

The Alliance for the Study of Adoption, Identity & Kinship

SUMMER 2007

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Support for the 2007
newsletter from the
Dept. of English,
Univ. of Pittsburgh

Layout Design and
Technical Assistance,
Tara Lockhart



ADOPTION AND CULTURE CONFERENCE

*** October 11th -14th ***

ASAIK's second International Conference on Adoption and Culture, Encountering New Worlds of Adoption, will take place at the University of Pittsburgh on October 11-14, with 80 speakers. Literary critics, creative writers, anthropologists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, legal theorists, psychologists, filmmakers, activists, and others, from Spain, Norway, China, Russia, England, Australia, and Canada as well as the US, will give perspectives to the relations between adoption and culture. Many speakers will discuss aspects of transnational and transracial adoption, but there will also be sessions dealing with open adoption, adoptee identity, legislation about birth records, same-sex and special-needs adoption, relinquishment, blog dialogues between adoptive and birth mothers, adoption novels, adoption history, and many other topics. Three sessions will involve reading of adoption memoirs, one featuring influential early authors in the field, another also including poetry and Jean Strauss's film memoir *The Triumvirate*, and a third presenting a panel of male authors. Specially featured are three keynote speakers, Susan Bordo, Emily Prager, and Dorothy Roberts, and the filmmaker Phil Bertelsen. Detailed information about the conference, hotels, and registration can be found at the website www.english.pitt.edu/events/adoptionandculture/.
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MLA Special Session:

Writing Transnational Adoption Across Asia/America

The Alliance for the Study of Adoption, Identity and Kinship has organized a special session entitled "Writing Transnational Adoption Across Asia/America" that will be held at the Modern Language Association Annual Meeting in Chicago, December 27-30 2007. Information on the exact time and place of the session will be determined by mid-July and can be found on the MLA convention website. Following up on previous MLA special sessions ("Adoption and Religion" chaired by Carol Singley in 2006; "Adoption Memoirs" chaired by Emily Hipchen in 2005; "Adopting Identities: Race, Nationality, and the Trans-ethnic Adoption Narrative" also chaired by Emily Hipchen in 2004), this panel extends and adds to such work by focusing in
(Continued on Pg. 3)

By Mark Jerng



Susan Bordo



Emily Praeger

JOIN US:

OCTOBER
CONFERENCETHURSDAY
OCT. 11TH—SUNDAY
OCT. 14THAT THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
PITTSBURGH

Dorothy Roberts

OCTOBER CONFERENCE *(continued from pg. 1)*

Susan Bordo is Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies and holds the Otis A. Singletary Chair in the Humanities at the University of Kentucky. She has written about her experiences as an adoptive mother in an open transracial adoption in Tulsa Studies, Hypatia, and, under the title "Cassie's Hair," for a new anthology Material Feminisms, ed. Susan Hekman and Stacey Alaimo. Her best-known books are Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body (University of California, 1993, most recently reprinted 2003), which analyzes the cultural causes of eating problems and was a NY Times Notable Book of the Year, and The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and in Private (Farrar-Straus and Giroux, 1999).

Emily Praeger is the author of Wuhu Diary: On Taking My Adopted Child Back to Her Hometown in China (Random House, 2001). She has written a short-story collection, A Visit from the Footbinder; the title story builds on her long-time interest in China, which dates from her childhood experiences there, long preceding her adoption of LuLu in 1994. Praeger has published three novels, Roger Fishbite, Clea and Zeus Divorce, and Eve's Tattoo, and has been a columnist for The New York Times, the Village Voice, the New York Observer, and the Guardian in England. In 2000 she won the first Online Journalism award for Commentary given by the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, for her columns on Oxygen.com. She has also published In the Missionary Position: Twenty-five Years of Humor Writing (1999). Toby Alice Volkman, an anthropologist and the editor of Cultures of Transnational Adoption, will comment.

Dorothy Roberts is the Kirkland & Ellis Professor at Northwestern University School of Law with joint appointments in the Departments of African American Studies and Sociology (by courtesy) and a faculty fellow for the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University. She has written and lectured extensively on the interplay of gender, race, and class in legal issues concerning reproduction and child welfare. She is the author of the award-winning Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare (Basic Books/Civitas, 2001; paperback, 2002) and Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and The Meaning of Liberty (Pantheon, 1997; Vintage paperback, 1999). Her article "Adoption Myths and Racial Realities" appears in the anthology Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption, ed. Trenka, Oprah, and Shin (South End Press, 2006). She serves on a panel of five experts that is overseeing foster care reform in Washington State. Her current research examines the concentrated involvement of child welfare agencies in African-American neighborhoods.

Phil Bertelsen was transracially adopted in the 1970s, and in Outside Looking In, as writer and director, he explores his own experience, that of his 11-year old nephew, also transracially adopted, and that of a mid-western white couple adopting an African-American child in 2001. *(Continued on pg. 14)*

Writing Transnational Adoption Across Asia/America (continued from pg.1)

particular on the question of transnational adoption from Asia (most prominently China, Vietnam, and Korea) in fiction, memoir, and documentary.

Patricia Chu (Associate Professor of English at George Washington University) will present “Ghostly Selves in Korean Adoption Narratives,” pointing to the continuities between Jane Jeong Trenka’s memoir, *The Language of Blood*, Deann Borshay Liem’s documentary, *First-Person Plural*, and H.I. Fenkl’s *Memories of My Ghost Brother*. In her analysis, the closure of the act of adoption itself – its transplantation of the adoptee from one country to another; the closing of records and knowledge of one’s past; the closure required by the adopting family – creates ghostly, abject selves that haunt the adoptee. In “Representing Transnational Chinese Adoption in a Hemispheric Context,” Claudia Sadowsky-Smith (Assistant Professor of English at Arizona State University) questions the U.S.-centered frame of racial politics itself, analyzing and comparing the particular effects of immigration and adoption in Canada to that of the U.S. By analyzing the novel *When Fox Is A Thousand*, written by the Asian-Canadian writer Larissa Lai, Sadowsky-Smith takes up a hemispheric paradigm to complicate the way in which transnational adoption is typically framed. In “Racial Identity and the Making of ‘Adoption Nation,’” Vincent Cheng (Professor of English at University of Utah) identifies a resurgent anxiety around culture and identity in the practices of transnational adoption, seeing how the practice of adoption is in fact haunted by identity itself.

