

## WEEK OF A STRANGER: Thomas Merton Bibliographic Review 2006

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*Donald Grayston*

While I was working on this review-essay of works by and about Merton published in 2006, I had the pleasure of spending a week on Savary Island, a little chunk of paradise accessible only by water taxi and float plane from the coast of British Columbia near Powell River and Lund. I was by myself in a cabin belonging to a friend: one main floor with a sleeping loft, a propane stove and refrigerator, running water but no electricity. The cabin —Iniswood Cottage, to give it its proper name—has a deck on which I could sit on sunny days, and a wood-stove/fireplace for cool mornings and evenings. Many times I saw deer, on one occasion two together, grazing peacefully in the salal less than a dozen feet from where I was sitting, and, perhaps because no hunting is permitted on the island, quite content to come close, occasionally turning to look—no, to gaze: deer are natural contemplatives—at me. Of course when I came home, I wanted to re-read the section (“Poetry of the Forest”) in George Kilcourse’s *Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton’s Christ* in which he reflects on the deer as symbol for Merton of the shy inner self which the contemplative unavoidably encounters in the hermitage.<sup>1</sup> I affirm here in print that, contrary to my children’s teasing, not only do I not think I am Thomas Merton, I am not even *trying* to be Thomas Merton! But it didn’t take me more than an hour after my arrival to recognize that I had been given the gift of a brief taste of quasi-eremital living. Of course I knew from the day I got there that I would be leaving at the end of the week, and that necessarily relativized the impact of the experience; whereas Merton, when he embarked on his time as a hermit, had no way of knowing how long he would so continue. Even so, staying in the cabin, I knew in my own way and in this brief time the truth of Belden Lane’s characterization of Merton’s hermitage years: that on my own in the cabin, on the island, I had no need to “be someone,” no need to nurture the outer or social self.<sup>2</sup> In the hermitage, similarly, rather than having any need to “be someone,” the hermit has time and opportunity to open himself/

herself to “a deeper personal authenticity,” to give love and solitude a chance to “test each other,” and to relinquish illusions which in a communal context might easily and unconsciously be sustained.<sup>3</sup> As someone with no need that week to be anybody in particular, I walked, I went to the beach, I sat in front of the fire, I prepared my own food and did my own dishes (nirvana = samsara), and I read some of the books I mention in this review. Experientially, my week there picked up on another major theme in Merton: the recovery of paradise. It was a very fine time.

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I began my reading there by looking at, that is, by appreciating the visual as well as the textual quality of Roger Lipsey’s *Angelic Mistakes*,<sup>4</sup> a beautiful book (the recipient of the 2007 ITMS Book Prize) which explores Merton’s work in the sixties as calligrapher and printmaker, most of which he undertook during his hermitage years (1965-68). The book is divided into three distinct sections: the first is Lipsey’s description of Merton as artist, and in particular, how his artistic efforts colored and expressed the spiritual path of his time as hermit; the second presents a portfolio of reproductions of 34 of Merton’s drawings, calligraphies and prints from that time, beside each of which Lipsey has placed one or more apposite quotations from Merton; the third offers an account of friends and colleagues “crucial to the development of Merton’s art in the 1960s”<sup>5</sup>—D.T. Suzuki, Jacques Maritain, Victor Hammer, Ad Reinhardt and Ulfert Wilke, as well as a discussion of another spiritual son of Suzuki, John Cage, and an account of the exhibitions of Merton’s art. The book concludes with a very interesting appendix in which three printmakers, at Lipsey’s request, recount their reconstruction of Merton’s printmaking technique.<sup>6</sup>

*Angelic Mistakes* (the name comes from a list of sardonic descriptors of his pieces in a letter from Merton to Jim Forest in 1966<sup>7</sup>) is the “first extensive exploration of Thomas Merton’s visual art of the 1960s. In those years ... Merton had matured into the radiant, questioning, profound human being whose writings reach out to this day with undimmed appeal.”<sup>8</sup> Merton toyed with whether to describe his drawings and prints from this time as “edifying” or “disedifying,”<sup>9</sup> because there was “no obvious bridge between his art and the values and traditions of the Catholic Church”<sup>10</sup> of which he was a solemnly professed monk. Lipsey says that Merton’s later art, moving beyond the institutionally ecclesial, had located itself

in an "ecumenical, cross-cultural terrain," which he characterizes under the headings of "Kyoto" and "Lower Manhattan."<sup>11</sup> By these rubrics Lipsey means to suggest that Zen, which has a long tradition of the practice of calligraphy among its practitioners, and American abstract expressionism were two chief contexts or conceptual framings for Merton's art.

Critical to the production of these pieces in Merton's last years was the hermitage itself, which was also his artist's studio: "Had there been no hermitage," says Lipsey, "there would probably have been no art."<sup>12</sup> The hermitage provided Merton with the autonomous space in which he could make artistic correlations "between marks on paper and the marks in [his] mind and heart."<sup>13</sup> His art-making was for Merton spiritual practice, involving mind, heart and hand; it was *contemplative art*, a following of the heart's path through pen, brush, found objects and paper. The two pieces which I found most engaging were 23, entitled by Lipsey "The three doors (they are one door)," a phrase which readers of Merton will recognize from the *Asian Journal*, and 33—"That is what it means to be a Christian," part of a less-well-known passage from *Conjectures*.<sup>14</sup> In both instances I found myself pulled into the images as one is pulled into an icon, conscious that I was looking at marks on paper that were indeed marks of both mind and heart.

The community of Merton readers and scholars has great reason to be grateful that a critic of Roger Lipsey's breadth and depth of experience turned his attention to this long-neglected portion of Merton's *oeuvre*. Donna Kristoff, in her review of this book in *The Merton Seasonal*, acknowledges Lipsey's high standing as an art critic, and expresses her appreciation of the portion of Merton's art on which he concentrates; but she also expresses a reservation in regard to his comparative neglect of Merton's immersion in the Christian-mystical and prophetic aspects of his personhood.<sup>15</sup> She also takes issue with Lipsey's equation (in the book's subtitle) of the word "art" with visual art. I concur with her latter point; but on the former, I am inclined to stand with Christopher Pramuk's understanding of Merton's "unknown and unseen Christ" as illuminative of Merton's spirituality of this period (see below on Pramuk).

In the fall of 1964, Lipsey also tells us, Merton began to explore photography, an interest which continued active until his death.

Charting the points of contact between his work with brush and ink and his work with the camera exceeds the scope of [*Angelic Mistakes*], but that project would be well worth the time of a historian of photography. When Merton damaged the simple camera he was using in September 1964, it was repaired and returned to him. "Darling camera," he recorded in his journal, "so glad to have you back!"<sup>16</sup>

No single such work on photography comparable in scope to Lipsey's on Merton's late art of other kinds has yet, it is true, been brought forth. However, the wittily-entitled article ("Late Developer: Thomas Merton's Discovery of Photography as a Medium for His Contemplative Vision") by British theologian and photographer Philip Richter, makes a substantial theoretical beginning.<sup>17</sup> Richter's article tackles no less formidable a theoretician than Susan Sontag, whose *On Photography* asserts that the taking of photographs is an aggressive act, an act of predation, appropriation and objectification.<sup>18</sup> Allied to her viewpoint is that of Peter Osborne, who characterizes the photographic gaze as potentially imperial or colonizing.<sup>19</sup> But Sontag's claims, Richter counters, "are massively generalized. What she claims may be true of some photography, at some times, by some people, but these are not necessarily essential features of the medium."<sup>20</sup>

A predatory or voyeuristic photographer will tend to promote the kind of photography that Sontag critiques, and a voyeuristic society (one thinks of the paparazzi and their harassment of celebrities) will encourage this; but the camera can also be the instrument of a respectful, indeed contemplative relationship. For Merton, he says, taking photographs, so far from being predatory or voyeuristic, was a form of meditation, a way in which Christ could develop Merton's life "into Himself like a photograph"<sup>21</sup>—and I find it interesting that Richter found this last quotation in *New Seeds of Contemplation*, published in 1962, two years before Merton began the serious practice of photography. To take a contemplative photograph was for Merton a way of acknowledging the *haecceitas*, the "thisness" or inscape of that which is being photographed.<sup>22</sup> Like the Shakers, the sublimity of whose crafting Merton admired, he tried in his photography to be "attuned to the music intoned in each being by God the Creator and by the Lord Jesus,"<sup>23</sup> a comment which evokes his use of the word *consonantia* in "Day of a Stranger," that "one central tonic note that is unheard and unuttered,"<sup>24</sup> and yet which contains all things in their speci-

ficity, their thisness. Richter's article is very rich; perhaps it could be the germ of the larger work that Lipsey has called for.

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I turn now to Merton's own writings, which continue, almost four decades after his death, to be published: "he, being dead, yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11.4, KJV). The *pièce de resistance* in 2006, literally—Gerry McFlynn, of Pax Christi UK, hails Merton as a "theologian of resistance"<sup>25</sup>—was the publication of *Cold War Letters* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), edited by Christine M. Bochen and William H. Shannon (a happy collaboration, given that Christine Bochen is the current holder of the William H. Shannon Chair in Catholic Studies at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY), with a Foreword by James W. Douglass. In his preface, William Shannon points to what he has earlier called "The Year of the Cold War Letters," the time between October 1961 and October 1962.<sup>26</sup> James Douglass, in his foreword, calls it "probably the most dangerous year in history."<sup>27</sup> Valerie Flessati, like McFlynn a member of Pax Christi UK, recalls the terror of that time.

In 1961 the Cold War between East and West became exceedingly dangerous, and nuclear war was a real and frightening possibility. In April a CIA-backed attempt by Cuban exiles to invade Cuba and overthrow Castro had failed. In August the Berlin Wall was constructed. In December President Kennedy sent troops—for the first time openly—to Vietnam. The Cuban missile crisis occurred in October the following year, and the world held its breath for a week during the standoff between Kennedy and Krushchev [sic]. ... [It] was an apocalyptic time.<sup>28</sup>

Merton believed that he had a responsibility, both spiritual and civic, to speak out against the possibility of nuclear war, which he saw, as did many others, as the greatest threat to the continuance of human existence. (In our own time, when the threat of global warming looms so large, this point may be contested, without in any way diminishing the nuclear threat or Merton's response to it.) He began to write articles, most notably "The Root of War is Fear," essentially a chapter from *New Seeds of Contemplation* which was published in the October 1961 issue of *The Catholic Worker*.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, he was sharing his deep concern in letters to friends, and soon decided to put together a collection of these let-

ters, which he himself called “The Cold War Letters.” Following—ironically as a patriotic American—in the Russian *samizdat* tradition, he circulated mimeographed copies of the letters, first in a shorter edition of 49 letters (late spring 1962), later in a longer edition of 111 letters (January 1963), written to 81 recipients in nine countries. Shannon makes the point that the writing of the letters was not in response to the prohibition from the Abbot General of the Cistercian Order, Dom Gabriel Sortais, of which he only learned on April 26, 1962, to publish on matters of war and peace—a most unmonastic topic, in Dom Gabriel’s view—but was part of his thinking as early as October 1961.<sup>30</sup> Merton’s own preface gives trenchant expression to his purpose in writing, collecting and privately (“not for publication,” he says on the original title page) distributing the letters.

