

and Von Balthasar himself writes in his introduction, "Often it is not clear whether Merton's vision ascends from the natural to the supernatural, or descends from the supernatural to the natural, and one realizes that such a distinction in poetry of this sort is completely unimportant. The whole miracle of the life of nature striving always more and more insistently towards unequivocal expression is ultimately grounded in the world's incarnation of the eternal life of the Trinity." It would be hardly surprising if in a small anthology the balance of these two movements was not always fully sustained.

As you see, I have found reviewing this small book of hours more difficult than I had expected. You may find yourself immediately drawn towards it, but it is possible that you too may feel some hesitation. In either case however, I think you would find you gain much by exploring it for yourself.

Donald Allchin is President of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

Pax Intransitibus: A Meditation on the Poetry of Thomas Merton.

Frederick Smock

Frankfort, KY: Broadstone Books, 2007

ISBN 0972114467 (hbk) 91 pages

U.S. \$25

In this short but beautifully produced little volume Frederick Smock, Poet in Residence at Bellarmine University in Louisville, presents one of the few books about Merton's poetry specifically written

by a fellow poet. Smock has numerous books to his name, including four volumes of poetry – *Gardencourt*, *The Good Life*, *Guest House* and *Sonnets* – and from his own background in poetry he captures insights into Merton overlooked in many other works and then conveys those insights in delightful prose with a lilt of poetry.

Pax Intransitibus is a gentle introduction to Merton's poetry, not an academic tome. Smock opens up the major themes of Merton's poetry from his earliest poems right up to poems written in the final year of his life. Although gentle Smock does not avoid tackling the numerous issues Merton raises through his poetry, in particular, as the title of this book suggests, Merton's poetry dealing with war and peace, the nuclear arms race, racism, the media and technology. Many readers of Merton's poetry will be familiar with the categories in his poetry pointed out by George Woodcock ("poetry of the choir" and "poetry of the desert") or George Kilcourse ("poetry of the forest" and "poetry of paradise") and yet social issues are ever present throughout the whole extent of Merton's poetic output. Maybe a new category such as "poetry of engagement" could be added to the others? One just has to think of his reflections about Harlem in "Aubade – Harlem"; his attitude to war evident in poems written before his entry into the monastery and especially in the poem written on hearing of the death of his brother, John Paul, "For My Brother: Reported Missing in Action, 1943"; and in such poems as "Hymn of Not Much Praise for New York City" which begin questioning the real and unreal city. These are all themes which would continue throughout his

poetry up to the anti-poetry of his final years, uncomfortable poetry, yet poetry Merton frequently regarded as his best.

In the spirit of Thomas Merton Smock takes Merton's thought and applies it to our present day, thought that is as pertinent now as it was at the time Merton wrote it. For example he quotes a letter Merton wrote during the Vietnam War to a Muslim friend in Pakistan, Abdul Aziz, saying "we live in troubled and sad times, and we must pray the infinite and merciful Lord to bear patiently with the sins of this world, which are very great. We must humble our hearts in silence and poverty of spirit and listen to His commands which come from the depths of His love, and work that men's hearts may be converted to the ways of love and justice, not of blood, murder, lust and greed. I am afraid that the big powerful countries are a very bad example to the rest of the world in this respect" (72). Words, as Smock points out, equally applicable to the present war in Iraq.

This volume includes a wonderful mixture of anecdotes and personal reminiscences. Many of these reminiscences are rooted in the author's experience of growing up in Louisville and he uses them to bring to life various aspects of Merton's life and thought. For example, I'd always been rather sceptical of Merton's references to hearing the guns of Fort Knox (almost forty miles away) at his Gethsemani hermitage and assumed it was poetic license. But as a child Smock recalls lying awake listening to "the soft thuddings of a distant something that I barely registered, and certainly could not identify" (13), noises he would himself later identify as the guns of Fort Knox, over fifty miles away from Louisville.

In *Pax Intranitibus* Frederick Smock demonstrates a broad familiarity and ease with the full range of Merton's poetry, much of his other work and a wide variety of other writers and thinkers, many important figures in Merton's work like Milosz and Blake. This small book would be a valuable addition to any Merton library.

Paul M. Pearson is Director of the Thomas Merton Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

Dorothy Day: Portraits By Those Who Knew Her

Rosalie Riegle
Orbis Books,
Maryknoll, New York, 2003
ISBN 1570756643 (pbk) 212 pages
U.K. £9.99/Cdn \$24.95

From Union Square to Rome

Dorothy Day
Orbis Books,
Maryknoll, New York, 2006
ISBN 1570756678 (pbk) 177 pages
U.K. £8.99/Cdn \$19.95

When I was a university student in Montreal in the late 1950s, I became attached to a house of hospitality, as it was called, in a very old and poor section of the city. The man who ran the house, which provided food for the hungry and shelter for the homeless, was an Englishman of Irish background named Anthony (Tony) Walsh. He had been inspired by Dorothy Day, a person many consider to have been the most significant American Catholic of the twentieth century. Tony Walsh, incidentally was one of the select