

DIVINE EXPLORATION AND INVITATION

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In a recent essay,¹ Eric McLuhan reiterates the argument that his late father, Marshall McLuhan, oft-termed a media theorist, worked without the use of theories. He supports this claim by suggesting that while his father did use theories, he did not use them in a consistent way. Rather than attempting to develop a culminating thesis, the elder McLuhan was more interested in the work of aphorism and art than explication and exegesis: he was most content when probing and observing, asking questions and exploring. This elusive and playful spirit of inquiry and expression has been the inspiration for much of my own work and is at the heart of the essay you now read. I write to share with you some ideas I have discovered in my own journey and will not consider it a failure should this piece raise more questions than it answers. Those looking for a more exhaustive and traditional treatment of theo-poetics are encouraged to see my recent piece in *Christianity & Literature*² or the website I maintain, <http://theo-poetics.net>.

It is a matter of how you begin: if you begin with theory, then one way or another your research winds up geared to making the case for or against the truth of the theory. Begin with theory, you begin with the answer; begin with observation, you begin with questions. A theory always turns into a scientist's point of view and a way of seeing the job at hand. Begin with observation and your task is to look at things and to look at what happens. To see.

—Eric McLuhan³

The explorer is totally inconsistent. He never knows at what moment he will make some startling discovery. And consistency is a meaningless term to apply to an explorer. If he wanted to be consistent he would stay home.

—Marshall McLuhan⁴

Observation

I recently found myself alone in a motel, staring at a jacuzzi in a hot room that smelled of stale cigarettes. It was nearly two in the morning, and the bathroom had no walls. I presume this design element was included so that one's bathing experience might also include ease of access to the bedroom, which, I might add, contained a genuine Magic Fingers[®] bed. The event of this encounter served as yet another opportunity to test my belief that it serves every person of faith to try to find God however they might in the place and time of their situation. As it grew nearer to 3 am and my place remained a less than desirable hotel, I struggled to make meaning of it all.

I have been a school teacher by training and occupation, and it was a job interview that had landed me in my aforementioned surroundings. I had missed a connection to Rochester, New York in the labryntine glory of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy International Airport, and was told that the next flight would not be until the following morning. Thirteen phone calls later, I had discovered that (1) late-night airport hotel finding is not for the easily discouraged, (2) that the kindness of strangers sometimes is real, and (3) that "the great cash only special" is neither great nor special in any standard use of those words.

Having been delayed for hours aboard my New York bound flight, and having had to attempt communications to my potential employers via cell phone at midnight, I was more than ready to accept the advice of a local who "knew a place." One handwritten address, a pleasant urban cab ride, and a snarky glance from our cabbie later, another stranded traveler and I ended up at our destination. After some confusion regarding the fact that we would not be sharing a room, the night shift employee pointed me toward my accommodations and I was allowed to stand in slack-jawed awe of the my jacuzzi-appointed furnishings. I told myself I had some work to do to figure out what the larger point of this fiasco was. Six hours later, on board a flight I was never "supposed" to be on, I discovered it.

Influence

By and large, I believe that the people of the United States of America have mostly forgotten the experience of God: we remember the name, but not the face. We have begun to confuse the menu for the meal and grow ever more hungry, fighting each other over how to properly order, while back in the kitchen tables groan under the weight of the food prepared for the feast of feasts. Folks aren't even ordering, let alone eating! I feel that a significant part of the unfed spiritual hunger that many experience has to do with menu confusion. We spend so much time squabbling over quibbles with the text that we never get around to experiencing the nourishment to which the menu refers. Put another way, I think that the language we use to describe God greatly influences our perspective and experience means of access to the Divine. When we fight pettily among ourselves, our religion can come to *feel* petty. We end up not liking the restaurant because of the horrific fight we had with one another before even getting to taste the meal. It is through this lens that I have come to the field of theoetics.

I understand theoetics to be the theory and practice of making God known in the world. I have arrived at this definition, at least partially, by means of the word's etymology. *Theos*, the Greek for God, most of us are familiar with. Poetics, though, has a less well-known origin. The word *poiein* in Greek is a verb meaning "to make or shape." At a root level then, theoetics is how we make God, how God comes to be known by us, and academically, the study of the ways in which God is made known through texts. What I have discovered, less by etymology and more by experience, is that words we encounter that articulate ways of being for the Divine and the Divinely inspired are with us far beyond their life on the page. That is to say, while theoetics may be construed as a primarily monograph-based discipline and a child of the Literary Theory movement, I think there is more life in understanding it as a means to grapple broadly with how we speak of God, the ways in which we articulate the numinous, and the shades of God-claims to which we are continually exposed throughout religious dialogue and supposedly secular forms of media.

