Traveling Proprieties: the Disorienting Language & Landscapes of Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation locates in the work of twentieth-century North American poet Elizabeth Bishop a collision between questions of propriety and questions of travel that emerge from the poet's unintended exile in Brazil. Drawing on a much more comparative, intertextual archive of Brazilian and travel literature than existing Bishop scholarship, I explore how the poet's experience of traveling to Brazil and residing there for nearly two decades, from 1951 to 1971, produces the disorienting effect of the "contact zone," as Mary Louise Pratt characterizes these spaces of cross-cultural, cross-temporal negotiation. These contact zones arise in Bishop's work as not only geographical-cultural spaces, but also as lyric and linguistic sites of contestation between norms. I argue that the key tension that inflects Bishop's writing is one between a poetics of "proper" restraint and formal control versus a poetics of exposure marked as "improperly disproportionate." This dialectic also marks the ways she judges Brazilian landscapes and expression as improper in their excess and overstatement. I argue that questions of propriety and proportion—What is proper behavior on the part of host and of visitor? How should the Euro-American traveler navigate the pleasures and improprieties of its all being out of scale or "too much"?—resonate throughout Bishop's representations of Brazil in her poetry, essays, journalism, and letters, and inflect her approach to translations of works by Brazilian writers. I also trace how Bishop's idea of the "proper lyric," by which she denigrates the confessional and free-verse poetry prevalent among her American contemporaries in the 1960s and '70s, begins to transform under this counter-poetics of release and exposure as she matures during her Brazil period and beyond, a debate that continues through the afterlife of her archive.

Bishop's keenly observational and reflective work also forms an important nexus in which to consider how the history of travel to Brazil, especially in the greater context of New World exploration, has produced a disorienting effect on European and North American judgments of proper social relations, expression, and scale amid startlingly new landscapes and cultures. Thus, I examine how Bishop's particular mapping of propriety and proportion in relation to Brazil intersects with a composite geographical-historical-cultural vision of the country formed through accounts by

travelers from the 16th century onward, while also causing the poet to redefine her own relationship to North American poetry. As Bishop goes deeper into Brazilian landscapes, language, and culture than most other twentieth-century Euro-American travelers, perhaps with the exception of Lévi-Strauss, she variously adopts the roles of a Darwin, Robinson Crusoe, and Wordsworth, offering a mix of eyewitness observation, exotic fantasy, and pastoral translations.

Chapter One, "The Shock of Encounter," explores the shock of encounter in Bishop's early impressions of Brazil as a disorienting site of improper disproportions, both in landscape and expression, as she opens a dialogue with similar accounts by previous European and North American travelers to the country. I show how Bishop is uniquely positioned as a poet-historian of travel to Brazil to articulate a twentieth-century critique of tourism and its imperial undercurrents that nevertheless gives in to the seductive pleasures of this tropical new world. Chapter Two, "Lyric Mutation," traces the effects of Bishop's experience in Brazil on her poetics, which I argue undergoes an affective loosening up and takes a more autobiographical turn that challenges Bishop's self-identification as a "northern" poet of cool restraint, as well as her ideas of what constitutes a proper lyric poem. I read the prose poem series "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" as Bishop's fullest manifestation of her poetic self in Brazil, which becomes the fittingly "southern," watery site for the release of feelings and desires elsewhere deemed inappropriately excessive. Chapter Three, "Pastoral Translations," follows a divergent mode of adjudication in Bishop's relationship to Brazil as she recognizes in the Minas Gerais region, and in the rural and folk-themed Brazilian works she chooses to translate, a pastoral ethos that recalls her Nova Scotia childhood and British Romantic influences on her writing. Here, I identify three kinds of pastoral translation: 1) the pastoral mode itself as a translation of the rural periphery for the metropolis; 2) the translation of British and classical pastoral into the Brazilian context of Minas Gerais, with miners in place of shepherds; and 3) the pastoralizing tendencies of Bishop's translations of Brazilian works into English. These versions of pastoral act as a counterpoint to the impropriety and excess that Bishop and other travelers more commonly associate with Brazil and the tropics.

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Abbreviations of Frequently Cited Works

Below are abbreviations for frequently cited works that are used in parenthetical citations throughout this dissertation.

CP Bishop, Elizabeth. *The Complete Poems (1927-1979)*. Ed. Robert Giroux. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984.

OA ---. *One Art*: *Letters*. Ed. Robert Giroux. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

PPL ---. *Elizabeth Bishop: Poems, Prose, and Letters.* Eds. Robert Giroux and Lloyd Schwartz. New York: The Library of America, 2008.

WIA Bishop, Elizabeth, and Robert Lowell. *Words in Air*: *The Complete Correspondence Between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell.* Eds. Thomas Travisano with Saskia Hamilton. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.

Introduction

Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil: Propriety and Exposure in Life and Art

I. Natural Propriety in the Contact Zone

This dissertation locates in the work of twentieth-century North American poet Elizabeth Bishop a collision between questions of propriety and questions of travel that emerge from the poet's unintended exile in Brazil. I also trace a dialectic between propriety and exposure in her poetics whose contours shift further toward exposure, or perhaps alternate definitions of propriety as shaped by Bishop's unintended exile in Brazil, from 1951 through 1971. In one sense, this is an in-depth study of a major twentieth-century North American poet whose reception and critical interest have changed substantially in the wake of her posthumously published letters, poems, and prose, particularly amid the relatively recent surge of primary and critical texts surrounding her 2011 centenary. The work that follows contributes to Elizabeth Bishop studies particularly by providing a more deeply intertextual perspective on how her work engages with and emerges from Brazilian contexts than currently available.

In a broader sense, this dissertation takes up Bishop's keenly observational writings on Brazil and translations of Brazilian authors as an important nexus in which to consider a layered vision of Brazil in the geographical imagination of North American and European travelers to the country. Without claiming an exhaustive account of foreign travel to Brazil, I examine an archive of Brazilian travelogues that Bishop read closely, beginning with the first Portuguese to witness Brazil in the 1500s and extending through Sir Richard Francis Burton and Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century, and Claude Lévi-Strauss in the twentieth. Their disorientation before Brazilian landscapes, expression, and behavior they deem disproportionate follows a pattern that Bishop echoes in her own judgments of propriety and proportion in Brazil, and that ultimately converges with her idea of her own poetics. At different times throughout Bishop's work, and throughout this dissertation, Robinson Crusoe, Darwin, and Wordsworth arise as figures for inspiration and imitation in Bishop. She alternates between Crusoe's sense of lonely yet indulgent exile and resourceful adaptation on an island, and his later memorializing impulse, Darwin's naturalist observations that achieve a dizzying level of detail in the already-heady tropical environment, and Wordsworth's pastoralizing vision of the rural poor, transposed into a Brazilian framework.

Even before the unexpected turn of events that would lead to her nearly two decades in Brazil, Elizabeth Bishop was a poet obsessed with geography, travel, and disorienting landscapes.[1] Bishop's writing consistently emphasizes an outsider quality, but under the effects of her literal foreignness and geographic estrangement from her northern roots, she more emphatically pursues her recurrent themes of travel and encounters with otherness in her Brazil poems.[2] The depth of Bishop's engagement with Brazil also puts these themes in dialogue with a much broader global

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[1] Bishop's earlier poems depict mainly North American and northern European settings, though her Florida poems in *North & South* (1946) and *A Cold Spring* (1955) move into lusher southern environments at a farther remove from her New England sensibilities. They also signal Bishop's first attempts to represent a more distinct alterity, in Key West's black and Cuban community.These poems include "Jerónimo's House," spoken in the voice of the Cuban Jerónimo, "Cootchie," about a black maid, and "Faustina, or Rock Roses," about a dying white woman tended to by her black Cuban maid—all three titled after their subjects.

[2] For more considerations of the themes of estrangement and foreignness in Bishop's writing, see Adrienne Rich's "The Eye of the Outsider" and Helen Vendler's "The Poems of Elizabeth Bishop." Vendler writes, "Foreign abroad, foreign at home, Bishop appointed herself a poet of foreignness" (828).

historical framework of European encounters with the New World, and of northern travelers in the tropics, spanning five centuries.

Bishop's Brazil writings illustrate the complex ethical and aesthetic questions that arise from surveying a place through foreign eyes, as she engages with the country from an always evolving subject-position: as tourist, then resident foreigner, translator, and guide, and eventually, one who was formerly intimate with a far-away place, like an estranged lover.[3] The poet's representations of Brazil offer insight into the ways in which being a foreigner—or living in translation, as it were—provoke a balancing act between accommodating to the logic proper to an unfamiliar territory and insisting on the propriety, or rightness, of one's own individual judgment or native standards. Her poems raise the questions: What is right on the part of host and of visitor? What are their rights in relation to one another? How should the European or North American traveler navigate the pleasures and improprieties of this tropical setting felt to be out of scale or too excessive?

Bishop's representations of Brazil evoke the dynamics of what Mary Louise Pratt calls "contact zones" in *Imperial Eyes*, those largely colonial and postcolonial spaces "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). As opposed to the more sustained and familiarized friction between disparate cultures in a borderlands context, as between the U.S. and Mexico, or between distinct regions that nevertheless share a national identity and language, these encounters in contact zones are marked by a more extreme sense of incongruence between norms, given the sudden collapsing of distances that occurs when the trajectories of "subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures" collide (7).

This dynamic of contact zones develops on multiple levels in Bishop's work, in both geographically bound ways as well as in figurative and literary dimensions. In Chapter One, I take up the most literal definition of a contact zone, in looking at how Bishop navigates the difference between her initial traveler's expectations based on a geographical imagination shaped by centuries of Western travel accounts to Brazil and what she actually finds in the country. Chapter Two looks at Bishop's internal debates over lyric propriety as a lyric contact zone, to the extent that Bishop layers a certain form of environmental determinism over her ideas of a "northern" lyric propriety of restraint and controlled forms versus a looser, more emotionally flowing affect proper to "southern" landscapes and behaviors. Her merging of northern and southern sensibilities while in Brazil makes for this "lyric contact zone. Chapter Three enacts a curious combination of linguistic and literary contact zones, in that I focus on Bishop's translations, both literally from Portuguese into English but also in the way she translates the communities and landscapes of Brazil's rural regions, especially the traditional mining region of Minas Gerais, in terms of a Western literary framework for the pastoral tradition, from classical works through Shakespeare through British Romanticism and American frontier literature.

"Propriety" is a key word in Bishop's poetics. Whether overtly or implicitly, Bishop structures her poetic principles, as well as certain principles of behavior, around two main versions of propriety. One line of propriety, extends from Bishop's early mentor, poet Marianne Moore. The two poets agreed on a sense of poetic propriety as a feeling of *rightness* that emphasized precision and understatement without feeling forced, or rigidly balanced, as by too-symmetrical rhyme or meter. However, Moore's concern for accuracy of expression led more often to an experimental, strikingly alien quality in her poetry, whereas Bishop's concern with cultivating the natural effect she writes of in the above quote resulted in more readily comprehensible work. Nevertheless, Moore and Bishop both held a preference for a lyric propriety that held back from the sorts of indulgent overflow they

[3] After her partner Lota's untimely death in 1967, Bishop lived in Ouro Preto on and off until returning permanently to dthe U.S. by 1970.

associated with Walt Whitman and that Bishop chided her contemporary American confessional poets about, as I discuss further in Chapter Two. They also shared certain belief in propriety not as an empty set of conventions, but as "manners as morals," as Bishop puts it at the end of "Efforts of Affeection," her memoir of Marianne Moore (*Collected Prose* 156).

At the same time, Bishop Bishop's manner and poetics veer toward the element of accommodation also inherent in the definition of "propriety" as she cultivates a certain *natural propriety*. In notes for a lecture on poetry, Elizabeth Bishop describes poetic composition as travelling between the unnatural and natural:

> Writing poetry is an unnatural act. It takes great skill to make it seem natural. Most of the poet's energies are really directed towards this goal: to convince himself (perhaps, with luck, eventually some readers) that what he's up to and what he's saying is really an inevitable, *only* natural way of behaving under circumstances. (*Edgar Allan Poe* 207)

The desired quality of naturalness here resides in that which occurs with little conscious force, without coercion, like breathing. The great skill and effort that writing poetry requires seem antithetical to what Bishop views as its aim of producing an effect of grace, a kind of exposure that arises from that which just *is*, rather than that which tries to be or is conspicuously crafted.

For Bishop, what is proper, or fitting, in poetry becomes a question of the natural, as naturalness of tone and as imagery derived from nature, but also as what feels an "*only* natural way of behaving under circumstances." However, her final qualification—"under circumstances"—works against an essentialist definition of "natural" and instead opens its meaning to the movements of particular contingencies, such as time, place, and subject. The subtle, seemingly paradoxical use of "an" instead of "the"—"an inevitable, *only* natural way of behaving"—further suggests that this chosen manner is only one of multiple modes. It emphasizes a distinction between the actual inevitabilities of biological form, of being "born that way," and the semblance of this givenness that art aspires to achieve, even in compositions that challenge the natural (or naturalized) orders of the world.

While Bishop takes many of her own poetic cues from the natural world, the naturalness of tone she praises in the poetry she admires does not exclude what might be taken as strange or somehow against nature, so that the "natural" comes to signify, more accurately, a sense of *rightness* in the work of art. Baudelaire, one of her favorite poets, praised "honest artifice," making a strong case for the propriety of openly embellished beauty over enhancements of the natural that conceal their art.[4] Bishop's poetry veers away from the confrontationally bizarre of avant-garde art but nevertheless bears surrealist tendencies as it recreates moments of mystery and disorientation that habitually interrupt quotidian rhythms and defamiliarize ways of absorbing experience. Bishop's method, even as it bears the mystic influence of George Herbert and other seventeenth-century metaphysical poets, retains an American insistence on the concrete. The apprehension of the metaphysical through a deep immersion in the material world extends back through the American tradition in poets like Stevens, Moore, Williams, and Stein and the philosophies of pragmatism and American transcendentalism.[5] Emerson's dictum "A Fact is the end or last issue of Spirit" presages Williams's "No ideas but in things" and "No ideas but in facts."[6]

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[4] "Le maquillage n'a pas à se cacher, à éviter de se laisser deviner; il peut, au contraire, s'étaler, sinon avec affectation, au moins avec une espèce de candeur," Baudelaire writes in the essay"Eloge du Maquillage" (24).

[5] Reviewing her first collection, *North & South*, Robert Lowell writes, "In her bare objective language, she also reminds one of times of William Carlos Williams; but it is obvious that her most important model is Marianne Moore" ("Thomas, Bishop, and Williams"' 187.) John Ashbery, in his review of *The Complete Poems*, refers to, "This quality which one can

Bishop called herself a literalist, and the philosophical turns that appear subtly in her work are often inspired by first-hand observations and experiences that evoke the American pragmatic vein of finding philosophy through the practical example—although the personal moments of Bishop's poetry are always refined into a more oblique form than the unfiltered confessional poetry whose excesses both she and Moore viewed with skepticism. Her writing often merges the familiar and the strange as she circles around themes of travel, childhood, and encounters with non-human otherness, common experiences that interrupt modern life's disenchantment by disorienting conceptions of scale, discursive logics, and ontology. Known for her superlative formal control, Bishop purposely sets her own compositions awry in some way so that their seemingly natural propriety also suggests some fundamentally uncanny element that disrupts agreed-upon conceptions of what is natural or proper.

Thus, when Bishop arrives in Brazil, her ideas of proper behavior as restrained, combined with a certain "natural propriety" as a sense of rightness and literalness of natural imagery, become upended by the startling Brazilian landscapes where everything feels exaggerated and tropical nature is out of proportion to the temperate, northern norms she is used to. The trajectory of landscape description, characterization of Brazilian character and culture, and translations of Brazilian texts, that I track in Bishop's work over these three chapters, becomes a process of adjudication of Bishop's own sense of propriety, as a matter of behavior that historically favored restraint, but also as a matter of a sense of the natural that becomes recalibrated according to the unfamiliar sense of the natural that she finds in the superabundant and gigantic tropical flora and fauna that she encounters in Brazil and depicts in her poetry. Further, her search for authenticity in representations of Brazil, which she finds most satisfyingly in her translation of *The Diary of Helena Morley*, is also based on a search for the natural as true, as testimony.

Another element of propriety relevant to Bishop given her sexuality—she was emphatically closeted during her life but had her most open lesbian relationship in Brazil with Lota de Macedo Soares—in Brazil is its association with the acceptance of behaviors, desires, and identities thought to be improper in more "civilized" Euro-American contexts. Particularly resonant for Bishop's experience is Pratt's characterization of travel to faraway locales as motivated by sexual freedom in her discussion of nineteenth-century naturalist Alexander von Humboldt's travels through Spanish America:

> Like many European travelers of the last century and this, Humboldt's wanderlust undoubtedly consisted in part of a need to escape the heterosexist and matrimonialist structures of bourgeois society. The history of travel and science is significantly shaped by the fact that they were legitimate contexts for same-sex intimacy and exclusively male society. (Pratt 240)

Bishop makes a sly reference to Rio as a gay haven in a letter to Robert Lowell, in which she reports that her partner Lota is renting Rio apartment to an elderly American retired business man who "we think is really just starting to *live* at sixty-five—he talked about a 'person'—no gender—who is coming to share it with him."[7] While Pratt highlights the real-life implications of the freer society associated with the New World tropics, literary fiction has also partaken of and further disseminated imaginings of Brazil and South America as a blank wilderness to be written over with adventure and

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only call 'thingness'" that "is with her throughout, sometimes shaping a whole poem, sometimes appearing right after the beginning, sometimes appearing only at the end to add a decisive fillip." (201).

[6] Emerson ("Nature" 52).

[7] "Bishop to Lowell, 5 December 1953. (WIA 149)

the site of new beginnings for those out of step with their own societies. Anglophone examples include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which taps into the association of South America as a New World Garden of Eden when the monster asks his maker to create a monstrous Eve and promises that in exchange for this companion, they will leave all human society by pursuing a life of exile "in the most savage of places," namely "the vast wilds of South America" (99). The young heroine of Virginia Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), feels discontent at the limitations of her position as a woman in British society as she travels deeper into the lawless jungles of South America, though she eventually succumbs to a mysterious fever, a suggestion that she is unfit to return to her home civilization yet tragically unable to adapt to the wilder nature of the tropics.

In Nella Larsen's Harlem Renaissance novel *Passing* (1929), African-American doctor Brian Redfield dreams of moving to Brazil where he imagines a racially democratic escape from the insidious effects of racism in his home country, while his lighter-skinned wife Irene, able to pass for white to her advantage in certain social situations, refuses to renounce America as her rightful place even as she shields her sons from discussions of the "race problem." Brazil takes on the twin status of Brian's desire and Irene's fears as she contemplates his discontent at home and wonders to herself, "If only I could be sure that at bottom it's just Brazil."[8] This hope ironically belies the very bottomless nature of the imbrication of Brazil as an actual place, "just Brazil," with the dream of Brazil in the foreign imaginary.

II. Bishop's Biography and Criticism

Bishop's stature as a major American poet has risen steadily since her death in 1979. The publication of a series of biographies and her letters in *One Art* in the early 1990s led to a spike in both popular and critical interest in the poet's work alongside her often-dramatic and formerly closely-guarded private life.[9] Due to the overwhelming availability of biographical material available on Bishop, and especially the autobiographical material of her letters, which she considered an art form and wrote with an eye on literary history, criticism on Bishop has been much developed by assessments of how her life influenced her art and the way her manuscripts from the archives give new readings of her poetry. Given her famous perfectionism—she published less than one hundred poems in her lifetime—as well as her closeted sexuality, and the large extent and quality of her archives, there is a case to be made for reading Bishop's work alongside her more autobiographical materials, especially her letters. The more disappointing criticism on Bishop merely draws a connection between a line of poetry and its source in a letter or some other form of "raw" material. That is not my intent in this dissertation. Rather, I aim to use Bishop's biography and her less composed materials but writings that still retain literary value, in order to better understand how her

[8] Nella Larsen, *Passing* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 130.

[9] The first decade of the 2000s has brought yet another wave of interest in Bishop as publishers mine her extensive archives for more letter collections and previously unpublished manuscripts and put out new editions of her collected poetry and prose. These include *Edgar Allen Poe and the Jukebox: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments* (2006), *Elizabeth Bishop: Poems, Prose and Letters* (Library of America, 2008), *Words in Air: The Complete Correspondence Between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell* (2010), *Elizabeth Bishop and The New Yorker: The Complete Correspondence* (2011), the *Poems/Prose* boxed set (2011), the last two corresponding with the poet's centennial, marked by a year of celebratory readings and conferences. "Bishopmania," as it has been called in Brazil, was set off by the translation of her works and letters into Portuguese in the 1990s and the 1995 publication of a popular biography of her life in Brazil with Lota de Macedo Soares, *Flores Raras e Banalíssimas* (*Rare and Commonplace Flowers*), which was recently adapted into a film by director Bruno Barreto (*Reaching for the Moon*, 2013).

work was shaped by Brazil and to understand that portrait of Brazil that Bishop has offered to her Anglophone readers who otherwise would have little experience or knowledge of the country.

Much is made of Brazil as a major theme in Bishop's work, yet most Bishop scholarship fails to move beyond a treatment of Brazil as a lush setting for her poetry and biography. Critics who discuss the Brazilian influence on her work more than superficially mainly address it in terms of its broader social and political context, yet still largely frame their approach in terms of Bishop's biography.[10] In this dissertation, I push further than current scholarship toward considering the intertextuality embedded in Bishop's Brazil writing as it engages with other literary travel accounts of Brazil that have shaped it in the foreign imagination, which in turn has significantly affected domestic narratives of Brazilian identity.[11] I examine the ways in which Bishop's portraits of the country for an Anglophone audience enter into dialogue with prior accounts that construct Brazil as an exotic idea in the Western geographical imagination. Bishop's Brazil poems mix nostalgia for a more romantic era of discovery with its ironic flipside of critical consciousness of the fraught associations between travel and conquest.

I make several references to Bishop's biographical details throughout this dissertation. While I do my best to situate her work in terms of where she was in her relationship to Brazil, here I give an overview of her life in Brazil. Bishop often remarked on the contingency of her country of residence, and indeed it was a minor catastrophe—an extreme allergic reaction to a cashew fruit—that sparked the transformation of Brazil from tourist destination to the most stable home of Bishop's adult life. In December 1951, originally intending to stop over briefly in Rio de Janeiro until she could catch the next ship leaving for the Tierra del Fuego, the forty-year-old poet was forced to extend her visit as she recovered at the home of acquaintance Lota de Macedo Soares, a self-taught architect and member of Rio's elite class. This accidental delay led to an equally unexpected romantic partnership that lasted for the next fifteen years, from 1952 until Lota's suicide in 1967.[12] The couple lived for the most part in a modern house Lota built in a rainforest setting at Samambaia, her estate in the mountains of Petrópolis, northwest of Rio de Janeiro. Bishop spent her first fourteen years in Brazil (the end of 1951 through 1965) living in the coastal region of Rio de Janeiro state, between Lota's country estate of Samambaia and the penthouse apartment in the city of Rio's Leme neighborhood, overlooking the beach on the chic end of Copacabana.

Bishop's life in Brazil was one of relative privilege and comfort, since she herself was financially comfortable, while Lota provided additional wealth, plus two deluxe homes, and a social milieu of Rio's elite, which included Lota's close friend Carlos Lacerda, the right-leaning politician who became governor of Guanabara state (now Rio de Janeiro) in 1961. Samambaia provided one kind of rural retreat away from the pollution and crowds of Rio, evoking a "deluxe Nova Scotia" for Bishop, as I discuss in Chapter Two. Bishop never liked Rio, which she found dirty and chaotic, yet the couple became increasingly based in Rio instead of Samambaia after 1961, when Lacerda appointed Lota to oversee the construction of the new Parque do Flamengo (Flamengo Park) on Guanabara Bay north of Copacabana. As Lota became entangled in the bureaucracy of building the

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[10] There has yet to be a full-length book dedicated to this topic. George Monteiro's *Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil and After* promises to be this book, yet is a strangely impressionistic collection of mini-chapters on separate poems whose organizational logic remains mysterious and that never coalesces into a sustained, overall vision of Bishop's writing on Brazil. Sadly, Lloyd Schwartz's "Bishop in Brazil" *New Yorker* article remains one of the fullest and most incisive accounts of her time in Brazil—though this is far from the depth and length needed for a full scholarly account.

[11] See Renata Wasserman's *Exotic Nations* for a study of the influence of European and North American literature on Brazilian national literature and identity. See also Flora Sussekind's *Brasil não é longe daqui (Brazil Isn't Far From Here)* and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Raizes do Brasil (Roots of Brazil)*.

[s] See the biographies by Millier, Goldensohn, and Oliveira for more detailed accounts of Bishop's life in Brazil, as well as before and after.

new park, and Bishop was forced to remain in Rio instead of at Samambaia, the poet's views of Brazil's social ills became especially cynical as she witnessed them exemplified in Rio. During this period, when Lota began her urban landscaping project through her death in 1967, Bishop wrote a series of poems and prose pieces that focused on the poor of Rio, often in the context of Brazil's social issues.

In the early 1960s, as Lota became embroiled in the construction of the Parque do Flamengo in Rio, Bishop gravitated increasingly toward the town of Ouro Preto. Then in 1965, with the help of her friend Lilli Correia de Araújo, Bishop bought and restored a historic house built in the late 17th century, at the start of the gold rush boom. She named it Casa Mariana after Marianne Moore and also because the house was on the road to the town of Mariana. This was the third of the "three loved houses" Bishop mentions in "One Art," and the only home in Brazil she owned independently. The second was Samambaia, and the first was the house at Key West that Bishop bought with her friend and sometime lover Louise Crane before she moved to Brazil. In 1967, Lota visited Bishop in New York while Bishop was taking some time away from Brazil, and fell into a coma after overdosing on Valium. She died while in New York and her family and friends blamed Bishop for Lota's death. This ended Bishop's time at Samambaia and her world as she knew it in Rio. She retreated with a younger girlfriend for a time to Ouro Preto, then to San Francisco for a year, before trying Ouro Preto again. Eventually, Bishop resettled in the Boston area to teach at Harvard a few years after Lota's death but continued to make extended trips to Brazil and Casa Mariana in Ouro Preto. She moved away permanently in 1971. Her last visit was in 1974. She resided in Boston until her death in 1979.

III. Chapter Outline

In this dissertation, I focus on Bishop's poems about Brazil in the context of travelers' histories and the practice of tourism, and the boundaries of proper behavior that they raise. In Chapter One, "The Shock of Encounter," I examine the way Bishop's densely intertextual "Brazil, January 1, 1502" enacts a lyric contact zone as it collapses centuries of *imperial eyes* into a single communal gaze. In this poem, "our eyes" look upon Brazil's famed tropical natural setting, and its inhabitants, as site and agents of impropriety to be civilized, even as the lush forest, exotic birds, and naked native women breed improper desires in the very imperial subjects who disapprove of them. The poem's feel of wonder and its depiction of an allegorical Garden of Eden allude to accounts by the earliest Europeans who landed in Brazil in the sixteenth century, such as Pero Vaz de Caminha, Jean de Lery, and Hans Staden. At the same time, its dense, painterly description evokes the scientific passions of natural historians who traversed South America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Darwin. Bishop saw herself in a lineage of keen observers of Brazilian landscapes and culture. In a 1966 interview she describes "Black Beans and Diamonds," the book she was planning on writing about Brazil that was meant to be "a combination of a travel book, a memoir, and a picture book," and remarks, "I think that since the great naturalists (Darwin, Wallace, Bruce, and so on) there hasn't been much close observation (at least by foreigners) of Brazil. Except perhaps Lévi-Strauss" ("An Interview" 29).

Bishop loses this nuance and complexity of perspective in her more straightforward prose representations of Brazil. Her letters often provided the impetus for anecdotes and descriptions that she would later hone into poems and descriptive essays, yet they are also the private space where she vents to friends about frustrations or tossed-off stereotypes of Brazil without the chance to revise and rethink in the way that she is so famous for in her poems. Bishop is most vulnerable to critiques of her condescension and cramped perspective on Brazil in her writing where she plays the travel writer and ethnographic authority, most notably the introduction to the country she wrote for the

Life World Series, *Brazil*, which she later disowned, and also in her *New York Times* travel piece on Rio, "On the Railroad Named Desire."

Brazilian Bishop critics are especially well-positioned to comment on her representations of Brazil and often critique Bishop's blind spots as not only a foreigner but one who was isolated from much of Brazilian life because she lived in an elite bubble through Lota's privileged economic resources and social position within Rio de Janeiro society. Bishop's Brazilian translator Paulo Henriques Britto is effusive in his praise of Bishop's poetic gifts in his afterword to the Brazilian translation of her collected poems in *O Iceberg Imaginário* (*The Imaginary Iceberg*, 2001) yet takes a much sharper tone of critique in his introduction to an earlier translation positioned as *Os poemas do Brasil* (*The Brazil Poems*, 1999). In the latter Britto writes, "In the nearly twenty years of her Brazil period, Bishop never developed any project to learn about Brazilian reality in its complexity—which is understandable, since her vision was always attracted to the local, the detail; totalities and abractions never interested her (26). Britto echoes Regina Przybycien, whose unpublished dissertation on Bishop in Brazil is widely cited for being one of the few in-depth analyses of the topic by a Brazilian. Przybycien characterizes Bishop's Brazil writings thus: "Analytical, discerning and objective when describing the particular detail, the minutia that escaped the most people's notice, she didn't achieve the same clarity in her vision of the whole. Her synthesis of culture, politics, Brazilian art is most often prejudiced or, at its worst, condescending" (220, my translation).

Chapter Two, "Lyric Mutation," traces the effects of Bishop's experience in Brazil on her poetics, which I argue undergoes an affective loosening up and takes a more autobiographical turn that challenges Bishop's self-identification as a "northern" poet of cool restraint, as well as her ideas of what constitutes a proper lyric poem. I read the prose poem series "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" as Bishop's fullest manifestation of her poetic self in Brazil, which becomes the fittingly "southern," watery site for the release of feelings and desires elsewhere deemed inappropriately excessive.

Chapter Three, "Pastoral Translations," follows a divergent mode of adjudication in Bishop's relationship to Brazil as she recognizes in the Minas Gerais region, and in the rural and folk-themed Brazilian works she chooses to translate, a pastoral ethos that recalls her Nova Scotia childhood and British Romantic influences on her writing. Here, I identify three kinds of pastoral translation: 1) the pastoral mode itself as a translation of the rural periphery for the metropolis; 2) the translation of British and classical pastoral into the Brazilian context of Minas Gerais, with miners in place of shepherds; and 3) the pastoralizing tendencies of Bishop's translations of Brazilian works into English. These versions of pastoral act as a counterpoint to the impropriety and excess that Bishop and other travelers more commonly associate with Brazil and the tropics.

Chapter One

The Shock of Encounter

Januaries, Nature greets our eyes
exactly as she must have greeted theirs:
every square inch filling in with foliage—
big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves.
—Elizabeth Bishop, "Brazil, January 1, 1502"

There are too many waterfalls here; the crowded streams
hurry too rapidly down to the sea,
and the pressure of so many clouds on the mountaintops
makes them spill over the sides in soft slow-motion,
turning to waterfalls under our very eyes.
— Elizabeth Bishop, "Questions of Travel"

Oh, tourist,
is this how this country is going to answer you
and your immodest demands for a different world,
and a better life, and complete comprehension
of both at last, and immediately [. . .] ?
—Elizabeth Bishop, "Arrival at Santos"[13]

I. Introduction

The poems cited above offer three ways of entering into "Brazil," the title of the first half of Elizabeth Bishop's 1965 collection *Questions of Travel*. I have sequenced the quotes according to how one might imagine a chronological progression of European and North American first encounters with Brazil, beginning with sixteenth-century accounts of marvel before a fantastically burgeoning Nature, and eventually coming to dwell in the twentieth-century tourist's deflated sense of historical lateness and imperial guilt. The first poem's title, "Brazil, January 1, 1502," refers to the original expedition of Portuguese explorers to land in this uncharted territory, which would eventually take on the name of its first major export, *pau brasil*, or Brazilwood. The title's January is significant because it refers to the inspiration for the name of Rio de Janeiro, or "January River." The date marks the moment when captain Gaspar de Lemos and his crew entered Guanabara Bay and mistook it for the mouth of a river. The ship was part of the expedition led by Pedro Álvares Cabral, credited as the first Portuguese to land in Brazil, in present-day Porto Seguro, Bahia on April 22, 1500. Brazil's most fabled city, Rio de Janeiro is the site of numerous travelers' tales of their first encounter with Brazil, hence a more logical point of entry for a poem that layers foreign fantasies of

[13] In *CP* 91, 93, 89.

Brazil as a tropical paradise. The poem links a lush tapestry of foliage to the discovery of "a brand-new pleasure" across centuries of vision.

However, in "Questions of Travel," the tone of rapture shifts to one of disoriented disapproval. The modern-day foreigner is overwhelmed by the Brazilian landscape's "too-muchness" as she surveys its overflowing forms. There are "too many waterfalls," "crowded streams / hurry too rapidly down to the sea," and "so many clouds" morph into waterfalls. At first, the North American traveler casts this tropical fluidity as inappropriately excessive. Then her sense of propriety turns against the childishness of first-world tourists for seeking the thrill of novelty. She muses, "Oh, must we dream our dreams / and have them, too?," "Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?," and "Is it right to be watching strangers in a play / in this strangest of theatres?" Here, Bishop voices a more contemporary ethical unease about the casualness with which leisure travelers consume the spectacle of otherness.

The third poem quoted above, "Arrival at Santos," bears a similar sense of tourist self-critique, layered over an acute sense of disappointment. It is based on Bishop's own initial arrival at the lackluster port of Santos in December, 1951. The poem voices the traveler's dissatisfaction at not being able to relive the storied accounts of first encountering Brazil. Part of the disappointment lies in the fact that the port of arrival in classic voyages has been moved from the lush panorama of Rio de Janeiro, to the modern-day industrial Santos, an unremarkable point of entry devoid of the anticipated sensory pleasures of an exuberant Nature. In this poem, the troubling excess resides not in the host country but in the visitor's "immodest demands" for immediate access to a utopian dream promised by this exotic destination.

My sequencing of the poems here maps the arc of this chapter rather than following the order in the collection. I begin with Brazil's origin story as New World colony and follow the influence of these earliest encounters and the impact of Brazil's stunning natural setting on later travelers, and subsequently connect this historical landscape to Bishop's representations of Brazil in the mid-twentieth century. I follow a more straightforward chronological structure in order to establish a historical-cultural context for understanding the complexities of Bishop's approach to representing Brazil, which goes much deeper than a temporary traveler's first impressions. In contrast to the organizing principle of this chapter, Bishop's own sequencing establishes a circular temporality, thus producing a disorienting and ironic sort of dissonance in the reader's geographical imagination. *Questions of Travel* begins in January 1952 with "Arrival at Santos," jumps back in time to "January 1, 1502," then returns to the poet's present moment with "Questions of Travel."[14] As Bishop's only poems that take on the perspective of a first-time visitor to the country, they form a three-tiered port of entry into Brazil.

Bishop sets up a play of expectation and abrupt reversal that begins even before the first poem. Shortly after the *Questions of Travel* title page, the section subtitle "BRAZIL" appears alone on a blank page.[15] The name's most typical associations for the U.S. and Western European reader, particularly in 1965 but also continuing through today, conjures an exotic destination full of exuberant nature and tropical sensuality. These associations are embedded in the popular Western (and Northern) imagination by cumulative layers of cultural production, from the earliest European travel narratives in the sixteenth century to Hollywood musicals and the 1959 film *Black Orpheus*, through the rise of bossa nova in the 1960s. The international hit "The Girl From Ipanema" won

[14] While "Arrival at Santos" was first published in 1952, just six months after Bishop's actual arrival at this port, and "Questions of Travel" in 1956, Bishop finished composing "Brazil, January 1, 1502" toward the end of 1959, after she had absorbed much more of Brazilian history and politics.

[15] This separate "I. BRAZIL" title page is also reproduced in the "Questions of Travel" section of *The Complete Poems*.

the Grammy for Record of the Year in 1965, the same year that *Questions of Travel* was published.[16] Yet Bishop upends the exotic and utopian associations of "Brazil" by opening the section with the least romantic, least clichéd account of the three in "Arrival at Santos." Yet after nine stanzas filled with disappointment and tedium, the poem ends on the promising line, "we are driving to the interior," which leads into the next poem. "Brazil, January 1, 1502" offers a more picturesque journey into the historical and geographical imagination. Like "Arrival at Santos" before it, this poem voices a critique of the excesses of host territory and traveler, yet couches it in a more stereotypically seductive presentation of the rainforest.

Then in the third poem, "Questions of Travel," Bishop loops dizzyingly back to her initial tourist perspective. However, this poem presents a lusher landscape than "Arrival at Santos," in a setting that evokes Rio de Janeiro and its environs, though Bishop continues to reprimand the traveler's childish need for novelty and ready wish-fulfillment. The subsequent eight poems in the "Brazil" section largely maintain this contemporary focus, though they depart from the initial tourist impressions to chart a deepening sense of Brazil as home. Even so, Bishop always maintains the sense that being a permanent outsider.[17]

The historical travel accounts that make up the composite portrait of Brazil in the Western imagination are written almost exclusively by men—intrepid explorers, military and bureaucratic officials, natural historians, and anthropologists.[18] In this context, Bishop's appropriation of the imperialist male gaze, but as a woman who also desires women, makes for a complicated dynamic in which she becomes simultaneously complicit in and ironically critical of the fantasies of feminized otherness embedded in the Euro-American traveler's vision. Bishop's poem shows how Brazil is associated in the Euro-American geographical imagination with a tropical spectacularity yet concurrent invisibility—that is, a sense that things remain hidden in the dense undergrowth—in a way that makes "just looking" never as innocent or objective as it might seem. The poem further emphasizes how these authoritative perspectives judge both female and tropical colonial subjects as excessively physical—too much body—but also as lacking in comparison to the proper standard set by a European masculine ideal.

This dynamic recalls Aimé Césaire's critique of colonial discourse that puts natives on the side of the improper, in a process of colonial "thingification" that emphasizes their physicality (42). Césaire quotes French affirmations of European superiority, such as Counter-Enlightenment thinker Joseph de Maistre declaring that, "There was only too much truth in this first impulse of the Europeans who, *in the century of Columbus, refused to recognize as their fellow men the degraded inhabitants of the*

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[16] Hollywood has a history of depicting Brazil as a glamorous, exotic locale, one particularly connected to its inhabitants' musical, sensual exuberance and a sense of freedom from the moral and legal strictures of home. The 1930s and 1940s saw countless Carmen Miranda musicals, as well as *Flying Down to Rio* (1933), starring Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, and Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1946), with Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman. By the time *Questions of Travel* appeared in 1965, Rio was cemented in the popular Euro-American consciousness as a place of beautiful women and musical pleasures. Marcel Camus's gorgeous Rio Carnival fantasia, *Black Orpheus* (1959), made a sensation whose effects continue today—when President Barack Obama visited Rio de Janeiro in 2011, he credited the film with inspiring his childhood dream of visiting Brazil.

[17] I examine other poems in this section in subsequent chapters. One exception to my characterization here is "The Riverman," which possesses the atemporal quality of myth in its retelling of Amazonian folklore about the *sacaca* witch doctors and the *boto cor-de-rosa*, the pink river dolphin that transforms into a man on certain nights.

[18] For Brazil, Maria Graham is one of the few early female travel writers. Graham traveled to Chile in 1822 as the wife of a British naval officer, and stayed on there for a year even after she was widowed. She spent 1823-24 in Brazil as a governess for the family of Brazil's emperor Dom Pedro I. A deeper discussion of her travel accounts is beyond the scope of this chapter but Pratt discusses Graham in the section on "*exploratrices sociales*" from Chapter 7 of *Imperial Eyes* (157-171). See also the Introduction to the critical edition of Graham's 1824 *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil*, edited by Jennifer Hayward and M. Soledade Caballero.

new world," and that the accursedness of the "savage" is written "*even on the external form of his body*" (49, Césaire's italics). Both Césaire and Bishop write in the context of postwar decolonial movements whose challenges to stereotypes about "degenerate" or "barbaric" New World, Asian, and African subjects pivot on revising the logics constructed during the era of Columbus and the Age of Exploration. Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* dates from 1955, the same era that Bishop was composing her Brazil travel poems (1952-1964). Yet Césaire's denunciation of colonial hypocrisy, "how colonization works to *decivilize* the colonizer, to *brutalize* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him," is much more direct and less ambiguous in its moral indictment of so-called civilized societies than anything in Bishop (35).

Bishop's approach to the tropical postcolony, an uneasy combination of fantasizing about exotic difference while also shaming the mechanisms of modern leisure travel, brings her closer to another contemporary, Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose 1955 *Tristes Tropiques* she read in the original French. In this memoir of fieldwork undertaken in Brazil during the 1930s, the anthropologist confesses his disappointment at having arrived too late to experience the marvels of the land he nostalgically insists on calling the "New World":

> Journeys, those magic caskets full of dreamlike promises, will never again yield up their treasures untarnished. A proliferating and over excited civilization has broken the silence of the seas once and for all. The perfumes of the tropics and the pristine freshness of human beings have been corrupted by a busyness with dubious implications, which mortifies our desire and dooms us to acquire only contaminated memories. (38)

In a worn-out era saturated by the "contaminated memories" of previous explorations and polluted by globalized civilization's industrial waste, "The first thing we see as we travel round the world is our own filth, thrown into the face of mankind." It is a profoundly disenchanted view of modern travel, and Lévi-Strauss can only express a more uncritical pleasure in his melancholy nostalgia for the "pristine freshness" of the Brazilian coast and its indigenous tribes that his predecessors encountered in earlier centuries. "I wished I had lived in the days of *real* journeys, when it was still possible to see the full splendor of a spectacle that had not yet been blighted, polluted and spoilt," he says of his remembered disappointment at having missed the grand, pristine spectacle. He muses, "Would it have been better to arrive in Rio in the eighteenth century with Bougainville, or in the sixteenth with Léry and Thevet?" (43). Thus the melancholy suggestion of the title *Tristes Tropiques* comes from both the sad sight of dwindling tribes that once thrived amid unspoiled natural grandeur, but also the anthropologist's nostalgia for the unreproducible spectacle in those past encounters between Europeans and natives, which make his own "discoveries" seem like decrepit reprisals.

Bishop's poems of modern-day tourist encounters with Brazil echo the tones of disdain and disappointment in Levi-Strauss. In the final section of this chapter, I look at how Bishop's "Arrival at Santos" and "Questions of Travel" question imperial tourist desires and motives but at the same time are themselves subject to the intensified postcolonial critiques of travel writing that have gained momentum since the 1990s. Bishop's critical self-awareness of her privileged position as a white North American in these poems anticipates the ethical lines of inquiry in contemporary criticism on travel writing. Despite the poet's degree of consciousness about the limits of her ability to characterize Brazilian sensibilities, the blind spots and asymmetries in her representations of Brazilian others have been the source of the most strongly voiced objections to her work, as I discuss later in this chapter. While I agree that Bishop's judgments of Brazil can be harshly condescending based on limited knowledge or access to its culture, and that she tends to overstate the harmony of its class and race relations, I make a case here for taking account of genre. I argue

that her poetry succeeds in representing a much more complex vision of Brazil than the more direct approach in her prose when she takes on the role of tour guide, especially in the Life *Brazil* book and her *New York Times* profile of Carnival in Rio, "On the Railroad Named Desire." Bishop's poems manage to evoke much more intimate and nuanced aspects of Brazilian life through a form that allows for greater ironies and multiplicities of voice and representation than the more authoritative, univocal mode employed in prose travel writing as a vehicle of practical information about another country.

II. Tropical Disproportion and Excessive Desire in "Brazil, January 1, 1502"

While most of the Brazil poems in *Questions of Travel* foreground the poet's personal encounters in a contemporary setting, "Brazil, January 1, 1502" is Bishop's only poem that also emphasizes her deeply intertextual historical vision of Brazil. Bishop completed the poem in early 1960, after she had been living in the country for eight years, during which time she significantly broadened her knowledge of Brazilian literature and history.[19] She was especially taken with the history of European travelers to Brazil, telling friends she had read "all the memoirs of and travels in Brazil that the British Council has."[20] Bishop particularly admired Darwin's "wonderful" 1839 travel journal, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, as well as his diary from the trip.[21] She also praised Richard Burton's *Exploration of the Highlands of Brazil* (1839) as "absolutely *marvelous*.[22] Lévi-Strauss's memoir especially resonated with her layered experience, in that he too goes from being a first-time traveler to Brazil to subsequently gaining a more intimate and substantial familiarity with the country during his four-year post at the University at São Paulo (1935-1939)—though of course Lévi-Strauss gained access to an even more singular knowledge of the indigenous through living among various tribes.

