Early Reflections in a "Nothing Place": Three Gethsemani Poems

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Lyndall Gordon concludes her 1998 biography of T. S. Eliot, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life,* by emphasizing the famous writer's ultimate understanding that his life had been an imperfect search for God. Although the search necessarily took him deep into the solitude of his own soul, Eliot knew he was not alone. According to Gordon, Eliot "spoke to choice souls of the future, 'the posterity of the desert' who would reenact his lone watch."[1]

Certainly one such "choice soul" to whom Eliot "spoke" even well before he died was Thomas Merton. In *The Sign of Jonas,* in an entry dated March 14, 1948, Merton extols the virtues of Eliot's then-recently-published *Four Quartets* and vows to learn from the older poet's mastery: "As a poet, I have got to be sharp and precise like Eliot—or else quit." [2] In one of the recorded conferences with the novices at Gethsemani during the 1960s, Merton again speaks enthusiastically of *Four Quartets,* especially "Little Gidding." Merton feels a connection with Eliot's work which is more than simple admiration for the poet's craft; this feeling is evident in his talk focused on Eliot and prayer.

Merton's sympathetic response can be said to derive in part from a shared belief between the two poets that prayer sanctifies any location in which it occurs consistently. The setting for the poem "Little Gidding," the village of Little Gidding, site of a Seventeenth- century Anglican community, is one such location. Harry Blamires comments on its symbolic significance:

> Little Gidding stands as a symbol of reconciliation . . . a peculiarly powerful symbol of reconciliation between the Way of Negation and the Way of Affirmation, between the practice of austerity and the acceptance of life's revelatory richness. . . .[3]

In the poem, Eliot simply calls Little Gidding a place "where prayer has been valid."[4] Earlier, he establishes that Little Gidding is not the only such prayerful place on earth:

> There are other places
> Which are also the world's end[5]

The monastery of Our Lady of Gethsemani is one of those "other places."

"Gethsemani is like Little Gidding," Merton proposes to the novices in his talk.[6] He develops the comparison by pointing out the unremarkable, even unattractive, external attributes of the two locations. Certainly no example of stunning architectural design or landscaping, Little Gidding features a plain little chapel half-hidden by a pig sty, while Merton jokingly agrees with one of the novices who states that the monastery's main building "looks like a barrel factory."[7] Merton, however, qualifies the good-natured insult by insisting, "God knows how or why, but prayer here has been valid," a declaration he punctuates by exclaiming, "Saints have been here!"[8]

The tie that binds Little Gidding to Gethsemani in Merton's mind is their shared history of contemplative prayer. The physicality of the places is significant, not because of any stunning beauty, but because they are not distracting to the eye in any remarkable way. The physical surroundings are significant primarily because they initiate a journey which can lead one to the unitive stage of prayer. The material aspects stimulate the first response of a creature, that of the senses. The ultimate response, however, is surrender, not to sensory stimuli, but to the spirit, to the enlivening and sanctifying of the created elements of the place, a place made holy by repeated acts of self-renunciation. One comes to such locations to do as others, who are now dead, did in the past: to kneel in prayer of submission to the will of God and, by doing so, connect one's soul with eternity.

As Eliot explains in the poem, this kind of prayer is not a simple "order of words."[9] It is a kind of prayer that Merton describes in *New Seeds of Contemplation* in which one not only speaks to God or even listens to God, but allows oneself to become the language of God. Merton explains from personal experience: "There exists some point at which I can meet God in a real and experimental contact with His infinite actuality, [a point at which] God utters me like a word."[10]

For both writers, the living word of God takes the form of poetry. Poetry and contemplation, as Merton eventually concludes, are compatible experiences; one stimulates rather than militates

against the other.[11] Merton holds that poetry has unique properties. It introduces one to another dimension, what he calls "the angelic realm," a meeting place between God and flesh where spirit is in complete harmony with the created world. In this sphere, material and spiritual elements are reconciled and mutually blessed. Poetry recognizes this unity and assumes that communication between, among, and within these elements is possible.[12] Only in poetry, Merton claims, can one be so bold as to assert, "Here is a place where prayer has been valid." Such a statement would be irresponsible, he explains, if made in a scientific context because it cannot be measured or proved. But in the angelic realm, the speaker speaks the infinite truth of God self-evident to anyone who meets God through contemplation.[13]

