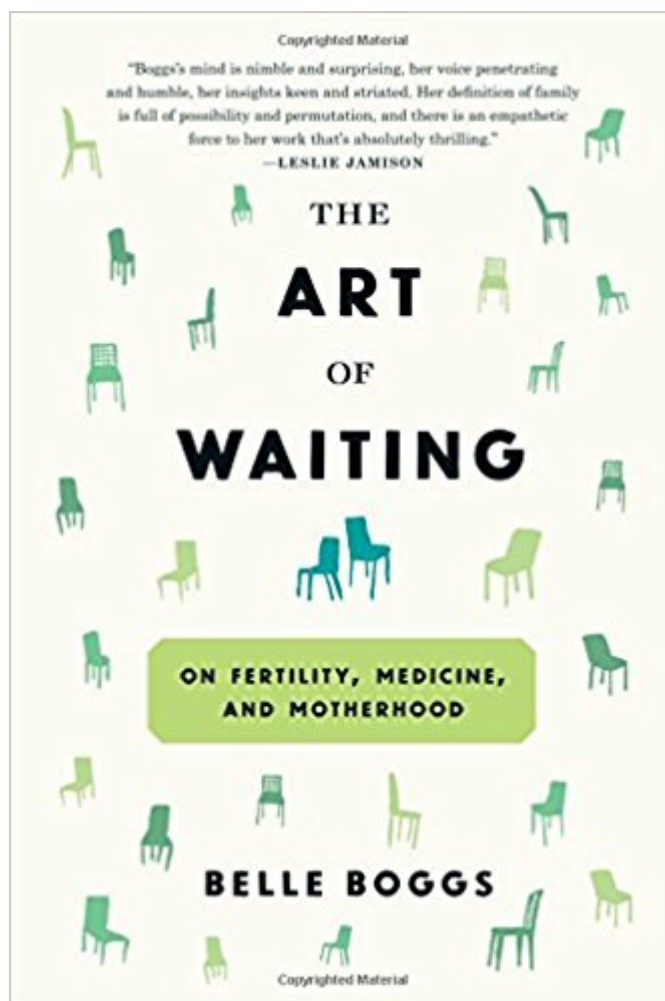


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# The Art Of Waiting: On Fertility, Medicine, And Motherhood



## Synopsis

A brilliant exploration of the natural, medical, psychological, and political facets of fertility. When Belle Boggs's "The Art of Waiting" was published in Orion in 2012, it went viral, leading to republication in Harper's Magazine, an interview on NPR's The Diane Rehm Show, and a spot at the intersection of "highbrow" and "brilliant" in New York magazine's "Approval Matrix." In that heartbreaking essay, Boggs eloquently recounts her realization that she might never be able to conceive. She searches the apparently fertile world around her--the emergence of thirteen-year cicadas, the birth of eaglets near her rural home, and an unusual gorilla pregnancy at a local zoo--for signs that she is not alone. Boggs also explores other aspects of fertility and infertility: the way longing for a child plays out in the classic Coen brothers film Raising Arizona; the depiction of childlessness in literature, from Macbeth to Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?; the financial and legal complications that accompany alternative means of family making; the private and public expressions of iconic writers grappling with motherhood and fertility. She reports, with great empathy, complex stories of couples who adopted domestically and from overseas, LGBT couples considering assisted reproduction and surrogacy, and women and men reflecting on childless or child-free lives. In The Art of Waiting, Boggs deftly distills her time of waiting into an expansive contemplation of fertility, choice, and the many possible roads to making a life and making a family.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] thoughtful meditation on childlessness, childbearing, and the stretch of liminal agony in between. [The Art of Waiting] is a corrective and a tonic, a primer and

