

PRAYING THE QUESTIONS

Merton of Times Square, Last of the Urban Hermits

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If there is one ambition we should allow ourselves, and one form of strength, it is perhaps this kind of wholehearted irony, to *be* a complete piece of systematic irony in the middle of the totalitarian lie—or the capitalist one. And even the official religious one.

Letter from Thomas Merton to Czeslaw Milosz¹

Introduction

As a consequence, perhaps, of an extended crisis about stability, Thomas Merton was granted permission to meet with Dr. Gregory Zilboorg at St. John's University during July of 1956 at a conference on monasticism and psychology. While Merton never mentions the second session with the psychoanalyst in his journals, Dom James Fox, who was present at this meeting, did, and apparently on more than one occasion, thus influencing ecclesiastical opinions of Merton for years to come. While previous conversations between the two men had not gone particularly well, the second encounter greatly disturbed Merton. Pressing his opinion that Merton's desire to be a hermit was almost pathological, Zilboorg declared, "You want a hermitage in Times Square with a large sign over it saying 'HERMIT.'"²*

* Editor's note: An overarching problem with the Merton / Zilboorg meeting arguably makes it an unreliable topic for discussion: the arrangement and public knowledge of this meeting reveals a compromise of integrity between those involved. Regardless of how or why Merton's meeting with Zilboorg was disclosed to the public, the point is that its very disclosure shows that either Merton or Zilboorg (probably both) did not respect or understand the nature and purpose of their meeting. If one interprets this deficit psychoanalytically, one sees that both Merton and Zilboorg idealized and therefore distorted one another's identity.

Zilboorg was, at least in part, correct. Certainly, he was correct to observe a fundamental contradiction in Merton's monastic life. Zilboorg, however, failed to understand how the opposite poles of this contradiction, urban and hermit, might authentically converge in the person of Thomas Merton. Zilboorg's preconceptions about Merton and monasticism prevented him from understanding the man sitting before him.³ His judgement, consequently, was wide of the mark. There was a contradiction in the urban Merton, yet the contradiction was anything but pathological.⁴ As we shall see, it was Cardinal Larraona's light-hearted dismissal of Zilboorg's diagnosis with a Spanish proverb that most likely moves us in the right direction and closer to the truth with regard to Merton as an urban hermit: *De poeta y de loco tenemos todos un poco* (We all have a bit of poetry and a bit of madness in us).⁵

This article suggests that the idea of Merton as someone like a hermit in Times Square may be correct, not, however, as descriptive of a troubled personality but rather as indicative of an essential aspect of this particular monastic vocation. In order to make a case for this opinion, several intersecting lines of inquiry into Merton's life will be explored: 1) a question he lived; 2) a contradiction he embodied; 3) and a hidden wholeness he offered the world in his silent prayer and protest against the crimes and injustices of political tyranny.

It needs to be noted as well that Merton's meeting with Zilboorg was *not* a psychoanalytic session, and no diagnosis occurred. Had they begun an actual analytic relationship, the general public would never have known it. Excluding specific homicidal disclosure, psychoanalysts and their analysands are ethically bound to hold their relationship in confidence. Also, non-psychoanalytic sources (including Merton) addressing Zilboorg's alleged diagnosis of Merton show basic misunderstandings about narcissism and psychoanalytic pathology. The Merton / Zilboorg relationship lacked what is required to take seriously the nature and process of a therapeutic relationship. Their meeting likely amounts to little more than a clash between two high-profile figures who were unwilling or unable to dialogue about their vastly different worldviews. Consequently, there is a serious question to be raised regarding the legitimacy of using the Zilboorg / Merton meeting as a basis of any discussion other than to say that their meeting shows itself as fallacious. [GC]

A Lived Question

Dom André Louf is known for saying that a monk is a person who begins every day by asking, "What is a monk?" Dom Benedetto Calati restates the question with a sharper focus. After reviewing Merton's publications, he asked an appropriate question, "If a monk, what kind of a monk is he?"⁶ Merton was a monk who lived this very question and struggled with the questions raised and the answers offered by others regarding his life and work. His writings provide ample evidence of an unflinching desire to find an answer. He eventually discovered, however, that the question he lived was the answer he sought. "Untitled Poem" expresses the importance of this question, informing as it does the obscure theology of God's presence at work throughout his life.

All theology is a kind of birthday
 Each one who is born
 Comes into the world as a question
 For which old answers
 Are not sufficient.

Birth is question and revelation.
 The ground of birth is paradise
 Yet we are born a thousand miles
 Away from our home.
 Paradise weeps in us
 And we wander further away.
 This is the theology
 Of our birthdays.

Obscure theology
 On the steps of Cincinnati Station:
 I am questioned by the cold December
 Of 1941. One small snowflake
 Melts on my eyelid like a guess
 And is forgotten.
 (Across the river my meaning has taken flesh
 Is warm, cries for care
 Across the river
 Heaven is weeping.)

Heaven weeps without cause
 Forever if I do not find
 The question that seeks me . . .⁷

Beginning with the remembrance of his stopover at Cincinnati Station during the train ride from St. Bonaventure to the Abbey of Gethsemani, the poem weaves together recollections that inevitably return to this fundamental question that sought Merton. Even though this speaker sets out to construct a "theology of will" that would allow him to be "a man without doubts," Wisdom makes of his theology "a broken neck of questions." Wisdom is described as a fire smouldering, a flower growing, a bird flying in the center of his monastery, here named "Fort Thomas Kentucky" where "all the gates are shut" and "everything . . . is certain." It is Wisdom that undoes such a "stone wall Eden" and awakens the speaker to love and the way of not knowing. "Untitled Poem" reveals the movement of Merton from a theology of answers to a theology of questions; a theology that he believed would lead to a "way home to where we are / Epiphany and Eden."

