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# “The adoption papers” : a child’s quest for identity through fiction

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► **To cite this version:**

Sarah Merabet. “The adoption papers” : a child’s quest for identity through fiction. Education. 2023. dumas-04352569

**HAL Id: dumas-04352569**

**<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-04352569>**

Submitted on 19 Dec 2023

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**UNIVERSITE DE FRANCHE-COMTE-BESANCON**

**U.F.R DES SCIENCES DU LANGUAGE DE L'HOMME ET DE LA SOCIETE**

Master : MEEF Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation

Mémoire de Master 2

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# THE ADOPTION PAPERS: A CHILD'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY THROUGH FICTION

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Sarah MERABET

ANNEE UNIVERSITAIRE 2022-2023

A master's dissertation written under the supervision of Margaret Gillespie

# Remerciements

Je tiens à remercier toutes les personnes qui ont contribué à ma réussite et qui m'ont aidées lors de la rédaction de ce mémoire.

J'aimerais dans un premier temps remercier ma directrice de mémoire Mme Margaret Gillespie qui m'a guidée et m'a permis d'alimenter la rédaction autour de ce mémoire, pour ses mots et ses conseils.

Je tiens à remercier l'Université de Franche-Comté ainsi que le personnel de l'INSPE qui m'ont permis d'acquérir les connaissances nécessaires à la rédaction de ce travail. Je remercie également la promotion MEEF Anglais 2022 pour leur soutien infaillible tout au long de cette année, particulièrement Nathalie Pastry, Anna Khelif ainsi que Mégane Maillot.

Je tiens à adresser une attention particulière aux personnes m'ayant témoigné leur soutien lors de la rédaction :

Mes parents pour leurs encouragements tout au long de cette année.

Ma sœur et mon frère, pour leur précieux conseils.

Lounes Boulma pour ses relectures et son soutien moral.

Mme Audrey Kawka qui a alimenté ma réflexion et donner les outils nécessaires à la rédaction de la partie didactique, mais également pour son professionnalisme et sa bienveillance.

# Tables des abréviations et des sigles

**CE** : compréhension écrite

**CO** : compréhension orale

**EE** : expression écrite

**EOC** : expression orale en continue

**TI** : tâche intermédiaire

**TF** : tâche finale

**EOI** : expression orale en interaction

**BO** : bulletin officiel

**Tle** : classe de terminale

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# INTRODUCTION

“Poetry, like any other form of artistic creation is one of the pillars of the humanities. By following the paths of emotions, sensitivity, and imagination, the poem transmits knowledge and human values. Better still, it shapes the beings, body, and soul”

- Tanella Boni.<sup>1</sup>

Adoption is a recurring theme in the literature that many authors try to define by the complexities and issues that arise from it. Through their often-autobiographical narratives they try to reconstruct their personal history, and gather elements about their roots, but also to establish a relationship, and create a connection with their own inner self. The search for identity, this sometimes long and tumultuous journey, becomes the search for many people, and many families. This is the case of our author, Jackie Kay, who through her poetry collection offers us a part of her own persona story based on fictional poems that retrace part of her life.

The title of the collection *The Adoption Papers* refers from the outset to the theme of adoption. However, the term ‘paper’ in the notion of ‘adoption papers’ is an ambivalent and misleading one because, ostensibly at least, it appears to deal with the subject from a legal point of view. Indeed, the expression “papers” seems to imply that the adoption in question has been legalized at an administrative or legal level. In this sense, the title of the collection does not immediately reflect the emotional complexity of adoption and the reality that lies at its heart—the lack of relational ties. In fact, it is this legal term that defines the adopted child, they are initially defined legally nothing else represents the child’s identity except what appears on those documents: sex, age, and place of adoption.

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<sup>1</sup>“The Poet at the Heart of Society,” UNESCO, April 26, 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/courier/july-september-2017/poet-heart-society>. Poet, novelist, author of children’s books and philosopher, Tanella Boni is a professor and vice-president of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP).

This lack of connection, of information, is the whole difficulty faced by writers like Jackie Kay.

This quest for identity invites us to ask ourselves this question: how is *The Adoption Papers* a form of art that leads an adoptive child to reinvent and affirm their own self through different fictional personae?

In order to answer this question, we will first analyze to what extent literature is a weapon for a child to create his own story through the power of the imagination. My perspective will be in part scientific since we will address the role of imagination in psychology.

I will then go on to focus on adoption, imagination and the quest for identity in Jackie Kay's work *The Adoption Papers*. I will then examine how the work can be said to constitute a testimony to bear witness of the trauma that adoption may represent. Then, I will turn my attention to an analysis of the poems themselves and the importance of telling a story to reach a certain understanding of one's experience and identity construction.

Finally, I will offer a pedagogical approach to studying the poem 'Black Bottom' and how its issues may be exploited in secondary school teaching.

## **PARTIE I : DISCIPLINAIRE**

I : LITERATURE AND IMAGINATION: PERPETUAL EXPERIMENTATIONS (OF LIFE) THAT LEAD TO ONE'S SELF-CONSTRUCTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD (AND ITS ACTORS)

### 1 Importance of literature to affirm one's self

Literature is well known for its emancipatory functions.<sup>2</sup> By means of fiction, particularly but exclusively in the autobiographical genre, literature allows authors to assume a subject position or to release themselves from one by creating characters that correspond to the concepts they wish to express. Through the portrayal of characters, it is possible for an author to express their own thoughts and emotions, to imagine the experiences of another person or even to be the mouthpiece of an entire society. The same goes for the speaker in a poem who allows the poet to bring to life a world they have imagined. Where the world seems to have its limits, literature makes it possible to escape from a condition that eludes us and makes it possible to shape a whole new world, or simply to fashion an identity when we ourselves are in search of it.

It is in this sense that the anthropologist Michèle Petit<sup>3</sup>, in *Lire le monde, Expériences de transmission culturelle aujourd'hui*, explains how books can be seen as cultural goods that help to revive interiority set thought in motion, relaunch an activity of constructing meaning.

Petit's study explains how, along the way, and regardless of the culture into which they have been born, human beings thirst for meaning, for thought and for belonging. They need symbolic figures to make sense of what seems to be chaos. Thus, it is here that literature and art intervene not only as libraries or mere places of access to knowledge, it is conducive to the transition between body and psyche:

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<sup>2</sup> Laurent Jenny, *L'autofiction*, cours en ligne, Dpt de Français moderne – Université de Genève, 2003. Laurent Jenny is a French literary theorist.

<http://www.unige.ch/lettres/framo/enseignements/methodes/autofiction/>

<sup>3</sup> Michele Petit, *Lire le monde, Expériences de transmission culturelle aujourd'hui*, (Paris: Belin, 2014)

La lecture permet d'élaborer du sens, de construire un autre espace, un autre temps, une autre langue, et, ce faisant, d'ouvrir une marge de manœuvre ; de symboliser une vérité intérieure, secrète, de mettre en forme son expérience, de se découvrir ; et parfois de réparer quelque chose qui a été rompu, dans le rapport à sa propre histoire ou dans la relation à autrui.<sup>4</sup>

Artistic works nourish dreams, thoughts, desires, and conversations—life itself—, while easing fears or difficult moments that everyone might face. Literature gives an artistic, poetic background to one's life. It fulfills a role including that of exploring imaginary pasts, presents and futures in the unconscious mind that may never be true but that remain a part of one's fears, one's dream and indeed oneself. Through literature we project our desires, our fears and reinvent our history in a certain way in parallel to situations, aspects of our lives, aspects of ourselves that we cannot necessarily affirm or face.

In this sense, writing is an escape that allows us to understand ourselves and can thus be said to be restorative.

In *L'identité narrative comme théorie de la subjectivité pratique, Un essai de reconstruction de la conception de Paul Ricoeur*, Jean Marc Tétaz addresses the issue of personal identity by defining “narrative identity as a poetic replica [...] of personal identity”<sup>5</sup>. For the author, it is a question of adopting characteristics, a character in order to appropriate an identity, initially a narrative identity, whose aim is to propose a story in which one can better accept and recognize oneself. This identity consists of “telling oneself over and over again”, in order to remind oneself that identity is a changing and non-fixed phenomenon that evolves through our experiences and the passage of time.

This is what Ricoeur defines as “ipseity”, which means to evolve while remaining oneself. In addition, narrative identity blends fiction and reality and stems from the ability to “tell a story, our own, with which we can identify.” (*Études théologiques et religieuses* 2014/4 (Tome 89), pages 463 à 494)

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<sup>4</sup> Frederik Guinard, “Interview De Michèle Petit - Publications-Prairial.fr,” accessed May 3, 2023: 4-5. <https://publications-prairial.fr/canalpsy/index.php?id=555&file=1>

<sup>5</sup> Jean Marc Tétaz, “L'identité narrative comme théorie de la subjectivité pratique. Un essai de reconstruction de la conception de Paul Ricoeur” 89(4) 2014 : 463-494 last accessed april 30, 2023 <https://www.cairn.info/revue-etudes-theologiques-et-religieuses-2014-4-page-463.htm>

Literature thus makes possible to affirm the relationship of an individual to the world. Webster's II New College Dictionary defines term 'identity' as "the collective aspects of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known"<sup>6</sup>. Identity, however, remains a complex and ever-evolving concept in literature that authors try to shape through characters. Therefore, it is important to consider literary works and their context in order to understand that the identity of the characters is influenced by the author's movement their personal experiences, their own self-portrayal, their environment and the role they play in society. The plot and the identity given to the story's characters can also be influenced by behavioural norms, and it is by understanding them that one grasps better why an author, or even a poet, constructs his characters in a given way.

## 2 Emotional Imagination

In *Expression de la mentalisation et de l'imaginaire chez l'enfant victime d'un trauma*, Alexane Henni-Juillard, Anne-Valérie Mazoyer<sup>7</sup> conduct a study of two children who grew up with "unstable figures [. . .] who do not meet their needs in an adequate way". In their study, they try to define whether the imagination could be a refuge in which the child flees a "disappointing, hurtful reality". They then articulate their reflections with the following question: "How does imagination enable 'mentalization', the awareness of one's self-awareness. " and the others?"

Henni-Juillard and Mazoyer's research attempts to study the imagination and its functions, as well as the manifestations of the imagination and mentalization in children who are "emotionally deficient." Indeed, imagination here intervenes in order to compensate for a trauma that has occurred. In this way, through imagination, role-playing and creativity they cut themselves off from the world by going beyond reality and by transforming their environment and its actors.

A disturbed family environment, with obstacles, would, according to them, encourage the child to be "creative in overcoming them." (cf: *Expression de la mentalisation et de l'imaginaire chez l'enfant victime d'un trauma*.) Their need for creativity appears in order to

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<sup>6</sup> "Reflection Activity: Identity," Learning for Justice", accessed May 3, 2023, <https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/reflection-activity-identity>

<sup>7</sup> Henni- Juillard Alexane, Mazoyer Anne-Valérie, "Expression de la mentalisation et de l'imaginaire chez l'enfant victime d'un trauma", 63 n°2 (2014) : 145-155: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-enfances-et-psy-2014-2-page-145.htm>

mitigate and transform their stressful, painful reality: imagination then becomes a refuge that plays the role of “protection”. Thus, the child protects himself from intense “psychic manipulations” and escapes into a “more serene, more manageable” world that is made possible by the imagination. By playing, they create another life for themselves in parallel, which they organize by “manipulating external phenomena”, that is, phenomena that occur throughout their life about which they have no means of action or which they do not know how to exploit. This allows them to integrate their personality, to find themselves better in a world that they have built themselves, which they understand because there they find a climate conducive to reflection and thus not to dwell on their feelings, and their thoughts and thus allows them to affirm their identity: who and what they are, what they want to be and what they will never be.

Their study concludes that the developed imagination allows an analysis of the inner world and of the inner self, to develop defenses more adapted to the situations encountered, thus allowing them to forge their personality in the best possible way. However, the children that have a “non-existent” imagination are “separated from their feelings” [...] and “approaches the world in a superficial way.”

