

Reinscribing the Topography of New England:

Elizabeth Bishop's Geography Poems

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1. Introduction

In 1935 when Elizabeth Bishop's poems "The Map", "Three Valentines", and "The Reprimand" were first published in the *Trial Balances: An Anthology of New Poetry*, there was an opposition to the fashionable over-intellectualism in the literary circle of the United States, which emanated from T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and was championed by the New Critics. Indeed, as what David Perkins observed, "[m]ost of the poets who emerged in the United States during the 1930s reacted against the ascendancy of T.S. Eliot." It seemed that for a lot of American poets of younger generation in that period the Eliot school and the formalism associated with the New Criticism were their principal adversaries. The Eliot school proposed that the English tradition of poetry was to be found in seventeenth century with its combination of Metaphysical wit with neoclassical elegance in tone and style. At the same time, thematically, in the writing of these ex-patriot modernist poets there is usually an undertone of disappointment, depression, existential Angst, and psychological vulnerability. It is retrospective inside of the self. The indifferent universal is epitomized as a waste world, a space of hermetic inwardness. Though it is powerful in introspection inside of the self in theme, it is objective as well as impersonal in tone. Thus against the Modernism which Eliot and Pound represented, the young poets "fought for a more passionate art" by going back to the other tradition, the Romantic one of nineteenth-century poetry (Perkins 354-5).

The volumes in the 1950s by Robert Penn Warren, James Wright, and W.S. Merwin, and Theodore Roethke powerfully justified Romantic values in modeling passionate art that the high Modernists had despised. However, the most passionate art could be well-embodied in the confessional school represented by poets such as

Robert Lowell. Thus, paralleling the enormously influential movement in criticism and poetry developed out of Eliot school from the late 1920s on to the 1960s, the other poetry in the 1950s developed that fused essential principles of the Modernist revolution in style with the more directly emotional utterance of the Romantic mode.

While such literary conflicts touched most American poets from the 1930s to the 1960s, neither the New Criticism nor the Confessional school was strongly imprinted upon Bishop. Instead, she obliquely claimed that she was a descendant “from the Transcendentalists” in her letter to Anne Stevenson (Lombardi 70). Thematically, Bishop’s poetry also concentrates on conveying the potential threat and existential horror. In tone and style, she represented a transition from modernism to postmodernism. More specifically, as what the critic Brett C. Miller saw with insight, Bishop’s poetry signals significantly “a shift from a hermetic inwardness to a manifest concern with people, and especially places, outside the self” (Miller 85).

Indeed, coming after Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, Bishop wrestles with a postmodern consciousness and its multicultural conscience to redefine on better terms New England the place as images of felt value and ambivalent feelings rather than a space bearing the absolute height and weight of transcendentalist ethos and morals. For one thing, while Emerson and Thoreau saw nature and culture as separate spaces, Bishop re-visioned them rather than as places with mutuality. This paper first studies the analyses of place by Lawrence Buell and Yi-Fu, then it examines Bishop’s “better terms” as the ways she re-visioned the space of New England as a place inscribed with a particular geography as well as a life of cultural multiplicity and natural diversity.

2. Place vs. Space

The critic Lawrence Buell noticed brilliantly that “world history is a history of space becoming place. In the beginning, earth was space without form. Then through inhabitation places were created. But modern history has also reversed this process”. That is to say, modernist imagination along with the modernization has turned back place into space in which no meaning or felt value has been ascribed since “space against place connotes geometrical or topographical abstraction (Buell 63-4). In a sense, such abstraction denies any life in place and results in literary texts without sense of place while full of inwardly anxious and void individuals. The sense of place is culturally significant in helping build up human beings’ value in a local and regional context while modernization has shrunk the planet into a space with easy “global culture” or “global citizenship” which ignores differences and diversity. The cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan claimed that places are

centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied. Humans share with other animals certain behavioral patterns, but ...people also respond to space and place in complicated ways that are inconceivable in the animal world.” (Tuan 4)

For Tuan, while sometimes “behaving like cornered and wary animals”, more often humans “are complex beings” with an “endowment including sensory organs similar to those of other Primates, but it is capped by an exceptionally refined capacity for symbolization.” (5) He also goes further to shed light on the mutuality of place and space:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value. Architects talk about the spatial qualities of place; they can equally well speak of the locational (place) qualities of space. The ideas “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (6)

Here quite obviously Tuan suggests it is the refined capacity of a person for symbolization that gives space its locational identity as place with felt, thus, valued aura. Such a view point is also held by Eugene Victor Walter who claimed that a place besides being loved, hated, feared, revered, it is also seen, heard, smelled, and imagined (Walter 142).

