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A Multi-Sensory Approach to the Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop

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A MULTI-SENSORY APPROACH TO THE POETRY OF ELIZABETH BISHOP

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Poetry is often characterized by sensorial and descriptive density, strengths ideal for sensory analysis in literature, yet sensory analysis in poetry has been limited to ekphrasis and synaesthesia, both of which entail transfer, across art forms and across senses, respectively. Despite expanded modern definitions of sense, these approaches have been limited to addressing the traditional five “external” senses, and limited further by emphasis on the two “higher” external senses: sight and hearing. Confronting these limitations, movement toward a more inclusive *multi*-sensory approach requires attention to the lower external senses (smell, taste, touch) and internal senses (temperature, pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, satiety, time, and space) as represented in diction.

The project offers an expanded sensory approach to poetry across four points: 1) recognition of sensory diction not limited to qualities of metaphorical transfer, 2) incorporation of literary-based conceptions of sense beyond the external, traditional five senses, 3) increased sensitivity to the presence and significance of lower sense invocation, and 4) sensory diction as contributing to a poem itself rather than as points for isolation.

Expanding both from the five traditional senses and sensory transfer approach, but based upon the organizing principles of synaesthesia research, this project applies a multi-sensory analysis to the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, whose body of work, in its precision and detail, lends itself to sensory analysis. Further, critical consensus reads Bishop as primarily a visual poet and a

poet who often captures the essence of every day life, both points explored here by multi-sensory analysis. Specifically in question are the following: 1) the patterns and sensual strategies in Bishop's work within an expanded sensorium, 2) the extent to which the lower senses are represented in Bishop's work, 3) the extent to which internal senses contribute or challenge the external senses for space within a Bishop poem, and 4) whether a more heterarchical, multi-sensory interrogation opens the poet's work to fuller sensory criticism and appreciation. The project is situated within the current historical and cultural reclamation of lower sensory detail and offers an inclusive, literary-based sensorium grounded in language.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dedication: To my wife, Carla

Two moments I will never forget in the dissertation process both involve the direction of my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Kenneth Sherwood. The first is when I momentarily stumbled during my proposal approval meeting and witnessed my ideas completely and faithfully conveyed by him--a realization that he knew my intended direction by heart. The second moment was receiving by overnight mail his review of my first full draft (to my mind, rather complete), and finding a copy filled with his edits, commentary, and direction, seemingly on every page--and my sincere agreement with all of them. I could write a second dissertation on the guidance provided by Dr. Sherwood, but I hope he will accept my heartfelt "thank you" in place of additional writing. Any reader should know that the work in hand has been immensely improved upon by his time, attention, and dedication.

Thank you to Dr. Christopher Orchard and Dr. Michael Williamson for serving on my dissertation committee, my exam committee, and for their excellent feedback on both. I have immense respect for Dr. Orchard, garnered firsthand as his student, and Dr. Williamson's passion for poetry invigorated my own interest at critical stages. I am grateful to all three members for seeing me through the process, and their critique alone was worth the experience; I wish them the absolute best in all of their own, future endeavors. I would also like to give special thanks to the late Dr. Karen Dandurand, who was very supportive of me during both my masters and doctoral coursework.

An infinite and eternal thank you to my loving wife, Carla, for simply everything. Her sacrifices to this now accomplished goal cannot be measured, and I hope she accepts this

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Poetry is often characterized by sensorial and descriptive density, strengths ideal for literary analysis and pedagogy. This density and descriptiveness of poetry is also ideal for sensory studies, the relatively recent field which explores current use of the five traditional senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) as well as reclamation of past sensual experiences and data, which in turn is particularly well served in its documentation and expression in literature. Yet sensory analysis in poetry has been limited to ekphrasis and synaesthesia, both of which entail transfer, across art forms and across senses, respectively, rather than a broader, more inclusive approach. Additionally, despite expanded definitions of sense (both medieval and modern), these approaches have been limited to addressing the traditional five “external” senses, and limited further by emphasis on the two “higher” external senses--sight and hearing. Confronting these limitations, movement toward a more inclusive *multi*-sensory approach requires attention to both the lower (smell, taste, touch) and internal senses (temperature, pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, satiety, time, and space), as represented in diction and as addressed by this dissertation.

The project offers an expanded sensory approach to poetry across four points: 1) recognition of sensory diction not limited to qualities of transfer, 2) incorporation of internal and literary-based conceptions of sense beyond the external, traditional five senses, 3) an increased sensitivity to the presence and significance of lower sense invocation, and 4) sensory diction as contributing to a poem itself rather than as points for isolation.

Expanding both from the five traditional senses and sensory transfer approach, but based upon the organizing principles of synaesthesia research (as in von Erhardt-Siebold; de Ullmann; Ruddick), this project applies a multi-sensory analysis to the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, whose body of work, in its precision and detail, lends itself to sensory analysis. Further, critical consensus reads Bishop as primarily a visual poet and a poet who often captures the essence of everyday life, both points explored here by multi-sensory analysis. Specifically in question are the following: 1) the patterns and sensual strategies in Bishop's work within an expanded sensorium, 2) the extent to which the lower senses are represented in Bishop's work, 3) the extent to which internal senses contribute or challenge the external senses for space within a Bishop poem, and 4) whether a more heterarchical, multi-sensory interrogation opens the poet's work to fuller sensory criticism and appreciation.

The dissertation contributes a more inclusive sensory approach to the transfer focus of synaesthesia and ekphrasis, a literary-based sensorium grounded in language rather than neurological receptors, and a broader pedagogical strategy for sensory reading, writing, and critique. Additionally, the project is situated in the current reclamation of lower sensory detail, historically and culturally (as in Classen; Stefan Smith; Herring), and within the recent, less biographical, more form-focused, academic treatments (as in Spivak; Rosenbaum; Samuels) of Elizabeth Bishop's work.

In literature, Elizabeth Bishop stands secure as an accomplished poet within America's 20th century literary canon. The senses in literature, however, once beyond ancient ekphrasis and medieval allegory, have required some modern day reclamation. Sense and literature have perhaps had their most sustained conversation in the form of synaesthetic literary analysis, a

momentary 20th century exploration of a few 18th and 19th century poets, where the transfer of sensory diction was tracked and discussed in terms of metaphorical movement among the higher senses of sight and hearing, and the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch. Within sensory studies, the marginalized cultural impact of the lower senses has become a point of reclamation and appreciation, through a revisiting of past sources and as awareness for future consideration and assessment. Within both of these aims, the poetic work of Elizabeth Bishop is an ideal point for sensory exploration, not only given the critical consensus which positions her poetry as capturing experiences authentically--and by extension sensorially--but as a consensus that reads her as visually dominant as well. Do these perspectives hold under the scrutiny of a literary sensory analysis? If Bishop captured an authenticity of experience in verse as her criticism asserts, then her strategies are of interest to sensory analysis and she is an ideal candidate for both sensory analysis itself and lower sensory reclamation, particularly if Bishop's poetic voice includes significant non-visual sensory expression perhaps overlooked by prior explorations of her work. However, and of note, sensory analysis precedes sensory reclamation, as one can only reclaim through analysis. Further, the search for lower sensory detail is in itself an act of reclamation. Past and current efforts to reclaim lower sensory experiences are covered below to establish the sub-field, as well as to warrant their inclusion in the analysis and to argue their importance in Bishop, whether in their inclusion or exclusion. This exploratory project was based on conducting a sensory analysis, with the level of lower sensory reclamation unknown until the analysis was completed.

In regard to reclamation in general, one of the strengths of literary synaesthesia has been its consistent inclusion of the lower senses as equal points for analysis; but as discussed at length

below, there are issues and limitations within synaesthetic analysis that warrant a departure from simply applying the approach to Bishop's work when lower sensory detail is explored (and this project expands beyond the lower senses as well). There have been treatments of the lower senses not connected to literary synaesthesia. Early on, in extensively examining Robert Browning's use of touch, John Bonnell (1922) argued that poetry is not creatively hampered by the "dictionary" limitations of language which do not adequately define and provide vocabulary for sensory experiences; however, Bonnell also dismissed smell and taste as not important in poetry because they cannot adequately introduce (as a new experience) the reader to scents and tastes not directly experienced beforehand. Yet, in a later reclamation of the lower senses, Donald Siebert (1985) examines Jonathan Swift's detailed use of odor in his scatological poems which critique idealizations of romantic love (not romantic love itself, argues Siebert). With non-English literature and smell, Bruce Fleming (1991) reassesses Patrick Süskind's *Das Parfum* and its mixed critical reception. And with the lower senses in general, Rebecca Stern (2003) re-evaluates "Goblin Market" as a more transparent warning about deception in wares and the marketplace. However, these examinations are relatively recent and the importance of lower sensory impact has been in the shadow of the culturally privileged higher senses. Western art, in general, has been about the visual and aural: oration and rhetoric; poetry, drama, and (later) prose; song and dance; operas and orchestras; painting, sculpture, and architecture; film and television. There are exceptions, but mostly only between the production and reception, such as the sensation of touch in the process of dancing and sculpting, and yet, the results here are visual for the audience. The visual and the aural seem to overwhelm appreciation of the lower senses.

True cultural appreciation of smell and taste is limited. While fragrances are a desired commodity, perfume making is not generally considered an art, and while purchasing the best perfumes is expensive, they are transparently bottled as a mass production. Recent interest in fragrance candles, even homemade efforts, has not brought about an art to our sense of smell. Even elaborate floral arrangements are more appreciated as visual expressions. Taste has more of a footing via the culinary arts, and while the visual is critical here--as an initial criteria for success--the final test is certainly the tasting of a work; yet, culinary expertise eludes inclusion into the fine arts. There is also the dismissal that the lower senses are too fleeting for appreciation; against this Francis Coleman argues that the lower senses can have an aesthetic quality:

In some instances sense pleasure is a species of aesthetic pleasure. When the data from our senses of smell, taste, and touch are attended to for their own sake, when we entertain them not to learn something from them, or to predict something on the basis of them, or merely to satisfy our wants with them, and when the data are of a certain intensity, however short-lived they may be, then they can be beautiful.
(324)

Likewise, John Harris has argued that food and drink can be art forms, by challenging assumptions that they are consumable, perishable, necessary, and generally boring. Here Harris focuses on an artistic objection, particularly relevant to art:

A further objection worth considering is the demand that for every art there is an artist. Clearly the chef or the creator of a famous recipe or process (mayonnaise) can count as the artist in the requisite sense, but it is more difficult to point to an

only begetter in the case of wine. In addition to the gardeners tending the vines, there are the proprietors who chose which vines to plant and who decide perhaps when to harvest the grapes and the cellar masters responsible for blending and for decisions about how long to keep the wine in cask before bottling, etc. But we owe the character of the wine also to the weather in a particular year, to the soil conditions on a particular hillside, and to the sensitivity of those who store the wine and those who open the bottle at the right time and at the right temperature. This multiple “authorship” is perhaps no more of a problem than was the vast Renaissance studio in which many hands touched the painting which when finished nonetheless bore the master's signature. (13)

Harris' counter to the objection ends on the visual art of painting, and it can be argued that the higher senses as well have a fleeting quality, that images and sounds only resonate temporarily once out of range. Our ability to more readily conjure absent images and sounds may be complicated by a continuing cultural prioritizing of the visual and aural. In the field of invention, higher sense privileging may have led to technologies that, while allowing for eternal loops of music and infinite rewinds of visual media (as well as 24/7 radio, television, and internet), have dragged in comparable advances toward capturing and augmenting the experiences of taste and smell.

In regard to touch, Frances Herring has defended this sense as warranting aesthetic consideration. Herring addresses the main assumptions against touch as worthy of analysis: touch as utilitarian, as immeasurable, and as shallow in representing life and experience. Although a lower sense, touch is appreciated as part of art's process, and becomes essentially either a

“middle sense” or highly ranked as the first sense of the lower senses (high above smell and taste) in regard to certain art forms. Herring is correct that touch, as a primary sensation, is rarely privileged, even in the context of art. Although touch is engaged in executing a paintbrush, touch is more intimate in shaping three-dimensional space, particularly when the hand is directly involved in materials such as clay (as opposed to hammer and chisel, welding torches, and when sculptor as designer of architectural sculpture delegates actual execution to workers).

Andrea Bolland has discussed Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* sculpture, noting that sculpture has a history of being privileged over painting; one example Bolland provides is the sculptor Tribolo using a blind man as the litmus test: the man's ability to recognize through touch the sculpture of another man, whereas a painting would only provide a flat canvas. Yet, the field of sculpture is often viewed as sight-based. David Martin, although noting the importance of the other senses in sculpture, concludes with privileging sight over touch in sculpture, to the extent that sculpture is primarily a visual art. As Martin is also focused on arguing for the uniqueness of sculpture, one might think that centering touch within sculpture would aid its separation from other art forms. If *David* truly resided in the marble, could Michelangelo not have freed him blind-folded?

Touch for an audience is problematic as well. Unlike most paintings and other two-dimensional works, sculpture invites touch. Yet in modern museums, whether local or national, we are told “Do Not Touch.” Of course, there is the practical context, that our eyes don't directly smudge, topple, or drop objects, particularly those valued and unique. But it also emphasizes that touch is a close sense, dangerous, more of the body, requiring distance (and perimeters, which mean “Do Not Cross” in addition to the no-touching signs). Sensory scholar

Constance Classen, sifting through contemporaneous commentary of museum experiences, shows that this touch prohibition is relatively modern, the turn developing through the late 18th and early 19th centuries (“Museum Manners”). Classen also connects museum culture with scientific advancement in relation to the senses:

Due to technological developments as well as to changes in scientific practice and theory, the nineteenth-century scientist was expected to gather information by means of microscopes and measuring devices and not by sniffing or tasting the material under study. Indeed, the non-visual senses would be given little role to play in modern scientific inquiry. By the end of the nineteenth-century, in fact, the use of the proximity senses of smell, taste and touch, had been generally relegated to the realm of the nursery and the “savage.” Civilized adults were deemed to comprehend the world primarily through sight and secondarily through hearing. (907)

Today there are accommodations for visitors with blindness in the form guided tours with selected works available to touch. And then there are sections for children that invite “please touch” but those are limited, specially marked rooms--and as they are for children, the invitation to touch here is positioned as an attempt to nurture some primitive urge or developmental stage requiring attention (similar to the publication of toddler animal touch-books with synthetic furs, hides, and mock scales), suggesting that touch is something to grow out of.

In considering academic sensory neglect of the lower senses, George Roeder (1994) has lamented the lack of sensory detail documented by historians. He further isolates this absence in documentation in regard to the lower senses. Roeder suggests that while historians are known to

immerse themselves in the minutiae of their subjects, they have been prone to miss lower sensory facts due to their own station in life as white collar academics. Roeder does recognize exceptions, such as instructor awareness of lower sensory detail in works such as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, although the work, now historic, was a journalistic effort. Other historians, such as Stefan Smith (2007) have revisited historical epochs which have been taken for granted without any modern exploration of them. To this Smith has investigated the Old World spice trade, not in its impetus for shortcuts to India by Columbus, or the search for a Northwest passage, or even the circumnavigation of the globe, but in terms of the historically neglected, original intent of the voyages--the importance of the spices, otherwise forgotten. In this, Smith goes beyond their use as a preservative, which, although critical (particularly in relation to sea voyages themselves), relegates the spices, of all things, to a commodity so purely functional as to dismiss taste itself as having any relation important enough to spur on men in ships (albeit for profit, but gained from a demand by those on land). Smith as well moves through the sparse historical record on food to investigate how past foods tasted.

Perhaps due to the ability to view the traditional five senses as culturally bound, other examinations explore non-Western sense definition itself. David Howes (2003) examines the sensory logic of non-Western cultures, primarily discussing sense in terms of practices unique to each, Jack Goody (2002) touches on how other cultures have considered the senses, particularly in spiritual classification, and Suzanne Evans (2002) examines the “aroma of sanctity” in Christian and other religions. Anthropologist Susan Rasmussen (1999) has detailed the use of smells in Tuareg everyday life; Joanna Tokarska-Bakir (2000) has reviewed Tibetan categorization of the senses, as opposed to Western thought, and the process of sensory liberation

Tibetan's follow; while Kathryn Linn Geurts (2002) has recounted living among the Anlo-Ewe peoples and discusses their more personal categorizations of critical senses, which often include the inner sensations, even emotions, that Western thought has separated. Linda Hurcombe (2007) sensitizes archaeologists to the sensory--particularly the lower sensory--significance of found objects. Hurcombe suggests that pottery recovered in graves may signify the favorite aromas and tastes of the dead, rather than (or only) the visual design or craftsmanship of the pottery. This last example is of particular interest in exploring the environments within the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop; similar to more traditional literary symbolism, objects themselves may be read as symbolically invoking sense. Through the efforts of scholars like Hurcombe and above, the recent concentration of scholarship demonstrates that lower sense reclamation has begun in the various fields of art, history, and archeology.

Literature and cultural studies have recently begun to embark on their own archeology. As in other fields, the last two decades have seen several anthologies collecting essays regarding the lower senses, such as Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott's *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (1994) and Classen's *The Book of Touch* (2005), Jim Drobnick's *The Smell Culture Reader* (2006), as well as singularly authored works, such as Robert Jutte's *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace* (1991), Laura Marks' work on the non-visual aspirations of experimental film, *Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002), and Susan Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002). As with individual treatments noted earlier, there have been overviews of past cultures and non-English literature as well, such as Stephen Nichols' (1991) exploration of the significance of classical and medieval depictions of food, Hans Rindisbacher's *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory*

Perception in Literature (1991), which examines German (and some Russian) literary works, and Eugene Eoyang's early study (1979) which discusses the elusive Chinese concept of “wei” (roughly “flavor” or “to savor”) in literary works. According to the above reclamation measures, it should be noted that most lower sensory attention has been paid to the often highest of the lower senses--smell, and that its importance for sensory reclamation may be tied to its ability to act as a cultural tool while maintaining distance (unlike the contact senses of taste and touch; and of note, distancing is strategy of Bishop's). But in Western culture in general, smell remains an essentially lower sense, and the reclamation of the lower senses has been necessary to better grasp, ancient to modern, the experiences of the past as well as sensory appreciation in the current moment.

To this possibility of reclamation and to sensory analysis itself, the project moves through sense history as context to sensorially examining Bishop's poetry; this begins with the following chapter, “Chapter Two: Considering the Senses and the Poetry of Bishop,” which covers ancient, medieval, and modern conceptions of the traditional five “external” senses; within this coverage, the hierarchies of the “high” and “low” senses are explored, as well as the concept of the “internal” senses in medieval and modern thought. Two theories of transfer, the ancient ekphrasis and the relatively modern synaesthesia, are addressed in relation to the sensory analysis of literature. Lower sensory contributions to description are considered, and sensory diction as description moves into positioning the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop as an initial, ideal corpus to apply a multi-sensory analysis. Bishop's critical reception is moved through chronologically, in effect demonstrating a consistent interpretation of Bishop as a visual poet of exacting detail and a

poet often capable of capturing the essences of daily life--it is from this consensus that Bishop is argued as an ideal choice for this project.

In “Chapter Three: Bishop's Poetry as Subject for Multi-Sensory Analysis,” the dissertation moves into building the multi-sensory approach by first considering the value of tracking and interpreting frequency of sensory diction. The use of Greenhalgh's *Concordance* on Bishop is discussed, both as a source of some direction but more so as a point of departure given that the analysis here is based in contexts of line, stanza, and the work itself. The distinction between open-class and closed-class words is discussed, the latter argued as warranting the inclusion of time and spacial diction within an expanded sensory approach. This expansion is detailed as the recognition of sensory diction not limited to transfer, the incorporation of modern and internal concepts of sense, increased sensitivity to the lower external senses, and the summation of sensory diction as contributing to a poem's interpretation. Appropriation of literary synaesthesia coding strategies for the multi-sensory approach is detailed, along with the move to color coding. Bishop's “Filling Station” is used as an initial application and demonstration for multi-sensory analysis, along with a discussion of the multi-sensory coding definitions and decisions in the context of Bishop's work.

“Chapter Four: Bishop's Use of The Senses” discusses the results of applying a multi-sensory approach to Bishop's body of poetic work. Beginning with the traditional five senses, how Bishop utilizes sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch is discussed with various examples shown for each sense. Sight, being found predominant in Bishop, results in select examples, including demonstrations of Bishop setting a “visual stage” without necessarily incorporating a preponderance of visually-laden images. Moments of sound, although a distant second to her

visual use, are also given selectively, both as representative and to showcase Bishop's brief but concentrated use of sound. In contrast, the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch are so scant in Bishop's work as to warrant a nearly complete showing, both to adequately address their use and to highlight their near disuse--at least as significant contributors to her work. The expanded, non-traditional senses are next covered with temperature, pain, time, and space as evident in Bishop's work, while the senses of pleasure, hunger, and thirst are relatively absent, the latter two in part as an extension of the limited use of taste, while a sense of pleasure in Bishop is at times interpretable but not locatable in diction itself. Given that sensory detail often suggests a singular perspective, an unexpected element of Bishop's voice, at least in frequency, is her questioning or open detail as represented by the conjunction "or" and the use of the question mark; this aspect of Bishop's voice and its sensory impact is discussed.

"Chapter Five: Bishop's Sensorium through Sensory Sketches" provides both coding and stanza by stanza analysis of Bishop's sensory use through six poems which provide a range of sensory invocation by Bishop. The sketches are in part close readings using multi-sensory coding and analysis, and in part larger contextualizations as each poem is framed by past critical treatments and discussion of the coding benefits of multi-sensory analysis. The six poems (with their sensory focus given parenthetically) are "First Death in Nova Scotia" (sight, color-themed), "Roosters" (sound), "The Monument" (spacial, one static object), "Sandpiper" (spacial, two dynamic objects), "Songs for A Colored Singer: IV" (blended), and "Insomnia" (space and time). In conclusion, pedagogical possibilities are discussed in tracking and mapping sense use as a graphic tool for sensory appreciation and composition aims, both in emulation of Bishop and as points for departure.

Finally, the concluding “Bishop's Sensorium” ends the project by reviewing the findings and positioning them into the larger context of general literary appreciation and beginning pedagogical directions. The multi-sensory analysis applied to Bishop's corpus provides evidence at the diction level of her visual dominance, but the analysis also challenges critical readings of Bishop as capturing the essence of everyday experience, as coding reveals minimal use of the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch--senses intimate in experiencing every day realities.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSIDERING THE SENSES AND THE POETRY OF ELIZABETH BISHOP

Hierarchy in the Traditional Five Senses: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Conceptions

Ancient Conceptions

The traditional five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are known by elementary and graduate students alike. Lesser known is their division into two orders, the higher and lower senses, with sight and hearing as the “higher” and smell, taste, and touch as the “lower.” Even less familiar is their history and debate. The Western hierarchy of the senses begins with Aristotle; not because he was the first to consider them philosophically, but rather because of the influence of his thought. In setting down his own categorization of the senses, for which sight and hearing are situated above smell, taste, and touch, Aristotle was in disagreement with the view of his predecessors over the most base (and yet to Aristotle the most essential) sense, that the sensation of touch was not localized to an organ such as the skin. Aristotle supported a “contact” definition that touch was indeed localized to the skin (Sorabji). Yet the ancient competing conception of touch, which does not locate touch to a specific organ, more closely fits modern conceptions, at least those in the scientific realm (as most non-scientists may not hesitate to wed touch with the skin, without any obvious need to question further). The modern scientific conception of touch is located within the somatosensory system, which includes commonly diverse sensations such as equilibrium, temperature, hunger, and pain-- although, dating prior to Aristotle, historian Elizabeth Harvey notes that Plato indirectly expanded the concept of touch; in “[d]escribing the body’s phenomenological experience of heat,

weight, roughness, and smoothness, qualities that orient the body to the world, he [Plato] delineates the operations of touch without ever naming it” (386).

Also requiring close examination by Aristotle was the classification of the other two lower senses, smell and taste, in particular their relation to one another. Aristotle was philosophically diligent in attempting to disentangle them, in order to arrive at a solid classification system of, as we know them, the five traditional senses. Separating flavor and odor is still an issue today, for those thinking about such things, and for Aristotle as he arrived at distinguishing them in regard to terms of wetness and dryness (as per Johansen). Although much can be made about the philosophical influence of the internal logic in Aristotle's categorization (with occasional modern attempts to re-conceptualize, as in Nudds), the five traditional senses were isolated pre-Aristotle.

Medieval Conceptions

With the medieval period came the theory of the “inner” senses. Simon Kemp and Garth Fletcher describe the hypothesis:

A theory of cognition and neuropsychology that had wide acceptance in Europe from the fourth to the sixteenth centuries. The theory proposed that incoming sensory information was processed successively in three linearly arranged ventricles of the brain. It was based on the psychology of Aristotle and the anatomical discoveries of Galen; its demise followed Vesalius's discovery that the anatomy on which it was based was incorrect. (559)

Kemp and Fletcher argue that, although now considered primitive, the medieval theories of the inner senses which were essentially cognitive (e.g., Avicenna's popular model of common sense,

imagination, cognition, estimation [instinct], and memory) were a great advancement in and across various fields. The “inner senses” connected animal and human behavior, and located cognition to the head. This new approach had even more modern components, particularly in regard to cognitive psychology, as the medieval theory was essentially one of information processing. This change in direction is still being developed as neural implants are currently being tested in humans that attempt to adjust appetite (the same technology that now controls tremors in patients with Parkinson's Disease (Nestor Tomycz, Donald Whiting, and Michael Oh; Donald Whiting et al.), thereby circumventing the five senses in their relationship, healthy or not, with something as essential as food. With the inner senses hypothesis, the pathways became simply pathways, routes to a center, and essentially the “outer” senses, rather than instruments which shape reality through their use; and although the the medieval physiology of the inner senses was abandoned academically with Vesalius, modern brain explorations continue to find centers of perception where differing outer senses meet and conflate.

The inner senses so dominated medieval thought that the traditional five were assumed to be ignored by artists and thinkers of the time, and therefore ignored by modern historians. According to historian F. Mütterich, the famous Fuller Brooch which depicts the five senses was missed by art historians, who then initially dismissed arguments supporting the depiction based on the belief that the five senses were no longer subjects of art in the medieval period:

The curious absence of a tradition for the rendering of the five senses was brought home to students of the subject when, in 1952, Mr. Bruce-Mitford wrote a paper on the Fuller Brooch of the British Museum, and interpreted the figures on that object as illustrations of the five senses. Such an illustration appeared to be

completely isolated, and there were scholars who rejected this interpretation precisely because the author could not produce an iconographic parallel.

(140)

Further, Mütterich uses the images found in a medieval manuscript (Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona, MS. CCLI) to illustrate the personification of the five senses, showing that, contrary to lingering scholarly assumptions, the traditional five continued to be treated in medieval art beyond the discovery of the brooch.

Although the inner senses are still very much about the body (first theorized and applied to animals in order to explain seemingly human reactions and sentience), with their introduction, the traditional five senses effectively become the “outer senses,” thereby invoking all the positive vs. negative relations that come along with that binary: inner vs. outer, mind vs. body, transcendent vs. earthly. Artistic renderings of the outer senses are perhaps the most telling of this change, which came to include a male:female binary represented in depictions of the senses. No longer were men depicted as representing the senses, but rather women, being perceived as more of the body, and in turn the inner senses became situated under the spiritual, the transcendent. Women now represented the outer senses as their bodies were perceived as corporeal and fleshy-- objects essentially of temptation and sin. Carl Nordenfalk has studied the five senses in medieval depictions and has noted three types of representation: animal (as having both heightened senses and being lower order beings); objects (held by humans); and human (and Nordenfalk notes the move from male to female representations, as women became more associated with sensuality) (1-8). Going further in examining perceptions of medieval women, Helen Solterer has argued that

the medieval designation of woman as sensual became meshed with the act of reading, itself a medieval sensual experience, thereby each view augmenting the belief in the other.

Modern Conceptions

As we move out of the medieval, the senses develop from a hierarchy entangled by male/female to one enmeshed with class, particularly in regard to smell, and the distance aspect of the senses becomes more socially tangible. In modern times, the higher senses, which allow for distance, continue to be situated above the lower senses, which require a closer proximity. In looking up, one can see light years away, and although hearing pales in this comparison, certain sounds can be detected miles away. In contrast, unless transported by gases or smoke, smells tend to require closeness, with taste and touch requiring contact, the latter noted by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty “as the double sensation: the hand embodies both the agency of touching and the receptivity of being touched. To touch is also always to be touched” (qtd. in Harvey 387). But in moving toward the modern era, the sense of smell increasingly crossed this distancing. Constance Classen has noted the evolution of olfactory symbolism:

It is not only the strong emotional appeal of smell that makes odors useful for classifying others, but also the fact that it can be perceived at a distance and does not require intimate contact to be experienced. Thus, to label a group “foul,” one does not need to have had any close association with it. At the same time, the ability of odors to travel through space renders them capable of crossing barriers. (“The Odor of the Other” 160)

In modern mingling within urbanization, newcomers who “smell” different have been assumed to be unkempt and unsanitary, although the only assimilation needed may have been into the

trappings of a particular cultural hygiene or diet (in an extension of Classen, Brant (2004) argues this symbolism predates the 19th century). In literary history, Janice Carlisle has narrowed down the strong and consistent association of smell and class within novels written in the 1860s, a reflection of the concerns and priorities of the social class which wrote them. Further, Carlisle has found that, in contrast to works of the 1840s and prior, writers in the 1860s begin to only indirectly describe lower class environments, as if additional detailing would be indelicate.

Once human scent became more controllable, or control became more affordable to larger proportions of society, the very absence of bodily scent becomes a greater indicator of one's station in life, which coincides with 19th century increase in less intensive labors, in turn leading to the beginnings of a white-collar sector. Smelling good, or at least not smelling of labor, becomes a class badge; it indicates that, not only does one not engage in laborious tasks (tasks of the body--pushing smell even further down the lower senses), but that one has the means to purchase the accoutrements for the goal--the result being a binary of smell between two large groups, primarily based on, and indicative of, income. However, as classes (however defined) tend to model themselves on the ideal direction (up), the act of smelling good (and it is now an *act*), trickles down as an expectation, especially cemented with the early 20th century mass production of relatively cheap toiletries. Apart from impoverishment, the "excuse" for smelling disappears. Even blue-collar workers should at least smell good after a hard day's work, or better, smell less during that hard day's work. The act of smelling becomes so undesirable that the absence of smell may be the ideal, at least strategically in Western interpersonal interactions--a modern inner hierarchy within smelling is perhaps: good scent, no scent, bad scent. However,

“good” is open to interpretation (and more limited to all the bad things that one might smell like), so it may be best to err on caution and to attempt to have no scent at all.

In considering the present moment, the hierarchy of the two orders, higher and lower, stands today as it did in ancient Greece, and with essentially little diversion along the way. It may be impossible to distinguish whether human sight, once privileged, was self-fulfilling in its cultural evolution beginning in pre-history, as Aristotle was tinkering with a classification and hierarchical system far pre-dating his efforts. Taking the top separately, the higher senses have been ranked as first sight, then hearing. On the contrary for the bottom order, the lower three senses have had some cultural movement within the bottom in regard to ranking, but there are cultural exceptions. With hearing, there is the “tall tale,” the connotation of inaccuracies in the term “gossip,” and the disconcerting lesson in playing “phone” where a simple statement morphs unrecognizably through a string of tellers. And although the settling of verbal discrepancy is often given over to sight, as in “See for yourself,” “Believe it when I see it,” and being an “eye-witness,” there are exceptions to even the highest sense being infallible. While a sighted person called “blind” is an insult well beyond not viewing the thing at hand, as it is about not perceiving some obvious truth, as a reversal, there is some acceptance, in moments, of the tyranny of sight. Folk wisdom such as “The grass is always greener on the other side” and, particularly relevant to literature, “Don't judge a book by its cover,” warn of the trappings of sight. This mistrust in sight is even evidenced in its absence, as the blind individual, not being held to appearances, better “sees” (at times to an extent believed oracular in power). Here a heightened “knowing” via the absence of sight opposes the earlier example, the derogatory use of blind as not knowing some obvious truth. A notable, little known example in literature, is the title character of Wilkie Collins'

Poor Miss Finch, who regains her sight yet now cannot detect that her beloved is his recently switched twin (for reasons supported in the story), until she regains her blindness and notices that his *touch* is not of the twin that she loves. But these examples, metaphorical, supersensory, and fictional, are the exception to a Western history overwhelmingly visual and aural.

Analysis of Sensory Transfer: Ekphrasis and Synaesthesia

Historically, literary treatment of the senses has been addressed through two strategies: ekphrasis and synaesthesia, both involving the crossing of senses. In a literary sense, ekphrasis means the act of putting a piece of art (painting, music) into written word. However, the term is free to mean any translation of one art into another, such as a painting of a sculpture and vice versa; readings in sculpture, for example, discuss these adaptations. Writing may be said to engage this process of ekphrasis when attempting to transcribe sensory experience into language. Whatever is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled is translated into words: the painting, the song, the sculpture, the pastry, and the perfume are, as works, represented in written form. However, perhaps given the sense hierarchy, literary efforts with ekphrasis have been centered on adapting the visual (painting and the visual aspects of sculpture and architecture) and the aural (oratory and music) into written forms.

Classicists have noted that this literary focus, which has come to define ekphrasis, severely limits the technique (which under literature became a genre). Classicist Ruth Webb has devoted an entire book, *Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice*, to reclaiming the original, broader meaning of the term, and opens her work with clarification of the classical interpretation of ekphrastic technique:

There was indisputably a strong tradition of describing real or imaginary works of art in oratory, historiography, epigram, epic and other poetry. But there is no evidence that these were considered to form a single genre, or that the genre had a name, still less that that name would have been 'ekphrasis'. Painting, sculpture and architecture certainly were among the subjects of ekphrasis as it was conceived and defined in antiquity. (1-2)

The classic example of ekphrasis, the crafting by Hephaestus of the Shield of Achilles, often referenced as a literary example, along with Hesiod's clay-made woman, Pandora, serve as classicist James Francis' own examples of meeting and going beyond the literary-based criteria for ekphrasis, into interiors unavailable to sight:

By the nature of his description, Homer invites comparison between the visual image of the shield and the words he uses to describe it, which communicate knowledge that the images cannot. Yet both images and words are the poet's creations, so that the result is a complex mirroring not only of the visual and verbal representation of the shield but also of the making of the shield and the making of the poem itself. In Hesiod, the powerful reality of the vision of Pandora is actually the counterpart to the words which describe her character; rather than compete with one another, both the visual and verbal are necessary to describe her completely. Artists and poets both create images, and one form of image making can, or perhaps inherently does, reflect the other. Visuality and narratology are two sides of the same coin. (17)

For Francis and other classicists there is also the issue of movement, or lack thereof in literary applications. As an example to this accusation, one recent writer opens an essay on ekphrasis by describing the ekphrastic process as such:

This might be done by the poet, whose name we might or might not know, giving a whole poem over to such consideration, or stopping that action, the narrative flow of a longer work, to direct his gaze, his characters' gaze, our gaze, for a while, at such a thing or things. Or it might be a matter of the novel turning the narrative focus, a character's attention, the reader's focus, for a time, on some such thing. (Cunningham 57)

In contrast to this conception of the technique, Francis notes that Homer's section on the Achilles' shield tells of it forging as well as its detail, and that the details themselves are moving and fluid, not static:

The emphasis is on the making, yet it is not even so much the making of the shield per se as it is the god's creation of the images ornamenting it . . . the description becomes immediately and intensely detailed, presenting the motivations of individuals and the sequential action of the stories that would be difficult if not impossible to convey by solely visual means . . . Yet the action is not described as a series of vignettes but as a continuous moving narrative, as if the shield were running some sort of movie in animated metal . . . the poet describes the song of a marriage procession passing by in the scene, the bystanders speaking up in the manslaughter dispute, the speakers taking turns, and in the harvest scene, singing, whistling, and the music of the lyre . . . Heffernan has suggested that the poet . . .

is exulting here in the then newborn powers of writing and inviting the audience to measure the power of verbal description against the visual. (Francis 9-10)

In regard to this dissertation, this attention to movement has been considered in the development of the initial coding scheme in the consideration of spacial cues, and the coding scheme itself based on the synaesthetic model, now to be discussed.

