of the Black Paintings connects directly or obliquely with Merton's concerns. Reinhardt's aesthetic, social, and ideological positions, brilliantly and painstakingly set before the reader by Corris, do not erase his perfectly evident concern to explore in the Black Paintings a visual correlative or embodiment of the *via negativa*.

Reinhardt's paintings should be seen. Please do what you can to see one. Reinhardt's writings should be read in enough depth to know and remember their unique perspective and rhythm. The best are litanies inserted into our very modern world, which scarcely knows or cares what a litany might be. Under the combat conditions of the art world of his time—not so unlike the art world of our time—Reinhardt was a religious artist.

Roger Lipsey

POKS, Malgorzata, *Thomas Merton and Latin America: a Consonance of Voices* (Katowice: Wyzsza Szkola Zarzadzania Marketingowego, 2007), pp. 288. ISBN 978-83-61061-00-7. n.p. (paperback).

At this point in time, four decades after Thomas Merton's death, few studies of his work could be said to break new ground, but Malgorzata Poks' new book on Merton and Latin American poets, a revision of her doctoral dissertation, written, in English, at a Polish university, can legitimately lay claim to do precisely that. One might suppose that it is rather peripheral ground, but of course the later Merton emphasized that wisdom is often discovered at the margins, and Poks makes a strong case that Merton's determination to become "a man of the whole hemisphere" is a central aspect of his project to discover and participate in that hidden sapiential wholeness he so memorably describes in "Hagia Sophia."

Poks' opening chapter provides the most thorough account yet written of the importance of Latin America and its culture to Merton, and the reciprocal importance of Merton's interest in and support for the lively literary awakenings throughout Central and South America in the mid-twentieth century. Drawing on letters, journals, articles and poems, as well as on previous studies of Stefan Baciu and Robert Daggy, along with Christine Bochen's introduction to *The Courage for Truth: Letters to Writers*, the author makes the case that Merton found to the south a "more spiritual, concrete, hieratic, intuitive, affective" alternative to the "rationalistic, pragmatic, aggressive" European and North American post-Enlightenment culture, "isolated from the natural world and

living by abstraction" (30). She traces Merton's fascination with the Hispanic world, both continental and American, from shortly after his baptism in 1938 through his 1940 visit to Cuba, which prompted both his epiphany in a Havana Church and the inspiration for his "first important poem" (39), "Song for Our Lady of Cobre," to the reawakening of interest largely catalyzed by the arrival of Ernesto Cardenal at Gethsemani as a novice in 1957. This renewed contact eventually led to an ever-widening network of contacts with Latin American poets and thinkers, particularly in Nicaragua but also in Cuba and throughout South America, to seminal writings such as "Day of a Stranger," "Letter to Pablo Antonio Cuadra Concerning Giants" and "Message to Poets," to Merton's deepening interest in indigenous cultures that would find its way into much of his later poetry, to his being recognized by many young, and not so young, literary figures as a mentor and a model, a bridge uniting the hemispheres, "the only living spiritual master in both Americas," as one admirer put it, respected "for his integrity as a writer and witness to truth" (55). This interest also led to Merton's translations of Latin American poets into English both as a way of immersing himself more deeply in a literary world he found so attractive and of exposing an English-speaking audience to some of the riches of that world.

The body of Poks' work that follows this introductory overview consists of chapters devoted to each of the seven poets whom Merton translated: the Ecuadorian Jorge Carrera Andrade, the Brazilian Carlos Drummond de Andrade, the Nicaraguans Alfonso Cortés, Ernesto Cardenal and Pablo Antonio Cuadra, the Chilean Nicanor Parra and the Peruvian César Vallejo, some of whom had become personal friends. (The discussion of Cardenal actually overflows into the following chapter on Cuadra, apparently because of the centrality of indigenous elements in both their work, a somewhat awkward break in the pattern that might have the unintended effect of diminishing the crucial significance for Merton of Cuadra and his work.) Each chapter provides background on the poet, relying not only on Merton's own comments on the five poets included in his 1963 volume *Emblems of a Season of Fury* but on Poks' own wide-ranging research, and offers sensitive and perceptive explications of each of the poems Merton translated, highlighting the points of intersection between translator and original poet. Thus Poks shows how Carrera Andrade's "inner journey" to the "secret country" which is "everywhere and nowhere because it is within

ourselves" proves to be "exemplary . . . for 'monks' and 'ministers of silence'" (70-71). She notes the "Franciscan love of life" (99) characteristic of Brazilian poetry as exemplified by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, the "extraordinary ontological sense" (102) of the ostensibly deranged Alfonso Cortés, the iconoclastic antipoetry of Nicanor Parra, and Merton's "exceptional resonance" (230) with Vallejo, whose identification with the outcast and the persecuted in his *Poemas Humanas* he found prophetic. Merton's closest connections were to his erstwhile novice Cardenal and the latter's cousin Cuadra, with both of whom he shared a growing fascination for the indigenous cultures of the Americas; Merton translates excerpts from Cardenal's spare collection of short poems on his monastic experience, *Gethsemani, Ky,* three epigrams that are more political in tenor, and the longer "Drake in the Southern Sea," an ambiguous paradigm of the encounter between Anglo and Hispanic cultures in the Americas. The fourteen poems Merton translates from Cuadra's *El Jaguar y la Luna,* the most from any poet, testify to how powerful Merton found his Nicaraguan friend's efforts to express "contemporary aspirations in the language of ancient myth" (176), an effort he himself would make in *The Geography of Lograire* and other late writings.