3. Poetry as Fiction: Sense of Place

It always disturbed the editors of modern literary anthology to place Bishop with her contemporary poets for chronological reasons. Besides the fact that Bishop is quite different in style from her contemporaries, it is more like Bishop is a poet transforming space into place while most modernist poets reversed the order. Being a poet facing different levels of displacement all her life, Bishop in her poetry describes the life of the world with a more postmodern concern for the place. Such a concern makes the topography of the New England appearing in her writing a re-visioned one inscribed with particularly plotted life geography full of gender, cultural, and natural multiplicity and diversity, which is totally different from that of

her transcendental fathers.

Being a poet writing to/about place, Bishop wrote “Letter to N.Y.”, and most of the titles of her poems and books that show places have accounted for much of her writing: “Florida”, “First Death in Nova Scotia”, “Cape Breton”, “Paris, 7 A.M.”, “Brazil, January 1, 1502”, “Arrival at Santos”, *North & South, Geography III*. It seems that she is poet with power and magic to transfer the geography of a space into place inside as well outside of the human heart. And it is her style of translating feeling into topography that makes her be able to exploit detail dramatically “to delay and resist emotion and thus build to a climax.” (Perkins 376-7) That is, her poems always were subtly plotted as fiction with their emphasis of one of the three stages of plot-- climax. Yet, while conveying strong sense of place, the plot was often concealed beneath an appearance of casual description. Thus, for some critics, her poetry is in several ways similar to fiction in its plot momentum. For example, Goldensohn noticed that the italicized endings in “The Armadillo” signal Bishop’s effort to bring her poems into unity, and “[a]t this point, her solutions turn on uses of narrative. Her immersion in prose has given her rolling, incremental masses of material, sighting in a range of places for her from Nova Scotia to Brazil, and an augment detail without sacrificing plot momentum.” (Goldensohn 190)

Bishop insisted her text’s fidelity to the facts outside of it to imply the existence of an invisible poet on scene as a way to evoke the sense of place. That is to say, Bishop gives her poems bodies, fleshes them out with place-attachment while her predecessors show the barrenness of poetry that is merely introspective and detached from a literal, sharable world. Sometimes she chose to be a disclaimer to serve her such purpose. It is the case in her “Santarem”.

By foregrounding in the first two lines of the poem “Of course I may be remembering it all wrong / after, after – how many years?” (“Santarem”: 185)¹, the poet behind the mask of the speaker announces that the enchanted place of her memory may not have been quite this “golden.” As Miller noticed, “[t]hat responsibility relieved, the description is free to take on that aura of precious metal it might—“everything gilded, burnished along one side, / and everything bright, cheerful, casual – or so it looked.” (185).

Miller was particularly insightful when she saw the poet’s correction of the “church” to the “Cathedral” twice in the poem as strategic repetition which evokes physical sensation and reinforces feeling produced by senses—that of scents (“Cathedral,” “palms,” “buttercup,”) sounds (“flowing,” “plodded,” “creaks,” “shush,” “whistle,”) and colors (“gilded,” “ember,” “blue,” “violet-colored,” “white,”

¹ All the poems discussed or mentioned in the paper are collected in *Complete Poems: Elizabeth Bishop*. 2004. London: Chatto & Windus.

“black”). In the poem, Bishop first offers a space in which two great rivers, Tapajos and Amazon, are confluent and “silently flowing, flowing east”.