These three papers frame the literature of transnational adoption in ways that both intersect with and extend larger attempts to globalize American literary studies, such as transnationalism, hemispheric approaches, and interracialism. In each of their analyses, the common story of the search for one’s origin (and hence, one’s ‘true identity’) that has occupied such a central place in how adoptee identity is narrated becomes displaced. Instead, these papers point to the ghostly after-effects, the incomplete process of citizenship, and the anxieties around identity that haunt the adoptee’s sense of security at every turn. The session is chaired by Mark Jerng, Assistant Professor of English at University of California, Davis, and Marianne Novy, Professor of English at University of Pittsburgh.

The International Adoptee Congress by Farnad Darnell, Ph.D.

According to its homepage (<http://www.internationaladopteecongress.org>), “The International Adoptee Congress (IAC) is a newly established membership organization made up of internationally adopted persons.” The mission of the IAC is to “empower, support, and give voice to all international adoptees and adoptee groups.” International adoptees are a growing community and this organization hopes to fight the condition of marginalization that has too often placed adoptees as “other,” “neglected,” unwanted second-class citizens. Furthermore, with over 20,000 children being adopted into the United States, from over 30 countries worldwide, the IAC feels these children need a voice when issues such as identity, belonging, ethnicity and race, and heritage, among others, emerge in their lifetime.

These papers point to the ghostly after-effects, the incomplete process of citizenship, and the anxieties around identity that haunt the adoptee’s sense of security at every turn.

Mark Jerng is an Assistant Professor of English at UC-Davis and a member of the Executive Council of ASAIK.

International Adoptee Conference

The IAC is also committed to empowerment and support of all international adoptees and embraces the work of adoptive families, agencies, and professionals so the children and families have a foundation for understanding and enabling a healthy identity.

The IAC was founded by Vietnamese adoptee Bert Ballard and Korean adoptee Kevin Ost-Vollmers. The inaugural meeting was held November 2-5, 2006, in Alexandria, Virginia, with approximately 40 international adoptees, from across the country and the globe, attending. The goals of the meeting included the following points:

- Demonstrate unity within the growing international adoptee community;
- Explore new and innovative ways to empower and give voice to pre-teen, teen, and adult international adoptees and their families;
- Consider ways in which international adoptees can work with each other, as well as other members of the broad adoption community, in positioning adoptees as leaders in adoption;
- Evaluate current resources (cultural, educational, adopted person organizations, therapeutic, mentorship, internet, film, literature, art, legislative) available to international adoptees; discuss how they can aid in improving and promoting the resources;
- Launch a national adoptee agenda for all international adoptees and adoptee organizations to participate in.

The meeting also created “action committees,” consisting of six sub-groups which hope to contribute to the adoption community at large. The action committees consisted of:

Creative expressions: this committee actively reaches out to the organizations and adoption communities for international adoptees active in creative arts, such as music and writing. Two fine examples of this are the creation of the e-magazine *In Third Space* (<http://www.inthirdspace.net/>), derived from the idea that adoptees are creating a third space and sense of belonging, and a very talented musician, Jared Rehberg (<http://www.jaredrehberg.com/>), who performs his music around the country;

Education: the Education committee focuses on avenues to help educators and schools to be more aware of international adoptees and to help them understand what it means to be adopted in the education system;

Information and Resources: The I/R committee establishes information and resources as a means for international adoptees to seek out specific needs, such as psychological services or adoption agencies;

Adoption Scholars on Plenary Panels and Concurrent Sessions

Many important adoption scholars are on the program at the ASAIK conference, in addition to the keynote speakers. A large number will speak on two plenary panels the morning of Friday, October 12.

At 9 a.m., on a panel about the aftermath of international adoption, Barbara Yngvesson, professor of anthropology at Hampshire College, will speak on "Gifts and Returns: Transnationalizing the Family of Transnational Adoption." Sara Dorow, professor of anthropology at the University of Alberta (Canada) and author of Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship (2006), will speak on "'I'm not an alien': Narrating Race, Space, and Kinship in Chinese Adoption," and Sandra Patton-Imani, professor of the study of culture and society, Drake University, and author of BirthMarks: Transracial Adoption in Contemporary America, will speak on "Mother Lands and Racial Landscapes: Korean Birth Mothers and Korean American Adoptees Imagining Each Other."

At 11 a.m. on a panel on adoption and its challenges, Signe Howell, professor of anthropology at the University of Oslo (Norway) and the author of The Kinning of Foreigners: Transnational Adoption in a Global Perspective (2006), will speak on "Adopting and Raising Adopted Children in Norway." Judith Schachter (Modell), professor of anthropology and history at Carnegie-Mellon University and author of Kinship with Strangers: Adoption and Interpretations of Kinship in American Culture (1994) and A Sealed and Secret Kinship (2002), will speak on "Circulating Children: Lessons from Hawaii for International Adoption." Sally Haslanger, professor of philosophy and women's studies at MIT and co-editor of Adoption Matters: Philosophical and Feminist Essays, will speak on "Family, Ancestry, and Self: What is the Moral Significance of Biological Ties?"

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International Adoptee Conference *(continued from pg. 3)*

Media: the Media committee reaches out to international adoptees via media contacts such as The International Adoptee Voice, a quarterly newsletter (available on <http://www.internationaladopteecongress.org>);

Research: the research committee attends to the academic realm of research, contributing to or adding to existing social theories, as well as creating research via quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to contribute to the scant research on international adoptees;

Support/Network: the S/N committee strives to connect international adoptees, as well as create a support when needed.

The IAC was created to meet the needs of the growing international adoption community, and is dedicated to reaching out to all international adoptees. Although we are a small group in this society, we are growing in numbers and feel the need for our voice to be heard, as we are an intrinsic part of the United States community.

