

## Translating Gender and Race through Music in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

**Abstract:** *Trumpet* is the 1998 debut novel by Scottish writer and Scots Makar Jackie Kay. It narrates, through the “language of music”, the life story of a black transgender jazz musician who, born anatomically female, lives his entire life as a man. Jazz music, encapsulated by the figurative image of the trumpet, contributes not only to shape the novel thematically and structurally, but it is also employed by Kay as a linguistic ‘instrument’ capable of expressing a more fluid conception of gender and racial identities. As a matter of fact, the novel’s discursive pattern is characterised by some basic elements borrowed from jazz music such as variations on a theme, repetitions, improvisation and even, at the level of the linguistic register, by the resemanticisation of its jargon. In other words, even the language itself is altered through a process of linguistic creativity which involves the re-contextualisation and re-signification of specific terms belonging to jazz music in order to express an anti-essentialist notion of both gender and race categories of belonging.

Drawing on a theoretical framework influenced by translation and gender studies, critical race theory and the interdisciplinary field of music as discourse, this essay investigates the author’s attempt to de-essentialise the self with regard to gender and race through the use of the language of music (jazz in particular) considered as specialised discourse. The exploration of the translation choices made in the Italian translation of the novel (by Sandro Melani for La Tartaruga, 1999), together with the proposal of alternative solutions on the basis of the aforementioned critical reflection, is then aimed at showing the fruitful insight that the intersection of specialised discourse, translation and gender studies can provide not only to the linguistic interpretation and fruition of literary texts, but also to their translation into other languages.

Keywords: *translation, music as discourse, specialised discourse, transgender, race, literature*

Music can [...] either align itself with the time of the clock, enact it, celebrate it, affectively identify with it – or struggle with it, rebel against it, subvert it.

Theo van Leeuwen, *Speech, Music, Sound*

### 1. Introduction: Music, Language and Power

Music has always played a pivotal role in every society. For the ancient Greeks it was indissolubly coupled with language – so much that the two concepts were designated by the same term *musiké* – and even after their separation into *logos* (language, reason) and *harmonia/rhythmos* (pertaining to performance techniques or *techné*), it continued to enjoy a prominent role in conveying affective aspects of communication, that ‘too much’ of a situation that cannot be exhausted by words alone.<sup>1</sup>

Linguist, social semiotician and former jazz pianist Theo van Leeuwen somehow recovers the original unity of music and language when he invites us to pay attention to the descriptive and discursive aspect of music (i.e., music as discourse) – more than to a mere melodious one – and to consider the way in which music can endorse or subvert institutionalised beliefs:

<sup>1</sup> As Roger Savage explains, for the ancient Greeks the original unity of music and language (i.e., *musiké*) served to place the soul in harmony with itself and with the rest of the universe. The subsequent separation of language (*logos*) from harmony and rhythm (*harmonia* and *rhythmos*) stripped music of its vital essence, of its educational meaning (*paideia*), and reduced it to mere performance techniques (*techné*), thus placing it in a fundamentally lower status, beyond language and reason. See Roger W. H. Savage, *Hermeneutics and Music Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 36; John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departures from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale U.P., 1986), 22-23.

Music is ... an integral part of social, political and economic life. It can create emotive allegiance to powerful nation-states, religions and other social institutions, and it can express the values these institutions stand for and rally people behind then ... But music can also be subversive and challenge power.<sup>2</sup>

National anthems, religious hymns, but also non-diegetic sounds in films (e.g., the soundtrack), are all examples of forms of emotive allegiance to a cause, an institution or a specific message. Music, or sound more generally, participates in the definition of what we consider socially acceptable or unacceptable based on a hierarchy of internalised values.<sup>3</sup> If for some social actors religious hymns and marching songs can create group unity and cohesion, for others they may be perceived as threatening, thus showing how music and sound enable an evaluation of social order/disorder and can implicitly signify distinctions based on race, gender, religion or class both as forms of oppression and as resistance.<sup>4</sup>

The triangulation of music, language and power and the importance of considering it as a multimodal discourse is likewise evident in a number of colonial contexts, like the one described by Kofi Agawu in a 2009 distinguished lecture in which he discusses how the introduction of European music to Africa in the nineteenth century contributed to the colonisation of African music.<sup>5</sup> In that lecture, held at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Music Media and Technology (Montreal, Canada), Agawu associates the musical concept of tonality – a term used to describe the hierarchical arrangement of relations between tones in a musical work – to the system of the colonial enterprise. He says: “Tonality, understood as a hierarchically organized system of relations animated by desire, accompanied Europe’s ostensibly civilizing mission to Africa from the 1800s on”.<sup>6</sup> As he connects music to language and associates them with Western epistemological truth claim over the cultures of Africa, he describes how the standards (read the system) of European music (and language) were not only completely new to the African groups, but they could hardly be recognised, and only with great difficulty achieved, in indigenous tone languages.<sup>7</sup> Agawu maintains:

So, this is musical violence of a very high order ... For the colonizer they [the religious hymns] were a means of exerting power and control over native populations by making them speak a tonal language that they had no chance of mastering. A language, moreover, whose reassuring cadences and modest trajectories would prove alluring, have a sedative effect, and keep Africans trapped in a prison-house of diatonic tonality.<sup>8</sup>

The imposition of a European diatonic tonality over the African one, which is mostly pentatonic, encapsulates the whole process of cultural colonization and domination of European nations over African ones according to a procedure that long pre-dates the nineteenth century and that originally saw the enslavement of African people and their deporting to the Americas, where they underwent a process of complete de-humanisation meant to completely annihilate their identities, languages and beliefs,<sup>9</sup> and

<sup>2</sup> Theo van Leeuwen, “The Critical Analysis of Musical Discourse”, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9.4 (2012), 319-328, 319.

<sup>3</sup> See Daniel Bender et al., eds., “Editor’s Introduction. Sound Politics: Critically Listening to the Past”, *Radical History Review*, 121 (January 2015), 1-7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> On the importance of considering music as a multimodal discourse see Lyndon C. S. Way and Simon McKerrell, “Understanding Music as Multimodal Discourse”, in *Music as Multimodal Discourse: Semiotics, Power and Protest* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 1-20, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Kofi Agawu, “Tonality as a Colonizing Force in African Music”, distinguished lecture (Canada: CIRMMT, 2009), <https://www.cirmmt.org/activities/distinguished-lectures/agawu>, accessed 22 October 2018.