Then by introducing her own voice, insisting on its subjectivity with the lines “Suddenly there’d been houses, people, and lots of mongrel / riverboats skittering back and forth / under a sky of gorgeous, under-lit clouds, / with everything gilded... / and everything bright, cheerful, casual”, she makes the space into a place, saying “I liked the place; I liked the idea of the place.” Here the idea is an idea of confluence of differences which is embodied by “mongrel” and “occasional blue eyes, English names, / and *oars* ...” (185-6). Such an idea of confluence is also emphasized subtly by simultaneously coming together of “scents, colors, and sounds” as a whole in the lines: “--- teams of zebus plodded, gentle, proud, / and *blue*, with down-curved horns and hanging ears, / pulling carts with solid wheels. / The zebus’ hooves, the people’s feet / waded in golden sand / dampered by golden sand, / so that almost the only sounds / were creaks and *shush, shush, shush.*” (185-6) The idea of confluence also reflects itself when the poet challenges the binary opposition by claiming “--- Even if one were tempted / to literary interpretations / such as: life/death, right/wrong, male/female / ---such notions would have resolved, dissolved, straight off / in that watery, dazzling dialectic.” (185)

Furthermore, when the poet makes the speaker correct some trivial misleading--- not “church” but “Cathedral, rather!” --- she is sarcastic about the more needed correction of the hierarchical binary opposition which denies significant differences and diversity in culture and nature.

The sense of place thus evokes felt value in human consciousness in a contemporary set of mind which tolerates difference, diversity and privileges, confluence, disconnection, and multi-opposites. All these characteristics which have been illustrated in this poem will reveal themselves in most of Bishop’s poems in the following sections.

4. Place Imagined

Geographically speaking New England as a space defines itself with a spatial North-Western area including six states Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine. In the poetry of Bishop’s New England fathers, New England is a space full of transcendental heritage, myth and ideal and belief. However, Bishop re-visions such abstract space into a concrete place rich with place-attached memories and landscapes which are as diverse and multiple in people, ecology, and cultures as a novel would usually hold.

Among the 30 poems collected in Bishop's first volume, *North and South* (1946), there are lots of poems about both place in real world and place imagined. Miller once distinguished Bishop's early poems as two groups. One can be lined together because of, on one hand, their remarkable clarity and straightforwardness; on the other, their apparent reference to outside, physical reality with climax and resolution. "The Map," "The Gentleman of Shalott," "Large Bad Picture," "The Man-Moth," "Cirque d'Hiver," "Florida," "Seascape," and "The Fish" belong to this line. Another group can be identified by their relative obscurity caused by hermetic inwardness inside of an introspective self, which include "The Imaginary Iceberg," "Casabianca," "From the Country to the City," "The Weed," "The Unbeliever," "the Monument," "Paris, 7 A.M.," "the two "Sleeping" poems, and "Anaphora" (Miller 84). In terms of Water's analysis of place, it is seen that the poet Bishop gives place in her poetry its identity and its aura through life in place which could be seen, heard, smelled outside of self founded in the former group of poems as well as the place imagined inside of self reflected in the latter group of poems.

In Tuan's analysis of place, it is claimed that since space is movement, it less yields sense of place to the location set in poems. Indeed, it is maybe the reason why the poem, "From the Country to the City," was overlooked by Miller and assigned to the later group as a work failing to yield sense of place to itself. Yet, contrarily, critics such as Harold Bloom with the perspective of formalism associated with New Criticism valued the latter group more for favoring the life imagined inside of the self. In his critical judgment of "The Unbeliever", for example, he praised the poem as "one of those rare poems you never evade again, once you know it (and it knows you)." He proposed that the personae in the poem exemplify

three rhetorical stances, and so as being three kinds of poets, or even three poets; cloud, gull, unbeliever. The cloud is Wordsworth or Stevens. The gull is Shelley or Hart Crane. The unbeliever is Dickinson or Bishop. None of them has the advantage; the spangled sea wants to destroy them all. The cloud, powerful in introspection, regards not the sea but his own subjectivity. The gull, more visionary still, beholds neither sea nor air but his own aspiration. The unbeliever observes nothing, but the sea is truly observed in *his* dream. (*Italic is mine*) (Bloom 2)

Then, concentrating on Bishop's last lines, Bloom praised the reality of Bishop's famous eye, like Dickinson's, "confronts the truth, which is that what is most worth seeing is impossible to see, at least with open eyes" (2):

Which was, "I must not fall.
The spangled sea below wants me to fall.
It is hard as diamonds; it wants to destroy us all."
(*"The Unbeliever"*: 22)

Bloom's critical judgment to large extent seems anachronistic not only in its gender displacement by calling the unbeliever a "him" while identifying it with Dickinson and Bishop, but also in its formalist orientation toward objectivity and impersonality. That is, while highly appreciating Bishop as a great poet, Bloom seemed to disclaim her importance as a poet with personal voice concerning more about life in place outside of the self, which is valued by postmodern consciousness.

