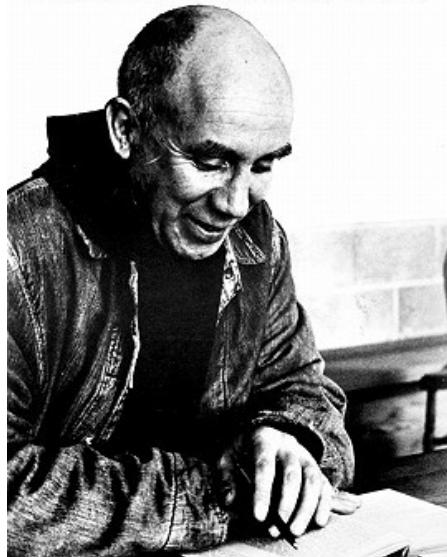


The Collected Poems of
THOMAS MERTON



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In 1944, New Directions brought out Thomas Merton's first book of verse. By the time of his tragic, untimely death in 1968, Father Louis (as he was known at the Trappist monastery where he lived for twenty-seven years) had published upwards of fifty books and pamphlets, including several more collections of poetry. All of these poems have been assembled in a single, definitive volume (first published by New Directions in 1977) which includes much additional unpublished or uncollected material drawn from the archive of the Merton Studies Center at Bellarmine College in Louisville, Kentucky, or supplied by the poet's friends and associates. Brought together in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* are: *Early Poems* (1940-42, published posthumously in 1971), *Thirty Poems* (1944), *A Man in the Divided Sea* (1946), *Figures for an Apocalypse* (1947), *The Tear of the Blind Lions* (1949), *The Strange Islands* (1957), *Original Child Bomb* (1962), *Emblems of a Season of Fun* (1963), *Cables to Ace* (1968), and *The Geography of Lograire* (completed in 1968 and published posthumously). These are followed by *Sensation Time at the Home and Other New Poems*, a book which Merton completed shortly before his death. There are also sections of uncollected poems, humorous verse, poems written in French, with some English translations, Merton's translations of poetry from various languages, drafts and fragments, and a selection of concrete poems. With the availability of *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* as a New Directions paperbook, an ever wider audience may more fully appreciate the impressive range of the poet's technique, the scope of his concerns, and the humaneness of his vision.

The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton Details

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From Reader Review The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton for online ebook

Mike says

Weird catholic surrealism, rollicking switches from verse to prose, political and spiritual earnestness conjoined with humor, "edgy," a good read for the most part.

Kenny says

ehhh

Rick says

"And who shall dare to look when all the birds with golden beaks / Stab at the blue eyes of the murdered saints?" (Figure for an Apocalypse)

carl says

Much of it is good, much of it didnt appeal to me.

Dr. Carl Ludwig Dorsch says

Merton describes sitting at O'Hare airport in 1969:

Comes a big slow fish with tailfins erect in light smog
And one other leaves earth
Go trains of insect machines
Thirtynine generals signal eight
Contact barrier four

(the first verse of DAY SIX O'HARE TELEPHANE)

or the death of Che Gueverra in 1967:

They came without faces
Found you with eyeless rays
The tin grasshoppers
With five cornered magic
Wanting to feed you
To the man eating computer

(from LETTERS TO CHE: CANTO BILINGUE)

There are many machines, weapons and generals here, likely more than there are angels, saints and virgins. I find the collection indigestible, but tantalizingly so. I am also continually aware of my difficulty disentangling the verse from the life myth or even the more interesting (and more ambiguous) life story, which seemingly remains, still and against all attacks, a novel of sorts.

Speaking of some of the sections of “The Geography of Lograire” (1968), Merton writes in its ‘Author’s Note’ that:

“(W)hat is given...is most often literal and accurate quotation with slight editing and with of course much personal arrangement. And where more drastic editing is called for by my own dream, well, I have dreamed it.”

The following, if I understand properly, is from one of those sections. Here is where I find what, to my reading, are some of the most conventionally attractive and least jarring portions of the “Collected Poems.”

Why? Because here the poet’s critical intelligence floats above his self-consciousness? Or only my own lazy partiality for the marginally mediated text of the world? I do not know.

VI. SEWENDE (Seven Day)

1. Seven Day is an unknown country where aspirins come from
And pants and axes and corned beef in cans
It is far beyond the green sea, the white sea, the blue sea
Past Tokyo North America and Germany
But in the same general direction
Far beyond other countries
No one has seen this blessed land

In the center of snow-night-day
Is a hidden place
Even more unknown than Sewende
The front door of Big Belong
Who got up very old
Out of Himself in the beginning
Left His endless bed in the morning
And started the Cargo Company
In which we now offer shares
To True Believers.

2. Then the dreamer said we must build a large warehouse in the bush. We must do everything he said and then wait: in a short time the warehouse would be filled with cans of meat, aspirins, hydrogen peroxide, soap, razor blades, rice, pants, flashlights and everything.

Then we built the warehouse together. And after that the dreamer said we must wash away all our impurities. We all drew water and heated it and washed together.

We went in silence to the burial ground. Nobody sang or danced or said anything. We just sat very still in the dark waiting for the signal.

At the signal the women took theirs off and we took ours off and we all began. It was collected in a bottle with water and poured over the burial place to bring Cargo.

When the Administration heard about it we had to tear down the warehouse and carry all the timbers eighteen miles and throw them in the sea.

(from EAST in “The Geography of Lograire”, p. 341 of “The Collected Poems”)
