

Thomas Merton as Public Intellectual

By J. S. Porter

Bookman and linguist, George Steiner playfully defines an intellectual as a reader with a pencil. His exact words are quite charming: “The intellectual is, quite simply, a human being who has a pencil in his or her hand when reading a book.”¹ By such definition, Thomas Merton, a man frequently at book and at scribble, is undoubtedly an intellectual. If an intellectual is a reader with a pencil, a public intellectual is someone who takes his pencil and paper to the street. He attempts to address a large audience about matters of urgency. By such definition, Thomas Merton is a public intellectual.

“Intellectual” is not a word Merton disavowed. In an important essay in *Raids on the Unspeakable* called “Letter to an Innocent Bystander,” Merton writes:

But who are “we”? We are the intellectuals who have taken for granted that we could be “bystanders” and that our quality as detached observers could preserve our innocence and relieve us of responsibility. By intellectual, I do not mean clerk. . . . I do not mean bureaucrat. I do not mean politician. I do not mean technician. I do not mean anyone whose intelligence ministers to a machine for counting, classifying, and distributing other people: who hands out to this one a higher pay check and to that one a trip. . . . I do not mean a policeman, or a propagandist. I still dare to use the word intellectual as if it had a meaning.²

Merton was, of course, called other things. Eldridge Cleaver called him brother, Lawrence Ferlingetti regarded him as a poet, Jack Kerouac dedicated poems to him, Allen Ginsberg dreamt about him, Boris Pasternak wrote letters to him. Merton’s social and political network was broad and deep. He befriended the socialist Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal, published in such left-leaning journals as *Ramparts* and *The Catholic Worker*, and spoke out against the Military-Industrial Complex of his day. He wanted to be read, and he was read. He wanted to speak to a broad public, and he did so.

Merton, who completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Columbia University in New York City, comes out of a long line of Columbia public intellectuals – from Mark Van Doren, Lionel Trilling and Jacques Barzun to Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said – most of whom are noted for critique and dissent. Before, during and after the Merton years at Columbia, the university was, in Barzun’s phrase, a “House



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of Intellect.” Heir to a legacy of enlightened humanism, Merton wrote for the general reading public rather than the select priests and initiates of a given discipline.

In a prose at once vigorous and personal, he spoke out on the political and social issues of his day. His teacher and fellow-Columbian, Mark Van Doren, never experienced an intellectual with “a mind more brilliant, more beautiful, more serious, more playful”³ than Merton’s. Call Thomas Merton, then, an intellectual with a cassock, an intellectual with a smile, a man in whom impish levity co-exists with a penchant for *gravitas* and intellectual debate.

When Morris Berman in *The Twilight of American Culture* talks about “the monastic option” as a way of addressing “our contemporary cultural crisis,” it’s difficult not to think that he may have someone like Thomas Merton in mind. When Berman writes of today’s new “monk” bent on resisting “the spin and hype of the global corporate world order” and as someone who knows “the difference between reality and theme parks, integrity and commercial promotion,” one thinks of a certain Trappist who died in Bangkok in 1968. According to Berman, the “new monk” – for which he even coins an acronym: “NMI, new monastic individual” – is “a sacred/secular humanist, dedicated not to slogans or the fashionable patois of postmodernism, but to Enlightenment values that lie at the heart of our civilization: the disinterested pursuit of the truth, the cultivation of art, the commitment to critical thinking.”⁴

In recent decades, the legacy of Columbia’s intellectual heritage has passed to Edward W. Said, until his recent death Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature and a Palestinian scholar of literature and music with an international reputation. Said defines the intellectual in his *Representations of the Intellectual* much more fully than Morris Berman’s teasing probe and George Steiner’s playful comment. For Said the intellectual’s job is to “question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or gender privilege.”⁵ “[T]his role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma . . . to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations” (Said, *RI* 11). “There is no question in my mind that the intellectual belongs on the same side with the weak and unrepresented” (Said, *RI* 22). An intellectual is like a shipwrecked person . . . whose sense of the marvelous never fails him, and who is always a traveler, a provisional guest, not a freeloader, conqueror, or raider” (Said, *RI* 60). “The intellectual in exile is necessarily ironic, skeptical, even playful – but not cynical” (Said, *RI* 62). “Exile means that you are always going to be marginal, and that what you do as an intellectual has to be made up because you cannot follow a prescribed path” (Said, *RI* 62). In these last few quotations, one can be forgiven for thinking that Thomas Merton is speaking, so Mertonian is Said’s talk of exile, playfulness and marginality.

