



In the Home of the Famous Dead: Collected Poems

Jo McDougall

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In the Home of the Famous Dead will appeal to newcomers as well as to avid followers of Jo McDougall's long career and complex work, providing valuable insights to the development of a poet's signature, inimitable style. This collection presents work known for its sparse, compact language; surprising metaphor; humor; irony; idiomatic speech; and a stoic, sadly earned wisdom concerning death and loss. In McDougall's world, folks making do with what they have take the stage to speak of, in the words of one critic, "the tangled mysteries of their faltering lives." Her work has been described as having "excruciating honesty" (Gerald Stern), giving voice to the "ineffable emotions of plain people" (Judith Kitchen). Miller Williams notes that the work has "cleanness and clarity . . . in all the funk and smell of humanity." This is the poetry of midwestern plains and southern bottomlands, of waitresses and professors, farmers and bankers, the disadvantaged and privileged alike. Often beginning in the personal and expanding to the universal, this poet takes note of the phenomenological world with a mixture of joy, despair, and awe, providing a haunting look at the cosmic irony of our existence. McDougall's style is indescribable, yet wholly accessible. As Kelly Cherry notes, "Call it magic, call it art; either way [Jo McDougall's work] is something like a miracle."

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