



SUMMER 2009

The Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture

ASAC Special Session on Birth Mothers at the MLA

ASAC's special session at MLA this year is "Birth Mothers: Reclaiming Missing Voices in the Literature of Adoption" and will occur at the Philadelphia Marriott from 3:30 to 4:45 on Monday, December 28.

Birth mothers have been much less the focus or author of fictional, scholarly, or autobiographical literature about adoption than adoptees or adoptive parents. This will be the first special session at the MLA to focus on the representation and self-representation of the birth mother. (continued on page 2)

Call for Papers

Adoption: Secret Histories, Public Policies

3rd International Conference on Adoption and Culture

Conference date: April 29–May 2, 2010 ← note new dates!
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA 02139

Proposal deadline: Sept. 1, 2009

Organized by the Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture

Conference Organizers:

Sally Haslanger (MIT), Marianne Novy (University of Pittsburgh), Charlotte Witt (UNH)

Adoption has often, though not always, involved secrecy. How has secrecy or openness affected the history, experience and representations of adoption?

- How have literature and film portrayed the impact of secrecy and disclosure on adoptees, birthparents, adoptive parents? What is the impact of recent revelations of secret histories in memoir, books such as *The Girls Who Went Away*, and documentaries such as *First Person Plural*?
- How and why did adoption secrecy, and the practices it hides, develop differently in different cultures, countries, and even different states? Where are alternatives to secrecy practiced and how do they work? How has increasing openness in domestic adoption changed the experience of adoption? Why do laws sealing birth records have such staying power in the US?
- What public policies do our current adoption practices promote and what should they promote? What are the effects of secrecy and openness on the health and well-being of adoptees, birthparents and adoptive parents? What are the ethical implications of genetic testing for adoption practices? How can analysis of secrecy practice in adoption be applied to assisted reproduction?
- How should we distinguish secrecy, privacy, and confidentiality in relation to adoption? How does secrecy in adoption relate to race, economics, and sexual orientation? How does it work differently in transnational adoption, in adopting waiting children, children in foster care, and children with special needs?

How can literary and film critics, philosophers, anthropologists, historians, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, legal scholars, activists, creative writers, culture studies scholars, and others enrich our understanding of these issues? (continued on page 2)

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Support for the 2009
newsletter from the
Dept. of English,
University of Pittsburgh

Layout and technical
assistance,
Mariann Grantham

Papers should discuss representations of adoption (including representations of birthparents) in literature, film, and other arts, and/or interactions between adoption practices and culture(s) in fields such as those listed. We are also interested in readings of memoir, poetry, and fiction dealing with adoption, and will consider musicians and performance artists.

Confirmed keynote speakers are Ann Fessler, author of *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before *Roe v. Wade**, Deann Borshay Liem, filmmaker of *First Person Plural*, Lynn Lauber, novelist, memoirist, author of *Listen to Me: Writing Life into Meaning*, and birthmother, and Anita Allen, professor of law and philosophy and author of *Why Privacy Isn't Everything*. Other expected speakers include Marla Brettschneider, Naomi Cahn, Meredith Hall, Ellen Herman, Craig Hickman, Emily Hipchen, Margaret Homans, Mark Jerng, Kate Livingston, Karen McElmurray, Lisa Marie Rollins, Elizabeth Samuels, Carol Singley, and Sarah Tobias.

Please send 200-word proposals for papers or samples of creative work (of less than 10 pages) dealing with adoption, with a brief CV, to asac2010@mit.edu

ASAC Special Session on Birth Mothers at the MLA, cont. from page 1

In the first paper, Emily Hipchen's "The Too-Embodied Voice: Reading Trauma in *Surrendered Child: A Birthmother's Journey*" addresses Karen McElmurray's award-winning adoption reunion narrative in the context of analyses of disability writing by Arthur W. Frank and G. Thomas Couser. The essay argues that McElmurray creates a birthmother identity out of trauma depicted as bodily disability.

In the second paper, "Mothers Global and Local: Representations of Birth Parents in Transnational Adoption Narratives and the Politics of Social Exclusion," Marina Fedosik argues that in dealing with transnational adoption, even recent narratives that portray birthmothers, such as *I Wish for You a Beautiful Life* and *Somebody's Daughter*, silence them, capturing them temporally in the past, and locally, in the birth country.

