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The Heart Is Strange: New Selected Poems

John Berryman

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John Berryman was perhaps the most idiosyncratic American poet of the twentieth century. Best known for the painfully sad and raucously funny cycle of Dream Songs, he wrote passionately: of love and despair, of grief and laughter, of longing for a better world and coming to terms with this one. The paperback edition of *The Heart Is Strange* has been updated to include a selection from the *Dream Songs* alongside poems from across his career.

The Heart Is Strange shows Berryman in all his variety: from his earliest poems, which show him learning the craft, to his breakthrough masterpiece, "Homage to Mistress Bradstreet"; then to his mature verses, which find the poet looking back upon his lovers and youthful passions; and finally to his late poems, in which he battles with sobriety and an increasingly religious sensibility.

The defiant joy and wild genius of Berryman's work has been obscured by his struggles with mental illness and alcohol, his tempestuous relationships with women, and his suicide. This volume celebrates the whole Berryman: tortured poet and teasing father, fiery lover and melancholy scholar. It is a perfect introduction to one of the finest bodies of work yet produced by an American poet.

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