

often in both Latin and English, and the English versions are generally reliable (more than can be said for some of the volumes of the journals, alas) – though the reader needs to be warned that translations from the Vulgate will at times look very odd to anyone consulting a biblical text in any modern translation (see, for example, the reference to Daniel [156]). And it seems ungracious to complain that an index is too extensive, given that most indices these days are very much the opposite; but this one too often gives the impression of simply throwing a set of occurrences and associated individual words which does not do much to help the reader with tracing serious themes (look, for example, at the entry for “Jews”).

As the editing and publication of Merton’s vast oeuvre continues, this series of volumes will have a particular importance as filling out in such detail the intellectual and spiritual monastic culture Merton was trying to instill in his novices. His later life took him in apparently different directions, as we have noted; but we understand nothing of him unless we grasp that this theology, with its patristic and liturgical roots, was something that continued to mold his thinking and praying right up to his last days.

Rowan Williams

MORGAN, Bill, *Thomas Merton, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and the Protection of All Beings* (Temple, PA: Beatdom Books, 2022), pp. 95. ISBN: 978-0-9934099-9-8 (paper) \$11.99.

In *Thomas Merton, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and the Protection of All Beings: The Correspondence*, Bill Morgan skillfully situates the relational thread linking Merton and Ferlinghetti within a wider web of resonant figures, including key members of the Beat Generation. One particularly important connector within this web was the Columbia University poet and professor, Mark Van Doren. Van Doren, Morgan notes, was “instrumental” in the development of both Merton and Ferlinghetti, as well as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, all of whom studied with Van Doren at Columbia (8). Merton’s close friend, the poet Robert Lax, was also a Van Doren Student (10).

Throughout the book, Morgan invites his readers into Merton’s and Ferlinghetti’s relationship, as well as the broader nexus within which this particular connection unfolded. In the process, the power of literature to link people in a kind of subterranean solidarity, akin to the mycelial network connecting trees, shines through these pages. Kerouac, Ginsberg and the Buddhist beat poet and environmentalist Gary Snyder were all close associates of Ferlinghetti’s, and they all read *The Seven Storey Mountain* (11). Ginsberg read it due to Kerouac’s enthusiastic recommendation (11). Snyder read it while hitch-hiking through the U.S., and he eventually

made his way to Gethsemani in order to meet with Merton (11). Though the meeting never materialized, Merton requested that Lax come for a visit with Kerouac (10). At the end of his June 30, 1961 letter to Merton, Ferlinghetti notes that he has sent Merton a copy of Ginsberg's *Kaddish and Other Poems*,<sup>1</sup> which City Lights had recently published (30).

Morgan, a friend of Ferlinghetti for over five decades, is himself steeped in the beat generation, and has authored such books as *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg* (2006)<sup>2</sup> and *The Typewriter Is Holy: The Complete, Uncensored History of the Beat Generation* (2010).<sup>3</sup> Morgan traces the genesis of this thin but rich volume on Merton and Ferlinghetti to conversations with Ferlinghetti prior to his death on February 22, 2021, as well as to the careful accompaniment of Nancy Peters, longtime co-owner of City Lights Books. Morgan recalls, for instance, a conversation he had with Ferlinghetti about Merton at a restaurant in San Francisco. During this exchange, Ferlinghetti recalled Merton spending the night in the City Lights apartment not long before his flight to Asia at the end of his life (1). The time that Merton spent with Ferlinghetti was "one of Lawrence's favorite memories" (90).

Prior to their physical encounter, Merton and Ferlinghetti met through letters and literature. In addition to Van Doren, another key connector within the literary web in which Merton and Ferlinghetti linked was the poet and publisher James Laughlin, founder of New Directions Books (6). Laughlin initially heard about Merton through Mark Van Doren, and he published a number of collections of Merton's poetry, including *Thirty Poems* (1944)<sup>4</sup> and *A Man in the Divided Sea* (1946)<sup>5</sup> (7-8). In 1958, New Directions published Ferlinghetti's *A Coney Island of the Mind*,<sup>6</sup> and Laughlin wrote to Merton offering him a copy (9). In addition to reading each other's work, Merton and Ferlinghetti connected through numerous letters, which Morgan includes throughout the book.

Morgan suggests that Ferlinghetti's poetry, which directly engaged the "great miscarriages of justice of the day" in an "accessible form of poetry," aided Merton in generating in his own poetic responses to national and global crises (10). He argues that Ferlinghetti's poems, such

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1. Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish and Other Poems, 1958-1960* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1961).