Poks, who demonstrated her mastery of Merton's original poetic corpus in a lengthy and very impressive article in *The Merton Annual,* vol. 14 ("Thomas Merton's Poetry of Endless Inscription"), is very much aware of analogies and possible influences connecting these translations with Merton's own work, and intersperses detailed discussions of many of these links throughout the book. For example "Grace's House" is compared with Carlos Drummond's "Memories of the Ancient World," seen through the eyes of the young girl Clara; a lovely reading of Merton's French poem "Le Secret," dedicated to Cortés, is provided in the chapter on that poet; Merton's essay "The Sacred City," his short sequence in prose and verse "The Early Legend," and the Meso-American sections of the "South" canto of *Lograire* are discussed extensively in the Cardenal/Cuadra chapter (along with the "Letter to Che: Canto Bilingue" – Merton's one venture into Spanish verse); Merton's own experiments in antipoetry, such as *Original Child Bomb* and *Cables to the Ace,* are considered in relation to Parra. Along the way, Poks also manages to incorporate at least brief notices of virtually every Merton prose work that has an explicit connection to Latin America, as well as a significant number that do not. An

added bonus is Poks' Appendix, "Thomas Merton and the Poets of North America: A Consonance of Sorts," in which she shows that Merton was not alone in his mid-century appreciation for Hispanic poetry and traces Merton's growing awareness, particularly through Louis Zukofsky, of the Objectivists and Black Mountain poets, as well as his contacts with the Beat movement through Lawrence Ferlinghetti, connections that she suggests would have modified Merton's expressed alienation from anglophone poetry and preference for those writing in Spanish and Portuguese – a suggestive if sketchy discussion that one hopes she will explore in more detail in the future.

There are a couple of somewhat problematic aspects to the methodology of this impressive study. One is the fact that for the most part Poks simply follows the alphabetical arrangement of the *Collected Poems*, which has no authorial warrant, both in the order in which she presents the poets and in her close readings of the individual translations of each writer. Since much of her argument is based on the gradually unfolding development of Merton's contacts with Latin America, it would seem to be more useful, and more logical, to consider the poets in the order in which he encountered them rather than in the arbitrary arrangement of the alphabet, which places Carlos Drummond and Nicanor Parra, both translated subsequent to the 1963 appearance of *Emblems*, in the second and sixth of the seven chapters devoted to individual writers. Likewise, to consider the translations neither in the order in which the original poems were written nor in the order in which Merton arranged them himself (for those poets and poems that appeared in *Emblems*), tends somewhat toward treating each translation in isolation from both the poet's own artistic development and from Merton's aesthetic response to the poet and his work. At times Poks even seems to suggest a kind of progression as she moves through her explications, though she is aware of the non-authorial character of the order (cf. 244); when she does make an exception to this approach, as with Cuadra's "The Jaguar Myth" (191 ff.), her exposition is strengthened significantly.

The other problematic aspect of the work is that the translations are never considered precisely as translations, that is, never compared to the originals. Except for a couple of footnotes in which Poks points out an absent simile in one of Merton's translations from Cardenal and Cardenal himself notes a mistranslation in one of the epigrams (148-49), there is virtually no attention given to

Merton's particular word choices, to the music his new language creates, which of course are what determine whether, and how, a translation becomes a genuine poem in its own right. Poks recognizes this missing dimension at the very outset of her work (13), and rightly points out that attempting to provide detailed comparisons of originals and translations would swell the book beyond reasonable bounds; but it would have been helpful to focus on the qualities of the translation *qua* translation for at least a few key passages, or perhaps for a single poem, for each of the poets discussed. It is telling in this regard that the one bilingual collection of Merton's translations, the ten poems and translations of Pablo Antonio Cuadra included in *The Jaguar and the Moon* (1971), published posthumously but planned by Merton himself, is not mentioned at all by Poks.

Notwithstanding these undeveloped aspects of Merton's translation work, Poks' volume makes a major contribution to elucidating Merton's enthusiastic response to the wisdom of Latin America as articulated by these poets, and to situating this response in relationship to other aspects of his maturing vision in the final decade of his life. She makes a convincing case that in listening to, and enabling others to listen to, "the voice of the New Man . . . in the poetry, written and unwritten," of Latin America, Merton was experiencing a prefiguring of "the eschatological new creation" and sharing in the process by which "the hemisphere was becoming conscious of its vocation to redeem the world" (258). It is a matter of some wonder, and a cause for much gratitude, that a young Central European scholar has explored in such breadth and depth these spiritual and cultural bonds uniting the Western hemisphere in the spirit and the writing of one monk-poet – at once a sign of Merton's own ability to transcend geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries, and a salutary reminder that voices on what might seem to be the margins can often provide central insights for those willing and able to attend to them.

Patrick F. O'Connell

SMOCK, Frederick, *Pax Intrantibus: A Meditation on the Poetry of Thomas Merton* (Frankfurt, Kentucky: Broadstone Books, 2007), pp. 91. ISBN-13: 978-0-9721144-6-2 (cloth). $25.00.

These days, it seems that people tend to have three reactions to poetry: They ignore it (most people); they ridicule it (see Jim Ber-