

BOOK REVIEWS

I also appreciated Frye's contemplations about lost relationships in her life. She asks, who are we when people leave our lives? How do we survive when people betray us, leave unexpectedly or slowly distance themselves? Although such chasms leave us flummoxed, she asserts that a re-shaking of the kaleidoscope allows a perspective that was not seen prior, and thus these aforementioned difficult absences actually "nourished the present" (286). She shows us that lost relationships do not deplete us, but rather those people continue to speak into our lives in unique ways, showing that we are stronger, more capable and more resilient than we imagined. It is in such forthright analyses that Frye illuminates layers of internal female strength, often buried beneath our scarred surfaces.

I connected on many levels to her deconstruction of feminism, academia, and motherhood; however, her constant railing against her ex-husband left me feeling uneasy. I questioned whether all the vitriolic details were necessary or just bitter aftereffects of her divorce. It wasn't until long after I was finished reading that I recognized that her penned vulnerability accomplished her goal to expose her wounds in order that I might examine my own. As such, I turned every page reflecting on whether my marriage had similar schisms, how my children were impacted by me, and if all of my own goals could be fully actualized.

It is in the last few pages, reflecting on the birth of her new grandson in London, that Frye seems to stop such questioning, and begins to enjoy the journey as a process, rather than an end. Looking up at the moon, eclipsed by clouds (thus the title of her memoir) she notices that the changing light illuminates areas not exposed prior. Frye finds that in this new birth, her discordant life pieces seem to have found unity and meaning. Maybe that is the true value in this memoir: that all of us can find change, not as completely daunting, but rather as a chance to start anew.

Anybody's Miracle

Laura Hercher

Wellfleet, MA: Herring River Press, 2013

REVIEWED BY RITA BODE

In *Anybody's Miracle*, Laura Hercher explores the desire for parenthood, and the challenges and emotions that parenthood evokes, both familiar and unexpected. Her handling of these subjects considers the ethical and legal is-

sues that shifting societal norms and evolving reproductive technologies are raising.

Hercher has published scholarly articles in her area of expertise – she is a genetic counsellor and faculty member in the Genetics Program at Sarah Lawrence College – but *Anybody's Miracle* is her first novel. While she draws on her professional background, the novel is a successful work of fiction with vivid characters and strong story lines.

Anybody's Miracle centres on three groups of characters: Robin and John are a young middle-class couple having difficulty conceiving. Hercher depicts them from Robin's point-of-view. Childless, Robin sees children everywhere. After she and John undergo invitro fertilization, Robin becomes pregnant, and despite a serious complication that threatens her life, she refuses to terminate her pregnancy. Her risk ends happily and she gives birth to identical twin boys.

The next group consists, initially, of two friends, Lindsay and Meredith, as Meredith accompanies Lindsay to China to bring back Lindsay's adopted baby girl, Lily. Through Lindsay, Hercher introduces the topic of foreign, cross-cultural and cross-racial adoptions, but Meredith and her future family become the real link to the novel's other groups. The third group is another couple: Robin's brother, Mickey, a social activist lawyer, and his partner, Caleb, who yearns for a family, while determinedly refusing to tell his parents about his homosexuality.

In bringing these groups together, Hercher humanizes central ethical questions about the beginnings of life, genetic connections, parent and child bonds, and parental and relational rights. Robin and John donate their surplus embryos for reproductive purposes, the only option that Robin's religious convictions will tolerate. Her obsession with the remaining embryos—she sees them as her children's "brothers and sisters" (102)—especially as she longs for a daughter, results in some bizarre behaviour, and leads her to identify a little girl who might be theirs biologically. She briefly meets the child's mother who turns out to be Lindsay's friend, Meredith. That Meredith and her husband owe their daughter Sophie's birth to Robin's and John's embryo is confirmed when Sophie is diagnosed with leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant. Through the reproductive clinic's intervention, Robin and John have their twins tested, and when one is a match, they agree to the procedure to save Sophie, but misunderstandings ensue when Meredith recognizes Robin as the woman she suspected of stalking Sophie.

Meredith's fear that Robin and John may try to claim Sophie since she is biologically theirs does not seem so far-fetched in light of Robin's attachment to the embryos. Both families hire lawyers. Knowing these plot details detracts little from the novel for the focus throughout is on how the characters