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*Summary.* For the first time in Ukrainian study of literature the author of the article tries to reveal the image of V.Vynnychenko in the reception of Hryhorii Kostiuk. In the aspect of the research special attention is paid to slightly forgotten newspaper interview of V.Vynnychenko, where he explains his personal vision of social and literary development of Ukraine, life of Ukrainian immigration.

**Keywords:** study of literature, H. Kostiuk, V.Vynnychenko, idea-artistic image, study of Vynnychenko's works, «odnobichnyku».

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## AMERICAN HISTORY IN TONI MORRISON'S NOVELS

*У статті розглядається мотив історії афроамериканців у наративних стратегіях роману лауреатки Нобелівської премії афро-американської письменниці Тоні Моррісон «Джаз». Проаналізовано роль персонажів-наторів від першої особи та «всезнаючої» неназваної оповідачки – третьої особи..*

**Ключові слова:** Тоні Моррісон, оповідач, наративні стратегії, історія афро-американців.

The novel of African American writer and Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison «Jazz» returns us to narrative and thematic territory closer to that of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* Stylistically, Morrison's multi-voiced novel recalls Faulkner's work in its array of narrative perspectives and in its easy slippage between present and past. Thematically, Morrison explores the story of the son – so integral to Faulkner's novel – as well as that of the daughter. These similarities, along with the shared focus on the American South, make Morrison's work a fitting finale for this study of narrative, family, and history. And in concentrating on a particular era in African American history (from Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance) Morrison opens up yet another perspective on the consequences of loss, the experience of dislocation, and the possibilities of redemption that each of the previous writers has grappled with.

The novel's historical setting suggests its emotional arc. From Reconstruction to the Great Migration to the Harlem Renaissance, the novel's major events move from violence, loss, and disconnection to vitality, success, and even triumph. The hopeful, even redemptive pattern that these historical events suggest correlates with the lives of the novel's central characters, which move through suffering and despair into reconciliation and vitality. The optimism inherent in this storyline is, as the progression of historical events suggest, hard-won – even, as historical hindsight reminds us, fragile. As Morrison suggests, the movement from loss to vitality, on both a cultural and a personal level, is not without pain or even disaster [2, p. 283-296; 7, p. 291-316; 1, p. 63-76].

Through the novel, Morrison insists that the ability to work through that pain, to recognize the impact of those disasters, is related to the ability to narrate them. But she also implies that narration does not always diminish pain, nor does it necessarily yield insight. In fact, narrative acts may be misleading or even deceptive, preventing insight or change and perpetuating delusion. Most importantly, the ability to recognize pain – both in oneself and in the other – may not occur through narrative at all. Morrison's novel goes further in its exploration and enactment of this ambivalence around narrative powers.

This ambivalence is apparent both in the style of narration and in the relationships between the characters; in fact, it is indicated in the title of the novel itself, which refers to a mode of communication, a method of expressing emotion, and a medium of cultural transformation that has nothing to do with language or with the linear sequencing that spoken or written narrative traditionally relies upon. Much has been written about the stylistic resemblances between «Jazz» and jazz (the break up of sequence and time, the interplay between individual voices, and the repetition of and elaboration upon a theme) and these elements are certainly crucial to understanding Morrison's

exploration of the possibilities and the limits of written narrative [6, p. 271-281; 3, p. 170-193; 10, p. 154-169; 4, p. 235-47; 5, p. 481-95; 12, p. 154-160].

But these inquiries tend to underplay the relationship between Morrison's narrative strategies and the fate of her characters, and it is in this relationship, I believe, that the real innovations of the novel take place. As in the novels looked at so far, the central characters in «*Jazz*» give voice to their own experience; the novel is full of first-person narrators who explore bits of the plot through their own point of view. But Morrison also creates another narrative voice, an unnamed narrator who speaks in the first person but moves into third-person omniscience, who comments on and directs the action, and who repeats, contradicts, and reflects upon its own contributions. This voice is such an active presence that has the feel of a character in its own right, but despite its hints and partial disclosures, it remains elusive, disembodied, without obvious age, race, or gender markers to define its origins or its interests. Noting the epigraph of the novel, Rodrigues argues that the narrator is «the thunder goddess» [10, p. 164]. In contrast, Roberta Rubenstein emphasizes Morrison's own deliberate effacing of the age, race or gender of the narrator, noting that Morrison has claimed that the voice is «the voice of a talking book» [11, p. 152-64].

Despite Morrison's own claims, we understand the narrator's voice as female. Furthermore, Morrison's own writings on voice would seem to bear out this interpretation [9, p. 1-39]. The interplay between this narrator's efforts to tell the story of these characters and the efforts of the characters to find their own voices elevates the issue of recognition beyond the scope of the story being told (the struggle of the characters) and onto the level of narrative process itself.

