A Bricoleur in the Monastery: Merton's Tactics in a Nothing Place

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The ability of Thomas Merton to unsettle us and re-organize our sense of "spiritual spaces" accounts in no small part for his continued appeal more than thirty-five years after his death.[1] The last several years have sparked questions about his suitability as a role model for young people in the light of some ill-considered reflections on his trip to Asia and his relationship with "M," the student nurse with whom he fell in love in the spring of 1966.[2] His positions on war and peace, racial justice, and monastic living were guaranteed to tweak the noses and the assumptions of many along the way. Two examples, set fifty years apart, may serve to make the point. English Benedictine Aelred Graham criticized Merton in 1953 for his "mysticism for the masses" and for his projection of his personal experience into his writing.[3] Fifty years later Mary Jo Weaver argued that "it seems fair to want a deeper acknowledgement of his experience with 'M'" than Merton allows and suggested that he seemed at times to Weaver, "neurotic, overpublished, and extraordinarily self-centered."[4]

Merton himself was aware of the discomfort he caused many and commented on it in a variety of ways. After a somewhat disappointing physical exam he was to remark that "[a]s an ikon, I am not doing too well."[5] He was careful to discourage people from turning him into a plaster-cast model of piety for the edification of young people. His continual ability to prompt, chide and even infuriate people who approach his work from a variety of perspectives is not much more surprising than this ability to confirm the preconceived notions of so many of those who approach his works from such widely disparate and sometimes contradictory points of view as well.

How are we to account for the comments of one self-proclaimed "conservative" Catholic bookseller who remarked to me that Merton is consistently among her store's bestsellers and the remarks of a number of veterans of the 1960s (if you can remember them, you weren't there) who comment that they are still "turned

on" by how far ahead of his time Merton was? The writings of French Jesuit historian, theologian and ethnologist Michel DeCerteau, along with others who share his perspective regarding the nature of everyday life and "the politics of the quotidian" offer some insights into these seemingly disparate responses.[6] The object of this discussion is to highlight several key insights which DeCerteau and others who follow his line of thought have to offer, especially regarding the notion of *bricolage*, and then to consider two points of intersection between the visions of DeCerteau and Merton.

The Bricoleur

Claude Levi-Strauss brought the term "bricolage" into academic discourse when he used it to describe the scientific workings of mythic reflection.[7] The French term refers to something made or put together using whatever materials happen to be available. A *bricoleur* is a handyman or jack-of-all-trades in contrast to a tradesman. The term describes a person adept at odd jobs and repairs who does not begin work with a planned-out project, dedicated materials, and accepted procedures but must make do with whatever is at hand. Levi-Strauss argues that like "bricolage" on the technical plane, mythical reflection can reach brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane.

DeCerteau took up this term and placed it within the context of his study of the everyday throughout history. He was concerned with how ordinary men and women, whose voices are heard only as the background murmur of official history, live their lives each day. He was especially interested in the activities of groups of people who lacked power. He wondered how the powerless made creative use of the culture imposed upon them.

DeCerteau, for example, points to the imposition of European culture and Christianity upon indigenous Americans. He notes that, "Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of* the rituals, representations and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept."[8] He argues that they did this through the various religions which they fashioned and which preserved the content of their beliefs and practices in the form of a European Catholicism. Slaves in the New

World decided what they would do with the Christian religion imposed upon them. They used it as a means of preserving their Yoruba religious traditions. So both slave owners and priests were happy to see them revering the Catholic saints. What they did not realize, however, was that they were revering the saints as representations of their traditional deities. So Mary, St. Barbara and Lazarus were used to translate and preserve slave devotion to the great Yoruba Orisishas: Oshun, Shango, and Babaluaiye.[9]

After citing a host of other similar examples, DeCerteau argued that all of these variations on bricolage are examples of *tactical practices.* He draws a distinction between these and others that he calls *strategies.* He argues that *strategies* are exercised by subjects, in established places and situations, who are in control of their lives and destinies. These include social or institutional domains such as governments, churches and academic institutions. *Tactics,* on the other hand, are the "art of the weak" living in foreign territory. In these cases people make do and get by in lands and cultures that are beyond their control and not of their making. Tactics are "ruses" or "surprises." They are "clever tricks" that allow and enable the weak to work within "the order established by the strong" by taking advantage of "cross cuts, cracks, and lucky hits."[10] DeCerteau pointed to the ruses of the weak as primordial realities that were present in ancient Greek, Islamic, and Chinese cultures. He went so far as to argue that there appeared to be a link between them and the deceptions of plant and animal camouflage. He spoke of the "permanence of a memory without language, from the depths of the oceans to the streets of our great cities."[11] Those without power, he argued, use subversive tactics in a space which is not their own. This kind of subversion is viable for even the most disadvantaged and victimized groups.[12]

