# The Affective Phenomenology of Beyond-ment and The Narrative Voice of Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

by

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We acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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## Abstract

This project outlines a new method for understanding the affective phenomenology of narrators in literary fiction and I demonstrate its application through Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz* (1992). When this method is applied to literary fiction, it assumes that there is a spatial-temporality to the narrator's emotions, which produces their sense of embodiment and the narrative's trajectory as well. Furthermore, this method demonstrates how the sense of embodiment of *Jazz*'s narrator is the Jazz Age itself. Affective phenomenology is a theory that originates from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Teresa Brennan's *Transmission of Affect* (2004), and Eve Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* (2003). Additionally, this project demonstrates the affective phenomenology of *Jazz*'s narrator by referencing Toni Morrison's own reflections on the novel too. This project approaches a pivotal moment in *Jazz* when the narrator admits that their emotions have affected their "imagining" the characters disingenuously. Here, I demonstrate how the feelings of loss, hostility, and bereavement make the narrator see the characters inauthentically. It is here that I demonstrate how their realization ignites their imagination. It is in this moment that the narrator senses the beyond-ment of their emotions and situates themselves in their own authenticity. This realization then causes the narrator to move towards a future that originates from the past, the site of their authenticity. This method invites scholars to be curious about how the emotions of a narrator's voice produce the spatial-temporality of the narrative and the futurity of the fictional world.

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# Dedication

For Amy.

I wouldn't
be here
if it wasn't
for what you said
to me that day.
Thank you
for saving my life.

For my queer community.
For those of you who are still hiding.
I see you and I'm telling you,
you have to imagine a future for yourself beyond the fear of coming out.

We're here when you're ready.

## Acknowledgements

This project has been a labour of love and transformation and from my heart I would like to thank all of those who've helped me along the way. To my family for their encouragement, love, and support. You've all seen me move through this process with its challenges and heartache. Please know that I got through it because you're all within reach. Thank you to all of my dear friends from near and afar, I love and appreciate all of you. And to all of my queer family members: please know that this work came from you and is for you. I'd like to especially thank to Dr. Stephen Ross for his emotional support and guidance through the challenging moments I've had as a graduate student. Those personal chats about cycling and scholarship kept my wheels and feet on the ground, and I'll cherish them forever. Many thanks to the CSPT program and faculty for the opportunity to write this ambitious project. Particularly to Dr. Sara Ramshaw, the director of CSPT, for overseeing the creation of the first chapter. I would like to also thank Dr. Adrienne Williams Boyarin for joining my committee and seeing me through this work. Thank you to Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh for recognizing the power in my method and for providing me with the necessary keys to unlocking its full philosophical potential. Last but certainly not least, thank you to Dr. Corinne Bancroft, the lead supervisor for this project. In the words of Eve Sedgwick, this project went from being a "paranoid reading" to a "reparative reading," which blossomed into a different range of "affects, ambitions, and risks." So, thank you for seeing the difference between the two and holding my feet to the fire of its reparative necessity. This project turned out to be exactly what I had in my heart all along, and I thank you sincerely for helping me out of the darkness and into its light.

## Introduction

### Affect

When I speak about affect, I am referring to the moment a body interacts with another body in the world. Here, I am referring to bodies of all kinds. Every single body that exits in the world is a body that experiences the effects of other bodies. When I refer to this moment of being affected, I am particularly interested in the changes that occur to a body by way of being affected. When I speak about affect, I am particularly interested in the ways in which a body is changed or transformed by its interaction with something else. Affect refers to physical changes and it is described through the visible changes to the physicality of a body. In this way, when something is physically affected, we describe the affect by way of how something has been physically moved or changed. In these terms, affect implicitly refers to the moment a body is touched or moved by another body. To be moved and to be affected, then, includes the instant that two bodies make contact.

At the same time that affect is about physical interactions, I am also interested in the ways in which affect includes emotions. That is, when I speak about bodies affecting each other in the world, I include the ways in which a body is also emotionally moved when interacting with other bodies. Here, when I speak about affect, I am referring to affect occurring beyond bodies that are mere objects in the world and including bodies that are conscious in the world. When speaking about affect, I am referring to physicality in terms of bodies moving, touching, making contact, as well as the sense of affect being registered through the body and felt as emotions. So, when I speak of affect, I am always speaking through terms of embodiment and the changes made to a body's conscious sense of embodiment. Thus, I cannot help but veer into language that speaks in terms of conscious physicality and a sense of being-in-the-world. Indeed,

I use such terms because affect is necessarily bodily, and it is a bodily sense because it is known through its existence in the world.

**Phenomenology**

When I speak about phenomenology, I am referring to how phenomena physically exist in the world. By that I mean, I am referring to how objects and bodies of all kinds exist in the world and how we as bodies come to know our existence in the world. For me, phenomenology is a way to come to know of my existence through the existence of other bodies too. For conscious bodies, then, existing in the world comes with the sense of being-in-the-world, and this sense involves the awareness of other bodies also sensing their being-in-the-world. So, when I am speaking about the world in terms of phenomenology, I am referring to how we come to know the world through the existence of other bodies existing as well. The sense of existing in the world, then, is an existence that is known through its spatial-temporal experience.

While I speak in terms of phenomenology I am necessarily speaking about the spatial-temporality of bodies being in the world. As conscious bodies physically exist, they have a sense that comes from the world itself. Since the body is a phenomenon, consciousness senses its spatial-temporality—the sense of being-in-the-world—by way of feeling oriented. When the body feels oriented and directed, it necessitates a path through the world. Having this sense—an awareness of the world—is how being a body consciously senses itself as a moving body in the world. Thus, when I speak of phenomenology, I am also speaking about what consciousness senses explicitly and implicitly in the world in order to maintain a sense of orientation and direction.

What is explicit in the world is what is immediately visible and therefore known to me in the world. Perhaps even what is literally in front of me as I exist and move through the world.

The implicit of-the-world is what is suggested to exist in the world by way of me knowing how the explicit exists-in-the-world. For example, I am sitting here in my chair, typing this sentence into my computer. My desk, chair, and computer are all known to me to exist in the world because my body senses myself through the spatial-temporality that is given to me from interacting with these objects. Me existing at my desk is something I explicitly know because these objects give me that sense of being-in-the-world through their objecthood. With that said, I implicitly know that beyond my computer screen exists a shelf of reference books. Although I cannot visibly see those books because my screen obstructs my eyes from registering them, I implicitly know that they are there because my knowledge of the existence of the shelf precedes the explicitness of the computer screen. The shelf's existence precedes the screen because I have memories of stocking the shelf and memories of always seeing the shelf appear once I close my computer screen. My awareness of the shelf, then, is comprised of the explicit and implicitness of objects existing spatial-temporally. So, when I speak of phenomenology, I am referring to having a sense of being-in-the-world by way of the explicit and implicit forming, creating, and affecting my knowledge of the world. In other words, phenomenology includes what is tacitly known in world.

**Affective Phenomenology**

Understanding the world through the method of affective phenomenology is a way to describe how bodies move, interact, and affect each other in the world. Affective phenomenology is particularly interested in the affectivity of emotions because they direct, orient, and move conscious bodies in the world. Indeed, an affective phenomenology enables us to see how emotions produce the bodily knowledge of being-in-the-world. The method of affective phenomenology enables scholars to be curious about how emotions produce their own sense of

being oriented and knowing the world because this method describes the spatial-temporality of emotions. Furthermore, this method understands that emotions produce futurity. An affective phenomenology enables us to see how emotions affect the imagination of a conscious body, which orients bodies into the futurity of particular emotions. That is, emotions produce a future for the body to move into because such affects give the body its sense of knowing itself in the world. When it comes to using this method to understand the spatial-temporality of emotions, it allows scholars to see how the imagination creates paths of movement for the body that are emotionally constituted. An affective phenomenology, then, demonstrates how the imagination enables the sense of embodiment to reach beyond itself. In essence, this method allows scholars to describe how the imagination enables conscious bodies to reach and move into a future and demonstrates how futurity is an emotionally felt path. A sense of futurity is something that the body feels as it moves through and is affected by other bodies in the world.

As the method of affective phenomenology gives scholars the means to see and describe how the spatial-temporality of emotions enable futurity, this method is particularly useful for understanding how emotions constitute creative works of all kinds. In fact, affective phenomenology is a particularly useful method for seeing how the spatial-temporality of emotions constitute the narratives of literary fiction.

Reading and engaging with literary fiction is an affective experience. When engaging with literary texts, we are particularly affected by how stories are told, that is, through the emotional orientation of its narrator. Applying the method of affective phenomenology to literary fiction would allow us to see how the emotions of the narrator affect our experiences of the novel. Moreover, how our immediate experience of fiction affects us beyond the act of reading too. This new method of understanding literary fiction gives us the ability to see how holding a

novel in our hands is a felt experience that stretches us beyond ourselves. When we read, we are always beyond the story, beyond our history, beyond our past and present selves, as well as into futures that fictions bring into reach. However, this reach is only made possible by the affective phenomenology of the narrator. By understanding how emotions affect the form of narratives, this method gives us the means to see how paths to certain futures are not benign but affective, active, and necessarily have an effect on our imaginations.

**Applying the Method of Affective Phenomenology to Toni Morrison's Work**

In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992a), Toni Morrison critiques various literary turns in the narratives of American fiction written by white authors. In doing so, Morrison demonstrates how the literary devices in these texts hold assumptions about race in their narratives. And it is these assumptions that situate white and black characters in their imagined literary worlds. Morrison's critique is typically used to buttress analyses of her novel *Jazz* and how she explores Black embodiment as both musical and historical. However, what is less noticed in this critique is the affective language that she utilizes in its *Preface.* Indeed, throughout the text, Morrison describes how her embodied reaction to these narrative shifts elicits an emotional response in her, which then have an effect on her imagination. In fact, Morrison notes that her curiosity is piqued while she was reading *the Words to Say It* by Marie Cardinal.

In the autobiographical novel, Marie Cardinal describes the moment that she suffers from an anxiety attack while listening to Louis Armstrong play at a concert. Once recounting the particular passage, Morrison describes how it made her "smile" because she felt "admiration" (Morrison, 1992a, p. vii) towards the clarity of Cardinal recollecting that her anxiety attack was somehow connected to listening to Armstrong's music. Applying an affective lens to this passage

makes visible the connection between each of their physical changes and subsequent physical reactions in both instances. Cardinal's emotional and physical transformation from listening to music moves Morrison to inspiration in this moment. Indeed, Morrison (1992a) continues to use affective language to describe how she suddenly found herself "interested" in the ways that Black people in particular "*ignite* critical moments of discovery or change of emphasis in literature" (emphasis mine p. viii) written by white authors. From Cardinal situating jazz music as the "catalyst" for her emotional disturbance, Morrison (1992a) then describes how this *causes her* to "reflect" on the "consequences of jazz" (p. viii) music beyond it simply being music. Particularly, how jazz is a "visceral, emotional, and intellectual" experience that "impacts" its "listeners" but also speaks of the richness of Black life and culture in America (Morrison, 1992a, p. viii). Here, Morrison takes what Cardinal merely associates tangentially—listening to music and the moment she feels disturbed—and sees how it has something to do with race and racism and its effect on the psyche of white people. When Morrison applies affective language to describe her turn towards investigating these instances, she then asks how racialized embodiment is imagined and made literary. Here, what Morrison understood is that literature is the means of turning a sense of embodiment—a sense of being-in-the-world—into language, and then a narrative. Through the lens of affective phenomenology, we can see how Cardinal's being disturbed by music orients Morrison's curiosity to consider how she might explain the relationship between white authors choosing literary turns when their horizons clash with blackness. Indeed, throughout *Playing in the Dark* (1992a), Morrison explores how the world view of whiteness is given agency through language, and in particular, through the literary fiction of the American canon. However, what is fascinating about Morrison sharing the origins

of her curiosity is that she, in effect, demonstrates the affective phenomenology of feeling curious, and the subsequent futurity of this reflection.

For Morrison, writing narrative fiction is an imaginative act that preserves certain world views. And through her literature, Morrison's takes what she demonstrates in *Playing in the Dark* beyond the assumptions of literary whiteness and wonders how might a "literary blackness" make its embodiment known in narratives?

In *Jazz,* Morrison conveys the feeling of Black embodiment as something that is contradictory, which has its roots in the era of jazz. That is, jazz expresses the contradictory felt experiences of being Black in America. For Morrison, black embodiment is not only intimately affected by Black culture but comes out of Black culture and contributes to its continual re-creativity. In *Jazz*, being Black in America means experiencing life through the sense of being contradictory, which is integral to the agency of the imagination.

When we read *Jazz* through the method of affective phenomenology, we can see how integral the imagination is to Morrison's conception of Black embodiment and Black futurity. For Morrison, the power of the imagination enables culture to keep reaching and creating a shared future. A stable sense of the future, though, is necessarily affective, and understanding how others orient and direct themselves requires the grounding of one's sense of their past. Here, the method of affective phenomenology enables literary scholars to see how the history of Black culture and African American people is integral to continuously precipitating the culture into a future whose path is made of the past's affectivity.

**Project Outline**

This project is modest in size, made up of two chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter I define the philosophical lineage I situate my method of affective phenomenology, the contours of

its method, and finally its methodology. Then, in the second chapter I demonstrate how the method of affective phenomenology can be used to understand Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz* in a whole new way.

My writing style comes out of my desire to delicately walk my reader down the philosophical path I have been meandering along for some time now. Several years ago, I experienced this sensation of walking away from the futurity of a fleeting happiness and choosing instead a much harder road to self-discovery. During this tumultuous time in my life, I never forgot about that sensation, and how it stirred my curiosity. I couldn't stop thinking about what that sensation told me about emotions, their effect on my imagination, and on my ability to sense a future in how I felt. As I kept walking away from that potential future, I kept returning to the sensation I felt when I refused to choose that particular path of happiness. I thought I'd be able to write about this moment after I graduated; however, it seems as though my imagination was subliminally locked in on following this curiosity until I was ready to see it for what it was. That is, a way of seeing how we move through the world by the clashing of how we feel with who we want to be. Indeed, piece by piece, this idea revealed itself to me as I moved through my graduate degree project.

