



Catalogue Baby: A Memoir of (In)fertility

Myriam Steinberg

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“Sex is messy. Un-sex is just as infinitely messy,” Myriam Steinberg writes in *Catalogue Baby*, her graphic memoir about five grueling years of fertility treatment. By the time she became a parent, she’d had 125 blood draws, 151 injections, and 483 progesterone suppositories—and shed an estimated twenty-five liters of tears.

Approaching burnout and age forty, Steinberg shut down the festival she had run for years and decided to pursue motherhood on her own. Between IUI, IVF, and a DIY at-home attempt, she had four failed pregnancies before the eventual birth of her twins. Choosing sperm and egg donors was mind-boggling, and the costs—and well-meaning friends’ barbed comments—stacked up.

The process involved agonizing choices, such as terminating a pregnancy when tests confirmed Down syndrome. While Steinberg gives a clear sense of the physical and financial challenges, she also employs the language of a spiritual quest. As she became acquainted with and bade farewell to several potential children, she developed a mystical belief in the migration of souls.

The book’s illustrations often render the book’s metaphors as literal: Steinberg’s biological clock is a cartoon watch face wearing cowboy boots and a pink cowboy hat; grief is a basket of water threatening to drown her heart; and the expense of IVF is depicted via toothed dollar signs. The style ranges from anatomical realism in the fertility clinic to whimsical, as in vintage computer game scenarios and a word cloud that becomes a cyclone. Against a mostly gray and brown palette, flashes of brightness stand out. Steinberg’s shock of pink hair is a constant. Pink also captures the bodily reality of treatment, via organs, blood, and pain. The visuals are essential in this unsparing account of the practical and emotional burdens of infertility.

Catalogue Baby is an eye-catching, heart-wrenching graphic memoir of a long road to motherhood.

REBECCA FOSTER (March / April 2021)

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