

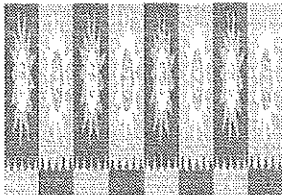
NEWSLETTER

Editorial

By Sandra Barry

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Minutes of EBSNS
AGM.....Pg 2
A Brazilian Point of
View
by Sandra Barry.....Pg 3
Circumference
Between
by Jeffery Donaldson.....Pg 4
Travel and Translation
By Michiru Oguchi.....Pg 6



The fall Newsletter is filled with a harvest of thoughts and ideas to digest. First of all, we are delighted to have Michiru Oguchi's fascinating and engaging meditation on "Travel and Translation." Michiru must be one of the most dedicated Bishop readers in the world. Those of us who have got to know her in her travels marvel at her indomitable spirit and admire her love for Bishop's poetry. Japanese readers are fortunate to have her efforts to introduce them to Bishop's marvellous poetry. Jeffery Donaldson's rigorous review of *Poet of the Periphery* demonstrates that there is an intense and ongoing dialogue – debate? – in Bishop criticism and scholar-

ship. Jeffery's thoughtful and insightful writing about Bishop's poetry always expands our understanding of it. Finally, I offer a brief review of the translation of Carmen Oliveira's book on Bishop's years in Brazil, *Rare and Commonplace Flowers*. The books at the centre of each of these pieces further show that interest in Elizabeth Bishop and her art is flourishing in many quarters. Also included is a report on the EBSNS AGM, which took place early in June 2002. See insert for information about the 2003 AGM.

I want to mention briefly that at the end of September 2002 one of the premiere events at *The New Yorker* literary festival was a tribute

to Elizabeth Bishop, with a stellar line-up of readers, including Seamus Heaney, Helen Vendler and Robert Pinsky. By all accounts (and I heard from several people who attended) it was a wonderful event, with nearly 1500 in the audience. A Halifax free-lance writer, Meg Frederico, did a piece about this event for the *National Post*. It appeared in the October 2, 2002 issue of the *Post* – for any of you who have access to back issues, or want to check the *Post's* online archive.

Also included in this mailing – to those of you who are due to renew – is a renewal form of the EBSNS. We hope that you will continue support the EBSNS; this support is deeply

EBSNS MEMBERSHIP

The EBSNS was formed in 1994 to celebrate the life and work of the poet Elizabeth Bishop. It publishes a bi-annual newsletter. In 1996, it also published *Elizabeth Bishop: An Archival Guide to Her Life in Nova Scotia*, documenting Bishop and Bishop-related records in the province. The EBSNS contributed to the purchase of an extensive family archive, which documents Bishop's Nova Scotia childhood and is housed at

Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, N.S. The EBSNS holds its AGM in Great Village in early June. The EBSNS seeks through its various activities to reclaim Elizabeth Bishop as a Nova Scotia writer, thus enriching our literary and cultural heritage. To become a member of the EBSNS please write to the address below and we'll send our brochure containing a membership form. Annual dues are \$8.00 or \$20.00 (CAD) for three years. An-

nual dues entitle you to two issues of the newsletter and all other privileges of membership. Elizabeth Bishop Society of Nova Scotia P.O. Box 138 Great Village, Nova Scotia B0M 1L0 Canada

Co-editors: Brian Bartlett and Sandra Barry

Contributing editors: Jeffery Donaldson and Ross Leckie

Layout: Anne Baker/Brian Robinson

Invaluable assistance from Ann Marie Duggan and Brian Robinson

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING—JUNE 8, 2002

EBSNS

Annual

General

Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Elizabeth Bishop Society of Nova Scotia convened in the Great Village School, Great Village, N.S., on 8 June 2002 at 1:15 p.m. Twenty-nine members and guests were present.