As the religious content of sermon and church conversation is usually self-evident, it behooves us to be aware of the messages we receive from other sources as well. A theoet isn't just writing god-talk in

verse, she is articulating the depths of reality with such expressive precision that the omnipresent nature of the Divine is seen, by those with eyes to see, in the text. There is a universality to this type of writing which I hesitate to categorize as solely religious. As T.S. Eliot wrote, there are “great religious poets, but they are, by comparison with Dante, specialists. That is all they can do. And Dante, because he could do everything else, is for that reason the greatest “religious” poet, though to call him a “religious poet” would be to abate his universality.⁵ “In the same expansive spirit that claims Dante as a universal “religious poet,” I am interested in cultivating the capacity of universal “religious poetry readers,” so skilled in their craft that they are capable of experiencing the Presence in a reading of the world that continues daily and unabated.

From the shoulder-riding devil and angel of Warner Brothers cartoons, to the continued proclamation of a just, God-supported war, media-consuming North Americans are continuously exposed to myriad messages on the nature of Divinity and how it appears in the world. I am captivated by the notion that we can make explicit the nature of these media, and the ways by which we subsequently come to think about the Divine and express our experience of the Sacred. Through the development of a critical awareness, we begin to become awake to the ubiquity of theological thinking, even in places where we would not expect it. Moreover, beyond the mere awareness of “theological thinking,” we also grow in our capacity to sense that of God in the world: I believe that the language we use to describe God greatly affects our perspective and perception of the Divine. I feel met in these convictions by the field of theopoetics, which takes seriously the possibility that the messages we receive *about* God can alter our experience *of* God. This is not to suggest that the Divine itself is directly altered by a Bugs Bunny animation arguing with a pitchfork-wielding devil, but rather that as creatures of media, words, images, and stories continue to influence us long after we hear Porky proclaim “Th-Th-Th-That’s all, folks.”

Fuchsia

During the course of my travels, I discovered the reason I had had my flight diverted several times, the reason I had had the pleasure of being exposed to my very own Magic Fingers bed, and the reason why my

interview had to be rescheduled three times. Finally, *en route* to Rochester, I had a vivid dream in which I saw that I would minister to a woman who would be waiting for me at the Rochester airport. Waiting that morning at exactly the time I arrived, not the day before. I woke with a clear image of this woman's face. She was in her late fifties and had an olive complexion and graying brunette curls worn close to her shoulder so that they brushed the top of a once-bright fuchsia scarf. She was having a panic attack and calling repeatedly for a priest, and when no priest was to be found, I stepped forward. There I was able to pray with her and bring her some measure of comfort as she readied to fly to the funeral of her son. Sometimes things happen that we cannot predict.

That was the dream at least.

When I arrived in reality, having deplaned certain of this woman's presence, I exited only to be met by the thundering roar of the everyday. No fuchsia scarf, no son's funeral, not even a woman. The early morning airport was nearly empty, and I was able to walk from my gate to the nearest coffee vendor without running into a single person. I was shocked. I had been so sure that she would be there.

Revelation

Even the stories we create for ourselves are powerful.

In many ways, I understand theo-poetics, à la McLuhan, to be a type of theology-less theological expression. Another way to approach this is to consider the degree to which the formal work of theology is carried out by means of postulation and abstraction. The presentation of theo-poetics, while covering the same ground, tends to travel that ground in a different way. By emphasizing communication and expression, theo-poetics encourages the drawing forth of actual experiences of God in the world and an attempt to articulate how it is that the Divine has manifested. While Scripture certainly contains myriad instances of God in the world, often people want to know how it is that god is now, in these days, and how we can speak of the Divine and god's work.

In the book *The Power of Myth*,⁶ a remarkable series of conversations are captured between journalist Bill Moyers and mythologist Joseph Campbell. During the course of one of those conversations, Campbell remarks that clergy are not concerned enough with the connotations of

symbols and are instead overly focused on pragmatic ethicism. Asked by Moyers why this might be the case, he replies as follows:

The difference between a priest and a shaman is that the priest is a functionary and the shaman is someone who has had an experience. In our tradition [Catholicism] it is the monk who seeks the experience, while the priest is the one who has studied to serve the community.

