



What W. H. Auden Can Do for You (Writers on Writers)

Alexander McCall Smith

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When facing a moral dilemma, Isabel Dalhousie--Edinburgh philosopher, amateur detective, and title character of a series of novels by best-selling author Alexander McCall Smith--often refers to the great twentieth-century poet W. H. Auden. This is no accident: McCall Smith has long been fascinated by Auden. Indeed, the novelist, best known for his No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series, calls the poet not only the greatest literary discovery of his life but also the best of guides on how to live. In this book, McCall Smith has written a charming personal account about what Auden has done for him--and what he just might do for you.

Part self-portrait, part literary appreciation, the book tells how McCall Smith first came across the poet's work in the 1970s, while teaching law in Belfast, a violently divided city where Auden's "September 1, 1939," a poem about the outbreak of World War II, strongly resonated. McCall Smith goes on to reveal how his life has related to and been inspired by other Auden poems ever since. For example, he describes how he has found an invaluable reflection on life's transience in "As I Walked Out One Evening," while "The More Loving One" has provided an instructive meditation on unrequited love. McCall Smith shows how Auden can speak to us throughout life, suggesting how, despite difficulties and change, we can celebrate understanding, acceptance, and love for others.

An enchanting story about how art can help us live, this book will appeal to McCall Smith's fans and anyone curious about Auden.

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