President Brian Robinson welcomed everyone to the Great Village School and called the meeting to order. Brian mentioned that there was a display in the foyer of the school with brochures, current and back issues of the EBSNS Newsletter, and a donation box (a replica of the Bulmer/Bowers/Tingley house constructed by Board member Ann Marie Duggan). Brian also invited all those present to take a copy of a drawing of the Great Village School, drawn by Brian himself, as a souvenir of the day. Brian also mentioned that there were books for sale on the table from Gaspereau Press: *Divisions of the Heart: Elizabeth Bishop and the Art of Memory and Place* and *Running to Paradise* (a play about EB written by Donna Smyth), and said Sandra Barry was taking care of their sale.

The first order of business had secretary Sandra Barry read the minutes of the last AGM, which took place on 9 June 2001 in the Great Village Legion. The minutes were approved as read.

Sandra Barry and Donna Smyth of the Nominating Committee submitted their report for the slate of executive officers and board members. A request for nominations from the floor was put forward; none being forthcoming, the slate was approved as offered:

President: Brian Robinson
 Vice-President: Donna Smyth
 Secretary: Sandra Barry
 Treasurer: Joy Graham
 Board:
 Brian Bartlett
 Lois Bray
 Angus Chisholm
 Arthur Chisholm

Ann Marie Duggan
 Meredith Layton
 Ruth Peppard
 Peter Sanger
 Deborah Stiles
 Paul Tingley
 Terry White

Brian Robinson presented the President's Report. Angus Chisholm presented the Treasurer's Report. The bank balance as of 31 March 2002 was \$1,458.69. Expenses since March brought the balance to \$1,353.15. Angus moved the Treasurer's Report be accepted. Seconded by Meredith Layton. Motion carried.

Donna Smyth moved that thanks be offered to Angus Chisholm for all his time and effort as Treasurer, as he was stepping down from that position. And a heartfelt round of applause was offered in response.

Other Business: Brian brought up the issue of fundraising and the projects for which the Society needs to raise funds: 1. reprinting the brochure; 2. open air kiosk; 3. conservation work on the Bulmer-Bowers-Hutchinson-Sutherland family funds.

Brian gave an update on the status of each of these projects concerning the amounts of money which are needed to bring each about and a discussion about possible fundraising activities. Lois Bray suggested that a meeting of the EBSNS executive and Board take place in the near future to clarify the various issues more fully and organize some fundraising activities.

Brian expressed his concerns that the province of Nova Scotia (the Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management) is transferring intellectual property rights of the

BBHSff to Acadia University. Some discussion took place about what this means and it was agreed that more information is needed. To that end, a meeting with the archivists at Acadia University Archives should be set up.

Donna Smyth suggested that a letter be sent to Bishop scholars who are members of the EBSNS requesting donations for the conservation of the BBHSff. The Acadia archivists also say that it will be possible to tap federal money for this purpose. Again, more discussion and information is needed before proceeding with this matter.

Brian Robinson brought a motion to adjourn, seconded by Deborah Stiles. Meeting was adjourned.

The programme for the afternoon was a performance of version of Donna Smyth's one-woman play about EB, *Running to Paradise*, performed by Andria Hill. This performance took place in "Primer Class" in the Great Village School. Brian Robinson presented Andria with a copy of *One Art: Elizabeth Bishop Letters*.

After the performance, the company retired to the Great Village Legion where a lovely lunch of sandwiches, sweets and delicious rhubarb punch was provided, catered by the United Church Women's Auxiliary.

A BRAZILIAN POINT OF VIEW

BY SANDRA BARRY

In 1996 Brazilian novelist Carmen L. Oliveira published *Flores Raras e Banalíssimas: A história de Lota de Macedo Soares e Elizabeth Bishop*, a novelistic retelling of the relationship between these "[t]wo fabulous women, two extraordinary intelligences; two people who loved each other" (*Rare* 173). Earlier this year Rutgers University Press published a translation by Neil Besner of this book, as *Rare and Commonplace Flowers: The Story of Elizabeth Bishop and Lota De Macedo Soares*.

Indisputably, Bishop's years in Brazil, during the 1950s and 1960s, were fundamental for her art. She wrote about Brazil in poetry and prose which was thought-provoking, even provocative. Her relationship with Lota de Macedo Soares was the most important of her adult life. In spite of several admirable efforts by biographers to shed light on it, North American readers have only had a partial idea of the many realities of this time. Looking at Brazil from a North American perspective takes us far, because Bishop herself looked at it in this way, but it inevitably leaves something out: a Brazilian perspective.