I had a friend who attended an international meeting of the Roman Catholic meditative orders, which was held in Bangkok. He told me that the Catholic monks had no problems understanding the Buddhist monks, but that it was the clergy of the two religions who were unable to understand each other.

The person who has had a mystical experience knows that all the symbolic expressions of it are faulty. The symbols don't render the experience, they suggest it. If you haven't had the experience, how can you know what it is? Try to explain the joy of skiing to somebody living in the tropics who has never even seen snow. There has to be an experience to catch the message, some clue—otherwise you're not hearing what is being said (73).

In his response, Moyers remarks that “the person who has the experience has to project it in the best way he/she can with images, [and] it seems to me that we have lost the art in our society of thinking images (73).” Amos Wilder, one of the early proponents of theopoetics, would have agreed with this completely. In the opening passages of his book *Theopoetic*,⁷ he offers that his “plea for a theopoetic means doing more justice to the symbolic and the pre-rational in the way we deal with experience. We should recognize that human nature and human societies are more deeply motivated by images and fabulations than by ideas” (2).

Theopoetics places an emphasis on the descriptive and minimizes the prescriptive. It is a means of linguistically re-engaging and re-envisioning the world and the ways in which we perceive God to be agentic within it. When a text is acting theopoetically, it functions in opposing

directions, simultaneously pulling the reader further into the text's poetic narrative and pushing the reader into a reconsideration of, and reconnection with, life in the world beyond the text.⁸ The theopoet is less concerned with correctly arguing the nature of reality and more with expressing how the Divine is sometimes revealed through it.

Vineyard

In 1812, the American ornithologist John James Audubon painted the first image of a bird flying. It was a whippoorwill. The occasion of this painting is notable because in it Audubon broke with standards of period ornithological illustration. To more "properly" depict the nature and action of the bird in flight in three-dimensional space, he used artistic techniques of foreshortening; the nearest parts of the bird were enlarged so that the rest of the form appeared to have depth and go back into the space of the painting. Because of this foreshortening, accurate measurements could not be taken from the illustration. Audubon painted things "incorrectly" to capture their movement and aid in their identification. As a result, some of his images lost their merit as scientific tools.⁹

I have come to believe that the issue is not so much that speaking of the Divine is impossible, but rather that it is impossible to speak about with objective certainty. At best, theology becomes less relevant the more the theologian employs solely the language of logic. At worst, it can become an exercise of tilting-at-windmills, attempting to enumerate the single-way things are and always will be. And this problem exists outside of the academic walls of seminary and divinity school as well.

If a young child is taught her creative painting is wrong, or not performed properly, it is likely that she will eventually withdraw from painting, regardless of how nonsensical the teachings may be. Those in positions of power contribute a significant amount to what it is we think is acceptable and what is off limits. It seems to me that the current situation of popular theology is not that dissimilar. At some level, people appear to be afraid of trying to talk about God and getting it wrong.¹⁰

Many people, both within my tradition and elsewhere, struggle to find language to articulate their sense of the Divine. There are a variety of reasons why this can be the case; however, the end product is that there are a number of people in the contemporary culture who are not

fully comfortable with the formal dogmatic positions of their own denomination of origin and do not feel as if the proposed theology of the tradition matches their experience of God in the world. Unfortunately, people also often feel equally uncomfortable questioning these positions from within the institution. Questioning is often discouraged, and literalism and/or adherence to tradition becomes the order of the day. A regrettable consequence of this dynamic is that some choose to remain within their tradition, their own voice silenced, and others choose to leave, only voicing their concerns from without. In both situations, an opportunity for dialogue is missed, and in so missing, another possibility to enrich the conversation of the Church has been lost.

The danger of valuing experience so highly is that people might come to believe that their own experience trumps all else. Often conservative critics of theopoetic and expressive thinking claim that it is bound to end up in some kind of relativistic, solipsistic hedonism. *Who cares about tradition? Let's do what feels good, what I experience as good for me is good!* While this position is extreme, it represents a misunderstanding of what I believe the theopoetic invitation to be. I do not see theopoetics as a destructive discipline replacing theology. Theopoetics is a way of perceiving and expressing experience so as to more directly articulate how the Divine manifests in the world. It presumes that there is some life-giving Source to creativity and creation, and that at times it is more noticed than others. I am not interested in attempting to disprove theological tenets; in fact, it seems to me that theopoetics is related to theology much the way that a vineyard is related to a horticultural museum. Both are of service, and of interest, to different populations at different times, and not in conflict with each other.