The letters form part of no plot. They incite to no riot, they suggest no disloyalty to government, they are not pandering to the destructive machinations of revolutionaries or foreign foes. They are nothing more than the expression of loyal but unpopular opinion, of democratic opposition to what seem to be irresponsible trends.<sup>31</sup>

Then why is he writing them? Because of his conviction

...that the United States, in the Cold War, are [sic] in grave danger of ceasing to be what they claim to be: the home of liberty, where justice is defended with free speech ... and where responsibility is sustained by a deep foundation of ethics. In actual fact it would seem that during the Cold War ... this country has become frankly a warfare state built on affluence, a power structure in which the interests of big business, the obsessions of the military, and the phobias of political extremists both dominate and dictate our national policy.

... [T]he majority opinion in the United States is now a highly oversimplified and mythical view of the world divided into two camps: that of darkness (our enemies) and that of light (ourselves). ... In consequence of this, everything the enemy does is diabolical and everything we do is angelic. ... It follows that we have a divinely given mission to destroy this hellish monster and any steps we take to do so are innocent and even holy.<sup>32</sup>

Reading these words, the interval between their writing and the present collapses: Merton is speaking to us now. Quite apart from the time-bound specifics of the letters themselves, Merton's underlying prophetic awareness of how human beings and governments act when in the grip of fear speaks as directly to the epoch of Iraq and the so-called "war on terror" as it did to the epoch of Vietnam and the Cold War. Over against the demonization of "the other," he places his own incarnational and contemplative humanism (the letters also include his thoughts on literature, ecumenism, interfaith dialogue and mysticism) which envisions, as Christine Bochen says in her introduction, "a world in which social and political actions are informed by regard for the dignity of the human person rather than by pragmatism and power-seeking and by a commitment to non-violence rather than recourse to armed conflict."<sup>33</sup>

War is at root a spiritual problem, in Merton's thought, and therefore required—requires—a spiritual resolution. This would/will involve *metanoia*, *teshuvah*, repentance, conversion, a change of heart, a spiritual transformation, commitment to the practice of non-violence. That his Church was largely passive in response to the crisis of the time he regarded as scandalous, as a matter for the utmost dismay. So Merton spoke out through these letters as a Christian, as a Catholic, as a monk, yes, and also as a citizen and as a human being. James Douglass says that the *Cold War Letters* represented Merton "at his best, writing to us at our collective worst."<sup>34</sup> Again James Douglass:

We were the cold in the Cold War, just as we are the terror in the War on Terror. We are also God's faith and hope—the Creator's reasons for putting us on this planet, God's faith in each of us, with the hope that we would choose finally to embody the love from which we came.<sup>35</sup>

Readers of Thomas Merton stand very much in debt to Christine Bochen and William Shannon for making available to all of us in this book the faith, hope and love with which these letters of Merton's plead, thunder and whisper across the years.

The second major publication of Merton's thought in 2006 could hardly be more different from the *Cold War Letters*; and yet it comes out of the same contemplative and monastic humanism foundational to all of Merton's thought. This is Patrick O'Connell's exquisite editing of the second volume in Cistercian Publications'

Monastic Wisdom Series, *Pre-Benedictine Monasticism: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition 2*, pref. Sidney H. Griffith (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications). It is an outstanding piece of scholarly recovery, masterfully edited and introduced, which has released to us the typed or mimeographed notes for Merton's lectures to the novices at Gethsemani between January 1963 and August 1965 from their longtime obscurity as part of the "Collected Essays" previously available only at the Merton Center and at the abbey. In his preface, Sidney Griffith frames the value of the work thus:

One of Thomas Merton's most enduring gifts to the Church sprang from his ability to read deeply in the abundant and multifaceted literature of her spiritual and mystical heritage and to give expression to the wisdom he found there in communicable, modern American English.<sup>36</sup>

This extensive reading included not only secondary sources in English, but as the footnotes reveal, in French, Italian and German, as well as many primary sources in Latin. Merton mined the entire Christian tradition of monasticism, East and West, for the gold it would yield up; although I have to say that he passed along some of the dross as well, perhaps because all things monastic—the profound and the bizarre, the healthy and the pathological—were of interest to him. There is, in fact, a somewhat undigested character to much of the material. In this regard, I found it instructive that in his comparison of the written lectures with the taped record of what Merton actually said in presenting his material, O'Connell points out that in the actual conferences Merton "tends to omit material that is of more scholarly than practical interest,"<sup>37</sup> and "to highlight the applicability of the material to his students."<sup>38</sup> Not having myself listened to any of these taped conferences, I am trusting that these omissions included the reference to Eusebius of Chalcis, who said his prayers in a dry well while wearing 250 pounds of chains, or the admonition of the *Collectio Monastica* to young monks not to scratch themselves while others were looking.<sup>39</sup> Knowing what we now do about what was happening in Merton's life at the time of the delivery of these conferences and in the hermitage years which followed, it is not hard to catch an echo of Merton's inner conversations with himself in comments such as his highlighting of the warning of Ammonas, successor to St. Anthony as abbot of Pispis, not to succumb "to a seemingly productive busyness that is actually 'excessive and in-



opportune work”;<sup>40</sup> or the thought he takes from Philoxenos, that “the cenobite who wishes to go and live in a cell”—for which we may read “hermitage”—“... must first prove himself perfectly obedient in community.”<sup>41</sup> Again, when he quotes Rabbula, bishop of Edessa in the fifth century, as a critic of monasteries which involve themselves in “*much business and many exterior relations*,” we are reminded of his longstanding irritation with the growth at Gethsemani “of large-scale and business-like cenobitic development,”<sup>42</sup> and we can hear, if we will, the unremitting noise of the cheese factory. Again one wonders if after Merton’s time in 1966 with the nurse, M, his mind returned to the quotation he took from the *Admonitio ad filium spiritualem*: “he who touches the flesh of a woman does not escape without harm to his soul”;<sup>43</sup> and the frequent condemnations from some of the ancient writers of music and laughter are impossible to reconcile with the monk whose sense of humor was legendary, and who listened to Bob Dylan on his turntable in the hermitage. I have no doubt whatever that at the end of his life Merton would have readily admitted the inapplicability of many such ancient prohibitions and admonitions to the life of contemporary monastics.

At the same time, I recognize that Merton was giving his novices an initiation into the monastic *tradition*: and in that tradition, as in the Christian tradition generally, there is gold and dross, wheat and chaff. He recognized that although historically continuous with that long tradition of monastic experience, the form and the forms of monastic life needed to change in his own time and the future, from the institutional (cf. his comments on Pachomius<sup>44</sup>) to the familial, from obedience to fraternal dialogue, from a strict cenobitism to one that supports the hermit life as well, from an attitude which elevates monastic virginity above marriage instead of seeing them as complementary, and from a spirituality which negates and degrades the body to a spirituality in which body and soul embrace one another in the Spirit.

Having referred mostly to dross, let me now speak of the gold. He warmly commends the Pachomian emphasis on scripture, the “strong belief that the words of Scripture are addressed directly and personally to each monk, who is now *living in the time of the fulfillment of the word of God*.”<sup>45</sup> He takes manifest delight in his reading of the Spanish nun and proto-pilgrim Egeria (whom he calls “Aetheria”), from which he took the inspiration to write his essay “From Pilgrimage to Crusade.”<sup>46</sup> He powerfully interprets

“the insights of Philoxenos for a contemporary audience,”<sup>47</sup> making a connection between the monastic tradition and contemporary cultural critique by his linking of Philoxenos and the Theater of the Absurd.<sup>48</sup> Still with Philoxenos, Merton explores his deeply scriptural theological paradigms of the desert and of paradise, challenging his hearers then and his readers now with the flat assertion that “there is no way to the Promised Land but through the desert.”<sup>49</sup> He gives major attention to Ephrem the Syrian, particularly to his Hymns on Paradise. “*We spend our lives making our own key [italics Merton’s] to the door of paradise. Each one has to have his own key. In our lives, the door ‘seeks us,’ smiles on us,*” says Merton, and quotes from one of Ephrem’s hymns.

Door of discernment, it measures those who enter  
Wisely making itself small or great according to its  
judgement  
Fitting the stature of each ....<sup>50</sup>

Behind these lines, of course, is “Christ’s own statement, ‘I am the door’” (John 10.7, 9); and from here it is but a short step to Merton’s magnificent meditation on the three doors—which are one door—during his retreat at the Mim Tea Estate.<sup>51</sup>

A particular gift to me in this book was the revelation of the origin of Merton’s dedication in *The Seven Storey Mountain: Christo vero regi*. Previously I had thought it might have been inspired by the representation of Christ the King in the sanctuary of Corpus Christi, the church in New York in which Merton was conditionally baptized in 1938. I now realize it is a quotation from the Latin original of the prologue to the *Rule* of St. Benedict, which invites the reader to renounce his own will in order to fight “for the true king, Christ.”<sup>52</sup> What a feast was enjoyed by those who started as novices on the Benedictine path in its Trappist-Cistercian form and were privileged, as this book so thoroughly attests, to be initiated into the monastic tradition by one so deeply acquainted with it.

