

# Modern Tales of Anxiety

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It is as if something were crumbling, decaying and exhausting itself, while something else, still indistinct, were rising from the rubble.

Vaclav Havel<sup>1</sup>

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, humanity is facing a crisis in definition and ways of thinking across the boundaries of identity, politics, and culture. This paper briefly addresses unusual forums and forms for expressing the anxiety surrounding change and the ability to analyze it, forms linked to the media and its intensive focus on particular "human interest" stories, but also to the uncertainty that a lack of precedent for thinking creates. One of the questions that most interests me is how the malaise of society and the malaise of political change is expressed through the debates around maternity, birth, and the custody of children, how socio-political problems are made intelligible through dramatization of individual struggle involving family relations. What is compelling is the way in which certain stories followed by the media gravitate around facts that speak of what we do not know. Recent advances in reproductive technologies have put into question the belief (whether implicit or explicit) that biology, as a teleological process, can hold cultural chaos in abeyance. The doors have been opened wide as the definition and status of mother, father, and child have all been deeply questioned. Yet at the very moment when the so-called nuclear family is endangered, it is the extraordinarily powerful metaphor of the family that rings insistently in social and political discourse. There is a sense that the threat to the family signals a disintegration of order, leaving the contemporary sense of self bereft of a discourse that can represent universal order.

The premise here is that literary and cultural studies along with the media accompany political, philosophical, and even juridical

thought by revealing the impasses and contradictions of rational discourse. At issue is how one passes from individual discourse in conflicting value systems to a discourse on the family: the assumptions underlying dialogue about reproductive and family relations, responsibility, and narrative. The Warnock Report on Human Fertilisation and Embryology stated that "increasingly, we are compelled to accept that 'common morality' is a myth. There is no agreed set of principles which everyone, or the majority, or any representative person, believes to be absolutely binding, and especially this is so in areas of moral concern which are radically and genuinely new."<sup>2</sup> The unknown here is ethical: the transformation of mores based on the personal, cultural, and political choices involved in birth and the identity of the subject.

My hypothesis is that, in the absence of a master narrative or theory, it is the reconstruction of cases and particular events, along with the discourses that subtend them, that reveal the interaction of contingent interests. Everyday in some form or other we can read about or we view personal stories of lives; and while the current fascination with them is voyeuristic at one level, it also involves a search for meaning and value, a search for heuristic solutions in the absence of ultimate answers.

Today the Shandian concern with starting a story *ab ovo*, that is from the egg or the beginning, has a lot to do with the rapidly changing technologies, now that sex and reproduction can be separated, embryos stored, genetic structures cloned or altered. It seems more and more evident that the givens of the past no longer alone suffice to define or even conceptualize what constitutes the relationship between the biological and the social, let alone between metaphysical or religious beliefs. Everything seems to be in question, from who the mother or father is to when life begins, or what constitutes a family and whose rights should dominate within it. Bio-history or bio-politics have become, as Michel Foucault pointed out<sup>3</sup> and the 1994 United Nations Conference on Population and Development demonstrated quite concretely, the object of explicit calculations in the balance between power and knowledge, the catalysts or agents of transformation in human life. To address the daunting problems of the future supposes pooling the thought of biologists, jurists, researchers, social work-

ers, psychologists, philosophers, social scientists, and people in the humanities—though one senses this will not be easy since each group, like each individual, has different interests and values.

If during the Enlightenment the analogical link between the family structure and the order of society was based on the ultimate connection of the two, nature can no longer be considered as the ultimate guarantor. In this century, nature increasingly has been taken to mean biology, and the idea of natural kinship has been “biologized.”<sup>4</sup> Everyone has biological parents, so far, whether they know them or not, and the debate around the moral and legal issues concerning the genetic make-up and origins of human beings has been debated for some time.<sup>5</sup> But does the ability to question coincide with the right to knowledge? If so, it would follow that the relationship to biological parents could be questioned. And here is one of the sticking points. Ostensibly there is no problem of definition when biological and social parenting coincide; traditionally, responsibility for children falls legally to the parents, and biological parents don’t have to prove themselves fit for parenthood. It is when the social and the biological aspects of parenthood are separated that many of the new problems arise.

