding right then that she would do it. Someday. ... What could it have been, I wonder? (101)

The national historical fact of the Rocky Mount hangings in 1888 stands side by side some local ballad-like stories of atrocities Rose Dear heard of and together with the account of her private humiliation in her own house. Not only does the narrator (within Violet’s mind) wonder about what might have made Rose Dear commit suicide, but this short passage also implies that it was rather “craving [gotten] out of hand” than “hope” that had black people make a final decisive move to pass away: depart or die.

Reinforcing Page’s hypothesis of passage being the most informative unifying symbol for African American experience, Carl Pederson similarly claims: “the Middle Passage is arguably the defining moment of the African-American experience” (225). Pederson reasons that from the Diaspora and the Middle Passage, to being sold down the river, to northward journeys to freedom, to westward and urban migrations, African Americans have been forever on the move: forced or pressured into one passage after another in an attempt to find a bearable place in the land. Harlem (and Lenox Avenue in it) of the 1910s and 1920s was one of those bearable physical places compared to the ones they left behind. Here, there seemed to be both room and place for black folks:

Breathing hurts in weather that cold, but whatever the problems of being winterbound in the City they put up with them because it is worth anything to be on Lenox Avenue safe from fays and the things they think up; where the sidewalks, snow-covered or not, are wider than the main roads of the towns where they were born and perfectly ordinary people can stand at the stop, get on the streetcar, give the man the nickel, and ride anywhere you please, although you don’t please to go many places because everything you want is right where you are: the church, the store, the party, the women, the men, the

postbox (but no high schools), the furniture store, street newspaper vendors, the bootleg houses (but no banks), the beauty parlors, the barbershops, the juke joints ... (10)

The remarks in parentheses on the lack of high schools and banks in the black neighborhood imply that although Harlem, and the North in general, meant relieved life to many migrants, still some key public institutions were strikingly unavailable to African Americans. In addition to financial and educational disadvantages, as Dorcas's life shows, institutions of both public emergency care and of legal protection were reluctant to relieve African American needs.

When Dorcas's mother burns to death in their house during the East St. Louis race riot in 1917, the fire brigade refuses to come (38–39). When Dorcas is lying shot and dying, although Felice calls the ambulance, they cannot get there on time allegedly because of the heavy snowfall (209–210). Though Dorcas is murdered with eyewitnesses around, her aunt Alice “didn't want to throw money to helpless lawyers or laughing cops when she knew the expense wouldn't improve anything” (4). Her case is not tried before court. Not only is she orphaned biologically – both her parents were murdered in the East St. Louis Riot – but also socially, which really signifies the ways some public spaces remained impenetrable for African Americans in the urban North. The unavailability of these public interiors limits Dorcas's movements in life as well as makes her final passage from life to death somewhat grotesque and awkwardly involuntary.

African American migrants' access to the North, then, also meant struggle over public spaces: physical (hospital, bank, school) and virtual (health, savings, learning). *Jazz* shows and makes inseparable three characteristic forces of this hazy though subversive penetration process in the 1910s and 1920s: [1] memories and fresh news of southern lynching, [2] proliferation of race riots in northern cities, and [3] spread of jazz.

### **Jazz: Sounds and Smells of Order and Disorder**

Jazz opens space for African American urban presence: it signifies change, danger, desire, love, and hope in the novel. It connects past and present; relates the rural to the urban; kneads a country sharecropper and an urban employee into a Harlemit; and blends the rustic and the mechanical: channels the back-woods African American into New York Modern. It is like weather, elemental and changeable: “[Up] there, in that part of the City – which is the part they came for – the right tune whistled in a doorway or lifting up from the circles and grooves of a record can change the weather. From freezing to hot to cool (51).

Jazz is the music of passage from one state of being to another. On the one hand, to Alice and the Miller sisters, it is dangerous, disruptive, and aggressive: full of “complicated anger [and] a kind of careless hunger for fight” (59) and sex. While watching the 1917 anti-lynching march in Fifth Avenue and holding the hands of her niece whose parents were victims of the East St. Louis race riot a couple of days earlier, Alice thinks jazz has caused all that violence: it just makes you want to break the law.

