

**A SCOTTISH METAMORPHOSIS:
JACKIE KAY'S *TRUMPET***

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ABSTRACT

As an adopted, black, lesbian, Scottish, poet, Jackie Kay's uncommon personal particulars have been the main source of inspiration for her literary career. In her first novel, *Trumpet*, awarded with the 1998 Guardian fiction prize, Kay raises issues concerning the racial, sexual, social and national construction of an identity, as jazz-trumpeter Joss Moody's adopted son, Colman, tries to cope with the shocking post-mortem revelation that his father was in fact a woman. The novelistic account of Joss Moody is based on the real story of the American jazz pianist Billy Tipton. Kay transfers Tipton's story to a Scottish context, changing in the process the racial colour of the musician, and adding autobiographical elements related with race, sexuality and Scottishness. Joss Moody and Colman are the two main characters through whom Kay explores her own unconventional profile. This paper aims at analysing Jackie Kay's fictional articulation of her own specificity in connection with Scottish subjects. The notion of hybridity and issues relevant in deconstruction and queer theory have been used in the discussion. In *Trumpet*, Kay celebrates the creative energy of hybridity, and therefore, suggests a revision of Scottishness, based not on fixed abstract categories or stereotypes, but on personal experience and actual response.

If I was not myself, I would be somebody else.
But actually I am somebody else.
I have been somebody else all my life.

It's no laughing matter going about the place
 all the time being somebody else:
 people mistake you; you mistake yourself.
 (Kay, "Somebody Else," *Off Colour*)

It is unusual to find a tender story with a happy ending in Scottish fiction. Tragic, violent or sour denouements often result from the impossibility of coherently developing a consistent patriarchal behaviour in the peculiar Scottish political context. The happy ending of Jackie Kay's first novel *Trumpet* (1998)¹ confirms this tendency by focusing on a queer, satisfactorily self-constructed masculinity. The plot is structured around the post-mortem revelation that the famous black jazz trumpet player, Joss Moody, who lived as a man and had a family, was in fact a woman (born Josephine Moore). When Joss Moody's adopted son, Colman, learns at the funeral parlour that his father's body was not male but female, he tries to revenge by collaborating with tabloid journalist Sophie Stones in a sensationalist book about his father. As Colman investigates Joss's past and manages to reconstruct his personality and identity, he shifts from an initial rejection and loathsome disgust for his family —“I'll write his fucking biography. I'll tell his whole story. I'll be his Judas” (*T* 62) —to the affectionate acceptance that “He'll always be daddy to me” (*T* 259). This sudden realization provokes Colman's awareness of his own personality and his subsequent dropping Sophie's project of a gossipy portrayal of his father as a transvestite or a pervert. Far from scandalous episodes, *Trumpet* concentrates on sensations, memoirs and emotions.

Jackie Kay transfers on her characters her unconventional traits and manages to convincingly shape the puzzle of her personal identity. By turning traditionally unrelated traits into a plausible realistic synthesis, Kay reminds us of Robert Young's suggestion that “Hybridity [...] makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different” (26). In *Trumpet*, blending becomes reverential. The novel's spatial and temporal dimensions, its characters' dialect, race, sexuality and names, and even its formal structure are subject to a process of enactment, which challenges clear-cut boundaries of differences and absolute notions, and celebrates the hybrid quality whenever it is realized in any text and in anybody.

Hybridity, as Ashcroft has pointed out, is “One of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in post-colonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (118). He then adds that “Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc.” (118). The aims and processes of hybridization as well as the creation of hybrid beings or objects are problematic, because they involved a parallel process of domination, annihilation and creation of subalterns. In *Trumpet*, hybridity in any of its manifestations does not imply an immediate danger either for the establishment, or for the hierarchical ordering where hybrids are placed as subalterns.² In postcolonial theory, concepts such as miscegenation, racial hybridity, mongrelity, cross breeding and *métissage* have been debated in relationship between the disastrous consequences for the dominated zone and the dangerous degeneration of the domineering power. In nineteenth-century Britain, on the contrary, racial amalgamation was used with positive signification to counteract German claims of racial purity, and to