The controversies surrounding who society regards as parents, when life begins, and whether and how fetuses should be carried to term are separate and distinct issues, but they are related. And the paradox, as anthropologist Marilyn Strathern points out, is that a child is defined as a child no matter whether or not its parents are known, whereas parents are parents only if there are recognized children; parents, that is, are “objects of knowledge.”<sup>6</sup>

The status of the mother and the father in the tradition is not the same. Until recently the mother, in her biological relationship to the child, was considered to be certain (*mater semper certa est*). The mother, that is, has a so-called natural connection through the body whereas the father has had to be constructed from his relationship to the mother, at least until DNA testing made positive identification possible. Some hope that with the increasing ability to divide biological and social parenthood, new and better patterns may emerge. Yet the landmark case of Baby M during 1987 and 1988, which involved a contract with a surrogate mother and questions of custody, dramatized the dangers of questioning the defini-

tion and status of the biological mother and father;<sup>7</sup> showing that in the potential for choice that reproductive technologies make possible, the right to negotiate parental status through a contract could have as yet untold consequences. Through a highly publicized personal story and legal case, it made tangible to the public at large questions that scholars of jurisprudence and ethicists had been worrying about for some time.

Kinship relations may have been what didn't change in one's social context, in relation to what did. But this is no longer the case. As change becomes increasingly subject to the choices and contracts between individuals, kinship plays out in scenarios never thought possible before, making what has been heralded as a taking control of biology look more like the loss of it. It is not only that social problems may be determined by new technology, but our forms of analysis may not be able to keep up with the power implicit in what it offers. Since nature is no longer considered a limit, as Enlightenment thinkers presumed, and the law cannot provide a founding for ethical thought, because it is designed less to innovate in than protect tradition, fitting principles (philosophical, moral, or legal) with facts has seemed like a process of updating in a constantly outdated system. Much of the interest generated in cases comes from the way in which they point out the inadequacies of existent discourses, mores, and laws to solve the ethical and political problems in newly emerging situations.

After Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, and Adrienne Rich opened up the largely uncharted questions of motherhood in modern society<sup>8</sup>—a society called patriarchal because patriarchy is understood as paternal power—a whole area of study has emerged on the history and status of motherhood. Inevitably, focusing on and questioning motherhood forced analysis of the place of fatherhood in the relations between men and women and their children. Revising these roles within society is nothing less than revolutionary and has created a dialogue of conflict. It involves the repositioning not only of mothers, but of fathers and children, and it touches everyone—for even those who choose not to have children are still themselves children with mothers and fathers.

I am going to sketch briefly two stories of adoption and one of single parenthood. All three are situated within the context of

North American society and may or may not be translatable in equivalent terms to other cultures; for this reason, they raise the question of what we can and cannot know through our own culture.<sup>9</sup> All three involve biographical accounts in which the line between fiction and reality is crossed at critical moments, and in which the opposition between nature and culture (or nature and nurture) figures in the relationship of choice to procreation. None of the three stories directly deals with reproductive technologies, and because of that they suggest a loss of ethical nerve evident in recent discussions. That is, if *these* problems can't be solved individually, legally, or socially—in scenarios that may be difficult but are still well within conceptual grasp—how can one come to terms with the more complicated issues waiting in the wings? My examples bring into play a kind of social jurisprudence in the response to such questions as: who is to judge, how, and on what basis?

The first was presented in a two-part series in *The New Yorker*, entitled "Open Adoption" by Lincoln Kaplan.<sup>10</sup> It reads like a short story, or a good fictionalized biography about two American students at the University of Delaware who, having lived together for two years, discover that the woman is pregnant and decide to give the baby up for an "open adoption." Such an arrangement brings the biological parents together with the social parents from the pregnancy on into the life of the child. It is a story with a beginning (the discovery of pregnancy), a middle (the relationship between the different people during the pregnancy), and an end (the crisis in the birth mother's life following the birth and the final adoption of the child). It was not the first time such an arrangement had been tried in adoption, and the author was able to make generalizations about the relationship between birth mothers and the couples who wish to adopt their children: a kind of courtship takes place in the early months with much good feeling and delicate interaction. There is a sense that the birth of the baby is in everybody's interest, solving a problem for each—the couple who couldn't yet deal with a child, the couple who wanted a child, and the needs of the child to be loved and cared for; it also created a bond. Only after the birth did the differences begin to take a heavy toll. In a fragile and jumpy fashion, the future family becomes almost like the birth mother's own surrogate family: the

adoptive parents help the birth mother through the pregnancy and are present at the birth.