2. Bill Morgan, *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: Viking, 2006).

3. Bill Morgan, *The Typewriter Is Holy: The Complete, Uncensored History of the Beat Generation* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

4. Thomas Merton, *Thirty Poems* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1944).

5. Thomas Merton, *A Man in the Divided Sea* (New York: New Directions, 1946).

6. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind* (New York: New Directions, 1958).

as “Tentative Description of a Dinner to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower” (1958) “must have had some effect on Merton,” as by the late 1950s, Merton became similarly outspoken on comparable themes and in a similar style through his own poetry (10). For instance, we can find aesthetic and political resonances with Ferlinghetti’s work in a number of Merton’s poems, such as “Chant to Be Used in Processions around a Site with Furnaces” (1961)<sup>7</sup> and *Original Child Bomb: Points for Meditation to Be Scratched on the Walls of a Cave* (1962) (CP 291-302). Merton sent both of these poems to Ferlinghetti.

Throughout the book, Morgan provides his readers with a vital window into the complexities of publishing, complexities which were significantly deepened due to the forcefield of censorship surrounding Merton’s literary output. Following a conversation stretching across numerous letters and involving the likes of Robert Lax, Dorothy Day and the *Catholic Worker* and Trappist censors, Ferlinghetti eventually published “Chant” in a recently conceived literary magazine called *Journal for the Protection of All Beings*. Morgan includes transcripts of the relevant letters between Merton and Ferlinghetti as well as both “Chant” (35-38) and *Original Child Bomb* (16-24). He also includes two of Ferlinghetti’s writings, the essay “Picturesque Haiti” (66-72) and the poem “A Buddha in the Woodpile” (90-91).

In 1968, the last year of his life, Merton began to publish his own literary magazine, *Monks Pond*,<sup>8</sup> which featured the work of Gary Snyder, Jack Kerouac, and Ferlinghetti himself (see 78, 84). In the middle of May 1968, Merton stayed in the spare room of City Lights in between his visits to Our Lady of the Redwoods Abbey in Whitethorn, CA and Christ of the Desert in Abiquiu, NM (79). Ferlinghetti had lived in that very apartment for years, and Ginsberg stayed there occasionally (80). Through his presence at City Lights, Merton came to physically inhabit a vital hub of the literary network that he had previously connected with through letters and publications. Morgan includes photographs taken by Merton during this trip, including a picture of San Francisco taken from Ferlinghetti’s window, as well as a picture of Ferlinghetti’s typewriter and desk (81).

At the end of the book, Morgan reprints Ferlinghetti’s “A Buddha in

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7. Thomas Merton, *Emblems of a Season of Fury* (New York: New Directions, 1963) 43-47; Thomas Merton, *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1977) 345-49 (subsequent references will be cited as “CP” parenthetically in the text).

8. Thomas Merton, *Monks Pond: Thomas Merton’s Little Magazine*, with an Introduction by Robert E. Daggy and an Afterword by Patrick Hart, OCSO (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1989).

the Woodpile” (1993), a poem written about the Waco siege. In this poem, Ferlinghetti includes Merton in a litany of “people who might have been able to stop the slaughter that day” (90). Morgan notes that, despite their apparent differences, both Merton and Ferlinghetti sought “purity of heart and clarity of vision. Both tried to find an authentic way of existing in the modern world and each lived a life filled with paradoxes” (91).

Throughout the book, Morgan paints a powerful portrait of the generative relationship between Merton and Ferlinghetti. He shows us that they did not link as mere individuals, but as relational persons inextricable from a wider ecosystem of literary seekers who chased authenticity, embraced paradox and pursued the beatific life.

Jim Robinson

SWEENEY, Jon M., ed., with photographs by Paul Quenon, OCSO, *Awake and Alive: Thomas Merton According to His Novices* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2022), pp. 144. ISBN 978-1-62698-491-2 (cloth) \$22.00.

Teachers often wonder what their students are really learning from their instruction. Learning is a complex process. Learning takes time, and so it is often the case that a student recalls a particular piece of instruction in a different setting at a later date; learning is relational, and so a student’s recollection may center less on content details and more on other factors like a teacher’s personality, comportment or approach; learning occurs situationally, and so it attends to a student’s affect, values and social location. On occasion, a teacher leaves an enduring impact on a student.

This was the case for several of Thomas Merton’s students who share their stories in *Awake and Alive*. Over the course of his time at the Abbey of Gethsemani, Merton served as Master of Scholastics (1951-55) and Master of Novices (1955-65). The publication of audio recordings of Merton’s conferences (along with the twelve published volumes of his teaching notes) attests to the caliber of the content and delivery of his instruction; his journals and letters bear evidence of his own reflection on pedagogy. *Awake and Alive* complements the study of Merton as pedagogue with the perspectives of six monks who studied under Merton in either their novitiate or scholastic formation. The book draws from individual interviews – some conducted by Victor Kramer and others by George A. Kilcourse, Jr. – previously published in *The Merton Annual*. These students’ reflections on Merton as a teacher demonstrate his impact at a critical period not only in the monastery itself, but more specifically, in their monastic formation.

Editor Jon M. Sweeney opens this book with a brief, useful introduction regarding its purpose and the selection criteria for the authors