<sup>7</sup> This issue recalls Homi Bhabha’s discussion of mimicry, with “the Other” being the subject of a difference which is almost the same, but not quite (with all its implications in the shifting relation between power and resistance). See Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”, in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

<sup>8</sup> Agawu, “Tonality”.

<sup>9</sup> Oriana Palusci, “Crossing the River: New Stories to Be Told”, *Cycnos*, 32.1 (2016), 141-156, 142.

that, by reducing them to pure matter or flesh, ungendered them in the process.<sup>10</sup> An ungendering of blackness that, as Riley Snorton recognises, “became a site of fugitive maneuvers wherein the dichotomized and collapsed designations of male-man-masculine and female-woman-feminine remained open – that is fungible – and the black’s figurative capacity to change form as a commoditized being engendered flow”.<sup>11</sup> Once they arrived on the other side of the Atlantic, as part of what came to be known as the Triangular Slave Trade or Middle Passage, enslaved African people were often converted to Christianity. Their conversion often meant – among other things – that they were induced to accept their condition, thus avoiding rebellions, as they were sedated by the reassuring cadences of European music, but also of its languages and cultural systems. Nevertheless, despite systematic attempts at dismantling their cultural belonging, a number of West African cultural traits were retained, constituting a form of resistance to cultural assimilation and subjugation. Similarly, as Snorton notes, the ungendering of blackness produced sites of resistance inasmuch as it enabled the creation of spaces for gender and racial re-articulation of identity beyond Western necessarily limiting dichotomous categories and definitions.

Jazz music emerges from this exact context. Evolving from hollers, slave songs and spirituals performed by African slaves in American plantations, it bears in its origin forms of cultural resistance through the cross-fertilisation of different cultural and musical traditions: Christian and folk songs from Europe, drumming from Africa, European diatonic and African pentatonic scales and harmonic patterns, hence being inherently a hybrid, fluid genre which resists being fitted into either/or categories or definitions. As a matter of fact, spirituals were often used as discursive practices of indirection inasmuch as African slaves would often encode in the form of metaphors and intertextual references secret messages – unintelligible to their European masters – with the aim of planning revolts and/or escapes to the North.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, influenced by the African American musical tradition, jazz often subverts the metronomic time typical of Western music – and Western classic order of time – by anticipating or delaying the beat or by superimposing triple or duple times on one another in limited polyrhythmicity.<sup>13</sup> It thus makes explicit how, as the exergue to this essay cites, music can align itself with the time of the clock or subvert it.

Jazz originates from the cultural tradition of the black diaspora which has always considered of pivotal importance conceptions of language and identity as performances, as fluid, since they represented the most suited survival strategy against a language-system that constantly tried to annihilate black people. As such, it represents a counter discourse to the linearity of Western official historiography and its essentialist notions of identity crystallised around the Enlightenment idea(l) of the Western *cogito*, that is the all rationalist Euro-American white heterosexual man as the privileged subject of knowledge.

It is in this sense that the Scottish writer of mixed Scottish and Nigerian parentage and Scots Makar Jackie Kay uses music in her first novel *Trumpet*, published in 1998. In her novel, Kay draws on the way black music, and jazz in particular, has changed over time and on how identity is likewise constantly changing, shifting, fluid. In her words:

jazz ... interests me because it's such a fluid form and it comes from the blues and I like the idea that black music has shifted and changed. It's like identity in that way, identity's something that's fluid, it's not

<sup>10</sup> Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book”, *Diacritics*, 17.2 (Summer 1987), 64-81.

<sup>11</sup> C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 59.

<sup>12</sup> These discursive practices of indirection or diversion, as E. Patrick Johnson explains, formed part of a long list of means of resistance employed by African slaves that included a number of embodied performances going from the simple lying to the master or pretending to misunderstand his orders to cheating, stealing from him, mutilating themselves in order to escape work, etc. See E. Patrick Johnson, “Black Performance Studies: Genealogies, Politics, Futures”, in D. Soyini Madison and Judith Hamera, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 446-463, 453; Monique Allewaert, *Ariel’s Ecology: Plantations, Personhood, and Colonialism in the American Tropics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 107.

<sup>13</sup> Van Leeuwen, *Music, Speech, Sound* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 58.

something that's static and fixed ... I think the wonder part about certain pieces of music is that when we're listening to them we can lose ourselves in them, but we can also find ourselves in them, that music defines us, but it also help [sic] us to lose our definitions.<sup>14</sup>

Drawing on the capacity of (jazz) music to define us and simultaneously helping us to lose our definitions, Kay uses the "language of music" in order to advance an anti-essentialist conception of both gender and race, inasmuch as said language enables the black transgender protagonist (Joss Moody) to express forms of gender identity that are more fluid, shifting, unmoored from the male/female dichotomy. The aim of this essay is therefore to investigate Kay's use of musical discourse in her text, that is to say how she employs the specialized discourse of (jazz) music in order to enable the articulation of alternative forms of gender identification and belonging, which are otherwise of difficult expression through common uses of language alone. The expression "language of music" works on different levels in the novel inasmuch as the narrative is not only influenced by jazz music both thematically and structurally, but presents as well a resemanticisation of its jargon or, in other words, it offers a re-signification of specific terms belonging to jazz music in order to express something different, in this specific case the way Joss Moody expresses his trans\* identity by stripping himself of all the racialised and gendered attributes attached onto him by society, to then recreate a more fluid conception of identity, just as Kay suggests with her image of music defining us but also helping us losing our definitions.<sup>15</sup> It will then explore excerpts of the Italian translation of the novel by Sandro Melani, published with the same title by the Italian feminist publishing house La Tartaruga in 1999, in which the specialised discourse of jazz music is mostly overlooked. The final aim is to show the importance that LSP (language for specific purposes) or specialised discourse can play not only in the encoding of gender issues in a text, but also in the interpretation of a literary text and its translation into other languages.