Farnad Darnell is a lecturer in sociology at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Thursday, October 11th

3:30 – 5:00 **Session 1: Adoption Memoirs, Classic and New**

Betty Jean Lifton, from Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter

Lorraine Dusky, from Birthmark

Margaret Moorman, from Waiting to Forget: A Motherhood Lost and Found

Emily Hipchen, English, University of West Georgia, from Coming Apart Together: Fragments of an Adoption

5:00 – 6:00 Get-Acquainted Reception (Light Refreshments)

8:00 **Keynote: Emily Prager, “Adoption--A Two-Way Street”**

Response: Toby Alice Volkman, editor Cultures of Transnational Adoption

Friday, October 12th

9:00 – 10:30 **Session 3: International Adoption**

Barbara Yngvesson, Anthropology, Hampshire College, “Gifts and Returns: Transnationalizing the Family of Transnational Adoption”

Sara Dorow, Anthropology, University of Alberta (Canada), “ ‘I’m not an alien’: Narrating Race, Space, and Kinship in Chinese Adoption”

Sandra Patton-Imani, Study of Culture and Society, Drake University, “Mother Lands and Racial Landscapes: Korean Birth Mothers and Korean American Adoptees Imagining Each Other”

11:00 – 12:30 **Session 4: Adoption and its Challenges**

Signe Howell, Anthropology, University of Oslo, “Adopting and Raising Adopted Children in Norway”

Judith Schachter (Modell), Anthropology, Center for the Arts in Society, Carnegie-Mellon, “Circulating Children: Lessons from Hawai’I for International Adoption”

Sally Haslanger, Philosophy and Women’s Studies, MIT, “Family, Ancestry, and Self: What is the Moral Significance of Biological Ties?”

12:30 Box Lunch (to be provided)

1:45 – 3:00 **Keynote: Dorothy Roberts, Law / Faculty Fellow, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, “Adoption and Culture: The Difference Politics Makes”**

- 3:15 – 4:45 **Session 6.1: Men Write Adoption Memoirs**
 Ralph Savarese, English, Grinnell College, from Reasonable People: A Memoir of Autism and Adoption
- Peter McCullough, English Renaissance Literature, Lincoln College, Oxford University, “Opening Adoption Closets: Sexuality, Class, and Place”
- Ned Balbo, Writing, Loyola College of Maryland, poetry and prose
- Craig Hickman, from Fumbling Toward Divinity: The Adoption Scriptures
- Session 6.2: Adoption in Russia**
 Lilia Khabibullina, Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Barcelona, “Rethinking Family and Children in the Global Circulation of Russian Orphans”
- Richard Wirick, from One Hundred Siberian Postcards
- Robert McCall and Christina Groark, Psychology and Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh, “Changing the Orphanage Culture to Improve Children’s Development”
- Session 6.3: Adoptive Parents’ Language**
 William FitzGerald, English, Rutgers University-Camden, “Rhetorical Constructions of Identity in Transnational Adoption: Reading and Performing the ‘Waiting Period’ Online”
- Juliette M. Ludeker, English, Purdue University, “From Unplanned to Miracle: The Use of Metaphor in Adoption Webpages”
- Miriam Klevan, Human Development and Social Policy, Northwestern University, “Meant to be Ours: The Uses of Fate in the Narratives of Adoptive Parents”
- 5:00 – 6:00 **Session 7: Open Mike.** Preference will be given to those not already on the program, then to creative writing by those on the program for scholarly writing.
- 8:00 **Session 8: Evening of Adoption Memoir, Poetry, Film**
 Nancy McCabe, English, University of Pittsburgh at Bradford
 Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, English, University of Southern California
 Jeanne Marie Laskas, English, University of Pittsburgh
 Jean Strauss, filmmaker, The Triumvirate
 Sheila Ganz, from Handbook to Healing for Relinquishing Mothers and Others
 Jan Beatty, Creative Writing, Carlow University
 Mary Anne Cohen, editor, Origins: A Birthmothers’ Newsletter

Saturday, October 13th**9:00 – 10:30 Session 9.1: International Adoption in TV, Documentary, Film, Print**

Elise Prebin, Anthropology, Harvard University, "Representations of Lost Children in South Korean Television"

Mark Jerng, English, University of California at Davis, "Writing Transnational Adoption Between Rights and Needs"

Diana Marre, Anthropology, Autonomous University of Barcelona and Institute of Childhood and the Urban World (CIIMU), "Public Understanding of 'New' Families: Representing International Adoption in Spain"

Session 9.2: Who is Allowed to Mother? Welfare, Class, the State, and the Family

Claudia Nelson, English and Women's Studies, Texas A and M University, "Adoption and Class in Victorian England"

Catherine E. Rymph, History, University of Missouri, "Parents Who Are Not Supposed to Act Parental: Foster Parenting and Adoptive Parenting, 1950-1997"

Cynthia Ninivaggi, Anthropology, Georgian Court University, "Lessons from their Silence: Twentieth Century Relinquishment and 'Expert' Discourse"

Session 9.3: Adoption and Race in American Literature

Cynthia Callahan, English, Ohio State University at Mansfield, "Slavery's Tangled Genealogies: Adoption and Racial Purity in Charles W. Chesnutt's Fiction"

Lori Askeland, English, Wittenberg University, "The Shock of Recognition: Kinship Care Across the Color Line in U. S. Literature and Culture"

Martha Satz, English, Southern Methodist University, "Adopting America: Adoption as an Entry to the Immigrant Experience in Anne Tyler's Digging to America and Gish Jen's Love Wife"

11:00 – 12:15 Session 10. Keynote: Susan Bordo, English and Women's Studies, University of Kentucky, "Will the "Real" Parent (s) (s) (s) (s) Please Step Forward?: Beyond our Fantasies and Fears about Open Adoption"

12: 15 – 1:30 Box Lunch

1:30 – 3:00 Session 11.1: Adoption Novels: Nurture and Nature

Margaret Homans, English and Women's Studies, Yale University, Adoption in Silas Marner and What Maisie Knew

Carol Singley, English and Women's Studies, Rutgers-Camden, "Sacrificing Sentiment in Edith Wharton's Adoption Novel, Summer"

