



## Sisterhood Is Forever: The Women's Anthology for a New Millennium

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**Thirty years after Robin Morgan's groundbreaking anthology, *Sisterhood Is Powerful* -- named by The American Librarians' Association one of "The 100 Most Influential Books of the Twentieth Century" -- comes this landmark new collection for the twenty-first century.**

*Sisterhood Is Forever* -- with over 60 original essays Morgan commissioned from well-known feminist leaders plus energetic Gen X and Y activists -- is a composite mural of the female experience in America: where we've been, where we are, where we're going. The stunning scope of topics ranges from reproductive, health, and environmental issues to workplace inequities and the economics of women's unpaid labor; from globalization to the politics of aging; from cyberspace, violence against women, and electoral politics to spirituality, the law, the media, and academia. The deliberately audacious mix of contributors spans different generations, races, ethnicities, and sexual preferences: CEOs, housewives, rock stars, farmers, scientists, prostituted women, politicians, women in prison, firefighters, disability activists, artists, flight attendants, an army general, an astronaut, an anchorwoman, even a pair of teens who edit a girls' magazine. Each article celebrates the writer's personal voice -- her humor, passion, anger, and the integrity of her perspective -- while offering the latest data on women's status, political analysis, new "how-to" tools for activism, and visionary yet practical strategies for the future -- strategies needed now more than ever. Robin Morgan's own contributions are everything her readers expect: prophetic, powerfully argued, unsentimentally lyrical. From her introduction: "The book you hold in your hands is a tool for the future -- a future also in your hands." •

**Edna Acosta-Belén • Carol J. Adams • Margot Adler • Natalie Angier • Ellen Appel-Bronstein • Mary Baird • Brenda Berkman • Christine E. Bose • Kathy Boudin • Ellen Bravo • Vednita Carter • Wendy Chavkin • Kimberlé Crenshaw • Gail Dines • Paula DiPerna • Helen Drusine • Andrea Dworkin • Eve Ensler • Barbara Findlen • Mary Foley • Patricia Friend • Theresa Funiciello • Carol Gilligan • Sara K. Gould • Ana Grossman The Guerrilla Girls • Beverly Guy-Sheftall • Kathleen Hanna • Laura Hershey • Anita Hill • Florence Howe • Donna M. Hughes • Karla Jay • Mae C. Jemison • Carol Jenkins • Claudia J. Kennedy • Alice Kessler-Harris Clara Sue Kidwell •**

**Frances Kissling • Sandy Lerner • Suzanne Braun Levine • Barbara Macdonald • Catharine A. MacKinnon Jane Roland Martin • Debra Michals • Robin Morgan Jessica Neuwirth • Judy Norsigian • Eleanor Holmes Norton • Grace Paley • Emma Peters-Axtell Cynthia Rich Amy Richards • Cecile Richards Carolyn Sachs • Marianne Schnall • Pat Schroeder • Patricia Silverthorn • Eleanor Smeal Roslyn D. Smith Gloria Steinem Mary Thom • Jasmine Victoria • Faye Wattleton • Marie Wilson • Helen Zia**

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

This book, the third in an anthology series on women's history and feminism (after 1970's *Sisterhood Is Powerful* and 1984's *Sisterhood Is Global*), is as multifaceted and compelling as the issues it explores. Theorist, activist and writer Morgan begins and ends the hefty tome with her own vibrant writing: a stirring introduction and concluding letters to "vintage feminists" and "younger women" alike about their role in protecting and expanding their rights. The bulk of the book is a collection of some 60 essays-some factual and scholarly, others narrative and poignant-addressing women's issues from a wide scope of angles. There's a piece by Gloria Steinem about how antifeminism plays itself out in the media, a rousing cry to end sexual harassment by Anita Hill and a meditation on women's role in farming and agriculture by Carolyn Sachs. Beverly Guy-Sheftall writes on the legacy of black feminism; Natalie Angier stresses that feminism and its impulses are "part of human nature"; and Eve Ensler sings the praises of theater as "a sacred home for women." Morgan wisely offers commentary from liberal and conservative feminists alike, and her book is a smart, telling testament to how far women have come and where they will go.

