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**Symbiosis: a Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations**

Volume 8.2

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**‘An Imaginary Black Family’:  
Jazz, Diaspora, and the  
Construction of Scottish Black-  
ness in Jackie Kay’s *Trumpet***

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First published in SYMBIOSIS, 8.2, April 2004, pp. 191–202

2nd electronic edition published in 2007 by Humanities-Ebooks LLP

<http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk>

Tirril Hall, Tirril, Penrith CA10 2JE

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ISSN: 1362-7902

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Carole Jones

## ‘An Imaginary Black Family’: Jazz, Diaspora, and the Construction of Scottish Blackness in Jackie Kay’s *Trumpet*

An interview with Jackie Kay in *The Guardian* newspaper in January 2002 opened with the following anecdote:

Jackie Kay tells a tale of mistaken identity. ‘I went to sit down in this chair in a London pub and this woman says, “You cannae sit doon in that chair – that’s ma chair”. I said “Oh, you’re from Glasgow, aren’t you?” and she said, “Aye, how did you know that?” I said, “I’m from Glasgow myself”. She said, “You’re *not*, are you, you *foreign*-looking bugger!”’ Kay roars delightedly.<sup>1</sup>

This anecdote is a familiar one now. Kay retells it on the British Council website, for instance, as an introduction to the poem it provoked, called ‘In My Country’.<sup>2</sup> The story describes an ongoing fact of Kay’s life and a dominant theme of her work—the inherent contradiction as some people see it in being black and Scottish.<sup>3</sup> Kay no longer lives in the country of her birth because, as she explains in the same interview, she is tired of having to assert herself as a black person in Scotland. She says, ‘I love the country, but don’t know if the country loves

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1. Libby Brooks, ‘Don’t Tell Me Who I Am’, an interview with Jackie Kay, *Guardian Weekend*, 12 January 2002, 34.

2. Jackie Kay, ‘In My Country’, in *Other Lovers* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1993), 24.

3. Jackie Kay interview in *Sleeping with Monsters—Conversations with Scottish and Irish Women Poets*, ed. Rebecca E. Wilson and Gillean Somerville-Arjat (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), 121.