The space of the disadvantaged is always the space of the Other. They must use alternative tactics within a terrain imposed and organized by laws they did not create. DeCerteau argues that "it operates in isolated actions, blow by blow, takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep." These "nowhere" places or "nonplaces," as he described them, are of tremendous strategic value. A non-place is the necessary precondition for those without power to create their own community. On the other hand, such a non-place suggests the only possible place from which to critique

and undermine normative culture, language, and the meaning we take for granted when embedded in a particular place.[13]

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz echoes this approach in discussing the stance of Hispanas/Latinas and Mujerista theology. She notes that, "often I know that we, Hispanas/Latinas, let [those with power and privilege] think they are dominating us while we in the interstices create a meaningful *cotidiano* that makes our lives worth living .... In other words, *nos burlanos del opresor* for though they exploit us, we in turn not only survive despite them, but also change their material world and are learning to influence their discourse about the world at large and even about themselves." That is, "we mock the oppressor by tricking/evading the oppressor." This happens by "turning the confinement/spaces to which we are assigned into creative/liberating spaces." To put it another way, she argues, "we are trying not to let the will of the masters (and mistresses) define the tiniest space which initially was not ours but which little by little we turn into our own, partially because masters and mistresses are scared to come into them once we inhabit them."[14] Isasi-Diaz is careful to note that "the mischieviousness of mockery is a most healthy antidote for any sense of 'victimhood' that we might be tempted to embrace."[15]

Merton as Bricoleur

It seems clear that there are points of intersection between this vision of the *bricoleur* and a balanced view of Thomas Merton. While there was never anything artless about Merton's writing, there was a studied and dedicated openness to going to the places where his prayer, his reading, his correspondence, or the challenges of the day took him. One would be hard pressed to imagine him as the author of a systematic theology. The "voice of the present moment" was too compelling for that.[16] Merton's procedures were his own; his tools were those that were the ones at hand.

At the same time he was comfortable making use of the materials at hand. Those materials ranged from the literature of the world to the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Nothing human was alien to his vision and nothing was beyond the ability to be used to make the point that all creation reflected the presence of the Creator. Merton found in the cultural movements and aspirations of the day, as well as in the rich Catholic imaginative and spiritual tradition, what Marie-Dominique Chenu called *pierre d'attente*, toothing stones that jut out from a wall in order to mesh

with an eventual addition.[17] True *bricoleur* that he was, Merton was able to see the points of intersection between those various cultural and religious traditions and the next steps in the construction of the Christian community. He saw links to other religious traditions at a time when elements of the Catholic community were only beginning to emerge from the great citadel of faith and embrace the "wide country" of "the holy commonwealth of contemplation."[18] Looking at the world from the wide country of the monastery, he could reflect that Gethsemani "taught me how to live. And now I owe everyone else in the world a share in that life. My first duty is to start, for the first time, to live as a member of a human race which is no more (and no less) ridiculous than I am myself."[19]

The "no place" of the monastery is "the burning promised land," "the place of silence," and "the place of wrestling with an angel." It is the place where God has given him "roots in eternity."[20] But Merton was never to find one true "abiding place."[21] A little more than decade after describing Gethsemani as "the four walls of my new freedom" he was to say: "My monastery is not a home. It is not a place where I am rooted and established in the earth."[22] William Shannon wisely remarks that "Gethsemani roots him, not where Gethsemani is, namely in this earth, but elsewhere, that is to say, in eternity. Gethsemani points to home, but is not itself 'Home.'"[23]