No. It wasn't the War and the disgruntled veterans; it wasn't the droves and droves of colored people flocking to paychecks and streets full of themselves. 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. ... It made you do unwise disorderly things. Just hearing it was like violating the law. (58)

At the Fifth Avenue march, however, there is no sound other than the drums. To Alice, drums grow to signify order and hope: “fellowship, discipline, and transcendence” (60). She nevertheless feels that it is also “impossible to keep the Fifth Avenue drums separate from “the belt-buckle tunes vibrating from pianos and spinning on every Victrola” (59) in the vice districts as well as every street in Harlem. These two sounds – orderly and disorderly – keep resonating in her mind while she tries to “balance” her living. She is trying to hold on to the drums “like a rope cast for rescue” (58) but she also hears the songs whose lyrics are as “greedy, reckless, ... loose and infuriating” as their tunes. Yet, they are “hard to dismiss because underneath, holding up the looseness like a palm, are the drums that put Fifth Avenue into focus” (58).

For Joe and Violet, on the other hand, jazz acts as a focalizer of love and hope for reunion in the

City. At the end of their story, they clumsily yet eagerly begin dancing together to it, just as they did when they “danced up” to the City on board of Southern Sky twenty years ago (31), “running from want and violence” (33) but also in an anticipation of a better future. After that, they dance separately. Joe dances in the street when the 369 Regiment marches along Fifth Avenue on Armistice Day in 1919 (129) and later watches Dorcas dance before he shoots her at a Harlem party. Violet decides to learn the dance Dorcas was so good at after she violates her corpse at the funeral (5). Readers learn from Felice how the elderly couple gradually revive their caring relationship to the rhythm of jazz floating into their living room through the open window (214–215) – the window that Alice cautiously keeps shut (59). Even their new bird – a nature symbol of their rural past as well as of their flight from there – eventually makes itself at home in their Lenox Avenue apartment house thanks to that music. So do Joe and Violet.

... So if neither food nor company nor its own shelter was important to it, Violet decided and Joe agreed, nothing was left but music. They took the cage to the roof one Sunday, where the wind blew and so did the musicians in shirts billowing out behind them. From then on the bird was a pleasure to itself and to them. (224)

Listening to the healing tunes the street musicians play recovers the bird’s appetite, its desire for food. Likewise, Violet and Joe recover their desire for talking and listening to each other. While for Alice and the Miller sisters, who may represent African American urban middle class, jazz and dancing to it also show and promote promiscuity (monstrous sexual appetite), because it brings black flesh, perspiration, smell, and touch to the fore, into motion, to Violet and Joe, this music helps “figuring things out, telling each other those little personal stories they like to hear again and again” (223). Jazz is instrumental in the satisfaction of their desire for self-expression rather than in their sexual gratification. Because of this new order in their home, their past traumas also seem to resolve. Joe lets his elusive hunt-obsession for Wild-Dorcas take the solid shape of a bird outside the window in the darkness while “Violet rests her head on his chest as though it were the sunlit rim of a well” (225). The recollection of the well here is no longer a gruesome reminiscence of “Rose Dear or the place she had thrown herself into – a place so narrow, so dark” (100–101). The image of the well Rose Dear jumps into to kill herself in 1892 (99–101) refigures in Violet’s fearful “private cracks” (22–23) in the narrative present; but now, Joe is her anchorage against the “pull of a narrow well:” exactly the way he was when they first met under “their” tree in 1893 (104).

### The Perch: Trees of Life

When Violet meets Joe, they have a fresh row about who owns the tree they happen to be in and under at the edge of a cotton field. Here is an excerpt from their sassy dialogue.

“You sleep in trees?”  
 “If I find me a good one.”  
 “Nobody sleeps in trees.”  
 “I sleep in them.”  
 “Sounds softheaded to me. Could be snakes up there.”  
 “Snakes around here crawl the ground at night. Now who’s softheaded?”  
 “Could’ve killed me.”  
 “Might still, if my arm ain’t broke.”  
 “I hope it is. You won’t be picking nothing in the morning and climbing people’s trees either.”  
 “I don’t pick cotton. I work the gin house.”  
 “What you doing out here, then, Mr. High and Mighty, sleeping in trees like a bat?”  
 “You don’t have one nice word for a hurt man?”  
 ”Yeah: find somebody else’s tree.”  
 “You act like you owned it.”  
 “You act like you do.”  
 “Say we share it.”  
 “Not me.” (103–104)

When morning comes, however, the tree is already theirs rather than his or hers.

