

feast day serves as a confirmation for Merton. As an ecclesiologist I am heartened by Merton's recognition in the Preface that his own Catholicism is irreducible to any one culture, time or place. In this way, can we say that Merton had intuited the tensions to come between the Vatican and Latin American contextual theologies?

While a justification for the selection of the essays could have been more clearly articulated, one comes away from reading it with a greater sense of Merton's engagement with and appreciation for the plight of indigenous people and the genius of their spirituality. And while it cannot be helped, one also comes away with mixed feelings that echo Dorothy Day's sentiment for "More, more!"

John Dadosky

HALL, Gary and Detlev Cuntz, eds., *Guard the Human Image for It Is the Image of God: Essays on Thomas Merton* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme, 2019), pp. 135. ISBN 978-3-7365-0260-4 (paper) \$19.60.

In January 2019 the German Benedictine Abbey of Münsterschwarzach hosted a conference as part of the series of ITMS-funded events commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Thomas Merton's death. This was the third such gathering held at the abbey, the most recent previous one in January 2015 marking the centenary of Merton's birth. The proceedings of those earlier meetings were published in German,¹ but this time the decision was made to issue the collection of presentations in both German² and English versions, edited by the German–British team of Detlev Cuntz and Gary Hall, with reciprocal translations provided for each volume, reflecting the fact that the talks themselves were almost equally balanced between the two languages. The title is drawn, in somewhat modified form, from the Prologue to Merton's *Raids on the Unspeakable*, actually part of a quotation (as Malgorzata Poks notes at the beginning of her essay [116-17]) from the Russian religious philosopher Nicolai Berdyaev, which reads: "The practical conclusion derived from this faith . . . turns into an accusation of the age in which I live and into a command to be human in this most inhuman of ages, to guard the image of man for it is the image of God."³

1. Detlev Cuntz and Wunibald Müller, eds., *Kontemplativ Leben: Erinnerungen an Thomas Merton* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme, 2014); Detlev Cuntz and Wunibald Müller, eds., *Gegensätze Vereinen: Beiträge zu Thomas Merton* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme, 2015).

2. Gary Hall and Detlev Cuntz, eds., *Das Menschenbild als Abbild Gottes Bewahren: Beiträge zu Thomas Merton* (Münsterschwarzach: Vier Türme, 2019).

3. Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1966) 6.

The nine presentations are preceded by three brief prefatory notes that provide complementary frames of reference for what is to follow. The co-editors' Foreword (7-8) briefly describes the circumstances of the conference, quotes Merton's journal entry following the assassination of Martin Luther King about 1968 being "a beast of a year,"⁴ and summarizes the events of the meeting as providing contemporary responses to its theme: "With particular attention to his *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* and *Raids on the Unspeakable*, we celebrated Merton's life and work, whilst facing with him some global crises and trends, including re-emerging patterns of nationalism, xenophobia, populism and confrontational rhetoric" (8). Abbot Michael Reepen's "Greeting and Welcome" (10-12) not only quotes at length St. Benedict's chapter 53 on welcoming the guest as Christ, but also the admonitions in the prologue to the Rule to seek peace and pursue it and to listen to God and one another with the ear of the heart, seeing in Merton one who models this quest to breathe the presence of God and so to make God visible in the world today. Paul Pearson's "Greetings from Kentucky" (13) quotes the pertinent passage from *Raids* along with the closing words from *New Seeds of Contemplation* on the "cosmic dance which . . . beats in our very blood"⁵ in extending his good wishes on behalf of the Merton Society and the Merton Center that Merton's "message of hope be enkindled in the hearts and minds" of the participants.

The first essay, Anselm Grün's brief "Attention to Language" (14-20), also serves as a kind of orientation to what is to follow. A prolific author and monk of the host abbey, he praises Merton as "a master of language" (14), citing passages from *New Seeds* that exemplify Merton's willingness to risk rejection while remaining committed to dialogue, one who "wrote in order to let the truth shine" (15). He considers Merton's care with words in the context of three German terms for "speech" (translated here as "Saying – talking – speaking" [15]), as exemplifying "The healing power of Language" (17), countering the all-too-frequent use of words as weapons to wound and divide, and, in the words of Jewish poet Hilde Domin, as "refuge" from the meaningless verbiage that passes as communication, a true "home" (18). Fr. Grün concludes his presentation with the wish that the symposium participants follow Merton's example and "make the effort to speak an honest, pure, and encouraging word . . . to build a house with our language, in which a seeking, fearful, worrying

4. Thomas Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey. Journals, vol. 7: 1967-1968*, ed. Patrick Hart (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998) 78.

5. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961) 297.

humanity finds refuge and feels at home” (20).

Bonnie Thurston’s presentation, “Thomas Merton on the Gifts of a Guilty Bystander” (21-32), considers the implications of the phrase found in the title of one of Merton’s best known and most loved books. Beginning with the “confession” that all of us are “implicated in systemic evil” and “beneficiaries of unjust economic systems” and so share the identity of “guilty bystander” (21), she goes on to reflect on what she calls the two gifts of being a guilty bystander that Merton both taught and exemplified, gifts rooted deeply in the monastic tradition: marginality and hospitality. The first provides the critical distance and detachment that liberates a person from the obsessions and illusions of societal expectations and so allows one to speak the truth fearlessly for the sake of those still oppressed by unjust institutions or by their own self-chosen servitudes. Invoking, like Abbot Reepen, chapter 53 of the Benedictine Rule, Thurston sees hospitality as the gift through which one empties oneself of all that is not God and so makes room, provides a home, for the stranger, the wounded, the lost: “Hospitality of the heart . . . is an important way *God’s* love enters the world” (28). Such attitudes, she concludes, are gifts to be given to others because they are first of all gifts to be received from God, able to be recognized and received only by acknowledging our own guilt and moving to the margins so that Christ can truly be at the center of our own lives and the life of the world.

In “Overcoming Dualism – Unifying Experiences in Thomas Merton’s Dream Life” (33-51), Andreas Ebert begins by identifying Merton as “a wide-awake and enormously productive ‘guilty bystander’” (33), attentive to the divine presence encountered both in the outer world of social struggle and engagement and in the inner world of reflection, silence, and not least, dreams. Drawing both on scripture and on the work of Jung, the author discusses the whole range of Merton’s recorded dreams as evidence and instruments of the process both of inner unification and of integration of the personal, the communal, the cosmic and the divine, beginning with his famous February 1958 dream of Proverb, the archetype of Wisdom who is recognized in his “epiphany” in downtown Louisville a month later, and becomes the subject of his great 1962 prose-poem *Hagia Sophia*. This is the first of the series of dreams of the integration of masculine and feminine, *animus* and *anima*, that also includes his dreams of the “lady Latinist,” reflecting the difficulty in uniting tradition and innovation in the contemporary ecclesial world; the “Chinese princess,” representing his efforts to join the spirituality of East and West; and his “Black mother,” a surrogate parent symbolizing his commitments to racial integration and recognition of the nurturing power of African-American

spirituality. Ebert also considers two dreams from his Asian pilgrimage that illustrate Merton's yearnings for a synthesis of East and West: his return to Gethsemani dressed in a Buddhist robe having both Zen and Tibetan elements, and his dream about Mt. Kanchenjunga, three weeks before his death, when he hears a voice telling him that there is another side to the mountain, the side never photographed, the only side worth seeing. The author concludes his survey with comments on two dreams featuring a divine child: the first is not Merton's own but Karl Barth's about Mozart, which Merton interprets as a reminder that salvation comes not as a result of theological erudition but as an unearned gift that must be accepted with childlike gratitude; the second is his dream of swimming through an enchanted sea to an equally enchanted shore, where he is given "the Eucharistic yet ordinary gift of buttered white bread," presented by a welcoming child to all who "came to stay," a foreshadowing of "the end and completion of Merton's life," in response to an invitation to the feast that "applies to him and to all people" (51). Considering these dreams in the context of the quest for inner and outer integration provides a helpful and convincing context for recognizing common elements. The only dream that is missing, apparently, and that could have reinforced the author's concluding reflections on final integration, is that found in *Conjectures*⁶ about being lost and walking toward the center of a great city, and suddenly coming upon a point overlooking a harbor and realizing that "though I had far to go, I knew where I was," a prospect a number of commentators have associated with a photo taken by Merton shortly before his death.

