

# HurlyBurly Secrets:

## A Reflection on Thomas Merton's French Poems

by **Robert E. Daggy**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** When, in 1966, Thomas Merton sent his poem "Le Secret" to the Paris Review "La Table Ronde" he also, at the same time, sent a copy to Victor and Carolyn Hammer, suggesting that they might want to print it at their press, the Stamperia del Santuccio — this they could not do. Now, after thirty years have passed, "Le Secret" (together with Merton's other known poems in French) have been published by Carolyn Hammer at her press, The Anvil Press.

### I

In the late 1950's, Thomas Merton recorded in his journal: "There are times when I am mortally homesick for the south of France where I was born."<sup>1</sup> He was born in the foothills of the Pyrenees on January 31, 1915 in a small town called Prades. On October 23, 1995 "The Merton Association," a group in Prades headed by the Mayor, commemorated the eightieth anniversary of Merton's birth. A plaque was placed on the side of the house at 1 rue du 4 Septembre where he was born. It says simply: "Ici est ne / Thomas Merton / Ecrivain Americain." Though designated at his birthplace as an American writer (some think "monk" should be added), Merton's "French-ness" which he claimed throughout his life in varying degrees and on different levels has been acknowledged.

Economic exigency and the scenery around Prades were responsible for his being born in France at all. His father, Owen Merton, was a watercolorist from New Zealand. His mother, Ruth Jenkins Merton, also an artist with a bent toward interior design, was from the United States. The Mertons left England and went to the south of France soon after their marriage in April, 1914 because they could live there relatively cheaply and because Owen like to paint French landscapes. There their son Tom, as Ruth insisted he be named, was born nine months later.

Tom Merton was to live in France for two periods during his life. Both periods were to influence him. The first period lasted from his birth until late July, 1916 when Owen and Ruth Merton, increasingly uncertain with France involved in the First World War, managed to obtain passage from Bordeaux for the United States. Merton's second period of residence in France extended from August, 1925 to June, 1928. The intervening nine years were spent in the United States, mostly living with his American grandparents, Sam and Martha Jenkins, and his younger brother, John Paul, after his mother's death in 1921. Owen Merton, who lived in Europe and Africa after early 1923, returned in the summer of 1925 and was allowed by the Jenkins family to take his older son Tom back to France with him.

Merton noted of his return to France: "It really saved me."<sup>2</sup> He later described periods in France as among "the darkest" in his life, but he also obviously found the French experience salutary in his development. For one thing, he was *with* his father and the first year when he actually lived with Owen at St. Antonin remained for him one of the great graces of his life (he later recorded that "Life at St. Antonin was a revelation"). In September, 1926 Owen enrolled him in the Lycee Ingres at Montauban and a darker though significant period began. Merton later said: "Entering [the Lycee] as far as I could see at that time was about equivalent to entering Sing Sing."<sup>3</sup> Yet the Lycee was to influence him far beyond developing his facility in the French language. His authorized biographer, Michael Mott, states that Merton "became an expert in the student mores of three very different subcultures [French, English and American]." In his adult years he

may have remained, in his casual exterior, a product of English schools, but Mott insists that this was “reinforced by the odd combination of seriousness and cynicism found in schoolboy France” (Mott, pp. 32-33).

## II

The ten year old Tom Merton who returned to France in 1925 had to relearn French though he had been bilingual when he learned to speak. Actually, since Ruth and Owen spoke to him in both English and French, he learned a kind of pidgin as he began to speak, saying some words in English and some in French, combining the two as he started to put phrases together. This continued for a time after the Mertons arrived in the United States. Undoubtedly through adult influence, he called his American grandmother “Bonnemaman,” the name he used for her as long as she lived. Ruth Merton recorded in *Tom's Book*, a baby diary she kept, that he continued to use French words. On November 1, 1916, he exclaimed with great enthusiasm when taken out for a walk: “Oh sui! oh joli!” She stated that he often said a word or two in French when he first awoke and added “at other times he is quite furious if I dare to talk to him in French.”<sup>4</sup> In her list of his vocabulary at age two (recorded on January 31, 1917), she notes only three or four French words and phrases, one of which was “Monsieur Wind.” Fairly quickly, for reasons we can only guess infant Tom Merton stopped speaking of Prades and people they had known there and he also stopped using French words.