It seems as though, no matter what, creativity always seeks to resolve the past—whether we're ready to admit it or not. It's only until we truly see what we are creating—in all of its honesty—that the words needed to say it finally arrive without hesitation.

I begin the first chapter by illustrating various times in my life when reading narratives could only be described as affective and phenomenal. My task in this chapter is to highlight how reading narratives is an affective experience and to bring this understanding closer to phenomenological texts. Particularly those that approach the philosophy of the body as spatial-

temporally situated in the world and a need to feel oriented. I explore the body as a sensual experience and orientation with reference to the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sara Ahmed. I also aim in this chapter to consider how the voice of the narrator transmits emotions and affects the orientation of the reader through a narrative. Using Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) and *Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004) in tandem with Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect* (2004), I explore how reading a narrative voice opens the reader up to the experience of their emotions, which elicits a bodily—and emotional—transformation from the reading experience. Chapter one investigates the layers behind this emotional transformation that elicits a bodily sense of the beyond via Eve's Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* (2003). Finally, this chapter concludes with a turn back towards Edmund Husserl's influence on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's lineage of phenomenology to argue that a narrative voice necessarily speaks of a world view, or in their terms, a "life-world."

In the second chapter, I ask more directly: how does the method of affective phenomenology work when it's applied to Toni Morrison's *Jazz*? Furthermore, how does this approach act as a supplement to previous scholars and how we've come to understand Morrison's text? In my answer, I begin by situating my method in a pivotal moment that occurs in *Jazz*. That is, the moment when the narrator concedes to being unreliable and decides to change how they orient themselves and their outlook towards the characters. Here, the reaction is layered with emotional spatial-temporality. Through Sedgwick's idea of embodiment being "texxtured" with a feeling of spatial-temporality, and in combination with Morrison's own writing on the Jazz Age, I argue that the narrator is the embodiment of the Jazz Age itself. It is an embodiment that is constitutively contradictory and rooted in African American history. From here, I closely read how the narrator's feelings of bereavement and loss, contempt and judgment, and wanting to be

hospitable affect their orientation towards and away from the characters of the novel. I show how these emotional reactions affect the narrator and cause them to turn to the past, to a moment when the character's ancestors' cross paths. It is here that I demonstrate how emotions fuel their imagination, producing their sense of beyond-ment as a means of moving towards a future that is necessarily learned from the past.

If we think about literary fiction through its affective phenomenology, we can begin to see how stories are kinds of embodiment. They are senses of a world view that is felt through the spatial-temporality of the narrator's emotions. Since our sense of embodiment is emotional, and emotions generate the path we travel into a sense of futurity, stories are truly for the future. Indeed, to continuously imagine and to create narratives is to always be in the process of reaching your own embodiment beyond its immediate space and time. Feeling through the sense of beyond-ment is to connect to the possible and as-of-yet imagined futures that are waiting to be felt.

## Chapter 1: Theorizing the Affective Phenomenology of Narratives

> Theory is rooted in examining the past and tracing how specific ideas morph and change over time to create the social and political spheres we all experience in the present moment. Theory is about understanding the past so as to know how we arrived at the present moment. Theory, then, is limited to knowing what lies beyond the present moment, and this is why all theory can only write so far into the future. We cannot theorize about the future because it hasn't happened yet. Fiction, on the other hand, is about imagining what is beyond the present moment because it gives us access to our ability to imagine the impossible becoming possible. That is why fiction is for the future.
>
> - Dr. Peyman Vahabzadeh

If I were to recount the moment literature changed my life, I would not be able to provide you with a single event. Instead, I would rather recount three events that happened throughout my childhood. These events were pivotal for me because the act of reading became a means for me to transform how I felt about myself and how I felt towards reading. Indeed, these experiences were so monumental that the act of reading was never the same for me again.

I still I remember the first time that it no longer felt like I was trying to read, and instead it actually felt like I *was* reading. It was a moment when the process of sounding out words, then comprehending words, and finally understanding the events that the words were communicating, all braided together seamlessly. It was a moment that was marked by my realization that the attempt at reading was no longer there because for the briefest of moments, it felt like *I* was no longer there. When I say I was no longer there, what I mean to say is I felt fully immersed in the experience of imagining what was happening in the book. I still remember the words that

immersed me, it was a beckoning, it was an invitation, and I disappeared: "Come on, come with me." I don't remember how old I was, but I do remember feeling moved by the experience.

Another memory that comes to mind was the first time I read a word that was more than four letters long. The number of letters and the length of the word was how I quantified my progress with reading. In fact, it was a profound moment for me because I made a leap in my reading capabilities, and I knew it. I knew it because I read a word that was the longest word I had ever seen up until that point, and it was the most beautiful word I had ever sounded out. Once I realized what I had read, and then saw how it was spelt, I fell in love with this seven-letter word. I had heard it and said it so many times, yet here I was, not only seeing it, but reading it too. The word was *because*. Be-cause. Bè'käz. In that moment I understood what a compound word was and how to read them because I realized words can be made up of smaller bits words. *Be* and *cause* marry in *because*. Suddenly I knew how I could sound out larger words and read more books. I was joyous in that moment because I realized that getting to know smaller words comprises the map of reading larger words.

Finally, another transformative moment I remember experiencing while reading was when I came to the last chapter of *The Catcher in The Rye* by J.D. Salinger. I was fourteen years old, and that year, my dad gave it to me as a Christmas gift thinking it might resonate with me. When I received that book as a gift, I was going through a rather difficult time in my life. I had just survived five years of severe bullying that followed me across numerous schools. Once it subsided, I couldn't say I had any real friends of my own. From the bullying, I felt a deep sense of distrust towards anyone who tried to get to know me. Additionally, I carried a sense of hopelessness that I might never be able to make real friends because up until that point, a lot of my friends turned against me when the bullying was at its nadir. As a result, I receded into

activities like reading as a source joy. So, when my dad gave me *The Catcher in The Rye* (1951), he was right in how he understood me in that moment of my life because I had never read a book so quickly. It was the first time I read a book in two days, and I was finishing the last chapters with music playing in the background. This is the passage I remember reading affecting me so:

> Boy, it began to rain like a bastard. In *buckets*, I swear to God. All the parents and mothers and everybody went over and stood right under the roof of the carrousel, so they wouldn't get soaked to the skin or anything, but I stuck around on the bench for quite a while. I got pretty soaking wet, especially my neck and my pants. My hunting hat really gave me quite a lot of protection, in a way, but I got soaked anyway. I didn't care though. I felt so damn happy all of a sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth. I don't know why. It was just that she looked so damn *nice*, the way she kept going around and around, in her blue coat and all. God I wish you could've been there. (Salinger, 1951, p. 275)

As I was immersed in each sentence of Holden describing how he felt watching his sister on the carrousel, Moby's 1999 album *Play* was adding to the atmosphere. It too was coming to its end as "My Weakness" synchronized with the events of the last chapter. How can I accurately describe what that moment felt like to me? My fourteen-year-old self, actually seeing myself in the protagonist's overwhelming misery and depression. Then, to suddenly have it punctuated by the painful beauty of watching a sibling, to be moved to tears by her playfulness and joy as she rode in circles. Reading how Holden's view moved him to feel beyond the prison of misery, and wishing that the reader had been there, this affected me. It was his desire to want to share how moved he felt that moved me so. In reading Holden wishing I was there, made me feel less isolated, less alone. I remember resonating with the music that synchronized with the events in

the novel that day. The painful beauty of the song amplified the painful beauty of Holden's sister he held in his eyes, the book in my mind and the music in my ears, while I was in my room that day. I felt so sensually present with the book that I briefly looked past my own teenage depression and hopelessness. For the first time in a while, I felt moved. I felt optimistic, and I felt optimism because I read about how Holden suddenly felt optimistic as well.

These are memories I hold; I recall them because they are moments when literature transformed how I knew myself and my relationship to the world. I experienced the world differently following these moments. These experiences became a part of the map I now use to navigate the world of fiction, literature, myself, as well as how I understand literature as an experience. Yet, what do I mean when I say that these were moments that moved me? What do I mean when I say I felt immersed when I was reading a book? Or what am I describing when I associate joy with my memory of understanding how etymology functions? Or what does it mean to have a sensuous exchange with a novel that changes how I feel inside about myself and how I feel towards the world? How is it that literature can affect these moments of transformation? What exactly is this phenomenon that is being felt and experienced in these moments where I describe myself as *never being the same* again? In recalling these memories, I reflect upon how literature shaped me and my experience of myself. I never just picked up a book, read it, and moved onto something new. When I read novels, I unfold into a new plot, I find myself bound to the shape of a narrative, and I grow and learn about my character as the characters grow alongside me. I want to explore what is occurring in these memories I have of a literary artifact re-shaping my perception of not only myself, but how I experience the world as well. To write about the exact processes that are occurring in these memories I need to first establish what it is I want to talk about.

**Reading as an Affective Experience**

When I reflect on these memories, I am characterizing reading as an experience that is affective. Reading is affective because it is re-orienting how I experience myself and how I feel in the world. To characterize reading as an affective experience means I am actually describing how reading is a phenomenon, and it is a phenomenon that is affective. Before I explore the affectivity of a phenomenon though, I must first contend with a big question: How *is* reading a phenomenon? Well, in essence, phenomena are perceivable events that are also consciously registered. More specifically, phenomena are things that are shown, revealed, or that manifest in our experiences in the world (Oxford). Additionally, they are what appear to us in space and time, and causally connect to the world, as opposed to things that are metaphysically posited or abstractly inferred (Oxford). Simply put, when I hold a book in my hands as well as read its contents, I am experiencing the book as an object in the world. As an object, physical qualities are what constitute it as a phenomenon. Such qualities reside in the sensuality of a book when it in in my hands. That is, when I turn the pages, I am feeling the pages, and I take in their texture against my fingertips. Also, when I open a text, I can hear the quality of its materiality. For example, the sound of the paper bending and popping when I turn the pages. When I open a new hardcopy—the sound of my fingers running over the texture of its case cloth, the cracking of glue, and the sound of the spine cleaving—are the phenomenal qualities of a book. Not to mention the smell that accompanies a book from a library or used bookstore. It is one that every bibliophile is all too familiar with. All of these aspects of experiencing the book as an object come from the book's effect on my senses. Indeed, as I experience a book in my hands, it affects me as a being that experiences the world through my sensuality. However, when it comes to reading, I am not just interacting with it as an object in my hands, looking at the pages, and

touching the text in a sensual manner. Reading a book is another kind of way of experiencing it. The act of reading, I argue, is also affective because reading is phenomenal.

When I read a book, the experience affects how I not only sense myself in the world but also transforms me through the experience of reading a narrative. The kind of affectual transformation I am referring to is what I experienced while reading Holden's account of how he felt at the end of *The Catcher in the Rye*. I do not wish to conduct a particularly close study of this text, but more to the point, I want to write about how it is possible for a narrative to affect myself in the manner like it did that day. In essence, I want to approach narratives—specifically what constitutes narratives and how they affect the reader—as a phenomenon. Moreover, I argue that my encounter with the narrative voice is a phenomenal experience.

The narrator's voice is a phenomenon because to read a fictional novel requires us to follow along with a voice that is telling us their story. When a narrative voice guides the reader along, they are the reader's access to the story-world. It is only from a narrative's voices that the reader is given access to everything that is in the story-world too. Even when we describe the experience of reading, we describe it as if we are perceiving it through multiple bodily receptors. For example, sometimes we say that reading is like listening to someone who is speaking to us. Even our descriptive language of the experience indicates that reading phenomenalizes. But what is a narrative, then, to someone who approaches them as a phenomenon? If it feels like we interact with it through multiple senses, how does an affective phenomenologist define a narrative?

For an affective phenomenologist, narratives need to be considered as objects in the world. Generally, definitions of narratives tend to take from narrative theorists, like Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, and specifically from her seminal work *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary*

*Poetics*. Rimmon-Kenan's definition of narration approaches narratives terms of how the work of literary fiction narrates its story. She writes that narration in literary fiction is a communicative process that is comprised of two main elements (Rimmon-Kenan, 1988). First, the narration can be thought of as a message that is being transmitted from an "addresser to an addressee" (Rimmon-Kenan, 1988, p. 2). Second, narration refers to the "verbal nature of the medium used to transmit" the story events as well (Rimmon-Kenan, 1988, p. 2). Indeed, a narration from a text can be thought of as a message that is being transferred between the voice of the narrator to a reader who is processing the message. Narrative theorists think of narration in terms of speech because has an audible quality to its experience because as we read it; we hear the voice in our head, we feel affected by their telling, and because of the long tradition of thinking about narratives in terms of its rhetorical qualities. To describe how a narrator's voice is phenomenal, though, I will focus on how the act of reading is not only an affectual transmission between narrator but also how the narrative is encountered as a phenomenon, it is also an object because it orients the reader. In other words, how the narrator directs me through a story is through the phenomenology of the literary devices that are used in the act of storytelling. For an affective phenomenologist, literary devices are objects and as objects they have an effect on the reader because of how they orient the reader accordingly. As the reader encounters literary devices in a narrative, the reader is affected by the orientation of these objects alongside of the affectual transmission of its sensuality. From here I begin to ask: What is it about narratives that change how a person understands themself? How does a narrative, as its being told through a narrator, affect my experience of reading a story? In particular, how does the constitution of a narrator have the ability to affect me and how I feel as a person? To ask these questions is to ask about how a narrator's voice functions as a phenomenon.