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Biologically Correct

Natalie Angier

In all my years as a science writer, I've sought to encourage friends, relatives, and other members of the laity not to be so afraid of science. Science doesn't belong only to scientists, I've exhorted, any more than art belongs only to artists, or politics to the Eeyores and Dumbos of Washington, D.C. Science is the property of the human race. It's one of our greatest achievements, and it doesn't take nearly as much effort as nonscientists believe to become reasonably literate in a particular discipline, to the point where you may even venture an opinion on, say, the rights of a U.S. consumer to drive an SUV, global warming be damned, versus the rights of a citizen of Bangladesh to continue living above sea level.

But I'm afraid that when it comes to my most cherished of subjects, evolutionary biology, the concept of scientific populism has been taken too far. It seems practically everybody is now an amateur Darwinist, willing to speculate grandly on the deep Plio-Pleistocene origins of all modern vices known to man, woman, or Tony Soprano. Lawyers bring evolutionary reasoning into the courtroom. Psychologists discuss the evolutionary basis of depression, neuroticism, anorexia, alcoholism, a wicked sweet tooth. Theologians insist the human brain evolved to believe in god, who may or may not return the favor by believing in evolution.

Now, I don't believe evolution is a "theory," any more than I believe gravity and the second law of thermodynamics are theories. I consider myself a Darwinist right down to my DNA, which I'm happy to share 98.5 percent of with our cousins, the chimpanzees. But it's one thing to revel in Darwin's magnificent, overarching theory of evolution by natural selection, and another to play Spin-the-HMS *Beagle* of a Saturday night and call the results "science." Yet to my disgust and occasionally crippling sense of despair, many of the slap-happy, data-free Darwinesque theory-ettes to emerge in recent years have been widely dispensed and accepted, to the point where they, too, are considered the biological equivalents of E=MC2. And nowhere has the acceptance of evolution-tinged notions been greater, more credulous, and more insidious than for those purporting to explain the supposed differences between the sexes. Darwinophiles, particularly

the subspecies who label themselves "evolutionary psychologists," love to talk about the gulf that separates men and women. Everywhere I turn, there they are: thematic variations of the dreary old ditty, "Higgamus hoggamus/women are monogamous; hoggamus, higgamus/men are polygamous." Or, in another mildewed rendering: men are ardent, women coy. Or how about: men want quantity, women quality. Or take that: men want sex, women want love. Evolutionary psychology has newly proved old verities to be true. Not necessarily with data, mind you -- how much data do you need to prove the obvious? -- but with nifty new theoretical constructs and sufficiently high jargon-wattage terminology to lend a spangle of rigor to the field.

For example, evolutionary psychologists (evo psychos) love to talk about "mental modules," little cerebral fiefdoms that supposedly operate independently and subliminally to prevent us from behaving in the rational, integrated, thoughtful manner that we deluded femi-Nazi types might strive to accomplish. As a result of these finely honed modules, which evo psychos liken to the separate tools in a Swiss army knife, we will do things that may seem illogical and even counterproductive to our lives overall -- say, by choosing a dumb mate just because he's tall or she has big breasts and our "mate-finding" module sees the person as a bearer of good genes or a fecund womb, thus the best tool for the job of reproducing. So what if our intellectual or kinship-bonding modules disapprove of what our mate-finding module brought home? And so what if there is as yet no evidence for the existence of these mental modules? Evo psychos also emphasize the "differential reproductive potential" between men and women, transmutating the numeric discrepancy between a man's sperm cells and a woman's egg cells into any and all sex-linked inequities you care to mention: the rarity of female CEOs or Nobel laureates; the spareness of the average female's salary; the disparity in gumption, motion, get-up-and-go-tion.

No longer are the "evolved" differences between men and women presumed hypothetical until proven actual, as they might have been as recently as the early 1990s; now they are pretty much post-factual. For example, in his essay "The End of Courtship," bioethicist Leon Kass (chosen by President George W. Bush to head a national bioethics advisory panel), quotes the tired hoggamus doggerel, declaring -- without apology, footnote, or citation -- that "Ogden Nash had it right." (Memo to Kass: the verse was written by William James.) This keeper of the nation's moral compass asserts that a "natural obstacle" to courtship and marriage is "the deeply ingrained, natural waywardness and unruliness of the human male." One can make a "good case," Kass continues, "that biblical religion is, not least, an attempt to domesticate male sexuality and male erotic longings," although how good a case depends on whether you consider an Old Testament hero like King Solomon, who had 700 wives and 300 concubines, to be an exemplar of domesticated masculinity. As for modern women, Kass pities us as we hop unnaturally from bed to uncommitted bed, "living their most fertile years neither in the homes of their fathers nor their husbands." Far from enjoying "sexual liberation," he says, we are awash in quiet desperation, "unprotected, lonely, and out of sync with their inborn nature."

