

careful selections we see a "vastness in God's mercy" and an ambitiousness in Merton the poet which is as every bit as valuable as the contributions of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Denise Levertov or Charles Olson. Organizers of American literature courses and anthologies would do well to digest what Szabo has given us in her thoughtful editorial arrangement. Then, more readers would come to Merton.

Victor A. Kramer

MONTALDO, Jonathan, editor. *A Year with Thomas Merton: Daily Meditations from His Journals* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004), pp. xv + 381. ISBN 0-06-075472-9 \$19.95 (hardcover).

The HarperCollins publishing company is apparently getting its money's worth from its exclusive rights to Thomas Merton's complete journals. After the publication of the seven volumes of journal (1995-1998), it has issued the one-volume compilation *The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals* (1999), followed by *Dialogues with Silence: Prayers and Drawings* (2001), which matched journal excerpts with examples of Merton's line drawings, and now *A Year with Thomas Merton: Daily Meditations from His Journals*. The principal guiding spirit behind all the recent volumes is Jonathan Montaldo, former director of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University and past president of the International Thomas Merton Society, who probably knows the Merton journals better than any other person alive. After editing *Entering the Silence*, the second volume of the complete journals, he co-edited *The Intimate Merton* with Brother Patrick Hart and was sole editor of *Dialogues with Silence* and now of *A Year with Thomas Merton*. His long familiarity with the material has produced in this most recent volume a wonderful collection of excerpts for daily reading and reflection.

The title *A Year with Thomas Merton* is appropriate not only because it includes a selection for each day (except for February 29!), but because the nature of the journal material lends itself so naturally to the temporal pattern of a daybook. Unlike previous compilations of this type, Thomas P. McDonnell's *Blaze of Recognition: Through the Year with Thomas Merton* (1983) and Naomi Burton Stone's *Keeping a Spiritual Journal with Thomas Merton* (1987), which draw on a broad range of Merton's published writing (and of course appeared before the complete journals were available),

all the selections here (with one exception—the December 30 excerpt from an unpublished letter to Merton's Louisville friend Tommie O'Callaghan on the death of her mother) are drawn from the journals, which gives the book a certain consistency of tone even as it samples the rich variety of Merton's reflections on his inner and outer life, on his relationships with himself and his God, with his monastic community and his wider community of friends dispersed throughout the country and the world.

The design of the book is attractive, with the smaller-than-standard 5 1/2" x 7 1/4" page size making reflection while walking, as well as sitting, an inviting possibility. Each of the entries is given its own page, preceded by the date and a descriptive title provided by the editor, and followed by the original entry date with its volume and page number from the compete journals. Significant events in Merton's life, such as his birthday (January 31), his permanent entrance into the hermitage (August 20), or his arrival at Gethsemani—and the day of his death (December 10) are also noted on the appropriate days. The months are divided from one another by a page (or two) featuring a photograph or drawing by Merton. The book proper is preceded by a brief introduction by the editor in which he proposes that the journals were a primary way in which Merton was able to discover and articulate the language of love, and suggests that reading these entries can assist the reader in learning that same language.

Montaldo wisely doesn't attempt to match the dates of the journal entries exactly to the dates of the daybook, which would have been artificially restrictive and probably impossible, as there were no doubt some dates for which Merton, who didn't make journal entries every day, had never written a journal entry in the more than two decades for which journals are extant, and other dates for which no appropriate material would have been available. But he does find passages from the same month, usually only a few days before or after a given date, so the flavor of a particular time of year is always preserved, and for some dates, particularly important ones in his own life, like the famous "Fourth and Walnut" experience (81 [March 19]), or the day of his ordination (152 [May 26]), journal and daybook dates coincide. Successive passages do not follow a chronological order. They move forward and backward through the years to create interesting juxtapositions of Merton at various stages of his life, but at the same point in the annual cycle, though there are occasions when a single entry or contiguous entries are spread out over successive days, as when a

reflection on the Indian Buddhist sage Shantideva from June 29, 1968 is continued over two days (June 18 and 19).

