Dolphins, Dying Rooms, and Destabilized Demographics, or: Loving Anna in a Transmodern World

Author(s): Alice Jardine

Source: *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* Vol. 21, No. 2, The Adoption Issue (Autumn, 2002), pp. 333-345
Published by: University of Tulsa
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/4149237
Accessed: 11-05-2020 19:06 UTC

Dolphins, Dying Rooms, and Destabilized Demographics

(or: The Personal Is Still the Political: Notes on How My Personal Experience Has Once Again Reorganized My Political/Intellectual Toolbox As I Have Become a Single Mom, Part of an Instant Family of Color* Struggling to Pay the Bills,* Long Before I Was Done Thinking and Writing* about Politics* and Postmodernism*)*

Or:
Loving Anna in a Transmodern* World

Alice Jardine
Harvard University

First "The Personal Is Still the Political" Hypothesis: Could perhaps the positive potentialities of one's own relationship to the global paradigm shift that was postmodernism be overdetermined by the extent to which one allows oneself access to one's own and others' historical and contemporary forms of irrationality in the transmodern context?

I was sitting on the beach watching the first pinks and blues of a picture postcard sunset, when people around me began running and shouting and pointing wildly out to sea. I tried to ignore them, turning my attention back to the large coffee table book on China I was perusing after putting aside impatiently the books on South America, Mexico, India, and the former Soviet Union. I was determined not to be disturbed. I knew that Anna was waiting for me somewhere in the world and that I just had to find her and fast. I knew only one way to make such an important discovery: through books. Hence the characteristic eccentricity with which I had answered the security guards at Logan Airport when they asked, "Why three suitcases full of nothing but books on a vacation to Florida?!" "I'm looking for my daughter, Anna," I sighed in tones that must have made them wonder about my sanity.

But I had never felt saner. The list of things that could definitely make me crazy was bracketed at the moment: for example, chairing Women's Studies at Harvard University; or trying to remain actively, politically progressive through the maddeningly reactionary 1980s and 1990s. Yes, right now, on this beach, at this time, with this particular book, my psyche felt as clear as the sky I was gazing at. Not that I wasn't worried: how could I

have let myself become a guinea pig for the genetics and infertility loony bins bringing ever newer and scarier cancer statistics to ever and ever younger women? What does it mean for a first-world, middle-aged, professional-class, Anglo-white woman to spend upwards of $20,000 to transport an abandoned, third-world, poverty-bound, brown-skinned baby girl into the heart of waspy, uptight New England, even if the money for the adoption came hard[1] and even if New England had never managed to feel like home?[2] How should I process the involuntary memories I was having of twenty years before when I had seen my friend and mentor Julia Kristeva, the French philosopher usually so elegant and together, sitting at her desk with stringy hair and pablum-covered dress, with tears of frustration running down her cheeks, attempting to talk to her screaming editor and her screaming baby at the same time? How would my lifelong, public fascination with European literature and philosophy intersect with my new, very private love affair with the politics, poetics, history, and culture of a non-European civilization? Would I ever write anything acceptable in my field again? How would I manage to pay for full-time childcare good enough that I would be able to perform my job as an academic, let alone indulge my calling as a writer? Would my students and colleagues at Harvard accept the inevitable end to my historical record of constant availability and endless "yes's" to ever more institutional demands with little or no concern on my part for material reward?

But these worries were nothing compared to the ones I was having about Anna herself: where was she? Was she healthy? Safe? Fed? How old was she and for how long had she been deprived of that web of heartfelt (as opposed to professional) care and attention we call love?

Suddenly my eyes filled with tears, as they often did when I thought of Anna. Just then, one of the people running on the beach fell right over me. Now filled with irritation, I asked her what on earth merited such speed? "The dolphins are jumping! The dolphins are jumping! The blue dolphins from Hong Kong! They only show up here once every few decades! Look!"

I focused way out, past the hectic, human noise, way out past the crashing waves, to the gorgeous sun-sparkled backs of the frisky dolphins, jumping in syncopation to some earthly or not so earthly rhythm I could not yet hear. I stood up, walked slowly to the pay phone, and called my adoption agency. "She's in China. Anna's somewhere in China. Please find her," I said. With total certainty I knew that this little being I had not been able to bring to my side through my body was going to have to be carried home on a plane from the other side of the world.