Catherine Cooper Jones, English, Middle Tennessee State University, "Foster Mothers and Their Wise Daughters: Navigating the Mother-Daughter Relationship in Angela Carter's Nights at the Circus and Wise Children"

Session 11.2: Adoptive and First Mothers Blog Their Way through New Family Structures

Shannon LC Cate, English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Editor, Literary-Mama.Com e-zine, "Challenging Adoption Blogs"

Dawn Friedman, Op-Ed Editor, Literary Mama, "Someone Else's Shoes: How Dialogue On-Blog Impacted a Real Adoption"

Susan Marie Harrington, English and Women's Studies, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, "Adoption Online: The Creation of Narrative Spaces and Identity"

Jenna Hatfield, AdoptionBlogs.com, "First Mothers Find a Voice"

Session 11.3: "What Stories are Adoption Stories: Historians Talk about Memories, Bureaucracies, Narratives, and Numbers"

Ellen Herman, History, University of Oregon, "Of Numbers and Narratives"

Karen Balcom, History and Women's Studies, McMaster University (Canada), "Government Policy: Institutional Imperative and the History of Adoption: The Case of Canadian Adoption Exchanges"

Karen Dubinsky, History, Queen's University (Canada), "Saving Cuba's Children, From Operation Peter Pan to Elian Gonzalez"

3:15 – 4:45

Session 12.1: Approaches to Adoptees' Identity: Myths, Metaphors, and Genetics

Penny Partridge, "Pandora and Pinocchio--Beginning and End of Adoptee Experience"

Jill Deans, English, University of Connecticut, "What's in a Hole?"

Kimberly Leighton, Philosophy, Tufts University, "Genetic Artifacts: Digging up the Meaning of 'Family Background' in the History of Adoption"

Session 12.2: Legal, Ethical, and Psychological Approaches to New Family Structures

Annette Ruth Appell, Law, University of Nevada at Las Vegas, "The New Blended Families: Legal, Blood, and Fictive Kin Networks in Open Adoption"

Mary Lyndon Shanley, Political Science, Vassar College, "What's Wrong with Anonymous Sperm and Egg Donation?"

Joyce Maguire Pavao, Center For Family Connections, "A Psychologist's Responses to Open Adoption and Artificial Insemination"

ENCOUNTERING NEW WORLDS OF ADOPTION: 2ND ANNUAL
CONFERENCE ON ADOPTION AND CULTURE

Session 12.3: Internationally Adoptive Parents

Kristine Freeark, Center for Human Growth and Development, University of Michigan, “Make Room for Daddy: The Impact of Father Involvement on the Adoption Dialogue in Transnationally Adoptive Families” (written with Katherine Rosenblum)

Mitch Levenberg, English, St. Francis College and New York University, Excerpts from a memoir about adopting in China

Chris Winston, Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network, “Adoptive Parents, Race, and Children’s Ethnic Communities”

5:00 – 6:00 **Session 13. Business meeting of ASAIK**

6:10 **Conference Dinner** (Reservation Required)

8:00 **Session 14: Phil Bertelsen, Realization Pictures, showing and discussing his film, Outside Looking In: Transracial Adoption in America**

Sunday, October 14th

9:00 – 10:30 **Session 15.1: Adoptees’ Interests, Children’s Interests, and the Law**

Tanya Washington, Law, Georgia State University, “Being Seen, Heard, and Placed: The Best Interests of Prospective Adoptees as a Constitutional Bulwark Against Same-Sex Adoption Bans”

Richard F. Storrow, Law, Pennsylvania State University, “Remaking the Family Through Special-Needs Adoption”

Cindy L. Baldassi, Law, University of British Columbia, “Constituted by the Law: Adoptive Identity in Disclosure Debates”

Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, Social Work, University of Nevada at Las Vegas, “Privilege in family-based immigration families: International Adoptees’ Rights to Define Family”

Session 15.2: Adoption, Race and Diversity, Post-War and Today

Allison Varzally, History, California State University at Fullerton, “Asian Adoptees and the Politics of Interracial American Families”

Dianne Creagh, History, Stony Brook University, “Adoptable Jewish Children and the Shifting Legacy of Louise Wise”

Solangel Maldonado, Law, Seton Hall University, “The Intersection of Race and Gender in

Adoption Preferences”

Elisha Marr, Sociology, Hope College, “I would like the melting pot soup with a side of Black”: The Differing Experiences of Transracial Adoptees in Contemporary America”

Session 15.3: Health Issues in International Adoption

Heather Jacobson, Sociology, University of Texas at Arlington, “A Leap of Faith: Managing Health Uncertainty in International Adoption”

Jessaca Leinaweaver, Anthropology, University of Manitoba, “Discourses of Health in Peruvian Adoption”

Sonya Martin, Medicine, New York University, “Biomedical Representations of Prospective Children at the International Adoption Clinic”

11:00 – 12:30 **Session 16.1: Adoption and Politics**

Steven Andrews, English, Grinnell College, “Abducted by Puritans: Adoption, Race, and the Politics of the New Frontier”

Ruth Nemzoff, International Studies, Bentley College; Women’s Studies Research Center, Brandeis University, “How Feminism Changed the Adoption System”

Marian Quartly, History, Monash University (Australia), “Political Representations of Adoption in Australia, 1977-2007”

Session 16.2: International Adoptees’ Identity Formation

Lori Delale-O’Connor, Sociology, Northwestern University, “Learning to Be Me: The Role of Adoptee Culture Camps in teaching Adopted Children Their Birth Culture”

Janet Eldred, English, University of Kentucky, “Diasporic Orphans”

Farnad Darnell, Sociology, University of Maryland, “Adoption Identity as Shared Identity among Adult Korean Adoptees”

Jeff Leinaweaver, Human Development and Organizational Systems, Fielding Graduate Institute, “The International Adoptee as Public Intellectual”

12:30 **Good-byes.** Those who wish will go to Foster’s at the Holiday Inn or another restaurant for lunch

NEWS OF OUR MEMBERS

American Book Review covered **Ned Balbo's** second poetry collection, Lives of the Sleepers (University of Notre Dame Press) in its January/February 2007 issue. His short memoir on adoption and ethnicity, "My Father's Music," (from Our Roots Are Deep with Passion: Creative Nonfiction Collects New Essays by Italian-American Writers, Other Press), was singled out for commentary in book reviews that appeared in ForeWord magazine and MultiCultural Review.

