Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of American Culture and Literature

ECHOES OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE: URBAN LANDSCAPE AND JAZZ MUSIC IN TONI MORRISON'S *JAZZ*, WALTER DEAN MYERS'S *HARLEM SUMMER* AND PERSIA WALKER'S *BLACK ORCHID BLUES*

Serkan Yıldız

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2019

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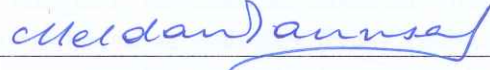
KABUL VE ONAY

Serkan Yıldız tarafından hazırlanan "Echoes of The Harlem Renaissance: Urban Landscape and Jazz Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers's *Harlem Summer* and Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 20 Haziran 2019 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



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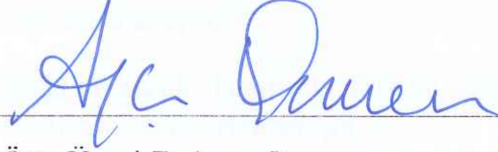

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ETİK BEYAN

Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Cem KILIÇARSLAN danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

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ABSTRACT

YILDIZ, Serkan. *Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance: Urban Landscape and Jazz Music in Toni Morrison's Jazz, Walter Dean Myers's Harlem Summer and Persia Walker's Black Orchid Blues*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2019.

The Great Migration of the 1910s in the US resulted in a concentration of African American population in the North, which gave way to a considerable demographical change that took place especially in Harlem, New York. The migrants who fled from the South due to severe racial discrimination and economic problems saw the new urban environment as a cultural mecca for African American literature and arts, and the artistic and literary movement that defined this attitude was called the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro movement. Distinctively African American forms of art in music and literature emerged as the new forms of self-expression for the discriminated and segregated community, which suffered in the hands of the Southern landowners before the migration.

To reemphasize the inspirational legacy of African American modernity in the 1920s together with the conflicts and problems, this thesis aims to analyze Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992), Walter Dean Myers's *Harlem Summer* (2007) and Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) in regards to music and urbanization. Chapter I of this study will focus on the structure of language and plot personified as jazz music and the cityscape in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*. Chapter II will analyze jazz music and the city as reflected on the historical consciousness of the characters in Myers's *Harlem Summer*. Chapter III will focus on jazz music and urban landscape as a state of mind that reflects the human condition of the Harlem Renaissance period in Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues*. All three novels, however different they may be in their methods and means of presentation of jazz music and its landscape, share a common ground in their representation of jazz music and landscape as formative powers in the making of the cultural atmosphere of the era. Although the Harlem Renaissance seemingly disappeared in the Great Depression era starting from 1929s, it continued to live in the imaginations of new generation of novelists as an inspirational subject revisited in the 1990s and the 2000s.

Keywords: The Harlem Renaissance, African American modernity, jazz music, urban landscape, Toni Morrison, Walter Dean Myers, Persia Walker.

ÖZET

YILDIZ, Serkan. *Harlem Rönesansı'nın Yansımaları: Toni Morrison'nın Jazz, Walter Dean Myers'ın Harlem Summer ve Persia Walker'ın Black Orchid Blues Romanlarında Kent Coğrafyası ve Caz Müziği*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2019.

1910'larda Amerika'da gerçekleşen Büyük Göç ülkenin kuzey eyaletlerinde o zamana kadar hiç görülmemiş büyüklükte bir Afrikalı Amerikalı nüfusunun toplanması ile sonuçlanmıştır. Bu gelişme, New York şehri ve özellikle şehrin Harlem bölgesinde kayda değer bir demografik dönüşüme yol açmıştır. Şiddetli ırkçılık ve ekonomik problemler nedeni ile ülkenin Güney bölgesinden kaçan bireyler bu yeni kent ortamını Afrikalı Amerikalı edebiyat ve sanatının merkezi olarak görmüşler ve bu sanatsal ve edebi akımın ortaya çıkardığı tavra Harlem Rönesansı adı verilmiştir. Edebiyatta ve müzikte ortaya çıkan Afrikalı Amerikalı kültürüne özel sanat formları uzun zamandır güneyli toprak sahipleri elinde acı çeken, ırkçılığa ve ayrımcılığa uğramış bireyler için bir kendini ifade aracı haline dönüşmüştür.

Harlem Rönesansı'nın geride bıraktığı ilham verici geleneği bütün çelişki ve problemlerini de içine katarak yeniden ele almayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, Toni Morrison'nın *Jazz* (1992), Walter Dean Myers'ın *Harlem Summer* (2007) ve Persia Walker'ın *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) adlı romanlarını müzik ve kent yaşamı çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Tezin ilk bölümü caz müziğinin ve New York şehrinin Toni Morrison'nın *Jazz* adlı romanında dilsel ve kurgusal olarak nasıl temsil edildiğini incelemektedir. İkinci bölüm ise, Walter Dean Myers'ın *Harlem Summer* romanının Afrikalı Amerikalı tarih bilinci ışığında şehir ve caz müziği kavramlarını nasıl işlediğine odaklanmaktadır. Çalışmanın üçüncü bölümü Persia Walker'ın *Black Orchid Blues* romanının caz müziği ve kenti bir "halet-i ruhiye" olarak nasıl ele aldığını ve bu ruhsal ve toplumsal durumun Harlem'deki insanlık hallerini nasıl yansıttığını ele almaktadır. Bu üç eser—caz müziği ve kent konusunu ne kadar farklı yöntemlerle ele almış olsalar da—dönemin kültürel atmosferinde caz müziği ve kenti önemli bir biçimlendirici güç olarak temsil etmişlerdir. Harlem Rönesansı, 1929'un Büyük Buhranı'ından sonra etkisini yitirmiş gibi görünse de, 1990'lar ve 2000'ler boyunca yeni nesil roman yazarlarının hayal güçlerin işgal etmeyi ve Afrikalı Amerikalı deneyiminin ilham için ziyaret edilen entelektüel bir boyutu olmayı sürdürmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Harlem Rönesansı, Afrikalı Amerikalı modernitesi, caz müziği, kent coğrafyası, Toni Morrison, Walter Dean Myers, Persia Walker.

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INTRODUCTION

Harlem, I grant you, isn't typical - but it is significant, it is prophetic.

(Locke, "Enter the New Negro" 630)

As a starting point, it must be stated that the Harlem Renaissance was the first era when the artistic and cultural heritage of the African American community in the US were recognized intellectually. The role the Harlem Renaissance plays as a milestone in African American social and cultural life is recognized by many critics, such as Houston Baker Jr., Henry Louis Gates Jr., Cary D. Wintz, Maria Balshaw and A. Saadi Simawe thanks to the fact that it led to the recognition of African American artists from different layers of the society. However, the Harlem Renaissance was the result of a long process. Gilbert Osofsky, in his article "Symbols of the Jazz Age: The New Negro and Harlem Discovered," manifests that the intellectuals of Harlem actually waged war against Anglo-American thought and faith which were considered superior at the time (230). Therefore, the 1920s in the US was a painful era for the African American community and also a struggle against the well-established cultural and geographical codes. Harlem, a racially distinctive community, did not conform to the usual stereotypes of Anglo-American urban culture and societal codes, thereby leading to a revolution that aimed to form a new culture which was both distinctively African and American at the same time.

Although a myriad of literary works were produced at that period, it was not only literature that contributed to the outbreak of such a social movement but also music that the community produced. What helped the music of African American people—which was to be named "the blues" afterwards—thrive was their roots in the South, which helped them establish a medium of expression in music, which, in return, would also have an impact on their future struggles to build an identity in an urban environment (Tracy, *Hot Music* 192). One of the contributing factors to this was the continuous migration of the African American population to the northern regions of the US

following the Civil War (1861-1865). The contribution of urban landscape to this new artistic and cultural movement cannot be underestimated since the new cultural and physical space gave African Americans a new cultural and artistic atmosphere where they can discover new horizons by experimenting with new forms and shapes of music and means of expression (Balshaw 4, 6). Therefore, the impact of the Harlem Renaissance should also be analyzed and investigated under the field of cultural studies along with the literary movement that it created.

As Cary D. Wintz, in his book *Black Culture and the Harlem Renaissance* (1996), explains, majority of the African American population was concentrated in the rural South before 1910 (13). However, the developments that took place in the South during the first quarter of the 20th century led to the urbanization of the same population group, thereby creating a change in its sociological and demographic dynamics. From a cultural perspective, one of the effects of migration to the northern cities, especially to New York, was that the influx that created the base for the urbanization of a population, which was confined primarily to the rural South up until that time, also helped create an experience of modernity for the African American individual. As the cultural critic Marshall Berman puts it in *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (2010): “The contemporary desire for a city that is openly troubled but intensely alive is a desire to open up old but distinctively modern wounds once more. It is a desire to live openly with the split and unreconciled character of lives, and to draw energy from our inner struggles, wherever they may lead us in the end” (171). The African American experience in the urban centers was formed by this same sentiment, and this very same sentiment became a determining factor in the formation of the Harlem Renaissance. The inevitable conflict between customs, traditions and practices of the rural South and the new, “modern,” practices of the urban North became the modern dilemma of the African American individual. Bearing this in mind, one of the main subjects that will be analyzed in this study is how the experience of modernity in Harlem, New York emerged, evolved and matured through the reception of music that was produced by African Americans.

When the huge waves of immigration and the role of New York as the ultimate destination for immigrants from all around the world are taken into account, it becomes

obvious that Harlem also represented a similar experience for black migrants moving to New York, especially to Harlem. As James Edward Smethurst notes, before the main influx of black migration, Harlem was mainly populated by German Americans, who similarly immigrated to Harlem during the 20th century white flight[1] and Harlem only had a scattered population of black residents (*The African American Roots* 9). However, Cary D. Wintz suggests that, at the turn of the 20th century, Harlem was seen as a city within a city and the capital of the race by the famous African American literary figure, James Weldon Johnson (1887-1938), who intentionally titled his book *Black Manhattan* (1930) (23). It is apparent that Harlem, in that sense, was seen as an integral part of New York rather than a distant slum.

French Jesuit and scholar Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), uses a mythological reference to describe the feeling of dwelling in a city, especially New York, Manhattan, where Harlem is located. De Certeau forms a parallelism between the experience of climbing to the top the World Trade Center and the myth of Icarus and Daedalus in mythology (92). Icarus, in Greek Mythology, was a character who tried to escape from a labyrinth in which he was kept together with his father, Daedalus. Daedalus built wings made out of wax for his son and himself to fly out of the labyrinth but his son Icarus, despite his father's warnings, flew too close to the sun and the wax melted and he fell and drowned in the sea. De Certeau associates the excitement that Icarus had during his flight with standing on the top of a skyscraper and observing the city. However, he also describes the condition of being down on the street as being trapped in a labyrinth (de Certeau 92). A conclusion that one can draw from these two mythological references is that the urban experience and music for the African American community in Harlem were stimulating and cautionary at the same time. This condition can also be examined according to de Certeau's views on "walking in the city" as an act of composing an "urban text," within which the social dynamics, network and the hustle and bustle of the city are encoded (93). This supports the view the individual who is mapping out the city on foot is not a passive member of the urban crowd but with the rest of the crowd, helps form a bigger whole through his/her own

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[1] A term that describes the movement of Anglo-American populations out of racially and culturally diverse regions to form racially homogeneous communities within themselves (Woldoff 213).

personal contribution to the "urban text" by inhaling and experiencing the city first hand. It can be said that the African American community in the 1920s contributed to this "urban text" both on a personal level and communal level through Harlem's cultural and artistic output.

The importance of music and urban experience in African American cultural movement in the 1920s is apparent in the literary works of writers who are retrospectively looking at the Harlem Renaissance as a source of inspiration. The fact that it demonstrated what could be achieved through arts and literature became an impetus for these writers, who also accepted that the Harlem Renaissance was the most recognized arts movement in spite of some claims that it was a failure (Dunn and Hutchinson 446). It can be argued that the Harlem Renaissance became an inspiration for other literary critics and the new generation of writers to come. In order to comprehend the impact of the Harlem Renaissance on the generations through the 1990s and the 2000s, it is important to look at the novelists who approach the era from different literary perspectives, by taking the literary and cultural framework mentioned above into consideration.

The Harlem Renaissance came to be condemned and vilified by certain critics for failing to achieve some literary, artistic, cultural and racial improvements that the community was expecting at the time. As David Levering Lewis, in his book *When Harlem Was In Vogue*, puts forward, the Great Depression acted only as a facilitator for the inevitable failure of the Harlem Renaissance (305). Ernest Julius Mitchell II explains that critics such as Richard Wright, Benjamin Brawley, Nick Aaron Ford and Robert Bone counted lack of Marxist views or an art that embraced the common people in Harlem and white patronage among the reasons that brought the end of the movement (660). These reasons seem to have contributed to the decreasing popularity of African American literary and artistic "vogue" at the time. However, what these authors might have missed was the growing influence of the movement on younger generations as the heated discussion of "failure" continued. Mitchell also adds that the Harlem Renaissance transformed itself into an intergenerational movement which inspired writers from the generations after so many decades despite the claims that it was a failure (640). As a result, those discussions led the following generations to look back into the Harlem Renaissance and form their own opinions.

Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992), Walter Dean Myers's *Harlem Summer* (2007) and Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) choose to handle the themes of urban experience and African American urban music as fundamental elements to revisit the most important artistic movement in African American history, the Harlem Renaissance. The proof for this can be seen in the literary works of the writers mentioned above since the period of the Harlem Renaissance was deliberately chosen as the setting. Moreover, the aura and atmosphere of the period are represented in these writers' fiction with a specific focus on urban landscape in the city of New York and its close interaction with the first "unique American musical product" to emerge in the US, which is jazz (Cassidy 34). Thus, the three works that will be analyzed in this study are valuable sources for the African American experience of modernity since they present the perspective of novelists who, through the setting and the soundtrack of the Harlem Renaissance, reenact the zeitgeist of the period by presenting different literary and contextual perspectives. In spite of the fact that the African American experience of the 1920s comes with its own predicaments, its role in forming African American modernity is obvious. Therefore, it is also crucial study the fictional works of the novelists who retrospectively recreate the experience of Harlem as modernity by blending historical facts and their own perspectives. In order to understand the perspective of the novelists mentioned above, the historical events that led to the Harlem Renaissance should be explained.

Historical Background: The Harlem Renaissance and Its Roots

As defined by Cary D. Wintz, the Harlem Renaissance is a term given to the incidents that took place and figures that lived between the 1920s and the 1930s, which is generally associated with the artistic and literary movement that contributed to the African American cultural awakening through cultural recognition of African American arts and lifestyle (2). Wintz adds that the Harlem Renaissance was also a state of mind that was shared by a number of writers and intellectuals who saw Harlem as the center of their artistic activities (2). When Wintz's ideas are taken into consideration, it can be argued that the Renaissance cannot be put into the confines of a certain time period as it is also a state of mind that transcends place and time, but the roots of the Renaissance

lay in a certain place and time in history. In order to understand how the Harlem Renaissance came to be what it is, an understanding of certain historical developments is necessary.

The end of the American Civil War (1861-1865) marked a new phase in the history of the US as it would change the demographics and the status of the labor force drastically. The African American population in the South had been working as slaves in plantations and different agricultural facilities for so long that the South and slavery had become actually synonymous with each other. Moreover, even after they were emancipated, the African American population continued to suffer in the hands of the plantation owners who would pay them "slave wages" to work on their farms, and this did not improve their conditions any further when compared to the times of slavery. After the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), the African American population started to migrate to the northern states where they could find jobs easily since the South was socially and economically devastated by the Civil War. However, the pace of migration, which tended to be slower until the 1900s, started to increase with some developments that took place at the turn of the century. Cary D. Wintz points out that *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) Supreme Court decision, which officially legitimized public segregation, and a series of race riots in the first quarter of the 1900s became push factors for the African American population (6, 7). Hence, the deterioration in the economy and racial conditions can be viewed as the biggest contributors to the migration. A population that had been confined to the plantations and the countryside left their homes in search of a new experience in the cities all around the US. Wintz also explains why the North was such a popular destination for the migrants and suggests that the North was mystified and mythologized by the southern blacks as a place of refuge where equality and racial justice were in practice (15). Wintz also claims that the reason for migration to the North was driven by an economic depression experienced in the South in 1914 and 1915 (14). However, what he sees as the biggest pull factor for African Americans is the advertising by black magazines like *The Defender,* which presented the North as the place of economic boom where job opportunities were relatively higher in number than those in the South (15). Nonetheless, as Wintz adds, the life in cities did not turn out to be as promising as it seemed for most African Americans living in ghettos (24).

Thus, the factors that led to the Great Migration was a combination of economic and racial problems of by the African American community. Two of the reasons that caused the economic condition in the South after the Civil War to deteriorate were the cotton boll weevil, which was an insect that fed on cotton balls, and the flooding in the lower South in the summer of 1915. The damage caused by these factors resulted in increasing unemployment among blacks working in the cotton industry. In addition to the devastating impact of these two developments, the outbreak of the First World War (1914) had made the conditions even worse with the soaring food prices in the South (Wintz 14). In the first years of the cotton famine (1915), the number of jobs was limited and competition for skilled jobs was harsh. Despite the fact that the South possessed lands that were rich in natural resources in the 1910s, a local initiative to extract these natural resources was never taken because the South was still recovering from the effects of the Civil War even at the beginning of the 20th century. The insistence on cotton production and deteriorating cotton business brought the remaining economic stability to an end. These conditions led to what is called the Great Migration, which took place between 1910 and 1920 (Marks 148). The deterioration in economic conditions can be considered as the second biggest push factor next to the hostile racial discrimination and segregation, which became the most important social element that drove the population out of the southern states.

The events that led to The Great Migration was a push factor for African Americans in the South but what led to the Harlem Renaissance was social conditions that took shape in the northern cities. It is crucial to point out that the social conditions of the African American citizens depended on the economic conditions, so the labor unions were really important. The African American labor unions contributed to the labor rights for black members as early as the 1860s in the South with a struggle to become a part of the National Labor Union (Grob 137, 138). However, James N. Gregory asserts that due to the continuing racial discrimination in the North, black communities had to form strong communal, political and religious unions, and this helped them establish segregated communities, which were free to practice their own customs and beliefs within their collective environment (116-17). Gregory goes on to talk about the strong political union of the African American community supported by the various labor unions established in the urban centers and how they supported the black intelligentsia who

were trying to create an identity for the ”black folk” in the city (28). These became some of the developments which laid the foundation for the Harlem Renaissance.

All these phenomena can be directly linked to the issues of urbanization since the Great Migration paved the way for the African American community to shift from a rural population to an urban population in a relatively short period of time. For that reason, the urbanization of the African American population became an opportunity for the writers who wanted to make the city their new setting for African American experience in the US. It can be said that this would help the community to come into existence and become visible not only as a labor force that contributes to the wealth of the city but also as a cultural force that integrated its arts and lifestyle into the new environment that they were experiencing.

Literary and Intellectual Roots in the City

As a consequence of the demographic and economic changes mentioned above, there were certain social dynamics, which would soon turn into a great artistic and literary movement. One of the most important figures who contributed to emergence of these developments regarding the African American arts and literature was William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. Du Bois was one of the literary, academic and spiritual leaders of the African American sovereignty movements in general and he contributed to African American culture and heritage significantly with his work. He coined the term “double consciousness” and raised an awareness of “color-line,” which he saw as a problem to overcome in his iconic work *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). In this seminal work, Du Bois defines double-consciousness as,

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (*The Souls of Black Folk* 3)

Double-consciousness, as a term, needs to be defined and analyzed to understand Du Bois further. Double consciousness presents a condition of double-layered identity within which an African American individual feels he/she has to comply with the

standards set by the white dominant society and subconsciously live up to their expectations by not recognizing his/her self as a separate identity that is worthy of existing on its own (*The Souls of Black Folk* 3). Demonstrating the question of identity crisis among African American communities created a whole new dimension for black individuals to think of themselves not as a reciprocal entity coexisting with white dominant rules but as a separate group existing free from the boundaries of social and political majority, thereby developing their own culture, literature and political ideology. Du Bois, therefore, paved the way for so many upcoming political leaders by leading them to think outside the established norms and form new perspectives.

Sandra Adell, in her book *Double-Consciousness/Double Bind: Theoretical Issues in Twentieth-Century* (1994), affirms that Du Bois's ideas took their roots from George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) *Phenomenology of Spirit*. John Russon explains how Hegel perceives the essence of the unhappy consciousness as contradictoriness resulting from a divided consciousness which seeks reconciliation in vain (102). Adell, adding to that, comments that Du Bois addresses this phenomenon not only within the limits of a sociological approach to the African American community in general but also by going back to the psychological roots of the problems these people were facing at that time. Du Bois defined these in *The Souls of Black Folk* with a literary tone (19). In the first chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk,* he points out how an African American identity should be formed in American society:

> The history of the American Negro is the history of the strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach to the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (4)

The Souls of Black Folk is one of the outstanding manuscripts of African American social and cultural movements and any organization that took place in them. This contributed to African American endeavor to gain equal rights not only as an intellectual and a man of culture but also as a spiritual father. His book mentioned above was both a critically acclaimed literary work and a book of criticism and vision

which would give African American communities new insights into racial awareness, African American arts and teach them how to overcome racial discrimination through education and collective effort. In other words, Du Bois was one of the first figures to raise an awareness of racial identity and he did that by defining problems related to both black communities and white communities. He vehemently talked about the racism that African American people encountered and also claimed there had to be a shift in African American communities' attitude towards race and he even found the solution in education and an awareness of race (Du Bois and Zuckerman 186). As Wintz states, "[Du Bois] based his approach on the conviction that black needed well-educated leadership to direct the uplifting of the race" (43). Therefore, Du Bois's mission was to organize and educate African Americans who would eventually produce arts and literature that could help them in the quest of "racial uplift."

When the Harlem Renaissance is examined, it is of utmost importance to mention the contributions of Alain L. Locke (1885-1954). In his article, "Alain Locke and the New Negro Movement," Eugene C. Holmes considers Locke as the first race leader of the New Negro movement in the US (63). Adding to that, Holmes claims that Locke also paved the way for other race leaders to come and follow his path (60). At the turn of the century, Locke defined ghettos as the starting point of a revolution and perceived the North as the land of opportunity and a land to thrive on. As he puts it in his *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (1997): "The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of northern city centers is to be explained primarily in terms of a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom, of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an exterminate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions" (6). Locke talked about a new phase in African American communities in urban environment where race, wealth and culture were seen as new modes which will help the community grow, get stronger and also politically conscious. This was where he drew the line between the "old negro" and "new negro" (12). The Harlem Renaissance being named as the New Negro Movement can be traced back to this.

The forces that drove Alain L. Locke to write *The New Negro* was predominantly a result of his education at Harvard and Oxford universities. Locke was the first African American to win a Rhodes scholarship in the history of the US, which gave him the

opportunity to study at Oxford University in London. Locke immediately became acquainted with the people there and gave talks and lectures on cosmopolitanism. This was where his ideas on urban life and ethnic consciousness in the city took shape. The cosmopolitanism of Alain L. Locke and his ideas on urban dynamics and what kind of an effect it had on the development and bloom of African American arts, literature and music in the first quarter of the twentieth century could be read as a guide to talk about African American urban endeavor.

One of the driving forces of the Harlem Renaissance was Alain L. Locke's statements on how African American endeavor was misread and misinterpreted by the white population or other ethnicities in the US. Locke, in *The New Negro*, claimed that this prejudice and discrimination could be overcome with "the New Negro," who is emerging in Harlem with ideas of pluralism and cosmopolitanism and for Locke, this new figure is responsible for eliminating all the prejudice and discrimination regarding the colored people of the world (12). In his article "Cosmopolitanism and the African Renaissance: Pixley I. Seme and Alain Locke," Leonard Harris argues that Locke preferred a subtle form of cosmopolitanism, which he called "a cosmopolitanism of confraternity," and this view supported an ideal that would respect the dignity of different ethnicities and communities sharing the same urban environment and an urban atmosphere where any contribution by these groups is valued equally (188).

Cosmopolitanism and urbanism became two terms that are closely related to the life in Harlem in the 1920s. These two concepts defined how it felt like to be in Harlem. What Locke tried to establish was how these terms helped make a "New Negro," who embraced them as his/her mode of existence and emerged as the representation of a community that embodies the values of urban life and African American life such as racial equality, human rights, equal payment, recognition of ethnic arts, freedom and human rights. As Locke stated in his essay "Enter the New Negro," published in *Survey Graphic*: "The pulse of the Negro world has begun to beat in Harlem" (633). Locke took sides with a moderate kind of cosmopolitanism which promoted democratic ideals that criticized racial nationalism (Shook and Margolis 90).

Locke and how he guided the movement are of utmost importance to any scholar who wants to read the Harlem Renaissance from a perspective that encompasses urbanization

of African American population. Robert E. Park[2] and Ernest W. Burgess, in their book *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment*, define the elements that compose a city by as,

> a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital process of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature. (1)

What can be inferred from Park and Burgess's definition is that Harlem, for the African American community, acted both as an urban space and a racial space since it was predominantly populated by African American people, so the city, for these people, was also a state of mind. What Alain Locke was trying to address was in line with the definition made my Robert E. Park in the sense that Harlem was the racial capital rather than a capital whose physical space was created by the inhabitants themselves. These thoughts are also evident in Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In the "Walking in the City" chapter of the book, de Certeau also confirms E. Park and Burgess's ideas: "The Concept-city functions: a place of transformations and appropriations, the object of various kinds of interference but also a subject that is constantly enriched by new attributes, it is simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity" (de Certeau 95). Harlem, for many African American individuals, was the place where these transformations took place. As a result, it became the center of an artistic movement led by African Americans because as Houston A. Baker Jr. suggests African Americans perceived the arts as the only medium of expression and as a hope for future advancement free of racial boundaries ("Modernism" 90).

While W.E.B. Du Bois prepared the intellectual background of the Harlem Renaissance movement, Alain L. Locke became the "the liaison officer" of the movement, and both promoted the careers of the important literary figures of the movements such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Fauset, Countee Cullen and Jean Toomer

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[2]Robert E. Park—one of the pioneer sociologists of the Chicago School of Sociology—is known to have influenced the Harlem Renaissance promoter Charles S. Johnson and later, the renowned sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, who both wrote about the urbanization of the African American population focusing on Chicago in particular. They both studied under E. Park at the University of Chicago (Farber 78, 83). In this thesis, E. Park's ideas, which influenced these two authors, are directly taken as base, because Johnson and Frazier's studies focus on the figures and statistics of urbanization in Chicago.

(Wintz 113, 119). Although these authors differed in ideology and philosophical approach, during the course of the movement, they all made considerable contributions to the literary diversity and productivity of the era.

While these literary and intellectual roots of the Harlem Renaissance were taking shape, the music of the period was also contributing to the impact created by these developments. There are various writers and critics who considered African American music composed in the city as a shaping factor in racial advancement. Steven C. Tracy, in his book *Hot Music, Ragmentation, and the Bluing of American Literature*, explains that music in the city was the language without which it was impossible to express the life conditions and yearnings of the African American community (193). The heritage of African American folk songs, in that case, became the guiding light for the following generation of musicians who were going to establish the tradition of jazz in New York, specifically in Harlem. In order to fully appreciate the importance of this music in the community, the works of W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain L. Locke and Langston Hughes on music should be examined in brief as texts contributing to the history and musical ideology of the Harlem Renaissance.

Musical Roots of the Renaissance

Du Bois was the intellectual father of the Harlem Renaissance because he helped theorize most of the concepts that were embraced by the artists, writers and musicians of the movement. The "Negro music" he wrote about in "of the Sorrow Songs" chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk* is the oldest text that talks about the contribution of African American folk music to American society. In the same chapter, Du Bois talked about the music springing from the South as a distinctly African American voice and how it captured the attention of the country with its grandeur and sublime (251). By talking about African American gospel and the blues, Du Bois provided insights and inspiration on how black music should be and how it should make people feel. He claimed, in the same chapter, that the lacking element in a white dominant society was brought in by African American story and song:

> Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and

> song—soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it; the third, a gift of the Spirit. (*the Souls of Black Folk* 262)

Du Bois, in the excerpt above, focuses on the elements of story and song as the inherent characteristics of the African American community which he thinks are the contributions of African American cultural presence to factors that helped the US form its cultural roots. What can be inferred from this quote is that Du Bois, then, makes a claim on American culture referring to the folklore related to the narrative and musical culture of the African American community by stating that American culture, without its African American roots, should be regarded as incomplete and unproductive. Du Bois's emphasis, here however, was on a racial awareness intended to enable the "black folks" to come to terms with their potential and capabilities of which they had been aware for a long time. Du Bois's approach to music, as he considers music as a medium of social awareness, is more didactic in that sense (Spencer 9). Bernard Bell, in his article "Folk Art and the Harlem Renaissance," further explains that Du Bois perceived African American folk music as "a window into the souls of a people and a basis for a new nation's formal art" (157). Bell also adds that one of the critics who saw folk music as the inherent gift of African American people to promote racial awareness but also as a medium to make the African American community globally recognized and equally valued by other nations was Alain LeRoy Locke (1886-1954) (158). Both Du Bois and Locke were Harvard educated intellectuals who shared the sentiment that folk music was a stepping stone for the high art that black artists were going to produce in their quest to demonstrate how African American folk art contributed to American arts in general.

Similar to *The Souls of Black Folk* by Du Bois, *The Negro and His Music* (1936) by Alain L. Locke was written to talk about the pivotal role of African American folk music in the creation of an authentic genre of "American" music. Locke, in the same book, reviews the African American tradition of folk music and its evolution towards jazz. When Locke analyzed the music of the US in *the Negro and His Music*, he came to the conclusion that with the exception of Native American music, which was the indigenous music of the Americas before European colonies arrived, what was called

American music back then was a mixture of cultures of people who immigrated to America from Europe (2). Locke believed that in order for a nation to produce a high art of its own, it needed to go back to its provincial roots and find elements that could adjust and transform the folklore into the "great classical music" (*the Negro and His Music* 5). Locke considered African American folk music as the most fitting form of music to achieve the mentioned goal. Bearing this in mind, Locke theorized that African American culture, among other minority influences, produced the first authentic music genre to emerge in the US (Locke, *the Negro and His Music* 2). It can be argued that this form of music, for Locke and for many other critics, became the medium of expression that provided African American population with a distinct voice and an urban identity. When the publication date of *the Negro and His Music* is considered, Locke's works and writing can be taken as one of the first sources to retrospectively study the African American music and its scope within the framework of American history, which allows critics such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Paul Gilroy to place African American music on an ideological ground in the literary works of next generations of African American writers.

Among the people coming out of this generation, Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was one of the writers without whom a discussion on the roots of the Harlem Renaissance would be incomplete. Hughes's literary contribution to the Harlem Renaissance was considerable since he picked up a literary tone that glorified life and arts in Harlem. His reputation as a Harlem poet grew out of his keen interest in jazz. Hughes brought these into his poetry, and through that, described African American life, evoking an interest in the life and arts in Harlem. F. Scott Fitzgerald used the title "the Jazz Age" in his book *Tales of the Jazz* Age (1922) referring not only to the African American experience during the era but also to the experience of the 1920s with its music and urban experience in general. As Susan Currell states: "Jazz was the beat and rhythm of unavoidable cultural change, a hybrid sound of the southern past and the industrial North, the 'primitive' keeping time with Ford's production line" (70). Despite the fact that Fitzgerald contributed the title, "the Jazz Age," to the famous American decade, Hughes can be regarded as the author of the "Jazz Age." Although Hughes vilified the Harlem Renaissance in his article "When the Negro Was in Vogue," (1973), he also believed in an alternative renaissance where "real black art" was practiced because he

saw that the Harlem Renaissance was happening under Jim Crow laws and talented black artists were being used for the sole purpose of entertainment rather than being appreciated for the art they put forward (2694). Hughes portrays this situation at the beginning of his article "When the Negro Was in Vogue" as:

> White people began to come to Harlem in droves. For several years they packed the expensive Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue. But I was never there, because the Cotton Club was a Jim Crow club for gangsters and monied whites. They were not cordial to Negro patronage, unless you were a celebrity like Bojangles. So Harlem Negroes did not like the Cotton Club and never appreciated its Jim Crow policy in the very heart of their dark community. Nor did ordinary Negroes like the growing influx of whites toward Harlem after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and where now the strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers – like amusing animals in a zoo. ("When the Negro Was in Vogue" 2694)

In the light of the information given above, it is obvious that Hughes, just like Du Bois, tried to promote racial awareness by opposing the new trend of commercializing African American music for the purposes of entertainment, when this form music was the expression of the past, present and future of the same community. For Hughes, creating an awareness of the importance of clinging to African American cultural heritage was the first step to be taken; in his essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," (1985) he portrays black people as people acting with a mindset pertaining to the standards of the white society. He exemplifies this in the same essay as:

> In the North they go to white theaters and white movies. And in the South they have at least two cars and a house like "white folks." Nordic manners, Nordic faces, Nordic air, Nordic art (if any), and an Episcopal heaven. A very high mountain indeed for the would be racial artist to climb in order to discover himself and his people. ("The Negro Artist" 2)

As in Du Bois's double consciousness, Hughes refers to the condition of African descent Americans as falling into the trap of believing in the so-called superior Anglo-American values which always discriminated and segregated them ("The Negro Artist" 3).

Unlike W.E.B. Du Bois, Hughes believed in the primitive revivalism of black folklore. It can be observed that although Du Bois praised African American folklore and how it became a reminder for the community to cherish the old days and take lessons from the past, he only used it as a means to an end rather than a separate art form. In *the Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois refers to the slave songs as: "They are music of an unhappy people,

of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways" (253). On the other hand, Hughes conceded that blues and jazz were a big part of African American racial pride and awareness in their simplest forms (Tracy, *Langston Hughes* 21). Du Bois and Hughes admired African American arts, but they were inevitably shaped and influenced by the educated, upper-middle class intelligentsia and their values. Hughes emerged as a poet who helped legitimize the power of lower class black community and its capability to change the fate of its race through their music and culture without having to comply with the arts forms of Anglo American world. Hughes did not consider music as a means of "racial uplift" but a true representation of who a "black folk" was, unlike the didactic approach adopted by Du Bois, which aimed to serve "racial uplift."

Consequently, Langston Hughes was the poet who wrote about the common black folk and his/her culture. Contrary to what Du Bois thought about education and the Talented-Tenth[3] concept, where he talked about widespread, carefully administered education, Hughes supported the conventional wisdom of the simple folk. As Jonathan Wipplinger states, "Hughes embraced jazz and the blues in his work as a means of validating the originality and value of African American vernacular culture" (166). The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Hughes saw the African American music as a form of art and expression in its purest form and promoted it in its poetry and writing. Du Bois's approach to literature, arts and music had always been shaped by the concept of "racial uplift," in other words, the idea to achieve racial advancement through an educated community which would change the destiny of the poor and discriminated "masses." However, Hughes included these "masses" into his blues and jazz poetry and voiced their concerns through the very same medium.

The Renaissance Revisited

All the authors, writers, political and cultural leaders mentioned above are all at some point in history have taken active roles in the making of the Harlem Renaissance (Wintz

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[3] The Talented Tenth: A concept introduced by W.E.B Du Bois, which aims to use the capacity of the top ten percent of the college-educated African Americans to carry out a widespread educational campaign among blacks (Wintz 43).

119). Their perspectives on race, African American cultural heritage, music and urban population forming in Harlem provided an insight into how the future of African American communities would be shaped and what kind of steps could be taken on that path. These figures, in their works, do not only reflect a single view of their culture, such as the literature of it or its musical roots, but also define and are defined by the urban landscape that African American culture is dwelling in since the migration after the emancipation (1863). It cannot be denied that the Harlem Renaissance and the Jazz Age, as F. Scott Fitzgerald called the period, can be mostly associated with African American artistic movement that dominated the atmosphere of the 1920s. However, this movement came to be criticized and vilified by critics and writers until the end of the 1980s because of the assumption that it failed to assist the African American cultural revival and recognition (Dunn and Hutchinson 449). Contrary to what is believed by critics such as Nathan Irvin Huggins and David Levering Lewis, there were also inspirations drawn from Harlem in the 1920s and the genre of music it was associated with. The music and urban experience of the Harlem Renaissance saw a revival since the 1990s through the works of novelists who believed that those elements can be resurrected through literature to create a new awareness of race by looking back at the first artistic movement of the African American community. The music of the period has been historicized and analyzed in relation to its modernist modes of expression and urban roots, but it is rarely fictionalized in the works of authors in the 1990s and 2000s. Therefore, the works by these authors have to be dealt with by looking at their connections and interactions with the urban issues and the music they encompass in the specific time period they take place.

As Houston A. Baker Jr. proposes, the Harlem Renaissance should not be considered as a movement whose influence is bound to the time span it covered but it should be viewed as a landmark event which gave impetus to movements that followed suit ("Modernism" 96). The Harlem Renaissance and its contributing members inspired so many different writers. As James Edward Smethurst, in his *The Black Arts Movement : Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s*, states, "Langston Hughes served as a bridge between different generations of radical black artists" (8, 9). Just as W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain L. Locke helped Hughes in his literary career, Hughes continued to help the writers in the literary and artistic improvement of the African American community.

Smethurst adds that Toni Morrison also embraced the “nationalist stance,” which was existent in the Black Arts movement, in her writing long after 1975 (*The Black Arts Movement* 3). Therefore, it can be claimed that after the Harlem Renaissance, the movements to come followed a progression by adopting different political views in the Harlem Renaissance. From W.E.B. Du Bois to Toni Morrison, the progression of African American literary and cultural quest for representation continues. The three novelists in this study, namely Toni Morrison, Walter Dean Myers and Persia Walker, reclaim a distinctively African American genre of music in their work by focusing on the time and place of the first nationally recognized African American literary movement. Thus, Harlem and jazz music are treated as transforming elements that should be revisited and re(fictionalized) in their works.

The Legacy of Toni Morrison

Linden Peach, in his book *Toni Morrison* (2000), argues that Toni Morrison’s contribution to African American prose since the 1970s has led to a new phase for African American experience in the US (15). Similarly, Jill Matus, in her book *Toni Morrison* (1998), explains that Morrison’s fiction is an epitome of atrocities and conflicts witnessed by African American individuals and her novels represent an era in African American prose that help readers reconnect with their collective memory as African American individuals whose ancestors went through all the atrocities resulting not only from the institution of slavery but also the extension of it to the modern so called “free” lives of people of African descent (2). Morrison’s novels follow a line which starts in the days of slavery and extends to the days of modern struggles in the urban environment where black individuals face difficulties arising from the same trauma. In these works, the collective unconscious of African American communities never leaves them and becomes the shadow that follows them everywhere (Peach 8). Collective memories of race have been a theme constantly recurring in Morrison’s work, and therefore, she revisits the folklore and her ethnic roots.

The factors that contributed to Morrison’s style of writing started in her family. As Peach continues to explain, in her private life, Morrison was also surrounded by family members who were aware of racial issues such as her father, who thought that black

people possessed superior moral (4). Additionally, Morrison drew her inspiration from the historical figures of all eras in African American history, but she also personalized the characters and peeked into their inner struggles and dilemmas while the framework still continued to be the racial identity and issue of freedom, spiritually and socially. Jan Furman states that: “She left Lorain in 1949 to attend Howard University but revisits community as she experienced it growing up by locating many of her stories in Ohio and in other parts of the Midwest” (2). In other words, the community has been a ubiquitous element in her work.

