



Little Labors

Rivka Galchen

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Little Labors Rivka Galchen

Rivka Galchen's *Little Labors* is a droll and dazzling compendium of observations, stories, lists, and brief essays about babies and literature

Sei Shonagon's *Pillow Book*? a key inspiration for Rivka Galchen's new book? contains a list of "Things That Make One Nervous." And wouldn't the blessed event top almost anyone's list?

Little Labors is a slanted, enchanted literary miscellany. Varying in length from just a sentence or paragraph to a several-page story or essay, Galchen's puzzle pieces assemble into a shining, unpredictable, mordant picture of the ordinary-extraordinary nature of babies and literature. Anecdotal or analytic, each part opens up an odd and tender world of wonder. The 47 Ronin; the black magic of maternal love; babies morphing from pumas to chickens; the quasi-repellent concept of "women writers"; origami-ophilia in Oklahoma as a gateway drug to a lifelong obsession with Japan; discussions of favorite passages from the Heian masterpieces *Genji* and *The Pillow Book*; the frightening prevalence of orange as today's new chic color for baby gifts; Frankenstein as a sort of baby; babies gold mines; babies as tiny Godzillas ...

Little Labors—atomized and exploratory, conceptually byzantine and freshly forthright—delights.

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