**The Discipline of Narrative Studies**

There are many different disciplines in narrative studies that theorize the structure of fictional narratives in literature. When it comes to the voice of the narrator, there is the classic narratological approach to the mechanisms that comprise literary fiction's rhetoric (Booth, 1983; Rimmon-Kenan, 1983; Onega, 1996; Phelan, 2005; Halpern, 2018). These scholars focus on defining the uses of specific rhetorical elements in narratives and seek to categorize their qualities and uses in fiction. Coming out of this classic approach to narrative structure (Chatman, 1978; Genette, 1980) some scholars studying the rhetoric of fictional narratives focus on how texts are acts of communication (Fieguth, 1975; Okopień-Slawińska, 1975). For this discipline in narrative studies, scholars focus on how the voice of the narrator (Margolin, 1986), as well as characters (Jannidis, 2004) are implicitly and explicitly evident in the story world. Collectively, these scholars study the rhetorical manner of the narrator's behaviour and categorize the narrator's various modalities (Booth, 1983). As narrative studies turned towards the analysis of the formal principles that underlie narration, some scholars began to examine the ethical consequences of how these formal features engaged with the narratorial audience (Phelan, 2017). By examining the connection between formal elements of the narrative and the reader's response to texts, this line of inquiry considers how the text creates the reader's positionality. Over the course of the development of narrative studies, there have been many ways in which scholars have established the formal elements of a text and their power to elicit a response from the reader. In fact, in the 1970s reader-response critics notably made use of phenomenology to approach literary fiction through the act of reading in order to understand the production of textual meaning[1]. It is worth noting that this application of phenomenology to narrative studies

[1] Scholarship that applies phenomenology to narrative studies in order to theorize the textual processes of meaning-making includes Wolfgang Iser's *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction* (1974) and *The*

strives to define the nature of prose fiction's method of meaning-making. The difference between my approach and reader-response criticism's use of phenomenology is that affective-phenomenology approach is more interested in how emotions relay the truth of lived experiences. Where reader-response works from the tradition of seeking to establish meaning-making mechanisms of prose fiction, an affective phenomenological approach to text seeks to understand how emotions influence and shape the experience of such texts.

Understanding reading and the formal elements of a text as phenomenon is a method that describes how literature transforms the reader and their lived experience. What interests me with the practice of reading, is how the composition of narratives affects the reading experience. In particular, how literary devices can influence the experience of reading by actually transforming the reader as they emotionally relate to and engage with the text. What fascinates me about my personal approach is that I seek to articulate what we collectively experience when we feel completely moved by a text. To be moved so profoundly can be described as a magical experience. So, for me, reading is magical, and we have yet to theorize the ways in which reading elicits a majestic transformation. Indeed, the magical experience that reading gives us is what keeps us reading. It is this experience that makes us want to creatively explore what comprises reading in the first place. I want to contribute to the way narrative scholars talk about that wonderful connection we have with texts and why we are here as scholars in the first place.

**Phenomenology of Novels**

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes sensing as a process that relates the body to its landscape. Experience is perceived when that which is sensed ascribes

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*Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetics Response* (1978); an Roman Ingarden's *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature* (1973) and *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (1973).

experience with its qualities. According to Merleau-Ponty (2012), the difference between perception and sensation are that sensations are corporeal while perception is when consciousness "awakens" and attends to that which holds its "attention" (p. 29). Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty (2012) emphasizes how sensing is integral to the body because it is the moment when "signification" (p.52) is not only reached through the perceiving consciousness but mapped back onto the landscape. Sensing, then, relates to the body because it is the experience of grasping and signifying the self in the landscape. This process of sensing the self in the landscape and perceiving the signification of self in the landscape can be conceived as relations that necessarily constitute the lived experience. In other words, we can begin to imagine how the act of experiencing anything is about understanding how the self is grasped by and through the body in a landscape. Additionally, Merleau-Ponty (2012) states that these various kinds of "relations" are "woven between the parts of the landscape" to the "embodied subject" (p. 53). These relations extend to all objects in the landscape too. Indeed, for Merleau-Ponty (2012), an "object" that is encountered in the landscape condenses "within itself an entire scene" or "entire segment of life" (p. 53) for the subject. Where Merleau-Ponty inserts a non-descript object, I would like to imagine the object as a work of fiction that is being encountered through the act of reading. When we think about the experience of reading, do we not think in terms of what Merleau-Ponty describes as the non-descript object? That is, reading feels like an encounter with a fictional world that is navigated by the voice of the text. It is an encounter with a condensed setting that has characters experiencing their own segment of life. Moreover, though, it is an encounter that is oriented by the relation we build with the narrator of the text. From Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, we can think of an encounter with a novel as something phenomenal. It is not only an object that is grasped, but it gives us a sense of our self through the narrative.

In the essay "Happy Objects," Sara Ahmed (2020) describes how a phenomenology of objects must consider how we are not only moved by objects but how such movement in turn moves us. In fact, similar to Merleau-Ponty, Ahmed's phenomenology of objects involves an intricate consideration of how phenomenology concerns the affectivity of the encounter. Where Merleau-Ponty situates the sensual aspect of the body, though, Ahmed overlaps the act of perceiving with the qualities of emotions. For Merleau-Ponty, the act of feeling is experienced through touch. For Ahmed, though, she overlaps the feelings of the body with the effect of emotions. In her phenomenological investigation into happiness, emotions are the conscious registration of bodily senses that shape the sense of self (Ahmed, 2020). Ahmed's (2020) phenomenology focuses in on how emotions, in particular, "play a crucial role in shaping our near sphere" (p. 32). The near sphere, though, is not inert. This space is what is "within reach" for the body (Ahmed, 2020, p. 32). What is within reach, then, generates the sense of self. As we repeatedly reach for something familiar, it continuously becomes familiar to us every time we reach for it (Ahmed, 2020). So, what is around us is not arbitrary. Instead, we can imagine what is within reach and what we keep within reach gives us a sense of ourselves. To be in contact with "objects that give" us a sense of ourselves also establishes "*what we are like*" (Ahmed, 2020, p. 32). The world that we interact with takes its shape from the encounters we have with objects that are around us, and those that we reach for contact (Ahmed, 2020). For Merleau-Ponty (2012), the landscape becomes "animated" from the "display" (p. 70) of these objects, and the act of perceiving them amalgamates the horizons of the objects that constitute the space. Ahmed (2020) expands Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology by asking us to consider our relationship to object that "take up residence within our bodily horizon" (p. 32). Indeed, the object that is within reach not only directs me, but I am also directed by it. So, what if our "near

sphere" is constituted by me holding a book and reading its narrative? How does reading a narrative affect our sense of self? When I read a novel, I am directed by its literary devices, especially the voice of the narrative.

In "Happy Objects," Ahmed considers how emotions are generated and how the sense of self is articulated from their affective qualities. Ahmed (2020) states that emotions start from a place "other than the subject," despite how we use emotional language "to describe the situation" (p. 29) of their happenings. For instance, when I described my memory of reading the end of *The Catcher in the Rye*, I am describing how reading Holden's emotional turn *affected* my own emotional constitution. Although I felt optimistic after reading the book, it was only the result of *being affected* by Holden's emotional transformation that my optimism emerged. Although emotions "involve affect," I agree with Ahmed (2020) when she writes that affect is itself not an "object of study" (pp. 29-30). Instead, affect describes the "messiness of the experiential," the "unfolding of bodies into worlds, and the drama of contingency" (Ahmed, 2020, pg. 30). A phenomenological method of understanding narratives involves the inclusion of "how we are touched" by narratives because affect is integral to the experience of reading (Ahmed, 2020, p. 30). How can we think of the elements of a narrative as being affectual in their constitution though? The text is a place where characters move, and we are told about their lives in the setting by a voice. We are affected by a voice telling us how the characters interact with their world, how specific decisions are made, and the overall direction of the story. Reading a novel is phenomenal because it is an encounter with an object. However, the narrative is also an object because it generates an effective response to the story itself. In essence, narratives affectively orient the reader through the story, and it is from this sense of orientation that creates the experience of reading.

**Phenomenology of Narrative Voices: Contact Through Telling**

A method to studying a novel's phenomenology is by understanding how literary devices function as a phenomenon. We can think of the narrator's voice as phenomenon because it orients the reader through a text in a particular way. Indeed, the narrator's voice generates the reader's affective experience of reading the story within the text. When we read narratives—whether they are told in the first, second, or a third-person indirect omniscient voice—we are reading a voice that is speaking directly to us. This voice is telling us a story from their perspective, and they are aware that someone is engaging with their story as it is being read. As a result, the voice demonstrates their intention in their telling of the story because they structure the story in a way that enables the reader to follow along. It is from this place of intention and orientation that I wish to examine how the voice of the narrator is phenomenal.

In *Queer Phenomenology* Sara Ahmed (2006) writes about the phenomenology of sexual orientation by examining how objects "appear" in "phenomenological writing" as "orientation devices" (p. 3). In this text, the author seeks to bring queer studies in "dialogue" with phenomenology to offer her reader a way of thinking about the "spatiality of sexuality," and "gender" (Ahmed, 2006, pp. 1-2). Ahmed's method amalgamates the queer moments that arise in Merleau-Ponty's (2012) phenomenology of perception with Edmund Husserl's (1969) phenomenology of the philosopher's writing table from *Ideas*. In doing so, Ahmed (2006) contemplates on how a sense of orientation involves the "different ways of registering the proximity of objects" (p. 3) to gain a sense of the self that is experiencing and moving through that space. Furthermore, she considers how orientation extends the reach and sense of the body to gain a better understanding of the self. She does so because the self begins with the sense of being oriented and thus having direction (Ahmed, 2006). In fact, orientations have everything to

do with "how we begin" to sense ourselves in space, and "how we proceed" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 8) to navigate ourselves accordingly. When we read a narrator's voice, their words are assembled on the page and are organized in a specific way that enables us to follow the narrator's telling of the story. The narrator's voice phenomenologically functions as a means of orienting the reader. Ahmed might say that the narrator's words "gather" in a manner that "creates" the "ground" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 1) upon which the reader moves through the story world. The words that comprise the narrative, and how they are assembled, can be thought of as intending to orient the reader in a particular manner and to a particular end.

How the narrator structures their telling of the story moves the reader through the experience of the plot. For the same reason the reader gains a sense of themselves from the narrator's orientation, the narrator also gains a sense of themselves from their telling of the story. Because depending on the kind of narrator, a different proximity to the characters in the story world is being experienced as the reader—by way of the narrator—engages with the story world. So, as the reader perceives the narrator through their telling of the story, Ahmed (2006) would say that the reader is also taking "a position upon" the narrator, who in turn "gives the reader a position" (pp. 27-8) in the text.

How the narrator is situated in proximity to the story world elicits a different sense of the reader's experience. Differing distances affect the kind of orientation that is being experienced from the narrator's voice. For example, when the reader is in contact with a narrator who is within the story world—whether it is first or second-person narration—the reader can be either closer or further away from feeling moved from the experiences of the characters during certain events. The same can be said for a third person indirect omniscient narrator. This kind of narrative voice enables a different kind of proximity to the story world too. As we consider how

a sense of orientation is gained from the narrator's voice, we need to also consider how the sense of the narrator's voice affects our "approach" to what "presents itself" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 8) to us in the space of the novel. Indeed, it is from the site of the body that not only perceives the approaching object, but also gives the sense of orientation from the exchanges of sensing both the object and the self as well. If we are to think about the phenomenology of novels, I wish to not only consider how we sense ourselves as we read narratives, but how narratives in turn affect a sense upon the reader too. The affect narrator's have on the reader, I argue, speaks through how they intend to move the reader.

**Phenomenology of Narrative Voices: Situating Intentions**

We can think of the narrator's voice as having contact with the reader because its intention is to orient the reader in a specific way through the story. However, the voice does more than just establish their contact through their ability to direct the reader. In a phenomenological sense, the narrator makes contact when they specifically direct the reader's emotions to specific events that occur in the story. When I read, I am in fact emotionally situated in a narrative, it is because the narrator's intention is to be affective as they tell their story. In other words, how the narrator tells their story establishes their intended relations between the events of the plot and the characters who appear in their story. It is the intention to orient and to emotionally situate the reader that constitute the phenomenology of the narrative.

When Ahmed writes about how the phenomenology of objects (2006) orients a person in an effective way (2020), she describes it as the process of apprehending an object through the act of perceiving it. It is within the moment that the object is perceived that orientation is consciously registered from the object. Ahmed (2006) writes:

> In perceiving the object as an object, I perceive the object in a certain way, as being some kind of thing. Perceiving an object involves a way of apprehending that object. So, it is not just that consciousness is directed toward objects, but also that I take different directions towards objects. (p. 27)

Indeed, orientation involves the intention to turn towards objects. The process of perceiving the object or coming to the object is the moment that it is apprehended. We can think of the moment an object is in its process of affecting a sense of orientation as being the moment when intentions affect each other. In other words, this is when the intention of the object becomes an orientation device because it affects the person. In Ahmed's phenomenology of objects, there is an implicit intention in an object because of how it has been situated. If objects are orientation devices, then they not only give us a sense of direction, but their positionality directs us in a specific way through the space that it is situated. Where Ahmed considers how objects function as these "anchor points" (p. 1) for the body, I wish to explore how the orientation of objects affects the body's sense of orientation because of their intended use. In terms of the affective phenomenology of literary fiction, what I mean to say is, I wish to explore how the intended orientation of a narrator's voice affects the reader's emotional orientation.

Instead of just describing how the narrator's voice orients us, I want us to consider how they direct our "attention" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 3) through their implicit intention to affect us as readers. This aspect of the affective phenomenology of literature, though, will be explored in greater detail further on this chapter when I discuss the methodology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. The question of how an affective phenomenology of literature understands and integrates a narrator's intention into its approach to fiction, for me, is more about considering the *assumptions* that are imbedded in the narrator's intention to affect the reader.

What we assume about another person reveals a lot about the world in which we live and how we relate to others in that world. Applying the method of affective phenomenology to literature, requires us to consider how the intentions of a narrator reveal a specific mode of being in the world. In order to clarify this important theme in this method, though, I must first establish how consciousness is situated in scholarship of phenomenology I am using for this theory.

