

TWO MERTON POEMS

by **Stefan Baciu**

Translated from the Romanian original by Stefan Baciu & Dorothy Aspinwall.

VANT

Astept sa intre pe fereastra in ordaje
 in nocturna tacere:
 vantul Thomas Merton
 cum a venit in Brazilia
 acum un: sfert de secol
 intr'o vara intocmai ca aceasta.

L-am simtut in nopti
 intre pinii din Honduras
 si bananierii din Nicaragua
 intre sgarie-nourii din Los Angeles
 (fostul oras al ingerilor)

Thomas Merton imi trimite cunvintele
 pe lungimea de unda
 Thomas Merton in 1992
 cu un picior pasind
 in secolul XXI!

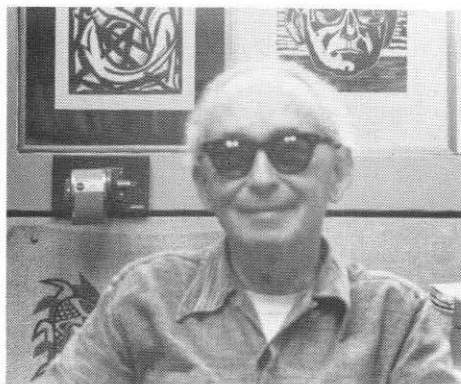
WIND

In the nightly silence
 I await the arrival through the window
 of the Thomas Merton wind
 in the same way it came
 twenty-five years ago
 in an evening very like this.

I used to feel it at night
 among the pines of Honduras
 the banana trees of Nicaragua
 and the skyscrapers of Los Angeles
 (the old capital of the angels).

Today Thomas Merton sends me
 his message on the wavelength
 Thomas Merton 1992
 placing one foot

□ **Stefan Baciu**, Thomas Merton's friend, correspondent and a publisher of his poetry, was born in Romania. He lived at the time of his death on 6 January 1993 in Honolulu Hawaii. He was Professor Emeritus of Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature at the University of HawaiiManoa. His definitive essay on Merton and the poetry of Latin America—"Latin America and Spain in the Poetic World of Thomas Merton - first appeared in the twenty-first century.



STEFAN BACIU

THOMAS MERTON

Un cello in noapte (da, un violocel)
se aude de departe
poate de NICAERI
—vocea lui Thomas Merton
pe care n'am auzit-o
decat in cateva scrisori
de mult—in anii 60
trimise din Rio de Janeiro.

Mi-a vorbit dde el, la Rio
pentru prima data
in redactia revistei catolice "A ORDEM"
prin 1950 si ceva
esseistul brazilian Alceu Amoroso Lima
(Acesta a fost, poate, cel dintai
caruia i se datmyt
un text publicat in America Latina
(America Portugheza)
scriind pe larg' cu intelegere
despre el.

Lui Merton i-am raspuns apoi din Seattle
din negurile Pacificului Nordwest
el a mi-a trimis o scrisoare lunga
mai de graba o a marturisire de
facasand analiza poeziei credinta
contemporane
latino-american.

Cel mai mare poet catolic dupa Dante
scria Merton
este Cffar Vallejo, dupa acea a i-am
trimis "vea" criticul literar din El
Salvador, Trigueros de Leon, cartea
nicaraguanul cu sutana prafuita si
ghetele deformate de a noroiul
drumurilor, parintele Azarias H. Pallais.
A fost atunci ca Merton exclamat
cuvintele ramase faimoase in Centroamerica
"lata un Fra Angelico al padurii."

De la o scrisoare la alta
Merton mi-a trimis poeme originale
si traduceri din portughezul Fernando Pessoa
care abia inCeDea sa fie cunoscut
in "Occident"
si in Ameri cile Hispanice.

Violoncelul din Honolulu
departe in Makiki
SINGUR IN NOAPTE
mi se pare a fi
vocea lui Merton
schimbata in poezie si muzica
in tacere
PENTRU INTODEAUNA.

THOMAS MERTON

A cello in the night
from somewhere far away
perhaps from Nowhere,
the voice of Thomas Merton
as I never heard it live
but only in letters or tapes
in the sixties.

I heard about him
for the first time
in the office of the
Catholic magazine *A Ordem*
in Rio de Janeiro
in the late fifties.
The speaker was the Brazilian
Catholic philosopher
Alceu Amoroso Lima
who was, if I am not mistaken,
the first in Latin America
to write about Merton.

I wrote to Merton from Seattle
in the Pacific Northwest rain
and he answered me
with a long letter
analyzing
Latin-American literature:
"The greatest Catholic poet
after Dante
was Cesar Vallejo."
In the letter he spoke also
of his joy at discovering
in a book I had sent him
the Nicaraguan poet Azarias H. Pallais
who went about in his dusty cassock
shredded by the years.
He called Pallais "The Fra Angelico
of the virgin forest."

In succeeding letters
Merton sent me
poems for *Mele*
our "International Poetry Letter"
that we have been editing
for a quarter of a century
in Honolulu.

The violincello of Honolulu
seems to me a voice lost in the night
yet at the same time it is the voice
of Merton
transformed into silence with words
that will echo forever.