The next phase is where the drama often takes a nasty turn: the period in which the “natural” bonding period and the legal waiting period overlap. The moment of crisis in these stories turns around the birth mother’s ability to face not only the birth but especially separation from the child. Part II of the *New Yorker* article concentrates on a history of adoption and the resolution of the story. Who are adoptees? where do they belong and how do they deal with the issues around their birth?<sup>11</sup> What kind of knowledge is available to them? Do they know who their birth parents are? Do they have contact?

The confidentiality and silence that have historically surrounded adoption gave a new beginning to both the child and the birth parent—a way out of the “taint of illegitimacy.”<sup>12</sup> The term “open adoption” suggests a caring vision in which trust, tolerance, and acceptance define changing relationships. Kaplan explains: “Open adoption depends on the optimistic notion that people can handle unfamiliar, even unprecedented, relationships.”<sup>13</sup> The negative presupposition, however, remains: adoption is still considered to be second best to the nuclear family of a biological mother, father, and child.

This particular story, like many others, turns out to be a story of pain and joy—the pain of loss for the birth mother, and in this case the biological father, and the joy of parenthood for the adopting couple. The contrast can lead to disaster. In this case, the biological mother did visit the child after the birth without serious consequence. Yet the turning point in Kaplan’s narrative comes when, after watching an episode of the American television series, *L.A. Law*, about open adoption, in which a birth mother asserts that she is the only true parent, the adopting couple senses danger in their own situation. The old saw about the chicken and egg takes over here from Lawrence Sterne’s narrative query in the relationship between fiction and reality. When is understanding based on fact, when on fiction? The adoption was finalized. But the biological mother ended up by cutting off contact with everyone involved in the birth, including the biological father. Where communion and sharing in a new version of the extended family

was promised, no satisfactory resolution between biological and social parenting resulted. Questions persisted: was it “unnatural” to choose the social over the biological? or, more likely still, was it that no one involved wanted to look at the unavoidable pain of the divergent roles played out *by* and *for* each actor in the story? The inability to deal with those feelings until after the event is what this story—which is after all comedy as it ends well—is all about. The moral here seems to be that, whatever the logical or historical arguments, such new scenarios exact a high emotional price.

The next story is one that many in the United States followed over the summer of 1993 when the papers were filled with legal cases whose resolutions went in vastly different directions, as though the consequences for the break up between nature and nurture had become a sequence of melodramas in which no consistent moral could be ascertained. They left the public—not to mention the people involved—aching for the impossible: simpler times, better solutions.

The most highly publicized was a case called Baby Jessica which had dragged on for two years through the courts of Iowa and Michigan.<sup>14</sup> It was a story, begun in conception, but whose drama involved, again, the private lives of four adults and one child. Unlike the story of open adoption written by Kaplan, which was investigative reporting turned biography, Baby Jessica was followed, created even, for the public through the media according to the rhythms of the court decisions, a story told by multiple authors. The press followed the case, as with Baby M, through all of its stages and prepared the public for the *dénouement* in August, 1993: with the removal of the two-and-a-half-year-old child from her adoptive parents, the Deboers, and her enforced return to her biological parents, the Clausens. The two sets of parents engaged in legal and media combat appropriately labeled by one lawyer a “blood battle”<sup>15</sup> in which the private lives of both families were thrown open to the public by the court hearings on the best interests of the child.<sup>16</sup>

The facts of this legal battle were no more in dispute than those in the trial of Orestes who killed his mother, Clytemnestria, after she had killed Agamemnon in the *Oresteia*. There, what was needed in determining whether killing the woman who gave birth

to him constituted matricide was whether she was of “kindred blood”? (“Am I then involved with my mother by blood-bond?”<sup>17</sup>) and the establishment of the father bond.<sup>18</sup> The jury found the father to be the only parent. So along with matricide, the mother too was washed away.<sup>19</sup> Freud saw this passage in the *Oresteia* as a “turning from mother to the father [which] points in addition to a victory of intellectuality over sensuality—that is, an advance in civilization, since maternity is proved by the evidence of the senses while paternity is a hypothesis, based on inference and a premise.”<sup>20</sup> This rise from sense perception to thought-process left the mother associated with nature and the father with culture and the life of the mind.