## 2. Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

*Trumpet* was inspired by the life story of Billy Tipton, a white American pianist and saxophonist who was born Dorothy Lucille Tipton in Oklahoma City in 1914 and who lived for all of his life as a male jazz musician. Intrigued by the fact of living one's whole life as the opposite sex, Kay builds up her narrative around the life story of the fictive deceased black jazz musician Joss Moody who, born anatomically female, lives his entire life as a man. The story reconstructs Joss's life and dwells on a secret (i.e., his trans\* identity) that is in fact a revealed secret, inasmuch as the reader learns about it in the very first pages of the novel. The story of Joss's life slowly emerges through the recollection of the fragmented memories of a series of people who did not know the truth about his trans\* identity and the only one who did, that is his widow Millie (Millicent MacFarlane). Therefore, Kay weaves a polyphonic narration, in Bakhtinian terms, mainly through the accounts of Joss's wife Millie, their adopted son Colman, the tabloid journalist Sophie Stones – who wants to write a book about "the secret" concerning his life – and to a lesser extent through those of other minor characters. In this sense, the novel finds an antecedent in the 1976 novel *Coming through Slaughter* by the Sri Lankan-born Canadian writer Michael

<sup>14</sup> Jackie Kay, "Jackie Kay Interview", *The Poetry Archive*, (2005-2016), <http://www.poetryarchive.org/interview/jackie-kay-interview>, accessed 22 October 2018.

<sup>15</sup> My use of the term "trans\*" follows Kai Green's usage in order to emphasise a movement away from the typical perception of trans-gender and/or trans-sexual identity as a passage from one gender to another, which thus recognises and reinforces gender polar oppositions (i.e., male or female), and toward an idea of trans\* identity as a "multidirectional, unpredetermined set of embodied motions that [...] affect and are affected by structures of governmentality", see Kai M. Green, "The Essential I/Eye in We: A Black TransFeminist Approach to Ethnographic Film", *Black Camera* 6.2 (Spring 2015), 187-200, 192. This alternative idea of trans\* identity can also be thought of as an assemblage, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2003 [1980]).

Ondaatje who recreates the life story of Buddy Bolden through the perspective of the people who were closest to him, each one narrating the events in their own voice.

In opposition to 'monologism' – which is characteristic of traditional writing and thought – in which a single narrator imposes their standpoint over the narrated events, 'polyphony' (or 'dialogism') enables the emergence and recognition of a multiplicity of voices and perspectives developing individually.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly enough, Bakhtin borrows the term 'polyphony' from music. Hence, if we consider the importance of music as social interaction, we can make a distinction between 'monophony', signalling "social unison", and 'polyphony', as an instance of "social pluralism".<sup>17</sup> In "social unison" all participants sing and/or play the same notes indicating either solidarity or conformity and lack of individuality, while in "social pluralism", different melodies are simultaneously played or sung, each on its own, yet all fitting harmoniously together, therefore representing a form of interaction in which all participants are 'equal but different'.<sup>18</sup>

An instance of polyphony (and as such of "social pluralism") is the musical interaction pattern known as "call and response" which is typical of African and Afro-diasporic musical traditions, including jazz which, as already mentioned, does not only influence the narrative structure of *Trumpet*, but represents as well an important instrument of interpretation and fruition of the novel and, as such, should be taken into consideration in the translation of the text.

In fact, the very narrative structure of the novel reflects jazz music inasmuch as it offers the reader an account of the same story (that of Joss) which is improvised time and again and told through different perspectives, just like jazz is made up of a refrain and improvised new melodic solo parts.<sup>19</sup> Kay reflects on this issue in a 1999 interview for the literary magazine *Bold Type* in which she states:

I wanted to tell a story, the same story, from several points of view. 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.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed both jazz music and Celtic folks songs – which are interestingly characterised by the pentatonic scale typical of jazz music and African music more generally – represent an important influence in Kay's writing, as a result of her exposure to them while growing up in Glasgow with her white adoptive parents Helen and John Kay, who were passionate about jazz and Scottish poetry and music.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. The translation of music as LSP in *Trumpet*

The chapter "Music", on which I will focus my analysis, emblematically occupies the central part of the novel and describes Joss's 'en-trance' into the music: the experience of playing seems in fact to take him

<sup>16</sup> See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. and ed. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999 [1984]), 5-46. Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Van Leeuwen, "The Critical Analysis of Musical Discourse", 322.

<sup>18</sup> Van Leeuwen notes that "social unison" is usually found in 'leaderless' societies where consensus and conformity prevail but also in more complex societies (like Western one) in the pub, the sports stadium, the church, the school or the army. He also notes how in European music polyphony started to develop in the ninth century to then being supplanted by homophony (or "social domination") during the industrial revolution, when it culminated in the symphony orchestra. Another issue that he explores, drawing on Max Weber, is the interesting relationship between the orchestra and the factory, and how the industrial revolution paralleled the development of the symphonic orchestra where the same division of labour and rhythmic cadence seemed to occur. See also Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundation of Music* (Edwardsville: Illinois U.P., 1958 [1911]).

<sup>19</sup> Kay, "Interview: Jackie Kay in Conversation to Maya Jaggi and Richard Dyer", *Wasafiri*, 14.29 (1999), 53-61, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Kay cit. in Lars Eckstein, "Performing Jazz, Defying Essence: Music as a Metaphor of Being in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*", *ZAA*, 54.1 (2006), 1-15, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Kay, "Interview with Jackie Kay" interviewed by Laura Severin, *Free Verse: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, 2 (2002), [http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/Archives/Spring\\_2002/interviews/J\\_Kay.html](http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/Archives/Spring_2002/interviews/J_Kay.html), accessed 22 October 2018.