illustrate “a society that had progressed through racial amalgamation” (Young 17). But, certainly, colour was not a striking component in the formation of the British racial amalgamation up to the nineteenth century, as it is now. Jackie Kay is not seeking to explore whatever degree of racism British society may score at present, but she seems to be interested in depicting the process to a (theoretically utopian) multiracial Britain.³ Hybridity carries along other concepts such as sexuality and fertility. Robert Young asserts that “hybridity and homosexuality did coincide to become identified with each other, namely as forms of degeneration” (26). In *Trumpet*, Joss Moody’s body “changes shape. From girl to young woman to young man to old man to old woman” (T 133). However, as Sophie Stones reflects in amazement, he “isn’t a straightforward tranny” (T 128); indeed nobody noticed that he was in fact a she. “Nobody called her bluff” (T 128). Joss Moody’s self-constructed sexual identity cannot easily escape from the interest of current lesbian and gay theory. Although there is no emphasis on sexuality, no criticism to homophobic attitudes, no political activism, no open challenge to social organization or moral principles, the novel largely illustrates subtler features typical of lesbian writing. For example, readers are constantly reminded that identity is never fixed but fluid, since almost every character bears a second or false name. Colman finds it difficult to describe himself in clear-cut terms, and it is only through love and affection that he is able to put his hybrid components in order. In *Trumpet*, the discourse of race and sexual orientation coalesce into a more complex discussion of constructing (personal, social, cultural and national) identity in contemporary Scotland (and Britain). Moreover, considering the postmodern metaphysics of deconstruction, hybridity, in Laura Doan’s words, “inevitably poses a dangerous challenge to the comfortable dualisms (nature/culture, natural/artificial, female/male) upon which patriarchal hegemony —and the hybrid itself— is based” (152). This essay, thus, will concentrate on the diverse manifestations of both identity and unity carried out by Jackie Kay in *Trumpet*, as a reflection of her own personal identity and Scottishness.

The ambivalence of the word title *Trumpet* pervades any element of the work. As a verb, “trumpet” is, according to Kay, both “the idea of Joss announcing himself, [and] [t]he journalist trying to trumpet her story” (“Interview”). But it also emphasizes the attitude of the listener/reader to what is being made public, which is certainly controlled by the ideological stance of the narrator. Thus, once Sophie Stones’ sensationalist book has been discarded, Colman’s perspective (full of renewed sympathy and love for his father after his visit to his grandmother’s, Edith Moore) prevails as the dominant point of view of the story. As a noun, “trumpet” refers directly to the jazz musical instrument. Jazz provides a model for the narrative form. The story progresses as the different characters report their attitude towards the central event of Joss Moody’s revealed secret. Like in jazz, by adjoining and combining individual pieces, Kay manages to produce a unifying image of Joss Moody. She said in an interview:

I was interested in how a story can work like music and how one note can contain the essence of the whole. I wanted to write a novel whose structure was very close to jazz itself. So the registrar, the drummer, the cleaner all interested me because they gave the same story a different note. (“Interview”)

Joss Moody's personal choice of sexual identity fits in the jazz ambience. In fact, Kay's story is originally based on the life of the American jazz piano player, Billy Tipton (1914-1989), who lived as a man and adopted three children. Kay transformed white American pianist Tipton into a black Scottish jazz trumpeter, and enriched the tale with a lot of autobiographical elements. The instrument is significant for its ambivalent form. When Joss plays it, the combination of the character and the instrument grants Joss wholeness, as if the phallic trumpet physically compensates for his absence of male sexual members. But a trumpet has also a concave end, combining thus the masculine and the feminine in its form, like Joss's appearance which, being a woman, nobody could ever see anything else but a man's.

As an instrument, "trumpet" reminds us of the musical element in poetry. Jackie Kay's debut was a collection of poetry, *The Adoption Papers* (1991), whose first part told the story of a black girl adopted by white parents. Divided in chapters and covering three decades, Kay uses three voices (the girl's, the adoptive mother's and the birth mother's), which are differentiated in the poems by the use of three corresponding typographies. The blend of narrative, dramatic and poetic elements is a constant feature in Kay's literary career. Apart from poetry and fiction, she is also the author of children poetry, scripts for stage and television, and a profile of the American blues singer Bessie Smith. Written by a poet, the sentences of *Trumpet* are melodious, rhythmic, almost measured, prompting readers to proceed aloud in order to enjoy its musical element.

Besides, as pointed out above, the formal structure of *Trumpet* is based, like a play, on the combination of different points of view towards Joss's secret. Bakhtin defined hybridization as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor" (358). It is not easy to distinguish the linguistic consciousnesses, the social languages encountering within the arena of utterance in *Trumpet*. The novel, far from capturing different social discourses, confronts the private and the public realms of individuality, the self-constructed and the ordinary, the authentic and the tabloid. While different reactions to Joss Moody's sexuality are explored, the editorial narrative voice and the characters' voices, which are heard in the first person, connive at idealizing the jazz musician. In fact, only Sophie Stones, who is searching for the scandalous, gossip side of the story, uses the feminine third person pronoun to refer to Joss.