Synaesthesia (or “synesthesia”) is the psychological blending of sensory experience, in which, for example, an individual may associate certain sounds with certain colors, essentially seeing them along with the sound. In literature, literary synaesthesia takes the form of metaphors, so that the touch word “soft” becomes descriptive of sound and sight, as in “soft music” and “soft colors.” Literary synaesthesia has been argued to be a conscious strategy of writers such as Keats and Byron--to such an extent that Stephen de Ullmann avoided compiling clichéd, arguably unconscious uses and “only such instances . . . where the poet must have been aware of his mingling different sensations” (“Romanticism” 814) (de Ullmann alone has synaesthetically treated Longfellow, William Morris, Oscar Wilde, Dowson, Phillips, Arthur Symons, and Lord Alfred Douglas (as noted in “Laws” 335), Leconte de Lisle, Vörösmarty (as noted in *The Principles* 277), and Gautier). Although, the extent to which literary synaesthesia is an intentional strategy and has novel use is debated. Nicholas Ruddick extensively reviewed the scholarship, particularly of well known synaesthesia scholars de Ullmann and Erika von Erhardt-Siebold supporting intentional literary synaesthesia, including arguments as to its strengths. Using de Ullmann's examination of Keats, Byron, and Gautier, Ruddick re-examined the sources, then matched these with a re-examination of Erhardt-Siebold's Dickinson findings. Ruddick finds some discrepancies but in general finds the following patterns (as did de Ullmann): most

transfers go “up” the sensorium, with touch being the most moved, and hearing the most common destination. A specific example would be “soft music” = touch to hearing (low to high transfer); although this example is perhaps one that de Ullmann would reject among “stale epithets like 'sweet sound, soft colour’” (814). Further, de Ullmann even reads within Byron that he “complains about the scantiness of synaesthetic resources at his command” as in “Don Juan”: “Would that I were a painter! to be grouping / All that a poet drags into detail! / Oh that my words were colours! but their tints / May serve perhaps as outlines or slight hints” (819).

However, Ruddick concludes that most instances of literary synaesthesia are marginal, that English itself is too full of ambiguous sensory words, open to interpretation despite context. First among the complications for accurate synaesthetic tracking, Ruddick notes the elusive destination of words despite known origins; in Dickinson's line, “In hue -- a mellow Dun --” (in “Of Brussel--it was not”), Ruddick argues, “If the poet could be asked which of the senses of 'mellow' she intended here, it would surely not be unreasonable for her to reply that she intended all of them” (65). Additionally, there are plays on idioms (“golden touch”) and the absence of a sensory destination, as in Dickinson's line, “A blue and gold mistake” (in “These are the days when Birds come back”), as Ruddick notes, “the phrase could not be considered synaesthetic by any accepted criterion because the word 'mistake' offers no clear sensory destination for the visual source 'blue and gold.’” (67). Ruddick viewed the decisions as to what is and is not true literary synaesthesia to be too subjective; in his coding of Dickinson, in the “provisional total of 173 transfers in Dickinson's poetry, at least fifty proved upon closer examination to be marginal in one way or another” (70). Ruddick calls for a disuse of “literary synaesthesia” and its focus on hierarchies to a “intersensory” focus that examines its effectiveness. Although the eventual

Bishop findings do not challenge Ruddick's view (as Bishop minimally engages in synaesthesia), the intent here is to highlight the limitations of synaesthetic coding rather than argue for its abolishment.

Even if synaesthesia is too strong a term in a literary sense (becoming “intersensorial” for some since Ruddick: as in Delalande; Mark Smith; Connor), the hierarchical data itself is very interesting and possibly related to the social privileging of the higher senses to the lower, as the majority of literary transfers move up the sensorium. With the destination of most upward transfers arriving at sound (and not sight), de Ullmann himself hypothesized that, “Visual terminology is incomparably richer than its auditional counterpart, and has also far more similes and images at its command. Of the two sensory domains at the top end of the scale, sound stands more in need of external support than light, form or colour” (qtd. in Tsur 33). It also may be that language struggles to meet the cultural appetite for sight and sound renderings, that in the effort to constantly convey the higher senses of sight and sound, writers pull from every direction, including raiding the lower senses, mining them for metaphorical use and synaesthetic transfer. Perhaps even more interesting, it may be that lower sense experiences anchor higher sense metaphors and transfers, that the language of the lower senses invokes more fundamental, more primeval experiences which are more literally grounded in human experience. While it is generally accepted that, in comparison to the higher senses, the dearth of the lower sense vocabulary coincides with the absence of varied experiences within the lower senses (e.g., that we only have five taste perceptions: bitter, sweet, salty, sour, and, recently added, umami), it is also possible that this indicates power. For example, sex, regardless of the images (vision) found in romantic film or pornography, regardless of verbal flirtations, sexual innuendos, and dirty talk

(sound), regardless of perfumes and colognes (smell), and other aphrodisiacs, including food (taste) stuffs such as chocolates and drink (especially those alcoholic), sex is ultimately about touch--and sensory words such as “soft” when borrowed for upper sensory purposes carry with them the power of the goal: touch. That a word retains some semblance of its origin may not be in spite of the transfer, but rather may indicate the very reason for the borrowing. Although the reasons for upward transfer are beyond the current study, the transfers themselves are of interest in marking Bishop's use of synaesthesia.

This reclamation of lower sense appreciation (within which most expanded senses would fall), whether as sources of transfer or as static details, addresses the importance of complete sensory consideration, particularly in the context of continual technological leaps privileging the higher senses, such as three-dimensional high definition televisions with 7.1 surround sound, as no appreciable advances regarding the lower senses exist. Yet, the slighting of the lower senses is not a modern event; rather it is embedded in the English language, whether it be in a predominately unidirectional transfer (de Ullmann) or simply in the poverty of descriptive language at the disposal of the lower senses.

Using touch as an example to the benefits of lower sensory reclamation and reconsideration, when as an infant Helen Keller lost the ability to process the higher senses of sight and sound, the possibility of communication was entirely limited, until Sullivan systematized her ability to touch. Through touch one may recognize the image represented by a sculpted object, whereas touching a painting would only convey a relatively flat canvas--yet the field of sculpture is often viewed as primarily sight-based (to the extent that touching is often taboo). Similarly, braille (and braille poetry) is typically bound with blindness, but in a sensory

approach it is tactile expression, and sign language (and sign poetry) becomes more about sight than about deafness. Further analogies could be made in the spirit of fair play, diversity, and inclusion, but in a strict literary sense the main benefit of attention beyond the visual and aural is an augmented appreciation of a literary artist's work, both through the exercise of closer reading and a resulting deeper immersion. When touch is present in a poem but is unattended by the reader, a fuller reading is missed, an experience similar to missing allusions and intertextuality across biographical, historical, or socioeconomical injections within a work.

But reclamation attempts are not without applied context. In addition to scholarly reclamation, basic composition textbooks typically contain a chapter entitled Description where the importance of capturing details beyond sight and sound is asserted as critical in faithfully conveying, through an act of ekphrasis, an object, an environment, an event, or an experience. For example, the lower sense of touch is to be incorporated whether one is writing prose or poetry about a baseball, a baseball stadium, the 7th inning, or the win. The inclusion of touch details is to augment immersion, authenticity, and even accuracy in relating a full account. This precise capturing of detail is often the territory of poets, and in both textbook chapters on description and in anthology headnotes noting “exacting description” (Cary Nelson in *Anthology of Modern American Poetry*), it is not difficult to find Elizabeth Bishop.

Elizabeth Bishop as Subject for Multi-Sensory Analysis

The use of Elizabeth Bishop for the dissertation is centered on her deserved reputation as a poet of descriptive detail, and thus her applicability to testing a multi-sensory approach. And this is the main consideration for choosing Bishop--a sensory analysis (expanded or otherwise) could be applied to any author and any poem. But works with a poverty of sensory detail, despite

being a significant finding (i.e., absence and negation can serve as points for exploration) would prevent exploring the expanded direction of the sensory analysis.

Another factor in choosing Bishop, further making her an ideal choice, is that, as a relatively non-prolific artist--her entire poetic output sits at slightly over 100 relatively short poems--it becomes possible to engage in a “completist” look at her body of work which can be analyzed within the bounds of the dissertation process. This is not to assert that a complete, comprehensive examination of any one poet is a prerequisite for a valid sensory analysis; rather this mirrors the efforts by past, synaesthetic studies of the Romantic poets and Dickinson, and, perhaps more significantly, allows for an exhaustive focus that insulates against making generalizations about the sensory quality of Bishop's output as a whole, as well as providing the opportunity to discover any development or patterns of sensory detail possibly lost in a more selective process.

There were other options in proposing an initial application of a multi-sensory approach, but each complicates the aims of the project: select poems from select authors adds the need to account for differences in authorial style and strategy, both of which distract from the thesis; alternatively, various poems from various authors, strategically or randomly selected, may add historical, geographical, and cultural range, but that approach would have prevented as deep a sensory-only focus and complicated (and possibly invalidated) inferences of sensory use patterns. Certainly, the choice of any poem, by any poet assumes the presence of adequate sensory detail, but an initial and sustained focus on one poet concentrates on the sensory involvement across one body of work, and in Bishop, an accomplished body of work.

Even further, Bishop's reputation as a sensual but primarily “visual” poet allows the project to essentially test this assertion; a preponderance of primarily or explicitly visual sensory detail--against a concentrated effort to find other types--would either further validate (in a novel approach) or begin to challenge this reputation (revealing a larger sensory reach in Bishop). This combination of factors makes Bishop an ideal choice for an initial, comprehensive approach involving multi-sensory analysis.

Elizabeth Bishop's poetic output is among the most distinguished of the mid-20th century. Influenced by poets such as Gerald Manley Hopkins, George Herbert, and Marianne Moore (becoming friends with the latter), Bishop went on to carve a distinctive voice in American poetry. A much more private poet than her Confessionalist friend Robert Lowell, Bishop's work focused on observations, typically of everyday events in foreign and rural environments, experiences juxtaposed to her background as an urban, educated, and wealthy individual.

Despite her world travels, Bishop was a New Englander (being born and eventually dying in Massachusetts) who returned to the region of her upbringing between her experiences abroad. Bishop lost both parents before age 5 (her father to Bright's disease, her mother to an institution) and was raised by upper-class grandparents who ensured her a life of independent wealth, allowing her to focus on her literary efforts after graduating from Vassar (Class of 1934) and to travel Europe and North Africa for approximately three years before residing in Key West for four years (“Elizabeth Bishop”). Involved in a relationship with architect Lota de Macedo Soares, Bishop visited and then remained in Brazil for 14 years, where she became influenced by the Mexican poet Octavio Paz and emerging Brazilian poets. After Soares' death in 1967, Bishop returned to the States, taking a teaching position at Harvard from 1970 to 1976.

Beginning with her first collection of poetry, *North & South* (1946), Bishop received critical praise early, cementing her reputation with a Pulitzer Prize in 1956 for her combined collection, *Poems: North & South/A Cold Spring*. Bishop went on to publish *Questions of Travel* (1956) and her *Complete Poems* won the National Book Award in 1970. In 1964, Bishop was granted the Fellowship of the Academy of American Poets and from 1966 to 1979 served as its Chancellor; during this time she published her final collection, *Geography III* (1976), being the first and only work by a woman to win the Neustadt International Prize for Literature. Bishop's work has been generally well-received, and Joseph Epstein offers the occasional exception, arguing in disappointment that Bishop arrives at no grand poetic theme--a charge that came at the height of her literary popularity, a moment Thomas Travisano called a "phenomenon" (both Epstein and Travisano published in 1995), as Bishop experienced a surge in academic popularity in the 1990s as analysis revisited Bishop the woman: her gender, her sexuality, her body (its lifetime of ill health and impact on her work, such as Millier on her use of alcohol), her issues with her mother, her travels and relationship with Brazil, and her sociopolitical views (which Mutlu Blasing, 1994, situated within a personally defined feminism). However, at the turn of the century there has been a return to Bishop's work itself, and this sensory project is situated within that context. Given the aims of the project, of particular interest are the critical perspectives which read Bishop as both a poet of exacting detail and visually centered.

Critical Consensus: Bishop as Visual Poet

Although later criticism of Bishop extended far beyond form into biography, her precise detailing is still a hallmark of her reputation and popularity. Bishop's poetic qualities were noted early on in critical examinations, notably by her eventual close friend, Robert Lowell, in response

to her first collection, *North & South*, and by the 1960s Bishop's body of work became a subject for academic exploration. In 1966, Nancy McNally noted that her work separated itself from contemporary poetry in that "it is not lyric in the usual sense, but 'descriptive'," with McNally focusing on attributes of Bishop's detailing: "It reports the minute but significant details of an object's nature or appearance either overlooked or ignored by the everyday observer, and clearly has its origin in the poet's own particularly keen perception" (189). How Bishop captures an "object's nature" in addition to its appearance may be found in the management of sensory detail. McNally also appreciates Bishop's detachment: "What sets her work apart from practically every variety of contemporary poetry is that she rejects the exhibition of her own personality in her poems in favor of the role of an impersonal but highly perceptive observer" (190). With Bishop, her ability to nearly write herself out of poems, or at least not be the vehicle within, allows much of her poetry's space to be occupied by descriptive details.

These details in turn flesh out Bishop's view for the reader, a view argued to be convincing. For example, McNally states that "her descriptive passages often seem accurate because they are expansive enough to insure clarity of detail. She almost always takes pains to describe even a passing object minutely . . . and such specific information increases immensely one's sense of the accuracy and exactitude of the description. Her constant precision in naming also enhances the illusion" (190). McNally adds that "her generally dispassionate, matter-of-fact tone contributes a good deal to the 'objective' effect" and "the most important factor in the precision of Miss Bishop's descriptive phrases is undoubtedly the remarkable visual clarity of their images" (190). Particularly for a sensory reading, that Bishop attempts to convey "accurate" and "objective" images (although not to the extent of earlier Imagist and Objectivist writers)

suggests that the poet did her best to transfer her experience to the reader through descriptive writing.

McNally, in line with future appreciations, focuses on Bishop's authentic capturings, as “Her images frequently attempt to represent as closely as possible the actual appearance, sound, or texture of what is being described rather than to interpret its significance” (191-92). But despite McNally's inclusion of sound and texture, she asserts that, “Miss Bishop's poetry is, in the most literal sense, a poetry of vision (i.e., of seeing with one's eyes); in positing a chiefly visual reality, it seems to imply a singular poetic epistemology--the necessary role of appearances in the comprehension of essential, non-visible realities” (McNally 191-92). This last assertion is a key aspect of the multi-sensory analysis--did Bishop posit “a chiefly visual reality”?

Other critics, such as Celia Bertin in 1976, have noted Bishop's ability to vividly transfer experiences: “I have never been to Brazil; but Elizabeth Bishop made me dream a great deal about that country, and I am quite sure that were I to go there, I should see it through her eyes. All those humble people are real to me” (16). In her assessment of Bishop, and echoing the detachment noted by McNally, Celia Bertin goes on to relate Bishop's light presence in her own works, where Bishop “relat[es] every aspect of a story which becomes at some point sentimental, melodramatic, crazy, with all the incoherence of real life. Keeping a distance, never losing her sense of humor, she makes us feel both the insanity and the gravity of this case of life and death in the context of a society anxious to protect its privileges. Her lucidity gives to each anecdotal element its true dimension” (16). Phrases such as “relating every aspect,” and terms such as “lucidity” and “true dimension” further recall McNally's appreciation for “accurate” and “objective” imagery, yet this focus does not limit Bishop's variety of vantage points.

In her 1982 article devoted to Bishop's use of sight, Bonnie Costello's "Vision and Mastery in Elizabeth Bishop" argues that the poet's rendering techniques resemble those of landscape painters, by looking particularly at two earlier and two later Bishop poems ("Brazil, January 1, 1502," "Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance," "The End of March," and "The Moose"). Costello noted Bishop's range in perspective, her willingness to come at a subject as necessary, as "Traditional representational landscape identifies reality with a single point of view, and provides the viewer with a feeling of mastery. Bishop manipulates perspective to disrupt this confidence in a variety of ways. Sometimes she simply parodies it, as when she imagines the world as seen by the Sandpiper or Crab" (363). Costello continues, but with an emphasis on Bishop's visual strategies: "Other times she will erase the illusion of being in the scene by taking a detached, aerial, often cinematic prospect from which hazard is enlarged and shelter shrunken. Such omniscience yields little security in the absence of an overarching order or compositional balance to which the eye can appeal" (363-64).

Mary Elkins (1983) further situates Bishop's own strategic perspective as positioning the writer as "seer": "The detail for which Bishop is so justly praised is a consequence of the act of seeing, the more than ordinary attention she pays to her object" (46). Using Bishop's "The Fish," Elkins further describes Bishop's perspective as typically halting (fixed, as in an instrument of observation), and in line with Darwin's scientific (visual) concentration: "Holding the fish, motion-less, frozen in time, she begins, like Darwin, her heroic observations, recording the details: "his brown skin," the presence of barnacles, of "tiny white sea lice," the seaweed hanging from him. The detail is ordinary. It can be seen with ordinary eyes. What is extraordinary is the concentration, the will to see" (46). With Bishop, critics tend to pull her imagery through the eye,

as if her authenticity is almost exclusively conveyed through her literal vision to the imaginative vision of the reader. This may be so, but applying a multi-sensory approach to a poet so appreciated for her sight and seeing may challenge this visual privileging assumption.

Richard Mullen (1982) makes the greatest leap regarding the visual quality of Bishop, by connecting her with Surrealist painting. He argues for Bishop's Surrealist inheritance and extends her reputation of visual expertise by comparing it to the visual art movement. Mullen examines Bishop's "The Monument," itself inspired by Surrealist artist Max Ernst's *Histoire Naturelle* collection, but notes its resemblance to Cubist sculpture as well:

The description of the box's visible features concentrates on the geometric properties of contiguous details. Its shape, angles, texture, slant and perspective are mentioned, much as one might describe the formal abstract elements of some twentieth-century sculpture. Indeed, the monument does resemble a piece of so-called junk sculpture in both its haphazard construction and mundane material, as described by the unappreciative second speaker: "It's piled-up boxes, outlined with shoddy fret-work, half-fallen off, cracked and unpainted. It looks old." It also resembles some Cubist sculpture because its intersecting geometric planes create a multifaceted surface which eliminates front, back and center. The monument is described following the line of sight—first bottom to top . . . and then vice versa . . . The emphasis on surface description in this first part of the part plays against the later speculations about its purpose. (67-68)

However, Mullen stops the comparison at the point of language play:

Bishop rejects the surrealists' attack on the conventions of language. Accordingly, she never employs the radical juxtaposition of verbal elements which permeates so much surrealist poetry. She does not break clauses, phrases or words into fragments; rather she stays within the confines of accepted linguistic and poetic conventions. In short, she uses syntax and grammar for her own needs rather than eliminating them as useless anachronisms. (71)

“The Monument” will be returned to in this project as it exemplifies both Bishop's visual detailing and her use of spacial direction. While Bishop pivots her command of transfer on language, rather than experimentation in poetic space, the sensory approach of this project will show that the placement and location of sensory diction presents the Bishop poem as a navigable space itself.

As noted above, at the turn of the last century, attention to Bishop returns to her work. Tina Barr (1999) explores Bishop's use of insects in her verse and Susan Rosenbaum (2005) explores Bishop as a miniaturist as “[t]he miniature had become Bishop's ticket into the realm of the grand: Bishop is now firmly in the canon, not in spite of, but because of, her interest in 'intimate, low-voiced, and delicate things'” (62). (Rosenbaum invokes here Bishop's own description of a miniature watercolorist.) Further, in mixing miniaturism with museum theory, Rosenbaum emphasizes a connection between ekphrasis and Bishop's work: “Bishop's *Geography III* may appear to be a textual collection, [however] Bishop uses the art of ekphrasis to elicit a 'visual' tour to accompany her verbal descriptions” (68), while Kathleen Spivack (2005) revisits early critics regarding Bishop's attempts at impartiality: “Historically she falls between

the 'impersonality' so admired in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and others of her early education; and the 'confessional' movement of her contemporary, Robert Lowell, and his group, who wrote directly about their personal lives. Bishop chose the 'middle way'" (496). Peggy Samuels (2006), in particular, returns to close analysis of Bishop's methods, understanding her poetry in terms of metaphor, an understanding that includes invocation of the senses beyond the traditional five: "The verse lines can run in waves, hold up objects, glitter, become charged or magnetic. The sound and duration of syllables and words, their weight and duration according to sense, the resonance of a metaphor all release in the liquid verse differing charges that create various kinds of force or movement and interact with one another" (312). However, Samuels' description of Bishop's verse is sensual, but it is not a sensory reading of Bishop's view within a poem.

As yet there have been no sensory explorations of Bishop's work resembling sensory treatments of other poets as by Erhardt-Siebold, de Ullmann, or Ruddick, or a sustained sensory analysis in any other guise. As detailed above, Bishop's critical reception since her very first collection and later expanding into academic explorations has positioned her as a poet of precise, detached observation who visually commands her sight into verse. Bishop, of course, can be read and interpreted in various ways, but consistent across her reception are the visual and experiential aspects of her work. In light of these attributes and in the absence any prior fully-realized sensory attention, Bishop's work is an ideal subject for sensory examination. Before building a sensory analysis approach that goes beyond synaesthetic aims and adequately explores Bishop's particular use of the senses, the question of *which* Bishop poems are to be analyzed requires some attention.

Corpus Under Review

Bishop spent years crafting her poems, and although her poetic production spanned her lifetime, we have only 110 poems. Regardless of her focus in any one poem, all words within were a part of the process, and at some point one must trust Bishop's judgment, trust the care and deliberation she placed into polishing her own work, work she was satisfied with enough to publish and later re-collect. In *The Complete Poems*, the opening publisher's note asserts "She would not have reprinted the seventeen poems written in her youth; she was too severe a critic of her own work," as could be said for the 11 "uncollected poems," collected for the first time after her death. And as critic William Pritchard notes, "*The Complete Poems* (1983) appeared after her death, and the unfinished poems and fragments (Edgar Allan Poe and the Juke-Box, 2006), welcomed by some, were strenuously condemned by Helen Vendler on the grounds that, considering Bishop's scrupulousness about what she published, she could not have looked favorably on resurrecting into print such unpublished items" (327). In trusting Bishop's own publication decisions, these poems as seemingly not good enough for Bishop's collections in her lifetime are not included here; therefore the sensory project examines the poems Elizabeth Bishop chose to have collected as representative of her voice and life's work in poetry. As the focus was on traditional poetry, the only other selective decision was the exclusion of her two prose poems, "Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics" and "The Hanging of the Mouse," bringing the number of examined poems to 84. The published Bishop corpus (as approved by Bishop) coded in this dissertation is comprised of the following collections as within the *Complete Poems* published in 1983: *North & South* (30 poems), *A Cold Spring* (16 poems), *Questions of Travel*

(19 poems), *Geography III* (9 poems), those uncollected until the 1965 *Complete Poems* (6 poems), and new poems included in the 1983 *Complete Poems* (4 poems).

Having moved through ancient, medieval, and modern conceptions of sense and the recent academic reclamation of the lower sensory detail, the 20th century poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, critically read as visually descriptive, presents as an ideal, initial corpus for a multi-sensory analysis, itself an expansion of synaesthetic coding beyond both transfer and the traditional senses in order to address the historical limitations of sensory analysis. The next chapter moves to build this multi-sensory approach as to be applied to Bishop's work.

CHAPTER THREE

BISHOP'S POETRY AS SUBJECT FOR MULTI-SENSORY ANALYSIS

Coding Bishop's Lexis through a Multi-Sensory Approach

In moving from the historical and critical backdrop of both sense itself and Bishop's appropriateness with that context, this chapter details the building of a multi-sensory approach as to be applied to Bishop's work--the work itself not only being the initial application of this analysis but impacting its shape as well. Having the 84 poems in hand, this chapter begins by considering the use of a Bishop concordance (Greenhalgh) and the distinction between "open" and "closed" class words and their identification as sensory diction (particularly those among the closed category). The chapter then moves into appropriating the coding schema of synaesthetic research as a foundational basis for the coding of the project, but one that then expands to include additional conceptions of sense, and then further from the synaesthetic coding model, as lettered coding (e.g., O = Optical/Vision) is replaced by color coding for more immediate identification of frequency, connections, and patterns in and across poetic lines and the poems themselves. The definitional aspects underlying the expansion are discussed and are both quantitatively and qualitatively applied to Bishop's "Filling Station" as an initial example of the project's multi-sensory analysis approach. The chapter ends with further coding examples and discussion regarding aspects of Bishop's work which informed final coding decisions.

Open and Closed Class Linguistic Distinctions and Considering Bishop's Word Frequency

In considering multi-sensory coding of Bishop's work, it is notable that adjectives and adverbs are typically assumed to be the primary attributor of detail and are typically synonymous with descriptive writing. Literary synaesthesia, in focusing on transfers along the traditional five

sense sensorium, primarily delves into the adjective and to a lesser extent the adverb. However, this project recognizes sensory details in words beyond adjectives and adverbs. For example, nouns are certainly descriptive. A writer conveys characterization in noting that a male antagonist dons a necklace; that the necklace sports a pendant adds further description without ever going beyond nouns; adding that the pendant worn by the antagonist is indeed a cross likely changes expectations and now propels characterization. The antagonist being changed to a *protagonist*, and the cross pendant to a cross tattoo, are adjustments whose consequences occur without ever venturing beyond nouns. Similarly with verbs, whether a horse walks, trots, canters, or gallops is descriptive of both the horse's state and its context (here, the casual to dramatic).

Borrowing a linguistic distinction, the above--adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and nouns--fall into the category “open class,” and are in contrast with the “closed” class category comprised of determiners, conjunctions, and pronouns:

The open class, consisting of the major lexical categories of noun, verb, and adjective, is so called because new vocabulary items may be freely added as the occasion demands. This class has a very large number of members, varying greatly in length and frequency of occurrence and normally ambiguous as to grammatical category (for example, “spring,” “felt,” and “cast” can each occur as either noun, verb, or adjective). By contrast, the closed class is a small, relatively fixed set of words consisting of the minor lexical categories of determiners, prepositions, quantifiers, and auxiliary elements . . . Vocabulary items are less frequently added to the closed class. (Zurif 308)

Open-class words are generally flexible and can openly absorb incoming vocabulary, whether it be from cultural evolution (“jazz”), foreign languages (“trek”), or technological advances (“email”), which are further open to producing other open-class parts of speech, such as “text” (noun), “texted” message (adjective), and “texting” (verb), with the latter having had the further creative adjustment of “sexting.” Open-class words representing new concepts and novel attributes can quickly be brought into a language, and within modern social media and the 24-hour news cycle, at times literally overnight (e.g., actress Gwyneth Paltrow's recent “conscious uncoupling” coining).

In contrast, the linguistic category “closed-class” encompasses the typically smaller but essential determiners, conjunctions, pronouns, and--particularly critical for this sensory project which argues for time and space codings--prepositions (or more inclusively, adpositions). Unlike the open-class, these words are nearly impervious to change, particularly sudden change as their evolution spans hundreds of years. This resistance is essentially the issue with English itself resisting the sudden incorporation of a convenient gender-neutral singular pronoun representing a person (i.e., without invoking the gendered pronouns: he, she, him, or her). However, precisely evident in the desire for a gender-neutral pronoun, closed-class words prove to be no less descriptive. Beyond linking open-class concepts, the closed-class capture a range of critical relationships and detail. To a child, whether a ball is blue or red may be far less important than whether it is “hers” or not; that dollar bills are torn and worn or newly printed and crisp is likely less important than whether they number 10 or 1,000; all the adjectival descriptors applicable to ones we unconditionally love are less important than whether they are “here” or “there.” Closed-class words capture time, distance, location, quantity, and ownership--for example and

respectively: now, far, here, few, hers. Although relatively finite, unnoticed and unappreciated, and not typically examined within the scope of literary diction, closed-class words contain meanings directly of interest to multi-sensory analysis. To examine how a poet transports, immerses, shares, and convinces, sensory analysis must delve between nouns, adjectives, and verbs; for this reason and for the purposes of this project, diction that captures time, distance, and location (the latter two collapsed as “spacial”) are included in the coding scheme--not for completeness nor whimsy, but rather as significant contributions to the poetic voice.

Working with Anne Merrill Greenhalgh's invaluable *A Concordance to Elizabeth Bishop's Poetry*, her alphabetized list of word frequencies was sifted through to produce a list of descending frequency for pre-study review (Appendix A). No instances below ten were included (therefore the list's descent ranges from 1103 to 10) resulting in a list of 370 words across all poetry found in *The Complete Poems, 1927-1979* (Greenhalgh's source material, minus translations). Although a main strategy of this sensory project is to primarily remain within stanzas and poems (to consider Bishop's word choices in the context of the individual works), attention to patterns across poetic line is also of interest in the effort to glean the general sensory strategies of the poet, perhaps even to the extent of arguing a Bishop sensorium. Below are the ten most frequently used words in Bishop:

1103 and

715 of

514 to

495 in

366 I

346 is

327 it

288 on

260 with

249 that

The list requires some immediate qualifications. The list is entirely closed-class words, but this is not to imply that Bishop is primarily a poet of what these invoke. Bishop may indeed be argued as a poet of location and orientation, but not on the basis of word frequency out of context. Of course, these are among the most frequent of word usages in English itself, compiled by linguists and found in high frequency word lists within language education and foreign language instruction. However, that Bishop is often an accessible poet may be evident here, and that here the calculated design of poetry matches the casual reader and writer's everyday output further situates her voice.

That “and” tops the list may be interesting as it typically sits around fifth, but this appears not a matter for sensory analysis. Here, a more relevant result is the 366 uses of “I” within the top five as it just comes in at fifth on the list, as “I” is often ranked around tenth in everyday written language (10th in the Oxford English Corpus (“The OEC”) and 11th in Davies and Gardner); “I” is more present than “is” (346) and “it” (327); this may be more notable in that these frequencies cross only 110 poems, resulting in an average of over 3 uses of “I” per poem. In contrast, as noted above, Bishop has been described as an intimate observational poet who seemingly writes her presence out of her own narrative; and although “I” does not suggest that the speaker and

author are one, its frequency does provide a more personal tone as to the sensory origin of the material.

Perusing down the larger list (Appendix A), other interesting frequencies that show informality and description are the reaching out to “you” at 188 (and “your” at 85), “me” at 81, and “my” at 165 (if added to “I,” self-referencing jumps to 612), the moving “so” at 81, the time-centering “now” at 61, and “sea” at 60. In part due to past conventions, “he” comes in at 226, “she” at 54; however “him” is at 55, “her” 70. There is “little” at 75 (or 122, if including “small” (38) and “tiny” (9)), versus its opposite at 52 (“big” (42) and “large” (10)). There are 66 “eyes” (83 with “eye” (17), along with 53 of “see” (vs. “ear” (less than 10) and “hear” (16)). Bishop's signature exclamation “Oh” is at 31 (or 38, if “O” is absorbed). Despite not being listed in the Appendix of 10 or more occurrences, even a single creative or unusual use of a word may be of interest (e.g., “a'dangled”), and these instances are not lost within the select poem by poem analysis.

As Greenhalgh has produced a high-quality concordance and since the project here is sifting through the minutiae which is sensory experience, the question arises: why not exclusively use Greenhalgh's gift to Bishop research? If the project's focus was not multi-sensory and not keeping to Bishop's poems whole in their examination, word frequencies alone invite interesting projects: Latinate vs. Germanic origins, syllable counts, past vs. present tenses, historical vs. immersive, invocations of nature (“bird/s” (40), “sky” (36), “tree/s” (32), “cloud/s” (30)), rural vs. urban (and blendings), use of animals (“bird/s” (40), “dog/s” (17), or “cat” (4)) or more concentrated themes such as her use of water: “sea” (60), “lake/s” (4), “rivers” (9), “riverboats” (1), “ocean” (2), “sand” (14), “stream/s” (7) “water/s” (65) and “waterfall/s” 9, or her use of

colors (“blue” (53), “black” (58), and “white” (90))--white being the first pure adjective, at 35th on the list).

However, given this project, there are at least three problems in overly relying on a frequency word list, at least in examining Bishop's poetry (or any poetry). First, there are the slight variations of root words, particularly in tense, such as “make” (22) and “made” (30) (equaling 52), or “has” (69) and “had” (65) (134 combined), or the multiple variations of “look” (37), with “looked” (16), “looking” (12), “looks” (12) (revising the total of “to look” to 40); there are also the contractions--“cannot” (14) and “can't” (also at 14), which exactly doubles the instances to 28, or which could be argued for continued nuance as formal vs. informal; there is the mostly insignificant parsing of “be” (108) and “being” (13), but the seemingly affirmative “are” (158) apparently overwhelms negation through “aren't” (3), but without context, how many of the “not” uses (102) accompany the occurrences of “are”? There are also the numerical variations of the root. Combining the the plural “trees” (19) with the singular “tree” (13) could be argued as a nearly synonymous invocation (at 32 occurrences) as could “bird” (17) and “birds” (23) (40 combined). Although these pluralizations typically don't change the meaning, more problematic are practical synonyms, which need to be accounted for (to be sifted for) when adding “oak/s” (6) and “maples” (3) when the theme of “tree” is explored.

Second, although these are all Bishop's words--which Bishop uses them? Do the frequencies change from an earlier to later Bishop? Do a significant number of instances fall into a few heavily themed, possibly aberrational poems? If specific words are concentrated in certain poems, is their repetition due to concentrated detail, rhythmic quality, or wordplay? Concentrations may defy general assumptions, as with Bishop's 23 uses of “fish” only two find

themselves within the well-known poem, “The Fish” (Greenhalgh records three, but this includes “fish-line”).

The third and perhaps the most daunting issue is multiple meanings (mostly homonyms, but occasionally homographs with differing pronunciations), such as “like” (194), either within a simile or in contrast to “love” (41), or the word “left” (28), either in contrast to “came” (15) or the directional “right” (24)--once each “right” is separated in contrast to “wrong” (8). These issues further warrant individually coding Bishop's work, and for this project, context at the level of the poetic line is critical in ascertaining sense usage. In formulation of the approach best suited to the project, one that incorporates, at a minimum, the poetic line was required. Discussed immediately below, the coding schema arrived at for this project was an appropriation of aspects from the synaesthetic model.

Multi-Sensory Analysis by Appropriating Synaesthetic Strategies

In regard to this project, the strength of synaesthetic research is primarily the organizing approach which has been used rather consistently across academics, as well as the inclusion of lower sensory diction as equally tracked and assessed. The model used by literary synaesthesia researchers to code and categorize the external senses is essentially:

O = Optical (Vision)

A = Auditory (Hearing)

N = Nasal/Olfactory (Smell)

G = Gustatory (Taste)

T = Tactile (Touch) (Ruddick 62-63)

Using this schema on the combination “loud color,” the word “loud” would be first coded as A (Aural), as it is fundamentally a sound word, but secondarily coded as O (Optical), as its metaphorical use in this instance pertains to sight. The end categorization would be A > O. The effectiveness in its original sensory realm has perhaps led to its borrowing; the intensity associated with “loud” has prompted its use metaphorically to likewise capture the intensity of visual brightness. “Loud” loses nothing in the transfer and actually gains (or maintains) flexibility as diction.

This appreciation for language and poetic use is the sole focus and main strength of synaesthetic study, however, it is also its limitation in regard to more inclusive and comprehensive sensory examination and appreciation. The use of “loud” as a transfer, that it travels, having a destination separate from its source, often makes it the only word of interest in a poetic line, at times even an entire poem. In a synaesthetic focus, only transfers are of interest to the synaesthetic researcher. In reading poetry, literary synaesthetic researchers only stop at sensory transfers, but there is no reason that one interested in all sensory words could not use the same method in a more inclusive way.