At the 2005 meeting of the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women and Gender, **Karen Balcom**, **Karen Dubinsky**, **Tobias Hübinette**, Anita Andrew and Anne Collinson participated in the roundtable "Babies Across Borders: Problems for Women's History in the Study of Transborder Adoption." Papers from that roundtable were published together in the Spring 2007 issue of The Journal of Women's History (Vol. 19, No. 1). The papers treat the history of transborder and transracial adoption in the context of Canada, the United States, Guatemala, China and Korea and discuss new theoretical approaches to the history of adoption across borders. **Karen Balcom** has just received a three year grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for her new project, 'Domestic Histories of Transnational Adoption to the United States, 1945-1975.' **Tobias Hübinette** is a collaborator on this project and will share in the research funding for work he and Karen will do together on Korean adoptions to the United States.

Laura Briggs published "Orphaning the Children of Welfare Mothers: 'Crack Babies,' Race, and Adoption Reform," in Jane Jeong Trenka, Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin, eds., Outsiders Within: Writings on Transracial Adoption (South End Press, 2006). She spoke at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, in February 2007, on the topic "From Gay Adoption to Baby Theft: Forms of Neoliberal Citizenship," and gave the paper "Adoption Politics and Gay Liberation: Whose Rights?" at the conference "On Philiias and Phobias: From Biological to Cultural Kinship: Adoption, Homoparentality and Other Ways to Construct Families," at the University of Barcelona, Spain.

Karen Dubinsky published "Babies Without Borders: Kidnap, Rescue and the Symbolic Child," in The Journal of Women's History, Vol. 19, No. 1, spring 2007, and "We Adopted a Negro: Interracial Adoption and the Hybrid Baby in 1960's Canada," in Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford, eds., Creating Postwar Canada--Community, Diversity and Dissent, 1945-75 (University of British Columbia Press, 2007). In 2006-07 she taught, as a new course, History 292, Symbolic Children: The Global Politics of Childhood.

Sheila Ganz was a keynote speaker at the Adoption Connections Training Institute: OneWorld Network (ACTION) for Center for Family Connections, Third International Conference 2007, Cambridge, Mass., in February 2007, where she presented her documentary Unlocking the Heart of Adoption. She will do a three-hour workshop on loss and identity in adoption and screen Unlocking the Heart of Adoption at the Department of Children and Families Permanency Conference at the Crowne Plaza on Cromwell, Connecticut, on September 11, 2007. For more info see her website, http://unlockingtheheart.com/www/A_screenings.htm.

Ellen Herman spoke about adoption in US History at the 12th National Conference on Children and the Law, sponsored by the ABA Center on Children and the Law and the Harvard Law School Child Advocacy Program, in Cambridge, April 2007 (a conference attended by hundreds of attorneys, academics, policymakers, and

other child welfare professionals from around the country). She has several essays in The Praeger Handbook of Adoption, 2 vols., eds. Vern L. Bullough and Kathy Shepherd Stolley (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006). The publisher says of the book, "This comprehensive resource provides both historical and current information on all aspects of adoption, from many countries and religions, including Africa, Britain, Canada, China, India, Islam, Japan, Jewish, Mexico, Mormon, and others. It provides information on the cultural, ethical, financial, legal, medical, psychological, and social implications of adoption." She has an article, "Supervising Spoiled Selfhood: Interpretation and Inquiry in the History of Modern American Child Adoption," forthcoming in Osiris 23, special issue on "The Self as Scientific and Political Project in the Twentieth Century," Greg Eghigia, Andreas Killen, and Christine Leuenberger, eds, summer 2007. (Osiris is the annual publication of the History of Science Society.)

Tobias Hubinette is now a researcher at the Multicultural Centre, Fittjagård, Borkyrka, working on a research project, "Adoption, discrimination, and ethnic identity," on how transracial adoptees and adoptive parents are experiencing racialisation. He has an essay, "From Orphan Trains to Babylifts: Colonial trafficking, empire building and social engineering," in Outsiders Within: Writings on Transracial Adoption (the new anthology which includes an essay by Laura Briggs). He has also published "The Korean adoption issue and representations of adopted Koreans in Korean popular culture" in Kathleen Ja Sook Bergquist, Elizabeth Vonk, Dong Soo Kim, and Marvin D. Feit, eds., International Korean Adoption: A Fifty-year History of Policy and Practice.

For news of **Mark Jerng**, see the article on the forthcoming MLA session..

Betty Jean Lifton gave a workshop on "Personal Journeys in Adoption Fiction" with Marianne Novy, and her own workshop, "Exploring the Alternate Life and the Alternate Self," at the American Adoption Congress, March 7-10. On March 24, she spoke on "Revisiting the Adopted Child Syndrome" at the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy in Oxford, England. On April 28 she gave two workshops at the conference of Adoption Community of New England (ACONE): "Preparing to Search: What You Should Know," and "Ghosts in the Adoptive Family." She will read from and discuss her memoir, Twice Born, at the opening plenary session at the ASAIK conference, Encountering New Worlds of Adoption, and she will also be a speaker at the Adoption Ethics and Accountability Conference co-sponsored by the Evan B. Donaldson Institute and Ethica, Oct. 15-16, in Arlington, Virginia.

Claudia Nelson's book Family Ties in Victorian England (Praeger, 2007), includes a chapter in which adoption and foster care figure.

