

Grace beats Karma: Thomas Merton and the Dharma Bums

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Prologue

FINALLY AFTER PORING OVER MAPS of the United States for months, Jack Kerouac set out on the road for his great trip across the country west from New York—by heading north. It was July 17th 1947. On the map he'd traced the 'long red line called Route 6 that led from the tip of Cape Cod clear to Ely, Nevada, and there dipped down to Los Angeles' and he planned to pick this up at Bear Mountain, forty miles north of New York. Problem was, having taken the Seventh Avenue subway to the end of the line at 242nd Street then the trolley to Yonkers, transferring there to an outgoing trolley to the city limits on the east bank of the Hudson River and hitching five scattered rides to Bear Mountain Bridge, he found himself stranded on a deserted minor road with virtually no cross country traffic. On top of this, the rain was beating down, hair all wet, flimsy Mexican *huaraches* on his feet sopping. Eventually sheltering in a gas station he got a ride going the wrong way and then took a dejected bus ride back into New York.¹

Several hundred miles south at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky it had been raining for days. Thomas Merton notes in his journal for July 16th 1947, the day before Kerouac heads out on the road for the first time:

On top of all this year's rain we just had a tremendous storm during Vespers. The mill bottom was turned into a lake and the creek is trying to make a noise like Niagara. A moment ago every path was a torrent and were a hundred rivers coming down all the hillsides. The ducks were very happy.²

Introduction

I find myself drawn more and more to these two writers, the so-called father of the 'Beat Generation' and the Trappist Monk—or as his friend Ed Rice dubbed him 'a beatnik, peacenik Trappist Buddhist monk.' Robert Inchausti refers to Thomas Merton as 'Jack Kerouac's monastic elder brother,'³ a phrase I borrowed elsewhere as I began to explore the links and parallels between these two characters.⁴ What I want to do in this paper specifically, is explore further their mutual interest in, and involvement with, Buddhism and eastern traditions. This feeds into wider discussions about the Beat writers and their impact on mid-twentieth century culture in America and 'The West,' and about Thomas Merton and his increasing relationship to (or involvement in) Buddhism and 'The East.' Wider still, it feeds into questions about how Christianity and Buddhism relate to one another—about the 'grace' that is central to Christian understanding and the 'karma' (the cycle of actions and consequences) of Eastern thought. I do not conceive this in terms of opposition but rather in terms of what Christianity and Buddhism have to offer one another—conscious of Merton's caution about the birds of appetite circling the carcass for what they may gain.⁵ It is my intuition that the experiences of the Beats and of Merton are not dissimilar and that they hold key insights for these discussions. Both Merton and the Beats were searching and struggling for a spiritual breakthrough, perhaps even a sloughing off of an old skin, and maybe they even achieved it or came to the brink of it before dying or going mad. And this is where it connects with my own spiritual journey – where it gets up close and personal – and where each of us is invited to engage, to ask the questions and see what will become of us.

Western Beats and Eastern Rhythms

In February 1954 Jack Kerouac walked into the public library in San Jose, California, and became engrossed with Dwight Goddard's *A Buddhist Bible* (1932), an anthology of Buddhist and Taoist writings from various traditions and periods. Soon Kerouac was devouring everything he could lay his hands on about Eastern religions. The immediate trigger for this sudden interest had been his reading of Thoreau's *Walden* and its discussion of Indian philosophy, earlier that winter. Earlier still Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg had encountered Buddhism through Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*; and whilst at

Columbia University in the early 1940s Professor Raymond Weaver suggested they look into the writings of Egyptian Gnostics and Zen Buddhists. The third member of the original Beat trinity, William Burroughs, also claimed in a number of letters that he had studied Zen Buddhism and practised some sort of yoga long before meeting Kerouac and Ginsberg.⁶

Kerouac's awakening to Buddhism stirred interest amongst other Beat writers, most notably Allen Ginsberg who came to pursue Buddhism much further, or perhaps more formally, than Kerouac who ultimately returned to the Catholicism which, in truth, he never really left. Kerouac's own novel *The Dharma Bums* (1958) inspired many young people of the 1960s disenchanted with Cold War America and the atomic age to turn to the East as well as hit the road in the 'rucksack revolution' of wandering 'Zen lunatics' prophesied by the book. The book itself fictionalises the San Francisco scene of the mid-1950s featuring depictions of other important figures of the West Coast poetry renaissance who became part of the Beat movement and were involved in Buddhism, most notably Gary Snyder and Philip Whalen who had come down from the Pacific North West.