Other psychologists, such as Paul L. Harris in *The Work of the Imagination*<sup>8</sup>, consider that imagination and its development are vital for the individual’s understanding of reality.

In his famous study recognized by other professionals, he explains how children’s ability to imagine and depict the world differently contributes to their emotional and cognitive development. Their way of reinventing their world, of imagining characters, of a life that could be organized very differently is considered an aptitude, that of “pretending” which is necessary in the philosophical sense; in other words, it is fundamental in order to allow a child’s moral construction and to enable them to better understand reality.

Harris divides his work into three parts: the first establishes how scholarly studies have explored and explained the human imagination through studies. This leads him to a second part on the development of the child which draws a parallel between the child’s ability to imagine “alternatives” and the “implications” related to it, which, according to him, emerge very early in the childhood. Finally in a third part he tries to define the proper functions of the imagination “for the subject”, of which there are three.

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<sup>8</sup> Paul L. Harris, *The Work of the Imagination* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 2000) :8:15

Firstly, it allows the subject to immerse himself in a fictional world that retains the principles of the real world. Secondly, the imagination makes possible to envisage results in order to compare them with others that might happen; it prepares the individual for eventualities and constructs a form of reasoning based on real, concrete results, even if they appear on a fictitious plane. The third function is to explore the impossible in real-time: the panel of choices, the different life perspectives that the child can imagine, allows the exploration of what he has, where he has to give up in real life in order to affirm his identity or to expand his field of possibilities: he has the possibility of experiencing situations to the infinite.

Pretending encourages children to set aside their "universal" knowledge and develop a sense of logic and reasoning. Imagination makes possible to develop real skills such as projection mechanisms or the child's own knowledge. In this sense, it is first of all important to understand the value of the imaginary, especially when this concept is related to adoption. To do so, it will be important for us to define these two terms.

### 3. The Power of imagination

Imagination has been defined by Dr. Murray Hunter of the University of Malaysia Perlis as in part a way to fill our lack of information. He goes on to describe the imagination as follows:

Imagination is the ability to form mental images, phonological passages, analogies, or narratives of something that is not perceived through our senses. Imagination is a manifestation of our memory and enables us to scrutinize our past and construct hypothetical future scenarios that do not yet but could exist.<sup>9</sup>

He explains that imagination is a filter that allows us to hear our personal experiences by developing our thoughts or constructing an overview of our universe in order to leave little room for uncertainty and doubt in order to allow us to construct meaning and provide information in order to reduce our lack of knowledge. Dr. Hunter explains that imagination also makes it possible to see life from a different point of view and thus to show empathy for others more easily. Imagination in this sense enables us to create a "mental maps" that "make meaning out of the ambiguities of the situation we face where information is lacking. " He

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<sup>9</sup> Murray Hunter. "Imagination may be more important than knowledge: the eight types of imagination we use", 113.

also emphasizes the cognitive aspect: it is not always a process that we are aware of, so sometimes it becomes difficult to disentangle what seems real to us from what we have experienced.

Some authors approach this aspect in connection with adoption by mixing personal experience with fiction. The values given to the imagination express what the subject of adoption sometimes refers to: the lack of information, connection and identity.

Before linking imagination, identity, and adoption, it is first necessary to define the term identity.

#### 4. Identity in Psychology : Erikson's psychological concept

In *The Psychology of Adoption*<sup>10</sup> Janet L. Hoopes addresses an entire chapter on adoption and identity formation. She links the two terms, describing them as “complex constructs. ” She first determines what identity is. In doing so, she cites Erikson's psychological concept (1959, 1959) which defines identity as “a continuing process that has roots in earlier stages of growth” and that is “expending through the whole life span”. It is complex as it implies many stages: “discovering and establishing a mature personal identity, evaluating the attitudes, beliefs, and goals acquired from the parents”. Thus, each step in the construction of identity is reflected in the encounter between the individual and their environment, a conflict that emanates from it and is then resolved. These conflicts are due to psychological crises during adolescence that will have to be solved in order to promote personality development: the individual positions themselves and the choices made, come up against problems for which they try to find a solution.

Another step in Erikson's psychological development is what he calls the crisis of “identity” in which the individual is confronted with physiological changes but also with their image and social role. Indeed, in order to reach a “mature identity”, adolescents must be in agreement with their decisions and accept their physical and social condition.

He also speaks of the need for identification, through personal explorations. Adolescents must feel integrated into their family by identifying with their parents or by developing their

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<sup>10</sup> Janet L Hoopes. “Adoption and identity formation” *The psychology of adoption* 144 (1990):166.

relationship. Indeed, it is what will promote the “sense of identity” that he compares as a psychological well-being. This well-being passes through the consolidation of social roles through interaction with others or belonging to a group. This psychological well-being is explained as a “feeling of being at home in one’s body, a sense of knowing where one is going and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count” (p. 165)

Literature leads a writer to convey their ideas using images and metaphors where more literal forms of expression are insufficient to put across how they feel. They create characters that correspond to their concepts and are in line with their emotions and thoughts. Thus, literary texts help them to imagine/ share experiences to revive interiority and fashion their own identity. From their birth onwards, humans thirst for meaning and a sense of belonging. They need figures to make sense of the world, to put it in order when making meaning. Literature gives an artistic depth to one’s life. A narrative that reveals one character’s condition allows us to understand our own by drawing a parallel between fiction and reality. Thus, literature can be considered restorative. Literature offers us a multiplicity of experiences and enables us to revisit the past and a world that longer exists “real life.” It unites people across spaces and time and leads us to better understand them and our world. Through narratives, the reader discovers another vision, they even participate in this vision and then it allows them to live through their experience. Thanks to literature, readers discover the infinite experiences and possibilities that life offers. This helps them to make sense of it, organize their thoughts, understand themselves and others, and make sense of the world around them.

In fact, through the narrative, the reader identifies with and parallels the writings with their life. They then take a stand and define how they perceive themselves according to certain situations and experiences. It affirms their sense of self. Literature then allows the reference to an objective reality that favors the identity of each individual. On the other hand, it allows one to understand oneself; identity also means adhering to one’s movements (needs, desires, emotions and intentions).

Paul Ricoeur refers to what is ‘ipseity’<sup>11</sup> when he discusses the notion of identity. This refers to the recognition of oneself by oneself, in other words, it is a question of “identifying oneself

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Ricoeur, and Kathleen Blamey. *Oneself as another* (Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Pr, 1994)

with the self in formation” or to evolve while remaining oneself. (Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*)

Thus, literature allows the construction of selfhood by affirming the relationship of an individual with the world. Through what Ricoeur calls ‘narrative identity’, authors and readers affirm their own sense of who they are. On the one hand, authors define the identity of the characters which is influenced by their own personal experience, their self-portrayal, and their role in society.

On the other hand, the readers adopt characters to appropriate a ‘narrative identity’ whose aim is to better accept and recognize themselves. It reminds the readers that identity is a non-fixed phenomenon that evolves through experiences and periods.

Literature allows a precise construction of identity for readers and authors, who, through discourse and narration, position themselves through experience, which makes possible the emergence of reflexivity and a form of self-awareness.

Imagination plays a particularly important major role in the identity construction of a child who has undergone a trauma. Imagination offers a refuge, another world, a parallel one where a child can flee to escape a hurtful reality. It leads the child to cut themselves off from their disturbed environment and its actors by transforming them. Their creativity plays the role of protection; by the means of imagination they transform the world and reorganize it. They manipulate what causes pain and transform it into something more manageable. It enables them to affirm themselves as they create a climate in which they can integrate their true self, without any pressure or influence. Therefore, imagination is a way to analyze one’s world and inner self

Imagination contributes to the adopted child’s cognitive and emotional development: these are important elements as they contribute to their moral’s construction and their understanding of reality. Adopted children’s identity is based on their birth and adoptive family relationship. Therefore, for most of them, these relationships are difficult to affirm. The power of imagination is that these children can imagine and apprehend numerous experiences, and factors that will help them to mold their perception of themselves. Imagination has the power of creation over and over again; it has reconstructive tendencies: children can establish their sense of self and their emotional identity.

Similarly imagination also allows biological and adoptive mothers to express their journey, and their experiences regarding the adoption of their child in a more bearable way. It allows them to express their identity, but imagination also allows them to reflect their state of mind through the use of creativity. This in turn allows them to see beyond external reality and to better understand their life by reconsidering their situation, their environment, and their actors, but also by imagining what their story could have been if it had been any other way. This is only possible through imagination, which allows them to “fill in the blanks”, and the uncertainties. Thus, their voices and images call for imagination, theirs but also that of the reader.

In *Identity, Grief, and the Lasting Effects of Adoption* Devon Thornton<sup>12</sup> explains what identity means for an adopted child. She starts by presenting it as a struggle as identity is a process that starts from “the very moment we our born”. She emphasizes on the fact that adoption affects “all those who are involved” and this is important to mention, as the child being adopted will try to relate to these people and establish a relationship between them.

The term ‘adopted’ by definition suggests that adopted children, “leave a part of themselves behind.” This explain why adoptees have “an adoptive identity, a unique understanding of what it means to be adopted and another identity that relates to their current selves.” (Devon Thornton, *Identity, Grief, and the Lasting Effects of Adoption*)

Devon Thornton goes on and highlights how identity formation can be “a confusing journey” for these children as they have undergone a trauma. They struggle to “reconcile their adoptive identity with their current selves and this leads to some issues such as loneliness, anxiety and a sense of loss.

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<sup>12</sup> Devon Thornton, *Identity, Grief, and the Lasting Effects of Adoption*, August 26, 2022, accessed May, 4 2023 <https://www.adoptionchoicesofnevada.org/the-lasting-effects-of-adoption/>

## II. ADOPTION, IMAGINATION AND THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

### 1 The Adoption Papers: a work of introspection and imagination

Through her work, Kay uses writing to share elements specific to her personal experience in order to share them but also to address themes that have allowed her to shape her identity as well as that of her female characters.

*The Adoption Papers*<sup>13</sup> is divided into eleven sections, a sub-section, three part and ten chapters which, in turn, recount specific episodes in the lives of these women. The chapters trace their journey but also their evolution. The reader discovers the baby who will be discussed throughout the collection, starting with its conception, the biological mother's pregnancy, and then the young child's construction, her personal and identity evolution, from her first nights of life until adulthood. In parallel, the main actors in her life are introduced: her adoptive parents and her biological mother, as well as the issues raised by the issue of adoption. The reader follows the characters over time, as well as through the memories of the biological and adoptive mothers, and those of the young woman in the making.

The voices of three the speakers/ personae are represented differently and each one is represented in a different font ('distinguished typographically' p.6); their words are juxtaposed and form a kind of echo and dialogue . The voice of the daughter, a little girl of mixed Scottish and Nigerian origin who is adopted by white Scottish parents, is represented using Roman typeface, the Adoptive mother using italic typeface and the Birth mother using bold typeface.

Jackie Kay offers a window into the lives and minds of these three women all of whom are constitutive of her own identity. Through her narrative poems she not only invites us to discover episodes in her life, but also revisits and in so doing reinvents her own story, her journey and the obstacles she has encountered. Thus, her pen combines reality and fiction in order to explore an issue that fascinates her greatly, namely the theme of identity, adoption and motherhood.

First, it is important to establish crucial information about the author's life that will allow us to understand the interplay between reality and fiction that she establishes throughout her work, but it is also important because it enables us to better understand the poet's intention.

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<sup>13</sup> Jackie Kay, *The Adoption Papers* (Newcastle upon Tyne : Bloodaxe Books, 1991), 6

## 2. The symbolism of the first cover

The cover of the first edition points to the concept of fiction and reality as well as the question running throughout the collection of poems: I am an adopted child, but who am I really?

