

an editorial comment and an unnecessary bit of preaching. At the end of chapter three on page 85, he omits several paragraphs about Buddhism and deletes the brief section labeled “Tea and Mercy.” In a few places the author has added material to make a point, situate the discussion in a literary context or update his facts. Three examples will suffice: on page 5 he adds the Declaration of Independence, Gettysburg Address, Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, King’s “I Have a Dream” speech to the discussion of the sermon-confession genre; on page 116 three paragraphs are added about Huck Finn, the *Odyssey* and *Macbeth* to expand the discussion of the journey motif; on page 47 he updates facts: “Seven volumes of his journals will be published after his death and five volumes of his letters.”

None of these changes alters the essential thrust of this work; indeed they streamline and focus the reading process for a new generation of readers and attest to the clear thinking and writing of the author. In light of all the Merton material available today, *The Spiritual Genius of Thomas Merton* is worth reading because it remains a unique exploration of the monk through his writing.

Monica Weis, SSJ

Merton/Meatyard – Meatyard/Merton: Photographing Thomas Merton (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2014), pp. 42. ISBN 978-188775250 (paper) \$19.95.

What a rare convergence of men, vocation and the contemplative spirit into one book! A thoughtful marriage between the written word and photography, friendship and solitude. This book is a collection of carefully selected photographs of Thomas Merton taken by Ralph Eugene Meatyard, paired alongside Merton’s journal entries during that period of his life. The work attempts to penetrate the archetypal ground that each man shared with the other. The images of Merton range from surrealist to candid moments, quiet portraits that embrace the interplay of light and shadow, to posed portraits. These photographs were clearly born from the psychic atmosphere both men created and shared with each other (or that was shared with them). These images and journal entries spring out of utter spontaneity, an honoring of the non-action of contemplation and action in relationship.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard was a husband, father, optician, photographer and contemplative who lived in Lexington, KY. He was an accomplished photographer who took his weekends to hone his craft and build a body of work that, at times, defies description. Meatyard’s work has appeared in galleries alongside photographers such as Ansel Adams and Edward

Weston. His work was said to be influenced by his children, Zen philosophy, jazz and his immediate environment. Meatyard obviously had a contemplative spirit and also, much like Merton, sought after the ground of his being through his work, his art, his relationships and overall life. Meatyard was ten years younger than Merton and passed away four years after Merton died.

What makes Merton's and Meatyard's relationship unique was its timeliness. Their friendship flourished during the last two years of Merton's life while he was living at the hermitage. Merton, who had just terminated his love affair with the nurse that had cared for him, was nurturing profound doubts about "vocation," all the while struggling to remain open to where the spirit was leading him – a fascinating and enigmatic time for anyone truly interested in Merton's life.

In order to soulfully photograph anyone there needs to be a very unique bond that develops between photographer and subject. An implicit trust must exist for both men to allow them to abandon self-consciousness so that life/art can adequately breathe and spring forth. This is often a challenging task when a camera is pointed in your direction and the sound of the shutter is clicking in the background.

Even after a cursory glance at these photographs, there is obviously a deep connection between the men, a sense of individual freedom only possible after self-consciousness has vanished. We are able to see myriad sides of Merton's personality – playful, thoughtful, restless, a man who was obviously able to take direction and pose for photos, a monk, a common man in jeans. And then there are all our own countless projections onto these symbolic and ambiguous photographs – a personal reminder that the quest for spirit is not simply done in solitude and silence, but also in the here-and-now, in moments of relatedness to ourselves, others and art.

It is also safe to say that this book is the result of the vocation of multiple men (Merton, Meatyard, his son, the editor and contributing writers), each coming together to churn the till of creativity until an altogether new life is created. So what is vocation? Merton would agree that vocation is manifest when work brings one closer to God. Both men seemed to live their lives in the service of knowing God more deeply.

Vocation requires a steadfast attention that ignites the process of defining and redefining itself until all that remains is revealed. The book begins this way (plate 2): a back-focused image of a blurred Wendell Berry, Denise Levertov and Thomas Merton, paired with a quotation from Merton in which he articulates a redefining and deepening understanding of his monastic vocation. The image itself is born from a contemplative act of looking beyond the perceived subject in the service of the whole.

