

Lost Daughters of China, Evans elucidates the process that leads to a couple's decision to adopt a child. Some couples choose to cross cultural and racial as well as genetic lines. Such choices are not easy to make and even more difficult to fulfill, however.

The book begins with a description of Evans' family and the circumstances that lead to their decision to adopt across ethnic lines. A realistic and, some might say, gripping account of the adoption process follows. (Anyone who can write a gripping account of two years of waiting deserves praise for that alone.) Along the way, Evan includes numerous digressions into various aspects of Chinese history, the history of women in China, the population crisis, and the government's attempts to deal with the problem. The historically unprecedented result of Chinese policies governing birth and population control is the "international female diaspora." Many thousands of Chinese infants, almost exclusively girls, have been adopted by families in the United States, Canada, and many other developed countries.

Many people have heard about "Chinese adoptions" or may know someone who has "actually done it." International adoption is no longer rare. Evans discusses the generic issues applicable to all adoptive families, as well as those specific to adoptions from China. The latter are many and Evan explores Chinese culture, the causes, the magnitude, and the results of the population crisis (China has more than 50 times the population of Canada with a roughly similar land area), and the powerful forces that govern people's lives in China.

A significant portion of the book is devoted to the plight of unknown Chinese mothers. Each mother has had to act in a way that is completely contrary to her "natural" instincts: she has had to sever the mother-child bond so that her daughter may have a chance at life. Evans has little sympathy, however, for the fathers of these lost daughters.

The book is intense, personal, and well written. It gives a balanced account of a complicated process spanning two cultures and centuries of history. It is essential for anyone contemplating adoption, especially from China, and recommended for any student of Chinese history and culture.

Child: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose

Dunlop, Rishma, ed.
Toronto: Boundary Bay Press, 2001

Reviewed by Roxanne Harde

In her introduction, editor Rishma Dunlop suggests that *Child: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose* "is about capturing our relationships to the qualities of the child within each of us," and she goes on to point out that "this book is about

the child as a way of knowing the world” (5). While some of the pieces of writing included in *Child* fulfill these epistemological intentions, the poems and short pieces of prose tend, rather, to explore how the writer/speaker comes to fuller self-knowledge through interaction with the child. The speaker’s gaze, by and large, tends to turn inward rather than outward. For every piece that presents the child’s perspective in one way or another, there are several that present the child from an adult’s perspective, and both approaches are valid and valuable as ways of knowing. In the first case, for example, Gary Raspberry and Rebecca Luce-Kapler revisit sites of childhood as they examine, in diverse and enigmatic ways, how coming-of-age continues to inform their worldview. In the latter case, Gary Kembel and Renee Norman follow rites of passages in the lives of their young children as they become the rites and rituals that inform the adult speaker. Similarly, the two selections of prose in the text, from Bill Richardson and David Beers, articulate what the birth of a child, in this case the same child, has taught and given them.

While the pieces mentioned above are provocative and thoughtful works of contemporary poetry and personal narrative, the general quality of the selections is uneven. Too often Dunlop has included that brand of contemporary meditative poetry that, by saying everything, ultimately says nothing at all. Leigh Faulkner provides examples of both overly transparent and beautifully formed verse in his poems on his daughter’s death. “Poems of Loss I & II” describe her illness and death with an abundance of description that leaves the reader with little to carry away. His “Ghazals of Loss” presents the type of succinct phrasing that haunts readers and makes clear the lack of weight in the earlier poems; for example, “I pile words into a rough mountain / my grief refuses to stay hidden” (36), and “I’ve written your death so many ways / each remains a monstrous fiction” (37). Furthermore, Dunlop’s inclusion of a previously published poem by noted Irish writer Eavan Boland only accentuates the shortcomings of the weaker pieces, and seems an ill-fitting conclusion to an otherwise all-Canadian collection.

What the text lacks in consistency of writing, however, it makes up for with a marvelous selection of photographs of children of varying ages and cultures. The work of several contributors, the photographs function as a photo-essay; they convey their own meaning and enrich that of the written texts. They are a welcome addition to this beautifully bound and printed volume, one that ought to be a welcome addition to public, academic, secondary, and private libraries.