

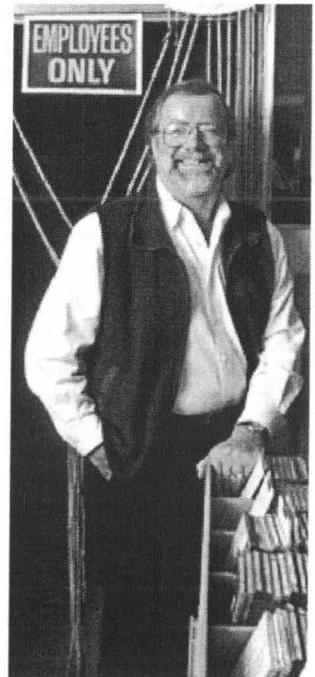
## How I Became Thomas Merton

By Doug Beardsley

For a whole semester I taught  
as if I were Thomas Merton.  
I became as gentle as Jesus  
and so soft-spoken as I was  
certain Merton's manner must have been  
that my students couldn't hear  
the words of wisdom I imagined  
spilled from my lips like crumbs of  
raisin cake and wafer-thin slices of sweet apple.

In my crazy wisdom I invited them  
to come closer, to form  
a semi-circle around my desk.  
For I would never again lecture  
from a podium, no, no  
more would I so much as stand up  
before a class. But even this  
failed to achieve the desired  
effect, for affect was all it was.

In my eagerness to achieve a quiet grace  
my students were overcome  
by my baffled silence. In my attempt  
to escape the holy terror of the emptiness  
that surrounded me on all sides  
I was terrified to give voice to the word.  
In my desire to be transformed  
I had emptied myself of myself  
and become someone else.



Doug Beardsley

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