One of my most solid, time-tested, and academically trained distinctions had just been sorely tested: rationality versus irrationality. I knew that my resistance to organized, Western religions and their narrative

explanations of the irrational was still intact. I knew that my long-held fascination with African and Far Eastern religions such as Buddhism was still hesitant given their relentless commercialization in the U.S. as "New Age" by the demographically privileged. I knew that my particular brand of secularism was not the unconsciously lazy embrace of standard protestant culture and its values that I saw all around me. I also knew that it was my long love affair with feminist psychoanalytic theory that had provided me with the surest way to contain safely and explain fully that which otherwise makes no sense without resorting to either religion or psychosis. A decade-long Lacanian analysis in Paris had convinced me, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that while the human unconscious is one of the most powerful of human variables, it and its effects can be rationally explained. Yet I had never before felt the utter collapse of the rational and irrational into each other. Was I going mad? No. My psychic health seemed impeccable. What I was feeling and thinking was totally irrational—and totally true. As in religion. As in psychosis. But neither of those felt relevant to me here on the beach. I put the phone down and whispered to the invisible line between ocean and sky: "Hang on, little baby Anna. Mommy's coming. As fast as I can." I began writing Anna's story in the margins of the Chinese reds and blues. I smiled with my whole being, suddenly not bothered at all by my image as a Mad Mother Mystic Loving Anna While Writing My Books on the Beach.

Second "The Personal Is Still the Political" Hypothesis: Could perhaps the positive potentialities of one's own relationship to the global paradigm shift that was postmodernism be overdetermined by the extent to which one allows oneself access to one's own and others' loss of ability to distinguish between representations of truth and fiction in the transmodern context?

By the mid-1990s, I was sure that one's moral and political opposition to the deadly effects of transnational, American-fueled capitalism could not and would not lead *en masse* to the nostalgic embrace of the historical Marxism protected by so many of my radical academic friends. I had not forgotten the bizarre time and space warp that was Eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin Wall. I had, after all, visited the old Soviet Union. I had experienced the supreme idiocy of trying to explain who "Garp" (that indescribable character in John Irving's 1978 novel *The World According to Garp*) was to an unsmiling, not so subtle, rifle-toting Soviet border guard. I had experienced the surprised fear of being arrested for telling Lenin jokes in Red Square. I had experienced the frustrated terror of no recourse while locked in my Leningrad hotel room because "I" had just bombed Libya. I had experienced my own intensely suspicious disbelief of the official denial that anything was wrong at Kiev airport as we were abrasively

pushed onto our Aeroflot jet to Paris (finding out upon landing in Paris that the urgency was due to the fact that Chernobyl had just melted down minutes before our takeoff). My positively Orwellian feelings about these kinds of personal encounters with what was left of the Communist State were, of course, matched by my positively Baudrillardian intellectual shock at how impossible it had become within the Capitalist State to know whom or what to believe. I was also only just beginning to understand how the exponentially increasing inability to sort out fact and fiction among the "First, Second, and Third Worlds" would impact the new century.

By the mid-1990s, I was struggling hard against my own idealistic nostalgia for a stable authority/nation state/way of life. I felt myself becoming surrounded by an increasingly vocal (generally political and often specifically feminist) fatalism (whether admitted or not), *genre*: "there's no way out of this patriarchal postwar mess so I might as well stop torturing myself."

By the mid-1990s, poststructuralist philosophers had already been writing in several languages for some forty years about the victory, in our advanced postmodern "First World," of "performativity" over "semiotic stability." It seemed no longer to matter, according to them, who won or lost "the game of truth," but rather all that mattered was where one was located on the game board and what particular game was being played at the time. This disturbing message about the postmodern condition was often blamed on the messenger and (often self-righteously) denounced as intentional moral relativism on the messenger's part. I would venture to say that this blaming of the messenger for the message came about in part because those of us deeply impacted by poststructuralist thought who found ourselves virulently critiquing the new postmodern epidemic of "unverifiability" also found ourselves secretly mesmerized by the entire process. (For example, a few years later, intense fascination was evident in the most loudly critical analyses of the 2000 presidential election—an "election game" played by rules twisted tightly within the transnational web of corporate media manipulation and poll-driven reality construction.)