In the novel opening section, Millie MacFarlane (Mrs Millie Moody, Joss Moody's widow) tells in the present tense her anxiety at both suddenly being the target of tabloid cameras and her son's intention of writing a book about his father. Safe from the journalists in her holiday house at Torr⁴—but still shocked, lonely and sorrowful—Millie seems to tape her memories of Joss for Colman.⁵ Her point of view, reported in the first person in the sections entitled "House and Home," creates a plausible tone of both melancholy and affection for her late husband that will prevail in the whole composition. Sophie Stones's voice is also heard in the first person, as she plans the book, feels increasingly attracted to Colman and has to cope with his refusal to continue with the project due to his "morals" (*T* 259)—that is his renewed respect for his father and family. She always refers to Joss as a lesbian and is intrigued

by the causes, which prompted the process of Josephine Moore's becoming a man. Sophie Stones never met Joss, nor was she keen on jazz. She concentrates on the aspects of interest for the tabloid morality. Nevertheless, her point of view does not conflict with Millie's owing to the authorial manipulation, which ridicules the journalist and the morality she represents. Her name is ironic. Sophie comes from the Greek word for 'knowledge,' but in fact she is not clever and hides it with fashion and Italian clothes: "I pull my hair up and put some pins in. I look clever with my hair up. I knew I had it in me. Clever Sophie" (*T* 128). "Stones" is referred not only to her weight, as she is very fat, but also to her intellectual abilities. Colman is the third character whose voice is recorded in the first person, though he is also shown externally in the third person. At the beginning he is very shocked and hurt because of the news, but he has no arguments to offer a negative portrait of his father. His very problem, then, consists of a sudden crisis of personal identity. Therefore, the multiplicity of points of view does not simply show the impact of the transvestite affair from different perspectives, but it also contrives to apprehend Colman's movement from an unrealised identity (obviously caused by applying typical criteria of the patriarchal, colonial discourse) to self-awareness. This suggestion explains why Colman, who has to sort out his own self, is shown through both internal and external perspectives. The points of view of the characters shown by an impersonal third-person narrator reinforce the multiplicity (hybridity) characteristic of *Trumpet*. The sections entitled "People" are devoted to present the reactions of Doctor Krishnamurty, Mohammad Nassar Sharif (the registrar), Albert Holding (the funeral director), Big Red (the drummer), Maggie (the cleaner), and May Hart (an old schoolfriend), when they learned that Joss was in fact a woman, or, in the case of May Hart, that Josephine Moore turned into a man and had a wife. Their reactions bring along their personal (respectively medical, legal, physiological, professional, domestic and juvenile) reflection on the slippery essence of identity itself, a central subject in current lesbian and gay studies. *Trumpet*, thus, is not the sensationalist book that Sophie Stones wished to write. Her objectives and the information she managed to obtain are in the book, but she never had access, for example, to Joss's last letter to Colman, nor to Millie's memory accounts: "If I was going to make a tape, I'd make it for Colman" (*T* 1). The novel turns out to be the completion of Joss's prediction in his last letter: "I will be your son now in a strange way. You will be my father telling or not telling my story" (*T* 277). As Colman's and Millie's affectionate point of view pervades the narrative, Joss is idealized, and consequently distorted. It is, therefore, Colman who is portrayed as a realistic, plausible character. Although the title, the jazz, mosaic-like structure, and the story underline the centrality of Joss Moody, the narrative technique foregrounds Colman's progress from the point of his identity crisis to his new self-awareness.

Jackie Kay examines by means of Joss "how fluid identity can be, how people can reinvent themselves, how gender and race are categories that we try to fix, in order perhaps to cherish our own prejudices" ("Interview"), a provocative statement if applied to the description of Scottish identity. But at the same time she also analyses by means of Colman the process of self-definition, of jumping to one side of the borderland into straight categories, which ultimately will always be essentially hybrid.⁶ The interest of the present discussion will be centred then on these two main

characters. On the one hand, Joss's construction of his sexuality emerges as a pivotal subject in self-definition, and, on the other, this is completed by Colman's attitudes towards fundamental dimensions that both Kay and her characters have in common, such as race and Scottishness.

Paradoxically, Joss's self-constructed masculinity resists a comfortable explanation within current lesbian theory. As it is well known, there are two main branches in lesbian studies. Roughly, one considers homosexuality in relationship with heterosexuality (i.e. differences between historical feminism and lesbianism, lesbian experiences within heterosexual environments, homophobia, activism, etc). And another—known as 'queer theory'—regards lesbianism from an exclusive lesbian perspective, rejecting heterosexual modes of analysis, in order to "prevent the heterosexist cleavage of sexual difference" (Case 305), and emphasizing the "potency of [the lesbian] agency" (Case 304). The unique quality of Joss's sexuality both escapes from any theoretical frame and is inscribed at the core of lesbian targets. Since he lived as an ordinary man, his very transformation illustrates Monique Wittig's differentiation between a lesbian and a woman. In her classic "One Is Not Born a Woman," she suggested that: "one feature of lesbian oppression consists precisely of making women out of reach for us, since women belong to men. Thus a lesbian *has* to be something else, a not-woman, a not-man, a product of society, not a product of nature, for there is no nature in society" (105). In Doan's words, Joss is "a hybrid—a third sex" (152). But the lesbian perspective goes beyond the mere discussion of a sexual stance into a more radical challenge to patriarchy. As Biddy Martin explains: "The Lesbian definition of herself is part of that larger movement by all oppressed people to define themselves" (279). In this sense, Kay's character proves adequate to explore the oppression attached not only to the lesbian sexuality, but also to *métissage* and the Scottish nation.