In "Brazil, January 1, 1502," Bishop's famous painterly eye suddenly takes on a historical resonance. The poem's description of tropical nature, grounded in minute detail, connects this method to the tradition of the earliest European "testimonies" of the New World, *"testemunhos*" in Portuguese, as well as to seemingly objective modes of description in natural history and anthropology. Bishop's method foregrounds the ways in which all travel writing borrows its authority from a sense of the real implied by an eye-witness account. The hard facts in the poem's title, which locates a specific place and date, reinforce the sense of its being anchored in the particularities of something that "really happened"—in this case the first Portuguese sighting of Rio de Janeiro.

On one hand, Bishop often gave a non-ironic weight to the "true-story" allure of travelogues and diaries. Her introduction to her translation of *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* (1957) praises the fact

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[19] Bishop read major Brazilian authors like Machado de Assis and Euclides da Cunha, some in the original and some in translation, though she was never very committed to immersing herself in either Brazilian literature or the Portuguese language. She made a point of reading *The Masters and the Slaves* (*Casa-grande e senzala*), Gilberto Freyre's 1933 classic that traces the structure of Brazilian society, especially its class and race relations, to colonial origins and a patriarchal structure based on slavery. Bishop recommends Freyre's book as "startling" and "fascinating and depressing" in a letter to U.T. and Joseph Summers, 18 July 1955, *OA* 307.

[20] Bishop to Joseph and U.T. Summers, 9 December 1953, *OA* 283.

[21] "I'm having a wonderful time reading Darwin's journal on the *Beagle*—you'd enjoy it too." Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 10 February 1953, *OA* 255. She also raves about Darwin in a letter to Marianne Moore and specifies it this time as "Darwin's Diary on the *Beagle*—not the Journal, although I guess it's mostly the same—and I thought it was wonderful. I think I'll begin right away on all his other books." 11 April 1953, *OA* 257. Bishop was most likely reading the version published in 1933 as *Charles Darwin's Diary of the Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle*." Ed. Nora Barlow.

[22] Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 13 July 1953, *OA*, 266. Burton's book became an early guide to Ouro Preto for Bishop, which I discuss further in Chapter Three.

that "*it really happened*" as "the charm and the main point" of the book's stories (xxvi, Bishop's italics). The latter quote is from a Gerard Manley Hopkins letter recounting the allure of *Two Years Before the Mast*, Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s 1840 memoir of a sea voyage from Boston down to South America, around Cape Horn and back up to California. From this viewpoint, all the fantastical things reported in stories from foreign places become even more wondrous and compelling for their actually existing. Yet despite Bishop's attraction to documentary modes, she distorts the "from life" quality in her poems with questions and revisions ("Of course I may be remembering it all wrong" she writes in "Santarém"[23]), and with ironic twists that resituate the poem's opening perspective, as in "Brazil, January 1, 1502."

Perhaps no historical event is as intertwined with marvel in the Western imagination as the European first encounters with the New World. In *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Stephen Greenblatt calls wonder the "central figure" in initial European responses to these never-before-imagined lands. He emphasizes the singular passion of these encounters that distinguished them from the past, so that "in the presence of the New World, the classical model of mature, balanced detachment seemed at once inappropriate and impossible. Columbus's voyage initiated a century of wonder" (14). Greenblatt further identifies the marvelous as the "central feature" in the complex medieval and Renaissance system of representation through which Europeans apprehended "the unfamiliar, the alien, the terrible, the desirable, and the hateful" (22).

Bishop's poem maps the stages through which the unfamiliar and alien landscape of Brazil produces these jumbled responses of fear and condemnation, but also delight and desire, in the Euro-American foreigner. Yet Greenblatt also emphasizes that what distinguishes these experiences in the New World from earlier conceptions of the marvelous is that they provoke a particular kind of wonder, one that results from the fusing of the everyday with the extraordinary. He observes how Jean de Léry wrote with "sober accuracy" in his anthropological description of cannibalism and other tribal rituals in *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1578), yet was "writing not in testimony to the ordinariness and familiarity of Brazil but to its utter strangeness" (22).

Bishop is deeply interested in the ways that a documentary perspective can suddenly derail into a moment of wondrous incredulity, especially in this poem. The epigraph that she inserts immediately after the title counters the facticity implied in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" with an allusion to the metamorphosis that occurs when art and the imagination reconstruct the material world:

> . . . *embroidered nature* . . . *tapestried landscape.*
> —*Landscape into Art*, by Sir Kenneth Clark

Bishop attributes the quote to Clark's classic 1949 study of landscape painting, in which he considers its prehistory of allegorical representations of "embroidered" nature in medieval tapestries. The quote's fragmentation and the indeterminacy embedded in its ellipses further suggest a dreamy idea of nature that trails off . . . to be filled in by the imagination. Thus, in her opening gestures, Bishop emphasizes the merging of observation and imagination that has marked apprehensions of the New World over centuries. In the first stanza, Bishop weaves together layers of description until the vision tilts and "our eyes" are caught between actual nature and the ekphrastic representation suggested by the epigraph:

> Januaries, Nature greets our eyes
> exactly as she must have greeted theirs:
> every square inch filling in with foliage—

[23] *CP* 185.

big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves,
blue, blue-green, and olive,
with occasional lighter veins and edges,
or a satin underleaf turned over;
monster ferns
in silver-gray relief,
and flowers, too, like giant water lilies
up in the air—up, rather, in the leaves—
purple, yellow, two yellows, pink,
rust red and greenish white;
solid but airy; fresh as if just finished
and taken off the frame.

Landscape becomes art, much in the way that Nancy Stepan considers "tropical nature understood as a special kind of landscape" to the European eye in *Picturing Tropical Nature*, study of how European ideas of the tropics were constructed through the fields of natural history, anthropology, and medicine (25). Here, the term "landscape" implies a visual field situated and organized at a distance). This distance marks not only a physical separation of observer from the scene but also a geographical one in the case of the tropical landscape, represented as a symbol of "radical otherness to the temperate world" in a space where "the superabundance of nature was believed to overwhelm human endeavor," (18). Indeed, the human is reduced to an eye in this living tableau overgrown with a multitude of foliage that layers "Januaries" from different centuries. The "*January, 1952*" that ends "Arrival at Santos" connects the modern-day tourist's gaze upon this rainforest scene to the "January 1, 1502" vision that met the first Europeans, in a fantasy of Nature's immutability. In this entanglement of sight and imagination, Nature is both timeless and historical, an alluring, yet vaguely threatening monstrosity.

However, Bishop's representation collapses this distance, as the reader/viewer becomes engulfed by the profusion of detail and exaggerated forms that tower over us in this word-tapestry: "giant leaves," "monster ferns," and "giant water lilies / up in the air." Bishop's method here, as in many of her compositions, is to induce a certain surrealist impact through dizzying close-ups and subtle yet disorienting shifts in perspective.[24] The effect is also the result of overwhelming precision, as Bishop enumerates every edge, line, relative size, and color in repetitive bursts: "big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves," "blue, blue-green, and olive / with occasional lighter veins and edges," and "yellow, two yellows."

This mixture of objective description and delirious profusion of detail recalls the moment that Bishop so relishes in Darwin's South American journal, when sustained attention slips into ecstatic transport. Bishop writes admiringly of "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." There is a way in which this kind of "self-forgetful, perfectly useless concentration" opens onto an aesthetic feeling, ideal for its being unconscious and unforced. It enables what Bishop calls "the always-more-successful surrealism of everyday life," a vision that blurs to dream-like insight, in order to "catch a peripheral vision of whatever it is one can never really see full-face but that seems enormously

[24] For more on the surrealist influences in Bishop's poetry, see Richard Mullen, "Elizabeth Bishop's Surrealist Inheritance."

important."[25] This description goes to the heart of how Bishop's own poetry captures the blurred edges where empirical observation collides with structures of affect and the imagination.

Bishop puts this idea of the elusive "surrealism of everyday life" into practice particularly well in "Brazil, January 1, 1502," which slyly reveals the bewildering passions that distort the seemingly objective mode of natural history documentation, as well as the more embellished yet also seemingly neutral language of painterly description that Bishop employs here. Bishop's descriptions of Brazil's tropical landscape here and elsewhere in her Brazil writing, echo the way earlier travelers' apprehensions of its tropical disproportion and superabundance are never neutral—they veer between disapproval of its improper extravagance and the travelers' own excessive pleasure and desire provoked by this surpassing of known limits. "To even the most enthusiastic tropicalist of the nineteenth century, it seems, tropical nature was too much—too disorderly, chaotic, large—and too different from the remembered landscapes of home," Stepan writes (54).

Bishop's 1950s tourist speakers share this tone of disapproval in their judgments of Brazil's "too muchness" that they associate with the disorderly and chaotic. Recalling the opening of this chapter, the traveler speaker in "Questions of Travel" feels her senses bombarded by "too many waterfalls," "crowded streams" hurrying "too rapidly down to the sea," and "so many clouds." The tourist in "Arrival at Santos" dismisses the dramatic scale of the granite mountains that shoot steeply into the sky as "impractically shaped" and chides the profusion of plant life covering them as "frivolous greenery." This idea that natural profusion can be too showy brings it under a manmade rubric that deems spectacularity improper for exceeding the bounds of modest necessity. Bishop's voicing of disorientation before these differences emphasizes the North-South cultural divide between temperate and tropical environments and establishes the distance between her home in the U.S., an industrialized world power, and the wild, chaotic nature associated with this less developed, poorer country, where common products like glue are "very inferior" and she "somehow never thought of there *being* a flag" ("Arrival at Santos" *CP* 89). This northern superiority ignores the two countries' shared history as New World wilderness in the European imagination.

In Lévi-Strauss's contemporaneous account of first encountering Brazil in *Tristes Tropiques*, he expresses a similar distaste for the coastline's exaggerated proportions, yet unlike Bishop he reads this difference in terms of a New World versus Old World divide. He attributes the sense of difference to America as a monolithic entity, conflating North and South America, industrialized cities and natural spaces alike under a rubric of dizzying vastness that the European finds disconcerting because it "does not correspond to any of his traditional categories" (91). The anthropologist observes:

> This impression of enormous size is peculiar to America, and can be felt everywhere, in town and country alike: I have experienced it along the coast and on the plateaux of central Brazil, in the Bolivian Andes and the Colorado Rockies, in the suburbs of Rio, the outskirts of Chicago and the streets of New York. Everywhere it makes the same powerful impact; [. . .] The feeling of unfamiliarity comes simply from the fact that the relationship between the size of human beings and the size of the objects around them has been so distended as to cancel out any possibility of a common measure. Later, when one has become accustomed to America, one almost unconsciously makes the adjustment which restores a normal correspondence between the different terms; it involves a barely perceptible effort, of which you are only vaguely made aware by the mental click which occurs as the plane touches

[25] Bishop to Anne Stevenson, 8 January 1964, *Prose* 414.

> down. *But the congenital lack of proportion between the two worlds permeates and distorts our judgments.* (78-79, my italics)

For Lévi-Strauss, American proportions—in natural formations as well as their influence on urban design—are logical on their own New World terms, yet he views a "congenital lack of proportion between the two worlds." Their incommensurability lies in the distance between the American and European scales of what constitutes a normative nature-to-human size ratio ("a *normal* correspondence between the different terms," my italics). Thus in America, nature is gigantic and humans are tiny, whereas in Europe there is greater parity. Yet the anthropologist emphasizes the elasticity of the mind, whose judgments are "distorted" and disoriented by the rupture between worlds but that should be able to recalibrate its internal scale with a "mental click," perhaps a psychosomatic version of the body's adjustment of its biorhythms to accommodate a sudden change of time zones.

Despite defending American (dis)proportions, Lévi-Strauss nevertheless admits to finding Rio de Janeiro's extremely irregular forms to be vulgar and inadequate:

> Having said this, I feel rather embarrassed in speaking about Rio de Janeiro, which I find off-putting in spite of its oft-extolled beauty. I don't quite know how to make the point. It seems to me that the landscape in which Rio is set is *out of proportion to its own dimensions*. The Sugar Loaf Mountain, the Corcovado and the much-praised natural features appear to the traveller entering the bay like stumps sticking up here and there in a toothless mouth. Since these eminences are almost always swathed in a thick tropical mist, they seem totally unable to fill the horizon, for which in any case they would be inadequate.[26] (79, my italics)

Lévi-Strauss's apologetic confusion at not being able to find a harmony in Rio's "crazy jumble of eccentric shapes" is almost comical; he is embarrassed by the impropriety of not being able to click his mind into this setting's aesthetic logic. He accuses Rio of being disproportionate *to itself*, its dramatic peaks as inadequate to the horizon and having "the appearance of an unfinished building-site." Despite the anthropologist's initial desire for a certain exotic headiness in the tropics, this actual physical disorientation feels unacceptably out of step with his ideal of harmony.

This sense of tropical disproportion is also present in "Brazil, January 1, 1502," yet here Bishop casts it as overwhelming without being displeasing. Rather, Bishop's somewhat nostalgic rendering paints a picture of Nature as an inviting female who "greets our eyes / exactly as she must have greeted theirs," "theirs" gesturing to the first Portuguese explorers the title alludes to, but also indeterminate enough to encompass a broader trajectory of past travelers. The poem's opening stanza tempers the potentially alarming, claustrophobic density of "every square inch filling in with foliage" by building up a gradual, fluid word-picture of this tropical nature, line by line, image by image. Monstrous nature has been aestheticized into an appealing work of art, "solid but airy; fresh

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[26] Caetano Veloso responds to Lévi-Strauss's distaste for Guanabara Bay, alongside the rapture of Paul Gaugin and Cole Porter, in his song "*O Estrangeiro*" ("The Foreigner") by invoking the "blind" eyes of a native Brazilian, who does not share this same sense of aesthetic shock as the foreigner and who draws upon a very different affective canvas. Caetano sings: "The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss detested Guanabara Bay: / It looked to him like a toothless mouth. / And I, if I had known it less would I have loved it less? / I'm blind from having looked at it so much, from having so taken it as a star / What is a beautiful thing? / Love is blind / [. . .] But it was beautiful and toothless at the same time, Guanabara" (translation mine). "O antropólogo Claude Lévi-strauss detestou a Baía de Guanabara: / Pareceu-lhe uma boca banguela. / E eu, menos a conhecera mais a amara? / Sou cego de tanto vê-la, de tanto tê-la estrela / O que é uma coisa bela? / O amor é cego / [. . .] Mas era ao mesmo tempo bela e banguela a Guanabara."

as if just finished / and taken off the frame," like a tapestry or a still-wet painting. The implication is that Nature's vivid profusion exists to please the eye.

This more pleasurable aspect of disproportion evokes the way tropical environments inspired a more dramatic sense of rapture in earlier European natural historians, powerful enough to pierce through their scientific detachment. In *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Darwin reminisces about his first stunning encounter with the Brazilian rainforest, at the northeastern port of the Bahia de Todos os Santos. Here, the methodical scientist seems to lose himself in a surprising moment of unrestrained exuberance:

> Delight itself, however, is a weak term to express the feelings of a naturalist who, for the first time, has wandered by himself in a Brazilian forest. The elegance of the grasses, the novelty of the parasitical plants, the beauty of the flowers, the glossy green of the foliage, but above all the general luxuriance of the vegetation, fill me with admiration. [. . .] To a person fond of natural history, such a day as this brings with it a deeper pleasure than he can ever hope to experience again. (21)

Darwin feels the intensity of this new environment compared to Europe, noting "the gaudy scenery of this noble bay," "this violence of rain" that penetrates the dense forests unlike "common English rain," and "the massive, bare, and steep hills of granite which are so common in this country" (28). In his scientific enthusiasm, the naturalist turns to Romantic language of sublime transport to describe an experience of nearly apprehending the inapprehensible and attempting to express the inexpressible. Not only is "delight" "a weak term" to express his feelings, but "none exceed in sublimity the primeval forests undefaced by the hand of man," while elsewhere he remarks, "It is easy to specify the individual objects of admiration in these grand scenes; but it is not possible to give an adequate idea of the higher feelings of wonder, astonishment, and devotion, which fill and elevate the mind" (506, 34-35).

Unlike Lévi-Strauss or Bishop's modern tourist, Darwin feels no compunctions about the immodesties of his desire for pleasure in this new land, nor does the specter of past New World discoveries trouble or disappoint his own encounter with the tropics. Darwin acknowledges the mediating influence of Prussian naturalist and adventurer Alexander von Humboldt's accounts of South America on his experience:

> As the force of impressions generally depends on preconceived ideas, I may add that mine were taken from the vivid descriptions in the Personal Narrative of Humboldt, which far exceed in merit anything else which I have read. Yet with these high-wrought ideas, my feelings were far from partaking of a tinge of disappointment on my first and final landing on the shores of Brazil. (505-506)

This confession suggests his categorically Romantic declarations of sublimity may in part arise from a certain will to rapture as conditioned by a Humboldtian aesthetic education. Humboldt borrowed from but also shaped the contours of European Romantic tropes of the sublime in his narratives of South America, as Mary Louise Pratt argues in *Imperial Eyes*, in which he depicted the continent as the site of "a dramatic, extraordinary nature, a spectacle capable of overwhelming human knowledge and understanding [. . .] a nature that dwarfs humans, commands their being, arouses their passions, defies their powers of perception."[27]

[27] In Pratt, 124. For her argument of how Humboldt's writings and ideas of the New World helped to construct German and other European romanticisms and not just vice versa, see p.137-38. Stepan also discusses Humboldt's impact on

Humboldt never made it very far into Brazil—he and his partner Aimé Bonpland were arrested as spies by the suspicious Portuguese shortly after entering the Brazilian Amazon from Peru during their 1799-1803 expedition—and Pratt is careful in her arguments about the influence of his wildly popular accounts of South America account of his influence to always specify Spanish America. Nevertheless, his writings remain an important reference point here, particularly the 1814 travelogue *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America,* precisely due to a lack of popular representations of Brazil in the northern European imagination after the initial sensationalistic figure of the Brazilian cannibal that swept across 16th-century Europe. Pratt argues that Humboldt invented Spanish America as Nature in the northern European imagination. Indeed, much of the rainforest and mountainous landscapes he depicts sufficiently stretch to fill in the blank space that constituted Brazil for Humboldt's audience, as far as its continental reach is synonymous with South America in the North American and northern European imagination, as Darwin's instinctive reference to Humboldt illustrates.

In Humboldt's version of New World grandeur, he builds upon earlier Garden of Eden myths and marvels conjured by Columbus and other early modern explorers but contributes his own particularly emphatic idea of gigantism, which would later factor importantly into various South American discourses that merged nationalism and Romanticism and that Lévi-Strauss also echoes: "In the Old World, nations and the distinctions of their civilization form the principal points in the picture; in the New World, man and his productions almost disappear amidst the stupendous display of wild and gigantic nature."[28] This description sounds like a painting, and indeed in the enormous South American landscapes painted by Hudson Valley school artist Frederic Edwin Church. For example, his paintings *Rainy Season in the Tropics* and *Heart of the Andes*, the majestic peaks, waterfalls, and vegetation that dominate the expansive canvases (seven-to-ten feet wide) make the tiny humans and their puny crosses seem as insignificant as ants.[29]

Bishop begins "Brazil, January 1" with a Darwinian-Humboldtian excess of detail that breeds a "stupendous display of wild and gigantic nature." At first, the middle stanza extends the ekphrastic description of the first. Then it takes an abrupt turn into allegory as a prelude to colonial violence that connects this vision back to the era of exploration and beginnings of colonization. In *Reinventing Eden*, Carolyn Merchant identifies the two competing Christian narratives of nature that produce a double vision of the Americas as either a savage, sinful wilderness to be mastered and improved by Adam's descendants or as a fertile garden to be enjoyed (plundered). She writes, "Internalized by Europeans and Americans alike since the seventeenth century, this story has propelled countless efforts by humans to recover Eden by turning wilderness into garden, 'female' nature into civilized society, and indigenous folkways into modern culture" (2).[30] In this stanza, Brazil is a place of Sin but also a place *to* sin, in the eyes of those informed by a long-sustained

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Europe's sense of the extravagance, superabundance, and fertility of the tropics (36). For the significance of Spanish America to British Romanticism, see Rebecca Cole Heinowitz. *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777-1826: Rewriting Conquest*.

[28] From *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (1814), 12. The allure of the tropics as a site of extreme drama, though perhaps more in a "heart of darkness" vein, continues to the present-day, as German director Werner Herzog illustrates in a 1995 interview that appears on the Criterion Collection edition of *Burden of Dreams*, the documentary on the making of *Fitzcarraldo* in the Peruvian Amazon: "Both in *Aguirre, the Wrath of God* and in *Fitzcarraldo* it's very evident that the jungle is a place of fever dreams. It's the place of magnificent stories that are bigger than our wildest fantasies, it's a place of grandiose opera and our greatest emotions that we are capable of, and it's a place of darkness and mystery and on and on and on. [. . .] Of course, I feel quite at home in a place like that."

[29] Church was inspired precisely by Humboldt's writings to travel through Colombia and Ecuador in 1853 and 1857. See Stepan for further discussion of paintings depicting tropical nature.

[30] See p. 24 for a general description of these two recovery narratives, and pp. 62-63 and 94-98 for their relevance to understandings of the New World, with particular emphasis on U.S. settlement.

dream of paradise and the imperialist justification of a higher religion and civilization. The still landscape springs disarmingly to life, first through an unsettling allegorical vision of Sin, then in the violent outbreak of colonial lust that rips through the travelers' reverie and shows that "our eyes" are far from innocent. They who share "our eyes" readily view Nature as a morality pageant:

> in the foreground there is Sin:
> five sooty dragons near some massy rocks.
> [. . . . .]
> threatened from underneath by moss
> in lovely hell-green flames,
> attacked above
> by scaling-ladder vines, oblique and neat,
> "one leaf yes and one leaf no" (in Portuguese).
> The lizards scarcely breathe; all eyes
> are on the smaller, female one, back-to,
> her wicked tail straight up and over,
> red as a red-hot wire.

What begins as a seemingly benign art historical landscape suddenly evokes human combat and infernal damnation. Here, vague intimations of tropical impropriety become heightened into matters of immorality and obscenity. The rocks are now under siege by the hellfire moss and "scaling-ladder vines" that evoke medieval warfare. The lizards in heat allude to the sexualized temptations associated with nature gendered as the weaker, sinful female. As we move from aesthetic contemplation into a hellish wilderness, the rainforest scene remains "lovely" yet in a disturbingly alluring way. Whereas previously Nature is welcoming as she "greets our eyes," here the female lizard's "wicked tail" stands "straight up and over," in the poem's most explicitly sexual image, drawing "all eyes" like a devilishly red-hot beacon announcing her availability. Bishop's use of the inclusive modifiers "our" and "all" eyes is especially disorienting for how it flattens the distinctions between a masculinized, colonizing view of feminized nature, the seemingly innocent looking by modern-day travelers and readers of poetry, human and animal sexual arousal, and the scopophilic attention on the female body that makes it an object of desire for men, women, lizards—basically, all who have eyes.

In the poem's compelling final stanza, the inferno of illicit desires and perpetual warfare morph into the more familiar New World foundational fantasy of a new Golden Age or Garden of Eden. Here, Bishop synthesizes the narratives of early modern explorers and colonizers (and we whose ideas have been shaped by the lore and logic of these accounts) who arrived armed with ready-made frameworks that enabled them to comprehend the strangeness of the New World as simultaneous fact and self-serving allegory. In *The Lay of the Land*, Annette Kolodny emphasizes the way eye-witness accounts of the New World become merged into structures of fantasy in a way that resituated narratives of Golden Age utopias and dreams of Eden from their location in a perpetually distanced "back then and over there" to a "here and now," so that "American pastoral, unlike European, holds at its very core the promise of fantasy as daily reality" (7).

The opening phrase "Just so the Christians [. . .] came and found it all" drives home the implication that we have been viewing this tropical garden through imperial eyes from the start:

> Just so the Christians, hard as nails,
> tiny as nails, and glinting,
> in creaking armor, came 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
already out of style when they left home—
wealth, plus a brand-new pleasure.
Directly after Mass, humming perhaps
L'homme armé or some such tune,
they ripped away into the hanging fabric,
each out to catch an Indian for himself—
those maddening little women who kept calling,
calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
and retreating, always retreating, behind it.

In these lines, immorality migrates from the sinfulness of the native land to involve the conquering explorers themselves. Already from the second stanza, Bishop has disturbingly twisted the vision of "our eyes" and in the third, the reader and speaker are encompassed in this critique of first New World encounters whose idyllic aspect only thinly veils the colonial violence to follow. In this stanza, mastering the virgin land (for female Nature here is distinctly virgin rather than mother) turns out to be less a matter of converting the Indians and purging the wilderness of Sin, but rather of plunging into this inviting garden to pluck its feminine fruits, as suggested by the off-color innuendo of "cherries to be picked."

The new landscape is not exactly the medieval pleasure garden landscaped according to an Edenic ideal. However, its material aspect is "not unfamiliar" and right before their very eyes, which makes this "brand-new pleasure" an ideally exotic treasure. Denominating these invaders generally as "Christians," who hum a church tune on their way to sin directly after mass, Bishop emphasizes the ideology of the civilizing mission shared by all European colonizers. The linguistic traces of Portuguese and French further enable this composite portrait to encompass not just the Portuguese but also the French, Italians, Dutch and other Europeans who sought wealth and power in the land of dyewood (*pau-brasil*), as well as the present-day Euro-American pleasure-seeker. [31]

This lush word-tapestry is treacherously seductive, and certain critics have read into it Bishop's "detached sympathy" for the invaders, how Bishop "empathizes, though more ironically, with the desire and violence aroused by the seductiveness and mystery of this new place," as Lloyd Schwartz asserts in an article that is egregiously full of his own traveler's asides on Brazil's aura of sensuality ("Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil" 91). More nuanced readings of the poem, however, give greater weight to the ironic and critical edges that cut into this dominating, masculine conquerors' view of passive, feminine Nature's seductive invitation. Victoria Harrison and Robert Dale Parker are among the few Bishop critics to engage further with the Brazilian historical and intertextual context of this deeply layered poem. Harrison examines the multiple levels of implication in this poem as Bishop "charts the stages and nuances of uninnocence [. . .] from the never wholly victimized to the never wholly victimizing" (160). Similarly, Parker hears in this poem "a conspiring language of male aggression and female exclusion, the more insidious because the guise of Nature veils the distortion as innocently natural truth, when, on the contrary, this is probably her most intricately perspectivized poem and among her most ironic" (92).

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[31] "one leaf yes, one leaf no (in Portuguese)" is the literal translation of an idiomatic expression that means "every other one," *"folha sim, folha não*." The mass tune "*L'Homme Armé*" gestures toward the French.

In her shades of "uninnocence" as "never wholly victimized and never wholly victimizing," Bishop occupies a complex subject position that on one hand participates in the (neo)imperial, masculinized superiority of the metropolis over the feminized (post)colony. On the other hand, she takes an ironic view of the self-serving injustice with which dominant, masculine logics also render women, and especially women who desire women, as improper, inferior objects. The way that Bishop layers jarring perspectives in this poem brings its critique of the illusory *uninnocence* of spectatorship surprisingly close to Mary Louise Pratt's theorization of the "strategies of innocence" that structure what the critic calls the "anti-conquest" genre of travel writing in the late 18th through 19th centuries. Pratt characterizes the "anti-conquest" narrative as "strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony." This mode encompasses natural history observation and sentimental, memoir-type travel writing, which Pratt associates with the same kind of scopophilia and dominance through visual narration that I read as structuring the gaze in Bishop's poem.

Pratt underscores the gendered nature of this mastering gaze in a narrative summary that could also describe Bishop's poem on a basic level: "Explorer-man paints/possesses newly unveiled landscape woman" (213). Pratt calls the protagonist of these accounts "seeing-man," an "admittedly unfriendly label" for the seemingly passive European male subject "whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess" (7). A key feature of the "seeing-man" narrative is the "monarch-of-all-I-survey scene," a kind of "verbal painting" technique that reproduces a moment in which "geographical 'discoveries' were 'won'" for the traveler's imperial country—specifically England in Pratt's case study of Richard Francis Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860).[32] Pratt attributes the scarcity of contemporaneous female accounts in this vein to the way this "masculine heroic discourse of discovery is not readily available to women" (213). She does introduce a handful of 19th-century travel narratives written by women set in South America and Africa, and notes the "ironic reversals" that occur when women wield representative authority. These narratives are more dialogic and conscious of the hypocrisies that veil colonial exploitation than many of their male counterparts. They veer between "a refusal of mastery" based on discomfort at violating the tacit law that women are meant "not to see but be seen," and a "monarchic female voice that asserts its own kind of mastery even as it denies domination and parodies power."[33]

Pratt identifies in these female narratives a different kind of anti-conquest genre, whereby these women use the alibi of perceived female innocence and passivity to avoid accountability for colonial oppression. Yet Bishop in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" avoids exempting herself from critique by virtue of being a female as she appropriates a mastering, desiring male gaze and makes all readers see through these eyes. Further, she makes use of the elusive formal techniques available to poetry rather in contract to more conventional forms of prose travel memoir. In her poetry, Bishop mor fully exploits the lyric possibilities in multiplicity of voice and perspective, condensed, oblique intertextuality, the surreal layering of time, history, vision, and symbol, in order to blur the boundaries of agent and spectator, victor and victim.

In this poem, Bishop moves away from the assumed authority of the first-person traveler's narrative and instead channels other travelers' histories. The last two stanzas draw on Luso-Brazilian voices in particular to conclude this sly, condensed retelling of the founding of Brazil. In inter-American "foundational fictions" of national literature (to use Doris Sommer's phrase) the birth of the nation is allegorized in an act of miscegenation between European men and indigenous

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[32] Pratt 201. Burton's method of precise observation and glorification of British superiority is similar in *Exploration of the Highlands of the Brazil* (1869).

[33] The former describes Anna Maria Falconbridge's *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone* (1802) and the latter comes from Pratt's discussion of Mary Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa* (1897). In Pratt 104, 213.

women.[34] The prime example for Brazil is José de Alencar's 1865 novel *Iracema*, whose title character is a Tabajara indigenous woman whose name is actually an anagram for America invented by Alencar. The novel concludes with the birth of the nation figured in the birth of Moacir, the first Brazilian, the child of the indigenous heroine and the Portuguese colonizer Martim. Renata Wasserman writes of this trope that unites both South and North American novels of national identity, observing how it is through marriage plots that this kind of novel "tells of implanting civilization in the American natural world, weighs the appropriateness of joining the opposites of nature and culture, European and non-European" (5). Bishop's vulgarized version dispenses with the Romantic veil and tells a story that gestures toward the rape of indigenous women.

In creating an identity between birds and Indian women as symbols of native Brazil, Bishop sounds more like the early Portuguese explorers. She departs from the more usual Northern European associations of Brazil with the sensationalized, savage figure of the cannibal first popularized in sixteenth-century accounts that swept Europe written by the German sailor Hans Staden, the French priest André Thevet, and French Hugenot settler Jean de Léry, and further disseminated as the popular image of the New World subject in Montaigne's "Of Cannibals" and Shakepeare's Caliban, whose name derives from an anagram of cannibal.[35] Whereas Lévi-Strauss calls de Léry's book his "breviary," Bishop's touchstone for entering into this Brazil of the early days are the first Portuguese testimonies, or *testemunhos*, of this new land.

In Chapter Two of Bishop's *Brazil* book, which the *Life* editors titled "Undeveloped Land of Legend," she describes Pero Vaz de Caminha's 1500 account of the Cabral expedition's encounter with this incredible new land and its inhabitants in Caminha's letter to the Portuguese King Dom Manuel I. Since its Brazilian publication in 1817, the letter has become the most famous document of Brazil's "discovery," and generally recognized as the founding work of Brazilian literature.[36] Bishop calls Caminha a "good reporter" of Indian society and "the brand-new wild life," which echoes "a brand-new pleasure" in her poem. "He grows almost lyrical, as all the early voyagers did," she writes, "over these first few idyllic honeymoon days,—in the amazing century when countries and continents intermarried and new countries were conceived." This suggestive language, "intermarried" and "conceived," recalls the standard marriage plot as national founding narrative. In Caminha's account she detects "a hint of envy, perhaps the earliest trace of the romantic, Noble-Savage, *Indianismo* that later colored the Brazilian imagination so strongly" (*Prose*, 176).

Bishop's detailed, empirical-sounding description parallels the style of the Portuguese narratives of discovery. Brazilian critic and historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda notes the "grounded style" '*estilo chão*' of the Portuguese accounts, whose "almost-scientific objectivity and minute attention to detail" contrasted the flights of marvel and mystery that marked tales of Spanish

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[34] See Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

[35] See Hans Staden, *True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil* (1557), André Thévet, *Singularities of France Antarctique* (1557), Jean de Léry, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Otherwise Called America* (1578). Michel de Montaigne's "Of Cannibals" (1580) was translated into English in 1603 to great success and thought to have been an influence on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11). For more on the image of the cannibal in the European imagination see *Cannibal Encounters: Europeans and Island Caribs, 1492-1763*, Philip P. Boucher, and *Castaways, Cannibals, and Fantasies of Conquest*, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower. For more on Montaigne-into-Shakespeare, and Caliban as New World subject, see *The Tempest and Its Travels*, Eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman.

[36] Despite its canonized status as the founding document of Brazilian literature, Caminha's letter was published for the first time only in 1817, after being discovered in the Portuguese royal archives in Rio. It was the Letter of the Anonymous Navigator, as well as other letters to Italian merchants and various secondhand accounts, that spread news of Brazil's discovery throughout Europe in the sixteenth century.

America.[37] However, he notes how even under these explorers' "relatively tempered curiosity" and "prosaically utilitarian inspiration [. . .] The extravagance of this or that object, which threatens to upset the habits and order of Nature, can certainly bring about some vague suggestion of mystery from time to time" (7-8, my translation). The realist description gives greater impact to the momentary expressions of shock or wonder, an effect that recalls Bishop's affinity "the surrealism of everyday life" in Darwin.

The shock that sends "Brazil, January 1, 1502" into its enigmatic, climactic turn occurs when the embroidered reverie is torn asunder by the first act of direct violence, wrought by the nail-sharp conquerors. Right after Mass, they bare their lust and "ripped away into the hanging fabric," a brute violation that animates the flat allegory into a shrieking forest, whose unseen depths come alive in an aural confusion of the coveted indigenous women and the "big symbolic birds" who in the middle stanza perch silently in profile, like the symbols that mark Brazil on an early *mapus-mundi*, but seem to have awakened in the third stanza. This moment of disorientation recalls how it is precisely when describing the birds and naked Indians, especially the women, that the chroniclers of the early Portuguese navigations suddenly become uncharacteristically excited. In *Brazil*, Bishop describes how "on the first maps it is either 'Brazil' or the 'Land of Parrots.' Along with dye-wood, macaws were sent back to Europe, and their brilliant colors, large size, and loud shrieks obviously made a deep impression."[38] In "Brazil, January 1, 1502," the "big symbolic birds keep quiet" along with everything else in the native landscape, until the moment the European conquerors break the silence with their "creaking armor" and sinisterly cheerful humming as they slash into the rain forest. Bishop's poetic version makes the birds' (or the women's) wild shrieks a call of alarm in response to the savagery of the Europeans.

In the 1500 Report from an Anonymous Navigator (*Relação do Piloto Anônimo*), a contemporaneous account of the same Cabral expedition in Brazil, the stilted narration suddenly becomes excessive as he describes the abundance of birds, setting off a stuttering repetition of "*muito*," a word that can mean both "many" and "very":

> [. . .] e têm *muitas* aves de *muitas* espécies, especialmente papagaios de *muitas* cores, entre os quais alguns grandes como galinhas e outras aves *muito* belas. [. . .] A terra é *muito* abundante em *muitas* árvores e *muitas* águas boas e inhames e algodão. [. . .] E tem *muito* bom ar e estes homens têm redes e são grandes pescadores e pescam peixes de *muitas* espécies.
>
> [. . .] and there are *many* birds of *many* species, especially parrots in *many* colors, including some as big as hens and other *very* beautiful birds. [. . .] The land is *very* abundant with *many* trees and *many* good waters and manioc and cotton. [. . .] And the air is *very* good and these men have nets and are great fishermen and catch fish of *many* species.[39]

The Portuguese descriptions lack the flowery descriptions in Columbus's diary or even Darwin's lushly detailed accounts of Brazil, yet the compulsive repetition of this single word, *muito*, emphasizes the shock of this Brazilian nature's too-muchness.

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[37] *Visão do Paraíso,* 3-5, my translation. In Buarque de Holanda's words, "uma objetividade e minuciosidade quase científicas," 351. He also notes how Vespucci gave a more sober, objective account of the Americas than did Columbus.
[38] Bishop's description of a 1501 *mapus-mundi* also echoes images from "Brazil, January 1, 1502," which was published two years before *Brazil*: "Caminha's 'groves of trees' are there, lined up as formally as in a Portuguese garden, and under them sits a group of giant macaws, to give explorers some idea of what to expect." In *Prose*, 175.
[39] In *Os três únicos testemunhos do descobrimento do Brasil*, 77, translation mine and italics mine to signal the variants of "*muito*."

A similar excess of "*muitos*" marks the intermittent bursts of excitement in Caminha's more detailed account of the same encounter. All the chroniclers of this period note the Edenic quality of the indigenous people's unselfconscious nudity and their attractive, healthy bodies, evocations of "the first innocence" '*a primeira inocência*', but Caminha launches into the most virtuoso wordplay of the Portuguese chroniclers with his irrepressible attention to the native "*vergonhas*," taking particular pleasure in those of the women. "*Vergonha*" is a curious word, literally meaning shame, but in the plural, "*vergonhas*," it also carried the slightly archaic and politely euphemistic meaning of "privates" or perhaps "unmentionables," literally a person's "shameful parts." Caminha uses the word with a frequency that is hard to ignore as he describes six separate encounters with the Tupiniquim Indians. He is clearly delighted with his pun on "*vergonha/vergonhas*" 'shame/shameful parts', as he repeats the joke three separate times but only when describing the women. In one of these passages, all of which were censored in the 1817 first publication of this letter, out of "excessive prudery," as a present-day editor puts it,[40] Caminha's use of "*vergonhas*" is made even more suggestively mysterious by the curious mix of adjectives he uses to modify this winking signifier:

Ali andavam entre eles três ou quatro moças, bem moças e bem gentis, com cabelos muito pretos, compridos pelas espáduas, e suas *vergonhas* tão altas, tão cerradinhas e tão limpas das cabeleiras que, de as muito bem olharmos, não tínhamos nenhuma *vergonha*.	There walked among them three or four ladies, very young and very nice, with very black hair down past their shoulders, and their *shameful parts* were so high, so compact, and so clean of hair, that in giving them a good look, we had no *shame* at all.[41]

To illustrate Caminha's appreciation for the women, Bishop quotes one of these "*vergonha*" passages in *Brazil*, but the translation she cites glosses over the more sexualized implications of the original language:

[. . .] she was so well-built and so rounded and her *lack of shame* was so charming, that many women of our land seeing her attractions, would be *ashamed* that theirs were not like hers. (translation in Bishop, my italics)	[. . .] she was so well-built and so shapely, and her *shame* [*vergonha*] (of which she had none) so charming, that seeing such features would *bring shame* [*fizera vergonha*] upon many women of our land for theirs not being like hers. (my translation and italics)

What I want to show with my more literal translation on the right, is how Caminha uses the pun on "*vergonha*" to represent both a presence and an absence. Her "*vergonha*" is the unmentionable, feminine lacuna, wherein lies her visible charm.

These unselfconsciously naked women realize the fusion of two female ideals—the sex object and the proper lady—with a natural modesty that puts their European counterparts to shame

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[40] "Aires de Casal ofereceu um texto censurado, *ad usum Delphini*, em que as descrições das 'vergonhas' das índias são suprimidas por excessivo pudor," writes Paulo Roberto Pereira in *Os três únicos testemunhos*, 62. Twentieth-century modernist trickster Oswald de Andrade parodies Caminha's passage by referring to the "*vergonhas*" of São Paulo prostitutes in his poem "as meninas da gare" ("the girls of the train station").

[41] In *Os três únicos testemunhos*, 40, my translation. British Romantic poet Robert Southey also offers his own gloss-as-translation of this letter in the second edition of his *History of Brazil*, 1822, but euphemizes Caminha's excess of detail about *vergonhas* into general statements of native nudity.

in Caminha's eyes.[42] Existing outside the rules of European society, these indigenous women are judged according to a different order of propriety, though not by everyone. Caminha later tells of how the Catholic priests gave the indigenous women cloths to cover themselves up to attend Mass on the beach, though the women eventually forget to hide their bodies. Here, their nakedness is a visible manifestation of innocence: "As you can see, Your Highness, the innocence of these people is such that Adam's would not be greater, in terms of modesty [*vergonha*]."[43] Here, the scribe distances the native women from Eve's tainted reputation by comparing their behavior to the greatness of Adam's more pure "*vergonha*," or humility. The translation of Caminha's letter that Bishop includes in the *Brazil* book (the translation is unattributed) gives the paraphrase "her lack of shame," which effaces the winking reference to the naked women's "*vergonha*," making this aspect of their bodies invisible in a way that suggests a Freudian female "lack."

In the closing lines of "Brazil, January 1, 1502," Bishop redirects the female lacuna into a subversive strength that gives the elusive indigenous women the upper hand:

> those maddening little women who kept calling,
> calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
> and retreating, always retreating, behind it.

In contrast to Caminha's wide-eyed account ("in giving them a good look, we had no shame at all"), Bishop gestures to what lies behind Nature's tapestried covering but does not unveil its mystery. In this refusal to show that simultaneously shifts our senses toward the sounds of what lies beyond the forest surface, Bishop's poem thwarts the colonizing gaze it begins with. These last lines open up an intertextual arc that leads to "The Smallest Woman in the World," one of three short stories by Clarice Lispector that Bishop chose to translate.[44]

"Her short stories are almost like the stories that I have always thought someone should write about Brazil—Chekovian, slightly sinister and fantastic," Bishop wrote of Lispector in a letter to friends.[45] "The Smallest Woman in the World" especially links the sorts of characterizations of the wilds of Brazil to clichés about Africa, from tropical, primitive nature to cannibalistic savages. The story's mock-heroic protagonist, Marcel Pretre (a *prêtre* or priest in French without the circumflex "hat"), is a Lévi-Straussian anthropologist, a modern-day explorer-exploiter who plunges into the heart of the Congo in search of scientific rarities. The two works speak to each other through their ironization of colonial encounters whose myth-making continues to collapse the

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[42] But of course the Tupiniquim women did not consider themselves naked, as their black and red body paint and adornments of feathers, bones, and stones were clothing to them, and could communicate such information as status and age, as Paulo Roberto Pereira points out (*Os três únicos testamentos*, 64).

[43] "Assim, Senhor, a innocência desta gente é tal, que a de Adão não seria maior, quanto a vergonha" (*Os três únicos testemunhos*, 57).

[44] Bishop's translations of the Lispector stories "The Smallest Woman in the World," "A Hen" ("*Uma galinha*") and "Marmosets" ("*Macacos*") first appeared in *The Kenyon Review* XXVI: 3 (Summer 1964). These translations also appear in the more recent *Prose* (380-388) and *PPL* (302-312).

