

KATZ, Jon, *Running to the Mountain: A Journey of Faith and Change* (New York: Villard, 1999), pp. xxi + 242. ISBN 0-679-45678-3 (hardback). USA \$20.00, Canada \$27.95.

Thomas Merton doesn't even need to be alive in the conventional sense to make new friends; and indeed Jon Katz considers himself not simply a reader of Merton but a friend—and this in a mutual way. Katz goes to Merton when he, Katz, needs spiritual friendship; and later in the book, Merton himself materializes at Katz's 'hermitage' in rural New York (and very materially drinks a fair bit of Katz's scotch—Glenlivet, \$36 a bottle) when he, Merton, is in need of friendship.

Katz's country place, which he buys with no little angst as the outward and visible sign of his midlife passage, is the setting of his narrative of re-negotiation with the self, his journey of faith and change. Here Katz, also a writer, either writes or fails to write; from here he negotiates his transitions with his wife and daughter in New Jersey; and here, as a non-observant Jew with no intention of becoming a Christian of Merton's kind or any other kind, he struggles with his own mortality. He goes for walks with his dogs, meets neighbors very different from himself, and eats chilled blueberry soup of his own making—not something on the regular menu of the village burger joints he also takes pleasure in frequenting.

A major motivation in his financially somewhat risky decision to buy the house is his awareness that he finds himself somewhere between stagnation ('Any more settling and I would vanish into the mud like some fat old catfish') and change ('I don't want to die in New Jersey'). He opts for change and renewal, buys the house, embarks on a journey of renovation both outward and inward, and takes Merton with him as guide and companion. Established in the house, he mulls over his estrangement from his father, his alienation from his ancestral faith, his concern for his mentally ill sister, his bursting pride in his daughter, his love and admiration for his wife, the highs and lows of his career as journalist and author, and his lack of 'traditional guy stuff'. He has been through ten years of psychoanalysis, and is, as he says, 'ripe for a brush with spirituality'.

Hitting 50 himself, he is particularly fascinated with Merton's state of mind and heart at that age, an age when 'idealism [is] rough to sustain', and his take on Merton at 50 is very searching. He bluntly calls attention to the gap between the public and the private Mertons, to the spiritual dissatisfaction, even bitterness, that he finds in the journals. He reflects very thoughtfully on the relationship with the nurse, the correspondence with Rosemary Ruether, and the frequent reflections on death which run in a dark stream through the journal entries.

Then one day Merton simply drives up to his place in a jeep (pedantic note here: it's a staple of the Merton bio that he never did—never could—learn to drive). He appears to Katz as his later photographs portray him, pats the dogs, makes himself at home, and accepts his first glass of Glenlivet. Then he asks Katz for help in his own midlife questions. Should he stay at Gethsemani? Could he still find love?

Katz's response to this, in direct address to Merton, takes up the next four pages (pp. 187-91). The gist of his response is to direct Merton to the paradoxes of his life—the celebrity hermit, the political activist vowed to stability—and to urge Merton to opt for the active expression of his creativity. He tells Merton that if he leaves the abbey he will help him get established as an on-line teacher, where his

pedagogical genius can come to full flower. Merton thanks him, they exchange blessings, and Merton drives away.

Does it work, this manifestation of the 30-years-dead Merton as he was at 50? I can only say that it works for me. It is an episode of Jungian active imagination, in which the Merton in whose writings Katz has soaked himself takes the position, not of mentor, but of one in need of mentoring. With amazement, Katz asks: 'What kind of script calls for my winding up happier than Merton, decades after my richest fantasy was to be him?' The question compels those of us who have spent a lot of time with Merton to ask ourselves afresh what really were the realities of Merton's heart and mind in his last years, and to what extent his earlier rhetorical statements about life with God hold up under the battering of late-life dissonances.

Whatever doubts we may have about Merton at 50, the book ends by assuring us that we need have no doubts about Katz at 50.

A distracted man, I am thinking of nothing but this stream,
this place.

An impulsive and restless man, I am at peace.

A man with no faith, I've found some.

Crisis and mystery are just around the corner, rushing towards me (p. 242).

It's a warm book, self-deprecating, humorous, grateful, ultimately peaceful—not a great book but a good book. It is Katz's celebration of the great truth which came to Merton at Fourth and Walnut, that it is an amazing and wonderful thing to be a human being.

Donald Grayston

DERIEVA, Regina, *In Commemoration of Monuments* (Jerusalem: Art Printing Press, 1999), pp. 60. ISBN 965-7126-01-0 (paperback). \$8.00; *Instructions for Silence* (Jerusalem: Abbaye de Latroun, 1999), pp. 39.

Writers and artists inhabit a kind of imaginary society. A poet has more in common with another poet, in another part of the world, than he has with his actual neighbor, most likely. By reading each other's work, and through correspondence, an intellectual community is formed that defies geographical barriers. Such a fellowship existed between Thomas Merton and many of his correspondents, most especially Boris Pasternak. Merton commented in his journal on the 'strange and marvellous fact of this apparently easy and natural communication between a monk in a strictly guarded Trappist monastery and a suspect poet behind the Iron Curtain. I am in closer contact with Pasternak than I am with people in Louisville or Bardstown or even in my own monastery' (18 October 1958).

No less than Merton's discovery of himself as a writer was intimately connected to his deep feeling for Pasternak. 'Everything hangs on the possibility of such understanding, which forms our interior bond, and is the only basis of true peace and true community', Merton wrote in his journal on 12 October 1958. 'External, juridical, doctrinal, etc., bonds can never achieve this. This bond exists between me and countless people like Pasternak everywhere in the world (genuine people like Pasternak are never 'countless'), and my vocation is intimately bound up with this bond and this understanding for the sake of which also I have to be a solitary and