Instead, Bishop's postmodern consciousness is self-referential more in the first group of poems, among them "The Map" which opens her first volume. Mentioning mapped waters, the poet first asks in the poem: "Are they assigned, or can the countries pick their colors? / --What suits the character or the native waters best." Then she answers herself: "Topography displays no favorites; North's as near as West. / More delicate than the historians' are the map-makers' colors" (*"The Map"*:3). Such a statement is New-Historicism-oriented; identifying her role of a poet with that of an exciting map-maker instead of with that of an objective therefore impersonal historian, Bishop makes the topography of New England a postmodern one which is much more local, direct, plain, and circumstantial. It is particularly true with her later volumes.

5. Place Seen, Smelled, and Heard: Landscape in Memory

After her first volume, Bishop became expert in using metonymic detail about place to define felt value and feelings which are important in human consciousness. It is that she added sense of place in her poetry by describing different landscape in memory all over the world she traveled on in general, and New England in particular which is epitomized as Massachusetts and Maine.

In most her life, Bishop as a traveler and citizen oscillated between Maine and Massachusetts which in many of her poem are transformed into image of sea the ecology of which is amazing diverse. She wrote often in her journal; they are careful descriptions of the natural phenomena of the island life at North Haven and very thorough lists of flowers or birds:

Barn-swallows; Cliff Swallows; White-throated sparrow;
Warblers—Tennessee (?)—others; Red-winged Blackbird; Goldfinches (very close to the house); Ducks (?)—some Eider ducks; Cormorants (?); B

lack-beaked gulls; Jays; Cow-birds; song-sparrow--& others—came, went away. Back again—bobolinks; pine siskin; cedar wax wings. There are pages of description of the flight of these birds, their migratory patterns, and their development with the seasons. “Oh, for a tenth of the energy of one barn-swallow--.” She wished, “these babies, flying for the 1st time 2 days ago—all over the sky now, & presently to fly to Mexico, or Brazil.” (Miller 530-1)

These lists anticipate her writing of life in place full of landscape in memory as moving home.

Though born in 1911 in Massachusetts and died there in 1979, her childhood experience of being kidnapped back at three from her mother’s hometown, Nova Scotia, a Canadian village, resulted in a life-long suffer from the sense of displacement. To empower herself with sense of emplacement, Bishop defines home in her own terms. The poet says, “--- Should we have stayed at home, /wherever that maybe?” (“Questions of Travel”:94). Actually, home is defined with imagination. Any place could be home as soon as there is imagination. Earlier in the same poem, Bishop claims “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?” No matter as a temporary resident living in Brazil up on spatial open mountains, or as a habited traveler staying near seas in Maine, she felt stay at her “home” in New England as long as her memory of it or imagination was there. Moreover, the places she stayed in trips could be seen as pause in movement, thus, in terms of Tuan’s analysis, makes it possible for location to be transformed into place known better and endowed with value.

Particularly, the value she endows to places she happened to stay through memory into her poems is in terms of her capacity for symbolization. Take some of her poems concerning animals in landscape such as “Roosters,” “The Moose,” and “The Armadillo” for examples. While they are bearable to receptivity to whatever appeared, these poems could be interpreted symbolically. Perkins, for example, saw the move from dark to dawn on one hand be completely probable, since the roosters wake up while it is still night and keep on crowing; one the other, this progression is also symbolic sustained by the three phrases of development in the poem. He expounded as followings:

In the first we are in world of everyday experience, which seems merely naturalistic, harsh, and dark; the sense of this deepens until suddenly, in the vision or symbol is beheld; this is followed by a return to the everyday world,

now viewed in a different way and accepted.