[45] 1962 letter to Ilse and Kit Barker quoted in Teresa Montero. "The Early Dissemination of Clarice Lispector's Literary Works in the United States." Pazos Alonso, Cláudia and Willaims, Claire (eds.). *Closer to the Wild Heart: Essays on Clarice Lispector*, Oxford: European Humanities Research Center, 2002, 176. This letter was not published in *One Art*. Bishop's poem first appeared in *The New Yorker* on Jan. 2, 1960, and her translation of Lispector's story did not appear until 1964. Although Lispector's story was collected in *Laços de Família* in 1960, Bishop is sure to have seen "A Menor Mulher do Mundo" when it first appeared in the inaugural issue of *Senhor* in March 1959, a new magazine that styled itself on *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *Partisan Review*, not only for the magazine's being a literary sensation among the elite circles that Lota participated in but also because the issue contained a story by the couple's close friend, journalist and politician Carlos Lacerda. See Benjamin Moser, *Why This World*: *A Biography of Clarice Lispector* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), XX. (only have the Brazilian edition handy, p.339 cap. "A pior tentação"... procura a pag. no inglês depois).

distancing "progress" made in postcolonial in contexts. The classifying naturalist figure of Marcel Pretre bridges the chronological gap between the sinning Christians in the New World and the modern-day tourist gazing on the seemingly unchanged forest tapestry. Even the actual language of Bishop's poem refers back to a phrase from Lispector's story that Bishop would later translate exactly as it appears in the poem, "retreating, always retreating," which in the story describes the pygmy tribe to which this smallest woman in the world (17 ¾ inches tall) belongs as, "The tiny race, retreating, always retreating, has finished hiding away in the heart of Africa, where the lucky explorer discovered it." Bishop's later translation seems to directly reference the version in her own poem since her language shifts the original slightly from what reads more literally in my translation as, "That tiny race of people, always retreating and retreating."[46]

In Lispector's story, the native pygmy woman, a cannibal like those early Brazilians and whom Pretre names Little Flower out of "an immediate necessity for order," is stark naked. Pretre gives her body a close scientific examination, but unlike Caminha, feels some *vergonha* at her unselfconsciousness (and visibly pregnant) nudity: "At that moment, Little Flower scratched herself where no one scratches. The explorer—as if he were receiving the highest prize for chastity to which an idealistic man dares aspire— [. . .] looked the other way" (303). Lispector's story humorously shows the failure of the Western imperial eye, here coded as the scientific gaze, to master the subject it tries to reify into a passive spectacle and contests the assumption that the observer maintains a neutral distance from the scene. It is Little Flower's sudden "warm" and incomprehensible laughter that topples Pretre's rationalized composure at the end of the story: "It was a laugh such as only one who does not speak laughs. It was a laugh that the explorer, constrained, couldn't classify. [. . .] The explorer tried to smile back, without knowing exactly to what abyss his smile responded, and then he was embarrassed as only a very big man can be embarrassed" (306-7).

Lispector's ironic recasting of the African "heart of darkness" as the African woman's unconsciously unsettling feminine mystique, gains power from its status as an indecipherable absence that manifests itself as a presence, like the invisible women in Bishop's poem. Little Flower's unexpectedly pregnant belly and the even tinier presence inside it is partly what disturbs the French explorer, and she laughs at the same time as "within her smallness, a great darkness had begun to move" (306). Meanwhile, Pretre's uncertain smile responds to some unknown "abyss." Little Flower's laugh echoes the "native" voices that come "calling, calling" into the final lines of "Brazil, January 1, 1502" to mock the immodest dreams that seduce the foreign adventurers. In both Bishop's poem and Lispector's story, the small and the feminine turn out to have surprising agency, both the "tiny as nails" Christians who assert their violence against the landscape that remains passive though gigantic, as well as "those little women" who elude the mastering compulsions of the male gaze, embarrassing the "very big man," as Lispector calls Pretre, by "retreating, always retreating" away into the unnameable, the incomprehensible, whether invisibly calling to each other in an unknown code or laughing for reasons that defy the explorers' rational-heroic phallogocentrism.

Over the course of "Brazil, January 1, 1502," Bishop charts a historical dialectic between the male mastering gaze and a female elusiveness, both subject positions that Bishop shares to a certain

[46] Bishop's translation in *Elizabeth Bishop: Poems, Prose, and Letters*, 303. My translation is in *The Complete Stories*, Lispector 166. The original is: "A racinha de gente, sempre a recuar e a recuar, terminou aquarteirando-se no coração da África, onde o explorador afortunado a descobriria" ("A menor mulher do mundo" 69). Robert Dale Parker calls attention to the repetition of this line from "The Smallest Woman in the World" (97). Victoria Harrison also mentions this overlap in her discussion of Bishop's translations (181). However, Harrison suggests that the coincidence between the poem and story is accidental due to the 1960 publication dates, or even that Lispector may have been influenced by Bishop's poem (unlikely), while Parker reads Bishop's line as a direct reference to Lispector but without accounting for the publication dates.

extent. In the end, the poem leaves the women with the temporary upper hand, which Bishop bestows by joining her voice to that of her Brazilian contemporary, another white bourgeois woman living nearby in Rio de Janeiro. Like Bishop in this poem, Lispector in "The Smallest Woman in the World," satirizes the French explorer's imperial eyes but also implicates the Western women who objectify and desire the native African woman, Little Flower, a cannibal like the historical native Brazilians. In channeling Lispector, Bishop doubles the effect of the middle-woman who feels somewhat complicit in the imperial impulse to possess the exotic other even as she identifies with the female-as-subordinate position.

III. Fraught Questions of Travel

The heady, larger-than-life Nature and surreal living fantasy of New World encounter in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" is made even more dizzying by its stark contrast from the poems that flank it. The trio this poem makes with "Arrival at Santos," which opens the collection, and "Questions of Travel," which appears third, ironically juxtaposes the tourist with the early modern explorer. Taken together, the three emphasize a centuries-long trajectory of imperial desire for exotic pleasures unavailable at home but also the disenchanted nature of twentieth-century travel. "Arrival at Santos" in particular suggests that the modern tourist has, well, missed the boat in terms of encountering a land of pristine nature and radically different human societies. Its ho-hum opening, has a flat, make-believe quality, like the children's rhyme that begins, "Here is the church, and here is the steeple / Open the doors, and see all the people"[47]:

> Here is a coast; here is a harbor;
> here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery:
> impractically shaped and—who knows?—self-pitying mountains,
> sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery,

The traveler's sensory privation while at sea is ended not by swirls of tropical perfume and a lush, tapestried landscape but by scenery characterized by negative descriptors: "impractically shaped," "sad and harsh," and "frivolous." The whole scene sags with disappointment at this nondescript port city with its warehouses painted in "feeble" colors and "uncertain palms." Here, the southern landscape seems to have absorbed, or perhaps itself imparted, emotional tones of self-pity and childish frivolity, the very opposite of the stoicism embedded in Bishop's northern landscapes. The banality of this arrival into a foreign port is underscored by the poem's ten quatrains that alternate between four- and five-beat lines and whose *xaxa* end-rhymes are almost too pat: scenery/greenery, comprehension/suspension, hope/soap. In contrast, "Brazil, January 1, 1502," is only slightly longer than "Arrival," at 53 lines versus 40, yet its three long, irregular stanzas of 15, 21, and 17 lines spill down the page in a roaming free verse whose lines lengthen and contract unpredictably, as if to mimic the rainforest's bountiful variation.

The tone of childlike simplicity that opens the poem becomes a tone of self-censure at the tourist's childish desire for immediate gratification. The description of the inadequate scene abruptly ends in a question that charges the visitor herself with impropriety in her "immodest demands" for ready access to a utopian existence:

> Oh, tourist,

[47] Indeed Bishop places "a little church" on top of one of the mountains in the second stanza.

> is this how this country is going to answer you
>
> and your immodest demands for a different world,
> and a better life, and complete comprehension
> of both at last, and immediately,
> after eighteen days of suspension?

These opening stanzas recall Lévi-Strauss's confession of his naive desire to encounter extreme alternatives in Brazil:

> I imagined exotic countries to be the exact opposite of ours, and the term 'antipodes' had a richer and more naive significance for me than its merely literal meaning. [. . .] I expected each animal, tree or blade of grass to be radically different, and its tropical nature to be glaringly obvious at a glance.

As in Bishop's poems, Lévi-Strauss's language emphasizes the spectacularity commonly associated with the tropics, whose exotic nature is expected to be "glaringly obvious" and to yield immediate "complete comprehension" of its radical difference. His fantasy of Brazil further evokes a Baudelairean fever dream of the tropics, "with clumps of twisted palm trees concealing bizarrely designed kiosks and pavilions," and "the smell of burning perfumes" (47).

Bishop's tourist speaker follows her own question ("is this how this country is going to answer you") with a curt dismissal, "Finish your breakfast. The tender is coming," as if reprimanding a child to stop daydreaming and pay attention to the practical matters of disembarking in a foreign country. The phrase "meager diet of horizon" figures the landscape as something to be consumed, while "Finish your breakfast" further emphasizes the impropriety of expecting to feast one's eyes on a marvelous natural landscape. Bishop further shames her tourist's ignorance at expecting an unadulterated version of nature and then being surprised to encounter a sovereign entity, with all its bureaucratic accoutrements. "So that's the flag. I never saw it before. / I somehow never thought of there *being* a flag," she says, and immediately chastises herself: "but of course there was, all along. And coins, I presume, / and paper money." The poem drifts away from the scenery to dwell on the tedium of customs that reminds the disappointed tourist, "Ports are necessities, like postage stamps, or soap," that "seldom seem to care what impression they make." There is something unexpectedly sobering in the port of Santos's refusal to yield the wished-for spectacle in this "welcome poem" to the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel*.

"Oh, must we dream our dreams / and have them too?" Bishop asks in the collection's eponymous third poem, "Questions of Travel," which reprises the tones of reproach that "Arrival at Santos" introduces. "Questions of Travel" strikes a middle ground between "Arrival at Santos" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502" in that it voices disapproval of both host country and thrill-seeking traveler yet also offers admiring views of Brazil's natural beauty that "Arrival at Santos" withholds. As I discussed briefly at the start of this chapter, Bishop's speaker gives us the drama of waterfalls and mountains yet finds their abundance overwhelming: "too many waterfalls," and "crowded streams" hurrying "too rapidly down to the sea." Even so, a sense of marvel persists, in phrases like "turning to waterfalls under our very eyes," an expression reserved for witnessing the incredible. The poem's sprawling free-verse stanzas of 12, 17, and 30 lines echo the flowing form of "Brazil, January 1, 1502," before ending on two *aaba* quatrains more evocative of "Arrival at Santos." However, unlike the other two poems, "Questions of Travel" ends on a more hopeful sense that the travel was worthwhile.

Despite Bishop's romantic affinities for earlier travel accounts, her poems about contemporary Brazil bear an anxiety about her right to intrude upon this other world, partially grounded in an awareness of the ethical ambiguities of her privileged position as a freely-mobile visitor from an economically and politically dominant country but also out of a more vaguely defined discomfort at being a tourist. "Questions of Travel" voices the suspicion that modern-day leisure travel is a voyeuristic, self-indulgent, uncreative, and potentially pointless practice. "Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?" Bishop wonders, later adding, "What childishness is it that while there's a breath of life / in our bodies, we are determined to rush / to see the sun the other way around? / The tiniest green hummingbird in the world?". This "tiniest green hummingbird in the world" recalls how nature's rare extremes become prized objects for foreigners in Lispector's "The Smallest Woman in the World." These questions denigrate the tourist-as-explorer drive toward collecting sights and souvenirs without pausing to gain a deeper understanding of the foreign place, a practice that is not only greedy but also childish.

The ethical quandaries that Bishop voices in this poem anticipate the critical focus on travel writing that surged amid the postcolonial turn of the 1990s.[48] Caren Kaplan's *Questions of Travel* (1996) emerges out of this wave and takes its title from Bishop's poem. Kaplan critiques a mode of Euro-American literary and cultural criticism that theorizes its tropes of travel from "individualized, often elite, circumstances." Kaplan takes aim at "the solitary exile who is either voluntarily expatriated or involuntarily displaced," and the way these travelers or those who write about them fail to adequately acknowledge the conditions of imperialism surrounding these circumstances and the collective experiences of post-war immigrants and refugees that have increasingly characterized the modern era (40).

Bishop's intimations of imperial guilt in "Questions of Travel" initially seem to draw Kaplan's approval, but the critic ultimately dismisses the speaker's privileged stance as insufficiently critical. Kaplan's response to the poem's closing question, "*Should we have stayed at home, / wherever that may be?*" is a "futile but emphatic 'yes,' if 'we' are a particular cast of historical agents," namely the beneficiaries of colonialism and its modern variants. Kaplan further charges that "simply destabilizing the notion of home ('wherever that may be') can no longer answer the historical question of accountability" (7). In the name of imperial accountability, Kaplan seeks a more complete historicizing of traveling figures, as well as a more specific way to locate the twentieth and twenty-first centuries' increasingly shifting notions of "home" and "away."

In Kaplan's book, these lines from one of Bishop's most quoted poems become the straw man for an argument that ultimately departs to critique other sources of insufficiently grounded metaphors of travel. Yet Bishop's qualifier for home, "*wherever that may be*?," is not merely a rhetorical flourish meant to speak to an existentially rootless and whimsically mobile "you and me," but also a question that arises from Bishop's own experience of home as defined early on through the particulars of her individual history.[49] Though Bishop can be called "voluntarily exiled" relative to those forced to flee their home countries in the wake of more cataclysmic world events, "the choice is never wide and never free," as the poet herself recalls in "Questions of Travel." While Bishop's poem is suspicious of the acquisitiveness and casual imperialism of modern tourism, it also functions as a prelude to a deep, complicated and sustained relationship to Brazil that brings it beyond merely "this strangest of theatres" in Bishop's other Brazil writings. While the poet-speaker stops short of

[48] For more background on travel writing critique into our contemporary moment, see "Introduction: Ethics on the Move," by Charles Forsdick, Corinne Fowler, and Ludmilla Kostova, in the Routledge Research in Travel Writing anthology, *Travel and Ethics: Theory and Practice*, 2013.

[49] See the introduction for an account of the circumstances that led to Bishop's ongoing sense of homelessness.

giving a direct answer to the twice-posed question, "Should we have stayed at home?," her self-criticism is not as acute as Kaplan reads it.

Reversing the cranky tone that opens the poem ("There are too many waterfalls here" and "Think of the long trip home"), the poet prefaces the second half of the poem with the almost apologetic refrain, "But surely it would have been a pity / not to have" and describes a series of experiences that are not the pre-designated spectacular tourist sights yet remarkable for their beauty and difference from the traveler's known world:

> But surely it would have been a pity
> not to have seen the trees along this road,
> really exaggerated in their beauty,
> not to have seen them gesturing
> like noble pantomimists, robed in pink.
> —Not to have had to stop for gas and heard
> the sad, two-noted, wooden tune
> of disparate wooden clogs
> carelessly clacking over
> a grease-stained filling station floor.
> [. . . . .]
> —A pity not to have heard
> the other, less primitive music of the fat brown bird
> who sings above the broken gasoline pump
> in a bamboo church of Jesuit baroque:
> three towers, five silver crosses.
> —Yes, a pity not to have pondered,
> blurr'dly and inconclusively,
> on what connection can exist for centuries
> between the crudest wooden footwear
> and, careful and finicky,
> the whittled fantasies of wooden cages.
> —Never to have studied history in
> the weak calligraphy of songbirds' cages.
>
> [. . . . . .]
>
> *Is it lack of imagination that makes us come*
> *to imagined places, not just stay at home?*
> *Or could Pascal have been not entirely right*
> *about just sitting quietly in one's room?*

Whereas the first two stanzas are filled with "folded sunsets," waterfalls, mountains, and other clichéd vacation sights that fail to make a profound impact on the tourist, these lines portray a detour that brings insights in unexpected forms. In the earlier stanzas, Bishop gives a fast-food-style, packaged version of tourism, where the tourist rushes around to collect sites and stare "at any view, / instantly seen and always, always delightful." The tourist gorges on this easy beauty, full of "too many waterfalls," and stares "at some inexplicable old stonework, / inexplicable and impenetrable."

This inability to decipher anything beyond the surface of these sights recalls Jonathan Culler's description of the modern tourist as a bumbling seeker of easy signifiers of authenticity that

will validate the trip, on the lookout for "signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behavior, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, traditional English pubs," and in Brazil's case the typical views of tropical nature. Culler makes an even more direct indictment of the "marginalized yet pervasive practice" of tourism than Bishop does, remarking, "The tourist, it seems, is the lowest of the low" ("The Semiotics of Tourism"). However, in the transition that the third stanza effects, what begins as an inconvenience—the need to stop for gas—leads to the unexpectedly arresting sight of pink-flowering trees, "like noble pantomimists," along the road, and the surprisingly lyrical, alliterative sound of "clogs / carelessly clacking" over the filing-station floor. Instead of the famed "tiniest green hummingbird in the world," the traveler listens to the music of a "fat brown bird." Her preset schedule slows down during this gap in the itinerary, and comes to a standstill during a rainstorm's "two hours of unrelenting oratory." With her attention left free to roam over everyday objects, the traveler reads them better than the "inexplicable stonework," now studying "history in / the weak calligraphy of songbirds' cages." Bishop's comparison of the cage to a "church of Jesuit baroque" reveals her knowledge of a major aspect of Brazilian history and architecture that goes beyond the tourist's clichéd ideas of beaches and jungle.

These lines are inconclusive as a defense of travel. Even still, the impact of this poem lies not only in its oft-quoted critique of travel but also in the unexpectedness of these often overlooked Brazilian particulars, and their capacity to shift previous balances of knowledge, understanding, and even affective relations through indirect and cumulative means. It is this accumulation of details and differences, "these things in all their particularity," that builds toward the traveler's wandering insights about "what random historical causes lay behind them," as Ashley Brown writes ("Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil" 21). As I argued earlier, Bishop seems the most successful at representing Brazil in her poetry especially and also her creative prose sketches. In these multivocal, ambiguous works, she reveals much more about life there in a single image or anecdote, than in her non-fiction prose pieces that attempt to account for the country in broader, more "officially" representative terms and with a univocal, authoritative voice—these include the *Brazil* book and her travel article "On the Railroad Named Delight."[50]

In contrast, Bishop's poems effect a careful, complex layering of voice, address, irony, and affect that produce that elusive, dream-like form of insight that she praises in Darwin cited earlier—a condensed accumulation of lines that enables her to "catch a peripheral vision of whatever it is one can never really see full-face but that seems enormously important." In her compositions less beholden to the rules of realism and documentary, Bishop is able to demonstrate the powerful mechanisms of the geographical imagination, to the extent that it shapes expectations of faraway and historical places. This blurred vision inevitably distorts the traveler's actual experience of these places, intertwining what we see before our very eyes with what our mind's eye wants to imagine.

[50] See my Introduction for a discussion of Brazilian critics who affirm Bishop's superior grasp on Brazilian culture in her poems and literary sketches over her more conventional prose pieces.

Chapter Two

Lyric Mutation: the Expanding Contours of Bishop's Poetics

I believe in the oblique, the indirect approach, and I keep my feelings to myself.
—Elizabeth Bishop, "Strayed Crab" in "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics"

I. Introduction

This chapter's epigraph, from Elizabeth Bishop's Brazilian prose poem series "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics," captures the spirit of Bishop's stated principles, in poetry and in life. In a rainforest setting that evokes the Fazenda Samambaia, the Brazilian home Bishop shared with her partner Lota de Macedo Soares, the strayed crab asserts its foreignness through its attachment to discretion and disdain for its surroundings: "I admire compression, lightness, and agility, all rare in this loose world" (*CP* 140). The crab embodies a mocking exaggeration of Bishop's allegiance to a certain propriety, as a matter of both personal affinity and poetic practice. As opposed to what Bishop called "the really lofty vagueness of Brazil" and the "atmosphere of familiarity, affection and intimacy" that its spoken Portuguese creates, the crab implies a preference for the rigors of understatement, emotional distance, and a more formally condensed expression that Bishop associated with northern contexts, from her Nova Scotia and New England upbringing to the influence of Marianne Moore, as I discuss in the introduction.[51]

In this chapter, I argue that Bishop's poetry undergoes what I call a *lyric mutation* during her time in Brazil, emphasizing a central tension in her work as one between propriety and exposure, or understatement and overstatement. Chapter One considered Bishop's early impressions of Brazil from a perspective of comparative travelers' histories in which the colonial and imperial converge with modern-day tourism to produce a vision of Brazil as a site of improper spectacularity and unsettling disproportion. This chapter extends the theme of impropriety and disproportion in Brazil but focuses on how these associations seep into Bishop's poetics over a longer span of time. This period opens up a much more direct line to personally revealing and affective modes of expression that Bishop ascribed to a "southern" way of being, as when she depicts the excesses of Brazilian natures as the proper context for overflowing emotionalism. Bishop's version of environmental determinism maps an internal geography of "northern" and "southern" expression to external coordinates, marked to the north by Nova Scotia and New England and to the south by Florida and Brazil. While most Bishop critics acknowledge the centrality of a North/South theme to Bishop's life and work, none have connected her lived geographies and poetic landscapes shaped by culture and memory to a more sustained consideration of how they relate to poetic form, expression, and tradition, as I propose in this chapter. I trace the ways Bishop's poetics of North and South develop in new directions during her Brazil period, but I emphasize the word *mutation* to signal a departure that nevertheless maintains a kinship to her earlier poetry.

Lyric mutation also works in a second way to characterize Bishop's uneasy relationship to the loosening up of her poetics while in Brazil. She depicts this change in various forms as a kind of monstrous or embarrassingly disproportionate aberration from her principles of northern propriety,

[51] It is precisely in a letter to Marianne Moore written in Samambaia on March 3, 1952 that Bishop explains the slowness of the mail system as part of this "lofty vagueness of Brazil ... where a cloud is coming in my bedroom window right this minute," thus juxtaposing this cultural attribute with the climate. (*OA* 237). The second quote is from Bishop's overview of Brazilian culture in her 1962 Life World Library Series *Brazil* book (*Prose* 169).

in both form and feeling. Thus this chapter asks, through Bishop, what constitutes a proper lyric poem in English? I argue that Bishop's standards of lyric propriety are shaped not only by a New England preference for understatement but also by certain strands of the Anglo-American poetic tradition that identify the proper lyric poem by its fitness of form and content—that is, by how well it produces a sense of balance, coherence, and harmony. By extension, disproportion and incongruence, especially deriving from excessive feeling or sentimentality, become the basis for lyric failure. In the context of Bishop's stated poetic affinities, I look at Wordsworth's belief in the need to temper the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" in poetry, and I relate it to Adam Smith's theory of sympathy as a sense of propriety. I further consider how propriety as a sense of *just proportions* unexpectedly bridges the British Romantic-era obsession with how best to manage and convey the passions to the ideal of impersonal aesthetics in the Anglo-American New Criticism contemporary to Bishop. I locate this connection in Cleanth Brooks's privileging of *dramatic propriety*, which becomes his basis for determining whether a poem has achieved the lyric just proportions of organic unity.

Bishop's sense that autobiographical and emotional subject matter are improper forms of disproportionate exposure, even as she begins to incorporate these elements more fully into her writing while in Brazil, leads to some curious distortions and contradictions in her North/South dualism. I show how Bishop constructs an idea of Brazil and Brazilian expression as the proper sites for indulging in a voluptuous emotionalism, from feelings of love to self-pity and abjection. In doing so, she gives an account of Anglo-American poetry that aligns it with understatement while coding "romantic" and confessional tendencies as Brazilian in a way that flattens divisions within both Brazilian and Anglo-American literary traditions and reinforces her own sense of lyric propriety as a "northern" trait. Bishop's critique of North American confessional poetry becomes especially ironic in this context, since as her writing veers toward the confessional mode, she nevertheless distances herself from this "transgression" by coding her over-sharing as foreign and southern as opposed to her northern restraint.[52] Bishop's conflicted relationship to a sense of lyric propriety manifests most overtly in "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics," as I have begun to suggest above and will return to later in this chapter. I further emphasize how the increasingly blurred boundaries of Bishop's North/South, North America/Brazil dualisms point to a self-divided tension throughout all her poetry but that she begins to address and integrate more freely in her later poems.

A third resonance of the mutation suggested by this chapter's title speaks to how Bishop's posthumously published writing has altered the contours of what is considered to be her literary oeuvre proper. A steady stream from her archives continues to outpace the fewer than one hundred poems she chose to publish in her lifetime. This decades-long flood of letters, autobiographical prose, and newly discovered poems and drafts has troubled the separation between life and art, private and public, by enabling Bishop's intimate biographical details and less polished manuscripts to be assimilated into both popular and critical understandings of her work. The most notable early additions include the twenty-three poems (occasional pieces and juvenilia) added to the 1979 posthumous edition of *The Complete Poems (1927-1979)*, the largely autobiographical and often previously unpublished pieces in *The Collected Prose* (1984), and her selected letters published as *One Art* (1994). More recently, the annotated collection *Edgar Allen Poe & the Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments* (2006) has been somewhat controversial for grafting Bishop's generally uncompleted drafts onto her official body of work. New material has also been included in The

[52] "It is a central paradox of Elizabeth Bishop studies that although many—including Bishop herself, when it suited her—have described the poet's style as 'impersonal,' her work has proven, after all, to be pervasively autobiographical," Thomas Travisano writes ("Bishop and Biography" 21).

Library of America edition *Elizabeth Bishop: Poems, Prose, and Letters* (2008) and the "definitive" Farrar, Straus, & Giroux box set *Poems* and *Prose* (2011), the latter released in 2011 to coincide with Bishop's centennial.[53] Finally two more letter collections have been released, *Words in Air: The Complete Correspondence Between Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell* (2008) and *Elizabeth Bishop and the New Yorker: the Complete Correspondence* (2011).

This mining of the archives has sparked critical debates over the appropriateness of disseminating and dissecting the more unguarded writings of a poet who was famously circumspect about her life and extremely selective about what she chose to publish. It raises the question of whether and how we should read the lyric proper against other hybrid and arguably illegitimate (because not explicitly authorized for publication) texts. Helen Vendler, one of the most vehement opponents to the archival expansion of Bishop's poetic body of work, declared that *Edgar Allen Poe & The Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments* should have been called "Repudiated Poems" and that, "The eighty-odd poems that this famous perfectionist allowed to be printed over the years are 'Elizabeth Bishop' as a poet. This book is not" ("The Art of Losing" 33).[54]

Significantly for this chapter, the new Elizabeth Bishop to emerge from the archives has become a figure of fascination precisely for the excessive, personal, and sentimental tendencies she deemed improper and that are linked to Brazil in ways I will explore. In 1995, after the publication of Bishop's collected letters and two critical biographies (Goldensohn, 1992; Millier, 1993), Thomas Travisano announced "The Elizabeth Bishop Phenomenon," the growing reassessment of Bishop as a major poet, an effect of changing critical paradigms and closer readings of her work, but also in the wake of increasingly intense interest in her life.[55] Much more explicit knowledge of her sexuality and love life, as well as Bishop's now-public struggles with alcoholism and her uncommonly dramatic series of personal tragedies—being orphaned as a child and passed among various relatives, the suicide of a college boyfriend and more significantly Lota's probable suicide, a loss that violently ruptured Bishop's life in Brazil—have led to new readings of her poetry as far more confessional than its understated autobiographical cues imply. "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, her poetry seems, if anything, even more contemporary than during her lifetime, a process facilitated in part by the numerous posthumous publications of her work," Angus Cleghorn and Jonathan Ellis write in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop* (2014), currently the most up-to-date collection of critical assessments of the "old" and "new" Bishop together (1).[56]

Previously closeted, now a lesbian icon, Bishop has been transformed from modest poet of ladylike restraint to passionate romantic who followed her heart to exotic locales, wrote sensual love poetry, and whose bed was never cold, as portrayed in *Welcome to This House* (2015) an experimental

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[53] The Library of America edition includes a selection of the drafts from *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box*, as well as a wide selection of her prose that extends to letters, reviews, "literary statements." *Poems* contains a more selective appendix of poetry drafts and facsimiles, while *Prose* adds still more previously unpublished prose, including Bishop's edited version of her Life World Library *Brazil* book, reflecting the growing interest in Bishop's relationship to the country.

[54] The generally cited total is between ninety and ninety-six, depending on whether one counts the poems in the series "Four Poems" and "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" separately. Vendler's figure likely refers only to the poems that Bishop chose to include in her four separate collections, but *Complete Poems* includes uncollected work published in magazines.

[55] Langdon Hammer's article "The New Elizabeth Bishop" (1993) gives a slightly earlier but related overview of Bishop's evolving reception since her death.

[56] The recent *Elizabeth Bishop in the 21st Century* (2012) collects critical essays that focus primarily on the impact of the new material in *Edgar Allan Poe and the Juke-Box*, *Words in Air*, and the Library of America edition of her writing. They consider how the newly available texts are challenging the Bishop canon and provoking debates over modes of reading her work. In " 'A Lovely Finish I Have Seen': Voice and Variorium in *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box*," Christina Pugh compares these discussions to the way new editions transformed Emily Dickinson criticism. *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop* (2014), cited above, incorporates even more recent publications from the archives and continues the critical discussion surrounding how to evaluate the "new" Bishop.

documentary tribute by queer feminist filmmaker Barbara Hammer.[57] A much sexier version of Bishop also appears in *Reaching for the Moon (Flores raras*, 2013), the biopic by Brazilian director Bruno Barreto that focuses on her romance with Lota in Brazil. The film was inspired by the somewhat gossipy account of Bishop and Lota's life together in Carmen Oliveira's *Rare and Commonplace Flowers* (*Flores raras e banalíssimas*, 1995; English translation, 2002). Its steamy love scenes drew particular notice from reviewers. Both films quote from several of the more overtly sexual or romantic love poems from Bishop's manuscripts without distinguishing them from the poems she published in her lifetime. They also draw heavily on oral histories and her letters in their storytelling, an indication of the shifting boundaries around what work contributes to her wider reputation as a poet.

Though I am wary of the misleading simplifications of approaches that merely connect the dots between lines of verse and their presumed real-life referents, I *am* interested in how Bishop's less edited, less rigorously curated writing enables a deeper attunement to the poetics of exposure that runs alongside that of propriety in her work. As a poet who took the art of letter writing quite seriously and used it as a way to explore poetic material, and whose poetry borrows much of its detail from her everyday observations and experiences, Bishop provides a case for reading her collected poetry alongside its more prosaic kin.[58] It's true that Bishop herself and critics like Vendler would rather excise the recently published poems ("poems"?) from the official record of "Elizabeth Bishop as a poet," often judging them as "lesser" or "failures" due to their lack of compositional balance or disproportionate sentiment. Yet I want to consider these kinds of compositions as Bishop's freer explorations of the "improper" tendencies this chapter examines and that the poet ultimately integrates more fully into her later poetry.

II. Between North and South

Discussions of civilization and barbarism, or propriety and impropriety, in a North American and New World context are usually structured around the symbolic poles of East and West. New England is aligned with Old World European standards of civilized manners whereas the west-facing American frontier inspired a wilder sense of self-belonging that reflected the exuberance and freedom of New World natures. Bishop's work transposes a similar dialectic along an axis of North and South, with the North as the site of propriety against which the South's deviance is measured. Starting with her first collection *North & South* (1946), Bishop overtly sets out these key compass points that reflect broader environmental and cultural associations but that also correspond to her particular internal geographies.

Bishop is best known as a poet of travel and maintained an ongoing sense of itinerancy, yet the themes of North and South in her work also create an affective map of her various homes. Bishop's "North" is largely elided with the northeast region that marked her childhood and formative years—Nova Scotia, Massachusetts, Maine, and New York—and that would remain the poet's metaphysical reference for home. She more acutely defined her northern identity the more she became bound to southern contexts through her relationships and the "three loved houses" that appear in her late poem "One Art" (*CP* 178). The first of these was in Key West, Florida, where Bishop bought a house with her friend and sometime lover Louise Crane, living there on and off for

[57] Hammer's film *Welcome to This House* (2015) played two sold-out screenings at Frameline 39, the San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival. Introducing the first screening, the festival's director of development proclaimed, "This is the hottest spot for lesbian cruising in Berkeley tonight!" In 2013, Frameline 37 featured *Reaching For the Moon.*
[58] Bishop was an avid reader of collected letters, including those by Darwin, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Henry James, Hopkins, and Flannery O'Connor, and taught a course at Harvard in 1971 on the subject of "Just *letters*—as an art form or something," as she described in a letter (*OA* 544).

over a decade from 1938 to early 1949.[59] By 1941 she was sharing her Key West home with Marjorie Stevens, with whom she also spent eight months in Mexico in 1942. The poetic environments in *North & South* and its follow-up *A Cold Spring* (1955) move mainly between Nova Scotia, New England, and Florida, with a handful of nods to other travels and time spent in New York and Washington D.C.

Although there is no official section division in *North & South*, the thirty poems in Bishop's first collection are generally grouped into the North of the first twenty poems and the South of the final ten. The opening poem, "The Map," establishes the geographical imagination that layers its own representational logic over external landscapes as a major theme in Bishop's work. It cites Canada's far northeastern coordinates of Newfoundland and Labrador, with a brief nod to Norway across the northern seas. The poems that follow create a cumulative atmosphere of deadening cold in a palette of snow whites, pale blues, shadowed greens, and gray cityscapes where the "half-tone scale of winter weathers / is a spread pigeon's wing" ("Paris, 7 A.M.," *CP* 26). The few poems that evoke Paris are inspired by Bishop's Europe trip with two girlfriends from Vassar after graduation, and though a departure from the North American settings, this city especially evokes the temperate, industrialized, Eurocentric sphere of the Global North.

The speaker in "The Map" asks, "Are they assigned, or can the countries pick their colors? / —What suits the character or the native waters best" (3). In this collection, Bishop's visual shadings correspond to a northern character she identifies with restraint, mystery, silent introspection, and cool precision. The subject of "The Imaginary Iceberg" is a mysterious, mostly submerged "solemn, floating field" that "cuts its facets from within" and is "self-made from elements least visible." In "The Colder the Air," we are told "We must admire her perfect aim, / this huntress of the winter air / whose level weapon needs no sight" (6). Cold, harsh mornings add to the sense of hardship and poverty in "Love Lies Sleeping" and "A Miracle for Breakfast." The mystical experience that opens up "the cold heart" whose "final thought stood frozen" in "The Weed," begins with the speaker dreaming of lying "upon a grave, or bed," or "some cold and close-built bower" (20).

Most of Bishop's contemporary reviewers saw her work as marked by impersonal and precise description, not given to deeper revelations of feeling. Yet even what I'm calling the northern poems, despite their coldness, *are* suffused with an air of melancholy, suffering, and a certain sense of romantic yearning, incompletion, or dividedness that suggest various unfulfilled states. However, in fitting with a New England Puritan sort of propriety, these feelings are only partially expressed and borne in stoic solitude. The surreal subject of "The Gentleman of Shalott" has only half a body, the other half merely a mirror reflection, but he feels "in modesty" that this is appropriate and is "resigned / to such economical design," declaring that "Half is enough" (10). The refined gentleman judges his abridged form to be the fitting proportion, a physical manifestation of understatement. This spareness is further underscored by the clipped, two-beat lines that form three long, skinny stanzas of 15, 15, and 14 lines, the last stanza making do with slightly less. The half-horse, half-dancer mechanical toy in "Cirque d'Hiver" is another variation on this elegant manifestation of self-dividedness. The speaker notes the horse's "formal, melancholy soul," and though they communicate with each other "rather desperately," it is only with a look (31).

Throughout all her poems, Bishop displaces affects more readily associated with human subjects metonymically onto the landscape and animals that surround them. Yet in her northern settings this distancing effect manifests in a more understated or constrained manner that often

[59] The source for these biographical dates is the Chronology in Anne Stevenson's *Five Looks At Elizabeth Bishop*, which gives one of the more useful annotated timelines of Bishop's travel in the context of her poetry (129-157). Brett Millier's *Elizabeth Bishop: Life and the Memory of It* provides a much more detailed account, followed by Lorrie Goldensohn's *Elizabeth Bishop: The Biography of a Poetry*.

corresponds to the sober, frozen landscapes. The animals "speak" less or more softly in the North. For example, the Newfoundland and Labrador landscape in "Large Bad Picture," based on a painting by Bishop's uncle George, evokes the sound of black birds "crying, crying, / the only sound there is except for occasional sighing / as a large aquatic animal breathes" (11). Similarly, the watery forms that allude to human outpourings of sadness are more meager and delimited. The old lonely hermit in "Chemin de Fer" lives near a "little pond" that lies "like an old tear / holding onto its injuries / lucidly year after year" (8). This stubborn tear resurfaces in "The Man-Moth," whose title subject is as surreal as the Gentleman of Shalott but is an even lonelier creature who lives in the subways beneath the city. He does his best to hide the lone tear that might slip from his eye, his only possession. The speaker tells us he'll slyly palm and then swallow this sad excretion if you're not paying attention, but "if you watch, he'll hand it over, cool as from underground springs and pure enough to drink" (15).

Vendler reads the Man-Moth's tear as "Bishop's most justifiably famous definition of a poem," which the critic places alongside "Shakespeare's 'summer's distillation,' Keats' 'last oozings,' and Dickinson's 'attar of the rose.'" These metaphors "insist that poetry is a natural secretion" but also "that it must be processed in a painful way before it is valuable or drinkable" ("Poems" 827). Vendler's focus on the importance of this symbol for pain in Bishop's work comes in 1987, as more critics were beginning to recognize the greater depths of feeling in her poetry, though Vendler hears a more ironic attitude toward the potential for sharing this tear in Bishop than in her predecessors.

Bishop's watery metaphors suggest depths of knowledge and feeling not readily communicable to human senses. Bishop's subsequent collection, *A Cold Spring*, extends many of the themes in *North & South* though less schematically, and includes two distinctly Nova Scotia poems that recall the cool, pure underground spring that the Man-Moth's tear seems to come from. The speaker in "At the Fishhouses" contemplates the sea as akin to a mystical form of knowledge: "Cold dark deep and absolutely clear, / element bearable to no mortal, / to fish and to seals." (*CP* 65). Here the seals have access to this icy sea of knowledge but remain gnomically silent. The inexpressive land in "Cape Breton" similarly withholds its hidden depths from human witness: "Whatever the landscape had of meaning appears to have been abandoned, / unless the road is holding it back, in the interior, / where we cannot see, / where deep lakes are reputed to be." The burnt forests suggest "scriptures made on stones by stones" but "these regions now have little to say for themselves" (68). A small bus packed with people passes through this terrain, but the only sounds we hear are the birds singing "freely, dispassionately," and the bawling of a calf, like the animals crying and sighing in "Large Bad Picture" while the people remain silent.

The southern environments in the final third of *North & South*, as well as the Key West poems in *A Cold Spring* and eventually Bishop's Brazil poems, present a stark contrast to these northern settings. These southern poems depict warmer, more humid landscapes that open onto less constrained, riskier sensibilities as they more centrally address feelings of sadness, love, desire, aggression, self-pity, and embarrassment. Even more so than in her northern poems, Bishop distances herself from the expression of these more intimate, exposed—and thus improper—affects by attributing them to her others: landscapes and animals, but also non-white, non-American subjects, often from poor backgrounds. "Jerónimo's House," "Cootchie," and "Faustina, or Rock Roses" evoke the African-American and Cuban population in Key West in the 1930s and '40s, while "Songs for a Coloured Singer" is her tribute to Billie Holiday, whom she used to see perform in New York in the 1930s (Millier 81). Bishop's tone is less sure when taking on these unfamiliar sensibilities, and the sharpest critiques of her work fall on her appropriation of voices from a

different race, class, national identity from her own.[60] Yet this sense of discomfort is also due to her unfamiliarity in using poetry to "sing" about emotion. There is an awkwardness to the rhythm and rhymes in "Songs for a Coloured Singer," which recounts troubles with infidelity, drinking, and money, as in: "I say, 'Le Roy, just how much are we owing?," made to rhyme with "He only answers, 'Let's get going,'" and "I'm going to go and take the bus / and find someone monogamous" (*CP* 47, 48).

Bishop is much more at home depicting differences in dense descriptions of landscapes populated by flora and fauna that obliquely reference a human presence. "Florida," the first of the last ten poems in *North & South*, inaugurates a startlingly new southern ecosystem, where the water and feelings are warmer, currents flow more freely, and the flora and fauna are louder, both aurally and visually. The poem moves dizzyingly through a dense, breathless description of "the state that floats in brackish water" in a sub-tropical setting both vibrant and rotting, filled with mangrove roots sprouting oysters, lively birds, enormous turtles, palm trees that "clatter in the stiff breeze," rain storms, shells called Job's Tear, the Chinese Alphabet, Junonia, and Ladies' Ear that adorn the coast (32). Formally, it is the most free-flowing poem of the collection, whereas most of the other poems are set in more standardized meter, rhyme schemes, and compact or at least symmetrical stanzas. The poem is the forerunner to Bishop's expansion of her southern, tropical themes in her Brazil poems, and especially similar in form and descriptive technique to "Brazil, January 1, 1502" (discussed in-depth in Chapter 1) with its painterly elaboration of natural profusion, and its focus on the calls of birds and the hint of violence against native women, manifested here in the cryptic allusions to a "buried Indian princess" whose gray skirt is decomposing in Florida's soil. In "Florida," the lines of two long stanzas of free verse lengthen and contract in irregular sequences and spill onto each other in frequent enjambment, as in this section:

> The state full of long S-shaped birds, blue and white,
> and unseen hysterical birds who rush up the scale
> every time in a tantrum.
> Tanagers embarrassed by their flashiness,
> and pelicans whose delight it is to clown;
> who coast for fun on the strong tidal currents
> in and out among the mangrove islands
> and stand on the sand-bars drying their damp gold wings
> on sun-lit evenings.

These birds, rather than sing dispassionately or cry in the background, throw hysterical tantrums and clown and careen around for their own delight. It marks this environment as a setting for both pleasure and the baring of more operatic emotions. Unlike the silent, gnomic seals in "At the Fishhouses," or the animals in the earlier poems that sigh quietly and communicate formal melancholy with a meaningful look, the animals here voice a mix of panic, aggression, and desire. The mosquitos "go hunting to the tune of their ferocious obbligatos," while the alligator that ends the poem proclaims itself with "five distinct calls: friendliness, love, mating, war, and a warning." Yet this masculine bravado suddenly dies down in the next moment when the alligator "whimpers and speaks in the throat / of the Indian Princess," swallowed up in a surreal turn that gives an elusive voice back to the native woman, as in "Brazil, January 1, 1502." Bethany Hicok suggests this image is a critical gesture toward Florida's past conquering violence and also a sly response to

[60] See Kirstin Hotelling Zona's "Bishop: Race, Class, and Gender" for an overview of this critique in Bishop studies. In *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop*, 49-61.

Wallace Stevens's use of the Indian Princess "as a stand-in for Florida and desire" in *Harmonium*, particularly his "O Florida, Venereal Soil" (*Degrees of Freedom* 127-129).

While the subjects and landscapes in the northern poems seem to exercise a self-governing form of restraint that instinctively stops short of revealing too much, many of the southern poems depict this tension between propriety and exposure from the other side—as a matter of an externally imposed embarrassment or disapproval at boundaries that have already been exceeded. In the passage from "Florida" cited above, a northern perspective invades the tanagers' subjectivity, giving them a human self-consciousness about their too-flashy colors, a self-estranged embarrassment that Bishop's Brazilian animals share. In "Faustina, or Rock Roses," it is the outsider who feels ashamed in witnessing the intimate vulnerability of an elderly white woman, bed-ridden and mentally unhinged, while the woman is tended to by her black Cuban maid Faustina. The woman lies "in a crazy house / upon a crazy bed," whispering to herself as "the eighty-watt bulb / betrays us all," a turn of phrase that emphasizes "betrayal" as both exposure and moral crime (*CP* 72). The bulb "discovers," "lights on," and "exposes" the discomfiting details around the room, from its disrepair to the visitor's confused concern, and the old woman's nightgown that reveals her undershirt. This scene recalls Eve Sedgwick's observation that "shame is both peculiarly contagious and peculiarly individuating":

> The visitor is embarrassed
> not by pain nor age
> nor even nakedness,
> though perhaps by its reverse.

In this poem, the visitor's embarrassment and feelings of awkwardness extend in and from all directions, linking the sad room, the frail old woman, her subordinate yet stronger black maid, and the polite, white visitor in that "double movement shame makes: toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality," as Sedgwick puts it. Bishop's lines here are similar to Sedgwick's example of the way "an unwashed, half-insane man" wandering into the lecture hall mumbling and urinating at the front of the room would make everyone else excruciatingly embarrassed in a move that puts them both inside and outside his skin (Sedgwick 37).

In Bishop's poem, the visitor feels a similarly uncomfortable mixture of isolation and painful empathy but puts it the opposite way—she emphasizes not the other's vulnerability but her own exemption from sickness, age, and exposure. This feeling of shame that cuts in two directions, bringing the subject both closer to and farther away from the object of identification returns in Bishop's Brazil poems, where Bishop both identifies with and disavows the kind of excessive emotionalism she codes as both Brazilian and improper. This is especially true of "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics," where the toad, crab, and snail alternate between forms of recognition and prickly isolation as they respond to each other's abjection and anxiety with a mix of empathy, disengagement, and disapproval.

Disapproval is the flipside of shame in Bishop in that both signal recognition that some form of propriety has been violated. However, unlike shame, disapproval erects a less porous boundary between subject and object, asserting the subject's superior moral correctness. "Seascape" dramatizes the severity of disapproval before a southern scene, casting Florida's tropical coast as an allegory of heaven and hell, similar to the allegory of sin that the European colonizers layer over the landscape in "Brazil, January 1, 1502." In "Seascape," angelic herons inhabit paradise through freedom of desire, "flying as high as they want and as far as they want" in a scene that "does look like heaven" (*CP* 40). Then the same scene is transformed into a raging hell in the disapproving eyes of "a skeletal lighthouse standing there / in black and white clerical dress." The lighthouse-as-

clergyman's proof of evil is that "the shallow water is so warm" and he knows, "Heaven is not like flying or swimming, / but has something to do with blackness and a strong glare." Here, as in "Brazil, January 1, 1502," Bishop's poem is more sympathetic to the innocent exuberance of the native landscape than to the hypocritical disapproval of a civilizing mission that invents a justification for imposing its will.

