

On Thomas Merton

By Sheldon Goldfarb

A hooded monk walks in a room
 And tells me why I am there
 He says: You are to be where you must be
 And it is the being that matters

Not the doing
 You complain about the doing
 (And the not doing)
 And the complaint so ravages you
 That you wonder why you should be

But you are meant to be, and be there

And you are not wrong to complain
 Because being there changes there
 And it is your job to change there
 But more it is your job to change yourself
 To change yourself by changing there

You are right to complain
 But you must not forget why you are there

Why, I ask? Tell me why.

You are right to complain, he says,
 Because that way you change yourself
 Not the other
 The other is not for you to change
 Though you may hammer at it for not changing



Sheldon Goldfarb

Sheldon Goldfarb, a Montreal native, lives in Vancouver and works as an archivist for the Alma Mater Society at the University of British Columbia. He earned a B.A. in history from McGill University in 1975, an M.A. in English from the University of Manitoba in 1985 and a Ph.D. in Victorian literature from the University of British Columbia in 1992, as well as a degree in archival studies, also from UBC. He is the author of *Remember, Remember: A Victorian Mystery*, for young adults (2005).

And you should not cease from hammering
But the nail you hammer is yourself

You will find yourself when you have come to the right place
But you must not stay in that place, or cease from wandering

You must travel and deepen and explore

And the hammering will grow less urgent
Less frantic
It will not be the sound of someone struggling to break out
It will be the sound of construction

And you will build a temple in your soul in which you and your
destiny can live
And you will dwell in the house forever