

Strange/Queer Temporalities in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

Jackie Kay'in *Trumpet* Adlı Romanında Tuhaf/Kuir Zamansallıklar

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Abstract

This study explores the strange/queer temporalities in Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* and investigates how transgender experiences and narratives can effectively subvert the prevailing view of time as a linear and normative concept. Taking the initial cue from Sara Ahmed's concept of "Queer Vandalism", which underscores marginalised identities' deliberate resistance against societal constructs, the study centres on Kay's protagonist, Joss Moody, a transgender jazz trumpeter, and examines the tension between individual identity and societal conformity in relation to time. Diverging from mainstream representations of transgender individuals, which often risk pathologising their experiences, Kay's novel vividly illustrates how Joss Moody defies norms by living as a man while biologically female, bringing into plain view societal reactions when his female body is posthumously revealed. A special emphasis is placed on the transformative role of Jazz in Joss's self-reconstruction and temporal liberation. The article concludes with a discussion of the novel genre's capacity to venture into unconventional temporal dimensions and disrupt normative narratives.

Keywords: Jackie Kay, *Trumpet*, Jazz, Queer Temporalities, Queer Vandalism, Marginalised Identities, Music, Self-reconstruction, Gender Identity

Introduction: Liminal Temporalities and Transgender Body as "Queer Vandalism"

Andreas Huyssen in *Present Pasts* (2003) notes that the discourse of history, not very long ago, offered to ensure "the relative stability of the past in its pastness" (p. 1). Historical discourse, once regarded as the "mise-en-scene of modernity", was meant to impart knowledge and enlightenment. For many years, Western history was fairly successful in its goal of establishing an elaborate but gripping narrative of historical time that would operate as a pillar for society and its ever-fleeting modernity. Einstein's ground-breaking theory of relativity ushered in a paradigm shift, fundamentally transforming the traditional Newtonian framework of reality. Whereas the former's reformulation of space and time is fluid and multifaceted, states Brian Greene in *The Fabric of Cosmos* (2004), the latter aims to establish fixed, unchanging spatio-temporal structures (p. 10). Accordingly, Einstein not only offers compelling evidence for the inextricable link between time and space but also unveils how their warping and curving contribute to the unfolding of the universe.

On the other hand, Newtonian physics effectively quantifies much of human sensory experience, as the distinction between classical and relativistic reality only becomes discernible under extreme circumstances, such as extremes of speed and gravity. While, therefore, Newton still offers an estimate that is remarkably concise and practical in numerous scenarios (2004, p. 10), it must be re-established that "utility and reality are very different standards" and that the universe Newton portrays does not correspond to the reality of the actual world: "Ours", as Greene affirms, "is a relativistic reality" (p. 10). This recognition marks a notable shift in the conceptualisation of temporality, demanding a detailed examination of how this relatively nuanced grasp of time shapes navigation through the past, present, and future.

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Unorthodox temporal reformulations critique the mainstream focus on narratives aiming to construct “decent” social identities rooted in the idea of (re)productivity. These subversive perspectives challenge how teleological and utilitarian discourses exploit and sustain linear time. Disrupting precise temporal patterns, including linear time and historical representations, is aided by a non-normative conglomeration of past, present, and future tenses. Non-conforming gender and/or sexual orientations provoke inquiries into spatio-temporal gender patterns. Jack Halberstam (*In a Queer Time and Place*, 2005) and Sara Ahmed (*What’s the Use*, 2019) explore “strange temporalities” and emphasise how such unconventional temporal frameworks shape the present and empower individuals and communities to envision alternative futures. The concept of liminal, “strange temporalities” thus acts as a catalyst for fostering cooperative communities, allowing the generation of non-linear histories and futures from the vantage point of here and now.

According to Halberstam (2005), the queer is a profoundly unsettling figure as it “literally and figuratively” eludes fixed temporal (as well as spatial) boundaries (p. 16). Standard conceptions of time thus often neglect the atypical chronology of the queer; by perpetuating stereotypes, they potentially contribute to the dissemination of transphobic and homophobic narratives, maintaining that queer lives, by refusing to know their *place*, can undermine commonplace portrayals of (re)production. The queer reconfiguration of spatio-temporality, as proposed by Jack Halberstam through “queer time” and “queer space”, is therefore marginalised within the mainstream framework of reproductivity due to its radical departure from the assumptions of progressive time, a trajectory where the “responsible” individual evolves into maturity (from the chaos of formative pre-adult years), prepares for matrimony, and ideally, reproduction, thereby ensuring continuity from one generation to the next.