She grew anxious when she heard workers begin to stir, anticipating the

breakfast call, going off in the trees to relieve themselves, muttering morning sounds – but then he said, “I’ll be back in *our* tree tonight. Where you be?” [emphasis added.]  
 “Under it,” she said and rose from the clover like a woman with important things to do. (105)

The tree belongs to both of them, just as they belong to the same tree of life. In the course of the narrative, told from different perspectives, readers gradually learn that actually Joe’s and Violet’s two separate trees of life are one. Joe’s and Violet’s life stories were mythically connected in the past through the legendary “golden boy” (Golden Gray) story, and may be connected through Felice and jazz in the future. The narrative structure of the novel thus generates a hope for reunion of Joe and Violet, because their lives were started and can be told in one story.

Joe’s and Violet’s trees of life and the character map of the novel show that Golden Gray and Felice are the two characters to whom all other characters are somehow related in both trees. With regard to the past, Violet’s story and Joe’s story merge in Golden Gray’s almost mythic figure. Violet grows up listening to True Belle’s tall tales about Golden Gray’s legendary beauty, whereas Joe is born in the Vienna hut of Henry Lestory, Golden Gray’s ex-slave father. True Belle, Violet’s grandmother and Golden Gray’s freed slave mammy, sends Golden Gray to Lestory. What is more, Golden Gray takes Wild to Lestory’s farm. On his way there, he comes across a wild-acting woman in labor. He picks her up, takes her to Lestory’s, names her “Wild,” covers her bleeding body with a green dress, and is present at Joe’s birth (if the child is Joe at all). Later, Henry Lestory teaches Joe how to hunt, and Joe repeatedly tries to hunt down Wild to ask her whether she is his mother or not (36, 175–178).

As a direct sequence to his last hunt in 1893, just before he meets Violet at their tree, the story of how he hunts down Dorcas in 1926 is focalized from Joe’s point of view. The two themes suddenly join and flow on together: for a while, neither the reader nor Joe really knows who Joe is after. The most striking image that connects the two hunts (for Wild and for Dorcas) is a green dress Dorcas is wearing at the party and the green dress Golden Gray covers Wild with (161, 169) some fifty years ago in the Lestory hut in Vienna.

... A green dress. ... Also, a pair of man’s trousers with buttons of bone.  
 Carefully folded, a silk shirt, faded pale and creamy – except at the seams.  
 There, both thread and fabric were a fresh and sunny yellow.  
 But where is she? (184)

Who? Wild or Dorcas? Or both? Joe could have only seen for sure that green dress on Wild at the moment of his own birth: Wild in labor and Golden Gray looking and helping. The two women melt into one in Joe’s imagination and/or memory (166–184). The mythic union between Violet and Joe through Golden Gray’s figure is then performed in a perfect narrative synthesis by relating Joe’s thinking just before shooting Dorcas-Wild. He spots Dorcas in the green dress dancing with Acton wearing clothes like Golden Gray does at Joe’s birth. Violet’s tree of life and Joe’s tree of life may become one at their mythic roots. The presence of Golden Gray in their stories and the actual words that describe his appearance and deeds are as instrumental in Joe’s imagination as they are in Violet’s. This textual recombination presents a narrative hope for a thematic one in the novel for Violet and Joe: shared tree – shared story – shared life.

After exploring the narrative significance of Joe and Violet’s shared tree of life bears, I will focus on my other argument claiming that the language describing lynching spectacles and race riots black people have suffered and the language describing a hope for improved living conditions, social security, and personal happiness are used interchangeably in *Jazz*, where lynching lexis being the hand-me-down linguistic legacy of the South.

### **Liberation and Love: Sights and Smells of Lynching Spectacles Reconfigured**

Historical precedents of spectacle lynching further unsettle the belief in an inherently republican American nation that is democratically inclined by nature largely due to the (supposedly) shared frontier experience of its people. In addition to and in congruence with the Page-Fisher-Pederson theses of the frontier/liberty/westward expansion vs. passage/slavery/migration paragon, the institutionalized practice of ritualistic lynching spectacles during the Reconstruction Era, Gilded

Age, and Jazz Age is another challenge to the narratives of American exceptionalism.

For a credible textual proof in the novel, I have to recall where I started out and what has been said so far: viewing lynching picture postcards and our anxiety of looking or not looking, the push and pull factors of the Great Migration, post-bellum racial violence both in the South and in the North up until the 1960s, the circumstances of Rose Dear's suicide, and Alice Manfred' watching the Fifth Avenue march in 1917 while holding Dorcas's hand and then hearing the inseparable sounds of the orderly drums and disorderly jazz ever after.