Toni Morrison grew up in Lorain, Ohio, where most of the families were migrants coming from the southern states and the remnants of slavery and discrimination were still as prevalent as they were during the times of slavery. Morrison defines Ohio as a “curious juxtaposition of what was ideal in this country and what was base” (qtd. in Peach 1). What Morrison refers to, by this definition, is the racially complex structure of Ohio after the migration from the South since it can be observed that there was both a hope for black community as new comers, and a racial tension aroused by the white population harassing blacks. It can be said that with the experience she had in Ohio, Morrison developed a race conscious mind which is centered on African American culture and its (dis)placement in the society (Mori 321). As Nick Pici puts forward, Morrison’s family background fed her cultural hunger by exposing her to both Western and African music throughout her childhood (19). Morrison was raised through storytelling and songs were sung in her household. As Peach adds, her experience in Ohio, as a Northern state, did not differ from the experience in the South (3). The state was a mixture of free states of the North and the ex-slave states of the South. As Morrison puts it, “Ohio embraced in microcosm the schizophrenic nature of the Union itself in which the free states of the North and the slave states of the South brought under one umbrella” (Peach 2). This must have helped Morrison create the image of an African American urban experience which would consist of the struggle, dilemma and hardships encountered. What formulated New York City in Morrison’s mind must have something to do with the childhood memories that she had in Lorain, Ohio, which, at that time, was a steel mill town, where caste-consciousness was more important than race, and however, racial discrimination was still witnessed (Peach 3).

The level of displacement in an urban environment experienced by the migrants coming from the South is one of the underlying themes in Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) but the feeling of displacement does not start with this point of reference. According to Peach, *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992) and *Paradise* (1998) form a loose trilogy (126). Morrison's most critically acclaimed and publicly popular novel is *Beloved,* which is considered to be her masterpiece. *Beloved,* in its construction, portrays what it feels to be a slave under the rule of the white society and the sacrifices made to escape from it mentally and physically. Thus, even before *Jazz, Beloved* also covered this theme. Morrison underpinned the spiritual displacement with her metaphors and imagery throughout the novel. Since slaves were not allowed to own a house or in its spiritual definition a "home," most of the African American population in the South were living in plantations provided by the slave owners. Jewell Parker Rhodes discusses that the feeling that these places did not belong to them was the reason for the lack of sense of belonging (79). Slaves in the South were "homeless" at a spiritual level. According to Rhodes, when they were emancipated, the houses were not available to them because of racial discrimination and financial reasons. It was either they could not afford houses or houses were not sold to them as they were black. The "Sweet Home" utopia in *Beloved* is actually a dystopia that Sethe, who is the female protagonist, lives in. She revisits the memory 20 years later and comes to the realization that "Sweet Home" was actually a place where cruelty and dehumanization experienced due to slavery were the only two feelings that remained (Rhodes 78). The concept of "homelessness" and wanting to flee to the North become the last grain of hope for Sethe in *Beloved,* but new struggles and hardships awaiting African Americans in the North is left to be discovered in *Jazz.* The absence of a sense of place is a theme that reoccurs in Morrison's work frequently in a number of ways. This physical absence of place is compensated through community.

Paradise is another novel by Morrison, which portrays a gated community where a series of unpleasant events happen. Ironically, the title of the novel is *Paradise,* but the events that happen in the novel suggest the opposite. Morrison describes a commune founded by black men whose aim is to stay "racially pure" (Peach 157). The communal place is named after a deceased woman who was the sister of one of the founding men. The communal life and the sense of place is a central theme in the novel and it is challenged by another place (a house near the community called Covent). *Paradise* is

chronologically the last book of the trilogy which includes *Beloved* and *Jazz*, and it is a part of Morrison's historiography in the time line (Joyner et al. 188). The events in *Paradise* take place in the 1970s while *Beloved* and *Jazz* use post-Reconstruction and the Harlem Renaissance period as the setting. This pattern followed by Morrison travels through the landscapes and urban-spaces of the US and portrays the lives of individuals who persevere under difficult circumstances resulting from the social injustice and equality. In addition to these, one of the themes that could be observed in these novels is the impact of the landscapes of urban space on individuals. The impact of geography and architecture on the characters are worth mentioning since they either look for a place to settle down or try to escape from the one they feel restricted or locked in. These character experience a sense of rootlessness but they try to overcome this by reconnecting with their past. The migratory feeling Morrison's characters have is almost always present in them but their ultimate goal is to settle down. They experience this dilemma throughout their lives. Liam Kennedy refers to Toni Morrison' *Jazz* and other books treating jazz music as foundation through a racial and an ethnic perspective:

> These texts all treat urban spaces as *lieux de mémoire,* unstable cities inscribing buried connections between the urban past and present, but they significantly diverge in their different cultural perspectives on the changing configurations of urban space, showing how differently rooted and routed forms of urban passage (ethnic and racial) find form in narrative. (12)

The feeling of confusion experienced because of the new urban environment mentioned above also reflected itself on the literary works. Toni Morrison, in *Jazz*, uses rhetorical devices that encompass the city and the music in a way that transcends language. As A. Saadi Simawe puts forward, African American fiction takes its form from the structures in music, especially jazz, because language may not be enough to express the emotions of the individual in a setting where he/she is suppressed, regressed and discriminated (xxiii). According to Simawe, music, more than language, helps the individual to express his/her deepest emotions and feelings. In that way, music is considered superior to language as Simawe states: "the experience of genuine freedom and the experience of crushing oppression, according to many musical passages in African American fiction, cannot be expressed in language. Rather, it is music, dance, and singing that provide the adequate expression for the deepest and most complex spiritual and emotional realities" (xxiii).

In *Jazz*, Morrison uses a rhythmic and musical structure which serves the purpose of expressing these spiritual and emotional realities through characters dwelling in Harlem in the 1920s. By doing that, Morrison becomes one of the novelists who, in her fiction, make readers relive the experiences of the Harlem Renaissance by building an atmosphere where music and language are at play. Although no direct reference to the actual events is given, a sordid picture of what African American individuals and community is conveyed through music embedded in language. *Jazz* by Morrison, is this sense, is worth analyzing since it is one of the works that voices the concerns of the period and revisits the specific time period in a form of African American fiction. This allows the new generations of the African American community to reconnect with their past through personal fictional narratives from the time period (Peach 126).

Walter Dean Myers and the Harlem Experience

Walter Dean Myers (1937-2014) is as a children's books writer who tried to raise the young generation's awareness of African American history and culture in an urban environment. Therefore, Myers targeted teens as readers of his books and prioritized the need to make some figures important to African Americans known to the upcoming generations. Karen Burshtein argues that Myers's aim is to introduce Harlem to the youth by introducing them to the important events and figures (8). In doing so, Myers, in his works, travels through the streets of Harlem and gives the reader an extensive view of the place through his crime stories.

Walter Dean Myers is similar to the Harlem Renaissance short story writer and novelist Rudolph Fisher in his description of Harlem and urban struggle. Fisher wrote a short story called "City of Refuge" and Maria Balshaw comments on the story by saying: "'City of Refuge' demonstrates that despite the economic hardships, racism and exploitation which existed at the time, Harlem does act at this point as a fantasy space of freedom, pleasure and opportunities for African American citizens (as well as acting as the legendary space of exoticism and license for the white imagination)" (14).

Myers's references to the street names and specific places in Harlem draw a realistic map of the social events in Harlem. *Harlem Summer* (2007) is a fictional book that

portrays life in Harlem in the 1920s through a teenage boy's eyes. Myers makes his protagonist work in one of the iconic magazines of the era, *The Crisis,* where he witnessed the literary landmarks of the Harlem Renaissance and met the important figures mentioned above. The book evolves as a teenage crime story in which the reader can observe the architectural landmarks of New York and Harlem specifically. The importance of Lenox Avenue for the novels that will be mentioned in this study is evident in Myers's *Harlem Summer.* The novel tries to depict the Harlem Renaissance and its heroes by talking about a family crisis and the solution that family brings to the crisis leading to other problems. These problems arising from the protagonist's decisions take the reader on a journey through the Harlem Renaissance depicting and giving information about the people of Harlem ranging from literary figures to arts patrons, from mobs to musicians. The depiction of streets, avenues, houses and apartment flats and the neighborhood gives the reader a clear picture of what life was like in Harlem back in the 1920s. Burshtein also refers to Myers as: "An ordinary experience that happened to him, especially in his young adult years growing up in New York City's Harlem, might be the seed of an idea that grows in Myers's imagination into the theme of a whole novel." (7). Myers's setting is from his own life while the event that the protagonist goes through is totally fictional. There are elements in the story that portrayed what happened during the Harlem Renaissance correctly, but the crime story is what gives the novel its element of suspense. Walter Dean Myers spent most of his life in Harlem and he knew the streets very well and the events happening in the novel took place on the streets that he specifically chose for the novel.

Another important theme in Myers' *Harlem Summer* is the protagonist's dream to become a successful jazz saxophonist and that triggers the chain of events that gets him in trouble. The element of music in the story line has an important impact on the character since it leads him to get involved in a crime. The connection between a musical career and becoming a criminal is intentionally presented by Myers to help readers gain some awareness of the 1920s during which African American people were struggling with racial stereotypes which portrayed them either as criminals or talented musicians who worked at the clubs to which most white people went to watch bands and have good time as Langston Hughes portrayed in his "When the Negro Was in Vogue."

The perception of the urban environment as the land of opportunity and hope appears to be a common theme that has been observed in the works of authors writing about the Harlem Renaissance. Although Toni Morrison seems skeptical about the advantages of urban life in her novel *Jazz*, authors such as Myers and Fisher hold the belief that the urban experience might offer new perspectives and opportunities for African American individuals. The perception of the urban living spaces as an opportunity to break free from the past associated with slavery is also reinforced with the idea that the music of black folk in the urban spaces is a way of expressing desires for freedom (Simawe xxiv). Walter Dean Myers, foreseeing that, bases his stories on this theme by making his protagonist as a teenage boy who wants to be a saxophonist but ends up doing things he does not want to do.

Walter Dean Myers's work, as an author who writes about African American cultural heritage, is not given enough attention to review African American past and its cultural media of expression. Myers, as a Harlem born children's books writer, deserves attention with his focus on the values of the Harlem Renaissance period and the 1920s. *Harlem Summer* by Myers is one of the few novels which attempts to revisit this specific period of time and provoke interest in the values of the Harlem Renaissance by integrating the music and political figures of it.

Persia Walker and the Power of Music and the City

Black Orchid Blues (2011) by Persia Walker is a historical mystery novel taking place during the Harlem Renaissance. Walker constructs a story around a transsexual black character who is a jazz singer. Including a transsexual character into a story taking place in the 1920s is not a pattern that can be observed in many of the novels written about the Harlem Renaissance. Walker might have made the decision to give voice to a character who remained unheard of during the period that spanned the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Walker's protagonist, Queenie Lovetree, has been described as someone who has a spectacular singing voice, which helps Walker to define him as the voice of an era and the city. Him being a transsexual coincides with the fact that being a black minority in the Harlem Renaissance was a struggle to try to have a voice.

The importance of voice both as a political stance and a tool for artistic expression can be observed in Walker's work. The view that considers music as an artistic narrative but not in written form or literary form was put forward by Paul Gilroy, who asserts that music is a discourse through which oppressed communities voice their political concerns, and he goes on to talk about the "opaqueness" of the musical form and how it can contain coded messages that are meant to express what is inexpressible or say what is unsayable through performance, drama and repetition (38). Gilroy's point of reference goes back to French-Bulgarian linguist Julia Kristeva, who argues that music is a linguistic concept related to poetic texts where words and music play roles as the signifier and the signified (75-6). Kristeva refers to poetic texts as "rhythmic space," where music works as a medium which is hidden beneath the text. Kristeva brings a semiotic explanation to what music means for people and explains this with the term *chora,* which is related to the musical chorus and mother's womb in Latin, and it connotes a kind of music within the text that supports language but has no semantic value. Kristeva believes that music is utterly non-representational and devoid of references (29). Gilroy's assumptions on African American music are in line with what Kristeva put forward as "semiotic rhythm or space" (Simawe 10). In *Black Orchid Blues*, this element can be observed in the characters' behaviors and conversations.

Persia Walker, in *Black Orchid Blues*, blends gender and psychology to write a crime novel and uses Harlem as the physical setting and its cultural setting as the Harlem Renaissance. In addition to Gilroy's views on modernity in America and double consciousness of the black individual, Walker adds another dimension when talking about gender issues back in the 1920s and the psychological problems these individuals were going through. Double-consciousness manifests itself not only within the race but also within the gender stereotypes of the era. One should be familiar with Langston Hughes's article "Spectacles in Color" in his autobiography *The Big Sea* (2002) and the article by the critic Eric Garber "Spectacle in Color: The Lesbian and Gay Subculture in Jazz Age Harlem" (1991), whose title pays homage to Hughes's article. Building on Hughes's depiction of the drag balls in Harlem, Eric Garber chronicles the lesbian and gay communities in Harlem. A more detailed book on the queer performance and transgender Harlem is James F. Wilson's *Bulldaggers*, *Pansies and Chocolate Babies: Performance, Race and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (2010), which will be used

in Chapter I of this study. The depiction of a transsexual character in the 1920s is apparently more challenging than depicting a black man since the individual is already segregated, discriminated and marginalized in the community. An already divided identity of a transgender character is again divided by the gender norms of the society in the 1920s, a period when women's rights issue was considered secondary or even tertiary to the race problem. The combination of the two is an important issue that deserves more attention by critics and historians.

Persia Walker portrays an urban environment where a character tries to realize himself despite the obstacles arising from family issues, mental illness, racial and gender discrimination. All these factors appear as different forms of confinement for Queenie Lovetree. From this perspective, Queenie Lovetree's mental condition might be given an explanation through a Foucauldian perspective, which explains how the "mad" were subjected to both physical and mental confinement by the authority throughout European history (Foucault xvi). Queenie Lovetree's confinement is directly related to this kind of condition, whereas his method of breaking out of this mental confinement becomes jazz music and performance, which is reflected through his "madness."

Queenie Lovetree's search of a space to dwell in can be observed as a mode of existence for the outcast and stranger who perceives the city as an opportunity. The city, as a social meeting place for all people living in it, is open to idiosyncrasy, more than any other settlement ever existed. The metropolis is a place where what is different is valued and even cherished (Park and Burgess 41). Michel de Certeau argues that constructed space in an urban environment can be disrupted, manipulated and reused by the public in multiple different ways. De Certeau links the drifting meaning in figurative language to the manipulation of space in the urban spaces (100). Bearing this analogy in mind, it can be concluded that Queenie Lovetree, trying to make his existence known, bends and twists the constructed values of gender norms and urban structures, because he sings in a famous club but also disappears suddenly with a scandalous kidnapping and his whereabouts become a mystery for residents. Later, it turns out that the kidnapping is his own plan. Such action can be interpreted as disrupting the construct of space by acting as if a crime is committed in it. He manipulates his own story by giving wrong

accounts of what really happened. Queenie Lovetree manipulates the assumed practices of space when thought in the context of what de Certeau expressed (100).

Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess claim that the suppressed and hidden passions of abnormal and exceptional types of people living in the city are more likely to come out because the metropolis is generally considered as the breeding ground of extreme feelings, which include both good and evil (46). The fame of Queenie Lovetree was scandalous since he was a transsexual jazz singer, however, this also attracted many curious customers who wanted to see a transsexual singer's performance. In addition to his great singing voice, his different looks and mystery intrigued people, because they had never seen such a character performing jazz before. The reason why the three novels examined in this study include certain degrees of crime in them is related to the discovery of the suppressed drives of human nature as it is put by Robert E. Park: "The City, in short, shows the good and evil in human nature in excess" (Park and Burgess 46).

Analysis

The concept of an urban environment for the African American community during the Harlem Renaissance was newly forming in the minds of the individuals since the remnants of the rural life in the South were still prevalent in the lifestyles of the families who had just moved to the city. This led to a change in the African American psyche that led the individual to discover the opportunities provided by this new environment which also helped him/her bring to the surface what was kept underground for years. The sterile and limited imagination of the plantation life was then replaced by the freedom to express whatever is being experienced. This did not necessarily result in positive outcomes for the individuals, for the new lifestyle led to a life of adventure that also brought danger and crime along with it.

The Harlem Renaissance was vilified and condemned by critics and writers in its aftermath with the claim that it was only an African American cultural and the literary movement between 1920s and the 1930s which ran its course and failed to create an impact that would transform the African American experience in the country. Dunn and

Hutchinson asserts that this school of literary criticism has dominated the debate until the late 1980s (448). Dunn and Hutchinson add that this school of thought started to shift to a wave of literary criticism which saw the Harlem Renaissance as an augury of what was to be done by the following generation of writers from different decades (449). James E. Smethurst points out that the same kind of criticism has been directed to the Black Arts movement from renowned scholars such as Henry Louis Gates Jr., who claimed that it was the shortest "renaissance" in the history of African American arts. (*The Black Arts Movement* 2, 7). Thus, the impact of the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement, on the arts and literature and urban experience of the African American community should not be confined to the 1920s or the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s. The 1990s and 2000s can be considered as decades which saw a new beginning of the appreciation towards the Harlem Renaissance. The literary influences of the Harlem Renaissance on the novelists through generations can be observed in the novels of different contemporary writers. Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992), Walter Dean Myers *Harlem Summer* (2007) and Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) are among these novels which treat the issue of jazz music, urban experience in the context of the African American community's struggle for racial and cultural freedom in the 1920s. These works with themes such as jazz music and urban experience can be analyzed as texts that portray the African American experience of modernity, which came into being after the migration of African American population to the northern cities. As Maria Balshaw states: "the Harlem Renaissance period I argue that it is the exploration of the paradoxes of the heaven and hell urbanism of African American writing that will allow us to see clearly the significance of the city to 20th African American literature" (2). Taking that into consideration, these three novels can be treated as texts that portray what city meant for the African American community of the 1920s and how Harlem, as the city, shaped and in return was shaped by the African American experience that would come to be called the Harlem Renaissance as imagined in the 20th century and beyond.

The effect of urban experience on the community after the migration from the South and the rediscovery of African American music as a political tool to combat racial discrimination are evident in the novels mentioned above. This study will try to examine these three novels individually in their attempt to describe African American

modernity by using music as a catalytic element that blends various other concepts such as music, and urban experience. These writers, this study argues, employ music in different ways as the central phenomenon that helped shape African American experience.

Chapter I of this study will deal with Toni Morrison's *Jazz* in the aspects of music and language as expressive tools to create voice and identity. A careful analysis of *Jazz* reveals that Morrison employs the rhythmic and structural elements of jazz music to the text to better express the African American experience of the 1920s in Harlem. Morrison makes use of the interplays between music, language and urban experience to convey the experience that people of the time were going through. Although the music of the decade is not named and discussed directly in the novel, it can be observed through Violet and Joe Trace's experiences that it is integrated into the language and the atmosphere of it.

Chapter II will continue with the same discussion focusing on Walter Dean Myers's *Harlem Summer*. A thorough reading of Harlem Summer demonstrates that Myers, unlike Morrison, employs the elements of historical facts and phenomena to refer to music as a cultural factor that help the African American community form their own identity. It can be seen that the names of the streets and avenues and real people from the Harlem Renaissance are integrated into the plot to portray Mark's experience of Harlem, the black teenager protagonist who wants to be a jazz musician. Mark's experiences in Harlem seem to reflect the Harlem Renaissance with the real characters from the era and the fictional world Myers creates through the plotline. It can be argued that Myers is trying to raise an awareness of African American modernity through the Harlem Renaissance.

Through a careful analysis of *Black Orchid Blues* by Persia Walter, Chapter III will similarly look at music as the factor that makes people go through fundamental changes in their lives culturally and personally. It can be shown through Walker's writing that the urban experience can transform an individual internally and externally through the experience of urban music, which is jazz music in this case. This study argues that Queenie Lovetree builds his fame upon his impressive singing voice but on the other hand, he feels alienated and disassociated because of the trauma he is experiencing,

which leads to a psychological disorder. These complex feelings about Harlem and what it offers for people from oppressed and discriminated communities can be analyzed through music and how it helps the community and individual heal or at least make their voices heard.

The Harlem Renaissance is considered as an era which had an impact on the authors, novelists, scholars, critics and artists of the following generations (Fabre and Feith 1). Taking this into consideration, it can be argued African American writers continue to write about the Harlem Renaissance directly or indirectly through utilizing its setting as their foundation. In other words, these narratives demonstrate that the Harlem Renaissance, even after almost ten decades, is very much alive and reverberating in the African American community in the US, and music is still the most defining and fusing force in the formation and preservation of the spirit even in literature.

CHAPTER I: TONI MORRISON'S *JAZZ* (1992)

The African American experience in different time periods has been a topic of discussion for a long time in the US history. However, its influence on the authors writing about it did not start to create a major impact until 20th century with the emergence of a Black literati mainly concentrated in the urban centers in the North; and only then did African American literature start to blend its own voice to the mainstream American literature. The beginning of the century saw the flourishing of African American arts and literature; however, with the Great Depression, starting in 1929 and political and social instability present at the time, these developments were hold at bay for a long time. Nevertheless, even after a generation, African American literature is revisiting the 1920s through arts, music and lifestyle it offered for African Americans. Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) pays homage to this period through a literary form which encompasses jazz music, the 1920s life style, struggles, dreams and hopes of the people witnessing the decade. The Chapter I of this study analyzes the literary forms and techniques employed to reenact the African American experience of the time through literary experimentation influenced by jazz music as depicted in Morrison's *Jazz*.

Jazz is the story of a couple, Violet and Joe Trace, who live in Harlem in the 1920s. Joe is a door to door beauty products salesman and Violet is a freelance hairdresser. Joe falls in love with an eighteen-year-old girl, Dorcas, and kills her at a party with a noiseless gun because he thinks that she lost interest in Joe and their secret relationship. Dorcas is shot, but she does not tell the people at the party who shot her to give Joe a chance to flee and finally bleeds to death. Therefore, the murder does not have any witnesses, but everybody knows who committed the crime. Violet learns about the affair after the killing of the young girl and the news spread. Violet goes to Dorcas's funeral and attacks her dead body lying in the casket and she is thrown out by the ushers at the funeral. The story revolves around this main incident and how it came to be, but there are other stories which are remotely or closely related to the characters in the main incident. The characters in these complementing stories are generally a part of the main characters' past. These seemingly loose and confusing transitions can be observed throughout the text. New characters in these "minor" stories appear and disappear

leaving the reader puzzled at times because the reader, only familiar with Joe, Violet and Dorcas's story, does not know about the background of these new characters. The reader learns about these characters when their story is being told. The non-linear plot structure, thus, makes it difficult for the reader to focus on the same list of characters. For instance, the story of Golden Gray, who is a mixed race man born as an illegitimate child of a white woman, is told through the account of True Belle, who is Violet's grandmother. Golden Gray, later in his life, travels to find his lost father, Henry Lestory, and on his way, he finds Wild, who is claimed to be Joe's mother. Interestingly, the story Violet's grandmother tells is closely related to Joe's past, but the reader learns from the narrator that Violet probably never talked to Joe about True Belle. Although some stories cross paths, they are also the stories of these characters and stories within stories. These characters contribute to the plot but also make it difficult to perceive it as a whole. The characters such as Malvonne, Mr. Frank, Victory, Henry Lestroy or Lestory, Rose Dear, Wild, True Belle, Sweetness, Felice, Vera Louise and Acton are people connected to the stories of the three main characters in the story line. Morrison centers these characters around Joe, Violet and Dorcas's life to talk about their pasts, and how their past experiences contributed to who they are.

The story of each character is told by a narrator whose identity is not disclosed. The seemingly omniscient narrator moves in and out of each character's point of view and seems to know every detail that the characters share but also add his/her comments on the events happening in the lives of the characters. The novel starts in medias res, with the voice of the narrator and each event is told through the eyes of the characters retrospectively. How the main incident happens is explained to the reader, but the story is about how the characters deal with it in the aftermath of the murder. *Jazz* ends with a long monologue by the narrator commenting on Joe and Violet's relationship. The novel does not end in a conventional manner where a proper closure is provided, but the narrator addresses a mysterious "you," who is not specified or introduced before.

The defining qualities of jazz music encompass quick, intuitive, and unexpected transformations and alterations in rhythm and melody within a composition, which provides a structural variety creating anticipation and suspense in musical form (R. Kennedy 38). The qualities mentioned above can be observed in the narrator and how

he/she tells their stories in *Jazz*. The narrator of the novel is the only filter through which the reader can get details on each character's background, mood and state of mind. However, Morrison gives qualities to the narrator in such a way that turns him/her into an unreliable narrator. The seemingly omniscient eye seems to give the reader conflicting views on what is going to happen, and his/her reactions take on different tones when a different view is presented by a character. When these qualities are examined, it becomes obvious that the narrator's different tones and reactions are similar to that of jazz music. Jill Matus, in her book *Toni Morrison*, argues that this feature of the narrative voice can be read as the improvisational and spontaneous mood of the text, which is deliberately created by Toni Morrison in her attempt to give the text a "jazzy" feeling (123). The musical tone that is integrated into *Jazz* takes its inspiration from jazz performances in which the tone, direction, melody and atmosphere are shifted, remade, repeated and revisited again. As Matus further explains this provides the readers with an experience similar to jazz performances, which is also a contributor to the element of unknown and suspense in the novel (124). It can be said that the suspense is maintained through the narrator's shifting and changing perspective on the events, which is similar to the improvisational nature of jazz music.

In addition to the effect of music on the narrator's character and mood, another significant contributor to what the narrator employs within the novel is its connection to "the City," as it is referred to in *Jazz*. Jan Furman, in his book *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, points out that "all of the facets of New York—its excitement, its promise of a better life, its seduction, its repressed hostility and blue mood—coalesce in the personality of Morrison's unidentified narrator" (97). It can be observed that Morrison, through her narrator, is trying to revisit the defining features of the 1920s, such as urban life experience and jazz music, as an expression of freedom for the black community. The setting, style and atmosphere of *Jazz* are all factors that can facilitate the African American modernity/modernism, which was happening during the defined period. All this literary experimentation with language and plot can serve the purpose of establishing black identity in the new urban environment. The literary style and devices that are used to define this African American modernity take their roots from African American oral and narrative tradition and transfer this collective experience to an urban environment to form the image of the "black individual" in the city (Gilroy 75). Bearing

these in mind, in order to give the African American community a voice or an identity, Morrison utilizes jazz music and its integral elements, such as improvisation, syncopation, call and response, spontaneity, and its distinctive tone as literary devices in written form. These elements may not be familiar to the African American community in the novel form, because jazz was a direct product of African American folklore. Additionally, it also represents a sense of belonging and a new beginning for the community. For this reason, these contributing factors should be put under close scrutiny to understand the African American experience of modernity in the city.

1.1. Jazz Music and Signifyin(g) in *Jazz:* A Theory

Analyzing Toni Morrison's *Jazz* in relation to the specific music genre that it refers to can provide information that will help readers better understand the connections between music and cultural identity of the African American community. Kathy J. Ogren, in her book *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (1992), defines jazz music genre as "a powerful new music characterized by syncopation, polyrhythms, improvisation, blue tonalities, and a strong beat" (7). In addition to a technical definition like this, Ogren adds that jazz can be also be historically defined as a music genre which emerged as a result of industrial and urban changes that took place after World War I, such as the migration to the urban areas and further industrial developments that introduced new technologies into the lives of people (7). Keeping these two definitions in mind, it can be seen that Morrison pondered on the social and musical aspects of her text while she was constructing it. Therefore, Paula Gallant Eckard confirms that Morrison, since the title of her work is *Jazz,* draws certain parallelisms between music and language and the ways they work together (11).

Morrison is not the first person to follow an approach that utilizes language as a tool to mimic musical patterns. Other African American literary figures, such as Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, and Zora Neale Hurston were known for integrating music into their poetry and prose (Eckard 11). Vernacular of the African American community and its distinctive ways of expression have their roots in the cultural elements such as work songs, proverbial wisdom, political commentary, and sacred harmonies which enabled

the African American community to talk about its experience in the US (Baker, *Blues* 5). Drawing on this, African American folk music, since Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois, has been associated with African American dialect and cultural identity to express cultural attitude. This cultural attitude helped the process of creating a black vernacular through African American folk music, which later became jazz music in an urban environment. However, what makes Morrison different from these writers in using this factor is the fact that she does not directly mention the name of jazz music as a genre; instead, she uses music as language to give the impression that the text itself is music (Pici 23). In other words, the dominant underlying force in the text is the music itself instead of it being a complimentary device.

This stylistic approach can be explained through a linguistic term put forward by Henry Louis Gates Jr. in his book *The Signifying Monkey: a Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (1989). Signification, in linguistics, refers to the relationship between a word and the meaning that it tries to convey (Innis 36). Gates takes signification from linguistics and writes the "s" in capital letters as "Signification" to define a term that describes how African American communities changed, modified and played upon English language to create a double-voicedness that would enable people within the community to generate meanings outside the normative standards dominated by white authorities (51). Gates goes on to elaborate on Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory of sign in semiotics, which defines the relation between the signifier and the signified in language (Innis 36) and coins the term "Signifyin(g)" (Gates 46). What Gates means by this term is the constant remaking of meaning, double-voiced personalities, and a condition that always requires intertextuality and revision of generated meaning through rhetorical figures and language play (51). It can be understood from Gates's critical theory that the formal changes in capitalization and punctuation in these terms, "Signification" and "Signifyin(g)," are derived from the tendency of African American vernacular to play with the language and make it belong to the people who are subjected to and colonized by it. Saussure's semiotic interpretation of the interaction between the concept and the sound-image is interpreted as a theoretical background for African American literary criticism. Thus, Gates forms a connection between African American vernacular language and its playful nature of manipulating the meaning through rhetorical figures. This routine, according to Gates, is similar to the generation of

meaning through signification (52). African American literary criticism is then based on a semiotic ground where the spoken and written word have a unique exchange of meanings, which can only be associated with African American heritage and its ways of using language and music as a tool to portray African American experience in the US. Hence, *Jazz* is Toni Morrison's take on the experience of this sort in an urban environment as she makes use of urban landscapes, music, and the African American community to form a triangle, which helps the reader see the same experience from different angles.

The "Signification," defined by Gates, is achieved through repetition, rhyme, story-telling, and the personification of the multi-voiced narrator by attaching the musical features of jazz music to it (Eckard 15). This approach helps Morrison create an ever-changing persona who tells the story of each character from their individual perspectives. This multi-voicedness prevents reader from reaching a judgment about who is right and who is wrong, thereby creating an atmosphere of ambiguity and obscurity. This technique resembles a jazz composition where the listener is not able to guess what melody will be played or revisited. This, in itself, is a sign for the reader to understand that a certain motif is being reiterated.

In order to put the approach mentioned above into perspective, the epigraph used in *Jazz* can be perceived as a direct indicator explaining the motifs in the narrative structure. It establishes the philosophical background of the linguistic and cultural approach adopted by Morrison. *Jazz* starts with the following poem:

> I am the name of the sound
> and the sound of the name
> I am the sign of the letter
> and the designation of the division (Robinson and Smith 302)

The epigraph, as stated above, is taken from a collection of poems dating back to early Christianity, which is called *The Nag Hammadi* scriptures. This collection of poems is called "Gnostic Gospels" and was discovered in Egypt in 1945. As Mariangela Palladino, in her book *Ethics and Aesthetics in Toni Morrison's Fiction,* observes, Morrison's deliberate choice of using a piece of poem from a time period as early as early Christianity and ancient Egypt can be interpreted as a universal message that

emphasizes the human condition in which people are torn between signs and referents they are trying to address (90). In *Jazz*, the ever-changing interaction between the written and spoken and the sound and image, and most importantly, the unreliability of the narrator do not let the readers come to a conclusion about who is to blame or vindicate. When the message of the epigraph is examined, it can be suggested that the narrator takes on the role of obscuring "the division" between the ethical and rational actions taken by the characters because the narrator designates "the division," whose existence is dubious. In *Jazz*, it is known by almost everybody that Joe Trace is the person who murdered Dorcas. His terrible deed is left unpunished by the law because there is no evidence to prosecute him. On the other hand, Violet intentionally tries to steal a baby from a woman who wants her to keep an eye on him for a few minutes, and she convinces the people and the police that she is innocent because she left her hairdresser utensils bag where she takes the baby from. However, there are still some people who do not believe her. Moreover, she tries to slash Dorcas's face in the funeral but just gets thrown out by the ushers. These actions are not ethical, or rational, but the background stories told by the narrator manipulate the judgment of the reader, which might prevent the reader from reacting against the characters. The fluidity of human actions in the story and characters' motives are both structurally and thematically reflected on the text. Another element that complicates the plot structure and adds to the ambiguity is the fact that the seemingly omniscient narrator is not privy to some of the things that happen. Having learned about Joe's affair with Dorcas, Violet tries to have an affair with another man to seek revenge on Joe, and the narrator comments on this by saying: "whether she sent the boyfriend away or whether he quit her, I can't say" (Morrison 5). However, the novel starts with the sentence: "Sth, I know this woman. She used live with a flock of birds on Lenox Avenue. Know her husband too" (3). These contradictory statements add to the element of unknown. Therefore, the fact that the entire story is told through word of mouth gossip, and the narrator is the only source of information to be trusted leave the reader in doubt.

The first sentence in the novel and the epigraph have a linguistic connection in terms of what Morrison is trying to achieve when things mentioned above are taken into consideration. The epigraph describes the gap between the oral narrative and written narrative. The text, in this context, can be defined as a force which tries to create an

atmosphere of both oral and written forms of narrative. As Palladino suggests, "Sth" sound is a gestural expression which does not have a meaning by itself in written form, but it has to be expressed with a certain sound that expresses a certain feeling. It can be interpreted as an expression of contemplation, one sucking his/her teeth to talk about a dreadful event, or even as "tut-tut," which expresses disapproval (Palladino 93). All these different interpretations of the "Sth" are one way or another connected to the way it is articulated in sound. The juxtapositions of the features of oral and written forms of story-telling can be considered as a form of discourse in the novel to create an awareness of African American oral tradition and the relatively new written form of narrative. Furthermore, the malleability and ambiguity of the different interpretations of the sound refers to the condition of the African American individual who is torn between the cultural codes of Anglo-American society and his/her own native culture, and fails to become either the sound or the image, but this very same individual becomes "the designation of the division." This stylistic approach in *Jazz* is analogous to the unknown and mysterious effect of a musical composition. This mystery is created by the improvisational nature of jazz music and the twoness resulting from the multitude of cultural influences the African American community has been exposed to.

Jazz critic and scholar Frank Tirro, in his article "Constructive Elements in Jazz Improvisation," refers to jazz music improvisers as, "the skilled improviser begins with neither a completely free or totally blank situation nor rambles aimlessly to an inconclusive termination, but instead develops motives with cyclic treatment" (586). The seemingly chaotic melodies in a jazz tune, rhythmic repetition of random phrases, which do not make sense by themselves, contribute to the atmosphere of the novel. This phenomenon can be attributed to the nature of human response to jazz music where listeners react to a composition by clapping along with the tempo of the song or singing along with the singer while he/she sings random melodies for the audience to repeat. The feeling of randomness and arbitrariness in a controlled environment could be what Morrison is trying to convey to the readers.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. asserts that "*Jazz*, drawing from both the Western and the African cultural heritage, challenges the sign-sound duality to fulfill Morrison's ambition" (qtd. in Palladino 91). As Palladino adds, this challenge can also be interpreted as a unique

attempt to create an African American presence by inventing a body of text influenced by musical and oral tradition of African heritage in the works of African American writers; therefore, the epigraph of the novel gives the reader a hint about the nature of the content and structure of the novel (91). As it is stated by Morrison in the foreword of *Jazz*, "I didn't want simply a musical background, or decorative references to it. I wanted the work to be a manifestation of the music's intellect, sensuality, anarchy; its history, it range, and its modernity" (xix). Considering this, it can be said that Morrison does not integrate music into her writing in a style, where music is used only as a complimentary tool to emphasize the content, but it is treated as one of the characters in the story which disguises itself in the form of the narrator (Eckard 13). This leads the reader to think that the music embodies itself in the narrator as a voice that speaks of not only the truth but also the ever-changing mood of the voices represented.

1.2. Music of the Language and Music of the City in *Jazz*

Toni Morrison's approach to music in *Jazz* encompasses different elements regarding the African American music and its evolution throughout American history. The interest Morrison develops in the 1920s music comes from her own view that the 1920s are best represented by love and music. Morrison, in the foreword to *Jazz,* states that "Romantic loves seemed to me one of the fingerprints of the twenties, and jazz its machine" (xviii). While Morrison's idea of music and love is so deeply rooted in the Harlem Renaissance period, her methods of weaving these two elements into the story depend on personal stories told through a multi-layered form of language that tries to blend the personal and collective into one through a musical text. Ana Ma Manzanas emphasizes that, at a time when black music is claimed by mainstream American music, it is literature's responsibility to reflect the myth and cultural heritage of the music played by African American musicians in the 1920s (97). Morrison fulfills this by composing a musical text which goes back to those years without even giving a direct reference to the music itself. This can be interpreted as Morrison's attempt to recreate music in the form of a literary text which historically and linguistically aspires to the musical forms of the Harlem Renaissance era. Morrison's deliberate choice of integrating the elements of jazz music into her literary text is not conventional in only integrating the rhythmical

elements of music into her text but also implanting the idea of collectivity, multi-voiced and layered narration of events, which reflect the characteristics of a jazz composition (Pici 22). This means that Morrison does not only use the rhythmical aspects of jazz music as a stylistic element in their literary texts, but she also utilizes contextual and thematic features of jazz music. This can be exemplified by the cultural references to the 1920s such as “Okeh,” which is a famous record company in 1920s. As the narrator mentions, “but when spring came to the City Violet saw, coming into the building with an Okeh record under her arm and carrying some stewmeat wrapped in butcher paper, another girl with four marcelled waves on each side of her head” (Morrison 6). Morrison also uses an anonymous song title which is actually not anonymous, “the Trombone Blues”[4] (Morrison 21). Morrison includes names of these cultural landmarks to give the text cultural authenticity.

The opening paragraph of *Jazz* is indicative of the literary features mentioned above. Morrison sets the scene through “Sth” (3) sound that the narrator makes with his/her mouth, and goes on to describe the scene. This specific sound is interpreted as “the muted soundsplash of a brush against a snare drum” by Eusebio L. Rodrigues in his article “Experiencing *Jazz*” (733). Later on, the narrator continues to describe the scene where Violet, Joe’s wife, is thrown out of the church because of her attempt to cut Dorcas’s face (Morrison 3). In addition to the sound design of the paragraph, the scene where Violet is thrown out of the church because of her attempt to cut Dorcas’s body can be analyzed as a reference to the history of jazz music. As Kathy J. Ogren, in her book *Jazz Revolution*, explains, by the end of the 19th century, blues and jazz were perceived as a kind of secular music genre associated with rural blacks and urban migrants who were condemned by black churches for their lack of religious belief, dedication and collectivism (112). Ogren adds that the division between the secular and sacred music was obvious since the identification of syncopated secular music with ungodly practices was intensified because of the jazz pianists working at brothels in urban areas at the beginning of their careers (112).