Sara Ahmed’s (2019) exploration of “use as technique” (p. 103) and the term “queer use” (p. 26) becomes pertinent here. “Queer use”, according to Ahmed, refers to the act of employing things or concepts in ways that deviate from their initially intended purposes, extending to uses by individuals outside the initially specified target audience (pp. 197-229). Accordingly, the concept entails appropriating societal structures, norms, or tools to cater to the unique needs of those diverging from the parameters of mainstream expectations. Ahmed conceptualises “queer use” as a methodology adopted by unconventional individuals or marginalised groups who redefine and repurpose societal elements (p. 189), paving the way for a more inclusive and dynamic interaction with the world around them.

However, individuals subscribing to progressive frameworks of time often feel entitled to intervene not only in the lives but also in the deaths of those deemed less *useful* due to their *misuse* of initially intended purposes of things. Prioritising certain lives over others, these individuals may even contend that those involved in “queer use” should operate outside the boundaries outlined by Judith Butler’s (2004) concept of “a publicly grievable life” (p. 34). In this context, their lives or losses may not prompt collective mourning or societal recognition. Butler’s assessment is frequently paired with Jasbir K. Puar’s (2017) views of queer necropolitics and “Homonationalism in Queer Times,” which spotlight the preconceived phenomenon that “the homosexual other is white, the racial other is straight” (p. 32). This perspective, Puar holds, fails to recognise systematically racialised queer minorities, perceiving them as non-valuable individuals destined for social, political, or literal death (pp. 32–79). As a counter-discourse to the idea that these individuals are squandering the potential for (re)production and thus not deemed publicly grievable, Sara Ahmed (2019) introduces the concept of “Queer vandalism” to acknowledge the equal validity of the deliberate *misuse* of an otherwise *useful* and productive entity, i.e., the body.

“Queer vandalism” assigns significance to the act of not utilising things as intended, disrupting decorum and well-established patterns; consequently, the *vandals* become aware of alternative and *profane* uses lurking beneath the mainstream use of “use” (pp. 223-224). Deliberately departing from conventional *uses* is depicted by Ahmed as a disruptive force, transforming into an explorative endeavour that uncovers hidden possibilities, redefines societal boundaries, and prompts a critical reassessment of presumed utility. This transformative process potentially encourages creative and subversive engagement with the world for marginalised identities.

Coming Out of the Transgender Closet for the Public Gaze: Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* (1998) begins immediately after the death of its central character, Joss Moody. Joss (formerly Josephine Moore), a renowned Black jazz trumpeter assigned the biological sex of a woman at birth, is portrayed as a devoted husband, a loving yet firm father, and a passionate performer dedicated to his love of music. During his lifetime, Joss has to go to extraordinary lengths to conceal his transgender identity from everyone except his wife, Millicent Moody, a white woman whose love from the very beginning proves resilient in the face of the truth about Joss's assigned sex. Even Colman, their adopted son, remains unaware of this *reality* until after his father's death.

The revelation of Joss's female body posthumously, along with the disclosure of his existence as a transgender man within society, sparks an immediate media frenzy. While his wife, Millie, wrestles with the challenge of coping with her loss and the ensuing “scandal”, their 30-year-old son, Colman, goes through a spectrum of emotions. His initial astonishment soon transforms into resentment and animosity, navigating a range from perplexity to rage and from shame to dejection. “My father had tits”, he utters tempestuously, “My father didn't have a dick. My father had tits. My father had a pussy. My father didn't have any balls. How many people had fathers like mine (Kay, 1998, p. 61)? Being confronted with highly sensational reports about his father and feeling the weight of this exposure, Colman seeks some form of retribution for this deception. Eventually, he agrees to reveal Joss's life to a zealous tabloid journalist, Sophie Stones, who exhibits overt transphobia against Joss's identity but still aspires to publish a book on this “scandal”, believing it would boost her career prospects (p. 128). Given Joss's celebrity status, his case is anticipated to stir a mix of sentiments within the wider audience concerning the inclusion and representation of queer identities in mainstream media. After all, it is both exhilarating and alarming for the public, as Halberstam holds, when television networks consider investing in a queer subculture such as drag kings (2005, p. 156). On one hand, public recognition might enable the marginal to surface within the dominant cultural framework to some extent; on the other hand, a concern voiced by Halberstam is that this seeming integration of the subcultural into the mainstream comes at the expense of portraying “maleness as the place of sexualized voyeurism” (pp. 139, 156). The process of integration often comes with a trade-off, particularly influencing how marginalised identities are portrayed, resulting in a reduction of their representation to stereotypical and sexualised images.