There had been none of that [jazz] at the Fifth Avenue march. Just the drums and the Colored Boy Scouts passing out explanatory leaflets to whitemen in straw hats who needed to know what the freezing faces already knew. Alice had picked up a leaflet that had floated to the pavement, read the words, and shifted her weight at the curb. She read the words and looked at Dorcas. Looked at Dorcas and read the words again. What she read seemed crazy, out of focus. Some great gap lunged between the print and the child. She glanced between them struggling for the connection, something to close the distance between the silent staring child and the slippery crazy words. Then suddenly, like a rope cast for rescue, the drums spanned the distance, gathering them all up and connected them: Alice, Dorcas, her sister and her brother-in-law, the Boy Scouts and the frozen black faces, the watchers on the pavement and those in the windows above.

Alice carried that gathering rope with her always after that day on Fifth Avenue, and found it reliably secure and tight – most of the time. Except when the men sat on windowsills, fingering horns, and the women wondered “how long.” The rope broke then, disturbing her peace, making her aware of flesh and something so free she could smell its bloodsmell; made her aware of its life below the sash and its red lip rouge. (58)

Alice's reflection on how current race riots and jazz are correlated recycles some of the vocabulary describing the elements of lynching spectacles: white men in straw hats looking ignorantly yet interested, rope cast in, frozen black faces watching from a distance, sudden sight and smell of flesh, blood smell, life below the sash, red lip. Out of these verbal elements of an ordinary lynching event, Morrison creates a description of a well-organized event of African American protest against lynching, as well as alludes to a language of frenzied freedom articulated in and perpetuated by jazz. These expressions also convey Alice's hope for personal balance, which is expressed in her understanding of “rope” as a means of gathering, rescue, and security rather than a means of mooring down, capturing, and hanging agonizing bodies on tree branches. Morrison describes a protest against lynching without representing any concrete lynching image in the passage. Readers do not get to read what is in the leaflet after all, but they still know. The words, expressions, and syntax the narrator conjures out of Alice's thoughts, however, yield a lynching scene right there, on the very same page. Alice observes the present march but perceives of the past riot. Words of lynching thus mobilized in her consciousness come easy to her but startle the reader, because Alice's mind converts that vocabulary to enunciate something good, something hopeful and necessary for life to go on then and there. Alice, although she cannot help thinking in the language of racial violence and suffering, reshuffles and remakes it to recreate a language of hope and black liberation struggle.

Next time, the language of lynching figures notably in the charming account of how Violet and Joe fall in love. They meet while picking cotton in Palestine. Joe, like a strange fruit, drops beside Violet from the walnut tree she prepares to sleep under. Now, we need to read a longer passage of Morrison's masterly weave of narrative, which will enable us to see the ways Violet's story distills and reshapes the elemental vocabulary of lynching into the teasing language of love and belonging, still preserving its recognizable ingredients, though.

... when a man fell out of the tree above her head and landed at her side. She had lain down one night, sulking and abashed, a little way from her sisters, but not too far. Not too far to crawl back to them swiftly if the trees turned out to be full of spirits idling the night away. The spot she had chosen to spread her blanket was under a handsome black walnut that grew at the edge of woods bordering the acres of cotton ... (103)

...  
His name was Joseph, and even before the sun rose, when it was still hidden in the woods, but freshening the world's green and dazzling acres of white cotton against the gash of a ruby horizon, Violet claimed him. Hadn't he fallen practically in her lap? Hadn't he stayed? All through the night, taking her sass,

complaining, teasing, explaining, but talking, talking her through the dark. And with daylight came the bits of him: his smile and his wide watching eyes. His buttonless shirt open to a knot at the waist exposed a chest she claimed as her own smooth pillow. The shaft of his legs, the plane of his shoulders, jawline and long fingers – she claimed it all. She knew she must be staring, and tried to look away, but the contrasting color of his two eyes brought her glance back each and every time. She grew anxious when she heard workers begin to stir, anticipating the breakfast call, going off in the trees to relieve themselves, muttering morning sounds – but then he said, “I’ll be back in our tree tonight. Where you be?”

“Under it,” she said and rose from the clover like a woman with important things to do. (104–105)

Here we find the lynching elements that were missing in the previous scene: the nigger in the Southern tree – a strange fruit hanging like a bat, hurt with a broken bone, dropping because the rope that secures him to the branch broke, and burning in the rising morning sun’s ruby.