Kim Park Nelson also has an article in Outsiders Within: "Shopping for Children in the International Marketplace: The Economics of Transnational Adoption." And, like Ellen Herman, she has contributed to the Praeger Handbook of Adoption: "Culture Camps", in Vol. 1. She gave a workshop entitled "Adoption Research for the Inside Out: Making Space for Adoptee Researchers and Professionals" at the St. John's University Adoption Conference: Families without Borders?: Adoption Across Culture and Race. She gave a paper, "Seoul Survivors: Korean American Adoptees in Urban Korea" at the April 2007 Association for Asian American Studies Conference. In addition, she is an oral historian for HERE: The First Portrait Book (Continued on pg. 19)

OCTOBER CONFERENCE *(continued from pg. 2)*

He made the film, he says, inspired by “the tension between an internal and external identity, between a cultural legacy and a family history.” Examining families different in time, place (New Jersey, Arizona, and Illinois), and approach (color-blind and color-conscious), he won a Paul Robeson Award for this film, which is a presentation of Independent Television Service, produced by Viewfinder Media Inc, and Big Mouth Productions, Inc, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Black Programming Consortium. Bertelsen’s other films, The Sunshine and Around the Time (which imagines his birthparents) have also won awards.

Convened by Marianne Novy as both co-chair of ASAIK and Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh, the conference is supported by the University of Pittsburgh School of Arts and Sciences, Department of English, Women’s Studies Program, Office of the Provost, and School of Law as leading sponsors, and by many other units at Pitt and at other schools. They include, at Pitt, the Literature and Writing Programs of the English Department, the Cultural Studies and Film Studies Programs, the Center for Latin American Studies, the European Union/European Studies Center, Russian and Eastern European Studies, the Center for Bioethics and Health Law, the Center for the Study of Race and Social Problems, the Departments of Anthropology, History, and Sociology, and Lynn Emanuel, Professor of English. Other sponsoring institutions in Pittsburgh are the Carnegie-Mellon University Departments of English and History, the Duquesne University Departments of English and of Women’s and Gender Studies, the Carlow University Women’s Studies Program, and Chatham University. Co-sponsors further afield are the Barcelona (Spain) Institute for Childhood and the Urban World, the University of Alberta (Canada) Faculty of Arts, and the Rutgers University-Camden College of Arts and Sciences.



Alliance for the Study of Adoption and What?

Our official name, established at our first meeting in 1998, is the Alliance for the Study of Adoption, identity, and Kinship. Our business meeting at the October conference will discuss a proposal for a name change, to “Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture. “

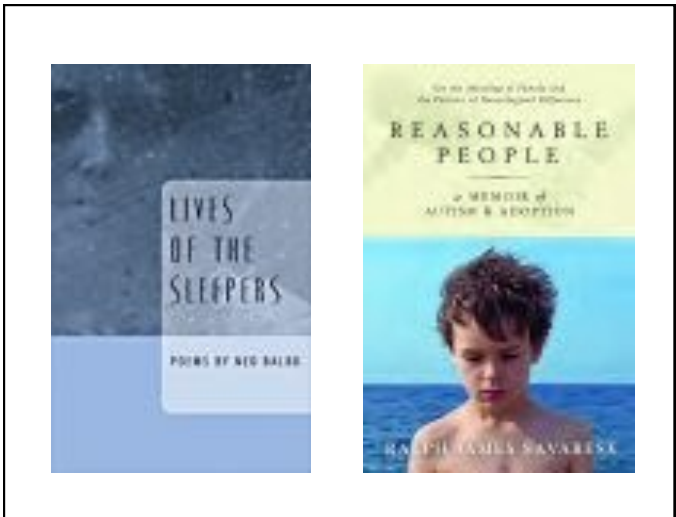
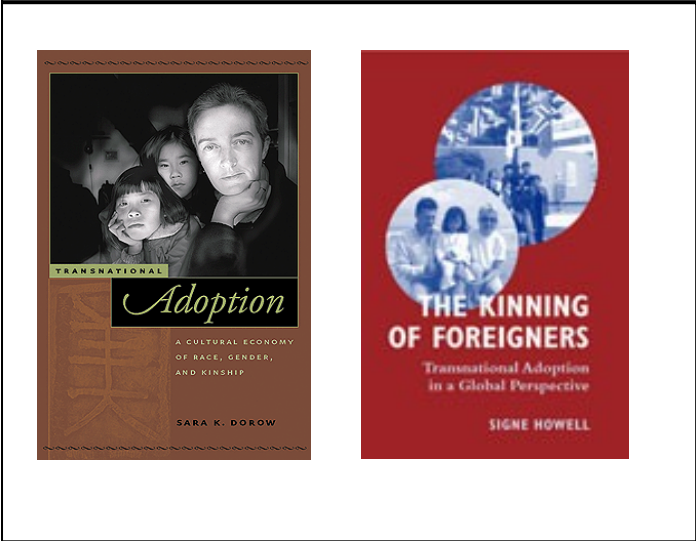
This new name better suggests several distinctive aspects about our organization, among other groups promoting adoption research, which are usually based in the social sciences or social work. We started with members professionally involved with literature and we include people in other fields in the humanities, as well as social sciences and professional fields, and activists with cultural interests. We also involve creative writers and filmmakers. Furthermore, we are not only interested in what adoption does to individuals’ identities but also to its relations with the larger culture and cultures. — Marianne Novy

Adoption Scholars on Plenary Panels *(continued from pg. 5)*

Many influential scholars of adoption in literature and history will speak in concurrent sessions. Claudia Nelson, professor of English and women’s studies at Texas A & M and author of Little Strangers: Portrayals of Adoption and Foster Care in America, 1850-1929, winner of the 2003 Book Award of the Children’s Literature Association, will speak on “Adoption and Class in Victorian England” in the session “Who is Allowed to Mother?” Saturday October 13 at 9 a.m. In the session on “Adoption Novels: Nurture and Nature,” at 1:30 on Saturday, Margaret Homans, professor of English at Yale, will speak on adoption in Silas Marner and What Maisie Knew, and Carol Singley, professor of English and women’s studies at Rutgers University-Camden, will speak in “Sacrificing Sentiment in Edith Wharton’s Adoption Novel, Summer.” On a panel on “Approaches to Adoptees’ Identity,” also at 1:30 Saturday, Jill Deans, professor of English at the University of Connecticut, will speak on “What’s in a Hole.” At the same time, in a panel “What Stories are Adoption Stories,” Ellen Herman, professor of English at the University of Oregon, developer of the Adoption History Project Website and author of Kinship by Design: Child Adoption in Modern America (forthcoming 2008), will speak on “Of Numbers and Narratives.” Karen Balcom, professor of history and women’s studies at McMaster University (Canada), will speak on “Government Policy: Institutional Imperative and the History of Adoption: The Case of Canadian Adoption Exchanges.” Karen Dubinsky, professor of history at Queen’s University (Canada), will speak on “Saving Cuba’s Children: From Operation Peter Pan to Elian Gonzalez.” Another notable historian, Marian Quartly, professor at Monash University in Australia, will speak on “Political Representations of Adoption in Australia, 1977-2007” in a session on “Adoption and Politics” on Sunday, October 14, at 11 a.m.