a dispeller of myths. It is likely to become a go-to guide for the many couples who discover that having children is not the no-assembly-required experience they were expecting. They will come away enlightened, reassured and comforted by her debunker mentality. . . . Ms. Boggs has done something quite lovely and laudable with *The Art of Waiting: She* given a cold, clinical topic some much-needed warmth and soul. The miracle of life, you might even say. *The New York Times* “Belle Boggs’s smart, elegant book, *The Art of Waiting* . . . includes reporting on eugenics, zoo animals and research behind baby fever, tying in great works of literature and even *Raising Arizona* along the way. It is a painful, enlightening joy to read. *The Washington Post* “Belle Boggs’s 2012 essay *The Art of Waiting* primed audiences for this intelligent, moving exploration of fertility. In the book, she ranges outside her own experience, turning to the animal kingdom and pop culture to survey how we respond to the possibility and, sometimes, impossibility of parenthood. *Elle.com* “Boggs is deeply empathetic as she explores not only her personal challenges with starting a family, but how culture treats the childless, the complex decision between adoption and trying to conceive, the additional hurdles facing LGBT couples, and the financial and legal complications that come with facing alternative means of childbearing. *Real Simple* “An eye-opening, gorgeously written blend of memoir, reportage, and cultural analysis. . . . Examining infertility and childlessness through the lens of her own struggle to become pregnant, Boggs presents not only a courageous account of her personal experience but an illuminating, wide-ranging study of the medical, psychological, social, and historical aspects of a condition that affects one in eight couples nationwide. *Boston Globe* “[Boggs’s] beautifully written, contemplative book which blends memoir, journalism and cultural history is about much more than her own costly and high-tech path to parenthood. It addresses, among other things, the ethical dimensions of fertility treatment (she concedes that her younger self would have judged her choices selfish and wasteful); representations of childlessness in literature; and the biological, psychological and cultural underpinnings of what she calls child-longing. *San Francisco Chronicle* “*The Art of Waiting* is not just an honest and heartbreaking account about Boggs’s experience. In addition to the endless medical options available to her and other women, she deftly examines the choices and challenges couples and singles face. . . . Infertility is a personal struggle, but Boggs ably mixes her experience with a broader, more objective account of what for many men and women amounts to one of the most traumatic upsets in their lives. *The Art of Waiting* is a primer for anyone dealing with infertility.

It's also an eye-opener for anyone who takes having children for granted. Star Tribune (Minneapolis) "Boggs's meditations on the politics of reproduction and ART are eloquent and impeccably researched. Ultimately, however, her prose is most luminous when she is limning the subterranean psychic toll that infertility takes on its sufferers. . . . All families start as stories, Boggs observes, no matter how true or untrue they eventually become. In *The Art of Waiting*, she illuminates the myriad ways in which the stories we tell ourselves about children—whether real or imagined, desired or declined—materially shape our sense of who we are. In the process, she makes a passionate and humane case for everyone's right to choose and direct their own reproductive story." Los Angeles Review of Books "Belle Boggs's memoir-through-essay dissects what it means to procreate and parent in our modern world and especially the myriad ways of getting there. Bustle "In a book that could easily become insular, instead the reader finds Boggs's considered, holistic approach, wherein she covers families of numerous formations and facets—different races, socioeconomic categories, and world views pepper this intelligent and insightful treatise on fertility, medicine, and motherhood, which spans years of Boggs's life and years of research on childbearing, its successes, and its failures. Science meets narrative; the global meets the personal; the reader meets the author, or at least feels that way, a knowing closeness that builds with every revelation and dispersal of personal, painful fact. The Millions "Boggs is both brave and generous—willing to hack through terra incognita and report back to the rest of us. . . . Riveting. . . . Deeply absorbing. . . . Boggs's experience of child-longing reminds us of our own desires, the virtues of letting go and the power of holding on. In every essay, she is recognizably human, attached to the future she always wanted. Brooklyn Rail "[A] collection of nuanced and unsparing essays. . . . Boggs interweaves her own experience with infertility with those of doctors, professors, unconventional families and even gorillas at the North Carolina zoo, shedding light on a complex human health issue that has remained cloaked in silence and shame. The Huffington Post "A moving, meditative collection of writings on one of life's most shared—but too often silent—experiences. The National Post "Through a series of beautifully rendered, often poetic essays, Boggs touches on myriad emotional and physical aspects of infertility, and the various options on offer to solve it. She peppers her memoir with references to literature and the natural world, rendering a rich, truly human and sometimes harrowing portrait of an oft-misunderstood experience. Boggs not only demystifies the

