

80 | my grandmother

Jackie Kay

My grandmother is like a Scottish pine
Tall straight-backed proud and plentiful
A fine head of hair, greying now
Tied up in a loose bun
Her face is ploughed land
Her eyes shine rough as amethysts
She wears a plaid shawl
Of our clan with the zeal of an Amazon
She is one of those women
Burnt in her croft rather than moved off the land
She comes from them, her snake's skin
She speaks Gaelic mostly, English only
When she has to, then it's blasphemy

My grandmother sits by the fire and swears
There'll be no Darkie baby in this house

My grandmother is a Scottish pine
Tall straight-backed proud and plentiful
Her hair tied with pins in a ball of steel wool
Her face is tight as ice
And her eyes are amethysts.

author biography

Jackie Kay is a black Scottish poet who was born in Edinburgh and raised in Glasgow. She has published her poems widely and her volume *The Adoption Papers* won an Eric Gregory Award in 1991. She has also written three plays, *Chiaroscuro* in 1986; *Twice Over* in 1988; and *Every Bit Of It* in 1992. Her television work includes films on pornography, AIDS and transracial adoption, and *Twice Through the Heart*, a poetry documentary for BBC2.

This poem was first published in 1991 in *That Distance Apart*, London: Turret Books and also appeared in *Feminist Review* issue 45, Autumn 1993.

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doi:10.1057/palgrave.fr.9400231