Many other important scholars, in the above fields and also law, politics, philosophy, sociology, medicine, and other areas, will be speaking at the conference: they are listed on the program and more information will be available on the website.

Recent Academic Releases by Conference Panelists



Recent Creative Releases by Conference Panelists (see next page)

CREATIVE WRITERS AT THE OCTOBER CONFERENCE

In addition to keynote speakers Emily Prager and Susan Bordo, the Adoption and Culture conference will have readings by many other creative writers, both on separate panels and mixed with other readings.

The conference will open at 3:30 on Thursday, October 11, with readings of adoption memoirs. Betty Jean Lifton, author, adoption counselor, and activist, will read from her groundbreaking book Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter, published 1975 and frequently reprinted. Lorraine Dusky, journalist and another open records advocate, will read from Birthmark (1979), the first memoir about surrendering a child to adoption and the aftermath. Journalist Margaret Moorman will read from Waiting to Forget: A Motherhood Lost and Found (1996), a memoir of coming to terms, after the birth of her second child many years later, with the experience of giving up her first. Last, Emily Hipchen, professor of English at the University of West Georgia, who has taught and studied many autobiographical writings about adoption, will read from her 2005 memoir, Coming Apart Together: Fragments from an Adoption, which tells about her experiences growing up adopted and her reunion, imagines the lives of her birth family members, and muses on the difficulty and necessity of telling stories, even in a situation where the truth can never be known.

On Friday evening the conference will present another panel of adoption memoirs, some in prose, some in poetry, one in film. Two speakers will read memoirs of adopting and raising daughters from China: Nancy McCabe, professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford and author of Meeting Sophie, and Jeanne Marie Laskas, professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh, main campus, and author of Growing Girls. Jean Strauss, open records activist and filmmaker, will show her award-winning film The Triumvirate, about her reunion with her birthmother and birth grandmother. Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, doctoral candidate in English at the University of Southern California, will read from poetry in her 2007 book Paper Pavilion, some of which meditates on her identity as a Korean adoptee. Sheila Ganz, birthmother and filmmaker of the documentary Unlocking the Heart of Adoption, will read a memoir section from her forthcoming book Handbook to Healing for Relinquishing Mothers and Others Who Suffer from Loss and Shame. Award-winning poet Jan Beatty, Director of Creative Writing at Carlow University and author of Mad River and Boneshaker, will read poems that draw on her experience as an adoptee. Mary Anne Cohen, the editor of Origins: A Birthmothers' Newsletter and open records activist, will end the evening with her poetry.

By contrast to the all-female lineup of these plenary sessions, a session Friday afternoon at 3:15 will present readings from adoption memoirs by men. Ralph Savarese, professor of English at Grinnell College, will read from his recently released Reasonable People: A Memoir of Autism and Adoption, in which he portrays his son's growth from apparent retardation to writing A papers. Newsweek has described this book as "a real life love story and an urgent manifesto for the rights of people with disabilities." Peter McCullough, Fellow in English Literature at Lincoln College, Oxford, will read from his memoir in progress about growing up adopted in rural northern California and finding his birth family there and elsewhere, considering the relationship between adoption, sexuality, class, and geographical place. Ned Balbo, who teaches writing at Loyola College in Baltimore, has received awards for both poetry and nonfiction about the experience of living as an adoptee, and will read some of each. Craig Hickman, an openly gay African-American activist, performance poet, and writer, will read from his book Stumbling Toward Divinity: The Adoption Scriptures, published 2005, finalist for a Lambda Literary Award.

Creative writers will also appear elsewhere on the schedule. In the panel on Adoption in Russia, Richard Wirick, fiction writer, essayist, and journalist, will read from his 2007 book One Hundred Siberian Post-

cards, which narrates the story of his adoption of a daughter from Siberia and also retells and meditates on Siberian geography, myth and history. Penny Partridge, a social worker and activist who has been called “the poet laureate of the adoption reform movement,” will read a few of her poems and reflect on important images in them in “Pandora and Pinocchio--Beginning and End of Adoptee Experience” in a panel on “Approaches to Adoptees’ Identity.” Mitch Levenberg, a short story writer who teaches writing at St. Francis College and New York University, will read from a memoir about adopting from China in a panel dealing with internationally adopting parents. In a session on “Adoption and Politics,” Steven Andrews, poet and professor of English at Grinnell College, will read part of a memoir, “Abducted by Puritans,” dealing with his history as a mixed-race (Black-Korean) child adopted, after six years on an Indian reservation, by a UCC/ Congregationalist family--and its context in the world of the Cold War and the New Frontier. And the session on international adoptees’ identity formation will include Janet Eldred, professor of English at the University of Kentucky, reading part of a hybrid creative and critical essay about Russian adoption, (failed) heritage/ culture projects, and inherited identity in a highly mobile & blended 21st-century culture.

The conference will also include an open mike session, 5-6 on Friday, in which those otherwise unrepresented on the program have first preference, and then those represented by scholarly work who want to read from their creative writing.

Jean Strauss, birth-mother, and birth grandmother



Review of *Reading Adoption*

by Betty Jean Lifton

Reading Adoption: Family and Difference in Fiction and Drama. By Marianne Novy

Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005

Reading Adoption is as engrossing as imagining it, which Marianne Novy helped us do in her previous book Imagining Adoption, an anthology, which she edited. They are very different, these two books, yet very much alike, dealing as they do with the same subject – adoption.