The third paper, Margaret Homans' essay, "When Birthmothers and Adoptees Speak Together," examines the possibility of intersubjective representations of birthmothers and their relinquished children, and looks closely at an unusual text: Camille Billops' documentary film, *Finding Christa*, clips from which she will show.

Marianne Novy will give a brief response before the general discussion.

Emily Hipchen is an editor of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, as well as general editor of *Adoption & Culture*. Much of her recent work has focused on adoption life writing, and in 2005 she published her own adoption memoir, *Coming Apart Together: Fragments from an Adoption*. She is an Associate Professor at the University of West Georgia. Marina Fedosik received her Ph.D. from the University of Delaware with a dissertation on "Representations of Transnational Adoption in Contemporary American Literature and Film." Margaret Homans' "Adoption Narratives, Trauma, and Origins," *Narrative* (2006), won the 2007 Society for the Study of Narrative Literature award for Best Essay. She is currently writing about how adoption narratives raise questions about what constitutes the human in the contexts of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, and sexuality. She is Professor of English and Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale University. Marianne Novy is the author of *Reading Adoption: Family and Difference in Fiction and Drama* and Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

Adoption & Culture

The Interdisciplinary Journal of The Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture Announces Its 2nd Issue

New Worlds of Adoption
Guest Edited by Marianne Novy

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Editor, Emily Hipchen

Editorial Board

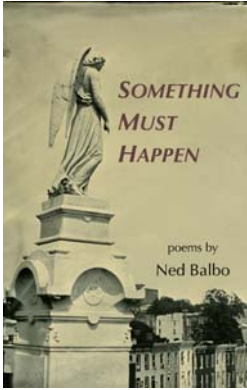
Karen Balcom, history, McMaster University, Canada; Susan Bordo, English, Gender and Women's Studies, University of Kentucky; E. Wayne Carp, history, Pacific Lutheran University; Sara Dorow, sociology, University of Alberta, Canada; Sally Haslanger, philosophy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Emily Hipchen, English, University of West Georgia; Ellen Herman, history, University of Oregon; Margaret Homans, English, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Yale University; Tobias Hubinette, Korean Studies, Multicultural Centre, Sweden; Claudia Nelson, English and Women's Studies, Texas A& M University; Marianne Novy, English and Women's Studies, University of Pittsburgh; Joyce Maguire Pavao, Center For Family Connections; psychiatry, Harvard University, Mary L. Shanley, political science, Vassar College; Carol Singley, English, American Studies, Women's Studies, Rutgers University, Camden; Barbara Yngvesson, anthropology, Hampshire College

Website address: <http://www.english.pitt.edu/adoption&culture/Home.html>

For a copy of A&C, and membership in the Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture, send \$20 to Emily Hipchen, Department of English and Philosophy, University of West Georgia, Carrollton, GA 30118. Please make checks out to ASAIK. To submit an essay, since essay review is blind, include your name, the title of your essay, and contact information (email and land addresses) in your cover letter, but do not include contact information on the essay itself.

Tell your libraries about us! They can also get the first issue for \$10.

NEWS OF OUR MEMBERS



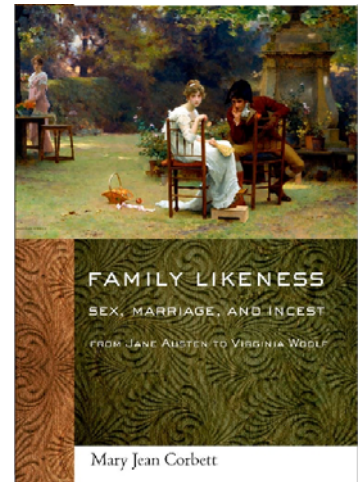
NED BALBO is the recipient of a 2009 Maryland Arts Council Individual Artist Award in poetry. His chapbook, Something Must Happen, forthcoming from Finishing Line Press, contains most of the winning poems. An adoption-related sestina, “The Trials of Edgar Poe,” appears in the Spring/Summer 2009 Shenandoah, and new poems are forthcoming in Notre Dame Review; in addition, “Time Traveler,” a flash fiction with adoption themes, is forthcoming in Pleiades. His essay-review “Invisible Ties and Secret Origins: Adoption in Literature and Culture,” which provides an overview of Marianne Novy’s Reading Adoption: Family and Difference in Fiction and Drama, appears in Lifewriting Annual: Biographical and Autobiographical Studies, Vol. 2 (AMS Press, New York). The Minor Hours, a collaboration with composer Donald Hagar, made its debut this past June in performances by the Brooklyn Conservatory Choir (Nelly Vuksic, conductor).