It is a truism—a cliché even—but it must be stated: all relationships are complex. The relationship between Bishop and de Macedo Soares was perhaps even more complex than most because not only were there the intricacies and ambiguities of temperaments and "personalities," there were also, at the heart of this union, the sweep and scope of two cultures (two hemispheres, really). And add to these vast realms the intrigues and crises of politics.

Oliveira's exploration seeks to shed some fresh light on these two compelling women

and their time together. For North American readers one of the most fascinating parts of the narrative will be the detailed account of de Macedo Soares's involvement in the construction of the Aterro, the Park, in Rio. Even with the insights of Bishop's published letters, North American readers do not have a sense of the organic centrality of this enterprise in de Macedo Soares's life. The intensity of de Macedo Soares's personality, while known in theory, comes to life more fully and in startling ways in this book. Her determination and passion are presented by Oliveira as forces of nature; she is revealed most fully through the story of the Aterro.

In the Brazilian original, Oliveira placed de Macedo Soares's name first in the subtitle. Rutgers has reversed this order for its North American audience. While this shift might have been technically necessary, because Bishop is the "famous" person here, it does not reflect the sheer dominance of de Macedo Soares in this narrative. (And indeed, de Macedo Soares deserves a full biography of her own.) This observation may seem like a quibble, but it points to a problematic element in the way the narrative is presented to North American readers. Bishop is one of the "two rivers" of this narrative, but de Macedo Soares's current flows more powerfully through this book, and readers will be startled if they turn to it expecting a detailed examination of Bishop's Brazilian life and art. The focus is almost exclusively on the way de Macedo Soares affected Bishop. Rutgers should have left the original subtitle alone, as it reflects more accurately Oliveira's approach.

I have problems with the

book. Among the abundant portrait of Bishop offered in this adjectives used to describe the two women, the active ones belong almost exclusively to de Macedo Soares, the passive ones to Bishop. There are factual errors connected to Bishop's childhood (e.g. her grandparents did not own a "farm" in Great Village (18); the support given to "Aunt Maud" to look after Bishop came from Bishop's inheritance from her father, not from her Bishop grandparents (18); Bishop "started at Vassar" in 1930 not "1929" (19)), but as these are endemic even in North American scholarship, they are understandable.

However, if the reader approaches this book as a window into the mind and heart of Lota de Macedo Soares, it is revealing of much which was previously unknown. What I wanted as a reader was more information about the origins of de Macedo Soares's indomitable personality, background about her family, especially her relationship with her father. We get only the briefest glimpses of these sources. Perhaps there is more of this background in the original, which is somewhat longer than the translation.

I disagree with some of Oliveira's choices and interpretations—indeed, I find some of them unsettling. But the powerful energy of this retelling of a great love is a welcome and challenging alternative to conventional biography. Oliveira brackets this narrative with two quotations. The first is from "Crusoe in England": "(Accounts of that have everything all wrong.)"—a challenge to all Bishop biographers to date, and an acknowledgement of

**"Bishop is one
of
the "two rivers"
of
this narrative,
but
de Macedo
Soares's
current
flows more
powerfully
through
this book"**

the limits of her own approach. She concludes with a quotation from Titus Livius:

"One writes to narrate, not to prove," a convenient and provocative position in its own right. In the manner of Oliveira's unorthodox method (e.g., imagined dialogue, merging of fiction and fact), these quotations express the boldness and passion of Oliveira's engagement with these "two fabulous women." Our attention is demanded and we can't help but give it.

Circumference Between

by Jeffery Donaldson

Elizabeth Bishop: Poet of the Periphery. Edited by Linda Anderson and Jo Shapcott. Newcastle: University of Newcastle Press & Bloodaxe Poetry Series 1, 2002. 200 p. 12£.