Josephine Moore/Joss Moody enriches the golden list of split-personality characters typical of Scottish fiction.⁷ When Josephine became a young woman Joss emerges as a young man, and the woman will only be apparent again at death. Edith Moore, Josephine's mother, never knew of her daughter's metamorphosis, although she regularly received letters and money. At the jazz clubs many people said that he had a baby face, but nobody ever suspected Joss was a woman. He led the normal life of a heterosexual man, were it not for his female body. The novel, then, does not foreground issues such as silenced same-sex affections, nor homophobic violence, political activism, or struggle for a happy-ending achievement of authentic sexual identity. In fact, following his death, he still passes successfully through the procedures of the patriarchal heterosexual legal system up to the Holding & Son funeral parlour, where its director made his secret public.

Soon after Joss's death, Doctor Krishnamurty started to fill in the medical certificate with the obvious details before her closer examination. She wrote "male" in the box for sex. Then, she discovered the bandages around his chest, and began to unwrap them as if it were layers of skin to finally realise that it was the body of a woman. Immediately, "She got her pen out of her doctor's bag. What she thought of as her emergency red pen. She crossed 'male' out and wrote 'female' [...]. She looked at the word 'female' and thought it wasn't clear enough. She crossed that out, [...] and print[ed] 'female' in large childish letters" (T 44). Once the biological (natural?) sex

is formally and officially stated by the scientific eye, Dr Krishnamurty “gave Mrs Moody a searching look, but found nothing in her face to indicate anything” (T 44). Similarly, the registrar Mohammad Nassar Sharif, from Bangla-Desh, is at a loss when Mrs Moody handed him the death certificate of her husband with the word ‘female’ on it. He noticed that Mrs Moody was not aware of the correction. She asked if Joss could be registered a man “in death as he was in life” (T 80). Obviously he cannot, but wrote Joss Moody on the ‘Green Form’ certificate for Burial, despite “Josephine Moore just plucked the name Joss Moody out of the sky and called himself this name and encouraged others to do likewise [...] [and it] was never officially sanctioned anywhere” (T 80).⁸ These professionals’ oriental family names contrast with the irony in Mr Holding’s. He thinks it his duty to correct the death certificate, in case it was wrong: “If he could have the satisfaction of brutally and violently obliterating ‘male’ and inserting female in bold, unequivocal [sic] red, then at least he would have something to do” (T 112-13). His sense of correctness is symptomatic of the violence and brutality of the social (patriarchal) group he belongs to; however, Jackie Kay prefers to concentrate on how this event undermines the logics of producing categories and fix notions. After Albert Holding disclosed to Colman his father’s secret, the narrator tells that:

the son’s face has repeated itself to Albert. That look of utter dismay and disbelief. That look of fury and sickness. It was quite an ordeal to witness. All his working life he had assumed that what made a man a man and a woman a woman was the differing sexual organs. Yet today, he had a woman who persuaded him, even dead, that he was a man, once he had his clothes on. That young man believed his father was a man; who was he to tell him any different? An entirely different scenario occurred [sic] to Holding. What if he had said nothing at all? Who would have been the wiser? What if he had simply waited until the embalmer had come and done her job? Dressed her up in the man’s suit and tie. (T 115)

The story of *Trumpet* is presented to the reader as a sequence of selected episodes. Readers, for example, never know anything about the family life in the early days when Colman was adopted, or about the exact moment Joss died, when coincidentally Millie had gone to the toilet, or about the details of Colman’s long visit to his grandmother, Edith Moore, which must have prompted his change of opinion. The most important item left unresolved is what caused Joss Moody to turn into a man, a question Sophie Stones asks permanently and strives vainly to give an answer. Trying to explain the case in patriarchal, heterosexual categories, the relationship between Joss and Millie could fall into a butch-femme lesbian model. But again this explanation should be discarded, as, interestingly enough, Case quotes Joan Nestle who claims that:

None of the butch women I was with, and this includes a passing woman, ever presented themselves to me as men; they did announce themselves as tabooed women who were willing to identify their passion for other women by wearing clothes that symbolized the taking of responsibility. (302)

The case of the American pianist Billy Tipton is often justified on professional grounds, since jazz musicians were generally male. Kay makes clear that Joss was determined to be a man, not for professional reasons, but for its own sake. Joss does introduce himself as a man to Millie. When, after months of going out together, he reveals his secret to her, she accepts his female body; but she always considered him as a man, as her husband. Millie's authentic sexual identity is central to a reliable understanding of Joss, since her point of view dominates the account of Joss's sexual behaviour. Throughout the novel, Kay insists on depicting Millie as a straight woman, without any sign of lesbianism.⁹ In fact, all the characters of the novel are supposed to be straight. It produces, then, a noticeable contrast between the clear, definite elements of what the characters say Joss did, liked or believed, and his own unsettled, most valuable 'queer' legacy he leaves to Colman in his last letter. Perhaps, in an effort to hide his true identity to his child, Joss only tells Colman the story of his own father in this letter. What is supposed, then, to be his "Last Word" (*T* 271), becomes the account of the arrival from Africa and subsequent naturalization of John Moore in Scotland. In the small part of the letter he devotes to write about himself, Joss emerges as an unfixed, unstable entity, to be (de)coded by Colman, and eventually by the (Scottish) reader: "I am leaving myself to you. [...] You will understand or won't. You will keep me or lose me. You will hate me or love me. You will change me or hold me dear. You will do either or both for years. [...] remember what you like. I've told you everything" (*T* 277). Thus, the unresolved sexuality of a woman, who turned into a male figure of responsibility, cannot be separated from other two unfixed dimensions, that Colman shares with his father: race and nation. Joss's resistance to self-categorize while at the same time establishing the signposts of his own self is one of the most remarkable achievements of the novel.¹⁰