The unforeseen quality of his searching and Merton's particular kind of *bricolage* can be attested to by the dramatic change and growth which he experienced throughout all his spiritual seeking. This was never clearer than in the arc of his life in Gethsemani. Much that happened in his monastic life from 1941 to 1958 was chronicled and the source of profound edification for a generation of his readers. A lesser literary artist, a different kind of spiritual person, would have been content to rest in the citadel that was, for a time, his spiritual home. His experience at "Fourth and Walnut" led him through the looking glass and challenged him to articulate an astonishing awareness of his solidarity with all the rest of humanity. It was, he said, "like waking from a dream of separateness."[24] Claude Levi-Straus argued that *bricolage* can achieve brilliant unforeseen results. Merton seems bowled over, thunderstruck, by the unsought and unforeseen "liberation," "relief," and "joy" in his realization that "I *am* like other men," a part of the human race "in which God Himself became incarnate." He is overwhelmed

by the startling awareness that "[t]here is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun."[25]

The reflections of Michel DeCerteau serve to cast much of Merton's writings in a particularly pointed slant of light. DeCerteau was interested in the activities of the powerless. He focused on the ways that the powerless made creative use of the surrounding culture. Drawing on his research he marked a distinction between *strategies,* the works of social or institutional domains in which their operations were carried out, and *tactics,* the "art of the weak" who live in foreign territory.[26] Tactics are employed by those without power in a space not really their own. They inhabit "nowhere" places or non-places which take on tremendous strategic value.

Compare this vision with Merton's description of life as a monk. The life of a monk, he says, "appears to be completely useless."[27] But he reminds us that the contemporary world calls us to and rewards the useful, but that this is largely "the usefulness of suckers."[28] Merton defies the conventional wisdom and refuses to define people by their functions. For the monk, "'Being' always takes precedence over 'doing' and 'having.'"[29] He notes the unique palace of nowhere which the monk inhabits, arguing that the monk is one "who at once loves the world yet stands apart from it with a critical objectivity which refuses to become involved in its transient fashions and its more manifest absurdities."[30]

The monk's "nowhere place" makes him "a marginal person ... essentially outside of all establishments."[31] This position, outside of contemporary technological society and its tendencies to dehumanize, places him in a unique spot to take advantage of the "cross cuts, cracks, and lucky hits" which emerge and to offer them as a vision of authentic humanity rooted in the image of God. This is the point he makes in his final talk in Bangkok when he defines a monk as "essentially someone who takes up a critical attitude toward the world and its structures... somebody who says, in one way or another, that the claims of the world are fraudulent."[32] His reaction to the challenges of technological society was not to adopt a piecemeal approach. Rather it was to argue for *metanoia,* a total personal transformation. This vision was possible for Merton precisely because he adopted a stance in this "no place." He hints at radical nature of this vantage point in a letter written to Daniel Berrigan dated October 10, 1967:

> In my opinion the job of the Christian is to try to give an example of sanity, independence, human integrity, good sense,

> as well as Christian love and wisdom, against all establishments and all mass movements and all current fashions which are merely mindless and hysterical .... The most popular and exciting thing at the moment is not necessarily the best choice."[33]

Gethsemani was such a "nowhere place" for Merton. He described it in a talk to the novices at Gethsemani as a "total non-entity," "a null and void nothing place."[34] While he jokingly agreed with one novice who referred to the monastery's main building as looking "like a barrel factory," he quickly qualified that remark by noting that "God knows how or why, but prayer here has been valid."[35] It became clear that this "nothing place," when seen through the eyes of a contemplative poet open to the grace of God, was indeed consequential and spoke of things beyond itself where time and timelessness intersect.[36]

In the preface to the Japanese edition of *The Seven Storey Mountain* Merton concludes that it is his task to "take my true part in all the struggles and sufferings of the world... to make my entire life a rejection of, a protest against the crimes and injustices of war and political tyranny which threaten to destroy the whole race of man and the world with him."[37]

The paradox for the *bricoleur*, as it was for Merton as well, is that this "no place" becomes the very place from which he or she can critique and undermine the normative culture, language, and meaning that is taken for granted when embedded in a particular cultural space.[38] This happens by affirming solidarity and communion with others through a compassionate identification with their brokenness. Merton maintains that "[t]he monastic life today stands over against the world with a mission to affirm not only the message of salvation but also those most basic human values which the world needs most desperately to regain: personal integrity, inner peace, authenticity, identity, inner depth, spiritual joy, the capacity to love, the capacity to enjoy God's creation and give thanks."[39]

