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Mysterious Geography: Elizabeth Bishop and the Mediations of Place

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IMPRIMATUR

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Neuchâtel, le 9 décembre 2022

Le doyen
Louis de Saussure

Abstract

This thesis begins with the questions: (1) How does change of place affect a writer's poetics? and (2) How is that change mediated through writing? Elizabeth Bishop's move to Brazil and the combination of her published literary works, correspondence, and archival materials provide a rich set of materials for a case study on the topic of change of place and poetics. This thesis argues that for Bishop: (1) mediation of a new place requires surprising intersections between place and memory, and (2) change of place reinforces her poetics of juxtaposition. Over the course of Bishop's Brazilian years, juxtaposition provides a vehicle for her mediation of the new place while her ability to incorporate her Brazilian experiences into her compositions through juxtaposition simultaneously reveals her deepening understanding of the nuances of Brazilian life, demonstrating her evolution from tourist to dweller.

Theoretically, this thesis establishes the concepts of place and mediation within constructivist and experiential frameworks and proposes that mediation of place can be seen through the process of writing and revision. This, in turn, can be visualized through a combination of digital humanities deep mapping and genetic criticism. Bishop's early approaches to mediating Brazil included repurposing material she had composed in Nova Scotia to a Brazilian context, attempting to physically situate her poetry, and limiting the geographic scope of her compositions. Her Brazilian poems were completed in short bursts of productivity that were interspersed with longer "fallow" periods during which she wrote prose. These pauses represent periods of "poetic instability" that were followed by stable periods when Bishop realized changes to her poetic mediation of a new place. Writing prose let Bishop experiment with new techniques while also providing an alternate approach to mediating place. Bishop's literary works interrogate the disjunction between place and the idea of the place, and her late Brazilian poems directly engage this disparity.

Keywords: Elizabeth Bishop; Brazil; place; poetics; digital humanities

Résumé

Cette thèse commence par les questions suivantes : (1) Comment le changement de lieu affecte-t-il la poétique d'un écrivain ? et (2) Comment ce changement est-il médiatisé par l'écriture ? Le déménagement d'Elizabeth Bishop au Brésil et la combinaison de ses œuvres littéraires publiées, de sa correspondance et de ses documents d'archives constituent un riche ensemble de matériaux pour une étude de cas sur le thème du changement de lieu et de la poétique. Cette thèse soutient que pour Bishop : (1) la médiation d'un nouveau lieu nécessite des intersections surprenantes entre le lieu et la mémoire, et (2) le changement de lieu renforce sa poétique de la juxtaposition. Au cours des années brésiliennes de Bishop, la juxtaposition fournit un véhicule pour sa médiation du nouveau lieu, tandis que sa capacité à incorporer ses expériences brésiliennes dans ses compositions par le biais de la juxtaposition révèle simultanément sa compréhension approfondie des nuances de la vie brésilienne, démontrant son évolution de touriste à habitante.

Sur le plan théorique, cette thèse établit les concepts de lieu et de médiation dans des cadres constructivistes et expérientiels et propose que la médiation du lieu puisse être vue à travers le processus d'écriture et de révision. Ceci, à son tour, peut être visualisé par une combinaison de cartographie profonde des humanités numériques et de critique génétique. Les premières approches de Bishop à l'égard de la médiation du Brésil comprenaient la réadaptation du matériel qu'elle avait composé en Nouvelle-Écosse à un contexte brésilien, la tentative de situer physiquement sa poésie et la limitation de la portée géographique de ses compositions. Ses poèmes brésiliens ont été réalisés dans de brefs élans de productivité entrecoupés de longues périodes de " jachère " pendant lesquelles elle a écrit de la prose. Ces pauses représentent des périodes d'"instabilité poétique" qui étaient suivies de périodes stables au cours desquelles Bishop réalisait des changements dans sa médiation poétique d'un nouveau

lieu. L'écriture en prose a permis à Bishop d'expérimenter de nouvelles techniques tout en offrant une autre approche de la médiation du lieu. Les œuvres littéraires de Bishop interrogent la disjonction entre le lieu et l'idée du lieu, et ses derniers poèmes brésiliens abordent directement cette disparité.

Mots-clés: Elizabeth Bishop ; Brésil ; lieu ; poétique ; humanités numériques

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Completing this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and guidance of many people. First and foremost, I am grateful for the support of my advisor Patrick Vincent. From our very first email exchange, he has been exceptionally responsive and supportive. At the beginning of my doctoral studies, he responded to my questions with books, helping me develop a broad theoretical foundation while encouraging me to find my own ways into the material. Then, as I developed an approach, he helped me shape and narrow my focus. Throughout the entire dissertation process, he pushed me to be more critical and precise while encouraging me to pursue my scholarly interests, which was ideal supervision! He also supported my teaching and advocated for the department to start a new creative writing course. He trusted my abilities and was available whenever I had questions or wanted feedback, and I would like to thank him for his excellent feedback and steadiness throughout this process. I always knew I could rely on Patrick for his honesty and his encouragement.

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My research would not have been possible without the help of the Archives and Special Collections Library at Vassar College, especially librarian Dean Rogers. Because of the pandemic, I was unable to visit Bishop's archives, and the library provided hundreds of pages of manuscript duplicates for me to study. I would also like to thank the Egalité grant committee at the Université de Neuchâtel for supporting my research and letting me redirect grant funds during the pandemic from in-person archival research to covering the cost of manuscript duplication. The grant made a significant difference in my access to a wide range of materials.

My parents, in-laws, and extended family have consistently supported me during my doctoral studies. I knew that I could complete my doctorate in part because I remember my mother completing her PhD when I was a child, so I had a model to follow. I'd like to thank my child Max for patience during some very boring breaks, for holding me accountable to word count goals, and for cheering me on. My partner Andrew has been my biggest support and did everything from giving me motivational desk decorations to building the MapTool when I was trying to figure out how to track Bishop's correspondence. He also read and gave feedback on every paper, conference paper, and dissertation chapter I wrote and deserves an honorary PhD in literature.

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List of Abbreviations

EAP

Elizabeth Bishop, *Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments*, ed. Alice Quinn (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

EBNY

Joelle Biele, ed., *Elizabeth Bishop and The New Yorker: The Complete Correspondence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

OA

Robert Giroux, ed., *One Art: Letters* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

P

Elizabeth Bishop, *Poems*, ed. Lloyd Schwartz (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

Pr

Elizabeth Bishop, *Prose*, ed. Lloyd Schwartz (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015).

VCSC

Elizabeth Bishop Papers, Archives and Special Collections Library, Vassar College

WIA

Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell, *Words in Air: The Complete Correspondence Between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell*, ed. Thomas J. Travisano and Saskia Hamilton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010).

1. Introduction

In a manuscript draft of her unpublished poem "Florida Revisited," Elizabeth Bishop writes, "Change is what hurts worst; change alone can kill. / Change kills us, finally — not these earthly things."[1] She composed this poem late in her life and had hoped to add it to her final collection, *Geography III*. As biographer Brett Millier notes, Bishop tried to finalize this poem in August 1976, three years before her death, and the poem "revisits both the state… and her early poems"[2] about Florida, which appear in her collections *North & South* and *A Cold Spring*. Although Bishop did not finish this poem, it offers a brief retrospective of the themes that most engaged her over the course of her literary career. Despite the harsh lines about change, her life was defined by it, in particular by change of place.

Bishop was uprooted several times in her childhood, moving between relatives and schools until she graduated from college. With no fixed home to which she could return, she traveled to France, Washington D.C., Key West, Florida, New York City, and, eventually, to Brazil, where she lived for nearly twenty years. Even then, she remained unsettled. Bishop arrived in Brazil in November 1951 and officially moved to Boston in 1970, but during this period she traveled to Europe and throughout Brazil and briefly lived in Seattle. She also gradually accumulated a surplus of homes in Brazil. Bishop and her partner Lota de Macedo Soares shared a house called "Samambaia" in Petrópolis and an apartment in Rio de Janeiro. Bishop eventually purchased her own house in Ouro Preto and named it "Casa Mariana" for

[1] This manuscript draft appears in print in Brett C. Millier, *Elizabeth Bishop: Life and the Memory of It* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992) and in *EAP*. The two versions differ significantly. Millier's version mostly replicates Bishop's typescript and follows her handwritten notes regarding stanza order, although two stanzas appear to be missing entirely, one of which reappears in a later manuscript draft. Quinn publishes a scan of the original manuscript (shown in Figure 1) and attempts to incorporate all of Bishop's handwritten notes and corrections in her transcription. It is more complete than the Millier version but involves a significant amount of interpretation. Both Millier and Quinn print the first of Bishop's three drafts of this poem, which is the longest version.

[2] Millier, p. 523.

Marianne Moore. After Lota de Macedo Soares's death in 1967, Bishop found it difficult to stay in Brazil. Settling the estate was complicated, and she lost much of the social support and goodwill that she had enjoyed during de Macedo Soares's life. Ultimately, Bishop settled in Boston and lived there until her death in 1979.

"Florida Revisited" was composed after Bishop's permanent return to Massachusetts and illustrates two questions that motivate this dissertation: (1) How does change of place affect a writer's poetics? and (2) How is that change mediated through writing? While these questions could be approached through the works of many different authors, I am focusing on Elizabeth Bishop as a case study. Bishop often writes about both place and the nature of memory – the act of remembering – and questions the myriad ways that place and change intersect. This thesis argues that in her compositions, Bishop addresses the fractures generated by change of place through juxtaposition. Rather than synthesizing two opposing ideas, she places them side-by-side, and the resulting uneasiness animates her most effective pieces of poetry and prose. This method aligns her more closely with a Romantic rather than a Modernist tradition, although her compositions often counter Romantic ideals.[3]

Despite repeatedly opting for change in her own life, in "Florida Revisited" (Figure 1), Bishop's speaker claims that it is painful to the point of death. Yet in the next line of the manuscript, the speaker resists lack of change as well, stating: "One hates all this immutability."[4] The line opens with unequivocal emotion expressed in forceful, monosyllabic terms and then ends with an odd, polysyllabic word that recalls Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "Mutability" with its closing lines, "Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow; / Nought may endure but Mutability."[5] While Shelley claims that life's only constant is change, Bishop

[3] Bishop's resistance to the sublime is discussed in Chapter Two.
[4] VCSC, f. 64.24.
[5] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Mutability ["We Are as Clouds That Veil the Midnight Moon"] by Percy Bysshe Shelley," Poetry Foundation (Poetry Foundation, 2022), accessed 29 July 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54563/mutability-we-are-as-clouds-that-veil-the-midnight-moon.

refers instead to the *capacity* to change. Thus, what is hated is resistance to change, not change itself. The word "immutability" is like a wall, difficult to cross. The period, the only punctuation in the line, reinforces the statement's finality, and the use of third person frames the line as an objective truth. The speaker as a subjective figure does not hate the inability to change; rather, it is impersonally and universally loathed.

After this series of abstractions, the stanza ends by situating the speaker in the specific place named in the poem's title: "Finally one hates the Florida one knows, / the Florida one knew." While place is clearly defined, time remains ambiguous. The shift from present to past tense splits the perspective so that Florida is simultaneously encountered it its current and former states. Both versions are hated, but is this due to change or the inability to change? Bishop famously self-corrects in her poems to show "a mind thinking,"[6] which gives the reader the impression of discovery through sensing and thinking along with the speaker. The slight correction of tense from "the Florida one knows" to "the Florida one knew" creates this cognitive effect: The present slips into the past at the moment of reading, so the correction mimics the passage of time. The poem's continuation also contradicts the word "finally," which is repeated twice in two lines. None of these lines are, in fact, final. Both place and time continue to change, regardless of the speaker's opinions of both, and this small gesture undermines the earlier statement of "immutability."

[6] *Pr*, "Gerard Manley Hopkins: Notes on Timing in His Poetry," pp. 468-474. As an undergraduate student at Vassar College, Bishop wrote an insightful essay on the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. She cites the line "Their purpose was to portray, not a thought, but a mind thinking" from an article by Morris W. Croll on "The Baroque Style in Prose" and connects this to both Hopkins and to seventeenth century Metaphysical poets, who originated this manner of poetic timing.

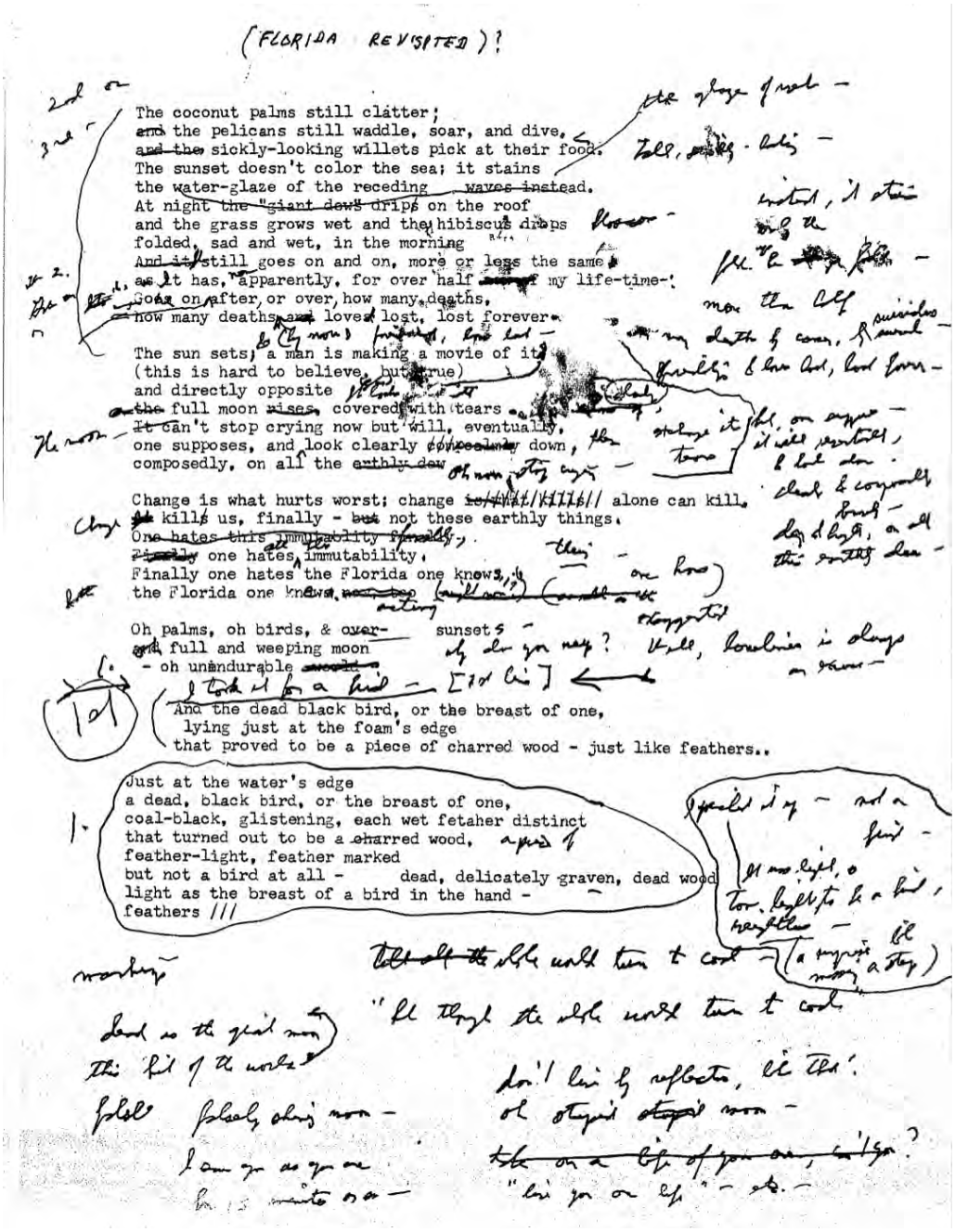

Figure 1: The first of three manuscript drafts of "Florida Revisited"[7]

The stanza about change marks the halfway point of the first draft of this poem. As seen in Figure 1 above, Bishop reorders the lines so that the closing stanza becomes the opening. She establishes the present-day Florida through a series of observations; however, unlike the typical accumulation of details viewed through her famous eye, these parts synthesize into an

[7] VCSC, f. 64.24.

incorrect whole. The speaker mistakes a piece of driftwood for a dead bird and experiences the disorientation of closely observing an object but not comprehending it. This sharply contrasts with Bishop's highly anthologized poem "The Fish" in which close observation of an animal leads to a nearly spiritual recognition and release. Instead, this impression of Florida is a lie, and the present, although it resembles the past, is not the same.

The perspective then expands to encompass the trees, birds, and sea. The speaker enumerates each sad aspect that "still goes on and on, more or less the same" and adds "… for over half my life-time." The persistence of place is set against personal loss, and the draft becomes melodramatic. Bishop does not manage to excise the "… many deaths, / how many deaths by now, [and] love lost, lost forever" which she elaborates in the margin with "many deaths by cancer, & suicides — friendship & love / lost, lost forever—,"[8] and the poem devolves into the kind of overwrought sentimentality that she could not tolerate and systematically cut from her drafts prior to publication.[9] Still, the outpouring of emotion demonstrates that the Florida of the present is distorted by the speaker's memories and that place cannot be disentangled from personal experience.

1.1 Contextualizing Bishop

As a writer concerned with geography, cartography, and nature, Bishop examined the places where she lived in a variety of written contexts including her journals, manuscript drafts, correspondence, essays, and poems, which provides rich material for criticism. Her move to Brazil in November 1951 is of particular interest due to the striking differences between places:

[8] *EAP*, p. 177.

[9] Richard Flynn suggests that part of Bishop's aversion to excessive sentiment stems from her childhood. He says, "Bishop also associated sentimentality with cruelty. Near the end of her "long sad tale" about her abusive Uncle George, she remarks, "What I dislike even more than the streak of cruelty almost is his dreadful sentimentality - I guess they often go together. His eyes were always filling up with tears, etc." (VC 118.33; qtd. in Goldensohn "Approaching" 19)," in Richard Flynn, "Elizabeth Bishop's Sanity" in *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive*, ed. Bethany Hicok (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2020), p. 48.

from Nova Scotia and New England to the tropics and from flat, coastal land with seemingly endless horizons to "straight up the side of a mountain"[10] in Samambaia. When she moved from north to south, the stars and seasons reversed, and she encountered entirely new species of plants and animals. As she wrote to Dr. Anny Baumann on 28 July 1952, "my Anglo-Saxon blood is gradually relinquishing its seasonal cycle and I'm quite content to live in complete confusion, about seasons, fruits, languages, geography, everything."[11] Bishop's literary preoccupations, her extensive archive, and the dramatic geographical changes make her work particularly well suited to the questions presented above.

Although Bishop's published works have been analyzed, her archive has grown over the past two decades, affording ample material for fresh readings. In the introductions of two recently published essay collections, the editors describe how the expansion of Bishop's archive continues to complicate our understanding of her work.[12] The aloof and perfectionist "Miss Bishop" of the 1980s has been replaced with a complex figure who survived abuse, struggled with alcoholism, and had several affairs, while her reputation as an exacting artist and committed correspondent and friend have solidified. New editions of her correspondence continue to be published,[13] and while the first generation of Bishop scholars collected and prepared her extensive archive for publication and uncovered and recorded elements of her biography, establishing her as a subject worthy of study, recent scholarship has followed diverse paths of critical inquiry, drawing from interdisciplinary fields ranging from disability studies to ecocricitism.[14]

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[10] *OA*, p. 233, letter from Bishop to Ilse and Kit Barker, 7 February 1952.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 243, letter from Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 28 July 1952.
[12] See Hicok's *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive* and *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop*, eds. Angus Cleghorn and Jonathan Ellis (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[13] Langdon Hammer notes that Bishop's epistolary exchanges with May Swenson and with Marianne Moore are being prepared for publication in "Letters: Elizabeth Bishop's 'Art Form or Something': Langdon Hammer," The New York Review of Books, June 25, 2020, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/02/25/letters-elizabeth-bishops-art-form-or-something/. These new volumes will join the already published collections of correspondence: *One Art: Letters* (2015), *Elizabeth Bishop and The New Yorker: The Complete Correspondence* (2011), and *Words in Air: The Complete Correspondence Between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell* (2010).
[14] Some examples include: Marilyn May Lombardi, "The Closet of Breath: Elizabeth Bishop, Her Body and Her

My approach differs from existing scholarship in its specific focus on change of place and compositional mediations of that change. While Bishop's poetry explores themes of geography and cartography, past readings have not, for the most part, been concerned with place phenomenologically or experientially. Anne Colwell's study of embodiment in Bishop's work, *Inscrutable Houses*, touches on certain experiential elements related to the subject of this dissertation, although I focus specifically on Bishop's stay in Brazil and experience of place whereas Colwell analyzes the development of Bishop's poetics of the body across her entire literary career.[15] Sarah Giragosian and Charla Allyn Hughes both contributed chapters to *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive*, edited by Bethany Hicok, that examine place more critically and will be discussed in the second chapter.[16] Giragosian's "Elizabeth Bishop's Geopoetics" offers a geocritical reading of Bishop's poem "The Mountain," while Charla Allyn Hughes's "I miss all that bright, detailed flatness" outlines Bishop's months living in the mountains of Brevard, North Carolina and changes to her poetics during that time, an approach that overlaps with mine, although Hughes selects a different period in Bishop's life and focuses on the incorporation of verticality into her poetics.

Larger critical studies on Bishop regarding geography, cartography, and Brazil itself provide the foundation for this dissertation. *The Geography of Gender*, edited by Marilyn May Lombardi, situates Bishop's geographies in feminist, queer, and Freudian criticism.[17] Eleanor Cook considers cartographic themes in both Bishop's writing and as a visual element in her book design.[18] Cook also discusses Bishop's poetics but describes her extensive formal

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Art," in *Elizabeth Bishop: The Geography of Gender* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993) and Sarah Giragosian, "Elizabeth Bishop's Geopoetics," in *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive*. Recently published, *Elizabeth Bishop in Context*, ed. by Angus Cleghorn and Jonathan Ellis (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021) collects short essays on Bishop that are grouped by "contexts" such as Places, Forms, Identity, etc. addressing topics ranging from race to animals to the Cold War to psychoanalysis.

[15] Anne Colwell, *Inscrutable Houses: Metaphors of the Body in the Poems of Elizabeth Bishop* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

[16] Charla Allyn Hughes, "I miss all that bright, detailed flatness," in *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive*.

[17] Marilyn May Lombardi, ed., *Elizabeth Bishop: The Geography of Gender* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1993).

[18] Eleanor Cook, *Elizabeth Bishop at Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

variations, allusions to poets such as Herbert, Stevens, and Whitman, and connections to Biblical texts and hymns. George Monteiro and Bethany Hicok have both written extensively about Bishop's time in Brazil, but they prioritize the cultural, linguistic, and political dimensions of her stay.[19] Monteiro identifies the influences of Brazilian poetry and the Portuguese language on Bishop's work, and Hicok considers her socio-political development in her adopted country. These studies provide invaluable context for all subsequent work on Bishop's Brazilian years.

1.2 Juxtaposition as Mediation

Whether through a sublime encounter or close observation of local nature, perception of place can alter one's poetics. Moving to a new place and interacting with unfamiliar landscapes and terrains can certainly elicit changes to metaphor and other types of descriptive language. For Bishop, such a shift was only possible via what I wish to call "counterpoints" that served both as an entryway to the new place and as a source of disorientation. In music, a counterpoint is "The melody added as accompaniment to a given melody or 'plain-song,'"[20] or an additional musical layer that can either contrast or complement the original melody, and which serves to accentuate various aspects of it. In other words, counterpoint adds depth to a musical piece by connecting two sets of sounds and themes. While Gerard Manley Hopkins and T.S. Eliot apply counterpoint metrically, incorporating two sets of rhythms into their poems, Bishop employs visual or temporal counterpoints in her poetic compositions through juxtaposition. As seen in poems such as "Florida Revisited" or "Santarém," a recent or new experience prompts a perspectival shift through its connection to an existing memory or place. The unresolved space

[19] George Monteiro, *Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil and After: A Poetic Career Transformed* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012) and Bethany Hicok, *Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016).
[20] Oxford English Dictionary, "counterpoint, n.1." *OED Online*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, June 2022), accessed 1 August 2022, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/42925.

between old and new forms the crux of Bishop's most effective compositions from her years in Brazil. Her less successful poems and prose lack the delightful irrationality or surprise of juxtaposition.

In this thesis, I argue that for Bishop (1) mediation of a new place requires surprising intersections between place and memory, and (2) change of place reinforces her poetics of juxtaposition. Over the course of Bishop's Brazilian years, juxtaposition provided a vehicle for her mediation of the new place while her ability to incorporate her Brazilian experiences into her compositions through juxtaposition simultaneously revealed her deepening understanding of the nuances of Brazilian life, demonstrating her evolution from tourist to dweller.

Defining Bishop's relationship to Brazil is difficult. She always maintained her outsider status and thus never quite became a local. She was neither an American expatriate nor a Brazilian citizen. However, over the course of her twenty years of residence, her relationship to the place deepened, and her understanding of it grew in nuance. The idea of "dwelling,"[21] although complicated by Heidegger's insupportable politics, conveys a sense of creating or building a space and inhabiting it that applies to Bishop's Brazilian residence. Tom Paulin discusses Bishop in a Heideggerian context and concludes that she subverts many of his worst traits through her celebration of "makeshift, temporary dwellings" and "Third World imagination."[22] While her aesthetic values unquestionably oppose those of Heidegger, I use dwelling because it encompasses both the conceptual notion and physical act of building. Samambaia, the mountain home where Bishop and Lota de Macedo Soares lived, was constructed around them, as they initially camped in half-finished rooms. This idea of "construction" is central to both placemaking and mediation, and through writing, one may argue, Bishop built her vision of Brazil.

[21] Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: HarperCollins, 1971).
[22] Tom Paulin, "Dwelling without Roots: Elizabeth Bishop," *Grand Street*, no. 36 (1990): 90–102, https://doi.org/10.2307/25007403.

As Thomas Travisano observes, juxtaposition became a defining part of Bishop's poetics when she lived in Florida, and he describes her "trademark" poetic technique as "a succession of linked images, usually without supplying explicit connectives."[23] He distinguishes Bishop's mode of juxtaposition from Ezra Pound's, claiming that for Bishop, "each image is sufficiently related to the next in place and time to achieve a primary effect of continuity rather than of dislocation." Bishop uses juxtaposition to create a rich sense of place, combining her observations with memories and history, but this technique requires a certain familiarity with place and a depth of experience. Travisano pairs Pound and Marianne Moore as poets who "extended imagism in *space*, sifting together a kinetic field of objects and remarks,"[24] whereas Bishop "extends imagism in *time* by melding a succession of related images, each in itself a Poundian 'intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time,' into a story."[25] Bishop's attention to temporality makes her a poet of place rather than of nature, as her juxtapositions tie memory to place.

While a late poem such as "Florida Revisited" juxtaposes place and memory, an earlier Brazilian composition such as "Arrival at Santos" shows how place can be considered without deep, personal experience. The poem ironically engages the dissonance between a traveler's expectations and reality. Rather than an exciting arrival at a new port in a foreign country, the speaker adopts a self-mocking tone in describing an uninspiring scene and asks, "Oh, tourist, / is this how this country is going to answer you / and your immodest demands for a different world…"?[26] The poem never articulates the tourist's desires, which are assumed — exoticism, adventure, and dramatic landscapes — the usual fare. The lack of specificity reinforces that "here" and "there" could be anywhere. Instead of engaging with a new place, the poem

[23] Thomas J. Travisano, *Elizabeth Bishop: Her Artistic Development* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1989), p. 56.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[25] *Ibid.,* pp. 72-73.
[26] *P*, p. 87.

interrogates the traveler and her desires. Most importantly, the speaker highlights the tourist's superficiality and lack of interest in the real place that appears before her rather than the imagined locale. The tourist would rather visit an idea of a place than its reality.

Still, the speaker of the poem occasionally notices the details that comprise a specific place. The first moment of disorientation arises from noticing "a strange and brilliant rag" flying above a small boat with the remark, "I somehow never thought of there *being* a flag…" Despite how common and universal this scene might appear, the Brazilian flag offers an instant of surprise and wonder in the recognition that while "here" could be anywhere, it is, in fact, a specific place. The triviality of this difference makes it even more striking and encourages the speaker to consider other possible novelties of this country, such as its currency. Still, none of the descriptions of the port can rival the liveliness and interest the speaker applies to the memorable Miss Breen. Throughout the poem, the speaker never mentions her own past or her hopes for this new place and comments instead on the banal nature of a port with its customs officials and practicalities. Only the final lines excite a sense of urgency and adventure: "We leave Santos at once; / we are driving to the interior." As the poem's speaker says, "Ports are necessities," and they function as a liminal space: a way point, not a destination. The true Brazil lies ahead, and the word "interior" evokes a sense of colonial discovery, which Bishop addresses in the second poem of *Questions of Travel*, "Brazil, January 1, 1502."

Bishop sent "Arrival at Santos" to Katharine White, her editor at *The New Yorker*, on 14 March 1952, only four months after her arrival in Brazil.[27] She had not yet experienced some of the most disorienting aspects of her new home, such as "the funniest feeling that Christmas is coming"[28] in July due to the reversal of seasons. Despite promising several more poems to White, Bishop did not begin to complete poems about Brazil in any consistent or

[27] *EBNY*, p. 77.
[28] *OA*, p. 239, letter from Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 8 July 1952.

sustained way until 1955, although her correspondence is full of lively descriptions of the surprising elements and experiences of her new life. In part, illness prevented her from working as the allergic reaction that initially kept her in Brazil triggered her severe asthma and complicated her recovery. Then, as she familiarized herself with this new place and an entirely new lifestyle as part of a new relationship, she began to experiment with a wide range of literary forms and voices, returning to short stories for the first time "in ten years"[29] and adopting voices from the landscape and both real and fictional personas. As she gained first- and second-hand experience with Brazil, she incorporated them into her writing through juxtaposition.

In the next four chapters, I will discuss Bishop's mediation of Brazil through writing and her poetics of juxtaposition. In Chapter One, I establish the theoretical and methodological frameworks underlying this dissertation, both of which are grounded in constructivist and experiential approaches to place and to literary scholarship. Specifically, the concepts of place and mediation are examined, followed by an overview of the digital and archival methods used to identify and analyze "mediation" of place. In Chapter Two I apply this framework and methodology to Bishop's initial attempts at composing poems about Brazil. The chapter begins with a description of the traits that comprise the four years of Bishop's "Brazilian transition" and continues with a discussion of three distinct approaches Bishop applied in her initial compositions about Brazil. First, past writing and observations serve as an entry point to a new place: Bishop repurposes old material in a new context. Second, I analyze an unsuccessful poem draft in which Bishop observes a figure near the harbor but cannot overcome the physical stasis that constrains the composition. Finally, I examine a series of drafts that ultimately develop into a finished poem. During the compositional process, Bishop progressively limits

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 249. In a letter to Kit and Ilse Barker, 12 October 1952, Bishop says it has been ten years since she has "finished" a story. This is a slight exaggeration. Her stories "The Farmer's Children" and "The Housekeeper" were both published in 1948 by *Harper's Bazaar* and *The New Yorker* respectively, although the latter had been accepted several years earlier under a pen name. See *EBNY,* p. ix and *Pr*, p. 491.

the geographical scope of each draft until this initial attempt to write about Brazil becomes a piece in the voice of a landscape feature.

After this consideration of Bishop's Brazilian transition period, in Chapter Three I show that Bishop's prose efforts, although often unsuccessful, enable her to develop techniques and a direct, first-person voice that she transfers to her poetic compositions. Despite numerous attempts at writing travel essays, Bishop was unable to master the narrative form, in part due to her preoccupation with factual rather than experiential accuracy. Her semi-autobiographical stories about her Nova Scotian childhood treat facts more flexibly and are more successful because she prioritizes emotional rather than literal truth. I connect Bishop's difficulties with the travel essay form to her stated poetic values, which she refined and articulated in the "late 1950s – early 1960s"[30] while in Brazil: "*Accuracy, Spontaneity, Mystery.*"[31] These elements, which she captures and conveys in poetry through juxtaposition, provide a greater challenge in prose, where the temptation to explain for the sake of accuracy subverts the principles of spontaneity and mystery, although her informal correspondence retains all three elements. Still, in these prose "failures," Bishop writes about Brazil for the first time without either ironic distance or a mediating persona, a voice which she then incorporates into her poetry.

Finally, Chapter Four returns to Bishop's poetry about Brazil through an analysis of her Amazon poems. I argue that "The Riverman," composed before she visited the Amazon, required multiple mediating personas in order to both establish authority and engage with the idea of the Amazon. In the poem, Bishop considers the possibilities and limitations of hybridity and of living in two distinct environments but belonging to neither. "Song for the Rainy Season," although not about the Amazon region, was composed four months after her visit there.Bishop's correspondence with Katharine White and Robert Lowell reveals her growing

[30] *Pr*, p. 331.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 328.

unease with her poetic relationship with Brazil. Just as she begins to compose poems about her adopted home more easily, she identifies a need for fractures to avoid the simplistically exotic and picturesque. While "The Riverman" is often grouped with Bishop's "true" poems of Brazil, her first, direct composition about the Amazon is an unfinished fragment, "On the Amazon," in which she juxtaposes stasis and movement to portray a moment of dissolution. Finally, in her late poem "Santarém," Bishop combines the elements and techniques that she had been developing in a "true" poem of place, juxtaposing memory, place, and history to depict the complex nostalgia for a city that had undoubtedly changed after her departure.

2. The Mediations of Place

"Place" and "mediation" have multiple definitions that subtly change across disciplinary fields, which makes the terms somewhat elusive. However, both ideas can be connected through 1) constructivist and 2) experiential frameworks. My understanding of place is shaped by cultural geographers and phenomenologists who describe how the concept is constructed and experienced at both individual and societal levels. Place is mediated subjectively as well as physically, but the idea of mediation also has a more specific meaning in constructionist learning theory,[1] which is that the construction of knowledge can be facilitated through the creation of objects, serving as externalizations of world views that can be interacted with. Thus, the epistemological process of "mediating place" through writing is grounded in the idea that knowledge, like place, is constructed, and this process can be seen through iterations of making and reflection (or in the case of writers through composition and revision).

With this constructivist foundation, I analyze the texts themselves using two methods: 1) deep mapping and 2) genetic criticism. Although the first method is digital and the second relies on archival research, both provide ways to visualize transitional moments in Bishop's biography and in her literary development. To study mediation of place means identifying transitional moments and then evaluating genetic materials to reconstruct the process. Alternating digital and archival methods provides two complementary ways of visualizing the literary creation process.

[1] Constructivism and constructionism are different terms, and I discuss the salient points below. Edith Ackermann offers a good comparison of Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism, Seymour Papert's constructionism, and Jean Piaget's genetic epistemology in "Piaget's Constructivism, Papert's Constructionism: What's the Difference?" accessed 27 October 2015, http://learning.media.mit.edu/content/publications/EA.Piaget%20_%20Papert.pdf.

2.1 Place

When describing the role of setting in fiction, Eudora Welty asserts that place "has the most delicate control over character" because "by confining character, it defines it."[2] In this sense, place provides an experiential boundary for characters, constraining the potentially infinite scope of who that person might be. In a fictional context, a character who is raised in a high-rise apartment building in Manhattan will, naturally, have a different way of understanding and experiencing the world than one raised on a Nebraskan farm. As Welty later notes, this limit applies to the writer as well, because "place is where he has roots, place is where he stands; in his experience out of which he writes, it provides the base of reference; in his work, the point of view."[3] What is observed and captured on the page as well as the diction and metaphors that are employed all emerge from a situated perspective. Welty's depiction of place and setting emphasizes a sense of grounded stability, and for Bishop, this initial point of reference is Nova Scotia. When she was uprooted to Worcester, Massachusetts by her paternal grandparents, she understood her new life and living situation in the context of her previous home. Although she retained a few memories prior to her life in Nova Scotia, these were primarily of specific moments rather than the routines and rhythms of daily life.

While this notion that place "creates" people is true to a certain extent, interdisciplinary scholarship has demonstrated that people simultaneously create place on both individual and societal levels. Since the 1970s and 1980s, cultural geographers have shown that "place" is a dynamic construction rather than a static environment, and this observation subsequently changed how both place and setting are interpreted in literature.[4] Individual identity and experience influence interactions with place, and our current understanding of intersectionality

[2] Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," in *On Writing* (New York: Random House, 2011), pp. 39-59.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[4] Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, "The passion of place," in *A Century of British Geography*, eds. Ron Johnston and Michael Williams, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 275-299.

and of the complex interactions between individual, culture, history, and place also complicates and refines contemporary readings.[5]

Denis Cosgrove defines landscape as, "…the external world mediated through subjective human experience… Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world."[6] Donald W. Meinig adds that the way we see is determined in part by who we are.[7] Robert Sack combines these ideas in his assertion that "place depends on people, who construct and organize it. In these complex ways, self and place are themselves mutually constitutive" and "all people are geographical beings."[8] In other words, while a physical place might comprise fixed elements such as trees or a mountain or a town of similarly designed homes, the perceived landscape is determined by the viewer who filters the scene through past experience and personal qualities. When facing similar homes, for example, a visitor may struggle to differentiate between them whereas a local can draw from personal experience and memory to tell them apart more readily. In addition to memory, personality and interest also shape perception. A painter's description of a landscape will differ from an engineer's just as a child will appreciate qualities that may not matter to an adult. However, subjective mediation only constitutes one aspect of placemaking.

In addition to the subjective exchange between individual and environment, passive observation also contributes to the composition of place. Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift describe places as "gatherings of habitual practices that are necessarily attached to particular

[5] See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Penguin, 2014) and *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, eds. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) on how we are shaped by our environments. Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," *Critical Inquiry*, 26.2 (2000), pp. 175–92 and Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) discuss identity and placemaking.
[6] Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 13.
[7] Donald W. Meinig, *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Meinig proposes an initial taxonomy of how different types of people may see the same landscape; how who they are determine what they observe.
[8] Robert D. Sack, "The Power of Place and Space," *Geographical Review*, 83.3 (1993), pp. 326–29.

locations,"[9] and this temporality marks another key element of the construction of place. Eventually "this sedimentation of detail feeds into our general expectation of how the world will turn up."[10] The constant, low-level reinforcement leaves us with a capacity for surprise by creating a gap between expectation and reality. When there is "no fixed definition: places are constantly adding qualities that give them new potentials for action, thus making them into new 'wheres' and new 'a-where-nesses'."[11]

As mentioned above, memories contribute to sense of place, but while I have described memory as a way of differentiating between similar places through specific associations, Massey and Thrift show how the opposite may also occur. A given place, for example a home, becomes familiar through a series of met expectations. Routines create a sense of place through continuity, and disruptions lead to an instability of that sense of place. These disruptive moments paradoxically heighten awareness of place, and whatever new quality has appeared either becomes absorbed into the overall place sense or is categorized as an exceptional circumstance. For example, when Bishop first arrived in Brazil, she often wrote about the "unbelievably impractical"[12] and "highly impractical"[13] scenery surrounding her, describing the cliffs and the waterfalls and the "clouds floating in & out of one's bedroom." She mentions finding a large hummingbird in the pantry and chasing it out with an umbrella.[14] Her initial letters express a lively wonder and delight at the strangeness she encountered in Samambaia. By contrast, later letters stop mentioning the peculiarities of her new home as they became normalized and part of her usual existence. A surprising visitor might be mentioned, but the dramatic landscape recedes into the background.

[9] Massey and Thrift, p. 295.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *OA*, p. 234, letter from Bishop to Ilse and Kit Barker, 7 February 1952.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 236, letter from Bishop to Marianne Moore, 14 February 1952.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 238, belated continuation of the letter to Marianne Moore, 3 March 1952.

In developmental psychology, this ongoing process that Massey and Thrift describe is known as assimilation and accommodation.[15] Mental frameworks, called schema, develop from repeated experiences, or what Massey and Thrift call "our general expectation."[16] New experiences are either assimilated into existing schema, essentially confirming expectations, or frameworks must shift to accommodate the new information. A pivotal moment in "Florida Revisited" occurs when observations that Bishop's speaker assumes will confirm a preconception come to mean something else entirely. Much of the tension in Bishop's Brazilian poems derives from this gap between expectation and reality, and she recreates the perceptual and cognitive processes for the reader to experience the same dissonance or surprise.

While Massey and Thrift explain how place sense develops over time, the "a-where-ness" or "awareness" they describe is, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, established through another type of temporality. When moving through a physical space, the surrounding landscape changes and is continually filtered through the subjective self. At certain moments, a specific object or occurrence might attract attention, perhaps because it appears "out of place" or some other aspect foregrounds it (for example a car alarm or a passerby), but usually the landscape simply serves as a backdrop to thoughts and interactions. Tuan characterizes this dual experience of "reality as both continuous and discrete, linked and disjunctive."[17] Moments when time appears to stop allow an active recognition of place, which adds to the development of a sense of place, but these pauses are temporary, so an impression of a particular place is more accurately a collection of instances of awareness or observation. In other words, sense of place develops during moments of reflection while place itself is under constant construction. As Edward Relph explains:

[15] Jean Piaget, *The Essential Piaget*, ed. Howard E. Gruber and J. Jacques Vonèche (Lanham, MD: J. Aronson, 1977).
[16] Massey and Thrift, p. 295.
[17] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Continuity and Discontinuity," *Geographical Review*, 74.3 (1984), pp. 245–56.

> Landscapes and townscapes are simultaneously the contexts of temporal experiences and the subject of temporality. They are the settings for diurnal, weekly and season patterns of human activity, the backdrops and reference points for recollections and expectations. They are an essential component of the geography of memory.[18]

Sense of place thus arises from a combination of internal and external experiences and temporalities. Certain memories may be linked to discrete moments of time, such as a holiday or a catastrophic event, while others are less exact, such as a general seasonal association. A Brazilian July might feel like Christmas to Bishop, but chasing a hummingbird from her pantry with an umbrella marks a specific moment.

This temporal layering of place and memory turns people into what poet Gary Snyder calls "composite beings," in which the "sole individual identifying feature is a particular form or structure changing constantly in time." He marks a paradox in which there is no fixed self — there are past, present, and future versions — and yet "the ever-present moment holds all the transitory little selves in its mirror."[19] In this manner, place and self serve as foils for each other as both are composite and created through mediation and exchange. Returning to "Florida Revisited," the questions raised in the poem can be reframed via these intersections of place, self, and memory. "What is this place?" can thus be read as "Who am I?" *Am I recognizable after these years and losses? Am I the still the same person? Is my self-perception as mistaken as my outward vision?*

[18] Edward Relph, "Temporality and the Rhythms of Sustainable Landscapes," in *Reanimating Places: A Geography of Rhythms*, ed. Tom Mels (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), p. 113.
[19] Gary Snyder, *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2008), p. 189.

2.2 Implacement and Orientation

When cultural geographers speak of construction of place, they often emphasize mental and emotional mediations, but as phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty has shown, people are physical beings who undergo a continuous, passive mediation of place through bodies as well as minds. As with subjective experience of place, physical mediation is marked by disjunctive moments of awareness. Most often, one simply exists in place without considering it, but certain moments foreground one's physical perception of a place, such as a change in the surrounding environment. Edward Casey names this sense of "being concretely placed" "implacement"[20] and defines place as "what takes place between body and landscape. Thanks to the double horizon that body and landscape provide, a place is a locale bounded on both sides, near and far."[21] In other words, place is not only a location but an encounter, with an experiential component in addition to a temporal one.

Returning to "Florida Revisited," the notion of implacement provides another way to frame questions regarding place and self and the relationship between the two. The poem shows how understanding of place and self are grounded in perception, which, to borrow Casey's terminology, is "bounded." Bishop's speaker does not consider infinite situations but a specific instance. What happens when perception, once interpreted, leads to a flawed conclusion, as in the poem when the speaker mistakes driftwood for a dead bird? In addition to wondering whether this flawed external vision might reflect a misunderstanding of self, the poem also asks whether re-implacement is possible. Can one "return" when both body and landscape have changed, or is place necessarily transformed with time? From the title of the poem, Bishop seems to suggest that one can "revisit" but not "return" to a place, while the poem shows the fractures between expectation and reality.

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[20] Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 23.
[21] *Ibid*, p. 29.

David Carr further breaks down the various axes along which place can be defined. He identifies the zero point where they meet as an egocentric perspective, which introduces a series of spaces or potentialities for creative exploration:

> The parallelism of lived space and lived time leads us to the very heart of subjectivity itself. Just as the spatial 'here' is absolute, representing the 'zero-point of orientation' around which all of space arranges itself, no matter where I am, so the 'now' is absolute as well, the 'place,' as it were, where I am always located, even though the content of the now is always changing. Just as the space of my surroundings extends indefinitely in all directions, so time, with its two-fold horizon, extends indefinitely into the past and the future. Opposed to the here is the there; to the now the then. The present, which is both spatial and temporal, stands out against its background: the absent, in the case of space, the past and future, in the case of time.[22]

Space and time extend outward from the fixed point of an individual. "Now" and "then" and "here" and "there" constantly change in relation to a current, embodied self in place. While people may be "composite beings," as Gary Snyder describes, and paradoxical in their simultaneous continuity and adaptability, the first-person subject persists as the point of origin and of synthesis.

The range of possible intersections between place, self, and time means that many potential fractures or gaps also exist — spaces that need to be bridged or integrated in some manner to create a sense of continuity and narrative. Some of these "fractures" or ruptures might intersect, or they may occur in a cascading sequence. For example, Bishop's travel poem

[22] David Carr, *Experience and History: Phenomenological Perspectives on the Historical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 176.

"Arrival at Santos," as described above, does not offer a particularly deep or nuanced view of Brazil itself. The place does not unsettle the speaker. Bishop composed the poem as a tourist who had planned a brief sojourn as part of a longer trip through South America. The poem, therefore, centers the traveler and only touches on superficial differences between North and South. However, as Bishop's stay lengthened, she encountered the instability that Carr describes and began to write about Nova Scotia, and, eventually, to engage with Brazil itself.

Taking this notion of conjunction and disruption a step further, Lawrence Buell describes the generative friction that develops from the "sense of inhabiting different places simultaneously" and the "conflicting allegiances" this can create.[23] These layers of self are made up of "an accumulation or composite of all the places that have been significant to a person, or a people, over time: like a coral reef or set of tree rings."[24] Buell identifies potential for conflict between places, within a single place, and within an individual situated in place. But what emerges from these areas of conflict? For some writers, the compositional process may reflect an attempt to repair or to make sense of these fractures within the self. This thesis argues that Bishop does not reconcile these conflicts; instead, she juxtaposes incongruous elements to convey the experience of fracture.

When discussing place, self, and composition, I have mentioned subjective mediation and the importance of the body's place in the world. In addition to emphasizing physical perception, Merleau-Ponty notes that, "I can 'be elsewhere' while remaining here, and if I am kept far from what I love, I feel far from the center of real life."[25] He, too, divides both place and sense of place between physical and mental states. One can be in a place physically while inhabiting another mentally. This division may take place through memory, reading, or writing, as one can be "transported" from immediate surroundings into an imagined or recalled space.

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[23] Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 66-67.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 69
[25] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 299.

As I will discuss in detail in the following chapters, part of the continued scholarly fascination with Bishop's Brazilian years arises from the short stories she wrote about her Nova Scotian childhood soon after arriving in Brazil, which exemplify the division that Merleau-Ponty identifies between writing evocatively about one place and residing in an entirely separate place (in both spatial and temporal senses).