Two further items conclude our survey of the publication of Merton’s own words. The first is *An Invitation to the Contemplative Life*, edited by Wayne Simsic (Ijamsville, MD: The Word Among Us Press), already known to many as the author of *Praying with Thomas Merton* (Winona, MN: St. Mary’s Press, 1994). After a brief introduction, there follow ten chapters on basic themes in Merton: freedom, contemplation, the true self, the person of Christ, the prayer of the heart, solitude and silence, nature, community, work

and social concern. Each chapter consists of an introductory page from Simsic, followed by a dozen or so pages of paragraphs from Merton, many well-known, others less well-known. Like the little book by James Martin, SJ, and the booklets from the Merton Institute for Contemplative Living on which I comment at the end of the survey, this is the kind of book that one may confidently give to someone who asks for an introduction to Merton. John P. Collins, in his review, offers this summary comment:

... with the publication of this small volume we have some of the best of the Merton canon regarding the contemplative life which can guide our daily meditations whether [they] take place within a monastic enclosure, a suburban home, a rural farmhouse or in an urban condominium ....<sup>53</sup>

The second such item of interest is the transcription of a conference, in highly colloquial language, which Merton gave to the novices on June 10, 1964, in response to the civil rights protests then going on in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>54</sup> The book in which it appears is an anthology of public statements from the religious sector about the civil rights movement. In it Merton uses the "ten commandments" given to non-violent protestors as a checklist for the examination of conscience in the monastery: monks, he asserts, cannot be content to be less intentional in the pursuit of their vocation than activists outside the monastery in their pursuit of gospel justice. The editors, in their introduction to the transcription, refer to his use, common for the time, of exclusive language, but follow this with the very pertinent comment that "[T]he inclusivity of his message in this lecture rises above the exclusivity of his language."<sup>55</sup>

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As we survey the critical studies of Merton, once again, as with Lipsey and Richter, we find a rich harvest. From Poland comes *Spirituality and Metaphor: The Poetics and Poetry of Thomas Merton* (Opole: Uniwersytet Opolski), by Waclaw Grzybowski. Malgorzata Poks, Grzybowski's fellow-countrywoman, has already given us a very substantial and thorough review in *The Merton Seasonal*,<sup>56</sup> on which I would be hard put to improve. The nub of Grzybowski's linking of spirituality and metaphor, as she says,

comes from Merton's conviction ... that the Scholastic concept of God as Pure Being is consonant with William Blake's poetic vision of [God as] the source and ground of life. Contrary to the Platonizing St. Augustine,... Blake intuited beauty in the Particular, which intuition seems to parallel Aquinas's concept of *claritas*—the glory of form ... shining through matter according to the degree of likeness between an individual created being and the uncreated Pure Being which in-forms everything.<sup>57</sup>

Reading this comment immediately evokes for me Hopkins' emphasis on the uniqueness of inscape which Merton so strongly shares and puts forward in the poetic prose of *Seeds of Contemplation*, and, later, in *New Seeds*.

The forms and individual characters of living and growing things and of inanimate things and of animals and flowers and all nature, constitute their holiness in the sight of God.

Their inscape is their sanctity.

The special clumsy beauty of this particular colt on this April day in this field under these clouds is a holiness consecrated to God by His own Art, and it declares the glory of God.

The pale flowers of the dogwood outside this window are saints....

This leaf has its own texture and its own pattern of veins and its own holy shape ....<sup>58</sup>

Poks commends Grzybowski's placing of Merton's poetry of the forties and fifties in its larger American context through comparisons with Robert Lowell and T.S. Eliot; stylistically, he asserts, Merton reached a place of originality and maturity in *The Strange Islands* (New York: New Directions, 1957), a style "informed by Asian spirituality and sapiential awareness, purged from verbosity and excesses of vision."<sup>59</sup> However, says Poks, although Grzybowski "skillfully documents this shift, [he] does not seem to approve of it, as if this new Merton voice was spoiling the underlying thesis of his work: that spiritual poetry must be based on a rising movement of metaphor."<sup>60</sup> At this point, Poks takes the gloves off, and again I cannot improve on her words.

... the work's fault line can be spotted ... in Grzybowski's somewhat narrow definition of spirituality. ... The moment he shuts spirituality within strict Roman Catholic orthodoxy, he is

bound to misconstrue Merton's more mature poetics. Had he read Merton's journals ... he would have understood that *The Seven Storey Mountain* type of spirituality he builds his arguments on is what Merton came to reject in the nineteen-fifties. Already by 1958, the year of the Fourth and Walnut illumination, Merton was prepared to see religious dogmatism as destructive of an authentic monastic experience and gradually started to believe that a monk had to become an "anti-monk" to qualify as a genuine seeker.<sup>61</sup>

As an "anti-monk" writing poetry, of course, Merton had to become an anti-poet and write anti-poetry: and this takes us to his poetry of the sixties, *Cables* and *Lograire*, as well as to his "empathetic renderings of the anti-poetry of Nicanor Parra,"<sup>62</sup> as Poks points out. Essentially her critique is that while Grzybowski deals well, theologically and Christologically, with Merton's early poetry, and while she acknowledges that his book is "a thorough piece of criticism, handsomely edited, erudite and argued with passion,"<sup>63</sup> he fails, she asserts, to present a theoretical framework equal to the different character of his late poems. To her critique I will only add the comment that the work is marred by a very large number of mistakes and misspellings.

William Apel has given us a very different kind of book in his *Signs of Peace: The Interfaith Letters of Thomas Merton* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis). The book is a testimonial to Merton's desire, indeed, sense of vocation, to *unite in himself*<sup>64</sup> Catholics from many centuries and ethnicities, other Christians and the other great religious traditions of the planet. Given his vow of stability, it was through correspondence with members of other traditions that he most often acted on this aspiration, carrying on what Apel calls a "ministry of letters."<sup>65</sup> Apel's aim in putting the book together was "to explore the importance of this correspondence for Merton's life and thought, and to examine the lessons these interfaith letters have to teach us today in the unfinished business of achieving mutual respect and appreciation for one another within the world's great religions."<sup>66</sup>

He does this in nine chapters, each one focused on one of Merton's correspondents: Muslim Abdul Aziz, Hindu Amiya Chakravarty, Confucian-Buddhist-Taoist-Catholic John Wu, Jewish Abraham Joshua Heschel, Zen Buddhist D.T. Suzuki, Baptist Glenn Hinson, Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh, Quaker June Yungblut, and Dona Luisa Coomaraswamy—a Roman Catho-

lic with Jewish origins and a syncretistic perspective derived at least in part from the influence of her husband, Ananda. In each chapter Apel begins with a reflection on the lesson or virtue which he sees most prominently evident in a particular correspondence (in the Merton-Abdul Aziz correspondence, for example, "blessing"; in the Merton-Hinson letters, "openness"), follows this with a discussion of the character of the correspondence, and concludes with a letter from Merton to his friend. The book ends with a postscript on hope, which is the gift above all which Apel has received from his study of Merton.

Christopher Pramuk's fine and generally balanced review<sup>67</sup> of this book salutes the author for his "clear, resoundingly urgent, and elegantly demonstrated"<sup>68</sup> thesis: that we need to pay attention to those spiritual pioneers who serve the entire human community as signs or sacraments of peace, to the lessons we can learn from them and to their virtues that we can emulate. He also celebrates the way Apel has in each instance provided "the historical and spiritual context for understanding [the] exchange"<sup>69</sup> between Merton and each chosen correspondent. However, he faults Apel for the same reason that George Kilcourse, in *Ace of Freedoms*, faulted Merton's practice of interfaith dialogue—for what he sees as a one-sided emphasis on religious experience, and a general unwillingness to engage issues of theology or doctrine,<sup>70</sup> as well as for his "penchant for romantic flight and over-simplification."<sup>71</sup> Pramuk contrasts the spiritual kinship between Merton and Heschel, for example, around their shared "mystical-prophetic" sense of the Bible as the Word of God, with the Suzuki-Merton relationship, in which God *qua* God does not figure. Thus his questions:

... is it really the case—as Merton intimates in the Suzuki letters, and Apel uncritically agrees—that "his Zen Buddhist friend saw Christianity, in its essence, more clearly than many Christians"? Is the "essence" of the gospel really "a Zen-like commitment to 'direct experience,' unmediated by preconceived structures"? Or is not Christianity's essence much closer, both in doctrine *and* experience, to Heschel's mystical-prophetic account of a personal God's headlong pursuit of human beings? ... In short, how do we reconcile the fact that Merton experienced such a deep kinship with Heschel *and* Suzuki, Abdul Aziz *and* Thich Nhat Hanh?<sup>72</sup>

Pramuk acknowledges that it would be unfair to expect Apel to resolve the theological questions, particularly questions related to the Christian understandings of creation and incarnation, in terms of Apel's stated purpose in writing the book. But he charges Apel, as Kilcourse did Merton, with dismissing

theology and doctrine as abstract, authoritarian, and divisive, while celebrating religious "experience" as pure, concrete, democratizing, and unifying... [and thereby exacerbating] the now rather tired dichotomy between doctrine and experience, theology and spirituality, tradition and mysticism.<sup>73</sup>

I can see Pramuk's point; but I have to question whether it is fair to fault Apel for exacerbating a dichotomy which has been with us for millennia and promises to be with us for centuries (at least) to come. Merton was ready to talk theology with those who wanted to talk theology with him (although in his later years it was well-known that he would excuse himself from discussions of scholasticism), and to talk experience with those who wanted to talk experience. It was his empathetic disposition, about which I have written elsewhere,<sup>74</sup> which moved him regularly into a stance of intense dialogical identification with his correspondents and interlocutors. As Rowan Williams comments, "so much of his...correspondence [has a] 'ventriloquial' character: he speaks uncannily with the voice of [whomever] he is writing to, from Sufi scholar to teenage girl."<sup>75</sup> Merton was, in other words, a man of many voices, including his experiential and theological voices, which were complementary rather than dichotomized; the analogy with the many languages with which he was conversant works for me here.

Pramuk does say that Merton at his best worked hard at recognizing and resisting "the overdrawn split between doctrine and mystical experience,"<sup>76</sup> and concludes by maintaining that yes, "the real Merton" is to be found in his interfaith letters, but not only there. In reading Pramuk's review, however, I think I overhear the sound of an ecclesial axe being ground, unnecessarily in my view. In Merton's hands the comparable sword of spiritual/experiential and theological discernment (cf. Hebrews 4.12) was already very sharp, perhaps even as sharp as the cleaver belonging to Prince Wen Hui's cook,<sup>77</sup> although Merton did not choose to use it in every instance.<sup>78</sup>

Still with Christopher Pramuk, I confess to a sense of real excitement as I read and re-read his “‘*Hagia Sophia: The Unknown and Unseen Christ of Thomas Merton*,” published in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*.<sup>79</sup> He begins by asking how, in the “social turbulence and epistemological fragmentation of the 1960s,”<sup>80</sup> and with a bow to Yeats, the center held for Merton, or, alternatively, how Merton was able to hold his center in such a time; and here is the nub of his response to his own question, a response which he explores from many angles in the article: “... the center held for Merton because he never ceased deepening his understanding of Christ at the heart of the Christian tradition, nor his daily adherence as a monk to Christian faith and praxis.”<sup>81</sup> From this starting-point, Pramuk presents the features of Merton’s mature Christology, specifically its view of Christ “as Wisdom of God, the ‘unknown and unseen’ Sophia, in whom the cosmos is created and sustained.”<sup>82</sup> It was through this aspect of his Christology, Pramuk suggests, that Merton was able, in interfaith dialogue, “to affirm the other *as other*,” “to say ‘yes’ to *everyone*,”<sup>83</sup> not as a systematic theologian, but as a theologian of *theologia*, a spiritual theologian. It is puzzling to me that in this discussion, Pramuk registers no discomfort with Merton’s experiential approach (such as he did in the Apel review), his “attention to religious *experience* more than verbal formulas, to divine *presence* and *light* more than revealed names,” acknowledging that this “facilitated his uncanny ability to connect deeply with practitioners of other religious traditions.”<sup>84</sup>

