

Hearkening to the Silent Word

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*Where shall the Word be found, where will the Word
Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence.*
T. S. Eliot¹

Introduction

Merton's fascination for language and writing can be traced back to his childhood. In his autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, he relates how, at school in France aged 11, he and his friends 'were all furiously writing novels', and that 'I was engaged in a great adventure story.'² While a student at Oakham School (1929-1932), he becomes the editor of *The Oakhamian*, the school journal in which he includes several of his own compositions. Following his father's death and his academic failure at Cambridge University, he returns back to North America to live with his grandparents in Douglaston (New York) and enrolls as an undergraduate at Columbia University studying English Literature. There he writes articles for *The Spectator*, *The Columbian Review* and *The Jester*, also becoming the editor of *The Columbia Yearbook*, being chosen as the best writer of the Senior Class. In 1939 he obtains his master's degree with a thesis entitled *Nature and Art in William Blake: an Essay in Interpretation*. Subsequently he teaches English at St Bonaventure University where he continues to publish journal articles and to compose poetry.

His admission to a monastery where the monks had to communicate by means of sign language does not diminish his natural instinct as a writer and poet. The four volumes of poems that precede the publication of his autobiography indicate that Gethsemani and its monastic milieu becomes for Merton a source of inspiration. *Early Poems* (1940-1942),³ *Thirty Poems* (1944), *A Man in the Divided Sea* (1946) and *Figures for an*

Apocalypse (1948) attest to the fact that his poetic instinct is flourishing, nourished by the freedom to write about what he really loves: 'the logic of the poet – that is the logic of language or the experience itself – develops the way a living organism grows: it spreads out towards what it loves, and it is heliotropic, like a plant.'⁴

Nevertheless, Merton's passion for language, his poetic fervour and his literary education at Columbia University soon contradicts his silent search for God, influenced by the apophatic tradition of Christian mysticism which encourages the monk to transcend all kinds of sensations, ideas, images, metaphors or aspiration, as described by what mystics and modern philosophers of language have described as the *via negativa*.⁵ By the time he publishes *The Seven Storey Mountain* in 1948, he is a very different person from that prolific and exuberant young poet and writer who had entered the monastery seven years earlier, writing in the book's epilogue that 'this shadow, this double, this writer, who had followed me into the cloister ... bars my way to liberty.' Furthermore he feels that his superiors are on the side of 'this double', who have 'got the idea that I ought to be put to work translating things, writing things.'⁶

Before becoming a monk, Merton had already started confronting his literary identity. In a letter to Catherine de Hueck Doherty, he openly confesses his doubts regarding his writing vocation, and she answers him with very moving and almost prophetic words: 'Tom, oh, Tom you will become so very small that your writing will be like fire, and sparks of the Holy Ghost lightening little torches everywhere to illuminate our terrific modern darkness.'⁷ Fortunately for us, he was never able to stop writing, and words would fly out of his manual typewriter at which he sat, in the words of Michael Mott, 'pecking away with one or two fingers. He must have been like a mad woodpecker.'⁸ Not only his friends but also his Abbot encourage him to continue publishing; and yet he cannot easily rid himself of the idea that his literary vocation will be a true obstacle to his progress on the monastic journey. He even suffers a deep psychological crisis. A few years later he reflects on this turbulent period in his journal *The Sign of Jonas* (1953): 'An author in a Trappist monastery is like a duck in a chicken coop. And he would give anything in the world to be a chicken instead of a duck.'⁹