Despite this attentional split, Merleau-Ponty stresses that individuals experience the world while simultaneously existing within it. To paraphrase him: one cannot touch without being touched. While he means this literally, it serves as a reminder of the physicality of writing and of composing drafts in one place while recalling another place, so the writer's perspective is always physically situated and influenced by their immediate environment. Carr further differentiates the idea of experience, which is "direct" and "immediate rather than mediated." Unlike the popular notion of experience which suggests action, he describes direct, received sensation as "*passive* or *receptive*."[26] Once emotions and thoughts are engaged, physical perceptions are cognitively reshaped or mediated.

Given the subjectivity of both experience and interpretation, the mediating body's identity becomes important, as this can affect one's manner of interacting with the world. In *Queer Phenomenology,* Sara Ahmed analyzes the concept of "orientation" and describes how the language of direction intersects with both sexual orientation and the concept of "the Orient." She begins with a paradox: "In order to become orientated, you might suppose that we must first experience disorientation. When we are orientated, we might not even notice that we are orientated: we might not even think 'to think' about this point."[27] Once again the notion of differentiation recurs. One notices exceptions and moments of divergence from the expected

[26] Carr, p. 11.
[27] Ahmed, p. 16.

or prescribed path. Disjunction or disorientation leads to awareness of place and one's position within it.

Ahmed's discussion of phenomenological orientation incorporates queer theory through the phrase "sexual orientation," which denotes directionality. During the 1950s, when Bishop moved to Brazil, queerness was referred to as "deviation" and "inversion," both of which suggest a straying from the "straight" path. Applying Ahmed's precipitating observation that one only requires orientation if previously disoriented to Bishop provides another way to interpret both her frequent displacements and the often-elliptical nature of her writing. Thomas Travisano identifies a kind of queer poetics in Bishop's deflections that matches the queer phenomenological orientations that Ahmed describes. Bishop's poetry does not directly address her queerness, and the evasiveness regarding this subject gives the poems an elliptical movement in which the compositions constantly turn in on themselves rather than being directed outward toward a figure of the beloved.

This inward reorientation occurs during the revision process, as several of Bishop's first drafts directly referred to her partners, and these references were removed as she prepared work for publication. As Travisano notes, "…these poems invite us to consider the obliquities of self-reference so frequent in her published canon, even in poems not directly or obviously referencing sexuality."[28] "The Shampoo," one of Bishop's early Brazilian compositions and one of the rare published poems in which her sexual orientation is not entirely obscured, was rejected by *The New Yorker*, her main publisher at the time, for both its intimacy and obliqueness of context, although possibly the situation was not quite obscure enough for the United States in the 1950s.[29]

[28] Thomas Travisano, "Bishop and Biography" in *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop*, p. 34.
[29] *EBNY,* pp. 112-113. White tells Bishop that the editors were hesitating because "The Shampoo" is "a personal poem in which you do not seem to have described the occasion involved" and finally concludes that "this sort of small personal poem perhaps doesn't quite fit into the New Yorker."

Ahmed notes that the concept of "the Orient" is mostly used as a foil to define what it means to be Western. Can the concept of Western culture even exist without the Orient for contrast? While I have mentioned the use of juxtaposition within Bishop's compositions, she herself divides her work between North and South and Brazil and Elsewhere, mutually defining each category through grouping and exclusion. Implicit in this type of definition is, of course, the speaker's orientation. "Arrival at Santos" clearly falls under the category of "tourist" poem, as a local would have composed an entirely different arrival poem: one of homecoming and familiarity. The "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel* begins with an outsider's gaze, but also serves as the collection's center; "Elsewhere" refers to any and every other place and time, implying that Brazil is "Here."

While this schema of East vs. West is both conceptual and ideological, Ahmed draws attention back to the physical and phenomenological process of travel and change of place. She defines migration "as a process of disorientation and reorientation: as bodies 'move away' as well as 'arrive'" as they reinhabit spaces."[30] She writes:

> [M]igration involves reinhabiting the skin: the different 'impressions' of a new landscape, the air, the smells, the sounds, which accumulate like points, to create lines, or which accumulate like lines, to create new textures on the surface of the skin.[31]

By applying Ahmed's description of migration, the micro-drama in "Arrival of Santos" of Miss Breen's skirt getting caught on a hook as she debarks can be read as a metaphor for migration and of learning to physically inhabit a new space. Immediately upon Miss Breen's release from the hook, the speaker describes her appearance in detail, with her impressive height and "bright

[30] Ahmed, p. 20.
[31] *Ibid.*

blue eyes," two traits that emphasize her foreignness. Then comes the infamous and atypical enjambment: "Her home, when she is at home, is in Glens Fall / s, New York. There. We are settled." The "s" on "Fall" does fall in e.e. cummings-like typographic mimesis, effectively disorienting the reader. The speaker skips from the minor boating emergency to Miss Breen's appearance to her home in New York with a brief reminder of her displacement — "when she is at home" — followed by the jarring typographical element. All of the dramas then resolve simultaneously in a simple: "There. We are settled." Although "there" means "all set" in Bishop's usage, the word choice is part pun and part oxymoron: "There" returns the speaker's wandering thoughts from New York to "here" in Santos. Similarly, "settled" typically denotes quiet stillness or home, but instead the speaker and Miss Breen settle into the routine aspects of travel with customs officials and other mundanities.

In this stanza, Bishop creates both a sense of displacement and of arrival by placing the bustle and action of the port next to the idea of "home" and then immediately returning to the present. In only a few lines, the speaker crosses continents and experiences both disorientation and reorientation. This technique of linking literal and figurative displacement, although exaggerated in "Arrival at Santos" with its unusually adventurous typography, already appears in Bishop's earliest work. As Travisano notes:

> [I]f we remember Bishop's displacement in "The Map" of an "emotion that too far exceeds its cause" onto the otherwise apparently innocent "names of cities" that "cross the neighboring mountains," we may come to better understand her art of displacement, which remained throughout her life one of her most pervasive and persistent artistic strategies.[32]

[32] Travisano, "Biography," p. 34.

As before, Travisano emphasizes the restraint in Bishop's poetry and identifies similarities between the careful elision of her sexual orientation and the geographic representation of emotional displacement. Bishop's experience of childhood displacement connects to her poetics as described by Travisano, and his observations about her elliptical writing are complemented by Ahmed's queer phenomenology. The juxtaposition in "Arrival at Santos" also produces an elusive effect. The speaker pairs past with present and harbor with home within a few words. The tension between places and times resolves through acceptance of the disjunctive moment and its recreation rather than any synthesis, and the lack of reconciliation or explanation leaves the fractures in plain view.

2.3 Mediation

In addition to the body as a mediating subject, experiences themselves must be translated into language with words as the mediating element. As linguists such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson and philosophers including Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, and Roland Barthes (among many others) have shown, language derives from physical experience with many common metaphors situated in a spatial, first-person perspective. Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard describe this relationship between experience and cognition:

> People's physical relation to things, therefore, affects the way that they organize and make sense of their worlds. This means that our knowledge of the world can, firstly, be said to be created by us (rather than something we simply discover) and secondly, results from our encounters with things (which are, for example, in front or behind, above or below, our bodies).[33]

[33] Lewis Holloway and Phil Hubbard, *People and Place: The Extraordinary Geographies of Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 69.

Holloway and Hubbard encapsulate the two principal elements of this section: first, that knowledge is constructed and second, that this construction occurs in an egocentric manner. Descriptive language begins with a body in space, especially when describing place or orientation. As individuals accrue sensations and perceptions, the spatial sense that develops also affects language. An infant learns that falling follows a downward trajectory while something "up" in the air might be beyond reach or unattainable; thus, the physical and metaphorical actions of reaching are linked. As discussed above, Bishop's childhood displacement and resulting disorientation provide a foundational experience to the poetics that persist through her literary career.

Johnson draws on philosopher John Dewey's *Art as Experience* to further elaborate these processes:

> Dewey correctly defines human inquiry as an embodied, situated, ongoing process that begins with a problematic or indeterminate situation, employs intelligence and symbolic resources of thought to clarify and seek to resolve the tension in the situation, and, when successful, transforms the character and quality of the situation. Logical thinking can thereby actually change experience, because it is in and of that experience.[34]

In Johnson's analysis of Dewey, he highlights that while language comes from thought, cognitive processes, or what Carr calls "reflection" (the *mediated* experience rather than the direct sense impressions) also shape and change the initial perception. Bishop was a friend of John Dewey's daughter Jane Dewey, and the philosopher himself wrote letters of

[34] Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 105.

recommendation for her. Although she claimed to be unfamiliar with his philosophy, her work enacts the processes he describes.

Bishop is sometimes described as a "cognitive" poet for the way she follows the mind in action.[35] In an undergraduate essay on timing in the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Bishop identifies Hopkins' ability to show "a mind thinking," and this quality became one of the fundamental aspects of her poetics.[36] Nearly twenty years later in Brazil, she further articulated her poetics, stating that what she values most in a poem are "*Accuracy, Spontaneity, Mystery*,"[37] which she finds in poems by her "three 'favorite' poets — not the best poets, whom we all admire, but favorite in the sense of one's 'best friends,'… Herbert, Hopkins, and Baudelaire." She goes on to analyze extracts of poems from these poets along with lines by W.H. Auden, Marianne Moore, Robert Lowell, Dylan Thomas, and others to elaborate on these values and how these elements might be combined in an effective and affecting composition. In her own writing, she accomplishes these effects through close observations and by relaying a scene as if it were occurring at the moment of reading in a reconstruction of firsthand experience.

Given that language is shaped by physical experience while also mediating those experiences, change of place becomes interesting as it creates potential for changes to poetics, as well. Moving to a new place and engaging with foreign topographies and rhythms may affect one's diction and metaphors. Mark Tredinnick in his study of four contemporary nature writers contends that a writer's syntax can be shaped by physical environment. He describes this exchange as, "...the ways in which place may be said to touch mind and, through it, text; to fashion diction and syntax, even awareness itself."[38] He contrasts his own ecocritical approach

[35] Heather Treseler, "Too Shy to Stop," in *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive*), p. 19 and Bonnie Costello, *Elizabeth Bishop: Questions of Mastery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 148-150 describe Bishop's cognitive style.
[36] *Pr*, pp. 468-474.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 328.
[38] Mark Tredinnick, *The Land's Wild Music: Encounters with Barry Lopez, Peter Matthiessen, Terry Tempest*

to that of Scott Slovic: "Where Slovic was concerned with nature writing as a state of mind, as a way of being mindfully in the world, I am interested in nature writing as a way of the world's being in us, a way of our entering into and sharing the state of mind of a place."[39] In his analysis of prose by four nature writers, Tredinnick identifies syntactical elements that correlate with the places where the writers reside. As he says, "A piece of writing reenacts the land in all its dynamism through its rhythm and roll, by playing out patterns of sound, through the shifting dance of tone and timbre—through its music."[40] This idea of "reenactment" suits Bishop's cognitive writing style, as well, in which she attempts to recreate an experience as it happens.

While Tredinnick, like Welty, focuses on home and the way that writers might be grounded in the language and syntax of a place of stability, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes evocatively about how encountering a new place might impact one's language. He describes experiencing the desert for the first time:

> I saw in the desert landscape, as I could not see in any other kind of landscape, the objective correlatives of my deepest values and beliefs: simplicity, clarity, purity, openness, generosity that is as encompassing as the sky, and space that is free of the lurid dramas of survival.[41]

While Tuan's interpretation of the desert demonstrates a projection of values onto an apparently empty space — it is difficult to imagine anyone with knowledge of desert life finding it devoid of survival drama — this sense of recognition and of unlocking some aspect of self through interaction with a new place is compelling, as is Tuan's immediate connection to metaphor.

Williams, & James Galvin (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2005), p. 25.
[39] Tredinnick, p. 25.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
[41] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Sense of Place: Its Relationship to Self and Time," in *Reanimating Places: A Geography of Rhythms*, p. 48.

The landscape provides a fresh vehicle for expression for a characteristic or understanding that existed within but was as yet unrecognized because it needed another type of language or expression of emotion through metaphor. Tuan shapes landscape through his particular subjectivities while also discovering a way to describe an aspect of self through this interaction. The jolt of recognition, of finding the familiar in an unknown place, surprises Tuan. As Bishop shows in both "Arrival at Santos" and "Florida Revisited," these flashes of recognition may cause opposite effects by either sparking a moment of disorientation or lulling one into complacency.

2.4 Constructionism

The process of familiarization with a new place can also be described through a framework of learning, as it involves many of the same aspects of acceptance and resistance and of assimilation and accommodation to new experiences. As with sense of place, knowledge is constructed, and psychologists and educators have shown that this construction can be mediated through the making of cultural artifacts as well as through more modern tools such as digital media. Mathematician and educator Seymour Papert calls these artifacts "objects to think with,"[42] as they are externalized representations of mental models and serve as objects of reflection in an iterative process of knowledge construction and refinement. For a writer, each draft represents an "object to think with" as each iteration represents an attempt to work through and articulate an idea that is then critiqued and revised. Developmental psychologist Edith Ackermann, who worked closely with Jean Piaget and Papert, states, "Expressing ideas makes them tangible and shareable which, in turn, informs, i.e., shapes and sharpens these ideas."[43]

[42] Seymour Papert, *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, And Powerful Ideas*, (New York: Basic Books, 1993), p. 182.
[43] Ackermann, p. 4.

Until this point, "mediation" has been applied in two ways: firstly, with the body as a medium for experience and secondly, in a cognitive sense in which experience is translated into language. Both types of mediation involve memory and the process of connecting new experiences to prior knowledge. "Mediation" has a more literal sense, as well, which is to turn an idea into media. Thus, when Bishop "mediated" a new place, she did so physically, personally/subjectively, and linguistically as described above; she also engaged all of these modes when composing a draft.

Change of place provides the type of instability that Papert identifies as a rich environment for development. Ackermann pinpoints the differences between Piaget and Papert as follows:

> While Piaget liked to describe the genesis of internal mental stability in terms of successive plateaus of equilibrium,[44] Papert is interested in the dynamics of change. He stresses the fragility of thought during transitional periods. He is concerned with how different people think once their convictions break down, once alternative views sink in, once adjusting, stretching, and expanding their current view of the world becomes necessary. Papert always points toward this fragility, contextuality, and flexibility of knowledge under construction."[45]

In the case of a writer concerned with the intersections of place, memory, and self, dislocation is mediated through many, varying texts composed during a transitional period, from letters to poems to journal entries which, especially in draft form, act as "objects to think with."

[44] Piaget's focus on a linear progression toward abstract, logical thought has been heavily criticized and is no longer considered to be an accurate developmental model; however, his theory of genetic epistemology endures, including the concepts of assimilation and accommodation.
[45] Ackermann, p. 8.

2.5 Deep Maps: Contextualizing Mapping Bishop

When Bishop wrote about place in her poetry and prose, she framed her work in cartographic terms, beginning with her first collection, *North & South*, and its opening poem "The Map," and ending with her fourth and final collection, *Geography III*. In the first chapter of *Elizabeth Bishop at Work*, Eleanor Cook traces Bishop's frequent return to the image of a compass rose both in her poetry and as a design element in her books.[46] A map, like a poem, functions paradoxically as both a static portrayal of place at a specific moment in time, and as an exploratory tool. Given Bishop's deep affinity for cartography, mapping her movements seemed like a natural starting point in a study of her relationship to place.

Literary mapping has a long history that only recently took a digital turn. In their overview of the current state of digital mapping, Joanna Taylor and her colleagues at Lancaster University highlight the persistence of this spatial approach to literature, pointing out that "literary atlases have been in circulation since the late nineteenth century, and early quantitative experiments in literary cartography followed shortly thereafter."[47] Computation makes new types of mapping possible, but many of the same approaches (and challenges) persist. First, a literary text might be mapped to reveal the spatial relationships within a narrative. One of the first and most well-known computational examples of this approach is Barbara Hui's now classic "Litmap," a map of W.S. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*.[48] In this project, Hui maps every place and every route described in *Rings of Saturn* and digitally pins extracts of text to the mentioned locations, creating a networked text that can be read spatially. Repeated referrals of specific places appear as layers and can be quickly identified, and each path offers an alternate way of navigating the text. The literary map displays both narrative and conceptual structures in relation to place.

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[46] Cook explains that Bishop chose the image for the jacket of *North & South*, pp. 12-15.
[47] Joanna E Taylor and others, "Mapping Digitally, Mapping Deep: Exploring Digital Literary Geographies," *Literary Geographies*, 4.1(2018), https://literarygeographies.net/index.php/LitGeogs/article/view/120.
[48] Barbara Hui, "About Litmap," accessed 6 July 2021, http://barbarahui.net/about-litmap.html.

In a second approach, extracts of place-specific texts from multiple sources are mapped. Rather than using the map to critically analyze a primary source text, this type of project prioritizes 1) changing depictions of places over time and 2) ways that literary representations of place may have influenced later texts or shaped impressions of a place. Examples of these include "…large-scale atlases, such as ETH Zurich's A Literary Atlas of Europe, Trinity College Dublin's Digital Literary Atlas of Ireland and the University of Queensland's Cultural Atlas of Australia, as well as projects focused on the literary cartographies of specific landscapes and cityscapes…"[49]

These two approaches can also be combined. Gary Priestnall describes a project by David Cooper and Ian Gregory as "a literary GIS of the English Lake District which reconstructs journeys made by poets from place references and also derives maps of their emotional responses to the landscape."[50] The "Mapping the Lakes" project places English Romantic writers in a spatial context, allowing, for example, comparative analysis between writers through visualizations of their specific tours of the Lake District, more accurately pinpointing the exact places that engaged their imaginations. At the same time, the map gives a sense of how the idea of the Lake District developed over time through these compositions and how these literary works may have influenced each other and their representations of this place.

Priestnall suggests a third use for literary mapping: pedagogy. He sees in literary maps, "a useful platform to encourage students to think about the nature of landscape scenes which relate to vernacular descriptions of places and experiences found in literary texts"[51] and a space, for example, "to reflect upon Wordsworth's compositional process by looking at the way in

[49] *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, ed. by David Cooper, Christopher Elliott Donaldson, and Patricia Murrieta-Flores (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2016), p. 9.
[50] Gary Priestnall, "Spatial Frames of Reference for Literature Through Geospatial Technologies," in *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, p. 241.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

which his manuscript material was repeatedly reworked across multiple versions of the same text."[52] Essentially, these maps can be used by students as well as scholars for literary analysis by adding new contextual layers. Finally, in non-cartographic mapping, distance reading techniques can be applied to the study of literature and place, for example through the extraction and analysis of place names in a corpus. The resulting topic model is a type of "map." One can also create a spatial model to visualize the structure of a narrative.[53] While many of these distance reading techniques produce aesthetically pleasing visualizations, they have limited use in literary studies unless these patterns spark new critical examination of the texts.

My approach to literary mapping differs because the question motivating the mapping process is not about how place is represented in a text or how multiple texts represent a place but how change of place might affect a writer's poetics. Rather than creating a "literary geography" or a map as a finished product, I mapped Bishop's literary creation process, primarily through her correspondence, to pair manuscript development with place. Mapping Bishop had two immediate benefits. First, Bishop's published correspondence spans thousands of pages across multiple volumes with some overlap between them. This tool consolidates texts from multiple sources into a cohesive timeline of Bishop's literary creation process. Second, the map provides both spatial context and a way to follow the development of specific concepts or manuscripts across both place and time through a combination of timelines and animation.

Within the framework of this dissertation, the process of mapping and of developing the "Mapping Bishop" platform was an important part of my methodology as it provided a way to model my assumptions, questions, and approach. As Peter Turchi notes, "We organize

[52] Priestnall, p. 248.
[53] Sally Bushell offers a critique of Franco Moretti's method of distance reading: "Essentially what Moretti does is to apply spatial models to narrative structures and he does this extremely effectively. What he does not do is to convert the spatial model into anything other than a spatial model and this can make him strangely wasteful of the rich data he produces. In other words, he does not go on to show fully how a spatial revelation can fundamentally alter interpretation and, without this, his work has clear limits for Literary Studies" in Sally Bushell, "Mapping Fiction: Spatialising the Literary Work" in *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, p. 132. As I also argue, mapping can serve as both a step and a tool in interpretation, and this process should both begin and end with the text.

information on maps in order to see our knowledge in a new way,"[54] so this process of creating a map is also a form of mediation: in this instance, of Bishop's texts in relation to place. Mapping Bishop is what David J. Bodenhamer calls a "deep map,"[55] which he defines as:

> …a platform, a process and a product. As platform, it is an environment embedded with tools to bring data into an explicit and direct relationship with space and time. As a process, it is a way to engage evidence within its spatiotemporal context and to trace paths of discovery that lead to a spatial narrative and ultimately a spatial argument. As product, it is the way we make visual the results of our enquiry and share the spatially-contingent argument enabled by the deep map.[56]

The tool became a way to identify patterns and deviations in Bishop's movements and in her process of literary creation. I was able to identify specific moments of transition in her creative development in relation to place, and having found various inflection points, could return to the texts and manuscript to see how certain poems or concepts were developed.

To a certain extent, the map simply illustrates what one can find by closely reading the texts, but it also serves as a tool to visualize the intersections of text, place, and biography in new ways. According to Bodenhamer, an interactive, process-oriented map "can create a complex picture that allows us to understand more completely the larger context… by integrating the data dynamically and by visualising it in multiple ways."[57] Mapping Bishop provides a "thicker" reading experience (to borrow the phrase from anthropologist Clifford Geertz) of Bishop's correspondence and drafts by situating them spatially. Barbara Piatti

[54] Peter Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 2004), p. 11.
[55] David J, Bodenhamer, "Making the Invisible Visible: Place, Spatial Stories and Deep Maps," in *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, p. 213.
[56] *Ibid*, p. 213.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

emphasizes that the most interesting maps are those "…in which new spatial patterns appear: those maps that make what is otherwise invisible visible. In such instances, a map will become a true tool of interpretation." She goes on to warn, "But, in all cases, it is crucial to accept that the maps in the field of literary geography will rarely provide final answers, especially since their production process is connected with a range of uncertainties."[58] Thus the map, rather than providing answers, brings to the surface new areas of inquiry.

Moving from text to map and then returning to the text creates different attentional spaces for the same set of material. Artist Jenny Odell, in a reflection on public parks, remarks,

> …the artist creates a structure—whether that's a map or a cordoned-off area (or even a lowly set of shelves!)—that holds open a contemplative space against the pressures of habit, familiarity, and distraction that constantly threaten to close it. This attention-holding architecture is something I frequently think about at the Rose Garden.[59]

A deep map is a similar sort of "attention-holding architecture," just as a poetic form might hold a certain type of focus. To return to Taylor, "The digital map – and particularly the kind of digital deep mapping we have outlined – mediates between the reader and the text in putting forward a visible representation of how reader, writer and text might inhabit the same geographical space."[60] Mapping defamiliarizes source texts while also confining them geotemporally.

This is consistent with Barbara Piatti's description of the role of literary mapping as "only one stage in a process of interpretation. Exciting literary-cartographical visualisations do not always provide final answers, but they invariably do support researchers in shaping their

[58] Barbara Piatti, "Mapping Fiction: The Theories, Tools and Potentials of Literary Cartography," in *Literary Mapping in the Digital Age*, p. 99.
[59] Jenny Odell, *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* (New York: Melville House, 2019), p. 6.
[60] Taylor, p. 16.

interpretations."[61] While the process of mapping involves mediation of the source texts, the goal is not to create an artifact but a tool to consider how change of place is mediated and how this might impact a writer's poetics. In *Close Reading with Computers,* Martin Paul Eve uses a metaphor of the focal length used when "reading" a text. Instruments like Mapping Bishop "…are like a telescope, though, because while we can see further, we also lose the resolution of close focus…"[62] For interpretation, a microscope is required instead and a shift from distant to close reading. Bushell expands on this:

> For the critic, such a map can clearly work to identify key areas of further spatial exploration within the text. Nevertheless, in terms of the full complexity of 'acts of mapping', which are central to our understanding and interpretation of literary spatiality, the static map only represents a first step. A literary critic would want to use the findings of this visualisation as outlined above to undertake a full textual analysis of a particular character's movements or a particular journey…[63]

As noted above, while literary geography differs from the approach behind Mapping Bishop, a similar return to text is necessary. In this case, rather than interpreting characters in place, the focus is on the compositional process.

2.6 Digital Methodology: Mapping Bishop

Mapping Bishop is a geotemporal map of Bishop's published correspondence from 1951-1955, her Brazilian transition period (Figure 2).[64] Unlike many digital humanities projects, the goal

[61] Piatti, "Mapping Fiction," p. 91.
[62] Martin Paul Eve, *Close Reading with Computers: Textual Scholarship, Computational Formalism, and David Mitchell's Cloud Atlas* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), p. 2.
[63] Bushell, p. 136.
[64] The map was created using MapTool, developed by Dr. Andrew Sempere.

of Mapping Bishop was not to create an online repository of Bishop's correspondence or to comprehensively represent her compositional process. Rather, it was an object to think with. Developing an interactive map requires many iterative steps, and much like writing a manuscript, each "draft" requires "revision." Some of the initial design questions are basic, such as: What exactly should be mapped? Upon selecting Bishop's correspondence as a way of tracking her movement, new questions arose, such as: What "data" or content from those documents should be included in the map? How should this information be displayed? Thus, each iteration of the map represents a mental model, or a snapshot of understanding at the moment of creation. Changes to the design reflect either fresh approaches or responses to failures.

Although many GIS and visualization tools exist, Mapping Bishop was co-developed and completely customized to follow my research questions as they evolved. All tools are limited by the expectations and assumptions of their creators, and the goal of this project was to minimize the friction between the tool and the research question. For example, Google Maps is both a popular and powerful mapping tool that provides directions between locations by car, public transportation, foot, bike, and plane. When finding a public transportation route, one can set preferences by type of transportation (bus, subway, etc.) or by route type (wheelchair accessible, fewer transfers, etc.). However, one cannot choose the most scenic route or a path that includes interesting architecture. The designers determined the most common uses for this map, which pertain to convenience, time, and mobility, and developed software to fit those requirements. Although an excellent and useful tool, Google Maps would be a poor fit for questions regarding mediation of place and poetic development. Other GIS applications bear similar limitations. Using an existing tool has benefits, of course. As the tool already exists, one can simply model the "data" rather than designing and developing software from scratch. Unfortunately, the software then shapes the research by constraining which data can be

included and how it is represented or visualized. While entering Bishop's correspondence into a Google Map would link letters to locations, I would only be able to search and display the information in a way that Google expects and allows. The process of developing Mapping Bishop, by contrast, required constant refinement of my research questions and approach to the material.

At first, my questions were overly broad, such as: (1) What is the relationship between place and content? and (2) Which ideas recur during Bishop's transitional period? I began to map her correspondence, but the mapping process did not provide insight into either question. As with any object to think with, having a model facilitated reflection: Was the problem with the tool, my approach, or the questions? Clearly the act of mapping Bishop's movements was not enough to begin to analyze her mediation of place, and a static map such as one created in Google Maps, did not add enough context to her compositional process. A dynamic map with the ability to search and limit parameters, however, could be used as an exploratory tool to identify patterns and changes in both Bishop's movements and her compositional process.

Considering the attentional split described by Merleau-Ponty and Lawrence Buell, I then began to expand the "data" from Bishop's correspondence to include "Place Written" and "Place Described." Did something in Bishop's correspondence explain why or how she wrote about Nova Scotia while living in Brazil? Was there a specific context in which she composed poems about "Elsewhere" while "Here" in Brazil? This approach was also overly simplistic and ultimately unproductive, but continuing to map Bishop's correspondence prompted additional questions, as I started to notice differences in periods of movements versus stasis: (1) How often did Bishop move? and (2) How does movement relate to her poetics? Through mapping, I realized that Bishop had traveled an unusual amount immediately before her trip to Brazil, which warranted further examination. This led to another possible avenue of inquiry: Which manuscripts traveled with Bishop from north to south? And then: At what point did she

begin to write her Brazilian poems? When did she switch from “tourist” poems to “Brazilian” ones? The process of mediating Bishop’s texts into a computational space gave me new ways to interact with the texts themselves.

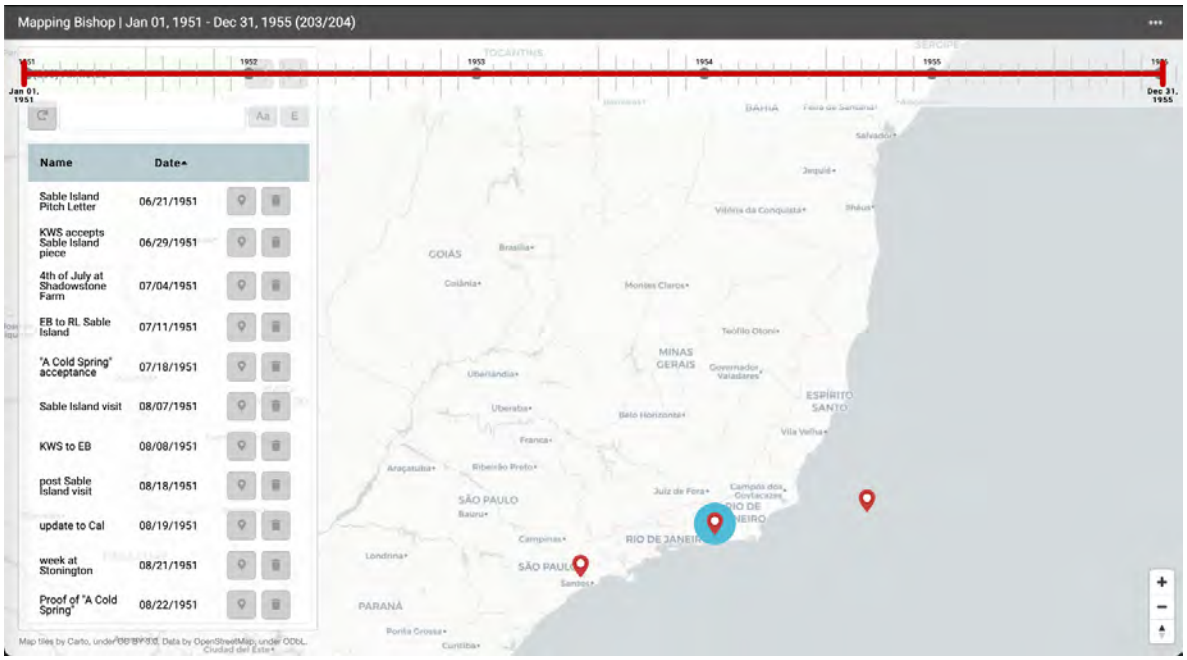


Figure 2: Overview of "Mapping Bishop"

Mapping Bishop became a deep map with both geographical and temporal ways of documenting and visualizing Bishop’s correspondence and movement. As Figure 2 shows, the tool consists of a map with a horizontal timeline across the top of the screen and an expanded timeline to the left. Each pin on the map places Bishop or her correspondents in a location on a specific date. As when working with any correspondence, the information is not exact. Bishop often wrote letters while in residence at Samambaia but mailed them from Rio de Janeiro because the postal service there was more reliable, so both the date and location “data” are imprecise. Sometimes Bishop wrote one letter over the course of several days. As textual interpretation does not depend on exact dates and times, I attempted to be as consistent as

possible in how I entered information into the map and added “extrapolation” tags to pins whose dates or locations were inferred from either correspondence or Bishop’s biography.

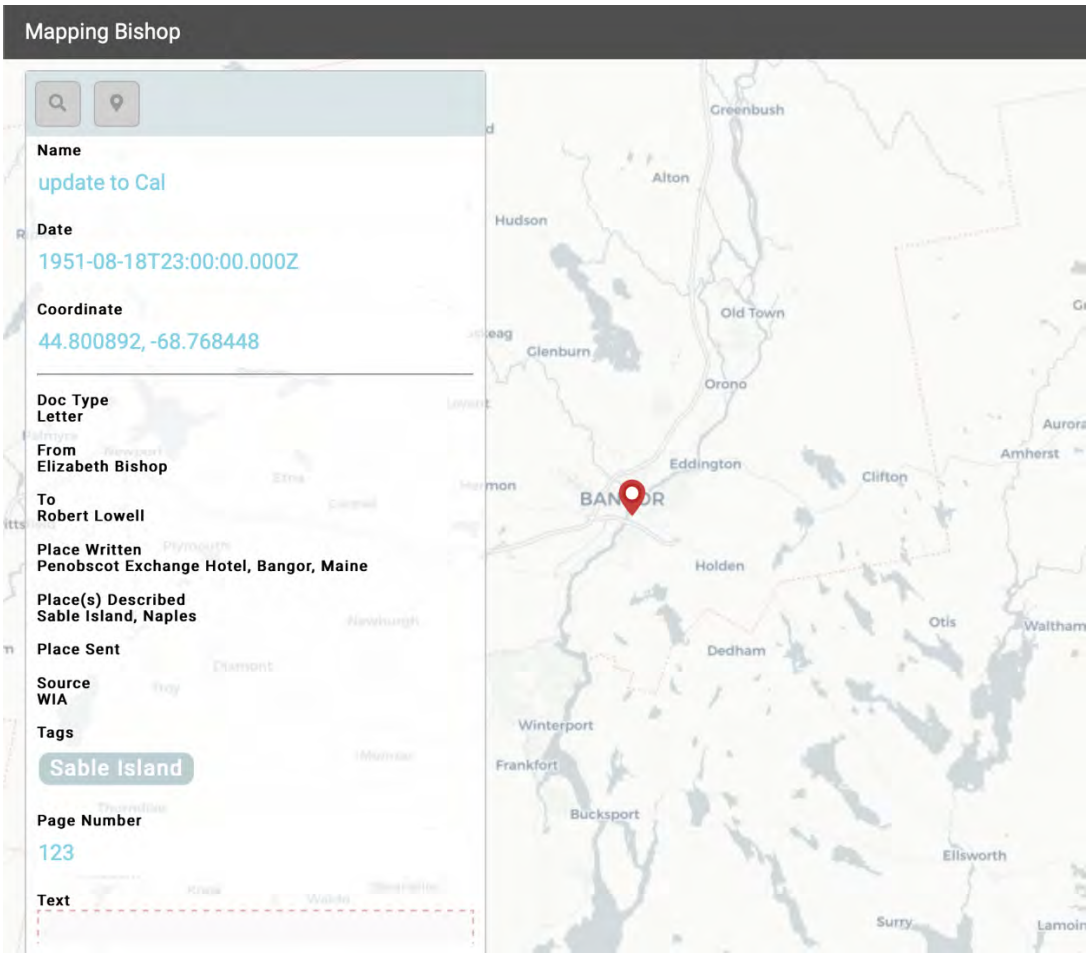


Figure 3: View of metadata associated with a pin

Each pin also has “metadata” from Bishop’s letters, such as date written, type of document, letter writer, recipient, where the letter was written, where it was sent, tags I defined such as which manuscripts are mentioned in the correspondence, and my observations and notes on the text (Figure 3). Bishop’s work is protected by copyright, so the map does not include the text of the letters, but the combination of her various locations, the works mentioned, and my notes illustrates how Bishop's work traveled with her. All of the metadata and text can be searched and filtered. For example, I can search for letters written by Bishop to

Katharine White, her editor at *The New Yorker* magazine, within a certain timeframe and only show those pins. I can sort the search results by fields such as name or date and also "play" them (or the map as a whole), shifting the map's focus from pin to pin by date to better visualize movement.

Having the ability to visualize Bishop's movement through animation of the map accentuated another aspect of her literary creation process by adding an experiential element to scholarship. Through playback I can visualize periods of movement versus stasis and then return to the source texts to see how these periods of frequent displacement intersected with Bishop's compositional process. For example, the six months before Bishop moved to Brazil reveal a great deal of movement and change, and one can both see and feel how unsettled she was through the map's playback of her travel. In her correspondence she writes that she feels stuck and unsure of what to do next, and her physical movement exhibits the same restless uncertainty. Once Bishop reached Brazil, she stopped moving. The contrast highlights that while Brazil was a beautiful and challenging new place for Bishop, she was also deeply affected by the time and stability she found there — she could finally work through the ideas that had been following her for months. The timeline also illustrates Bishop's varying speeds of production, yielding another interesting avenue of inquiry regarding her mediation of place and poetic development. These visualizations spotlight new patterns, and, more interestingly, deviations from her usual compositional methods, indicating texts from limited periods of time for analysis.

2.7 Archival Methodology: Genetic Criticism

Frank Bidart, Bishop's friend and literary executor, describes a poem as "a working through of a problem or an idea,"[65] or, to paraphrase Yeats as he often does: "*Out of our argument with*

[65] Advanced Poetry workshop at Wellesley College in 1998.

others we make / rhetoric, out of our argument with ourselves we make poetry"[66] (italics in the original text). He, like Bishop, characterizes a poem as a representation of a poet's mind thinking,[67] although their poetics differ significantly. The drafts of a poem, then, also reflect "a working through of a problem or idea," making genetic criticism an important component for analyzing and interpreting how change of place is textually mediated. Genetic criticism, as Sally Bushell notes, historically has had limited reach in anglophone criticism, but the strong French and German traditions can inform both terminology and methodology.[68] In her adaptation of genetic criticism for English literature, Bushell cites Pierre-Marc de Biasi's *La Génétique des Textes* to differentiate the creation of a new literary work into four stages: 1) precompositional, 2) compositional, 3) prepublication, and 4) publication.[69] This description closely coincides with Bishop's specific compositional process, making it particularly well-suited for describing and analyzing her manuscript drafts.

Bishop typically began her compositions by writing fragments and taking notes from related reading in her journals or workbooks, what Bushell, borrowing from the French, calls an *avant-texte*. When an idea reached sufficient maturity or had enough promise, she transferred her work to a new context and began to work on the poem as a whole, marking the shift from precompositional to compositional phases of writing. Bishop numbered her drafts, which also helps identify these moments when a manuscript moves from idea to draft. Bishop only numbered drafts in her compositional phase, so certain precompositional texts, although they might appear to be cohesive, early versions of a work, were not numbered until Bishop decided to revise the piece. In addition to labeling her drafts, some early versions of her

[66] Frank Bidart, *Against Silence: Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021), p. 15. He said this often in workshop and discussed it during his *Against Silence* book launch event.
[67] *Pr*, pp. 468-474.
[68] For an in-depth discussion of the historically different approaches of French and German genetic criticism, see the first two chapters of Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009).
[69] *Ibid*., p. 71.

manuscripts (both poetry and prose) are handwritten, but much of her compositional work is typewritten, and she marked revisions by hand. Later drafts often had typed comments and edits. Finally, Bishop would send her "submission ready" manuscript to her editor at which point the collaborative editorial process began, signaling the change to the prepublication phase. Here revisions become a negotiation between the editor's notes, the publication's requirements, and Bishop's vision of the piece. Finally, upon publication, the piece reached a somewhat fixed state, although later editions might contain changes to a text.

As Bushell notes, and as is clearly visible in Bishop's compositional process,

> One of the characteristics of early draft material is a willingness to allow change and experimentation… As the text develops, particularly for a long poetic structure, the degree of possibility is closed down, because each individual section is affected by what occurs around it. This suggests that a context of phases or stages of composition is an important element of the compositional act, and one that affects the nature of the revision undertaken.[70]

As I will discuss in the following chapters, certain ideas and themes recur in Bishop's work, and her precompositional fragments encompass a range of possibilities for the resulting poems. Her drafts of "One Art," for example, begin with a long, nearly stream of conscious meditation on the concept of "mislaying." From the first draft, Bishop repeatedly returns to the idea of accidental loss. She also introduces size and compares geographically-scaled losses with the loss of an individual. Subsequent drafts refine these central ideas, and in each draft, Bishop works on some distinct aspect of the poem; for example, in the eighth draft, she focuses on the rhyme scheme:

[70] Bushell, p. 99.

The art of losing isn't hard to master
Practicing my
and possibly will end disaster

faster
ent
master

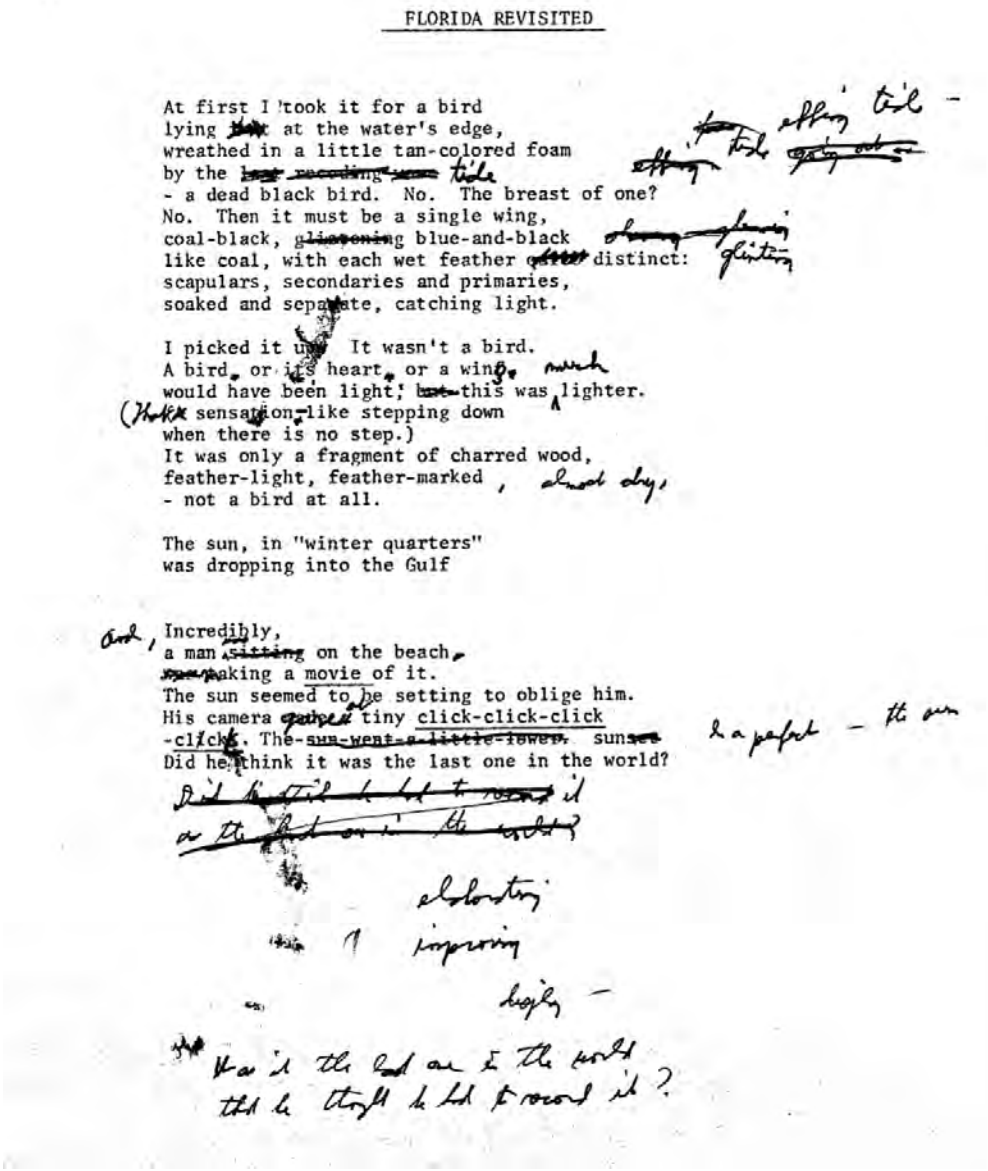
last, or
ent
disaster

ent
master

arts
ent
disaster[71]

Through the progression of drafts, Bishop excises nearly all description of her lost love, until the beloved metonymically appears as a simple gesture. Bishop also removes all editorializing about lying, such as in the eleventh draft: "I"ve written lies. I wrote a lot of lies. It's evident / the art of losing wasn't hard to master / with one exception…"[72] The first draft of the poem had the potential to be highly ironic in tone, with lines such as "This is by way of introduction. / I really want to introduce myself — I am such a / fantastic ally good at losing things / I think everyone shd. profit from my experiences."[73] The poem could have followed a more sentimental path (although this would be uncharacteristic for Bishop), with "…the eyes were exceptionally beautiful and / … the hands looked intelligent)."[74] However, the decisions made in each draft narrowed the possibilities of future drafts. Choosing the villanelle form limited the available lexicon to a particular set of rhymes, the circular repetitiveness of the lines evoking an obsessive feeling. Combined with the thematic focus, every draft became increasingly constrained.

[71] *EAP*, p. 232.
[72] *Ibid,*, p. 235.
[73] *Ibid,*, p. 225.
[74] *Ibid.*



FLORIDA REVISITED

At first I took it for a bird
lying at the water's edge,
wreathed in a little tan-colored foam
by the tide
- a dead black bird. No. The breast of one?
No. Then it must be a single wing,
coal-black, glistening blue-and-black
like coal, with each wet feather distinct:
scapulars, secondaries and primaries,
soaked and separate, catching light.

I picked it up. It wasn't a bird.
A bird, or its heart, or a wing,
would have been light; this was lighter.
(The sensation like stepping down
when there is no step.)
It was only a fragment of charred wood,
feather-light, feather-marked,
- not a bird at all.

The sun, in "winter quarters"
was dropping into the Gulf

Incredibly,
a man on the beach,
making a movie of it.
The sun seemed to be setting to oblige him.
His camera gave a tiny click-click-click
-click. The sunset
Did he think it was the last one in the world?

Figure 4: "Florida Revisited" Draft Three[75]

Although Bishop never completed "Florida Revisited," the existing drafts reveal a consistency in her compositional process. As with "One Art," the first draft of this poem contains multiple ideas and emotions with the title framed by parentheses and a question mark: "(FLORIDA REVISITED)?" By the third draft (Figure 4), the marginal notes about death and suicide disappear, and the explicit lines about change have been cut. Only three stanzas remain,

[75] VCSC, f. 64.24.

beginning with the misidentification of a piece of driftwood for a bird. It ends with observation of a man who attempts to film the sunset. Instead of directly reflecting on the nature of change, the third draft distills the experience of misapprehension and then focuses on the filmmaker as he tries to capture a moment of transition. The speaker wants to understand why he is doing this: "Did he think it was the last one in the world?" The draft ends with alternate versions of this line and the verbs "elaborating" and "improving." While several ideas and images remain from the first draft, this version of the poem centers on perception: How does documentation shape a memory? Why document a seemingly unexceptional moment?

While analyzing a sequence of drafts may be illuminating, Hannah Sullivan cautions against the temptation to "narrativize the revision process"[76] in a linear and causal manner. The drafts of a poem are not steps to a "fixed" final form. Revision does not follow a direct path, nor should subsequent drafts be interpreted as "improvements." Describing the genesis of a literary work through a causal narrative presupposes an authorial intent and implies that the final draft is the one that captures an initial vision, when in truth "there is a dynamic between what the writer wills and intends and what is unwilled (and allowed to be unwilled), which drives forward the creative process."[77] In addition to the conscious and unconscious aspects of composition, writers also make decisions. Some might be formal considerations, such as selecting a word for purposes of rhyme or meter, whereas others may be driven by other, external concerns, such as Bishop's reluctance to publicly disclose the gender of her partner in the 1950s, an act that might have had professional consequences.

