

I'd never known they knew.
Otherwise, silence
except for the breeze through the firs.

5. *Concerto for the Left Hand Alone*

with the right in a sling—from what?
a great day's work and play, toting a bale
of wallboard, bailing—no, swamping and upending
the rowboat, playing whiffleball in two feet
of water, home runs floating a hundred feet
out on the lake, feet stubbed and scraped on the rocks
under second (a boat cushion floating, tied to a rock),
rowing halfway back from Willow when the outboard
ran out of gas—at last, a mere awkward
twist of the wrist sitting down to be polite
to a friend's father (how strange to have a father
alive when you're forty!)

I remember Ravel's *Concerto for the Left Hand*,
the heavy bass dances, the light-fingered far-away treble ripples
written for a pianist who gave his right to the War,
and try to think of all the right hands severed
in war or peace, flying off like a flock going south,
and the thirty or forty years thereafter
of single- and left-handed flight. . . .

LITERARY ANECDOTE (APOCRYPHAL)

When bold Elizabeth Bishop found
Her way to St. Elizabeth's,
She heard the prophet Ezra pound
The filthy air with one clean hand.
He beat the windows with his breaths
Like some big Persian-rug-winged moth.

And then they danced, a one-two-three,
One-two. She showed him how to do
The Samba, nor had she forgot
Her native style: they did a fox-
trot too. He taught her how to box
Like Hemingway, who'd said her Fish
Was so well caught it made him wish
He'd caught one just as well.

Well, hell,

This anecdote now here first printed
Is totally undocumented.*

* But cf. her "Visits to St. Elizabeths" and Ian Hamilton's *Robert Lowell*, p. 130. The Hemingway statement is found in a footnote in John F. Nims, *Harper Anthology of Poetry*, p. 652.