This passage (with Rose Dear’s and Alice’s as textual backdrops to it) evokes the lyrics of Billie Holiday’s blues, “Strange Fruit,” and the sceneries in the picture postcards displayed at the *Witness* exhibitions. The associations do not come as easy now as they do while reading Alice’s stream of thoughts at the Fifth Avenue march, because there the connections between suffering lynching and the hopeful struggle against it are more direct (expressed in the image of “rope cast for rescue”) than here, where the verbal reminiscences of lynching imagery are more hidden and abstract. Nonetheless, the ingredients are the same: young black man, strong tree, rope, fire, “pastoral scene,” refreshing Southern breeze; black, red and white; buttonless open shirt, exposed chest, shaft of legs, plane of shoulders; bits of him; staring and trying to look away, mesmerizing eyes; stirring, muttering sounds around; the memory of Rose Dear’s twisted dead body; fear of killing and death.

Yet, “our tree” now is a shelter to sleep in and under, a likely place of perch and nesting; the rope is to secure the sleeper so that he would not fall and to tie the couple together; the red (color of blood and fire) is the ruby of the morning sun in the horizon shedding light on the attractive details of Joe’s handsome body; the “bits of him” are desirable body parts full of life rather than splintered dead flesh lying around to be picked up for souvenir; and the burning is in the fire of awakening love. Joe’s eyes are wide open rather than “bulging” and his mouth is smiling rather than “twisted” while the fear is the fear of breaking up a fresh sense of belonging. The buttonless open shirt exposes Joe’s chest, which Violet claims “as her own smooth pillow” (105). Violet’s fear of death disappears when she claims him, all of him, in the morning after a long night’s journey of talking and teasing into day. This tree is a lifetree not a lynchtrees. The black male, who used to be the most likely target of white lynching mobs once upon a time in America, is presented as beautiful and charming now.

### Free and Situated

If Morrison fills the empty sign of ‘slave’ in *Beloved* with meanings, she fills the empty sign of ‘lynched black male’ with meanings in *Jazz* for sure. On national scale, from a more political perspective, what Morrison achieves in *Jazz* is to show and demolish the racist construct of American society and nation embedded in language. As she asserts in the conference speech delivered after she had just written *Jazz* and while she was working on *Paradise*, in *Jazz*, she

... tried to locate American modernity as a response to the race house. It was an attempt to blow up its all-encompassing shelter, its all-knowingness, and its assumptions of control. In the novel I am now writing, I am trying first to enunciate and then eclipse the racial gaze altogether. (Morrison, “Home” 790)

*Jazz* is then part of her larger vocation evolving around questions of the hazards of making a living in a racist house while trying to convert it into a nonracist home; that is, writing in racist language to produce a race-specific yet non-racist text.

How to be both free and situated; how to convert a racist house into a race-specific yet nonracist home. How to enunciate race while depriving it of its lethal cling? They are questions of concept, of language, of trajectory, of

habitation, of occupation, and, although my engagement with them has been fierce, fitful, and constantly (I think) evolving, they remain in my thoughts as aesthetically and politically unresolved. (Morrison, "Home" 790)

Her political and aesthetic efforts of rewriting that house into home, she believes, has global significance in our day, when racist narratives seem to bless wars waged on every continent. Although Morrison does not explicitly call attention to US involvement in these wars, but in the mid-1990s, it was obvious and it is even more obvious in 2003, when Dora Apel publishes her *Witness* exhibition review or in 2004, when David Ryan recollects Archbishop Williams's dilemma of the right language of political and personal response after 9/11. What can or should a scholar of American Studies do to remain both free and situated?

Apel warns that to use slavery and lynching narratives negligently may also lead to "the flattening out" of their meanings (Apel 474) by an immature acceptance of the current US rhetoric of "the war on terrorism" and by a shortcut conceptualization of other forms of "extralegal execution, [like] gay bashing, police brutality, and anti-Arab persecution" (Apel 473). What scholars can/should do, then, is rather try to represent and scrutinize ways of lynching representations in their own "past and present histories" (Apel 474). If we fail to do that, we may end up giving a hand in forming post-9/11 narratives of US exceptionalism using lynching narratives to support the government's violent racist antiterrorist rhetoric.