And place was where the presence was, /Circumference between. – Emily Dickinson

The title of this new collection of Bishop conference essays from University of Newcastle Press and Bloodaxe Books in Britain, edited by Linda Anderson and Jo Shapcott, is ambiguous enough to pass any number of critical inspections. Poet of the Periphery. Certainly on a thematic level, one can picture Bishop's poetic personae as toeing an existential and emotional periphery, voicing attitudes of edginess and displacement: the sense of being always on the look-out for whatever a home is or could be, in transit if not high strung, somehow out of place as a bemused spectator in a vivid but foreign world. In short, a question of how you look at the world. In her own essay in the volume, Linda Anderson makes much of the metaphor of the glass eye and the kind of vision it fosters. Bishop's maternal grandmother wore a glass eye, a prosthesis that recalled for Bishop a combination of emotional indirection and intimacy, and later came to suggest in poetic terms a form of blindness and insight, a visual if not visionary healing for "a body already fragmented, unable to experience wholeness, and a memory bound forever to the contradictions of seeing and not seeing" (169).

Complementing these attitudes is a far-reaching aesthetics of the peripheral, from Bishop's painstaking poetic procedure, her penchant for Mooresque quirky and surprising metaphors, her glancing, diffident, side-long approach to a subject. Anderson shows how the poems embody what Bishop calls the "peripheral vision of whatever it is one can never really see full-face" (163). When the critics collected here stick with this notion of periphery – as something that the poems are about and which they evince aesthetically – they seem on comfortable ground. Barbara Page's essay "Stops, Starts, Dreamy Diva-

gations" shows very effectively how in her revisions and endlessly elaborated drafts Bishop effectively built her poems out of puzzle pieces, working spatially rather than consecutively between as-yet unlinked fragments, finding the right fit for whatever was at hand until the whole was gradually filled in. She could never have written a poem – as the waiting-room child reads the *National Geographic* – "straight through." In another essay on process, Anne Stevenson writes how Bishop's poems, "for all their lucidity as art, admit to confusions. They never lie at rest on the page, they never fit neatly into an intellectual category or generalization." These essays make a welcome contribution to our understanding of perspective in Bishop's poems and her creative process.

There are other peripheries drawn upon by essays in this volume, but in general I found they proved more quicksand than foundation for the arguments adduced in them. There is, for instance, what gets overgeneralized as the geographical periphery. I sometimes have the feeling that Bishop's thematic in their complexity become too confused with her own biography and sojourning. Certainly there was travel and a feeling of uprootedness in her life, though neither of these need be synonymous with peripheral life. On the contrary, I think one can make a plausible case that Nova Scotia and Brazil were more centres than peripheries in Bishop's world. With Lota de Macedo Soares, Bishop moved among the political elite in Brazil, and while she was there she won the Pulitzer Prize (the story in Bishop's letters of how the word got out to Casa Marianna makes enjoyable reading); everyone knew who she was. It seems just as plausible that New England for her was the actual periphery, a world she was

carried away to as a child, and which she only made temporary forays into until her last years. As for the north, what was the very active shipping community of Great Village in early 20th-century Nova Scotia would not have seemed to a child of six as peripheral: indeed her life in the Maritimes is now well documented as being the happiest of her youth, with a place, family, and community where she felt most loved; she returned there annually for summers through her adolescence and continued to visit Canadian family long after her grandparents died. Bishop was stretched out on John Donne's compass: one doesn't return to a periphery, one returns to a centre. "The Moose" is not about a bus ride away from a Maritime outland back towards a hub: after a series of departures, the speaker is drawn away from a home in the mind, into a kind of solitude, corrected by a dreamlike craning backwards to see the last of what was revealed and cut off there.

But in this volume, one has the sense that Bishop's inhabited geographies can be confusingly summoned to verify, for instance, thematic binaries of north and south, cold and warm, to the point where the actual geography is obfuscated or misrepresented. In his essay "The Snow Queen: Elizabeth Bishop and Nova Scotia," Jonathan Ellis seems to connect all references to northern latitudes to Bishop's life in the Maritimes. Her longing for "arctic climates" (a phrase used in a letter to Moore in suspicion of "mother-love") is related to home life in Great Village. His comments on maple-syrup slushies seem closer to home. In an otherwise finely detailed reading of "The Imaginary Iceberg," Ellis seems to imply (for lack of better clarifying) that there were icebergs floating in on the Minas Basin. The fact that it can be cold in Can-



Elizabeth Bishop Society Annual General Meeting

June 14, 2003

Great Village Legion, Great Village, N.S.