In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed (2006) integrates the nature of consciousness into her phenomenology of gender because the subjective experience occurs by way of consciousness apprehending all experiences. In order for the author's phenomenology to address how consciousness is situated in the world, she takes up Franz Brentano's psychological claim concerning the nature of consciousness. That is, intention gives consciousness its "worldly" dimension" because consciousness "is about how we perceived the world around" us (Ahmed, 2006, p. 27). As we are "embodied, sensitive, and situated," (Ahmed, 2006, p. 27) so too is the world giving us a sense of embodiment, sensuality, and situation. However, Ahmed (2006) primarily frames her affective phenomenology of objects in *Queer Phenomenology* as a process that takes into consideration the intention of the person who is perceiving the object. Indeed, Ahmed's phenomenology of objects mainly focuses on the intention of the person approaching objects in the world. I agree that phenomenology must always consider how "consciousness" is "intentional" because it is always "directed towards something" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 27). However, the affective phenomenology of the narrative voice considers how the object, or literary devices, exhibit an intention as well. That is, the intention of the narrator is perceptible through how they decide to *tell* their story.

When it comes to establishing the affective phenomenology of narratives, we must consider how a narrator's voice is situated in their position as story tellers. Narrators exhibit an

awareness of their positionality as interlocutor to the story world because of how they construct their story. Indeed, the intention of the narrator is evident in how they choose to reveal particular details of the story or withhold certain characteristics of the events. It is even evident in how they focus on particular aspects of a character's behaviour while ignoring other elements that seem periphery to their interest. All of these aspects of the narrator's telling exemplify their intention to tell the story in a particular way so as to have a specific effect on the reader's engagement with the novel.

If novels affect us and our experience of being in the world, then reading can be understood as an affective phenomenon. If we seek to examine how reading is an affective phenomenon, then, I need to theorize how the process of reading is transmitted, and therefore a bodily experience in addition to how reading affects an orientation for the reader. For example, when I describe how learning to read affected my *perception* of myself because it *felt like I was no longer there*, I am describing how my own sense of self dramatically changed from not sensing myself *there* at all. Here I am describing how reading not only transformed my ability to sense and feel myself but how the constitution of reading is about eliciting a transformative experience. The experience I am describing and the effects the book had on my understanding of myself can be qualified through a phenomenological method of how transformations occur.

Phenomenology is a qualifying method of the world and reality that begins from the subjective experience of the world. However, my memories of being transformed by the experience of reading goes beyond simply describing how reading is experienced. Instead, my memories recall how reading transformed not only my sense of myself, but my sense of reality, and my experience of literature as well. The phenomenon of reading, then, requires an additional theoretical lens that integrates the various kinds of affect that occur during the experience of

reading. From these memories, I wish to establish the affective phenomenology of narratives as sites of transformation.

**Phenomenology of Narratives: Emotions that Transmit and Transform**

Sara Ahmed establishes a theory of affective phenomenology in her seminal text *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*. In the text, Ahmed (2014) theorizes how emotions are affective, and in being affects, they create the political boundaries that mediate cultural spheres. Indeed, the author explains that these social boundaries are created through the affective transference of emotions between individuals and groups of people. In particular, Ahmed (2014) argues that when the body feels a specific emotion, the feeling creates an affect that flows out into the world, into other and objects, which generates a sense of the self in the space. It is through the "intensification" of affects being generated that "bodies and worlds materialise and take shape, or the effect of boundary, surface and fixity" are produced (Ahmed, 2014, p. 24). For Ahmed's affective phenomenology, she states that emotions are "crucial to the forming of surfaces and borders" because it is this formation of boundaries that "make" and "unmake" us (Ahmed, 2014, p. 24). For Ahmed (2014), emotions create the boundary of the self. What is felt as the self is the mode of being in the world, a being that feels the world. The sensing of the self, though, is both that which makes the self, and yet can re-make those same boundaries as well. In other words, the experience of being emotionally affected by something or someone transforms how the individual senses themselves in the world. Thus, Ahmed's (2014) affective phenomenology makes explicit how bodies and worlds materializing through the affective exchanges that takes place between individuals and objects.

From this affective phenomenology of emotions, I want to imagine how the narrator's voice in fiction functions in the same manner. That is, I want to explore how the voice of a

narrator in fictional literature creates and re-creates the reader through an affective transformation that is textured from the experience of being emotionally transformed. It is through this method of emotionally affecting the reader that the text becomes a site of transformation because it transmits an emotional affect. Those who engage with its objecthood—the state objecthood of the narrator, and the objecthood of the novel itself—are moving towards the transformation the text has the potential to elicit. However, what is the nature of this transmission? Indeed, what is the constitution of the boundary between text and the reader that enables a transmission at all?

In *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan (2004) interrogates how we can sense an atmosphere in a particular social setting. The author argues that we are not only affected by the atmosphere of a specific space, but demonstrates how our emotions are transmitted and sensed by individuals (Brennan, 2004). In her text, Brennan (2004) argues against the Eurocentric mode of thinking that the individual is an isolated entity, cut off from their environment, and "affectively contained" (p. 2). Instead, her theory of affectual transmission demonstrates how emotionally sensing a space emerges from the "social" setting because it is "biological and physical" in its effects (Brennan, 2004, p. 3). Traditionally, emotions are thought to reside in the person; however, Brennan considers how the individual feels the space they inhabit and senses the social atmosphere as a given event. Indeed, the author argues that emotions come from an "interaction with other people," as well as their collective "environment" that is sensed from the "physiological impact" of an environment (Brennan, 2004, p. 3). For the author, there are two kinds of affectual transmissions. Basically, there are transmissions where people become each other's opposition, and similarly, there are transmissions that create a sense of homogeneity (Brennan, 2004). Relevant to my affectual phenomenology is the mimetic transmission because

this is how the narrator and reader align. That is, when a narrator tells their story, they conjure the visual imagery that the reader sees in their mind as they read the narrator's words. For the narrator to create the sense of the story world through the act of their telling, the reader becomes homogenous with the narrator's voice. Indeed, as the reader aligns with the narrator's words, the reader mimics the narrator's vision of the characters and setting of the story world. Brennan (2004) even concedes that visual imagery has "a direct physical impact" on the body because mimetic transmission activates the "neurological networks" (p. 10) in the mind. The act of being stimulated, then, transforms the body because it is interacting with a "spectrum" of sensual "vibrations at various frequencies" (Brennan, 2004, p.10). However, Brennan (2004) argues that sight, and the act of visually perceiving the world is a sensual experience, and as such, it also "separates" the individual from their near sphere, compared to "other senses" that "do not" (p. 11).

While it is true that sight is associated with separation from what the sense perceives and takes in, I disagree with Brennan's conclusion that visual perception separates a person more so compared to other modes of perceiving. Although there is space between what is being seen and the body that is perceiving something through their sight, there is still an affect that occurs. I argue that such an affect can feel like the distance has been closed because to perceive is the act of bringing something into reach. Additionally, having something within reach can have an effect on multiple modes of perception, and not just sight. So, despite there being space when we see something, this does not conclude that space equates to perceptual distance. An affective phenomenology of narrative considers how the text elicits a sensual transformation because the transformation occurs from all modes of perception and not just one. To feel any particular emotion, one must first approach their own spectrum of emotions. In the same sense, when I

sense the world that I inhabit, I am sensing the spectrum of sensuality that brings the world into my body.

When I describe my experience of being transformed from reading *The Catcher in the Rye*, I am describing the moment when Holden's narration became my path to optimism. As Holden approached his optimistic awakening, I experienced my own alignment with his emotional approach. In other words, when I was reading how he felt, I was being brought to feel Holden's optimism as my own optimism, and I felt a distance from the emotions that I previously felt tied to. I felt optimism *because* I no longer felt close to my depression. Instead, the music in the room, the book in my hand, Holden's words in my head, myself in Holden's world, this all encapsulates the spectra of emotions and sensuality that was interchanging when I was reading its narratives. In sum, I want to think about how an affective phenomenology of narratives requires us to think about how an experience is constituted by the overlap of the spectrum of emotions and the spectrum of sensuality. That is, the spectrum of feeling and the spectrum of sensing overlap to create the textured spectra of experience.

**Phenomenology of Narratives: The Texxture of Experience**

In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Sedgwick (2003) seeks to establish specific "tools and techniques for nondualistic thought and pedagogy" (p. 1) as a means of understand the world. Sedgwick (2003) begins her text by asking the following question: what can we imagine as the cognitive and affective habits, or nondual practices involved in going beyond prescriptive forms of understanding experience? She even wrestles with the internal contradiction of reaffirming dualism by defining a nondualistic schema against the ever-present schema of dualism itself. Sedgwick writes:

> [To] invoke nondualism, as plenty of Buddhist sutras point out, is to tumble right into a dualistic trap. I've always assumed that the most useful work of this sort is likeliest to occur near the boundary of what a writer can't figure out how to say readily. (p. 2)

For Sedgwick to theorize techniques of nondualistic thinking, she works from J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality: Introduction* (1976), and Silvan Tomkin's *Affective Imaginary Consciousness* (1962-92). Indeed, *Touching Feeling* is a text that is rooted in the "implications surrounding J.L. Austin's foundational work on performative utterances" and their "constative" qualities (Sedgwick, 2003, pp. 3-4). To think of performance as the overlapping of an act and what it says, Sedgwick (2003) elicits her nondualistic technique of imagining a mode of thought that is "near the boundary" of "what can be said readily" (p. 2). It is in her approach to the constative quality of performances that she considers how modes of thought are in fact "spatialized" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 5). According to Sedgwick (2003), conceptualization involves the ability to "imagine a map-like set of relations" that allows for "scattering" or "clustering" of ideas to form "near and far" from "each other" as they act from a "spatializing impulse" (p. 5) as they are situated beside each other. When Sedgwick (2003) considers how conceptualization has a spatial quality to it, she considers how concepts affect each other through the experience of thinking. For her, scholarly investigations into performativity need to consider "how language constructs" and "affects reality" as opposed to only focusing on how it "merely describing it" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 5). From this text, the author writes about the spatial "texture" (p. 6) of language because it is not just words, but its performance as well. Meaning, or what moves the individual through the experience of language, can be thought of as arising out of language's spatial quality.

From Sedgwick's introduction to the texture of language and performance, I want to think about how the experience of reading is textured, and I want to tend to the layers of affects that blend as we read fictional literature. When I say that the experience of reading is textured, I am not just referring to the how the texture of reading is the touching a book. In fact, Sedgwick takes her definition of texture from Renu Bora's essay "Outing Texture" (1997) and argues that there are actually two modes of sensing texture. First, there is the "texture" with one X and "texxture" with two X's (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 14). The extension of the "x" refers a kind of texture that is "dense" with "information about how, substantively, historically, materially" something comes "into being" (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 14). Meanwhile, texture with one "x" only attends to the single sense of touch and its one-way relation with a surface. So, when I ask us to consider the "texxture" of reading, I am asking us to imagine the feeling of the book's material in our hands, the atmosphere of the space we read—even the time in our lives we find ourselves reading a specific novel that speaks to us—I am also asking us to consider how the feel of a book blends with how we are moved by a story because we blur these spheres together.

In addition to the blending and blurring of these phenomena, I want us to tend to the "texxture" of the narrator's voice, and how it orients our spectrum of emotions through their telling of the story and how the history of their experiences, its emotional density, transmits through their voice. The affective phenomenology of narratives tends to the collective "texxtures" of the experience of reading. The spectra of how we feel and sense the world, as well the experience of reading, blends with not only our emotional spectrum, but the narrator's as well. This event is the "texxture" of reading the narrative of fictional literature. However, the moment the blending occurs, it is no longer just involving the reader and the text. When we read a book, we extend beyond the boundaries of our subjectivity, and the same can be said for the

narrator too. In fact, literary fiction can stimulate such a sense of a beyond-ness for the body. I would like to consider the sense of a beyond-ment as its own kind of seeing the world. Beyond-ment is essential to feeling embodied because it is the seeing of a world beyond, not just physically, but imaginatively as well. Thus, studying a narrator's voice through the method of affective phenomenology also reveals how a sense of the world exists in the sensing beyond-ment of their world. The beyond-ment of the world is both the world in which we live, and the imagined, the possible worlds beyond.

For a scholar of the affective phenomenology of literary fiction, the composition of the world beyond us must be included in our theoretical approach to literature. More specifically, how the composition of the world shapes and relates to the practice of storytelling. Phenomenology is about the appearance of things in the world, and the effect of being in the world needs to be situated in this theoretical approach to literature. What affects us comes from our submergence in the social world that we live. In particular, how we are affected by our encounters with the social world and specific social spheres can be read in our orientation too. Indeed, it is integral to include the affectivity of our encounter with the world because we are never without its influence.

When it comes to the theory of affective phenomenology of narratives, including the effects of being in the world enables us to understand the orientation of the narrator's voice. How we move through the world and how we speak of our world and those around us reveals a lot about how our sense of self is intimately related to the world around us. For affective phenomenologists of narratives, orientation needs to be considered in terms of how the narrator's sense of direction speaks of the world in which they are submerged, and in particular, their social world. In order to understand how an orientation is a reflection and effect of a specific social

world, I need to return to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and its methodology. The methodological approach to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is, in fact, Edmund Husserl's assumptions of what constitutes subjectivity, which came out of his writings on phenomenology in his later years. So, before I re-introduce Merleau-Ponty, I must briefly refer to the insight of Dermot Moran, a scholar of Edmund Husserl's work and legacy. It is in his knowledge of Husserl's body of work that we find the explication for Merleau-Ponty's methodology of subjectivity for *Phenomenology of Perception*.