Although Joss is based on the white American jazz pianist Billy Tipton, the black lesbian American blues singer Bessie Smith (1894-1937) represents an important reference as well. Jackie Kay, who was adopted by white parents, remembers when she realised that she was "the same colour as Bessie Smith": "The shock of not being like everyone else; the shock of my own reflection came with the blues. My own face in the mirror was not the face I had in my head" (*Bessie* 13). And she continues:

I did not think that Bessie Smith only belonged to African Americans or that Nelson Mandela belonged to South Africans. I could not think like that because I knew then of no black Scottish heroes that I could claim for my own. I reached out and claimed Bessie.

When I was a young girl, Bessie Smith comforted me, told me I was not alone, kept me company. I could imagine her life as I invented my own. (15)

Race is a fundamental aspect in *Trumpet*. Kay, in her rendering and exploring autobiographical subjects, must not have overlooked aspects related with the politics of inter-racial (homo)sexual relationships. Dollimore affirms that "Of the convergence of homosexuality and race, fewer still are prepared to speak, and those who have spoken have often done so in racist and/or homophobic terms" (332-33), which is not the case in this novel. Nevertheless, with the instance of Lawrence of Arabia in mind, Dollimore asserts that "For homosexuals more than most, the search for sexual

freedom in the realm of the foreign has been inseparable from a repudiation of the ‘Western’ culture responsible for their repression and oppression” (339). The realm of the foreign may arguably include cross-racial sexual relationships. Kay must have outlined her characters not only to study the reactions to the revelation of Joss’s secret, but also to examine the cultural factors that provoke these reactions. She cannot ignore that the *mélange* of races —and consequently of cultures— have often been linked paradoxically with both the decay of civilization and the generation of culture (Young 112). Coloured Joss’s marriage to white Millie reproduces his father’s union with Edith. Jackie Kay, a biological daughter to a Nigerian man and a Scottish woman herself, must be aware of Gonibeau’s description of “the active Aryans as the ‘pre-eminently male groups’ and the desirable yellow and black races as the ‘female or feminized races’” (Young 109). In *Trumpet*, while Millie misses the masculine presence of her husband, she remembers how Joss assured that she created him and was responsible for his success (*T* 36). Colman also remembers that he always insisted that his family was with him when touring, what strikes him as “unusual for a jazz man” (*T* 48). It is through his family, particularly through Millie, that Joss gains his sexual/social identity, which permits him to become the “Britain’s legendary trumpet player” (*T* 6). Kay inverts the distinction by attaching a colour to the wrong sex, and makes explicit the blurring of differences within the Moody’s “unconventional” marriage. In doing this, she underlines the potential creative energy involved in deconstructing, subverting categories, and implicitly in hybridity, “in the complex interplay of independence from and dependence on its biological precursors” (Doan 152).

Like Kay herself, Joss is racially a “zambo,”¹¹ and so is his adopted son, Colman, who has the same skin colour as Joss. When Colman is asked if he is coming “from Morocco, Trinidad, Tobago, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Jamaica,” he thinks “the next fucker that asks me where I come from, I’m going to say, yes, I come from Hawaii, Morocco, Trinidad, or any place they ask. What does it matter anyway?” (*T* 58). *Trumpet* also deals with the process of naturalization of black race in Britain.

John Moore’s father persuaded the captain of HMS *Spiteful* to bring the child to Scotland to be given some education. John Moore’s story “was the diaspora” (*T* 271). The distinguished family Duncan-Brae took him under their protection. He was Mr Duncan-Brae’s servant, and at the age of eighteen he “wanted away” and “became apprenticed to a Dundee house painter” (*T* 275). It is difficult to decide if the version of John Moore’s life, that Joss tells Colman in the last letter, is the authentic one, out of the alternative plausible accounts he had devised to counteract Colman’s patriarchal demands for a design of a family tree:

Look, Colman, I could tell you a story about my father. I could say he came off a boat one day in the nineteen hundreds, say a winter day. All the way from the ‘dark continent’ on a cold winter day, a boat that stopped at Greenock. Greenock near the port of Glasgow when Glasgow was a place all the ships wanted to go. [...] Or I could say my father was a black American who left America because of segregation and managed to find his way to Scotland where he met my mother. Or I could say my father was a soldier or a sailor who was sent here by his army or his navy. Or I could say my father was from an island in the Caribbean whose

name I don't know because my mother couldn't remember it. Or never bothered to ask. And any of these stories might be true, Colman. (T 58-59)

Whereas Joss finally certified the first version in the last letter, May Hart remembered that John Moore was said to have come from the West Indies (T 250). For Joss, the place of his father's origin is really immaterial. For him, black race, like jazz, is an all-inclusive concept. He believed that every black (British, American, Caribbean) person had built up a "fantasy Africa" (T 34), a utopian nation. That was the title of his first big hit, based precisely on his "strong imaginary landscape" of Africa.¹² Colman often accused his father of spending his whole time "worshipping black Yanks" (T 192), an accusation that he makes extensive to other black people obsessed by a history that is really not their own:

Black people and music. [...] Slave songs, work songs, gospel, blues, ragtime, jazz. [...] The stories in the blues. All blues are stories. Our stories, his father said, our history. You can't understand the history of slavery without knowing about the slave songs. Colman doesn't feel as if he has a history. Doesn't feel comfortable with mates of his that go on and on about Africa. It feels false to him, mates that get dressed up in African gear, wank on about being African with a fucking cockney accent, man. Back to Africa is just unreal as far as Colman is concerned. He's never been to Africa, so how can he go back? (T 190-91)

Whereas John Moore performed the diaspora and Joss romanticized it, Colman, as if he were Kay's mouthpiece,¹³ realistically rejects the sentimental idealization of a place long lost for his present generation in favour of a more natural, ordinary attitude to race in Britain. These three stages generate a parallel depiction of British white women attitudes to black race. Edith had to suffer the shock of a homehelp girl, Cathy, when she learned that the old lady was married to a black man, whom —Cathy thinks— looks handsome on the photograph. Edith watches Cathy "thinking things" (T 220). Cathy's silenced thoughts reflect the colonial ideological stance towards black people, characteristically related with exoticism, sexual energy and uncontrollable passionate drive. Millie experienced the racist prejudices of the mid-twentieth century, when her mother objected her marrying a "Darky" (T 27). Although she did not consider herself a racist, she did not want a dark man for her own daughter. In the third stage, Sophie Stones feels utterly attracted to Colman, whom everybody thinks of as a man with amazingly good looks. In *Trumpet*, Jackie Kay wants to depict Britain as an increasingly non-racist society, not because it has ceased to be racist, but because of the potential social energy of hybridity, of erasing differences and reinventing new orders.

Nevertheless, Kay, echoing Joss, cannot help being fascinated by the Harlem Renaissance, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Bessie Smith, jazz. The chapter entitled "Music" is strategically placed in the middle of the novel. It examines Joss's consciousness at the moment of his death. The narrator attempts to reach the core of his essence as "he loses his sex, his race, his memory" (T 131), only to discover that "The music is his blood" (T 135), that "Only the music knows everything." When he finally dis-

solves: “he is the whole century galloping to its close. [...] Scotland. Africa. Slavery. Freedom. He is a girl. A man. Everything, nothing. He is sickness, health. The sun. The moon. Black, white” (T 136). Jazz suits exactly Kay’s purposes: “identity within jazz is very fluid. [...] So jazz is a process just like what I was trying to say about Joss, constantly reinventing itself, constantly changing how it sounds” (“Jackie” 55). Like Joss’s sexuality and race, the world of jazz underlines the emphasis on eliminating difference between (patriarchal, heterosexual, racist) fixed categories. In fact, one of the things of his father that Colman cannot understand is why he did not show that he was a woman in the “cool” 1960s, when any new oddity was most welcome; or why he did cross-dress, if “the jazz world was so ‘anything goes’” (T 57). The world of jazz is presented as a realm in itself, a peculiar territory within British society inhabited by newly created people, by romantic pioneers of a new vision. This is what Millie feels in one of the first nights she listened to jazz at a Glasgow club:

It is dark now outside. The streetlamps cast their yellow lights on the streets. A lot of us leave The Wee Jazz Bar at the same time. We look like people that have just been created out of the night, people who have just landed on the planet all at once together with the same pioneering, fierce look on our faces.
(T 18)

This world of jazz that Millie perceived operates as a utopian possibility of change and renovation of the (cultural?) forces that regulate our present system of hierarchies, and our modes of constructing difference and identity, including the notion of Scottishness. In *Trumpet*, sexuality and race are inseparable of nation, as Millie gracefully tells that Joss’s “skin was the colour of Highland toffee” (T 11).