(Perkins 379)

Indeed, during the process of development the roosters symbolize first a fallen world, then with the allusion of sculpture bring the possible redemption, finally silence as inaudible to return an ordinary real world no longer beastly but with gild beauty:

In the morning
a low light is floating
in the backyard, and gilding

from underneath
the broccoli, leaf by leaf;
how could the night have come to grief?

(“Roosters”:39)

What impresses most is the final line which reads “faithful as enemy, or friend.” It is one of her amazing ways to yield to diversity naturally through presenting the opposites side by side. Moreover, the poem also obliquely engages to raise gender issue while the speaker satirizes both the patriarchal world of the roosters presented as a “water-closet,” and the feminine admiration of it from “their [many] rustling wives” “who lead hens’ lives / of being courted and despised” in “the dropping -plastered henhouse.” (35)

The enactment of an archetypically symbolic experience is also ineffably delicate in another poem, “The Moose,” which Perkins interpreted as an archetypal Romantic quest while claiming it is also direct, circumstantial, and, therefore, any interpretation will be hopelessly inadequate. He saw the scene set on a bus in which fog closes in, evening comes on, and finally the woods are entered correspond to the romantic quest pattern. Moreover, he emphasized from the very beginning there are images of eeriness, from which resistance and danger are anticipated and expected to be encountered and passed finally by the quester (380). If the symbolization of the poem unfolds the nature location its maternal and protective identity, it is the realistic description of sights and events that gives meaning to the life in place where the human and the animal in its natural environment stare peacefully at each other briefly, yet joyfully. While depicting the moose as harmless as “[t]owering, antlerless; / high as a church, / homely as a house / (or, safe as houses)”, the poet makes the passengers to exclaim in whispers softly for the solid, familiar, reassuring, protective, female figure:

“Sure are big creatures.”

“It’s awful plain.”

“Look! It’s a she!”

Taking her time,
she looks the bus over,
grand, otherworldly.
Why, why do we feel
(we all feel) this sweet
sensation of joy?

(“The Moose”:173)

As usual, the last lines give the sense of confluence again: “then there’s a dim / smell of moose, and acrid / smell of gasoline” (173). Such a juxtaposition of complex and ambivalent feelings defines a place open to sexual, biological, natural, and cultural diversity, thus, gives the place its aura with felt postmodern consciousness and its value. Indeed, comparing with the New Critical poetry of her contemporaries which is repressive, elitist in tone and artificial in its dense, intellectual idiom and closed ending, Bishop’s is amazingly real, natural, and open. Most importantly, such a postmodern style does not scarify her rigorous artistry—it is merely concealed slightly. In her prose poem “Strayed Crab”, Bishop says through the speaker “I believe in the oblique, the indirect approach and I keep my feelings to myself.” This statement to some extent could be seen as a gentle resistance against the ethos of confessional poetry. In the very poem, the sulking toad with stupid “loud and hallow voice” despised by the crab speaker is on one hand as much similar as to the frog in Emily Dickinson’s poem “I’m Nobody, Who Are You.”; on the other, it parodizes a Confessional poet who dominates materials to expose his/her feelings while risking falsifying them and risking the obviousness from which his/her writing suffers.

Contrary to the confession poetry, Bishop inscribes place full of landscape and memory as images of complex and ambivalent feelings as what Tuan once suggested in his analysis of place. “The Armadillo” was collected in Bishop’s poem collection, *Questions of Travel*, in the part called “Brazil”, where is exactly the textual place in the poem. The speaker in the poem describes her experience of watching the rising and falling of “illegal fire balloons” in the festival of St. John’s day when Brazilians set out these balloons as a worship to the saint.

The poem begins by describing a festival narrative by focusing on the fire balloon ceremony in which fire balloons as “paper chambers flush and fill with light”

are set out to the sky. They are as beautiful and colorful as the other production of heaven, such as “the tinted” stars and planets-- “Venus” and “Mars. Yet, these man-sent “frail, illegal” paper chambers prove themselves to be “dangerous” when they hit the wind, especially the wrong wind—“the downdraft from a peak”. The second part of the poem chronicles that danger after the fire balloons fall behind the cliff by offering a more substantive scene in details: a pair “shrieked” ancient owls, a “short-eared” baby rabbit with “ignited eyes”, and a “rose-flecked” armadillo with head and tail down running out the tragedy. The last part of the poem is the final italicized quatrain which is transcendental in nature yet brings comprehensive significance to the poem though the significance varies from critic to critic.