In this context, the action of throwing Violet out of the church can be read in two different ways. The first one can be taken as the revengeful action of the heartbroken

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[4] The original song title was “Trombone Blues” by the Washingtonians.

wife who is trying to damage an already dead body of a young mistress. The second one is the excommunication of a person from a religious sect because she is the embodiment of what is interpreted to be secular, vulgar and irreligious. Jazz music represented these characteristics according to many preachers towards the end of the 19th century because everything related to the urban freedom and secularity meant a departure from the homogenous community (Ogren 112). Contrary to that belief, *Jazz*, as a novel, tells the story of individuals with their own sorrows, hopes, past and future in an urban environment. In the case of Violet, the community wants to help her but a decision that says "only prayer—not money—could help her now" (Morrison 4) was made. This decision by the Salem Woman's Club in Harlem can be interpreted as the community's abandonment of these individuals who, after this, held onto music and arts as a new, welcoming community. Although Morrison does not directly address these points, the underlying message of *Jazz* seems to be hidden in the literary text. Robin Small-McCarthy, in her article "*From The Bluest Eye* to *Jazz*: A Retrospective of Toni Morrison's Literary Sounds," explains that African American people, with their changing mindset, are in a struggle to maintain their individuality while they are trying to be an integral part of the community and this element is similar to jazz improvisers playing solo parts within the framework of the music group to which they belong (177). Morrison, by blending what is musical and what is historical, creates an atmosphere that is formed by both of these factors instead of leaning on only one aspect of jazz music.

The reason the novel's initial setting was chosen as a church could be interpreted as a reference to the schism between the sacred music of the church and new urban secular music because there is an attempt by Morrison to give voice to the individuals in the community through cultural identification and political concerns instead of depending solely on religious concerns (Scheiber 475-6). This can be read as an effective lead-in to the story after the epigraph since the cultural atmosphere of the 1920s was suited for a new phase in the history of the African American community. The new cultural arena allowed the community to redefine itself through new forms of expression such as jazz, which was a new, secular and an urban form of expression although some of its roots is embedded in church music (Ogren 113). In this regard, Morrison's reference to modernist facets of the Harlem Renaissance can also be observed in her treatment of the historical phenomena in the specific time period. Secularization of music and the

foundation of a new cultural medium of expression were direct results of the Harlem Renaissance.

It can be said that Morrison alternatively uses the church incident as an exposition to the lives of the characters in an unconventional sense because the characters and their backgrounds are not explained in an order which describes the events in a standard plot structure with exposition, rising action, climax and denouement in the correct order. The climax is given at the very beginning and the story starts in medias res. After the climax, the narrator starts telling the story of the individuals in an order which might be classified as "random" since the narrator travels from one character to another without a predefined order and gives an account of each character's version of story and also mentions their past, future, dreams and hopes. However, just as the improviser who improvises on the musical ideas deriving from past events as mentioned by Frank Tirro, there is also an order in chaos (286). Depending on the narrator's point of view, the reader finds himself/herself in the middle of Violet's account of events and her attempt to reach as much information as she could about the affair between Dorcas and Joe Trace. As Gurleen Grewal, in her book *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison*, states,

> In the triad of Joe, Violet, and Dorcas, dispossession becomes a tonal idea that the rest of the characters repeat with variations. Just as in a jazz composition "harmonic qualities [suggest] linkages with particular harmonic synonyms, rhythmic elements evoking other patterns with similar configurations," the novel's discordant notes of loss build an architectonics whereby each story links with another. (129)

Correspondingly, the reader tries to untie the knots between the stories, each character's past with its trauma, despair and sense of loss is portrayed. Each individual story is like a thread going into a knot that is to be untied by the reader to understand the motives behind each character's actions. As Morrison herself described this can be associated with a jazz composition in which a certain pattern is introduced, and it disappears for a while only to reappear and remind itself (qtd. in Pici 19).

Syncopation in music can be described as the action of placing accented and strong events at weak positions and weak and less accented events at stronger ones (Fitch and Rosenfeld 43). This is a technique that is frequently used in the plot structure of *Jazz.* The intentional fluctuations in the narrative help create an atmosphere of changing

patterns and motifs. The first example of this in *Jazz* starts on page 7 where the narrator goes on to give a long talk on "the City," which seems to be irrelevant to topic mentioned previously. On the one hand, Violet's investigation of Dorcas's life is described by the narrator and on the other, a long monologue on "the City" and the narrator's comments on his/her own role in the story are included, which goes on for two pages. These two pages that disrupt the flow of the narrative are used to give some extra information about the narrator himself/herself and the historical atmosphere of the US in the 1920s. Page 7 starts the fluctuation in the narrative with the inclusion of words related to rhythm and melody such as "clarinets and lovemaking" and fast clicking trains" (Morrison 7). Musical and rhythmical allusions deliberately inserted into the flow of the text to facilitate the narrative atmosphere which aims to mimic the musical elements of blues and jazz. The narrator goes on to talk about "the City" on page 8, and the new beginning and opportunities it offers by giving references to its musical flow and rhythm through language despite the limitations of literary text. These seemingly irrelevant pages can be interpreted as the syncopated parts in a jazz piece which surprise the listener and draws his/her attention to another motif for a moment and then retreats to the familiar motif which is presented at the beginning (Small-McCarthy 176). This technique is intentionally used by Morrison, just like a jazz composer taking the attention of the listener to another theme, to draw the reader's attention to some historical events about the period of time in which the story takes place.

These fluctuations or syncopations do not only occur between chapters but also within the narrative to allow "Signification" between the text and jazz music. The moments from the lives of characters are transformed into a jazzy game of Signification. The narrator describes one of the appointments of Violet as,

> When the customer comes and Violet is sudsing the thin gray hair, murmuring "Ha Mercy" at appropriate breaks in the old lady's stream of confidences, Violet is resituating the cord that holds the stove door to its hinge and rehearsing the month's plea for three more days to the rent collector. She thinks she longs for rest, a carefree afternoon to decide suddenly to go to pictures, or just sit with the birdcages and listen to the children play in the snow. (Morrison 16)

As Paula Gallant Eckard suggests, the language in this excerpt from the text displays a double function through which both the actions of Violet and jazz music are signified

(16). Old lady's stream of confidences could be associated with a jazz composition and Violet's repetitive use of the phrase "Ha Mercy" can be considered as a break to let Violet join the sequence. The use of words indicating musical terminology such as "rehearse" and the resemblance between the word "cord" and chord are obvious indicators of Morrison's multi-layered language that mimics jazz music (Eckard 16, 17). In that sense, the readers, in their imagination, might guess that Violet is rehearsing a song or resituating a chord or singing along "Ha Mercy" with a choir of jazz audience.

The improvisatory literary functions in *Jazz* are hidden between the instances of life where the narrative moves away from the main incident and describes the scenes and events from the lives of the characters. These scenes and events are glimpses into the lives of the characters, and they make up the elements in the narrative which contribute to the formation of the characters' selves. Barbara Williams Lewis, in her article "The Function of Jazz in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," finds a parallelism between jazz music terminology and the vocabulary used in *Jazz* referring to individual stories of characters as "breaks," or specifically "cracks" as they are called in *Jazz* (273). Lewis further explains that these two terms are used to refer to the solo played by a soloist when the rest of the jazz band accompany with soft playing, in other words, players in the band follow the main motif while letting the player perform a solo piece (273). These solo performances can be associated with minor stories that help the reader understand the daily lives and personal attributes of each character. The "cracks" and "breaks" represent these sudden glimpses into the lives of characters where the main incident, which is the death of Dorcas, is abandoned, and the inner struggles of each character are directly or indirectly addressed. To demonstrate the multi-layered jazzy feeling of the text, the scene referring to the specific incident where Violet is accused of stealing a baby from a lady, who goes to fetch a jazz record from her house and leaves the baby with Violet, might be used. In this scene, Violet goes to one of her appointments, but she finds that her clients are not home. She then decides to wait in front of the apartment and there, she is asked to take care of a baby for a few minutes until "the older sister" goes to fetch "the Trombone Blues" record from the house. During that period, Violet takes the baby from the stroller and walks down the street "playing" and "rocking the baby" (Morrison 23).

The first layer of jazz element in this scene can be explained through the Washingtonians' "Trombone Blues," which is a jazz standard released in 1925 arranged by Duke Ellington, who is one of the pioneers responsible for the popularity of jazz. As Mark Tucker, in his book *Ellington: The Early Years*, explains "Trombone Blues" is a problematic song in its structure because musically, the arrangement makes the already fragmented structure even more fragmented with the sudden breaks or "cracks" (153). The level of breaks and fragmentation in the story line is introduced through both musical and literary experimentation. Violet initiates a fragmentation in the plotline and "Trombone Blues" is a song which includes an excessive level of break and fragmentation. In addition to that, it can be understood that "The Trombone Blues" in *Jazz* is the record which is responsible for the alleged abduction of the baby by Violet. This helps the reader understand that the music in the Harlem Renaissance was so important for people that it distracted them from their daily life responsibilities as the sister's case demonstrates.

The second layer of jazz element in the story is metaphorical. This incident is the first part in the novel where Violet's character is defined through an indirect musical metaphor. Violet's madness is described through "cracks" as the narrator calls it: "Joe never learned of Violet's public craziness. Stuck, Gistan and other male friends passed word of the incidents to each other, but couldn't bring themselves to say much more to him than 'How is Violet'? Doing Okay, is she?" Her private cracks, however, were unknown to him" (Morrison 22). The metaphor of "cracks" can be interpreted in three different ways in the context of the story. The first one is related to how jazz music includes "breaks" during which one of the band members comes to the front to play a solo part (Lewis 273). In that sense, Violet's specific action can be attributed to her "private cracks" as stated in the quote above (Morrison 22). Morrison, by using the word "private," puts Violet into the center as a soloist and emphasized that the deed she committed belongs only to her. These glimpses into the lives of the characters are their signatures and give the reader clues about the depth of the characters and their potential actions. This point is where there is a distraction from the main incident and one of the characters is put in the spot while the central plot is abandoned for a limited number of pages. These fluctuations in the narrative can be interpreted as the solo parts of the

characters where they play in their own key signature and introduce their peculiarities to the reader.

The second possible interpretation of the "cracks" mentioned by the narrator in *Jazz* could be associated with the mental condition of the character. As Deborah Barnes explains in her article "Movin' On Up: the Madness of Migration in Toni Morrison's *Jazz,*" Violet is delirious and in confusion to the point of "public craziness" (290), because she feels disoriented, fragmented and without function in her new urban environment. Violet's attempt to kidnap a baby on the street is indicative of her potential and most importantly, her character. She claims to be taking care of the baby until its sister arrives, but she veils her intention to take the baby home and give him a bath, which shows that she wants to own the baby. The narrator is convinced that Violet tried to steal the baby and he/she states that "but quiet as it's kept she did try to steal that baby although there is no way to prove it" (Morrison 17). The narrator supports that view by reporting a comment by one of the passersby, "Why would she walk that far, if she was just playing and rocking the baby?" (22). Bearing this in mind, Violet's "cracks" can also be interpreted as the token of the madness she has been descending into. The implication that she is acting strangely is expressed by the narrator who reports what happened through the eyes of the witnesses. In addition to that, the atmosphere is given a musical aura through the use of musical words like "playing" and "rocking" to describe her experience with the baby. From that perspective, her madness is also described through words with musical connotations to contribute to the jazzy atmosphere of the text. In Violet's case, it can be argued that her madness is equal to jazz music both in the musical and contextual sense. In the first chapter, Violet is handled as the solo player who is portrayed as a character who has "cracks" referring to the things that she has done outside the norms, and even to the criminal behavior. It can be concluded that the presentation of madness is related to the syncopated, constantly changing mood of jazz music combined with the constantly changing mood of Violet.

The third interpretation of "cracks" refers to the elements of insanity caused by the split identity of the race observed in Violet's psyche. As Richard Hardack, in his article "A Music Seeking Its Words' Double-Timing and Double-Consciousness in Toni Morrison's *Jazz,*" explains Violet's language and consciousness are split and fragmented

in a way that makes her actions disjointed and uncontrolled (457). The narrator comments on Violet's manner as, "Violet had stumbled into a crack or two. Felt the anything-at-all begin in her mouth. Words connected to only themselves pierced an otherwise normal comment" (Morrison 23). This image gives the reader the impression that Violet is struggling in her attempt to control her actions and has the potential to do the unthinkable. Hardack adds that these are the symptoms of a double-consciousness, and jazz music is the "reified" and "personified" yearning for identity or consciousness which can never achieve a unity in itself and goes on to say that Morrison integrates jazz music into her language also to portray the lives of the black individuals who are divided and torn apart by the social environment to which they were exposed (454). Apart from Violet's personal insanity, there is a collective madness shared by African American social order and performative arts. James Arthur Manigault-Bryant explains this madness through Du Bois's thoughts on a failed integration of the African American individuals into Anglo-American society by suggesting that madness for the community meant a kind of revival rather than a disorder which indicated the individuals' inability to integrate into America's "social order of thought" (328). This madness, most of the time, is reflected on African American arts and literature.

Consequently, "the race music," which is jazz, becomes characters' moments of moving in and out of the double-consciousness, which is partly caused by the new cultural phenomena experienced in the new urban environment. The events and character portrayal, such as the difficulty of moving to a new spacious flat and Violet's sharp tongue towards the shopkeepers in the neighborhood reflect the urban environment through its ups and downs. As the narrator claims, "she did not use to be that way. She had been a snappy, determined girl and a hardworking young woman, with the snatch-gossip tongue of a beautician" (Morrison 23). However, the urban environment she is exposed to causes her to have these "cracks" from time to time. The change the character goes through in the city and her search for a meaning through repetitions, reiteration and mimicking are a few of the musical elements utilized in *Jazz* (Hardack 457).

Moreover, each individual story mentioned in each chapter is connected to the next chapter through sentences repeating the same words or words following or

complementing each other. These do not remain on a structural level, they also serve as liaisons providing the meaningful connections between chapters. As Paula Gallant Eckard points out, “A chapter ends with a certain word, thought, or image. In response, the next chapter picks it up and plays it out by improvising on what has been gone before. With a jazz narrator, chapters quite literally signify on each other” (18).

Eusebio Rodrigues explains that the transitions between chapters are provided through blank pages and the themes and words that continue where the last ones have left off (740). He adds that although the blank pages, “transitional slurs” and “glides” between the chapters make the reader stop for a while, the continuing chapters make the reader resume reading the narrative through repetition of the same vocabulary items or the sentence structure in the following chapter (740). The “transitional slurs” and “glides” mentioned by Rodrigues leave the reader in a position where he/she gives the reader a chance to fill the gaps in the narrative. This is deliberately done to create a reading experience that is both interactive and participatory. The reader gives pauses by looking at or turning the blank pages and is allowed to dream about or contemplate what is going on in the story. The following chapter after these blank pages makes the reader reconnect to the narrative through repetition and sentences completing each other either in structure or meaning. Chapter 1, in *Jazz*, ends with “I love you.” (Morrison 24) and chapter two starts with “Or used to” (27). The meaningful connection as such between these two utterances is maintained throughout the book to emphasize the improvisatory atmosphere with the purpose of preserving the unity in meaning like a jazz composition does. Though syncopated and fragmented most of the time, the text still remains relevant to the main rhythmic or melodic motifs. These transitions are literary devices that allow the reader to make sense out of the narrative in the text without being distracted by the shifts and fluctuations.

The stories in *Jazz*, including the murder and other minor stories, are told retrospectively. The book tells the reader about the main incident and goes back in time to recollect the stories that lead up to the murder and how it was settled between Joe and Violet Trace in its aftermath. The second chapter starts with the last topic mentioned in the first chapter and builds the background in a chaotically progressive way. The scene in which Violet sets the birds free is revisited and from this point on, the narrator travels

in time to tell the stories of individual characters in their relation to the lives of other characters while moving in and out of them. Chapter 2 specifically focuses on Joe Trace. How he met Violet and their journey to "the City," how Joe and Dorcas met and how Joe convinced Malvonne to rent her house out to him to be used as a "love nest" are described in an order which might be called random. However, stories tie up to each other in a jazzy progression. For instance, though unknown to Joe, Violet's grandmother, True Belle, tells the story of Golden Gray who has saved Joe's alleged mother's life. Since Violet never tells Joe about her grandmother, Joe never learns that Golden Gray whom Violet's grandmother raised saved his mother's, in other words Wild's, life.

As mentioned above, Chapter 2 focuses on Joe Trace and his imagining of events retrospectively. The narrator delves into the psyche of Joe Trace and chronicles his relationship with Dorcas. However, the narrative, again, fluctuates between Joe, Malvonne and Dorcas as the incidents from their past surface at random points. The layers of musical allusions also continue in this chapter. As Alan J. Rice, in his article "Jazzing It up a Storm: The Execution and Meaning of Toni Morrison's Jazzy Prose Style," suggests, each character in Morrison's stories add their own "timbre" to the story, in other words, their own distinctive voice (431). In *Jazz*, the direct reference to that comes as, "Even then, listening to her talk, to the terrible things she said, he felt he was losing the timbre of her voice and what happened to her eyelids when they made love" (28). Joe's complaint about "losing timbre" of Dorcas's voice can be interpreted as his failure to see who Dorcas really was and her character in detail. Failing to hear the timbre in music is a problem experienced by instrumentalists in differentiating the tonal colors of instruments (Eidshiem 6). In other words, "losing timbre" means losing one's distinctive quality or voice. This is again Morrison's attempt to signify on music through African American critical technique of Signifyin(g) according to Henry Louis Gates Jr. (46).

Morrison's play on language does not only stay within the domain of abstract linguistic word play referring to the main themes in the story, it also refers to language itself directly. Morrison directly refers to the language of the African American community by creating a meta-language reference. Scheiber acknowledges that Morrison situates

the African American vernacular in a context where it functions as a medium which gives African Americans freedom in their new urban surroundings, and he goes on to explain that the urban experience transforms the storytelling tradition of the rural African American community into street corner fast talk and jive, and country dance steps into swing and jazz music (487). This element is presented in *Jazz* as, "when they spoke, regardless the accent, treated language like the same intricate, malleable toy designed for their play" (Morrison 33). Morrison, here, intentionally gives the impression that the cultural devices of the African American community can transform themselves no matter where they are practiced. The transition between storytelling to street corner fast-talk, and between country tap dance to swing and jazz are examples of this fluidity and malleability of the language.

What can be achieved through language in Morrison's text is also reinforced by references made to historical landmarks from the Harlem Renaissance era. Towards the end of Chapter 2, Malvonne, the neighbor who rented her apartment flat out to Joe, is examined. Morrison mentions the name of the famous black magazine *The Opportunity* (1923-49) along with Malvonne's personal story. Malvonne inherits a stolen bag of letters from her nephew, who robbed the mailbox in an attempt to find money in it. Malvonne reads these letters and sends replies to the urgent ones anonymously, and before she was asked to rent his house out to Joe, she was recommending an article from *Opportunity Magazine* to the receiver within her letter (Morrison 44). Jill Matus, in his book *Toni Morrison*, elaborates on that by saying that although Harlem witnesses a black liberation movement during the 1920s, Morrison did not want to give into the idealized and generic representation of Harlem portraying the highbrow literati, jazz clubs and dancing all along (127). On the contrary, Morrison talks about the liberation of the "ordinary black folk" in Harlem.

These life instances portrayed by Morrison are mostly directly and indirectly related to musical allusions or references. As Eckard states, "the narrator's speech reflects a jazz musicality" (16). The end of chapter two includes a few of these musical allusions. As the narrator explains, "So Why is it on Thursday that the men look satisfied? Perhaps it's the artificial rhythm of the week—perhaps there is something phony about the seven day cycle the body pays no attention to it, preferring triplets, duets, quartets, anything

but a cycle of seven that has to be broken into human parts and the break comes on Thursday" (Morrison 50).

The words like "rhythm," "triplet," duet," and "quartet" belong to jazz music terminology, but they are also an integral part of the text because they make up the thoughts and internal monologues existent in the psyche of the characters through the narrator. This strengthens the idea that the narrator in *Jazz* is actually jazz music (Eckard 13). Furthermore, a deeper analysis might reveal that "the artificial rhythm of the week" is the seven common notes in Western Classical Music and the narrator, as jazz music, is trying to break out of this confinement through its liberating spirit. Instead of living life in sevens, experiencing life in "triplet," "duets," and "quartets" are more appealing to men. Moreover, triplet, duet and quartet refer to the number of people in a jazz band not to the number of musical notes on a scale. This can be interpreted as the interactive, communal aspect of jazz music. Additionally, the chapter ends with the image of "circles and grooves of a record" turning on a gramophone and thus changing the weather "From freezing to hot to cool" (Morrison 51). All the imagery with jazz bands and records is repeatedly used in the text to create an atmosphere that is specifically jazzy. The musical language in the text is realized through verbal and contextual mimicry and also through the evocative and dynamic image of "the City" (Hardack 460).

One of the characters whose actions are formed by, associated with and portrayed through musical imagery is Alice Manfred. She is one of the key characters in the interwoven stories, Dorcas's aunt and her key role in the story is her unusual friendship with Violet. Despite the fact that her niece was killed by Joe and his wife tried to cut Dorcas's dead body at the funeral, Alice Manfred finds herself in a friendship with Violet. Alice is portrayed as a character who seemed to remain passive about most of the events because of the traumas she experienced as a result of racist riots against black community. Therefore, she develops a cautious approach towards the music the City embraces. Furthermore, Dorcas's murder adds to her already traumatic past which includes the killing of Dorcas's parents in the riots mentioned above. Thus, Alice's thoughts on music are divided into two different modes. The first takes on an embracing

mood where the music is the fixer, healer and social glue and second one takes on a disapproving mood where music is perceived seductive, deceiving and adulterous.

In Alice Manfred's case, music takes on a racial and sociocultural meaning. As the narrator puts, "What was possible to say was already in print on a banner that repeated a couple of promises from the Declaration of Independence. But what was meant came from the drums" (Morrison 53). This passage from the text describes a scene where Alice watched a silent black parade marching down the Fifth Avenue, but the sound of drums compensates for the silence of black people protesting racial discrimination and inequality. The political message aimed to be conveyed here is mediated by drums, and thus, it represents a communal tie within the African American community because they explain what is otherwise unexplainable through a written note including promises from the Declaration of Independence. The image of drums speaking for the community is repeated for emphasis on page 58 and 59. The comparison between the Declaration of Independence and the sounds of drums is important to understand because what drums had to say is preferred to the promises of the official document that declared the independence of the country.

Contrary to the sentiments shared for the drums and their connecting and embracing communal message, Alice Manfred is intimidated by and afraid of the music "the City" produces because she associates it with Dorcas's wrong actions which led to her death. However, she seems to have a love-hate relationship with this kind of music because she cannot help the thought of it. This is reflected upon her discourse on the music and according to what the narrator observes, "Yet Alice Manfred swore she heard a complicated anger in it; something hostile that disguised itself as flourish and roaring seduction" (Morrison 59). This passage explains Alice's negative feelings towards music; however, a few lines after these, the two different kinds of music Alice is referring to are molded into one as it is stated by the narrator: "It was impossible to keep the Fifth Avenue drums separate from the belt-buckle tunes vibrating from pianos and spinning on every Victrola" (Morrison 59). Drums were also given special power of fixing, restoring and connecting to what is lost: "Then suddenly, like a rope cast of rescue, the drums spanned the distance, gathering them all up and connected them" (Morrison 58). The drums in jazz music have long been a significant representation of

social and political expression in African American culture. This phenomenon is intentionally traced back to the African roots of the community by some critics the most notable of whom is Langston Hughes. As Hughes stated, “Jazz is to me one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the tom-tom beating in the Negro soul—the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world,” (“Negro Artist” 3). The Harlem Renaissance and the modernity it embraced had to be based on an ancient musical heritage such as the rhythmic “tom-tom” of ancient Africa; therefore, this mission was carried out by race leaders like Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke.

The treatment of music in *Jazz* does not take its roots from a single source. Morrison designs the musical atmosphere of every scene depending on the character, physical surroundings, and historical context. Nick Pici emphasizes that the music in *Jazz* is designed to morph into different states of mind and thus, liable to transformations (25). Dorcas’s experience of music and Alice’s differ in their perception of it since Alice condemns it as “infuriating,” “loose” and “greedy.” On the other hand, her niece Dorcas embraces it as a part of her life and experiences it first hand when she dances at the home parties. Dorcas lets the music take control as it is described by the narrator, “They believe they know before the music does what their hands, their feet are to do, the illusion is the music’s secret drive: the control it tricks them into believing is theirs; the anticipation it anticipates” (Morrison 65). The illusionary control that Dorcas surrenders herself into and the awareness Alice has of the effects of music and her complicated feelings towards it differentiates the characters and their perception of music. As Pici concludes, this discourse is vital for “[u]nderstaning paradoxical nature of jazz within a cultural-historical framework” (25).

Morrison in *Jazz* uses “the anticipation” mentioned in the excerpt above also to refer to the conflicting views on the purpose of jazz music when there was a debate in the public on its validity as cultural value that represents the African American community. The music “anticipates” its own future in the lives of people it entered because a part of the population labeled it as “devil’s music” whereas the other part embraced it as the new form that “liberates” the community as no cultural movement did before (Scheiber 478). Therefore, jazz music takes on a different meaning for every individual depending on their cultural perspective. Alice Manfred, for instance, classifies jazz music as one of

the motives that contributed to her niece's murder when she says, "Nothing her niece did or tried could equal the violence done to her. And where there was violence wasn't there also vice? Gambling. Cursing. A terrible and nasty closeness. Red dresses. Yellow shoes. And, of course, race music to urge them on" (Morrison 79). What Alice perceives as "race music" is different from the drums she hears in St. Louis, therefore, her perception of music changes depending on the condition she is experiencing. Her perception of music is open to change like every mood in the text.

The comparison between the characters' rural past and urban present also presents an orderly chaos which results in different perceptions concerning the music and the city. Violet, Joe and Alice, as the three main characters in the story, travel back to their past to reminisce the events that led to their current problems, traumas and contradictions. The narrator serves as a ghost-like mediator that initiates that instantaneous flashbacks cutting back to the past and since the story started at the present time, the story goes back and forth between the characters' recent past in the City and their distant past in the rural areas of the US. When these flashbacks are examined, it can be observed that the scenes Morrison creates when she switches between these two geographies overlap. Kristin K. Henson, in *Beyond the Sound Barrier: The Jazz Controversy in Twentieth Century American Fiction*, explains that this effect can be explained through the modernist view of historical revisionism (93). The scenes switch between instances of recent and distant past through the course of the nonlinear narrative. Through the unreliable narrator, every time the reader learns about an instance, another one comes into light and make the other piece of information meaningful. It is vital to understand Joe's trauma related to his mother to understand the motive behind the murder he committed.

In an attempt to put the story into perspective, Joe goes on to explain the seven changes he went through before he met Dorcas. Morrison places this long internal monologue by Joe to revise what we know about him and have a degree of empathy towards his actions. Joe describes how he picks the surname "Trace," how he learnt hunting from Mr. Frank, how the town he lived was burned to the ground, how he and Violet left for the City, how he was saved by a white man from being lynched in a riot, how they struggled in the City, and how he saved a little boy who fell and could not get up during

another riot. Joe comments on these changes as, "I changed once too often. Made myself new one time too many. You could say I've been a new Negro all my life. But all I lived through, all I seen, and not one of those changes prepared me for her" (Morrison 123). Joe keeps revising himself through the course of his personal history. Joe's self is always open to change. These changes, according to Henson, are representations of temporal setting of modernism within which the author gives the climax of the story at the very beginning and sets out to discover or at least attempt to analyze the reasons behind each character's actions, in this way, jazz music fulfills the expectations of this literary modernism (93). This idea manifests itself at the beginning of the novel when the narrator says, "History is over, you all, and everything's ahead at last" (Morrison 7).

Jazz music's modernity comes from the changes it offers for the instrumentalist within the context of improvisation, and unconventional usage of musical instruments. In *Jazz,* characters form their reasons with complex stories that tie up to the climax of the story. Their stories are unconventional, and their motives can sometimes be labelled as unrelated and far-fetched when their actions are examined. The states of mind of the characters, thus, come to a point where the division between the past and present becomes blurry. The characters' actions are determined by the traumas in the past, but they are in a situation where they are unable to relate them to those traumas within their current states of mind. Joe's seven changes are not enough to explain his terrible crime. However, his absent mother and his attempt to find her helps the reader make a connection because the scenes where he also tries to find Dorcas are mentioned in the same chapter through switches between the two scenes. The sense that the past and present are intertwined is provided by Morrison as a modernist aspect of her literary text. As jazz music revises its own melodies and rhythms in the creation of the live performance, Morrison's text recreates and revises itself throughout the story by introducing new story lines, pieces of information that add to the mood the characters.

Morrison, making use of these modernist aspects, plays with the notion of time her characters perceive. Dayton Kohler, in his article "Time in the Modern Novel," explains the same phenomenon by referring to the modernist features of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. Kohler states: "The structure of the novel is dictated

entirely by the movement of memory, especially by the illusion of the way time passes, or seems to pass, recurs, or seems recur" (337). Kohler adds that this technique allows the novelist to demonstrate the transformative effect of time on ideas, concepts and characters themselves and how hidden memories of the characters seep into their present consciousness to let the past events resurface in the present time in full vividness (337-338). In Morrison's *Jazz*, this aspect is also combined with African American urban experience where characters discover the urban spaces they were drawn to. Characters in *Jazz* also become the new perceivers of their new urban environment. As Noël Carroll, in his article "Modernity and Plasticity of Perception," explains, people who wandered the streets of cities in the late 19th and early twentieth century were destined to shift their attentions from one image to another while travelling in the city, because in the city, individuals are granted with a different kind of perception formed by various items to be looked under a different light such as shops windows, billboards, high-speed traffic all of which forced them to shift their perception in a quick way (13).

The concepts mentioned above can be exemplified through the walk Joe takes to find Dorcas. When Joe sets out to find Dorcas, his present and past blend into each other. This is achieved through language and word choice. While Joe is looking for Dorcas, he says: "Plus I know how to treat a woman. I never have, never would, mistreat one. Never would make a woman live in a cave" (Morrison 182). By mentioning the cave, it can be understood that he is talking about Wild, his mother, and the times he spent looking for her. A few lines later, he comments: "When I find her, I know—I bet my life—she won't be holed up with one of them. His clothes won't be all mixed up with hers. Not her. Not Dorcas. She'll be alone. Hardheaded. Wild, even. But alone" (182). In this excerpt, Joe talks as if he is looking for his mother in the cave she is dwelling. His word choice makes it obvious, and he even calls Dorcas "Wild." Morrison, instead of connecting the sentences, uses a full stop to write "Wild" in capitals, in other words, to treat the adjective as a person's name. Joe thinks about all the recurrences and past traumas while looking for Dorcas in the urban haze of New York on Harlem streets. In scenes like this, the past and present intermingle and word choice and the use of language give the reader hints about the character's deep thoughts and subconscious where the real reasons behind his/her actions come out. Morrison, by using language to

signify on character's inner troubles and traumas, contributes to the reception of African American modernity through language as Henry Louis Gates Jr. puts forward in his definition of Signifyin(g) as an African American cultural mode to play with the language to create a medium of cultural and historical expression (46).

In the same manner, Morrison makes use of music and musical instruments throughout the text to talk about African American modernity and its troubles and dilemmas. This process requires the community to come to terms with their past and present no matter how troublesome it has been. One striking image of how the musical allusions become a prominent effect on characters can be explained through Joe's different experiences with city music and his perception of nature's music. Joe comes across "blind twins" playing guitar, while he is looking for Dorcas on the streets of Harlem: "the blind twins were playing guitar in the shop, and it's just like you said—only of them's blind; the other one is just going along with the program. Probably not even brothers, let alone twins" (Morrison 131). The image of twins playing the guitar can be interpreted as an image to signify on the double-consciousness juxtaposed with musical imagery. One of the twins is blind and the other is not, and they pretend to be brothers, which can be seen as an imagery regarding the doubleness/duality experienced by the African American individual's psyche. The division between each twin can also take the place of the division between seeing or not seeing the truth about African American experience. However, the twins, who are not really twins, are bound by music rather than biological or physical traits. As Joe also comments, "They were playing something sooty, though; not the gospel like they usually do, and the women selling fish dinners frowned and talked about their mother bad, but they have never say a word to the twins and I knew they were having a good time listening because one the loudest ones could hardly suck her teeth for patting her foot" (Morrison 131).

As can be seen in the passage above, the reception of the music played by "the twins" is not very pleasant on the surface, however, it can be felt that the music is loved and embraced by the community because women do not criticize "the twins," and one of them even taps her foot to the rhythm. These pretentious twins, despite their conmanship and tricks caused by their fake duality, manage to attract women's sympathy with the music they are playing. This same music makes Joe confused. Joe

further comments on the music played by "the twins" as, "It can do that to you, a certain kind of guitar playing. Not like the clarinets, but close. If that song had been coming through a clarinet, I'd have known right away. But the guitars—they confused me, made me doubt myself, and I lost the trail" (Morrison 132).

While Joe is looking for Dorcas the music "the twins" play makes him confused, and he loses his concentration ending up not finding Dorcas that day. This can be attributed to the new self that Joe is trying to achieve in "the City." He gets distracted by the sound of the guitars, which were newly becoming a steady musical instrument in jazz music orchestras in the 1920s. The polyphony and complexity of the music the guitar produces makes Joe lose the trail in his attempt to find Dorcas. This specific chapter where the passage above is located ends with Joe's comments on newness, Joe's adaptation to "the City" and the polyphony it creates are disrupted by his past experiences. Joe states: "I talk about being new seven times before I met you, back then, back there, you was or claimed to be colored, you had to be new and stay the same every "day the sun rose and night it dropped" (Morrison 135). Joe's adaptation to urban life and the polyphony it creates does not happen easily, but it is eventually achieved through acceptance, and reconciliation with Violet, in other words, when Joe comes to terms with his past and present.

The end of the chapter mentioned above makes a transition to the story of Golden Gray, who is a mixed race man born on a plantation. Golden Gray's story is told by the narrator by depending on True Belle's account, who is Violet's grandmother. True Belle raises Violet and her sisters upon their mother's suicide. True Belle is a person who belongs to Violet's past at the same time, the story she tells through the narrator is closely related to Joe's past, specifically his childhood. The two subsequent chapters between the pages 137 and 187 give a historical background on the past life of African American individuals living in poverty and suffering from the remnants of the institution of slavery. When these two chapters are compared to other chapters, it can be observed that the language in these chapters mostly has a different rhythm. As the narrator tells how Vera Louise and True Belle admired Golden Gray,

> Simply startled each morning by the look of him, they vied with each other for the light he shed on them. He was given a fussy spoiling by Vera Louise and complete indulgence by True Belle, who laughing, laughing, fed him test cakes and picked

> every single seed from the melon before she let him eat it. Vera Louise dressed him like the Prince of Wales and read him vivid stories. (Morrison 140)

The monotony and established norms of southern culture infiltrates the text. The portrayal of the rural life in the countryside is conveyed through a relatively more linear story line, and there are less ups and downs, and historical flow of the narrative is not disrupted by the city noise and city images since the time period the mentioned story takes place goes back to the history of rural life after the Emancipation Proclamation. The chapters where Golden Gray's story is told seem isolated from the rest of the novel, but his connection starts with Violet's memories of True Belle and later, extends to Joe's story through True Belle. As Eusebio Rodrigues explains, one of the ways to express the atrocities experienced in the South is to disrupt the chronological orders of the events and isolate an individual story in order to make it stand out from the rest (742). The inclusion of minor characters, and the historical point aimed to be expressed through them help maintain a balance between the personal stories and historical facts of the time. By this method, the reader empathizes with characters and learns the personal and communal history simultaneously.

The chapters including Golden Gray's story are not disrupted by any fluctuations or syncopations except for the narrator's personal comments on Golden Gray. True Belle and Golden Gray act as a window to the past lives of slaves, white slave owners and free black people trying to survive. The story is told by the narrator upon True Belle's account, but neither True Belle nor Golden Gray has an experience of living in an urban environment. Their stories represent a distant past away from "the City." Therefore, the rhythm and music in these two different geographies, namely urban and rural, are contrasted. These chapters lacking the rhythmical changes of the chapters that take place in "the City" do not mean that they also lack music. Although the narration is relatively linear, the music in the distant past offers an indirect connection presented as an inspiration for the music that will shape the characters' future life. Golden Gray, who was raised as a gentleman, knows the country life as well as he does music. As Morrison writes, "Golden Gray reins in his horse. This is a thing he does well. The other is play the piano" (150-51). In the education of a boy raised with southern values, the place of the piano is not neglected. Golden Gray on his journey to meet Henry Lestory finds Wild, who is the other person with musical associations.

The first time Joe is looking for Wild has direct references to music, after hours of a fun fishing trip, Joe decides to check the rock formation where Wild is claimed to live and the narrator describes the sound of wind and running waters as, “The music the world makes, familiar to fisherman and shepherds, woodsmen, have also heard. It hypnotizes mammals. Bucks raise their heads and gophers freeze. Attentive woodsmen smile and close their eyes” (Morrison 176). Wild’s surrounding is the world’s music. Furthermore, the next scene describes Joe’s confusion when he is exposed to this kind of music: “Joe though was it, and simply listened with pleasure until a word or two seemed to glide into the sound. Knowing the music the world makes has no words, he stood rock still and scanned his surroundings” (177). This scene might be interpreted as the birth of jazz music in *Jazz* because it is chronologically the earliest point of time in the novel where a type of music is listened and paid attention to. The following scene gives lyrics to “the music the world makes” by making Joe hear Wild sing: “The Scrap of song came from a woman’s throat, and Joe trashed and beat his way up the incline and through the hedge, a tangle of muscadine vines,” (177). “The music the world makes” blends into Wild’s song and makes Joe follow the voice of his alleged mother. This attitude makes the reader think about the African roots of jazz music. As Scheiber explains, jazz music, with its new forms emerging in 1970s, dates back to African musical heritage, which emerged earlier than the blues, and it repudiates the European harmonic structure by embracing improvisational and rhythmical complexity of African musical traditions (472).

In the end, both Golden Gray and Wild run off to the wilderness and disappear. These two characters become the earliest appearances of music in the novel chronologically, and they disappear into the wilderness just like the musical roots of African American music does in “the City.” Scheiber goes on to explain that blues music started to be ignored as the starting point of jazz music because of its connection to plantation life and slavery, and African tradition is introduced instead as a more authentic source for jazz music tradition (472). Morrison, in her attempt to trace back African American modernity, brings together the elements of African musical tradition and the new African American experience in the urban landscapes of the North. The pages between 137 and 187 narrate Golden Gray’s story and starting from page 180, the scene starts to fuse into Joe’s moment in Harlem where “he is a long way from Virginia” (Morrison

180). In this specific moment, it can be claimed that the music the world makes and the music the city makes blend into each other through the African American modernity Morrison is trying to address. Morrison, in her attempt to cover African American musical and literary history from African roots to plantation life and from plantation life to the modern urban experience, blends the urban and the rural elements into each other through Joe's struggles, traumas, dilemmas and conflicts. Joe becomes the modern African American individual with all different connections leading up to his story as Joe Trace who shot Dorcas in a rent party.