Dharma means variously 'the way,' 'the law,' 'righteousness,' 'reality' or more fully, 'the path which a man should follow in accordance with his nature and station in life.'⁷ And 'bum' refers to a bum, a tramp, a traveller, someone habitually on the road. The *Dharma Bums* were both the protagonists of the novel, Japhy Ryder (Gary Snyder) and Ray Smith (Jack Kerouac) and others, and the ancient Chinese poets such as Han Shan who like the Beats were chastised for their laziness and apparent purposelessness. On the penultimate page of *The Dharma Bums* we read:

And suddenly it seemed I saw that unimaginable little Chinese bum standing there, in the fog, with that expressionless humor on his steamed face. It wasn't the real-life Japhy of rucksacks and Buddhism studies and big mad parties at Corte Madera, it was the realer-than-life Japhy of my dreams, and he stood there saying nothing.

The origin of the Beat movement is sometimes traced to the famous poetry reading held on October 13th 1955 at the Six Gallery in San Francisco – and described in *The Dharma Bums* – at which Allen Ginsberg gave his first public reading of the controversial but prophetic poem 'Howl.' But this was more of a coming-out party; the true origin goes

back to 1944 when Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs first met in New York City. The phrase 'Beat Generation' was coined in 1948 by Kerouac in a conversation with fellow writer, John Clellon Holmes as they struggled to describe the times in which they lived and their developing outlook.⁸

It's a state-of-being epitomized by their associate and Times Square hustler Herbert Huncke, possibly the first person they heard use the word 'beat' in this sense, who according to Ginsberg '

was to be found in 1945 passing on subways from Harlem to Broadway scoring for drugs, music, incense, lovers, Benzedrine inhalers ... encountering curious & beautiful solitaires of New York dawn.' Huncke symbolized Spengler's 'fellaheen' with 'a deep piety that fills the waking-consciousness... the naïve belief... that there is some sort of mystic constitution of actuality.' No doubt there is some romanticizing here, but Huncke stands as one of the two archetypes of 'beat-ness.'

The other is Neal Cassady who hit New York in 1947 and is immortalized as Dean Moriarty in Kerouac's *On The Road*. He embodied energy, insatiable zest for words, ideas, kicks, cars and life. Whereas Huncke was 'beat-up' and 'beat-down,' Cassady was *upbeat*, he ran with the beat, moved with the beat and kept the beat drumming on the dashboard of whatever car he happened to be driving at full-speed, in time to the downbeat bop blaring full blast from the radio. *Joie de vie*, everyday life as a sacrament. Already in both these aspects of the word 'beat' we can see religious or spiritual overtones. This is made more explicit in Kerouac's development of the idea, linking the word 'beat' with 'beatific' and 'beatitude.' Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . and so on.⁹

Despite considerable misunderstanding at the time, the 'Beat Generation' was essentially a religious movement rather than a literary movement, though granted one that was rebelling against religious orthodoxy and conventional practice. Their rejection of the mid-twentieth century versions of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish traditions was taken as a wholesale rejection of religion. Furthermore they were accused of not only rejecting religion but meaning itself. In standing out against the prevailing culture and society and questioning conventional values they were caricatured as anti-social deviants bent on the pursuit of crime, violence and hedonism. Responding to a critic who described his poem 'Howl' as a nihilistic 'howl against civilization,' Allen Ginsberg defended the poem as a prophetic

utterance. Speaking of *Howl and Other poems* (1956) he said, 'The poems are religious and I meant them to be.' Similarly, Kerouac responded to the charge that the Beats were 'nay sayers': 'I want to speak for things,' he explained,

For the crucifix I speak out, for the Star of Israel I speak out, for the divinest man who ever lived who was German (Bach) I speak out, for sweet Mohammed I speak out, for Buddha I speak out, for Lao-tse and Chuang-tse I speak out.¹⁰

When Allen Ginsberg was asked whether the Beats were first and foremost artists or spiritual seekers, he responded that the two were inseparable citing the Milarepa school of Tibetan Buddhism where to be a lama one must also be an archer, a calligrapher, or a poet. 'The life of poetry,' he said, 'is a sacramental life on earth.'

The three Beat writers most involved in Buddhism were Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg. Of these, Snyder spent much of the late-1950s in Japan and Ginsberg's more rigorous involvement in Buddhism developed later. So it was Kerouac who for that crucial time in the 1950s was the most prolific of the 'Beat Buddhists' leading the way in the communication of ideas and sparking new interest.