Helen Gardner writes of *Four Quartets*, "These poems do not begin from an intellectual position or truth. They begin with a place ...."[14] The same description applies to several of Merton's poems written during his first six years as a Trappist, representing that period in which he produced what George Woodcock classifies as "the poetry of the choir."[15] These poems center upon the specifics of the one place in which the restless monk would honor his vow of stability for 26 years. The geography of Gethsemani provides the setting for the story of Thomas Merton's maturing soul. It is where Merton makes both a beginning and an ending and where he learns to see the two as one. The place can be described, using Merton's blunt phrases, as a "total non-entity," "a null and void nothing place," like Little Gidding.[16] But when seen through the eyes of the contemplative poet open to the revelatory grace of God, the "nothing place" becomes replete and consequential and talks of things beyond itself,[17] saying that here is another place where time and timelessness intersect.

The comparison provides a basis for studying representative early poems by Merton. As Gethsemani (the place) is like Little Gidding (the place), Merton's Gethsemani poems—those poems written early in his career as a poet-turned-monk—are like "Little Gidding," the poetic masterpiece. They reveal Merton's affinity with Eliot's concept (so captivatingly illustrated in *Four Quartets*) that a place can be hallowed by tradition, arrested in time, and neutralized to the senses and, therefore, conducive to ecstatic and transcendent experience. In Eliot's end, one might say, is Merton's beginning.

Three of these poems "After the Night Office—Gethsemani Abbey," "The Trappist Cemetery—Gethsemani," and "Spring: Monastery Farm" draw their considerable vitality from paradox; in them, the poet recognizes the fullness of emptiness, the light within darkness, life amid the province of the dead, freedom that comes only from surrender, and spring which never leads to winter; in a semblance of contradiction which is the heart of the apophatic or Negative Way of seeking to know an unknowable God. The three poems originate with descriptions of physical details of place, vivid and precise images, such as Merton admired in the work of Eliot, but they move beyond the level of sensory encounter to recreate the poet's experience with the source of that significance, a recreation and a reconciliation which can be conveyed only through paradox.

"After the Night Office—Gethsemani Abbey" is an ecstatic statement by a seeker-of-light who is in love with the darkness. The poem anticipates future expressions of Merton's long-lived attraction to the night as a time of spiritual liberation and clarification for the monks of Gethsemani. For example, in *The Sign of Jonas*, in an entry dated April 8, 1950, Merton writes: "At the end of the Night Office, when the whole choir sank into the darkness of death and chanted without the faintest light, I thought of the darkness as a luxury, simplifying and unifying everything."[18] In yet a later entry, he resumes the topic and offers the same perspective, this time in more concise terms: "The night, O My Lord, is a time of freedom. You have seen the morning and the night, and the night was better."[19]

This poem also illustrates Merton's own critical standard that "[a]ll really valid poetry (poetry that is fully alive and asserts its reality by its power to generate imaginative life) is a kind of recovery of paradise."[20] In "After the Night Office," the poet's imagination thrives in the darkness which blankets the monastery at this particular time and vividly renders the recovery of its innocence, a process which Merton would later refer to as being "[b]aptized in the rivers of night."[21]

Appropriately, the poem opens with the rhetoric of *apophasis*,[22] in which the speaker affirms by negation:

> It is not yet the gray and frosty time
> When barns ride out of the night like ships:
> We do not see the Brothers, bearing lanterns,
> Sink in the quiet mist . . .[23]

By describing clearly what he cannot see, he calls special attention to the physical details of a place with which he has become intimately familiar. Like Eliot, who gives directions in "Little Gidding" in a series of statements beginning with the clause "If you came this way" and ending with a description of what one would find there, Merton directs the would-be pilgrim with the assurance of one who has memorized the geography of which he speaks. The speaker comfortably delineates, as well as anticipates, the features and routines of the monastery he has come to know in the few years he has lived there. The speaker not only points out what has just taken place but what he knows will appear when the day eventually dawns. This familiarity—intensified by the simple fact that the monk's life is, by design, lived within strict boundaries—makes the current state of visual obscurity no hindrance to the speaker's awareness.

