

The
Literary
Essays
of
THOMAS
MERTON

EDITED BY BROTHER PATRICK HART

As wide a following as the late Thomas Merton had while he lived, ever since his tragic accidental death in Bangkok in 1968, there has been a steady upsurge of interest in both his life and writings. A priest and Trappist monk by vocation, his theological works have been instrumental in carrying on the religious dialog between East and West; an enormously productive poet, his poems display an astonishing technical versatility and deeply felt humanity. Merton's stature as a critic, however, has yet to be fully appreciated—perhaps because until now there has been no collection of his distinctively literary essays.

The fifty-six pieces included in *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton* represent every known critical article by the author, though written for the most part

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during the last years of his life. The mature Merton ranges across the modern literary landscape with impressive ease. Joyce, Pasternak, and Zukofsky are only a few of the authors discussed in "Literary Essays (1959–68)." These are followed, in turn, by "Seven Essays on Albert Camus"; nine essays "Introducing Poets in Translation"; and "Related Literary Questions," linking Merton's literary thought with his aesthetic, religious, and social concerns. His earlier work, such as his 1939 Master's thesis on Blake as well as critical reviews written prior to 1941, are included in appendixes; to these are added transcripts of two talks he gave on Faulkner in 1967. *The Literary Essays* were collected and edited by Brother Patrick Hart, Father Merton's secretary at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.

NEW DIRECTIONS

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