It is highly symbolic: the background colour is black, as if to indicate a black hole or even black ethnicity. It is suggestive of the darkness that makes it possible to hide from our surroundings or possibly points to the importance of the imagination: if nothing is perceptible, what then is concealed behind this title or even this narrative? The cover thus highlights the fact that imagination is an essential part of the story, possibly its main theme. This black background can evoke the unknown, emptiness, or nothingness. The lettering of the title of *The Adoptions Papers* is multicolored, echoing the image just beneath which is an illustration of violet, blue, yellow and green human chromosomes that the acknowledgements<sup>14</sup> on p.4 of the collection describe as a “false colour light micrograph of human chromosomes, obtained by amniocentesis.”



Thus, the topic of biological and legal identity is explicit from the outset: through the presence of chromosomes in order to link identity and adoption, and through the term ‘The Adoption Papers’, which refers not only to the identity conferred by adoption but also the legal aspect and the identity given from the point of view of the state. At the same time however, the expression “false colour light” suggests that identity, particularly the identity of

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<sup>14</sup> The cover photograph is reproduced by the permission of CNRI/Science Photo Library

an adopted child eludes biological or legal reality, and that falsity—or fiction—also plays a key role. Moreover, the use of colour also foregrounds the importance of colour, in the sense of skin colour or race, in Kay's own identity construction.

### 3. Kay's quest through the daughters and the two mothers' perspectives

As explained above, the collection features three different female speakers. Their voices echo other ones, those of other personae in the collection, but they predominate. These voices are an adopted daughter, a birth mother, and an adoptive mother. Kay adopts three different typographies to represent and identify these voices that create three different yet interconnected narratives. Poetry is used to create an identity for the different personae each of whom recount their own personal experience. In this way the poet uses the theme of adoption as a way both to explore her inner self and to perceive the world differently. She uses a multiplicity of voices to express her personal agenda.

The voice of the adopted daughter may indeed echo the voice of Jackie Kay who, herself an adopted child, seems to share the identity of the adopted child: she was adopted by a Scottish couple while her biological parents were of Nigerian origin. Her collection of poems allows us to trace this identity by giving voice to virtual characters. She recounts what she experienced and seems to recreate her own history, establishing her family tree through fictional poems.

The issues of lack and loss can be identified as engines of creation for the writer. Kay pursues her quest for a hidden truth, but as she cannot perfectly recollect her own story, she cannot collect everything from her past life, she conjugates her fears, her misunderstandings, and her lack of information in order to recreate a story, a fictive one, where she can fill in the gaps and justify the choices made by an adopted child, a biological mother and an adoptive mother. This explains why Kay represents three different speakers, three different voices: she tries to be in their head to interpret their feelings and thoughts and justify the choices made that have an impact in her identity construction and even on her telling of the story: she uses fiction and reality as she combines elements from her real life to tell the story of an adopted little girl who tries to find herself, understand who she really is and who she wants to be when she grows up.

#### 4. Struggles of one's life as an adoptive child = repossessing one's life story

However, this quest for an elusive truth is paradoxical as it is impossible to totally recover it. That is why Kay uses the power of imagination. It leads her to better accept what happened to her, to the little girl in the story, by imagining reasons for her adoption from the point of view of two different mothers but also from a little girl who tries her best to protect herself from a world where being an alien child is a motive for violence and exclusion. This work can be perceived as an introspective journey into Kay's inner self but also a reflexion on what it means to be an adoptee. The process of recovering is long and difficult, this explains how important it is to invent and imagine what happened or just a part of it. As some elements cannot be justified or explained, invention and imagination is necessary.

Multiple elements justify Kay's choices in the process of writing *The Adoption Papers*. As we insisted on the struggles of one's life as an adopted child, we can add that *The Adoption Papers* can represent the act of creation and of repossession one's life story. Even if a part of the collection is fiction, the feelings and quest hold by the three different speakers can be interpreted as being the inner voices of Kay. These three different speakers embody a part of Kay's interest in the process of adoption or even aspects of Kay's identity. She recreates her own story and redefines elements of it thanks to the power of imagination: it allows her to give another direction to her quest that she could not fulfill in real life; or to modify it thanks to the fictitious elements of her quest that happened in real life. She shapes a story that responds to her expectations and interrogations (questioning): she is an adoptee and tries to convey the thought and struggles an adopted child must face in the identity construction process or when reconnecting with your roots. She raises numerous issues and complexities in order to combine a story to which one can identify easily and perceives the struggles and trauma behind it. Kay creates a character who becomes a sort of spokesperson for adopted children. By the structure and style of writing chosen, it is very easy to identify with the personae: a certain emotional closeness binds readers and speakers. As for the style adopted by the author, it gives voice to different speakers and contrasting perspectives while bringing them typographically closer together on the page. The text also engages with the reader, drawing them into the narrative as they negotiate the various viewpoints: the speakers seem to address us, arouse our curiosity and cause us to reflect: we are witnesses to the facts and the confidants of these three women who tell us their story.

This collection of poems plays the role of substitute: Jackie Kay establishes different perspectives on the same story to restore what has been lost from her past and to bear witness to her present in a different way. She establishes her narrative identity in order to best articulate the notions of belonging, affirmation and self-fulfillment. She portrays a fictional world that allows her to explore her inner self but also the void of the unknown by anticipating a story in which she projects the frustrations she encountered and highlights unanswered questions that, even when she was an adult, could not be solved. Through her work, she evokes a constant relationship between what seems to have happened to her through the story of the adopted girl, but also what in reality could not be established.

Imagination and creation are imposed upon us as a necessity when reason fails to justify our means of action regarding a situation. Biological and adoptive mothers experience the loss and lack but also anticipate the course of adventures. Indeed, imagination allows them to redefine who they really are and to soften their reality: they find a refuge in which the perpetual exploration of life is possible, this leads to their self-construction. For example, the adoptive mother prepares to question her child and her desire to reconnect with her biological parents, while the biological mother anticipates a possible encounter with her child whom she thinks she has never left in a certain way by imagining her presence, because her daughter is always present in her thoughts, she constantly has her child in mind.

The expression of these thoughts and their implications can be perceived through the structure of the poems: through the typography, the intertwined voices, and the form of the poems (spaces, parentheses, run-on lines). The structure seems to perfectly reflect the hesitations, thoughts but also the psychological state of the characters. It also allows us to distance ourselves from the text and to use our subjectivity and reflection as readers to interpret the text, the voices, and the images offered by the author. It is also interesting to look at the use of time and space created by the narrative: the collection proposes a constant dialogue between past and present. The question of time here is interesting because it allows the notion of time passing to be posed: in the imagination time is not linear, just like our memories, so in the process of identity construction, these occurrences in time are important and interesting to evoke. After all, it allows the state of mind and thoughts of the characters to be inked as if we were with them in their heads and helps us understand the importance of these leaps in time.

##### 5. Imagination: a mirror conveying the state of mind of a persona- not the facts of their existence.

The appeal to the imagination appears in the poems for each of the personae for various reasons as mentioned above. Firstly, we have established that one of the reasons for the author's use of imagination is to fill the void of absence or lack. In fact, imagination allows the exploration of the feelings and psychological state of a being. Imagination allows one to put forward one's dreams and desires, but it also brings to light one's most intimate and deepest fears. Imagination allows the expression of identity but also of psychological schema established in the unconscious.

Indeed, Jackie Kay poses the existence of a deep complex that emerges in each of the women and highlights their perception of themselves and the world around them to conceive their psychological state. She portrays three different struggles with the same cause: the adoption of a child and what it means to be adopted. The most obvious state of mind is the psychological and emotional state of the adopted child, which from birth presupposes an existence in which the affirmation of its identity and its development will leave indelible scars on both a psychological and physical level. It is then through the creative act that she lets her malaise show through by evoking a parallel world that could explain who her adoptive mother is —a monster, a supernatural phenomenon capable of haunting her daughter? Through the imagination, she also conjures up the existence of her biological mother by shaping a physical image of her that is close to her own but also of the affective and identity links that might connect them.

For the biological mother, imagination allows her to reflect on her anxieties but also the trauma of the adoption: she establishes her psychological state by imagining the conversations justifying her choices to her daughter or by imagining the ghost of her daughter as well as her constant psychological presence. The biological mother transforms her environment into a hostile one: she imagines hearing voices judging her and reminding her of the bad choice she made in giving her child up for adoption. In “reality”, it is her upset feelings, which influence her perception of the world around her and also influence her image and self-esteem. In this way, she convinces herself that she is not worthy of her child, nor she does not feel anything positive about them.

In the case of the adoptive mother, the imagination allows her to reflect her fears as well as her desires: the desire to give birth. First, she describes the physiological state of the pregnancy, which she would very much like to experience. For lack of being able to

experience this, she imagines it and then imagines a life with her child that she could have through adoption. Later, obsessed with the fear of losing her child, who as she grows up will be old enough to understand her origins, the adoptive mother will play out over and over again scenes in which she will see herself explaining to her child who she is, or nightmares in which she will see her child disappear, taken away by her biological mother.

Thus, the power of imagination throughout the collection highlights the emotional state of the characters as well as their psychological struggle: lost between fiction and reality, mental well-being, and a form of insanity.

#### 6. Adoption as trauma, the poem functioning to bear witness to that trauma

For Kay, writing is a way to question the trauma of her adoption, she involves the reader so that they can bear witness to what happened to her. The fact that the poems express the voices of both mothers is a choice made by Kay in order to be in the head of the two actors of her life, enabling her to identify what they have gone through and justifying and interpreting why she has been adopted and how difficult that may be. It is also a way to give response to what was in her head: what were her mothers thinking or feeling at this particular episode of their lives?

In fact, in writing *The Adoption Papers*, Jackie Kay is searching for a truth that she is trying to reach. She has experienced a trauma so she has created a work that is, in a way, a distortion and subversion of her reality. The poems function to bear witness to that trauma: to understand what happened she articulates a story that cannot be fulfilled in thought and memory. In fact, her present life proceeded from memories of her childhood and adoption.

That explains why Kay evokes supernatural elements and three different speakers to transcribe in the perspective of each of them how difficult is adoption and to what extent it is difficult to recover from it in the eye of each of the protagonists of the story. Thanks to the poem as readers, we can feel how difficult it can be emotionally and mentally: we are constantly in search of who we are and cannot fulfill a part of our past as we have not all the elements to do so. Poetry here allows us to understand the complexity of adoption as it shapes a world that we can understand as we use our senses to feel, hear the voices and perceive the speakers' message.

In the next part we will focus on the three different speakers of the story in order to propose an analysis of the different principles listed above and a more literary analysis of the work.

## 7. Analysis of the poems

The introduction to the poems sets out the central themes of the collection and presents the different personae. From the first verses we understand the fragility of the personae but also different information about their identity and their personal struggles. In fact, Kay offers a nuanced exploration of adoption on all parties involved and its psychological and emotional impact.

*I always wanted to give birth  
Do that incredible natural thing  
That woman do- I nearly broke down  
When I heard we couldn't,  
And then my man said  
Well there's always adoption (6)*

The first verse of the introduction presents the adoptive mother's maternal desire; the concept of 'adoption' is then presented from a societal viewpoint, presented as a 'secret failure' accompanied with a sense of shame: something that was considered 'scandalous' in the 'early sixties'(1.8) But this woman wants to achieve her goal, the one of being a mother.

*I was pulled out with forceps  
left a gash down my left cheek  
Four months inside a glass cot*

The second stanza exposes the first minutes of life of the one who is called 'the alien child' and this baby's fight for life. In fact, she is between life and death: 'survive'; 'gash'-wound and even her birth is described as a violent fight, a struggle. She was 4 months in an incubator. The words used by the child to describe her birth seem to anticipate the trauma and the difficult experience of life that adopted children have to go through. The words used by the poet explicitly deliver a poignant testimony and a unique perspective to the emotional impact of adoption by the adoptee.

### 7.1 Family, origins and sense of belonging

Despite the uncertainty, the adoptive mother is 'faithful'- she believes in the child and wills her to live, it is thanks to the adoptive mother's positive energy that the daughter survives.

Even before they really meet, the daughter is already enveloped in the adoptive mother's boundless love. The adoptive mother is determined, loving from the start and she is attached to her adoptive child.

