



Conversations with Denise Levertov (Literary Conversations Series)

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Denise Levertov, American poet and activist, died in December 1997 at the age of 74. This book contains some twenty previously uncollected interviews conducted between the early 1960s and the middle of the 1990s. They are focused primarily on her work as a poet but also on her social and political concerns. She was forty years old and already recognized as an important poet at the time of the first of these interviews. She was past seventy and an icon of American culture at the time of the most recent.

Levertov was born in England of a Welsh mother and a Russian-born Anglican priest who had converted from Judaism. She first made her mark as a poet in the late 1950s. Her poetry was recognized as distinctive and indeed brilliant. The earliest interviews are focused on her poetic craft and on her youth in England, her education, her marriage to an American, and her postwar move to New York. In 1955 she became a U.S. citizen, and in the 1960s and 1970s she and her husband Mitchell Goldman were among the most visible and vocal opponents of the Viet-nam War. After the war, she retained her interest in social and political issues and continued over the years to write deeply moving poetry about her life and about contemporary events.

The interviews in which Levertov discusses her craft constitute an important document on American poetry in the second half of the twentieth century. She talks of her legendary friendship with her mentor William Carlos Williams and her association with the Black Mountain Poets. As she discusses her craft in great detail, she gives special attention to diction, line lengths, versification, and choice of subject matter. Students of American culture and readers of American poetry will be delighted by this collection of the personal views of one of the century's best poets.

Jewel Spears Brooker, a professor of English at Eckerd College, is the author of *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Eliot and the Dialectic of Modernism*, coauthor of *Reading The Waste Land': Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*, and editor of *Approaches to Teaching Eliot's Poetry and Plays*.

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