What Pramuk calls a first step in his project of assessing Merton’s Christological thinking is an examination of *The New Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), particularly in regard to its theological anthropology. It was written, he points out, as his journals of the years preceding bear out, at “the high point of his immersion in Russian mystical theology.”<sup>85</sup> He focuses particularly on chapter 6, “The Second Adam,” which concerns the origin and re-creation of the human race in Christ, the Christ who is not only “the fulfillment of creation but also ... its source and beginning.”<sup>86</sup> This provides Merton with a “basis for an all-encompassing Christian inclusivism, the ground for an openness and dialogue that positively expects to encounter Christ, the light and Wisdom of God, hidden in the stranger.”<sup>87</sup> In Merton’s view, in other words, if and when Christians contemplate the unity of the human race, they can see it in the Second Adam, through whose



incarnation and reclaiming of an alienated humanity all human beings, ontologically and spiritually, are already one—as he memorably and very simply said in his informal talk in Calcutta in 1968: “My dear brothers, we are already one.”<sup>88</sup> If I understand what Merton is saying here, it is not that he is imposing an identity of the “anonymous Christian” variety on the religious other, but rather that—as a *Christian*—he sees himself as one with all other human beings by virtue of their shared membership in the human race. Everyone, and not only the Christians, are “walking around, shining like the sun.”<sup>89</sup> The recognition that, together, we are Adam, and that together, we are Christ, forms the basis of his theological (and intra-Christian) anthropology. We come to the experience of this, of course, through contemplation, as Merton presents it, as the experience, in God, of oneness beyond all the dualities, including Christ and ourselves, seen as dual. Here Pramuk touches on the promise of his title with a long quotation from a letter of 1959 from Merton to D.T. Suzuki. “The Christ we seek,” says Merton,

is within us, in our inmost self, is our inmost self, and yet infinitely transcends ourselves. ... Christ Himself is in us as unknown and unseen. We follow him, we find Him (it is like the cow-catching pictures<sup>90</sup>) and then He must vanish and we must go along without Him at our side. Why? Because He is even closer than that. *He is ourself*. Oh my dear Dr. Suzuki, I know you will understand this so well ....<sup>91</sup>

It was the language of Wisdom, of Sophia, which in Pramuk’s view enabled Merton so to express his experience of Christ to his Zen Buddhist friend, one of his prime religious “others.” Then comes a crunch: while acknowledging the power of this for Merton, Pramuk asks if a sophianic Christology can “find a foothold in the imagination of ordinary Christians in our time.”<sup>92</sup> Only, he answers himself, “to the degree [to which] it finds some reference in analogous experiences of transfiguration, light, resurrection, or presence.”<sup>93</sup> This comment returns us to the interfaith conversation, in which mystic speaks to mystic “outside of a historical and chronological framework and inside a sapiential, aesthetic, or liturgical mode of rationality.”<sup>94</sup>

Another strand of Pramuk’s discussion which I find puzzling is the question of how he sees Merton’s overarching position as a practitioner of interfaith dialogue: does he see Merton as an

inclusivist or a pluralist? In one comment already quoted, he speaks of Merton's "all-encompassing Christian inclusivism."<sup>95</sup> In another place, he lists Merton together with Rahner, von Balthasar, the authors of the documents of Vatican II and Benedict XVI in *Dominus Iesus* as all offering different approaches to inclusivism.<sup>96</sup>

Earlier he had said that the present time, in its postmodern character, is one in which "a thousand voices proclaim, not a few quite credibly, that there really is *no center* and that to posit a center into which all things converge is to perpetuate a 'totalizing' myth that can only lead to more violence."<sup>97</sup> One of these credible voices is that of Jesuit scholar Roger Haight, who asserts that it "is impossible in postmodern culture to think that one ... religion can claim to inhabit the center into which all others are to be drawn,"<sup>98</sup> that the time of the theological meta-narrative is over. Interestingly, and in somewhat the same vein, yet as if he wanted at some level to push the question away himself, Pramuk asks in a long footnote whether the time has not come to move beyond inclusivism into a pluralist mode "of learning from non-Christians as such... in all their luminous distinctness."<sup>99</sup> He then challenges those who would follow this risky path by saying that if the Christian, in turning to the other in dialogue and openness, is rooting this in the biblical revelation, "then perhaps the question becomes this: which biblical symbols are most able to affirm the other ... *as other*; [and] which symbols lend positive theological support to pluralism *de jure*?"<sup>100</sup> It seems to me, although Pramuk does not say so, that Merton has answered this question for him through his exploration of the New Adam and Sophia, which, "unknown and unseen" in the mind and heart, indeed the body and soul of the contemplative, constitute a mystical and non-coercive center for the Christian practitioner of dialogue. Again Pramuk asks: "Are we so grounded in Christ's Resurrection that we may risk 'going along without Him at our side,' allowing him to 'vanish,' in a manner of speaking, even from our theology?"<sup>101</sup> In alluding thus to Merton's statement in his letter to Suzuki, is he not characterizing Merton as just such a pluralist, simultaneously grounded in Christian scripture and its symbols and ready to risk even the disappearance of the name of Christ from his theology, indeed, ready in dialogue to risk the disappearance of theology (in its propositional forms) as such? I leave it to other readers of Merton to help Pramuk and myself with the resolution of these questions, and I look forward to further studies of Merton from this very promising writer.

The nature of contemplation provides the link between this last article and the next: Ross Labrie, now president of the Thomas Merton Society of Canada, has given us a fine study of this topic in "Contemplation and Action in Thomas Merton," published in *Christianity and Literature*.<sup>102</sup> Contemplation as Merton conceived it and as Labrie describes it is an experiential and intuitive awareness of God beyond our own thoughts, feelings and conceptualizations through which one can come "to see oneself as one is seen through the eyes of God."<sup>103</sup> This of course is the personal dimension of contemplation, which, as one comes to know oneself, is found to stand beside the social dimension, whereby

one's fellow human beings ... are seen not abstractly as an institution might see them but rather as distinct persons, each valued by God and thus deserving of care and justice, a justice that, for Merton, encompassed even the ecological integrity of the earth as the divinely created cradle of life.<sup>104</sup>

Contemplation in this social dimension, if I understand Labrie here, comes under the rubric of *active* contemplation, the experiencing of God in the continuing events of daily life in which one is related to others to whom one gives oneself in love. Merton also speaks of *natural* contemplation, which is a consciousness of the presence of God in prayer and in the world simply valued for itself. Finally, Merton hoped for the experience of *infused* contemplation, in which, beyond the simple consciousness of God's presence, one's soul can be "permeated by the presence of God ... [in] the very center of one's being."<sup>105</sup> To receive the gift of infused contemplation, one would need to be passively disposed to it, a consistently passive disposition which "Merton believed was unattainable within the active state of creative composition,"<sup>106</sup> activity which would short-circuit the journey into God. There is no way to tell, as Labrie correctly asserts, to what extent such infused contemplation was a reality in Merton's life, "since such experience would by its very nature have been ineffable."<sup>107</sup> However, after some struggle early in his monastic life on the relation of contemplation and action, Merton concluded not only that they did not contradict each other, but that they were complementary to each other. This was not all that easy for Merton at first, because he experienced a tension due to the time and energy he gave to his writing rather than to his prayer. But by the late 1950s and early 1960s, Merton had concluded not only that they were not in com-

petition, but that they were necessary to each other for the sake of balance in the life of the contemplative, and because of the necessary relation of the contemplative to the life of the larger world—which Merton first thought he had left behind when he entered the monastery, only to realize in maturity that he was in the world and the world was in him, even as he was in God and God in him. Contemplation then became *his way of being in the world as well as in the monastery*, an orientation by which the Cold War and his opposition to it, the features of the natural environment in which he lived and his relations with other people, were given their proper proportion and their proper relatedness: it functioned for him as “the secret ‘stabilizer’ and ‘compass’ of the Christian life.”<sup>108</sup> Merton was moving towards this integrative understanding as early as 1952, when he wrote the exquisite and lyrical “Fire Watch, July 4, 1952,”<sup>109</sup> as Labrie points out; and he surely reached a very deep experience—at once active, natural and infused?—when he visited the great statues of the Buddha at Polonnaruwa nine days before his death.<sup>110</sup> In the decade or so before his death, through his reading and reflection in the areas of Buddhism, as well as Heidegger’s phenomenology and existentialism, he had come, as Labrie deftly summarizes it, to a place in which these intuitive modalities could resolve whatever leftover tension there might have been between contemplation and action “by allowing one to see *being* as an intermediate and unifying space in which thought and action, subject and object, were ontologically unified.”<sup>111</sup> By the end of his life as an active contemplative, then, Merton had learned, simply, *to be*.

The last article I consider here is Michael Kreyling’s “A Good Monk is Hard to Find: Thomas Merton, Flannery O’Connor, the American Catholic Writer, and the Cold War,” published in 2006 as a chapter in a book of presentations at an earlier conference on O’Connor.<sup>112</sup> O’Connor, who like Merton had Robert Giroux as an editor, was, again like Merton, “a cold-war writer as well as a Catholic and southern one,”<sup>113</sup> if indeed Kentucky is in the South, which is arguable. Giroux, according to Kreyling, observed a “mutual curiosity and admiration between the monk and [O’Connor],”<sup>114</sup> both of whom were committed to the integration of their religious perspectives into their literary texts. Kreyling uses Merton as a foil for his critique of O’Connor, and concludes that for “a Catholic writer who claimed the certainty of the absolute, O’Connor’s cultural politics proved stronger”<sup>115</sup> (she resented, for

example, Dorothy Day coming to Georgia in support of local activists) than Merton's. There is some carelessness with dates in the article: Kreyling says that Merton was not baptized until a few years after reading Huxley (Merton read Huxley in 1937, and was baptized one year later, 1938, at Corpus Christi), and that he entered Gethsemani in 1942 rather than 1941.