In the case of Baby Jessica, however, the father’s paternity was no longer a surmise due to DNA testing. He is as surely the biological parent as the mother, Cara Clausen. The two together were portrayed on the side of biology, the raw facts of nature whereas the DeBoers were relegated to a soft, nurturing but a culturally determined role devoid of biology. In some ways, the Clausens represented a case of paternalized maternity and the Deboers a maternalized paternity. Which triumphed here? Judge Ager of Michigan ruled in favor of the Deboers on the grounds that if two-year-old Jessica were taken from her parents she “might never recover.”<sup>21</sup> But the Iowa court weighed in with a decision of its own in favor of the mother’s parental rights. Two states, two philosophies. Two sets of parents, one child with two names: Jessica and Anne. In Solomon’s story the “true” mother would rather give the child up than have it sliced apart by conflict, and so the biological mother triumphed; in Brecht’s *Caucasian Chalk Circle* it is the caretaker mother who shows herself to be the true mother by letting go. Nature, nurture. Both can be “true” depending on the parameters and according to which one judges. But no one let go here; everyone fought for their own desires or interests, except the child.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately, after a final ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court declined a stay to the DeBoers, Jessica was taken from the only home she had ever known, returned to her biological parents in August 1993, under the scrutiny of a fascinated and polarized public. The case touched a nerve encapsulated in a very painful photograph given front page coverage in newspapers across the



continent of a crying baby Jessica being carried away. The case was over, giving a kind of tragic closure to the story, but judgment on the effects of the decisions was far from in. Of the two biographical scenarios, one with Jessica's social (previously only) family, the other with her biological (and now only) family, no one will be able to say which would have been better from the beginning, *ab ovo*. That wasn't the choice. The choices were after the fact, legal and social.

The papers ran a story concurrent with Baby Jessica about a fourteen-year-old woman, who had been accidentally switched at birth, who was suing her biological parents for "stalking her." Her lawyer had previously helped an eight-year-old child to "divorce" his mother. This was not the revolutionary fantasy of two families, the family romance, that Freud envisaged; it is closer to Orestes for whom rejection of the mother involved legal adjudication of the legitimacy of the kinship ties and with that the possibility of terminating them.

The closure of legal decision ended the story of the trial but not of the problems it raised: within two months of the court decision, a filmic reenactment of the Baby Jessica case appeared on television, based upon the facts and characters of the case, and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* picked up on the problems of cutting across religious, moral, or legal traditions in intergalactic adoption. In it, one family loves their adoptive child but teaches him to hate his own race for atrocities committed by them; this translates into hatred of self for the cultural and political history that his biological makeup carries with it. The mandate of the space station, like that of the Federation ship in the original *Star Trek*, is to maintain peace and negotiate amongst often hostile peoples. As the theme states its goal: "to explore strange new worlds. To seek out new life and new civilization. To boldly go where no one has ever gone before." If the ideal is always impartiality and reason, judgment by consensus (which does not exclude force to maintain these principles), the program is also largely about difference: physical, social, and intergalactic. One of the major questions tacitly asked throughout the series, here specifically about adoption, is: can or should one judge social systems and ethical positions outside one's own culture? And if one must, how can a consensus be reached?

Without the kind of idealism and presiding myth that *Star Trek* presents in the second phase of its “new generation,” cases like the one surrounding Baby Jessica take the place of myths in advanced contemporary society. They permit the public to think about frightening possibilities and to orient itself with respect to the unknown. They are, in that sense, a counterpart of a loss in society of the utopian function. We seem not to have, or no longer to have, the imaginative capacity to anticipate in any general way the forms that problems of the future will take so as to make coherent proposals for social organization. Whence it seems a need to focus on endless scandals, trials, and enigmatic cases which, though they operate in the real world, play the role of *gedanken experiment*. What is unknown in these cases is therefore epistemological: the fear that present questioning and methods of analysis will become extinct, leaving us without the means to understand and interpret the world around us.

