

Two Poems

By Anita Rifkind

Gethsemani's Back Garden in the Autumn Rain

Stone enclosures
 Revetments
 Rectangular blocks along the road
 Ancient boulders forming abbey walls
 All laid by monkish hands
 Mortar mixed with Trappist sweat
 And mortal tears
 Men and walls formed
 In Kentucky heat
 Each trowel a penance
 And a prayer
Domine Miserere's in every layer

Revetments form abbey walls
 Stones dark with age
 Nestled in among them
 Rest their masons
 Rain mixing men and mud
 Into sacred mortar

Anita Rifkind is a long-time member of the Chicago Chapter of the Merton Society; an urban planner; a small-time, small-town politician; a community volunteer; a church member; and a wife, daughter, sister, and mother – not necessarily in that order. When she has some free time, she reads history and theology, walks in the prairie or the woods, visits Gethsemani Abbey, writes an occasional poem, and prays – not necessarily in that order. What she wears is (mostly) pants.



Anita Rifkind

Requiem

Hot
Heavy
Still
Nothing moves, save the sun
It sets the tallest knob ablaze
And then is gone
Still hot
Old walls
Too hot to touch
Too hot to move
Too hot to breathe
Nothing stirs
Not branch nor leaf
Not bird nor man
Still as death
Above
Beside
Below the wall
Rest bones
Grown warm, not cold with age
Once men, now saints
Brothers all
In life, in death
Too hot to sleep
Above the ground
Compline is begun
A barefoot monk
In choir surround
Stirs to chant the psalms
The Spirit still sets souls ablaze
And then moves on.