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Our year of grace 2006 also gave us two collections from British sources. The first of these is *Making Peace in the Post-Christian Era*,<sup>116</sup> which by its title is manifestly a follow-up to the publication in 2004 of Merton's *Peace in the Post-Christian Era* (PPCE).<sup>117</sup> It collects three papers, by Valerie Flessati, Gerry McFlynn and Anthony Maggs, all active in Pax Christi UK, originally presented in November 2005 at a day conference in London organized and co-sponsored by Pax Christi and the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland to explore the contemporary implications of Merton's long-delayed book. As the introduction comments, the conference was organized because its sponsors believed that "Merton provides wisdom and sustenance for twenty-first century Christians who want to recover the peace message of the gospel."<sup>118</sup> Valerie Flessati's paper, "Thomas Merton and Pax Christi," describes their connection. While many Merton readers on this side of the Atlantic wondered over the years what had happened with the typescript of PPCE, there rested in the Pax Christi archives in London an original copy, sent by Merton in the summer of 1962 to Charles Thompson, then editor of the *PAX Bulletin*. Merton worked during Vatican II (1962-65) with Pax Christi and with Archbishop Thomas Roberts, SJ, formerly archbishop of Bombay/Mumbai, in lobbying bishops at the Council to include in the documents that were to be published as representing the official position of the Roman Catholic Church on issues of war and peace sufficient statements of opposition to specific aspects of warmaking as well as safeguards for the individual conscience in a time when the Church was clearly not ready to challenge the continuance of war itself as an instrument of national/international policy. Valerie Flessati summarizes their contribution.

Although they did not achieve everything they hoped for, *Gaudium et Spes* (the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today*) included crucial points about the

unacceptability of indiscriminate warfare and the right of the individual conscience to refuse participation in war. This, in Merton, and Roberts' view, was more important than the condemnation of any particular weapons' system. The weapons might change, but Catholics would have the freedom to make conscientious judgements.<sup>119</sup>

Her article concludes with the estimation that this historical moment saw Pax Christi at its best,

working with the worldwide network of those concerned that the voice of the Church should be prophetic and clear. Thomas Merton was the still point at the centre of all this activity, the wise man on the mountain, a hermit, yet in touch with all those striving to make the Church's witness to peace a reality in the post-Christian era.<sup>120</sup>

In the second article, "Merton Today: No Guilty Bystander," by Gerry McFlynn, Merton is characterized, as aforementioned, in a phrase which I soberly expect to see in a book title one of these days, as a "theologian of resistance."<sup>121</sup> In giving him this sobriquet, McFlynn places him beside Dorothy Day, the Berrigans and their followers. McFlynn sees the theology of resistance as the principled grounding of Dorothy Day's Christian anarchism, with Day contributing her long-held and steely convictions to the resistance movements of the 1960s. Like her, the Berrigans chose their actions of resistance less from any expectation that they would compel governments to change their minds or that they would generate a mass movement in support "than for their power to give existential expression to a spirituality of personal resistance and disaffiliation."<sup>122</sup> The word "disaffiliation" there is a very strong one; yet the insanity, hypocrisy, indeed the cold willingness of "our side"—on behalf of which Merton and the others felt the calling to exercise their responsibility as citizens—to risk the future of the planet and the human race through a readiness to use nuclear weapons, moved them to withdraw their assent to such actions of their government and indeed their nation. That their work remains unfinished was forcefully brought home to me as I worked on this review in an email which I received from a friend that describes the danger to which the planet remains subject through the continued operability of the "launch-on-warning" systems still functioning in the militaries of the United States and Russia.<sup>123</sup> Merton

saw then, as Gerry McFlynn would have us all see now, that to live out a theology and spirituality of resistance—resistance to racism, injustice, violence, “and all the other trappings of empire”<sup>124</sup>—was the only way, given the times in which we live, to offer hope, reassurance and meaning to a world in which all three are in short supply. As always, contemplation is the foundation of this spirituality: its basis for Merton is his conviction of “the sacredness of human life based upon his own contemplative experience of the presence of God as the still point of each person’s true self.”<sup>125</sup> Even though there is no longer a Cold War (although the recent posturings of the United States and Russia in regard to missile “defence” are strongly evocative of that period), Merton’s thinking as applied to the so-called “war on terror” remains “bang up to date.”<sup>126</sup> The third article, by Anthony Maggs, “The Voice from the Hermitage: Thomas Merton’s Contribution to Peace,”<sup>127</sup> covers much the same ground in terms of Maggs’ own experience. I note that Maggs regards Rowan Williams as one of Merton’s spiritual heirs in the area of peacemaking. Certainly, as archbishop of Canterbury, he could, if he would, give Merton a bully pulpit as prophet of peace and theologian of resistance in our own time.

The second set of papers comes from the Sixth General Meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, held in March 2006 at Merton’s old school, Oakham, just five months after the Pax Christi symposium. Called *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*,<sup>128</sup> it includes the three plenary addresses from that conference, by Monica Weis, Paul Pearson and Kathleen Deignan, with a foreword by A.M. Allchin.

The title, to which each of the speakers responded, comes from the highly-charged passage in the *Asian Journal* in which Merton records his unexpected response to the great and ancient statues of the Buddha in Sri Lanka.

Surely, with Mahabalipuram and Polonnaruwa my Asian pilgrimage has come clear and purified itself. I mean, I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for. I don’t know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.<sup>129</sup>

Monica Weis’s paper is called “The Birds Ask: ‘Is it time to be?’: Thomas Merton’s Moments of Spiritual Awakening.” Her thesis is that Merton’s “deeply-embedded love of nature not only nour-

ished—but also evoked<sup>130</sup> many of his moments of awakening. At school at Oakham he took advantage of nearby Brooke Hill, simply to be there in a place of closeness to the earth. At Gethsemani, he reveled in the opportunities for natural contemplation which the woods and the knobs and the wildlife afforded him: among other examples, she notes his observation of the killing of a starling by a hawk on February 10, 1950, and how it directed his mind to the dedication required for the deepening of spiritual practice: "... that hawk is to be studied by ... contemplatives because he knows his business. I wish I knew my business as well as he does his."<sup>131</sup>

Later he comes to the writing of the passage from which Weis takes her title, the rich passage in *Conjectures* in which Merton reflects on the *point vierge* of the day, "the genesis of day, that moment of creation repeated daily all over our planet."<sup>132</sup> She later interprets the *point vierge* as "the moment of poise when anything is possible,"<sup>133</sup> a moment experienced not only in the diurnal awakening of the planet, but, as Merton expands on it in his reflections<sup>134</sup> on the Louisville epiphany, a moment to experience the mercy of God "within each human being."<sup>135</sup> Her paper is a celebration of the *daily*ness of Merton's integration of his own participation in creation.

Paul Pearson's paper is "Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise: Thomas Merton's Embrace of *Logos*." Merton, he says, was drawn, even before his conversion to Roman Catholicism, to the concept of the *logos*, understood as the Word of God uttered at creation ("Let there be light") which is also the uttering of God's own Name within each of us, sustaining us in being and ready to speak in God's time, in silence, symbol or insight. A number of times he draws on the thought of Clement of Alexandria, selections from whose *Protreptikos* Merton published in 1962, particularly in relation to his emphasis on the *logos*. Merton described Clement in words equally applicable to himself—a regular habit of his if one thinks of his description of Clement in company with his celebration of that other mischievous hermit, Chuang Tzu, and his characterization of the "fully integrated" person in his review of Reza Arasteh's book, *Final Integration in the Adult Personality*.<sup>136</sup> Clement, he says, was "a man of unlimited comprehension and compassion who did not fear to seek elements of truth wherever they could be found."<sup>137</sup> It is a comment which is highly revelatory, of course, of Merton's own spiritual aspirations, as were his com-



ments about Chuang Tzu and the “fully integrated” person. Pearson also points to how Merton found an “*epiphany of logos*” in the handicrafts and furniture of the Shakers, and in their buildings, which in their balance and proportion revealed the *logos* of the places where they were built, something very important in the siting of the early Cistercian abbeys.<sup>138</sup> Like Clement he listened for the Word of God in his reading of the many poets he read (Pearson mentions Rilke in particular), and, whether so named or not, in his conversations with representatives of other faiths. As Clement in his time, so Merton in his, public intellectuals both, they offered to their contemporaries a Christian humanism ready to search for “elements of truth wherever they could be found.”

The third paper at the conference, by Kathleen Deignan, is called “Within the Shadow and the Disguise: Thomas Merton’s Sacramental Vision.” Her focus is on Merton’s “vividly incarnational sensibility,” his “vibrant sacramental spirituality,” a sensibility of apophasis and iconoclasm, a sensibility which took him, finally, “beyond the shadow and the disguise.”<sup>139</sup> Paradoxically, however, and in keeping with her conviction that Christianity is fundamentally kataphatic, she asserts that Merton’s apophatic orientation “bore fruit in a more vibrant and vivid kataphatic sensibility, the restoration of perception—a sacramental vision of the startling immediacy of an ever-incarnating divinity at once revealed and concealed in creation as mercy and love.”<sup>140</sup>

It is kataphasis that leads to sacramentality, and Merton, says Deignan, “was a sacramentalist from birth,”<sup>141</sup> both genetically, she avers, and by his parents’ tutoring him in the sacramentality of contemplation of nature, “in the art of beholding.”<sup>142</sup> This bore particular fruit on his visit to Rome in 1933, aged 18, when he was dazzled by the mosaics in the great basilicas, an experience which awakened the Christ-consciousness which remained with him for the rest of his life. Ultimately, as a hermit, he found himself, ecologically, sharing his daily office of praise with the “huge chorus of living beings ... choirs of millions and millions of jumping and flying and creeping things.”<sup>143</sup>

This was also the time when he learned to appreciate the Celtic saints and writers with whom he shared a sense of the communion of human with animal and plant, rock and fish that would take him through the thin places to the Presence, to paradise recovered. This ecological consciousness also had a prophetic side for Merton, as he inveighed against human irresponsibility and

destructiveness vis-à-vis the creation. It remains highly appropriate then, that in his penultimate sacramental experience at Polonnaruwa, he took off his shoes in reverence, to walk barefoot one last time on God's earth.<sup>144</sup>

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Now to biography. Kudos first of all to Millie Harford for suggesting to her husband James that he write a book on three great friends, two of whom, Ed Rice and Bob Lax, he had known personally for almost fifty years, the third, Merton, whom he knew through his writings and the place he held in the hearts of Rice and Lax. The book is *Merton and Friends: A Joint Biography of Thomas Merton, Robert Lax, and Edward Rice*,<sup>145</sup> and I have to say that I inhaled it. In fact, I felt, for the first time since I have started to read Merton, now a practice of more than fifty years, a sense of envy. Why could I not have been born at a time and under the circumstances to permit me to go to Columbia, work on the *Jester*, and so on? (I do know the answer to that!) All three were simultaneously on a journey with God and with each other, heading (not in a straight line) in the direction of the true self. The response that the three hermits on the island give to the bishop in Tolstoy's marvelous story, when he asked them how they prayed, comes to mind in this regard: "Three are we, three are ye; Lord, have mercy upon us!" Three hermits? Merton tried to be a hermit, but the record on his attempt is a mixed one. Lax, in fact, was more of a hermit than Merton, for much longer, and Rice simply spent a lot of time on his own. As Harford comments: "Rice once told me that he thought Lax had the life of solitude that Merton really wished for."<sup>146</sup> Another iconic image comes to mind, from Chinese religious art, the figures of Confucius, Lao Tzu and the Buddha, standing together and smiling out at the viewer of the painting, scroll or mural—three friends, so alike and so different, "exemplary in their friendships with one another over decades."<sup>147</sup> The book is a contemporary *De amicitia*, a celebration of a magnificent set of friendships, as well as a perceptive study of American Roman Catholic life over the greater part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Harford gives us Merton and Rice unvarnished; Lax, in his sweetness of soul, has never needed varnishing. Solidly researched, it also gathers up memories from Harford's friendship with Lax and Rice, many of them generated from his many years of involvement on the editorial board of *Jubilee* magazine, published from 1953 to 1967, and tellingly subtitled *A Maga-*