Said goes on in his book-length essay to spell out specific qualities of the intellectual. He must not be beholden to a power centre: the corporation, the government or the university; he must as far as possible avoid slavish specialization; he must be an amateur, in its root sense of being a lover, a lover of truth, even if it collides with sacred or official texts. To be a “Saidean” intellectual one must be “a thinking and concerned member of a society . . . entitled to raise moral issues at the heart of even the most technical and professionalized activity” (Said, *RI* 82). If one goes through Said’s extended definition of the intellectual – his responsibilities, function and moral stance – one finds how accurately it matches the intellectual life of Thomas Merton. Merton is the man in exile from a one-dimensional technological society, the man without an agenda, the man on the margins, some-

one who is neither on governmental nor corporate payroll. The moneyed classes may expect monks to keep their mouths shut, particularly Trappist ones, but Merton seldom lives according to the expectations of the financially and politically or ecclesiastically powerful. He is in the Sartrean and Saidean sense, *l'homme engagé*.

Throughout the sixties, Merton raged vociferously in books, articles and letters against the Vietnam war, against racism, against the cold war and threat of nuclear war, against the trampling of indigenous peoples, against the all-pervasive power of the corporation in its advertising and its links to the military, and against the technologizing of society and the individual. Merton's intellectual mission seems very similar to Jonathan Swift's as articulated by Edward Said in "Swift as Intellectual" in *The World, the Text and the Critic*. It's concerned with "organized human aggression or organized human violence": "conquest, colonial oppression, religious factionalism, the manipulation of minds and bodies, schemes for projecting power on human beings, and on history, the tyranny of the majority, monetary profit for its own sake, the victimization of the poor by a privileged oligarchy."⁶ The two political agendas, one in the eighteenth century and the other in the twentieth, speak out against entrenched and co-opting power.

Merton resists the prevailing conformities and orthodoxies of the time. He mounts his sixties attack by way of two distinct verbal strategies: his meditational works which emphasize the interior life of thoughtfulness, quiet and self-criticism as an antidote to a life of frenzied consumption and the cult of things; and his political and social writings which make use of what Soren Kierkegaard calls "the negative way," the use of satire, irony and parody as a way of uncovering the deceptions and seductions of what Neil Postman, a public intellectual and communications theorist not from Columbia, calls "technopoly": a society which is not only governed by technological concerns but also a society whose highest aspirations fall within a technological sphere. In simple English, technopoly has to do with the production of wealth made possible by business-computers and the protection of that wealth by military-computer technologies. In a society in which the technological way of being has a monopoly on the expression of the human, in other words, in a technopoly, what makes money and what protects it makes the only rational sense.

I want to examine one aspect of Thomas Merton's intellectual life, his challenge to technopoly under the categories of what I'm going to call Techno-Man and Techno-Language. In each case, I'm going to use Adolf Eichmann as portrayed in Merton's Swiftian parodies of Eichmann as being representative of a new character-type growing in number and a language-type found with increasing frequency in the postmodern world. Merton wrote about Eichmann explicitly on three occasions: first in his "Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann" (1964) in *Raids on the Unspeakable*, then in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*⁷ in 1966 and finally in his "Epitaph for a Public Servant" (1967), originally written for *Ramparts* and posthumously included in the *Collected Poems*. He also wrote about Eichmann, or performed Eichmann, implicitly on other occasions in works such as "Chant to be Used in Processions around a Site with Furnaces" (1963).

Techno-Man

In 1964, after reading Hannah Arendt's *New Yorker* magazine coverage of the Eichmann trial in 1963, later published as *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Merton wrote his "A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann." The title is of course meant ironically in the way that Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is meant ironically. Merton's meditation is no more devout

than Swift's proposal is modest. "One of the most disturbing facts," Merton notes, "that came out in the Eichmann trial was that a psychiatrist examined him and pronounced him *perfectly sane*" (RU 45). In fact, according to Hannah Arendt, "half a dozen psychiatrists had certified him as 'normal'."⁸ Merton implies that had Eichmann been pronounced insane his participation in the deaths of millions of Jews would have been easier to fathom.