By the mid-1990s, then, most progressive intellectuals and artists were, I think, caught up in battling against seemingly never-ending moral/political equivocations, *genre*: "one is as bad as the other, but. . . ." Some began trying to imagine "a third way." Others just sank under the weight of the forced indeterminacy all around them.

I was struggling against this sinking feeling during the winter of 1995-96 as my adoption of Anna was moving into high gear. At that point, I could not have foreseen the impact the impossibility of trusting any representation of truth would have on what I still saw then as my "private" life.

My own "truth game" started on the evening of 9 January 1996. I was by then what we call in the adoption community a "waiting parent." My homestudy was completed for the U.S. government. My paperwork was in China. I was "emotionally pregnant." I was waiting for the mysterious woman at the Ministry of Civil Affairs in Beijing to match me up with Anna. One night late, I suddenly got a call from another waiting mom. Had I heard about the NYC-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) story, "Death by Default," on the "dying rooms" at the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute? No. I knew that Mainland China and Taiwan and, hence, my own government were beginning to rattle swords again, and I was frightened by the prospect that a military confrontation over Taiwan could shut down the Chinese adoption process. War with real ships and guns I could grasp. But now what was this new "truth in reporting" problem threatening the already fragile possibility for Anna and me to be together?

It turned out that the HRW had published a report alleging the existence of a Chinese state policy of intentional extermination and abuse of abandoned female children in Chinese state-run welfare institutions. This assertion was based on two things: (1) an investigation of one institution, the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute, from the late 1980s until 1993; and (2) statistics from Chinese civil affairs authorities for several provinces in 1989-90 reflecting a children's mortality rate of 50-80 percent. It seemed that the HRW had already brought their message to the BBC the year before in a news documentary called "The Dying Rooms: China's Darkest Secret" (BBC, 14 June 1995). This video had been seized upon by the U.S. State Department and the U.S. media as the best possible proof of the "evils" of (still) Communist China. Result: the video would be discussed on 21 January 1996 by the journalists of *60 Minutes*, and the video would be aired in full in the U.S. by Cinemax on 24 January 1996. Result: the Chinese Ministry, already furious, would no doubt shut down the international adoption program. My friend added that so far both HRW and the U.S. State Department were dismissing U.S. adoptive parents of children from China (who were already denying and denouncing the HRW Report loudly and clearly) as both "naïve" and "self-interested."

Well. I wasn't naïve, but I was self-interested. On the one hand, nobody was going to keep me from finding Anna. But, on the other hand, what if the report were true?

There had already begun an intense battle among many different interest groups—the U.S. State Department, the HRW, the mainstream, corporate media, the FCC (Families with Children from China), the Chinese Ministry—for the heart and soul of the Western mind. With nary a doubt (!), I immediately came down on the side of the hundreds and hundreds of par-

ents in the FCC who had already traveled to China to receive their children. These parents passionately argued that not only had they collectively seen very few instances of abuse but that, on the contrary, they had witnessed thousands of instances of orphanage staff going above and beyond to provide true love and devoted care for the excruciatingly at risk lost daughters of China.

The FCC argument against what they saw as cynical U.S. media-rattling was best articulated by Professor Kay Johnson in scholarly form as part of her important study "The Politics of the Revival of Infant Abandonment in China, with Special Reference to Hunan": "[the HRW report asserts] that there is a national policy to reduce the population of abandoned infants by the 'routine murder of children through deliberate starvation.' The report provides no direct evidence for this extreme assertion, basing its conclusions on evidence of intentional abuse in one institution, coupled with evidence for high mortality rates throughout the orphanage system. As argued [in my article], the latter can be more reasonably explained by factors other than deliberate policy."[3]

A true blue baby boomer, I believed the people, not the government or the media or even a self-described human rights organization. On what was my belief based? Self-interest? Maternal hysteria? My version of "the end justifies the means"? Or on my long-trained ability to valorize the counterintuitive critique over the government-media complex? Perhaps I equivocated: "it's all a little bit true."