2:00 pm

Followed by an illustrated talk by sculptor Heather Lawson
with readings of Elizabeth Bishop's works by Brian Robinson,
Peter Sanger and Sandra Barry

Light refreshments and good conversation following the programme.

ALL WELCOME!

Special Note: The EBSNS will announce details of a fund-raising raffle. The raffle prize is a beautiful garden sculpture inscribed with a line from Elizabeth Bishop's poem "North Haven," generously donated by Heather Lawson.

REMEMBERING MUIR

With great sadness the EBSNS marks the death of Muir MacLachlan (1911-2003) of Great Village, N.S. Muir was the son of the late Donald and Alberta (Layton) MacLachlan, also of Great Village. For fifty years Muir and his wife Helen operated MacLachlan's General Store, retiring in 1981. Muir was an integral part of life in Great Village, involved in many community organizations and activities, including St. James United Church, the Masons and the Garden Club. For Bishop devotees, Muir is best remembered as the classmate whose name she fragrantly misunderstood: "When I went home the first day and was asked who was in Primer Class with me, I replied, 'Manure MacLaughlin,' as his name had sounded to me." Never the world's best speller, Bishop also never could get "MacLachlan" correct, though she was deeply fond of Muir's parents and visited them and Muir on her return visits to Nova Scotia. Muir's sister, Donalda Nelson, also of Great Village, writes of Bishop's childhood infelicity, "I think that he found it rather amusing." Great Village has lost one of its most original citizens. As one of his many friends remarked, "Muir for me stood for what Great Village was – someone who was always there – a part of the community – a gentleman." His importance is best summed up by one of his grandchildren, summed up in a way which echoes much of what Elizabeth Bishop wrote about her beloved Villagers: "Grampie was never too busy to play soccer or baseball in the back yard, or to hand out gumballs from his beloved gumball machine. He continually amused and amazed us grandchildren – whether it was making huge bubbles with the bubble wand or flying kites in the summer – or letting us help with jig-saw puzzles in the winter. He will always be remembered for his love of Noxzema! – and as the bearer of peppermints and chicklets. Grandpa was an avid gardener and would often take us up to his garden to sneak peas and beans. He not only planted seeds in his garden, but he planted seeds of kindness in his grandchildren and helped make us who we are today." We will miss Muir's gentle manner, miss seeing him walk to the post office with his dog Laura. The Village has seen the passing of an era.



HAPPY SPRING!! We would like to thank EBSNS members for their forbearance and patience as you waited for this long overdue issue of the Newsletter. We hope that its tardiness won't prevent those of you who need to renew your membership to do so. We are grateful for your support. We want to thank Anne Baker for her major effort in preparing this newsletter. Her patience and good will is also deeply appreciated.

The Editors

Circumference Between Cont'd...

ada might explain something of Bishop's mythopoetic dialectics of winter and summer, arctic and tropic, but the connection seems obvious and only a first step. The essay turns short of an understanding of Bishop's unique consciousness and its expression in poems and in the meantime misses an opportunity to adduce many finer details of Nova Scotian life in the poems. I suspect that Nova Scotians will feel their landscape – thus mythologized as arctic and iceberged – has lost what is otherwise in Bishop's poetry its vibrant and eidetic detailing. Lay the essay beside Peter Sanger's study (in *Divisions of the Heart*) of the kind of school primer Bishop would have read in Nova Scotia and the influence it seems to have had on her writing, or beside Sandra Barry's discussion in the same book of the Maritime archival materials, and you will see the difference.