Despite this limited focus, the coding scheme is good one, and simply needs four points of extension to be used significantly toward a more comprehensive sensory application:

The first extension is to simply apply the schema to all uses, regardless of whether synaesthetic transfer is present. Therefore, an instance of “loud” would be acknowledged and coded as “A”/Aural even in the non-synaesthetic combination “loud music” where the adjective keeps to its source realm with no transfer to another destination; here “loud” itself is credited as a sensory word without any other conditions. This is not to say that synaesthetic transfer is of no

interest to a multi-sensory reading--it certainly is, particularly in any patterns of use (e.g., a poet who significantly employs transfers down the sensorium when invoking trauma). Rather, a multi-sensory reading includes the synaesthetic, but it is not limited by it.

The second extension is to go beyond the five external senses to include modern conceptions of the “internal” senses such as the senses of temperature and pain, both of which are represented in literature. For example, when a writer effectively transports an Alaskan reader to a Caribbean locale, language has impacted the sense of temperature. In his own synaesthetic research, de Ullmann extended into a sixth sense, separating from touch the concept of “heat” as “it seems to possess a certain measure of psychological autonomy which impressions of pain . . . do not command” (278); and while Ruddick perhaps is correct in dismissing the extension as “his [de Ullmann's] motives for doing so hardly justify this disruption of the traditional quintet” (63), here the extension (further expanded beyond heat by coding temperature itself), is warranted by the initial aims of the project, as well as by the project's findings. Similarly, when a reader seethes at a description of pain, the internal sense of pain has been stirred through language; this psychological/physiological connection is perhaps indicated by emotional pain often being conveyed through physical pain vocabulary (Eisenberger; Lieberman and Eisenberger). Therefore, diction used by poets to access these internal senses require identification when examining the complete sensory experience of a poem.

The third extension is to situate literary sensory analysis within the recent reclamation of lower sensory detail by social researchers, particularly those engaged in revisiting the importance of the lower senses as noted earlier. The project assumes a sensitivity to the classic lower senses of smell, taste, and touch, all within the context of sensory inclusion. This current sensory

research tends to be more sociological than literary, but it sets the stage for re-examining works (including poetry) without an exclusive focus on the higher senses involving sight and sound. The absence of smell, taste, and touch as serious artistic considerations has obstacles beyond the immediate cultural designation of “lower.” Francis Coleman notes that the lower senses tend to be viewed as “fleeting” sensations but argues that the lower senses can be beautiful aesthetically, particularly when separating complexity from aesthetics and in accepting more fleeting sensations as worthy of analysis. Similarly, this project offers opening literary sensory analysis to the numerous sensory details which go beyond the visuals of art and the aural of music.

The fourth and final extension is to borrow but not restrain the examination of poetry to scientific sensory definitions. Although we can find matches in literature for many sensations evidenced by neurological and physiological inquiry (such as temperature and pain), language itself seems to recognize, or at least conceptualize, sensations not focused on or even deemed as such by science. For example, there is neurological and physiological research and evidence for pain and hunger receptors, but little comparable evidence in pleasure or satiety receptors, which simply may be due to the internal senses monitoring homeostasis with greater attention to the detection of negative stimuli. However, in the culturally responsive evolution of language and literature, there is a sensory call to identify and convey more positive stimuli and states. And while it is scientifically questionable whether humans have an internal sense of navigation like other animals (e.g., birds), in literature there is the sense of direction, such as manifested in plot. This literary sense of direction allows for familiar patterns, along with the existence of twists which break with directional expectations. Therefore, as the reader may literally sense direction in writing, this sense of direction is not as pronounced physiologically. Direction is at times more

explicit, as in spacial prepositions, which do assist the reader in recreating the sensory environment as envisioned by the writer, despite their current relegation as outliers beyond the traditional five senses.

With these four extensions expanding 1) beyond synaesthesia, 2) beyond the traditional five external senses, 3) beyond the higher senses of sight and sound, and 4) beyond scientific definition, the multi-sensory analysis maintains its establishing links to both philosophical and physiological perspectives, but the analysis delves deeper as an explorative literary approach.

Taken together, the initial, extended coding schema was established:

- O = Optical (Vision)
- A = Auditory (Hearing)
- N = Nasal/Olfactory (Smell)
- G = Gustatory (Taste)
- T = Tactile (Touch)
- Pn = Pain
- Pl = Pleasure
- H = Hunger and/or thirst
- S = Satiety
- Te = Temperature
- D = Direction

This was an initial schema and open to adjustment given any findings within a poet's work. It was possible that a poet may engage in a sensation consistently and/or intensely enough to warrant consideration as a sense (see Bishop below for an initial possibility involving weight or

pressure). Although not a sense in itself, a locatable “openness” was frequent in Bishop and argued to impact sensory reading; as such it was provided a color label and coded accordingly. Conversely, a poet may rarely invoke other established senses, or do so within certain unconscious patterns or conscious strategies. Further, a poet's pattern may warrant a more refined sensual distinction, as in a poet who not only consistently invokes a sense of temperature, but invokes conceptions of “hot” much more often, or much more differently, than invoked “cold” conceptions. What is essentially being presented is that the analysis here is a descriptive act, that the poem itself dictates, and perhaps in instances defines, the sensations to be analyzed.

In practice, all of the poems have been coded according to the schema above, with the expanding of the schema if additional literary senses were suggested in the analysis. Emphasis was on the literary, rather than the linguistic, although open versus closed-class words were distinguished in arguing for the inclusion of the closed-class. Lines of poetry were typically captured to give context, but at times surrounding lines were required for clarification and evidence of sensory interpretation. Stanzas which best exemplify or share any found patterns were brought forth, along with sensory sketches when the entirety of a poem was addressed.

The selected poems (the bulk of Bishop's poetic work) were loaded into a word-processor (OpenOffice) in order to code sensory diction by color highlighting, therefore sight words were “Yellow,” sound words “Light Magenta,” and so on. The coding schema below leads with the sense captured, followed by the color used (and parenthetically, as labeled by the processing program). The coding is as follows:

Visual/Sight = **Yellow** (“Yellow”)

Auditory/Sound = **Magenta** (“Light Magenta”)

Olfactory/Smell = Violet (“Magenta 4”)

Gustatory/Taste = Red (“Light Red”)

Tactile/Touch = Blue (“Light Blue”)

Pain = Beige (“Orange 4”)

Pleasure = Light Pink (“Salmon”)

Hunger or Thirst = Dark Red (“Red 2”)

Satiety = Dark Green (“Green”)

Temperature = Gray (“Gray 20%”)

Time = Light Blue (“Chart 6”)

Spacial = Orange (“Chart 10”)

In addition, after an initial color coding run, the concept of “openness” in Bishop's poetry was put forth and coded accordingly:

Openness = Light Green (“Green 8”)

The lettered coding model used in synaesthesia, where only transfers are tracked and collected, was found to be problematic on the scale of multi-sensory analysis, particularly given the inclusion of an expanded sensorium (in the number and readability of abbreviations required). Color coding was also chosen over the synaesthetic practice of letter designations as colorization more immediately reveals sensory usage. Trials with color highlighting showed an immediate sensory picture emerge on tests poems and was found to facilitate comparisons across poems as well. Shades of gray were initially used but gradations beyond three or four were too difficult to differentiate. The eventual use of full color coding, once completed, allowed the sensory patterns

within each poem to be most readily revealed, navigated, and compared and contrasted, both within and across poems.

Once acclimated to the color designations, poems are more easily assessed for sensory presence, absence, and patterns, and the result is more pedagogically-friendly, both visually and in foregoing the need to literally read coding. The one complication was the inability to dually code diction which presented as having two possible sensory invocations; however, at least in Bishop, most sensory diction was discernible as to which sense was primarily served, and exceptions were manageable with greater context as to warrant the maintaining of color coding and its benefits.

Initial Coding Application: Bishop's "Filling Station"

Bishop's well-anthologized "Filling Station" makes for an ideal demonstration for the possibilities of a multi-sensory analysis as applied to her work, both in sensory coding quantitatively (the focus of Chapter Four) and sensory reading qualitatively (the focus of Chapter Five). The poem as first-person narrative relates a brief stop at a dirty, family-owned gas station. While the male workers attend to servicing the automobile, the female customer/speaker peruses station, put off by its dinginess and shocked in the discovery--through domestic touches--that the family also lives at the station. The poem becomes centered by the indirect encounter between the speaker and the lingering female presence of the domestic touches (e.g., a plant, a doily, and organized oil cans), and ends with the reflective line, "Somebody loves us all."

A number of traditional ways to read this poem come to mind: A historical reading might note the dated use of the term "filling station" itself, along with consideration of the times when both full-service and family-owned stations were more common, as well as people residing at

their place of business. Biographically, the voice and the author are one in the same, as Bishop recalls in an interview, and that she was moved to write the poem after such an experience. A gendered reading might note the roles of both the author and the “Somebody”--the contrasting stereotypes of feminine cleanliness and female hard labor, the two further juxtaposed as an urbanite put off by the exposed workings of male mechanical paid labor doubling as a residence and the absent Somebody who attempts to domesticate the station with furniture, doilies, and organization. There are also the males doing the mechanical labor, a paid labor. A socio-economic reading could return to the gender divisions but also expand to the class division of urban customer and rural worker, again with attention to the workplace/home, as well as the presence of comic books, which may touch on education and literacy, given the medium's reputation at the time and the absence of other reading material of the day, such as even a local newspaper.

Stepping back into the poem is where a sensory reading comes into play. Synaesthetically, Bishop uses “*saucy* sons” (G > A) and “*softly* say” (H > A) (emphases added; notice that both directions of source and destination move up the sensorium). But where, with these two instances alone, a synaesthetic reading would be done at this point, a sensory reading would consider much more of the vocabulary as of sensory interest. The sense of sight, as shown to be appreciated in Bishop, is focused on the building, the men, the domestic touches, and the dirt on all. Yet, although the reader is led visually by the speaker, the poem turns on what is not seen, what is only evidenced in the domestic touches. And in contrast, but still sensorially, there is an absence of touch coinciding with the tone of the speaker, emphasizing that this is a disgusting place. The touch of “Somebody” is not metaphorical; the poem is visually sleuthing through a world not safe to touch, deciphering and seeking out the feminine other who moves through and indeed

touches (puts down wicker, crochets, arranges cans, and, indeed, procreates with the Father whose ill-fitting “monkeysuit” cuts him under the arms). The women are separated by class, but also by experiences that come with the sense of touch.

Certainly there are primarily visual details of particular interest in a sensory reading. The near absence of color plays a major role in further distancing viewer from viewed; “[D]irty” through the descriptors “oil-soaked,” “oil-permeated,” and “black translucency” is the repeated visual, along with “greasy” and “grease-impregnated” (even the white doily is dimmed), the only bit of color being from 1950s era comic books, which were typically in garish primary and secondary colors. But importantly, in regard to individualizing sensory analysis and reading beyond sight, there is a heaviness to the poem possibly not noticed without attention to the sensory qualities of word choice. Rather than simply oily or even oil-covered, the *oil-soaked* surroundings and the father's “oil-soaked” suit suggest they are thick with oil; and there is the backdrop of a “cement” porch, behind tall 1950s pumps, and the furniture is “crushed” and grease-impregnated (literally heavy with grease and metaphorically pregnant in carrying another), while the doily is “big” and “heavy with grey crochet.” The lack of color adds to the heaviness, to the depressed, dingy state, reinforcing a sense of hopeless--how could one unearth from all this oil and grease once mired and immersed? Other than the quickness in the youth, referenced critically, the only lightness comes with the question marks, during the rise in intonation in the disbelief of residency and the curiosity at the feminine touches; and with the latter there is a resultant weight, given that these are apparently burdensome questions, asked almost in frustration. It is not until the very end with “high-strung automobiles” and the cans turned to “softly” speak that the heaviness eases (while “soft” is not necessarily “light,” here it

invokes whispering). And the ending, if read sentimentally, ends on a high note, the elevation of love above all else. This uplifting reading of the final lines contrasts with the weight of the prior stanzas, each augmenting the other. Bishop's "Filling Station" displays a sense of weight or pressure less appreciated and perhaps less discoverable if even a sensory application reads visuals as only visuals. This consideration of weight as sensory illustrates that each word in the 84 selected poems of Bishop has been considered in terms of sensory contribution. The project discusses Bishop's sensory diction in terms of sight words, sound words, smell words, taste words, and touch words in covering the traditional senses, and in terms of temperature, pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, satiety, time, and space diction when moving into the non-traditional senses.

Coding Definitions and Decisions in the Context of Bishop

These designations of sight words, sound words, and so on are according to their usage, as ascertained by their context. For example, the "Filling Station" usage of "saucy" is a taste word but the context is auditory, therefore it is designated a sound word. Critical to the project's coding, two concepts which are significant in differentiation are *exclusiveness* and *explicitness*. To distinguish the terms by way of example, visually-*exclusive* usage would include the literal use of colors, as color itself is not perceivable by hearing, smell, taste, and touch. For this project, exclusivity was found to be too limiting a concept to be used extensively, and although it is noted and discussed, it is the explicitness of usage that is primarily argued in regard to sensory designations in coding decisions; visually-*explicit* usage centers on one sense designation despite having the potential to be perceived by other senses; for example, although birds may be handled, heard, smelled (and tasted), and are therefore not visually-exclusive, that "Thirty or more

buzzards are drifting down, down, down” (“Florida”) may be an explicitly visual reference, as in the act of flying, the birds themselves are beyond the reach of other senses, unless sound is alluded to; however, even in the absence of explicit sound diction, an audible impetus to look up may be more likely, for example, with a passing formation of geese. Although elusive, explicitness may also be evident in concepts and vocabulary which are essentially classifications under a particular sense, such as “handsome” as a visual attribute. This explicitness is the ideal definition for uncomplicated coding; however, complications in coding are sensorially interesting, capture the possibility that diction at times invokes multiple senses, and most importantly are a reality when delving into language. In consideration that sensory diction under review may have more than one sensory invocation, explicitness as the primary designation was used instead of exclusiveness (although this is at times noted), and this is the logic behind the coding of one word and not another, and the logic of designating one word under a particular sense; words that initially appear accessible by two or more senses are examined further for one sensory designation, and that designation is contextual--how a word is used dictates its sense designation. Of the complications with designating diction under a particular sense (in establishing sensory explicitness), most were due to the technical overlapping of sight and touch potentials, i.e., when a visual detail can also be touched (and is therefore not visually-exclusive), but is either reasonably beyond touch (e.g., “sky”) or essentially a visual classification, such as the visual descriptor “hirsute,” then the coding was visual. But despite these moments, explicitness was an ideal most easily held to with sight in Bishop. Broader coding for smell, taste, and touch was utilized to capture otherwise lost moments of indirect lower sensory invocation, and instances of relaxing this definition of explicitness are noted and are points for

elaboration, both as indicative of particularly problematic coding decisions and as opportunities for insight into Bishop's use of sensory detail. In effect, the coding serves to aggressively challenge Bishop's reputation as visually dominant by restraining sight to primarily uses of explicitness while allowing potentially more expansive coding for all remaining senses--in other words, to give the lower senses a fighting chance to emerge from Bishop's poetry. Yet, given that Bishop's visual dominance shined despite this flexibility in coding, as will be shown, this approach only served to highlight the visual dominance of Bishop and further reveal the lack of lower sensory details in Bishop's work.

Continuing with "Filling Station," but now as an example of coding Bishop, of the poem's 179 words, only 14 are primarily "sight words" or visually-explicit. These thirteen include the literal usage of the colors "black," "gray," two uses of the word "color," and "translucency"; additionally, given their context, the words "disturbing," "over-all," "dim," "certain," and "note of [color]" provide visual information; for example, the translucency is visually "disturbing," the doily is visually "dim" and are therefore coded as visually-explicit, and the words coded throughout the poems have been designated by their usage. When Bishop modifies a sight word with "dim," in that context "dim" as well becomes a "sight word." Although in this poem the colors are literal (a pattern in Bishop), colors are free to be designated under any sense accordingly. The words highlighted below are those visually-explicit in their use or sight words in the context of this project.

Oh, but it is dirty!
--this little filling station,
oil-soaked, oil-permeated

to a disturbing, over-all

black translucency.

Be careful with that match!

The phrase “disturbing, over-all black translucency” is coded as visually-explicit, based on the visual quality of “translucency”; its modifiers, “disturbing, over-all, black,” are by extension all visual modifiers; whereas the descriptors “dirty,” “oil-soaked,” and “oil-permeated” are argued as not visually-explicit as these characteristics can be known non-visually, in this case by touch and smell, and are within reasonable proximity of the speaker. Granted, that the speaker is somewhat repulsed by the details (and unlikely to have touched anything, given the tone) argues for a visual reading in general, but specifically there is no evidence that the dirty and oil-saturated environment was not perceived through the nose, smell being a sense allowing for modest distance.

Father wears a dirty,
oil-soaked monkey suit
that cuts him under the arms,
and several quick and saucy
and greasy sons assist him
(it's a family filling station),
all quite thoroughly dirty.

In the above stanza, there are no essentially visually-explicit terms and exclusive usages. Again and in general, the details of this poem appear visually ascertained, particularly “cuts him under the arms” as it is nearly impossible to interpret this as the speaker gathering this information

through touch; however, the proximity of the parties allows for this possibility. Even “several” as an approximate number and “quick” can be accessed through sound, and there are no specific details which reveal how the speaker arrives at the knowledge that this is a “family filling station” run by “Father” and “sons”; it may be imagined that a surname graces a sign or that the younger workers resemble the lone older worker, which would be visual assumptions, but then the reader is free to imagine a verbal exchange of “dad” and “son” as well.

Do they live in the station?

It has a cement porch

behind the pumps, and on it

a set of crushed and grease-

impregnated wickerwork;

on the wicker sofa

a dirty dog, quite comfy.

Although a cement porch can be felt under foot, distance is read in the above stanza, in that the speaker is likely visually scanning rather than tactilely calculating “a set of crushed and grease-impregnated wickerwork” or petting the “dirty dog.” However, these experiences in themselves are not visually bound, and therefore not coded as essentially visually-explicit.

The effort here is to hold to visual explicitness. It is not to argue that scenes, in the absence of visual explicitness, are not reasonably visually ascertained. The distinction is made here initially--then found warranted throughout Bishop's work--as to do otherwise would be to code the entire poem, nearly every detail, as visual. Indeed, in origin this may be accurate--the speaker recorded the moment and its details visually--but, for purposes of this multi-sensory

study, the visual is restrained in order for other senses emerge--that no other senses emerge here (other than the verbal quality of the aforementioned “saucy”) both attests to the visual dominance of Bishop's poem here (and, to be shown, in her work in general) and demonstrates that the effort to hold coding to visual-explicitness does not, in Bishop's case, skew the work as non-visual.

Some comic books provide
the only **note of color**--
of **certain color**. They lie
upon a big **dim** doily
draping a taboret
(part of the set), beside
a big **hirsute** begonia.

The coding process requires attention to subtleties of use; for example, the term “hirsute” as hairy was initially not coded since the characteristic can be assessed via touch (and therefore not essentially visually-explicit in the characteristic it describes); however, although the characteristic of “hirsute” includes synonyms such as hairy, shaggy, bristly, and unshorn, “hirsute” itself has a visual connotation, one of visual identification rather than equally serviceable as a tactile description.

Why the extraneous plant?
Why the taboret?
Why, oh why, the doily?
(Embroidered in daisy stitch
with marguerites, I think,

and heavy with gray crochet.)

In the above stanza, the informed eye could translate into the sensitive hand with “Embroidered,” “daisy stitch,” “marguerites,” and “crochet.” However, “gray” is only accessible by sight.

Somebody embroidered the doily.

Somebody waters the plant,

or oils it, maybe. Somebody

arranges the rows of cans

so that they softly say:

ESSO--SO--SO--SO

to high-strung automobiles.

Somebody loves us all.

The apparent sound ending “softly say” is actually a personification of oil cans; while “softly” is at first glance a sound word (and synaesthetic: touch to sound), it modifies the metaphorical use of “say” as the oil can labels can only be read; and that they can only be read by the eye moves the “softly say: ESSO--SO--SO--SO” into the visual designation; no other senses are able to read the ESSO label and therefore perceive the effect of at least four cans organized to be orderly or pleasing to the eye. In considering the context of “say,” its designation as visual runs counter to a more automatic assumption--inaccurate--of sound quality had the project either ignored the context within the line or been dependent on concordance data.

That the remaining 165 words are not essentially visually-explicit means that they are free to be known, to be experienced by other senses. As noted above, vision is not required to know, experience, and assess “dirty,” as smell can do so as well. Smell and touch can perceive “oil-

soaked, oil-permeated,” therefore these words are open to other senses and not explicitly visual, unlike those surrounding the experience of “translucency” and literal color.

In terms of sense privileging and as an example of the above coding decisions--there are no other traditional senses explicitly present in the poem “Filling Station.” No touch, no smell, no taste. And yet there are very few visually-explicit words as well. Again, this is not to argue that “Filling Station,” given so few visual words, is not a “visual poem,” or, given that it contains no other traditional (sound, smell, taste, touch) sensory-explicit diction, that this is only a visual poem. Rather, it is an apparently visual poem constructed by very few visually-explicit details. And that it is a visual poem is understood by the familiar narrative context: a customer stops at a service station and surveys the scene; and we can assume visually surveys by the lack of other sensory applications and the need for at least one pathway of perspective. That the customer expresses disgust explains the lack of touch detail, although not smell given its ability to maintain distance. Taste would be unusual given the context. The lack of sound, the absolute silence--no exchanges noted, even in payment (assuming the passenger is alone)--serves to highlight the visual without directly referring to it throughout. This absence, as represented here in “Filling Station,” has been critical in formulating the coding definitions used in this project.

But also impacting the coding parameters is the acknowledgment that not all non-visual senses are absent from the poem, if senses beyond the traditional five are included, although they are limited in this particular work. Through the sense of time, the first stanza establishes the presentness of the experience with “is,” but while there are some spacial cues, they take the form of pointing (this, that, under, in, behind, on, upon, beside), as this is an object-heavy poem (the station, the grime, father, sons, dog, monkey suit, pumps, cement porch, wickerwork, comic

books, doily, hirsute begonia, taboret, oil cans, and Somebody). The poem works as a stack of nouns and their modifiers, as the captured moment is essentially about seemingly incongruent objects occupying the same space; this opposition allows for their shared existence to nearly speak for itself, although Bishop helps the customer's dilemma along with pleading questions. These questions are to be found throughout Bishop's work and have additionally shaped the coding.

Offered as a contrasting, multi-sensory example, and as demonstrating interplay between traditional and non-traditional senses, the ending lines of "A Cold Spring" are dense with sight, time, and spacial diction.

Beneath the light, against your white front door,
the smallest moths, like Chinese fans,
flatten themselves, silver and silver-gilt
over pale yellow, orange, or gray.
Now, from the thick grass, the fireflies
begin to rise:
up, then down, then up again:
lit on the ascending flight,
drifting simultaneously to the same height,
-exactly like the bubbles in champagne.
-Later on they rise much higher.
And your shadowy pastures will be able to offer

these particular glowing tributes

every evening now throughout the summer.

Although still providing location, the spacial cues are more concentrated and nuanced, at times capturing movement (rise, ascending) and comparison (rise much higher, same height). Time is invoked through basic descriptors (now, then, later) and the more complex (simultaneously), as well as by duration (throughout), and varying expanses of time (evening, summer). In the seventh line, space and time interact to create movement “up, then down, then up.” The sight words are mostly color-based, with “shadowy” and “glowing” being visually-explicit. The phrase “exactly like bubbles in champagne” was coded as sight-based due to its injection as a visual reference. Not only do sight, space, and time mix, it appears that they share nearly equal representation in these lines.

As Bishop tends to focus on sensory detail individually--in that subjects are described by sight, then by sound, it is difficult to find more numerous senses sharing space, at least beyond a few lines of momentary blending. In “The Prodigal”:

the sty

was plastered halfway up with glass-smooth dung.

Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts,

the pigs' eyes followed him, a cheerful stare--

even to the sow that always ate her young--

“Light-lashed” and “stare” are visually-explicit (and visually-exclusive) and “eyes,” as holding vision, are the sight words in this short stanza. Also at three instances are the spacial “halfway up” and “above,” and with “followed” coded as spacial as it indicates a change in location and

therefore space. All other sensory diction is, in these selected lines, alone in number but explicit within their own sense designation. The instance of “glass-smooth” is a tactile experience, “snouts” (similar to “eyes”) are the conduits of smell. “[A]lways” represents time, and “ate” involves the act of tasting (see following chapter on the collusion of taste and eating). Here 20 words are non-sensory-explicit while 10 contain sensory-explicit information. Sensory experience informs the lines but sense, however more varied, is not as dense as in the above “A Cold Spring” lines. The sensory packing within the ending stanza of “Varick Street” is unusual in Bishop, but illustrative of how various sensory diction may be tightly mingled:

Lights music of love
work on. The presses
print calendars
I suppose; the moons
make medicine
of confectionery. Our bed
shrinks from the soot
and hapless odors
hold us close.

“Lights” and “print” are visual, as is “presses” (the printing device invokes the visual). “Music” is an auditory invocation. “Shrinks from” indicates direction (one away from the soot). (A literal use of shrinks could also be read spacially as a change in the space occupied.) “Hapless odors” are olfactory and “hold” here is metaphorically tactile. The “on” within “work on” is the time continuation of work, and “calendars” track time. In isolation, the concept of “medicine” is not

taste-exclusive (eye drops, ear drops, nicotine patches, and nasal sprays route medicine through the other traditional sense gateways), but as coupled as an option (“or”) with “confectionery,” it takes on an explicitly oral quality.

Although the dense and varied sensory detail here is metaphorical, in closely examining the sensory quality of Bishop's poetry, her predominant strategy with sensory diction is to use it literally, which is about to be shown. In applying the coding system detailed in this chapter, the following chapter fully delves into Bishop's use of the senses in terms of frequencies, concentrations, and absences, and the general patterns and prevalence (through specific examples) of sensory diction within Bishop.

CHAPTER FOUR

BISHOP'S USE OF THE SENSES: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The previous chapter detailed the building of the multi-sensory coding system and ended with initial examples of coding as applied to Bishop's work. This chapter presents the findings of the coding corpus-wide and analyzes the coded patterns with respect to both the traditional and expanded concepts of sense in order to fully reveal Bishop's use of sensory diction. As this chapter focuses on coding and patterns, only individual lines and stanzas will be presented. In the next section, Chapter Five, select poems, each largely representative of certain sensory patterns, will be discussed as a whole.

In reading and coding Bishop for her use of the traditional senses, a word's categorization as primarily sight, sound, touch, scent, or taste was based on two factors: source and destination. "Source" and "destination" are from the synaesthetic practice (above) of identifying the sensory source of a sensory word and tracking its destination (a process of synaesthetic transfer); reiterating a standard example, "soft" is a touch word, but when modifying "music" its "destination" is sound. As the project is multi-sensory rather than exclusively synaesthetic, source is considered and discussed when notable (as will be shown, particularly in scraping for lower sensory uses), but the destination is of primary interest, and destination dictates the coding, although the coding is open to interpretation. This primary interest in destination is based on assessing Bishop's usage of sensory diction, the particular sense her usage primarily invokes. The privileging of destination is required to gauge to which sense sensory diction serves. Words were first coded by source for initial identification but then re-coded to reflect usage gleaned from context. It should be noted that, in Bishop, there were few instances of synaesthetic transfer, as

Bishop tends to maintain sensory words within their realms, even in metaphor. In the simile “a moustache / like a white spread-eagled sea gull” (“Manuelzinho”), while the sea gull is a metaphor for mustache, the color white as applied to the sea gull is at least literal (despite contained within a metaphor), sans any additional, symbolic use. Befitting a literary project, coding requires interpretation, and is not here presumed definitive.

Traditional Senses in Bishop

Sight

The coding complications of interpretation are immediately evident in the sensory diction most used by Bishop, sight. There were certainly problematic words in Bishop that, while not visually-explicit, due to context begged for a visual categorization: “sky,” unless moving through it in flight is in all practicality visual. “Ornamented” and “decorated” as found in Bishop were also coded as visual (in “Florida” and “The Riverman,” respectively). Words such as “light” required the context to be noted as visual (rather than light as in weight), while “hard” was consistently marked as tactile, with non-touch use marked further as synaesthetic or metaphorical. Another, “window” required the context as it may regulate scents and sounds as well as allow light (e.g., “A Miracle for Breakfast” and “Love Lies Sleeping”). A concept defined by the absence of another also weighted more words toward sensory coding; “disappeared” and “vanished” were marked as sight words (in “Sleeping Standing Up” and “Manuelzinho,” respectively), as an instance of “deaf” was noted as a sound word (in “Cootchie”). Additionally, adjectives were captured as visual when modifying a word itself designated as visual; so that adjectives became, as used, visual adjectives, as in “dim moonlight” (in “Manuelzinho”). Overall, most coding complications involved the extent to which explicitly visual words (e.g.,

“view”) argued for surrounding diction to be likewise coded. In “The Monument,” the use of “view[ing]” justifies interpreting (and coding) surrounding description as visual:

The monument is one-third set against

a sea; two-thirds against a sky.

The view is geared

(that is, the view's perspective)

so low there is no “far away,”

and we are far away within the view.

The explicitly visual use of “view” (here the third and final lines) and “view's perspective” justify otherwise touch vocabulary (“against” in first and second lines) as visual, as well situating the sea and sky as viewed, literally seen, both of which are otherwise open to other sensory experiences, such as hearing and touch. Although any sense may envelop neighboring diction, this effect is most evident in the visual focus Bishop's observations.

But even as the coding was generous in attributing visualness, Bishop typically limits her use of visually explicit detail; this can be seen in the most visually-explicit detail (sans metaphorical use): color. Bishop almost exclusively uses basic colors: primary and secondary, along with white, black, gray, and pink. There is one use of “emerald” describing moss, one “lavender,” two uses of “tan” (both in regard to sand). There is no mauve, no turquoise, no maroon, no burgundy; when gradations are needed, she typically compounds two basic colors, as in “purple-brown” (the other three purple uses apply to plant leaves). “Brazil, January 1, 1502” has a large number of colors (none repeat exactly), and their listing reveals Bishop's use: blue,

blue-green, olive, silver-gray, purple, yellow, “two yellows,” pink, rust red, greenish white, blue-white, pale-green, pure-colored, gray, hell-green, red.

There is an unusual use of black and red in “First Death in Nova Scotia” (examined in following chapter) which goes beyond functional, beyond color as surface, into the symbolic but is also playful in its obviousness--unusual in that her use of color is mostly literal. There is no green with envy or yellow as cowardice, so that, although color use is not invoked through cliché, there are no novel analogies as well. This is not to say that Bishop's use of color only has surface meaning; that a Bishop object be surfaced black may be only its exterior color, or it may be additionally symbolic (as white and red in “First Death in Nova Scotia”); however, most of her colors at a minimum have literal applications, whether or not they serve a dual purpose. It should be noted here that Bishop's tendency for literal color application is not a suggestion of inferior poetic strategy nor that purely metaphorical use of color is superior. Indeed, functional use and surface meaning reinforce Bishop's strategy of documenting the observable.

Bishop's color descriptions gravitate to certain colors, the most (in the selected poems) being white (77), black (48), blue (45), and green (44). However, she uses these colors somewhat frequently, and on Greenhalgh's frequency list “white” is the first word that is not a conjunction, preposition, or pronoun. Although blue and green each occur the same number of times, blue typically stands alone while green is often compounded for a more precise shade of green: gray-green, blue-green (2), green-gold, copper greens, pea-green, greenish-white, greenish white, pale-green, hell-green, pale green, grey-green, pale-green, bottle-green, and gray greens. As Bishop's color use is typically literal and generally does not cause coding complications, the focus here is to reveal how she used color. Moving to other colors, gray occurs next in frequency at 38, red at

35, with the next colors not until silver, pink, and yellow (at 19, 19, 17). Further, the majority of “light” references (culled from a few weight contexts) are visual, and there are nearly no metaphorical uses of “dark” in its 41 uses. As cautioned above, the literal strategies of Bishop are not highlighted here to suggest any limitation; on the contrary, her use of color has similarities to a painter's palette, where a few initial colors combine to produce a satisfying effect--an effect, at the minimum, literal in color.

Even a casual reading of Bishop reveals that she is primarily a poet of observation while closer reading reveals that this observation reads as through the eye. As noted above, critics have read in Bishop a distance from her subjects (not necessarily sterile, as Jeffrey Harrison attributes Bishop's seemingly innocent gaze strategically as “infant sight”), and, as this project will show, sight was her primary sensory usage, followed by the occasional incorporation of sound, but with the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch rarely invoked, and only then briefly; these latter three senses, being of the body, require a close proximity, and their absence is felt in the particular aspects Bishop details. Upon closer inspection, in poems that do not necessarily open or insist upon a visual reading, there eventually comes a visual string of detail that falls down through a poem, which reveals that surrounding detail as well, while not explicitly visual, has been visually gathered. In the opening line of “From the Country to the City,” “The long, long legs, / league-boots of land” is not explicitly or exclusively visual as length can be assessed by touch, even sound; however, the movement into consistent (nearly every line) visually-explicit description with “the lines that we drive on” suggests that even the technically debatable lines (i.e., their sensory source) can be assumed visual:

The long, long legs,
league-boots of land, that carry the city nowhere,
nowhere; the lines
that we drive on (stain-stripes on harlequin's
trousers, tights);
his tough trunk dressed in tatters, scribbled over with
nonsensical signs;
his shadowy, tall dunce-cap; and, best of all his
shows and sights,
his brain appears, throned in "fantastic triumph,"
and shines through his hat
with jeweled works at work at intermeshing crowns,
lame with lights.
As we approach, wickedest clown, your heart and head,
we can see that
glittering arrangement of your brain consists, now,
of mermaid-like,
seated, ravishing sirens, each waving her hand-mirror

Certain words are visual, and difficult to imagine accessing otherwise (stain-stripes, scribbled over, shadowy, sights, shines, lights, glittering) while others require adjacent words for proper coding. An isolated "nonsensical" could refer to any sense, but here it modifies the visual "signs" (in turn, itself not exclusively a sight invocation but for the modifying "scribbled over"). As well,

“appears, throned” is caught in a coding decision, as “throned” is not technically visual, yet here similar to “decorated” (typically visual), with “appears” visual in its root (but colloquially crosses senses); therefore, the visual context is assumed due to its location along a string of more clearly visual terms, and it is coded as a sight word. Yet, because of these strings, rather than despite them, Bishop's visual accounting is shown to be primarily--overwhelmingly--non-visual in its use of language to convey the realities and images she transfers to the page. Momentary bursts of visual detail, moments of concentrated, visually-explicit words, when highlighted, reveal what lies outside sight-based vocabulary, and what lies outside is the majority of the poem. This is not to argue that the absence of visual cues makes a poem non-visual, only that visual cues are not necessary to sustain a visual reading. A short “I see” or “I saw” (both found in Bishop) directly verifies that surrounding lines have visual origin; absent this directness, context can establish visual origin, albeit more indirectly, as in the above “throned”; and, unless challenged by the invocation of other senses (or that the speaker is an individual without sight), the larger context, such as the act of visiting a filling station (above) or fishing (below), reasonably allows the supposition that apparent visual details are indeed visual. While the coding for a sight word is based on explicitness--that a sight word only be accessed by sight, the following poem shows how a visual may be read as visual without explicit visual cues (without any explicit sight words).

“The Fish,” one of Bishop's most famous poems, captures the experience of hooking an impressive catch. Her poetic line essentially examines this fish, and in a poem averaging only 4-5 words per line, running seventy-six lines, the sole stanza itself resembles the fish in question,

being hung and sifted down through, but there are also great gaps of visual information. Here are the beginning lines:

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and **homely**.