Taken as a whole, *North & South* is Bishop's most restrained, least intimately revealing collection—and the one most closely associated with Marianne Moore. Moore's review of *North & South* praises, beginning with its title, "A Modest Expert," many of the features that affirm Moore's own poetic proprieties. She writes, "Elizabeth Bishop is spectacular in being unspectacular. [. . .] why not be accurate and modest?" (177). Moore's characterization of "verisimilitude that avoids embarrassingly direct descriptiveness" reinforces the link between embarrassment and improper exposure in Bishop's work. In moments when direct description happens, it is "neat, never loose," while Bishop's signature "enumerative description ... can be easy and compact" (178). Yet Moore sees past the surface descriptions (being a famously detailed describer herself) to juxtapose the collection's stylistic neatness with moral depth, calling it a "small-large book of beautifully formulated aesthetic-moral mathematics." Her concluding approval of Bishop's lyric propriety merges a sense of proper form with moral rightness and endorses the counterintuitive force of understatement: "With poetry as with homiletics, tentativeness can be more positive than positiveness; and in *North & South*, a much instructed persuasiveness is emphasized by uninsistence" (179).

In their uncommonly perceptive reviews of *North & South*, poets Robert Lowell and Randall Jarrell both affirm Bishop's poetic kinship to Moore but emphasize the ways in which her poetry is more personal and approachable. Lowell writes, "Both poets use an elaborate descriptive technique, love exotic objects, are moral, genteel, witty, and withdrawn," but distinguishes Bishop as "softer, dreamier, more human and more personal" ("Thomas, Bishop, and Williams" 188). Jarrell calls Moore "an appropriately selected foundation for Miss Bishop's work," adding that "in her best work restraint, calm, and proportion are implicit in every detail of organization and workmanship." Like Moore, he recognizes Bishop's underpinning moral sense that backs away from heavy-handed moralizing, calling her "morally so attractive" in her handling of the unpublicized, everyday choices that confront each individual ("On *North & South*" 180-81).

For both Lowell and Jarrell, the "personal" aspect in Bishop means that the voice of the speaker evokes the poet herself as a living, breathing person observing, recollecting, or imagining in the present rather than a distinctly invented persona. The poems also feel more directly connected to the poet's actual lived experiences, than the more otherworldly speakers in the hermetic poem-objects of a poet like Moore or the more impersonal poetics of Eliot and Auden. Jarrell writes, "Her work is unusually personal and honest in its wit, perception and sensitivity—and in its restrictions too; all her poems have written underneath, *I have seen it*" (181). Lowell echoes, "Bishop is usually present in her poems; they happen to her, she speaks, and often centers them on herself" (188). Jarrell's vision of a plaque of authenticity, *"I have seen it*," has partly to do with an empirical sense of witnessing but seems more a response to Bishop's matter-of-fact tone of voice, which sounds generally the same across these poems. She even makes us aware of herself imagining even the more fantastical subjects, as when she accompanies the surreal dream-sequence of "The Man-Moth" with a footnote citing the origin of the idea as a newspaper misprint for "mammoth" (*CP* 14).

Despite the "personal" qualities of Bishop's voice that Lowell and Jarrell were attuned to ahead of most others, *North & South* is much less situated in the intimate facts of Bishop's life than any of her subsequent collections, and much less directly personal than the confessional poetry that Lowell became known for. Even Lowell himself remarks on their elusive nature, writing that one "is left rather at sea about the actual subjects of the poems," so that the personality one feels at the

heart of them still isn't quite so revealing about the person (186). These poems have an especially artifactual and self-enclosed quality, as in "The Monument," which revolves around "an artifact of wood," a mysterious structure that becomes a metaphor for the esoteric work of art that "can shelter / what is within (which after all / cannot have been intended to be seen)" (*CP* 25). The poems in Bishop's subsequent collections offer an increasingly autobiographical and personally revealing sense of *I have seen it* and *I have lived it*, often making their reference points more legible through specific place names, sources and dates that Bishop hardly offers in her first collection.

III. The "Proper" Lyric in a Brazilian Context

The qualities of "restraint, calm, and proportion" that Jarrell praises in Bishop's "best" poetry are precisely what become threatened in her southern environments. After Bishop's arrival in December, 1951, Brazil takes over from Florida as *the* reference point for her poetic South. "Her compass kept pointing her south, to a warmer, more colorful, less puritanical climate," writes Lloyd Schwartz. ("Elizabeth Bishop and Brazil" 89). As in the poem "Florida" and other Key West poems, Bishop's Brazil poems focus on the abundant proliferation of flora and fauna in warm, watery landscapes, which become the fittingly exaggerated spaces to release what she presents as analogously excessive and indulgent passions, from despair, self-pity, and anxiety to love and delight, often attributed to the landscapes or animals. As I discuss in Chapter 1, Brazil becomes the site of "immodest" utopian desires in Bishop's writing, in the foreigner's desire for a better, freer life, as well as a more sensual desire to experience the pleasures of the land and the women. In both her letters and in a more coded, figurative way in her poetry, Bishop finds her new environment alternately seductive and wondrous yet disorienting, and responds to it with a mix of pleasure, marvel, discomfort, and disapproval.

In this section I explore how the unexpected turn Bishop's life took in Brazil becomes the context for new directions in her poetry that challenge her ideas of lyric propriety. In the introduction, I identified four main groups of poems that Bishop wrote in or about Brazil: poems of travel or foreign observer in Brazil, the domestic, love poems, the autobiographical Nova Scotia poems she was inspired to write while in Brazil, and the later poems that see Brazil through the disillusioned, frustrated eyes of a long-time resident foreigner. The travel poems, which I discuss in Chapter One and Three, extend the theme of southern landscapes and affects that Bishop begins to explore in the Florida poems, though they differ from her earlier work in that they borrow even more literally from her experiences.

My main focus here is on the other three groups, which constitute a more distinct challenge to Bishop's poetics of restraint. In this loosening up of her poetry, Bishop dwells in an uncharacteristically open way on themes of love, grief, nostalgia, self-pity, and abjection. These poems move beyond the detachedly personal tone of the earlier poems to reveal flashes of painful or intimate autobiography. The first of these groups that I take up are her love poems, which are the most elusive. This is partly because they contain only oblique references to their main object (often Lota though also other women), and partly because Bishop never published the most overt poems. They were discovered in Brazil in the decades after her death and published posthumously. I look at the way these poems have provoked anxiety about their improprieties not only in Bishop but also in their reception. This is due both to their more open treatment of love and lesbian sexuality, and also to the incongruence between the revelation of these poems and the reputation of a poet who was adamantly closeted to the public and so selective about what she chose to publish.

I connect the love poems to broader discomfort about Bishop's lyric propriety in her handling of emotional themes and personal exposure throughout her work, both according to her

own poetic principles but also in line with the views of poets and critics in the Anglo-American tradition who approve of a more balanced, tempered approach to sentiment in poetry. Subscribing to these principles, Bishop critiqued the confessional poetry that her American contemporaries were writing throughout her time in Brazil and after she returned to the U.S. Yet in a curious turn toward the confessional, Bishop was also inspired to write for the first time about the traumatic events of her childhood by the way her new life in Brazil conjured memories of Nova Scotia. The third group of poems I examine are the most painfully autobiographical that she had written up until then and make up most of the second half of *Questions of Travel*. These poems merge Bishop's northern and southern logics, not only in that they are Nova Scotia poems inspired by Brazil, but also because they indulge in a "southern" outpouring of personal grief while tempering it with a stoic "northern" rigidity, in both form and expression. Looking at this and the last group of poems, I argue that the forms of expression that Bishop codes as Brazilian, as opposed to Anglo-American, is a way of distancing herself from the more excessive, personal sentiments in her poetry through a rubric of the foreign.

The last group of poems that challenge the sense of propriety Bishop aligned with northern values and Anglo-American poetry are the poems that reveal Bishop's more negative personal feelings about Brazil and about herself living there. These poems date from the late 1960s when she and Lota were living mainly in the urban chaos of Rio de Janeiro, as their relationship was fraying—and eventually ended with Lota's death in 1967. "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics," "House Guest," "Going to the Bakery," and "Pink Dog" are Brazil poems that Bishop completed after *Questions of Travel* and are included as "uncollected work" in her 1969 *Complete Poems*. These poems are the riskiest of Bishop's Brazil series because they most exceed the boundaries of lyric "good taste" that I map in this chapter. As such, they have been treated as minor poems, attracting much less admiration and attention than her more appealing Brazil travel poems. This is Bishop at her most darkly "Brazilian" as she characterizes it, in poems that suffuse the poet, the speakers, and their objects all at once in uncomfortable affects—self-pity, abjection, depression—in tones that sound critical, alienated, exasperated, and disillusioned. "Crusoe in England," considered one of Bishop's major poems and included in her last volume *Geography III* (1976), also engages in the self-pity Bishop characterizes as an affect proper to Brazil, yet tempers this effect through the filters of memory and a whimsical imagination that elegizes her time with Lota in the trappings of a Robinson Crusoe narrative.

Many of Bishop's Brazil poems, including her published love poems to Lota, are set in Samambaia, the site of the second of her "three loved houses," where she spent the happiest years of her most lasting romantic partnership, which lasted fifteen years. The couple's first seven years together, late 1951 through 1958, were shaped by overseeing the construction of Lota's ultra-modern house of glass, steel, and concrete set amid the lush green rainforest and steep granite formations of Lota's estate in the mountains of Petrópolis, north of Rio. An earlier published version of "Song for the Rainy Season" wonders if this setting is "too indulgent, perhaps."[61] "Hidden / oh hidden" as it was, Lota's estate offered a safe distance for Bishop's most openly lesbian partnership up till then, at a significant remove not only from the U.S. at the start of the conservative 1950s, but also secluded within Brazil as a rural country retreat and with the added protection of Lota's wealth and position in Rio high society. Bishop's letters in the first few months after arriving in Brazil and deciding to stay are full of exclamations about how happy she feels, "happier than I have felt in ten years," and how impractical and wonderfully surreal she finds Samambaia: "it is a sort of dream-combination of plant & animal life. I really can't believe it at all."[62]

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[61] *New Yorker,* 8 October 1960.

[62] Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 8 January 1952, *OA* 231; Bishop to Moore, 14 February 1952, *OA* 236.

This marks a dramatic contrast from the playful yet melancholy, often anxious tones of her letters throughout the years before.[63]

Nearly a year after first arriving in Brazil, Bishop remarks on the greater freedom she feels despite some reservations about being an exile in Brazil, "Against all the correct theories of escapism, exile, and the horrid facts about the condition of Brazil, I like living here more and more. Maybe it's just age, but it is so much easier to live exactly as one wants here."[64] Elsewhere, Bishop attributes this new feeling of boldness principally to her southern surroundings. She tells Moore she has been reading Moore's poetry aloud to Lota, "something I should never dare to do on the other side of the Equator, I know, but here it seemed easier to."[65] And she notes a change in her work after settling in Brazil in a letter to her editor for *A Cold Spring*, "since I have moved to the other side of the Equator and have started a lot of quite different things, the work I am doing right now will be a new departure and will not go with these poems very well."[66]

Bishop's letters from these years also combine a newfound delight with a heightened awareness of her New England and Anglo-American identity. "I like it so much that I keep thinking I have died and gone to heaven, completely undeservedly," she writes in late 1952. "My New England blood tells me that no, it isn't true. Escape does not work; if you really are happy you should just naturally go to pieces and never write a line—but apparently that—and most psychological theories on the subject, too—is all wrong."[67] To her doctor and close friend Anny Baumann, she writes, "It seems to be mid-winter, and yet it is time to plant things—but 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."[68] Bishop also remarks on the refreshing directness of Brazilians in contrast to northern restraint, "I find that all this frankness makes it much easier to get along with people than it used to be in New England, say—or am I just getting old and tolerant?"[69] While Bishop took pleasure in the warmth she found in Brazilians and spoken Portuguese, her poetic affinities remained tied to the precision of English. Writing to Marianne Moore, Bishop says, "But I like it [Portuguese] very much—packed with diminutives, augmentatives, endearments, etc. [. . .] I still feel sure that English has the advantage as far as poetry goes—but what is it—accuracy, range, or what?—because it seems to me that every other language is *enjoyed* more by the people speaking it [. . .] "[70]

This merging of northern and southern coordinates also vividly recalled Bishop's Nova Scotia childhood. At Samambaia, Bishop and Lota were involved in the lives of various servants and their families, all living on the sprawling rural property. Part of their extended family was Mary Morse, Bishop's former classmate at Vassar and who had been Lota's companion before Bishop's arrival. She continued to live at Samambaia in a separate house with her adopted child. For Bishop, this sudden transition from a more solitary existence with few close family ties to a bustling family and social life with Lota and Mary in a rustic setting gave her the mix of comfort and nostalgia to relive memories of her early childhood in Great Village, Nova Scotia, both a pleasant and painful time in her life.[71] "What I'm really up to is recreating a sort of deluxe Nova Scotia all over again in

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[63] The letters in *OA* begin with 31 December 31 1928.
[64] Bishop to U.T. and Joseph Summers, 17 September 1952, *OA* 247.
[65] Bishop to Moore, 14 February 1952, *OA* 238.
[66] Bishop to Paul Brooks, 2 January 1953, *OA* 253.
[67] Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 12 October,1952, *OA* 249.
[68] Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 28 July 1952, *OA* 243.
[69] Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 13 July 1953, *OA* 267.
[70] Bishop to Marianne Moore, 24 August 1952, *OA* 244.
[71] Many have written on the way Brazil reconnected Bishop to her early childhood. David Kalstone writes, "She led a life, in its intimacies and domesticities, curiously reminiscent of her happiest years—the early ones in Nova Scotia"

Brazil. And now I'm my own grandmother" she writes to Lowell.[72] In another letter she remarks on the sudden inspiration of "In the Village": "To my great surprise—I hadn't finished a story in ten years, I think—I suddenly started writing some and have done three [. . .] It is funny to come to Brazil to experience total recall about Nova Scotia—geography must be more mysterious than we realize, even."[73] The other impetus for Bishop's nostalgia for her Nova Scotia childhood was the translation she began in 1953 of the diary of a young girl in rural Diamantina at the end of the 19th century, *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* (1957), which I take up in Chapter Three.

The Brazilian present and Nova Scotia past merge as the major spatial-temporal-affective coordinates in *Questions of Travel*, Bishop's third collection, completed over the fourteen years she had been living in Brazil by then. The collection's compass points are arranged in the inverse of *North & South*. It opens with the eleven poems of the "Brazil" section, then flits north to "Elsewhere." The section begins with "In the Village," an autobiographical story from Bishop's childhood in Great Village, Nova Scotia, while the next five of the remaining eight poems continue the autobiographical themes of childhood and family in a Nova Scotia setting.

This collection signals a distinct loosening up in Bishop's poetics in compositions that alternately reflect and resist a sense of release, emotional intensity, and disproportion. David Kalstone remarks on how Bishop's tone in this collection is "more relaxed than ever before" (*Five Temperaments* 18). John Ashbery strikes a similar note in a review of the prematurely titled 1969 edition of Bishop's *Complete Poems*, which included additional Brazil poems but preceded *Geography III*: "Her years in the *la-bas* of Brazil brought Miss Bishop's gifts to maturity. Both more relaxed and more ambitious, she can now do almost anything she pleases" (204). John Hollander hails the "new mythopoetic force" that the geographies of North and South gain in this collection, recognizing how "all that intensely and chastely observed material" gained depth from being "poetically compounded with the figurative geography books of her earlier poems" (245).

Hollander's adverbs "intensely" and "chastely" suggest that Bishop's dense descriptive techniques act as a way to channel an intensity of experience while maintaining a cool distance from the scene. This is largely true of the travel poems that shape "Brazil" in *Questions of Travel*. As I examined more deeply in the context of travel literature in Chapter 1, the foreigners in these poems often disapprove of the physical and affective excesses and impracticalities of the tropical landscape, even as the poems immediately turn this disapproval back onto the travelers and their own excessive desires in this new world. The tourist speaker in "Arrival at Santos" views the scenery as "impractically shaped" and the mountains as "self-pitying" and "sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery" but also chastises herself for these "immodest demands" for an exotic utopia (*CP* 89). "Brazil, January 1, 1502" recasts this dynamic in an allegory of original sin in paradise, where an overly sensuous Nature provokes evil temptations in Man (91). The present-day tourist returns in "Questions of Travel," again sounding wary of a certain too-muchness in Brazil, "There are too many waterfalls here; the crowded streams / hurry too rapidly down to sea, / and the pressures of so many clouds makes them spill over the sides in soft slow-motion, / turning to waterfalls before our very eyes." Again, the speaker indicts her own impractical, greedy fantasies, "Oh, must we dream our dreams / and have them too?" (93-94).

(*Becoming a Poet*, 152). Brett Millier opens her biography of Bishop with this connection between a happier home life in a place that reminded her of the rural existence of her youth: "Not until 1952, when she set up a stable and happy life in the household of Lota de Macedo Soares, could Elizabeth Bishop take objective account and make direct artistic use of her difficult childhood. During this time, she became deeply interested in her family's circumstances in her early years, and she wrote anxiously to her aunt and cousin asking for artifacts, family treasures, firsthand historical accounts of life in Nova Scotia in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries" (1).

[72] Bishop to Lowell, 21 March 1952, *WLA* 134.

[73] Bishop to Kit and Ilse Barker, 12 October 1952, *OA* 249.

The abundance of water imagery in the Brazil poems extends one of Bishop's central tropes, that of water as a figure for affective states, as I identified in *North & South* earlier in this chapter. In contrast to the ice-cold, frozen zones of the North, where a lone tear or a small pool offer restricted evidence of deeper sources of painful feeling, the gushing water of rainstorms, waterfalls, rivers and streams evokes the overflow of affects like self-pity, mournfulness, and love that saturate the spaces between subjects, objects, and environments in these southern settings.[74] The profusion of watery bodies overwhelms Bishop's tourist speakers, but in her more tender, intimate poems that render Brazil as home, the rain, clouds, and breath-like air become associated with the pleasing warmth of domestic bliss. Samambia, with its waterfalls and soft mists, becomes the implicit setting for the most overt love poems that Bishop published during her lifetime—though "overt" on Bishop's scale still means their human object, Lota, remains oblique.

"Song for the Rainy Season" is a dreamy ode to this happy mountain home Bishop shared with Lota that depicts a love nest shrouded from the rest of the world. It beings: "Hidden, oh hidden / in the high fog / the house we live in," and describes it as "rain-, rainbow-ridden," and luxuriant with "blood-black / bromelias, lichens, / owls, and the lint / of the waterfalls." Bishop describes the rain falling while "fat frogs [. . .] / shrilling for love, / clamber and mount," a sly wink to what happens between the home's human inhabitants. In an apostrophe to this loved house, Bishop gives in to an uncommonly rapturous tone: "darkened and tarnished / by the warm touch / of the warm breath, / maculate, cherished, / rejoice!" (*CP* 101-102). The warm touch and breath refer literally to the humid climate that speeds everything to decay but the truncated syntax also lets it allude to human lovers. "Electrical Storm" adds to this sense of feeling swaddled in love while it thunders outside and the hail melts on the ground. Bishop lightly telegraphs the cozy sense of waking up together in the casual "we" of "We got up to find the wiring fused" and in the image of Tobias the cat staying in the warm sheets (100).

These oblique love poems from *Questions of Travel*, along with "The Shampoo," open onto a new sense of pleasure and contentment in Bishop's work. "The Shampoo" is Bishop's earliest Brazil poem after "Arrival at Santos," both of which Bishop completed in 1952 and included as the two final poems of *A Cold Spring*. Yet while Bishop later reprinted "Arrival" in the significantly more contextualized "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel*, she excluded "The Shampoo" from this more official Brazil sequence. "The Shampoo" is one of Bishop's most sensual poems about Lota and marks a departure into a new tone of exposure for Bishop. This has raised a number of uncomfortable and ambiguously expressed concerns about lyric propriety and sexuality, both from the poet herself and from others. "The Shampoo" also takes place in Samambaia, yet its external references remain much more coded than the other two domestic poems, completed eight years later. It connects love to this intimate act that ends in pouring water through another's "star"-streaked black hair, "—Come, let me wash it in this big tin basin." The speaker addresses her lover instead of the house they live in and speaks in a serious tone rather than as if recounting an amusing domestic anecdote. Yet the poem's directness is countered by the lack of information to situate it in the domestic space of Bishop's Brazilian home and is further obscured by the euphemistic and rather unromantic address "dear friend," in "you've been, dear friend, / precipitate and pragmatical" (84).

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[74] Quoting from Silvan Tomkins, Eve Sedgwick describes this fluid, indiscriminately saturating quality of the affects, which "have greater freedom with respect to object, for unlike the drives 'any affect may have any 'object.' [. . .] The object of affects such as anger, enjoyment, excitement, or shame is not proper to the affects in the same way that air is the object proper to respiration." Affects exceed boundaries between what is commonly understood as subject versus object: "Affects can be, and are, attached to things people, ideas, sensations, relations, acitivities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects" (*Touching Feeling* 19).

It was this mix of emotional directness and contextual elusiveness that caused the *New Yorker* to reject this poem. In a letter from July 2, 1953, Bishop's friend and editor, Katharine White, tells her the votes were mixed but that a main reason for turning the poem down is that "this is a personal poem in which you do not quite seem to have described the occasion involved. [. . .] for instance, what was the dear friend too demanding and too voluble about?" The original line was "You are, dear friend, / demanding and too voluble," slightly less mysterious adjectives than "precipitate and pragmatical" in the collected version, though equally unromantic. Yet the objection based on lack of context seems especially odd considering that most of her poems were rather oblique in that way, and she published regularly in the *New Yorker*. White concludes apologetically, "But I guess the deciding factor was that this sort of small personal poem perhaps doesn't quite fit into the New Yorker" (*Elizabeth Bishop and the New Yorker* 112-133). It is an awkward and somewhat confusing justification, especially since the *New Yorker* eventually published "Electrical Storm" and "Song for the Rainy Season," also personal and "small" in scope though neither focuses so overtly on the romantic context that gives these scenes their emotional meaning and warmth.[75] Both the *New Yorker* and *Poetry* passed on the poem before the *New Republic* published it two years later, in July 1955.

Brett Millier speculates, "One wonders if the editors found themselves unable to recognize this new Bishop tone or unable to accept what is clearly a love poem between two women" (248). Joelle Biele blames the rejections on homophobia much more bluntly in her introduction to the 2011 collection of Bishop's *New Yorker* correspondence. Biele describes the *New Yorker*'s strict rules of propriety in which homosexuality implicitly joined drunkenness and adultery as grounds on which to reject stories. Biele calls "The Shampoo" "the most openly gay poem Bishop had attempted to publish to date" and links it to "Exchanging Hats," the central poem in the queer Bishop canon: "Bishop's play with sexual identity was also the likely reason for Moss's rejection of 'Exchanging Hats' in 1955." Biele notes that Bishop didn't attempt to publish another "love poem" with the *New Yorker* until "One Art" in 1975 and "held off publishing anything that could be read as dealing with sexual identity until submitting 'Sonnet' in 1977" (Biele xxiv-xxv, xxvi).[76] It is an effect of the reputation of the new, lesbian Elizabeth Bishop made available through her previously private writings, combined with a contemporary hindsight that can pick up on the elements barely hinted at, that enables Biele to take for granted how openly about love and sexuality these poems are. Bishop's sexuality was well-known within her literary and social circles, yet interpreting this from her poems alone would feel much more speculative without the now-assimilated knowledge about Bishop's life.

Bishop herself "began to think there was something indecent about it I'd overlooked," as she writes of "The Shampoo" in a September 6, 1955 letter to May Swenson. Bishop complains that other friends to whom she sent the poem, including Marianne Moore, never responded to it. She connects it to the fact that Moore didn't like "Insomnia" either, which Moore compared disparagingly to a blues song, implying a certain rough sentimentality.[77] Much later, in a 1978 interview, Bishop recalls Moore saying "Insomnia" was "a cheap love poem," and adds, "I don't think she ever believed in talking about the emotions much" (Spires 125). Collected in *A Cold Spring*, "Insomnia," like "Exchanging Hats" is now widely read as one of Bishop's queer poems, with its "world inverted" and lovelorn speaker staring at the unattainable moon. In the letter to Swenson Bishop muses further, "I'm afraid she never can face the tender passion. Sometime I must show you her complete re-write of *Roosters*—with all rhymes, privies, wives, beds, etc. left out [. . .] It is

[75] The *New Yorker* published "Electrical Storm" in May 1960 and "Song For the Rainy Season" in October. Bishop first enclosed "The Shampoo" in a letter to Marianne Moore dated 7 August 1952, *OA* 244.

[76] I discuss "One Art" at the end of this chapter.

[77] Bishop to May Swenson, *Elizabeth Bishop*, Library of America edition, 807.

amazing, and sad, too. But then, her determined obliquity is her, or she, after all—." Although the "indecency" of "Roosters," one of the southern in *North & South* has to do with its bloody, violent cockfighting (as a metaphor for war) and its visceral imagery and too-obvious rhymes—"excrescence" made to rhyme with "virile presence" and "all that vulgar beauty of iridescence"—Bishop's letter connects it to the judgment of indecency she feels being imposed on her love poems (*CP* 37). The episode she refers to is the time Marianne Moore and her mother stayed up all night rewriting Bishop's "Roosters," taking out all the "indecencies" and violent images.[78]

This new element of openness regarding love in Bishop's work, which arises during the honeymoon phase with Lota in Brazil, causes her to distance herself from Moore's "obliquity." Yet in the face of this lyric mutation while in Brazil, Bishop continues to feel tentative about handling the overly personal in her work, especially when it comes to the "tender passions." In the same letter to Swenson, she writes of being "puzzled by what you mean by my poems not appealing to the emotions," asserting on one hand that "poetry is a way of thinking with one's feelings anyway." But immediately after, she doubts her natural ability to handle feeling in poetry: "I think myself that my best poems seem rather distant, and sometimes I wish I could be as objective about everything else as I seem to be in and about them. I don't think I'm very successful when I get personal,—rather, sound personal—one always is, of course, one way or another" (809-810).

Bishop's lack of conviction about the lyric propriety of her more emotionally vulnerable poems is reflected in the ways she treated them as minor. She echoes the *New Yorker*'s trivializing of "The Shampoo" as a "small personal poem," referring to it as "a little poem" in a letter to another *New Yorker* friend Pearl Kazin. She also submitted "Exchanging Hats" to *New World Writing* with the self-deprecating, "Here is a small escaped poem."[79] "Exchanging Hats" was similarly left out of all collected volumes until after Bishop's death. And besides excluding "The Shampoo" from *Questions of Travel*, she also excluded "The Wit," her only other completed poem directly addressed to and about Lota, from her collected work.[80]

It has also been only after Bishop's death that Brazil has gained greater significance as the site most associated with her love poems, many of which existed only in manuscript form and have gradually, and somewhat controversially, become grafted onto Bishop's published body of work, first quoted in scholarly works on Bishop and then much more widely available after *Edgar Allen Poe & the Juke-Box* in 2006. Bishop's first biographer, Lorrie Goldensohn, scored a major coup in 1986 while in Ouro Preto, when Bishop's Brazilian friend Linda Nemer handed her a shoebox of papers and notebooks Bishop had entrusted her with, saying she could sell them "but if so, get a good price" (Goldensohn 23). Nemer, who speaks no English, told me a similar story when I interviewed her at Casa Mariana in July, 2008, recounting, "She said one day people are going to come looking for these papers. And they will be worth a lot. So hold onto them and sell them when you need the money" (Interview with Linda Nemer, my translation). Nemer's account underscores Bishop's awareness and acceptance of the future dissemination of work she held back from publication during her lifetime.

Included in the box from Brazil were two Key West notebooks containing a number of draft poems that more openly address Bishop's own romantic and sexual life. The shared content and imagery between these drafts and certain published poems enable a link between key symbols that mark the love poems as such—including rain, bird cages, electrical storms and electric wires, the

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[78] See the first chapter of David Kalstone's *Becoming a Poet* for an account of this exchange and Bishop's relationship to Moore.

[79] Bishop to Kazin, July 10, 1953, Vassar College Library (in Biele xxv); Bishop to John Ciardi, September 27, 1955, Vassar College Library (in Biele xxxi).

[80] From 1956, it was published in the 1979 edition of *Complete Poems (1927-1979)*.

moon and stars. These signs operate in a kind of lyric flagging across the published poems, linking them to intimate contexts so encoded that the sexuality they point to might otherwise slip past the radar of outsiders.[81] One of the poems from these notebooks, "It is marvellous to wake up together . . ." is perhaps the most complete draft among Bishop's manuscripts, cleanly typed with neither gaps, fragments, nor ambiguous notes for correction. It forms a diptych of sorts with "Rain Towards Morning," part of the series "Four Poems" in *A Cold Spring*. The series clearly alludes to intimate yet fraught interactions but provides only fragmented scenes without clear agents and that are stitched together through a series of synedochal body parts. The series recalls an early reviewer's assessment of *North & South*: "any thumb-prints have been wiped from the shining legs of the poetic furniture at least twice in every other poem" (Williams 185).

Lines from the respective poems show this disjointedness. There is "The tumult in the heart / keeps asking questions" in "Conversation" and "The face is pale / that tried the puzzle of their prison / and solved it with a kiss, / whose freckled unsuspected hands alit" in "Rain Towards Morning." "While Someone Telephones" pictures the "minutes of a barbaric condescension. / [. . .] the heart's release." Finally, "O Breath" confounds with its fragmented images, "Beneath that loved and celebrated breast, / silent, bored really blindly veined, / grieves, maybe lives and lets / live,":

> (See the thin flying of nine black hairs
> four around one five the other nipple,
> flying almost intolerably on your own breath.)[82]

These hair-ringed female nipples may be the raciest images in all of Bishop's published poetry, yet perhaps under the guise of what Adrienne Rich calls "the lesbian writing under the false universal of heterosexuality," in addition to the extreme obliqueness of the image, they provoked little comment at the time (127).

Rich, in "The Eye of the Outsider" (1983), was the first to read Bishop as a lesbian poet in a major critical essay. Rich reads a "disturbance and tension" in "Four Poems" while tentatively noting "a glimpse, at least, of some kind of erotic freeing up." Without access to the manuscript poems that are now in wider circulation, Rich has to read between the lines. She acknowledges, "Poems examining intimate relationship are almost wholly absent from Bishop's later work," and recalls not previously connecting "the themes of outsiderhood and marginality in her work, as well as its encodings and obscurities, with a lesbian identity" (125). Yet Rich's speculations about what she was reading in Bishop's work anticipate many of the currents that the manuscript poems make explicit.

In contrast to "Four Poems," the manuscript poem "It is marvellous to wake up together," opens directly and smoothly onto a luxuriantly joyous scene of a couple waking up in bed together during a storm:

> It is marvellous to wake up together
> At the same minute; marvellous to hear
> The rain begin suddenly all over the roof,
> To feel the air suddenly clear
> As if electricity had passed through it

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[81] See Goldensohn's chapters "It is marvellous to wake up together" and "The Body's Roses" for an in-depth analysis of love and sexuality in Bishop that traces these images across her love poems and uses them to activate similar undercurrents in poems ostensibly about other subjects, such as the connection between the bird cages that appear in "Rain Towards Morning," "It is marvellous to wake up together . . . " and "Questions of Travel." (27-52, 53-79).

[82] The quotes are taken from the poems in order, *CP* 76-79. The gaps in each line in the final quote, from "O Breath," mark hiatuses in the middle of each line that mimic the pause between an intake and exhale of breath.

From a black mesh of wires in the sky.
All over the roof the rain hisses,
And below, the light falling of kisses.

While "Rain Toward Morning" produces an unexplained image of a "great light cage" that has "broken up in the air," this poem identifies it as a metaphor for the lightning that encloses the lovers in their house, "a bird-cage of lightning" that they imagine dreamily "Would be quite delightful." And the mysterious, disembodied "unexpected kiss" of the published poem becomes a downpour of kisses in the first stanza's unambiguous scene of waking up that reappears in the startlingly frank last stanza: "As the air changes or the lightning comes without our blinking, / Change as our kisses are changing without our thinking" (*Edgar Allen Poe* 44).

The overt way "It is marvellous" brings together rain, kisses, and the "electric" delight of waking up together in a cozy bed, as well as the image of the bird cage, makes it the key that enables a more assured reading of themes associated with romantic freedom in other poems that seem to suggest as much with similar imagery but that remain quite coded—"Sleeping on the Ceiling," the "Four Poems" series, "Electrical Storm," "Song for the Rainy Season," and "Sonnet." This, and other poems from these notebooks, form "the kernel of the book" *Edgar Allan Poe & the Jukebox*, as its editor Alice Quinn writes, much of which is made up of poems that expose a much more romantic side of Bishop than ever emerges from the poems she chose to publish. The nipples from "O Breath" seem tame compared to the images in the later manuscript poem "Vague Poem (*Vaguely love poem*)," which critics have dated around 1973 and concludes, "Just now, when I saw you naked again, / I thought the same words: rose-rock, rock-rose . . .," ending on an image of a rose-rock that metamorphoses breathlessly into:

clear pink breasts and darker, crystalline nipples,
rose-rock, rose-quartz, roses, roses, roses,
exacting roses from the body,
and the even darker, accurate, rose of sex—" (*Edgar Allan Poe* 153)

Never has accuracy been so sexy in all of Bishop.

Lloyd Schwartz waxes a bit romantic on Brazil as the clandestine home for the Key West notebooks, and especially for the two additional love poems he discovered in Brazil in 1990: "Is it ironic or inevitable that the only poems she seems to have left behind in Brazil should be about love and sexuality, and that she left them just where she was most encouraged to write them?" ("Annals of Poetry" 90). Schwartz 1991 *New Yorker* article on Bishop was the first to publish the two new Brazil love poems. Bishop wrote "Dear my compass . . . " around 1965 for Lilli Correia de Araújo, the Danish proprietor of the chic Ouro Preto inn Pouso do Chico Rey, with whom she had a brief affair and who helped Bishop find and restore her the third of her "loved houses" in Ouro Preto. In this poem, Bishop revisits her favorite North/South theme to draw her and Lilli together through their shared status as northerners in Brazil. It begins, "Dear, my compass still points north / to wooden houses / and blue eyes," and enumerates other northern things like Protestants and heavy drinkers, crab-apples, and swans paddling in icy water. It ends on the playful, suggestive lines: "Cold as it is, we'd / go to bed, dear, / early, but never / to keep warm." (*Edgar Allan Poe* 140).

Schwartz also found the other love poem in Ouro Preto through José Alberto Nemer, a friend of Bishop's from the town. It begins with lines so romantic they are almost unrecognizable as Bishop: "Close close all night / the lovers keep. / They turn together in their sleep, / close as two pages in a book / that read each other in the dark" (141). Alice Quinn writes in the notes to *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box* that Bishop gave this poem to Nemer, but Schwartz doesn't specify this in

his article (336). José Alberto's sister Linda Nemer told me that Bishop had actually given it to Lilli first, who later shared it with their friends, a slight difference that makes the poem's romantic object more direct (Nemer, Personal interview). These explicitly romantic and sexual poems, "It is marvellous to wake up together . . .," "Close close all night . . ." "Dear my compass . . .," and "Vague Poem" have since been integrated into the new Elizabeth Bishop canon, all appear in the Library America Edition of Bishop's collected works and all except for "Close close all night..." are included in the centenary edition *Poems*. The poems also feature prominently in the two recent films about Bishop, though Bruno Barreto's *Reaching For the Moon* excludes the later "Vague Poem" (*Welcome to this House*, *Reaching for the Moon*).

The incorporation of more emotionally bared poems like these and others in *Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box* into the public version of Bishop as a poet compensates in part for this striking omission from a body of work that grows increasingly autobiographical dating from Bishop's time in Brazil, a period deeply shaped by her romantic life with Lota and in which she was able to pursue and express her sexual desires more openly. However, the question of outing these currents in her work becomes especially tricky to navigate in terms of literary criticism because Bishop's preference for understatement and mystery as a matter of style overlaps with her conviction that she should keep her sexuality private to avoid prejudice. She "believed in closets, closets, and more closets," Frank Bidart recalls her saying in his 1994 memoir essay that addresses all the gossip and speculation surrounding Bishop's life after the release of her letters and biographies. He describes her "sense that straight society would never truly accept homosexuality, that sooner or later it would punish writers for 'coming out," noting that "for the vast majority of her life, in both social and literary terms, not to be in the closet was to be ghettoized; ... to talk about it openly in straight society was generally considered out-of-control or stupid." Bishop's distaste for confessional art extended to "famously polemical works like *The Well of Loneliness*," which she dismissed as "weak, simplistic, an embarrassment" (Bidart 7).

Thus, critical confusion arises from, on the one hand, recognition and respect for Elizabeth Bishop the refined perfectionist, who deemed too much self-exposure improper. But as a principle for determining the limit point of what constitutes her proper body of work as a major poet, it conflicts with the pressures of self-censorship unique to a lesbian poet, limited both by her sense of the strictures on women and by prejudice toward her sexual orientation, as the lukewarm reception for "The Shampoo" and "Exchanging Hats" shows. In an interview with George Starbuck toward the end of her life, Bishop says wistfully and frankly, "Sometimes I think if I had been born a man I probably would have written more. Dared more, or been able to spend more time at it. I've wasted a great deal of time" (Starbuck 97). Bidart more or less repeats this quote from Bishop, further adding a gendered component to her restraint: "she felt that certain kinds of directness and ambition—because of gender—had been denied her, had been impossible" (6).

It seems that critics more committed to questions of form over those of identity and biography don't quite know how to integrate the directness of feeling in Bishop's love poems alongside her other work. And neither did she, judging by her ambivalent treatment of this work and recalling her own self-doubt, "I don't think I'm very successful when I get personal,—rather, sound personal." I want to connect to Bishop's own poetic principles to a certain line of Anglo-American critique, in a tendency to identify lyric failure with the exaggerated, the unprocessed, the disproportionate elements in a poem, especially when it comes to sentimental material, perceived as excessive self-exposure. The disorientation and dizzying shifts in scale that Bishop manages with such conviction in her travel and metaphysical poems become sources of discomfort and embarrassment—for both the poet and certain critics—when turned toward a more literally personal state of mind.

Alan Williamson, in a 1980 essay on Bishop as a "poet of feeling," asserts that the distancing effect in her poetry is a counterbalance to her emotion that "tended to become immense and categorical, insusceptible to rational or, in poetry, to structural counter-argument." He continues, "There is a curious disproportion to many of the love poems in *A Cold Spring*," which he focuses on for their "strangeness" and occasional "failure" (96). He points out the abruptness of the "naked emotion" at the end of "Insomnia" and the "melodramatic indulgence" of "Varick Street," repeating the charge of "disproportion," in what he feels is an irritatingly confusing disconnect between the descriptive stanzas depicting a New York neighborhood and the abruptly cynical refrain: "*And I shall sell you sell you / sell you of course, my dear, and you'll sell me*." (*CP* 75). He reads the two poems as failures and declares, "Bishop was never guilty of such imbalances again," though he reads hints of "the same abruptness in the face of painful feeling" in her later work (98).

Helen Vendler, in her widely discussed dismissal of *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box* as unworthy of its treatment as a new collection of Bishop poems, singles out similar crimes of passionate disproportion in what she calls the "maimed and stunted siblings" of Bishop's "real poems" ("Art of Losing" 10). For Vendler, these "deformed" pieces unfit to be called poems are both too small in their minorness as unperfected drafts and too bloated in their excessive sentiment and lack of honed precision.[83] She writes, "The drafts and fragments presented here confirm, by contrast, how in her good poems Bishop steered between Scylla and Charybdis, avoiding not only the monster of exaggeration and the whirlpool of sentimentality but also all sorts of byway rocks and shoals on which she runs aground in many efforts here" (4). This monstrous exaggeration and engulfing sentimentality that Vendler identifies with poetic failure recall the triggers of disapproval and embarrassment that permeate what I have been calling Bishop's southern poems. After harshly critiquing one of these imposter poems, Vendler declares, "One asks—and receives—more from a poem by the 'real' Elizabeth Bishop" (3).

Vendler's language of failure and inadequacy as opposed to the "real" in this review essay raises the question of what a proper poem should be and do. On what criteria does she measure a poem's success, or its substantiveness? Here, Vendler employs Bishop's own statement of her poetic principles in notes for an essay included in *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box*, which I take up in the Introduction. Bishop begins by identifying the great challenge and contradiction of poetry as trying to make the unnatural act of writing poetry seem convincingly natural. To this initial criterion of naturalness, Bishop later adds, "The three qualities I admire in poetry I like best are: *Accuracy, Spontaneity, Mystery*." She cites Herbert, Hopkins, and Baudelaire as her three favorite poets, whose poetry possesses these qualities in different ways (*Edgar Allan Poe* 207-208). Thus Vendler applies her judgment of naturalness, accuracy, spontaneity, and mystery as rather inflexible benchmarks for lyric success.

The drafts that Vendler picks apart as improperly lacking in these qualities are precisely those that explore the "looser" and more emotional themes Bishop associates with Florida and Brazil in her poems: love, sex, drunkenness, raw grief and despair. Vendler interprets naturalness as a certain moderation of tone, what she at one point refers to as "sobriety," in a word choice that channels

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[83] Vendler's refusal to call many of these pieces "poems" seems based on an overly rigid but also imprecise distinction between the "real" as published during the poet's lifetime versus manuscript poems. Yet she confuses her own definition by referring to at least one of the pieces in the book as a "finished but unpublished love poem"—"It is marvellous to wake up together" (6). Editions of Bishop's work published after *Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box* have included a selection of those manuscript poems deemed more complete or with more lasting interest and refer to them as "Unpublished Poems and Drafts" (Library of America edition) and "Selected Unpublished Manuscript Poems (Farrar, Srauss, & Giroux *Poems*). I follow this consensus in still accepting the word "poem" alongside "draft" to refer to the compositions Bishop managed to revise enough to reach a reasonably coherent lyric form, while recognizing the need to clearly signal their manuscript form.

poetic Puritanism, especially since she turns her censure on the drunken scene of "Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box," a poem that resonates with Bishop's lifelong struggle with alcoholism. The piece that gives the book its title, and what Bishop thought of as her "farewell to Key West," is to Vendler "a bar poem" that "transgresses [Bishop's] commitment to exactness."[84] The poem is guilty of transgressing against accuracy in what Vendler views as an exaggerated representation in its sordid, "melodramatic" lines like, "The music pretends to laugh and weep / while it descends to drink and murder." Vendler concludes, "What persuades the reader in a poem by Bishop (and what she admired in George Herbert) is the absence of such inexact extremes of flatness on the one hand and melodrama on the other" (2-3). The implication here is that a proper poem should persuade the reader of the authenticity of its expression, and that this authenticity lies in a sense of proportion between its elements so that no "inexact extremes" overwhelm the whole.

Vendler links flatness and heaviness to failures not only of naturalness and accuracy but also to the lack of mystery in what she takes to be Bishop's overly confessional compositions. "Travelling, A Love Poem," is "a failed piece" because its "leaden sentences" are insufficiently mysterious (3). "Florida Revisited" is also too direct in its heavy-handed enumeration of deaths and "love lost, lost forever" (*Edgar Allan Poe 177)*. "One of her dangers is sheer grief," Vendler cautions, adding, "Bishop's tears, when they exceed her aesthetic discipline, can wreck a poem" (4). This judgment echoes the moment in "The Map" when the names of towns "run out to sea" in the printer's lapse of accuracy, "as when emotion too far exceeds its cause" (*CP* 3). Mystery, for Vendler here, functions as the discretion that keeps the "whirlpool of sentimentality" from engulfing the poem.

Vendler's idea of spontaneity is the least defined of her measuring sticks, though it seems to inhere in the idea of a surprising line that offers a sudden burst of feeling. In the same statement of poetic principles discussed above, Bishop herself conceives of it as a sudden emotional force applied with precision, citing Wordsworth and the way Shakespeare moves readers to tears (*Edgar Allan Poe* 209). She later asserts, "spontaneity occurs in a good *attack*, a rapid line, *tight* rhythm" (212). This mix of emotion and control recalls Wordsworth's famous definition from the 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." The tranquilizing distance of memory, combined with the regulating function of form, particularly meter and rhyme, are necessary to enable "a complex feeling of delight" crucial for "tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions" (266-67). Barbara Johnson, in her brilliant reading of how Wordsworth's injunction to derive poetic inspiration from "natural" origins converges in an unlikely way with Poe's mechanical approach in "The Philosophy of Composition," points out how the word "fit" in Wordsworth's poem "Strange Fits of Passion" becomes the perfect pun that sums up Wordsworth's paradoxical concept of poetry: "poetry is a fit, an outburst, an overflow, of feeling; and poetry is an attempt to fit, to arrange, feeling into form" (95).