While recounting the story of Golden Gray in the distant past, the narrator has conflicting views about the content of Golden Gray's character: "I know he is a hypocrite; that he is shaping a story for himself to tell somebody, to tell his father, naturally. How he was driving along, saw and saved this wild black girl: no qualms. I had no qualms" (Morrison 154). A few pages later the narrator changes his views about Golden Gray: "What was I thinking of? How could I have imagined him so poorly?" (Morrison 160). The narrator confesses that he/she had misjudged Golden Gray's motives and reasons and starts to empathize with him. The absence of a father figure in his life and the confusion about his own identity after he learns about his father makes the narrator question his/her opinions. This shift in the narrator's views is deliberately provided to help the reader understand that the views of the narrator can change, and he/she is not reliable all the time. As the narrator comments, "I have been careless and stupid and it infuriates me to discover (again) how unreliable I am" (Morrison 160). The unreliability of the narrator is utilized as a tool to give the narrative a jazzy quality. In *Jazz*, all the different stories are liable to change, even the most distant ones like Golden Gray's. By playing with the reader's perception of Golden Gray, Morrison aims to revise and reproduce the identity as an element of artistic production. As Caroline Brown in her article "Golden Gray and the Talking Book: Identity as a Site of Artful Construction in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," states, "Simultaneously, Golden Gray, a character who is actively and mindfully being produced, becomes the reader's conduit into the ambivalence and contradictions of creative production, whether of artistry or identity itself" (634). In order to refer to African American modernity, the lives of African American individuals are abstracted and made into a product of art through the medium of jazz, which is genuinely African and American. While commenting on

his/her false judgment on Golden Gray, the narrator states, “I want to be the language that wishes him well, speaks his name, wakes him when his eyes need to be open” (Morrison 161). Morrison here attempts to give Golden Gray a jazz quality by transforming the narrator into his language. As suggested before, the narrator itself embodied all the qualities regarding jazz music. Personification of the narrator as a musical entity, namely jazz music, can be considered as an asset of African American modernity, which allows the novelist to personify a cultural concept as a Signifyin(g) element in a literary work, as explained by Henry Louis Gates Jr.. The unison of Joe, Golden Gray and Wild’s stories blur the boundaries between form and content and present and past thereby representing a people’s experience of modernity through an art form.

The setting for the African American modernity in *Jazz* is chosen as the urban North since the South carries the memories of slavery, plantation life, and a socially suppressed existence of black community. Therefore, the language that is used to talk about two different settings, which are the country and city, are different in word choice and imagery (Eckard 15). However, the impact of the past on the characters and their stories is not overlooked. Although there are differences in language, there is also a moment of unification between the country and the city. The narrator, in the first pages of the novel, states: “Daylight slants like a razor cutting the buildings in half” (Morrison 7). On the other hand, Joe’s search for his mother in the country is described as, “A silver line lay across the opposite bank, sun cutting in to the last of the night’s royal blue (Morrison 177). The treatment of the setting here is very similar in terms of the imagery presented. This specific scene can be interpreted as the unification of two different lands, namely the country and city, but the scene is significant in the story since Joe is trying to find his alleged mother, and the next scene describes how he looks for Dorcas on the streets of Harlem.

Contrary to the scene described above, the scenes which include Joe and Violet’s journey to “the City” presents a change in language in terms of word choice and rhythm. As it is described by the narrator, “When the train trembled approaching the water surrounding “the City,” they thought it was like them: nervous at having gotten there at last, but terrified of what was on the other side.” (Morrison 30). Later on the

same page, "the trembling" and "nervousness" turn into something positive: "The train shivered with them at the thought but went on and sure enough there was ground up ahead and the trembling became the dancing under their feet" (Morrison 30). The language is intentionally played upon to show the contrast between the feelings Violet and Joe have about "the City." Something negative turns into positive as the elements of "the City" enter their lives (Eckard 15). Gurleen Grewal suggests that the rural past of the characters have an impact on their perception of the urban land they newly start to experience (125). Having experienced the hate and violence in South, the newly arriving black families perceived the North as the land of opportunity, unaware of what awaits them. Grewal also adds that the affection the characters build for the urban experience results from the division that it initiates between their repressive past, and the present containing hope about the future (125). While the rural perspective is abandoned, the northern city is embraced with its unknown possibilities. However, the impression that the past is left behind turns out to be a deception, it haunts the characters, but "the City" still continues to give them the courage to face it and accept it and also move on with their lives. As Grewal states, "the northern city delivers its own violence, that is the place of a dream deferred, does not negate the possibilities it offers" (125-26).

As two dominant elements of the imagery in *Jazz*, the images related to cityscape and music are inextricably interwoven. The narrator echoes almost all the features regarding the urban and musical images. As mentioned before, these factors contributing to African American modernity are not presented without their problematic sides. Morrison portrays the conditions of African American experience in an urban environment with sheer reality, but also with great imagination through her narrative devices. The narrator's comments on Joe exemplify these two interwoven elements:

> It pulls him like a needle through the groove of a Bluebird record. Round and round about the town. That's how the City spins you. Makes you do what it wants, go where laid-out roads say to. All the while letting you think you're free; that you can jump into thickets because you feel like it. There are no thickets here and if mowed grass is okay to walk on the City will let you know. You can't get off the track a City lays for you. (Morrison 120)

This is a series of comments by the narrator which include images closely related to both the urban experience and the music. By saying "the City spins you," Morrison equates the individual with a record played on a gramophone. In that case, "the City" is

the record player and the individual, Joe, is the song. Through this analogy, the action of playing a record on a gramophone and walking around in the City, paying attention to its limitations and rules, are presented as the qualities of a character. While applying these literary devices, the limitations and restrictions of the city life are not overlooked. The illusion of freedom in "the City" is openly addressed. In doing so, the controlling effect of music on the individuals is also integrated to the monologue, the music "spins" the character, controls him, makes him do whatever it wants him to do. These references to the urban and musical elements help Morrison define the African American modernity through its fundamental elements. Morrison's approach to the wandering urbanite who is played upon by the city can be explained through Michael de Certeau's comments on walking in the city:

> To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place—an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately the place but is only a name, the City. (103)

The narrative in *Jazz* oscillates between "the City" and "the race music." These two components surround the characters and delve into their lives and even become the narrator. The space and rhythm are played upon to bend the truth about characters and their perceptions. As Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris in her article "Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and the City" states, "Reading the text is a form of reading the City," (227). The cityscape also meant uncertainty and confusion for the migrants coming from the South, so these individuals had to decipher the ways the city functioned. Therefore, the only way for the community to integrate themselves into the urban life was to use the modernist elements of the music black people were producing throughout their history in the US, which brought the country and the city together. As Paquet-Deyris argues, "The text becomes then a musical score, an open to change, instrumental space in the literal sense of the term" (222).

Although the urbanism embraced by Morrison's text portrays "the City" as the land of salvation and opportunity by presenting it as a "promised land," it also reflects the atrocities faced by the migrants within their own community. The first years of Joe and Violet in "the City," as described by Joe, were spent fighting with "light-skinned

renters:" "When we moved from 140th street to a bigger place in Lenox, it was the light-skinned renters who tried to keep us out. Me and Violet fought them, just like they was whites. We won" (127). Morrison brings a criticism towards the lack of communal bonds between the members of the same community and refers to the internalized racism imposed by "light-skinned" renters. It can be said that Morrison positions African American modernity against the norms and rules of the cityscape designed by white dominant authorities, which fragments "the City" into secluded neighborhoods and gated communities. Jane Jacobs, in her *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, mentions that confining cities into neighborhoods is against the idea of a city because urban life requires mobility—freedom to move between places—and this cannot be hindered by the confinement introduced by property owners who want to block the migrants' access to the city's cultural, social and economic activities (116). Jacobs also explains that among what makes a place urban, one of the most important elements is its "fluidity of use," in other words, the individual's freedom to choose where to eat, have fun, walk, or listen to music (116). In that case, it can be inferred that some members of the African American community become the victims of the Anglo-American modernity practiced in "the City." The urban atmosphere in Morrison's narrative favors a more communal and embracing modernity where members are accepted and also let free to experience their individuality. It is then easy to assume that Morrison attempts to address the fluidity and mobility of an urban environment rather than carefully divided segments with different social classes. This can be best exemplified by the private parties given in the flats and on the rooftops, which use the living spaces in the city as the place of cultural and communal entertainment. Such parties are described as: "Young men on the rooftops changed their tune; spit and fiddled their mouthpiece for a while and when they put it back in and blew out their cheeks it was just like the light of the day, pure and steady and kind of kind. You would have thought everything had been forgiven the way they played" (Morrison 196).

The significance of these parties for the modernity of African American arts can be explained through the social environment of the 1920s where all the venues and music halls were segregated by the Jim Crow laws and the only black population in those places were either black people serving as waiters/waitresses or black performers. As a result, the modernity that African American population chose to grow in emerged in

those private parties that rebelled against the common entertainment of the time. These parties are portrayed as divine and sublime experiences as described in the excerpt since they were “pure” and “steady,” and also had the power to forgive everything. Morrison, from this perspective, seems to be taking sides with Langston Hughes’s views in “When then Negro was in Vogue,” which puts forward that rent parties in those years were more entertaining and real than the entertainment provided in famous clubs (2696). Morrison, in her text, even attempts to glorify these parties and musicians: “That’s the way young man on brass sounded that day. Sure of themselves, sure they were holy, standing up there on the rooftops, facing each other at first, but when it is clear that they had to beat the clarinets out, they turned their backs on them, lifted those horns straight up and joined the light just a pure and steady and kind of kind” (Morrison 197).

The musicians in the Harlem Renaissance period fell on two categories as the ones who work for big clubs and the ones who play in the rent parties given in flats and on the rooftops. Morrison’s language privileges these musicians and attributes divine qualities to them by portraying their performances in vivid imagery and soulful language. The alternative provided to generic club entertainment by avant-garde musicians playing on the rooftops came to be perceived as the Harlem Renaissance of the ordinary folk living in Harlem in difficult times.

The last three chapters of Jazz revolve around Felice, Violet, Joe and the narrator. Felice is Dorcas’s best friend and the girl who holds her hand tight while she bleeds to death. These chapters, again, include the syncopated shifts between characters and their individual perspectives where the characters mentioned about above comes into the scene to reflect their inner voices. The narrator is sometimes absent and leaves the stage to each individual character and their dialogues. Felice, towards the end of the novel, comes in as an important figure who serves as a mediator between Joe and Violet and a character who witnesses the recovering phase of the couple’s relationship. Felice visits the Traces to ask Joe about the ring Dorcas borrowed from her to wear in the party she was shot and later visits the couple again upon Violet’s invitation. Violet, at first, mistakes Felice for Dorcas: “she easily believed that what was coming up toward her was another true-as-life Dorcas, four marcelled waves and all” (197). However, Felice perceives herself as someone totally different in character and visits the couple to talk

about Dorcas and the mistakes she has made. She firmly says: “I am not like her” (209). Felice helps Joe and Violet come to terms with who they are. As Felice states, “I thought about it for three months and when I heard he was still at, crying and so on, I made up my mind to tell him about her.” (205). Felice proceeds to enlighten the couple by talking to them and bringing their real selves out.

Felice presents a conscious attitude towards the urban lure, but she keeps her enthusiasm about music alive. Her standpoint results in confusion by the narrator: “A sooty film is gathering on the sills, coating the windowpanes. Now she is disturbing me, making me doubt my own self just looking at her sauntering through the sunshafts like that. Climbing the steps now, heading for Violent” (198). Felice helps characters discover their true selves as an alternative to their urban selves which might be the reason for their wrongdoings or madness. Felice decides to visit Joe and Violet again because she thinks: “The first time was to see if he had my ring or knew where it was, and to tell him to stop carrying on about Dorcas because maybe she wasn’t worth it (207). Felice consoles Joe by telling him that he was “the last thing on [Dorcas]’s mind” (213). The news that Dorcas let herself bleed to death by refusing any kind of medical help is relayed to Joe.

In her conversations with Violet, Felice discovers that Violet is not the crazy person the community is constantly talking about, but a person who suffers from trauma and loss. Eventually, she turns out to be really a reasonable and wise person, she tells Felice that: “What is the world for if you can’t make it up the way you want it?” (Morrison 208). Violet, later on the same page, comments that she wants to be the woman her mother did not live to see and accepts that she should have been that woman before (208). Violet comes to the realization that her present has changed her, and she tells Felice: “Before I came North I made sense and so did the world” (Morrison 207). Felice lets Violet and Joe come to terms with their past. As Eusebio Rodrigues points out Felice is a strong character who has observed the flaws of these characters, and she is unlikely to be tricked or changed by the factors that lead Dorcas, Joe and Violet to make wrong decisions because she is self-conscious, and she knows how the life they are leading might do harm (749). Joe and Violet, after all the struggle and hardships they go through, reunite to heal each other by the help of Felice. Felice becomes a catalyst for

their self-discovery and what concludes her mission, once again, comes with music. Violet suggests that they buy a Victrola (a gramophone) for their house (214). Joe objects to this, but Felice interferes: "If you get one, I'll bring some records. When I come to get my hair done" (215). Felice unites the couple with the music she offers to bring to their house. In the final chapter of *Jazz*, the narrator comments on Felice as follows,

> Felice still buys Okeh records at Felton's and walks so slowly home from the butcher shop the meat turns before it hits the pan. She thinks that way she can trick me again—moving so slow people walking nearby seem to be running. Can't fool me: her speed may be slow, but her tempo is next year's news. Whether raised fists freeze in her company or open for a handshake, she is nobody's alibi or hammer or toy. (Morrison 222)

Morrison first provides this image on page 6 as, "but when spring came to the City Violet saw, coming into the building with an Okeh record under her arm and carrying some stewmeat wrapped in butcher paper, another girl with four marcelled waves on each side of her head" (6). This time, it is revisited to reveal that Felice was the girl who bought those records, and she became the person to reconcile the couple. Only after this, Joe and Violet make their mind up about music as the narrator explains, "Violet decided, and Joe agreed, nothing was left to love or need but music" (Morrison 224). Violet and Joe finally understand the nature of urban music and its place in their lives. However, the narrator expresses his/her failure to predict or "invent" stories about characters: "That when I invented stories about them—and doing it seemed to me so fine—I was completely in their hands, managed without mercy" (220). The narrator accepts that he/she was the one played upon and manipulated by the characters. This can be explained by a reversal of roles between the characters and the narrator. It can be concluded that the narrator surrenders his/her musical qualities to the characters. From the start, the characters have been the musical entities rather than the narrator, and they invented or created their own stories.

This phenomenon also explains how *Jazz* ends; the narrator addresses the reader at the end of the book leaving the possible interpretations to the reader. The narrator states: "*I like your fingers on and on, lifting, turning. I have watched your face for a long time now, and missed your eyes when you went away from me. Talking to you and hearing your answer—that's the kick*" (229). All the images in these sentences can be referred to

the act of reading a book. The reader "lifts" and "turns" the pages, tries to solve the mysteries and answer the questions. Additionally, the book interacts by watching the reader's face and missing him/her when the book is put down. This interaction gives the reader a creative space where he/she can make his/her deductions. The narrator concludes the novel by saying: "If I were able to say it. Say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now" (229). As Jan Furman explains, these sentences can be associated with a jazz musician who wants to communicate with his/her audience through a participatory and improvisatory approach where the audience plays an active role in creating the music, which is called "call and response" in jazz music terminology (102). The text intentionally refers to the hands of the reader who hold the book, and appreciates the actual moment of holding, caressing, and turning of the pages of the book while contemplating, interpreting the events that are happening within the text. Morrison does this with the precision of jazz musician who interacts with the audience to create a music of their own, their community.

Jazz is a set of stories taking place in Harlem in the 1920s, but the concept of time in the novel is treated as a tool to travel back in time to revisit the memories of traumatic past experiences in the South under discrimination, segregation and violence by white supremacists. Morrison covers a span of time between post-Reconstruction and the Harlem Renaissance to lay the foundation for an African American modernity, which has long been neglected and overlooked by both Anglo-American and African American critics. In order to achieve this purpose, Morrison turns to the fundamental elements of African and African American folk, which can be defined by African American lifestyle and vernacular, but most importantly by long-lasting influence of jazz music on American culture in general. Morrison treats African American urban culture progressively by presenting it as harsh, evil and luring at first, but when the characters in *Jazz* come to terms with their past to accept and experience the present, the novel completes its mission of addressing African American modernity. While achieving these, Morrison integrates the qualities of jazz such as improvisation and syncopation into her text. Although the word "jazz" is never used in the text, the substructure of the language bears the qualities of jazz music through the multi-voiced,

mobile, interactive narrator who oversees the characters and is also managed and manipulated by them.

At this point, the narrative becomes a musical composition where characters turn into musical instruments through which the notes of their stories are played. These notes appear on Morrison's text to create a note sheet that can be considered the whole narrative with different scales, notes and key changes. Each instrument has a different timbre and sound that represent the personal and racial identity of each character. Characters, as musical entities, are scattered across this musical geography like notes scattered across a note sheet. They use their own body and language as instruments that produce notes to form a voice and identity. Their vibe is also determined, within the narrative geography, by the bustle of the city in the North or the calm atmosphere of the rural South.

The Harlem Renaissance Morrison tries to address is the Harlem Renaissance of the common folk trying to survive in their new urban landscape. They have fears, expectations, disappointments and hopes. Morrison departs from the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and moves retrospectively treating the issues of racism, segregation, economic problems and labor issues. While jazz music is secretly in the center of novel's linguistic structure, the cityscape acts as an openly displayed character which helps demonstrate the jazzy qualities of language and African American lifestyle. Morrison, by revisiting the era of the Harlem Renaissance, aims to raise an awareness of the cultural heritage of folk traditions and customs and blend them into the lives of the urbanites of the 20th century. Jazz, in this quest, acts as a text that will both fulfill the expectation of raising awareness in the African American community and introduce a form of art through the novel which encompasses African American musical elements. Jazz music, now being the common American value all across the globe, is now practiced and played through Morrison's text as a literary form. Morrison, through literature, reintroduces these elements by tracing them back to their African American roots.

CHAPTER II: WALTER DEAN MYERS'S *HARLEM SUMMER* (2007)

Walter Myers's *Harlem Summer* (2007) aims to introduce the Harlem Renaissance and the important figures it included to an audience of younger generations who are not familiar with the phenomenon. Therefore, Myers's choice to tell the story through a teenager boy in that era who spends time with these important figures such as Jessie Fauset, W.E.B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes is a way to transfer the experience of the Harlem Renaissance to the younger generations.

Myers's historical fiction aims to cater to the needs of African American youth in the 2000s to reconnect with their cultural roots in a factual and enjoyable style of writing. Myers's emphasis on the issue of "the New Negro" and "the Old Negro," referencing Alain L. Locke's famous work *The New Negro*, introduces the dilemma experienced by the generation of the Harlem Renaissance period. The introduction of concepts regarding the Harlem Renaissance and the modernity it embraced for the African American community echoes another revival in terms of cultural and artistic movements. This chapter will continue the discussion of the Harlem Renaissance and its manifestations of African American modernity through urbanization of the population and musical representations.

Harlem Summer is the story of a sixteen year-old teenager, Mark Purvis, whose dream is to become a famous saxophone player in a jazz band. Mark learns the saddening news that his father's land in North Carolina is sold because of back taxes. Furthermore, Mark's elder brother, Matt, is successful as a student and accepted to two different colleges he can choose from. The family thinks of a way to pay Matt's tuition fees and since the land in the South is confiscated and sold for tax debt, there seems to be no way to pay the tuition. Mark's mother finds the solution in pulling the family together to pay Matt's tuition because as parents, they promise to pay for his college tuition for the first year, so everybody has to do something to send Matt to college. For this reason, Mark's mother arranges a meeting with Aunt Carolyn, who helps Mark find a job in *The Crisis*, which is a famous magazine that promotes African American intelligentsia and African American literary movement in the 1920s. Mark works at *The Crisis* as an office boy

who deals with the advertising department of the magazine. Mark, among other jobs, prefers to work at magazine, because other options including working at his uncle's funeral house or cleaning a club does not appeal to him, and he also feels curios about the place, which claims to promote the concept of "the New Negro." Mark meets the famous figures of the Harlem Renaissance in his workplace and tries to understand their approach to life and the race issue. Although Mark's priority is to become a saxophone player, he does not choose to work in a club, where he will have the opportunity to see the famous jazz orchestras and singers playing. Consequently, Aunt Carolyn convinces him that sweeping the floor in a night club is not a proper job.

Apart from his job at *The Crisis*, Mark also chases his dream of becoming a jazz musician, and in order to do that, he tries to become friends with Fats Waller, who is a young and talented piano player. Fats is known by most people in Harlem, and he records albums for Okeh Records. Mark wants to get in contact with Fats, and his sister Edie tells Mark where to find Fats and informs Mark that he is looking for some people to help him with a job. Mark finds Fats and learns that him and a man called Crab Cakes Dean are hired by someone to load a truck full of cologne, which will transfer these goods from Union City to New Jersey and finally to Harlem. The job they do to earn five dollars turns out to be an illegal transaction of bootleg whiskey. Even more surprisingly, the strangely behaving Crab Cakes, who drives the truck loaded with bootleg whiskey, disappears with the truck.

Mark finds himself owing a thousand dollars' worth of bootleg whiskey to one the most notorious mob leaders of the time, who is called Dutch Schultz. It turns out that the truck which disappears belongs to him. Mark and Henry are kidnapped from a jazz band audition for Black Swan Records by Schultz's men. They are threatened by Schultz with their lives. Mark decides to borrow money from a loan shark called Bumpy Johnson, who actually works for Queenie, a female mob leader. Queenie pays the thousand dollars to Schultz and tells Mark that he owes the money to her. In the meantime, Crab Cakes reappears with the truck and all the bootleg whiskey during a church service to which Mark is taken by his mother. Crab Cakes tells Mark that he went to Dutch Schultz for the delivery, but he told him that Queenie bought the whiskey and when Crab Cakes went to Queenie, she told Crab Cakes that she did not want the

bootleg whiskey anymore because she felt it was too risky to store it. Having nowhere to store the bootleg whiskey, Mark's father Benny comes up with the idea of storing it in the Cotton Club owned by Owney Madden. However, the Cotton Club is inspected by the city officers the next day and the bootleg whiskey is discovered and confiscated.

The following event leads to the denouement. Mark is arrested by the police in *The Crisis*. He is questioned and beaten by the police officers and finally released upon the testimony of Fats and by the support of a lawyer hired from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The fortunate part of this incident is understood when Mark appears on the *Daily Mirror*. On the news column, Mark is portrayed as a fierce criminal who works with Owney Madden and Dutch Schultz and also knows important intellectual figures. Mark is claimed to be the leader of the bootlegging gang and cruel young "Negro," who is believed to have committed crimes in New York, New Jersey and Baltimore. The news in the *Daily Mirror* travels across Harlem and is even heard by Queenie. Queenie sends a message to Mark through Bumpy Johnson, who tells Mark that he does not owe anything to Queenie, and if he is to be interfering with any of their business anymore, he will get himself killed. Queenie sees Mark's appearance on a white newspaper as a threat to her authority, and decides to let go. The novel ends with Henry and Mark's dialogue in which they joke about the incident they have experienced.

2.1. Walter Dean Myers's Historical Fiction and the Harlem Renaissance

According to Rudine Sims Bishop, "Myers frequently incorporates names from African American history and culture into his books" (684). Historical fiction, in that sense, is an integral part of Myers's prose. Myers uses all the historical elements to construct his fictional world so that these pieces of history help him handle the issues regarding African American modernity and specifically the Harlem Renaissance. The significance of the Harlem Renaissance as a cultural movement has been discussed among a group of critics and scholars over decades, but the same scholar and critics are divided on whether the movement of African American modernity has been really successful or not (Baker, "Modernism" 88-89). The ongoing discussion on the Harlem Renaissance since

the Great Depression overshadowed its crucial impact as the first and biggest African American literary and artistic movement that would be a roadmap for the upcoming generations when they think about the issues of African American racial and cultural identity. In order for the Harlem Renaissance to be considered as a movement across generations, it had to be introduced in a new form through literature so that it would also appeal to the new generation of readers. Walter Dean Myers, in his historical fiction, aims to serve this purpose by specifically addressing the Harlem Renaissance period and its key figures to create an awareness that will be useful for the new generation of readers to understand cultural and political atmosphere of the era. Myers chooses to do it through a story of a sixteen year-old boy and tells the personal story of Mark Purvis by evoking the zeitgeist of the 1920s.

Similar to Morrison, who does not use the word "jazz" in her book *Jazz*, Myers does not use the title of the "Harlem Renaissance" in his book probably due to the concerns of historical authenticity. As Ernest Julius Mitchell II points out, the "Harlem Renaissance," as a term, did not come to be used until the 1940s (641). Myers aims to state the historical atmosphere and its dynamics by making it both an entertaining and thought-provoking story. Without mentioning the name of the movement directly, Myers attempts to put the story of Mark Purvis into the center but he also surrounds the character with figures and persons from the Harlem Renaissance era. Myers's story does not only include real literary figures of the Harlem Renaissance era but also the famous criminals and gang members are integrated into the story to point out that Harlem was also a neighborhood full of crime, hardships and difficult conditions. Among other novels examined in this study, *Harlem Summer* is obviously the one which aims to "teach" about the Harlem Renaissance period through the personal story of Mark Purvis.

Fictionalizing African American modernity or the Harlem Renaissance demands the incorporation of the two fundamental elements of the 1920s, which are the urban Harlem and jazz music. Myers, expectedly, prioritizes these elements as the components of his story in *Harlem Summer*. Mark Purvis, the protagonist, desperately wants to become a jazz musician, but every step he takes towards the goal gets him into trouble. Mark travels on trucks and in cars on the streets of Harlem and his adventure takes him

everywhere including New Jersey and a ride on Hudson River. Myers, by moving the protagonist across the city, also attempts to introduce the cultural geography of Harlem to his readers. R. D. Lane, in her article "Keepin' It Real': Walter Dean Myers and the Promise of African-American Children's Literature," explains that Myers's fictional characters find themselves in true-to-life experiences taking place in a real urban environment (130). Myers's fictional characters are accompanied by real characters in a real cityscape. The combination of fictional and non-fictional elements in a novel helps maintain the balance between straightforward historical facts and the suspense and curiosity that should be kept alive to make the reader interested in the text.

As Lane adds, Myers is conscious of the increasing crime in Harlem during the 2000s and the youth recruited by street gangs and drug cartels on the streets of Harlem, so Myers decides to touch upon the issue by introducing the Harlem of the 1920s through a crime story which has a moral lesson at the end (128). As Park and Burgess explain, the morality of the urban development, especially the growth of the city, pushes the individuals towards a disorganization of their manners and behaviors before they can reorganize them according to the urban lifestyle, and though this moral dilemma might create a sense of loss and conflict regarding the individual's self, it also leads to a transformation that frees the person and opens up new possibilities for change and progress (54). Mark, the protagonist in *Harlem Summer*, comes to realize that his moral dilemmas make him understand the value of his community. While he is unknowingly involved in criminal action, his moral values are taking shape, and he learns to appreciate the differences in his community through moral transformation.

Harlem Summer includes a glossary of important figures and places of the Harlem Renaissance at the end. The section is called "Real People and Places in *Harlem Summer*." By the inclusion of a section as such in his novel, Myers makes it obvious that his historical fiction acts as an agent of historical awareness about racial struggle, black intellectuality, race leaders, important urban landmarks of black history and also the criminals and outlaws of Harlem. All these characters represent the morality and realities of African American modernity through Myers's fiction. Myers's attempt to portray African American modernity through its real people and the moral dilemmas and transformation it possessed did not receive the attention it deserved in the academia

of African American studies, therefore, it should be put under scrutiny to understand African American modernity in the 1920s.

2.2. Urban Adventures and Jazz Music in *Harlem Summer*

Walter Dean Myer's approach to treat the Harlem of the 1920s takes on the features of what defines the city of New York at the time. The characters and setting define and are defined by their physical and cultural surrounding such as jazz music, music clubs, church clubs, Harlem streets, New York cityscape, racial discrimination, and technological and scientific developments. The individuals affected by the factors mentioned above are presented by Myers as ordinary and true-to-life characters going on about their lives in Harlem. They are seen through the eyes of the narrator Mark Purvis, who perceives the world through his experiences in Harlem, New York.

Harlem Summer opens with a Harlem street scene where the members of the community talk about the current issues of the time. Two members of the community, Mr. Mills and Jimmy Key, sit on the stoop and play checkers while discussing being modern and theory of evolution put forward by Charles Darwin in *On the Origin of Species*. Myers defines the time and the setting through these two characters. The conversation between Mr. Mills and Jimmy Key starts with the introduction of refrigerators to the homes of richer people. As Mark reports Mr. Mills's words, "'I have heard that some rich folks got two or three of them refrigerators in their house so they can have a cool glass of water in whatever room they are in,' Mr. Mills said. 'That is what you call high living'" (Myers 2). Soon, the discussion of refrigerators turns into the discussion about being modern, Jimmy Key states that "I still don't see why you need an electric icebox when all it does is make the same kind of ice that the iceman brings" (Myers 2). Mr. Mills responds "'Don't pay him no stead, Mark … He don't realize this is 1925. He's still living in the old days when they used to feed Christians to lions and whatnot'" (Myers 2). Mr. Mills accuses Jimmy Key of not being modern enough and Jimmy Keys's answer shifts the topic to another issue: "'This conversation don't have a thing to do with no Christians and lions … It is okay being modern but you can't let it go to your head. That is what's wrong with that teacher down in Tennessee

talking about how people come from monkeys. He's trying to be modern but what he's talking about don't make a bit of sense'" (Myers 2).

Myers, in the excerpt mentioned above, refers to the Scopes Trial which raised a big publicity in the US during the 1920s. The Scopes Trial was a court case against John Thomas Scopes who was claimed to have broken the rule of the state of Tennessee by teaching evolution in classes (Grabiner and Miller 832). In addition to the controversy Darwin's theory created between religiously conservative creationists and positivists who defended scientific facts and evolution, the racial slurs associated with African American individuals became a topic of discussion in the public, which made the theory not only a discussion of biological evolution of human kind but also a sociological and cultural issue to make the African American community more marginalized and segregated in a time the community was trying to improve its conditions and reputation through its artistic appeal and newly emerging modernist art forms. Raising such issues helps Myers mention the modernist conflicts of the period and derive metaphors from the content by integrating the common misconception about people descending from monkeys. This misconception was mostly associated with African American citizens as a racial slur, but Myers reverses this metaphor using the modernist African American literary tradition, in other words, by using the monkey character as a trickster figure to play upon the racial slur to criticize the attitude towards the African American community. The same issue is revisited in the book at certain sections, thereby drawing upon both African American modernity and playing upon racial insults.

Myers, here, introduces the time period with the confusion it created with people. The scientific and technological developments of the 1920s started to change the lives of people in a considerable way, which came to be associated with urban life and modernity. The inclusion of such dialogue at the beginning of the novel lays out the historical context through the confusion of modernity in the public, but Mark remains as the observer in this conversation. Myer's historical context is also shaped by the technological and scientific discussions of the time. This new lifestyle started with the urban lifestyle and the new issues it brought into the lives of African American people. These discussions were different from the ones in the South, which were generally shaped by the memories of sharecropping and slavery. These new topics replace the old

ones as the modern talk of the street in the new urban environment. Mr. Mills's answer to the reaction quoted above can be interpreted as an association with the African American literary criticism figure Signifyin(g) Monkey or the trickster: "'I read in the paper where they interviewed a monkey and asked his opinion about on the subject, … The Monkey said he didn't know if any humans came from monkeys, … but the way some humans acted, no self-respecting monkey would admit to it if it was true!'" (Myers 3).

Here, it can be observed that Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s Signifyin(g) Monkey, defined in the book with the same title, is at work to parody a serious discussion about science (6). The speaker takes the discussion of one scientific theory, which is Darwin's theory of evolution, and signifies on it to talk about the atrocities committed by people in the nation. Myers, perhaps intentionally, personifies the monkey, who is interviewed on the claims that humans come from monkeys, and this monkey explains that humans are worse in their behavior and attitude than monkeys. Myers's intention can be read as a way to use the African trickster figure of monkey to talk about African American endeavor throughout the community's history. Myers uses the African trickster figure to parody a scientific theory and shifts the topic towards the unruly acts of "some humans." The opening scene includes the discussion of the theory of evolution and the most common presumption within the theory, which presupposes that humans come from monkeys. Observing the topic of refrigerators and being modern evolving into a superficial discussion of evolution might seem as an unrelated introduction to the topic, but Myers's attitude may have an undertone of the inclination of integrating the monkey as the trickster figure, and the discussion of refrigerators as the new technology creates the basis of the African American Signification and all the tricky nature of using language to address problems at the beginning of the novel. After this scene, the story shifts towards Mark's life and his problems.

Myers, similar to Toni Morrison, does not use chapter numbers for the sections in *Harlem Summer*, but he uses titles written from the perspective of Mark. The titles reflect Mark's opinions on life and the events that take place around him. The first section is titled as, "A REGISTERED LETTER BRINGS BAD NEWS FROM THE SOUTH AND I START LOOKING FOR A SUMMER JOB—HOPEFULLY, NOT IN

A FUNERAL PARLOR" (Myers 1). It can be inferred from the title that repercussion of the events that happened in the South and are always a source of problem for the African American community. *Harlem Summer* starts with the news that the land Mark's father owned in North Carolina had been sold for back taxes. The loss of the land in the South disconnects the family from the experience of southern lands totally. This experience does not create the same effect it created on his parents than it does on Mark Purvis. As Mark states commenting on her mother reaction to the loss of the land, "She was crying so I knew it was serious. Still, I hadn't heard anybody talking about moving down to North Carolina so it didn't bother me that much" (Myers 4). From Mark's reaction it can be understood that the experience of the South is absent in the psyches of the younger generation who grew up in Harlem. Mark is ready for the possibilities of the city, and everything that the urban Harlem can offer for him.

It can be understood from the quote above that Mark, born and raised in Harlem, displays a level of detachment and indifference towards the South and its memories. However, it can be seen that he has developed an attachment towards the urban landmarks in Harlem, which are associated with the musical production of the era. Mark favors these places over the land his father owned in the South. Mark talks about the place his father works at as, "Connie's Inn, on 131st Street and Seventh Avenue, was not a low-life place. Some of the best musicians in the world played there, including Fletcher's Henderson's band" (Myers 5). The detail of the information given in the quote makes it obvious that Mark has an emotional bond with the place and the music that is being played there. As Park and Burgess suggest, "The fact is, however, that the city is rooted in the habits and customs of the people who inhabit it. The consequence is that the city possesses a moral as well as a physical organization, and these two mutually interact in characteristic ways to mold and modify one another" (4).

Mark's thoughts on the place and the music create the mutual interaction mentioned above. Mark's father's job in Connie's Inn introduces him to a whole different world and shapes his ideas on the city and music. In addition to the place mentioned, the musical history of Harlem is given reference to. "Fletcher Henderson's band" is an important musical act for the history of Harlem because of Henderson's role as a talented black musician representing the African American community, and more

importantly the contribution his music made to the African American modernity and American culture in general. As Jeffrey Magee, in his article "Before Louis: When Fletcher Henderson is the 'Paul Whiteman of the Race'," states:

> A survey of the backgrounds of the musicians in Henderson's first band reveals strong connections to the emerging New Negro of the Harlem Renaissance. For upwardly mobile African American in 1920s New York, racial empowerment came through assimilation. This did not mean a self-effacing denial of uniqueness but rather a cultural mastery of demonstrating that African Americans could make a contribution to the cultural mainstream. (393)

As presented, there is evidence for the reciprocal relation between the music and places of Harlem neighborhood. Myers's text, in that sense, might be seen as a discursive unit, which aims to juxtapose the elements of new urbanism and music embraced by the African American community to establish a new identity free from the experience of the South.

Mark also prefers musicianship to a college degree. His brother Matt is about to attend college, but Mark sees himself a low-brow folk compared to his brother Matt. Mark states: "as Mr. Mills said, some folks were upper-crust and some were plain old crumbs. I was more crumby than crusty" (Myers 6). From that perspective, Myers portrays Mark as the common folk of Harlem with all of its rights and wrongs, and he does not idealize Mark as someone who represents what is best about Harlem, but what gives Mark the motivation is the music that he inherits from the social and cultural atmosphere. As Mark explains: "The thing was, I wanted Matt to go to college, too. If he went to college then I would have our room to myself. Also, if he went to college maybe Mama would be satisfied and I wouldn't have to go. What I wanted to do was to play saxophone with a jazz band. Music was just naturally in my blood and that was all there was to it" (Myers 6).

Myers's portrayal of Mark can be also analyzed within the dichotomy between highbrow and lowbrow or high culture and low culture. In the discussion of high culture versus low culture, Myers, in *Harlem Summer*, presents the discussion of jazz music as marginalized low culture contrasted with the "supposed" high culture of the African American bourgeoisie. Since Myers perceives jazz music as a cultural asset for the African American community to express all the values that it originally possesses, his presentation of jazz music can be left out the discussion of mass-culture versus high

culture through which Theodore W. Adorno[5] criticized the motives behind how and why jazz music was composed and "produced" in the US back then. As Mikita Brottman, in her High Theory/Low Culture, puts forward, the once marginalized low cultures of the past might be regarded as complex forms of high culture when they are studied and examined within the correct framework or theory as can be seen in the examples Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, James Feminore Cooper (xii). The historical context of *Harlem Summer* does not coincide with the time period when jazz music was fully considered as a product of mass-culture, so in the context of this study, it might not be possible to examine jazz music under the discussion of mass-culture versus high culture where critics such as Theodore W. Adorno considered it as a product of commercial culture to manipulate masses. However, the focus of this discussion can be the reaction of the African American bourgeoisie to jazz music as "high culture" or "low culture," concerning the ideas of critics and writers such as Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois and Langston Hughes.

Mark's view that music is inherent in him is shaped by his social and cultural space created by the habits and customs of the community living Harlem. As Alain Locke explains, African American individual is "by instinct and experience is a music-maker" (*Negro and his Music* 3). By portraying Mark as a teenager who is, deep inside, conscious of his musical past and heritage might be interpreted as a message for African American urban community to embrace their musical heritage and nature. Myers's *Harlem Summer*, published in 2007, might serve the purpose of relaying the message of important figures in African American Renaissance, such as Alain Locke, after decades. On the other hand, Mark's lack of interest in education and college are not glorified by the text. Mark finds work at *The Crisis* and learns about how the intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance era perceive the world. Additionally, the business he does with Fats and Crab Cakes causes him trouble from the beginning to the end. Myers, in that sense, strikes a balance between Alain Locke's idea that African American individual should not only be musical by nature but also by nurture, in other words, through the mastery of musical form and through education, (*the Negro and his Music* 4) and Langston Hughes's idea that supports the common black folk's primitive wisdom and

[5] Brown, Lee B. "Adorno's Critique of Popular Culture: The Case of Jazz Music." *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1992, pp. 17–31.

art, especially jazz, which can be observed on the streets and rent parties ("the Negro Artist" 2). Matt's college education, therefore, is contrasted with Mark's passion for becoming a self-taught jazz musician.