JAN BEATTY’s fourth book, Red Sugar, published in 2008 by the University of Pittsburgh Press, was a finalist for the Paterson Prize.

NAOMI CAHN has recently published Test Tube Families: Why the Fertility Market Needs Legal Regulation (New York University Press, 2009). It was reviewed in the New England Journal of Medicine 361 (July 23, 2009). She has also co-authored (with Sarah Lawsky) “Embryo Exchanges and Tax Credits,” in Tax Notes (June 15, 2009).

MARY JEAN CORBETT published Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf (Cornell, 2008), with a chapter on adoption in Bronte.

JENNIFER DOBBS is in Korea doing research on a book about the politics of adoptee birth searches. She has been conducting interviews with unwed moms and learning more about developments in South Korea’s attempts to become a Hague signatory. She is also an activist for TRACK (Truth and Reconciliation for the Action Community in Korea) and is circulating a petition asking Korea to involve adoptees and birth families in the revision of their adoption practices. For information, see <http://justicespeaking.wordpress.com>, especially the July 17 entries: the petition is available online at www.gopetition.com/online/29353.html. She is helping TRACK and a new unwed moms’ NGO work together on this and other issues. She is on the planning committee of the Second International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies. Poetry-wise, she was a finalist for the Tupelo Press’s chapbook prize and won the New England Poetry Club’s Sheila Motton Book Award for Paper Pavilion.



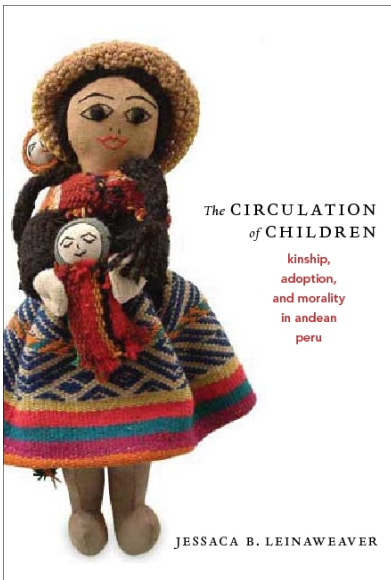
SHEILA GANZ’s documentary Unlocking the Heart of Adoption screened at the First National Exhibition of Cinema and Biological Identity in Buenos Aires in November 2008 and is currently touring Argentina. She was told by one of the organizers of the Film Festival that after they screened Unlocking... the audience wanted to see it again! To watch the 5 1/2 minute trailer of the film and for more info go to: <http://www.unlockingtheheart.com>.

MARLEY GREINER presented a workshop at the American Adoption Congress in Cleveland, April 26, 2009: “Baby Dumping: An Ohio ‘Safe Haven’ Case Study.” She continues to be Executive Chair of Bastard Nation, the adoptee rights organization.

TOBIAS HUBINETTE is one of the founders of TRACK and is its director of research. He is on the planning committee for the Second International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies.

LILIYA KHABIBULLINA is finishing her dissertation on "Circulation of Russian Children: Case Study of International Adoption from Russia to Spain," which will have an English version available to be adapted for publication. She has published an article "'Los niños vienen de Siberia': la adopción internacional en Rusia por parte de familias españolas", Revista electronica Scripta Nova, Barcelona. This article discusses the portrayal of orphans in Lazarillo de Tormes, Les Miserables, Crime and Punishment and more recent Russian novels, as well as current practices. Here is a link:

<http://www.ub.es/geocrit/-xcol/33.htm>. She also has an essay entitled "International Adoption in Russia: Market, Children for Organs, and Precious or 'Bad' Genes." in the Marre/Briggs anthology, International Adoption: Global Inequalities and the Circulation of Children.



