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by

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**Elizabeth Bishop and Brazil**

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**Elizabeth Bishop and Brazil**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

To Jonathan, with whom I fell in love in Brazil, thus gaining a country in which I feel at home and a husband who is my home wherever we go in the world.

And to Simone (my qualifying exam baby), Gabriella (my prospectus exam baby) and Etta (my dissertation defense baby), who make all of this worthwhile.

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## **Elizabeth Bishop and Brazil**

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Elizabeth Bishop's phenomenal rise in the academic canon is due in large part to the way her writings about Brazil correlate with current critical concerns. However, U.S. scholars have relied on an inchoate understanding of Bishop's sociohistorical contexts as she performed complicated and at times contradictory Brazil(s). Using Yi-Fu Tuan's methodology of space and place and James Clifford's dichotomy of routes/roots, I delineate between four discrete Brazil(s) in Bishop's texts. Shifts between these Brazil(s) are predicated on changes in Bishop's relationship with her Brazilian partner, Lota Macedo de Soares. I explore the eleven poems of the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel* and "Crusoe in England," as well as the introductions and translations she worked on contemporaneously. Bishop's tourist poems examine the tension between her expectations of the banana-ized Brazil of the popular Carmen Miranda movies, and the reality that she discovered as she moves from a tourist-voyeur to a rooted expatriate. In her Samambaia poems, she writes from the position of insider/partner about the subaltern public sphere that Lota has created at her farm outside of Rio de Janeiro. The volatility of the Brazilian political situation, which Bishop blamed for the dissolution of her relationship with Lota, led Bishop to define the primitive aspects of Brazil that Lota

disdained. Finally, I argue that her translation strategies as she writes about Brazil after Lota's death in 1967 are a nostalgic return to her earliest views of Brazil.

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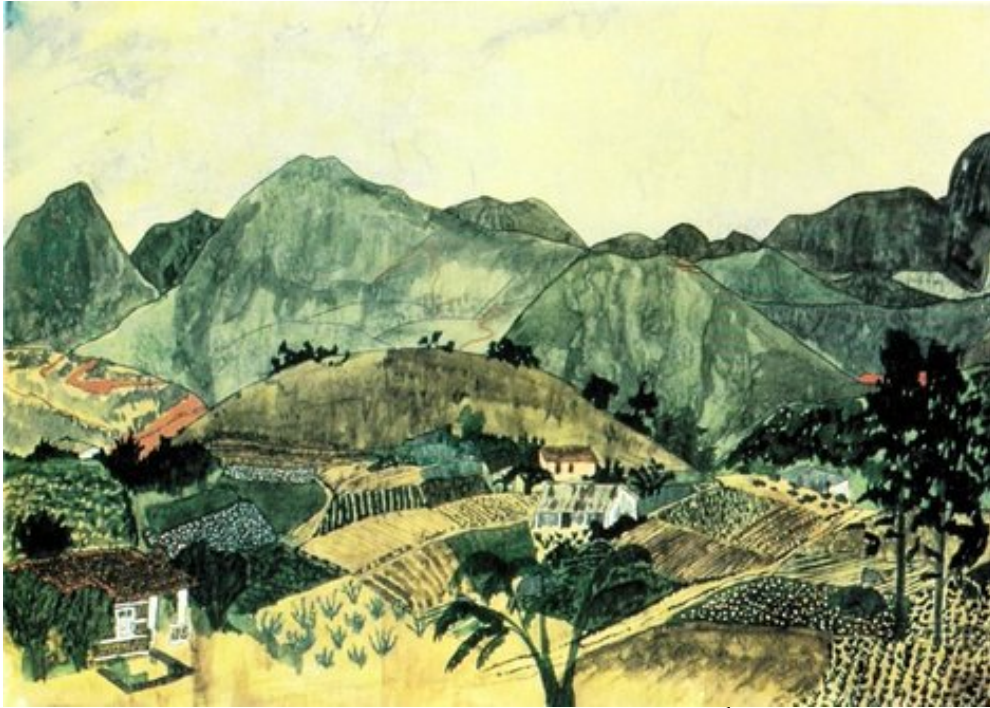


Illustration 1: "Brazilian Landscape," 1952<sup>1</sup>



"Interior with Calder Mobile," date unknown (presumably late 1950s)<sup>2</sup>

## **Introduction: On Bishop's Brazil(s)**

Elizabeth Bishop painted watercolors that she often gave as gifts to her friends and loved ones in a personal representation of scenes from her travels and her life. Two of her paintings from the 1950s represent a complete portrait of the area in Samambaia in which Bishop lived with Lota for the first years of their relationship. In September 1952, less than a year after she arrived in Brazil, Elizabeth Bishop sent a large painting to her friend and doctor Anny Baumann. In the accompanying letter, Bishop downplays the painting, later titled "Brazilian Landscape," with her usual self-deprecation: "I am not very well pleased with it. I'm afraid, to use an elegant expression, I bit off more than I could chew" (*One Art* 246). The painting is ambitious among Bishop's work using watercolor and gouache; the scene is "from Lota's road, looking down over the land belonging to a florist, just below us—a very nice neighbor to have." The distance from which Bishop views the florist's home and the other farms below, as well as the rolling green hills under a blue sky which fill the top half of the painting, give a broad overview of the vast area around Samambaia, the *sítio* [country home] of Lota Macedo de Soares, Bishop's partner during her years in Brazil.

In contrast to the grand scope of "Brazilian Landscape," another of Bishop's paintings provides a more focused portrait of an intimate corner of the home Bishop shared with Lota.<sup>3</sup> In "Interior with Calder Mobile," Bishop depicts old-fashioned aspects of their home; the fire-burning woodstove beside the cozy teakettle and the iron container with logs waiting to be put in the fire. But centered above these elements is a sign of the

cutting-edge artistic taste that both Bishop and Lota enjoyed: a Calder mobile, presumably a gift from Alexander Calder when he visited them at Samambaia in 1959 with his wife. The stove and the mobile epitomize the combination of modernity and tradition that was prevalent in their home, an award-winning example of Brazilian architecture set in a rural community whose “backwardness” Bishop often remarked on humorously in her letters. Just outside the scope of the painting, like the “someone” in Bishop’s “Filling Station” who positions the “Esso” cans and lays out doilies in the middle of the greasy waiting area, “Interior with Calder Mobile” implies the presences of people who plump the pillow, put out flowers, and light the stove to enjoy the tea. The felt presence of their relationship in the poem gives an intimacy to the painting that is missing from the grander landscape.

In poetry, letters, travel writing, translations, essays, and introductions, Elizabeth Bishop defined Brazil to both a private and public U.S. audience for more than two decades. In that time, her view and portrayals of the country shifted; she performed complicated and at times contradictory Brazil(s). In 1977, looking back across more than two decades of living in and writing about Brazil, Bishop told George Starbuck in an interview: “I have no theories about Brazil, unlike so many people. Immediately upon arriving I did have theories and they were sharp ones. Little by little those theories evaporated. Brazil became my home” (80). The relationship between Bishop’s initial views of the country, the generalized “theories,” and the later, more intimate association of Brazil as “home” is similar to the focal shift that happens when Bishop turns her attention from the vast space of the landscape to the intimate place of the interior. The

tension in many of Bishop's Brazilian texts comes from her desire to represent accurately the broad Brazilian spaces and her own theories, which she questions upon her arrival, as well as the intimate places with the specific details that change Brazil from a visited site into a familiar place.

This project examines the representational practices, values and strategies with which Bishop portrays Brazilian moments, people and texts. Bishop's representations are determined by the dynamics of her often volatile relationship with Lota Macedo de Soares; the economic circumstances of their domestic life; the location of their homes—the domestic spaces they constructed in their Samambaia farmhouse and the small apartment in the Leme neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro; the political situation in Brazil with which Lota, her family and friends were intimately connected, especially in the 1960s when Lota worked for the government; Bishop's publishing contracts and editorial relationships; and her own sense of her audience's expectations, which evolved over two decades from the post-World War II audience she left in 1951 to the Vietnam War-era audience she encountered on her return to the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s; and other aspects of her daily life in Brazil. These factors affect the distances from which she observed Brazilian spaces, what she revealed of the intimacy of her shared Brazilian places, and the representational strategies she employed as she strove to portray accurately her Brazil to her U.S. audience. In every stage, a shift in her relationship with Lota is the catalyst for the new type of Brazil Bishop writes.

Situating the multiplicities of Bishop's Brazilian spaces and places within their sociohistorical contexts, in the four chapters that form this project, I unpack the eleven

poems that form the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel* and “Crusoe in England,” as well as the prose texts and translations that she worked on contemporaneously. Each of the four chapters focuses on a different stage of Bishop’s life in relation to her views on Brazil and the texts that she wrote or translated during that time. In chapter 1, I examine Bishop’s route from New York to Samambaia and the resulting tension between her expectations of Brazil, formed by the banana-ized Brazil of the popular Carmen Miranda movies, and the reality that she discovers as she moves from a tourist-voyeur to a rooted expatriate. In particular, Bishop expresses this tension in the poems that end *A Cold Spring* (“Arrival at Santos” and “The Shampoo”) as well as other poems that she originally submitted to the *New Yorker*: “Brazil, January 1, 1502” and “Questions of Travel.” As I will demonstrate, in general Bishop arranged the poems in the “Brazil” section in chronological order of their original publications in the *New Yorker*. In an important exception, Bishop’s editorial move to replace “The Shampoo” with “Brazil, January 1, 1502” forms a suite of tourist poems that make her narrative move from outsider to insider more pronounced. It also erases Lota almost completely from the collection. Bishop begins with the distant vantage point of what I will term in chapter 1 a “tourist/voyeur,” using Michel de Certeau’s sense of the term “voyeur” as the outsider whose distance gives her fresh perspective from which to more effectively observe a space.<sup>4</sup>

I focus in Chapter 2 on Bishop’s domestic roots as she moves to a position of insider/partner as her relationship with Lota solidifies. Bishop writes about Brazil from the security of Lota’s home in Samambaia, a place where Lota actively cultivates a

subaltern public sphere that is nurturing to their lesbian relationship and accepting of the cosmopolitan lifestyle that Bishop finds so attractive. In “Manuelzinho” and “Squatter’s Children,” Bishop chronicles the socioeconomic distance and captures the rarefied tone of Lota’s *coronelista* circle in a way that fits well with the upper-class audience of the *New Yorker*—they share the same kinds of jokes about the difficulty of finding good “help.” I place these poems in conjunction with Bishop’s introduction to and translation of *A Diary of “Helena Morley”* in order to lay out her earliest definitions of the idyllic life of the rustic Brazilian poor. Against that backdrop, Bishop writes subversively about her shared space with Lota, who is always part of the scene in “The Armadillo,” “Electrical Storm,” and “Song for a Rainy Season.” Though she disguises their lesbianism, the use of “us” and “we,” the intimacy of their shared bed and their shared jokes, makes the nature of their relationship clear. This is particularly true in “Song for a Rainy Season,” one of Bishop’s transitional poems that celebrates the intimate union through the metaphor of the house and its natural decay even as she grieves the loss of their time at Samambaia.

The period I analyze in Chapter 3 begins as Bishop and Lota leave Samambaia and make their home in Lota’s apartment in Rio de Janeiro. As their relationship fractures, Bishop turns her attention to the primitive people whose lives she finds fascinating throughout her writing career, but whom Lota disdains. The underlying tension of the poems comes from Bishop’s resistance of Lota’s sense that the “best” Brazilian literature should represent the traveled, educated circles of Brazil, rather than examining the “lower” classes and the “primitive” natives. Bishop’s definitions in the



Time-Life *Brazil* book, particularly in the reconstructed manuscript that Lloyd Schwartz published in *Prose* in 2011, make clear the distinctions she makes between Brazilian types. She draws these categories from the work of anthropologists, including Claude Lévi-Strauss, Charles Wagley and Gilberto Freyre. Combined with her own translation work of the time, particularly her translations of stories by Clarice Lispector and poems by João Cabral de Melo Neto, these anthropological views influence Bishop's prose texts and the final poems in the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel*. I examine her views on "Indians" as objects of the tourists' gaze in an essay that was unpublished during her lifetime, "Aldous Huxley, A New Capital and Some Indians"; "Indians" as "noble savages" in "The Riverman"; and the effect of Lispector's main character, Little Flower, on the agency demonstrated by the "maddening little women" in "Brazil, January 1, 1502." The shift between "The Riverman" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502" marks a turn in Bishop's writings about "primitives," which I demonstrate in my readings of "Twelfth Morning, or What You Will," which is a poem about "backlands people," and "Burglar of Babylon," which is a poem about the semi-rural poor. The complexity of Bishop's routes during this time as she writes about Brazil indicates the depth of the break with Lota, who no longer serves as her primary source for the country.

Finally, in chapter 4, I look at her translation strategies as she writes about Brazil after Lota's death in 1967. Though she continues to live in Brazil on and off in her home in Ouro Preto, Bishop's relationships were significantly altered after Lota died. She returns to her earliest viewpoints, which I examine in Chapters 1 and 2, as she works on *An Anthology of Twentieth Century Brazilian Poetry*. Lota's upper-class views dominate

Bishop's introduction; Lota's circle of friends form the core of those chosen for inclusion in the anthology. By comparing Bishop's work with two later anthologies of Brazilian poetry, I demonstrate the ways in which Bishop returns to a nostalgic portrayal of Lota's dated, often problematic views of Brazil; the latter two anthologies gently correct Bishop's definitions of Brazil. Bishop also translates the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel* into her dramatic monologue, "Crusoe in England." The poem relies on the tensions of that section as Bishop elegizes Lota and their shared Brazil.

In these chapters, I am conscious of resisting a tendency that is almost ubiquitous among U.S. Bishop scholars. Easily aware of the differences between North American influences on Bishop's work, critics do not confuse New York with Nova Scotia. And yet when writing about the country in which many of Bishop's most important works were written, scholars too often conflate Samambaia and Rio de Janeiro, the Amazon and Ouro Preto, Brasília and a Tupi Village, into the word "Brazil."<sup>5</sup> Bishop herself was fascinated by and took great pains to discern the differences between the cultural nuances and shifts in the variety of Brazilian regions in which she traveled and lived. Her approach to the spaces where she traveled and the places where she lived changed in the various phases of her life and relationship status in Brazil. The narrative of this study, therefore, attempts to distinguish between some of the sites implied in my plural use of the term Brazil(s): the personal Brazil that Bishop shares with Lota, the Brazil she attempts to capture in the Time-Life *Brazil*, the old-fashioned Brazil of *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* or the "primitive" Brazil of "The Riverman" and other poems.

My discussion of Bishop's idiosyncratic travel practices and representational strategies opens onto the ways in which U.S. mid-twentieth century tourists, writers and audiences imagined themselves and others and how her texts fit into larger cultural discussions about race, region and language within her home audience. I have attempted, as much as possible, to make Bishop the still point of a turning cultural and personal circle. In a sense, my examination is as much about mid-twentieth century Brazil(s) in popular and academic discourse both in the U.S. and in Brazil and the influences that inform Bishop's versions of Brazil, whether they be U.S. and European writers traveling within Brazil, Brazilian acquaintances and friends, or other catalysts for her representational decisions. At stake in my argument is a sense of Bishop's position as a mediator between these two cultures; this role as she conceived it and as critics have performed it has contributed to Bishop's unprecedented rise in popularity in the last two decades.

### **Routes/Roots**

Before situating my discussion within the larger critical conversation, I must define the terms I use to analyze Bishop's own poetics of travel and displacement. Because the questions of travel Bishop poses in the poem of that title create a tension between travel and home, I draw on Clifford's opposed conceptualizations of routes and roots. In his *Predicament of Culture*, Clifford privileged routes over roots. As he summarizes his philosophical shift from the previous book to *Routes*, "Dwelling was understood to be the local ground of collective life, travel a supplement; roots always

precede routes. But what would happen, I began to ask, if travel were untethered, seen as a complex or pervasive spectrum of human experiences?” (3). The privileging of roots over routes in the larger critical discourse is one I will return to below in my discussion of Bishop’s positionality. But prompted by my discomfort with the careful articulation by Bishop scholars of the variations in Bishop’s North American roots, and the lack of the same treatment of Bishop’s Brazilian routes *or* roots, I have turned Clifford’s universal question into a specific one applied to Bishop: What if Bishop’s travels and the resulting translations and representation were seen as a complex and pervasive spectrum of her own specific human experiences within Brazil? What if her questions of travel were situated within her own Brazil(s)?

### **Space and Place**

In order to analyze Bishop’s Brazil(s), I turn to Yi-Fu Tuan’s seminal book, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, in which he positions space and place as contrasting but linked concepts on either end of the spectrum of experience.<sup>6</sup> As Tuan lays out his formulation, “Experience can be direct and intimate, or it can be indirect and conceptual, mediated by symbols” (7). At one end of the spectrum, “‘Space’ is more abstract than ‘place.’ (7); it is the idea of a country or neighborhood or group of people which can be broadly focused on but which cannot be fully understood on an intimate level—it is impossible to know everyone in the “space” of one’s country, for example.<sup>7</sup> Space is often associated in Western culture with freedom:

Space lies open; it suggests the future and invites action. On the negative side, space and freedom are a threat. A root meaning of the word ‘bad’ is ‘open.’ To be

open and free is to be exposed and vulnerable. Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed (54).

Bishop's routes are a search for the freedom of space. The negative and positive connotations Tuan outlines are inherent in Bishop's Brazilian spaces. The Brazilian landscape she paints in 1952 is free from the constraints and difficulties she fled when leaving the stressors of her year as the national poetry chair at the Library of Congress from 1949-1950, a position Bishop despised, and the pressure she consistently felt when residing in New York.<sup>8</sup> The journey she intended to take, following Magellan's journey around South America, was stopped short by her relationship with Lota, but the privilege she enjoyed as a white guest, the intriguingly exotic markers of another culture, the promise of fascinating sites just around every corner, are part of the "future" and "action" that Samambaia gave Bishop. In later years, when problems with Lota plagued their relationship, Bishop continued her search for space in the Amazon and the more "primitive" areas in Brazil. In searching for these Brazilian spaces, Bishop sometimes acknowledged her privilege and problematic approach of the mid-twentieth-century tourist intent on imposing meaning on the blank sheet of a visited space. Despite those issues, the act of travel, the fresh perceptions and renewed distance from which to look upon cultures and people, were invigorating for Bishop in her poetics. As Tuan puts it, "In the act of moving, space and its attributes are directly experienced...ideas develop out of movement—out of the direct experiencing of space through movement" (52). Often, a trip spurred Bishop on to write new poems or new prose. She is self-aware in her poetry and letters, however, that this search for space is also marked by the loneliness Tuan

describes; the isolation and vulnerability Bishop experienced in D.C. and New York were answered by the relationship which Lota offered when she first asked Bishop to remain in Samambaia.

A crucial difference between the understanding of space and place is the distance from which each is viewed. The remoteness, whether physical, emotional, cultural, or personal, necessary to gain a broad understanding of a conceptual space is the opposite of the tight focus which is required to accurately portray an intimate place. Bishop scholars have rehearsed the observational strategies she employs in a variety of ways; she is famous for her binoculars, which she used to observe Micuçu in “The Burglar of Babylon” from the distant vantage point of the apartment balcony in Leme. This shift in observational stance, moving from distance to intimacy, from seeing once to living in everyday, is how Bishop shifts from viewing aspects of Brazil as a space and turns them into a place/home. Tuan consciously provides terms with shifting definitions depending on the scale of the representations and experience. For example, “Place exists at different scales. At one extreme, a favorite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the whole earth” (Tuan 149). I will provide more specific definitions for these terms within each chapter as I attempt to categorize the shifts in Bishop’s own views of Brazil.

Bishop’s Brazilian spaces hold a number of smaller Brazilian places, which she focuses in on within any given poem or prose text. Especially in her earliest poems, when she is still coming to terms with the space in which she is writing, Bishop provides an expansive scene that she then narrows to focus on quirky details, like a handmade

birdcage or a red-tailed lizard. Space and place work congruently in Bishop's poetry, as they do in her paintings. As Tuan points out,

Place can be defined in a variety of ways. Among them is this: place is whatever stable object catches our attention. As we look at a panoramic scene our eyes pause at points of interest. Each pause is time enough to create an image of place that looms large momentarily in our view. The pause may be of such short duration and the interest so fleeting that we may not be fully aware of having focused on any particular object; we believe we have simply been looking at the general scene. Nonetheless these pauses have occurred. It is not possible to look at a scene in general; our eyes keep searching for points of rest. We may be deliberately searching for a landmark, or a feature on the horizon may be so prominent that it compels attention (161).

These pauses or points of rest are the brilliantly observed details of many of Bishop's poems. Bishop creates a dichotomy between the expected spaces that she assumes she will observe, what I call the Concept-Brazil of the first three poems of the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel*, and the actual places with all of their individualistic detail, which both disappoint and delight her. In many of her prose texts, like the introduction to *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* the Time-Life *Brazil* and the introduction to *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry*, Bishop's classifications and categorizations of Brazil are compatible with Tuan's conceptualization of a broad space with intimate places.

### **Lota**

Throughout Bishop's Brazil(s), however, Lota is the primary indicator of the place which Bishop writes about in the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel* and which she mourns in "Crusoe in England." The roots in Bishop's Brazils, the homes in which she lived and the places in which she finds permanency, are Lota's (with the exception of

the home in Ouro Preto, though she had originally hoped Lota would live there with her). As Tuan notes, “For most people possessions and ideas are important, but other human beings remain the focus of value and the source of meaning... home may well be another person” (139). The relationship with Lota, whose quirks and faults Bishop first celebrated in “The Shampoo,” the poem about their middle-aged love affair, attached Bishop to Samambaia and the society in which Lota moved.

Lota was part of the privileged class at the upper-echelon of Brazilian society. When Claude Lévi-Strauss traveled to São Paulo in 1934, he encountered a Brazilian elite that was sophisticated, cultured, and well-read, as well as insular and gossipy.<sup>9</sup> He described the upper-class Brazilians in *Tristes Tropiques* as having “an appetite for all kinds of learning” (100). The society, however, was very small: culture was “the plaything of the rich” who shared “a combination of inherited wealth, innate charm and acquired craftiness” (101, 100).<sup>10</sup> The elite were the landed gentry who had controlled the country from 1890 to 1930. This forty-year period, called the *República Velha*, began after the fall of the Portuguese emperor and the end of slavery in 1888. In the *República Velha*, oligarchic landowners called *coronels* [the term in Portuguese means a type of feudal landowner whose rule was absolute within his domain, as well as a military colonel] ruled the country. These rural landowners from the interior exported coffee in São Paulo and dairy from Minas Gerais; their *Café com Leite* [coffee with milk] politics privileged their own concerns, which meant that a significant portion of the population lived without representation, access to education, or the ability to rise from the poverty-stricken lower class. A major drought in 1877, followed by an influx of former slaves



whose freedom meant they were now homeless and jobless, contributed to the anger felt by the majority of the Brazilian population toward the oligarchic rule of *coronelismo*. Tension simmered for decades before significant change occurred in 1930; Lévi-Strauss witnessed the cultural clout of this small community, which lasted even after they lost political control of the country.

Because of Lota's family connections and political ties, these political tensions were part of their everyday life. Lota's friends owned and ran the newspapers in which Bishop read accounts of political changes. By the early 1960s, Lota had moved them full time from their home in Samambaia to Rio de Janeiro as she worked on the Aterro do Flamengo, a job she attained because of her lifelong friendship with the governor, Carlos Lacerda. The same newspapers Bishop read were also the site of vitriolic political and personal attacks on Lota's leadership of the park. The attacks were classist because of their accusations that Lota was only appointed because of her privileged position; they were gendered because reporters questioned her ability to lead as a woman. Underlying this tension were the cultural anxieties playing out within a small society when Lota, an open lesbian, resisted the normative constraints of her elite circle.<sup>11</sup>

### **Accuracy**

In general, I have conflated Bishop's travel practices and her representational strategies. That is to say, I have written as if the way she traveled in Brazil, what she thought and read and saw, is also how she wrote about Brazil. There is little degree of difference between the speakers in the poem and Bishop herself. There are exceptions—

she exaggerates her own voice in poems like “Arrival at Santos” in order to emphasize her own unrealistic expectations. But Bishop is always clear when she fictionalizes or takes on another voice. She relied on the form of dramatic monologue throughout her poetic career in order to provide herself an imagined character whose viewpoints gave her an opportunity to reexamine disparate aspects of the society or the situation she is attempting to portray. Three of my chapters feature readings of a dramatic monologue; Bishop speaks in the voice of Lota in “Manuelzinho,” as the Amazonian shaman in “The Riverman” and through the grief of the aging explorer in “Crusoe in England.” Bishop takes great care to differentiate between those speakers and her own voice.

Other than those clearly marked poems, Bishop speaks in her own voice in most of her poems. In general, most scholars who know her texts well assume that she is the speaker of the poems. Thus, for example, the commonly accepted term for the unnamed speaker from “In the Waiting Room” is “Little Elizabeth.” While it would be possible for me to share the methodology of most Bishop scholars without highlighting it, I find it productive particularly in my arguments about her representational strategies to explain my conflation of her travel practices and her travel writings.

By reading Bishop’s written Brazil(s) as congruent with the Brazil(s) that she experienced, I rely on Bishop’s highest ethical value in representations, whether they were poems or translations: accuracy. She wrote in unpublished notes that the three qualities she admired most in poetry were “accuracy, spontaneity and mystery.”<sup>12</sup> As she told a student once, “I *always* tell the truth in my poems” (Brett Millier 196). However, especially in her translations or her travel poetry about Brazil, which are translations of

Brazilian moments, Bishop is particularly careful to keep descriptive details and often includes a footnote or some other marker of changes she makes to a Brazilian moment or a Brazilian text. Her penchant for accuracy was a site of difference between Bishop and Robert Lowell who, according to George Monteiro, “insisted...she carried ‘the accuracy business too far’” (ix). Unlike Lowell, Bishop was adamant her entire life that accuracy implies an almost literal interpretation of a moment or text. The moments of inaccuracy, therefore, often point to the source from which she drew a particular portrayal or argument. Bishop’s based her sense of how to accurately write about Brazil on what she saw, what Lota told her, or what she read in the work of experts.

Bishop had a distinctive definition of what she meant by “accuracy.” In one sense, the term had the feel of actuality: her poems were about factual moments that actually occurred and she used details (characters, animals, rooms, tin bowls) that existed in real life. In another sense, Bishop’s use of accuracy implied authenticity: she attempted to portray Brazil as authentically as possible, whether she used her own travels in the country, the testimony of Brazilians, or expert writers like ethnographers and naturalists as her sources for these authentic depictions. The source materials for her authentic renderings of Brazilian places especially were determined by Lota. Lota set the boundaries and limitations of Bishop’s places; as I will show, although Lota is outside of the scope of most of the poems in the “Brazil” section, she is nonetheless a felt presence in almost every poem about the places they shared in Samambaia and in Rio de Janeiro.

The arrangement of the scene in the painting “Brazilian Landscape” demonstrates Bishop’s commitment to her sense of accuracy: rather than centering the scene in an

aesthetically pleasing way, she paints it exactly as she sees it. She marks the foreground of the painting with hills divided into small farming sections, some of which hold plots of flowers. In the midst of the fields, at least five buildings are evident, drawn first in pencil then colored in with watercolors in Bishop's typical drawing style. Bishop does not put the focal point of the painting within the golden ratio (an off-centered third of the painting, either on the left or right). Arguably, one of two buildings could be considered the focal point of the painting: The closest one to the left bottom edge of the painting features a whitewashed house with red tile roof and a large patio or yard off to the side. In the exact middle of the bottom edge of the painting, Bishop has overlaid a dark green tree over the fields. The placement of objects in the scene has more to do with veracity than artistry.

Bishop's disregard of the ratio in painting is evidence of her own unique style and demonstrates the authenticity of her accurate depictions. She labeled her style "primitive," which in describing her art had the connotation of being unstudied and self-effacing. Bishop equated "primitive" with authentic; the spontaneity of her authentic portrayal of a particular moment in a poem or the scene in a painting gave it an authentic perspective that she might have missed with an overly stylized poem. And she often equated "primitive" Brazilians with her search for the Real Brazil, the essentialized Brazil she describes in texts like *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* "Manuelzinho," or "Twelfth Morning." There is a slight condescending edge to the word when Bishop uses primitive as a descriptor for other artists who are invariably poor, illiterate or "natives," like Lota's cook who, as she told Baumann in the letter accompanying "Brazilian

Landscape,” competed with Bishop to paint bigger paintings and bake better cakes, “only using up *all* the eggs” (*OA* 246). Bishop’s letters are full of anecdotes about the local-color characters she encountered at Lota’s home in Samambaia, and the cook, like the tenant farmer Manuelzinho, is a source of merriment in her accounts. Bishop asserts repeatedly when describing her paintings that her style is on par with “primitive” artists in a way that allows her to be free from the type of perfectionism that characterized her poetry.

Bishop’s approach to “primitive” Brazil, especially her sense of what was at stake in her portrayals of lower-class or native Brazilians, came from anthropologists writing about their fieldwork. A number of factors influenced what James Clifford in *Routes* calls specific “relational politics, poetics and pragmatics of representations” (170). Clifford’s representations are generally on large scales—museum exhibitions, representational tendencies in ethnography—but they are also applicable to Bishop’s sense of the relationship between writer and primitive subject. Bishop read contemporary ethnographers, namely Claude Lévi-Strauss, Charles Wagner and Gilberto Freyre, in order to write about Brazilians accurately. These ethnographers were at the forefront of the field. Though their views are now seen as problematic by current ethnographers and scholars, that is only because the backlash that has occurred in the last thirty years has been directly against their views—Lévi-Strauss is the structuralist against which Derrida and others base their poststructuralist claims. As Clifford explains, “The concept of the field and the disciplinary practices associated with it constitute a central, ambiguous legacy for anthropology. Fieldwork has become a ‘problem’ because of its positivist and

colonialist historical associations (the field as ‘laboratory,’ the field as place of ‘discovery’ for privileged sojourners)” (63). In the 1950s and 1960s, Bishop was not writing problematic texts, she was writing well-researched and meticulously accurate texts based on cutting-edge anthropological views.

### **Bishop’s *New Yorker*/U.S. Audience**

In order to delineate Bishop’s Brazil(s), I also examine how her other spaces and groups were defined (or defined themselves) in the mid-twentieth century in U.S. academic and popular discourse. Bishop consciously shared a larger audience with her friends and contemporary poets who were writing travel poems. Her perceived audience was both interested in and concerned about U.S. postwar imperialism. Her sense of her audience’s expectations provides boundaries for the way in which she frames her portrayals of Brazil. These boundaries are aesthetic and social, but they are also economic: though she is a writer who is often remarkably free of financial motivations, there are times when Bishop’s financial concerns prompt her to write poems that will be accepted by the *New Yorker*. With a few exceptions, every poem and many of the essays I examine in this project were published in, or at least submitted to, the *New Yorker* before being included in Bishop’s collections of poetry. The focus of the *New Yorker* often provides the frame around Bishop’s still life examinations of Brazilian life.

Lota is always the catalyst for Bishop’s new Brazils. But the *New Yorker* is also the catalyst for many of Bishop’s representational practices as she turns to new aspects of her adopted country. The editors’ discomfort with her homosexual love poems, their

interest in “Indians,” their sense of their audience all inform Bishop’s poetry over the years. This is not to say that Bishop wrote only what Lota told her within the limitations of the *New Yorker*’s editorial preferences, but to note the emotional and personal boundaries that affected her portrayals of Brazil.

Her relationship with the magazine represents Bishop’s roots in the U.S. For much of Bishop’s writing life, she had a first-read contract with the *New Yorker*, originally offered to Bishop in 1946 by Katharine White, the long-time poetry editor.<sup>13</sup> The first-contract lasted until 1961 (Bishop ended it then, later resuming it in 1967).<sup>14</sup> The consideration of whether or not a poem or story would pass muster with the *New Yorker* editors influenced her writing, even if she was at times resentful of that fact. Bishop’s first-read contract with the magazine meant that its audience was her primary one: their iconoclastic style, distinct humor, and middle- to upper-class concerns shaped her poetry about Brazil, particularly in her early years of self-imposed exile.<sup>15</sup>

In 1925, as Harold Ross was seeking investors for his new magazine venture, he set forth a vision for the style and audience of the *New Yorker* that the editors meticulously maintained in the next several decades of publication.<sup>16</sup> Designed to accurately capture “metropolitan life” with wit and satire through pictures and word, Ross’s *New Yorker* was not written for the “old lady in Dubuque” but for a national audience who nonetheless had a “metropolitan interest.” Ross’s singular vision for the magazine created a style that guided the editors who selected the poems and the poets whose work would be included in the magazine. In the postwar years, the *New Yorker*’s

readership grew and its social significance increased as the constraints of the war years lifted and a new haut-bourgeois emerged.

The *New Yorker* of the 1940s and 1950s captures the contradictions and anxieties of a society in flux.<sup>17</sup> Most of the subscribers to the magazine did not live in New York. Though Bishop was an expatriate, she was part of a large community of people whose subscriptions to the *New Yorker* meant that they also subscribed to a particular viewpoint about the city: “New York” was a metonymic locale ostensibly inhabited by “discriminating people,” but which in reality any reader with money, education and interest could join.<sup>18</sup> In this imagined site, the audience “could satisfy two sets of feelings, often in conflict with each other: the desire for comfort and the consciousness of national and global ills” (Mary F. Corey xii). The juxtaposition of luxury advertisements and socially aware articles fit the period in which the answer for the world’s dilemmas seemed to be the economic expansion of the United States. Bishop, though often uncomfortable with the contrarities of the two positions, nonetheless joined with her fellow “New Yorkers” in her desire for both comfort and social consciousness, a desire that would play out in many of her poems for the *New Yorker*.

Bishop’s “Brazil” was not a familiar landscape to her *New Yorker* readers. By the mid-1960s, subscribers to the *New Yorker* had traveled all over the world: 42.8% had been to Canada, 41.2% to Europe, 24.4 % to Mexico, 62.3% to the Caribbean, 7.2% to the “Far East” and 7% to the “Near or Middle East.” Only 5.5% had traveled to South America, on par with the 5.6% who had traveled to Africa (*Characteristics of The New Yorker Households*, 7). South America was clearly not a popular vacation spot. Brazil



was not advertised as a luxury location in the *New Yorker*, though Carmen Miranda types appeared in other exotic advertisements. According to Joelle Biele, the *New Yorker* editors “pegged” the location of the poetry and stories on its pages because of Ross’s “theory that readers assumed *New Yorker* stories took place in New York” (*Elizabeth Bishop and The New Yorker* xxiv).<sup>19</sup> To play off the categories that Bishop herself employed in *Questions of Travel*, poems in the *New Yorker* fit into two categories: “New York” and “Elsewhere.” By “pegging” her Brazil texts (and those about Nova Scotia or other places), Bishop wrote against the New York poems that appeared simultaneously alongside them.

Bishop’s partnership with the *New Yorker* was not always a comfortable one. Bishop perceived the editors as having a “preference for witty, urbane, and superficial poems” and her discomfort with that preference was “symptomatic of an old debate she had been having with herself over whether she would ever write ‘real poems’” (Millier 323).<sup>20</sup> Always concerned with being labeled a minor poet or one who wrote descriptive lyrics rather than edgy, political works, Bishop objected to the editors’ selections. Biele surmises that the tone and scope that Bishop disliked about the magazine was “perhaps what she objected to in a lot of women’s writing, the ‘She-has-such-a-lovely-home’ boasting” (xxxv).<sup>21</sup> Bishop’s relationship with Lowell, who published primarily in *Partisan Review* and whose work she often considered more serious than her own, contributed to Bishop’s insecurity about being associated so closely with the *New Yorker*.<sup>22</sup> Part of her motivation in ending her first-read contract with them in 1961 was because she felt “the prose she planned to write about Brazil would be ‘unsuitable’ for

such a genteel audience” (Millier 322). Even in the next six years, until she renewed the contract again in 1967, a sense of that “genteel audience” was a constant in Bishop’s writing.

At times, Bishop resisted their audience, contested their editorial preferences, fought for her right to use (or not use) commas and colons despite their in-house regulations, but in the end, the *New Yorker* was one of the most beneficial relationships in Bishop’s publishing career. In a letter to the Barkers, Bishop remarks “In some ways the *New Yorker* is not a bad writing school” (OA 259). The magazine’s network of writers, reviewers and editors was also hers; its “New York” was hers as well. Because of that constancy, Bishop’s audience, no matter their actual location, was part of her “New York.” In each of my chapters, I examine the ways in which Bishop’s complex relationship with the *New Yorker* affected her portrayals of Brazil. Though she negotiated, sometimes challenging and sometimes meeting, her audience’s expectations, Bishop remained committed to an accurate sense of Brazil as determined by her own sociohistorical moment and the relationships that determined her views on the places and spaces she depicted.

### **Bishop Criticism and Her Revival**

This value of authenticity, being true to the Brazil she sees and experiences, is not the same as the value that often ascribed to Bishop by her critics. For example, in their readings of Bishop’s “The Riverman,” Thomas Travisano and Lorrie Goldensohn, attribute authenticity to the poem because it exemplifies Bishop’s ability to speak in the

voice of the “other.” As I will argue in chapter 3, “The Riverman” is one of Bishop’s least successful poems by her standards (because she based it on her reading rather than her actual experiences in the Amazon) and by contemporary critical standards (because she fictionalizes a Brazilian using markers that indicate he is a noble savage). However, Travisano and Goldensohn find the same attributes that I assume to be problematic to be indicative of Bishop’s forward-looking views. Both frame the poem as pivotal in Bishop’s lifework, a personal and historical moment when Bishop is “now able to penetrate and comprehend the alien consciousness of a Brazilian native from a distant place and class” and in which “she finally penetrates the remote class of the Other” (Travisano 162, Goldensohn 209). Their close readings of this poem examine it from a U.S. viewpoint and place it in the context of her other writing; both conclude that Bishop’s lifelong pursuit of accurate, authentic poetry is achieved in “The Riverman.” They, along with most other U.S. Bishop scholars, read this poem metaphorically, as an account of Bishop’s own sense of herself as an outsider or representative of her lifelong interest in primitive art. I read it more literally: Bishop was attempting to write an authentic portrayal of an Amazonian shaman using the positivist anthropological viewpoint of Charles Wagner as her source. This is one instance of many in which Bishop’s essentializing work has instead been framed as hybrid and liminal.

My point of contention with Travisano and Goldensohn is a small but important one. Both of these scholars are vanguards in Bishop scholarship of the 1980s and early 1990s. I am not overly critical of their work. Like many other readers of mid-twentieth poetry, I am grateful for the revisionist scholarship of a cadre of Bishop scholars whose

observant readings and persuasive arguments made her, in the words of Daniel Bosch in a review of the 2011 release of Bishop's *Prose*, "America's flagship, 20<sup>th</sup> Century poet, leaving the straight men (Eliot, Frost, Stevens and Lowell) in her wake" (par. 1). The revisionist scholarship has been outrageously successful in Bishop's case, as Travisano notes in his 1995 article, "The Elizabeth Bishop Phenomenon." There are few writers, if any, whose work can match the meteoric rise of Bishop's over three decades as her poetry went from a location of relative obscurity to preeminence within the U.S. academic literary canon.

The revisionist scholarship has relied primarily on arguments about Bishop's subject position as a white lesbian U.S. expatriate living in and writing about a "developing" nation. Because she is a poet who is out of step with her contemporaries and colleagues, scholars have read late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century concerns onto her writing and her life. Bishop resisted that move in her lifetime with polite but firm refusals to be viewed as a lesbian poet (she famously remarked to Frank Bidart that she believed in "closets, closets, and more closets") or to allow her work to be included in anthologies dedicated solely to "women poets." Adrienne Rich's April 1983 *Boston Review* article changed the scope of Bishop scholarship, or at least acknowledged a shift that had already begun to occur among critics and poets alike. Up until that point, Bishop was widely considered, in the words of John Ashbery, a "writer's writer." As Travisano points out in "The Elizabeth Bishop Phenomena," in 1979 at her death, "her profile within the academy perfectly mirrored the working definition of a 'minor' poet: a single outdated critical book in the *Twayne* series, two or three unpublished dissertations,

a handful of extended critical articles by academics...and a few dismissive footnotes by the literary historians” (904). Four years later, Rich made the argument that has been the cornerstone for most Bishop scholarship in the last three decades: “*I believe she deserves to be read and valued not only for her language and images, or for her personality within the poems, but for the way she locates herself in the world*” (par. 6). The way Bishop located herself in the world was drastically different from her contemporaries who, when they did travel, spent most of their time in Europe. Her life in South America and her partnership with a Brazilian woman, as Travisano points out in “Phenomena,” coincided with “an extraordinary variety of contemporary perceptions and concerns” (905). Bishop scholars have examined her poetics through the lens of her life, her alcoholism, her asthma, her nostalgia, her home in Nova Scotia, her lesbianism, her gender, her skin color, and many other attributes of her body, her background or her interests. In doing so, however, the many versions of Bishop’s poetics, when placed together, produce an impossible picture of Bishop’s life. Rather than discovering qualities that are inherent, I contend that many scholars have placed these contemporary perceptions and concerns onto Bishop’s life and work. Their arguments about her position have been used to undergird their assertions that she deserves reexamination within the literary canon.

Throughout my inquiry, I self-consciously anticipate another critical shift regarding Bishop, whose work is now firmly established as canonical. According to Michael Awkward, the injunction for critics to position themselves and to examine the position of the writers they are studying is “seen by many as among the most effectively moral and significant gestures of our current age, protecting us from, among other sins,

fictions of critical objectivity that marred previous interpretive regimes” (qtd. in Curry 1). To use the popular vernacular, Bishop has gone “viral,” which necessarily anticipates a reciprocal negative reaction. As Bosch puts it, “Expect a Bishop backlash by 2020” (par. 1). Indeed, that move has already begun as the mostly positive revisionist history of Bishop scholarship has already turned toward more overtly critical stances which attempt to make Bishop not proto-Postmodernist or post-racist but just a product of her own day and age. One example is René Curry’s inclusion of Bishop in her book, *White Women Writing White*. Curry’s focus on Bishop’s position, along with Sylvia Plath and H.D., as writers who are examples of American whiteness, marks a change from the almost overwhelmingly positive scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s. However, as early as 1996, Betsy Erkkila situates Bishop within her U.S. and Brazilian political contexts in “Elizabeth Bishop, Modernism and the Left.” Stephen Gould Axelrod examines her work in relation to U.S. containment policy in 2003. Camille Roman locates Bishop within the time just preceding the scope of my project in *Elizabeth Bishop’s World War II—Cold War View*. Jeffrey Gray analyzes her poetics of displacement in terms of the cultural transition from modernism to postmodernism in the 1950s to the 1970s. These have been the exceptions, but as Bishop’s popularity continues, their arguments will become the rule. The remarkable reticence among many Bishop scholars to locate Bishop in ways that can be construed as negative will not last.

Though Bishop’s poems are wonderfully capable of creating multiple meanings, in her letters and prose texts, her views on Brazil, its people, the landscape, the socioeconomic classes, politics, and other categories of her life there are remarkably

straightforward. While she is sometimes very complimentary or progressive, she is also often racist not only by today's standards but also by the standards of the 1960s. As I will show in chapter 2, while the civil rights movement raged, Bishop lamented the lack of good help because of the racialized qualities inherent in the black Brazilian poor who worked on Lota's estate. In chapter 3, I examine how the categories of her Time-Life book about Brazil rely on essentializing categorizations of Brazilian types. Such examples indicate the level of difficulty in positioning someone as ahead of their time. Bishop was a poet who was able to allow for multiple viewpoints and fragmented discourse at times in a way that is in keeping with the concerns and interests of postmodern scholars. But she was also a person whose views on race, socioeconomic class, privilege, power and permissible sexuality clearly fit a narrow and often rigid point of view which is not in keeping with current tendencies. She is not either/or, she is both/and, which is why she is such a remarkably fascinating poet to study and why examining her Brazil(s) is long overdue.

### **Bishop Criticism and Brazil**

In positioning Bishop within her Brazil(s), I am also widening my focus to include her translations and prose texts in addition to her poetry. In an example I will explore more fully in chapter 2, scholars look at Bishop's translation in terms of how it informs her poems about Nova Scotia rather than how it informs her understanding of Brazil, her translation aesthetics, her Portuguese language, or her relationship with Lota. There is no question that *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* was integral to Bishop's

“Elsewhere” poems and that Samambaia gave her the freedom to return to those earliest memories. But now that this point has been well established in Bishop criticism, the absence of critical scholarship on the diary itself or the role that it plays in Bishop’s portrayals of Brazil is glaring. This is just one of many examples: Bishop’s translations, her Brazilian relationships, her situation in Lota’s artistic circle, her front row seat to the Brazilian political upheaval, have been neglected in Bishop scholarship. Bishop’s “Elsewhere,” her Nova Scotian roots, are much more fully developed, examined and analyzed in Bishop scholarship than her Brazilian routes/roots.

This is in part a natural result of these conversations taking place in a North American context, but there is an equally engaging critical discussion taking place in Portuguese among thoughtful Bishop scholars whose work takes into account U.S. scholarship but is largely ignored or unread in the northern hemisphere. Thus my study includes and even privileges the work of Brazilian Bishop scholars. Their work’s absence within the rapidly growing U.S. conversation on Bishop is a loss. There is a great need of someone to translate their essays into English in order to bring these arguments more easily into the U.S. conversation.<sup>23</sup> When possible, I have drawn first from Brazilian scholars in order to provide evidence for many of my arguments and, though I have not quoted directly from all of them, I have been influenced tremendously by the works of scholars such as Flora Süssekind, Elizabeth Cancelli, Maria Lucia Milleo Martins, Regina Przybycien, Carmen Oliveira and Paulo Henriques Britto, Bishop’s translator whose articles originally began my inquiry. In addition to the literary critical conversation about Bishop, her relationship with Lota Macedo de Soares has been a fundamental cornerstone



in the emerging conversation about queer studies in Brazil. Nadia Nogueira's groundbreaking 2008 book, *Invenções de si em histórias de amor: Lota e Bishop*, approaches Bishop and Lota from the perspective of a sociohistorian examining the creation of queer spaces in a Brazilian context and was particularly helpful in my argument in chapter 2. Because of the popularity of Bishop's poetry in Brazil, her relationship with Lota provides a unique case study to open up the conversation about queer studies both within Brazil as well as in the U.S. My goal in this project has been to integrate the scholarship of Brazilian critics in a way that brings them more fully into the ongoing discussion of Bishop's works.

Though I focus in this project on one poet's life, by incorporating Bishop's translations and the work of Brazilian scholars, I hope to model what I think is an important framework for studying any writer who worked in a foreign language, translated or even traveled extensively. Bishop is certainly not the only poet whose work is enhanced by situating it alongside the foreign works that influenced her own poetics. As Lawrence Venuti notes in *The Scandals of Translation*, "translation suffers from an institutional isolation, divorced from the contemporary cultural developments and debates that invest it with significance" (2). I want to bring Bishop's translation out of isolation and into the body of work that make up her Brazilian texts. Bishop's representational strategies and her translation techniques are derived from the same ethical approach to accuracy. The choices she made in terms of which texts to translate throughout her life reveal the various shifts in her viewpoints about Brazil. Her translated works were greatly influential on her own creative process. Bishop's editorial choices about which poets to

include in her anthology, either as translators or original sources, reveal a great deal about her literary preferences and anxieties after a return to the U.S. following an almost twenty-year stint in Brazil. Ultimately, I argue that Bishop's approach to the actual translations of texts and her own artistic "translation" of Brazilian moments, bodies and places is the same. In her poetry, translations and prose texts, in a way that was congruent with her sense of accuracy and her own sociohistorical contexts, Bishop wrote to her U.S. audience about the Brazilian routes she followed as she explored new spaces and the places in which, at least for a time, she put down roots with Lota.

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<sup>1</sup> In *Exchanging Hats*, edited by William Benton, page 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 65

<sup>3</sup> Most U.S. and Brazilian scholars refer to Lota by her first name rather than her last.

<sup>4</sup> As I explain more fully below, I am using the term “space” in Tuan’s sense, not Certeau’s.

<sup>5</sup> I will speak more specifically about that tendency, as well as important scholarly exceptions to my assertion, and the necessity of an inter-American conversation about Bishop in later sections.

<sup>6</sup> In using these terms, I am aware of other philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists, among scholars of a variety of disciplines, who have examined the difference between “space” and “place” with slightly different or possibly contradictory definitions to the ones that I am employing in this project. For example, Henri Lefebvre’s 1974 *Production of Space* examines space as a social construct with economic production as the center of the operational methods. The work of postcolonial theorists like Doreen Massey (whose 1994 *Space, Place and Gender* I found particularly applicable to my own approach in my inquiry) criticizes the ways in which Eurocentric Western writers evaluate countries as “developing nations” using their own nations as standards against which to measure more “backward” countries. An assertion underlying my argument is that Brazil and Latin America should not be judged by or left out of the conversation that is centered in the U.S., in what I might call “Northern-centric” conversations. However, in attempting to define the terms in the ways that they were used by Bishop, I found Tuan’s significantly more applicable to Bishop’s travel practices and observational habits than other writers. In using Tuan’s terms, however, I want to be clear that I am also applying my own perhaps idiosyncratic interpretation to ideas that could be incorporated into another philosophical rubric just as easily. In particular, because of my use of terms by Michel de Certeau later in this section and particularly in Chapter 1, I want to delineate between his definitions of these terms and those of Tuan. Though these ideas are complex and I want to be careful not to describe them in reductionist terms, Certeau’s “place” is a fixed point, a stable entity which is unmoved or unchanged by the mobility of people or ideas within its walls. The mobility implied by his term “space” changes the shape of a stable place: “In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs” (Certeau 117). In some sense, though again this is reductionist, the terms are almost the opposite in Tuan and Certeau’s conceptualizations: Tuan’s place is the details that are missing from the impression of space; Certeau’s place is given life by the practice of space when people inhabit a building.

<sup>7</sup> In this, as I will make more clear in chapter 1, I am also aware of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined community.” In the sense that both are too large to be known other than as intellectual concepts, Anderson’s imagined communities correlate well with Tuan’s space.

<sup>8</sup> Camille Roman’s excellent work, *Elizabeth Bishop’s World War II-Cold War View* gives an overview of the difficulties, both personal and political, with which Bishop struggles in the time immediately preceding her trip.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Paulo Henriques Britto for clarification of the many political and economic factors in this section; in particular, he pointed me to Lévi-Strauss as an accurate portrayal of the Brazilian elite. Many of the details in these paragraphs also come from *A Brazilian Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke UP, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> “...the elite of São Paulo, like its favorite orchids, constituted a more languid and exotic flora than it was aware of itself. Botanists tell us that tropical species include more varieties than those of the temperate zones, although each variety may comprise only a small number of individuals. The local *gran fino* had carried this specialization to extremes...Society, being limited in extent, had allocated various roles to its different members. All the occupations, tastes and interests appropriate to contemporary civilization could be found in it, but each was represented by only a single individual. Our friends were not really persons in their own right, but rather functions which had been selected less for their intrinsic importance than for their own availability” (Lévi-Strauss 99-100).

<sup>11</sup> Details from this paragraph come from Nogueira and Oliveira.

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<sup>12</sup> These three qualities are from unpublished notes for a talk kept at the Vassar archive. They are quoted repeatedly in various sources, including Jonathan Ellis, 115.

<sup>13</sup> Under their arrangement, Bishop would submit her poetry, fiction and travel essays first to the magazine; if they rejected it, she was free to submit the text to another source. The contract “guaranteed writers a minimum rate per line of poetry or per word of prose and usually paid 25 percent above that, in addition to quarterly cost-of-living adjustments and a signing bonus each time the agreement was renewed” (*EBNYf* xviii). White herself pushed for Bishop’s poetry to receive a slightly higher rate than what they had originally negotiated, so that Bishop was originally paid \$2.00 per line (*EBNY* xix).

<sup>14</sup> In *Elizabeth Bishop and The New Yorker* (2011), Joelle Biele collects letters between Bishop and the editors, many for the first time, and show the significance of the magazine on Bishop’s writing. The letters are my source for much of the chronology of this section.

<sup>15</sup> The following books have been particularly helpful in laying out the mid-century *New Yorker* audience: Mary F. Corey, *The World through a Monocle: The New Yorker at Midcentury* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999); Brendan Gill, *Here at The New Yorker* (New York: Berkley, 1976); Dale Kramer, *Ross and the New Yorker* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1951); Judith Yaross Lee, *Defining New Yorker Humor* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000); Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1964); Ben Yagoda, *The New Yorker and the World it Made* (New York: Scribner, 2000); Thomas Kunkel, *Genius in Disguise: Harold Ross of the New Yorker* (New York: Random House, 1995); and *Characteristics of the New Yorker’s Subscriber Households* (New York: Research Dept., *New Yorker Magazine*, 1967), a study commissioned by *The New Yorker* for its own use to understand and define its audience.

<sup>16</sup> From Ross’s prospectus: “The *New Yorker* will be a reflection in word and picture of metropolitan life. It will be human. Its general tenor will be one of gaiety, wit and satire, but it will be more than a jester. It will be not what is commonly called sophisticated, in that it will assume a reasonable degree of enlightenment on the part of its readers. It will hate bunk....As compared to the newspaper, the *New Yorker* will be interpretive rather than stenographic. It will print facts that it will have to go behind the scenes to get, but it will not deal in scandal for the sake of scandal nor sensation for the sake of sensation. Its integrity will be above suspicion. It hopes to be so entertaining and informative as to be a necessity for the person who knows his way about or wants to...The *New Yorker* will be the magazine which is not edited for the old lady in Dubuque. It will not be concerned in what she is thinking about. This is not meant in disrespect, but the *New Yorker* is a magazine avowedly published for a metropolitan audience and thereby will escape an influence which hampers most national publications. It expects a considerable national circulation, but this will come from persons who have a metropolitan interest” (qtd. in Peterson 247-248).

<sup>17</sup> According to Corey, “Although *The New Yorker* has appeared without interruption from its first issue in 1925 to the present, the late forties and the fifties were certainly its greatest period of cultural potency. In the years following World War Two, the magazine was widely read and widely talked about and came to have serious social cachet...In the postwar years, *The New Yorker* meant something to its readers. It offered them both a mirror and a map, instructing them and confirming for them things they already suspected about their world. In particular, the magazine unapologetically offered readers a mix of overlapping, contrasting, even contradictory reflections of a world in flux. For a brief span of time, *The New Yorker*, its readers, and the historical moment joined in a harmony that resonated in the worlds of journalism, culture and consumption” (x).

<sup>18</sup> As Peterson writes, “The *New Yorker* was established on the assumption that a small group of discriminating people would appreciate a magazine written by persons of their own kind and that advertisers would welcome an economical means of reaching such a market” (260).

<sup>19</sup> *The New Yorker*’s practice of pegging stories irritated Bishop. She wrote a 10 February 1953 letter to Pearl Kazin mocking their practice in which she describes the back-and-forth with the editors about her autobiographical short story, “In the Village,” which had a “fantastic” trail of correspondence. The letter gives a frank assessment of her views about the editors and their audience: “They really do want it, but I refuse to put in enough ‘he said’ and ‘she said’ and ‘it was 4 p.m., a very hot summer, August 16, 1917, Great Village, Nova Scotia, and my father’s name was William Thomas Bishop’s. But still some of their editorializing is good. The places they pick on to criticize are usually the right places, only they suggest the

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wrong changes...The idea underneath it all seems to be that the *New Yorker* reader must never have to pause to think for a second, but be informed and reformed comfortingly all the time, like newspaper writing a little—but then if one does attempt to publish there I guess one has no earthly right to complain” (*OA* 254).

<sup>20</sup> As I will show in chapter 2 in the section about “Manuelzinho,” this worry was not off-base; her funny and offensive poem fits perfectly with the scope of the magazine’s “light” poetry, which necessarily concerned Bishop in her quest to be taken more seriously.

<sup>21</sup> Horace Gregory’s essay-review, “The Poetry of Suburbia,” summarized the criticism against the magazine in a few pithy lines, calling it “the handbook of the suburban matron” that published “quasi-serious verse” (qtd. in *EBNY* xxxiii).

<sup>22</sup> Bishop’s doubts about the literary worth of her poetry resulted in self-deprecating descriptions of her poems to Lowell: in a 7 June 1956 letter just after the publication of “Manuelzinho,” “he seemed more frivolous than I’d thought, but maybe that’s just the slick, rich surroundings” and in a 22 April 1960 letter about “The Riverman,” “I don’t approve of it myself but once it was written I couldn’t seem to get rid of it” (*Words in Air* 178, 315).

<sup>23</sup> As I will indicate in my conclusion, this is the project I would like to undertake next.

**Chapter 1**  
**Bishop's Tourist Routes: Defamiliarizing the Space of a Banana-ized Brazil**  
**(1945 -1960)**

When Elizabeth Bishop left New York for Brazil in 1951, she intended to follow the journey made by the explorer Magellan. The story of how she remained in Brazil has been well-rehearsed by Bishop scholars: her allergic reaction to cashew fruit; the sudden and surprising offer from Lota Macedo de Soares to live in her lovely home in Samambaia; the joy Bishop felt in the early years of their love affair. Her new home with Lota was a welcome relief from the difficult time she had just experienced, including the appointment at the Library of Congress that she despised. She was increasingly uncomfortable with U.S. culture during World War II and the Korean War. She knew little about Brazil compared to other places to which she had traveled; making discoveries about her new home was a constant subject of her letters and poetry drafts of those early years. But Brazil was not a blank space for Bishop or the public and private audiences to whom she wrote. When *Questions of Travel* was published in 1965, Bishop titled her first section "Brazil." The single word centered in an otherwise blank page suggested to her audience an imagined "Brazil" that had been constructed in U.S. popular culture in the years preceding Bishop's journey to the country. Bishop, her fellow travel writers, and her audience were part of a generation that was traveling with a renewed vigor after the constraints and difficulties of World War II and, in their new identities as leisure tourists, reconceiving their own national identity and concerns.

The first three poems in the "Brazil" section, "Arrival in Santos," "Brazil, January 1, 1502" and "Questions of Travel," form a suite that differs from Bishop's later

portrayals of Brazil. The major difference is the distance from which Bishop treats the country in which she is visiting, a distance that is physical but also personal. In these poems, Bishop is a tourist. As Yi-Fu Tuan notes, the touristic process results in a sense of defamiliarization that is inherent in the act of travel: “Seeing has the effect of putting a distance between self and object...Tourists seek out new places. In a new setting they are forced to see and think without the support of a whole world of known sights, sounds, and smells—largely unacknowledged” (146). Though she returns to the distant viewpoint repeatedly in her poems about Brazil, and often about new sites to which she travels within the country like the Amazon and Ouro Preto, Bishop writes about her responses to these contrasts, lacks and differences and records her sense of displacement in these first three poems.

The touristic practices that Bishop analyzes are similar to the ones that Michel de Certeau theorizes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*.<sup>1</sup> In his work, Certeau attempts to defamiliarize the “imaginary totalizations produced by the eye” of the “everyday” which “has a certain strangeness that does not surface” unless self-consciously examined (93). Certeau illustrates the process of defamiliarization by ascending the World Trade Center tower (a painfully dated point of elevation) to gaze down from a distance on New York City below. He becomes an onlooker whose “elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was ‘possessed’ into a text that lies before one’s eyes” (92). Then he descends again to enter the everyday area of the “ordinary practitioners of the city” who “are ‘down below,’ below the thresholds at which visibility begins” (93). There are two viewpoint shifts in Certeau’s

metaphor: the voyeur carries in his ascent a Concept-City (the “bewitching world by which one was ‘possessed’”), which is a Utopian, philosophical idea and has very little to do with the actual city. When the voyeur looks down, the first viewpoint shift occurs: the imagined totalization is replaced by the place (the “text that lies before one’s eyes”) which is far enough away to be seen as a separate entity, but which is still a specific, particular site and no longer conceptual. This is the process of defamiliarization. The second viewpoint shift occurs when the onlooker descends, transforming from a “voyeur” to a “walker” who enters the everyday practice of the urban practitioners, the other walkers “whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being about to read it” (93). In Certeau’s metaphor, because he views the city from a distance, he is able to enter that everyday area with new clarity.

In Bishop’s poems, the speakers in “Arrival at Santos” and “Questions of Travel,” as well as the conquistadors in “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” observe with rich detail the landscapes, people, and everyday happenings of the foreign and exotic site which they perceive from a distance. However, Bishop’s poems do not just acknowledge or record the tourist-voyeurs’ travel practices. The suite of poems adheres to Certeau’s process of defamiliarization as her travelers replace their Concept-Brazils with actual places, whether the port at Santos or the jungle in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Brazil, which have gritty, realistic details that defy the travelers’ utopian ideals. Bishop alludes to the second viewpoint shift, moving from the “space” of Brazil (in Tuan’s sense of the term) to the “place” of Lota’s home in Samambaia, in the last stanzas of “Questions of Travel,” which serves as a transition into the later domestic poems of the “Brazil” section.



