

Wellspring: Poetry for the Journey

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A weekly poetry resource

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III (1997)

I was wakened from my dream of the ruined world by the sound
of rain falling slowly onto the dry earth of my place in time.
On the parched garden, the cracked-open pastures,
the dusty grape leaves, the brittled grass, the dropping foliage of the woods,
fell still the quiet rain.

Wendell Berry¹

Reflections

There is a moment just after waking when I forget how devastated the world is, forget the brokenness, it seems, in every direction. There is a moment just after waking when I have not yet remembered that the work before us—racial and social justice for all, care-taking and healing of wounds both tangible and abstract that are deep as time itself—is nearly overwhelming and certainly life-long. There is a moment just after waking when I am unaware of myself entirely, know only that I am in a body and with a mind which are both now rousing from rest, and that I have been given another day to use them: thanks be to God. Broken does not have to mean ruined.

It is early morning, barely dawn, this house still dark. I have no memory of what or if I had been dreaming at all. And it matters little, I suppose, for I have been nevertheless restored—a word which shares its Latin root with that for *rebuild* and for *repair*. Perhaps it is a start, that much.

And it is still true: there is a moment just after waking when I do forget how devastated the world is. But there is a moment that co-exists—an *also*, a *too*—when I forget how beautiful, how punishingly beautiful the whole of the world is, this “place in time.” The whole broken thing. And the broken, whole thing.

I think it is not ruined, but in need. I put my hope in beauty still to come.

About the poet

Wendell Berry (b. 1934) is a poet, novelist, essayist, and environmentalist who lives on a farm near his birthplace in Port Royal, Kentucky. Author of over 40 books, he is celebrated for his faithful attention to the natural world and to the sacredness of all life.

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¹ “III” by Wendell Berry from *This Day: New and Collected Sabbath Poems 1979-2012*, Counterpoint, 2013.