Although this sets a visual stage for most readers, the only visual word is “homely.” Using the first line, there is nothing visually explicit about “I” or “caught” or “tremendous” or “fish,” alone or in combination; as there is nothing necessarily visual about “beside the boat” or “half out of water” or “corner of his mouth”; and so on with “hung a grunting weight” or “battered and venerable.” Imagine Bishop's poetry recited and the listener sifting through each line, each word, as if blindfolded to the visually explicit aspects--only “homely” would be difficult to assess and even more awkward to convey with any of the other traditional senses. Further down in the poem Bishop further unleashes several lines containing visual associations:

I thought of the coarse **white** flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,

the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.

The colors here are literal, and there are words “of the eye” (looked, eyes, irises, seen, lenses) and the visually explicit (shiny, tarnished); there are also creative substitutions for the elements of seeing (tinfoil, isinglass), as well as non-visual words which become visual in their modifying (dramatic, far larger, shallower, old scratched).

But the reader does not only begin seeing the fish upon hitting this thick string of visual words, just as the reader doesn't stop seeing the fish at breaks and gaps in visual information.

Below are lines toward the end of the poem:

and then I saw
that from his lower lip
- if you could call it a lip
grim, wet, and weaponlike,

hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.

Again, it is certainly a reasonable supposition that the speaker is visually examining the catch, but there are no sight-explicit details other than the two colors of green and black, and the visual interpretations of “grim” and “wavering,” the latter being particularly difficult to imagine non-visually in this context. The surprising last line is perhaps even augmented by color, as the final lines enter into “rainbow” then “orange” and end with the emotionally packed “--until everything was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!”

It is conceded that Bishop is approaching these details visually, however many parts recollection, however many parts creation. Yet the vocabulary itself, even set within a visual

telling, is not exclusively visual. Using again the blindfolded analogy, these details of the poem would account for the minority of the poem. This is not to argue that the loss would be inconsequential, indeed it may be critical to understanding (although most of Bishop could escape damage), but rather that Bishop is capturing more than the visual through visual observation. A stanza in “House Guest” is absent any specifically visual detail, yet:

Her own clothes give us pause,
but she's not a poor orphan.
She has a father, a mother,
and all that, and she's earning
quite well, and we're stuffing
her with fattening foods

That Bishop as visual observer writes her poetry primarily from non-visual vocabulary also can be seen in basic counts. An example of consistent fleshing out of the visual context, “At the Fishhouses” is a longer poem at 83 lines and 596 words, containing only 43 sight words--yet with less than 10% of the words occupying the poem as visual invocations, the poem as highlighted still looks to be a visual poem in part due to the string of visual details, although, as noted above, even the prefacing or otherwise injecting the act of sight directly (“see” or “saw”) can establish visuality. However situated, this low visually-explicit quotient may be present in other poets, other writers, or even prevalent in English itself, situating Bishop in the “norm,” but that Bishop's poems alone contain this pattern is of primary interest to understanding her own uses of sensory detail.

Sound

Next to sight vocabulary, sound words come in a distant second, and unlike sight, some poems have no sound words, no trace of auditory invocation in the diction. However, they are closer in frequency to sight words than they are to touch, scent, and taste combined, as these lower senses rarely register in Bishop's work. When sound is invoked, it typically involves multiple words, more clustered than instances of sight, and there is also the typical pattern of extending the aural effect for three lines:

One can **hear** their **crying, crying,**
the only **sound** there is
except for occasional **sighing**
as a large aquatic animal breathes. ("Large Bad Picture")

The above is often encountered with Bishop's use of sound: a few dedicated lines, involving various words resulting in a concentrated but momentary attentiveness to sound. Most uses are clearly auditory (hear, crying, sound, sighing), and although here sound ("sighing") is a consequence of "breathes," the breathing is broader than sound producing (similar to creaking due to walking, "creaking" being the only sound word), as breathing can be felt and viewed, and as breathing would continue whether or not audible; however, literal "sighing" can only be produced by breath (unlike creaking by, say, wind) and as all vocal sound requires breath, an argument could be made that they are inextricably linked, short of categorizing all vocal sound as breath, as then their distinctions become jeopardized.

Hear it falling on the ground,
hear, all around.

That is not a tearful **sound**,
beating, beating on the ground. (“Songs for a Colored Singer: IV”)

He was curious about me. He was interested in **music**;
like me a believer in total immersion,
so I used to **sing** him Baptist **hymns**.
I also **sang** (“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”)

The sea’s off somewhere, doing nothing. **Listen**.
An **expelled breath**. And **faint, faint, faint**
(or are you **hearing** things), the sandpipers’
heart-broken **cries**. (“Twelfth Morning; or What You Will”)

Here “breath” is the sound heard (opposed to the coding difficulty of “breathes”), and “expelled” serves to distinguish the particular sound of breath, as inhalation typically sounds different than exhalation.

The pet hen went chook-chook.

“Love should be put into action!”

screamed the old hermit.

Across the pond an **echo**

tried and tried to confirm it. (“Chemin de Fer”)

With “chook-chook” it should be noted that Bishop rarely uses onomatopoeia; there is only the “baa-baa-ing” and “peep-peep” in “The Burglar of Babylon,” the *shush, shush, shush* in

“Santarem,” and the unusually long “*Baa, baa, baa and shriek, shriek, shriek, / baa . . . shriek . . . baa . . .*” of “Crusoe in England.” As rare is the exclamation of sound (“Boom!” in “Love Lies Sleeping” or “*Cra-aack!*” in “Electrical Storm”). Much more frequent than imitating sounds is her use of dialogue, typically in quotation marks (and at times in italics, although this often indicates internal monologue). At times Bishop's quotation marked lines are clearly spoken storytelling, at other times inner dialogue. With quoted open dialogue, the sound words “say” and “said” are somewhat redundant (i.e., when one is sifting for sound usage), although “screamed” (as in “Chemin de Fer”) and similar add detail not necessarily captured by or within quotation marks. Here sound invocations are stacked in succession over five lines (Bishop's italics):

*--Never to have studied history in
the weak calligraphy of **songbirds'** cages.
--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: (“Questions of Travel”)*

Other than the beginning of a poem, Bishop will introduce sound at any point, as its occurrence may come at the start, middle, or end of a work (although only a few works invoke sound early on). Here she ends the otherwise very visual “Florida”:

The alligator, who has five distinct **calls**:
friendliness, love, mating, war, and a **warning--**

whimpers and speaks in the throat

of the Indian Princess.

The coding logic reveals itself, in the second line, as four of the five items are not in isolation sound terms, but here are situated as friendliness call, love call, mating call, and war call, while “warning” itself has a verbal quality (although not exclusively, as in a written or signed warning). In the third line, “throat” is not exclusively a sound conduit, but contextually it is here. These three ending lines detail sound directly. Below is an example of Bishop invoking sound indirectly, here primarily through roles:

From a magician’s midnight sleeve

the radio-singers

distribute all their love-songs

over the dew-wet lawns.

And like a fortune-teller’s

their marrow-piercing guesses are whatever you believe. (“Late Air”)

“Radio-singers” are inextricably linked (as “radio” and “singer” apart are) to sound, “distribute” is in part synonymous with “play,” and “love-songs” are sung (reinforcing “distribute” as partaking in sound--given the context of who is distributing and what is being distributed). Bishop connects this auditory act to “like a fortune-teller’s” (although the “fortune-teller” could stand auditorily alone, as do radio-singers) who speaks “marrow-piercing guesses.”

Unique for its equal representation of sight and sound, the thirty-six line “A Summer’s Dream” balances visual cues (blue, streaked, glittered, glistened, dark) with sound ones (listened, stammer, grumbling, grammar, audibly). Whereas the expectantly visual “View of the Capitol

from the Library of Congress,” after an initial string of sight invocations (light, lunette, blankly stares, white, wall-eyed), breaks into sound:

On the east steps the Air Force Band
in uniforms of Air Force blue
is playing hard and loud, but - queer -
the music doesn't quite come through.
It comes in snatches, dim then keen,
then mute, and yet there is no breeze.

And this carries (with: music, band's, music, brasses, *boom--boom*) for the remainder of the short poem. (Of note, the third line's abrupt “queer” alternatively may mean the occurrence was odd as “there is no breeze,” rather than the music itself, despite arriving in “snatches, dim then keen, / then mute.”)

Bishop often separates sound details from visual ones, resembling a turn-taking act. This may be a strategy of Bishop, similar to her pattern of attending to the visual details of one subject before moving to another. With injecting the aural, Bishop's switch to handling sound is typically brief but notable in its sudden concentration of surrounding auditory diction. It generally reads as if the poet has literally turned attention from describing her subject with one sense to another (whereas movements from sight to the lower senses, it will be shown, are injected so briefly as to barely register a change in sensory focus). There are however longer moments of sound injection. The long, 108 line “The Moose” is consistently visual until Bishop begins to share the exchanges of bus passengers, which includes their reactions to encountering a moose on the road; at this point Bishop's visual emphasis gives way to a swath of sound terms, all in addition to the mini-

dialogues (snores, sighs, auditory, creakings, noises, conversation, recognizable (in conversation), voices, talking, mentioned, cleared up (in conversation), “what he said, what she said,” pray (aloud), affirmative, half groan, acceptance, talking, talked, voice assures, exclaim in whispers, says, quiet, rolling his r's).

In the even longer, 48 stanza “Burglar of Babylon” sounds are strung throughout (say, said, say, hear, baa-baa-ing, hear, cry, shouted, sobbed, said, said, listening, sounds, cursed, heard, peep-peep, whistle, rattle, talked, hear, ear, heard, crying, barking and barking, sigh, and said). There are also 32 lines (approximately 8 stanzas) of quoted dialogue, of which only one of the above sound words listed sits within (an instance of “say”). Although there are 27 sound words to 37 visual, the poem has large areas of neither sense, and the “telling” form of the poem appears to highlight its spoken quality. Additionally, a questionable coding argument could be put forth that all words within quotes warrant an audio designation, both as “spoken” and as similar to the assumption of other Bishop poems being visual in a larger context despite scant visually-explicit cues (e.g., the speaker in “Filling Station” is obviously observing the detail, yet the reportage is not in visually-explicit language).

There are works in which specific visual cues are absent and sound is the only traditional sense present. “Manners” is a conversation that maintains its sound quality throughout the poem (unlike aforementioned “View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress” where the expectant visual becomes unseated by sounds of the Band). “Manners” has only one visual, “hid” (in the context of a face), and mixes dialogue with a few stand alone sound words, and one “Caw.” A very short poem, “Casabianca,” has only one traditional sense--sound--in the line “Love's the son / stood *stammering elocution*” (emphasis added). But the most aural poem of Bishop, in space

allowed and predominance, is her “Roosters” which consistently invokes sound throughout, and unlike most uses of sound that appear in concentrated spots, here she weaves her sights and sounds. As it illustrates sound throughout, “Roosters” is fully covered in the following section, Chapter Five.

Scent, Taste, and Touch

Bishop uses the traditional lower senses so minimally it is possible to practically show their every instance in Bishop's poetry. Indeed, her use of the lower senses is so minimal that the concept of explicitness was relaxed with scent, taste, and touch in order to capture indirect invocations that may otherwise be lost. Using an example (given in respective sections below) for each lower sense: while “fumes” may also be visual, the word was coded as scent when an olfactory reading was probable; while “feeds” (eats) may involve tactility, in referring to edibles or passage through the mouth the word was coded as taste; and while a “grab” may be viewable, it may be read as essentially tactile (i.e., a grab in the dark). Therefore, in order to capture these moments, explicitness was broadened to more readily consider primary use given the context. And despite this broadened definition, the coding of the lower senses remained minimal, attesting to the poverty of lower sensory detail in Bishop. Beginning with scent--or more accurately here the connotations that come with the term “smell”--Bishop uses the sense briefly and rarely, even more rarely lingering on it for more than a one word mention:

One can **smell** it turning to gas (“The Bight”)

The Tantramar marshes / and the **smell** of salt hay. (“The Moose”)

. . . the **smell** of hot coffee. (“A Miracle for Breakfast”)

no lights, a **smell of saltpetre**, (“Electrical Storm”)

The air **smells** so strong of codfish (“At the Fishhouses”)

The island **smelled** of goat and guano. (“Crusoe in England”)

The brown enormous **odor** he lived by (“The Prodigal”)

the **fragrant** bedstraw's incandescent stars, (flowerbed in “North Haven”)

and bleat and bleat, and **sniff** the air. (a goat in “Crusoe in England”)

It approaches; it **sniffs** at / the bus's hot hood. (“The Moose”)

sniffing and shivering, (“Manuelzinho”)

The last three (variations of “sniff”) invoke the act of smelling (or, in the last example, at least use of the nose). On a few occasions Bishop provides smell a bit more attention, and this extra space appears to better describe their unpleasantness, as in noting the above, one word invocations are mostly unpleasant or neutral, with “fragrant” being the only sure positive representation. In discussing factories along “Varick Street”:

Trying to breathe,
the elongated **nostrils**
haired with spikes
give off such **stenches**, too.

.....

Our bed
shrinks from the soot
and **hapless odors**
hold us close.

In the very ending lines of “The Moose”:

then there's a **dim**
smell of moose, an **acid**
smell of gasoline.

And while “Going to the Bakery” initially hints at a promising exception, the speaker takes in a stranger's wound in the most potent treatment of smell in Bishop:

Fumes of *cachaça* knock me over,
like **gas fumes** from an auto-crash.

Given this last example, two key passages in “Going to the Bakery” present a paradoxical use of smell--its absence in an environment where smell is reasonably expected to be cataloged (here, in detailing a bakery), and the arrival of olfactory description (once outside the bakery) as repugnant in detail, both of which are patterns in Bishop. Although smell comes late in the poem (the passages below are toward its end), the absence of smell is significant in its eventual arrival:

The bakery **lights** are **dim**. Beneath
our rationed electricity,
the round cakes **look** about to faint--
each turns up a **glazed white eye**.
The **gooey** tarts are **red** and sore.
Buy, buy, what shall I buy?

Note that in the introduction of the bakery, sight is the sense used; it is unclear if the viewing takes place inside or outside, the latter as one peering into the window of the bakery, but the slight anxiety of decision-making in the stanza ending, “Buy, buy, what shall I buy?” suggests the speaker is now inside the bakery and, again, taken with the sight of the baked goods.

Now flour is adulterated
with cornmeal, the loaves of bread
lie like yellow-fever victims
laid out in a crowded ward.

The baker, sickly too, suggests
the “milk rolls,” since they still are warm
and made with milk, he says. They feel
like a baby on the arm.

Here, in the above two stanzas, there are other senses slightly at play, most notably temperature in the “warm” milk rolls, a detail shared by the baker, and the milk rolls as tactile in that “They feel / like a baby on the arm,” a detail shared by the speaker. In the latter stanza, it is now clear the speaker, in verbal exchanges with the baker, is now inside, but although these sound invocations offer another sense presence, the “suggests” and “says” and the quotation marks surrounding “milk rolls” only function to establish dialogue (rather than as sound descriptions). Although the speaker has remarked on the sight of the “round cakes” with their “glazed white eye[s],” and the temperature (via the baker) and touch of the milk rolls, the visit produces no recording of smells, a sensory detail likely met upon entering or at least expected in describing a bakery and its products, particularly when these baked goods are desired.

Slightly further down the poem, the following passage has the speaker nearing home and tells of an encounter that ends with the introduction of olfactory detail.

In front of my apartment house
a black man sits in a black shade,

lifting his shirt to show a bandage

on his black, invisible side.

Fumes of *cachaça* knock me over,

like gas fumes from an auto-crash.

He speaks in perfect gibberish.

The bandage glares up, white and fresh.

There is the moment of sound in the line, “He speaks in perfect gibberish,” with “gibberish” being the main sound detail (although it could be argued that “speaks” suggests a description of volume and duration, as opposed to say “shouts” or “screams”) and the glare and freshness of the bandage as sight detail, but the real power comes from the intensity of the repugnant smell.

The smell of the alcohol, the *cachaça*, is such that it disorients a passerby (our speaker) which reminds one of “gas fumes,” and that the analogy of gas fumes is extended to emitting from “an auto-crash” serves to strengthen the negative interpretation of the moment; indeed, the intense olfactory reaction in contrast to the complete olfactory absence within the bakery itself suggests this instance of stark disparity may provide insight into Bishop beyond sensory renderings. Bishop's overt reaction to the injured man sets off a series of binaries dichotomizing the baked goods and the man on the street: enticing vs. repulsive, cooked (baked) vs. raw, order vs. disorder (“auto-crash” further signaling a wreck of a man), abundance vs. subsistence; in sum, a socioeconomic paradox where pastries are nestled and kept warm, sheltered and displayed, while a human sits alone in the street, his injuries concealed under a shirt. Color is dichotomized with each “glazed white eye” of the round cakes and the white implied in the milkiness of the rolls versus “a black man sits in a black shade” upon whom white becomes a fresh bandage,

which also looks “up” (as did the “glazed white eye[s],” also fresh). In hindsight, “the loaves of bread / lie like yellow-fever victims / laid out in a crowded ward” anticipate the man in the street, and that the “gooey tarts are red and sore” mirrors the man's injuries, he himself a showing his wounds as wares but speaking gibberish (similarly, “the baker, sickly too” but is one who “suggests” intelligibly). The ending stanza has Bishop attempting to momentarily, but ineffectively (in her mind), bridging the void: “I give him seven cents in *my* / terrific money, say “Good night” / from force of habit. Oh, mean habit! / Not one word more apt or bright?” Poets are often classifiers, and here Classen's olfactory symbolism (discussed above) appears in play, as Bishop's complete absence of smell detail within the bakery positions olfactory negation as positive, particularly in relation to consequences when smell is present. The poem is perhaps best representative of the “smell as neutral or negative” pattern throughout Bishop.

In returning to other poems, there is also “The Riverman,” although here Bishop borrows, as she prefaces the poem by explaining that the details are based on *Amazon Town* by Charles Wagley. Here the focus on smell is still in an unpleasant context--certainly with the tea, but the river smell seems to be an unhealthy symptom, along with coldness of the extremities and the overall “yellow” visage.

There is fine mud on my scalp
and I know from **smelling** my comb
that the river **smells** in my hair.

My hands and feet are cold.

I look yellow, my wife says,

and she brews me **stinking** teas

I throw out, behind her back.

That Bishop uses smell infrequently was surprising given the general critical consensus, noted above, that Bishop “reports the minute but significant details” (McNally 189) and has been argued a miniaturist (Rosenbaum 62); it may be that most scents available to Bishop did not register as significant, but although most criticism has noted her visual approach, the sense of smell, unlike taste and touch, does allow for distance, thus preserving the detachment for which Bishop is admired.

In moving to taste, it should be first noted that anyone attempting to communicate the experience of taste has a dearth of source material. Indeed, English (and most Western cultures) has only five sensory words to describe taste: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and the recently recognized umami. Bishop occasionally brings in drink and food into her poetry, but when she does she stops before describing how items actually taste. Here are two exceptions, the first from “At the Fishhouses,”

as if the water were a transmutation of fire

that **feeds** on stones and burns with a dark gray flame.

If you **tasted** it, it would first **taste bitter**,

then **briny**, then surely burn your **tongue**.

It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:

dark, **salt**, clear, moving, utterly free,

and the second from “Crusoe in England”:

I tried it, one by one, and hours apart.

Sub-acid, and not bad, no ill effects;
and so I made home-brew. I'd drink
the awful, fizzy, stinging stuff
that went straight to my head

Note that “tongue,” “salt,” “home-brew,” and “fizzy, stinging stuff” were coded as primarily taste invocations in the effort to capture Bishop's rare delving into taste. Although a tongue has language capabilities and is not as sense-bound as the eye (“eye” being almost exclusively coded as a sight-word), here tongue is primarily situated in the act of tasting. The coding of “salt,” is more problematic as salt itself is accessible to other senses and also slightly less bound than tongue with taste (e.g., salting a wound). Coding “home-brew” and “fizzy, stinging stuff” was based on their digestible nature and purpose. But these again are exceptions, despite being captured by a broader coding definition of primary use than of explicitness. Due to the cultural lack of taste-exclusive words, Bishop's poetry was not presumed to necessarily contain attempts to overly counter this with analogy or novel usage, but what is striking is the practical absence of taste itself. Typically, Bishop only indirectly invokes taste, here in drink:

. . . I sit on my balcony / with my feet up, and drink gallons of coffee.

(“A Miracle for Breakfast”)

Go drink your wine and go get tight (“Songs for a Colored Singer: II”)

And he drank a final beer. (“The Burglar of Babylon”)

But sometimes mornings after drinking bouts

(he hid the pints behind the two-by-fours), (“The Prodigal”)

Give her a dress, **a drink**, (“The House Guest”)

I’m bored, too, **drinking** my real **tea**, (“Crusoe in England”)

Note that “tight” above was coded as an effect of imbibed with wine, that “pints” as containing drink were coded as taste, and “a drink” itself was coded despite not actually being tasted. Unlike the concentration--and therefore the taste context--within “At the Fishhouses” and “Crusoe in England” shown above, these individual lines show that isolated associations with taste were coded in the attempt to capture even Bishop's indirect taste references. Further, in “Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance,”

The Englishwoman poured **tea**

.....

the little pockmarked prostitutes

balanced their **tea-trays** on their heads

the entrance of tea may assume its consumption and thereby its tasting, despite being out of view within the poem. Coding “tea-trays” is an example of devices related to taste being included in the overall analysis of taste in Bishop; however, “tea-tray” in the absence of the earlier “tea” would not be included, as the tray alone may not suggest the surrounding context of tea tasting.

And then in food itself, Bishop mentions but holds back from providing taste details:

You **starve**

.....

you **eat** boiled cabbage stalks. (“Manuelzinho”)

“Starve” was coded as the absence of food, a condition directly due to its absence (similarly, “blind” would assume the absence of sight, yet be coded as a sight reference as a concept defined

by sense negation). As the next examples show, Bishop does invoke food, but sans any taste detail:

. . . Had they thought poison
and left? or--remember--**eaten** them from the loaded trees?
("Some Dreams They Forgot")
Finish your **breakfast**. ("Arrival at Santos")
He was soaked with dew, and **hungry**, ("The Burglar of Babylon")
. . . and we're stuffing / her with **fattening foods**. ("House Guest")
Dreams were the worst. Of course I dreamed of **food** ("Crusoe in England")

The coding of "hungry" is similar to the "starve" discussed above, that food--and by extension here, taste--is invoked by its absence. In terms of the sensory project, although hunger (and thirst) is a sense initially situated as separate from taste in the coding, Bishop's limited taste usage directly impacted the coding of hunger and thirst, which were subsumed by the broader coding reaches provided the lower senses; hunger and thirst were then back-coded as taste invocations (although despite this appropriation, the attempt to code hunger and thirst warrants their discussion under the expanded sense section below).

While Bishop rarely injects both drink and food into the same poem, as in "Under the Window: Ouro Preto,"

The conversations are simple: about **food**,
.....
and give them **drinks** of water lovingly
.....

Donkeys agree, and dogs, and the neat little
bottle-green swallows dare to dip and **taste**.

.....

The seven ages of man are talkative
and soiled and **thirsty**.

here both eating (although a crumb) and drink occupy the same line:

We **licked up** the crumb and **swallowed** the coffee. (“A Miracle for Breakfast”)

and perhaps interestingly, cows are often the recipients of taste detail:

Poor, starving, dumb

or lowing creatures, never to **chew** the **cud**

or fill their **maws** again! (“From Trollope's Journal”)

The mother stopped lowing / and took a long time **eating** the after-birth,

(“A Cold Spring”)

even to the sow that always **ate** her young-- (“The Prodigal”)

Your cows **eats** a “poison grass” / and drops dead on the spot. (“Manuelzinho”)

A cow stood up in one, quite calm / **chewing her cud** while being ferried,

(“Santarem”)

But these are nearly exhaustive selections, and it is not difficult to randomly approach Bishop and move through numerous poems not finding a single hint of taste, even within the relaxed coding which captured the act of engaging with, possessing, or even referencing items people (and animals) consume or imbibe. Facing this abyss, tracking taste invocations went beyond related devices and into environments, although this posed some additional issues:

eating her dinner off the kitchen sink

while Lula ate hers off the kitchen table.

The skies were egg-white for the funeral (“Cootchie”)

“[K]itchen” may be a place for food, but this may be too similar to situating “living room” as invoking sight and sound as it may be expected to contain a television; “dinner” itself falls into labeling an action as automatically sensory. Notice that in poetic lines set in a kitchen, the only specific food reference is Bishop invoking eggs as a visual with “skies were egg-white.”

Returning to “The Riverman,” (and remembering it is a retold tale) it has the most references to smell and food:

We drank cachaça and smoked

the green cheroot.

.....

I don't eat fish any more.

There is fine mud on my scalp

and I know from smelling my comb

that the river smells in my hair.

My hands and feet are cold.

I look yellow, my wife says,

and she brews me stinking teas

I throw out, behind her back.

.....

The river breathes in salt
and breathes it out again,
and all is **sweetness** there
in the deep, enchanted silt.

.....

to find the pure **elixirs**.

.....

When the moon shines and the river
lies across the earth
and **sucks** it like a child,

That “The Riverman” has taste references strung down through its stanzas, similar to Bishop's use of visuals, extends experience of taste, as well as the space it occupies, more than Bishop's rare but concentrated uses first shown in this section. That the poem is retold by Bishop may explain this unusual use of a sense similar to her use of the visual. The last coding, “sucks,” further pushes the coding boundaries of taste, but this is a nursing infant metaphor rather than an attempt to code anything that enters the mouth. To note the boundaries in taste coding, there is the uncoded “stinking teas” which whether a literal or a metaphorical insult, is a smell invocation despite its proximity to drink: “and she brews me stinking teas.” Note that only “sweetness” lends itself taste most comfortably, yet it is a metaphorical use. The above examples have been primarily literal, but Bishop does utilize taste, at least in drink, although in isolated usage:

He took to **drink**. Yes. (to addiction) (“The Moose”)

. . . pure enough to **drink**. (a tear, in “The Man-Moth”)

He's **drinking** in the warm pink glow (“Songs for a Colored Singer: II”)

She has a little **drink** shop

.....

And men in the **drink** shop swore, (“The Burglar of Babylon”)

In the examples below, “true” taste is invoked, yet metaphorically:

The sad seamstress

who stays with us this month

is small and thin and **bitter**. (“House Guest”)

The light

grows richer; the fog,

shifting, **salty**, thin,

comes closing in.

.....

Why, why do we feel

(we all feel) this **sweet**

sensation of joy? (“The Moose”)

Beyond analogy, there are only five core words available in English to describe taste. Since Bishop, the separation of umami has become more commonly adopted in the West, although it has yet to describe anything but itself, unlike the everyday metaphorical uses of sweet, sour, salty, and bitter. But as these metaphorical uses are relatively clichéd (sweet as positive, the others as negative), the most striking aspect of their literal absence may be in relation to the everyday experiences Bishop often covers.

In contrast, the near literal absence of the final traditional sense, touch, is perhaps more interesting in its varied vocabulary, and, also in contrast to scent and taste, its limited literal use was expected given the general critical perspective that Bishop maintains a perceptible or suggested detachment from her subject matter. With touch, many uses are metaphorical. Here she describes light tactilely:

Moving from left to left, the light
is heavy on the Dome, and **coarse**

(“View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress”)

The yellow sun was ugly,

Like a raw egg on a plate--

Slick from the sea. (“The Burglar of Babylon”)

It's time for tea now; but the child

is watching the teakettle's small **hard** tears (“Sestina”)

Similar to Bishop's use of basic color terms, she uses basic descriptors of touch, such hard and soft, most often; however, with “hard” these are in the form of cliché (unlike color usage),

The art of losing isn't **hard** to master; (“One Art”)

hard to say (“Large Bad Picture”)

. . . it's **hard** / to tell them from the stars-- (“The Armadillo”)

playing **hard** and loud (“View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress”)

so that they **softly** say: (“Filling Station”)

and while her use of “soft” appears more devised, as in,

as **softly** as falling-stars come to their ends / at a point in the sky.

(“Quai' d'Orleans”)

in **soft** slow-motion (“Questions of Travel”)

use of soft can be more of a expanded cliché, as here the subject is essentially a soft whisper,

Some of the passengers

exclaim in whispers,

childishly, **softly**, (“The Moose”)

and here “uninvented” otherwise separates the use of soft music,

a **soft** uninvented music (“Invitation to Miss Marianne Moore”)

The explicit use of the word “touch” itself is primarily found metaphorically in Bishop, a finding again that fits her perception as a distanced observer:

and a **touch** familiar (“Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance”)

by the warm **touch**

of the warm breath, (“Songs for the Rainy Season”)

Carrying a bucket along a slimy board,

he felt the bats' uncertain staggering flight,

his shuddering insights, beyond his control,

touching him. (“The Prodigal”)

In “The Prodigal,” although bats are in proximity in “uncertain staggering flight,” it is the “shuddering insights” which touch. And here Bishop's sound does the touching:

Entering the Narrows at St. Johns

the **touching** bleat of goats reached to the ship

(“Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance”)

While in “Crusoe in England,” Bishop imbeds touch reality within metaphor:

All the hemisphere’s
left-over clouds arrived and hung
above the craters--their parched throats
were hot to **touch**.

The craters are indeed hot to touch, but here the sense is used within the craters' metaphorical “parched throats,” the suggested dryness of “parched” augmented by “hot.” This has been noted above, and now seen with touch, how sense metaphors in Bishop are often literal within the constructed reality of the metaphor. When Bishop does leave the basic words of hard, soft, and touch, the results are perhaps interesting:

now draw us into daylight in our beds;
and clear away what **presses** on the brain: (“Love Lies Sleeping”)
prodding me from desperate sleep. (“The Weed”)
blurs further, **blunts, softens**,

(in regard to a question, in “Faustina, or Rock Roses”)

These three uses: “presses,” “prodding,” and “blunts, softens,” similar to the touching “shuddering insights” above, are all psychological. And while most variations of metaphorical touch beyond hard and soft are not repeated across the poems, here “cling” is revisited by Bishop:

but they **cling** and spread like lichen, (“The Burglar of Babylon”)
and the lint / of the waterfalls **cling**, (“Song for the Rainy Season”)

As noted at the beginning of this section, although a literal sense of touch by Bishop was expected, her limited metaphorical use was not. Even metaphorically, touch does not significantly factor into Bishop's poetic voice:

An open, **gritty**, marble trough, carved solid

(“Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance”)

I thought of the **coarse** white flesh

packed in like feathers, (“The Fish”)

that bore **sharp** blades around its wheels. (“Wading at Wellfleet”)

hairy, **scratchy**, splintery; (woods, in “The Moose”)

Note that the above are all rough uses of the tactile sense. Bishop does use softer tactile imagery (below) but the rougher uses, especially if the uses of hard below are included, slant her non-metaphorical touch invocation to more stern accounts. As with the metaphorical uses of hard and soft, the examples below show hard at times within cliché, at times not, but both instances are close to their subjects, so that hard as a modifier sits close to its subject, resulting in an abrupt, literally hard use:

and **hard** as stucco. (“Santarem”)

hard as nails (“Brazil, January 1, 1502”)

hard as diamonds (“The Unbeliever”)

drawn from the cold **hard** mouth (“At the Fishhouses”)

Each man received one rather **hard** crumb, (“A Miracle for Breakfast”)

The uses of soft are more separated from their subjects, requiring more reading and consideration to connect, resulting in fuller, more expansive imagery, not unlike the fullness of soft itself:

The hills grow **softer**. Tufts of long grass show
where each cow-flop lies. (“A Cold Spring”)
Between us float a few
big, **soft**, pale-blue,
sluggish fireflies,
the jellyfish of the air . . . (“Manuelzinho”)
and then a baby rabbit jumped out,
short-eared, to our surprise.
So **soft!**--a handful of **intangible ash**
with fixed, ignited eyes. (“The Armadillo”)

Soft requires more context, as the object modified is not with as quickly as within Bishop's hard touch usage. The surrounding lines are required to ascertain the context, not just for this analysis, but for grasping the imagery itself. However, though similar to soft in its opposition to roughness, “smoothness” is used more than once by Bishop, the term is situated close to its source:

like women feeling for the **smoothness** of yard-goods. (“The Map”)
. . . the sty / was plastered halfway up with **glass-smooth** dung. (“The Prodigal”)

And while these touch invocations exist, like the other lower senses covered above, they find limited use in Bishop, and efforts were made to extend the coding to not lose more suggested moments of tactile imagery. Unlike sight/eye, sound/ear, scent/nose, and taste/tongue, the sense of touch has no definite location (other than the skin, in a traditional sense), but often is invoked in the hands. Coding touch was expanded to include words where touch by the hand appeared

necessary. A problem with this becomes obvious when moving into references for “hold” and “held” as these may be done by the arms, so that touch begins to be seen in “lies” and “sits” and similar, as these invoke the body itself coming into contact. Therefore there was no expansion beyond selective intense variations of “hold.”

her bowsprit seemed to **touch** the church (“Santarem”)

The brook **feels** for the stair. (“Sunday, 4 A.M.”)

We can **stroke** these lovely bays (“The Map”)

and his hands can **clasp** one / another. (“The Gentleman of Shalott”)

They flash again. No. They are vibrations of the tuning-fork

you **hold** and strike (“From the Country to the City”)

and a weak mailed fist

clenched *ignorant against the sky!* (original italics; “The Armadillo”)

But how could Arthur go,

clutching his tiny lily, (“First Death in Nova Scotia”)

I’d **grab** his beard and look at him. (a goat’s beard, in “Crusoe in England”)

numbed our faces on one side (“The End of March”)

There are two, more notable uses of touch: the momentary interaction among family she witnesses during a bus ride, the other her own connection with family through “held” (although the “held” here is metaphorical and only registers as touch with the expanded coding):

a lone traveller gives

kisses and **embraces**

to seven relatives

and a collie supervises (“The Moose”)

“[K]isses” as well involves touch, the only other references being the metaphorical “The face is pale / that tried the puzzle of their prison / and solved it with an unexpected kiss” (“Four Poems/II: Rain Towards Morning”) and the recollection of another's experience “years ago, you told me it was here / (in 1932?) you first 'discovered *girls*' / and learned to sail, and learned to kiss” (“North Haven”). In all three instances the speaker observes, but the “held” below, although less intimate than a kiss or embrace, metaphorically touches deeper in the recognition of a connection:

What similarities

boots, hands, the family voice

I felt in my throat, or even

the *National Geographic*

and those awful hanging breasts

held us all together

or made us all just one? (“In The Waiting Room”)

As the above shows, despite stretching the coding designations to capture more touch related moments, Bishop scarcely uses touch. Unlike her limited use of scent and taste, this only occasional use of touch was expected, although with the ratio of literal/metaphorical use being unknown at the onset of this project. McNally was shown above to attribute to Bishop “the role of an impersonal but highly perceptive observer,” while Bertin described her approach as “[k]eeping a distance,” and as Costello situates her as at times “taking a detached, aerial, often

cinematic” view, and therefore the finding is not surprising. Bishop appears to not feel the need to fill the void created by distanced observation, to not imagine or describe from afar what surfaces may actually feel like.

Summing the Traditional Five in Bishop

As shown above, Bishop primarily uses sight-based diction to illustrate her poetry, and the next most common sense, although relatively sparse in her work, is the expression of sound. A distant and approximate tie for third would be all three lower senses: smell, taste, and touch. With taste, twice does Bishop comment on the actual sense; all other references to taste are implied through the mention of drink, food, and similar terms, or the references were metaphorical; indeed, there is only one instance each of “bitter,” “salty,” and “sweet” and all are metaphorical. With touch, beyond the approximate dozen instances of true touch sensation, touch was coded when even the act of touching with the hand was evident, to the point of including “clasp” and “held,” and all other uses were metaphorical. With smell there was no purely metaphorical use, and the literal conveyed either an unpleasant or neutral assessment (this final aspect was more interpretable with taste and touch). Whether in frequency or true detail, the representation of these lower senses as a whole does not equal the even inconsistent use of sound, despite that their use was augmented by generous coding considerations. Bishop's only occasional and limited use of the lower senses may match poetic, literary, or colloquial patterns (this author is unaware of any literary, linguistic, or sociological baselines), but the incoming expectation, perhaps unfair, was that Bishop “reports the minute but significant details of an object's nature or appearance either overlooked or ignored by the everyday observer” (McNally 189).