Spiritual Yearnings vs Creative Needs

It is in the journal extracts that Merton selected to be included in *Jonas* where we can clearly observe the latent dilemma between the monk's spiritual yearnings and the writer's creative needs, between the priest's

longing for humility and the author's efforts to be admired, what Merton called 'the dialectic between silence and utterance'.¹⁰ Trapped in the whirlwind of this dialectic, he ceases to write poetry. In the epigraph to what he plans to be his final book of poems, *The Tears of the Blind Lions* (1949), he quotes words of Léon Bloy which seem to be his farewell to lyrics: 'When those who love God try to talk about Him, their words are blind lions looking for springs in the desert.'¹¹ Most of the compositions included in this volume and also in *Figures of an Apocalypse* are the manifestation of the author's deep mistrust of language rather than mere lyrical musings on prayer, solitude or the religious life. Although one of the outcomes of his solitude was an outburst of poems 'boiling up out of the cold forest', Merton could not but see them as a hindrance for the experience of a silence that speaks 'louder than a cyclone',¹² constantly reminding him of the urgency to give up art on behalf of contemplation. As he writes in 'The Quickening of St. John the Baptist', 'You need no eloquence, wild bairn / exalting in your hermitage.'¹³ The poet keeps quiet but continues writing prose works as if they were a kind of penance.

In *Bread in the Wilderness*, also published in 1953, he continues reflecting on art, literature and poetry: 'The desire for contemplation has nothing essential to do with art or with the aesthetic sense. It cannot be satisfied by poetry, any more than it can by philosophy, or music, or ceremonies, or biblical speculation.'¹⁴ Previously, in 1947, Merton had written in the Catholic journal *Commonweal*, that poetry is an obstacle to the path of contemplation and that it should be sacrificed in favour of a knowledge derived from pure grace:

Poetry can, indeed, help to bring us rapidly through that part of the journey to contemplation that is called active: but when we are entering the realm of true contemplation, where eternal happiness begins, it may turn around and bar our way. ... In such an event, there is only one course for the poet to take, for his own individual sanctification, the *ruthless and complete sacrifice of his art*.¹⁵

This conflict would gradually disappear as Merton learns to live 'in the belly of a paradox',¹⁶ accepting his poetic vocation as a sort of divine predestination.¹⁷ In a fragment entitled 'The Angel' which belongs to his verse drama 'The Tower of Babel' we find a mature Merton who has accepted his mission as a poet-prophet sent to the world to incarnate the

Word of God in the midst of his own most vivid contradictions:

How will the fields praise God if you do not lend them your tongue? Who will ever set down the witness of the deep rivers, the testimony that the mountains bear, of God's revelations, if you do not resolve their language into music with your own pen which God has placed in your hand? And if you speak of words that live by love, will you condemn yourself to silence by living without love? Hell's silence is the pandemonium of despair, but heaven's everlasting freedom is found where men and angels sing forever in God's own public language.¹⁸

Engaging with the World

Almost a decade later, in 1957, Merton begins to write and publish poems again. On the one hand, his poetry will be devoted to the symbolic celebration of the beauty found in Creation. On the other, this poetry becomes 'antipoetry' when he no longer turns his back on the world and starts censuring all types of alienated and alienating discourses.¹⁹ The poems written after 1957 show a considerable reorienting of the poet's interests towards social criticism, and protest against the dehumanizing and self-destructive forces that pervade mass-culture. Both his poetic and prose works now reveal a man who has gone beyond his personal crisis and has understood his responsibility as a monk-writer situated on the margins of American society in order to question its mystifications and the artificial dreams implicit in its cult to success. With great courage, he adopts the compromise of an *artiste engagé* against the prevailing inhumanity and injustice of his time.

Merton was convinced that an authentic political revolution should start both by questioning the language of oppression and mass media manipulation and by recovering the language of poetry through an awakening of 'the paradise ear'.²⁰ Merton saw the crisis of language 'as both a symptom and an expression, the cause and the effect, of a mind-frame ever prone to war.'²¹ In one of his poems from the early 1940s, 'The Tower of Babel (The Political Speech)', he harshly commentates upon the secularization of words in an antipoetic world where language has lost its metaphorical value and its capacity for meaning, thus becoming an often hidden, yet most incisive, instrument of killing and destruction:

Now the function of the word is:
 To designate first the machine,
 Then what the machine produces
 Then what the machine destroys.
 Words show us these things not only in order to mean
 them
 But in order to provoke them
 And to incorporate us in their forward movement:
 Doing, making, destroy or rather
 Being done, being made, being destroyed.