literally into a state of trance. It traces, to use Kay's words in the previously mentioned 2005 interview, the capacity of music to define us, but also to help us losing our definitions.<sup>22</sup> As a matter of fact, the experience of playing jazz music enables Joss to blur temporal, gender and racial categories and, in order to highlight this process, Kay shows the reader the collapsing of language (as a system) itself: specialised terms belonging to jazz music are re-signified and re-contextualised in order to break down the language and recompose it in a way that can better reflect specific experiences otherwise destined to remain unspeakable.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, Kay's experimentation with language parallels the approach in translation known as feminist translation, inasmuch as the latter seeks to etymologically dismantle conventional vocabulary and to introduce a new lexicon capable of expressing the experience of women in a patriarchal society governed by phallogocentrism.<sup>24</sup> As Hatim puts it, in feminist translation:

Language is fragmented at will and conventional syntactic and semantic structures are not simply disregarded, but rather examined more closely for concealed meanings. Put differently, language becomes a political weapon and conventional discourse targeted, since it is here that power is thought to reside.<sup>25</sup>

While the so-called womanhandling – consisting in making the feminist translator visible in the target text, in making her/him “an active participant in the creation of meaning”<sup>26</sup> – is often used to mitigate forms of misogynist discourse in the source text and to introduce a feminist angle on it, its use in a feminist source text remains still relevant as it prevents a loss of meaning or, in other words, the loss of the potential for subversion which is already intrinsic in the text.

Kay's chapter presents in fact a complex discursive pattern which aims at reflecting, both semantically and syntactically, the peculiar experience of losing, deconstructing and recreating one's identity markers pertaining both to gender and race through (the language of) music. At the lexical level, it comprises different types of specialised terms that include musical terms, professionalisms and jargonisms, as well as general words (e.g., colloquialisms, general slang, etc.) that have entered specialised musical discourse through resemanticisation. An example is the expression “to get down” – originally indicating an invitation to dance, then diachronically used to connote the act of participating in an activity with other people, the fact of being at ease with a situation, and later on still assuming also a sexual connotation – which is resemanticised in musical term so as to mean “to play exceptionally well, with abandon”.<sup>27</sup> Other instances of specialised language include musical terms (e.g., “growl” and “false fingering” indicating a specific playing technique, or also a singing technique in the first case; “to blow” synonym for “to play” as related to any wind instrument; “swing” indicating both the quality of a jazz performance and a specific style of jazz which started to become popular in the 1930s; “rip” a type of glissando; etc.), professionalisms (e.g., “jam” for “jam session”) and jargonisms (e.g., “cat” meaning “musician”; “horn” meaning “wind or brass instrument” and “chops” indicating the musician's strong abilities and endurance).

I will concentrate on a series of examples in order to show – through a comparative analysis of the source text in English (on the left column) and its Italian translation (the target text on the right column)

<sup>22</sup> Kay, “Jackie Kay Interview”.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion on the way music, within the context of the black diaspora and therefore as an expression of Black aesthetics, enables the blurring of boundaries and troubles notions of subjectivity and sovereignty see, among the others, Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernit* (Durham: Duke U.P., 2005); Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke U.P., 2017); Nadia Ellis, “Out and Bad: Toward a Queer Performance Hermeneutic in Jamaican Dancehall,” *Small Axe* 35 (July 2011), 7-23.

<sup>24</sup> See Basil Hatim, *Teaching and Research in Translation*, Second Edition (Harlow, UK: Pearson, 2013), 57.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Godard, “Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation”, *Tessera* 6 (1989), 42-53, 50.

<sup>27</sup> All About Jazz, “Jazz Slang”, (2018), [www.allaboutjazz.com/jazz-slang-by-aaj-staff](http://www.allaboutjazz.com/jazz-slang-by-aaj-staff), accessed 22 October 2018.



– how the acknowledgment of specialised terms can affect both the textual interpretation and the ensuing translation strategies adopted.

The description of Joss's journey through music begins with these words:

When he gets down, and he doesn't always get down deep enough, he loses his sex, his race, his memory. He strips himself bare, takes everything off, till he's barely human. Then he brings himself back, out of this world. Back, from way. He has to get to the centre of a whirlwind, screwballing in musical circles till he is very nearly out of his mind. Getting there is painful. The journey is so whacky, so wild that he sometimes fears he'll never return sane. He licks his chops. He slaps and flips and flies. He goes down, swirling and whirling till he's right down at the very pinpoint of himself. A small black mark. The further he goes, the smaller he gets. That's the thing. It's so fast, he's speeding, crashing, his fingers going like the hammers, frenzied, blowing up a storm. His leather lips. His satchelmouth.<sup>28</sup>

Quando scende giù, e non sempre scende giù abbastanza a fondo, perde il sesso, la razza, la memoria. Si denuda, si spoglia di tutto, fino ad essere a malapena umano. Poi torna in sé, fuori da questo mondo. Da molto lontano. È doloroso arrivarci. Deve arrivare al centro di una tromba d'aria, roteando in cerchi musicali fino a perdere quasi la testa. Il viaggio è così pazzesco, così scatenato che talvolta ha paura di non riacquistare più la ragione. Si lecca i baffi. Con un colpo secco e uno scatto si libra in aria. Scende giù, turbinando e frullando finché non si ritrova al nucleo stesso del suo essere. Un piccolo segno nero. Quanto più avanza, tanto più rimpicciolisce. È così che dev'essere. È tutto così rapido, e lui sfreccia veloce, precipita, le sue dita si muovono decise come i martelli, eccitate, scatenano una tempesta. Le sue labbra di cuoio. La sua bocca a sacco.<sup>29</sup>

In the incipit, the expression “to get down” means “to play with abandon” in jazz terms and connotes the experience of losing oneself in music, the text continues in fact with a description of the loss of the identity markers of race and gender as produced precisely by this experience of playing and losing oneself in music. While this seems to be the main message the author wants to convey, it remains slightly overlooked in the target text where jazz terminology is not taken into account. By literally translating “gets down” with “scende giù”, the translator seems in fact to highlight a different aspect – namely the capacity of music to generate introspection, hence signalling Joss's descent into his innermost self – thus inevitably neglecting the whole experience of jazz music engendering a dissolution and reconstitution of the self which characterizes the chapter.