**Phenomenology of Narratives: Literature and The Life-World**

In "The Phenomenology of the Social World: Husserl on *Mitsein* as *Ineinandersein* and *Füreinandersein*" Dermot Moran (2017) discusses Edmund Husserl's phenomenological account of the constitution of the social world, its various themes, and its relation to the work of other early twentieth-century phenomenologists. In this paper, Moran aptly explains that there are two contradictory methodologies that underlie the totality of Husserl's body of work concerning the phenomenology of subjectivity. Moran (2017) notes that in his earlier work, Husserl's phenomenology is interpreted as prioritizing the assumption that subjectivity moves outwards in terms of how it constitutes itself and others, as well as its intersubjective world. In his earlier work, Husserl wrote about the phenomenology of transcendental subjectivity from the assumption that it begins as a Cartesian ego and, from that site of origin, moves outwards in terms of its constitution. This concept of the Cartesian ego comes from Descartes two *Meditations*. In these two texts, Descartes defines the self as something that only comes out of the awareness "of its own thoughts," and entirely capable of a "disembodied existence," which is "neither situated in a space nor surrounded by others" (Oxford, 2016). Working from the tradition of Descartes, Husserl's early phenomenology conceives of the self in terms of being an

individual transcendental ego. One that, at its site of origin, the self is an abstracted and incorporeal entity (Moran, 2017). Such an assumption, though, begs the question: how can the self be an a priori entity to that which gives it its *sense* of being? To put it another way, if phenomenology is the study of the appearance of objects, does subjectivity appear without any prior submergence into that which gives it its appearance? When it comes to using phenomenology as a means to describe the world in which things appear, the assumptions about the constitution of subjectivity needs to be reevaluated. In his later work, Husserl's phenomenology began to work out of another assumption of the constitution of the self altogether, and it began to change because it came out of an interest in his phenomenology of the social world.

Throughout the nineteen twenties and thirties, the phenomenology of the social world began to occupy the minds of Germany philosophers. The evidence for this resides in some of Husserl's publications throughout the nineteen tens, and early to mid-nineteen twenties (Moran, 2017). Specifically, when discussions of intentionality, intersubjectivity, and the phenomenology of what constitutes a social act was taking place amongst German philosophers (Moran, 2017). It was during this time that Husserl's phenomenology of the social world took on the assumption that the self is as an intersubjectively constituted community (Moran, 2017). According to Moran (2017), Husserl defined the social world as the "world shared primarily with human subjects (and with animals)" (p. 110), and since the world is shared, Husserl attempts to describe these relations as phenomenon because they constitute the sense of subjectivity. For this reason, Husserl used various terms to describe how the self is experienced as an intersubjectively constituted community that is situated in the ever-present horizon of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*). Husserl's term 'life-world,' or 'world of life,' refers to the material world of our everyday

experience, which has both objective and subjective aspects to it (Moran, 2012). It is within the life-world that Husserl situates all intersubjective communal horizons of human collective activity, which are foundational for the sense of subjectivity. For example, he uses the term we-world (*Wir-Welt*) to refer to the world of "those around me" (Moran, 2017, p. 101). Moran (2017) succinctly summarizes Husserl's phenomenology of the we-world in the following way:

> Husserl tries to describe the structural features of [the] horizon [of the we-world] in various works. He distinguishes between those who are immediately present to me now, my contemporaries, those who are absent or dead, those who belong to the past, those who will be my successors, possible people, putative people, fictional and imagined people, and so on. (p. 111)

Husserl's definition of the we-world is the interrelationships I share with those around me, those who have come before me, and those who affect me in all manners in which the social world infuses us together. These interrelations constitute my intersubjectivity because my sense of self comes out of the collective horizons that my sense of self is situated. Along with the broad horizon of the we-world, Husserl also uses the term *Mitwelt*, which loosely translates to describing the world of those who I belong with, or who I associate as being "alongside" (Moran, 2017, p.101) myself. Husserl's use of *Mitwelt* acknowledges how the social world provides the sense that "there are other sides" (Moran, 2017, p. 101) that comprise our intersubjectivity because we interrelate with others in the social world. Indeed, the *sidededness* of the social world comes from the sense of "co-belonging" (Moran, 2017, p. 101) with others.

For Husserl, the phenomenology of the social world is a co-existence amongst other intersubjectivities. Describing the phenomenology of the social world, then, includes the phenomenon of intersubjectivities co-creating each other in the spaces of sociality. As a result,

Husserl uses the word *Mitsubjektivität* to describe the phenomenon of "co-subjectivity" (Moran, 2017 p. 110) because subjectivity is necessarily constituted by an *inter* quality. Moran (2017) notes that Husserl's phenomenology of being-in-the-world describes the co-existence of "intentional subjects operating together in a shared 'intersubjectivity'" (p. 110) where the horizon of the self always interrelates with others in the life-world. These structures of interrelation, then, co-produce the "horizon of the we" (Moran, 2017, p. 111) where the horizons of intersubjectivities blend, blur, and even clash over time. For Husserl, the phenomenology of the social world necessarily includes the on-going affectivity of history on the sense of self as well. Moran (2017) writes:

> Husserl is aware not only that the social world is built upon tradition and incorporates the sedimented achievements of generations of anonymous others (everyday language is a repository of such sedimentations), he is also aware that even the everyday world is layered and structured in complex ways. Husserl introduces his notion of 'life-world' or 'world of life (*Lebenswelt*) as his shorthand for all these complex interconnections. To be human is to be already en-worlded. (p. 112)

For Husserl, being in the world affects and creates the sense of intersubjectivity, and it comes from the layers that structure the social world. His term life-world includes the affectivity of traditions and heritages because intersubjectivity involves moving through a world that is always in a process of socially layering itself over time. How Husserl wrote about the phenomenology of the social world assumes that the social world is a living phenomenon, and it lives through the process of intersubjectivities co-creating themselves.

It is Husserl's methodology of the life-world and its assumptions about intersubjectivity that serves as the basis for Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Affective

phenomenologists of literature are not just concerned with how literature moves us, affects us, and shifts our orientation while we read, but how a sense of orientation comes from our embedded existence in the life-world in general, and the clashing of social horizons in particular.

When scholars practice the affective phenomenology of literature, they approach the orientation of the narrator, and how they orient their reader in their story, as indicative of a life-world. In other words, the effects of a life-world reveal itself in the orientation of the narrator's voice: what they want you to know, what they negate, what affects them and what doesn't, how they speak of an event, how they generalize and how they speak of someone else. Indeed, how the narrator appears in a text speaks of a particular life-world through the mechanisms of their telling. And the mechanisms I am referring to in particular are literary devices and modes of speech.

The life-world in which we inhabit affect us in different ways, and how we use language to tell stories transmits the ways in which we are affected by our life-world accordingly. Indeed, culturally constructed meaning is passed on and develops through this transmission. With literature, scholar of affective phenomenology must consider how the narrator's voice not only speaks of a specific life-world but the particular assumptions about the world too. These assumptions tend to rest in the rules for conventions and can go by unnoticed as they are repeatedly used and historicized. It is through the application of an affective phenomenology that the assumptions that come from particular positionalities in the life-world can be revealed and interrogated.

Here, though, I must note that I am veering into the sticky territory of referring to the relationship between the narrator and the author's voice. How does the affective phenomenology of literary fiction see the relationship between the narrator and the author? This is a question I

first addressed in an earlier draft, then felt necessary to take out, but then challenged again to include a few sentences on my thoughts on the whole matter. If a literary scholar wishes to know how the method of affective phenomenology addresses the space between the narrator and the author, I will say that this method allows for such discussions. This method approaches this space with an understanding that it exists, and we can speak about how the author's assumptions can characterize the narrator's voice. Although literary scholars hesitate to speak on behalf of what an author intends, this method includes the ability to demonstrate how an author's assumptions about the world emerge in how they imagine their story worlds. This is why it is necessary for this method to situate literary devices as objects with an orientation in the space of the text.

**Conclusion**

An affective phenomenological approach to narratives attends to the "texxture" that is produced during the experience of reading. How we feel through the sensual space of touch, sight, sound, and the transmission of an atmospheric feeling produces the spectra of reading. It is an experience that is cyclically sensual and affective up until the book is put down. A phenomenology of narratives demonstrates how literary devices emotionally touches and orients the reader, while also tending to how literature can make and re-makes the reader. Literary fiction doesn't just emotionally move us though. It can shift our sense of being in the world because its shift *comes from* that which is peripheral to our self. When we reach for the book, we are reaching for an experience that makes us disappear, hoping to come out of the experience anew and changed. It is in these moments of reaching that we bring literature into our being to cause a transformation of the self. It is because of literary fiction that we experience a magic that

comes from the world beyond the text and how the life of that world comes from the tapestry of human co-existence.

If we consider describing how it feels to be part of a community, our sense of subjectivity necessarily feels joined, affected, and historical. The phenomenology of connection comes out of the bonds we share with those around us and from the integrity of the various social spheres we associate with. How we move, perceive, and interact in the social world speaks of these layers of our intersubjectivity. However, experiencing the life-world and how the life-world co-creates our sense of intersubjectivity is not the same for everyone. Sometimes the clashing of cultural horizons can be a jarring experience because it goes against the *givenness* of certain modes of being-in-the-world that are culturally root for some, which means it's culturally foreign to other.

For affective phenomenologists of literature, this is where there is a potential for radical shift in the history of a literary canon can occur. The beauty of writing literature is that literary conventions are already culturally determined. However, it is the ongoing activity of artistic expression that enables devices to be used in radical and new ways each time they are utilized. Indeed, sometimes the act of writing can be so liberating for the writer that they produce an epiphenomenal experience that is disrupts and challenges the assumptions in literary devices and the assumptions in the canon as well.

By including the phenomenology of the social world in the affective phenomenology of literature, it allows us to understand how intersubjectivity is affected and oriented by the voice of a narrator. As a result, this approach brings the sociology of the life-world into closer conversation with literary studies in a big way. To be sure, the affective phenomenology of literature this is not the study of how meaning, in a uniformed sense, has some kind of impact on the reader, but how constructed meaning is transmitted through the act of reading, and in doing

so invokes emotional responses. It is this clashing of horizons—the horizons in the narrator, the horizons in the language, the horizons of the reader—and its "texxture" produces an awakening in those it affects.

## Chapter Two: Applying the Method of Affective Phenomenology to Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

> What was I thinking of? How could I have imagined him so poorly? Not noticed the hurt that was not linked to the color of his skin, or the blood that beat beneath it. But to some other thing that longed for authenticity, for a right to be in this place, effortlessly without needing to acquire a false face, a laughless grin, a talking posture. I have been careless and stupid and it infuriates me to discover (again) how unreliable I am. -The narrator of *Jazz* pg. 160.

This is a moment in Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz* (1992b) when the narrator utters a realization that they have about themselves, and in doing so, re-orients the novel entirely. It occurs about two thirds of the way through the text when the novel regresses to 19th-century Baltimore; to a moment when Violet and Joe Trace's own familial histories intersect years before they actually meet. The narrator describes the moment when a character named Golden Grey learns that he was born from a white mother (Vera Louise) and a black father (Henry LesTroy) who was one of Vera Louise's slaves. Once learning his truth, Golden Gray is overcome with a desire to find his father, to see him, and hopefully to hold him. The narrator is moved by Golden Gray's desire to share this truth with his father. In fact, the narrator is so moved that they admit to feeling guilty for not truly seeing and imagining the nuances of these characters. In this moment, the narrator admits that they now see how acting from a place of their authentic self can be both painful and liberating. As a result, the narrator, reacts by orienting themselves from their own truth. That is, their own desire to liberate themselves from the inhospitable hold their carelessness has fostered in them. In doing so, it effectively changes the phenomenology of the text.

When we examine the epigraph through the method of affective phenomenology, we can see how the narrator transforming right before our very eyes. It is a transformation that occurs

through their sudden emotional openness to the world, past and present. This transformation begins with their feeling struck by Golden Grey's choosing to find his father, as well as seeing him hold the hope of finding his him in the future. In making this decision, the narrator sees Gold Grey exhibit a clear sense of himself and it is held in his imagined future. The narrator, then, in turn regards themselves in their position as the narrator. Suddenly, the narrator wants to embody the integrity needed to be a reliable storyteller, to be able to feel the beyond-ment of themselves. They feel ashamed and guilty for how much their judgment has affected their ability to see these characters in their truth. As a result, the narrator feels fury and frustration because their own feelings of judgment and hostility has not given them a clear sense of direction in the world. For Morrison, fury is the ignition for the narrator's agency, and it strives from and towards the desire to be true to themselves and to be true to what they imagine as possible.

Upon reading this passage for the first time, I felt awestruck and astonished because in *Jazz* unreliability is situated as a disorientating disposition. Morrison took a literary device of the narrator's voice and imagined it in terms of emotion and affect. This passage emphasizes how the narrator's emotions are affected by their world, past and present, and also how those emotions affect that world, present and future combined. In *Jazz*, Morrison demonstrates how the narrator's intersubjectivity and their intentions affect the direction of the narrative. Through the method of affective phenomenology, we can see how the narrator's sense of self directly comes from how they exist in the novel's space. In this passage, the narrator realizes how they have been situating themselves in the space so far, how their disposition affects their proximity to the characters. It is in the moment we can see that there is a spatial quality to how Morrison wrote literature. If we apply the method of affective phenomenology to the emotions and moves the narrator makes as

they come to imagine? Golden Grey, we can make visible what Morrison is trying to get the reader to *see*—what is behind the narrator's unreliability.

Phenomenon is the outcome of a gaze and when we see changes in objects that exist in the world, those changes are indicative of affects. The affects can be indicative of emotions that relate to past events, past interactions, or even past traumas. When we apply the method of affective phenomenology to this passage in particular, we can begin to understand how the narrator's sense of self prior to this moment is tied up with their feelings of loss, judgment, and shame. Since the narrator does not resolve these feelings, or reconcile their sources, they ultimately contribute to maintaining an inhospitable disposition to anyone who tries to connect with them—even the characters who colour the narrative landscape of the novel.

In this chapter of my project, I will apply the method of affective phenomenology to instances in the novel where the narrator reveals and conceals the sources of their feelings of bereavement, hostility and judgment, which foster their inhospitable disposition towards the characters and the world around them. Then, through this reading of *Jazz* I will demonstrate how Morrison situates authenticity as the ultimate act of liberation.

Applying the method of affective phenomenology to any piece of literature is a way of seeing how the literary object of an unreliable narrator is affected by those who also exist in the spatial-temporality of the story world. When the method of affective phenomenology is applied to the unreliable narrator in *Jazz* it means we are being sensitive to what is revealed and concealed by the narrator's actions and emotions. As readers, from our viewpoint, when the narrator admits to being "unreliable," it is a phenomenological experience for us. It is phenomenological because we can see how the entire narrative transforms into something new once the narrator accepts how wrong they were to let themselves be navigated by their feelings

of judgment and hostility. When we apply the method of affective phenomenology to *Jazz,* we can see how the narrator's admission changes their regard for the characters and in effect transforms the trajectory of the narrative up until its end. Indeed, through the method of affective phenomenology we can see how the literary device of the narrator's voice is subject to being affected while also affecting the narrative of a novel.

