

Abs-90

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Jackie Kay's poetic discourse: A corpus stylistics study

This presentation deals with my on-going thesis research, a corpus stylistics study of Jackie Kay's poetic collection 'The Adoption Papers' (1991). This Scottish contemporary writer has always been studied from a feminist and post-colonial point of view; however, very little research, if any, has been done as regards her language. My thesis aims at describing 'The Adoption Papers' from a linguistic point of view, achieving interpretations which might agree or disagree with previous studies as well as adding new insights into the reading of her poetry. 'The Adoption Papers' is framed in three poetic voices – adoptive mother, birth mother, and daughter – who tell us about the adoption process from their own perspective, according to their role. The voices of the three female characters are interwoven in the poem, being a slight typographical difference the only trace that distinguishes their individual discourse.

In this research, I make use of Corpus Linguistics research tools so as to carry out the study of the three different points of view expressed in the poem and their conceptualization of 'maternity' and 'adoption'. With this aim in mind, I create three different corpora which include the words of each character. Through Wordsmith Tools 5.0. (Scott, 2008), I use three wordlists which specify words and their frequency in each poetic voice, which I later explore through concordances. In this way, I focus on the differences as regards modality and those words that in Kay's poem are considered key in the process of adoption – such as 'know', 'want', 'mother', 'blood' and 'colour'.

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