Joss(ephine)'s Posthumous Twist

The pitfall highlighted here is distinctively elaborated in *Trumpet* when the somewhat melodramatic media narratives seize upon Joss's passing as an opportunity to, at least in retrospect, reassign Joss's identity to the hitherto *erroneously* renounced *natural* female body. Accordingly, for instance, the tabloid journalist perceives Joss's masculinity as a deception, and the media is full of patronizing, customary narratives on how to “fix” the transgender subject's life story in order to avoid its *threat* to normative gender categories.

Aligned with Halberstam's assertion, the description of transgender lives by non-transgender individuals typically involves a "normalizing" project, portraying it as unsettling or pathological, or validating it with a collectively "reasonable" justification (2005, pp. 36, 55), thereby simultaneously denigrating it. The transgender body is thereby intended to be entirely "defused". For some, in this context, Joss's deceased body epitomises "vandalism" or "a Black queer monstrosity that can be met only with derision and turned into spectacle" (Richardson, 2012, p. 367). This is how the commonplace understanding of *use* is thought to be reinstated to its established position.

Kay's novel, however, taunts the presumptions of Joss's masculinity as being "bogus" by revealing the shiftable nature and porosity of gender constructs, and redefining the conventional boundaries of (re)productivity and *use* in queer terms. It is true that throughout his life, Joss Moody projects an image consistent with the hegemonic ideals of heterosexuality and masculinity. Carole Jones (2009) contends that the radically transgressive potential of Joss' transgender body is compromised by "his conforming masculinity" (p. 114), albeit a prerequisite for him to achieve the desired manner of existence. This is how the Moodys lead their everyday lives as a typical family within an average household. In one obituary, a member of the UK Trumpet Society expresses confusion: "What I can't understand is how he managed to go on the road with us. I never noticed anything exceptional" (Kay, 1998, p. 160). This comment is quite suggestive, because Joss's subversive "self-authorship" while alive, as proposed by Matthew Brown (2007), overtly rejects the "mechanisms that police all subjectivity through external impositions of racial, gender and other cultural norms" (p. 225). Yet, Joss's posthumous twist firmly establishes that he *was* anything but a conformist. That is, the point at which he ceases to breathe is the moment when "his identity is most subversive", as he can no longer "conceal his feminine excess" and maintain the facade of "natural permanence and stability" (Jones, 2009, p. 114). Although the observations of Jones and Brown shed light on the significant tension between individual identity and societal conformity, contributing to a deeper understanding of the complex journey of Kay's transgender protagonist, it is crucial to add nuance in this study to their assertions by highlighting that Joss carries a profound awareness, both in life and posthumously, of the performative and constructed nature of gender. He skilfully manoeuvres through life with this awareness and unequivocally underscores it after his death.

Formerly perceived as exclusively male in his lifetime, the revelation of Joss's dead body lacking male genitalia shocks those familiar with him, sparking reflections about a sudden and visible feminine change unfolding right before their eyes. Albert Holding, the undertaker responsible for organising the funeral, undergoes a shift in perception when confronted with Joss's body:

He didn't mean to but he happened to glance quickly at the face. It gave him quite a turn. The face had transformed. It looked more round, more womanly. It was without question a woman's face. How anybody could have ever thought that face male was beyond Albert Holding. How he himself could have thought it male! There she was, broad-boned face, black hair, with spatterings of grey, full lips, smooth skin. Quite an extraordinary looking woman. Her body was in good shape. Her stomach lean, muscles taut. Albert wouldn't have said she had a particularly womanly shape, but the fact that she was a woman was now beyond question. (Kay, 1998, pp. 110-111)

Joss's deceased body stands as a catalyst for the fluid nature of people's biases concerning gender. Defying traditional parameters that rigidly define time and history within linear, non-relative premises, Joss's deceased form interrupts potential linear narratives

surrounding his life history. The presumed linear trajectory of Joss's lifetime, which typically depicts temporality as a progression from the past through the present to the future, is subverted. Consequently, the revelation of his transgender identity after death requires a reassessment of this narrative within a non-linear timeframe. The reader is prompted to comprehend how gender identities are modelled and to understand masculinity or femininity as a construct that must be de-naturalised. *Trumpet*, for that matter, creates a universe that has been redefined in reverse by the tangible reality of a transgender body.