Merton's analysis of Eichmann in the essay bears close resemblance in sentiment, though not in form, to Leonard Cohen's 1964 "All There Is to Know about Adolf Eichmann" in *Flowers to Hitler*:

EYES: Medium
 HAIR: Medium
 WEIGHT: Medium
 HEIGHT: Medium
 DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:None
 NUMBER OF FINGERS:Ten
 NUMBER OF TOES: Ten
 INTELLIGENCE.....Medium⁹

The horror of Eichmann as the one in charge of "the Jewish question," that is to say, the one charged with the responsibility of getting rid of Jews, if not by forced emigration or re-settlement then by murder, is his sanity. "The sanity of Eichmann," Merton argues, "is disturbing." He writes in his "devout" meditation:

We equate sanity with a sense of justice, with humaneness, with prudence, with the capacity to love and understand other people. We rely on the sane people of the world to preserve it from barbarism, madness, destruction. And now it begins to dawn on us that it is precisely the *sane* ones who are the most dangerous. It is the sane ones, the well-adapted ones, who can without qualms and without nausea aim the missiles and press the buttons that will initiate the great festival of destruction that they, *the sane ones*, have prepared. . . . No one suspects the sane, and the sane one will have *perfectly good reasons*, logical, well-adjusted reasons, for firing the shot. They will be obeying sane orders that have come sanely down the chain of command (RU 46-47).

Merton goes on to question the value of "sanity" when it is cut off from love. "[W]hat is the meaning of . . . sanity that excludes love, considers it irrelevant, and destroys our capacity to love other human beings, to respond to their needs and their suffering, to recognize them also as persons, to apprehend their pain as one's own?" (RU 47). He concludes his essay, riddled with Swiftian bite, by seeing Eichmann not just as one person in history but as a character-type all too common in history: "No, Eichmann was sane. The generals and fighters on both sides, in World War II, the ones who carried out the total destruction of entire cities, these were the sane ones. Those who have invented and developed atomic bombs, thermonuclear bombs, missiles; who have planned the strategy of the next war; who have evaluated the various possibilities of using bacterial and chemical agents: these are not the crazy people, they are the *sane* people" (RU 48). Such is the power of Merton's prose that the reader (in Merton's case I'm always tempted to say the listener because it seems to me that I listen to Merton more than I simply read him) so effortlessly projects it into 2004 and the war on Iraq. Merton ends his essay on Eichmann with a paradox worthy of Swift or Orwell: "in a society like ours the worst insanity is to be totally without anxiety, totally 'sane'" (RU 49).

Hannah Arendt's wording differs from Merton's slightly. While pointing to Eichmann's sanity (in Merton's viewpoint his insane sanity), she gives greater emphasis to his banality. She believed Eichmann to be a banal man who enfolded in attitude and behaviour "the banality of evil" (her coinage).

In 1967, Merton has another go at Eichmann, but this time he takes Swift all the way. He uses the Swiftian technique of becoming the other, of taking on the voice and manner of the enemy for the purpose of mockery and subversion. As Edward Said says in his essay "Swift as Intellectual," Swift's technique "is to become the thing he attacks, which is normally not a message or a political doctrine but a style or a manner of discourse" and "styles of behavior" (Said, *WTC* 87). The "I" in Merton's "Epitaph for a Public Servant: *In Memoriam – Adolf Eichmann*," is Merton's parody of Eichmann.

As in his devout meditation, Merton emphasizes Eichmann's sanity in his epitaph. The I, the voice of Eichmann, tells the reader that his relations with his father, mother, brother and sister are "most normal / Most desirable."¹⁰ His Christian education is "Without rancor / Without any reason / For hating" (*CP* 704). He followed orders; he subordinated himself to "The Leader." He, being a grown-up, thinks "Repentance is / For . . . / Little children" (*CP* 705). (This line Merton borrows directly from Hannah Arendt quoting Eichmann at his trial [Arendt 24].) Eichmann is, after all, "A man with positive / Ideas / With no ill will / Toward any Jew" (*CP* 710).

Eichmann is the quintessential man of the twentieth – and twenty-first – centuries: the sane, rational, efficient man; the engineer; the problem solver. When given the task of getting rid of European Jewry, after failed attempts at other options, Eichmann implements a plan to kill large numbers in an efficient way: by gas. (He failed in his plans of evacuating European Jewry to Madagascar and in his proposal for the establishment of a Jewish territory in the Nisko region of Poland [Arendt 33].) He is rational man without feeling, without compassion and without guilt or anxiety.

