



Pocket Universe

Poems

NANCY REDDY

"Pocket Universe is a powerful and honest meditation on how anxiety and wonder intersect at the nexus of motherhood. These poems chronicle the speaker's corporeal postpartum experiences, while simultaneously reaching backwards into history and outwards into space to remind us of our fragility and resilience in the face of all of the dangers caregiving engenders."—Erika Meitner

"Reddy reveals how the most intimate domestic spaces and our bodies themselves connect to the stars; how family matters connect with historical, political matters and to dark matter itself."

—Camille Guthrie

Nancy Reddy's *Pocket Universe* explores how the world becomes more wondrous and more perilous in the permanent *after* of parenthood. The collection begins in the public hospitals in sixteenth-century Paris—where women giving birth were as likely to die of fever as go home with healthy newborns—travels through the dizzying world of Instamommies and celebrities who effortlessly got their body “back” after baby, and ends with children singing at a bounce-house birthday party. Poems set those intimate, ostensibly domestic matters against weighty questions about human origins, our place in the universe, and the pervasive historical and present-day violence against mothers and children.

Pocket Universe traces an arc from the challenges and bodily horror of the first weeks home with a new baby, through the wonder of watching that child discover the world, and finally to the hard-won joy of motherhood.

NANCY REDDY is the author of *Double Jinx*, a winner of the National Poetry Series, and coeditor of *The Long Devotion: Poets Writing Motherhood*. She is the recipient of a fellowship from the Sewanee Writers' Conference and grants from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Sustainable Arts Foundation.

The universe was, for millions of years,
full only of the darkest dark, the just-born elements
 clustering
and joining, until all at once, like the bright quick heat

of a good idea or a dividing cell: starlight,
and all the heavy atoms that give us this good life

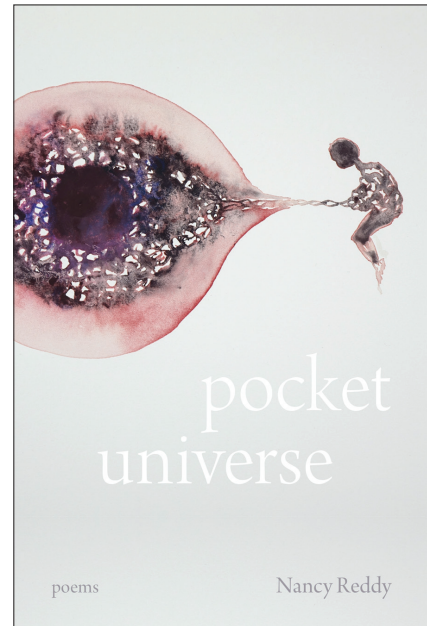
formed inside those blazing short-lived stars. We can only see
the places in the universe the light has touched. We have to learn

to look, the way that, one October afternoon, I lay against
the crinkling paper of the exam table while the nurse

swabbed gel across my belly, and in the night sky
of the uterus, on the grayscale screen of a handheld
 sonogram,

we saw it all at once: the striations of muscle and space,
the stuttering and blinking, the insistent flicker of a beating heart.

—from “First Light”



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Poetry



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