Audubon did not seek the destruction of images from which measurements could be taken, *and* he knew that he could offer something more.

Ground

After talking with me about theopoetics, people are often left with the impression that language occupies a space in my life that borders on the obsessive. I don't reject this out of hand, but it does bring to mind an interview with Stanley Kunitz I once read.

In it, he evokes William Blake in asserting that he succeeds as a poet only as much as he is capable of evincing the “minute particulars” of a situation. The specificity of corporeal experience is essential to Kunitz. He comments that “it is an advantage for the poet not always to be immersed in poetry, not to become incestuous with his own art. . . [Too] much poetry is airy. It is spun only out of the need to write the poem and is not nailed into the foundations of the life itself.”¹¹ The retreat of his garden was a place wherein he could come to literal grips with that life. He fended off obsession with poetry by immersing himself in the “minute particulars” of his flower beds. So it’s not that I don’t love language—I do—it’s that language is my garden.

It is in its tended rows that I find enough expression of the everyday to hedge against a type of airy theorizing and abstract theology that I hope to avoid. It is precisely because of my love of the Divine that I find myself drawn to text with a passion. It refreshes me and returns me to my own ground. Consequently, I try to tend to it as best I can, aware of its limitations and all the more careful because of them given how much I ask it to produce. I do not want to overtax the soil.

I do not view language deterministically. While it is powerful, it is neither omnipotent nor a full substitute for the experiences of life. It surely influences our human sense of things, and I firmly believe that it works in concert with our cultural context to evoke all manner of emotional and intimate responses, yet I balk at claiming that words can inherently exert control over anything. While poetries are indeed enchanting they are not magic. The power of song and prose is part and parcel of the creative impulse of Spirit, not its precursor.

By exploring within the relatively fixed media of language, we attune our sensibilities to more readily interpret reality through the lens of our faith rather than that of the dominant culture. The more we practice seeing God, the easier the task becomes. Will we ever be able to see the whole of Divinity continuously? If Moses’ experience on Mount Sinai was any indication, no. This doesn’t mean, though, that the task isn’t worth attempting in part. I see the inward work of religion as continuous rather than discrete. I understand the cultivation of a Spirit-led life to be a process, not an instant of conversion. While Grace is received, and many Sauls have been turned *en route* to Damascus, I am more inter-

ested in the path on which Saul placed his feet after conversion than the place where he fell to the earth.

I believe that part of the rise of theopoetic perspectives will be a parallel call to dialogue and communal connection. Engaging in the theopoetic process means coming to terms with the Gracious Presence that unites all things, even in this broken world. It means learning to perceive Spirit at work in the mundane and transcending modern alienation with a call to unite and serve. Just as Kunitz gained recognition through his poetry though it was his garden that fed him, so too do we come to know one another through words and actions although it is that deeper, quiet place of God that unites us. So as not to become engaged in infinite navel-gazing and/or personal obliteration in the face of constant direct divinity, we can choose to create language that captures shades of that experience in such a way that others recognize it and are affected by it. In some cases, affection is the effect, and those affected are “lavishly flung forth”¹² into the world where they encounter others and inspire other work. At best, theopoetics is a means of engaging language, and perception in such a way that one enters into a radical relation with the Divine, the Other, and the Creation in which all occurs.

Dance

Scott Holland has written that theopoetics “is a kind of writing that invites more writing. Its narratives lead to other narratives, its metaphors encourage new metaphors, its confessions invoke more confessions, and its conversations invite more conversations,”¹³ and while I agree with this statement, I find it akin to defining love by saying that “it is a kind of emotion.” It is true, and yet it does not capture the fullness. Theopoetics is a type of writing, *and* I would like to offer that it is a way of perceiving as well. The theopoet as wordsmith can so craft because she sees theopoetically, because she is looking for all the ways her experiences are variations on a Divine theme. Her poems then, or prose, or songs, are new iterations and utterances of that eternal Word which was in the beginning. Is she crafting new scripture? No, not as such, but she has served to manifest another means by which we may more fully come to know the movement of the Spirit.

Is her service needed? Strictly speaking, probably not. Every moment is, in and of itself, inherently a possible gateway into a deepening life of faith; Grace is available and abundant regardless of what we do. This, of course, begs the question: What is the point of it then? Why bother writing? To proceed down this path asks us to consider the possibility that any human-initiated act is superfluous. Given the saturation of Divinity throughout our experience, there is no need for additional contributions. God's got it covered.