Following the repercussions of Joss Moody's death, the Transvestites Anonymous Group protests the controversy surrounding Joss's undisclosed femininity, questioning "this notion that somebody who lives their life as a man and is discovered to be female at the time of death was *really* a woman all along. What is 'really' in this context? What is the force of that *reality*" (Kay, 1998, p. 159, emphasis added)? After Joss departs, Millie raises similar questions concerning what is real and what is not. "It was our secret", she says, "That's all it was. Lots of people have secrets... Our secret was harmless. It did not hurt anybody" (p. 10). Joss does appear to conform to societal standards while alive, without anyone around him noticing. However, in private, Joss and Millie's *reality* is radically distinct from the conventional assumptions about the binary oppositions (and *uses*, for that matter) of male and female. Together, they create a non-conforming world in a non-linear temporal framework, navigating their existence by embracing what Sara Ahmed (2019) terms as queer forms of *use* and queer vandalism. An exemplary manifestation of this is that their marriage supersedes, and operates independently of, the economics tied to the "absence" or "presence" of the phallus; they redefine the terms of a loving relationship and matrimony within their distinctive private reality. Just as Millie remains undeterred by the initial discovery of Joss's "truth" at the onset of their relationship, she reminisces about her late husband with similar sentiments after his passing: "I look at the picture on the album cover, but no matter how hard I try, I can't see him as anything other than him, my Joss, my husband", she confesses (Kay, 1998, p. 35). Indeed, she consistently employs masculine pronouns when referring to Joss and goes so far as to inquire with the registrar about the possibility of listing Joss as male in the official registry. Her rationale is that it would hold particular significance for her husband "to be registered in death as he was in life" (p. 79). Throughout, Millie staunchly supports Joss's quest to go beyond the ordinary, ultimately becoming "the only one who can remember him the way he wanted to be remembered" (p. 40). This unwavering dedication highlights their intentional departure from linear narratives and their joint effort to shape a non-traditional, non-linear temporal trajectory – a private reality for themselves.

Queering the Colonial Past

While the narrative in *Trumpet* is informed by a particular perspective on gender and sexual orientation, it is also embedded within the broader context of the African diasporic community in Scotland. The main setting is London, where the Moodys lived during the 1990s, but the story concludes with Colman and Sophie travelling to Scotland to find out about Joss's origins. The revelation of Joss Moody's true history only occurs when they visit Edith Moore, Joss's mother.

Steven Blevins in *Living Cargo: How Black Britain Performs Its Past* (2016) aims to stimulate a public response to the narratives of colonial undertakings and underscore Black British

culture's¹ grim designation, previously hidden in archives, of some humans, such as slaves, as "human bio-cargo" (p. 16). The expression aptly captures the unsettling concept of characterising certain human lives as commodities in global circulation, echoing historical practises of dehumanisation during periods of colonisation and the transatlantic slave trade (pp. 18-19). In *Trumpet's* concluding chapters, Colman discovers that Joss has left him a picture of his own father along with a letter labelled "To be opened after my death" (p. 270). This is the first time Joss discloses his own history, and the letter details the journey of Joss's father from Africa to Scotland:

My father came off a boat right enough, right into a broth of dense fog... He had never seen fog before. The air was damp and eerie on his skin and he was freezing. Ghost country. The people and the weather shrouded in uncertainty. Shadow people, he thought, insubstantial, no colour. He was a young boy full of fears. Life, then, he said, was something that happened to him. Other people pulled the thin strings and he moved his limbs. This new country was a wet ghost, cold fingers searching his cheeks for warmth. It was as if he walked off that ship into nothing, as if the strange grey air might gulp him down, whole. (p. 271)

Joss's father undergoes profound disorientation and discomfort in a new, unfamiliar country. Descriptions such as "broth of dense fog", "damp and eerie air", and "Ghost country" establish a haunting ambiance of sheer uncertainty. The portrayal of the new land as a "wet ghost" and the air as "strange grey" poignantly conveys vulnerability and alienation. Finally, the metaphor of life being something that "happened to him" and others pulling "the thin strings" a significant absence of agency, framing him as merely a puppet manipulated by external forces. As Colman belatedly discovers, his grandfather, in the midst of this disorientation, uncertainty, vulnerability, and alienation, is left without a name and a firm sense of personal history. This fact incenses Joss, evident in his letter, as he writes, "Someone painted a picture of my father which I've left for you amongst the bits and pieces. The picture's called Mumbo Jumbo which has made me more angry than anything... He's not given a name. Even the name he was given, John Moore, was not his original name" (p. 276). However, Joss's rage turns out to be a powerful catalyst, enabling him to refashion his own life in a way that extends beyond the present, unveiling a spectrum of possibilities for redressing the past and tailoring the future.