Merton had come to learn that previous answers to the question, as well as those formulated by others like Zilboorg, were and would continue to be insufficient. He had come to realize that if he were to ever discover the nature and meaning of his life as a monk, he must live the questions that surfaced in his life, obscure and contradictory as they might at first appear. By the mid 1960's, this had become apparent to him. A journal entry from the January 31, 1964 reads:

The new *Monastic Studies* is out, only one copy in the house, in the Chapter Room. A long review takes in that Italian collection of monastic conferences in which Dom [Benedetto] Calati discusses me as precisely what? As utterly out of his world. And of course, he is right. I do not belong to his monastic world at all, am no part of it—the world where the status quo is just all right. On the other hand I do not rebel against it either, I am just not concerned with it. And thus from many points of view I am "not a monk." In general that is all right with me, since I need only to be concerned with loyalty to my own graces and my own task in life, not with being recognized by "them" in "their" categories.⁸

And, nearly a year later, on December 9, 1964, he writes in his journal about an unexpected discovery with regard to his vocation:

Last night after a prayer vigil in the novitiate chapel (didn't do a good job—was somewhat disorganized and distracted), went to bed late at the hermitage. All quiet. No lights at Boone's or Newton's. Cold. Lay in bed realizing that what I was, was *happy*. Said the strange word "happiness" and realized that it was there, not as an "it" or object. It simply was. And I was that. And this morning, coming down, seeing the multitude of stars above the bare branches of the wood, I was suddenly hit, as it were, with the whole package of meaning of everything: that the immense mercy of God was upon me, that the Lord in infinite kindness had looked down on me and given me this vocation out of love, and that he had always intended this, and how foolish and trivial had been all my fears and twistings and desperation. And no matter what anyone else might do or say about it, however they might judge or evaluate it, all is irrelevant in the reality of my vocation to solitude, even though I am not a typical hermit. Quite the contrary perhaps. It does not matter how I may or may not be classified. In the light of this simple fact of God's love and the form it has taken, in the mystery of my life, classifications are ludicrous, and I have no further need to occupy my mind with them (if I ever did)—at least in this connection.⁹

With these journal entries in mind, it becomes apparent that Merton's defense of Boris Pasternak is as appropriate for himself as it was for the Russian writer:

But the important thing to realize is that here, as with all deeply spiritual thinkers, to concentrate on a strict analysis of concepts and formulas is to lose contact with the man's basic intuitions. The great error, the error into which the Communists themselves plunge headlong at the first opportunity, is to try to peg genius down and make it fit into some ready-made classification. Pasternak is not a man for whom there is a plain and definite category. And we must not try to tag him with easy names . . .¹⁰

Abandoning easily prescribed definitions of what a monk is, Merton takes a different path; one less certain but more promis-

ing, one guided not by an established theology of answers but by one led by Wisdom into deeper and more complicated questions. There is a line in *Opening the Bible* where Merton says that religious thought does not move from question to answer but rather from question to question, with each new question opening a larger field of vision for understanding oneself in relation to God and the world.¹¹

This particular strain of religious thought is further clarified by recalling what Rilke says in a letter to a young poet, a letter most certainly familiar to Merton, that one must live the question and, if one lives long enough, one may live into an answer.¹² In other words, a person's life becomes the answer to the question as the question shapes the person who lives it. And so it was with Merton who lived the question of his vocation and the paradoxes unique to it. By living this question, a question for which there was no definitive answer but only more questions, the mystery of Merton's vocation would unfold, obscurely but nonetheless authentically. Perhaps this is what he had in mind while writing "Learning to Live." While he is never able to say exactly who he is or what kind of monk or hermit he might be, he was none-the-less aware of how living the question moved him in the direction of becoming more authentically human, free and alive in relation to and for the sake of the world in which he lived. Recalling his early formation at Columbia, he writes:

Life consists of learning to live on one's own, spontaneous, freewheeling: to do this one must recognize what is one's own—be familiar and at home with oneself. This means basically learning who one is, and learning what one has to offer to the contemporary world, and then learning how to make that offering valid. The purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world—not to impose a prefabricated definition of the individual himself, still less an arbitrary definition of the world. The world is made up of the people who are fully alive in it: that is, of the people who can be themselves in it and can enter into a living and fruitful relationship with each other in it. The world is, therefore, more real in proportion as the people in it are able to be more fully and more humanly alive: that is to say, better able to make a lucid and conscious use of their freedom. Basically, this freedom must consist first

of all in the capacity to choose their own lives, to find themselves on the deepest possible level.¹³

Merton finally had discovered that his vocation could only be understood by discerning the dark path of questions along which he journeyed; questions that obscurely revealed the grace of God at work within his life. Following the trajectory of questions emerging from a person's life is a far cry from Zilboorg's approach, an approach not unlike those who tried, according to Merton, to categorize Pasternak. Zilboorg failed to see the relevance of the questions emerging from Merton's struggle to be a monk according to his own graces and tasks. His preoccupation with institutional definitions and psychological categories prevented him from hearing, and assisting Merton in hearing, how Merton was answering the question, "If a monk, what kind of a monk?" Zilboorg would have better served Merton had he focused their attention on the questions that were emerging from this one question that was central to Merton's life by simply saying, "Ah, I see you as a hermit in Times Square. What an odd image, Merton. What are you to make of it?"

An Embodied Contradiction

Had Zilboorg raised such a question, Merton may have recognized the contradiction that was inherent in his vocation. And, if Matthew Kelty had been there, he would have confirmed their observation by saying, as he would later say, "While many have tried to categorize Merton, he cannot be placed in one category of monk or another because he was a contradiction, a man who lived at the center of the cross."¹⁴ This being the case, if a category is to be offered, it must be one for which contradictions are an essential aspect. Before turning to such a category, the two parts of the contradiction presented by Zilboorg's image of Merton as a hermit in Times Square need to be addressed.