We can affirm that Kay challenges the notion of family as she asserted that family is created by emotional bonds and that is not something pre-established. "Now I come from her, the mother who stole my milk teeth" ("Chapter 5: The Tweed Hat Dream" 1.37-38)

The third stanza of the introduction introduces the biological mother. Indeed, we discover her personal struggles and her relation to the process of adoption and the trauma it represented for her. She also establishes her testimony and establishes the impact adoption has on her sense of self.

**I still have the baby photograph  
I keep it in my bottom drawer  
She is twenty-six today  
my hair is grey  
The skin around my neck is  
wrinkling  
does she imagine me this way (6)**

She keeps a photo of her child, (so as to not forget, showing her attachment): there is also an idea of shame and guilt as she 'gave her baby away'; she always remembers her birthday and her age ('She is twenty-six today'). There is an idea of nostalgia towards the passage of time, we can feel an idea of regret and a sense of a wasted youth. The power of the imagination is invoked: indeed the mother imagines meeting the daughter she cannot see. There is also an idea of self-hatred, and the desire to hide herself from bad dreams or thoughts via the image of hiding her child's photo in the drawer. Even when she wants to think of something else, her child always appears before her: she is haunted by her daughter.

### [7.2 Analysis of Part One: Chapter One 'The Seed'](#)

The poem which opens part one of the first section of the collection. 'The Seed' presents the story and the narrative of the child's procreation which is also Kay's story. The poem is composed of couplets alternating biological and adoptive mothers. It establishes the atmosphere and the environment within which the adoptive child will construct her own identity: her relation to her two mothers and her projected explanation of the choices they

have made. “Chapter one: The Seed” presents some of the key issues underlying the poems: two women present their relationship to motherhood and evoke the conception of a child by natural means: procreation. One of the personae evokes her most cherished wish: that of carrying life and appeals to the senses with the description of the physical way she discusses the pregnancy. The second voice, the biological mother’s one, shares her experience of pregnancy in a prosaic way, as something that happened at a given moment without difficulty and without it being planned.

**I never thought it would be quicker  
than walking down the mainstreet**

I want to stand in front of the mirror  
swollen bellied so swollen bellied (*The Seed*, 1.1-4)

From the very first pages of the poem collection, Kay uses two different typographies to present the identities of two central characters in her narrative, the birth mother and the adoptive mother, a third being reserved for the daughter, Kay’s alter ego. The two maternal voices mingle and seem to respond each other, they seem to reveal the identity of two different women through the same prism, that of motherhood. Kay reveals the tension that revolve around the two women and their relationship to the future child. She imagines the circumstances that led the adoptive and biological mothers to consider the process of adoption.

### [7.3 Analysis of Chapter 2 ‘The Original Birth Certificate’](#)

In this poem the notion of origin will be posed because the word “original” implies that the child’s identity has evolved. There is a temporal ellipsis between the first two poems. The poem begins with the persona of the daughter as a young woman. Indeed, at this moment in the narration, the adopted child is old enough to discover information about her identity, she is physically and mentally mature enough to be able to claim that information. Two speakers are represented: the daughter and the birth mother. The daughter-persona retraces her own identity quest, while Kay-the-poet also takes on the identity of the biological mother to imagine her thoughts and the reasons that led her to give up her child.

It is in this second poem of the collection that the daughter first appears and begins searching for her biological or blood identities. She tries to find information about the origin of her birth

from a man at the counter in the office. She is seeking a birth certificate and begins looking for her birth or biological parents.

*How adoption impacts one's conception of self and ID construction?*

This poem focuses on the biological mother and the first tormented nights that follow the adoption of her daughter. This is interspersed with the beginning of the daughter's quest to find her biological mother.

The first stanza opens up on the child's desire to reunite with her roots, her 'biological' identity. Her quest starts and she has no idea how difficult it will be to access these pieces of information. First, the adoption agency employee makes fun of her and presents this quest as a game. On the verge of discovering an important element of her identity, her name, the speaker expresses her irritation with the clerk who belittles her search, reducing it to a guessing game with possible racist overtones ("Do you have any idea what your name was? / Close, close he laughs", Chapter 2, l. 3-4). The following question, posed by the speaker in italics, underlines her impatience with the clerk —she really wants to know: "*Well what was it?*" (l. 4). She draws a conclusion from the information she is given; the key detail for the speaker appears to be the time of her birth:

"So, so, so I was a midnight baby after all" (The Original Birth Certificate, l.5)

The news seems contradictory. The repetition of "so" as well as the punctuation (commas) conveys the confusion the speaker feels and follows her thought processes as she discovers she was born at a special, almost magical time - midnight.

The verses present the psychological state of the adopted child as she receives these pieces of information.

Kay sheds light on her own story—which is that of all adoptees— as she addresses societal issues related to adoption such as stigma and shame but also feelings of loss, confusion and the search for belonging. She is bearing witness to these experiences in order to raise awareness about the complexities arising from adoption and the psychological and emotional impact it has on adoptees, so that everyone can understand the main issues of it and to what extent it is a trauma that impacts your identity construction and your sense of loss.

The young girl's quest for identity has thus begun but also her unfailing will to want to know more, not only about her history, and her biological parents, but also about what might explain her skin color. This information is all the more essential for the girl because it is what

will perhaps allow her to shape her identity. In fact, as she progresses from childhood to adulthood, she tries to figure out who she really is and she believes this can be possible by receiving fragmented information on her identity.

The 'Original Birth Certificate' reveal who she really is in the eyes of the law: her so-called 'real' name. She finally wants to know who she is, she is in a period where she is searching for herself, she wants to fill the absence created by the lack and absence of information and of relational link with her biological mother

I say to the man at the desk

I'd like my original birth certificate -(The Original Birth Certificate, 1.1-2)

This poem is the starting point of a long journey that will allow the daughter to reconstruct her roots and reconsider her identity. Indeed, it will allow her to question her aspirations but will also provoke a certain gap between her and her mothers as she does not know her story, why she was adopted: everything was hidden from her.

After it is established that she was "a midnight baby after all", the three successive nights of life of the baby are presented in the perspective of the birth mother who delivers a poignant testimony on her experience using a highly poetic language which solicits the reader's imagination.

I cannot pretend she's never been

my stitches pull and threaten to snap - (The Original Birth Certificate, 1.15-16)

The identity of the child is finally revealed, it is a girl. On the other hand, the relationship between the child and the mother seems complicated: the speaker seems to want to reject her existence and uses the prism of imagination to ignore it and escape reality. However, she put words to her feelings and the trauma adoption represents. In particular, the term 'I toss' 1.28, is an image of the birth mother's tormented state of mind but also the expression of her maternal love.

The importance of the imagination to assert one's identity is central to the collection. It creates a distance between an adopted child and those around them, but it also allows us to understand their origins by reinventing their story. The narrative identity allows us to join Kay's personal identity, she reorganizes her thoughts and reinvents her story without necessarily having to change the plot. Since she doesn't have access to her birth mother's

thoughts, she imagines them and reinvents her birth to explain why her mother gave her up for adoption.

#### 7.4 Analysis of Chapter 3: The Waiting Lists

This poem explores the long and often difficult process of adoption from two different perspectives: the adoptive parents and the child waiting to be adopted.

It traces the journey of the adoptive mother's struggle, the difficulty of which is reflected in the length of the first two stanzas. She explains how the agencies did not want her and her partner and she still did not understand the reasons for these refusals.

Then, finally (*'Just like that, the waiting was over'* l.17) the reasons become clearer. The issue of racism is addressed. The color of the adopted child matters.

Through these verses, the profile of the mother is drawn up as she affirms her identity, her sense of self: her determination, impatience, perseverance to have a baby. She is ready to be a mother and to do so she has to hide a part of self, her political identity which is unconventional (for her society): she is a communist, she rejected moral and religious traditions (*'nor were we church-goers'* l.4) she is more open and tolerant than most *"we don't mind the color"* l.16.)

*I thought I'd hid everything  
that there wasnie wan  
giveaway sign left* (The Waiting Lists, l.27-29)

The verses are about the visit of a woman, a social worker, who will decide the adoptive mother's fate— whether she can adopt a child or not. This episode reflects the personality and aspirations of the adoptive mother but also her difficult experiences with all the stress and anxiety which results from the process of adoption.

Elements about the adoptive mother's identity are revealed, such as her Scottishness 'wasnie'=not; 'wan'=one Scotts. We may ask why there is this presence of Scotts slang. It creates a moment of closeness between the adoptive mother and Jackie Kay, it also brings a part of oral English that the voice can feel real and authentic.

She has to hide her communist sympathies (Daily Worker), she retains Burns (Scottish national poet), detective novels and Shelley – conventional cultural references that tend to make her look like a conventional woman in the eyes of society.

"*I'm on the home run*" 1.59 reveals the image of the race, the last straight line before the finish line: It is the last step to reach her goal: to be a mother.

The adoptive mother's hopes and political convictions are established. She cannot pretend to be someone she is not. A portrait of a genuine, ethical and caring individual is depicted. The reader easily feels empathy for the adoptive mother as her testimony serves as an informative discourse that delivers her pain and her desire to create a family and solid and powerful bond with her future child.

#### 7.5 Analysis of Chapter 4: 'Baby Lazarus'

Baby Lazarus is a poignant and powerful poem that explores themes of birth, life and the miraculous nature of existence. Two personae echo each other: the biological mother speaks first. Her voice is then paralleled with the words of the adoptive mother.

The title of the poem 'Baby Lazarus' is initially interesting to analyze it refers to:

Lazarus, Hebrew Eleazar, ("God Has Helped".) "Although Lazarus had been entombed for four days by the time Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was raised by Jesus from the dead and emerged from the tomb wearing his burial cloths. This miracle"<sup>15</sup>

In fact, the poem expresses a sense of belonging through the idea that the child is given a new life and a new family to belong to. It is also important to point out the importance of the language used throughout the poem: it reflects the psychological state of the mothers but also to a certain extent their personality. The biological mother uses a very literary language, poetic to distance herself from reality by the mean of imagination : she flees the trauma of adoption ; we can feel her melancholy.

The adopted baby is immediately presented by the biological mother as having supernatural faculties: although she wants to stop thinking about it or get rid of it; her child resurfaces in her mind and acts like a holy spirit that accompanies her in her daily life, whose omnipresence seems to haunt the biological mother who, although she tries, cannot get rid of her (mental) presence.

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<sup>15</sup> <sup>15</sup>"Lazarus," Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Lazarus (biblical figure)," accessed April 26, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lazarus-biblical-figure>.

The first verse: “**land moves like a driven cattle**” (l.1) evokes the return journey that the birth mother took after leaving her baby for adoption. It can also refer to the process of adoption that she has resorted to: she reaches the end of her journey: she has given up her baby and returns home, alone, without her daughter's presence.

Thus, it is important to understand the symbolism of the words used: ‘driven cattle’: she no longer feels like a mother or a woman but is compared to cattle: this allows her to express her feeling of powerlessness regarding what is happening to her. She's taken away with no more will. She is passive, has no more control over her life.

From the first verses, the psychological state in which the birth mother finds herself in is interesting to analyze: the atmosphere is palpable. Indeed, her act is compared to a sin, a crime that seems to have been exposed in all the newspapers, including the one she reads:

**My eyes snatch pieces of news  
headlines strung out on a line:**

**MOTHER DROWNS BABY IN THE CLYDE** (Baby Lazarus, l.2-4)

‘MOTHER DROWNS’ echoes the birth mother’s feeling of guilt, the press refers to the public space, the external judgment that supports the feeling of guilt and the malaise of the birth mother. She conflates her own sense of guilt (for having had pre-marital sex and then for having given away her own baby) with the crime being described in the newspaper. Kay bears witness to her biological mother’s suffering.

The next stanzas evoke the opposite process: the adoptive mother receives the child. The language and vocabulary used also reflect the psychological state of the mother. She uses simple language in which she describes an episode of her life, in a rather administrative way: she is anchored in reality unlike the birth mother whose experience and feelings are expressed differently.