Apart from the general yuckiness of Kass's aspartame-tainted nostalgia, I wouldn't mind terribly if such self-styled neo-Darwinists restricted their pontificating to insisting that men are, on average, more sexually rapacious and prone to philandering than women. I don't believe that claim, and in fact some evidence indicates otherwise: while performing routine prenatal screening tests for the presence of disease genes, genetic counselors have found incidentally that anywhere from

5 to 15 percent of babies are fathered by somebody other than the mother's husband -- and surely not all these women were forced against their "inborn nature" into adulterous copulations.

Nevertheless, I can keep my erotic longings to myself, and if it makes a fellow feel better to insist that his are bigger and more unruly than mine, he can insist away. What is far more disturbing, and what I cannot accept without mounting my soapbox for a lusty rant, is the tendency of the evo-psycho crowd to attribute to men not only greater sexual ardor, but greater ardor for *life*. Kass writes that men are not only innate sexual

"predators," but are also "naturally more restless and ambitious than women; lacking women's powerful and immediate link to life's generative answer to mortality, men flee from the fear of death into heroic deed, great quests, or sheer distraction after distraction."

Others are even more presumptuous. On a computer list populated by academic sex researchers, one member recently asked for commentary about the following quote from an unnamed source:

As a consequence of differential evolutionary histories, human genetic males, on average, differ from genetic females in fundamental behavioral ways. Males are more competitive, aggressive, creative, and inquisitive than females. These behavioral characteristics are evident throughout human societies to one degree or the other, and in aggregate are irrefutable. These average differences are clearly reflected in the dominance and achievements of males over the course of human history in politics, architecture, science, technology, philosophy, and literature, among other areas of human activity and intellectual concentration. It is reasonable to posit that these average differences between human males and females are functions of the differential environmental demands human males encountered over tens of thousands of years in human evolution. Today these differences are founded in the genetic and hormonal constitution of the human male.

My reaction on reading this was, *Huh? Are you joking?* Men by their "genetic and hormonal constitution," are more "creative" and "inquisitive" than women? Sez who? Sez *what* data? To my dismay, other members of the list were unperturbed. "It is pretty standard evolutionary psychology of sex differences," shrugged one professor, referring to various popular books about evolutionary psychology, including the bluntly titled, *Why Men Rule: A Theory of Male Dominance*. Woe to this professor's female students if he conveys to them his settled opinion that males have a hardwired advantage in exactly those traits necessary to excel in his class. Well, every trait except cleavage.

I don't mean to be flip and sarcastic. OK, I do. But I also want to express my frustration at how readily and arrogantly so much evolutionary blather can be bandied about, with hardly a whimper of complaint or an attempt at alternative interpretation. Remember, I'm a big fan of Darwinism, convinced that by considering the deep roots of our past we can enrich our lives now, if only because understanding always trumps ignorance and denial. I also believe that evolutionary biology is a growth industry, and that we will be seeing ever more effort, inside and outside of academia, to examine contemporary human behavior from a Darwinian perspective. Fine. But maybe we shouldn't leave the analysis to a small, self-referential cabal of evolutionary psychologists, who attempt to reify the status quo with a few sweeping, simplistic, binary formulations.

Maybe we should seek to use Darwinian principles to our own nefarious ends -- beginning with a fresh understanding of feminist impulses. Many mainstream neo-Darwinists try to dismiss feminism: "We're scientists! We seek the truth about human nature, however unpleasant," they self-righteously maintain. "We must resist the forces of 'political correctness' and get at the truth."

But what this smug dismissal fails to address is the fact that *feminism and its attendant egalitarian impulses are very much part of human nature*. Hence, any system that purports to explain the primal origins of our desires must also explain why any of us want to be feminists in the first place. I would argue that *feminism is an evolved trait* -- part of the puzzle to be solved, not a distraction from it. If it takes evolutionary biologists who double as feminists to tackle this particular puzzle piece, they can fairly be said to be at their most "scientific" just when evo-psycho critics are pooh-poohing them for being driven by "political" motives.