Merton makes this point more explicitly in his discussions of non-violence. The roots of all violence, he argues, are to be found in the denial of our common human condition. The distorted vision of humanity which results leads us to project our own unadmitted evil onto the other.[40] Peacemakers, observing the world from their "no place," are able to see the common humanity which

transcends these divisions: "Christian non-violence is not built on a presupposed division, but on the basic unity of man." Ultimately, Merton argues, Christian nonviolence is rooted in his firm belief in "the total solidarity of all."[41]

Merton frequently associates himself with the *bricoleur* who acts as a "sign of contradiction" to a society that calculates human worth in terms of achievement and accomplishment. The hermit, he argues, exists, "outside all our projects, plans, assemblies, movements."[42] He is a reminder that God's ways and the world's ways are not the same or even compatible, reminding the followers of Christ that they are pilgrims with "no abiding place" on this earth.[43]

Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz approaches the role of the *bricoleur* in a slightly different way. She notes the benefits brought by the "mischievous use of mockery" in helping the bricoleur to avoid any sense of victimhood.[44] The most notable and charming example of this appears in Merton's poetry dealing with the mechanization of Gethsemani life. In his poem "CHEE$E" he remarks, "Poems are nought but warmed-up breeze, / *Dollars* are made by Trappist Cheese."[45] His anti-poem to his friend Robert Lax called "A Practical Program for Monks" provides an example that is a little less comic and substantially more satiric: "Each one's own business shall be his most important affair, and provide his own remedies" and "The monastery, being owner of a communal rowboat, is the antechamber of heaven. / Surely that ought to be enough."[46] Even here in the monastery Merton projects a stance of "no place" to look critically at the life of the Gethsemani community.

Merton moves beyond humor and satire and makes use of irony to accomplish the ends to which Isasi-Diaz points. His prose poem on the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, *Original Child Bomb*, appears to be, in large part, a detailed factual description of the events culminating in the use of the bomb. At many turns, however, Merton provides ironic commentary on the events he describes. For example, he notes that Harry Truman "knew a lot less about the war than many people did."[47] The decision to drop the bomb as "a demonstration of the bomb on a civil and military target"[48] suggests that this "demonstration is a sanitized, bureaucratic description of the enormous destructive capabilities of the bomb."[49] "America's friendly ally," the Soviet Union, would not be told about the creation of the bomb because they are "now friendly enough."[50] Hiroshima is "Lucky" because it had

escaped bombing up until this time.[51] The list goes on and on, and the focus of the irony gathers steam and centers around two key sets of images. The first cluster of images identify the bomb with a child: "'Little Boy' was . . . tucked away" and "the Original Child that was now born," for example. The second focuses on images that have religious associations such as "Trinity," "an atmosphere of devotion" surrounding the event and the "act of faith" of the observers.[52] The topic lends itself to a stance that is critical and that encourages a different interpretation when looking at humanity from the standpoint of the image of God.

Robert Nugent has highlighted Thomas Merton's difficulty with the Trappist censors concerning his writings on war and peace and the challenge this offered to obedience.[53] Writing to W.H. Ferry in December, 1961 he acknowledged that he was having "a bit of censor trouble" which he hoped to avoid by having his materials circulated along with Ferry's writings. This he did not believe was a violation of censorship rules.[54] Writing to James Laughlin, Merton denied that he was engaging in some "wild subversive activity," arguing that circulating his writings in this way would not be wrong unless it had been expressly forbidden.[55] In response to Dom Gabriel Sortais's letter of May 26, 1962 ordering him "to abstain from writing in any way whatsoever about the subject of nuclear war," Merton missed no opportunity to forward copies of the Cold War Letters to Jim Forest, Daniel Berrigan, Dorothy Day and others.[56] At about the same time Merton remarked in his journal that "If I am to write an article asked for by the *Nation* it must be super-cagey, censored by the Cardinal in N.Y (or some other ordinary acceptable to the Canons)."[57] Such caginess is the hallmark of the practiced and intentional *bricoleur*. He carefully and relatively skillfully operated from this "nowhere place" and continued to distribute his writings in a way which appears to be almost classic *bricolage*.