Other essays summon one last, rather generalized, notion of periphery, but I found them to be the deadweight in the book, and unfortunately in the slim majority. These are essays that employ literary-critical approaches that are anything but peripheral these days but which have to do with the idea of socio-political peripheries and marginalized interests. They seem far-fetched, superimposed, largely unilluminating. Guiltiest of what Huck Finn would have called a 'stretcher' is Vicki Feaver's "Elizabeth Bishop: The Reclamation of Female Space," in which the rented boat, the gas station, and the bus (in "The Fish," "Filling Station," and "The Moose" respectively) are seen as "wombspaces" where Bishop "reclaims ... the female space from which she was ejected at birth." The readings – they feel like impositions on the poems – seem to confuse more than to clarify. Feaver does not explain, for instance, how the oil in "the unquestionably male space, permeated with grease and filth," can give way to, or marry with, an "emphasis on oil and grease and touch" that "conjures the experience of a child before it is introduced to language and challenges culture-bound classifications of 'nice' or 'nasty' substances." Something of the legitimate and strong feminine presence in the poem gets lost in the dissembling here. Similarly, I can't

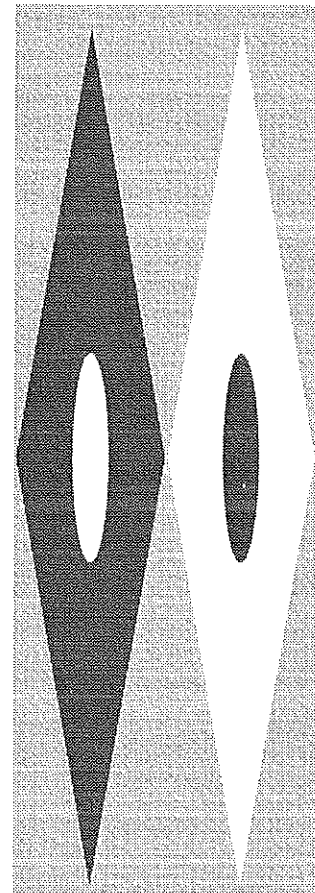
see how, if the bus is a wombspace as Feaver argues, one is to make sense of the intrusion of the also female moose. If the bus is already a successfully transformed 'she' then what need is there of a moose-mother to break its stride? Whatever relationships are genuinely examined between men and women in the poem, they are obfuscated by a contorted gender debate that imposes on them its own unconvincingly related agenda.

Peter Robinson's essay on "Pretended Acts: The Shampoo" (apart from not having its conference paperese revised out of it) seems a fairly weak application of post-structuralist linguistic principles. It pretty much bleaches the life out of the poem and makes over-heavy weather of the "pretended speech act" at the end ("Come, let me wash it..."). The issues surrounding hypothetical fictive utterances and their 'real' effects are fascinating, but they seem over-simplified here for all their complication, and the application to the poem forced and tiring. In her essay "Writing ELIZABETH," Deryn Rees-Jones drowns out a perfectly interesting discussion of cooking recipes in Bishop's thought and writing with a very aggressive and distracting who's-the-real-subject-here autobiography and overly creative mucking-about (she uses the letters of ELIZABETH to build a random glossary of Bishopian objects and ideas and to head respective sections that are unrelated to them). Two other very short essays left me scratching my head. Jo Shapcott's "Confounding Geography" and Michael Donaghy's "The Exile's Accent" offer little in the way of accomplished argument and both seem egregiously truncated, cut off in mid thought. They have the traces of unfinished twenty-minute paper written all over them. Finally, I'm not sure why Jamie McKendrick's essay on "Bishop's Birds" belongs in this volume (some clarification called for?), but it made for an appetizing read on the subject.

To end on a more positive note, Nichola Deane's essay on Bishop's letters, "Everything a Poet Should Be," is perhaps the finest in the book, for its natural scholarly carriage and a rare combi-

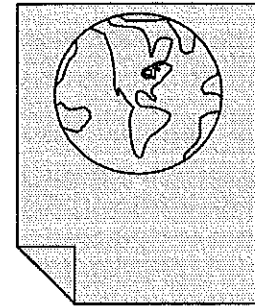
nation of stylistic deference and aplomb. There is also a useful up-to-date bibliography of Bishop criticism and a detailed chronology of Bishop's life, both prepared by Neil Astley, editor of Bloodaxe Books.

