All the metaphors you are: conceptual mappings of bebop in James Baldwin’s ‘Sonny’s Blues’ and Jack Kerouac’s On the Road

Abstract:

This article explores how two influential mid-twentieth-century texts incorporated jazz, and bebop in particular, into the context of a literary narrative. Drawing on recent work in linguistics, it argues that ‘Sonny’s Blues’ and On the Road may be distinguished on the basis of the different underlying conceptual metaphors that inform their representation of jazz. Baldwin’s text describes it first as a form of revolt; then as an updating of a coherent blues ethos. Kerouac’s text constructs jazz as a journey outward into the ineffable, a mystical transport beyond the self. Despite these differences, the depictions of jazz in these texts play analogous roles since they enable the narratives to move from problem to solution.

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References:


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