



Evening Train

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Long associated with the Black Mountain School of the 1950's and with such poets as Charles Olson and Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov is also famous for her bitterly realistic antiwar poems written during the Vietnam War era. In *EVENING TRAIN*, her twentieth and perhaps best book of poetry, Levertov is writing at the height of her powers with utter clarity and devastating honesty. In a voice perhaps more measured and deliberate, she presents two distinct but complementary kinds of poems: nature meditations and poems about the outer world of friends, war, and global pollution.

The meditative poems set the tone for the entire work and proceed naturally from Levertov's residence in the Pacific Northwest, where she lives in direct view of a mountain. That mountain, with its brooding presence, alternately visible and invisible, defined by mists and moonlight but also by boulders and scree, becomes an archetype for divinity itself—a reality as powerful as the mountain, which can suddenly become hidden in our midst.

The close attention to the subtleties of that mountain ambiance prepares Levertov and the reader for the touching intimacy of her poems about the world outside her mountain retreat. These poems are chiefly about losses, friends seen infrequently, her deceased father and mother, an AIDS victim in a wheelchair, a battered woman, and many poems about war, especially the Gulf War when American bulldozers buried Iraqi soldiers alive. In "Contrasting Gestures," Levertov argues that the true artist becomes transformed by the work of art.

That is precisely what happens to the reader of *EVENING TRAIN*, a wonderful book on first reading that becomes even more profound with each re-reading.

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