.
 Thus, words have no essential meaning.²²

Throughout his literary work, Merton keeps referring to the degradation and desacralization of words and symbols, and their substitution by a discourse of signs and numbers whose function is no other than identifying facts and communicating information. For Merton it is the language of 'double talk, tautology, ambiguous cliché, self-righteous and doctrinaire pomposity, and pseudoscientific jargon that mask a total callousness and moral insensitivity, indeed a basic contempt for man', language that he criticizes and renders grotesquely in one of his last volumes of poetry, *Cables to the Ace* (1968).²³ In it he uses acute sardonic overtones to express his discontent: 'The saying says itself all around us. No one need attend. Listening is obsolete. So is silence. Each one travels alone in a small blue capsule of indignation.'²⁴

Fully aware of the predominance of a language uprooted from its ground of silence, Merton summons artists and poets to restore the spiritual and creative wisdom of symbols and to deny any kind of complicity with contemporary forms of 'newspeak'. He considers human creativity as a sharing with one another in 'the creative work of living in the world, ... a prolongation of the creative work of God';²⁵ and he sees in the task of the poet a profoundly religious meaning: the world's redemption and recreation. In *The New Man* he continues reflecting on the gift of the Word:

God initiates Adam into the very mystery of creative action.
 But how? Not by doing violence to his human nature,
 intelligence and freedom and using him as an agent in
 drawing something out nothing. On the contrary, Adam's
 function is to *look* at creation, recognize it, and thus give it a

new and spiritual existence within himself. He imitates and reproduces the creative action of God first of all by repeating, within the silence of his own intelligence, the creative word by which God made each living thing.²⁶

Creation as an Epiphany of the Sacred

Merton compares the poet with a new Adam who baptizes things for the first time, who recovers 'the word beyond time' which Aristotle spoke about in his *Poetics*:²⁷ a naming which arises from the action of *contemplare*, and points to a *templum* that sets up new horizons of reflection and experience. In Merton's poem 'Stranger', the poet's soul, as a witness and an interpreter of the flights of the Spirit, is identified with a bird that recreates the world in its everlasting flux:

When no one listens
 To the quiet trees
 When no one notices
 The sun in the pool

When no one feels
 The first drop of rain
 Or sees the last star

.
 One bird sits still
 Watching the work of God:
 One turning leaf,
 Two falling blossoms,
 Ten circles upon the pond.²⁸

In these beautifully rendered lines, the poet approaches the mystery of Creation as an epiphany of the Sacred. Made in the image and likeness of God, he attempts to enlighten this mystery by means of his imagination. His contemplative gaze inaugurates the world at every moment, and ordinary life acquires a translucent dimension. Attention is focused on the simplest things, which in their multiplicity and uniqueness are, at the same time, one and equally sublime.²⁹ For Merton, then, true poetry always implies a new beginning, a *poiesis* whereby 'the language of everyday becomes charged with expectations' and, as when we talk to a child, we can 'participate in the discovery of language', and 'say words for the first time, thus recognizing their immensity'.³⁰ Underlying his comments on the poetry of Louis Zukofsky one can sense Merton's strong

intuition that poetic creation provides us with more life than life itself, and also that life and love, although given, are not a *factum* but a *faciendum*. Hence, the permanent need to recreate them.

In poetry, the world gets ever-new opportunities 'through the innocence, the teaching, the good faith, the honest senses of the workman poet'.³¹ Innocence is a key concept for understanding Merton's theory of poetry. Only in the void and the transparency achieved through a process of unlearning and deep introspection can reality be shown to us as it really is: 'It is the renunciation of our false self, the emptying of self in the likeness of Christ, that brings us to the threshold of that true creativity in which God himself, the creator, works in and through us.'³²

Consequently, in Merton's poetic universe, solitude and silence are perceived as a *sine qua non* condition to become receptacles of the divine Word.³³ In his poem 'Song: If you seek . . .' he writes:

If you seek a heavenly light
 I, Solitude, am your professor!