Contradictions result from establishing boundaries that define human experience by way of opposites. Once established, boundaries determine inclusion and exclusion. So it is with urban and hermit. What urban includes, hermit excludes and vice versa. Urban includes society, public discourse, and commerce. Hermit includes solitude, silence, and self-sufficiency. Consequently, according to this way of thinking, a predominantly Western and modern way of thinking, hermits do not live in Times Square or

any other public place. Merton was aware of this. In *The Silent Life*, he writes:

Let us face the fact that the monastic vocation tends to present itself to the modern world as a problem and as a scandal. In a basically religious culture, like that of India, or of Japan, the monk is more or less taken for granted. When all society is oriented beyond the mere transient quest of business and pleasure, no one is surprised that men should devote their lives to an invisible God. In a materialistic culture which is fundamentally irreligious the monk is incomprehensible because he "produces nothing." His life appears to be completely useless.¹⁵

Merton, of course, had problems with this way of seeing things. The boundary that separated the two worlds disturbed him. This was not a consequence of being maladjusted but something deeper and of greater significance. It had to do with a valid objection to the way in which the Western world had been defined into opposites of sacred and profane, religious and secular, and so forth. Such a way of defining the world was contrary to what he was discovering in his life at Gethsemani and, in particular, his experience at Fourth and Walnut:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness. The whole illusion of a separate holy existence is a dream. Not that I question the reality of my vocation, or of my monastic life: but the conception of "separation from the world" that we have in the monastery too easily presents itself as a complete illusion: the illusion that by making vows we become a different species of being, pseudo-angels, "spiritual men," men of interior life, what have you.¹⁶

It is commonly understood that the intersection of Fourth and Walnut in Louisville marks the place where Merton's understanding himself and his relation to the world radically changed. While some distance from Times Square, on that day, he was clearly an

urban hermit who was able to see with the eyes of a contemplative the world in which he lived and of which he was a part. His account of the experience continues:

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really *are*. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. But this cannot be *seen*, only believed and "understood" by a peculiar gift.¹⁷

It was also at this intersection that one might say Merton runs into Czeslaw Milosz and Albert Camus. Of course this did not actually occur. What did happen, however, was no less significant. Two years following the experience at Fourth and Walnut, Merton initiated correspondence with Milosz and, by Milosz's encouragement, began reading Camus. I emphasize these relationships because of the role they play in the further formation of Merton as an urban hermit, which might—going one step further—be called an urbane hermit. At the heart of both "conversations" was a search for a position in the world that was true to the deepest dimension of the Fourth and Walnut experience, i.e. *le point vierge*, "the gate of heaven" that "is everywhere."¹⁸ While a contemplative's vision, it also becomes for Merton the ontological grounding of his engagement with that world. In a letter to Milosz dated December 6, 1958, Merton writes:

It seems to me that, as you point out, and as other writers like yourself say or imply (Koestler, Camus etc.) there *has to be* a third position, a position of integrity, which refuses subjection to the pressures of the two massive groups ranged against each other in the world. It is quite simply obvious that the future, in plain dialectical terms, rests with those of us who risk our heads and our necks and everything in the difficult, fantastic job of finding out the new position, the ever changing and moving "line" that is no line at all because it cannot be traced out by political dogmatists.¹⁹

The search for *le point vierge* and the third position became primary concerns for Merton as evidenced by his correspondence with Milosz and his essays on Camus. This third position is the intersection of opposites that opposes the illusion of separateness manifested by a world artificially defined and compartmentalized. It is this search that makes Merton an urban hermit. Unable to accept the division between religious life and political action, he holds the two together. Note, for example, how his photographing of Kanchenjunga and pilgrimage to Polonnaruwa eventually lead to the city of Bangkok where he addresses himself to:

... the monk who is potentially open to contact with the intellectual, the university student, the university professor, the people who are thinking along lines that are going to change both Western and Eastern society and create the world of the future, in which inevitably we are going to have to make our adaptation.²⁰

The awareness of the other side of the mountain that cannot be reduced to a postcard and the dharmakaya exploding from the stone Buddhas, brought Merton to an urban setting in which he offered, once again, a contemplative's vision of the world; a vision that was full of promise, new life, and, as Merton stated in "Untitled Poem" "a way home to where we are / Epiphany and Eden."

If Merton were placed within the Alexandrian tradition, the odd image of urban hermit would not appear so strange. It clearly has historical precedence in the West. Philo Judaeus, a contemporary of Jesus and Paul, was as at home with the Therapeutae, contemplative community, as he was in the streets of Alexandria. He could be found in the synagogue reading the Torah, as well as in the library reading Plato; and reading *Timaeus* and Genesis in light of one another. A highly imaginative biblical scholar who created commentaries for Jews living in a Hellenistic culture, he was equally skilled at writing political tracts and leading embassies to see Gaius in Rome. At the heart of Philo's life and work was an effort to integrate a contemplative vision of the world with social and political action. In a sense this is what Merton did best.

While Merton only makes passing reference to Philo, he devoted considerably more attention to another figure from that ancient city. While desiring to live as a hermit, Merton appears in many ways far more like Clement of Alexandria than Anthony of the Desert. Confessing his love for and affinity with Clement,

Merton's admiration is more than apparent from the numerous references to this Alexandrian as "a great mind and a great Christian, noble and broad and belonging to antiquity, yet new."²¹ He draws Jean Leclercq's attention to Clement as a source for renewal of monastic spirituality in the twentieth century.²²

His essay on Clement's *The Protreptikos* reveals what he found of great value in this early Christian theologian.

The voice of Clement is the voice of one who fully penetrates the mystery of the *pascha Christi*, the Christian exodus from this world in and with the Risen Christ. He has the full triumphant sense of victory which is authentically and perfectly Christian: a victory over death, over sin, over the confusion and dissensions of this world, with its raging cruelty and its futile concerns. A victory which leads not to contempt of man and of the world, but on the contrary to a true, pure, serene love, filled with compassion, able to discover and to "save" for Christ all that is good and noble in man, in society, in philosophy and in humanistic culture. This is the greatness and genius of Clement, who was no Desert Father. He lived in the midst of Alexandria, moved amid its crowds, knew its intellectual elite, and loved them all in Christ.²³

Clement was able to live within the city, presenting the Christian faith in terms comprehensible to the world in which he lived because, as Merton explains, he was:

. . . a man of unlimited comprehension and compassion who did not fear to seek elements of truth wherever they could be found. For truth, he said, is one. And consequently its partial and incomplete expression is already something of the great unity we all desire. The full expression is found most perfectly in the Divine Logos, the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.²⁴

In order to illustrate this, Merton points to how Clement would have worked with Plato.