However, the child is ill and fragile and the adoptive mother evokes all the administrative hurdles she has to go through to complete the process of adoption. ‘The adoption papers can’t be signed. I put the phone down.’ Kay challenges traditional notions of family by suggesting that family is not defined solely by blood ties but rather by the emotional connections and relationships that we form with others. It doesn’t only depend on adoption papers.

In the last stanzas, imagination leads the biological mother to affirm her state of mind and her feelings: she has a distorted perception of reality:

*'our baby has passed'* (l. 37)

The term 'pass' may express the child's success in the medical tests she has passed for the adoptive mother, but it may mean something else for the birth mother such as the death of her child. We thus understand the importance of the language used here, which allows us to express the psychological state and feelings of both mothers. Through the perspectives of the two mothers, Kay relies on imagination to construct their own version of the story, the intertwined voices reflect the complexity of the narrative.

The birth mother's voice occupies the rest of the poem. The words refer to her psychological state:

**'I must stop it. Put it out of my mind.'** (l.42)

Indeed, even the books that might be expected to enable her to escape reality by plunging into fiction seem to remind her of her condition: 'I should have brought another book all this character does is kiss and say sorry' l. 48-49.

Late the same night  
She came in by the window" (l.68-69)

The birth mother mourns her child, she hopes that by burying her baby's clothes, she will also be rid of the memories of her child. However, her child comes back to her window: the poetic language expressing the troubled psychic state of the mother. Imagination conveys her emotions and experience (as a trauma) and leads her to recount a version of her experience in a more bearable way.

### [7.6 Analysis of Chapter 5: 'The Tweed Hat Dream'](#)

The title refers to the use of imagination and its main goals. "The Tweed Hat Dream" refers to the adoptive mother's dream. The poem is notable for its use of sensory imagery, which create a vivid and emotional portrait of the speaker's relationship to her daughter and her family's history (through the process of adoption). It is a powerful exploration of the ways objects can become charged with emotional significance. She constructs possible scenarios that do not yet

but could exist to prepare herself mentally for such a difficult moment. She experiences through imagination what could possibly happen in the future: losing her child.

*Her mother just turns up at the door  
With a tweed hat on. I think* (The Tweed Hat Dream, l.10-11)

*(...)She looks a dead spit  
except of course she's white; lightning white.  
She says in her soft Highland voice  
can you let me see her? Can you?* (The Tweed Hat Dream, l.15-18)

The birth mother appears as a ghost and threatens the adoptive mother as she could possibly disappear with her child. The birth mother's hat refers to something incongruous and scary for the adoptive mother. Here, she seems to be haunted by the biological mother who would return to reclaim her child. This dream is like a nightmare revealing one of her deepest fears as a woman, as a mother. To give her testimony she uses images of nature such as 'a wind in a storm' (l.20) and a 'thunder'(l.31); These strong images show the intensity of the emotions she felt: she appeals to the elements in order to appeal to the strength of her feelings.

The adoptive child shares the poem, presented as an adult, she launches into her identity quest, the poem retraces the steps she takes. The quest is difficult, however she is determined to establish links with her mother (the adoptive one here), even if there are irrational ones (she is seeking for a sense of belonging.) In fact, she understands that identity and the feeling of belonging are not limited to documents or genes ('It is all so long ago. Does it matter?' l.36)

Here, fantasy reflects her link to her adoptive mother as the image of the biscuits connects the all three of them: 'arrange a plate of cookies' -adoptive mother (l. 26)- and 'ate the digestive left for Santa'- adoptive daughter (l.39.)

Poetic links and administrative links are paralleled and bring us back to the same question and to the importance of this quest: do pieces of information necessarily give a sense of identity? Here the answer seems to be no as it is rather the establishment of relationships and bond that with mothers that make a family. Kay denotes that adoption is not the only thing that defines an adopted person, nor are pre-established blood ties. Today Kay, just like the daughter in the poem, is a woman who has managed to build a sense of self even though part of her history and identity is unknown and unretrievable.

## 8. Analysis of Poems Part 2

### 8.1 Analysis of 'The Telling Part'

Part two introduces the voice of the daughter as the child either protesting or working out how she came into her family. The speaker explores identity through the perspective of the daughter. She identifies herself as an adopted child. This disrupts her understanding of the world and its environment. Indeed, from this perspective, we have access to the thoughts of the child who, at her age, does not seem to fully understand the conversation she had with her adoptive mother. Moreover, the word “adopt” is not used by the girl to describe the process. She uses a language, her own, in which she expresses what she is experiencing or even thinks she is experiencing.

« Ma mammy bot me oot a shop

Ma mammy says I was a luvly baby » (The Telling Part, 1.1-2.)

Kay plays with register in order to bring out the voice of the girl who tells her story using her own words but also her own as Kay is reflecting her identity with the imitation of the Scottish accent with ‘oot’ or even ‘luvly’. The anaphor “My mammy” is symbolic enough to represent the register used but also to mark the mother-daughter relationship that is really being discussed.

Through these lines, the child’s imagination shines through. Indeed, failing to understand what is happening to her, she appeals to her imagination and ends up alone concluding that she was bought. In this way, we can address the psychological aspect of the child who shapes her own vision by transforming the information she has received about her life.

The daughter then questions her identity and even wonders what it is to the point of being reduced to an object with the reification “bot me oot a shop” (1.1) There is a paradoxical sense of positive alienation: the daughter was chosen by her mother and loved. The child does not know how to define or explain what in psychology we call ‘external phenomena’<sup>16</sup>. Just like in psychology, Kay manipulates writing in order to ‘manipulate external phenomena’.

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<sup>16</sup> Henni- Juillard Alexane, Mazoyer Anne-Valérie, “Expression de la mentalisation et de l'imaginaire chez l'enfant victime d'un trauma”, 63, no. 2 (2014) : 145-155: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-enfances-et-psy-2014-2-page-145.htm>

that occur throughout her life on which she does not know how to explain at the time she experiences them.

'Ma mammy says she's not really ma mammy (just kid on) (The Telling Part 1.5-6)

She took me when I'd nowhere to go

my mammy is the best mammy in the world OK. (The Telling Part 1. 21-22)

Here, the term 'really' is interesting because it refers to the adoptive mother. In the child's mind, a question arises: she opposes the real to the unreal and reconsiders her links with her "mommy". Although she previously appeared as a living entity, entirely familiar to her, by the term 'really' the child reconsiders the existence of the one she considered to be her mother, as if she was not an animated living being but rather an illusion in her mind, her environment. The notion of identity is challenged.

This revelation will give rise to a feeling of fear in the child who no longer conceives of reality in the same way and will then interpret it or use fantasy to distance herself from it. The fear is thus imagined by the child; she is afraid that her mother is in truth not a real person 'I was scared to death she was gonnie melt'. She then seeks physical and emotional closeness in order to make a connection with her adoptive mother. This is the beginning of her quest for identity: she wants to find out who she is, even though she is not old enough to understand everything at her young age. 'So I searches the whole house for clues but I never found anything. Anyhow a day after I got my guinea pig and forgot all about it' (l. 32-33)

Later, the girl will bring out the notion of disillusionment by wanting to redefine the identity of her adoptive mother because her conception of her adoptive mother's identity has evolved through this revelation. So she tries to give her mother a nature:

After mammy telt me she wisnae my real mammy

I was scared to death she was gonnie melt

or something or mibbe disappear in the dead

of night and somebody would say she wis a fairy

godmother.' (The Telling Part 1.23-27)

The child is so disturbed that she does not dissociate her reality from the world she discovers in fantasy stories. Fiction and reality are closely linked. The child's imagination then represents a refuge that allows him to interpret his situation. It is through her imagination that

she tries to identify her mother's identity. She is a being who can at any moment "disappear" or "melt" which then attributes ephemeral characteristics to her mother.

Interpretation plays an important role in the child's psychology. It is important for her to establish a physical connection with her adoptive mother:

So the next morning I felt her skin  
to check it was flesh [...] (127-28)  
So I searches the whole house for clues  
but I never found nothing (1.31-32)

In the two penultimate stanzas, the adoptive mother establishes her identity as a mother in the eyes of the world, the external perspective (which still seems to judge her), which is expressed as 'people'. Indeed, she enumerates what a mother by definition does: to take care of her child as well as possible and to love them above all. One is not a mother in fact, one becomes one. It is not necessarily a biological link, or that of a simple appellation, it refers to a role held and assumed. Her role as a mother is deeply suggested with the notions of culture and role model. It is her adoptive mother who connects her to other missing parts of her identity- that of her black paternal heritage and her own future alternative sexuality. In fact, the child's identity is suggested through references to several black bisexual and song lyrics.

'(...) Round at her house we put on  
The old record player and mime to Pearl Bailey  
Tired of the life I lead, tired of the blues I brief' (The Telling Part, 1.73-75)

Here, it is interesting to question the culture of the Blues.<sup>17</sup> By definition, the blues leads to express that her identity was torn away from her - she is an adopted woman who has fears which haunt her quest for identity.

The importance and role of the adoptive mother are intensified by these references. She is at the origin of this culture acquired by her child. It is her culture that allows the identity construction of her child, not blood bounds or anything else.

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<sup>17</sup> The blues refers to "an autobiographical and poetic chronicle" and establishes how "the blues is there as soon as the Black speaks to himself " "Black Arts Movement," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed May 4, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Black-Arts-movement>.

## 8.2 Analysis of 'Black Bottom'

This poem, which transcribes the voices of the three women, is essential to the collection because it brings out a key issue: it recounts the first time that the issue of ethnic identity arose for Kay as a young girl. Here, the persona of Kay as a girl tries to reassert her identity and explores several ways to do this.

The title of the work refers to a dance around which the young girl, in the midst of her personal development is related to. The dances alluded to in the poem will constitute the trauma which around the poem is articulated: the fact that she is endlessly reduced to her color and ethnic origin by those around her at school.

Indeed, this first fight is initially presented to the adoptive mother who had to constantly justify the fact that her daughter's skin was a different color to her own. Thus, in the first two stanzas, the adoptive mother exposes the external judgment that she expresses through the terms 'all this talk about her being black' (1.2).

This implies that these criticisms have not yet ceased and that they were made long before the adoption of her little girl. Indeed, the whole environment within which the women, but also the child, evolve, reflects a racist environment that is hostile to diversity. Kay addresses broader societal issues related to adoption, and complexities of this often-misunderstood topic at this time. She also examines the confusion, sense of displacement that adoptees may experience and the challenges of parenting an adopted child.

The next stanzas expose the racism of which the little girl is victim within her entourage at school; she receives insults such as 'sambo-sambo' or 'Dirty Darkie': which are racist and violent terms against which the young girl defends herself with violence as she refuses to be brutalized:

My fist is steel; I punch and punch his hut.  
Sorry I didn't hear you? His tears drip like wax. (Black Bottom, 1.24-25)

The figure of the teacher is also questionable. She is supposed to represent authority and to educate the pupils, but she presents herself as racist in her turn:

'Thug. Vandal. Hooligan. Speak up. Have you lost your tongue?'(1. 40.) The teacher believes in social determinism; as Kay is black, she is bound to become a 'juvenile delinquent'. This

explains why she also interprets the child's artistic talents which are supposed to be innate according to her skin. ('you people had it in your blood' 1.56.)

my blood  
what does she mean? (1.59-60)

The run-on line highlights how all these reflections fuel the child's questions, the criminality constantly associated with her "identity" her "physical appearance" or her skin color. As the notion of identity is projected here through the point of view of her peers, the suffering of the little girl is exteriorized although she refuses to be considered as a victim: 'my heart starts to miss beats like when I can't sleep at night.

Kay's enforces the nature of what motherhood is. The adoptive mother is unfailing in her support for her child, she understands her and supports her to the point where the two beings, are so close that they seem to form one being with the symbiosis: 'Us two in the armchair; me holding her breath' (1.68-69.)

