

Julian Peters

# NATURE POEMS TO SEE BY

A Comic Artist Interprets More Great Poetry



Matsuo Basho · Elizabeth Bishop · William Blake · Gwendolyn Brooks · Robert Burns · e. e. cummings  
Emily Dickinson · Rhina P. Espallat · Robert Frost · Joy Harjo · Langston Hughes · Gerard Manley Hopkins  
Mary Karr · Philip Larkin · Sylvia Plath · Li Po · Carl Sandburg · William Shakespeare · Stevie Smith  
Christina Rossetti · Alfred L. Tennyson · Dylan Thomas · Edward Thomas · William Wordsworth

# **NATURE POEMS TO SEE BY**

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A Comic Artist Interprets  
More Great Poetry

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Plough

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*To my biologist parents, Rob and Nella,  
who taught me to see nature.*



**About the artist:** Julian Peters is an illustrator and comic book artist living in Montreal, Canada, who specializes in adapting classical poems into graphic art. He holds a master's degree in art history. His first collection of poetry comics, *Poems to See By: A Comic Artist Interprets Great Poetry*, was published by Plough in 2020.

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## Preface

In the preface to my first collection of poetry comics, *Poems to See By*, I wrote that a beautiful poem is “pretty much the most beautiful creation I can imagine.” This opinion, I now wish to clarify, was meant to apply only to the creations of humans. The beauty of nature is in a whole other league from anything human beings could ever come up with. This beauty is everywhere, to the point that we often cease to notice it. One important function of art, including poetry of course, is to call attention to the wonders all around us that we habitually take for granted, to help us see them afresh, as if with new eyes. In creating this new collection of comic adaptations of great works of nature poetry, I have tried to pay tribute not only to the poems themselves but also to the natural world that inspired them.

Along with the beauty we perceive in nature, there is the way we see ourselves and our emotions reflected in it, which can reveal much to us. Most of the poems included in this collection refer to our natural environment as a means of touching upon some aspect of our own human condition. Throughout these pages, nature serves as a metaphor for so vast a range of human concerns as faith (“God’s Grandeur”), grief (“The Trees”), the glory of childhood (“Fern Hill”), women’s liberation (“Mushrooms”), and the endless quest for the infinite (“Sandpiper”). As with the first book, I felt that to do justice to the diversity of the source material, my comics adaptations should adopt as wide a variety of creative approaches and visual styles as possible.

I feel compelled to conclude on a somber note: All the while I was working on this collection, I couldn’t shake the feeling that I was rowing upstream against powerful historical currents, that the very premises upon which this project rests are at serious risk of being swept away. On the one hand, insidious new technologies threaten to undermine the human creative impulse responsible for all poetry – and, for that matter, for all comics. At the same time, our natural environment is being poisoned, dismembered, and depleted at a tremendous pace. William Blake writes, “To the eyes of a man of imagination, nature is imagination itself.” If nature and imagination are inextricably linked, we are in serious danger of losing both. I hope the poems I’ve illustrated in this book can help us open our eyes in time.