Mark's desire to become an acclaimed saxophonist drives him to establish a friendship with the popular piano player, Fats Waller. Fats, in the eyes of Mark, is perceived as someone different from the rest of the people living in the community because of his talent in playing the piano. Even though Fats becomes the person who involves Mark and Henry in the bootleg whiskey transaction, his actions are overlooked by Mark. In the first chapter of *Harlem Summer*, Mark describes Fats as, "Fats with a sax was what I wanted to be. He could play a mean piano and an even meaner organ. Maybe that's because his father was a preacher. Fats played jazz. He could swing with anybody, even bang out some classical music that sounded righteous. More than that he was an okay guy and full of fun" (Myers 8). Mark's perception of Fats cannot only be explained through his prioritization of Fat's musical talent, but also the conditions that Fats and Mark are exposed to. Park and Burgess claim that the communities in the urban centers, which share common values and tastes, isolate themselves to the abstract spaces called "moral regions," where they can escape from the existing dominant impositions of the urban laws and rules through activities such as sports, concerts, theater (43). From this perspective, Fats's actions can be interpreted as his escape from the oppressive forces of the urban limits where he is discriminated and humiliated. His criminal activities, then, can be interpreted as a coping mechanism against the dominant culture.

Fats's musical ability to "play jazz" and "swing with anybody" deludes Mark into thinking that "he was an okay guy and full of fun," but it is hinted that Fats is involved in some of the criminal actions such as bootleg whiskey transfer, which makes the reader understand that he is not a totally innocent person. The portrayal of jazz musician does not live up to the expectations of the Harlem intelligentsia who wanted the musicians to set examples for the African American community. It can be understood from this condition that Fats has a different "moral region" than the intelligentsia, where he defines his own free space. Although Fats has mastered the piano in different genres of music as Alain Locke suggested in his *the Negro and his Music*, he does not obey the laws. His musical talent does not match up with his character. However, Mark sees no

fault in hanging out with Fats, because all he thinks about is forming a jazz band with Fats. As Park and Burgess explain "the moral region" that the community occupies is formed by the suppressed social reflexes developed against the dominant moral order which find their medium of expression in arts and music (43). The unstoppable need to play music or listen to music becomes a "moral region" for the younger generation of musicians in Harlem. This attitude encompasses in itself the dilemma of becoming a "New Negro" in the urban environment. On the one hand, the cityscape offers opportunities for the individuals but on the other hand, it forces them to do wrong. The integration of the African American community into an urban community becomes a concern.

Mark chases his dream through Fats, because his ideas of how a "New Negro" behaves are formed by the character of Fats, but he also has the chance to meet the representatives of intelligentsia of Harlem, who defined their own "New Negro," when he starts to work at *The Crisis*. Myers chooses to portray these two different types of people to complicate Mark's views on race and community. Myers mentions in an interview that he went through a phase of uncertainty in his life when he learnt that his parents could not afford to send him to college despite his interest in intellectual development and reading (Miller et al 688). Mark's life reflects the same uncertainty Myers went through when he was a teen. Mark feels excited about the new possibilities and also feels frustrated about the consequences of his actions. The title of the second chapter of *Harlem Summer* reflects this confusion and uncertainty: "HOW THE RUINATION OF MY WHOLE SUMMER STARTED AND I BEGAN TO BE A NEW NEGRO WHEN I WASN'T REALLY THROUGH BEING THE OLD NEGRO I USED TO BE" (Myers 11).

The concept of becoming a "New Negro" in the 1920s came with the prerequisite of representing certain values set by the intelligentsia of the time. Important figures like Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois put forward norms and values that pushed for strict education and acculturation. Du Bois's talented-tenth theory, which aimed to establish an elite group of black individuals to elevate the race and, Locke's ideas on racial consciousness, which promoted the mastery of both African and American forms of art to create the "New Negro" can be given as examples. Mark, in the second chapter of

Harlem Summer, is sent by his mother to Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) to talk to Aunt Carolyn, who arranges for him an interview with Jessie Fauset, the editor of *The Crisis* magazine. The civic institutions such as YMCA were among the places which carried the mission of providing the African American youth with the qualities mentioned by Locke and Du Bouis. The civic organizations of all sorts in Harlem, as Kevin Mattson explains, opened up new possibilities for community to practice "the social association, political expression, and culture" (294). The reason Mark goes to YMCA can be associated with both his search for a job and an identity. The conversation between Aunt Carolyn and Mark in YMCA conveys Mark's attitude: "Aunt Carolyn said it was a good choice, because the magazine was one of the Leading Intellectual Journals of the Negro Race. That did not sound so good, but I said I would go anyway" (Myers 15). As can be understood from the quote, Mark's approach to the intellectuality and school is distanced. Mark prioritizes music over everything, and finds the concept of the "New Negro" deceiving, because he cannot see any connections between jazz music and this new perception of African American individual. Mark does not seem mature enough to comprehend the problems of modernity that jazz music encompasses as a teenager boy, so he distances himself from the intellectual world of African American intelligentsia. Mark only thinks about his music unmindful of what is going on with the African American community. His prejudice results from the impression he gets from the people working in *The Crisis*.

In his job interview with Jessie Fauset, Mark's internal monologue reveals his actual expectations and desire. When Jessie Fauset asks Mark about his career goals, Mark ponders over his words and says: "She didn't look like she knew anything about jazz so I said I wanted to be a teacher because she looked a little like a teacher" (Myers 16). Mark thinks about jazz music when he is making decisions about his career. This allows the reader to understand that Mark puts jazz music in the center of his life. Jessie Fauset also tells Mark about the "New Negro" to explain what the job entails socially and politically: "Dr. Du Bois has said that the Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional people. We are trying to make sure we promote and encourage that talented ten percent of black people so that they will be able to lead us" (Myers 17). Mark's fixation with jazz music can be explained through Henry O. Osgood's comment on jazz music: "Jazz, in truth, is a wild bird, free to flag its wings in any direction. It

defies all attempts to cage it, however liberal in size the apiary. It is the spirit of the music, not the mechanics of its frame or the characteristics of its superstructure built upon that frame, that determines whether or not it is jazz" (26). Mark's attitude towards his own life takes shape by turning jazz into an attitude rather than mere forms played musically. This pattern can also be prominently observed in Fats's case since he lives his life through its ups and downs, and he does not care about the outcomes of his actions.

Myers's deliberate attempt to incorporate the key policies of the Harlem Renaissance into his text and his decision to call them in question in the eyes of his protagonist allow the reader to question, evaluate and vindicate the newly forming modernistic policies of this era. When Mark remembers the time Jessie Fauset told him about the talented tenth concept, he says to himself: "'That's very good, ma'am,' I said. I didn't know who or what she was talking about" (Myers 17). Mark does not seem to understand or care about what he has been told, and for the part he understands, he comments as, "Miss Fauset had looked really pleased to be telling me about the New Negro, but I didn't get the feeling that she thought I was one" (17-18). Mark's portrayal as an indifferent young boy who is blind to the problems of his community might be misleading, because Mark cares about his family and chooses to work in the magazine despite his reluctance. However, his racial awareness and his motivation about the future are shaped by his passion for jazz music. When Mark comments about what he has been told in *The Crisis*, he says, "But I wasn't going to get my mind messed around with anything that was going to keep me from my music and making a good impression on Fats Waller. Working for Fats was a lot more important than anything I had ever done before, and a lot more important than whatever being a New Negro was" (Myers 18). Mark's attitude here can be read as his resistance against being confined to a scholarly environment that could deprive him of his musical talent. Mark does not want any constructed ideology to blur his vision of life and music. As Albert G. Mosley, in his article "The Moral Significance of the Music of the Black Atlantic," explains jazz music does not accept any kind of prewritten script, which will hinder the flow and spontaneity of the performance (349).

It can be understood from the excerpt that the concept of modern African American individual does not depend on intellectuality for Mark, but it very much depends on the music African American individuals are known to play, produce, or compose. On his quest, Mark seems to be ignoring all the other factors that compose his life such as his family's expectations and Miss Fauset's insistence on getting Mark familiar with the "New Negro" and his/her intellectual work. Musicianship, then, becomes Mark's ultimate goal to prove himself as a "New Negro" if not an old one.

Mark's perception of life differs from the people working in *The Crisis*, but Mark does not exactly discard the possibility of these people representing something new in the African American community. However, Mark's perception is shaped by the possibilities of what jazz music can do for the community rather than the literary output *The Crisis*. This point of view is reflected on his thought through his daily talk about music when Mark talks about jazz record companies such as Black Swan records. When he makes plans with Henry on how to invite Fats to play with them, Henry asks Mark: "You think we're ready to make a record" (Myers 19). Mark answers by complimenting Black Swan: "I've heard some of the Black Swan records they're pretty good" (Myers 19). Mark also states: "My dad had met Mr. Pace the guy who owned Black Swan Records" (Myers 20). When Black Swan is mentioned, it is also important to think about the importance of this label in African American experience in the city, Black Swan is not only mentioned as a good record company, but its historical importance also plays a role in the plot. As David Suisman, in his article "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Black Swan Records and the Political Economy of African American Music," explains,

> Black Swan was established by a former protégé of Du Bois, Harry H. Pace, who saw the company as a powerful means to respond to the hostile conditions African American faced, both in the entertainment business and African American society at large. At stake was not merely entertainment but access to, and control of, material source that could cultivate and boost African Americans' creative spirit, support and encourage African American business development and economic self-sufficiency, and, it was believed, help shape popular opinion to produce tangible social, political, and economic benefits for African American. (1295)

From this perspective, it can be understood that Black Swan Records acted as an organization that serves the purposes of elevating racial awareness, helping the African American community sustain itself, supporting African American artists, and

facilitating cultural and economic advancements that were to be carried out in the African American community. In that sense, Black Swan Records can be compared to *The Crisis* in its mission, because it aimed to carry out the same objectives through music rather than literary works. Since its owner, Harry H. Pace, was a friend of W.E.B. Du Bois, it can be understood that Black Swan Records also had connections with the leading literary figures of the time. This mutual interaction between the musical and literary organizations can be considered as cooperation of these two different branches of art to contribute to African American modernity. It is also crucial to remember that these organizations, historically, were active during the Harlem Renaissance period.

Mark's resistance to the intellectuality forced on him by Jessie Fauset is an indicator of his choice to become the "New Negro" not through the means of the Harlem intelligentsia of the time but through his own means of expression, which is jazz music. In that line, Myers takes sides with Langston Hughes views on African American identity formation. As Cary D. Wintz explains, "Like Claude McKay, Hughes identified with the black lower classes and attempted to give voice to this class in his poetry. Hughes found the most basic expression of the black spirit in music, especially the blues and jazz, and attempted to capture the spirit, both in content and form, in his verse" (74).

Myers, as can be understood from his protagonist's choices, inclines towards a view that portrays the lives of lower class black people whose lives are shaped by music and dance more than literature and writing. For instance, during his work in *The Crisis*, Mark is assigned to read several back issues of the magazine and given seminal works of African American authors to read at home. However, he perceives this task as toil and does not want to do it. Mark comments on this task as, "By the time I was ready to go home I had a whole bag of books and magazines I had to read. Miss Fauset said I was going to love reading them and discovering what was going on in the black world, but it didn't seem that exciting to me. I lived in Harlem and I figured that was about as black as you could get without being in Africa" (Myers 52).

This excerpt from the books can be considered as a call to declare Harlem as mecca of the "New Negro" as titled by Alain L. Locke in *the Survey Graphic* magazine of 1925, which defines Harlem as the landmark of African American urban community and

grants Harlem the status of an international center for African communities' advancement and development. Mark's perspective is shaped by the same view. Mark seeks no other place but Harlem to define his racial identity as a black teenager. Consequently, he does not feel the need to read all the literary works regarding African American struggle. He finds the reading task boring and time-consuming. Mark's view that living in Harlem represents the ultimate blackness that an individual can achieve also refers to the Zionist Harlem perspective indoctrinated in *Survey Graphic: Harlem, Mecca of the New Negro*. It can be also seen in Myers's text that Harlem is considered the center of black artistic endeavor.

As in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers chooses to depict the lives of ordinary African American individuals affected by the historic changes taking place in their time. Myers's literary tone, here, resembles the tones of important African American authors such as James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker. As in the works of these authors, Myers also develops a tone which appreciates and values the common, lowly and practical forms of everyday practices. Alice Walker's "Everyday Use" and James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" both set examples for Myers's treatment of Mark as the common and lowly folk. Baldwin's treatment of Sonny and Walker's treatment of Maggie as characters who cling onto their cultural heritages in order to survive introduce new perspectives to writers on African American modernity. Myers's characters are from underprivileged parts of the community and approach these changes with suspicion at times, but when these changes become meaningful for them, they tend to embrace them. Mark's work in *The Crisis* does not create the desired effect on his change, but his desire to play jazz music revitalizes his belief in himself. When he does his reading at home, he is distracted by the thought of finding a name for his music band:

> I got home and started reading right after supper. I got through five pages of *the Souls of Black Folk* and started falling asleep. It was all about this heavy-duty drama stuff that sounded like school stuff except it was black people. Then I had a great idea. I was going to tell Henry we should call ourselves The Hot Three instead of the Fabulous Three because that would make people think of The Hot Five, Louis Armstrong's group. (Myers 33).

The sudden shift to the topic of music observed in the excerpt given above indicates the prioritization of musical success over a literary one. For a young African American boy

in Harlem who belongs to a relatively low income family, the 1920s represent a hope for success that might come through music, especially African American jazz music. Darryl Dickson-Carr, in his book *Spoofing the Modern: Satire in the Harlem Renaissance*, explains that American folk music was an outright criticism that satirized the institution of slavery in the US (103). By using music as a tool, Myers creates a contrast between the newly emerging bourgeoisie and Mark's musical approach regarding the issue of addressing the condition of the African American community. Mark goes on dreaming about their performance as The Hot Three:

> I could practically hear us with me playing sax like my man Buster Bailey sitting on a two-burner stove on a hot night, and Henry tearing up the strings, and Randy playing the ivories like Jelly Roll Morton—with our own business cards and everything. Or If I could get Randy to switch to clarinet, then Fats could play piano. That would be Groo with a capital V. Grooo-vy! (Myers 33)

Apart from being exposed to the intellectual atmosphere of *The Crisis*, Mark is trying to build a different bond with a group who act and behave in an opposite manner when compared to the people he works with in the office. Mark's way of communicating is not shaped by literary talk, but it is shaped by the bond he aims to form with his band mates through music. In his quest, his ultimate goal becomes achieving a groove in his music. The concept of groove has to be examined in an African American context to explain its interactional and communal importance for the community. As Ingrid T. Monson, in her book *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, explains the concept of groove does not only depend on the instruments, tone, timbre, pitches and rhythm of music but it also depends the interactional pattern that occurs among people who are creating the music (26). Monson also states: "The often cited soul, warmth, and emotional expressivity of jazz improvisation have much to do with the ineffable and unpredictable musical chemistry among players, who take delight in recounting their most quirky and magical moments in performance (26-27). Mark's attempt to build a community is centered around achieving the chemistry or the groove. Mark's way of forming a community depends on interpersonal skills, and the music that will be produced through this network of people. Monson goes on to explain that the instrument a musician chooses to play has an effect on both his/her perception of music and the way he/she thinks about certain modes of music (27). Bearing this in mind, Mark is trying to arrange the band in such a way that their music can be groovy. Mark's

judgment of characters according to the relationship between them and their instruments is a factor that affects the groove of their music. Consequently, picking an instrument that suits the personal characters of a musician is an important decision. Therefore, Myers's message here can be interpreted as the individual's decision to play the correct role in his/her community to achieve harmony to which every individual should contribute.

Amidst the struggles of forming a harmonious community that would raise racial awareness among its members through musical production, the African American community in the 1920s was also dealing with economic problems of the new urban system in addition to racial discrimination and segregation practiced by Anglo-American majority. Myers does not overlook this theme in *Harlem Summer*. Mark's dream to become a jazz saxophonist is also hindered by the fact that he has to support his family, as a sixteen year-old teenager, instead of working towards his dream. After the scene where Mark is dreaming about forming a jazz band with Fats, Henry, Randy, Mark starts to talk about his brother's girlfriend and describes a moment in which his brother asks him to bring his girlfriend a glass of water. Mark's answer to that request is as follows: "I told Matt that he was not a doctor yet and sure didn't have any servants running around and if Miss Lavinia wanted a glass of water I would point her toward the kitchen. Matt called me a plebian I told him to spell that out and when I look it up it had *better* not be anything bad" (33). Matt, Mark's elder brother, is portrayed as someone who is aware of the terms regarding the class consciousness since he is the only member that will attend a college. However, Mark is not yet aware of these terms and when he is called "plebian," he asks his brother to "spell that out." However, later on the following pages of the novel Mark is given a dictionary by Jessie Fauset and he says: "I looked up *plebian*. It didn't look that bad" (40). Mark does not find the term "plebian" humiliating or insulting, and he does not mind being called one after he reads the definition.

Mark's positive attitude towards the word can be explained through the policies of *The Crisis*. As Cary D. Wintz explains, W.E.B. Du Bois was known to have hold socialistic ideas before he was possessed with the concept of pan-Africanism, and he once thought that the solution to racial discrimination lied in the union of black and white labor

workers (44). Thus, the chief editor of *The Crisis* had socialistic policies in his career and defended the rights of black workers. In addition to this, Mark's mother informs Mark that *The Crisis* is published by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As Ernest Obadele-Starks states, "The NAACP, particularly, emerged as anti-segregation body and a link between black working and middle classes. The NAACP worked closely with prominent community figures, the black labor leaders, and black proletariat to curtail workplace inequalities" (56). It can be inferred from Myers's text that *The Crisis* does not only carry the mission of advancing the race through culture and literature but also through an awareness of socio-economic class. Hence, Du Bois had Marxist aspects in his view when his earlier policies are examined.

The NAACP was founded in New York in 1909 (Obadele-Starks 56). This kind of communal organizations were mostly urban in their nature, because the African American community was just accumulating enough power to establish its own diaspora in big cities, and cities were the most suitable places for them to operate since the number of wealthy African American investors was relatively high in the centers. Urban organizations like the NAACP helped African American migrants who had just moved to the urban centers to find jobs and additionally, they supported and promoted African American literature and music. It was not easy for African American migrants to find jobs and the jobs they could find were menial and not paying well. Myers's *Harlem Summer* touches upon these hardships through the dialogues it created. For instance, Mark's father, upon being called to work as a busboy at a night club for some extra money, tells Mark's mother: "'Honey, we are black folks,' Daddy said. 'When we get a knock on the door it ain't no job, it's somebody looking for the rent. Folks in Harlem who want to eat can't be that particular'" (Myers 34). In this scene, Mark's father wants to take Matt with him to the club, but his mother objects to this, since she considers him too educated to be working at a club for some extra money, and instead of Matt, Mark ends up going to the night shift as a busboy. Mark secretly goes with his father to clean tables, but his real intention is revealed as the desire to see the famous jazz instrumentalists performing. The two brothers differ from each other in their perception of life when their interests are examined. One is portrayed as educated and arrogant at times, and the other seems to belong to the common black folk who works at night clubs and walks and commutes on the streets of Harlem to get to work. This kind of activity,

as mentioned by Michel de Certeau in his *Practice of Everyday Life*, belongs to "ordinary practitioners of the city" (93). However, de Certeau also mentions that these walks on the streets of Manhattan have their own rhetoric, in other words, their own medium of composing a path for their own stories (100). By relating de Certeau's views to the modernization and urbanization of the African American population in the city, it can be concluded that Mark tries to compose his own path and his own art through the city and its landmarks and organizations; and therefore, he is always willing to wander the bustling city. The portrayal of Mark as "the boy of the streets" in *Harlem Summer* can serve the purpose of "composing a path" for the young African American individual. From this perspective, Mark's adventures form the experience of modern city in Harlem. Mark knows the corners of the streets, the clubs where the music is played and the buildings and offices where writers and critics work. He roams the streets of Harlem and this helps him form his identity in the modern city, when de Certeau's views are thought in line with the African American experience of modernity.

Mark goes to the club that his father works at by using the excuse that "[he] could use some extra money and would help to clean the club" (Myers 35). While cleaning the club his attention is drawn by the music played in the club and he starts to muse about music and performance:

> All the time I was working I watched the saxophone players and listened to them carefully. What I liked was the way they made everything look so easy. They never squeaked or missed a note. That's the way I wanted to play. I could imagine myself playing as good as them and even better. Maybe I could play something really fast, something jumping and have everybody standing up clapping, or maybe I would play something slow, like "Always" and have people in love holding hands or looking into each other's eyes. Then when I saw I was getting to them, I would look over at Fats and he would nod and roll his eyes. Yeah. (36)

The passage from the text entails the tradition of jazz and its interactive spirit. Firstly, the scene describes a young amateur musician watching professional musicians and praising their style and playing, which is a common practice in jazz music. According to Douglas Henry Daniels, jazz music is built upon a tradition that requires reverence for the masters who invented, innovated, and experimented with the musical forms to pave the way for the upcoming musicians (112). As Daneils adds, the forebears such as Jell Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington always receive the utmost respect from the younger generation of jazz musicians, so jazz music is about tradition and

historical bond as much as it is about modernity, novelty and innovation in music (112). Secondly, jazz music is about interaction between the band mates and also between the audience and the musicians. Mark, in the passage, talks about how he is going to make the audience feel in a certain way. Myers here emphasizes the power of a jazz musician to affect the mood of audience in different ways. As Virginia Whatley Smith, in her article "The Harlem Renaissance and Its Blue-Jazz Traditions: Harlem and Its Places of Entertainment," states, "Musicians themselves possess a degree of power, for it is they who set the emotional pace in the club that affects the moods of the audience starting with the level of sound" (48). This way, the musicians are empowered, who are performing in a space at a specific time, to make their presence known hence their identity. This may be interpreted as an efficient factor to define the modern African American individual in an urban setting.

Furthermore, the interaction between the musicians is also emphasized in the passage through the gestural exchange between Mark and Fats. Mark's moment when he thinks he touched the hearts of the people in the audience is followed by the scene where Mark looks at Fats, and they exchange gestures of confirmation to urge each other on. This kind of contribution from a band member in jazz music is very common and comes with the group dynamics of a band. As Daniels explains, this kind of interaction and relationship between band members is equated with those of a family; therefore, jazz musicians call their sidemen as brothers and the band itself as family (112). However, Mark and Fats are described as two very different characters, so the individuality of their perceptions is also given importance.

Besides working in jazz clubs and trying to follow a career as a jazz musician, Mark keeps his day-time job in *The Crisis*. Mark is supervised by Jessie Fauset, and he runs errands for the magazine. The way these errands are portrayed by Myers reflects his didactic approach to teach about the Harlem Renaissance art and artists and the artistic dilemmas they were experiencing at that time. For instance, Mark is asked to take some drawings back to the cover design artist, Miguel Covarrubias, since his drawings for *The Crisis* were turned down by the editorial desk. Mark feels shocked and surprised when he tells Covarrubias that his drawings were rejected, because the artist starts to feel sad and, he almost cries. Mark describes this as, "I was going to tell him that I

didn't know the real reason or even that they were going to reject them but he got all sad and teary-eyed. I felt really sorry for him. People shouldn't have to feel bad like that" (Myers 45). When Mark asks Jessie Fauset about this, she says, "Miguel was a great young artist but was very sensitive" (45). Mark does not seem to understand this and asks whether sensitive people cry a lot or not. Jessie Fauset answers this as, "No, it means that his work represents who he is. And when his work is turned down he feels he's being turned down … We encourage artists to put themselves into their work, but it's risky" (44-45). This answer by Jessie Fauset reflects one of the dilemmas that the artists were experiencing during the Harlem Renaissance, because African American music and arts were in demand, and so many artists wanted their work to be appreciated by the public at costs that can damage mental and physical health. However, the demand by the audience was generally shaped by the generic, caricaturized "black entertainment," which held the artistic potential and individuality of African American art at bay.

Langston Hughes, in his article "the Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," handles this issue by condemning the condition of African American artist whom black and white intelligentsia tried to mold according to their own expectations and standards (3). Hughes describes this condition as, "'O, be respectable, write about nice people, show how good we are,' say the Negroes. 'Be stereotyped, don't go too far, don't shatter our illusions about you, don't amuse us too seriously. We will pay you,' say the whites" (3). The African American artist torn between the expectations of these two societal forces seem most likely to have difficulty in putting himself/herself into her work. Myers through the literary figure Jessie Fauset, also gives voice to the struggles of African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance period. However, Myers chooses to describe Mark as not of these sensitive artists who are influenced by criticism and guidance. Mark ponders on the condition and say: "I went back to stapling some dummy magazines and started thinking about Miguel. I also thought about how I would feel if somebody heard me playing my horn and didn't like it. I couldn't see myself crying. No way, I could see me getting a bit difficult, though" (46). In that sense, it is safe to assume that Mark starts to empathize with the artists he meets and think about how he would react to being criticized for his art. This becomes an opportunity for Mark to show his stance and form his own reaction.

Mark's confident attitude about his music is also contrasted with his brother's more structured and schooled approach to life and music. Thus, Mark criticizes his brother when he realizes that he is schooled, guided and molded by the dominant societal forces. Mark expresses his feelings when he describes a scene where Matt plays the piano in the parlor:

> When I got home, Lavinia was visiting and Matt was playing "I Dream of Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair" on the piano in the parlor. Why was he playing that when his girlfriend wasn't even named Jeanie unless he was trying to show her how square he was? He was also playing from notes, which is so weak. Matt couldn't make the sorry song jump anyway. I would rather play a number 4 reed with a split lip than play some stupid song about dreaming of Jeanie with some stupid brown hair. I couldn't wait until Matt dragged his moldy butt off to college. (Myers 47)

This excerpt illustrates that Mark does not find Matt's piano playing sincere. Mark criticizes the song choice, and the playing style, which involves playing from notes on a sheet. For Mark, this attitude deserves criticism, because Mark, instinctively, does want to confine music to the geography of a scripted and prewritten note sheet. This act can be interpreted as a similar concern to Hughes's criticism on molding and manipulation carried out on African American artists in his article "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." Mark's approach can also be interpreted as a reaction to the white dominant society who are trying to appropriate African American musical styles and moods as they wish to. Mark rejects this attitude and complains about how the song was not played properly, because it was not jumpy enough. The term "jump" refers to the groove that most African American musical forms possess. By stating that "Matt couldn't make the sorry song jump anyway" (47), Mark refers to the distinctive beat the African American music possess. He implies that the way Matt plays the song does not contain that beat. This lack of groove can be attributed to Matt's memorized and book driven playing that lacks the elements of an evolving and interactive performance. As Albert G. Mosley states,

> Encrypted in scores, a notated piece of music is treated as a permanent object with an existence that is dependent of any particular performance. Like facts demonstrated under laboratory conditions, classical performances take places in concert halls insulated from extraneous influences. Experimental demonstrations and musical performances embody similar imperatives as modernity's models for reconstructing our physical, social and personal worlds. (349)

The same lack of groove in the song causes Mark to comment negatively on the song. Mark then expresses how he would rather play his saxophone with a special mouthpiece that would cut his lip than play the song his brother is playing on the piano. It can be understood from Mark's remarks that he does not find Matt musical in nature because of his inclination towards a more schooled and structured approach to music, therefore; he calls Matt "moldy" meaning outdated or old-fashioned. Matt, thus, does not represent "the New Negro" for Mark. For Mark, Matt remains unchanged throughout his physical, social and personal world.

However, Mark's search for "the New Negro" continues throughout the narrative. He goes through an apprenticeship under the authority of Jessie Fauset, who instructs Mark about how an African American poet should look like or behave. It can also be understood from the Jessie Fauset's behavior that she prioritizes literature over music because she promises Mark to bring some jazz records she was given by Carl Van Vechten, who was an important patron of African American arts in the 1920s but does not bring them. Instead, Fauset tries to introduce Mark to the young generation of black writers of the Harlem Renaissance, who can set a good example for him. For instance, Jessie Fauset introduces Mark to Countee Cullen, who was one of the most successful poets of the Harlem Renaissance period, while he was having a meeting with W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Crisis*. Fauset tells Mark: "'He is a brilliant young man' … 'you would be smart to remember his name'" (49). After Fauset introduces Mark to Countee Cullen, Mark starts to have an idea about what she means by a "New Negro," so Mark states:

> Later Miss Fauset said that when they spoke of the New Negro it was exactly people like Countee Cullen they are speaking about. I had finally figured out just what she was talking about when she referred to the New Negro. It helped if you looked a little square and spoke like you were trying to taste the words as they were coming out, but mostly you had to be doing stuff that Old Negroes weren't doing. (Myers 50)

Mark's comment on Fauset's perception of "the New Negro" has a sarcastic tone, because Mark feels skeptical about the concept of "the New Negro," and his speech makes it clear that he finds it insincere. It can be inferred from his speech that Mark is irritated by Jessie Fauset's attempts to set literary figures as an example for him. Mark does not see a literary figure as worthy of idolizing. Mark likes Countee Cullen when he personally meets him in Du Bois's room but develops a reaction against Fauset's

description which indicates that Mark would look smarter if he knew about Cullen. After being introduced to Countee Cullen, Fauset invites Mark to a house party to which she also invited Countee Cullen. Fauset asks Mark if he wrote poetry or stories before she invites her to the party, and Mark answers: “I said no, I thought I could write some music someday” (50). Whenever Fauset tries to impose some literary qualities on Mark, he reacts by emphasizing that he is musical rather than literary. Once again, Mark’s perception of modern, urbanite individual does not take its roots from the newly establishing African American literati but a more musical and carefree character much like Fats Waller.

The careless, joker jazz musician persona who wanders through the streets of Harlem portrayed through Fats can be associated with the modern man who had similar personal traits as described by Charles Baudelaire. As Marshall Berman explains, Charles Baudelaire wrote about modern man and woman in way that does not only glorify their actions as typical heroes without any faults in their character, but he also presents their bad habits, conflicts, faults, mistakes and dilemmas including alcoholism, rootlessness, carelessness, desperation (132). The character of Fats Waller fits into this category when the character portrayal is examined according to Charles Baudelaire’s description. To exemplify, Jessie Fauset asks Mark for Fats’s address after the party he played, because she tells Mark that Carl Van Vechten needs to contact him. Mark responds to this as, “Fats didn’t have a regular place but was staying with a family downtown around St. Nicholas Park” (Myers 72). It can be understood from this statement that Fats is a rootless wanderer who does not even have a regular address, but his talent continues to mesmerize people.

This concept can be exemplified by the party scene where Fats played some piano to entertain the people who were mostly white people who want to support African American literary and artistic movement. Mark arrives at the place and tries to adapt himself to the intellectual atmosphere of the party. He feels uncomfortable and alienated, but he enjoys some of the conversation that he has with the intellectual figures. Langston Hughes becomes the figure to comfort Mark and criticize the party for being too dull because they just stand there and do nothing. Mark comments about Langston Hughes: “He had a way of making me comfortable, too, and made the party

easier" (64-65). Hughes also promises to take Mark to another party "a real party" and says: "Look, you want to go to a real party this week? Thursday night and live-ins are stepping out. Good music, good food, and three types of sweat" (64). These are the parties that Hughes mentioned in his article "When the Negro Was in Vogue." Hughes was in favor of more egalitarian parties, where the common folk had the chance to enjoy himself/herself without the gaze of white patrons.

After Hughes leaves and a short live performance by the famous actress and singer Ethel Waters, Mark is approached by a man who asks him his opinion on the Scopes trial. The Scopes trial was a trial against John Thomas Scopes, who was prosecuted for violating the rule of teaching the theory of evolution in the public schools in Tennessee (Grabiner and Miller 832). Myers, by introducing a modern and scientific controversy like the Scopes trial, also touches upon the conflicts of the modern man, who has conflicting views about the new scientific findings and their reception. Myers mentions the Scopes trial at the beginning of the book in a conversation between two senior members of the Harlem community, and now the issue is raised in a conversation that involves Mark. The man tells Mark: "Evolution is here to stay. You can't argue with science. It is just not possible" (66). Mark reacts to this statement as, "Some things in science change" (66). The man replies as, "Not evolution my friend, not evolution" (66). Mark does not know the issue properly, but he tries to make witty comments on the man's statements and says: "'If you are rich you don't mind being called a monkey,' I said. 'I think people in Tennessee aren't that rich'" (66). Mark's made-up comment impresses the man. Mark does not seem to have the insight to comment on the issue but still manages to impress the man. Since Mark is raised by a religious mother, he has difficulty in reconciling these two concepts in his psyche, but he seems to be keeping up appearances. Unlike Mark, Fats has the ability to combine the two concepts in his art as a modern man in Baudelairian sense.

Marshall Berman, in his *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, interprets Baudelaire's ideas on the modern artist and puts forward the idea that the modern artist should place himself/herself in the midst of the constantly moving and evolving urban setting and use the modern technology and science to recreate in his/her art the transformations that take place in the flow and energy of the everyday life (145).

When all the conversations and events above are examined, Fats Waller's appearance at the party becomes a turning point for Myers's story line since he introduces all these modern transformations with his presence at the party. After Mark's conversation with the man who defended evolution, Fats arrives. He comes to the party upon Mark's invitation, but he is not officially invited by the hosts, so his appearance at the party comes as a surprise, especially to Jessie Fauset, because as soon as Fats enters the party house she feels irritated by Fats's carefree and indecent behavior. Additionally, she realizes that Fats is drunk. He tells Fauset that he has been hired by Mark to play piano and walks to the piano immediately after his conversation with Fauset. Fats sits behind the piano and grabs the attention of the crowd by hitting a loud chord. Mark reports his response: "'Don't worry about it, folks,' he said. 'That's just my unevolved hand monkeying around'" (Myers 68). Fats, throughout his performance at the party, gives references to the social conflict between evolution and religious concerns. This shows that he is aware of the changes that are happening in the society. Fats later jokes about his "unevolved hand" and says: "'Can we say a little prayer for that hand?' … 'Maybe if we combine prayer and evolution something good will happen'" (68). Fats combines social conflicts of the 1920s with an imagery that he integrates into his music. Fats uses his right and left hand to represent conflicting views in arts and science in society. As it is portrayed,

> While Fats's left hand was climbing up the side of the piano he was making the sign of the cross with his right hand and praying. Then his left hand got up to the keyboard and it, or he, started playing classical music and everybody started clapping. Fats looked as if he was the most surprised of all of us and his eyes got wide and started rolling around his head and people started clapping again. Then his right hand started climbing up his leg and jumped onto the piano. But his right hand started playing jazz and that's when Ethel Waters stood up and clapped and it was all over. (Myers 69)

Fats's playing style embodies all the conflict concerning the society at the time, so Myers's portrayal of Fats is indicative of the modern artist of the time as described by Marshall Berman: "The real point for the modern artist is to re-enact these processes, to put his own soul and sensibility through these transformations, and to bring these explosive forces to life in his work" (145). Fats's performance encompasses African American modernity since it embraces, plays upon and re-creates the issues of the age in a musical imagery. It can be understood from this approach that African American

musical performance is a medium to convey the modernity that the community is preparing to establish. Fats's arrival at the party transforms the high-brow intellectual atmosphere in the room to a more casual and alternative rent party as described by Langston Hughes. Fats's causal and carefree behaviors intimidate Jessie Fauset, who tries to establish a racial model where individuals are distinguished only by their talent in intellectual tasks and decent and orderly behavior. On the other hand, Fats does not represent these moral and ethical norms imposed on "modern" African American individuals. In a Baudelairian manner, Fats is a man of the streets and involved in some criminal activity, but his musical talent and his artistic sensitivity distinguish him from the rest of the crowd. It is understood from his performance that he is not unaware of the current issues concerning the public. Fats does not lose touch from the casual street life of Harlem, and he is also able to play classical music, comment on evolution and finally play jazz in the same performance. These traits of an individual can refer to Myers's description of modernity that manifests itself in the African American artist.

Fats's performance at the party ends with the scene where he composes a song on the spot to make fun of a white woman who asks him to compose a song for her grandson's birthday. Mark describes the scene as, "Well, he was the big hit and everybody loved him until a fat woman asked him if he could write songs. She wanted a song for her grandson's birthday" (69). The woman comments: "And I understand that Negroes are so inventive" (69). This statement urges Fats to compose a song that humiliates the physical appearance of the rich white woman in the party. The woman's realization of the inventiveness of the African American artist seems to be a statement that has been uttered without thinking or knowledge. As Jean-Paul Sartre and John MacCombie explain, centuries of oppression, discrimination and slavery created such a strong tendency to see the world through the gaze of the white rule, and the effect of this whitewashing blinded white people to the truth of black creativity (13). Knowing that, Fats chooses to tease the woman instead of writing a song for her grandson's birthday, because Fats takes the superficial and uneducated comment of the woman about black inventiveness as something he cannot respond to in seriousness. As Sartre and MacCombie, referring to this black modernity, state: "black torches light up the world and our white heads are no more than chinese lanterns swinging in the wind" (13). This woman is considered to be taking advantage of the inventiveness of "the Negro"

without assigning importance to the great history and heritage of African American artistic creativity.

Myers, through Mark, attempts to explain the identity crisis that black individuals experience in their quest to define their modernity. Mark is portrayed as an indecisive teenager whose ideas on African American identity in the urban culture of Harlem have not yet taken form. Mark experiences a conflict when, as a teenager, he examines the life of people living in Harlem. As he states:

> What I was beginning to catch on to was that there were a lot of people who lived in an ordinary way and did okay with their lives. Then there were people who were always trying to do something great, and they were probably the New Negro crowd. I thought that it probably didn't matter what you looked like so much as what you were going to do with your life, and Miss Fauset was trying to figure out if I was a New Negro or just an ordinary Negro. I was wondering about that myself. (77)

Georg Simmel, in his article "The Metropolis and Mental Life," presents a dichotomy which individuals living in a metropolis experience while thinking about their role in an urban environment. Simmel explains that an individual living in a metropolis is exposed to so many depersonalizing forces governed by the institutions of the state, such as schools, churches, communal organizations, that it becomes impossible for a citizen to protect his personal identity in a city; however, the same effect becomes so overwhelming for the individual that he/she develops a reaction against the powerful forces of personalization and strives to bring out the most peculiar and particular aspects of his/her personality to cope with this process (59). The dichotomy of the "New Negro" is similar to this phenomenon described by Simmel. The need and desire to express the most personal attributes of African American arts through personal expression and the communal need to establish a strong bond that will protect the rights of the citizens are clashing in the psyches of African American individuals.

These contradictions are manifested in Mark's personal life where he has to obey the rules that his mother set for him. Mark's passion to be a successful jazz musician contrasts with the religious beliefs of his mother who always tried to raise him as a devout Christian. Mark's mother has a strong belief in the communal bond Christianity creates and is a regular church-goer. This behavior can be interpreted through Simmel's explanation on institutionalized organizations in society as mentioned above. On the

other hand, Mark's plans on becoming a jazz musician are not approved by his mother for religious reasons. When Mark is visited by his friend Randy, who tells Mark about the audition that they were going to attend, his mother makes comments about the type of music they play. As Mark reports: "'Why do they have to have jazz music in night clubs and bars if it's supposed to be so good?' asked Mama. 'You never hear nobody playing any of that music in church and I know why.' Why? Randy asked. Because the Lord don't like jazz. Mama said'" (82). This dialogue gives us the division between personal and communal and also secular and sacred in the community. This issue, as mentioned in the previous chapter of this study, has been a controversial one in the history of African American modernity, because jazz music and gospel music have always had common musical roots, but they are held separate by the critics because of the audiences they are targeting. As Kathy J. Ogren illustrates, the division between sacred and secular music was marked by the places they were performed in, because the night clubs and cabarets, where blues and jazz music used to be performed, were considered improper by the religious community of African American public (113). Mark experiences this contradiction between his family values and his passion, which reflects one of the dilemmas of the urbanite African American individual.