Gnosis is . . . the full experience of Christ revealed and living in His Church. But this full experience could not be attained without a thorough preparation, both cultural and spiritual. Here is Clement's special contribution: he felt that Greek philosophy could and did assist this preparation. But Christian gnosis was far beyond Plato, and to enter into the Divine light

one had to leave Plato's cave. Nevertheless, Plato himself had not failed to realize the existence of the cave, or the fact that he realities "seen" there were only shadows cast by a light from elsewhere.²⁵

Within these paragraphs, we find the theology and pedagogy that formed the foundation for the contradiction of Merton's vocation as a hermit in Times Square. Truth is one. While fully revealed in Christ, it is nonetheless present everywhere. Recognizing the truth presented by persons from other traditions and representing alternative perspectives, prepares the way for the Gospel. Consequently, it is necessary for those who bear the responsibility of sharing the Gospel to be in the midst of the city fully engaged in the conversations of the day. It is somewhat amusing to note that Merton laments that there have not been more Clements in the history of the Church; amusing because it is not at all difficult to see him as a Clement engaging the world in dialogue and thereby awakening within the hearts and minds of his contemporaries the hidden Logos.²⁶ Merton's seven essays in response to the literary work of Albert Camus provide an excellent example of this.²⁷ Recognizing a certain affinity with Camus, Merton referred to him as the "Algerian Cenobite."²⁸ Believing that Camus was a prophetic voice that the Church needed to heed, Merton sought to clarify Camus' message. In these essays we observe a pattern that is remarkably similar to what we find in Clement's response to the intellectuals of his day. First, there is an expression of respect for Camus as a person and writer. Second, there is acceptance and approval of Camus' ideas. This acceptance, however, is seldom without reservation. Consequently, there is a third part to the pattern where Merton indicates that Camus is fine as far as he goes but Camus needs to go further. Like Plato, he must move beyond the shadows to the light of the Gospel.

While Zilboorg was correct to identify two dimensions of Merton's vocation, urban and hermit, he was unable to see how they paradoxically might be true for Merton. Unaware of the Alexandrian tradition, he failed to grasp the significance of his image of a hermit in Times Square. Had he said, "Ah, I see you as a hermit in Times Square. What an odd image, Merton. What do you make of it?", Merton might very well have responded, "Clement of Alexandria."

A Hidden Wholeness

There is more, however, to Merton than a twentieth-century reincarnation of an ancient Alexandrian. While looking at Clement may have shed some light on the image of an urban hermit, it is not sufficient for fully grasping the significance of this image for Merton. I noted earlier Matthew Kelty's opinion that Merton could not be categorized. I also indicated that I would nonetheless suggest a category but one that by its very nature embodies contradictions.

Before turning to that category, a brief mention of Nicholas of Cusa's notion of coincidence of opposites will suggest that it is not unreasonable to believe that contradictions such as urban and hermit might converge into an authentic whole. Simply stated, the coincidence of opposites is a state in which opposites no longer oppose each other but converge into a harmonious union. While perceived as a coincidence, the unity, not the distinction, is the deeper reality that we, for a brief and passing moment, are able to glimpse. With this in mind, it becomes possible to consider ways in which urban and hermit might converge to reveal a hidden wholeness in Merton's life. One such way is suggested by Lewis Hyde in his book entitled *Trickster Makes This World; Mischief, Myth, and Art*.²⁹ Hyde points out that the trickster is an embodiment of contradictions who provides an invaluable service to society by opening the deeper dimension of life that has become closed off by formidable boundaries constructed by custom and practice. As we shall see, it is not at all difficult to understand how urban and hermit converge in Merton to reveal his essential and hidden wholeness as a trickster.

The trickster embodies the playful and disruptive side of the human mind; the wild and creative imagination that breaks up static ways of thinking and with them rigid institutions and traditions that no longer allow for the dynamic processes of authentic life, freedom, and joy. The old myths tell us that dying cultures are transformed by the subversive innovation of tricksters. In these stories, the trickster is always up against those who are intent on building a more perfect and ideal world; one without the natural complexities, ambiguities, and paradoxes of life. The trickster is an anti-idealist. He is in and for the world of imperfections. He speaks and acts out about those things that a society has deemed unfit, that is, do not fit together according to the prevailing ways

of seeing the world. Consequently, the trickster and the establishment are locked in an endless cycle of constructing and deconstructing worlds. On the one hand, officials plan, build, and manage business-as-usual. On the other hand, the lone trickster emerges from “nowhere” to ensure the continuation of life in its full mystery by disarranging everything. Needless to say, for most, tricksters are bothersome [as Merton was to Zilboorg]. Few understand them, many dislike them, but paradoxically history tells us that they are indispensable cultural heroes whose stories have been told from antiquity: Hermes in Greece, Loki in Scandinavia, Eshu in Africa, the Monkey King in China, and Coyote in North America, to name just a few. And, now with Hyde’s book, the life and work of still more recent tricksters are recalled: Pablo Picasso, John Cage, Allen Ginsberg, and Frederick Douglass. All these characters, fictional and real, are described by Hyde as follows:

. . . trickster is a boundary-crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends the internal boundaries by which groups articulate their social life. We constantly distinguish - right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead - and in every case trickster will cross the line and confuse the distinction. Trickster is the creative idiot, therefore, the wise fool, the gray-haired baby, the cross-dresser, the speaker of sacred profanities. Where someone’s sense of honorable behavior has left him unable to act, trickster will appear to suggest an amoral action, something right/wrong that will get life going again. Trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox.³⁰

Hyde identifies here four characteristics of the trickster. The trickster is a boundary-crosser, a confuser-of-distinctions, a cross-dresser, and an embodiment-of-ambiguity. These characteristics are true for Merton and can be seen as the characteristics of someone who longed to be a hermit, but also as someone whose attraction to the urban and urbane remained basic. The designation of boundary-crosser can be misleading. It may suggest that the trickster simply crosses boundaries. He does more than this. He works his way in-between established boundaries. That is to say, his work is done not on one side or the other but in the middle. Perhaps, it

would be better to describe him as a playful criss-crosser who moves back and forth, weaving connections where there had not only previously been none but where such connections were more than likely prohibited. Crisscrossing boundaries like a thief in the night, the trickster employs any crafty measure available to create something new and totally unexpected. While many will see his play as whimsical, disoriented, foolish, and even immoral, he is playing true to a deeper sense of order, harmony, and beauty; playing true to his own intuitions and graces. His tricks are for the sole purpose of making new and odd connections and thereby opening up the deeper dimensions of life that had become closed off by the rigid structures of a society. Merton was a boundary-crosser who worked his way in-between established traditions and institutions which had been closed to one another for ages. This is so apparent from his writings, there is no need to list them all. It was so characteristic of his life and work that it is difficult, if not impossible, to think of Merton without conjuring up an image of a man-between-something-or-another. Locating himself in-between mutually exclusive worlds, he went about opening dialogue, imaginations, and ways of thinking to the vast array of possibilities for an authentic human community grounded by grace in a freedom offered by life unbounded.