Articulation from No Place

Thomas Merton took up the challenge of *bricolage*, implicit in the gospel, through his willingness to enter into a searing search for the real in his writings and his life. That search reflects a deep sense of faith in the image of God central to humanity and in Christ the great physician who came to heal all who are wounded. It leads to a kind of personal humility that causes him to resist turning himself into any sort of icon and that is quick to notice any kind of

institutional idolatry. It is precisely the golden calf that is the prime and easy target for the *bricoleur*.

It is this approach which DeCerteau recommends as the logical response of the Christian community to the challenges of *bricolage*. Rather than resist the challenges of tactical *bricolage*, he argues that our religious tradition is called to mediate these "other desires." He uses the term "articulation" to describe this sort of Christian engagement with culture. Here he does not mean "articulation" as either translation or re-expression. Instead he uses it to mean, "to join flexibly" as in "articulated" buses or sculptures. The articulation or "writing" of and within the tradition involves "insinuating" the desires and operations of Christianity into our contemporary institutions, practices, and systems of knowledge.[58]

It is precisely this critical stance that leads Merton, as *bricoleur*, to advocate for a truly "transcultural awareness." He is quick to say that a self-critical attitude toward one's own culture, one of the true strengths of Western culture, is an essential stance to take.[59]

This provides the opening, similar to the one DeCerteau describes, to the divine truly present in the other. This is what Merton means when he says that "We must, then, see the truth in the stranger, and the truth we see must be a newly living truth, not just a projection of a dead conventional idea of our own—a projection of our own self upon the stranger."[60] When this begins to happen, we can start to become aware of a relationship like that which he experienced at Fourth and Walnut that exists between ourselves and every other human being. It is then that we are "fully 'Catholic' in the best sense of the word," he remarks, possessing a vision and an experience "of the one truth shining out in all its various manifestations, some clearer than others, some more definite and more certain than others."[61]

Ultimately, Merton argues, "the path to final integration ... lies ... beyond the dictates and programs of any culture."[62] The Christian is called to live in a "no place" in which "a transcultural integration is eschatological." This will require, in the final analysis, "a disintegration of the social and cultural self, the product of merely human history, and the reintegration of that self in Christ, in salvation history, in the mystery of redemption, in the Pentecostal 'new creation.'"[63] This, too, is the ultimate end of all *bricolage*.

Notes

1. I am indebted for this understanding of "spiritual spaces" to Graham Ward, "Michel DeCerteau's 'Spiritual Spaces,'" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100:2 (Spring, 2001), pp. 501-517.

2. "Letter to Bishop Donald Wuerl," www. Merton.org/Letter/index.asp (accessed 6/23/05) and Deborah Halter, "Whose Orthodoxy is it?" *National Catholic Reporter* (March 11, 2005). For a useful evaluation by a younger Catholic see Michael Herron, "'No Offense, but ...' Thomas Merton and the New Catechism," *National Catholic Reporter* (October 28, 2005), pp. 21a-22a.

3. Aelred Graham, "Thomas Merton: A Modern Man in Reverse," *Atlantic* 191 (January, 1953), pp. 70-74.

4. Mary Jo Weaver, "Conjectures of a Disenchanted Bystander," *Horizons* 30/2 (2003), pp. 291, 285.

5. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), p. 330.

6. Michel DeCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Graham Ward, (ed.), *The Certeau Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); and Vincent Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 155.

7. Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 17.

8. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. xiii.

9. Joseph Murphy, *Santeria: An African Religion in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988). For a similar perspective see Thomas Merton's reflections on cargo cults in *The Geography of Lograire* (New York: New Directions, 1969). Kenelm Burridge raises some interesting questions in this regard in his "Merton, Cargo Cults and *The Geography of Lograire*," in Victor A. Kramer, (ed.), *The Merton Annual*, vol. 17 (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2004), pp. 206-215.

10. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 37-38. Leonard Cohen makes a similar comment in his song "Anthem," "There is a crack, a crack in everything/ That's how the light gets in." I am grateful to Dr. Paul Pearson for reminding me of this verse.

11. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 38, 40.

12. For one example, see the application of this theory to people with autism and other related disorders in Ine Gevers, "Subversive Tactics of Neurologically Diverse Cultures," *Journal of Cognitive Liberties* 2 (Spring/Summer 2000), pp. 43-60.

13. Michel DeCerteau, *The Mystic Fable*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1992).

14. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Burlanda al Opresor: Mocking/Tricking the Oppressor: Dreams and Hopes of Hispanas/Latinas and Mujeristas," *Theological Studies* 65 (June, 2004), p. 346.