In any case, I didn't stop to think about it very long. I wrote, emailed, and faxed every relevant media outlet I could think of (*Newsweek*, *Time*, CBS, NBC, and *The New York Times*); but I also wrote to government offices—from President Clinton in the White House to Mme Zhang Xiaoquing at the Ministry of Civil Affairs in Beijing. Like thousands of other adoptive or waiting parents, I emphasized that adoption is just about the only option left for these Chinese baby girls born into dire patriarchal poverty under the strict one child per family policy. I argued that every single American family (as well as their agencies) that had already traveled to China had returned with extensive, moving testimony about the efforts of thousands of orphanage workers struggling to save the lives of abandoned—often seriously malnourished, ill, and neglected—infant girls left by the road in the rural countryside. I urged them all to remember that adoption is internationally recognized as the right of any child needing a family and that a continuation of the adoption process under the current circumstances was in the best interest of both the United States and China.

Will I ever know for sure whether or not the HRW report was more than an inexpensive and convenient instrument of American foreign policy

games? Probably not. But I do know for sure that in the radical empiricism of my personal experience in rural China I found a new kind of truth. I found it in the heart-wrenching mixture of trauma and relief written on the faces of the small armies of orphanage workers as they gently handed the babies to their new American parents. I listened to the babies scream bloody murder as they were torn from the embrace of the only love they had known. I walked down the narrow, muddy roads of central Hunan Province with Anna in my arms, past the crowds of hundreds of Chinese peasants—male and female, young and old—holding lanterns high in one hand and with the other making the sign of "thumbs up." And I listened as their soft, smiling whispers of "lucky baby, lucky baby" floated across the mud and garbage as if millions of butterflies were taking flight all at once. No doubt they could not hear or understand my harmonizing whispers in Anna's ear: "lucky mommy, lucky mommy." But it is through my memory of what I think of today as Anna's "Chinese butterfly concert" that I continue to find my surest access to the promises of what could be true *if only* . . . the promises of fiction, of beauty, of art could be kept . . . truth protected . . . while loving Anna . . . and all the other children of the world.

Third "The Personal Is Still the Political" Hypothesis: Could perhaps the positive potentialities of one's own relationship to the global paradigm shift that was postmodernism be overdetermined by the extent to which one is able to question seriously the theories produced totally from within the dominant demographics of one's own life in the transmodern context?

I assume that most of you reading this collection of essays by academic, adoptive parents are yourselves friends of the university, by vocation or avocation, working daily at its center or in its margins, maintaining a stubborn dedication to its noble goals while wondering constantly how academics manage to have any effect on the world at all. I also assume that all of you, as readers and writers in the university community, bring to these essays a sensibility sobered by the events of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath,[4] events that have "transmagnified" the transmodern context I have been evoking. For from within our now thoroughly transmodern context, the transmutation of boundaries between rationality and irrationality, between truth and fiction, between the values of the rich and the poor, has been acutely accelerated. If one has been paying attention at all, one's belief systems, politics and poetics, daily habits and lifelong dreams—not to mention travels, readings, and writings—have more often than not flashed in and out of focus through the tears of a sadness and rage difficult to pin down. For example, how can any of our pre-postmodern thought systems account for the new, yet seemingly ancient warriors seeking shelter in both caves and Marriott Hotels, directions from both the Koran and CNN,

necessities from both the desert and Wal-Mart, community from both their Islamic brotherhood and their Microsoft-driven palm pilots? How can the intellectual habits that we were taught and that we teach account for the new, yet seemingly well-entrenched, brain-twisting world in which our own government helped create (inspire, finance, train, and arm) those same Frankensteinish warriors who have now turned their bitter wrath against their creators' families and communities (not to mention our government's earlier participation in, when not providing major funding for, the bio-weapon research now threatening all of us on a daily basis)?[5]

Perhaps Anna would have been safer growing up in the rice fields or factories or even brothels of central China? What have I done by transporting her to the very heart of transmodern reality?

But let me return to the university and to what is and is not happening there in these new contexts. For example, it would be timely, here and now, to dwell at length upon the question of endangered civil liberties and academic freedom in the current atmosphere of national emergency and its required "appropriate patriotism."[6] But I actually think that the greatest danger facing all of us in the American university is neither right-wing think tanks nor the new kinds of intellectuals they are targeting—the ones who are sifting the sands of historical truth and falsehood, of the historical relationality among experience, authority, and believability.[7] Rather, I think that the greatest danger to the survival of academic inquiry at its most positive and creative is the continuing arrogance of the unconsciously class-bound theoretical/political/aesthetic vision unable to account for any practice that does not follow directly from that vision.