Kerouac's interest in Buddhism went beyond the study of Eastern religious texts. In the mid-1950s he chanted *The Diamond Sutra* (his favourite Buddhist scripture), meditated daily, and attempted for months at a time to live the ascetic and celibate life of a Buddhist monk. He translated Buddhist texts from French into English and took notes on his Buddhist studies that swelled to become *Some of the Dharma* (unpublished until 1997). Although both this and his account of the life of Shakyamuni Buddha, *Wake Up*, remained unpublished during his lifetime, a book of Buddhist poems, *Mexico City Blues* (1959), and a sutra called *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity* (1960) provided early published evidence of his Buddhist concerns, as did novels such as *The Dharma Bums* (1958), *Tristessa* (1960), *Visions of Gerard* (1963) and *Desolation Angels* (1965).

Buddhism appealed to Kerouac, in part at least, because of his sense of compassion and acute awareness of human suffering and the possibility he found in Buddhism to transcend such suffering and death. He was also drawn to the idea that the phenomenal world is in some sense illusory and dream-like. Although the popular press associated the Beats with Zen Buddhism, Kerouac was not drawn so much to Zen as to Mahayana Buddhism, he was less concerned with

attaining mystical insight than cultivating compassion—in Mahayana the enlightened one is both a *Tathagata* and a *Bodhisattva*. The *Tathagata* passes through the world without any attachments, whilst the *Bodhisattva* is one who refuses personal salvation as long as other beings remain unsaved. In this respect his Buddhism remained deeply Christian. Burroughs referred to him disparagingly as 'a Catholic-Buddhist.'

The one aspect of Zen which did connect with Kerouac however is the haiku, formally a three-line, seventeen syllable poem which so conveys a moment or image that one is almost able to experience it oneself. The spontaneity of the haiku and its time collapse and transcendence of subject and object powerfully connects with Kerouac's own developments in his writing technique—the spontaneous composition in stream of consciousness in which he sought to use the movements and patterns of his own mind as his subject matter. The first and most famous example of this technique was the composition of *On The Road* written on a continuous scroll over three weeks in April 1951 fuelled, according to legend, by Benzedrine and caffeine. After assimilating the haikus of masters such as Basho, Issa and Shiki, Kerouac produced a large number of haiku that contemporary Zen poets regard as among the best in English.

So when Jack Kerouac began seriously reading Eastern texts in the San Jose public library in February 1954, his affinity with the teachings was immediate. Both Kerouac's sense of compassion for the down-and-out, the 'beat,' who populated his novels, and his revolutionary new method of 'spontaneous bop prosody' found striking resonance with Eastern thought.

Yet in the introduction to *Lonesome Traveller*, Kerouac made the claim that he was 'actually not "beat" but a strange solitary crazy Catholic mystic,' whose final plans were, 'hermitage in the woods, quiet writing of old-age, mellow hopes of paradise (which comes to everybody anyway)...'

As early as 1952 he was planning, 'Someday I am going to be a hermit in the woods . . . very soon now I'll visit my site.'¹¹ In *Some of the Dharma*, he again articulated his decision to become a hermit, patterning himself after Thoreau in his hut at Walden Pond. Sounds familiar.

Merton and the East

Meanwhile by 1954, down in the Kentucky backwoods, Merton was just beginning his own deeper exploration of Eastern thought and Zen in particular. By July 1956, when Merton attended a gathering in Chicago to meet the psychologist Gregory Zilboorg, we begin to hear about dinner table conversations about Zen, and that back at the monastery Merton has been going on and on about Zen.¹² His interest in Eastern thought goes back much further, though it had lain dormant during his early years of monkish enthusiasm during the 1940s. At Columbia University he had met a Hindu monk, Bramachari, who advised Merton not to read Hindu scriptures, but first to explore the mystical writings of Christianity—especially Augustine's *Confessions* and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. In studying Blake for his Masters dissertation in 1938 we find 'Suzuki—Zen Buddhism' on the reading list in Merton's Columbia Blake notebooks—though it is not ticked so it is unlikely that Merton read it at this point, but already there is perhaps a note for future reference; and we do find a couple of quotations from Chuang Tzu even at this early stage.¹³ Whilst at Columbia also, Robert Lax recommended Aldous Huxley's book on mysticism, *Ends and Means*, which introduced him to apophatic mysticism – a knowledge of God gained by negation – that would later enable him to relate to Buddhist teachings about the Void and Emptiness. Going back further still in 1930, whilst still at Oakham, Merton defended Gandhi and his claims for home rule for India in a debate with the captain of the school's rugby team and head prefect.