So, he basically learned French in 1925 and it seems not to have been particularly difficult for him. He later stated: “I was always able to develop the right accent and the right protective feathers in a few months.”<sup>5</sup> In a short time he was busy writing *romans* and stories in French (Mott, p. 33). After he left France in 1928 and was enrolled in school in England, his writing in French stopped though he continued throughout his schooling to read books in French. There is a lot of French and even lists of French adjectives in the first of his published journals, *Run to the Mountain*, which covers the years from 1939 to 1941. He haunted the French pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair.<sup>6</sup>

Merton emerged as an aspiring poet from “the decade of nihilism and cultural despair to which Eliot had given the name of *The Wasteland*.”<sup>7</sup> He looked to the French poets of the last century just as Eliot had done, though he tended in this period to be somewhat dismissive of Eliot (*Run*, pp. 92-93, 108). He said: “I think the best modern poetry is being written in France, has been for the last fifty years. Between 1880 and 1920 perhaps the only good poetry was being written there” (*Run*, p. 66). Like Eliot and so many other young poets and writers, he admired the French poet Jules Laforgue and wrote that his poems “are very fine and moving: more moving than anything in English since then, except by Yeats” (*Run*, p. 66). Yet, unlike Eliot, Merton cannot be described as a Laforgist though the influence of the French symbolists was to surface later in his poetry. In this pre-monastic period, his search for new rhythms and experimentation with language led him to another writer: James Joyce.

After reading Joyce, he became fascinated with combining languages by writing in the style known as “macaronic.” In a journal passage which does not appear in *Run to the Mountain*, dated January 25, 1941, he said: “That's what I like writing . . . That's the way I want to write.”<sup>8</sup> His only published novel, *My Argument with the Gestapo*, written in 1941 but not published until 1969, is subtitled “A Macaronic Journal.” Basically in English, it is riddled with passages and phrases in French, Spanish, Italian, and combinations of two or more languages. It may be too much to claim that his infant experience of speaking in two languages influenced his macaronic writing, but it is not too much to say that the two French periods left him with facility and inclination to communicate, even to think as he claimed, in more than one language.

Neither this nor a certain pride in his “French-ness” was ever to disappear. One observer referred to the country of his birth as Merton's “beloved France.”<sup>9</sup> He himself referred to it on occasion as “my native France.”<sup>10</sup> It pleased him when he entered the Abbey of Gethsemani in 1941 that he was given “Louis” after St. Louis IX of France as his name in religion (Mott, p. 211). Reports from Father Chrysogonus Waddell after visits to St. Antonin in 1964 gave Merton information about that period in his life which he had not known before and this interested him.<sup>11</sup> Throughout his

monastic career, he wrote occasional letters in French and did several “Bulletins” (or reviews) in French for *Collectanea Cisterciensia*, the French language journal of the Cistercian Order. In 1965 he wrote: “I still read a great deal of French, though not a great deal of contemporary French poetry.”<sup>12</sup> He spoke limited French in some sessions at the Bangkok Conference where he died in 1968.

### III

Thomas Merton debuted in the literary world as a poet with *Thirty Poems* in 1944. His output as a poet was as prodigious as his prose productions were enormous. *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (1977) runs to 1,030 pages. Only four of these poems were written in French, the first, “Je Crois en L’Amour,” in the late 1940’s and the other three all in 1966.

Merton scholars have been mostly silent about the four French poems, not answering why they may have been written in French nor attempting to place them in context. We wait for a poem-by-poem analysis of Merton’s verses. Sister Therese Lentfoehr, long regarded as the expert on Merton’s poetry, does mention all of them in her study, *Words and Silence: On the Poetry of Thomas Merton*, but beyond her usual effusion of “brilliant,” “witty” and the like offers no critical analysis and little explanation.<sup>13</sup> Other scholars do not mention the French poems at all, probably because they stand outside the thrust of their studies and are four oddities among Merton’s poetry.<sup>14</sup> Susan Margaret Campbell, in the first doctoral dissertation on Merton, mentions “Je Crois en l’Amour” in passing, but makes it clear that she is making no attempt to place it in the framework of his poetry to that point. She calls it “an attempt at French verse: and “little more than a *tour de force*” (the latter obviously meant to be taken in a negative sense as an indication that Merton was merely preening).<sup>15</sup> Though the poems may be oddities, there is, nevertheless, evidence to explain Merton’s departure from English into French on these four occasions. The reasons are rooted in part, of course, in his affinity for France and the streak of Gallicism in him. After all, put simply, he *could* write in French, but other factors seem to have caused him to do so in each case.