In fact, it is only fairly recently that I have begun to think (rather than just feel) my way through the general arrogance and insecure authoritarianism so often the norm in the university, especially within the protective walls of elite institutions. Some of my recent thinking about this is no doubt guided by some middle-age perspective on my personal class history. But, increasingly, my thoughts have been guided by the communities into which I have been drawn on a daily basis by my still young Chinese American daughter: communities made up of other FCC parents,[8] parents and teachers from Anna's schools, Chinese immigrant friends, and a steady stream of female, underpaid and overworked childcare providers from many different walks of life. For example, it is only through my long conversations, collective activisms, and shared anxieties with demographically diverse groups of parents, K-12 teachers, and babysitters that I have slowly come to appreciate fully how child unfriendly the university still is overall.[9] While things are certainly changing, at Harvard, for instance, children are still remarkably invisible; it is still practically impossible for a woman scholar with a small child to receive tenure; it is still really hard to find

accomplished senior women colleagues with small children at home; and if one does not have a traditional "wife" to keep the children invisible, one is still (if silently) judged as something less than a full member of the intellectual club there.

As I move around among these wildly different communities, my assumptions about the relationships between theory and practice are questioned; my vocabularies are excavated; my capacities for analysis are questioned. I can be impressed by the wisdom of a community's social practice while frustrated by the same community's theoretical naïveté. But then is it wisdom or good mental choreography? Naïveté or rebellion? Is it practice or an alternative conventionality? Theory or pure speculation? My destabilized parental demographics continue to teach me, challenge me, and make it harder than ever for me to stay comfortable with who, what, or where I am for very long.[10]

It is a bright, sunshiny afternoon here in the middle of rural Pennsylvania. Anna and the other little girls she calls her "Chinese sisters" are, for their fifth season together, splashing happily if loudly in the sparkling blue, very chlorinated waters of the reunion celebration backyard pool. We mostly middle-aged parents—who first met in the cold, concrete lobby of a Hong Kong hotel five years ago—sit around the pool staring anxiously at our rowdy daughters while checking in warmly, curiously, awkwardly with each other about what's new since last summer. Inevitably, most of what's new has to do with our girls and their inevitable progress. These proud parental narratives, hardly distinguishable from most such smiling updates, are occasionally interrupted by the alternately tearful or giggling evocations of a shared memory: taking turns all night holding the fevered, hardly breathing baby girl in the steam of a dilapidated Chinese hotel shower stall; each of us encouraging the other to "just go ahead and taste!" the still moving seafood served up cold for breakfast in the middle of flooded rice paddies; our collectively forceful revolt against the Chinese bus driver propelling us and our ten babies at one hundred miles an hour across the "Chinese National Highway" into the path of goats, cows, and even a human or two; communal, uncharacteristically patriotic relief at seeing "The Seal of the United States of America" above the door of the building where our girls would finally be cleared to travel home.

Here we are: businessmen and women, daycare providers, airline baggage handlers, social workers, ministers, accountants, school teachers, car repairmen, homemakers, computer programmers, and one professor. Talking, thinking, feeling together, vaguely aware that we are just one limited example of new transmodern, destabilized demographic practices never before imaginable by the social, economic, and aesthetic theorists

still in charge of describing reality. I smile at the hubbub of our genuine community; I marvel at how unselfconscious I feel here about the mixture of my complex identities; I wonder at how relevant our shared experiential wisdom comes across to those who have come to parenthood in the ordinary way. I vow to shape my professorial theories into forms more resonant with the difficulties of my multiplied practices. I fantasize going to work for some, any organization that struggles to protect children from violence, war, illness, poverty—perhaps Doctors without Borders, perhaps UNICEF. . . . But no. I will after all return to teaching my classes, better aware of how much easier epistemological revolutions are for the young.

And I realize that the only thing I'm sure of in this place and this time is that—no matter what—I will continue to love Anna in this terrible and wonderful transmodern world. And that I welcome with renewed energy each day the privilege of doing so.

