

Further, it may have been advantageous to update the editor's introduction (originally published in the 1981 edition of the collected prefaces) before inclusion in this 1989 publication. When Daggy notes the enduring value of Merton's work "more than a decade after his" [Merton's] death in December, 1968" (p. 6), the careful reader notes that this volume appears over two decades after his death, and that much of note has occurred in Merton studies during the second decade.

Those with interest in Merton studies are likely to find little of value in this work. But for those who are close and careful readers of the Merton corpus, this volume will be useful because of the nuances in Merton's thinking which can be discerned in these "second thoughts."

Thomas Merton
MONKS POND:

Thomas Merton's "Little Magazine"

Edited with an Introduction by Robert E. Daggy
Afterword by Brother Patrick Hart
Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1989
xv, 349 pages — \$30.00

Reviewed by **Jonathan Greene**

In 1965 Thomas Merton realized "a dream deferred" — becoming a hermit, living in a small concrete block building on the edge of a field a short walk from the main buildings at Gethsemani. Far from shutting out the world, these remaining years of his life were his most activist. He thought long and hard about peace and was much concerned with the struggle for racial equality. Living in the midst of a traditional monastic community, he was always interested in the cutting edge of what was happening in the Catholic world, in other religions, in politics, and in the literary and philosophical worlds.

In the late 1950s and into the 1960s, the literary world witnessed an explosion in the number of both small presses and "underground" literary

magazines. While most of Merton's books went to mainstream houses (Harcourt, Brace; Doubleday; Farrar, Straus & Cudahy), he was familiar, as a publishing poet, with small literary magazines. Though some of his poems appeared in the "giants" such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker*, *The Hudson Review* and *The Sewanee Review*, many appeared in the "little magazines" such as *El Corno Emplumado*, *Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, *Pax*, *Unicorn Journal*, etc. Attuned as ever to the *zeitgeist*, inspired by the monastery's purchase of an offset press, Merton decided to join the fray and doff an editor's cap as well as the cowl.

Monks Pond was the result. It was named after a real pond created by a concrete dam in the monastery's woods. He planned four issues: "The purpose of this magazine is to publish a few issues devoted to poetry and to some unusual prose and then go out of business." Merton was in touch with many writers and I would guess some of the contents of the first two issues were on hand when he conceived the magazine: his old Columbia friend Ad Reinhardt's aesthetic statement; the religious/philosophical texts of Shen Hui, John C. H. Wu, Reza Arasteh, etc.

Once the idea of the magazine was in place, Keith Wilson, Jonathan Williams and I acted as unofficial "contributing editors," sending in texts and exhorting writers we thought in sympathy with the project to send in material. The poetry Merton was writing had taken on a sea change with the recent *Cables to the Ace* and his work-in-progress, *The Geography of Lograire*, some of which would appear in *Monks Pond*. Also recent was his interest in photography and the magazine featured his work along with experimental work by his photographer-friend from Lexington, Ralph Eugene Meatyard. Merton also used some of his calligraphic drawings that he was turning out prolifically at the time. And another new interest found its way into these pages — concrete poetry, both by himself and by others. *Monks Pond* was an outlet for Merton's enthusiasms — both his own new exploratory writing and art, and his co-conspirators working in these realms. It is a rich record of the ferment taking place within him at this time.

The first two issues were rather select and intimate affairs of sixty-four and forty-eight pages. But, by the time help arrived in the person of Philip Stark, a Jesuit visiting at the Abbey of Gethsemani during the summer of 1968, the floodgates had opened and the third and fourth issues on which Stark worked became large grab bag anthologies of ninety-eight and 140 pages. The scope, too, had expanded to include translations of French, Latin American, Chinese, Polish and Finnish poets, as well as African myths and proverbs.

The whole idea of the magazine, as well as its contents, was a bit anarchistic. No money was sought (though contributions to cover expenses were accepted). Copies were sent out to those who requested them and many went to contributors. Less than 200 copies of each issue were printed. So it was not empire-building, but a quick sand castle waiting for an incoming tide. Mott, in his biography, has snidely remarked that "Merton made the mistake as editor of including the work of poets who were friends and of friends who claimed to be poets." Robert Daggy, in his informative introduction, quotes this with the rejoinder that "Mott may interpret this as a mistake, but it was precisely what Merton intended."

Reading through this 350 page reprint, though, one can see that Mott's low opinion of the magazine might have some justification. There is a wealth of worthwhile material in its pages, but *Monks Pond* has amateurish work, especially in the last two mammoth issues. Although Merton did not accept everything submitted, with his active mind I suspect he could often "read in" qualities to some of the work, qualities not so visible to others. *Monks Pond* was a light diversion for Merton that quickly became more work than he intended (any editor of a small magazine will corroborate this experience). With all the demands on his time, it might just have been easier to hand over work to Stark to type than to write a rejection letter.

Merton was sincere when he said that he thought there was much good work, "good poets hiding around in the bushes." This discovery of other experimental writers, his enthusiasms for the work of others writing in a similar vein, probably helped feed his own work (for example, one could make a case of like methods being used in *The Geography of Lograire* and in Paul Metcalf's work). The conjunction of this hermit with the community of writers is recorded here during a time that the writer, monk and man were undergoing new energies and changes. This is the main value of this reprint.

It may seem unfair to close with a few quibbles, but I think more time and care put into the reprinting would have made it a better volume. For example, on page 106 the unattributed second poem dedicated to Tu Fu is by Li Po which explains its juxtaposition to the one above which is about Li Po written by Tu Fu. And even though the introduction claims that only pagination has been changed, the deletion of an accent mark in CAFE on page 38 has rendered the poem meaningless. Also, although the title page announces that the Introduction is by Robert Daggy and the Afterword by Patrick Hart, their names are not in evidence with their words. But aside

from such quibbles, we should welcome back into print one of Merton's last projects.

Thomas Merton

PREVIEW OF THE ASIAN JOURNEY

Edited with an Introduction by Walter H. Capps
New York: Crossroad, 1989
114 pages — \$13.95 hardcover

Reviewed by **Bonnie Bowman Thurston**

Readers who are familiar with Merton scholarship will remember that Walter Capps wrote one of the best articles on Merton's significance that was produced in the flurry of analysis and scholarly activity ten years after his death. "Thomas Merton's Legacy" appeared in the March/ April 1979 issue of *The Center Magazine* and described Merton's contributions to the new contemplative and social era in religion. Now, twenty years after Merton's death, Capps has edited the dialogue which Merton engaged in at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, California, on 3 October 1968, a few days before he left on his Asian pilgrimage. Like the article, this longer work helps us to put Merton's importance as an intellectual into perspective.

A thin volume, *Preview of the Asian Journey* contains an introductory essay, the transcription of Merton's dialogue, and two short essays (one on the ancient Mesoamerican city of Monte Alban and one a reflection on Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*) which were published in *The Center Magazine* and which have appeared elsewhere. The value of this volume is the dialogue, which with *Thomas Merton in Alaska*, makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Merton's thought in the last year of his life. As the introduction notes, the dialogue is part of the record of Merton's first extended period away from Gethsemani, is one of the only times Merton met with a group of intellectuals, is an indication of why he wanted to travel to Asia, and is a record of the manner and style in