Although Mark seems to be experiencing this in-betweenness, his connection with the family values, past and religion does not prevent him from going after his passion to become a jazz musician. Mark, Randy and Henry decide to attend an audition which Black Swan Records organizes to spot young talents and make albums for them if the company finds them promising. Randy comes to inform Mark about the audition and they start to plan what they are going to play for the audition. They rehearse a jazz song they know by heart and play well, but Mark thinks it is not a song with a full swing. Randy, in order to impress the jury in the audition, suggests a change in the arrangement of the song. As Mark reports, "'I got an idea for an arrangement,' said Randy. 'We start off with just the sax playing the melody line. Then the guitar comes in with a few chords, then there is a thing back and forth between the guitar and the sax. Make it like you are talking to each other. You know what I mean?'" (83). Randy's suggestion for the arrangement is a musical technique known as call-and-response. Defined by John M. Chernoff as one of the fundamental elements of African polyrhythmic music, call-and-response is a rhythmic play between the performers, or sometimes between the

audience and performers, where the participants complete each other's musical phrases as if they are exchanging words and sentences in a conversation filling the gaps the participant left for the other to fill, melodically and rhythmically (1099). This technique is a distinctive musical technique that takes it roots from both African and African American traditions (Tracy, *Hot Music* 207).

When the definition of the call-and-response technique and its implications are taken into consideration, Mark and his band mates' attempt to play a successful call-and-response section in their performance can be explained through Mark's search for a new medium of expression and his constant struggle to negotiate between his "Old Negro" and "New Negro" identity. Firstly, Mark and his friends are teenagers living in Harlem in the 1920s, so they are a generation torn between the values imposed on them by their community and the new African American youth who are trying to find their voice in in the city, so music becomes a medium through which they can find their own voice. As Chernoff states, African musicians use such techniques to create a structure for rhythmic variation in their music, which consequently encourage participation by other members who contribute to the performance and strengthen the solidarity (1100). Call-and-response technique, by nature, enables jazz musicians to express their individuality and communality at the same time, because, through their instruments, musicians can talk to each other and to the community for which they are playing. Secondly, as Frank Tirro explains, in order for a performer to improvise easily, as in call-and-response technique, one should reach a technical mastery of his/her instrument (288). Mark's band's performance in the audition results in failure because Randy, the pianist, starts playing a different song than the one they agreed on in the rehearsal. Myers's choice to present Mark's band's call-and-response section as a failure serves the purpose of raising Mark's awareness of the African American modes of musical expression. As a result, Mark says: "Jazz is about tunes but it's about improvising, too" (Myers 85). Mark and his friends are not virtuosos and they need a lot of practice to play jazz music properly so Mark comments: "We'll just have to get into improvising a little more" (86). The result of the audition illustrates that Mark and his friends are not ready to play jazz, because they have not committed themselves to it fully yet. Mark's realization, expressed in the previous quote, supports Chernoff's idea that these technical nuances

of African American music such as improvisation and call-and-response aim to create a sense of solidarity and togetherness that the community needs (1100).

The audition scene ends with the kidnapping scene where Mark and his band mates are taken to Schultz's place. The transition from the audition scene to the bootlegging mob leader scene can give the reader information about the perception of jazz music by the intellectual literati. As Kathy Ogren points out, jazz music in the 1920s was associated with vice, and crimes committed in the jazz clubs by some leaders during the Harlem Renaissance (116). Myers's point can be taken as an attempt to vindicate jazz music from these criminal associations, because Mark and his friends are unknowingly involved in a bootleg whiskey transfer, and they did not even know what they were involved in while loading the truck. After this event, Mark decides to be a writer instead of a jazz musician for a while, but he discovers that he does not have any talent for it. He gets Jessie Fauset's ideas on his poems, and he judges from her reaction that the poems he writes are not very good.

After his encounter with Dutch Schultz, Mark tries in vain to find a way to pay off his debt. He opens up the issue to his brother Matt by telling him that it is Fats who owes money to a gangster. In their conversation, Bumpy Johnson's name, who is one of the mobster loan sharks in Harlem, is mentioned. The idea of borrowing the money from Johnson and paying off the debt strikes Mark. However, his attempts to learn Johnson's address fail until a surprising encounter in an unlikely place takes place. Having lost his hope to find Bumpy Johnson, Mark decides to build an interest in poetry after his failed attempt to collect the money; and he takes Langston Hughes as an example, because he thinks that Hughes is getting paid really well for the job he does for *The Crisis*. However, Hughes comments on that as, "I never saw a rich Negro writer" (99). All hope seems to abandon Mark and at that moment, Hughes invites Mark to the rent party he mentioned earlier in the house party that Jessie Fauset organized. Hughes might be considered as the only person Mark can take as a model since his values are not totally corrupted by the tendency to believe in the validity of the exclusive parties that were given by African American intelligentsia. As Steven Tracy C. explains, Hughes becomes the advocate for the "other" Harlem where the "glitter" and "glitterati" are abandoned for a more genuine experience that represents Harlem in its true form (202).

Mark believes in Hughes's cause although he does not fully understand some of his ideas due to his young age, and he leaves home to go to the party and tells her mother that he is going to practice some hymns with his friends for the church service.

Mark remembers the first time he heard about rent parties from what Mr. Mills said about them as he enters the rent party. Mr. Mills states: "When a rent party gets right, I mean really gets right, it's like testifying to the Lord! Only, this time it's the landlord" (Myers 103). The division between sacred and secular reappears in Myer's text and, this theme is intentionally used to mark the division between old and new, in other words, "Old Negro" and "New Negro." In the party, in a conversation with Langston Hughes, Mark is told: "'This is what gives Harlem its pulse,' Langston said. 'Fast music, fast dancing, and living fast enough to stay ahead of the blues and the landlord'" (104). The rent parties are described as the artistic medium of survival and modernity in the city.

As Steven C. Tracy explains, Langston Hughes did not want to be called a southern poet but an urban one taking his inspiration from places such as Chicago, Kansas, Broadway and Harlem (196). Tracy interprets Hughes's reason for that as, "He just meant that northern road was long and dusty and a hard road to travel, and it led away from shacks and mules and plows and cotton crops to tenements and cars and steel mills and skimpy paychecks, from stream-of-consciousness guitar playing folk-blues to whirling tuxedoed orchestras with more than one kind of brass on the road to modernity" (196). Myers, here, emphasizes the division between the South and the North by mentioning the rent parties in 1920s, which can be considered as landmarks that led to the African American modernity in the sense that they provided artistic mediums of African American artists.

In the rent party, Mark ponders upon his life and comes to the conclusion that the only career he wants to pursue is to become a jazz musician. Mark hears a piano playing at the party and immediately understands that it is Fat Waller. He becomes overjoyed by it and feels elevated. The effect of the atmosphere of the rent party on Mark encourages him to reconsider his choices. As Mark states:

> Fats Waller was playing the kind of music I wanted to play, full of fun and rhythm … I hadn't been sure that I wanted to come to the party, but by the time it was winding down. I knew what I wanted to do with the rest of my life: play hot music at jazz clubs and rent parties. I had tried writing a poem and Miss Fauset didn't think too much of it, but even if she had, it had not been that exciting, not as

> exciting as playing my saxophone or even as exciting as eating fried chicken and collard greens and not nearly as exciting as dancing with Louise. (106)

The rent party, unlike the party given by Jessie Fauset, opens new possibilities for Mark. He makes up his mind about his future with the help of Langston Hughes and Fats Waller. Later in the party, Mark has the chance to explain the situation concerning Dutch Shultz and the money to Fats. Upon listening to Mark, Fats introduces Mark to Bumpy Johnson, who gives Mark an address, this address leads to the resolution of events in the story. The party offers hope for Mark's hopeless situation. The modernity that the Harlem Renaissance offers is reflected on Mark's hope to become a successful musician despite the challenges and trouble he has to go through. As Tracy mentioned, Hughes saw the North as a bumpy road to the African American modernity (196). Although Mark seems to have made up his mind about what he wanted to do, the events do not happen as he planned. Harlem's unpredictable atmosphere and the sudden changes in the turn of events can be a challenging road to modernity, where the African American community was trying to establish its own modernizing aspects by coming to terms with their past and present.

After their visit to Queenie, who is Bumpy Johnson's boss, Mark starts to wait for some good news but feels extremely nervous about the decision Queenie is going to make. Feeling overwhelmed by the events he is going through, Mark feels disheartened and tells Henry: "I have decided that I'm going to be a New Negro after all … Maybe write some poems and play symphonies. You know what I mean?" (121). Mark, here, fits into the definition of Alain Locke's "New Negro," who is supposed to elevate the African American forms by blending them with Western forms of arts (*the Negro and His Music* 5). It is also interesting to point out that when Mark gets himself into trouble, he tries to find a solution by practicing the "New Negro" method of becoming an individual with a "decent" and scholarly attitude. This can be interpreted as an escape from the realities of Harlem. However, his friend Henry replies to that statement as, "Symphonies? You can't get away from hot music when it's in your blood like it's in ours, … If we tried to play some kind of symphony it would probably come out swinging. All we need to do is get ourselves out this mess and get back to being us" (121). The reply by Henry embodies the resistance of African American music against Western forms of imposed

culture to protect its uniqueness and identity. Mark cannot escape from his own cultural heritage, hence his own identity.

Concerning the same issue, Albert G. Mosley quotes Duke Ellington on music and improvisation, “You see, the man has to match the music, in feeling, in character. No point in knowing the music unless you know the boys as individuals” (qtd. in Mosley 348). Mosley goes on to explain that while classical music and its performers represent high status people such as scientists and engineers, Black Atlantic music represents underpaid workers working under dire conditions (349). The “swing” of the music played was a medium of protest against that high status. It can be understood that Myers perceives music as a phenomenon which can reside in one’s character and soul, and certain characteristics of it come out even though the individuals are trying to suppress it. Henry tells Mark that their identity can be found within this “swing,” even when they are trying to adapt to a cultural transformation taking place in the new urban environment.

Mark is taken to church by his mother when his connection with the mob leader is learned by his family. However, the prayer is disrupted by the arrival of Crab Cakes, who disappeared with the truck full of bootleg whiskey Upon the church incident, Mark receives some advice from his father, who tells Mark about being black in Harlem. As he says,

> Mark, you are a young black man. Sometimes, living here in Harlem, we walk on the sunny side of the street and sometimes we walk on the shady side. I know that because I’ve been black a whole lot longer than you. Anything you’ve seen—I’ve lived. But I also know that you got to be careful on both sides of the street. I’ve spent my whole life stepping lightly, praying nightly, knowing when to cut bait and run. It’s time for you to cut bait and get to footing! (130-131)

Mark’s father’s advice, as can be seen from the choice of words and imagery created, replicates a musical performance through African American vernacular. As Eric Porter explains, African American urbanites in the 1920s listened to a lot of popular music and saw the integration of African American vernacular language into popular music as a sign of racial advancement or success over dominant culture (8). The internal rhymes towards the end of the passage such as “stepping lightly, praying nightly,” seem to be mimicking a jazz tune drawing on African American vernacular language. Additionally, there seems to be a jazz song integrated into Mark’s father’s speech. The image of

“walking on the sunny side of the street” comes from a jazz standard also recorded by Louis Armstrong in 1937 called “On the Sunny Side Of The Street.” The song talks about “leaving the worries behind and walking on the sunny side of the street.” An excerpt from the lyrics is as follows:

> I used to walk in the shade with my blues on parade
>
> But I'm not afraid... This rover's crossed over
>
> If I never had a cent
>
> I'd be rich as Rockefeller
>
> Gold dust at my feet
>
> On the sunny side of the street (Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra 1937)

Mark’s father combines African American vernacular language and a jazz standard to explain Mark what it feels like to be a black teenager in Harlem and how one should act in difficult times. Mark’s father’s speech takes on Langston Hughes’s ideas on “black vernacular.” As Wipplinger concludes: “Hughes embraced jazz and the blues in his work as a means of validating the originality and value of African American vernacular culture” (166). The musicality in Mark’s father’s speech and the message it carries can be considered as an example of old blues tradition and modernistic city slang juxtaposed in a monologue.

After the Cotton Club is closed by the authorities for storing the whiskey that Mark and his father left there for sale, Mark is also arrested by the police and questioned for the connections he might have with the bootlegging business. Eventually, Mark is set free upon Fats Waller’s testimony. Fats Waller is called into the room while Mark is being questioned and talks in favor of Mark. Even more important than his testimony, Fats promises to play at a party that one of the police officers is giving. After his release, Mark thinks that the person who saved him from going to jail is Fats. As Mark reports, “Mama thanked Jesus all the way uptown and I was wondering if Jesus could have looked anything like Fats Waller” (139). Mark sees Fats as his savior, assigns him religious qualities, which can be interpreted as the glorification of jazz musicians in the 1920s by some of the literary figures such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.

Jazz musicians, in that sense, could be considered as the saviors of African American modernity.

Mark, although he is the one who involved him in the bootleg whiskey transfer, cannot help but admire Fats Waller. His admiration is reflected on his speech:

> I couldn't get over Fats. He was waltzing around the police station like he owned it. He was big and he was smart, but he wasn't what it was all about. What it was about was that Fats could cook. He could play anything for anybody, and the whole world was waiting to hear him. Gangsters gave him slack. The police listened to him. Fats was Fats and that was that. Fats was what I wanted to get to, to be playing so good, and swinging so hard that the whole world took you serious. I thought maybe Fats was the newest Negro of all. (139)

For Mark, Fats is "the newest Negro of all" because, he can connect with and communicate with every layer of the society, and his actions, even criminal ones, are overlooked by the public. Firstly, Fats Waller, as a character in *Harlem Summer*, can be examined through Langston Hughes's ideas on the African American art and artist. In his "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes claims that African American artist should produce African American art without worrying about the criticism he/she is going to receive and embrace his cultural heritage to build a future for African American arts (4). Embracing the cultural heritage and its media of expression is considered the only way for racial advancement and progress. Myers, depicting a certain period of time, attempts to portray Fats Waller as a person who is talented and prolific, and an artist who can impress all layers of the society. As Eric Porter puts forward, jazz music became really popular when American public was restructuring its perception of culture, because there was a reaction against old Victorian moral which restricted artistic expression to a limited sphere, so jazz was a big opportunity also for the Anglo-American community to break away from cultural and artistic impositions (8). Therefore, Fats Waller in Myers's text, becomes a cultural mediator and an artist that provides artistic relief for both African American and Anglo-American communities.

After his release from the police station, Mark appears on the *Daily Mirror as* a young and fierce gangster who carried out an interstate bootlegging business. His reputation spreads in the neighborhood, and he is mocked by people who really know Mark, but also feared by some who really think Mark is a gangster. Mark also learns from Bumpy Johnson that Queenie is not after him anymore after his appearance in a "white"

newspaper. Bumpy Johnson warns Mark: "So you just stay on your side of the street from now on" (143). After all, Mark wants to return to his simple life in Harlem. He reconsiders his career plan as a musician playing hot music in rent parties and clubs all the time. The novel closes with Mark pondering upon the advice he has been given by Langston Hughes, and him exchanging bootlegging jokes with Henry. Mark says: "I thought about Langston saying that there was more than one kind of real, that the kind of real at the rent party had been hot and swinging and seemed like the only way to live, but that there were other faces and other places that I would find just as real" (150). This excerpt makes it obvious that Mark, as Langston Hughes suggests in his articles "When the Negro Was In Vogue" and "the Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," finds realities in the simple and humble lives of the common folk. Mark goes on: "I didn't know what I wanted to do with myself. I knew I didn't want to be an undertaker and I knew I didn't want to get arrested every weekend, but that's about where it ended. I did know I wanted to be in Harlem, though. I wanted to be around the music and all the people. The New Negros as well as the old ones. I loved them all" (150-51). Myers, through this excerpt, introduces a definition of African American individual which encompasses both Alain L. Locke's concept of the "New Negro" and Langston Hughes's belief in the wisdom of the "simple Negro."

Walter Dean Myers's prose on African American experience in Harlem reintroduces the history of the cityscape and music to the young generations through the medium historical fiction. Although Myers's first book was published in 1969, his prose has not been given enough attention by African American critics and literati studying Harlem in particular. Myer's *Harlem Summer* (2007) reviews the events and concepts of the Harlem Renaissance from the point of view of the sixteen year-old Mark Purvis. Myers, born and raised in Harlem, recreates the African American experience in Harlem in the 1920s through a story that is embroidered with musical and literary references from the heart of the Harlem Renaissance. Myers text puts African American modernity under scrutiny by placing his protagonist in the social environment of African American intellectual population. Mark works at *The Crisis* magazine where most of the African American writers work as the defenders and supporters of racial solidarity. Myers delves into the lives of these people and introduces their perspectives through the eyes of Mark, at the same time, he creates his own vision of African American modernity,

where he presents the perspectives of the ordinary people and the Harlem literary bourgeoisie who are trying to build a new African American identity through the modernity the Harlem Renaissance embraces. Myers's text handles the issues of African American modernity by making use of musical and literary references from Harlem's past.

As Alfred W. Tatum explains, Walter Dean Myers's writing is influenced by James Baldwin's style in African American urban experience blended with musicality that African American individuals possess culturally (Tatum 539). Tatum also states: "Following in the path of Baldwin, Myers's writings about ordinary life with accessible and melodic dialogue that captured the rhythms and cadences of his Harlem upbringing became his signature" (539). Myers's style embodies the "dark" writing of Baldwin and also his own ruminations on life in the urban North concerning the issues of African American individuals of the 1920s from a point in time where the coming of age of the Harlem Renaissance is a topic of discussion. The motives that led Myers to write *Harlem Summer* in 2007 is an indicator that shows how the construction of African American modernity which predated the 1920s still occupies the minds of novelists who see the same problems, dilemmas and paradoxes that African Americans experience still today. The common pattern that is shared by these concerns is that these novelists find the solution in African American music and arts. In addition to literary awareness, Harlem, as a neighborhood, started to gain popularity after the new wave of racial tension after the 1980s when white backlash became prominent in New York; therefore, the growing tension pushed people to ethnically homogenous districts where their community has long been residing, and they can be in touch with their roots in the city (Prince 29). These developments might be seen as major causes to analyze Myers's *Harlem Summer* as important literary work of the 2000s looking back to the Harlem Renaissance and its modernizing elements.

CHAPTER III: PERSIA WALKER'S *BLACK ORCHID BLUES* (2011)

The Great Migration (1910-1920) from the southern states to the northern ones that led to the concentration of African American population in the urban centers of the US also helped the creation of an African American population which had the chance to exercise the rights they had been deprived of since their arrival at the American continent. The diasporic formation of African American population in the urban North enabled the community to express their voice in unison in an environment where they could found labor unions, local churches, and even big orchestras which promoted their causes without the hindrances of the southern practices which assigned a fixed societal role to the African American individual as a farm worker and servant. Although the racial discrimination and segregation were still existent in the lives of these individuals, the North created opportunities for them to embrace the differences even in the same community. The reason they were freer in the northern states resulted mostly from the protection by the Federal Government by law and the already existent diversity in urban centers (Taylor 327). The Harlem Renaissance emerged as a direct result of these social and political developments which led to the literary and artistic means of expression. These means were not always in line with what the mainstream African American community advocated, but it was still African American in its essence.

As Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess explain, the rural communities tolerate eccentricities and queerness in small numbers and isolated them to their own physical and mental spheres; however, the city values the intricacies of these individuals' dispositions whether they bring forth good or evil (42). The case of modern African American individual bears resemblance to the case of the outcast individual isolated to those spheres in villages and towns. On the one hand, the African American community in the 1920s was becoming stronger with its institutions and organizations, but on the other, it was trying to reconcile the differences in identity formation among its own members. Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues* (2011), from this perspective, handles the issues of the African American individual, who is trying to position himself/herself within the mainstream Anglo-American culture while also talking about the African American community, which is also trying to position itself against the suppression of white dominant societal forces by trying to establish its own cultural and social

dynamics in the urban centers of the North. This chapter will examine the patterns of African American modernity in the Harlem Renaissance period, which are reflected on the psyches of oppressed and marginalized individuals both within the society and in their own community. The role of African American music and the city as a liberating factor will also be handled within the scope of the Harlem Renaissance and its modernizing aspects.

Black Orchid Blues is the story of Junior Bernard who is an African American transgender individual performing in the Cinnamon Club of Harlem under the name Queenie Lovetree. Junior suffers from dissociative personality disorder and thinks that Junior and Queenie are two different people dwelling in his body. Junior Bernard is born as a hermaphrodite and raised as a girl until he was thirteen years old and called Janie by his family. Junior suffers from his father's sexual abuse throughout his childhood. When Junior goes into puberty, he starts to look like a boy rather than a girl. The family, worried of the public shame, keeps Junior away from the eyes of the public and tells the neighbors that they sent their girl to the South to stay with relatives. Junior receives home-schooling from his mother and lives a secluded and isolated life in the family house until their decision to send him to college. Later, Junior Bernard marries Sheila whom he met in Howard College, where they were both studying as senior year students. Junior takes Sheila to New York to introduce her to his family, and they get married and move into their parents' house in Harlem, New York after their graduation. The Bernards are an upper-middle class family living in Harlem, New York. Junior's father is one of the first black doctors in Harlem and his mother is a nurse. Junior, living with his wife and his parents, leaves the house every night to secretly perform at clubs as Queenie Lovetree. His family introduces Sheila Holt as their daughter and Junior as their son-in-law to continue the lie.

Junior Bernard suffers from dissociative personality disorder, and it appears in the novel that Queenie Lovetree has the dominant role of controlling Junior. He goes out every night for his show and invites Lanie Price, the famous society columnist, to encourage her to write a review of his performance. This starts the chain of events which will eventually lead to the death of many people including police officers, club goers, a farmer, the Bernard family members, and Sheila. Queenie Lovetree, seeking revenge on

his family, sets up a staged kidnapping that starts the killing spree Queenie goes through. On the night he invites Lanie Price to see his performance in the Cinnamon Club, the staged kidnapping takes place. It turns out that Queenie has hired Olmo, a gangster, to kidnap him from the Cinnamon Club. Olmo shoots a couple of people to make the kidnapping look real, but later is killed by Queenie. Queenie, Junior's alter ego, thinks that he deserves his family's inheritance due to the fact that he had to go through all the abuse and isolation that is imposed on him because of the confusion that his family went through in his upbringing. Most importantly, the sexual abuse he was exposed to drives Queenie to carry out all the bad deeds he has committed against his family. He wants to take the money from the family as ransom and leave Harlem to start a new life in a different place. Through all of these, Queenie struggles with his split identity and commits crimes that prepare his ending.

Black Orchid Blues ends with Junior Bernard's death. Junior Bernard does not want Queenie to hurt anyone else and drives a car down a cliff and into the river to end everything after a long escape from the police. Queenie Lovetree, all throughout the story, prepares his own death by killing different people for the reasons he found legitimate. His motives sound reasonable as he talks about his traumatic past, but he also kills everybody that prevents him from getting the ransom and running away from the police. However, Junior Bernard, as the body carrying these two personalities, seizes control for a moment and drives the car into the river and chooses death over being trapped with Queenie in the same body. The last chapter of the novel describes how Lanie and Sam are going to prepare the story of Junior Bernard and his transgender alter ego Queenie Lovetree. Lanie plans to write Junior Bernard's story by describing him as a victim who experienced sexual abuse throughout his childhood. Lanie wants to portray Junior as a child victim despite the negative reactions she is about to get from the African American community who will be claiming that she is misrepresenting, and setting a bad example for the race in front of the public. The entire story is told through the eyes of the Harlem society columnist, Lanie Price, who attains a relatively objective tone to report Junior Bernard's or Queenie Lovetree's story. There is always a battle between the two personalities, namely Junior Bernard and Queenie Lovetree, who represent different facades of African American reality in the US in the 1920s.

3.1. The Urban Experience and the Sense of Belonging in Harlem

As Maria Balshaw suggests, African American citizens living in Harlem were facing pressure from their community to comply with the desired expectations of how an African American man or woman should act or behave (47). These expectations coming from the Harlem intelligentsia, who led the Harlem Renaissance, worked towards a goal to create a model for the African American citizen, who would represent the race in the best way possible. Persia Walker's approach to the racial, cultural and musical elements in her book *Black Orchid Blues* addresses this problem by shattering the illusion of this normative approach, because it possesses the cacophony, multi-layeredness, musicality, and the psychological depth of New York City, especially Harlem in itself. As Darryl Dickson-Carr explains, Harlem, socioeconomically, was made up of different classes that would separate it into different neighborhoods where people's jobs range from doctors, lawyers, artists and columnists to entertainers, porters, plumbers, cooks and day laborers (87-88). This diversity did not prevent the African American community from building an awareness of racial and communal solidarity, but the lifestyles and aspirations were still different in many ways. The two main characters in *Black Orchid Blues*, namely Lanie Price and Junior Bernard, come from the upper middle class segment of Harlem. The two characters live in the Strivers' Row, which became the neighborhood of wealthy professionals of Harlem (Dickson-Carr 88). Although both characters suffer from traumas, though different in content, they seem to enjoy a certain amount of wealth unlike the characters depicted in *Jazz* and *Harlem Summer*. However, this newly emerging bourgeoisie in Harlem still suffered from racism, suppression, oppression, family pressure, and antagonism in their own community. Their jobs as doctors, artists, lawyers and actresses did not bring them happiness all at once. The community and the individuals still had to make great effort and sacrifices to achieve a level of satisfaction with their lives. Understandably, those who had different sexual orientations had more difficulties than the average members of the minority. Junior Bernard, therefore, represents a struggle that is more challenging than an average heterosexual African American male citizen experienced. On the other hand, Lanie Price, as a woman columnist, leads a life as a widowed African American woman who

always needs a man's protection and affection on her side to function. Both characters belong to a minority group within their own community.

Both Lanie Price and Junior Bernard (Queenie Lovetree) try to develop a sense of belonging that will help them discover their emotional traumas and also their fragmented identity. In Junior's case, he finds fulfillment on stage as Queenie Lovetree. His performance gives him an opportunity to become himself, but the other sphere of his life has to be spent within the norms of the family, race and community. In Lanie's case, the fulfillment comes from writing about these people who transgress the norms of the society and create their own realities. Additionally, the sudden loss of her husband makes her more sensitive to the issues of individuals who experience loss in different parts of their lives. Lanie writes about artists, performers and celebrities in Harlem, but her interest shifts toward Queenie Lovetree because of her eccentricity. Lanie seems to be looking for what is different in the African American community, and she does not want to go after the normative or mainstream presentations of Harlem as African American experience. In Lanie's and Junior's condition, belonging in a space requires reinventing their own space through writing and music. They reinvent their space and thus their modernity in Harlem.

In his attempt to reinvent his space, Queenie Lovetree suffers from a confinement resulting from his domestic and mental spheres. This confinement can be associated with Queenie Lovetree's "madness" when interpreted from a Foucauldian point of view. Jean Khalfa, in his introduction to Michel Foucault's *History of Madness*, explains that, throughout history, the concept of madness has been shaped by different sociological factors that led the society to dichotomize different beliefs regarding madness by contrasting them in regard to their relationship with reason and "unreason" (Foucault xvi). Foucault divides the concept of madness roughly to three different historical periods, which are the European Renaissance (15th century to 17th century), the Classical Age (17th and 18th centuries), and the modern age (from the end of 18th century to 19th century), and examines how madness was perceived in each time period (xv). In this chapter, the contradiction between the modern perception of "madness," which takes madness as a medical condition to be treated and examined in mental institutions (Foucault 115), and the European Renaissance ideology, which similarly tends to

exclude individuals labeled as "mad" by sending them away on ships but also portrays them as characters in literature, who possess a secret knowledge that "normal" people do not possess (Foucault 12, 19-20), will be handled within the context of the African American modernity.

In addition to the modernity defined by figures such as by W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, Jessie Fauset and black upper middle class bourgeoisie, there were also individuals in the community who are seeking their own way of existing within the newly discovered modernity of the African American community. Despite hardships caused by the frame to which their own community tried to confine them, these individuals were able to make contributions to the Harlem Renaissance as musicians, writers and intellectuals. The famous Harlem singer and pianist Gladys Bentley, the widely famous poet of the Harlem Renaissance Langston Hughes, the famous poet Countee Cullen and the novelist Wallace Thurman can be considered among the examples of such figures. What can be inferred from the conditions of these individuals experiencing African American modernity in 1920s is that the Harlem Renaissance, rather than being a unified voice for all the individuals it contained, was state of mind in its essence that shifted and transformed the experience of African American modernity in the new urban areas that are populated by African American people, and therefore; as Carly Wintz suggests the movements marks an era of black literature and arts which did not necessarily belong to certain period of time, but it was a new vitality that had never been encountered before (80-81). Belonging to a certain group was a problem for individuals who were already marginalized in their own community, but the unifying power of the movement gave them a different state of mind that would allow them to experience new horizons in the urban spaces of New York.

3.2. The Clash of Identities in the Musical City of *Black Orchid Blues*

Persia Walker belongs to one of the younger generation of writers starting her career as a novelist in the 2000s, whose main interest resides in African American historical fiction. Walker's works have not been paid enough attention by critics, but her prose seems to deserve attention regarding the life in Harlem in the 1920s and African

American minorities and marginalized groups. In *Black Orchid Blues* (2011), Walker goes back to the 1920s to rediscover the atmosphere of the urban cityscape, which becomes the setting for African American modernity. Walker's treatment of modernity differs from her contemporaries in that her approach to Harlem takes shape over an already marginalized transgender protagonist who assumes the character of a villain alter ego to seek revenge on his family. Walker's attempt can be interpreted as introducing African American modernity from the perspective of a transgender individual suffering from a mental condition, which also presents the racial and class confusion surrounding the community. Walker's protagonist, Junior Bernard or Queenie Lovetree is a performer who labels himself as Black Orchid. Black Orchid is a talented performer and interviewed by Lanie Price, the society columnist. These two characters come together in the setting of Harlem and take part in the chain of events that involve the killing of nearly all characters related to Junior Bernard.

Black Orchid Blues opens with Lanie Price commenting on Queenie Lovetree's stage performance. Lanie comments on Queenie Lovetree's performance as, "Queenie Lovetree. What a name! What a performer! When she opened her mouth to sing, you close yours to listen. You couldn't help yourself. You knew you were going to end up with tears in your eyes. Whether they were tears of joy or tears of laughter, it didn't matter. You just knew you were in for one hell of a ride" (P. Walker 7). The opening lines express how enchanting Queenie Lovetree's performance was and how he took the audience under control as if casting a spell on the audience. This kind of an introduction sets the jazzy atmosphere and relates to the performative aspect of the jazz music to assign superior qualities to the performer. The performance in the quote being ultimately inviting and personal refers to one of the qualities of modernist conception of art. As Robert G. O'Meally et al. suggest, modernist aesthetics perceive art as a form of expression which is independent from the constrictions of customs, traditions, and ancestral roots and created by individuals instead of communities (18). Queenie's opening performance and the impact it creates on the audience is a personal manifestation of his character. From that perspective, it can be understood that jazz music consists in a form of artistic expression that is as individually driven as it is communally rooted. The communal roots of jazz music, later in its reformation in the

diverse urban center, also served the purpose of individual expression for marginalized and alienated persons.

Queenie Lovetree's individuality and the freedom he feels on stage are rooted in his talent for improvisation. One of the comments Lanie hears about Queenie is his ability to improvise, Lanie comments on this as, "Folks used to talk about her gravely voice, her bawdy banter, and how she could make up sexy lyrics on the spot. Queenie captured you. She got inside your mind, claimed her spot, and refused to give it. Once you heard her sing a song, you'd always remember her performance. No matter who was singing it, Queenie's voice would come to mind" (7). Queenie's talent for improvisation can be explained through his need to break away from his parental ties. As Grace Kyungwon Hong, in her book *Death beyond Disavowal: The Impossible Politics of Difference,* explains, throughout history, the concept of Blackness has depended on the individual's ancestral and parental relatedness defined by the biological kinship to a certain group, but Black feminist and queer communities position blues/jazz improvisation against the restricting and normative forms of this genetic and biological relatedness (95-96). Queenie, from this perspective, tries to (re)form his individuality on stage. Jazz/blues improvisation through a queer cultural approach enables Queenie to express himself truly.

As in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, which gives the reader the accounts of different characters through a narrator that shifts and changes between voices, Walker's *Black Orchid Blues* presents a character that moves between two different characters, whose accounts are different from each other. An attempt to make each character in the novel unique can be observed in Walker's writing. Lanie Price, while describing Queenie, says, "She billed herself as the 'Black Orchid'. The name fit. She was powerful, mythic, and rare" (9). As the characters in *Jazz,* who were "busy being original" (Morrison 220), Junior Bernard exhibits his originality when he assumes her other persona, Queenie Lovetree. "Black Orchid," as a stage name, connotes originality and rarity, in that sense, in addition to its reference to the racial identity of the character as an African American person. Being "black" and rare form Queenie's identity so that he can advertise himself as the "exotic" and rare talent of Africa. Walker, like Morrison, tries to define the modernity of African American experience through individuals, who are victimized in one way or another.

Their originality stems from their past traumas, but they also try to disconnect themselves from this experience to form a new identity. In Junior Bernard's case, he transforms himself to Queenie Lovetree whom Junior Bernard finds guilty of all the bad things that happen to him. The clash of these two identities can be interpreted as the confusion of modernity, where the past still has a considerable effect on the individual, and the individual tries to break free from burdens of the past through performance and music. These characteristics features embodied by Queenie might be considered as the modernizing aspects of the 1920s when mental reconciliation between the communal and individual both had a significant bearing on the African American individuals living in urban centers. As O'Meally et al. state,

> It is not incorrect to view jazz as crucible of heroic artistry. Jazz musicians have discursively transcoded the hard facts of slavery, migration, industrialization, and urbanization in the U.S. history into aesthetically rich and complex creations. Their harmonious balance between individual soloist and collective improvisation provides a metaphorical solution to one of the current dilemmas of social life in the U.S.—how to encourage individuality without selfishness and how to encourage civic mindedness without totalitarianism. (19)

The "destructive" persona of Queenie Lovetree uses the power of improvisation both to express his individuality and to impress his audience. As mentioned by Kyungwon Hong before, the transgender individual's use of jazz improvisation carries a different and specific purpose. Queenie Lovetree, in that sense, pushes his individuality one step further through his performance. As Lanie comments, "A six piece orchestra, one that included jazz violinist Max Bearden and cornetist Joe Mascarpone backed her up. Her musicians were good—you had to be to play with Queenie—but not too good. She shared center stage with no one" (9). Queenie Lovetree does not want anybody's performance to overshadow his sensational stage presence. His improvisatory lyrics, witty comebacks and strong singing voice make him standout among other musicians. It can be understood from this condition that it is not only the musical talent but also the character that goes along with it that makes Queenie a standout performer.

Harlem plays a central role in Queenie's success and popularity since it was home to the most vibrant jazz and blues venues of the time. Although Queenie is a Harlemite by birth, his origins become a topic of mystery among the public. Although Queenie is coming from a family consisting of Harlem upper middle class urbanites, his stage performance is associated with those the peculiar places of the South. As Lanie reports,

"Rumor had it that she was out of Chicago. But back at the movie premiere, she'd mentioned St. Louis. All anybody really knew was that she'd appeared out of nowhere" (8-9). Queenie's rootlessness is indirectly addressed by the public, but Lanie's speculations directly refer to the South. Lanie adds her own musings on the issue, "I mused about his real history. No doubt it was like hundreds of others. He'd been a touring vaudevillian, or had grown up singing gospel in some church down South, then either ran away from home or was kicked out" (13). The reason that makes Lanie imagine that Queenie was from the South is that his performance reminds the audience of the vitality, sincerity and emotional intensity of the performers, who are known to have suffered from the vile conditions of the South under Jim Crow laws and societal pressures imposed on African Americans.

However, Queenie's past does not reside in those experiences but a personal trauma that affects him all throughout his life. Since his trauma is rooted in his family, Queenie Lovetree, through his queerness, presents a different experience shaped by the freedom of urbanity and the newly forming artistic experiences some of which are inherited from the South. Therefore, his history should be deconstructed to understand the real reason behind his "blues." The deconstruction of Queenie's past can be achieved through Henry Louis Gates Junior's concept of Signification, which aimed to shift the interpretation and speculations by an Anglo-American perspective through black tropism (45-46). Queenie can sing the blues, which is full of non-standard English phrases and idioms that are not common in standard English, and this allows his audience to associate his use of language with a certain physical geography, namely the South. Queenie's impressive performance is perceived as the outlet of his southern past and this means that he is signifying on his own past by letting people believe that he is actually coming from the South, which is actually not true. African American music, which is rooted in the South, can be associated with the tradition of blues music and its tradition of African American tropism, however, Queenie's unusual competence in singing the blues is not connected to his roots in the South. Lanie comments on that by saying, "When he took the mic, the folks hushed up and Queenie launched into some of the most down and dirty blues I'd ever heard. He preached all right, signifying for everything he was worth, and the crowd of mostly rich white folk, they ate it up" (P. Walker 9). Queenie performs a "down and dirty blues" that the audience finds amusing,

but his inspiration does not directly come from the South but his own experiences in the city. In Queenie's Signification, the blues can also be performed in the city. His tropism is able to deceive the white audience so that they never know the real meaning behind his "down and dirty blues."

Queenie's tendency to lie about his past is shaped by a tendency to (re)form an identity independent from his biological and cultural relatedness to his family. Queenie tells many lies about his past, when he is being interviewed by Lanie. Queenie's reconstruction of his own past stems from his need to alienate himself from his parental ties, for that purpose, also for the purpose of impressing Lanie, he makes up stories about his past to hide from his own roots. Lanie comments on this as, "People lied. Sometimes for no apparent reason, they obfuscated, omitted, or outright obliterated the truth. And often the first sign of an intention to lie was an unsolicited promise to tell the truth, 'the whole truth and nothing but'" (11). In Queenie's case, the lying becomes an act of performance through which he could create a new form of reality, a new past for himself.

