

Merton's Choir

By Catherine Racine

He calls today from the tall shadows of Gethsemani
 Where Jesus cried before he said goodbye;
 Humming through the cool earth
 Deep beneath the hermitage
 Where the pilgrims come in busloads to quench
 Their thirst for silence and look at his chair.

Spinning like atoms all the way from Kentucky,
 To sing this bright morning in my tiny garden,
 He sounds like a Russian choir
 Through the fading lavender and unkempt chives
 Through the lace leaves of the high pink cosmos
 Through the succulent stems of the apricot dahlias
 Bent to the ground but still,
 It is a miracle, unbroken.

His voice is clear as spring water
 On the parched surface of my desert heart
 That flinches even while it drinks and drinks.
 I am cowed by his urgency and
 All the words
 He sowed and tilled
 With his draft-horse strength
 To the very last day
 Though he always doubted the harvest.
 He would laugh to see it now.

Catherine Racine is a Canadian from Vancouver now living in England and pursuing doctoral studies in Spirituality, Theology and Mental Health at Durham University. Her current focus is on mysticism, and clinicians' experience of love within the therapeutic process. A feminist counsellor and writer, she has published on mystical experience in *Women and Therapy*, and in 2008 was published in the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. Research interests include the intersection of mystical experience and clinical practice, Buddhism, storytelling, and grief and loss. She is currently working on a volume of poetry about her mother.



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But today he sings and I listen,
Rooted and rioting like
A poplar tree thrashing in the wind.

Rise up and do your work
For God's sake
Learn to cast your beauty thus
Banish the timidity
Share your fire like these unstinting
Creatures made for love and insurrection,
From the first budding moment
Until the petals fall like snow around.
Heed them and go free.