Techno-Language

Merton in his epitaph for Eichmann has Eichmann say "From then on / Official orders / Were my only language" (*CP* 706). Here Merton is more or less paraphrasing Hannah Arendt's quotation from Eichmann that "Officialese is my only language" (Arendt 48). Arendt goes on to say that "the longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that this inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else" (Arendt 49). His speech was full of "empty talk" and "stock phrases"; he was "genuinely incapable of uttering a single sentence that was not a cliché"; he was, in short, not stupid but vacuous.¹¹ He was also "a non-reader except for newspapers" (Arendt 41).

Eichmann acquiesced comfortably in the Nazi penchant for euphemism. As Arendt recalls, words like "killing" or "extermination" were never used (Arendt 85). "The word for murder was replaced by the phrase 'to grant a mercy death'" (Arendt 106); gas rooms were disguised as showers and bathrooms; the gassing centres at Auschwitz and other death camps were called "Charitable Foundations for Institutional Care." Merton in his essay "Auschwitz: A Family Camp," another of his Swiftian titles dripping in irony, writes "Officialese has a talent for discussing reality while denying it."¹² A "pathological joy in death," Merton further writes, is "the key to all officialese. All of it is the celebration of boredom, of routine, of deadness, of organized futility" (*PP* 282).

Merton's contribution to an understanding of Eichmann and his language lies, it seems to me, in

his ability to not see him or his language in isolation. Officialese predates and postdates Eichmann. In one of his last essays, written in 1968, “War and the Crisis of Language,” he points to the “pompous and sinister jargon of the war mandarins in government offices and military think-tanks” (PP 307). Here “a whole community of intellectuals, scholars . . . spend their time playing out ‘scenarios’ and considering ‘acceptable levels’ in megadeaths. Their language and their thought are as esoteric, as self-enclosed, as tautologous as the advertisement . . . [T]hey are scientifically antiseptic, business-like, uncontaminated with sentimental concern for life – other than their own. It is the same basic narcissism, but in a masculine, that is managerial, mode” (PP 307).

In language as powerful as Orwell’s in “Politics and the English Language,” Merton in “War and the Crisis of Language” speaks of “the illness of political language,” how it is “characterized everywhere by the same sort of double-talk, tautology, ambiguous cliché, self-righteous and doctrinaire pomposity, and pseudoscientific jargon that mask a total callousness and moral insensitivity, indeed a basic contempt for man” (PP 313). If Eichmann were an aberration, one would breathe more easily. But in many ways he is the norm. He is frequently the voice of officialdom in the United States, for example, from Erlichman and Haldeman in the Nixon White House to Cheney and Rumsfeld in the Bush White House.

It’s one thing to talk about the crisis in language, it’s another to perform it. In “Chant to Be Used in Processions around a Site with Furnaces” (1963) Merton once again performs Eichmann; that is, he speaks (writes) in his manner of thought and language. In content, the chant links to his “Devout Meditation,” but in style it bears closer resemblance to *Original Child Bomb*, about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Merton’s first Swiftian performance piece, originally published in 1961. In a September 5, 1965 letter to Cid Corman, Merton characterizes his chant as “a sort of mosaic of Eichmann’s own double-talk about himself” (see PP 199): “How we made them sleep and purified them / How we perfectly cleaned up the people and worked a big heater / I was the commander I made improvements and installed a guaranteed system taking account of human weakness I purified and I remained decent / How I commanded” (CP 345).

The title of the piece combines monastic words (“chant,” “procession”) with more clinical terms: the passive voice “to be used,” the abstract noun “site” and the comparatively modern term “furnaces.” Throughout the Swiftian satire, filled with the unconscious irony of a speaker who has no idea that the very words he boasts of (“I commanded,” “I improved”) condemn him, Merton has Eichmann hang himself by his own diction. The “I” of the prose poem mixes old words with new and simple words – with “engineering” words: verbs like “installed” and nouns like “guaranteed” and “system” sit near ludicrously moronic phrasing like “a big heater.” Eichmann comes off as simultaneously vacuous and moronic and technically sophisticated. He sounds like U.S. astronauts with their usual mix of baby talk and technical jargon. Eichmann has no images in his prose, no metaphors, no emotion; his is the prose of fact, observation and euphemism – the prose of clinical and detached discourse.