When reading and interpreting manuscript drafts, it is important to remember that poems are crafted and that rather than attempting to infer intent, the texts themselves should be prioritized in an "analysis of actual genetic *material.*"[78] In part, this means looking at texts on

[76] Hannah Sullivan, *The Work of Revision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 57.
[77] Bushell, p. 58.
[78] Bushell, p. 16.

their own terms and not merely as points of comparison with the final draft. Material contexts of the drafts can also be considered, such as the transfer of text from one context to another or "the juxtaposition of different materials within a single manuscript notebook."[79] Sullivan notes that revision, beginning in a modernist context, changed from "stylistic tidying-up" to "large-scale transformations of length, structure, perspective, and genre."[80] This is particularly visible in Bishop's drafts of "One Art." The poem began as a long, free-form meditation on loss and the idea of "mislaying" objects, homes, and people, composed in a stream of consciousness, and it ended as a tightly composed villanelle.

While "the making is a part of the meaning,"[81] it is also important to underscore that poems do not always share literal or biographical truth. Even Bishop, who prioritized accuracy and precision in her writing, made poetic decisions in favor of emotional and experiential truth over facts. In a letter to Bidart about her poem "In the Waiting Room," she admits that the *National Geographic* magazine mentioned in her poem uses the date of one magazine and the contents of another.[82] They had merged in her mind, and despite having gone to the New York Public Library to fact check her poem, she elided the two to convey the reality of her memory and experience over factual chronology.[83]

Bushell links genetic criticism to two additional points that show why this approach is especially well suited to a study of change of place. First, she writes:

> In the case of textual self-extension the mediation of body with the world also appears to the writer to occur to prepare the way for the mediation of consciousness with the

[79] *Ibid*., pp.85-86.
[80] Sullivan, p. 2.
[81] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[82] *OA*, pp. 545-546.
[83] See Chapter 6, "Fact-Checking Elizabeth Bishop" in Erica McAlpine, *The Poet's Mistake* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020) for a full discussion of Bishop's autobiographical revisions in "In the Waiting Room."

> world through language. Through habit-based activity the writer shapes the external world to match the needs of the inner world in preparation for an event of self-externalization. A compositional context is played out in the world immediately around the body-that-writes in the place at which a writer chooses to work.[84]

Composition occurs in a physical context, within a concentric circle of places beginning from the immediate desk or chair and extending to the building, the city, and the continent. Physical factors affect the moment of composition, such as the infamous knock at the door that interrupted Coleridge's composition of "Kubla Khan." In her letters, Bishop describes the "estudio" that Lota de Macedo Soares had built for her in effusive terms, detailing her view of a waterfall and the many plants and animals she could see. She delights and wonders at this space and also fills it with objects sent by friends and that she collects during her travels. This forms the immediate physical context of her early compositions in Brazil, which differs greatly from the less happy time she spent at an apartment in Rio de Janeiro while de Macedo Soares worked on a city park project.

In addition to the physical space in which composition occurs, writing produces new material objects, and these drafts also preserve iterative acts of mediation across spatial and temporal contexts, or as Bushell describes:

> …the manuscript object exists as the embodied history of process in acts on the page that retain a sense of life and immediacy as evidence of the original time of entry, yet also become part of their own history in the writing and rewriting of texts. Temporally, the writer moves between the present of the material object and of himself as a reader

[84] Bushell, p. 231.

> of it, the past of his mind returning to the earlier moment of composition and the present engaged in revisiting and extending the present object.[85]

In this way, manuscript drafts can materially represent intersections of place across the spatial, temporal, and experiential senses of the word. Sometimes these contexts are juxtaposed in a literal way, such as when drafts are placed side by side or when moved between notebooks and placed next to fresh material.

2.8 Coda

During a book launch event hosted by Harvard Bookstore,[86] author Garth Greenwell asked Frank Bidart to expand on lines from his poem "Words Reek Worlds" that Greenwell called "A credo for art making, and that credo is 'set up a situation, then reveal an abyss.'" He prompted Bidart to elaborate: "I wanted to ask what you mean by abyss and why is it so crucial to art making."

Bidart replied:

> …it is the difference between expectation and a felt reality that the work of art is registering… How do you render the experience of a concrete world that is constantly going past one's expectations? Well one way is you try to render something and then you put it next to something that doesn't fit. Pound made that as a kind of foundation of his poetics. You know:
>
> *The apparition of these faces in the crowd:*
>
> *Petals on a wet, black bough.*

[85] Bushell, p. 231.
[86] "Virtual Event: Frank Bidart presenting *Against Silence: Poems* in conversation with Garth Greenwell," 29 October 2021, https://www.harvard.com/event/virtual_event_frank_bidart/.

> What you feel is in the business between the first line and the second line. How does an artist render a physical world in words that are themselves not things. You partly do it by embodying the very embodiment of something and putting that next to something else which doesn't fit. But you have apprehended that disjunction as being something you can learn from or you do learn from or that embodies the way things are….[87]

Bishop and Bidart's poetics differ wildly, with the former renowned for her restraint and the latter for his theatricality and excess, but both try to capture that space between experience and expression. While Bidart calls this an abyss, Bishop attempts to bridge something smaller in her juxtapositions: the synapse between two neurons as a thought occurs.

[87] This is a lightly edited version of the automatic transcription generated by Zoom.

3. The Brazil Transition

The impact of Brazil on Elizabeth Bishop's work has been well documented in scholarship, particularly over the past decade, from the influence of Portuguese language and literature on her poems to her growing socio-political awareness.[1] Yet although biographical, socio-cultural, and linguistic aspects of Bishop's time in Brazil have been thoroughly studied, less has been written about her relationship to the physical place itself or how that change in place may have affected her poetics. Bishop's years in Brazil can be divided into distinct periods based on a combination of biographical events, her speed of production, and stylistic elements of her new compositions. The first period is, of course, the transitional one, when she decided to reside in Brazil and then began to settle into a new life there. This process lasted from 1951 until 1955.

As is commonly known, Bishop intended to visit Brazil for only two weeks as part of a longer tour of South America, but during her visit she had an allergic reaction to the fruit of a cashew plant that was exacerbated by her severe asthma and respiratory problems. She became seriously ill and recuperated at the home of Lota de Macedo Soares, who, towards the end of Bishop's convalescence, asked Bishop to stay with her in Brazil. Their partnership lasted until de Macedo Soares's death by suicide in 1967, and several years later, in 1970, Bishop officially relocated to Massachusetts. Although she continued to visit Brazil for a few months at a time, in 1974, she made her final trip there to ship her belongings to her new home in Boston. She continued to write about her experience of the country until her death in 1979.

During this initial period of transition, Bishop employed a range of compositional strategies in her attempts to understand and to assimilate her new home, which was markedly

[1] The most significant studies are Monteiro's *Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil and After: A Poetic Career Transformed* and Hicok's *Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil*. The former examines Bishop's acquisition of Portuguese, the influence of Brazilian poetic forms, and her translation efforts. The latter shows Bishop's changing attitudes towards class, culture, and politics.

different from the north where she had grown up, with its new topography of "impractically shaped and—who knows?—self-pitying mountains"[2] and "too many waterfalls."[3] Even her beloved Florida, for all of its excess,[4] differed from Brazil, where the stars and seasons were reversed, defamiliarizing what might have otherwise been recognizable. Bishop's first four years in Brazil were notable, in part, for her lack of poetic output; instead, she maintained an extensive correspondence, kept journals, and composed short stories. While she did not publish many poems at this time, she continued to draft fragments. Some were incorporated into poems she later completed and others were abandoned, but her compositional process during this transitional period shows her approaches to mediating Brazil through poetry. First, she repurposed earlier precompositional texts into a Brazilian context, using material she wrote in Nova Scotia as an entry point to Brazil. Second, she attempted to physically situate her work through an examination of physical orientation and perspective. Finally, she met the perceived excesses of Brazil with geographical restraint by progressively limiting the physical area described in her writing until she ultimately composed a dramatic monologue in the voice of a landmass. In this chapter, I will analyze Bishop's journals, correspondence, and manuscript drafts to define what I label her "Brazilian transition" and to reconstruct the process by which she mediated this change of place.

3.1 "Why Brazil?"

Bishop first mentions the possibility of a fall trip to Robert Lowell in a letter dated 11 July 1951, but her plans at that point were entirely hypothetical. She hoped to sell an article to *The New Yorker* and use those funds to "get abroad in the fall, after finding a place to live here."[5]

[2] *P*, p. 87.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[4] Millier writes, "Elizabeth's attachment to Florida was instantaneous. Its excesses of scenery, flora, and fauna attracted her painter's eye, and its people's often tasteless attempts at decoration stirred her appreciation for the uniquely awful," p. 113.
[5] *WIA*, p. 122, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 11 July 1951.

Five weeks later, her plans became slightly more specific. She tells him that if she can sell her essay, "I may take a trip of some sort, probably a long freighter one. I enjoyed the short one out there [to Sable Island, Nova Scotia] so much that I don't want to settle down in N.Y. at all."[6] On 18 September 1951 Bishop contacted Katharine White, her editor at *The New Yorker* for help with her visa application. Her passport states that she is a "writer" and so she must prove her employment through a publication. She explains,

> Travel seemed to agree with me very well… I've just done something that may have been wrong – I'm not sure, but I thought I'd better let you know I decided instead of trying to get an apartment here I'd just keep on going for a while – probably all winter -- & I'm starting off towards the end of October via freighter to South America.[7]

She continues, "I do hope to send you things, of course, poems & other things maybe. – I have a plan, not too impossible, I gather, of going all the way around the coast." The plan appeared to be continuous travel and writing, with a return to the US after a few months abroad, with a great deal of flexibility regarding where she would go and when. At the end of November 1951, Bishop writes to Lowell from "Somewhere off the coast of Brazil"[8] with her itinerary:

> I hope to get around to the west coast, maybe write an article about Punta Arenas or something on the way, and stay in Peru and Ecuador until April or May, then come back in time to put in an appearance at Bryn Mawr.[9]

[6] *Ibid*., p. 124, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 19 August 1951.
[7] *EBNY*, p. 71, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 18 September 1951.
[8] *WIA,* p. 129, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 26 November 1951.
[9] *WIA*, p. 131, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 26 February 1952.

Nowhere in her initial correspondence does Bishop mention Brazil. On 21 March 1952, nearly four months after her arrival in the country, she tells Lowell, "I wasn't even particularly interested in Brazil to start with, but it was my freighter's first stop."[10] She simply wanted to travel, and after a reservation error for her intended trip to Europe, she "haphazardly settled on South America."[11]

After the unexpected interruption to her tour around South America due to her health, Bishop revised her itinerary, and this articulation and renegotiation of future travel plans in her correspondence reveals her deepening levels of commitment both to Brazil and to her new partnership with Lota de Macedo Soares. Upon her initial recovery from illness, Bishop provided specific dates of departure and expressed her intent to complete her tour of South America. In a letter dated "December 10th or 11th or 12th [1951]," or approximately one month after her arrival in Brazil, Bishop told Alfred Kazin that she planned to stay "until the second freighter from now goes south, about Jan. 26th."[12] On 7 February 1952, she told Ilse and Kit Barker that "now I'm planning to take off on my vague little freighter line around March 1st," a departure that was less than a month away. Two days later, after celebrating her birthday, she continued the letter, informing the Barkers that she had received a "lifelong dream — a TOUCAN" from a neighbor.[13] Her letter ends with additional, and for Bishop extremely effusive, comments on her happiness in Brazil. Although this was not mentioned in her published correspondence from the 1950s, Bishop recounted in a letter written twenty years later that on this birthday, she received a ring from de Macedo Soares bearing the inscription, "Lota—20-12-51,"[14] the date when she told de Macedo Soares she would stay in Brazil. The

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 133, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 21 March 1952.
[11] *Ibid*.
[12] *OA*, p. 226, letter from Bishop to Alfred Kazin, "10th or 11th or 12th" December 1951.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 234, letter from Bishop to Ilse and Kit Barker, 7 February 1952.
[14] *OA*, p. 551. In a letter to friends Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale, 20 December 1971, Bishop writes: "That gold ring I usually wear says inside (or did I show you?) 'Lota-20-12-51.' Twenty years ago was the day I told Lota I'd stay in Brazil & she had [the ring] made for my birthday the next February."

ring appeared to seal this promise, as when March arrived, Bishop coyly told Marianne Moore, "Well, it is all wonderful to me and my ideas of 'travel' recede pleasantly every day."[15]

Four months after her arrival in Brazil, Robert Lowell finally asked, "Why Brazil?" and expressed the collective mystification of their friends and colleagues that she was still there.[16] Bishop responded to him more directly: "I have had a really nice time, and I am coming back, because I still want to see some more of S.A. and do some more writing about it." Although she expresses an intent to travel through South America as initially planned, her entire letter is filled with descriptions of Brazil to the extent that she says, "I find it hard to stop when I get to describing, as you see…" She mentions the possibility that by "next winter" she expects to "have had enough for a while and [to] have saved enough money to go to Europe, from here, probably, or Buenos Aires,"[17] indicating a plan to base herself in Brazil for a longer period of time than she has, until this point, been willing to commit to, at least in writing. Still, Bishop clearly envisioned leaving Brazil, so this letter only marked a shift from tourist to longer-term visitor.

Lowell continued to press her, and in a postcard sent in June 1952, teased, "Now I hear from a fellow named Canfield that you are moving to Brazil forever. Impossible choice, even for the author of *North & South.*"[18] A year later, in July 1953, Bishop finally conceded: "Well, Brazil is a much more unlikely place than Amsterdam, certainly, and I'd never have picked it. But it is a combination of circumstances that make it wonderful for me now, and it really looks as though I'd stay."[19] Her remarkable phrasing distances her personal feelings from the decision to stay, both softening it with the conditional "would" and the impersonal "it really looks as though," as if this decision belonged to fate or some external force rather than herself.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 236, letter from Bishop to Marianne Moore, 14 February 1952.
[16] *WIA*, p. 133, letter from Lowell to Bishop, 21 March 1952.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 138, letter from Lowell to Bishop, June 1952.
[19] *WIA*, p. 142, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 28 July 1953.

Then, as though this confession of happiness might be too much, Bishop immediately begins to describe future travels including a half-year trip to Europe "next spring" followed by a trip to New York "for a winter" so she doesn't "feel 'out of touch' or 'expatriated' or anything like that…"[20] She attempts to create distance between herself and Brazil, but she equivocates, describing how she felt like an outsider in New York because she was so shy and lonely and by contrast feels happy and social in Brazil, delighting in living in "a spectacularly beautiful place."[21]

The following year, in February 1954, Bishop wrote to Pearl Kazin about the cruzeiro crash and the consequences for her travel plans with de Macedo Soares: "… it's made me suddenly realize I must take Brazil more seriously and really learn the damned language. I'd stopped all efforts when I thought we were going away for a year. I must decide what I'm going to think about it if I live here for good and all."[22] She continues with what she views as negative aspects of Brazilian culture, in particular the politics. Her descriptions reveal a far more complex understanding of Brazil than her initially simple enthusiasm for the landscape, vegetation, and animal life, and she finally acknowledges a significant shift in how she sees Brazil: it is becoming her home, and for the first time in her life, she may have found a permanent one. In this letter, she also notes a change in her writing: "I had a good spell of work and then a long bad one, but now I think I'm taking up poetry again at last."[23] The end of this biographical transition, it would seem, coincided with her return to poetry.

3.2 From Sable Island to Santos

Bishop arrived in Brazil with multiple poems in progress and was actively trying to incorporate her travel experiences into her new work. She and her publisher Houghton Mifflin wanted to

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[22] *OA*, p. 288, letter from Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 12 February 1954.
[23] *OA*, p. 289, letter from Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 12 February 1954.

add several poems to her manuscript of *A Cold Spring* prior to publication. However, although Bishop managed to complete a few "tourist" poems early in her stay, her first few years in Brazil were marked by an inability to produce polished poems about her new home. Her first travel poem, "Arrival at Santos," was quickly composed and accepted for publication by *The New Yorker*. Bishop sent it to White on 14 March 1952 and received an acceptance with payment enclosed on 31 March 1952. Subsequent poems met with less success. "The Mountain," discussed in detail below, was sent to and rejected by *The New Yorker* in August 1952, then appeared in *Poetry* magazine in October 1952.

Except for these two poems and "The Shampoo," which was also rejected by *The New Yorker* but included in *A Cold Spring*, Bishop almost exclusively worked on short stories, essays, and translations during this transition period. *The New Yorker* published two semi-autobiographical short stories about her Nova Scotian childhood. She also attempted to complete an essay about Sable Island, Nova Scotia, which she had visited three months before embarking on her trip to South America, but Bishop's pace of production and the type of work she was able to complete in her early years in Brazil was limited, and her attention to prose after nearly a decade of poetry characterizes this period of transition. In the letter that accompanied the second short story she sent to *The New Yorker* Bishop writes, "Here is another story ["In the Village'] – and still none of the things I had planned to do. However, that seems to be the way things often go, and I now have one more story and Sable Island going at the same time."[24] Her intent had been to complete her planned travel essay and to write poems, but she was unable to do so.

In 1955, slightly over three years after Bishop arrived in Brazil, *A Cold Spring* was finally published. It contained only three poems set in her new country,[25] all of which were

[24] *EBNY*, p. 85, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 10 October 1952.
[25] "The Mountain" was published in *A Cold Spring* but removed from the paperback and subsequent editions, including *The Complete Poems*. "Arrival at Santos" was originally published in *A Cold Spring* and then republished with minor changes in *Questions of Travel*. It was removed from *The Complete Poems* on Bishop's

written during her first year.[26] *Questions of Travel*, with its section on Brazil, required another decade to complete. In its opening sequence, *Questions of Travel* offers a narrative of a tourist arriving in Brazil and then "driving into the interior," an arc that could represent any tourist turned immigrant in its focal shift from apparently superficial observations to a deeper look at history, culture, and individuals. This story, though, is constructed from poems that were composed at different stages of Bishop's assimilation of her new home. While "Arrival at Santos" was both composed and published within her first year in Brazil, the second poem in the opening sequence, "Brazil 1, 1502" was first sent to *The New Yorker* in 1959 and "Questions of Travel" in 1955. The actual mediation of Brazil occurred in her journals and letters and, after several years, crystallized into the poems that comprise the Brazil section of *Questions of Travel*.

I define Bishop's "Brazil Transition" as beginning with her departure for her South American tour in 1951 until 1955, when many of her "Brazilian" poems including "Squatter's Children," "Questions of Travel," and "Manuelzínho," were accepted for publication. A simple data visualization foregrounds the difference in production rates. Except for "Arrival at Santos," which was written and immediately accepted for publication in 1952, Bishop did not have any poems accepted for publication until 1955, despite repeated solicitations for new work from her longtime editor Katharine White. Bishop's completed short stories involved a complex editorial process with months of discussion, so they have long timelines that reflect onerous work. But beginning in 1955, this pattern changes. First, Bishop finishes several poems in quick succession (Figure 5). Second, these poems have brief timelines that follow a simple pattern: Bishop completes a poem, she sends it to *The New Yorker*, they accept her poem, and they send editorial proofs and payment (Figure 6). While this was an atypical timeline for most

instructions. The third of these poems is "The Shampoo," which became the closing poem in *A Cold Spring* and the only one that remained from Brazil.

[26] *Pr*, p. 414.

of Bishop's literary career (she was notorious for her often excruciatingly slow writing process), we can see that much of 1955 follows this pattern.

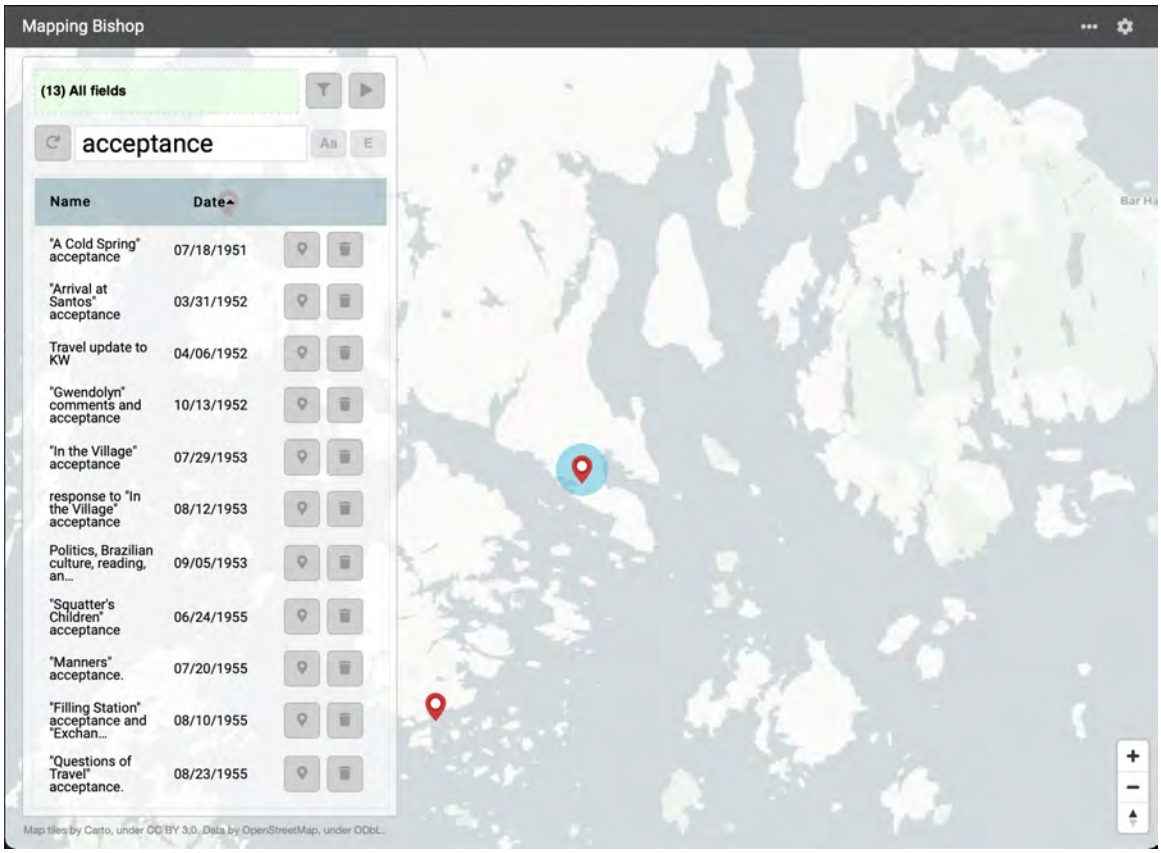


Figure 5: Timeline of acceptances with a three-year gap between poems and a two-year gap between "In the Village" and "Squatter's Children"

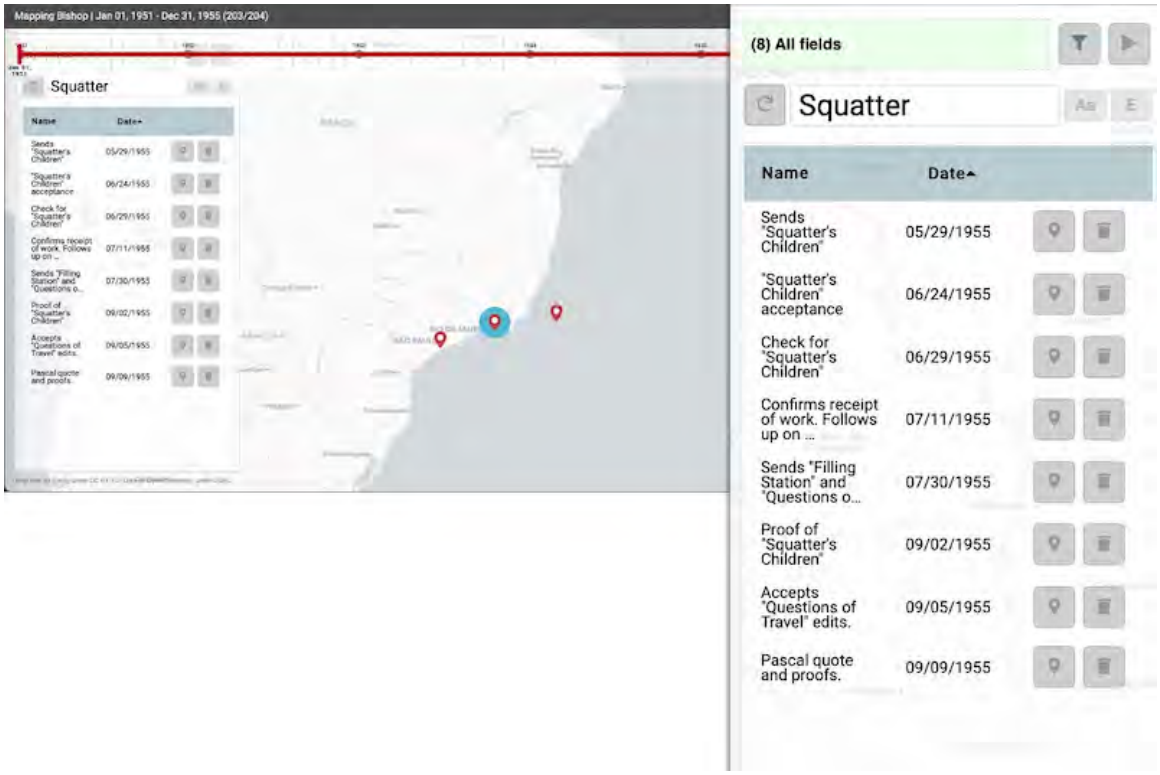


Figure 6: Timeline of "Squatter's Children"

Most notable about Bishop's transition period is her focus on prose and on writing about Nova Scotia rather than completing the intended travel poems for *A Cold Spring*. In a letter to Ilse and Kit Barker dated 12 October 1952, eleven months after her arrival in Brazil, Bishop famously reflects, "It is funny to come to Brazil to experience total recall about Nova Scotia — geography must be more mysterious than we realize, even." In the same letter, she also expresses surprise at what she calls her "sudden" shift to prose: "To my great surprise — I hadn't finished a story in ten years, I think — I suddenly started writing some and have done three — two more part done — and the Sable Island, which I am just getting down to."[27] Bishop dramatizes the changes in her writing by emphasizing the unexpectedness of both her "total recall" and her prose writing. Her evocation of the mysterious force of geography encourages us to view Brazil as the key to unlocking Nova Scotia. Change of place created a situation in

[27] *OA*, p. 249, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 12 October 1952.

which a "reverse" mediation of place became possible. Brazil gave Bishop the opportunity to understand Nova Scotia.

Biographers and critics have proposed a wide range of theories, sometimes contradictory, about how this temporal and spatial distance from Nova Scotia allowed Bishop to write about her childhood. The simplest psychological explanations focus on the trauma of her early childhood, from her mother's illness and hospitalization to Bishop's many relocations afterward to live with various family members. Linda Anderson points to Bishop's arrival "in a country she did not know and whose language she did not speak" as a way of returning to "the repressed past."[28] Bishop's arrival in Brazil broke the direct narrative thread between past and present, so that, rather than applying her past to her present circumstances, she could, in this new place, articulate the past in its own terms. For Laura Helyer, the disruption of this latest relocation "brought about a greater immediacy and awareness to memory,"[29] the abrupt change allowing Bishop's childhood memories to crystallize. Lorrie Goldensohn, as described by Barbara Page and Carmen Oliveira, credits the "warmer embrace of her new life in Brazil" with letting her write about the "estrangement" of her Nova Scotian childhood.[30] Brazil, in all of these instances, provided the safety and stability that Bishop had lacked in childhood, and the alienation of language and environment permitted a fresh perspective on the past.

David Kalstone and Victoria Harrison, by contrast, note several similarities between Bishop's Nova Scotian past and Brazilian present and attribute these short stories to the resonance Bishop found across space and time between two types of village life. Kalstone points to Bishop's ability to write about Nova Scotia "after she had safely and happily taken up a life in Brazil that in part recalled the restorative warmth, intimacy, and scale of her Nova

[28] Linda R. Anderson, *Elizabeth Bishop: Lines of Connection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 105.
[29] Laura Helyer, "Patterns of Time and the Maternal in the Short Stories of Elizabeth Bishop and Katherine Mansfield," in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*, p. 224.
[30] Barbara Page and Carmen L. Oliveira, "Foreign-Domestic: Elizabeth Bishop at Home / Not at Home in Brazil," in *Elizabeth Bishop in the Twenty-First Century: Reading the New Editions*, p. 118.

Scotia village."[31] Additionally he proposes that the daily rhythms and colorful local characters of Samambaia recalled Nova Scotian village life,[32] and that this "odd streak of familiarity"[33] allowed Bishop to access childhood memories more easily, while Harrison notes that Bishop's new home shared the "countryside, family, animals abounding, the elements that made Nova Scotia 'home.'"[34] Kalstone and Harrison identify familiarity as the source of Bishop's short stories rather than the friction of dislocation and the concurrent estrangement and defamiliarization.

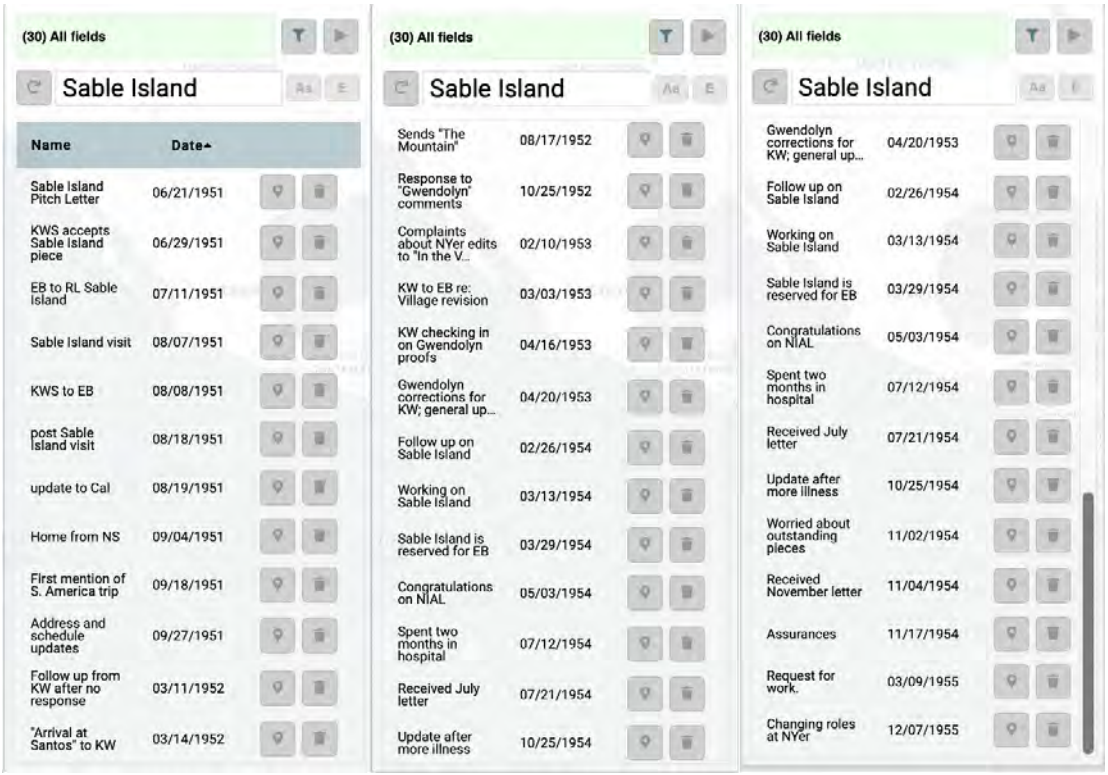


Figure 7: Timeline of "Sable Island" essay

[31] David Kalstone, *Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop, with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1989), p. 120.
[32] *Ibid*., p. 122.
[33] *Ibid*., p. 152.
[34] Victoria Harrison, "Recording a Life: Elizabeth Bishop's Letters to Ilse and Kit Barker," in *Elizabeth Bishop: The Geography of Gender,* p. 221.

In all of these analyses, as well as in Bishop's own account of her new work, the ability to write about Nova Scotia is grounded in her Brazilian experience: being in Brazil made writing about Nova Scotia possible. However, Bishop's early work in Brazil, which includes both her "Brazil" poems and her short stories about Nova Scotia, has direct antecedents in her research and writing on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, carried out shortly before her 1951 trip to South America. As archival materials and data visualizations make evident, Bishop repurposed her writing on Nova Scotia to frame her initial experience of Brazil, and her precompositional texts from her Sable Island visit specifically served as an entry point for her early Brazil poems. The Sable Island essay that Bishop mentions in passing in her letter to the Barkers, occupies all four years of this transitional period, thus it serves as a backdrop for all of the writing she produced during this time. As is clear from the timeline above (Figure 7), although Bishop never completed the essay, she frequently discussed it in her correspondence. Sable Island was mentioned in Bishop's correspondence most often in 1951, when she initially proposed the essay to White and then visited the site for research purposes. She took particular delight in describing the place to Robert Lowell while she was still in Maine, [35] immediately following her stay on the island, saying that the island was

> …about 180 miles off the coast of N.S.—where one of my great-grandfathers & his shop & all hands were supposed to have been lost, and where there are wild ponies, besides the sparrows—&my aunt had, has—she's (Pansy, the pony) about 40 now—one of them… The actual place is nothing much except sand-dunes like Cape Cod, but its history is spectacular, just the kind of thing I feel you might like…[36]

[35] Bishop reports to Lowell that her interest in Sable Island was rekindled during a visit to Jane Dewey, daughter of American philosopher John Dewey whom Bishop knew well from her time in Key West. In trying to identify a particular bird in the Audubon guide, she found an entry about the "Ipswich Sparrow" which only lives on Sable Island.

[36] *WIA*, p. 124, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 19 August 1951.

Her exchanges with White about Sable Island quieted in 1952 and 1953 and then became more frequent in 1954. Bishop assures White, "I don't mind your egging me on to finish *Sable Island* at all" and adds, "You have an ally here in the friend I am staying with, who asks me about S.I. every day," which further demonstrates the importance of this essay in her quotidian life. She continues, "I'm now in a position the first time in my life really to get a lot of work done, I think…"[37] Bishop did enter one of the most productive periods of her literary career in 1955, composing many of the poems that appear in her collection *Questions of Travel*. While the glacial pace of Bishop's process in drafting the Sable Island essay is not surprising, her persistence with this piece is unusual when compared to her other in-progress works at the time, as is her sustained attention to a piece about a highly specific place written in an entirely different context over such a long period of time. This departure from her typical behavior prompted my closer study of Bishop's failed attempt to write this article.

The Sable Island essay began as an act of desperation. In the months before Bishop moved to Brazil, she struggled to find purpose. In 1950, which Bishop described in a journal as the "worst year" thus far in her life,[38] she served as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, a position now designated as the United States Poet Laureate. The climate in Washington DC exacerbated her severe asthma, leaving her sick and unable to work for weeks at a time, and she was unhappy with her inconsistent performance in the position. Bouts of alcoholism reinforced her depression and drove her to isolation, and her loneliness provoked further binge drinking. In 1951, after a productive but personally debilitating stay at Yaddo during which she was briefly hospitalized for alcoholism, work on her collection *A Cold Spring* stalled, and she was frustrated with both publishing delays and her inability to complete the manuscript. She planned and then postponed international trips. Her physical movements

[37] *EBNY*, p. 142, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 17 November 1954.
[38] Anderson, p. 26.

mirrored her lack of direction. She lived in hotels in New York City and often escaped to her friend Jane Dewey's farm in Maryland.

Bishop was clearly searching for a way forward both personally and in her work, and toward the end of June 1951, in the midst of this turbulence, she proposed the idea of an entirely new kind of writing project to Katharine White, her poetry editor at *The New Yorker*. Bishop planned to visit Sable Island, where, as she describes it, "My own great-grandfather who had a schooner in the West Indies trade was shipwrecked and lost there with all hands, so I have a particular interest in it." The island, known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," was famous for its hundreds of shipwrecks, and Bishop suggests a novel way to write about it based on her personal connection to the island through her great-grandfather: "He himself was a rather interesting character & my idea is to combine personal reminiscences with the best parts of its history, plus a first-hand account of it now."[39] She describes myriad possibilities for the piece: the feral ponies that inhabit the island, ghost stories, shipwrecks, and philanthropist Dorothea Dix, who, after visiting Sable Island, raised funds to supply the island with new lifeboats. The details span centuries, from the "animal cycles" beginning in the 16th century and a treatise from 1789 by a clergyman to her present day. She notes, "Of course I heard so much about [Sable Island] when I was little that it has haunted my imagination most of my life." Even before officially beginning to work on the essay, Bishop had a deep connection to and knowledge of the island. White accepted the project by the end of June. Bishop immediately made travel plans, arranging to reach Sable Island by supply boat as, "There is no regular passenger service to the island,"[40] and in August 1951, she crossed over for a two-week visit. One month after her stay, two weeks of which were also spent on the road, she decided to travel to South America.

[39] *EBNY*, p. 66, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 21 June 1951.
[40] VCSC, f. 43.6.

Prior to visiting a new place, Bishop researched it by reading histories and first-person accounts as preparation for her own encounter, and her trip to Sable Island maintained this pattern. This was her first step in mediating a new place. She kept detailed journals when she planned to write about her travel, and her Sable Island notebook begins with numerous extracts from her reading. Her visit is documented in this notebook, in which her personal observations are followed by copious additional research notes. While Bishop planned to write an essay about Sable Island, her journal also contains a few brief sketches of poems including "On the *Prince of Fundy*" and "On Shipboard / On Board Ship." Although these draft materials are so fragmentary that they can more precisely be called precompositional texts, they demonstrate Bishop's typical compositional technique, which frequently begins with repetition. Sometimes she begins with a form, but more often she has a core idea that she rearranges as she tries out possible combinations of phrases and sounds. These early drafts are generally obsessive in their repetition, with the same word appearing at least half a dozen times on a page.

Toward the end of the Sable Island journal, Bishop entered some remarks about the horizon as she watched it from the departing ship then began to try to turn her observations into a poem: "We imagine the horizon / & it hardens / into definition: / flawless / faultless / the horizon."[41] Bishop's interest in the horizon dates back decades, as is evident from an entry in her 1935 travel journal, in which she documented her trip to Europe with college friend Hallie Tompkins. She writes, "The horizon seems to be <u>boat</u> shaped — the shape of whatever you're on...."[42] That year she also composed her poem "The Man-Moth" in which she portrays the creature's pupil as "an entire night itself, whose haired horizon tightens / as he stares back, and closes up the eye."[43] In both of these early examples, Bishop notes the mutability of the horizon and the way that it appears to adjust according to the current circumstance. By contrast, during

[41] VCSC, f. 72.7.
[42] Millier, p. 86.
[43] *P*, p. 17.

her voyage to South America on the HMS Bowplate she identifies the moment in which the horizon becomes itself, a phenomenological depiction of a process initiated by the viewer's imagination. On the following double-page spread in her Sable Island journal, she changes tactics to write about geography: "I like geography best / because it's easiest / Economics & history / arithmetic–."[44] In the first set of lines, she seeks to capture the moment that the perception of the horizon becomes fixed, when an idea turns into reality. In the second she prioritizes form and sets school subjects to iambic trimeter in a simple, childlike verse. The Sable Island journal then ends with more research notes and a list of references.

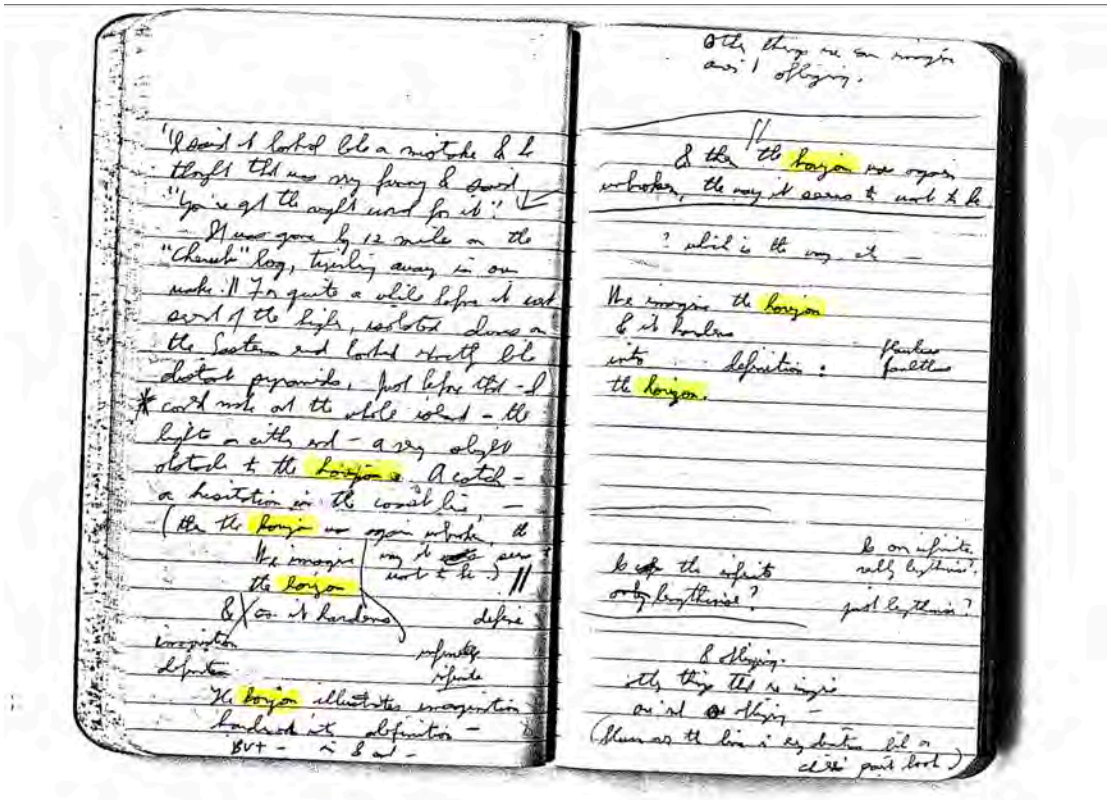


Figure 8: Repetition of the word "horizon" in Bishop's Sable Island journal

[44] VCSC, f. 72.7.

When Bishop went to Brazil, she repurposed a barely used Key West journal, crossing out "Key West 1949" and adding "Nov. 10th 1951 – Brooklyn docks / Dec. 1951 – Brasil –."[45] After four pages of material from Key West in 1949, Bishop began to rework some of her precompositional texts from the Sable Island journal in new material and spatial contexts. "On Shipboard / On Board Ship" became a draft called "P.P.H." about her friend Pauline Hemingway, the former wife of Ernest Hemingway whom she had met in Key West and who had recently passed away.[46] Here the Sable Island lines about geography become: "I choose geography / perhaps ^just because it's easy[47] –" turning her simple enjoyment of geography into a willed activity by revising "I like" with "I choose." She undermines the confidence of the first version with the word "perhaps," modulating the declaration to speculation. Her fragments about the horizon are then incorporated into a fresh draft of "P.P.H." on the facing page called "Crossing the Equator/ P.H.": "Still the horizon is unbroken. / We imagine the horizon, & it hardens / into faultless definition: the horizon."[48] The word "still" implies continuity across the distance traveled while simultaneously invoking a sense of stasis. Her journal entries reflect a similar tension between stasis and motion:

> […] when I read something like 'The question about time is how change is related to the changeless' – & look around – it doesn't seem so hard or so far of. The nearer clouds seem to be moving quite rapidly; those in back of them are motionless – Watching the ship's wake we seem to be going fast, but watching the sky or the horizon, we are just living here with the engines pulsing, forever.[49]

[45] VCSC, f. 76.2.
[46] *EAP*, p. 301.
[47] VCSC, f. 76.2.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] Quoted in Millier, p. 239.

Bishop continues her circular attempts at describing the horizon as she perceives it, but she relocates her observations from a ship that was somewhere off the coast of Nova Scotia to "[s]omewhere off the coast of Brazil."[50] From the very beginning of her voyage, Bishop uses her Sable Island drafts to relate her experience of travel to South America.

As Bishop approached Brazil, she began to draft a poem called "Todos Os Santos," which opens with the line, "Here is the coast; here is the port."[51] She crosses this out in her journal, yet it clearly recurs as the famous opening to "Arrival at Santos,"[52] "Here is the coast; here is the harbor." Translated, the title "Todos Os Santos" means "All Saints," which refers to the date that Portuguese explorers first arrived in what is now called the state of Bahía, 1 November 1501, All Saints Day. Amerigo Vespucci arrived in that same bay exactly one year later and named it Bahía de Todos os Santos, or the Bay of All Saints. Bishop reached Brazil in November 1951, 450 years later, a parallel that might have been enough to spark Bishop's early Brazilian poems. However, she had begun to write about Portuguese explorers shortly beforehand, on Sable Island, the Portuguese having been credited with the island's discovery in 1520-1521.

In one of her drafts of "On the *Prince of Fundy*," composed during her research trip to Sable Island in August 1951, Bishop imagines how the island may have appeared to visitors from four hundred years before: "The Portuguese explorers came / and found it looking much the same / Something diffident, withdrawn… / History has come and gone. / To ~~see the autumn~~ foliage / The displaced Acadians / The apple crop that breaks the trees…"[53] In this draft, she introduces several intersections between place and time. She notes the similarities in landscape and foliage across centuries, but this supposed stability is juxtaposed with the displacement of an entire population. The arrival is coupled with departure, and the "apple crop that breaks the

[50] *OA*, p. 224, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 26 November 1951.
[51] VCSC, f. 76.2.
[52] *P*, p. 87.
[53] VCSC, f. 65.4.

tree" projects both violence and change. Despite a façade of steady continuity, a harsh transformation has occurred.

