**Jordan (II)**

When first my lines of heav’nly joyes made mention,

Such was their lustre, they did so excell,

That I sought out quaint words, and trim invention;

My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,

Curling with metaphors a plain intention,

Decking the sense, as if it were to sell.

Thousands of notions in my brain did runne,

Off’ring their service, if I were not sped:

I often blotted what I had begunne;

This was not quick enough, and that was dead.

Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne,

Much lesse those joyes which trample on his head.

As flames do work and winde, when they ascend,

So did I weave my self into the sense.

But while I bustled, I might heare a friend

Whisper, *How wide is all this long pretence!*

*There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn’d:*

*Copie out only that, and save expense.*

—George Herbert

**North Haven**

*In memoriam: Robert Lowell*  
*I can make out the rigging of a schooner  
a mile off; I can count  
the new cones on the spruce. It is so still  
the pale bay wears a milky skin; the sky  
no clouds except for one long, carded horse’s tail.*

The islands haven’t shifted since last summer,  
even if I like to pretend they have  
—drifting, in a dreamy sort of way,  
a little north, a little south, or sidewise,  
and that they’re free within the blue frontiers of bay.  
  
This month, our favorite one is full of flowers:  
Buttercups, Red Clover, Purple Vetch,  
Hackweed still burning, Daisies pied, Eyebright,  
the Fragrant Bedstraw’s incandescent stars,  
and more, returned, to paint the meadows with delight.  
  
The Goldfinches are back, or others like them,  
and the White-throated Sparrow’s five-note song,  
pleading and pleading, brings tears to the eyes.  
Nature repeats herself, or almost does:  
*repeat, repeat, repeat; revise, revise, revise*.  
  
Years ago, you told me it was here  
(in 1932?) you first “discovered *girls*”  
and learned to sail, and learned to kiss.  
You had “such fun,” you said, that classic summer.  
(“Fun”—it always seemed to leave you at a loss . . .)  
  
You left North Haven, anchored in its rock,  
afloat in mystic blue . . . And now—you’ve left  
for good. You can’t derange, or re-arrange,  
your poems again. (But the Sparrows can their song.)  
The words won’t change again. Sad friend, you cannot change.

—Elizabeth Bishop

**The Proof**

Shall I love God for causing me to be?

I was mere utterance; shall these words love me?

Yet when I caused his work to jar and stammer,

And one free subject loosened all his grammar,

I love him that he did not in a rage

Once and forever rule me off the page,

But, thinking I might come to please him yet,

Crossed out *delete* and wrote his patient *stet*.

—Richard Wilbur

‘Section 1’ of **The Revisionist**

If I could raise rivers, I’d raise them

Across the mantle of your past: old headwaters

Stolen, oxbows high and dry while new ones form,

A sediment of history rearranged. If I could unlock

The lakes, I’d spill their volume over the till

I know you cultivate: full accumulations swept away,

The habit of prairies turned to mud. If I had glaciers,

I’d carve at the stony cliffs of your belief:

Logical mountains lowered notch by notch, erratics

Dropped for you to stumble on. Earthquakes, and I’d

Seize your experience at its weakest edge: leveled

Along a fault of memories. Sunspots, I’d cloud

Your common sense; tides, and I’d drown its outlines

With a weight of water they could never bear.

If I had hurricanes, I’d worry your beaches

Into ambiguity: barrier islands to collect them

In one spot and in another the sudden gut

That sucks them loose to revolve in dispersion with

The waves. If I had frost, I’d shatter the backbone

Of your thought: an avalanche of gravel, a storm

Of dust. And if I could free volcanoes, I’d tap

The native energies you’ve never seen: counties

Of liquid rock to cool in summits you’d have to

Reckon from. If I could unroll a winter of time

When these were done, I’d lay around your feet

In endless fields where you could enter and belong,

A place returning and a place to turn to whole.

—Douglas Crase

**Revision**

Which is worse—not being

myself, for long hours, able to

account for my own absence; or

not having been, by anyone,

asked to—I can’t say. As when

the leaves have to but angle

in direction proportion to the wind’s

force, times its direction,

and the mind, whose

instinct is to resist any

namelessness, calls

all of it—leaves, leaves,

and the wind’s force—

*trust*, at first, then *disregard*

until, suspecting the truer name is

neither of these, it must

stop naming. Or as in

the days, reportedly, of

the gods having dwelled

among us—always

people invariably not knowing

and then (some irreducible

odor, an abrupt

solidity to the light) only then

knowing, but too late,

their faces changed

forever after by the difficult

weight of mere witness,

of having none but their own

word for it…. If mistake, possibly,

yet mistake this

afternoon seems less

a river than a barely contained in

spite of everything

belief: there’s another ending.

In this one, I recognize you—

And the recognizing has the effect of

slowing down that

part of me that would

walk past, or as if away toward

another ending— You

speak first. And I’ll answer.

—Carl Phillips