diagnosis and the slew of medical procedures that can come along with it, but corrects the idea that there is a single, straightforward path when it comes to tackling it. . . . An intimate and generous collection, providing a new and necessary narrative of infertility than the one we've consistently offered. . . . This book is immensely valuable . . . not only to those who have faced the hardship of infertility, but to all who seek to support them.

—The Globe and Mail (Canada)

“Boggs’s book ponders not just motherhood, but also examines the massive landscape of self and society. . . . You don’t have to have children (or want them) to love this book; you just have to be human.”

—Literary Hub

“A meticulous investigation of the complicated sociopolitical issues surrounding fertility, infertility, and medical intervention. . . . A meaningful meditation on the many paths to making a family.”

—Poets and Writers

“This book is already getting passed around my circle of women of childbearing age. . . . It’s a memoir of infertility, IVF, conception and birth that’s also an intellectual exploration of biological and historical treatments of pregnancy and the lack thereof and it’s very, very good.”

—Flavorwire

“Belle Boggs’s memoir-through-essay . . . dissects what it means to parent and procreate in our modern world especially the myriad paths to getting there. . . . [Her] message is clear: there is no one path to parenthood, and no experience of mothering more valid than another.”

—Bustle

“Belle Boggs’s *The Art of Waiting* is a contemplation of fertility (and infertility) that considers all the possibilities of making a family, as well as the medical, financial, and legal aspects and complications that may arise. Boggs shares stories from numerous couples involving adoption, surrogacy, assisted reproduction, or the decision to be child-free as well as the depictions of fertility and childlessness in literature and film to paint a broader picture of motherhood.”

—Buzzfeed

“A wide-ranging, thoughtful, and lively meditation on the desire for children and coping with that desire. . . . Boggs is a brave writer and an empathetic one. . . . She emerges as a passionate advocate for the right to have children, no matter how unconventional the result or how seemingly artificial the means.”

—4 Columns

“Boggs sensitively and creatively explores infertility, the struggle to get pregnant, and the entire concept of ‘waiting,’ which leads her to literature and pop culture. . . . Deeply thoughtful, beautiful, and illuminating.”

—Booklist

“Eloquent and insightful, Boggs never descends to self-pity, instead writing with empathy, compassion, and occasional humor. . . . All readers will appreciate the engaging prose and thought-provoking information.”