On the matter of peripheral vision, the reader is invited here to think of Britain itself as having been too long out of view, on the periphery of Bishop studies, and that this volume gives us an alternative continental perspective: in which case, a very welcome addition. But if it were a matter of seeing its subject clearly from all angles, or finding new ways of seeing Bishop altogether, I'd have to say that this book has one functional and one glass eye. As long as you know which way to squint, there are good things to see.



Travel and Translation

by Michiru Oguchi



What childishness is it that while there's a breath of life
in our bodies, we are determined to rush
to see the sun the other way around? Elizabeth Bishop

These lines from "Questions of Travel" ring true to me. It is precisely this childishness which drove me toward Elizabeth Bishop. Addicted to her poetry, I went on pilgrimages to related places in search of backgrounds and objects. My reaction is typical of Bishop readers although perhaps a little way out, since I'm a Japanese living in Tokyo, who has now been tracking Bishop down for over twelve years. The result of my childishness is this: my Japanese translation *Elizabeth Bishop Shishu* (Selected Poems) published by Doyo-Bijutusha on February 8, 2001.

It is a small book but contains what are in most cases the first Japanese translations of her major poems: ten from *North & South*, nine from *A Cold Spring*, "Rainy Season: Sub-Tropics," all of *Questions of Travel* and *Geography III*, and six others chosen from *The Complete Poems*. As Bishop is still not well known in Japan, I added a brief chronology and notes. The latter, not without some concern, for as is well known, Bishop was against the idea of footnoting poems (letter to J.F. Nims, Oct. 6, 1979, *One Art*). Even so, I wanted to give Japanese readers detailed information widely shared among world readers today. Isn't it forgivable if, in the notes, I introduce Bishop's own comments and the reactions of her friends, critics or contemporaries toward each poem? I wished to indicate the outburst of international attention Bishop received throughout the 1990s.

Thus, the book was done, a slim volume of 164 pages, set in the format of the 'Contemporary World Poets' series, which includes Lorca, Symborska, Paz, and some 30 others. It is not the bilingual edition as I originally intended. Yet I was pleased with it. So was Margaret Mitsutani, who first introduced me to Bishop and served as poetry consultant to my translation from beginning to end.

One summer night in 1989, I encountered the poem "One Art" through *Voices & Visions*, a video Margaret lent me. I was immediately captivated and started writing down words from the tape. As none of Bishop's books were available in Japan and *The Complete Poems* was out of print even in the U.S., Margaret's mother helped us, and two second-hand copies from a warehouse in Pittsburgh finally arrived after a couple of months. With the written text, I began translating "One Art." "In the Waiting Room" was next. These two are my first and oldest translations. Before 1991 I managed to finish all the poems in *Geography III*.

My true start, however, was marked by my travel that year. In October 1991 I was in Great Village with questions in mind. All Bishop hunters are alike when they come looking for the house, churches, school, for meanings of phrases,

names, images to be clarified: 'Tantramar', 'Hustler Hill', 'Little Marvel Stove', 'Maple Leaf (Forever)', 'Silted red', 'flats' lavender rich mud' and so on. Flora and fauna, rare or common, all had to be weighed in the geography of the poetry. I came back in 1995, wishing to dig deeper till the landscape would speak to me. Great Village, visited and revisited, was eloquent. [For more about these visits, see *EBSNS Newsletter*, Fall 1995.]

Five trips in ten years certainly pushed my translations forward. In Key West (1993), Nova Scotia (1991, 1995), Worcester (1997), Brazil (1999), I observed her "continent, city, country, society." Conferences provided me with others' views and friendly discussions to check my translations on various levels. I witnessed her mother's needlework and portrait, the dollar-bill size painting; her "three loved houses" were the highlight, for they disclosed the traces of the poet's life left in each one. I have so many mental pictures such as the "Roosters" yard in Key West; the studio in Petropolis with bromelias and rocks beside it, where Lota showered Bishop with love and fits of temper, shared with me love's "ignorant map"; in Ouro Preto, the chatter of hummingbirds mingled with that of local women, or perhaps Manuelzinho's family, faces laughing, crying, staring at "immodest tourists"...