JESSACA LEINAWEAVER's book, The Circulation of Children: Adoption, Kinship, and Morality in Andean Peru (Duke University Press 2008), came out in a Spanish translation as Los niños ayacuchanos: una antropología de la adopción y la construcción familiar en el Perú (2009, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, trans. Adriana Soldí). Jessica and Linda J. Seligmann co-edited a special issue of the Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology, Cultural and Political Economies of Transnational Adoption, 14(1). The issue includes articles about adoption in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, and Argentina. Her chapter "The Medicalization of Adoption in and from Peru" has just come out in the anthology edited by Marre and Briggs.

B. J. LIFTON's book, Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience, came out in an expanded and updated version from the University of Michigan Press in January, 2009. She spoke on the psychological complexities of reunion at the AAC conference in Cleveland in April. In July at the Adoption Resource

Center's conference in Provincetown, she reported on her recent research on adoptees and time. In a group of 35 adoptees, the majority were Owls (late-nighters), a few were Larks (early birds), and a lucky few were both. The survey also queried adoptees about procrastination and lateness for appointments. She is in her Wellfleet home and office on Cape Cod through October, spending a lot of time on Facebook, seeing some clients live and in phone therapy across the country.

DIANA MARRE and **LAURA BRIGGS** have co-edited International Adoption: Global Inequalities and the Circulation of Children (New York University Press, 2009). This collection contains versions of the papers given at our Pittsburgh conference by **JUDITH SCHACHTER** and **JESSACA LEINAWEAVER**, as well as papers by others of our conference speakers, **BARBARA YNGVESSON**, **LILIA KHABIBULLINA**, **DIANA MARRE**, **SIGNE HOWELL**, and **TOBY ALICE VOLKMAN**.

KIM PARK NELSON is the chair of the Second International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies.

MARIANNE NOVY gave a paper, "Memoirs of Seven American Adopted Women," at the American Adoption Congress. She also gave a talk on "The Identity Development of the Asian American Teenager in The Love Wife" at the Adoption Initiative Conference sponsored by St. John's University and Montclair State. **CAROL SINGLEY** and **EMILY HIPCHEN** also gave papers at this conference.

JANE SATTERFIELD is the new literary editor for the Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.

ERIC WALKER published the book *Marriage, Writing, and Romanticism* with Stanford Univ. Press in spring 2009 and presented a paper, "In the Place of a Parent': Jane Austen and Adoption" at a conference on "New Directions in Austen Studies" at Chawton House Library in the UK in July 2009.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

International Adoption from Korea and Overseas Adopted Koreans: The Second International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies Call for Papers

Symposium Date: August 3, 2010

Planned location: IKAA Korean Adoptee Gathering, Seoul, Korea. For more information about the Gathering, see <http://gathering.ikaa.info/en>.

Symposium Sponsor: IKAA (International Korean Adoptee Associations). For more information about IKAA, see <http://ikaa.org/en>.

Submissions Due by: September 15, 2009

Submit to: SISKAS2010@gmail.com

Questions? Contact Kim Park Nelson, greg0051@umn.edu

If selected, your *complete, full-length paper* (up to 15 single-spaced pages) will be due *January 1, 2010*. Submission of a full-length paper by the due date is a requirement for participation in the Symposium. You may also be invited to participate in a research panel at the Gathering the week following the Symposium.

Submission Deadline and Instructions

Complete submissions (cover sheet, paper proposal and CV) must be received by September 15, 2009 by 5:00 PM (U.S. Central Time). No late proposals will be accepted. We will accept proposals via email only. A cover page submitted without attached proposal or CV is NOT considered complete. We will not accept or consider submissions that are lacking information. Selection notifications will be made by e-mail by the end of November.

Criteria for selection

While we encourage submissions from everyone, we will prioritize papers from academics who have completed a terminal degree or who are currently enrolled in terminal master's or Ph.D. programs. We also seek presentations/papers on a range of topics (some of which are outlined below) that represent as many of the current research approaches on Korean adoption as possible.

Introduction and presentation

The International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) plans to convene the Second International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies as part of the 2010 Korean Adoptee Gathering 2010.