 I go before you into emptiness,
 Raise strange suns for your new
 mornings,
 Opening the windows
 Of your innermost apartment.

 Follow my ways and I will lead you
 To golden-haired suns,
 Logos and music, blameless joys,
 Innocent of questions
 And beyond answers:
 For I, Solitude, am thine own self:
 I, Nothingness, am thy All.
 I, Silence, am thy Amen!³⁴

The relevance of silence in a civilization where 'seeing' is more important than 'listening' is underlined in other compositions: 'Be still/ listen to the stones of the wall./ Be silent, they try/ to speak your/ name,' he writes in the poem 'In Silence'.³⁵ The poet encourages us to the hearkening of the silent Word, the poetic-prophetic Word, the Word that was 'in the beginning', the Word that spoke on the Mountain and that was given in the desert. It is in silence – a *kenosis* or emptiness of the self – that this Word, which is Light and Fire, can be revealed to us:

... The whole
 World is secretly on fire. The stones
 Burn, even the stones
 They burn me. How can a man be still or
 Listen to all things burning? How can he dare
 To sit with them when
 All their silence
 Is on fire?³⁶

Influenced by Heraclitus' meditations on language, Merton realizes that this *Lógos*, this fire, is shared by all.³⁷ As Christopher Nugent has pointed out, it is 'a fire convertible to all things and to which all things are convertible.'³⁸ It burns everywhere, questioning the false distinction between subject and object, and awakening in us a symbolic consciousness which points to the very heart of being, to the 'inscape' of things. Moreover, it allows us to participate in the mystery of love, redemption, contemplative truth, and communion with the radical Otherness:

Wind and a bobwhite
 And the afternoon sun.

 By ceasing to question the sun
 I have become light,

 Bird and wind.

 My leaves sing.

 I am earth, earth

 All these lighted things
 Grow from my heart.³⁹

A Unifying Vision of Reality

Throughout his whole poetic corpus, Merton seems to have reached a unifying vision of reality, in which there is no dichotomy between 'I' and the outer world.⁴⁰ This realm of original unity and brotherhood is the 'nowhere' and 'everywhere' from which Merton seems to have written his final, longest and most complex poem, *The Geography of Lograire*. He had devoted all his life to the search, study and we could even say 'translation' of a radical new language, a sort of 'xenopoetics' (or poetry

of 'the stranger'), and a Christ-filled grammar⁴¹ that challenges our mind-frame, holding up for us the mirror of our own alienation while pointing to a cartography of silence, a landscape of redemption where, like wild geese, words may announce '[our] place in the family of things'.⁴² Moreover, he saw in poetic language an instrument of subversion and recreation, a vehicle for our inner journey into life and death, describing it as 'the gate of Heaven, a gate into an invisible world'⁴³, into the very heart of Sophia.⁴⁴

I studied it and it taught me nothing.
I learned it and soon forgot everything else:
Having forgotten, I was burdened with knowledge—
The insupportable knowledge of nothing.

How sweet my life would be, if I were wise!
Wisdom is well known
When it is no longer seen or thought of.
Only then is understanding bearable.⁴⁵

This is the mysterious and silent *sapientia* of the yellow flower in 'Song for Nobody', a lighted flower that 'sings without a word', by itself and for nobody.⁴⁶ This is the secret knowledge of 'Night-Flowering Cactus', whose ephemeral bloom is described as 'a white cavern without explanation'.⁴⁷ This is the wisdom of the unborn flower of nothing in 'The Fall', a paradise tree which remains unseen until 'words end and arguments are silent'.⁴⁸

Merton was a 'poet of unknowing', or 'no language poet' as Susan McCaslin has suggested.⁴⁹ He encourages us to take a leap of faith beyond our narrow schemas of thought and feeling, so as to dwell in the Spirit of 'the unknown, the dark, the nameless Ousia',⁵⁰ a sophianic intelligence which can deconstruct private and collective identities, and yet enable us to be re-born into a new consciousness and a new life.⁵¹ As he told us:

To find life we must die to life as we know it. To find meaning we must die to meaning as we know it. ... To find the full meaning of our existence we must find not the meaning that we expect but the meaning that is revealed to us by God, the meaning that comes to us out of the transcendent darkness of His mystery and our own. ... The true meaning has to be revealed. It has to be 'given'.⁵²

1. 'Ash Wednesday', *The Complete Poems and Plays of T S Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 96.
2. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (London: Sheldon Press, 1975), p. 52.
3. This volume was published in 1971 by The Anvil Press in a limited edition of 150 copies. It is included in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), pp. 1-24.
4. Journal entry, November 2, 1939 in Thomas Merton, *The Secular Journal* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), p. 24. This entry is not included in *Run to the Mountain- The Journals of Thomas Merton*, vol. 1, 1939-1941.
5. See Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death. The Place of Negativity*, translated by Michael Hardt (Collegeville: University of Minnesota Press), 2006.
6. *The Seven Storey Mountain*, pp. 410-411.
7. Fragment of a letter written by Catherine de Hueck Doherty to Thomas Merton, dated 14th October 1941 (TMSA Archives).
8. Extract from interview quoted in *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, eds. Morgan Atkinson and Jonathan Montaldo (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008), p. 126.
9. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1953), p. 85. The book is comprised of selections Merton made from his journals. The quote comes from his introduction to Part 2, 'The Death of an Abbot'.
10. Journal entry, January 8, 1950, *The Sign of Jonas*, p.259. Included in *Entering the Silence - The Journals of Thomas Merton*, vol. 2, 1941-1952.
11. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 196.
12. 'Song', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p.197.
13. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 201.
14. Thomas Merton, *Bread in the Wilderness* (New York: New Directions Classics, 1997), p. 14.
15. Thomas Merton, 'Poetry and the Contemplative Life', *Commonweal* 44 (July 4, 1948), p. 24. The essay was also included as the final section of *Figures for an Apocalypse*.
16. *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 11.
17. In his essay 'Poetry and Contemplation: a Reappraisal', *Commonweal* 69 (24 October 1958), Merton acknowledges the mistake he made when he wrote his previous article 'Poetry and the Contemplative Life': 'The earlier problem was, largely, an illusion, created by this division of life into formally separate compartments of "action" and "contemplation".' The essay is also included in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1981).
18. Quoted by Robert E. Daggy, 'Thomas Merton's Critique of Language', *The Merton Seasonal: A Quarterly Review* 27: 1 (Spring 2002), p. 15.
19. See Sonia Petisco, 'Thomas Merton's Antipoetry: a Revolution in Language and Thought' in *Thomas Merton's Poetics of Self-Dissolution* (València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2016), pp. 57-65.