### **Bishop's Concept-Brazils**

Briefly unpacking the two discrete Concept-Brazils, as well as mid-twentieth century U.S. travel anxieties, serves to situate the act of defamiliarization experienced by Bishop's speakers in each of the poems. The first Concept-Brazil that Bishop troubles was made ubiquitous and normative in U.S. popular culture by the immensely popular Good Neighbor movies—this process of construction by U.S. filmmakers “banana-ized” Brazil. Though there are touches of these signifiers in the rest of the poems Bishop writes about Brazil, only in these three poems does Bishop react directly against the banana-ization of Brazil. The second Concept-Brazil was what I will call the “Real Brazil,” the natural, pristine, untouched place which is threatened by what Claude Lévi-Strauss terms the spread of “monoculture.” The loss of the Real Brazil provides the basis for the Western/Northern “tourist's lament” with which Bishop struggles in these first three poems.<sup>2</sup> Bishop does not argue against the impossibility of arriving at the Real Brazil; instead, she posits that an authentic experience is outside the scope of the tourist's situation. Her search for an authentic, untouched, non-banana-ized Brazil is one of the reoccurring tropes in two decades of writing about the country.

The tension between Bishop's Concept-Brazils, the expectations of privileged escapism and primitive authenticity, is one that was shared by her post-World War II traveling audience. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said says, “In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action” (3). In the same way, because of these Concept-Brazils, the “Brazil” Bishop writes was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Bishop consciously worked against

these movies or other portrayals of Brazil in U.S. culture, but that, because they were in the air at the time of her journey, Bishop's poems were transformative interpretations of both the banana-ized Brazil and the search for the Real Brazil.<sup>3</sup>

Because Bishop left the U.S. in 1951, her first Concept-Brazil is determined by the U.S. views of the country during World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, when the U.S. defined Brazil in order to define itself. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson explains that the concept of nationhood is "*imagined*" because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Conversely, in imagining another nation, members of one nation share an understanding of what characterizes the other nation: this is what separates "us" from "them." In the minds of each lives the image of their *difference*, the way in which a nation constructs a nation as "other." Consciously or not, translators, travel poets and other cultural intermediaries portray their perceptions of an imagined community in a way that fits into the language or ideas of another imagined community, usually their own. Often the depiction is taken as an unquestioned fact by members of the second community: that's just how "they" are. In "Arrival at Santos," Bishop writes about the symbols of those national boundaries (currency, language, flags). At the end of "Questions of Travel," when Bishop worries about the dichotomy between "home" and "here," the boundaries of those locations are along specific imagined national borders in the mind of her speaker and U.S. audience.

If, as Anderson argues, in the minds of each citizen “lives the image of their communion,” movie theaters in the 1940s were the site of that communion. Movies were more universally influential and popular in the 1940s than they have been at any point since. Movie-going audiences fell off sharply in the late 1940s and early 1950s because of the increased affordability of television sets. But according to Richard Maltby, in 1946, a third of Americans went to the movies at least once a week (20). At a time when the nation was struggling to identify itself, the movie audience was a provisional nation joined through their roles as spectators. The ritual gathering of a national community to confirm shared values, culture, language and viewpoints took place in the movie theater during that decade in a way that it has not since then.<sup>4</sup>

Carmen Miranda was the cultural synecdoche for Brazil in the politics playing out within the popular Good Neighbor movies from that time.<sup>5</sup> With only a couple of exceptions, Miranda starred in every one of the many movies made about Brazil during that period. Beginning with her U.S. cinematic debut in *Down Argentine Way* in 1940, Miranda appeared in eight Hollywood musicals and two Broadway musical revues from 1939 to 1944, just before and during U.S. engagement in World War II. Her popularity was such that, according to her biographer Martha Gil-Montero, by 1945 she became the highest-paid woman in the U.S. (155). The mutually exclusive implications of the phrase “Good Neighbor” denote the anti-imperialistic stance held by the U.S. public at the time: Unlike a “big brother” or a “burdened white man,” a good neighbor meets another autonomous neighbor on equivalent terms with language of mutual respect and courteous civility.<sup>6</sup> The phrase comes from Franklin Roosevelt’s foreign policy toward Latin

America; in Roosevelt's March 1933 inaugural address, he promises that he "would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor." The Good Neighbor policy implied that the U.S. was not appropriating or placing demands on the countries to the south but instead working with them to improve hemispheric relations.<sup>7</sup> The Roosevelt administration explicitly encouraged a focus on Latin America in films, fashion and music. The wartime U.S. public responded enthusiastically with an insatiable appetite for sambas, rhumbas, and tangos in night clubs and Latinized clothing in fashion, all inspired by the movies. The Good Neighbor policy became particularly important as the country moved to war. Hemispheric unity contributed to the sense of safety the U.S. desired in the face of foreign invasion. It also provided new economic avenues as the U.S. lost its economic partners in Europe and Asia.

Bananas were the most common signifier of Brazil in Miranda's movies. The fruit was ever-present on Miranda's hats and hung from cardboard palm trees in movies to denote a tropical setting. By banana-izing Brazil, filmmakers connected it to "banana republics," a term used by the 1940s to describe any Latin American country. The term implies that governments of all "South of the Border" countries are politically corrupt and trivial and in service to the North American economy, which receives the exported bananas. By the time Bishop wrote her "Brazil," the country had been so thoroughly banana-ized by the Good Neighbor movies that, even though Miranda is never mentioned in Bishop's poems, her body, songs and representations form part of the shared imagined normatives about Brazil.

Despite the breezy feel of the banana musicals, the interactions between constructed national views staged in them are complex. Miranda's body and voice were marked by South of the Border signifiers that privileged white U.S. culture as superior.<sup>8</sup> As Camille Roman notes, the mid-century World War II and post-war national interventionist narrative depicted a white female United States being hunted by “a demonic male hunter”—during World War II, that hunter was Germany, Italy and Japan and during the Cold War, the hunter became Communism (82).<sup>9</sup> The overly simplistic musical genre leant itself well to the allegory of this narrative. Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Vivian Blaine and the other blonde actresses who starred in the movies were easily identified with the gendered United States. Carmen Miranda's Brazilian body was an exotic alternative to their pure white ones, just as Brazil was an exotic setting in which to act out escapist fantasies. At the end of each movie, the white star (and therefore the white United States) was portrayed as superior, purer and worthier than the foils to which she was compared. These foils, including Miranda, were sexualized, exoticized and essentialized in a way that continued to privilege “wholesome” white movie stars.

The motif of Latinos/Brazilians as humorous or sexualized foils to the U.S. movie star is ubiquitous. A movie poster advertising *Week-End in Havana* (1941) depicts Alice Faye, Cesar Romero and Carmen Miranda in a typical scene that demonstrates this relationship:



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Illustration 2: Poster for *Week-End in Havana*

Romero, whose eyebrow is raised in the expression of the South American playboy, is kissing Faye's hand. Her unsure, displeased look is that of the ingénue taken aback but too polite or innocent to pull away. Faye is dressed almost completely in white and carries a white piece of paper in her hands, signaling her purity. In case the conflation of Faye with the United States is not clear enough, her blazer is blue and her belt is red. Miranda, on the other hand, wears a fiery red dress with a banana-colored necklace. Her angry expression, the hand on her hip and arm raised to smack Romero point to her hot-tempered personality. Romero's back to Miranda and her anger indicate his preference for Faye. Miranda's relationship to her blonde co-stars was a metaphor for the expected U.S. relationship to the South of the Border countries.

In appropriating this costume, especially the sexualizing bananas, Miranda fit into the filmmakers' niche of the acceptable black Other by playing up her exotic sexuality.<sup>11</sup>

Shari Roberts argues compellingly that looking at Miranda in relation to the particular sociohistorical moment helps to “approach audiences’ understanding of the star text as a signifying system” (4). In contrast to Miranda’s U.S. co-stars (Alice Faye and Betty Grable especially), Miranda became “the allowable cultural Other for wartime Hollywood, playing the dark but comic and, therefore, unthreatening foil to all the gilded wartime female musical stars” (Roberts 4). In positioning Miranda as a foil to her white counterparts, filmmakers relied on existing stereotypes that crafted Miranda as “dark” to her co-star’s “white.”<sup>12</sup> In Brazil, Miranda would not have identified as “black,” since her parents were Portuguese immigrants to Brazil. It was only when she arrived in the U.S. that she took on a traditionally Afro-Brazilian costume; her Baiana costume came from the part of the country populated most heavily by black Brazilians.

In defining the U.S. as different from a banana-ized Brazil in the Good Neighbor movies, the filmmakers relied on a number of tropes that represent the racial and regional interests and classifications of World War II Americans. The boundary of difference between countries is one Edward Said explores in his explanation of imaginative geographies in *Orientalism*.<sup>13</sup> Said’s boundary which marks the “our land-barbarian land” distinction in a collectively imagined geography is “arbitrary” because it “does not require that the barbarians recognize the distinction.”<sup>14</sup> The “barbarian” Brazilians, Argentines and other Latin Americans certainly did not recognize themselves in Miranda’s persona or the tropical settings. In these movies, Cuba, Argentina and Brazil are all shown as vaguely Spanish-speaking tropical islands that export bananas and exotic sexual dances; little care is taken to accurately depict geographical, economic, lingual

differences, much less to separate a rhumba from a samba.<sup>15</sup> Portuguese and Spanish are used interchangeably. In *Week-End in Havana* (1941), Miranda's character and Cesar Romero's have a fight in which she argues vehemently in Portuguese and he replies in Spanish. They repeat the same kind of argument in *The Gang's All Here* (1943). In *Down Argentine Way*, Miranda is singing "Sous' American Way" with Portuguese lyrics while the plane is landing in Argentina. Portuguese/Spanish became interchangeably Other or homogeneously "Hispanic" and were used for effect, not for communication.

In addition to providing escapist distractions to a World War II audience, the Good Neighbor movies were intended to win over a Latin American audience whose interest was economically and politically valuable to the U.S. Zanuck and Fox envisioned the Good Neighbor movies making up some of the revenue that was being lost while the European markets were impacted by the war. Because of the exploitative U.S. and Latin American relationship and misrepresentations in the movies, it is not surprising that the movies failed spectacularly in Latin America. The response from Latin American audiences to the imperialistic U.S. narrative was swift and harsh. *Down Argentine Way*, the movie intended to endear the U.S. to Argentina, was censored in Brazil and banned from Argentina. Gil-Montero quotes the Assistant Commercial Attaché to the American Embassy in Buenos Aires in a report that outlines the specific incongruities, concluding: "Everyone who portrays an Argentine in it from the first to the last is outrageously ridiculous in the opinion of Argentines, even down to the clerk of the hotel" (98).<sup>16</sup> Brazilians had similar responses to movies about Brazil. As one contemporary reviewer wrote of *That Night in Rio*:



because South of the Border is simply South of the Border so far as lyricist Mack Gordon is concerned...among the songs presented for approval to Brazilian authorities as part of the film was one called *Buenas Noches*. ‘But that’s Spanish,’ was the complaint, ‘and in Brazil we speak Portuguese’” (qtd. in Sean Griffin 34).

Miranda’s popularity in the United States had a devastating effect on her reputation in Brazil. The more successful her persona was in the U.S., the angrier her Brazilian audience became. She tried to challenge the accusations with ironic and humorous songs like “Disseram Que Voltei Americanizada” (“They Say I Came Back Americanized”).<sup>17</sup> But Miranda’s Brazilian audience, angered by the way her bad English full of sexual innuendos and her outlandishly exotic costumes represented their language and culture, resented her success in the U.S.

The rancor was particularly sharp among the upper-class circle of writers and artists in which Miranda moved before she left; Bishop landed in this same circle upon her arrival. Bishop witnessed firsthand Brazilians’ frustrations with Miranda through her community in Rio, and particularly her partner, Lota.<sup>18</sup> Bishop moved in an upper-class Brazilian society that viewed itself as the equal of any cosmopolitan society in the world, often having more in common with current events in Paris and New York than with their fellow Brazilians. The well-traveled, well-educated polyglots among whom Bishop was just beginning to make her home were eager to dispel the myths and stereotypes propagated by the Good Neighbor movies. And though the first three poems do not feature Lota and her friends, the tone of Bishop’s speaker reveals their influence. The speaker is not sure what this new country is yet, but she is confident it is not Miranda’s breezy, tropical, oversexualized, Technicolor “Brazil.”

Though the films portrayed Brazil in a completely different genre than Bishop's poetry, their shared audience connects Miranda's "Brazil" with Bishop's. The national audience of the banana movies was vast; the movies' success meant that people from varied socioeconomic levels, races, and regions viewed them. The U.S. audience certainly recognized that the plots of the musicals were improbable and light, designed to provide escape to an audience weary from worrying about the war, and not to accurately depict Brazilian culture. Their responses to those essentializations were as varied as the audience. The audience of Bishop's poetry was in many ways a subset of Carmen Miranda's larger national audience. Bishop herself was part of the audience of the Good Neighbor movies; she wrote often in her letters about going to the movie theater. However, her audience was a group that thought critically about their engagement with these national narratives. In addition to their interest in travel, her perceived audience was also concerned about U.S. postwar imperialism. As Robert von Hallberg asserts in "Tourism and Postwar American Poetry," after World War II, "the United States set about the job of becoming a global power in short order...there is no question that the years following the war saw a rapid and immense extension of American power around the world" (134). The travel poetry of the fifties explored the new U.S. power and how that would play out on a world stage. In keeping with that move, Bishop challenges her expectations of a banana-ized Concept-Brazil that forms the background for her questions of travel in the first three travel poems.

The second Concept- Brazil with which Bishop's poems engage is the source of her "tourist's lament": The Real Brazil relies on a normative view of Other cultures as

pristine or pure and therefore threatened by the influx of Western/Northern influences. Bishop shares the anxieties of other travel writers and ethnographers of her generation as she demonstrates the threats of their own touristic practices on Brazil. As travel expands and becomes more widely available to middle-class U.S. citizens, and as the global economy makes importation of foreign goods more universally affordable in the 1950s, anthropologists and travel writers rushed to record and mourn the loss of the pristine, untouched cultures that are forever changed by these global phenomena. In particular, Claude Lévi-Strauss's vehement denouncement of the global turn toward an all-inclusive, capitalistic, primarily Western "monoculture" in *Tristes Tropiques* is Bishop's primary source for this anxiety. *Tristes Tropiques* was published in Portuguese in 1955; it is likely that Bishop had read it by the time she journeyed to Diamantina in 1956, the trip she records in her introduction to *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* which I examine in chapter 2.<sup>19</sup> As Gray and several other scholars have argued, Bishop's readings of Lévi-Strauss's arguments are some of the richest sources for her versions of Brazil. While Bishop moves past Carmen Miranda's banana-ized Concept-Brazil after these first three poems, the search for the Real Brazil and Claude Lévi-Strauss's ethnographic approaches are influential in each of her stages about writing about the country, as I will demonstrate in the following three chapters. Bishop's "tourist's lament" was shared by a group of travel poets either employing or reacting against mid-twentieth century U.S. imperialistic tendencies.

In her poetry, Bishop sometimes met and sometimes challenged the expectations of the U.S. audience who read her works alongside those of her contemporaries. After the

war, the U.S. middle-class conceived of “travel” as a right of the generation that had either gone to war or supported men who had gone to war. Though World War II soldiers had journeyed to Europe, they had not “traveled” with all the leisure and power that the term conveys. Because the national narrative perceived this leisure and power as having been achieved through U.S. dominance in World War II, as James Clifford notes in *Routes*, American culture became particularly interested in “travel” with “its associations with gendered, racial bodies, class privilege, specific means of conveyance, beaten paths, agents, frontiers, documents, and the like” (39). This postwar travel poetry reified as well as resisted the beliefs of the U.S. middle-class. As von Hallberg states, these poets were writing of “a new cultural experience, or rather to a newly diffused one” and “the class of Americans who conceived of themselves as the center of American social, political, and economic life: these were the Americans whose interests were comprehended within the political consensus of the fifties” (134). Like their audience, most of Bishop’s writer friends traveled. Many of these poets made extended visits or lived in foreign countries for several years.<sup>20</sup> Bishop shared an audience with the other (mostly male) European-traveling poets, an audience made up of “many Americans...going abroad for the first time” as part of the middle class that was defining itself in peace-time; they were “predominantly white” and privileged enough to take advantage of the offers made by the savvy international tourist industry (von Hallberg 133-4). In recording her own initial impressions of the country, particularly in placing the three poems together to begin the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel*, Bishop worked within the conventions of travel

writers at the time in order to construct a new Brazil for her educated middle- and upper-class U.S. audience.

This audience can be seen in the *New Yorker* magazines in which Bishop published all but one of the poems she would later compile into the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel*. One of the major changes in the *New Yorker* magazine from the 1940s to the 1950s is the influx of travel marketing. Beginning shortly after the end of World War II, the Bahamas, France, Cuba, Italy, and numerous other travel destinations were marketed to a postwar audience able economically and politically to travel to such destinations. Examining these travel advertisements reveals that this postwar audience was concerned with combining the comforts of privilege with the thrill of an “authentic” exotic experience in an escapist fantasy setting. Bishop’s first Brazilian poem, “Arrival at Santos,” was published in the January 21, 1952 *New Yorker*. Just a few pages after her poem, an ad for South Africa touts two of the draws of postwar travel: the assurance of civilization (“ultra-modern Africa” with “great cities” and “fabulous gold and diamond mines”) and the desire for an primitive exoticism (“age-old Africa” with “exotic native tribes and vast game reserves,” “matchless mountains, majestic waterfalls” in which “[e]very day is an adventure”) (81). In the February 12, 1955 issue, the advertisement for French Line cruises urges the audience to “refresh your zest for living on France-Afloat” (41). A large cruise ship dominates the middle of the page. The bottom half features a sketch of Paris (complete with the Eiffel tower) and other European sites framing the text of the ad on top of a European grapevine. The cruise line boasts of meals of “world-famed French cuisine,” “gay entertainment, pre-release movies, deck sports or deck-

dozing relaxation” on an “enchanted holiday.” The European scene and vegetation below the cruise ship differ from the tropical scene and vegetation above it: In a palm tree forest are two men and two women dressed like Carmen Miranda and her Bando da Lua. One of the women holds a basket of fruit on her head, the other wears Miranda’s Baiana top. The two men carry instruments denoting a “tropical” band with puffy sleeves and maracas. The ad argues that France-Afloat offers the best of both worlds: tropical, exoticized sexuality with the comforts of civilization in a bright breezy setting. This use of a Carmen Miranda-type drawing to immediately denote “zest for living” and escapist tropical fantasy shows how ubiquitous Miranda’s cultural portrayals had become by the 1950s; any tropical, escapist destination became, in a sense, “Brazil.” The tropes in these movies form part of larger cultural portrayals in the air during and after World War II.

Bishop’s first three poems resist and critique the mid-twentieth century middle class desires for the trappings of privilege and the thrills of primitivism.<sup>21</sup> As Jeffrey Gray writes, “Travel helps us think about essence and construction” (11). In these poems, the privilege is the escapism of a sexualized fantasy and the easily-comprehended souvenir qualities of a quick view of the Real Brazil. The travelers’ desire for these experiences are ultimately unmet. Instead, the grittier, more realistic, less amenable actual place supplants those Concept-Brazils. Later in Bishop’s domestic expatriate poems, the trappings of privilege and thrills of primitivism shift to other features of her life with Lota. Bishop falls into many of ways of thinking that align her still with other mid-twentieth century travel writers, particularly her essentializing categorizations of types of Brazilian people. But in these first poems, the subject of the poems is not the

reality of the people she confronts but the troubling demands for an ideal place. Bishop writes a new Brazil that is threatening and unfriendly as well as beguiling and enchanting, populated by people whose agency allows them to return the imperialistic gaze of her tourist-voyeurs.

### **The Tourist's "Immodest Demands for a Different World"**

The first poem Bishop wrote about Brazil, "Arrival at Santos," was published in the *New Yorker* on 21 January 1952. She sent it to the magazine on 15 March 1962, four months after her arrival, and in her letter to Katharine White, references her return to New York in the early spring. The poem was written and sent off before Bishop told any of her friends of Lota's offer to stay at Samambaia and was published quickly for Bishop. Before Bishop included it at the beginning of *Questions of Travel*, the poem was published in 1956 in *A Cold Spring*. Almost four years separate the publication of "Arrival at Santos" from that of any of Bishop's poems about Brazil. Because of the speed at which she submitted it to the *New Yorker*, the poem has a spontaneous feel. Though most of the incidents she describes in the poem actually occurred, they are slightly exaggerated for comic effect. The result is a caricature, spoken by an overly querulous narrator, which captures Bishop's frustration with idealism and colonial viewpoint, but does so with more humor than she utilizes in the other two poems.<sup>22</sup>

The poem begins with the disappointment the narrator experiences as she replaces the Concept-Brazil with the actual place. She repeats the landmarks that signal that the landscape differs from what she expected. Though it becomes clear by the fourth stanza

that the narrator observes the scene from the deck of a ship, she uses the identifying word “here” rather than the distancing “there” to indicate the landmarks: “Here is a coast; here is a harbor; / here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery” (*Complete Poems* 89). As Bonnie Costello, Anne Colwell and Gray all note, the first stanza echoes the nursery rhyme, “Here is the Church, Here is the Steeple.” The nursery rhyme feel and the use of “here” give a flat quality to the tourist’s landmarks, as if she is pointing to items on a picture or on the page of a book rather than actual places. The use of this structure in the first two stanzas emphasize the speaker’s childish tone.

In addition to the nursery rhyme feel, the first two stanzas have a cinematic quality as the narrator looks first at the larger “coast,” then focuses in on the “harbor” with “some scenery” and the mountains until her gaze finally narrows in on the more specific “little church” and “warehouses.” In *The Gang’s All Here*, the opening scene begins in much the same way. After a close focus on Aloysio de Oliveira, the leader of the Bando da Lua, singing the song “Brazil” in Portuguese, the camera drops slowly to show part of a ship, the “S.S. Brazil.” The camera pans across the side of the ship, tightening in on the shallow water, and then moves toward the “dock,” where items are being hoisted off of the ship above the heads of departing passengers. The water is sparkingly blue. A dockhand pushes a cart of burlap bags all labeled “Sugar.” A load of the same burlap sacks, labeled “Coffee” in the same black stencil, is unloaded next. Finally a load of fruit dangles down beside of the ship and the camera tightens in until the fruit fills the screen. As the camera follows the line of fruit downward it becomes Carmen Miranda’s hat. The visual images are simplistic, designed to give a clear sense of the



setting. Sugar, coffee, fruit, Carmen Miranda—the stereotypical exports of Brazil arrive at a large dock.

Bishop's images give the sense of a setting that is markedly different from the movie scene. Unlike the well-planned tropical scenery and joyful natives of the banana-ized Brazil, she sees "impractically shaped" mountains that are "sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery." She encounters mundane "warehouses, / some of them painted a feeble pink, or blue"—the "feeble" seems particularly weak in comparison with the Technicolor brilliance of *The Gang's All Here*. The movie was Busby Berkeley's first Technicolor musical; the colors throughout the musical are brilliant and saturated. The tropical jungle that the speaker anticipates is actually "some" (but not many) "tall, uncertain palms" rather than the evenly spaced palm trees of the tropical nightclub scenery or the lush jungle landscape Bishop fictionalizes later for the conquistadors to discover in "Brazil, January 1, 1502." The scene she creates in the 16<sup>th</sup> century also has Utopian undertones of a garden of Eden populated with "authentic" primitive Brazilians who are more "real" than the disturbingly urban, uninteresting objects.

Stuck between the two divergent Concept-Brazils, neither of which are met by the scene before her, Bishop addresses her disappointment sharply by asking ironically of her narrator:

...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,  
after eighteen days of suspension?

The persona's "immodest demands for a different world,/ and a better life" are the Utopian Concept-Brazils which must be exchanged for the actual details of the place which has an existence outside of the narrator's imaginings and fantasies. Even if her Concept-Brazils do not have the sexual undertones of the banana-ized Brazil, the speaker still implies that "Brazil" should provide her with escape and release or with indications of its authenticity. In *Elizabeth Bishop: Her Artistic Development*, Thomas Travisano notes that "The tourist-speaker arrives with heady hopes and with senses starved by an ocean voyage. What is found cannot fulfill those expectations, raising the implicit question: 'Can reality ever live up to imagination?'" (135). Narrowing the scope of Travisano's question, can the reality of the actual country live up to the speaker's Concept-Brazils? The answer, which "this country" gives, is resoundingly negative.

Bishop's speaker has a sense of the ridiculousness of views of the foreign site as she finishes her breakfast and watches the tender, "a strange and ancient craft, flying a strange and brilliant rag." Calling the Brazilian flag "a rag" makes her ignorance comically clear—she didn't even recognize it as a flag. But there is a superior tone in her voice even as she berates her own ignorance: "So that's the flag. I never saw it before. / I somehow never thought of there *being* a flag, / but of course there was, all along. And coins, I presume, / and paper money; they remain to be seen." The implication of the haughty tone is that any proper flag would be immediately identifiable as more than a rag; the mistake, however grudgingly, is self-admittedly the speaker's. However, as Gray observes, the "I presume" "supplies the imperialist touch: ignorance dressed up as omiscience, the landscape coerced into conformity with expectation" (40). As she

comes to terms with the symbols of Brazil as an actual nation, the flag, the currency and the language (in stanza eight, the narrator hopes the customs official might “speak English”), the boundaries between the two nations indicate the difference between reality and the imagined place she expected. These symbols, at a basic and fundamental level, point to the existence of the nation which exists outside of the tourist’s desires of it.

The arrival at the dock in stanzas five through eight follows the sequence of “Brazil/You’re in New York,” the opening song and dance number from *The Gang’s All Here*, so closely that Bishop was obviously familiar with the tropes in the film, even if she did not actually see the movie herself. Reading the two together enhances Bishop’s humorous tone; the idyllic “Brazil/You’re in New York” scene makes the persona’s unglamorous arrival that much funnier. After the tracking of Miranda’s hat, the camera opens up to her garish costume, red and covered in pom-poms, as the Bando da Lua men surround her with the “passengers” behind them. As they sing a chorus of “Brazil,” Miranda smiles and dances.<sup>23</sup> The assumption seems to be that, after a Brazilian ship has arrived, the most natural thing would be for Carmen Miranda and her musicians to be playing on the dock while a happy crew unloads passengers and stereotypical exports.

The arrival of *The Gang’s All Here* contrasts sharply with the harsh reality the speaker describes in the next few lines in “Arrival at Santos.” Instead of jolly passengers stepping off the ship down a gangplank and waving jauntily to loved ones, “...gingerly now we climb down the ladder backward, / myself and a fellow passenger named Miss Breen.” The undignified way of disembarking is clumsy and humiliating. Though “descending into the midst of twenty-six freighters” (and not onto a dock with sparkling

blue water), Miss Breen and the persona are near the cargo of the ship “waiting to be loaded with green coffee beans.” Bananas and sugar may not be present, but the coffee beans signal a typical Brazilian port. The scene shifts hilariously with the next line, however: “Please, boy, do be more careful with that boat hook!/ Watch out! Oh! It has caught Miss Breen’s/ skirt! There!” The clumsy “boy,” a term with racialized and aristocratic imperialist overtones, could not have made the situation clearer: Miss Breen and the persona are not in a banana-ized “Brazil.” Brazilians do not shape themselves to fit the tourists’ views of a perfectly choreographed arrival or an escapist tropical wonderland.

But the speaker dismisses her own reproach by implying that perhaps it is the port that has not lived up to her “immodest demands,” not the country itself:

Ports are necessities, like postage stamps, or soap,

but they seldom seem to care what impression they make,  
or, like this, only attempt, since it does not matter,  
the unassertive colors of soap, or postage stamps—  
wasting away like the former, slipping the way the latter

do when we mail the letters we wrote on the boat,  
either because the glue here is very inferior  
or because of the heat.

Again using weak “unassertive colors” as a signal that the country is not a Technicolor Brazil, she nonetheless finds humor in the way the stamps will not stay on the letter. Despite her dismissal a few lines earlier, the speaker’s colonial gaze remains firm with the comment on glue; if “the glue here is very inferior,” perhaps the country itself is inferior as well.

At the end of the poem, despite her own frustrations and desire for self-awareness, the speaker defers hope for a realization of her expectations: “We leave Santos at once; we are driving to the interior.” In Brazil, the “Interior” is the area around São Paulo. In using “interior,” Bishop is invoking a word that is both English and Portuguese; perhaps in literally driving to the interior region of Brazil, some of the persona’s “immodest demands” will be met. But it is also by “driving” further into her own interior that the persona will understand her need to demand so much of Brazil in the first place. As Travisano notes, “The poem’s most incisive irony is directed, not at the port, but at the traveler, who cannot be certain what to make of a scene that does not fit one’s preconceptions” (137). Bishop directs the “incisive irony” at her speaker’s unrealistic Concept-Brazil.

In this poem more than either of the two poems in the opening suite, Bishop writes from the position of a voyeur whose hopes for her trip are bound up in the sense of travel that is quick rather than deep. Bishop criticizes her speaker’s disappointment in the lack of landmarks or people that give “complete comprehension” of a Brazilian essence “immediately” (*CP* 89). The tension in the poem comes from the question of how self-aware the narrator is: is she berating herself for attempting to find an essential “Brazil” as the poem concludes? The last line implies that, while discrediting a banana-ized Brazil, the traveler still operates under the impression that the “drive into the interior” will lead to more Brazilian people or landscapes in the deeper recesses of Brazil itself. Bishop turns to this “tourist’s lament” in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” as she reconfigures the travelers who approach her second idealized, untouched Concept-Brazil.

### **The “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” and Those “Maddening Little Women”**

Bishop wrote “Brazil, January 1, 1502” later than the poems that bracket it in the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel*. In the section, Bishop mostly follows the chronological publications of her poems in the *New Yorker*, with a few notable exceptions. Rearranging the poems so that “Brazil, January 1, 1502” is second is among the most important editorial choices that inform the loose narrative connecting these eleven poems.<sup>24</sup> By moving up “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” which was published in the 2 January 1960 issue of the *New Yorker*, Bishop erases the actual second poem she wrote about Brazil, “The Shampoo,” which was rejected by the *New Yorker* in 1953 and eventually published in *The New Republic* in 1955. Like “Arrival at Santos,” Bishop included “The Shampoo” at the end of her 1955 book *A Cold Spring*. The juxtaposition of those two poems indicate the rapidity with which Bishop turned from writing about her own sense of what Brazil should be to a celebration of the domestic partnership she enjoyed with Lota. Bishop’s act of editorial erasure is important for two reasons: First, in the first three poems, Bishop prolongs and strengthens her arguments about tourist-voyeurs and their approach to Brazil. However, underneath these portrayals that seem to be about universal travel experiences, the intimacy and the specific Brazil which she celebrates in “The Shampoo,” and later represses by not including the poem, remain as crucial backdrops for “Brazil, January 1, 1502” and “Questions of Travel.” The second reason this act of erasure is important is that the poem’s rejection by the *New Yorker* leads Bishop to write about Lota and their shared home in Samambaia differently than she might have otherwise. By deleting “The Shampoo,” Bishop also removed Lota

physically from all but one of the poems; she is the speaker in “Manuelzinho,” but even then, she is only referred to by name in the dedication to the book itself. However she is marginalized in the text, Lota’s Brazil and their shared place is an integral part in each of the ten poems after “Arrival at Santos.”

The *New Yorker*’s rejection seems to be based on the homosexuality Bishop reveals in “The Shampoo.” Katharine White’s 2 July 1952 rejection letter is written in a regretful tone, but she asserts that the deciding factor was that “this sort of small personal poem perhaps doesn’t quite fit into the *New Yorker*.”<sup>25</sup> In her 8 July 1953 response, Bishop expresses surprise at the rejection: “I got ‘The Shampoo’ back. I somehow thought you’d like that one!” (*Elizabeth Bishop & The New Yorker* 114). Joelle Biele connects the rejection of “The Shampoo,” and later “Exchanging Hats” in 1955, with Wolcott Gibbs’s in-house style manual, “Theory and Practice of Editing *New Yorker* Articles,” in which he states in rule eighteen that homosexuality “is definitely out as humor and dubious in any case” (xxiv). Bishop sent the poem to correspondents who seemed to consider the subject matter “dubious” as well. Two years after writing the poem, she complained to May Swenson, “I sent it to a few friends and never heard a word and began to think there was something indecent about it I’d overlooked.”<sup>26</sup> Bishop’s surprise indicates that, unlike some of her erotic unpublished poems, she did not intend the imagery to be sexual even if the circular lichen, the “explosions,” and the suggestive ending make it difficult to read the poem any other way.

Reading “The Shampoo” after “Arrival at Santos” indicates that Bishop as the tourist-voyeur, speaking in the first poem in a voice that, though a caricature, was still

largely based on herself, came to Brazil and almost immediately moved past the initial outsider stage to a position as a domestic partner. The setting of their tryst in the three-stanza poem is among the rocks around Samambaia, a setting which Bishop compares repeatedly in letters and poems to an Edenic, Utopian paradise. As a woman, Bishop arrives and finds another woman, as she writes in “The Shampoo,” “nothing if not amenable” (*CP* 84). Together they easily and quickly fall into a partnership in which she feels accepted, and able to appreciate the exotic beauty of her new home. In “Arrival at Santos” and “The Shampoo,” the three cornerstones of the narrative are a Northern traveler’s disconcerting arrival in Brazil, her acceptance in a natural setting that embraces and protects her, and the love of a Brazilian woman whose age and imperfections are the very qualities which Bishop acclaims. That narrative is the diametric opposite of what Sylvia Henneberg identifies as the plot of both “Brazil, January 1, 1502” and Jacobs’s “Etablissement d’une communauté au Brésil,” “whose three cornerstones are white Christian invasion of Brazil, appropriation of land and nature, and confrontation with non- white peoples” (341). By substituting “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” Bishop reverses the plot of her own experience. But resituating “The Shampoo” as a central part of Bishop’s Brazilian narrative gives context to the confrontation between the “white” travelers and the “non-white” and “maddening little women” of “Brazil, January 1, 1502” who exhibit a rare agency in reaction to the aggression of the conquistadors.

The switch from harmonious women consummating their love in “The Shampoo” to aggressive would-be rapists attempting to dominate women in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” relies on tropes that are inherent in both of Bishop’s Concept-Brazils. The



reimagining of Portuguese conquerors invading a new land in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” is a metaphor for the colonial gaze of post-World War II travelers. But the association of the travelers with soldiers makes Bishop’s comparison particularly focused on the just-returned soldiers whose sexual prowess and physical needs are the underlying subject of the campy, rape-culture-affirming “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” scene in Carmen Miranda’s *The Gang’s All Here*. Like Max Jacobs’s poem and Clarice Lispector’s “A Menor Mulher do Mundo,” which Bishop was translating while she wrote the poem, I will argue throughout this section that the poem was a transformative interpretation of the “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” scene.<sup>27</sup> This is not to say that the scene was a direct influence on the poem, but that the scene epitomizes the type of scenario against which Bishop reacted. At the same time, in using this conquistador trope, Bishop turns to what Mary Louise Pratt identifies as one of the most “decisively gendered” travel tropes, the “monarch-of-all-I-survey-scene” in which “Explorer-man paints/possesses newly unveiled landscape-woman” (209). Both Concept-Brazils depend on a narrative in which soldiers/explorer-men capture, tame and dominate native women. Bishop’s empowered women defy those tropes.

In the poem, Bishop also subtly works against a larger U.S. narrative that Othered Brazil. After World War II, when the burgeoning U.S. middle-class began to travel in record numbers, their colonial gaze generally “discovered” a world that was exactly as they pictured it because it fit into the narrative that prioritized the U.S. Fresh off the sense of victory in World War II and yet frightened by its own atomic power, U.S. citizens almost uniformly participated in and constructed a political and cultural narrative of

containment that provided a sense of collective purpose. Within this narrative framework, the U.S. began to view and portray itself as the only culture capable of containing the damage of a nuclear war, thus ensuring the survival of the human race through American superiority. Roman outlines this containment culture policy:

As in World War II's victory plot, a 'double plot' depicted both the enemy as well as U.S. civilians or citizens. The new war discourse closely resembled the World War II version, in which U.S. soldiers had sought to rescue the faithful feminine U.S. nation from the clutches of demonic Nazis, Fascists, and Japanese and to 'master' or 'contain' or 'destroy' the feminine-coded enemy—be it primarily male combatants or predominantly female civilians. As a result, the 'containment' narrative focused on changing the enemy's face first (82-83).

This act of Othering the enemy was applied to all developing nations, not just the enemies of the U.S. As Roman points out, "imperial gazers need to transform this 'other' into themselves just as the United States desired to Americanize other nations in its efforts at global domination. While we generally think of the Cold War's mistakes with underestimating and misinterpreting Korea and Vietnam, Bishop would have insisted that Brazil be added to this list" (147). After World War II, the United States turned its collective attention to becoming a global power. In the Cold War years, the expansion of U.S. power and influence on the world was unquestioned. The travel poetry of the fifties explored the new U.S. power and how that would play out on a world stage.<sup>28</sup> The anxiety over American imperialism and insecurity over this burgeoning American culture was shared by Bishop and other U.S. travel poets.

In this poem specifically, Bishop condemns the religious element inherent in the colonial gaze. In the post-war victory culture of the mid-twentieth century, following the hard times and frugality of war, American excess was seen as more than a boon or the

triumph of war. To a culture that believed in the interventionist narrative that the war was a necessary one, victory over their evil enemies was a sign that their triumph was God-given, that their privilege was God-ordained and that their colonial views were condoned by God himself. Missionary efforts around the world picked up significantly after World War II as U.S. citizens traveled to the “heathens” who were depicted in many churches as awaiting the arrival of Christian missionaries who would convert and also contain them. Bishop engages with this combination of religion, colonialism and war in “Brazil, January 1, 1502.” By combining religious language with the tropical markers in her setting (“symbolic birds,” “Sin” in the foreground, “hell-green flames,” “wicked tail”), Bishop shows how she, as well as the other members of a society that identifies broadly as “Christians,” “came and found it all, / not unfamiliar,” even as she uses those tropes ironically.

With the first two lines, Bishop sets up the structure of the poem, dual Januaries examined by people in two different times with the “exact” type of gaze. She creates a “just so” comparison in the first stanza: just as Portuguese encountered Brazil in 1502, so victory-culture travelers encounter it when Bishop does in the 1950s. Bishop evaluates her contemporary colonial gaze and positions her speaker within it, reifying that reading with “Nature” who “greet[s] our eyes / exactly as she must have greeted theirs” (*CP* 91). The two groups, “we” and “they,” are each appraised, one explicitly, the other implicitly. By using first-person plural pronouns throughout this poem, Bishop implicates herself as part of the mid-twentieth-century touristic culture she is denouncing; she is one of “us” who are not very different from “them.”

*The Gang's All Here* epitomizes the victory culture with which she is engaging. Many of the banana movies ignore the war in their desire to distract and provide escape for a war-weary audience. *The Gang's All Here* deals with the subject directly but lightens it through the musical form. The thin plot of *The Gang's All Here* is patriotic.<sup>29</sup> Miranda once again plays the good-natured seductress who only wants what is best for a poor uptight white man. Though many of the men in the movie commit indiscretions, their wives and sweethearts blatantly encourage them. The thinly veiled message is that men in war need to release their sexual tension and that the white women who love them should respect and encourage them in the role of supportive wives and girlfriends. Because it is presented as a show-within-a-show, the song "Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat" is part of the overall message of Latina women helping men overcome their sexual repression. Miranda's character, Dorita, not only "helps" another character, Peyton Potter in the primary plot to get in touch with her sexuality; in the nightclub scenes, she dons the Tutti-Frutti hat to welcome men to an island where scantily clad women frolic with huge phallic bananas and breast-like strawberries.

As she does in many of her Brazilian poems, Bishop focuses in the first few stanzas on the natural setting in which the action will occur. The quote from Sir Kenneth Clark's *Landscape into Art* which sets up the poem, "...embroidered nature...tapestried landscape" points to the reading of nature which the conquistadors view flatly as a tapestry woven for their specific enjoyment. The map of Brazil in 1502 which illustrates Bishop's Time-Life *Brazil* book seems to have been one of the sources for Bishop's poem (27). The hand-drawn coastline of Brazil is filled with a lovely pattern of regularly

placed trees, with two macaws picturesquely representing the animals. As Bishop (or the Time-Life editors) note, “Brazil’s jagged coastline is mostly guesswork. By contrast, the African coast is fairly accurate and even the islands of the Antilles are shown in their approximate position” (27). The vague Brazil is just trees and empty space, waiting for the Portuguese settlers to fill it in. As Bishop outlines in the text, though the Portuguese “mercifully lacked the blood-thirsty missionary zeal of the Spaniards,” they had “always been romantically drawn to women of darker races...In Brazil it was only natural for them to become eager miscegenationists almost immediately” (27-28). Bishop fictionalizes the actions of those “eager miscegenationists” in her poem.

In the first stanza, while the reading of nature as a tapestry is clear, the viewpoint, language and imagery are also cinematic, as they are in “Arrival at Santos.” Nature “greet[s] our eyes” the way the camera shots in *The Gang’s All Here* track over the props and scenery to give a sense of the setting. The “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” is one of the most well-known and impersonated of all of Miranda’s campy song-and-dance sequences, due in large part to director and choreographer Busby Berkeley’s camera shots and choreography. In setting the scene for this confrontation, Bishop corrects the feeble cardboard palm trees that are stage props of the “Tutti-Frutti” scene with a wealth of descriptors, “foliage,” “leaves,” “ferns,” “lilies,” “flowers,” to make the tropical setting obvious to her audience. Palm trees and bananas are missing from Bishop’s forest. Like the overabundance of nature in “Arrival at Santos,” the profusion of colors has a Technicolor quality to it, as if it is too colorful to be real: “blue, blue-green, and olive,” “silver-gray,” “purple, yellow, two yellows, pink, / rust red and greenish white.” The

leaves in the “Tutti-Frutti” scenery are made from emerald green satin; Bishop gives her forest the occasional “satin underleaf turned over.” The setting of the poem reverses the scenic formulation even as she keeps the cinematic point-of-view.

Both Bishop’s poem and the “Tutti-Frutti” scene begin with the animals that populate the tropical settings. In *The Gang’s All Here*, the animal is a monkey with an organ grinder, a traditionally Italian stereotype that demonstrates the appropriation of any Other stereotypes in order to create a vaguely “ethnic” feel in the movie. The monkey climbs into a banana tree and the camera opens outward to reveal identical monkeys in rows of cardboard banana trees with green silk leaves. Bishop’s animals are equally stereotypical in some ways: the macaws of the 1502 map appear as “the big symbolic birds” which “keep quiet, / each showing only half his puffed and padded, / pure-colored or spotted breast” (CP 91). Bishop personifies the “five sooty dragons” as “Sin,” which interrupts the Edenic perfection of the natural setting. However, though she uses puritanical language, Bishop makes clear that the religious signifiers are used ironically to indicate seduction and desire.

The rocks near the five dragons are remarkably similar to the rocks in “The Shampoo.” In “Brazil, January 1, 1502, Bishop uses battle imagery to describe nature’s relationship with the rocks, which are “worked with lichens, gray moonbursts / splattered and overlapping, / threatened from below by moss / in lovely hell-green flames, / attacked above / by scaling-ladder vines, oblique and neat” (CP 91). Bishop’s language for the domination of the rocks by the greenery around it is pleasurable and feminine, equating the threats as “lovely hell-green flames” and the attackers as “oblique and neat.” The tone

of her imagery implies that, if this is hell, it is enjoyable and well-organized. The rocks from “The Shampoo” are markers of the permanence of the place where Lota and Bishop are experiencing a romantic connection: “The still explosions on the rocks, / the lichens, grow / by spreading, gray, concentric shocks” (84). The sensualized nature is aggressive in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” and nurturing in “The Shampoo,” but in both poems these rocks form the background for the implied sexual encounters that take place outside of the framework of the poems. Bishop says in “The Shampoo,” “look what happens,” but the actual “happenings” are only hinted at in both poems.

The end of the second stanza in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” concludes the descriptions of the animals by describing the lizards who “scarcely breathe” (92). Within this still tableau, the power lies with the object of the lizards’ gaze: “All eyes /are on the smaller, female one, back-to, / her wicked tail straight up and over, / red as a red-hot wire.” Again, Bishop equates desire with biblical language. The power in the scene lies with the female, whose phallic tail holds the gaze of the owners of “all of the eyes,” who are presumably male, but could also be female. The desirability of her tail is emphasized with the repetition of “red” in the last line. By not limiting it to the male gaze, Bishop makes the female’s show one that could also be for other females.

The vague “Just so” which begins the third stanza works as a comparison in which the conquistadors are just like the plural first-person tourist viewpoint of the first line of the poem. But it also sets up a comparison between the lizards and the conquistadors as each of them gaze upon the power-wielding females. Just as “all eyes” are on the female lizard, so the “Christians,” who are described in overtly phallic

language as “hard as nails” but also, humorously “tiny as nails,” are gazing in a way that anticipates the women, who only appear in the last three lines of the poem:

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—

As they approach the jungle scene, Bishop lists the signifiers the “Christians” expect to see—“lover’s walks,” “bowers,” “cherries,” “lute music”—all of which allude to the jungle as a romantic scene in which the soldiers expect to be welcomed and pleased by sexualized women. If the only concern of the soldiers was “wealth and luxury,” Bishop would have listed gold, jewels, spices, or any of the other items that brought financial gain in the sixteenth century. Instead, the women are the prize to be won, the due reward for men whose sole concern is the “old dream of wealth and luxury.” The parallels are obvious: victory-culture tourists coming to Brazil looking for sexualized women who will give the returning soldiers their “just reward,” the reward promised in *The Gang’s All Here*, *Road to Rio* and other banana movies, are falling for “an old dream...already out of style when they left home.” This dream is the deferred confrontation which the banana dancers anticipate in the “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” scene.

Just as the men in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” chase women just out of the poem, the banana dancers arrange themselves for me who remain just outside of the scope of the



film. The cinematic viewpoint of the poem follows the animals to “discover” the women just as Berkeley’s camera shots widens from monkeys in trees to reveal an island shaped like a breast on which dozens of sleeping women wear modified versions of Miranda’s well-known Baiana outfits: short yellow skirts, navy blouses tied just beneath the breasts, yellow kerchiefs around their heads to mimic the upright bananas. Repeated loud catcalls awaken these women and they run delightedly on their toes toward the camera, looking for something just to the right of the lens, lining up in formation and waving. The camera pans across the symmetrical tropical trees to reveal a wagon filled with bananas on which Carmen Miranda rides, flanked by the ever-smiling Bando Da Lua men. The symbolism of erect bananas held over prostrate strawberries, which happens in every formation, visually supports the message of the film: that women should serve, please and submit to the soldiers who are returning home from war or support them after they have “conquered” the women in foreign lands.<sup>30</sup>

The contagions which the women perform in the nearly ten minute scene are all sexually suggestive. A 1943 *New York Times* reviewer of the movie writes it stems “straight from Freud and, if interpreted, might bring a rosy blush to several cheeks in the Hays office” (qtd. in Shari Roberts 15). According to James Agee, the routine “deserves to survive in every case-book of blatant film surreptition for the next century” (qtd. in Gil-Montero 149). The dancers carry in trays of bananas on their heads, and the next several minutes of the scene feature the women dancing with the phallic fruit. The bananas become a circle that Miranda plays like a xylophone. The camera tracks the trays of bananas, then the girls’ bare hands and feet, lingering on lines of naked legs and arms

before opening to show dozens of women holding enormous erect bananas over their heads. In a combination of moves, the women lift and lower the erect bananas in pulsating rhythms, touch them together in two lines reminiscent of a military sword salute, and swing them in well-timed contagions. Large strawberries are strewn across the ground, lightly veiled referents to breasts.

After their various banana movements, several of the dancers create a circle around a group of women lying on the ground holding large strawberries over their heads. The camera gives an aerial shot of the arrangements the women make with the bananas and strawberries. The strawberry women lie in a shape that looks like a six-sided flower with their legs spread out widely, their feet and arms touching to form large vaginal diamonds. As the banana women enclose them in a pulsating circle, the strawberry women touch their strawberries together. The formation is repeated several times in the shape of a pulsating circular vaginal hole as the bananas enclose the strawberries while the women sing a chorus of orgasmic “aahs.”



Illustration 3: Image from *The Gang's All Here*

After a few more reverent banana moves, the women lower the giant fruits exhaustedly as if spent from the effort. Carmen Miranda enters again on the banana wagon and sings, “Brazilian señoritas, / they are sweet and shy, / They dance and play together when the sun is high / But when the tropical moon is in the sky, ay, ay!” Then she looks suggestively at the camera, raises her eyebrows while a few notes are played on the banana xylophone. Finally she repeats an exaggerated “ay! Ay!”/ They have a *different* kind of time/ And even *I* forget the time/ The lady in the tutti-frutti hat.” The women wave good-bye to Miranda, singing a chorus of “Adios, señorita, adios” (incongruously in Spanish) and “aaahs” until they fall asleep, presumably to dream about men.

Bishop transforms the wordless chorus of “ahs” in the “Tutti-Frutti” scene into the women “who kept calling,/ calling to each other,” in a way that, at first, seems to support the reading that the purpose of the women was to tempt, tease and eventually satisfy the men. But with the insertion of the parenthetical “(or had the birds waked up?),” Bishop questions the viewpoint throughout the stanza. The women might not exist at all; they might be an illusion based on the soldiers’ expectations. If they exist, the women who are “retreating, always retreating” have the power in the poem. Their calling voices are evidence of their ability to speak, with humor and confidence, for themselves. If the women do not exist, the conquistadors are victims of a deceptive narrative. As soldiers, they expect wealth and women as their just and God-given reward; instead, they hack away at a jungle that leaves them impotent and infuriated by the mirage of the women.

In the ending of Bishop’s poem, though the men are intent on raping the women, that rape does not happen. The tropes from either of the Concept-Brazils necessitates the

story playing out in the opposite way; either because they are the happy, oversexualized, escape-providing Latinas of the banana-ized Brazil or because they are the submissive, naïve, pure “Indians” of the Real Brazil, the ending of the narrative is assumed. But in Bishop’s poem, though “they ripped away into the hanging fabric, / each out to catch an Indian for himself,” the women were forever out of reach. Bishop’s transformative interpretation of the “Tutti-Frutti” scene condemns the “imperial gazers” who constructed the banana-ized Brazil in order to dominate and contain it.

In doing so, Bishop pushes against the colonial gaze by giving the women postcolonial agency. Pratt records the sociohistorical shift that occurs in the 1960s and 1970s as the white travelers record their “lament” about the destruction of a pristine and lost authentic culture but with an important shift: the “seeing-man’s dominion now comes accompanied by persistent fears of annihilation and violence. It is in this fear that the contemporary seeing-man records what has always been there: the returning gaze of others, now demanding recognition as subjects of history” (216). Bishop’s women might not return the gaze of the conquistadors, but they are able to resist their dominion in a way that demands autonomy and recognition of their humanity beyond just objectification of their sexuality.

In addition to a postcolonial reading, their agency also indicates the sexualized banana dancers occupy a lesbian space which excludes men rather than welcoming them. Bishop reconfigures the equation in the “Lady in the Tutti-Frutti Hat” scene—the banana dancers inhabit a self-sufficient sexual utopia in which they never anticipate the arrival of men. In the same way, placing “Brazil, January 1, 1502” in conjunction with “The

Shampoo,” the women might be calling to each other in a lesbian paradise in which men do not figure. The lichen-covered rocks that are witnesses to the sexual union between Lota and Bishop in “The Shampoo” also indicate a landscape that is protective of and nurturing toward the same kind of union in “Brazil, January 1, 1502.” The women’s agency arrives both from their ability to escape the domination of men and their lack of interest in the sexual advances of the “tiny,” “hard” soldiers. The diminutive, humorous language makes the men absurd and the women powerful in a complicated reversal of the tropes of both Concept-Brazils. Bishop’s landscape from “The Shampoo” and her relationship with Lota also forms the unseen background of her third poem in the section, “Questions of Travel.”

### **The Ethics of Travel: “Where should we be today?”**

The querulous narrator of “Arrival at Santos” returns in “Questions of Travel” as Bishop finishes her suite of poems about victory-culture travelers. The “our” that begins “Brazil, January 1, 1502” becomes the “we” of the second stanza in “Questions of Travel” as she asks the central questions of this poetry collection: “Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?/ Where should we be today?/ Is it right to be watching strangers in a play/ in this strangest of theatres?” Bishop troubles her right to assimilate the “Brazil” that she sees with the “Brazil” that she expects. The ethical issues Bishop raises in “Questions of Travel” play out on two different level based on her Concept-Brazils: she problematizes her right to privilege in a fantasy-Brazil in which the Brazilians put on a show for the tourists’ benefit. Building on the empowered

“maddening little woman,” she asserts in this poem that the actual place Brazil has life and narratives outside the scope of her gaze, as evidenced by the quirky and idiosyncratic details she lists in the last half of the poem. Bishop also troubles the move Gray identifies of travelers who “bring the foreign site—artistic, geographic or human—under conceptual control by means of the colonial ‘gaze’” (3).<sup>32</sup> Bishop externalizes the colonial gaze by making it an attribute of her fictional conquistadors in “Brazil, January 1, 1502.” In “Questions of Travel,” Bishop shifts back to the first-person viewpoint—the colonial gaze is her own. The vague term “travel” associates it not just with travelers in Brazil but with all victory-culture travelers who venture out into exotic places. The metonyms for Rio are missing; there is no Sugar Loaf mountain or Copacabana beach. Instead Bishop uses less recognizable referents that are specific to her personal experience. She defamiliarizes the two Concept-Brazils by replacing them with a place of quirky bird cages and gas stations and then moves further, into a more authentic place marked by the particular attributes of Lota’s home in Samambaia.

Throughout the poem, the speaker both asserts and undermines her right as an observer and voyeur to evaluate the scenery she encounters. Picking up the tourist’s complaints from “Arrival at Santos,” the speaker frets about the scenery which, based on the banana-ized Brazil, should be sparse, beachy and tropical rather than “crowded” with rapid, “mile-long, shiny” waterfalls (*CP* 93). The actuality of the place, once again, is more abundant in a way that contradicts what she anticipates: “There are too many waterfalls here; the crowded streams/ hurry too rapidly down to the sea.” Though the country is never identified in the poem, the types of things the speaker sees and the way

she describes them make it evident she is in South America rather than Europe. In the place of monuments and museum-pieces, Bishop's speaker comments on the youth of the country she is viewing. The landscape in this first stanza is changing in front of "our" eyes; waterfalls are being formed and a "quick age" is altering the topography. The implication is that the landscape upon which she is looking is young, almost primordial. Brazil in U.S. popular culture is constantly portrayed as a childish nation in need of protection from its more advanced neighbor to the north. As a primitive nation, Brazil is also "young" in terms of Anglo-European standards of development in this viewpoint. Bishop picks up on both of these underlying arguments about Brazil in relation to the U.S. in her negative first stanza.

But even in her petulance, the speaker examines her own right to evaluate the foreign site in the second stanza. The short sentence, "Think of the long trip home" posits the possibility that the journey to this location was not worth the unmet expectations. The first line in the second stanza is also the only imperative sentence in the stanza. The seven questions that follow demonstrate the ways in which Bishop problematizes the idealized versions of Brazil her speaker carries. The first three questions are ethical: "Should we have stayed at home and thought of here? / Where should we be today? Is it right to be watching strangers in a play / in this strangest of theatres?" These work particularly well with my reading of this act of collective imagining in which "we" think "of here" as the banana-ization practiced by moviegoers. The speaker's anxiety about her "right" to read the Brazilians she encounters as "strangers in a play" associates them with actors and plays off of the stereotype of the "Brazilian" settings in the Good Neighbor movies, in

which “Brazil” is often a scene revealed to be a nightclub show performed for an American audience, not a country in its own right.<sup>33</sup> Often the settings are literally built within the movies: Many of the banana movies are “backstagers,” a genre of musical about putting on a show. This show-within-a-show provides most of the conflict in a series of events that threaten to prevent the show from taking place. In Bishop’s poem, however, these “strangers,” are not actors putting on a show for the benefit of tourists. Instead, Bishop is fully aware of the fact that they are acting outside of the script of her expectations.

In the Good Neighbor movies, “Brazil” was made into a dream-world of sexual fantasy without rules, regulations or societal repressions. The question of how one “should” behave is answered in every situation by the imperative for repressed white characters to shed their Apollonian conservatism for Dionysian desire. In *Week-End at Havana*, being in “Cuba” gives the characters license to act in ways they might not otherwise. In *That Night in Rio*, it is only through pretending to be a South American playboy that an American man (both played by Don Ameche) achieves unrepressed fulfillment. This push toward sexual expression is particularly evident in the Bob Hope and Bing Crosby movie, *Road to Rio* (1947).<sup>34</sup> In the scene on board the ship just as they are about to arrive in the country, Bing Crosby as Scat Sweeney announces at dinner that if anyone has any concerns about disembarkation, the purser will be available in the morning. The Andrews Sisters, at a nearby table, stop him. They have a “problem that is apt to spoil the trip”—they worry that they cannot speak the language and therefore “won’t be hip.” Sweeney’s answer is they should “wibble and wobble ‘em with your



nanny language” and a kiss, to which the Andrews sisters respond by lifting up their skirts, “And this?” Sweeney whistles and replies “Da pontinha.” The point is clear—the language of sexuality is the language they need in order to be understood in Brazil. The sight of their legs makes Sweeney speak spontaneously in Portuguese. The phrase he uses, “da pontinha,” is short for “da pontinha da prelha.” The dated, English equivalent of this phrase is that their legs are the “cat’s pajamas.”<sup>35</sup> The Andrews sisters respond immediately in imitations of Carmen Miranda’s accent: “Eh, amigo, now we know.” The word ‘know’ is held out while they put their hands on their hips and lift their pelvises. If sexuality is the language of Brazil, than every woman innately knows it by channeling her inner Carmen Miranda. Sweeney confirms, “now they know” as they launch into the song, “You Don’t Have to Know the Language.”

Suppose you need a vacation  
Brazil is the place you should be  
So you can’t understand what they are saying  
You can’t read a sign that you see

Chorus: But you don’t have to know the language  
With the moon in the sky  
And a girl in your arms  
And a look in her eyes (qtd. in Freire-Medeiros, 59).<sup>36</sup>

In the song, the main argument, repeated several times in the chorus, is that language is unnecessary in order to understand Brazilian sexuality. The Andrews sisters direct the song at men who have served in the war—men who will hold “a girl in their arms” to whom they “won’t have to mention / That Yankee phrase, ‘Ay, ay.’” The two times the “Yankee phrase” comes up, the Andrews sisters and Crosby accompany it with salutes and limps, mimicking war injuries best forgotten on this vacation. The metonyms of

Sugar Loaf mountain and Copacabana identify Rio as an explicit sexual wonderland. They envision a place that is designed for the needs and desires of the filmic tourists, a topsy-turvy world where anything is possible. In the constructed Dionysian world of “Rio,” men dress like women, as Bob Hope does later in the movie when he puts on a Carmen Miranda costume; women lose their inhibitions, like the Andrews sisters when they “learn to speak the language.” The question within these portrayals is whether the travelers should follow this path of sexual and personal self-discovery and the answer, in every popular portrayal, is always affirmative because sexual exhibition is associated with agency. The Andrews Sisters achieve empowerment through their ability to get in touch with their own repressed id.

Bishop reverses this formulation. The people in the “strangest of theaters” already possess agency. The sexual undertones of the banana-ized Brazil are missing in these lines. The Brazilians that Bishop encounters have achieved agency whether or not she witnesses it. The third stanza gives the evidence of their lives and their own empowerment as she lists the sites it would have been “a pity” not to have seen. In the next set of questions that finish the stanza, before she turning to the lives of the Brazilians who inhabit the actual place, Bishop turns from the ethical dilemma of her conceptual control to a more self-evaluative examination of her quest for an authentic experience, a search she terms “childishness.” Bishop delineates her own approaches in ways that inherently prevent the possibility of penetrating past the colonial gaze. The qualities of tourism prohibit true insight: the speed with which the travelers “rush / to see the world the other way around” or the exoticism they assign to the “tiniest green hummingbird in

the world.” The repetition of “inexplicable” to describe the “old stonework” at which the tourists’ “stare” reifies their inability to comprehend the foreign sites. The stonework is “impenetrable” because of the speed and exoticism of tourism, not because the stonework is itself fundamentally not understandable. In Bishop’s interpretation, the fault lies with the viewers, not the stone. “Inexplicable” and “impenetrable” seem like odd choices for this scenario, in many ways, because at almost any visited foreign site, a guide or translator or resident might be able to explain and contextualize the landmarks. But for the mid-twentieth-century U.S. citizens about whom Bishop writes, including herself, the landmarks are “instantly seen,” and therefore contained within a colonial construction, rather than actually being comprehended within their own situation. These constructions are the “dreams” which “we dream.” Yet even as Bishop levels this criticism, she participates in it as well by the lovely surreal image of worrying about having “room / for one more folded sunset, still quite warm?” In her articulation of the touristic impulse, Bishop transforms experiences into readily packable souvenirs.