One of the aspects of the modernity of the jazz artist according to O'Meally et al. is that, "The aesthetization of alienation is seen as an end in itself, as an episode in the history of art rather than as an individual and collective strategy for living better in the world by calling new realities into being through performance" (18). In that sense, Queenie has to alienate himself from his past and traditions to create new realities about himself. Queenie makes up lies about his adventures in different places around the world. As Lanie reports, "He described how at the age of fourteen he'd fallen in love with a sailor who smuggled him to Ankara" (P. Walker 11). Queenie's tall-tales reach out to remote places around the world, and he even claims that he was sold to a sultan for his harem. As Lanie states, "Believe it or not, Queenie's tales were certainly fascinating. He described corrupting wealth and murderous intrigues. Sultan's wives were poisoning each other and one another's children in a never-ending struggle for power" (11). Queenie's alienation from his personal history enables him to recreate himself in the eyes of his audience. The reason he is so eager to give an interview to Lanie results from his need to create a mythic past where he is a product of his own creation rather than his biological or ancestral heritage. The only thing that allows him to do that

becomes the story and song. The content of the stories Queenie tells, after this point, loses its importance for the listeners, and the performance starts to matter more for them. Therefore, for a performance to be impressive, it is important for the performer to convey sincerity to the audience. Lanie, after listening to Queenie's stories, comments by saying,

> I've seen and heard enough to be fairly immune to what shocks most people. So it wasn't Queenie's stories that got me. It was the obvious pride and conviction with which he told them. People talk about being larger than life, but it usually doesn't mean a thing. When applied to Queenie, it did. And his tales were as tall as tales can get. Sure, they were hokum. That was obvious, but it was okay. It was more than okay because it would make rip-roaringly good copy. (13)

Queenie's ability to tell stories gives him the power to reconstruct his self through the very same medium. The sense of rootlessness and the self-creation become a coping mechanism for the transgender individual in a jazz scene in Harlem. Queenie was born and raised in Harlem as Junior Bernard, but his real self was discovering the cityscape anew. He had to prove himself in that space again to a different group people with different expectations. Lanie comments by saying,

> No doubt he'd spent years on the circuit, in smaller clubs, dark and dirty. Underworld characters had smoothed his path and a wealthy man or two had taught him to love the finer things in life—men who lived double lives, with women during the day and men at night. Now Queenie was here in New York, the big time. It was his chance, and he was going to run with it, milk it for all it was worth. I certainly couldn't blame him. (13)

Queenie's struggle for survival in the clubs of New York can be interpreted as his attempt to recreate himself through performance. The excerpt suggests that the clubs at which Queenie performed showed him the alternative side of the social diversity and dynamics of urban space he started to explore as Queenie Lovetree. As Hong suggests, the improvisatory nature of African American music depends on creating something new and deforming its structure at the same time (108). Queenie's relationship to New York is similar to that approach, because he starts his life all over again when he starts working at clubs in Harlem as a performer. This does not mean that Queenie has no memory of Harlem before, but it is a whole new way of experiencing Harlem through its underground clubs and non-conservative individuals as it is mentioned in the excerpt, its "double lives." This scene does not represent the ultimate goal of the Harlem bourgeoisie to paint a picture of the African American individual in the eyes of the

Anglo-American population as the "New civilized Negro," who is a social project rather than an individual (Dickson-Carr 89). The opportunities the city offers become apparent when Queenie finds supporters within the same community, who help a performer prove himself through his talent. Queenie breaks out of his family's oppression through story and song he shared in the underground jazz clubs of Harlem. Contrary to the restricting and controlling attitude of the Harlem literati, the welcoming clubs and venues were more democratic places in the sense that they valued individual performance. Dickson-Carr comments on the issues as, "The efforts of the members of the black bourgeoisie to restrict and control the images of African Americans found in art and literature, therefore, interfered with the democratic impulse that blacks shared with their fellow citizens" (89). Thus, Queenie Lovetree was the embodiment of this "democratic impulse" with his unconventional character and performance.

According to Michel Foucault, during the European Renaissance, the mad used to be sent away on ship to the places of confinement since they were thought to disrupt the public order (9). Nevertheless, Foucault also explains that in the literary of works of the European Renaissance, the mad were also assigned the qualities of having a "dark form of knowledge," which the ordinary member of the society did not really possess (19-20). This perspective can also be traced back to Friedrich Nietzsche's opinions on Greek tragedy and the desired balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian approaches to the performance of tragedies, which also must have influenced Foucault regarding his views on madness. Nietzsche puts forward the idea that the artistic production should achieve a balance between the intoxicating inspirational powers of Dionysian parties, which Greeks called Bacchanals and involve activities including drinking, sex, dancing, music freely expressed through these parties; and the Apollonian artistic approach, which gives merit to the mind and sanity rather than the "irrational" (82). Nietzsche supports the view that in artistic performance, these two elements should be harmonized and juxtaposed to coexist with each other (82). This idea also finds its place in African American modernist philosophy. In the case of African American performance and the modernity that comes with it, James Arthur Manigault-Bryant argues:

> Du Bois's use of the term *madness* to describe the revival, while seemingly pejorative, suggests a kinship with is appropriation by Michel Foucault some years later. Both would understand "madness" as a state of mind distilled from a protected category of reason. As a budding sociological thinker, a scholar who was

> attuned to intellectual history, Du Bois could see, at the turn of the century, that there were realms of mind incapable of inclusion into America's social order of thought. That this was a *pythian* madness, a madness drummed up, like the music played on the lyre of Greek god Apollo—also known, in his role as the patron deity of Delhi, as Pythian Apollo—meant that it, though a form of unreason, might heal and bring the listeners to light and truth. The syncopated rhythm, which did not intensify the front beat but its *echo*, pushed time backward. (329)

Queenie's tendency to lie and bend the "truth" can be considered as a part of this *pythian* madness which is an integral part of African American performative arts. Queenie Lovetree, by presenting his story as a form of art work, which is full of amusing stories, seems to be possessing the qualities of the "sacred knowledge" the European Renaissance writers associated with the characters in their literary works. Thus, Queenie's madness can be interpreted as an attempt to reconstruct his identity through destruction as in the very nature of jazz music, which aims to deconstruct the classical structures of Western music to recreate them under African American musical tradition through his "madness." Queenie's performance and lifestyle, thus, seems life-affirming and constructive through a manifestation of his "madness" through music and performance although the novel ends with his suicide. However, his suicide is initiated by his other character, Junior, who is the embodiment of the bourgeoisie and white-washed values of African American modernism.

Although the Harlem Renaissance was the defining movement which promoted "the New Negro" of the 1920s in New York, the city had to deal with the ghettoization that brought poverty and crime along with the Great Migration that took place in post-Reconstruction era. The unseen realities of Harlem during the 1920s were affecting the community in a considerable way, because the promising look of Harlem for the average migrant did not fulfill the expectations when the migrant had to deal with low wages, social problems such as discrimination and segregation (Wintz 24). These factors contributed to the criminalization of the ordinary migrant in the city. Persia Walker, in her *Black Orchid Blues*, treats this issue within a historical context by criminalizing a transgender individual who has been victimized by his family. The revenge of the victimized is motivated by the money that will be inherited from the family. This fact can be examined as a social outcome of the economic and cultural conditions of the time period. Although Queenie is coming from a relatively higher-income family, he has to demand ransom for his own life from his own family. The

trauma and confusion Harlem urbanites experienced in this modern setting also led them to commit crimes. As Paula J. Massood claims the conditions that were shaping Harlem in the 1920s continue to shape the realities of the newer generations of Harlem, so the mythic setting of the Harlem Renaissance period was created by the very same conditions that are shaped by unplanned urbanization, soaring real estate prices, overdevelopment that left the poor out of the social and cultural developments, and these are still factors that help define the African American experience in Harlem (136). Lanie comments on that issue as, "Detective John Blackie. I knew him from when I covered crime for the *Harlem Age*. Now I worked for the *Chronicle*, but our paths still crossed, because every now and then my writing about highbrow Harlem meant writing about highbrow crime" (P. Walker 23). Therefore, Walker's writing raises issues that are still being experienced by African Americans living in the city. The themes such as communal versus individual, bourgeoisie versus proletariat are still in question in African American modernity. As a result, although Walker's writing is labeled as historical mystery or historical fiction, her attempt to cover the issues concerning African American reality regarding the crime and emotional traumas of the individuals can be considered as a realistic representation of African American modernity through historical mobility.

Although the characters in *Jazz* and *Harlem Summer* belong to the lower-income working class, the characters in *Black Orchid Blues* generally portray the lives of a generation who moved up in the social ladder as the members of a higher-income African American bourgeoisie. All the characters in these works experience problems in their lives, but Walker's characters are less hindered by the economic conditions of their time. As Lanie explains, "I lived in a small, highly insular part of Harlem dubbed 'Strivers' Row,' an appellation that began as a term of mockery but soon became a badge of pride. The enclave's distinctive town houses were home to many of Harlem's most renowned 'strivers,' including entertainers, lawyer, doctors, and other professionals" (32). The quote reflects Lanie's perspective on her neighborhood. She explains that the term "strivers" used to be used to mock the newly emerging upper-middle class in Harlem, but later on, with the actual success of these individuals, the term presented "pride." Lanie, as a successful columnist, is one of the "strivers" in Strivers' Row, in that sense, her class mobility is what makes her different from the

characters examined in the previous chapters of this study. Walker's characters are constructed according to the upper-middle class bourgeois values of the African American community. Thus, their problems and view of life are different from the ones living in ghettoized divisions of Harlem. Their problems started to become individualized, and their sense of community started to take shape according to the values of the bourgeoisie. As a result, the bourgeoisie in Harlem experience conflicts related to the newly forming values of the African American bourgeoisie and their own values shaped by their individual experiences.

Darryl Dickson-Carr presents this condition as a modernist dilemma experienced by the African American upper-middle class community of the time and claims that African American middle class was not different from the "Old Negro" in the sense that they were enamored with Anglo-American and Victorian tendencies except for the new horizons that modernity offered (89). This tendency can be observed in Lanie's speech, when she talks about Strivers' Row, she comments, "The mention of Strivers' Row conjured up images of red Roman brick or Georgian yellow town houses. It meant private gateways and courtyards, quiet dignity and distinction, all designed by some of the best architects of the day, including Stanford White" (P. Walker 33). Lanie's speech seems to have a tone of sympathy, and a longing for the old Roman brick houses with courtyards, which is meant to evoke respectability and aristocracy within the dweller. However, romanticizing the Strivers' Row houses through its Italian Renaissance architecture and famous architects does not help Lanie give the space a meaning. When she goes back to her memories about the house, she remembers her deceased husband and his memories. The only way to give a meaning to the house becomes a personal act rather than a historical association made through the Roman bricks in the design of the houses. This act is in line with de Certeau's ideas on the transformative city space, as de Certeau states, "Unlike Rome, New York has never learned the art of growing old by playing on all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future" (de Certeau 91). Lanie, as in New York's case, reshapes her space through her memories of it and adds her own values to it. In line with de Certeau's comments on New York City, it can be suggested that Harlem, which was populated by German working class citizens at the beginning of the 20th century, went through a change in color and identity with the

changing demographics of the district. The city's tendency to renew itself is also reflected on the individuals who populated Harlem after the Great Migration. Although the houses and the architecture remain "white," the mental and racial space of the Harlem neighborhood saw a great change, which led Alain Locke to call this urban center "the Mecca of the New Negro."

Although Lanie lives in a house which was designed by "some of the best architects of the day including Stanford White" (33), she does not possess an ancestry that goes back to the works of these architects, who were generally influenced by Italian Renaissance in the design of the buildings. Therefore, her sympathetic tone towards the house starts to disappear. Lanie's memories of the house are shaped by the memories of her deceased husband. Furthermore, the house creates a void that results from a lack of liveliness and family memories. Lanie describes this as, "For a moment, I felt as though the house itself was speaking to me. I could sense its disappointment. I wasn't the only one to have lost dreams; the house too felt wrenching void. It was a big place, with generous spaces. It was meant to be filled with noisy, laughing children and grumpy but loveable relatives. Instead, it stood empty" (35). As can be understood from the excerpt, Lanie feels that the house is speaking to her to express its distress resulting from the lack of roots regarding its dwellers. Lanie could not have enough memories to fill the house due to the loss she has experienced. The detachment from the classical design of the house becomes apparent when Lanie starts to talk about the memories she had of the old days she spent with her husband in the same house. Lanie also adds, "The house was warm—I could feel the warmth on my skin but, it didn't touch the chill inside me" (35). The sense of personal loss and the feelings recalled by the memories of the past cause Lanie to distance herself from the house for a while, and the memory of Roman bricks and yellow stones starts to disappear as the memories of the past start to appear. Lanie's mental condition once again makes it clear that the modernity that African American bourgeois individual possessed contained a dilemma, which includes the appreciation of Classical Western architecture and arts but also a refusal against the same phenomenon through a personal struggle to create individual experiences to establish a unique identity that will support the cause of the African American modernity. In that sense, Lanie experiences a sense of detachment regarding Strivers' Row, although she appreciates its architectural heritage.

Lanie's spatial memory and her changing perception of the house can also be explained through a common pattern that can be observed in the cultural treatment of spaces by African American individuals. As Peter Gaál-Szabó, in his article "Zora Neale Hurston's Cultural Space and African American Spatiality" explains, African American culture's treatment of space is shaped by a tendency to change, modify and alter the spaces in which they dwell to create a personal association with the space that will help form an African American identity within the defined restrictions of the space (87). This action can be exemplified by the set of cabinets built into the kitchen of Lanie's Strivers' Row house. While Lanie is reminiscing about his deceased husband's memories, she talks about how she has Sam build a set of cabinets for her kitchen: "There was one part of the house where memories of him had been softened, if not fully overlaid, and that was the kitchen. Sam had labored long and dusty hours to me a set of cabinets" (33). This action can be associated with the African American musical tradition of improvisation manifested in spatial treatment of the physical environment in an attempt to cope with the trauma. As Gaál-Szabó discusses,

> The inherently communal pattern grants Hurston a multidimensional approach to African American Culture since improvisation facilitates pluralism and heteronomy within cultural framework. In Hurston's cultural/cosmological space the construction of places shows similar characteristics. She hybridizes places by inverting them to express the subjectivity of her character. (85)

In Walker's text, Lanie also comments by saying: "I've always believed that houses are alive, that perhaps they're imprinted by the thoughts of their creator and the succeeding hopes and sorrows of their owners" (35). Dwelling on Gaál-Szabó's views, Lanie, as a member of the African American bourgeoisie, is improvising on her own space to escape from her personal loss when her actions are examined from a Hurstonian perspective. It can be inferred from her actions that Lanie, like Queenie, has to use the elements of social and cultural improvisation, like a jazz musician, to develop a defense mechanism against loss and trauma. As in Queenie's case, the musical traditions of the African American tradition can be observed in Lanie's life as cultural reactions to the dominant and oppressive cultural hegemony.

Although Lanie is absorbed in her own personal problems and loss, she is aware of and exposed to the social problems the African American community was experiencing in the 1920s. Her social and communal awareness surface when the issues are raised.

Belonging to the African American bourgeoisie helped raise an awareness of social and communal consciousness for these individuals, following the path of W.E.B. Du Bois, Alain Locke and Jessie Fauset. While Lanie is doing her investigation on Queenie's case and how he disappeared, she learns that all the print media, who have been ignorant of the Cinnamon Club and the Black Orchid (Queenie), are now writing about the case, and Lanie comments on their perspective as, "By the afternoon citywide dailies had picked up. By evening, people who'd never before heard of the Black Orchid or the Cinnamon Club were talking as though they'd known about them forever. There was talk about guns and the increase in the crime and how Harlem had turned wild 'ever since the ofays moved out and the darkies moved in'" (37). In this quote, the effects of the Great Migration on the population of Harlem has been addressed, and the purposeful act of writing the last sentence of the quote in quotation marks makes it obvious that the narrator is expressing the view of the public and does not really agree with the hateful comments on the migrants labeling them as criminals. However, the criminalization and demonization of African American migrants were a direct result of the ghettoization and segregation imposed on these communities by the Anglo-American rulers and governors when they first arrived (Wacquant 17-18). Although Lanie expresses the complaints about these, she knows that Queenie's case is not a standard ghetto crime story which results from poverty and unemployment. Since Queenie was college educated, and belonged to an upper-middle class family, his motives to commit those crimes were different and complex.

In that sense, Persia Walker's writing fictionalizes the tabooed and less introspected characters of the Harlem Renaissance although they consist of an important section of the community of the African American intelligentsia. Walker depicts a queer Harlem Renaissance through Queenie, which sheds light on the internal conflicts the transgender individuals might have experienced during the period. As Stephen Knadler, in his article "Sweetback Style: Wallace Thurman and a Queer Harlem Renaissance," explains, unlike many of the Harlem Renaissance literary figures, Wallace Thurman, in his writing, portrays characters with different sexual orientations who did not comply with the normative and exaggerated masculinity of the time, which was intended to challenge the white supremacist discourse that tried to deprive male black individuals of their maleness and emasculate them (900). Similarly, Persia Walker, in her writing,

seems to be pursuing the line of portraying a different façade of the era through a character who challenged the gender norms of black male masculinity. Queenie Lovetree, being a transgender figure, is also a performer who sings jazz music in clubs, which gives him the freedom to realize himself through the established tradition of improvisation in jazz and blues music embedded in his performative skills. As Knadler adds, Wallace Thurman's portrayal of a queer character puts the male body and its desires into question, which makes it difficult for the reader to predict the character's thoughts and actions when considered in heteronormative representation of the African American male (899).

The point above can be exemplified with Persia Walker's portrayal of Queenie as an African American man in drag. When Lanie goes to talk to the club owner Lucien Fawkes, what she learns about Queenie surprises her. When the possibility of Queenie being kidnapped by the rival club owner Owney Madden is voiced, Lucien tells Lanie about Queenie's reaction: "He said he'd never work in a place like that, one that put colored people on display, like a zoo. His words, not mine. He would not work for people who would not let Negroes come in, sit down, and enjoy themselves. And when he said it he was angry. That is why I believed him. He was furious and I think he meant it" (P. Walker 47). Lanie is surprised by the fact that Queenie is also interested in the cause of the African American struggle against segregation. Lanie comments as, "Hmm. Social awareness: Queenie had many good qualities, I was sure. But social awareness? The Queenie I'd interviewed had shown no interest in civil rights or a willingness toward self-sacrifice. More like an overweening sense of self-absorption" (47). Queenie's secret intellect surprises Lanie as she is not privy to every piece of information regarding Queenie. She knows about his flamboyant, witty, and sharp-tongued persona, who seems to be interested only in fame and glamor, but Queenie also has a socially and racially conscious mindset. Queenie's identity, in that sense, is not only defined by his queerness, but also his socially conscious self, who takes on a political stance over the conditions he has been exposed to. This stance is one of the factors that might complicate the issue of African American modernity in the sense that the defined roles of African American male masculinity does not apply to Queenie's case, and as it has been mentioned by Knadler before, the transgender individuals, who challenged the African American bourgeoisie and their normative male masculinity,

were a part of the newly forming African American modernity, but also challenged its values (899-900). Therefore, Walker's text introduces the Harlem Renaissance era and African American modernity from a perspective that has been sporadically overlooked and neglected by the critics.

Despite the normative treatment of sexuality and gender in the 1920s, some of the leading figures of the Harlem Renaissance were known to have unconventional sexual orientations. In her attempt to portray the Harlem Renaissance from a different angle, Persia Walker handles the issues of the transgender and gay individuals focusing on their contributions in literature and music. Walker's treatment of these individuals is a testimony to the successes of transgender and gay community of African American authors, artists and musicians. The narrator, Lanie Price, explains the social atmosphere as,

> Things would change a few years later, but back then, if you were gay and into the scene, you had a lot of Harlem nightspots to choose from. The crowd that danced at one place partied later at another. There was 267, for example, over on West 136th Street, and Edmond's Cellar on West 132nd and Fifth Avenue. There was the Yeahman and the Garden of Joy. There was Lulu Bells's on Lenox near 127th and buffet flats like Hazel Valentine's Daisy Chain on 140th. (P. Walker 51)

The passage from the text helps the reader understand that Harlem of the 1920s included many different places of gathering for the transgender and gay community. The specific addresses and names of real places are integrated into the text to give the text a sense of historical authenticity. It can be understood that the liberating atmosphere of the Harlem Renaissance was to be experienced in the landmark spots of the cityscape of Harlem the narrator mentions in the excerpt. It can be understood from Lanie's speech that these spots naturally appeared in Harlem with the appearance of a literary and artistic scene in the area. Lanie comments on that by saying,

> People knew about these places mostly by word of mouth. If you were gay, then Greenwich Village or Harlem were it, baby. The churches in Harlem weren't too tolerant, but the community as a whole mostly looked the other way. Of course, gays were discreet. Like Richard Bruce Nugent used to say, people didn't shout their business from the rooftops. They just did what they wanted to do. Nobody was in the closet. (P. Walker 51)

It can be understood from the passage given above that Harlem, within itself, was made up of different voices representing different ideologies, but they were partially able to tolerate each other when the racial issues and representation of African American

identity were concerned. In Lanie's account, one Harlem literary figure who carries great importance with his outspoken character is Richard Bruce Nugent. Nugent was one of the writers who was famous for depicting the lives of gay community in Harlem in his writing. As Charles I. Nero, in his review of the collection of works by Nugent, states,

> [Nugent]'s essays about the African American entertainment diva Georgette Harvey, Rose McClendon, the transgender 'Gloria Swanson,' and the black gay bibliophile and collector Alexander Gumby are masterpieces of a camp style of writing. His discussion of Gloria Swanson's decline even achieves poignancy as he relates how homophobic statutes and the police who enforced them eventually made the transgender performer wear the attire of her biological sex. (674)

Nugent can be considered as the first Harlem Renaissance figure who made transgender performers his topic of writing and touched upon the atrocities they faced by the hand of the police department and homophobic forces in society. Looking at Nugent's writing, it can be assumed that Persia Walker's writing might have been inspired by the portrayal of transgender individuals by Nugent in the 1920s and 1930s. Chronicling the Harlem Renaissance and African American modernity through transgender issues is an area that has been neglected in the contemporary fiction.

Lanie continues to make comments on the same issue by listing the important literary figures of the Harlem Renaissance by mentioning their sexual orientations and how they contributed to the cause of African American modernity. Lanie comments on Nugent's ideas on gay Harlem intelligentsia by saying,

> If they had been, then that closet would have been mighty crowded, cause a whole lot of Harlem's best and brightest were gay or bisexual. There was Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, and Wallace Thurman. There was the aforementioned Richard. Some would've put Langston Hughes on the list. Both men and women were in love with him. He just never let himself be seen with anybody and kept them all guessing. He was a beautiful, talented enigma. (P. Walker 51)

As Nero adds, Richard Bruce Nugent's works do not seem to have received the attention they had deserved by the Harlem literary critics because of the pro-gay and pro-transgender tone manifested in his writing and consequently remained unpublished most of the time (475). Persia Walker, being aware of this literary negligence, fills a gap in African American modernist literature by fictionalizing a transgender jazz performer

in her historical mystery. This attitude also serves the purpose of raising an awareness of Harlem arts and music a queer musical and literary expression.

Lanie Price, through her journey through Harlem gay parties to find clues about Queenie's whereabouts, visits important figures of Harlem's alternative night life, who would become important figures in Harlem's musical past later on. Lanie mentions Gladys Bentley, who is a real figure in Harlem music scene, and draws a resemblance between Queenie Lovetree and Gladys Bentley in terms of their musical style,

> You can't mention the scene without mentioning Gladys Bentley. That sister was two hundred and fifty pounds of gutsy talent. She used to get dressed up in a white tuxedo and top hat. Bentley was the heart and soul of the Clambake, a popular place for people "in the life." Like Queenie, Bentley was known for belting out double-entendre lyrics. She counted Tallulah Bankhead, Beatrice Lillie, Jeanne Eagels, Marilyn Miller, Princess Murat, Libby Holman, and Louisa Carpenter du Pont Jenney among her most fervent admirers. (52)

Walker's reason to draw a parallelism between a fictional transgender character and a real lesbian figure can be interpreted as validating the existence of such figures in the Harlem Renaissance period. Additionally, it can be seen that Gladys Bentley has also been given credit in Langston Hughes's "When the Negro was In Vogue." Hughes talks about Bentley as a great talent; "Miss Bentley was an amazing exhibition of musical energy—a large, dark, masculine lady, whose feet pounded the floor while her fingers pounded the keyboard—a perfect piece of African sculpture, animated by her own rhythm" (2694). These parallelisms between Walker's main character and the Harlem Renaissance's musical talents cannot be overlooked when the modernity and multi-voicedness they brought into the cultural milieu of the African American community are concerned.

Lanie's visit to Jack-a-Lee Talbot, who is one of the transgender party hosts famous all over Harlem, becomes an eye-opening moment for her since the atmosphere of the party makes her realize how the Harlem bourgeoisie and their literary gatherings do not present a completely truthful account of Harlem gatherings and rent parties. Lanie, as a society columnist, has come to realize that she has been writing about pretentious Harlem parties which included the same famous figures who represented a single view of what Harlem should have been at that time. Lanie comments as, "No hypocrisy here. Violence, drugs, and liquor? Yes. But hypocrisy? No. And that was a relief after some

of the stuffy society gatherings I often attended. I felt absolutely at ease with this crowd. Here, among all the costumes and flamboyant fakery, I still felt a greater sense of honesty than I did at a lot of the buttoned-up gatherings I wrote about" (53). This moment introduces a change in Lanie Price's life where she was transformed by the energy she has witnessed in the party. This attitude by Lanie can be associated with Langston Hughes's criticism on "stuffy" Harlem parties and gatherings, where individuals felt pressured because of the imposed stereotypes of the "New Negro" in his "When the Negro was In Vogue" (2696). Hughes's ideas that differ from important figures such as Alain Locke and Langston Hughes, manifest themselves in Lanie's speech. Hughes, who was complimenting Gladys Bentley, goes on to criticize the "Nordic" influence and admiration in the refined Harlem gatherings ("When the Negro was In Vogue" 2696). Jack-a-Lee Talbot's party is different from the stereotypes of refined Harlem gatherings and seems to offer so much more for Lanie.

When Lanie leaves Jack-a-Lee's party, she also makes up her mind to attend the biggest drag party which is held every year in Harlem because she promises Jack-a-Lee the reward money in return for the information that is going to lead her up to Queenie. Lanie describes the balls as:

> The Faggots' Ball was the largest drag ball of the year. That wasn't the official name for it, of course, but it's what everybody called it. A fraternal society, the Hamilton Lodge of the Odd Fellows, hosted it every February at the Rockland Palace Casino on Eight Avenue and 155th Street. The event was set in Harlem, but folks came from all over, and they weren't only colored. (56)

Walker's approach to the Harlem Renaissance takes the alternative lifestyles of Harlem as a source and goes against a view that defines the period as only a surge of literary hope and excitement. As Charles I. Nero puts forward, there is reluctance among literary circles even today to review the Harlem Renaissance through its gay and transgender members (473). Walker's literary choice of depicting the lives of the alternative lifestyles in Harlem in the 1920s might be considered as a reaction against this kind of "reluctance" by the literary critics who tend to avoid the musical and literary contributions of the marginalized communities within the African American community, where the identity is not defined by the racial belonging but the sexual orientations and lifestyle within the same community. However, when the community

needed to address racism and segregation, the differences became blurred, the community acted in unison.

The Bernards represent the opposite end of the spectrum when they are examined as a family from an outside perspective. Lanie knows the family through her deceased husband and describes them as a well-to-do family. They do not seem to have a tendency to yield to any kind alternative lifestyle. Lanie remembers Junior and Sheila as,

> I'd often heard music when walking past the Bernards' residence. Someone in that house was an accomplished pianist. He or she loved to play Chopin and Brahms. Someone sang opera too. Sometimes I heard Enrico Caruso playing on the Victrola, most often his recording of sacred music by Rossini. I would also hear the pure, thrilling live voice of a young, male tenor singing along. It must've been Junior and Sheila: he singing and she at the piano in accompaniment. (P. Walker 77-78)

It can be understood from this passage that the stereotypical Harlem bourgeois family in the 1920s bought into the values of Western and Anglo-American cultural heritage. This family portrait is in line with the description of Langston Hughes in his "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," where he described a state of mind in which African American individuals are so enthralled by the ways of Anglo-American living that their own values start to look banal and alien (2). This attitude fills the atmosphere in the Bernards household. Junior, whose alter ego, Queenie, sings the dirtiest blues at night clubs in Harlem, whereas, at home, he sings opera with his beautiful tenor singing voice to sign over his wife's accompaniment through a piano. Although this scene might represent a bond between Junior and Sheila, when Junior transforms himself to Queenie, this bond disappears. Queenie is known for his strong jazz and blues performance and "inventing sexy lyrics on the spot." This contrast seems to be deliberately achieved by Walker to show the difference in values of these two different types of lifestyle in the same community. The strictly bourgeois lifestyle of the Bernards and the alternative lifestyle of Queenie Lovetree, which is full of jazz, blues and flamboyance, represent these two different mindsets. Queenie, as Junior's alter ego, tries to escape from the restrictions of this bourgeois life to experience his freedom through jazz music.

These restrictions of bourgeois life imposed on the members of the family can be examined through Foucault's opinions on the bourgeois family and its influence on the characterization of madness. As Foucault illustrates, the emergence of the bourgeoisie in France in the 17th century happened under the monarch, who allowed the bourgeoisie to control hospitals where the mad were kept and confined (50). In *Black Orchid Blues*, Queenie's father is a doctor, who works at the Harlem Hospital and, he is a character who deeply embraced the values of the bourgeoisie class emerging in Harlem. This parallelism can be construed as Persia Walker's attempt to portray Queenie's father as the authoritarian force who confines "the mad" to physical and mental spheres where they are labelled and treated. Parallel to this conception, Foucault also explains the period of time when "madness" started to be considered as a real medical illness that should be studied and scrutinized by physicians (xv-xvi). This attitude also reflected itself on the attitudes of the dominant authoritarian forces of the Anglo-American Society. As mentioned above, Queenie lives a double-life with two different persons dwelling in one body, and his alter ego is transgender jazz musician performing at clubs. With this combination, Queenie seems to be representing all the perils of the age. Queenie is a jazz musician and "mad," which were at some point synonymous in American culture. As L. Johnson Russell states, "Critics used words like 'pathological', 'infection', 'virus', 'epidemic', and 'cancer' to describe jazz, and the Cincinnati Salvation Army's lawsuit indicates the fear in many quarters that jazz madness was undermining the nation's physical, mental and moral health in the 1920s" (14). Persia Walker, by combining these elements, might be referring to the "madness" that Queenie possesses as jazz music, which can be considered the strongest medium of expression to stand against the hypocritical and decadent values of the African American bourgeoisie.

As a society columnist, Lanie has to go to different parties organized by different layers of the community and this enables her to compare and contrast the parties she has been attending. When she is talking about the parties A'Lelia Walker gives, she says,

> I knew people who would've sold themselves to get one of A'Lelia's engraved invitations. I knew others who wouldn't have anything to do with her—including one of my best friends, Grace Nail. Grace said she would rather do the Black Bottom on Lenox Avenue than cross A'Lelia's threshold. Grace was married to the renowned James Weldon Johnson. So folks thought she turned up her light-skinned nose at A'Lelia because A'Lelia was dark-skinned and the daughter of a washerwoman who'd made good by selling hair-care products. (123)

The excerpt reflects the divided layers of the African American bourgeoisie. It is once again important to point out that the Harlem Renaissance was the melting pot of many different ideologies and literary perspectives within itself; therefore, it has been received as a state of mind rather than a homogenous movement which supported a single view. As Cary D. Wintz explains, James Weldon Johnson was one of the promoters of the Harlem Renaissance, but he was known as a serious and socially-isolated person, who would always keep a distance between the Harlem bohemian writers and intelligentsia (109). Moreover, his wife, Grace Nail Johnson was said to be insistently criticizing the parties given the "hair-straightening heiress" as explained by Wintz (110). Although A'Lelia Walker's parties acted as a meeting place for all the people who would promote and be promoted within the "loosely" defined movement of the Harlem Renaissance, other writers and authors found these parties insincere and pretentious. Lanie agrees with Grace Nail on the issue by saying, "Grace said, and I agreed with her, that A'Lelia's parties required a strong stomach. They had a reputation for looseness. A lot of talk was exaggerated, but, like they say, where there's smoke, there's probably fire" (123). It can be understood that Lanie also embodies these as a middle-class African American woman attending those parties. Lanie accepts that she finds Jack-a-Lee's parties more sincere and honest, and when Grace tells her that, she simply says she could go everywhere for a story. On the one side, Lanie, as a society columnist, has to attend and embrace the bourgeois values of the Harlem bohemian authors, and the other side, she enjoys Jack-a-Lee's drag parties where the marginalized crowds of the 1920 try to find a voice. As a result, for both of these actions, she is criticized by one of her best friends.

Lanie's views and her—maybe unknowing—choice can be understood when the scene where she goes through her reading list is examined. As Lanie states, "I tried to read. I picked up *The New Negro* by Alain Locke, but put it down again. It was too dry to hold my attention. I went back to my bookshelves and ran my fingertips over the titles" (124). Just as Mark in *Harlem Summer*, who thinks that *The Souls of Black Folk* by Du Bois "sounded like school stuff" (Myers 33), Lanie finds a similar work "dry." It can be understood from the quote that despite her bourgeois lifestyle and refined taste, Lanie finds something missing in the writing of the Harlem Renaissance's alleged literary leaders. What she finds missing in Alain Locke is found in Zora Neale Hurston. As

Lanie comments, "I floated back to Zora Neale's book; it was one of my favorites. I'd read all of these books at least once, but hers, I'd read three times already. It always distracted me and lifted my spirit" (124-125). As Wintz explains, Alain Locke has always been associated with the stark values of the bourgeois culture in the community, his posh Rhodes scholar aura and ideas on the advancement of the African American individual through the mastery of Western forms met with criticism (119). In that case, Zora Neale Hurston's writing reflects Lanie's conflicts about her communal attachment. As Péter Gaál-Szabó explains, Hurston's writing embodies both the subjectivity and communality of the African American community through the use of elements such as call-and-response and improvisation, which both require individuality and communality (85). This dilemma is manifested in Lanie's upper-middle class habits.

Lanie's dilemma is reinforced by the disappearance of Queenie Lovetree, because she finds herself thinking about these issues unknowingly while working on the story of Queenie. As she states, "That night, my worried thoughts keep returning to the Black Orchid. I tried listening to the radio. I switched channels between *The Eveready Hour*, *Rambling with Gambling*, and Boston Symphony Orchestra. Eventually, I turned it off. Even the classical strains of the symphony were just an annoyance" (125). Lanie, as an educated woman with refined tastes, finds it difficult to listen to even the most peaceful piece of classical music because the thought of "the Black Orchid" does not leave her alone, she leaves her refined tastes behind to help the transgender jazz performer, who is believed to have put his life at risk. It can be concluded that remembering Queenie distances Lanie from her bourgeois habits. Once again, Lanie's social class subconsciously goes through a change with her contact with music, Queenie's "madness," in other words his "jazz," occupies more space in Lanie's thoughts. It can be inferred that she is possessed by the influence of Queenie's jazz.

The gradual process of reconciling the African American dilemma regarding the bourgeois habits of the Harlem Renaissance becomes a process that is initiated by Queenie's story, and it becomes more prominent with the unraveling of the events. Lanie is criticized by Sam for putting her life at risk for Queenie's story, and Lanie replies to that statement by saying: "I wanted to tell the stories that no one else would tell. Ida B. Wells and Nellie Bly, they are my heroes. I wanted to be like them: do

important work, cover significant stories. But the fact is, I'm a coward. I don't have Ida's guts to fight lynching or Nellie's courage to go inside an insane asylum" (133-134). Lanie's choice to take Ida B. Wells a model can be interpreted as her attempt to go back to her roots where African American individuals really made an impact on the community by pointing out real problems. Lanie, as a society columnist, covers stories regarding the entertainment in Harlem, but with Queenie's story, she finds the chance to uncover a story that will make a substantial impact on the community by pointing out both individual and communal problems. Through this, she experiences the same problems African American women experienced throughout the history of African American struggle for equality and freedom.

Regarding the points mentioned above, Hollie Pich, in her article "Various, Beautiful, and Terrible: The Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells-Barnett," explains that Ida B. Wells's contribution to African American history of struggle did not only involve condemning lynching and violence against African American people but also a battle against the norms of African American male authority, which was embedded in the African American movement of liberty as a token to show the strength and robustness of the community (62). Pich goes on to explain that Ida B. Wells was aware of the predicament the African American community was experiencing, because of the general sentiment that Wells, as an African American woman, was defending the dignity and honor of African American men against the accusations and black propaganda made by the white press (62). This parallelism drawn between Lanie Price and Ida B. Wells enables Persia Walker to portray Lanie as a character, who not only fights against the dominant forces of the white dominant population but also against the patriarchy of the African American liberation movement. This aspect is treated by Persia Walker in her portrayal of Sam, Lanie's boyfriend, who becomes extra protective when Lanie tries to follow the case as closely as possible risking her life at times. When the time period is taken into account, Lanie Price becomes an unusual character who can drive her own car, have private conversations with the Irish American police chief, and spend time with Harlem mobsters alone. This represents the multi-layeredness of the African American community's struggle for equality. Through Lanie Price and Queenie Lovetree, the perspective of an upper-class white collar woman and a transgender jazz performer in Harlem are given a major role in the setting of the Harlem Renaissance.

Persia Walker reintroduces these themes to review modernizing aspects of the African American community in her literature.

Despite Lanie's portrayal as a strong woman who tries to stand against the ingrained values of the community, Sheila is presented as a naïve and fragile character, who is open to manipulation. Sheila marries Junior Bernard not knowing that he suffers from a mental disorder and has a transgender alter ego as a result of it. Sheila learns about Junior's condition when they move to Harlem to stay with the Bernards. Sheila, as the rest of the main characters, suffers from a trauma because her two brothers had passed away and her family had been overprotective. Sheila's naivety and unconditional love for Junior prepares her end. Sheila learns about Junior's double life by following him, and this enables her to go through a change in herself. She learns about Queenie Lovertree on a night she follows Junior to the Cinnamon Club. As she states:

> I wasn't prepared for what I learned that night. Not at all…. When I saw all those people, I … well, at first, I still didn't know what was going on. I knew it was a sinning place, like the juke joints we had back at home. I'd never been to one, never wanted to, 'specially not after what happened to my brother Lynn. He used to hang out in them kind of places. That's where he met that woman who shot him. Him being killed like that, it gave me a righteous fear of bars and speakeasies. (153)

Ironically, Sheila's end is also brought by her own husband. Sheila's father was a preacher, and she was raised as a girl who was always told to obey the rules set by the community. As Kathy J. Ogren asserts the collectivity of the church music and the individuality of blues and jazz music had become really solidified by the end of the 19th century, and musicians were compared to preachers in the community (112). Coming from a culture that strictly values communality over individuality, Sheila's inability to make her own individual decisions in a city like New York enables people to manipulate her for their own interests. Sheila is manipulated by Queenie and the Bernards and gets killed at the end. Her southern roots and naivety do not work in an urban environment. The swirling and changing intrapersonal dynamics of the city surprises Sheila, but she cannot adapt to its dangerous chaotic dynamism. Therefore, it can also be understood from Persia Walker's writing that, in addition to the collectivity and communality that were required for the racial issues, there was also as need for the individuality for a person to survive in the city by handling the interpersonal relationships within one's inner circle.

