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Our Andromeda



Synopsis

Honored as a New York Times Book Review "100 Notable Books of 2013" Honored by
Cosmopolitan as the one poetry title on their list of "Best Books of the Year For Women, by
Women" "A heady, infectious celebration." "The New Yorker" Shaughnessy's voice is smart,
sexy, self-aware, hip . . . consistently wry, and ever savvy." Harvard Review Brenda
Shaughnessy's heartrending third collection explores dark subjects; trauma, childbirth, loss of
faith; and stark questions: What is the use of pain and grief? Is there another dimension in
which our suffering might be transformed? Can we change ourselves? Yearning for new gods, new
worlds, and new rules, she imagines a parallel existence in the galaxy of Andromeda. Rave reviews
for *Our Andromeda*; Love is the fierce engine of this beautiful and necessary book of poems.
Love is the high stakes, the whip of its power and grief and possibility for repair. Brenda
Shaughnessy has brought her full self to bear in *Our Andromeda*, and the result is a book that
should be read now because it is a collection whose song will endure. "The New York
Times Book Review" It is a monumental work, and makes a hash of those tired superlatives that will
no doubt crop up in subsequent reviews. But the truth is that I have no single opinion about this
collection; how could I? The book is a series of narratives that resist interpretation but not
feeling; except that I am certain it further establishes Shaughnessy's particular genius,
which is utterly poetic, but essayistic in scope, encompassing ideas about astronomy, illness,
bodies, the family, 'normalcy,' home." "The New Yorker" Another Brooklyn poet, Marianne
Moore, defined poetry as 'imaginary gardens, with real toads in them.' In *Our Andromeda*,
Shaughnessy has imagined a universe, and in it, real love moves, quick with life." Publishers
Weekly, starred review; Brenda Shaughnessy's laments and sometimes makes
narratives about the struggle to keep her small family together in the aftermath of a difficult birth. In
the title poem, she posits a galaxy far, far away where familial love might overtake all woe and
turmoil of the heart and body and mind. Once there, she says to her son, "you'll have the
babyhood you deserved." She also delivers a number of lovely lyrics in a supple, plainly stated
line; some merely expressive, some with a philosophically questioning air; on fate, dreams, the
present time's long gaze back at the past; you know, all the good things poets write
about. Alan Cheuse, on NPR's list of 5 Books of Poems to Get You Through the
Summer; This book explores love and motherhood and the turbulent terrain of
grief. "Cosmopolitan" Shaughnessy articulates, with force and clarity, the transformation that
motherhood has required of her. Her poems are full of regret and ferocity." Boston
Review "Brenda Shaughnessy explores the possibilities of a second chance in life and what could

come of it. Enticing and thoughtful, *Our Andromeda* is a fine addition to contemporary poetry shelves." [The Midwest Book Review](#) Brenda Shaughnessy was born in Okinawa, Japan and grew up in Southern California. She is the author of *Human Dark with Sugar* (Copper Canyon Press, 2008), winner of the James Laughlin Award and finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Interior with Sudden Joy* (FSG, 1999). Shaughnessy's poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Harper's*, *The Nation*, *The Rumpus*, *The New Yorker*, and *The Paris Review*. She is an Assistant Professor of English at Rutgers University, Newark, and lives in Brooklyn with her husband, son and daughter.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fierce, heartbreaking, tender, musical, *Our Andromeda* is a triumph of love and imagination overcoming grief and fear. Inspired by the circumstance of her son who suffers brain injury at birth resulting in permanent disability, Brenda Shaughnessy works out in these poems her desire for an alternate world in which "there are no accidents" and it's possible to do things over. The poems oscillate between desire and acceptance, love and longing, fantasy and reality. It is a meditation on motherhood as well as self-discovery. Intensely emotional, the author looks at her grief, anger, and regret straight in the eye, and that ability to engage, articulate, and speak those internal experiences, however painful and frightening, is immensely courageous and strength giving. The book moves through several sections that build on each other. The first section of the book interrogates the notion of self: what is the self and what is other. The opening poem, "Artless" meditates on love: "Artless / is my heart. A stranger / berry there never was, / tartless. // Gone sour

in the sun, / in the sunroom or moonroof, / roofless." In this poem, the heart, the poet's self, her life, are all objects which she can interrogate: "Heart, what are you? / War, star part?" She is intensely aware of the heart's failings, "fatted from the day, / overripe and even toxic at eve." But recognizing that it is a spectacular organ no less: "fighting fire with fire, / flightless. // That loud hub of us, /meat stub of us, beating us / senseless." There is mystery about this heart that exhausts itself for no purpose. Like love, it needs no motivation to keep going.

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