The final story shows the political skews that result from such anxiety; it involves politics in the United States and the television program entitled *Murphy Brown*. The prime-time television comedy show or sitcom *Murphy Brown* is about the “off screen” personal lives of the protagonist, a superstar media anchor-person, who is beautiful, intelligent, articulate, and stubborn, and her colleagues, all of whom form a kind of family of friends. The series was very popular, running for several years with “high ratings,” but it went off the scoreboard in 1992 when the character Murphy became the center of a national debate in the United States around “family values.” The 1991–1992 season had been dominated by the character’s decision to exercise choice, her political persuasion concerning abortion, and paradoxically to keep a pregnancy as a single mother. In a now famous speech made in San Francisco on May 19th, then Vice President of the United States, Dan Quayle, attacked the fictional character during a talk on poverty and the ills of society, linking the “lawless social anarchy [of the riots in Los Angeles] ... to the breakdown of the family structure, personal responsibility and social order in too many areas of our society.” Then he made the statement that ignited the furor: “It doesn’t help matters when prime time T.V. has *Murphy Brown*—a character who supposedly epitomizes today’s intelligent, highly paid, professional woman—

mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another 'lifestyle choice.'"<sup>23</sup>

Acting as the political point man for the Republican Party, Quayle's speech attempted to pinpoint a lack of "family values" in American society, in particular in fatherless families. No one could be against "family values," especially because the term seemed to bend to every and any definition, but the effects of the sentence were as extraordinary as they were unexpected: the dialogue between the Vice President of the United States and a fictional T.V. character, grappling with her pregnancy, became the focus of a public debate around the family. Personal matters, in particular abortion, were high on the political agenda, but here was a story curiously worthy of attack. What ensued was a debate in the media and amongst politicians concerning the definition of the family: must a family be constituted out of a traditional nuclear group headed by a father and mother, or can it be opened up to include many possible choices: single parent families, homosexual parents, etc.? Quayle's position zeroed in on problems within the social order, giving a single set of moral and political answers: a return to the traditional biological family to end the moral degeneration of a society which has lost all sense of values. But the unexpected explosive reaction focused rather on Quayle's attack of a fictional character and strong concerns about the changes in gender roles. Some of the male characters, for example, exhibit more maternal tendencies than Murphy, who seemed devoid of them. The debate was heated on all sides, the controversy provided high melodrama.

Probably few would have contested the need to overhaul the image of the fast disintegrating family; nor is the problem limited to the United States when one looks at how the archetypal crack-up of the Royal Family in Britain signals cultural transformation. The family is in need of new mythologies. Some argue that prime time T.V., reaching millions of people through global electronics, offers a theater of clashing stories that are important to the people who watch them. Quayle had unexpectedly touched on this raw nerve: the importance of these stories as contending "American myths."<sup>24</sup> However, to attack the kinds of story needed to explore the possibilities of new or unknown situations, and thereby to

imagine a different life, is to take away an important avenue of present-day thought, formerly relegated to literature and myth.

Each of these scenarios I have sketched presents choices. Perhaps that is why they have so fascinated the public. The choice of abortion, or adoption. The choice to keep a baby or give it up. The choice to let the law mediate between interests in conflict. These highly dramatized cases show what we all share as human beings (reproduction and family) as well as the diversity that makes the we of consensus so difficult: our differing cultural, ethnic, family, and sexual identities, our social contexts, beliefs, and philosophies. Any sense of closure in these cases seems at best contingent, whether individuals negotiate their legal and personal contracts successfully (as in the case of the open adoption), or resort to the law for solutions between interests in conflict (as with Baby Jessica). For all their complexities, these stories are only the precursors to others more radically unknown and uncertain: the potential for stories of cloned children, offspring of sperm donors, and more.

Murphy Brown put on screen a radically singular situation (pregnancy) for which there is no one general law, signifying system, or overarching theory. The ability to generalize depends upon the contextualizing of one character in relation to others, though the story does have venerable predecessors going back to Diderot, Raynal, and Benjamin Franklin.<sup>25</sup> It is almost as though the Western tradition were being reformed from performative anthropology: not from scrutinizing kinship in other cultures to better understand one's own, but from looking within through a process of distancing and individuation—through the personal narrative as a form of criticism. Not only is the personal political, but the well-known feminist adage has been turned around, the political is also personal.<sup>26</sup>

The extraordinary focus on such individual stories permits one to rehearse one's own choices and provides a form of interactive ethical questioning. Telling and retelling stories becomes a means of open-ended analysis in which the individual is subsumed into a discourse of singularity whose force goes beyond the individual's voice or position. Because these stories retain a decidedly human plot, they seem to protect, albeit fleetingly, against the worry that in the tidal wave of technological change, our present

forms of analysis may not survive. They offer the possibility of reflective experimentation in the cross-over between fact and fiction, the public and the private. That is, as examples they do not so much illustrate principles, as they offer the possibility for linking discourses and voices, the possibility for creating consensus based on a plurality of positions.