But it was during the 1950s, at the same time that Kerouac and the Beats were discovering Buddhism, that Merton's interest in the East was re-kindled and became a major focus of his attention. In 1959 he wrote to D.T. Suzuki for the first time:

...when I read your books – and I have read many of them – and above all when I read English versions of the little verses in which the Zen masters point their finger to something which flashed out at the time, I feel a profound and intimate agreement. Time after time, as I read your pages, something in me says, 'That's it!' Don't ask me what. I have no desire to explain it to anybody, or to justify it to anybody, or to analyze it for myself. I have my own way to walk, and for some reason or other Zen is right in the middle of it wherever I go. So there it is, with all its beautiful purposelessness...¹⁴

In the letter, Merton asks Suzuki to write a preface for a collection he was preparing of the writings of the fourth and fifth century Desert

Fathers, because of 'a kind of Zen quality they have about them.' Suzuki agreed to do this, but the plan was blocked by Merton's superiors who felt that a preface by a Zen Buddhist scholar to a book of sayings by Christian Desert Fathers would be 'inappropriate.' The piece together with a response by Merton was published in the journal *New Directions* in 1961, and is included in the collection of essays *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (1968). Eventually Merton was given special permission to meet Suzuki in New York in June 1964.

Merton also co-operated with John Wu in the production of *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (1965), a 'translation' of the sayings of the ancient Chinese philosopher; he also put together a collection of essays *Mystics and Zen Masters* (1967). His 1963 collection of poems, *Emblems of a Season of Fury*, also illustrates the depth to which Buddhism and Zen were influencing his thinking.¹⁵ This also applies to much of his writing from the late 1950s onwards—even where it is not explicitly noted.

Merton as Dharma Bum

I have sketched out something of the place of Buddhism amongst the Beats, and how it connected with Jack Kerouac in particular; and I have briefly outlined Merton's growing involvement with Buddhism and the East and his particular interest in Zen. I now want to look at the ways in which Merton's connection with the East coincides with that of the Beats.

The two primary aspects of Eastern thought and experience that connected with the Beats were the sense of compassion and affirmation of life in the face of suffering and death, and the direct unmediated experience or insight into reality. These two aspects are illustrated for Merton in his famous defining and transforming experience in downtown Louisville on March 18th 1958, by which time he was well into his Buddhist studies:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness... But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.¹⁶

This is a *satori*, in the sense of a sudden, instantaneous, unmediated revelation of reality—an awakening as if from a dream. And the content of this *satori* is clearly that of compassion—Merton realizes that he is at one with suffering humanity. There is a new level of consciousness here not simply of recognizing his own humanity but of somehow becoming aware of his identification with all humanity—the world flowing in his bloodstream.

Part of the reason for choosing this well known passage is that I came across a remarkably similar experience recounted by Kerouac in a letter to Allen Ginsberg in January 1955:

Now let me give you this: on the subway yesterday [Jan 17, 1955], as I read the Diamond Sutra, not that, the Surangama Sutra, I realized that everybody in the subway and all their thoughts and interests and the subway itself and their poor shoes and gloves etc. and the cellophane paper on the floor and the poor dust in the corners was all of one suchness and essence. I thought, "Mind essence loves everything, because it knows why everything is." And I saw that these people, and myself to a lesser extent, are all buried in selfhood which we took to be real...but the only real is the One, the One Essence that all's made of, and so we also took our limited and perturbed and contaminated minds (hankering after appointments, worries, sorrows, love) to be our own True Mind, but I saw True Mind itself, Universal and One, entertains no arbitrary ideas about these different seeming self-hangs on form, mind is IT itself, the IT [...] If I sit with True Mind and like Chinese sit with Tao and not with self but by no-self submission with arms hanging to let the karma work itself out, I will gain enlightenment by seeing the world as a poor dream.¹⁷

The parallels are quite remarkable—'seeing the world as a poor dream' and the sense of waking up to reality (and the literal meaning of 'Buddha' is 'an awakened being') and the sense of compassion through his identification with not just the people on the subway but with all-that-is as being of one essence. The thrust of the insight is very similar to Merton's though expressed in more 'Buddhist' terms and being more radical in encompassing not simply all humanity but all *reality*. And we may blush when Kerouac disingenuously regards himself as buried in selfhood 'to a lesser extent' than those around him, but perhaps we blush knowing that is how we are too—because such an attitude seems to be inherent when we come to realize this oneness and the illusoriness of the isolated self. It's there in Merton as well: 'There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around

shining like the sun.' It cannot be explained—but this, too, connects with the Buddhist awareness that enlightenment cannot be communicated, it has to be experienced. I can look you in the eye and tell you that you are walking around shining like the sun, but it won't mean anything to you unless you experience that too. You might feel a warm glow in your heart, but that is perhaps the warmth of my light falling upon you—which may in turn of course draw forth the light in you. There is a paradox, one that thwarts us in all our many attempts to communicate, all our words: I can perhaps shake you whilst you slumber, but I cannot wake up for you.

