

1923-1998

Denise Levertov:

a correspondence



Denise Levertov was born in 1923 in Ilford , but spent most of her life in America. She died this year and as Ken Leech wrote in the obituary in the Church Times, “deprives the United States of one of its most distinguished and best loved poets.”

**October 14, 1961 Thomas Merton to Ernesto Cardenal**

There is a very fine new poet, Denise Levertov. I forget whether you translated some of her work or not. She is splendid, one of the most promising. I will try to remember to get *New Directions* to send you a copy of her new book. You will like her very much. She has lived a bit in Mexico I think.

**December 10, 1967 Thomas Merton to Sister N**

Denise Levertov was here today, and in fact she left only a couple of hours ago.

**from Michael Mott's *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton***

The idea for Monks Pond may have come out of a meeting on Sunday Dec.10 at the hermitage during a visit of Wendell and Tanya Berry and the Meatyards. They had brought the poet Denise Levertov, who Merton had been wanting to meet for some time. Merton writes, 'I like Denise very much. A good warm person. She left a good poem "Tenebrae" and we talked a little....'

**August 27, 1993**

On writing to ask Denise Levertov for a poem for the Winchester Merton Conference '93, she sent me a copy of a poem on Brother Lawrence which I promptly lost or gave away, but is now to be published in her new posthumous collection *Tesseræ* (Bloodaxe). She wrote:

"Did Monks Pond ever get published at all? If so, I've never seen a copy.

I had a wonderful afternoon with Merton, sitting in his hermitage (& drinking Bourbon!) Wendell and Tanya Berry and the late Gene Meatyard and his wife took me to Gethsemane, & they'd all met him before so they went off to walk about in the wood and gave me a chance for a tête à tête. I wish I'd written down what was said. Alas, I didn't."

David Scott Winchester