

Reflection on “Redemption”

In Perpetual Spring

By Amy Gerstler

Gardens are also good places to sulk.
You pass beds of
Spiky voodoo lilies
And trip over the roots
Of a sweet gum tree,
In search of medieval
Plants whose leaves,
When they drop off
Turn into birds
If they fall on land,
And colored carp if they
Plop into water.

Suddenly the archetypical
Human desire for peace
With every other species
Wells up in you.
The lion and the lamb cuddling up.
The snake and the snail, kissing.

Even the prick of the thistle,
Queen of the weeds, revives
Your secret belief
In perpetual spring,
Your faith that for every hurt
There is a leaf to cure it.

“Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, “Love your enemies.” It is this: that love has within it a redemptive power. And there is a power there that eventually transforms individuals. ... That is love, you see. It is redemptive, and this is why Jesus says love. There is something about love that builds up and is creative. There is something about hate that tears down and is destructive. So love your enemies.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Contrary to what we may have been taught to think, unnecessary and unchosen suffering wounds us but need not scar us for life. It does mark us. What we allow the mark of our suffering to become is in our own hands.”

- bell hooks

“My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
so much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those who,
Age after age,
With no extraordinary power,
Reconstitute the world.”

- Adrienne Rich

“[No] matter what a waste one has made of one’s live, it is every possible to find some path to redemption, however, partial.”

- Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain*

“I take literally the statement in the gospel of John that God loves the world. I believe that the world was created and approved by love, that it subsists, coheres, and endures by love, and that, insofar as it is redeemable, it can be redeemed only by love. I believe that divine love, incarnate and indwelling in the world, summons the world always toward wholeness, which ultimately is reconciliation and atonement with God.”

- Wendell Berry

“In the end, it is our defiance that redeems us. It would have had a religion – if there was a religion of the wolf – that is what it would tell us.”

- Mark Rowlands, *The Philosopher and the Wolf*

“We can be redeemed only to the extent to which we see ourselves.”

- Martin Buber

“You cannot mend the chromosome, quell the earthquake, or staunch the flood. You cannot atone for the dead tyrant’s murders and you alone cannot stop living tyrants. As Martin Buber saw it, the world of ordinary days ‘affords’ us that precise association with God that redeems both us and our speck of the world. God entrusts and allots to everyone an area to redeem: this creased and feeble life, ‘the world in which you live, just as it is, and not otherwise.’

Insofar as [he/she] cultivates and enjoys them in holiness...through [them] the sparks which have fallen will be uplifted, and the worlds which have fallen will be delivered and renewed.” - Annie Dillard

“It is our faith that each child born is one more redeemer.”

- Rob Eller-Isaacs

“Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you – and you shall return every [person] unto his own clan, you shall return every [person] to their family.

The land must not be sold permanently, for the land belongs to me. You are only foreigners, my tenant farmers.”

- Leviticus 25

The Fire

By Franz Wright

Listen, I've light
In my eyes
And on my skin
The warmth of a star, so strange
Is this
That I
Can barely comprehend it.

I think
I'll lift my face to it, and then
I lift my face,
And don't even know how
This is done.

And
Everything alive
(and everything's
alive) is turning
into something else
as at the heart
of some annihilating
or is it creating
fire

that's burning, unseeably, always
burning at such speeds
as eyes cannot
detect, just try
to observe your own face
growing old
in the mirror,
or is it beginning
to be born?