The link that the child establishes with the adoptive mother is also present with the birth mother who was once a victim of racism because of her love for a man of color:

**'It made me burn, that hot glare; my hand would sweat down to his bone'** (1.86-88)

These are elements of Kay's life; she was born from the love of two races and her relationship to her adoptive mother is found in her writings through the relationship between the child and the adoptive mother. This is her own testimony. Growing up, she becomes more concerned by the image of her she conveys and her social role and position among others and try to find her place.

The little girl will try to define her identity through different figures thanks to her mother who politicizes her life and gives her a good perspective on who black people can become.

Angela Davis is the only female person

I've seen (except for a nurse on TV)

Who looks like me (1.104-106)

She finds a model who looks like her and whose poster will proudly be displayed in her room. The child's need for identification is addressed, also her need to establish relational links with her family. The last stanza refers to the political awakening of the child, she is like her militant parents, engages and politics form a part of her identity construction ('He brought me a badge home which I wore to school. It says FREE ANGELA DAVIS' 1.131-132)

This poem is very important to the collection as it reconsiders the adoptee quest, need of identification and sense of loss. The little girl's expresses the difficulties she faces but also the aggressiveness of the world around her. She finally finds comfort in figures who understand her, such as her mother, who gives her love and soothes her, but also in political figures who resemble her such as Angela Davis, a militant American black activist for civil rights "who gained an international reputation during her imprisonment and trial on conspiracy charges"<sup>18</sup>

## 9 Analysis of Part Three

### 9.1 Analysis of 'Generations'

In the following poem, the birth mother exposes her torments, she talks about her condition after having to 'let' her child go. She recounts her trauma and how she perceives herself since her child has left.

She is imagining people's faces, their 'gossip' and continues to hear voices, voices that seem to judge her and scrutinize her every action throughout the process of adoption. She seems disconnected from reality and perceives everything through the prism of culpability. She is tormented to the point that 'the voices' she hears are omnipresent and seem to follow her even in her 'dreams'. She compares her situation to a 'scandal' once again. The birth mother seems to lose her mind but also her courage. She hears these voices in her head, we understand that it is the trauma she lives that haunts her.

Moreover, she expresses herself by metaphor, images - is it a coincidence of madness and mental distress: she would say a world apart, close to the poetic world.

In the third stanza her meeting with her daughter becomes a fantasy so much so that it cannot be realized and yet she relates everything to it.

"I dread strange handwriting  
Sometimes jump when the phones rings" (Generations, l.16-17)

The birth mother fears the meeting and seems to be confused about her desires: she doesn't want to meet her child but can't bring herself to think about her and prepare for their meeting.

Kay plays with the voices of the two speakers. The form of the poem brings them closer together and it gives an impression of communication as it is what they both desire and fear at

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Pletch, *Angela Davis*, Encyclopedia Britannica March 20, 2023)  
<https://www.britannica.com/event/Black-Arts-movement>

the same time. Indeed, mother and daughter want to meet and use the imagination to interpret what they look like.

In the fourth stanza, the young girl questions her identity following genetic questions asked in the medical context. The gap that seems to separate the birth mother and her daughter seems to widen : she has no information to share about her genetics, so she answers that she doesn't even know the faces of her parents, her biological parents. "I tell them: I have no nose or mouth or eyes To match" (l.34). She will then explain: "I have my parents who are not of the same tree" ( l.36) to justify her situation, however, she will end up posing the importance of her roots by the term 'blood': we can consider the ambivalence of the term.

I confess to my contradiction  
I want to know my blood (l.44-45)

She thinks she is betraying her parents by wanting to know more about her roots.  
confess'(l.44.) Does she consider reuniting with her roots a sin, or a bad thing or it is a means to evoke her sense of guilt towards her adoptive parents? --

The biological mother then explains in her own way "I know she thinks of me often" (l.60)- imagination embellishes reality. She says she does not want to meet her but wants her child to never forget her. This contradiction highlights the mental fragility of the BM and paints a darker, almost toxic picture of the BM mother "you'll never really know your mother" (l.71)  
The form of the poem is interesting: it is characterized by its lexical and syntactic poverty.

"I know who she thinks I am- she's made a blunder" (l.72)

In the last part of the poem, mother and daughter echo each other, both drawing a portrait of each other. Haunted by each other, they question their respective lives.

She is faceless, she never  
weeps. She has neither eye nor  
fine boned cheeks (l.94-96)

The biological mother is only a ghost for the child: she has no heart, she does not suffer, she is not a human being. The little girl's quest leads to nothing but remains obsessive.

### [9.2 Analysis of 'The Phone Call'](#)

In this poem Kay imagines a conversation between her and her relatives (biological family), highlighting the longing and sense of belonging that adoptees often feel. The poem

underscores the importance of communication and connection in forming a sense of belonging and understanding.

The young girl receives the number of her biological grandmother and wants to contact her at all costs in order to trace her mother. Here images of nature and the elements (“a burning hole”) allow her to express her inner ambivalence: “burning” refers to fire, which is synonymous with destruction. But fire is also synonymous with desire, especially in this context it refers to the strong desire to call that the young woman recently experienced.

To reach her mother more easily, the daughter has to “adopt” an invented role in order to conceal her real identity. ‘I used to work ages ago with your daughter’ she says. As she plays out this scene in her head over and over again, she has apprehension on what may happen and what the voices of her relatives might sound like (“My grandmother’s voice sounds much younger’ (l.5) The imagined conception of her grandmother is wrong. However, imagination allows her to anticipate her family’s unwillingness to cooperate:

my mother's sister  
Asks lots of questions (l.11-12)  
I know she knows. The game's a bogey (l.16)

This phone call sets the reality, establishing the distance between the girl and her family. The names with which she identifies the members of her family “my mother’s sister” emphasize the distance between the adoptee and her family. The terme ‘game’ translate the nonsense of the approach and the respective postures adopted: they know the truth but ignore it. The mother’s sister justifies her position with “I’m sure you understand” (l.22.) Language expresses the link established as the given answer is a form of social politeness, formal of social convenience that reduces this highly personal situation to a simple formality.

The last stanza allows a shift in perspective. The voice of the adoptive mother appears to establish her bond with and love for her daughter, bounds that are real and established. The adoptive mother expresses her sorrow, and her fear of rejection and of losing her little girl. To express her feelings, she conveys the image of Adam Carrington", protagonist from the TV series *Dynasty*<sup>19</sup>. Paralleling with Adam Carrington, she can imagine her daughter’s feelings and desire to reunite with her biological mother.

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<sup>19</sup> Popular American series from the 70's

### 9.3 Analysis of 'The meeting Dream'

This final poem establishes the end of the girl's quest but also that of Jackie Kay the poet who here imagines a meeting with her biological mother. The meeting finally occurs (in the imagination) "If I picture it like this it hurts less" (1.1) but proves to be full of disillusionment, as if the poet imagines the worst to protect herself from further disappointment. The two women finally meet and can put a face to each other. The physique of each is exposed: they seem to be physically opposed from the start "We are not as we imagined." (1.5.)

I am smaller, fatter, darker

I am taller, thinner. (1.6-7)

One of the important physical characteristics imagined by the young woman does not seem to fit:

and I'd always imagined her hair dark brown

not grey. (1.8-9)

This disillusionment almost turns to disappointment. It establishes the issues of the quest for identity by identifying how biological ties do not define a close or ingrained family bond. It also establishes the need to use the imagination to satisfy a complex and overcome trauma. Imagination allows the cognitive and emotional development of a person but also to escape from reality in order to preserve oneself emotionally in order to build oneself.

It finally establishes rational links through the imagination: the actors in our lives are those that allow us to build ourselves. Belonging to a peer group, to an environment is essential and inevitably necessary. "Neither of us mention meeting again" (1.42) exposes the end of the quest as the encounter has no more to be imagined. "Faded now, she's not a baby anymore". To bear witness; to deliver one's message is equally important to move forward and to become aware of what adoption represents and the dilemmas one has to go through. Testifying allows Kay to take ownership of her story also to share her version of the truth about her personal experience by affirming who she ultimately is to the world.

Through her work, we readers have experienced adoption by understanding the emotional, and psychological values that it entails for a child, an adoptive mother, a birth mother, and the need to share her story. We also understand the importance of language and the need to share one's story in the identity construction process.

## Conclusion

We have established the role of literature and its emancipatory functions. We have also established how literature allows a better understanding of the world and the actors around us by promoting an affirmation of oneself.

However, it is important to understand the importance of telling a story. Writing, recounting allows the construction of a sort of informational discourse an unconscious witnessing that could not be expressed during the event.

While writing, Kay attempts to bear witness: the main objective is to transmit, perceive and assimilate what happened not just to give emotional responses to the event. In fact, she formulates a testimony in order to repossess what happened. She creates a listener, a reader who can substitute her lack of witnessing for her own story.

In *Truth and Testimony: The Process And The Struggle*, Dori Laub<sup>20</sup>, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, offers a reflection on the relationship of testimony to truth. He explains that what is important in any process of testimony "conscious and unconscious, is not simply the information, the establishment of facts, but the very experience of living the testimony, of bearing witness". He adds that witnessing is the process by which "the narrator (...) reclaims his or her position as a witness". He then argues that "the reappropriation of one's life story through testimony is itself a form of action, of change, that one must (...) go through" to complete one's journey and the process of restoration. This testimony plays a "formative role in what one becomes."

We readers are invited through Kay's work to discover her story based on her own personal experience in order to bear witness to its truthfulness but also to give credence to her story which needs witnesses and to be understood.

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<sup>20</sup> Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process And The Struggle". In: *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 61-75  
[https://hemi.nyu.edu/coursenyu/NYU%20fall%202006/readings/7/Laub\\_Truth%20and%20Testimony.pdf](https://hemi.nyu.edu/coursenyu/NYU%20fall%202006/readings/7/Laub_Truth%20and%20Testimony.pdf)

## PARTIE 2: DIDACTIQUE

### Programme et activités langagière dominante de la séquence

Exploitation pédagogique de 'Black Bottom' *The Adoption Papers* by Jackie Kay

Niveau visé : C1

Classe : Terminale LLCER-

Thématique : Art et débat d'idées

Axe d'étude : Art et contestation

Autre Niveau proposé

Niveau visé : B2

Classe : 1<sup>ère</sup> LLCER

Thématique : Rencontre

Axe d'étude : Relation entre l'individu et le groupe

**TF:** You are competing for the National Poetry Slam.

Write a poem on a subject that matters to you and use poetic diction. Be ready to Recite out loud your poem in front of your classmates.

Pay attention to your gesture. Your classmates will elect the best poem and your presentation will be recorded and posted on the high school blog/website. **EE vers EOC**

Lieu: Auditorium

**TI :** Présenter le poème à analyser en groupe en expliquant le thème, les enjeux de l'œuvre en mettant en voix une partie de l'œuvre sous étude afin d'appuyer ses propos et s'entraîner pour la tâche finale. **(EOC)**

Mettre en voix le poème d'un des poètes vus en classe à sa façon.

## 1 Ancrage et apports culturels

Thème proposé: 'The Power of words' or 'Poems of protest resistance and empowerment'

La séance proposée pour étude de l'œuvre de Jackie Kay interviendrait en guise de séance 3 ou 4 à la séquence sur la poésie moderne et ses enjeux. Il serait intéressant d'envisager de l'interdisciplinarité avec un professeur de français afin d'étudier le genre poétique en amont dans la langue de cognition des élèves afin qu'ils puissent se représenter le genre d'une manière plus approfondie et évocative (versification, rimes, figures de styles, prosodie) et de les entraîner au mieux à la réalisation de la tâche finale (entraînement en guise d'exercice en cours de français afin de se familiariser à l'écriture poétique + possibilité d'entraînement à l'exercice de Version)

Ainsi, en guise d'anticipation à cette séquence, je proposerai à mes élèves une ouverture directe sur le sujet en proposant en guise d'ouverture culturelle une vidéo d'anticipation. Le choix de proposer une entrée en matière à partir d'une vidéo n'est pas anodin. En effet, une mise en voix d'un poème permet d'emblée de mettre en avant les compétences oratoires des artistes ainsi que la rythmique, la posture à adopter. Cela permet également de poser l'atmosphère qui tourne autour de la poésie et de ses 'pouvoirs'. Elle permettra de lancer la discussion autour d'un genre poétique et de déconstruire les aprioris ou les stéréotypes des élèves en lien avec ce genre ? Ainsi, je proposerai en guise d'anticipation à la séquence ce document : "The language of Equality"- Aranya Johar ft Siddhant.