Pilgrimage is not the only way to fulfil literary quest, but it's the one I recommend, even in this age of the internet. Houses and landscapes cannot be transported, nor can the air, smells, colors, the temperament of the people or the tone of their voices telling inside stories be sent out electronically. "Génie du lieux" Marcel Proust would say - What matters most is formless, and it is these invisible threads that form the texture of Bishop's poetry. A translator should never go home without gripping that 'wire' (in "The End of March") which "limply leashes the whole affair / to something off behind." Travel might give you that.

I'll never forget Margaret's comment on my translation of "The Burglar of Babylon." When I showed her my draft (around 1995?), she said, "It is grammatically correct, but the whole tone is wrong." I knew a few things about Brazil by that time and had thought it would be enough. But I understood what she meant: not knowledge or accuracy but, above all, music! As I revised the draft, I kept thinking of what it lacked. In the mean time, I realized it was rhythm, the two beats that shocked French composer Milaud, that seemed to be the heart of the matter. As a translator, I felt an urgent need to learn about things Brazilian. Music studies and travel helped me to acquire the beat and breath of

'and bees have a most interesting history in Brazil, which tempts me to write whole new interpretations of these poems. But a translator should carefully keep her tongue, and her nose out of the matter. She's an outsider, after all.

Looking back, I am amazed how much time I spent on all these things that are lost now, leaving no trace in my final drafts. The translator is an outsider indeed, chasing shadows of words. Reading Neil Besner's essay "Lost in Translation" (EBSNS Newsletter, Spring 2002) about his English version of Carmen Oliveira's *Rare and Commonplace Flowers*, published around the same time as my book, I envied the happy relationship between Carmen the author and the translator Neil. For Bishop translators, there is no chance of talking with a living author. They must work within the limits of translation and beyond the boundary of English and the author's voice. A labor of love? Maybe. But I'd rather say "efforts of affection," which sounds more rewarding.

Happiness remains. It was a joy to present the book to Mr. Kijima Hajime, the eminent poet and editor of *The Poetry of Post War Japan* (University of Iowa Press, 1975). Being a translator and long-time correspondent of Langston Hughes, he guided me to A. Bontemps/L. Hughes (eds.), *Poetry of the American Negro*, which includes Bishop's "Song for a Colored Singer." He assisted me in many ways in publishing this book, as Margaret did.

Responses were another kind of happiness. The letters I received proved the power of Bishop's poetry. Some liked "One Art" best, particularly with its form and play on the words *waza* (master) and *wazawai* (disaster). A young professor kindly praised "In the Waiting Room" and "Sestina," while wanting to discuss one phrase in "First Death in Nova Scotia" with me. "The Moose" was the favorite of many, while "Rainy Season" struck readers' minds with its idiosyncratic beauty⁷. Essayist Dekune Tatsuro recommended this book to a librarian's magazine, showing Bishop's charming letter and the paragraph "Everything only connected by 'and' and 'and'." Poet Osada Hiroshi sent me a card, saying that he was attracted to "Roosters" and "Over 2,000 Illustrations..." Quoting my translation of the lines "I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream-house, / my crypto-dream-house" from "The End of March," Mr. Osada added in English, "You got it all!" His blessing confirmed for me the happiness of travel and translation, this childish affair I still want to continue.

/Mont'd Espoir/

モン・デスポアール
希望峰

きぼう ほう

/kibou/ /hou/

=hope =mount

←Pronunciation→

←Phonetic readings¹→

←Chinese characters→

←Phonetic readings²→

←Pronunciation→

←Meanings→

/Mount Despair/

マウント・デスペア
絶望峰

ぜつぼう ほう

/zetsubou/ /hou/

=despair =mount

/lento/ /no/ /ki/

レント節の木
四旬節の木

しじゅんせつ き

/shijun-setsu/no/ ki/

=Lent =tree

←Pronunciation

←Phonetic readings¹

←translation using Chinese characters

←Phonetic readings²

←Pronunciation