Accordingly, while Goldensohn saw the poet keeps her most pained and bewildered selves undercover in disguise as armadillo (Goldensohn 2), Costello explores the poem with its significant use of grotesque tradition in ways that challenge our conventional responses to life. She focused on Bishop’s juxtaposition of the beautiful with the dangerous, the vital with the morbid, spiritual transcendence with moral indignation. In a sense, the poem dramatically shifts sympathy from the desire for aesthetic transcendence in the fire balloons to the will to survive and the rage against oppression (Costello 128, 149). It is the ambivalent beholder in the poem that brings in postmodern conscience and multicultural significance— while participating in the repressive forces, she is first horrified by and then concerns for the oppressed.

Bishop’s best friend Robert Lowell, the confessional poet, wrote “Skunk Hour” which bears the dedication “For Elizabeth Bishop” and the claim that it was partly modeled on her poem “Armadillo”:

When I began writing “Skunk Hour,” I felt that most of what I knew about writing was a hindrance. The dedication is to Elizabeth Bishop, because rereading her suggested a way of breaking through the shell of my old manner. Her rhythms, idiom, images and stanza structure seemed to belong to a later century. “Skunk Hour” is modeled on Miss Bishop’s “Armadillo”.

(Goldensohn 184)

Actually, Lowell failed to detect the main reason that makes her writing belong to a later century is it’s about narratives of life in place full of memory and landscape.

Anyway, subtly the influence seems to be wider and deeper while Lowell “began to feel that real poetry came, not from fierce confessions, but from something almost meaningless but imagined” (186). While thinking of organizing images to convey a meaning, she felt that the selecting, coloring, ordering, unifying, and so forth, in

which every poet must engage, are suspect. For instance in “A Cold Spring” it is observed that nature is taking its course. There are two births occurring in spring, a space with locational quality, as imaginative theme links one to the other: “the little leaves waited” and “on the side of one a calf was born” (A Cold Spring: 55). In an artificial poet who denies the receptivity to whatever appeared the cow and the calf would make an imaginative unit, but Bishop does not let it happen. Instead, she makes the calf to get up and the cow to eat the afterbirth by separate instincts. Thus, as the ambivalence presented by the fascination and danger of iceberg which is like jewelry from a grave/it saves itself perpetually and adorns/ only itself” (“The Imaginary Iceberg”:4), the significance of the poem dwells on the disconnection as much as on the opposite of its subjects.

Likely, most of Bishop’s poems propose the ethos which supports the idea that when meaningfulness is gone, one looks out on and accept frightening reality which can be imagined. It is exactly the ideal of a complete receptivity to whatever appeared which Bishop aspires in many poems such as “The Armadillo,” “The Moose.” More significantly, the receptivity is possible only when the reality imagined or in memory in her writing is place-attached as most of the above-discussed poems have illustrated.

6. Conclusion

Being a female poet in the period when beatniks, drugs, communes, feminism, gay liberation, black pride and power, Zen, and other manifestations of cultural eclecticism, and the protest against the war in Vietnam had an impact on the subject matter and style of poetry, Bishop’s rejection of “high” culture, “closed” and therefore “strict” forms, tradition, and other embodiments of authority could not be taken as granted. For one thing, Bishop deserves her position of one of the greatest poets in that period in the eye of postmodern readers mainly because the fact that she help readers re-vision New England as a place seen, smelled, heard, and imagined with diversity, confluence, multiplicity, and openness. In her place-attached poems, Bishop makes the life of human beings unfold itself with wisdom and value which is open to diverse, local, and regional knowledge and cultures. Even the places in Bishop’s poems discussed in the paper are not limited to those in New England; they do in great sense contribute to help readers re-vision New England. In the introduction for his own book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* Tuan narrates the story occurred to the physicists Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg when they visited Kronberg Castle in Denmark. The paper needs to break the taboo set for a conclusion paragraph (no quotations are allowed!) by quoting the quotation made by

Tuan about what Bohr said to Heisenberg²:

Isn't it strange how this castle changes as soon as one imagines that Hamlet lived here? As scientists we believe that a castle consists only of stones, and admire the way the architect put them together. The stones, the green roof with its patina, the wood carvings in the church, constitute the whole castle. None of this should be changed by the fact that Hamlet lived here, and yet it is changed completely. Suddenly the walls and the ramparts speak a quite different language. The courtyard becomes an entire world, a dark corner reminds us of the darkness in the human soul, we hear Hamlet's "To be or not to be." Yet all we really know about Hamlet is that his name appears in a thirteenth-century chronicle. No one can prove that he really lived, let alone that he lived here. But everyone knows the questions Shakespeare had him ask, the human depth he was made to reveal, and so he, too, had to be found a place on earth, here in Kronberg. And once we know that, Kronberg becomes quite a different castle for us.

What is New England? What gives the place its identity, its aura? Besides Emerson, Thoreau, and Dickinson, we did have an Elizabeth Bishop lived and wrote there in a modernist field yet with a more postmodern set of mind. Such thinking does help us re-vision the New England according to what Buell and Tuan remarked on the importance of place to human consciousness. Through her poems oriented toward local and regional levels of place-attachment as well as her pervading echo, "awful but cheerful," the New England speaks a quite different language along with its geographical identity being changed into a place imagined or in memory as landscape full of rich cultural, ecological, and natural diversity.

² This passage is quoted in Tuan's book *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. p.4.,

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The 1955 volume POEMS reissued Elizabeth Bishop's debut collection North and South, but it also contained an entirely new collection titled A Cold Spring. One of the best places to get this material is the Library of America volume (ISBN 1598530178) that contains Bishop's complete poems and prose with a choice of letters, but I have found it interesting to slowly examine Bishop's collections on their own. North and South was published in 1946, but of the poems predate the war (or at least America). The 1955 volume POEMS reissued Elizabeth Bishop's debut collection North and South. The early poetry of Elizabeth Bishop is discussed. The poet is positioned as an endpoint to modernism, and in her essay "Dimensions for a Novel," a response to Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Bishop is shown to transfer Eliot's concept of "tradition" to the construction of literary works. So, what Bishop's doing is applying Eliot's idea of sequence in tradition to the way in which a literary work might itself unfold; that is, where every, as it were, new moment in a novel "here she's talking about a novel" affects a kind of readjustment of what's gone on before. It is, as she's imagining it, a literary form in which there is a kind of continual reorientation required by both reader and writer. Read Poems by Elizabeth Bishop with a free trial. Read unlimited* books and audiobooks on the web, iPad, iPhone and Android. Bishop's poems combine humor and sadness, pain and acceptance, and observe nature and lives in perfect miniaturist close-up. The themes central to her poetry are geography and landscape "from New England, where she grew up, to Brazil and Florida, where she later lived" human connection with the natural world, questions of knowledge and perception, and the ability or inability of form to control chaos. This new edition offers readers the opportunity to take in, entire, one of the great careers in twentieth-century poetry. Read More. Poetry.

"Geography III" was Elizabeth Bishop's final volume of poetry, and it was published only a few years before her death. Sadly this is not her best work, but it's still a vivid, colourful collection of poetry, which focuses on little interactions and striking memories. It opens with Bishop reminiscing about a dental appointment as a child, and how she read National Geographic to keep herself amused. The poems that follow are just as locked in Bishop's own world: her tiny island with its fifty-two volcanoes, poisonous cities, a New Brunswick bus' passengers spotting a moose, a beloved town full of familiar things, a warrior's perspective on an ashtray, a late winter walk on the beach, and about how "the art of losing isn't hard to. master." Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979) at the time of her death was respected as a "writer's writer" on account of her technical mastery and exemplary patience and dedication to her craft. Since then her reputation has risen steadily until she has become one of the major figures of 20th century American poetry. She was born into a comfortable home in Worcester, Massachusetts, her father being a business executive with a successful family-owned construction firm. "Roosters" was recorded on 17 October 1947 at ABC Studios in New York. The remaining poems were recording on 15 April 1974 in the Coolidge Auditorium, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Poems by Elizabeth Bishop. At the Fish Houses. Crusoe in England - Elizabeth Bishop. Books by Elizabeth Bishop. Book.