1-1-2010

A Brain Wider than the Sky: A Migraine Diary by Andrew Levy, Simon and Schuster, 2009

Chad Bauman
Butler University, cbauman@butler.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las_bookreviews

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las_bookreviews/42

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in LAS Faculty Book Reviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.
Because Ideas Matter...

The faculty and staff of Butler University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

Recommended Readings

**A Brain Wider than the Sky: A Migraine Diary**

by Andrew Levy, Simon & Schuster 2009

Reviewed by Chad Bauman

In this book, recently named one of the best memoirs of 2009 by the *Washington Post*, Andrew Levy attempts to convey the shape, flow, and sensation of migraines to his readers. And in this, he succeeds brilliantly (in the interest of full disclosure, Levy is a colleague of mine at Butler University). Yet Levy's memoir is also about the terrifying privacy of a migraine. Migraine descriptions are metaphorical at best, and migraines are ultimately nontransferable; they isolate and discriminate. Levy explores the damaging effects of this isolation on his psyche, his relationships, and his ability to perform the roles of professor, parent, and spouse. But this very same isolation drives Levy, while suffering through a particularly enervating four months of daily migraines, to begin reading more about the science and history of migraines, as well as about other migraineurs. *A Brain Wider than the Sky* distills that information, mixing and integrating it with a moving narrative of the author’s own experiences with migraine.

One in ten Americans are sufferers of migraine, and migraineurs are even well represented among those so famous they require only one name: Jefferson, Marx, Freud, Darwin, Elvis, Nietzsche, and Joan (of Arc). This list, then, makes plain the paradox of migraines—that despite their isolating and debilitating effects, migraines seem somehow, at least for some, a font of inspiration. Levy's departing migraines leave him refreshed, his mind buzzing with potential and urging him to create and connect-to his own mind, to others, to nature. *A Brain Wider than the Sky* is not, therefore, a complaint, but rather an exploration, a meditation, and through it Levy seems to come to terms with his migraines, and even, perhaps, with his own human frailty. So too, I suspect, will many of his readers.

- Chad Bauman is an assistant professor of religion at Butler University.