—Library Journal

“Touch[es] on universal themes of hope, loss, and identity. Boggs shows a profound awareness of the value of story, drawing on fictional models of infertility such as those in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, conversations with childless female writing colleagues, and Joan Didion and Adrienne Rich’s writings on motherhood. . . . Even though she calls herself “greedy for every kind of model,” her reach for connection to the world feels expansive rather than self-centered. . . . Boggs’s contemplative view of waiting as a mentally active practice offers comfort to those who cannot get exactly what they need even by the hardest of wishing. Publishers Weekly “This deeply empathetic book is about more than one woman’s challenge; it’s about the whole scope of maternal urges, of how culture (and literature) treat the childless (or “childfree”), how biases against medical intervention serve to stigmatize those who need such expensive (and not always successful) assistance, and how complicated can be the decisions about whether to adopt rather than continuing to attempt to conceive, the moral dimensions of international adoption (and surrogates), the additional hurdles facing gay couples, and the seemingly arbitrary differences between states as to what procedures are covered and to what financial limit. . . . Boggs writes with considerable heart and engagement about the decisions that are so tough for so many. . . . A story well-told and deeply felt. Kirkus Reviews, starred review Belle Boggs has taken an experience often understood in terms of absence—the process and procedures and pain of infertility—and re-illuminated it in terms of presence: the presence of longing, the presence of effort, the presence of patience and community. Her book explodes the word ‘infertility’ so that it’s no longer a single word but a thousand stories, a thousand possible families—thwarted, growing, reimagined. Boggs’s mind is nimble and surprising, her voice penetrating and humble, her insights keen and striated. Her definition of family is full of possibility and permutation, and there is an empathetic force to her work—her summoning of our collective vision, her call to openness—that’s absolutely thrilling. Leslie Jamison In this lovely meditation, Belle Boggs explores a landscape suddenly illuminated by the bright light of her own uncertain future. Her great mind is at work through it all, considering captive gorillas and biology and Virginia Woolf and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *Raising Arizona* and adoption and surrogacy and wells that run dry. What *The Art of Waiting* suggests to me is that all our moments that feel fruitless may be bearing their own sort of fruit, in their own time. Eula Biss “In this profound, deeply moving study of fertility and motherhood, Belle Boggs takes us on a remarkable journey. Her book ponders the nature of reproduction in modern America, which is of necessity a means of pondering the nature of family, which is in turn a

means of pondering the nature of intimacy and love. The wisdom comes easily here, as Boggs considers the searing pain of disappointment, every structure of proleptic hope, and the widening of human relationships. She does all this and more in luminous, generous prose. — Andrew Solomon

Belle Boggs is the author of *Mattaponi Queen*. Her stories and essays have appeared in *The Paris Review*, *Ecotone*, *Slate*, and many other publications. She teaches in the MFA program at North Carolina State University.

This book is a must read!

I am a man and a father. I did not experience difficulty conceiving in the same way my partner did. I wish I'd had this book back then so I might have had a better understanding of not only why we felt so alone, but also of the strange and sometimes arbitrary cultural assumptions that we had accepted and were acting out to the point of misery. So, for me, this is a book about a society, viewed through the lens of reproductive culture. The writing is sublime, she is a terrific short story writer, too. But the appeal, for me, is to witness a supple, incisive, and generous mind calmly examine a fundamental aspect of our culture, in all its social, psychological, scientific and economic expressions, and ask: why? (The implied question in all this: Can we do better, can we be less cruel, can we be more light-hearted about life?)

I really enjoyed this book. I liked that the author weaved her personal story in amongst fact and other stories. It was informative yet had a lot of emotion and feeling. Would recommend if you're struggling with infertility, have a family or friend struggling with infertility, or just want to be informed.

Belle Boggs has written a profound and deeply moving book about infertility and parenthood. I found my own experiences (she wrote about her own) placed in a much larger context. One that explored modern reproduction in the United States and Assisted Reproductive Technology through stories of families, science, religion, politics, and above all patience and tenacity. Informative and deeply moving.

A beautifully written and impeccably researched collection of essays on infertility with a focus on IVF. Boggs' voice is clear and compelling — this is a must-read for anyone struggling

with infertility or undergoing assisted reproductive technology.

A clear and thoughtful memoir about Belle Boggs' fertility journey that weaves in history, science, sociology, and psychology. This book will be a great read for those newly diagnosed and beginning their path to parenthood or to the initiated.

This book has been a light in the darkness of infertility.

This book is a godsend to anyone touched by infertility. Poised somewhere between informational nonfiction and memoir, this book depends on Boggs' story, but it isn't reducible to it. Boggs' voice -- measured, warm, brittle at times -- helps weave together her story with a larger project of cultural criticism about how we see infertile women, and how we understand the place of reproductive woes in social life. As someone who had a very different fertility challenge, I'm grateful to Boggs for sharing her story, and for acting as an amanuensis for so many others' stories. This book is a beacon, a call to be more open and forthright about fertility challenges (particularly about how race and class affect those challenges), and a prompt to talk more publicly about what child-bearing and child-rearing means to us all.

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