Like the audience of the *New Yorker* travel advertisements, Bishop’s speaker wants a combination of privilege and primitivism in her journey. The underlying premise of the poems, the speaker’s anxieties about whether or not she “should” travel in this way, are unique to her sociopolitical, class and even racial status. The implication of the persona’s criticisms of the scenery is that “someone” should have fixed it; the travels she lists as “childish” are all trips taken for pleasure, trips made by the middle- to upper-classes who can afford to spend large amounts of money to see the “tiniest hummingbird” or the “sun the other way around.” At the same time, in the third stanza, all of the things

that make the trip worth the money and effort are the more natural, essentialized aspects of the scenery and culture, the trees “really exaggerated in their beauty,” the “sad, two-noted, wooden tune of disparate wooden clogs” that are more rustic than the “less primitive music of the fat brown bird.” Brazil is defined as unsophisticated because the pitch of the clogs “In another country...would all be tested.” As a member of the white traveling U.S. middle-class, Bishop is not self-aware of how her concerns about privilege and primitivism are racialized and regionalized. She *can* travel, with the baggage of her issues and anxieties, whether or not she “should.”<sup>37</sup>

In the last stanza, Bishop provides idiosyncratic details alluding to the separate lives of Brazilians outside of her touristic gaze. Though the ethics of her position are not resolved, the quotidian quirks she encounters in an everyday drive through the country allow her to relax her moral rigidity. The shift in tone is signaled by the “But” that begins the third stanza, and the phrase “surely it would have been a pity” sets up each of the six responses. If she were to follow her own ethical sense of it not being “right” to watch “strangers in a play,” the speaker would have missed “the trees along this road, the “wooden clogs / carelessly clacking” on the “filling-station floor,” the “fat brown bird,” the moment of pondering the connection between “wooden footwear” and “wooden cages,” “the “history” of songbirds’ cages, and finally “unrelenting” rain. After the first example, each of the items she would have missed are set off by em-dashes that draw attention to the shift in subject in the long stanza. The items are not the metonymic landmarks that the Andrews sisters mention or the universal rhetoric of the questions she

asks in the first two stanzas. By shifting from vague to specific language, Bishop replaces concepts with actual details.

The em-dash list follows a drive along a tree-lined road during which she had to stop for gas, only to arrive at a place where the rain beat down on the roof so loudly that when it stopped there was a “sudden golden silence.” The journey that she describes is driving with Lota to Samambaia. Bishop does not mention Lota in this poem, but the list of images it would have been a “pity” to miss point to Lota’s presence. Just like the doily and the lined up cans of “Esso” oil in her earlier poem “The Filling Station” indicate the presence of “Somebody” in the greasy place who takes the time to clean and prettify out of love, so the list in “Questions of Travel” points to a specific person. Lota drove the car for Bishop for most of the years they lived together in Brazil. As I will explore more extensively in chapter 2, the fact that Lota drove herself around Rio, particularly up the difficult-to-traverse road into Petrópolis, was one of many of her personal choices that marked her queerness in a strict and conservative Brazilian culture. Bishop did not know how to drive. Bishop writes in one of her first letters that the road to Samambaia was “straight up the side of a mountain,” could “only be reached by jeep, or as they say here, jeepy,” and surrounded by “unbelievably impractical” scenery.<sup>38</sup> That trip and the distance between the city and the remote home which Lota was building was one of Bishop’s favorite aspects of their early life together. It was a literal drive into the interior to the place she memorialized in “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” away from the gaze of others. The private place of Samambaia was the answer to Bishop’s personal questions of travel.

The end of “Questions of Travel” locates Bishop in Lota’s home. The em-dash list leads up to the final item which is further emphasized by adding “and” to the beginning of the line: “—And never to have had to listen to rain / so much like politicians’ speeches: two hours of unrelenting oratory / and then a sudden golden silence / in which the traveller takes a notebook, writes” (CP 94). The “unrelenting oratory” of the rain, an image she picks up in “Squatter’s Children” and “Electrical Storm,” was specific to the rain on Lota’s aluminum roof in her ultra-modern house in Samambaia, which was notoriously noisy during storms. The architect, Sergio Bernardes, was challenged about his use of aluminum on the well-known house by a student, who asserted that aluminum was an impractical choice because of the noise when it rained. He responded, “Sim, mas a Lota adorava aquele barulho” [Yes, but Lota adored that noise] (qtd. in Nadia Nogueira 107). The noise of the rain on the aluminum roof comes up several times in Bishop’s letters and poems about Samambaia. Following the trip up the mountain in which she contemplated the details of wooden footwear and birdcages, Bishop arrives in Lota’s home in time for two hours of a noisy rainstorm. After the rain stops, she pens the famous ending to the poem:

*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?*

*Continent, city, country, society:  
the choice is never wide and never free.  
And here, or there...No. Should we have stayed at home,  
wherever that may be?*

The comparison of “imagined places” that “we” envision “sitting quietly in one’s room” and the actual place that marks “here” different from “there” indicate Bishop’s own troubling of the act of defamiliarization. And yet, while she frames her inquiries as if they belong to the speaker, in Bishop’s life they were less about tourism and more about expatriation. She is not just packing up sunset-souvenirs, she is writing in her journal from her room in her new home in a new land. The final question points to the slipperiness of the concept of home, “wherever that may be.” She is already moving from the vantage point of the tourist-voyeur to the walker-partner who has moved past the Concept-Brazils and is now evaluating the sites she encounters.

When “Arrival at Santos” was followed by “The Shampoo” in *A Cold Spring*, Bishop moved quickly through the stages of defamiliarization Certeau describes. From a position of replacing her Concept-Brazils with the actual witnessed place, Bishop drove “into the interior.” There, her focus shifts from the grand conceptual landscape to the small details of Lota’s home, such as battered tin she uses to wash her partner’s hair. Because she removes “The Shampoo” from her Brazilian poems in *Questions of Travel*, that act of defamiliarization is made more gradually in the “Brazil” section. The tourist’s demands are met not by some mysteriously Real Brazil or an escapist paradise but by the actuality of a domestic place which she is able to inhabit by virtue of her romantic relationship.

Bishop universalizes her experience of defamiliarization in a way that distances her position in keeping with the way she wrote about Lota following the rejection of “The Shampoo” by the *New Yorker*. The answer to her questions of whether she “should” be

here or she is “right” in describing the country is not provided within the poem. Instead the quotidian details of their shared life together allow the speaker to live within the tension. In “Questions of Travel,” she frames these questions as concerns of her generation, particularly the travel writers with whom she aligns herself and the victory-culture audience. These three poems are the only ones in which she writes overtly as a tourist-voyeur. However, the distance that Certeau uses as a means to create a sense of defamiliarization is one which Bishop returns to repeatedly in her other poems about Brazil. The Brazilian “texts” she will attempt to “read” and translate into poetry are ones that she and Lota, as well as other Brazilian bodies, write together in their shared place at Samambaia. The next five poems of the “Brazil” section change as the narrative shifts from one of defamiliarization to one of domestic intimacy and eventual loss.



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<sup>1</sup> As I referenced in the introduction, Certeau's use of the terms "space" and "place" is exactly the opposite of Tuan's in many ways: Certeau's "places" are the larger, more conceptual sense of a location, while the "spaces" are formed by the everyday practices that give them meaning. However, in general, I find Tuan's use of the terms more congruent with my own understanding (I think "space" sounds larger than "place") and also more applicable to Bishop's own travel and writing practices. Therefore, despite the fact that I'm relying on Certeau's act of defamiliarization in chapter 1 to describe Bishop's descent from tourist to partner, I am intentionally not juxtaposing that act of defamiliarization with his dichotomy of space/place but instead using Tuan's throughout.

<sup>2</sup> In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt terms the anxiety underlying the texts of many nineteenth-century travel writers the "white man's lament" as they worry about the loss of authentic primitive cultures. This lament is picked up by Claude Lévi-Strauss's concern over "monoculture" and will be explored more fully by Bishop in her later poems. I've changed Pratt's terms to fit Bishop's gender and subject positions.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow this phrase from Sylvia Henneberg, who explains the connection between Bishop's poetry and other poems with which she freely engaged; though Bishop's translations were limited and often literal, her "transformative interpretations" drew from foreign poetry in way that gave structure and direction to some of her best poems. Henneberg's study of the influence of Max Jacob's 1921 "Etablissement d'une communauté au Brésil" on "Brazil, January 1, 1502" was the impetus for this chapter when I realized that Bishop was interpreting not just Jacob's poem and the Clarice Lispector story I mention later, but also Carmen Miranda's banana dancers in her portrayal. Throughout my project, I am indebted to Henneberg's premise that Bishop's strategies of transformative interpretation are a "creative means of interacting with and building on existing foreign poetry" (I would add, other sources as well) without "engaging in the free translation of which she was so deeply skeptical" (338).

<sup>4</sup> For further reading on the role of theater in constructing a national identity during World War II, I recommend Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> In my formulation of Miranda's role for a post-World War II traveling audience, I am indebted to Camille Roman in her discussion of John Wayne, whose "personal and professional collaboration with the Cold War national victory-culture led to his 'performing body' becoming...a cultural synecdoche for this national narrative" (13). Roman's adept reading of Bishop's reaction to the interventionist narrative embodied by Wayne reveals the subtle political motivations intertwined in U.S. popular culture during and after World War II and how that plays out in Bishop's poetry.

<sup>6</sup> Four 1939 publications demonstrate that Miranda was widely received as the embodiment of the Good Neighbor Policy: She was "the chief good in the [current] good neighbor policy" (New York *World-Telegram*) and "bound to do more to cement the good relationship between the United States and South America than a couple of boatloads of diplomats and other career men" (*Playbill*). As two headlines from June of that year claim, "A Brazilian Bombshell in the small person of Carmen Miranda, puts the good neighbor policy right on Boston's front door" (Boston *Evening Transfer*), and "Broadway Got Her From Brazil, Finds Her a Really Good Neighbor" (New York *Herald Tribune*) (qtd. in Gil-Montero 91).

<sup>7</sup> According to Tamara L. Falicov, the objectives of the Good Neighbor policy were twofold: "1) to insure that nations in Latin America were joined in the Allied war effort and were not associated with the Axis or Communist sympathizers, and 2) to allow the U.S. access to Latin America as a source of raw materials and a market for goods, including films" (245).

<sup>8</sup> In identifying "South of the Borderism" in the Good Neighbor movies, I am particularly indebted to Norma Klahn who theorizes the phrase as a specific process of Othering common in cultural representations of any country South of the Border. Klahn defines "South of the Borderism" as "...the way that the United States and its peoples have come to terms with Mexico as they continuously invent an 'other' image, and defend and define their own. In their writings, and in contrast with the ways Anglos constructed or invented themselves (stereotypically as morally superior, hardworking, thrifty), the Mexican could in the best of cases be mysterious, romantic, fun-loving, laid back, and colorfully primitive or alternately conniving, highly sexualized, disorderly, lazy, violent and uncivilized" (125). Her discussion of

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literary representations of Mexico was valuable in my own theorizing about filmmakers' construction of Brazil.

<sup>9</sup> In her text, Roman is discussing the "containment culture" of Alan Nadel's *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*. While I quote her words, many of the ideas she draws from Nadel, particularly the "hunted" female United States.

<sup>10</sup> From <http://www.moviepostershop.com/week-end-in-havana-movie-poster-1941>.

<sup>11</sup> Though many of the actors who play Brazilians in these movies are not dark-skinned, the movies rely on traditional African-American stereotypes to connote the same sort of innate sexuality that was performed at the time in U.S. and European culture as inherent in African-Americans. Miranda took on the characteristics of the type set by Josephine Baker two decades earlier, particularly the banana skirt Baker wore with only pearls in *La Folie du Jour* (1927). While there may have been little actual influence from Baker to Miranda, Baker created a type that Miranda entered with her off-screen persona and on-screen performances. Like Baker, Miranda played up her lack of language ability in order to appear more charming and more naïve. Both used their bodies in order to locate their cultures as "different." Both "translated" their cultures to an audience in a way that others from their original cultures found problematic and against which those cultures reacted. Both exploited the expectations of their target cultures and used the primitivizing, exoticizing tendencies to their financial advantage. Both used costumes that immediately implied to their audience that that they were exotic by nature, that they were inherently and racially inclined to be overly-sexualized, to be comfortable with their sexuality. Bananas played a crucial part in both of their constructions.

<sup>12</sup> With little differentiation, in the Fox musicals of the 1940s, the "Other" characters are conflated into a broad, vague and stereotypical category that is marked only by their difference as being "dark" or "non-white." Though Fox musicals tended to provide more roles for non-white performers than those of other studios, "the opportunities for minority performers usually came with a price. To be included on the screen, minority artists often had to conform to stereotypical or Orientalist notions of racial or ethnic identity" (Griffin 22). Fox musicals (more than musicals of other contemporary moviemakers) utilized what Griffin calls the "vaudeville aesthetic," and focused on having a variety of musical acts; for this reason, the inclusion of many different ethnicities, languages, types and bodies amongst the musical acts was encouraged: "[Vaudeville] Theater managers formulated a structure that emphasized the radical differences among acts: a comic was followed by an opera singer, who was followed by a dog act, which was followed by a tap dancer, who was followed by a magic act, and so on" (Griffin 29). Fox musicals followed that general rule of thumb in the line-up of its musicals. In Miranda's first movie with Fox, *Down Argentine Way*, the Nicholas Brothers, famous African-American tap dancers, and (O)ther performers rotated with Miranda in providing an exotic feel that came from vaudeville and not from Argentina.

<sup>13</sup> In *Orientalism*, the Orient that Said describes as being particularly interesting to the U.S., our view of Japan, China and Indochina, was being formed and portrayed parallel to the views of Brazil being constructed in the banana movies. Beginning with the Japanese internment during World War II to the Korean conflict and finally the Vietnam War, the characteristics of what made "them" different from "us" were an important part of nationalist, patriotic rhetoric.

<sup>14</sup> "A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call 'the land of the barbarians.' In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary. I use the word 'arbitrary' here because imaginative geography of the 'our land-barbarian land' variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for 'us' to set up these boundaries in our minds; 'they' become 'they' accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from 'ours'" (Said 55).

<sup>15</sup> Griffin terms the settings an "all-purpose Latin America"—despite their fanfare about representing Latin America and working well with ambassadors and embassies, "Fox lacked concern with individuating Latin American cultures" (34). Shari Roberts notes the use of bananas shows the classic misreading and conflation of all South of the Border countries: "While Miranda was from Brazil, while her films were set

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in South America and her theme song was “Sous’ American Way,” Miranda’s banana-and-fruit hats refer most directly to the imported products of Central America and its ‘banana republics’” (7).

<sup>16</sup> The list of allegations the cultural attaché outlines would be humorous if it were not for the offensive nature of these portrayals: “Carmen Miranda, a Brazilian star, sings in Portuguese a Tin Pan Alley rumba called ‘Down Argentine Way,’ which speaks of tangos and rhumbas being played beneath a pampa moon...Many Argentines, especially wealthy ones, speak perfect Oxford English. Don Ameche does a rumba in Spanish with castanets and talks about orchids, as rare in Argentina as in New York. Betty Grable does a conga with bumps. When Betty Grable and Don Ameche arrive at the airport of Buenos Aires, they are met by a couple of silly-looking gentlemen described as distributors of her father’s products, a definite reflection on all U.S. distributors here. The Nicholas Brothers do a tap dance...and add to the Argentine impression that all Yankees think they are Indians or Africans. A colored person is seen in B.A. [Buenos Aires] as often as a Hindu in Los Angeles” (Gil-Montero 98).

<sup>17</sup> The term “Americanisada,” used humorously by Miranda in this song, was the impetus for my term “banana-ized” as I tried to find a similar, slightly humorous equivalent for the move that Othered here in U.S. popular culture.

<sup>18</sup> Miranda’s and Lota’s lives intersected in ways that could only occur in a small society like upper-class Rio de Janeiro. The Aterro do Flamengo, or Flamengo Park designed by Lota, now houses the Carmen Miranda museum. The connections between Miranda and Lota were several; though they may never have met, Lota was deeply engaged in a circle of musicians and artists that worked with Miranda, including Vinicius de Moraes, who traveled and worked with Miranda in the 1940s in the United States and later became close friends with Bishop, spending a week with her in Ouro Preto in the 1960s.

<sup>19</sup> The generic forms of travel writing that Bishop uses in her introduction to *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* will move progressively toward Lévi-Strauss’s style of ethnography as Bishop comes to rely more fully on outside sources to accurately depict Brazil.

<sup>20</sup> Robert von Hallberg lists their many destinations: Charles Olson journeyed around the Yucatán. W.S. Merwin, Robert Lowell, James Merrill, James Wright, Richard Howard, Adrienne Rich, Charles Gullans, Robert Creeley, Richard Wilbur and John Ashbery lived in and toured throughout Europe (134).

<sup>21</sup> Referenced in the introduction as being identifiable in the *New Yorker* audience who in an imagined site “could satisfy two sets of feelings, often in conflict with each other: the desire for comfort and the consciousness of national and global ills” (Mary F. Corey xii).

<sup>22</sup> My reading relies on the work of earlier Bishop scholars, notably Susan McCabe who identifies the poem as the “calculated analysis of the tourist mentality and its flaws,” as well as Bonnie Costello’s reading of the speaker’s “colonial mentality” (153, 129).

<sup>23</sup> In the background, a chorus of voices joins Oliveira’s, but their Portuguese is thickly accented, though at least they are singing in Portuguese and not Spanish. The final “o” sound in Portuguese is flatter than the pure “o” of Spanish, so that it tends a bit more toward the “oo” sound, but is still rounder than a flat American English “oo.” In singing the last syllable of the words “terminando” and the rhyming words that follow it, the chorus sings with thick American accents, “terminandoo.”

<sup>24</sup> Ashley Brown remembers Bishop’s process for choosing the order of poems in the book, based mostly on her concerns that she was not producing a large enough book. In order to give her more pages, Brown was inspired by Lowell’s *Life Studies*. As he recalls, “My suggestion was that Elizabeth take that wonderful story ‘In the Village,’ which quite a few people admired and which was not very well known outside the *New Yorker*, and put it in the middle, have the Brazilian things first, and then have other poems, many of which are set in Nova Scotia, follow the story. That would give her another 50 percent in pages...I suggested that Elizabeth move ‘Arrival at Santos,’ which comes near the end of *A Cold Spring*, [to be an] introduction to the Brazilian poems. She immediately took up the idea. I should have suggested that she put ‘The Shampoo’ with the Brazilian poems” (Fountain and Brazeau, 193).

<sup>25</sup> Biele assumes from White’s response that, based on their editorial system, White had wanted to accept it. The mixed response indicates that someone other than White had ultimately vetoed it since she often just vetoed poems herself without taking it to the committee: “It is perfectly horrid to have to return a poem of yours, especially when we are so eager to have one to publish. But though the votes were mixed on ‘The Shampoo,’ the noes had it in the end. One reason against it for us is that this is a personal poem in which

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you do not seem to have described the occasion involved. At least it does not seem to us that you have conveyed it all; for instance, what was the dear friend too demanding and too voluble about? But I guess the deciding factor was that this sort of small personal poem perhaps doesn't quite fit into the *New Yorker*. Thank you, anyway, for letting us read it and we look forward to the others you say are coming" (*BNY* 113).

<sup>26</sup> 6 September 1955 letter (qtd in Biele xxvi).

<sup>27</sup> I will return to this poem in my discussion of her interest in primitivism as an alternative to the increasingly politicized situation she found herself in with Lota in chapter 3. Because the poem was not published until 1960, it fits chronologically in the period in which she was focusing more on translation and in which she drew on those translations to inform her own poetry. Marilyn Lombardi and Victoria Harrison argue effectively that Bishop drew from her translation of Clarice Lispector's "The Smallest Women in the World" in writing "Brazil, January 1, 1502" and of course I agree with Henneberg's argument in the article I mentioned earlier that Max Jacobs was also an influence on her writing of this poem.

<sup>28</sup> In my reading of this poem as criticizing Cold War culture, I was particularly informed by Camille Roman's reading of the poem: "The Brazilian world is portrayed as a mysterious or elusive Eden that resists any interpretation and therefore remains an eternal object of desire. But this fascination is a matter of power and control; for imperial gazers need to transform this 'other' into themselves just as the United States desired to Americanize other nations in its efforts at global domination" (147).

<sup>29</sup> Sergeant Andrew Mason Jr. (James Ellison) is a soldier heading to war who leaves behind two women, Edie Allen (Alice Faye) and Vivian Potter (Sheila Ryan), both of whom think they are engaged to him. As Mason returns from war and the love triangle plays out, the entire company puts on a show to raise money for the war effort. Throughout the movie, women do whatever must be done to sustain their soldiers, even if that means losing the men they love. Vivian Potter lets go of her relationship with an ease that points as much to the poor writing as it does to the underlying message of the movie that men in war time need to be supported. In a sub-plot, her father Peyton Potter (Edward Everett Horton) finds release from his sexual repression through his relationship with Dorita (Carmen Miranda). Early in the movie, he calls her a "gypsy" and "South American savage." Though he avoids her as much as possible, when the contrived circumstances of the script force him to encounter her, he is overcome by his passion. Their rendezvous finally enables Potter to break past the Apollonian nature that has constricted his marriage to his wife (Charlotte Greenwood).

<sup>30</sup> A recent book by historian Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, examines the effects of the sexual relationship between U.S. soldiers and French prostitutes on the political tension in the European war; a fundamental argument in her book is that the sexual relationships were erased or repressed in representations of the war to audiences at home.

<sup>31</sup> From <http://filmfanatic.org/reviews/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Gangs-All-Here-Banana-Dance2.png>.

<sup>32</sup> Gray is giving an overview of Mary Louise Pratt's arguments about nineteenth-century travelers. The control exercised by their colonial gaze did not end in the nineteenth-century; in many ways, Bishop's traveling contemporaries demonstrate many of the colonial moves Pratt outlines in her book. Gray shifts Bishop away from modernism based on her questioning of the more modern imperial practices; I agree with his reading, particularly of this poem, but I am uncomfortable with the situation of her as postmodern because, as I will demonstrate in the later chapters and have argued in the introduction, her prose texts and letters reveal a much more conservative or essentializing viewpoint than is exhibited in this poem. Read alone, "Questions of Travel" certainly reads as an ambivalent, unresolved questioning of this colonial gaze. Read in the context of her later work, the questions asked in this poem are answered, perhaps less flatteringly by current standards, in Bishop's later assertions about Brazil, many of which are problematic and certainly in line with Lota's upper-class views.

<sup>33</sup> For example, in *The Gang's All Here*, at the end of the musical number "Brazil/You're in New York," in which the "passengers" debark amid the stereotypical Brazilian imports, Phil Baker turns to the audience and comments about Miranda, "Well, there's your Good Neighbor policy!" Miranda is scripted as the literal embodiment of that policy. He then tells the audience that Miranda and the other night club dancers will lead them in the "Uncle Sam-ba." His pronunciation, "Uncle Sam(ba)" instead of "Uncle Sahn-ba,"

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demonstrates the appropriation of the Brazilian dance into a patriotic framework that diminishes its foreignness and emphasizes the nationalistic rewriting of Brazil that plays out throughout the movie.

<sup>34</sup> Though not a Carmen Miranda movie, in *Road to Rio* Hope dresses up in drag as Miranda, showing how she had become a stand-in for Brazil.

<sup>35</sup> I am indebted to Paulo Henriques Britto for his help in translating and understanding this old-fashioned Brazilian expression.

<sup>36</sup> The song continues:

You stop at the Copacabana  
With Sugar Loaf mountain in view  
So the words on the menu mean nothing  
You can't ask a soul what to do

[Chorus]

When she smiles your way  
What more would you want anyone to say,  
So you sigh, just sigh,  
You don't have to mention  
That Yankee phrase, "Ay, Ay"

Perhaps when you end your vacation  
You bring back a bit of Brazil  
You can't understand what she's saying  
You need an interpreter skill

But you don't have to know the language  
If you don't wanna say goodbye

<sup>37</sup> In this argument, I'm reminded of many of the charges leveled against Betty Friedan and other writers that their "burdens" are unique to women of racial and socioeconomic privilege.

<sup>38</sup> 7 February 1952 letter to Ilse and Kit Barker (OA 233-234).

**Chapter 2**  
**Bishop's Domestic Roots: Samambaia as a Place of Shared Subaltern Values**  
**(1952-1960)**

Bishop's journey into the "interior," which she describes in "Questions of Travel," was one she took many times in the next decade she lived. The mountain road led to Samambaia, Lota's *sítio* [country home] outside of Petrópolis. Bishop's letters indicate her health and happiness and give several "local color" anecdotes about the remote location and the natural setting.<sup>1</sup> However, Bishop's many descriptions of the domestic help, the architecturally innovative house, and the tropical landscape do not reveal the Brazilian context of the mountain retreat.<sup>2</sup> At their home, Lota was constructing a public sphere that resisted mid-century *carioca* public discourse on gender and homosexuality where intellectuals, artists, politicians and others gathered, discussed issues, and formed a shared identity.<sup>3</sup> As Tuan describes it, "Enclosed and humanized space is place. Compared to space, place is a calm center of established values" (54). It is not just the familiar details of their home, but the descriptions that imply that Bishop lived with Lota in a place of shared established values, that marked the Samambaia poems as different from the tourist suite that precede them. During those years, Bishop translated and wrote the introduction for *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* as well as six poems about Samambaia published from 1953 to 1960, five of which form the next set in the "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel*: "The Shampoo," "Squatter's Children," "Manuelzinho," "Electrical Storm," "Song for the Rainy Season," and "The Armadillo."<sup>4</sup> Lota and her circle were the source for the way Bishop defined "Brazil," both implicitly and explicitly, in these texts. Bishop also navigated the expectations and constraints of

the upper-class, intellectual audience she left behind through her publishing relationship with the editors of the *New Yorker*. In these texts, Bishop defined Lota's "Brazil" for her own "New York."

One of the things that attracted Bishop to Lota was her artistic, cosmopolitan worldview. They had originally met through friends in New York; Bishop was planning a short trip to see Lota and other friends before her allergic reaction to the cashew fruit forced her to stay and be nursed for several days, leading to the surprise romance with Lota. In many ways, as alternative artistic groups within a larger, more conservative culture, Bishop's circle in New York and Lota's circle in Rio reacted in similar ways to the national public discourses playing out in their respective countries.

### **Samambaia as a Subaltern Public Sphere**

Samambaia was located near the traditional imperial summer residence just outside of Rio de Janeiro. The farm was the couple's primary residence for the first eight years of their relationship. Eventually Lota's job took them more and more to her apartment in Rio toward the end of the 1950s and they moved permanently to Lota's apartment in the chic neighborhood of Leme in Rio, returning to the farm only on occasional weekends. The house itself, an award-winning example of Brazilian modern architecture, was designed with Lota's oversight to suit the tropical landscape in which it was situated. Its proximity to Rio but distinctly rural location made Samambaia a popular weekend and summer destination for the members of Lota's intellectual circle who fled the city to escape the heat and stress. Lota's connections are at times astounding; Bishop

made friends with some of the most famous and influential painters, poets and politicians of mid-twentieth-century Brazil. Lota's friends included the governor of the state; a future presidential candidate; international-award-winning architects and gardeners; newspaper owners and influential journalists; presidential cabinet members; internationally-known musicians, including Vinicius de Moraes, who wrote the lyrics to "Girl from Ipanema"; painters, sculptors and other artists, like muralist Candido Portinari, under whom Lota studied for years; and of course writers, including Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Rachel de Queiroz, and many others. It would be difficult to overstate the influence Lota's friends had in politics and society in Rio de Janeiro in the middle of the twentieth century.

This remarkable group of people enjoyed invitations from Lota as opportunities to retreat from a conservative culture and a political situation to which they were opposed; the gatherings lasted for days; heated discussions and vehement arguments were expected. At Samambaia, Lota constructed what Nancy Fraser calls a "subaltern counterpublic."<sup>5</sup> Through their discourse, Lota's friends formed a cultural identity that was formed in opposition to Brazilian public sphere. As they contested the normative discourse through newspaper articles, artistic endeavors, and political maneuvers (including assassination attempts and coups) thus enacting the same resistance strategies as other groups: "women, workers, people of color and gays and lesbians have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute...parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs"



(Fraser 67). Bishop's introduction to Brazilian politics and culture is through the narrow, privileged worldview of these counterdiscourses, though she took them to be indicative of mainstream Brazilian ideas.

In her letters, Bishop attributes qualities to "Brazil" that are probably only true at Samambaia. Most tellingly, she reveals her privilege in many of her descriptions of the country: She tells the Barkers that Brazil is a place where one can "live exactly as one wants," a statement that could only be true for the white expatriate guest of a wealthy Brazilian landowner.<sup>6</sup> She writes that Brazil is really "democratic" with a "pleasant intimacy" among classes, a statement that seems jarringly out of place with the tumultuous class wars at the time.<sup>7</sup> Most of her early descriptions of "Brazil" are picturesque, like "the really lofty vagueness of Brazil...where a cloud is coming in my bedroom window right this minute," the "unbelievably impractical" scenery, and the "sort of dream-combination of plant & animal life" in the mountains surrounding the farm.<sup>8</sup> When Bishop refers to the weekend gatherings, it is clear she does not enjoy them or approve of Lota's friends and their influence, especially in the beginning when she was learning Portuguese. She at times speaks highly of a few of Lota's friends, but often refers to them only in passing in order to relay a local color story that occurred.<sup>9</sup> She described Rio de Janeiro as "culturally poor" with a "very limited" social life compared to New York.<sup>10</sup> But despite her complicated relationship with Lota's friends and their discussions, Samambaia is the context in which Bishop's descriptions of Brazil are rooted. The things Bishop found most fascinating at their dreamlike home were possible only in that unique, rarified, discrete society.

The Samambaia group's identity becomes increasingly clear as the political situation exploded in the next few years. The way they resist the Brazilian public discourse on gender roles, sexuality and politics is particularly influential on Bishop's texts. In the 1950s, mainstream cultural expectations placed on Brazilian women were not unlike those in the U.S. at the time. According to Nadia Nogueira, Bishop arrived in 1951 during "uma época privilegiada" [a privileged period] that could be characterized by the "*dona-de-casa-ainda-feliz-com-o-seu-papel*" ["housewife-that-was-still-happy-with-her-role"] (47). But it was a view that was soon to be challenged and Lota's artist and political friends were fundamental in beginning many of the conversations that became national movements in the next three decades. In the United States, many of the cultural views about traditional gender roles were already being reformed by the cultural shifts that had occurred in World War II when women occupied roles that had been predominantly male, among many other complicated factors. In Brazil, the modernization and industrial revolution that had occurred on an unprecedented scale in the first half of the twentieth century, the rapid movement of the population from rural to urban sites, and the sharp socioeconomic divide between the upper-class and the lower classes were among the factors that contributed to the turmoil of the Brazilian society in flux.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, the traditional religious affiliations of both nations sharpened the political and cultural debates about gender roles as well as homosexuality. The imagined community of the United States conceived of itself as a Christian nation and in many ways cultural expectations of traditional roles for women were based on that conception (which is still evident in our political discourse about women presidential candidates or

state-sanctioned gay marriage). However, the influence of various denominations and the importance of religious freedom, free speech and the separation of church and state as American ideals make the conversations about U.S. religions very different from the public discourse about those roles in a Brazilian context. There was (and still is) almost ubiquitous identification of Brazilians with the Catholic Church, which Nogueira notes:

No Brasil, país onde o sistema patriarcal dominou o imaginário das relações sociais na maioria das suas regiões, onde o catolicismo é a religião oficial, e o mito de Adão e Eva naturaliza a divisão sexuada da sociedade, os papéis tradicionais de gênero, a heterossexualidade e as relações assimétricas entre os corpos sexuados emergem como norma, algo quase inquestionável

[In Brazil, a country in which the patriarchal system dominated the conception of the social relationships in the majority of its regions, in which Catholicism is the official religion, and the myth of Adam and Eve naturalizes the sexual divisions of society, the traditional roles in general, heterosexuality and the asymmetrical relationship between sexual bodies emerge as the norm, something almost unquestioned] (24).

Because of the conservative position of the Church, the vast nature of its influence, and the uniformity of its staunch hierarchical views, the public sphere of Brazilian society was unquestioningly heteronormative. Lesbians in Rio in the 1950s and 1960s were constrained by a very strict society that viewed their lifestyle almost exclusively as “unnatural” or “sinful.”

Lower-class lesbians had few options to resist these normative views. The heart-breaking stories Nogueira touches on in her overview of the difficulty lesbians faced in Rio in the 1950s and 1960s reveal the very real consequences for coming out, dressing in male clothing, or otherwise contesting their societal restrictions. Lota’s position of privilege and her cultural clout as a member of one of the most influential families in *carioca* society gave her mobility that lower-class women could not possess. Had she

been poor, Lota's interest in construction, the fact that she drove her own car and dressed almost exclusively in pants would have marked her as masculine, a *mulher-homem*, a term which carries the same connotations as the English word "dyke." However, Lota and Bishop were able to establish what Nogueira terms "espaços lesbianos distantes dos domínios públicos, no privado, a casa como proteção dos olhares misóginos" [lesbian spaces away from the public dominion, in private, a house with protection from the misogynistic gaze] (28). Her distance from Rio and her independent wealth enabled Lota to construct an image of herself as eccentric and artistic without being accused negatively of fitting into negative stereotypes of lesbianism (Nogueira 27-28). Lota was one of a very rare subset of upper-class women whose mobility allowed them to bypass the constraints that bound lower-class women from dressing or acting in ways that would have been deemed socially unacceptable by conservative Brazilian society.

In addition to establishing a public sphere at Samambaia that nurtured queer identity, Lota's subaltern counterpublic was also deeply united in their political stance. Not everyone who formed part of the loosely organized group of Lota's friends would identify as queer. But the "oppositional interpretations" of their communal identity united them: they were *antigetulistas*. Bishop wrote: "I move only in very anti-Vargas circles."<sup>12</sup> The term that defined the group means "anti-Getúlio," the controversial president of Brazil. Getúlio Vargas came to power in the Aliança Liberal [Liberal Alliance], a bloodless coup led by the Brazilian military on 24 October 1930.<sup>13</sup> The coup ended a period that has come to be called the *República Velha* [Old Republic], which began with the deposition of Dom Pedro II in 1889. From 1889 to 1930, Brazil was established as a

democratic state. In reality, during the *República Velha*, wealthy rural landowners in the interior of the country held the power and traded it back and forth, choosing governors and presidents from within their own elite aristocratic circle. Their combined political maneuvering earned their type of politicking a name drawn from the major exports of the two states that held the majority of the political power for three decades: *café com leite* [coffee with milk] politics. Coffee was the major export of the large farms in São Paulo; Minas Gerais was famous for their large dairy farms. The landowners held enormous influence over the people that lived in their region in a system called *coronelismo*. Within the *café com leite* inner circles, political decisions were made, then passed on through the pressure the coronéis put on their poor tenants, so that a handful of landowners wielded enormous power for more than three decades.

Vargas billed himself as a man of the people. He was a *gaúcho* (a cowboy) from Rio Grande do Sul, an outsider in the insider world of *coronelismo*. Though Vargas came from an educated and wealthy family, he wooed the labor classes with slogans like “O trabalhador também tem o seu lugar no Estado Novo” [The worker also has a place in the New State].<sup>14</sup> He often associated himself rhetorically with the workers and the poor who were frustrated with the *café com leite* system that benefited *coronéis* at the expense of the lower classes. Vargas lost the 1920 election in a fraudulent election to Júlio Prestes, the hand-picked successor of President Washington Luís. In a move that occurred with some frequency in Brazilian politics in the twentieth century, Vargas seized control of the country just weeks before the end of Luís’s term in a bloodless coup with the support of the Brazilian military. He remained president until 1945; he returned to power as the

elected president in 1950 until his death by suicide in 1954. The four years of his second administration as president are particularly fraught with corruption and violent opposition.

Lota and the *antigetulistas* were opposed to Vargas for economic, political and personal reasons. The Macedo Soares family had opposed Vargas vehemently for years. Lota's father, José Eduardo de Macedo Soares, was the influential owner of the newspaper *Diário Carioca*, and was arrested by Vargas for political slander. Their family went into exile when Lota was twelve; Lota and her sister were educated in Switzerland and spoke French and English as fluently as Portuguese.<sup>15</sup> The *café com leite* politics benefited the Macedo Soares family and their elite friends; as that political era passed, Lota found herself an increasingly impoverished landowner. And though Vargas aligned himself with lower-class people and workers, in reality his government was rife with corruption. He replaced the *café com leite* landowners with other elite members of his own circle. In particular, his second administration was staunchly pro-Brazil in a way that pitted the country's concerns against U.S. interests. His lofty rhetoric and foreign policy decisions angered the U.S. as well as pro-capitalist Brazilians, including Lota. Lota's friend and staunch Vargas opponent, Carlos Lacerda was in a political party with close ties in the U.S. and Lota, with her interest in international travel and her European education, found Vargas's brand of nationalism repugnant.<sup>16</sup>

Before Bishop left the U.S., she had the leftist leanings of the educated elite. In Brazil, the political ground shifted beneath her: The politicians she found the most reasonable in Brazil were members of the União Democrática Nacional (UDN), the party

in which Lacerda was doing so well. The UDN was pro-business, pro-capitalist, and pro-United States, espousing political views most commonly held by the right in the United States.<sup>17</sup> Bishop, by joining in the anti-Vargas sentiment of her circle, found herself in a political position that might have been associated with Republican conservative values in the United States. In Brazil, the political stakes were vastly different: Vargas was blatantly anti-American in his nationalistic rhetoric, locating himself “for the people” against international colonial or imperial interest in Brazil. Bishop, while not always at ease with U.S. culture, was opposed to his anti-American claims and the communistic leanings of his political party.<sup>18</sup>

By the time Vargas shot himself in the chest on 24 August 1954, Bishop had already been drawn deeply into Brazilian politics. The political upheaval of those first few years in which Bishop was learning Portuguese and translating *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* were deeply influential on Bishop’s understanding of the country. National events were personal because of Lota’s connections: An assassination attempt was made on the life of Lacerda in 1954. One of the most outspoken leaders of the *antigetulista* movement, Lacerda owned a newspaper, the *Tribuna da Imprensa*, which had launched bitter attacks against the Vargas administration. He owned one of the plots of land that Lota had sold at Samambaia and had a “little country house” that was “built by the same architect as Lota’s” adjoining their farm (*One Art* 309). After the assassination attempt, Lacerda fled to his little farm and borrowed sheets from Samamabaia (Carmen Oliveira 51). He soon became involved in a plot to depose Vargas, whom Lacerda blamed, probably correctly, for hiring someone to kill him (Oliveira 51). Gétúlio Vargas shot

himself on 24 August 1954, thus ending any plans Lacerda was making to retaliate against his political enemy.

Vargas's suicide note added fuel to the volatile tension between the upper and lower classes. Vargas's note, which came to be called the "Carta Testamento," placed the blame for his death on "as forças e os interesses contra o povo" [the forces and interests against the people] (par. 1).<sup>19</sup> He differentiates between his political opponents, the forces against "the people" who "Não querem que o povo seja independente" [don't want the people to be independent] (par. 3). He positions himself as the bulwark against *antigetulista* control: "Tenho lutado mês a mês, dia a dia, hora a hora, resistindo a uma pressão constante, incessante, tudo suportando em silêncio, tudo esquecendo, renunciando a mim mesmo, para defender o povo, que agora se queda desamparado" [I have fought month after month, day after day, hour after hour, resisting a constant, incessant pressure, tolerating everything in silence, forgetting everything, renouncing my own self, in order to defend the people, who now have been abandoned] (par. 4). The melodramatic tenor of his language notwithstanding, Vargas's suicide and letter changed the scope of the debate. Any sympathy Lacerda might have garnered vanished with Vargas's death; the "people," mourning the loss of "the father of the poor" and "the man who modernized Brazil," turned against Lacerda and his life was once again in jeopardy (Oliveira 50). Lacerda fled the country, heading first to Cuba and eventually spending time in New York in exile. Bishop wrote to friends introducing Lacerda and asking for their help.



Because of their involvement in local and national politics, the group who gathered at Samambaia created a site of resistance that was not just theoretical. Though it is outside the scope of this chapter to provide the details, many of the coups that took place in the two decades in which Bishop lived in Brazil were launched from within Lota's *antigetulista* group, if they were not conceived at Samambaia itself. Lota's farm was a site of revolution through Lota's and her friends' active resistance to Getúlio Vargas's political repression and *carioca* society views of sexual norms. The Brazilians whom Bishop encountered in the early years were one of two types: either the elite who were cultured, educated, well-traveled *antigetulistas* or the servants who waited on them. Bishop espoused Lota's views because she had no reason to question them.

Bishop seems to have been unaware of the Brazilian influence on her societal views; her friends, on the other hand, were cognizant of how those early years in Brazil altered her outlook. Frank Bidart records Lowell's reaction to Bishop's views:

Lowell once said to me that Elizabeth changed tremendously with Lota, at least in political terms, and that after about five years, Elizabeth became, from the point of view of someone from the States, conservative. Lota was Brazilian aristocracy; it was an oligarchy. Elizabeth clearly had accepted that. The poems she wrote in Brazil, and her poems earlier, seem to me often radical in perception and feeling; but, Lowell said, Elizabeth would defend their friend the governor, that sort of thing. She began to sound like Lota. Lowell didn't find this particularly attractive: it wasn't the bohemian Elizabeth Bishop that he had known in the forties in New York. The only poem, I think, that reflects this is 'Manuelzinho,' with its whiff of noblesse oblige. The speaker of the poem isn't Elizabeth, but Lota; perhaps the title character is perceived too comfortably as helpless and funny (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau 140-141).

Lota's political and economic interests meant that she was part of a class that held more than the "whiff of noblesse oblige" Bidart detects in "Manuelzinho." Mary Stearns Morse, Lota's partner for many years, remarks starkly: "Lota was quite a snob"

(Fountain-Brazeau 130-131). Lota's snobbery shocked and appalled many of Bishop's friends over the years, but was shared by the Brazilian elite.<sup>20</sup>

Bishop's writing in this decade clearly reflects the political views and sexual mobility she encountered at Samambaia. But her portrayals are not static; instead, she continually modifies how she views and how she writes about Brazil in that first decade as she struggles to define "Brazil" for herself and for her audience. The multi-faceted "Brazil" that emerges in her translation of and introduction to *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* is strongly *antigetulista*, but it is also marked by Bishop's increasing discomfort with Lota's involvement in the tumultuous political arena in Rio. Bishop describes the socioeconomic divisions between Lota and her servants as humorous in a way that her *New Yorker* audience would find palatable; I contend in my readings that "Squatter's Children" and "Manuelzinho" are classist portraits of lower-class Brazilians in a way that is uncomfortable for twenty-first century readers. And yet, despite the fact that the upper-class snobbery she learns from Lota is intact in the poems, there are moments when Bishop demonstrates uneasiness with her position in the strict hierarchy of Samambaia's small society. In "The Shampoo," she openly celebrates the sexual mobility her new home allows her. But the intimate, idyllic domestic relationship is tempered and repressed in the later poems about their home, "The Armadillo," "Electric Storm" and "Song for a Rainy Season," based on the constraints she perceived when the *New Yorker* rejected "The Shampoo." And the political tension that is held at bay by the safety of Samambaia is evident in the last poem of that decade, "Song for a Rainy Season." Bishop constructs a new "Brazil" as she mourns the domestic place she and Lota shared, now

being overcome by the political situation which Bishop eventually blamed for the dissolution of their relationship.

### ***Antigetulismo, the República Velha and The Diary of “Helena Morley”***

The “Brazil” that Bishop performs in the texts I examined in Chapter 1 is a reaction to the banana-ized Brazil. Though Bishop does not actively define the country in those three poems, she pushes against her own expectations of Brazil. In the introduction to *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* Bishop defines Brazil for the first time in her published work as a country divided between the upper-class intelligentsia and the delightfully simple, artless and primitive lower-class people. In doing so, she moves past the banana-ized Concept-Brazil, but continues to rely heavily on the tropes of the explorer’s search for the Real Brazil. In many ways, the introduction to the diary records the trip that epitomizes that search for Bishop who travels after years of living in a country and learning the language; it is the antithesis of her quick, “childish” desire for revelation. Instead, using Claude Lévi-Strauss’s ethnographic approach, Bishop backs up her search with evidence and experience.

The lightning-fast changes in the political environment and the collective identity of the Samambaia *antigetulistas* inform many of the editorial choices Bishop makes in the first major work she undertook in her new country, beginning with the choice of the book she translated. *Minha Vida de Menina* was the book recommended by Lota and her friends. Bishop spent four years working on the book written by a young girl in a mining village in Minas Gerais, not far from Ouro Preto, who kept a diary from 1893 to 1895 as

part of a school assignment. The author, Alice Brant (“Helena Morley” was a pseudonym based on Brant’s British heritage) published her diary at the behest of her granddaughters. It became a classic in the Brazilian literary circle in which Bishop moved. Bishop learned about Brazilian culture and Portuguese language through the diary. The *Diary of “Helena Morley”* was foundational in forming the ethical values out of which Bishop translated other Brazilian texts. Both classes are represented in the life of Alice Brant, who was extremely poor during her childhood in the diary but who became part of the Brazilian upper-class elite by the time Bishop met her late in life. Bishop’s introduction and translation establish the influence of Lota’s deeply entrenched views on Brazilian class and politics.

Lota is an active presence in the introduction, particularly in the first section in which Bishop writes about meeting Brant, now a matriarch of a wealthy Brazilian family. Bishop mentions Lota more than she does in almost any other published text, though the nature of her relationship with Lota is masked under the more neutral term “friend.” Bishop and Lota meet Brant and her family through their mutual friendship with Manuel Bandeira. Lota accompanies Bishop “to serve as interpreter because my spoken Portuguese was very limited” (ix). Bishop thanks Lota in the acknowledgments section for her help with the Portuguese: “To my friend Lota de Macedo Soares, who reluctantly but conscientiously went over every word of the translation with me, not once, but several times” (xxxiii). Bishop uses an anecdote about Lota to give insight into the way Brant continued to industriously care for her family; in a visit, Lota discovered Brant darning napkins in an upstairs hall. Brant asked Lota “severely if she didn’t employ her

time on such chores when she was at home” (xi). Lota’s own position as the landowner and employer of a large estate makes the story funnier. If she were just an interpreter, perhaps a middle-class Brazilian, the remark might lose its sharpness. Their roles as women who employ servants make the idea of Brant darning napkins, and encouraging Lota to do so, ironic and humorous.

The character of “Lota” in the introduction is simply helpful and interpretive; a straightforward reading of the introduction makes clear the position of privilege from which Bishop writes, but Lota is not implicated as the source of that position. Bishop describes the “large Cadillac” the Brants drive, complete with a “mulatto chauffeur” who wears “a white yachting cap,” which points to the Brants’ affluence. But Bishop indicates her own point of view in the next sentence: “Cadillac, chauffeur, and white cap are all contemporary Rio fashion” (ix). These status symbols could only be fashionable among the very elite in Rio. Later on that page, in a discussion between Lota and Brant’s daughter, Bishop notes that, “Although they had not met before, very shortly they were identifying and placing each other’s relatives, something that seems to happen in Brazil as quickly as it does in the South of the United States.” The conversation reveals the narrowness of their mutual social circle even as Bishop asserts it to be a more universal Brazilian quality. Knowing the nature of their relationship and their home at Samambaia, many of the evidentiary details that Bishop give about Brazilian culture and people are clearly drawn from Lota and the elite world she shares with the Brants.

Her relationship with Lota also changes the reading of Bishop’s own assertions of her whiteness and her “Northern/Yankee-ness” in relation to the “Brazilian-ness” of her

host and friends. Bishop's categorizations of Brazilians in the introduction carry hints of the Apollonian/Dionysian binaries of the banana-ized Brazil. In the above quotation connecting the South and Brazil, Bishop is clearly a northern outsider obviously delighted by and attracted to the warm family ties of the south and Brazil. The letters to friends which extol Lota's warmth and hospitality undergird her claim in the introduction that Brazilians are universally welcoming: "This warmth and ease in meeting strangers is a Brazilian characteristic especially charming to Nordic visitors" (x). At the same time, her identification of herself with "Nordic" visitors applies the binary of the "North" as reserved, and cold, while those in the South show their "warmth and ease." Her own sense of herself as an outsider in Lota's home highlights the way Bishop describes Brant in her home as an adult. Bishop's description of Brant's "half-English blood" and the way it manifests itself in the "unusual fairness of her skin" and her freckles, as well as her rags-to-riches story in going from "bitter poverty and isolation" to being the matriarch of a large wealthy family, have obvious connections with Bishop's own situation. Bishop displays a subtle affinity for the woman whose poor childhood and pale skin marked her as different from her privileged upper-class Brazilian partner. Like Lota, Brant's husband, referred to in the introduction as Dr. Brant (the title "dr." is used as a courtesy for upper-class men) was well-educated, well-traveled and firmly *antigetulista*: he had been "a lawyer, a journalist, and was five times elected to the National Congress; under the Vargas dictatorship he was exiled and spent five years in France and England. He reads English" and was currently "reading Boswell's Journals" (x). Bishop's audience members who were aware of the true relationship between Lota and Bishop would make

the connection easily; this introduction is one of the few places in which Bishop writes so openly about Lota and her world. In the first section of the introduction, Bishop's understanding of the stakes and contexts within which the diary were written came from Lota, who mediated the Portuguese and the politics for Bishop.

In the second section of the introduction, Bishop switches her tone and tropes. As she travels to Diamantina, Brant's childhood home, Bishop relies on the style of other postwar travel writers and ethnographers who, in journeying out of the cities into rural areas, write about finding the "true" country off the beaten path. The section about Diamantina is written with the breezy generalities that mark the style of her travel writing contemporaries. Like her travel poems, "Arrival at Santos" and "Questions of Travel," Bishop identifies with the tourist-voyeurs in this section more than she does in the part in which she interviews Brant. In Rio, she is Lota's companion as Lota translates for her the language and cultural situation. In Diamantina, Bishop is a seasoned traveler who is well-read in the ethnography and travel writing of the day—she is on firm ground as she identifies and defines a "Brazil" that is at once universally idyllic and specifically Brazilian.

Bishop implicitly links that definition of a particular Brazilian identity to her own understanding of what it means to discover the "true" Brazil. She makes a case in the introduction that the value of Brant's writing should be based on its authenticity rather than its inherent literary artistry. Her sense of the aesthetic and ethical value of the text is derived from the actuality of the events recorded. The fact that "*it happened*," is "the charm and the main point" of *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* (xxiv). Bishop points out

external evidence of the historical events: Richard Francis Burton, the famous Scottish explorer who traveled throughout Brazil once met Alice Brant's father, Felisberto Dayrell. Burton recorded the meeting in his 1869 *Explorations of the Highlands of the Brazil* (xiii). The *Diary of "Helena Morley"* appealed to Bishop because it contained elements of writing she designated as more "literary" in a way that were necessarily artless because the school girl writer could not have been aware of her allusions. In her introduction, Bishop points to these unconscious moments:

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 moving-picture theatre. Certain pages reminded me of more famous and 'literary' ones: Nausicaa doing her laundry on the beach, possible 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 (viii)

Bishop points to the underlying "eternal truth" of the text in a way that makes the scenes universal, in ways she purports could have occurred in any poor, rural, uneducated place, and yet essentially "Brazilian."

Bishop relies on the authenticity of the text to argue throughout the introduction for an essential, inherent Brazilian identity that is found in the text. Monoculture threatens it and Bishop gives several instances of the influx of what Lévi-Strauss calls in *Tristes Tropiques* the "noxious by-products which now contaminate the globe" (38). She shows how the quaintness of the town is marred by the intrusiveness of "modern" inventions.<sup>21</sup> But Bishop displays her concerns with the wit that marks her writing. The



turn-of-the-century clocks in Diamantina that called Helena Morley to evening prayer service have been replaced. When Bishop visits the town, every night at 7:00 “a great noise comes from the loud-speaker over the Cathedral door and reverberates all over town. *Ave Maria, gratia plena*; the town vibrates with it and the light bulbs on the high cross opposite snap into activity” (xvii). These same loudspeakers call the town to mass, but in an awkward juxtaposition of holiness and Western culture, “at five o’clock it was blaring out *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.” The humor in the scene comes from the contrast of the antiquated town listening to the quintessentially American song. Bishop’s asserts that, despite “the Betty Grable film showing at the one cinema, the town has changed very little since the youthful Helena lived there” (xvii). Her humor underlines her pessimism; she gives the sense throughout the introduction that though she is visiting a town which has not been fully engulfed by Western culture yet, inevitably it will be.

Though Bishop claims an essentially Brazilian identity for Diamantina, she also connects it to other “primitive” places to which she has traveled. The comparison may not be direct, but she uses many of the tropes to identify its characteristics that she employed in texts and paintings about other cultures. Her witty awareness of the “local color” moments in Diamantina has a sense of imperialistic or colonial othering inherent in many of her Key West poems, including “Jerónimo’s House,” “Cootchie” or “Songs for a Colored Singer.” The people of Diamantina prefer colorful houses—the one she likes best was “crushed-strawberry pink” with blue accents (xix). The color is an almost exact match to the watercolor painting she made in 1942, called “Merida from the Roof,” in which she sketches the town in Mexico she is visiting, then paints in just a few houses

with bright spots of color, including the pink house on the corner at the center of the painting.<sup>22</sup> There are also indications in the town of a lack of taste and artistry; the churches in the small town are “disappointing, cramped and musty, the Portuguese-style wedding-cake altars crowded with old artificial flowers and incongruously dressed, bewigged saints,” which contrasts with the natural beauty of the town (xvi). The tone of Brant’s writing, the spontaneous, unstudied artlessness of the diary, is similar to the “primitive” art Bishop had written about in her travels in Morocco and North Carolina in the 1930s, in Mexico with the Nerudas and in Haiti with Ernest Hemingway’s wife in the 1940s. As Brett Millier points out, Bishop learned a “romantic, esthetic appreciation of poor people and the ways in which they ‘made do’ on limited resources, especially the ways they made art” (273). Bishop identified with and had a lifelong appreciation for untaught artists, especially painters; she described herself as a “genuine primitive” when discussing her watercolors, according to William Benton, the editor of *Exchanging Hats*, her published book of paintings (xviii). The diary is the first of many times in Brazil when she praised the “artlessness” of found art in the rustic voice of a child or other “primitives.”

Bishop was certainly interested in the book because of the subject matter and unselfconscious artistry; the easy, schoolgirl Portuguese made it an ideal book for her to translate as she was learning the language. It was also a nostalgic text for Bishop personally: The universality of this childhood experience informed and influenced Bishop’s other writing of the time, like “Gwendolyn” and “In the Village.” When Bishop scholars have discussed the diary, it is almost uniformly as a launching place to discuss

her own nostalgic return to her childhood in Nova Scotia.<sup>23</sup> While there is no doubt that the diary was catalytic in Bishop's own writing, the nostalgia of the piece is politically charged in a Brazilian context.

The book is an idealization of the *República Velha* period, which ended with the coup that brought Vargas to power in 1930. The diary is written at the beginning of the period, from 1893 to 1895, just after Dom Pedro II was deposed in 1889. Slavery had been abolished in 1888. Throughout the diary, the relationship between former slaveowners and their former slaves (particularly Alice Brant's grandmother) are presented in an idyllic relationship that mutually benefitted each other. In the diary, *coronelismo* is a benevolent system in which paternalistic (or maternalistic) former slave owners educate, adopt, and genially oversee the lives of their former slaves. The setting, high in the mountains in Minas Gerais, locates the diary in one of the two seats of power under the *café com leite* political system.

Bishop translated a text with similar political and cultural overtones to the "moonlight and magnolias" genre written in the United States during the Reconstruction Era. Like Thomas Nelson Page's *In Ole Virginia* (1887) and other representations that paint the pre-Civil War U.S. South as edenic, *Helena Morley* idealized a time that was highly political and disputed.<sup>24</sup> For *antigetulistas*, the period of *Helena Morley* was a return to their own political Golden Age, a better time destroyed by the Vargas administration. Bishop's romanticization of the diary as "completely authentic" and "giving a marvelous picture of the life of the time" is in line with Lota's political views even if Bishop herself is not aware of the political undertones in the translation (OA 248).

In emphasizing the actuality of the diary, Bishop is making a subtle, if unconscious, political statement about the idyllic nature of the *República Velha*.

Though the introduction was written for the book's publication in 1957, Bishop translated the diary itself at the height of antigetulismo in the three years leading up to Vargas's 1954 suicide. Bishop's letters show how intertwined the political situation is with her translation process and her fear that it will literally and figuratively encroach the borders of Samambaia. She writes introductory letters to friends in New York for Carlos Lacerda and a few sentences later petitions them for help finding a publisher for the diary.<sup>25</sup> Though Bishop did not translate *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* from political motives, she might not have been above capitalizing on the political drama in securing a publisher for the book. Just days after Vargas's death in an August 1954 letter to Austin Olney, her editor at Houghton Mifflin, Bishop wrote:

I was in Rio really desperately ill when the political upheaval took place. Carlos Lacerda, of whom you have probably read now, just happens to be one of my best friends and a neighbor here. The friend I am staying with is also involved politically, so there has been little time to think of 'work,' as I'm sure you can imagine. I am in my studio in the country now, and incredible as it seems to me, with a .22 at my side. (Please do *not* repeat this. Brazil has been very good to me.) (OA 299).

The Brazil that had "been very good to her" was one she and Lota both wanted to represent to the idyllic events in the diary, but the subject matter was not as compelling to a U.S. audience as it was to a Brazilian one. Though she compared the diary to Anne Frank's in the introduction and her letters, Bishop was aware that the "forced maturity and closed atmosphere" of Frank's diary were "tragically different" from the circumstances of Brant's "classical sunlight and simplicity" (viii). The narrative structure

of the diary was much less urgent or compelling than Frank's text, especially for a U.S. audience familiar with the historical context of the Nazi Holocaust. Perhaps by writing her most dramatic letter from that time, containing the image of herself sitting in her studio in the country with a gun by her side, to a new editor, she hoped to increase the dramatic sense of the text itself. By documenting the depth of her uncertainty about the political situation, Bishop might also have been hoping to highlight the diary with its nostalgic return to a better time.

Though Bishop did not theorize her own translation process, she privileged the "literally true" in her poetry and translations.<sup>26</sup> The methodical, painstaking way that Bishop translated the diary informed her style of translating Portuguese from that point forward; she brought poems or texts into English that she could translate faithfully and therefore, in her viewpoint, as accurately as possible. The best criticism of the translation is Bishop's own in a 26 January 1956 letter she writes Pearl Kazin: "I've tried to make it sound 'natural,' too, and probably sometimes I haven't" (*OA* 313). Despite her own self-deprecating dismissal, the tone of her translation maintains the "natural" conversational feel from the original Portuguese. Her verb choices reflect her desire to maintain the colloquial tone, "For example, I've usually put 'doesn't,' 'isn't,' etc.; 'he's'—or 'she's going to,' etc.—and also to work in the English continuing present or whatever it's called—'she keeps doing so & so'—whenever I thought it was the right translation" (*OA* 313). Bishop's translation is at times exactly literal: she translates the Portuguese term "pretinha" as the offensive "nigger" (*Minha Vida* 23, *Helena Morley* 19). In Portuguese, "pretinha" can be used affectionately, and not just among Afro-Brazilians, in a way that

transcends the offensive connotations and racial limitations of “nigger.” Bishop’s translation of the word into English loses the ease of the sense in Portuguese and instead reifies the class divisions; terms like “dear” or “honey” might have kept the colloquial endearing feel of the sense in Portuguese. Or keeping the word in Portuguese (like she does “coitado”) might have increased the foreign feel. Either way, “nigger” for “pretinha” seems like a poor choice. Bishop also footnotes phrases she cannot translate because the phrases are idiomatic, like “Eu fui com o coração pequeno como uma noz,” literally “I had a heart as small as a nut” (*MV* 189, *HM* 195). For the rest of her time in Brazil, Portuguese phrases from *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* cropped up in her letters to friends. For instance, the use of the word “coitado” (poor thing) provides the same local color feel in her letters and in her Time-Life *Brazil* as when she left the word untranslated in the dialogue of *The Diary of “Helena Morley.”* Kazin apparently thought there were too many “coitados” in the version she read in 1956; even if she took out “every other one” as Bishop instructed her, it is still the word Bishop most often left in Portuguese. Bishop also left terms like “chácara” [farm] or “jaboticabas” [a type of fruit] to give an exotic sense to the text. The exoticization of the rural domestic situation in Bishop’s English text reads jarringly at times. Without the Portuguese words and phrases, Bishop’s translation becomes a fairly universally rural provincial experience, which might be inevitable in a translation of a text in a colloquial tone since the only way to bring it fully into English is to invoke other “folksy” connotations not inherent in the original text.

The translation informed and confirmed Bishop’s portrayals of poor Brazilians and their interactions with their upper-class employers and landlords. The poor people in

the *Diary*, like the poor servants in Lota's coronel home, were scrappy, independent, innovative and content. They knew their place and it was not a bad one. In an entry toward the end of the diary, Brant records the death of "grandma's last African Negro" whose affection for her was so strong "that when in I realized it I couldn't help but return it" (*HM* 263). Joaquim Angola (named for the region in Africa from which he was taken) is one of the many slaves who, after their release from slavery in 1888, chose to stay with Brant's grandmother because of their devotion to her. Manuelzinho and his family served the Macedo Soares family for at least three generations, their quirks and characteristics becoming a funny part of family lore. Though Brant's branch of the family is poor, her grandfather was an English doctor and their family's educational capabilities, which Brant attributes to her European blood, are a constant source of pride for the young girl. She mourns the uneducability of more "primitive" people, like Sía Germana and Seu Ferreira who, in their backwardness, tried to cure their son's eye problems with rose-water until he was blind past the point of medical intervention (*HM* 210-211). Bishop's letters and poems are filled with anecdotes about the "backwardness" of Brazilians, especially the poor, who cannot or stubbornly will not learn better. The rich Brazilians in the diary as well as in Lota's home infantilize the lower-class in condescending and humorous ways that are reified by the terms with which Alice Brant describes the poor and black people in her own life.