As the Pali canon says, 'When all conditions are removed, all ways of telling are also removed.'¹⁸ Experience is untranslatable, it cannot be captured accurately in words, language can only hint at it, point toward it. So Kerouac says in *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity*:

When you've understood this scripture, throw it away. If you can't understand this scripture, throw it away. I insist on your freedom.¹⁹

This talk of things that cannot be communicated but only hinted at or pointed towards has immediate resonance both with what Merton had to say about contemplation and what D.T. Suzuki said about Zen, providing further clues as to why Merton was drawn to Eastern thought. In the first chapter of *New Seeds of Contemplation* he writes:

Contemplation is the highest expression of...intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being.

Such could be also read as a description of the Beats and their outlook on life—you can almost see Neal Cassady standing there before you! Merton continues:

It can be suggested by words, by symbols, but in the very moment of trying to indicate what it knows the contemplative mind takes back what it has said, and denies what it has affirmed.²⁰

This compares with what D.T. Suzuki says in his *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 'Zen teaches nothing; it merely enables us to wake up and become aware. It does not teach, it points.'²¹ And when Merton goes on to say, 'contemplation is a sudden gift of awareness, an awakening to the Real within all that is real. A vivid awareness of infinite Being at the roots of our own limited being,'²² it is almost an exact description

of his experience at Fourth and Walnut, and of Kerouac's experience on the New York subway.

Merton's words come from *New Seeds of Contemplation* published in 1961 after he had been studying Buddhism and Zen for sometime; it is highly likely therefore that his view here on contemplation is influenced by this study. However it is not too difficult to see how this also flows out of his earlier study of the Christian mystics, particularly figures such as St John of the Cross and Meister Eckhart.²³

In Conclusion

Merton and the Beats came to find themselves coinciding in a whole area of thought and spirituality and outlook at roughly the same time. I am not aware of particularly strong links between them, though they both spent formative periods of their lives at Columbia University (the Beats arriving just after Merton had left) and it is true that Merton's close friend at Columbia, Bob Lax, also became a good friend of Jack Kerouac during the 1950s, and published some of his work. Merton also published a couple of Kerouac's poems in *Monk's Pond* in 1968. But I would not argue that either had any significant influence on the other at this point. Rather they had come from different directions to the ground on which they found themselves together: the Beats via Times Square and their visions that all life is holy; and Merton via the Kentucky backwoods and his encounters with the ancient Christian mystics. Both were struggling for a breakthrough of some sort—a sloughing off of an old skin, to be discarded inside out, with an emergence into a new state of being, a new consciousness, a new creation.

I feel I have only just begun to scratch the surface of this whole topic. The questions that still remain for me concern how in detail the 'Beat perspective' worked itself out through Buddhist ideas and practice; and how Merton's contemplative Zen spirituality was born of, and gave expression to, his own inner 'Beatness.' I find myself therefore, once again, with more questions than answers but conscious too that as I read Merton and as I read the Beats (Kerouac especially) the connections they are making with me are remarkably similar. Both Kerouac and Merton speak to me at a deep level—if I was to try and make a distinction, I would say that Kerouac is raw experience whereas Merton helps me make sense of this. But at the end of the day they blur into one another.

Epilogue

Kerouac aspired to Thoreau's ideal of a hermitage in the woods; Merton eventually achieved it: after spending much time in the early sixties in the hermitage within the monastery grounds he moved there full time in 1965. But in 1968 he was invited to make a trip to Asia and so he too at last hits the road bound for the East—by heading west (like Kerouac). On October 15th his plane took off from San Francisco:

Joy. We left the ground—I with Christian mantras and a great sense of destiny, of being at last on my true way after years of waiting and wondering and fooling around... May I not come back without having settled the great affair. And found also the great compassion, *mahakaruna*... I am going home, to the home where I have never been in this body.²⁴

