

"Transracial Adoption in the Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic Novel: Questioning National Identities in Charlotte Lennox's *Euphemia*."

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Transracial adoption in the 18th c. transatlantic novel suggests a questioning of identities—of self, family, community, and nation. In particular, British novelist, Charlotte Lennox uses this adoption motif in her last novel, *Euphemia*, which like her first, *Harriot Stuart*, is set partially in colonial New York of the 1740s, the period in which she had lived with her family in Albany while her father served as a military officer there. Including a modified captivity narrative to describe the capture and adoption of Euphemia Neville's young son, Edward, by a group of Hurons returning to Canada, allows Lennox to explore a variety of issues centering on identity. These include the points of contact among the several cultures existing in North America at the time: the aboriginal, the British, the French, the Dutch, the African, looking at what each group borrowed from the others and how this changed both cultures involved.

Lennox is also interested in the ways in which the "hybrid identity" of those Euro-Americans taken by and adopted into native tribes of North America, many of whom refused to leave their adopted homes or, if they did so, grieved heartily, calls attention to a more fluid, expansive, nurturing notion of family, one not limited by biology, than is represented by the dysfunctional Neville family where Mr. Neville insists on his patriarchal right to tyrannize his wife and children.

This in turn suggests an idea of nationhood that is inclusive and democratic in terms of race, class, and gender, of the nation Lennox seems to have glimpsed the possibility of in the 1740s, but which might in post-revolutionary 1790, when *Euphemia* was published, need greater determination to achieve—and as a woman with family still in America, as a mother who would send her only son to America in 1793 for a fresh start, Lennox had a vested interest in such an America. And because Euphemia and her family, including Edward, who is called the "handsome young Huron," return to Britain at the end of the novel, Lennox's exploration of American identity resonates on the other side of the Atlantic as well in such concerns as married women's lack of autonomy under English Common Law and their powerlessness over their children, conditions that Lennox herself experienced in her own marriage but which finally do not apply to Euphemia, since she, with the example of the aboriginal women of North America who often determined their tribe's adoption needs, and chose and nurtured the members of other tribes or races they adopted, is able to use her inheritance to counter her husband's negative influence over their children.