Bishop's is not an intimate poetry in regard to the traditional senses, as intimacy is what the lower senses provide. Touch, scent, and taste are of the body, and Bishop's primary use of the visual has her at once present yet removed. As shown earlier, critics have commented on this but the distance is within the word usage itself. For all her travels and residences, there is almost no poetic documentation of the beauty or ugliness of textures, scents, and tastes. This does not suggest that her poetry is necessarily lacking, sensually underdeveloped for her purposes, or even unreasonably incomplete in moments of description. The transferring of experience requires choices and priorities, and poetry is no different. However, this lack of significant lower sensory detail does challenge the critical view that Bishop offers something close to experience itself. In reevaluating her reception, her poetry has been read critically as richly descriptive--yet when considering the intimacy of experience only afforded by the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch, this level of description is bare when stripped of lower sensory detail. Given her varied life experiences both at home and abroad, it appears that the traditional lower senses were simply not in her poetic voice.

Yet, Bishop's sensory proportions mirror modern society's, or at least the American culture she occupied. Earlier in this project it was discussed how the five senses have had, since ancient Western times, an internal privileging order, which despite momentary exceptions, has been argued to hold to this day: sight then sound as the higher senses; smell, taste, touch as lower three, and more malleable in rank (within the designation of lower) given immediate circumstances. In the last century, technology has mirrored sensory priorities. Advances aimed at augmenting both visual and auditory experiences have propelled silent film to online streaming and radio to MP3, all with attention to augmentation of experience (in vividness, color, depth,

immersion, personalization). In contrast, advances in the lower senses have been minimal, with cutting edge ranging from better tasting sugar-free, or fat-free, or gluten-free foodstuffs to bio-sensory prosthetics, although both of these examples are about maintaining a particular level functioning rather than augmentation. Today's sensory augmentation matches the ancient privileging order. Bishop's use of the traditional five senses matches this order as well.

Contrary to any argument for sensory “completeness” or balance, Bishop's lack of lower sensory detail does not automatically suggest that her voice is less authentic, less relatable. To give equal weight, yet one disproportionate to everyday life, would in effect privilege the senses in an unusual way, perhaps even giving an artificial quality to her work had her subject matter remained the same. While there is certainly something to be gained in greater appreciation of our neglected senses, her infrequent use of the lower senses mirrors recent cultural reality as attended to and scribed. Since early on in her poetry, critics have commented on her precision in capturing realities, that “[h]er images frequently attempt to represent as closely as possible the actual appearance, sound, or texture of what is being described” (McNally 191, in 1966). But, given the sensory analysis here, this inclusion of “texture” reads as a deeper visual understanding--if we *look* closely enough we may see the texture, even imagine knowing it--rather than texture as truly tactile and intimate (and perhaps truly authentic or at least challenging authenticity in its absence). Yet, these proportions may argue why she is actually read as authentic or convincing in her descriptions; she captures what many capture, ignores what many ignore. Bishop may have stopped to smell the roses, but she did so visually. For Bishop, particularly as a harsh self-critic, this visual level of understanding was satisfying in rendering works to be shared and published, and her corpus certainly has been satisfying for casual readers, students, and critics alike; but to

read her as capturing something approaching the essence and intimacy of common experience may be critically overreaching in the face of multi-sensory analysis.

Non-Traditional Senses in Bishop

Turning to the non-traditional or expanded senses of temperature, pain, pleasure, hunger/thirst, satiety, and direction (now divided into space and time), the initial exploratory categories (proposed in the second chapter) produced varied results. Instances of pain, though sparse, were not difficult to locate through diction, but pleasure proved more difficult, as did hunger/thirst and satiety (although these latter were linked with the limited use of traditional sense of taste). In Bishop, the sense of temperature, although limited in range, and the senses of space and time presented themselves more fully for analysis.

Temperature

Bishop's use of temperature is similar to her use of basic color; she typically uses basic temperature terminology rather than variations (e.g., "hot" rather than "humid"), as in "red as a red-hot wire" ("Brazil, January 1, 1502") and "hot black stove" ("Sestina") (here the basic colors couple with the basic temperature of hot). Regarding frequency, "cold" has 29 uses with some variations (cool 2, frost 2, chill 2, icy 2, ice 4 (one metaphoric), froze/n 4, winter 6, and snow 14 (one metaphoric)), while "hot" sits at only at 7 and one "scorch," one "tropical." Perhaps interesting, "burn" and its variations (burned, burnt, burning) numbered 21. And this is exhaustive; there is no torrid, humid, scalding or freezing, frigid. Unlike "hot" and "cold" and their variants (only in "The Weed" is a heart "cold"), "warm" at 9 is more often used metaphorically, as in "warm pink glow" ("Songs for a Colored Singer: II") (again, the combination of basic color and temperature). Seasons invoked both time and temperature with

“Winter” 6, but no “Fall” or “Autumn” references, “Summer” 8, and “Spring” 5--unlike the greater use of colder temperature detail, warmer seasons are more specifically noted. This last apparently disparate usage of temperature to the seasons is perhaps interesting as Bishop spent formative years (both personally and poetically) in two opposing climates, New England and Brazil, but specifically noting the seasons may be inconsequential as Bishop begins “Sestina” with “September falls on the house” and a dog “rushes in circles in the fallen leaves” in “Five Flights Up.”

Pain (and Pleasure)

Regarding the sense of pain, Bishop shows an infrequent and literal use, and even more narrowly toward physical pain: “The visitor is embarrassed / not by pain nor age” (“Faustina, or Rock Roses”); “Suddenly, from inside, / came an *oh!* of pain . . . a cry of pain” (“In the Waiting Room”). Even synonymous uses are ground in physical discomfort: “. . . falls back scared but quite unhurt” (“The Man-Moth”), “When my mother combs my hair it hurts” (“Under the Window: Ouro Preto”), “I still can’t shake / them from my ears; they’re hurting now” (“Crusoe in England”), “suffers our uses and abuses” (“Anaphora”), “think of him as uninjured, barely disturbed” (“Little Exercise”), and “Th’effluvium / made that damned anthrax on my forehead throb” (“From Trollope’s Journal”). A personification within a simile experiences “injuries” (a pond in “Chemin de Fer”) and there is the metaphorical “one tear, his only possession, like the bee’s sting, slips” (“The Man-Moth”). There is an instance of Bishop lingering for more than with a passing word:

If you should dip your hand in,
your wrist would **ache** immediately,

your bones would begin to **ache** and your hand would **burn**
as if the water were a transmutation of fire
that feeds on stones and burns with a dark gray flame.
If you tasted it, it would first taste bitter,
then briny, then surely **burn** your tongue. (“At the Fishhouses”)

And the rarity of this sustained focus highlights the absence of Bishop's attention to pain. Of the 21 occurrences of “burn” noted above in temperature, the above stanza contains the only two related to pain (otherwise, inanimates in Bishop incinerate). As done with the traditional lower senses, an expanded coding search for even emotional pain, such as “sad” produces only one human application (and only a handful of otherwise personified uses), the first line, “The sad seamstress” in the “House Guest,” ironically an account where only apathy is shown to the woman. On rare occasion does Bishop label emotional pain: “But behind the counter his auntie / Wiped her eyes in grief” (“The Burglar of Babylon”). There's the dissatisfaction of Crusoe in “Crusoe in England”: “Well, I had fifty-two / miserable, small volcanoes I could climb . . . One billy-goat would stand on the volcano/ I'd christened *Mont d'Espoir* or *Mount Despair* . . . a miserable philosophy” and “that tells the time / of the wretched man / that lies in the house of Bedlam” (“Visits to St. Elizabeths”), but “miserable” and “wretched” perhaps pull too far from any arguable pain (physical or emotional); regardless, these examples are rare moments of Bishop labeling pain other than of the body.

Possibly not evident in the above, particularly given the number of examples, is a limitation of the coding method regarding pain. This is more clear in the other half of the dichotomy, pleasure. In the coding being done here, pleasure is less evident in Bishop's

vocabulary than pain; there is a near absence of words directly related to pleasure (2 “bliss,” 2 “joy,” 1 “luxury,” and no “satisfaction,” “contentment,” “comfort,” “thrill” or their variants); of the 180 occurrences of “like” only 7 are not attached to simile; and although “love” is not necessarily pleasurable, Bishop uses it positively in most of its 31 occurrences. Despite this last number, and unlike the limited use of the traditional lower senses, the coding method shortchanges Bishop's injection of this sense (e.g., the joy and wonder in “The Fish” elude sensory coding). At times, what Bishop or the poem's speaker found pleasurable or even pleasing enters into notions of attraction and even beauty, concepts far less tethered to locatable diction. As Bishop typically does not invoke pleasure vocabulary, isolating diction in the form of sensory coding is a limitation in tracking this sense, at least across the work of Bishop.

Similar to Bishop implying a visual stage by context (detailed despite distance) or by including a solitary, but key, sight word (such as “view”), pleasure can be “sensed” in Bishop but through comprehension of contexts rather than specific sensory diction. For example, in “The Fish,” an auto-biographical account of an impressive catch, Bishop's pleasure is palatable; or at least with readings beyond the initial that keep the ending (“until everything / was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!”) in mind. Although an initial reading may detect fascination in her attentiveness, there is little preparation for the crescendo of the beaming final lines. There is no indication throughout the poem (including no pleasure diction) that the close examination of this sorrowful specimen is building toward a celebratory moment. On the contrary, there is very little diction that even indicates approval. Directly expressed admiration is immediately countered in the same line by sad imagery in “I admired his sullen face.” There is the early “venerable,” but this is flanked and nearly hidden within the line “a grunting weight / battered and venerable / and

homely,” which in totality produces another sad image. Therefore, even the positive connotation of the opening “I caught a tremendous fish” is quickly overwhelmed by the amount of disconcerting detail. There is a delicacy in Bishop's examination in general, but although this reaches into intricate injections such as “fine rosettes of lime” (although notably, among barnacles and sea-lice), these moments are soon followed by details such as “Here and there / his brown skin hung in strips / like ancient wallpaper,” and “his gills were breathing in / the terrible oxygen / - the frightening gills, / fresh and crisp with blood, that can cut so badly-.” In sum, the fish presents as somewhat of a horror.

Although there is a general sense of suffering from age and condition (even before the imbedded hooks are reached), and even with the loss of a will to live (“He didn't fight. / He hadn't fought at all”), the singular explicit mention of pain is the “aching jaw”; and this comes at the very end, within the last line of Bishop's description of the fish; indeed, while the five ingrown hooks in the fish's aching jaw initially may be read as the final miserable detail concerning this poor creature, their presence in fact turns the poem toward full realization (“I stared and stared”), the dawning of accomplishment, and the swelling of “victory.” Bishop's delight is an initial turn that perhaps cloaks and preps the final twist (indeed, the fish's release would have been more readily anticipated had “aching jaw” been directly followed by “And I let the fish go”). Yet, for the purposes of this study, there is no locatable pain and pleasure diction, and the coding is eluded by the otherwise perceptible sentiment, whether of distress or delight.

This absence of coding is different than the limited coding of traditional lower sensory detail where diction more adequately locates the presence of these senses, so that a true void is apparent in the absence or in the non-significant use of smell, taste, and touch; and, as seen

below, their particularly limited use translates into the near absence of hunger, thirst, and satiety in Bishop.

Hunger, Thirst, and Satiety

The inner senses of physical hunger, thirst, and satiety are problematic as well, indicating that the somatosensory spectrum (excluding temperature) may require greater context for identification, one beyond tracking sensory diction, than the “outer,” traditional senses, at least in Bishop's work. In the attempt to avoid losing more indirect taste invocations by broadening taste coding, hunger and thirst essentially became subsumed by taste coding, so that the rare instance of “starve” (in “The Burglar of Babylon”) and “hungry” itself (in “Manuelzinho”) has been captured under taste (above). Although physical hunger and thirst have taste to partially indicate their presence, it has been established that taste itself barely registers in Bishop's verse, but unlike the expansion of coding in scent, taste, and touch toward related terms (e.g., nostrils, kitchen, clasp), the inner senses prove more elusive. This is evident with coding attempts to expand into nonphysical diction capturing hunger or satiety, such as conceptions of emotional longing or emotional fulfillment; while it is possible to find terms such as “miss” or “happy,” Bishop uses the first once, in “I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster” (“One Art”) and does not use the word “happy” (or its variants) in any of the selected poems.

As in literary synaesthetic readings and research, the multi-sensory approach here is prefaced on the theoretical assumption that senses are locatable in Bishop, primarily as evidenced in her vocabulary choices and diction. While this assumption has held for the traditional senses and the expanded explorations of temperature, time, and space, the frustrated attempts to pinpoint sensory diction in accordance with pain, pleasure, hunger, and satiety reveal that these sensations

may be more holistic, suffused throughout a poem and more vaguely evoked. Particularly in a poet like Bishop, often writing in the role of participant observer, these inner senses may be felt momentarily or generally but are not specifically focused upon by Bishop through diction. Senses that are more commonly perceived as exterior, such as temperature and the orienting senses of time and space, are more readily found in Bishop--befitting, given her observational approach. Pain, pleasure, hunger, and satiety, particularly when they represent longing and contentment, may be perceived as experienced below the bodily surface, and not typically within Bishop's focus nor her intended subject.

Although pain, pleasure, hunger/thirst, and satiety are not convincingly found in Bishop in regard to this exploratory multi-sensory analysis, these senses may be more readily present in other voices: Marilyn Hacker's poetry has been the subject of a "food and drink" focus (Biggs), and Anne Sexton's work, as well as the work of other confessionalists, may more adequately lend itself to pain and pleasure explorations. That senses such as pain, pleasure, hunger/thirst, and satiety are scant in Bishop only attests to her approach to her subject matter. Although Bishop is not an emotionless observer ("The Fish" an apt example from above), she is also not an emotional one. Focusing on exteriors, it is fitting in Bishop that a sense like temperature be utilized to a greater extent than the deeper interpretations of pain, pleasure, hunger, and satiety. And with exteriors, it is logical that it is the orienting senses of time and space which present patterns significant enough to fully explore in Bishop.

Time and Space

Bishop's use of time and space has similarity to her use of sight and sound. Bishop predominately uses visually-explicit terms but instances of sound can be found, although these

are typically concentrated instances over a few lines, often within a poem more visually fleshed. Likewise, space and time in Bishop, as spacial referencing is strung throughout most poems (a preponderance due to the visual), while time referencing makes appearances occasionally but also, like sound, in concentrated usage.

At times, time and space words are the most difficult to separate in coding. Even the context of the surrounding line may not end the ongoing slippage into both concepts (it is as if physicists needed only to look at language to posit that time and space are at points inseparable). Bishop rarely plays with time diction and only a few words reappear enough to count and compare. Perhaps interestingly, there are 8 uses of “new” and 6 of “young” contrasted to 9 “ancient” and, most significantly, 41 “old,” which spans both people and objects (together at 50 old/ancient versus 15 new/young, although the present-centering “now” is at 44).

Coding time and space was begun by locating prepositions and their phrases but extended beyond linguistic designations to capture any diction which invoked time and space. Therefore, timepieces were coded as time words and, more significantly in number, words indicating a change in direction or location were coded as spacial words. An example of this is “fall” as either a noun or verb which indicated a drop in position and therefore space; like sight colors, “fall” was captured whether literal or metaphorical, with coding complications only occurring when vying for categorization in another sense (see “past” below).

In the following stanza, the word “falls” was coded as spacial as it signals a change in position, although this is dependent upon interpretation. That the metaphorical clock (“atmosphere”) “falls” was read as literal within the metaphor, that it falls/arrives “in wheels and chimes of leaf and cloud.”

Time's in her pocket, ticking loud
on one stalled second. She'll consult
not time nor circumstance. She calls
on atmosphere for her result.
(It is this clock that later falls
in wheels and chimes of leaf and cloud.)

In the above stanza from “The Colder The Air,” small words of both time (time, second, clock, later) and space (in, on, this, falls) are mingled with metaphorical sound references (ticking aloud, calls, chimes). Below, in the last stanza of “Sleeping Standing Up,” both time and space references go beyond “time,” “second,” “clock” and “in,” “on,” “this,” to slightly more involved time referencing (all the night, sometimes, until the night, never) and space detail (underneath, out, where).

we tracked them all the night. sometimes they disappeared,
dissolving in the moss,
sometimes we went too fast
and ground them underneath. How stupidly we steered
until the night was past
and never found out where the cottage was.

As in first stanza, here coding decisions are based on considered but open interpretations. The word “past” could be be coded as spacial, that “the night” was metaphorically steered past, but this necessitates coding the “the night” itself as a point in space, in order for it to have been “passed”; however it was coded here as a time reference, in part due to the spelling and that the

entire line “until the night was past” indicates morning (at least). “Out” within the phrase “never found out” is metaphorical in that it means “revealed,” yet coupled with “where” it is additionally a spacial reference as the cottage was not found “out from” its secluded (to the passengers) location.

Bishop's spacial references typically string down through a poem, more as necessities to hoist and set the objects she views, as in “Questions of Travel.” In the stanza below, one imagines Bishop at times pointing with basic spacial terms (here, those), but only pointing, using them as tools.

There are too many waterfalls **here**; the crowded streams
hurry too rapidly **down** to the sea,
and the pressure of so many clouds **on** the mountaintops
makes them spill **over** the sides **in** soft slow-motion,
turning to waterfalls **under** our very eyes.
--For if **those** streaks, **those** mile-long, shiny, tearstains,
aren't waterfalls **yet**,
in a **quick age** or so, as **ages** go **here**,
they probably will be.

Here spacial referencing is necessary to discuss and position the scene's components. Although critically functional, they appear *only* functional, necessary to transfer the more interesting and important details: “too many waterfalls,” “crowded streams,” and the sea, clouds, mountaintops. Time is injected toward the end (yet, quick age, ages) but they also simply further situate. But there are moments in Bishop of much denser spacial detail, as in “Paris, 7 A.M.”

I make a **trip** to each **clock** **in** the apartment:
some hands point histrionically **one way**
and some point **others**, **from** the ignorant faces.
Time is an Etoile; the **hours** **diverge**
so much that **days** are **journeys** **round** the suburbs,
circles **surrounding** stars, **overlapping** circles.

Other than “in” establishing her location in the apartment, space is traversed through the adventurous use of “trip” and “journey.” Clockhands point “one way” and “others” (i.e., other ways), and their direction is given the dramatic “histrionically.” Even the “hours” are pulled into space as they “diverge” to a point requiring travel, the movement which is “round”; and the introduction of “circles” actually reinforces the directional “round”; and the enmeshed imagery of “round,” “surrounding,” and “overlapping” may call into question which words are modifying which. Although time appears to be, in that clocks are the subject, the stanza's initial focus, it is space that gets the attention, the modification, and all the good lines.

As to not overstate the relationship of time and space in Bishop, here is an example of space alone at work:

Thirty or more buzzards are **drifting down**, **down**, **down**,
over something they have spotted **in** the swamp,
in circles like **stirred-up** flakes of sediment
sinking through water. (“Florida”)

Buzzards, “something,” and the swamp are the only objects here (of 27 words), their presence repeated metaphorically as “flakes of sediment” and water. The majority of the poetic space is

spacial, the movement of direction, position, and location in “drifting down, down, down, over . . .”, “in” the swamp, “in” circles, “stirred-up” and “sinking through.”

Bishop uses time far less than space, with spacial referencing being the most prevalent sense in her poetry as examined here. With sight and sound, that Bishop often visually approaches her subjects results in sight being the primary descriptor; thus with time and space, this visual approach also results in the need to navigate space more than time, particularly as time is often held momentarily as she surveys, whether literally or imaginatively, her subjects--a strategy very much within the literary tradition of ekphrasis discussed above (opposed to a more dynamic ekphrasis, as argued by classicists). In addition to her observational approach, the frequent use of spacial diction, here consisting of primarily prepositions, is also due to Bishop's relatively conventional use of language. However, Bishop's use of spacial diction at times takes on its own cadence, and at times reveals sensory navigation through stanzas otherwise relatively devoid of explicit sense data.

Bishop's use of time does include moments of navigation and presence. In “The Prodigal,” the “odor” of the first line is both odor and pig; that Bishop turns the animal into essentially a reverse personification (“with its breathing and thick hair”) at once defines the animal by olfaction and asserts the man's immersion into the sty. As Bishop biographer Bret Millier has suggested, “The Prodigal” reads as a combination of Bishop's experience: partly as firsthand experience with the both the physical and psychological effects of inebriation, and partly as a childhood memory of a drunken relative removed from the home to apparently sober in a pigsty (63, 65). The stanza's beginning emphasizes the location of details to at once orient the reader and explain the disorientation of the man in the sty. The odor lived “by” and “too

close” suggests a congestion of bodies, and while not exclusively olfactory, “with its breathing and thick hair” here is an extension of the odor and its disorienting proximity. Bishop immediately establishes the conditions through olfaction before moving the description into the sty itself as a space, one “plastered” in pig feces with a “rotten” floor, the latter as an unsure foothold particularly adding to sense of intoxication (all while being observed by the pigs).

The brown enormous odor he lived by
was too close, with its breathing and thick hair,
for him to judge. The floor was rotten; the sty
was plastered halfway up with glass-smooth dung.
Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts,
the pigs' eyes followed him, a cheerful stare--

Moving from olfaction, the remaining lines of the stanza begin to detail time, both as duration (“always,” “sometimes,” “year”) and as taking up the orientation (“mornings,” “after,” “then”). Extending Millier's reading, time spent in the pig sty appears analogous to moral decline through inebriation, and the stanza ends on the concept of a seemingly self-extended “exile,” here measured in time and on condition of hidden drink, with past “bouts” indicative of a history in the sty:

even to the sow that always ate her young--
till, sickening, he leaned to scratch her head.
But sometimes mornings after drinking bouts
(he hid the pints behind the two-by-fours),
the sunrise glazed the barnyard mud with red

the burning puddles seemed to reassure.

And then he thought he almost might endure

his exile yet another year or more.

The second and final stanza brings the day to a close with “evenings” and “at dark” and reveals the man to be an employee and the sty possibly within or adjacent to a barn. The explicit time diction now gives way to sight markings for time (“star,” “lantern,” “sun”), but the time within the poem doesn't speed up in response the onset of night. The lines return to detailing the space, and only toward the end does the man move “Carrying a bucket along a slimy board” while feeling “the bats' uncertain staggering flight.” Yet his movement does not propel him to end his stay, nor does the content of “his shuddering insights,” as in the end “it took him a long time finally to make up his mind to go home.”

But evenings the first star came to warn.

The farmer whom he worked for came at dark

to shut the cows and horses in the barn

beneath their overhanging clouds of hay,

with pitchforks, faint forked lightnings, catching light,

safe and companionable as in the Ark.

The pigs stuck out their little feet and snored.

The lantern--like the sun, going away--

laid on the mud a pacing aureole.

Carrying a bucket along a slimy board,

he felt the bats' uncertain staggering flight,

his shuddering insights, **beyond** his control,
touching him. But it took him a **long time**
finally to make up his mind to go home.

As an incarnation of the Prodigal Son parable, Bishop's poem captures the last night before redemption is embarked upon, a night in which the man appears more comfortable (in this moment, and in like moments) among beasts and pig mud than among his own in the world outside the sty. Thoughts of departure contain hesitancy, despite that here the wastefully extravagant, “prodigal” aspect is represented in drink and its effects. The sty is a space and within this space is kept the time to possibly escape, possibly feel safe, despite the odor of the pigs and their dung, as they show a “cheerful stare” or snore, while horses and cows prove to be as “safe and companionable as in the Ark.” Perhaps nearly hidden otherwise, the coding highlights the time elements which actually serve in part as the backdrop, as the man waits for the time to imbibe and stalls before ending his time in sty.

Before moving to a summation of Bishop's sensory use, both in the traditional and the expanded senses, the act of coding her diction began to reveal the high frequency in which Bishop opens her description to self-questioning, particularly points where more than one rendering of detail is entertained. This aspect of Bishop's voice and its frequency in her work is argued below to have sensory impact, not only in reading Bishop's poems as sensory experiences but also in understanding seeming imprecision in detail as capable of--counter-intuitively--creating or capturing a more convincingly authentic experience for the reader.

Coordination as Sensory Openness in Bishop

Bishop's most commonly anthologized poems, both in criticism and in education, include such works "The Fish" and "The Filling Station," which highlight a relatively straightforward, accessible verse in line, diction, narration, and accessible in experience (the catching of a fish, the stopping at a gas station). However, the larger Bishop corpus certainly contains more complex renderings along with the use of literary ambiguity (and even the two well-anthologized, seemingly transparent examples above can be read as utilizing ambiguity, particularly the latter's ending as open to interpretation). But with description, arguably there is an expectation away from literal ambiguity; for example, that "blue" in color means blue in color, despite that blue may also be symbolic of mood; and depending upon the subject, that color is absent may be read as a slip in description; and perhaps most unexpected would be detail such as a subject being either "blue or red," not when a choice is proffered but when a detail is remembered. This kind of ambiguity was not expected in Bishop, at least not in any significant amount or frequency, given that her work was explicitly chosen for its precision and attention to detail. Yet there are frequently moments of literal ambiguity or "openness" in Bishop; indeed, it occurs in the majority of her work. To begin illustrating this openness, two moments of ekphrasis, one by Homer, one by Bishop lend themselves to revealing Bishop's subtle ambiguities. Returning to Homer's accounting of the shield of Achilles:

Four golden herdsmen drove the kine a-field

By nine swift dogs attended. Dreadful sprang

Two lions forth, and of the foremost herd

Seized fast a bull. Him bellowing they dragg'd,

While dogs and peasants all flew to his aid. (XVIII, 719-723)

Focusing first on the last line, there are degrees of precision in relating detail, so that “dogs” is less precise than had Homer written “several dogs,” which is itself less precise than “seven dogs.” But even less precise than the original “dogs” alone is the ambiguity introduced *had* Homer written “dogs *or* wolves”--that Homer does not inject this element of ambiguity illustrates a difference in Bishop's rendering of ekphrasis. The injection of “or” is a move Bishop regularly makes throughout her poetry, even when she is describing a static image, here a painting of a landscape familiar to her rather than an ancient shield:

Elm trees, low hills, a thin church steeple
-that gray-blue wisp-*or is it?* [emphasis added]

.....

A specklike bird is flying to the left.
or is it a flyspeck looking like a bird?

.....

Would that be Miss Gillespie's house?
Those particular geese and cows
are naturally before my time. (“Poem”)

In contrast to Bishop, there is no uncertainty in Homer's accounting of the shield, no “By nine *or* ten swift dogs attended” and no “Dreadful sprang / Two *or three* lions forth,” (italics added), and when Homer is less precise in number he simply lets the plurals stand, as “While dogs and

peasants all flew to his aid.” Homer’s exacting detail matches his elevated subject, literally the stuff of legend, and although Bishop’s subject matter is typically everyday realities, she is celebrated for her exactness and ability to capture those moments with fidelity, an aspect she acknowledged as a goal: “I always *try* to stick as much as possible to what *really* happened when I describe something in a poem” (Wehr interview qtd. in Montiero 42). Yet, as Anne Newman has noted, “Bishop frequently uses the method of questioning in her poems, with the intent of leading to clear perception rather than giving definitive answers” (40). So there is ambiguity in Bishop, but its frequency is initially striking given her reputation for exactness. Of the 84 poems examined, only 16 poems do not contain a question mark or the word “or”—a punctuation mark and a word which introduce choice or uncertainty. There are 182 instances of “or” across 79 poems. At times these “or’s” are within or in addition to Bishop’s use of the question mark, itself totaling 129; therefore, across 79 poems there are 311 moments of open detail, where Bishop invites choices and poses questions. Although not all moments of ambiguity have significant sensory impact, subtle ambiguities in Bishop are present throughout nearly all of her work, and in the multi-sensory examination here, where details are designated primarily either/or, the occurrence of sensory choice, such as the speaker questioning what they view or two metaphors equally proffered by “or,” reads as “open.” What follows is an examination of this use, organized to show how Bishop positions choices for the reader ranging from multiple metaphors for one image, to establishing a questioning voice, to disparate images for singular observations. From a point of sensory analysis, this openness either provides multiple images for the reader to contemplate or leaves open the sensory information for the imagination.

Situated as the very first poem of her first collection (*North & South*), “The Map” questions and counters itself within the first stanza more than it settles on one rendering. “Shadows, or are they shallows” is at once playful and a grasp for a more precise account. At the start of the fifth line, Bishop begins with her second “or” to truly delve into metaphor, yet continuing to situate her personifications as postulations, leaving “or’s” behind for question marks.

Land lies in water; it is shadowed green.
Shadows, **or** are they shallows, at its edges
showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges
where weeds hang to the simple blue from green.
or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,
drawing it unperturbed around itself?
along the fine tan sandy shelf
is the land tugging at the sea from under?

Further in, Bishop uses “or” to offer a choice of metaphor: “We can stroke these lovely bays, / under a glass as if they were expected to blossom, / **or** as if to provide a clean cage for invisible fish.” And later combines both “or” and “?” in the first line, popping back into the reality of maps as literal maps by questioning the process of map-making: “Are they assigned, **or** can the countries pick their colors? / -What suits the character **or** the native waters best.”

Bishop uses “or” for others' choices as well: “even the swimming sailors, who / would like a schoolroom platform, too, / **or** an excuse to stay / on deck” (“Casabianca,” at 10 lines, an example of invoking “or” in a short poem). Bishop opens poems, at times the first very line, as a

question; the beginning of “The Gentleman of Shalott” opens with two questions: “Which eye’s
his eye? / Which limb lies / next the mirror?” And Bishop may end on a question, as in “First
Death in Nova Scotia”:

But how could Arthur go,
clutching his tiny lily,
with his eyes shut up so tight
and the roads deep in snow?

Bishop’s “or” can be used to hit a profound note, as in “Roosters”: “The sun climbs in, /
following “to see the end,” / faithful as enemy, or friend.” Or it can facilitate playfulness, as in
“You can’t derange, or rearrange, / your poems again” (“North Haven”) and in “It is like
introspection / to stare inside, or retrospection, / a star inside a rectangle, a recollection” (“Paris,
7 A.M.”). Later in “Paris,” there is a string of possibilities, via three “or’s,” then two questions:

It is a dead one, or the sky from which a dead one fell.
The urns have caught his ashes or his feathers.
when did the star dissolve, or was it captured
by the sequence of squares and squares and circles, circles?
Can the clocks say; is it there below,
about to tumble in snow?

At times “or” is more precise, in that Bishop captures two equal possibilities, as in “(sometimes,
frightened by aeroplanes, they stampede / and fall over into the sea or onto the rocks.)” (a
parenthetical line about sheep in “Cape Breton”) or “Black-and-white man-of-war birds soar / on
impalpable drafts / and open their tails like scissors on the curves / or tense them like wishbones,

till they tremble” (“The Bight”), or as in “Some of the little white boats are still piled up / against each other, **or** lie on their sides, stove in” (again, “The Bight”).

But more often the usage of “or” is open, at times less precise in regard to quantity: “For two weeks **or** more the trees hesitated” (“A Cold Spring”) or in “Thirty **or** more buzzards are drifting down, down, down, / over something they have spotted in the swamp” (note that “something” itself is ambiguous) (“Florida”), or where precision is then accompanied by estimate, as in “At The Fishhouses”:

thin silver
tree trunks are laid horizontally
across the gray stones, down and down
at intervals of four **or** five feet.

Or the number may be disparate: “for always to *one*, **or** *several*, morning comes / whose head has fallen over the edge of his bed” (emphasis added, “Love Lies Sleeping”). In “The Unbeliever,” “or” allows for three distinct versions:

Asleep he was transported there,
asleep he curled
in a gilded ball on the mast's top,
or climbed inside
a gilded bird, **or** blindly seated himself astride.

At times, what finds itself on either end of “or” may seem a trivial difference (to the speaker):

Once up against the sky it's hard
to tell them from the stars--

planets, that is--the tinted ones:

Venus going down, or Mars,

or the pale green one. ("The Armadillo")

Or at times offering more significant differences, as in "The goldfinches are back, or others like them" ("North Haven") or in "-Rags or ragged garments / hung on the chairs and hooks" ("Faustina, or Rock Roses," the title itself an example). In another title/line connection, Bishop may use "or" flippantly, as suggested by the title "Large Bad Picture," even when the opening line itself appears harmless: "Remembering the Strait of Belle Isle or / some northerly harbor of Labrador." This sarcastic use of "or" can be seen in "Manuelzinho," which Bishop prefaces with "A friend of the writer is speaking"; its rant-like commentary is linked by "or," and these linkages produce the poem's firing-line delivery:

and supposed

to supply me with vegetables,

but you don't; or you won't; or you can't

get the idea through your brain--

.....

And then

umbrella ants arrive,

or it rains for a solid week

and the whole thing's ruined again

.....

and once more I provide
 for a shot of penicillin
 down at the pharmacy, or
 one more bottle of
 Electrical Baby Syrup.
 or, briskly, you come to settle
 what we call our “accounts,”

 Account books? They are Dream Books.
 in the kitchen we dream together
 how the meek shall inherit the earth--
 or several acres of mine.

 I love you all I can,
 I think. Or I do?

There are nine other uses of “or” in this poem, but these are the most biting (but all weave sarcasm). In Bishop, a series of options involving “or” or question marks may stir a situation, as in “and everything bright, cheerful, casual--or so it looked” (“Santarem”) and signal sarcasm. In “House Guest” there is “Give her a dress, a drink, / roast chicken, or fried fish- / it's all the same to her.” In the earlier examined “Filling Station,” there is the initial disbelief of a family residing in their workplace--“Do they live in the station?”--soon followed by disbelief at the feminine (or familial) attempts to domesticate the station:

Why the extraneous plant?

Why the taboret?

Why, oh why, the doily?

(Embroidered in daisy stitch

with marguerites, I think,

and heavy with gray crochet.)

Somebody embroidered the doily.

Somebody waters the plant,

or oils it, maybe.

The series of three questions is followed by the parenthetical “I think” as self-questioning. The relative ambiguity of “Somebody,” repeated across two lines here, along with the ending jab (“waters the plant, / or oils it, maybe”) containing both “or” and “maybe,” presents 8 uncertainties across 9 lines.

As an extended example, the poems “Filling Station” and “House Guest” have similarities beyond being first published in *The New Yorker* at almost exactly 13 years apart: “Filling Station” on December 10, 1955 and “House Guest” on December 7, 1968. Both works tell of an encounter between Bishop and the working class that produces varying degrees of tension. Although both are similar in line length, “Filling Station” is a shorter work whose brevity matches the momentary stopping at a service station, while the length of the “House Guest” mirrors the building frustration toward a guest who has overstayed her welcome. And where Bishop is the visitor at the filling station, the visit momentary, and the visitor free to go (and all

within the social expectations of the event), here the situation is quite reversed: the visitor is in Bishop's home and has overstayed, but with Bishop feeling socially trapped and hesitant to move the guest along.

The details attended to in "Filling Station" build toward indirectly teasing out the motherly presence of "Somebody," whereas the subject is the clear focus of "House Guest" (beginning with the very title); the former is perhaps idealized while the latter demonized (indeed, the seamstress eventually shares--with no reaction by the speaker--an unfulfilled wish to have become a nun), and while the difference may be familiarity, the occupants of the filling station read as struggling, whereas the situation of the house guest is somewhat different; she is ironically described as a seamstress whose "sewing is decidedly mediocre," perhaps to include her own clothing (the visual below), with possible imagery alluding to an overstuffed rag doll:

Her own clothes give us pause,
but she's not a poor orphan.
She has a father, a mother,
and all that, and she's earning
quite well, and we're stuffing
her with fattening foods.