If some choose the above path, I will not begrudge them, but I for one find the argument a bloodless and abstracted one that leaves little room for the reality of human proclivity and failing. Do I want to encourage human frailty? Not at all, but I do want to be honest in acknowledging that often we don't perceive the Divine, that we are enfolded, that we sometimes do need to be jolted out of various stupors, and that there is joy in song and dance and play. These acknowledgments are core to my understanding of the field: a theopoetic perspective is one that admits an element of playfulness, joy, and grit into a project interested in putting words to the numinous. It is a corrective to abstraction that has no experiential grounding and, like art, is bound intimately within the context of our community. While the artist can declare his work as peerless, ultimately it is community and time that determine the profundity of a piece.

I am not asking that we accept every voice as truth. I am asking that we make room for every voice to be heard, with an understanding that everyone has something to offer. To paraphrase Holland, theopoetics is an invitation and its response: narratives, metaphors, confessions, and conversations all spiraling around and through that which is true. It is a dance and a blossoming, a longing and a love affair.

Field

In a footnote to his essay "U.S. Hispanic Popular Catholicism as Theopoetics," Roberto Goizueta makes a gripping claim that pertains directly to theopoetics.

The existence of its "unity and rootedness in praxis preclude the possibility of a theopoetics immune to theological and ethical critique. There can be no apolitical or a-theological affect any

more than there can be an apolitical or affectless theology; the most sterile logic cannot be completely devoid of affect any more than a mind can exist without a body. A theo-poetics that sets itself over against theology and ethics distorts human praxis and, thus, expresses a distorted view of the God revealed in that praxis.”¹⁴

In this text, I see an articulation of theo-poetics as a resonating process set to oscillation by simultaneous forces of esthetics, ethics, experience, and reason. I find great hope in this admission of theo-poetics as a field of inquiry somewhat apart from the specialized disciplines of formal academia. It is related by means of abstracted critical study, poetics, and artistic vision and yet is also grounded in an engagement with the political and social world. It suggests that just as humans are complex creatures with many facets and means of participating in humanity, perhaps there is a way of communicating and partaking in spiritual experience in such a way that is more inclusive of multiple modalities.

Goizueta’s articulation is appealing to me because it takes into consideration various facets of the human experience and sets them in motion around the centrality of God, allowing for diversity of expression. I think about it like a gyroscope, whose massive moving center is the means by which the object as whole can be kept upright. Our tendency, where God is concerned, is to overemphasize a particular quality of divinity at the exclusion of other aspects in what I understand as a misguided attempt to name and claim God. The result is an off-balanced worldview in every sense of the German *Weltanschauung*. When certain modalities, such as rational scientific prose, rise to cultural dominance, even in fields better suited to other means of connection, such as religion, the result is that any engagement with the material in question is irrevocably altered by the means used to engage it.

While it may well bear equal part insolence and audacity, it strikes me that the point in question here might best be illustrated by amending the contents of one of Rumi’s most quoted poems. I tamper with his verse in the hope that my short poetic intrusion will serve better than a page of prose, and, in the event of offense, that it can be forgiven once carried out.

In John 15:15, Jesus reminds the disciples that they are to be called friends because friends can know the Lord's reasoning, while servants merely serve. Perhaps, the presence of the Gospel is enough alone, but in my foolishness and exuberance, I want not just to hear it but to experience it as Spirit breaks anew into my life and brings some measure of creative refreshment. I want to find ways to express how it is that I am inspired and I want to hear how it is that others experience the Divine. In that conversation, I cannot help but feel that I find an easier path into fellowship and a greater sense of understanding: the power of the Gospel is not just in text on the page, but in that text as it is given breath in the lives and actions of the human communities committed to each other and to the work of the Kingdom. To better understand this text, and each other, I think we can continue to develop ways of speaking to one another that help to clarify our experience of God in the world and guide us toward the truth of what we are called to as a people.

