

wholeness" (102) but also some insight into their own. Thank you Suzanne. *Requiescat in pace.*

Christine M. Bochen

PADOVANO, Anthony T., *The Spiritual Genius of Thomas Merton*, foreword by Jonathan Montaldo (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2014), pp 200. ISBN 978-1-61636-802-9 (paper) \$16.99.

The re-issue of Anthony T. Padovano's interpretative biography of Thomas Merton is another welcome text available during this centenary year of Merton's birth. Originally published in 1982 by Doubleday under the title *The Human Journey: Thomas Merton, Symbol of a Century*, this re-issue offers the wider audience a stunning analysis of Merton's life seen primarily through his writing, especially his selectively published journals (*The Secular Journal*, *The Sign of Jonas*, *A Vow of Conversation*, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*) and his poetry (*Emblems of a Season of Fury*, *Cables to the Ace*, *The Geography of Lograire*).

Accolades for the 1982 version remain valid for the 2014 edition. Timothy A. Curtin noted that the approach of Padovano's text is the "reading of the man through his writing" and that the text's greatest strength is "the masterly balance of the paradoxical elements of Merton's character" (*America* [12 June 1982] 467-68). Elena Malits commented that this "may well be the best book on Thomas Merton of the several which have appeared in the last three or four years. . . . [Padovano has] captured the spirit and significance of Thomas Merton" (*Horizons* 10.1 [Spring 1982] 197-98). Jesuit Richard Hauser called the book "provocative," noting that the reader's "effort to process [Padovano's] conclusions leads to an increase in understanding of Merton" (*Merton Seasonal* 10.4 [Autumn 1985] 9). Approached by Franciscan Media thirty-two years after the original publication to revise his text, Padovano has merited firm praise from Paul M. Pearson: this "presentation of Thomas Merton is second to none" (book blurb on 2014 edition).

Degreed in theology and literature, Padovano is the author of more than twenty-five books and three plays. He was the first elected president of CORPUS, an international Catholic Church reform movement promoting an expanded and renewed priesthood of married and single men/women, and one of the founders of Ramapo College in New Jersey, where he is currently a professor of philosophy and literature. Well-prepared to write on Thomas Merton because of his extensive knowledge of the Merton corpus, Padovano presents not only facts of Merton's life and writing, but a comprehensive view of the intellectual and literary history

of the United States. Frequent references to the Puritans, Emerson, Thoreau, Eliot and Dickinson situate his comments about Merton within our complex American literary history. To cite Jonathan Montaldo's Foreword, Padovano expresses "unusual sympathy with the inner meaning of the monk's literary career" (ix) and sees Merton as "solving his difficulties by holding in tension what seem to be polarities" (xi). In short, what we have in Padovano's text is the dynamic writing of a literary scholar and counselor who understands the intricacies of the human mind and the spiritual struggles of a seeker.

One caveat for grasping and enjoying *The Spiritual Genius of Thomas Merton*: readers need to be conversant with the broad framework of Merton's biography, to have a mind-map of his life's trajectory. Otherwise, the wide-ranging scope of Padovano's writing could be dismissed as confusing or succumbing to pop psychology – neither of which would be accurate.

Montaldo's Foreword to the 2014 edition – "A Genius for Reconciling the Irreconcilable" – is suitably named because the essential truth of this interpretive biography relies on paradox. Padovano's description of Merton's entrance into the monastery is one apt example: "[Merton's] journey into solitude and anonymity is the first step into fame and renown. The vocation that was to take him out of the world, so to speak, would bring him into much sharper contact with it" (17). With that said, chapter one ("A Wilderness Faith") is a paradoxical collage of images: dreams and visions, "wild secularity and antiquated piety" (2), the mountains of Asia, the journey motif in American literature, as well as the journey of the self, a thumbnail sketch of Merton's life and early writings, a comparison with John Henry Newman and a section the author labels "The Prose and Poetry of Life." Chapter two ("A Vow of Conversation") offers a balanced critique of the tensions in Merton's vocation as monk and writer with cogent insight into "Fire Watch, July 4, 1952," the finale of *The Sign of Jonas*. Padovano rightly claims that Merton is "full of life and life's energy," a fullness that "finds expression in manuscript after manuscript as the writing becomes a way of breathing, a source of nourishment, and the stuff of personal survival" (49). Moreover, Merton's writing becomes "an indispensable ingredient in the development of nonviolence" (53) which leads him to seek more solitude in the hermitage. Chapter three ("The Measure of Human Pain") focuses on the dialectics of Herakleitos, nonviolence, and turning toward the East and the blessing of Zen. Chapter four ("A Child Shall Lead Us") highlights Merton's poetry and a desire to recapture childhood innocence. Regarding "Poetic experience, like religious experience" as "an act of communion with the world" (87), Padovano explores Merton's "capacity to renew his simplicity despite

encroaching complexity” (95). This chapter includes a reflection on prayer and the dangers of materialism. Chapter five (“A Cable to Absalom and Abel”) underscores the power of loss – loss of Merton’s mother, father, brother, and the loneliness that emerges in many sections of *Cables to the Ace*. According to Padovano: “The pain of the journey became a catalyst for Merton’s creativity” (128). Chapter six (“Cargo Cults and Ghost Dances”) explores the power of myth with many pages devoted to an explication of *The Geography of Lograire*, intended to reveal the subtleties of this intricate poem to the reader as well as demonstrate the creative genius of Merton. The short final chapter (“Winter Rains”) sums up Merton’s life and premature death by once again locating him within American literary culture. Padovano sees Merton as following the Puritans into the wilderness, as a candidate for Emerson’s *Representative Men*, and as a hermit similar to Thoreau on Walden Pond. The “American tradition of asceticism and contemplation,” argues Padovano, begun with the Puritans and modeled in the lives of Emerson and Thoreau, is an essential component of Merton’s contemplative spirit – “a form of fascination with the beyond and the nameless, with the indefinite future and the infinite possibility . . . with allowing reality no limits . . . with seeing points of convergence where others, in despair, see only diversity” (187-88). For Padovano, “Thomas Merton summed up an era. He showed us our spiritual potential in the midst of our secular endeavors. . . . He proved that contemplation could occur in the throes of restlessness and that it was permissible to be fully human” (188).

A brief word about the revisions in this 2014 version, which are minor and generally relate to formatting. There is an additional name listed in the Dedication; footnotes have been transformed into endnotes (with a couple updates, for example reference to Mott’s biography and the publishing of *18 Poems*); the Index and Bibliography have been eliminated (perhaps not a good choice); and Padovano’s Acknowledgements of the “three vital institutions: the academic community, the ecclesial community, and domestic life” that have shaped his life have been moved to the back just before the endnotes. Changes within the text are inconsequential: long paragraphs have been divided into shorter ones, the typeface is more spacious and readable, sub-heads are flush left. In twenty or thirty places, Padovano has revised words for greater clarity or elegance. The final sentence of the book, for example, is changed from “The journey goes on” (1982 edition) to “The journey continues.” Here and there one or two sentences are omitted in the new edition: for example, in chapter four on page 92, in a passage about the hunger for success, Padovano eliminated two sentences about wealth and affluence – what amounts to

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