*Julian Peters  
Montreal  
October 2025*

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# Summer



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# DAYBREAK IN ALABAMA

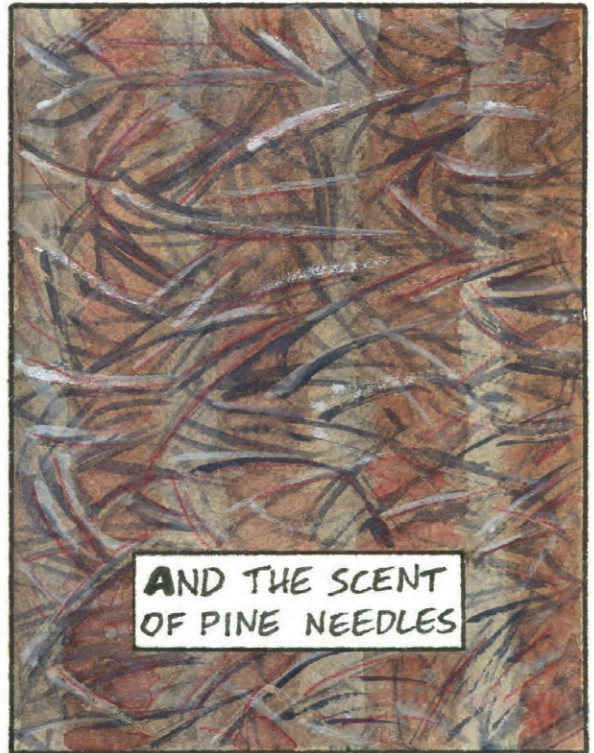
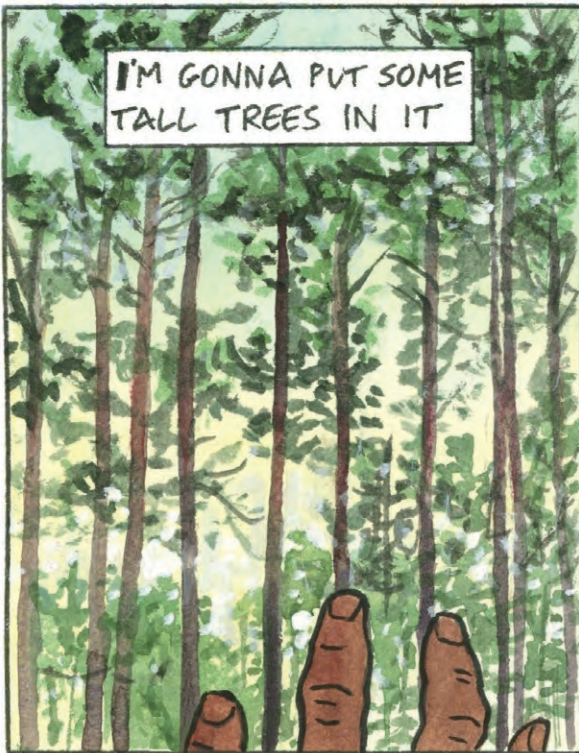
*By* **LANGSTON HUGHES**



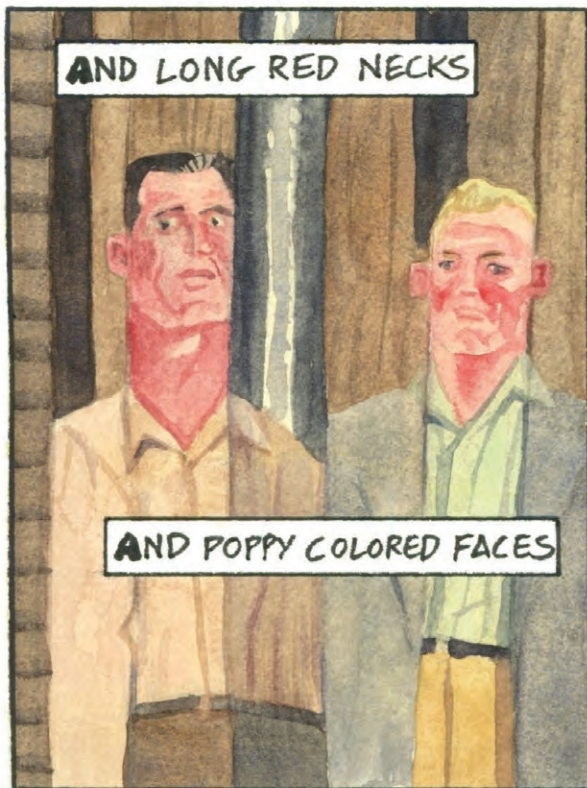
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AND I'M GONNA PUT WHITE HANDS