The suggestion that the place is familiar enough that the poet can describe it, even in the dark, captures an important aspect of Merton's view of the sanctity of place. In his discussion of "Little Gidding," Merton emphasizes the following passage:

> If you came this way,
> Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
> At any time or at any season,
> It would always be the same.[24]

Merton considers the most important words in this passage to be "always" and "the same." The antecedent of "it" is the place, and its sameness is a mysterious quality, distinguishing the holiness it has developed through its history as a place of prayer. This sameness "neutralizes the accidentals" of the place, subordinating the externals to the internal.[25]

The characteristic of "always the same" is also suggested of Gethsemani in the opening stanza of "After the Night Office—Gethsemani Abbey." The darkness is the metaphor for God's ineffable grace, the sanctifying power that renews Gethsemani. It restores Gethsemani's Edenic purity while it also conveys and reinforces its sameness, leaving the speaker confident that the "barns [will] ride out of the night like ships," just as they always do, and the Brothers will return from the mists into which they only just hours before sank "bearing lanterns"—to greet a new but unchanging day. The day will be new in that it will have only recently dawned, but what it will hold for the monks is sure to be similar to that which was offered by the day before.

The poem immediately moves from the predictable to the disorienting, however, when it presents a portrait of disorder in which the speaker and his brothers, fresh from their office, are now out of sync with time:

> But now our psalmody is done.
> Our hasting souls outstrip the day:
> Now, before dawn, they have their noon.[26]

Their prayers have hastened their souls' movement beyond that of the clock and have propelled the poet into a zone of awareness in which paradoxically his temporary blindness has clarified his spiritual vision. He sees not through his physical eyes, but with "the secret eye of faith." This faith resides in a soul freed by the blessed darkness to "drink [the] deeps of invisible light," a synesthetic image which calls to mind a reversal of the famous Miltonic oxymoron in which the essence of Hell is captured in one terrifying phrase: "darkness visible."[27] The synesthesia continues into the third stanza, as does the speaker's confidence, an assurance of well-being which transcends the knowledge of his ordinary sensory experiences: the life-giving rays of the "invisible light," perceptible now only through touch and hearing, are nevertheless still shining.

The penultimate stanza, framed by the poet's echo of John Donne's futile scolding of the rising sun—although here the sun arrives not too early, but too late, having been supplanted by a superior light—reveals the poet's reluctance to yield to the mere light of day. The speaker reinforces his unwillingness to greet the sun by directing it to "hide behind Mount Olivet" and announcing that the "flying [that is, disappearing] moon" is being "held prisoner" by the juniper tree, [28] striking images that suggest Merton's early attraction to the work of Donne and other Metaphysical Poets of the Seventeenth century, such as George Herbert and Andrew Marvell.[29] In these fanciful words, a gentle irony exists, however, in that Mount Olivet and the juniper tree are familiar features of the landscape of the poem's setting. The irony arises from the speaker's specific identification of them. Even in his transcendent state, transported by his poetic and contemplative vision far from the mundane details of home, the speaker still effortlessly calls by name those geographical elements which are clearly visible only in the light of day but with which he shares a spiritual connection, unbroken by his fidelity to the obscuring darkness.