Some scientists do see the need to move beyond clichés toward a more nuanced picture of human motivation, a recognition of the suppleness of human nature, the capacity for men and women to adjust their

social and reproductive strategies as conditions around them change. Male as well as female scientists lately have argued for broadening the field of evolutionary psychology to incorporate the notion that our psychology does in fact evolve, is designed to evolve, even in the absence of genetic evolution. There is a reason why we have managed, for better or worse, to colonize virtually every habitat on the earth's surface, and to turn the planet and its glorious diversity into a vast playground for Homo sapiens. It's because we are omnivores in every sense of the word -- nutritionally, culturally, behaviorally. Any theoretical framework that slights our plasticity, that declares all or most men to be like this, and all or most women to be like that, is a framework fit only for kindling.

Here's an example of rigid absolutism, again from Sexnet, which made me run for my matchbook. A hard-core evolutionary psychologist presented his little gedanken, then kindly told us just how to gedank about it: "There is a contest," he wrote. "If you win you get either of two prizes: unlimited store credit at Saks Fifth Avenue for a 10-day period -- that is, you can have anything you can walk away with -- or have 10 extremely attractive total strangers of the preferred sex, a different one each night, come to your room, rip your clothes off, and have mad sex with you. I guarantee you that close to 100 percent of young men will choose the latter, and close to 100 percent (or literally 100 percent) of women, young or older, will choose the former."

The old Sex vs. Saks dilemma. When I read this, I thought, *"Neither* of the above, sir." I won't go into what my fantasy prize might be -- or might have been in the days when I was a single woman without kids -- but these boxes don't hold me and never did. Nor do they hold a lot of people, including a lot of good evolutionary scientists. I expressed my annoyance to David Sloan Wilson of the State University of New York at Binghamton, a scientist I mostly adore (with the exception of his occasional fits of didacticism that seem endemic to the scientific trade). Wilson has criticized much of the current evo-psycho literature while still considering himself an evolutionary psychologist, so I knew he'd sympathize with my desire for a more inclusive, expansive approach to understanding the evolution of human nature. I sent him the gedanken, and described my surly feelings about it. Darwin bless him for his delicious reply: "Your 'Neither of the above' answer can be given a serious scientific formulation. The evolutionary psychology view assumes that *all* resources for women flow through men, leaving only the 'strategies' of 'find the best husband' or 'maximize your returns from sexual favors.' The option that is not listed is 'self-determination,' or calling one's own shots. With this simple addition, feminism finds an evolutionary voice capable of silencing the evolutionary psychology voice on its own turf." Wilson then paused for a pious commercial break, warning me that whenever I sought to argue against "the narrow evolutionary psychology view, or any other objectionable evolutionary theory of human behavior," I must do so from an evolutionary perspective of my own, lest I "leave the opposition holding the banner of Darwinism," crowing about the stupidity of their critics for rejecting evolution altogether. "As an aside," Wilson went on, "even in its shriveled form the Sex vs. Saks experiment wouldn't work. Any guy with a brain (an oxymoron in most cases) would choose the Saks option and amass so much stuff over 10 days that he could have more than 10 women long enough to actually impregnate them. If he could choose Abercrombie & Fitch instead of Saks, he'd probably throw it all away for a single fishing pole. The boneheads who chose the women would probably have second thoughts by night 5 and would beg numbers 8, 9, and 10 to watch TV instead of having sex." In the words of George Bernard Shaw, Wilson concluded, "They are barbarians who mistake their own customs for human nature."

What can we do to reclaim the blessed turf of Darwinism? How can we think afresh about our contemporary selves in the light of several million years of thrashing around in the grim and shank of nature? Let me toss out a few ideas I feel have been neglected in most pop renditions of neo-evo. Let me try, to the best of my ability as a serious if not officially credentialed Darwin hobbyist, to present an ancestral Eve who had greater or at least more complex aims in life than a Stone Age shopping spree.