As a boundary-crosser, the trickster is also a confuser-of-distinctions. He erases those carefully drawn lines that have been used to distinguish persons, things, and activities from one another. His favorite area of play is the intersection of human and divine. When the relation between humanity and the gods becomes too distant and, consequently, meaningless, the trickster is there to renew the presence of the divine in the daily activities of human life on earth. In order to do this, the trickster must erase the line that has been drawn between the sacred and the profane, the eternal and the temporal, heaven and earth. Merton was a confuser-of-distinctions. That is to say, he took great pleasure in turning things upside down and around to see what new forms could be created. For example, in his poem entitled "Five Virgins," he intentionally confuses the distinctions that we make between the sacred and the profane, piety and play, vigilant virgins and good looking women who know how to dance. Merton knew the dangers of a religious life whereby the joy of heaven could be lost by over-emphasis on being responsible, prepared, and ever-vigilant virgins. While there is nothing wrong with these virtues

in and of themselves, if practiced to the exclusion of human foolishness in all its rich earthiness, they can become the death of the Spirit that is intended to create life, freedom, joy within us and our communities. Consequently, we see in this poem a confusing of distinctions between wise and foolish virgins so that the reader may discover *holy folly*.³¹

There were five howling virgins
Who came
To the Wedding of the Lamb
With their disabled motorcycles
And their oil tanks
Empty

But since they knew how
To dance,
A person says to them
To stay anyhow.

And there you have it:
There were five noisy virgins
Without gas
But looking good
In the traffic of the dance.

Consequently
There were ten virgins
At the Wedding of the Lamb.

In order to crisscross boundaries and reconnect heaven and earth, the trickster must be a cross-dresser; that is to say, a master of disguises. His life is marked by happenstance. He must be able to take advantage of the unexpected coincidence. Consequently, one moment he appears this way and the next another. To an onlooker, the trickster will appear a shifty character, aimless and without purpose. In reality, the trickster is simply playing the moment for all it is worth by adapting to the situation. Nonetheless, he keeps his wits about him and his eye on the primary objective of opening the place up. Merton was a cross-dresser, a master of disguises. Perhaps this is best seen in his correspondence. Facing all four corners of the globe, he wrote letters to Latin American poets in the South, Buddhist monks in the East, Beat writers in the West, and Russian dissidents in the North. In these letters we observe

with what great ease he became all things to all people. A casual reading of the letters reveals Merton's vast array of voices and disguises. After a while, you cannot help but ask, "Which was the true Merton?" If we understand him as a trickster, we have to say Merton was honestly "playing" whatever he was at that moment, sincerely and authentically engaging his world in conversation. He was able to move between communities, make connections and open possibilities for dialogue.

There is one more characteristic that must be considered. A trick or two, now and then, does not make someone a trickster. The trickster must embody the ambiguities of his age. The trickster has internalized the contradictions of his world. He is acting them out. He is trying to make a place for himself in the world that has no place for him. As one might imagine, his acting out of these internal conflicts inevitably disturbs the peace and quiet of the community or communities through which he is passing. Even though the trickster's behavior is deeply rooted within himself and has much to do with his own unresolved issues, his acting out always has social consequences. As he struggles to make a place in the world for himself, he opens the doors for others. In this struggle, he becomes his own place within the world, his own geography, his own pattern of life; his own and yet oddly enough not his own for he has become the embodiment of life with all of its questions, ambiguities, and paradoxes. And, so in his struggle, he gains for his contemporaries a new-found freedom for discovering life at its deepest level and experiencing for themselves the fullness of life in all of its complexities. Merton was an embodiment of the ambiguities of his age. The opening lines of *The Seven Storey Mountain* articulate this most clearly: "Free by nature, in the image of God, I was nevertheless the prisoner of my own violence and my own selfishness, in the image of the world into which I was born."³² These few words describe the birth of a trickster in our world who would eventually combust with the contradictions of our age. Reflecting back on his autobiography, Merton writes:

. . . the monastery is not an "escape" from the world. On the contrary, by being in the monastery I take my true part in all the struggles and sufferings of the world. To adopt a life that is essentially non-assertive, non-violent, a life of humility and peace is in itself a statement of one's position. But each one in such a life can, by the personal modality of his decision, give his whole life a special orientation. It is my intention to make

my entire life a rejection of, a protest against the crimes and injustices of war and political tyranny which threaten to destroy the whole race of man and the world with him. By my monastic life and vows I am saying NO to all the concentration camps, the aerial bombardments, the staged political trials, the judicial murders, the racial injustices, the economic tyrannies, and the whole socio-economic apparatus which seems geared for nothing but global destruction in spite of all its fair words in favor of peace. I make monastic silence a protest against the lies of politicians, propagandists and agitators, and when I speak it is to deny that my faith and my Church can ever seriously be aligned with these forces of injustice and destruction.³³

In the World

Merton could not understand monasticism as simply a retreat from the world. On the contrary, for Merton, to be a monk meant also to be in the world and, for him, this meant to be in the world in a way unique to the monastic vocation. He understood the monk as "essentially someone who takes up a critical attitude toward the world and its structures," believing "that the claims of the world are fraudulent."³⁴ This did not mean for Merton a rejection of the world. For Merton, it meant taking up a middle position, the third position, a position in-between worlds.