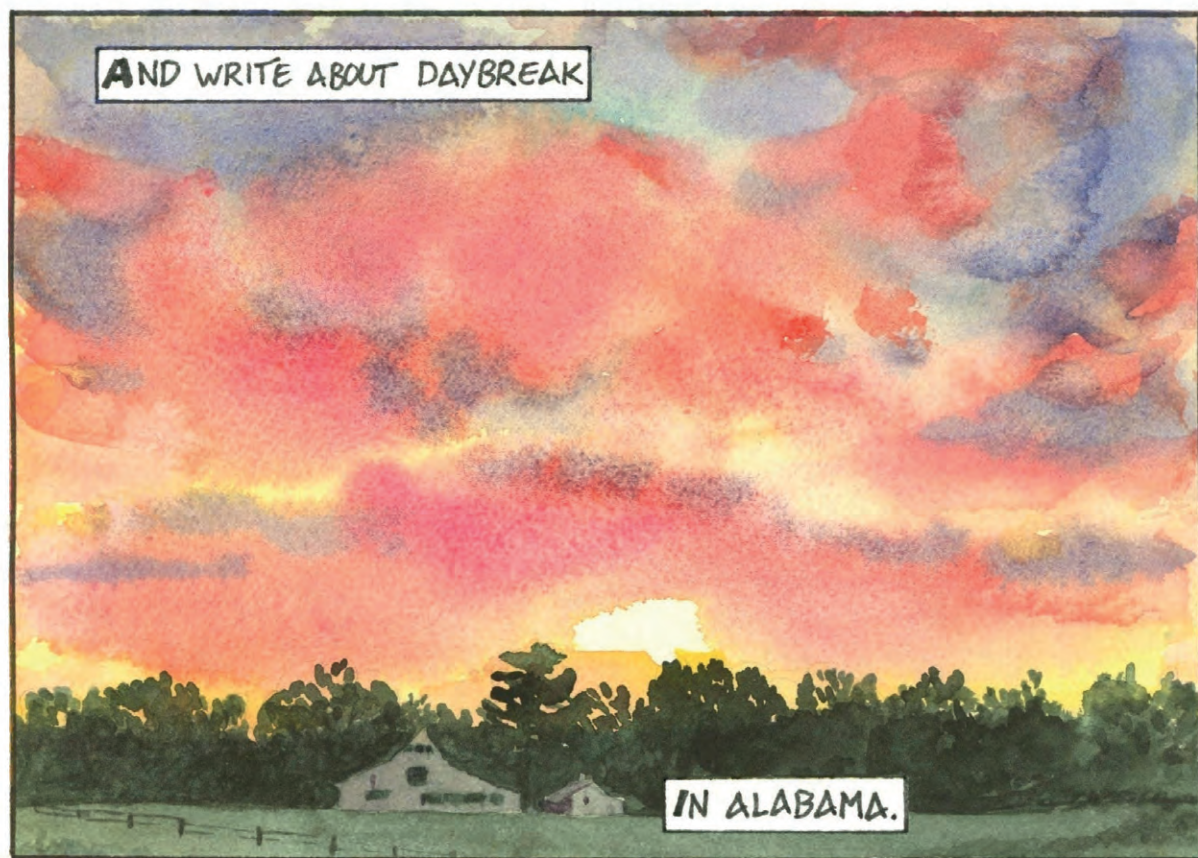


AND BLACK HANDS AND BROWN AND YELLOW HANDS  
AND RED CLAY EARTH HANDS IN IT  
TOUCHING EVERYBODY WITH KIND FINGERS



TOUCHING EACH OTHER NATURAL AS DEW

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## DAYBREAK IN ALABAMA

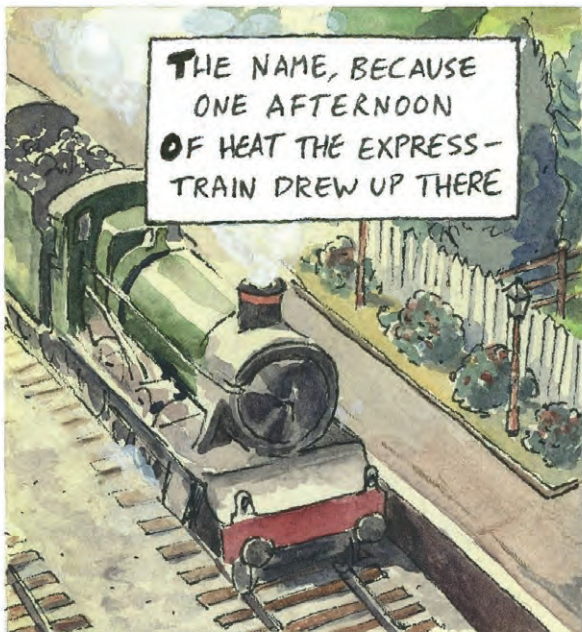
*Langston Hughes*

When I get to be a colored composer  
I'm gonna write me some music about  
Daybreak in Alabama  
And I'm gonna put the purtiest songs in it  
Rising out of the ground like a swamp mist  
And falling out of heaven like soft dew  
I'm gonna put some tall tall trees in it  
And the scent of pine needles  
And the smell of red clay after rain  
And long red necks  
And poppy colored faces  
And big brown arms  
And the field daisy eyes  
Of black and white black white black people  
And I'm gonna put white hands  
And black hands and brown and yellow hands  
And red clay earth hands in it  
Touching everybody with kind fingers  
Touching each other natural as dew  
In that dawn of music when I  
Get to be a colored composer  
And write about daybreak  
In Alabama.

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by  