An appropriate sequel to Ebert's study is the following piece by Gary Hall entitled "Awakening from Barth's Dream" (52-64). The author situates Merton's comments on Karl Barth in their context at the very beginning of *Conjectures*, providing the title for the first of that book's five sections. He goes back to consider Barth's own description of the dream "in a Christmas message of 1955, a response to an invitation to write for a newspaper 'a letter of thanks to Mozart'" (53-54). Barth's frustration that the Catholic Mozart, whose music he loved deeply and played daily before embarking on his own theological work, refused to answer any of Barth's doctrinal questions, "had nothing to say – except what he has already said through music" (54), prompts Merton to hypothesize that "The dream concerns his salvation, and Barth perhaps is striving to admit that he will be saved more by the Mozart in himself than by his theology," more by the "childlike" play (54) Barth himself recognizes in Mozart's

6. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 170-71; subsequent references will be cited as "CGB" parenthetically in the text.

music than the “cerebral and stern” (57) approach Merton seems to associate with Barth’s dogmatic theology. It is this recognition of “the hidden sophianic Mozart in himself, the central wisdom that comes in tune with the divine and cosmic music and is saved by love, yes, even by eros” (54 [CGB 3]) that makes this story a fitting opening for the entire volume. Hall then goes on to reflect on the opening vignette of the book’s central section, “The Night Spirit and the Dawn Air,” in which the other part of his presentation’s title is highlighted, the reawakening of life at dawn in the landscape surrounding the monastery, a kind of return to paradise unnoticed by most people too busy with their usual routines to recognize and respond to the divine call to newness of life. This is complemented by the final entry of this section, in which, at day’s end, Merton on night watch enters the empty novitiate study room and experiences it as filled with the presence of Christ, encountered in the lives of his young charges that he has been privileged to know, “the loveliness of the humanity that God has taken to Himself in love” (62 [CGB 193]), a concrete experience of incarnation that Hall dares to suggest is at least as powerful and meaningful as the more generalized and much better known experience in downtown Louisville. This prepares the way for his closing remarks on the very last entry in the book, in which the Jewish child in a poem of George Oppen echoes and complements the divine child that appeared at its beginning: “Amidst any despair that infants will grow to live a lie like their parents’ generation (or even worse), hope rests in the fact that there is a world which ‘remakes itself at God’s command without consulting us’” (64). On this note Merton ends *Conjectures* and Hall ends his essay, resisting any attempt to provide a neat summation of the book, instead reminding us that “Merton’s words just don’t work like that” (64).

Again providing a smooth transition, Ashley Cocksworth’s presentation, “Why Barth Needs Merton” (65-82), is written by a scholar who first encountered Merton while writing his doctoral dissertation on Barth, and fantasizes about the conversation that might have ensued when these two very different giants of twentieth-century Christianity encountered one another in the heavenly waiting room, having died on the same day. His two principal points are first, that while their approaches are strikingly diverse, both are convinced that authentic theology “must take place in the context of prayer,” and second, “that *Barth needs Merton more than Merton needs Barth*” (69). Challenged by the profound crisis in Protestant theology caused by the upheaval of the First World War, Barth rejected the notion that knowledge of God is primarily cognitive and resituated it as intrinsically relational; in the face of the rise of National Socialism, he went on to recognize an essential dimension of the vocation of the

theologian as developing a language to name and challenge the injustices of a disordered, fallen world. While coming from different starting points, Barth and Merton converge in their understanding of this engaged role of the Christian witness, whether monk or theologian. Where Cocksworth sees Barth in need of Merton's insights is in the area of contemplative silence as an essential openness to the operation of grace. Barth's discomfort with silence is matched by his discomfort with making use of his own experience in his theologizing, exemplified by his unresolved self-contradictions in his personal life which were kept strictly separate from his theological work, whereas Merton's willingness to interrogate himself, his struggles and his failures as well as his experiences of transforming grace, provides his readers with what the author calls "a script, a language, a framework, a way of narrating your feelings. You learn something about yourself by reading Merton. You get many things from Barth but you don't get that." Reflecting on the gap "that separates the theological from the experiential" in Barth, Cocksworth suggests "that Merton's writings could have helped Barth understand himself better and find ways of better levels of integration" (82).