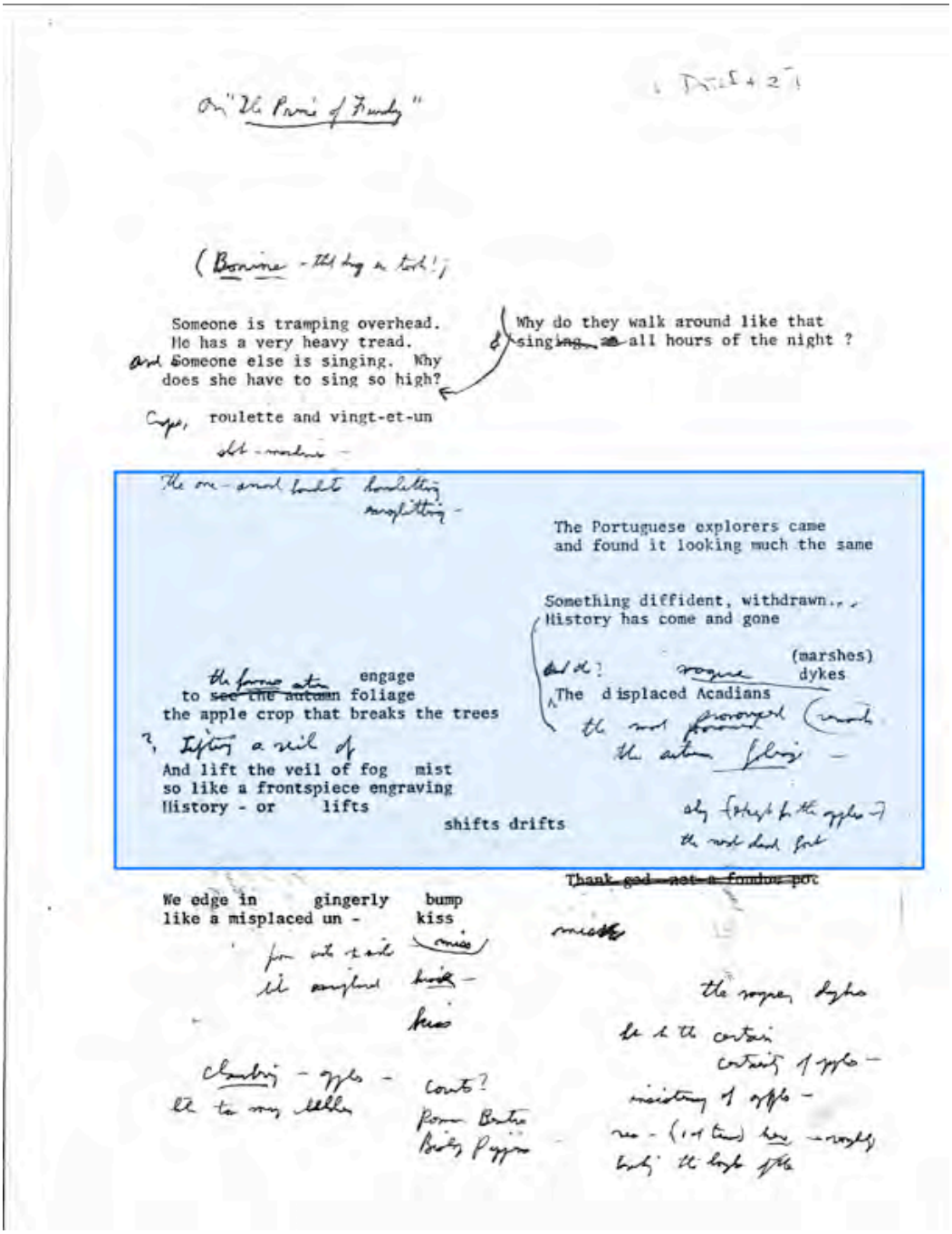


Figure 9: Second draft of "On the Prince of Fundy*"*

This draft was written one month before Bishop first mentioned a possible trip to South America, so she traveled to Brazil with these themes already under consideration. The

Portuguese explorers and the landscapes they encountered reappear in Bishop's completed poem "Brazil, January 1, 1502," which retains the idea of the persistence of landscape that she establishes in "On the *Prince of Fundy*." The Brazilian poem opens with: "Nature greets our eyes / exactly as she must have greeted theirs…".[54] It replaces the apple trees and autumn foliage, however, with an extended description of a tropical jungle. The displacement of the existing population also remains in the final version in the "maddening little women who kept calling, / calling to each other… / and retreating, always retreating."[55] Once again, an arrival is paired with a departure. While these themes of landscape and history can be traced to "On the *Prince of Fundy*," the title of the poem and the way it entangles place and time can be traced to "Todos Os Santos." As mentioned above, Bishop refers to the arrival of the Portuguese to the Bay of All Saints, which is located in the northern state of Bahía, in November 1501. "Brazil, January 1, 1502" is set, however, in Rio de Janeiro. The precise date preserves the parallel arrivals in 1502 and 1952, and the new location allows a bilingual pun between Janeiro and January. Bishop merges place and time in January/Janeiro by referring to both the city Rio de Janeiro and the month; she also alludes to Janus, the two-faced God who looks into the past and the future, as this poem does.[56] While Brazil provides a new beginning, Nova Scotia frames the experience of it with the Portuguese explorers serving, as it were, as an intermediary.

Bishop split her material from "Todos Os Santos" into two poems: "Brazil, January 1, 1502" as mentioned above and "Arrival at Santos." The latter poem refers to yet another location: the city of Santos where Bishop's ship docked.[57] In addition to adapting her opening line of "Here is the coast; here is the port"[58] from "Todos os Santos" to "Here is the coast; here

[54] *P,* p. 89.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[56] Millier notes: "May Swenson had suggested that she borrow the title *Questions of Travel* for the book, and Elizabeth saw that it would accommodate the group of poems about Nova Scotia and her childhood better than *January River* would have. And the poems that she was able to finish, now that the Brazil book was out of the way, were not about Brazil," pp. 328-329.
[57] In her journal, Bishop named the patron saints of Brazil and the regions they protected. As a phrase, "todos os santos" provides the type of richly entangled set of associations that she enjoyed.
[58] VCSC, f. 76.2.

is the harbor" in "Arrival at Santos," Bishop continues the poem with: "here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery."[59] In this version, rather than capturing a moment of perception, Bishop filters the horizon through a tourist's experience. She had written about tourists in her Sable Island journal as well as in "On the *Prince of Fundy*." As Bishop continued to revise that poem, she discarded the Portuguese explorers and only noted that the word "Fundy" comes from Portuguese. In subsequent drafts, she concentrated instead on the contrast between the heavy tread of someone walking aboveboard and a woman's high singing voice. In one version, she attempts to set a love poem against these disconcerting sounds and the gentle swaying of the ship. In another, she substitutes gambling and tacky tourist souvenirs for the lines about love. In "Crossing the Equator / P.H.," which was composed during the voyage to Brazil, Bishop describes the "headaches and exquisite *ennui*" of the "passive passengers."[60] She weaves these threads together in "Arrival at Santos." Bishop never manages to describe the act of seeing the horizon that had captured her attention off the coast of Sable Island. Instead of conveying a sense of wonder, she reverses the emotion to reflect the tourist's disaffection.[61]

As is now evident, Bishop mediated her initial experience of Brazil using her Sable Island drafts. The travel essay, which was never completed, also haunted her early years in Brazil. From 1951 through 1954, Bishop sent updates about the Sable Island essay to White, although the level of completion changed from "I've at last got back to Sable Island, which I like pretty well – 2/3rds of it"[62] on 14 March 1952 to "the half or so I have done"[63] two and a half years later, in November 1954. On 10 October 1952, nearly a year after her arrival in Brazil, Bishop directly paired her Nova Scotian stories and the Sable Island piece in a letter to

[59] *P,* p. 87.
[60] *EAP*, p. 95.
[61] This coincides with Millier's observation that: "More than once in the drafts of Bishop's published poems, one finds that she came to express in the final draft nearly the opposite of what she started out to say," p. 507.
[62] *EBNY*, p. 77, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 14 March 1952.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 142*,* letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 17 November 1954.

White, saying, "I now have one more story and Sable Island going at the same time."[64] Two weeks later she repeats, "Once Sable Island and the Nova Scotian pieces are done I think I'll take a rest and go back to poetry…"[65] Rather than appearing suddenly, Bishop's prose fiction about Nova Scotia was composed alongside her nonfiction about Sable Island, and she did not write from memory alone. In November 1954, Bishop tried to illustrate her continued commitment to the travel essay by telling White, "...here I am surrounded with maps, and a letter from a great-uncle, and Prowse's History of Newfoundland, etc...."[66] Bishop had changed the material context of her Sable Island poem fragments by reusing them in her Key West/Brazil journal. In Brazil, research materials for the Sable Island essay occupied her studio. This letter, in which Bishop describes her physical immersion in the travel essay, marks the last time Bishop mentions the piece to White. The editor asked about the essay twice in letters to Bishop in 1955, but Bishop was entering one of her most productive periods of poetry writing and publication, and after one final comment in 1956, White also dropped the subject.

Despite this time and effort, only a few pages remain of Bishop's Sable Island essay. Millier theorizes that Bishop was unable to complete the project because it reminded her too strongly of her mother. The Dalhousie University archives, where Bishop conducted research immediately after her trip to the island, face the hospital where her mother had been institutionalized.[67] Bishop maintained a lifelong interest in Dorothea Dix,[68] and she discovered in her research that Dix had founded both the hospital where her mother had stayed in Nova Scotia and St. Elizabeths in Washington D.C., where Bishop visited Ezra Pound during her year in Washington D.C., which she had called the worst year of her life.[69] While the traumatic personal connections may have affected Bishop's ability to complete this essay, the explanation

[64] *EBNY*, p. 85*,* letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 10 October 1952.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 90*,* letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 25 October 1952.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 142*,* letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 17 November 1954.
[67] Millier, p. 234.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 430.
[69] Flynn, p. 59.

may also be more simple. Over the course of her career, she tried to compose several travel essays that combined personal history and narrative with the stories of the places and people she encountered, much in the style of this proposed piece; she never succeeded, however. Sable Island was the first piece of its kind that Bishop attempted, and in her 17 November 1954 letter to White, she cautioned, "Since it's the first thing I've ever done of that sort it may need considerable re-writing, of course."[70] As many of the essays Bishop attempted to write chronicle her travels in Brazil, not her childhood in Nova Scotia, the barrier appears to be formal rather than psychological.

The two remaining drafts of "The Deadly Sandpile," the working title of the Sable Island essay, are each only three-and-a-half pages long and similar in structure and content. They are handwritten, which, based on her process of poetic composition, suggests early drafts, although they are undated, so it is unclear whether these are early or late attempts to complete the essay. As with much of her writing, Bishop begins by precisely situating the reader on this "strip of sand" about "180 miles south-east of Halifax, Nova Scotia" and "for the present, about 22 miles long & a mile wide at the widest part."[71] "For the present" implies that these dimensions will change, although she does not specify when or how this might occur. She later clarifies that "Sable Island <u>is</u> dying, or rather, slowly vanishing; but ~~quite the opposite of all this is true~~. The truth about it is quite the opposite of this." As in her poetry, Bishop self-corrects mid-sentence and reverses course, and the contradiction in these lines forms the crux of this essay, demonstrating an unusual approach to a travel narrative. Instead of recounting the history of Sable Island through a frame of personal encounter and family history, Bishop attempts to define it geographically and then epistemologically as she questions the nature of the island. The expected first-person perspective is primarily implied through what is seen and presented;

[70] *EBNY*, p. 142, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 17 November 1954.
[71] VCSC, f. 53.18.

Bishop mentions purchasing a map, but the narrative, if it can be called that, comprises geography and history with a brief assessment of the language typically ascribed to the island and its accuracy. It is an analysis of how this place is constructed rather than an experience of it.

After establishing Sable Island's physical location, Bishop leads the reader to the Dalhousie Archive building in Halifax to describe a map of "Known Wrecks" on the island from 1882, exchanging the current, physical place and what is visible with a representation of a compelling, hidden past. This slippage between place and representation echoes similar shifts in her poetry, beginning with "The Map," and foregrounds the process of mediating a place by fixing it in an unchanging moment. The Sable Island that Bishop visited no longer matches this cartographic representation, and she notes that the map was outdated at the time of its creation as it "shows only the wrecks from 1800, since no record was kept before then, but there are more than two hundred of them." Sable Island collects shipwrecks, but despite its moniker as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic," provides few traces of them. Bishop notes in the essay, "During my own stay there, on my walks along the beaches, I saw almost no driftwood, just occasional logs…" The sand also contained few shells and almost no stones, at least nothing larger than a "peanut," "as if the entire island had been sifted & re-sifted." She describes the "macabrely voracious quality of the sand that has given rise to the use of the word 'insatiable' in every scrap of recent writing on the subject of Sable Island." For all of its history, the island is a place of erasure. Bishop considers the appropriateness of the island's depiction as a "graveyard" given the imperceptibility of the shipwrecks and concludes that it is "correctly used, because the ships are buried." She also appraises the other, common characterization of Sable Island as "ill-fated." Parenthetically she clarifies that the word applies both to the island "In two senses: 1 It has the misfortune to cause ship-wrecks. 2. It is vanishing" and to the "ships

wrecked there" and "those ill-fated marines they carried." She concludes, "But insatiable wins." The ships and sailors were ill-fated; the island, by contrast, is ravenous.

Omitting the expected prose transition, Bishop leaps from this conclusion to a particularly Nova Scotian expression that she calls, "the Indrawn Yes,"[72] used by locals of all ages. She describes the sound, the context in which it is used, and its meaning: "both commiseration & an acceptance of the Worst, and it occurred to me as I walked over those fine, fatalistic sands, that Sable Island with its mysterious engulfing powers was a sort of large-scale expression of the Indrawn Yes." In her attempt to apprehend this empty island, Bishop found in the landscape an objective correlative of a quintessentially Nova Scotian emotion.

Bishop's Brazilian transition nearly perfectly coincides with her work on the Sable Island essay, and although she was unable to complete it, her continuous work on a prose piece with research materials comprising family history, local history, personal observations, and regional maps make her many stories about her childhood in Nova Scotia less "sudden"; rather, the stories are a natural extension of her work in progress. Her initial poetic efforts in Brazil repurposed precompositional fragments about Sable Island, reinforcing the exchange between Nova Scotia and Brazil in her writing. Each is constructed with fragments of the other. While the physical and temporal distance surely helped in writing about her childhood, Bishop's prose about Nova Scotia had a recent context in addition to the material reminders that filled her studio. Bishop, upon her arrival in Brazil, described what she was prepared to see, and it was only after several years of living in this new place that she could distinguish "Brazil" from "Elsewhere" in her work.

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[72] Decades later, this Nova Scotian expression famously appears in "The Moose" during a bus trip that begins at the Bay of Fundy and moves inland:
"Yes ..." that peculiar
affirmative. "Yes ..."
A sharp, indrawn breath,
half groan, half acceptance,
that means "Life's like that.
We know it (also death)." *P*, p. 192.

3.3 Early Implacement

While Nova Scotia offered an entry point for Bishop's mediation of Brazil with the past pointing a way forward in her writing, her earliest poetic compositions in Brazil also attempt to situate the place itself. As in her Sable Island essay, she sets the reader in a geographical context, which consequently provides spatial and temporal perspective. In her correspondence, Bishop makes repeated references to the "vagueness" of Brazil. In January 1952, she tells White, "I don't know what season it is here & nobody else seems to know, either—but it's a very vague country."[73] The next month, in a letter to Ilse and Kit Barker, she writes, "... this trip is doing my memory no good at all so far because Brazilians can't remember a *thing*—not even what season it is right now, for example"[74] and then continues to describe de Macedo Soares's "fancy" watch that can "tell the day of the week, the month, the phase of the moon, etc. and almost every day we all consult with each other and think it all over & get out the latest *Time*… and then she fixes the astoundingly accurate piece of Swiss engineering with a pin." In the same letter, she conveys her upcoming travel plans with a mention of a "vague little freighter line." In March 1952 she tells Marianne Moore that the unreliable mail is "part of the really lofty vagueness of Brazil... where a cloud is coming in my bedroom window right this minute."[75] Bishop's "vagueness" is counterbalanced by overwhelming description: "Not only are there highly impractical mountains all around with clouds floating in & out of one's bedroom, but waterfalls, orchids, all the Key West flowers I know & Northern apples and pears as well," as though she can define place through detail. By July 1952 she appears to embrace the uncertainty and writes to her physician Dr. Anny Baumann, "I'm quite content to live in complete confusion, about seasons, fruits, languages, geography, everything."[76] The repetition of the word "vagueness" across her correspondence recalls Bishop's drafting process in which

[73] *EBNY*, p. 75, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 19 January 1952.
[74] *OA*, p. 233, letter from Bishop to Ilse and Kit Barker, 7 February 1952.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 237, letter from Bishop to Marianne Moore, 3 March 1952.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 242, letter from Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 28 July 1952.

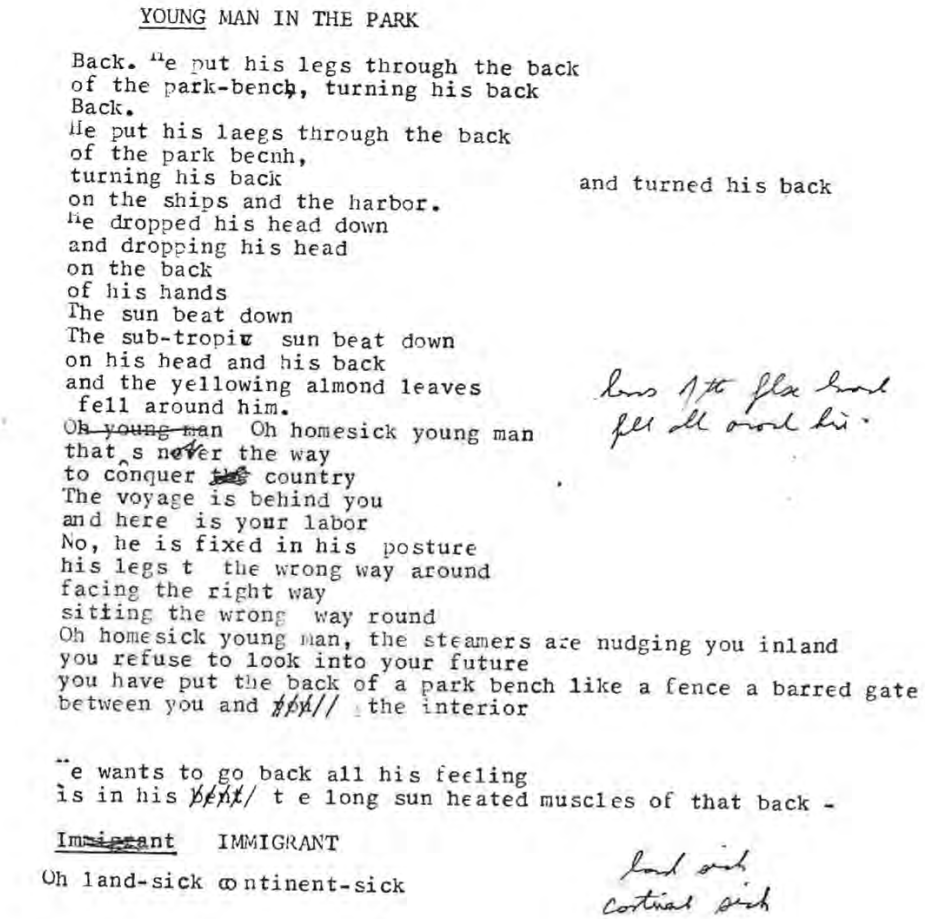
she tests the accuracy or precision of a particular sentiment and attempts to extemporize on a concept.

One of her first Brazilian compositions, "Young Man in the Park," focuses entirely on physical placement and perspective. Only one, typewritten draft of this poem remains, and it was never polished or revised, so it offers a poor example of Bishop's craft; however, when considering Bishop's mediation of place through writing, this poem offers a rich, precompositional framework. The poem describes a young man who is sitting backwards on a park bench and couples his literal and figurative disorientation. In a poem that is approximately thirty lines long (see Figure 10 below), Bishop begins with the word "back" and then repeats it an additional eleven times. "Back. He put his legs through the back / of the park bench, turning his back / Back."[77] Although these lines obviously have not been crafted in any way, the repetition of the word "back" used in multiple senses underscores the central matter of perspective that Bishop seeks to represent. "Back" refers to part of the bench, the dorsal side of the young man's body, and general physical orientation, and Bishop uses puns to simultaneously disentangle and complicate this body in both place and time.

In *Getting Back into Place*, Edward Casey states that "Our perspective is embodied and we see the future and past physically in relation to our physical presences."[78] He adds, "Place is what takes place between body and landscape. Thanks to the double horizon that body and landscape provide, a place is a locale bounded on both sides, near and far."[79] In this manuscript draft, as in "Arrival at Santos," Bishop restricts a largely incomprehensible new country and continent to a narrow, liminal space between harbor and land in the contained wilderness of a park through the body of a young man. As in "Brazil 1, 1502," which begins with "Januaries," this figure is positioned between the future and past, except this time, instead of the larger flow

[77] VCSC, f. 67.24.
[78] Casey, p. 12.
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

of history and the movement of a river, the figure is confined. As Merleau-Ponty posits, "To see is always to see from somewhere, is it not?"[80] In this scene, the perspective is fixed to and through the young man. The speaker encounters the place through him while simultaneously observing him in this place.



YOUNG MAN IN THE PARK

Back. He put his legs through the back
of the park-bench, turning his back
Back.
He put his laegs through the back
of the park beenh,
turning his back and turned his back
on the ships and the harbor.
He dropped his head down
and dropping his head
on the back
of his hands
The sun beat down
The sub-tropic sun beat down
on his head and his back
and the yellowing almond leaves
fell around him.
Oh ~~young man~~ Oh homesick young man
that's never the way
to conquer ~~the~~ country
The voyage is behind you
and here is your labor
No, he is fixed in his posture
his legs t the wrong way around
facing the right way
sitting the wrong way round
Oh homesick young man, the steamers are nudging you inland
you refuse to look into your future
you have put the back of a park bench like a fence a barred gate
between you and ~~the~~// the interior

He wants to go back all his feeling
is in his ~~back~~/ t e long sun heated muscles of that back -

~~Immigrant~~ IMMIGRANT
Oh land-sick continent-sick

Figure 10: Manuscript draft of "Young Man in the Park"[81]

Once the young man's physical position is described, "turning his back / on the ships in the harbor," the focal position shifts from "back" to "dropped" and "down," and once again, Bishop depicts this same motion in multiple ways. The young man's head is bowed, and the

[80] Casey, p. 69.
[81] VCSC, f. 67.24.

sun is also beating “down” on his “back.” The negative directionality of “down” and “back” along with the weighty sounds of these monosyllablic words coalesce into an image of stagnation. There is both a refusal and a pressing into place. While the young man sits, hunched and backwards at his bench, “yellowing almond leaves / fell around him.” The leaves move downward and settle around the static figure, the yellow offering an image of decay.

In the following stanza, the voice abruptly changes from description to apostrophe, and the speaker addresses the “homesick young man” and chides that he cannot “conquer ~~the~~ country” in this manner. The voyage is “behind” and the “labor” is “here.” The word “here” provokes a series of disorienting descriptions as “here” is both backwards and stuck, and the “labor” is one of conquest. While the young man must make a choice, neither conquest nor stagnation seems positive or appropriate. The speaker then returns to description, observing the young man instead of addressing him. As is typical of Bishop, even in this unpolished draft, she pauses to reassess what she sees and corrects her initial reading of the situation: “No, he is fixed in his posture / his legs t the wrong way around / facing the right way / sitting the wrong way round.” Despite the roughness of this composition, the meaning is clear: the young man is stuck; he is facing the right direction but in the wrong manner. He provides the fixed point of a flawed tableau.

The speaker then addresses the young man directly again: “Oh homesick young man, the steamers are nudging you inland / you refuse to look into your future / you have put the back of a park bench like a fence a barred gate / between you and the interior.” The speaker invokes homesickness once more, and here it appears to be the cause of stagnation. The young man will neither look back to where he came from nor ahead into his future. The back of the bench becomes both a literal and figurative barrier, and the word “interior” refers to both physical direction — a movement inland — and a movement into an individual’s future, a physical and mental shift. Of course, the word “interior” famously appears at the end of

"Arrival at Santos," the opening poem of *Questions of Travel*, propelling the collection into Brazil with the line, "We leave Santos at once; we are driving to the interior." "Young Man at the Park" and "Arrival at Santos" were composed concurrently,[82] and thus portray conflicting experiences of arrival.

After a line break, Bishop adds: "He wants to go back all his feeling / is in his ~~bent~~ t e long sun heated muscles of that back -" and then "IMMIGRANT / Oh land-sick continent-sick." The employment of various senses of the word "back" recurs, and now, beyond physical orientation, the text finally incorporates emotional movement. In the early lines, only physical placement matters along with the refusal to orient oneself correctly in space. The poem's closing and the additional lines directly pair physical and mental orientation. In a reflection on migration, Sara Ahmed states, "This orientation might be described as the lived experience of facing at least two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home."[83] Homesickness, the desire to move backwards, causes the stagnation in this draft. Bishop pursues this idea of homesickness further in the next lines. The word "IMMIGRANT," capitalized and indented, could signify either a change in voice, a new poem, or a renaming of the current poem. In addition to the typewritten "land-sick" and "continent-sick," Bishop handwrites the words to the site without hyphens, "land sick / continent sick," illustrating another point of interest of this draft. This repetition indicates Bishop's preoccupation: homesickness and its meaning — to miss a land? A continent?

As with her intermittent attempts to write about the horizon, Bishop had broached the idea of homesickness in decades-old journal entries. During her 1935 voyage to Europe, after reflecting on how the horizon is shaped, she continues,

[82] *EAP*, p. 305. Quinn dates this draft based on journal entries and phrasing.
[83] Ahmed, p. 21.

> When this feeling comes I can't speak, swallow, scarcely breathe. I knew I had had it once before, years ago, and last night on its second occurrence I placed it as 'homesickness.' I was homesick for two days once when I was nine years old; I wanted one of my Aunts. Now I really have no right to homesickness at all. I supposed it is caused actually by the motion of the ship away from New York — it may affect one's sense of balance some way; the feeling seems to center on the middle of the chest.[84]

Bishop attributes the sensation of being unmoored to homesickness, although she clearly differentiates the experience from her childhood desire for a familiar person. On this ship she offers a physical justification for the emotion. Yet she places her center of gravity in her heart, so while she may not have a "right" to homesickness, having no fixed home, she still feels it. In contrast to homesickness manifesting as vertigo during her early travels, in this poem, the sickness arises from an inability to move. The young man, whoever he is, should move forward into the future and into the interior with his past, the voyage, and his previous home remaining behind. The feeling that lodged in Bishop's chest nearly two decades earlier resides in the "long sun heated muscles of that back." As Casey explains, "… displacement can give way to re-implacement in a new landscape"[85] and this draft, while describing an insurmountable inertia also captures an early moment of implacement.

3.4 "The Mountain"

As we have seen in this chapter, Bishop like any other writer revisits themes throughout her work, but change of place affects her perception, which by extension impacts her poetics. The

[84] Kalstone, p. 21.
[85] Casey, p. 199.

Sable Island material and "Young Man in the Park" illustrate Bishop's mediation of a new place through the familiar. Her new situation lets her recontextualize and refine existing ideas, in essence assimilating the new place into existing models with some adjustments. By contrast, certain changes are so extreme that they require a perspectival shift to accommodate them, as is the case with Bishop and Brazilian topography.

Bishop, who lived near water and coasts for most of her life, had encountered mountains prior to settling in Brazil, but "The Mountain" represents her first effort to truly engage with this topographical feature in a poetic composition. Bishop herself was unsure of the poem. Handwritten at the top of a typed manuscript draft is the question, "Very bad?"[86] She eventually sent it to White at *The New Yorker* with a dismissive introduction, calling it a "slight poem"[87] and "a little too elliptical" for the magazine, recalling her earlier observations about the "vagueness" of Brazil. White agreed that it was not right for *The New Yorker*, and, as requested, forwarded it to *Poetry* magazine instead, where it was published in October 1952. Bishop replied, "I didn't think you'd want the 'Mountain' — in fact I'm not sure that I want it myself."[88] Her ambivalence toward the poem continued. Although it appears in *A Cold Spring*, Bishop removed it from her *Complete Poems* and from subsequent compilations of her work. Millier calls "The Mountain" Bishop's "weakest published poem"[89] and Giragosian concurs, although she notes its ecocritical importance, reading it "as a poem about the Anthropocene"[90] where "without the context of the human 'other,' the mountain cannot understand itself or the phenomenological world,"[91] as it is animated but misunderstood.

Bishop, who eventually wrote many dramatic monologues and persona poems in Brazil, wrote for the first time from the perspective of the land. This was a marked departure from her

[86] VCSC, f. 57.5.
[87] *EBNY*, p. 81, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 17 August 1952.
[88] *Ibid*, p. 83., letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 12 September 1952.
[89] Millier, p. 252.
[90] Giragosian, p. 239.
[91] Giragosian, p. 241.

earlier work in which she observed objects, fauna, and landscape features and in certain cases anthropomorphized them but never gave them voices.[92] Although "The Mountain," like "Young Man in the Park," does not present a particularly strong example of Bishop's craft, its genesis reveals another aspect of mediation of place.

As with the horizon and the idea of homesickness, Bishop had considered and written about mountains before, detailing these encounters in her journals and through correspondence. Bonnie Costello, in her analysis of Bishop's "excursive vision," notes the differences between her horizontal and vertical writing, which Costello connects to the sublime. She points specifically to Bishop's 1938 Key West journal, saying, "She resists its vertical thrust, turning instead 'to all that bright, detailed *flatness*' of the immediate world. Yet the mountain is there 'at the back of my mind,' 'like recurring thoughts,' an obscure but magnetic force in experience."[93] Costello mentions the vertical movement in a poem like "The Armadillo," a later Brazilian poem, and concludes that Bishop follows a "characteristic movement: horizontal images of transience and mutability dominating over vertical images of permanence and stasis."[94] For Costello, Bishop uses horizontal and vertical perspectives to control what is in the foreground and to de-center "the beholder." A static, sublime image stands in contrast to impermanence and mutability. Douglas Basford also points to the contrast between horizontal and vertical perspectives in the "Burger of Babylon" and the "surprising topography of the city"[95] and of the favelas.

In an excellent chapter in Hicok's *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archives*, Charla Allyn Hughes details Bishop's first, extended encounter with mountains. Ten years before arriving in Brazil and moving to Samambaia, Bishop visited Brevard, North Carolina, staying in the mountain town in both the fall of 1940 and 1941. Bishop documents these sojourns in

[92] By the 1950s, her most highly anthologized poem was "The Fish," a figure that is compared to a war veteran.
[93] Costello, p. 91.
[94] *Ibid.,* p. 109.
[95] Douglas Basford, "The Burglar of the Tower of Babel," in *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive*, p. 214.

her 1938-42 travel journal, in which Hughes finds "unsettled moments" that match Bishop's contemporaneous correspondence with Vassar classmate Frani Muser and Marianne Moore.[96] Hughes identifies Bishop's description of "a landscape that appears to [Bishop] at first oppressive but later beautiful" and an encounter that gives her "a heightened sensitivity to verticality, flatness, and surface that is also present in her poems, especially in the Florida and New York poems she was working on during this period and shortly after."[97] Hughes notes that the change in place appears to have triggered homesickness, as Bishop mentions her Aunt Maude and reflects on her childhood in these journal entries,[98] which closely parallels her Brazil transition. The critic identifies "a processing of the past — especially of her childhood, shame, poverty, and trauma — and a conception of geography as simultaneously specific and composite, interwoven with multiple memories and times."[99] On Sable Island, Bishop found an objective correlative for a typically Nova Scotian expression. In contrast, her experience of the mountains recalls Lawrence Buell's description of place sense and the friction between places, within a single place, and within an individual situated in place.

Hughes finds lists of waterfalls, plants, and animals in the journals, which she attributes to "Bishop's process of familiarizing herself with the landscape and of memorializing this stopover and documenting material for future use."[100] Bishop continued this practice in her correspondence from Brazil, in which she describes her surroundings at length. In a letter to Marianne Moore dated 3 March 1952 that typifies her catalogues of Brazil, Bishop writes,

> Just a few minutes ago I found a hummingbird in the pantry—quite a big one, yellow and black. I got it out with an umbrella. There are such varieties of them—and now the

[96] Hughes, p. 151.
[97] *Ibid.,* p. 152.
[98] *Ibid.,* p. 156.
[99] *Ibid.,* p. 152.
[100] Hughes, p. 161.

> butterflies have come for the summer—some enormous, pale blue iridescent ones, in pairs… And I've never seen such moths… we're using oil lamps so of course we get thousands, and mice, and large black crabs like patent leather, and the biggest walking-stick bugs I've ever seen.[101]

One description overflows into the next as she endeavors to capture all of the excess and "impracticality" of her new home. Decades later, Bishop "… kept a journal of her weeks on North Haven, and reading the year-to-year entries, one sees her attraction to the changelessness of the place…. Several pages of the journal contain a running list of birds and wildflowers spotted on the island, and some record day-to-day developments in Elizabeth's health."[102] Millier remarks on the similarity to Bishop's Samambaia letters in their "concern with elemental matters"; however, like Hughes, I interpret this pattern of naming and counting as part of Bishop's process of mediating place.

In her often cited "Darwin letter" to Anne Stevenson dated January 1964, Bishop expresses her admiration for Darwin and

> the beautiful solid case being built up out of his endless heroic *observations*, almost unconscious or automatic—and then comes a sudden relaxation, a forgetful phrase, and one feels the strangeness of his undertaking, sees the lonely young man, his eyes fixed on facts and minute details, sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown. What one seems to want in art, in experiencing it, is the same thing that is necessary for its creation, a self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration.[103]

[101] *OA*, p. 238, letter from Bishop to Marianne Moore, 3 March, 1952.
[102] Millier, p. 496.
[103] From "The Darwin Letter" in *Pr*, p. 414.

In her journals and correspondence, Bishop conducts her own endless, heroic observations, and as Sophie Baldock remarks, "Several passages from Darwin's diary correspond to passages of 'Questions of Travel," particularly Darwin's depiction of Brazil as a fantastical space."[104] Baldock adds that the "anxiety in relation to the dangers of viewing Brazil as a fantasy is more clearly tied to themes of mastery over animals and landscapes and legacies of colonization. Travel and tourism are presented as yet another acquisitive, possessive, and even caging desire."[105] By contrast, "[c]areful observation… which paradoxically involves the accumulation of blurred and incomplete detail, goes some way to preserving a sense of freedom and vitality." She clarifies that "[w]here Darwin observes, Bishop questions."[106] Paired with her extensive research notes, Bishop's lists also build a case, and as with her Sable Island essay, she names and defines and, piece by piece, constructs a personal model of Brazil.

Like Costello, Hughes remarks on the Brevard journal entry that recounts the magnetic pull of the mountains; however, Hughes concludes that "the 'physical compulsion' the mountains create for Bishop is inescapable and alienating (and frustratingly repetitive), but their constant pull also drives her to the earth, an attention to the surface quite like that in 'Florida…,'"[107] a poem comprising a list of well-observed and ever-changing flora and fauna that dart from life to death across an enjambed line. The mountains of North Carolina provide a grounding force in Hughes's view, with a strong, gravitational pull unlike the lofty vertical motion toward the sublime that Costello invokes.[108] Both agree that the constant, domineering presence necessitated a poetic response and also prompted a perspectival shift and change in poetics, although Costello prioritizes movement whereas Hughes finds a new attention to

[104] Sophie Baldock, "Migrating Letters," in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*, p. 217.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 220.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[107] Baldock, p. 159.
[108] Hughes notes, "Bonnie Costello records 'loftiness' in the place of 'leafiness' (Elizabeth Bishop 89). While either term seems fitting here, Bishop uses 'leafiness' in her letter to Marianne Moore on September 11, 1940, when she implores her mentor to visit her in Key West…," p. 157.

earthiness and to delving "amongst the dirt and ferns but also amidst those parts of her past that are unpleasant — working below the surface to allow some traumas to rest."[109]

Despite Bishop's prior writing about mountains, her first attempts to compose poems about the Brazilian landscape began at a much larger scale. Slightly more than halfway through the Key West journal in which Bishop documented her voyage to Brazil, she writes, "Petropolis, Christmas, 1951" at the top of the page and "A Little About Brazil" below. The following entry is dated "Samambaia, Nov. 10th-Nov. 11th, 1952," which marks the end of her first year in Brazil. Instead of completing this journal, which subsequently contains erratic entries from 1953 and one from 1954, she began to draft poems in what is essentially a workbook — a composition book that belonged to Lota de Macedo Soares when she was a student.[110] The cover of the notebook, with its title and marketing message, are in Portuguese, and on the line for the name of the "Aluno" or "Student" is "Maria Carlota Costallat de Macedo Soares." The only English words belong to Bishop. The name of the school is crossed out with a single line and replaced with "BRAZIL Rio, Rainy Day, the Brazil one" and, below the line, "Unfinished poems."

Changing notebooks marks a symbolic passage into a Brazilian space. Bishop uses this composition book for her first Brazilian poems, as though some aspect or experience of the country can be gleaned from the stationery with its simple, lined pages, distinct from the ledger-like format of the Key West journal. The new compositions are drafted in a quintessentially Brazilian material context: a mass market student notebook, and Bishop begins at the exact moment she sets aside her shipboard journal — with a draft of a poem titled, "A Little About Brasil." Within these pages, she adopts the local spelling of the country rather than the Americanized version. The first observation is unexpected, however. Instead of describing the

[109] Hughes, p. 159.
[110] VCSC, f. 74.6.

flora or the landscape, she writes: "In Brazil, the men scratch themselves / fully and unselfconsciously, they scratch themselves." Once this is out of the way, she begins to write about St. George and St. Sebastian and the saints who protect the country. Four pages of drafting and cross-outs later, she notes, "[The quotations in this poem are from "BRAZIL" by Preston E. James…] with a complete reference, and she fills the page with phrases describing the parks, mountains, and beaches. These notes are entered as short, unfinished verses, with three to four lines grouped together and incomplete sentences, and she copies brief descriptions, such as, "'low rounded hills, shaped like half oranges' (all seen from the train)." The phrases are evocative, and as is typical of Bishop, she documents both the observation and the perspective. As with her Sable Island reading and research, she mediates place through her research, in this case adopting another writer's words and descriptions and juxtaposing them with her own.[111]

Bishop continues these varied precompositional sketches, first in short clusters scattered across a page and then in tidier, linear columns that continue, nonetheless, with crossed out phrases. Arrows indicate possible rearrangement. This work is not complete enough to be titled, but finally, halfway down the ninth page of this notebook, she draws a horizontal line that separates precompositional fragments from a named draft, titled "Rainy Day. Rio." It begins, "Mountains should really not protrude / in city streets and [] trees / at skyscapes, nor shall the seas / [] of the business-man. So rude / of nature not to go away / but hang around that wondrous bay."[112] The proper and chiding tone is humorous, but the mountain's insistent presence recalls the Brevard journal, "Every time I look at the mountains, I think of the expression, 'at the back of my mind.' This sensation they give is so strong that I feel a physical compulsion to turn my back…"[113] and then, with the mountains at her back, she

[111] This is consistent with Baldock's analysis of Bishop's incorporation of images from Darwin's Brazil journals in "Questions of Travel."
[112] A few words are difficult to read and are marked with brackets.
[113] Hughes, p. 159.

studies the flora instead. In this fragment, the mountains intrude on busy, human life, an ironic observation as the city was built within this landscape, and they emanate such forceful presence that Bishop grants them both agency and intent. The poem then reverses to welcome the intrusion, as the mountains draw the speaker's gaze toward the "wondrous" bay. As Costello and Hughes observe, the mountain draws Bishop's eye to the horizontal plane, but here the contrast is between man and nature rather than the vertical and horizontal: Nature demands her attention.

The precompositional texts in her notebook progressively narrow in both conceptual and geographic scope. Although Bishop begins with the modest introduction, "A Little about Brasil," she quickly reduces the geographic area to a city in "Rainy Day. Rio." After a few revisions of her Rio poem, she retitles it: "Rainy Day. ~~Rio de Janeiro~~ Copacabana" to only encompass the beach outside of de Macedo Soares' apartment. Brazil is clearly too large a starting point, and so she progressively confines the physical range of description. Bishop continues to work on this draft in her notebook for several pages with a few interruptions as she itemizes her poems and projects in progress, and then she begins a new, titled poem, called "Mountains Complain Continuously,"[114] which eventually becomes "The Mountain," the second poem Bishop published from Brazil.

From the first draft of this poem, the anthropomorphized "rude" mountains appear as an elderly, complaining chorus. On the first page of scratched out lines and notes, Bishop finds the refrain "I do not know my age," which appears twice on the page and is underlined both times. This refrain persists across drafts, but Bishop does not immediately find its counterpart. Instead, she experiments with several possibilities: "I cannot know my age," "Can I not know my age?" and at the bottom of the facing page of this first named draft, "Tell me how old I am!" In this initial precompositional text, Bishop mentions the "climbing lights," "stone

[114] VCSC, f. 74.6.

wings," "feathers hardening feathers," and "the claws are lost here" that remain in the final version. She alternates between "a slow-motion waterfall" and a "waterfall in slow motion" and also observes the "blue demarcations" and "tattoo" that are eventually reordered. While the mountains speak in these fragments, their presence is static and observed in a manner fairly typical for Bishop. However, she also begins to give the mountains senses, repeating, "I feel it, I feel it" and "I am deaf, I am deaf · bird songs dwindle," as the mountains discern something undefined, or perhaps they recognize a loss of perception from the first to final phrase. For a poet who famously insisted on the accuracy of her poems and on the biographical truth of her retellings, this poem turns unexpectedly towards the fantastic.

After this initial draft, Bishop continues her composition outside of this workbook,[115] in which the remaining few pages comprise crossed out verses and a grocery list. She handwrites the subsequent text, although she crosses out her original title, "Mountains Complain Continuously" with an "Always?" circled above it, suggesting "Mountains Always Complain" as an alternative. "The Mountains" is written in the upper, righthand corner and underlined three times. This version maintains the chorus of mountains, and Bishop composes quatrains with the alternating final lines, "I do not know my age" and "Tell me how old I am." The draft enters more deeply into the experience of a mountain, which physically reacts in the opening stanza: "I blench."

The next stanza further develops this startling movement: "In the morning it is different / an open book against me / too close to read in comfort / Tell me how old I am." Several words are struck through in these lines with alternatives written to the side, but this stanza resembles the final version. Not only can these mountains be surprised, but they can also read. Yet perception fails here for this elderly landmass, as the unnamed book is too close for easy decoding. A stanza follows that is unchanged in the final draft, although several quatrains

[115] VCSC, f. 57.5.

precede it in the published version: “I do not mean to complain. / They say it is my fault. / Nobody tells me anything. / Tell me how old I am.” Here the poem, which had begun as a monologue directed at an unnamed “you” who may be able to answer the question of age, introduces new figures: “They” and “Nobody” who are possibly the same, although this is unclear. The titular mountains who complain continuously make a sympathetic appeal. They are being blamed for — what? Not knowing their age? Their complaints? The first line of the quatrain eschews responsibility and then is followed by additional complaints and a demand. This draft is only partially complete, and the facing page mostly consists of strikethroughs, but a version of the closing lines appears: “Shall I [never][116] know my age? Tell me how old I am.”

The following page has no title and appears to be a continuation of this material. At the top of the page, the word “reasoning” sets the objective for the following stanzas. Bishop returns to the idea of deafness and the dwindling bird calls but crosses out many lines, including the frustrated, “How old can I possibly be?” Adding to the surreality of this character is the line “waterfalls / go unwiped” with a question in the margin of whether these are “lesser” waterfalls or not, as though that might alter the precision of the description of a waterfall as nasal drip. A line stating, “a child of ten might tell me? / Tell me how old I am” introduces yet another character into this short poem, but Bishop does not develop this specific human figure.

With these few quatrains established, Bishop turns to typed drafts. The first is labeled “Draft 2,” which contextualizes the composition notebook as precompositional material and the handwritten stanzas on separate paper as compositional text. As with the final draft, this version comprises nine quatrains that end simply: “I want to know my age. / Tell me how old I am.” Arrows mark possible rearrangement of the middle stanzas and a few strikethroughs and notes in the margin indicate line-level modifications. The most significant revision is to the title, which was originally entered as “THE MOUNTAINS,” but the “S” is crossed out, leaving

[116] Bishop’s handwriting is unclear here.

"THE MOUNTAIN." Subsequent drafts mostly comprise line edits and word substitutions as Bishop aims for precision. The sixth draft has the question "Very bad?" handwritten at the top. Despite her hesitation, she continues with Draft 7, in which the stanzas are numbered and rearranged for narrative effect. The eighth and ninth drafts are nearly identical. The former lists a single potential change in verb tense, and the final manuscript draft is a fair copy of draft eight without the change in tense. In both of these versions, Bishop underlines the alternating refrains "I do not know my age" and "Tell me how old I am." The penultimate quatrain has a small adjustment with the addition of "What is my age?" in the line above the expected "Tell me how old I am." The final stanza provides resolution by combining the alternating end lines at last: "I want to know my age. / Tell me how old I am" although the speaker's pleas are never answered.

Giragosian finds "The Mountain" to be "critically interesting when read in the context of geochronology, or the science of Earth time, whereby the earth is read as an archive."[117] In this reading, the poem is "an apostrophe for the human, an 'other' from the perspective of the speaker-mountain" who "seeks answers about its age and—by extrapolation—its identity." To her, the mountain wants to be perceived "accurately by the 'other,' a perspective we require in order to access even our own origins." With the explicit image of the mountain unable to read a text, Giragosian homes in on a theme of reading and misreading both self and environment. Given Bishop's relocation, the mountain's desire to be known could be substituted for Bishop's personal biography. However, with part of the Earth itself speaking, Giragosian asserts, "we are within the territory of a mountain consciousness, one which destabilizes anthropocentric thinking,"[118] and the "singular, generic mountain" has a "totemic quality, as if the mountain speaks for the Earth itself." From this geopoetic and geochronologic perspective, "all

[117] Giragosian, p. 239.
[118] Giragosian, p. 240.

organisms are interdependent, so much so that introducing a change in a system or even a single organism can affect all."[119] This notion of geochronology or of deep time is compelling and supported by analysis of Bishop's compositional texts in which she consistently underlines verses about age. Nevertheless, the poem seems less concerned with the phenomenology of a mountain or of an accurate representation of a mountain's experience than with its imagined personality.

Travisano's reading by contrast prioritizes the speaker's voice: "Bishop comically dramatizes the inner emotional life of just such an impractical and even self-pitying mountain," and the speaker, "expresses a partly comic geologic crisis of identity."[120] Part of the poem's elusiveness, or its elliptical nature to use Bishop's term, is the difficulty in ascertaining tone. The idea of a mountain complaining is comical, and certain descriptions seem humorous, such as, "The waterfalls / go unwiped." Yet at other moments, the voice sounds both feeble and pathetic. From the beginning of the compositional process, the central concern is, obviously, one of age and an urge to be quantified in some way. Herbert Marks interprets this as part of Bishop's "determination to synchronize past and present… where traumatic memory finds formal expression in the oscillation of alternative refrains."[121] This compulsion to quantify seems like a response to all of the vagueness that Bishop repeatedly notes about Brazil during her early years there. As she mentions in her letters and in "Arrival at Santos," these mountains are "impractical" and something about them strikes her as "self-pitying" or "complaining." Their presence intrudes.

"The Mountain" differs from previous poems in a significant way: in addition to composing a dramatic monologue from the perspective of an inanimate object, Bishop changes

[119] *Ibid.,* p. 241.
[120] Travisano, *Love Unknown: The Life and Worlds of Elizabeth Bishop* (New York: Penguin, 2019), p. 226.
[121] Herbert Marks, "Elizabeth Bishop's Art of Memory," in *Mémoires Perdues, Mémoires Vives*, eds. Carle Bonafous-Murat, André Topia, and Marie-Christine Lemardeley, Monde Anglophone (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2018), pp. 147–76, accessed 15 January 2020, http://books.openedition.org/psn/7636.

her use of scale. In earlier work, Bishop examined objects in minute detail, to the extent that in a poem like "The Fish," the reader suddenly enters the object and observes it from within. While early precompositional material encompassed "A Little About Brasil," Bishop progressively limited geographic scope and instead distinguished one element of the landscape, an idiosyncratic individual rather than a symbol of Earth. Despite some comic descriptions, the voice often sounds querulous, an absurd rendering of a monumental object. Bishop responds to the impracticality and excess of Brazil with absurdity, which is established in the opening images of a startled mountain who struggles to read. The tone, though interrupted with humorous moments, is predominantly harsh and sad from the line, "staggeringly halt and burn" to "They say it is my fault. / Nobody tells me anything." Even children are addressed mournfully, as they "never stay long enough." Fossilizing feathers succeed these ephemeral children, juxtaposing transitory and deep time. These leaps between timeframes magnify the mountain's desire to know its own age. Bishop may have set geographic limits, but her poetics changed to accommodate greater physical and temporal scales.