*zine of the Church and Her People*. (A personal memory here: I became a *Jubilee* reader in the sixties, and it was a small ad in *Jubilee*, perhaps in 1964 or so, that moved me to order a vinyl recording of the music of Taizé, which brought me to tears when I first played it, as it continues to do whenever I am fortunate enough to go there. The encouragement of quality in the liturgical arts was in fact a notable commitment of the magazine.) Rice (baptismal sponsor/godfather to both Merton and Lax) was the editor, Lax a “roving” editor, and Merton a major and substantial contributor. All three as Columbia undergraduates had worked on *Jester*, Columbia’s humor magazine; and there is a sense, as Rice commented, in which *Jubilee* was “a kind of extension of *Jester*.”<sup>148</sup> In the years before Vatican II, it pointed forward to all the major issues with which the Council would struggle, and it played a major role in preparing American Catholics for the changes that the Council would bring. But alas (a word which Harford finds occasion to use frequently, alas!), always produced on a shoestring, it ran out of money and ceased publication in 1967. After this, Rice continued to work as writer and photographer, Lax found his *métier* in minimalist poetry and his hermitage on one or other of the Greek islands, and Merton, with the one year left to him, continued with his unique living out of the monastic and eremitical journey at Gethsemani.

Harford, before and after his chapter on their collaboration on *Jubilee*, chronicles the effects on all of them of World War II, their literary triumphs, their experience at a distance of Vatican II, their romantic gains and losses, their exploration of Eastern religions and their opposition to the Vietnam War (these last three of greater substance for Rice and Merton than for Lax). Merton dies in 1968, decades before the other two; Lax responds with a one-word telegram to Gethsemani: “Sad.”<sup>149</sup> The book finishes with a celebration of their later literary accomplishments, with a look at what Harford calls “the Merton Movement”—not a happy term, in my view—and with a consideration of their legacy. Mary Anne Rivera, in her review of the book, commends Harford for the “thought-provoking answers”<sup>150</sup> he provides in his reflection of their impact on American Catholics and society in general, but I have to say that I find it hard to agree with this assessment. Certainly I can only agree that Merton has had a major impact on Christian spirituality, both within and beyond the Roman Catholic Church; and that all three nourished the process of *aggiornamento* before, dur-

ing and after the Council. But Harford's frame of reference—their impact on a troubled Catholicism—is too narrow. Lax's influence is almost entirely literary; Rice's *corpus*, *Jubilee* excepted, is more historical and literary as well as more religious than ecclesial; and Merton's impact extends well beyond American Catholicism—which indeed, as Harford recounts in his treatment of Merton's non-appearance in the new American Catholic catechism, which he rightly describes as “bizarre,”<sup>151</sup> has a somewhat conflicted view of him.

There are other weaknesses in the book: there is, for example, no reference in the chapter on Vatican II to what was surely Merton's major contribution, his collaboration with Abraham Joshua Heschel on *Nostra Aetate*, a story well told in *Merton and Judaism*.<sup>152</sup> Interesting also though the first-person material on *Jubilee* is, there were times when Harford's presentation of it seemed to me to be out of proportion with the main subject, the friendship of the three. There were also more errors in the book than a careful editor should have let through: it is the Thomas Merton Society of Canada (I confess to conflict of interest here) and not the International Thomas Merton Society, that organizes the “excursions”—better, pilgrimages—to Merton-related locations (x); there is no chapter of the ITMS at Oakham (7)—it is rather the location of a number of conferences/general meetings organized by the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland; the L'Eau Vive retreat house at Soisy-sur-Seine, now, if the web is to be believed, a psychiatric hospital, is more likely to have been associated with Madame de Pompadour than Madame Pompidou (85-86); the L'Arche community, founded by Jean Vanier, serves both women and men with developmental disabilities, not just men (86); contrary to the statement that it is “Swiss monks who brewed Grande Chartreuse” (104), it is French hermits who *distill* Chartreuse (not Grande Chartreuse, the name of the monastery) liqueur; the term “Dog Rib” refers not to a region of the Northwest Territories of Canada, but to a native people or First Nation who live there (123); it is unhelpfully reductionistic to describe Islam as merely an “offshoot” of Judaism and Christianity—although this is Rice's error, not Harford's (168); for “Nam” in reference to Indian bread we should, I would think, read “naan” (231); for “Mahablipuran” (234, again Rice's error), we should read Mahabalipuram (now Mamallapuram); and although the Friedsam Library at St Bonaventure's does have a Merton archive, surely *the* Merton archive is the one at the Merton Center at Bellarmine Uni-

versity in Louisville (265). Most curious of all is the inclusion of this sentence—"I am not giving in to an ingenuous, admiring expression of friendship when I rank Merton with the Fathers of the Early Church and those of the Middle Ages" (217)—in an excerpt from an undated document written by Rice, and summing up Rice's sense of Merton's importance, when in fact it is a statement from Jean Leclercq's introduction to Merton's *Contemplation in a World of Action*.<sup>153</sup> Liking the book as much as I do, I hope that there will be a second edition in which these and other *errata* might be corrected.

Having thus indulged my copy-editor *manqué* identity, let me conclude with further appreciation. A part of the book which I found of particular interest was the description (207-14) of the writing and impact of Rice's *The Man in the Sycamore Tree*,<sup>154</sup> not least because it was this tendentious and very personal book which in 1972 reanimated my interest in Merton, first established when I read *The Seven Storey Mountain*. As Harford states,

some Merton devotees, as well as Gethsemani colleagues, felt that it was impulsively written, published opportunistically, and gave erroneous impressions of the monk's disposition toward his future, seeming to imply that he was headed for Buddhism.<sup>155</sup>

John Eudes Bamberger, for example, longtime colleague of Merton, and later abbot of the Genesee, now, like Merton at the end, a hermit, was very critical, taking particular exception to Rice's characterization of Merton, which tilted in his view too far towards Buddhism. He also objected to Rice's take on Merton's relationship with his longtime abbot, James Fox. Similarly, Mark Van Doren and Jim Forest found it unbalanced. His Columbia peers, on the other hand, found Rice's "blunt, candid style"<sup>156</sup> very appropriate.

And what does "opportunistically" mean, if not simply that it came out before other biographies of various kinds? My own sense of the book, thirty-five years after first reading it, is that it was a very personal, and yes, idiosyncratic, presentation of his understanding of and grieving for a very close friend, indeed, his godchild, and written with a strong dollop of the zaniness he and Merton had shared. It was surely never intended to be a biography in any sense official or definitive, such as Michael Mott's *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*, with its 2311 endnotes.<sup>157</sup> In the undated ms. on Merton to which I have already referred, Rice

shows that he is capable of giving a much more sober assessment of his friend, which I am grateful to Harford for discovering and sharing with us.

Thomas Merton summed up an era. If one wishes to know where the Western world was in the second half of the twentieth century, Thomas Merton

offers considerable enlightenment. He showed us our spiritual potential in the midst of our secular endeavors. He made holiness equivalent with a life that seeks to be whole, honest and free. He taught us that it was possible to be truly religious without being formally religious. He proved that contemplation could occur in the throes of restlessness and that it was permissible to be fully human.

Merton was part of the great Catholic tradition and yet seemed not to be confined by it. ... Thomas Merton never left us. The journey goes on.<sup>158</sup>

But let Robert Lax, speaking, I would say, for Merton and Rice as well as for himself, have the last word: "Where There's an Oy, There's a Vey."<sup>159</sup>

The second major biographical work of the year is Joan C. McDonald's *Tom Merton: A Personal Biography*, published by Marquette University Press. Clearly it is a labor of love, with the author feeling personally indebted to Merton: "When I was lost in the liturgical and philosophical changes being considered in the Church [during and after Vatican II], he found me. I will be eternally in his debt."<sup>160</sup> She presents the book as

the first biography of Merton that combines the details of his diaries with other circumstances of his life that have been published in a number of different places. I have chosen to title the book with his original name, Tom, to emphasize the personal approach I have taken ....<sup>161</sup>

Alas (Harford's continuing influence!), I find myself hard pressed to offer a generally positive assessment of the book. Although the book contains many statements the authenticity of which I wondered about, there are no references either to primary or secondary sources which would enable me to give context to her assertions. More difficult for me, as a reader familiar with the range of Merton's styles of writing, were the extensive passages in which she wrote in Merton's own voice. These I found painful to read,

particularly a conversation between Merton and Dom James, in which she imagines Dom James, about to retire as abbot, coming during a rainstorm to see Merton in his hermitage and to seek his counsel on the possibility of his retirement.<sup>162</sup> I also found the narrative excessively sequential, lacking in integration and contextualization. Nor does she quote from Merton himself at times when one would expect a substantial quotation, as for example in her reference to the Louisville epiphany, given with no part of Merton's memorable account of it (224). Beyond this, the frequency of erroneous statements and misspellings undermine the seasoned Merton reader's confidence in the rest of her text. She says, for example, that Merton never explained the meaning of the curious phrase spoken, as it were, by God, in the last line of the SSM: "*That you may become the brother of God and learn to know the Christ of the burnt men.*"<sup>163</sup> She calls these words a prophecy, and clearly she uses the word, in the sense of prediction, to make a connection to the burning of Merton's body by the fan at the time of his death. But in a journal entry of August 26, 1949, he does explain its meaning.