And while we might never discern the whole of that truth, we might as well seek some measure of it. In so doing perhaps we will find new ways that the Gospel can speak to us and through us. To this point, Peter Rollins has performed an amazing job of articulating this sense of communal truth-seeking. He writes that religious truth shouldn't be considered fact in the way we scientifically use the word. He asks us to consider religious truth not as a means of defining reality, but as way of transforming reality. When we do this, he suggests that "instead of truth being an epistemological description, it is rediscovered as a soteriological event (an event that brings healing and salvation). This is no more a form of relativism than it is a form of absolutism; rather, it is an understanding of truth as that which transforms us into more Christ-like individuals."¹⁵

My sense is that liberating discipleship is a process best explored in expressive community. Within the context of that body, we can test our personal experience against that of others, developing skills of discernment and articulation in the journey toward an understanding of what it is we are called to in this world. And while I have no clear, direct sense of an ultimate reality, I find that I can concur with the poet Louise Glück. "Whatever the truth is, to speak it is a great adventure."¹⁶

Discovery

And so while I didn't meet my mystery woman there in the Rochester airport, I did meet God. There in the empty, expectant space, the potential for anything to happen was opened up. I was prepared to be yolked into service and was willing to be transformed in the experience. The specifics of my dreams were not seen, but for following them I found reward. In the early quiet of that western New York morning I came to be grateful again for having stories that I can believe, and for living a life in which I have the chance to believe them. The in-breaking of Spirit is profound and the pregnancy which marks those moments of revelation is Divine indeed.

My God is the god in the next room,
cooking unseen feasts and humming;

the ache of the moment before the rain
when you're sure the whole June
cloud is ready to burst through
though you haven't felt single drop;

the photographer's ironic smile
after her darkroom discovery
that in the background of a misfire
she has captured two lovers gazing
longingly at each other's meals;

the dandelion blade that insists
adamantly that it must reside directly
in the middle of your neighbor's
suburban blacktopped driveway;

the sight of the shadow of a bird flitting
by the sill near the bed of an aging Grace,
who can no longer move but counts herself
lucky because at least she can still see.

This is my God:

expectant and grinning,
wild and near.¹⁷

Notes

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2. Keefe-Perry, L. B. C. "Theopoetics: Process and Perspective." *Christianity and Literature*. 58.4 (2009).
3. McLuhan, Eric. "Marshall McLuhan's theory of communication: The Yegg." *Global Media Journal—Canadian Edition*, 1.1 (2008): 26.
4. McLuhan, Marshall. "Casting My Perils Before Swains" *McLuhan: Hot & Cool*. Ed. Gerald Emanuel Stearn. New York: Signet Books, 1969. xii.
5. Eliot, Thomas S. *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965, 134. Also cited in Eric McLuhan's piece.
6. Campbell, Joseph, and Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Anchor Printing, 1991, 73.
7. Wilder, Amos N. *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976, 2.
8. Keefe-Perry, L. B. C. "Theopoetics: Process and Perspective." *Christianity and Literature*. 58.4 (2009): 592.
9. Bierregaard, Richard O. "John James Audubon—A Bird's-eye View." The Department of Biology University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Accessed August 24, 2009 at <http://www.bioweb.uncc.edu/bierregaard/audubon.htm>.
10. I do not intend to include here those that compose what is often referred to as the "New Atheists." I do not believe they are afraid. They are worth considering briefly, though, so as to hold them in relief to those uncomfortable with voicing their personal sense. I often find that atheistic arguments against God articulate a host of qualities which I too challenge. As it pertains to this piece, the relevant item is that all atheistic arguments I have come across have as fixed an idea of God as do literal, fundamentalist theologians. While they might take separate sides in the debate, both believe they are arguing from firm and fixed ground. So whether it be atheism or "protheism," those who encounter mystery and do not presume to force it to conform are surrounded on all sides by people telling them that God is indeed one certain way.
11. Lumphor, David. "Language Surprised." *Interviews and Encounters with Stanley Kunitz*. Ed. Stanley Moss. Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: Sheep Meadow, 1993, 6.
12. Rilke, Rainer M. "Poem II, 26." *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*. Trans. Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy. Riverhead Trade, 2005, 122.
13. Holland, Scott. "Theology Is a Kind of Writing: The Emergence of Theopoetics." *Cross Currents* 47.3 (1997): 317–331.
14. Goizueta, Roberto S. "U.S. Hispanic Popular Catholicism as Theopoetics." *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*. Eds. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996, 264.
15. Rollins, Peter. "Christian A/Theism." *Movement: Termly Magazine of the Student Christian Movement*. 122 (2006): 15.
16. Glück, Louise. "To My Teacher." *Interviews and Encounters with Stanley Kunitz*. Ed. Stanley Moss. Riverdale-on-Hudson, NY: Sheep Meadow, 1993. 140.
17. Keefe-Perry, L. B. C. "Bird Shadows," *Spirit Rising*. Ed. Angelina Conti, et al. Quakers Uniting in Publications (QUIP), forthcoming.