The camera could be seen as a transcendent function, the means to relate to the unconscious in hopes of expanding consciousness – a looking beyond what is immediately in focus to stare into the wilderness where there is a loosening of the ego's grip on the individual, the product being less important than the action itself.

Meatyard's poignant use of symbolism, amplified with Merton's written word, not only heightens our experience of Thomas Merton, but also brings us into harmony with the universal longing to wake up. We observe in plate 14 the portrait of Merton with a camera up to his face. This is just one of the many moments where the concept of vision and sight are in the foreground of the photograph and words. In many of the portraits Merton looks directly at the viewer. Throughout the book, as in Merton's literary works and lectures, Merton has seemed consumed by the insatiable desire to wake up and "see." I hear the echoes of his catch phrase during the lectures to the novice Monks: "You see . . . ?" Most of the journal excerpts contain the flavor of a man taking an unflinching look inward at himself, at his own humanity, all in the service of liberation and coming into the fullness of God's love.

No photographic work is ever complete until it goes through the alchemical editing process: discerning what images to select, which ones to separate out, settling on the order and coagulating the layout. It takes into account the proper use of words to enhance and complement the images. This is the process that either makes or breaks a body of work. It combines the parts into a whole, a final creation greater than the sum of the parts.

The editors did a remarkable job. This is their book as well. Their careful attention added depth and meaning by soulfully joining Merton's words with Meatyard's photographs. It demonstrates the desire to penetrate between the words and into the thoughts evoked by Merton's confessions and observations. There is a rich kind of editorial inquisitiveness into Meatyard's compositions, an insight into the hidden depth of the interplay of light and shadows in these photographs of Merton. Together, on the same page, as one body of work, Meatyard's and Merton's work take on another kind of life, one that enters into a relationship that relies on one another and adds a meaning and depth that might have otherwise never been born – a creation that I believe both men would cast a familiar smile at.

The most authoritative thing I can say about this book is what it did to me. It urged me to continue wondering. It made me feel less alone regarding the questions that rise up from within me. It placed my seemingly irreconcilable dilemmas about life into a larger human context. It

reminded me that wrestling with my understanding of myself does not stop at midlife, but continues as I head down the stream of life and grow in my relationship with God. I remember why I return to silence so often, and why I run away from it. My profession is here-and-now, all in the service of a contemplative life, whether it is in solitude or neck deep in relationship.

Jeff Giraldo

Universal Vision: A Centenary Celebration of Thomas Merton – European Perspectives from the Merton Journal, special edition of *The Merton Journal*, edited with an Introduction by Fiona Gardner, Keith Griffin and Peter Ellis, Foreword by Paul M. Pearson (Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2014), pp. xvii + 152. ISBN 978-0-9551571-3-4 (paper) £8.99.

One of several significant volumes prepared in honor of the centenary of Thomas Merton's birth, this edition adds to the pleasure of scholars, European and North American, seeking to expand their exposure to current thought on the life and writing of this influential monk and his trans-Atlantic orientation. Paul M. Pearson provides precisely the perspective necessary to our reading of this volume, his unique vantage point mirroring that of Merton's – European by birth, transplanted by vocation. It should be noted that this collection, prepared and edited by European scholars, was partially funded by the International Thomas Merton Society, headquartered in the U.S. Such collaboration aptly propagates the dialogue between the two Merton societies; this publication reflects in practicality the "universal vision" of Merton, "a citizen of the whole world" who remained "at heart a European" (xv) as Pearson wisely reminds and persuades us in the percipient pages of his foreword (ix-xvii).

This compilation hospitably invites us to its reading with the variety of its genres and points of view: essays, poems, an interview and previously unpublished writings from Merton's Cambridge days, amplified by illustrations including his father's painting, photography and cartoons. A photograph of Merton in a thoughtful, envisioning pose and posture, taken by Sibylle Akers when she visited him at the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1959, is an apposite cover. Delightfully, Owen Merton's painting and several of the photographs of St. Antonin are presented in color. The fifteen contributors offer us reviews of Merton's brief durations at St. Antonin and Montauban, personal reflections on encounters with him and his writings, and penetrating examinations of his gyroscopic, continuing influence. Where bios follow the articles, they are helpful in introducing