NOTES

*Single Mom: We need another term for the growing numbers of educated, unmarried/unpartnered women who decide to raise children more or less by themselves. Being the daughter of a single mother of the 1950s and '60s, I know only too well exactly what the phrase conjures up in the mind of a conventional middle-class person. It has been suggested that we might call ourselves "Mothers by Choice." While I am resistant to the politically and philosophically naïve overuse of the word "choice" in contemporary representations of American political life, the expression is not entirely inaccurate.

*Family of Color: Required for membership: the capacity on the part of any Anglo-white member of that family to think in a political way about how "white" is a color with a long, complex, and not always very gratifying history.

*Paying the Bills: I find it difficult to approach the question of economic class and income in the context of the relative privilege provided a single parent by a tenured academic position in the U.S. And yet, even that level of privilege rapidly becomes a matter of "fuzzy math" when, along with other categories of nonconventional households (especially those dependent on one salary), it is analyzed closely. Suffice it to say here that I do not know even one unmarried/unpartnered woman professional with a small child who does not spend inordinate amounts of her time worrying about—and working many extra hours to earn more—money.

*Writing: On 9 May 1996, I was printing out my new book manuscript and was up to chapter 7 (out of 8) when the cab pulled up in the driveway to take me to the airport to catch my flight to China, to pick up Anna and bring her home with me. Five years later, it was more than sobering to finally pull out the dusty manuscript once again—up to chapter 7 that is. Chapter 8 had gotten lost in the cyber-chaos of my turn of attention towards the all-consuming needs of a small child.

*Politics: There has been no doubt in my mind since at least the early 1990s that "the political" has become since WWII more a question of epistemology than it ever was before. Or at least the informed understanding of postwar "politics" has

acquired a desperate dependency upon epistemological inquiry into "the lessons of history"—the stuff of philosophy.

*Postmodernism: Contrary to its accepted usage in much academic and journalistic writing, for me this word designates quite simply a specific era of human history—roughly 1951-1991—during which there were major paradigm shifts on a global scale. These shifts were produced at the intersections of advanced (post-industrial) capital, science, and technology, new kinds of environmental challenges, formal decolonization, and major movements for human liberation in the "first world," such as the women's movement, the gay and lesbian rights movement, the civil rights movement, etc. Neither simply "good" nor "bad," postmodernism encouraged complex, often destabilized subjectivities, completely new infrastructures for representation, and a chaos of communicability making it increasingly difficult for anyone to sort out what is "true" from what is "false" in any given context. For the record, I hold "poststructuralism" to refer to that couple of generations of intellectuals (primarily in France) that were trying to make sense of these radical transformations—often by embracing, indeed celebrating them for their potential breaks with the "old order of things," the order that had already brought the world to the brink of extinction halfway through the twentieth century. Today, one of the persistent, most vexing debates around the question of postmodernism remains that of our widespread and stubborn political nostalgia for obvious logics of cause and effect, logics without the "white noise" of what the physicists are calling "simultaneous reversibility," especially when it comes to the question of agency. For example, while there is no doubt that the postmodern era has opened up all kinds of potentials for non-white/male/straight/Christian subjects, it is also and simultaneously true that postmodernism itself came about in large part because of the words and actions of formerly disenfranchised subjects.

*Transmodern: Finally, "transmodernism" refers to the post-1991 global situation we are just beginning to recognize as "new" and thoroughly unsettling to most normative, "First-World" thought patterns and assumptions about subjectivity, representation, and communicability. I would argue that as a worldwide epistemological environment, transmodernism is as yet almost impossible to understand. While certain phenomena point to its effects (subjective hybridity rather than doubleness; technological affinity to the computer and its webs rather than to the TV and its broadcasts, etc.), transmodernism is, as yet, barely recognizable—even to those of us who strain to see and hear it.

