

EVENING: ZERO WEATHER, from *SELECTED POEMS OF THOMAS MERTON*.

*Now the lone world is streaky as a wall of marble
With veins of clear and frozen snow.
There is no bird-song there, no hare's track
No badger working in the russet grass:
All the bare fields are silent as eternity.*

*And the whole herd is home in the long barn.
The brothers come, with hoods about their faces,
Following their plumes of breath
Lugging the gleaming buckets one by one.*

*This was a day when shovels would have struck
Full flakes of fire out of the land like rock:
And ground cries out like iron beneath our boots*

*When all the monks come in with eyes as clean as the
cold sky
And axes under their arms,
Still paying out Ave Marias
With rosaries between their bleeding fingers.*

*We shake the chips out of our robes outside the door
And go to hide in cowls as deep as clouds,
Bowing our shoulders in the church's shadow, lean
and whipped,
To wait upon your Vespers, Mother of God!*

*And we have eyes no more for the dark pillars or the
freezing windows,
Ears for the rumorous cloister or the chimes of time
above our heads:
For we are sunken in the summer of our adoration,
And plunge, down, down into the fathoms of our
secret joy
That swims with indefinable fire.*

*And we will never see the copper sunset
Linger a moment, like an echo, on the frozen hill
Then suddenly die an hour before the Angelus.*

*For we have found our Christ, our August
Here in the zero days before Lent——
We are already binding up our sheaves of harvest
Beating the lazy liturgy, going up with exultation
Even on the eve of our Ash Wednesday,
And entering our blazing heaven by the doors of the
Assumption!*