### IV

“Je Crois en l’Amour” appeared in the fourth collection of Merton’s poetry, *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, published in 1949. This slim volume included just seventeen poems, all written at the Abbey of Gethsemani after 1947.<sup>16</sup> There is a certain French resonance to the volume beyond the inclusion of the one poem in French, partially prompted by Merton’s continuing reading of French authors. First of all, the title was suggested by an unidentified line from the French novelist, Leon Bloy, whom Merton admired: “When those who love God try to talk about Him, their words are blind lions looking for springs in the desert.” Secondly, Merton dedicated the volume to French author Jacques Maritain, whom he also admired.

Something about the style struck observers as somehow French. Campbell, while discussing the impact of Eliot on Merton, suggested that Merton’s use of the device of *synthesisia* may be traced directly to the influence of the French symbolists (Campbell, p. 229). At least three reviews at the time of publication suggested French stylistic influence. An anonymous notice in *The New Yorker* said: “Merton again displays a rhetoric and a religious intensity more usual in French poetry (Peguy, Claudel) than in English.”<sup>17</sup> Robert Gorham Davis, reviewing the volume in *The Saturday Review*, though anxious to emphasize how “American” he found the poems, felt that Merton’s images had “the magic quality of quite similar images in [Rimbaud] . . . They are clear and hard and very physical.”<sup>18</sup> Gervase Toelle, one of only two reviewers who mentioned “Je Crois en l’Amour” directly, found its inclusion in *The Tears of the Blind Lions* questionable and its style derivative. He thought he heard “Parnassian echoes through the poem” and asked, “can one read of ‘*fraicheur des sommets liturgiques*’ without being reminded of Claudel?” Toelle felt that the writing and inclusion of the poem was connected somehow to Merton’s imitating Eliot, an imitation he found unfortunate in this case. He said: “Certainly Merton does not succeed in French as well as Eliot did, and even Eliot’s French verses are something of a museum curiosity.”<sup>19</sup>

Toelle was not alone in pointing out Eliot's influence on Merton. Nearly every reviewer did so. If, however, Toelle was right, if Merton, consciously or unconsciously, imitated Eliot (even by including a poem in French as Eliot had in his early volumes of verse), it helps to explain the French resonance critics found in the volume because Eliot was "a poet whose work [was] avowedly influenced by significant French — especially Symbolist — poetry." Merton had by this time definitely reversed his earlier, sophomoric dismissal of Eliot. As he was writing the poems in *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, he was reading Eliot and found *Four Quartets* "as beautiful as anything that has been written in English for fifty years or more."<sup>20</sup> And Merton, the insecure younger writer, wanted the good opinion for his own writing of those two giants of English literature, Eliot and Evelyn Waugh. His publishers, James Laughlin and Robert Giroux, managed to get Merton's earlier volumes to Eliot (probably hoping, as publishers do, for endorsement). But Eliot did not like Merton's poetry any more than Waugh like his prose, finding him "hit or miss" as a poet." According to Michael Mott, Merton was "devastated" and his confidence deeply shaken (Mott, pp. 242, 254).

