

# Grave Robber Beware

By Thomas Merton

Introduction by Paul M. Pearson

Although much effort was put into making *The Collected Poems of Thomas Merton* a complete collection of his poems, over the years many more pieces have come to light in both archives and private collections. The number of universities holding Merton-related materials also continues to grow as friends and correspondents of Merton bequeath their materials to their *alma maters* or other schools – Daniel Berrigan’s papers at Cornell, Dorothy Day’s at Marquette, James Laughlin’s at Harvard, Jacques Maritain’s at Notre Dame, Michael Mott’s papers from writing the authorized biography at Northwestern, Edward Rice’s at Georgetown . . . the list is endless, and will no doubt continue to grow.

The advent of the internet has made it possible for archives to develop on-line finding aids, as opposed to card indexes and printed finding aids, to detail the materials in their collections. Thus much more information about archival holdings is available, via the internet, to researchers all over the world.

The following previously unpublished poem came to light among the papers of W. H. “Ping” Ferry which are housed at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. Ping graduated from Dartmouth in 1932 and left his papers to the College in 1975 with subsequent gifts in 1980, 1984, 1985, and 1987. Among the papers Ping deposited were copies of his correspondence from Thomas Merton, the manuscript of his book, *Letters from Tom*, various articles, prefaces and translations Merton had sent him and other related materials.

Merton and Ferry began corresponding in the fall of 1961 and in the years up until Merton’s death exchanged over one hundred and forty letters. Ferry visited Merton a number of times at Gethsemani, including participating in the November 1964 retreat on “The Spiritual Roots of Protest.” They met for the last time in the fall of 1968 as Merton, *en route* to Asia, visited the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, where Ferry was vice-president. Subsequently they traveled together along the Pacific coast for several days searching for possible sites for a hermitage.

This particular poem is not referred to in the correspondence between Merton and Ferry but frequently Merton tells Ferry that he is enclosing various materials for him, quite often poetry. The poem obviously relates to the political climate of the sixties and the involvement, by both Merton and Ferry, with the issues of their day. The tone of the poem is reminiscent of some of Merton’s later verse in *Emblems of a Season of Fury*, “Sensation Time at the Home” or the “Humorous Verse” in the *Collected Poems*. It is published with the permission of the Merton Legacy Trust.

**GRAVE ROBBER BEWARE**

the knights of Malta are  
after you lock up your

shutters the cub scouts  
of Baby Jesus are going

to burn all that commie  
literature on your lawn

Fr. Malarchey is working  
up Sunday's sermon and

it's about you I'm sorry  
I can't talk to you any

more if we meet at the  
post office it seems you

are a bad apple a worse  
apple than Eve made Adam

eat boy I really am sorry  
for you the Swiss Guard

is on full alert & they're  
flying over the exorcists.