Certain identifying properties of Gethsemani, such as the steeple and the water tower, recur throughout Merton's writing. In *The Seven Storey Mountain,* for instance, he notes that in his first viewing of the monastery, the steeple "shone like silver in the moonlight."[30] In one of his early journal entries, he writes of the water tower appearing "fierce and efficient."[31] In the final stanza of "After the Night Office—Gethsemani Abbey," the two objects appear again. The steeple is again portrayed in terms of a precious metal—here, along with the water tower, it is gold in the sunlight as it appears in a description which suggests a lingering resentment on the part of the speaker toward the rising sun:

> But now the lances of the morning
> Fire all their gold against the steeple and the water-tower.[32]

Morning is depicted through mixed metaphors of violence; it is portrayed as a force that wields weapons (sharp objects and firearms) against the landscape to which it comes. The steeple and water tower stand tall as if they are both targets and first lines of defense against the invading sun. While the word "lance" also denotes an act to promote healing, it is an effective measure only when it causes painful bloodshed. Clearly, the speaker is conflicted; he has not yet completely reconciled himself to the fact that the period of luxurious, simplifying, and unifying darkness has ended.

The bellicose implications of the description suddenly give way, however, as the poem reaches a peaceful climax. As the sun arrives, so does consciousness for the inhabitants of Gethsemani who, along with the speaker, find themselves miraculously blessed. Finally, the steeple and water tower (as well as the juniper tree), because they are images of height, can be seen as emblems of the steadfast heavenly aspirations of their earthly setting—ordinary and familiar features, yet extraordinary because they too have been "soaked in grace, like Gideon's fleece."[33]

The significance of the monastic cemetery in the holy landscape of Gethsemani is also significant in Merton's sacred vision of the place. In a passage from *The Sign of Jonas* dated December 20, 1948, he writes of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the monastery by standing in the cemetery looking up at the sky where he thinks "of the sea of graces . . . flowing down on Gethsemani" and envisions the crosses on the graves speaking to him, as if "the jubilant dead were just about to sit up and sing." [34]

"The Trappist Cemetery—Gethsemani Abbey" is Merton's loving if somewhat effusive address to "the jubilant dead" and is compatible with his declaration that Gethsemani is a place where saints have been. As in "After the Night Office—Gethsemani," this poem pulses with paradox. The speaker praises the dead by assuring them of their anonymity. The physical graves, rather than memorializing the individuals who lie there, serve instead to "hide [their] characters."[35] The graves are not marked by grand monuments, but by "simple crosses."[36] The simplicity subdues rather than proclaims the glory of the dead brothers; such absence of ornamentation contributes to the holiness of the place. The magnificence is not external, but within. It is not individual, but collective. It exists in the sustained lives of prayer which the brothers led on earth, a habit of prayer which has not ended, but has merely moved on to another plane where it continues its work which "is not yet done."[37]

To adorn their graves would not only constitute an offense against humility, but would be a far too conclusive statement that the monks are dead. The poem illustrates the speaker's refusal to distinguish clearly between life and death by using the contradictory descriptive phrases "green cradles"[38] and "green tombs"[39] to refer to the brothers' graves.[40] The poet's use of these seemingly conflicting images suitably frames this poem, the central focus of which is the paradoxical concept that in death the monks are actually more alive than they were before they died. The poet once again transcends the limitations of his physical setting to enter a plane of existence where ending and beginning meet at the intersection of gone forever and forever present, or as Eliot, in "Little Gidding," terms it, "[n]ever and always."[41]

By remaining faithful to surface routines, in short, by maintaining Gethsemani's sameness, the terrain and natural occupants of Gethsemani protect the sanctity of the souls whose remains lie buried beneath its landscape. Everything goes about its usual business of daily life: birds "bicker in the lonely belfry"[42] while swallows and chimney swifts frolic about the monastery's eaves and steeple, yet all the while the graves of the departed brothers "smile like little children"[43] who know they are safe, far from the potential harm suggested in the description of the world just beyond the monastery grounds where the road carries cars in which "cities pass and vanish," where the air is filled with a "roar," and where the noise assaults the natural world by "[h]urling the air" into the trees, creating an effect of "panic."[44]

