

A Poet's Mind: Collected Interviews with Robert Duncan, 1960-1985



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Robert Duncan (1919-1988), one of the major postwar American poets, was an adulated figure among his contemporaries, including Robert Creeley, Charles Olson, and Denise Levertov. Lawrence Ferlinghetti remarked that Duncan "had the best ear this side of Dante." His stature is increasingly recognized as comparable to that of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D., and Louis Zukofsky.

Like his poetry, Duncan's conversation is generative and multi-directional, pushing out the boundaries of discourse. His recorded reflections are a means of discovery and exploration, and whether talking with a college student or a fellow poet, he was fully engaged and open to new thoughts as they emerged. The exchanges in this book are exciting and lively.

His vast and wide-ranging knowledge offers readers an increased understanding of the interrelations of the arts, history, psychology, and science; those who would like to learn about Duncan's own life, his bravery in being an out gay man well before Stonewall, and his friendships with fellow writers, such as Charles Olson, Jack Spicer, and Kenneth Rexroth, will find this book richly rewarding.

The six volumes of Duncan's collected writings are being issued by the University of California Press. The collected interviews are an indispensable companion to these books, providing an in-depth exposition of his poetics, which center on the belief that the poem is "a medium for the life of the spirit." In *A Poet's Mind*, he describes the genesis of some of his works, including that of books, essays, and individual poems, and also discusses gay love and life, along with the many diverse influences on his work. Ducan's fertile creative mind is also evident in these conversations: often coming back to Ezra Pound in these conversations, he gives one of the clearest expositions to be found anywhere on the scope and meaning of *The Cantos*. This volume also includes a number of photographs never before published.

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