And so he did. The culmination of his trip came on December 1st when he visited the shrine at Polonnaruwa in Ceylon with its huge Buddha statues. On December 4th he wrote in his journal:

Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and obvious... All problems are resolved and everything is clear. The rock, all matter, all life, is charged with *dharmakaya*...everything is emptiness and everything is compassion. I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination. Surely...my Asian pilgrimage has come clear and purified itself. I mean, I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for. I don't know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise.²⁵

The very next day after Merton wrote this, on Friday December 5th, Kerouac wrote in a letter to his brother-in-law of his recent trip from Lowell, Massachusetts to his new home in St Petersburg, Florida:

We made Lowell to St Petersburg in less than 24 hours, 1600 miles or so – We were stopped for speeding in South Carolina but when the cop saw Mémère and the cats and Stella in the back he just told us to pull over to a station and have our rear warning lights refurbished – [...] I stayed awake all the way, drinking and yelling and playing harmonica and watching that old road, as usual...²⁶

Notes and References

1. Jack Kerouac, *On The Road*. New York, Viking, 1957; Penguin, 1972, pp.12-13. Also see Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac*. New York, Viking, 1983, p.188
2. Thomas Merton, *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and Writer: The Journals of Thomas Merton*, Vol. 2 1941-1952 (ed. Jonathan Montaldo). San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996, p.91
3. Robert Inchausti, *Thomas Merton's American Prophecy*. New York, SUNY, 1998, p.5
4. Angus Stuart, 'Visions of Tom: Jack Kerouac's Monastic Elder Brother.' *The Merton Journal* Vol. 8 (1), 2001, pp.40-46 See also: <http://pages.britishlibrary.net/thomasmerton/kerouac.htm>
5. Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*. New York, New Directions, 1968, p.ix
6. Gerald Nicosia, *op. cit.* pp. 139, 272, 457-459; Carole Tonkinson (ed.), *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and The Beat Generation*. New York, Riverhead, 1995, p.2, 24
7. Nancy Wilson Ross cited in *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*. New York, New Directions, 1973 & 1975, p.372
8. Gerald Nicosia, *op. cit.* p.252
9. See 'Beatific: The Origins of the Beat Generation' (1959) in *The Portable Jack Kerouac* (ed. Ann Charters). New York, Viking Penguin, 1995, pp.565-573
10. Quoted in Stephen Prothero's introduction to Tonkinson (ed.), *op. cit.* p.8 cf 'Beatific: The Origins of the Beat Generation' (1959) see *The Portable Jack Kerouac*, *op. cit.* p.556
11. Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1946-1956* (ed. Ann Charters). New York, Penguin, 1995, p.371
12. Michael Mott, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*. London, Sheldon Press, 1986. pp.293-294, see also note 352 on p.611
13. *ibid.* pp.117-118, see also note 75 on p.589
14. Letter to D.T. Suzuki March 12, 1959 in *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns* (ed. William H. Shannon). London, Collins, 1990, p.561 (also New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1985)
15. See "Thomas Merton's Poetry: Emblems of a Sacred Season" by Alan Altany at <http://140.190.128.190/merton/altany2.html>
16. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. New York, Image, Doubleday, 1968, 1989, pp.156-157
17. Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1940-1956*, *op. cit.* p.460-461 Letter to Allen Ginsberg dated January 18, 1955.
18. Cited in the introduction by Stephen Prothero in Tonkinson (ed), *op. cit.* p.20
19. Jack Kerouac, *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity*. San Francisco, City Lights, 1994, p.46 (Originally published in 1960 by Corinth Books, New York)
20. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*. Wheathamstead: Anthony Clarke, 1972, p.1 (Originally published as *New Seeds of Contemplation* in 1962 by Burns & Oates.)
21. D.T. Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. Grove Press, 1991, p.38
22. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, *op. cit.* p.2
23. An interesting study charting the development of his thought would be a detailed comparison of *New Seeds of Contemplation* with his earlier work *Seeds of Contemplation* (1948) that he was so anxious to have superseded – even so far as

- wanting to retain the original title for the new book. Actually this has already been done, see: Donald Grayston (ed.), *Thomas Merton's Rewritings: The Five Versions of "Seeds/New Seeds of Contemplation" as a Key to the Development of His Thought (Studies in Art and Religious Interpretation)*. Lewiston, New York, Edwin Mellen Press, 1989
24. *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, *op. cit.* pp.4-5
 25. *ibid.* pp.233-236
 26. Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1957-1969* (ed. Ann Charters). New York, Viking Penguin, 1999, p.525-526