After the description of the painful, vertiginous, speeding journey into the music, the expression “licks his chops” may signify, as the target text suggests, anticipation and eagerness (as in “to lick one's lips” or in Italian “leccarsi i baffi”). Yet, if jazz as LSP is taken into consideration, it could also mean something different. In jazz terms the word “lick” signals “a short motif or formula inserted into an improvisation when the context permits or when invention lapses”,<sup>30</sup> while “chops” stands both for the lips of a brass player and more broadly for that player's strong technical ability or endurance.<sup>31</sup> Taking everything into account, the sentence may thus signal eagerness to play, or express the way Joss is playing, that is by showing his abilities, by improvising and enduring.

Following in the text, the expression “He slaps and flips and flies” has been translated into Italian with “con un colpo secco e uno scatto si libra in aria”. In this instance, the target text might attempt to make more coherent a source text that has a very complex syntactic structure and presents difficulties even at the lexical level. The choice operated by the translator might have been to connect this sentence with the previous expression (“leccarsi i baffi”) and – by recalling the actions of a cat (a word that in jazz terms also indicates a jazz player) – providing the reader with the idea of something more instinctual,

<sup>28</sup> Kay, *Trumpet* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 131. From now on quoted in the text as *Trumpet*.

<sup>29</sup> Kay, *Trumpet*, trans. by Sandro Melani (Milano: La Tartaruga, 1999), 135. From now on quoted in the text as *Melani*.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Witmer, in Barry Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, vol. 1 A-K (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1988), 40-41.

<sup>31</sup> Witmer, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 208.

happening outside of this world: "He strips himself bare, takes everything off, till he's barely human. Then he brings himself back, out of this world" (*Trumpet*, 131). The connection with animality is in fact something that returns several times in the chapter (e.g., an umbilical cord is associated with a snake; the expression "galloping piano" is followed by "sweating like a horse"), and in the novel at large. If we consider the influence of jazz terminology in the novel, on the other hand, "slap" or "slap-bass" refers to an effect produced on the double bass when "the string is drawn away from, or across, the fingerboard at high tension and then released suddenly so that the resulting note is accompanied by a percussive click or slapping sound as the string hits the fingerboard";<sup>32</sup> "flip" indicates a combination of two types of glissandos: a "lift" rising from the end of a note, followed by a "fall off";<sup>33</sup> and in jazz slang it also means "to go crazy" as a verb or it refers to an "eccentric" as a noun;<sup>34</sup> while "fly" in jazz terms is a synonym for "smooth" or "slick".<sup>35</sup> In this case the importance of considering jazz as LSP is particularly clear since it enables a reading of the sentence as a description of the specific way in which the musician plays by showing his ability and technique and, again, reflects his experience of losing himself into the music, until he becomes a "small black mark" (perhaps a musical note).

Later on in the text, the use of the word "blowing" brings together the act of playing an instrument (if "to blow" is considered as a musical term)<sup>36</sup> with the vertiginous experience – similar to a tempest – that ensues. The use of this term, together with the expressions "leather lips" and "satchelmouth" (which is also the way the famous African American trumpeter Louis Armstrong was nicknamed, sometimes shortened as "Satchmo"),<sup>37</sup> represent an instance of polysemy in the way Kay introduces – by way of camouflage and in order to say something different, therefore deploying the linguistic strategy of indirection – jazz terms in her novel.<sup>38</sup> Even if monoreferentiality has initially been considered one of the key lexical features of specialised discourse,<sup>39</sup> and reflects some of the desirable qualities of specialised discourse identified by Lothar Hoffman,<sup>40</sup> cases of ambiguity in the guise of polysemy can also appear, since specialised discourse employs words drawn from general language which undergo a process of specialisation and vice versa, that is, in some instances specialised terms become part of everyday lexis.<sup>41</sup> In this case the polysemy is possible – and the same is true for a number of examples which I will highlight later on in the analysis – because jazz as LSP is used in a different context, that is in literature. Therefore, while monoreferentiality implies that only one meaning is allowed in a given context, its transposition in literature enables the possibility both of engendering metaphorical meanings and of carrying intertextual references.

The chapter includes other instances of polysemy as in the following lines:

And he is bending in the wind, scooping pitch, growling.... Running changes. Changes running faster, quicker, dangerous. A galloping piano behind him. Sweating like a horse. Break it down. Go on.

E si china nel vento, impostandosi, grugnendo.... Cambiamenti continui. Cambiamenti sempre più veloci, più rapidi, più pericolosi. Dietro di lui un piano al galoppo. Suda come un cavallo. Smetti. Dai, smetti.

<sup>32</sup> Alyn Shipton, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, vol. 2 L-Z (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1988), 465.

<sup>33</sup> Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 390.

<sup>34</sup> All About Jazz, "Jazz Slang".

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Witmer, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 119.

<sup>37</sup> Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 2, 416.

<sup>38</sup> See Celia M. Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville: U.P. of Virginia, 1999), especially the chapter "Camouflaged Languages: Detour and Ruse".

<sup>39</sup> Maurizio Gotti, *Investigating Specialized Discourse* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

<sup>40</sup> The desirable qualities of specialized discourse mentioned by Hoffman (1984) are: 1) exactitude, simplicity and clarity; 2) objectivity; 3) abstractness; 4) generalization; 5) density of information; 6) brevity or laconism; 7) emotional neutrality; 8) unambiguity; 9) impersonality; 10) logical consistency; 11) use of defined technical terms, symbols and figures. See Lothar Hoffman, "Seven Roads to LSP", *Special Language – Fachsprache*, 6.1-2 (1984), 28-38.

<sup>41</sup> Gotti, *Investigating Specialized Discourse*, 30.



Break it down. It is all in the blood.... When he was something else. Somebody else. Her. That girl. The trumpet screams. He's hot. She's hot. He's hot. The whole room is hot. He plays his false fingers. Chokes his trumpet. He is naked. This is naked jazz. O-bop-she-bam. Never lying. Telling it like it is. (*Trumpet*, 131-132)

Sta tutto nel sangue.... Quando [lui] era un'altra cosa. Un'altra persona. Lei. Quella ragazza. La tromba grida. È eccitato. È eccitata. È eccitato. Tutta la sala è eccitata. Suona con le sue false dita. Soffoca la tromba. È nudo. Questo è jazz nudo. O-bop-she-bam. Non mente mai. Dice le cose come stanno. (*Melani*, 135-136).