In pursuit of this reading, I will provide a brief sketch of how other scholars have approached *Jazz* in the past. Most importantly, I will demonstrate their relevance to my own application of an affective phenomenology to the novel and how my approach to *Jazz* is supplementary to existing commentary on the Black aesthetic in *Jazz* as well as its contribution to American Black literary traditions. In the following survey, I will briefly summarize three specific reoccurring topics that run through the literary criticisms of *Jazz*. Then, I will demonstrate how each these topics are relevant to my method of approaching *Jazz* through an affective phenomenological lens. Finally, I will situate my reading of *Jazz* and explain how the method of affective phenomenology contributes to this scholarly landscape because it helps us understand Toni Morrison's *Jazz* through Eve Sedgewick's concept of "texxture" (pg .23) that I discussed in chapter one in relationship to the narrator's voice.

**Scholarly Landscape**

*Jazz*'s scholarly landscape can be summarized in terms of the various ways in which literary critics map the Black aestheticism that characterizes the novel. Whether it's examined through its aesthetics as a "bibliobject" (Stewart, 2013, p. 427), or examining the novel as a "Talking Book"—a trope in the African American Literary Tradition (Jones, 2018, p. 96)—scholars can't help but situate their analyses of *Jazz* in the intersection of its materiality with its expression of Blackness. Here, I find my method overlaps with Jones's (2018) ""look. look. look.": The Work

of Black Aesthetics in Toni Morrison's Jazz" in particular. In her article, Jones (2018) approaches *Jazz*'s Black aesthetic as something that is more "sonic" than visual (p. 96). For Jones (2018) and other scholars of Black aestheticism, there "visual paradox" at the "center of Afro-American thought" (p. 96) and Morrison's *Jazz* resumes the unfinished business of the sonics of Black visual aesthetics. Jones (2018) asserts that *Jazz* is a "double-voiced" book that talks through its "free indirect" literary form, while also "voicing" a "meta-discourse on black representation across time and texts" (p. 97). Jones's theory of *Jazz* being a "Talking Book" is extremely useful because it sheds light on the difficult problem of articulating how *Jazz* is all of these things and also *a voice*. Yes, it is true that Morrison offers evidence and works from a tradition that invites us to read the narrator as an object—a book sculpted by its material—which speaks of its culture through the form of its narrative. But also, and at the same time, Morrison invites us to read her narrator as an embodied affective person. Here, an affective phenomenological reading would supplement this specific lineage of scholarship.

In addition to the overlap of the novel's sonic qualities of the voice and its materiality, over the years numerous scholars have also examined and analyzed the relationship between the novel's musicality and prose style. These authors either examine how the musicality of jazz influences the novel's rhetorical strategy (Ludigikeit, 2001; Farshid, 2012; Jones, 2020; O'Meally, 2022) or investigate what the novel's rhetoric of "unreasonable optimism" (Richards, 2022, p. 359) reveals about jazz music as a cultural expression. While Ludigikeit, Farshid, Jones, and O'Meally attempt to map the jazz-like characteristics of Morrison's writing and trace it back to its roots in African American cultural history, Richards reverses the directionality of this analysis. By examining the roots of the rhetorical strategy first, Richards argues that the essence of the Jazz Age can be found in the linguistic techniques of *Jazz*. The relationship between the

cultural expression of blackness inherent in the prose style of the novel dominated the scholarship of *Jazz* all the way up until our current moment. Following the events of George Floyd's murder in 2020, though, a shift began to occur in how literary scholars approached Morrison's *Jazz*.

It's worth noting the rich resurgence of contemporary readings of *Jazz* and Morrison in the era of the BLM movement by scholars such as Alexandra Smith (2021) and Andrew Scheiber (2023). In Smith's (2021) article, she examines how the City streets are a character unto itself because they encapsulate the "dynamic interplay between the spatial and social dimensions of life" (p. 100). Scheiber (2023), on the other hand, explicates how the descriptions of the City streets speak of Morrison's agenda as a Black artist. Compared to Smith, Scheiber analyzes how the streets of the City are described without mention of there being courts or a police present in the setting. By approaching the novel's setting from the descriptions of what characterizes the urban space, Scheiber (2023) addresses how Morrison "treats questions of policing and justice in *Jazz* (p. 198). In both of these readings, the authors analyze what the streets in *Jazz* tacitly reveals about Morrison's experiences as a Black author in America. This contemporary scholarship demonstrates a trend in how scholars want to approach the setting of the novel in new ways. Here, they directly address how the description of the setting speaks of the author's lived experiences of their world. In this kind of scholarship, the space between author and literary devices are being interrogated and examined. It is here where my own approach can be situated within this scholarly milieu. This trend in scholarship is interested in the ways in which the life-world of the author clearly influences and speaks through the characterizations of *Jazz*'s setting. Applying an affective phenomenological reading of *Jazz* contributes to this trend and

takes it further by demonstrating how the author emerges in the literary devices that characterize their fiction.

In thinking about how these scholars characterized the voice of the narrator as the book, or jazz music, and including the setting, I couldn't help but notice a pattern occurring throughout these interpretative strategies. What my own strategy revealed to me is that each of these authors gendered the narrator in a way that speaks of them as scholars. For example, scholars referred to the narrator with female pronouns when they were female (Farshid, 2012; Jones, 2018; Jones, 2020) or male pronouns (Ludigkeit, 2001) when the scholar was male. In these instances, these gestures speak of how these scholars relate to or even situate their own identities in the voice of the narrator. Other scholars, on the other hand, used they/them pronouns (Smith, 2021) or no pronouns at all (Richards, 2022). Whilst some critics ascribe gender to the narrator, they also describe the narrator as possessing the "fluidity" (Smith, 2021) of a "spectre" (Jones, 2018) and concede that they have an "omniscient" position in the text (Farshid, 2012; Jones, 2018; Smith 2021). Here, gendering extends the descriptive terms the scholars use to define the narrator, while also personifying the narrator as an actor in the novel. By gendering the narrator, these scholars confine the narrator to societal identifiers, which makes it easier to extend their imagining of this voice as embodied and present in the text. Yet, this porcess of gendering calls into question how gender harmonizes with their explorations of how the narrator's voice is also the materiality of "a book" (Stewart, 2013), "an object" (Stewart, 2013; Farshid, 2013; Jones, 2018), the trope of a "Talking Book" (Jones, 2018), "jazz music" (Ludigkeit, 2001; Jones, 2020; O'Meally, 2022; Richards, 2022) or the "streets" (Smith, 2021; Scheiber, 2023). When I noticed the different pronouns that characterized each of these approaches to the narrator of *Jazz*, it brought something to light to me about the practice of interpreting texts. When it comes to

attempting to distance oneself from one's practice of analysis, such an attempt is almost futile. Here, we can clearly see that scholars can't help but have their identities shape their readerly experience, which clearly also shapes their interpretative strategies as well.

The narrator exists as an embodied person in the text because the novel continuously gestures towards such aspects of embodiment. Scholars are aware of this, and we use pronouns to gesture back to these elements. Yet these scholars also argue that this narrator is music, an object, its setting, and a voice. I think what sticks out to me the most is that this pattern makes me wonder about how ascribing gender speaks of the one ascribing it. Here I found myself wondering: Do we playfully give objects genders because once we interpret a voice as gendered its objecthood inherits the process of gendering automatically? This is where my application of the method of affective phenomenology to *Jazz* worked beyond the text, and influenced my own reading of *Jazz*'s scholarly landscape.

When I read *Jazz* through the method of affective phenomenology, it revealed to me that there is no instance that occurs in the novel where Morrison explicitly reveals the narrator's gender. There are times where gender is suggested to exist in their life; however, the exact gender of the voice is never given. In this space of ambiguity, which an affective phenomenological reading afforded me, I wanted to state why not gendering the narrator in my own scholarship mattered and what it says about my strategy. I prefer to leave the narrator in the space that Morrison clearly situated them in for us as readers, which is a space that is both explicitly not given and yet implicitly suggested. This for me is what the nongendered pronouns of they/them do for my reading strategy. It acknowledges where Morrison left the reader space to exercise their imagination, thereby inviting them into the novel with an expressed intention to do so. What my reading revealed to me is that even scholars implicitly insert themselves into the space

of the novel, even when we attempt to practice analytical distance again and again. It is only by taking stock of how these scholars write about *Jazz* can we see how interpretive strategies reveal the most personal touches of ourselves in our modes of reading. Mine included.

Applying the method of affective phenomenology to *Jazz* resolves these gaps in these conceptualizations of the novel's narrator with a method that demonstrates how multiple truths exist simultaneously in the same space at once. Here is where I situate my work with these scholars that discuss the musicality of *Jazz* as a "Talking Book." When we consider the phenomenology of the Jazz Age, an affective reading of the text will supplement these approaches that are interested in the music itself. Approaching the text from an affective phenomenological perspective not only embraces the nuance of contradictions but also argues that the novel embraces the embodiment of contradictions on purpose. When we examine how Toni Morrison wrote and spoke about the rich history of the Jazz Age, we can approach the contradictory evidence of the narrator as something embodied and constitutionally their truth.

**“intricate *and* wild”: The Texxture of the Jazz Age**

In the following, I wish to provide the reader a window into Morrison's own method and methodology of how she thought about and understood the Jazz Age. I argue, that if we look at the Jazz Age through Sedgewick’s (2003) idea of "texxture" (p. 14) and Morrison’s own writings on the Jazz Age, we can see that the Jazz Age is characterized by these contradictions that are embodied by the narrator. As I noted in chapter one, the narrator's voice is comprised of the emotional "history of their experiences," and that history has a "density" to it, and when it "transmits" through their voice, it affects the narrative.

As phenomenology attends to the spatiality of things, we need to approach the narrator's emotions as something that affects the space and time of the narrative. In addition to this, I need

to observe the narrator's emotions as well as how they are a voice that is rooted in time and in a history. As a result, we need to consider how the setting of the novel—the Jazz Age—"blends" and "blurs" with the narrator's own constitution. This consideration is necessary because there is an affectivity between the narrator and narrative. In other words, the phenomenology of the narrator and narrative in *Jazz* are not separate; instead, they comprise the "texxture" that is its literature. As we think of how the narrator's inability to imagine—or, how their emotions, history, and orientation—affects the narrative, we begin to understand how it affects the direction of the narrative. Because the "texxture" of *Jazz*—its phenomenology—comes out of the affectual transmission between its emotional/historical layers.

In *Jazz*, an affectual transmission is occurring between the narrator and the narrative, which comprises its literary "texxture." Throughout the novel, we can see how the narrator's voice and emotions are spatially and temporally situated because of how it mimetically transfers to the narrative as a whole. The narrative's spatial-temporality comes from the narrator's own emotions—their judgement and hostility—which directs their sense of self. However, the narrative's spatial-temporality takes place during its own time in history: the Jazz Age. For an affective phenomenology of literary fiction to account for the affectual transmission between the layers, or "texxtures" of a narrative, we cannot discount how the "texxture" of the Jazz Age and the narrator are homogenous. Understanding the affective phenomenology of *Jazz* requires us to incorporate how the spatial-temporality of the narrator as a voice—how Morrison uses it as a literary object—and the narrative as a space/time in African American history blend and blur together.

In the essay "The Source of Self-Regard" (2020), Morrison describes the shift in focus between *Beloved* and *Jazz*. Particularly, how she wanted to move away from exploring the

history of African American people in *Beloved* to understanding how the culture of African American people emerges from its history. In this essay, Morrison describes how the Jazz Age—as a historical and cultural moment for African American people—was a specifics kind of generative space for creating a sense of self-regard and agency during the great migration. For Morrison, the Jazz Age exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between self-regard and cultural creativity (Morrison, 2020). And as she came to writing *Jazz*, Morrison was interested in exploring what specifically distorts the process of becoming a person in a time, in a history, and in and amongst others. That is, how the sense of self can flourish or collapse under certain circumstances that also contribute to the process of becoming (Morrison, 2020). Morrison was particularly interested in exploring how the Jazz Age proceeded from the time following the abolition of slavery in America.

Morrison wanted to start the next novel in *Beloved*'s trilogy with a question concerning the contemporary definition and understanding of jazz as a cultural phenomenon. That is, how the culture of jazz is an American phenomenon. In this "The Source of Self-Regard" (2020), Morrison describes the Jazz Age as an era with its own uniquely "American posture" (p. 317), and it was its own American modernism:

> It's an American cultural phenomenon, and as such, it's more than any of the definitions or connotations that I have mentioned. It's really a concept. And it's interesting to me as a writer because it's so full of contradictions. It's American, indisputably American, *and* ethnically marginal. It's black *and* free. It's intricate *and* wild. It's spontaneous *and* practiced. Its exaggerated *and* simple. It's constantly invented, always brand-new, but somehow familiar and known. (p. 317)

As Morrison wrote *Jazz*, she considered the ways in which the Jazz Age was a "posture," a way that people held themselves. It was the skeletal/musculature of a burgeoning culture that was becoming its own expression of America. This mode of being came from the expression of a people who were living contradictions. They were black/free; self-determining citizens who are subjected to the systematic oppression of being Othered; intricate/wild; comprised of a fierceness that is complexly interrelated; spontaneous/practiced; uninhibitedly proficient through a systematic exercise of being a collective.

Through an affective phenomenology, the Jazz Age can be described as the blending and blurring of modes of being-in-the-world during a pivotal period of transition in American history because it is African American history. The Jazz Age can be thought of as the phenomenon of intersubjectivities co-creating each other in the spaces of sociality. Morrison was aware of what marked the spatial-temporality of the Jazz Age's "texxture" and she situated it in the contradictions of being Black in America. For Morrison, the "texxture" of the Jazz Age—how it felt to live in such a time—had everything to do with the feeling of being contradictory. Being contradictory was the source of the cultural life of the Jazz Age. The "life-world" of the Jazz Age is where the Black subjectivity related "with other;" and the contradictions can be thought of as the "horizon of the self" interrelating "with other in the life-world." The contradictions, I argue and by way of Morrison, cultivated the energy for transformation. Indeed, the agency of African American culture, the homogenous agency of a people comes from being contrary.