While the lynching photographs today constitute a form of protest and resistance against the history of lynching and its contemporary effects, Bush and Aschcroft's rhetoric of terrorism only reinforces the ideology of white supremacy and further, American nationalism, which is still inherently defined as white, male, Christian, and heterosexual. (475)

"On Looking" hence opens our eyes to the problematic situation the popularity of lynching images and narratives may cause today. Apel is also quick to point out that instead of deflating the supremacist narratives of American exceptionalism by showing how the spectacular performances of "lynching carnivals" (Apel 469) obliterate the morally superior condition the protagonists of the American Dream have enjoyed, we may end up reinforcing that very same narrative. However, she hastens to quote Mark Bauerlein, warning that the reasons one might be disinclined enough to show such photographs "are outweighed by the importance of showing how people who otherwise believed in basic democratic principles turned into self-exonerating murderers" (Apel 466).

*Jazz* was published in 1992 among such theoretical works as *Playing in the Dark*, "Nobel Lecture," and "Home;" all of which call attention to the unifying roles of a denied "Africanist presence" in both US society – thriving on the ideals of US exceptionalism – and literature. In a 1989 interview with *Time*, Morrison voices her life-long experience according to which the key to become an American and to keep the country whole has always been the unanimous rejection of black people by immigrants.

If there were no black people here in this country, it would have been Balkanized. The immigrants would have torn each other's throats out, as they have done everywhere else. But in becoming an American, from Europe, what one has in common with that other immigrant is contempt for me – it's nothing else but color. Wherever they were from, they would stand together. They could all say, "I'm not that." So in that sense, becoming an American is based on an attitude: an exclusion of me. (Morrison, *Conversations* 255)

This author of *Jazz* sounds rather antithetical to the unifying narratives of the frontier and the premises of republican hope. Even so, instead of brooding over racial discrimination and belonging to "the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a lowdown dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it" (Hurst 1009), Morrison explores ways and portrays possibilities of the creative remaking of US racial and literary history of expulsion through "[converting] a racist house into a race-specific yet nonracist home" (Morrison, "Home" 787) in her fiction.

I believe, students of American Studies may learn from Toni Morrison about how to be both free and situated without embracing racist, violent, or propagandistic rhetoric. *Jazz* enables a sort of creative 'counter-seasoning' of the narratives of US exceptionalism, while "counterracism [is]

never an option” (Morrison, “Home” 787) in Morrison’s texts, because she knows if she responded in racist language, the conversation would continue in that language. The trees of life in *Jazz* are rooted into the shattered flesh and the splintered bones of real black people, though. *Jazz*, like *Beloved*, openly brings them back; it commemorates them. Alas, no wonder Morrison’s trees are yielding bittersweet crop, bearing (in our minds) the juicy fruit of lynching and love at once.

## Notes

[i] *Jazz* could be read as a neo-slave narrative, a migration narrative, or even as a modernist novel, too, but this reading now is not focusing on genre classification issues. Postmodern historiographic fiction and neo-slave narratives do have a lot in common, though, I think. I mean, for example, Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* (1990) is both a neo-slave narrative and a postmodern historiographic novel. It is possibly the case with Ernest Gaines's *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971), Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada* (1976), Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986), and Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) as well. These novels use fragments of history as their organizing force and blend other facts with fiction just as fugitive- and ex-slave narratives do. Just think of William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1851). In many ways, *Clotel* is both a historiographic novel and a fugitive slave narrative. In "Who Set You Flowin'?" *The African-American Migration Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Farah Jesmine Griffin argues that *Jazz* is a migration narrative. Four migratory moments describe best the narrative tradition Griffin explores: "the migrant's connection and/or lack thereof with the "ancestor;" the migrants experience with and as "the stranger;" the migrants negotiation of "the urban landscape;" and the fourth, the moment always already in progress, the migrants "consideration of the sophistication of modern urban power [...] ... evaluation of the consequences of migration and urbanization, and ... vision of future possibilities" (4).

[ii] In *The Contemporary African American Novel: Its Folk Roots and Modern Literary Branches*, (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), Bernard W. Bell develops an African Americentric vernacular theory of culture and identity that is rooted in African Americans' socio-historical, socio-cultural, and socio-psychological double-consciousness and "the code-switching or blending of Standard American English (SAE) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and tropes" (xv). He further asserts that "[the] manner and degree of code-switching of novelists between the pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar of AAVE, especially its distinctive idioms, sayings, and cultural commonplaces, and SAE in the imaginative construction of identities of African Americans is therefore one important area of analysis for assessing the agency, as well as the authenticity and authority, of black American novelists, their characters, and their texts" (43–44). In Bell's terminology of code-switching, I argue that through complex maneuvers of code-switching from violent to nonviolent diction and imagery, *Jazz* performs a remaking of images and language of spectacle lynching (historically ingrained into many American minds) into the language of social liberation, romantic love, and belonging.