This excerpt contains other examples of specialised terms re-contextualised. If it is true that Joss might be actually bending in the wind (as the target text suggests), the passage could also refer to Joss bending the note, a reading endorsed by the expression “scooping the pitch” as in raising the pitch, and “growling” recalling a specific playing/singing technique. As a matter of fact, in jazz as LSP the term “bend” indicates “a variation in pitch upwards or downwards during the course of a note”;<sup>42</sup> “scoop” on wind instruments refers to “a glissando rising to the beginning of a note, achieved entirely with the embouchure”;<sup>43</sup> and the musical term “growl” denotes the production of a particular rough or “dirty” tone by brass and woodwind players and singers.<sup>44</sup> The three examples thus refer to the variation and improvisation that Joss introduces to the music while playing, something that anticipates the issue of gender variation.

The next example – the expression “Running changes. Changes running” – represents, through a repetition with inversion, a clear instance of resemanticisation typical of Kay's play with words. “Running changes” is an expression quite specific to jazz music: “running” is a synonym for “playing” and “changes” refer to “the harmonic progression of an existing theme on which a jazz performance is based”;<sup>45</sup> hence meaning “using suitable scales over each given chord of the tune”.<sup>46</sup> Yet, through repetition and inversion, the act of playing music introduces as well the issue of change, of transformation – in this case of gender identity – that is reflected in the text by the shifting pronouns, from male to female, and back again. In this case the expression “break it down” – a slang term meaning “get it hot” – introduces both the issue of the fragmentation of identity and the approaching important theme of “sex-change”, which has been building up in the narrative as a ‘crescendo’ through the attention given to Joss's peculiar way of playing, of experiencing music, as if in a trance.

The expression “The trumpet screams”, as a matter of fact, is an intertextual reference to the “trumpets pealing Truth!” in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. In this text, it is exactly while the trumpets resoundingly announce the ‘truth’ that the sex-change of the protagonist Orlando takes place, and the author declares “we have no choice left but confess – he was a woman”.<sup>47</sup> The expression “he was a woman” is repeated time and again in the novel becoming a sort of leitmotiv together with the other repeated expression “Running changes. Changes running”. This expedient is used by Kay not only to emphasise ‘change’ and ‘transformation’ as key words in her novel, but also in order to represent, just as Woolf did with Orlando, sex-change or gender-change as a common event that is part of the ever-changing process of identity transformation, hence avoiding forms of spectacularisation (something that, on the other hand, the tabloid journalist Sophie Stones constantly tries to do in the novel).

While it is not my intention to romanticise jazz or black music which, even in its most recent formulations continues to be interested by heterosexist and gender biased practices (one only has to think

<sup>42</sup> Witmer, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 95-96.

<sup>43</sup> Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 2, 430.

<sup>44</sup> Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 455.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>46</sup> A Passion for Jazz!, “Glossary of Jazz Terms”, (2018), <https://www.apassion4jazz.net/glossary.html>, accessed 22 October 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2003 [1928]).

about the fact that women still tend to be mainly vocalists in jazz) –<sup>48</sup> I do want to emphasize how it can be, and has similarly been in the past (e.g., the expression of lesbian desire by the blues singers of the 1920s), a space for transformation, for freedom, especially when considering the negotiation of space for the expression of “black female libidinality”,<sup>49</sup> and its use within a masculine-dominated arena.<sup>50</sup>

In this context, and especially with regards to the translation, it is interesting to notice that since English is considered a “natural gender” language as opposed to a “grammatical gender” one (such as Italian, French or Spanish) – that is to say that English speakers usually refer to nouns with the male or female pronoun based on their being biologically male or female in the real world<sup>51</sup> – the pronoun assumes a particularly important role in revealing the sex or gender of both names and the invariable adjectives. In the target text the Italian inflectional suffixes “-o” to indicate the masculine and “-a” for the feminine (“È eccitato. È eccitata. È eccitato”) are equivalent to the use of the pronouns “he” and “she” in the source text (“He’s hot. She’s hot. He’s hot”). On the other hand, while in English it is compulsory to specify the subject in a sentence like in “When he was something else” (*Trumpet*, 131), Italian leaves more space for indeterminacy through the (possible) elision of the subject: “Quando era un'altra cosa” (*Melani*, 135). In this case the subject could have been added also in Italian so as to emphasise even more the issue of gender transformation (e.g., “Quando [lui] era un'altra cosa”) according to the feminist translation procedure that seeks to make visible gender difference, even if at the risk, perhaps, of sounding slightly redundant.

Furthermore, while the term “O-bop-she-bam” is an expression that recalls the Bebop – a style of jazz developed by young players in the early 1940s,<sup>52</sup> the other two terms “hot” and “false fingers” are another example of polysemy. In jazz terms “hot” is both used “to suggest the qualities of excitement, passion, and intensity” and “to differentiate ‘real’ jazz from the ‘sweet’ music played by the more commercial dance bands” by coining the term “hot jazz” to indicate the jazz of the early 1920s and swing periods in the USA,<sup>53</sup> while “false fingering” is a musical term that refers to a playing technique “of altered finger placement that produces tones or density of sound on horns that are not available by orthodox techniques”.<sup>54</sup> Yet the two terms, read in the context of this ecstatic, physical and emotional journey into music, assume other connotations as well. The experience narrated is certainly very physical, sexualised even, as an expression of black female libidinality building up in a crescendo of tension waiting to be released as suggested by the adjectives “faster”, “quicker” and especially “hot” and “naked”, the verbs “sweating” and “chokes”, and the reference to “false fingers” that may recall female autoeroticism. Also the sentence “It is all in the blood” lends itself to multiple interpretations: is it the blood beating, pumping through Joss’s veins and body or is it another type of blood, perhaps menstrual

<sup>48</sup> See, among the others, Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1999 [1993]) and Weheliye, *Phonographies*.

<sup>49</sup> Weheliye, *Phonographies*, 186.