But as the monks of the holy place carry on their ordinary practices, protecting the privacy of the departed brothers, they also ensure that they will share in the blessings of eternal glory which the dead monks now enjoy. In fact, the poet considers these elements of place to be saints, too: the hills themselves are canonized by a sun which "exult[s] like a dying martyr."[45] Further, the poet identifies not only with the dead monks but also with the "frogs along the creek" who "[c]hant in the moony waters" offering their nightly devotions "to the Queen of Peace."[46] By virtue of this connection of a temporal place to the eternal souls of the holy living and the holy dead, the beasts and plants of Gethsemani take their place in the poet's eschatological vision with which the poem climaxes:

> Then will creation rise again like gold
> Clean, from the furnace of your litanies:
> The beasts and trees shall share your resurrection,
> And a new world be born from these green tombs.[47]

As Ross Labrie writes, Merton's exquisite descriptions of nature in Gethsemani are often more "than an emptying of the mind in preparation for contemplation of the divine. His aesthetic pleasure in looking out at the world is everywhere evident and affirmed."[48] Such aesthetic pleasure is certainly evident in the poem "Spring: Monastery Farm." As Labrie further comments on this poem, Merton here portrays "the instinctive energy of nature as an emblem of freedom."[49] The poem hails the arrival of spring on the monastery farm by presenting lively visual, aural, and tactile images of the natural world released from the prison of winter. The poem abounds with expressions of movement and activity: the bulls "roam in their pens"; the trees "boom with honey bees"; the streams ("blue-eyed" clean and fresh) "run to meet the sun."[50] This poem sets up a relationship among the flora and fauna of the farm's landscape and its human residents in that all are joined in spring-time revelry. As the opening lines announce, even the mighty bulls in their pens sing of spring in their own unmelodious way, "like trains."[51] This introductory image of joyful movement within confinement subtly points to the poem's paradoxical underpinnings as well as to its ultimate message: only by total surrender of self-will does one become truly free. Spring on the monastery farm offers sensuous pleasure to all its living inhabitants,

and the speaker affirms the beauty of the season on the farm for its own sake. His delight is evident in his abundant use of sensory imagery to depict the season. He also makes clear, however, that the monks' happiness at the arrival of spring is intensified by their understanding that while the time of year brings freedom from seasonal captivity, it also signifies the liberation of the soul from the prison of sin.

While the poem begins by suggesting a union between nature and man, it climaxes with a statement of contrast between the natural world and the supernatural transcendent life of the earth-laboring monks. As much as the bulls and the honey bees revel in the arrival of spring, their enjoyment of the season cannot match that of the monks who "glaze the dark earth with a shining ploughshare" with more "ardent" minds and more "insatiable" hearts than those of their animal companions.[52] The reason for this greater degree of happiness is that the natural world depends totally on the promise of the sequence of the seasons for its regeneration, but the monks have "traded April for [their] ransom" and now possess a joy that surpasses the temporal jubilation of the "uncomprehending" natural world.[53] Spring is *not* the "necessity" of the monks who have their Emancipator all year long.[54] Just as the opening of "Little Gidding" speaks of the "heart's heat,"[55] a spiritual warmth that does not go cold in the dead of winter, the monks of Gethsemani enjoy an inner spring which defies the prescribed movement of the seasons. Their spring is not subject to the laws of the physical universe: it is the spring of the eternal domain of the angels.