The diary also reifies the way in which rich women objectify poor children. Throughout the narrative, Brant recounts the ways her aunts and grandmother "adopt" the babies of their former slaves like other rich women might take in a lap dog. They refer to

their charges as “crioulinhos,” which Bishop translates as “pickaninny” (*MV* 143). Bishop translates the passage as “the weakness grandma and Dindinha have for always having a pickaninny around to bring up and love, as if it were white. Each of them always has one” (*HM* 147). The objectification of the “pickaninny” babies is inherent in Bishop’s attitude to the poor children in Lota’s circle. There are several children in the years of their relationship that Lota and Bishop became involved with. Lota “adopted” a son, Kylso, a boy with medical problems that she “saved” from his poor parents by taking him in. By the time Bishop arrived, Kylso was grown and married; his wife and young children are the subject of many of Bishop’s letters. The Afro-Brazilian cook’s baby was named after Elizabeth. Bishop liked to have the baby Betty (pronounced “Bettchy”) “brought to her with her breakfast tray each morning at 7:30” (Millier 265). Lota and Bishop toyed with the idea of “adopting” Betty and they spent a great deal of time instructing the cook and gardener in the correct, Dr. Spock-inspired methods with which to raise the child, but eventually she left when her parents moved from Samambaia in 1960. Like the aunts and grandmother in the *Diary*, Bishop and Lota involved themselves with lower-class children of a different ethnicity from a position of power and privilege: the children were not adopted, as Mary Stearns Morse’s four children were, but fostered in ways that reflected Lota’s view of their proper place in the hierarchy of the household. These attitudes underscore Bishop’s poems about the poor, particularly “Squatter’s Children” and “Manuelzinho.”

Translating the diary solidified the social and political structures Bishop found on Lota’s farm.<sup>27</sup> In Samambaia, the poor knew their place. Lota oversaw their lives with a



benevolent power that was a throwback to the *coronelismo* of the *República Velha*.<sup>28</sup> In a letter to May Swenson (which was left out of *One Art*) Bishop writes in overt terms about the division between the rich and poor. The letter refers to an earlier correspondence in which Swenson was offended that Lota and Bishop had hoped the premature baby of some of Lota's servants would die rather than face a poverty-stricken life:

The parents are so ignorant, savage, suspicious, etc that now they are blaming us and it is very unpleasant, naturally, but exactly what one has to contend with (and the US nation has to contend with, too) when dealing with backward people who are incapable of any of the more highly refined emotions. We've been through it for years with Lota's adopted son, for example. It seems to take generations of educations for anyone to feel trust in anyone else—and gratitude is rare even among the most highly educated, as I'm sure you must know as well as I do by now... We have been through this kind of thing so many times in the past ten years—Lota all her life.—If you say, 'You must eat vegetables, you know'—they leave, because they think you're forbidding them to eat meat—their luxury article—and so on. It is why one has serious doubts about the Peace Corps! (qtd. in Millier 272-273).

This letter, among others, reveals the depth of Bishop's opinions of the strong differences between upper-classes and the "backward people who are incapable of any of the more highly refined emotions." Despite her occasional resistance of the oligarchic caste system in Samambaia, in the introduction and translation of *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* Bishop shared Lota's views about the poor in Brazil.

Her poems about Samambaia reveal this attitude, especially "Squatter's Children" and "Manuelzinho," and remain remarkably consistent in their portrayals of rich and poor. However, the poems in which she mentions Lota and their domestic place change significantly over her first decade in Brazil as Bishop struggled with issues of representation. To play off one of her well-known phrases, which she wrote to Lowell when expressing her anxiety about his translation strategies, Bishop wasn't sure she "how

*free* one could be.” After the introduction to *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* and “The Shampoo,” the later poems about Samambaia shift tremendously away from Lota as the center of her domestic poems to an unspoken presence. With a couple of significant exceptions, in Bishop’s published texts about Brazil for the rest of her life, Lota is mentioned glancingly as a “friend” or remains hidden as part of the “we” who observe the idiosyncrasies of their life in Samambaia. Bishop’s texts still center upon Lota and her views on Brazilian people and politics, but Lota herself disappears from print. And, as I will demonstrate, the threats in her text change as well. In the introduction to the diary, Bishop is concerned about the impending arrival of Western culture in rural Brazil with all of its “noxious byproducts” that threatens an essentialized Real Brazil. In her later poems, the political situation in Brazil looms just outside of the idyllic natural domestic setting in Samambaia that threatens their subaltern lesbian place.

### **“Brazil/You’re in New York”: Lota and Bishop’s *New Yorker* Audience<sup>29</sup>**

In those years, Bishop published six poems about Samambaia. Like “The Shampoo,” Bishop’s three love poems, “Electrical Storm,” “The Armadillo,” and “Song for the Rainy Season,” explore her relationship with Lota and the exotic Brazilian landscape in which their home is set. Her two published poems about the lower-class Brazilians, “Squatter’s Children” and “Manuelzinho,” rely on her understanding of the social and political context in their small society. But in each of these poems, Bishop’s relationship with her audience, particularly through her relationship with the *New Yorker* and the editors’ explicit and implicit expectations, inform how she portrays Brazil.

The language in “The Shampoo” is slow and intimate. As she often does in her poetry, Bishop begins the first stanza by focusing on the setting of the poem before moving into the events of the poem itself. Rather than examining the jungle or the greenery that surrounds their location in Samambaia, as in several of her other poems about nature in Brazil, Bishop focuses on “The still explosions on the rocks,” where “the lichens, grow / by spreading, gray, concentric shock.” By using “gray” and “shocks,” the line anticipates the third stanza in which Bishop points to the gray in Lota’s hair. Bishop plays with the femininity of the love scene--the lichens are circular, like the moon, both symbols of womanhood and female sexuality. Their love is new in comparison to the timelessness of the lichens growing on the rocks; in their shared memories, in the short time they have been coming to this spot, “they have not changed.” In introducing Lota only using “our,” Bishop does not indicate her gender, but the feminine imagery of the first stanza indicates that she is a woman, a fact that becomes apparent by the third stanza.

In the second stanza, Bishop focuses more specifically on Lota herself and the happy surprise of their romance. Bishop continues the celestial metaphor she began in the first stanza; the permanence of their love is attested to by the fact that “the heavens will attend / as long on us.” The “And” of that first line indicates that the second stanza is a continuation of the first stanza in which the lichens have remained unchanged and unmoving, permanent markers discovered by their relatively young love affair. In the third line, Bishop indicates that Lota is not just the subject of the poem, she is also the audience by addressing her in the second person. Her usage of the term “dear friend”

seems to play off of the way in many of her letters and texts she refers to Lota as a “friend.” But the intimacy of the poem makes the word a euphemism. Bishop intentionally and affectionately identifies the imperfections in Lota’s personality as the cause of the actions she does not give in detail, but glosses over with a figurative wink and nod. Bishop frames their love affair, implied by the colloquial “look what happens,” on the fact of Lota being “precipitate and pragmatical.” The line originally read “demanding and too voluble” and Bishop keeps the rapidity and capriciousness of “voluble” while toning down the passion by describing Lota less as headstrong and more as helter-skelter. In her 2 July 1952 letter about the poem, Katharine White criticized this form as “a personal poem in which you do not seem to have described the occasion involved. At least it does not seem to us that you have conveyed it all; for instance, what was the dear friend too demanding and too voluble about?” (*Elizabeth Bishop and the New Yorker* 113). But the stanza is not about a specific occasion but ongoing actions or traits. Lota is not *being* precipitate or pragmatic (or demanding or voluble) in a particular moment: these are qualities of her personality.

In addition to her teasing tone in pointing to the imperfections of her lover, Bishop includes herself in the joke, alluding to the age at which they have finally found love at the witty end of the second stanza: “Time is / nothing if not amenable.” In a 25 April 1953 letter to Pearl Kazin, written just two months before submitting this poem to the *New Yorker*, Bishop writes about her domestic bliss in Samambaia: “This place is *wonderful*, Pearl. I just spend too much time in looking at it and not working enough. I only hope you don’t have to get to be forty-two before you feel so at home” (*OA* 262).

Though she writes with the heady joy of a young speaker, Bishop glories in the fact that theirs is a middle-aged love affair.

The third stanza clarifies and locates the poem. The lichens in the first stanza could have been on any rock near any field; instead, the ready location of the basin in the last two lines indicates that the lichen-covered rocks are near a house. And the “shooting stars in your black hair” not only continues the celestial imagery of the first two stanzas, it indicates Lota’s age. Bishop’s teasing and proprietary tone shows the intimacy of their relationship. Lota is clearly not just the “dear friend” from the third stanza, but the lover Bishop sensually commands, after the suggestive pause of an em-dash, to “—Come.” The sensuality of the act of washing Lota’s hair is underscored by the manner in which Bishop washes it, in a basin that has been in the home long enough to become “battered.” The celestial imagery in the poem culminates in the “big tin basin, / battered and shiny like the moon.” The moon is not unattainable and perfect but a well-used part of everyday life. Yet in the context of the poem, the basin, like Lota, is more beautiful for its imperfections and age. Bishop’s poem “The Shampoo” celebrates the sides of Lota that would seem to make her less attractive by both of their culture’s values—her age and her strong personality. She resists the trope of love poems to soften the lover, focusing instead on the quirks, oddities and age of her partner.

The imagery of her poem is an overt celebration of homosexual love. For a poet who famously liked “closets, closets and more closets,” “The Shampoo” is one of only a handful of her poems in which she comfortably and relatively openly writes from a lesbian viewpoint.<sup>30</sup> There are a few other poems in her unpublished fragments in which

she is as open about her sexuality, all published for the first time in *Edgar Allan Poe and the Juke-Box*. In “Foreign-Domestic,” Bishop addresses a poem to Lota that is a snapshot of a casual moment in their home, “From where I’m sitting I can see / across the hallway in your room...” (117). She gently pokes fun of Lota’s accent in the first line, “I listen to the sweet ‘eye-fee’” (probably referring to the hi-fi they bought in New York on their 1957 trip). Bishop, seeing that Lota has not moved her “two bare feet upon the bed, / arranged as if someone is dead,” gets up to check, only to find Lota reading a “detective book.” The sweetness of the next stanza, “So that’s all right. I settle back” as she listens to Vivaldi on the record player, is the type of cozy language that she employs in “The Shampoo.” Two later poems are clearly sexual but they are not addressed to Lota. “Dear my compass” was written and illustrated for Lilli Correia de Araújo. The final stanza is among the most suggestive in Bishop’s poetry: “Cold as it is, we’d / go to bed, dear, / early, but never / to keep warm” (140).<sup>31</sup> In “Vague Poem (Vaguely Love Poem),” much like the orgasmic lichens of “The Shampoo,” Bishop connects rocks and sexuality through the association of the phrase “rose-rock, rock-rose” with her partner’s sexuality and the “even darker, accurate, rose of sex—” (153). And in the haunting “Breakfast Song,” one of her most candid unpublished poems, Bishop celebrates the imperfections of her lover, probably Alice Methfessel, just as she praised Lota’s idiosyncrasies in “The Shampoo”—“I kiss your funny face, / your coffee-flavored mouth” (158). While in “The Shampoo” Bishop exults in the surprise of a middle-aged love affair, the passing of time provides the anxiety for “Breakfast Song” as she faces her old age in comparison to her much-younger lover. None of these poems were ever published, however; with the

exception of “The Shampoo,” Bishop repressed her sexuality and her eroticism, writing them only in notebooks that perhaps she never intended to see the light of day.<sup>32</sup>

The rejection of “The Shampoo” by the *New Yorker*, which I mentioned in chapter 1, altered Bishop’s subsequent representations of her relationship with Lota and their home in Samambaia. Following “Questions of Travel,” Bishop submitted two poems about Lota’s relationship with her tenant farmers to the magazine. “Squatter’s Children” and “Manuelzinho” retain the political context of the *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* even as the poems are written to connect with Bishop’s *New Yorker* audience. Her underlying premise in these two poems is that Lota and the other upper-class elite were no different from the cosmopolitan *New Yorker* audience. She performs a relationship between rich and poor using *New Yorker* versions of domesticity, thus gently erasing her own racial and queer differences in order to make this argument. The italicized lines that “peg” the poem locate the speaker and situation in “Manuelzinho”: “*Brazil. A friend of the writer is speaking.*” Once again, her relationship with Lota is concealed by the word “friend.” The “Brazil” that emerges in this poem and “Squatter’s Children” is homey, cosmopolitan, well-read and well-traveled, populated with lower-class characters who serve as backdrops upon which the rich rehearse their anxieties.

Bishop’s *New Yorker* audience did not recognize many of the social and political nuances playing out in the two poems. Her letters show that she assumed some knowledge on the part of her well-informed readers (Lacerda’s name would have been familiar to them, and certainly Vargas’s) but many of the political nuances were lost on them. Nor did she desire to engage with politics overtly; as many Bishop scholars have

shown, her poetry had political undertones, but she generally stopped short of explicit political engagement in her published poems.<sup>33</sup> In representing the political and social issues in Brazil in the early 1950s, Bishop portrayed social situations that were outside the scope of her U.S. audience's experience.

Both poems are about Manuelzinho and his family; he is the "squatter" whose children Bishop observes. The critical misreading of the word "squatter" by many Bishop scholars exemplifies how easily a U.S. audience misses the Brazilian social context. The Brazilian context of Manuelzinho's precarious position on the land does not carry the same meaning as it does in a U.S. context. Kim Fortuny and Bonnie Costello frequently refer to Manuelzinho as a "fugitive," a term that might make sense from the U.S. reading of a "squatter" as a usurper who journeys to a tract of land, sets up a home and acquires legal rights after several years.<sup>34</sup> In the context of these poems, however, even without understanding the Brazilian context, "fugitive" makes little sense since the speaker is frustrated with acquiring Manuelzinho with the land; his father and grandfather forged the paths he treads. Instead, Bishop's Brazilian translator Paulo Henriques Britto uses two Portuguese terms to translate "squatter."<sup>35</sup> He titles "Squatter's Children," "Filhos de Posseiros." "Posseiro," like a squatter, has no legal right to the land on which he lives. In "Manuelzinho," Britto changes "half squatter" to "rendeiro," or "tenant farmer." The term in Portuguese has all of the connotations of the term in English, a farmer whose family has worked a farm for generations but whose legal rights are limited. The European feudal system is a closer example of the *coronelismo* set-up of Samambaia than the Wild West connotation many Bishop scholars read into "squatter." Betsy Erkkila



grasps this relationship, describing the poem as expressing “the affectionate, familial, hereditary, and strained relations between landlord and tenant” (299). The frustration that the speaker feels is not because Manuelzinho has shown up on her land uninvited and unannounced but because he has been living on the land and she has no choice in the matter. In the poem and in the actual situation, Lota holds all of the power and she keeps Manuelzinho on because he amuses her.<sup>36</sup> In using the word “squatter,” Bishop is coming down on the side of the landowners whose land is being taken away rather than expressing sympathy with the poor who do not have the right for land. Instead, Bishop wrote into “Squatter’s Children” and “Manuelzinho” the contradictory desires Mary F. Corey identifies in the *New Yorker* audience: Bishop’s personas view the poor from a comfortable, leisurely distance and recognize social issues without advocating specific actions or solutions. For the tourist poet who can afford to travel to the observed site and the time to record the new experience, leisure is an integral part of the author’s distance; the ability to be relaxed and observe the interactions between rich and poor implies socioeconomic mobility and freedom from pressing engagements.

“Manuelzinho” is written in Lota’s voice; the sense of “speaking through each other” conflates Lota’s and Bishop’s words and viewpoints.<sup>37</sup> “Lota’s” voice is dripping with the iconoclastic *New Yorker* humor. Her racial and socioeconomic issues, namely that her “help” is ignorant and funny, matches the tone of the *New Yorker* pieces in the 1950s. From its inception, the editors at the *New Yorker* considered “light verse,” especially from their serious poets, a critical part of the magazine.<sup>38</sup> Through stories, the “Talk of the Town” section, the cartoons and poetry, the *New Yorker* cultivated a

sophisticated, urbane, witty, “insider” humor. As Judith Yaross Lee argues, the *New Yorker*’s humor contributed to its strong sense of a “peer society” that held its own conventions and assumed who was “in” and who, like Jews, Catholics, or African-Americans, were “out” (53). Though the magazine often satirized racism, the cartoons consistently racialized all “others” as black in the “typically American way” (Lee 52). Much of “Lota’s” humor in “Manuelzinho” is written to an insider peer society who shares the frustrations and hilarities of trying to find good “help.”

The humor in the poem is supplied by infantilizing and racializing Manuelzinho. The diminutive “-inho” is like “-ito” in Spanish; Manuel was probably called “Little Manuel” to distinguish him from an older or larger Manuel, perhaps his father or even an older neighbor, cousin or friend. Many Brazilians carry the diminutive form of their names or a silly nickname (like “Toy,” “Zebra,” or “Matchstick,” some of my Brazilian friends) long after the context of that nickname has passed. So even though Little Manuel may no longer need to separate himself from Big Manuel, still those who have known him for his life will continue to call him by a childish nickname. Though he is “white” and old enough (“in your thirties now”) to know better, still, “you don’t; or you won’t; or you can’t/ get the idea through your brain” (CP 96).<sup>39</sup> In each of these assertions, “Lota” is superior because she does, will or can understand him while he cannot her. Bishop’s Brazilian persona, “Lota,” aligns herself with the exacerbated and amused upper class using markers of whiteness to describe herself.<sup>40</sup> The sarcastic lilt to the line, with the underlying sub-text questioning his race, implies that he should be “other,” that he acts

how “those” people act. Manuelzinho is racialized as “the world’s worst gardener since Cain.” He is “Lota’s” personal white woman’s “burden.”

“Lota’s” humorous voice and the racialized relationship between “mistress” and “help” echoes the cover of the 28 October 1950 issue of the *New Yorker* magazine, which Corey examines in her overview of racial relationships in *New Yorker*. The cover shows an African-American maid washing dishes in an upper-class kitchen. She is plump, wears a blue maid’s uniform, and has her hair pulled back neatly. She is almost part of the scenery, dark like the wooden cabinetry, evergreen walls, and the black-and-white tiled floors. The only spots of white in the scene are the maid’s apron and shoes, an off-white kitchen table, and the white child dressed like a ghost who watches the maid from the doorway to the kitchen. The white child is the point of interest and the maid is presumably a stable and familiar part of her upper-class childhood. Corey situates the cover in its sociohistorical moment:

To step into the corner of the postwar world in which the black maid and her ghostly charge are easily recognizable players in a familiar household scenario is to enter a very particular time and place in midcentury American culture. Like a diorama in a natural history museum, this *New Yorker* cover is a perfect showcase in which the hallmarks of the period have been miniaturized and frozen in time (ix).

Manuelzinho and Lota are “easily recognizable players” in both a U.S. and a Brazilian upper-class context. Midcentury *New Yorker* readers might have understood “Lota’s” “whiff of noblesse oblige” and considered her aristocratic arrogance normative, or at least just offensive enough to be funny. Like other *New Yorker* light verse, when later printed as part of Bishop’s oeuvre, “this humor was effectively lost” (Lee 13). The mildly offensive humor in the poem depends on the *New Yorker* context.

Bishop uses the trope of the noble savage in her depiction of Manuelzinho. She relies on the trope primarily for comic effect in this poem, unlike other poems about Others with mystic or surreal powers, like “The Riverman” or “The Man-Moth.” “Lota” subverts the magical or metaphysical qualities of a noble savage as she berates Manuelzinho. He turns her orderly, expensive “imported, guaranteed” seeds into magical, superstitious vegetables: “a mystic three-legged carrot, or a pumpkin ‘bigger than the baby’” (CP 96). Often his mysticism is unexplained, just recorded as part of his unknowing eccentricity: “You starve / your horse and yourself / your dogs and family. / Among endless variety, / you eat boiled cabbage stalks” (CP 97) She paints Manuelzinho as a fairy gardener:

And once I yelled at you  
so loud to hurry up  
and fetch me those potatoes  
your holey hat flew off,  
you jumped out of your clogs,  
leaving three objects arranged  
in a triangle at my feet,  
as if you’d been a gardener  
in a fairy tale all this time  
and at the word ‘potatoes’  
had vanished to take up your work  
of fairy prince somewhere (CP 97)

Even the description of him as a fairy-tale gardener fits more with a bilingual or European-educated audience than it does with a traditional Brazilian one. A more Brazilian reference might have been to refer to Manuelzinho as Saci-pererê, the Brazilian folkloric character featured in the stories of José Bento Renato Monteiro Lobato, who wrote the *Sítio do picapau amarelo* books. In the stories, Saci-pererê is a one-legged Afro-Brazilian boy who hops through the forest making mischief. He is the typical

trickster in Brazilian folklore. Instead, “Lota,” through Bishop’s interpretation, uses Northern fairy tale references that sound more like the Brothers Grimm than Monteiro Lobato. There is an whimsical, fairy-tale atmosphere to the poem that seems to be outside of “Lota’s” voice, connecting it with more northern literary tradition.

Bishop as the outsider/observer gives a touch of pathos to Manuelzinho that counteracts “Lota’s” ridicule. By pushing “Lota’s” voice, with its tone of a hostess telling an often-repeated anecdote at a dinner party, to the extreme, Bishop makes Manuelzinho sympathetic as well as ridiculous. Both landowner and worker are caricatured in the piece. Affection and frustration are mixed in “Lota’s” exasperated exaggerations: In the first stanza, his gardens “ravish” her eyes with his mixing of “silver cabbages/ with red carnations, and lettuces” with “alyssium” (*CP* 96). The inserted italics and exclamation marks—in the third stanza, ““I don’t think he’s *dead*,”” “you go and hire a *bus*,” “you pray for me every night!”—give emphasis to the story (*CP* 97). There are witty double entendres like “holey hat” or a donkey named “Formoso” (“elegant” or “beautiful” in Portuguese), the reference to Manuelzinho as “Klorophyll Kid,” that a sophisticated, bilingual audience might catch. The fourth stanza begins with the line that sums up the stories recorded in the poems: “The strangest things happen, to you.” In this stanza, “Lota’s” story falls flat, whether that is Bishop’s intention or not. The story that is meant to be humorous about how Manuelzinho won’t accept his father’s death (“a superior old man”) repeats a few lines in Manuelzinho’s voice: ““I look at him. He’s cold./ They’re burying him today./ But you know, I don’t think he’s *dead*”” (*CP* 97). The speaker’s voice is dripping with scorn as she emphasizes the ridiculousness of the servant who

won't recognize the simple fact that his father has died. But the sadness of a son losing his father seems to come through, undermining the speaker's cynical tone.

The poem does more than connect with Bishop's upper-class audience, it captures an *antigetulista* moment "frozen in time." "Lota's" sense that she "can't endure it another minute," sitting "indoors, beside the stove" and "reading a book" while she watches Manuelzinho "trotting, light, on bare feet, / up the steep paths you have made--/or your father and grandfather made--/all over my property" is a portrait of a rich, comfortable, *coronelista* landowner watching, with patronizing irritation, one of the "poor" trying to figuratively and politically take away her land. "Lota's" frustration with Manuelzinho is both personal and political. In the fifth stanza, his accounts anger her:

Or, briskly, you come to settle  
what we call our "accounts,"  
with two old copybooks...  
Immediate confusion.  
You've left out the decimal points.  
Your columns stagger,  
honeycombed with zeros.  
You whisper conspiratorially;  
the numbers mount to millions.  
Account books? They are Dream Books.  
In the kitchen we dream together  
how the meek shall inherit the earth—  
or several acres of mine (*CP* 98)

The line would have been read by Bishop's *New Yorker* audience the way it has been read by Bishop critics, as referring to Manuelzinho's ignorant math skills and his desire to trick her out of her income. Within the Brazilian political context of the time, the exchange was politically charged. The columns "honeycombed with zeros" reflect not just the ignorance of Manuelzinho, but the national inflation of the cruzeiro. Inflation had

serious implications for Lota's wealth and lifestyle; in a 5 February 1954 letter to the Barkers, Bishop writes "The cruzeiro here took a sudden and awful plunge, a real inflation, and Lota of course just doesn't know what to do" (*OA* 283). Manuelzinho represents the "poor" whose political party has complicated "Lota's" economic circumstances immensely. The Brazilian context makes their meeting to "settle their accounts" a political double entendre for "Lota" and Manuelzinho as representatives of two different sides of the political divide. The religious reference, "the meek shall inherit the earth," refers not just to Manuelzinho's status as a squatter on her property, but the political party made up of the "people" who are figuratively infringing on Lota's family land.

In "Manuelzinho," by speaking in Lota's voice, Bishop locates herself in the action of the poem. In "Squatter's Children," Bishop writes with a similar voice to "Arrival at Santos" and "Questions of Travel." The speaker does not relax into the intimacy of the later Samambaia poems; her removal from the scene is that of a touristic voyeur, not a domestic partner.<sup>41</sup> As it does in her tourist poems, Bishop uses distance as a defamiliarizing tool with which she frames literal and figurative questions about the children and their situation. Unlike the insider speaker in "Manuelzinho," the speaker in "Squatter's Children" has the outside position and observational tactics of the tourist poems, though without the querulous tone. She is recording the children, not evaluating her right to watch them; Bishop has settled into her role as an expatriate. The distance from which the persona watches the "specklike" children playing on a "specklike" hill is emphasized by the repetition of the word in the first stanza (*CP* 95). The sense of

discovering a fundamentally Real Brazilian moment underlines the utopian language, however. In the edenic scene, the girl and boy, “wade / gigantic waves of light and shade,” complete with a “dancing yellow” pup. The “sun’s suspended eye / blinks casually,” deistically and approvingly observing their environment. The fragility of their place is threatened in the last line by the pressure of clouds “piling up.” The innocent poor, represented by the tiny, fragile children, are at the center of a storm moving quickly on the horizon. Because of the persona’s distance, she cannot help them even as she notices the storm gathering overhead.

Bishop presents the social structures at play in caricatured and exaggerated terms. Unlike the verdant and protective mountains of Bishop’s later poems, these “unbreathing” hills are as “sad and harsh” as the mountains Bishop describes in the first stanza of “Arrival at Santos” (*CP* 89). The “children play at digging holes,” but the “ground is hard” and unworkable. The children attempt to till the land; the tools of their father’s labor are too heavy for them. Bishop expresses their difficulty in short monosyllabic words: “The ground is hard; they try to use” a broken mattock. The line ends with harsh onomatopoeia—“It drops and clangs.” The children, seemingly indifferent to the cruelty of the landscape, respond with “laughter” which “spreads / effulgence in the thunderheads.” Their laughter is radiant against the dark storm. Their naiveté could be inspiring, oblivious or courageous.

The pressure of the situation builds in the first two stanzas of the poem, supported by the dissonance of the slant rhymes: “house/holes,” “use/tools,” “haft/lift,” “spreads/thunderheads.” The rhythm leads to the heavy threat of that last word, which



then quickly diminishes in the third stanza by following the enjambed “thunderheads” with “Weak.” The ominous storm with which Bishop ends the first and second stanzas finally breaks in the third stanza. But the menace of the storm is undercut immediately: the lightning is like “weak flashes of inquiry” and the thunder as non-threatening “as is the puppy’s bark.” For the *New Yorker* audience, the poem appeared vaguely supportive of the poor, the threats general and undercut. Within Bishop’s sociohistorical moment, however, any description of the poor was laden with meaning.

If the children are the metaphorical center of a political storm, Bishop characterizes the rhetoric that threatens their removal, whether it be the personal rhetoric Lota uses in “Manuelzinho” or the national rhetoric against Vargas’s positions, as weak and repetitious. The poor, at least, do not seem to heed the words that rain down on them; instead, in their unauthorized and improbably “little, soluble, unwarrantable ark” they allow the rhetoric to pass over them. The words are as indistinguishable and repetitious as the personified “rain” whose “reply / consists of echolalia.” In this description, Bishop briefly aligns herself with the poor; the Portuguese political rhetoric sound like gibberish to her English-hearing ear, the repeated words like rain, all sound and no meaning. The only interruption the children hear is “Mother’s voice, ugly as sin.” She “keeps calling” because she is either unwilling or unable to compel them to come inside. Instead, the children exultantly or ignorantly remain outside in the storm, like their parents whose house is perched illegally on a hill that is not theirs, blatantly within sight of the landowner’s home.

Despite her sympathetic portrayal of the children, the resolution of the social situation is outside of Bishop's purview. In the last stanza, she speaks directly to the children whose actions she both questions and grudgingly respects. The poem implies that political storms come and go, but the resilience of the "people" lies in their ability to respond in a gutsy, deliberate fashion against expectations or social conventions. Manuelzinho's children play throughout the storm and at the end of it, "stand among / the mansions they may choose," which could be any of the hills they would like to live on whether or not they have the legal rights. The "rooms of falling rain" contain the rights they claim, whimsical "soggy documents" that do not carry any legal weight. Bishop does not advocate a solution to the political tension in the poem, though she clearly does not think the situation will be resolved by the political rhetoric. Instead, the storm will slide beneath the "muddy shoes" of the poor, who will "stand," and frolic on land they do not own. From her comfortable vantage point, Bishop makes her audience aware of the social plight of the poor on a hillside in Brazil, close enough to enable them to feel connected and yet far enough away to rule out any actionable response.<sup>42</sup>

### **Samambaia, the Nurturing and Threatened Place**

The Samambaia poems met her audience's expectations of Brazil in one of two ways: "Squatter's Children" and "Manuelzinho" fit into Corey's assertions that the audience was interested in being made conscious of "social ills." In "The Armadillo," "Electrical Storm" and "Song for a Rainy Season," Bishop also created a privileged domestic situation of comfort and ease on terms that were familiar to her audience as she

erased the “queerness” of her own domestic situation. In these poems, Bishop condenses her relationship with Lota to short verb phrases: “We saw,” “we live,” and “We got up” respectively (*CP* 103, 101, 100). The inclusive “we” draws in her readers, but there are no indicators that “we” are two women. That she is describing an intimate domestic relationship is obvious by the suggestive circumstances (all three reference a shared bed), but the vague “we” could refer to a heterosexual couple. Even Tobias the cat is mentioned by name in “Electrical Storm,” his reaction to the thunder storm thoroughly chronicled. But after the response from her editors about “The Shampoo,” Lota lies just outside of the scope of the Samambaia love poems.

Though she changes the tone and tenor of the later poems, Bishop retains the natural setting from “The Shampoo.” From the beginning, Bishop was enchanted by the landscape around Samambaia. Her letters are full of delighted descriptions of the mountains and the verdant forest: the “unbelievably impractical” scenery, with the “dream-combination of plant & animal life” growing on the “wild mountains” created a haven that was “very very quiet” as well as “beautiful and strange.”<sup>43</sup> Lota’s lifelong friend, Elizabeth Leão, writes that, for Bishop, “Samambaia foi para ela uma espécie de Shangrilá, um paraíso no Brasil” [Samambaia was a type of Shangri-La, a paradise in Brazil] (qtd. in Nogueira 121).<sup>44</sup> Bishop turns the natural setting into utopia in “Brazil, January 1, 1502.” But in the love poems, the imperfections and the well-known quirkiness of the natural setting is more highly praised than the beauty of the surroundings themselves. As Bishop rendered her love for Lota by praising her imperfections in “The Shampoo,” so she renders her love for Samambaia by focusing on

the odd details that make the place home. In a 12 October 1952 letter to the Barkers, she attempts to explain her inexplicable happiness: “we go to bed to read at 9:30, surrounded by oil lamps, dogs, moths, mice, bloodsucking bats, etc. I like it so much that I keep thinking I have died and gone to heaven, completely undeservedly” (*OA* 249). In letters written on her arrival as well as decades after she left, Bishop expressed over and over how her home at Samambaia, with the vast variety of exotic animals and luxurious greenery, even the spotty electricity, the remote location and the limited society, was the place in which she was the happiest.

The three love poems are expressive exhibitions of the intimacy of their life together in Samambaia. In each of the three poems, the house is the point of reference around which the action takes place, but in the first two poems, the house protects and shelters Bishop and Lota from external threats. In “The Armadillo,” an illegal fire balloon “splattered like an egg of fire / against the cliff behind the house” and in “Electrical Storm,” the “house was really struck” by lightning (*CP* 103, 100). The “frail, illegal fire balloons” are customs of the Brazilian lower class; her tone contains a hint of the “noblesse oblige” of “Manuelzinho” when she describes the people who are ignorant, superstitious and old-fashioned enough to create fire balloons for Festa Junina, “rising toward a saint / still honored in these parts” (*CP* 103).<sup>45</sup> Bishop is removed from the fire balloons and their makers; she does not witness the making or releasing of them, but only records them once in flight. In the midst of the poem, Bishop and Lota watch the balloons “steadily forsaking us” or “suddenly turning dangerous” from a position of intimate closeness. The balloons might be a threat to their domestic sanctuary, but they are

launched by members of the Brazilian lower class and Bishop and Lota are removed with the privileged distance of feudal landowners who watch with fascination and condescension. In “Squatter’s Children,” Bishop’s distance has to do with her position as an expatriate. With Lota, the position is one of economic privilege since their house is situated above the poor huts below.

Bishop’s description of the animals, which often imply inside jokes or refer to previous conversations, imply the amount of time the couple spends discussing their surroundings. She makes this move often in her love poetry, like in “One Art” when she refers to “a gesture I love” without describing the actual gesture. In “The Armadillo,” the animals are depicted in relation to the couple. Bishop refers to the pair of owls “who nest there,” alluding to routine knowledge of the nesting habits of these particular, long-watched owls (103). Bishop and Lota are amused at the “baby rabbit,” who is “*short-eared*, to our surprise.” In the preceding stanza, the burning “ancient owls’ nest” prompts the “glistening armadillo” to leave, “rose-flecked” by the burning nest, “head down, tail down” (104). The ending stanza describes the armadillo’s response (“panic”) and flight (the “weak mailed fist / clenched ignorant against the sky!”). The title of the poem indicates the armadillo, as opposed to the owls or baby rabbit, as the emotional center of the poem. It is tempting to read the armadillo as a metaphor for Bishop, who in other poems associates herself with marginalized creatures in her sense of being alone or different in Brazil.<sup>46</sup> But in the context of this poem, Bishop is part of the couple, protected by the home from which she is observing the actions of the fire balloons and animals from a safe and comfortable distance. The armadillo, unlike the “pair of owls,” is

“all alone” and flees “hastily,” pitting the single animal as a foil to Bishop, who observes him in a leisurely moment with her partner.

The threat posed by the storm in “Electrical Storm” only underlines their security and comfort in the intimacy of their bedroom. While “unsympathetic” nature rages outside, “Personal and spiteful as a neighbor’s child,” the house enfolds Bishop and Lota (*CP* 100). The hail hits the loud tin roof on the farmhouse with a “tinny sound, like a dropped tumbler” which Bishop first alluded to in “Questions of Travel.” Lota and Bishop are in bed to receive Tobias, “silent, his eyes bleached white, his fur on end.” The storm reduces their modern house to a rustic state—“no lights...and the telephone dead,” but in the cozy bedroom, the cat still sleeps “in the warm sheets.” Bishop incorporates fairy-tale elements in the personification of the child-like thunder and description of the hail as “Dead-white, wax-white, cold— / diplomat’s wives’ favors / from an old moon party.” The slight deistic reference of the “Lent trees” (her translation of quaresmeira trees, a common type of tree in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo) places the poem in a Catholic country. It also indicates the season as early fall since the purple flowers of the quaresmeira trees blossom between January and April (“quaresmeira” comes from the Portuguese for Lent, “quaresma,” so the trees bloom around Lent). Knocked down by lightning, they are “wet, stuck, purple, among the dead-eye pearls.” In the sanctuary of the warm house, protected from nature’s capriciousness, Bishop records the exotic beauty of the landscape after the storm. Threatened from nature outside, the home has provided a nurturing site to protect their somewhat concealed lesbian relationship.

In “Song for the Rainy Season,” the house no longer shelters them from the natural threats of the surrounding jungle. Instead, the house is destroyed by the intrusion of mice, mold, vegetation, water, and other natural elements; the poem is an elegy for the home they have enjoyed there, “hidden, oh hidden,” away from the misogynistic gaze of *carioca* society. Nogueira imagines the structure of Samambaia, both the physical structure and the societal sanctuary they built in their subaltern counterpublic, as a shelter for the women’s romantic relationship, “um universo particular, não ausente de conflitos, parecendo estes ter sido administrados com habilidade por suas moradoras” [a special universe, not absent of conflict, but where the conflict seems to have been managed skillfully by the residents] (109). The last poem Bishop writes about their home in Samambaia chronicles an end to that shared place as the women no longer handle the conflict skillfully but instead lose their home and their relationship to the pressures of the political tension in Rio, which Lota enters forcefully in 1961 when she accepts the embattled position as director of the Flamengo Park in Rio, after which they lived permanently in Leme.<sup>47</sup>

The first stanza is a sentence fragment which introduces the house as the subject of the poem; by the fifth stanza, with the imperative “rejoice!,” Bishop makes it clear that the poem is an apostrophe addressed to the house itself. The poem follows the form of a mourning elegy, which according to Andrew Ettin draws on “the power of emotion-driven rhetoric, a fusion of nature and art that expresses something important *against* the processes of nature, even though (perhaps especially when) those processes are beyond control” (117). In the first few stanzas, the natural intrusion is nurturing and protective.

The “house we live in” is “Hidden, oh hidden / in the high fog,” interconnected with the “magnetic rock” under which it is immediately situated, and accessible to “vapor” that “climbs up the thick growth / effortlessly” (*CP* 101). The vapor holds both “house and rock, / in a private cloud” and gently penetrates the “House, open house / to the white dew.” Bishop uses the celestial imagery of “The Shampoo,” but the home is set within the space, which she paints in “Brazilian Landscape,” as a way to indicate its remoteness and its intricate connection to the natural world. The “milk-white sunrise” is not bright, glaring or threatening, but “kind to the eyes,” softer than the “suspended eye” looking upon the same landscape in “Squatter’s Children” (*CP* 102, 95). The sun is filtered by the clouds of the rainy season, making its intrusion hazy and remote.

Lota and Bishop’s love is metaphorically represented by water, the most abundant element in the poem. The “magnetic rock” is “rain-, rainbow-ridden” (101). The “waterfalls cling, / familiar, unbidden,” the nucleus of the observed ecosystem that includes “blood-black / bromelias” (which hold a small pool of water in their center), “lichens” (which grow more rapidly in a moist environment) and “owls.” The rainy season is a “dim age / of water” in which the “brook sings loud,” “vapor” is personified as it “climbs” and “holds” the house. She repeats the intimacy of the earlier poems in which they laugh about nature: Within their “private cloud,” Bishop and Lota share a private joke about the owls who count “five times—always five” and listen to erotic “fat frogs that, / shrilling for love, / clamber and mount.” The sexual union of the frogs in the third stanza is repeated in the union of nature and house in the fourth and fifth stanzas. Nature permeates the home in an inclusive blending that grants “membership” to “silver



fish, mouse, / bookworms, / big moths; with a wall / for the mildew's / ignorant map," all driven into the house by the rain outside. Water is the catalyst for the natural action of the poem.

Nature and home come together in one final sensuous climax. The unfinished sentence of stanza four is finished in stanza five; the earlier "House, open house" is modified by the description of the dirty, organic union: "darkened and tarnished / by the warm touch / of the warm breath, / maculate, cherished, / rejoice!" (101-102). By making the union of house and nature "maculate," Bishop subtly shifts the consummation away from the "immaculate conception" of Catholic religious imagery. Her homosexual union might be "sinful" by Catholic standards which inform the constraints of *carioca* society, but in the context of this poem, it is biological, natural and celebrated.

After the climactic "rejoice!," Bishop changes the tone of the poem immediately, with no enjambment to transition to a new idea. By pushing together "rejoice!" and "For a later era / will differ," Bishop makes the "later era" present and threatening. A parenthetical interjection grieves the end of their domestic sanctuary: "(O difference that kills, / or intimidates, much / of all our small shadowy / life!)" (102). While "our" could refer to a universal "we" of humankind, the intimate and personal nature of the poem makes "our" more specific to the nostalgia Bishop feels for the passing of her time with Lota at Samambaia. The stanza ends with the temporal end of the rainy season and the termination of the verdant action of the poem, which cannot be sustained "Without water." By enjambling the line just after the negative phrase, Bishop allows the tension

and grief of the loss to hold before undoing her landscape. When the rainy season is over, the domestic sanctuary of Samambaia will disappear:

the great rock will stare  
unmagnetized, bare,  
no longer wearing  
rainbows or rain,  
the forgiving air  
and the high fog gone;  
the owls will move on  
and the several  
waterfalls shrivel  
in the steady sun (102).

No longer “kind to the eyes,” the sun acts as the antithesis to the moisture that creates the fertile landscape. Bishop anticipates that the misogynistic *carioca* gaze and conservative Catholic culture will “kill and intimidate” their union, which had thrived in the shelter of Samambaia.

Within seven years of the publication of “Song for the Rainy Season,” Bishop’s relationship with Lota will have completely dissolved. In those years, she and Lota live in an increasingly strained relationship as Lota’s appointment over Flamengo Park keeps them more often in the apartment in Rio than in Samambaia. In the first several years in Brazil, Bishop accepted Lota’s views of Brazilian society. They traveled together almost exclusively and Bishop saw the aspects of Brazil Lota wanted her to see. Beginning in 1957, Bishop ventured off more frequently on her own, taking trips to “primitive” parts of Brazil in which Lota had no interest. Those trips coincided with the decline of Lota’s mental health and the deterioration of their relationship, augmented by Bishop’s resurging alcoholism. Their emotional health paralleled the increasing political tension of the country and the increased attacks in the newspapers against Lota as her position as the

director of the park drew increasing ire and conflict. From 1957 to 1967, Bishop focused increasingly on figures like the Riverman, Balthazar and Micuçu in her poems and Severino and the *gaúcho* persona of “Sonnet of Intimacy” in her translations, the type of figures which, as Bishop wrote Lowell about “The Riverman,” Lota “hates.”<sup>48</sup> As they literally and metaphorically left the domestic intimacy of Samambaia, Lota was no longer the mediator and translator of Brazil for Bishop.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop's 7 February 1952 letter to Ilse and Kit Barker gives a sense of Samambaia's remoteness (*OA* 233-234). And Nogueira gives a sense of the specific guests who were invited: The farm was "uma flutuação das fronteiras entre o público e privado, à medida que foi também um espaço de sociabilidade composto por pessoas escolhidas para compartilhar essa relação amorosa" [a fluctuation of the frontiers between the public and private, even as it was also a sociable space of made up of people chosen to share in this romantic relationship] (18). Nadia Nogueira unpacks this time nicely in her book, *Invenções de Si em Histórias de Amor: Lota & Bishop*. The work is groundbreaking not just in terms of Bishop scholarship, but in queer studies in Brazil, a subject that is critically underexamined both in English or Portuguese. Therefore, her book is one of the only sources in this chapter for the queer constructions Lota employs at Samambaia. Her adept arguments and insightful analysis of how Bishop and Lota resisted *carioca* society, created a lesbian domestic sphere in the midst of tumultuous societal and historical context, was immensely helpful in my argument for this chapter. I have cited her where applicable, but I owe a great debt to the direction of her argument, which I am extending to look at these specific texts. Translations of her quotations are all my own.

<sup>2</sup> Underlying my argument throughout this chapter is my contention that most Bishop scholars examine Samambaia not in terms of its Brazilian context, but in terms of its position in Bishop's life and writing. Though I will not spend much time examining specific readings of Bishop's Samambaia poems by other scholars, Bishop scholars almost universally look at these poems in relation to Nova Scotia and her own childhood memories (see footnote 25 below). Instead, by recasting Bishop as the outsider-tourist in a very specific Brazilian setting, I intend to show the ways in which Bishop repressed, ignored or recast many of the issues in the Brazilian context she was describing during this time.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this dissertation, I'm going to use the Portuguese word "*carioca*" to describe "from or of Rio de Janeiro." At the time, Rio was the capital of the country as well as the hub of Lota's intellectual and social life. The city's proximity and the relatively little traveling that Bishop did in the first few years within Brazil make Rio de Janeiro the center of the cultural discourse I am describing in this chapter. This shifts in later years as Bishop increasingly becomes interested in a "Brazil" outside of Lota's. But the importance of Rio de Janeiro, especially its influence on the marginalized lesbian and gay subculture, is a crucial part of Lota's resistance strategies.

<sup>4</sup> *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* was published in 1957 by Farrar, Straus and Cudahy; "The Shampoo" was rejected by the *New Yorker* in 1953 and later published in the *New Republic*; "Manuelzinho" on 26 May 1956; "Squatter's Children," published first in *Anhembi* in 1956, then in the *New Yorker* on 23 March 1957; "The Armadillo" on 22 June 1957, "Electrical Storm" on 14 May 1960; and "Song for the Rainy Season" on 8 October 1960.

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Fraser's article "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" was originally published as a chapter in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991). Nyssa Wilton helped me to find the article. She was also instrumental in helping me understand the way in which public/private sphere functions. Though Samambaia is a private home, it functions as a subaltern public sphere by creating a location that resists and negotiates the discourse of the mainstream public sphere in Brazil in the 1950s.

<sup>6</sup> From a Good Friday 1953 letter to the Barkers (*OA* 258); though Bishop does not mention what it is like to be a lesbian in Brazil, I want to be careful not to push this argument too far. It is unlikely that she would have been very overt in her letters. Both in the published and unpublished letters, she rarely mentions her relationship with Lota and certainly not in sexual terms; she refers to her to friends who obviously understand their relationship, but never goes into specifics. She is perhaps most affectionate in her praise of Lota to a couple of correspondents, like Howard Moss and Arthur Gold, but her letters are generally very reserved.

<sup>7</sup> 25 (or 26) February 1954 to Barkers: "It's a sad country, and it hasn't gone through yet—and I suppose never will—a period of having *good* servants, as England used to have, and then emerging into another period. There is a really pleasant intimacy with the people who work for you and Brazil is by far the most 'democratic' place I've ever seen, in some ways—but nobody knows how to do *anything* well, and nobody has the slightest sense of 'style,' I suppose is what it amounts to" (*OA* 290).

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<sup>8</sup> 17 September 1952 to U.T. and Joseph Summers (*OA* 248); 9 February 1952 to Barkers (234); 14 February 1952 to Moore (236).

<sup>9</sup> Nogueira mentions a 22 April 1960 letter that Bishop writes to Lowell as an instance of Bishop's frigidity toward Brazilians: "Quando ocorreu a morte de Lúcia e de seu marido Otávio...na Baía de Guanabara, ela descreveu de forma fria esse acontecimento triste e trágico, no qual admitia, Lota perdera *amigos que faziam companhia para ela nos finais de semana*. [Carta para RL, 22 de abril de 1960] Ou seja, ela não parecia tocada por essa perda" [When Lúcia and her husband Otávio Baía de Guanabara died, she described this sad and tragic event in a frigid way, when she acknowledged that Lota lost "friends that provided company for her on the weekends...That is, she did not seem touched by the loss] (117). Nogueira's scathing critique of Bishop seems lost in translation, however. Bishop's original letter reads: "Two of our best friends here, a couple on whom she depended a lot for company over weekends, a historian and his wife, were killed in a stupid plane crash at Christmas time. (I had just got him nominated for the Academy, an honorary member, too.)" (*OA* 384). The warmth with which Bishop describes the death of "two of our best friends," as well as the care she must have taken to nominate him for "the Academy," makes Nogueira's criticism seem harsh or at least unfounded.

<sup>10</sup> 24 May 1953 to Barkers (*OA* 266); 19 March 1952 to Katherine E. McBride (238). To be clear, Bishop was also very uncomfortable in New York's intellectual society, a fact she often laments and wrestles with in letters throughout her life. In her descriptions of *carioca* society, she is often quoting Lota, but there is a subtle difference in the way the criticism comes across in private letters to her friends. While Lota might have found the society lacking in important ways, she was deeply invested in rectifying the cultural situation. It was a cause to which she dedicated most of her life.

<sup>11</sup> In one of the few other full-length studies of queer culture in Brazil, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* James N. Green argues this shift is crucial to the political and cultural turmoil in mid-twentieth century Brazil: "In the two and a half decades between 1945 and 1969, mass migration to Brazil's major metropolises tipped the demographic balance from rural to urban. In 1950, 64 percent of all Brazilians lived in the countryside, and the remaining 36 percent resided in cities. Ten years later, this number jumped to 45 percent, and in 1970, 56 percent of the population lived in urban areas. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo continued to draw the largest numbers of rural migrants, especially hundreds of thousands of peasants who left the drought-ridden Northeast to seek employment in the Southeast" (147).

<sup>12</sup> In a 31 August 1953 letter to the Barkers, Bishop recounts Lota's family's political history: "Until Vargas, her father was always in politics. He was exiled several times; they have the straw hat with a bullet hole through the brim he was wearing one day when shot at. Lota says at the convent for a few years the girls whose fathers were in prison—hers was—didn't speak to the socially inferior girls whose fathers were out, all in the best South American tradition" (*OA* 271).

<sup>13</sup> For more on Vargas, the *República Velha* and the Aliança Liberal, see R.S. Rose, *One of the Forgotten Things: Getúlio Vargas and the Brazilian Social Control, 1930-1954*. (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 2000); Martha Huggins, *Political Policing: The United States and Latin America* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998); Stanley E. Hilton, *Brazil and the Soviet Change, 1917-1947* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1991); Raul Mendes Silva, Paulo Brandi Cachapuz, and Sérgio Lamarão, *Getúlio Vargas e seu tempo* (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: BNDES, 2004); and Richard Bourne, *Getúlio Vargas of Brazil, 1883-1954: Sphinx of the Pampas* (London, Tonbridge: Chas. Knight, 1974). The historical overview in the next few paragraphs are compiled from my readings of these works.

<sup>14</sup> The picture of crowds campaigning under Vargas's pro-labor slogan is from the educational website <http://www.brasilescola.com/historiab/vargas.htm>. Interestingly, Bishop found herself in a position of being strange bedfellows with the communist party in her antigetulista political viewpoint. Her socialist activity at Vassar in the 1930s had led her to differentiate between her views and those held by communists (Betsy Erkkila chronicles these political moves well).

<sup>15</sup> Arthur Gold remembers that "Elizabeth was provincial in a sense that Lota wasn't, because Lota had been brought up in Europe. Lota's French was as good as her Portuguese. Elizabeth always struggled with Portuguese and really had a dreadful American accent in every language. She was always the slightly

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Henry Jamesian character in a cosmopolitan atmosphere, because the atmosphere of very rich Brazilians is very cosmopolitan. Lota was a society girl, and Elizabeth liked that” (Fountain-Brazeau, 138).

<sup>16</sup> I am deeply indebted to Paulo Henriques Britto in understanding Lota’s particular aversion to Vargas, especially during the second administration. Prof. Britto patiently explained and contextualized many of the details in this historical section for me.

<sup>17</sup> Carlos Lacerda eventually became governor of the state of Guanabara, a state which existed briefly from 1960 to 1975, with Rio de Janeiro as the capital (the state has returned to being Rio de Janeiro State). He later appointed Lota as the designer of Flamengo Park, the move which caused Bishop and Lota to spend an increasing amount of time in Rio and, at least in Bishop’s view, led to the dissolution of their relationship.

<sup>18</sup> In this view, she was joined by most Americans who traveled to South America at the time, as well as the U.S. government, whose Cold War engagement in South American politics has been well-documented. In all probability, the U.S. instigated the 1964 coup which overthrew President João Goulart (known popularly as Jango) and eventually led to General Humberto de Alencar Castello Branco being elected president of the Nationalist party.

<sup>19</sup> This document is widely known in Brazil and there are a number of copies available; this copy of the “Carta Testamento” is from <http://palavrastodaspalavras.wordpress.com/2011/08/24/carta-testamento-do-ex-presidente-getulio-vargas-57-anos-de-seu-suicidio-rio-de-janeiro/>. The translations are mine.

<sup>20</sup> In the 31 August 1953 letter to the Barkers, Bishop outlined the class differences: “But it is very strange to me to live in a country where the ruling class and the intellectual class are so very small and all know each other and are all usually related. It’s certainly bad for the ‘arts’ too—it’s entirely too easy to get a reputation and never do anything else, and never have to compete. Well, it’s all because of NO MIDDLE CLASS” (271). Bishop’s views on the lack of the middle class (which are not entirely true) will form an integral part of my examination of Brazilian literature she included and what she left out of *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry* in chapter 4.

<sup>21</sup> An undated water painting titled “County Courthouse” reproduced in *Exchanging Hats* that Bishop painted as part of a collection depicting buildings in Key West epitomizes her type of ironic humor. In the painting, a salmon-colored courthouse is centered in the painting. Ostensibly the subject of the scene, the courthouse is blocked by large shrubs, trees, and powerlines. The active lines in the painting are formed by wires that extend from the top of the courthouse tower and make a triangle with other wires from a nearby radio tower. The red and white tower, in the far right of the painting, is the focal point of the scene. William Benton, who collects and edits Bishop’s book of paintings, describes the scene as “the exact opposite of what a Sunday watercolorist might select. It is, in fact, a picture whose wit transforms it from a ‘scene’ into an image of impasse” (*Exchanging Hats* 22).

<sup>22</sup> The painting is on the cover of her 1979 *Elizabeth Bishop: The Complete Poems, 1927-1979* and the many reprintings of the book have had a salmon pink cover that matches the reproduction of the painting. It is also reproduced in *Exchanging Hats* (26).

<sup>23</sup> The only time that most Bishop scholars mention *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* is in the context of Bishop’s own domestic writings. Among the many scholars who look at the relationship of the diary to Bishop’s Nova Scotia prose texts are David Kalstone (155, 197), Thomas Travisano (167-168), Jerome Mazzaro (38), Jan B. Gordon (9-10), and Lorrie Goldensohn (8).

<sup>24</sup> I am indebted to Anna Stewart for her help in identifying a novel of the “moonlight and magnolias” genre that idealizes the pre-Civil War South.

<sup>25</sup> Bishop’s 20 November 1955 to Loren MacIver recommending she help Lacerda gives a glowing of him as a person and a politician (OA 309-310). Her more intimate 22 February 1954 letter to Kazin, who lived in Brazil when Bishop arrived and was friends with Lota and her circle, expresses Bishop’s growing sense of frustration with Lacerda and her inability to speak of it with Lota: “I suppose Carlos Lacerda is honest all right, but I think he’s got too much ego and will probably end up in about ten years as a cynical politician. (We see a great deal of him, and I must say he’s much the most interesting and entertaining person to talk to I’ve met so far)...I wish there were somebody I could talk to about it! Lota is, after all, a Brazilian, and no matter how fair everyone wants to be, nationality always gets in the way sooner or later...” (288-289). Bishop wrote similar letters to Lowell and others in the same period. Bishop eventually signed a contract with Farrar, Straus and Cudahy; the book was her first publication with their publishing

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house and her first time working with Robert Giroux in what would become one of the most productive editorial relationships of her writing career.

<sup>26</sup> In examining her theory of translation, I am particularly indebted to Eduardo Luis Araújo de Oliveira Batista's article "O método de Elizabeth Bishop na tradução de poemas brasileiros." Though he is looking exclusively at her poetic translations, I believe his arguments apply well to her translation of the diary as well. He asserts that Bishop's translation process was aligned with her poetic process: "Como tradutora não-profissional Bishop não oferece um método tradutório baseado em alguma teoria da tradução. Seu método tradutório parece originar-se de suas próprias convicções sobre criação literária" (56) [As a non-professional translator Bishop does not offer a translation method based on some theory of translation. Her translation method appears to originate from her own beliefs about literary creation"]. As for her poetic process, Mary McCarthy recalls a party at Hannah Arendt's in New York in 1957 during the summer Bishop and Lota spent there. As the group had a discussion about how to interpret a line of verse, "Elizabeth finally joined the conversation—she was the last to speak up—and in this quiet, little voice said, 'Well, I would think that it was literally true.' Then she put forward her conviction that anything in a poem was true, that it was there because it had happened. The other reasons could be added" (Fountain and Brazeau 152-153).

<sup>27</sup> Unlike most Bishop scholars, Virginia Harrison notes the influence of the diary on Bishop's understanding of Brazilian social conventions: "As Bishop became settled into a daily life that included not only the frustrations of the mails and the sweeping beauty of her view of clouds and flowering trees, which she described in letters each spring, but also the extreme poverty in the slums near Rio as well as the overt sex and class discrimination everywhere, she began to seek ways to define her often clashing impressions. In the mid-1950s, after spending three years writing the tones of rural Brazil as she translated *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* her poetry became increasingly alert to the economic, racial and gendered structures that configure speakers and subjects. Writing the relational subjectivity of Brazilians required acknowledging these structures as well as her own framing devices" (146).

<sup>28</sup> She arranged a marriage between her cook, Lulu, and her gardener, Paulo. After the wedding that Lota organized, Lulu's former employers were entertained in the dining room by Lota and Bishop, waited on by the servants who ate together with the bride and groom in the kitchen (Fountain-Brazeau 139). And Nogueira asserts that the way Lota cared for her workers made her exceptional among other upper-class women: "Destaco essas questões cotidianas, com as quais essas duas mulheres se envolviam, por entender que, por um lado, dificilmente pessoas elitizadas se preocupavam em dar uma boa qualidade de relacionamento para os seus funcionários. Em geral salvo raras exceções, essa não era uma característica presente nesse grupo. Por outro lado, para elas, o bem estar das pessoas com as quais conviviam parecia fundamental, à medida que se apropriavam e solucionavam qualquer tipo de impasse que pudesse desestabilizar a família eletiva que vivia em Samambaia. Havia um constante entrosamento entre as patroas e os funcionários, observados nas pequenas atitudes, no cuidados com as crianças, na atenção às necessidades próprias da cultura daquelas pessoas que elas respeitavam e auxiliavam" (116).

<sup>29</sup> The movie *The Gang's All Here* begins with Carmen Miranda singing the medley "Brazil/You Discover You're in New York" while the original "Brazil" is revealed to be a constructed night club set.

<sup>30</sup> Bidart, quoted in Fountain and Brazeau (327).

<sup>31</sup> The poem was discovered by Lloyd Schwartz in Lilli's home and published in the *New Yorker* on 30 September 1991 (*Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box* 352-353).

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd Schwartz found the poem "Breakfast Song" in a notebook while Bishop was having an X-ray in a hospital room in 1974; recognizing the literary value of the poem, he copied it down secretly and waited twenty years to have it published. Though he felt guilty about the copy, "she was capable of not publishing anything so profoundly personal, capable even of destroying it" (qtd. in *Edgar Allan Poe and the Juke-Box* 348).

<sup>33</sup> As Victoria Harrison notes, "Bishop did explicitly confront such issues as child and infant mortality, poverty, crime, Brazilian inflation and corruption, and exploitation in the mines... These poems and travel writings, however, consistently position her speakers at various degrees of unacknowledged remove from their subject, and she finished and published none of it" (147).

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<sup>34</sup> In this view, they are joined by other Bishop scholars, including Patricia Dwyer in *Divisions of the Heart: Elizabeth Bishop and the Art of Memory and Place*, who calls Manuelzinho one of the “many characters away from home” (123).

<sup>35</sup> Britto translated Bishop’s poems in *O Iceberg Imaginário e outros poemas* and brought most of her letters into Portuguese.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Stearns Morse, Lota’s friend and former partner who lived for years on the estate in Petrópolis, remembers Manuelzinho as “one of Lota’s favorites. He was very amusing...Lota liked him as a person, so she let him stay on a piece of land right near her house. He didn’t work for Lota. He worked for himself, and he was just on a piece of her land, hoping he wouldn’t be put off” (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau 141).

<sup>37</sup> Their combined voice is noticed by Robert Lowell in a June 18, 1956 letter: “Liked your Brazilian man better than ever in the *New Yorker*—the most feminine of character sketches with you and Lota both speaking through each other” (*Words in Air* 181).

<sup>38</sup> The humorous poetry “helped identify the *New Yorker’s* target market as the educated consumers of the peer society; the market for verse thus attracted literary humorists as consumers *and* producers, as readers *and* writers” (Lee 324). Their humorous style was “coherent across gender and genre” and assumed a shared experience among its readers, who were “defined by socioeconomic status” (Lee 325, 54).

<sup>39</sup> C.K. Doreski notes that the voice in the poem “implicitly condemns both his situation and his character. Through obstinancy, ignorance, or innocence he has failed to live up to his obligations to his superior” (118).

<sup>40</sup> René Curry describes the signifiers in her introduction to *White Writers Writing White*: “Whiteness can be written into a text explicitly, but more commonly, various elusive mastery signifiers...point out its presence and position as masterful designer and observer of the world” (13). This goes against the trend of many Bishop scholars, Lorrie Goldensohn and Marilyn Lombardi in particular, who view Lota as the “dark other” in Bishop’s poetry, a view to which I take great exception, particularly since (Lota’s dark hair notwithstanding), she was lighter-skinned than many of her Brazilian counterparts, came from European ancestry, and never identified herself as “dark.”