For the individual, she or he must then deal with the uncertainties emerging from these conflicted and conflicting stories which fall outside traditional categories or models. Jane Flax has suggested that it is necessary to stay with the anxiety they evoke<sup>27</sup> and resist the desire to leap into, or grasp at any new metanarratives. To stay with the perils of choice means lending a ear to a form of social jurisprudence outside of institutions, roughly equivalent to the concept of public opinion in the eighteenth century. Stories are among the tools that allow us to recognize familiar forms in the constant and excessive barrage of information demanding attention and interpretation. That is why literary and cultural studies figure among the disciplines that can help us to hear and engage in a dialogue of conflict in order "think ethically" about who we are or might be.

## Notes

1. Address of the President of the Czech Republic, on the occasion of the Liberty Medal Ceremony, Philadelphia, July 4, 1994.
2. Mary Warnock, *A Question of Life. The Warnock Report on Human Fertilisation and Embryology*, Oxford, 1985.
3. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I*, Paris, 1976, p. 188.
4. See T. Ingold, *Evolution and Social Life*, Cambridge, 1986, and Marilyn Strathern, *Reproducing the Future. Essays on Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*, New York, 1992, p. 19. "What is to count as natural has acquired rather specific meanings."
5. See Baudoin, Jean Louis, and Catherine Labrusse-Riou, *Produire l'homme: de quel droit?*, Paris, 1987.
6. "The discussion over human beginnings proceeds without reference to social factors at all: when a person begins is taken as a biological fact of development. By contrast, the legal debate over who shall be socially acknowledged as parent makes constant reference to biological parenting: legislation is after the fact." Strathern, pp. 25 and 148.

7. See "Changing the Facts of Life: The Case of Baby M," *Sub Stance* 64 (Spring), 31–48.
8. Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième sexe: les faits et les mythes*, Paris, 1949; Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, London, 1979; Adrienne Rich, *Of Women Born*, New York, 1976.
9. The problems encountered at the United Nations Population and Development Conference indicated how difficult such translation can be. For example, for some countries a "single-parent household" is inconceivable because women may not bring up children alone. *The Boston Globe*, September 9, 1994.
10. *The New Yorker*, May 21 and 28, 1990.
11. "An Open Adoption," p. 74.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–79.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
14. Under the title, "Annals of Law," the *New Yorker* (March 22, 1993, pp. 56–73) published an article entitled "The War for Baby Clausen" by Lucinda Franks.
15. *Ibid.* 69
16. *Ibid.*, 71.
17. Aeschylus, *The Eumenides. Oresteia*. Trans. Richmond Lattimore. Chicago, 1953, l. 605.
18. "The mother is no parent of that which is called /her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed /that grows. The parent is he who mounts. A stranger /she preserves a stranger's seed, if no god interfere." *Oresteia*, 1.658–662."
19. *Oresteia*, 1.279, p. 145.
20. *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. James Strachey. In collaboration with Anna Freud assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, London, 1937–39, vol. XXIII.
21. The conflict that came to light in this case legally was that, on the one hand, biological parents should have custody of children unless they are proved unfit, and, on the other, that the "custodial environment should not be changed unless it was in the child's best interest." Franks, p. 72.
22. Editorial, *New York Times*, January 8, 1993.
23. Prepared remarks by the Vice President, Commonwealth Club of California, Office of the Press Secretary, San Francisco, CA, May 19, 1992. He went on to suggest that "marriage is a moral issue that requires cultural consensus, and the use of social sanctions." Vice President's Speech, p. 6.
24. Lance Morrow, "Folklore in a Box," *Time*, September 21, 1992, 78. In this view, the ability to reach a vast and diversified audience results in programming that is both universalizing and plural, a potential counteraction to fanaticism—a form of "symbolic democracy."
25. See "Opérateurs du changement: De Miss Polly Baker à Murphy Brown, *Oeuvres et Critiques XIX*, 1 (1994), pp. 69–78; "Personal Criticism: Dialogue of Differences," in *Feminism Beside Itself*, Bloomington, forthcoming Spring 1995.
26. Gloria Steinem, *Revolution From Within*, Boston, 1992, 17.
27. See Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments. Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West*, Berkeley, 1990.