[1] What I was facing: $15,000-$25,000 total adoption costs ($5,000-$10,000—adoption agency fee; $1,000-$2,000—dossier preparation expenses; $3,000-$6,000—plane tickets, hotels, meals; $3,000—required donation to the orphanage; $3,000-$4,000—other legal fees). How was I going to do it? I had never in my entire life had one penny more than exactly what I needed to live my life in a relatively modest fashion—that is, until 1996 when my private and public worlds collided in unforeseen ways. To make a long story short, I had been one of several feminist academics targeted in the early 1990s by the American, Christian-identified Right Wing. Specifically, I was attacked by the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C., in the person of its well-heeled foot soldier Dinesh DeSouza and in the language of their most successful media campaign to date against the so-

called "politically correct." While battling these forces on the home front, one of my closest colleagues, Susan Suleiman, and I were also viciously attacked in Paris by the Far Right French magazine, *Le Figaro Magazine*. According to *Le Figaro Magazine*, Susan and I had "taken over Harvard" via the politically correct; we were the "new Red Guard," without credentials and evidently to be feared like the plague. With only a little hesitation, Susan and I sued *Le Figaro* for libel and defamation of character. There ensued several years of transatlantic battles in the French courts as well as in the French press—and, yes, we won. For a lucid account of this extended battle, see Susan Suleiman, "Big Bad Wolf? A Short Chapter in the Long Story of Franco-American Relations," *Sites*, 4, No. 1 (Spring 2000), 145-52.

On 1 April 1996, I was in Paris for the final hearing of the case in the French Courts when that very same day I received a picture of Anna faxed to me from China. I had borrowed the money needed for Anna's adoption from a dear friend who believed both in my ability to mother and in my ability to win the *Figaro* case. I won my case that day, and I used my winnings from the verdict to pay back my friend—but with not one single extra penny left over.

[2] Raised in southern Ohio by a working-class single mom, brought to political and cultural consciousness during student travels to every continent except Antarctica in my twenties, academically trained in French literature and theory at Columbia in the mid to late '70s, I came to New England in 1982 ready to put down some new roots. But New England has never stopped feeling "temporary"—too segregated, too upper-crust, too cerebral—and still does in large part feel that way even after twenty years of living in the greater Boston area.

[3] See Kay Johnson's short, elegant, and informed rebuttal of HRW's claims: "Abandoned Children and Orphanage Care in China: A Reaction to Human Rights Watch," in *FCC, Greater NY, NJ, CT*, 3, No. 1 (January 1996). The longer scholarly article, "The Politics of the Revival of Infant Abandonment in China, with Special Reference to Hunan," is in *Population and Development Review*, 22, No. 1 (March 1996), 77-98. I would add that late in the game, even HRW began objecting to the ways in which their report was being sensationalized and cynically manipulated by Western media.

[4] I began writing this essay during the summer before 9/11/01. Finishing it now, some months later, all of my questions about how to love Anna in a transmodern world have taken on a painful urgency.

[5] And these questions are not only "historical," but also "actual." For example, what is it exactly that intellectuals, writers, and teachers are expected to do—from within an appropriately patriotic atmosphere—with all the difficult-to-verify-when-nobody's-talking information about covert CIA and oil cartel activities in the Middle East during the 1980s and 1990s?

[6] For a chilling example of new threats to academic freedom, see the report dated 13 November 2001 by The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a conservative academic group in Washington, D.C., formerly chaired by Lynne Cheney. This report claims, among other things, that "college and university faculty have been the weak link in America's response to the [9/11/01] attack."

[7] I am referring primarily to those intellectuals who self-identify as progressive to radical and are active in the struggle to help students think and feel their way

through new paradigms and alternative narratives for the understanding of human experience. These intellectuals are often grouped together in marginalized programs like Women's Studies, African American and Ethnic Studies, Queer Studies, etc.

[8] There have been approximately 25,000 adoptions from China since 1985. Volunteers from some 100 chapters of Families with Children from China serve as the major intermediaries between many of those mostly Anglo-American families and everything having to do with China and Chinese culture.

[9] No one told me before I became a parent that safe, educationally proactive, full-time childcare in the Boston area costs no less than $1,500 a month. These kinds of costs limit the amount of childcare even well-paid academics can afford. But it did not take more than two or three occasions of bringing Anna along to professional events for me to understand that the perceptual distinction (especially on the part of my male students and colleagues) between "professor" and "mommy" is a disagreeably slippery slope.

[10] It is probably no accident that I have found my longest and most comfortable academic home in a foreign languages and literatures department where the majority of my colleagues consistently embrace intellectual, literary, and cultural hybridity.