<sup>41</sup> This is one of the reasons why I use the term “persona” in these poems and not in the much more intimate nature pastorals in the next section, which I read as being spoken directly by Bishop without the slight remove of a poetic persona.

<sup>42</sup> Bishop writes other poems that share this anxiety (like “Burglar of Babylon” and “Pink Dog”) and I am certainly not arguing that a poem should propose an actionable response. In fact, poetry seems to be an appropriate form for Bishop to express her discomfort with the situation without having to advocate a social or political solution. In other texts, namely her 1965 *New York Times* article about Brazil, given the space and generic freedom to propose solutions, Bishop still resists doing more than just identifying issues.

<sup>43</sup> 9 February 1952 to Barkers (*OA* 234); 14 February 1952 to Moore (236); 3 March 1952 to Moore (237); 25 (or 26) February 1954 to Barkers (290).

<sup>44</sup> The unflattering way in which Elizabeth Leão describes Bishop’s views of Samambaia as Shangri-La in relation to the glowing description of Lota reveals the ire with which many of Lota’s friends later viewed Bishop, whom they never forgave for the affairs she had or Lota’s death in New York: “‘Lota era uma pessoa inteligente, culta, elegante, gentilíssima, possuía muito calor humano. Ela mantinha um ambiente agradável e tinha o dom de fazer tudo brilhar em torno dela. Bishop era muito americana, a mais provinciana da relação, conversava pouco em português e não gostava do Brasil e dos brasileiros. Samambaia foi para ela uma espie de Shangrilá, um paraíso no Brasil. Lota estava sempre de braços abertos e com eles, abraçou Bishop, a envolveu completamente’” (qtd. in Nogueira 121). [Lota was an intelligent, cultured, elegant woman who was absolutely kind and possessed a great deal of human warmth. She maintained a pleasant atmosphere and had the gift of making everyone shine around her. Bishop was very American, the most provincial in the relationship; she conversed very little in Portuguese and she didn’t like Brazil or Brazilians. Samambaia was a type of Shangri-La, a paradise in Brazil. Lota always had open arms with which she embraced Bishop and enveloped her completely.]

<sup>45</sup> Festa Junina, June Festival, is a common Brazilian holiday in the late fall with customs associated with it not unlike Halloween or other fall festivals in the United States. Originally named “Festa Joanina” after St.



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John, like many Brazilian holidays, the religious impetus has been combined with other folk customs to create a syncretistic holiday.

<sup>46</sup> My reading of the poem is the opposite of many Bishop scholars, including Susan McCabe's: "For both Lowell and Bishop, the animals, armadillo and skunk, are made to appear 'illegal,' on the fringe of the natural and human world, and very much like artists, who in spite of being endangered and threatened outsiders, discover a means of survival. Bishop identifies with her armadillo who, camouflaged, can leave 'the scene' with the shamed posture of 'head down, tail down' and in doing so, places her craft and position as artist alongside those displaced 'others'—Manuelzinho, the Riverman, Micuçu—she has taken such pains to acknowledge" (187-188).

<sup>47</sup> On 20 January 1961, the newly appointed governor of Guanabara, Carlos Lacerda, appointed Lota to the position of advisor "to the State, the Parks Department, subsection of the General Secretariat of Works and Transportation, and the Superintendency of Urbanization and Sanitation (Sursan); and, especially, to study the urbanization of the surfaces arising from the Aterro of Flamengo" (Oliveira 66).

<sup>48</sup> In a 22 April 1960 letter to Lowell (*Words in Air* 315).

### Chapter 3

#### Bishop's Primitive Routes: The Search for "Other" Spaces (1958-1964)

From 1958 to 1964, Bishop changed her focus from Samambaia to "primitive" Brazilians.<sup>1</sup> The shift in her writing was not instantaneous; her last poem about Samambaia was published in 1960. But in that time, Bishop wrote more fully about Brazilians outside of the Samambaia circle. These are the poems that end her "Brazil" section of *Questions of Travel*: "The Riverman," "Twelfth Morning, or What You Will" and "The Burglar of Babylon."<sup>2</sup> The move away from Samambaia represented more than just restlessness with her personal situation. Lota's upper-class sensibilities and desire to represent Brazilian culture as cosmopolitan ensured that "other" Brazilians were at best objects of disinterest to her. Bishop, however, resumed the search for the Real Brazil she began as a tourist and in her first in-country trip to Diamantina. As Bishop's and Lota's familiarized place at Samambaia became increasingly tense and painful, she turned to "primitive" Brazilians in a way that echoes her earlier, touristic travels in Brazil. However, her search for space is markedly different from the first touristic desire for easy comprehension which she criticizes in "Arrival at Santos" and "Questions of Travel."<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1958, Bishop pushes toward a more comprehensive theoretical framework of translation and transformative interpretation. The sources of these poems (the translations she not only brings into English but also uses as impetuses for her own poems), the works of anthropologists she read, along with her own travel experiences, contribute to the fresh clarity of the space in Brazil outside of Samambaia.

A renewed focus on space also enabled her to write more penetratingly about the dissolution of her life with Lota in “Song for a Rainy Season.” Bishop felt unable to write with distance about their home in Samambaia. Jeffrey Gray notes that “the foreigner must continue to hold the host culture at arm’s length, a difficult and impractical stance since the resulting alienation inhibits agency, not to mention pleasure and involvement, in the new culture. If a foreigner wants difference at all costs, he or she must move. Stasis inhibits defamiliarization” (14). Bishop wrote something similar in a 20 March 1965 letter in which she describes to Randall Jarrell what it is like to live in Brazil. For Bishop, Brazil was “a country where one feels closer to real old-fashioned life, somehow” because, despite what she calls “its awfulness and stupidities,” it feels to her as if “the Lost World hasn’t quite been lost here yet” (*One Art* 434). However, she qualifies this description by pointing out that the feeling only occurs to her on some days when “I still like living in this backward place,” and notes that emotional response is most prevalent “when one gets away from Rio” to see the people “in the small poor places” who are “absolutely natural.” This return to the role of outsider follows what Tuan terms the “dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom. In open space one can become intensely aware of place” (54). In writing poems about the “old-fashioned” and “absolutely natural” Brazilians, Bishop “gets away from Rio” in a way that enables her to maintain a sense of difference and to look more critically on the place she shared with Samambaia. The overlap between her poems about “others” and her poems about losing Lota mean that even as she was focusing on the space around her, Bishop was “intensely aware” of their place as well.

As was often the case, travel spurred Bishop on to new writing. Her return to “venture” and “freedom” in several trips outside of Rio allowed her to end a particularly difficult dry spell in her writing beginning in 1958.<sup>4</sup> She took a trip with Aldous Huxley and a cosmopolitan traveling party (that did not include Lota) to Brasília and an “Indian” village. Once again Bishop played the role of tourist, although this time with a great deal more experience and knowledge of the sites she visited. Almost all of the trips Bishop took within Brazil in the late 1950s and early 1960s were made without Lota. Bishop also read the work of several anthropologists during that period; though she maintained a preference for Claude Lévi-Strauss, Charles Wagley, and Gilberto Freyre were also influential on her writing. Bishop essentialized Brazilians based on the categorizations of those anthropologists. The classifications of racial and regional differences which Bishop employs in her writing do not indicate that she was racist or that her views were unusually libelous or slanderous of Brazilians. In fact, her views were far-reaching in her almost constant push and interest in the people outside of her own circle. But within the moment in which she lived, wrote, and read, based on her anthropological sources, Bishop relied on what James Clifford in *Routes* calls “the pseudo-scientific reductions and ahistorical visions that beset the structural formalism” (49). Those reductions were, in most ways, in the line of Franz Boas, who trained both Wagley and Freyre. Though my argument is an oversimplification of the complicated history of anthropological thought, the Boasian view of the “primitive object of study” that Clifford argues is indicative of mid-twentieth century anthropologists influenced Bishop’s portrayals through these two writers. Lévi-Strauss comes from a different intellectual line, but he shared with Boasian

anthropologists a view of the Brazilian people among whom all three did their fieldwork as “romantic, pure, threatened, archaic, and simple,” along with the linked stereotypes that “remote tribal peoples” are “*either* primitive and untouched *or* contaminated by progress” (Clifford 21, 157). These are the fundamental arguments which affected Bishop’s portrayals of “Other” Brazilians.

In evaluating and explaining the shift that occurs in Bishop’s representational methods, I am chronicling the ways in which she develops a theoretical framework of translation and transformative interpretation. In her writing about “Other” Brazilians, Bishop makes a move that is identified by Anduradha Dingwaney in her introduction to *Between Languages and Cultures* as being a nearly universal one when “Third World” cultures are represented for a Western audience: “The processes of translation involved in making another culture comprehensible entail varying degrees of violence, especially when the culture being translated is constituted as that of the ‘other’” (4). The effects of this violence and the types of portrayals drawn from it are determined by “the institutional constraints and disciplinary demands of social anthropology and the expectations of the audiences for whom these translations are intended,” thus producing predetermined translations of cultures (4-5). From her position as an outsider and a U.S. expatriate writing to an educated, middle-class, *New Yorker* audience, Bishop writes about “Other” Brazilians with varying degrees of violence: she uses markers that signify the voice of a “noble savage” in “The Riverman” or that emphasize the racial qualities of “blackness” inherent in Balthazar’s body in “Twelfth Morning.”<sup>5</sup> However, in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” and in “The Burglar of Babylon,” Bishop criticizes herself and her

audience for the degree of removal that places in a position of disproportionate power to her subjects, which lessen the violence inherent in her representations because she is self-critical of her own position.

Bishop achieves this effect by maintaining formal aspects of the poem that link it to traditional Brazilian folkloric ballads. Though most of the texts I examine are not actually translations, I think Sylvia Henneberg's conflation of Bishop's act of translation and transformative interpretation is particularly helpful; in these texts, Bishop rewrites and reconfigures poems and short stories by Clarice Lispector, João Cabral de Melo Neto, Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Vinicius de Moraes, among others. Though "Brazil, January 1, 1502" and "The Burglar of Babylon" are not free from issues (as Dingwaney might argue, no representations of "Third World" cultures to a Western audience can in fact be "free"), Bishop is significantly more self-aware of their problems as a result of her increased reading among the Brazilian writers whose work she was translating during the period. Bishop undergoes a complicated shift as she struggles with how to write authentically about "primitive" Brazil. That shift results in her fully realized bricolage approach to translation and transformative interpretation in *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry* and "Crusoe in England" in the early 1970s, which I will examine in Chapter 4.

Her categories of Brazilians—what she translates—are remarkably consistent even as she adjusts aspects of her representational process. She defines Brazil by essentialisms in her original manuscript for the 1962 Time-Life *Brazil*. Bishop's original text for the book differs significantly from the final version. In his 2011 *Prose*, Lloyd

Schwartz has recreated Bishop's original text as closely as possible from her extant original typescript held at Vassar, and her handwritten copies in her personal copy of *Brazil*.<sup>6</sup> A comparison of Schwartz's reconstruction of her original manuscript and the final published version of the book reveals Bishop's original assertions about the types of Brazilians she attempts to define for her audience.<sup>7</sup> It does not, however, reveal Bishop as a proto-postcolonial critic. If anything, the editors toned down and adjusted some of Bishop's more acerbic language or possibly offensive sections. Her manuscript makes explicit many of the views that are implicit in her earlier and later writings. The poems she published in the *New Yorker* from 1960 to 1964 are based on three different categories of "Other" Brazilians which she delineates in the first chapter of her book. Bishop defines "the Indians," the "backlands people" and the "rural/semirural population" by measuring them in terms of their "backwardness" in relation to modern Western society and upper-class Brazilians:

Men from two, three, or more eras of European history live simultaneously in Brazil today. The coastal cities from Belém at the mouth of the Amazon River to Pôrto Alegre in the south, are filled with 20<sup>th</sup> Century men with 20<sup>th</sup> Century problems on their minds: getting on in the world and rising in it socially; how to pay for schools and doctors and clothes. Then in the surrounding countryside is a rural or semirural population who lead lives at least half a century behind the times, old-fashioned both agriculturally and socially. And for the people of the fishing villages, for those living on the banks of the great rivers, for cowboys and miners—all of the backlands people—time seems to have stopped in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Then, if one ventures even a little farther, one enters the really timeless, prehistoric world of the Indians (*Prose* 168).

These categorizations are present in her poems before 1957 as well; in her Samambaia poems, Bishop associated herself with other "20<sup>th</sup> Century" people who observe the lives of the "rural or semirural" population. The juxtaposition of their lives "at least half a

century behind the times” is the source of her humor in “Manuelzinho” and her exotic fascination in “Squatter’s Children” and “Questions of Travel.” Bishop shares the anxiety of their “20<sup>th</sup> Century problems,” which she associates with urban dwelling. Bishop connects the “20<sup>th</sup> Century coastal” people with educated, cosmopolitan people around the world; she conflates the “problems on their minds” with the concerns of any first-world country and thus links them with the U.S. audience of her Time-Life book. In doing so, Bishop constructs all Brazilians outside of the upper class as “Other” than her audience and herself.

Rather than overstating my criticism about Bishop’s essentialisms in the book, let me expand my analysis to look at the scope of the encyclopedic series of Time-Life books. Bishop’s book was part of a series called the *Life World Library*. The problematic assumption against which Bishop struggled was the underlying assumption in the series that a country could be defined and categorized within the span of a coffee-table book that was palatable for a wide audience. These books are designed for easy perusal and illustrated by exoticizing images.<sup>8</sup> The titles preceding *Brazil* include *France* (1960), *Germany*, *Mexico*, *Russia*, *India*, and *Italy* (1961). Published in tandem with the 1962 *Brazil* were *Tropical Africa*, *Southeast Asia*, *The Arab World*, *Spain*, *Israel*, and *Japan*, as well as books on various other countries and regions that were published rapidly in the 1960s. Some of the books were organized around essentializing principles, such as *The Arab World* (1968). The “editors of Time-Life” are credited as co-authors on many of the books. A comparison of the books reveals an overview of their in-house style: the volumes feature large pictures and readable text with short paragraphs separated often by



section breaks and large upper-case, differently colored letters that mark the beginning of a new section (in Bishop's *Brazil* the letters are teal and take up two lines of regular text). The section breaks are aesthetic, to break up the text into shorter, more readable parts, rather than because there is a clear transition from one section to another. Sections based on logical paragraph flow in Bishop's original text are reorganized into arbitrary sections in the final version. The pictures and anecdotes in the books are included to satisfy what Regina Przybycien calls "representations of the quaint and exotic so cherished by Time/Life readers" (qtd. in Goldensohn 207). Indeed, many of the revisions of Bishop's text seem to have been made to set up the photographs that are produced on corresponding pages. I want to acknowledge the inherent difficulty of a series of books published on the premise of defining countries palatably for a middle-class U.S. audience rather than overstating my own criticisms of Bishop's text. In her case, the Time-Life editors played up the sensational exoticism of her anecdotes about Brazil in order to meet their audience's expectations. Familiar tropes about Brazilians are often reified through the editing process. But even in her manuscript, Bishop essentializes Brazilians in a way that indicates her sense of her own position or of any traveling U.S. American or European, in relation to the South Americans upon whom she is gazing.

Bishop's manuscript also reveals the changes in her relationship with Lota as she reacts against, rather than embraces, Lota's views of Brazil. Bishop's depictions of "primitives" faithfully adhered to her sources which, for the first time since she arrived in 1951, did not include Lota. It is certainly true to say, with David Kalstone, that Lota mediated Brazil for Bishop in the early years. But Lota was uninterested in "primitives,"

an indifference she shares with others of her class and position. As Bishop told Lowell, like many of the Brazilian elite, “Lota refuses to have anything to do with anything Brazilian or ‘primitive’” and told Bishop she wanted “something more civilized rather than less when she goes traveling” (*Words in Air* 318).<sup>9</sup> Lota’s aversion to “anything Brazilian or ‘primitive’” is similar to the “conventional, official idealization” Claude Lévi-Strauss recounts in *Tristes Tropiques* as part of the Brazilian elite’s worldview in the 1930s. The upper-class Brazilians overlooked or ignored what they viewed as the less-than-desirable aspects of their country. Lévi-Strauss recalls the occasion on which he received an invitation to work as a sociology professor at the University of São Paulo in 1934 and was promised by Célestin Bouglé that São Paulo was a city with “suburbs full of Indians” (*TT* 47). The description of São Paulo was erroneous and ignorant.<sup>10</sup> Still, he was surprised at the advice from the Brazilian ambassador to Paris to “forget about the Indians. You won’t come across a single one.” Lévi-Strauss found the remarks “quite incredible,” but indicative of the Brazilian elite who “could not bear any allusion to Indians or more generally to the primitive conditions of the interior” (*TT* 48).<sup>11</sup> Lévi-Strauss surmises that the ambassador erased Brazil’s “Indian” population in order to forget the period in which his generation and others before them would hang the clothes of smallpox victims and other gifts on paths frequented by “Indians” in order to systematically eradicate them from the country. Two decades later, Lota made a similar move in her relationship with Bishop; her disinterest was not just a passive indifference but an active desire to portray her country as current and modern rather than backwards and ignorant. This is particularly true of “The Riverman,” which Lota disliked

immensely. According to Lorrie Goldensohn, “Lota’s distrust of the poem stemmed from her dislike of Bishop’s or anyone’s interest in the primitive; an activist in advance of her country’s backwardness, she was impatient with what seemed to be her American friend’s regressive fascination with Indians, or in this case, the caboclo, or mixture of Indian and European” (209). Lota’s frustration with Bishop’s portrayals were, to some degree at least, a desire to erase a less-than-cosmopolitan aspect to her country.

Lota’s impatience was also an indication of the growing rift between the women. The tension in Bishop’s relationship with Lota in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the result of complex factors. Their financial situation was increasingly dire. In 1958, despite good reviews, *The Diary of “Helena Morley”* was not selling well. Bishop’s letters from the time are full of complaints about the Brazilian inflation, references to their need for a new garage or her excitement at selling long poems like “The Riverman” and “Burglar of Babylon” to the *New Yorker*, which paid by the line. Lota was in difficult financial straits—she wasn’t selling any more land and the increased inflation was lowering her income significantly. When the construction on the Samambaia house was finished, Lota was without a project to fill her time. Because of their financial constraints, Bishop was perplexed that Lota took on a full-time position without pay. But when Lota was asked by Carlos Lacerda, who became the first governor of the new state of Guanabara on December 5, 1960, to be head of the task-force redesigning the Aterro de Flamengo, she accepted unequivocally. On January 20, 1961, the appointment became official. In 1961, just after “The Riverman” was published, Lota moved their residence from Samambaia to Rio permanently.

The political constraints within which Lota would struggle for the next seven years were multifaceted. Lota faced political wrangling from the very beginning of her appointment as the head of Sursan—as a woman without a university degree, Lota was seen by many as an odd choice to manage the various engineers and architects who would be transforming the Aterro de Flamengo. In typical Lota fashion, in reply to the vague wording of her appointment, she took immediate and complete control, a move which set her up in an adversarial position to many of the more established politicians and city administrators. The opposition to Lota was about her gender, her class and probably her lesbianism, but it was most obviously about her lack of experience and training and her dictatorial management style. Lota exacerbated many arguments by her flamboyant and dramatic responses. She was also accustomed to having the new governor's ear and refused to acknowledge the change in status that his new position entailed. She wrote several long letters to Lacerda over the years, pleading or demanding the resources and changes she felt best in order to turn the Aterro, as Carmen Oliveira notes, into “an immense treed area, which will soon become a mark of the city, as famous as Sugarloaf and the sidewalks of Copacabana” (66-67). Lacerda's own political situation was so precarious that he focused increasingly less on one park in one city.

Lacerda was elected governor just after the “Jan-Jan” ticket of Jânio Quadros and João Goulart won the presidency in October 1960. Quadros was from Lacerda and Lota's party, the UDN, and, though Goulart (“Jango”) remained as one of the last vestiges from the Vargas administration, the antigetulistas were happy that his power was somewhat limited since he was only the vice president (Oliveira 64).<sup>12</sup> Lacerda was a consistently

pro-capitalist, pro-U.S. governor. As Quadros demonstrated support for Cuba and other communist states, Lacerda became increasingly vocal against communism and its influence in South America. The political tension played out in very public ways--after the failed U.S. attempt to invade Cuba in April 1961, Lacerda asked Manuel Antonio de Verona, director of the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front, to come to Rio to receive commendation for his efforts. He scheduled the ceremony for August 19, 1961, the same day that President Quadros asked Che Guevara, the Cuban minister of industry and commerce, to Brasília in order to be decorated for his effort opposing the U.S. (Oliveira 77). The volatile reactions against the U.S. involvement in the region led to increased tension, assassination attempts and plots to depose the president or various governors through different coups. Bishop's 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> chapters in her *Brazil* manuscript cover this political season very well; many of the details of the text were heavily or completely overhauled by the editors. Her overview of Quadros's rise to power emphasizes both his popularity ("elected by a tremendous majority, the biggest election ever held in Brazil") and his relative inexperience ("From history teacher, he had gone up all the steps of the political ladder...never having finished one term in office") in order to explain the radically unexpected move Quadros made less than a year after being elected (*Prose* 245). According to Bishop's account, Lacerda was deeply involved in Quadros's undoing by making "the sensational revelation that he had been asked to join a Quadros plot to close down Congress entirely" (246). Apparently frustrated that his attempt to gain additional powers had been rebuffed, Quadros launched a power move to try to overrule Congress and then, when that backfired, he resigned.

The move was so dramatic and unexpected that the country was shocked. As Bishop wrote, Quadros's letter of resignation on 25 August 1961 "claimed devotion to Brazil and hinted at threats from mysterious foreign powers" (*Prose* 246). Goulart took office, a move to which the *antigetulistas* were vehemently opposed. There was a crisis of power for several weeks as the army, Congress and the new president jockeyed for their political positions; the country finally settled into a system of *parlamentarismo*: "that is, Goulart would be allowed to take office as president, but his powers would be curbed by having a prime minister" (246). The ensuing unrest and increased volatility only contributed to Bishop's sense that the country was "awful." In 1963, Lacerda sheltered at Samambaia during an attempt on his life, a scene which Oliveira fictionalizes dramatically by having Mary Morse Stearns, who still lived on the property, scrounging for sheets to put on the beds for Lacerda's men (101-102). The more distracted Lacerda became by his own political entanglements, the harder Lota fought for his attention for the park. She faced mutiny from her employees, resistance from the public, political intrigue, as well as ineptitude and corruption. Lota fought ferociously against all of these forces; her efforts involved all of her energy and eventually consumed her to the point that she was no longer capable of caring for Bishop in the way that she had in the first decade together.

Lota's stress and inattention as she poured herself into transforming the Aterro took its toll on Bishop, who struggled not to drink. Lota hired a maid for their apartment in Leme, Joana, with whom Bishop played a cat-and-mouse game as Joana tried to keep Bishop away from alcohol. Bishop's drinking only increased the tension between her and

Lota. Bishop's asthma was worse in the city. Her time in Rio was less productive; she was writing less and what she wrote she did not like. The stress of these factors added up until, by 1964, Bishop's separation from Lota was almost complete. In turning to "primitive" Brazil, Bishop reacts against the personal and political stress she felt in Rio.

### **"Indians" as Objects for the Touristic Gaze**

Bishop's first attempt to write about "primitive Brazil" was an essay called "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians," which she submitted to the *New Yorker* in October 1958 (*Bishop & The New Yorker*, 205). The essay chronicled an August 1958 trip she made to the controversial capital of Brasília with Aldous Huxley, his wife, and an international party of journalists, diplomats and friends. From Brasília, Bishop and the Huxleys went further west, near the border with Bolivia, on a day trip to visit an "Indian" village. Bishop describes their journey in an August 1958 letter to Robert Lowell as "the best trip I've made here so far" (*WA* 264).<sup>13</sup> She was particularly struck by the "Indians" they encountered, which she described to Lowell as "quite naked, just a few beads; handsome, plump, behaving just like gentle children a little spoiled." As an American tourist in the interior, Bishop discovered "the fresh, primitive Brazil with which she had lost touch" (Fountain-Brazeau 164). Once again, the country was defamiliarized.

The editors' rejection of the piece a month later was instrumental in narrowing the focus of the subsequent poems she wrote.<sup>14</sup> Bishop agreed when William Maxwell wrote that the editors found inaccuracies in the architectural descriptions of the new buildings being built in Brasília and that they felt that "Huxley doesn't come through well," despite

the fact that “the Indians were beautiful to read about” (*Elizabeth Bishop and The New Yorker* 208). Bishop wrote Anny Baumann that the “material just didn’t go together.” The four distinct parts of the essay have very little narrative arc: the first section examines the difficulty of setting up a capital in the middle of the country with Bishop’s commentary on contemporary Brazilian architecture; the second criticizes then-president Juscelino Kubitschek’s decision to create a world-class capital in the middle of the Brazilian interior; the third provides anecdotes about traveling with Huxley and the group through the capital; and the fourth narrates their day trip to visit a Xavante Indian village. However, as the rejection by the *New Yorker* editors of “The Shampoo” forced her domestic intimacy with Lota to the background of her other Samambaia poems, their praise of the “Indians” encouraged that subject to the forefront of the poems she wrote over the next few years. In 1959, just months after their rejection of the Aldous Huxley text, Bishop sent “The Riverman” to the *New Yorker*, her first poetic submission to the magazine in three years, followed closely by “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” both of which White accepted with great acclaim.<sup>15</sup>

In the beginning of the essay, Bishop espouses Lota’s political views in the criticism of the Brazilian government as she does in earlier texts. Bishop and Lota both found the new capital a ludicrous endeavor by then-president Juscelino Kubitschek that created more socioeconomic problems and did not solve the existing issues that were crippling the country.<sup>16</sup> Bishop’s overview of the political situation and Kubitschek, while ostensibly allowing for multiple views, is clearly critical of his government. She lays out the concerns of the “pro-Brasília group” and compares their building of the new



capital to the establishment of Washington. She quotes Anthony Trollope's 1861 writing on the new United States capital and notes that other "prophets of failure were wrong about Washington, and it behooves Americans to be particularly careful in predictions about Brasília" (*Prose* 321). She gives an overview of the pro-Brasília group's case but quickly undercuts their arguments.<sup>17</sup> Lota's voice is evident in the criticisms laid out against the Brazilian capital: "those opposed to Brasília feel that it might be done to begin with more modestly and economically, and by means more in keeping with Brasil's present desperate financial state" (293). Her list of Brazilian needs, "schools, roads, and railroads, above all; then medical care, improved methods of agriculture, and dams and electric power" make the subsequent portrayal of architectural marvels particularly damning (293). The flashier the architecture, the more out-of-touch the government appears in Bishop's (and Lota's) views.

The later sections shift away from Lota as Bishop's source and move to the anthropologists whose work Bishop would use as a source for her subsequent arguments about Brazilian society. Bishop also returns to her role as a tourist-voyeur. Her writing about the "Indians" is modeled on the descriptions of native villages that Lévi-Strauss describes in *Tristes Tropiques*. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, Bishop had almost certainly read *Tristes Tropiques* by the time she wrote the introduction to the diary, which told of her 1956 trip to Diamantina.<sup>18</sup>

The probability of the book's influence on her views of Brazil is heightened by the many tonal and structural similarities between her essay and *Tristes Tropiques*. The form of Bishop's essay, the narrative position from which she writes and the

disconnected way in which she brings together the disparate subjects have correlations with the structure, tone, descriptions, and approaches used by Lévi-Strauss. In *Tristes Tropiques* Lévi-Strauss's subjective viewpoint, the details of his travels, his personal relationships and impressions, are as much the subject of the book as the cultures he visited.<sup>19</sup> The book is one of the original examples of “reflexive” ethnography which, according to Lévi-Strauss's biographer, Paul Wilcken, is “a blend of confessional literature and ethnography” (210). The subject matter and settings shift rapidly and often with little apparent reason, meandering from broad categorizations to personal stories in a stream-of-consciousness style.<sup>20</sup> Bishop continually juxtaposes broad historical and political generalizations about Brazil with very specific and personal details of her own trip.<sup>21</sup> In particular, his depiction of the Bororo village, his first experience in a village “where the native culture has remained relatively untouched” serves as a model for Bishop's depictions of Xavantina, the small village they visit (215).<sup>22</sup>

Lévi-Strauss's writing about their bodies, hair, clothing and body art is echoed by Bishop. As Lévi-Strauss describes them,

The men were quite naked except for the little straw cornet covering the top of the penis and kept in place by the foreskin, which is stretched through the opening to form a little roll of flesh on the outside. The majority were smeared from head to foot with red pigment made by pounding urucu seeds in fat. Even their hair, which was worn either shoulder-length or cut in a round mop at ear level, was covered with this paste and so took on the appearance of a helmet. Other paintings were superimposed on this base...The women wore a cotton loincloth dyed with urucu around a stiff bark belt supporting a softer strip of beaten white bark which passed between the thighs (*TT* 217).

In Bishop's passage, she repeats many of his images, including the red paint on naked bodies, the women's loincloths, the men's bowl-like haircuts covered in paste:

The Uialapiti are short but well-built, the men almost plump, with smooth muscles, broad shoulders, and smooth broad chests. They are naked except for shell necklaces and strings of beads or shells around the hips; the women wear a symbolic *cache sexe* of palm leaf folded into a little rectangle about an inch and half long, secured by a fine string woven from the same palm. This almost invisible article of dress is important; sometimes they stop and turn their backs to adjust the string. Their hair is very thick and surprisingly fine and glossy; the women wear it long, with no bangs; the men in inverted bowl haircuts...Most of the men had locks of hair or the whole crown of the head smeared with a bright red, sticky paint they make from the *urucum* tree, the only dye, and color, they possess (*Prose* 312).

Bishop also echoes a puberty ritual which Lévi-Strauss describes in some detail in the Caduveo village, where there was a feast to celebrate the puberty of a girl living in another hut (176). Bishop's tourists went en masse to ask questions about a young girl's puberty initiation and to gaze behind a fence of "twigs and palm leaves" at a lean-to in which "silent and invisible, the girl is supposed to stay for three months, six months in some tribes, only coming out at night to get a little fresh air" (216). The puberty ritual is one of the few details in Bishop's that is grimmer in the Xavante village than the rituals Lévi-Strauss records.

Bishop is self-aware of the tourists' primitivizing views but in portraying the "Indians," she relies on tropes that depict Native Americans as ignorant, naked, and child-like even as she pokes fun at herself for having those views. Bishop turns the humor on herself and her fellow travelers' shared interest in the "Indians," their naïve questions and their privileged positions. When asked the meaning of a "polished black calabash" hanging on the rafters of a hut, the Cambridge student responded, "Oh, they just happened to like it...They're human beings too, you know." This ironic jab at the tourists underscores Bishop's own self-deprecating descriptions of their questions and

assumptions. She also records the way the villagers rehearsed the role they were expected to play for the tourists—they shook hands, expected cigarettes, asked for “*Caramelo? Chocalate? Caramelo?*” and performed “a wrestling match put on for our benefit” (314, 316). One man, a visitor from a village that had been “in contact with white men for only two years,” understood the tourists’ expectation of his body as primitive: “when asked to pose for a photograph he politely removed his clothes” (315). Bishop gives several examples in which the “Indians” made embarrassing or otherwise funny observations about the group, including the man who asked if Bishop would “stay behind and be his wife” (318). Though she uses her humor to good effect on herself, Bishop unquestioningly fits her descriptions of the “Indian” village in the role of comical foils even as she depicts the Americans in humorous ways as well.

### **An “Indian” as a “Noble Savage” Foil to the *New Yorker* Audience**

The second text that Bishop writes relying on her category of “Indians” is the poem that she submitted to the *New Yorker* soon after the trip. Bishop demonstrates a different type of stereotype in fictionalizing “The Riverman.” She speaks behind the mask of the “noble savage” in order to write about a threatened culture and provide a point of comparison for her audience about their problematic modern world. Bishop uses the form of dramatic monologue regularly throughout her poetic career, often to take on the voice of an “Other,” as she does in “Songs for a Colored Singer” and “Jerónimo’s House,” or to provide a narrative viewpoint other than her own, as she does with Lota as the speaker in “Manuelzinho” or later as Robinson Crusoe in “Crusoe in England.” In a

1966 interview with Ashley Brown, Bishop asserts that using the form of a dramatic monologue “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” (26).<sup>23</sup> Continuing her metaphor, in her dramatic monologue “The Riverman,” Bishop puts on a mask that is marked with familiar signifiers that are read by her audience in a way that exoticizes and contextualizes the speaker as “Other.”

The poem is a faithful representation of contemporary anthropological views in the books Bishop read and the expectations of the “Other” that Bishop and her audience shared. Bishop uses these signifiers that mark her character as primitive in order to demonstrate her speaker’s authenticity as a Brazilian Indian. However, in “The Riverman” and her letters about it, Bishop shows her representational values to be the opposite of the ones held by postcolonial critics today. James Clifford gives an overview of the shift in anthropological disciplinary criteria from the generation Bishop read to current anthropologists in *Routes*. According to Clifford, Franz Boas’s generation and the one he trained viewed the village as “a manageable unit” that “served as synecdoche, as point of focus, or part, through which one could represent the cultural whole”—that simple view “has largely gone out of style in current anthropology” (21). Poststructuralist literary critics, following the disciplinary shift of anthropologists, should question the use of one fictionalized “riverman” who could speak for an entire group. Sílvia Maria Guerra Anastácio and Elisabete da Silva Barbosa, co-authors of “Lendas Brasileiras e a Poesia de Elizabeth Bishop: *O Ribeirinho*” [Brazilian Legends and the Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop: *The Riverman*] argue that the poem is “uma representação da representação, considerando

que Bishop, além de ter ficado particularmente impressionada com a força imagética das divindades de nosso folclore, também se inspirou no texto do antropólogo Wagley para escrever o seu poema” [a representation of representation, considering that Bishop, having been particularly impressed with the strength of the imagery of our folklore deities, was also inspired by the text of the anthropologist Wagley to write her poem] (186). They lay out Bishop’s interest in umbanda (the Brazilian voodoo religion), especially the goddess Yemanjá, and trace the influence of Spiritist folklore on several drafts of “The Riverman.” As a poem written by a white U.S. tourist poet based on the words of a white U.S. ethnographer, imagining what it might be like to be a *sacaca* in an Amazonian river, it is a beautiful poem with strong images and lovely language, but it is not an authentic representation of an actual Brazilian.

Bishop’s own sense of why the poem was problematic reveals her approach to the authenticity of the subject matter. Her discomfort was primarily derived from the fact that the details of the poem were not based on her own observations but on the book *Amazon Town* by the Boasian anthropologist Charles Wagley.<sup>24</sup> The poem came out in the *New Yorker* on 2 April 1960; three weeks later, Bishop wrote Lowell: “You don’t have to like the ‘Riverman’ poem. Lota hates it, and I don’t approve of it myself, but once it was written I couldn’t seem to get rid of it. Now I am doing an authentic, post-Amazon one that I trust will be better,” a reference to “Santarém,” which would not be published until 1978 (*OA* 382). Her use of the term “authentic” relies on her consistent definition of that term—that the poem result from an instance or a situation she saw with her own eyes. She certainly did not question whether the poem was inauthentic because she as an

American white woman was appropriating the voice of a Brazilian Native American in order to speak to her *New Yorker* audience.

Bishop's editor Katharine White relies on Bishop's own sense of authenticity, framing the poem as an accurate portrayal of a Brazilian voice in a way that demonstrates the expectations of an audience primed to view Brazilians as "noble savages."<sup>25</sup> In her 6 July 1959 acceptance letter, White calls the poem "Worth waiting for! For me, it's a magical poem that casts a spell--one of your very best" (*EBNY* 210). In a later letter with various editorial changes, White asks Bishop to "Excuse all this fuss. The poem is such an important one that we want to get it entirely right" (213). A year later, Bishop writes White in relief that her worries about inauthenticity seem to be unfounded. She recounts the trip she finally made "down the Amazon from Manaus to Belém. I was afraid I'd find I'd made mistakes in 'The Riverman,' but I hadn't. I saw a great many 'dolphins' (river porpoises, really), pink and black—the pink ones bring good luck" (230). White's enthusiastic reaction indicates the way she assumes this poem will be accepted by her audience, as a true portrayal of a Brazilian Other, and Bishop is relieved to find in her trip to the Amazon nothing that discounts that view.

In order to provide the primitivizing signifiers that mark her persona of the Riverman as "authentic" to Bishop and her audience, she drew from at least three different sources: Charles Wagley's *Amazon Town*, her own experience with spiritism, and her brief trip into the native village with Aldous Huxley and their group. While Bishop uses details from Wagley's text, she continues to write with an approach that is more like Lévi-Strauss than it is like Wagley. The difference between Lévi-Strauss's

anthropological approach and Wagley's is stark. Lévi-Strauss's grief and frustration over the loss of cultures that have been subsumed by Western "monoculture" spreading through the region lies in direct opposition to the underlying warrant of *Amazon Town*, that change and progress are necessary, inevitable and desirable. Bishop retains Lévi-Strauss's criticism of modern civilization in "Aldous Huxley, A New Capital and Some Indians." In her introduction in *The Yale Review*, Page argues that "Notes of discomfort and disappointment dominate" the essay's narrative (78). Page gives Bishop's temperament as the source for her dark view of the capital, which might be the case, but her pessimism is also Lévi-Straussian as she laments the fact that concrete cities, airports, and roads cover what were once pristine paradises.

Wagley's positivist approach to native cultures and philosophical framework differed greatly from Lévi-Strauss's.<sup>26</sup> Through cultural examination of the Amazon Valley and its societal strata, Wagley speaks for a "backwards" people to argue that they are ripe for cultural appropriation. Wagley maintains an enthusiastic desire to portray "primitive" cultures as discrete and worth preserving. Nonetheless, undergirding his writing in *Amazon Town* is a sense of his own advanced racial and cultural abilities and an abiding sense of the positive nature of the innovations Western civilization brings to his subject the people of the fictional town of Itá: "The people of Itá, like human beings everywhere, are quick to recognize the advantages of such efficient and productive methods and instruments," he gives the example of their enthusiastic embrace of DDT (253). He consistently describes societal change in positivist terms—in the title of the chapter Bishop uses as the source for the details in "The Riverman," Wagley assumes



that the society in Itá is moving “From Magic to Science.” Far from trying to protect the primitive cultures he encounters, Wagley lays out their customs and beliefs in order to better aid those who would assimilate them and eliminate the “rejection of scientific concepts crucial to technological change in the Amazon Valley” (217). He retains a classist, ethnocentric viewpoint that assumes industrialization is synonymous with amelioration.

In the ethnographic approach Bishop uses in “The Riverman,” her tone is nostalgic, not positivist; she borrows narrative but not method from Wagley. The poem recounts the Riverman’s experiences being called by the river spirit, Luandinha, to partake in mystical ceremonies that mark him as a *sacaca*, a shaman whose line Wagley records as part of the magical aspects of the Amazonian culture that are being replaced by science. Wagley assumes that the end of the line of *sacacas* is necessary and inevitable; Bishop uses details from Wagley to poem to configure her Riverman as the last in a proud line of shamans whose existence is at risk because of modernization. The threats of modernization are inherent in the imagery of the poem. The Riverman repeatedly compares nature to items that demonstrate the extent to which modern civilization has infiltrated his otherwise primitive life. In the first stanza, the Riverman follows the Dolphin’s call into the river by the light of the moon, which was “burning bright / as the gasoline-lamp mantle / with the flame turned up too high, / just before it begins to scorch” (*Complete Poems* 105). Luandinha’s parties in the river are lit by “a steady stream of light / like at the cinema” (*CP* 107). The worms that inhabit the river have “tiny electric eyes” (108). When he needs a “virgin mirror” to see the “spirit’s eyes,” he turns

to the “storekeeper,” the instrument by which new technology is being introduced into his village, for help in finding one (107). At the same time, the Riverman still lives a lifestyle not unlike his ancestors, as his “Godfathers and cousins” row above his head in “canoes” rather than more modern boats checking on the “wicker traps” (109, 107). His concerned wife uses homeopathic remedies, “stinking teas,” to cure him because she says he looks “yellow” (106). Bishop juxtaposes the Riverman’s superstitious, traditional way of living with the imagery in which he references aspects of encroaching modernization. For a Lévi-Straussian writer, this evidence of new technology indicates the end of an ancient way of life.

Bishop makes the Riverman a foil to “20<sup>th</sup> century” people with their “20<sup>th</sup> century concerns,” whether those people are in Rio or New York. Like other poets, Bishop uses the “noble savage” motif as a corrective to the politically-charged society with which she is disillusioned.<sup>27</sup> The Riverman’s communion with nature is implicit from the second line of the poem when the “Dolphin spoke to me” and called him into the night for the ceremony in the river. In the voice of “The Riverman,” Bishop uses plainspoken English to appeal to the commonsense of her audience that separating themselves from nature does not lead to happiness:

Look, it stands to reason  
that everything we need  
can be obtained from the river.  
It drains the jungles; it draws  
from trees and plants and rocks  
from half around the world,  
it draws from the very heart of the earth  
the remedy for each of the diseases—  
one just has to know how to find it (*CP* 108).

The tone of the section connects with the colloquial language Bishop used in “Manuelzinho” to appeal to an upper-class *New Yorker* audience. Bishop positions the Riverman as a mediator who is in touch with the secrets of the natural world (“trees and plants and rocks / from half around the world”) even as he speaks in the language of his audience. The “Look” that begins the stanza connotes a speaker who is familiar with an urban audience’s anxieties even as he politely argues (“it stands to reason”) the opposite position of those held by his audience. His role is to implicate the worldview of people who do not know “how to find” “everything we need.” The persona’s assertion that “everything must be there / in that magic mud” indicates nature’s capacity to reduce the stress of the people who are not in touch with the river’s secrets. In order to find these cures, the Riverman uses a magical ability to travel “fast as I wish, / with my magic cloak of fish / swerving as I swerve, / following the veins, / the river’s long, long veins, / to find the pure elixirs” (108-109). His mystical connection to nature, demonstrated by the fish that follow every move his body makes, is one of the tropes of the “noble savage” she relies on in the poem.

Bishop used the basic framework of Wagley’s text for her own poem, but she adjusts the narrative to provide actual details from her own experiences. In the poem she mentions several *sacacas* her Riverman aspires to be like, all drawn from Wagley: The Riverman strives to be “like Fortunato Pombo, / or Lúcio, or even / the great Joaquim Sacaca” (CP 108). Luandinha, the deity who sanctions the Riverman’s ritual in Bishop’s poem as he becomes a *sacaca* is mentioned only briefly by Wagley: Joaquim Sacaca was often summoned into the river by “Luandinha, a female spirit said to have been a large

water snake, would call him, and he would disappear to spend a few hours with her in the depths of the Amazon” (228). Bishop drew from her understanding of spiritism, particularly the traditional figure of Yemanjá, the goddess who is queen of the sea and is often confused with the Virgin Mary, in the Brazilian spiritualist tradition of macumba. Bishop’s Luandinha takes on many of the folkloric qualities of Yemanjá in her description: the “tall, beautiful serpent / in elegant white satin, / with her big eyes green and gold / like the lights on the river steamer” resembles the typical descriptions of Yemanjá. Anastácio and Barbosa note that Bishop copied traditional portrayals of Yemanjá who “Veste-se, geralmente, toda de branco” [is dressed, generally, all in white] and sometimes appears with a school of fish (167).<sup>28</sup> These details in Bishop’s poem do not appear in Wagley’s book. Because she had not yet visited the Amazon, Anastácio and Barbosa assert that Bishop spent time gazing at the sandy areas around the Copacabana beach in order to imagine the divinity Luandinha and her surroundings; many of the earlier drafts of the poem show details from Copacabana as Bishop adjusts the descriptors she uses for Luandinha (169). Macumba is also the basis for parts of the ritual in which the Riverman became a *sacaca*, including the use of *cachaça* (a vodka-like drink made of fermented sugarcane), “decorated cigars,” a room “filled with gray-green smoke,” a female leader who “blew cigar smoke / into my ears and nostrils,” much like the traditional figure of the Mãe Santa in traditional Macumba ceremonies are drawn from the spiritism around Bishop more than the Wagley text. These images from the folk religion would have been ubiquitous in Bishop’s time in Brazil, just as they are today.<sup>29</sup> When the poem is taken as anything other than a “representation of a representation” in

which Bishop applied these and other primitivizing markers to a fictional character, it becomes problematic. The violence that occurs in Bishop's representational strategies in "The Riverman" is not repeated to the same degree in her later poems.

### **"Indians" Who Demonstrate Agency**

Bishop's "Indian" in "The Riverman" is contaminated by progress; she relies on the other stereotype Clifford identifies in the next poem she submitted to the *New Yorker*, "Brazil, January 1, 1502" in depicting tribal people as "primitive and untouched." She also returns to the vantage point with which she is more comfortable in writing from a distance, in this case both the temporal distance of centuries of history as well as the removed position of her speaker in relation to the action of the poem. In imagining the first conquerors' interaction with the jungle, wildlife and people of Brazil, Bishop fictionalizes Lévi-Strauss's concerns about the ills of modern society and the loss of an unsullied utopia. But she moves away from the problematic portrayal of "noble savages" inherent in "The Riverman." As I argued in chapter 1, Bishop's "Indians" in the "Brazil, January 1, 1502" poem are a transformative interpretation of the banana dancers in *The Gang's All Here*. But one of the other sources for the women was Little Flower from Clarice Lispector's "A Menor Mulher do Mundo," which she was translating from the Portuguese. The move from the overly simplistic "Riverman" to the complex "Brazil, January 1, 1502" marks a significant shift in Bishop's representations of Brazilians.

Lispector's "A Menor Mulher do Mundo," written in 1955, was included in the collection *Laços de família* (1960). The story chronicles the interaction between the

French explorer Marcel Pretre and the smallest woman in the world, whom he calls “Little Flower,” in equatorial Africa. A life-size photograph of Little Flower is published in the Sunday supplement of the newspaper (never named, but presumably a paper in Rio de Janeiro) and the speaker shifts from recording the encounter between Pretre and Little Flower to providing the reaction of several upper-class readers to the picture of Little Flower: One woman is repulsed by it, another feels such sympathy that she is impacted all day. A five-year-old suffers an existential crisis in which she realizes that she herself is not the smallest person in the world. A woman tells her daughter that Little Flower’s feelings are those of an animal. A mother of a little boy associates the primal urges of her ferocious child with the picture of the “savage” in the paper. A family measured out her height on the wall and became enthralled with the idea of owning that small human being. The narrative then returns to Little Flower, who laughs at the explorer’s reverence for her existence. She demonstrates her agency by refusing to be categorized or classified by him. She feels a type of love for him that has as much to do with his non-threatening stance toward her (he is not eating her). He is taken aback by her laughter and by his inability to capture her. The story ends with him attempting to cover his embarrassment by recording anthropological information about her because “Those who didn’t take notes had to manage as best they could,” followed by the assertion of an “old lady” reading the paper that “God knows what He’s doing” (*Prose* 384).

Bishop was working on the translation of the short story in 1959, when she submitted “Brazil, January 1, 1502” to the *New Yorker*. In her poem, she repeats the phrase “retreating, always retreating” to describe the way the women escape from the

conquistadors' advances.<sup>30</sup> She first used the phrase to translate Lispector's description of the way Little Flower's people, the Likouala, always ran from ("sempre a recuar e a recuar") the savage Bantu hunters who terrorized them (Lispector 82). The Bantus in Lispector's story are a constant threat to the Likouala's existence; Lispector creates a triangulated relationship between the Likouala, who are being hunted, the Bantu who endanger them and the explorer, Marcel Pretre, who "discovered" them. The explorer is not the immediate threat from which they are always "retreating," and yet his presence portends a different danger for their existence. The explorer took the picture of her that appeared in the paper. Lispector then expands the narrative formulation by adding the reaction of the different families to Little Flower's picture. In straightforward language, each new section begins with "in another house" or "in another apartment" and demonstrates how Little Flower's picture was the catalyst for existentialist reactions to the "Other." The five-year-old's existential crisis prompts an uneasiness that she would only later put into words; the picture "made her feel, in her first wisdom, that 'sorrow is endless'" (*Prose* 382). Bishop echoes the surprise the little girl feels and the inability to put that feeling into words in her "In the Waiting Room," published in the 17 July 1971 issue of the *New Yorker*. Her fictionalization of her own first memory of seeing "Others" is remarkably similar to the way Lispector uses Little Flower's image as an object upon which the different viewers project their responses.

The majority of this short story is not about Little Flower or even her picture, but about the way the picture reveals the essentialisms inherent in the people's reactions to seeing it in the paper. Little Flower is an object to be acquired, for the family who want

her to serve at their table “with her big little belly!” or for the explorer whose heart beat when he saw her “because no emerald in the world is so rare” (383, 381). Her body, typified by its unusual size, is a location upon which to enact their desires or to place their fears. An entire household responds to the picture in starkly colonial fashion: “In the heart of each member of the family was born, nostalgic, the desire to have that tiny and indomitable thing for itself, that thing spared having been eaten, that permanent source of charity. The avid family soul wanted to devote itself. To tell the truth, who hasn’t wanted to own a human being just for himself?” (383). Their collective reactions to her body, its size, nakedness, and condition of pregnancy, are of little concern to Little Flower, however.

In the beginning and ending of the story, Little Flower achieves an agency that is unaffected by the Othering of the explorer whom she encounters or the people who react to her picture. The explorer’s initial reaction to the body of “a woman that the greed of the most exquisite dream could never have imagined” is to control her through the act of naming, even though he speaks to her with “a delicacy of feeling of which his wife would never have thought him capable” (381). His short declarative sentence does not just change her name, but attempts to remake her entire identity: ““You are Little Flower”” (381). The woman’s response is to scratch herself “where no one scratches.” Her lack of concern to this act of reconstituting her identity is clear—she has complete control of her body and is neither affected nor controlled by the explorer’s name. At the end of the section highlighting the many responses to her picture, Lispector turns to the “rare thing itself” (“a própria coisa rara”).<sup>31</sup> With an ironic jab at the people who wanted to control



her, Lispector writes about the feeling of “the rare thing herself...in her heart—and who knows if the heart wasn’t black, too, since once nature has erred she can no longer be trusted” (383). By poking fun at the people who reacted to her as an object rather than a person, Lispector focuses on Little Flower’s agency in responding to the ministrations of the explorer who is studying her belly as an object. Instead of being afraid, she laughs from pure joy at not being eaten. She demonstrates self-control in not jumping from “branch to branch” as she felt the impulse to do; instead, she channels her desire for action into a laugh which “the explorer, constrained, couldn’t classify.” From the moment in which the explorer is constrained by Little Flower’s agency in responding against the explorer’s expectations by laughing, Lispector shifts the point of view slowly from the woman who is being examined to her feelings for the man. She loves the “sallow man,” though Lispector’s “aquêle explorador amarelo”—that yellow explorer—has a more colloquial feel than Bishop’s choice of phrase (*Prose* 383, Lispector 87). As Little Flower notices the things she loves about him, including his boots, and as Lispector contextualizes this as a love that is not erotic but has to do with the joy of existence, Little Flower becomes the center of the description. By the end of the story, the explorer is unsure, unable to read her expressions, and “embarrassed as only a very big man can be embarrassed” (383). Lispector records his attempt to get control of the situation by “adjusting the symbolic helmet” in order to “severely recapture the discipline of his work” (383). Put off by her agency, unable to do much more than attempt to “interpret their signs,” Marcel Pretre “had some difficult moments with himself.” The woman

understands him as he cannot understand her; the story ends with her Little Flower the insightful person, not Pretre.

This translation is a turning point for Bishop. The transition in her portrayals of “Others” comes not from the act of translating the text but from the content of the story itself, the self-critical irony that Lispector pointed at herself and at her audience in using universal language. Bishop’s connection between the retreating Likouala and Bishop’s “maddening little women” is based on their location in the jungle, their size, their bodies as sexual objects to be conquered, and the fact that they are being hunted in order to be consumed, whether metaphorically or physically. Continuing Lispector’s relationships, Bishop as the observer of the conquistadors who are chasing the women is more like the explorer Marcel Pretre, and her audience is the people whose reactions to the picture revealed their own objectifications and essentialisms.

Unlike Pretre, however, in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” Bishop is a more self-aware explorer and translator. Bishop writes about the active quality of Nature, who “greet our eyes” and who is the subject of the first stanza as “she” instills growth in the jungle (*CP* 91). In Lispector’s story, the smallest people in the heart of the equatorial jungle were a result of “the necessity nature sometimes feels of outdoing herself” (*Prose* 380). The presence of Bishop’s “maddening little women” and Little Flower’s people is positioned by both writers as an act of nature that makes the entrance of the Westerners, conquistadors or explorers or even Western poets, unnatural and intrusive. In Bishop’s poem, the conquistadors are part Bantu (she uses the word “Bahunde” in her translation) in their savage hunting of the little women but also the tourist/anthropologist-voyeur.

Marcel Pretre when he encountered the small woman, “immediately began to collect facts about her,” so that he could “classify her among the recognizable realities” (380). In the same way, the conquistadors (and by implication, Bishop and her western audience) “came and found it all, / not unfamiliar” (92). Bishop’s women demonstrate their agency not only by not being captured by the conquistadors but also in their resistance of anthropological classifications. They are not captured, either literally or metaphorically, as Little Flower was captured by the photograph, and therefore they are not objects to be clothed in signifiers or used as foils for an audience to measure itself against.

The difference between the “noble savage” in “The Riverman” and the “maddening little women” is significant and Bishop does not return to the earlier, much more problematic portrayals. Using a Lévi-Straussian nostalgia for cultural elements that are disappearing because of increasing globalization and industrialization, Bishop writes two more poems about “Other” Brazilians in traditional or picturesque scenery. She achieves in “The Burglar of Babylon,” especially, a balance similar to Lispector’s four-sided relationship as she implicates herself as the outsider looking on through binoculars and her upper-class neighbors and audience even as she gives the burglar Micuçu, who is being hunted by the police, agency and complexity similar to Little Flower’s. Her next character, Balthazár, retains Little Flower’s ability to be unaffected by the views of the person observing him and to respond with laughter in a way that asserts his own humanity.

### **Balthazár, One of the “Backlands People”**

In April 1964, Bishop published “Twelfth Morning, or What You Will” in the *New York Review of Books*. The poem is written about Cabo Frio, the beach town just east of Rio where she and Lota spent Christmases for several years at their friend Manoel Leão’s house. In this poem, Bishop captures the picturesque scenery and poor living situation of a category of people whom she identifies in her Time-Life book as being like “the backlands people,” who live in “fishing villages” or “on the banks of the great rivers” and for whom “time seems to have stopped in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century.”<sup>32</sup> The desire to capture this simplistic and old-fashioned way of life before it vanishes is inherent in the poem. In changing the title to “Twelfth Morning” instead of night, Bishop marks the day on which the poem takes place as the Feast of Epiphany. Though Bishop certainly plays on what Bonnie Costello calls “a Shakespearean comparison of perspectives between classes,” the style, subject matter, and quatrain form link it to another Christmas play: *Morte e vida severina* by João Cabral de Melo Neto (39). Placing Bishop’s “Twelfth Morning” in conversation with *Morte e vida severina* provides a richer background to the political statement she makes about Balthazár’s extreme poverty as well as the Christian imagery she uses in the poem. Bishop also emphasizes Balthazár’s blackness as a foil to her whiteness and as a threatened part of Brazilian society.

The character’s poverty and race are immediately evident in the poem. In the first stanza, Bishop emphasizes the character’s blackness with the triple alliteration of “the black boy Balthazár” who shows through the mist “like a first coat of whitewash” (*CP* 110). In her introduction to *White Women Writing White*, Renée Curry proposes two

readings of this stanza: either Bishop has a “rare and provocative self-awareness about her own whiteness as a ‘natural’ veil” or the poem “flaunts a perfect example of essentialist racism” (11). Curry positions her query as particularly important in terms of recent critical views of Bishop as anticipating the postmodern concerns of later writers.<sup>33</sup> Either Bishop is critiquing her own white viewpoint or, in writing a prototypical example of essentialist racism, she “assumes that racial differences stem from nature and these givens of nature prove evident, immovable, and noticeable to everyone—everyone who matters” (Curry 11). Reading this poem in conjunction with Bishop’s own assertions about the racial undertones of regional differences in her manuscript of *Brazil* point to Curry’s second reading as the most accurate, but I propose a third reading: Bishop understood “blackness” as a characteristic that what was “evident, immovable, and noticeable to everyone” that was being permanently lost in the racial mixture of Brazilian society.

In her *Brazil* manuscript, Bishop echoes Gilberto Freyre who describes the racial mixing of Brazil as one of the strengths of the country from which the United States could learn.<sup>34</sup> Bishop celebrates the fact that, despite what she calls the “tragic” and “widespread poverty, backwardness, ignorance and suffering” for millions of Brazilians whose lives are “hungry and dirty, short and cruel,” there is still immense cause for hope (*Prose* 231). In an example that situates Brazil as having achieved the state of racial mixing toward which she assumes the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa are working, Bishop calls it a “revelation” to any “liberal-minded South African or North American” to hear a “black cook calling her

elderly, white mistress *minha negrinha*, ‘my little nigger,’ as a term of affection.” In this paragraph, Bishop demonstrates an enormous misreading of the Portuguese language. Far from the offensive term that is its homonym in the United States, “minha neguinha” (the misspelling “negrinha” remains in both the manuscript and the published version) is a term of affection, not a term of racial reconciliation; just like “pretinha” in *The Diary of “Helena Morley,”* it is a term that can be used between people of any skin color.<sup>35</sup> The fact that the mistresses speak affectionately with their maids might indicate progressiveness in their class relations, but this instance alone does not point to a lack of racial tension.

However, the following paragraph undercut what Bishop purports as forward-leaning views on race relations. In touting “racial mixtures” around the country, Bishop calls Brazil’s “racial situation...one of the country’s greatest assets (*Brazil* 114). The editors’ changed the phrase from “racial situation” to “history of racial assimilation,” a loaded term for the Civil Rights moment, and then wrote in a final sentence that Goldensohn later calls “problematic”: “With each new census, an increasing proportion of the total population is classified as white” (*Brazil* 114). As Goldenson notes, this sentence “seems to imply that the end result of all of this mixing is toward the gradual elimination of blackness, a belief held by early theorists, and hardly one that tends to celebrate mixture” (206). Her assertion is especially true with their substitution of “assimilation” for Bishop’s “situation.” However, Bishop’s earlier version of the paragraph, deleted by the editors, relies on what Clifford would identify as “pseudo-

scientific reductions” of anthropology in identifying the end results of Brazilian racial mixing in ways that are equally problematic.

In her manuscript, Bishop argues that the differences in races between people living in different regions of Brazil are determined by their origins in direction proportion to their mixing of Portuguese, Indian and “Negro” blood and their access to good nutrition, qualities she draws from Gilberto Freyre’s *The Masters and The Slaves*. Her unedited text lays out how these proportions affect the racial mixtures of various Brazilian regions:

In the north, in the Amazon region, Portuguese and Indian have produced the *caboclo*, small, well-built, straight noses, bright eyes—a very attractive physical type. The northeast, after generations of poor diet, has produced the *cabeça-chata*, or “flat-head,” who is also apt to be small, somewhat rickety, with thin arms and legs and a large head, but quick, and certainly prolific. In the south under better living conditions and with little or no Negro admixture, the type is more Portuguese, sometimes with German blood, bigger, fairer with clear skin, calmer—but pugnacious, even inclined to violence. It is in and around the big cities of Rio and São Paulo that one gets every racial type mixed together, types that have lost their racial clarity along with their former agricultural skills and beautiful backlands manners. A man in Goiás will know the name and habits of every beast and bird around him; but the people of regions that have fallen into agricultural decay are sickly-looking bad farmers, to whom every insect is only a *bicho*, or every tree is the ‘five-leaf,’ and all are subject to destruction. The importance of nutrition in Brazil is shown by the fact that the richer and older the family, the taller and bigger-boned they are apt to be. Sometimes their servants from the ‘north’ or the ‘interior’ appear almost like dwarfs beside them” (*Prose* 231-232).

Her focus on the racial differences as dependent upon Brazilian regions, as well as her emphasis on nutrition, are both key themes of Freyre’s book. And the overall argument she makes in this passage, that racial mixture is one of the country’s “greatest assets,” is drawn straight from *Masters and Slaves*. In that book, Freyre argues that “Brazilian

society is, of all of those in the Americas, the one most harmoniously constituted so far as racial relations are concerned” (83). Though Bishop eschewed what she called the “exaggeration and pro-slavery feelings” of the book, she nonetheless relies on Freyre’s terms and concepts in several of her comparisons, including the “admixture” of races she discusses in the above passage (qtd. in Goldensohn 205; Freyre 68). Bishop describes the Amazonian *caboclos* as “attractive” and “well-built,” which stems from Freyre’s description of the “physical capacity, beauty, and even the moral resistance of the Brazilian racial strain” (67). The people of the northeast are “prolific,” an apparent jab at their high population; Freyre lists the large area in which the “*sertanejo*...radiates northward” and eastward in a footnote about the unity and high population of the region (39). Her description of the people of the south who are “pugnacious, even inclined to violence” because of their Portuguese blood echoes Freyre’s descriptions of the “furious passions of the Portuguese” (75). The “racial clarity” that is lost in the larger cities is one of the things Freyre touts as the benefits of “Brazilian history as a march toward social democracy” since “miscegenation and the interpenetration of cultures—chiefly European, Amerindian, and African culture—together with the possibilities and opportunities for rising in the social scale that in the past have been open to slaves, individuals of the colored races, and even heretics” leads to “the possibility of and the opportunity of



becoming free men and, in the official sense, whites and Christians” (xiv). The result of the racial mixing that Freyre claims to record in his book is an erasure of the other races into whiteness. Whether Bishop herself was comfortable with the racial erasure is unclear; the editors themselves may have read Freyre’s book in changing her long paragraph to the one sentence in which the Brazilian population is being “classified as white.” In “Twelfth Morning,” Bishop’s poem about the picturesque quality of a scene that is threatened by the encroaching tourists who are discovering the beach town is also about the disappearance of a distinct type of “black” Brazilian.