After completing this poem, Bishop turned to work nearly exclusively on prose in her short stories, her essay attempts, and her translation of *The Diary of Helena Morley*. While she mentioned working on poems in her correspondence, she did not publish another until "Squatter's Children" in 1955, the same year that *A Cold Spring* was finally published. This moment marks a clear end to her transitional period. She was freed from the burdensome obligation of completing her second poetry collection and had, at long last, written about her childhood. She had enumerated the excesses of Brazil in her letters and developed approaches to write about Brazil despite uncertainty regarding her place within it. By using precompositional materials from Sable Island to produce new compositions in Brazil and attempting to situate a place that eluded her, Bishop applied familiar techniques to new

circumstances. She also narrowed the geographic scope of her writing while experimenting with scale and voice, which resulted in a shift in her poetics.

As Bishop entered one of the most productive periods of her life, she maintained this geographic restraint as she proceeded to broaden the types of subject matter and voices she incorporated into her poetic compositions. Ashley Brown notes that "'Manuelzinho' and 'Squatter's Children,' which were both written around the same time as "Questions of Travel,' are about people who might be found on the hillside leading to 'Samambaia'"[122] and adds that these three poems follow in *Questions of Travel*, after the opening "tourist" poems. Bishop continued the pattern that Hughes found in the Brevard journal: after an initial focus on the landscape in her entries, she makes a "turn to the people."[123] Yet she did not travel far for these poems; Bishop stays on her mountain, fixed within the interior.

[122] Ashley Brown, "Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil," in *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art*, eds. Lloyd Schwartz and Sybil P. Estess, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1983), pp. 232-233.
[123] Hughes, p. 161.

4. Prose as Poetic Precomposition

Bishop had exacting standards for her work and published relatively few poems during her lifetime. After her death, the sheer volume of her prose writing came as a surprise. Although she published both original prose and translations during her lifetime, these pieces were often viewed as exceptions within the greater context of her poetic career. The publication of several volumes of her correspondence and her collected *Prose* has corrected this impression, and her archive contains many more "unsuccessful" pieces that were either rejected or left unfinished. In this chapter, I argue that Bishop's prose writing represents the periods of poetic "instability" between the "plateaus of equilibrium" that Piaget describes,[1] and that when considering manuscript drafts as "objects to think with,"[2] compositional failures can be as revealing as successes. Bishop's prose writing filled the transitional periods during which changes to her poetics developed, and the shift in genre provided opportunities for experimentation. In fact, her prose efforts, even when they reached prepublication and publication stages, often acted as precompositional texts for her poetry, as Bishop identified themes and refined techniques that she later incorporated into her poetic compositions.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, prior to her arrival in Brazil, Bishop planned to write a travel essay for *The New Yorker* about Sable Island but failed to complete it. Instead, she composed short stories about her childhood in Nova Scotia. Aside from "Arrival at Santos," a tourist poem, she did not immediately find a voice or vantage point through which she could engage with Brazil. At the end of this period of short story writing, she began to compose poems set in and around Samambaia, an area that had become deeply familiar to her. She followed stories of her childhood home with poems set in her new home. Then, once again,

[1] Ackermann, p. 8.
[2] Papert, p. 182.

Bishop paused in her poetic compositions. Instead, she began to translate *Minha Vida de Menina*, or *The Diary of "Helena Morley*," and in 1958, proposed her first travel essay about Brazil to *The New Yorker*, revealing a new confidence in writing about her adopted home.

In her correspondence with her editors and in her exchanges with Robert Lowell and other friends, Bishop described plans to complete a book of short stories as well as a collection of travel essays.[3] Although she published lightly fictionalized memoirs, she never completed enough stories or essays to collect into a finished book, and the travel essay form eluded her. Despite her inability to complete and sell many of these pieces, Bishop's prose efforts served as a critical step in her ability to write about Brazil directly, without an ironic tone or mediating persona. Oftentimes, Bishop captures Brazil more effectively in prose than in her early poetic compositions, even when she struggles to sustain a narrative arc. While the lack of narrative in Bishop's prose has been observed in criticism, this stagnation had the counter-intuitive benefit of allowing her to dwell in the locations she attempted to describe and to engage them through the direct, first-person voice that appears in later poems. Bishop's prose experiments thus let her write about place in a more direct manner, and she regularly returned to prose when she could not move forward poetically.

Although Bishop translated poems, short fiction, and a memoir and was commissioned to write a nonfiction book about Brazil, in this chapter, I focus on a selection of original prose works that she composed during three separate moments of poetic instability. While some of these stories and essays may have "failed" from a literary standpoint, Bishop cultivated techniques and themes that she developed in subsequent, "successful" poetic compositions, making prose a transitional medium for her poetry.

[3] Bishop mentioned the possibility of a prose collection many times. The following selection of letters illustrates how long she considered it and how often she discussed this, but this is not a comprehensive set of correspondence: Bishop to Katherine White, 18 July 1953, p. 114 and Bishop to Howard Moss, 8 September 1966, p. 291 in *EBNY*; Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 10 December 1952, p. 251 and Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 3 April 1953, p. 259 in *OA*; Bishop to Robert Lowell, 28 July 1953, p. 141 and Bishop to Lowell, 22 January 1962, p. 384 in *WIA*.

"Gwendolyn" and "In the Village" were written in 1952 during the first of these "unstable" periods, when Bishop could not yet engage with her new home poetically. Although she was deeply frustrated with what she considered to be an overly fussy editorial process for "In the Village," afterwards she began to identify differences between "prose" and "prose-poetry" and treated them as separate genres. She started to consider questions of character and timing in new ways, which she applied to her poetry, marking a change in her poetics.

In 1958 she composed "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians" during a second poetically "fallow" period in Brazil. Bishop did not have a poem accepted by *The New Yorker* between the fall of 1956 and the summer of 1959, and once again, she returned to prose. In an effort to define Brazil's "true" interior, she portrays two opposing views of Brazil through the aestheticization of landscape. Consequently, Bishop had to find a way in which she could establish her authority on the subject despite her ambiguous status as both foreigner and dweller. "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians" failed narratively, but in the essay, Bishop wrote about Brazil directly, eventually repurposing lines and themes from this essay in the poems that she composed immediately afterward, including "The Riverman" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502," once again demonstrating how prose provided an entry point to Bishop's poetry.

Finally, in 1967, Bishop attempted two different treatments of the travel narrative genre: "A Trip to Vigia" and the unfinished "A Trip on the Rio São Francisco." These essays were composed after the publication of *Questions of Travel*, when Bishop's idyllic Brazilian life had completely collapsed. Both pieces recount short journeys; however, the former prioritizes experiential accuracy through storytelling whereas the latter is a factual essay. Bishop's consideration of the intersections of modernity and indigeneity in the Aldous Huxley essay and of nature and society in "Vigia" served as precursors to "The Riverman" and "Santarém," which are discussed in the next chapter.

4.1 A Poet's Prose

In October 1958, Bill Maxwell, an editor at *The New Yorker*, wrote to Bishop, "The prose of poets is the only kind that gives me intense pleasure."[4] In his study *Elizabeth Bishop's Prosaic*, Vidyan Rivinthiran identifies poetic elements in Bishop's prose writing that showcase why this might be, going so far as to scan extracts of prose ranging from her stories to correspondence to show her use of rhythm and meter. He demonstrates that Bishop had so thoroughly mastered poetic meter that it often slipped into her prose, even in her correspondence.[5] Maxwell is undoubtedly right to respond to the poet's close attention to sound and line level details, yet Bishop was unable to translate other commonly used poetic techniques into prose. In her poetry, Bishop often generates tension by juxtaposing temporal elements or surprising observations, and she achieves similar effects in her stories and correspondence. However, she approaches her essays differently by trying to make these connections explicit, so that her formal prose does not usually leap between subjects and contexts (although she is most successful when she allows herself to do this).

In many ways, Bishop established herself as a prose writer prior to her poetic development and later returned to prose with a poet's sensibility. She first began to write short stories in her childhood and co-founded a newspaper at Vassar after she and her friends were rejected from the established college paper. Her literary analysis for her coursework was remarkably astute, but she later avoided formal criticism and was deeply skeptical of academic writing about poetry.[6] Victoria Harrison provides a thorough accounting of Bishop's prose efforts in Brazil. Notably, Bishop began to compose her memoirs upon graduation from Vassar, and she "seems not to have picked them up again until the early 1950s, when, having apparently brought them with her to Brazil, she reworked episode after episode in her stories 'Gwendolyn

[4] *EBNY*, p. 203.
[5] Vidyan Ravinthiran, *Elizabeth Bishop's Prosaic* (Lewisburg, OH: Bucknell University Press, 2015).
[6] Lloyd Schwartz, "Editor's Note," *Pr*, p. viii.

and 'In the Village.'"[7] Harrison links several of Bishop's "Elsewhere" poems from her collection *Questions of Travel* to these memoirs as well: ""Manners" (1955), about her grandfather, "Sestina" (1956), about her grandmother, and "First Death in Nova Scotia" (1962)."[8] While she may have paused work on these childhood memoirs, Bishop continued to compose short fiction during the years between her college graduation and her move to Brazil. In 1948, her short stories "The Farmer's Children" and "The Housekeeper" were published respectively by *Harper's Bazaar* and *The New Yorker*,[9] but she mostly focused on developing her poetic voice and career.

"Gwendolyn" marks the first piece of prose that she sent to *The New Yorker* in nearly ten years and the first that they published in her name. "In the Village" is widely recognized as Bishop's most successful story and was the one that she liked most, as well, and she included it in the original publication of *Questions of Travel* as an interstitial piece between the "Brazil" and "Elsewhere" poems. Bishop's placement of the story mirrors her compositional process, with prose serving as an intermediary between distinct sets of poems. Bishop's early success with these short stories prompted her to continue to suggest and send prose compositions to *The New Yorker*. Despite her history of incomplete and unsuccessful travel essays, Bishop even hoped to publish a prose collection.

In the introductory pages of *Prose*, Lloyd Schwartz includes a facsimile of a possible table of contents for this hypothetical book: "IN THE VILLAGE & OTHER STORIES" with "Stories & Essays?"[10] handwritten above it. David Kalstone describes Bishop's intended book of travel essays as "a book about fresh starts, where the air is one of expectation" and in the list

[7] Victoria Harrison, *Elizabeth Bishop's Poetics of Intimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 108.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.
[9] Bishop's five-page story "The Housekeeper" was accepted by *The New Yorker* in 1944, but it was not published until the acquiring editor retired and Katharine White found and connected it to Bishop. The story was published on 11 September 1948 under the name "Sarah Foster" (Bishop used her grandmother's name). See *EBNY*, p. ix and 29; *Pr*, p. 491.
[10] *Pr*, p. 2.

of potential prose pieces includes her 1960 trip to the Amazon, a 1967 trip down the Rio São Francisco, and "A Trip to Vigia," among others. He characterizes these pieces as demonstrating her "settled/unsettled experience in Brazil."[11] Indeed, travel essays are, by their nature, about orientation and disorientation and usually result in some form of realization or synthesis that bridges cultures or identities. The essay writer comes to understand something about the visited place or herself. But as with many of her poems, Bishop's essays rarely reach a resolution, and combined with her difficulties in balancing information and experience, this produces unsatisfying narratives. Yet, when Bishop applies this same poetic impulse to short fiction, she can create a feeling of closure through resonance. Composing these different types of prose let Bishop refine her poetic techniques, which she later incorporated into new poetic compositions, by testing them in new contexts.

4.2 The narrative thread "seems to break entirely"

As discussed in Chapter Two, Bishop arrived in Brazil with the intention of finishing the Sable Island essay; however, her true return to prose occurred during the "unstable" moment after she had decided to stay in Brazil indefinitely but had not yet found a way to write about it. Although Bishop was a precociously talented prose writer, when she returned to writing formal prose in Brazil, she did so as a mature poet, and she often searched for an effective balance between poetic and prosaic approaches in her compositions. The editorial process with *The New Yorker* magazine, despite frustrating Bishop deeply, forced her to articulate her artistic intentions and revision choices, especially as she resisted several of the initial editorial remarks. Ravinthiran, like many Bishop scholars, champions her abilities as both poet and prose writer and disagrees with many of Katherine White's editorial comments on "In the Village," claiming that "White and her editors simply could not understand that Bishop had already

[11] Kalstone, pp. 228-229.

thought deeply about prose—about style, characterization, and the utility of the realist code."[12] He somewhat facetiously adds that *The New Yorker* editors "may also have hypnotized Bishop into the belief that fiction really did have to be this way."[13]

In fact, while *The New Yorker* tended to be conservative in both style and tone, they gave Bishop an unusual level of stylistic freedom for "In the Village." Two years after the grueling editorial process that I discuss below, Bishop wrote to Kit and Ilse Barker:

> I am really getting interested in what I now think is the Art of story writing. I just wrote off some prose-poetry from time to time before. I'm afraid "In the Village" is pretty much that, too — but now I am taking it more seriously and thinking about *people*, balancing this with that, time, etc. — and I'm hoping whatever I write will be a little less precious and "sensitive," etc., in the future."[14]

After revising two short stories under Katharine White's editorial direction, Bishop began to differentiate between her hybrid form of "poetic prose" composition and "story writing." Bishop could compose engaging, syntactically interesting descriptions in poetry, prose, and prose poetry; however, she also had to consider characterization, situating the reader, and timing in new ways in her short stories. She had studied the latter element since her undergraduate years at Vassar and had developed techniques for timing in poetry, but in 1952 she had yet to translate this into literary prose.

Of all of Bishop's original prose works, "In the Village" stands out as her most polished and experimental. She first mentioned it in passing to Katharine White on 12 September 1952, when she sent "Gwendolyn" and said that the enclosed story, "is the first I've finished of three

[12] Ravinthiran, p. 128.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[14] *OA*, p. 272, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 5 September 1953.

or four Nova Scotian ones — the second will be along in a few days."[15] Nearly a month later she sent "In the Village," along with her famous note about the mysteriousness of geography.[16] She closes the letter with an observation about the seasons and her belief that "as well as being opposite, run the other way around, but I haven't been able to think through it yet." She states that writing these stories makes her "slightly homesick for the other side of the Equator, but not too much."[17] The two stories were composed close to the first anniversary of Bishop's arrival in Brazil, and although she had lived in Brazil for nearly a year, she was clearly still trying to understand her new home and continued to be charmed by every surprise and oddity. As a sometimes surrealist writer, Bishop was stimulated by strangeness, but she also expressed surprise at her productivity under such happy circumstances.[18] While the Sable Island essay may have been prompted by an unsettled and rather desperate desire for a fresh project, personal and poetic instability did not necessarily coincide.

Although "Gwendolyn" and "In the Village" were composed in quick succession, Bishop first sent what she considered to be the weaker manuscript to White at *The New Yorker*, as was typical for her. In the letters to White that accompanied these stories, Bishop preemptively offered reasons to reject them: they are too "morbid," "gloomy," or "impressionistic,"[19] a sharp contrast to her current situation in Samambaia. White acquired "Gwendolyn" within a month with one required revision for the sake of propriety — Bishop had described a child's soiled undergarments, which was deemed too crude and tonally inconsistent — and offered a few smaller suggestions. She complimented Bishop's prose, her choice of details, and the overall tone (aside from the "functional reference"[20]). In her

[15] *EBNY*, p. 83, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 12 September 1952.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 85, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 10 October 1952.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *OA,* p. 249, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 12 October 1952.
[19] *EBNY*, pp. 83, 85, letters from Bishop to Katharine White, 12 September 1952 and 10 October 1952.
[20] *OA*, p. 255. In a letter to Pearl Kazin, 10 February 1953, Bishop expresses her exasperation over the polite squeamishness of *The New Yorker*: "I'm sure Lota makes a functional reference every time she opens her mouth and so do most of the people I know here…"

acceptance of the main editorial request, Bishop explained that while she had considered the issues that White had raised regarding the child's uncleanliness, she was "not 'creative enough'" to change what had happened during the drafting process and had to "go on and give every last detail."[21] This failure of restraint recurred in Bishop's later travel essays, as well, diverging from her characteristic reticence. In fact, her essays more closely resemble early compositional drafts of poetry, for example the first draft of "One Art," in which she records every idea before shaping the text into a poem, and as in her poetry, Bishop asserts the literality of her imagination.[22]

Bishop swiftly accepted White's required revision, but she rejected a smaller request to immediately situate the reader in Nova Scotia, saying,

> I do mention Nova Scotia after three short paragraphs — and I do feel a reader should be able to wait that long… I think the convention of situating everything clearly and immediately can get to be boring, make the reader lazy, or else think, oh heavens, here we go again on another of those childhood reminiscences instead of troubling to absorb the real atmosphere first.[23]

Bishop's response to White's editorial letter reveals her priorities as a writer and explains her desired effect, which is to compel the reader to engage with place as she describes it. If she were to state the location as "Great Village, Nova Scotia," the reader would approach the text with certain expectations and assumptions of the place and of the story itself. By withholding the name, she retains greater control over the tone and the reader's experience. In "Gwendolyn," although she does not begin by naming the setting, she immediately situates the

[21] *EBNY*, p. 88, letter from Bishop to Katherine White, 25 October 1952.
[22] *OA*, p. 290, letter from Bishop to Ilse and Kit Barker, "25th or 6th" February 1954.
[23] *EBNY*, p. 89, letter from Bishop to Katherine White, 25 October 1952.

reader in a specific place and moment through a detailed description of a newly discovered doll, her wardrobe, and her nearly magical old costumes, worn as they are. Although expressed in standard prose, the description is typical of Bishop, with her strict control of perspective, close observations, and surprising realizations as the child closely examines each of these objects.

The above explanation to White also reveals one of Bishop's principal fears, which is of having these stories from childhood read as bathetic recollections overloaded with sentimentality. This echoes Bishop's response to her own poetic compositions as well as to confessional poetry as a genre, as she abhorred excessive sentimentality and writing that excited a reaction through self-disclosure or sensationalism rather than through artistry. Bishop's semi-autobiographical short stories have been difficult to categorize in part because they are often portrayals of childhood events and memories with a few changed names and slight temporal shifts for the purpose of pacing. Thomas Travisano notes that:

> while Bishop sometimes altered or suppressed an individual's true name, every figure in Bishop's writings about this early period may be traced to an actual person. She herself acknowledged that while she condensed the timing and rearranged events to better serve the narrative, her landmark autobiographical story "In the Village" was mostly factual."[24]

Vidyan Ravinthiran calls this style of writing a "biographical memoir,"[25] or "memoir-fictions,"[26] both of which accurately describe these works. However, Bishop tried to distance herself from the idea of memoir or reminiscence. Both Bishop and White agreed that the

[24] Travisano, *Love Unknown*, p. 24.
[25] Ravinthiran, *Elizabeth Bishop's Prosaic*, p. 147.
[26] Vidyan Ravinthiran, "Prose" in *Elizabeth Bishop in Context*, p. 189.

difference between story and memoir lies in tone. The pieces are effective due to their unsentimentally and immediacy, both of which are antithetical to the nostalgia typical of the "childhood reminiscences" popular at the time. White says that Bishop's pieces "are and should be short stories — not reminiscences,"[27] and clarifies that she had suggested naming the setting for the reader at the start because she mentions Boston in the opening, which confuses the issue of place. If a specific city hadn't been named in the first sentence, waiting to introduce Nova Scotia would have been acceptable, even preferred for the tonal reasons that Bishop lists, but jumping from one location to another within a few paragraphs provokes unnecessary confusion for the reader. For White, a small adjustment would lead to greater clarity and therefore accuracy in the reader's mind, which coincided with Bishop's poetic values, except Bishop latched onto the idea that *The New Yorker* valued simplistic placement over the experience of place.

Although Bishop successfully translated her famous eye across genres, "Gwendolyn" follows a fairly standard, episodic structure, and while competently written, especially at the sentence level, she often dismissed the piece, which was uncharacteristically precious despite its serious tone. "In the Village," by contrast, was written in what Bishop called "poetic prose," and the impressionistic style of the original work presented significant editorial challenges in balancing clarity with style. Ravinthiran compares Bishop's "lament that 'In the Village' is 'just poetic prose,'" to her "remark about her 'literal imagination,' how she has 'just stuck a few years together'—this doesn't sound 'poetic' at all, more reportorial."[28] He also cites a letter from Bishop to Robert Lowell in which she claims it is "almost impossible not to tell the truth in poetry, I think, but in prose it keeps eluding one in the funniest way."[29] While Ravinthiran identifies an "overstructured quality"[30] in Bishop's efforts at "biographical memoir," he also

[27] *EBNY*, p. 91, letter from Katherine White to Bishop, 10 November 1952.
[28] Ravinthiran, *Elizabeth Bishop's Prosaic*, pp. 127-128.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[30] *Ibid*., p. 147.

finds Bishop to be overly dismissive in her description of "In the Village" as "just" any kind of prose.

Contrary to claims that *The New Yorker* simply did not understand Bishop's approach to this hybrid style of writing, White establishes in her first response to "In the Village" that *The New Yorker* editors in fact liked it "*even better* than "Gwendolyn"; but it does arouse some confusion. It must be kept poetic and I hope I can persuade you that it can be just that but can also be a little less puzzling in a few respects."[31] The imperative of "must be kept poetic" shows that White understands the strengths of the piece and that she does not want to lose its poetic qualities, simply to clarify a few passages. In her request for a revision, White adds, "We all of us like its poetic quality and we all of us are *for* the story, if we can persuade you to clarify and strengthen the thread of narrative that it is strung on. In one or two places this thread is so thin that it seems to break entirely."[32] This harsh assessment might explain Bishop's defensiveness and resistance to White's feedback, but this problem of a thin narrative thread followed Bishop through both her prose and her longer poetic works, such as "Santarém" and "The Moose."

In *Remembering Elizabeth Bishop: An Oral Biography*, Frank Bidart recounts seeing an unfinished draft of "The Moose" shortly before Bishop planned to read it at the Phi Beta Kappa ceremony at Harvard in 1972. He compares the poem to the unfinished Death Star in *Return of the Jedi*, saying:

> There's the sphere, but there are all these gaps and holes in the sphere as it hangs in the air. Elizabeth's stanzas were like that. She could have the first line. She would have the last line. She'd have maybe two lines near the end and maybe even several phrases in the middle, but not quite enough to make the rhymes and the lines come together. What

[31] *EBNY*, p. 92, letter from Katherine White to Bishop, 10 November 1952.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 12 November 1952.

> she needed was an audience to lead through the narrative line of the poem… having to talk out what the stanzas filled with gaps needed to accomplish within the narrative frame, she filled the gaps.[33]

Bidart's description recalls Robert Lowell's often cited sonnet for Bishop, with the lines: "… Do / you still hang your words in air, ten years / unfinished, glued to your notice boards, with gaps / or empties for the unimaginable phrase —"[34] except here, the gaps result from broken narrative threads rather than phrases that have not yet materialized: a split between images and narrative. "In the Village" exhibited a similar technical issue in which Bishop needed the help of an external reader to distinguish necessary connections from compelling juxtapositions.

White further explains in her editorial letter for "In the Village" that "it is reasonable and right that the little girl's mind be centered on what happens, what she sees, but the author is not limited to her point of view."[35] Bishop had clearly mastered split perspective in her poetry but had not quite managed to fully utilize the space between character and authorial voices in her short story, possibly because the perspective was of her child self. White does praise Bishop's "sense of the richness, not to say splendor, that is found in commonplace objects"[36] and "the miniature world" evoked by the child's perspective, which Bishop conveys in both her poetry and prose. It is not surprising that Bishop composed "Sestina" not long after *The New Yorker* published "In the Village" with the memorable set of objects and the rapidly shifting perspectives. Finally, White concludes that "[o]ne does not have to understand *everything* of course, but one ought not to be so constantly puzzled that one keeps thinking about the puzzle rather than about your words and your beautiful poetic and emotional

[33] Gary Fountain and Peter Brazeau, *Remembering Elizabeth Bishop: An Oral Biography* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), p. 291.
[34] Robert Lowell, "For Elizabeth Bishop 4," in *WIA*, p. vii.
[35] *EBNY*, p. 95, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 12 November 1952.
[36] *EBNY*, p. 95.

effects."[37] Again, White accepts ambiguity and a certain amount of mystery, but as with "Gwendolyn," she wants to direct the reader's attention towards Bishop's evocative language, tone, and description by eliminating what she considered to be irrelevant questions of situation, speaker, and perspective.

Bishop's initial response and minimal revisions frustrated White, who then attempted to revise the story herself. Her efforts, like Marianne Moore's changes to Bishop's poem "Roosters," made the piece worse. White acknowledged this but remained convinced that they could find a balance between clarity and style. Bishop offered a polite response to White and then turned to her friends in her correspondence to express her deep frustration with White specifically and *The New Yorker* more generally. In a letter to Pearl Kazin, Bishop complains, "They really do want it, but I refuse to put in enough 'he saids' and 'she saids' and 'it was 4 p.m., a very hot summer, August 16, 1917, Great Village, Nova Scotia, and my father's name was William Thomas Bishop''s.,"[38] repeating her annoyance with the "Gwendolyn" revision. And yet even in this derisive depiction of the editorial notes, Bishop retains her sense of fairness and adds, "But still some of their editorializing *is* good. The places they pick on to criticize are usually the right places, only they suggest the wrong changes."[39] She concludes that the revision suggestions are "like newspaper writing a little,"[40] linking literary fiction with the style of reportage one might employ in a travel essay. Her reactions in these letters typify the performative complaints that one sends to friends, especially to artist friends: a series of hyperbolic statements spun from a minor but unshakeable grievance. Between her attachment to this short story, which she rightfully recognizes as her best, and her misreading of White's critique, Bishop could not move forward with this piece, despite having accurately diagnosed

[37] *Ibid*., p. 96.
[38] *OA*, p. 254, letter from Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 10 February 1953.
[39] *Ibid*.
[40] *Ibid*.

the central problem: White's assessment was correct; however, the proposed solutions were not.

Time gave Bishop enough distance from what she had written to recognize that some of these changes might actually be necessary. Two months later, she wrote to Ilse and Kit Barker again, saying, "I have just re-read my story and I guess I won't send it after all. I've let it rest for two months now and I see a lot of little changes…"[41] She does, however, continue to describe "In the Village" as her "best story" and in a mix of humor and exasperation with the revision process laments that "one tires of typing even a masterpiece."[42] Finally, an additional four months later, she completed her revision and sent it to White with the following note: "I let it rest for six months then re-did it, and I really think that now it is as clear as such a piece of what I'm afraid is 'poetic-prose' could ever be… I think most of your objections were justified and that I've improved it a lot."[43] This statement can be read as capitulation; however, Bishop does not uncritically accept every editorial remark. Where she strongly believes in her approach, she retains it. For example, she states that the "conversation is paragraphed and attributed more conventionally. I *have* kept the frequent paragraphing where it was done for rhythmic effect, though."[44] While Bishop is willing to yield on clarifying speakers, voices, and situation, she preserves the hybrid quality of her poetic prose and uses line breaks to pace the prose as she might use enjambment in poetry. Ultimately, Bishop did exactly what White had suggested in her initial letter, and with the major points of confusion clarified, White "simply canceled out all the millions of conventional punctuation and style-rule and clarity queries"[45] and overrode the style department. She told Bishop that her "argument about not getting it

[41] *OA*, p. 260, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, "Good Friday" 1953.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 268, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 15 July 1953.
[43] *EBNY*, p. 113, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 18 July 1953.
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid.,* p. 120, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 20 November 1953.

further corrected in the normal way was that the story was really like a poem and therefore had every right to be unconventional in small matters of punctuation, usage, repetitions, etc."[46]

Once these two short stories were completed and published, Bishop continued to work on stories, poems, and, of course, the Sable Island essay. Meanwhile, she also began to reflect on differences between stories and poems and her own compositional process. When corresponding again with the Barkers about her experience with *The New Yorker's* fiction editors, she said, "I'm not really a story writer, you know — never meant to be at all. Writing stories is just much better for one, when one can't write poems, than dissipation, say."[47] Considering Bishop's many other letters in which she expresses her aspirations as a prose writer with both a short story collection and a book of travel essays, the "never meant to be" appears to be an expression of her feelings at that moment and not of her overall ambition. Still, she recognizes that prose is a productive way to occupy herself when she cannot find her way in poetry. Given her difficulties in finding an authentic approach to writing about Brazil, she repeatedly returned to it.

4.3 Juxtaposition in Prose

In order to resolve the problems of character, clarity, and situation that White had raised, Bishop adapted some of her poetic techniques to prose. Thus, in addition to filling time, shifting between poetry and prose allowed Bishop to "cross pollinate" between forms, much in the way that when moving between Brazil and Nova Scotia, she used one place to access the other. Genre changes, after all, provide formal disorientation. As described in the previous section, "In the Village" differs from many of Bishop's other prose works because of its impressionism and poetic language. Ravinthiran provides an excellent analysis of the famous opening of "In

[46] *Ibid*.
[47] *OA*, p. 285, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 5 February 1954.

the Village," with the self-correction in the first line, repetition of phrases and of the "o" sound, and the constant revision of the scream itself — what it sounds like, when it happens, and who can hear it. He also comments on Bishop's use of time, noting that her "memoir-fictions… move back and forth in time–but the effect she describes is never so precisely replicated as in this passage on Brazilian football.[48]" The passage he mentions is a brief description that appears in the book on Brazil that she wrote for *Time Life* about the Sunday afternoon football games played in every village. Within a few short lines and with masterful changes in verb tenses, Bishop portrays a lively scene that shifts from an ongoing weekly occurrence to the present moment. But, as I will show below, Bishop exhibits a similarly deft control of time in "In the Village."

Initially, "In the Village" had been titled "Clothes. Food. Animals." but Bishop decided this was too "chichi."[49] Nevertheless, the working title gives a sense of Bishop's approach to the story as a series of discrete moments that constitute a larger experience, resembling a musical score that is broken into three separate movements. The series of nouns separated by periods offers a sense of stasis, like a "pure note: pure and angelic"[50] existing both outside of time and within it: co-existing, but not necessarily causal as in a narrative where decisions lead to consequences. In identifying the poetic elements of "In the Village," Dawn Watson lists parataxis, use of white space, and rhythm along with Bishop's use of sound repetitions such as sibilance. She argues that these poetic elements unite the past and present, creating a convergence between Bishop's child and adult perspectives[51] — a difference that White considered to be underutilized in the first draft of "In the Village" that she read. Watson also suggests that the linearity of the prose form and the need to follow a timeline appears to unlock

[48] Ravinthiran, "Prose," p. 189.
[49] *OA*, p. 249, letter from Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 12 October 1952.
[50] *Pr*, p. 63.
[51] From a presentation given by Dawn Watson on "In the Village" at the "Apparently Personal Poetry: Elizabeth Bishop and Biography" Symposium at Rothermere American Institute, Oxford University, 10 June 2022.

Bishop's childhood memories, as both memory and prose fiction are recounted through similar narrative structures.

These readings of "In the Village" are compelling, and in addition to the poetic devices that Watson lists, Bishop incorporates her typical self-corrections and the dizzying perspectives that characterize her early surrealist poems. The first paragraph is strange and interesting not for the scream so much as for the ever-changing context surrounding it. At first the scream "hangs over that Nova Scotian village" — but which one? Does the word "that" suggest a hand pointing to a specific village, perhaps on a map, or does "that" refer to something the reader should know, such as a defining, past event? The story continues, "No one hears it," which is peculiar. Is a scream still a scream without an audience? Then some "travellers" appear, who are the first people (rather than signs of people) to be mentioned. But these figures compare the Nova Scotian skies to those of Switzerland and do not belong to this place, wherever it may be. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bishop often invoked the "vagueness" of Brazil, and that indeterminacy is transferred here, to this unnamed Nova Scotian village. The constantly shifting focus is disorienting – an effect that is exacerbated by the lack of characters. Finally, in the second to last sentence comes the possessive "my" in "my village." The accumulation of impressions begins to consolidate around this small word. "That" village is "my" village. But this momentary stability collapses as the perspective immediately flips to the second person: "Flick the lightning rod on top of the church steeple with your fingernail and you will hear it." Suddenly, the reader is pulled into the scene, and in surreal twist, appears to be a giant looking down on a miniature town.

"In the Village" unfolds in thirteen sections of varying lengths, and while several depict short scenes or episodes, the narrative reads as a collection of instances or memories adding up to a story rather than a linear tale with a beginning, middle, and end. Here, Bishop applies what Thomas Travisano identifies as Bishop's "trademark" method of composing a poem from a

"succession of linked images, usually without supplying explicit connectives"[52] to prose. Travisano later describes Ezra Pound and Marianne Moore as extending "imagism in *space*" whereas Bishop's "poem's spaces are almost always one particular place, but she extends imagism in *time* by melding a succession of related images."[53] "In the Village" follows this pattern with the story set in a single place – Great Village, Nova Scotia – but cutting from one moment to another without explicit transitions.[54] The section breaks separate and pace the narrative but also disrupt the paratactical accumulation of details. Bishop juxtaposes different moments in time, jumping between past and present rather than rationally explaining connections through smooth transitions.

The first section break is particularly disorienting, as the perspective, tense, and point of view all change in swift succession: "She stood in the large front bedroom with sloping walls on either side, papered in wide white and dim-gold stripes. Later, it was she who gave the scream." The village has returned to human scale, and the camera has moved from an external, establishing shot to an internal, domestic one. A character physically appears in the scene, even though the story appears to switch points of view for the third time in as many sentences. As if this shift were not bewildering enough, Bishop follows with a flash forward that is actually a flashback to the opening paragraph, pairing the past tense "later" with the present "it was." The section can be read and interpreted as closely as a poem with Bishop employing myriad poetic techniques in her prose, beginning with an italicized "*Clang*" on its own line, giving the sound space to resonate. This one-word line is followed by a paragraph that nearly bursts in comparison with its full lines, frequent twists of punctuation, and rich sounds:

[52] Travisano, *Artistic Development*, p. 56.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[54] J.T. Welsch describes this technique in cinematic terms in "'The Moose' as Movie: Elizabeth Bishop as Screenwriter" in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*, pp. 194-205.

> Oh, beautiful sounds, from the blacksmith's shop at the end of the garden! Its gray roof, with patches of moss, could be seen above the lilac bushes. Nate was there—Nate, wearing a long black leather apron over his trousers and bare chest, sweating hard, a black leather cap on top of dry, thick, black-and-gray curls, a black sooty face; iron filings, whiskers, and gold teeth, all together, and a smell of red-hot metal and horses' hoofs.

The echo of the "clang" now cheerfully hangs over the scene, supplanting the scream, and draws attention to its source: the blacksmith's shop and the blacksmith himself. Rich, delightful sounds suffuse the paragraph with the internal rhyme of "there," "wear," and "bear," the repetition of the "b" sound in "beauty," "blacksmith," "bare," and "bushes", and the steady beat of "black" in the "blacksmith's shop," "black leather apron," "black leather cap," "black-and-gray curls," and "black sooty face" culminating in the panting sounds of "hot" and "horses' hoofs." Pacing is regulated through varied punctuation: commas, an exclamation point, a dash, and a semicolon for pauses of different lengths. Then:

> *Clang*.
>
> The pure note: pure and angelic.
>
> The dress was all wrong. She screamed.
>
> The child vanishes.

This time, the repetition of "*Clang*" freezes the scene, ending the lush description. Once again, the sound occupies an entire line, but this time the pacing changes and three brief moments follow. First, the "clang" is described further, but in a sentence fragment. Instead of a verb, the phrase has a colon, as though the sound simply exists all around, constant and unchanging. The

following line reverts to the past tense, returning to the faulty dress and the discordant scream. Finally, in another disorienting shift to the present, "The child vanishes" in a surreal and disturbing moment.

The short lines and mostly monosyllabic words effectively lengthen each moment, stretching them through the micro-pauses between words and the longer visual breaks rising from the white space on the page. The following paragraph continues to build the bewildering atmosphere, this time through a peculiar sense of normalcy with its more conventional syntax and line length, although Bishop continues her heavy use of alliteration in a nearly Anglo-Saxon poetic style with "sipping sour" and "ruby: raspberry," except with a slightly shifted caesura:

> Later they sit, the mother and the three sisters, in the shade on the back porch, sipping sour, diluted ruby: raspberry vinegar. The dressmaker refuses to join them and leaves, holding the dress to her heart. The child is visiting the blacksmith.

The child has magically reappeared and is settled in comfortable company with the source of the angelic sounds.

While Bishop, as Ravinthiran says, rather unjustifiably dismissed her efforts as "poetic-prose," she accomplished a remarkable piece in the end, and her success with "In the Village" motivated additional prose works. Unfortunately, her attempts to meet presumed expectations limited her. In her response to White's "Gwendolyn" editorial letter, Bishop assesses the possibility of collecting these stories and concludes, "I'm afraid they won't make up a 'series' at all, because they are all in different periods of time, some written in the first person, some not, etc."[55] White gently corrects her by saying, "When I spoke of 'a series,' I did not mean…

[55] *EBNY*, p. 90, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 25 October 1952.

one episode after another. I meant a group or sequence based on Nova Scotia. We are *every one of us* excited about these manuscripts. Do go on with others!"[56] Despite reassuring correspondence about the Sable Island piece, Bishop never completed the essay. *The New Yorker* also did not publish extracts of "Helena Morley" and rejected "USA School of Writing" because the topic and its treatment were too conventional, obscuring the genre. While the Nova Scotian "memoir-fictions" read as artful retellings of childhood experiences, the more standard framing of correspondence school encounters counterintuitively blurred the line between fact and fiction through its matter-of-fact tone and lack of obvious poetic license.

The New Yorker accepted and published several poems during this period, many drawing from the same childhood memories of Nova Scotia that comprise the "Elsewhere" portion of *Questions of Travel*. Bishop sent so many consecutive poems about Nova Scotia that she felt the need to justify herself, writing, "Please don't think I'm getting stuck back in Nova Scotia! — but I suppose such a drastic move as to Brazil does turn one backwards for some time."[57] Yet as has been established, Bishop had been working on the Sable Island essay and then on these short stories for several years. Her poetic compositions grew naturally from her prose efforts, especially in their attention to childhood objects and experience.

Only three weeks later, she followed the poem "Manners" with "Filling Station" and "Questions of Travel," prefacing the latter with the concern that it "may be too special and Brazilian — but I must get here sometime!"[58] In truth, "Squatter's Children" had already been accepted, and she would soon send "Manuelzinho," with the former poem relocating Bishop's gaze from her distant childhood to local children, small figures set against the large mountain that had made such an impression, and the latter depicting a relationship with a childlike man with his diminutive name and guileless haplessness. Despite Bishop's caveats, by examining

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 92, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 10 November 1952.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 149, letter from Bishop to Howard Moss, 6 July 1955.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 151, letter from Bishop to Bill Maxwell, 30 July 1955.

the motivation for living (or even going) abroad and obliquely addressing matters of voice and authenticity, "Questions of Travel" provides a smooth transition from "outsider" poems to poems in which Brazil is home. By the end of the poem, Bishop has catalogued Brazil's excesses but hasn't resolved the titular questions, which she continued to consider in her poetic and prose compositions. As her comment to White suggests, she seemed to have "arrived" in Brazil poetically and found ways to observe and portray Brazilian experience. Still, distance remains between speaker and subject.

4.4 Essay Composition

While Bishop had begun to compose poems about the people who lived around her new home, writing about Brazil as an outsider tested one of her principal poetic values. In 1959, the year that Bishop composed "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians" and "The Riverman," she also began an essay in which she articulated her poetics. This fragment, along with undergraduate essays written at Vassar College and her correspondence with Anne Stevenson, provides the best summary of Bishop's poetic values in her own terms. In this unfinished draft, "Writing poetry is an unnatural act," Bishop first identifies the paradox between the "unnatural" or artificial act of poetry composition and the "great skill" required "to make it seem natural."[59] She goes on to list the three poetic values she most admired.[60] Travel essays presented a significant challenge to Bishop due to the issue of accuracy. To represent the place, she had to know it well. As a foreigner, she also had to resolve questions of voice and authority. As a tourist, she could fairly compose a tourist poem with few, specific details about Brazil, and as she had lived in Samambaia for several years, she knew the residents well enough to depict them in poems. Unlike short stories about her childhood in

[59] *Pr*, p. 392.
[60] *Ibid*., p. 393.

which she portrayed personal experiences and memories, travel essays presented an entirely new set of challenges, especially as Bishop recognized her role as a mediating figure, interpreting Brazil for a foreign audience. Bishop's compositional process reflects her effort to reconcile this style of writing with her values.

Aside from "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," Bishop did not receive editorial feedback on any of her travel essays, unlike her short stories. She never sent "Sable Island" to *The New Yorker*, and the *Brazil* book that she wrote for *Time Life* was meant to be an objective presentation of the country for an American audience. Travel essays, by contrast, combine personal experience and opinion with observations and context, and they require fluid shifts between objective and subjective writing. Bishop could write in both modes, of course; however, moving between the two confused the issue of accuracy: specifically factual versus experiential truth.

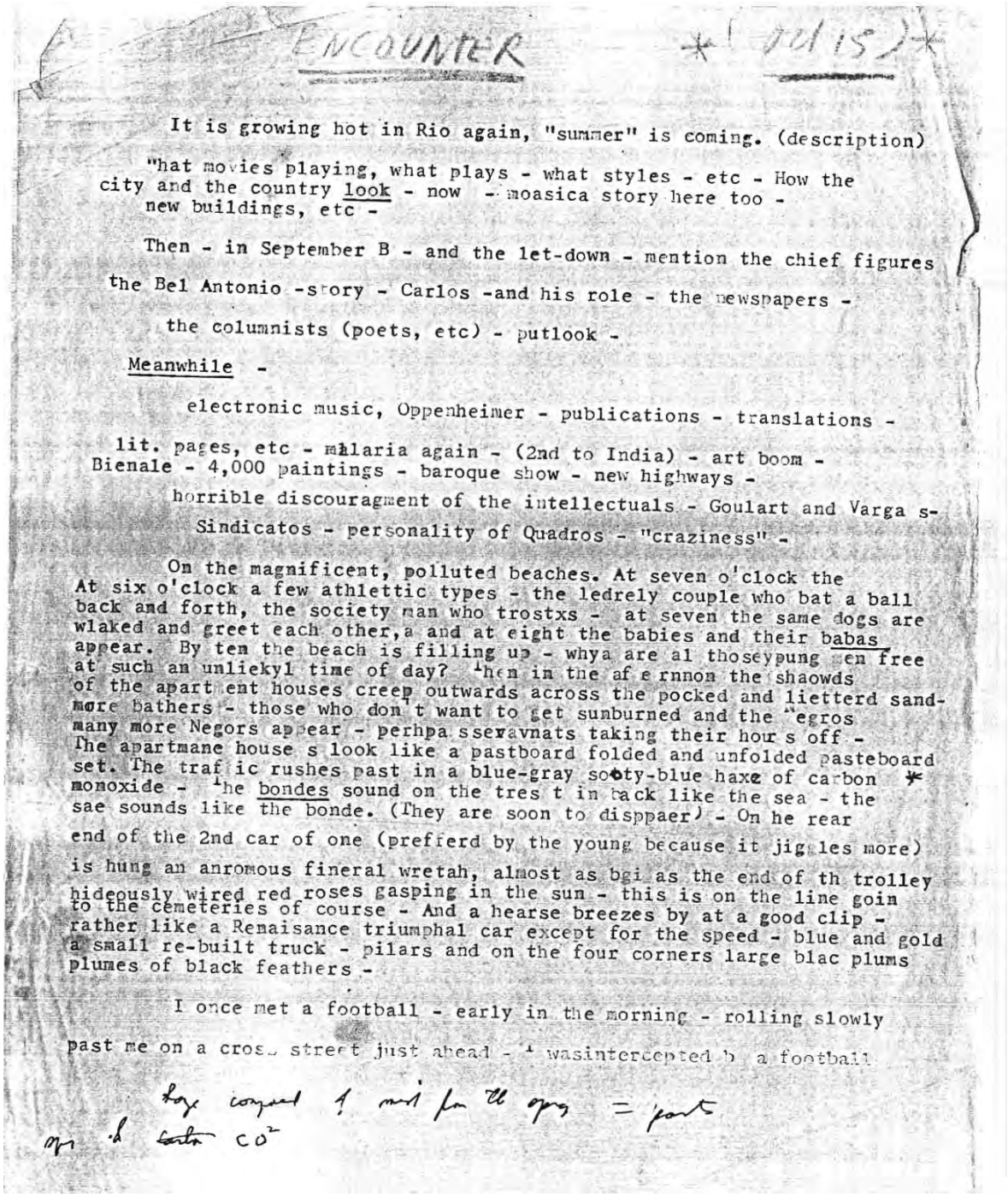
In order to maintain an authentic and accurate voice, Bishop could not misrepresent her experience. In Brazilian poems such as "Manuelzinho," she adopts an entirely different persona to portray a complex relationship between a landowner and her hapless gardener and prioritizes experiential or emotional accuracy. Even then, she begins the poem with a clarification: "[Brazil. A friend of the writer is speaking.],"[61] distancing herself from the material. In a travel essay, however, the observations clearly come from Bishop's first-person perspective due to the autobiographical context of "reporter" or "travel writer," positions that carry expectations of expertise and responsibility. Additionally, Bishop's long relationship with *The New Yorker* had revealed their strict parameters for both content and style, especially in prose. They prioritized intellectual but decorous work that might excite their readers without overly challenging them. This influenced Bishop's compositional process because from the start she always considered how to frame her essays for publication. Unlike her poetry, which she

[61] *P*, p. 94.

intended to collect into book form and for which she had other possible literary venues such as *Poetry* magazine or *Partisan Review,* she conceptualized these pieces with a specific audience and form in mind, so that from the earliest precompositional stages, these travel essays exhibited a tension between what excited her interest and what she expected would capture an editor's attention.

In addition to audience considerations, Bishop's prose composition process naturally differed from her poetic one. While she usually began the poetic precompositional stage with a central idea or phrase that she repeated, rephrased, and reworked until she could compose more structured verse, with prose she began with lists of ideas or scenes that were connected by em-dashes. The undated fragment in Figure 11 shows her typical process in which she lists scenes and overarching ideas in a horizontal, almost stream of consciousness outline. The elements connect associatively, and then she writes these sections. Bishop's prose pieces typically begin with precise situation of place. Until she draws the scene, she cannot begin to form the narrative (thin as that might be!).

The opening of the "Encounter" fragment in Figure 11 begins, as usual, with a description of a moment, in this case a contemporary and emblematic scene that represents Rio at a particular time. The word "then" can mark either the next moment in time or a consequence, and Bishop links her scenes temporally rather than causally. After another brief series of ideas, this time political, she makes another temporal note: "Meanwhile," adding another layer of context, this time through music and art. Travisano's observation about Bishop's extension of imagism through time applies to her essay efforts as well. Rather than telling a story or creating any sort of narrative where actions lead to consequences, Bishop layers scenes through time, creating a complex sense of place by offering multiple, simultaneous views of a single moment.