I think we should say that there has to be a dialectic between world refusal and world acceptance. The world refusal of the monk is something that also looks toward an acceptance of a world that is open to change. In other words, the world refusal of the monk is in view of his desire for change.³⁵

All this underscores the opinion that Merton was a trickster-monk set loose in the world; a hermit talking about silence and solitude in Times Square. It is perhaps this lived contradiction that caused a restless search that eventually led to Albert Camus in whom he found a mentor and model of silence as a language of resistance and a source for social change.

With all my silence I shall protest to the very end. There is no reason to say, "It had to be." It is my revolt which is right, and it must follow this joy which is like a pilgrim on earth, follow it step by step.³⁶

While we might be inclined to identify this quote with Merton, it was actually written by Albert Camus. A notebook entry dated the September 9, 1937, it represents a youthful Camus' early reflections on a position that he would later develop in several collections of essays entitled *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Rebel*, and *Resistance, Rebellion and Death*, as well as, in plays, short stories, and novels. It is, however, quoted by Merton in "Terror and the Absurd: Violence and Nonviolence in Albert Camus"; the third essay in a series of seven essays by Merton on Camus. Merton was looking seriously at Camus' position of revolt as valid for himself as a monk living in the twentieth century. Referring to this notebook entry, Merton indicates that he had found in Camus the pure rebel who refuses to accept with passive and unreasoning resignation a falsification of authentic life; who protests the destruction or mutilation of life in the name of something else, whether it be patriotism, the economy, or religion; and who resists the numerous forces of alienation that separate humans from one another and from life itself.³⁷ It is interesting to observe, however, that Merton appears to have overlooked the opening words of the notebook entry. Even though Merton belonged to an order that valued silence, he took no notice of Camus' words, "With all my silence I shall protest to the very end." This, as is obvious from the context, is *not* the despairing silence of resignation but the affirming silence of protest on behalf of life. Camus' rebel is grounded in this silence, speaks out of this silence, and embodies this silence. While Merton does not make anything of this in "Terror and the Absurd: Violence and Nonviolence in Albert Camus," it is clearly articulated in his "Message to Poets." In this address, Merton calls upon a new generation of Latin American writers to be rooted in "fidelity to *life* rather than to artificial systems."³⁸ He points out that they are a generation who are "not in tutelage to established political systems or cultural structures" and, as a consequence, may "dare to hope in their own vision of reality and of the future."³⁹ Because they remain outside all socially constructed categories, outside where life unfolds in "all its unpredictability and all its freedom,"⁴⁰ he declares that they, like himself, are "monks," "ministers of silence," and "children of the Unknown"⁴¹ whose words "point beyond all objects into the silence where nothing can be said."⁴² It is out of this silence, Merton tells them, that they will be able to resist with innocence, love, and solidarity the alienation, violence, and deceptions that are inherent in the social structures of their day.

Whether it was the notebook entry or something else, it is clear from "Message to Poets" that Merton and Camus were on the same page with regard to silence as the language of resistance.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of what this might possibly mean, we could look at Merton's "Rain and the Rhinoceros" and Camus' "The Growing Stone." Both works explore in similar ways silence as the language of resistance. Nature is presented as a witness that invokes an awareness of the ineffable that extends beyond all social constructs. This awareness silences all declarations of what is and what ought to be. In Camus' story, the murmuring of a river running through the jungles of Brazil silences social customs and ecclesiastical traditions that had long alienated the indigenous peoples. In Merton's essay, the strange rhythms of rain baptizing his hermitage in the hills of Kentucky silences technological enterprises that make for progress and war. Both narratives awaken within the reader an awareness of an interior silence that echoes the silence of the universe. The awareness of this interior silence to which nature and these two works of literary art witness, long forgotten in the West, was understood by Camus and Merton as the essential protest necessary for the protection of life in the postmodern world.

While silence as resistance is explored in these two works, neither Camus or Merton present systematic studies but simply express, as stated by Merton, intuitions which cannot be easily defined because they are "obscure and ironic."⁴³ Consequently, "The Growing Stone" and "Rain and the Rhinoceros" leave the reader with difficult questions to consider. These questions, however, if pursued, offer an opportunity to discover new horizons for humanity as it approaches the end of the modern era. How does the silent gesture of a French engineer carrying a stone overcome alienation and create community with the poor and oppressed? Why should we consider the silent presence of a hermit in the woods a valid and effective protest against alienation? Of what do a river in Brazil and rain in Kentucky speak? Who are we who are silenced by a simple gesture, a hermit in the woods, a murmuring river, or the rhythms of falling rain?

Luce Irigaray, a French feminist philosopher, provides a perspective from which we can consider "The Growing Stone" and "Rain and the Rhinoceros," the questions these works raise, and silence as the language of resistance. In her book, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, Irigaray presents a theory

on gender as a paradigm for an appreciation of diversity, a respect for differences, and a commitment to solidarity.⁴⁴ She understands human identities to be grounded in the fecundity of nature and therefore irreducible to stereotypes, class distinctions, and social customs. The witness of nature appears and reappears everywhere in the random murmurings of running streams, unrecognizable rhythms of falling rains, and sundry other ways. Nature, according to Irigaray, challenges us to welcome the diversity it represents and, to do so, in the spirit of democracy.⁴⁵ Consequently, nature silences all forms of authoritarianism and totalitarianism that have dominated human life in modern times. Nature witnesses to the possibility of a community woven from the differences of age, gender, and race, as well as, the diverse religious symbols that vary from one culture to another.⁴⁶ For this to happen, she suggests an "education of the body"⁴⁷ by which learning comes through the sensual experiences of the whole person immersed in nature. Here, she believes, is the possible refoundation of the human community "at the level of the least constructed, at the most intimate level of being human itself and of its living relations with the pre-given world that surrounds it: nature, other living beings."⁴⁸ While sharing much in common with Merton and Camus on nature, silence, and resistance, Irigaray has moved beyond these two, presenting a more systematic study. Her perspective on silence and human relations can be summarized in three parts.

