

Rethinking Flâneur: Strolling Spectators in Harlem in Toni Morrison's Jazz

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Abstract : The concept of flâneur means a walking observer with subjectivity in the urban city and at the same time, an idiomatic and unnamed existence in public. In the modern city, an individual, flâneur walking on the street, observes the street and collects the memories of the past, during which process the individual comes to understand what the past means. However, the concept tends to be narrowly applied to the white middle-class males, thereby excluding females and other marginalized groups. This paper expands the concept to examine black immigrants and black women, who traditionally fall outside the scope of the flâneur. Placing the black immigrants on the trajectory of literary figure of flâneur by reading Tony Morrison's Jazz, this essay revisits the relationship between street and characters in Jazz. In particular, this essay focuses on characters strolling on the street as well as their surroundings. Based on the traditional characteristics of the flâneur, this essay explicates how the black characters in Jazz are reinvented as the flâneur and moving observers with their autonomy to stroll around the city, while the city, which used to be an observer watching and predicting what happens to the characters, takes a position as a mere onlooker. This paper concludes with illustrating the black characters stroll on the street in Harlem and thereby recreating ordinary people living in Harlem as flâneur.

Keywords : jazz, the arcades project, flâneur, flânerie, street, city

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