

The Labyrinth

[Typescript with manuscript corrections]

(St. Bonaventure University ms.61)

145 leaves ; 29 x 23 cm.

Typescript with extensive corrections in pencil, ink and red pencil.

Brown binder, with metal fasteners, containing unlined, loose-leaf notebook paper.

Title page reads: "The Labyrinth by Thomas James Merton."

On front cover:

The Labyrinth [in light pencil]
JOURNAL OF MY ESCAPE FROM THE NAZIS [crossed out in pencil]
BY
Thomas James Merton.
[rubber stamped] Please Return to
CURTIS BROWN, Ltd.
347 Madison Avenue
New York City

Notes: There are ten sections but without a unified numbering sequence. No overall pagination sequence, but many groups of pages have typed number sequences showing they were inserted from another text. There are five titled chapters scattered throughout: *Some Monday Mornings Cambridge* (crossed out), *The Party in the Middle of the Night* (crossed out), *The Straits of Dover*, *Epilogue*, *The Memoirs of a Prince of the Blood*.

According to the introduction that Naomi Burton Stone wrote to Merton's only published novel, *My Argument with the Gestapo*, there were only two other completed novels that were brought to her for possible publication. They were *The Labyrinth* and *The Man in the Sycamore Tree* (*My Argument with the Gestapo*. NY: Doubleday, 1969. p.9). Merton says in *The Seven Storey Mountain* (p.240) that *The Labyrinth* was first called *Straits of Dover* and then *The Night before the Battle*.

The text of *The Labyrinth* that is in the archives is certainly not the completed piece which he submitted for publication. Whether that text exists seems doubtful because Merton says that he, "took the manuscripts of three finished novels and one half-

finished novel and ripped them up and threw them into the incinerator", when he was leaving St. Bonaventure College in 1941 (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, p.368). In a parallel passage he writes, "today [12/3/41] I threw the worst novel into the incinerator - both copies: only kept out a few pages, and I don't know why!" (*Run to the Mountain*, p.469).

Merton, when he talks about his early writing in a number of places, uses the terms "journal" and "novel" interchangeably. Merton writes in an entry dated June 11, 1941, "Now I really have three journals going at once - *The Journal of My Escape from the Nazis* which is already in the hands of Miss Burton ... The second is what I write on the typewriter but not for the *Escape from the Nazis*, and the third is what goes in this longhand book." (*Run to the Mountain*, p.375). The second and third items mentioned are definitely journals, while the first is a novel.

In St. Bonaventure University ms.58 (known as the Fitzgerald file), there are two other novel fragments. See the description of that manuscript for details.

PJS

[Back one level to the Major Texts menu](#)

[Back to the Thomas Merton Archive at St. Bonaventure University home page](#)