EDWARD  
THOMAS  
(1915)



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## ADLESTROP

*Edward Thomas*

Yes. I remember Adlestrop—  
The name, because one afternoon  
Of heat the express-train drew up there  
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.  
No one left and no one came  
On the bare platform. What I saw  
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,  
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,  
No whit less still and lonely fair  
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang  
Close by, and round him, mistier,  
Farther and farther, all the birds  
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

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# AND DID THOSE FEET IN ANCIENT TIME

by William Blake

And did those feet  
in ancient time



Walk upon England's mountains  
green:



And was the holy  
Lamb of God,



On England's pleasant pastures seen!



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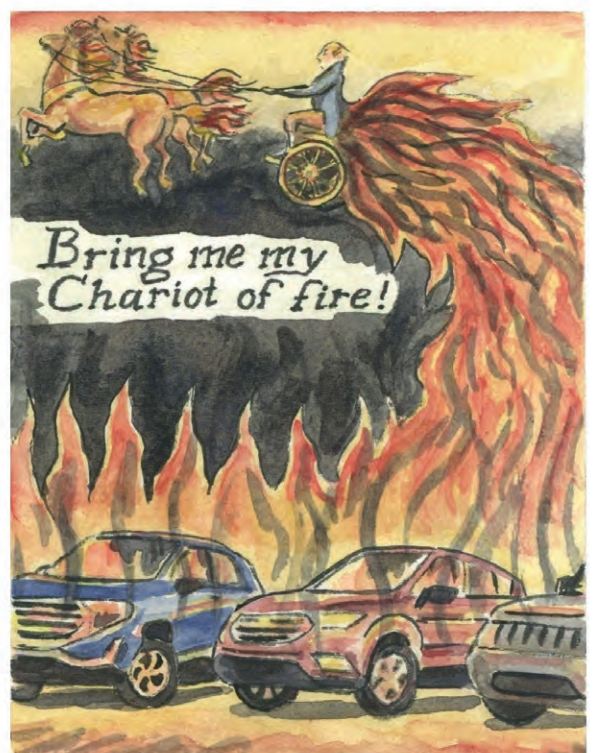
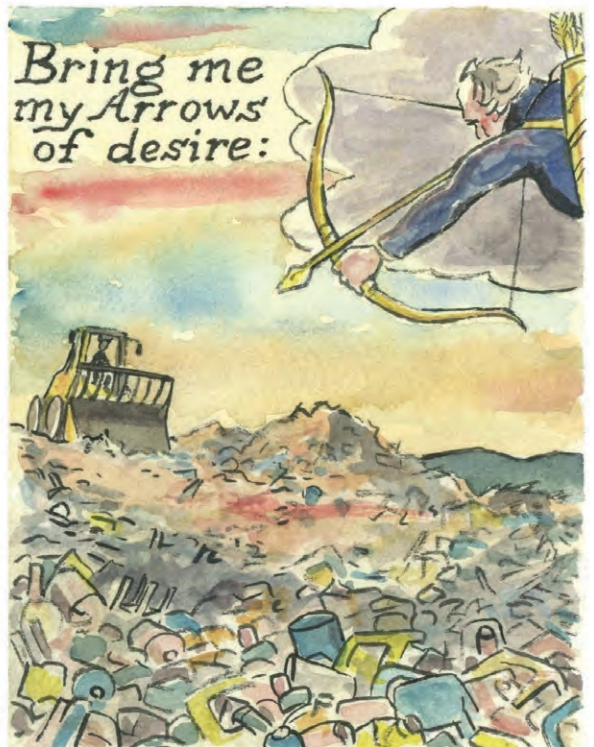
*And did the Countenance Divine,  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?*