ENCOUNTER

It is growing hot in Rio again, "summer" is coming. (description)

"hat movies playing, what plays - what styles - etc - How the city and the country look - now - moasica story here too - new buildings, etc -

Then - in September B - and the let-down - mention the chief figures the Bel Antonio -story - Carlos -and his role - the newspapers - the columnists (poets, etc) - putlook -

Meanwhile -

electronic music, Oppenheimer - publications - translations - lit. pages, etc - malaria again - (2nd to India) - art boom - Bienale - 4,000 paintings - baroque show - new highways - horrible discouragment of the intellectuals - Goulart and Varga s- Sindicatos - personality of Quadros - "craziness" -

On the magnificent, polluted beaches. At seven o'clock the At six o'clock a few athlettic types - the ledrely couple who bat a ball back and forth, the society man who trostxs - at seven the same dogs are wlaked and greet each other,a and at eight the babies and their babas appear. By ten the beach is filling up - whya are al thoseypung men free at such an unliekyl time of day? Then in the af ernnon the shaowds of the apart ent houses creep outwards across the pocked and lietterd sand- more bathers - those who don't want to get sunburned and the negros many more Negors appear - perhpa sservavnats taking their hour s off - The apartmane house s look like a pastboard folded and unfolded pasteboard set. The traffic rushes past in a blue-gray sooty-blue haxe of carbon * monoxide - The bondes sound on the tres t in back like the sea - the sae sounds like the bonde. (They are soon to disppaer) - On he rear end of the 2nd car of one (prefferd by the young because it jigles more) is hung an anromous fineral wretah, almost as bgi as the end of th trolley hideously wired red roses gasping in the sun - this is on the line goin to the cemeteries of course - And a hearse breezes by at a good clip - rather like a Renaisance triumphal car except for the speed - blue and gold a small re-built truck - pilars and on the four corners large blac plums plumes of black feathers -

I once met a football - early in the morning - rolling slowly past me on a cross street just ahead - I wasintercepted b a football

Figure 11: Undated and unpublished manuscript.[62]

Immediately after outlining this piece, Bishop begins to write it and develops her parenthetical "(description)" with a beach scene in Rio de Janeiro. Even here, Bishop does not

[62] VCSC, f. 68.5.

compose complete sentences but lists figures and their characteristics, setting their choreographed appearances to a clock: six, seven, eight, etc. The descriptions and the accumulation of characters are lively, and the opening ends with a speeding hearse that, in typical Bishop fashion, is described then redescribed, mimicking the cognitive process of locating the exact phrase. This short precompositional text illustrates both the possibilities and difficulties of Bishop's travel writing: she is attempting to decenter the first-person perspective that is typical of travel essays by offering multiple points of view.

4.5 The "Real" Brazil: Accuracy and Authority

Bishop's second period of poetic instability in Brazil began after the publication of *A Cold Spring* in 1955. During this time, she began to engage with Brazil conceptually, layering historical and cultural meaning onto the landscape. She questioned Brazil's rapid construction of Brasília, especially at the potential cost to indigenous culture and land, but also understood the complexity of expressing these concerns in print given her background. To Americans, Bishop was an expert on Brazil, and her writing carried authority. Yet within Brazil, her status was more ambiguous as neither tourist nor Brazilian. Her work, therefore, had to somehow bridge both Brazil and her indeterminate authority.

In 1956, *The New Yorker* accepted "The Armadillo" and "Sunday, 4 A.M." for publication, but aside from these two poems, Bishop did not publish any work with them until 1959. In August 1958, the day after Bishop returned from a trip to the new capital city of Brasília, which was under construction in the undeveloped heart of Brazil as a utopian and futuristic symbol of progress, she wrote to Bill Maxwell at *The New Yorker* to see if the magazine might be interested in a travel piece on the visit. She explained that she had accompanied Aldous Huxley and his wife to see Brasília and an "Indian" tribe. She offered to send an essay "within two weeks" — a record time for her — with the caveat that a "proper

piece on the city, architecture, etc. couldn't really be done for six months or a year, because so little is constructed"; however, she had "quite a lot to say… and combined with the irony of the next stop being the Indians, Huxley being the guest of honor, etc…. I think it might do for a 'Footloose reporter' or some other department — or even as a story."

At this point she had already published two short stories with them and had translated "Helena Morley" but had been unable to sell an extract of either her translation or the book's introduction to the magazine, so she had some sense of their taste and requirements. Bishop requested Maxwell's feedback prior to writing the essay because she did not "want to work on it too long *as* a *New Yorker* piece unless there is some possibility of their taking it."[63] The "as" demonstrates Bishop's understanding of how she might have to shape her proposed essay for the magazine and her consideration of how to fit her central idea to the imagined format. While she was drawn to the juxtaposition of three incongruous elements, Aldous Huxley, this invented city, and an indigenous tribe, she emphasized the irony of the situation for her potential editor, imposing the interpretation she expected Maxwell to like on her observations. In his telegram reply, Maxwell expressed the magazine's interest with caveats: "…SHAWN SAYS IT SOUNDS HOPEFUL AND INTERESTING AND THAT YOU SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO GO AHEAD WITH IT, WITH THE WARNING THAT WE CAN'T BE SURE IT WILL WORK…"[64] *The New Yorker* had, after all, waited several years for an essay that was never delivered.

Surprisingly, Bishop wrote to Maxwell two weeks later having completed the piece, but before sending it, she wanted to have a friend who was a newspaper editor fact check it for her. A month later, she wrote again to say, "There proved to be so much more fact-checking necessary than I'd realized and it's so hard to get hold of people here that it takes a long time.

[63] *EBNY*, p. 202, letter from Bishop to Bill Maxwell, 21 August 1958.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 202, Western Union cablegram from Bill Maxwell to Bishop, 28 August, 1958.

However, I think everything is *correct* at last and as soon as I get it copied again I'll mail it…"[65] Finally, on 20 October 1958, two months after her initial pitch, she sent the piece along with two sketches by a travel companion. She responded to a comment Maxwell had made about a poet's prose saying, "It is kind of you to say you like poets' prose — but I have many doubts about this sample of it. For one thing, the items are so diverse, and for another Huxley never *said* anything! — or no general reactions, that is…"[66] She continued to explain her spelling choices and repeated that the piece should be "accurate," ending with her hope that the piece will not alienate locals, as she is "somewhat critical" although "very mild compared to what some newspapers [in Brazil] print every day."[67] As her correspondence shows, Bishop placed great importance on this issue of "accuracy" in the travel piece. She did not want to misrepresent her adopted home, even as she planned to criticize certain aspects of it. By having the essay fact checked, Bishop confirmed her credibility while also borrowing the authority of a local editor friend to support her claims. She took into consideration the social implications of her essay and how locals might respond to her critique.

The manuscript that Bishop sent to *The New Yorker*, which she considered to be finished, was rejected outright with no possibility of revision. Bill Maxwell informed Bishop, "Bad news. Three of the factual department editors read the piece and all of them feel that it starts off well and that from the point where you get involved in the architectural descriptions everything 'tails off badly'. Also that Huxley doesn't come through."[68] He went on to compliment a specific encounter she had depicted with a member of an indigenous tribe and other descriptive moments but politely concluded that he believed the piece could be published elsewhere and requested more poems and stories instead. In an internal letter to White, he was more candid, saying, "I read the piece carefully when it came back, to see if there was a casual

[65] *EBNY*, p. 203, letter from Bishop to Bill Maxwell, 1 October, 1958.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 205, letter from Bishop to Bill Maxwell, 20 October, 1958.
[67] *Ibid.*
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 208, letter from Bill Maxwell to Bishop, 19 November 1958.

there, and there didn't seem to be. Almost, but not quite…. In any case, it was a long way from being a successful reporter piece, though the writing was often good, and here and there was a nice detail."[69] In short: the essay had some nice Indians but too many descriptions of buildings, and not enough Huxley. Contrary to Bishop's fears, the diversity of topics did not pose a problem; rather, her uneven handling of them did.

From the start of the essay, Bishop presents multiple possible paths of development, exposing the disparity between her interests and her imagined editor's expectations. Bethany Hicok describes the start of the essay cartographically:

> Bishop maps the following points on her rhetorical compass. First is Rio de Janeiro, River of January, the original site of the Portuguese "discovery" of Brazil and subsequent "colonization"; it is Brazil's old capital; next, Brasília, the bland, new center of Brazil; and, finally, the "dwindling" Indian tribes whose numbers will become even more endangered as a result of the move to the interior."[70]

This mapping of Brazil's history alongside the physical journey is compelling both rhetorically and organizationally but also demonstrates one of the editorial concerns: the framing entirely ignores Aldous Huxley. Jonathan Gray describes the essay as "Bishop's longest and richest prose travel account"[71] and divides the essay into three sections according to its title:

> …the city of Brasília, still under construction when Bishop visited, to which she devotes eight small-print pages in the Library of America volume; the trip to the Amazon with Aldous and Laura Huxley; and the visit to the Uialipiti people of Mato

[69] *EBNY,* p. 208, letter from Bill Maxwell to Bishop, 19 November 1958.
[70] Hicok, *Brazil*, p. 101.
[71] Jonathan Gray, "Travel," in *Elizabeth Bishop in the Twenty-First Century: Reading the New Editions*, p. 474.

> Grosso–the latter, in spite of the bland, if not dismissive phrase "Some Indians," is by far the most interesting."[72]

Gray's overview of the essay's structure illustrates another problem that *The New Yorker* editors identified: the number of pages dedicated to the construction of the city. While the title suggests a balanced, three-part narrative, the essay itself skews heavily towards the "new capital."

Jonathan Ellis offers a similarly charitable description of the essay, calling it "as much about the new city's architecture as her famous co-traveller"[73] and adds that for Bishop, reflecting on the relationship between buildings and society, "like her reading of art criticism, finds its way into the poems she was drafting at the same time… There is, in other words, a porousness between the criticism she was reading and sometimes writing."[74] Bishop's research may have influenced this essay as well. Given her typical trip preparations, she had undoubtedly studied architect Oscar Niemeyer and his plans for the city's construction, especially with de Macedo Soares to guide her. In fact, the essay dedicates far more space to architecture than it does to Huxley as Bishop uses description of place to build an argument about Brasilia and the characteristics of the "real" Brazil.

Although the essay was ostensibly about Aldous Huxley's visit, he was incidental to it: his tour precipitated an inquiry into the meaning of "Brazil" as represented by the dichotomy between the new capital city and an indigenous tribe. Rather than offering a charming account of traveling with a famous literary figure, Bishop presents arguments for and against Brasília, and she is unequivocally opposed to the government's mission to construct a new city in Brazil's interior. She summarizes the two sides of the debate over Brasília as follows: "While

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[72] Gray*, p. 474.*
[73] Jonathan Ellis, "Criticism and Reviews" in *Elizabeth Bishop in Context,* p. 623.
[74] *Ibid.*

everyone in Brasil who has ever thought about it at all agrees that the interior of the country has to be opened up somehow or other, and the sooner the better, those opposed to Brasília feel that it might be done to begin with more modestly and economically…"[75] In other words, the fundamental problem is with the speed and scope of development. Having contextualized the debate over Brasília, Bishop begins to develop the idea of "the interior," the hidden core of the country that features so memorably in the ending of "Arrival at Santos," the poem which immediately precedes "Brazil, January 1, 1502" in *Questions of Travel*. But what is this "interior" – this heart of Brazil? Bishop builds her arguments by aestheticizing the Brazilian landscape.

Bishop's arrival in Brasília, delayed in the essay by two pages of context and reportage, starts inauspiciously, setting the tone for the section on the capital. Her driver never arrives, so she must find her own way to the hotel. She writes,

> The first thing that greeted my eyes as I got off the plane was a three-throned shoe-shine stand against the wall of the small airport building. At the moment I was not in need of a shoe-shine but all departing passengers certainly were. To be sure, it was the tail-end of the dry season, but in the later summer of 1958 one's first and last impression of Brasília was of miles and miles and miles of blowing red dust.[76]

The opening phrase is striking because Bishop reuses it in "Brazil, January 1, 1502": "Januaries, Nature greets our eyes / exactly as she must have greeted theirs:"[77] except in Brasília, dust greets Bishop and seems to pervade her entire experience of this new city.

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[75] *Pr,* p. 293.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 294.
[77] *P*, p. 89.

Bishop depicts the landscape surrounding Brasília as antithetical to the effusive spectacle of Brazil, with its waterfalls and excessive vegetation. Despite having been warned, she "was not prepared for quite such dreariness and desolation," which, unlike the rest of "this fantastically beautiful country it seems really remarkably unattractive and unpromising." She then defines the entire area through negation: "no mountains nor even real hills, no rivers, at least not in evidence…, no trees of any size, no feeling of height, nor grandeur, nor security, nor fertility, nor even just picturesqueness; not one of the qualities one thinks of as capable of giving a city charm or character."[78] This litany of absence and of undoing strips all the unique characteristics of place from Brasília, disconnecting it from the Brazil she knows. A similar list of negations recurs in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" when the colonizing Christians arrived and "… found it all, / not unfamiliar: / no lovers' walks, no bowers, / no cherries to be picked, no lute music, / but corresponding, nevertheless, / to an old dream of wealth and luxury."[79] As in the essay, the double negation of "not unfamiliar" evokes a sense of detachment. The interior depicted in the poem is neither familiar nor unfamiliar but something in-between— neither here nor there. Both the poem and essay deny the existence of either natural or human beauty. What the Christians find "familiar" is the "old dream of wealth and luxury," and Brasília is likewise meant to be the new governmental seat, bringing political and financial classes into the undeveloped interior.

Over half of the essay comprises a catalogue of Brasília's faults, building a case that the city lacks the spirit of Brazil. The city, already established as anti-Brazilian and inhospitable, is also deceptive, between its promise of an artificial lake and the local "sparse, scrubby trees, mostly a variety known as 'apricot,' which bears small wild fruits, no relation, however, to the true apricot."[80] Bishop's use of alliteration conveys the depth of her disgust

[78] *Pr,* p. 295.
[79] *P*, p. 90.
[80] *Pr*, p. 295.

with the place: “When I asked my driver, a depressed, dust-covered young man, about them he said dryly that termites build half-way up the trees to be that much nearer the fruit.”[81] She continues in this vein with even more description and history. Huxley has been entirely forgotten. Additionally, the modernist architecture that is meant to revitalize this place fails in a tropical climate as the large glass windows are “extremely pretty” but make the interior “fiendishly hot.” The dust manages to permeate the hotel, as well, sullying the clean, modern space. Finally, in the midst of all of this, Bishop mentions that Huxley had been “irritated” by a badly designed floor with a hidden drop after nearly falling. This odd aside is meant to bolster her claims about design flaws by using Huxley’s authority; however, Huxley has not yet arrived in the narrative, and no other mention had been made of him, except for a brief overview of the group accompanying him on this tour. Referring to him, rather than supporting Bishop’s claims, reminds the reader of the essay’s lost focus. Huxley’s party finally arrives at the hotel on the ninth page of the essay.

While the narrative arc clearly fails between the lack of characters and plot, Bishop successfully describes the place as she experienced it with no ironic distance or mediating persona. She rarely even uses first person pronouns and simply gives her unfiltered view of Brasília and the city’s many faults. She eventually introduces the occasional external voice, citing texts about the city and finally, fifteen pages in, records actual dialogue from a memorably described Polish countess. The second half of the essay adheres to a more traditional travel essay form, with deftly drawn characters and snatches of dialogue. This stylistic difference accentuates the dichotomy Bishop has created between the false, modern Brazil and the “real” Brazil of the indigenous tribe.

Once Bishop exhaustively establishes that Brasília is not the true Brazil, she offers an alternate “interior” instead. This creates an immediate problem of voice and authority. While

[81] *Ibid*.

she can criticize a government's imposition of a modern city on an inhospitable land, how can she, as a white American, portray an indigenous tribe both accurately and respectfully? Her initial approach is ironic, calling the Uialapiti tribe "some Indians" in the title of the essay. This casual, offhand tone mimics colonial rhetoric by grouping all indigenous tribes together under a generic (and erroneous) category, and until she meets the tribe in the essay, she repeatedly refers to them as "the Indians" and "primitive." The indigenous people are clearly marked as "Other," yet from the moment she meets tribal members, she uses correct names and takes great care to differentiate between members of the tribe, including those from other regions. While this might recreate her experience of viewing Brazilian indigenous people as some exotic group and then meeting individuals, the irony of the title takes too long to resolve in the body of the essay for it to sound anything other than dismissive. Additionally, while Bishop's descriptions of the Uialapiti tribe are both sympathetic and romantic, she perpetuates the noble savage stereotype by calling them "gentle" and "like children," casting them in a role of innocence. This is as troubling as her initial descriptions of the tribe as a generic group as both approaches perpetuate colonial tropes.

Gray asks, "Is her view of the Uialapiti romantic or naïve? Is it offensive? She was sometimes accused of a colonialist attitude, although Fortuny suggests that Bishop 'approached the subject [of travel] fully conscious of her position as a colonial writer.'"[82] Hicok remarks that "Bishop's account reflects her criticism of the utopian impulse behind Brasília and pays particular attention to how this massive development project threatened the region's indigenous population."[83] In developing her contrast between modernity and indigeneity, Bishop's sympathy certainly lies with the indigenous tribes, and she worries what will happen to them as a result of this new, thoroughly modern development of a nearby city. Yet she

[82] Gray, p. 476.
[83] Hicok, p. 99.

simultaneously applies a white, anthropological gaze to the Uialapiti. Bishop is aware of her position; yet she cannot seem to escape it. David Spurr describes "the gaze of the Western writer" as one that "… descends from the heights of mountain ranges and hotel rooms" and "penetrates the interiors of human habitation, and it explores the bodies and faces of people with the same freedom that it brings to the survey of a landscape."[84] Bishop describes members of the Uialapiti tribe in this exact manner, especially their bodies and states of dress (or undress).

From the start, the Uialapiti appear as enthusiastic, innocent, and "primitive," although Bishop is careful not to call them "savages." They lead simple lives with no work, only subsistence, and the main threat comes from outsiders who bring disease. Bishop aestheticizes the landscape surrounding this village, which unlike Brasília, returns to the paradisal, true Brazil that Bishop recognizes. This highly romantic language reinforces the noble savage trope. She writes:

> … I got into a hammock, too, and looked up. The high shadowy roofs are beautifully made, palm leaves folded over horizontal branches, in overlapping layers, and the big dome is braced towards the top with a framework of unpeeled branches. Pigeons roosted there, cooing, and a pair of parakeets. A gorgeous blue and yellow macaw sat on the dining-hut wall eyeing us and talking away in *Nuaruak*, presumably—the language group to which the Uialapiti belong. Several *mutum*, a kind of turkey, black and shiny, with crests like ball-edged combs and patches of pale green on either side of their chic little heads, strolled about clucking under our legs. The gloom, the gentle voices, the pats

[84] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 19.

> and smiles and swaying hammocks, were restful and dreamlike, down-to-earth, even nostalgically back-to-earth, after the three hours in the plane.[85]

The scene is lovely and sharply contrasts the experience of Brasília, where even the hotel floor offered inadequate grounding and support. No false fruit, termites, or inescapable red dust in this place but a gentle closeness to the earth. Yet despite her sympathetic intent, this sentimental characterization of both the people and the landscape is simplistic. Bishop substitutes aesthetics for authenticity, making the Uialapiti unwitting symbols in her argument against Brasília.

Furthermore, Bishop's rhetorical style perpetuates what Davis Spurr identifies as a form of colonial reportage:

> The rhetorical trope known as parataxis—placing things side by side—by the mid-nineteenth century had become a standard adaptation of language to the scientific method, in which the process of knowing the world became largely a matter of establishing natural objects as visually accessible (Stafford 34). But the "imaginative eye" of the journalist-explorer goes beyond the mere arrangement of visual data.[86]

He proposes that the structure of these sentences have a colonizing effect by giving the descriptions a scientific tone. Bishop employs parataxis throughout this essay, presenting comprehensive lists of details from the moment she arrives in Brasília; however, she treats both the new city and the Uialapiti tribe in the same manner, which complicates the issue. Bishop's portrayal of the indigenous group cannot be extricated from the complexities of both colonization and class, yet she approaches the entire journey in this way and directly compares

[85] *Pr*, pp. 314-315.
[86] Spurr, p. 17.

the two environments and experiences, applying the same ethnographic gaze to both places. Bishop had been reading Darwin's journals and admiring his manner of accumulating details, so her approach may have been a combination of emulation and expectation. Her goal was to write an essay for *The New Yorker,* not a story, and this required a certain level of "objectivity" in her tone (although her politics and descriptions are obviously personal); therefore, much of the essay adopts a reportorial voice that surveys and catalogues the scene. Still, while she gives a physical description of Huxley, she does not interpret or explain his manner of dress for her audience as she does for the Uialapiti, treating people differently. Rather, she uses Huxley and the Uialapiti tribe members as foils for each other in an unfortunate juxtaposition.

While her intent in applying this style may have been accurate representation and an authoritative voice, Bishop imposes her opinion of the "real" Brazil onto the landscape and uses place to support a social argument. In Spurr's analysis of Mary Louise Pratt's critical study *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*,[87] he says that Pratt, "identifies three parts of this rhetorical convention: the landscape is first aestheticized, then it is invested with a density of meaning intended to convey its material and symbolic richness, and finally it is described so as to subordinate it to the power of the speaker."[88] Both of the landscapes that Bishop describes are given symbolic meaning; however, she tries to circumvent the speaker's final act of subordination. Throughout the essay, Bishop appears to be asking: Which is the real Brazil? The manufactured city or the indigenous lands? As the author, she cannot escape her role as arbiter. She presents a case to her reader that the modern, manmade city lacks an essential spirit that brings it together — the *city* is the colonizer. Rather than emerging from people who were drawn to a particular geographic region through commonalities, Brasília is an imposition by outside politicians.

[87] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2007).
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

To resolve the problem of voice and of her own authority, Bishop concludes the essay by decentering herself. She draws attention to her American identity, spotlighting herself as an outsider, and then she cites her tour's guide, Antonio Callado, a Brazilian, who presents his own critiques of Brasília, such as the "Teutonic preoccupation with problems that have not yet risen. For example: the airport is miles from everything in order to prevent future congestion, when there could easily be a temporary airport near the hotel…"[89] The word "Teutonic" of course conjures ancient Germans and establishes both cultural and temporal foreignness, linking development of the interior to foreign, and therefore inappropriate, methods. Bishop continues with the words of "Another English author" and his remarks on a manmade city, which she then reveals to be Anthony Trollope's 1861 critique of Washington D.C. This thriving American city offers a counterpoint to Bishop's critique of Brasília. She closes the essay by remarking,

> …it behooves Americans to be particularly careful in predictions about Brasília. But the tone of Callado's remarks seems to echo the feelings of all intelligent Brasílians I know on the subject. Rather desperately and resignedly, they are hoping for the best. Perhaps we should also all spare a little hope for the Indians.[90]

While Bishop is referring to Washington D.C.'s success as a city, her comment doubles as a reminder for outsiders to withhold judgment. She passes the final evaluation to local Brazilians but cannot resist a rather condescending reference to "intelligent" Brazilians and can only represent the views of those she knows, revealing the subjectivity behind her seemingly objective language and analyses. Although Bishop is attempting to defer to local viewpoints,

[89] *Pr*, p. 320.
[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 321.

as Spurr states, "The sympathetic humanitarian eye is no less a product of deeply held colonialist values, and no less authoritative in the mastery of its object, than the surveying and policing eye."[91] Ultimately, Bishop still creates the narrative, deciding which Brazilians to cite and pronouncing judgment on them, and despite her good intentions, she can neither escape her American identity nor her role as interpreter for an American audience.

Bishop does, however, manage to reorient the essay in its closing lines and in doing so, differentiates it from colonial rhetoric as described by Spurr in which, "the commanding view still reflects the writer's authority over the scene surveyed, but the perceptual appetite is more likely to find itself unsatisfied, and the writer's tone to be one of disappointment or disillusionment."[92] Bishop does indeed begin the essay with page after page of dissatisfied commentary: everything about Brasília displeases her. But in the final moments, Bishop abandons her effort to identify the "real" Brazil. Instead, she defines the true Brazilian: one who wants what is best for the country. Whether or not they agree with or approve of the government's methods, they all hope for the best outcome, and that desire for success represents the true Brazil.

Ultimately, Huxley is somewhat of a red herring in an essay that is truly about Brazilian identity as it pertains to place and geography. After receiving a rejection for this essay, Bishop wrote to Dr. Anny Baumann on 4 December 1958, "*The New Yorker* did not take my piece about Brasília. As I worked on it I felt fairly sure they wouldn't; the material just didn't go together… Now I'll work on something more my natural bent."[93] Seven months later, she sent "The Riverman" to *The New Yorker*, which was accepted immediately and was her first poem with them in three years, followed by "Brazil, January 1, 1502" four months later, in October 1959. Although "The Riverman" famously describes a member of an Amazonian tribe and

[91] *Pr*, p. 20.
[92] Spurr, p. 18.
[93] *OA*, p. 369, letter from Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 4 December 1958.

Bishop did not visit the Amazon until later, she pursues her interest in indigenous cultures from this trip to Brasília and repurposes some of the ideas and language from this essay in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" while addressing issues of colonization more directly.

4.6 A Final, Failed Essay

Thus far in this chapter I have discussed an example of a successful short story and an unsuccessful travel essay. The former uses juxtaposition to layer images through time while the latter errs on the side of insistent but ineffective accuracy. These prose works filled otherwise fallow periods of poetic production, whereas "A Trip to Vigia" and the unfinished essay, "A Trip on the Rio São Francisco," occupy a third period of instability in Bishop's life – one that resembles the unsettled months in 1951 before her trip to Brazil – although the two trips occurred several years apart. "Rio São Francisco" repeats the mistakes of Bishop's earlier efforts, but she takes a new approach in "Vigia," composing a travel narrative that resembles one of her earlier memoir-fictions rather than an essay.

In 1960, during her voyage to the Amazon, Bishop took a side trip from Belém to Vigia with a poet she had met during her stay. Millier describes "A Trip to Vigia" as "the only piece of travel prose about Brazil that she finished, and it was not published until after her death."[94] Bishop's estate published the piece four years after her death but, according to Millier, "clearly she did not consider it finished."[95] She never sent it to *The New Yorker* or to any other magazines for consideration and does not mention it in her correspondence. Jeffrey Gray claims that like her other failed essays, "A Trip to Vigia" "…has almost no arc. The insights, the anecdotes, the descriptions rest on their own merits."[96] However, calling "A Trip to Vigia" an essay may be a misnomer. Stylistically it resembles her Nova Scotian short stories far more

[94] Millier, p. 287.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 310.
[96] Gray, p. 470.

than it does her other travel essays, and in her collected *Prose*, Lloyd Schwartz categorizes the piece under "Stories and Memoirs" along with her memoir-fictions. Thomas Travisano remarks that "pieces published as factual reporting, such as 'A Trip to Vigia," contain a significant measure of outright invention,"[97] a direct contrast to her "mostly factual"[98] short stories. Bishop clearly did not subject this story to the rigorous fact-checking of her Brasília essay and attempts something new in both form and content.

Schwartz dates "A Trip to Vigia" to 1967, the year that Bishop traveled down the Rio São Francisco. The exact compositional timeframe of this story is unclear: it falls between the publication of *Questions of Travel* in 1965 and Bishop's permanent departure from Brazil in 1970. By 1966, Bishop and Lota de Macedo Soares had lost their idyllic lifestyle in Samambaia due to the instability of Brazilian politics and the stress caused by an overwhelming public parks project that de Macedo Soares was leading in Rio de Janeiro. Bishop spent the spring of 1966 in Seattle as the poet-in-residence at the University of Washington. By the end of 1966, she was once again lost both personally and poetically. Bishop wrote to editor Howard Moss in September 1966, "I feel I need a little encouragement badly, at the moment."[99] Lota de Macedo Soares was institutionalized due to overwork and depression. In February 1967, Bishop also checked into an in-patient facility to manage her alcoholism, which had been exacerbated by ongoing stress. Doctors requested that Bishop and de Macedo Soares separate for some time, so when Bishop embarked upon her journey down the Rio São Francisco in early June 1967, she traveled alone.

Given the close compositional timeline of "A Trip to Vigia" and "A Trip on the Rio São Francisco," their differences are striking. The first, as mentioned above, is stylistic. While "A Trip to Vigia" more closely resembles Bishop's memoir-fictions, the latter essay emulates

[97] Travisano, "Biography," p. 22.
[98] *Ibid.,* p. 24.
[99] *EBNY,* p. 287, letter from Bishop to Howard Moss, 8 September 1966.

her less successful travelogues in form and narrative arc. Second, "Vigia," like the Nova Scotian stories, was composed several years after her visit, whereas Bishop wrote "Rio São Francisco" while traveling. Finally, "Vigia" prioritizes experiential accuracy whereas "Rio São Francisco" emphasizes factual accuracy, a difference that is evident in her earlier prose works about place.

Despite her many failures at writing travel essays, Bishop persisted at the genre, and during a rather miserable journey down the Rio São Francisco, made an unusual attempt to compose an essay while traveling. Prior to her departure, Bishop updated Dr. Anny Baumann on the situation at home: "I start off for Rio São Francisco in two days. I think [Lota] is getting better gradually but still is far from being herself. She wakes up crying every morning…"[100] Towards the end of her trip, she wrote to May Swenson from Bahía:

> We were both sick — L. much the sicker, of course — but now I really seem to see light ahead again. The long river trip I have just made seemed to act like a sort of eraser. I lost all track of time and distance — feel as if I'd had amnesia. Lota wouldn't have liked it a bit — in fact, after the first few days I think I'd have gone back except it was impossible to. Then it began getting a bit better — and now, in retrospect, and having spent three days here writing it all up, I am glad I did it. Oh (vaguer & vaguer) I went on a sternwheeler (made 70 years ago in the U.S.) down the Sâo Francisco River — 100s of miles of it, straight north down the middle of the country.[101]

The parenthetical comment about vagueness recalls Bishop's earliest impressions of Brazil in which she could not yet grasp the place and attributed to it a "lofty vagueness." By contrast, in

[100] *OA*, p. 462, letter from Bishop to May Swenson, 26 May 1967.
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 463, letter from Bishop to May Swenson, 8 June 1967.

this letter she welcomes the erasure of travel and of being nowhere in particular, even though she immediately counterbalances the ambiguity of travel with the precise detail of the 70-year-old American sternwheeler. When describing this "endless trip," Ashley Brown quotes a postcard that Bishop sent upon her return, and in it, she repeats her favorite detail about this American boat:

> ...in retrospect I'm glad I did it + some of the worst will no doubt seem funny as time goes on -- but never never the hideous poverty. The boat a very quaint stern-wheeler made in the U S A 70 years ago -- everyone nice and polite, but each and every one asked if I had a "family" and when I said no, they all commiserated with me, but also, I felt, rather avoided me as being not quite all there."[102]

The compelling vagueness that had offered a sense of possibility in the letter to Swenson becomes an unmooring here. Bishop has no connection to either people or place during this voyage, as she travels alone. The erasure that had felt like a respite turns into an erasure of self.

Although Bishop writes to Swenson that her trip improved and she was glad to have gone, her correspondence reveals deep ambivalence about the journey. She comments on the extreme poverty of the region, and despite her attempts to find charm, everything falls flat when compared to the Amazon, which was "1,000 times better."[103] Still, she informs both Swenson and Howard Moss, who had succeeded Katharine White as her editor at *The New Yorker*, that she is planning a chapter about this trip for her prose book about Brazil, and she tells Swenson that she hopes to sell this story to a magazine. To Moss she even calls this hypothetical piece a "'chapter' (so far the book is so formless I'm using the quotes)."[104]

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[102] Brown, p. 229.
[103] *OA.*, p. 464, letter from Bishop to May Swenson, 8 June 1967.
[104] *EBNY,* p. 291, letter from Bishop to Howard Moss, 19 June 1967.

During her earlier trips, Bishop followed a method much like the one she used for the Sable Island essay in which she conducted extensive research, kept notes, and then documented her travel. During this 1967 journey, however, she attempted to do all three simultaneously. Her trip documentation is clearly geared towards essay writing. Her observations are peppered with parenthetical notes and questions: "The capt. can marry and baptism. (used to be occasional run-away marriages). One capt did all this, and once called an onça (WHY?) crossing the river."[105] These anecdotes are interspersed with her typical research, beginning with the foundation of Brazil and spanning centuries to the contemporary moment.

By the third page of her typewritten travel notes, her work shifts into a precompositional mode. At first her writing simply becomes more literary: "Parrots, pumpkins for sale — and pigs — shall I take a small black pig to Rio?" Then at the bottom of the page she types: "FOR BEGINNING???" and composes what becomes the introductory paragraph of her essay, "Lika (*sic*) any nice, clean travelling American citizen, I have just done a bit of drip-dry laundering in my hotel room…" While Bishop often began to write poems in this manner with precompositional fragments appearing mixed into her research and notes, this was atypical for her prose writing, which she tended to approach more formally. By the sixth page, Bishop's trip has become even worse due to a bout of dysentery. As she logs yet another disaster, she considers in parentheses: "(Title? A Rather Sad ~~River~~ Trip" ???)." Many of Bishop's observations directly compare this trip to her journey down the Amazon, a contrast she finds depressing. In considering this place, she writes, "Well, alas, it lacks grandeur. (beginning?) It is just a river — the Amazon so much more."

In her most effective prose, Bishop uses temporal layering and jumps between scenes for movement and depth, but in this essay, she errs on the side of explanation and explicit

[105] VCSC, f. 55.3. My transcription includes Bishop's typographic errors.

connection. Bishop's essay draft, unlike her notes, renders a sanitized and rather dull account of her trip. As Millier reports, the draft

> that survives describes the river, the life along its shores, the boat, and the other passengers in terms of what she saw and of what she had read about navigation on the river. It seems typical of what she had in mind for the Brazil book; it opens with a personal anecdote (doing her laundry after the trip and finding that her clothes retained the yellowish color of the river rinse after rinse) and proceeds to description and historical asides."[106]

Bishop dutifully returns to images of washing throughout the essay: She has learned the importance of having a narrative thread, even if only through a simple motif. Yet the questioning and wondering that enliven her notes do not appear in this text. In fact, the entire essay feels like a lackluster response to an assignment. The observations are as precise as ever, and her prose is clear and sharp, but the essay replaces the "mind thinking" with reportage, a quality she believed *The New Yorker* would value. However, a series of descriptions, no matter how evocative, cannot sustain an entire essay. Recalling White's comment on "In the Village" that the narrative thread "seems to break entirely," this essay has a thread but no narrative arc, resulting in an unsatisfying lack of closure.

4.7 Manners and the "Baroque Grandeur" of Brazilian Nature

As described above, Bishop composed "A Trip to Vigia" at approximately the same time as "Rio São Francisco," but rather than recounting a meandering journey, "Vigia" engages questions of manners and failures of cross-cultural communication and ultimately turns to the

[106] Millier, p. 391.

"baroque grandeur"[107] of Brazilian nature for fulfillment. The story depicts these ideas as counterpoints rather than holding them in opposition, simultaneously considering manners as a form of restraint and the baroque as excess. As with her poetic compositions, Bishop repeats the central theme of this travel narrative in the margin of the first compositional draft. She types, "best of B manners, solved it / Brazilian manners."[108] Given this shift in focus from place to politeness, "A Trip to Vigia" diverges from her typical travel essays and does not begin with Bishop situating the reader in a physical environment. Rather, the story starts and ends with a character, Ruy, the "shy poet, so soiled, so poor, so polite," who invites Bishop and a companion to take a day trip to Vigia, a city on the coast known for its baroque church. The story has a simple plot of trying to reach Vigia in an unreliable vehicle, making a few stops on the way, visiting the church, and then returning. Bethany Hicok describes it as,

> a good example of what Mary Louise Pratt has called a "contact perspective." Rather than focusing only on the story told by the "'invader'" (or, in this case, the non-Brazilian, North American traveler), Pratt argues, the "'contact perspective' emphasizes how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other."[109]

Although the relationships with Ruy and the other Brazilian figures are "asymmetrical,"[110] this framing resolves some of the issues of colonialism, authority, and objectivity of the "Aldous Huxley" essay. Bishop participates in the scenes as a character instead of observing and documenting the landscape and the people.

Following a more traditional approach to narrative, Bishop introduces the main characters and establishes a basic conflict before turning to place. Within the story, Bishop's

[107] *Pr*, p. 114.
[108] VCSC, f. 52.1.
[109] Hicok, *Brazil*, p. 44.
[110] Pratt, p. 4.

initial concerns all pertain to politeness and communication. First, she is concerned about the reliability of the car. She would prefer to rent an alternative vehicle but cannot find a polite way to suggest this without insulting or inconveniencing her host. Having established both his poverty and generosity, she remains silent and simply accepts his offer despite her reservations. She is also anxious to witness the transition from formal to familiar speech that she expects to occur during this trip: when the formal "you" becomes informal. Despite her many years in Brazil, she still has not mastered this shift in familiarity.

Rather than surrendering the narrative to endless description, in "Vigia" Bishop uses description to mark the passage of time, observing what is visible through the car window until the inevitable breakdown. Once the journey recommences, the description does as well. Bishop evokes the car's movement mimetically through syntax using choppy, staccato sentences:

> More pepper. A mud-and-wattle house or two. An oxcart: mild, lovely zebus with high humps and long hanging ears, blue-gray, a well-matched team. Skinny horses scrambled off into the bushes, or stood pat while we edged around them. A dismal mud-and-wattle church, half-painted bright blue: IGREJA BATISTA.[111]

Here, she finally finds a balance between poetic-prose and the more traditional short fiction that had begun to interest her more than a decade earlier. She paces these lines precisely through variation of sentence length and punctuation and abandons verbs to create a series of snapshots, like still lives seen from a moving car. Unlike "Aldous Huxley" with its ethnographic approach and insistent objectivity, these images are presented without interpretation. Bishop is still mediating Brazil for her reader but less intrusively by giving perceptions without reflection.

[111] *Pr*, p. 111.

As the journey progresses, Bishop begins to complicate the cultural interactions, setting the trip up for failure through a series of small missteps and frustrations. Ruy and Bishop, both poets and symbols of the literary arts, fail to have a conversation about poetry due to linguistic barriers. Bishop tries to tell a joke only to realize it does not translate. Both poets stay determinedly polite throughout, relying on manners to navigate cultural gaps. Meanwhile, Ruy frets about how his guests will respond to the church, which, according to Bishop, he fears "would be too "baroque" for us. Each time he said this, our imaginations added more belfries and a slightly wilder wave of carved stone."[112] Although Ruy is referring to a cultural artifact, he could just as easily be describing Brazil's excessive landscape, with its "too many waterfalls" and "crowded streams" and "so many clouds on the mountaintops" all of which "keep travelling, travelling."[113] His worry reflects that of a local concerned about a tourist's response to his country: *Will we be too much for our esteemed guest?*

Artistically, excess delighted Bishop, so Ruy's stop at a friend's simple home appears, at first, to be a misstep that further suggests the entire trip will end in polite, unacknowledged failure. His friend is not actually at home, and Ruy's friend's wife, caught by surprise, scrambles to welcome them:

> There was almost nothing in her kitchen except a black pot or two. The only signs of food were some overripe cucumbers on the windowsill. How had she managed to be so fat? The upside-down *cafezinho* cups were modestly hidden under a fringed napkin, with a little boy pushing a wheelbarrow embroidered in red outline. Dona Sebastiana had no white sugar, and she apologized for the cake of brown she scraped for us herself. We drank it down, the hot, bad, sad coffee, and went out back to see her river.[114]

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[113] "Questions of Travel" in *P*, p. 91.
[114] *Pr*, pp. 113-114.

Like the city of Brasília in the "Aldous Huxley" essay, Dona Sebastiana's home is marked by absence. Once again, guests and hosts participate in an expected ritual, despite it bringing pleasure to no one. However, this stop becomes pivotal to the story as it introduces a counterpoint to polite restraint.

Stepping outside, the tone changes entirely as Bishop finally finds beauty in this trip and begins to connect Brazilian nature to the baroque:

> It really was a beautiful river. It was four yards across, dark, clear, running rapidly, with white cascades and deep pools edged with backed-up foam, and its banks were a dream of the tropics. It splashed, it sang, it glittered over white pebbles. Little did it reck that it had almost reached the vast muddy bay, the mouth of the Amazon. It made up for a lot, and Dona Sebastiana was proud of it.[115]

By juxtaposing these indoor and outdoor scenes, Bishop heightens the contrast between the constraints of politeness and the lushness of nature. She introduces baroque elements through the personification of the cheerful river and the chiaroscuro of the white cascades and pebbles against the dark river. The archaic word "reck" cements the link between nature and the baroque in its allusion to "God's Grandeur" by Gerard Manley Hopkins: "Why do men then now not reck his rod?"[116] In this sonnet, Hopkins portrays a division between the unpleasantness of humanity's work and nature's ever replenishing beauty. Upon their initial arrival at Dona Sebastiana's home, Bishop observes "banana trees growing directly from the bare, swept earth" which recalls the line "the soil / Is bare now" from "God's Grandeur." Unlike Hopkins, Bishop does not construct a dichotomy — she seems perplexed by rules of decorum,

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[116] Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur by Gerard Manley Hopkins," Poetry Foundation (Poetry Foundation), accessed 7 August 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44395/gods-grandeur.

not upset up by them — but she finds solace in nature as he does, which counterbalances any failures of human connection.

In Vigia, to Ruy's relief, his guests assure him that they "liked the church very much,"[117] although when Bishop first sees it, she compares it to "a sacred bull, a great white zebu"[118] quite unlike the baroque monstrosity she had expected from Ruy's description. In her first compositional draft of this story, she remarks, "Well, there was the church. Heaven,s how ~~big~~ huge it looked -, but scarcely baroque" at all, to our eyes, white, solid, ~~almost~~ rectangular, bare."[119] In her revision, Bishop applies polite restraint, as though she does not want to hurt or offend Ruy, by emphasizing the church's size and pinnacled towers while excising its surprising plainness. Instead, she subtly counters the "baroque" claims of the church by describing its surrounding plaza's "lampposts stuck with round globes, like artificial pearls,"[120] a reference to the Portuguese etymology of "baroque," or: "*barroco* 'rough or Scotch pearl.'"[121] The "artificial pearls" indicate a false baroque.

Inside the church, Bishop is finally driven to break her politeness. The priest hands her a skull, and as he tells her its history, she realizes that she is holding the bones of a recently deceased priest rather than "some forgotten saint of the seventeenth century who had never been properly recognized."[122] Once again, the church in Vigia fails to be sufficiently baroque, in, what is to Bishop, a terrible manner. She breaks protocol by repeatedly trying to return the skull while the priest continues to speak. When they finally escape the dark church, Nature's presence overwhelms the scene: "In the high, high skies, shafts of long golden beams fell

[117] *Pr*, p. 114.
[118] *Ibid*.
[119] VCSC, f. 52.1.
[120] *Pr*, p. 114.
[121] Oxford English Dictionary, "baroque, adj. and n." *OED Online*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, June 2022), accessed 5 August 2022, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/15685.
[122] *Pr*, p. 115.

through the thunderclouds. Nature was providing all the baroque grandeur the place lacked."[123] Rather than God's grandeur, Nature once again repairs the failures of humanity.

At first, the image of the golden beams evokes the sublime with the light's vertical motion and the long vowel sounds, calling one to wonder, but Bishop swiftly grounds this lofty gesture through the heavy sounds of the phrase "baroque grandeur." She rejects the sublime moment with an immediate return to the mundane: "We started back to Belém, and it soon began to get really dark."[124] Bishop's "literal imagination" and her dedication to detail both subvert sentimental or idealized language. As discussed in Chapter Two, Bishop had encountered the sublime pull of the Brazilian landscape upon arrival via the mountains that seemed to intrude on one's mind. Yet she resisted this in "The Mountain" by personifying the landscape and giving it a querulous voice. In "Vigia's" tantalizingly sublime climax, Bishop once again returns to personification: this time of Nature itself. Bishop no longer has to constrain the scope of the Brazilian landscape to engage with it. In fact, she welcomes the excess that the church and the many, constrained social encounters could not provide. The phrase "baroque grandeur" combines Hopkins's poem and style, thus Nature imbues Brazil itself with Bishop's poetic values.

Bonnie Costello, as discussed earlier, claims that Bishop resists the sublime's "vertical thrust, turning instead 'to all that bright, detailed flatness' of the immediate world."[125] Bishop's allegiance, she argues, remains with the mutable world. In "Vigia," rather than contrasting stasis and change, Bishop considers the roles of restraint and excess. While she clearly responds to every moment of natural excess, politeness smooths the overall journey and plays an important social function. Ultimately, as with her unresolved poems, she does not choose one

[123] *Pr*, p. 115.
[124] *Ibid*.
[125] Costello, p. 91.

or the other. Rather, Bishop alternates between the two, playing counterpoint in both her prose and her poetics.

4.8 Essay Composition Revisited

The scene of the arrival at Vigia, besides marking the climax of the story, also reveals a poetic approach to composition that is rare in Bishop's prose drafts (Figure 12). While she typically corrects her travel essays by crossing out words and phrases and replacing them with more precise language (Figure 13), she rewrote the arrival paragraph several times on the same page. These changes show the "mind thinking" as she tries to precisely capture the experience of seeing the church for the first time. She repeatedly adjusts the perspective as well as the timing of each new perception.

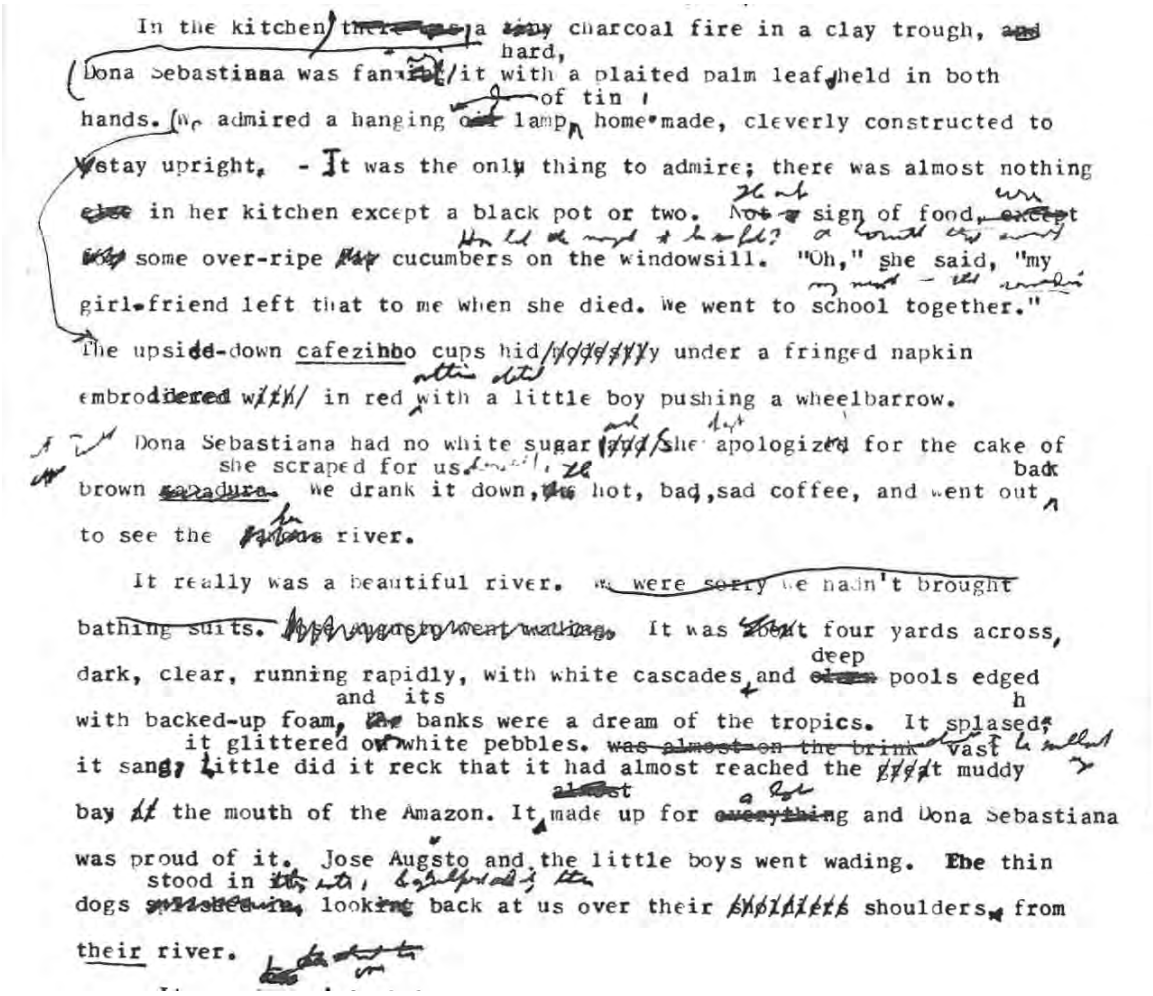
After a while, we got there. But first, from far off, we saw the ~~tpp~~ turreted tops of the ~~to~~ square big white towers of the church, dazzling white. The land lay so low now that they were visible for a long way pff, rising ~~ppppp~~/ above the tops of big black-green mango trees around them. It looked enormous, out of all proportion to the scenery, and how had it got there. We were nearing the mucky coasta - It looked like a great zebu a sacred bull, a great white zebu - like t e bull a great white zebu, the bull, and Europa had failed the rendezvous -

After a while we got there. But first, from far off, we saw thepinnacled tops of two square ~~wwiii~~ towers of the church, dazzling white against dark ~~ppppp/ppppp~~ rain-clouds. The land was flat now; we were near to the coast, and the towers were visibles/ a long way off, rising above what must be higer than what must be very high b~~ll~~// green-black mango trees around them.