Bishop records the “racial clarity” in the “black boy Balthazár” that is threatened by racial mixing with a strong nostalgia for a way of life that will soon pass.<sup>36</sup> In displaying his jovial response to poverty, singing in spite of his destitute surroundings, Bishop presents Balthazár as a “Sambo” figure. She relies on a trope that places his good-nature and child-like spirit as quintessential racial qualities that allow him to be carefree and happy-go-lucky despite his circumstances. Travisano notes the “bleak mood of the observer” in the poem, a reading that is echoed by the handful of Bishop scholars who examine this poem. If Balthazár is a foil whose value is in revealing her position as a privileged white observer, then Bishop relies on the “Sambo” trope in constructing a “black boy” whose joyful outlook in spite of his poverty comes from qualities inherent in

his racial differences. He is Other than her in ways that are racial, regional, inherent, and threatened.

Like the “maddening little women” in “Brazil, January 1, 1502” were influenced by Lispector, Cabral’s poem about a “backlander” who faced difficult life circumstances and horrible poverty certainly informed Bishop’s own poem about a character she constructed as a “backlander.”<sup>37</sup> Once again, her poem is as transformative interpretation of a character in the translation she was working on at the time in a way that increases her sense of the poem accurately portraying a Brazilian type. Bishop translated three of the eighteen sections of *Morte e vida severina* during the time in which she was working on “Twelfth Morning.” The three sections were published as *The Death and Life of a Severino*, with the subtitle “A Pernambuco Christmas Play, 1954-1955,” in the October 1963 edition of *Poetry*. It was the first translation of a Brazilian poem that she published, though she was simultaneously working on translations of Lispector’s stories and various poems by Carlos Drummond de Andrade.

Originally published in *Duas águas: poemas reunidos*, the poem remains one of Cabral’s best-known works. *Morte e vida severina* was originally commissioned by a playwright, and has been staged in various productions. Cabral most identified with Manuel Bandeira, Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Vinicius de Moraes, all poets of the generation ahead of him. Like many other poets, Cabral worked as a diplomat, representing Brazil in various countries in Europe and Africa over a decades-long career. Despite his ability to speak several languages and the influence of many international writers on his poetry, including Marianne Moore, with whom he had a close friendship,

Cabral was a decidedly Brazilian poet. He self-consciously resisted the neo-Parnassian movement of his time and wrote letters with other poets in which they sought to define a distinctly Brazilian poetics. In his work he focused on Brazilian political issues and his own personal life, often writing about his childhood growing up in the northeast of Brazil. He is well known for rooting his poems in Brazilian folklore or popular culture, including *poesia de cordel*, a form I will examine more in depth in the next section. In *Morte e vida severina*, he plays with popular Brazilian forms by using *redondilha maior*, lines of seven syllables, in the style of the traditional Christmas morality play called an *auto* that came to Brazil from Portuguese culture.<sup>38</sup>

The poem is written about an Everyman whose name indicates the severity of his life as a poor man in the northeast region of Brazil; Severino speaks on behalf of all the people in his region who have journeyed on a “pilgrimage” from the drought-stricken Sertão to the coastal town of Recife in search of a better life. In the first section of the poem, which Bishop translated, Severino explains that he is just one of many “Severinos” where he is from: “we are exactly alike: / exactly the same big head / that’s hard to balance properly, / the same swollen belly / on the same skinny legs...” (*Anthology of Twentieth Century Brazilian Poetry* 129). The implication is that all of the people who live in such extreme poverty in the northeast region of the Sertão, where Severino is from, suffer the same kind of starvation and ultimately face “the same Severino death” (129). In the poem, much of which Bishop does not translate, Severino loses his farm to a rich man, goes on a pilgrimage to Recife searching for a place where he can survive, almost kills himself out of desperation, but is saved by Joseph in a parody of the

Christmas play. There is hope at the end of the play in the birth of a new child as Cabral follows the traditional form of the medieval Christmas morality play; however, the severity of the life which Severino lives and the increasing deprivation he faces subvert the traditional form. Instead, the poem is an indictment of the cultural Catholic response to poverty, as Jon Tolman points out: Cabral “shows the futility of traditional solutions, such as those offered by the church, in dealing with the problems of life and death in a context of outrageous deprivation” (65).

“Twelfth Morning” begins like a play whose opening curtain reveals a frozen scene as the first characters and props “show through” the “thin gray mist”: the scene is set by “the black boy Balthazár, a fence, a horse, a foundered house” (*CP* 110). Like “Severino,” Balthazár is a name with a specific reference since it is traditionally one of the names of the three wise men; it is not a typical Brazilian name. Instead, by naming him “Balthazár” Bishop extends the Christian imagery in the poem in which a poor man transcends the horrible poverty of his situation in order to bring hope. But whereas Balthazár is a wise man (typically depicted as black in Brazil), the last two lines of the poem indicate that he can also be read as a Christ-like figure. Balthazár’s song, “‘Today’s my Anniversary,’ he sings, / ‘the Day of Kings’” changes by translating “anniversary” into Portuguese, where it means “birthday” (*CP* 111). The word becomes doubled—in English it is the anniversary of the wise men coming to see the Christ child. But in Portuguese, Balthazár could become the Christ child who is born at the end of *Morte e vida severina* to bring hope out of extreme desolation to the people in village in the last section Bishop translated: “XIV (A Child Has Just Been Born).”

The two poems have similar formal aspects. Bishop's translation carries the colloquial feel of Cabral's poem; she maintains his quatrains, though they are unrhymed in her English translation. Instead she uses slant rhymes, repetition and assonance to maintain the rhythm: the third through fifth lines end "tide," "tonight" and then "tide" again. A few lines down she pairs "interior" with "moisture" in the next line. The last four lines almost attain an ABAB rhyme scheme with the alternation between long "I" sounds and strong "Rs" within the words: "blind," "dirt," "sky," "stars." In "Twelfth Morning," Bishop repeats the quatrains and slant rhymes of her translation of Cabral's fourteenth section. She ends the last two lines of the first stanza with "horse" and "house." She pairs "mixture" and "silver" in the sixth stanza. And she repeats sounds from within the line, making the point about the desolated house by playing off of "shipwreck" in describing his "housewreck." The word "house" is repeated as a referent for the horse in the sixth stanza; the horse is "bigger than the house." The dilapidated state of the house makes the horse stand out even more in a way which Bishop questions: "The force of personality, or is perspective dozing?" Either way, the horse "gleams a bit," though she adjusts her description from the "big white horse" of stanza five to the "pewter-colored horse" of stanza six, whose color is "an ancient mixture, / tin, lead, and silver" (*CP* 110). The horrific situation of the "housewreck" sets off the size and color of the horse just as the setting of Cabral's section fourteen reveals the glory of the child born into such suffering.

In Cabral's poem, the birth of the child brings miraculous events that relieve the effects of extreme poverty for a short period of time. In Bishop's translation of that

section, the “tide / didn’t go out tonight,” which meant that “The mud stayed covered up / and the stench didn’t rise.” Instead, the “sponge-dry tongue of wind” sucks up “the stagnant puddle,” the mosquitos that are on the Capibaribe River are gone and the river, which is usually opaque from “eating dirt” and “never reflect the sky,” for one night, at least, “has adorned itself with stars” (*ATCBP* 139). Balthazar’s “housewreck” could have been lifted from the “huts” of Cabral’s poems whose original condition are revealed by the strength of the transformation they undergo at the birth of the child: “Every hut becomes / the kind of ideal refuge / highly thought of by / the sociologists.” The word Cabral uses in Portuguese, “casebre,” has the same connotation as the English word “hovel”—it is the lowest level of dwelling one can live in. But in the poem, the hope of the newborn child changes the living conditions of the people who describe his coming.

Bishop’s poem differs in significant ways from Cabral’s; unlike the sweeping scope of Cabral’s work, Bishop narrows her focus to a small picturesque scene. The awareness of the changing landscape in Cabo Frio gives an immediacy to this scene. As Oliveira notes, Bishop “noticed with distaste that the beaches of Cabo Frio had been ‘discovered’ and that people were trying to spoil them as quickly as possible” (109). As she does in “The Riverman,” Bishop writes a poem about a moment that will pass quickly with an increase of civilization along the beaches. Unlike the problematic viewpoint in “The Riverman” in which she appropriates the voice of the threatened “Other,” Bishop writes “Twelfth Morning” from the more comfortable viewpoint of the observer who happens upon a picturesque scene. As Eduardo Luis Araújo de Oliveira Batista and Else R. P. Vieira note, with her “olhar pitoresco” [picturesque gaze] Bishop “procura retratar

os aspectos, a seu ver, naturais, primitivos e característicos da cultura brasileira” [seeks to portray aspects that are, in her view, natural, primitive and characteristic of Brazilian culture] (14). In many ways Balthazar could be linked to Severino’s poverty, but the specific details of the poem also emphasize his unique situation. Unlike Severino, Balthazar is not from the Sertão, but a beach town just east of Rio. The difference between them is not just regional, it’s also racial, but in Bishop’s formulation, the picturesque qualities of both are threatened by her touristic gaze, the influx of outside cultural forces and the racial mixing in Brazil which will fundamentally alter Balthazar’s inherent characteristics.

### **The Semirural Population of the “Babylon” *Favela***

Bishop analyzes the third category of Brazilians, the rural or semirural Brazilians “who lead lives at least half a century behind the times” more frequently in her poetry, especially the poetry about Samambabaia, which features the juxtaposition of class and cultures when Manuelzinho and his family with Lota and her circle. “Rural and semirural” Brazilians also form the backdrop to several of the poems, like the unseen neighbors who release “fire balloons” in “The Armadillo” or the owners of the “wooden footwear” and the “wooden cages” of “Questions of Travel.” But in “The Burglar of Babylon,” Bishop focuses on the poor who have come from rural or semirural areas into Rio de Janeiro. Bishop draws the form and subject matter of both poems from what Freyre calls the “folkloric sense that comes from the people” (122). As Bishop argues in her *Brazil* manuscript, “Like other primitive peoples, Brazilians of the interior prize their

folk-poets” (214). In “Burglar of Babylon,” Bishop draws from Cabral as she attempts to accurately write the narrative of a real scene she witnessed from Lota’s balcony when the police chased a murderer through a nearby *favela* [the sprawling slum areas]. The tension in both poems comes from the difficulties faced by the poor who have left impoverished rural areas in order to seek out economic opportunities in Rio. In these poems, Bishop contextualizes her depictions of Other Brazilians in contemporary political situations as she endeavors to accurately portray the plight of the poor in Rio. However, the threat that is inherent in Balthazar’s situation is missing in “Burglar of Babylon” since the location of the *favela* in relation to Rio means the poem is not a picturesque snapshot of joy in poverty but an overview of a desperate and hopeless situation.

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of enormous social movement in Brazil as the country changed from a predominantly rural society to an urban one. As James N. Green records, the social movement took place during that time on an unprecedented scale:

In the two and a half decades between 1945 and 1969, mass migration to Brazil’s major metropolises tipped the demographic balance from rural to urban. In 1950, 64 percent of all Brazilians lived in the countryside, and the remaining 36 percent resided in cities. Ten years later, this number jumped to 45 percent, and in 1970, 56 percent of the population lived in urban areas. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo continued to draw the largest numbers of rural migrants, especially hundreds of thousands of peasants who left the drought-ridden Northeast to seek employment in the Southeast (147).

The majority of these *sertanejos* who traveled to Rio ended up in *favelas* that were built haphazardly along the hills of the city. In her manuscript for *Brazil*, Bishop describes this city’s “steep hills, which were left uninhabited until the fairly recent (about twenty years or so) growth of the notorious *favelas*, or slums” (*Prose* 198). Bishop estimates that “one



million of Rio's three million inhabitants" live in these neighborhoods (the editors changed her number to 700,000). Bishop indicates that the slums, filled mostly with "immigrants from the north and northeast," are the source of "the worst of the city's main problems." The juxtaposition of the *favelas* with the upper-class neighborhoods was a source of amusement at times for Bishop, who records the effects of this odd mixture for "Upper-class dwellers in upper floors of apartment houses," much like Lota's apartment in Leme (*Prose* 198). Forced to "look straight into *favelas* only a few yards away," the upper-class are often "awakened by roosters crowing, at the level of the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, or babies not their own crying" or, in the case of one family on the eighth floor of an apartment complex, awakened at night by the intrusion of a "panic-stricken horse" who fell into their living room from his "minute pasture" in the *favela* (198-199). Bishop writes about this juxtaposition of rich and poor in such close proximity, what she calls in her paragraph "this chaotic mixture," in "The Burglar of Babylon."

The poem begins by setting up this dichotomy in verses drawn almost verbatim from her *Brazil* manuscript, though the tone of her poem is significantly more sympathetic. In her manuscript, she describes the "steep hills" upon which there has been a "fairly recent...growth of the notorious *favelas*" (198). In the poem, that becomes the "fair green hills of Rio" where "there grows a fearful stain: / The poor who come to Rio / And can't go home again" (*CP* 112). The verb phrase "can't go home" seems to suggest that the poor remain in the city because they have run out of options in their homes in the interior. In the *Brazil* manuscript, Bishop suggests that life in the *favelas* "would seem to offer nothing at all, except superior views and breezes, to the poor who come to them," or

that they are drawn to the city because, while it may offer the “same poverty” that they would face in the interior, at home they are also faced with “boredom and isolation” (198). The city in her *Brazil* manuscript is an attractive option to bored poor Brazilians. In “The Burglar of Babylon,” the city is the site to which “a million people,” like “A million sparrows” are drawn “Like a confused migration.” In the poem, the poor are represented by the bandit Micuçu, who may be “a burglar and a killer” but “they say he never raped” (112-113). As he climbs through the *favela*, Micuçu passes the markers that Bishop uses in her manuscript to describe the area: the “ocean-liner” of her manuscript becomes the “freighters passing by” (*Prose* 198; *CP* 113). The “roosters,” “horses,” and “babies” that wake up the upper-class dwellers in her manuscript are like the “goats *baa-baa-ing*,” the “mongrels barking and barking” and the babies crying as Micuçu attempts to escape (199; 114, 116). The “tunnels” and “deep cuts right through the granite mountain” become the more interesting “caves and hideouts” near “an old fort, falling down” where they “used to watch for Frenchmen” (198; 113). In the ballad, Bishop romanticizes the setting of *favela* as she describes Micuçu’s plight in more benevolent terms than the ones she uses to give an overview of the same landscape in her manuscript.

The concerned tone of the poem fits in with the vague calls to social awareness that were expected by her *New Yorker* audience, as well as the genre concerns of the ballad form. By following the narrative of Micuçu, Bishop turns the Brazilian criminal into a folkloric outlaw. He pays one last visit to his “auntie” who raised him as he drinks a final beer and gives advice to a “*mulata* / Carrying water on her head” with the

gallantry of a dashing antihero. The soldiers in the poem are more inept than Micuçu: because of their actions (like the panicked soldier who shot his officer in command), or the people's reactions (like the "men in the drink shop" who swore and "spat a little *cachaça*" on the floor when the soldiers arrived) (114). However, Bishop undercuts her sympathetic portrayal of the outlaw with humor that also appealed to her *New Yorker* audience in the same way she does in "Manuelzinho"—with a joke near the end of the poem. Discussing Micuçu as they leave his auntie's shop, one of the customers remarks to another, "He wasn't much of a burglar, / He got caught six times—or more" (117). In keeping with the sympathetic portrayal of the poor that begins and ends the poem, Bishop complicates the view of "the poor" being offered in her poem. His auntie's speech clarifies the differences between Micuçu and other poor people in the *favela*. Though the auntie "Wiped her eyes in grief," she does not sanctify Micuçu. Instead, in two and a half stanzas, she marks his criminal actions as unacceptable by her hard-working values:

We have always been respected.  
My shop is honest and clean.  
I loved him but from a baby  
Micuçu was always mean.

We have always been respected.  
His sister has a job.  
Both of us gave him money.  
Why did he have to rob?

I raised him to be honest,  
Even here, in Babylon slum.

The differentiation between Micuçu and the aunt is gendered. The hard-working characters in the poem are women—Micuçu's aunt, sister and the woman who carries

water—while the men in the poem are soldiers, criminals, or drunks spitting *cachaça*. Bishop takes care to portray the people in the *favelas* with more sympathy than she provides them in other texts, particularly the women. She also presents more complicated views than she does in other texts; not all of “the poor” are the same.

Using Bishop’s criteria, “The Burglar of Babylon” is a much more authentic Brazilian poem. The poem is accurate because of the actuality of the moment she describes and the authentic Brazilian context out of which she writes, a point she emphasizes repeatedly when the poem was published as an illustrated volume titled *The Ballad of the Burglar of Babylon* by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 1968. The text is accompanied by woodcuts from the well-known children’s illustrator, Ann Grifalconi. The dust jacket of the first edition of *The Ballad of the Burglar of Babylon* quotes Bishop as saying “The story of Micuçu is true” and describes the Grifalconi’s pictures as “dramatic, accurate woodcuts.” The double emphasis on accuracy on the dust-jacket flap illustrates how Bishop defined the term.

Returning to Bishop’s definition, actuality and spontaneity are in the same vein. Though she might adjust some of the details of a poem, in general, Bishop self-consciously represented what occurred in the moment she is describing in a poem: “But I always *try* to stick as much as possible to what *really* happened when I describe something in a poem” (qtd. in Millier 196). The short, three-paragraph introduction to the book reveals her argument for the veracity of the poem and the spontaneous nature of the moment in which she observed Micuçu’s last stand:

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 think that actually the hill of Kerosene had been torn down shortly before Micuçu's death, but I liked the word, so put it in.

I was one of those who watched the pursuit through binoculars, although really we could see very little of it: just a few of the soldiers silhouetted against the skyline of the hill of Babylon. The rest of the story is taken, often word for word, from the daily papers, filled out by what I know of the place and the people.

At the time, the people said that the name Micuçu was short for *Mico Sujo*, or *Dirty Marmoset*, but finally it was decided that this was wrong and that is the colloquial name for a deadly snake, in the north of Brazil. A young man trying to be a real gangster, like in the films, would certainly prefer to be called by the name of a deadly snake. Also, the poor people who live in the slums of Rio have usually come from the north or northeast of Brazil and their nicknames are apt to be Indian words, or the common names (frequently derived from the Indian) used for things or creatures in those far-off regions (unnumbered page).

The honesty of her admission about the "hill of Kerosene," the name she left in because she liked the word, is typical of the way she draws attention to any small divergence from the literal truth of the original moment.<sup>39</sup> She appeals to the ethos of the newspapers that supplied the majority of the details for the poem. The self-deprecating disclosure that this poem is taken "almost word-for-word" from the newspaper stories distances herself from the ease with which she wrote the long poem. The light tone of the introduction is typical of Bishop's discussions of her work; though she famously agonized for years over word choice in various versions of poems, she discussed her work dismissively, as if she coincidentally arrived at just the right moment to capture the poem and anyone else could also have written it.

By Bishop's standards, the poem is accurate, but it is also a more authentic portrayal than more problematic texts like "The Riverman" by current representational values. Though there are similarities with English ballads and this ballad, Bishop uses Northeastern folkloric poetry tradition, *poesia de cordel*, in writing the poem. By relying

on this tradition, Bishop attempts to write about the Northeastern immigrants who inhabit the *favelas* in a way that captures their unique cultural voice. At the same time, by inserting herself as one of the “rich,” Bishop distances herself from the situation in a way that allows her to retain her outsider status. She does not speak for the Brazilians she describes, but writes in a poetic tradition that emphasizes the linguistic and cultural differences between her subject and her audience. The poem is a more successful translation of a Brazilian cultural situation than some of her other poems from this period.

*Poesia de cordel* is a type of folkloric, popular poetry that comes from the Sertão, but which spread throughout Brazil with the migration of the landless workers who moved to the cities. In writing about the “confused migration” in the poem, Bishop self-consciously uses the folkloric form of the people who are her subject.<sup>40</sup> *Poemas de cordel* are long narrative poems printed on cheap paper *folhetos* [the word might be translated as “pamphlets” without the didactic sense of that word in English or “chapbooks,” with its connotations of cheaply produced poetry] that are usually made up of 8, 16, or occasionally 32 or 64 pages. They are decorated with simple, stamped pictures made from hand-carved woodblocks, often made by the poets themselves; Grifalconi’s woodcut illustrations accompanying the 1968 book are “accurate” because they reflect the woodcuts on *poesia de cordel*. The poems are sold in booths or on the side of the road, usually hung with clothespins on a long string, which is why the genre is called “poetry of the string.”

*Poesia de cordel* is genre of poetry unique to Brazil, though it has roots in the Portuguese oral and balladic traditions. Though the more traditional form is the *quadra* or

*rodilha maior* (four lines with an ABAB CDCD rhyme scheme), many of the current poems are generally written in *sextilha* form (six lines of seven syllables with a ABCBDB rhyme scheme). The form of Bishop's ballad, XAXA XBXB (in which X is an unrhymed line) is also common in *poesia de cordel*. The uneducated nature of the poets is part of what makes the literature distinct: As Orígenes Lessa explains rather poetically himself, *poesia de cordel* is "produzida por homens quase analfabetos, de leitura escassa, muitos dos quais não freqüentaram sequer a escola primária" [produced by almost illiterate men, who are poorly-read, many of whom did not even attend primary school] and intended for rugged backwoods people of equally limited school, and yet the influence of the poetry is "jamais igualada pela outra literatura, a de colarinho e gravata, nos meios mais cultos" [unmatched by any other collar-and-tie, more educated forms of literature] (Lessa 13-14). The poetic process is also unique; the usually male poets write long ballads about current historical or political situations, like a drought or the suicide of a political leader. The narrative poems are then published by hand with small printing presses, with family members often contributing to the process by cutting the folio pages or collating the *folhetos*. Not all poets write, illustrate, publish and distribute their poems, but as it is not a lucrative endeavor, many manage the production of their *folhetos* from beginning to end in order not to pay any fees to distributors or publishers. The poems, therefore, are largely unedited, written and published quickly in order to be relevant because, as Candace Slater notes, "salability is directly related to speed" (26). Though the genre has become increasingly less influential with the rise of modern technology, in the

mid-twentieth century in Brazil, the political upheaval gave the poet-publishers ripe content from which to write poems that they then distributed rapidly to an eager public.

Bishop's assertions about the rapidity with which she wrote the poem, the journalistic framework, as well as the genre form indicate the influence of *poesia de cordel* on her poem. The introduction to the translation, which was published in the November-December issue of *Cadernos Brasileiros*, simultaneously with its U.S. publication in the *New Yorker* on 21 November 1964, makes the link explicit. The translation was published by Lota's nephew, Flávio Macedo Soares, with Bishop's cooperation; in the two-paragraph introduction to the piece, Macedo Soares describes the poem as "o mais acessível" [the most accessible] of Bishop's recent publications. The translation was published with consultation from the author; indeed, in his overview of the dilemmas of translating the poem, Macedo Soares seems to be essentially quoting Bishop's conversations with Lowell about the difficulty of translation and his own "imitations." The choices that Macedo Soares notes that "we" faced (his co-translator[s] are unnamed, but he refers to himself in the first-person plural throughout the introduction) were two-fold: "fazer a tradução pura e simples, ou uma imitação, uma *imitation*" [to do a translation pure and simple, or an imitation]. They opted for the first choice, though in some situations it was necessary to diverge from the original in order to keep the original meaning of the poem. In order to do that, Macedo Soares wrote the translation in "uma métrica que varia em torno da *redondilha maior*, aquela mais usada na poesia de cordel," [a metric based around the *redondilha maior*, which is most used in the *poesia de cordel*] (61). He laments that the attempt to keep the form at times results in



poor rhymes, which was “necessário para salvaguardar o sentido do texto original” [necessary to safeguard the feeling of the original text]. Despite the influence of the English ballad and oral tradition, including the modern examples Macedo Soares notes such as W.H. Auden and Dylan Thomas, Bishop does not retain an exact ballad form in her version of “The Burglar of Babylon” either.

She eschews the more formal aspects of any ballad form. Bishop’s first stanza sets up a loose trochaic tetrameter followed by an iambic trimeter form; the rhyme scheme of the first stanza is ABAB (with A being a repetition of the word “Rio”), but the second stanza immediately changes to CDED. Following those stanzas, most of the second and fourth indented lines in each stanza rhyme, repeat or have slant rhymes, but she does not maintain a rhyme with the first and third lines. The lines end with true rhymes (“raped”/“escaped”) and slant rhymes (“rain”/“again”), of which some are self-consciously funny (“society”/“penitentiary”). Bishop loses the trochaic tetrameter form in the beginning of the third stanza and only occasionally returns to it again. Instead, as João Cabral de Melo does in many of his poems which are also based on the *poesia de cordel* tradition, Bishop builds the rapid rhythm of the poem around short line-length, alliteration, and repetition, all of which are markers of many forms of oral literature.

Bishop emphasizes the class differences in this poem by mentioning twice the “Rich people in apartments” who “Watched through binoculars” and then returned the next morning “standing on the rooftops /Among TV antennae” (CP 115, 116). In the poem, Bishop does not self-identify herself as one of the rich. She does not write about her own subject position, but the juxtaposition of the rich with their binoculars among TV

antennae (which at the time seems to have been a marker of their wealth, though now satellite TV dishes are ubiquitous in *favelas*) indicates their passivity in relation to Micuçu and the plight of the poor. In the parallel description in the *Brazil* manuscript Bishop seems slightly put out with or, at best, amused at the roosters, babies and horses just outside her window. But in “The Burglar of Babylon” she sympathizes with the poor. The rich literally view the poor from a privileged distance; Micuçu’s flight through the crowded streets is a source of entertainment from their points of removal, not an immediate life-or-death situation. The discomfort with which Bishop describes the rich people’s position returns to the ethical concerns of “questions of travel,” but with more subtlety. There is no solution for the rich people, just a growing sense that it is unethical for them to view the poor as objects of amusement.

In “The Burglar of Babylon,” Bishop repeats Lispector’s four-sided relationship between viewer and viewed in “The Smallest Woman in the World.” Micuçu, like Little Flower, is a fictionalized character whose audience assumes an understanding of their motives and thoughts. Like Little Flower and the Bantu, Micuçu is hunted by the soldiers. As one of the people watching with binoculars and later reading about the story in the newspapers, but also as the person who writes about the foreign situation for her own domestic audience, Bishop plays dual roles: she is the explorer who categorizes and classifies Micuçu in order to record his story and report it to her audience. As a rich reader who is self-aware, she is at least somewhat uncomfortable with her essentializing reaction, which could be part of the more complicated portrayals of the poor she gives in the poem, and which leads to the much more self-aware way in which she wrestles with

her own existential reaction to the “awful hanging breasts” in “In the Waiting Room” a few years later. Bishop returns to some measure, at least, of the self-criticism that marked her tourist poems by condemning the rich, including herself.

At the same time, as she struggles with how “free” she has the right to be in her translations of Brazilian “Others,” Bishop also differentiates between herself as an expatriate and the rich society in which she lives but from which she is removed. In her original *Brazil* manuscript, Bishop expands on the sense of slight contempt she demonstrates toward the indifferent rich in “The Burglar of Babylon.” A scathing sub-text of criticism of Lota and her upper-class circle plays out in Bishop’s writing about class differences, a complete reversal from the glowing and unquestioning portrayals of a Brazil seen from Lota’s viewpoint in her earlier domestic poems, prose texts and translations. In her earlier portrayals, Bishop unquestioningly asserts the value of the intelligentsia in Brazil and correlates the upper-middle class with other cosmopolitan groups in New York in Paris. But in the *Brazil* manuscript, Bishop repeatedly undercuts upper-class Brazilians. She attributes the disinterest Lota expressed in primitive Brazilians as characteristic of urban dwellers: Brazilian literature and society can “be divided roughly...into that of the city and that of the country, those who looked to Europe, tradition, and ‘correctness,’ and those who were drawn to the wilderness, the Indian, the regional” (*Prose* 226). In discussing the difference between the Iguacu falls and Niagara, Bishop adds in a parenthetical aside “(To this day, upper-class Brazilians are amazingly unfamiliar with their own country, even its geography.)” (191). She also seems to be criticizing Lota’s education in a discussion about schooling for women:

“Upper-class girls go to convent schools, some good, some bad. (But one cannot help but feel that the nuns have too often encouraged complacency and snobbery, not *noblesse oblige*.)” (235). Lota attended a convent school and Bishop’s assertion that the nuns encourage complacency and snobbery seems leveled at her.

The most pointed criticism in the book is at the beginning of Bishop’s chapter 8 in the manuscript, in which she describes class and race relations:

The old upper-class looks down on the new middle-class, because of its vulgarity or bad manners, much more than on the Negroes or mulattoes. Part of this is nostalgia for the days when there was no middle-class, part economic pressure and part old-fashioned snobbishness. One often feels sorry for the small but growing middle-class; surely old-fashioned Brazil should have more patience with it (*Prose* 230-231).

In this instance, “old-fashioned Brazil” is a metonym for Lota and her circle, for the Old Guard who looked back nostalgically on the period ruled by *café com leite* politics. The reversal from Bishop’s Samambaia days, in which she wrote authoritatively about the idyllic period captured by Helena Morley, is stark. Bishop’s manuscript gives a sense of a Brazil that was no longer moderated by Lota but instead, written largely without Lota’s approval or interest and in many ways critical of Lota’s worldview.

The political tension reached a head during the *golpe militar* in which the army ousted the president in 1964 and Lota was intimately involved in it. She was trapped with Lacerda at the governor’s residence on April 1 while the coup took place; Bishop was in her apartment in Leme listening to the radio for news. President Goulart, who had taken over after Quadros, had called for a rally in support of several nationalizing measures that signaled to his opposition he was moving toward a communistic state. Concerned about Goulart’s increasingly left-leaning political stance, the U.S. backed the Brazilian army

under General Humberto Castello Branco in the coup to oust the president, just as they participated in many anti-communist revolutions in Central and South America during the Cold War. Lota and Bishop, as well as most Brazilian citizens, were infuriated by “a currency worth only 10 percent of what it had been worth in 1962, and a cost of living that had tripled in the same period” (Millier 353). Bishop wrote that she was on the side of the army; the pro-capitalist, pro-U.S. Lacerda was also staunchly against Goulart. He declared on April 1 that he and his state were in a state of revolt against the federal government, following the governor of Minas Gerais, on the day Brazilians called *O Dia da Mentira* [the Day of the Lie]. When President Goulart left Rio and moved toward Brasilia in an ill-guided attempt to stop the coup, Lacerda, his staff, family, and friends including Lota were in the palace tensely awaiting the outcome. The positive news that the army had deposed Goulart in a bloodless revolution seemed to signal a new era in Brazilian politics. For a few months, Bishop and Lota felt hopeful that the difficult years in Brazil had turned around; it was some time before the military dictatorship began the repressive policies that marked some of the most difficult years in Brazilian history. In spring 1964, the army appeared to have saved the country from communism and put a stop to the downward financial spiral that had all but ruined Lota and other members of her social class.

Bishop and Lota were able to travel to Europe in May of that year. The proceeds from Bishop’s sale of “The Burglar of Babylon” paid for her plane ticket. After a month in Italy, Lota returned to Rio to get back to work on the park on June 15 and Bishop went on to England to spend several weeks with the Barkers in their cottage, where, as Millier

notes, her friends “reminded her of what she had been missing in the past few years in Brazil” (355). The break from Lota began formally in November 1964 when Bishop hesitantly accepted the position of poet-in-residence that the University of Washington offered her for the spring of 1966. Millier asserts that she accepted the position because she felt that the political tension in Brazil was unlikely to improve and she hoped to bring Lota with her to Washington. Carmen Oliveira argues that it was in part because she thought that Lacerda would be elected president, taking Lota with him into his new government and that “Bishop wouldn’t want to stay in Brazil any longer, if it was to prolong the demented life that she and Lota were living now” (Oliveira 109). Whether Bishop intended her term at the University of Washington to include Lota or to be an escape from Brazil, the break was clear.

Though she would return to Brazil, after 1964 Bishop would be coming to grips in her poetry with the volatility and dramatic tension in Lota’s final years. The political turmoil in the years before Lota’s death, Lota’s suicide, the cold shoulder that Bishop received by people she had thought to be her friends as well as Lota’s, led Bishop to write a complicated, multifaceted elegy to their Brazil in two of her most definitive works on the country, “Crusoe in England” and *An Anthology of Twentieth Century Brazilian Poetry*. Together they serve as an homage to Bishop’s relationship with Lota and the Brazil in which they had lived. The representational strategies that Bishop hones in her writing about other Brazilians are fully realized in these two works as Bishop employs what I will term her “bricolage” approach with confidence and efficiency. However Bishop significantly alters her arguments about Brazil; she uses the same methods of

transformative interpretation and translation but returns unquestioningly to Lota's upper-class views.

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<sup>1</sup>Brett Millier identifies this time as Bishop's "second wave of poems about her adopted country," but I mark it as her third after the early tourist poems and her Samambaia poems (300). Millier also identifies 1959 as the year in which Bishop's "second wave" begins; I have pushed her date back to include the year in which Bishop was writing the poems because it coincides with her return from New York in 1957.

<sup>2</sup> Two of the poems were originally published in the *New Yorker*: "The Riverman" on 2 April 1960 and "Burglar of Babylon" on 21 November 1964). "Twelfth Morning, or What You Will" was published in the *New York Review of Books* on 2 April 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Written after "The Riverman," the complex formulation of travelers to Brazilians in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" is the result of Bishop's second, more profound defamiliarization.

<sup>4</sup> The translation of *The Diary of 'Helena Morley'* had been published, along with most of Bishop's poems about domestic Brazil, but Bishop seemed at a loss about what to write next. In March 1958, Bishop complained in letters that she had not finished a poem for the last eighteen months (Fountain-Brazeau 163). In April of the same year, she wrote Lowell "I haven't been able to work at all since I got back, I don't know quite why. I've read and read and read, that's all" (*Words in Air* 255).

<sup>5</sup> Bishop also relies on a generalized sense of "blackness" in "Songs for a Colored Singer" and other poems.

<sup>6</sup> I use the title *Prose* when quoting from this text in Schwartz's *Prose* in order to differentiate between Bishop's original text and the final Time-Life version, which I call *Brazil*.

<sup>7</sup> In order to mark the changes made by the editors from Schwartz's reconstructed manuscript, I painstakingly went through each line comparing both books. There are too many interesting alterations for me to include more than a few, but the process was a fascinating chance to solidify many of Bishop's original views. The Time-Life editors made the following types of changes: 1) Some were done to connect more clearly to a wide audience, often adjusting her level of syntax, contextualizing allusions, or deleting overly lyrical passages (in at least one instance they rewrote a quote as if she said it, essentially plagiarizing her source). 2) Other corrections adjust to house style, including spelling changes like "foetal" to "fetal," adjusting her grammar or linguistic choices, such as rewriting many of her parenthetical insertions. 3) Many of their rewrites sensationalize or lyricize her language (such as changing "weeks" to "many nights at sea") especially in the chapter titles and captions to pictures. 4) At times the editors corrected what they thought were inaccuracies in her text; usually their changes are not right, as in the many misspelled or wrong Portuguese names and terms they "corrected." 5) They inexplicably rewrote entire portions and paragraphs in ways that significantly changed her argument about Brazilian culture or people.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in one of the first episodes of *Mad Men*, the producers, who are generally praised for their impeccable research and knowledge of period details, provide a copy of the 1961 *Italy* for January Jones's Betty Draper to pick up off the coffee table and flip through distractedly in order to show her frustration with babysitting the neighbor's children.

<sup>9</sup> From a 22 April 1960 letter to Robert Lowell, *Words in Air*, 318.

<sup>10</sup> Lévi-Strauss satirizes Bouglé as a philosopher who wrote a book about India's caste system without "ever pausing to consider whether it would not be better to go to India first" (*TT* 48).

<sup>11</sup> Neither Bouglé nor the ambassador were correct and most of *Tristes Tropiques* chronicles Lévi-Strauss's journeys into the interior of Brazil to encounter what remained of the "Indian" population whose territory had once made up "two-thirds" of the country (49).

<sup>12</sup> Oddly, in Brazilian politics at the time, it was possible to vote for the presidential candidate of one party and the vice-presidential candidate of another party, resulting in strangely mixed results. Again, Prof. Britto has been instrumental to me in helping me understand the political situation of the time.

<sup>13</sup> Bishop knew Laura Archera Huxley from her years in Key West before coming to Brazil. The information in this paragraph is from *Words in Air* 264. It was published posthumously as "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians" in *Poems, Prose, and Letters*, edited by Robert Giroux and Lloyd Schwartz (2008). The essay was anthologized in Lloyd Schwartz's 2011 *Prose*, which is the text I quote in this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> In a 4 December 1958 letter to Anny Baumann: "...*The New Yorker* did not take my piece about Brasília. As I worked on it I felt fairly sure they wouldn't; the material just didn't go together, Huxley didn't say anything of interest—and I fell it was rather *dumb* of me to put in so much time on it. However, the chief loss is that we'd hoped to start the garage on the proceeds! Now I'll work on something more my natural



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bent...” (OA 369). As Barbara Page notes in its original 2006 publication in *The Yale Review*, “Bishop tried to enliven her essay with ‘human interest,’ but struggled to find a narrative thread through the chaos of Brasília” (77-78).

<sup>15</sup>“Brazil, January 1, 1502” was first published in the *New Yorker* on 2 January 1960 followed by “The Riverman” on 2 April 1960.

<sup>16</sup> The fact that the trip was part of a propaganda campaign launched by the Brazilian State Department, who invited Huxley, as they had invited John Dos Passos and other writers, to come see Brasília and write about the new capital city in the middle of the jungle, was also something Bishop found ridiculous about the government’s campaign. Bishop writes that the joint invitation of Huxley and Dos Passos “indicates the Brazilian ignorance of Eng [sic] Literature, I suppose! To think that two writers as far apart as DP and Huxley would both be interested in seeing Brasília and—I suppose that’s the idea—doing a little propaganda for it!” (*Words in Air* 264)

<sup>17</sup> Brasília advocates argued, in Bishop’s words, that legislation will be “carried on more efficiently and fairly away from the pressures of the rival cities of Rio and São Paulo,” Rio is increasingly unfit as a capital because it is “badly overcrowded, constantly short of water” and overwhelmed by mushrooming *favela* neighborhoods made up of poor, newly-arrived Brazilians in search of work who are challenging the city’s already stretched infrastructure (293).

<sup>18</sup> Though the English edition (originally titled *A World on the Wane*) did not come out until 1961, Bishop mentions reading books in French and Portuguese often in her letters from the 1950s and 1960s; in the letter to Lowell in which she mentions her dry spell in writing, she says all she has done is “read and read and read.” She mentions Lévi-Strauss in later interviews and letters as the best source for authentic portrayals of Brazil.

<sup>19</sup> The seeming disconnectedness of these thoughts is part of Lévi-Strauss’s “broader theoretical point...that structural echoes could be found in many aspects of social and cultural life—art, metaphysics, social systems, even the positioning of huts in a village. Again and again the human mind threw up similar relationships across domains that at first glance seemed completely unconnected” (Wilcken 213). Lévi-Strauss’s Saussurian association of the French “Brésil” with “grésiller (to splutter in burning),” which he uses to explain the fact that he continues to think of Brazil “first and foremost as a burning perfume” points to the Structuralistic underpinnings of the text (48). The relationship between seemingly unconnected events or ideas is both his subject and part of his writing technique. The disconnectedness of Bishop’s essay, “A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, and Some Indians,” echoes the disjointed structure of *Tristes Tropiques*; perhaps what Bishop was missing was the underlying philosophical point Lévi-Strauss made through his structure.

<sup>20</sup> The style and genre of *Tristes Tropiques* were prompted by the circumstances under which Lévi-Strauss wrote the work. Jean Malaurie, a traveler and writer who was working on a new series of non-academic texts called *Terre humaine* in Paris in the 1930s, commissioned a book from Lévi-Strauss which would be “intellectual but autobiographical, scientific yet engaged, feeding off the rich and largely unexplored literary terrain of indigenous cultures and ethnographic research” (Wilcken 204). The consensus among critics and later readers is that the genre of *Tristes Tropiques* is unique and unrepeatable. Clifford Geertz writes that, though the book is “very far from being a great anthropology book, or even an especially good one, [it] is surely one of the finest books ever written by an anthropologist” (347).

<sup>21</sup> The structure of the first two paragraphs invokes Lévi-Strauss’s writing. Bishop jumps quickly from Aldous Huxley and his wife’s invitation to visit Brasília from the “Cultural Division of Itamarati,” the national department of foreign affairs whose “Indian place-name” (Itamarati) leads Bishop on a tangential discussion of Brazilian nobility’s nationalistic feelings about their “semi-civilized country” before returning to the trip she is describing (292). Bishop introduces herself as the speaker in the third paragraph, “myself, the only American,” accompanying Aldous Huxley, his wife Laura and seven other people on a trip to Brasília and the “dwindling tribes along the Xingu River.” Bishop’s overview of the historical and national impulses that led to the construction of a new capital in the middle of the uninhabited interior is interspersed with personal details of her arrival in Brasília: “I arrived there alone on a Friday afternoon,” to find a hotel “reminding me vaguely of a New York subway entrance” and “the biggest swimming-pool I have ever seen” (294, 298, 299). Her discussion of Brazilian architecture, particularly Oscar Niemeyer’s

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innovative architectural designs for which the capital was famous, are interrupted by her own unfavorable impressions of the buildings themselves. The “effect of coolness and airy grace” of the presidential palace vanished as the group “stepped in onto hot turkey-red carpets, extra thick” (302). She asserts that “Brasil, like Italy, Spain or Portugal, has never had our northern ideas of comfort in the home,” and follows with a description of the group in the presidential palace: “Perspiring and occasionally dropping onto the nearest chairs, we rudely asked our guide about air-conditioning but he replied that it wasn’t necessary” (303). Bishop uses the humorous juxtaposition of the rude tourists and the obtuse guide in order to make a larger generalization about the difference between Apollonian and Dionysian ideas of comfort. Throughout the text, Bishop’s universalizing claims about Brazilian culture are based on the anecdotal evidence of her trip. Bishop uses her personal observations about Brasília and the Xingu natives as evidence to support her universalizing claims in her interpretation of Lévi-Strauss’s ethnographic style.

<sup>22</sup> Though to be clear, in many ways, the Xavante Indians she encounters are more like Lévi-Strauss’s descriptions of the Caingang and Caduveo Indians than the Bororo tribes; Caingang and Caduveo tribes have encountered “white men” (explorers, ethnographers or missionaries) before. The native culture Bishop is visiting on a day trip with a plane full of European tourists has had significantly more contact with Western travelers than the villages Lévi-Strauss encountered more than thirty years before in Brazil.

<sup>23</sup> Originally published in *Shenandoah* in 1966, the interview is reprinted in George Monteiro’s *Conversations with Elizabeth Bishop*. Zhou uses this quote to examine Bishop’s use of the dramatic monologue in “The Riverman.” Zhou views Bishop’s turn from the “picturesque sketches” of the Brazilian landscape to folkloric material as a way to come to terms with her own artistry: “It seems that the form of dramatic monologue and the persona of riverman who aspires to be a great shaman provide Bishop with an appropriate mask for articulating her poetic ambitions and her ideas of the hardship and magic involved in the art of making poetry...” (Zhou 82). Though I use the same term Zhou does in exploring the mask that Bishop creates in her construction of the riverman, my argument is less interested in Bishop’s alterity and artistry than the historical context out of which the mask was constructed. However I did want to acknowledge Zhou’s helpful framing of the dramatic monologue genre.

<sup>24</sup> Franz Boas is widely considered to be the founder of modern anthropology. Both Charles Wagley and Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian anthropologist whose influence was particularly clear in Bishop’s *Time-Life* manuscript, studied directly under Boas and used his essentializing classifications in their own writing.

<sup>25</sup> This view is also held by some Bishop scholars. As I noted in the introduction, many Bishop scholars, including Thomas Travisano and Lorrie Goldensohn, have particularly problematic readings in which they praise Bishop for effectively entering the mindset of the “other.”

<sup>26</sup> Boas differentiated between race and culture by publishing several studies that concluded that Native Americans and various indigenous groups, as well as African Americans and immigrant populations, were not inherently inferior to White “civilized” culture. His emphasis on the relative nature of discrete and individual cultures broke from earlier anthropological explorations of hierarchical savage cultures. Boas maintained racial categories that relied on biological dissimilarities. In *Amazon Town*, universal statements about the “backwardness” of tropical people have pseudo-scientific reasoning behind it. For example, Wagley argues that darker skin is a “positive aid to acclimatization to the tropics...because darker pigmentation seems to serve as a protection against the rays of the sun” (7). He finds that the “physical environment is not the most serious obstacle to its eventual development and to higher standards of living for its inhabitants,” but instead it is the cultural backwardness of its people that have kept it from a strong “economic and political relationship...with the outside world” (16, 17).

<sup>27</sup> In *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss records his time exploring Brazil in the 1930s trying to find the last shards of “authentic” primitive experience, which had regretfully been almost completely eradicated through colonialist and Western expansion. Rousseau’s “noble savage” was not a theoretical category for Lévi-Strauss. Wilcken writes about “Lévi-Strauss’s attraction to the romantic notion of the ‘noble savage’ in the tradition of Rousseau—ideas to which he would cling, even after witnessing the cultural wreckage of the Brazilian frontier” (43). That attraction to Rousseau’s “noble savage” was translated into Lévi-Strauss’s phrase, “Virtuous Savages.” In his chapter of that name, Lévi-Strauss remembers one of his first experiences in “a village where the native culture has remained comparatively untouched,” describing how, when facing “a society which is still alive and faithful to its traditions, the impact is so powerful that one is

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quite taken aback” (215). He describes not just the Bororo tribes in Brazil but his own feverish, animated response to coming in contact with people that he had, until then, only experienced in the literary category of “le bon sauvage.” Lévi-Strauss’s search for authentic “noble savages” in *Tristes Tropiques* was also a push for what Wilcken terms “philosophical synthesis.” When he encountered the remnants of the Nambikwara culture, he assumed that he had discovered “the end point of Rousseau’s quest for man in the state of nature, uncorrupted by society...What Rousseau had suggested as an ideal ‘which perhaps never existed,’ Lévi-Strauss claimed, rather extravagantly, to have found in flesh and blood” (Wilcken 103). Far from questioning his “noble savages,” Bishop accepted Lévi-Strauss’s readings of Brazilian culture as authoritative.

<sup>28</sup> In “Lendas Brasileiras,” Anastácio and Barbosa document the many changes in the eight drafts of the poem, many of which are undated, that Bishop wrote before it was published in July 1959.

<sup>29</sup> When we lived in Brazil, my husband and I attended an Umbanda ceremony as a favor to a friend (it’s a type of spiritism much like Macumba) in which fragrant cigars and a Mãe Santa played an important role. In order to receive a “spirit,” the spiritual leader often blows smoke over the medium until the “spirit” descends on them, at which time they begin to move in affected ways, dressing and taking on the stereotypical characteristics of the spirit whose name they’re invoking. The clothing and markers of the various types of Orixás, or deities, is critically important in these religious observances as they help differentiate one “spirit” from another. Even after a few months in Brazil, with very little background, I knew the differences between many of these Orixás because they are ubiquitous in popular Brazilian culture. Many of them also make appearances in Brazilian literature, as in *Dona Flor e Seus Dois Maridos*, a well-known novel by Jorge Amado.

<sup>30</sup> Goldensohn is one of many critics to notice the influence of Lispector on “Brazil, January 1, 1502” (204-205).

<sup>31</sup> Bishop’s choice of the word “itself” in the translation is a small act of objectification. Using “coisa” allows for the feminization of the adjective “rara” to be about the word “thing” without having to choose a gender to describe Little Flower. Bishop’s choice not to identify Little Flower as “herself” retains the feel of her as a thing rather than a person, though the difference is subtle since the feeling in Portuguese and English is an endearing one, as one might call a child “a cute thing.” And later Bishop uses “herself,” but in that stand alone line, almost in the voice of the people reacting to Little Flower, she emphasizes the Othering that Lispector has been describing.

<sup>32</sup> To be clear, the word “backlander” should more accurately be *sertanejo*, or person from the Sertão, a region in the northeast of Brazil. However, I’m arguing that Bishop uses this term rather idiosyncratically, especially in her description of “backlanders” as residing along rivers and in fishing villages. I do not think that Balthazar is a Sertanejo; instead, Bishop conflates her stereotypes. These seem to be largely individualistic divisions that are hers and are not drawn from other sources; Gilberto Freyre’s book *The Masters and the Slaves* uses the term “backlander” and “*sertanejo*” interchangeably. Especially because I argue in the next several paragraphs that Bishop roots her poem about Balthazar in João Cabral de Melo Neto’s and that in portraying Balthazar, though she does not portray someone from the “backlands,” she uses qualities inherent in Cabral’s backland poem, I am retaining her term even as I acknowledge that it is problematic and idiosyncratic.

<sup>33</sup> See my overview in my introduction of the recent trends in Bishop studies that push her into the role of a “proto-postmodernist.”

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, Gilberto Freyre and João Cabral de Melo Neto were cousins through Cabral’s mother; though I’m not sure if Bishop ever met Freyre, her friendship with Cabral might have informed her reading of Freyre.

<sup>35</sup> Thanks to Paulo Henriques Britto for originally this fact out to me in our discussion about Bishop’s translation of the *Diary of “Helena Morley.”* I was also delighted to discover that Benjamin Moser noticed this same error in his *New Yorker* 5 December 2012 article about Bishop and the editors of *Brazil* in which he focuses on this passage as one of many that indicate that the editors did not make her text more liberal but if anything edited her views in order to make them more progressive than they were in her manuscript.

<sup>36</sup> In another example of her racializing generalizations from her *Brazil* manuscript, Bishop asserts that in Brazil: “Negros want to be ‘light,’ *claro*, have ‘good (straight) hair and ‘good’ (not flat) noses. They are

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sometimes treated with the condescending, indulgent humor found in the southern U.S.—& there are hundreds of Negro myths—but again it is not so very different from the way lower-class whites are treated” (231). This portion was also deleted by the editors.

<sup>37</sup> In one of the few critical texts about Cabral in English, Jon Tolman gives an overview of the poem in which he refers to it as the pilgrimage of a “Brazilian backlander.” His overview is helpful in contextualizing the long narrative poem: “The allegorical device of the pilgrimage permits the author to study the intermingled roles of death and exploitation within a well-known social situation, that of the Brazilian backlander. In this poem the forces of nature and of society converge upon a defenseless, anonymous man whose response is to seek escape. Continually confronted with death and denied any sort of consolation or help, the man is mercilessly stripped of his humanity. When he contemplates embracing the forces he has fled by taking his own life, a kind of negative will-assertion, he is saved by the intervention of life itself in the guise of Joseph” (65-66).

<sup>38</sup> Details in this paragraph come from my work on the “João Cabral de Melo Neto” entry in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography 307: Brazilian Writers*. I was an associate editor at the publishing company that produced the *DLB* and helped research Cabral in the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile as well as other places and have pieced together biographical information from those notes.

<sup>39</sup> According to Britto, the hill of Kerosene is still in Rio.

<sup>40</sup> In much the same way, in “Pink Dog,” Bishop relies on the easy, repetitive rhythm and subversively upbeat lyrics of Carnival sambas to write an ironic poem about the Brazilian political situation as well as her own increasing discomfort in living in Brazil.

**Chapter 4**  
**Bishop's Nostalgic Return to Roots:**  
**Bricolage Translations of Lota and Their Shared Place (1965-1972)**

In 1971 and 1972, Bishop published two of her most ambitious projects about Brazil, which she worked on simultaneously in the years following Lota's death. On 6 November 1971, "Crusoe in England" appeared in the *New Yorker*. On 13 April 1972, Bishop and over 400 people celebrated the launch of *An Anthology of Twentieth Century Brazilian Poetry* at a party in New York. Bishop was living in Cambridge and working at Harvard; she had worked on the poem and anthology in Ouro Preto, San Francisco and Cambridge over the years as her relationships and residences shifted rapidly. Bishop told friends late in her life that she was working on an elegy to Lota, but no such work has been found among her unpublished papers. These two texts work together to form that elegy, not only to her relationship with Lota but to their shared Brazil. Lota was the catalyst for Bishop's shifts in writing about Brazil throughout their relationship; her death changed the ways which Bishop portrayed their shared country and their home once again. In *An Anthology of Twentieth Century Brazilian Poetry* and "Crusoe in England," Bishop demonstrates her mature mastery of what I term her bricolage translation, which is the result of the artistic shift she began after "The Riverman." Retaining the representational strategies of her poems about the primitive subjects "Lota hates," Bishop translated her final version of the Brazil and the woman she loved.

Within these two works, there are three distinct acts of translation. First, Bishop framed an overview of Brazil for her U.S. audience with definitions that rely on the foundations and limits of her earliest portrayals of the politics and concerns of Lota's

society in Samambaia. Second, Bishop oversaw the translation of the Brazilian poems in the anthology itself with a heavy editorial hand that ensured her representational values were upheld throughout the volume. Third, Bishop recast her final relationship with Lota and Brazil through the mask of the dramatic monologue in “Crusoe in England,” which is a transformative interpretation of the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel*. In these acts of translation, Bishop aligned herself once again with Lota’s upper-class views and returned to many of her early tropes, anxieties and definitions of Lota’s Brazil.

### **Bishop’s Translation and Transformative Interpretation Practices**

In her translation practice, as I have demonstrated about her poetics throughout my project, the most important quality underlying Bishop’s representations is accuracy. An unpublished, undated document among her notes held at Vassar College entitled “Remarks on Translation- (Of poetry, mostly)” provides the only direct thoughts on translation that Bishop left, probably in preparation for a talk later in her life. She lays out the difficulty inherent in every act of translation:

TRANSLATING IS HARD, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE...It is true that sometimes – R. Lowell is a good example – here –one has a feeling right or wrong – that one does know what the poem says – a feeling like that “feminine intuition” possible...Out of this feeling can come a whole cluster of emotions, intuitoins [sic], appreciateions [sic], etc. – but probably not good translations...Robert Lowell once said to me, ‘What’s worth doing at all is worth doing badly’... I think I know what he meant; I’m not sure – is it that translation has always to be done badly? Anyway, what I’m going to talk about now (very hit-or-miss-ly, I’m afraid) – is my feeling that it doesn’t have to be done as badly as it frequently is” (Vassar Collection, Folder 54.12).

She valued faithful translations just as she wrote accurate poems; her remarks show that she also felt that achieving faithful accuracy was all but impossible. But Bishop leaves a

small window of opportunity between “hard” and “impossible,” which gives her the change to try to define how to attempt, at least, a translation that she terms a “good” translation.

The move that she identifies as the “feeling like that feminine intuition” is counterintuitive and leads to what she frames as “bad” translation. Interestingly, Bishop makes an argument against a representational strategy that was a distinguishing feature of her poetics: moving away from a subject in order to paradoxically write about it more accurately.<sup>1</sup> In her poems, fictionalizing the original moment or situation brought her closer to her sense of an authentic representation than she might have attained with a factual recounting of details. However, in her translations, as she highlights in these unpublished remarks and other writings, Bishop reacts against this same strategy, translations done “badly.” The reason for her reaction is because that counterintuitive move was the hallmark of *antropofagismo*, or cannibalism, a theory of translation as well as poetics practiced by the members of the Concrete movement in Brazil in the 1950s; it is similar to the type of translation Robert Lowell demonstrated in his translations from the French in *Imitations* and the poetry he published in *The Dolphin*. Bishop’s distinctive sense of what qualified as a faithful translation positioned her translation values in opposition to the cannibalism of the *concretistas* and Lowell.

In one of the few scholarly articles devoted to Bishop’s translations, Justin Read argues that Bishop uses the *antropofagismo* of Haroldo de Campos, one of the founding members of *concretismo* in cannibalizing the work of Brazilian poets to create unique original versions.<sup>2</sup> On the surface, this argument appears to be compelling, especially

when placing her theories of translation in conjunction with her poetics. However, by examining her actual translations in comparison to the original texts in Portuguese and contextualizing her own translation practices in relation with the representational strategies of Robert Lowell, Bishop's translation line up with with her understanding of the bricolage artistry of Claude Lévi-Strauss than *antropofagismo*.

*Antropofagismo* is one of the principal translation theories espoused by many Brazilian poets in the twentieth century. Though I will examine the relationship between the specific schools of thought more in-depth in the following section, I want to provide a brief background of the history of the term in order to define it. The poet that Justin Read examines, Haroldo De Campos, formed part of the Noigandres group of poets who exploded on the Brazilian literary scene in the 1950s advocating for a new type of visual or shape poetry. The aims of the group included challenging current Brazilian poetics but also expanding the avant-garde poetics which had been famously launched in 1922 by the modernists at the *Semana de Arte Moderna* [Modern Art Week] in São Paulo in 1922. One of those modernist founders, Oswaldo de Andrade,<sup>3</sup> wrote a 1928 "Manifesto Antropófago" [Cannibal Manifesto] in which he proposed *antropofagismo* as a uniquely Brazilian mode of literary postcolonial resistance. Andrade's definition of the term is also the one de Campos relied on in his 1950s poetics.

The manifesto is one of the seminal works of Brazilian, and ultimately Latin American, intellectual reaction against European postcolonial domination, as writers sought to assimilate the hegemonic discourse and dominant culture in order to (re)create a unique, discrete Brazilian (or Latin American) identity.<sup>4</sup> Andrade contended that



instead of reacting against the European primitivistic idea of Brazilians as noble savages, Brazilians should embrace the qualities of the indigenous cannibals who form part of their literal and metaphorical lineage. Andrade correlated modern Brazilians with the Tupinambá cannibals, who ate the Europeans when they landed on Brazilian shores. The famous line from his manifesto, “Tupy or not Tupy, that is the question,” demonstrates both his celebration of Brazilians’ Tupy heritage and his cannibalism of Hamlet’s monologue. In their overview of the influence of *antropofagismo*, Bina Maltz, Jerônimo Teixeira and Sérgio Ferreira give a sense of how Andrade intended the term to be used by Brazilian writers:

What Oswald wanted was to refuse, to incorporate and to question at the same time the dominant literary culture, models and repertoire, critically revising them and assimilating them to the Brazilian cultural reality. In this way, the critical consumption and assimilation of the values transplanted by the colonizer—scoffingly attacking some and enhancing others [that are] restrained by the hegemonic culture—are the same synonymous terms that are in the matrix of the cannibalistic metaphor: a metaphor of resistance to thought, to the official history of the ruler...that results in the prolongation of ideology, forms, themes and artistic paradigms...And the counterpart to this attitude of ideological and cultural inertia, of brutal assimilation that legitimized the foreign influence, would be the cannibalistic attitude of “gulping” the European knowledge, devouring it not just to incorporate it in a mechanical way but to absorb it dialectically in an attempt to “Brazilianize” our culture, giving it an identity (11, translation mine).

*Antropofagismo* was a theory that applied to the act of translating as well as writing original texts. Andrade argues that cannibalizing the text would make it more like the original.

This is the experimentalism that Read attributes to Bishop because of her ability to expand her gaze in order to reexamine a moment or text with fresh clarity. This is

certainly true of her poetics and Read's assertion is an invaluable contribution to the ongoing examination of the scalar movement of Bishop's representations. However, I find the inventiveness of *antropofagismo* an inadequate theory to apply to Bishop's value of faithful translation. As Read notes, for *antropofagistas*:

...the transcreative translator does not attempt to copy content from one language to the next, but strives to open up similar ranges of semiotic possibility for reading from one linguistic code to the other. The proper translation of a poem, then, has less to do with one-to-one semantic correspondence than it does with transubstantiating poetic forms, allowing readers in the target-language to invent semantic pathways suggested by the poem in a similar fashion to readers of the original. The most accurate translation under de Campos's method may thus require the translator to *falsify* the source-text (in the terms of the traditional etiquette of translation) in order to *fortify* that text's existence in the target-language (304).

In particular, Read's overview of Bishop's use of Haroldo de Campos's *antropofagismo* does not take into account Bishop's own dismissal of the *concretistas* and their approaches. While I agree with Read that Bishop is one of the "great border-crossers of any American literature" (299), and that her translations are fundamentally important because she brings the work of Brazilian modernists to a U.S. audience for the first time, her emphasis on accuracy and faithfulness place her in opposition to any theory that embraces cannibalistic translation practices.