First, silence is always an essential aspect of the human experience. George Steiner in *Silence and Language: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* has noted that language only deals meaningfully with a restricted segment of reality. The rest, and he presumes this to be the much larger part, is silence.⁴⁹ Irigaray situates this silence within human relations. She sees the recognition, establishment, and nurture of this silence as necessary for all authentic ways of relating. In "The Growing Stone," Camus essentially says the same thing. Here he describes a situation in which a traditional Christian ceremony processes unexpectedly outside the church and the town to a primitive hut by a river where an engineer from France and indigenous peoples simply sit together in silence. In "Rain and the Rhinoceros," Merton, while reflecting on the immediate experience of the rain falling in the woods around his hermitage, remembers Ionesco's play *Rhinoceros* seemingly to suggest that the silent presence of a hermit, impervious to the gigantic snorting sounds of progress, lives in fidelity to the rhythms of his own life.

The second aspect of Irigaray's perspective is an extension of the first and may be summarized: in silence the socially constructed one becomes two with each standing as unique and a mystery before the other. That is to say, for example, in silence, I cannot be reduced to you or you to me but each stands separate, a mystery to one another. The same is true for other human differences. Identity, at the deepest and truest level, according to Irigaray is always open rather than closed; open to seemingly endless possibilities. Human identity, like life itself, is undefinable and therefore free to be explored and discovered in new ways. So, in Camus' "Growing Stone," the native peoples are no longer seen as members of a European empire but are present as distinct and unique and, consequently, an unknown to be discovered rather than predefined. Likewise, Merton in "Rain and the Rhinoceros" makes a point of distinguishing himself from the culture that would try to define him and what he does, believing, as he says, to know what he was doing in the hermitage.

The third aspect of Irigaray's perspective is simply the reverse of the second: silence is where two resists one. Irigaray believes that from within silence emerges a natural resistance of the two to reduction to the socially constructed one. The resistance is essential for the unfolding of the uniqueness and mystery of the individual. This silence prevents a person or group of persons from defining others in ways that restrict, alienate, and oppress them, thereby preventing the human community from flourishing. All such social constructs become meaningless when dwarfed as they are by the expansive unknown reality of the ineffable to which silence witnesses. Furthermore, this aspect of silence becomes the ground for a solidarity of resistance but one that does not require uniformity but the openness of wonder, exploration, and acceptance. So, with Camus' "Growing Stone" we find in the closing scene that while the distinctive differences are more than apparent a community nonetheless is present. And, in Merton's "Rain and the Rhinoceros," Merton understands that while he is distinctively different, he is nonetheless inescapably a member of a larger community with the task of protesting.

Thoreau sat in *his* cabin and criticized the railways. I sit in mine and wonder about a world that has, well, progressed. I must read *Walden* again, and see if Thoreau already guessed that he was part of what he thought he could escape. But it is

not a matter of “escaping.” It is not even a matter of protesting very audibly⁵⁰

Merton’s recognition that neither he nor Thoreau can escape the social constructs of their times is important.

Merton understands the monk’s vocation to be in but not of the world; a situating of oneself that is characteristic of the trickster figure who lives on the boundary between the socially constructed world and the vast unknown, and thereby becomes a portal between the two. It is in taking up this position that his very presence becomes a protest against the social constructs and a witness to life, to the virgin point that cannot be analyzed by social scientists but only discovered as the place where the dance of life happens.

Viewing Merton and Camus on silence as resistance through the lens provided by Irigaray, we see that both writers recognized the problem with social constructs and the need to awaken within the human experience an awareness of that which lies outside the boundaries of all constructs and, while beyond comprehension, nonetheless real, speaking as it does of our true identity as unknown, undefinable and unfolding in contrast to ideologies that define human identity as knowable and set. Nature, as represented by the stone and rain, witnesses to this dimension without boundaries, beyond analysis, before all constructs. An engineer’s silent gesture and a hermit’s silent presence draw our attention to this witness. Their silence speaks of the vast unknown, calling us to live within and out of this mystery that silences our illusions of grandeur, and calls us to live and speak out of it and its unpredictability and the freedom it offers. Here, as suggested by Irigaray, a new horizon for life is to be found. Here we discover the importance of silent gestures, a hermit’s vocation, and the deepest dimension within ourselves that is awakened by murmuring rivers and the rhythms of falling rain to enter the dance of life.

While Merton acknowledged his agreement with Camus, he also recognized how they differed. While both may agree on silence as the language of resistance, Camus proceeds no further than the human heart and the happiness one must imagine Sisyphus knew as he resisted death and despair with each step up the hill. Merton, on the other hand, understands the human heart and its deepest joy and capacity to love in a world of sorrow and hate to be grounded in the hidden work of God in Christ. Even so, the distance between the two men may not be as great as it ap-

pears. Czeslaw Milosz in his obituary essay on Camus stated that all of Camus' work, not just his academic thesis on Augustine, might very well have been "marked by a suppressed theological bent."⁵¹ This "bent" has been acknowledged by others who have found in Camus themes of grace and redemption, although without reference to the Christian God that Camus says he was unable to accept as long as there was one innocent child in this world suffering.

Whether the distance between these two men could ever have been bridged is the subject of another study. For this article, however, it should be noted, that Merton and Camus would have no difficulty sitting together with whatever disagreement may have existed. Each, I am sure, would have respected and valued the uniqueness of the other. Merton's essays on Camus testify to this and Camus' "The Unbeliever and Christians" does so as well. And, I have no doubt that there would have been an authentic solidarity between the two; a solidarity emerging not from conformity of thought but out of a deep intuition of the ineffable diversity they embodied together. Both understood, perhaps obscurely, this irony that Irigaray would later so clearly articulate in her writings.

Conclusion

The relation with Camus, as well as with Milosz and many others, places Merton in the Alexandrian, rather than the Desert, tradition. This makes him no less a contemplative, a monk, or even a hermit. His unique vocation embodied the contradictions of contemplation and action, monk and writer, longing to be hermit and connected to the urban. Merton became a contemplative whose silence included, not excluded, conversation with the world in which he lived. The same could be said of his solitude. It was never an exclusive solitude but rather a solitude grounded in the solidarity of Christ with all humanity. The world was his hermitage. And, for a brief moment in history, he was the world's hermit. In every relation and situation, varied as they might be, Merton witnessed to the ineffable presence of God in the world and the unbounded possibilities of life lived in the Spirit of that God. This witness, as we have seen, was not limited to essays on monastic life but extended into the public domain as a protest against humankind's propensity for violence, exploitation, and death.

