



MARY JO BANG is the author of four previous books of poetry, including *Louise in Love* and *The Eye Like a Strange Balloon*. She lives in St. Louis, Missouri, where she is a Professor of English and Director of the Creative Writing Program at Washington University.

POETRY

"The loss of a child—especially an only child who is in the prime of life—is one of the most painful experiences anyone can have and one, common sense tells us, almost impossible to render in an age of sensory overload. But Mary Jo Bang's *Elegy* is the grand exception. In its insistence on 'the inexhaustible / Need to be accurate,' *Elegy* is wholly absorbing. Avoiding all self-pity, false comfort, sentimentality or finger pointing, Bang's terse, oblique poems anatomize grief, guilt, and mourning in pitiless detail. Do things 'improve' by the end of the year whose progress this heartbreaking book charts? Not really, but the reader is transformed. I know of no contemporary elegy that has its power." —Marjorie Perloff

"The palette is drained; the weather chilled. The tone is formal, the voice even; the feeling is scoured out. Every word stands naked, stands alone, facing a door, an opening. 'Wonderful/Awful.' This is where time stops, breath stops. Words are chosen and framed and hung because they must be, not because they make an unbearable loss one whit more bearable, but they position us a step closer to seeing the beginning (of love) and the end (of life). Something. 'Ancient and every and over.' This is our beautiful glimpse of forever. Mary Jo Bang's *Elegy* is a harrowing, necessary work." —C.D. Wright

"Mary Jo Bang's remarkable elegies recall the late work of Ingeborg Bachmann—a febrile, recursive lyricism. Like Nietzsche or Plath, Bang flouts naysayers; luridly alive, she drives deep into aporia, her new, sad country. Her stanzas, sometimes spilling, sometimes severe, perform an uncanny death-song, recklessly extended—nearly to the breaking point." —Wayne Koestenbaum

"Perhaps everyone has a story that could break your heart—the poems that make up *Elegy* break mine. These poems are astonishing—here is fierce, controlled abandon, here is one of our finest poets utterly in the moment, yet the moment is unbearable. 'There is no waking from death,' Bang writes, and yet each of these poems is fully alive." —Nick Flynn

ELEGY

Mary Jo Bang



US \$20.00/CAN \$25.00

MARY JO BANG's fifth collection, *Elegy*, chronicles the year following the death of her son. By weaving the particulars of her own loss into a tapestry that also contains the elements common to all losses, Bang creates something far larger than a mere lament. Continually in search of an adequate metaphor for the most profound and private grief, the poems in *Elegy* confront, in stark terms and with a resilient voice, how memory haunts the living and brings the dead back to life. Within these intimate and personal poems is a persistently urgent, and deeply touching, examination of grief itself.

ELEGY

"These poems (elegies) are written under the sign of Necessity. They exist because they have to exist. This means they are still burning from the forge, carry pain that is radiant, and cut a guiding path for the reader. Because she is already, before the hour of necessity, a serious and accomplished poet, all that she knows comes to her aid and has the kindness to make these poems great."

— Fanny Howe, citation for the 2005 Alice Fay di Castagnola Award of the Poetry Society of America

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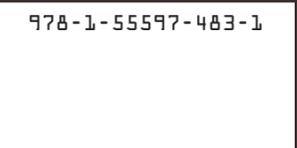
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