I know well the burnt faces of the Prophets and the Evangelists, transformed by the white-hot dangerous presence of inspiration, for they looked at God as into a furnace .... They are the "burnt men" in the last line of *The Seven Storey Mountain*.<sup>164</sup>

She also asserts that Merton never referred to his practice of donating blood; but again he does, in *Conjectures*.<sup>165</sup> Some other errors: Merton's birthplace in Prades is not built on the ruins of the abbey of St. Michel de Cuxa, which still stands at a distance of some three kilometers from the house (28); it's very unlikely that Merton, as McDonald claims, would have attended the Catholic parish church of Montauban, given that he was a Protestant child at a Protestant school (46); Maud Grierson was Merton's father's aunt, not his sister (50); Merton was not forced into a ditch by Nazis in Italy, but in Germany (60, 101);<sup>166</sup> the New Testament which Merton was reading in Rome was part of the Vulgate Bible he had bought, not a NT furnished by the *pensione* (63);<sup>167</sup> he became an American citizen in 1951, not 1954 (71—she does give the correct date on 179); his baptism at Corpus Christi was "conditional," not "provisional" (85); Gerard Manley Hopkins had never been an Anglican priest (86); God is not "contained" in the Eucharistic wafer (111); City Lights is in San Francisco, not Santa Barbara (251); Eldridge Cleaver's notable book is *Soul on Ice*, not *Sand*

on *Ice* (272); Merton always called his parents Mother and Father, not "Ruth" (338) or "Owen" (343, in passages where the author writes in Merton's voice); for "Chimary" read "Chimay" (379); for "embassy" read "high commission"—because India and Canada are both Commonwealth countries, the terms high commission and high commissioner are used instead of embassy and ambassador (415); and for "Samut Praharn" read "Samut Prakan"—the place of Merton's death (432). I salute Joan McDonald for the depth of her feeling for Merton, and for the substantial research and travel she undertook in the book's writing; but I cannot recommend it as a fully reliable biography of Merton.

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And now to Merton for the multitudes. I would be rich today if I had a nickel for every occasion that someone has asked me to recommend a starter book on Thomas Merton.

Currently I recommend William Shannon's *Thomas Merton: An Introduction* (Cincinnati, OH: St Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), and/or the Cunningham or Bochen anthologies. In this review, the Simsic book would certainly qualify, as would James Martin's very readable *Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self from Thomas Merton and Other Saints* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2006)—with the notation that the word "saint" as applied to Thomas Merton is a tendentious one in a time when he has been deliberately excluded from a catechism. Perhaps the use of the term could be supported by the memorable dialogue between Merton and Lax in the SSM (237-38), although Merton would certainly have shelved it towards the end of his life, when through Zen, to his personal satisfaction, he had deconstructed so many of his early assumptions. Beyond these single volumes, however, the year 2006 saw the beginning publication of an ambitious and potentially far-reaching project, an eight-booklet series entitled *Bridges to Contemplative Living*, all edited by Jonathan Montaldo and Robert G. Toth, each booklet 64 pages long. The first two of these are *Entering the School of Your Experience* and *Becoming Who You Already Are* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2006). The next four booklets (*Living Your Deepest Desires*, *Discovering the Hidden Ground of Love*, *Traveling Your Road to Joy* and *Writing Yourself Into the Book of Life*, together with a Leader's Guide, have been published since; the last two (*Adjusting Your Life's Vision* and *Seeing That Paradise Begins Now*) remain to be published. The series is a project of the Merton



Institute for Contemplative Living, formerly the Merton Foundation, which describes each booklet as

a small group resource ideally suited for groups with four to ten members. A tool for spiritual development, *Bridges* invites participants on a journey toward spiritual transformation and a more contemplative, peace-filled life. Using Merton's writings as a starting point, each session seeks to mine the life experience and spiritual depths of those who use it.<sup>168</sup>

The introduction to each booklet includes definitions of what the editors mean by "contemplative living" and "contemplative dialogue," a brief biographical note on Merton's life and importance, suggestions for the use of the booklet, a section entitled "Eight Principles for Entering Into Contemplative Dialogue," and a list of additional resources. This is followed by eight session outlines, each of which includes an opening reflection from the Psalms, an introduction to the texts, a passage from Merton, a second passage from another writer ("Another Voice"), a set of questions for reflection and discussion, and suggestions for closing the session with prayer or quiet reflection. The first session in the first booklet, for example, "Contemplative Living," begins with Psalm 91:2-3, 5-6. Then comes the introduction to the texts, which does not address the specific texts which follow, but rather offers suggestions of how to approach them. The Merton text comes from *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and the second text from Pema Chodron's *Start Where You Are* (full bibliographical information on all the readings, together with biographical sketches of their authors, is found at the end of the booklet: other authors whose writings are used in this first booklet include Karen Armstrong, Wilkie Au, Pierre-Marie Delfieux, Paul Evdokimov, Abraham Heschel, Rainer Maria Rilke and Eckhart Tolle). The questions are contemplative, evocative and spacious—open-ended and thoughtful. The level of writing and the choice of texts is suitable for almost any group of adults, even older teenagers; each session is manageable both in terms of challenge and of time (90–120 minutes), if the setting is a parish or congregational one, or a retreat, a student group, a Merton chapter or study group, or even if the booklet is used by an individual.

I would describe the ethos of the booklets as both simple and profound, both gentle and challenging. Manifestly the booklets, without ignoring Merton's earlier life, resonate most strongly with

the perspectives of the transcultural pioneer whom he had become in his later years. The inclusion of passages from writers from beyond the Christian tradition also testifies to Merton's global inclusiveness, his recognition that Christians live in a very big world, in which through shared respect and a consistent contemplative perspective they can build bridges of understanding, communication and even communion. Michael Brennan's thorough and highly laudatory review salutes the editors for having found "a dynamic way to present Thomas Merton's writings,"<sup>169</sup> an assessment with which I would entirely concur. The huge volume and unsystematic character of the Merton corpus has often intimidated or defeated the beginning reader; the faithful use of these booklets, contrariwise, is much more likely both to whet the appetites of their users for further knowledge of Merton, as well as, even more importantly, giving them guidance on how to set out on the contemplative path. I plan to use them myself in a variety of settings, and I hope that they will be very widely used. Brennan helpfully notes<sup>170</sup> that the Leader's Guide and a "Series Sampler" which includes the full text of sessions one and six of the first booklet can be downloaded (from [www.avemariapress.com](http://www.avemariapress.com)). In terms of reaching out in the spirit and perspective of Merton to engage people on a grassroots level, this is probably the most significant undertaking ever mounted.

Less likely to be widely popular, but no less worthy in its own genre, and capable of touching through its elegant *consonantia* those among us to whom music speaks more directly than words, is the CD "Sweet Irrational Worship: The Niles-Merton Songs," Opus 171 and Opus 172; words by Thomas Merton, music by John Jacob Niles, and sung by baritone Chad Runyon accompanied by pianist Jacqueline Chew. The text comprises 22 poems of Merton, including such well-known pieces as "For My Brother: Reported Missing in Action, 1943," and "Love Winter When the Plant Says Nothing." Of these, parts of 12 of the songs can be heard on any computer with an mp3 feature (at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/runyonchew>). In her review, Monica Weis, herself an accomplished musician, and someone to whose musical discernment I willingly defer, acknowledges that these are "eclectic art songs, difficult to perform, and requiring careful attention from both artist and audience."<sup>171</sup> At the same time, she describes it as "well-crafted and splendidly interpreted ... not just technically proficient [but] intelligently musical, doing justice to the creative vision of both Niles and Merton."<sup>172</sup>

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And so to conclude, with an attempt to see through a glass, darkly, at what might lie ahead for this feature of the *Annual*. The running bibliographies in the *Seasonal* contain a number of items in languages other than English. I would commend to the new editors of *The Merton Annual* the thought that this review might be expanded to include reviews of the more significant of these, recognizing that this would require the recruitment of reviewers conversant with the languages so represented. Recognizing also that the greater part of Merton scholarship appears in English, I would want to see as many as possible of these items translated into English or indeed, published in the original English out of which they may have been translated for appearance in another language. In particular I register the hope that there will soon appear an English counterpart of *Thomas Merton: Solitudine e Communione*, a collection of the papers (surely all written originally in English) presented by Bonnie Thurston, Donald Allchin, Jim Forest, Lawrence Cunningham, Paul Pearson and Rowan Williams at the conference held at the ecumenical monastic community at Bose, in Italy, in October 2004.<sup>173</sup> Some space might also be given to publications in which Merton's influence is strongly manifest, such as *A Monastic Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Where Do We Go From Here?*<sup>174</sup> In my view this is a book that would probably not have been written without Merton's life and witness, as in fact the dedication ("In grateful memory of Thomas Merton, whose prophetic vision embraced monasticism in all its expressions.") testifies; and doubtless there are others.

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Another year, then, 2006, of a renewed access to some of Merton's own words, and a year in which we may celebrate the ingathering of an ample sheaf of Merton studies as well as the publication of a number of items the intention of which is the communication of his legacy to broader audiences and readerships. Let Ed Rice conclude for us.

Merton was part of the great Catholic tradition and yet seemed not to be confined by it. ... Thomas Merton never left us. The journey goes on.<sup>175</sup>

## Notes

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1. George Kilcourse, *Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton's Christ* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), pp. 76-87.

2. Belden Lane, "Merton's Hermitage: Bachelard, Domestic Space, and Spiritual Transformation," in *Spiritus* 4 (2004), pp. 123-50.

3. Lane, p. 139, p. 140, p. 142.

4. Roger Lipsey, *Angelic Mistakes: The Art of Thomas Merton*, Foreword by Paul M. Pearson (New Seeds/Shambhala: Boston and London, 2006).

5. Lipsey, p. 133.

6. Lipsey, pp. 167-73.

7. Lipsey, p. 3.

8. Lipsey, p. 3.

9. Lipsey, p. 8.

10. Lipsey, p. 8.

11. Lipsey, p. 9.

12. Lipsey, p. 19. Lipsey also summarizes his understanding of the hermitage and Merton's art in "'How I pray is breathe': Thomas Merton in the Hermitage Years," in *Parabola* 31.1 (Spring 2006), pp. 16-22.

13. Lipsey, p. 19.

14. *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, ed. Naomi Burton, Patrick Hart and James Laughlin, consulting ed. Amiya Chakravarty (New York: New Directions, 1973), pp. 153-55, quoted in Lipsey, p. 106, the image appearing on p. 107; and *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. 199, quoted in Lipsey, p. 126, the image appearing on p. 127.

15. "Signatures of Someone Not Around," *The Merton Seasonal* 31.2 (Summer 2006), pp. 30-32.

16. Lipsey, p. 29.

17. *Spiritus* 6 (2006), pp. 195-212. Other approaches to Merton's photography include those of Deba Prasad Patnaik, Paul Quenon, Anthony Bannon, Marilyn Sunderman, John Howard Griffin and Paul Pearson, all cited in the article's notes; and in J. S. Porter, *Spirit Book Word: An Inquiry into Literature and Spirituality* (Toronto: Novalis, 2001), p. 187. Richter's article is available online at <http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/spiritus/>

18. Quoted in Richter, pp. 195-96.

19. Richter, p. 197.

20. Richter, p. 199.

21. Richter, p. 202.

22. Richter, p. 203; cf. chapter 5 of *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), "Things in their Identity," in which Merton expands on the *thisness* of a colt, a dogwood tree, a leaf, a lake, a mountain (pp. 30-31).