Morrison understood the Jazz Age at the level of its affectual transmission; the ways in which it was experienced and expressed in the "cultural signs" of the music, as well as the "customs," "literature," and the "migration" pattern of African American people during this era (p. 318). Even how Morrison articulates the effects of Black people having agency over their

own culture is spoken through the language of affective phenomenology. She states: "That period, the Jazz Age, was a period when black *people placed an indelible hand of agency on* the culture scene. And this agency—unremarked in economic and political terms—informs my project" (Morrison, 2020, p. 318, emphasis added). How the Jazz Age surface in the cultural signs of its era is the evidence of the intentions of African American people creating their culture. In *Jazz*, this period of transition is imagined as being a *dense* feeling, a *dense* "texxture" that arises out of being contradictory; the blending and blurring that has always been being Black in America. For Morrison, the substance of African American culture is this "texxture." Accordingly, the contradictions exist simultaneously and cohesively in the novel as well. What's more, they coalesce in the objecthood of the narrator's voice. When we examine the descriptions of the narrator of *Jazz* through the method of affective phenomenology, suddenly the "texxture" of the Jazz Age is the narrator's voice.

Morrison writes about the intricate ways the Jazz Age affected the imagination of black people. Particularly, how it was an era that enabled them to engage in the "personal" and "imaginative freedom" (p. 318) of expressing their stories of love and despair in blues lyrics. Indeed, Morrison (2020) notes that the Jazz Age fostered a "creative agency" (p. 318) for African American people. It was a creative agency that was rooted in deep and profound relationships based in love, where the beloved was either chosen or requitted and not because of "filial blood relationships or proximity," but because it was "accidental and fated" (Morrison, 2020, p. 319). These choices of loving were gestures that were rooted in love for the self, in the desire to establish how one regards themselves. Morrison (2020) acknowledges that the lyrics of blues songs reveal the power that resided in the new agency of the era. It was an agency that enable the "reconstruction of identity" (p. 320) where compromising what one could or could not have in a

lover also supposes that reconciling a lost love is an equally loving gesture. When reconciliation becomes the source of agency, Morrison (2020) states, a "third thing grows, where despair may have been" and it was this third thing that "propelled the writing" (p. 320) of *Jazz*.

Ironically, as the freedom afforded by the Jazz Age allows the freedom to choose with whom you love, that kind of affectionate freedom is not without its experiences of heartache. In *Jazz,* Morrison imagined how such heartache would resonate and affect a person, and she situated this kind of heartache in the narrator. In the following section, I will examine instances where the narrator gives the reader a window into their emotional disposition, particularly, when they express bereavement and loss, and judgment and hostility. In doing so, the method of affective phenomenology will show how the narrator attempts to turn away from healing the hurt that is at the site of these memories. When we examine these instances through affective phenomenology, we see how such emotions are necessarily tethered to events in their life, which the narrator seems reluctant to resolve. By turning away from these memories, the narrator struggles to feel open to others; they demonstrate a reluctance to be hospitable. Additionally, an affective phenomenological perspective of this demonstrates how the narrator's orientation is affected by their emotions and relate to the direction of the narrative. By examining these emotions through the method of affective phenomenology, we can begin to grasp how emotions spatially and temporally affect the sense of being embodied, oriented, and either opened or closed towards others. In these instances, the contradictions of the Jazz Age not only constitute the narrator's voice, but the contradictions constitute their physicality and by extension, how their memories affect their willingness to change.

**"maybe too much": Bereavement and Loss**

In *Jazz*, the exact location of the narrator—that is where they are situated—is besieged with contradictions. This is evident in the descriptions of their own physicality, which defy clarity. For example, in one moment they admit that they "haven't got any muscles" yet they describe how they "watch everything and everyone" from a distance (Morrison, 1992b, p. 8). It can be easy to imagine the presence of the narrator existing without a body, while also still having the capacity to see and speak. It is easy to concede because we hear a voice when we read, and we can both imagine them existing in our reading but also understand that voices can be bodily and unbodied in the imagination. At this point, the stretch to hold this contradiction in the mind of the reader. Although the narrator exists in the novel, not having any muscles would preclude that they don't in fact live in the story world, but instead, they exist in the practice of reading the novel. As a result, this declaration enables the assumption that the narrator simply lives in the existence of their own voice, which is to exist in the space of the act of reading. So, it is easy for a reader to concede to this slight contradiction concerning the description of the narrator in the opening pages. For a reader of fiction, the composite of the narrator's existence can be something that is not physical; it can even exist outside the temporality of the setting. Yet, a page later, the narrator states:

> I've lived a long time, maybe too much, in my own mind. People say I should come out more. Mix. I agree that I close off in places, but if you have been left standing, as I have, while your partner overstays at another appointment, or promises to give you exclusive attention after supper, but is falling asleep just as you have begun to speak—well, it can make you inhospitable if you aren't careful, the last thing I want to be. (p. 9)

On one page, the narrator confides in the reader that they do not have a body, but they still witness the world of the novel. Then, a page later, the narrator admits to how long they have lived in a state that is "closes off" from other people, and how this state affects their way of thinking about their own life and their own experiences. Here, the narrator shares the origin of their deeply unsettled mode of feeling bereft; it is from being betrayed by a lover, and the loss of their love. Additionally, we are suddenly told that people *do* interact with the narrator. These people encourage them to "come out" of their shell "more," and have done so with the expressed concern for their wellbeing. In the opening pages of the novel, *where* and *in what state* the narrator exists in the structure of the novel's literariness is immediately presented as contradictory. Similar to how Morrison describes the Jazz Age, the objecthood of the narrator's voice in *Jazz* is constituted by contradictions.

In *Jazz*, the contradictions concerning the narrator's exact physicality and constitution are never resolved either. Instead, the contradictions are just there; they are a matter of what constitutes the phenomenology of the narrator. In tandem with these contradictions, though, their judgment, disappointment, and hostility—which originates from a deep sense of loss—is what orients them and by extension the narrative as well. As they acknowledge their bereavement, they also confide in the reader that they don't want this loss to make them "inhospitable" because it's not who they "want to be."

When reading *Jazz*, these contradictions disoriented me as a reader. As a result, I tried to find my own clarity of where the narrator is supposed to be located in the novel. By making the narrator's spatial-temporality contradictory, though, I then realized that the "texxture" of reading *Jazz* is a feeling of resistance. The phenomenology of the Jazz Age is the agency of the narrator. Although resistance and creativity coloured the Jazz Age, such constitution overlaps with the

narrator as an embodied being. Indeed, from chapter one, the "horizon" of the narrator's sense of "self" "blends and "blurs" with the Jazz Age as a "horizon of the we."

Here, Morrison asks her reader to exercise their ability to imagine the voice of a novel as constitutively contradictory. That is, the narrator's broken heart is their truth, and their ability to see everything existing in the novel because they are the narrative's voice, which is also the truth. Here, Morrison does not need to resolve these contradictions or tries to explain how such contradictions exist because the novel is both the collective creative agency of the Jazz Age and the narrator's own sense of self. Moreover, we the readers are tasked with the work of imagining the possibility—and confronting our own assumptions—that existing in a state of contradiction is real and can constitute a living reality. Although the contradiction concerning the physicality of the narrator are never resolved, the narrator in fact contradicts themselves when they talk about what it means to be hospitable.

**"welcoming and defensive at the same time": Hospitality**

When the narrator tells the story of a lover betraying them, it suggests the origin and site of their being an unreliable storyteller. They admit that other people accuse them of being "closed off," then, they share a moment in their life that affected this hesitancy to trust others and to let other in. They share their own story of feeling fragile, rejected, and abandoned, and how such a state affected their sense of direction in the world. And yet, at the end of their defending their skepticism of others, they insist that being inhospitable is the last thing they *want to be*. Herein lies a contradiction, or the hypocrisy in their own character and how they regard themselves. It is this disoriented self-regard that underlies their inability to be reliable to the reader and least of all to themselves. From this hypocritical utterance, they then segue into talking about how:

> Hospitality is gold in the City; you have to be clever to figure out how to be welcoming and defensive at the same time. When to love something and when to quit. If you don't know how, you can end up out of control or controlled by some outside thing like that hard case last winter. (p. 9)

Here, the narrator goes into detail about how hospitality functions like a currency in the City. And, knowing that hospitability has value in the City, the narrator expresses skepticism towards the gesture of being open with others in participating in these transactions. There are two contradictions in this utterance. First, despite previously stating their fear of being inhospitable, they have already internalized this disposition. Hospitality is the state of being unequivocally open and welcoming to others. Hospitality is grounded in bringing others into a space, your space, and having that space affected by their presence. We can think of hospitality as the act that enables affectual transmission between people in a social space. Indeed, spaces that are open are characterized by affectual transmissions. There is no guardedness in hospitality, there is no hesitancy at its threshold. And yet, the narrator truly believes that one can be open and defensive at the same time. Second, although the end of the quote refers to the scandal of Violet and Joe, what we can take from this utterance is a deeper understanding of how the narrator's memories—of their broken heart—affects how they orient themselves towards others. That is, their fear of trusting others that originated from a cheating lover affects a desire to have complete control over the transactions that occur between themselves and others. In other words, the narrator is contradictory in how they regard themselves as hospitable because it is evident in the tone of their narration.

**"Sth": Judgment and Contempt**

Prior to their engaging with Golden Grey, the narrator fails to see how the characters are attempting to learn and grow from their mistakes. Indeed, the narrator doesn't see how the characters are learning to exercise their own agency in America during the 1920s either. As the narrator witnesses the characters in their world, they express judgment and hostility towards them. In fact, Morrison opens *Jazz* (1992b) not with a word, but with a sound "Sth" (pg. 1), the sound of air being sucked through the teeth. It is sounds made when a tongue presses against the front teeth and air is sucked into the mouth. The sound is also the result of air resisting the mouth, resisting the speaker. It is a resistance to being taken in with ease, to being taken it at all. "Sth" is the sound of air working against something that is self-imposed, something that slows down the inhalation, and it works from the tongue's pressure. The tongue, the receptor of taste causes the mouth to make this sound. The tongue is what we use to determine what is delicious, or conversely, what is disgusting for us to ingest. It is the receptor that judges; it is the sense that gives us our authority to judge something as welcomed into the body or unwelcomed entirely. Thus, "sth" is a sound that conveys judgment, and it is a judgment that precedes the narrator's declaration that opens the story: "Sth, I know that woman" (Morrison, 1992b, pg. 1) they tell the reader. From this one simple sound alone, we can get a sense of how narrator's inability to imagine is stifled because they feel contempt. It is a tone that conveys their disgust towards their flaws. Here, Morrison establishes a palpable sense of the narrator's unwavering judgment and hostility towards the characters. In *Jazz*, these emotions are what orient the narrator's sense of knowing themselves and the world around them. The literal sound of the tongue, the sense that establishes taste is what gives the narrator their authority. For the narrator, their sense of knowing the characters comes from their feelings of judgment and hostility. Although these emotions give

the narrator their sense of knowing the world, it is the emotions of disgust, judgement, and hostility that also *dis*orients them in the presence of these characters as well. Here, an affective phenomenology of literature recognizes that emotions have their own spatial-temporality to them. The narrator's emotions don't exist just as feelings. Instead, we see how the narrator's emotions actually take them through the space of the novel.

The narrator keeps a distance from the characters and the story world and their inhospitality colours how they see the world. Throughout *Jazz*, the emotions that orient their sense of embodiment not only distances the narrator from the characters but also disable the narrative from moving forward. In the novel, Morrison demonstrates how the narrator's disposition affects their ability to move forward, to even look beyond these feelings.

**Nostalgia, Interrupted: The Turn to the Past**

The affectivity of the narrator's "unreliability" is situated in terms of how it disorients their ability to move through the world. Prior to the events of Golden Grey, the narrator hits an emotional impasse concerning how they see Joe. By attuning ourselves to the affective phenomenology of the text, we can understand how the narrator's emotions spatially affect the direction of the narrative itself.

There is a moment prior to the regression when the narrator does not grasp the truth of Joe Trace's character. The effects of this inability to grasp Joe—the narrator's inability to be affected by Joe and to feel empathy towards him—leads the narrative not forward, but backwards into Joe's past. If we turn to the section of the novel that precedes Golden Grey, we find the narrator describing their memories of their own past. In this moment of the novel, the narrator waxes nostalgically about the "range of what an artful the City" can be for those living its "condition" (Morrison, 1992b, p. 118). Here, the City invokes a feeling of yearning for more in

those it affects. The narrator then describes how the music of the era characterizes those who feel such yearning, and the pain that can come from yearning. Then, Joe Trace comes into the narrator's visual field and the narrator projects their judgement and distain onto him. For example, as Joe listens to the street singer, the narrator quips, "Joe probably thinks that the song is about him" (Morrison, 1992b, p. 119). Then, the narrator confidently declares to the reader how much they "know him so well," while they assume Joe's thoughts are "loose" and wanting like the "sweetbacks"—slang for womanizing men—who were off to the side of the music (Morrison, 1992b, p. 119). Finally, a few pages later, the narrator completes their characterization of Joe by declaring him a "rat" for cheating on Violet (Morrison, 1992b, p. 121) and for letting it go on for so long. In this moment of declaration, the narrator's judgement, hostility and contempt towards Joe arrests them in this spot. Here, they are fixating and closed off from the world.

As a result of their fixation, the narrator's agency is arrested, in addition to the narrative as well. Here, Morrison is drawing a connection between the narrator's voice and the ability of the narrative to move into a future. Due to the narrator's feelings of disgust and contempt from seeing Joe, though, the narrator is unable to imagine where to go next. It is in this moment that the narrator cannot avert the direction of their ire. It is fixed on Joe. In essence, the narrator's inability to change how they see Joe disorients the narrator's relationship to the space of the text.