The aim of the symposium is to establish and explore this new and rapidly expanding academic field. The field of Korean adoption studies is specifically concerned with international adoption from Korea, as well as with overseas adopted Koreans. It has recently emerged as an area of study both in Korea, the country of origin, and in the Western receiving countries to which Korean children have been sent for adoption. This symposium will bring together scholars from around the world who are

conducting research in the field of Korean adoption studies. These scholars are working at the multidisciplinary intersections of Asian and Korean studies, postcolonial and cultural studies, and social and behavioural sciences. Their work is also engaged with issues of ethnicity, migration and diaspora, and globalization and transnationalism.

This day long and multidisciplinary symposium will take place in Seoul, South Korea, and will be comprised of paper presentations and open discussions. The papers will be published as a volume of collected proceedings, which will be distributed at the Symposium and also made available to university libraries. The First Symposium in 2007 laid the foundation for the growing network of Korean Adoption Studies scholars, and the 2010 Symposium will be an opportunity to continue expanding the network, to include a wider range of scholarship and to incorporate work being done by scholars in Korea.

Background and purpose

South Korea's history of over half a century of continuous and uninterrupted international adoption provides the background for this symposium. Since the 1953 armistice that suspended the Korean War, almost 200,000 Korean children have been sent for adoption to 15 principal host countries in the Western world. Of those children, over 120,000 were sent to the United States, 60,000 to Europe (with half in Scandinavia of which 10,000 arrived in Sweden alone), and the remaining 10,000 were sent to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In its significant demographic scope, its lengthy time span, and its wide-ranging geographic spread, international adoption from Korea is unprecedented in modern history as the largest global transfer of children in the world. Today, still around 1,500 children leave Korea every year for adoption to eight different Western countries. The child welfare practice commonly known as international adoption, i.e., the transnational/ transcontinental, and, often, transracial/transcultural adoption, of predominantly non-Western children to primarily Western parents, was carried out in Korea directly following the war. As such, Korean adoption has become a model for understanding subsequent waves of international adoption. Furthermore, adopted Koreans are not only the most numerous, diverse and widespread of the world's child migrants, but also constitute the first generation and population of transnational and transracial adoptees. The field of Korean adoption studies thus provides a foundation for understanding international adoption and internationally adopted people as a whole.

Past and Current Research

For many years, the subject of international adoption from Korea and adopted Koreans was an under-researched area in academia. The field, as it existed then, was dominated by professionals in social work, psychology, and medicine. The first academic studies on Korean adoption started to come out in the mid-1970s, both in Korea and in the West, but it was not until the mid-1990s that one could begin to talk about a full-fledged field of Korean adoption studies.

In Korean academia, the majority of adoption studies discuss international adoption in terms of social welfare or legislation, and primarily from the perspectives of social work and family law. But Korean research interest in adult adopted Koreans has grown in recent years, with studies focusing on the life consequences for adoptees who have revisited Korea and/or reunited with their Korean family members, as well as cultural studies oriented textual analyses of adopted Korean self-narratives.

On the other side of the world, adoption scholarship in the leading adopting regions of North America, Scandinavia and Western Europe mainly focus on the behavioral and emotional adjustment of adoptees, including their attachment and adjustment to the adoptive family and assimilation and acculturation to the host culture. In addition, a growing number of studies have started to look at Korean international adoption from a comparative historical perspective and others have conceptualized it as a migratory practice linked to globalization and transnational processes. There is also a growing body of research on adoptees' language detrition and attrition and their cultural output of art, film, and literature.

Finally, a new research trend that has emerged both in Korea and in the West deals with the question of an identity and community specific to adopted Koreans, in the context of existing theories of ethnicity, migration, and diaspora.

This symposium aims to bring together researchers who focus either on international adoption from Korea or on overseas adopted Koreans from these different perspectives and approaches.

Themes and Topics

We welcome submissions from any academic background or perspective, and especially welcome work with multi-or interdisciplinary perspectives. Suggested topics include (but are not limited to):

- The Korean state and international adoption policy/adoption and Korea's image in the world. We especially encourage the submission of papers that focus on Korean adoption as a social, cultural or political phenomenon within the nation of South Korea including research that originates from within South Korea.
- Korean adoptees as part of Korean diaspora and/or Korean adoption as a part of Asian North American, Asian European, or Asian Australian experience.
- Comparative projects that examine Korean adoption and adoption from other countries.
- In-between identities and familial relations and the impact of Korean adoption on the adoption triad members.
- Empirical research that examines a specific question or salient issue within the Korean adoptee community, including the behavioural adjustment and emotional development of Korean adoptees from normative standpoints as opposed to pathologized approaches. We also encourage work that can detail the logic of inquiry or research methods, and that provides sufficient evidence to support and interpret results.
- Projects that explore the social phenomenon of multiple group status held by Korean adoptees and their relative experiences in North America, Australia, and Europe.
- Korean adoptees as subjects of cultural production including literature, fine arts, or blogs. We especially encourage work that examines Korean adoption in documentary or cinema.