[-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jpxFI7TG-w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jpxFI7TG-w) -

Ce document met en avant une jeune indienne et permet ainsi de mettre en avant un certain multiculturalisme et permet de pointer l'aspect discriminatoire dont elle est victime. Cela permet également de mettre en avant une femme de couleur qui utilise une forme d'art comme moyen d'émancipation.

## 2. Définir les objectifs

**Objectif Culturel :** Maya Angelou- Britta B-Jackie Kay- Elizabeth Acevedo et leur poèmes contestataires. L'écriture poétique

### **Objectifs linguistiques :**

#### **Grammatical :**

Rebrassage du présent simple

La modalité au présent et au passé

Expression de l'opinion personnelle ( donner son avis sur une œuvre, un thème...)

Expression des sentiments, réactions

#### **Lexicaux :**

Champ lexical des sentiments

Vocabulaire lié à l'analyse d'un poème (Les figures de styles, versification)

Description physique

Personnalité

La discrimination

La dénonciation

#### **Phonologie :**

'Word stress, flow and tone'

Prosodie-Prononciation

La lecture expressive pour être convainquant

Mise en voix d'un poème

### **Objectif Pragmatique :**

Rédaction d'un poème (*TI*)

Pris de note (CO/EOI)

Structurer son discours

Exprimer ses émotions

Donner son opinion

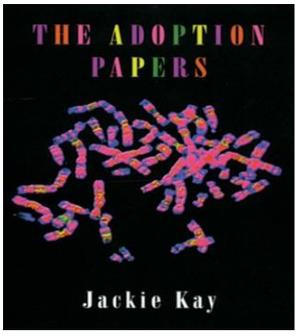
### **Objectif Méthodologique :**

Analyse d'une œuvre littéraire

S'approprier les codes du genre poétique

Expression d'un choix ou d'un non-choix
<p><b>Compétences sociolinguistiques</b></p> <p>L'accent Américain</p> <p>Compétences oratoires/discursives</p>
<p><b>Objectif citoyen</b></p> <p>Eveiller son esprit critique face aux différentes formes de discrimination</p> <p>Sensibiliser aux différents types de harcèlement</p> <p>Promouvoir l'égalité et la diversité des populations d'une même nation</p> <p>Développer l'ouverture à la communication, au dialogue, au débat</p>
<p><b>Médiation</b></p> <p>De concept : travaux collaboratifs en groupes</p> <p>De texte : Exprimer une réaction personnelle à l'égard de textes créatifs (dont la littérature)</p> <p>Traiter un texte - à l'oral et à l'écrit.</p>
<p><b>PIX</b></p> <p>Recherches d'informations (<i>biographie d'auteurs</i>)</p> <p>Publication de contenu sur un blog (<i>celui du lycée pour le gagnant du concours 'National Poetry Slam'</i>)</p> <p>Participer à une production numérique collective dans un esprit de mutualisation, de recherche (<i>wooclap/ framapad</i>)</p>

### 3. Exploitation pédagogique du poème 'Black Bottom'

Anticipation	Task :	Attendus :	Objectifs	Modalités
<p>A partir d'un document iconographique et du titre de l'œuvre</p> <p>'<b>Black Bottom</b>' -Jackie Kay</p> 	<p><i>Describe the document (type, colors, character)</i></p> <p><i>Link the title of the document to the image.</i></p> <p><i>According to the words written on the picture,/ Focus on the words guess the themes you expect to find in the following poem.</i></p>	<p>Présentation du document, de la Poétesse localisations géographiques.</p> <p>Personnages dont il sera question dans le poème</p> <p>Faire émerger le thème de L'Adoption La discrimination</p> <p>Emettre des hypothèses</p> <p>Exprimer une idée</p>	<p>Rebrassage présent simple</p> <p>Description d'un document iconographique</p> <p>Vocabulaire de la description physique</p> <p>Découverte de la Poétesse Jackie Kay</p> <p>Amorcer le thème de l'identité</p>	<p>Ilots, travail de groupe.</p> <p>Chaque groupe possède l'image et s'applique à la décrire ainsi que les thèmes se cachant derrière le personnage. Ce travail de groupe permet de faire émerger différentes idées de la part des élèves ainsi que de mettre en avant des interprétations et point de vue différent d'un document iconographique (collaboration encouragée + médiation)</p>
<p><b>Compréhension globale</b></p> <p>Classe mobile + (Poème écrit pour les élèves les</p>	<p><i>Watch the video once.</i></p> <p><i>Present the document (People, topic, themes, time, purpose)</i></p>	<p>Découverte de la 'Slam Poetry'</p> <p>Repérage éléments de contexte</p>	<p>Découvertes de la 'Slam Poetry' et ses codes</p> <p>L'accent Ecossais</p>	<p>Travail individuel + Worksheet : Il est important de proposer une analyse de l'audio</p>

<p>plus fragiles ?)</p> <p><b>CO</b></p>	<p><i>Sum up with your own words what the video is about.</i></p> <p><i>Read the title of this sequence and link it to the document under study 'The Power of words' or 'Poems of protest resistance and empowerment'</i></p>	<p>Infirmier/confirmer les hypothèses</p> <p>Leur demander leur ressenti lors de l'écoute</p>	<p>La lecture expressive pour être convainquant</p>	<p>individualisée afin de mettre en place une atmosphère particulière. L'élève fait face aux pouvoir des mots, et l'interprétation d'un poème reste très personnelle.</p> <p>Cette mise en œuvre permet également de faire de la différenciation : les élèves les plus faibles ont le droit à un nombre d'écoute répondant à leur besoins</p>
<p><b>Compréhension détaillée</b></p> <p><i>Vidéo + Script sous les yeux</i></p> <p><b>CO vers CE</b></p>	<p><i>Analyze Kay's attitude, and gestures, (prosody ?). What can you say about the genre/ What is specific to this genre?</i></p> <p><i>What is the tone of the poem?</i></p> <p><i>In what way does this performance give life to the concepts conveyed? (Focus on the word stress- which</i></p>	<p>Retour sur les thèmes principaux du poème : l'identité, la culture, le multiculturalisme</p> <p>Analyze stylistic (<b>repetition</b> of « I worry »</p> <p><b>simile</b>: My skin is hot as a burning coal</p> <p><b>hyperbola</b> « my feet step out of time »</p>	<p>PRL sur les codes du genre poétique + temps du passé (modalité, valeurs)</p> <p>Analyse d'une œuvre littéraire</p> <p>Vocabulaire lié à l'analyse d'un poème (Les figures de styles, versification)</p>	<p>Travail individuel (écoute de la vidéo+ worksheet) :</p> <p>Les élèves visionnent une fois de plus la vidéo afin d'analyser en profondeur la mise en voix du poème et reprendre les éléments clefs.</p> <p><i>Travail sur le script</i></p> <p>Le poème permet</p>

	<p><i>words do you recognize?)</i></p> <p><i>Etude du poème</i></p> <p><i>Pick up information referring to the person's feelings in the poem. Which adjectives could best describe these feelings?</i></p> <p><i>Pick up elements about :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>-her relatable experience as a teenager</i></li> <li><i>-Family-People's Expectations</i></li> <li><i>-The theme of identity</i></li> <li><i>-Discrimination</i></li> <li><i>-Adoption</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Highlight poetic devices and lexical fields that are significant (according to the ideas/ messages the poet tries to convey.)</i></p> <p><i>To what extent her</i></p>		<p>Eveiller son esprit critique face aux différentes formes de discrimination</p>	<p>aux élèves les plus faibles d'allier graphie et phonie en s'appuyant sur la mise en voix du poème ainsi que sur le script .</p> <p>Analyse stylistique</p>
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	<i>style gives us access to her thoughts and feelings?</i>			
<b>Elargissement</b>  <b>CO vers EOI</b>	<p><i>*Listen to the recording of Bretta B reciting her poem 'Dear Young Women'. Read it aloud to your peer.</i></p> <p><i>What effect do the verses have on your experience as a reader?</i></p> <p><i>Could you identify with her? Why?</i></p> <p><i>Justify your ideas by explaining the purpose of the poem and the common theme related to/linked to your own experience.</i></p> <p><i>Did you like it? Why /why not ? (Express your point of view by giving specific examples)</i></p>	<p>Entraînement à la prise de parole en continu</p> <p>Organiser un brouillon à partir d'une vidéo</p> <p>Exprimer son opinion personnelle</p> <p>La lecture expressive pour être convainquant</p> <p>Compétences oratoires/discursives</p> <p>Mise en Voix d'un poème</p>	<p>Les temps du passé</p> <p>Objectifs phonologique (intonation, accent de mots (préparation à l'épreuve d'analyse sur dossier (DPE) + Grand oral du bac)</p> <p>Expression des sentiments, réactions</p>	<p>Travail personnel sur les impressions et ressenti à l'écoute du poème.</p> <p>Travail en îlots afin d'échanger sur la mise en voix, inter évaluation afin de permettre aux élèves d'identifier leurs erreurs et de perfectionner leur travail de mise en voix.</p> <p>Entraînement au grand oral du baccalauréat ou épreuve orale sur DPE.</p>

**Tâche intermédiaire :**

**Sources :**

<p>“<i>Dear Young Woman</i>” (Britta Badour) a poem of empowerment <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adUToRtRkaY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adUToRtRkaY</a></p>	<p>Maya Angelou, ‘<i>Still I Rise</i>’ <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM</a></p>	<p>Jackie Kay- <i>The Adoption Papers</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvztYlml-Ps&amp;t=175s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvztYlml-Ps&amp;t=175s</a></p>
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**Tâche finale : (Mise en scène possible dans l’auditorium du lycée)**

Take part in the National Poetry Slam. Make sure you are giving more than a recitation and do your best to captivate your audience. Try to make it sound powerful!

#### 4. Ancrage CECRL de la Séquence

<p><b>Expression orale</b></p> <p>Interaction avec les membres du groupe + Mise en voix et présentation du poème</p>	<p><b>C1 :</b> A une bonne maîtrise d'une grande gamme de discours parmi lesquels il peut choisir la formulation lui permettant de s'exprimer clairement et dans le registre convenable sur une grande variété de sujets d'ordre général , éducationnel, professionnel, ou de loisirs, sans devoir restreindre ce qu'il/ elle veut dire.</p> <p>Peut s'exprimer sur des sujets complexes de façon claire et bien structurée et manifester son contrôle des outils d'organisation, d'articulation et de cohésion du discours.</p> <p><b>B2 :</b> Peut communiquer avec un degré de spontanéité et d'aisance. Peut s'exprimer de façon claire et détaillée sur une grande gamme de sujets, émettre un avis sur un sujet d'actualité et exposer les avantages et les inconvénients de différentes possibilités.</p>
<p><b>Compréhension orale</b></p> <p>Exploitation du document + documents supports pour la TI</p>	<p><b>C1 :</b> Peut comprendre une grande gamme de textes longs et exigeants, ainsi que saisir des significations implicites</p> <p>Repérer et analyser les éléments de mise en scène et de mise en voix d'un poème dans un clip vidéo.</p> <p><b>B2 :</b> Peut comprendre le contenu essentiel de sujets concrets ou abstraits dans un texte complexe, y compris une discussion technique dans sa spécialité. Peut comprendre un document sonore en langue standard</p>
<p><b>Expression écrite</b></p> <p>TF : Ecriture créative + Expression opinion personnel, entraînement à la confection du DPE</p>	<p><b>C1 :</b> Peut produire un texte clair, fluide et bien structuré démontrant un usage contrôlé de moyen linguistiques de structuration.</p> <p><b>B2 :</b> Je peux écrire des textes clairs et détaillés sur une grande gamme de sujets relatifs à mes intérêts. Je peux écrire un essai ou un rapport en transmettant une information ou en exposant des raisons pour ou contre une opinion donnée. Je peux écrire des lettres qui mettent en valeur le sens que j'attribue personnellement aux évènements et aux expériences.</p>
<p><b>Compréhension écrite</b></p> <p>Analyse d'œuvres littéraires</p>	<p><b>C1 :</b> Je peux comprendre des textes factuels ou littéraires longs et complexes et en apprécier les différences de style.</p> <p><b>B2 :</b> Je peux lire des articles et des rapports sur des questions contemporaines dans lesquels les auteurs adoptent une attitude particulière ou un certain point de vue. Je peux comprendre un texte littéraire contemporain en prose.</p>

#### 4.1 Evaluation de la Tâche finale

Take part in the National Poetry Slam. Make sure you are giving more than a recitation and do your best to captivate your audience. Try to make it sound powerful!