Merton’s Swiftian prose poem ends with these chilling words: “Do not think yourself better because you burn up friends and enemies with long-range missiles without ever seeing what you have done” (CP 349). In one clear sentence Merton’s Eichmann prophetically reaches beyond his time and place to the first Television War (the Vietnam War) and the first Nintendo War (the first American invasion of Iraq). He instantly brings to mind the Computer Wars of Bosnia and Afghanistan where pilots drop bombs from 30 thousand feet or launch missiles from the safety of battleships

docked in harbors hundreds of miles from their targets. The pilots and missile-launchers hear no screams, see no blood, smell no corpses. They inflict what the American military and television networks casually refer to as "collateral damage."

The Eichmann of history and the Eichmann of Merton's tract do not witness the actual deaths of human beings either; they are far away in an office or at a control panel working on drawings or plans. Whatever the problem, the speaker surmounts it. Whatever the demands of cost, he finds cheaper ways to effect mass destruction. He makes soap from gassed bodies. "How I commanded and made soap 12 lbs fat 10 quarts water 8 oz to a lb of caustic soda but it was hard to find any fat" (CP 348). He transports corpses, which he euphemistically refers to as "customers," cheaply: "For transporting the customers we suggest using light carts on wheels a drawing is submitted" (CP 348). He finds the precise numbers: "I am a big new commander operating on a cylinder I elevate the purified materials boil for 2 to 3 hours and then cool" (CP 348). He conducts the right tests: "For putting them into a test fragrance I suggested an express elevator operated by the latest cylinder it was guaranteed" (CP 348).

Merton's Eichmann-chant reaches back to *The Tower of Babel* of 1957 where he began his challenge to technopoly. There in his morality play the engineer character-type is perceived as the archetypal problem-solver. In the *dramatis personae*, Merton includes, along with a leader and a captain, two builders; they are responsible for the planning and building of the Tower. With brilliant insight, Merton also recognizes how technology refashions language:

Now the function of the word is
To designate: first the machine,
Then what the machine produces,
And finally what the machine destroys (CP 255).

In words that look forward to the furnace chant the First Exile says, "The words of this land / Are interminable signals of their own emptiness, / Signs without meaning" (CP 265). Earlier First Exile says, "One by one we lost our names. / Men gave us numbers" (CP 264). It's difficult not to hear Merton's own voice in this voice of exile, and difficult not to shiver at the words of the Leader: "Each word becomes an instrument of war. Words of the clocks and devils. Words of the wheels and machines. Steel words stronger than flesh or spirit. Secret words which divide the essences of things" (CP 252).

Technopoly and Merton's Opposition

In *Raids on the Unspeakable*, the volume in which the meditation on Eichmann appears, Merton also includes several of his own calligraphies and his prose statement entitled "Signatures: Notes on the Author's Drawings":

In a world cluttered and programmed with an infinity of practical signs and consequential digits referring to business, law, government and war, one who makes such nondescript marks as these is conscious of a special vocation to be inconsequential, to be outside the sequence and to remain firmly alien to the program. In effect these writings are decidedly hopeful in their own way in so far as they stand outside all processes of production, marketing, consumption and destruction (RU 181).

Although Merton is speaking of his Zen-markings or calligraphies, he may just as easily be

describing his own word usage and his own character traits: “they stand outside all processes of production, marketing, consumption and destruction” (*RU* 181). In his pre-monastic journal *Run to the Mountain* Merton distinguishes between a logic of language and a logic of mathematics. “The former is something like experience: it follows it closely, is not rigid but supple, imitates life.” On the other hand, “the logic of mathematics is abstract, more certain . . . but achieves certitude at the expense of truth. That is, it is less real.”¹³ He goes on to compare the logic of language to “living things that grow in the same way as a tree, spreading out into the light, not spreading out into a geometrical shape: the tree grows into what it loves to be, not into what mathematics would like it to be” (*RM* 83).