After a while we got there. But first, from far off, we could see the pinnacled tops of two square towers, dazzling white aginst the dark rain-clouds.

After a while , we got there. But first we could see the ~~tops of two~~ pinnacled tops of two square towers, dazzling white aginst the dark rain-clouds. The road was level now, the landscape low and flat; we were near the coast. The towers could be seen a long way off, rising very high above what must have been higher than what must be very high green-black g the tops of bblackgreen mago trees - The round tops

Figure 12: Revision of the arrival scene in "A Trip to Vigia"


In the kitchen there was a charcoal fire in a clay trough, and
hard,
Dona Sebastiana was fanning it with a plaited palm leaf held in both
of tin
hands. We admired a hanging oil lamp, home-made, cleverly constructed to
stay upright. - It was the only thing to admire; there was almost nothing
else in her kitchen except a black pot or two. Not a sign of food, except
some over-ripe cucumbers on the windowsill. "Oh," she said, "my
girl-friend left that to me when she died. We went to school together."
The upside-down cafezinho cups hid under a fringed napkin
embroidered with in red with a little boy pushing a wheelbarrow.
Dona Sebastiana had no white sugar and she apologized for the cake of
she scraped for us.
brown rapadura. We drank it down, the hot, bad, sad coffee, and went out
to see the river.

It really was a beautiful river. We were sorry we hadn't brought
bathing suits. It was about four yards across,
dark, clear, running rapidly, with white cascades and deep pools edged
and its
with backed-up foam, the banks were a dream of the tropics. It splashed,
it glittered on white pebbles. was almost on the brink vast
it sang, little did it reck that it had almost reached the great muddy
almost
bay at the mouth of the Amazon. It made up for everything and Dona Sebastiana
was proud of it. Jose Augsto and the little boys went wading. The thin
stood in
dogs waded in, looking back at us over their shoulders, from
their river.

Figure 13: Typical prose revision process

As with "In the Village," Bishop aims for experiential accuracy, employing a similar, mimetic style of prose at the end of the story. The final, brief section switches to the present tense, bringing the reader even closer to the first-person point of view. In contrast to the urgency of the moment, the visit to the church recedes into a dreamlike distance:

> There wasn't even a light for miles, and never a car; we met two trucks and overtook two. Our eyes fastened on the slightest light or movement—an oil lamp, like an ancient Greek lamp, on a bicycle; a few people on foot carrying umbrellas.

> Then lights. We were coming to Belém. Lights on the mud walls and their political posters and endless slogans, with all the N's and S's written backwards. Tall narrow doorways, the murky light of an oil lamp, warm, yellow and black. A man carrying a lantern—oh, he's leading a cow and a calf. Goats. Look out, a zebu! We almost hit him, a high bony gray wall across the road. He lowered his horns sharply and snored softly.
>
> Suddenly we are in Belém. Huge black mango trees. Cars bumping over the cobblestones, bumpety-bump. How very, very bright this dim city can look! We ache in the dark. The church at Vigia, huge, white, alone on our consciences, has become a ghost story.[126]

Once again, Bishop briefly abandons verbs to mimic the experience of catching flashes of static images through the window of a moving car. In the darkness, lights attract her gaze, from building lights to the warm oil lamps. The verb tenses shift from past to present with an imperative interjected into the middle, demanding immediate attention. In the busy, dim present, Vigia fades into distant memory, too alien to feel real. The story ends in a café with Ruy once again performing an act of generosity by stealthily paying for his guests' drinks, although, as has been established, he cannot afford this. Bishop closes a story of manners with a gesture that demonstrates unshakeable politeness.

In "A Trip to Vigia," Bishop finally stops endlessly cataloguing details for the sake of thoroughness or due diligence and favors experiential accuracy over facts. Her most successful "travel essay" is not an essay at all but a story. In one of her early exchanges with White about possibly writing a short story collection, Bishop lists several topics of interest from Brazil, in addition to her Nova Scotian compositions. When met with White's enthusiasm, she hesitates

[126] *Pr*, p. 116.

and reverses course saying, “Once Sable Island and the Nova Scotian pieces are done I think I’ll take a rest and go back to poetry before I undertake the Brazilian cook. The trouble with her is she keeps right on happening, so that I’ll probably have to go back to Nova Scotia to do her justice.”[127] While both a comical statement and a reference the mysteries of geography that so intrigued her, Bishop also alludes to an aspect of her compositional process: in order to write a story, she must know its ending. This, in turn, suggests another reason she could not complete a travel essay: her journey was ongoing.

[127] *EBNY*, p. 90, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 25 October 1952.

5. The Amazon

Few places captured Bishop's imagination like the Amazon. From the moment she arrived in Brazil, she wanted to visit the region, and as with other planned travel, she prepared for this new place through reading, most notably an anthropological study of the region called *Amazon Town* by Charles Wagley.[1] As has been frequently noted, Bishop made the unusual decision to write a poem about the Amazon prior to visiting, composing it solely based on her research in what David Kalstone calls "a poem of expectation."[2] Given Bishop's commitment to accuracy, this was a significant break from her usual writing process and demonstrates the extent to which the idea of the Amazon captivated her. This poem, "The Riverman," was published in *The New Yorker* in 1959. In February 1960, Bishop finally visited the Amazon, and as was typical when she intended to compose poems and prose based on her travel, she kept comprehensive notes about her journey. Afterward she attempted to convey her experience through letters, essays, and poems; however, despite writing to Robert Lowell, "I want to go back to the Amazon. I dream dreams every night. I don't know why I found it so affecting,"[3] she struggled with her formal compositions.

"Santarém," her second published poem about the region, took nearly twenty years to compose, and she only completed it after permanently settling in Boston. Bethany Hicok attributes Bishop's completion of the poem to the loss of Brazil in a way that recalls interpretations of Bishop's Nova Scotian writings upon arrival in Brazil and the spatial, temporal, and emotional distance required to write about her childhood.[4] While Bishop may have completed "Santarém" due to the definitive break from her Brazilian life, she had also

[1] Charles Wagley, *Amazon Town A Study of Man in the Tropics* (New York: MacMillian, 1953), p. 231.
[2] Kalstone, p. 195.
[3] *WIA*, p. 316, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.
[4] Hicok, *Brazil*, p. 130.

been particularly determined to compose it. Having published a pre-Amazonian poem, she felt compelled to write "a post-Amazon Amazonian poem."[5]

In this chapter, I discuss four poems that were composed during three distinct periods in Bishop's life, beginning with "The Riverman," written before she visited the Amazon. Bishop composed "Song for the Rainy Season" and the unfinished fragment "On the Amazon" soon after her visit. Finally, she completed "Santarém" nearly two decades after her transformative journey. Naturally her poetics developed and changed during the intervening years, yet her attachment to the Amazon region and her desire to write a poem that conveyed her experience of it persisted. I analyze Bishop's attempts to write about the Amazon through indirect versus direct experience and demonstrate that to write "The Riverman," Bishop had to find a new way to create sense of place, whereas in "Santarém" she combines multiple modes of both poetry and placemaking to finally compose a sophisticated piece about the region.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, although Bishop did not visit the Amazon until 1960, she visited the Uialapiti tribe with Aldous Huxley and his entourage. Consequently, she became concerned with the survival of indigenous tribes in the face of modern expansion and contact. Although her travel essay about this experience failed, she quickly decided to "work on something more [her] natural bent"[6] and composed "The Riverman" within seven months, ending a nearly three-year break in poetry publication. The poem is a transitional piece in which Bishop attempts to reconcile dualities through hybridization. Unlike the "Aldous Huxley" essay, which constructs competing visions of Brazil, "The Riverman" uses aestheticized landscape to evoke an archetypical Amazonian village: an idea of a place rather than the place itself.

[5] *EBNY*, p. 230, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 9 June 1960.
[6] *OA*. p. 369, letter from Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann 4 December 1958.

"Song for the Rainy Season" describes Samambaia rather than the Amazon but was completed four months after her memorable visit. Bishop's correspondence regarding the poem reveals her increasing disquiet about her poetics in relation to Brazil. The trip to the Amazon had given her so much material that she began to resist its nearly magnetic pull by insisting that place names and locations were irrelevant to several of her Brazilian poems. While she began to write in a second person plural voice, signaling a closer relationship to her subject than before, she also insisted on distance and on maintaining a fracture between her Northern self and Southern locale.

By contrast, in the fragment "On the Amazon" Bishop attempts to capture a fleeting moment of dissolution at the end of the storm when water surrounds the boat, and the sun's rays shoot light and rainbows in all directions. While "The Riverman" is a dramatic monologue, "On the River" has no mediating persona and marks a true shift in Bishop's poetic approach to Brazil. "Santarém" eventually fulfills the promise of this fragment by combining the idea of binary opposition with this image of dissolution. Bishop returns to a theme that she introduced in "Arrival at Santos": the disjunction between place and the idea of place, but instead of probing the difference between expectation and reality, the speaker considers the relationship between place and memory, as in "Florida Revisited." Once Bishop can draw from her personal experience of the Amazon, she faces both narrative and metaphoric challenges. The Amazon at its junction of rivers is too easily symbolized, and therefore too easily trivialized through superficial metaphors, so she turns again to juxtaposition to forestall an overly romantic rendition of place.

5.1 Mediating Personas and Voices

As described in the previous chapters, when Bishop first arrived in Brazil, she struggled to find a vantage point from which to engage with her new country. Bishop did not finish many poems

during her first few years in Brazil, instead composing semi-autobiographical short stories. Then, from 1955 to 1956, she began to complete one poem after another. During these two years, *The New Yorker* accepted many of the poems that appear in the "Elsewhere" section of *Questions of Travel* along with Bishop's first "real" Brazilian poems, including "Squatter's Children," "Manuelzinho," "Questions of Travel," and "The Armadillo." Eleanor Cook divides *Questions of Travel* into three movements: the first poems are "centered on outsiders: tourists, explorers, travelers," the second "are at home only on sufferance: squatters and a 'half-squatter' gardener of sorts," and the third are "true poems of home."[7] The collection does not exactly follow Bishop's compositional timeline; rather, it mirrors the development of her poetics and approach to Brazil. As mentioned earlier, "Arrival at Santos" was composed before Bishop truly engaged with Brazil as a place, thereby differing in approach from her later poems. The Brazilian poems from 1955-1956 are set in and around Samambaia.

Cook's transitional category of those "only at home on sufferance" comprises figures who belong to Brazil, and, in part, define it — even if they do not have the right to inhabit it. Having lived in Brazil since 1951, Bishop recognized the sense of ambiguous belonging, but despite her familiarity with the people living near Samambaia, the accuracy and impact of her representation can be problematic.[8] As with the Uialapiti tribe who appear in the "Aldous Huxley" essay, Bishop depicts marginalized Brazilians but was herself white and comparatively wealthy. As described in the previous chapter, Bishop's awareness of the complexities of writing from a privileged place did not preclude her from succumbing to colonial tropes. The issue of orientation, as described by Sara Ahmed, further complicates

[7] Cook, p. 149.

[8] Sandeep Parmer, "Race," in *Elizabeth Bishop in Context* thoroughly critiques Bishop's work through a decolonial lens. Unlike many white critics who either praise or forgive Bishop's cross-cultural writing efforts, Parmer considers the poems from the perspective of those they supposedly represent, providing a much-needed assessment of why and how these poems are, in fact, troubling. Vidyan Ravinthiran offers a complicated and fascinating reading of "Manuelzinho" in "'Manuelzinho," Brazil and Identity Politics," in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion* that addresses dynamics of race and class and the gap between personal and dramatic voices.

matters. Bishop was queer and oriented herself towards other "outsiders." However, her orientation towards other "outsider" figures, while understandable, was not necessarily reciprocated. For the purposes of this chapter, I would simply like to note the disparity between her intentions and her representations. The class and race dynamics encoded in some of her poems are troubling; these compositions also served as a step in Bishop's ability to artistically engage with Brazil. Bishop was a cultural outsider, and although her status differed greatly from those she wrote about, imagining these voices and perspectives took her closer to composing direct, first-person poems about Brazil.

After the flood of publications from 1955-1956, Bishop entered a second quiet spell during which she primarily worked on her translation of *Minha Vida de Menina*, or *The Diary of "Helena Morley*." As with a dramatic monologue such as "Manuelzinho," translation involves assuming a persona, and here Bishop immersed herself in the language and voice of a young, Brazilian girl and continued her efforts to adopt (and adapt) Brazilian voices. During this second hiatus in poetic production, she concentrated on prose, just as she had done upon arrival in Brazil. Completing and publishing "The Riverman" thus marked a turning point in two ways. It was the first poem accepted and published by *The New Yorker* in three years and initiated the third stage of her Brazilian compositions. Bishop entered another productive period of poetic composition with "Brazil, January 1, 1502" following soon thereafter. Subsequent poems included "Electrical Storm," and "Song for the Rainy Season," both of which are firmly set in Brazil — neither on sufferance nor via a mediating persona.

Although most critics categorize "The Riverman" as the first of Bishop's "true" Brazilian poems, I read it as a transitional poem given its many layers of mediation. "The Riverman" is clearly distinct from the "second wave" poems. Unlike the children in "The Squatter's Children" or the gardener Manuelzinho, the riverman belongs to the land and to his community. Yet, as has been noted, Bishop based the poem on a section of *Amazon Town* by

Charles Wagley. She read about the person who inspired her character in an anthropological study on a region of the Amazon, an outsider's explanation of indigenous culture and practice, so this figure is doubly interpreted through a Western gaze, first by Wagley and then by Bishop. As the poem is also a dramatic monologue, Bishop mediates her idea of the Amazon through a persona without firsthand experience of either the place or the people.

Although Bishop does not hesitate to compose a dramatic monologue in the voice of an indigenous man, she does face a problem of accuracy: she must justify her composition despite her lack of direct experience. Bishop's drafts demonstrate her struggle to accurately situate this poem, and the number of times she rephrases and reframes her opening is striking. By citing Wagley's book as her source for the poem, she appears to be attempting to find a balance between authority and plausible deniability. Clearly, she has done her research, and therefore has the right to compose this poem. The academic nature of this text also seems important: Her poem derives from a rigorous study of the people of the region. But how much information does she need to include to establish her authority on the subject and thus the accuracy of her poem? Which details are necessary? And whose authority should she borrow through citation?

The first precompositional fragment begins:

> Juca becomes a Sacaca
>
> might become in a remoted village
>
> (This poem is supposed to tell the story of how a man in the Amzaonian region became a shaman, or witch doctor. True sacacas are very rare nowadasy; the usual wicth doctor is a page, a lower form who sometimes works with land spirits instead of river spirits. The names at the end are of famous sacacas of the past fifty years or

> ealrlier. The factual detail domes from AMAZON TOWN by
>
> and from conversations with Brasilian friends.[9]

Unlike the final draft of the poem's opening, this fragment begins by setting the poem's goal, which, like Juca, may or may not succeed. In this version, the riverman has a name, giving him a specific identity that sounds like it could be authentic. Then follows a description of different types of witch doctors in a hierarchy that valorizes shamans who work with river spirits instead of those of the land. Bishop mentions "true" sacacas as well as "famous" ones, which grounds this tale in reality. Both this taxonomy and the references to "today" and "fifty years" provide evidence of scientific expertise. Finally, Bishop credits both Wagley and local friends, acquiring her authority from diverse sources, which establishes the poem as both academically researched and commonly known. Essentially, she tries to preemptively cover every possible doubt regarding the poem's accuracy.

The published version of "The Riverman" takes a simpler approach, beginning with a gloss of the poem that is presented in the distanced manner of an encyclopedia entry:

> [A man in a remote Amazonian village decides to become a *sacaca*, a witch doctor who works with water spirits. The river dolphin is believed to have supernatural powers; Luandinha is a river spirit associated with the moon; and the *pirarucú* is a fish weighing up to four hundred pounds. These and other details on which this poem is based are from *Amazon Town*, by Charles Wagley.][10]

[9] VCSC, f. 57.16. My transcription includes Bishop's typographic errors and underlining.
[10] *P*, p. 103.

In “The Riverman,” Bishop employs two distinct voices to mediate this already mediated version of the Amazon: the ostensible authorial voice, which matches Wagley’s ethnographic tone, paradoxically deepening the sense of the poem’s Otherness, and the riverman’s voice. The phrase “is believed to have supernatural powers” signals that the author does not share these beliefs, which belong in this “remote” and obviously primitive place. Bishop juxtaposes magical beings with the weight of a fish, as if they were equally real or true. No sense of wonder or even curiosity disturbs this recitation of “facts”; thus, the tone, which seems both direct and objective, establishes authority. Foreign words are introduced and defined. Finally, framed by this Western voice, the dramatic monologue begins.

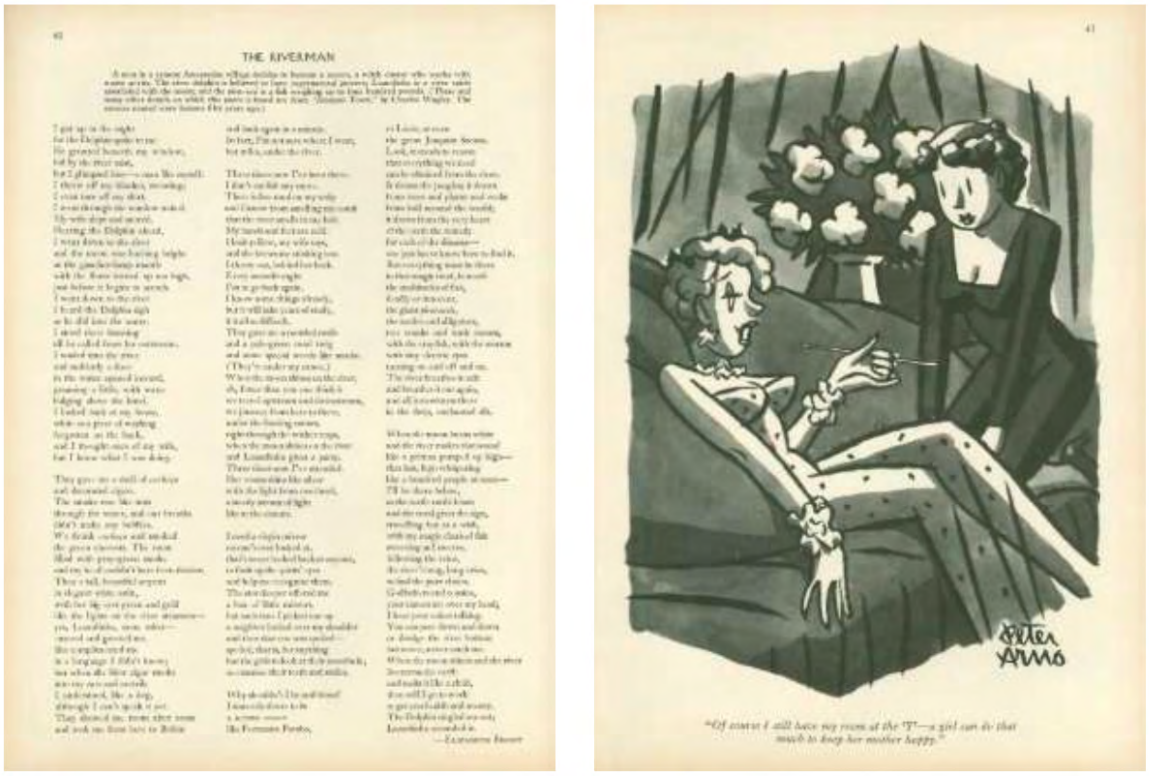

THE RIVERMAN

Figure 14: “The Riverman” as published[11]

[11] Elizabeth Bishop, “The Riverman,” *The New Yorker*, 25 March 1960, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1960/04/02/the-riverman.

Given that Bishop had not visited the Amazon prior to composing this poem, she expressed worry about inaccuracies in her correspondence. Victoria Harrison remarks on a letter Bishop wrote to Ashley Brown in which she elaborates on her concerns about the poem. Beyond her uncertainty about the poem's accuracy, Bishop wanted to make Brazil accessible to her readers, yet Harrison describes "The Riverman" as "constructed out of [Bishop's] own alienation from the place"[12] which serves to exoticize Brazil and to estrange her audience from the place. Despite Bishop's desire for accessibility, *The New Yorker* further exoticized the poem by placing it next to a full-page cartoon of white women at a cocktail party. The contrast between the far-off magic of the first and the modernity of the second is jarring. This layout adds yet another mediating layer for the audience, thereby increasing the distance between place and representation. "The Riverman" in published form becomes not only Bishop's idea of the Amazon, but also *The New Yorker*'s framing of Bishop's interpretation of Wagley's study *Amazon Town*.

5.2 "*Accuracy, Spontaneity, Mystery*"

As has already been noted, Bishop valued "*Accuracy, Spontaneity, Mystery*"[13] in her poetics. With "The Riverman," the latter two elements were easily attainable. Her subject matter offered many potential mysteries, and dramatic monologues permit an immediacy of voice that favors spontaneity. Yet, the problem of accuracy remained and preoccupied Bishop, who expressed deep ambivalence about this poem in her correspondence. When she sent "The Riverman" to Howard Moss at *The New Yorker*, she dismissively called it an "anthropological number" and suggested that he forward it to *Partisan Review* if he did not want it. [14] The magazine's response was unexpected. Moss accepted it by telegram, and Katharine White was thrilled with Bishop's

[12] Harrison, p. 157.
[13] *Pr*, p. 393.
[14] *EBNY*, p. 209, letter from Bishop to Howard Moss, 11 June 1959.

"first poem since 1956" accepted by *The New Yorker*, which was "Worth waiting for! For me, it's a magical poem that casts a spell — one of your very best."[15] The proofs were returned one month after the poem's acceptance with minor editorial notes, mainly concerning the standardization of spelling. White told Bishop that they had "followed Webster, as always, in the matter of your hyphenated words, making them a compound word or two separate words or leaving them with your hyphen as this dictionary says."[16] Given the number of hyphenated words, White wondered about the intended effect, but she thought the poem was easier to follow when "Riverman" was always one word while "river mist" and "river dolphin" remained separate. She also noted that they "followed Wagley in the matter of accents and spellings of the foreign words and names"[17] which were also inconsistent throughout the poem. Bishop accepted the changes with a small clarification regarding punctuation, explaining that she had wanted readers to know how to pronounce Portuguese words and names but preferred the text without additional marks. In essence, she was attempting to balance accuracy with aesthetics, and in this case accepted her editor's advice to err on the side of simplicity rather than over explanation.

Bishop told Dr. Anny Baumann that she had started to work on "a whole group of poems again at last, thank heavens" and explained that "The Riverman" "…is the one I like the least, so I thought I'd send it off first."[18] This was typical of Bishop, who had treated her earlier, autobiographical short stories in a similar fashion. She hoped to send Pearl Kazin "something much better"[19] than "The Riverman" and assured Robert Lowell, "You don't have to like the "Riverman" poem. Lota hates it, and I don't approve of it myself but once it was written I couldn't seem to get rid of it. Now I am doing an authentic, post-Amazon, one that I trust will

[15] *Ibid*., p. 210, Western Union telegram from *The New Yorker* to Bishop, 2 July 1959.
[16] *EBNY*, pp. 212-213, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 3 August 1959.
[17] *EBNY*, p. 213, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 3 August 1959.
[18] *OA*, p. 373, letter from Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 9 July 1959.
[19] *Ibid.,* p. 376, letter from Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 9 September 1959.

be better…"[20] While Bishop's ambivalence arose from her concerns about accuracy, later in this letter she mentions that "Lota refuses to have anything to do with anything Brazilian or 'primitive'"[21] so their shared skepticism of the poem may have had different aesthetic origins. Lowell assured Bishop, "I wouldn't worry about the Amazon poem — it's the best fairy story in verse I know"[22] which provided some comfort. She replied, "You made me feel somewhat better about 'The Riverman' by calling it a 'fairy tale."[23] This, after all, addresses the root of Bishop's anxiety: a lack of accuracy that renders the poem inauthentic.

Still, after visiting the Amazon she expressed relief that she had not been wrong in her depiction, telling White, "I was afraid I'd find I'd made mistakes in 'The Riverman," but I hadn't. I saw a great many 'dolphins' (river porpoises, really), pink and black — the pink ones bring good luck."[24] Again, her attention is on "accuracy" and her fear of misrepresentation, although these comments pertain specifically to the visual description of place, not to the indigenous tribe or culture. Seeing a dolphin was enough to reassure her. Bishop had not described the dolphin's appearance in the poem, which had helped forestall a possible inaccuracy. In terms of poetic value, although the poem may not have offered an authentic portrayal of the Amazon, at least it was not factually incorrect, and the simple existence of river dolphins shifted Bishop's assessment of it.

5.3 Binary Oppositions and *Amazon Town*

In the previous chapter, I discussed Bishop's construction of two, contrasting images of Brazil in the "Aldous Huxley" essay: the modern versus the indigenous. While she clearly favored the latter, she closed the piece by bypassing this dichotomy and considering the Brazilian

[20] *WIA*, p. 315, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 318, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.
[22] *WIA,* p. 321, letter from Lowell to Bishop, 28 April 1960.
[23] *WIA*, p. 327, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 19 May 1960.
[24] *EBNY,* p. 230, letter from Lowell to Bishop, 11 September 1957.

people instead of Brasília as a place. Although "The Riverman" is set in one place and features one central figure, several binary oppositions exist within the poem. The beginning frames them as choices: When the Dolphin calls him, should the riverman follow into the underwater world? He says, "I looked back at my house, / … / and I thought once of my wife, / but I knew what I was doing."[25] With the decision made quickly, the poem considers instead what it means to exist in a hybrid state. The title "The Riverman" itself suggests hybridity: a melding of man and environment. While Bishop's source text for the poem, *Amazon Town* by Charles Wagley, establishes several oppositions in the real Gurupá tribe and amongst the *sacacas* he interviewed, Bishop fictionalized her riverman's dualities, prioritizing the relationship between the character and place rather than social or cultural dichotomies.

By basing her dramatic monologue on a text, Bishop knew the basic narrative prior to writing: this would be the story of a man becoming a *sacaca* (or indigenous shaman) told in the first person. Unlike poems that she composed from direct experience, she wrote very little precompositional material for "The Riverman." Rather than finding the precise phrase to describe some phenomenon as it occurred, she selected which details to include from the source text and how to inhabit them. In the book's preface, Wagley details his experience of Brazil and specifies that most of the research was conducted during the summer of 1948. The book was published in 1953, not long after Bishop's arrival in Brazil, and reflects a post-war vision of modernity and progress. *Amazon Town* includes the subtitle "A Study of Man in the Tropics" which clearly outlines its purpose. Wagley worked with Brazilian locals, who conducted and facilitated interviews with him of the Gurupá tribe (which he pseudonymized as "Itá" in the text). As Bethany Hicok remarks, "Wagley adopts a style in this chapter that allows his interviewees to speak for themselves for long stretches of the narrative, so the effect is that we,

[25] *P*, p.103.

as readers, are able to adopt different points of view as we move through their stories."[26] She identifies the figure of Satiro from *Amazon Town* as the basis of the riverman, and this name is handwritten in the margin of Bishop's first draft of the poem along with a list of "famous" *sacacas* that is also taken from the text.

Despite the tone and rhetoric of Wagley's study, which attempts to be objective but as a result exoticizes the Gurupá people, Wagley describes a complex society in which indigenous belief and Catholicism co-exist. He ends his chapter on the tribe's spiritual and religious practices with these contradictions: that the Gurupá tribe can follow two, conflicting belief systems and that while colonization has impacted their culture, they have managed to maintain their own. This is the kind of observation that Bishop normally makes during her travels and that she eventually incorporated into "Santarém," her "true" Amazonian poem. However, "The Riverman" does not engage this aspect of Wagley's research and instead focuses exclusively on the shamanic religion.

Part of the revision process for this poem involved finding the right name for the riverman's role. At first Bishop follows Wagley and calls him a shaman, an unambiguously indigenous figure whose title connotes a certain mysticism. Yet in subsequent drafts, she changes "shaman" to "witch-doctor," a composite term like "river-man" that combines magic and science, or in Wagley's worldview, indigenous and modern practices. This is notable given that Bishop ignores the central paradox of Wagley's chapter: that the tribe concurrently practices indigenous and Christian faiths. Instead, she establishes a binary of native/modern or magical/mundane. In Bishop's version of the Amazon, the two elements do not oppose each other; rather, they coexist as part of her speaker's identity.

The world of Bishop's riverman is also conventionally gendered, although Wagley specifies that women can be *sacacas* and that shamans can be possessed by spirits of either

[26] Hicok, p. 125.

gender. In *Amazon Town*, Satiro attempts to heal a member of Wagley's team, and they observe the process, which he begins "in the traditional manner" although his methods are generally "not as traditional" as those of "better known"[27] shamans. During the treatment, Satiro is possessed by a spirit, who "was obviously a female, because he began to sing in high falsetto and his movements were dainty."[28] This altered manner lasts until the session ends and the spirit departs his body. In contrast, two women appear in "The Riverman": the wife who belongs to the mundane, surface world and Luandinha, the snake-shaped goddess who reigns below the Amazon. The Dolphin and the famous *sacacas* are all male, and Bishop's narrator does not channel any spirits, only meets them, avoiding the possibility of gender fluidity or confusion. Instead, the women associated with the riverman represent multiple dualities: water/land, nature/society, and travel/home. The riverman, given these various options, selects all of them. In doing so, he must transform into a hybrid being who can exist in two, wildly different environments.

While Luandinha and the wife stay in their respective domains of water and land, "The Riverman" is populated by hybrid creatures, beginning with the Dolphin, who is described in both animal and human terms, at first grunting and then sighing. From the earliest drafts, Bishop attributes hybridity to these magical beings who can cross between worlds. In the second draft's margin, Bishop adds the line, "but I glimpsed him, a man like myself" to clarify that this character is understood to be both a dolphin (or boto) and a person. The human-like figure's true dolphin nature seems inexplicably understood in the manner of a dream. As the riverman spends more time underwater, he undergoes a transformation, turning both yellow and cold-blooded, and he reports, "There is fine mud on my scalp / and I know from smelling

[27] Wagley, p. 231.
[28] *Ibid*.

my comb / that the river smells in my hair."[29] Place changes his physique, becoming part of him as man/animal and person/environment merge.

Despite the magic, the riverman quickly learns the limitations of his hybridity. Luandinha breathes smoke into his ears and nostrils, giving him a dog-like understanding of what is said but an inability to communicate. He cannot identify magical spirits without the help of a virgin mirror, but every time he reaches for one at the local shop, "a neighbor looked over my shoulder / and then that one was spoiled –."[30] Becoming part fish, he no longer consumes it, and his wife worries about his color and coldness. She tries, ineffectively, to help: "…she brews me stinking teas / I throw out, behind her back."[31] Ultimately, "The Riverman" can have both worlds, but only partially. He must constantly move between the underwater and surface worlds, with the former only accessible by the light of the moon and the latter only granting him limited access to magical power. Transformation, it appears, generates its own problems, which arise at the intersection of the worlds, when one side of his life intrudes on the other.

Victoria Harrison interprets "The Riverman" as a story "of two worlds— the pagé under the sea and the poor godson, cousin, and husband of a snoring wife, who wants to make good for his family."[32] In this depiction of the riverman, Harrison finds a parallel to Bishop's life and says that both the character and the poet "are of two worlds, their prose and lyric overlapping, their desire for clear-sighted access to a compelling mystery similarly thwarted by the limitations of their own perspective.[33]" Harrison identifies a desire to access a visible yet unreachable space and claims that the riverman's attempts to belong to the underwater world resemble Bishop's cross-cultural navigation. She finds a light humor in the poem's

[29] *P*, p. 104.
[30] *P*, p. 105.
[31] *P*, p. 104.
[32] Harrison, p. 157.
[33] *Ibid*.

suggestion that "'…pure, unmediated knowledge of another's spirit… as all the river man requires and all Bishop would need in order to be conversant with Brazilian difference."[34] Both Bishop and her character attempt to cross a liminal space in an authentic way. By contrast, Melissa Zeiger connects this poem to breath and the "crucial literal and figurative ability to breathe and to the threat of suffocation" which she links "to questions of poetic freedom and constraint."[35] Bishop's newfound productivity upon completion of this poem results from resolving doubts.[36] Sarah Kennedy, in the same volume of essays, argues that "The Riverman" represents a "swerve," which means "to debate, to transgress and to stray. The motion encompasses the strategic (deliberate deviation) and the responsive (deflection)" which Kennedy links to Merleau-Ponty's "image of the *chiasm,* the criss-crossing interplay between flesh and world."[37] In the riverman's transformation, Kennedy finds the "gradual interpenetration of mind and environment."[38] Harrison and Kennedy both identify different sets of binaries within the poem, the first between mind and environment, and the second between two disparate cultures. Somehow in this poem these oppositions must be spanned or synthesized. In Kennedy's reading, the reconciliation stems from acceptance of this exchange of elements, whereas Harrison notes the impossibility of what is being attempted: an unmediated understanding of a foreign epistemology.

The focus on boundaries and their potential porousness is typical of Bishop's work. Beginning with "The Map," she shows interactions between elements rather than conflict or difference. Bishop does not represent land and water as disparate spaces that need to be bridged; rather, the liminal points of intersection have their own epistemology that encompasses both

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[35] Melissa Zeiger, "Elizabeth Bishop's Immersion in 'The Riverman,'" in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*, p. 49.
[36] Zeiger, p. 56.
[37] Sarah Kennedy, "'Swerving as I Swerve': Elizabeth Bishop's Fugitive Empathy," in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*, p. 118.
[38] *Ibid*, p. 119.

land and water. The riverman, as a hybrid figure, can access every space but cannot stay in any of them. Returning to the opening of the poem and the two, distinct voices who mediate Bishop's idea of the Amazon, one can argue in favor of both the intellectual and the imagined experiences of place. Both provide access; however, neither is enough.

5.4 Space, Time, and Personification

While "The Riverman" can be read as either a combination or a juxtaposition of identities, it is not a poem of place, as some of Bishop's "second wave" dramatic monologues and persona poems had been. The "Squatter's Children" inhabit a land that is not their own, observed from a distance "[o]n the unbreathing sides of hills,"[39] a strange opening that recalls the "self-pitying mountains"[40] in "Arrival at Santos" and the querulous figure of "The Mountain" itself. The character of Manuelzinho similarly occupies land, or attempts to, and meets endless, surprising failure. The riverman, by contrast, is not an occupant but a person who truly belongs to the place where he lives with a calling to deepen that connection. However, as has been established, Bishop had not visited the Amazon prior to composing "The Riverman," and she was concerned about possible inaccuracies. While she could research and read about *sacacas*, when writing about place, her compositional method relied on observation and evoking the "mind thinking." Without direct experience of place, she depicted an archetype instead, an idea of the Amazon rather than the Amazon itself. To keep this prototypical Amazonian town from becoming too static, Bishop used routines and temporality to create a sense of place out of placelessness.

While the riverman constantly moves throughout the poem, from the very first draft the Amazon is essentially "placeless." Bishop's descriptions typically include ever shifting colors

[39] *P*, p. 93.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

— of the map, of the fish, of Brazilian nature — and yet in a poem about the Amazon, she relies solely on green, yellow, and white. Luandinha is dressed in "elegant white satin, / with her big eyes green and gold"[41] and as the riverman transforms, his skin turns "yellow."[42] He receives a "pale-green coral twig" and the moon casts a "silver" light on Luandinha's rooms.[43] Later the moon "burns white."[44] The description reads flatly, as if in a dream. Despite the dreamlike aspects of this place, however, Bishop does not describe the underwater realm, which would push this dramatic monologue too far into fantasy. The riverman enters Luandinha's domain through a door which has a lintel and opens inward with a physicality that much of the rest of the poem lacks. On land, the riverman's house is mentioned along with washing, but even the shop is not mentioned — only the shopkeeper. Underwater, the spirits showed him "room after room," [45] but what does this mean? Do the spirits share a palace? Are these rooms made of water, like the doorway into this realm? Do they exist materially or only conceptually?

Even the riverman's travels occur in a disoriented manner. The spirits took him "from here to Belém / and back again in a second," [46] and "faster than you can think it / we travel upstream and downstream, we journey from here to there."[47] Place breaks down into axes of here/there and up/down, situating these spirits everywhere and nowhere at once. The riverman does not even know where he is beyond "miles, under the river." [48] On land, however, the riverman's disorientation results from an oblique shadow cast by the spirit world. At first, the Dolphin was "hid by the river mist,"[49] but once the riverman is initiated into this magical world, they all smoke together, and "[t]he smoke rose like mist / through the water, and our breaths /

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[45] *P*, p. 104.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] *Ibid*.
[48] *Ibid*.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

didn't make any bubbles."[50] Luandinha gives the riverman access to language through smoke, as well, but he can only see this world "when the moon shines on the river." Even when he shops for a virgin mirror, a tool he needs for his new craft, he cannot gaze into it directly. The mirror can only be regarded sideways in order to glimpse members of the spirit world. He hides the objects given to him by the spirits under his canoe, a location that is mentioned parenthetically, hiding it away from the surface world.

Although Bishop cannot seem to situate this poem through physical or spatial descriptions, her version of the Amazon is not, in fact, "placeless." In developing the idea of placelessness, Edward Relph first describes place as a sense that is developed "in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual, routine, other people, personal experiences, case and concern for home, and in the context of other places."[51] At the heart of place is openness and authenticity, which relates to one's willingness to engage with the surrounding environment. While the industrial world might appear homogenous or placeless due to a lack of unique characteristics, he stresses that "placelessness is an attitude and an expression of that attitude."[52] He singles out mass tourism as one of the most "inauthentic" attitudes towards place, "for in tourism individual and authentic judgement about places is nearly always subsumed to expert or socially accepted opinion, or the act and means of tourism become more important than the places visited."[53] In this sense, "Arrival at Santos" depicts "placelessness" more precisely than does "The Riverman" in which the speaker is so invested in his surrounding environment that he merges with it.

Furthermore, spatiality only comprises one part of place sense. Unable to rely on sensory perception, Bishop instead establishes a sense of place through temporality. As described in Chapter One, Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift identified a temporal aspect of

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 104.
[51] Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976), p. 29.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[53] *Ibid.,* p. 83.

place through the development of a routine. Bishop specifies that the riverman has visited this underwater realm three times, a magic number.[54] Only the first visit is fully described as the latter ones replicate the experience, assimilating and normalizing a behavioral shift. A stanza break shows the passage of time, and within that visual break, the journey becomes routine — so much so that the riverman himself experiences physical transformation. Soon he travels "every moonlit night" with the spirits "upstream and downstream" and "from here to there," and the implacement that Edward S. Casey describes occurs through these repeated encounters.[55]

After establishing this new routine, the riverman shares a slight adjustment: "Luandinha gives a party. / Three times now I've attended." Then the description offers a temporal surprise:

> Her rooms shine like silver
> with the light from overhead,
> a steady stream of light
> like at the cinema.[56]

Until this point, the poem seems somewhat timeless, or perhaps set in a period of early industrialization. In the opening, the riverman compares the light of the moon to a gasoline-lamp and mentions "…a piece of washing / forgotten on the bank."[57] These details establish an expectation of a village that has not yet been electrified. Luandinha's eyes are compared to the lights on a river steamer, which is temporally ambiguous. Thus, the cinema feels anachronistic with contemporary technology and culture intruding on what had until that moment appeared

[54] For a discussion of Bishop's specific love of the number three, see Katherine Mayson, "Elizabeth Bishop and 'a Bad Case of the *Threes,*'" in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*.
[55] Casey, p. 29.
[56] *P*, p. 105.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

to be a mostly "primitive" village. The juxtaposition of these temporal elements energizes the composition, which reads like a more classic "Bishop poem" with the startling observation that reframes the scene and forces the reader to incorporate jarring new information.

Lorrie Goldensohn interprets the "disjunctive weaving of industrial objects with the organic world of the river"[58] as a "tactic" of defamiliarization and remarks on the "persuasive junction of prosaic and exotic."[59] Items like the primus stove and gasoline-lamp serve to accentuate the differences between the magical world below the river and the manufactured world above, returning to the notion of opposition within the poem. In considering this poem as depicting an "idea" of the Amazon, Bishop's real concerns about modernization and indigenous culture intrude on this imagined space. The repeated romantic language about the moonlit night and the beautiful Luandinha are disrupted by "the worms / with tiny electric eyes" and the river making a sound like "a primus pumped up high," indications that nature and industry have also begun to merge.

In addition to temporal placemaking, Bishop employs a classic device to evoke sense of place: personification. As in "A Trip to Vigia," Bishop personifies the river, and, once again, she subverts a romantic image. This river, instead of nourishing the earth as one might typically expect,

> It drains the jungles; it draws
> From trees and plants and rocks
> From half around the world,
> It draws from the very heart
> of the earth the remedy

[58] Lorrie Goldensohn, *Elizabeth Bishop: The Biography of a Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 217.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

for each of the diseases –

one just has to know how to find it.[60]

Whether this river is intentionally acquisitive or not, it siphons "the pure elixirs" from the land – some primal life force, which Bishop later reframes as, "When the moon shines and the river / lies across the earth / and sucks it like a child…,"[61] but in either case, the river takes, and the riverman's role is to restore balance, claiming some of the accumulated hoard for society above.

5.5 Coda: Vocation

Returning to the opening of the first draft of this poem, at its core, "The Riverman" is "supposed to tell the story" of a man becoming a *sacaca*. The dramatic monologue is, after all, a narrative form, and the drafts reveal a startlingly simple narrative: one of vocation. The first precompositional fragment begins with an apostrophe, and the riverman calls on Boto the Dolphin and Luandinha. By the second fragment, however, this invocation disappears. Instead, the riverman responds to the Dolphin's call. Then follows the riverman's initiation, where he is given tools of this craft and time to learn and to practice it.

The first full draft of the poem ends with a prayer to Luandinha and the Dolphin: "Mother of Waters, teach me! / Father of Dolphins, guide me!" As with the introductory text, Bishop continuously adjusted these final lines. Her revisions attempt to balance the spirits' promises with the riverman's hopes and desires. Ultimately, the riverman is cast as a "Chosen One," and the poem ends with, "The Dolphin singled me out / and Luandinha agreed" rather than a request for a blessing. The poem's overarching narrative then becomes a response to a

[60] *P*, p. 106.
[61] *P*, p. 106.

calling and an enthusiastic acceptance of that role. After all, the Riverman asks: "Why shouldn't I be ambitious? / I sincerely desire to be / a serious *sacaca*."[62] With this sibilance reinforcing the riverman's transformation, he says that he "will go to work / to get you health and money."[63]

For Bishop, "The Riverman" served the dual purpose of firstly imagining the Amazon, a magical place that she longed to visit, and secondly considering the demands of a vocation. The paragraph in *Amazon Town* that most directly corresponds to "The Riverman" is about Satiro's efforts to learn his craft. Wagley portrays a sympathetic figure but seems unsure that Satiro will achieve his goal, unlike Bishop's confident *sacaca*. In fact, "The Riverman" tells the story of Satiro's expectations, not his accomplishments. He says that he cannot yet travel underwater but "[he] believes that he will one day be able to travel under water and visit the great water snake" and there "he expects to receive his *maracá* (rattle) from the very mouth of a giant water snake."[64] Bishop gives her riverman the tools and power that Satiro desires.

Goldensohn remarks that "[w]hat makes ['The Riverman'] rich is the exploration of the ironic gap between the pretended speaker of dramatic monologue, and the voice of the poet herself, exploring her own disconnections and powers."[65] By the end of the poem, the riverman is sure of his abilities and ambitious in his pursuit, and that spirit fills the next phase of Bishop's Brazilian compositions as she finally writes her "true" poems of home. While Bishop inhabits this character and writes through his first-person perspective, demonstrating a marked change from her earlier poetic compositions, the riverman serves as an intermediary until she can relate her firsthand experience of the Amazon.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[63] *Ibid.,* p. 107.
[64] *P,* p. 232.
[65] Goldensohn, p. 209.

5.6 Resisting Brazil

In June 1960, four months after Bishop's trip to the Amazon, she sent the poem "Song for the Rainy Season" to White, which, like "Manuelzinho" and "Squatter's Children" is set at Samambaia. In the brief cover letter, Bishop mentions two Amazon poems, first expressing her relief that she had not made mistakes in "The Riverman" and then saying that she was "working on a post-Amazon Amazonian poem."[66] She offers little context for the new Samambaia poem, only noting that she had probably missed White's local rainy season. As with "Electrical Storm," which *The New Yorker* accepted in November 1959, "Song for the Rainy Season" marks a minor shift in Bishop's Brazilian poems. Rather than mediating her experience of place through figures who occupy the land "on sufferance,"[67] she instead employs the second person plural, as if she had developed a direct connection to the surrounding landscape but could not yet claim these places herself. Despite this newfound intimacy in her tone and the domesticity of "the house we live in"[68] and "our small shadowy / life,"[69] her correspondence with White and Lowell reveals a deeper conflict in Bishop's relationship to Brazil: she resists her growing closeness to the country just as it deepens and instead searches for fractures within her work.