<sup>50</sup> Weheliye uses the term “black female libidinality” with regards to Tricia Rose’s discussion on the importance of voicing, making known and explicit through narration, forms of black female desire, intimacy and pleasure as a potential for liberation, since keeping them secret through a politics of moralism “will not reduce objectifying, male-empowering representations and treatment of women” (Tricia Rose, “‘Two Inches or a Yard’: Silencing Black Women’s Sexual Expression”, in Ella Shohat, ed., *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (Boston, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 315-324, 321). In the novel, as a matter of fact, if Joss is perhaps initially subjected to masculine protocols necessary for his emergence as Britain’s legendary trumpet player, he then uses that same system in order to express the potential for more fluid conceptions of identity, and he does so by undoing it from within, through a process of disidentification.

<sup>51</sup> Suzanne Romaine, *Communicating Gender* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1999), 73.

<sup>52</sup> The Bebop is particularly associated with Charlie Parker, John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, Kenny Clarke, Charlie Christian and Bud Powell. It is characterised by a stressed instrumental ability expressed through rapid, busy, chord-progression-driven improvisations using irregular, syncopated phrasing with many tensions and alliterations. See A Passion for Jazz, “Glossary”.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Thacker, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 539-540.

<sup>54</sup> See Columbia University Centre for Jazz Studies (CJS), “Jazz Glossary” (2018), <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/jazzglossary/>, accessed 22 October 2018; Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 1, 352-353.

blood? Here, while male gender identity and female anatomy intersect each other by breaking down the boundaries of heteronormative conception of gender and selfhood, Kay uses the polysemic potential of the “language of music” to express something unspeakable in contemporary Western heteropatriarchy, that is the possibility of female masculinity or male femininity, and the potential of queer forms of desire. Kay's play with jazz terms and their resemanticisation is lost in the target text where, probably for editorial reasons, a more literal, sanitised even, rendition of the text has been preferred over the feminist paradigm which praises the translator visibility and the “repossession of the word by women”.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, the expression “this is naked jazz” reflects both the expression of black female libidinality, the freedom of expression, and emphasises the process through which Joss strips himself of the layers of identity labels that society has attached onto him. In the process, the linear – chrononormative and as such heteronormative – conception of time starts to collapse, and Joss witnesses his own death before seeing his younger self in a flashback:

He's a small girl skipping along an old disused railway line in a red dress.... The picture changes with the light. He can taste himself transforming. Running changes. The body changes shape. From girl to young woman to young man to old man to old woman.... When he starts to come back from the small black point, he finds himself running along the old railway line that his mother never trusted although there were never any trains. Running along he realizes his mother was right never to trust that track. (*Trumpet*, 132-134)

[Lui] È una ragazzina che saltella con un vestito rosso lungo una vecchia linea ferroviaria in disuso.... Il quadro cambia con la luce. Si sente trasformare. Cambiamenti continui. Il corpo cambia forma. Da ragazzina a donna giovane a giovannotto a vecchio a vecchia.... Quando comincia a uscire dal piccolo punto nero si ritrova a correre lungo la vecchia linea ferroviaria di cui sua madre non si fidava mai, anche se non c'era mai nessun treno. Mentre corre sul binario, capisce che sua madre aveva ragione a non fidarsene mai. (*Melani*, 136-137)

Gender identity transformation continues to inform the text with Joss as a small girl (here the emphasis on the male pronoun could have been perhaps reinforced in the translation with “[Lui] è una ragazzina” in order to highlight the continuous transformation) skipping along an old disused railway line. A few lines after, the issue of transformation reappears with more intensity and it is introduced again by the expression “running changes” that, as mentioned before, combines the variation in music with that of gender identity. The sentence “From girl to young woman to young man to old man to old woman” traces the actual process of Joss's gender transformation, his trans\* identity as, born a girl, he embraces a male gender identity during his life to then return a woman in the morgue where the medical discourse defines his body as anatomically female.

In this context the reference to the “railway line” holds perhaps a hidden meaning. In jazz terms a “train wreck” signals the “disagreement” of the musicians on their exact location in the tune they are playing; in other words, someone gets lost so the chord changes and the melody may get confused for several bars, but usually there are no fatalities and the journey continues.<sup>56</sup> As Joss runs along (read agrees) the railway line (which can be read as society's expectations or institutionalised knowledge and assumptions) she realises that the track (the railway, but also the musical tune or the recording)<sup>57</sup> is not to be trusted. Therefore the musical improvisation, granted by the “train wrack”, enables Joss to think about gender identity ‘off-beat’ in a certain sense, that is following alternative temporalities and ‘paths’ of expression. In the target text both the repetition and re-contextualisation of the term “running” (i.e., “running”, which is present three times in the excerpt, is rendered as “continui”, “correre” and “corre” respectively, so that the visual association of the act of playing, “running” in jazz terms, and of actually

<sup>55</sup> Godard, “Translating and Sexual Differences”, *Resources for Feminist Research* 13.3 (1984), 13-16, 14.

<sup>56</sup> See All About Jazz, “Jazz Slang”.

<sup>57</sup> Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 2, 544.

running is lost) and the polysemy of the term “track” (e.g., “track” not only as “rail line”, but also as “recorded tune”, or “sequence of events”, or “way of life”, and so on) remains inevitably overlooked.

