

Ballad: Brer Fox* to Brer Merton**

By Jean Goodwin

You knew the day that you came to stay
That if you left us you would die.
Refuge was why you threw away
Gotham for gardens to pray safe inside
This spare Brer Dare called Gethsemaneye
Because, if you left us, you would die.

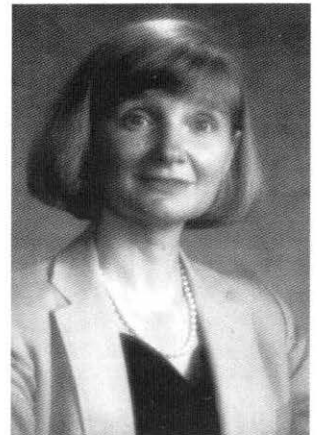
That day that you came you saw it straight.
In world you were prey, but praying here not
Where war and sex and the terrible weight
Of your own ambition (you had a lot)
Bind soul to grindstone (now you've forgot),
Grind minds to blind stone, star hearts to rot.

Your needs were so foxlike, so easy to feed,
So fierce-disagreed with your lone greedy pride.
I found you forests where you could walk free,
And fox-friends to hunt with and howl with and fight,
And a foxhole for writing when frightened at night.
You think you don't need this. I know you. I'm right.

Brer monks try to learn just to love what we've got.
I tried for delight when I played alpha fox,
And with you in my pack, I was king of a lot.
Now I've grown to inhabit your enemy box.
That's OK. I'm a fox who's not shocked by hard knocks.
Not like you,
(You food for hounds,
Who won't back down
Or go to ground.)
Not like you, my God's Tomfool, and my Tomfox.

*Dom James Fox was abbot during most of Merton's years as a Trappist monk at Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky. Fox has been criticized for persistently refusing Merton's requests for travel. Once a new abbot was elected, the travel request was granted. However, Thomas Merton returned from that trip in a coffin.

**Merton: Wild creature, winged, part merlin falcon and part tree-dwelling marten. Shy because much-sought-after, either to be captured and hooded as a tamed fighter or skinned for its soft fur.



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