However, the most interesting aspect across the two poems may be the use of Bishop's openness in the form of question marks, "or's," and "perhaps," which inject sarcasm with every use. In "House Guest," where the frustration steadily builds, the first uses are relatively subtle: an "or" emphasizing the disparate items ("a dress, a drink, roast chicken, or fried fish") that are "all the same to her." In "House Guest," the first question mark highlights that the most basic of requests

("Can you adjust the TV?") goes unheeded. By mid-poem, the questions begin to reveal a growing curiosity, but one grown from being trapped by her immobility, rather than sincere interest:

Does she dream of marriage?
Of getting rich? Her sewing
is decidedly mediocre.

The above bewilderment, similar to "Do they live in the [filling] station?", leads to a heightening of anxiety:

Please! Take our money! Smile!
What on earth have we done?
What has everyone done
and when did it all begin?

This point of crisis is similarly evidenced in "Filling Station" by a series of pointed questions: "Why the extraneous plant? / Why the taboret? / Why, oh why, the doily?" In the "House Guest," the anxiety gives way to problem-solving, although dipped in sarcasm:

Perhaps we should let her go,
or deliver her straight off
to the nearest convent-and wasn't
her month up last week, anyway?

It is possible that in "Filling Station," Bishop also engages in problem-solving, eventually attributing the disparate domestic touches within a space for labor to the unseen Somebody, a moment with a touch of sarcasm with "Somebody waters the plant / or oils it maybe." And

similar to Somebody, the house guest's contentedness to present circumstances has the host pondering, perhaps suspecting, that there is more than meets the eye:

Can it be that we nourish
one of the Fates in our bosoms?
Clotho, sewing our lives
with a bony little foot
on a borrowed sewing machine,
and our fates will be like hers,
and our hems crooked forever?

Although the seamstress is very present and directly detailed in her shoddy appearance and in her unpleasant personality, this latter aspect is of unknown origin until “one day” some history is shared by the guest (in contrast to the exchangeless “Filling Station”), and the ending stanza slips the guest back and further into the unknown by suspicions of a power to disrupt lives, perhaps the mythic Clotho, who with “borrowed sewing machine” sews “crooked hems” into the fate of those around her. This mythological status may in fact be similar to the possibly insincere reverence of the filling station's Somebody. Bishop never uses “mother” or any variant, and fastens to the term “Somebody” such as to inject Somebody with nearly a mythological air (Bishop places “Somebody” at the beginning of lines, never mid-line, but the context suggests the name could be capitalized, similar to Clotho). There is similar sarcasm throughout “Filling Station,” but particularly biting in the last stanza if the ending line “Somebody loves us all” is read to contain pity, and in consideration of “House Guest,” possibly pity for us all. But the momentum of both works is built through Bishop's use of questioning.

But Bishop is capable of self-criticism as well. In “Going to the Bakery,” the speaker berates the self-chosen words used in encountering a downtrodden and apparently wounded man in the street:

I give him seven cents in *my*
terrific money, say “Good night”
from force of habit. Oh, mean habit!
Not one word more apt **or** bright?

In “The Gentleman of Shalott,” the speaker self-corrects with “or,” which is used again from the Gentleman's perspective, but in indecision:

The glass must stretch
down his middle,
or rather down the edge.
But he's in doubt
as to which side's in **or** out
of the mirror.

And she extends this self-critique to characters she inhabits. “Why shouldn't I be ambitious?” asks the speaker in “The Riverman.” Robinson Crusoe in “Crusoe in England” is self-reflective throughout:

I often gave way to self-pity.
“Do I deserve this? I suppose I must.
I wouldn't be here otherwise. Was there
a moment when I actually chose this?”

I don't remember, but there could have been."

What's wrong about self-pity, anyway?

Bishop may give a questioning voice to any speaker, of any situation, of any age. In "The Burglar of Babylon," the fugitive himself asks "Ninety years they gave me. / Who wants to live that long?" and his Auntie pleads, "Both of us gave him money. / Why did he have to rob?" The child in "Manners" frets, "I was worried. / How would he know where to go?" And even Bishop's personifications have a voice to ask questions: "I am founded on marble pillars," / said a cloud. "I never move. / See the pillars there in the sea" ("The Unbeliever").

Bishop's questioning can act as a search for detail when faced with its absence, in effect suggesting detail in a strategy similar to negation--defining or situating a subject by what it is not--here suggesting details in their absence. Rather than simply ignore details she cannot capture, leaving the reader alone to notice what is absent, Bishop initiates this call to missing details. As below, Bishop may ask for true inquiry, probing for information whether accessible or not, so that in the absence of sensorial detail, a sensorial question is posed; had the questions been able to be answered, sensory diction would be present, although the amount would be dependent upon how Bishop crafted the answer. This questioning is perhaps most unknowable and interestingly used when encountering animals:

She was a white hen

--red-and-white now, of course.

How did she get there?

where was she going? ("Trouvee")

And here in the non-responsive (yet non-rhetorical) extensive questioning in “Pink Dog”:

You are not mad; you have a case of scabies
but look intelligent. Where are your babies?

.....

in what slum have you hidden them, poor bitch,
while you go begging, living by your wits?

Didn't you know? It's been on all the papers,
to solve the problem, how they deal with beggars?
They take and throw them in the tidal rivers.

.....

If they do this to anyone who begs,
drugged, drunk, or sober, with or without legs,
what would they do to sick, four-legged dogs?

Bishop typically deals with questions (the ones that can be dealt with) immediately, and the use of “or” situates the momentary connection, then moves on. But the walk on the beach in “End of March” poses a discovery (the exact point of discovery phrased as a question), “A kite string?--But no kite.” and only later revisits with:

--a sun who'd walked the beach the last low tide,
making those big, majestic paw-prints,
who perhaps had batted a kite out of the sky to play with.

The poem also contains a moment of extensive detail (the first three lines below), which lapses into questions and approximations (“a sort of”) grasping for detail. Of particular note, the speaker moves to say one thing (lost to us), “a palisade of--” but in mid-breath changes to “are they railroad ties?”--never answering or confirming, only stating that many things present there are “dubious.”

I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream-house,
my crypto-dream-house, that crooked box
set up on pilings, shingled green,
a sort of artichoke of a house, but greener
(boiled with bicarbonate of soda?),
protected from spring tides by a palisade
of--are they railroad ties?
(Many things about this place are dubious.)
I'd like to retire there and do *nothing*,
or nothing much, forever,

In one of Bishop's few confessional works, the use of self-questioning makes for the climatic points of “The Waiting Room”:

But I felt: you are an *I*,
you are an *Elizabeth*,
you are one of *them*.
Why should you be one, too?
.....

Why should I be my aunt,

or me, or anyone?

What similarities

boots, hands, the family voice

I felt in my throat, or even

the *National Geographic*

and those awful hanging breasts

held us all together

or made us all just one?

But rather than reflecting realities, even inner realities, some of the most striking uses of “or” are the disparate images Bishop couples in verse, such as “the moons / make medicine / or confectionery” (“Varick Street”) and “--like kings of old, or like a miracle” (“A Miracle for Breakfast”). In “The Burglar of Babylon,” the first line presented here offers a choice of naming, “Building its nests, or houses, / out of nothing at all, or air,” versus the second line’s impossibility of either choice, though offered as such. Unless the art is illusionary, only in words can one at once or at all consider these images. “The Weed” situates two moments of doubt, their duplicity difficult to imagine successfully rendered visually: “I lay upon a grave, or bed . . . and in my eyes, so I could see / (or, in that black place, thought I saw).” Then there is the dilemma--visually--of considering the profound “Alone on the railroad track / I walked with pounding heart. / The ties were too close together / or maybe too far apart” (“Chemin de Fer”). These examples highlight that for all the analogies connecting Bishop’s pen to a paintbrush, her paper to

canvas, or her pen in hand to a raised thumb, Bishop was a writer, instilling in her work a level of visual ambiguity best rendered by language and verse.

As with primarily utilizing (and thus privileging) the higher sense of sight (in that Bishop's use is arguably in line with modern America), it is possible that this openness of Bishop's further augments, rather than argues against, the transfer of authenticity; that the speaker does not recall or does not give as much attention to certain details (as all are not equal in Bishop) resembles at times the everyday mind and its attention, or rather inattention, to certain details of everyday experience. At times, what is estimated are details simply not worth calculating, both for the self or its context, its surrounding circumstances. At times, as in "Thirty or more buzzards" ("Florida"), a more exact number would be distractingly odd, or ridiculous, or seemingly artificial (however correct). Returning to her poem "The Fish," the speaker notes "and underneath two **or** three / rags of green weed hung down." In examining this "catch," is it significant whether the accurate number of green weeds be two or three (or four)? Strategically, does the concession of "two or three" provide a more conversational, more authentic voice?

and then I saw
that from his lower lip
--if you could call it a lip--
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,

Regarding the lines “hung five old pieces of fish-line, / or four and a wire leader” Bishop has noted in an interview that she precisely recalls “he only had three. I think it improved the poem when I made the change” (Wehr in Monteiro 42); although Bishop does not elaborate as to specifically how this improved the poem (it may be as simple as nearly doubling the times the fish escaped capture), it is perhaps interesting that she does not address the uncertainty apparent to any reader (as opposed to the writer only), the move from “five old pieces of fish-line” to “four and a wire leader.” To a reader without knowledge of the interview, it is unclear whether the uncertainty between “five old pieces of fish-line” and “four and a wire leader” occurs as a correction, a move of clarification or in its recollection as true uncertainty; the effect, however, this momentary fog in a field of clarity, is subtly humanizing--and all the more interesting as Bishop swaps the original three for an exaggerated “five” yet constructs and interjects a moment of increased clarity (if read as such, the correction to “four and a wire leader”). Whether or not Bishop is truly uncertain of the detail in other examples, it may be these lapses which allow the reader room to imprint or exchange their details for Bishop's, truly leaving something for the imagination.

Psychologists and neuro-scientists have theorized that memory and perception itself are reconstructions, and recently even the recollection of memories appears to further alter the memory itself (St. Jacques and Schacter). In a literary context, it may be that artistic license is a part of the human condition, but Bishop's writing, with its interjections of “or,” may be tapping into this malleability at the syntactic level, burrowing into closed-class words and conjunctions. Linguistically, “or” is a conjunction, more specifically a disjunctive conjunction, essentially the joining of choices. Although its frequency and context were examined above, an isolated “or” in

descriptive poetry is significantly different from seemingly similar options, such as the use of “nor.” Bishop's use of “nor” is extremely limited and can be presented in its totality here:

She'll consult / not time nor circumstance. (“The Colder the Air”)

For neither is clearer / nor a different colour (“The Gentleman of Shalott”)

neither warm nor cold (“The Man-Moth”)

neither sun nor moon (“The Weed”)

not by pain nor age / nor even nakedness (“Faustina, or Rock Roses”)

neither proving you less wanted nor less dear. (“Argument”)

Across the selected poems, the seven uses of “nor” through six poems are in sharp contrast to her consistent use of “or” throughout her work. Although “nor” itself is also a disjunctive conjunction, the difference is more than an addition of the letter “n”; whereas “nor” is a negation of choices, “or” is presentation of them; “nor” eliminates options, “or” offers them, and this is evident in the lines above.

Yet, with “or” as a disjunctive, the choices presented and flanking the use of “or” do not automatically suggest ambiguity. Syntactically “or” typically presents mutually exclusive choices; “blue or red” directs that the object be one color or the other, not both. However, Bishop's use of “or” is in a descriptive context where the injection of “or” often indicates uncertainty of recollection or even of present observation. Further, Bishop's insertion of “or,” despite the resulting disjunctive choice, does not significantly alter what follows in the continuing verse; the existence of an unrealized choice in Bishop causes no dilemma of interpretation. Indeed, Bishop often uses “or” as an invitation to simultaneously grasp two or more possibilities, and she appears to situate “or” as an accepted (and acceptable) consequence of

observation. Combined, the distinction between “nor” as negation and “or” as offering, and the use of the latter within moments of unresolved description, provide Bishop's lines with a sense of openness; an openness directly resultant from the subtle syntactic injection of “or,” an opposite effect from “nor,” which narrows and tightens description. As well, Bishop's use of “or” possibly reflects an acceptance of the complications of recollection and perception (the latter itself perhaps a reconstructed recollection).

Bishop's injection of questioning, whether in contemplation or true searching--Bishop does not use questions rhetorically--further opens the tone of a poem and humbles the voice, particularly when probing for information, thus making the moment almost interactive (inviting the reader to answer, share complicity in the lack of knowledge, and accompany Bishop's perceptual process). Once this strategy is noticed, the few poems absent questioning read as nearly didactic, handed down as reportage, where every line is grounded in unquestionable fact, in contrast to her typical voice of exacting detail with moments of very human lapses in perception, memory, and conviction. As sensory choices and ambiguities, her consistent but momentary openings with “or” and “?’s” (although occasional poems are heavy in questions) appear to strengthen the verisimilitude of the representation and provide enough room for others to read themselves alongside the speakers in Bishop's poetry. Although the above “openness” challenges a reading of Bishop as unwavering in detail and was an unexpected “find” in the coding, Bishop's use of traditional and expanded senses, as coded here, support Bishop being read as primarily a visual poet, as suggested by critics since her arrival.

Prior to leaving the senses as split apart in analysis, as an extended example, Bishop's “Crusoe in England” uses various senses in its passages, this being likely attributable to its

subject matter, the once castaway now residing and reflecting in his home country. Although the poem engages in multiple senses, few passages are particularly dense with sensory information, as they are somewhat scattered and strung through, and even then without a consistency that sets a sensory tone for the poem (as sight does in “Filling Station” or as sound does in “Roosters”); rather the poem is of interest here in its various sensory inclusions and particularly in its momentary concentrations of sense, as if Bishop fastened certain senses to certain details. Here a passage briefly but densely invokes taste, and the “home-brew” relaxes Crusoe to in turn invoke sound through his flute (emitting the “weirdest” scale) and through dancing (the “whoop”).

Sub-acid, and not bad, no ill effects;
and so I made home-brew. I'd drink
the awful, fizzy, stinging stuff
that went straight to my head
and play my home-made flute
(I think it had the weirdest scale on earth)
and, dizzy, whoop and dance among the goats.
Home-made, home-made! But aren't we all?

The stanza ends with a question and notably there are twelve questions raised in the work as Crusoe examines his previous life as a castaway. Although in the persona of Crusoe, the questions are in frustration, similar to Bishop's more personal use.

Because I didn't know enough.
Why didn't I know enough of something?
Greek drama or astronomy? The books

I'd read were full of blanks;
the poems--well, I tried
reciting to my iris-beds,
“They flash upon that inward eye,
which is the bliss ...” The bliss of what?
One of the first things that I did
when I got back was look it up.

(Note: “is the bliss of solitude” completes the line from Wordsworth's “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”; here Bishop has Crusoe reciting a poem about daffodils to his iris-beds, the irony further extended, given Crusoe's situation, in “solitude” being the missing word.)

The island smelled of goat and guano.
The goats were white, so were the gulls,
and both too tame, or else they thought
I was a goat, too, or a gull.
Baa, baa, baa and shriek, shriek, shriek,
baa ... shriek ... baa ... I still can't shake
them from my ears; they're hurting now.
The questioning shrieks, the equivocal replies
over a ground of hissing rain
and hissing, ambulating turtles
got on my nerves.
When all the gulls flew up at once, they sounded

like a big tree **in** a strong wind, its leaves.

Although sound has been represented here as effects (“baa” and “shriek”) and descriptively (“questioning shrieks” and “equivocal replies”), and below (“bleat and bleat”) and above (surrounding use of the flute), sound otherwise only additionally appears as indicating speaking (“begs” and “implores”) and three variations of “hiss” within seven lines (“hissed,” “hissing,” and “hissed”) in describing the island's general sound; therefore sound is present and descriptive but is relatively minor in the scope and size of the poem. Of note, smell is descriptively invoked only once in the poem with the above “The island smelled of goat and guano” with neither goat nor bird excrement having positive connotations; there's the “sniff” (below) coded as olfactory but that is in extending the definition to capture the act of smelling as well.

(I'd **time** enough to play with names),
and **bleat and bleat**, and **sniff** the air.
I'd **grab** his beard and **look** at him.
His pupils, **horizontal**, **narrowed up**
and **expressed** nothing, **or** a little malice.
I got so tired of the **very colors!**
One **day** I **dyled** a baby goat **bright red**
with my **red** berries, just to **see**
something a little different.
And **then** his mother wouldn't **recognize** him.

To this point, the poem's sensory focus has shifted through taste and two concentrations of sound. In the above, sight description has its turn as a focus as Bishop moves first through Crusoe

examining the face of a goat, then describing the attempts and consequences of playing with the goats' color. Strung through this passage are three time references, the tactile “grab,” the spacial location of the goat's pupils “narrowed up,” the aforementioned olfactory “sniff” and the audible “bleat and bleat.” There is also the open detail of the goat's eyes having “expressed nothing, or a little malice.” Although none of these senses, besides sight, are here in individual concentration, four of the five traditional senses are represented within two lines, an unusual moment in Bishop. The absent traditional sense, taste, is nearby in the first line of the stanza directly following the above, but its use is fleeting; indeed, it is only mentioned within, “Of course I dreamed of food” as acknowledgment of an otherwise obvious expectation.

Dreams were the worst. Of course I dreamed of **food**
and love, but they were pleasant rather
than otherwise. But **then** I'd dream of things
like slitting a baby's throat, mistaking it
for a baby goat. 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, knowing that I had to live
on each and every one, **eventually**,
for **ages**, registering their flora,
their fauna, their geography.

Although not packed with sensory diction, the above passage is quoted at length to capture Bishop/Crusoe's detailing the nightmares of anxiety over any dreams of "food and love." Certainly Crusoe's nightmares provide insight, but the absence of food descriptions (beyond the mention of the word and a momentary focus on home-brew) in a poem detailing the subsistence life of a castaway may also provide insight into Bishop's poetic sensory priorities.

Conclusion

Having now delved into each sense in detail conceptually and within Bishop's corpus, the sensory counts may be best understood: Spatial diction was the most predominant at 2,232, but it should be noted that this included orienting prepositions which establish location and direction. Visual coding came in at 1,140, and it should be recalled that methodological decisions attempted to restrain visual coding to a high threshold of explicitness in order to adequately test the critical perception of Bishop's visual dominance. The Time diction count was 590, which places it second to spatial diction in representing the internal senses. Auditory diction sat at 483, and although substantially less than the visual occurrences, sound was not held as tightly to explicitness as visual diction, and it sits much closer to sight as a traditional sense in comparison to any of the traditional three lower senses (which even combined sit at 128). Openness at 323 consisted of the use of question marks, the conjunction "or," and moments of "perhaps" and similar. Temperature came in at 113, perhaps interestingly sitting above any of the lower senses, as Bishop invokes temperature alone as often as all the lower senses combined. Although Tactile came in next at 51, approximately half of the coding captures the act of touching rather than true tactile description. Similarly, Gustatory coming in at 49 benefited from generous coding as drink and food were marked regardless if actually described. Olfactory was last at 28, with occurrences

almost exclusively literal. All of the counts were impacted by the methodological choices in both establishing the coding and in applying it; and although the latter is more open to discussion once the coding parameters are set, most adjustments in coding application would likely produce results close in number or at least unlikely close the significant expanses between the counts.

Bishop's traditional sensory use privileges sight, with sound a distant second in frequency, and only an occasional, and even then limited, use of the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch. In line with her reputation, coding showed that Bishop tends to be literal with few moments of synaesthesia; this is not to argue that Bishop doesn't use sensory details symbolically; rather, that synaesthesia is typically not a descriptive strategy employed by her. In visually dense works, Bishop's sight diction works its way, line through line, revealing itself as a visual string in the coding; and although not all works are visually explicit, a single, literal use of "viewed," for example, often positions the poem as one conveyed through the eye.

Sound invocation in Bishop is typically concentrated momentarily across neighboring lines, with Bishop first invoking visual details, then sound details. Onomatopoeia itself is rare, with dialogue more common, both in the external and the internal (i.e., instances of an inner voice). Smell is rarely, and then only briefly, invoked, and these moments typically situate smell as unpleasant rather than fragrant. With the olfactory realities of everyday life and its accessibility through distance, the rarity of smell as a finding was not expected given Bishop's reputation as a poet of detail, daily life, and removed observation. With sensory diction, Bishop primarily relates scenes visually, only occasionally injects audible detail, and rarely captures olfactory experience. Bishop's use of the traditional senses is in line with their relative reach: Sight allows the greatest distance, sound less separation, and smell often indicates close

proximity. Taste requires touch, and although Bishop may occasionally inject food and drink, the taste of these items is not given, and striking was Bishop's practical absence of taste invocation even at points when food and drink were present. Similarly, touch itself is occasional and functional, although its relative absence immediately speaks to Bishop's observational distance; therefore, the finding that most tactile references were metaphorical, occasional, and fleeting was not surprising.

Despite subject matter whose proximity eliminated distance as a factor, as in the title subjects "The Fish" and "Filling Station," Bishop still visually relates the experience. Although the speaker in "The Fish" is reasonably assumed to have baited the hook and then pried the same hook from the fish's mouth in letting it go, these tactile moments are outside the verse; the poem tells of the middle moment, the close visual inspection as the specimen is dangling from a line possibly held out at arm's length. And despite the grease and grime surrounding the speaker in "Filling Station," the station experience itself seems to be examined from a distance, itself held out at arm's length as if dangling from its own line. Both of these poems, which showcase Bishop's powers of assessment, are near devoid of sound and smell. As works among her most anthologized, how these two poems are representative of Bishop is arguable, but the coding of her published work shows that they are representative of Bishop's traditional sensory usage and privileging.

Coding in Bishop for the expanded senses--temperature, time, space, pain, pleasure, hunger/thirst, and satiety--produced mixed findings. Temperature vocabulary was occasional and reserved in variation but readily evident. Time and space diction typically was coded at the prepositional level and their coded use, particularly spacial cues, demonstrated Bishop's moving

gaze; similar to sound, time was used occasionally and in bursts, while space was used in a string fashion similar to sight. Though also occasional, physical pain references were evident, unlike pleasure which proved an elusive element in Bishop, as did hunger/thirst and satiety.

With these expanded senses, Bishop's sensory usage again is in line with their distance, here conceived in an external/internal binary. Time and space, as orientation senses more tethered to the external, and temperature (as perceived at the skin's surface) were readily present and locatable through diction. In Bishop, explicit pain is triggered externally and located by diction, whereas physical pleasure was scarce. The inner senses of hunger and thirst and satiety were practically absent, a finding partially supported by the earlier noted absence of taste invocations. Attempts to expand coding into non-physical counterparts--emotional pain and pleasure, longing (hunger/thirst), and contentment (satiety)--were unsuccessful, in part by Bishop's subject matter and detached observation, in part by the absence of locatable diction conveying otherwise perceptible degrees of delight and distress. As with the traditional senses, that Bishop invokes the expanded senses of time, space, and (to a lesser degree) temperature and physical pain, as externally descriptive while eschewing more internal aspects captured by hunger and satiety, whether physical or non-physical, supports Bishop as primarily a poet of visual observation.

The picture that arises out of the multi-sensory treatment of Bishop firmly situates the poet, at the diction level, as visually dominant in her poetic voice. Indeed, lower sensory experience as well, even in its occasional use, tends to be read visually--touch references are typically visually ascertained and food and drink are viewed and cataloged, but actual taste is typically absent or nearly nonfunctional as detail separate from the visual. Smell does register but its occasional use is further limited in being either neutral or negative in assessment.

Additionally, the expanded senses as felt below the surface, such as pain and pleasure, were nearly absent at the diction level, although at times situationally perceivable within the works themselves. In contrast, the expanded senses which include more external perception, such as temperature, time, and space, factor in as orienting elements. The extremity of Bishop's distance is not only felt in the preponderance of sight referents, but is also felt in how she utilizes non-visual senses. The degree to which Bishop privileges sight raises the question as to whether visual information captures the essence of the subject, or, again, as McNally suggests Bishop's work may encompass "a singular poetic epistemology--the necessary role of appearances in the comprehension of essential, non-visible realities" (192). To this, and unless we are willing to accept visual perception as definitive or synonymous with knowing, reading Bishop as offering something similar to a complete accounting of experience is questioned by the poverty of certain sensory detail, particularly the more intimate knowledge provided by the lower senses.

CHAPTER FIVE

BISHOP THROUGH SENSORY SKETCHES: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

This purpose of this chapter is to move from coding patterns across individual lines, stanzas, and fragments of poems to coding discussions of entire poems (or, in one case, a complete section of a longer poem). The selections below are Bishop poems which sustain concentrations of sensory diction, allowing Bishop's use of the senses to be viewed within complete poems. As Bishop typically uses sensory diction in various ways, from scant usage to bursts of sensory detail, the poems here are not positioned to be representative of Bishop's sensory usage, but rather as demonstrations of her attention to subject matter through use of particular senses. Further, these poems provide the opportunity to not only view moments of consistent sensory use in Bishop, but the verse surrounding those moments--the full subject and environment in which these moments occur.

The previous chapter demonstrated the patterns of Bishop's sensory use through assessing every word of Bishop's published poetry, coding sensory laden diction, then collecting, organizing, and presenting them en masse. This strategy answers questions about frequency and patterns. Which of the senses does Bishop invoke the most and the least, in regard to the higher, the lower, or within an expanded sensorium? What are these senses then attached to? Which items are immediately adjacent? Caution was taken in preserving the immediate context of each coding, that being the poetic line itself, and neighboring lines when necessary for comprehension. But as an isolated act, a concern is that a consequence of this exercise--scouring for individual moments and plucking them out--does not show the variety of sensory play within any one Bishop work. Indeed, it is in a whole poem that Bishop truly shows us how she uses the senses

toward rendering her subject, as one application among more traditionally scoured aspects, be they biographical, psychological, sociological, or political. The question therefore shifts from how does Bishop use the senses throughout her poetry to how does Bishop use the senses as an integral aspect of a poetic rendering? What does a Bishop “color” poem look like? How does sound contribute to a poem's theme? How does Bishop orient the reader while navigating a still object? a moving one? Close readings of complete poems are required for this level of analysis, and this need is addressed by this chapter's qualitative focus.

The poems in this chapter are sketched, typically stanza by stanza, through both coding and discussion. The commentary both isolates and connects similar sensory word occurrences, and reveals coding decisions made according to each sensory word's usage and context within the poem. The sketches are in part close readings using multi-sensory coding and analysis, and in part contextually larger as each poem is framed by past critical treatments and discussion of the coding benefits of multi-sensory analysis. As a combination of close reading, critical reception, and sensory analysis by stanza, the term “sketch” appears most apt. Although “multi-sensory” readings, the sketches of the selected poems favor one to two sensory uses, a pattern demonstrated in the previous chapter as reflective of Bishop's poetry in general. Selections are “First Death in Nova Scotia” (sight, color-themed), “Roosters” (sound), “The Monument” (spacial, one static object), “Sandpiper” (spacial, two dynamic objects), “Song for A Colored Singer: IV” (blended) and “Insomnia” (space and time).

As the nature of this chapter does not treat the senses (and therefore the coding) as isolated in line(s), the multi-sensory coding color key is again presented prior to entering into the sketches:

Visual/Sight = Yellow (“Yellow”)

Auditory/Sound = Magenta (“Light Magenta”)

Olfactory/Smell = Violet (“Magenta 4”)

Gustatory/Taste = Red (“Light Red”)

Tactile/Touch = Blue (“Light Blue”)

Pain = Beige (“Orange 4”)

Pleasure = Light Pink (“Salmon”)

Hunger or Thirst = Dark Red (“Red 2”)

Satiety = Dark Green (“Green”)

Temperature = Gray (“Gray 20%”)

Time = Light Blue (“Chart 6”)

Spacial = Orange (“Chart 10”)

Openness = Light Green (“Green 8”)

Sketch One: “First Death in Nova Scotia”

The first sketch is of “First Death in Nova Scotia,” a mostly auto-biographical account of Bishop as a young child attending the viewing services of her deceased cousin Frank (changed by Bishop to “Arthur” for the poem), also a child. Helen Vendler broke the poem into “three fictions”:

In the first, she fears that the loon might want to eat up Arthur and his coffin together, because the loon must share her metaphor for the coffin, brown wood topped off with white lace . . . The second fiction tries to account for little Arthur's fearful pallor by conjecturing that Jack Frost had started to paint him, got as far as

his red hair, but then “had dropped the brush / and left him white, forever.” The third fiction is an attempted consolation, making up an afterlife more agreeable than the Christian heaven of which the child has been told; Arthur will join the royal couples in a place warmer than the freezing parlor. (835-36)

Vendler's reading includes some attention to sensory diction, such as the visuals “brown wood,” “white lace,” and “red hair,” as well as the climate of the poem, its temperature with “a place warmer” and the “freezing parlor, but Vendler's reading is very much a psychological one, one that quickly moves from the child in the poem, to Bishop as child, to Bishop as poet:

This structure, which follows the bewildered eye of the gazing child trying to put together all her information-sense data, stories of an afterlife, and the rituals of mourning-is a picture of the mind at work. It will not change, in its essentials, throughout Bishop's poetry. The frightened child makes up three helpless fictions, trying to unite items of the scene into a gestalt. (835)

Although a young Bishop was gathering “information-sense data,” Vendler positions the structure of the poem as an early glimpse into Bishop's mind (if indeed Bishop has captured the mind of her child-self), and the injection of “helpless” (“three helpless fictions”) is significant. Initially a “picture of a mind a work,” Vendler extends her “First Death” reading as a revelation into the origin and formation of a mature Bishop's poetic voice: “A poem of this sort suggests that Bishop's habit of observing and connecting was initially a defense invented against ghastly moments of disconnection and that it was practiced throughout childhood even before it found a structure in poetry” (836).

Within a sensory reading, the poem is sketched in part due its concentration of color, rare in Bishop, who here presents an exclusive use of the colors “red” and “white” throughout the poem. As noted in the previous chapter, Bishop typically uses color literally and as one detail among many, but here she returns again and again to reds and whites, both directly (naming) and indirectly (through essentially red and white objects, such as blood and snow). The other aspect for this poem's inclusion is the consistent presence of coldness, the literal sense of temperature and the emotively “cold” atmosphere it creates--through not only the Canadian winter setting, but this occasion of death with its multiple unliving objects, as well as the distanced and detached presence of royalty. White reinforces the chill with every use; and even red, a color culturally entangled with fire, heat, and passion, is here iced. The work intertwines these colors with coldness, death, and royalty, producing one of Bishop's most symbolically laden poems.

In the cold, cold parlor
my mother laid out Arthur
beneath the chromographs:
Edward, Prince of Wales,
with Princess Alexandra,
and King George with Queen Mary.
Below them on the table
stood a stuffed loon
shot and stuffed by Uncle
Arthur, Arthur's father.

The poem opens with an emphasized reference to temperature, “cold, cold,” an unusual doubling of sensory description for Bishop, which sets tone and introduces one of the concentrated themes of the poem, coldness (although the “Nova Scotia” of the title, as well as “Death,” invokes the cold as well). This coldness may also be present, although not coded, in the two inanimate bodies of the first stanza, Arthur and the stuffed loon. The chromographs explicitly begin the second theme, royalty, although this theme is first suggested by the renaming of the child to Arthur. The existence of a stuffed loon (below) as taxonomical decoration and the product of sport also suggests luxury.

Since Uncle Arthur fired
a bullet into him,
he hadn't said a word.
He kept his own counsel
on his white, frozen lake,
the marble-topped table.
His breast was deep and white,
cold and caressable;
his eyes were red glass,
much to be desired.

The only sound moments are the noted silence (“hadn't said a word . . . kept his own counsel”) of the loon (above) and the mother's “Come” and instruction to say good-bye to the boy (below). Here Bishop introduces another theme of the poem, the colors of red and white (present three times in the above stanza), along with the continuation of coldness through the “frozen lake,” a

metaphor for the “marble-topped” table, marble itself being a cold surface; and the metaphor is particularly astute as “topped” resembles the top layer of ice across hardened lakes, and there is touch invocation regarding the hardness of both marble and frozen. “Cold” is used to describe the breast of the loon. Both instances of “white” are within references to cold (“white, frozen lake” and “white, cold [breast]”). The color red is first invoked and attached unfavorably to the loon's eyes of “red glass, / much to be desired.”

“Come,” said my mother,
“Come and say good-bye
to your little cousin Arthur.”
I was lifted up and given
one lily of the valley
to put in Arthur's hand.
Arthur's coffin was
a little frosted cake,
and the red-eyed loon eyed it
from his white, frozen lake.

Coded as a sight word, the lily is noted as “of the valley,” a species whose color is white, and highly poisonous, further adding to the expanding theme of death. Cold is invoked by “frosted” in the metaphor “frosted cake” for the boy's coffin, and color and temperature are coupled again with “white, frozen lake” to end the stanza. For a second time, red is referenced, again within “the red-eyed loon.”

Arthur was very small.

He was all **white**, like a doll
that hadn't been **painted** yet.

Jack Frost had started to **paint** him
the way he **always painted**
the Maple Leaf (Forever).

He had just begun **on** his hair,
a few **red** strokes, and **then**

Jack Frost had dropped the brush
and left him **white**, forever.

The boy himself is now detailed through a series of words all having cold connotations, in addition to his own state (white, doll, Jack Frost). “Doll” is read here (although not coded, discussed below) as a cold reference because it is situated metaphorically for the boy's body, and has the literal quality of being in human form but lifeless and cold (particularly if, given the time of this autobiographical event, a porcelain doll). “Jack Frost” and “white” are each used twice in the above stanza, the latter now referring to the color of the boy (but beyond his skin with “all white”). “Red” is explicitly referenced once, as the paint Jack Frost began the hair, but red is suggested by the way Jack Frost “always painted the Maple Leaf (Forever),” which being a national Canadian song is visually represented by a red maple leaf. The redness has shifted from the eeriness of the loon's eyes into this stanza's almost sweet portrayal of the boy's hair and red as implied through a grander, national symbolism.

The gracious royal couples
were warm in red and ermine;
their feet were well wrapped up
in the ladies' ermine trains.
They invited Arthur to be
the smallest page at court.
But how could Arthur go,
clutching his tiny lily,
with his eyes shut up so tight
and the roads deep in snow?

The royal theme is explicitly returned to in the chromographs of “gracious royal couples” dressed in ermine, a white animal fur and a tincture in heraldry. Being white, dead, and royal, “ermine” crosses the various themes, and ironically, as something dead (and cold in that sense), produces the only spot of warmth in the poem: “warm in red and ermine,” the injection a reminder of the surrounding cold, and the redness now fully shifted into the theme of royalty and distinction. Royalty is densely invoked throughout the final stanza (gracious royal couples, red and ermine, ladies' ermine trains, smallest page at court, Arthur).

The last line ends the poem with “roads deep in snow,” an invocation of both whiteness and cold; both are further suggested by their coupling with “deep” as a return to the loon's breast as “deep and white, cold” in the second stanza. Bishop's coldness is both literal (Nova Scotia, cold parlor, Arthur, lily of the valley, ermine, snow) and metaphorical (Jack Frost, frosted cake, frozen lake), and there are additional occurrences evasive of coding: the suggested coldnesses of

the marble and the lifeless bodies in the scene: Arthur, the loon, the doll, the ermines, three of which having been drained of blood, suggests invoking red in its absence; the humanly formed doll also lacks red, or enough of it. Possibly further, the lily of the valley, only coded as visual for its whiteness, also invokes death/cold (temperature) as both poisonous and itself torn from its roots. And then there are the images, the lifeless chromographs, above Arthur in addition to the watching loon; and, as Bishop's mother died young and that her only direct presence as “mother” in Bishop's poetry is in this work about death, her presence may fit this theme as well; however, that she is indeed alive and given literal voice (as opposed to loon keeping his “own counsel”) challenges this. As well as these two brief points of sound invocation, the only explicit sight words are the colors “white” and “red” and the red of the “paint” and the white of the “lily of the valley,” while of the four “eye” references, two are coupled with red.