In Imagining Adoption you get an insider’s view, each chapter written mainly by people who were either adopted or adopters. Paradoxically, they were not imagining adoption because they were living it. While in Reading Adoption, Novy is our guide to novels and drama by writers who, for the most part, not being touched by adoption, are imagining what it must be like for their characters who are. She explains that she chose books in which the issue of defining parenthood, family, and the adoptee’s identity is important.

There are three plot lines running through Novy’s narrative. The first casts her as a literary sleuth uncovering the works in which the genetic birth parents are regarded as the real ones, and those in which the adoptive parents are. She wants us to read with an adoptee’s eye, otherwise we might not notice a particular bias for nature or nurture. We become aware of Shakespeare’s shifting viewpoints toward birth and adoptive parents in his melodramatic parent-child reunions, and can identify with the travails and vulnerabilities of orphans lost and found in English and American literature. (Think Fielding, Dickens, Austen, George Eliot, Kingsolver, and Albee, among others.)

In the second plotline, Novy gives us an overview of American adoption today, with sections on the

Review of *Reading Adoption*

commodification of adoption through baby selling, cross-cultural adoption, and search and reunion as a social movement. In the third, she tells her own adoption story of reuniting with her birth mother, which is as absorbing as any of the fictional narratives she is guiding us through. *Reading Adoption*, then, is an essential read for those who would understand how adoption has been viewed through the ages from ancient Greek literature up to our present time.

Being adopted myself, I was intrigued to learn the diverse perspectives that so many authors bring to the subject of adoption. Novy, who is a Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, is an ideal explicator, having dealt with this material for years, mainly as a feminist until she found her adoptee voice. "Writing as an adoptee is different from writing as a feminist," she tells us. Where she once read the plot of *Daniel Deronda* primarily as a female critic, she now reads it as an adoptee, identifying with Deronda, since she also discovered late that she has a Jewish parent. And where she once was focused on myths of gender, she now concentrates on myths of adoption.

Take the Oedipus myth, for example. Novy can now see Oedipus as an angry male adoptee, even as she points out that classical scholars weren't concerned with his double parentage, being focused instead on themes like fate and free will. I have always thought that Sophocles and Freud got the Oedipus myth all wrong. They ignored Homer's version that Oedipus did not blind himself after Jocasta's suicide, but remarried, had two more children, and died an old king on his horse in battle. Were he adopted, Sophocles would not have had Oedipus blind himself: he would have understood that Oedipus could see for the first time after he learned his true parentage. And if Freud had been adopted, his Oedipus Complex would have centered on the danger of keeping secrets of their heritage from children.

Novy identifies with Oedipus' resolve to know "who I am." She too is on a personal search for answers about her identity. Aware that in life, as in fiction, some adoptees find birth parents who mirror their looks as well as their souls, and that some are able to discover who they are after filling in this missing piece of the self, she wanted to know if finding her birth mother would tell her who she is. The only child of badly-matched adoptive parents who would eventually separate, she was in her late twenties when her mother gave her the adoption papers with her original name. She searched and found Geraldine, married, with seven sons (it sounds like a fairytale), whom she had raised in poverty.

Novy admits that Geraldine was kind, loving, and brave in welcoming her, but she found more differences than similarities between them. Geraldine was fair, while she was dark. Geraldine had not been to college and didn't read much except the Bible. She was an evangelical fundamentalist with right-wing political views, while Novy was a left-wing Catholic who would later join a liberal Episcopal Church. They did not share any interests. Novy felt disappointed because she knew that in literature "this was not the way it was supposed to be." Although she tries to be balanced in sorting things out, and stays in contact with Geraldine, her conclusion is that that meeting her genetic mother did not tell her who she was.

Later, she learns, much to her surprise, that her birth father is Jewish – a fact that her adoptive parents kept secret, she suspects out of an unexpressed anti-Semitic prejudice. Ever the scholar, she reads up on the Jewish religion, and is dismayed when her birth father, a lawyer with three teenage children, sends his photo and a newspaper article about himself, but refuses contact. He is the one she resembles, but since he refuses to meet, she surely will not learn who she is from him.

But there is a plus to all this – Novy realizes that for all their conflicts, her "real mother" is her adoptive one, not Geraldine; that she had a better life with her adoptive parents than she could have had with Geraldine and those seven half brothers – whom she is slowly getting to know. But can we really believe that

Review of *Reading Adoption*

she still doesn't know who she is?

On this issue of identity, Novy and I differ. I have found in my clinical practice with adoptees that reunion with even the most dissimilar birth parents can eventually reveal to you who you are. I suspect that over time, as she continues to process and integrate everything, Novy will come to realize that through knowing Geraldine and learning about her Jewish father, she has a more grounded knowledge of who she is than she had before.

That said, Reading Adoption throws light on how secrecy in adoption shapes the identity of the adopted. Novy says she could have used a book like this when she was growing up. And I say we all could have – even Oedipus.

Betty Jean Lifton is an adoption counselor and the author of many books about adoption.

News of Our Members—continued

of Korean Adoptees Living in Minnesota. More information on this project is available at <http://www.dalrosdesign.com>. Also, she has taught “Cultures of Korean Adoption: The Adoptee Experience” at the University of Minnesota in Spring 2006 and Spring 2007. This is the first university class in the United States on Korean adoption. An interview of Kim (from April 2, 2006) is available at <http://www.mamazine.com/Pages/feature62.html>.

Marianne Novy's book Reading Adoption: Family and Difference in Fiction and Drama will appear in paperback from the University of Michigan Press this September. She is the convener of Encountering New Worlds of Adoption: The Second International Conference on Adoption and Culture, taking place in Pittsburgh October 11-14, 2007.

Martha Satz spoke on a plenary panel from the adoptive mother's perspective at the “Families without Borders” conference at St. John's University. Her address is being expanded into an article to be published in the Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness.

For news of **Ralph Savarese** see the article on Creative Writers at the October Conference.

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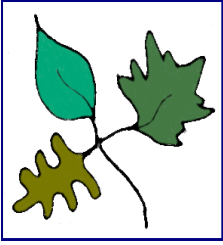
To keep your membership current, complete the form below and mail \$10 (Checks payable to ASAIK) to:
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**THE ALLIANCE FOR THE
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