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VICTOR KRAMER Replies To
 MICHAEL HIGGINS'S Review of *THOMAS MERTON: MONK & ARTIST*
 ("A Gentle & Gracious Critic," *Merton Seasonal*, Autumn 1988)

The book is meant to do three things: 1) provide an analysis of Merton's major writings in prose and poetry; 2) examine the relationships in the life as monk and writer as those roles supported one another and allowed the career to develop; 3) delineate the importance of approximately fifty other books, by and about Merton, which either bear on mine, or which appeared after my book was first published.

To nitpick about spelling errors seems mean-spirited. To suggest many of my judgments "incline to the banal" is bold! To suggest that I fail to understand the "significance" of Merton's later poetry is startling. Higgins faults my study by saying "the reader is left with no clear sense of the integrity and complexity of the Merton vision." Higgins might have noted a passage in my Chapter Eight, "Experimental Poetry," where I commented: "... there is a crucial difference between the mature Merton's compassionate awareness of the illusions of the world . . . and earlier writing . . . almost arrogant and disdainful of the world. So one of the most important facts about *CABLES* and *LOGRAIRE* is a definite compassion for contemporary mankind often lost in its own technology and in a mass-culture mentality. Man is so busy that he can no longer be; he becomes instead what others wish him to be" (p. 125). Higgins's method reminds us that each person sees what he chooses to see.

In my now twenty-three years as a scholar-professor who has seen eight of my own books into print; written approximately fifty reviews myself; and observed many other reviews, I have never observed a review quite like this one. As minimum, I would have hoped that the organization of my book, its thesis, and the expanded version's rationale might have been noted. I see none of this.