Montaldo frequently abridges an entry to include only the core material he wants (without indicating omissions by ellipses, which would be a distraction given the nature and purpose of the book, but which makes it unsuited for quotation in any sort of academic context), and on occasion will include material from two separate journal entries, which can create fascinating and insightful juxtapositions, as in the entry for February 21 (53), given the title "Where Your Treasure is," which combines a passage from February 4, 1961 on Merton's "[t]remendous discovery" of the *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad*, which he calls a "new door," with an entry ten days later (from the next page of the journal) on "the splendor of my Mass" that includes the Gospel verse "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also," thus reflecting the compatibility for Merton of his unwavering commitment to his own Catholic Christian faith with his openness to the wisdom of other religious traditions, and allowing the reference to "your treasure" to reach back to include the *Upanishad* as well.

The entries are distributed over the entire chronological range of Merton's journals (with the exception of the pre-monastic period, represented only by three entries from 1941), with the final decade of Merton's life being most heavily drawn on (1965, with 61 entries, is the most thoroughly represented, more than double the number of selections of any other year except for 1961, with 32 entries; all years from 1947 on have at least ten excerpts, except 1948, 1951, 1957, 1959 and—perhaps surprisingly—1967). The range of topics is narrowed somewhat by the nature of the volume—there are no grumblings about the abbot, and no fantasies about the nurse—but still reflects the amazing range and depth of Merton's interests and commitments and his conception of a journal as "a book into which everything can go" (a famous passage from July 1956 that Montaldo appropriately places at the very center of the book, on July 1 [191]).

Those acquainted with the journals already will find many familiar and famous passages—Fourth and Walnut, of course, taking a writing pad to purgatory (255 [September 1]), the vision of the deer at the hermitage (265 [September 11])—but also hidden gems like the role of the Holy Spirit in contemplation (88 [March 26]), or St. Irenaeus on being the work of God (228 [August 6]), or the influence of Islam on the conversion of Louis Massignon and Charles de Foucauld—to Christianity (320 [November 22]). There

are of course passages on nature and the cycle of the seasons, on Merton's enthusiastic responses to his reading, on liturgy, and solitude, and old and new selves, and interreligious dialogue, and the Kingdom of God, on social issues—perhaps not as numerous as they might be (Merton's interest in racial justice is largely absent), but those that are included are striking and powerful—see for example the passages on peace and realized eschatology (71 [March 9]), on Chuang Tzu and commitment to peace (112 [April 18]), on Vietnam and Christ's passion (130 [May 4]), on non-violence in spirit (244 [August 22])—on technology, on humorous and slightly surrealistic monastic events (see "Another Lost Customer": 338 [November 20]), on "St. Benedict's Sanity" (289 [October 3]) and four days later on "America, the World's Mad Abbot" (293 [October 7]). Above all there is the ongoing story of Merton's successes and failures—neither of them absolute and definitive—in his ongoing efforts to surrender himself entirely to God and to God's mercy in humility and gratitude and *hesychia*—the peace that passes understanding.

In assembling these selections, Jonathan Montaldo has provided a precious resource both for long-time readers of Merton and for those encountering him for the first time. *A Year with Thomas Merton* is certainly worth spending a year with, and worth returning to, in part or in whole, for many subsequent years thereafter.

Patrick F. O'Connell

KOWNACKI, Mary Lou, *Between Two Souls: Conversations with Ryokan*, Introduction by Joan D. Chittister. Calligraphy by Eri Takase. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004). xxii + 191 pages. ISBN 0802828094. (Hardcover) \$20.00

*Between Two Souls* is a striking and a singular book. It is, as the subtitle suggests, a "conversation"—one that spans more than two centuries, bridging East and West and plumbing the depths of the human spirit beyond geography.

Joan D. Chittister's "Introduction to a Dialogue on Life" introduces readers to two monks and poets: Ryokan, a Japanese Buddhist, who moves back and forth from the solitary quiet of the forest to the village where he goes to beg for food and play with the village children, and Mary Lou Kownacki, a Catholic Benedictine, who finds solitude and community in an American