Two Poems

by Michael Williams (November 2020)



Summer Night, Riverside Drive, George Bellows, 1909

What is it ‘bout a Summer Night?

What is it ’bout a summer night

That conjures blood into a yearning?

Is it the ghost of Paradise

That stirs up such unquiet churning?

A dreamy haze of lemonade
About the mountains charms the eye,
Transmuted soon to grander tones –
The roseate and eastern sky;

And ‘gainst the watercolors, boldly
Tower the birch and cottonwood
And all their leafy silhouettes
In light and shadow’s brotherhood.

The sunshine’s slumber wakens cool
And soothing exhalations sweet
To calm the soul and body in
Relief from the aestival heat.

And I, all sighs and throbbing heart,
With gleaming, poignant visions haunting
My troubled spirit; past and future
Frolics and adventure wanting.

The goals of these Edenic raptures

Some time ago I piled a pyre.

More solemn now, but still I long

To chew the apple of desire,

And would have better luck in struggle

With passion in my solitudes:

But miserly of brilliant stars

Are skies in northern latitudes

This season, and their balm serene;

I think my heart would be less riven

Could I in summer’s pleasures bask

Beneath the audience of heaven.

Pretty Follies, II

Weather: when Sky and Earth resume again

  Their ancient and dramatic lovers’ quarrel—

Cloudy grimness; redundancy of rain;

  Hail’s sting; blizzard’s frigidity and whirl.

The Sky’s rage is cold and brutal, but the Earth

  Has passion! —churning, caustic, hot and harsh:

Sylvan holocausts and volcanic wrath;

  The pungent, briny stench of beach and marsh.

  This is the climatology of spite,

Which shutters a somber world to the Sun’s rays,

  And hides this world from that same solar sight;

The lovers’ quarrel obscures the lovers’ gaze.

  I cast these eyes of earth upward and sigh,

  Panting to catch again your eyes of sky.

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Michael Williams is a Catholic convert, a crude man of letters, a bleeding heart and a goofball. He—like St. Francis—- is wedded to poverty, but with moderate success. His interests (apart from writing) include smoking cigarettes, drinking beer and whiskey, reading history books, playing chess, and entertaining his friends. He lives in Anchorage, Alaska with his faithful kitty, Olivia. He has been published in the *St. Austin Review* and the *Catholic Anchor.*

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