I'll start with the answer I give whenever anybody asks me what I think the real, primal, non-negotiable

differences between men and women may be. I preface my response by claiming the ignorance we all suffer under in any discussion of the roots of something as intangible and free of fossil evidence as human nature. But there is one big difference -- which amounts to an amusing similarity, with profound consequences. A woman, like any female primate, has two core desires. First, access to resources, which means food, shelter, and -- ever since we were so rudely and coldly depilated -- clothing, for herself and her young. Second, control over her sex life and her reproduction. What are a man's core desires? He, too, wants access to resources and control over the means of reproduction, which, in the absence of male parthenogenesis, means control over women. There's nothing *inherently* wrong with this desire. But the fact that women and men are tussling over the same piece of valuable real estate -- the female body -- means that the tedious, endlessly vivisected "war between the sexes" is pretty much built into the system. I'm by no means arguing that men and women can never get along. The best of friends and allies are often cunning competitors. Consider the Greek warriors in the *Iliad* who, during intermissions in the Trojan War, could think of no zestier way to spend their leisure than holding mini-Olympics to see who could run the fastest, throw the farthest, jump the highest -- all in the nude, no less. Recall as well that even the most seemingly like-minded, bodily bonded of dyads, mother and infant, engage in subtle conflicts. The fetus wants to grow very big very fast, while the mother wants to keep its dimensions compact and manageable to preserve her body for future trials, which is why some fetus-specific genes are designed to enhance the growth of the placenta, and the maternal equivalents of those genes help suppress placental ambitions. The child wants to stay on the breast year after year, the better to forestall births of rival siblings through the ovulatory suppression that nursing imparts; the mother wants to wean her greedy suckler and maybe have a few more kids without depleting her calcium stores and risking every osteocyte in her body.

Yet such subconscious clashes of interest do not mean that mother and young are "really" enemies rather than the great lovers they often appear to be. Instead, they are living creatures, bound together by fourteen-carat compromise, trading up *Paradise Lost* for *Paradox Found*, and relishing the match. So, too, can men and women love each other wildly without necessarily, or even desirably, seeing eye to eye -- provided everyone's eyes are wide and gimlet.

What the inherent dialectic of the sexes does mean is that men and women may have differing definitions of freedom. Evo psychos, opining from their standard masculinist perspective, emphasize the clash between a man's "restlessness" and a woman's desire for "commitment," as exemplified by the Leon Kass passage quoted above -- the assumption being that men need freedom and women do not. But if you take a more female-primate point of view, you see that quite often it is the woman who wants her freedom, and the man, or men collectively, who are determined to circumscribe her. A woman may want freedom to walk by herself down the street, just as a female chimpanzee may have the urge to move from denuded bush *A* to bursting berry patch *B*; but if the wayfarer happens to be a young urban *Homo sapien*, she will be harassed en route more mercilessly than any free-ranging ape. A woman may also want the opportunity to exercise that old gift of Mother Nature known as female choice -- to socialize, flirt, and, if the chemistry fits, to mate with the men she likes while avoiding those she does not.

But think of how many women are abused and beaten, sometimes hunted down and killed, by men who have either fallen off the women's A list, often because they were too aggressively possessive, or never made it to the chosen column in the first place.<sup>3</sup> Many men play within the bounds of female choice and seek to please the women they find pleasing, just as women usually strive to please the men by whom they themselves hope to be chosen. But sometimes a man has little patience for the strictures of female choice; he wants access to the means of personal perpetuity that only a female body can give him, so whack smack get over here bitch! Who, in these cases, is seeking to "domesticate" whom, and who most fearful of being barred from connubial bliss?

Evo psychos are well aware of the potential ferocity of male sexual jealousy; they incorporate the power of that jealousy into many of their theories about differing male and female strategies. But they fail to admit that male jealousy exists because women are, whether they take the tag or spurn it, born feminists. Women, like men, want the freedom to roam, explore, experiment -- all desires to be expected in a highly intelligent, inquisitive, shrewd, opportunistic, social species. It's not "out of sync" with our "nature" to want autonomy. The individual is the reproductive unit. Through the fantastic efforts of eons of evolution, the individual is born to like its particular genome, to want to get as much of that genome into the population as possible. The individual does not like being pushed around, deprived of choice, enslaved. The individual tends to chafe against excessive oppression. This is not "political correctness." This is common sense, Darwinian sense; our past, present, and future sense.