Joss's stance relates to another concept used by Blevins (2016), "bespoke history", a term that vigorously delineates the ideological, ethical, and political weight of Black British culture (p. 197). The term conveys a deliberately tailored historical narrative, holding the potential for retribution or revenge in the present. Essentially, Blevins argues that this crafted historical understanding shapes current times with the prospect of a vindictive undertone (p. 200). Against a colonial background and within a family narrative of a father haunted by memories from his lost childhood (Kay, 1998, pp. 274-275), Joss explores avenues to rebuild his fractured identity and history. As the narrative unfolds, Joss's

¹ Joseph H. Jackson (2021) in *Writing Black Scotland: Race, Nation and the Devolution of Black Britain* examines the distinctions between "black Britain" and "black Scotland". He discusses the historical presence of black people in Scotland, including plantation slaves, members of the Scottish diaspora from the Caribbean, or skilled labour immigrants from the United States (p. 1). Jackson argues that the concept of "a black Scotland" encompasses critical and representational practises focused on "a national history of race, racism, and racialized experience" (p. 3). He suggests that black Scottish writing opposes racism and imperialism and analyses race signifiers and political culture. Accordingly, while "Black Britain" has been used to promote political multiculturalism, it remains tied to institutionalised racism and neo-colonial trade (p. 4).

odyssey of self-discovery and personal transformation becomes more prominent, affording him the ability to de-construct and then re-construct his identity through what Chela Sandoval in *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) characterises as a systematic practise developed by the oppressed (p. 179). In response to experiences of slavery, colonisation, or oppression, individuals often develop a form of resistance and resilience as a means of emancipating themselves from the persistent impacts of their past subjugation and marginalisation:

Under conditions of colonization, poverty, racism, gender, or sexual subordination, dominated populations are often held away from the comforts of dominant ideology, or ripped out of legitimized social narratives, in a process of power... The skills they might develop, if they survive, have included the ability to self-consciously navigate modes of dominant consciousness, learning to interrupt the “turnstile” that alternately reveals history, as against the dominant forms of masquerade that history can take... not only with the hope of surviving, but with a desire to create a better world. (p. 105)

For Joss's physical and psychological survival, it becomes imperative to construct a new narrative for his past, present, and future, accompanied by the formation of a new gender identity. Indeed, Joss's metaphorical assertion, “The present is just a loop stitch” (Kay, 1998, p. 277), depicts the interconnectedness of the current moment with both the past and the future in an uninterrupted, looping manner. This expression communicates the idea that time does not follow a linear progression but rather possesses a cyclical nature, in which events and experiences from the past influence the present, and the present, in turn, plays a role in shaping the future.

Joss Moody thus makes the choice to shed his assigned gender, initiating a journey of manhood, akin to the act of opening a blank canvas in his life. This is his unique method of disrupting the “turnstile” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 105) that depicts past events linearly and demands adherence to this progression. Consequently, he weds a woman, adopts a child, and rises to international fame as a jazz trumpeter without any remnants of old friends, family, or ties from his past (Kay, 1998, p. 29). Colman recounts Joss's customised viewpoint as follows:

He said you make up your own bloodline, Colman. Make it up and trace it back. Design your own 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... Or I could say my father was a black American... Or I could say my father was a soldier or a sailor... Or I could say my father was from an island in the Caribbean... Any of these stories might be true, Colman... You pick the one you like best and that one is true. (p. 59)