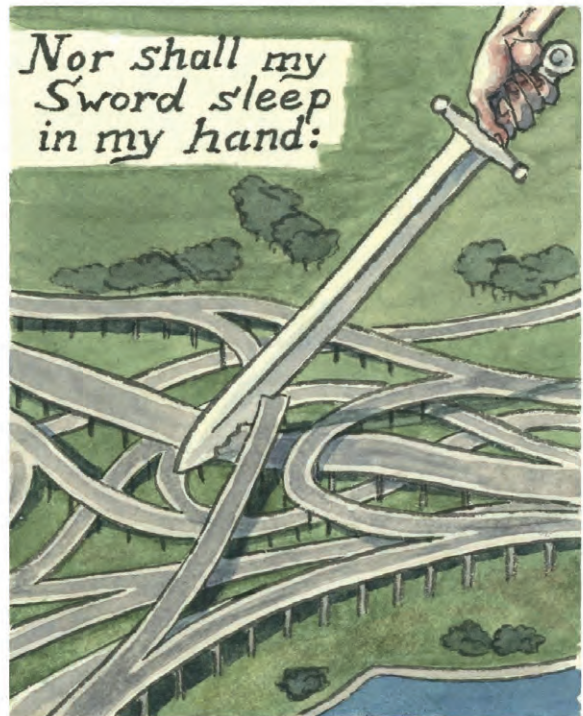
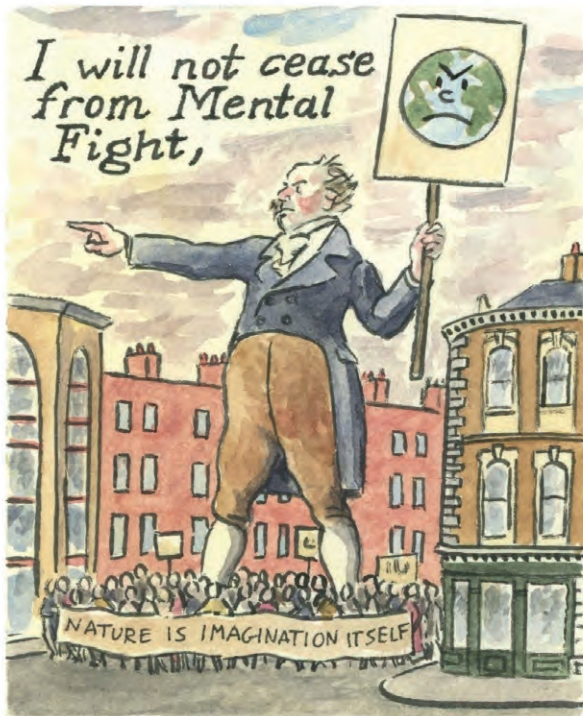
*And was Jerusalem builded here,  
Among these dark Satanic Mills?*



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## AND DID THOSE FEET IN ANCIENT TIME

*William Blake*

And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green:  
And was the holy Lamb of God,  
On England's pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here,  
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:  
Bring me my arrows of desire:  
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!  
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand:  
Till we have built Jerusalem,  
In England's green & pleasant Land.

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# Sonnet 18.

by  
WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE

SHALL I  
COMPARE THEE  
TO A SUMMER'S  
DAY?