Merton received the news of Eliot's reaction in 1949 as *The Tears of the Blind Lions* was being prepared for publication. He immediately informed Laughlin that he would write no more poetry. If he had imitated Eliot in those poems — if as a side issue he had included, consciously or unconsciously, a French poem aping Eliot — his efforts had proved useless because Eliot did not like his poetry anyway. Toelle's review later could not have helped his mood. Small wonder that he was devastated in 1949. It must have been, as Mott claims, a factor in the vocational crisis and writer's block which he was to experience in the next few years. Six years passed before Merton actively wrote poetry again and eight years until the publication of his next volume of verse, *The Strange Islands*.<sup>21</sup> There were no French poems. Seventeen years passed before he wrote another poem in French — and then he wrote three in one year, but they were written for quite different reasons than "Je Crois en l'Amour" may have been. By 1966, we find a more mature and confident Merton, one influenced but perhaps less imitative. Scholars continue to point to the influence of Eliot and various European and Latin American poets, particularly the Chilean Nicanor Parra, in his later poetry. Two of the later French poems seem to contain Laforgian echoes. Lentoehr saw "Rilkean transparencies" in one and Carolyn R. Hammer correctly sensed René Char in another (Lentfoehr, p. 25). All three were connected, more than "Je Crois en l'Amour," to the continuing disclosure of Merton's autobiography.

+++++

The three later poems — "Le Secret," "Cable # 35," and "Les Cinq Vierges" — were written in 1966. The original drafts are in the same notebook, *Working Notebook #19*, all within eighteen pages of each other. "Les Cinq Vierges" is on the two pages following the draft of "Le Secret."

"Le Secret" was the first written, as Merton notes on "Jan 23, 1966." 1966 was a year of "secrets" for Merton, secrets which went beyond those locked in his childhood, some of which Waddell disclosed to him after visiting St. Antonin. Merton increasingly felt that his retirement to the hermitage was, by its very nature, a withdrawal into a life in which the mental and physical secrets of his own being filled his thinking. He signaled in an interview published on January 23, the same day that he wrote the French poem, that he would in future be more secluded and involved in his "retired and silent life"<sup>22</sup> He became obsessed with his dreams (particularly those in which young women appeared to him), with the isolation and aloneness he felt in the solitude at the hermitage, with deterioration in his fifty-one year old body, and with death. Much of this reached climactic proportions, possibly inevitably, later in the year in one of the great "secrets" of his life, his involvement with the young nurse. In the summer of 1966, undoubtedly influenced by that involvement, he wrote what he described as sixteen "secret poems" (Mott, p. 459).

He wrote "Le Secret" on January 23, that day on which the Louisville paper announced his retreat to a more hidden and isolated life. The poem emerged in nearly mystical fashion. Merton wrote in his journal: "A marvelous morning (early in the night hours) in which, among other things, I suddenly wrote a French poem." It "occurred," he wrote

elsewhere, “all of a sudden one morning about 4 A. M. (January 23, 1966) in a time of pre-dawn darkness” (Lentfoehr, p. 72). Though far less dark than Laforgue, Merton’s poem does give expression, like Laforgue, “to his obsession with death, his loneliness, and his boredom with daily routine” by taking him away from the milieu in which he found himself currently living. Merton’s “secrets” help him transcend in nearly dreamlike fashion even the woods and the hermitage.

Written spontaneously according to Merton’s account, it would seem to fit into his increasing experiments in poetry. Charles Dumont, OCSO, praises Merton for the “pure emotion and naive expression of that wonderful morning” embodied in “Le Secret,” but notes that there is some “gaucherie” in the poem. Dumont finds the “versification . . . unusual in French,” particularly in mixing regular and blank verse. It may be that Merton was playing in French with the possibilities he had started to see with anti-poetry. Dumont finds the poem joyful, one which should not be read as “an homily” but as an expression of Merton’s life growing from his secrets at the time.<sup>23</sup> Michael Mott states: “Most of Merton’s poetry of 1966-67 has the fun of play (pure or sardonic), though at times the game is too private” (Mott, p. 460).

The draft of “Le Secret” appears to have been written hurriedly. It is all over the two pages of the notebook (was it written in semi-darkness?). It starts on the right hand page, with arrows drawn to indicate the order of the stanzas. It continues on the bottom of the left hand page with the last stanza, starting “Je suis un oiseau . . .,” at the top. Several words, phrases, and even stanzas are crossed out. Merton changed only two or three words in the draft that remains before it was typed and mimeographed.