Clearly aware of the constructed nature of history, Joss dedicates himself to the intricate process of decolonizing his identity by unveiling suppressed aspects of his male self. This marks the moment when he flips the codes of conventional discourses about being confined in the “wrong” body, and the narrative, in line with Halberstam's contention, portrays “the image of a man trapped *outside* a woman's body” (2005, p. 111). This metaphor underscores the feasibility of surpassing the constraints imposed by a binary framework of embodiment, encouraging the adoption of a more inclusive appreciation of diverse gender experiences. The funeral director's startling experience upon encountering the female body of a once male-identified celebrity underscores the lack of awareness concerning what Halberstam terms “transgender hybridity” (p. 97). This concept accentuates non-conforming gender expressions, emphasising that individuals may embody a blend of gender identities, roles,

or traits that do not neatly fit into conventional norms. It also manifests as a form of resistance against normative gender binaries and challenges linear spatio-temporal patterns. As the son of a nameless and outcast man, Joss adeptly delineates and reinforces “particular forms of resistance to dominant social hierarchy” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 69), steering away from a mere endeavour to rectify what Sally Hines (2007) terms “nature’s anatomical error” (p. 11). Joss’s active engagement in recreating his own sense of self therefore reflects a deliberate effort to liberate his identity from both colonial imprints and societal expectations.

Stretching Temporality and Warping Gender through Jazz

A descendant of a “bio-cargo” whose colonial heritage persists in a *ghostly* manner, Joss Moody chooses to reinvent his gender identity according to his own *reality*, freeing himself from the notion of a lifelong female essentiality and imprisonment. This temporal reinvention of self is driven by a specific catalyst: Joss acquires his distinct form of defiance through the power of Jazz, a genre that, as characterised by Fred Moten (2003), embodies “the aesthetics of the black radical tradition” (p. 243). Jazz music and Joss’s trumpet alike stand as epitomes of vandalistic expressions of queerness that can not only bend gender identity but also warp time, especially during the musical activity. Scott Hames (2013) emphasises the significance of “voice” which, during the past several decades, has been characterised by its attributes of “giving and joining” and has been central “in Scottish literary and political discourse” (p. 204). Hames portrays “voice” as a symbol of national stamina and articulation, serving as a versatile “display identity” (p. 204) within a diverse cultural context and representing deep-seated aspirations for self-determination. Alice Ferrebe (2007) also posits that “the idea of ‘voice’ as an emancipatory potentiality is a concept central to Kay’s jazz novel *Trumpet*” (p. 278). As a corollary, “music” refers to the unique sensation in the national Scottish framework (Jackson, 2021, p. 109); “Scotland” and “Africa” are two of the opposing forces, two ends of the pendulum, between which Joss navigates and, at times, swings. Musical activity is where Joss is able to present recuperations of his past as well as “black Scotland” and, at large, “black Britain”. Catherine Lynette Innes’s (2002) analysis of *Trumpet*, a novel obviously marked by both personal and societal reimaginings, exemplifies this reconfiguration: “Like so much of the writing by black and Asian people in Britain throughout the previous two centuries”, she maintains, *Trumpet* “allows the reader to understand the extent to which individual selves as well as visions of Britain may be continually invented and reinvented” (p. 244). At the core of this reinvention stands Jazz music.

With a narrative based on the flashbacks of Joss’s wife, son, friends, and those who interacted with him before passing, the novel is a striking expression of strange temporalities in the queer processes of identifying with music which, in *Trumpet*, is treated as the locus of not only artistic but also temporal liberation. The narrative in the novel describes how Joss Moody’s professional involvement in music at once enables him to revise his personal history and provides the marginalised protagonist with the ability to envision other ways of experiencing time and reiterating his existence in the world at present. Therefore, the storyline in *Trumpet* is frequently made more convoluted by references to Joss’s musical activity, which at once accelerates and slows down time, embraces rhythm and circularity, helps regenerate the past in the present and project the present version into the future, and physicalises the otherwise impossible imaginings in a narratively clear present. This makes room for the excess that is most likely to challenge naturalised assumptions of historical and progressive time as well as congruent presumptions concerning gender, sexuality, and racial identities. Hence, the narrative makes use of the aesthetic principles of musical activity, which might go against the

mainstream consensus to embrace identities in difference. The jazz trumpeter, Joss Moody, is able to remain in the interstitial timespaces, acting as a bulwark of prevailing antagonism and public gaze.

Musical activity serves as Joss Moody's methodology to evade the convoluted mechanisms that rest on stereotypical tropes to subjugate nonconformity, crafting a life of his own making and constructing his own past. His trumpet, the *sine qua non* for his memory, functions as an instrument to re-member and re-design his past and origins. This resonates with Sara Ahmed's discussion of the queer *use* of things, a practise she notes is often conventionally construed as "the willful destruction of the venerable and the beautiful" (2019, p. 208) – vandalism. Deliberate refusal to *use* objects conventionally and a purposeful disregard for propriety are encapsulated in the concept of "queer vandalism", which seeks to reclaim the potential for inherent subversive uses within the materials.