This idea of modulated passion in Wordsworth runs counter to the more stereotypical identification of Romantic poetry with unbounded expressions of feeling. In fact, Wordsworth's warning against emotional excess resonates with Vendler's and Bishop's privileging of commensurability in poetry, which I read as informed by certain strands of Western, and particularly Anglo-American, poetics. Vendler's disapproval of when Bishop's tears exceed her aesthetic discipline, and Bishop's image of emotion too-far exceeding its cause, find a precedent in Wordsworth's warning that "if the words by which this excitement [of the mind] is produced are themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds" (264). The

[84] Quinn's extensive notes to this draft link it to this quote from Bishop's letter to her editor Paul Brooks, July 28, 1953, in *Edgar Allan Poe*, 49, note on 271.

"danger" here is that the poem will be repellent in its raw, overly personal form, so the poet must mix in equal parts pleasure and remove "what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion," and hence make it palatable to the reader's sympathy (256-257). Wordsworth asserts, "We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: [. . .] wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure" (258).

In Wordsworth's equation, painful passion + regulating pleasure = sympathy. For Bishop, the right proportions of accuracy, spontaneity, and mystery add up to a naturalness that convinces the reader to enter sympathetically into the world of the poem. Sympathy is not one of the key terms in Bishop's poetics; she overtly distrusts elements of self-pity and sentimentality in poetry, as I will return to later in this chapter. Yet I want to further establish the connection between sympathy, pleasure, propriety, and proportion as measures of the "proper poem" in order to understand the nature of the unease surrounding Bishop's less modulated expressions of "the deeper passions" in her poetry, namely love, melancholy, and grief.

The primacy of sympathy as a fitting outcome for poetry in Wordsworth's model reflects the obsession with categorizing and regulating the passions, particularly the "social affections," that bridged the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1751), Edmund Burke identifies sympathy as the key facilitator in poetry's power to delight: "It is by this principle chiefly that poetry, painting, and other affecting arts, transfuse their passions from one breast to another, and are often capable of grafting a delight on wretchedness, misery, and death itself" (41).[85] He echoes Aristotle's idea of the pleasure enabled by the distancing effect of skillfully executed mimesis, so that even "the forms of those things that are distressful to see in reality ... we contemplate with pleasure when we find them represented with perfect realism in images." (*Poetics* 47-48). Yet while Aristotle views terror and pity as pleasurable responses to tragic events arising from our instinctive pleasure in imitation, Burke insists on a connection to real-life pleasure in the tragedy of others. He takes a Christian view that pity produces a pleasure that "arises from love and social affection," since "as our Creator has designed we should be united by the bond of sympathy, he has strengthened that bond by a proportionable delight" (42). Thus pleasure in art takes on a particularly moral component in the 18th century, which we see echoes of in twentieth-century readers' approval of Bishop's poetry based on its moral depth.

Burke's close contemporary Adam Smith connects the mechanism of sympathy to a judgment of propriety in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). In the opening section, "Of the Sense of Propriety," Smith emphasizes the role of the imagination in activating sympathy, whose definition here is closer to what we would now call empathy. Pity or compassion is enabled by vividly imagining another's situation, to "enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him" (4). In an uncanny sort of correspondence between self and other, the spectator makes himself at home in the body of another, while also "bringing the case home to himself" (5). Like Burke and Wordsworth, Smith locates an instinctive pleasure in this sympathetic exchange. The judgment of propriety plays a central role in this concordance between expression and sympathy in that the spectator must agree that the other's emotions are proper responses to an identifiable cause. Smith concludes, "To approve of the passions of another, therefore, as suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them" (14).

Granting propriety also signals an approval of the proportion of another's response to its cause: "In the suitableness or unsuitableness, in the proportion or disproportion, which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it, consists the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness, of the consequent action" (17). Propriety, then, inheres in a sense of

[85] The categories of the Sublime and the Beautiful are another way of mapping a dialectic of disproportion/excess/pain and harmony/restraint/pleasure, or exposure and propriety.

coherence in what the spectator is witnessing and able to imagine, and "if otherwise, we necessarily disapprove of them [the passions], as extravagant and out of proportion" (18). In illustrating the case of someone seeking sympathy due to an intensely personal situation, Smith advises that one moderate his more distressingly excessive feelings "by lowering his passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him [. . .] in order to reduce it to harmony and concord with the emotions of those who are about him." This recalls Wordsworth's lyric propriety that calls for the refinement of "painful or disgusting" feelings. Smith describes the consolation a sufferer finds in a sympathetic audience when "the emotions of their hearts in every respect beat time to his own," in a turn of phrase that further brings sympathy and poetry together in their establishment of a shared rhythm.

The judgment of propriety as a sense of coherence, harmony, and proportion unexpectedly connects Romantic ideals of imaginative expression in poetry to a New Critical assessment of aesthetic perfection in poetry as an autonomous work of art.[86] If in the former, a sense of propriety leads to a pleasurable feeling of sympathy with the poet and his subject, then in the latter, a sense of propriety leads to a pleasurable appreciation of beauty and perfection in the self-contained world of the poem. Cleanth Brooks, in his classic of Anglo-American New Criticism, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947), uses the criterion of *dramatic propriety* to defend Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" from charges of its being ruined by the abruptness of its famous ending: "Beauty is truth,—truth beauty,—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." Brooks refutes the charge that these lines lack subtlety and thus "violate the doctrine of the objective correlative." He quotes T.S. Eliot's complaint that this obtuse "message" is "a serious blemish on a beautiful poem." Brooks further notes that "the troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it." (Brooks 124-25). Brooks defends these lines based on a principle of dramatic propriety, on the grounds that if it can be demonstrated that the seeming aberration "was dramatically appropriate, was properly prepared for," it can be justified based on its fitness within the organic unity of the poem (126).

In Smith's model, sympathy was dependent upon recognizing a proper relation between an expressed passion and its context, and in Brooks's model the poem as a whole is the context that each expression must suitably arise from. Brooks reads the poem as "obviously intended to be a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general," and its "truth" as not the literal truth of history but the mythic truth of art, whose beauty is based "on an imaginative perception of essentials (125, 134). He points out that this reading is nothing new but that his counterintuitive reading lies in hearing the last lines spoken in the silent voice of the urn, which has been paradoxically "speaking" its truth throughout the poem. In Brooks's view, critics have been "disturbed" by a perceived lack of subtlety in the last lines, "a bewildering break in tone," as if Keats himself had improperly broken the fourth wall of the poem to suddenly blurt out, "Beauty is truth and truth is beauty! That is what I mean!" (130, my paraphrase).

What Brooks wants to show, however, is that an attuned close reader will sympathize with the sentiment in its context: "If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters" (134). Brooks may seem to be endorsing the poem as an entirely self-contained world, but

[86] For an overview of the emphasis on expressive theories of art during Romanticism, in opposition to the prior dominance of mimesis, see M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953). His essay "Art-as-Such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics" in *Doing Things With Texts* (1985) connects this story of evolving aesthetic-critical affinities to the late-19th-into-20th-century turn toward "art for art's sake" and disinterested contemplation of the autonomous work of art, where he discusses Eliot and the New Critics.

clarifies that "the principle of dramatic propriety may take us further than would first appear," so that while no one line should be related in isolation to the world beyond the poem, the complex interrelations within the poem in its entirety do intersect with external realities. To this effect, he concludes:

> If we can see that the assertions made in a poem are to be taken as part of an organic context, if we can resist the temptation to deal with them in isolation, then we may be willing to go on to deal with the world-view, or 'philosophy', or 'truth' of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness: that is, we shall not neglect the maturity of attitude, the dramatic tension, the emotional *and* intellectual coherence in favour of some statement of theme abstracted from it by paraphrase. (135)

Brooks thus locates lyric propriety in a formal, emotional, and intellectual coherence, and an organic fit between parts and whole. The poem's beauty and its "truth," which he equates to goodness and perfection, is based on this harmonious balance.

Indeed, the only "blemish" Brooks finds is a moment of affective disproportion in the third stanza, which "represents a falling-off from the delicate but firm precision of the earlier stanzas" in its "tendency to linger over the scene sentimentally" (129). This sounds similar to Vendler's critique of Bishop's emotionally unbalanced poems. Brooks's choice of words while praising Keats's poem—"neat," "exactness," "perfectly fair," "delicate but firm precision"—connects its fitness to a sense of accuracy and moderation that recalls Bishop's contemporaneous statement of poetic principles.[87] Brooks voices a mid-century Anglo-American idealization of cold beauty unmarred by an excess of feeling: "For Keats in the 'Ode' is stressing the ironic fact that all human passion *does* leave one cloyed; hence the superiority of art" (130).

It is this belief that art should emerge from the cloying excess of spontaneous feelings with a superior sense of unity and proportion that fueled Bishop's aversion to the confessional tendencies sweeping through American poetry while she was living in Brazil through the 1960s and after she moved back to the U.S. to each at Harvard, from 1971 through 1978. In various interviews over these decades, Bishop repeated her disapproval of confessional poetry's over-sharing of private tragedies and their accompanying emotions, referring to her American contemporaries in 1964 as "the School of Anguish."[88] "The tendency is to overdo the morbidity," she lamented in a 1967 interview. "You just wish they'd keep some of these things to themselves."[89] She is especially dismissive when one of her poetry students mentions reading the confessional poets lately, to which she responds, "I *hate* confessional poetry, and so many people are writing it these days [. . .] Mostly they write about a lot of things which I should think were best left unsaid" (Wehr 45).[90] Though Robert Lowell, one of Bishop's two closest poetic interlocutors (along with Moore), was credited with touching off the confessional trend in his collection *Life Studies* (1959), Bishop distinguished his level of craft from those she deemed his imitators, such as John Berryman and two of Lowell's

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[87] Bishop's draft essay elaborating on her poetic principles is from 1949, just two years after Brooks's book was published.

[88] Bishop to Anne Stevenson, October 27, 1964, add ref. This group included Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath, though the designation was given by critics like M.L. Rosenthal and not readily accepted by the poets themselves. For more on Bishop's relationship to Lowell and confessional poetry see Kalstone "Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell" in *Becoming a Poet* (109-250), Travisano "Bishop and Biography," and Flynn "*Words in Air*."

[89] Excerpted in "On 'Confessional Poetry'" in *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art*, 303. Originally appeared as "Poets," *Time* (June 2, 1967), 35-42.

[90] Wesley Wehr's account comes from 1966, when he was a student in Bishop's poetry seminar at the University of Washington.

former students, Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. In a letter to Randall Jarrell she compares Jarrell to Robert Frost and distinguishes their thoughtful melancholy from a more shallow confessional style, "You're both very sorrowful, and yet not the anguish-school that Cal [Lowell] seems innocently to have inspired—the self-pitiers who write sometimes quite good imitations of Cal! It is more human, less specialized, and yet deep."[91]

Bishop's contempt for confessional poetry relates both to her sense of the deterioration of poetic rigor in the U.S., which coincided with a broader rebellion against social and political strictures, and to her general distrust of excessive personal sentiment as an improper intrusion on proper lyric form. In a 1978 interview, Bishop complains about the homogeneity of contemporary poetry written in the same aimless type of free verse: "a great deal is slap-dash. I don't necessarily like strict form, but too much poetry today lacks coherency." She adds that the famously impersonal T.S. Eliot was right "when he said that the more you try to express yourself, the less you really express. So much poetry I see seems self-indulgent" ("Geography," Interview 103). And while Bishop embraces the social rebellion of the Beat poets, she denigrates their confessional style, as reported by her 1966 interviewer Tom Robbins: "'Romantic and self-pitying,' she calls [Beat poetry], and adds, 'I hate self-pity poems'" (Robbins 35). Even Emily Dickinson becomes an early confessional poet for Bishop, who admits to mixed feelings about Dickinson's violently expressed emotions, explaining, "I am not attracted by the oh-the-agony-of-it school," as quoted in a 1977 interview (Hanscom 71). Bishop's characterization of confessional poetry as self-indulgent and self-pitying converges with her characterizations of Brazilian expression, as I will return to later.

Despite continually voicing her dislike of the confessional form, Bishop was inspired by the first few years of her new life in Brazil to address the traumatic events of her childhood—her father's death when she was eight months old and her mother's subsequent mental breakdown when she was five—as poetic raw material for the first time. The "Elsewhere" section of *Questions of Travel* is marked by the intense affective landscape of Bishop's Nova Scotia childhood, permeated by an uncharacteristic mix of nostalgia and pain. At least half of the eight poems here are set in this Nova Scotia of the memory, while the others inhabit settings that suggest North America to varying degrees of specificity. In 1952, less than a year after arriving in Brazil, Bishop began working on the autobiographical story "In the Village," which she also referred to as a prose poem. It opens the "Elsewhere" section of *Questions of Travel* and establishes her childhood world of Great Village, Nova Scotia, her mother's hometown, as a key reference point for much of the second half of the collection.

The piece begins with the dramatic first lines, "A scream, the echo of a scream, hangs over that Nova Scotian village. No one hears it; it hangs there forever . . ." (*Prose* 62). It is Bishop's mother's scream that haunts the story of her breakdown while still mourning her husband's death. By the story's end, her mother has disappeared from the household, taken to a sanitarium, from which she never left.[92] Verifying the source of the piece in a letter to friends, Bishop declares, "'In the Village' is *entirely*, not partly, autobiographical. I've just compressed the time a little and perhaps put two summers together, or put things a bit out of sequence—but it's all straight fact."[93] Robert Lowell was so taken with its intense imagery that he turned it into the poem "The Scream" in his next collection, *For the Union Dead* (1964). Around the same time, Bishop also wrote the prose piece "Gwendolyn," about the death of a girlhood friend, also in Great Village.

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[91] Bishop to Jarrell 25 Feb 1965, in *OA* 432. Cal was Robert Lowell's nickname.

[92] Bishop never saw her mother after the age of five. Relatives discouraged her from visiting her mother, who died when Bishop was eighteen.

[93] Bishop to Joe and U.T. Summer, 19 October 1967, *OA* 477.

"Manners" is the first of the poems that follow "In the Village." It focuses on Bishop as a girl with her grandfather and revisiting happier moments in the village. The next poem, "Sestina," builds a fragmented scene of grandmother and child in mourning. Then "First Death in Nova Scotia" recounts Bishop's childhood encounter with the death of her cousin Arthur. Bishop's mother and her Uncle Arthur also appear in this poem. The following poem, "Filling Station," is actually a portrait of a gas station on the road from Rio to Bahia but Bishop's choice of placement put it closer to her rural childhood in her affective-geographical imagination—"couldn't it be equally true of an out-of-the-way filling station anywhere," she writes to the New Yorker to justify ignoring their editorial advice to change its title to refer explicitly to Rio or Brazil.[94] It is also the only one of these family-themed pieces to mention a father. Though it's not a literal reference to her absent father, Bishop's use of the familiar title—"Father wears a dirty, / oil-soaked monkey suit / that cuts him under the arms"—is striking given that the other poems single out her mother, grandfather, grandmother, aunts and uncles (*CP* 127). "Sunday, 4 A.M." depicts that unsettled state during or after a disorienting dream. It merges scenes and voices from her Great Village past with her Brazil present (she wrote it in 1956). In confusion, the speaker asks, "Which Mary? Aunt Mary? Tall Mary Stearns I knew?" (129). Mary Stearns is Mary Stearns Morse, the third member of her household with Lota, whom she mixes up with her Aunt Mary from Nova Scotia.

Despite the painful personal histories embedded in these poems, Bishop did her best to temper the tales of her tragic childhood losses with mysterious imagery, oblique references to sorrow, and tightly structured stanzas, whose sedate meters and regulated rhymes recall the connection between mourning and formality in Dickinson's line, "After great pain, a formal feeling comes." "Sestina" best exemplifies this effect, with its fragmented yet regulated rotation of the end words: house, grandmother, child, stove, almanac, and tears. As in Bishop's earlier northern poems, the tears suggest both restraint and deeply submerged springs of feeling, as they make their way surreally from the grandmother "talking to hide her tears" to the condensation on the tea kettle, the "dark brown tears" in the teacup, the child's drawing of moons that "fall down like tears," and finally the almanac that announces "*Time to plant tears*." We see the tears falling through the stanzas but never know their source and watch them become less and less human even as their sorrowful effect intensifies through repetition. This is the "properly" distanced way to express loss through poetry, as Vendler affirms in her negative review of *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box*. Vendler rejects Bishop's elegy for her Brazilian toucan Sammy as cheap "bathos" while citing "Sestina" as a "tender and wrung" reminiscence and superior example of how Bishop "draws the line of inclusion with deliberate finesse." "First Death in Nova Scotia" is superlative for its "expert management of naiveté for purposes of pathos" (5). Bishop left the longer, more intense "In the village" out of later collections, thus relegating it to more minor status.

Even as Bishop's poetics developed under the influence of Brazil in ways that challenged her previously established poetic propriety, she reasserted her status as a particularly "northern" sort of American poet—one aligned with restraint and precision. In an interview with Ashley Brown conducted at Samambaia in 1965, the poet distances herself from Brazilian expression and its literary tradition by highlighting what she perceives to be irreconcilable incongruities between Brazilian and Anglo-American poetry:

> And I suppose they [Brazilian poets] have still never quite escaped from romanticism. It's an interesting fact that there is no word in Portuguese for 'understatement.' Marianne Moore's poetry is nearly all understatement. How can they understand us? So much of the English-American tradition consists of this. They have irony, but not

[94] Bishop to Howard Moss, 2 November 1955, *Elizabeth Bishop and the New Yorker* 158.

> understatement. [. . .] To summarize: I just happened to come here, and I am influenced by Brazil certainly, but I am a completely American poet, nevertheless. ("An Interview with Elizabeth Bishop" 19)

Bishop's declaration gives an idiosyncratic account of both Anglo-American and Brazilian poetry that does more to reveal her own tastes and projections than fully represent these traditions. Her choice of Marianne Moore as a metonym for Anglo-American poetry is not surprising given Bishop's allegiances to a poetics of understatement.

Yet Bishop's generalization ignores major tendencies in American poetry toward exuberance and unbounded expression, both in the past (Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams) and in Bishop's contemporaries, including the confessional and Beat poets, the New York School (Frank O'Hara in particular), and also the more explosive style of feminist poets like Adrienne Rich. Bishop insists on her Anglophile version of American poetry in another interview from the same period: "We're still more English than anything else, and this 'American language' which William Carlos Williams was always talking about is nonsense." (Robbins 34). Harold Bloom affirms Bishop's inclusion in a "tradition of American poetry" that is "marked by firm rhetorical control, overt moral authority, and sometimes by a fairly strict economy of means." He groups Bishop with Emerson, Very, Dickinson, Frost, Moore, and Stevens. Yet Bloom also recognizes countercurrents in Anglo-American poetry, which he distinguishes Bishop from. He connects her "poetry of deep subjectivity" to that of Wordsworth or Stevens as opposed to the "opacity" of "a confessional poetry, like Coleridge's or that of Bishop's principal contemporaries," such as Lowell and Berryman (Foreword, *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art* ix).

Bishop's understanding of Brazilian literature as inescapably "romantic" also speaks more to her affective geographies rather than accurately characterizing the Brazilian tradition. She suggests in this interview that Anglo-American poetry went off in the direction of modernism under Eliot and Pound, while Brazilian literature remained more influenced by the French tradition. While Brazilian poetry does generally share much more with other Romance-language poetry, it was Pound who became the founding inspiration for the Brazilian concrete poetry movement that developed contemporaneously to Bishop's time in Brazil.[95] Bishop's juxtaposition of Brazilian Romanticism with the lack of understatement in Portuguese suggests an elision between the "spontaneous overflow of feelings" associated with Romantic literature and her more general characterization of exaggerated sentiment and self-dramatization as "romantic." In Bishop's terms, not only are the Brazilians R/romantic, but so are the Beat poets, as cited above, and the confessional poets. "That Anne Sexton I think still has a bit too much romanticism," Bishop once remarked to Lowell.[96]

Bishop's own impression of Brazilian environments, culture, and expression is also colored by this double sense of the romantic. Her depiction of poor Brazilians and Brazilian folklore (as in "The Riverman" and "The Burglar of Babylon") often draws comparisons to the figures that wander through Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, while she herself layers a sense of Romantic pastoral and archaic decadence over rural Brazilian scenes, as I discuss in Chapter Three. Bishop's romantic Brazil is also the proper place to indulge in excessive passions, from love to self-pity. Yet this also echoes her characterization of North American confessional poetry. Thus, Bishop's account of the

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[95] Brazilian twentieth-century poetry is in fact marked by a progressive reduction in expression, a certain hardening into bare word-objects in the 1940s and '50s, as in the minimal sentences of Graciliano Ramos that evoke the drought-ridden poverty of the northeast, the stony poetry or "*poesia da pedra*" of João Cabral de Melo Neto, and the Imagist- and visual arts-inspired compositions of the concrete poets that suggest an urban, industrial aesthetic, in particular the trio of Haroldo and Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari. Luís Costa Lima traces this development in his book *Lira e Anti-Lira* (*Lyric and Anti-Lyric).*

[96] Bishop to Robert Lowell, 27 July 1960, *Words in Air* 333.

divisions between these northern and southern poetics works to distance her from the sentimental tendencies that increasingly invade her poetry during her Brazil period by attributing them to foreign voices or elements.

"There is absolutely no self-pity in Elizabeth Bishop's writing," poet Mark Strand declares.[97] "I suspect that it is the human quality she most dislikes," Ashley Brown writes.[98] And yet Brazil becomes for Bishop the proper place for self-pity. "I do find that Brazilians are very much given to depression. They are very temperamental," she remarks to a Brazilian journalist (Schiller 74). "They are highly emotional and not ashamed of it," she informs her Anglophone audience in the typescript of her *Brazil* book (*Prose* 166). Bishop's statement implies a northern expectation that shame should accompany displays of emotion. Despite the awareness of the improprieties of emotion, Bishop also shows an appreciation for what she typifies as a greater cultural receptivity to emotion in Brazilian culture: "Brazilians are also quick to show sympathy. One of the first and most useful words a foreigner picks up is *coitado* (poor thing). Part of the same emotionalism in social life is the custom of the *abraço*, or embrace" (169). Yet while this Brazilian warmth is something that Bishop often praises in her letters, when the emotionalism tends toward sadness, her deeply ingrained northern stoicism raises an eyebrow.

The melancholy "Crusoe in England," which Bishop began while in Brazil but completed in 1970, after returning to the U.S., is the closest she came to a completed elegy for her life in Brazil with Lota, her dearly missed native companion Friday, and associates exile with self-indulgence. The poet-as-Robinson-Crusoe has returned to England and looks back nostalgically on this other place where "I often gave way to self-pity." The island's misty, watery, cloud-enveloped environment recalls Samambaia and Bishop's other southern landscapes that are receptive to overflowing affect. Yet this wallowing becomes a right and comfort of home: "I told myself / 'Pity should begin at home.' So the more / pity I felt, the more I felt at home" (*CP* 163). Giving in to self-pity thus becomes a way of being at home with oneself but in a broader sense also brings Bishop closer to being at home in Brazil.

While "Crusoe in England" has more often been read as Bishop's reminiscence of her past life in Brazil, the prose poem series "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" (1966) is the fullest poetic incarnation of Bishop *in* Brazil. Set in a nocturnal rainforest suggestive of Samambaia, it links three dramatic monologues spoken in the voices of a "Giant Toad," "Strayed Crab," and "Giant Snail" who proclaim exaggerated feelings of self-pity and anxiety to anyone who will sympathize.[99] In these poems, Bishop addresses feelings of foreignness in Brazil that produce a sense of disproportion, displacement, impropriety, and inadequacy in a lyric mutation that worries about its own monstrosity. More directly than in any of her other southern poems, Bishop emphasizes how the physical aspects of disproportion and humid diffuseness manifested in the environment and in these animals' bodies corresponds to the overstatement and effusive emotionalism that mark her characterization of Brazilian expression and the confessional mode.

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[97] In a speech introducing Bishop at a reading at the Guggenheim Museum, November 29, 1977. "Elizabeth Bishop Introduction," in *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art*, 242-243.

[98] In his essay that mixes memoir and criticism, "Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil" 225. Brown befriended Bishop while a Fulbright professor in Brazil.

[99] Her description of Samambaia and its giant flora and fauna sounds strikingly similar to the desriptions in this poem series: "You say you imagine me in a 'Rousseau jungle'—well, it is as beautiful as one ... Things are very much out of scale, too, like a Rousseau—or out of our scale, that is. The 'Samambaia' mentioned at the top of the page is a giant fern, big as a tree, and there are toads as big as your hat and snails as big as bread & butter plates, and during this month butterflies the color of this page and sometimes almost as big flopping about ..." Bishop to James Merrill. 1 March 1955, *OA* 303.

"Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" exemplifies a very different sort of Bishop-in-Brazil poem than those collected in *Questions of Travel*. The "Brazil" section creates a mosaic of the foreign traveler's perspective as she discovers the environments and characters of Brazil. The poems set in Samambaia have a more intimate, domestic feel than the others, but overall these poems merge the documentary with the personal without exposing the more vulnerable passions. "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" forms part of a group of uncollected Brazil poems—with "Going to the Bakery" (1967) House Guest" (1968), and "Pink Dog" (1979) that exceed the boundaries of the lyric good taste I have been mapping in this chapter. While not exactly "the maimed and stunted siblings" of Bishop's "real" poems that Vendler rejects, they may be the illegitimate kin of the more well-known travel poems in that they dwell centrally on uncomfortable affects—self-pity, abjection, depression—that separate and connect the poet, the speakers, and their objects all at once. They reveal Bishop's darker feelings about Brazil, in tones that sound critical, alienated, exasperated, and disillusioned—especially in the sad and sordid Rio poems "Going to the Bakery" and "Pink Dog."

They echo the frustration and depression Bishop expresses in her letters from 1963 through 1967, while she was living in Rio and Lota was consumed with her project designing the city's Parque do Flamengo.[100] "I keep thinking I'm going to pieces in the tropics, but then I find if I get away from Rio, up here, or into the 'interior' with a better altitude, more exercise, I always feel fine again," she confides to Randall Jarrell in a 1965 letter. "We've been living in Rio most of the last three years because of Lota's job, and although we're right on the ocean with a superb view and I can go swimming, or at least dip in the surf, whenever I feel like it, I hate it, and find that poor shabby spoiled city very depressing." Bishop sounds even more tragic and self-pitying in a 1967 letter to her doctor: "Forgive all my personal woes—it has been the worst stretch of my life except maybe the first eight years of it."[101]

In these depressive Brazil poems the poet turns these feelings against a self that becomes identified with what it describes, so that Bishop herself becomes abject like the balding pink poodle in "Pink Dog" or the drunk beggar with an open sore on her walk home in "Going to the Bakery," and as desperate as the depressed seamstress in "House Guest." These poems test the sympathies of the reader in their sad, repellent images, helpless and confused sense of social injustice, and awkward forms. For example, the sickening rhyming triplets of the Carnival poem "Pink Dog" produce combinations like rabies/scabies/babies. And in the following stanza, the "eyesore" of the forced rhyme that breaks the word "an" over two lines and matches "a-" with "a":

> solution is to wear a *fantasía*
> Tonight you simply can't afford to be a-
> n eyesore. But no one will ever see a (*CP* 190-91)

What sets "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" apart from the other three poems is that Bishop tempers its sense of abject impropriety with a more appealing humor, and more sustained beauty in its dense natural description and sudden bursts of unmistakable verse amid the prose, which itself maintains a lightly lyric rhythm. The resulting composition is one of the strangest in Bishop's body of work. In one sense, it is quintessentially about the seductive beauty, disproportion, and emotional indulgence of her southern lyric environments, with their attendant mixture of guilty disapproval and disavowal. Yet even as these linked poems announce themselves to be violating the tenets of a northern propriety, they counterintuitively affirm their status as proper lyric poems in Bishop's

[100] Bishop to Jarrell, 25 February 1965, *OA* 432.
[101] Bishop to Dr. Anny Baumann, 30 March, 1967, *OA* 461.

canon through their unity of voice, image, and form that perform a virtuoso version of a Cleanth Brooks-type dramatic propriety.

All sorts of boundary and identity confusions collide in "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics," which functions not only as a carnivalesque Brazilian masquerade but also as Bishop's half-serious parody of the over-sharing tendencies in American confessional poetry.[102] In the same interview in which Bishop declares herself an American poet in the tradition of understatement, she also mentions that she is trying out a dramatic monologue, probably the beginnings of this very series, which was first published the following year in *The Kenyon Review*. Speaking of this "poetry of experience," as her interviewer calls it, Bishop reflects, "I suppose it should act as a sort of release. You can say all kinds of things you couldn't in a lyric. If you have scenery and costumes, you can get away with a lot" ("An Interview" 298). This understanding of dramatic monologues as being more forgiving or more indulgent emphasizes a sense of lyric propriety in which the proper lyric poem demands the poet exercise restraint over what she reveals and in what form.

Without the regulating function of meter or line breaks, these poem-animals enact a nervousness of form as they struggle under a sense of disproportion, heaviness, and aimlessness. Like diminutive giants or enormous dwarves, they are overgrown lyrics but small in comparison to the epic or novel forms. Together, these poem-animals enact three iterations of an existential and lyric crisis, each one agonizing over how unfit they all are to the composition's shared environment. They convey Bishop's northern-identified sensibility of restraint trapped in a southern overflowing form, but in a subjectivity that suddenly finds itself giving way to an uncharacteristically exaggerated form of expression in this foreign environment.

The giant toad and giant snail are kin to Bishop's self-pitying and giant Crusoe, yet even as native species they lament their exaggerated proportions and wallow in a self-pitying sense of not-rightness. Their bloated bodies correspond to their overstated affect in this watery environment. "I am too big, too big by far. Pity me," declares the toad in the first line of "Giant Toad," which "Giant Snail" later echoes with, "But O! I am too big. I feel it. Pity me."[103] For both, their great size is a source of vulnerability rather than strength, and each feels shame at its disproportion. The toad hides from its neighbors, saying, "Don't breathe until the snail gets by." Meanwhile, the snail registers the toad's longing for connection but recoils from the threat of self-recognition in responding to its grotesque counterpart: "That toad was too big, too, like me. His eyes beseeched my love. Our proportions horrify our neighbors." It follows the mantra, "Withdrawal is always best."

Despite this lyric body-consciousness, the conceit of the neurotic, talking animals and their watery environment provide countercurrents of humor and strangeness that recalls Wordsworth's formula for tempering the painful aspects of poetry with pleasure. In a letter to her biographer Anne Stevenson, Bishop praises the way Kafka and Buster Keaton both render tragedy in profoundly comic terms and remarks, "I don't like *heaviness*—in general, Germanic art. It seems often to amount to complete self-absorption—like Mann & Wagner. I think one can be cheerful AND profound!—*or, how to be grim without groaning*."[104] From another angle, this heaviness and exaggerated emotion also work as Bishop's "Brazilian" accent. She viewed Portuguese as "a rather heavy and solemn tongue" and "cumbersome" as a poetic language compared to English for its grammar and written formality.[105]

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[102] Zhou Xiaojing further explores the relationship between this series and American confessional poetry in the chapter "The Oblique, The Indirect Approach" in her book *Elizabeth Bishop: Rebel* In Shades and Shadows (New York: Peter Lang Publishing), 1999.

[103] All quotes from the series in *CP* 139-142.

[104] Bishop to Stevenson, January 20, 1964, in *Prose*, 417.

[105] In Bishop's typescript of *Brazil*, in *Prose*, 169. She also calls it "cumbersome" in the interview with Ashley Brown, *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art*, 291.

Into the center of this southern, sub-tropical poem, Bishop throws a very northern crab. The "Strayed Crab" feels itself to be horribly out of place: "This is not my home. How did I get so far from water? It must be over that way somewhere." This recalls Bishop's sentiment of being out of place in "Dear, my compass / still points north." The crab is repulsed by the toad's bloated size and sub-tropical diffuseness: "What is that big soft monster, like a yellow cloud, stifling and warm? [. . .] Out of my way, O monster." The crab announces itself as a foreigner, a proper lyric poem with a Marianne Moore love of precision and restraint: "I am dapper and elegant; I move with great precision, cleverly managing all my smaller yellow claws. I believe in the oblique, the indirect approach, and I keep my feelings to myself." Its crabby fastidiousness evokes Bishop's disdain of American confessional poetry ("You just wish they'd keep some of these things to themselves."), as well as Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock, who voices his sense of bitter isolation through Hamlet's famous lines: "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." Paul Muldoon writes of Eliot's discomfort with the hybrid prose-poem form, "he was inclined to dislike, even to disallow, the term, all too aware that the borderline between verse and prose represented by the form was a minefield in which any hard and fast theory would almost certainly be exploded."[106] The crab concludes with a final dismissal of this improper environment, "I admire compression, lightness, and agility, all rare in this loose world."

Despite its fierce disavowal of belonging to this scene, the strayed crab partakes of the prose poems' "loose" form and lack of emotional restraint. While it may not share the Eeyore-esque melancholy of the toad and snail, the crab's declarations of its anxieties reach a fever pitch. Like its animal-poem neighbors, the crab's poetic body has lost the hard-shell armor of versification and its lament, "But on this strange, smooth surface I am making too much noise. I wasn't meant for this," gestures metacritically toward the ironies of this poem-animal's bloated textual form that blunders prosaically across the blank page as the crab imagines returning to its rightful pool and the comforts of formal enclosure. The crab announces itself as more refined than the other animals, but the toad warns, "Beware, you frivolous crab," recalling the "frivolous greenery" of "Arrival at Santos" or the equally frivolous tourists hoping to collect exotic sights in "Questions of Travel."

In these animals' distress, manifested as indirect addresses to an other and to each other, lies a shameful exposure of their in-between or "sub" quality, what Eric Santner calls a "creaturely cringe" that registers in their sub-human, sub-lyric forms.[107] Another cringe-worthy element is Bishop's use of apostrophe, an awkward choice for a poet so committed to a natural tone of voice that covers up the artifice in her poetry. Delight, aggression sympathy, and self-pity all come together in a form that resembles over-acting. The Giant Toad raptures about its own call, "O how it echoed from the rock! What a profound, angelic bell I rang!" The Strayed Crab threatens the toad, "Out of my way, O monster," while it pities the snail, "Cheer up, O grievous snail. I tap your shell encouragingly, not that you will ever know about it." The Giant Snail ends the cycle with a breathy-yet-deflated apostrophe, "But O! I am too big. I feel it. Pity me." The exaggerated form of the "O!" instead of "Oh!" further exposes these poem-animals' artifice in their condensation of strong natural feeling into the sad little artificial "O" of the apostrophe.

Jonathan Culler calls this supremely lyric figure of address "embarrassing to me and to you," that is to the writer and reader both, because it "proclaims its artificial character rather too obviously" but also as the simulation of an outburst of passion ("Apostrophe" 135). Yet this "O" is also

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[106] Paul Muldoon observes how Eliot's own prose-poem, "Hysteria," suggests this form as appropriate to capturing the nervous struggle between repression and natural urges.

[107] See Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life*, 58 Drawing on exemplary creaturely characters like Shakespeare's Caliban and Frankenstein's monster, and W.G. Sebald's melancholy animals, Santner identifies a defensive solitude and simultaneous yearning for sympathy similar to what Bishop's creatures manifest.

"always an indirect invocation of the muse" in that it summons the "lineage and conventions of sublime poetry" (143). Thus these apostrophes are also a quintessentially lyric form of address that connects these animals' self-consciousness to the potential embarrassment in all poetry. "There's nothing more embarrassing than being a poet, really," Bishop once remarked (Spires 129). With the apostrophic exclamations that mark these poems, then, Bishop activates the humorous, the pitiable, and the supremely poetic together in one stroke. Recalling her assertion, "Writing poetry is an unnatural act," she exposes the absolutely unnatural, absolutely unhuman quality of a form that attempts to translate what is profoundly natural and human.

The unexpected poetic heart of "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" arises not from a sense of perfection but from an ashamed and melancholy sense of inadequacy and a contingent harmony, that arises in moments of beauty and sympathy. These poem-animals wallow in their lack of concordance with their environment, though in doing so, their un-lyric prose forms correspond fittingly to their sprawling, un-lyric feelings. In this way, these poems practice a poetics of imperfection and disproportion that in their formal asymmetry and lack of regular versification correspond to British Romantic and New Critical principles of a proper fit between form and content.[108] The snail voices a blind faith in the fitness of its poetic body to its own shell, even if it feels monstrous in a broader context: "Ah, but I know my shell is beautiful, and high, and glazed, and shining. I know it well, although I have not seen it. Its curled lip is of the finest enamel. Inside, it is as smooth as silk, and I, I fill it to perfection." The snail's rhythmic movement also leaves a lyrical, dimeter trace on its prose environment: "My sides move in rhythmic waves, just off the ground, from front to back, the wake of a ship, wax-white water, or a slowly melting floe." The toad's longest flight of lyricism occurs as it painfully questions its own beauty, pushed along by a ghostly iambic meter and the subtle presence of rhyme, alliteration, and repetition:

> My eyes bulge and hurt. They are my one great beauty, even *so*. They *see* too much, above, *below*, and yet there is not much to *see*. The rain has *stopped*. The mist is gathering on my skin in *drops*. The *drops run* down my back, *run* from the corners of my down-turned mouth, *run* down my sides and drip beneath my belly. Perhaps the *droplets* on my mottled hide are pretty, like *dewdrops*, silver on a moldering leaf? (my italics to emphasize the sound patterns)

The steady intensity of these poems echoes Charles Baudelaire's celebration of the prose poem in the letter to "To Arsène Houssaye" that introduces his prose poem collection *Paris Spleen* (*Petits Poemes en Prose*) in which he rhapsodizes:

> Which one of us, in his moments of ambition, has not dreamt of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhyme, supple enough and rugged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the jibes of conscience? (ix)

These poems' imperfect beauty also resonates with the heart of the poetic that Jacques Derrida describes in "Che cos'è la poesia?" as a "heart down there, between paths and autostradas, outside of your presence, humble, close to the earth, low down," and whose mix of aggressive solitude and a quivering vulnerability is kin to the *hérisson*, or hedgehog, that becomes Derrida's

[108] As demonstrated in my earlier discussion of Brooks's New Critical approach, and also exemplified in Coleridge's idealization of organic form in poetry in *Biografia Literaria*.

emblematic poem-animal: "Rolled up in a ball, prickly with spines, vulnerable and dangerous, calculating and ill-adapted (because it makes itself into a ball, sensing danger on the autoroute, it exposes itself to an accident "(231-3). Derrida's account of the poetic before poetry resonates with the creaturely when he affirms, "Not the phoenix, not the eagle, but the *herisson*, very lowly, low down, close to the earth. Neither the sublime, nor incorporeal, angelic, perhaps, and for a time" (235). Bishop's toad evokes this same contingent election as it rings its "angelic bell" and calls out, "Beware, I am an angel in disguise" with "wings of poison," literally the dark, splotchy parotoid glands on its back, though it fails to inspire awe in the crab or love in the snail.

In these "sub-tropical" prose poems, neither exactly temperately northern nor tropically southern, Bishop offers an anomalous series that remains somewhat apart from her main body of work, and yet in their exaggerated qualities of estrangement and distress, they voice elements that are central to Bishop's poetics even as she often renders these qualities more oblique through formal techniques and tonal restraint. John Ashbery writes, "This strange single dividedness of our experience is a theme that is echoed and alluded to throughout Miss Bishop's work, but never more beautifully than in the short prose poem called "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" (202). This series suggests that there is less of a divide between Bishop's ideas of restraint and exposure, or northern and southern poetics than she claims, and that many of her best poems contain the tell-tale heart of confession enveloped in a meticulously formed lyric composition.

IV. Conclusion: The Art of "Loosing"

Who can say with empirical certainty whether Brazil is *the* liberating factor in the loosening up of Bishop's poetics? Bishop's shift toward encompassing a more direct line to the autobiographical, and even confessional, in her poetry and in an increasingly varied range of forms coincided with her time in Brazil, as well as with her overall maturing as an artist. And all this occurred in the broader context of deep cultural shifts in the 1960s and 1970s toward more liberated attitudes in art and social relations. Nevertheless, it is clear that these alterations in Bishop's poetry are deeply connected to an affective-geographical landscape that reflects her experience in and of Brazil, in modes that began with Florida.

Bishop's last collection of new poems, *Geography III* (1976), has been widely recognized as her most openly autobiographical. "One Art," from this volume, has become one of Bishop's most iconic poems. In many ways it is the culmination of her complex relationship to ideals of lyric propriety versus the improper territory of exposure. It is a villanelle that enumerates the losses in her life—starting small with "lost door keys" and crescendoing through two-word indexes for greater losses, her mother's watch, the "three loved houses" in Key West and Brazil that gesture toward the loves and lives she left behind in these places, to the "you" that suggests both Lota and her later companion in Boston, Alice Methfessel, who had left her at the time. Yet it tempers these accumulating losses through interwoven refrains that rhyme "The art of losing isn't hard to master" with variations on "no disaster." Through this double effect, "One Art" is both her *ars poetica* affirming the value of artistic mastery through formal and affective restraint, and of stoicism without sentimentality in the face of raw emotion, but also acts as her most thoroughly confessional of poems in its litany of a lifetime of personal tragedies.

Although "One Art" is often admired for its lyric perfection, Eve Sedgwick declares, "it's the one poem of hers I've never liked." In the introduction to *Touching Feeling*, Sedgwick pits her own principles of writing and feeling against Bishop's efforts of refinement, what Sedgwick calls Bishop's "purgative aesthetic":

> In her celebrated poem "One Art," Elizabeth Bishop's repeated refrain is "The art of losing isn't hard to master." In its insistence on a purgative aesthetic, it's the one poem of hers I've never liked; I picture it on a refrigerator magnet, say, urging dieters not to open the door. A more congenial version to me would invoke the art of *loosing*: and not as one art but a cluster of related ones. Ideally life, loves, and ideas might then sit freely, for a while, on the palm
> of the open hand. (Sedgwick 3)

What Sedgwick's humorous comparison to a dieters' admonition captures is that as the refrigerator holds bad, indulgent food, so does writing poetry for Bishop hold the threat of wallowing in bad, indulgent feelings. And as with a dieter's struggle to avoid weight gain and its attendant feelings of failure and unattractiveness, the poem voices a determination to avoid being weighed down by an unseemly excess of despair that would threaten aesthetic failure.

Throughout this chapter, I have focused on judgments of propriety as a measure of lyric success from a poetics standpoint. However, Sedgwick's desire to embrace the "art of *loosing*" and sit freely with the mess of life, loves, and ideas without aspiring to a sense of superior unity or coherence suggests how conversations in queer and affect theory might offer an alternative-yet-parallel approach to Bishop's writings in their potential intersections with questions of lyric propriety. Reading Bishop further alongside the work of Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Ann Cvetkovich, Sianne Ngai, and Rei Terada, among others, would give a different entry-point into the "touchy-feely" themes of shame and embarrassment, and the incoherence and self-dividedness associated with queer sexuality, as well as offer approaches for rethinking evaluations of failure, negative affect, ugly feelings, and the complexity of the emotions beyond their attachment to a subject.[109]

These newer texts could reactivate earlier readings of Bishop that focused on her sexuality ahead of their time. Adrienne Rich's early queer reading of Bishop anticipates this move to read her against the usual praise for "her triumphs, her perfections" and instead pay attention to "her struggles for self-definition and her sense of difference" (125). Indeed, Rich sounds like Sedgwick in recalling, "I had felt drawn, but also repelled, by Bishop's early work—I mean *repel* in the sense of refusing access, seeming to push away" (124). Marilyn May Lombardi's 1993 anthology of essays on Bishop from a gender and sexuality perspective, which includes Lee Edelman's "The Geography of Gender: Elizabeth Bishop's 'In the Waiting Room,'" picks up Rich's conversational threads, but there has yet to be a substantial work or collection that takes into account the newer material available by and about Bishop.[110]

A more recent book, Michael Snediker's *Queer Optimism* (2009), offers one more recent take on how queer theory might enter into further dialogue with lyric poetry, in his extended readings of the work of Bishop, Dickinson, Hart Crane, and Jack Spicer.[111] Snediker's chapter on Bishop takes a rather narrow approach to her work through interpreting a queer articulation of love through her oblique references to Hart Crane. Nevertheless, his larger project of reading poems as "striking experiments in the very forms of affect and personhood" that move beyond what he sees as

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[109] Some places to start would be Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*, which I begin to discuss in this chapter, as well as Butler's *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, Halberstam's *The Art of Queer Failure*, Cvetkovich's *Depression: A Public Feeling* and *An Archive of Feelings*, Ngai's *Ugly Feelings*; and Terada's *Feeling in Theory*.