Coding Implications

Essentially, Bishop restricts the explicitly visual elements to red and white, and variations suggesting them; an artist holding to Bishop's description would likely produce a series of black and white sketches with dabs of red, all the more striking in its exclusivity and consistency. Multi-sensory coding could be similarly described. The act of color coding sensory elements paints their inclusion, position, frequency, and juxtaposition to one another. Once one is acclimated to the process, the identification of sensory diction immediately reveals itself, but what is not coded stands out as well, whether as lines possibly barren of specific sensory information or locations for hidden sensory details escaping initial coding, such as the “lily of the valley” reference, which in isolation is not visually explicit, but in the context of tracking “white” references reveals itself in part as a visual reference. But although coding here assists with

marking hunted sensory diction and making connections among them, coding in this first poem may reveal more how color, as sight based, is essential to a poem otherwise devoid of explicitly visual diction. The presence and returns to color assert the visual absorption of the scene, that the event of the viewing is indeed taken in through the eye, but in the one poem Bishop extensively uses color (perhaps the ultimate sight concept), the poem lacks the variety of visual diction Bishop strings down through the lines of stanzas--here the strings are composed of color references, with Bishop wedding sight with color. Without coding, this critical contribution of color may be easily lost; without coding it may be assumed that the loon, the casket, and Arthur himself have sight qualities, but the visually explicit diction is color-based.

Sketch Two: “Roosters”

The poem “Roosters” is an anti-war poem written during the Second World War. As “First Death in Nova Scotia” above was unusual as a childhood auto-biographical piece for Bishop and unique in its inclusion of the author's mother, “Roosters” is unusual for Bishop given its political backdrop. The work, “a bitter invective directed at male aggressiveness (the most acid poem in her oeuvre)” (Schultz 135), contains metaphors that are most obvious at the wartime level. Jeffrey Powers-Beck notes that Bishop “lashed out at strutting, crowing militarism. She mocks the aggressors in images of roosters: the cocks' proprietary and insistent crowing, their ostentatious and bloody fighting, their control and sacrifice of “hen's lives,” their stupid conceit and will to power, and their utter indifference toward their victims” (82). Powers-Beck further notes that Bishop “mocks military icons of valor: the smart uniforms, the rousing battle cries, the swirling cockfights in the skies, the tacticians' multi-colored maps, and the defense of wife and home” (82-3).

Despite Bishop's clear anti-militarism in the work, significant arguments have been made to counter an anti-war reading, ranging from the apolitical, “poetry that directly addresses wartime events is political, whereas poetry situated on the home front, like Bishop's well-known “Roosters,” for example, is undeniably unpolitical or at least privileged with less political value, even though that poem criticizes militarist masculinity” (Palattella 18) to “a war poem that splits between an opening indictment of masculine militarism and a final statement of Christian reconciliation” (Dickie, “Elizabeth Bishop” 7). However, this latter interpretation of a split or duality of theme, Margaret Dickie herself finds incomplete without the further exploration in reading the poem as additionally about gender and marriage, a point to which Betsy Erkkila extends to sexuality as well:

Insisting on the relationship between the cocks who “command and terrorize” women in the private sphere and the “senseless order” of war, militarism, and violence in the public sphere, “Roosters” is also a kind of veiled “coming out” poem in which Bishop registers her personal protest against the “senseless order” of marriage and heterosexuality that “floats/ all over town” and “gloats” over the bed of lesbian love . . . The speaker's questions protest against the scenes of private and public violation--of “unwanted love, conceit and war”--to which she is awakened by the heterosexual order of the rooster as cock or phallus. (295)

But as one of Bishop's most dissected poems, “Roosters” has eluded a sensory or similarly focused analysis. As “First Death in Nova Scotia” had Bishop deep in color and metaphor, “Roosters” is one of Bishop's most metaphorical works (at various levels), and one that also delves most consistently into sound, the reason for its inclusion here. As noted earlier, Bishop's

use of sound, in terms of frequency in her work, comes a distant second to sight, and her typical injection of sound is singular, covering a few consecutive but intense lines; however, in “Roosters” Bishop sustains sound and revisits it at various points in the poem. Although Bishop never produced anything resembling a “sound” poem (as conceptualized within the context of this project)--a poem primarily conveyed through the use of sound diction--here Bishop produces moments of sound infusion which convey the horrors of war hidden from sight. In this work, Bishop swaps generals and planes for roosters, and their bombs for crows and disturbing cries, the latter sounds being the initial focus of the poem's unfolding.

At four o'clock

in the gun-metal blue dark

we hear the first crow of the first cock

Bishop begins with a stanza containing sound in what is to become her most sound invoked poem selected. The first line establishes time, and time is used to track the sounds through the first three stanzas; here with the first crow at “four o'clock,” an echo follows “immediately” (second stanza), and “then” one from the fence (third stanza), and another “then one with horrible insistence.”

just below

the gun-metal blue window

and immediately there is an echo

With each stanza containing at least one sound reference, the sound words in these first five stanzas (hear, crow, echo, horrible insistence grates, flare, catch) include the literal and the metaphoric, although the literal is relative when the entire work is read as a metaphor to war.

These literal uses are “crow” and “echo,” while the metaphors within a metaphor are “grates” (synaesthetically delivered from touch, and modified by “horrible insistence”), “flares” (sight borrowed), and “catch” (another touch borrowing). Unlike the call to “hear” the “crow” and “echo,” the coding of the last four requires more closely considering Bishop's usage.

Although “grates” begins the simile “like a wet match” (that a wet match grates), it also sits apart, allowing for the simile to be only “like a wet match,” perhaps more apparent in that Bishop could have ended at “grates,” with no loss of a touch invocation. Grates is coded as auditory because of its context as a descriptor from the last line of the previous stanza, as taken together: “then one, with horrible insistence, / grates”; the grating is of the ear, a sound grating, and its “horrible insistence” only serves to further describe the this sound grating (as well, “horrible” and “insistence” could be parsed, arguing that while the insistence augments the sound grating, the horribleness only augments the insistence, that it stands not as “then one, horrible *and* insisten[t], grates”; yet, it reads more in fidelity of the moment as dual descriptors of the sound.

The coding of “flares” is less problematic as it moves from an extension of the metaphor “like a match” to an attachment to sound within the reality of the poem (i.e., “from the broccoli patch”). Isolating Bishop's complete thought, but with middle details stricken: “then one . . . flares” more clearly shows that the sound “crow” (the one in “then one”) indeed “flares” (and it is assumed as a crow, building on the assumption that the echo was the echo of a crow, as well the successive “then one” and this “then one”). The now existent flare (having emerged from the simile) “begins to catch” “all over town.” Consequently, “catch” is audible, spreading of the audible flare which ignited it.

off in the distance,

then one from the backyard fence,

then one, with horrible insistence,

grates like a wet match

from the broccoli patch,

flares, and all over town begins to catch.

Cries galore

come from the water-closet door,

from the dropping-plastered henhouse floor,

“Cries galore” is clearly a sound coding. Other than two instances of “then” (above) and one “while” (below) time references are lost until the ending stanzas, effectively locking the scene to the immediate present. Of note, “rusting” is coded as visual metaphor (perhaps a metaphor of condition as well).

where in the blue blur

their rusting wives admire,

the roosters brace their cruel feet and glare

The larger context of hens suggests that “admire” can be visually detected as one might imagine chickens in the act of admiring, which would involve a more deliberate, gestural surveying involving the craning of the neck and head (as opposed to the much less perceptible shifting of human eyes). Further, that the roosters “brace their cruel feet” may suggest that “cruel” implies

visually striking sharp claws (even talon-like as more typical birds of prey) that are also visually explicit in their tight, tense “brace,” perhaps as tense (and as sharp) as the visually obvious “glare.”

with stupid eyes

while from their beaks there rise

the uncontrolled, traditional cries.

Deep from protruding chests

in green-gold medals dressed,

planned to command and terrorize the rest,

the many wives

who lead hens' lives

of being courted and despised;

deep from raw throats

a senseless order floats

all over town. A rooster gloats

This is an example of Bishop holding onto sound usage, with various sound diction (deep, raw throats, senseless order floats, gloats). The “raw” appears to indicate over-usage of the throat, and from which a “senseless order floats.” Three stanzas above is another concentration (beaks, rise, cries, the latter modified by “uncontrolled, traditional”).

over our beds
from rusty iron sheds
and fences made from old bedsteads,

Unlike the rust earlier within “rusting wives,” the rust in “rusty iron sheds” was not coded as essentially visually-explicit given its non-visual properties. And although not coded as auditory, the spacial words (over, from) track the rooster's gloat; they indicate where the “rooster gloats.” This tracking continues into the following stanza, and the rooster's gloat moves through these two stanzas despite the absence of sound words.

over our churches
where the tin rooster perches,
over our little wooden northern houses,

making sallies
from all the muddy alleys,
marking out maps like Rand McNally's:

Both definitions of “sallies,” a stinging remark and a military assault aptly fit; indeed, more than the sounding “gloats” which stand in for bombs, the duality of “sallies” connects the metaphor and the real. The “marking out maps” at first reads as sound, given that Bishop has chosen the roosters' oppressive crows and cries as metaphor for bombs, so that the marking (like the deep gloat that traveled overhead through two stanzas) audibly marks the region; however, in the following stanza the maps are shown to be marked by “glass-headed pins.”

glass-headed pins,
oil-golds and copper greens,
anthracite blues, alizarins,

And the pins provide a burst of visual color, and exotic color given Bishop's typical strategy of coupling basic colors together when a basic one alone doesn't suffice.

each one an active
displacement in perspective;
each screaming, "this is where I live!"

Here the sound invocations switch to those who had, in the prior stanzas, been bombarded by the rooster "crows," "cries," "gloats," and "sallies." The residents first are given voice through the multi-colored "glass-headed pins" which mark war maps, each in reality "an active displacement," each "screaming, 'this is where I live!'"

Each screaming
"Get up! Stop dreaming!"

Roosters, what are you projecting?

The pins continue screaming, with Bishop's dialogue continuing to contain pleas of reason. Although Bishop stops the quoted dialogue, the verbal counter, the plea for reasoning continues from the last line and into and throughout the next stanza, giving it a verbal quality (despite the absence of explicit sound diction).

You, whom the Greeks elected
to shoot at on a post, who struggled
when sacrificed, you whom they labeled

“Very combative . . .”

what right have you to give

commands and tell us how to live,

“Very combative” is sound coded as a verbal label (per Bishop's prior ending line), while “commands” and “tell” return sound to instances within lines, and the opening line below of “cry” injecting the double call of “here!” is the end of sound until “sung” several stanzas down.

cry “here!” and “here!”

and wake us here where are

unwanted love, conceit and war?

Although scant with visually-explicit diction (marked), the next stanzas are filled with visually-
implied details, particularly the events taking place in the sky.

The crown of red

set on your little head

is charged with all your fighting blood

Here the “crown of red” is described as coursing with “fighting blood,” its pulsating, “charged” quality suggesting a strong visual.

Yes, that excrescence

makes a most virile presence,

plus all that vulgar beauty of iridescence

Now in mid-air

by two they fight each other.

Down comes a first flame-feather,

and one is flying,

with raging heroism defying

even the sensation of dying.

Other than “crown of red” and the protrusion of “excrecence” (both above), the rooster analogy is thread by varying uses of “feather,” such as “flame-feather” (above), “bloodied feathers” and “metallic feathers” (both below).

And one has fallen

but still above the town

his torn-out, bloodied feathers drift down;

and what he sung

no matter. He is flung

on the gray ash-heap, lies in dung

Although there is only one instance of sound invocation within this series of stanzas, the “sung” is significant, as an instance of sound coding but more as the singular moment that a Bishop rooster is situated as vulnerable, its death as sad and warranting empathy; and not alone as the line “flung / on the gray ash-heap, lies in dung” continues into the following stanza: “with his dead wives / with open, bloody eyes.” As the poem's most heightened moments are written audible, it may be significant that this revelation turns on sound and song.

with his dead wives
with open, bloody eyes,
while those metallic feathers oxidize.

In its remaining stanzas, the poem moves into direct philosophical confrontation through historical and allegorical referencing:

St. Peter's sin
was worse than that of Magdalen
whose sin was of the flesh alone;

of spirit, Peter's,
falling, beneath the flares,
among the “servants and officers.”

Old holy sculpture
could set it all together
in one small scene, past and future:

Christ stands amazed,
Peter, two fingers raised
to surprised lips, both as if dazed.

In the above stanza, the raising of two fingers is not necessarily visually-explicit, as “Christ stands amazed” is not only knowable--both the standing and the amazement--through sight;

however, the moment is flanked by “one small scene” in the preceding stanza and by “But in between / a little cock is seen / carved . . .” in the following, therefore a visual reading is warranted.

But **in** **between**
a little cock is **seen**
carved **on** a **dim** column **in** the travertine,

explained by *gallus canit*;
flet Petrus **underneath** it,
there is inescapable hope, the pivot;

yes, and **there** Peter's tears
run **down** our chanticleer's
sides and **gem** his spurs.

Tear-encrusted thick
as a medieval relic
he waits. Poor Peter, heart-sick,

still cannot guess
those cock-a-doodles yet might bless,
his dreadful rooster come to mean forgiveness,

a new weathervane
on basilica and barn,
and that outside the Lateran

there would always be
a bronze cock on a porphyry
pillar so the people and the Pope might see

that event the Prince
of the Apostles long since
had been forgiven, and to convince

all the assembly
that “Deny deny deny”
is not all the roosters cry.

The rooster analogy is threaded above with instances of “bronze cock,” “cock-a-doodles,” the Latin “*gallus*,” and the medieval “chanticler,” “weathervane on a basilica and barn,” “spurs,” and one direct “dreadful rooster.” In a spot of vocalization, “deny” is “not all the roosters cry.” The ending stanzas capture the next morning, the fighting of the night done, and are a return to the once tranquil setting so suddenly disturbed in the poem's opening.

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?

The broccoli patch is returned to and detailed “gilding from underneath . . . leaf by leaf” and other smallnesses (“tiny floating swallow's belly”) as there is opportunity now (and daylight) to survey. Time references are slowly strung through (morning, night, day, now) and soft visuals (low light, gilding, gilding, pink), though haunting, make for a serene but traumatized silence.

gilding the tiny

floating swallow's belly

and lines of pink cloud in the sky,

the day's preamble

like wandering lines in marble,

The cocks are now almost inaudible.

The sun climbs in,

following “to see the end,”

faithful as enemy, or friend.

In the final two stanzas the visuals lengthen and the ending line profoundly notes the time's ambivalence. Despite the marks, there is no auditory quality for “to see the end,” but the only direct reference to the roosters regards their aural absence: “The cocks are now almost inaudible,” emphasizing “with horrible insistence” the impact of their sound. Bishop's priority, other than capturing the details, may have been rhyme, but the result is an enmeshment of these details, where metaphor flows into reality, itself metaphor.

Coding Implications

Coding in “Roosters” allows the intricate sound use to be revealed and remain revealed. There is first the act of coding, which exercises awareness of sound, to be “on the look out for” sound invocations in any guise, particularly those contained within diction typically reserved for another sense, and there is the act of reading coding, which allows the sensory designation to be maintained despite additional sensory interference. For example, returning to the stanza,

grates like a wet match
from the broccoli patch,
flares, and all over town begins to catch.

it is not difficult to imagine, without coding, slipping “flares” and “catch” into a visual reading (unlike “grates” which has a culturally negative sound inference). Even in holding onto the echo quality introduced two stanzas prior, the reader may come to conceive it as a nebulous visual entity with the infusion of “flare” and its combustion in “catch.” Perhaps this is Bishop's intent, to blur sound into visual representation, so that one visually imagines the echo flaring and catching further; however, the effect is originally based in sound, in the echo itself. Coding acts to not only recognize and isolate unique sensory uses of diction, but to insulate these occurrences

from more culturally privileged uses; this would be the case for any poem, but particularly for works by poets who either typically use (or are read to use) more privileged senses, such as Bishop.

Although coding here assists in separating and preserving the aural contributions of Bishop's sound diction and imagery, coding does not necessarily change the interpretation the poem in its entirety, as the impact of coding is dependent upon the sensory use within the work. Coding can reveal which sense sets the stage, which in Bishop is the visual, as no other senses ever truly challenge sight as a dominant reading. Coding "Roosters" is not to argue that this is a Bishop "sound" poem--the aural, despite its bursts, does not carry through the entire poem and neither does it set the stage for primarily a sound reading as too often there are moments of visually-explicit detail as well as historical imagery, particularly through the middle stanzas, which do suggest at least an oral telling. Rather, that this poem showcases Bishop's most intricate use of sound, yet is significantly silent at points throughout, provides a sustained example of Bishop using the aural qualities of sound diction while not exaggerating Bishop's use of sound in the context of her work and sensory use in general.

Sketch Three: "The Monument"

In "The Monument," the subject is a group of wooden boxes stacked against a background of sky, an ekphrastic image similar to a wood rubbing by Max Ernst. Ernst's two-dimensional frottage drawing inspired Bishop to render in verse a similar image. The poem is primarily voiced by a speaker who admirably describes the monument, while a present, unadmiring and unimpressed audience--increasingly put off and frustrated by the sight--interjects objections (marked as quotations by Bishop). Among the literary, poetic treatments of objects,

James Longenbach historically situates Bishop's monument within the contemporaneous modernist movement surrounding Bishop as well as extending its philosophical reach into the meaning of art itself:

This defense of a “useless” artifact [“The Monument”] is a quintessential document of the 1930s--the decade in which the kind of modernist abstraction exemplified by Bishop's monument first came under attack . . . Yet Bishop's monument differs from other artistic icons (Keats' urn, Yeats' golden bird, or even Stevens' humble jar in Tennessee) in that it is made of wood, organic and decaying. Though it is more lasting than sea or sand, it does not offer refuge from reality. The monument is flawed, a little ridiculous, and undeniably human-made; its “crudest scroll-work says 'commemorate,’” suggesting that it is a monument to the potential grandeur of human folly and failure . . . “The Monument” is not so obviously marked as a poem of the thirties; but it asks more rigorous questions about the relevance of art and imagination . . . (473)

And unlike Shelley's pedestal ruins, the ancient and worn condition of Bishop's monument is a wonder to the poem's speaker. Indeed, as Diane Mehta notes, “In the poem it is presumably we, the audience, who ask the narrator why we were brought there to see it, and what it can prove. Bishop suggests that the structure wants to be a monument in order 'to cherish something.' What, we ask ourselves, do we cherish? Bishop's answer to the riddle of the monument is this: 'It is the beginning of a painting, / a piece of sculpture, a poem, or monument, and all of wood’” (73-4). Mehta's reading positions this monument, this beginning, in direct contrast to the ending inherent in Shelley's humbling ruins.

While the dialogue of the poem--the exchange between the admiring speaker and the frustrated companion--typically is not of primary interest (this being the monument itself) by those examining the poem, Bonnie Costello credits the conversational qualities of the poem for its success: "Bishop disorients the viewer by conflating several points of view into one surface as [Max] Ernst himself did with images. 'The view is geared / (that is, the view's perspective) / so low there is no "far away," / and we are far away within the view' (CP, p. 23). 'The Monument' works because of the immediacy of dialogue and richness of thematic material" (364-65).

As often as "The Monument" is discussed, the primary focus is on a deeper meaning of the monument rather than the strategies Bishop employs in its conveyance to the reader, although Richard Mullen in his spacial focus (cited above, in Chapter Two) nearly ventures into a sensory reading. It is perhaps expected that a poem despite being touted for its descriptive qualities has them bound and secondary to meaning; even Nancy McNally's excellent overview of the poem, which consists of approximately thirteen hundred words addressing the poem's irony of "ugliness," contains no sensory exploration, despite its inclusion within her article entitled, "The Discipline of Description"--this is not to argue that her descriptive analysis is incomplete--indeed it appears exhaustive to her point and at her level of description; rather, a poem which must orient the reader, and does so successfully, warrants its structure and contents examined at the sensory level, a point of analysis which includes spacial diction and its coordinates--here, within a poem celebrated for its subject, a structure.

Like all selections within this chapter, "The Monument" shows a concentration of sense diction, in this case "spacial"; unlike the above two selections which exhibited Bishop's thick use of metaphor and unusual (for Bishop) uses of color and sound, "The Monument" represents what

is typical in Bishop, her celebrated, methodical movement over a subject, albeit here in a highly concentrated form. The poem is sketched and included as an example of Bishop's maneuvering through a collection of detail from a stationary, static object (a moving object follows in the next selection). Other senses are present, notably bursts of sight diction, but sound frequency is complicated in how to interpret the audience, which Bishop situates as a presence through quotation marks; there is an illusionary quality to the audience, which is actually gleaned from the speaker's voice, not the audience's--although the speaker and audience view the monument, and although the audience asks direct questions of the speaker, the speaker's voice--even as response--reads as disconnected from the audience in the poem; indeed, the speaker reads as educating the true reader (us) more so than the complaining voice within the poem. The resulting effect resembles ancient philosophical dialogues, where the relatively naïve participant's role, at times the participant's very existence in the dialogue, was to create the exchange (that time diction describes the monument as "ancient" perhaps further strengthens this interpretation). The complication for coding is whether the audience's "dialogue" is present and/or audible or whether it is dialogue within the mind of the speaker, i.e., as memory or construction; coding here was deemed inconclusive, and therefore the dialogue, unlike the obvious audible presence in "Roosters," was not coded as sound.

Beginning with the present-centering "Now," the poem combines this with the questioning "can you" to immediately pull the audience into the main speaker's gaze. The "Now" also has a spacial quality, as if it indicates the audience has been moved into view. If one's conception of monument material is stone, marble, or granite, that this is of wood first hints at the

unusualness of the object. The main speaker's first stab at overall description reads confidently but is immediately corrected, or improved, with “No. Built / like . . .” ending with a surer image. (Note: As the poem has few stanza breaks, the commentary is interjected at transitions in Bishop's focus.)

Now can you see the monument? It is of wood
built somewhat like a box. No. Built
like several boxes in descending sizes
one above the other.

Each is turned half-way round so that
its corners point toward the sides
of the one below and the angles alternate.

The simplicity of the first stanza “several boxes in descending sizes / one above the other” quickly moves toward increasing complexity in the second, and as indicated by the spacial words repositioning the initial implication of symmetry.

Then on the topmost cube is set
a sort of fleur-de-lys of weathered wood,
long petals of board, pierced with odd holes,
four-sided, stiff, ecclesiastical.

Despite that the monument is three-dimensional sculpture, potentially tactile as well as visual, the approximate (“a sort of”) “fleur-de-lys” is such a visual reference as to warrant a visual coding (similar to “hirsute” above). Spacial words, other than identifying the “top-most” position in the

first line, are absent as the stanza becomes a list of detail never moving from the “sort of fleur-de-lys”; the descriptions of “weathered wood,” “long petals of board,” and “pierced with odd holes” have no visually-explicit diction (such as “hirsute” or “fleur-de-lys”) and are not visually-exclusive to the sculpture; however, given the setting Bishop has staged, particularly in the apparent distance between speaker and subject, the stanza (and the entire poem) can be read visually despite the gaps in visually-exclusive diction.

From it four thin, warped poles spring out,
(slanted like fishing-poles or flag-poles)
and from them jig-saw work hangs down,
four lines of vaguely whittled ornament
over the edges of the boxes
to the ground.

Above, Bishop returns to details which require locating description before suddenly panning out (below) into the foreground of the object. The spacial uses of “against” coupled with three uses of “view” with one “perspective” appear to situate the monument as picturesque more than sculptural. In the last two lines, “low” is marked spacial as it indicates position and the first quoted “far away” signals an approximate use rather than an audible one.

The monument is one-third set against
a sea; two-thirds against a sky.
The view is geared
(that is, the view's perspective)

so low there is no “far away,”

and we are far away within the view.

Below, Bishop pulls the view to the background of the object, using spacial terms to describe and situate the boards which lie “out behind” the monument, and moves to more visually-explicit terms in describing the sky.

A sea of narrow, horizontal boards
lies out behind our lonely monument,
its long grains alternating right and left
like floor-boards--spotted, swarming-still,
and motionless. A sky runs parallel,
and it is palings, coarser than the sea's:
splintery sunlight and long-fibred clouds.

To this point, the stanzas have produced a silent poem; there is no sound coding, and this absence is ironically noted in the first line which suggests a present audience. Below is the first occurrence of dialogue, but whether it is inner monologue or audible to a present audience (the one which the speaker positioned into viewing the monument at the very beginning) is questionable at this point.

“Why does the strange sea make no sound?

Is it because we're far away?

where are we? Are we in Asia Minor,

or in Mongolia?”

An ancient promontory,
an ancient principality whose artist-prince
might have wanted to build a monument
to mark a tomb or boundary, or make
a melancholy or romantic scene of it . . .

“But that queer sea looks made of wood,
half-shining, like a driftwood, sea.

And the sky looks wooden, grained with cloud.

It's like a stage-set; it is all so flat!

Those clouds are full of glistening splinters!

What is that?”

It is the monument.

But as the sections continue, the turn-taking between narration and dialogue, and their contrasts in knowledge, tone, and appreciation (and therefore voice) of the above now suggest that the dialogue is external to the speaker--that this viewing of the monument, though shared, is divergent across two minds (and not inner monologue as the voice takes own more divergent characteristics through the expanding dialogue). If it were not for the poem's opening line, the dialogue might read as a summation of unknowing, unappreciating thoughts the speaker has encountered in regard to similar sights, but that first line argues a presence (although ambiguity also allows for reader to be present, that the dialogue anticipates a reader's objections). The

poem's orientation reverses, with the dialogue first responding to the landscape of the monument. The speaker has moved the audience from the monument to its surroundings, and now the audience comments on this environment above and moves into the monument below.

“It's piled-up boxes,
outlined with shoddy fret-work, half-fallen off,
cracked and unpainted. It looks old.”

--The strong sunlight, the wind from the sea,
all the conditions of its existence,
may have flaked off the paint, if ever it was painted,
and made it homelier than it was.

The contrast deepens as the views further separate, and the dialogue, now panning into the monument itself, reveals the audience as unimpressed. The speaker defends the monument's appearance, from a reference point appreciating its age (“ancient” vs. the dialogue's “old”) and longevity despite the elements (rather than judging it because of them). And what the speaker admits to not knowing, indicated by the qualifiers “may” and “if” regarding paint, situates the speaker, despite the other specific knowledge here, as a knower of such things. Further, that the audience is represented by dialogue but the speaker narrates, begins to emphasize the cerebralness of the speaker, and the talky quality of the other.

“Why did you bring me here to see it?
A temple of crates in cramped and crated scenery,
what can it prove?”

I am tired of breathing **this** eroded air,

this dryness **in** which the monument is cracking.?”

Despite still referencing the larger environment (scenery, air), the dialogue moves into spacial cues of closeness (here, cramped, this, this) as opposed to the distant spacial cues within the beginning dialogue: “*that* queer sea,” “*those* clouds,” and “What is *that*?” (emphasis added).

Although these spacial words often may seem inconsequential, here they pivot the change from a distanced viewing with “that” in a bemused tone, to one of “this” in an increasingly annoyed and possibly anxious reaction. As the dialogue lapses into complaint, the speaker does not respond directly to the protests, rather the speaker appears to only contemplate the response. This is immediate but maintained throughout the remainder of the poem, the dialogue of the audience having made its last appearance.

It is an artifact

of wood. Wood holds together better

than sea **or** cloud **or** sand could by itself,

much better than real sea **or** sand **or** cloud.

The speaker, now seemingly alone, begins to give the monument life.

It chose that way to grow and not to move.

The monument's an object, yet **those** decorations,

carelessly nailed, **looking** like nothing at all,

give it away as having life, and wishing;

wanting to be a monument, to cherish something.

The crudest scroll-work says “commemorate,”
while once each day the light goes around it
like a prowling animal,
or the rain falls on it, or the wind blows into it.

The sight words in this poem string down through poem, particularly in the sections of the speaker's narration rather than the audience's dialogue; except for one section of dialogue (of distanced viewing), the lack of explicit sight words in the dialogue mirrors the audience's lack of appreciation for the monument. With coding, the majority of the poem's sight words are easily marked, but the coding in the above two sections requires elaboration. The “give it away” as related to the decorations was coded as synonymous with “reveal visually.” The coding of “scroll-work says “commemorate” is slightly more questionable; it was read with practicality in mind, as although scrolled wording could be accessed by touch, the monument is never accessed in this manner (and the one touch word “coarser” refers to details within the sky, and the marks around “commemorate” do not indicate voice). The speaker now moves into contemplating its interior:

It may be solid, may be hollow.
The bones of the artist-prince may be inside
or far away on even drier soil.
But roughly but adequately it can shelter
what is within (which after all
cannot have been intended to be seen).

It is the beginning of a painting,
a piece of sculpture, or poem, or monument,
and all of wood. Watch it closely.

Coding Implications

Coding “The Monument” reveals how Bishop orients the reader, how the monument, as physical subject, is transferred into words and lines and poetry. Bishop strings spacial cues down through physical coverage, navigating the reader over the surface of the monument, and even through its backdrop. Coding poems which incorporate maneuvering the reader's gaze particularly reveals smaller prepositional diction that often goes unappreciated by many, educators, linguists, and intricate writers being expected exceptions. “Above,” “below,” “that,” and “this” are among vocabulary often taken for granted, words necessary to position the real vocabulary of actions, objects, and higher concepts (the stuff of vocabulary texts), and although Bishop extends into “descending,” “horizontal,” “alternating,” and “parallel” these may fail noticing, despite their number and necessity. Coding, both the act of coding and reading through it, surfaces the architecture of spacial diction. Multi-sensory coding raises critical spacial diction to the level of other sensory diction as it sits in code, as equally sought, tracked, and highlighted as its sensory counterparts. Similar to Bishop revealing the construction of the monument, multi-sensory coding reveals the critical construction of Bishop's verse in regard to orientating the reader.

Of all the senses coded in this project, the spacial, particularly in its use of closed-class vocabulary at the prepositional level, may be the most consistently benefited by multi-sensory coding. As the spacial element becomes teased out by coding, not only does the spacial

architecture of description become revealed but stands as a framing model for navigating space and engaging in ekphrasis with diction, line, and verse. Here the opportunity for pedagogical strategies extends beyond capturing multiple senses and honing their sensory detail. That Bishop's vocabulary utilizes the elementary basics of spacial referencing (e.g., "in" and "on") alongside less basic, more varied terms (e.g., "horizontal" and "descending"), is not only a lesson in exactness and advanced spacial diction, but about effective style as well; here in Bishop an accessible mixture of elementary and advanced spacial diction serves as the guiding foundation underlying a composition of ekphrasis. Bishop's spacial vocabulary is functional but varied, similar to injecting dramatic writing with alternatives to "Elizabeth said": Elizabeth insisted, protested, laughed, shouted, whispered. The coding method literally highlights how low profile, elementary language and concepts create secure paths through which higher profile description travels and is understood.

In addition, the sheer prevalence of spacial diction in Bishop as revealed in the coding demonstrates how often Bishop is moving across the surfaces of her subjects, and this preponderance can be seen in opening stanzas of the "The Monument." Only spacial diction outnumbers sight diction in Bishop, although the source of the spacial perception is typically sight, whether in Bishop setting a visual stage or through explicit diction in proximity of the spacial referencing.

Sketch Four: "Sandpiper"

Bishop's "Sandpiper" is a different poem of observation; here there are two objects, a sandpiper and an ocean, neither static, both moving as the speaker tracks their location through spacial cues. A short work, it nevertheless highlights Bishop's ability to capture moving subjects.

As Bishop's lingering on both "The Monument" and its backdrop helped produce its length, the brevity of "Sandpiper" matches the pace of the subject (although both works ponder matters beyond their subjects).

In considering the sandpiper's actions, Susan Rosenbaum makes a connection between Susan Stewart's critique of miniature exhibitions in literature and Bishop's sandpiper:

Stewart argues that "attempts to describe the miniature threaten an infinity of detail that becomes translated into an infinity of verblivity. Language describing the miniature always displays the inadequacy of the verbal" (52). Bishop's poem "Sandpiper" (CP) is an excellent example of this strategy. The sandpiper (a piper or singer of sand) is a "student of Blake," but rather than describing the world in a grain of sand (as in Blake's "Auguries"), the sandpiper with his beak to the ground is destined to provide an endless catalogue of detail, for there is "no detail too small." (92 n44)

Illustrative as an endnote, Bishop's "Sandpiper" is often mentioned in passing, and then typically for its literary allusion, the bird's portrayal as "a student of Blake." In the face of Stewart's concern, Bishop's commands the potentiality for an "infinity of detail" and appears to avoid the danger of an "infinity of verblivity" both externally, as the poem itself is among her shortest, and, internally, as the speaker leaves the beach scene before the sandpiper; on the latter, the reader is left to only imagine the sandpiper scouring the beach ad infinitum.

Similarly, Bonnie Costello briefly visits the poem, reading a message into the sandpiper regarding the human condition:

Bishop's animals represent human fallibility as often as the possibilities for heroism. She imagines, in fact, how the world would look to us did we share the sandpiper's point of view, as figuratively we do. Yet the poem insists on particularity, and ends much as a Moore poem might, in a list of facts: "The millions of grains are black, white, tan, and gray, / mixed with quartz grains, rose and amethyst" (CP, p. 153). We would see this ourselves had we the sandpiper's scale of vision (144).

Yet through Bishop, we do have the sandpiper's scale of vision, as well as the details, here the colors Costello pulls from the poem's ending two lines. The poem seems to attract concerns about overly detailing, a charge not as consistently applied to other Bishop poems--from William Pritchard: "From Randall Jarrell on down, every critic has praised her for regarding, like the sandpiper, "(no detail too small)." Jarrell's italicized *I have seen it* was taken as conferring upon her an unambiguous compliment. Yet a passion for detail may have its possible overkill. The critic James Wood, writing about prose fiction, notes that while he relishes and consumes "detail," he also chokes on it (327). However, Rosenbaum further explores this anxiety found in Pritchard and Stewart, and, although not directly utilizing the "Sandpiper," situates both the critique and counter in regard to Bishop:

Stewart, for instance, argues that the miniature reifies the bourgeois interior, that its scale signifies a version of experience "which is domesticated and protected from contamination" and that the miniature souvenir permits a nostalgic cultivation of authenticity (45, 69, 133-139). However, miniaturization as a form of institutional critique draws on our expectations about scale and possession so as

to unsettle them: it is precisely the acquisitive perspective of the bourgeois subject, upheld by its collections, that these artists seek to expose and denaturalize from within. The miniature exhibition is peculiarly qualified to expose the forces that miniaturize it, that seek to determine its size and value: the miniature permits a hand-hold on the gigantic. (87)

This “hand-hold on the gigantic” could be read within the “Sandpiper” as grasping of meaning through a sandpiper's dance with a tide. As will be shown in separating and tracking the spacial movements of the sandpiper from those of the ocean, that the tide dictates and is the primary mover within the poem reinforces the use of the miniature exhibition (a demonstration not unlike sensory analysis) to, as Stewart states, “expose and denaturalize from within.”

The roaring alongside he takes for granted,
and that every so often the world is bound to shake.
He runs, he runs to the south, finical, awkward,
in a state of controlled panic, a student of Blake.

Although visually-explicit diction is scant, the poem's context is visually implied--the observation of a perpetually running sandpiper along an encroaching beach. The only sound throughout the poem comes from the ocean, its “roaring alongside,” and the beach which “hisses like fat.” Other than the present tense of verbs, time is only explicitly referenced twice in the phrase “every so often” (above) and “then” (below), both in reference to the will of the world, that it occasionally is “bound to shake” and that it moves through being “mist” then “minute and vast and clear.” The spacial and directional terms serve to situate the sandpiper in relation to the

ocean, which he is “alongside” and running “south,” with “shake” coded as spacial due its referring to shifting “the world” of the sandpiper.

The beach hisses like fat. On his left, a sheet
of interrupting water comes and goes
and glazes over his dark and brittle feet.

