

METROPOLE  
SEPTEMBRE

**BACCALAUREAT GENERAL**

**SESSION 2004**

**ANGLAIS**

**Série L - Langue vivante I**

**Durée : 3 heures - Coefficient 4**

**L'usage des calculatrices et de tout dictionnaire est interdit.**

*Barème appliqué pour la correction*

<i>Compréhension écrite Expression</i>	14
<i>Traduction</i>	6

**Ce sujet comporte 7 pages.**

Donald lived in a large stone semi-detached house with a long neat garden at the back. I remember it as dark inside, with walls the colour of brown paper and with hard carpets of deep maroon and navy blue. After his housekeeper had cleared away our dinner dishes we went into the library. Donald smoked a pipe. I examined his new Ross Parross stand camera with its patent lens tilt. Donald seemed thoughtful, vaguely melancholy.

5 'How old are you now, Johnny?'

'Nearly thirteen.'

'My God. Thirteen years. Is that right?'

10 My father never mentioned my age. I knew what Donald was thinking. He looked at me. He had not changed much in the six years I had come to know him, except that he was now almost completely bald.

'I should've shown you these ages ago,' he said. He got up and went to a glass bookcase and took down an indigo leather album. He handed it over. I opened it.

15 Pictures of my mother. Close-ups, studio portraits, casual snapshots. I looked at her as if for the first time, as if I were a groom in an arranged marriage contemplating his distant bride. I saw wavy fairish hair, a slim small-breasted woman with eyes and eyebrows like mine. She had a hesitant smile in the portraits, her top lip tensed rather over her teeth. The reason for this was revealed in a snapshot where one saw small white teeth set in a wide gummy smile as she leapt down from a pony and trap<sup>1</sup> into my father's arms. It was strange too to see my father with a woman, his face somehow decades younger, his posture more supple and limber.

20 Donald explained that my father had asked him to take my mother's portrait. They had had several sessions, which explained the number of studio shots (he used an empty upstairs bedroom as a makeshift studio, he said).

25 'You mean she came here, was in this house?'

'Many times.'

30 I felt an odd tautening of my spine<sup>2</sup>. I looked over my shoulder. I tried to see my mother in this room. I felt strange. I turned back to the album. The other pictures came from excursions and jaunts<sup>3</sup> they all three had taken as friends. There must have been fifty or sixty photographs in all. (Donald gave the album to me. It became one of my most treasured possessions and I kept it with me through all my travels and ordeals over the years until a thief stole the suitcase in which it was contained from my hotel room in Washington DC in 1954.)

35 'I offered the album to your father after she...' Donald said. 'But he didn't - said he couldn't bear to have it.' He smiled sadly.

40 I looked at him. I thought: *Why did you make and keep an album full of photographs of my mother? Why? And how did I know then aged nearly thirteen, that darkening summer evening in Barnton, that Donald Verulam had been in love with my mother? What made me sense that? How do children intuit these things? I have no idea. But I remind you I was no ordinary child. Already in those days my mind was working in distinctly personal ways. I cannot explain, though, why this conclusion presented itself to me with such particular force, but as I flicked through the pages, contemplating this pretty young stranger who had given birth to me the day she died, I felt myself brimful of<sup>4</sup> a new liberating certainty. I had divined something; I possessed my first adult secret. I nourished it and let it grow inside me, warm and exquisite.*

45 This realization allowed me to cope with my father's strange coldness towards me of which I became more aware as I grew older. [...] Since my discovery of Donald's love for my mother other complications had suggested themselves to me that made my father's ire and hostility more comprehensible. What if Donald's love had been reciprocated? In terms of attractiveness there was no comparison between the two men. I hugged my secret to me like a hot water bottle. It protected me; it set a distance between me and my father. Donald Verulam and Emmeline Todd ... it seemed entirely natural and likely.

William BOYD, *The New Confessions*, 1987

<sup>1</sup> a trap (line 19) : a two-wheeled carriage

<sup>2</sup> an odd tautening of my spine (line 27): an unusual tension of my back

<sup>3</sup> jaunts (line 29): day-trips

<sup>4</sup> brimful of (line 43): full of

## COMPREHENSION - EXPRESSION

1. Where does the scene take place?

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2. Give the narrator's name and say how old he was when he met Donald for the first time.

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3. At what moment of the day does the scene take place? Justify your answer with two quotations.

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4. *'I should've shown you these'* (line 12). What exactly does *'these'* refer to?

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**Read from line 14 to line 21.**

5. a) What do *'I looked at her as if for the first time'* and *'a slim small-breasted woman'* reveal about the way the narrator sees his mother?

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b) Further down in the text, pick out a phrase confirming your answer.

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c) Why does the narrator see his mother that way?

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6. *'It was strange too ..... limber'* (lines 19 to 21). What does the narrator realise about his father?

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**Read from line 22 to line 33.**

7. a) What are the three different things the narrator learns from Donald?

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b) Explain what is going on in the narrator's mind at that stage.

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**Read from line 34 to the end.**

8. a) " *'I offered the album to your father after she....'* Donald said. *'But he didn't - said he couldn't bear to have it.'*" (lines 34-35)

There are words left unsaid in these sentences. Find them and rewrite the sentences.

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b) What is Donald's state of mind and how does the narrator interpret it?

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**9. In your own words:**

a) Say what this discovery represents in the narrator's life. (50 words)

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b) Explain the change it caused in his relationship to his father.

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10. How would you account for the father's attitude to his son? (30 / 40 words)

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11. Focus on the narrative.

To what extent do '*I remember*' (lines 1-2) and '*I remind you*' (line 39) justify the title of the book?

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12. Imagine the reasons that led Donald to show the narrator the album on that particular day. (100 words)

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