20. Merton uses this concept of 'the paradise ear' in a review of a publication by fellow American poet Louis Zukofsky (1904-1978). See 'Louis Zukofsky: The Paradise Ear' in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, pp. 127-129.
21. Fernando Beltrán Llavador, 'Thomas Merton's Critique of Globalization' in *Nor Shall Diamonds Die: American Studies in Honour of Javier Coy*, Manuel & Derrick, eds. (València: Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2003), p. 48.
22. Included in *Early Poems (1940-1942)*. See note 3. Also in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, pp. 21-22.
23. 'War and the Crisis of Language' in Thomas Merton, *The Non-Violent Alternative* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1987), p. 246.
24. *Cables to the Ace*, section 4, *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 397.
25. 'Christian Humanism' in Thomas Merton, *Love and Living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1985), pp. 177-178.
26. Thomas Merton, *The New Man* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1990), p. 83.
27. *The Poetics of Aristotle*, edited and translated by Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2013), p. 42.
28. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, pp. 289-290.
29. In an essay on Pasternak, Merton writes that through inspiration the 'poet utters the voice of that wonderful and mysterious world of God-manhood – it is the transfigured, spiritualized, and divinized cosmos that speaks through him, and through him utters its praise of the Creator.' See 'The Pasternak affair' in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, p. 49.
30. See 'Louis Zukofsky: The Paradise Ear' in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, p. 129.
31. 'Louis Zukofsky: The Paradise Ear', p. 128.
32. 'The Catholic and Creativity: Theology of Creativity' in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, p. 370.
33. See Lynn Szabo, 'The Sound of Sheer Silence: A Study in the Poetics of Thomas Merton' in *The Merton Annual*, Vol. 13 (UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), p. 220.
34. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, op. cit., pp. 340-341.
35. 'In Silence', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 280.
36. 'In Silence', p. 281.
37. In his essay 'Herakleitos the Obscure', Merton writes: 'He [Herakleitos] spoke for the mysterious, the unutterable, and the excellent. He spoke for the logos which was the true law of all being — not a static and rigid form, but a dynamic principle of harmony in conflict. This logos principle was represented by Herakleitos under the symbolic form of fire.' *A Thomas Merton Reader*, ed. T P McDonnell (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 258.
38. Don Christopher Nugent, 'Pax Heraclitus: Heraclitus, *Hagia Sophia* and a Hard Night's Peace' in *The Merton Seasonal* 35: 2 (Summer 2010), p. 17.
39. 'O Sweet Irrational Worship', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 344.

40. See Sonia Petisco, 'What is a Grammatical Subject?: Reflections on the Mysteries of Language', *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1: 16 (November 2011), p. 204.
41. 'The monk's "grammar is Christ"' wrote Peter Kountz, in *Thomas Merton as Writer and Monk: A Cultural Study (1915-1951)* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson, 1991), p. 178.
42. Mary Oliver, 'Wild Geese', *Wild Geese: Selected poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 2004).
43. Thomas Merton, 'Notes on Sacred and Profane Art', *Jubilee* 4 (November 1956), p. 24.
44. 'Sophia refers here to Haggia Sophia, meaning Holy Wisdom in Greek. In his prose poem 'Hagia Sophia', Merton presents us with a profound meditation on this divine wisdom as a female manifestation of God. See *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, pp. 363-371.
45. 'Wisdom', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 279. In an entry from his journal dated 20th August 1956, Merton thinks over this kind of wisdom which he describes as 'the savour of the good', as learning to taste and see: 'Sapientia [wisdom] – sapor boni [the savour of the good] (3rd nocturn – St. Bernard). To know and to taste the secret good that is *present* but is not known to those who, because they are restless and because they are discontent and because they complain cannot apprehend it. The present good – reality – God. *Gustate et videte* [Taste and see].' *A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's Life. The Journals of Thomas Merton*, vol. 3, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 70.
46. 'Song for Nobody', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 337.
47. 'Night-Flowering Cactus', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, pp. 351-2.
48. 'The Fall', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, pp. 354-5.
49. Susan McCaslin, 'Transformative Solitudes: Merton and Rilke at the Pivot of Silence', *The Merton Seasonal* 35: 1 (Spring 2010), p. 18.
50. 'Haggia Sophia', *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton*, p. 367.
51. Logically speaking, the consciousness of the world cannot be something of the world. In other words, 'the speaker of the world cannot be spoken about because it would no longer be the subject who speaks, but the object about which something is uttered.' See Sonia Petisco, 'What is a Grammatical Subject?: Reflections on the Mysteries of Language', *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *Science* 1: 16 (November 2011), p. 204.
52. Thomas Merton, *The New Man*, p. 9.

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Michael Mott 1930—2019

Michael Mott was a poet, novelist and biographer who published widely on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1978, he was commissioned to write the authorized biography of Thomas Merton, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*, published in 1984. In the preface he wrote:

I have tried for a work of balance that will present things fairly and leave the reader to decide. In writing the biography of someone like Thomas Merton who wrote so much about himself, leaving revealing details in the least expected places, I may seem to have had all the help I needed. In fact, I found it extremely difficult. Merton found himself a mystery. He went on puzzling his odd fate to the end.

May he rest in peace