Jackie Kay, like her character Colman, was born in Edinburgh in 1961, and was then adopted. Like Joss and Millie did, her white adopted parents planted outside the house a cherry-blossom tree as old as she was. They both grew up in Glasgow. Colman moved with his family to London when he was seven, and Kay did so much later. While Kay regards herself as Scottish, Colman initially mirrors the unsettled identity of Kay’s friend and poet Carol Ann Duffy, whom *Trumpet* is dedicated. As Gonda suggested “Duffy’s status as a transplanted Scot and long-term resident in England places her on the boundary between assimilation and difference, belonging and exclusion, familiarity and alienation” (18). At the end of the novel, Colman’s sense of Scottishness cannot be separated from his culmination of a long lasting process of adulthood and maturity, following his father’s death.

Like for black race, three chronological stages can be distinguished in the presentation of Scotland. For John Moore, Scotland was a “Ghost country” (T 271) when he arrived in Greenock on a foggy day. John Moore’s early twentieth-century Scotland is determined by class difference and master-servant relationship, but it is also a country with scope for personal autonomy and success, as he manages to earn a “plausible living” (T 275) as a house painter. Joss represents the Scottish diaspora (he leaves Scotland because, unknown to Millie, his mother is still alive and is ignorant of her daughter’s transformation). Consequently, Scotland is romanticized by Joss as a kind of “fantasy Scotland.” He took black pudding for breakfast, drank malt whisky, and acquired a holiday house on the coast of Fife. The third step is explored through Colman.

Although his father kept telling him that he was Scottish, because of his birthplace, Colman “didn’t feel Scottish. Didn’t feel English either. Didn’t feel anything” (T 51). In fact, his perception of racism in London is related not with colour, but with accent: “When I came home with my cockney accent, my father got all cut up. He’d shout, ‘Speak properly!’ Seriously. It was a fucking nightmare moving down here with that accent. I got ribbed. Non stop. Got it both ways. London was seething, racist” (T 51). The chapter entitled “Travel: *London*” deals with Colman’s mixed feelings about race and Scottishness, as he approaches Carlisle, and then Glasgow, by train. Since his father died, Colman starts to appreciate whisky, a process parallel with a conviction that he has got a stronger, more powerful sexual energy.¹⁴ Colman’s progressive acceptance of his father, symbolized by his progressive liking of whisky, reassures his masculinity both sexually, with Sophie Stones, and socially, when Bruce Savage, the butcher of Kepper, offers his condolences, and becomes the first person who tells him “Sorry to hear about your dad” (T 269). Readers are invited to believe that Colman is undergoing a discovery and an acceptance of his Scottishness, although this is never told and certainly never described. It is a process that culminates when he decides to comfort and protect his mother, an unconventional ending as far as Scottish fiction is concerned.

Millie had once a dream of Joss and herself at Victoria coach station. “Joss has got tickets which just say *Scotland* on them. He gives me a large plastic bag with *Selfridges* written on it. He shoves me into the Ladies and says, ‘Quick! Get changed!’ (T 96). In the age of poststructuralism, deconstruction and Lacan, the writing—the material inscription—of Scotland is ironic. As a signifier stamped on a ticket, *Scotland* is placed at the same ‘linguistic’ status as *Selfridges* stamped on a plastic bag. However, Scotland is not the ticket, and Selfridges is not the plastic bag, the real objects these signifiers refer to are absent in both cases, and so their respective concepts or signifieds. Scotland, Kay implies, is also an unstable identity. It is no longer a clear-cut concept with an unambiguous meaning (typically identified with the patriarchal, heterosexual, colonial, unprivileged term in the binary opposite England/Scotland). Millie thinks of the other side of the border when she drives to Torr as refuge, symbolic of an individualistic, intimate and private realm. However, Colman, Kay’s mouthpiece, asserts his Scottishness in the process of accepting the true identity of his ambivalent, hybrid father who had a female body, but his sense of Scottishness remains a matter of experience, largely unspoken, as if searching for a new language, a new starting-point.

In *Trumpet*, Scottishness, then, like sexuality and race are notions explored in relationship with hybridity, fluid of identity, and lesbian construction of meaning, in order to suggest new structures of thought, a Scottish metamorphosis. Kay’s insistence on destabilizing difference while keeping an overall context of normality challenges any fixed assumption on definite categories. Scotland, thus, is also reinvented, not by means of revising its long (social and political) history or emphasizing well-known cultural differences, but by means of deconstruction and the liberating lesbian project of eliminating binary opposites and heterosexual (patriarchal, colonial) signifieds.

If Andrew Marvell had read Jackie Kay’s *Trumpet*, the author of *The Loyall Scot* would have firmly asserted once again that, quoting Dollimore, “perversion increases dissensions” (125). But times have changed. According to Robert Young, “Today’s self-proclaimed mobile and multiple identities may be a marker not of contemporary

social fluidity and dispossession but of a new stability, self-assurance and quietism. Fixity of identity is only sought in situations of instability and disruption, of conflict and change” (4). Attempting to disclose their past, Millie takes the old holiday photographs. One of them depicts “Joss and Colman, playing at being chieftains. Colman has a tartan tammy on his head and a stick. Joss has our tartan blanket wrapped round his shoulders. I remember Joss joking that day, telling Colman that they were Black Jacobean, that they could fight in any battle” (T 99). The battle fought in *Trumpet* is not against an English army, but against a set of received stereotypes, categories and prejudices, including the notion of Scotland and Scottishness, which, Kay suggests, need be regenerated from misleading fantasies and abstractions. This is why Jackie Kay’s transgressive, deconstructive reflection about identity, and her poetical articulation of hybridity, produced a memorable happy ending in Scottish fiction.