[110] The essays in both *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop* and *Elizabeth Bishop in the 21st Century* do address Bishop's sexuality openly but do so more in terms of biography and traditional literary criticism than incorporating broader conversations in sexuality and gender studies.

[111] John Emil Vincent's *Queer Lyrics: Difficulty and Closure in American Poetry* (2002) offers one of the earliest interventions in linking queer and lyric theory.

limitations in theoretical discussions gives inspiration for ongoing explorations of questions of (im)propriety in Bishop's evolving body of work as it continues to be absorbed and circulated in critical networks. These frameworks can offer another look at the "new" and "old" Elizabeth Bishop together in a way that would sidestep valuations of the "real" or "proper" Bishop over the "repudiated" version.

Chapter Three

Pastoral Translations

For pastoral makes explicit a certain disproportion between its fictions, conspicuously modest and selective, and the meanings they bear or imply: there is always a suggestion that "more is meant than meets the ear."
—Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*

. . . *and it happened*—ah, that is the charm and the main point.
—Gerard Manley Hopkins, quoted by Elizabeth Bishop in her translator's Introduction to *The Diary of "Helena Morley"*

I. Introduction

Whereas "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics," remains a somewhat aberrant member of Elizabeth Bishop's oeuvre, an exaggerated manifestation of her lyric mutation while in Brazil, Bishop locates a more natural accord between Brazilian styles and her personal and poetic sensibilities in Brazil's rural interior, both in her own writing and in her choice of Brazilian works to translate. In contrast to the shocks of landscape and expression, and the sense of impropriety and disproportion, that course through Bishop's Rio de Janeiro and rainforest poems and in her generalized descriptions of Brazil, the poet presents a different side of the country in these works, one that feels more picturesque, quaintly domestic, and nostalgic. In this chapter, I explore Bishop's affinity for a regional aspect of Brazil and Brazilian culture that is relatively unknown to most foreigners but that she instinctively renders familiar through a pastoral framework that draws on the Western literary tradition and her childhood memories of rural Nova Scotia.

I characterize this movement in Bishop as *pastoral translation*. In contrast to the foregrounding of tropical extremes and improprieties that I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, pastoral translation constitutes the making proper of the other, through processes of assimilation that I delineate in this chapter. In bringing these two terms together, I examine the multiple ways in which the pastoral mode and acts of translation merge in Bishop's work to construct an alternate version of Brazil in which the foreign gets cast as the familiar, and difference and distance get flattened under ideals of the universal, the authentic, and the natural that are commonly associated with both the pastoral *and* translation. Bishop is at her least critical of Brazil when writing about its rural areas. The works she chose to translate similarly reflect her partiality to themes of nature, folk culture, and childhood.

Though Bishop co-edited the 1972 *Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry*, she only translated twelve Brazilian poems herself, making the predominance of pastoral themes in this selection especially striking. Bishop's approach to selecting, presenting, and translating poems by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Vinícius de Moraes, João Cabral de Melo Neto, Joaquim Cardozo and the book-length *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* (*Minha vida de menina*) further constitute a Bishop-curated version of Brazil that gains a sense of authenticity from its source in Brazilian voices.[112] Bishop particularly emphasizes the truth-value of *The Diary* (whose Portuguese

[112] *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* will hereafter be cited as *The Diary*.

title translates as *My Life as a Young Girl*), kept by a girl from the age of thirteen to fifteen living in the provincial diamond mining town of Diamantina at the end of the nineteenth century.

Bishop's translations and writing about rural, folk, and poor Brazil emphasize how the pastoral fundamentally acts as a translation of the Other into the familiar in its merging of sensibilities from disparate contexts. Just as translation recasts one idiom in terms of another, so does pastoral take "low" country culture and express it in an "elevated," refined manner that can be more readily appreciated by a cultivated, often urban audience. In many ways, Brazil as a whole plays the role of peripheral "country" to the metropolitan nations of Western Europe and North America, especially the Brazil of the 1950s through 1970s that Bishop encountered. Raymond Williams, in the final chapters of his classic study *The Country and the City* (1973), describes this global country-and-city dynamic in which less "developed," poorer countries offer the appeal of a "rural idyll and escape" for first-world visitors, who can feel they've traveled back in time and recognize their "traditional experiences" in the face of a rapidly industrializing present (281, 284). Bishop echoes this sentiment a year after arriving in Brazil: "It's funny how in this undeveloped-yet-decadent country one feels so much closer to the past than one ever could in the U.S.A."[113]

Yet the poet discovers an even further level of pastoral escape within Brazil, located in the isolated, historic mining towns of Minas Gerais state to the northwest of Rio de Janeiro state. "Arrival at Santos" ends with the declaration, "we are driving to the interior." In Chapter 1, I followed this line into the interior space of the traveler's geographical imagination in the subsequent poem, "Brazil, January 1, 1502," which ends with the European conquerors tearing into the rainforest tapestry to find what lies beyond. The phrase "driving to the interior," which sounds a little odd in English, is also a literal translation of a colloquial Brazilian way of referring to the rural "*interior*" (it's the same word in Portuguese), defined as any region located far from the coast and from major cities.

In this chapter, I read this "to the interior" as Bishop's double move of leaving behind the tourist's surface impressions amid the exotic extremes of the coastal rainforest and moving toward a greater immersion in Brazilian culture and life, and also literally retreating to the *interior* of Minas Gerais, or "General Mines," with its baroque yet picturesque churches and glittering, mineral mountainsides. When Bishop renders these Brazilian contexts in English, she often familiarizes them through allusions to British Romantic poetry and earlier European literary traditions, as in her prose sketch "To the Botequim and Back," in the poem "Under the Window: Ouro Preto," and in her introduction to her translation of *The Diary of "Helena Morley"*. Bishop also looks on the Brazilian rural interior with a sense of familiarity for how its evokes memories of her childhood in the rural town of Great Village, Nova Scotia.

On one hand, Bishop's move away from the more clichéd Brazilian landscapes of the coastal rainforest around Rio de Janeiro, along with her forays into translation, constitute a depth and breadth of representing Brazil that is unique among foreign travelers writing about the country. "Black Beans and Diamonds," the working title for her never-completed book about Brazil, veers away from the stock images of Brazil in the foreign imagination. In an interview, Bishop describes her impulse to clear up misty notions of Brazil among her English-speaking audience:

> It's to be a combination of a travel book, a memoir, and a picture book. I am quite interested in photography. I'd like to make Brazil seem less remote and less an object of picturesque fancy. It's not really so far from New York. I think that since the great naturalists (Darwin, Wallace, Bruce, and so on) there hasn't been much close

[113] Bishop to Ilse and Kit Barker, 29 August 1953, *OA* 271.

> observation (at least by foreigners) of Brazil. Except perhaps for Lévi-Strauss. ("An Interview" 302)

Against the grain of my reading of the pastoral tendencies in her work, Bishop herself proposes that her Brazil sketches act more akin to documentary or realist memoir. She makes a point of resituating Brazil away from associations with being "remote" and "an object of picturesque fancy." Yet the title itself, "Black Beans and Diamonds," combines the common and the rare in a pastoral juxtaposition inspired by Bishop's fascination with the traditional mining culture of towns like Ouro Preto and Diamantina, which translate to "Black Gold" and "Diamond." Their names recall the decadent glory of mining in past centuries, though in Bishop's time and even today, families in these regions continue to subsist on traditional *mineiro* fare—black beans, collard greens, and heavily salted meat—while humble miners continue labor in the rocky earth for potential riches. Nevertheless, Bishop's version of pastoral integrates more modern, industrial crosscurrents and a more critical, documentary edge that shows the grime and hardship of poverty alongside softer, more Romantic descriptions of simple country life.

Despite the consciousness of harsh difficulties underlying the dream of rural simplicity in Bishop's writings, her depictions of Brazil and its poor, uneducated, often non-white inhabitants can at times paint an idealized picture of race relations and communal life that partakes of contradictions embedded in the pastoral tradition. Looking through the lens of the pastoral offers a nuanced way to consider Bishop's representations of Brazilian voices in a way that recognizes the distortions and limitations in these representations yet without denouncing them wholesale as not properly authentic. In this chapter, I present three modes of *pastoral translation* that Bishop activates: 1) the pastoral mode itself as a translation of the rural periphery for the metropolis; 2) the translation of British and classical pastoral into the Brazilian context of Minas Gerais, with miners in place of shepherds; and 3) the pastoralizing tendencies of Bishop's translations of Brazilian works into English. These versions of pastoral act as a counterpoint to the impropriety and excess that Bishop and other travelers more commonly associate with Brazil and the tropics.

The pastoral is a literary mode that travels particularly well, in part because it activates ideas of country life versus the city that can resonate with almost any hinterland-metropolis dynamic. Another factor that has contributed to the pastoral tradition's adaptability is the way it has morphed and expanded over centuries and transnational traditions to encompass a variety of genres and approaches to writing about country life that are sometimes convergent and sometimes conflicting.[114] In considering the pastoral tendencies in Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil writing, I take the pastoral to encompass a way of depicting country life that is specifically marked by an awareness of rural life as an escape from the problems of the metropolis, and as distinguished from more generalized forms of nature writing. In the context of Bishop in Brazil, I am most interested in those theorizations of the pastoral that emphasize the contradictory currents in its ethos of simplicity and unity versus the underlying complexity of its historically dual nature—more specifically in the oppositions between country and city, "low" and "high" culture, poor and rich, sameness and difference.

Raymond Williams identifies the way that classical pastoral and other literature that celebrates an ethos of good living in the countryside also hold "almost invariably a tension with

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[114] Scholars usually associate the origins of the pastoral with Theocritus' *Idylls* and Virgil's *Eclogues*, though Raymond Williams dates this kind of writing about country life back to the ninth century B.C. with Hesiod's *Works and Days* (Williams 14). Although poetry remains the most traditional form that pastoral takes, through the Renaissance it migrated into pastoral drama and pastoral romance narratives, and is now more often recognized as a literary *mode* rather than a distinct genre. See Paul Alpers's discussion of the difficulty of defining the pastoral in *What is Pastoral?*, especially Chapters 1 and 2, "Representative Anecdotes and Ideas of Pastoral" and "Mode and Genre" (8-78) .

other kinds of experience: summer with winter; pleasure with loss; harvest with labour; singing with a journey; past or future with the present." He further traces how adaptations of this mode beginning in the Renaissance tended to smooth over an awareness of the "counter-pastoral" that surrounds the pastoral idyll (i.e. winter, loss, labor, present troubles). More and more, pastoral conventions favored "the excision of this irony" in a tradition that became increasingly theatrical and romantic, and hence more reductive in its depiction of rural subjects (18). Williams characterizes the modern version of pastoral as presenting "the simple matter in which general truths are embodied or implied," and in which "the life of the shepherd could be made to stand for the life of nature and for natural feeling" (21, 22).

Another central contradiction to emerge out of the long and varied tradition of pastoral literature is that this celebration of the simple truths of country living is predominantly an artful convention produced by an elite class of writers, often from the metropolis. This otherness of the subject of pastoral to its authors and audience makes for a certain dissonance at the heart of pastoral, even as far back as Virgil writing the *Eclogues* from the seat of Roman civilization.[115] William Empson writes in *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1974) that the pastoral is "a puzzling form which looks proletarian but isn't." This is mainly because unlike art that arises from within folk culture, like fairytales and ballads, which are "by" and "for" though not "about" common folk, pastoral is "about" but neither "by" nor "for." Empson calls this coerced union between two disparate worlds "the polite pretence of pastoral," an artfully calibrated harmony that adopts the guise of unconscious naturalness.[116] This "polite pretence" pits two kinds of pastoral propriety against one another. First, there is the propriety that calls for excluding the unseemly and recasting of crude country life in elegant terms. This propriety-as-pretense counters the pastoral's celebration of another sort of propriety, that of moral virtue expressed as artless sincerity. This dual nature of pastoral propriety—in which a process of refinement mimics natural simplicity—arises especially in Bishop's translation of Vinícius de Moraes's "Sonnet of Intimacy" ("Soneto de intimidade") and in *The Diary of "Helena Morley"*, as I will discuss in the final section.

Like pastoral literature, translations seek to bridge the distance to an authentic source, so that a translation is often judged by its closeness or fidelity to the original and by the naturalness of its expression—that is, how much it sounds as if it were authentically written in the target language. In "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin's idea of "that ultimate essence, pure language" is the most glorified version of the source text as an original truth whose translation is always inadequate (81). Benjamin writes further of the inevitable separation of the translation from its source, "While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds" (79). This image emphasizes that translation can never recover this lost unity or be quite *au natural*, in the nude so to speak, but always takes on a more embellished and artificial "clothed" form.

Writers on translation often highlight how the closeness of the words "translation" and "betrayal" in Romance languages underscore the way that translation is always somehow counterfeit. The association is best exemplified in the Italian saying, "*Traduttore, traditore*," which casts the translator as a traitor, a liar. This idea is similarly evident in the closeness of *tradução/traição* in Portuguese and *traduction/trahison* in French.[117] Yet Benjamin rejects the idea of fidelity as a false idol

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[115] The *Eclogues* were a series of bucolic poems modeled on the Greek poet Theocritus' *Idylls*, poems in which goatherds and shepherds come together to sing in a setting of harvests and rural life.

[116] In Empson, 6. Empson's idiosyncratic yet deeply insightful account of pastoral ranges from classical and early modern through Romantic forms of the genre up to twentieth-century proletarian literature as often a covert form of pastoral.

[117] Eliot Weinberger refers to "that tedious Italian pun *traduttore traditore*," in the context of asserting, "All discussions of translation, like nineteenth-century potboilers, are obsessed with questions of fidelity and betrayal" (21).

of translation. "What can fidelity really do for the rendering of meaning?," he asks. "Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original." Instead, harmony and reconciliation between languages become Benjamin's key values over that of literalness as the goal of equivalence. In the translator's work toward the impossible ideal of "integrating many tongues into one true language," a language that Benjamin imagines as a coming together in which "the languages themselves, supplemented and reconciled in their mode of signification, harmonize" (80).

Thus, pastoral and translation both participate in conventions that aim toward an ideal of unity and authenticity even as they necessarily operate in a more hybrid middle-ground of compensatory harmony reconciliation. In both, differences between cultures and languages are smoothed over in a contrived equivalence posed to feel natural. Pastoral and translation both hold the promise of giving voice to the writer's and translator's others—whether the poor, unlettered country dweller or those who reside in a foreign language—and often do so to varying extents. Yet this access ultimately remains somewhat incomplete or illusory. The distance between the purported aims and the practice of pastoral literature and of translation is always marked by a melancholic sense of irrecuperable loss, whether a pastoral nostalgia for a never-fully-regained Golden Age or childlike innocence or a lament for what gets lost in translation.

Countering the idea of pastoralizing as a strictly idealizing function, Paul Alpers offers a defense of pastoral In *What is Pastoral?* (1980) that pivots on his idea that "when pastoral writing is properly understood, it can be seen to be far more aware of itself and its conditions than it has usually been thought to be, or even capable of being" (xi). Alpers goes on to observe that "pastoral makes explicit a certain disproportion between its fictions, conspicuously modest and selective, and the meanings they bear or imply: there is always a suggestion that 'more is meant than meets the ear'" (16). That is, the simple life depicted in pastoral conventions becomes a representative anecdote that gestures toward more complex realities rather than being offered as realist truth. Alpers draws on Empson's idea that pastoral manages to contain the complex in the simple, so that "you take a limited life and pretend it is the full and normal one" (Empson 115). For Alpers, modern incarnations of pastoral, which he locates in British Romantic poetry, are especially marked by an interplay of the sincere and the ironic, the innocent and the self-aware. He defends Wordsworth against the usual charge of pastoral hypocrisy by attributing a critical awareness to works such as *The Ruined Cottage*, "Michael: A Pastoral" and others from *Lyrical Ballads*, and *The Prelude*: "Like every good critic of pastoral, Wordsworth is attentive to the representing consciousness as well as to the lives represented" (20).[118]

Another key element of pastoral literature that Alpers emphasizes is that it is grounded in conventionality even as it celebrates an ethos of the natural. This includes pastoral conventions like shepherd songs or role reversals between high and low, rich and poor characters in Renaissance pastoral romances and drama like Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* or Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Alpers contextualizes this conventionality of pastoral as firmly based in an ethos of "coming together" in classical pastoral poetry, which opens up an understanding of the mode not merely as an uncomfortable appropriation but as arising from a very real desire for unity and a drive to create a shared aesthetic and moral universe. He writes, "Pastoral convenings are characteristically occasions for songs and colloquies that express and thereby seek to redress separation, absence, or loss" (81). A key distinction he makes is that pastoral poetry does not cover over loss or distance so much as effect a compensatory continuity or cohesion, in the present gathering of shepherds, in the composition of the elegiac song itself, or in the echoing or dialogue that occurs when one poet

[118] See Alpers Chapter 7 "Modern Pastoral Lyricism" for a detailed account of Wordsworth's pastoral poetry (260-322).

enters into the form laid by a predecessor, as in Virgil's *Eclogues* that continue the tradition inaugurated by Theocritus' *Idylls*.

"A convention is a usage that brings human beings together," Alpers writes, adding, "a pastoral convention brings them together under the figure of shepherds." The "shepherd," a figure that seems increasingly fictional the further away this world moves from traditional agrarian culture, is meant to be taken not so much as the actual common man so much as a representative of commonality. Alpers contrasts pastoral from epic and tragedy, "with their ideas of heroic autonomy and isolation," in that the pastoral "takes human life to be inherently a matter of common plights and common pleasures" (93). Thus pastoral in Alpers's more charitable view shouldn't be taken literally in its erasure of individual differences but rather should be read as a way to contemplate the parts of experience that are shared, even if in the contingent and incomplete manner of imagined communities.

Alpers argues that the "half-truth" status of pastoral is also what is exemplary about literary form. This naturalized artifice that I link to both pastoral and translation also recalls the quote from Bishop that has become a refrain throughout this dissertation:

> Writing poetry is an unnatural act. It takes great skill to make it seem natural. Most of the poet's energies are really directed toward this goal: to convince himself (perhaps, with luck, eventually some readers) that what he's up to and what he's saying is really an inevitable, *only* natural way of behaving under the circumstances. (*Edgar Allan Poe* 207)

In her writing on Brazil, Bishop veers between a realist tone that mixes elements of documentary, memoir, and ethnography, and more openly literary techniques that conjure surreal dream worlds and historical fantasies. In the work I characterize as pastoral translations, Bishop effects a similar combination that makes for a modern pastoral. It is marked by overt allusions to earlier literary tradition but also elements of counter-pastoral that give a more contemporary dissonance to her bucolic scenes. Bishop juxtaposes reveries of wildflowers, ruined cottages, and sparrows with descriptions of poverty, racial and social difference, and industrialization, akin to what what Leo Marx calls "the interrupted idyll" in *The Machine in the Garden*, his study of the pastoral in the rapidly industrializing U.S. in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (27). Marx identifies a complex form of pastoral in which, "What begins as a conventional tribute to the pleasures of withdrawal from the world—a simple pleasure fantasy—is transformed by the interruption of the machine into a far more complex state of mind" (15). Her inclusion of industrial grime and a certain everyday brutality in the life of poor Brazilians creates an effect similar to the mixed quality that Raymond Williams attributes to Romantic poet John Clare, whose poetry he claims "marks the end of pastoral poetry, in the very shock of its collision with actual country experience" (141). What Alpers attributes to Wordworth and a form of modern pastoral, Williams locates more emphatically in Clare's less aestheticized, harsher scenes of country life in a kind of broken pastoral.

Throughout her poetry, Bishop is typically hyperaware of her outsider status and of the dual improprieties of the traveler as interloper and of the host country as improperly excessive and indulgent. Yet in her pastoral writings and in her presentation of her translations, the focus shifts to a sense of community and a proper fit between people and place. This recalls Alpers's designation that "landscapes are pastoral when they are conceived as fit habitations for herdsmen or their equivalents" (28). In Bishop's pieces on Ouro Preto and in many of the Brazilian works she feels enough of a connection to in order to translate, the people come together as kin or community and inhabit the landscape naturally, hence pastorally. Bishop remains conscious of being slightly out of step with the native inhabitants of these scenes, but her sense of separation is diminished compared

to the sense of alienation that she voices most strongly in her Rio de Janeiro poems. Bishop's pastoralizing tendencies are the least conscious when she confidently presents the sources of her translations as factual. Whereas she continually questions the credibility of her own perspective alone, she maintains an uncontested faith in the authenticity of the Brazilian originals.

II. Driving to the Interior: from Rio de Janeiro to Ouro Preto

Elizabeth Bishop spent her first fourteen years in Brazil (the end of 1951 through 1965) living in the coastal region of Rio de Janeiro state, enjoying a life of relative privilege and comfort between Lota's country estate of Samambaia and the penthouse apartment in the city of Rio's Leme neighborhood, overlooking the beach on the chic end of Copacabana. The couple became more based in Rio starting in 1961, when Lota began her urban landscaping project building the Parque do Flamengo. From then through Lota's death in 1967, Bishop wrote a series of poems and prose pieces that reflected her frustration and disdain for the city. She takes a rather critical, alienated view of the urban woes of Rio de Janeiro, which reflect what she finds "backward" about Brazil as a sociopolitical entity—crime, poverty, inflation, corruption, chaos. I begin this section with Bishop's depictions of Brazil's urban poor in Rio de Janeiro in these poems in order to contrast them from her more pastoral treatment of Brazilian common folk in rural settings. Her writing about the countryside adopts a perspective softened by its archaic charm and sense of community, even as she continues to document harsh conditions of poverty.

Bishop's critiques take on a particularly paternalistic tone in the non-literary, journalistic prose of her 1962 Life World Library *Brazil* book and in her widely criticized 1965 *New York Times* travel piece on Rio, "On the Railroad named Delight." In Chapter 1 of *Brazil*, unfortunately titled by the editors as "A Warm and Reasonable People," Bishop presents Brazil as "a very poor and in many ways backward country," and repeats the phrase "poorest and most backward" just four paragraphs later to describe the northeast and Amazon regions (*Prose* 166, 167). It should be noted, however, that Bishop herself disowned the *Brazil* book after it was published and accused the editors of rewriting large sections of it, though this version in the 2011 *Prose* "is the closest we can come to Bishop's original version, taken mainly from her typescript at Vassar," the editor explains (Schwartz, "Editor's Note" viii). The cities of Rio and Recife are "the worst offenders" when it comes to the "appallingly high" infant mortality rate, a "tragic waste of life" that Bishop attributes to malnutrition, ignorance, and inefficiency (167). Bishop evokes the historical fantasies of utopia we saw in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" when she reports that "Brazil struck all the early explorers as a 'natural paradise,' a 'garden.'" However, she immediately pivots into a critique of this would-be paradise as "a garden neglected, abused and still mostly uncultivated," where "[g]reat resources have been squandered" due to "the mismanagement and waste of both human and material wealth along the way that shocks the foreigner as well as the educated, sensitive Brazilian" (168). Here, the foreigner's "shock of encounter" comes from the impropriety of Brazil's "backwardness," while her allusion to the "educated, sensitive Brazilian" conjures the condescending stance held by Lota and her elite social circles toward their country.

Bishop takes a similar casually denigrating tone in "On the Railroad Named Delight," a travel piece on Rio written on the occasion of the city's quatercentenary anniversary. As in the *Brazil* book, the article mixes amusing local color anecdotes with blunt critique that comes off as even more tone-deaf as a dialogue between a North American writer and her readers. She concedes Rio's undeniable romantic beauty but qualifies it as: "not a beautiful city, just the most beautiful setting for a city" (*PPL* 439). She writes of Rio's "general decrepitude," its "sad and notorious" favelas, and concludes, "Finally, after 400 years, it is a city that has grown shabby" (441, 440). In another sign

that Bishop's Rio life was sequestered in the conservative circles of Lota and their close friend, the right-leaning Governor Carlos Lacerda, Bishop adopts an almost glib attitude toward the still-recent 1964 military coup, which installed a twenty-year dictatorship. She reports popular support for the unelected President Castelo Branco, and further surmises that due to "the ignorance and high illiteracy rate," drastic government policies to curb rampant inflation could never be explained to the people (448).

Despite the bluntness and condescension of Bishop's social critique of Brazil, a pastoral feeling creeps into her picture of the poor coping with their plight in high spirits, especially in her rosy take on class and race relations. This is apparent in the first chapter from *Brazil* chapter I quoted above, in which Bishop identifies "the earthy humor of the poor" in contrast to the wry humor of the intellectuals, and ends the chapter with an anecdote about the easygoing nature of Brazilians (*Prose* 173). In "On the Railroad Named Delight," she casts the idea of rich and poor as a mark of Brazil's archaism, asserting: "the words 'rich' and 'poor' are still in use here, out of style as they are in the affluent parts of the world." Bishop then illustrates the jovial way that the poor in Rio voice their discontent by translating what she calls the "hackneyed lyrics" of four popular sambas that air grievances like inadequate public transportation, and shortages of water and electricity or *luz,* which Bishop translates literally as "light" (*PPL* 442-43).

This recalls Anne-Lise François's apt characterization of the twentieth-century discomfort with British Romantic pastoral as "the justifiably maligned genre in which you point to poor people *and* say how good they have it" (xxii).Empson too highlights a common contemporary critique of pastoral as being "either patronising or 'romantic.'" He distinguishes the attitude of true proletarian literature from its semblance in pastoral in that the latter is more apt to celebrate the common workers' "ironical humour, a subtle mode of thought which among other things makes you willing to be ruled by your betters" (7).

One main difference between Brazilian and European pastoral is that race becomes intermingled with class as the important differentiating factor in Brazil, where brown and black Brazilians are also often the poorest or considered as inferior to white Brazilians. Bishop praises the "complete ease of manner on both sides" in relationships between rich white Brazilians and their darker servants, especially those who have been raised on the same rural property, known in the Brazilian plantation system as *agregados*. Critic John Gledson, translator of Brazilian Marxist critic Roberto Schwartz, translates this term as "dependents," and explains the way Schwartz's work on nineteenth-century writer Machado de Assis centers on the way "Brazilian society was based on a tripartite division of society into masters, dependents, and slaves" (Gledson xii). The *agregado* or dependent is the quintessential protagonist of modern pastoral, especially in Schwartz's formulation, in his role as the "low" common character who mingles with the rich and maneuvers cleverly within the bounds of his subordinate position without completely toppling the social order.

"Manuelzinho," *Questions of Travel* (1965), is about Lota's white *agregado* farmer of sorts who lived at Samambaia with his family and whose forebears had been there for generations (*CP* 96-99). Bishop writes the poem in Lota's voice, as the prefatory note implies "Brazil. A friend of the writer is speaking." The Bishop-as-Lota tone in addressing the poem to Manuelzinho is simultaneously condescending, intimate, and affectionate. However, in this poem, Bishop shows more of an awareness of the awkwardness and asymmetry in this dependent relationship. She ends the poem apologizing on behalf of Lota in the latter's assumed voice and offering an uncharacteristic of deference, "I take off my hat, unpainted / and figurative, to you. / Again I promise to try."

However, in Bishop's much less nuanced *Brazil* book, she praises this familial relationship between dependents and landowners, servants and masters, though instead of the term *agregado*, she focuses on "*criação*," which means both creation and upbringing, as it designates both adopted familial relationships and servants:

> A rich man will shake hands with and embrace a poor man and also give him money, try to find him a job and pay his wife's doctors bills, because they grew up on the same *fazenda*, or country estate, made their first communions together and perhaps are even "brothers of creation," a system of partial adoption that dates from slavery days. Servants are still often called *criados*, a term which originally meant they had been raised in the family. Even today one occasionally sees an elegant lady out walking, leaning on the arm of a little dressed-up Negro girl, or taking tea or orangeade with her in a tearoom; the little girl is her 'daughter of creation' whom she is bringing up. (*Prose* 169-70)

Bishop never waxes nostalgic about Brazil's long dependence on slavery, and she often addresses this dark period of Brazilian history rather than evading it. In this essay, she is conscious of the misguided notion that confuses familiar interactions for equality, which she recognizes as a "a holdover from slavery days, or feudalism, or even from the Roman Empire." And still, she observes approvingly that "a sense of natural responsibility underlies the relationship" between upper and lower class Brazilians.

Bishop's observation of this naturalized "noblesse oblige" recalls Empson's description of how traditional pastoral "was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor" in how it wishes away the way clashes between high and low, even as it upholds the social hierarchies of the status quo as the most natural way of life (12). Bishop embraces another moment of false populism at the end of her *New York Times* travel article, which she concludes with a representative anecdote meant to illustrate a heartwarming unity between black and white. Bishop muses that Rio "is now essentially a provincial city," yet there remains "another compensation for those who have to put up with the difficulties of life in Rio." Then she describes a major advertisement that appeared showing "a young Negro cook, overcome by her pleasure in having a new gas stove, leaning across it toward her white mistress, who leaned over from her side of the stove as they kissed each other on the cheek." Bishop's point is that this show of affection is exemplary of the beautiful relationships that transcend race and class hierarchies even as she tacitly endorses the assumption that the poor should be grateful for whatever favors the rich offer. She offers a weak acknowledgement that "the situation is not utopian, socially speaking, and that the advertisement is silly," yet marvels at the fact that while it could never have appeared on billboards in Atlanta, Georgia, "it went absolutely unremarked on" in Rio (*PPL* 448).

As I argue in Chapter 1, Bishop finds surer footing in her poetry and literary sketches, in which she effects more nuanced representations of complicated social dynamics, in contrast to her heavy-handed and pat formulations when attempting the more head-on, authoritative approach of informative prose. "The Burglar of Babylon," collected in *Questions of Travel*, is more openly a pastoral translation than any of Bishop's other writing on Rio, yet the poem manages to communicate a complex view of the disparities and injustices in an idyllic setting that make Rio such an incongruous place, while also distinguishing Bishop's own outsider perspective. Further, it does so through the conventions and stilted language of the Brazilian popular poetry tradition known as *literatura de cordel*, or cordel literature, named for the way the cheap paper pamphlets are often sold at outdoor markets strung along a cord, or *cordel*. The poem tells the true story of Micuçu, a criminal who fled Rio's military police, who pursued him up into the hills of his home favela of *Babilônia* 'Babylon' in April, 1963.

Like Wordsworth throughout *Lyrical Ballads*, Bishop situates herself and the poem's source material in a preface to the poem that appeared in its 1968 chapbook illustrated edition that was received as a children's book, though the jacket says "all ages." This edition was printed with black-

and-white woodcut illustrations in imitation of a standard presentation of cordel literature. Bishop explains, "The story of Micuçu is true. It happened in Rio de Janeiro a few years ago. I have changed only one or two minor details, and, of course, translated the names of the slums. [. . .] I was one of those who watched the pursuit through binoculars, although really we cold see very little of it." Bishop's preface and the poem itself highlight this fact of life in Rio, where the rich and poor live nearly on top of each other, with favelas within sight from the windows of the best penthouses in the Zona Sul, or "Southern Zone" neighborhoods, like Leme (where Bishop lived), Copacabana, and Ipanema. Bishop reinforces her own eye-witness experience with another documentary source: "The rest of the story was taken, often word for word, from the daily papers, filled out by what I know of the place and the people" (718).

Bishop makes a quintessential pastoral translation by choosing to adapt for an English-speaking audience the story of a favela folk hero using a Brazilian popular form, which recalls the way classical pastoral was historically understood as a low, humble form differentiated from high, erudite poetry. Cordel literature comes out of a troubadour tradition that goes back to Renaissance Europe and that in Brazil has evolved to be the form associated with the rustic, unlettered culture of the Northeast. Though Bishop's subject is urban, the majority of inhabitants of Rio's favelas come from the rural Northeast where the cordel tradition is strongest, in a wave of migration that swelled during the 1940s through 1970s, as a result of massive droughts that devastated the northeastern agricultural economy. As with the pastoral convention of shepherds gathering to sing, cordel literature is based on an oral form often sung by illiterate, itinerant poets and was originally transmitted during fairs and markets that brought together rural communities. These poems are still sometimes performed by poet-singers in the Northeast called *repentistas*. Cordel poems typically narrate dramatic tales of love, loss, violence, and betrayal, often involving famous folk heroes, like the legendary bandit couple, Lampião and Maria Bonita, a kind of hinterlands Bonnie and Clyde. Like these cordel heroes, Micuçu in Bishop's ballad is a criminal but not a villain, heroic in his bravery and sympathetic as a victim of Rio's brutal inequalities.

"The Burglar of Bablyon" resonates with William Empson's account of the subtle range of implications that can result from pastoral convergences. On one hand, pastoral is a merging of high and low that ultimately privileges the superiority of refined sensibilities, as Empson outlines:

> The essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor, was to make simple people express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). From seeing the two sorts of people combined like this you thought better of both; the best parts of both were used. (11-12)

In a similar way, Bishop takes a popular Brazilian form to portray an uneducated commoner and elevates it in her sophisticated handling of poetry in English for the intellectual readers of the *New Yorker*, where the poem was first published on November 21, 1964. Yet Empson also gives a counterpoint to his critique of pastoral's often-false populism by also conceding that "good proletarian art is usually Covert pastoral" (6). Like Alpers and Williams, Empson recognizes different levels of realism and irony within the pastoral mode, so that: "The realistic sort of pastoral (the sort touched by mock-pastoral) also gives a natural expression for a sense of social injustice." While Bishop's prose accounts of Rio denounce its social problems while simultaneously giving a tacit endorsement of social hierarchies in her praise of a communal spirit that transcends class and race, "The Burglar of Babylon" communicates a much more disturbed sense of unjust suffering and the troubling asymmetries in comfort and privilege between Rio's classes in its mix of realism and

cordel poetry conventions. Indeed Empson illustrates his discussion of pastoral's ability to express an ironic awareness of social injustice with the very example of "the sympathetic criminal" as "the sacrificial tragic hero" of pastoral, a person who is "outside society because too poor for its benefits" and as an outsider like the artist, he is a "critic of society; so far as he is forced by this into crime he is the judge of the society that judges him" (16).

Though inspired by newspaper accounts and scenes that Bishop herself witnessed, "The Burglar of Babylon" unfolds in a flat, stilted style that makes a distinct break from the natural, conversational register of Bishop's signature lyric voice. This signals that Bishop is inhabiting a more theatrical persona than usual. It begins with a refrain that returns at the very end of the long narrative poem, which continues for forty-seven quatrains:

> On the fair green hills of Rio
> There grows a fearful stain:
> The poor who come to Rio
> And can't go home again.
>
> On the hills a million people,
> A million sparrows, nest,
> Like a confused migration
> That's had to light and rest.[119]

The voice echoes the declamatory style of cordel *repentistas* while also conjuring traditional folk ballads in English, with lines like "On the fair green hills of Rio." Bishop follows one of cordel poetry's standard forms: four-line stanzas with an alternating *xaxa* rhyme. Bishop also stays close to the cordel rubric of seven-syllable lines (sometimes slightly less or more), in another formal break from the more usual pattern of stressed and unstressed beats in Anglophone poetry. The poem's artificial feel in places also comes from Bishop's literal translations from the Portuguese, as when she translates the names of the favelas, in another refrain that appears in the fifth stanza and returns to end the poem:

> There's the hill of Kerosene,
> And the hill of Skeleton,
> The hill of Astonishment,
> And the hill of Babylon.

Taken outside of the naturalizing context of everyday usage Bishop's English version of these favela names makes them sound all the more unreal, like some quasi-biblical allegory of ill-fated cities: Babylon, Skeleton, Astonishment, and Kerosene. Her literal translation of "*morro*" into "hill" also makes the slums sound like storybook landscapes, despite the "fearful stain" of the million migrants who have descended, never to return home again. Any Brazilian would immediately understand "*morro*" as a slang term for the favelas, which are spread over the steepest hills amid Rio's most stylish neighborhoods in the Zona Sul region, an effect that its opaque translation as "hill" loses in English.

The poem's flat, rhythmic quality, its refrains that suggest an ongoing pattern, and the way it follows the conventions of a centuries-long folk poetry tradition, all convey a disturbing dissonance with and sickening sense of an inevitable cycle of injustice and violence more successfully than any

[119] The poem appears in *CP* 112-118.

diatribe about social ills, as in Bishop's prose pieces discussed above. The frame that the refrains create around the story of an escaped convict who gets hunted down by swarms of police while innocent favela inhabitants are powerless to avoid the tragic violence produces the frustrating, powerless recognition that this representative anecdote is part of an almost ritualized cycle that will continue as relentlessly and mechanically as the stanzas. The police finally manage to shoot Micuçú, in an abrupt line that closes out its stanza with a rhyme, "But he got it, behind the ear." Then, in the third-to-last stanza, we're told: "Micuçu is buried already. / They're after another two," suggesting that for every Micuçu are countless, nameless others who live short, violent lives. Finally, the two concluding refrains bring the perspective back out to the endless proliferation of the "fearful stain" of the anonymous poor flocking to "the fair green hills of Rio," and the enumeration of favelas that sound almost interchangeable in their ominous one-word names.

Though "The Burglar of Babylon" follows a simple, conventional form, Bishop carries off a sophisticated series of shifts in perspective that enable greater nuance in this poem than in her journalistic writing. In the poem's opening stanzas, the "poor" as a group begin as an undifferentiated mass seen as faraway specks, as they might be as statistics in a newspaper, as indistinguishable and insignificant as the sparrows she compares them to. Similarly, Bishop introduces Micuçu from the more distanced point of view in a a newspaper article, "a burglar and killer, / An enemy of society" who had escaped jail three times. Yet less than a quarter of the way into the poem, Bishop shifts into Micuçu's perspective as his visits his "auntie" and drinks one last beer before he sets off to buy time before meeting the death that he knows will come. We see the everyday life of the favela as its residents pass by the fugitive wending his way to the top, from where he hears "the goats *baa-baa*-ing" and the babies crying while trying to hold on to a little more life. Bishop also takes a moment to think of the scared military police, the nervous "soldiers," one of whom accidentally shoots his own commanding officer and sobs hysterically "like a little child" as the officer dies stoically. The sun sets then rises as the hero hides "in the grasses / Or sat in a little tree," recalling that Micuçu is a "colloquial name for a deadly snake, in the north of Brazil," as Bishop explains in her introduction (*PPL* 718). After the police finally hit their target, we witness his grieving family, the auntie who raised him "from a baby," and the neighbors who knew him and shake their heads at how badly things turned out.

While the poem zooms in close to the perspective of Micuçu and those in the favela, it takes an impersonal, distanced view of those whose perspective is closest to Bishop's own: "Rich people in apartments / Watched through binoculars." This first mention doesn't appear until halfway through the narrative. It is an unsympathetic rendering of the cold detachment of the rich, who remain faraway behind their binoculars, as if watching some form of entertainment. Similarly, the people on the beach in Copacabana appear similarly abstracted to Micuçu as he breathes his last breaths and watches them incongruously go about their leisurely lives from up high just "little colored spots" and heads swimming in the sea like "floating coconuts." The safety and obliviousness of the two-dimensional rich and the beach-goers seems grotesquely at odds with what Bishop portrays at close range from within the favela and Micuçu's point of view, in this poem that compensates for the lack of perspective in Bishop's own binocular view and the factual account in the newspapers. In this version of pastoral, Bishop merges rich and poor, high and low, in a way that identifies the status quo as something that has become a structural inevitability but with a sense that what has become natural is a daily horror.

Samambaia was always the home the Bishop most associated with the comforts of love and family life, as I explore in the previous chapter. However, the poet found her most instinctive affinity for Brazil in the more isolated, rural region of Minas Gerais state to the northwest of Rio de Janeiro. This neighboring state, whose name translates to "General Mines," is known for its traditional culture and its rocky landscapes that have been mined for gold, silver, diamonds, and

other metals and gems since the Brazilian gold rush at the end of the seventeenth-century, known as the *Ciclo do Ouro* ("the Gold Cycle"). Though Minas Gerais is most famous for its mineral wealth, pasture and farmland also extend over a substantial portion of the state, conjuring images of both in the popular imagination. The region holds strong pastoral connotations within the Brazilian imagination, as I will elaborate, with its mix of cattle farming and rural mining culture and its feel of being preserved in the past.

Bishop first visited the colonial gold rush capital of Ouro Preto with Lota in 1953. The poet then gained a deeper connection to the region after reading *Minha vida de menina (The Diary of "Helena Morley"*), and translating it from 1953 to 1953. To write her introduction to the translation, which I discuss in the next section, Bishop visited the small town of Diamantina, located high up in the Serra dos Cristais, or the "Crystal Mountains." In the early 1960s, as Lota became embroiled in the construction of the Parque do Flamengo in Rio, Bishop gravitated increasingly toward the town of Ouro Preto. Then in 1965, with the help of her friend Lilli Correia de Araújo, Bishop bought and restored a historic house built in the late 17thcentury, at the start of the gold rush boom. She named it Casa Mariana after Marianne Moore and also because the house was on the road to the town of Mariana. This was the third of the "three loved houses" Bishop mentions in "One Art," and the only home in Brazil she owned independently.

One might think of Casa Mariana in Ouro Preto as Bishop's anti-Rio or even anti-Samambaia with its dry, mineral version of mountain splendor and its aura of austere tradition. Lota's design at Samambaia was ultra-modern, built of glass and steel, and almost continually swathed in clouds. Meanwhile, Bishop's Casa Mariana was made of centuries-old wood and wattle-and-daub construction—called *pica-pau* in Portuguese and made from strips of leather and bamboo woven together and covered with mud—and required years of restoration. In contrast to the watery, mist-laden landscapes of the coast that Bishop depicts in the Brazil poems from *Questions of Travel*, Casa Mariana looked out on a crystal clear views of glittering, terra cotta-colored mountains and the white soapstone baroque churches of Ouro Preto.

David Kalstone describes Ouro Preto as Bishop's "'ideal' Brazil," an escape from the stresses of Rio and Lota's responsibilities there (*Becoming a Poet* 230). In a 1965 letter from Rio, Bishop writes, "O P is a wonderful place to work in and the climate is much colder and dryer than here [. . .] and I live in great comfort and idleness there." She adds, "Lota is working so hard these days and going through such a hard time."[120] When asked what the famed town of Ouro Preto meant to her, Bishop responded in terms that suggest the pastoral appeal of authenticity and tradition: "I do not know. I simply like it. It is small, but it is a city of truth, vitality. I like its architecture very much, I like its churches. There is something in this city's character that agrees with me."[121] In a letter to Robert Lowell after purchasing Casa Mariana, Bishop further explained her liking for the artifactual quality of things in Ouro Preto, which evoke a sense of history and resourcefulness:

> I like Ouro Preto because everything there was made on the spot, by hand, of stone, iron, copper, wood—and they had to invent a lot—and everything has lasted perfectly well for almost three hundred years now.—I used to think this was just sentimental of me—now I'm beginning to take it more seriously. (Bishop to Lowell, 18 November 1965, *WIA* 596)

[120] Bishop to May Swenson, 10 November, 1965. In Notes to *Edgar Allan Poe* 336.

[121] The article originally appeared in Portuguese in the publication *Visão*. So Bishop's English here has been re-translated by from the Portuguese interview, itself likely a translation from a conversation in English. Add ref with translator.

Bishop enters a distinctly pastoral state of mind when she considers rural Brazil, especially the old-fashioned culture of Minas Gerais. In a letter to Randall Jarrell in which she praises his book of poems *The Lost World,* "The people in the small poor places are so absolutely natural and so elegantly polite."[122] In *Brazil*, she charts a temporal map of Brazil that places the coastal cities in the 20th century, the indigenous tribes in a "really timeless, prehistoric world," and locates the middle-ground in the countryside, where the rural or semi-rural population "lead lives at least half a century behind the times, old-fashioned both agriculturally and socially." For the "cowboys and miners—all the backlands people—time seems to have stopped in the 17th Century" (*Prose* 168). As I argue earlier, Bishop's poetry and literary sketches evade the simplified extremes of this schematic breakdown, though they reflect this way of thinking.