Merton typically saw anything he wrote into print and “Le Secret” was no exception. Through a process we can now only imagine, the poem went off to France and appeared in the July-August 1966 issue of the Paris review, *La Table Ronde*.<sup>24</sup> He included it in his final “collection” of poems, *Sensation Time at the Home and Other New Poems*, compiled in 1968 and never published as a separate volume. The collection, with “Le Secret,” appeared as a section in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* in 1977.

+++++

“Cable # 35” was written in the summer of 1966 when Merton was busy at work on a new collection, originally called *Edifying Cables* but published as *Cables to the Ace, or Familiar Liturgies of Misunderstanding*. Mott calls it “Merton’s most baffling collection” (Mott, p. 459). Lentfoehr, typically, found it an “exciting collage” in which Merton’s images despite their “tenuous contiguity, result in a strange lucidity” (Lentfoehr, p. 99). Most scholars would agree with Mott, finding it difficult to wind through the labyrinth of *Cables to the Ace* and discovering much that is not “lucid” along the way. Merton himself said in November: “Finished a long poem sequence, but I am not happy with it, it is not rich enough, hot enough, cerebral maybe, ironic, testy, blah” (*Courage*, p. 264). Mott advises that the best preparation for reading *Cables* may be found in Merton’s long time fascination with “macaronic literature,” particularly in the macaronic letters he was exchanging in this period with his friend, the poet Robert Lax (Mott, p. 459).<sup>25</sup>

*Cables* has been seen as autobiographical. The impulse which produced the spontaneous poem “Le Secret” was also at work in the production of *Cables* which is, in many ways, obscure, private and secret. In his last years Merton was on “a David Copperfield sort of trip,” mining things in his past to make his present explicable. If *Cables* is autobiographical, then is the French schoolboy coming through in “Cable # 35” behind the facade of the English public school boy? If there is significance to the pattern, as some scholars claim, is it not striking that the French cable is embedded near the center of the volume almost as Merton’s French-ness was embedded at the center of his being?

Merton himself quickly pointed out a direct French influence in “Cable # 35.” During the summer and early fall of 1966 he was engrossed in reading the poetry and prose of René Char (*Courage*, pp. 228, 247). He tied Char to other reading he was doing and wrote to Jacques Maritain that he found François René de Chateaubriand’s biography of Rancé and Char “much alike” and used them together in conferences for the monks (*Courage*, p. 50). He told his friend Cid Corman that he would send him “a couple of pages of Char-ish French verse that I have written myself recently. Part of a long sequence . . .” (*Courage*, p. 250). It is not surprising then that Carolyn Hammer finds Char’s poetry so like Merton’s *Cables to the Ace*. Merton intended to imitate Char in “Cable # 35.” Luke Flaherty points out Char’s influence on the

cable, but does not discuss the cable itself. While David D. Cooper states that scholars have gone “to extraordinary lengths to unslip the Gordian knot of *Cable to the Ace*,” they have avoided the French strands of “Cable # 35” (Cooper, p. 216). *Cables to the Ace* was published in 1968 before Merton’s death.

+++++

The fourth French poem, “Les Cinq Vierges,” written soon after October 7, 1966, grew from an event in Merton’s life. On October 6 and 7, he received French author Jacques Maritain, then on his last visit to the United States. During discussions at Merton’s hermitage, he failed to convince Maritain that Bob Dylan was the “American Francois Villon.” But they did agree on their objection to some of the French translations made for Mass in the vernacular. The discussion apparently centered on a new translation of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins with Maritain opposed to the phrase “les vierges etourdies” (meaning confused or dizzy) for the foolish virgins. Late in the afternoon, Maritain became a bit confused himself and told Merton: “Forgive me, *cher Tom* . . . I am a little *etourdi*” (Mott, p. 461).

After Maritain’s departure, Merton wrote a poem in French “pour Jacques” which he called in his notebook “Les Dix Vierges.” The first line of the handwritten draft reads “Il y avait dix vierges.” There were, of course, ten virgins, but Merton’s tongue-in-cheek poem is about only the five who were “hurluburlu” — scatterbrained, the word he used to replace “etourdies” — though he says at the end that ten virgins attended the wedding. Subsequent drafts were titled “Les Cinq Vierges.”