The dual authorship of the next presentation, "'Wisdom Cries the Dawn Deacon' – The Healing Power of the Night Spirit and the Dawn Air" (83-101), is explained by the fact that Detlev Cuntz is adapting texts and images previously used by Paul Pearson at the 2013 ITMS General Meeting for the audience at this symposium. Returning to *Conjectures* and to the opening passage of part 3, this guided meditation uses Merton's photographs and drawings, as well as the text of *Conjectures* and of Merton's poetic adaptation of *The Ox Mountain Parable* of the Confucian sage Meng Tzu, from which the phrase "the night spirit and the dawn air" is taken, to invite the audience into an experience of the goodness of creation, the unrecognized presence of "paradise all around us" (90), along with an awareness of the destructive effects on the inner self and on the outer environment when the renewing spirit is stifled and the natural world is exploited and degraded for the sake of material gain. These and similar passages in Merton are presented as a call to an "experience of the mercy, the compassion, the goodness of God" (91) and to make that experience visible and tangible to others by a willingness "to awaken to the mysterious action of the night spirit and the dawn air in our lives and in our world today. . . . to preserve some element of silence and solitude in our busy lives. . . . to dissent from the general myth dream, the clichés and prejudices by our compassion and our responsibility for the suffering of others" and so to participate in the healing of a broken world (100).

While the Merton–Barth connection had been explored by a few pre-

vious scholars, Kosmas Lars Thielman's "Thomas Merton and Romano Guardini" (102-108) is evidently the first treatment of Merton's links to another major German-speaking Christian thinker, who also died the same year (though not the same day) as Merton, the younger by three decades. Common interests in culture, literature and social and political issues, as well as religion, led Merton to respect and admire Guardini as one of the most astute Catholic writers of his era, but Thielman also notes Guardini's appreciative comments about Merton – tempered somewhat by a concern that he was too prolific, a judgment Merton himself did not dispute. He mentions Merton's enthusiastic journal entries on Guardini's writings about Dostoevsky, Pascal and the Jesuit spiritual writer Jean Pierre de Caussade, the last of which is included in revised form in a lengthy passage in *Conjectures*, where Merton praises Guardini for refusing to apply outdated principles to a radically new situation, calling Christians instead to "a true and heroic freedom" beyond ideology and abstract theory, a commitment to "the naked will of God" that "makes us already obedient to the future we do not yet perceive or understand" (CGB 284-85) – a passage that rather surprisingly Thielman does not quote or refer to directly. Instead he focuses in some detail on the two authors' different evaluations of Rilke and his poetry, noting that in Merton's opinion Guardini was "taking Rilke too seriously in his religious statements" (107), hostile toward the Catholicism he had grown up with. These two Catholic priests who insightfully confronted the major issues of their own time "even today" offer "encouragements to address questions and problems of our time. In no way," Thielman concludes, "are the potentials of either of them exhausted" (108). We might add that this pioneering discussion has not exhausted the potential of its topic either. Perhaps due to the time constraints of his oral presentation, Thielman has considered only Merton's journal references to Guardini; he was probably unaware of Merton's use of Guardini's *Sacred Signs* in his novitiate conferences on *Monastic Observances*⁷ or his citation of *The Conversion of Augustine* in the conferences published as *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism*,⁸ but he also omits the half dozen consistently laudatory mentions of Guardini in the volumes of collected letters.⁹ There is

7. Thomas Merton, *Monastic Observances: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition* 5, ed. Patrick F. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2010) 10, 49-51, citing Romano Guardini, *Sacred Signs*, trans. Grace Branham (St. Louis: Pio Decimo Press, 1956).

8. Thomas Merton, *An Introduction to Christian Mysticism: Initiation into the Monastic Tradition* 3, ed. Patrick F. O'Connell (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2008) 124-25, citing Romano Guardini, *The Conversion of Augustine*, trans. Elinor Briefs (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1960).

9. See Thomas Merton, *The Road to Joy: Letters to New and Old Friends*, ed. Robert E. Daggy (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1989) 96, 349; Thomas Merton, *The School of*

still room for further analysis of this significant influence.