What Anglophone readers may not realize, however, is that Bishop's attitude toward the *interior* also channels a distinctly Brazilian geographical imagination, especially the way cosmopolitan Brazilians in wealthier southern cities like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo view their country's rural heritage. Within Brazil, the towns in Minas Gerais, especially Ouro Preto, possess a mythic status as the historic centers of wealth, power, and culture during the late-17th-through-18th-century gold rush. Minas Gerais also bears the distinction of being the site that gave birth to the 1789 failed revolutionary plot against the Portuguese crown known as the Inconfidência Mineira. The poets who led the Inconfidência Mineira also participated in the literary movement known *Arcadismo* (Arcadianism), which directly connects Minas Gerais to European pastoral within the Brazilian literary tradition.. Their poetry was a measured, neoclassical pastoral poetry celebrating natural, bucolic scenes as a counter-response to the extremes and excesses of the Baroque, though their imagery often imitated European models. Brazilian literary historian Alfredo Bosi characterizes it in terms of a musical, mellifluous style and as influenced by Enlightenment ideals of rationality, clarity, and regularity.[123]

Bishop began frequenting Ouro Preto in the 1950s and '60s, during an era when its cultural-historical cachet drew a steady flow of Brazilian intellectuals and artists from the cities, themselves in search of a more authentic, local Brazilian culture and the appeal of a temporary retreat into the simple life. The casting of Minas Gerais as the site of a modern Brazilian pastoral began in the 1920s, when the region caught the imagination of Brazilian modernists who were turning away from the artistic capital of Paris and instead looking to Brazil's folk cultures of the Amazon, Northeast, and the *interior* for a more regionally grounded sense of "*brasilidade*" in their art. The impetus for the rediscovery of Minas Gerais by the Brazilian modernists was a 1924 road trip that became known as the Modernist Caravan (*a Caravana Modernista*), a group that included key members of the first modernist movement: the satirical poet Oswald de Andrade, his painter wife Tarsila do Amaral, and writer Mário de Andrade. The "caravan" set off from the megalopolis of São Paulo on their way to celebrate Carnival in Rio de Janeiro and took the scenic route in order to introduce their foreign friend, the Swiss-French poet Blaise Cendrars, to the historic baroque towns of Minas Gerais. There, they were received by the "*mineiro*" writers (from Minas Gerais) Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Pedro Nava, and Aníbal Machado.

Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago identifies the two-fold implications of the trip as "an important moment for discussing the emergence, not only of past national heritage (from Minas Gerais, the baroque, etc.), but of the past as facilitating the manifestation of a primitive (or naive) aesthetic" (112, my translation).[124] Through the decades that followed, Minas Gerais became the

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[122] Bishop to Randall Jarrell, 20 March 1965, *OA* 434.

[123] See Bosi, "Arcádia e Ilustração," 55-60.

[124] "[. . .] momento importante para discutir a emergência, não só do passado pátrio (mineiro, barroco etc.), mas do passado enquanto propiciador de uma manifestação estética primitiva (ou naïve)."

nostalgic, primitivist, and pastoral muse for city-dwelling modernists, beginning with the first phase of Brazilian modernism in the 1920s, through the later modernist periods known as the Generation of '30 and of '45. Oswald de Andrade revisited the modernist caravan trip in a series of poems called "*Roteiro das Minas*" ("Minas Gerais Itinerary") in his debut poetry collection *Brazilwood* (*Pau-brasil*, 1925). Manuel Bandeira, one of Brazil's major twentieth-century poets—whom Bishop translated and who became an acquaintance of hers in Rio—wrote the now-classic guidebook *Guia de Ouro Preto* (1938) and the poems "Ouro Preto" and "Minha gente, salvemos Ouro Preto," ("My People, Let's Save Ouro Preto"). The same year Bandeira's guidebook appeared, Ouro Preto became one of the first large sites designated by the Brazilian government for cultural preservation.[125]

Four years later, in 1942, *Minha vida de menina* (*The Diary of "Helena Morley"*) was published to much acclaim—Bishop was introduced to the book and its author through Lota's society circles. During the time Bishop was translating *Helena Morley*, two major poetry books centered on Ouro Preto gained attention: Cecília Meireles's *O Romanceiro da Inconfidência* (*Ballads of the Inconfidência Mineira*, 1953), a retelling of the history leading up to the 1789 revolutionary plot, and the poetry collection *Contemplação de Ouro Preto* (*Contemplation on Ouro Preto*, 1954) by *mineiro* poet Murilo Mendes. In 1956, another *mineiro*, João Guimarães Rosa, considered by many to be Brazil's greatest twentieth-century prose writer, published his masterpiece *Grande Sertão Veredas* (*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*, 1956), a novel that documents the violent, "Wild West" bandit-versus-cowboy culture of the Minas Gerais backlands. All these works cemented Minas Gerais in the Brazilian literary imagination as the repository of a strong Brazilian spirit of place, protected from the modern industrializing and globalizing tendencies of the cities. Yet even as these works idealize the bucolic glories of Minas Gerais, they also focus on its history of violence and decadence, as revolutionary unrest and colonial violence but also its centuries-long dependence on slavery.

Besides Helena Morley, Bishop's favorite chronicler of small-town life in Minas Gerais was Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Brazil's major twentieth-century poet alongside Bandeira, and roughly Bishop's contemporary (he was a decade older). More than half the poems Bishop translated from the Portuguese were by Drummond (seven of twelve), who came from a wealthy ranching family in the Minas Gerais town of Itabira and later settled in Rio de Janeiro. In his 1952 essay "*Contemplação de Ouro Preto*" ("Contemplation on Ouro Preto," which shares its title with the poetry collection by his colleague Murilo Mendes), Drummond describes traveling from his adult home of Rio de Janeiro to Minas Gerais in terms of a journey back in time, a spatial-temporal elision that recalls Bishop's mapping of Brazil that placed its rural interior between fifty years and several centuries behind the coastal cities.[126] Transferring between trains from the Rio to Ouro Preto, Drummond writes of the changes in landscape and the accompanying associations:

> [. . .] we feel the intimacy of Minas a bit more, because we are traveling further into history. It's not only "the more severe landscape," as Saint-Hilaire observed, with mountains that extend beyond our vision, and the mining wounds that remain open among the leaves of imbauba, moss, and faint vegetation. It's the saturation of a traditional atmosphere, the gold-mining scars, the struggle between Paulistas and the Portuguese, the shocking eruption of the arts from a foundation of manual labor; the formation of a *pleiade* of poets [. . .] This atmosphere of Minas, austere and soft in

[125] Ouro Preto became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

[126] The essay appears in the compendium of Drummond's prose sketches, history, and criticism called *Passeios na Ilha* (*Outings on the Island*). The editor's notes to the 2011 reissue of the collection observes that "Ouro Preto, in the era that *Passeios na Ilha* was published, had become a major topos in Brazilian poetry" (*Passeios na Ilha* 309, my translation). Original: "[. . .] na época da publicação de *Passeios na ilha*, havia se tornado um grande *topos* da poesia brasileira."

> any given part of its territory, perhaps it is from here that one inhales its most penetrating vapors." (*Passeios na ilha*, 65, my translation)[127]

The urban chaos of Rio subsides into a kind of baroque pastoral, undulating between violent and gentle extremes—the "more severe landscape" and lush vegetation, the "austere and soft" atmosphere, and the nostalgic air of tradition mixed with the traces of violence done to the land and between men. Drummond further characterizes Minas Gerais as a place of good manners and cheerful hospitality mixed with intense religiosity and a history of suffering. He continues, "Ouro Preto is history and poetry, it's the dramatic feeling of social conflicts, and the elusive charm of the young ladies singing 'if only the live-forever had a scent'" (my translation).[128] Minas Gerais always feels somewhat sepia-toned in Drummond's writing, inseparable from a melancholy sense of the past and a native son's mix of affection and disdain for the isolated towns that seem forever stuck in their ways and completely out of step with "progress." In his autobiographical essay "Vila Utopia" ("Utopian Town") in *Confissões de Minas* (*Minas Gerais Confessions*, 1944), Drummond describes his hometown of Itabira: "Today, tomorrow, one hundred years from now, just like one hundred years ago, a physical reality, a moral reality that becomes crystallized in Itabira. The city neither advances nor retreats. The city is paralytic. Yet, from its paralysis comes its force and its permanence" (121, my translation).[129]

Bishop's translations, and the 1972 *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry* that she co-edited, reflect the pastoral tendencies that marked the national literary zeitgeist through three waves of Brazilian modernism. However, in her own portraits of Ouro Preto and Diamantina, Bishop leaves out Brazilian literary references and instead translates the rural scenes for her English-speaking audience through allusions to British and classical literature. Her depictions also present a more contemporary hybrid pastoral that, even as it dwells on bucolic pleasures and a sense of interconnectedness between humans, animals, and the environment, nevertheless cuts into these reveries with a documentary mode that conveys the harsh, unsettling side of life in these towns.

The industrial grime, disease, alienation, and abjection that characterize Bishop's Rio writing, especially the Copacabana poems "Going to the Bakery" and "Pink Dog," appear in a more pastoral frame in the Ouro Preto texts "Under the Window: Ouro Preto" and "To the Botequim and Back." All four works take the form of a pageant of sorts, a "slice of life" from Bishop's resident foreigner perspective as she takes a stroll or watches the neighborhood go by. The poems "Going to the Bakery" and "Under the Window: Ouro Preto" appear back-to-back in the 1969 edition of *The*

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[127] "[. . .] sentimos um pouco mais a intimidade de Minas, porque caminhamos mais pela história adentro. Não é só a 'paisagem mais severa,' que Saint-Hilaire observou, com as montanhas a se perderem de vista, e as feridas da mineração ainda abertas entre folhas de imbaúba, musgos, mato rasteiro. É a impregnação de uma atmosfera tradicional, são as picadas do ouro, a luta entre paulistas e portugueses, o surto pasmoso das artes com base nos ofícios mecânicos; a formação de uma plêiade de poetas . . . Esse ar de Minas, austero e macio em qualquer parte de seu território, é talvez daqui que se aspira o seu eflúvio mais penetrante." The reference is to the French naturalist Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, who wrote about the region in is *Voyages dans l'Intérieur du Brésil*, 1852.

[128] "Ouro Preto é história e poesia, é sentimento dramático dos conflitos sociais, e graça esquiva de moças cantando 'se a perpétua cheirasse'." The last quote is a wistful line from a popular song that refers to one of the local flowers that is dried used as decoration, the *perpétua* or *sempre-viva*. Bishop mentions this signature flower of Minas Gerais in her introduction to *The Diary of Helena Morley*: "The live-forevers that Helena used to pick are still very much in evidence, in fact they are one of the town's few industries besides diamond-mining." In *PPL* 353.

[129] "Hoje, amanhã, daqui a cem anos, como há cem anos atrás, uma realidade física, uma realidade moral se cristalizam em Itabira. A cidade não avança nem recua. A cidade é paralítica. Mas, de sua paralisia provêm a sua força e a sua permanência."

Complete Poems, emphasizing their diptych connection.[130] The sketch "To the Botequim and Back" (1970) is one of her more polished drafts that first appeared posthumously in *The Collected Prose*. "Pink Dog" (1979) was her penultimate poem to be published before her death.[131] Though not explicitly set in Copacabana like "Going to the Bakery," it conjures a similar bourgeois-yet-sordid Copacabana feel with its imagery of a sad poodle, Carnival, and the leisurely beach and cafés, alongside beggars, sewage, and slums.

I discuss these Rio poems in Chapter Two, but I return to them briefly to highlight the contrast between the city and country in Bishop's neighborhood portraits. "Going to the Bakery" recounts a routine evening walk from Bishop's apartment on the Avenida Copacabana down to the bakery. "To the Botequim and Back" reprises this form as a morning walk from Casa Mariana to get soda and cigarettes at the *botequim*, which she describes as "a little shop or 'grocery store'" but that is also a bar counter where people go for coffee, beer, or *cachaça* (the sugar cane rum ubiquitous in Brazil). The "bakery" and "botequim" in this Brazilian context are basically interchangeable as places people go for sundries, snacks, and drinks at all hours. George Monteiro surmises, quite plausibly, that since "Going to the Bakery" takes place at night that Bishop is also going out to get a drink (*Elizabeth Bishop in Brazil* 73). All these works, except for "Under the Window," refer to drunks or drinking cachaça, which are obliquely connected to Bishop's own alcoholism and cachaça habit and suggest a simultaneous identification and alienation from the drunk and abject subjects she observes.

"Going to the Bakery" opens with a rather romantic personification of the moon, as she "looks down the Avenida / Copacabana at the sights" and "leans on the slack trolley wires." Then it veers into a more lurid dimension where the parked cars have "the iridescence / of dying, flaccid toy balloons" and the bakery lights are dim because the electricity is being rationed. Bishop saturates the atmosphere with disease: the cornbread loaves "lie like yellow-fever victims," the cakes "look about to faint," and Bishop compares the pastries to "a glazed white eye" and red sores. The baker himself is "sickly too," and Bishop passes a "childish *puta*" (prostitute) dancing "feverish as an atom" (*CP* 151). There's a suggestion she might be drunk, underscored by Bishop's subsequent encounter, with a black man sitting on the street outside her apartment who gives off fumes of cachaça that "knock me over, / like gas fumes from an auto-crash" and who lifts his shirt to show off a wound wrapped in a fresh, white bandage. The poem ends in the relatively wealthy white foreigner's sense of helplessness before the black beggar. Bishop ironically recounts a paltry, mechanical version of noblesse oblige:

> I give him seven cents in *my*
> terrific money, say "Good night"
> from force of habit. Oh, poor habit!
> Not one word more apt or bright? (152)

It is a failed, clumsy attempt at connection, that Bishop underscores with the stumbling, mechanical repetition of "habit," "poor habit," that makes for an awkward off-rhyme against the too-cheery "Good night" and "bright." The token exchange—of a few coins and a couple rote words immediately felt to be inappropriate—does little to alleviate the sense of isolation between individuals in this cityscape.

"Pink Dog" reshuffles similar themes of illness, beggars, outsiders and outcasts, and a desperate sort of *danse macabre* amid the hopeless squalor of the streets of Rio. Yet this later poem

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[130] "Under the Window: Ouro Preto" originally appeared in *The New Yorker* on December, 24 1966. *The New Yorker* also first published "Going to the Bakery" on March 23, 1968.

[131] *The New Yorker* published it on February 26, 1979. Bishop died in Boston on October 6, 1979.

combines them all in the figure of the hairless, pink dog that the speaker directly addresses as "you." "Naked and pink," she's an analog for Bishop the melancholy pink foreigner who goes strolling the avenue, most likely Avenida Copacabana again, at odds with everyone else. She's a "poor bitch" who's hidden her babies in the slum while she goes begging; she's the diseased element, an "eyesore" afflicted with scabies and that passersby shy away from because "they're mortally afraid of rabies." It's Carnival and the speaker shrilly advises the pink dog to disguise herself in a costume: "Dress up! Dress up and dance at Carnival!" The poem's bleakest moments refer to a scandal indicative of Rio's chaos and inability to properly deal with its poor, a story in the papers about the homeless being tossed into rivers. In this cautionary tale, the speaker warns that the wretched dog is even worse off than the "idiots, paralytics, parasites," "anyone who begs, / drugged, drunk, or sober, with or without legs," who "go bobbing in the ebbing sewage" (190).

Both Rio poems strike a sour chord of pity, repulsion, and frustration alongside a sense of helpless alienation. The individuals remain anonymous and isolated in their misery. The only distractions are drinking and dancing, Carnival figured as a bread-and-circuses diversion. Bishop also reveals her cynicism about the problems of the poor in "To the Botequim and Back," yet her depiction of social ills in this rural context is much more tempered by a sense small-town solidarity, nostalgia, and the partial solace of untamed natural beauty. Written quite late in Bishop's Brazilian phase, after Casa Mariana had become her primary residence in Brazil, the narrative offers a perspective that feels more domestic than foreign, though it retains a subtle awareness of the poet's outsider status.

Bishop opens the sketch by announcing her quotidian errand at the botequim, but the first vision she offers is an elaborate description that conjures a Romantic idyll of fields teeming with flowers and gardens growing wild among the stone ruins of colonial houses and their crumbling perimeter walls. It recalls the ekphrastic detail and meticulous gradations in color and size of the tapestried nature in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" but without the sense of awe and disorientating disproportion that mark the earlier poem. Nature's vitality is still stunning in this later essay, yet gentler and less foreign:

> It is a beautiful bright morning, big soft clouds moving rather rapidly high up, making large patches of opaque blue on the green hills and rocky peaks. [. . .] Everything has grown amazingly in a week or so. Two kinds of morning glory adorn the standing walls of a ruined house—a pale lavender kind and a bright purple, pink-centered kind, hundreds of gaudy flowers stretching open to the sun as wide as they possibly can. [. . .] I look down at a garden inside another ruin, an attempt at beauty and formality about ten feet square: there are a square border and two diagonals, with a rosebush in the middle covered with small red roses. Everything straggly and untidy, unpruned, long shoots on the bushes swaying in the breeze. (*PPL* 500)

The passage blooms with the liberatory beauty of an overgrown garden, of ruins merging back into nature. The "big soft clouds," "green hills and rocky peaks," and especially the wild and "gaudy flowers" that adorn the "ruined house" and the overgrown garden of "another ruin" summon a patchwork of images out of Wordsworth. The emphasis on these ruined houses especially recalls one of Wordsworth's most famous pastoral poems, *The Ruined Cottage*, in which the Wordsworthian wanderer arrives at the ruin and climbs over a "wall where that same gaudy flower / Looked out upon the road" and finds "a plot / Of garden ground now wild" and "a well / Half covered up with willow flowers and grass" (704). Bishop herself observed her ties to Wordsworth in a letter to Robert Lowell after nearing completion of her second collection, *A Cold Spring* (1955): "On reading

over what I've got on hand I find I'm really a minor female Wordsworth—at least, I don't know anyone else who seems to be such a Nature Lover."[132]

Bishop continues filling in the dense description with various butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds, as well as more orange-yellow dahlias, yellow-white roses, lavender flowers, and onions and kale mixed in among the flowers to complete the breezy summer scene. Bishop ends this extended nature description with a "cascade" that passes under the street and reappears below—down the steep hillside, in fact right alongside Casa Mariana—and is filled with "a rank growth of 'lily of the valley,' a wild water plant with lush long leaves and big tired white blossoms that drag in the water" and have an "overstrong and oversweet" scent (*PPL* 500). This cascading river frames the sketch, as Bishop eventually returns to its mountain source in the final paragraphs. Murmuring rivers and rushing "cataracts" abound in Wordsworth, as in the poem commonly known as "Tintern Abbey." The waters of the "sylvan Wye" river run through the poem, as at the start when "I hear / These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs / With a soft inland murmur." Wordsworth reminisces on "this green pastoral landscape," and how in his youth "The sounding cataract / Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock, / The mountain, and the deep and gloom wood, / Their colors and their forms, were then to me / An appetite" (*Lyrical Ballads* 113-118).

However, Bishop abruptly leaves this cloyingly beautiful nature behind, and the middle of the sketch takes a more somber turn as she nears the small commercial strip. Shades of "Going to the Bakery" and "Pink Dog" arise as Bishop depicts the various town locals whom she passes on her way to the botequim, owned by João Pica Pau, which Bishop translates literally as John Woodpecker. Bishop introduces a dissonance into the Romantic feeling as Ouro Preto shifts from a picturesque site of wildflowers among ruins to a place where life has a hardscrabble, worn-out-yet-persevering feel. It is a place of hard drinking where violence can break out at any moment. A group of men and boys loiter on the sidewalk in front of an open room where two boys are playing snooker. A similar group gathers at the botequim, where one man is "already quite drunk at the far end drinking straight *cachaça*" on this "beautiful bright morning." João Pica Pau describes a drunken fight that broke out the night before, in which, "One man had a machete, another had a pocket knife, the third had a stick." No one was killed but the botequim owner concludes, "Yes, too much killing goes on, it is easy to kill someone." Bishop completes the sordid, sad atmosphere with details of the shop's humble offerings, its unrefrigerated bottles of milk that often go sour, the "wild variety of cheap cigarettes," "a mess of small salamis in a basket," razor blades, and "cheap candies" that the owner spills out on "the dirty counter" for her to select (she repeats the word "cheap" repeated twice in the same paragraph).

What differentiates Bishop's description of common life in Ouro Preto versus Rio de Janeiro is the sense of solidarity and familiarity among the townspeople, who drink together and exchange stories. Bishop is still an outsider, but she is able to witness and interact with these others on a more sustained level compared to merely offering an awkward "Good night" and some change, as in "Going to the Bakery." There is "[c]onstant coming and giong on the sidewalk" in a rural pageant that is more varied in that it includes not only the wretched but also cheerful and dignified elements. In one striking image: "A large black lady holds an apricot-colored umbrella, sheer and shiny, high over her head to give as much shade as possible to herself, the baby in her arms, and two little ones trailing behind." There is still "a miserable and shuffling old woman" with glittering, "crazy little eyes" but one whom Bishop recognizes as "[o]ne of the local characters" and defends against the mocking children who follow her around.

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[132] Bishop to Lowell, 11 July 1951. *WLA* 122. Other critics have compared Bishop's poetry to Wordsworth's, including Robert Pinsky, "The Idiom of a Self: Elizabeth Bishop and Wordsworth," in *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art*, 49-60.

Bishop depicts a trio of adolescent brothers on their way to the barber shop, one of whom becomes an eyesore like the beggar and the dog in "Pink Dog," though the moment of repulsion gets resolved in this small-setting. She refers to them as "mulattoes," tone-deaf to the term's offense in English, especially in 1970s, but a word also suggestive of her assimilation into Brazilian ways of talking about race—*mulatto* remains in common usage in Brazil without the same negative or pejorative connotations as in the U.S. Something is wrong with the middle brother, who is "languid and limp," yet whose ragged clothing is nevertheless very clean and who "bends and sways like a broken stalk," in a naturalizing simile that lends a pastoral melancholy to the scene. He's missing an eye, and Bishop "can't bear to look" at the "sunken hole" where the eye should be. Yet as a counterpoint to her revulsion, she peers into the barbershop and witnesses an endearing familial scene—"the one-eyed boy sitting on his brother's lap, while the barber cuts his long frizzy hair. Everyone is silent as the brother holds him in a tight embrace."[133] Thus while the wounded beggar in Rio continues to sit alone on the street, this boy is taken care of by family.

In the third and final movement of this sketch, Bishop returns home and to a scene of natural splendor that conjures a Romantic idyll with jagged edges. Bishop shifts the focus in two ways. First, geographically, she moves farther away from town into the desolate countryside, past her home on the outskirts of Ouro Preto, to a high plateau "a mile above the city, up a winding steep dirt road." And she also moves inward, shifting from the generally realist description of her walk into town toward a more surreal technique that integrates her characteristically detailed physical descriptions with both subtle and overt allusions to British Romantic poetry. Bishop grows Wordsworthian once more with "steep fields full of ruins" that are two hundred years old, where "a few ruins have turned back into houses again." She describes one of these ruins-turned-houses as "just four standing walls," recalling Wordsworth's description of "a ruined house, four naked walls / That stared upon each other" in *The Ruined Cottage* (703).

This ascent away from the town, in a landscape full of even more wildflowers and a few tiny hermit houses, made of "mud brick, wattles showing through," like lowly versions of Bishop's restored wattle-and-daub Casa Mariana, further recalls the opening scene of Wordsworth's "Michael, A Pastoral Poem." It begins, "If from the public way you turn your steps / Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill, / [. . .] in such bold ascent / The pastoral mountains front you, face to face" (*Lyrical Ballads* 226-240). Yet Bishop rebels against the picturesque tendency somewhat when she contrasts the "magnificent view" and "magnificent sight" of the blue hills with a comparison of one of these houses grafted haphazardly onto the body of a bus as "a hideous little riddle against a majestic backdrop." She further disrupts the nostalgic charm of a ruined former mill by recalling the boys who stole the old iron mill wheel while in town to make "an arty movie" and who smoked pot every night in their apartment below her house while "one, the youngest, stayed home alone and sniffed ether, almost etherizing me."

While Bishop's descriptions of gentle nature evoke Wordsworth, it is Coleridge that she overtly alludes to at the end. The language in the final two paragraphs suddenly grows quite lyrical, as Bishop describes a field of flowers and then the stream that flows from the Cachoeira das Andorinhas, which Bishop names in a literal English translation, the Waterfall of the Little Swallows. Bringing the reader to a field dizzyingly "carpeted with flowers, short, shorter ones, moss-height ones" amid "tall ones, all nameless, yellow and purple, fuzzy seed-heads, red pods, and white ones too," Bishop doubly situates this location, by geography and in the Anglo-American literary imagination: "This is the field of the Waterfall of the Little Swallows, and this is where the stream

[133] All quotes in this and the prior paragraphs are from *PPL* 501-502.

disappears, like the sacred river Alph in Coleridge's dream."[134] This is the opium-fueled fantasia "Kubla Khan," subtitled "Or a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment." It begins:

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man.
> (741)

Coleridge's sacred river flows throughout the dream sequence, heading underground and resurfacing for a moment amid "dancing rocks" and "meandering with mazy motion / Through wood and dale." Xanadu is Coleridge's exotic idea of the Mongolian Khan's Far Eastern pleasure garden, yet the poem also draws on classical myth. John Livingstone Lowes, in his classic study of Coleridge's source texts for this poem, *The Road to Xanadu* (1920), connects the sacred river Alph to both the Nile and the Alpheus, "in a context of ebullient fountains and subterranean rivers disappearing into a chasm."[135] In another pastoral connection, the Alpheus, or Alpheos, is the river that runs through the mountainous region of Arcadia. Thus Bishop, in her allusion to the River Alph, casts the rural highlands of Minas Gerais as a living Arcadia, the original shepherds' paradise associated with the Golden Age. Bishop's impressions of the bucolic scenes in *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* further links these highland rivers and forests to classical scenes of natural simplicity, as I discuss in the final section.

Bishop's description of the Brazilian mountain stream at the end of "To the Botequim and Back" echoes Coleridge's lines on the Alph, even as her language simultaneously evokes the namesake of the stream's physical source, a "little sparrow," in its flowing, darting movement:

> It fans out over the red stone, narrows and rises in cold gray ridges, disappears underground, and then shows up again farther off, dashing downwards now through more beautiful rocks. It then takes off downwards for the Underworld. You can hang over the rocks and see it far below. It keeps descending, disappears into a cavern, and is never seen again. It talks as it goes, but the words are lost . . . (*PPL* 504)

Like the Alph, the water that flows from the Waterfall of the Little Sparrows dips underground and to the surface again among rocks and back into caverns. What is striking about this passage is how Bishop conjures a mythic reverie that mixes Arcadia and whiffs of the exotic Orient by way of the British Romantic imagination while also maintaining an accurate, literal naturalist description, apart from the "Underworld," and the more Romantic idea that nature speaks. I have seen these same red rocks and this series of waterfalls, caverns, and mountain streams that disappear and remerge, one even cascading down the hillside above and below Bishop's Ouro Preto house. They are indeed as breathtaking as Bishop writes, perhaps even more so.

This real spring with a mythical feel is also central to Bishop's poem "Under the Window: Ouro Preto," only this earlier poem describes the much lower portion, located on the main road into Ouro Preto, the same one that Bishop takes to the botequim. Here, the water is diverted into a fountain for passersby to drink from, and then continues down the slope past Casa Mariana. Shortly

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[134] As usual, Bishop gives a literal English translation of a Brazilian name: Cachoeira das Andorinhas.
[135] Livingstone 360. See Book Four, Chapter XIX "The Sleeping Images" for Livingstone's discussion of the River Alph, especially sections X-XI, 354-362.

after purchasing the colonial house, Bishop mentions the fountain and cascade in a letter to May Swenson:

> There is also a small water-fall right under my bedroom window—the house sits up high on a ledge overlooking the town—and it is good water, so every passerby, every car and truck almost, stops for a drink of water, and I lean out and eavesdrop on their conversations—mostly talk of sicknesses, funerals, babies, and the cost of living.[136]

Bishop describes a similar scene to Robert Lowell later that year, but from the perspective of her friend Lilli Correia de Araújo's house, where she was staying while Casa Mariana was being renovated, and which is located just across the road, on the same side as the fountain. Bishop writes of the "water running down through a marvellous set of aqueducts, tunnels, fountains, stone tanks, etc.—now all overgrown with ferns and moss," another Romantic scene of nature reclaiming ages-old stone ruins. Bishop elaborates, "There's a big spring that runs out just below the house—an iron pipe where there used to be a fountain—and everyone stops, always, to have a drink there—dogs, donkeys, cars—besides all the pedestrians."[137] The communal scene she describes in these two letters becomes the raw material for the more choreographed version in the poem. In the letter to Lowell, she mentions the same truck painted pink and blue with rose-buds that appears in the poem. Bishop ends the scene in the letter with, "Now all hands are taking a drink," a line that sums up the pastoral feel that suffuses the poem.

"Under the Window: Ouro Preto" is the most traditionally pastoral of all Bishop's writing on Brazil. Even though it takes place on the busy road between Ouro Preto and Mariana and lacks the typical pastoral scenery—no fields of wild flowers, roving streams or green hills—the poem fully inhabits a pastoral state of mind in its sense of timelessness, pleasing harmony, and universality among humans and animals all taking a momentary respite from labor to drink from the spring. Here, common folk and pack animals alike take pleasure in the most simple of resources: water. Formerly covered by a baroque-era soapstone sculpture of three faces that was removed to the local museum, the "fountain" now takes a more humble form as "a single iron pipe" from which emerges "a strong and ropy stream." Bishop creates a simultaneously synchronic and diachronic sense of unity in that this fountain is "here where all the world stops" in the present but also where the whole world has stopped for time immemorial:

> . . . "Cold." "Cold as ice,"
> all have agreed for several centuries.
> Donkeys agree, and dogs, and the neat little
> bottle-green swallows dare to dip and taste. (*CP* 153)

The original fountain carving may be in a museum but a living history pageant gathers around the true fountain, made authentic from daily use. The contract recalls Robinson Crusoe's knife from Bishop's "Crusoe in England" that "reeked of meaning, like a crucifix" as long as it was essential but off the island, in a museum, its "living soul has dribbled away" (166). Alpers writes that pastoral poems "not only exemplify continuity but mythologize it as an account of poetry" (13). Bishop not only documents the centuries-long continuity of town life that pauses at this fountain

[136] Bishop to May Swenson, 21 May 1965, in Notes to *Edgar Allan Poe*, 335.
[137] Bishop to Lowell, 19 September 1965, *WLA* 589.

but also mythologizes this daily ritual and coming together as a symbol of universal humanity with literary overtones.

"The conversations are simple," she declares in the opening line and offers snippets of mundane dialogue about food, "*Women*!," babies, money that could happen in any town. We see women carrying swaddled babies, pack donkeys and a mare that suggest old-fashioned country ways, a small black boy carrying laundry on his head, and "that old man with the stick and sack, meandering again," who could be a character out of *Lyrical Ballads*, the old leech-gather from "Resolution and Independence" or the subject of "Old Man Travelling." Even the "big new truck" that "arrives / to overawe them all" stops so the men inside can stop for a drink and to "wash / their faces, necks, and chests. They wash their feet, / their shoes, and put them back together again."

In "Manners," Bishop's poem about old-fashioned country life in Nova Scotia, the cars that speed past the horse-drawn cart at the end of the poem never slow down and ultimately break the intimacy of the pre-industrial relationship between people and animals. Yet in "Under the Window," the truck not only stops but is also marked with a human touch, decorated in hand-painted rosebuds and with joking slogan written across the bumper. The poem's harmonious scene evokes Empson's idea of poetry making "a unity like a crossroads" in its reconciliation of disparate elements, in his discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets in *Some Versions of Pastoral* (89).

Here too Bishop recalls Shakespeare's pastoral play *As You Like It* in the line that casts this pageant in a mythic light: "The seven ages of man are talkative / and soiled and thirsty." It indirectly references one of the most famous passages from Shakespeare, spoken by the melancholy character Jacques, that begins "All the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely players," and enumerates the phases of life as "seven ages" (II.7.140-141).[138] Bishop's phrase "seven ages of man" translates this particular Brazilian scene in terms of Shakespearean truth and philosophical tradition and universalizes the scene as a theater of humanity. Bishop's line "all the world still stops" echoes "All the world's a stage." Her citing of the "seven ages of man" further unifies these individual characters, from infants to old man, into the symbolic phases of a single human life.

While Bishop's other depictions of the Brazilian poor are tinged with guilt, pity, alienation, and disapproval, here she sees the common folk through a rosier pastoral lens. Bishop herself is at home in the poem, literally, eavesdropping unseen at her window and not self-conscious as the foreign element in the Brazilian scene, as in the other texts I've examined in this chapter. "Under the Window" still registers poverty, dirty, and industrial forces, but their negative associations become temporarily suspended during this idyll. The people are poor but no one is begging or suffering and everyone is engaged in some sort of activity. The mothers use their "dirty hands" to give their babies drinks of water but do so "lovingly." The only sign of disease is the sly description of an old truck with "a syphilitic nose" but that has a "gallant driver." Though the seven ages of man are "soiled," they are animatedly "talkative" and quenching their thirst.

Even the oil that has saturated a puddle of water near the fountain suggests natural beauty during this lyrical spot of time. At first it seems to reflect the sky, but then Bishop decides, "no, more blue than that: / like the tatters of the *Morpho* butterfly." She thus ends the poem on an image stagnant, polluted water that undergoes a metamorphosis into this tropical butterfly whose enormous, iridescent blue wings are almost cartoon-like in their brightness and beauty. Yet in the poem's only point of ambivalence, this oil "flashes or looks up brokenly, / like bits of mirror," suggesting this harmonious living tableau around the fountain may be a temporary pastoral crystallization, easily dissipated like Coleridge's "Vision in a Dream. A Fragment."

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[138] Though Shakespeare borrows the idea of these seven ages from medieval philosophy, Bishop is most like referring to this most famous usage of "the seven ages of man," especially in this pastoral context and because this phrase is the unofficial nickname for the speech it occurs in.

III. Bishop's Pastoralizing Translations

The Brazilian works that Bishop chose to translate tend to be more openly sentimental and romantic than her own style but at the same time resonate with her original work's recurring themes of nature, animals, and nostalgia for the simplicity of childhood and rural culture. Bishop's select translations from the Portuguese—just thirteen poems, plus single stanzas from four popular sambas, three stories by Clarice Lispector, and the book-length *The Diary of "Helena Morley"*—further suggest her desire to present a more ideal, more authentic version of Brazil than the one that emerges in her own writing. In a pastoral doubling that merges the particular and the universal, or difference and sameness, this sense of authenticity comes on the one hand from the way in which these works feel particularly Brazilian in their representations of folk, popular, and traditional cultures that are distinct from first-world Europe and North America. On the other hand, there is also a universal quality about this "authenticity" that conjures a somewhat recognizable, or at least translatable, agrarian past for those from fully industrialized "metropolitan societies," as Williams characterizes them when he transposes his model of country and city to a global periphery-metropolis framework (279).

As I discuss at the start of this chapter, a translated text is always received with a certain level of doubt about its fidelity to the original. By virtue of being a translation, the text is already implicated as an approximation, an adaptation of some truer source. The original thus retains an aura of authenticity when measured against its translation. Bishop's translations offer this feeling of a window onto the "true" Brazil, due in part to their predominance of folk and "popular" content, popular here referring to both popular songs and stories about the uneducated class known in Brazil as "*o povo*," or "the people." Her translations also offer a more immediate sense of Brazilian voices when juxtaposed with Bishop's travel writing on Brazil in anthologies of her work, which offer minimal-to-zero notes situating the translations' Brazilian authorship and literary context.[139] Given the relative lack of knowledge among Anglophone readers about Brazilian culture, especially its literature, which was and remains inadequately represented in English, these translations become representative anecdotes for Brazil without further ways to situate their voices within the Brazilian literary context.

Bishop's translations mix popular compositions with work from more erudite writers that often mimics popular forms, though they are difficult to distinguish from each other in translation, especially since Bishop tends toward a literal translation style that doesn't always reflect more nuanced registers in Portuguese.[140] The most genuinely popular, or what Empson would call

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[139] Bishop's poetry translations appear with no contextualizing notes in either *The Complete Poems (1911-1979*) or the 2011 centenary *Poetry* anthology. Her poetry and prose translations appear with minimal notes about their Brazilian provenance in Library of America *Poems, Prose, and Letters* (2008).

[140] Though Bishop spent nearly two decades in Brazil and could read and write in Portuguese, she still spoke mainly English with Lota and among their social group. She read Brazilian classics and poets of note in both English and Portuguese but never pursed a more systematic or sustained study of Brazilian literature or the Portuguese language. Her translations are marked here and there by basic errors or overly literal interpretations that show she continued to hear the Latinate constructions common to everyday Brazilian speech in terms of the formal register that Latinate words hold in English. For example, she refers to the "slight pretentiousness in speech of semi-literacy" common to Brazilians in "To the Botequim & Back" (*PPL* 500). In the *Brazil* chapter "A Warm and Reasonable People," she quotes a passenger who stumbles while leaving the *bonde* (tram) in Rio declaring "with great dignity": "Everyone descends from the *bonde* in the way he wants to." It's easy to hear the Portuguese original behind this, as "*Todo mundo desce do bonde como quiser*," which is a colloquial expression that more naturally translates to, "Everyone gets off the tram however they want." The verb

proletarian, form that Bishop translates are the four samba stanzas she includes in her *New York Times* article on Rio. Bishop introduces them as a popular form, "The sambas, *marchas* and other Carnival songs are the living poetry of the poor Cariocans," and explains the songs are made from the stuff of everyday life: "obsessions, fads, fancies and grievances; love, poverty, drink and politics" (*PPL* 442-43). These samba fragments next appear without notes in the 1979 *Complete Poems*. Neither the original article nor the anthology, no composers are credited, further underscoring their popular form.

Many of Bishop's other selections contain a more complex convergence of "high" and "low" whose seams get erased in their translation for an audience with little access to their broader cultural and literary context. The effect recalls the confusion embedded in the pastoral mode that Empson points out, as "a puzzling form which looks proletarian but isn't." As I discuss at the start of this chapter, Empson makes a distinction between folk culture as "by" and "for" though not necessarily "about" common folk, versus pastoral as "about" common folk but neither "by" nor "for" (6). What complicates interpreting the more erudite pastoral versus the authentically folk character of Bishop's translations is how the original works blur these distinctions, or mix them up in various ways. The sambas come from the context of the people (*o povo*) yet are "for" all to sing together during Carnival.

The Rio singer and composer Chico Buarque's songs are similarly "for" all in their mass popularity, and his song that Bishop translates, "A Banda" ("The Band"), is such a universal hit that Brazilians of all classes and generations know the lyrics.[141] Its upbeat tempo makes it similar to samba, and it narrates what sounds like a folktale about a band that enchants an entire town (the melancholy girl, the man counting his money, the children, the tired old man) as it marches through singing about love. Yet the singer and composer Chico Buarque is also from Rio's elite circles, son of the famous historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, and who now writes sophisticated literary novels that don't necessarily take place in Brazil and whose protagonists seem more internationally cosmopolitan than particularly Brazilian.[142]

Another cross-over composer that Bishop translated was Vinícius de Moraes, a poet respected in literary circles but more famous as a bossa nova lyricist and composer.[143] While several of his poems appear in the 1972 *Anthology*, Bishop only chose to translate one, "Sonnet of Intimacy," a particularly pastoral composition of his. A dreamy Petrarchan sonnet about a leisurely walk in the countryside, the poem builds into a crescendo of coarse, masculine energy. The speaker begins by chewing on a blade of grass bare-chested, plucks then spits out the dark "blood" of a blackberry or raspberry (*amora*, which Bishop translates as raspberry but is more commonly blackberry), and then ends up among the cattle. She renders the final two stanzas as:

> The smell of cow manure is delicious
> The cattle look at me unenviously
> And when there comes a sudden stream and hiss
>
> Accompanied by a look not unmalicious,
> All of us, animals, unemotionally
> Partake together of a pleasant piss. (*An Anthology* 103)

"descer" is the everyday word used to say "get off" the bus, the tram, the train, without the forced, erudite air that Bishop's translation as "descend" implies (*PPL* 433).

[141] "A Banda" only appears in the later anthology *PPL*, 301.

[142] One exemplary novel of Buarque's is *Budapest* (*Budapeste*), which takes place in a "Budapest" invented from a map.

[143] Moraes wrote the lyrics to songs from the 1959 film *Black Orpheus*, based on his play *Orfeu da Conceição*.

In the original, which appears on the facing page, they are:

> Fico ali respirando o cheiro bom do estrume
> Entre as vacas e os bois que me olham em ciúme
> E quando por acaso uma mijada ferve
>
> Seguida de um olhar não sem malícia e verve
> Nós todos, animais, sem comoção nenhuma
> Mijamos em comum numa festa de espuma. (102)

One of them begins to pee and the poems ends with them pissing all together in a "*festa de espuma*," literally a "frothy celebration" or "froth party." Bishop's version is one of the most graceful stand-alone poems of her translations. Yet whereas Vinícius de Moraes's original gathers a certain crass force at the end, upsetting what promised to be a more polite bucolic reverie, hers maintains a more decorous, steady pace and defuses the violence of the original. The last two tercets in the Portuguese are made up of three pairs of rhyming couplets (the middle one broken over two stanzas), *aab baa*, with complete, masculine rhymes[144], with the pairs *estrume* / *ciúme* (manure / jealousy), *ferve* / *verve* (boils / verve) and *nenhuma* / *espuma* (none / froth).

Meanwhile, Bishop changes the rhyme-scheme to a subtler, alternating *aba aba*. She further makes the original more decorous by leaving out the jarring "boiling" piss that starts off the "frothy celebration" or "froth party" (*E quando por acaso uma mijada ferve*) and making it more euphemistically "a sudden stream and a hiss." Finally, in comparison the more literal "All of us, animals, with no commotion whatsoever / We piss all together in a frothy celebration" (*Nós todos, animais, sem comoção nenhuma / Mijamos em comum numa festa de espuma*), Bishop ends in an elegant alliteration: "All of us, animals, unemotionally / Partake together of a pleasant piss." To be fair, Bishop was also beholden in her choices to maintaining the meter and rhyme scheme, but her ending makes Moraes's explosive, crude climax feel like an only slightly naughty tea party. Bishop's interpretation of "Sonnet of Intimacy" makes for the most pastoralizing of her translation choices at the level of the word.

Bishop's translations of poets from Brazil's poor, agrarian northeastern region present what seems like folk poetry but that is in fact composed by poets with rural roots who revisit these themes through a more literary perspective. One major example is João Cabral de Melo Neto, a major poet from the post-1945 generation whose work evokes traces of modernism and concrete poetry (and its influence from Imagism and Objectivism) alongside currents of social protest. Born in Recife, one of the northeastern capitals, Cabral spent most of his life in the diplomatic corps, Itamaraty, known as a club for the Brazilian elite, and spent years abroad as the Consul General in several European countries. Yet none of this is apparent in the three of eighteen sections that Bishop translates from his long poem *Life and Death of a Severino* (*Morte e Vida Severina*, 1954-55), a pastiche of a traditional *auto*, a religious play originating on the medieval Iberian peninsula (as does the northeastern cordel literature that Bishop imitates in "The Burglar of Babylon").

Cabral draws on a traditional oral form, in this case a kind of northeastern Christmas pageant, and uses artificially basic, ritual language in a series of speeches and dialogues that narrate the hardship, precarity, and violence that mark the itinerant life of a typical rural northeasterner and that end in the Christ-like birth of a child. The *auto* is spoken in the voice of Severino, a farmer who announces his collective identity from the start:

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[144] "Masculine rhyme" is the Portuguese poetics term identifying when the final two syllables of a word rhyme, giving an emphatic flourish.

My name is Severino,
I have no Christian name.
There are lots of Severinos
(a saint of pilgrimages)
so they began to call me
Maria's Severino.
There are lots of Severinos
with mothers called Maria. (127)

The stilted dialogue could have easily come from a popular form of anonymous or collective composition:

—From where do you bring him,
brothers of souls?
Where did you start out on your long journey
—From the dryest of lands,
brothers of souls,
from the land where not even
wild plants will grow. (131)

Yet the only information in the anthologies of Bishop's work that indicates this is not a collective, popular work is the poet's name, João Cabral de Melo Neto, with no further indication of a certain distance between his poetic range and this relatively rustic-sounding composition. The *Anthology of Brazilian Poetry* is a notable exception, in that Bishop and her co-editor Emmanuel Brasil include short biographies contextualizing each poet in the table of contents. Their decision to publish it as a bilingual, facing-page edition also adds to the increased transparency of the translations, in contrast to the translations when incorporated alongside Bishop's original writing.

A longer study of Bishop's translations would include an analysis of all her translation work, yet in this more directed context, I turn to focus on Bishop's central pastoral fascination with old-fashioned Minas Gerais, as manifested in her two most substantial translations, from Carlos Drummond de Andrade and *The Diary of "Helena Morley"*. Both Drummond and Morley offer small-town portraits in this region known for its traditional way of life and codes of proper behavior, which resonate with Bishop's own writing about the rural Nova Scotia of her childhood. While Drummond is considered a late modernist and experimented with form and a more concrete style of poetry—exemplified by "In the Middle of the Road" ("*No meio do caminho*"), which Bishop translated—there is also a more nostalgic, sentimental side to his poetry. This is particularly manifested in his more personal poems about growing up in the small town of Itabira do Mato Dentro at the start twentieth century, where he came from a ranching family in transition from its slave-holding days (slavery was abolished in 1888).

