

the socio-political rhetoric shaping Irish notions of identity in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The 2004 citizenship referendum, which resulted in the passage of the 27th Amendment to the Constitution, revoked the birthright previously held by all people born on Irish soil, regardless of parental citizenship. This debate received only a brief mention in the conclusion, but greater consideration of it would have enriched earlier discussions of ART and the implications of using donor gametes.

Infertility, Allison argues, “provides a medium through which we can challenge not only the biological designation of sex and reproduction but the multiple layers of meaning that biology itself entails” (5). *Motherhood and Infertility in Ireland* succeeds in this endeavor, offering a nuanced and enriched understanding of both the impact of infertility and the ways in which women claim maternal identities.

Twice in a Blue Moon

Joyce Harries

Edmonton, AB: Spotted Cow Press, 2007.

REVIEWED BY DORSÍA SMITH SILVA

Filled with gracious candor, *Twice in a Blue Moon* by Joyce Harries replicates the stages of life in its five sections: “Beginnings,” “Middles,” “Endings,” “and Goings On,” and “Beginnings Again.” As she encourages readers to follow her journey, Harries cycles through her experiences of childhood, marriage, motherhood, widowhood, grandparenthood, and aging. Like a rare blue moon, Harries shines in her poetic voice, which is only made richer with her seventy-nine years of living.

The initial poem of the complication, “What If” begs the poignant questions, “What if we could stop time and remain at a certain age? Which age would we choose?” Harries ponders if she should “stall / at sixteen” when she “knew so little,” but thought that she “knew so much.” As she contends that her generation had to confront the aftermath of War World II, Harries openly finds that today’s youth must face the horrific atrocities of “ecological disasters / and terrorists.” This unflinchingly honesty is carried throughout the remainder of the poem as Harries confronts the deaths of her young son and husband, menopause, and pain of arthritis. Nonetheless, Harries calls herself fortunate to have surpassed these hardships—ready to “rejoice, celebrate / even blossom occasionally.”

“Beginnings,” “Middles,” and “Endings” weave Harries’ experiences as a child, wife, mother, and widower. “At the Hospital” best encapsulates Harries’ memories as she recalls the death of her mother along with their tea parties, conversations about boys, and aging legs. When she ends the poem with the tenuous loss of her mother by stating “and away she went,” Harries allows readers to witness her truth-telling with compelling tenderness. This conmingling of loss and sentiment is also effortlessly executed when Harries recalls her husband’s death from a massive heart attack in “Did He Know?” and when she describes the parting of her eldest son in “Holding Hands.”

The last two sections, “and Goings On” and “Beginnings Again,” primarily turn towards the realities of motherhood. Harries enchants with the purity of the personal and wit in “How to Leave Mothering.” She questions if a mother actually stops being a mother when she has adult children. After reaching the conclusion that mothering is a lifetime profession, Harries quips that mothers “bite their tongue” as their children age. Similarly, Harries explores her role as a mother when her son criticizes her poetic depictions of their family in “The Critic.” When her son tells her to shred her writing because she sounds “like someone she is not,” Harries courageously confronts his disapproval to conclude that her writing not only honors her roles as a wife and mother, but allows her to utilize a poetic license that welcomes her familial relationships.

By the time readers are introduced to “Today I Took My Daughter’s Weddings and Engagement Rings to a Pawn Shop,” they are keenly aware of Harries’ preserving responsibility to protect and guide her children. Instead of lamenting that her daughter’s marriage has ended, Harries wishes that her daughter had “asked years ago” about selling her rings and thinks these rings were “wrong the start / and worn too long / much too long.” Harries’ persistence in replicating frank perspectives tempered by sentiment accentuate her ability to bring readers into the various folds of her life. By creating this refreshing and welcoming process, Harries’ poems effectively bring a lively dynamism that enthralls readers.