[iii] Any Internet search engine will show hundreds of reliable sources on "seasoning slaves."

[iv] *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Ed. Hilton Als et al., Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000) explores the exhibition at the Roth Horowitz Gallery and the collected photo postcards of Mr. James Allen of Atlanta, Georgia. Spectacles of actual real life lynchings are captured with photos and full historical documentation of the events. There are 98 plates of lynching pictures viewing the victims and the people surrounding them. The last document is from 1960.

[v] According to Dorothy Ross in her entry "American exceptionalism" in *A Companion to American Thought* (Ed. Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg, Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1995), the notion of "American exceptionalism" – the idea that the United States of America occupies a place in history significantly different from that of any other country in the world – may have three enduring characteristic narratives about the American experience: [1] puritan faith in America's holy mission in the New World and in the whole world; [2] republican hope, which expresses the belief in the US Republic to live for ever unlike other republics in history because Americans are democratically inclined in their minds and hearts, and also because it was American intellectuals of the Enlightenment era who put the philosophies of the European Age of Reason into social practice; and [3] liberal expectations of economic expansion enabled by as well as further enabling the triumph of the common man, the democratic legacy of the frontier experience, and a sense of a homeland of limitless opportunities (22–23).

[vi] 1870 – 1890s: the Great Migration culminates; 1888: Rocky Mount hangings; 1901: Booker T. Washington has breakfast at the White House; 1917: race riots in East St. Louis; July 1917: anti-lynching march on Fifth Avenue in New York City; February 1919: Armistice Day Parade in New York City.

[vii] In 1855, Vera Louise Gray, pregnant with a mulatto child (Golden Gray) of Henry Lestory (Hunters Hunter) moves to Baltimore and takes along True Belle, mother of Rose Dear, who is Violet's mother. At that time, Rose Dear is eight years old. On 1 January 1926, Joe Trace shoots Dorcas Manfred; Dorcas's funeral is on January 3, when Violet stabs her face; and Violet visits Alice Manfred in March. The story ends sometime in May 1926.

[viii] Henry Nash Smith in *The Virgin Land: The American West as Myth and Symbol* (1950) claims, "one of the predominant theorizations of American identity – grasped in part by people like Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, and Walt Whitman – is explicitly expressed in Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 "frontier" hypothesis; namely, that American society has been shaped by the westward pull of a vacant continent." I am aware of the complexity of the notion of the frontier and of the risk I am taking by reducing its significance to this single assertion. I am also aware of the many critiques and mutations this concept has enjoyed or suffered. Patricia Nelson Limerick in her entry in the Fox-Kloppenber *Companion to American Thought* gives a very instructive summary of how the concept of the frontier has changed its meanings for scholars since Turner, but, at the same time, its popular understanding somewhat has remained the same, evoking its primary meaning as a border and its secondary one as a place of clash (255–259). Ray Allen Billington emphasizes the standardized zonal character of the frontier. He proposes that the frontier consisted of "a series of contiguous westward-migrating zones, each representing a different stage in the development of society from elemental to complex forms:" namely the zones of the fur traders, cattlemen, miners, pioneer farmers, equipped farmers, and the urban pioneers (256). Jack D. Forbes hopes to conceptualize the frontier as a zone of cultural encounter as opposed to Turner and Billington's concept of the edge of the westward movement. At this zone of cultural interaction, different processes of intercultural contacts happened, such as acculturation, assimilation, miscegenation, conquest, imperialism, and colonialism. He believed that in seeing the frontier as a place for cultural encounter, the faith in US exceptionalism would fade a little and US history could be read and written just as another chapter in world history, nothing exceptional (257). Twenty years later, in the early 1980s, Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson came up with a new definition of the frontier. They would have loved to see the frontier "not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpretation between two previously distinct societies" which struggle over hegemony there (257–258). This definition, I think, is the closest to our everyday understanding of the term. On the one hand, we may historical-mindedly say that the frontier was a place where European Americans and Indians met and fought for domination. On the other hand, we can be more metaphorical, and say that the frontier is a border between peoples and between two people, or a place of political, economic, social, scientific, or racial, or even gender contest (259). None of these deliberations seem to undermine the thesis that the notion of the frontier primarily has meant to many Americans and foreigners alike the freedom to leave behind any miserable place in a hope for a brighter future.