The narrator is not worried about being known to her subjects because she believes that she is in control; her power derives from her position as the director of the narrative elements. But as the story begins to develop in new, unexpected directions, it becomes «clear» that the narrator is only one part of a whole project, not «silent and unobservable» but obvious, available to be «watched» and «whispered about.» Available, that is, to be recognized and judged. Significantly, those who watch and whisper are not the narrator's audience, but her subjects themselves, and it is this twist that begins to involve the larger consciousness of the writer, the one behind the narrative voice. The suggestion of a mutual interplay between elements – between that which appears to be directed and that which appears to direct – points to an equality between these different elements, an equality that the narrator's relationship to the characters at first seems to deny. The narrator is just one other element of the writer's consciousness, and an element that may not be as reliable or as knowing or as powerful as it pretends. Furthermore, Morrison suggests that these different elements of consciousness may remain hidden from each other, hence the narrator's surprise and discomfort with the thought that she herself can be watched. This discomfort arises not simply from the fact of misunderstanding the characters, nor from the idea of ceding total control, but most importantly it derives from the vulnerability inherent in the process of recognition itself. The shame that the narrator speaks of at the end of the passage, «just thinking about their pity I want to die,» has to do with the pain involved in self-exposure and self-acceptance. The current pressing categories of identity – such as race and gender – may be deeply embedded in the voice itself, thus rendering a further explanation of these categories redundant or unnecessary. And just as the desires, motivations, and fallacies of the narrator are revealed in her narrative, so are those of the writer, within the entirety of work itself.

The narrator's exposure only goes so far, however; and even this exposure is carefully controlled. That is, though the narrator is willing to reveal her mistakes, even to ponder over them, the narrator still never comes into full view. She instead remains a voice, a presence who is never physically present, never fully embodied. To some degree, the exposure of desire constitutes a more intimate exposure than any of these physical attributes, as it reveals the internal working of the self. Creating a work of fiction, Morrison suggests, involves a dual stance, one both hidden and exposed. This stance is one that appears in the narrator's final images of Wild, living in a place «both snug and wide open» [8, p. 221].

For Morrison, perhaps more than the other writers, the process of storytelling, of narration itself, is not only a process of revelation, but also of discovery and transformation. Unlike the characters in the novels examined in previous chapters, Morrison's characters are not bound by a history doomed to repeat itself. Instead, then-individual journeys, their confrontation of past pain, provides relief and change. Violet and Joe reconcile because each has finally come to recognize the source of sorrow, and in doing so, to understand it. This recognition does not mean that they are fully released from that sorrow – Joe still imagines the redwings that signaled his mother's elusive presence, Violet still contemplates «the sunlit rim of a well» – but it does mean they are freed from its unacknowledged burden [8, p. 225]. And this freedom appears as a new vitality, a changed relationship both to each other and to their environment. Violet and Joe explore the city, play games, and tell each other stories; in short, they experience a greater range of expression and communication. Significantly, this communication is not based wholly on speech; in fact it is never clear if they share their stories

with each other. Instead, their healing is expressed in gesture and touch, as if the deeper change is one that resides, and is registered, in this more primary, non-narrative realm. The non-narrative does not replace narrative, however; instead it provides a basis for a new narrative to begin. The loss of the mother's touch generates one sort of narrative for Violet and Joe, the reconciliation with that loss generates another.

By allowing her characters not only to survive loss, but to thrive in its wake, Morrison brings them into congruity with the historical setting of the novel. The making of Harlem, the creation of a new, vibrant, urban culture out of older, rural, folkways acts as a corollary to the characters own transformations. In both cases, making history (cultural or personal) involves loss, pain, even violence. But, in Morrison's hands, these elements are not definitive, a stance especially important in relation to African American history, in which suffering could obscure vitality. By emphasizing the possibility of overcoming suffering, Morrison opens up a different sort of reading of personal and cultural loss than the other authors I have examined. Rather than being trapped in history, her characters are able to participate in its creation. The narrator's ability to change the direction of her story and to recognize the various interests at play in the development of the story, allows for a similar sort of freedom, as the narrator beckons «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» [8, p. 229]. So this freedom or at least its possibility ultimately extends to the audience itself.

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*Summary.* The article deals with the motif of African American History in the narrative strategies of the Nobel Laureate writer Toni Morrison's novel «Jazz». The role of multiple first-person narrators-characters and the move of the first-person unnamed narrator to the third person omniscience is being examined.

**Keywords:** Morrison, narrator, narrative strategy, African American history.

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