CONFERENCE REPORT

“Perspectives on local and intercountry adoption: Canada, US and Australia”

by Amy Pollard, Monash University

On June 12th, 2009, the Australian History of Adoption Project convened a seminar focusing on local and intercountry adoption issues. It was held at the Australian Catholic University’s Melbourne campus, and jointly sponsored by ACU and Monash University. The academic event was held in conjunction with a film festival sponsored by the Adopted Vietnamese International and Intercountry Adoptee Support Network. The seminar featured presentations from Denise Cuthbert (Monash University) and Shurlee Swain (ACU), and special guest Karen Balcom from McMaster University in Canada as the lead speaker.

Karen Balcom, a well-published author in the field of intercountry adoption in Canada and the United States, presented a paper entitled “The U.S. Enacts the Hague Convention on Protection of Children in Respect of Intercountry Adoption: One Year In.” She showed how attempts had been made to understand and regulate intercountry adoption in the U.S. even as far back as the early twentieth century, through measures such as the creation of the International Social Service in 1918 and the United States Children’s Bureau Conference on Interstate and Intercountry Adoption in 1948, 1949 and 1951. Karen argued that given that the Hague Convention only came into force in the United States in April 2008, it is too early to judge how successful this move has been. However, she outlined a list of outcomes to watch for in order to judge its impact and success: an observable decrease in the numbers of children arriving in the U.S. for adoption (and indeed the numbers of American people wanting to adopt from overseas); judicial challenges within the U.S. to the processes enforced by Hague; and the responses of other countries (especially non-signatories) to the changing processes and regulations of the largest receiving nation of children for adoption.

The audience was shocked by Karen’s revelation that the United States also ranks highly amongst sending nations. Although the exact figures aren’t available, Karen estimated that it could be amongst the top fifteen in the world. The majority of these children are bi-racial children who are sent mostly to Canada, Scandinavia and the Netherlands, as they are considered “safe havens” from racism. Karen suggested that one of the consequences for the U.S. of compliance with the Hague Convention would be regular reporting of data on children both sent and received in ICA; this would mean that this less well-known aspect of ICA in the U.S. would become more widely known. Karen’s presentation prompted a vigorous discussion about the nature of sending countries, with a number of attendees remarking that Australians would be horrified if their own children were being sent overseas.

Shurlee Swain is a professor at ACU and senior research fellow at Melbourne University, and has published widely in Australia on the history of religion, women, children and welfare. Her seminar paper, “‘What shall we do with ‘poor little Chinky?’ Race and adoption in Australia between the wars,” provided a historical examination of the issue of race in Australian adoption, which complemented Karen’s presentation. Shurlee focused on the language and treatment of race in all

sites of adoption dialogue and discourse in Australia during this period. As early as colonial times, child rescue discourse focused on the needs of the white child; the “blue-eyed, fair-haired” child, the child desired most by adoptive parents. The first acknowledgments of the “other,” the non-white children, were in photographs only (it was to be a further 15–20 years before they were acknowledged in printed text), with the earliest representations presenting them as tribal and uncivilized, in comparison to the idealized Anglo child. Further, even as the numbers of non-white children available for adoption in wards increased, Shurlee observed, “They were always marked by their difference.”