While Joe can move into the future, the narrator cannot escape the pull they are subjected to by their feeling of bereavement keeps them locked in their past. After he finishes his rebuttal to the narrator's contempt, the section of the novel ends and, turning to the next page, the narrator retorts:

> Risky, I'd say, trying to figure out anybody's state of mind. But worth the trouble if you're like me—curious, inventive, and well-informed. Joe acts like he knew all about what the

> old folks did to keep going, but he couldn't have known much about True Belle, for example, because I doubt Violet ever talked to him about her grandmother—and never about her mother. So he didn't know. Neither do I, although it's not hard to imagine what it must have been like. (Morrison, 1992b, p. 137)

The novel's regression to Joe and Violet's past begins with the narrator completely rejecting Joe's gesture to connect with them. Not only does the narrator negate Joe's attempt to reach out to them, to move them to be empathetic towards him, the narrator accuses Joe of being "risky" with his assumptions, perhaps even careless with what he thinks he knows because, to the narrator, Joe is assuming what the "old folks did to keep going" back in True Belle's era before the Jazz Age. Although Joe attempts to speak for himself, the narrator rejects Joe's attempts the way they were rejected by their lover. Instead, the narrator admits that they, like Joe, may not know what "anybody's state of mind" was prior to the Jazz Age, but they also admit that "it's not hard to imagine." It is in this wishful desire to imagine what others must have experienced that the turn to the past occurs.

It is through the act of imagining that the narrator creates a path for themselves to move into the past so that they can see—with clarity—their own disposition through the past. Indeed, they are convinced that Joe's own history will disenfranchise him from how he knows himself through his experiences.

With that said, the turn to the past does not go as planned for the narrator. Instead, they encounter Golden Grey and his story, and they end up being transformed as a result of witnessing Golden Grey's gesture to reconcile with his father. Furthermore, when the narrator characterizes their shortsightedness, they do so by stating it's because they "imagined" Golden Grey and the

others "so poorly." Here, Morrison situates the imagination as the ability to feel beyond the self. Indeed, to have the ability to exercise the imagination is to feel the beyond-ment of embodiment.

**Imagination: An Embodied Sense of Beyond-ment**

The method of affective phenomenology not only considers how reading literary fiction gives the reader the feeling of extending "beyond the boundaries" of "subjectivity" but how the feeling of beyond-ment can also be spoken of "for the narrator too" (p. 22). I use the term "beyond-ment" to refer to what the narrator senses beyond the emotional embodiment of these feelings. When the narrator turns to the past and encounters Golden Grey, it puts the narrator in a position where they suddenly see beyond their bereavement, judgement, and hostility. When the narrator encounters Golden Grey's story, they are so affected by his gesture to find his father that it shakes their imagination loose. They suddenly realize that these emotions are the source of seeing these characters disingenuously. Indeed, these emotions are the source of the narrator seeing the characters so inauthentically. Suddenly, though, they realize that they can see beyond Golden Grey's physical attributes—like the "color" of Golden Grey's "skin"—and it is to this "other thing" in Golden Grey that strives for "authenticity" instead. It here where the narrator realizes that they wish to embody and move through their own authenticity too.

Here, sensing the beyond-ment of their emotions enables the narrator to see what lies even behind their bereft disposition. It's a heart that has the freedom to love, the freedom to choose, and the freedom to make the gesture beyond hurt and pain. It is a heart that has the freedom to imagine something beyond a loss, to make something else appear. When the narrator suddenly imagines something beyond their immediate impression of Golden Grey, it makes it possible for them to reach past his and their own pain to something authentic in themselves as

well. When the narrator suddenly senses the beyond-ment of Golden Grey's authentic gesture, it comes out of their own gesture to see Golden Grey beyond his pain too.

Nearing the end of *Jazz*, the narrator grasps the affectivity of their bereavement. From witnessing of Golden Grey's desire to find his father and connect to his familial truth moves the narrator so deeply that they turn to their own self-regard and discover what lies at its site. They find their own pain, their own loss, their own inability to see their own truth, that is, how their heart is bereft and yet always yearns to be loving and to be loved. From witnessing Gold Grey, the narrator sees how they continuously harmed their own ability to see themselves *in* others. From this site of witnessing, the narrator grounds their self-regard in their desire to reconcile their grief and to live in their truth too. For the narrator to see themself in Golden Grey sprung from witnessing his vulnerability and hope of finding his father and for his father to see him as well. Indeed, to bring his father into his own self-regard, to affect and be affected. For Morrison, the inclusion of others into how you know yourself generates a willing heart, an authentic self, and a stimulated imagination. A willing heart is the grounds for a self-regard that is hospitable to their truth. The method of affective phenomenology gives the reader the resources to see just how delicately Morrison situates emotions and their affective phenomenology throughout *Jazz.*

In *Jazz*, a complexity of emotions comprises the narrator's orientation, and Morrison posits what would necessarily occur in order to dislodge such a disposition. When we approach *Jazz* through the method of affective phenomenology, we can understand how the narrator's "unreliability" is tied up with emotions that stretch beyond the bounds of the text and into the life of the reader. In this moment of the narrative, the narrator's sense of self is bereft and needs to imagine themselves beyond the hold it has on them. Indeed, in the novel, holding on to such emotions speaks of how looking to the past and can give someone perspective and the

imaginative fuel to reach beyond feelings that arrest the self. From a distance, the past and present perspective can affect a sense of self into changing directions. In *Jazz*, when the narrator looks to the past, they are so affected that it gives them a renewed sense of self, a renewed orientation, and an inspired imagination. A truth emerges for the narrator, and it orients them in a manner that reaches beyond the text in an extraordinary way. It is a gesture that perceives and generates the contradictory "texxture" of *Jazz*.

**Final Thoughts**

*Jazz*'s narrator only comes to realize how their disposition disorients them after they grasp the complexity of Golden Grey's feelings. And the language that Morrison situates the pain of the narrator's disorientation is in the language of negation; of "not noticing" his hurt, and "not" linking it to something other than the colour of his skin. When the narrator tries to articulate the source of Golden Grey's pain, they locate it in his attempt to establish a sense of self that is absent from falseness or performativity. The narrator, then, realizes that Golden Grey's orientation moves towards authenticity and moves from a point of origin that is his truth. In fact, it is a pain that aches to establish Golden Grey's own sense of self as a son to a father. It is a yearning that is not bound to a construct of race or class either, but instead it is something that reaches for a sense of authenticity, the maintenance of his beyond-ment that is his truth, which is tethered to his past.

What is important to note about *Jazz*'s narrator is how their disoriented sense of self moves them through the novel and leads up to the moment of their transformation in a time prior to the Jazz Age. An affective phenomenologist of literary fiction understands that orientations involve the process of "turning towards objects"—that is, literary devices of all kinds—that in turn "affect" our sense of being "oriented spatially" in the novel itself. As a result, being open

and hospitable to devices within texts, then, affects and orients one in the space of the text. Here, phenomenology teaches us that being oriented with your surroundings has to do with being affected, which moves the body spatially in contexts of all kinds.

When we apply this understanding of spatial orientation to what is occurring in *Jazz*, we need to understand how the narrator's inhospitable disposition towards the characters takes them to this moment with Golden Grey. That is, what affects the narrator to turn to the past when Violet and Joe Trace's individual histories intersect well before they ever met. An affective phenomenology of literature approaches this moment with the question: How and why does the narrator turn to the past? And how does hospitality fit into this turn?

When we examine the turn to the past through the method of affective phenomenology, we can understand how Morrison explores the condition and composition of being the narrator. This method allows us to ask: What is being concealed behind this distant and judgmental disposition? What is the underlying story behind its disposition? What is the history of such a tone towards others? More specifically, though, how do emotions affect the spatial-temporality of a narrative through its narrator and the "texxture" beyond the text too?

In *Jazz*, the narrative turn to the past can be seen as two kinds of spatial-temporal movements. The first kind of movement can be understood in terms of the narrator literally stepping back from the established characters of the novel. This movement enables more distance from the characters, and by extension, how these characters elicit the narrator's emotional response. And the second kind of spatial-temporal movement can be understood in terms of the narrator being re-oriented away from the 1920s Jazz Age to a time that preceded it. By moving towards this moment in the past, the narrator *gains* the ability to reflect upon their own disoriented self. The narrator also generates fuel for their imagination. In doing so, this

reflection enables a new orientation to emerge because it is oriented by something else, and it is intentional.

When the narrator refuses to let go of how much they are affected by their realization, they open themselves up to being reoriented by their surroundings. It is an openness that invites the world into their sense of self, which generates a self that is hospitable to the world. Indeed, it is an orientation that comes from a fearless desire to establish how one regards themselves—as someone who acts out from their own self-regard. It is as if once the narrator grasps the effects of themselves engaging with the characters authentically, they put into action their wish to be more hospitable to those within reach. When the narrator calls attention to their lack of responsibility towards seeing the truth in the characters, the entire plot is affected and transforms. It's as if the once inhospitable narrator suddenly wishes to be hospitable to the story and those beyond it as well. Here, Morrison is emphasizing the connection between literature and the reach of its affectivity.

**Conclusion**

Affective phenomenology reveals to us how emotions relate to our sense of embodiment. Through this project, I have demonstrated that emotions bring us into a future that is oriented by that particular emotion. There is a futurity to gratitude, as well as to grief; there is even a futurity to disillusionment and including a futurity to shame. There is a future to every emotion and when we apply the method of affective phenomenology to see how emotions orient us in the world, we can understand how they can consciously create a sense of ourselves. Indeed, it is a sense of ourselves as embodied and affected by the world in which we live. Moreover, this method enables us to describe how the imagination allows us to see beyond a particular—perhaps short-term—emotional futurity. By giving us a means to sense our beyond-ment, the imagination can move us towards a sense of ourselves rooted in who we want to be as opposed to who we are when we feel an emotion. Indeed, we can imagine ourselves as someone who can achieve a graduate degree in order to move past the initial fear of such a journey. We can imagine ourselves as a contributing member of a queer culture in order to move beyond the feeling of rejection that comprises sections of our life-world.

In chapter one, I began by defining the experience of reading from the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sara Ahmed. By way of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception,* I explained how reading begins with sensing and attending to a novel as an object. I showed how perceiving the narrative is when the self is mapped back onto the experience of being-in-the-world as a reader of a novel. By way of Sara Ahmed's "Happy Objects," I explained that the phenomenology of objects affects us when we encounter them. From these two scholars I situated the novel as the object that we not only encounter but affect us as readers. It is here where the method of affective phenomenology goes deeper into the experience of reading

because reading necessarily involves being moved by the narrator whose orientation is constituted in the space of the novel.

From here, I used Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* to demonstrate how the literary device of the narrator's voice is not only an object but an object that orients the reader. Understanding the narrator's voice in this way reveals how they intend to affect the reader by way of how they tell their story. Indeed, the narrator's act of telling transmits emotions to the reader. By way of Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect,* I illustrated the mimetic transmission of the narrator's telling as the moment when the narrator and reader align in the space of affects being transmitted. It is in this space of affect where I illustrated how the experience of reading can be thought of as the layering of the emotional spectrums of the narrator and the reader. Through Eve Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*, I explained how reading is a "texxtured" experience that is dense with historical, material, and emotional information. Feeling the experience of reading is not one directional; instead, it is an experience of blending our sense of ourselves with the narrator's and blurring the boundaries between the story-world and our experience of being-in-the-world. This blending and blurring of our experience of being-in-the-world affects how we sense ourselves beyond our embodiment. That is, the sense of beyond-ment of the body—whether it's beyond the immediate surrounding or beyond the sense of the present moment—is the imagination extending embodiment into possible futurities of the world. Here is where I demonstrated that the affective phenomenology of literary fiction includes the social world in its theoretical horizon. Indeed, what affective phenomenology shows us is that the futurities our emotions afford us comes by way of how we interact with others in the world. It is from this space of interaction—between self and world—that being-in-the-world means continuously reconstituting what each of us determines as our mode and orientation of being.

In chapter two, I applied the method of affective phenomenology to Toni Morrison's novel *Jazz.* In *Jazz,* the method revealed how Toni Morrison situated the imagination as something integral to the futurity of an American Black embodiment. Affective phenomenology allowed us to see how the narrator's truth is constitutively contradictory because they are the "texxture" of the Jazz Age. For Morrison, this era was characterized as a time when Black culture kept reaching, creating and re-creating, just gesturing towards all futurities. Through an affective phenomenology, we see how important it was for Morrison to situate the narrator's transformation in the past, to a time prior to the Jazz Age. Indeed, when the narrator turned to the past, it gave them the affectual experience they needed to imagine a future self that was beyond their bereavement, loss, disgust, and hostility. Here, Morrison demonstrated how memory is non-linear because emotions are non-linear. Memories arise out of present experiences and present reactions to being affected in the world. As such, memories and their constitutive emotions tether us to their ongoing emergences, which characterize our lived experiences. It is here that the method of affective phenomenology of *Jazz* shows how past, present, and future work in synchronicity and constitute embodiment.

We could think of affective phenomenology in terms of how futurities arise from our emotional dispositions. Furthermore, we can situate stories in this lens by examining how they map such futurities onto the reader. Indeed, the affective phenomenology of literary fiction gives us a way of seeing how the imagination is integral to our sense of ourselves as beings in the world. Narrative and the narrator's voice speak through a particular view of the world and the role of the self in the world. Applying affective phenomenology to these voices allows us to see how such world views enhance their lives or inhibit their own ability to know themselves.

From affective phenomenology, we can consider how the imagination is generated by the act of reading and engaging in stories that move us emotionally. When the imagination is stirred to feel beyond-ment, it exercises its ability to think of ways of moving beyond emotions that might impede its own ability to act and move in the world. As the body senses itself in the world, emotions may disorient the sense of self by becoming fixated or distracted by a particular state of being one disposition. The imagination allows us to reach beyond such instances by giving us the space to move through and past such emotional obstacles. The imagination can be thought as a space where possibility meets embodiment and being-in-the-world becomes being-in-possible-worlds.

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