THOU ART MORE LOVELY  
AND MORE TEMPERATE:

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ROUGH WINDS DO SHAKE THE DARLING BUDS OF MAY,



AND SUMMER'S LEASE HATH ALL TOO SHORT A DATE;



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**SOMETIME TOO HOT THE EYE OF  
HEAVEN SHINES,**



**AND OFTEN IS HIS GOLD  
COMPLEXION DIMM'D;**



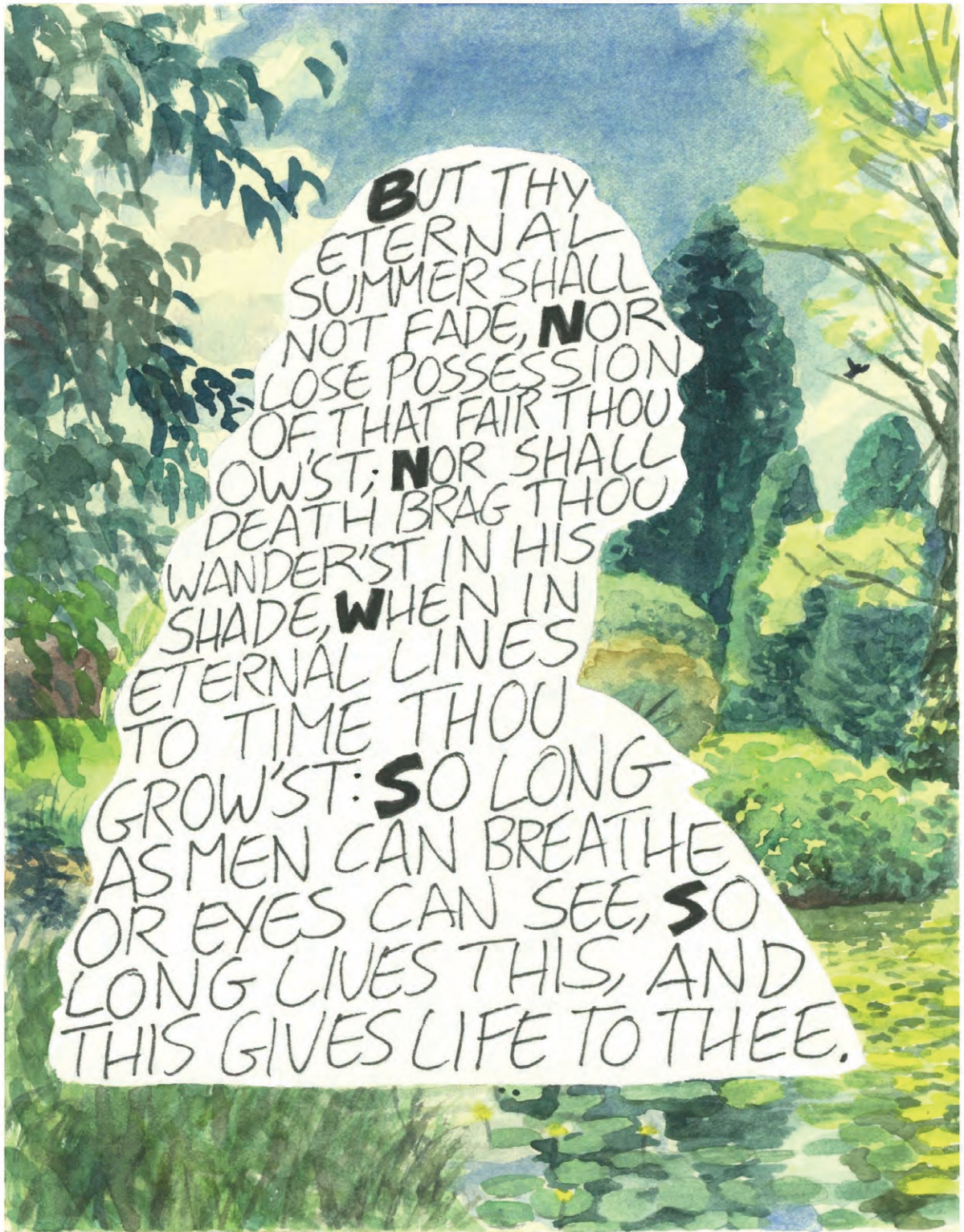
**AND EVERY FAIR FROM FAIR  
SOMETIME DECLINES,**



**BY CHANCE OR NATURE'S CHANGING  
COURSE UNTRIMM'D;**



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## SONNET 18

*William Shakespeare*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
    So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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