

# THREE POEMS

## by YOUNGER MERTON READERS

### TWENTY-ONE YEARS TOO LATE

by **Paige E. M. Hessel**

The birds of wisdom that darted in  
and out of your soul and your hermitage  
gave us both gifts.  
You know that?  
Your footfall haunts me here  
in my home  
and it crashes when I'm in yours.  
Those birds, Thomas, how many promises  
did they make?

The birds have told me about Jonas  
and the Desert, but I cried  
when they told me about the water  
and your naked body on the floor.  
They ran to you, those who hoped  
to save you.  
And the birds flew away.

When the robes turned white forever  
and your name was no longer yours,  
did the birds hush your doubts?  
Did you doubt, Thomas?  
The gifts arrived very late,  
yet had they come any earlier  
I don't believe I would have known  
how carefully I should open them.



PAIGE E. M. HESSEL

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□ **Paige Elizabeth Moore Hessel** lives in Louisville, Kentucky, is Assistant to the Director of The Purchase Gallery at the J. B. Speed Art Museum, and attends the University of Louisville. She writes: "It has been only a little bit over a year since my introduction to the writing of Thomas Merton, and in that year I have consumed all that I could. Merton's writing has been a guide for me, making me want to have content, something of intrinsic value in my writing, not simply clever words slung carefully on the page . . . if I can touch at least one person with my ideas, my musings, then I can feel that I have created that something of intrinsic value."