Living these contradictions involved Merton in a lifetime of questioning and more searching for answers that could only be discovered in his prayerful lived experience. These contradictions, however, were not his alone but those of the world in which he lived and sought to serve. By living the contradictions of his age, he opened for his contemporaries a new way of being religious within the world; a way that extended far beyond the sectarian divisions of the past, the classifications of sacred and profane, and the limitations of modern thought.

Merton's struggle was not pathological as Zilboorg would have us to believe. While his observations were correct, his conclusion was wrong. When we compare Zilboorg's observations as recorded by Merton⁵² with Hyde's description of a trickster, we discover that the collective wisdom of mythology provides a far more interesting perspective on Merton than that provided by psychoanalysis. When we consider the way in which Merton lived the question of his vocation and the contradictions that he embodied, we come to see that his "poetry and craziness" were expressions of a hidden wholeness; the hidden wholeness of a trickster who was both urban and hermit. Merton moved between the monastic world and modern life with the intention of opening the twentieth century to deeper dimensions of life that it had forgotten.

Postscript

After working his way in-between so many worlds, erasing the barriers which bound and separated humanity in the twentieth century, and thereby opening for us new ways of seeing life's possibilities when lived as grace and mystery, Thomas Merton, far from home, on December 10, 1968, after talking about monasticism and Marxism, had a coke and disappeared . . . which is the way of tricksters. Tricksters erase lines and, then, themselves. The trickster cannot stay around long. He is always outside, in-between, and on-the-road. Sooner or later, for his work to be completed, the trickster must disappear. This last act is essential. In the last act of the trickster's play, his audience is lured into the trap that will set them free. By his absence, the audience is left alone, puzzled and perplexed by the crazy antics of someone who has rearranged their world. Alone, the audience discovers something that could never have been found had the trickster remained. The audience becomes aware that they too may have wild and creative imaginations that can see beyond the confines of their old world.

Notes

1. *Striving Towards Being: The Letters of Thomas Merton and Czeslaw Milosz*, ed. Robert Faggen (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997), p. 56.

2. For an account of Merton's meetings with Zilboorg, see Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), pp. 290-99, 339.

3. Regarding Zilboorg's lack of objectivity, see Mott, *The Seven Mountains*, pp. 291-93.

4. Mott does not agree with Zilboorg's diagnosis. See Mott, *The Seven Mountains*, p. 366. And, apparently, Fr. John Eudes Bamberger did not agree that Merton's desire for solitude was pathological. See Thomas Merton, *Witness to Freedom: Letters in Times of Crisis*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), p. 212.

5. Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985), p. 135.

6. Dom Benedetto Calati, *The Theory of Monasticism in the Literature of the Last Thirty Years in Problemi e orientamenti di spiritualita monastica, biblica e liturgica* (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1961), pp. 337-497.

7. Thomas Merton, *Eighteen Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1985).

8. Thomas Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, ed. Robert Daggy (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), p. 68.

9. Merton, *Dancing in the Water*, pp. 177-78.

10. Thomas Merton, *Disputed Questions* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., 1960), p.23

11. Thomas Merton, *Opening the Bible* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1970), p. 19-20.

12. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. and ed. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Modern Library, 2001), p. 34.

13. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), p. 3.

14. *A Taste of Gethsemani: Trappist Monks Remember Merton* (Video of Panel Discussion at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky by The Thomas Merton Center Foundation: December, 1997).

15. Thomas Merton, *The Silent Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc., 1957), p. viii.

16. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 140-141.

17. Merton, *Conjectures*, p. 142.

18. Merton, *Conjectures*, p. 142.

19. *Striving Towards Being*, p. 4.

20. Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal*, ed. Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart & James Laughlin (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 328.
21. Thomas Merton, *Clement of Alexandria; Selections from the Proteptikos* (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 3.
22. *Survival or Prophecy? The Letters of Thomas Merton and Jean Leclercq*, ed. Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002), p. 76.
23. Thomas Merton, *Clement of Alexandria; Selections from the Proteptikos* (New York: New Directions, 1962), pp. 1-2.
24. Thomas Merton, *Clement of Alexandria*, p. 3.
25. Thomas Merton, *Clement of Alexandria*, p. 5.
26. Thomas Merton, *Clement of Alexandria*, p.10.
27. *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. Brother Patrick Hart (New York: New Directions, 1981), pp. 181-301.
28. *The Literary Essays*, p. xv.
29. Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World; Mischief, Myth, and Art* (New York: North Point Press, 1999).
30. Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World*, p. 7.
31. For Merton's understanding of *folly*, see Mott, *The Seven Mountains*, pp. 419f.
32. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), p. 3.
33. Thomas Merton, "Honorable Reader"; *Reflections on My Work*, ed. Robert Daggy (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 65-66.
34. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, p. 329.
35. Merton, *The Asian Journal*, pp. 329-30.
36. Albert Camus, *Notebooks 1935-1942* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) p. 54.
37. Thomas Merton, "Terror and the Absurd: Violence and Nonviolence in Albert Camus" in *The Literary Essays*, p. 239.
38. Thomas Merton, "Message to Poets" in *The Literary Essays*, p. 372.
39. Merton, "Message to Poets," p. 371.
40. Merton, "Message to Poets," p. 373.
41. Merton, "Message to Poets," pp. 373-374.
42. Merton, "Message to Poets," p. 374.
43. Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 2.
44. Luce Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 137.
45. Irigaray, *Between East and West*, p. 140.
46. Irigaray, *Between East and West*, p. 140.
47. Irigaray, *Between East and West*, p. 70.
48. Irigaray, *Between East and West*, pp. 11; 55.

49. George Steiner, *Language and Silence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. vii.

50. Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp. 12-13.

51. Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 93-94.

52. Mott, *The Seven Mountains*, pp. 295-96.