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Monticello in Mind: Fifty Contemporary Poems on Jefferson

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Thomas Jefferson was a figure both central and polarizing in his own time, and despite the passage of two centuries he remains so today. Author of the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, yet at the same time a slaveholder who likely fathered six children by one of his slaves, Jefferson has been seen as an embodiment of both the best and the worst in America's conception and in its history.

In *Monticello in Mind,* poet Lisa Russ Spaar collects fifty contemporary poems--most original to this anthology--that engage the complex legacy of Thomas Jefferson and his plantation home at Monticello. Many of these poems wrestle with the history of race and freedom at the heart of both Jefferson's story and America's own. Others consider Jefferson as a figure of Enlightenment rationalism, who scrupulously excised evidence of the supernatural from the gospels in order to construct his own version of Jesus's moral teachings. Still others approach Jefferson as an early colonizer of the West, whose purchase of the Louisiana territory and launch of the Lewis and Clark expedition anticipated the era of Manifest Destiny.

Featuring a roster of poets both emerging and established--including Lucille Clifton, Rita Dove, Claudia Emerson, Terrance Hayes, Robert Hass, Yusef Komunyakaa, Tracy K. Smith, Natasha Tretheway, Charles Wright, and Kevin Young--this collection offers an aesthetically and culturally diverse range of perspectives on a man whose paradoxes still abide at the heart of the American experiment.

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