	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1</b>
<p><b>Capacité à raconter, décrire, mettre en voix une œuvre littéraire</b>            Peut présenter et décrire des aspects de son environnement (expériences personnelles, loisirs, thèmes) ; est capable de présenter un projet</p>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<b>4 points</b>
<p><b>Lexique et Grammaire</b>            Peut utiliser des structures syntaxiques et grammaticales adéquates et le lexique approprié</p>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>4 points</i>
<p><b>Intelligibilité/ recevabilité linguistique</b>            S'exprime dans une langue correcte et fluide avec une prononciation claire</p>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>4 points</i>
<p><b>Aisance</b>            Est capable de mettre en voix un texte en le restituant de manière expressive ( intonation, gestuelle)</p>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>4 points</i>
<p><b>Respect de la consigne</b>            Produire un discours en adéquation avec la situation proposée</p>	<i>1 point</i>	<i>3 points</i>	<i>4 points</i>

## 5 ANCRAGE DE LA SEQUENCE AVEC UN PROJET PEDAGOGIQUE

Ce projet est accessible à des classes de 1<sup>ère</sup> LLCER et tle LLCER

Mon projet pédagogique se présente sous la forme d'une web radio qui sera organisée en interdisciplinarité avec plusieurs classes. En effet il s'agit d'un projet complexe et qui nécessite beaucoup de travail en amont mais également d'organisation. Ce projet est destiné à des classes de terminales et premières LLCER.

### *5.1 contexte*

Ce projet interviendrait en milieu d'année scolaire tout au mieux, en prolongement à une séquence sur la poésie. En effet, après avoir exploré ce genre littéraire avec mes élèves, je me suis aperçue de leur volonté d'en apprendre davantage sur ce genre pour les élèves les plus à l'aise et leur soif de culture. Cependant pour la majorité des élèves, il s'agit malheureusement d'un genre littéraire sur lequel les élèves ont de nombreux à priori, et c'est en ce sens que ce projet interviendra comme un renforcement permettant aux élèves de déconstruire ces stéréotypes en mettant en avant les compétences communicatives, linguistiques, culturelles de celui-ci mais également les compétences transversales des apprenant en leur apportant une ouverture sur le monde et la culture.

Ainsi, la web radio que je propose inclurait plusieurs acteurs, notamment un auteur/ une autrice traducteur. Il serait intéressant de travailler sur des œuvres littéraires, notamment des poèmes phares en spécialités et faire appel au traducteur/ traductrice officiel d'un des recueils de poème étudié en classe. Ce projet répond aux exigences du socle commun en rentrant dans la langue par la culture. Il est en effet indispensable de faire découvrir aux élèves des auteurs des pays anglophones, et de s'enrichir culturellement, surtout en spécialité.

Ainsi, mon projet répondra aux exigences du socle commun de référence mais également aux attentes à ce niveau d'étude. En effet, plusieurs compétences sont mises en avant notamment les compétences oratoires en vue de l'oral du baccalauréat mais également l'éducation aux médias. Ce projet invite également les élèves à revenir sur l'exercice de version, épreuve du baccalauréat

## 5.2 EXPLICIATION DU PROJET ET DE SES ENJEUX

### 5..2. 1 Les Acteurs

Projet mis en œuvre par deux classes, afin de permettre aux deux classes de spécialités un enrichissement culturel. Par le biais de l'interdisciplinarité il permet également aux étudiants en BTS audiovisuel d'avoir matière à travailler en s'ouvrant à un projet qui leur donne de la visibilité mais permet également de mettre en avant leur travail. Cela permet également aux élèves de coopérer dans un esprit de recherche et d'enrichissement.

C'est un travail qui nécessite énormément de travail en amont. En effet, la web radio nécessite une trame bien articulée et bien maîtrisée. La diffusion se fait en direct, ainsi, un travail de préparation en profondeur est nécessaire pour de nombreuses raisons : dans un premier temps pour mettre les élèves en confiance en les accompagnant et ajustant leur projet, mais également afin d'aborder les notions et compétences à acquérir à travers ce projet qui nécessitent du travail, de la découverte.

Pour ce faire, tout au long de la séquence, un travail de préparation en îlot sera nécessaire. Les élèves prépareront leur chronique respective, travailleront l'intonation, les silences avec l'aide de l'assistant de langue. Un entraînement se fera lors de la séance précédant le projet : les élèves prendront connaissance du studio d'enregistrement, organiseront les transitions entre les différents élèves et s'accorderont avec les étudiants en audiovisuel afin de mettre en place les jingle et pauses musicales.

La première consistera en des questions à poser à l'auteur afin d'échanger sur le parcours de l'auteur. Cette démarche est d'autant plus intéressante car elle permet aux élèves de s'identifier en découvrant le parcours scolaire de ces personnalités qui sont pour la plupart similaires à celui des élèves (études de langues, spécialités littérature étrangère). Cette chronique permet aux élèves d'en apprendre davantage sur le parcours suivi mais également de prévoir les obstacles possibles à travers l'exercice de ce métier.

### 5.2.2 La trame de notre web radio

Cette web radio comportera 4 « chroniques » qui seront réalisées par les élèves eux-mêmes.

La première s'attache à découvrir le parcours de l'auteur/ l'autrice.

Cette démarche est d'autant plus intéressante car elle permet aux élèves de s'identifier en découvrant le parcours scolaire de ces personnalités qui sont pour la plupart similaires à celui des élèves (études de langues, spécialités littérature étrangère). Cette chronique permet aux élèves d'en apprendre davantage sur le parcours suivi mais également de prévoir les obstacles possibles à travers l'exercice de ce métier.

La deuxième consiste en l'analyse d'une œuvre littéraire et des questions de style portées à l'auteur ( est-ce que tel personnage fait écho à cet évènement de votre vie, dites-nous en plus sur la notion ... que vous aborder dans tel chapitre.)

La troisième à un retour sur différentes œuvres (les élèves en expliquent l'intrigue, les personnages clefs les notions abordées et posent des questions plus personnelles sur le ressenti de l'auteur. Quel passage en particulier a-t-il/elle préféré traduire ? Quels passages lui ont posés le plus de mal ? Quelle difficulté a-t-il/ elle rencontrée lors de la traduction dans la langue cible).

Et en enfin, une quatrième chronique : dans laquelle quelques élèves présenteront à leur tour leur poème en le mettant en voix (ce poème correspond à la tâche intermédiaire de cette séquence, la création de leur propre poème basé sur leurs expériences personnelles.

Des ateliers de traduction et d'écriture créative animés par l'auteurs/trice en découleront : cela permet aux élèves d'aborder au mieux la traduction par le biais d'un professionnel (conseils, avis, découvertes de nouveaux procédés littéraires) mais également de se perfectionner pour l'épreuve de Version du baccalauréat.

### 5.2.3 Mise en place du projet

Il s'agit d'un projet qui nécessite beaucoup de temps de préparation au minimum un an. Il faut en effet prendre en compte plusieurs éléments.

Dans un premier temps, afin de faire appel à un auteur-traducteur, il est nécessaire de faire appel à son attaché de presse, de le contacter afin de proposer ce projet et pouvoir entrer en relation avec le professionnel. A l'issue de cet échange, un devis sera établi car ce genre de projet nécessite un certain budget. Ce projet doit ensuite être voté au conseil d'administration qui décidera de sa pertinence et sa faisabilité (en fonction de ses enjeux et du budget disponible)

Une date antérieure sera alors communiquée en fonction des disponibilités de l'auteur (qui prendra en compte ses déplacements)

### 5.2.4 Visibilité du projet

Il est nécessaire de partager cette ouverture culturelle que les élèves proposent à travers ce projet. Ainsi, pour mettre en avant leur travail, la date du projet ainsi que le site menant à la radio seront affichées sur les écrans du lycée. Un article explicitant le projet ainsi que le lien menant à la web radio sera posté sur le site internet de l'établissement afin de capturer ce projet et augmenté sa visibilité aux près des élèves mais également enseignants qui pourrait trouver l'inspiration.

Un mail sera également envoyé aux familles afin de présenter la trame du projet et de rendre disponible le lien renvoyant à la web radio.

Les élèves en permanence pourront avoir accès à des casques audio et aux différents postes informatiques pour suivre leurs camarades en direct depuis le C.D.I

## 6. Ancrage du projet pour l'épreuve du baccalauréat

*B.O : grille d'évaluation de l'expression écrite épreuve du baccalauréat<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup>Bulletin-Officiel, "Épreuve Terminale De Spécialité « Langues, Littérature ... - Education," accessed May 4, 2023, <https://eduscol.education.fr/document/3368/download>.

Annexe

**Baccalauréat - épreuves de langues vivantes**  
**Grille pour l'évaluation de l'expression écrite enseignement de spécialité terminale**

	Qualité du contenu	Points Score	Cohérence dans la construction du discours	Points Score	Correction de la langue écrite	Points Score	Richesse de la langue	Points Score
C1	Peut traiter le sujet et produire un écrit <b>fluide et convaincant, étayé</b> par des éléments (inter)culturels pertinents.	30	Peut produire un <b>récit ou une argumentation complexe</b> en démontrant un usage maîtrisé de moyens linguistiques de structuration et d'articulation.	30	Peut maintenir tout au long de sa rédaction un <b>haut degré de correction grammaticale</b> , y compris en mobilisant des structures complexes.	30	Peut employer de manière pertinente un <b>vaste répertoire lexical</b> incluant des expressions idiomatiques, des <b>nuances de formulation</b> et des structures variées.	30

Les Tle en spécialité pourront être entraîné à l'épreuve écrite qui comporte une partie où les élèves sont invités à élaborer une synthèse de 500 mots à partir de différents documents notamment une œuvre littéraire qui est obligatoire ( l'étude de poème et d'œuvre littéraire les entrainera donc à cette tâche, une fois de plus, l'entraînement à l'exercice de Version qui correspond à la deuxième partie de l'épreuve écrite.

Et enfin, une prise de parole en continu pendant 10 min pour les élèves de Tle, à partir d'un dossier qui nécessite au minimum deux œuvre littéraires.

### Conclusion

Cette séquence pédagogique, en plus d'avoir une grande dimension littéraire et culturelle, permet aux apprenants d'approfondir leur connaissance sur des œuvres littéraires qui façonnent les sociétés du monde anglophone. Elle permet aux élèves d'acquérir des compétences d'analyse littéraire solide, attendues à ce niveau d'étude mais également de se sensibiliser à l'art de la poésie et ses œuvres majeurs. Ces activités proposent un vrai bagage culturel qui donne des outils aux élèves ayant pour vocation de continuer leur cursus scolaire vers l'université, notamment en développant leur esprit critique. Le projet pédagogique qui découle de cette séquence permet d'ancrer les apprentissages dans une situation de communication réelle, ce qui permet aux élèves de considérer leur apprentissage de façon plus tangible : il ne s'agit pas seulement de théorie, mais plutôt de pratique. Ce projet permet de transférer les savoirs sur le plan réel, dans la vie quotidienne.

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