The penultimate piece of the collection, headed “Sermon Offered on January 13, 2019 at the Abbey Church of Münsterschwarzach” (109-15), lacks a catchy title but certainly has a catchy premise – that it is preached by Merton himself, given “ten to twelve minutes of vacation from heaven, to talk to you at this morning” (109), in both languages no less, the only appearance of German in the volume. It is evident that Merton’s fluency in that language has improved considerably over the half-century of his afterlife, or perhaps it was polished by Wunibald Müller, whose name appears above the title. A good deal of the material, like the initial scripture citation from Matthew (Matthäus) 3:16-17, is presented in both languages, but not everything, such as the reference to “Euer Mitbruder Odo Haas” (109), the German abbot present at the 1968 Thailand conference who was one of the first persons present in the room where Merton died. But it is fairly easy to follow the main lines of the homily in either tongue, a reflection on the gospel of Christ’s baptism, vivid evidence of his oneness with and compassion for all humanity, memorably expressed by Merton in the famous Fourth and Walnut passage from *Conjectures* that he quotes in both languages here (112-13), and issues forth in a bilingual challenge: “What happens to you, when you see this inner sun shining in the people whose opinion you dislike? . . . When you see it in people you are afraid of, because of their being different from you or because they have another cultural background? Or what happens to you, when you see this sun shining even in such persons as our present president, who in German you would say is a real ‘Kotzbrocken’” (113) (no translation really needed!). After remarking that he plans to stop by the kitchen to pick up some beer on his way out, he concludes with the exhortation to “keep in touch with the sun, in you and in others” and signs off (in both languages) as “Conjectures of a no-longer-guilty bystander” before ending in Latin (!) with “In Christo Amen” (115). The editors had alerted the reader about this “playful blend” (8) in their Foreword, but it is clear that the humor, as so often with Merton, is in the service of a serious point.

The final presentation, which apparently followed the Mass on the last day of the conference, is Malgorzata Poks’ “‘Lamb Admits Ties to Cain’ – The Human, the Less-Than-Human, and the Kin(g)dom in Thomas Merton’s *The Geography of Lograire*” (116-31), the latest in the Polish scholar’s remarkable series of studies of Merton’s posthumously published, book-length experimental poem. After a quick overview of its

Charity: Letters on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction, ed. Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990) 119, 145; Thomas Merton, *The Courage for Truth: Letters to Writers*, ed. Christine M. Bochen (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1993) 56, 210.

contents, Poks focuses on Merton's transcending of binary divisions in the poem, not only sexual and racial, but even human and non-human. The image of the Lamb in the opening section of the poem not only deconstructs the associations of God with patriarchal domination, but extends the reach of ultimate communal integration both to the outcast fratricide of Genesis: "Lamb admits ties to Cain' enacts an epistemic decolonization of the nonhuman, or the not-quite human, beyond the mirror game of oppositional politics" (126) – and to the entire creation: citing a line of his poetic master Blake about his own place of residence, Merton is "suggesting cross-species kinship," Poks writes: "the name Lambeth, the place of the Lamb, resonates with a promise of justice that extends beyond the human to non-human animals. . . . In God's Kin(g)dom every being will be a node in a dense web of relations" (128-29). Echoing the words of a seventeenth-century "Ranter," Merton affirms the presence of God "in all creatures . . . the life and being of them all" (130) so that heaven is already found wherever love and mercy reign.

Whether by happenstance, divine providence or a particularly well-crafted call for papers, this group of conference presentations has a degree of textual and thematic unity unusual in such collections. There are a few minor infelicities: the numerous instances of one-syllable words being hyphenated over two lines may provoke amusement or annoyance, or both; Thielman's references to "Third Advent 2017" (102) and to "Dostojewski" (105, 106) in his generally competent translation of his own essay may cause some puzzlement; reversing the order of the two final pieces might have been an appropriate alteration for publication, grouping all the formal presentations together and thus giving "Merton" the last word. But gratitude is due to the editors, authors and translators for making this material available and accessible to an English-speaking audience, able to participate at least vicariously in "an occasion marked by companionship and mutuality, conversation and laughter, prayer and feasting" (8), all made possible by a grant well deserved and funds well spent, as ITMS members can confirm for themselves by purchasing a copy, very reasonably priced and readily obtainable through Amazon.

Patrick F. O'Connell

PRAMUK, Christopher, *The Artist Alive: Explorations in Music, Art & Theology* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2019), pp. 324. ISBN 978-1-59982-838-1 (paper) \$29.95.

In August 1969, the musical festival Woodstock happened. Artists performed in front of over 400,000 people, three days of peace and music.