

Redemption. It's so dramatic; camp, almost. Borderline archaic in any largely secular, contemporary society. For as America's blowhard-in-chief keeps proving, you can be a remorseless racist, misogynist and treacherous criminal who commits a cascade of 'irredeemable' acts such as wrenching families apart, and still half a nation doesn't believe you've a need for absolution. So, what might your regular, progressive citizen want with it? Then again, we appear to spend our entire lives trying to redeem ourselves for living at all. Not due to original sin – there is no such thing – more by striving to make up for actual or perceived failings until the day we die. Seems, as with many concepts today, 'redemption' has sidled away from its prior connotations. In this issue, we endeavour to contextualise it anew.

Whether or not we believe that humans have full agency, nick that 21st century veneer, and (sociopaths aside) you'll find a gnarly yearning for liberation from guilt; for forgiveness – for salvation. For there's scant chance of avoiding internalised blame for any (or all) of our current cardinal sins, e.g. not being in a position to make a proper home, reproduce, or care for loved ones as you'd wish; being undecided about your gender, or gender itself; enjoying sugar; not acting enough on your concern for the environment; producing only a little, sometimes; not being permanently primed for an Instagram swimwear shot; ageing; not performing your pain sufficiently to fix everyone else's discriminatory ways; neglecting self-care; not vehemently signalling your position on every trending cause; checking your phone, again; not being in a position to do much about the miserable state of devastated nations, nor your overtly peace-loving

government flogging billions of dollars of weaponry to the parties proliferating said devastation then doing jack shit to assist with the human fall out – in short, getting by as best one can while trying not to be an outright arse.

Luckily(!) by definition, redemption is both salvation and exchange. It's eternal bliss, and a coupon for mylk. Even luckier, it's real easy to exchange capital for salvation: after all, late capitalism does not require your first born. This unholy pact might not last past brunch, but it can be a balm to assuage mental backchat with a plate of 'Forgiveness': Smashed Avocado, Sunflower Seeds, Chili Sauce, Radish, Organic Feta. Cheap shots at bourgie caffs aside, the stealth moralisation of consumer activity is rather disturbing.

*You deserve that Sea Salt Caramel Doughnut, you gorgeous creature. Oh hell no – you posted it, then ate it? Dirty, naughty; bad, bad, bad. Hit Psyche til you're worthy of love again // Guilt over chronic debt? Find a cute bargain to take the edge off // You drank how many units?! To the juice bar – pronto! (This is how we live.)*

Mostly, that's because we have it relatively easy. Still, the whole – transgress, confess, pray or self-flagellate with an actual whip, be redeemed; repeat – pseudo-religious thing seems straightforward next to the interminable swallowing and repressing of shame and vitriol till it curdles sufficiently to spew forth at others. Globally, religion is on the up, but for those of us lacking a ready-made moral framework, we'll have to keep poking around in the dark till we grasp our own codes of conduct.

In this vein, there remains much work to do to recalibrate society, its institutions, products and artefacts to align with our best intentions. And in this volume, a trio of essay writers, Daisy Johnson, Joseph Keckler and Sarvat Hasin shine a guiding light on how we might begin to reconfigure literature, pop culture and cinema, respectively. Also, in the filmic realm, Kieran Yates redeems marginalised characters from childhood classics, and Siobhan Leddy illustrates queering failure via the video work of an iconic choreographer. Looking closer at (supposedly) redemptive behaviours, Luke Turner shares insight on fleeting sexual liberation under shady canopies; Octavia Bright poetically prises recovery from morality by the sea, and yoga's potential to both save and destroy powers Alexis Penney's contribution.

Interspersed, you will also find ideas of redemption unspooling through narratives as YZ Chin tackles the un-evolved world of AI development; Tara Isabella Burton recounts the gothic, nocturnal escapades of New York City teens; Sophie Mackintosh draws on manifestation as a means to rid oneself of bad romance, and Emer O'Toole conjures a rich, artistic scene awash with spliffs, shagging and copious Síle na Gigs. And, finally, a pathos-stirring poem, Forgive by Kayo Chingonyi. We hope that you take your sweet time perusing them without a trace of bad feeling – we might not offer redemption, but sanctuary will forever be found in stories.