Shurlee outlined the three main arguments offered in support of formal adoption, all of which ignored non-white children. The first was a “discourse of benevolence,” which Shurlee described as “the least influential and often deceptive in its intent.” Although adoption was touted as being in (and for) the best interests of the child, Shurlee argued that this veiled the underlying desire to save the nation by removing children from undesirable households. Secondly, the “discourse of economy” argued that formalizing adoption procedures would alleviate financial strain on both charities and the state. Finally, the “discourse of security” provided adoptive parents with a sense of confidence that the child was legally theirs, and therefore could not be removed from them if circumstances (especially regarding birth mothers and families) changed. However, the rewriting of the birth certificate transformed the discourse of security into a discourse of secrecy, with adoptive parents having no obligation to reveal the child’s history. Shurlee’s presentation prompted a fascinating discussion on the implications of the longstanding culture of secrecy surrounding adoption. This secrecy led, in some cases, to people inadvertently having relationships (including sexual relationships) with people to whom they were biologically related because they were ignorant to their heritage and their bloodlines. This issue has never been resolved legislatively, and a number of people commented on the need to understand and manage the conflict inherent in the need to be informed and yet maintain anonymity in adoption and related contemporary situations such as donor conception.

Denise Cuthbert’s interest in adoption was sparked in the late 1990s when she researched non-Indigenous parents who had adopted and fostered Indigenous children. In her paper, “How can adoption be so bad for Australian children, yet so good for children born overseas?” Denise addressed this “riddle” that highlights the division and contradictions between local and intercountry adoption. When legalized adoption was first implemented, its success was measured by the extent of its invisibility to the outsider; however, the rise of intercountry and transcultural adoptions meant that adoption could no longer be judged on the ability to match the skin color of a child with their adoptive parents. Using submissions to the 2005 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Human and Family Services inquiry, *Overseas Adoption in Australia: Report of the Inquiry into Adoption of Children from Overseas*, Denise showed how adoptive parents rationalized the decision to adopt children from overseas, with the main benefit repeatedly articulated as the decreased likelihood of “contestation” from birth parents, in contrast to the “open” adoption available domestically—the result of legislative reforms in adoption that took place from the early 1980s in Australia. These positive perceptions of intercountry adoption by adoptive parents have normalized intercountry adoption as a valid way of creating a family, supported by the state and adoption

organizations alike. However, Denise argued that this positive support for intercountry adoption does not necessarily mean adoption is “good” or “bad” for children, but rather that it fulfills the needs of adoptive parents. As such, Denise called for a greater examination of intercountry adoption policy and practice, with a specific focus on child welfare discourse.

Karen concluded the seminar by presenting her second paper, entitled “Research directions in the history of adoption to/from/within Canada and the United States,” in which she surveyed current and emerging trends in adoption research in North America, including the following: Native American and First Nation adoptions; racial hierarchies within intercountry adoption placements; pressures upon unmarried women to relinquish their children; the connection between adoption, social work and welfare history; and the changing narratives of the country’s acceptance of the adoption of children in all its forms.

The event attracted attendees from a wide range of fields and interests relating to adoption—from those with personal connections to adoption, to researchers and academics; from social workers past and present, to those involved in policy—and the afternoon roundtable session provided a positive forum for discussion between these different fields. A number of young researchers undertaking Masters and PhD courses with a focus on adoption attended the seminar, and introduced themselves and their research interests and projects to the group. Suggestions for future research included adoptee memoir literature, focusing particularly on the journey of discovery; the support systems needed to help adoptees and adoptive parents; individual narratives highlighting the lifelong nature of adoption; and birth fathers.

ACU provided a great atmosphere for dialogue and networking between the different adoption disciplines, and a great deal of thanks must go to those who made the seminar so successful: everyone who was involved in the organization of the event, those who presented, and to everyone who attended and made it a vibrant, open and discursive day. For further information and the speakers’ notes from the seminar, you can go to the ARC-funded *History of Adoption Project* website: www.arts.monash.edu.au/historyofadoption.

Amy Pollard is a PhD candidate at Monash University and a member of the *History of Adoption Project* research team.

ANOTHER FUTURE CONFERENCE

Robert Ballard of the Department of Communication, Leadership, and Social Innovation at the University of Waterloo is planning a “Summit Conference on Intercountry Adoption” for September 22–26, 2010. Involving 14 or so disciplines, he hopes to bring together the most influential countries of origin and receiving countries involved in intercountry adoption to share research, practices, experiences, and current status related to adoption, and to bring together the top researchers in intercountry adoption from around the world to share findings and explore ideas in an interdisciplinary format. This conference is intended to produce two books and impact on policy decisions. He may be contacted at bballard@uwaterloo.ca.



THE ALLIANCE FOR THE STUDY OF ADOPTION AND CULTURE

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