[ix] Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X neatly point out this contradiction in "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" (1852), "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963), and "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1964), respectively. By showing the inconsistencies *between* the governing principles spelled out in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution *and* the actual political practices in the U.S.A. of their own times, they all emphasize the inertial immobility or the involuntary journeys black people are forced into. African Americans neither enjoy some desired places of their own (a potential springboard) nor have the income that could enable them to move (on) freely. While Douglass's antislavery speech culminates in expressing his hope that the liberal principles of the Declaration of Independence eventually will prevail, and King believes in the power of love that could enable all Americans to join the national dream of freedom in their own ways, Malcolm X rather calls for a violent and immediate awakening from the nightmare African Americans are obliged to dream in segregated America.

#### Works Cited

- Als, Hilton, et al. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000.
- Apel, Dora. "On Looking: Lynching Photographs and Legacies of Lynching after 9/11." *American Quarterly*. 55.3 (2003): 457–79.
- Baker, Houston A. Jr. "Autobiographical Acts and the Voice of the Southern Slave." *The Slave's Narrative*. Ed. Charles T. David and Henry Louis Gates Jr.. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. *Questia*. 5 March 2006 <<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=96297455>>.
- Bell, Bernard W.. *The Contemporary African American Novel: Its Folk Roots and Modern Literary Branches*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004.

- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 1903. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. 613–740.
- Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. 1789. *African American Mosaic: A Documentary History from the Slave Trade to the Twenty-first Century*. Ed. John H. Bracey, Jr. and Manisha Sinha. Vol. 1. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458: Prentice Hall, 2004. 4–19.
- Fisher, Philip. “Democratic Social Place: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency.” *The New American Studies: Essays from Representations*. Ed. Philip Fisher. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. 71–89.
- Fox, Richard Wightman, and James T. Kloppenberg, eds. *A Companion to American Thought*. Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1995.
- Griffin, Farah Jesmine. “Who Set You Flowin’?” *The African-American Migration Narrative*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. *Questia*. 5 March 2006 <<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=94450783>>.
- Holiday, Billie. “Strange Fruit.” *The Billie Holiday Collection*. E.U.: Galaxy Music. 1999.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. “How It Feels to Be a Colored Me.” 1928. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997. 1008–1011.
- Morrison, Toni. “Home.” 1994. *New Bones: Contemporary Black Writers in America*. Ed. Kevin Everod Quashie, Joyce Laussch, and Keith D. Miller. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458: Prentice Hall, 2001. 781–93.
- . “Nobel Lecture.” 1993. *Toni Morrison: Critical and Theoretical Approaches*. Ed. Nancy J. Peterson. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. 267–273.
- . Interview. “The Pain of Being Black: An Interview with Toni Morrison.” By Bonnie Angelo. *Time*. 22 May 1989. *Conversations with Toni Morrison*. Ed. Danielle Taylor-Guthrie. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1994. 255–261.
- . *Jazz*. London: Chatto and Windus, Random House, 1992.
- Page, Philip. *Reclaiming Community in Contemporary African-American Fiction*. Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi, 1999. *Questia*. 1 May 2004 <<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=11172464>>.
- Pederson, Carl. “Middle Passages.” *Massachusetts Review*. 34 (1993): 225–39.
- Ryan, David. “Framing September 11: Rhetorical Device and Photographic Opinion.” *European Journal of American Culture*. 23.1 (2004): 5–20.
- Schlesinger, Arthur M. “What Then Is the American, This New Man?” 1943. *AHA Presidential Addresses*. American Historical Association. 2000. 8 May 2005 <[http://www.historians.org/info/AHA\\_History/amschlesinger.htm](http://www.historians.org/info/AHA_History/amschlesinger.htm)>.
- Smith, Henry Nash. “Prologue: Eighteenth Century Origins.” *The Virgin Land: The American West as Myth and Symbol*. 1950. *Hypertexts*. Ed. Eric J. Gislason. February–March 1996. American Studies Group at The University of Virginia. 8 March 2005 <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/HNS/prologue.html>>.
- Williams, Rowan. “End of War.” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. 101.2 (Spring 2002): 267–278.



Some rights reserved. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.5 License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/).