

# 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,  
Hawkweed 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.

1978

Elizabeth Bishop, The Complete Poems, 1927-  
1979 (New York: Farrar, Straus  
and Giroux, 1983)