Merton not only recasts the parable in the French vernacular, but thrusts it into the twentieth century. He had already come to feel that some of the reforms and much of the renewal attendant on the Second Vatican Council pandered to misconceptions about what a “popular” church should be. In addition he felt that the “moguls” of church, state and commerce constantly debased language to serve their purposes. Though he undoubtedly meant “Les Cinq Vierges” to be funny on one level, he gave serious expression to the absurdity that can result when we reduce our language and action to today’s terms and ideas.<sup>26</sup>

Why, he seems to be asking, have a parable about oil lamps for a generation nurtured on the pap of television and used to electricity? What would they know about oil lamps? What would they care about oil for obsolete lamps? Give them gasoline and motor oil, the kind of oil they can understand. Put the foolish virgins on motorcycles and let them have a “real” twentieth century disaster. Let them run out of gas and oil. Running out of gas is serious business in our society and that is exactly what the five “hurluburlu” virgins do. Yet, Merton, unlike St. Matthew’s “bridegroom,” allows them — scatterbrained as they were — to remain, dancing even, at the wedding: “So there were ten virgins / At the Lamb’s Wedding.” So what if the foolish virgins ran out of oil. They can party anyway in our society. Is this another of his comments on our consistent refusal to take responsibility for ourselves or to expect responsibility in others, even in preparation for Christ’s presence?

“Les Cinq Vierges” is the last of the French poems. It is striking, though probably not significant, that Merton dedicated the volume in which his first French poem appeared to Jacques Maritain and that he wrote his fourth directly for Maritain. An interesting coda to the French poems developed in 1968.

+++++

In the two years after 1966, Merton pursued his experiments with anti-poetry and became intrigued with “Concrete Poetry.” Some of this dabbling (if we can call it that) was certainly a response to the minimalist poetry and letters of his friend Robert Lax. His fascination with Chinese ideograms and his practice of a sort of pseudo-calligraphy may have influenced his attempts at this more visual genre of poetry (Lentfoehr, p. 141). Some of the concrete poems appeared in *Monks Pond*, a four issue “literary magazine” which Merton edited in 1968. “Found Macaronic Poem” is a mixture of languages (he obviously continued to like this form) while “Semiotic Poem from Racine’s *Iphigenia*” plays with French.<sup>27</sup>

The one which closes our discussion was written by Merton, who went back to *Notebook # 19*, on July 17, 1968. He must have remained intrigued by the word he used for the foolish virgins in “Les Cinq Vierges,” that rollicking sounding “hurluburlu.” He wrote a concrete poem using the word toward the end of the notebook. We might consider it the fifth, and last, French poem by Thomas Merton, “Ecrivain Americain.”

H U R L U B  
 E R L U H  
 U R L U B  
 E R L U H  
 U R L U B  
 E R L U  
 B E R  
 L U H U R L  
 U B E R L U

H U R L U B  
 E R L U H  
 U R L U B  
 E R L U H  
 U R L U B  
 E R L U  
 B E R L  
 U H U R L  
 U B E R L U <sup>28</sup>

---

#### Notes

1. Merton, Thomas. *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), pp. 167-170.
2. Mott, Michael. *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), p. 25. Hereafter referred to as Mott.
3. Merton, Thomas. “On Remembering Monsieur Delmas.” In *The Teacher*; edited by Morris L. Ernst (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 48.
4. Merton, Ruth (Calvert) Jenkins. “*Tom’s Book*” (Manuscript diary, Thomas Merton Studies Center, Louisville, Kentucky), p. 9.
5. *The Road to Joy: The Letters of Thomas Merton to New and Old Friends*; edited by Robert E. Daggy (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989), p. 635.
6. *Run to the Mountain: The Story of a Vocation / The Journals of Thomas Merton, Volume One, 1939-1941*; edited by Patrick Hart, OCSO (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), especially pp. 19, 23-24.
7. Reilly, Patrick. “The Paradoxes of Thomas Merton (1915-1968).” Lecture (University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, 1995), p. 2. For Merton’s comments on that decade, see *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*; edited by Brother Patrick Hart (New York: New Directions, 1981), p. 314. Hereafter referred to as *Literary*.