Then there is the bracing sense of dollars and cents. Not only do women yearn for the plain old primate liberty to come and go, pick and choose. Protestations of Kass and company notwithstanding, women are also born ambitious: they want social power, respect, admiration. Such desires are not the invention of the modern feminist movement. They are our birthright, or burden, as a profoundly social species, in which personal power translates into all the goodies of life. Nor is the lust for acclaim and high rank in contradistinction to a woman's more familiar "nurturing" side. The two impulses -- to succeed in society, and to care for your children -- are expressions of the same drive. A good mother is a powerful mother. A good mother can accrue resources for her young, and a really good mother can outcompete other mothers in the neighborhood, thereby ensuring that her children will do really well, while the children of less ambitious stock skulk around the back forest smoking acanthus leaves before getting picked off by a leopard.

The inherent ambitiousness of women can be seen in any country where women are not confined to home or *burqa*. At the slightest opportunity, women flock to schools, so much so that university officials in the United States bemoan the comparative lack of male faces in the classroom. Women take to the professions with astonishing ease: ever since the contemporary feminist movement helped open heretofore forbidden trades to women, the number of female doctors and lawyers has jumped from a few percent to nearly 50 percent, and woman-owned businesses are the fastest growing sector of our society.<sup>4</sup> Despite media gloatographies about the women who yearn to stay at home and be supported by a man, surveys repeatedly show that most employed women like earning a paycheck.

Yet despite the evidence, evo-bloviators have ignored or denied the existence of women's ambition. Behind this neglect are a couple of conceptual chestnuts in serious need of roasting.

First is the idea that males and females have wildly different reproductive prospects. By this notion, males tend to fall on either end of the reproductive scale, as "zeroes" or "heroes," with most failing utterly to reproduce, and a minority of lucky stiffs monopolizing most of the females and siring most of the young. In contrast, females have been viewed as interchangeable, bearing more or less the same number of offspring and being more or less similarly talented in mothering skills. Hence, males had a strong spur to be hyperambitious and competitive, while females supposedly did best by keeping a low profile, busying themselves with a predictable number of bairns.

Recent research, including extensive paternity studies using DNA fingerprinting techniques, has skewered this folklore. As it turns out, the alpha males in many species breed fewer young than presumed, and the supposed duds sometimes prove spermic studs. Among females, on the other hand, the discrepancy in fruitfulness is far greater than previously believed. Some females are much better at bearing and rearing young than others, and those supermoms, as it happens, are the powerhouses of their societies. For example, Flo, a member of the Gombe chimpanzee troop long studied by Jane Goodall, was the most prolific female chimp of all time. She reared all but one of her nine infants to adulthood, a success rate at least twice that for

the average chimpanzee mother. Flo also happened to be the most powerful female chimpanzee any researcher has ever observed. She could displace virtually any other chimpanzee -- save the highest ranking, much larger males -- from a prize feeding site, and her subordinates competed for the chance to groom her. So powerful was Flo that her daughters managed to stay in their birthplace rather than being forced to migrate at puberty as female chimps usually are; those daughters in turn became powerful, prolific matriarchs.

"Mother chimps like Flo were not simply doting nurturers but entrepreneurial dynasts as well," writes the primatologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy in her marvelous book, *Mother Nature: Maternal Instincts and How They Shape the Human Species* (Pantheon, 1999). "A female's quest for status -- her ambition, if you will -- has become inseparable from her ability to keep her offspring and grand-offspring alive." As Hrdy sees it, a generalized striving for local clout was programmed into the primate female's psyche long ago, the result of a convergence between high status and successful motherhood.

Another reason why the evo psychos have shortchanged female striving stems from their assumption that whatever status and power women have sought they sought secondhand, by coupling with strong, ambitious, powerful men. This supposition is part of the larger tenet that women have a much greater need for men than any other female primate has for her male counterpart. The prolonged helplessness of the human infant (the story goes) means that a woman can't rear it alone; hence the evolution of love, romance, and committed fathers. It's true that women need help to rear their young, much more help than any other female ape requires. But the most recent anthropological evidence strongly suggests that women get such help from many quarters: from men, from relatives, from their older children. In some traditional cultures, senior females are indispensable to the welfare of their young kin; in others, women rely more on the assistance of brothers, uncles, and male cousins than on the take-home prey of their mates; elsewhere, women accept contributions from a number of different consorts. As anthropologist Meredith F. Small notes in *Kids: How Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Raise Our Children* (Doubleday, 2001), about 90 percent of childcare in the world is performed by older siblings.