Bishop first wrote to Drummond in 1963 to send him the translation of "Travelling in the Family" that she had begun work on and to let him know she planned to translate other poems of his.[145] Though they lived within ten minutes of each other (she in Leme, he in neighboring Copacabana), they carried out their acquaintance mainly through letters. As I mentioned earlier, Bishop translated more poems by Drummond than any other poet, and their correspondence shows

[145] Bishop to Drummond, 27 June 1963. In the Carlos Drummond de Andrade archive at the Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa, Rio de Janeiro. Also printed in the Appendix to the Brazilian translation of Bishop's letter collection *One Art*, *Uma arte*.

a mutual respect and cordiality, as well as the meticulous care Bishop took in translating his poems. The affinity between their styles lies in a balance between the proper and the natural—in an elegant yet largely conversational poetic voice, a certain formalism that nevertheless resists predictability or stiltedness, and a way of entering into intimate, personal subject-matter without becoming wholly confessional.

In *Duas Artes* (*Two Arts*), Maria Lúcia Milléo Martins compares Drummond's "*boitempo*," "cattle-time" or more literally "bull-time," to what she calls Bishop's "*tempo-vaca*," "cow-time" in her maternal grandparents' town of Great Village and in New England (13). "*Boitempo*" is Drummond's own portmanteau neologism for the title of a poem and three volumes of poetry (1968, 1973, 1979) that revisit his youth in the Minas Gerais countryside. Milléo Martins reads "the figure of the bull in the countryside" as "an icon of the paralysis of life in 'Itabira do Mato Dentro,' where everything remains 'at a standstill, indestructible and silent'" (63, my translation).

Bishop's "cow-time" comes most literally from her autobiographical piece "In the Village," in which the child Elizabeth Bishop takes Nelly the cow out to pasture, as she does every morning. As the child leaves the house, her grandmother instructs her to take Nelly to the brook and pick a bunch of mint, and her two aunts come into the kitchen to fuss over her before she slips out to find the cow. Nelly takes a leisurely pace, "Flop, flop, down over the dirt sidewalk into the road," stopping to steal bits of weeds along the way (*PPL* 107). Bishop points out who lives in every house her young-girl self passes, as she stops to say hello to the farmers and to her friend Nate the blacksmith. This long walk with the cow forms the pastoral idyll at the center of "In the Village," a sweet memory of Bishop's rustic life in Great Village, the only time she lived surrounded by her family.

This picturesque tour of the village is framed on both ends by the traumatic events that abruptly interrupted Bishop's life in Great Village. The story begins with her mother's "scream, the echo of a scream" that "hangs over that Nova Scotian village" forever, a sign of her mother's grief for her dead father and eventual breakdown that resulted in her lifelong institutionalization in a sanitarium. Toward the end, the child Bishop takes a package to be sent to her mother at the sanitarium and hiding the address in embarrassment.[146] The idea of *tempo* in *boitempo* and *tempo-vaca* here is both the unhurried sense of time among the leisurely cows and the naive world of childhood but also *tempo* in the sense of a past era or phase, "*o tempo da infância*," or "the time of childhood."

In contrast to the more stereotypical Brazilian "emotionalism" that Bishop links to "the custom of the *abraço*, or embrace" in the *Brazil* book, and that I explore in Chapter 1, Drummond's portraits of Minas Gerais culture emphasize the region's singular strict codes of propriety and repressed silences around taboo topics. Bishop and her co-editor Emmanuel Brasil further underscore the relatively austere regional character of Minas Gerais in their introduction to Drummond's work in their Brazilian poetry anthology, explaining that, "the countryside is harsh and rocky, and life there is likely to be hard, narrow, and sometimes fanatically devout" (*An Anthology* ix). In Drummond's essay on Itabira, "Vila de Utopia" ("Utopian Town"), he observes the quaint archaism of his hometown but also remarks on its rigidity, "There was an excess of good manners in the air of Minas Gerais and the young gentlemen had to undo their upbringing" (*Confissões* 120, my translation).[147] British explorer and diplomat Sir Richard Francis Burton, in his two-volume *Explorations of the Highlands of the Brazil* (1869), also observes the strict rules of propriety surrounding

[146] Bishop's stories "Gwendolyn" (1953), "Primer Class" (1960), and "Memories of Uncle Neddy" (1977) also give nostalgic portraits of life in Great Village, though like "In the Village," they are laced with allusions to greater troubles, the death of her playmate neighbor and her family history of alcoholism. "The Country Mouse" (1961) recounts the jarring differences between her life in Great Village and the stuffier home in Boston, where her wealthier paternal grandparents insisted on raising her in less rustic conditions.

[147] "Havia excesso de boa educação no ar de Minas Gerais e os moços precisavam deseducar-se."

the young white women of these towns, who were kept out of sight and watched the street life behind *muxarabis*, latticed screens that came from the Moorish influence on Portuguese architecture.

Bishop's translations of Drummond's work favor the poems that reminisce about his traditional family life in Minas Gerais, especially "Travelling in the Family" ("*Viagem na família*"), "Family Portrait" ("*Retrato de família*"), "The Table" ("*A mesa*"), and "Infancy" ("*Infância*").[148] The poems operate in the realm of memory and nostalgia for the family fold, rural leisure, and the famously abundant, home-cooked *mineiro* feasts. Yet as with Bishop's writing about Nova Scotia, Drummond's memory poems also bear the pain of the past, of death and trauma in the family that the relatives never openly address. Drummond's nostalgia for Minas Gerais is also cut through with an acute awareness of how deeply patriarchal structures dictated all aspects of life and granted an exceptional permissiveness to the men in power.

The youngest of nine children, Drummond voices his and his siblings' resentment toward their tyrannical, remote father, and at times their grandfather, alongside sympathy toward the passive, hardworking women of the family who put up with the mens' adventures among the black slave and servant women. Drummond's tour-de-force long poem "The Table" imagines a raucous *mineiro* family feast "made from / a thousand ingredients / and served up in abundance / in a thousand china dishes" for what would have been the family patriarch's ninetieth birthday, fantasizing it as "an honest orgy / ending in revelations" (*An Anthology* 67). His light irony suggests the opposite reality—a remote, disapproving, tight-lipped father and sibling rivalries. Drummond asks, "Is drinking then so sacred / that only drunk my brother / can explain his resentment / and offer me his hand?" He imagines all of them so drunk and merry by the end that "we forget the terrible / inhibiting respect, / and all our happiness / blighted in so many black / commemorative banquets (71). The effect is a would-be wake for their dead father in a poem-as-feast that goes on and on relentlessly for pages in one unbroken stanza, until it finally ends with "a table that is / empty," this "empty" appearing right-justified alone on the last line (85).

Drummond's poems voice a particularly masculine subjectivity in the recurring theme of fraught father-son relationships and anxieties about the inheritance of patriarchal patterns. Even as he generally critiques a macho culture of violence and decadent voluptuousness that exploits asymmetrical power relations, Drummond also looks back on his own pleasures made possible by the "good old life" with a mix of fondness and guilt. By the end of "The Table," the imagined celebration turns out to honor their humble deceased mother as well. Drummond-as-speaker suddenly acknowledges the invisible labor behind this family feast:

> Who prepared it? What incomparable
> vocation for sacrifice
> set the table, had the children?
> Who was sacrificed? Who paid
> the price of all this labor?
> Whose was the invisible hand
> that traced this arabesque
> in flowers around the puding,
> as an aureole is traced?
> Who as an aureole? (83)

[148] These appear in the different Bishop anthologies, as well as in *An Anthology of Twentieth Century Poetry*.

Bishop translates *auréola* as "aureole" but it is more colloquially "halo," the halo of the angelic, self-sacrificing mother. The pattern of women who tend to the children and turn the other cheek without complaint, while the men indulge in escapades turns out to be another family inheritance.

In "Travelling in the Family," a trip back home summons the ghosts of his forebears: "In the desert of Itabira / the shadow of my father / took me by the hand" (57). This silent father takes Drummond through the old town, past "[s]o many heaped-up dead" and "ruined houses." Among his father's "things," his watch, his clothes, his legal documents, are "His tales of love affairs" and the "Opening of tin trunks / and violent memories." In a cryptic line laced with sexual desire and guilt, the son says, "The market of desires / displays its sad treasures; / my urge to run away; / naked women; remorse." The next stanza brings more women, "the mad aunt; my grandmother / betrayed among the slave-girls, / rustling silks in the bedroom." This jarring opposition between the proper plantation lady in silks and the sexualized slaves is made a matter of course by the juxtaposition in a list with other mundane facts of life, "books and letters" and "Marriages; mortgages" (59). Throughout these conflicted memories, the shadow of a father says nothing; the refrain in almost every stanza is, "But he didn't say anything," "*Porém nada dizia*."

"*Infância*," which Bishop translates as "Infancy," but which is more accurately "Childhood" in this context, narrates a dream-memory version of Drummond's rural childhood:

> My father got on his horse and went to the field.
> My mother stayed sitting and sewing.
> My little brother slept.
> A small boy alone under the mango trees,
> I read the story of Robinson Crusoe,
> the long story that never comes to an end.
>
> At noon, white with light, a voice that had learned
> lullabies long ago in the slave quarters—and never forgot—
> called us for coffee.
> Coffee blacker than the black old woman
> delicious coffee
> good coffee.
>
> My mother stayed sitting and sewing
> watching me:
> *Shh*—don't wake the boy.
> She stopped the cradle when a mosquito had lit
> and gave a sigh . . . how deep!
> Away off there my father went riding
> through the farm's endless wastes.
>
> And I didn't know that my story
> was prettier than that of Robinson Crusoe. (87)

The poem opens with the dutiful and resigned mother who "stayed sitting and sewing" while "My father got on his horse and went to the field." The image returns in a varied refrain in the third stanza, the mother still sitting and sewing with an infant, but who suddenly gives "a sigh . . . how deep!," betraying a hint of discontent, while the father rides off free in the distance. Meanwhile,

the boy Drummond luxuriates in innocent freedom under the mango trees, reading *Robinson Crusoe*, "the long story that never comes to an end." There's a surreal quality to this intimation of a never-ending story. It is a story that gets read over and over again, yet also emphasizes that fact that a boy in Brazil is reading a tale about exotic adventures in far-flung lands that are located in the part of the world he lives in.[149]

The story is also ongoing as a memory that gets replayed over and over again, like one of Wordsworth's "spots of time" in *The Prelude* (Book XII, l.208). These happy memories often date "From our first childhood," and Wordsworth imbues them with a "renovating virtue" that repairs and nourishes the weary adult mind that revisits these moments (l.225, l.210). Drummond's "Infancy" is in part the story of his own happy solitude in the isolated Itabira, his own Crusoe island, as suggested by the title of his essay collection *Passeios na Ilha* (*Strolls on the Island*), which refers to his private inner world and memories that form the subjects of these essays. Wordsworth's first example of a spot of time evokes a protected, pastoral childhood, in which he goes out riding in the countryside with a servant at his side, has a moment of terror after getting separated from the servant, and then is comforted by the enchanting sight of a peasant girl carrying a pitcher on her head against the wind. Similarly, Drummond gives the sense of being a happy little prince, alone in the mango grove until "a voice that had learned / lullabies long ago in the slave-quarters—and never forgot— / called us for coffee. / Coffee blacker than the black old woman / delicious coffee / good coffee." Womanly comfort in this spot of time comes from Drummond's black ex-slave nanny, whereas in other poems, including "Travelling in the Family," the black women, formerly slaves and subsequently servants, provide sexual comfort.

The final couplet casts the entire reverie as nostalgic and ironic at the same time:

> And I didn't know that my story
> was prettier than that of Robinson Crusoe.

In these concluding lines, Drummond casts a wistful smile on his simple childhood, emphasizing the dramatic irony of the boy's unconscious innocence. He remains on his "island," surrounded by adult toil and complexities, sheltered within a patriarchal system supported by the subordination of women and black Brazilians still overshadowed by the living memory of slavery. His own story is a pretty fairytale even as the boy seeks the pleasurable escape of *Robinson Crusoe*. Bishop first published "Crusoe in England," her own poem recasting Brazil as her past Crusoe moment in the November 6, 1971 issue of the *New Yorker*. It was the same year she returned to the U.S. permanently, feeling something like Crusoe back in England with her artifacts from Brazil displayed on the wall of her apartment the way Crusoe's flute, knife, "shrivelled shoes," and other formerly useful belongings go to the local museum (*CP* 166).

Bishop's translation of "Infancy" appeared in the 1972 *Anthology*, and she likely worked on it as she was also composing her own poem. Though less a fairytale than Drummond's version and more of an extended allegory of her life in Brazil, Bishop's "Crusoe" has a similarly nostalgic, elegiac feel. She overtly references another famous "spot of time" moment from Wordsworth, as her Crusoe anachronistically tries to recite lines from "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" to his iris-beds while lonely on the island:

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[149] Before his famous shipwreck, Crusoe lives for two years in Brazil as a tobacco planter and sets sail for Guinea in order to find slaves to farm his land. Friday is also comes from a cannibal tribe, connecting him to the most well-known early image of Brazilians as cannibals to sweep Europe in the sixteenth century. Robinson Crusoe is also inspired by the life of the Scotsman Alexander Selkirk, and as Bishop points out in the *Anthology* introduction to Drummond, he is of Scottish ancestry, while *mineiros* are often compared to the Scots. (add ref)

> "They flash upon that inward eye,
> which is the bliss . . ." The bliss of what?
> One of the first things I did
> when I got back was look it up. (*CP* 164)

In Wordsworth's poem, it is the experience of coming upon an unexpected and breathtaking field of "golden daffodils" as far as the eye can see that interrupts his loneliness and that in an endlessly renewable memory, transforms loneliness into its more felicitous form as solitude. Bishop-as-Crusoe, feeling lonely and isolated on her island, tries to recall the line that goes: "They flash upon that inward eye, / which is the bliss of solitude." Wordsworth's poem concludes, "And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the daffodils" ("I Wandered," 733).

In the poetry of Wordsworth, Drummond, and Bishop, the memory holds a certain compensatory quality that finds a melancholy pleasure and beauty in the past. This mode brings out the elegiac nature of pastoral, which one slips into in order to muse on the goodness of what has been lost: the Golden Age, childhood innocence, a beloved "Lycidas," or in Bishop's case the mourning of Lota as Friday.[150] The pastoral holds that wistful idealization that comes with distance. Thus, for Bishop the book *Minha vida de menina* that she became enamored with and translated as *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* was better than pastoral because to her it was neither an invention nor a recreation of an idyllic rural childhood but the real thing. Bishop explains in her 1956 introduction to her translation that "the title means 'My Life as a Little Girl,' or 'Young Girl,' and that is exactly what the book is about, but it is not reminiscences; it is a diary, the diary actually kept by a girl between the ages of twelve and fifteen, in the far-off town of Diamantina, in 1893-1895" (Introduction ix).

What so fascinated Bishop about the book was how literary and universal its scenes of small town life were at the same time that it was a true story, a quality she also emphasizes about the source of "The Burglar of Babylon" and in the travel writing she admired, especially Darwin's. Her account of *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* sounds like a classic description of the pastoral, and also cites touchstones of the Western literary tradition that celebrate the simple lives of children and country folk in pre-industrial, natural circumstances:

> The more I read the book the better I liked it. The scenes and events it described were odd, remote, and long ago, and yet fresh, sad, funny, and eternally true. The longer I stayed on in Brazil the more Brazilian the book seemed, yet much of it could have happened in any small provincial town or village, and at almost any period of history—at least before the arrival of the automobile and the moving-picture theatre. Certain pages reminded me of more famous and "literary" ones: Nausicaa doing her laundry on the beach, possibly with the help of *her* freed slaves; bits from Chaucer; Wordsworth's poetical children and country people, or Dorothy Wordsworth's wandering beggars. Occasionally entries referring to slavery seemed like notes for an unwritten, Brazilian, feminine version of Tom Sawyer and Nigger Jim. But this was a real, day-by-day diary, kept by a real girl, and anything resembling it that I could think of had been observed or made up, and written down by adults. (An exception

[150] Milton's *Lycidas* (1637) is often taken as an exemplary form of pastoral elegy, in which he mourns the untimely death of his friend Edward King by casting him as the shepherd Lycidas. Bishop's "Crusoe in England" includes fond memories and Friday, often taken to be Lota, and ends on a remembrance of Friday's death: "—And Friday, my dear Friday, died of measles / seventeen years ago come March." *CP* 166.

> is Anne Frank's diary; but its forced maturity and closed atmosphere are tragically different from the authentic childlikeness, the classical sunlight and simplicity of this one.) (x)

Bishop's description emphasizes the pastoral convergence of the particular and the universal in the *Diary*'s bucolic world—it's thoroughly Brazilian and yet could have happened in any small town, is old-fashioned yet "eternally true," a work of naive art by a provincial child yet evocative of the highest literature. Above all, it possesses "authentic childlikeness," simplicity, and what Bishop calls "the classical sunlight," evoking all the time Helena spends out of doors.

Bishop's literary references trace connections from antiquity through the Renaissance, British Romanticism, early American frontier literature, and finally to a twentieth-century literary classic written by a girl around the same age as Helena and begun the same year that *Minha vida de menina* was published, 1942—though Bishop emphasizes the stark differences that separate Anne Frank's dark world from Helena's idyllic childhood. Bishop situates *The Diary* in the Western canon and also emphasizes the uniqueness of its female and youthful authorship. Bishop elevates the world that the unknown Brazilian teenager depicts to the level of classical epic, with a comparison to the Nausicaa scene from Homer's *The Odyssey*. The mention of Chaucer speaks to the earthy humor of common folk in *The Diary*, which is full of entertaining anecdotes about religious posturing and petty feuds between neighbors and relatives, and offers stories that end in a light moral lesson, either in the form of advice from her grandmother or her own conclusions (she references teachings from La Fontaine throughout[151]). Bishop also reaffirms her own Wordsworthian take on rustic Brazil that I have threaded throughout this chapter, citing not only William's poetry but also Dorothy's more informal observations in her Alfoxden and Grasmere journals, which often served as source material for her brother's compositions.[152]

The connection Bishop draws to Tom Sawyer highlights the picaresque aspect of Helena's adventures and the protagonist's tomboy spirit. Beholden to yet skeptical of the logic of the adult world, Helena is a mix of Twain's hero and Lewis Carroll's Alice. She's clever like both, rebellious and irreverent like Tom, less studious and genteel than Alice, but with a similar earnest desire to be friends with whomever she meets, regardless of superficial differences, and to figure out the moral center of the world around her. In the last chapter of *Some Versions of Pastoral*, Empson focuses on the Alice in Wonderland books and what he calls "the child as swain," that is, "the slow shift" of the healthy attitude of irreverence for hollow authority "from fool to rogue to child" (259). The child has a direct connection to nature and hence "is the free and independent mind" (262).

Like the pastoral rogue or wise child, Helena goes for sincerity over mere manners. In one entry, she reports that her English Aunt Madge, "who thinks that only English things are good," has given her the Victorian conduct books *Power of Will* and *Character*, by the aptly named early self-help guru Samuel Smiles. She has dutifully read them both yet is unconvinced by what she determines are two books about the same exact things: "Economy, Good Manners, and Force of Will." She dismisses this rhetoric of self-improvement in favor of her own pragmatism: "I'm positive that these books were useless to me. I haven't acquired a drop more will-power than I had already. Anyway, character doesn't change. I'm not any better than I was before" (36). In another episode, In another episode, Helena complains about how boring it is to go with her aunt and uncle to the country

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[151] When her parents tell her to study more because she is intelligent, Helena declares, "I listen to this the same way I listen when they say I'm pretty, because I know the story of the owl." Bishop adds a footnote after owl, "Who thought her children were beautiful (La Fontaine, *'L'Aigle et le Hibou'*). In *The Diary* 27.

[152] Like Helena's diary, Dorothy's journals, recorded respectively in 1798, and 1800-03, weren't originally intended for a public audience. The Grasmere journal was the first to be published in 1897, more than forty years after her death.

because no one's allowed to go off wading, climbing trees, or looking for fruit. She writes, "At their house everything is on the dot and according to rule, even manners and words and everything." She reflects on her cousins' shock at the way her parents let her and her siblings roam free and on how tiring it is to pretend to be well-brought-up all the time. "I think that God punishes well-brought-up people," she concludes, based on the evidence that her uncle and cousins never catch any fish or birds and her own brothers always catch fish to eat and even to sell and never let any birds get away (29).

This anecdote also underscores young Helena's lack of a pastoral self-consciousness of the natural beauty of her own life. Bishop observes, "She does speak of streams where she and her sister and brothers take baths, or catch the most fish, of places where there are wildflowers and fruits, or where she can set her bird-traps," but Bishop differentiates these scenes from poetic pretense in that, "whatever love of nature she has seems part utilitarian and part, the greater part, sheer joy at not being in school." For Bishop, this makes Helena pleasingly like Tom Sawyer but even better because she is real and not a self-conscious creation. Helena can demonstrate the joys of humble, rural life without the moralizing intent of a Wordsworth. Bishop marvels at how Helena takes for granted the mountainous landscape that impresses the traveler as a "wild and extraordinary setting" and is charmed by the irony of Helena's extreme hinterland sense of "country and city" in Helena's repeated assertions "that she likes 'the country better than the city,' the 'city' being, of course, the tiny provincial town of Diamantina" (xv). Helena is also natural in the sense that she isn't a goody-two-shoes kind of heroine. Bishop points out that she is greedy, unfair to her sister, cheats at times, and steals fruit. Yet, her saving grace is her core sincerity, "If she is not always quite admirable, she is always completely herself; hypocrisy appears for a moment and then vanishes like dew" (xxvii).

Another major aspect of Helena's *Diary* that Bishop's reference to Tom Sawyer and "Nigger Jim" raises is the way that the would-be harmony between the hierarchy of classes in pastoral—high and low, rich and poor—also necessarily encompasses race in literature of the Americas (Bishop uses the racist epithet in common usage during her time to refer to the escaped slave who is more often just called "Jim" in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*). The culture of slavery shapes both Twain's South and Helena's Minas Gerais, where the development of the mining industry relied heavily on slave labor. Twain published *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876 and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884, starting just over a decade after slavery was abolished in the U.S., though the stories take place before the Civil War. Helena Morley's *Diary* begins almost a decade after *Huckleberry Finn*, from 1893 to 1895, and documents the transitions of a newly post-slavery society just five years after the May 13, 1888 proclamation ending slavery in Brazil.

Bishop's mention of Tom Sawyer and Jim gives her U.S. audience a familiar framework with which to enter into a remote, South American town where a white child has sustained social relationships with various adult freed slaves. However, this connection merely offers a point of departure, since the interactions between black, white, and brown (*moreno*) Brazilians in Helena's Diamantina possess a far greater complexity and variety than in the Tom Sawyer novels. Though Helena's family is considered poor in comparison to her wealthier relations, she and her siblings were nursed and raised by a slave the same age as her mother whom she calls Mama Tina. When Helena recalls a dictum learned from her nanny, Bishop renders it in an approximation of black American dialect, following the cues of Helena's phonetic misspelling, "because Mama Tina had brought me up knowing that 'The homely lives, the pretty lives, they all lives.'" Hesitant about the effect of her translation, Bishop clarifies with a footnote explaining Mama Tina as, "Negro nurse. Her proverb is in Negro dialect" (53).[153] Mama Tina has passed away before *The Diary* begins, but

[153] "porque mãe Tina me criou sabendo que 'o feio veve, o bonito veve, todos vevem.'" The phonetic spelling puts an "e" instead of an "i" in the verb "viver," which is normally conjugated as "vive" and "vivem." (Morley 77).

two of her children, Emídio and Cesarina, stay on with the family as free but subordinate *agregados*, dependents who help with various chores.

However, Helena's father is an independent diamond miner, hence the family income is sporadic and they can't always afford to keep Emídio and Cesarina, who are different times are shipped off to other relations or sent to live at the home of Helena's grandmother on her mother's side, which is the more traditionally Brazilian line. This *chácara*, something between a house with a large garden and a farm that Bishop leaves in the original Portuguese, serves as the nucleus of family life, and still has a former *senzala*, slaves' quarters, where many of her former slaves still live, now somewhere between servants and dependents—here too, Bishop preserves the particularity of Brazilian culture by leaving "*senzala*" in the original with a footnote. Stories and references to "the Negroes"—Bishop's equivalent for Helena's "*os negros*" or "*as negras*," a respectful term relative to "*pretos*," (blacks)—and the details of their lives, such as marital troubles, illnesses, celebrations, and arguments, are nearly as frequent as her gossip about her own relatives and non-black townspeople. Bishop presents the town's post-slavery integration in terms of a quaintly harmonious solidarity as a result of the decline of the mining industry, which has left Helena's world in "bitter poverty and isolation." Bishop continues:

> One of the greatest problems is what to do with the freed slaves who have stayed on. Reading this diary, one sometimes gets the impression that the greater part of the town, black and white, 'rich' and poor, when it hasn't found a diamond lately, gets along by making sweets and pastries, brooms and cigarettes and selling them to each other. Or the freed slaves are kept busy manufacturing them in the kitchen and peddling them in the streets, and the lady of the house collects the profits—or buys, in her parlor, the products of her kitchen. (xxix)

Bishop describes a closed circuit, by virtue of the town's remoteness and lack of a dominant industry, in which hierarchies and distinctions between "black and white, 'rich' and poor" ("rich" in quotes signaling that real wealth is elsewhere), become smoothed over.

Bishop also suggests a kind of non-hierarchical, rural utopia in the opening scene of *The Diary*, which she compares to "Nausicaa doing laundry on the beach, possibly with the help of *her* freed slaves" (x). In Homer's episode, from Book VI of *The Odyssey*, the beautiful young princess goes to the seashore by the woods with her handmaidens, also to wash laundry, and they sing and frolic with a ball when the work is done. Indeed, the opening scene of *The Diary* may very well be its most idyllic. It's Thursday, January 5, 1893, and Helena begins, "Today is the best day of the week." She then recounts an outing to a river on the outskirts of town to do the laundry with Mama, her sister and two brothers, and Emídio their former slave whom they send for from the grandmother's house. While the women wash the clothes, the men disperse to look for firewood, catch birds, and fish for *lambaris*, a kind of fish that Bishop keeps in the original with a footnote, as she does with most of the Brazil-specific fruits and plants. After the work is done, they have lunch and bathe in the river.

With the exception of Helena's initial declaration of pleasure in the day, the narration is relatively objective, a pastoral without excess poetic rapture but whose series of events bear a rustic grace: "After that [the women washing their hair] we beat the clothes on the stones and rinse them and hang them on the bushes to dry. The we can go to look for berries and birds' nests and cocoons, and little round stones to play jackstones with." Like the scene with Nausicaa, it's a pleasurable outing that combines work and play. Yet in Helena's pragmatic narration, there's no room for self-conscious appreciation of nature in itself, and she turns pragmatic again in reporting that her brothers are able to sell everything they bring back from the woods. She further muses that if they

didn't have to study this could be a way of supplementing their father's meager income—"Now that the mines aren't producing diamonds any bigger than a mosquito's eye"—and relieve their mother's endless toil (4).

Bishop's introduction that segues into this scene makes the comparison to Nausicaa especially apt in that Nausicaaa is a princess yet mingles indiscriminately with the lower servants in work and play, while Bishop tells her readers that this humble country girl grows up into a great beauty and marries a distant cousin, Augusto Mario Caldeira Brant, a future president of the Bank of Brazil, and ends up one of the most beloved ladies of Rio de Janeiro high society. Helena Morley is the pen-name of Alice Dayrell Caldeira Brant, taken from family names on her half-English father's side. Another thing that separates Helena from the others in Diamantina is her English heritage, so that she is know as the "*inglesinha*," the little English girl, but also mocked at school for her red hair and freckles, which later become a point of distinction. Thus, like the heroines of neoclassical pastoral romance, both Nausicaa and Helena mingle with the commoners as if in disguise but prove to be superior to the others in beauty, character, and station.

One of Bishop's constant points of praise for this book is this literary, almost folktale feel combined with its authentic pedigree. She quotes one of her heroes Gerard Manley Hopkins as he praises the memoir of a sea voyage, Richard Henry Dana, Jr.'s *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) and marveling at its riveting and instructing tales, but above all that "*it happened*—ah, that is the charm and the main point."[154] Bishop adopts this sentiment for her own, "And that, I think is 'the charm and the main point' of *Minha vida de menina*. [. . .] everything did take place, day by day, minute by minute, once and only once, just the way Helena says it did. She then gives quite a good idea of the "local color" that makes Helena's story so vividly Brazilian but also with an "anytown" feel:

> There really was a grandmother, Dona Teodora, a stout, charitable old lady who walked with a cane and managed her family and her freed slaves with an iron will. There really was a Siá Ritinha who stole her neighbors' chickens, but not Helena's mother's chickens; a Father Neves; a spinster English Aunt Madge, bravely keeping up her standards and eking out a living by teaching small obstreperous Negroes, in a town financially ruined by the emancipation of the slaves and the opening of the Kimberly diamond mines.[155] (xxvii)

As with Bishop's description of the harmonious and slightly quixotic cottage industries that kept the freed slaves and poor whites alike somewhat gainfully employed, there is a storybook satisfaction that draws her into this tale. It partakes of the best parts of Great Village without the same weight of loss that marks Bishop's childhood home.[156] Bishop adds a touch of historical glamor by mentioning that Helena's grandfather, the British Protestant physician John Dayrell, appears in Richard Francis Burton's *Explorations of the Highlands of the Brazil* (1869). Dayrell had moved to Brazil between 1840 and 1850 to work for the English São João del Rey Mining Company as a doctor. He also mentions Helena's father, Felisberto Dayrell, born to John and his English wife Alice (xv). Bishop cites Burton again in a footnote from the December 16, 1894 entry, in which Helena compares the stories of the extravagance and abundance of parties thrown in the old days—and that Burton marvels at—

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[154] I also quote this in Chapter One in the context of Bishop's love of travel writing.

[155] Bishop is referring to the 1870s diamond rush that exploded in Kimberley, South Africa (she leaves out the second "e"), and that partially contributed to the rapid decline of prosperity in the Diamantina diamond district, though mining revenue had already peaked by the mid-1700s. For more historical background, see Thomas Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).

[156] Brazilian critic Regina Pryzbicien suggests that Bishop's translation of *The Diary of Helena Morley* is a way of rewriting her own interrupted, tragic childhood in Nova Scotia.

compared to the privation and disrepair of the present circumstances in Diamantina and the neighboring towns (179).

While Bishop presents the *The Diary* as a perfectly naive pastoral tale, superior in its freshness than any reminiscence or artificial construction, her translated version leaves out the controversies in Brazil that surrounded the authenticity of the book's authorship. Additionally, Bishop's storybook description of Diamantina's racial and class harmony pastoralizes what turns out to be a remarkable complexity of both post-slavery integration but also ongoing tensions in the shifting socioeconomic terrain of 1890's Diamantina that Helena's diary entries reflect. As far as I know, no Elizabeth Bishop scholarship has addressed either of these contradictions. In a 1959 note to the Brazilian reissue of *Minha vida de menina*, three years after Bishop's translation appeared, writer Alexandre Eulálio recognizes the 1942 book as an instant classic. Though he affirms its authenticity in the same way that Bishop does, as a diary "composed without artistic intent," he also characterizes it as "halfway between documentary and fiction" ("Livro que nasceu clássico*"* 7, all translations from Eulálio mine).[157]

Further, while praising Helena's prose as remarkably oral and colloquial in an uncommonly natural way, Eulálio briefly entertains, in a footnote, the supposition that the book was "a literary fraud, and had been written, let's say, by the author as a grown woman."[158] He then turns to the great Minas Gerais modernist writer João Guimarães Rosa, known as an expert on *mineiro* backlands dialect, and who responded to the theory of adult authorship, which emerged in the wake of the book's popular success, that if this were the case: "—we would be facing an even more extraordinary 'case,' for, as far as he [Guimarães Rosa] knew, there did not exist in any other literature a more robust example of such a literal *reconstruction* of childhood" (8).[159]

In relegating the theory to an indirect reference in a brief footnote, Eulálio addresses a theory voiced frequently enough to merit response but decides it is not entirely relevant to the value of the book. Nor does he go so far as to engage the theories that the book was actually written by Helena's husband, Augusto Brant, perhaps with the help of his literary friends, the critic Augusto Meyer and the writer Cyro dos Anjos. In the end, Eulálio praises the book less for its authentic provenance and more for its perspective and insightful evocation of a unique historical universe in-transition, with its panorama of folk characters: "ex-slaves, poor neighbors, loiterers, soldiers, beggars, washerwomen and women who gather wood, miners and mule drivers" (11).[160]

Despite her own attachment to the truth of the original text, Bishop herself praises the unusual sophistication of Morley's composition in her introduction: "She has a sense of the right quotation, or detail, the gag-line, and where to stop" (xxviii). Bishop refers to the meticulous edits and corrections that Helena's husband made to her translation drafts and at one point confesses some early doubts about the authorship to May Swenson: "No, I never did manage to make Mr. Brant show me the original manuscript. I worried about it at first, but if you'd ever met the Brants you'd realize that they are incapable of *faking* anything [. . .]"[161] In one letter, Bishop dismisses a line from Helena's own Author's Preface as overly sentimental—"Happiness does not consist in worldly goods but in a peaceful home, in family affection, in a simple life without ambition"—quite a change from her unmitigated praise of the teenage girl's episodes that often end in a La Fontaine-type moral. Bishop attributes the platitude to Morley's husband, "I suspect that Mr. Brant wrote that for Helena

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[157] The original phrases cited are "composto sem intenção de arte" and "A meio caminho do documento e da ficção."
[158] "que o livro se tratasse de uma impostura literária, e tivesse sido escrito, digamos, pela autora adulta . . ."
[159] "—estaríamos diante de um 'caso' ainda mais extraordinário, pois, que soubesse, não existia em nenhuma outra literatura mais pujante exemplo de tão literal *reconstrução* da infância."
[160] "ex-escravos, vizinhos pobres, tipos de rua, soldados, mendigos, lavadeiras e lenheiras, garimpeiros e tropeiros."
[161] Bishop to May Swenson, 15 January 1958, *OA* 355.

anyway, for the Preface."[162] When Bishop wrote an additional foreword to the 1977, she made no mention of the altered reception for Morley's book, mainly just affirming her impression that the town was more or less the same as when she visited in 1955 (vii-viii).

Among all the theories surrounding the book's provenance, I am most convinced by that of critic Roberto Schwarz. Schwarz opens his long essay "Another Capitu? The Diary of Helena Morley" in *Two Girls* ("Outra Capitu," *Duas Meninas*) with this historical speculation, mentioning the names of Augusto Mario Caldeira Brant's literary friends and quoting Carlos Drummond de Andrade's praise of *Minha vida de menina* referring to Augusto Mario Caldeira Brant as "that excellent and presently unrecognized writer" (in Schwarz 46, translation mine). Schwarz recognizes the book as one of the greatest Brazilian literary works of the nineteenth century, second only to the works of Machado de Assis. Based circumstantial evidence, conversations with family and friends close to Alice Dayrell Caldeira Brant, the case of the missing or non-existent original manuscript, and his own analysis of the book's style, Schwarz concludes that it was indeed largely written by Alice Brant herself but then subsequently doctored by a skilled and subtle hand (or hands), slightly reconfigured so that the entries form more coherent blocks. In short, it is a "collaboration" between the 1890s and 1930s, in a "a strategic fusion of Brazilianness, modest decorum and up-to-date intelligence" (in *Two Girls* 94, 95; *Duas meninas* 46, 48).

Schwarz recognizes the superior value attached to the idea of the story's artlessness, its honest virtuosity. He counters, "In aesthetic matters, nothing is more suspect than a preference for an author who is not an artist," a sentiment that he claims participates in "a regressive urge, an aversion to calculated processes, technical discipline and engagement with the complexities of contemporary life." He argues that in any case, an appreciation of *Minha vida de menina* based on its naive origins would be misguided, because the great beauty of the book lies not in its being ingenuous but rather in its perspicuity and vivid attention to its subjects, which are clearly intimately familiar to Helena, whose insights are devoid of either literary or ideological bitterness. Schwarz makes a key distinction in recognizing what he calls "true mastery" (*maestrias*) that possesses evident artistic qualities, "but in a state we can call 'everyday (as opposed to aesthetic), and which these qualities owe their special poetry: for they exist in ordinary life, as well as in the book—a kind of robust proof that beauty is of this world" (96; *Duas meninas* 49). It is the rich specificity of this social life that Helena is so talented at capturing that forms the evidence for its foundational authenticity.

What makes Schwarz's reading of *Minha vida de menina* a valuable complement to Bishop's is that he shares her impulse to see in Helena's Diamantina a form of utopia based in social realism. Yet he manages to locate its beauty of "a working, functioning society" within a set of race and class hierarchies much more complex and contradictory than Bishop's more pastoralized version of small-town solidarity in her translator's Introduction (97, *Duas meninas* 50). Like Bishop, the Brazilian critic also recognizes something highly idyllic in the opening scene of laundry at the river, even as this day of "paradise" still bears the marks of privation and necessary labor. Yet he parses the details further to observe a hierarchy within their leisurely labor that conflicts with a vision of total equality: the ex-slave Emídio is still the only one who carries the basin of laundry on his head while the others put their things in the cart and he is the one who goes to gather firewood while Helena's brothers pursue the more amusing sport of catching fish and birds. At the same time, Schwarz acknowledges that within this simple circle of cooperation, the divisions of labor typical in Brazilian society eventually dissolve, and the brothers carry the wood on the way home, while Helena is able to break free of the conventions that discourage girls from nice families away from physical exertion.

Any attentive reader of *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* / *Minha vida de menina* will observe that her family's social status seems to shift constantly depending on the context, as well as that of the

[162] Bishop to Pearl Kazin, 9 September 1959, *OA* 376.

other people in town. In the first scene, they seem a modest country family with enough means to hire help (they summon Emídio from the grandmother's house), though at the wealthy grandmother's *chácara*, it becomes clear that Helena's family are the poor relations and the source of ongoing charity, though they often associate with higher class families. And at times it seems the freed slaves are becoming integrated into the everyday life of the town. Helena enters into their personal dramas alongside those of her relatives and neighbors, asserting that she likes everyone the same, in contrast to more prejudiced relatives. Her brothers don't shy away from manual labor in the way that other lighter-skinned Brazilians do for fear of being associated with slave labor; in one scene a relative refers implies this connection to black Brazilians, but Helena's English-Brazilian father brushes it away asserting "Our João is a perfect little Englishman" and tells him to carry on with the same chores (*The Diary* 68). At one point a black couple hires her brother to tutor their child.

Yet at other times, Helena's anecdotes unintentionally remind the reader of the pains of prejudice against those considered of lower castes. The poor, darker-skinned neighbor children become her enemy and mock her white skin after they hear her mother tell her not to play with them. Helena herself at times speaks of her family's morally upright treatment of freed slaves in self-congratulatory tones or dismisses their "strange" or superstitious habits with condescension. Helena also witnesses the beating of an ex-slave by a man from the household that used to own him after the black man asserts he can say what he pleases now that he's free.

It is far from an egalitarian and harmonious universe. However, Schwarz helps bring into focus how this constantly shifting social terrain is itself a unique and temporary sort of utopia in provincial Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century. He identifies a critique of the vestiges of colonial segregation and injustice in Helena's worldview, and a related moment of transition in which "Slavery had just been abolished, and free labour was not yet set in the alienation of a wage system." This moment of indefinition and redefinition of work and social roles, especially in the town's isolated economy and population, created what Schwarz deems "an interregnum, promising or chaotic according to the circumstances, an ill-bounded space in which the sociable, human idea of collaborative effort, which Helena invests in and which today sounds utopian, could more easily make its way." He asserts that the protean possibilities of this sort of social reorganization are not uniform, yet "always involving some form of surmounting the barriers associated with slavery" in a way that was less open in larger cities with more fixed social hierarchies and ties to outside industries (120, *Duas meninas* 71).

This pastoral feeling that Schwartz voices in his reading of *A minha vida de menina* suggests a more robustly realist version of pastoral than Bishop's. Yet whether the story is taken as a social text, an authentic personal testimony, or an aesthetic document, its utopian allure of a past world seen through innocent eyes remains constant. In this translation especially, but also across her several translations of rural, folk, and historical Brazil that I have presented in this chapter, Bishop finds a rustic version of paradise in Brazil prettier than Robinson Crusoe's story. In these translations and her Ouro Preto writings, she pieces together a Romantic reverie more picturesque and down-to-earth than the wilder, or more classically Edenic New World fantasies associated with the coastal rainforests and the Amazon that I took up in Chapter One.[163]

In translating this range of Brazilian voices, Bishop trades her sordid, jaundiced sense of a carnivalesque *fantasia* in Rio as a hollow form of temporary compensation for everyday woes ("Pink Dog"), for a merrier mode of pastoral masquerade. Leaving behind her critical function as a resident

[163] Also, Bishop's late poem "Santarém" (1979) composes her memory of a trip down the Amazon River in a golden, Edenic light. She casts the famous Meeting of the Waters (o Encontro das Águas) as "Two rivers. Hadn't two rivers sprung / from the Garden of Eden? No, that was four / and they'd diverged." *CP* 185.

observer reporting on Brazil for her home audience, Bishop enters a more harmonious, compensatory mode in her translations. She plays with gender, sexuality, and the further possibilities opened up by inhabiting alternate existences as she takes up the disparate voices of exclusively male poets—some of whom communicate a particularly masculine approach to the world and its feminine objects of desire, especially in de Moraes and Drummond. In this translated literary universe, Bishop can more fully adopt the guise of an erudite male poet with small-town roots but also an unlettered farm laborer, an anonymous "Severino."

On the other end of the spectrum, Bishop translates just one work by a woman, though not a woman like herself but a provincial girl. Bishop reenacts an alternate version of her own clever, innocent girlhood self, seeking the role of a storybook life, somewhere between Tom Sawyer, Nausicaa, and Alice in Wonderland, better than anything the Wordsworths could have observed or invented. Yet the contrast in the adult women's trajectories emphasizes the divide between the conventionally happy ending of the real-life Helena and her translator, Bishop. Alice Dayrell grows up to be a much-courted, beautiful young lady and ends up respectably married to a rich man, as Bishop recounts in her introduction, in contrast to Bishop's own itinerant yet temporarily happy but also "improper" life with Lota, whom Bishop must always refer to under false pretenses as her "friend"—"Armed with a friend, Lota de Macedo Soares, to serve as interpreter because my spoken Portuguese was very limited, I went to call" on Dona Alice (Introduction to *The Diary* xi).

In her pastoral translations, Bishop can invert and subvert her usual senses of im/propriety. Translation is by no means innocent or free of bias, but it offers Bishop a way to enter into Brazil while suspending her critical, ironic perspective that views impropriety in both host territory and foreign interloper. She can effect a more harmonious way of presenting Brazil to her audience as if it were home sweet home, as a native's more authentic-seeming representation, less complicated for being someone else's experience. Reminiscent of her uncollected poem "Exchanging Hats" (1956), Bishop can skirt propriety through the temporary play of translation and its pastoral masquerade. She can try on different hats, like the "unfunny uncles who insist / in trying on a lady's hat" and the "Anandrous aunts" who "keep putting on the yachtsmen's caps / with exhibitionistic screech" (*CP* 200). Bishop's winking use of "anandrous," a botanical term for flowers without a stamen, that is, plants lacking the male pollinating parts, implies these aunts lack not only male parts but also male partners—"aunts" here suggesting yet another discreet name for lesbians, like "friends" and "roommates." Putting on her macho Brazilian cap, the anandrous Bishop can take a "pleasant piss" as Vinícius de Moraes or worry about the transmission of patriarchal corruption from father to son as Drummond. Or she can try on the torn dress of the vivacious country girl who eventually becomes the most admired of society matrons. In this queerest of her poems, which Bishop left uncollected during her lifetime, the poet asserts the pleasure she takes in these boundary crossings, even as she remains aware of their perceived impropriety:

> we share your slight transvestite twist
>
> in spite of our embarrassment.
> Costume and custom are complex.
> The headgear of the other sex
> inspires us to experiment.

Costume and custom are complex languages, and Bishop's time in Brazil inspired constant experiments and revisions of new idioms. These reflect that ways her life and work were disoriented and reoriented through Brazilian landscapes, culture, and her deeply intimate personal ties, to Lota, and to the world she built there and that her readers eventually come to know.

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