Technopoly uses the language of computers and mathematics. Whether in Nazi Germany, Mafia Russia, Stalinist Korea or Corporate America, it champions the language of certitude and abstraction, the language of numbers, tables and charts. It denigrates emotion, linguistic variety and distinctiveness and metaphor. Technopoly elevates, and promotes, the Eichmann-character type and the Eichmann-speech type, the obedient commander who organizes efficiently, reduces human diversity and solves intractable human problems by technological means. The strength of Merton’s technological dissent and critique is to see technopoly as person and language in the embodiment of Adolf Eichmann.

But it is also the strength of his dissent and critique that “Eichmann” is not just a particular person born at a particular time in a particular place. Eichmann is timeless and placeless, even “personless.” He lives anywhere in any time. He lives everywhere and always where institution and bureaucracy, where nation and nationality, where power and wealth are put ahead of individual freedom and human need. He opens his mouth to speak anytime facts and numbers are put before human feelings and abstract theories are considered more important than individual lives. As Merton himself says speaking in the voice of Eichmann in *Conjectures of Guilty Bystander*, “Your world is full of me, I am all over the place, I am legion” (*CGB* 265).

When I listen to the American media about “Showdown: Iraq” as if the world’s only superpower were going to play an opposing side in the Super Bowl, I hear Eichmann. I also hear him in empty platitudes about democracy and freedom, I hear him in the phrase “axis of evil” as if evil were something in the other but never in us, I hear him in the lies and obfuscation by the media and politicians around the “threat” posed by a tenth-rate military power like Iraq which for the last twenty years has easily and successfully been contained by the Israelis.

The Eichmanns in our part of the world are slicker and more media-savvy than the European engineer-archetype, but the essence is the same: find an enemy, label and demonize him and kill him. For Eichmann and the Nazi regime he served, the enemy was the Jew. For American Eichmanns, it is Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein or someone whose name we haven’t yet heard in the media but will shortly. Concomitant with finding an enemy is building an impenetrable bunker, or in the case of the United States, an impenetrable Star Wars shield, and making sure the enemy cannot strike back.

In Merton’s brilliant phrasing in “Testament to Peace,” “remember [that in] war” – the United States seems currently to be in a state of perpetual war – “every crime is justified, the nation is always right, power is always right, the military is always right.” Remember too, in Merton’s words, “[t]o question those who wield power, to differ from them in any way, is to confess oneself subversive, rebellious, traitorous” (*PP* 55).

President Bush may be right: the choice for the public intellectual and the rest of us is join power or oppose it, join the alliance of the corporation, the military, the media and the government or rebel against it. I have no doubt in thinking that Thomas Merton was, and would be, among the rebels.¹⁴

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1. George Steiner, *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1995* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 8.
 2. Thomas Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable* (New York: New Directions, 1964) 54; subsequent references will be cited as "RU" parenthetically in the text.
 3. Van Doren, quoted in Ross Labrie, *The Art of Thomas Merton* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1979) 1.
 4. Morris Berman, *The Twilight of American Culture* (New York: Norton, 2000) 10.
 5. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, the 1993 Reith Lectures (London: Vintage, 1994) xiii; subsequent references will be cited as "Said, RI" parenthetically in the text.
 6. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983) 84; subsequent references will be cited as "Said, WTC" parenthetically in the text.
 7. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 261-65; subsequent references will be cited as "CGB" parenthetically in the text.
 8. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1964) 25; subsequent references will be cited as "Arendt" parenthetically in the text.
 9. Leonard Cohen, *Selected Poems 1956-1968* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969) 122.
 10. Thomas Merton, *Collected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1977) 703; subsequent references will be cited as "CP" parenthetically in the text.
 11. Peter Baehr, Introduction to *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (New York: Viking Portable Library, 2000) xxvi.
 12. Thomas Merton, *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Crossroad, 1995) 282; subsequent references will be cited as "PP" parenthetically in the text.
 13. Thomas Merton, *Run to the Mountain: The Story of a Vocation. Journals, vol. 1: 1939-1941*, ed. Patrick Hart (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995) 83; subsequent references will be cited as "RM" parenthetically in the text. Those interested in Merton's early fascination with "technology" may also want to look again at his word lists written on October 30, 1939 (RM 74-75).
 14. The essay was originally presented as a talk at Canadian Memorial United Church, Vancouver, BC on January 20, 2003, to the Thomas Merton Society of Canada. Special thanks to Michael W. Higgins for making the Merton-Swift connection clear to me; Susan McCaslin for encouraging me to write this paper; and Judith Hardcastle for inviting me to Vancouver to deliver it.