15. "Burlanda al Opresor," p. 346.

16. Thomas Merton, "Rain and the Rhinoceros," in *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1964), p. 23.

17. Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Church in Crisis: Pope Benedict's Theological Vision," *Commonweal* 132 (June 3, 2005).

18. Donald Grayston, *Thomas Merton: The Development of a Spiritual Theologian* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1985), p. 177.

19. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1953), pp. 322-23. I am grateful to Michael Herron for pointing me to this remark.

20. *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 345.

21. See Fred Herron, *No Abiding Place: Thomas Merton and the Search for God* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005).

22. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948), p. 772 and Robert E. Daggy, (ed.), *"Honorable Reader": Reflections on My Work* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p. 65.

23. William H. Shannon, *Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), p. 9.

24. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p. 140.

25. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p. 158.

26. *Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 37-38.

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

28. "Rain and the Rhinoceros," p. 22.

29. Thomas Merton, *The Monastic Journey* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1977), p. 44.

30. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), p. 227.

31. Thomas Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1973), p. 305.

32. *Asian Journal*, p. 329. See Paul R. Dekar, "What the Machine Produces and What the Machine Destroys: Thomas Merton on Technology," *The Merton Annual*, vol. 17, pp. 216-34.

33. Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Experience and Social* Concerns, ed., William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), p. 98. For a discussion

of Merton and technology see Paul R. Dekar, "What the Machine Produces and What the Machine Destroys."

34. Thomas Merton, *T.S. Eliot and Prayer* (Creedence Cassette).

35. *T.S. Eliot and Prayer.*

36. Mark Van Doren, "Introduction," in *Selected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. xiii. See also Deborak P. Kehoe, "Early Reflections in a 'Nothing Place': Three Gethsemani Poems," in Victor A. Kramer, (ed.), *The Merton Annual*, vol. 17 (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2004), pp. 61-75.

37. *"Honorable Reader,"* p. 65.

38. *The Mystic Fable.*

39. *Contemplation in a World of Action*, p. 81.

40. See Thomas Merton, *Ishi Means Man: Essays on Native Americans* (Greensboro, NC: Unicorn Press, 1976), pp. 26-27.

41. Thomas Merton, *The Nonviolent Alternative* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), pp. 209, 257.

42. Thomas Merton, *Disputed Questions* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1960), p. 199.

43. See *No Abiding Place: Thomas Merton's Search for God.*

44. "Burlanda al Opresor," p. 346.

45. Thomas Merton, *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977), p. 800.

46. *Collected Poems*, pp. 797-98.

47. Thomas Merton, *Original Child Bomb*, (New York: New Directions, 1962), p. 2.

48. *Original Child Bomb*, p. 5.

49. *Original Child Bomb*, p. 5.

50. *Original Child Bomb*, p. 6.

51. *Original Child Bomb*, p. 7.

52. *Original Child Bomb*, pp. 26, 40, 13, 15.

53. Robert Nugent, S.D.S., "The Silent Monk," *America*, 194 (May 15, 2006), pp. 8-12.

54. *The Hidden Ground of Love*, p. 203.

55. *The Hidden Ground of Love*, p. 204.

56. "The Silent Monk."

57. Victor A. Kramer, (ed.), *Turning Toward the World: The Journals of Thomas Merton*, vol. 4, 1960-1963 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), p. 187.

58. Michel DeCerteau, "The Weakness of Believing: From the Body to Writing, a Christian Transit," in *The Certeau Reader*, pp. 215-243 and "How Is Christianity Thinkable Today?" *Theology Digest*, 17 (Winter, 1971), p. 344. For a reflection on the implications of DeCerteau's vision

see Frederick Bauerschmidt, "The Abrahamic Voyage: Michel deCerteau and Theology," *Modern Theology* 12 (January, 1996), pp. 1-26 and Jeremy Aherne, "The Shattering of Christianity and the Articulation of Belief," *New Blackfriars* 77 (November, 1996), p. 501.

59. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p. 62.
60. *Collected Poems*, p. 385.
61. *Contemplation in a World of Action*, p. 212.
62. *Contemplation in a World of Action*, p. 217.
63. *Contemplation in a World of Action*, p. 216.