8. "St. Bonaventure Journal" (Merton Archives, St. Bonaventure University, Olean, New York), typed-in photocopied pages.
9. Lekai, Louis J. "Thomas Merton, the Historian?" *Cistercian Studies* 13:4 (1978), p. 386.
10. See, for example, Thomas Merton, *Honorable Reader: Reflections on My Work*; edited by Robert E. Daggy (New York: Crossroad, 1989), p.
11. Chrysogonus Waddell to Thomas Merton, 1 October 1964 (Correspondence files, Thomas Merton Studies Center, Louisville, Kentucky).
12. *The Courage for Truth: The Letters of Thomas Merton to Writers*; edited by Christine M. Bochen (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993), p. 241. Hereafter referred to as *Courage*.
13. Lentfoehr, Therese. *Words and Silence: On the Poetry of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1979), pp. 24, 64, 72, 77. Hereafter referred to as Lentfoehr.
14. See George Kilcourse, *Ace of Freedoms: Thomas Merton's Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); Victor A. Kramer, *Thomas Merton, Monk and Artist* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987); Ross Labrie, *The Art of Thomas Merton* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1979); and George Woodcock, *Thomas Merton. Monk and Poet: A Critical Study* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978). Merton's book length *Cables to the Ace* has received considerable critical attention, but the French "Cable # 35" is not mentioned. See, for example, David D. Cooper, "From Prophecy to Parody: Thomas Merton's *Cables to the Ace*," *The Merton Annual* 1, ed. Robert E. Daggy, et.al. (New York: AMS Press, 1988) — hereafter referred to as Cooper; Luke Flaherty, *Mystery and Unity as Anagogical Vision in Thomas Merton's Cables to the Ace: A Critical Explanation*, master's thesis (Louisville: University of Louisville, 1979); and Gail Ramshaw, "The Pattern in Thomas Merton's *Cables to the Ace*," *The Merton Annual* 1, ed. Robert E. Daggy, et.al. (New York: AMS Press, 1988).
15. Campbell, Susan Margaret. *The Poetry of Thomas Merton: A Study in Theory, Influences, and Form*; doctoral dissertation (Berkeley: Stanford University, 1954), p. 312. Hereafter referred to as Campbell.
16. "Everything in the volume *Tears of the Blind Lions* was written at Gethsemani since 1947." Letter from Brother Campion to Sister Rosemarie Julie, 7 July 1951. In Gavin, Rosemarie Julie, *An Analysis of Imagery in Selected Poems of Thomas Merton*; master's thesis (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1951), p. 71.
17. "[Review of] *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, by Thomas Merton." *The New Yorker* (11 March 1950).
18. Davis, Robert Gorham. "Where Silence is a Ministry." Review of *The Tears of the Blind Lions*. *The Saturday Review* (11 February 1950).
19. Toelle, Gervase, O' Carm. "Merton's Most Recent Poems." Review of *The Tears of the Blind Lions*. *Spirit* 16 (January 1950), no. 6, p. 196.
20. *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and Writer / The Journals of Thomas Merton, Volume Two, 1941-1952*; edited by Jonathan Montaldo (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 182.
21. Merton says in his short "Preface" that most of the poems were written in 1955 and 1956. See Merton, Thomas, *The Strange Islands* (New York: New Directions, 1957).
22. Morrissey, James, "Monk, Man and Myth: Talks with and about Thomas Merton," *The Courier-Journal Magazine* (23 January 1966), p. 15+.
23. Letter from Charles Dumont, OCSO, to Patrick Hart, OCSO, 14 December 1993.
24. Merton, Thomas, "Le Secret," *La Table Ronde* (Juillet-Aout 1966), nos. 222-223, pp. 88-90.
25. See Thomas Merton and Robert Lax, *A Catch of Anti-Letters* (Kansas City, Missouri: Sheed & Ward, 1994).
26. See "War and the Crisis of Language." In *The Nonviolent Alternative* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980), pp. 234-247.
27. *Monks Pond: Thomas Merton's Little Magazine*; edited by Robert E. Daggy (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989), p. 87, 232.
28. This version differs considerably from the one in *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* (1977), p. [1019].