Notes

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- ¹ Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (London: Picador, 1998). Future references in the text will be to the Picador paperback edition (1999), abbreviated *T*.
- ² Due to the singularity of Kay’s story, the extensive meaning of “hybridity” has been preferred to “grafting” or “diaspora,” to describe the insertion of difference —racial, sexual, cultural, linguistic— in an assumed, theoretical sameness. That is the case, for example, of jazz clubs in Britain, or an Englishwoman who married a Scots, raised her family in Glasgow, and became a naturalized Scotswoman, while keeping the English vowels. Laura Doan, for example, mentions the “process of grafting” (152) discussing Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherrie*. Curiously enough, although Winterson is white, she is also —like Kay— a lesbian and an adopted child, and her novel —like *Trumpet*— contains a great deal of autobiographical elements.
- ³ Although Jackie Kay has dealt elsewhere with racist attitudes in Britain (Gonda 10), it does not seem to be a prime topic in *Trumpet*.
- ⁴ Torr is a fictitious tiny sea-village located near Pittenweem, in Fife.
- ⁵ According to Biddy Martin, “imitations of oral narratives [...] as if they have been transcribed from taped accounts” (278) are characteristic of lesbian writing.
- ⁶ It is emphasized by the fact that Colman is an adopted child. Adoptions, failed fatherhoods, inadequate intergeneration relationships (as well as tutors, mentors and protectors) are subject still largely neglected in Scottish criticism.
- ⁷ Queer theory emphasizes that identity is not a monolithic essence but a stratification of layers. In order to stress the unstable quality of personal identity, almost all the characters have their names changed. One day Josephine Moore turned into Joss Moody; his African father was given the name of John Moore in Scotland. Colman was Duncan Dunsmore before adoption. One of his early girlfriends was called Melanie, though her real name was Ruth, after a baby-sister born before her, and who had died prematurely (T 117); Albert Holding named his firm “Holding and Son” only for commercial purposes, as he

had no son (*T* 104). The most outstanding example is the case of the drummer, Big Red, whose life can be summed up by the list of the nicknames he has borne (*T* 144).

- ⁸ Notice that Joss's identity is a matter of personal free choice. Joss is individually, not socially, transformed.
- ⁹ The facts that others see Millie as a normal woman, wife and widow, that she wished to get pregnant, that Joss and she never talked about his former self, that she only touched his tits when wrapping the bandages around them at death-bed, or her description of satisfactory lovemaking (*T* 196-97) underline Millie's sexual straightness. However, the very fact of her knowing Joss's body was female, and other subtler details hints her latent lesbianism. For example, "Millie" sounds strikingly similar to "Billy" (Tipton), the ambivalent "I imagined my life" of the opening paragraph, or, when they first met significantly in a blood donor's hall (ambivalently giving life to and being drained by society), Millie wonders "what family accident, what trauma" made him give blood (*T* 11), as if implying unresolved psychological conflicts. Besides, the constant moving, wandering of the family due to the "gigs" may be interpreted as a variation of the perverse "masterless men, wayward women or religious rebels" examined by Dollimore (119-120).
- ¹⁰ Similar experiments at exploring identity by means of unstable, fluid categories have been attempted by several Scottish novelists in the 1990s, including Irvine Welsh in *Trainspotting*, Janice Galloway in *Foreign Parts*, and Alan Warner in *Morvern Callar*.
- ¹¹ Following "W.B. Stevenson's chart of different 'castes' and their mixtures" reproduced in *Loomba* 120.
- ¹² There is a noticeable similarity between Joss's notion of "fantasy Africa" and the lesbian Chicano writer Anzaldúa's concept of "Borderland." As Raiskin suggests: "for these 'postcolonial' lesbian writers, 'place' is the metaphor that binds the deconstruction of race, sexuality, and the political state. At the centre of their work is the desire for a metaphorical homeland, for a place outside of the categories of racial, sexual or national placement" (167-68).
- ¹³ Some of these attitudes that Colman criticizes are characteristic of the Afro-American approach. In her book on Bessie Smith, Jackie Kay remembers when as a child she used to write Christmas cards to the political prisoners in South Africa and to think that "all black people had a common bond. It was like sharing blood" (15). But Kay also acknowledges that, unlike Britain, the United States is "a country obsessed with colour" (71).
- ¹⁴ He starts by swallowing (as a traitor) Jack Daniels in a prelude to masturbation (*T* 140) and moves on to finally get drunk with Lagavulin and to have sex with Sophie Stones in chapter entitled "Good Hotels."

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