Colman reminisces about his father's assertion that music is the exclusive means to keep the past alive: "There is more future in the past than there is in the future", Joss once conveys to his son, "Our stories, his father said, our history. You can't understand the history of slavery without knowing about the slave songs" (Kay, 1998, p. 190). Music becomes an essential aspect of Joss's existence, leading Millie to assert,

If it wasn't for his horn he would be dead and gone. Years ago. Dead in his spirit and still living. It doesn't matter a damn he is somebody he is not. None of it matters. The suit is just the suit the body holds. The body needs the suit to wear the horn. Only the music knows everything. Only the dark sweet heart of the music. Only he who knew who he was, who he had been, could let it all go. (pp. 135-136)

Implicit in this testimony is the intricate connection between music and temporality in Joss's life. Millie reflects on the pivotal role of music, particularly Joss's trumpet, in sustaining him physically and spiritually. She contemplates the potential solace a final "big trumpet breath" could bring to Joss on his deathbed (p. 10), underscoring the profound association between music and his sense of relief. Joss's engagement with jazz music, epitomised by his trumpet, operates as a subversive mechanism, initiating a temporal fluidity in his self-identity. This transformation culminates in the dissolution of boundaries, merging into a broader collective consciousness and memory.

Halberstam examines the dynamic interplay between the predominant cultural milieu and the queer subcultures, particularly in the domain of music, and posits that musicians within the subculture view themselves as contributors to a collective endeavour that is "rewarded not by capital and visibility, not by the market, but by an affective connection with those people who will eventually be the vessels of memory" (2005, p. 187). Diverging from the mainstream cultural paradigm where commercial success and visibility take precedence, these musicians prioritise the intrinsic value of their art and its impact on a more intimate level. The fluid identity achieved by Joss through music is particularly noteworthy in this context:

He loses his sex, his race, his memory. He strips himself bare, takes everything off, till he is barely human... He could be the ferryman. The migrant. The dispossessed. He can't stop himself changing... It is liberating. To be a girl. To be a man... He unwraps himself with his trumpet. Down at the bottom, face to face with the fact that he is nobody. The more he can be nobody the more he can play that horn. Playing the horn is not about being somebody coming from something. It is about being nobody coming from nothing. The horn ruthlessly strips him bare till he ends up with no body, no past, nothing... So when he takes off he is the whole century galloping to

its close... Scotland. Africa. Slavery. Freedom. He is a girl. A man. Everything, nothing. (Kay, 1998, pp. 131, 135-136)

Joss recognises the vitality of bringing attention to oppressed identities, including his own. Through his artistic expression, rather than verbal discourse, he adeptly communicates narratives of struggle, resilience, and identity. In this context, Joss represents individuals who have experienced a loss of freedom, equality, and fluidity, succumbing to the systemic impositions of prevailing societal norms. As DeNora (2000) deftly puts it, music serves as an embodiment of the yearning to “regain” that lost “realm” (p. 93).

Diverging from Well-Trodden Paths: The Novel Reclaiming Time and Affording Strange Temporalities

With its potential for exploration and innovation, the novel genre frequently surpasses the constraints of mainstream historical narratives. Its unique potential lies in the ability to explore (re)adjustments that break free from utilitarian or customary parameters, creating a rich landscape for the examination of various temporal dimensions, particularly within the context of queer experiences. Embedded within the vast tapestry of the novel genre, the narrative emerges as a potent instrument for capturing and conveying the intricate and multifaceted perception of time within the transgender community. This temporal territory is commonly marked by its volatility, causing disruptions in the linear flow of time to which society typically adheres. Despite its seemingly inhospitable nature to those bound by conventional norms and linear temporal constructs, the novel genre serves as a means to elucidate these strange/queer temporalities, affording readers a portal into the real-life experiences of transgender individuals.