Indeed in the novel, it is exactly this alternative experience of time that ultimately enables Joss to deconstruct himself by refusing fixed and stable conceptions of identity (as reflected by the Western *cogito*), and then to recreate himself anew:

All his self collapses – his idiosyncrasies, his personality, his ego, his sexuality, even, finally, his memory. All of it falls away like layers of skin unwrapping. He unwraps himself with his trumpet.... 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. The wide moors. The big mouth. Scotland. Africa. Slavery. Freedom. He is a girl. A man. Everything, nothing. He is sickness, health. The sun. The moon. Black, white. Nothing weighs him down. Not the past nor the future. He hangs on to the high C and then he lets go. Screams. Lets it go. Bends his notes and bends his body.... He just keeps blowing. He is blowing his story.... He lets it rip. He tears himself apart. He explodes. Then he brings himself back. Slowly, slowly, piecing himself together. (*Trumpet*, 135-136)

Tutto il suo io crolla – le sue idiosincrasie, la sua personalità, il suo ego, la sua sessualità, persino, infine, la sua memoria. Tutto ciò si stacca come strati di pelle che si stiano sfacendo. Si sfa insieme alla sua tromba.... Suonare la tromba non c'entra col fatto di essere qualcuno che arriva da qualcosa. Ha a che fare con il fatto di essere un nessuno che arriva dal nulla. La tromba lo mette spietatamente a nudo finché non si ritrova senza corpo, senza passato, senza niente.... Così, quando lui decolla, è l'intero secolo che galoppa verso la fine. Le ampie brughiere. La grande foce. La Scozia. L'Africa. La schiavitù. La libertà. È una ragazza. Un uomo. Tutto, niente. È la malattia, la salute. Il sole. La luna. Nero, bianco. Niente che lo appesantisca. Né il passato né il futuro. Si tiene aggrappato al do maggiore e poi molla. Grida. Lascia andare. Piega le note e piega il suo corpo.... Continua solo a suonare. Suona la sua storia.... La lascia filare. Lui va in mille pezzi. Esplode. Poi ritorna in sé. Ricomponendosi adagio adagio. (*Melani*, 139-140)

In the description, the collapse of all labels defining a person by their beliefs, sexuality or past is realised with the verb “unwrapping” that represents an intertextual reference to a different type of unravelling that takes place earlier on in the novel: when Joss unwraps the layers of bandages binding his chest and reveals his breasts to his future wife Millie for the first time. As such it stands for Joss's freedom to express his complex identity without the need to fit it into neatly separated boxes based, among other things, on dichotomous conceptions of gender. This process, as the whole chapter emphasises, is made possible through the act of playing music (and the trumpet in particular) as the sentence “He unwraps himself with his trumpet” suggests; something that results slightly overlooked in the target text where the proposition “with” translated as “insieme a” implies the dissolution of both the self and the trumpet.

The expression “he takes off” has been translated as “decolla” since it refers to the process of raising, of Joss lifting himself up through music, but at the same time it also recalls the action of removing (taking off) the bandages and sedimented layers of fixed identity traits as he unwraps himself free.

The terms “moors” and “big mouth” have been respectively translated as “brughiere” and “grande foce” in order to reflect the natural landscapes of Scotland and Africa. Yet, they also carry other implicit meanings, especially if we read them contextually with the words that follow in the text: 1) “moors” (with a capital ‘m’) is also a noun historically used to define Muslim people coming from North Africa and, in its variant “Moore” represents the surname that Joss's father received upon his arrival to Scotland – possibly from Africa – as a way of indicating that he was a black man; 2) “big mouth” or “large lips have historically been stereotypically associated with people of the African diaspora”<sup>58</sup> so much that the big-lipped African became a cornerstone of American minstrelsy – and were believed to be a visible

<sup>58</sup> Victoria Pitts-Taylor, ed., *Cultural Encyclopedia of the Body*, vol. 1 A-L (London: Greenwood Press, 2008), 325.

signal of “their underlying animal nature, just as the thin, defined lips of European were thought to be emblematic of a gentler, more refined nature”.<sup>59</sup>

Terms represented as dualistic pairs are then mentioned (e.g., Scotland/Africa; slavery/freedom; girl/man; black/white; everything/nothing; etc.) in order to show the collapsing of such labels, as Joss “bends” not only his notes, but also his identity and the language in the process while he keeps on “blowing” (that is playing) his story, finally free to tell his own version. The musical term “rip” meaning “a loud, violent glissando rising to the beginning of a note”<sup>60</sup> has been translated as “filare” but perhaps better reflects the will of letting things be, of letting them go unrestrained and, again, the unwrapping (in a violent way, by ripping them) of the identity labels, as Joss tears apart himself (or better, tears apart the identity labels imposed on him) and then slowly recreates his identity anew.

#### 4. Conclusions

Starting from an understanding of music as a multimodal experience and through an analysis of jazz music as LSP in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, this essay has outlined the importance of an awareness of specialised discourse both for the textual interpretation of literary texts and for their translation into other languages. Kay's re-contextualisation of some specific terms belonging to jazz music in her novel, or in other words her transposition of specialised language to another context – namely from a specialised musical context to literature – has enabled her to bypass some of the desirable qualities of specialised discourse (e.g., monoreferentiality, lack of emotion, transparency, etc.),<sup>61</sup> qualities that are nevertheless not always applicable to all specialised language.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, while a broad definition of specialised translation leaves aside literary texts,<sup>63</sup> this essay has postulated not only that literature may employ specialised language at length, but also that its translation can be deeply affected, to the extent of experiencing a loss of meaning, by its neglect.

This critical reflection is particularly important in a text such as Kay's *Trumpet* where the author employs the specialised language of (jazz) music in order to find a way to make up for the failure of common language in contemporary racialised heteropatriarchy to account for the experiences of subjectivities who are gendered and racialised through dichotomous systems of categorisation. In fact Kay draws on the potential of black music, as “the social organization of black time for revolution”,<sup>64</sup> in order to advance through its fluid ability to adapt, shift and change, the militant capacity to ‘bend’ the language – as if in bending a note – to multiply its semantic potential, as a way of reinventing not only music and language, but also identity in the process,<sup>65</sup> and eventually to find expression for fluid black and queer forms of belonging that hopefully would not be lost in translation.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. See also Emilio Amideo, “Undoing Black Masculinity: Isaac Julien's Alternative Grammar of Visual Representation”, in Paul Baker and Giuseppe Balirano, eds., *Queering Masculinities in Language and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2018), 214.

<sup>60</sup> Kernfeld, in Kernfeld, ed., *The New Grove*, vol. 2, 380.

<sup>61</sup> Hoffman, “Seven Roads to LSP”.

<sup>62</sup> Gotti, *Investigating Specialized Discourse*.

<sup>63</sup> Maurizio Gotti and Susan Šarčević, *Insights into Specialized Translation* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> Tavia Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York: New York U.P., 2019), 11.

<sup>65</sup> Kay, “Interview: Jackie Kay in Conversation”, 55.