In sum, women through the ages and across the world's stages have been remarkably creative and adaptable when seeking solutions to the childcare crisis. We have always lived in a nanny state of one sort or another. For their part, men do not always display the hallmarks of devoted fatherhood. As Geoffrey F. Miller has described in *The Mating Mind: How Sexual Choice Shaped the Evolution of Human Nature* (Doubleday, 2000), much of the behavior we view as paternal may be a courtship display, a way of pleasing one's current mate and perhaps attracting the attention of other females in the vicinity. If good fathering conduct were driven by the same thing as is maternal behavior -- a desire to improve one's offspring's chances of survival -- why, Miller asks, would so many fathers end up as deadbeat dads who invest virtually nothing in the children of women they have divorced or abandoned? After all, DNA paternity testing is a ridiculously recent invention, and the grim male fears synopsized by the couplet, "Mother's baby/Father's maybe" are not to be dismissed out of hand.

If paternity uncertainty bred waffling fathers prone to bolting from their responsibilities, we would expect as a corollary women who likewise waffled about pinning their future and their children's welfare to one man, however alpha. How foolish a woman would be to forsake any attempt at gaining a degree of personal power or cultivating a reliable route to resources, simply for the opportunity to marry an ambitious man who could easily abandon her, be killed while out hunting, or simply prove to be a fraud. It's tempting to think that women have indeed "evolved" to hook their prospects to their mates, because we see as much in the annals of history -- not to mention the pages of Jane Austen -- but in fact the condition of extreme female dependency on husbands is very recent, and depends for its maintenance on a strong set of laws making divorce difficult and punishing deadbeatism. As we've seen in recent decades of loosened divorce laws,

women who cling to the model of complete economic reliance on a husband suffer terrible financial hardship when the marriage breaks up, and they and their children are all too likely to be cast into poverty. That such a risky "my man is my meal ticket" strategy could have arisen and persisted in prehistory, in the absence of a legal system and in the face of chronic threats of famine, seems to me frankly laughable. Better to be ambitious, cunning, and, yes, creative, competitive, and aggressive. Better to earn your degree, learn a trade, get a paycheck, kiss it, and sock it away. If you're going to bank on anything, it might as well be a bank.

Natalie Angier is a best-selling author and Pulitzer Prizewinning science writer for *The New York Times*. Previously, she has been senior science writer for *Time* magazine, an editor at the women's business magazine, *Savvy*, and a professor at New York University's Graduate Program in Science and Environmental Reporting. Her first book, *Natural Obsessions* (Houghton Mifflin), an inside look at the world of cancer research, was named a notable book of the year by *The New York Times* and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). In 1990, she began working for *The New York Times*; the following year, she won a Pulitzer in the category of beat reporting, for a series of articles on a wide array of scientific topics, from the biology of scorpions, to the astonishing prevalence of infidelity in the animal kingdom. Among her other awards are the AAAS-Westinghouse award for excellence in science journalism, and the Lewis Thomas Award for distinguished writing in the life sciences. Her second book, *The Beauty of the Beastly* (Houghton Mifflin), has been translated into eight languages. Her latest, *Woman: An Intimate Geography* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999; Anchor Vintage paperback, 2000), was a bestseller, a National Book Award finalist, winner of a Maggie Award from the Planned Parenthood Federation, and named one of the best books of the year by the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, and other major media. She is the editor of *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2002* (Houghton Mifflin). Her writing has appeared in numerous periodicals ranging from the *Atlantic Monthly* to *Natural History*, from *Cosmopolitan* to *Ms.*

#### Suggested Further Reading

Ehrlich, Paul R. *Human Natures: Genes, Cultures, and Human Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2000.

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Jolly, Alison. *Lucy's Legacy: Sex and Intelligence in Human Evolution*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Rose, Hilary, and Steven Rose, eds. *Alas, Poor Darwin: Arguments Against Evolutionary Psychology*. New York: Random House, 2000.

Small, Meredith F. *What's Love Got to Do with It? The Evolution of Human Mating*. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

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