And yet it is the created landscape of the place in which they live and labor that keeps the monks ever mindful of this truth. In a synesthetic phrase, the poet makes this point quite clear:

> For, in the sap and music of the region's spring
> We hear the picture of Your voice, Creator,
> And in our heartspeace answer You
> And offer You the world.[56]

The term "heartspeace" is reminiscent of the coined language of Gerard Manley Hopkins who also recreates in his poetry an ecstatic acknowledgement of the Creator's presence in the "joy and juice" of early spring.[57] The contentment is so profound that it leads those who possess it to an easy sacrifice; they offer in return nothing less than everything they have. This they do, the poem

suggests, as a matter of custom, every spring on the farm, when the saving victory of the Lord is especially evident in the resurrection of the natural surroundings. The poet, however, makes clear in the final lines that the Redeemer is present even when no outward signs declare Him there; His is a presence that is not just seasonal, but perpetual:

. . .by Your Cross and grace, is made our glory and our Sacrament:
As every golden instant mints the Christ Who keeps us free.[58]

This continuous process of recognition and response to a salvific action that knows no end reveals yet another portrait of the immutability of sacred places as seen through the vision of Thomas Merton.

In his recent book, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage*, a study of the lives and works of Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day, Walker Percy, and Thomas Merton, Paul Elie points out that rather early in his monastic writing career, Merton's "romance with the monastery [came] to an end."[59] Elie writes:

> From this point forward [the early 1950's] he will strive to be simply a monk in a monastery. Although he will remain faithful to his calling as a Trappist, he will no longer write about Gethsemani as an ideal place, a world unto itself. Rather, he will see it as a place of imaginative possibility.
> . . . He will seek a place outside the monastery or apart from it, in the world, in his surroundings, in the depths of his being or in flights of fantasy; from here on his places and spaces will be longed for, self-made, envisioned, imaginary.[60]

This movement away from the landscape of Gethsemani is certainly traceable in Merton's poetry, as George Woodcock has amply demonstrated. Woodcock explains that once Merton reconciled his two vocations of monk and poet and recognized the relationship between art and spirit, he was free to turn his poet's eye from Gethsemani to different landscapes.[61] The poet no longer needed to depict the actual details of his earthly home with words. Perhaps he had so completely internalized the elements of the place itself that they disappeared altogether from sensory perception and became one with his interior landscape. Perhaps the neutrality—that quality of which he speaks to his novices in the discus-

sion of "Little Gidding"—the hallmark of holy places such as Little Gidding and Gethsemani, the force that diminishes the accidentals and clarifies the sacred essence, stilled his impulse to express in poetry his oneness with Gethsemani and inspired him to celebrate the union of his soul with sacred spaces accessible only to his inner eye. Perhaps, as William H. Shannon writes, "Gethsemani root[ed] [Merton], not where Gethsemani is, namely in this earth, but elsewhere, that is to say, in eternity."[62]

Both T. S. Eliot and Thomas Merton found their nothing places at the end of the world, and both captured in poetry the paradoxes they discovered there. In *Four Quartets*, Eliot renders instances of perfect clarity achieved over the course of his imperfect life, encounters with the eternal that are inextricably bound to the temporal. In Little Gidding, the time-worn, out-of-the-way refuge for saints and seekers, the poet recognized a passageway leading from isolation to unity. In the concluding stanza of Eliot's eponymous poem, the essence of the setting it celebrates is summed up in two lines beginning: "A condition of complete simplicity" and followed immediately by a parenthetical caveat, offered for rhetorical emphasis in the negative: "(Costing not less than everything)."[63] The place bestows its grace (the poet reminds himself) only on those poor enough to receive it. In Gethsemani, "the poet of the choir" emerged, flourished, and eventually moved on. Amid his simple surroundings and through the routines and rituals of the days and seasons, he found in himself the necessary poverty, the emptiness which opened him to the infinite wealth of God's love; "helped him," in Shannon's words, on that inner journey along the holy way "that knows no geography." [64]

Notes

1. Lyndall Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), p. 536.

2. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953), p. 94.

3. Harry Blamires, *Word Unheard: A Guide Through Eliot's Four Quartets* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 123.

4. T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding" in *T.S. Eliot: The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1971), pp. 139-145 (139). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations will be from this collection.

5. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays, 1901-1950*, p. 139.

6. *T. S. Eliot and Prayer* (Credence Cassette).

7. *T. S. Eliot and Prayer* (Credence Cassette).

8. *T.S. Eliot and Prayer* (Credence Cassette).

9. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950*, p. 139.

10. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), p. 37.

11. Thomas Merton, "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, Patrick Hart, ed. (New York: New Directions, 1985), pp. 338-354 (341).

12. *Poetry: The Angelic Realm* (Credence Cassette).

13. *Poetry: The Angelic Realm* (Credence Cassette).

14. Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Dutton, 1959), p. 57.

15. George Woodcock, *Thomas Merton: Monk and Poet* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1978), p. 51.

16. *T. S. Eliot and Prayer* (Credence Cassette).

17. See Mark Van Doren, "Introduction" in *Selected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. xiii.

18. Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 297.

19. Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 349.

20. Thomas Merton, "Louis Zukofsky—The Paradise Ear," in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, Patrick Hart, ed. (New York: New Directions, 1985), pp. 128-133 (128).

21. Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 349.

22. For a thorough explication of the poem in terms of its underlying apophatic theology, see Patrick F. O'Connell, "Thomas Merton's Wake-Up Calls: Aubades and Monastic Dawn Poems from *A Man in the Divided Sea*," *The Merton Annual* 12 (1999), pp. 129-163.

23. Thomas Merton, "After the Night Office—Gethsemani Abbey," in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), pp. 108-109 (108). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations will be taken from this collection.

24. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950*, p. 139.

25. *T. S. Eliot and Prayer* (Credence Cassette).

26. Merton, *Collected Poems*, pp. 108-109.

27. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton* (ed. Douglas Bush; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965) p. 213.

28. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 109.

29. This connection between Merton and the Metaphysical Poets, as well as his technical departure from them, has been documented by scholars of his poetry; see Sister Thérèse Lentfoehr, *Words and Silence: On the Poetry of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1979), pp. 52, 89.

30. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1948), p. 320.

31. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and Writer* (Journals. 2; 1941-1952; ed. Jonathon Montaldo; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 101.

32. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 109.

33. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 109.

34. Merton, *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 144.

35. Thomas Merton, "The Trappist Cemetery—Gethsemani," in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), p. 116. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations will be taken from this collection.

36. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 116.

37. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 117.

38. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 116.

39. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 118.

40. This juxtaposition of "green" with an image of death is remarkably similar to Dylan Thomas's phrasing in "Fern Hill" in which he speaks of Time holding him "green and dying." See Dylan Thomas "Fern Hill" in *The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas: 1934-1952* (New York: New Directions, 1971), pp. 178-180 (180). Given Merton's appreciation of Thomas's poetry, especially at this time—see Sister Thèrése Lentfoehr, *Words and Silence: On the Poetry of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1979), p. 33—the similarity is worth noting.

41. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 139. For a more thorough discussion of the poem in terms of this theme of the continuity between death and life, see Patrick F. O'Connell, "Thomas Merton's Wake-Up Calls: Aubades and Monastic Dawn Poems from *A Man in the Divided Sea*," *The Merton Annual* 12 (1999), pp. 129-163.

42. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 116.

43. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 116.

44. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 116.

45. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 116.

46. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 117.

47. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 118.

48. Ross Labrie, *Thomas Merton and the Inclusive Imagination* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), p. 84.

49. Labrie, *Thomas Merton and the Inclusive Imagination*, p. 85.

50. Thomas Merton, "Spring: Monastery Farm," in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), pp. 169-170 (170). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations will be taken from this collection.

51. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p. 169.

52. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p.170.

53. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p.170.

54. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p.170.

55. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950*, p. 138.

56. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p.170.

57. See Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Spring" in *Victorian Prose and Poetry* (eds. Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 682.

58. Merton, *Collected Poems*, p.170.

59. Paul Elie, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 210.

60. Elie, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage*, p. 210.

61. Woodcock, *Thomas Merton: Monk and Poet: A Critical Study*, p. 69.

62. William H. Shannon. *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1993), p. 9.

63. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, 1909-1950, p. 145.

64. Shannon, *Silent Lamp*, p. 10.