Bishop derived her representational strategies from Lévi-Strauss's bricolage as she defined her idiosyncratic "Brazil" in the anthology, translated Brazilian texts, and rewrote her personal experiences into "Crusoe in England."<sup>5</sup> A bricoleur uses whatever is at hand to create tools or art; the word is French for "tinker." According to Lévi-Strauss's work, *The Savage Mind*, a bricoleur finds new uses for old material in order to solve problems creatively; it is a pragmatic artistic approach that Lévi-Strauss identifies as a

quality of “primitives,” whose “savage minds” he attempts to classify ethnographically in his work.<sup>6</sup> Their act of creation “always really consists of a new arrangement of elements, the nature of which is unaffected by whether they figure in the instrumental set or in the final arrangement (these being the same, apart from the internal disposition of their parts)” (21). Because of Bishop’s own often-repeated and lifelong interest in “primitives” and “home-made” art, there are characteristic and distinctive differences that define her distinct type of bricolage and distinguish it from the cannibalism of the writers and translators in her circle or bricolage as understood by structuralist and poststructuralist theorists. What I propose is not that Bishop actively applied Lévi-Straussian principles to her own writing but rather, based on her own reading of Lévi-Strauss, that she performed a unique type of bricolage artistry in her poetics and translation theory, which was bounded by her own sense for bricoleurs’ modes of artistic operation. Her bricolage approach relied on an understanding of representation as ultimately impossible; there was no perfect form or end result. Instead, her constant tinkering with fallible words and ideas led her to create as accurate a portrayal of a moment or idea as she could achieve, but the art is ultimately imperfect and “home-made,” to use her word from “Crusoe in England.”

Bishop, with her constant fascination with “primitive” art, wrote poems about bricoleurs throughout her career, including Jerónimo, Manuelzinho, Balthazar, and the Riverman, among others. In Bishop’s poems, bricoleurs have an untrained and therefore uncontaminated artistic sense; it was not just the way they reused objects that she admired, it was the way they approached the world and found beauty in eccentric items like birds’ nests or wasps’ nests or painted green straw hats. Bishop established the sense

of unsullied artistry in her writing about Brazilian bricoleurs. They could be children (Helena Morley, Manuelzinho's children); Indians (The Riverman, the Indian villagers she visits with Aldous Huxley); poor (Balthazár, the residents of the *fazendas* in "Burglar of Babylon" and her Time-Life *Brazil*); servants (Manuelzinho, many of her letters); or natural artists (like the young Brazilian artist she "discovers" and supports in Ouro Preto). Bishop aligns her own artistic approach with those of the bricoleur artists; she consistently refers to her own paintings as "primitives" in her letters. Her dry humor means that she uses the term self-deprecatingly when applied to her own art and with a hint of condescension when applied to art of people she discovers. She invites the readers of her letters in particular to laugh at her for her paintings or for her interest in primitive people and art; as I argued in chapter 3, Lota certainly did. Just as she worried that by publishing in the *New Yorker* she was positioning herself as a "precious" poet rather than a serious artist, so Bishop's letters express an underlying anxiety that her interest in primitives is somehow lowbrow in a way that might express something inherently lacking in her own taste level. Especially set in context with the travel poems by her contemporaries who wrote about art in Italy and France and England, Bishop's poems about bricoleurs would seem problematic by her own sense for what qualified as good art. This explains in part Bishop's own self-conscious, slightly apologetic tone when describing her paintings or her fascination with quirky objects and artists.

Nonetheless, despite her underlying anxiety that perhaps a good artist should not be interested in such things, Bishop wrote throughout her life about bricoleurs. Her early poem from *North & South*, "Jerónimo's House," records the ways in which a bricoleur

reimagines objects in his home: plants grow out of old sponges on the veranda, palm leaf fans become wall art, Christmas wrapping paper is transformed into dining room decoration. In a phrase that captures Bishop's understanding of bricolage, she describes Jerónimo's house as a "gray wasps' nest / of chewed-up paper / glued with spit" (*CP* 34). There is something fascinating, disgusting and still beautiful about Jerónimo's wasps' nest home; he is the bricoleur for creating it, but Bishop also demonstrates bricoleur taste for finding beauty and artistry in his odd mix of objects. One of her last poems about Brazil, "Santarém," published in 1978, records the tension between her own bricolage artistry which might be misunderstood by others. Echoing her description of Jerónimo's house from decades before, Bishop admires "an empty wasps' nest from a shelf: / small, exquisite, clean matte white, / and hard as stucco" (*CP* 186). When she returns to the boat on which she was traveling, a fellow passenger, Mr. Swan—whose job title ("the retiring head of Philips Electric") makes his bourgeois taste clear—asks her, "'What's that ugly thing?'" (187). By ending the poem with this criticism of bricolage art by a man whose own artistic taste clearly marks him in the poem as a Philistine, Bishop subtly privileges the beauty in natural and primitive things. Bishop alternatively wrote about bricoleurs with humor, frustration, and admiration, but looking for bricolage art was a constant source of interest in her travels and writings about Brazil.

Despite the fact that I am arguing in this chapter that Bishop returns almost completely to her earliest views of Brazil, her break with Lota that I chronicled in chapter 3 marks a subtle shift away from the cosmopolitan views as represented by Lota's circles. Bishop is more comfortable with her own interest in bricolage art in the poems in

*Geography III* than she is in *Questions of Travel*. The difference is subtle, but her mature poems have a competence and independence that separates her later writing from her earliest poems. She is working toward this mastery of bricolage art in “Burglar of Babylon,” based on the work of illiterate balladeers whose woodcuttings are bricolage, as well as “Twelfth Morning, Or What You Will,” whose house is another example of the type of practical found beauty. Her statement to Lowell about “The Riverman” that I quoted in chapter 3 makes clear her own personal dichotomy between civilized as represented by Lota and primitive as represented by her own interest in the Riverman: “You don’t have to like the ‘Riverman’ poem. Lota hates it, and I don’t approve of it myself but once it was written I couldn’t seem to get rid of it” (*WA* 315). The values she displayed, what she “should” think about the poem, privileges a cosmopolitan artistry that is above such things. However, Bishop stubbornly refused to give into such viewpoints, though she writes self-critically about that fact. The publication of “The Riverman” marked a shift in Bishop’s writing toward the things that “Lota hates” and away from her own sense of the type of artistry of which she should “approve.” The change which marks the last three poems at the end of the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel* is fully realized in “Crusoe in England” and other poems in *Geography III*, widely acknowledged by scholars as Bishop’s most accomplished work, in which she demonstrates her mature mastery of bricolage translation.

Returning to a comparison between de Campos’s *antropofagismo* and Bishop’s bricolage as both poetics and theories of translation, the stereotypes of “primitives” on which their theories rely have opposing stances that inform the differences between the

two approaches. The difference between *antropofagismo* and bricolage is the difference between a cannibal's consumption and tinker's craftsmanship. Both methods of translation rely on the figure of the "other" as either consumer or creator. De Campos formulated his theory not from the "insipid, resigned perspective of the 'noble savage'...but from the point of view of the 'bad savage,' devourer of whites—the cannibal" (qtd. in Read 303). In contrast, the bricoleur, to return to Lévi-Strauss's phrase, "'speaks' not only *with* things, as we have already seen, but also through the medium of things" (*Savage Mind* 21). It seems natural that Bishop, with her lifelong interest in the primitivized "noble savage" and the bricoleur's way of creating art, would prefer this method. Drawing from Andrade's manifesto, de Campos's theory assumes an aggression on the part of the cannibals that must be part of the translator's approach. He advocates consuming European artistry, with the feel of a warrior eating the heart of his vanquished foe, in order to create a completely new Brazilian artistic form. Whether or not he achieves this aggressive reimagining in his translations is the subject of some scholarly debate among Brazilian scholars, who find his translations more pedantic or faithful than his theory suggests they should be. De Campos's poery, however, and that of the other founders of the Concrete movement, August de Campos (Haroldo's brother) and Décio Pignatari certainly demonstrate their experimentalism with poetic form in many of the poems published in *Noigandres*, the literary review the three founders began in 1952.<sup>7</sup> Though there are many examples of this type of poetic cannibalism, Pignatari's 1957 "beba cloaca" demonstrates the ways in which he as the poet consumes U.S. advertising in a subtle and humorous play on words that critiques the ubiquitousness of Western

influence in Brazil. The words were printed like a Coca-Cola ad in white on a red background as seen in this image and translation from Reinhard Krüger, a German scholar who is an expert on *concretismo*:



drink coca cola  
 drool glue  
 drink coca(ine)  
 drool glue shard  
 shard  
 glue  
 cesspool

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Though Krüger's translation gives a sense of the offensiveness of the words in English, the point of the poem is that these are jokes that only Brazilians get. The subtle shift in signifiers, from *beba* to *babe*, the double entendres with *coca* as cocaine and *cola* as glue, which is the addictive substance sniffed stereotypically by the extreme poor in Brazil who cannot afford other drugs, all point to the underlying message of Pignatari's critique: Coca-Cola and Western advertisers are dangerous, addictive, and full of waste. Pignatari uses *antropofagismo* to cannibalize the Coca-Cola brand and logo and create a uniquely Brazilian form of aggressive resistance to U.S. cultural influence. The



metaphorical act of consumption fortifies the cannibal's underlying rhetorical position; Pignatari "consumes" the Coca-Cola ad to make an avant-garde poem.

In contrast, Bishop as a bricoleur with forms. Her innovation is the craftsmanship of using more traditional forms in order to arrive at more personal truths. Though I will examine these examples more thoroughly in the next two sections, my discussion of the anthology will differentiate between her approach to defining Brazil and its literature in the introduction and her translation approaches in the texts by Brazilian writers. The bricolage approach in the introduction is a rhetorical move in which Bishop emphasizes her lack of academic experience to write about Brazilian literature, instead privileging her own experiences and her characteristically self-deprecating sense of defining the country inadequately. Nonetheless, despite her disclaimers throughout the introduction, Bishop does define the country and its literary history in a way that reconstructs her earliest Samambaia views. Her bricolage translation bring the poems into English with overly precise faithfulness that sometimes misses the overall feel of the poem in Portuguese and, as I will demonstrate in the case of one of Vinicius de Moraes's poems, transforms the Brazilian landscape into a U.S. just as she originally conflated Samambaia and Nova Scotia. In the introduction and in her translated texts, Bishop speaks disparagingly about *concretismo* and resists the experimentalism of *antropofagismo* so thoroughly that she misses many of the characteristics of twentieth-century Brazilian poetry, especially its emphasis on colloquialism and experimentalism. The subject of that anthology is a public version of Brazil and Brazilian literature, the political and literary space in which she lived for two decades.

The subject of “Crusoe in England” is her own personal Brazil, the place she shared with Lota. Like her anthology and translations, her bricolage approach in “Crusoe” is also a reaction against cannibalistic experimentalism, but in a much more personal way. She turns away from or fictionalizes her relationship with Lota in order to be able to write about it more fully. Bishop does not write a poem with one-to-one correlations in which signifier equals signified; Friday does not symbolize Lota. Instead, she reexamines the triad relationship of Bishop-Lota-Brazil in a new way. The new triad, Crusoe-Friday-island nonetheless maintains the tropes, tensions, undercurrents and concerns of Bishop’s other portrayals about her shared life with Lota. Bishop relies again on the form of the dramatic monologue, which she often uses to mask her own voice, to explore and expound on her grief and her loss. Turning away from Lota in order to write better about her loss is a direct result of Bishop’s discomfort with Robert Lowell’s type of cannibalistic poetics.

Lowell’s translations and poems in the 1960s and early 1970s relied on the exact type of experimentalism which made Bishop so uncomfortable. Though he might not have used these terms, Lowell’s translation in his 1961 *Imitations* are not unlike the translations privileged by the *antropofagistas*: His recreations of poems by French poets falsify the original texts in order to fortify them as discrete poems in English. His goal was different—rather than working toward a postcolonial identity, Lowell was creating a more distinct and personal type of poetry—but his methods were remarkably similar to those advocated by Brazilian *antropofagistas*.

Bishop was horrified by Lowell's translations. In a 1961 letter to Lowell, critiquing his versions of poems by Rimbaud and Baudelaire, she revealed her distress with what she viewed as his mistranslations of the French: "I just *can't* decide how 'free' one has the right to be with the poet's intentions" (qtd. in Millier 337). Despite the decisive way she took Lowell to task, the emphasis Bishop placed in this sentence is on her inability to decide what freedom a translator has. However, this is the only instance in which she admits this type of uncertainty; within the context of the letter, the line reads more as a kindness to a friend than a true picture of her own feelings. She was sure how free one had a right to be, she was just uncomfortable telling Lowell her opinion as frankly as she told it to other people. Lowell dedicated *Imitations* to her; according to Lloyd Schwartz, it was "probably one of the last books in the world she'd have wished to be dedicated to her" (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau, 341). Her own views, as Schwartz remembers, were "quite rigid" and she viewed Lowell's works as "almost willful mistranslations." She responded to Lowell's versions in private letters, but not in print in English.

Bishop only mentions publicly her response to Lowell's *Imitations* in a Portuguese-language introduction to a translation of four of his poems in Portuguese.<sup>9</sup> Published in 1962 in the journal *Cadernos Brasileiros*, a literary magazine printed in Rio from 1959 to 1970 by the CCF (Congress for Cultural Freedom), the publication in Rio coincided with an infamous visit from Lowell in the summer of 1962 that in many ways changed the scope of their friendship. Lowell brought his wife at the time, Elizabeth Hardwick, and their daughter to spend a few months in South America, but he suffered a

breakdown in Argentina that caused quite a bit of trouble for Bishop and others and was sent home in a straightjacket. Bishop's Portuguese-language introduction of *Quatro Poemas* provides insight both into Bishop's views on Lowell's translations as well as her own language abilities. The introduction reads like a literal rendition of English phrases in Portuguese. There are a number of places where Bishop's word choice and word order reveal a lack of knowledge of Portuguese. Bishop refers to the public reaction to *Imitations* in the introduction as she gives a brief biography of Lowell for a Brazilian audience:

Lowell has dedicated part of his time to translations; in 1961, we have his translation of *Phaedra* of Racine. A book of shorter translations, Baudelaire, Rilke, Montale, Pasternak, etc., was released recently under the title *Imitations* [provided in the English]. Lowell deliberately chose this word to describe his technique of translation; the poems are far from being literal translations; they constitute, in reality, new poems, in the already famous Lowell style. And for this they are praised by those who admire this style and criticized by those who prefer the more usual translation, word for word (5-6; translation mine).

The rather acerbic "those who admire this style" indicates that she does not include herself in that camp. Bishop praises Lowell throughout the five-page introduction except, glaringly, when she mentions *Imitations*. There is almost a note of sarcasm when she mentions the "new poems" in the "already famous Lowell style." Bishop considered his deviations from the original, while perhaps aesthetically appealing in the "famous Lowell style," to be ethically unacceptable because they so deviated from the original what they were almost unrecognizable in English.<sup>10</sup>

Any reader of Bishop or Lowell is aware of the personal and aesthetic collaboration between the two poets. Despite very different poetic styles, they were in

many ways each other's best critics as well as friends. Millier describes Bishop's role in relation to Lowell's *For the Union Dead*, published in 1964: "She had seen most of Lowell's book quite recently and had chided him for what she perceived as inaccuracies. A felt presence throughout the book, she had contributed much to its composition" (360). Interestingly, then, for colleagues and friends whose collaboration is a famous and integral part of their poetic creation, Lowell is not a translator for the 1972 anthology. As Bishop is a felt presence in his work, so Lowell's is a felt absence in her anthology.

Bishop's choice to exclude Lowell points as much to Bishop's resistance of his experimentalism as it does her misunderstanding of the importance of experimentalism in Brazilian literature. It is a missed opportunity on both counts. As the editor of the volume, she matched many of U.S. friends who did not speak Portuguese as translators to Brazilian poets whose style she thought worked well with theirs; they worked off of literal prose trots to create new poems in English. Her pairing of James Merrill, with his love of spiritualism and deep symbols, with Cecília Meireles, a poet of the symbolist movement who explores religious and supernatural themes in her poetry, was a brilliant match. Richard Wilbur's "Rondeau of the Little Horses" in particular captures the alliteration and movement of Manuel Bandeira's original poem while still diverging in ways that enable the poem to maintain the same feel in English. Bishop's own translations of poems by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, with whom she shared a warm if reserved friendship, are some of her best translations because the style of the poems suit her own poetic voice. Bishop could have paired Lowell as a translator with poets for whom his methods would have been celebrated. A "Lowell poem" which cannibalized an

Oswald de Andrade poem might have been magnificent. It would also have been more faithful to Andrade's aesthetic values than Jean Longland's rather pedantic translations of a handful of Andrade's simpler poems in the anthology (10-17). Lowell might have "Americanized" the Brazilian poems in his imitative style in a way that would have been in line with the values of *antropofagismo*. As the editor, Bishop's bricolage approach resisted the cannibalism that Lowell and Andrade might both have found more aesthetically valuable. Bishop's resistance of their cannibalism results in less innovative translations. Though he does not do so (most of the arguments about translations between the two authors are her views of his approach), Lowell could have accused Bishop of a lack of artistry in her translations in the sense that his poems used the creative experimentation that her faithful translations lacked.

The divergence between their representational strategies which first came to a head on the subject of translation in 1961 after the publication of *Imitations* became more apparent in 1972, when Bishop wrote an impassioned and thoughtful letter to Lowell about his poetic practice and asking him to rethink publishing *The Dolphin*. The book was the third of a sonnet-based trilogy he published in 1973; the first book in the trilogy, *History*, dealt with broader historical and political issues. The latter two volumes, *For Lizzie and Harriet* and *The Dolphin*, dealt with the personal turmoil of the dissolution of his marriage to Hardwick and his remarriage to Caroline Blackwood. In a move that Bishop found particularly reprehensible, Lowell rewrote or published, almost verbatim, letters from Hardwick. What Lowell intends as daring experimentalism in cannibalizing

the personal details of his marriage to Elizabeth Hardwick and rewriting them as confessional poems, Bishop effectively labels laziness and vengefulness.

In her letter responding to her discomfort with his translation style, Bishop couched her views in disclaimers; in the letter responding to *The Dolphin*, she is very clear that she knows exactly how free Lowell can and cannot be with Hardwick's letters. Bishop quotes from a Thomas Hardy letter in writing to Lowell about the ramifications of what he is planning to do: "Lizzie is not dead, etc.—but there is a 'mixture of fact & fiction,' and you have *changed* her letters. That is 'infinite mischief,' I think. The first one, page 10 ["The Farther Shore 1: From My Wife"] is so shocking...well I don't know what to say" (*Words in Air* 708). Though Bishop acknowledges that "One can use one's life as material—one does, anyway," the way in which Lowell rewrites his wife's letters is "violating a trust." Bishop makes clear that her indignation might be qualified by Lowell working within parameters with which Hardwick was explicitly comfortable ("IF you were given permission—IF you hadn't changed them"), but the way that he wrote the poems, using "personal, tragic, anguished letters that way—it's cruel." Bishop asks him to reconsider his decision first on moral grounds.

But Bishop also couches her argument with Lowell in artistic terms in a way that reveals her own sense of how to handle private material in literature in a morally and aesthetically acceptable way. Her problem with *Imitations* is that Lowell's cannibalism of source-texts in translation leads to a greater type of experimentation, deviating from the original text. Bishop condemns the poems in *The Dolphin* for exactly the opposite reasons: the sonnets that cannibalize the private letters of his wife are not experimental,

creative or well-crafted enough. With a larger measure of creativity or “a great deal of work,” Bishop argues that “the thing *could* be done, somehow—the letters used and the conflict presented as forcefully, or almost, without *changing* them, or loading the dice so against E” (708). Bishop expresses two different types of frustrations about these poems in particular and, in the next paragraph, with “the ‘confessional’” type of poems, which “In general, I deplore.” First, she implies that the poems are a lazy use of personal material, that the force of the poem comes from the use of shocking material (“anything goes, and I am so sick of poems about the student’s mothers & fathers and sex-lives and so on”) rather than careful writing. Second, she finds that the overabundant use of personal material makes the authors themselves untrustworthy both as people and writers: “one surely should have a feeling that one can trust the writer—not to distort, tell lies, etc.” (709). She resisted Lowell’s confessional experimentalism, the way in which he crossed boundaries and violated trusts in ways that were morally reprehensible to her. Bishop emphasized, “*art just isn’t worth that much*” (708). The moral cost of his confessional experimentalism was one that Bishop was unwilling to bear.

During this same period, Bishop was struggling to write about issues that were very similar to the ones Lowell was dealing with on a personal level. Both of them left long-term partners for younger women, and Bishop’s grief over her affair was compounded by Lota’s subsequent suicide. Bishop wrote in the last line of “Five Flights Up” that her past was “A yesterday I find almost impossible to lift” (*CP* 181).<sup>11</sup> The unresolved nature of that line, originally published as a parenthetical aside, which ends the last poem in her last book, indicates the difficulty and lack of resolution she



experiences in writing about her past. But in the poems Bishop wrote about Lota and her losses between 1965 and 1972, Bishop eschewed Lowell's brand of cannibalism. Bishop's poems and representations of Brazil during that time had as much to do with resisting Lowell's writing as with accurately describing the Brazil she shared with Lota. In "Crusoe in England," Bishop managed after "a great deal of work" to present the conflict between them "forcefully" and without "loading the dice" against Lota. Bishop wrote a poem in which the tension and unresolved nature of their last years is evident even if it remains unconfessed.

Bishop as bricoleur carefully, meticulously, with very little sense of resolution, tinkered with ideas as she re-used her past in order to create new texts. In Bishop's translations and throughout the anthology, the end result is less creative and perhaps less effective in bringing Brazilian modernist poets wholly into English and accurately defining Brazil to her audience. The limits and definitions of her idiosyncratic "Brazil" are based on her personal past. But the result of her meticulous craftsmanship of "Crusoe in England" is a piece that evokes more richly the pain and tension of the dissolution of her relationship than any of Lowell's *Dolphin* poems could achieve. These final texts are the culmination of Bishop's lifelong fascination with putting "found" things together into art as she translates Lota's Brazil for the last time.

### **Crusoe as Editor**

In early 1968, just months after Lota's suicide in September 1967, Bishop began working on the anthology. She spent the next four years on the project, as she moved

with Suzanne Bowen between the apartment they shared in San Francisco and Bishop's renovated home in Ouro Preto and finally, without Suzanne, to Cambridge to begin teaching at Harvard in 1970. Bishop had two partners during the time she was working on the anthology—Suzanne, who also functioned as her secretary, and Alice Methfessel, with whom she had just begun a relationship by the time the anthology was published. But Lota is the unmentioned center of the anthology; throughout the introduction, Bishop is faithful to Lota's views of Brazil.

Extending the metaphor of Bishop as a bricoleur, the anthology was to her experiences in Brazil what the museum was to Crusoe: a repository for souvenirs that represent early memories and views as they give their audiences an overview of the foreign sites in which they lived. Anthologies, like museums, are zones of negotiations. A museum exhibit is a carefully curated collection of represented artifacts pieced together to form a specific narrative; an anthology editor performs the same act of vetting and curation. The views of the audience impact the project as the curators/editors either reify or challenge their readers/viewers' expectations of the culture, people, or texts. The curators'/editors' value judgments are impacted as much by academic interest as by economic factors (the type of audience who will buy the book or come to the exhibit or finance the project). James Clifford delineates the role of museums and the way in which power relationships play out in within the representation of "other" cultures for a primarily Western audience:

When museums are seen as contact zones, their ongoing structure as a *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral *relationship*—a power-charged set

of exchanges, of push and pull...A center and a periphery are assumed: the center a point of gathering, the periphery an area of discovery. The museum, usually located in a metropolitan city, is the historical destination for the cultural productions it lovingly and authoritatively salvages, cares for, and interprets (*Routes* 192-193).

If an international anthology is a “contact zone,” then each anthology creates a structure that represents a specific relationship between the texts, the culture in which the texts were originally produced, and the culture into which they are translated. The editors, in their introduction and selection of the texts, collect items that are evidence of the narrative and relationships they set out as central. Like the setting of a museum, in a metropolitan city, the cultural production of an anthology like Bishop’s is intended for an audience who is cosmopolitan, traveled, and primed to expect the primitivized view of Brazilians as “other.” This is the expectation that her audience would have held both because of popular portrayals of Brazilians, but also the overview of Brazilian literature in previous anthologies or texts.<sup>12</sup> The audience of both an anthology and a museum invest in it financially by buying tickets or buying books, and their buy-in must, in some way, impact the editors’/curators’ choice in their collections. By setting boundaries and terms of engagement, both have power over how the country is represented. Their editorial choices are impacted as much by the expectations of their audience as by their own values and views; in Bishop’s case, the primitivizing expectations of her audience are met by insisting on the formality, education, and sophistication of ‘certain types’ of Brazilians, even as she argues that the ‘other types’ are certainly ‘primitive.’ Using Clifford’s framework, Bishop’s understanding of the power relationships and the narrative of the “Brazil” that she presents to her audience is different than that of an

academic ethnographer returning with a well-researched examination of the culture and texts that are representative of Brazilian literature. Instead, Bishop's anthology is a bricoleur's collection of personal moments, relationships, and viewpoints in Brazil. Bishop is Crusoe as an editor.

My acknowledgment that Bishop's anthology is more personal than academic is not as strong an indictment as it might seem on the surface. The role of bricoleur is one with which she would have been more comfortable than that of an academic expert. Bishop was hesitant to view herself as an authority on Brazilian literature; she wrote in a letter to Lowell in 1969 that it was "awful to think I'll probably be regarded as some sort of authority on Brazil the rest of my life" (qtd. in Millier 424). She was a reluctant cultural intermediary throughout her life and was often uncomfortable in academic settings, but particularly so in her later years at Harvard, where her position as a writer-in-residence often put her at odds with her academic colleagues in the English department. Within the anthology itself, Bishop limits the scope by writing self-deprecatingly that the texts selected, from poets of the "modern generation and of the post-war generation of 1945," are "more representative of the editors' personal tastes than all-inclusive" (xv). Bishop never purports to have written a definitive volume on Brazilian poetry and, in her typically self-effacing way, makes clear her introduction that the project is personal, quirky, and selective rather than expansive and comprehensive.

Comparing Bishop's anthology with two other anthologies reveals the unique approach and arguments Bishop constructs about Brazil.<sup>13</sup> The first anthology, *Brazilian Poetry: 1950-1980*, was published in 1983 and was part of the series produced by the

Academy of American Poets. Though it is clear from Bishop's letters that she and Brasil were planning on working with the Academy of American Poets on the second volume, it was not produced during her lifetime. Instead, Brasil worked with William Jay Smith; the volume is dedicated to Bishop. The second anthology, *Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain*, edited by Michael Palmer, Régis Bonvicino, and Nelson Ascher, was published in 1997. Though not produced by the Academy of American Poets or published by Wesleyan like the other two anthologies, the editors reference the earlier anthologies in defining the scope for their work.<sup>14</sup> The foreword to *Nothing the Sun* begins by stating "this anthology fills an important gap" since there have been "very few" anthologies of Brazilian poetry published in the U.S. (17). Both of the later anthologies explicitly begin chronologically where the previous anthology left off and build off of the last anthologists' work to create a history of Brazilian poetry translated for a U.S. audience. In their overview of Brazilian culture, history and literary movements, the latter two anthologies indirectly correct Bishop's misreadings of Brazilian poetry. Continuing my metaphor of the anthology as a museum exhibit, the later anthologies are the more thorough exhibitions by academic ethnographers rather than the personal collection of one bricoleur.

Bishop's relationships were the center of her anthology. Bishop's own position as a returning poet was critical to her selection as an editor and her Brazilian and U.S. friends are featured as translators and translated writers. Bishop's involvement in the anthology was mutually beneficial to her career and to the Academy of American Poets, who produced the book. Bishop's literary reputation lent the project credibility when

Elizabeth (Betty) Kray, the first director of The Academy of American Poets, began the process of fundraising. According to Kathleen Norris, who worked as a proofreader for the Academy during the production of the anthology, Bishop's involvement with the project was essential to its financial backing. As Norris remembers the process, Kray, "obtained money from several sources (listed in the anthology) to do this book...Betty had known Elizabeth Bishop for years, and I believe would not have attempted to raise the money for this project had Elizabeth not been involved (and indeed, enthusiastic about it)."<sup>15</sup> The financial backing from the Center for Inter-American Relations, the Tinker Foundation and C. Douglas Dillon enabled Kray, Bishop and Bishop's co-editor, Emmanuel Brasil, who provided the literal Portuguese definitions, to solicit translations from Bishop's hand-picked group of U.S. poetry translators. Almost all of the U.S. writers and academics who worked on the volume came from Bishop's circle of relationships, a veritable "Who's Who" of contemporary poets and Brazilian scholars. Many of them attended the launch party for *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry*. The 400 guests included disparate friends from throughout Bishop's life in Brazil and the United States. To the competitive English department at Harvard in which Bishop struggled to find her place, the launch party signaled her place as a major poet among writers and academic scholars whose opinions mattered to Bishop.

The level of Bishop's influence on the production and translation process of the anthology made her views on Brazil particularly critical to this project. Though the introduction is signed "The Editors," Bishop's voice dominates most of the the 9-page overview of Brazilian culture and literature. In explaining Brazil to a U.S. audience, the

generalized arguments about social and political issues in Brazil and the trajectory of twentieth-century Brazilian poetry are based on Bishop's experiences. Bishop also matched the U.S. translators with the Brazilian poems; though there were a few translators who spoke Portuguese, most worked from literal prose translations of Brazilian poetry and Bishop provided. Bishop retained almost complete editorial control over the final result. According to Norris, "Miss Bishop kept an eagle eye out for poets whose 'Brazilian poems' sounded suspiciously like their own verse. She all but rejected the work of several poets...for this reason, and did her own versions. Some are printed under Bishop's name, and some under the other American poet...egos got bruised but it never got out of hand." The views and the translation style throughout the volume are almost uniformly Bishop's. Comparing Bishop's introduction, particularly her arguments about Brazilian culture, with the arguments made in two later anthologies of Brazilian poetry, reveals the ways in which Bishop fundamentally misreads and misrepresents Brazil in her nostalgia for Lota's privileged, well-educated antipetista epoch.<sup>16</sup>

Bishop limits the scope of the Brazil she is defining in the third paragraph of the introduction. First she begins with her own subject position. Though she writes in third person and uses masculine language, she was once the "American visitor" to whom it seems "that the educated people whom he meets in Brazil read more poetry and *know* more poetry (often by heart) than people in the same walks of life at home." As she does in the introduction to *The Diary of "Helena Morley,"* Bishop identifies herself as an American tourist, then places herself solidly among the "educated elite," whom she defines as "a very small class, living almost entirely in five or six of the larger coastal

cities” and set against the rest of the country which is afflicted with “widespread illiteracy (forty per cent is the figure usually given).” The Brazilian audience of the poetry included in the anthology is limited because of the small nature of the “potential book-reading, book-buying public.” By focusing on this elite and only referring to the rest of the country as illiterate, Bishop implies that the poets write within, about and to the educated elite, which in her argument accounts in part for the difficulty Brazilian poets have in living on their art alone. In the last paragraph, Bishop enumerates the number of ways the major Brazilian poets all augment their income in order to live within their society (xiv-xv). This stark dichotomy between rich and poor, with no mention of the middle class, is inconsistent both with Bishop’s own writing about the country in the Time-Life manuscript as well as the facts of the time. The strict class and socioeconomic divisions within Bishop’s view of Brazil set up the argument she makes about Brazilian poetry a few paragraphs later.

As the editor of *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry*, Bishop sometimes demonstrates a response to the resonant themes and issues in Brazilian poetry that was as tone-deaf as her Portuguese reportedly was. Bishop was aware of her own language difficulties. Bishop refers to her lack of ability with Portuguese in a 1966 interview with Ashley Brown originally published in *Shenandoah*: “After all these years, I’m like a dog: I understand everything that’s said to me, but I don’t speak it very well” (291). David Weimer and Mark Strand, who were Fulbright scholars in Brazil in 1963 and 1965 respectively, both recall Bishop’s difficulties speaking Portuguese. According to Weimer, “I realized that Elizabeth could barely make herself understood in Portuguese.



I think she was tone deaf, as far as languages go, at least as far as Portuguese. Elizabeth read it fluently, but she couldn't speak it well. My wife and I were always amused when we heard her speaking on the phone to somebody, or speaking to a servant" (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau, 179). And Strand notes that, though "She knew a lot of people—Vinicius de Moraes, Cecília Meireles, Carlos Drummond—and had met a lot of these people through Lota...Elizabeth was very timid about her Portuguese... She was always embarrassed by her pronunciation of the language" (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau, 194-5). Though her comprehension of written Portuguese seems to have been better than her speaking ability, she nonetheless betrayed a misunderstanding of Portuguese language and twentieth-century Brazilian poetry in many of her arguments in the introduction.

Bishop misses at least three critical points that were central to twentieth-century Brazilian poetic movements: the importance of colloquialism, the link between everyday poetry and political reform, and the poets' break from U.S. and European literary traditions. These are qualities that became more pronounced in Brazilian poetry through the decades and it could very well be that Bishop intended to address the connection of politics and experimentalism in the second volume which she planned with Brasil. The last paragraph of the introduction alludes to this volume in which the "editors hope to introduce" the "younger poets" to give the "American reader a more complete picture of the variety, profundity, and originality of Brazilian poetry today" (xxi). This volume became *Brazilian Poetry: 1950-1980* and was published after her death. However, her "personal tastes" in this volume lead Bishop to making arguments about modern

Brazilian poetry that are the opposite of what is argued about the same period in the two later volumes.

The definitions of modernist Brazilian poetry in the introductions to the later anthologies gently contradict and correct Bishop's arguments. In the introduction to the second anthology, *Brazilian Poetry: 1950-1980*, Brasil and Smith identify the goal of the Brazilian modernists (whose work was included in Bishop's anthology) to "use with complete honesty the materials of everyday life" (2). They describe how the modernist poet Oswald de Andrade "treated in simple language Brazilian themes" (2). Bishop notes the same thing about Modern Art Week in her introduction; one of the goals of the modern poets was to "abandon the dead literary language of the nineteenth century and to write poetry in the spoken language" (xv). She labels the formal aspects, like "slang, abbreviations, ellipses" and other formal markers, that the poets rely on to communicate their colloquial tone. However, in the rest of the introduction, Bishop marks the end of colloquial Portuguese being used in poetry while the other editors of the later two anthologies give colloquialism as the definitive quality that runs through all twentieth-century poetry. In *Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain*, editors Régis Bonvicino and Nelson Ascher continue to emphasize modernists' emphasis on everyday themes written in colloquial Portuguese as quintessentially Brazilian—"from '22 on, Brazilian poetry has fallen into one of two categories: Modernist or immaterial" (30). Bishop argues that, despite the writers having eschewed the older, more formal written style in order to use "demotic Portuguese," the trend has "not been completely realized, and Portuguese is still rarely written as it is spoken" (xvi). She also argues that the use of demotic Portuguese

“declined with the ‘generation of ’45,’” which is more “conventional” than those “early attempts at modernism.” Even her word “attempts” sounds a bit condescending—both other anthologies just refer to Brazilian modernism without comparing it to U.S. and European poetry or making judgments about whether or not the poetry “realized” what it set out to accomplish. It is certainly possible that in arguing that colloquialism and slang were declining, Bishop was not familiar enough with the Brazilian poetry being published in the 1950s and 1960s to realize how they reacted against the generation of ’45 in order to return to many of the guiding principles of the *Semana de Arte Moderna*, especially the use of everyday life in their poems. (The last paragraph of her introduction alludes to the later second volume which would cover the poetry of the “Concretionists” and others.) But it seems particularly glaring for Bishop to omit one of the guiding principles of the poetry of modern Brazilian poets as well.<sup>17</sup>

In defining Brazilian poetry in her introduction, Bishop either avoids or demonstrates a complete unawareness of the connection that was important to many of the Brazilian poets whose poems were included in the anthology: the literary move to emphasize colloquialism was part of a larger political move to remain in solidarity with oppressed people. Both later introductions point to the centrality of the political and social consciousness that permeated twentieth-century Brazilian poetry. The fight against overly formal Portuguese is in many ways part of the overall social and political backlash against the education and culture of the elite ruling-class. Bishop’s arguments about modern Brazilian poetry as being written by the elite for the elite demonstrates how much of her understanding of Brazil was dependent on Lota’s nostalgic, classist values which

privileged poetry by Brazilians educated, as Lota was, in Europe rather than the true movements in twentieth-century Brazilian poetry.<sup>18</sup> In addition to supporting political parties of the people, Brazilian modernists and the poets who followed them were self-consciously creating poetry for the people. Bishop defines Brazilian poetry as the opposite of that.

In contextualizing the poets within Lota's particular world of Samambaia with that group's strong connections to the cosmopolitan circles in the U.S. and Europe, Bishop unquestioningly uses a North-South axis for her comparisons in the introduction rather than placing the Brazilian poets in the context of other Latin American poets. Her move was certainly not unusual nor was Lota solely responsible for the comparison. Throughout their relationship, Bishop and Lota were united in their appreciation of the United States as superior to Brazil culturally—this premise undergirds most of Bishop's arguments about the country. And her views were in line with the views of other poets and travelers of her time. Using the U.S. and Europe as a frame of reference would have been an unquestioned expectation for an anthology about literature from a region that was almost completely ignored in literary circles up till the publication of her anthology. In 1972, literary critics were just beginning to become interested in issues of representation and postcolonialism. Many of the seminal works of postcolonial theory would not be published until later in the decade. It would be decades before categories of literature such as "World Literature" and "Ethnic and Third World Literature" would be serious subjects of study in English departments. Bishop was certainly at the vanguard of a

movement arguing that Brazilian poetry, as well as other South American poetry, were worthy of serious consideration.

In the beginning of the introduction, Bishop's comparison between the U.S. and Brazil favors Brazil, especially in the way poets are treated respectfully in their country. Before turning to the editorial choices and translations issues in the volume, Bishop creates a tension between the two countries in their respective reception and treatment of poets as well as their artistic and literary taste levels. She privileges Brazil's treatment of poets and poetry; her assertion that "poets and poetry are highly thought of" in her adopted country indicates her own frustration at the position of poets in the U.S. In particular, the fact that Manuel Bandeira receives a full pension from the University of Brazil, whose Chamber of Deputies awarded it to him unanimously "to great applause," seems to be a jab at Harvard as part of Bishop's ongoing frustration at not qualifying for a larger pension with which to retire. And for a poet who was famously worried about her lack of prolificacy as a poet, the fact that Brazilians had a term for poets who "produce volumes after long intervals of silence," called *Bissextos* ("Leap Year Poets"), seems particularly appealing (xiii). Her praise of Bandeira's anthology of *Bissexto* writers who "are esteemed and not forgotten" though "their output may be small" is significant because of her own often-repeated anxiety that she would be viewed as a minor poet in comparison to many of the more prolific U.S. writers in her circle.

However, in general, Bishop retains the slightly condescending tone that is indicative both of Lota's cosmopolitan views and Bishop's place in U.S- and Euro-centric academic circles. Despite praising their respect for poets, Bishop undercuts

Brazilians' taste level and understanding. Anyone can be a "poet," even "a businessman or a politician." The fact that the term "poet" can be a "compliment or term of affection" takes away from the word's power to denote literary ability. Bishop uses a local color story about Manuel Bandeira to illustrate Brazilians' deference to poets. Bandeira is given a permanent parking space in front of his apartment building with "an enameled sign POETA." The punch line of the story, set off by one of Bishop's ironic em-dashes, pokes fun at the Brazilians who award him a parking space: "— although he never owned a car and didn't know how to drive" (xiii). The humor is subtle, but pointed: Brazilians respect the role more than the writing.

The unquestioned premise on which her introduction is based is that the Northern Hemisphere's poetry is the standard against which Brazilian poetry should be judged. In the same way that Bishop defined Brazilian people groups as being decades or centuries behind in comparison to U.S. and European cultures in the Time-Life book, in her introduction she asserts that Brazilian literature trails behind U.S. and European poetry by at least a decade or more. She describes the modernists' use of slang and apostrophes as something which "happened in English poetry about a decade earlier" (xvi). In 1922, the modernists in Brazil were attempting to "break the dependence on foreign literary models and to make Brazil a leader in the international avant-garde," a goal shared by the later Concrete poets (Brasil and Smith 5). Though Bishop acknowledges that the use of apostrophes to denote colloquial speech could be a "recurring phenomenon, desire, or ideal in modern literature" she conveys in this paragraph a sense that this quality in Brazilian poetry is one of the aspects that has yet to have been "fully realized." Brazilian

poets, as *antropofagismo* demonstrates, were aware of Northern literary traditions and perhaps had many of these forms in mind, but their goal was to break with them.

The goal of most Brazilians from the Modernists through the rest of the twentieth century was to create a uniquely Brazilian voice and identity, often through experimental forms of poetry that were self-consciously different from or resistant to Northern poems. In their introduction to *Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain*, Bonvicino and Ascher define Brazilian literature to their U.S. audience by contextualizing the country within Latin American regions and literary traditions rather than comparing Brazil to the U.S. or Europe. Bonvicino and Ascher are aware that their U.S. audience is unfamiliar with Brazil, but as they set out to define the poetry as well as the country, they do not use Bishop's north and south axis: "Modern poetry in Brazil is no less peculiar than the country itself...Brazil is actually the other face of the South American subcontinent, not so much hidden as it is unknown. The same might be said of the country's literature in general and of poetry in particular (25). The editors do not have the same anxieties as the other editors of the previous two anthologies. By the time of this anthology's publication in 1997, the editors are able to assume a general knowledge of Latin American literature on the part of their U.S. audience. Their goal, then, is not to educate a group that is utterly ignorant about South American poetry, but instead to "enrich" this understanding by adding to it knowledge about Brazilian literature which, "strangely enough, has nothing in common with the poetry from Portugal or Hispanic America. The latter, discursive and deeply marked by Surrealism, never quite established its grip on Brazilian writers" the (*Nothing the Sun* 34). The editors' larger contextualization indicates the progress in the

time between Bishop's anthology and theirs, in part because of Bishop's attention to Brazilian literature and poetry.

Bishop's version of Vinicius de Moraes's poem "Soneto de Intimidade," retains the North-South axis inherent in her introduction as she transforms the Brazilian persona and landscape into a decidedly Northern one. Within her anthology, Bishop's translations often remain so close to the original Portuguese that the resulting poem in English is an almost exact replication; "Sonnet of Intimacy" is one of the few exceptions. Bishop deviates from the original poem in ways that might appear to be experimental as she attempts to find equivalent images in English that evoke the same response to Moraes's rustic scene. However, she is still constrained in her experimentalism—the result is not a cannibalized version in which a new image appears that retains the foreignness or feel of the original. Instead, Bishop takes parts of Moraes's poem and pieces them together, bricolage-style, into something expected and familiar to her audience, especially one primed to view Brazilians as "noble savages" with the equivalent sense of that term. The English version, "Sonnet of Intimacy," has more to do with William Wordsworth's "Michael" and other Romantic sonnets about "noble savages" than it does with Moraes's Brazilian poem.

Moraes's use of colloquial language to portray commonplace subject matters is characteristic of his work. Bishop misreads and misrepresents these qualities in her translation by using more formal language. Moraes was a popular poet; he is most famous as the poet who wrote the lyrics to "The Girl from Ipanema." Moraes wrote several sonnets with similar titles, (like "Soneto de Felicidade," "Soneto do Amor Total,"



as well as sonnets to Katherine Mansfield, Pablo Neruda, Portinari and others), many of which were compiled in a 1957 book called *Livro de Sonetos*. In the majority of his sonnets, Moraes plays off the formal structure with a humorous, everyday tone--his poem to Katherine Mansfield addresses her perfume pressed into the pages. In general, however, his sonnets are more universal poems about love, loss, women (he was married eight times) and his city, Rio de Janeiro, among other themes. "Soneto de Intimidade" was written in 1937 after a trip to Campo Belo, when Moraes was still in his 20s; the poem about being on a farm is unusual in Moraes's work.<sup>19</sup> The rhyme scheme and structure of the poem fit into Bishop's understanding that the best Brazilian literature was formal—this sonnet is a light pastoral using the Italian sonnet rhyme scheme.

In her version, "Sonnet of Intimacy," Bishop maintains the sonnet structure, changing the rhyme scheme from the Italian sonnet ABBA ABBA CDE CDE to ABAB CDCD EFG EFG. Her endeavor to preserve the sonnet structure accounts for a number of her wording changes as she works to match both rhyme scheme and meaning in English:

Soneto de Intimidade:

Nas tardes da fazenda há muito azul demais.  
Eu saio às vezes, sigo pelo pasto, agora  
Mastigando um capim, o peito nu de fora  
No pijama irreal de há três anos atrás.

Desço o rio no vau dos pequenos canais  
Para ir beber na fonte a água fria e sonora  
E se encontro no mato o rubro de uma aurora  
Vou cuspingo-lhe o sangue em tórno dos currais.

Fico ali respirando o cheiro bom do estrume  
Entre as vacas e os bois que me olham sem ciúme  
E quanto 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.

Prose Trot:

In the afternoons of the [ranch/farm] there is too much blue.  
I leave at times, follow [by/along] the pasture, now  
Chewing a blade of grass, chest bare  
In the surreal pajamas from three years ago.

I descend into the river at the crossing of the small channels  
To go drink in the fountain the water cold and [resonant/voiced]  
And if I find in the [grass/bush] the red of an [aurora/dawn]  
I go spitting the blood around the pens.

I stay there breathing the good smell of manure  
Between the cows and the bulls that look at me without jealousy  
And when all of a sudden [a stream of] piss boils

Followed by a look not without malice and [vivaciousness/verve]  
All of us, animals, without any commotion  
Piss [in common/together] in a party of [foam/froth].

Sonnet of Intimacy:

Farm afternoons, there's much too much blue air.  
I go out sometimes, follow the pasture track,  
Chewing a blade of sticky grass, chest bare,  
In threadbare pajamas of three summers back,

To the little rivulets in the river-bed  
For a drink of water, cold and musical,  
And if I spot in the brush a glow of red,  
A raspberry, spit its blood at the corral.

The smell of cow manure is delicious.  
The cattle look at me unenviably  
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.

The first major shift in meaning comes at the end of the first stanza, when Bishop changes the Portuguese “unreal” or “surreal” pajamas from “three years ago” to “threadbare pajamas from three summers back.” Both changes fit the British pastoral tradition. Adding the word “threadbare” is one of the major editorial insertions Bishop makes in this translation.

The river in the second stanza is altered when the poem is brought into English. The river changes from a more substantial body of water to a small, tinkling brook. In the next two stanzas, Moraes uses the word “aurora,” the meaning of which in English is unclear. It could be a regional kind of fruit, or it could mean the dawn. Bishop replaces the vague “aurora” with a very specific Northern fruit, “raspberry,” firmly placing the pastoral in a field far outside of Brazil where raspberries do not grow. The modifications in the third stanza allow Bishop to keep the sonnet form. To shorten the first line, she loses the intentionality of the speaker, who in the Brazilian poem deliberately “stays breathing the good smell of the manure.” She reduces the female cows and the bulls into “cattle” in the second line. The more interesting change occurs in the third line, when she translates “ferve” (“boil”) to “stream and hiss,” which anticipates the rhyme that ends the poem.

In the last stanza Bishop preserves the marvelous tension in the scene by retaining the double negative of “not unmalicious;” the animals begrudgingly allow the speaker to join them. Her “unemotionally” is a little more understated than the grander, “without commotion,” which implies a crowd or ceremony in Portuguese. The sense of the stanza

in Portuguese is that the cattle are challenging the speaker to a pissing contest. In Moraes's poem the cattle and speaker "mijar" ("urinate or pee") together "numa festa de espuma" ("in a party of froth"). The rollicking Bacchian party of pee, the abandon and delight of the persona's union with the animals, and the "malícia e verve" ("malice and vivaciousness") of the cattles' challenge to the speaker as they join together in the crass need to "urinate or piss" is missed in Bishop's translation. She understates the Portuguese by reducing the frothing party to the rather uptight "partaking" of "a pleasant piss." While "piss" is the perfect word for this context because it captures the feel of the verb "mijar" in Portuguese, which is crasser than "pee" and more colloquial than "urinate," Bishop's use of "partaking" and "pleasant" are more reminiscent of a tea party than a pissing contest. The use of litotes fits Bishop's understated style, downplaying the more gregarious language of Moraes's poem.

The speaker is the poet, visiting family land where he wears the pajamas of "three summers back." Moraes was part of the same elite cultural circle as Lota, those for whom visiting the country implied a cosmopolitan turn to get back in touch with their more regional roots. This poem within Moraes's oeuvre is a celebratory escape from the anxieties and pressures of Rio. The landscape is familiar to him but his recent return gives an element of defamiliarization: he is struck again by the sights, sounds and sensations of the country. As Bishop's speakers often do, Moraes's persona is delighted by the differences around them. However, without the biographical background and an understanding of the social situation in which Lota, Moraes and Bishop moved in Brazil, the line about pajamas does not necessarily make the speaker's subject position clear.

Though he could be the poet returning to the field, he also reads in Bishop's English version like a poor shepherd who cannot afford better clothing. He becomes the romanticized rustic of the British pastoral tradition who is "natural" but contained. The translation reads like a formal British pastoral rather than a colloquial, folksy Brazilian poem.

Bishop turns Moraes's Brazilian field into a Nova Scotian one in the same move she made when conflating Samambaia with her own childhood experiences. She relies so heavily on the Anglo-British pastoral tradition that the setting within the poem has little bearing on the specific Brazilian field where the poem originates. Because this is one of a handful of Moraes poems in the anthology and this anthology is the only introduction for many U.S. readers to Brazilian poetry, the rewriting of the field as a northern Anglo-Saxon one rather than a southern Brazilian space is significant. Her translation is an act of linguistic and cultural "carrying over" that reifies her misreading of Brazilian poetry, aligning the poem with a northern U.S. tradition rather than a Brazilian one. The U.S. audience who read this poem for the first time was already primed to view all "third-world" cultures in one of two ways: either they exoticized and patronized them, or they essentialized them to construct something palatable and familiar.

One of the difficulties in examining the translations that are published under Bishop's name in this anthology is that she intentionally translated only poems that she could bring into English almost verbatim; Moraes's sonnet is one of the only exceptions. For example, her version of Manuel Bandeira's "O Último Poema" ("The Last Poem") is almost identical in English.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Bandeira and others, she chooses to only

include poems that are easy to translate almost literally and leaves out many other poems. There were occasions, though rare, when Bishop intentionally altered a poem to bring it into English more effectively. In Drummond's "Poema de Sete Faces," she changes one of the key verses, which is a pun in Portuguese. In order to keep the sense of a rhyming joke, she sacrificed the literal meaning. She changes Drummond's line, "Mundo mundo vasto mundo, / se eu me chamasse Raimundo, / seria uma rima, não seria uma solução" [World world vast world, / if I called myself Raymond (literally: Rayworld),/ it would be a rhyme, it wouldn't be a solution] more completely than she does in almost any other poem. Her version, "Universe, vast universe, / if I had been named Eugene / that would not be what I mean / but it would go into verse / faster," keeps the rhyme but loses the lovely repetition of mundo/Raimundo. When the poem was included later in her *Complete Poems*, a footnote with the original Portuguese was included, demonstrating her discomfort at straying even a little from the poet's original semiotics but also revealing her own anxieties.<sup>21</sup> Though she came down clearly on the side of faithfulness in translation, there are moments when Bishop reveals she struggles with how "free" she has the right to be. Her well-placed doubts about her own ability as a Brazilian translator, her sense of her limitations in Portuguese or distrust of a position as an expert on Brazil, are evident in the footnotes or in some letters in which she reveals her struggles with how to translate poems in a way that accurately reflects her understanding of Brazilian poetry and people.

Arguably, it might have been better for her to falsify some of the poems in English, to experiment with them even if it meant completely diverging from the original

Portuguese, in order to more effectively translate the poems themselves. However, Bishop was not cognizant of any dissonance between her lack innovation in her translations and the brilliant creativity of her poetics. As always, her greatest emphasis was on accuracy. In laying out Bishop's own sense for the Brazilian space which she described in the introduction and the theories of translation that guided her work as both editor and translator, I have shown the Brazil which Bishop was accurately attempting to define and represent. That sense of Lota's space which comes up frequently in the introduction, the nostalgia for a way of life that Bishop may or may not have been misremembering, was informed by a grief that brought Bishop back to a nostalgic version of Lota's earliest Brazil. In "Crusoe in England," that grief is the subject of the poem. Bishop attempts to write with accuracy as well; though nostalgia is one of the threads of the poem, beneath the mask of Crusoe's voice, Bishop translates her struggles with the almost impossible task of lifting "yesterday."

### **Crusoe in Cambridge**

In "Crusoe in England," Bishop writes not just about a bricoleur, but as a bricoleur who self-consciously critiques her own artistic approach within the figurative language of the poem. Though less overt, the move she makes is similar to what James Merrill accomplishes in his 1974 "Lost in Translation." As he records a childhood memory of putting together a puzzle with his French nanny, Merrill expostulates on his own translation of a French poem by Paul Valéry. The puzzles in the poem (the existential puzzle of his life, the puzzle of his relationship with his father, the puzzle he

puts together with his nanny, the puzzle of his translation) are all missing a piece, whether metaphorical or literal. Merrill struggles with his own inability to solve those puzzles, to accept that some pieces are missing, that some relationship tensions will never be resolved, that some things will always be “lost in translation.”

Though not as overt or as complicated as Merrill’s poems, Bishop’s continuous examination throughout the poem about the inadequacy of language, the island that is “un-renamable,” which “None of the books has ever got...right,” or Crusoe’s own faulty memory of books that were “full of blanks” is also Bishop’s description of the difficulty of representing Lota and their shared Brazil (*CP* 162, 164). In particular, because of the uncharacteristically overt representation of a queer relationship in her poem, Bishop describes the difficulty of writing about homosexual love to an audience that overwhelmingly privileges heterosexuality: “Accounts of that have everything all wrong” (*CP* 165). Through the voice of Crusoe, the self-deprecating bricoleur whose “home-made flute” had “the weirdest scale on earth,” Bishop purports that all artistry is bricolage on some level: “Home-made, home-made! But aren’t we all?” The poem, like all “home-made” art, remains ultimately unresolved: “The ‘bricoleur’ may not ever complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it” (*Savage Mind* 21). In what has become a famous description of her artistry, in 1973, Lowell described Bishop’s technique in “For Elizabeth Bishop 4”: “Do / you still hang your words in the air, ten years / unfinished, glued to your notice board, with gaps or empties for the unimaginable phrase— / unerring muse who makes the casual perfect?” (qtd. in *WA*, vii). The gaps which Bishop’s Crusoe laments are also the gaps Lowell identifies that she is always



trying to fill with her poetic practice. She also lays out her own translation theory in describing the inadequacy of language and in privileging bricolage artistry.

Bishop uses the mask of a dramatic monologue to remember, celebrate and question her version of Brazil as she rewrites the relationship between Bishop-Lota-Brazil as Crusoe-Friday-island. But even as language is inadequate and shifting, so her use of metaphor is also inadequate and shifting: in the poem, Lota is both Friday and the island, both partner and Brazil. And, while the books and the accounts are wrong, Bishop also casts doubt on Crusoe's own ability to "get it right." The unfinished nature of Bishop's bricolage artistry indicates that this poem, like every piece of art, is an ongoing process as Bishop is in some sense always arriving at a more complete understanding of Lota and Brazil. The lack of resolution is inherent both in the art form and in their artist's own inability to stop tinkering with her own narrative of the past. By "putting something" of herself and Lota into a famous and familiar story, Bishop is able to combine pieces of their shared experiences in a manner that is evocative and intimate. By "exchanging hats" and writing about the love of two men, Bishop is paradoxically able to explore the complexities of their lesbian relationship more fully than she attempts since "The Shampoo." Though Crusoe tries, he is ultimately unsuccessful in his desire to write an accurate version of the past; the gaps are both without and within him. Bishop, working on several levels at once in the poem, is also ultimately unable to definitively provide a narrative of the past, a theme which connects "Crusoe in England" with the other poems in *Geography III*.

With Crusoe's bitter clarity, Bishop returns to many of the tropes of her earliest portrayals: her speaker is a querulous tourist critiquing the overabundance of the natural setting, the tropical paradise she wrote in the Samambaia years and to which she returns during a brief, month-long retreat at the *sítio* just before she leaves Lota permanently. She gives a sense both of their domestic intimacy and her constant sense of outsidership. Though the details are fictionalized, Crusoe's tone and tropes conflate his memories of his island with Bishop's earliest memories of Samambaia. Bishop combines these early memories with the tension of their later years. The paradoxes of the fruitful/barren island where she is nurtured/threatened are the paradoxes she wrestled with as her relationship with Lota dissolved. Bishop wrote out of the personal and political volatility of those crucial last two years in Brazil leading up to Lota's death by overdose in September 1967.

The explosiveness in their relationship originated with the Brazilian political situation, which Bishop blamed for Lota's, suicide; it was also a result of Bishop's own actions, the betrayals of Lota which she works out in many of her later poems. Bishop took an extended break from Lota and the political situation in Rio in 1965, when she was working on an early draft of what would become "Crusoe in England." Much has been made by Bishop scholars of her affair with Suzanne Bowen in Seattle in early 1966 and how it contributed to the end of her relationship with Lota. But the affair with Lilli Correia de Araújo, a close friend of Lota's, six months before Bishop met Suzanne, certainly exacerbated the tension between Bishop and Lota. Bishop only sent one poem to the *New Yorker*, "Under the Window: Ouro Preto," that year.<sup>22</sup> In the 28 September 1965

letter accompanying “Under the Window,” Bishop apologizes to Howard Moss for not sending a poem she had promised a few months ago, “Crusoe at Home” (*EBNY* 278).<sup>23</sup> Bishop had recently reread Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and told Moss it was “morally appalling, but as fascinating as ever” (273). The title of the version she promises to Moss in 1965 implies that she is writing about herself at home at Samambaia. Her inability or unwillingness to send the poem at the time could be indicative of the level of personal turmoil which threatens her home and relationship with Lota, who is widely acknowledged to be the subject of the final version. Instead, as Bishop replaces Lota with Lilli in her brief affair, so she replaces Lota’s Brazil with Lilli’s view by substituting “Under the Window” for “Crusoe at Home.”

From 1964 to 1967, Lota played a difficult political game as she attempted to work within the ever-changing Brazilian power structure to safeguard the future of the Aterro de Flamengo. Her relationship with Carlos Lacerda changed fundamentally; their friendship had been politically advantageous, but it became a liability to her work with the park. When the military organized the coup against Goulart on 1 April 1964, both Bishop and Lota had supported the move. Lacerda was one of several governors who sided with the military. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, during the coup, Goulart’s troops surrounded the governor’s mansion, where Lacerda was hiding, and Lota snuck past them to get out of the building. Later, as he was being pursued by Goulart’s soldiers, Lacerda hid at their home in Samambaia.<sup>24</sup> For a few months after the coup in 1964, the military seemed to have reinstated a time of peace for Brazil. However, within a year the military began to show signs of the repressive policies that would mark the dictatorship for the

next several years. And in that time, Lota and Bishop privately became disillusioned with Lacerda's own shifting policies. As Ashley Brown remembers, by June 1965, Lota and Bishop were frustrated with the "rather hysterical" atmosphere Lacerda created around him, especially as he "began to present himself more as an opportunist than anything else...He was no longer the brilliant, brave young man who was going to do all of this for Brazil" (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau 193). Bishop's disillusionment led her to escape the political chaos as often as possible.

Lota, on the other hand, joined the fray more and more on a public level to fight for control over the committee that was building the Aterro Flamengo. In July 1965, she wrote a letter to Lacerda putting her name forth as a candidate for governor. Though the tone of the letter was funny, she was serious about suggesting herself as his successor. In Brazilian politics of the time, the person in power often threw his political weight behind a candidate and Lota appeals to Lacerda by comparing herself favorably against the list of potential candidates. She was as well-born and had the same "horror of the masses," as well as the "same temperament as Helio Beltrão," though with better hair than one candidate and a much better art collection than another (qtd. in Oliveira 132). Mixed in with her own policy ideas are facetious assertions: "I will order that all statues of thin women put in place by Yr. Excellency be changed for statues of fat women" (133). But there is an edge to her light humor as she describes the type of governor she would be, "Naturally, I won't have a government like yours. I'll do much better; this is, of course, what we candidates think" (132.) Bishop had been traveling to Bahia with Brown when Lota sent the letter; she returned to Rio for a short time, then made another trip to Ouro

Preto in August 1965. It is possible that Lota's desire to be governor pushed Bishop over an emotional edge—she had been planning to stay with Lilli for two weeks, but ended up staying over two months. During those months, she had the affair with Lilli, wrote “Under the Window” and submitted it to Howard Moss.

Bishop was still in Ouro Preto in October 1965 when two events occurred that were particularly devastating to Lota's efforts to protect her park. First, on 5 October, Negrão de Lima was elected governor of Guanabara; he was a political adversary of Lacerda's. One of Lacerda's last acts as governor had been to designate a foundation that would have allowed the Aterro de Flamengo to function independently of whoever was in political power, but he did not present the bill to the assembly to have it ratified. Lota was frustrated that Lacerda did not use what political clout he retained to ensure its passage before he left office. Within five days of taking power on 5 December, de Lima annulled Lacerda's decree. The Foundation was in political limbo for several months as Lota met with and cajoled various cabinet members and politicians. In January 1966, Lota went so far as to meet the president who had been appointed by the military, Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, with her friend, writer Rachel de Queiroz, who grew up with him. She desperately worked to separate the park from the military on one side and the Lacerdists on the other.