White "delightedly" acquired "Song for the Rainy Season" and remarked that while the magazine wanted to clarify a few minor points, their main hope was that Bishop might "be willing to *place* this rainy season in the title, or in a subtitle" and that the title "should carry the word 'Brazil' or a recognizable Brazilian place name."[70] When Bishop first sent what she had called "the 'January'" poem ("Brazil, January 1, 1502") to White, she acknowledged the title "would have to say 'Brazil' I suppose," accurately predicting White's editorial comment, but she preemptively explained that this would not be necessary for "Electrical Storm" as "the

[66] *EBNY*, p. 230, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 9 June 1960.
[67] Cook, p. 149.
[68] *P*, p. 99.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[70] *EBNY*, p. 232, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 5 July 1960.

place doesn't matter"[71] in that poem. By late 1959, even before her transformative trip to the Amazon, Bishop had begun to resist being cast as a poet who solely produced work about Brazil. The presence of Tobias the cat situates "Electrical Storm" at Samambaia, but aside from that minor biographical detail, the poem could take place anywhere that has hail, "red ground," and "Lent trees."[72] White accepted "Electrical Storm" with few editorial comments and tacitly agreed that the setting could remain unspecified.

For "Rainy Season," White justified the request for a place name by saying, "The natural scene here is so exotic that the reader really craves to know the locale."[73] This instantly differentiates the poem from "Electrical Storm," which depicts a hailstorm from the inside of a house but makes little reference to the external setting. "Rainy Season," by contrast, describes an immediately recognizable landscape with the mountain and waterfalls that recur in many of Bishop's Brazilian poems. However, as in her response to the "Gwendolyn" editorial letter, Bishop resists naming a location, and she offers multiple explanations for this hesitation. Unlike her responses to the editorial comments on her short prose, Bishop does not disparage *The New Yorker*'s request. Instead, she tells White:

> …the poem is not specific. In fact, I think it could apply to any rainy season, any place that there was a big rock and a brook and a waterfall or two. (It works equally well for a month I once stayed in the Great Smokies in a mountain house, when it rained a lot.) I would very much like to avoid labeling more poems "Brazil"… I don't want to become a local-color poet any more than I can help.

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 218, letter from Bishop to Katherine White, 15 October 1959.
[72] *P*, p. 98.
[73] *EBNY*, p. 232, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 5 July 1960.

As a compromise, she suggests changing the title to "Song for *a* Rainy Season"[74] to create distance for readers who "associate" her with Brazil. Bishop appears to claim that the only reason one might find this poem to be "exotic" is due to her biography rather than the richly described landscape. Her reluctance to be classified as a "local-color poet" is consistent with her later refusal to be published in "feminist" anthologies. She wanted to be a poet, not a subcategory. Bishop then changes tactics and suggests that she's "afraid of cluttering" the reader's mind 'with extraneous palm-trees, deadly snakes, etc." In other words, she wants to create a sense of place without interference from the reader's assumptions or expectations, as she had explained in her "Gwendolyn" response. Finally, she somewhat ludicrously tells White, "If you pretend my poem came with a New Hampshire – or West Coast address on it, I am sure you will see what I mean…,"[75] arguing once again for the placelessness of this poem and that its placedness only arises through association.

Of all the rationales against locating "Song for the Rainy Season," Bishop's aversion to being overly identified with Brazil appears to be central. One month before her Sable Island visit, while working on *A Cold Spring*, Bishop remarked to Lowell that upon rereading her collection, she found that she was "a minor female Wordsworth"[76] because no other contemporary writer appeared to love nature as she does.[77] Her trip to the Amazon affirmed her love of all things natural; however, by the end of the journey, she had too much material, and she expressed a larger fear about the potential impact of Brazil on her poetics to Lowell:

[74] *The New Yorker* published the poem as "Song for a Rainy Season." Bishop changed the title back to "Song for the Rainy Season" in *Questions of Travel*, and I will refer to it by the latter title for consistency.
[75] *EBNY*, p. 233, letter from Bishop to Katharine White, 17 July 1960.
[76] *WIA*, p. 122, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 11 July 1951.
[77] See Charles J. Rzepka, "Elizabeth Bishop and the Wordsworth of Lyrical Ballads," Romantic Circles, 1 November 1999, accessed 25 October 2022, https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/lyrical/rzepka/bishop.html for a brief overview of criticism on Bishop and Wordsworth.

> … I worry a great deal about what to do with all this accumulation of exotic or picturesque or charming detail, and I don't want to become a poet who can only write about South America, etc. It is one of my greatest worries now, how to use everything and keep on living here, most of the time, probably and yet be a New Englander-herring-choker-bluenoser at the same time…[78]

Even after nearly nine years, Bishop qualifies her residence in Brazil as "most of the time, probably," not permanent, and contrasts her South American life with her New England self. Her relationship to Brazil has changed, and instead of struggling to write poems about her adopted home, she now has the opposite problem of producing too much place-specific work. She wants to write about more than Brazil and fears both pigeonholing herself as an artist and becoming a merely descriptive poet, which means maintaining the fracture between places so that she can filter Brazil through her New England sensibility instead of entirely succumbing to Brazil's charms and allowing it to overwhelm her typical reserve. This tension prompts her to extract Brazilian poems from their place-specific contexts whenever possible. "Brazil, January 1, 1502," was about "a real historical event and the real landscape it took place in,"[79] so the location was necessary. "Electrical Storm" and "Song for the Rainy Season," by contrast, had no external rationale for a place name.

Of Bishop's Brazil poems, however, "Song for the Rainy Season" is possibly the most specific to Samambaia, the modernist home she and Lota shared. From the first line, the imagery recalls Bishop's letters describing the fog and the clouds that surround the mountain where "the lint / of the waterfalls cling, / familiar, unbidden."[80] These are the "unwiped"[81] waterfalls of "The Mountain," which, after years of living in Samambaia, no longer looms in

[78] *WIA*, p. 317, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.
[79] *EBNY*, p. 233, letter from Bishop to White, 17 July 1960.
[80] *P*, p. 99.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Bishop's mind, having become familiar. Instead, the house and its placement within this obscured landscape becomes the central focus, and the mountain, represented without personification, recedes into the background as part of the terrain that surrounds the home. In fact, the landscape surrounds and protects the house, giving a feeling of enclosure and separation from the outside world.

As in her "Aldous Huxley" essay and in "The Riverman," Bishop once again personifies water. The "brook sings," but in this place, the voice emerges "from a rib cage / of giant fern,"[82] as though the land has a body. Samambaia, of course, means giant fern, so Bishop alludes to her Brazilian home in the poem despite her protestations that it could be set anywhere. The vapor that rises from this "thick growth" behaves not like breath from lungs but another form of protective enclosure, "holding them both, / house and rock."[83] Bishop repeatedly connects fog with breath in this poem[84] and then imbues respiration with additional power. Breath envelops the home and landscape in a blanket of safety. Later, within the home, a map is "darkened and tarnished / by the warm touch / of the warm breath."[85] Once again, breath assumes a comforting, physical form, distinguished here by its warmth, and impacts the surrounding environment by causing a living map to spread along a wall of the house.

Despite the secret, closed sensation that is established from the opening lines of the poem, the house itself is "open," as are the sounds: "House, open house." Landscape and home merge further, where the house is not only embedded in the terrain but welcoming of "the white dew / and the milk-white sunrise,"[86] which is muted by the surrounding fog and vapor. The sunlight is so non-threatening that it appears "kind." Then, instead of continuing the cozy descriptions, the house opens to vermin like silverfish and bookworms. The two published

[82] *P*, p. 99.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] See Lombardi for a discussion of breath in Bishop's work in the context of her lifelong struggle to manage her asthma.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

versions of this poem differ in how the house receives these new occupants. In *The New Yorker*, the house is "too indulgent, perhaps" of the various vermin who enter (Figure 15), which suggests that they should, perhaps, be prohibited from entering the space. However, when Lowell complimented Bishop's poem upon publication, she replied with her thanks but asserted that "there are some words that *must* be changed, somehow."[87] She incorporated these changes in the version that appears in *Questions of Travel*. The most significant revision to the poem's text is in this line,[88] in which the house becomes open "to membership," and the creatures that one normally aims to exclude instead join the household. Even the mildew is offered a wall for its "ignorant map." Nature, while plentiful both inside and outside of the house, acts within the obscurity of the fog and vapor, between the "blind" raindrops on the roof and this map that is shaped by "warm breath" but represents something unknown.

The oddness of this celebration of vermin and mildew is compounded by the poem's shifts between the immediate moment and deep time, which creates disorienting temporal fractures in the poem. Bishop does not juxtapose north and south or examine competing visions of Brazil through cultural or geographical disjunctions. Instead, the poem begins in a current, human moment, where "the house we live in" is "[h]idden, oh hidden / in the high fog." The present tense establishes the immediate timeframe, while the description that follows suggests a certain timelessness due to familiarity or repetition. The fog's arrival does not disturb the speaker; rather this appears to be an expected and regular occurrence. The "magnetic rock" that is "rain-, rainbow-ridden" and covered in plants and waterfalls lends a sense of permanence to the scene, of a consistent present. This is simply how things are, which implies a steady continuity of how this place has been and will be.

[87] *WIA*, p. 346, letter from Bishop to Robert Lowell, undated [October 1960].
[88] The other changes were more minor. As mentioned above, in *The New Yorker*, the poem was published as "Song for a Rainy Season" rather than "Song for the Rainy Season." Line 15 in the magazine says, "the vapor" which becomes "vapor" in *Questions of Travel*.

SONG FOR A RAINY SEASON

Hidden, oh hidden
in the high fog
the house we live in,
beneath the magnetic rock,
rain-, rainbow-ridden,
where blood-black
bromelias, lichens,
owls, and the lint
of the waterfalls cling,
familiar, unbidden.

In a dim age
of water
the brook sings loud
from a rib cage
of giant fern; the vapor
climbs up the thick growth
effortlessly, turns back,
holding them both,
house and rock,
in a private cloud.

At night, on the roof,
blind drops crawl
and the ordinary brown
owl gives us proof
he can count:
five times—always five—
he stamps and takes off
after the fat frogs that,
shrilling for love,
clamber and mount.

House, open house
to the white dew
and the milk-white sunrise
kind to the eyes;
too indulgent, perhaps,
to silver fish, mouse,
to bookworms,
big moths,
and the mildew's
ignorant maps,

darkened and tarnished
by the warm touch
of the warm breath,
maculate, cherished,
rejoice! For a later
era will differ.
(O difference that kills,
or intimidates, much
of all our small shadowy
life!) Without water

the great rock will stare
unmagnetized, bare,
no longer wearing
rainbows or rain,
the forgiving air
and the high fog gone;
the owls will move on
and the several
waterfalls shrivel
in the steady sun.

—Elizabeth Bishop

Figure 15: "Song for a Rainy Season" as published[89]

The temporal scale of the poem then shifts, as the second stanza invokes "a dim age / of water," which sounds prehistoric. The speaker and companion disappear, and instead the landscape is given a voice and body, with the vapor embracing both the house and rock, now diminished from mountain status to something more knowable and comfortable, unlike the incomprehensible and befuddled landmass of "The Mountain." Water droplets climb "[a]t night, on the roof," returning the temporal measurement to human-scale before swerving once more into deep time, as the mildew's map is celebrated for capturing the present, as "a later /

[89] Elizabeth Bishop, "Song for a Rainy Season," *The New Yorker*, 8 October 1960, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1960/10/08/song-for-a-rainy-season.

era will differ." Bishop introduces the concept of lethal change that she later attempts to develop in "Florida Revisited":

> (O difference that kills,
> or intimidates, much
> of our small shadowy
> life!)

Rather than examining personal change and the disjunction between memory and place, the poem leaps eons into the future, and epochal weight bears down upon transitory human lives. The map on the wall, although "ignorant" and not an accurate representation of any particular place, offers a snapshot of the present moment. The mildew will, presumably, grow and change over time, and this record of the passage of time has value. The lines about change and the way it overshadows shared, small lives is set aside within parentheses, enclosing them within the larger structure of the poem, both protecting and separating this truth from the passage of time.

The poem then simultaneously unravels the opening while continuing to circumscribe it. The water in this future era disappears, and the "magnetic rock" becomes "unmagnetized, bare," while the "rain-, rainbow-ridden" space is "no longer wearing / rainbows or rain."[90] The pairing of these opening and closing lines and the reversal of their order acts like parentheses enclosing the microcosm of Samambaia with the house and the vermin and the landscape within; yet the final lines undo this effect as every closing is also a reversal or undoing. The ample water disappears, and the owls "will move on." Eventually the "waterfalls shrivel / in the steady sun." In the end, everything is stripped away. The house and its occupants are not mentioned. Only empty landscape remains.

[90] *P*, p. 100.

In her response to this poem, White mentioned some confusion on the part of *The New Yorker* editors regarding the word "era" and whether Bishop was referring to geological time or simply a later season and questioned whether that word needed to be more precise. Did Bishop intend to describe "the next dry season" or "a much later era, when geophysical changes, or even merely aging, will have turned a lush wet land into a dry one"?[91] Bishop briefly confirmed that she meant geological time and then turned her attention to the matter of naming the place. While *The New Yorker* and *Questions of Travel* versions of the poem have several small differences, from the title to the attitude towards the small pests, the most significant is the ending. In *Questions of Travel*, "Electrical Storm" and "Song for the Rainy Season" appear consecutively in the "Brazil" section, clearly situating them. At the end of "Rainy Season," Bishop goes further, adding an italicized address at the bottom righthand corner of the page:

> *Sítio da Alcobaçinha*
>
> *Fazenda Samambaia*
>
> *Petrópolis*[92]

Between the place names and the accented and italicized Portuguese words, Bishop could not have made the poem's location any more specific or "exotic" to an American reader; however, she ends with these names rather than incorporating them in the title, thereby controlling the reader's experience of place, as she had always desired.

In *Questions of Travel*, Bishop establishes her version of Brazil over several poems, beginning as a tourist and gradually moving further into the interior, and by "Song for a Rainy

[91] *EBNY*, p. 232, letter from Katharine White to Bishop, 5 July 1960.
[92] *P*, p. 100.

Season," her reader knows not to expect standard exoticism. The conflict regarding Bishop's identity as a poet is resolved within the structure of the collection, and therefore the earlier questions regarding place names become irrelevant. Half of the collection comprises poems that are explicitly set in Brazil while the other half are set "Elsewhere" with "In the Village" serving as the transition between the two sections. The organization of the collection and ordering of poems illustrates the fracture that Bishop wanted to maintain in her work; thus, she no longer needs to make "Song for the Rainy Season" placeless. The greater context gives her the freedom to accurately situate this poem at Samambaia.

5.7 "On the Amazon"

Bishop's 1960 trip to the Amazon was as memorable as she could have wished, and as she told Lowell, she kept dreaming about it. Naturally she wanted to compose a "true" poem about it and had taken copious notes in preparation. Her typewritten documentation has handwritten corrections and clarifications as she aimed for precision:

> The hotel is a ~~dup~~ dump — probably ~~extremely~~ good when it was opened in ?
> — but going to seed under one's eyes — We had ~~probably~~ the best room except for a suite or two for politicians, etc, on the top floor — [93]

In a letter to Lowell she confesses that she had even taken photographic slides, although she "always thought it was too bourgeois for words, but they really are lovely…"[94] Most of Bishop's anecdotes and observations are not incorporated into poetic compositions; instead she

[93] VCSC, f. 55.2
[94] WIA, p. 316, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.

attempts to capture every detail of her journey. In these private notes, startling images and juxtapositions appear, painting vivid descriptions of place.

At the start of her trip, Bishop mostly describes the towns that she and her companions visited as well as their fellow travelers and the locals they encountered. In one early example, she noticed a

> fountain — a magnificent affair, painted in bright colors — a large pool, hexagonal? — at the angles life-sized cherubs with urns, etc. — deep flesh color — startling when seen from across the street — in the middle a high conglomeration of more cherubs, bearded men, females, musical instruments, pearly lamp shades — thin streams of water falling into the muddy pool — At the base of each cherub it said "Sun company Glasgow 1900" and only when I got close enough to read that I realized the whole thing was of cast iron — [95]

As in her poetry, Bishop tightly controls the perspective and captures her own startled jolts of perception, beginning with the color of the cherubs then the impression they make at a distance. She conveys the chaos of visual detail, from the bearded men to the pearly lamp shades, once again subtly recognizing the baroque,[96] and then closes with a final, industrial twist, complicating the image of a Baroque monstrosity with a realistic detail that somehow makes this contrivance even more astonishing.

Unlike material written for a reader, whether a correspondent or a literary audience, Bishop's notes include unrestrained disgust with certain aspects of her travels, as well. In her personal entry about Manaus, she describes, "four maybe it was five, young girls who hovered

[95] VCSC, f. 55.2 p. 3.
[96] As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Portuguese etymology of "baroque," is "*barroco*" which means "rough or Scotch pearl." Bishop made a similar reference in "A Trip to Vigia."

about and talked a great deal — in slippers and oddly mixed clothes — all Manaus seemed to favor mixed prints — skirt one kind, blouse another, big bright designs…"[97] Later in the paragraph she continues, "The oldest a lovely crop of pimples — and a head full of sex." Bishop describes every element of the trip, from the condition of the bathrooms to the food: "In your soup plate you first mix a sauce — the pimply one mixed mine for me — of oil, manioca, and hot pepper — all stirred up like a hellish porridge…." She ends the paragraph with a final encounter with the eldest girl and summarizes: "A revolting girl."

In her letter to Lowell, she omits the horrors of the bathrooms, food, and locals. Instead, she describes for him the interior decoration of a building:

> there the Opera house stands, huge, magnificent art-nouveau-ish with the town dwindled to nothing around it, and the Rio Negro rolling magnificently below. It is quite lovely inside, rose damask and mirrors (the last governor stole a lot of mirrors and girandoles) and armchairs with cane seats, for coolness; the plasterwork is very delicate, all regional things, palms, coffee trees, alligators, etc., and huge paintings of *Guaraní*, sunrise on the river, etc. The ballroom is marble and tortoiseshell — but the pillars around the sides are *fake* marble, because the last shipload from Carrara was sunk.[98]

Here is the Bishop who loves details, and while she lists the "regional things" in the plasterwork, she leaps from coffee trees and alligators to opera posters. Although this passage appears in a letter, her language is poetic and rhythmical, and she even incorporates her characteristic turn at the end, reframing the ostentatious grandeur of the opera house with a

[97] VCSC, f. 55.2, p. 4.
[98] *WIA*, p. 315, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.

remark about the fake marble. Across these forms — her notes, letters, and essay drafts — Bishop experiments with different approaches to convey her experience of the Amazon, and in both her poetry and her letters, she filters out the voices and characters that populate her earlier Brazilian work and focuses nearly exclusively on place.

In the same letter to Lowell, Bishop tells him that she is working on a poem about her trip; however, she does not complete anything until "Santarém." Bethany Hicok identifies this draft as "On the Amazon" (Figure 16), an undated fragment that was published in *Edgar Allan Poe & the Jukebox*, which shows a more typical attempt to compose a poem of place.[99] In this draft, Bishop finally observes the Amazon through her own gaze and not via the ironic gaze of a traveler or some mediating figure. Instead, she searches for just the right words and phrases to capture a particular moment. This poem is full of color, with "dark, dark-silver," "pink," "dark blue," "all pink," and "yellow" — and the word "rainbow" appears three times.[100] Unlike "The Riverman," which erased spatial description in favor of character, "On the Amazon" is almost purely aestheticized place.

In an early reading of "The Riverman," Thomas Travisano hails the poem's importance in Bishop's development because it "reveals an author who is now able to penetrate and comprehend the alien consciousness of a Brazilian native from a distant place and class." We might question that framing today, but he adds, "Her poems are no longer about the act of observation (as "Brazil, 1502" and "Questions of Travel" had been); instead they frankly observe."[101] Lorrie Goldensohn, in her classic reading of "The Riverman," stresses that "Unlike the space of her earlier fantasy poems, in which her projected speaker is suspended above or below or at some barrier before the medium in which a tantalizing and fuller life is

[99] *EAP*, pp. 124-125. As with many of the drafts in this collection, Quinn incorporates Bishop's handwritten notes without noting the changes, so I have included the original manuscript page below.
[100] Stephanie Burt discusses the significance of rainbows in Bishop's work as illusory images of closure in "Elizabeth Bishop at the End of the Rainbow," in *Reading Elizabeth Bishop: An Edinburgh Companion*.
[101] Travisano, *Artistic Development*, p. 162.

being enacted, in 'The Riverman' she achieves an entry."[102] Goldensohn compares "The Riverman" to earlier poems such as "The Man-Moth" with its disorienting perspectives; however, the transition to direct, first-person perception truly begins in this fragment.

ON THE AMAZON

Down the wide river
comes the soft rain
dark, dark-silver
~~running~~ forward
oh pink water - down the wide river, comes the soft rain

Gone again. and sudden
everywhere smudges
of rainbow and shafts
of soft sun backwards
rain over there now
crossing over
the dark blue line
and the river
erases it all
the world, all pink,
has dissolved at last
and is going somwehere
under a rainbow, too -
the rainbow has taken shape, but the world, all pink, strange to say
has dissolved at last
and is going somwehere, at last -
so that is the color of the world all together -

not much air is necessary - just water
and a little sun, ~~here and there and the acquiescent~~ world
and a gentle acquiescent world -

The river, we are told, goes faster than the ship
tilts into ~~the sea tilting us~~, spilling us out to sea -
(- if we keep our shape that long -)

(oh gentle crocodile
"embalmed and stuffed with straw"
with your head cruelly bent down to your breast
to look like a dragon, I suppose
no wonder you cry
tears of yellow varnish, ~~all~~ down your belly-)

Now it is clear, The water moves faster
a thin ~~slice~~ of blue skin blue skin
reflects, reflects - nothing -
~~a sudden~~ line of birds
~~flung up~~ like beads - out
~~AND/THEN/~~
A bar on stilts, a bird on stilts
a boy on stilts-
stem the river with straws or toothpicks
stick a straw in the water for security
the neat palm thatch
~~the hens on a small platform~~ the hen sitting hen on her individual platform-
the delicate hammocks -

Figure 16: Manuscript draft of "On the Amazon"[103]

[102] Goldensohn, p. 210.
[103] VCSC, f. 55.2.

"The Riverman" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502" were composed consecutively, and both maintain a distance between poet and place. This fragment, by contrast, is firmly told from the perspective of the poetic self. As in her letter to Lowell, Bishop dramatizes the moment through observation and juxtaposes the movement of the river with the static, souvenir shop stuffed crocodile. She mentions a stuffed alligator in a shop window in her typewritten notes, but in contrast to her personal observations, here she lingers on the movement of the water and of the rain alongside the permanently frozen crocodile. The rain obscures the speaker's vision and the movement of water, and the simple declaration of "Now it is clear" sweeps away both the rain and any visual obstruction to let the speaker truly see the relative speeds of the river and of the ship.

The fragment begins much like "Young Man in the Park" with its repetition of directional words, except this composition moves, "down," "forward," "down," "everywhere," "backwards," "over there," "crossing over," and "going somewhere" in a joyful, colorful disorientation. The poem begins without any fixed perspective. The speaker and the moving boat from which the speaker observes this kaleidoscope of sun, rain, river, and rainbow are not introduced until the poem's halfway point. Instead, Bishop concentrates on a moment at which "the world, all pink, / has dissolved," varying and repeating lines.

The juxtaposition of stasis and movement recurs in "Santarém," and this fragment hints at the possibilities of color together with the contrast between the river and what emerges from it: the crying crocodile and everything on stilts. While the river rushes out to sea, the ship moves more slowly. Significantly, "On the Amazon" shifts from narrative to lyric modes, and the focus changes from narrating a story to capturing a moment. In this post-Amazonian poem, Bishop tries to describe an instant of dissolution, much as she once tried to describe the horizon at its moment of perception, following the model of timing she identified in Gerard Manley

Hopkins's poetry as an undergraduate.[104] The concept of dissolution recurs in Bishop's poetry, beginning with "The Imaginary Iceberg" where "the ship's sails were laid upon the sea / as the snow lies undissolved upon the water."[105] It appears again in "Paris, 7 A.M." and "Quai 'd'Orléans," both times in an eerie, somewhat surreal scene. The repetition of "dissolution" in "On the Amazon" illustrates Bishop's preoccupation with the concept, and it appears one last time in "Santarém" as a way of finally collapsing binaries and instead focusing on meeting and allowing the space between seemingly disparate elements to exist.

5.8 "Santarém"

After her trip down the Rio São Francisco in 1967, Bishop temporarily relocated to New York City. Three months later, Lota de Macedo Soares followed, against the recommendations of her doctor, and on her night of arrival, died by overdose. Whether this was accidental or intentional remains unclear. Bishop moved to Boston permanently in 1970, starting a new life in the North after nearly twenty years in Brazil. In 1978, eighteen years after her trip to the Amazon and nearly a decade since her move to New England, Bishop finally composed "Santarém," one of her final poems, which was published posthumously. As though responding to Millier's comment about the poem resulting from the loss of Brazil, Colm Tóibin claims that "[i]t is infused, like her best work about Nova Scotia, with a sense of loss" and goes on to describe "the helpless tone of a lone survivor trying to make sense of whatever has occurred, or whatever is in front of her eyes…"[106] Goldensohn also describes the light that fills the opening of the poem as "elegiac gold"[107] as though this might be read as a poem of farewell to Brazil.

[104] "Gerard Manley Hopkins: Notes on Timing in His Poetry" in *Pr*, pp. 468-474.
[105] *P*, p. 6.
[106] Colm Tóibín, *On Elizabeth Bishop* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 92.
[107] Goldensohn, p. 270.

The main shift in Bishop's poetics during the years between her Amazon visit and the composition of "Santarém" is tonal. Rather than describing immediate observations, Bishop writes about memories, so the angle of perception is adjusted from the present to the past, and the issue of sight, as in "Florida Revisited" becomes a questioning of accuracy and the possibility of recollection rather than an attempt to capture a current moment as it unfolds. Jeffrey Gray notes that Bishop worked on "Santarém" and "Florida Revisited" concurrently toward the end of her life, returning to former homes in the south from her northern situation.[108] While the speaker in "Florida Revisted" resists change, in "Santarém" the speaker simply states: "I liked the place; I liked the idea of the place." This is, after all, a nostalgic memory in which the accuracy of the scene, of the exact details, matters less than the remembered experience.

"Santarém" does, in its final, published form, engage the concept of memory overtly and tonally. Bonnie Costello pairs the "inevitable fictionalizing quality of memory against the highly qualified idealism of the town" and highlights the poem's constant reminders of the instability of memory and "about memory's power to transform what might affront one on arrival or what might be troubling or threatening realities."[109] While "The Riverman" had been composed based solely on research, Santarém's composition included nearly twenty years of mediation of place and of memory. The tone derives from distance and lacks the immediacy of a childhood memory, such as those described in "Sestina" or "In the Waiting Room." The reflective, adult voice adds a layer of distance to the story.

Yet this idea of memory appears in the very first compositional draft of the poem, which in its infant stage comprises only three stanzas. Millier observes with some humor the evolution of the opening lines of "Santarém" changing from, "'Of course I may be

[108] Jeffrey Gray, "Postcards and Sunsets: Bishop's Revisions and the Problem of Excess," in *Elizabeth Bishop in the Twenty-First Century: Reading the New Editions*, p. 34.
[109] Costello, p. 174.

remembering it all wrong / after two years' to 'after five years' to 'after eight years,' until [Bishop] abandons the count for 'After, after — how many years?'"[110] While the intervening years stretch the distance in the way that Costello describes, even the two-year break between "Santarém" and "On the Amazon" lends a sort of unreality to the trip to the Amazon.

The initial draft begins with the question of the speaker's recall followed by the decision

> … to go no further, stay and rest
> at the conflux of tow great rivers ~~puring past~~ pouring past
> like a
>
> two colors, two ~~Life and Death Right and Wrong~~
> ChiceChoice
>
> whatever grand interpretations you like best[111]

Along the greater Amazon River, rivers meet and combine, and Santarém, like the cities of Manaus and Belém, is set at one such juncture (Figure 17). Although the Amazon runs deep into Brazil, tributaries split off, forming a network of smaller waterways through the surrounding land. At Santarém, the Tapajós River from the south meets the Amazon as it runs east in a watery crossroad that provides a convenient metaphor. Bishop, naturally, strikes conventional possibilities from her list, substituting "whatever grand interpretations you like best." This line recurs in the third stanza, as is typical in her drafts. She wants to address the binary presented by the river but has not found the right approach, so she repeats the phrase

[110] Millier, p. 534.
[111] VCSC, f. 60.4.

with minor variations: “Whatever grand interpretation / suited it best, or you best, in the golden afternoon.” Within these two versions of the line, she raises both the possibility of choice, such as Frost’s two roads, and the potential for the metaphor to match either the place or some unidentified second person.

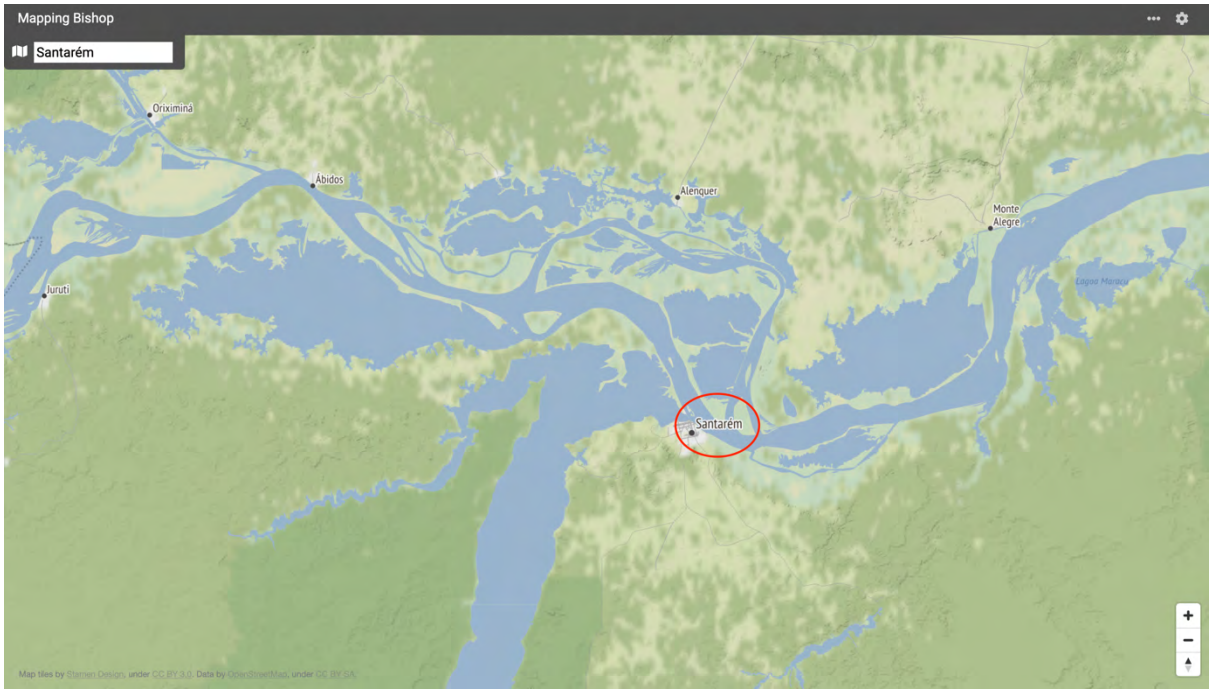


Figure 17: The city of Santarém

The second stanza continues with description — memories of the place and its many colors together with a cathedral that had been struck by lightning. Zebus, ships, and nuns all appear, as they do in the final draft, although the narrative order changes. The third stanza closes with more ships, including one with a “dazzling” sail, and finally the famous purchase of a wasps’ nest and the man, identified in this fragment as “Mr Swann,” asking “‘What’s that ugly thing?’” This sketch of a draft introduces several, distinct elements: the nature of memory, the potential metaphor in the meeting of the rivers, description of the place, and this puzzling anecdote.

Millier compares the evolution of the "Santarém" drafts to the genesis of both "One Art" and "Questions of Travel" in which she argues that the poems ultimately say "the opposite" of what was expressed in the first drafts. Here she emphasizes the change from early drafts in which Bishop tries "to articulate the emotion she felt in seeing the conflux of two great rivers"[112] and how her initial preoccupation with choosing between rivers (as in Frost's "The Road Not Taken") is abandoned in the final draft. The poem becomes one about acceptance rather than choice. Herbert Marks remarks that in her maturity, Bishop's writing "continues to revolve about such binary oppositions, but it evinces a principle of reciprocal transformation or mutual metamorphosis."[113] However, as mentioned above, this porousness between elements, or "reciprocal transformation" as Marks calls it, had appeared in Bishop's poems since her first collection, and she arrives at the word "conflux" by the second draft of "Santarém," which reveals a tension between conjunction and disjunction.

Bishop does return to the word "choice" repeatedly over the next six drafts, but the word appears as a question. She repeats the binary oppositions that she had crossed out in the first precompositional draft, and adds "male, female" to the list. In the third draft, the matter of choice is cast as "- whatever interpretation one chose to put on them, / But choice - a Choice! That evening, one might have chosen." Two tabs next to this line, she types, "???" Clearly, she is still wrestling with the idea of choice, and here she understands the notion to be external: something that is applied to the situation, not one that emerges from it. She continues in this vein until the seventh draft, when she says, "But that evening one didn't have to choose." In this draft she also first mentions the rivers of Eden, finding in Christianity a possible parallel, but in the following draft, she corrects herself, clarifying that Eden had four rivers and repeats

[112] Millier, p. 536.
[113] Marks, p. 26.

"that evening one didn't have to choose" before trying another variation, "opposites - apposites her, one didn't have to choose."

In the next draft, the "interpretation" becomes "unimportant" rather than grand, as she attempts to further minimize this binary opposition (or "apposition," as she also continues to experiment with these concepts). In a series of fragments that I'm identifying as the fifteenth compositional "draft," Bishop finally returns to the word "dissolved" and the "watery, dazzling dialectic." As is typical of her compositional process, she repeatedly rearranges and rewrites these words in multiple, short verses in an attempt to find just the right phrase, and she pairs "resolved" with "dissolved" and alternates "dazzling, watery dialectic" with "watery, dazzling dialectic." In the following pages she reworks this section repeatedly with minor variations, showing that this section of the poem is almost there.

Most readings of "Santarém" focus on the mixing of the rivers, although they emphasize different aspects of it. Jeffrey Gray claims that Bishop was unable to complete this poem "until her fear of sentiment (and sentimental language) surrendered to intimations of the transcendent and to a more expansive linguistic and emotional register."[114] The following is, to a great extent, the crux of Gray's reading of this poem:

> On the one hand, there is the nausea and suffocation from the surfeit of nature — the sense that nature, like one's own effusions about it, should be more restrained, less incursive (I take this to be Bishop's default poetic mode) — and on the other hand, the sense that nature, like one's travels through it, offers aesthetic and spiritual epiphanies, particularly in moments of subject-object collapse, in the dissolving of distinctions that we find in "Santarém," moments duplicated in "On the Amazon,"

[114] Gray, p. 27.

where “everywhere smudges and shafts of soft sun backwards … / the world, all pink / has dissolved at last” (EAP 124).[115]

I quote this at length because of this division between effusiveness and restraint — the notion that Brazil as a physical place challenges Bishop’s established poetics, creating a fresh source of tension in her work. How can one convey the experience of the Amazon through the understatement of a New England sensibility? Frank Bidart identifies a related tension in “Santarém” with “the ‘literary interpretations’ passage” in which she tried “to use such abstract, even academic language and not have it swallow up, flatten, banalize the poem.”[116]

The “subject-object” collapse that Gray mentions also occurs through Bishop’s use of perspective. The poem begins subjectively with a first-person speaker describing and analyzing the scene. As soon as the poetic speaker rejects excessive interpretation of the place, the subjective voice disappears. While self-corrections continue, keeping the point of view firmly in the first person, the scene is described in a more objective manner with parenthetical asides that provide additional context. The pronoun “I” only reappears in the final stanza, when the speaker admires “an empty wasps’ nest”[117] at a pharmacy, accepts the object from the pharmacist, and then must depart on board her ship. The first-person perspective that so firmly establishes the opening of the poem disappears into the accumulated details of Santarém in a way that the riverman could not entirely merge into the underwater world of the Amazon and gives the impression of raw, unmediated experience, despite the strong and intrusive voice of the speaker.

The center of the poem is populated with imported elements that have become part of the local scene, from Christians to the zebus to the descendants of post-Civil War Southern

[115] *Ibid*., p. 38.
[116] Fountain and Brazeau, p. 290.
[117] *P*, p. 208.

families. Bishop's parenthetical statement about oars — a minor object imbued with significance — uniquely situates the poem. Unlike "The Riverman," the catalogue of physical and historic details specifically describes the city of Santarém. No other city in the Amazon has oars, and this surprising observation creates a layered sense of place through temporal juxtaposition. Vidyan Ravinthiran and Gray both list the various "mongrel" and mixed elements in "Santarém," and the former notes that the "…color-motif seeks to preserve in a poem stylistically emulous of a mixed culture a coherence that isn't reductive but encompassing of plurality."[118] He also analyzes the prosaic elements of this poem and addresses the many unfavorable critiques of its insufficient poetic appeal by arguing that "Bishop's prosaic verse provides, in this poem, a style adequate to a historical environment shaped by conflict, trade and religion."[119] In other words, the style fits the content and more specifically the place itself as the combination of prose and poetry mimics the mixing of the rivers and cultures. Ravinthiran writes, "…the cognitive shape of the poem itself—which is neither one thing or another—also provides a mimetic affirmation of such mixture as valuable despite the varied nature of its historical determinants. A cultural argument is being advanced with great subtlety."[120]

In addition to the prosaic style, Ravinthiran argues that Bishop uses the anticlimactic ending to put forth an aesthetic claim. Bishop breaks the poetic contract that promises catharsis or a transformation of some kind, which Ravinthiran identifies as an attempt "to revise—to historically complicate—the aesthetic contract…. According to this model, the poet provides an intensity of diction and event (a thunderstorm, for example) and the reader undergoes an experience supposedly wondrous but really conventionally contained."[121] He finds it particularly significant that "the poem ends at this point, at the very moment when what he

[118] Ravinthiran, *Prosaic*, p. 188.
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 184.
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

describes as the 'aesthetic claim' is 'rebuked' or at least threatened. It's also important that Swan is a Dutch man evaluating a Brazilian artefact."[122]

Though jarring, the unresolved ending of "Santarém" does fit the opening of the poem in which the speaker rejects the idea of choice. From the first precompositional fragment, Bishop pairs the unreliability of memory with precise description and then ends with the anecdote about the wasp's nest. She appears to be questioning the nature of metaphor itself by beginning her first draft with an easily symbolized scene and ending with an inscrutable one. While "The Riverman" tells the story of gaining access to a hidden world, "Santarém" reveals an inability to either remain in that world or to bring it along. The poem begins, after all, with a desire to stay and ends with a departure. Lorrie Goldensohn, who admires how "the details of the language are painterly in ways that belong to all the best of Bishop's poems"[123] says that "Santarém," like "The Moose" and other trip poems, is an unfinished journey, and yet "[n]owhere else in the poetry do we meet a place where Bishop the traveler voices the desire to go no farther, even in the concluding lines she says: "Then – my ship's whistle blew. I couldn't stay."[124]

"Santarém" is in many ways the opposite of "Young Man in the Park." There, as described in Chapter Two, an observed figure is stuck in a liminal place, unable to leave the past or to venture into the future. In "Santarém," as Goldensohn notes, Bishop expresses an impossible desire to stay in a specific place and time but has a journey to complete. This tension results in a dual poetic form, with a narrative poem about a journey framing a lyric poem that resists change. In a conversation on the difference between narrative and lyric poetry, poet Aria Aber describes narrative poetry as expressing a poetics of loss.[125] Time moves forward,

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
[123] Goldensohn, p. 270.
[124] *Ibid.*, p. 272.
[125] "Aria Aber vs. Ruins - Vs," Poetry Foundation (Poetry Foundation), accessed 1 May 2022, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/podcasts/156261/aria-aber-vs-ruins.

which means that something is always left behind — time, a previous state of being — as the narrative mode prioritizes change. By contrast, a lyric poem endeavors to freeze time, immortalizing the moment. "Santarém" opens and closes in the narrative mode through the start and end of a journey. The opening lines heighten the sense of loss through years of distance. By contrast, the middle of the poem portrays a single moment as it occurs around the speaker, formally resisting the pressure to leave this place behind.

The final scene of the poem also evokes home and the disorientation of losing it. The wasp's nest is, after all, a home, and is described as "small, exquisite, clean matte white, and hard as stucco."[126] Earlier in the poem, "stucco" refers to local homes: "buildings one story high, stucco, blue or yellow / and one house faced with azulejos, buttercup yellow."[127] Bishop connects the two images through repetition while alluding to the word "stuck." The jarring ending disorients the reader as effectively as the dangling "s" in "Glens Fall / s"[128] in "Arrival in Santos." A lingering sense of *That can't possibly be the end… can it?* remains after the final line, and that feeling of incompletion matches the desire that Bishop expressed in her letter to Lowell about dreaming about the Amazon and wanting to return.[129] At the end of this dreamlike poem, with its golden light and miracle, the reader is startled awake, bewildered.

When Bishop sent "Santarém" to Howard Moss at *The New Yorker*, she called it "a poem—or maybe just an endless 'description' ['Santarém']— I don't know." Two short paragraphs later she adds, "This 'poem' may be over-punctuated—& have other faults, too, of course."[130] This echoes Bishop's earlier letter to Lowell in which she tried to resist becoming a "Brazilian" poet. Despite the seventeen-year gap between the letters and Bishop's permanent return to Boston, a certain hesitation remains about how to transcend the picturesque and exotic

[126] *P*, p. 208.
[127] *Ibid.*, p. 207.
[128] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
[129] *WIA*, p. 316, letter from Bishop to Lowell, 22 April 1960.
[130] *EBNY*, p. 386, letter from Bishop to Howard Moss, 1 October 1977.

without succumbing to idealism or other sentimental extremes. In "Santarém" the "objective" middle section begins:

> In front of the church, the Cathedral, rather,
> there was a modest promenade and a belvedere
> about to fall into the river,
> stubby palms, flamboyants like pans of embers,
> buildings one story high, stucco, blue or yellow,
> and one house faced with *azulejos*, buttercup yellow.[131]

The juxtaposition of modest and flamboyant elements encapsulates how change of place affected Bishop's poetics. The need to resist overly easy symbolism and foreignness while maintaining an accurate and critical gaze offered another kind of "abyss" or synaptic leap.

Lowell described "The Riverman" as a poem of "initiation,"[132] and composing the dramatic monologue let Bishop imaginatively dwell in an idea of the Amazon. Her eventual experience of the place apparently affected her so deeply that she had to wait until it also became an idea before she could capture it in a poetic composition. Time clearly played a significant role in Bishop's mediation of place. Her "true" poem of the Amazon simultaneously shows the impossibility of staying and of leaving. The poem adopts a nostalgic tone and evokes quintessentially Brazilian feelings of *saudade* through gold-drenched imagery, while the precision of detail and the dissolution both reinforce the idea that Brazil has become part of Bishop.

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[131] *P*, p. 207.
[132] *WIA*, p. 591, letter from Lowell to Bishop, 28 October 1965.

6. Conclusion

While Elizabeth Bishop may have marveled at the mysteries of geography early in her Brazilian residence, her poetic development clearly shows how change of place affected her poetics. As demonstrated in this thesis, the concepts of place and mediation can be connected through constructivist and experiential frameworks. By applying the idea that knowledge, like place, is constructed, the process of mediation can be seen through stages of writing and revision. Deep mapping and genetic criticism provide complementary methods of recognizing patterns in the compositional process and then analyzing manuscript development.

Although Bishop composed a "tourist" poem within months of her arrival, she soon struggled to engage with Brazil through poetry, even though her correspondence was full of lively descriptions and enthusiasm for her new home. Her initial approaches to mediating Brazil through writing included repurposing material that she had written in Nova Scotia to a Brazilian context, poetically examining physical orientation and perspective, and setting geographical limits on her compositions.

According to both constructivist and constructionist theory, learning occurs in moments of "instability" followed by "plateaus of equilibrium," and Bishop's compositional process matched this. She had short bursts of poetic productivity that alternated with long, fallow periods. During these breaks from poetry, Bishop wrote stories and tried to complete several travel essays. Although many of the latter efforts failed, changing genres provided space for experimentation, and prose writing filled the transitional periods when changes to Bishop's poetics occurred. She identified themes and techniques that she later incorporated into her poetic compositions. In her early stories about her childhood in Nova Scotia, she translated some of her poetic techniques such as juxtaposition of images, into prose. Her new

interest in characterization transferred to her poetry, giving her new approaches to writing about Brazil.

Finally, Bishop's poems about the Amazon let her engage with both place and the idea of place. She composed her first Amazon poem prior to visiting in the form of a dramatic monologue, which let Bishop dwell in her idea of the place. After her journey, she questioned her poetic relationship to Brazil and how she could use material about her adopted country without being classified as only a South American poet; however, she also finally began to compose first-person poems about Brazil without ironic distance or mediating personas. Bishop consistently examined the disjunction between experience and expression, and as she mediated a change of place through writing, the disparity between them decreased.

Returning to the opening discussion of "Florida Revisited," the manuscript draft presents the idea of change as both deadly and inevitable. By contrast, in the "Elsewhere" section of *Questions of Travel*, the poem "Sunday, 4 A.M." ends:

> The world seldom changes,
> but the wet foot dangles
> until a bird arranges
> two notes at right angles.[1]

This remark about lack of change is surprising given the ever-shifting landscape of the dream. This poem is immediately followed by "The Sandpiper," which depicts a frantic creature with whom Bishop identified. The sandpiper "runs to the south" as she did when she traveled to Brazil "in a state of controlled panic," and who watches "the spaces of sand" between its toes.[2]

[1] *P*, p. 128.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Given that one poem leads into the next, it is difficult to imagine these birds as anything but the same figure. In “Sunday, 4 A.M.,” the restless sleeper dreams until some precise counterpoint awakens her. The imagery of water and wet feet continues into the next poem, but the sandpiper resolves none of its problems of running between land and water, settling instead on accurately naming the colors of each grain of sand. Bishop mediated change of place in a similar manner: by using juxtaposition and counterpoint to reconstruct fractures of place, self, and memory – and then leaving them unresolved.

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f. 52.1 A Trip to Vigia, [approximately 1960] (TS, MS, 2 drafts, fragments, 19 p.)

f. 53.18 The Deadly Sandpile, undated (MS, 1 draft, 1 fragment, 5 p.)

f. 55.3 A Trip on the Rio São Francisco, undated (Miscellaneous drafts)

f. 55.2 [Trip on the Amazon: description trip of February 1960], undated (TS, 1 draft, 9 p.)

f. 57.16 The River-Man, [April 1960] (TS, 6 drafts, fragments, 25 p.)

f. 57.5 The Mountain, [October 1952] (MS, TS, 9 drafts, 11 p.)

f. 60.4 Santarem, [February 1978] (TS, 16 drafts, fragments, galley, 36 p.)

f. 64.24 Florida Revisited, [mid-1970s?] (MS, TS, miscellaneous drafts, 3 p.)

f. 65.4 Aboard the "Prince Fundy," undated (MS, TS, 4 drafts, 4 p.)

f. 67.24 Young Man in the Park, undated (TS, 1 draft, 1 p.)

f. 68.5 Fragments. Prose, undated (TS, MS, 34 p.)

f. 72.7 Miscellaneous Notes and Observations, 1951

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