Sheila comes close to understanding this individuality when she visits the club to find out about Junior, because she understands that everything that she has been told about the clubs was a product of the ideology that was imposed on her. As Sheila comments,

> When I walked in that door, the first thing that hit me was that this was a place of happy people. Real happy people. They were laughing, jiving and having fun. It may sound strange, but it was the first time I realized just how miserable I'd been. For months, I'd been making excuses, rationalizing things. Standing there in the club, I actually envied those people. (P. Walker 153)

Sheila's sudden change and the belatedness she feels when she observes the atmosphere in the club can be taken as her naïve dreams about finding happiness in the North. As Kathy Ogren notes, despite the efforts by the conservative public of the 1920s, the growing popularity of jazz clubs, where the youth could listen to the newly emerging forms of expression through visual and musical spectacles, continued to attract crowds (6). Sheila, as young girl who had never been in a social environment like this before, seems to be attracted and open to a new experience that she could never have the chance to have if she had stayed with her parents. However, her decision to follow Queenie's orders and her inexperience with the urban dynamics causes her death. Sheila's dilemma between her old southern values and new promising northern ideals do not allow her to make the right decisions. As Maria Balshaw highlights, within African American literary tradition, the South is always described as a place of ancestors and tradition, but it is never considered as a place to return to when African American urban writing is considered (5). Sheila, in that sense, leaves her past behind to follow her heart, but it can be understood from her actions that her modernist dilemma between her rural past and urban present prepares her end.

The seemingly "destructive" environment of the city, which is also described as the land of opportunity, is manifested in Persia Walker's text through the description of places and how they make people feel. Lanie describes Strivers' Row after Sheila's disappearance as, "Strivers' Row appeared to be an oasis of tranquility in the seething urban sea around it. But that was only an appearance. There was one household, at least, where nothing was quiet, where emotions were in turmoil and the occupants, clinging to their sanity. The news I had to deliver wouldn't make it any easier" (165). The scene describes a condition of the appearance versus reality in the neighborhood, which is known as the "bright side" of Harlem with its newly emerging bourgeois habits and

seemingly decent families, who are supposed to represent the "New Negro" of Alain Locke with their success and moral values. As Darryl Carr-Dickson outlines, the black bourgeoisie was extra vigilant about the problem of the representation of the community, and they did everything to show the "bright side" of Harlem to create a pleasant image (89). However, the bourgeois family of Strivers' Row, the Bernards, led to more problems with their lost morality and history of abuse, which will lead to the destruction of a young African American individual and people around him.

E. Franklin Frazier, African American sociologist and critic, in his studies regarding the African American family and bourgeoisie, touches upon the same issues experienced in the household of the Bernards. As Ernest W. Burgess, in his editorial preface to Frazier's *The Negro Family in Chicago*, states, "The chief handicap from which the Negro suffers is perhaps not poverty, nor overcrowding, however serious and challenging these problems may be, but the persistence of an unorganized and disorganized family life" (Frazier xii). This condition can be exemplified by Lanie's comments on Phyllis Bernard's, Junior's mother, worries about the household's welfare rather than her son's life: "She was weeping over the lost money, the lost house, not the lost son. I disagreed with what Junior had done, but now I had an inkling of why he'd done it" (P. Walker 168). The developing conservative values of the African American bourgeoisie on the value of private possession and economic welfare also gave harm to the traditional form of African American family structure, which gives utmost importance to ancestral family values that support the uniformity and togetherness of the family. However, in the Bernards' case, the greed for money and attained property win over the values of the family. As Junior's father Dr. Bernard expresses, "Excuse me. I don't mean to be disrespectful, … but we don't have time for talking. Somewhere, somebody out there has got all our money. I need to know what you are going to do about it" (168). Dr. Bernard, as the abusive father, is only interested in saving his money although he knows that his own son went away with it. This statement by Queenie's father also leads to a discussion of bourgeois practices that are designed to protect the private possession accumulated in the hands of the "chosen" few who also want to protect their hegemony. Michel Foucault comments on the role of the police department to protect the wealth of the bourgeoisie by saying,

> The major concern was with ensuring that family inheritances were not squandered, or passed into unworthy hands. In an important sense, confinement and the whole police structure that surrounded it served to control a certain order in family structure, which was once a social regulator and a norm of reason. Family and its requirements became one of the essential criteria of reason, and it was above all in its name that confinement was demanded and obtained. (89)

Junior Bernard, by transforming himself into Queenie Lovetree, seeks refuge from the "abnormality" of his family in the glittery and welcoming environment of the nightclubs of Harlem. His divided personality enables him to develop a defense mechanism through dissociation against the abuses of his family, and consequently, his other personality takes control to seek revenge on his family as the character of Queenie Lovetree. As can be observed in all three novels examined in this study, a sense of detachment from the past and its institutions, which also leads to a feeling of rootlessness, is triggered by the traumas experienced by characters in the modernistic setting of the African American urban experience.

Persia Walker's choice of settings can be considered as a roadmap for the overlooked history of Harlem's marginalized groups as well as her character's personal account filled with crime and confrontation. One of the turning points in *Black Orchid Blues* takes place in a famous drag ball held by a renowned social club in Harlem. As James F. Wilson, in his book *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*, explains, the 1920s saw the growing popularity of queer subculture, which had been restricted to private parties and small gatherings, with the social gatherings starting to be held in big dance halls and casinos of the time (80). Lanie describes the place the ball is held as, "The Manhattan Casino was a fancy hall at 280 West 155th Street, just east of Eight Avenue and within walking distance of the Harlem River" (P. Walker 202). This allows critics to reexamine the places of entertainment and music in Harlem from a different perspective, because this might also give historians the hint that the music and entertainment in the Harlem Renaissance period could have been also shaped by marginalized groups within the same community. Persia Walker, by fictionalizing these aspects of the Harlem Renaissance, treats the issue personally through Queenie and his story by also integrating a real historic ball that was held in Harlem every year, which brought the marginalized groups of the community together.

In this modernistic and alternative setting, Queenie Lovetree decides to set up a plan to take the money from his family in a crowded ball that is held every year under the name of “Faggots’ Ball,” which ball is organized by Hamilton Lodge social club in Harlem. Queenie’s deliberate choice of collecting the money during the drag ball can also be interpreted as both a criticism towards the patriarchal and heteronormative values of the African American bourgeoisie and the hypocritical and pretentious atmosphere of the ball as described in *Black Orchid Blues*. As Wilson also explains the organizers and promoters of Hamilton Lodge “Masquerade,” as it was called, were middle class men with good reputation in the community, and they represented the standard African American values without any inclination and reference to the alternative queer groups in Harlem (82). However, since Queenie is portrayed through dilemmas and the “twoness” an African American individual is constantly experiencing, this criticism does not seem to take away the glory and importance of the Hamilton Lodge Civic Ball, as advertised by the press. On the one hand, Persia Walker, through her vivid description of the colorful party, portrays all the elements of the Harlem alternative life and its concept of entertainment. On the other hand, the party ends with gun shots and explosions of grenades and the kidnaping of Lanie Price by Queenie Lovetree.

In her description of the ball, Lanie touches upon the theme of the discrimination between celebrities and common people attending the event: “Singer Nora Holt was just stepping out of her white limo, wearing a silver silk gown, when I arrived. She got a rousing cheer. Others, usually noncelebrities, were less lucky. When they stopped to pose and preen, the remarks were often catty” (202). Regarding the discussion of the Harlem bourgeoisie and their impact on the community, Walker treats the issue in her writing by contrasting how the celebrities and non-celebrities of Harlem received different reactions upon their entrance to the ball. Lanie reports the comments of the attendants: “And you see what she’s wearing’? Lawdy! Some poor chicken’s running around with no feathers!” (203). The difference in reactions marks the division between the upper class African American bourgeoisie and lower middle class admirers, who wanted to climb the social ladder. To look richer and “classier,” the members of the same socioeconomic class criticize one another harshly upon their masquerade attires. Nora Holt, who was mentioned in the quote, was the first black person to receive a master’s degree in music, and was one of the cofounders of National Associations of

Negro Musicians and a music critic (Walker-Hill 4, 7-8). Walker's intentional integration of Nora Holt as a real black character from 1920s and her impressive entrance with a white limo can be construed as the outer reflection of the glamor and wealth of the attendants and how the African American music was confined to smaller circles of "classically" trained musicians of the time.

As James F. Wilson notes, the drag ball of Hamilton Lodge was not advertised as an unusual event that would cause the city authorities to pat attention, but in reality, it hosted the most marginalized communities of New York; however, since the ball was organized by standard middle class New York bourgeoisie, the music that it included was standard upper class dance music provided by John C. Smith's orchestra, who played most events in New York (82). Persia Walker addresses the issue by portraying the orchestra as an added flavor to the ball with little impact on the real entertainment of the ball. As Lanie says,

> As usual, John C. Smith's twenty-piece-orchestra was providing the music. His musicians put out a vigorous and admirable effort, but they could barely be heard above the excited babble. You could make out the *boom-boom* of the drum, and every now and then the saxophone and cornet players struck a note that soared above the rest, but the singer might as well have sat down; you couldn't hear a word he sang. (P. Walker 203)

The drowned out music Lanie portrays assigns a secondary role to the music in the scene; it can be understood from this choice that Walker, by drowning out the music, attempts to address or emphasize the music of Queenie Lovetree by making him the attention center of the ball through the catastrophic ending of the event. Queenie, at the end of the ball, collects the money and kidnaps Lanie in front of the eyes of the police officers disguised as drag queens in the ball. The party is shaken by gun shots and exploding grenades leading to casualties. This physical destruction in the party can also be decoded as the collapse of the old Victorian values of the Harlem bourgeoisie and the new identity of African American individuals defined by their own individuality and identity, however conflicting they may be. The standard and clichéd music of the ball is disrupted by the explosion of Queenie's hand grenades. This action can be construed as Queenie's desire to inflict his own "music" on the party. This action might also be understood as the breaking point of a mind in the face of bourgeois values that are

imposed on a party which is supposed to represent the alternative and marginalized lifestyles of Harlem.

Additionally, Queenie, by terrorizing the drag ball, transgresses the law of the patriarch. This action can be explained by Julia Kristeva's concept of *chora* through which she talks about a rhythmic space where what is unsayable and inexpressible dwells (Simawe 10). Therefore, Queenie, as a reaction to the subversion and oppression he went through, tries to destroy his father's authority on him by depriving him of his material wealth. Since chora refers to the mother's womb and female productivity, Queenie, as a musical character, creates his own rhythmic space by destroying the physical space of the African American bourgeoisie and the patriarch. Saadi A. Simawe, by combining Paul Gilroy and Julia Kristeva's ideas on chora, defines the musical and rhythmic space as "the slave sublime," which cannot be explained through any verbal activity but through musical performance (11). Chora, as Kristeva suggests, is where symbolic stops, and different media of articulation are initiated by the performer to transcend the boundaries of the language imposed on the individual by the family (27). Thus, Queenie's violent transgression can be associated with his attempt to break away from his father's realm of control, and the memories of abuse. This can also be interpreted as Queenie's attempt to create his own music, his own jazzy improvisation through his own rhythmic space.

Although there are not many specific references to jazz music proper in *Black Orchid Blues*, the character of Queenie Lovetree might be considered as a reflection or an embodiment of the elements of jazz music such as improvisation, rhythmic variation and call-and-response, which are fundamental to its composition. Just as the unknown narrator in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Queenie Lovetree's characteristic traits such as his split identity, spontaneous mental state can be considered as a projection of the state of jazz music. Queenie's rhythmic space, from a Kristevan perspective, can be related to his mental space where the different elements of jazz music mentioned above come together. Thus, his mental state and mental condition can be regarded as a continuous leitmotif that forms the tone of Persia Walker's text in *Black Orchid Blues*. Queenie's reactions in the face of events can change according to condition, because he is competent in taking action since he is capable of dealing with unexpected events. This

characteristic trait can be linked to the concept of improvisation in jazz music, which gives the musician the power to adapt to changing musical lines in a piece. Since Kristeva refers to a space free of all the bounding rules of signs and signifiers, Queenie's struggle can be related to breaking out of the hierarchy of these signs through the power of improvisation in music and life at same the time. From this perspective, the underlying theme or leitmotif in *Black Orchid Blues* can be considered as Queenie's defense mechanism, which is influenced by his "jazzy" and spontaneous lifestyle.

These psychological traits of Queenie mentioned above can be explained through his adaptive character that enables him to make plans and adapt them according to the changes that take places along the way. Queenie goes to the drag ball to take the ransom money from Lanie, but since Lanie, probably with the instructions she receives from the police chief, hides the money in one of the stalls in the ladies' room in the ball. Queenie has to take Lanie with her to the ladies' room to fetch the money. Queenie, here, uses his skills to navigate Lanie around the ball room to get to the ladies' room. Queenie's competence in guiding Lanie to reach the ladies' room shows how he can adapt to situations resulting from unexpected events and cope with them expertly like a jazz musician adapting his melodies and motifs to a musical piece to make it his own. As it has been explained by Grace Kyungwon Hong before, the power of improvisation in queer/transgender context is a factor that enables queer/transgender individuals to create a new medium of expression through which they can manipulate, play upon, and stretch every structure, form and norm through an African American musical form. Queenie's motives, in that sense, can also be considered as motifs that seem to recur throughout the text with the elements improvisation that are applied also on social dynamics. Therefore, Queenie can be considered as an improviser in both jazz music and social environment.

Queenie, by taking Lanie with him, also executes his plan of publicizing his story. Despite his individuality and secrecy as a transgender character, Queenie wants his story to be heard and used as an example to warn the community about the perils of parental abuse. As he tells Lanie, "I told you: I'm gonna give you what I've given no other, a chance to write my story, to see inside my head. So you can drop the self-righteousness, Slim" (218). Queenie wants Lanie to see his side of the story and write it

despite the pressures issued by the community to protect the image of the community. To present his side of the story, Queenie makes connections with the historical figures of African American struggle.

Queenie associates himself with two different characters from African American history. The first of these characters is Luther Boddy, who was put to death in an electric chair in Sing Sing prison in Ossining, New York after being convicted of killing two detectives, who stopped him on the road for a standard security check ("Boddy Dies in Chair for Police Murder" 1922). The same story is portrayed by Lanie in *Black Orchid Blues* as, "Boddy was a twenty-two-year-old bootblack and ex-con. He was a police favorite, or sorts. The coppers used to like to pick him up for a 'routine questioning.' They'd beat him with a lead pipe covered in a rubber hose. Beat him so bad, he'd have to stay in bed for days to recover" (P. Walker 223). Luther Boddy, from that time on, became a symbol of resistance against the police violence practiced on African American in Harlem. Luther Boddy had been caught after a long man hunt by the police department and been executed in a few months ("Boddy Dies in Chair for Police Murder" 1922). The comment Lanie makes on the issue is as follows, "Did Queenie think that people would feel the same way about him? It was highly unlikely, but even if for some reason they did, would it matter? Folk hero status didn't save Boddy. Some might say it even hurt him. The powers that be didn't want people admiring a cop killer, so they put an end to him, quick" (P. Walker 224-225).

Persia Walker, from this perspective, seems to be addressing the conditions of African American marginalized individuals as victims, who ended up sacrificing themselves for the community in an attempt to avoid the unjust treatment of the state against them. The political atmosphere of the 1920s was shaped by a tendency to blame African American individuals for increasing crimes rates, although what was allegedly considered "crime" was actually a form of resistance by these tortured, beaten and humiliated individuals. As James Arthur Manigault-Bryant presents, jazz music was one the cultural elements belonging to the African American community, which was considered as "an outgrowth of abnormality" by some people (16). As Manigault-Bryant consequently states, "More seriously, some people indicated jazz for all evils of modern life: rising rates of divorce and of suicide, for instance, and the growing of crime rates" (16). Queenie's purpose of

remembering figures as such is an indicator that jazz music is not only a form of music but also “an attitude toward life in general” (Manigault-Bryant 16). In Queenie’s case, it was both the state and the family that harmed the individual. The same scene also foreshadows the ending of the novel where Junior, in other words Queenie, sacrifices himself by driving a car off the cliff putting an end to the man hunt. This association might also be worth analyzing since Luther Boddy is relatively an unpopular folk hero, whose memory and mission need to be reintroduced to the new generation of readers.

The second historical figure with whom Queenie associates himself is Harriet Tubman. As Catherine A. Latimer outlines, Harriet Tubman was an African American woman born as a slave, who is known for her extraordinary effort to secretly smuggle slaves from southern states to northern states and Canada through the “Underground Railroad” (40). Lanie has difficulty understanding the connection when Queenie makes a plan to escape to Canada. Queenie explains this as, “I told you, Canada is where Harriet went” (P. Walker 227). Lanie asks Queenie to whom he refers by saying “Harriet,” and Queenie answers: “Harriet Tubman! Who else? … Yeah, if it’s good for Harriet, then it’s good enough for me” (227). Queenie recognizes that Lanie does not find his connection plausible and, he goes on to explain: “Harriet and I are very much alike. Harriet, you see was born into slavery. I was also born under the whip, only masters were black. And because they could call themselves my parents, no one cared or noticed what they did to me” (227).

Queenie’s statements, when African American urban experience is examined, might be considered as a reflection of African American individuals’ internal struggle, who did not only have to deal with racial discrimination and violence by the state but also with the domestic conflicts they were experiencing because of the family structure in which they were forced to live. Queenie comments by saying: “She too fought for her freedom. She struggled to find that place where she could be herself, with no one to lord it over her. That’s what I’m doing, seeking my own way” (228). The last statement by Queenie leads to the conclusion that despite the atmosphere of the freedom experienced by African American individuals in places such as cabarets, balls and night clubs, the mental and physical prisons for them existed in the households of upper middle class bourgeois African American family. There was still a need to discover new places to

experience the level of freedom these marginalized communities needed to reach. As Thaddeus Russell explains, the African American bourgeoisie operated in a multiracial environment where respectability and reputation came first, so it was nearly impossible for them to be open about their sexuality (103). This phenomenon might as well be related to the concept of confinement introduced by Michel Foucault in his *History of Madness*. Foucault talks about physical and spatial forms of confinement that "mad" people were subjected to throughout history, but he also comes to the conclusion that these confinements brought with them the concept of mental alienation as well (82-83). He goes on to explain the roots of this problem as the tendency of the bourgeoisie to classify every kind of different inclination, such as different sexual orientations, libertinage and profanation, as "unreason" (82-83). This might be the cause that created the mental confinement these marginalized and discriminated groups experienced. Therefore, Queenie's parents did everything to protect their reputation as "respectable" members of Strivers' Row community although Dr. Bernard, the father, abused Queenie for a long time and his mother continued to ignore his husband's terrible action because they isolated Queenie into a mental state that he could only escape through the "madness" of his jazz music.

As shown in this chapter, the conflicts and dilemmas that an African American individual might experience in Harlem, which is perceived as the cultural mecca of the African American modernity, might serve as proof that the Harlem Renaissance took Harlem as its center but not always as a physical location. Harlem was more of a mental state where marginalized and discriminated individuals could find solace by experiencing the music, arts and literature in Harlem wherever these communities might dwell (Wintz 80). Thus, Queenie's decision to flee to Canada can also be interpreted as an action that can be taken with the spirit of the movement. Finding a new place to form an identity, a new geography to experience one's real self against all the destructive social elements could be considered as themes in *Black Orchid Blues*. When thinking about these themes, the examples of Luther Boddy and Harriet Tubman as fugitives running from both physical and mental spheres of the white dominant forces might be taken as strong indicators for the reader. In that sense, Boddy and Tubman might also be regarded as practitioners of jazz music with their grit, courage, and resistance against the brutal forces of authoritarian society, who deprive them of their basic rights.

Whether jazz music was a form of expression in their time or not is not relevant since it could also be considered as a continuation of an African American means of survival.

It would also be necessary to note that Michel Foucault does not use madness to define a positive or beneficial state of mind. Foucault does not seem to trace back the reasons why people become mad, but he mostly refers to the methods of categorization and exclusion of mad people in the society. In the context of African American modernity, Foucault can be integrated into this study since he criticizes the modernity founded by the Western concept of authoritarianism propelled by the European Renaissance and the European bourgeoisie, which were supported by centuries of European feudalism and social hierarchy. African American modernity introduced through the Harlem Renaissance has always been a marginal movement for its time, and its members are known for their resistance against such confinements and discriminations defined by Foucault in his work.

Black Orchid Blues ends with Lanie Price's plan to publish Junior Bernard's story. Lanie thinks about the repercussions that the story might create. Lanie comments on that as,

> Incest, child rape, those were embarrassing, shameful secrets that no one talked about. Folks in fine homes, if they acknowledged those problems at all, claimed they were aberrations of the poor, the ignorant, the uncivilized. No doubt, Harlem's upper crust, especially, would be horrified if I wrote about the subject. We were a struggling community, trying to get white America to see us as something more than animals. An exposé on what had happened behind closed doors among one of the community's most respected members would do more harm than good. That, I knew, would be the reaction. (268)

The problem of representation in the 1920s of Harlem was directly related to the representation of the community in the eyes of the Anglo-American community, and a personal story as such would be a considered an "embarrassing" one since the characters were all African American. The problem with the African American bourgeoisie was also their tendency to prioritize racial representation over the personal stories and problems of the people in the community. The community failed to position itself as a unit that was independent of the expectations from the white dominant press. As Thaddeus Russell explains, Harlem was labeled as the most crime ridden neighbor of New York City by an association called Committee of Fourteen, which was

conservative white committee that tried to ban alcohol and close clubs in the city (104). As T. Russell goes on to explain, this decision had an impact on the middle class African American community leaders who would eventually pressurize and condemn the workers of entertainment business in Harlem a considerable number of whom were queer, transgender and gay individuals (104). This action made it easy for the middle-class "conservative" Harlem bourgeoisie to blame these individuals for the crime rate and immorality in Harlem. However, in Queenie's case, his sexual orientation was not the reason of his brutality, as Lanie explains, "Queenie's murderous nature had nothing to do with his physical condition; it had nothing to do with his being a trannie; it had everything to do with the abuse he's suffered—that Junior had suffered—as a child" (267-268). The multi-voiced community in Harlem in the 1920s had been sacrificed in a battle for the representation of the community as one strong unified bourgeois community.

Black Orchid Blues ends with the scene where Lanie and Sam talk about publishing the story of Junior Bernard, namely Queenie Lovetree. They have a dinner with Mrs. Cardigan and look at the "For Sale" sign on the Bernards' house. The sale of the house, when the points mentioned above are considered, can be viewed as the downfall of the African American upper-middle class moral values and a display of their hypocrisy when it comes to these very same values. Junior Bernard was the victim of this hypocrisy when everybody thought he was the victimizer.

Persia Walker's prose on African American experience in urban spaces of Harlem differs from her contemporaries in that she chooses to introduce a middle class Harlemite, whose life experience is shaped by the abuse from which he was suffering. This personal aspect of the story, however, moves towards the problems of social life, sexual orientation, racial identity and hypocrisy within the same community. Walker portrays a college educated, middle class, transgender jazz musician who performs in clubs to create her multi-layered and multi-voiced narrative. She, through this narrative, is able to portray the dilemmas and conflicts that started to exist within the African American community. *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) embodies these dilemmas and conflicts through the characters of Lanie Price and Junior Bernard. In a time when the African American urbanization and modernity has long been discussed widely,

Walker's choice to make her setting the 1920s of Harlem seems to be an intentional one because giving voice to the marginalized individuals who had an impact on the formation of a culture in Harlem can be considered as an important task for a novelist. Queenie Lovetree, in that sense, might be perceived as Walker's medium to touch upon the internal conflict within the African American community during the 1920s. Queenie's socio-economic class and his choice of abandoning the values of this class because of the abuse he suffered from can be a window into the lives of individuals who did not have to deal only with the issues of race but also with the issues of parental abuse and decadent bourgeois values.

As Thaddeus Russell states,

> Despite the reluctance of Harlem's cultural elite to reveal their sexuality, substantial numbers of working-class people in the capital of black America were stunningly open about their homosexuality and created and created what may have been the most liberated public space in U.S history. They commonly socialized in cabarets saloon, speakeasies, and house parties, places where bourgeois morality was notably absent. (103)

Queenie Lovetree seeks his identity and feels at ease in places such as clubs, parties and cabarets as mentioned in the quote. His quest is to go against hypocritical "bourgeois morality" that is manifested in popular locations of Harlem, which are marked by their Roman brick houses and elite residential areas. Persia Walker, through a historical journey into the lives of the people living during that time, tries to raise an awareness in the community towards a more multi-voiced society, where different voices within the same community are also represented. Walker's text also aims to revitalize the cultural atmosphere of the 1920s by mentioning the important literary and musical figures of the time. As it can also be seen in *Jazz* and *Harlem Summer*, *Black Orchid Blues* is a personal historical account of individuals in the 1920s, who are trying to recover from the racial and personal traumas in their lives resulting from the actions taken by them or people around them. Walker's text is also a fresh perspective on the LGBTQ issues in the 1920s of Harlem, and it raises an awareness of the conditions of people belonging to the LGBTQ community by fictionalizing them. When the traumas, conflicts and dilemmas of these people are reexamined, it can be seen that the modernity of the African American arts, literature and music has to be rediscovered by the new generations of African Americans, whose knowledge of the era remains insufficient.

Black Orchid Blues, as the title suggests, refers to the peculiarities, diversity and uniqueness of the African American medium of expressing trauma and sorrow through music, performance and cityscape.

CONCLUSION

The Harlem Renaissance is a time period which has been studied and analyzed by a plethora of literary critics and authors. Therefore, it continued to attract the attention of the novelists, who have been writing about the African American experience in the US for decades. In addition to the critics, authors, poets and novelists who wrote during the Harlem Renaissance, a group of novelists who specifically wrote about the period came into the scene in 1990s and 2000s. The need to revive the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement seems to be an obvious element in the works of those writers even after decades of discussion about the success of the movement to grant the African American community the place they deserve in American social life and politics. Within this very same discussion, the role jazz music, and the new urban culture being shaped through an African American musical form cannot be overlooked. Toni Morrison, Walter Dean Myers and Persia Walker, through their works, stand out as novelists who retrospectively fictionalize the Harlem Renaissance period to rekindle the hopes and fears of the African American individuals living in Harlem, New York. The personal approaches of these individuals to the movement become a reflection of the impact of jazz music and cityscape on their lives. The objective of this study has been to analyze how the music and urban space the Harlem Renaissance period and the modernity it encompassed are treated in the works the novelists mentioned above.

Chapter I of this study analyzed Toni Morrison's *Jazz* (1992) in respect to its stylistic and contextual elements to mimic and reflect jazz music and its landscape through a family tragedy experienced by a couple with a southern background. Morrison's text has a complex and non-linear timeline where different events in the lives of characters tie up to each other to form a "jazzy" unity through an unknown narrator, who reports the events by moving in and out of the psyches of these characters. The narrator is constructed in such a way that it possesses the distinct features and characteristics of jazz music, such as syncopation and improvisation. These features and characteristics are achieved through stylistic manipulation such as repetitions, sudden changes in the voices of the characters and instant changes of opinions by the narrator, who claims to know everything but later admits that he/she is not privy to every piece of information concerning the lives of the characters, which obviously mimics the unpredictability and

uncertainty introduced into Western forms of music through jazz music. Additionally, Morrison travels back to the history of the South to illustrate the backgrounds of her characters also by analyzing the events that led to the Great Migration in the post-Reconstruction era. Morrison tries to create the same effect a jazz performance creates on the readers through her intricate plot structure, her syncopated rhythm in language and her call-and-response style narrator who interactively communicates with the reader. The characteristics of jazz music in Morrison's *Jazz* are obviously a reclamation of a distinctly African American musical form back to the community through literary style and form.

Chapter II looked at the issues of African American individuals dealing with the problem of in-betweenness resulting both from the newly forming bourgeois identity in urban centers and the conflict between the southern and northern practices transferred from the migrant generations to city born individuals. Myers presents a confusion regarding the historical consciousness of his characters. In *Harlem Summer* (2007), Walter Dean Myers deals with the old customs inherited from the South, which bring these urbanites into conflict with their own identity. The newly emerging concepts of "the Old Negro" and "the New Negro" in 1920s becomes a major source of conflict for the protagonist. Mark, as a teenager growing up in Harlem, is torn between the imposed values of the Harlem intelligentsia and the jazz music that fills up the cityscape of New York. Mark's passion to become an acclaimed jazz musician is contrasted with his family's southern practices and religious views. Additionally, Mark's work at *The Crisis* enables him to observe the Harlem bourgeoisie who try to "convert" him to a "New Negro," whom they are promoting as the new racial stereotype. However, Mark's "jazz impulse" wins over the intellectuality and refinement advocated by the Harlem bourgeois practices. Mark's choice to follow his goal to become a jazz saxophonist leads him to an adventure where he has to deal with the criminal figures of Harlem, which implies that the path of jazz music is also paved with risk and danger. Myers's prose plays upon these elements to portray the in-betweenness experienced by the artists making use of the modern African American media of expression.

Chapter III dealt with jazz music as an expression that manifests itself in the lives of African American individuals as an attitude and a state of mind. Unlike *Jazz*, which

mostly focuses on the language and structure to mimic the structure of jazz, or *Harlem Summer*, which attempts to teach the stylistic features of jazz music through historical fiction, Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) treats jazz music as an "abnormal" condition that manifests itself as "madness." Hence, jazz music is represented through a form of mental condition, namely dissociative disorder, experienced by the main character of the novel. This mental condition helps Persia Walker portray the many different aspects of African American modernity. Since Queenie Lovetree is a jazz performer, his life is full of the qualities associated with jazz music, such as improvisation, spontaneity, and syncopation projected on his psyche. His life takes twists and turns, and his plans change along the way. Despite all, Queenie Lovetree is always on a quest to realize himself through his performance. The abuse he has to endure might be considered as a force that triggers his "jazzy" attitude. Thus, jazz music, apart from its performative and musical elements, also manifests itself in the life of Queenie Lovetree as an attitude toward life. Hence, all three novels analyzed in this study present both positive and negative aspects of African American modernity by emphasizing the importance of jazz music and its source as the urban landscape.

The notion that the impact of the Harlem Renaissance period on the African American literary productivity is limited to the period between the 1920s and the 1930s might be misleading, because the aftereffects of the movement have long been discussed both in the literary circles and general public in the US for decades. The ongoing discussion on the period has divided the literary critics on the success of the movement. Although the Harlem Renaissance has been considered as a "failure" by a fair number of critics, its impact on the upcoming generation of writers cannot be overlooked when the contemporary fiction by African American novelists is examined (Dunn and Hutchinson 446). The Harlem Renaissance has been an inspiration for the generation of writers who are—at some point in their lives—influenced and inspired by the communal and literary figures of the period. For this reason, fictionalizing the period seems to have become a popular task for the African American novelists of the following generations. This task contributes to the African American community in the mission of reintroducing the Harlem Renaissance through a form of literature which encompasses distinct African American artistic expressions, one of the most important of which is jazz music. The unification of the newly forming urban culture in the 1920s in the African American

community and the music that sprang from it is a topic that has been studied in history, but its reflections on literary fiction of the 1990s and 2000s remain mostly unstudied. Thus, the works by Toni Morrison, Walter Dean Myers and Persia Walker help the readers of contemporary fiction analyze and compare different perspectives in the period in the light of the Harlem Renaissance.

Jazz music, as an urban musical form, emerged parallel with the Harlem Renaissance that helped define African American experience of modernity in literature. Despite the parallelism between the musical form and literature, the elements of jazz music in literature were mostly limited to the poetry of Langston Hughes and prose of Rudolph Fisher in the African American literary scene in the 1920s. This partly resulted from the reaction by the Harlem literary bourgeoisie who saw jazz music as "primitive" and "vulgar," since it entails all the spontaneous emotions created in the moment of the performance (Ogren 116). Moreover, the places where jazz music was performed at that time were labelled as places of "immorality" and "decadence." Literary leaders such Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois saw jazz music as a cultural element that needs to be refined by the new modes of modernity, but what was neglected by these important figures was that jazz music was already a modern musical expression which emerged in an urban setting and as a search for a new medium expression for the African American community. All these discussions disappeared with the deteriorating economy which led to the Stock Market Crash of 1929. This period marked the beginning of a debate over the success of the Harlem Renaissance, which also overshadowed the discussions on jazz music a practice of African American modernity.

Decades of discussion on the "failure" of the Harlem Renaissance did not yield any important results in general except a cultural conflict that prevented the population of the African American community from consolidating its cultural strength through its diverse forms of artistic expression. In his "Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance," Houston A. Baker Jr. discusses that it is illogical to call the Harlem Renaissance a "failure," because this also meant reassuming that it did not have any considerable impact on the African American arts and literature ("Modernism" 91). Baker Jr. also explains that the vilification of the pivotal role of the Harlem Renaissance in the formation of the African American modernity is similar to stating that British and

American modernity also failed because of the conflicts they possessed ("Modernism" 92). Bearing this in mind, it can be said that the conflicts that are and were ingrained in African American modernity also become elements that define the movement. Suitably, the reception of the Harlem Renaissance as a "failure" should evolve into a more critical evaluation of the efforts that were made by the African American artists from all different schools of thought. The conflicts that arouse from the condition mentioned previously can be observed in the works of more recent novelists who also became the subjects of this study. In the works of Morrison, Myers and Walker, glorification and vilification of the social and cultural atmosphere in Harlem are both present.

Catherine Morley claims that the modernist literature of the twentieth century simply failed to notice the contributions of the African American literary movement of the 1920s to the American literature in general by privileging white pioneers of modernism such as T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound (196). However, the modernity that African American writers created with the Harlem Renaissance generated an impetus that continued to influence the writers of the upcoming generations who relied on the legacy of this movement to define themselves. As Morley continues to explain, the Harlem Renaissance was not a movement governed by a single ideology, discourse or writing style, but the contributors of this movement were united by the mission to (re)introduce African American forms of "self-expression" and "self-definition" to (re)define African American experience in "the Mecca of the New Negro" (196). Although the Harlem Renaissance period included authors and critics who criticized the "modern" ways of "the New Negro" and how urbanization affected the African American community, these figures should also be considered as contributes to African American modernist movement without disregarding the optimism and courage it provided for the community. This multi-voicedness should be considered as a fundamental aspect of African American modernity. Thus, reintroducing the Harlem Renaissance with all of its aspects became a necessity for the African American novelists in a time period when racial issues were on the rise in the US.

Richard Pells, in his book *Modernist America: Art, Music, Movies, and the Globalization of American Culture*, stresses that jazz music is indisputably modernist since it captures the spirit of the early twentieth century in its form and content (130).

Pells counts urban roots and its innovative and rebellious spirit as the modernizing aspects of jazz music since it emerged as an urban music culture but remained "low-brow," opposing the refined and polite music and dance of the bourgeoisie of the time period (130). Hence, jazz music's modernity should be perceived differently since it sprang from the common folk and embraced by the intelligentsia afterwards in its reception as a product of the African American experience of modernity. Jazz music and the literature that succeeded it are deeply rooted in the rebellious spirit of the African American mode of existence, which uses jazz music a medium to fight the discrimination and cultural oppression imposed on the community by the Anglo-American state authority. In order to portray the African American experience of modernity in literature, the novelists writing about the history of African American endeavor in the US are in a search to trace back an African American form of art that could become a means to (re)claim a form of musical expression which is both African and American and not Anglo-American in its essence. At that point, jazz music and its conventions rise as a force that can give momentum to this mission. Jazz music, in that sense, can be considered as a source of inspiration for African American modernist thought since it already opposes an Anglo-American and a Victorian tradition of literature.

The years following the popularity of jazz music in the US during the 1920s also had reverberations far beyond the American domain. In European countries, there was a movement concerning the reception of jazz music as a form of art that could also inspire different art forms. As Pells notes, jazz music represented an intentional estrangement from the values of Europe in the interwar period (138). The artists in Europe were looking to the New World to find new modes of expression, because America represented a break from the European conventions of art, such as Classical Music and the European Renaissance art. One of the most important consequences of this development, according to Pells, was the induction of jazz music into high-culture (138). Pells also adds that the artist, who made use of jazz music in their works, found ways to adapt this new form of music into their cultural context accordingly (138). After jazz music was introduced to Europe, its worldwide popularity saw a considerable increase, and this process led to the invention of music genres such as oriental jazz, Cuban jazz, and Latino jazz. This development also created the impression that jazz

music had always been a form of high culture. Works influenced by jazz music in arts all around the globe created this appeal. All these events contributed to the African American modernity starting from the 1920s. Although it was not considered as a music genre that needed to be seriously dealt with in its initial years, the years following its emergence proved that jazz music appealed to and attracted the attention of the academia in music and literature. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the cultural, sociological and literary roots and influences of jazz music in general.

The commitment of the novelists in this study to their cultural heritage and motives to write these novels are demonstrated in this study through the musical traditions of the African American people, which found a new voice in literature. As the grandchildren of the people who went through a cultural revolution, these novelists fictionalize the Harlem Renaissance to trace back the same cultural experience through literature. The attempts to revisit an old phenomenon does not mean that the sound(s) that have been voiced have the exact same tone but in the musical sense, they are *echoes* that turn into altered resonances, therefore, they provide different interpretations of the same composition, which is the Harlem Renaissance.

Jazz (1992) by Toni Morrison, *Harlem Summer* (2007) by Walter Dean Myers and *Black Orchid Blues* (2011) by Persia Walker all present the conditions of African American individuals in a time when the African American arts and literature were experiencing widespread popularity, but the glorious façade of the movement does not prevent these novelists from presenting the realities of the individuals adapting to the new urban environment through their own cultural defense mechanism, which comes into being as jazz music in this case. These aforementioned works, through characters, language, music and urban experience, can help the cause of African American racial self-awareness even after almost ten decades. Since the 1990s and the 2000s have witnessed the discussions on ghettoization and crime in African American communities in the US, it can be observed in the works of these novelists that African American modernist thought, since its launch in the 1920s, still continues to be relevant in the intellectual, mental and daily lives of African American individuals. The echoes of the Harlem Renaissance reverberating in these novels through jazz music and cityscape are

still audible and visible in the psyches of African American people while they are dealing with oppressive social and cultural forces.

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APPENDIX 1: Originality Report

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MASTER'S THESIS ORIGINALITY REPORT

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
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AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

Date: 17/07/2019

Thesis Title : Echoes Of The Harlem Renaissance: Urban Landscape and Jazz Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers's *Harlem Summer* and Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues*

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Student No:	N11121327
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Tez Başlığı : Harlem Rönesansı'nın Yansımaları: Toni Morrison'ın *Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers'ın *Harlem Summer* ve Persia Walker'ın *Black Orchid Blues* Romanlarında Kent Coğrafyası ve Caz Müziği

Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç ve e) Kaynakça kısımlarından oluşan toplam 164 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 17/07/2019 tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 6 'dır.

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APPENDIX 1: Ethics Board Waiver Form

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Thesis Title: Echoes Of The Harlem Renaissance: Urban Landscape and Jazz Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers's *Harlem Summer* and Persia Walker's *Black Orchid Blues*
My thesis work related to the title above:

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Name Surname:	Serkan Yıldız
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Tez Başlığı: Harlem Rönesansı'nın Yansımaları: Toni Morrison'ın *Jazz*, Walter Dean Myers'ın *Harlem Summer* ve Persia Walker'ın *Black Orchid Blues* Romanlarında Kent Coğrafyası ve Caz Müziği.
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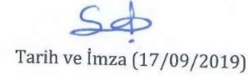

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