The second event that occurred in October 1965 was the publication of Roberto Burle Marx's letter denouncing Lota as the leader of the Aterro in *O Globo* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of that month. Marx had been a close friend from her university days whom Lota had

invited to serve as an architect on the park with her. The public nature of the letter in a popular paper and the vindictiveness of Marx's personal attack, since the letter was addressed to Lota in the first-person singular, were particularly hurtful. Marx took credit for much of Lota's work, which he claimed was "created by me and my office of experts, with the decisive support of Governor Carlos Lacerda and the worthy collaboration of the ex-work group over which you preside" (qtd. in Oliveira 135). The more vicious aspects of the letter implied that Lota, as an upper-class woman, had been appointed to the job without the expertise needed to perform the tasks he allowed that she had accomplished, despite the fact that he also did not have a university degree. The gendered aspects of his critique relied on stereotypes of upper-class women as shallow ("Perhaps it would be opportune to remind you that having the good taste to pick out a spoon or a Finnish kettle does not signify that you have creative talents") or shrewish ("You deliberate without any respect"). He undercut the firmness with which she led by casting her as dictatorial: "Forgive me, Lota, but I detest your despotism" (136). The article contributed significantly to the condemnation of Lota in the court of public opinion, which had been turning against her and the park after a series of setbacks including an ill-placed amusement park and some ill-considered remarks Lota made in interviews which made her sound snobbish and out-of-touch. The newspaper published her reply the next day, followed by Burle Marx's equally acerbic rebuttal on the 23 October.

In the midst of this emotional turmoil, Bishop's *Questions of Travel* appeared in November 1965 with the intimate dedication to Lota from the Portuguese poet Camões which came closer to declaring their relationship publicly any of Bishop's other

references to Lota in her published texts. Lota traveled to Ouro Preto to pick up Bishop, surprising her by taking her back to Rio. But in letters from that same month, Bishop fought to keep the dedication to Lilli as part of the published version of “Under the Window” in the *New Yorker*.<sup>25</sup> When the poem ran the following year, in the 24 December 1966 issue, the line “For Lilli Correia de Araújo” was printed just beneath the title. Though Bishop identifies the view of the poem as being from “my window,” Brett Millier argues that “bedroom overlooking the fountain was Lilli’s own” (370). The dedication to Lilli demonstrates the depth of the damage that had been done to Bishop’s relationship with Lota. Bishop bought a house across the street from Lilli’s before leaving for Seattle on December 27, 1965.<sup>26</sup> In recording the view from their shared bedroom in a poem dedicated to Lilli published in the *New Yorker*, Bishop made just as public a declaration about her relationship with Lilli, though it might only be apparent to Lota and a handful of close friends, as she did with the dedication in *Questions of Travel*.

Whether Lota knew about the dedication until the poem was published is unclear; however, the publication of “Under the Window” in 1966 could not have come at a worse moment for Bishop and Lota's relationship. Bishop had been in Seattle during Lota’s last-ditch battle to save her life’s work. On 29 July 1966, the fight for the foundation to oversee the Aterro was finally and completely finished when a court terminated the provincial status under which it had been acting for the last six months. The headline in *Gazeta de Notícias* indicates how personally Lota had been associated with the project: “‘Dona Lota doesn’t rule!’” (Oliveira 172). The dismantling of the foundation took less than a month. Bishop and Lota left for a trip to Europe on 23 October 1966; before their

trip, Lota had a car accident in Ouro Preto, which was widely attributed to her level of stress. Friends of the couple hoped a trip together would give them much-needed rest away from the ongoing political strife, but Lota returned early from Amsterdam in the midst of a nervous breakdown in November and both women were hospitalized by January 1967.<sup>27</sup> They were released in March 1967 and spent time alone at Samambaia, where Bishop wrote the prose-poems “Giant Snail,” “Giant Toad” and “Strayed Crab.” The final turn for Lota began in May of that year, when her father died. Lota’s sharp emotional downturn prompted her doctor to send Bishop back to New York in July. By August, Lota felt well enough to make a will, which many of her friends took as an indication that her death in September was by suicide. Whether the action was intentional or not, in September 1967 Lota arrived in New York unexpectedly and against doctor’s orders. She took an overdose of Valium early the morning after she arrived and died a few days later, never having woken up from her coma.

Bishop’s letters demonstrate the long-lasting effect of Lota’s death on her emotional health. In a 5 April 1968 letter, Bishop writes Anny Baumann “I miss Lota horribly & it doesn’t seem to get better at all” (*OA* 493). Her condition seems worse almost two years later in a 20 February 1970 to Baumann: “...I see no end to it all. I try to keep remembering that I had about 15 really happy years until Lota got so sick—and I should be grateful—most people don’t have that much, I know. But since she died, Anny—I just don’t seem to care whether I live or die. I seem to miss her more every day of my life” (*OA* 514). A week later, she writes the same phrase to Lowell, and cites her missing Lota as one of the reasons she wants to leave Brazil (*OA* 516). Bishop’s grief at



Lota's death, her coming to terms with the capriciousness and turbulence of the last few years of their relationship, her increased resentment toward the political and social situation in Brazil that she felt augmented Lota's desire to kill herself, the pain of the rejection of most of Lota's friends and family, and finally her choice to abandon the country she had lived in for almost two decades inform the final version of the poem, which became "Crusoe in England," on which Bishop spent more than six years.

In the beginning of "Crusoe in England," Bishop, often the binocular-wielding observer in her poetry, makes her subject position clear. The title denotes a place of current rootedness from which to examine past routes/roots. She does not identify with the tourist-voyeurs Crusoe read about in the papers that were on "some ship" and "saw an island being born." The first mate on that ship watched through binoculars, but Bishop associates herself through Crusoe with the observed rather than the observer. The unidentified island seen from the ship is a space, a vague idea formed of steam, a fleck in the distance. Crusoe's island, though also unnamed, is a very specific place. As Yi-Fu Tuan states, "Home is an intimate place. We *think* of the house as home and place, but enchanted images of the past are evoked not so much by the entire building, which can only be seen, as by its components and furnishings, which can be touched and smelled as well... This surely is the meaning of home—a place where every day is multiplied by all the days before it" (144). Unlike the narrative move Bishop makes in "Arrival at Santos," "Brazil, January 1, 1502," "Going to the Bakery" and other poems, Bishop does not expand her focus in the beginning to give a broad sense of the scenery before focusing in on a specific place. Instead, the focus of the poem is always on the place, invoking quirky

details that mark it as Crusoe's island upon close inspection but which are unidentifiable from a distance. She remains in the position of the rooted ethnographer-traveler who knows the terrain thoroughly even if his narrative is subjective and at times suspect.

On the surface, a straightforward reading of the island as Samambaia/Brazil and Lota as Friday is certainly evident in the poem. Bishop repeats many of the over-the-top descriptors of nature that she uses in her early Brazil poems, including "Brazil, January 1, 1502," "The Armadillo," "Song for a Rainy Season," "Questions of Travel" and others. Bishop compared herself to Robinson Crusoe in a 30 November 1956 letter to Pearl Kazin in which she recounts a time she was alone in the house in Samambaia: With just the cat, the toucan "and the *roaring* waterfall," Bishop wrote "I feel as if I'd undergone a sort of Robinson Crusoe experience" (*OA* 332). The giant stature of Crusoe, as well as the goats and turtles, in relation to the tiny volcanoes echoes Bishop's last series of nature poems about Samambaia, "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" featuring the "Giant Toad," "Strayed Crab," and "Giant Snail." Like many of her nature poems, Bishop anthropomorphizes the animals in order to criticize and question her own sense of self and place: "This is not my home. How did I get so far from water? It must be over that way somewhere" (*CP* 140).<sup>28</sup> Bishop draws on the sense of dislocation amidst the overabundance, the hallmark of her Samambaia poems.

Even in her lifetime, critics and friends recognized that "Crusoe in England" memorialized Bishop's relationship with Lota.<sup>29</sup> But they generally associate Lota with Friday.<sup>30</sup> For friends and those familiar with Bishop's biography, the section about Friday clearly begins in a way that makes a reading of Friday as Lota an understandable one.

Lota was the cure for Bishop's loneliness as Friday is Crusoe's—"Just when I thought I couldn't stand it / another minute longer, Friday came" (165). And the parenthetical aside, "(Accounts of that have everything all wrong.)," denotes the erotic undertones that become more explicit in the following lines, much like the line in "The Shampoo"—"and look what happened"—implied their sexual relationship. Though Bishop disguises their relationship slightly, the evocation of homoerotic desire is undoubtedly about Lota. The fictionalization of their relationship is the most overt portrayal of erotic homosexuality that Bishop makes in her poetry since "Exchanging Hats."

However, Bishop's language in the section, repetitive and childlike, problematizes a conflation of Friday and Lota. The nursery-rhyme repetition of the lines describing Friday makes the relationship innocent and childlike: "Friday was nice / Friday was nice, and we were friends" (*CP* 165). Bishop uses nursery rhyme rhythms and language in several poems; Thais Flores Nogueira Diniz, referring to the balladic repetition of "Burglar of Babylon," notes that Bishop's repetitions and parallelisms "servem ao propósito de enfatizar o episódio principal e, ao mesmo tempo, descarregar a emoção" [serve the purpose of emphasizing the principal episode and, at the same time, discharge the emotion] (67, translation mine). While this is true for the overall rhyme structure of "Burglar," the emphasis in the tone and repetitive nature of the few lines about Friday stand out even more in "Crusoe" because it differs from the rest of the poem. Bishop repeats this tone a few lines later, set off by her signature em-dash: "—Pretty to watch; he had a pretty body" (166). Friday is younger, an object on which Crusoe wanted to enact his sexual feelings: "I wanted to propagate my kind / and so did he, poor boy" (*CP* 165).

Whether Friday did indeed also want to “propagate” his kind is never proven within the poem and Crusoe’s repeated questioning of his own narrative credibility provides some doubt. Either theirs is an unconsummated love affair or Bishop writes Friday as the male equivalent of the “maddening little women” in “Brazil, January 1, 1502.” Bishop’s nursery rhyme lines are litotes, discharging the emotion of the poem but also centering it in a way that provides a focus to Crusoe’s grief. Bishop works within the fictional framework of the dramatic monologue she is writing; she changes the character of Crusoe, but retains some of the basic facts of the story. Friday is the objective correlative for Bishop’s love for Lota, but he is not her metaphorical equivalent.

Lota is also the unpredictable, tumultuous island. The narrative move Bishop makes in this poem is similar to the one in “Song for a Rainy Season.” In most of the poems of the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel*, nature is the setting and Lota is just outside the scope of the poems, the vague “we” of “The Armadillo,” the owner of the tin roof in “Questions of Travel,” the “friend” in “Manuelzinho,” one of the rich with binoculars in “Burglar of Babylon.” Arguably, she is also metaphorically represented by the empowered “maddening little women” of “Brazil, January 1, 1502.” The specific “precipitate and pragmatical” Lota with graying hair does not appear in any of the poems, but their love is the subject of “Song for a Rainy Season.” In that poem, the natural setting and their sexual union, the aging of the house and their middle-aged love, Samambaia and Lota are all part of the “small shadowy life” which a later era “kills / or intimidates” (CP 102). The conflation of the people and place, of nature and Lota, is one

Bishop returns to in “Crusoe.” The island is the most enduring relationship with which Crusoe wrestles.

In her Samambaia poems, especially “The Shampoo” and “Song for a Rainy Season,” Bishop moves back and forth between nature as the setting of erotic encounters and a metaphor for her relationship with Lota. In “The Shampoo” Bishop moves the cosmic language she applies to the lichens on the rocks to describe “the shooting stars” in Lota’s hair (84). The intimate domesticity is surrounded by and saturated with nature. In “Song for a Rainy Season,” the ever encroaching nature threatens their domestic space even as it serves as a metaphor for the decay Bishop sees in their love. Bishop’s adjectives for Lota in “The Shampoo,” “precipitate and pragmatical” or even her original “demanding and too voluble,” could be used for Crusoe’s island as well. Throughout the overview of the island, the specific and quirky details inspire in Crusoe affection and fascination as well as frustration. In my reading from Chapter 2 of “The Shampoo,” those idiosyncratic details are what make Bishop’s love poem for Lota poignant—their love was not idyllic, universal or timeless, it was specific, middle-aged, idiosyncratic. Crusoe loved the island like Bishop loved Samambaia—for all of the strange and fascinating details, like hissing turtles or a well-used tin bowl. But Bishop equates Lota’s Latinity and her body with the island as well; the sexuality of the volcanoes as breasts, though now cold and dead, is implied in the imagery. The island was Brazil, Samambaia, Lota’s Rio relationships and Lota, all pieced together as one metaphorical place.

The nature imagery echoes the capriciousness and tenderness of Bishop’s last years with Lota. In the poem, everything is unreliable and changing: Crusoe, the island,

the narratives metaphors, memory, the home-made umbrella, the pipe, the volcanoes, the hissing turtles. Each are decaying or capricious or home-made. The lack of firm ground, both literal and metaphorical, is the subject of almost every stanza. The underlying argument that Bishop makes in the first stanza is that an island volcano is dangerous, threatening, mercurial, primitive: the “mate” who watches the island being born in his binoculars has the distanced act of seeing it from “ten miles away,” far enough that the island is only a “black fleck” (which Bishop has Crusoe identify with ethos-building authority as “basalt probably”). If the island being born and observed from the deck of the ship is turbulent, Crusoe’s island has the potential to be more so. With the tone of a one-upping storyteller, the second stanza begins with a transition that makes clear that Crusoe’s situation was worse than the one-volcano island: “Well, I had fifty-two / miserable, small volcanoes I could climb / with a few slithery strides—” (162). Just as Crusoe sets up the superiority of his island with “fifty-two” volcanoes in the second stanza, however, Bishop then undercuts it again. The volcanoes were paltry, inferior. They were “dead as ash heaps.” Bishop combines impotence and violence in the imagery of how Crusoe would “sit on the edge of the highest one / and count the others standing up, / naked and leaden, with their heads blown off.” The scenery is that of a battleground. The volcanoes were miniscule and barren in a way that reduces their ability to hurt Crusoe even as it indicates the level of violence that has already occurred, but that does not make them less threatening. The shifting scale increases the feel of the island as an unreliable place: if Crusoe is a giant, then he “couldn’t bear to think what size / the goats and turtles were / or the overlapping rollers.” The rollers in particular, aggressively close

to the shore but never arriving, “closing and closing in, but never quite” increase the maddening sense of threats that never arrive but are also never deferred.

The juxtaposition of battlefield imagery in the second stanza with the warm abundance of nature in the third stanza emphasizes the threatening/nurturing binary. On the island, there is too much rain: “My island seemed to be a sort of cloud-dump” (*CP* 162). The excessive amount of turtles “hissing like teakettles” constantly served to remind Crusoe of what he was missing—“(And I’d have given years, or taken a few, / for any sort of kettle, of course.)” (163). Nature is proliferous and multiplying: There are “fifty-two” volcanoes, “the hemisphere’s left-over clouds,” turtles and “more turtles,” “half a dozen” waterspouts (162-163). The island is exquisitely beautiful but hostile to human life. By beginning with the “naked and leaden” volcanoes with their “heads blown off,” Bishop gives a dark quality to the abundance of nature in the last half of the second stanza as well as the third. Crusoe’s nightmares reveal his horror of this juxtaposition (“I’d dream of things / like slitting a baby’s throat, mistaking it / for a baby goat”) as well as the depth of his sense of isolation (“I’d have nightmares of other islands, / stretching away from mine, infinities of islands, islands spawning islands, / like frogs’ eggs turning into polliwogs / of islands” on which he had to live one after another) (165). The only other beings, goats, turtles, gulls and the “sacerdotal beings of glass” made by the waterspouts only further the sense of isolation Crusoe feels (163). The line that ends the third stanza about the priest-like waterspouts, “Beautiful, yes, but not much company,” summarizes Crusoe’s and Bishop’s isolation within this landscape. Crusoe is the sitting

conqueror of the tiny island, who is untouched in some ways by the island because of his enormous size in relation to the volcanoes, but also because of his outsider status.

The constant question with Crusoe shares with his audience is whether the island was as inauspicious as he records or if his memories infuse it with a hostile demeanor. Crusoe is not a natural part of the environment. Though he sat with “legs dangling familiarly / over a crater’s edge” in the fourth stanza, his loneliness and “self-pity” indicate the degree to which he does not belong (163). There was “one kind of everything,” including the “same odd sun...there was one of it and one of me” (163). Except for the sun, however, there are multiple versions of everything, including the turtles and goats and gulls. Like the sun, he was separate and individual. The imagery of an outsider repeats Bishop’s depictions of Lota and her home in Samambaia early on in their relationship, the tourist-voyeur I described in chapter 1. It also echoes her lack of connectedness which prompted the journeys among the primitives I examined in chapter 3. Though Crusoe remains on the island, his isolation marks emotional routes he takes that demonstrate the way in which, no matter how long he lives there, his rootedness on the island will always be questionable. It feels like home, especially once Friday arrives, and he makes it his home, but he will still always be a singular outsider within a familiar place.

Bishop’s return to Brazil after Lota’s death heightened her own sense of herself as an outsider. Lota’s friends and family were distant and angry; they blamed her for not being with Lota while she died (Bishop did not visit her for the five days Lota was in a coma in New York) and not attending the funeral, as well as several other issues related



to the last few years.<sup>31</sup> Lota's sister contested the will in court and her son Flavio, Lota's nephew who was particularly close to Bishop, testified against his mother in favor of Bishop; he also later killed himself, in part because of that family estrangement. Bishop exchanged heated words with Mary Stearns Morse and others over paintings and other personal items that Lota willed to her friends which Bishop disputed. Bishop had a broken arm from falling while she was drunk in New York; her time in Rio was miserable. Bishop sold their apartment in Leme, which Lota had left Bishop in her will, and returned in Ouro Preto to live with Lilli while the new house was being finished. Bishop never lived in Rio again. In "Crusoe in England," Bishop returns to the isolation of Crusoe's existence again and again. The inability to fully arrive at a conclusive viewpoint other than Crusoe's subjective narrative points to the imperfect nature of the poem itself, but also self-consciously questions her own act of remembering.

Imperfect as it may be, Crusoe's bricolage allows him to control, manage or come to terms with the chaos of the island. Crusoe describes in detail some of his attempts to domesticate the island. He recounts his "island industries," the "smallest" of which was making "home-brew, which was "awful, fizzy, stinging stuff" from the red berries (164). Along with the "home-made flute," which had the "weirdest scale on earth," these island industries are markers of Crusoe's ability to create art, whether it was strange music, awful drink, or poor existential philosophy. Each of these "home-made" artistic activities, while certainly not living up to Crusoe's standards of cosmopolitan art, are nonetheless important because of their meaning in the island context. At the time he disparaged them and regretted that "The books / I'd read were full of blanks," but looking back, those

paltry attempts to create art, as imperfect as they were, become full of symbol and meaning. Bishop self-consciously, even self-deprecatingly, moves bricolage art to the forefront of the artistic values in the poem: “Home-made, home-made! But aren’t we all?” (164). The universalizing move situates artist, narrator and audience as bricoleurs imperfectly piecing together art. All of the best art, food, writing, music, or philosophy in this framework, is still ultimately “home-made.” Bishop, as the bricoleur, lays out the tension in her relationship in a way that closer to a personal truth about Lota without resolving the tension inherent in that act of remembering.

Returning to my assertion that the poem is both about her relationship with Lota and a description of Bishop’s process of bricolage translation, the “home-made” artistry makes resolution not only impossible but undesirable. A line from “The Bight,” which Bishop chose as the epigraph on her tombstone, summarizes the philosophical idea that she expresses in this poem: “All the untidy continues / Awful but cheerful” (*CP* 61). Unlike Crusoe’s activities in Daniel Defoe’s book, Bishop barely records how Crusoe makes a home in her narrative. There are indications that there is a space where he eats over a fire, makes homebrew, takes care of goats, plays the pipes, but she never describes any part of that process. Friday, accompanied by other natives in Defoe’s text, appears Eve-like within the narrative: “Friday came” (165). Bishop never describes their relationship; day-to-day interactions are outside of the poem. The story is not about Crusoe’s domestication of the chaos; he never cleans up the “untidy activity.” Instead, he finds “cheerful” moments while still allowing the island to remain “awful.” Turning this to a theory of translation or representation, domestication and control is an illusion in

Bishop's bricolage artistry. Though the artist tries, ultimately language and texts, as well as memories and relationships, are problematic and outside of the bricoleur's control. There is no way to "tidy" them up.

Bishop ends the poem by returning, but not resolving, the ethical dilemma about issues of representation that she frames in "Questions of Travel." The short, terse sentences of the last two stanzas of "Crusoe" reverse the issue Bishop problematized in her early poem. Rather than wondering, "Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?" Bishop essentially asks, "Should we have stayed there and thought of home?" The ending of "Crusoe" makes clear the poem is a comparison of two rooted places. Though the routes between the two islands are implied, they are not the subject of the poem. In one line set off by itself, Bishop dismisses the route that took Crusoe to England: "And then one day they came and took us off" (166). The island of England is bigger, but the isolation is the same. His memory and his body are experiencing decay; the imagination and philosophy of the rich island years in which "my brain bred islands" has now "petered out." Having finally arrived in the place he dreamed of while watching the hissing turtles, he finds "I'm old. / I'm bored, too, drinking my real tea, / surrounded by uninteresting lumber." The abundance of things in England does not provide the same fascination as the exotic, foreign details of the island. What he yearned for on the island is no longer desirable and he finds himself now desiring the very place he was so eager to leave. The lack of contentment shifts Bishop's original questions of travel about her routes to questions of home about her roots.

The last stanza returns to the list form of “Questions of Travel,” but imbues each item with the ironic nostalgia that Bishop writes so devastatingly in the list form of “One Art.”<sup>32</sup> Crusoe’s souvenirs and memories are signifiers which no longer point to anything when they are removed from their original context; their utility is lost in the translation of moving them from one island to another. Though “the local museum” is interested in keeping the things which he brought back with him, Crusoe wonders “How can anyone want such things?” The answer, of course, is that Crusoe wants these things. The act of translation makes their significance only personal; they matter because they represent the memories of the past.

As she does in the lists in “Questions of Travel” and in “One Art,” Bishop adds specificity to each item that is lost in the last stanza of the poem and increases the emotional weight. The list covers five lines: “the flute, the knife, the shrivelled shoes, / my shedding goatskin trousers / (moths have got in the fur), / the parasol that took me such a time / remembering the ways the ribs should go” (166). Beginning with the flute, Bishop starts with an item whose memories she has recorded for her audience; the “weird scale” invokes a direct experience from the narrative of the poem. The same is true of the knife, which she describes in the previous stanza and which epitomizes what is lost in translation when the signifier is removed from its original context. Crusoe indicates it within the scope of the poem, the “knife there on the shelf” in the house in England where Crusoe tells his story, a knife which “reeked of meaning, like a crucifix” (166). The poignancy of his description of the knife, “each nick and scratch” which he knew “by heart,” the way he anthropomorphized it as he begged and implored it “not to break”

reveal the central place of the small domestic tools. On the island, “It lived,” but in England, “it won’t look at me at all. / The living soul has dribbled away. / My eyes rest on it and pass on.” And yet the vehemence and intensity of his memories of its life belie his insistence that the knife has lost its meaning. Moving through the list in the final stanza Bishop now implies the losses she has shown with the flute and the knife. There must be a story behind why the shoes are “shrivilled.” The details of the moths that have eaten the fur off the trousers and the parasol “that will still work but, folded up, / looks like a plucked and skinny fowl” only adds to the pathos of the memento Crusoe has brought back.

The details of the list in “Questions of Travel,” the tin roof and handmade bird cage and other markers of Lota’s home, provide an answer of sort to Bishop’s questions of whether she should have left home to travel. The equivalent answer at the end of “Crusoe,” whether she should have left Brazil for “home,” is more devastating in comparison to that early poem. Each item on the list moves the narrative of the poem closer to the loss of Friday and island, or Lota and Brazil. Set off by the em-dash, Crusoe arrives at the most pointed line in the poem: “—And Friday, my dear Friday, died of measles / seventeen years ago come March.” With all of the obsessive worry Crusoe exhibits in the “self-pity” stanza, the death of Friday from a curable disease indicates the depth of the question that is implied but never stated: if he had stayed on the island, would Friday have lived? Would the items that had lost their meaning have retained their significance in their context? Would he and Friday ultimately been able to achieve a

satisfying, companionable love? Lota's unstated presence in "Questions of Travel" makes her absence in "Crusoe" that much more unendurable.

Translation and writing about the past are equally impossible for Bishop. And yet, with that concept as her underlying premise, she attempts faithful translations of texts, places and people. Her bricolage artistry means that the end results are imperfect; Bishop continuously points to the limitations in her translations and poems. Bishop the observer finds beauty and wonder in Jerónimo's wasps' nest bricolage house. Bishop the bricoleur allows for the quirky imperfections of her own poems. In her ability to represent the messiness and chaos of the situation without resolving the tension, Bishop demonstrates the innovative brilliance of her poetics, which she is not always able to achieve in her translations of poems. Underlying the poem is her sense that translating the past is impossible, but that if she must describe it, she will do so as faithfully as possible. In accurately portraying the tensions of her relationship with Lota, Bishop does not try to whitewash her memories but allows Crusoe to remain in the devastating uncertainty of a threatening and also nurturing environment. The same conscientious desire for faithfulness which makes her translated texts often pedantic keeps her from romanticizing or idealizing Lota. Ultimately, perhaps, only the bricoleur as translator and artist can see the defects and faults in the final results. And perhaps the details of the poems, like Crusoe's knife and flute, have the most significance to the artist. By focusing in on the specific details of those signifiers, Bishop reveals a context that is lost in translation, but she also universalizes the experience. When Crusoe's island and Bishop's beloved houses, Crusoe's shoes and Bishop's mother's watch, Crusoe's Friday and Bishop's Lota,

are lost, then the “disaster” that is invoked is one that is ubiquitous in the human experience.

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<sup>1</sup> In this argument, I am deeply indebted to Susannah Hollister, who identified what she calls Bishop's "characteristic, counterintuitive move: turning away from the social in order to pursue it" (399). Hollister analyzes this within the context of Bishop's focus on geography which, though it would seem to turn away from the more human aspects of history, instead gives Bishop an entry point through which to examine many of the social themes she pursues in her works. Hollister's sense for Bishop's scalar movement in her portrayals was informative not only to this chapter, but to the framework I've laid out in this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> In "Manners of Mis-Translation: The *Antropofagismo* of Elizabeth Bishop's Prose and Poetry," Read argues persuasively that the literary concept of *antropofagismo* forms a necessary framework for any inter-American theory of translation; I agree with his premise, but disagree with his conclusion. He argues that Bishop uses *antropofagismo* effectively in her translations; while I find his arguments compelling, ultimately his translations do not seem to back up his conclusions. My major contention with Read's article is with his conclusion that Bishop is the translator who best encapsulates this theory. The fact that he does not examine her language limitations or cultural misreading while positioning her as an effective "cannibalistic" translator is problematic at best.

<sup>3</sup> Oswald Andrade is no relation to two more famous (at least in the U.S.) Brazilian poets, Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Mário de Andrade, who are also not related. The number of poetic de Andrades in Brazil is a happy, if sometimes confusing, coincidence.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that *antropofagismo* was the only theory of translation at work in Brazilian translations in the twentieth-century. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the Generation of '45 broke from many of the artistic traditions of the modernists in order to return to more formal versions of poetry, but the generation of poets who followed them, the Concrete Poets, particularly Haroldo de Campos, returned to Andrade's *antropofagismo*, as a unifying theory for Brazilian translation. Though there are variations among the schools and even specific writers of how the concept of *antropofagismo* affected their translations, one of the defining characteristics of twentieth-century Brazilian poetry was the concept that Brazilian translators should cannibalize a text, ingest it and then "Brazilianize" it, in order to translate it effectively.

<sup>5</sup> As early as 1973, Jan B. Gordon called Bishop's cartographic poetics an example of "bricolage" (298). In addition to the work of other scholars who examine that term in Bishop's poetics, I am especially indebted to Susan McCabe's argument that the strategy of "bricolage" is a method "Bishop devises to handle a forbidding exclusive tradition as well as a past traumatized by the loss of her own mother" (84). While I examine a different time and set of texts than McCabe, I found her framework about Bishop's poetics of loss to be very helpful to my inquiry. In particular, I want to acknowledge her reading of "Jerônimo's House" as a bricolage text, which informed my own discussion of that poem.

<sup>6</sup> Lévi-Strauss examines the place of myth in primitive thought in a way that does not privilege Western thought but instead attempts to find the derivative for the capacity for myth-making in humans. The term "bricolage" as it is used in structuralist and poststructuralist thought has a different meaning than the one I am claiming for Bishop's poetics. Among many examples, in the late 1960s Gérard Genette uses Lévi-Strauss's dichotomy between the bricoleur and the engineer in arguing that the literary critic relies on what is at hand rather than the artist who is the more structured creator. (Though it is outside of the scope of my argument, it would be interesting to place Bishop's bricolage poetics in opposition to Genette's artist-as-engineer theory, particularly since both were working through these ideas in the late 1960s.) Most famously, in 1966 Jacques Derrida presented a paper entitled "The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau" at a structuralist conference at Johns Hopkins in which he examines bricolage. The paper compares the work of Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau and their concepts of the origin of language. Derrida deconstructs a scene in Lévi-Strauss's *Triste Tropiques* in which Lévi-Strauss taught writing to a native Brazilian chief to demonstrate the Rousseauian nature of Lévi-Strauss's methodology. Derrida argues that the text itself challenges Lévi-Strauss's assertion that writing, which both Rousseau and Lévi-Strauss associate with "civilization," is always an interruption or a corruption of an otherwise "civilized" society. However, Derrida claims bricolage as a central tenet of poststructuralist thought; because of the inability of a writer to separate her/himself from the culture in which s/he writes a text, Derrida concludes that every type of discourse is an example of bricolage as the cultural moment is reinvented in a text.



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Derridian bricolage is the basis for most of the poststructuralist writing in the 1980s and 1990s. Again, it is outside the scope of my project to examine Bishop's poetics and translation theory in relation to poststructuralists' use of the term. However, as I hope to make clear in this chapter, Bishop's own sense of the term is idiosyncratic and based on her own close relationship with Lévi-Straussian thought as it applies to what she viewed as literal primitives in Brazil.

<sup>7</sup> The essay "Concrete Poetry" in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 307 gives a thorough overview of the history of *concretismo*. I was the associate editor for the volume's production in 2004 and, as part of my editorial duties, spent several hours on the phone with Décio Pignatari. His many anecdotes and descriptions of the aims of *concretismo* have informed my discussion throughout this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> This image of the poem and its translation, provided by Reinhard Krüger, the German scholar who wrote the *DLB* essay about the Concrete Poets, on his personal scholarly website (<http://www.ubu.com/historical/pignatari/pignatari1.gif>) provides an image of the poem in its original context with a translation that captures the feel of the poem in a much better way than the versions printed in the *DLB* essay. The translations in the *DLB* essays throughout the volume were the subject of some editorial debate and, I personally feel, many of the final versions are inaccurate or erroneous. Krüger's website has my preferred version.

<sup>9</sup> Brazilian scholar Elizabeth Cancelli describes both the publication of the poems and the circumstances of Lowell's visit: "In the same year that Lowell traveled to Brazil, in 1962, the magazine *Cadernos Brasileiros* published...the first of the series...called *Quatro Poemas* [Four Poems], by the authority of Lowell and introduced by Elizabeth Bishop..." (5; translation mine).

<sup>10</sup> Jean Longland, who provided the literal prose trots for the anthology, provides a term for Bishop's desire to remain as close as possible to the original: "Much breath has been expended on the relative desirability of literal and of free translation. But nobody really translates literally and nobody would read such a version...There is a third course, the faithful. This means an accurate reflection of the poem even if different words must be used" (68). Longland assumes a definition of a "faithful" translation as one that represents the intentions and language of the original poet as well as the context, imagery and metaphors of the poem as closely as possible in the target language. The problem with this, of course, is the implication inherent in this definition that the translator can understand all of the variables of the original poem and language in order to bring the piece "faithfully" into the target language, using what Longland calls "different words" to find an equivalent metaphor or image that resonates with the audience reading the translation. This becomes especially important when looking at translators who are not fluent in the original language. Bishop valued "faithful" translations, but for a variety of reasons, her understanding of what constitutes a "faithful" translation is problematic. Her own misconceptions about Brazilian poetry influenced which poems were included in the anthology, many of which were translated by poets who did not speak or read Portuguese.

<sup>11</sup> Though there is no reference to Lota or Portuguese in "Five Flights Up," by assigning a corporal heaviness to "yesterday," Bishop links it to the Portuguese word "saudades," which is famously difficult to translate into English. Though a Brazilian might talk about missing a person or feeling nostalgia, the most common form of expressing regret or nostalgia is to say "I have saudades" or "I am dying of saudades." The sense that is often conveyed through adjectives ("sad," "heartsick," etc.) or verbs ("to miss," "to yearn," etc.) is expressed in Portuguese by this noun. The sense of the word is of something that is held, that can crush a person, that afflicts someone. So by making "yesterday" a noun with heavy qualities that she cannot "lift," Bishop gives the same sense to her past that Brazilians connote with the word "saudades."

<sup>12</sup> Earlier anthologies include *An Introduction to Modern Brazilian Poetry: Verse Translations*, edited by Leonard S. Downes (São Paulo, SP: Clube de Poesia do Brasil, 1954); and *Modern Brazilian Poetry: An Anthology*, edited by John A. Nist and translated by Yolanda Leite (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1962).

<sup>13</sup> In addition to the two anthologies mentioned in the previous note, other anthologies include *Modern Brazilian Poetry*, edited and translated by J.C.R. Green Breakish, Scotland: Aquila/The Phaeton Press, 1975); *Seven Faces of Brazil*, edited by Charles Perrone (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996) and *Poets of Brazil/Poetas do Brasil*, edited by Frederick G. Williams (New York: Luso-Brazilian Books, 2004). This is not an exhaustive list, but they indicate the extent to which translations of Brazilian poetry are still underrepresented in U.S. literature. I chose to focus on Brasil's and Smith's anthology as well as Palmer's,

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Bonvicino's, and Ascher's because of the way they associate themselves in a lineage of representation which does not reference the other anthologies. Bishop's is still by far the most well-known of these anthologies.

<sup>14</sup> My first introduction to Brazilian poetry came from a long plane flight from São Paulo to Chicago in 2002, where I sat next to a Portuguese history professor at the University of Iowa who was friends with Palmer, Bonvicino, and Ascher. Though I've forgotten many of the details of our hours-long conversation on that flight (including the name of my seatmate), her anecdotes about the making of the anthology, which she praised highly, originally led to my interest in Brazilian poetry and Bishop's anthology, which she told me to look up even as she told me how off-base many of Bishop's overviews of Brazil were.

<sup>15</sup> Norris, Kathleen. E-mail to the author. 26 September 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Brasil and Smith produced similar translations to Bishop and Brasil: faithful to the point of overt literalism. They also avoided many of the most experimental poems of the Concrete poets, though inclusion of some of these poems which are (to use the academic term) just wacky might have been an intentional editing move. However, almost all of the poets that were included had some association with Concretismo. The style of Palmer, Bonvincino and Ascher, however, demonstrates a different value of translation: they allowed for a much larger inclusion of experimental poetry and their translations differed from the original as they move the poems into a U.S. context by adjusting metaphors or finding equivalent semantic possibilities in English. Though it is outside the scope of my project to examine their translations, a few poems indicate their overall ability to effectively bring poems into English without relying on literal transcribing: "Traveling" (Ana Cristina César, which references Bishop as "Elizabeth," 62-63), "The Assassin was the Scribe" (Paulo Leminski, 72-73), "Traveling Theater" and "Almanac" (Dudo Machado, 122-125), and "Half-Season" (Waly Salomão, 132-133), among many others.

<sup>17</sup> Paulo Henriques Britto sums up the frustration of Brazilian critics most succinctly: "...the most important thing about modern Brazilian poetry is surely its affirmation of colloquial Portuguese as a proper medium for poetry. How could Bishop read Bandeira and Drummond and Cabral — how could she *translate* these poets — and fail to see that?" ("My Six Years with Elizabeth Bishop," 4). Britto surmises that Bishop, with Lota's encouragement "had long before convinced herself that Brazil was a primitive country; from this it followed that all things Brazilian — the art, the poetry, even the language — were necessarily primitive" (4).

<sup>18</sup> Within the introduction, there is a section in which the paragraphs differ from the rest of the introduction in their tone, arguments and overviews of Brazilian poetry. In the final section of the introduction, in a series of paragraphs that have a slightly different voice than Bishop's earlier, chattier tone, the arguments about Brazilian literature anticipate the introductions of the later anthologies: "The Modernist poetic movement repudiated French and Portuguese influence, and, as in other countries, it rejected the ideas of the Romantics, Parnassians, and Symbolists. It believed in using the material of everyday life, and attempted a complete honesty, bringing the anguish and conflicts of the period into poetry for the first time" (xx). These discrepancies are most likely accounted for by assuming that Bishop wrote the earlier parts of the introduction and that Brasil wrote or helped her write the later, more historical paragraphs. But they also indicate the degree to which Bishop is shifting her views away from views of Brazil she espoused in the middle years with Lota to her earliest sense of Brazil.

<sup>19</sup> In his 2004 *Poets of Brasil*, Frederick G. Williams translates "O falso mendigo," a poem which I think captures Moraes's nuanced humor well, as well as his "Soneto de fidelidade," a more universal love poem about faithfulness in love.

<sup>20</sup> To give a sense for how closely she follows the original, I have included the poem, the prose trot, and her translation:

O Último Poema

Assim eu quereria o meu último poema  
Que fôsse terno dizendo as coisas mais simples e menos intencionais  
Que fôsse ardente como um soluço sem lágrimas  
Que tivesse a beleza das flôres quase sem perfume  
A pureza da chama em que se consomem os diamantes mais límpidos  
A paixão dos suicidas que se matam sem explicação.

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Prose Trot

[Like this/In this way] I would like my last poem [to be]  
That it would be [gentle/tender] saying the things most simple and less intentional  
That it would be [burning/fervent/ardent] like a [sob/hiccup] without tears  
That it would have the beauty of flowers almost without perfume  
The purity of the flame in which are consumed the diamonds most limpid  
The passion of the suicides that kill themselves without explanation.

My Last Poem

I would like my last poem thus  
That it be gentle saying the simplest and least intended things  
That it be ardent like a tearless sob  
That it may have the beauty of almost scentless flowers  
The purity of the flame in which the most limpid diamonds are consumed  
The passion of suicides who kill themselves without explanation.

<sup>21</sup> In her 1977 article, “World World Vast World of Poetic Translation,” Jean Longland critiques Bishop’s alterations, though she acknowledges the difficulty in translating the pun. On first reading Bishop’s translation, she thought it was a “tour de force,” but after later consideration, she “realized that ‘Eugene’ ignores the important relationship between ‘mundo’ and ‘Raimundo’” (80). Though she still prefers the phrase, “Universe, vast universe,” Longland feels that her later version “preserves the relationship and is closer to the text”: “World world immense world, / if my name were Raymond World / it would rhyme, not be an answer” (80). Longland’s solution retains the name Raymond and is perhaps closer to the original poem, but it seems clear from her hesitation that even she might agree that Bishop’s poem works better on an aesthetic level. I prefer Williams’s slightly more whimsical translation in his 2004 *Poets of Brasil*: “Wide world wide world world so wide / if my name were Raymond McBride / it would be a rhyme, it wouldn’t be a solution, though” (297). In general, his poem has a lighter tone than both Bishop’s and Longland’s, with a more natural use of conjunctions and other colloquialisms that match the feel of Drummond’s original in Portuguese.

<sup>22</sup> The spelling of the city Ouro Prêto was changed to Ouro Preto in 1971; I’ve kept the accent in the title of the poem but not when I refer to the actual place.

<sup>23</sup> In a 25 March 1965 letter to Moss, Bishop mentions the similarities between a poem she is working on, “Crusoe at Home,” and Moss’s “Robinson,” which had recently been published in the *New Yorker*. She describes her poem as “in the first person, more realistic and un-organized” and tells Moss she plans to send it to another magazine (273). After a 29 March letter from Elizabeth Hawes relating Moss’s instructions to send it to the *New Yorker* first, Bishop replies on 8 May “I shall send you my Robinson Crusoe poem as soon as I give it a good dusting, --maybe this week” and promises it again on 18 May (273, 274, 275). But by 28 September, she decides not to send it: “I’m sorry I promised you *my* Robinson Crusoe poem and then changed my mind about it...Perhaps I’ll like it better after awhile” (278). She and Moss mention the poem in several letters over the next few years, but she does not send it until 18 May 1970 and by then she has changed the name from “Crusoe at Home” to “Crusoe in England” (317).

<sup>24</sup> Fountain and Brazeau capture this time well, including the memories of Mary Stearns Morse of how she helped Lacerda and his bodyguards get sheets for the night (184-185).

<sup>25</sup> Moss wrote Bishop in a 12 October 1965: “One tiny thing: We are against dedications, as you know...Would you mind terribly if we removed the dedication? I’m speaking here for the policy of the magazine” (*EBNY* 279). Bishop replies in a 8 November 1965 letter with a long paragraph arguing three different reasons why the dedication should be included, including citing other dedications she has seen in the magazine, but giving her relationship with Lilli as the most compelling reason. Bishop identifies the view which the poem describes as being from “my window” in Lilli’s house, and the dedication “is almost the only re-turn my friend Lilli will let me make for endless hospitality and kindness and she is so proud and pleased that I can’t bear to disappoint her” (281).

<sup>26</sup> Bishop gave many reasons for taking the position: “she needed money to restore the house in Ouro Prêto, she had never visited the Northwest, and Lota was so preoccupied that she would hardly be missed.” However, according to Ashley Brown, Bishop was going for one reason: “Although she was very

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frightened because she didn't think that she could teach and didn't know what she was going to do there, and she didn't say that she was escaping, Elizabeth *was* escaping" (qtd. in Fountain and Brazeau 199).

<sup>27</sup> While they were gone to Europe, Lacerda, Jango and Kubitschek, who were political enemies, and aligned themselves against the military government, published "Wide Front Manifesto" in the *Tribuna da Imprensa*, and "Brazil boiled" (Oliveira 177).

<sup>28</sup> Helen Vendler uses these poems to set up her examination of Bishop's self-criticism in her 1987 article.

<sup>29</sup> Frank Bidart remembers when someone suggested to Bishop that "Crusoe in England" was "a kind of autobiographical metaphor for Brazil and Lota. She was horrified about the suggestions. And obviously the poem is" (Fountain and Brazeau 333). James Merrill reads the poem as "an elegy less for Friday than for the young imagination that running wild sustained itself alone" (qtd. in Kelly 139).

<sup>30</sup> In many ways, of course, this is an oversimplification of the many arguments and discussions about "Crusoe in England" and Friday's role within the poem. For in-depth discussions about "Crusoe," see Diehl (104-15), Colwell (202-214), Gray (48-54), McCabe (196-202), Harrison (190-193) and Doreski (60-62). In general, my contentions are with some of the problematic readings of Fortuny (85-93), Goldensohn (247-251) and Travisano (179-182) among others.

<sup>31</sup> Oliveira fictionalizes this sense from Lota's friends that Bishop was an unwelcome outsider throughout her book, which is told from the point of view of several friends gathering on the anniversary of Lota's death several years later. Fountain and Brazeau, Millier, Goldensohn and several other sources give detailed overviews of the resentment and anger Bishop encountered in Brazil among friends she thought she shared with Lota.

<sup>32</sup> I will turn to a fuller reading of this poem and a more expansive view of Bishop's bricolage translation in *Geography III* in the epilogue.

## **Conclusion: What Is Lost by Not Translating Bishop's Brazil(s)**

### **Brazil in *Geography III***

Though not published until 1977, Bishop wrote many of the poems in her final book, *Geography III*, during or just after her final years in Brazil. Consistent with her bricolage approach to poetry, several of the poems are transformative interpretations of parts of Bishop's Brazil(s). Running through the book is the sense of disorientation prompted by a vast, unfamiliar sense of space and the speaker's efforts to come to terms with her own unstable place. The fear of "sinking or sliding giddily off into the unknown" undergirds the collection (Schwartz and Estes 288).<sup>1</sup> The speakers of these poems struggle with their own questions of travel between spaces and places in a way that marks Bishop's viewpoint shifts throughout her career. But underlying the poems is the sense of loss that deepens the trajectory of that spectrum. Having lost Lota and Brazil, Bishop displays a heightened fear of the "unknowns" of loss and solitude in *Geography III*.<sup>2</sup>

She translates the loss of Lota and their shared Brazil into other losses in the book. In particular, Bishop correlates the absence of Alice Methfessel during a break-up, which is the subject of "One Art," with losing Lota. Bishop uses the list form which she began in a looser way in "Question of Travel" and which she writes more definitively in "Crusoe in England" to chronicle the devastating losses in her life that culminate with Alice. Bishop's movement in "Questions of Travel" and "Crusoe" is from space to place; she contemplates the grand landscape first (mountains or island, too many waterfalls or

too many volcanos) before turning to the small specific details of the place (birdcage/wooden shoes/rain on a tin roof or flute/knife/handmade parasol). By tightening the focus to the small items, she allows them become objective correlatives for the larger losses about which she writes.

The move Bishop makes in “One Art” is the opposite. She almost begins where she left off in “Crusoe,” though the small items she mentions first are not as specific. Focusing on the tiny things that are lost every day (keys, an hour), Bishop then moves quickly into more personal items, each of which marks particular places: her mother’s watch, the three loved houses, the cities, rivers and continents. As the size of each item increases to “vaster” things like realms, rivers, a continent, the weight of the loss intensifies. Despite the ironic tone in which she advocates for the art of losing, at the end of fifth stanza, she shifts to a candid tone: “I miss them, but it wasn’t a disaster” (*CP* 178). With the characteristic em-dash starting the sixth stanza, Bishop continues in that tone. The unironic disaster was “losing you.” The parenthetical details to which she refers but does not name, “the joking voice, a gesture / I love,” serve the same purpose as the birdcage and parasol—they universalize the experience.

As she replaced Lota with Lilli in the dedication and publication of “Under the Window,” so Bishop translates the loss of Lota into the loss of Alice Methfessel in “One Art.” This is not to say that Bishop the person psychologically replaced Lota with Lilli Correia de Araújo, Suzanne Bowen or Alice Methfessel. That may have been the case, but I am uncomfortable with attempting to provide too definitive a narrative of her personal life. But within the texts that she wrote, the places and spaces and routes/roots

that she describes in “One Art,” though presented with indefinite articles and in vague language, are identifiable because of the ways in which she translates the “Brazil” section of *Questions of Travel* into *Geography III*. Unfortunately, it is outside of the scope of my project to follow this argument to its full conclusion and note the many ways in which she translates the “Brazil” section into *Geography III*, but the evidence of Lota and their Brazil is evident in many of the poems.<sup>3</sup> Though many of the referents in “One Art” are clearly about Lota, comparing the poem to “Questions of Travel” and “Crusoe” as well as her other writing about Brazil expands the initial reading of the poem.

Bishop’s Brazil(s) need to be better understood and taught by Americanist scholars/professors in order to more effectively teach “One Art,” “In the Waiting Room,” “The Moose,” and other of her more well-known and anthologized poems from *Geography III* as well as the poems from *Questions of Travel*. On the surface, I realize it seems rather self-absorbed to take this stance: every scholar surely feels that their particular field of study is critically undervalued and that their contribution should reach a wider audience. But as I argued in the introduction, Bishop’s rise to prominence in the academic canon and the enthusiastic nature of the revisionist scholarship of her work make her a unique case.

In recent memory, no work by another writer has warranted academic attention on the level of Bishop’s texts. Though revisionist scholars have successfully brought the work of other writers from the margins or relative obscurity to the center of the canon, including *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, or *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Sä (among many, many examples), the

rise in academic interest was relatively slow over several decades. Like Bishop's poems, these texts are now among many that were rare and have become classroom standards; indeed, the relatively stable location of works within the canon, whether they become "classics" that are often anthologized, has as much to do with an innate quality of teachability as it does with their own worth as texts. This is certainly true of Bishop's poems. The successful arguments made by scholars about the inherent worth of Bishop's poetry would perhaps not been as successful if undergraduate students did not relate well to "One Art," "In the Waiting Room," "The Moose," "Filling Station," "The Fish," or "Questions of Travel," as well as other poems.

### **Notes on Bishop's Brazil(s) in the Classroom**

I want to expand the discussion about Bishop's academic reputation from her role in the scholarly canon as it plays out in peer-reviewed publications to examine her role in the undergraduate classroom canon, as exemplified by the inclusion of Bishop's texts in anthologies of "American" literature or course syllabi. Though there are certainly applications for more in-depth undergraduate (and even graduate) courses, I am particularly basing my argument on freshman- or sophomore-survey classes that present U.S. literature in broad generalities. Though I am sure there are a variety of ways to use her texts, textbooks and teachers often frame Bishop as an anti-Confessional Poet. In my experience in the classroom, Bishop's poetry functions well as a foil to the work of the Confessional Poets. In classroom discussions I have led, after reading "One Art," students drawn to the sensationalism of Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" are then able to criticize,



or at least articulate arguments about, Confessional Poetry that are cognizant of the issues that divided Bishop from Lowell. Bishop's bricolage break from Lowell's cannibalism, her emphasis on meticulous craftsmanship and nuance over controversy and subjectivity, serve on some level to give students a sense of the spectrum of values in mid-twentieth century U.S. poetics.<sup>4</sup> A brief perusal of a handful of American Literature anthologies reveals that they mostly portray Bishop's work in relation to Confessional Poets. This online study guide from the Norton Anthology well represents how textbooks geared toward lower-level undergraduates depict Bishop in terms of her relationship with Lowell:

Emotionally unstable, Lowell was a figure of public self-torment, an artist who favored dramatic shifts in form and voice and insurrections against previous identities; Bishop, by contrast, was famous for her reserve, for understatement, for self-concealment in her verse, and for refusing the "confessional" mode that Lowell joined and helped to lead in the last fifteen years of his life. In contemporary literary histories, these poets are often spoken of as a pair--not merely for their long friendship but also for certain perceived similarities in what they attempted to do as artists (par. 1).<sup>5</sup>

The reading guide goes on to give a list of questions in order to help students assess as they read Bishop's and Lowell's work whether "their achievements are complementary, fundamentally at odds, or in some other relationship to one another" (par. 1). The options for the students to discuss the work inextricably link Bishop to Lowell. This is not a problematic assumption necessarily (any more than any Norton study guide can be criticized for being overly simplistic) but it does indicate the ways in which Bishop is framed in undergraduate survey classrooms.

Bishop's teachability also relies in large part on the biographical details of her own sense of displacement and her self-conscious questioning of her own routes/roots.

As a lesbian woman who lived in South America and wrote about her viewpoint, Bishop's texts in the classroom allow for rich discussions of identity, privilege, whiteness, sexuality, and other issues of representation. Whether her questions of travel are as progressive as some scholars have claimed or, as I have argued, representative of her own cultural milieu, they nonetheless enable undergraduate students to grasp the differences in portrayals between poets who were traveling and writing about Europe and poets who are writing about "developing" nations. This, I think, is a valid argument for Bishop's position within academic discussion as a poet anticipating our contemporary concerns. Whether she herself engaged necessarily in resisting the travel poetics of other mid-twentieth century writers, her work serves as a hinge to move a classroom discussion from the Euro/U.S.-centric poetry of the privileged male poets of the 1950s to the "ethnic and third world" poetic interests that began in the 1970s and 1980s and extend into the twenty-first century.

That classroom discussion, however, is still most often taking place within a context of courses usually categorized as "American Literature." I understand the need for categories that are broad, even if academics view them as reifying or problematic, in teaching undergraduate courses. So rather than argue fruitlessly against these classifications within university systems, I want to argue for a transformation of the understanding of Americanist scholars of Bishop's role in "American" poetics. This is a practical application of my project; in expanding the scope of the academic discussion about Elizabeth Bishop, I am also hoping in some sense to affect the way Bishop's poetry is taught in undergraduate classrooms.

What I am advocating is a slight adjustment of our shared academic sense of her location within the canon. If U.S. scholars, who are also undergraduate teachers, have a better sense of Bishop's Brazil, they will be able to teach her poetry in a more inclusively inter-American way; Bishop certainly belongs at the center of the canon of American poetry, but it should be a poetry that is truly American and not just U.S.-centric. This does not mean that we have to teach international texts within a class with a designated scope of "American" literature; U.S. writers are still U.S. writers. But in my experience, most U.S. scholars are generally more educated about Europe or Spanish-speaking contexts than they are a Brazilian one. As Michael Palmer, Régis Bonvicino, and Nelson Ascher argue about Brazil in their introduction to *Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain*, "Brazil is actually the other face of the South American subcontinent, not so much hidden as it is unknown" (25). Because Bishop writes about the "unknown" face of the South American subcontinent, a deeper understanding of her Brazilian context will enable professors to teach more accurately about that country as they examine her work.

The move to contextualize the work of writers within a larger cultural setting has been made much more successfully in relation to Spanish-speaking America, whether it be U.S. Latino/a poetics, which are now often included as a matter of course in anthologies and classroom syllabi, or the travels of U.S. writers traveling in Central and South America. In large part, this makes sense within our own cultural context; the rising number of Latinos living in the U.S. (certainly in Texas, but also in surprising numbers in traditionally non-Hispanic areas) and effective arguments by revisionist scholars has over time made it fairly common to ensure a Latino/a presence in anthologies and classroom

syllabi. Spanish is a language frequently taught in U.S. schools, so significantly more U.S. citizens are likely to have some knowledge of Spanish than they are Portuguese. While there is certainly work to be done in revising the academic sense of “American” to include Latino/a or hispanophone literature, it pales in comparison with the work that needs to be done in relation to Brazilian interests and issues.

The rise of Bishop’s popularity converges with the rise of U.S. interest in Brazil in popular culture within the last five years. There are several reasons for this: on an economic level, Brazil’s relative stability and impressive economic growth in the midst of a worldwide recession has made it increasingly attractive as an expanding market for U.S. products. As one of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China), it is helping to quickly dispel Euro/U.S. binaries that privilege some countries as “first world” and others as “third world.” Indeed, the rise of Brazil’s influence on the world stage politically, economically, and socially has highlighted the problematic nature of many of the terms, like “developing,” that have been applied to countries outside of the U.S. and Europe. Those terms privilege a Northern/Western viewpoint, but with the centers of economic stability suddenly residing outside of those traditionally colonial boundaries, the sense of cultural norms have shifted significantly in this economy. Combined with popular interest in soccer, with the World Cup in Brazil in 2014, and other sports, with the Olympics in Rio in 2016, Brazil is enjoying an emergence in U.S. culture it has not arguably not experienced since World War II. Thankfully, President Dilma Rouseff is the woman more likely to currently represent Brazil to the U.S. than Carmen Miranda.

U.S. students have a deeper understanding of Brazilian culture than the generations before them. They are also more connected with worldwide politics through social media. The Brazilian protests in June 2013 played out on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media outlets in a way that allowed U.S. students to have a current, real-time, personal grasp of the issues and dilemmas, just as they did with protestors in Turkey, Egypt, or the larger Arab Spring within recent memory. Because of our own cultural moment, more than a decade into the twenty-first century, there has arguably never been a more important time for Brazil to be accurately and thoroughly represented rather than glossed over in U.S. university classrooms.

Because of Brazil's popularity and Bishop's popularity, it is opportune to expand our academic discussion of the context of the Brazil(s) in her work. Brazilian Bishop scholars have been arguing for years about the need for a wider engagement on the part of U.S. scholars, but the cultural emergence of Brazil in the U.S. means that U.S. scholars are more likely to listen. While it would be ideal if every scholar learned Portuguese, of course that seems impossible. It is also problematic, since that argument could be applied on behalf of any people group whose language is underrepresented in U.S. classrooms and implies that any Americanist should be an expert in every field (which means I need to brush up on my Kreyole). The burden lies first with the scholars who do speak Portuguese (or Kreyole, Dutch, French, or other American languages) to translate primary texts and secondary scholarship into English in order to more easily expand our academic discussion. The idea of considering other languages could multiply my argument in fascinating ways as the trajectory of our inter-American scope changes.

However, because of Bishop's role in twentieth-century undergraduate "American" survey classes, her work seems like a particularly good place to start. Because of my own research interests, this imperative is both practical and personal: with other scholars who speak English and Portuguese, I need to translate the rich critical discussion about Bishop taking place in Portuguese into English in order to bring the Brazilian scholars whose work informed my own argument into conversation with U.S. scholars. Actually, they are in conversation with U.S. scholars, but it is one-sided. Because most Brazilian Bishop scholars read and speak English, they are moving adroitly along the same critical landscape as U.S. Bishop scholars; the U.S. scholars would benefit most from being able to engage critically with their Brazilian counterparts. Making the resources more accessible for U.S. scholars/teachers through translation would be one important step toward expanding the context of Bishop's Brazil(s) in the classroom.

I also hope is that this project provides a framework that can be applied when examining other writers as well. Because I am invested in the future of Bishop studies, my goal throughout this project has been to self-consciously contribute a different aspect of her views of Brazil—not to discredit her work but to enrich discussion of it. As we as a critical community place her work under greater academic scrutiny, I do not want to use the more troubling aspects of her writings about Brazil to discount the work of revisionist scholars whose tremendous efforts have rightly brought Bishop from the margins of academic discussion. In the same way, as revisionist scholarship continues to bring forth under-examined writers, I want to allow troubling and progressive elements to be a part

of the conversation. This applies equally to writers who were marginalized in the past by their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. or those contemporary writers who are still publishing and writing outside of the mainstream canon as determined by a Northern/Western-centric focus. Just as Elizabeth Bishop's dated essentializing views about Brazil should not lead to a loss of academic interest in her work, but should instead provide another facet of it, so equally problematic aspects of under-examined writers should not curb the efforts of revisionist scholarship to bring them into a more mainstream academic conversation.

I am particularly interested in using these arguments to look at writers from China, Turkey or Kenya (just to name three examples) and to include critical sinophone, turcophone or swahiliphone conversations in the scholarly discourse within the U.S. I understand that there are cultural and linguistic limitations to these kinds of multicultural scholarly conversations, but I hope we continue to move towards normalizing them within mainstream literary criticism rather than allowing them to take place only on the margins as part of translation studies, linguistics or comparative literature. By examining Bishop's translations with her poetry, allowing for both U.S. and Brazilian influence and engaging with Brazilian and U.S. scholars, my goal has been to write an interdisciplinary work that gently batters against our own arbitrary academic boundaries, even as I advocate for a better methodology with which we examine writers who batter against their own cultural boundaries.

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<sup>1</sup> In the “Darwin Letter,” as Lloyed Schwartz and Sybil P. Estes title it, Bishop writes Brown about her sense of the seamlessness between the conscious and the unconscious and the occasional moment in which one becomes aware of one’s place in the world, as she imagines Charles Darwin must have when he began to contemplate the “strangeness of his undertaking” in recording facts and details while at the edge of sliding off the known world (288). Lee Zimmerman calls this description “pretty obviously a self-portrait” (498). Zimmerman treats well the psychological implications of this sense of dislocation in his 2004 article and rehearses many of the readings of other scholars in relation to this passage, most notably David Kalstone.

<sup>2</sup> In each poem, this instability is the result of an encounter by the speaker with an innately Other body (the native women with their “awful hanging breasts” in “In the Waiting Room,” the enormous subject of “The Moose,” the bird and dog in “Five Flights Up”); by chaotic events (“12 O’Clock News”); by the discovery or loss of an idyllic or well-loved place (“The End of March,” “Crusoe in England,” “One Art”); or by the contemplation of solitude (“One Art”).

<sup>3</sup> I intend to examine this subject in much greater detail in a more expanded version of this project. A handful of examples include: the house on the beach from “End of March” in which Bishop translates the falling down house from Samambaia in “Song for the Rainy Season” into the “proto-dream-house”/“crypto-dream-house”: “Many things about this place are dubious” (*CP* 179). “In the Waiting Room” relies on the encounters between civilized people and primitives that I analyze in chapters 1 and 3 from “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” her “Aldous Huxley,” and many other texts as she describes the first awareness of primitives whose unknown qualities set off the existential scream of the young narrator. There are correlations between “12 O’Clock,” in which she writes about the effect of the news in a way that is aware of her first-world privilege, and Lispector’s “Smallest Woman in the World.” The questions she references in the first stanza of “Five Flights Up” that are answered “directly, simply” by the dog and the bird, but with which she is still struggling (181). Particularly in this poem, the notoriously untranslatable Portuguese word *saudades*, which means a state of missing that implies physical weight (one carries *saudades*, which are heavy), adjusts the reading slightly. Bishop’s questions of the past are physical: she finds yesterday “almost impossible to lift.”

<sup>4</sup> Though it is usually titled “American” poetry, I am still resistant to the idea of applying a title that could refer to two continents just to one country’s poets.

<sup>5</sup> From the current online Norton anthology study guide for Elizabeth Bishop as one of the writers since 1945: <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/naal7/contents/e/authors/bishop.asp>.



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