Kay's novel invites readers to contemplate the diverse ways individuals navigate the ever-shifting currents of time. It offers a thought-provoking inquiry into “the pseudo-temporal order” in which events are arranged within the narrative (Genette, 1980, p. 35). It skilfully delineates two distinct temporal modalities: the time of the events being recounted and the time of the storytelling itself. This dual perspective encourages readers to consider that “one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme”, a duality that “renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives” (Metz, 1974, p. 18). The multi-generational storyline of *Trumpet* also intertwines the life stories of three men: John Moore, Joss Moody, and Colman Moody. A notable aspect of this narrative is the profound connection each man maintains with both their Black heritage and Scottish identity. Their interwoven lives create a complex narrative where past, present, and future converge, embodying Jackson's (2021) concept of “intergenerational memory”, where “the lives of the fathers are told from the temporally displaced perspectives of the sons, displaced further by the spectral presence of a ‘ghost writer’ who re-presents the narrative” (pp. 88-89). This distinct vantage point ushers in a temporal displacement, enabling the sons to interpret and provide fresh context for the experiences of their fathers. Additionally, the author's spectral presence amplifies the narrative's intricacy and introduces an element of temporal fluidity, thereby adding yet another layer to the storytelling process through the re-presentation of the narrative. At its core, *Trumpet's* multi-generational narrative stands as a reflection of the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of history, memory, and identity, fostering a profound exploration of both personal and collective stories. Kay's novel hence actively seeks to disrupt the narratives framed within normative parameters, specifically repositioning conceptualisations of “strange times” in the context of gender and racialised embodiment.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this paper is on the disruption of linear narratives of time within Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, and the analysis presented here foregrounds the concept of "queer temporalities" and strange temporalities, particularly within the framework of Jazz music through which Joss Moody's transgender identity finds expression within temporal flux. Returning to the theoretical framework once again, it is evident that the concept of "queer temporalities" serves as a lens through which to interpret Joss's journey of self-discovery and resistance against normative constructions of gender and identity. By engaging with concepts such as non-linear storytelling, temporal fluidity, and the coexistence of past, present, and future, this analysis aims to shed light on the complexities of Joss's temporal experiences and the ways in which they intersect with his transgender identity.

Moreover, this paper expands the examination of "queer temporalities" by engaging with the concept of "strange temporalities", which encapsulate the unorthodox and disorienting temporal experiences that permeate Joss's narrative. Through an investigation of the temporal disruptions instigated by Joss's immersion in Jazz music, this analysis accentuates the fluid and non-conforming facets of his identity, thereby interrogating conventional understandings of temporality and historical progress.

In conclusion, Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* not only pivots on the way the manifold facets of a musical activity can, instead of subsuming into a homogeneous whole, stand apart and provide a vibrantly quirky coexistence of different and multiple selves, but the novel also demonstrates how the musical activity can be temporally and aesthetically integrated into a transgender identity. The book promotes discussions of "strange times" while simultaneously addressing the issues of gender and embodiment by inquiring how "strange temporalities" can address transgender people's perception of time as unreliable, ruptured, or estranged and how time could be salvaged for marginalised bodies, particularly those marked by their racial mismatch. Joss Moody refuses to wrap himself up in a woman's persona by being true to himself and using his own practises of survival. He leads a fulfilling life. As a man. A husband. A father. And yet, one wonders, did he really not wear any masks at all?

At one pivotal moment in the book, Maggie, the housekeeper of the Moody family, recalls the day Mrs. Moody showed her a set of Russian dolls, each one nestled inside the other. Reflecting on the intricate layers of humanity they represent, Mrs. Moody muses, "We're all like that, aren't we? We've all got lots of little people inside us" (Kay, 1998, p. 173). As Joss's life draws to a close, despite his adherence to his own reality and orientation throughout his life, he somehow seems to simultaneously embrace his assigned gender. Millie remembers Joss telling her "a few days before he died more about being a girl than he had ever done in a lifetime of marriage", and she states elsewhere in the book, "I can see the dead Joss quite clearly now. He is quite different to the living one. He looked unlike himself when he was dying. Unlike the man I married. I don't know who he looked like. Maybe he looked more like her in the end. More like Josephine Moore" (pp. 203, 94). As his death approaches, John assumes a multifaceted identity reminiscent of Russian dolls, each layer submerged in the intricacies of his past in the bloom of youth, only to resurface with the imminence of death. This convergence of identities may explain Millie's conviction that only a resounding final trumpet breath could offer solace to Joss, with music serving as his sole sanctuary from all his predicaments. Perhaps it could afford him a moment of selflessness and transcendence, shedding all identity constructs to become maskless and nameless, everything and nothing, as he nears the ultimate unknown.

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