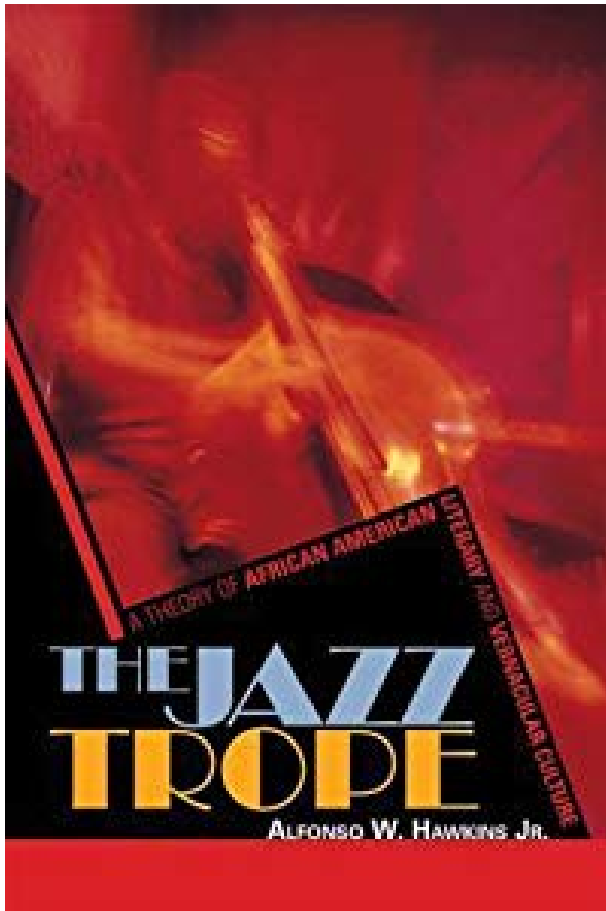


The Jazz Trope: A Theory of African American Literary and Vernacular Culture



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The Jazz Trope takes a look at the African American lifestyle through the lens of jazz, blues, and spirituals. Through the pioneering efforts of Albert Murray, Ralph Ellison, Houston Baker, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Ishmael Reed, Amiri Baraka, and other notable scholars who have related jazz, spirituals, and blues to African American life and culture, The Jazz Trope offers an opportunity to add scholarship to the perception of African American identity as a creative attempt to survive a unique history and struggle. Transcending structure and the perimeters that it limits, African American musical statements were produced out of a human need to be free. Using jazz as a metaphor for escaping slavery, jazz can be seen as a creative attempt to exceed restriction through the act of improvisation; jazz takes a known melody and changes it to create a personal identity. The literary genre of African American life reflects this melding of musical milieu. It tells through tropes of the folktale, novel, self-script, slave narrative, myth, and legend a unique American experience and history. This book also explores motives and schemes that were hidden behind musical codes, illustrating that jazz (interrelated with its foundation in blues and spirituals) existed as a pre-musical statement and, then, manifested as it is more popularly known: as a musical statement. The Jazz Trope allows students to grasp the jazz song structure within this work and liken it to the tropes that it emits: a true American identity.