23. From Merton's introduction to Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews, *Religion in Wood: A Book of Shaker Furniture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973) ix, reprinted in Thomas Merton, *Seek-*

ing *Paradise: The Spirit of the Shakers*, ed. and introd. Paul M. Pearson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003), pp. 72-89 (see p. 78).

24. Thomas Merton, "Day of a Stranger," in Lawrence S. Cunningham, ed., *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 222.

25. "Merton Today: No Guilty Bystander," in *Making Peace in the Post-Christian Era* (London: Pax Christi, 2006), p. 12.

26. CWL, xix; *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 209-24.

27. CWL, p. xi.

28. "Thomas Merton and Pax Christi," in *Making Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, p. 3. For "Krushchev" read "Kruschchev."

29. CWL, p. xix.

30. CWL, p. xxi.

31. CWL, p. 3.

32. CWL, pp. 4-5.

33. CWL, p. xxix.

34. CWL, p. xvi.

35. CWL, p. xvii.

36. PBM, p. vii.

37. PBM, p. liii.

38. PBM, p. lv.

39. PBM, p. 230; p. 269.

40. PBM, p. xxxiv, p. 195.

41. PBM, p. 298.

42. PBM, p. 277.

43. PBM, p. 142.

44. PBM, pp. 72-114. See also note 174, below, and my related comments.

45. PBM, p. 77.

46. PBM, xxix-xxxii, pp. 169-87; "From Pilgrimage to Crusade," in *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Dell, 1967), pp. 91-112.

47. PBM, p. xlvi, a reference to Merton's essay "Rain and the Rhinoceros," *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1966), p. 23.

48. PBM, p. xlviii.

49. PBM, p. xlvi; cf. p. 304.

50. "Trois hymnes" 38 (2.2), in PBM, p. 261.

51. *Asian Journal*, pp. 153-55. See also note 14, above.

52. PBM, p. 139.

53. John P. Collins, "A Guide to Full Integration," *The Merton Seasonal* 31.4 (Winter 2006), pp. 24-26.

54. "Some points from the Birmingham Nonviolence Movement," in Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Rhetoric, Religion, and the Civil Rights Movement 1954-1965*

(Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2006), pp. 743-52.

55. "Some points," p. 744.

56. "Jacob's Ladder with a Few Missing Rungs," *The Merton Seasonal* 32.1 (Spring 2007), pp. 32-35.

57. Poks, p. 32.

58. From "Things in their identity," chapter 2 of *Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1949), p. 25. In the parallel passage in *New Seeds* (see also note 22, above), to the statement in *Seeds*, "Their inscape is their sanctity," Merton adds, "It is the imprint of His wisdom and His reality in them"; he also deletes the word "Art," and replaces it with "creative wisdom" (p. 30).

59. Poks, p. 34.

60. Poks, p. 34.

61. Poks, p. 34.

62. Poks, p. 35.

63. Poks, p. 35.

64. Cf. his well-known statements on this in *Conjectures*, p. 12 and p. 129. In this regard, I find it curious that James Harford (see notes 145 and following, below) says that Merton's comments seem arrogant in what he saw as its implication that what Merton undertook personally in ecumenism and interfaith dialogue was crucial to the success of their cause (Harford, p. 95). To me it seems that he was simply modeling a specific and contemplative way of contributing to Christian and human unity.

65. Apel, p. 1.

66. Apel, p. xvii.

67. "A Vocation of Unity," *The Merton Seasonal* 32.1 (Spring 2007), pp. 28-31.

68. Pramuk, p. 28.

69. Pramuk, p. 29.

70. Pramuk, p. 28; Kilcourse, pp. 217-19, quoted in Pramuk.

71. Pramuk, p. 29.

72. Pramuk, p. 30; the internal quotations are from Apel, p. 93.

73. Pramuk, p. 30.

74. "Thomas Merton, the Holocaust, and the Eclipse of Difference," in Beatrice Bruteau, ed., *Merton and Judaism: Recognition, Repentance and Renewal/Holiness in Words*, Foreword by Victor A. Kramer (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2003), pp. 83-103; see also, in the same volume, Karl A. Plank, "An Open Letter to Donald Grayston," pp. 105-08.

75. "The Courage not to Abstain from Speaking: Monasticism, Culture and the Modern World in the Public Interventions of a Disturbing Monk," *The Merton Journal* 12.1 (Eastertide 2005), p. 17.

76. Pramuk, p. 30.

77. "Cutting up an Ox," in Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1965), pp. 45-47.

78. For the way in which Merton holds together the experiential and theological voices, there is in my view no better example than "A Christian Looks at Zen," originally published as a preface to John C. H. Wu's *The Golden Age of Zen*, then rpt. in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968), pp. 33-58, and in Cunningham, pp. 399-420.

79. CSQ 41.2 (2006), pp. 167-92; hereafter UUC. The article, for the most part very engaging and indeed provocative, does, however, sag a little in the middle, in its explication of *The New Man*, particularly in section 2.3, on the natural-supernatural distinction in Merton's late utilization of scholasticism.

80. UUC, p. 168.

81. UUC, p. 168.

82. UUC, p. 168.

83. UUC, p. 168, p. 167.

84. UUC, p. 169. I note here Pramuk's use of the word "uncanny," cognate with "uncannily," used by Rowan Williams; see note 75, above.

85. UUC, p. 170.

86. UUC, p. 173.

87. UUC, p. 175. See also Pramuk, p. 180, for further references to "the stranger."

88. AJ, p. 308, quoted in UUC, p. 181.

89. *Conjectures*, p. 157.

90. Sometimes called the "ox-herding pictures," or the "ten bulls." See "Ten Bulls," in Paul Reps, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, n.d.), pp. 131-55.

91. Merton to Suzuki, in *The Hidden Ground of Love*, p. 564, quoted in UUC, p. 184. This evokes for me the aphorism often quoted by Carl Jung: *Vocatus aut non vocatus, Deus aderit*—"called or not called, God will be there"; or perhaps in this context we should translate *vocatus* as "named."

92. UUC, p. 187.

93. UUC, p. 189.

94. UUC, p. 189.

95. See note 87, above.

96. UUC, p. 190, note 55.

97. UUC, p. 171.

98. In *Jesus Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), p. 333, quoted in UUC, pp. 187-88.

99. UUC, p. 190, note 55.

100. UUC, p. 190, note 55.

101. UUC, p. 191.
102. Vol. 55, No. 4 (Summer 2006), pp. 475-92.
103. Labrie, p. 477.
104. Labrie, p. 477.
105. Labrie, p. 479.
106. Labrie, p. 486.
107. Labrie, p. 487.
108. Labrie, p. 482.
109. In *The Sign of Jonas* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), pp. 339-52; cf. Labrie, pp. 487-89.
110. AJ, 230-36; cf. Labrie, p. 489.
111. Labrie, p. 491.
112. Jan Nordby Gretlund and Karl-Heinz Westarp, eds., *Flannery O'Connor's Radical Reality* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press), pp. 1-17.
113. Kreyling, p. 2.
114. Kreyling, p. 3.
115. Kreyling, p. 16.
116. Valerie Flessati et al., *Making Peace in the Post-Christian Era* (London: Pax Christi, 2006).
117. Ed. and introd. Patricia A. Burton, foreword Jim Forest (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).
118. *Making Peace*, p. 1.
119. *Making Peace*, p. 8.
120. *Making Peace*, p. 8.
121. *Making Peace*, p. 12; see also note 25, above.
122. *Making Peace*, p. 15.
123. Ron Rosenbaum, "The Return of the Domsday Machine? Please don't count on me to save the world again," posted August 31, 2007, in *Slate Magazine*: <http://www.slate.com/id/2173108/>
124. *Making Peace*, p. 15.
125. *Making Peace*, p. 17.
126. *Making Peace*, p. 18.
127. *Making Peace*, pp. 25-36.
128. Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Somerset, UK: Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2006.
129. AJ, pp. 235-36.
130. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, pp. 12-13.
131. *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and Writer*, The Journals of Thomas Merton, v. 2, ed. Jonathan Montaldo (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 408, quoted in *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 16.
132. *Conjectures*, pp. 131-32; *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 18.



133. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 21.
134. *Conjectures*, p. 158.
135. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 22.
136. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965. The encomium on "the man who has attained final integration" may be found in Merton's article, "Final Integration: Toward a Monastic Therapy," in Rob Baker and Gray Henry, eds., *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story, A Complete Compendium* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999), p. 272.
137. From his introduction to his *Clement of Alexandra: Selections from the Protreptikos* (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 3, quoted in *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 29.
138. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, pp. 32-33.
139. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 45.
140. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 47.
141. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 48.
142. *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 48.
143. *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 360, quoted in *Beyond the Shadow and the Disguise*, p. 53.
- 144.. Two corrections: for "Santa Prudenza" (p. 50) read Santa Pudenziana, and for "Jaques Maritan" (p. 51), read Jacques Maritain.
145. New York and London: Continuum, 2006.
146. Harford, p. 219.
147. Harford, p. vii.
148. Harford, p. 98.
149. Harford, p. 193.
150. "Communication Leads to Communion," *The Merton Seasonal* 31.4 (Winter 2006), p. 29.
151. Harford, p. 290.
152. Bruteau, *Merton and Judaism*, chs. 10-13.
153. *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), p. xviii.
154. New York: Doubleday, 1970.
155. Harford, p. 207.
156. Harford, p. 211.
157. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. Mott makes only a very brief reference (pp. 533-34) to Rice's book.
158. Harford, pp. 216-17.
159. Harford, p. 100.
160. McDonald, p. 12.
161. McDonald, p. 11.
162. McDonald, pp. 366-69.
163. McDonald, p. 14; SSM, p. 423.

164. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence*, ed. Jonathan Montaldo (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1966), p. 362. I am grateful to Paul Pearson for his help in locating this quotation for me.

165. *Conjectures*, p. 310.

166. Mott, pp. 61-62.

167. SSM, p. 110.

168. From the Institute website, [www.mertoninstitute.org](http://www.mertoninstitute.org)

169. "Merton as Contemplative Catalyst," *The Merton Seasonal* 31.3 (Fall 2006), p. 29.

170. Brennan, p. 29.

171. "Merton Set to Music," *The Merton Seasonal* 31.3 (Fall 2006), p. 31.

172. Weis, p. 31.

173. *Thomas Merton: Solitudine e Comunione. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Spiritualità, Bose, 9-10 Ottobre 2004, a Cura della Comunità di Bose* (Magnano: Edizioni Qiqajon, 2006). Only the preface by Enzo Bianchi, prior of Bose, would need to be translated for the book to be published in English.

174. Ed. Patrick Hart, introd. Bernardo Olivera (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2006). Monastic Wisdom Series Number Eight.

175. Harford, p. 217.