He runs, he runs straight through it, watching his toes.

The increasing occurrence of spacial terms to orient becomes dense as the description begins to capture both sandpiper and tide moving, and although the sandpiper is nearly oblivious and the tide completely, to the other, each is dramatic in its own right. Some spacial and directional terms are easily coded (left, over, straight through) while the coding of the verbs “comes” and “goes” is more contextual: they reference the incoming and outgoing tide, movement which impacts the space of the sandpiper. Although the speaker never inhabits the sandpiper's view, at the very end of the last line, Bishop switches to considering the busy bird's perspective, his “watching his toes.”

--Watching, rather, the spaces of sand between them
where (no detail too small) the Atlantic drains
rapidly backwards and downwards. as he runs,
he stares at the dragging grains.

The speaker corrects the “watching his toes” of the prior line to watching the “spaces of sand” between the toes, and from the previous stanza the sight words are those of the bird's own sight (watching, watching, stares). The draining of the Atlantic, the tide, at the point of changing direction (“backwards and downwards”) is coded as spacial (as above with “comes and goes”

and below with “higher or lower,” as Bishop has variously described the changing tide three different ways).

The world is a mist. And then the world is
minute and vast and clear. The tide
is higher or lower. He couldn't tell you which.
His beak is focussed; he is preoccupied,

“[M]inute” and “vast” are coded as spacial because they refer to “the world”; the space the sandpiper is within shrinks or expands as the tide is “higher or lower,” despite that “He couldn't tell you which,” due apparently to his obsession (below).

looking for something, something, something.

Poor bird, he is obsessed!

The millions of grains are black, white, tan, and gray
mixed with quartz grains, rose and amethyst.

That the bird is visually “focussed”(sic/above) upon the ground, “something” is coded as visual, its tripling reinforcing the intensity of the “looking,” the line in turn reinforced by the empathic assessment, “Poor bird, he is obsessed!” The poem ends in a burst of colors, and their composing the “millions of grains” only adds to the sandpiper's discriminating task.

Coding Implications

In observing this scene, the speaker may be stationary (like in “The Monument”) but the sandpiper and the ocean are in constant movement (unlike “The Monument”). Here Bishop moves two subjects, and without coding it may easily be read as an equal play, that the ocean moves in and recedes with the sandpiper described as doing the same, a type of turn taking. But

with coding this is not the case--the ocean is the subject primarily attached to the spacial diction--appropriate given that the sandpiper is the one reacting to the other. Coding reveals that the dance is actually one-sided, that the main sense attributed to the sandpiper is sight, specifically his “watching” and “looking”; with coding the spacial diction, the sense of movement itself belongs primarily to the ocean, which through coding challenges the sandpiper as a kinetic entity. The poem ends in a burst of color references, but these are properties of the sand (and through the eyes of the narrator), so that the sight invocation of “watching” is essentially the only sensory aspect attached to the bird. But the bird moves--“runs”; however, other than once running “south” and once “straight through,” Bishop moves the ocean, providing its position through spacial diction; the bird moves in running, but its spacial position is in relation (in the scene and in the diction) to the ocean. Certainly there is enough in this poem (and in sandpipers themselves) to imagine the sandpiper similarly moving across a calm beach, but the bird's direction and changes in movement are here initiated in avoiding the ever-encroaching, ever-moving ocean.

This is a poem where coding challenges the interpretation, the reading of the sandpiper as the more kinetic object in this scene. And as the coding reveals the ocean as owning more spacial diction, it suggests that the poem may be representative of Bishop's own strategies as a poet. The sandpiper moves as need be, more in response to the environment, and in effect the environment dictates the location and perspective from which the piper busily observes and collects, obsessively and singularly by sight, “watching” and “looking for something, something, something,” perhaps for the little bits that appear to have more importance than even the ocean itself. Despite its concentration, the sandpiper keeps a distance from the ocean, never getting its feet wet for all its observing and collecting. The sandpiper and the ocean are tracked in order to

convey this miniature narrative but it is the little bits, the grains, which have their glorious colors cataloged. Coding assists in the interpretation that Bishop's fascination with the strategies of the sandpiper has a mirror quality.

Sketch Five: “Songs for a Colored Singer: IV”

The four poems which form Bishop's “Songs for a Colored Singer” attempt to convey the experiences of people of color, of African descent, in the Western world--or at least as deeply and as accurately as Bishop could given her whiteness and privileged background. Betsy Erkkila has extensively written about the poems, both as a singular entity and as individual works: “‘Songs for a Colored Singer’ speaks not only for but as and through a black blues-woman . . . [it] not only describes the material conditions of black, specifically black female, oppression but also calls for--and indeed prophesies--the transformation of black sorrow and tears into ‘seeds’ of black revolution, ‘beating, beating on the ground’” (296), while Margaret Dickie argues that “[T]he ‘colored singer’ here is hurt by human conditions rather than those specific to race.” Dickie extends Bishop's non-specificity as a possible insight into Bishop's psyche: “What Bishop calls songs for a ‘colored singer’ may be a way of identifying her own melancholy” (“Race and Class” 49). While Anne Newman insists that, “Bishop does not attempt to reproduce any black dialect through the narrator of these poems; instead she merely suggests the idiom in such a way that it reinforces the rhythm and the personal tone” (37). Unlike Newman and Erkkila, Dickie reads the poems not only as expressions of a more generalized suffering but also as more disconnected from their intended context of black experience:

The melancholy that pervades them is quite different from the blues that a coloured singer might be imagined to sing. These are not songs that allow the

singer to console herself, to hold off the sadness that is sure to overtake her, as blues would be . . . They are poems about women who have been hurt by social rather than racial circumstances. These poems were written after the 'social conscious days' of the 1930s. They evince an identity with the dispossessed, the servant or criminal classes, and what Thoreau called the degraded poor. (50)

Newman may be positioned as closing these apparent disparate readings by noting that, "Possibly "Song IV" loses some of the universality of visionary poetry in a context which makes the association with blacks explicit, but its position as the last poem in the group does add power and meaning to the images which seem overly esoteric in the very early poem. It is as though the rhythm of black music and the consciousness of black experience give the poet a frame-work of meaning for the images" (39).

As the fourth poem is the focus here, Newman notes that the fourth section (IV) of "Songs for A Colored Singer" ("Song IV") "has the powerful, passionate yet melancholy beat of a song which expresses the feelings of a group of oppressed people coming to a realization of their identity" (37) and later further notes that "the theme of oppression is expanded from this personal relationship to include a whole people" (39).

A poet known for her panning along landscapes, in "Song IV," Bishop demonstrates an intricate and sustained use of micro-images in a near fantastical setting. The poem has a dream-like quality throughout as objects within metaphors slip into the poem's reality, complicating coding in interesting ways. As shown in the previous chaptershop's use of sense, beyond sight, is typically momentary, and, with senses such as taste and touch, fleeting; but this poem was in part selected due to its incorporation of various senses: Sight and space, touches of sound and time, as

well as the self-questioning quality Bishop's frequent use of "or" often brings to her work. Newman has noted this as well: "The poem is formed around a series of questions which are in themselves a vital part of the vision. Bishop frequently uses the method of questioning in her poems, with the intent of leading to clear perception rather than giving definitive answers. In "Song IV" responses to the questions are given in images, and the vision has the beautiful but terrifying qualities of a dream" (40). But in reviewing coding results, "Songs, IV" is particularly striking in that nearly every line is "lit" by the presence of sensory diction. The poem is among Bishop's most consistent and sustained uses of sensory invocation, particularly in its inclusiveness beyond sight.

What's **that shining in** the leaves,
the **shadowy** leaves,
like tears **when** somebody grieves,
shining, shining in the leaves?

Bishop begins with a stanza long question, inquiring what shines in the leaves, coupled with the simile "like tears when somebody grieves." Ambiguity of subject is contained in the stanza, within beginning "What's" and the ending question mark, as "shadowy" in part connotes mystery and "somebody" is ambiguous as well. What is isn't apparent in the opening stanza alone is the eventual switch from the absolute unknown of "What's" to considering the initially metaphoric "tears" indeed what shines in the shadowy leaves. "Tears" in isolation is not necessarily sad or even human but it is introduced through "somebody grieves" and works its way into the second stanza, leaving the opening, seemingly real yet unknown subject (as the recipient of metaphor) behind.

Is it dew or is it tears,
dew or tears,
hanging there for years and years
like a heavy dew of tears?

Like the first, the second stanza is comprised of a four line question, here wrapped with “Is” and a question mark, with two exclusive “or’s” (it cannot be both a tear or dew) contained within. Although “tears” enters into the second stanza, it is immediately met and contested by “dew” as the unknown in the leaves. But Bishop playfully collapses both to end the question with, perhaps, a “heavy dew of tears.” That dew envelopes tears will allow dew itself to pass through into the third stanza.

Then that dew begins to fall,
roll down and fall,
maybe it's not tears at all.
See it, see it roll and fall.

The third stanza is not a direct question, though it contains the questioning “maybe” as the dew, having entered into this stanza from above, falls and rolls down, and for reasons unknown is questioned, not as dew, but has its identity questioned by its composition, tears. And after this injection of “maybe” the tears become “it” as the stanza ends with a double call to the visual “See it, see it roll.” This is the only stanza not to end its rhyme on nouns, giving it the most consistent movement of the stanzas.

Each brief time reference serves its respective stanza. Tears are brought forth “when” grief is present, “years and years” allows for the “heavy” build-up of tears into dew, and the

opening “Then” situates the unfolding of falling and rolling. In addition to the repetition of the objects within each stanza (leaves, tears, dew), Bishop repeats sensory cues in each: shining (sight) in the first stanza, years (time) in the second, and roll and fall (space) in the third; in the fourth below she will repeat “hear” (sound). The repetition of “beating, beating” could be considered sound (as coded here), but an argument could be made for touch. When read as sensory, it is unclear if the beating is indeed the sound heard or if beating produces a sound “that is not a tearful sound.” Regarding tracking what began under the shadowy leaves, the questioning itself of it being a tear or being comprised of tears is further in doubt by the observation, as well as the insistence to hear/witness its negation via “not a tearful sound.”

Hear it falling on the ground,
hear, all around.
that is not a tearful sound,
beating, beating on the ground.

Also in the above, the prior directive to “See” is replaced by one to “Hear,” with another double call to evidence the now “it” falling “all around,” but this seeming proximity is distanced by “that [rather than “this”] is not a tearful sound.” The object repeated here is “ground.” The above and below stanzas, to a lesser extent than the prior “roll and fall” but unlike the others, continues the movement. Taken together they wrap another moment of momentary pause, “beating on the ground” (above) while “lying there” (below).

See it lying there like seeds,
like black seeds.
see it taking root like weeds,

faster, faster than the weeds,

A double call switches back to the visual “See,” directed to the “it” which continues into this stanza. “[L]ike seeds” implies the “it” is not seed, and this thing, which is like but not seed, initially takes “root like weeds,” but then this comparison of the speaker’s is revealed as inadequate as the thing takes root “faster, faster than the weeds.” The third and fourth lines both end on “weeds” but the first is indeterminate as “like weeds” whereas the second is preceded by the definitive “*the* weeds” (emphasis added), thus again slipping metaphor into reality. The repetition of objects is shared by “seeds” and “weeds.”

all the **shining** seeds take root,
conspiring root,
and what curious flower **or** fruit
will grow **from that** conspiring root?

Here the “it” is suddenly seed, specifically “shining seeds” which calls back to the “shining” unknown of the first stanza. The repeated object is root. In question form at mid-point in the stanza, “flower” and “fruit” are introduced as exclusive choices (with “or”) as the new unknown eventuality from “that” (distanced) “conspiring” root, giving it sentience and will which fleshes into a “face” below.

fruit **or** flower? It is a face.

Yes, a face.

in that dark and dreary place

each seed grows **into** a face.

Questioning opens the stanza, but is immediately in the first line challenged by the confident refutation or elaboration that the thing is indeed a face, or seemingly confident as this is followed by the verification, “Yes, a face” (with the absence of simile). In descriptors that recall “shadowy,” the place seeds grow faces in a “dark and dreary” place. Below, in ending one of Bishop's most dream-like poems, the last line calls to reject the notion that this the above was indeed a dream

Like an army **in** a dream

the faces seem,

darker, darker, like a dream.

They're too real to be a dream.

Coding Implications

Coding in this poem initially reveals the presence of sensory elements throughout the poem; further, it exemplifies setting the “visual stage” by the very first line's “shining,” which is soon reinforced by “shadowy” and the return and doubling of “shining, shining.” Although Bishop does at further points direct the reader to “see,” once this visual stage has been set, coding shows that a visual telling does not require further sight diction to move forth, to read on in any sense other than the visual. But when the visual preference is broken into by another sense (in the third stanza), here the isolated but intense use of sound,

Hear it falling **on** the ground,

hear, all **around**.

that is not a tearful **sound**,

beating, beating **on** the ground.

the coding highlights the sustained and concentrated use of sound. The absence of sight coding also signals the deference to sound in this lone stanza, despite its location in a sight continuum of stanzas. Notice as well that spacial diction orients the sound, that coding reveals its presence and role outside of the visual examples given above in “The Monument” and “Sandpiper.” This auditory moment provides an example of Bishop's tendency to turn-take between the visual and the auditory, although in Bishop the auditory detail is typically, as here, in momentary bursts. The coding here illustrates how Bishop's observations are often conveyed, including those dream-like--a string of visual details with the momentary inclusion of the non-visual.

Although criticism has focused on the musicality of the poem and not just the admirable but questionable attempts at capturing black experience, “Song IV” is one of the best examples of Bishop using various senses beyond the aural and even beyond the visual. Coding reveals that Bishop's “Song IV” delves consistently across various senses, and not only in variation but in frequency as well. Most stanzas are well colored by the coding method applied here, and just perusing through the coded poem instantly shows the variation and frequency of sense use by Bishop. Among the codings, Bishop's use of questioning is striking and is as Newman notes (above) the framework on which the poem is built. However, the inclusion of “Song IV” as a sketch is to illustrate Bishop's ability to mingle the senses and to work through this mingling via multi-sensory analysis, not to position the poem as representative of Bishop's overarching strategy which is predominantly visual with occasional significant use of the other senses.

Sketch Six: “Insomnia”

In the short poem “Insomnia,” Bishop plays with space and time in another dream-like work, but here the moon is personified, as it engages with a bureau mirror, in turn setting off a

series of imaginative inversions. On the concept of inversion, the poem has been read by various critics (such as Jarraway) as an expression of Bishop's sexuality, and Steven Gould Axelrod provides a particularly concise yet dense overview of this interpretation:

[I]n “Insomnia,” originally published in 1951 at the height of McCarthyist homophobia, the speaker's meditation on the lonely moon becomes a reflection on her own same-sex desire . . . Bishop's speaker in “Insomnia” evokes female love-loss in a world “inverted,” a pun on the then-current term “inversion,” which signified homosexuality (see, for example, Caprio 133; Deutsch 332). Bishop's characters--two separated female lovers and the traditionally female moon--feel “deserted” in the surrounding (male, heteronormative) universe, which the moon goddess, in a decidedly unfeminine mood, would like to tell “to go to hell.” Here is female rage against a milieu in which “every aspect of same-sex love . . . came to be defined as sick” (Faderman 133), and at the loss of a love that arose despite and within those cultural conditions. Bishop brings the poem's grief to the fore at the very end, in a moment of characteristic rhythmic splendor. Anapests and iambs yield to two final spondees, giving stunning emphasis to an assertion or demand that lies in agonizing contradiction to the facts: “and you love me.” (6-7)

Axelrod's reading is as devoid of sensory detail as multi-sensory analysis here is devoid of interpretations regarding Bishop's sexuality, and although the two approaches possibly would have met through Bishop had the poet weaved sensory with sexuality, the contrast highlights the ideal for multiple approaches. David Young offers a somewhat different reading:

It's been suggested here and there that this poem's last word is Bishop's final gesture as a lifelong closeted lesbian, coming out as she also exits the world. That reading works as long as you don't hold the poem simply to an agenda of gay liberation. It's just one more meaning of the imagined release from life, but not part of a political or ideological agenda, at least not that I can see . . . The flash and spirit of the final image is wonderful, but it's also a kind of trick, a sleight-of-hand rather than a pronouncement of faith. I think the author wouldn't want us to forget that. (45)

Whether Axelrod or Young is closer to Bishop's intent (conscious or otherwise) is beyond the approach here, yet this elusiveness of the private poet (in contextual evidence and "sleight-of-hand"), can be viewed at the sensory level, particularly in Bishop's use of light and dark, both literally and metaphorically. As Jonathan Ellis argues, "In Bishop's imagination . . . a darkened room is nearly always a metaphor for the self (and the selfish poet) . . . The brightening sea or street, on the other hand, is usually representative of life and love outside . . . Bishop's preference for light over dark is obviously a matter of tone as well . . . Bishop frequently begins poems as the sun is rising" (138). Yet, as Diane Mehta has noted, "Part of Bishop's accomplishment is the way her sensuous, easygoing diction and naturalistic descriptions disarm us. In dark counterpoint to this is an unforgiving, Old Testament-flavored reality. If you look between the leaves, danger and uncertainty lurk in abundance" (74). "Insomnia" incorporates both the darkness of night and the light reflected off moons and mirrors, but here Bishop's sleight-of-hand may be that, unlike "The Monument" that primarily managed static space and the "Sandpiper" that pondered an everyday scene, "Insomnia" plays with space metaphorically. The poem is sketched and included

due to concentrated use of space and time, and, particularly, Bishop's frequent use of space in the tight quarters of this short work even produces an eventual cadence of spacial diction, particularly striking when coded.

The moon **in** the **bureau** **mirror**
looks **out** a million miles
(and **perhaps** with pride, **at** herself,
but she **never**, **never** smiles)
far and away **beyond** sleep, **or**
perhaps she's a **daytime** sleeper.

Bishop immediately plays with space as the moon, from “a millions miles” away, looks into the bureau mirror, and is personified further with sentience and perhaps “pride.” Space is critical in this poem about insomnia as the moon's distance is “far and away beyond sleep.” With coding, the “mirror” is coded as visual due to its primary use for reflecting images. The unusual spacial coding of “bureau” is due to its contrast with the mirror of the second stanza, which is indicated as horizontal in position, thereby highlighting the above bureau mirror as vertical.

by the Universe deserted,
she'd **tell** it to **go to** hell,
and she'd find a body of water,
or a **mirror**, **on** which to dwell.
So wrap up care **in** a cobweb
and drop it **down** the well

The second stanza invokes two possibly linked spacial directions, both metaphorically downward. The moon telling the universe to (“go to hell”) is the less sure as “to hell” may not be literal (in as much as it could be), but similar to other dismissing cliches, such as the weaker “get lost.” The dropping “down” of cares wrapped in a cobweb is clear. “[M]irror” again is invoked but rather than a vertical bureau position, the mirror appears horizontal as it is one of two choices “on which to dwell.” Striking out the choice clarifies the image: “she’ll find . . . a mirror, on which to dwell.”

into that world inverted
where left is always right,
where the shadows are really the body,
where we stay awake all night,
where the heavens are shallow as the sea
is now deep, and you love me.

The final stanza continues to play with space, as the cobweb dropped from the end of the second stanza makes its way into the first line of this stanza, giving the visual that it has literally dropped from above on the page. Through the cobweb's fall, Bishop enters into “that world inverted” which she details with four examples, all prefaced and anaphorically stacked by “where,” providing a cadence to end the poem. Along with opening “into” situating the space of the stanza, five of its six lines establish location (and the last line is a continuation of the prior line).

Time is played with in the first stanza, as the moon, despite perhaps viewing her reflection with pride, “never, never” smiles and that she may be a “daytime” sleeper. Bishop returns to time in the final stanza within her inverted world where (emphasis added) “left is

always right” and “we stay awake *all night*,” with a striking ending based on the inversion that the world “is *now* deep, and you love me.” The “now,” within this fanciful context, hints that only the opposites hold in the real world.

Coding Implications

In this short, dense poem, the coding here separates and brings forth the spacial and time diction from its enmeshment with metaphor, an aspect which may otherwise take center stage given the moon's personification and resulting imagery. But it is the ending spacial diction that is striking in beginning each of the five lines heading into the last. Although the four uses of “Where” are not necessarily revealed by coding as the repetition is notable, their position functions as and resembles (in profile) a spinal column, from which each assertion extends into the body of stanza. Here is an assured image of “into that world inverted.” Gone are the uses of Bishop's open “or” and “perhaps,” as used in the poem's prior two stanzas. Bishop's prior openness contrasts with the cadence of later certainty. The looseness of the opening stanzas turns sharp as Bishop heads into the closing line. The coding of this contrast helps its recognition, more readily bringing forth turns directly intertwined with sensory diction.

This last sketch shows Bishop consistently using sensory diction in a compact work, and the coding demonstrates the thickness in which the senses of space and time are covered. As Bishop's dominant sense is sight, spacial diction often follows, but here it breaks free, and at points intimately connects with time--another sense throughout Bishop (to a much lesser degree) but here wedded with space in constructing key moments. And although “Insomnia” contains Bishop's open quality found in moments throughout her work, here with words such as “perhaps,” the strength of the certainty within the last stanza is striking; the anaphoric cadence is

insistent--a moment unusual in Bishop's verse. But this unusualness of the ending stanza conversely highlights the typical Bishop pattern of attending observation with touches of questioning and openness subtly intertwined.

The sketches above show both the difficulties and decisions underlying the coding method, but also, through color separation, the revealing of sensory patterns, both within and across senses. The coding immediately reveals strings, concentrations, switches, absences, and the prevalence of sensory diction, and closer reading reveals the novelty, frequency, and the literal and metaphoric qualities of the sensory words themselves. Relationships and separations among differing senses are also evident.

An unexpected result of the selection is that the poems above challenge popular notions of Bishop. In "First Death in Nova Scotia" Bishop adjusts the "authentic" to craft a poem heavily themed in metaphorical color use and themes of royalty. In "Roosters" she chooses sound over sight as metaphor for the violence of war, and this work, not being held to surfaces and the "every day," is heavy in historical and allegorical references and philosophic thought; more generally but similar is the space spent historicizing "The Monument." The suspension of realities in "Songs for a Colored Singer: IV" and "Insomnia" show a Bishop deep in metaphor and borderline reality. And among Bishop's poems which attend to objects as if held in time is not the "Sandpiper."

The dual uniqueness of these selections--that the works stylistically break from common notions of Bishop, and that these poems are also among the best examples of Bishop delving into sense beyond the visual--suggests that Bishop was not only visually centered with sensory usage, but that when she breaks from pure reality she does so by experimenting with senses beyond

sight. It appears that when left to her imagination, when Bishop shut her eyes to recording the detail around her, senses beyond sight were engaged more fully and consistently than evident in the bulk of her corpus.

The above analysis and readings also lend themselves to pedagogical illustration, here in the form of close sensory reading, whether for appreciation, application, and composition. Bishop offers both readers and writers the framework to appreciate the telling of a visually assembled narrative, whether in setting a visual stage with choice sight references or in the stringing of visual details through a work to tighten a sighted reading. As with a painter's palette, Bishop mixes colors but leaves their combinations revealed as “greenish white” and “silver-gray,” a strategy that is perhaps both precise and instructive in maintaining accessible diction. Although not typical color use for Bishop, “First Death in Nova Scotia” models intricate color symbolism for reader and writer alike.

While it is Bishop's visual command that primarily situates her as instructive of sensory pedagogy, and although Bishop's sound use is relatively limited, her bursts of concentrated usage may be emulated and further sustained when desired. In particular, her sound invocations in “Roosters” model the power aural imagery can bring to line and verse. But what Bishop doesn't attend to is also a source of instruction: to begin at points where Bishop ends, to invoke food and drink but then elaborate with the quality of the experience--not necessarily extensively as if the poem is a “taste poem” or as if taste needs to center the work (although coverage is critical if either is indeed the goal). How Bishop mastered the visual can be explored to harness the olfactory, the gustatory, and the tactile. How Bishop mastered distanced observation can be

extended to capture temperature, or even pain or pleasure, or hunger and satiety, the senses not explicitly invoked in Bishop's own work.

Coding poems which actively lead the reader's gaze (“The Monument” and “Sandpiper”) reveals the prepositional contribution that often goes unnoticed by many except educators, linguists, and meticulous writers. Multi-sensory coding pulls out spacial diction to the level of other sensory diction as closed-class vocabulary sits in code alongside color, sound, and texture, all as sensorial contributors. Multi-sensory coding reveals the architecture of Bishop's verse that guides the reader through the poem as landscape, traversing more noticeable descriptive detail. This mapping of spacial diction, particularly at the prepositional level, may most benefit from multi-sensory coding, as it readily reveals the spacial aspect and contribution of navigating both surfaces and interiors. Elementary spacial vocabulary (e.g., “this” and “that”) mingled with more advanced diction (e.g., “parallel” and “alternating”) are lessons in function, variety, precision, and style. Coding spacial diction moves sensory analysis beyond capturing senses in order to mine for sensory description, as spacial emphasis instructs in the maneuvering of sensory details, as well as the subjects those details describe.

In line with greater appreciation of very subtle language aspects is Bishop's openness in her consistent use of the conjunction “or” and the punctuation of the question mark, which perhaps challenge the act of description as an exacting goal, that uncertainty may not only add to a rendering's air of authenticity but secure it. Bishop's points of open detail, where description is situated between choices, read as sincere eyewitness testimony, gaps and all. That Bishop consistently includes even brief moments of open detail and the injection of questioning within a

body of poetry famous for its exactness, reveals that Bishop's moments of precision and imprecision alike are points for instruction.

Later in life, Bishop became a teacher of poetry, and although it appears she was never quite comfortable with that role, her voice--through her poetry itself--continues to be a part of any standard 20th century canon as well as anthologized in classroom textbooks of literature and composition. The findings and context of this multi-sensory analysis of Elizabeth Bishop's poetic work can be combined with pedagogical aims. With a sensory analysis applied to Bishop, her works as continuing lessons extend the descriptive range.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: BISHOP'S SENSORIUM

In addressing the four main questions posed by this project, the first question--the patterns and sensual strategies in Bishop's work in relation to an expanded sensorium--a multi-sensory analysis of Bishop reinforces, poem by poem, line by line, the critical consensus that Bishop was a visual poet. Except for spacial diction, which tends to serve sight and increases when Bishop visually surveys a scene, no other sense, whether traditional or expanded, is as frequent or as meaningful as sight in Bishop. The general strategy of Bishop is to privilege the eye to an extent that non-visual use and patterns are overwhelmed, even in their relation and proximity to sight usage. And although glimpsed throughout her work, the other higher sense of sound occasionally appears concentrated over a few lines and is otherwise a brief injection and a distant second to the use of the visual.

Bishop shows that simply a mentioning of the visually-explicit is all that is needed to establish the visual gathering of information. Bishop can essentially set the stage by injecting key sight vocabulary such as "view" and "seen" to establish a visual perspective, at least in the environment of the surrounding lines, if not an entire poem. In this establishment of the visual, the majority of the poem need not be filled with sight diction to maintain a visual reading despite that the remaining majority of a poem's words be non-visual. As was shown and noted with "The Fish," a reader does not only begin seeing the fish upon hitting visual words, just as a reader does not stop seeing the fish in the absence of continuous visual information. In addition to seeding the visual, the larger context, such as surveying in such environments as "The Filling Station" argues for a visual reading as well.

Reading a sensory-coded Bishop poem shows that to wed sight with experience more extensively, visually-explicit diction may be strung through a work, so that consecutive lines map and reinforce a visual terrain. In coding, this appears as a visual string of sight detail that falls down through a poem, and these strings cement the perspective that the poem's information has been visually collected. Among the more interesting patterns within these strings is Bishop's use of color, perhaps the most visually dependent characteristic of a subject. Bishop limits her use of color references to their basic incarnations, so that in Bishop there is blue but not "navy" and, when blending color, there is blue-green but not "turquoise," as well as novel combinations that preserve their basic roots such as "purple-brown." This technique resembles a painter's palette on which basic colors may be combined, but one where the original base colors remain distinguishable in the resulting swirls. As well, Bishop uses color, at a minimum, literally, in that blue is blue in color whether or not there is imbedded symbolism, or, for example, the color red may additionally symbolize royalty, but at a minimum it is the color of the object itself; although, regardless, her use of color is at least sensually perceived at the visual level.

Although the significance of these findings includes revealing her patterns in rendering visual information (to include her interesting use of basic color), the most significant finding is the affirmation of Bishop as primarily a visual poet in her rendering of sensory detail. However, the findings only speak to her particular use of the senses in her poetry; the findings are not argued to be transferable to her prose, her letters, or the remaining minority of poems she did not clear as entering into her collected works; as well, the findings are not imagined to be indicative of poetry from any other writer, however strong a similarity in style to Bishop. Perhaps the most significant qualification is that the study does not assert that all of Bishop's poetry is visually

rendered; rather that visual description is the most dominant sense (in frequency and framing) throughout her corpus, both within and across her poems.

Turning to the other higher sense, sound can be found in Bishop, but hearing moments are often concentrated across a few lines, within a larger context more visually crafted. Unlike the ubiquity of sight, some poems have no sound invocation. But when the aural is significantly present, there is typically a burst of sound (although again, around instances of sight), and there is also the typical pattern of extending this aural effect for three lines. Coding separates sound from visual diction, revealing a turn-taking strategy of focus. Although limited in Bishop, sound at times signals a shift in focus however momentary, and coding preserves the contribution of sound in instances where Bishop mingles the two higher senses (as in “The Rooster”). Despite the relatively limited use of sound, it generally holds a much more significant presence in Bishop--particularly in its momentary shift in sensory focus--than the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch, which are attended to so briefly as to not disrupt the primary sensory focus of sight.

The significance of the sound coding centers on the detection of sound in areas otherwise dense with sight-based descriptors and in revealing Bishop's pattern of momentary concentrations of sound. In coding for sound, Bishop's occasional use of quotation marked lines raises the question as to what constitutes internal monologue or external dialogue, and whether the latter is codeable sound detail.

In addressing the second question--the extent to which the lower external senses are represented in Bishop's work--the senses of smell, taste, and touch appear at times in Bishop but so minimally as to warrant a broader interpretation as to what entails lower sensory diction (at

least in Bishop), and the need itself for an expanded definition demonstrates Bishop's near inconsequential use of these traditional, lower senses. Bishop uses the lower senses rarely in comparison to sight and even to sound. Smell, taste, and touch typically present as no more than one word invocations without any lingering or circling of sense for elaboration. A coding concern was the possibility of losing more indirect lower sensory details by holding these senses to the explicit parameters set with sight and sound, and although lower sense explicitness was not abandoned, the reach of lower sensory invocation was broadened slightly to include items perceivable by other senses yet in context were primarily interpreted as lower sensory (e.g., “kitchen” in the poem “Cootchie” as a taste invocation).

The sense of smell in Bishop occasionally is treated with multiple words, but these elaborations serve to highlight unpleasantness, and smell in Bishop is typically neutral or unpleasant. Given Bishop's distanced observation, smell was perhaps predictably less invoked than sound, but smell also allows distance (unlike taste and touch), and its absence was unexpected in environments where scents would be pervasive. With taste, as it has a dearth of diction in only five sensory words to describe taste: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, and the recently recognized umami, Bishop's limited use initially may appear partly attributable to language limitations, and although poets and writers certainly have the ability to work around these limitations, Bishop's rare break from conventional language partly counters this expectation. However, despite these considerations, how Bishop does invoke taste, yet limits its reach, is more significant--Bishop stops before describing how items actually taste, so that while the near absence of taste is notable, what is striking is the practical absence of taste itself even in moments when food and drink are present. Therefore, both smell and taste were limited despite the

presence of details which reasonably could be smelled or tasted. With touch, the sense has no concentrated location (as opposed to the concentrated locations of the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue), but although skin envelopes the body, the sense of touch is often invoked in the hands; therefore touch was expanded to include diction where hand contact appeared necessary, as in “We can stroke these lovely bays (“The Map”); here, “stroke” was coded as tactile.

Being of the body, these three senses require close proximity, and their absence is felt and interpretable as distancing. Given Bishop's reputation as a detached observer, lower sensory invocations were not expected at the level and frequency of sight, but the level of infrequency and their near inconsequential use was surprising given the additional aspect of Bishop's reputation, her penchant for minute detail contributing to realistic renderings. While touch's limited literal use was expected and the finding not a revelation, there appears to be no compulsion to describe textures even through the eye; the occasional moments of food and drink are commonly bereft of taste; and while smell typically requires closer proximity than hearing or sight, it does provide a distance--and yet it is absent in most Bishop settings; and when distance is occasionally traversed by smell, the end result is neutral or unpleasant. This last finding, as a capstone to the Bishop characteristics of lower sensory absence, suggests the ability to read an anxiety of proximity in Bishop's work, perhaps in origin or in balance to the strategy of distance. Perhaps readers, including critics, are lulled or satisfied by the Bishop's visual density, but the coding reveals the poverty of these intimate senses and the extent of their absence; the realization that in a filthy filling station no smells are registered, perhaps makes it less “dirty,” or at least less repugnant, but it also serves to make the poem less a conveyance of immersion.

The significance of these findings is centered on their limited use in Bishop. The most striking patterns in Bishop's use of each of the lower senses are the general absence of smell description in environments assumed odorous (along with the near absence of positive associations when smell is indeed invoked), the general absence of taste description when food and drink are noted, and the absence of tactile description even in moments of touching. The fleeting use of the lower senses augments Bishop's privileging the higher sense of sight and challenges her composition as having immersion qualities, unless visually-rendered environments satisfy the reader.

The third question posed by the project--the extent to which internal senses (temperature, pain, pleasure, hunger, thirst, time, and space) contribute or challenge the external senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) for space within a Bishop poem--is answered by the sensory coding: certain internal senses as here defined contribute while others do not, but none challenge the external senses in Bishop. Although the internal senses are variously present in Bishop's work, contributions tend to serve fuller external sense use, particularly sight.

Temperature diction was occasional in Bishop, but at times key in setting a stage similar to establishing a visual perspective. Similarly as well, Bishop descriptively uses temperature as she does color, in that she holds to the basics without much variation (e.g., multiple uses of "cold" rather than any occurrence of "frigid"). In line with her observational approach, temperature, as well as senses commonly perceived as orienting, such as time and space, were the expanded senses most found in Bishop. The significance of temperature is as a nontraditional but locatable sense experience in Bishop, despite its somewhat limited use here.

Pain and pleasure, as perceived below the surface, typically were not Bishop's direct subject; possibly as a result, these expanded senses were problematic to locate through diction. Although pain references were found, they were scant, and both pain and pleasure, particularly the latter in Bishop, require situational insight rather than locatable vocabulary specific to pleasure and pain (such as "joy" as pleasure vocabulary). Although Bishop is not an emotionless observer, she is also not an emotional one. Certainly there are the palatable feelings of unease ("First Death in Nova Scotia"), awe and appreciation ("The Monument"), disgust ("The Filling Station"), and excitement and joy ("The Fish"), but Bishop rarely directly states emotion, rather she shows it through responses; although a complication for coding, it attests to the tenant of good writing: to not tell but to show.

The significance of pain and pleasure is primarily as a limitation of the coding as applied to Bishop; however, as the study was exclusively on Bishop and not comparative, their continued inclusion in the coding schema may be warranted when examining a poetic style that explicitly invokes pain and/or pleasure diction.

Hunger and satiety fell within the limited use of taste, as food and drink barely registered in Bishop, and therefore the physical senses of hunger and satiety followed suit. It should be noted that more metaphorical, non-physical or emotional conceptions of pain, pleasure, hunger, and satiety also were frustrated in coding, in theory by Bishop's position as a distanced observer. Hunger (and thirst) was initially positioned as separate from taste-coding, but Bishop's limited taste usage and the resulting broadening of taste-coding subsumed hunger and thirst from being independent references within Bishop.

The significance in the lack of literal hunger, thirst, and satiety directly relates to the general absence of food and drink (an absence that also frustrated taste coding) in Bishop; the attempt to code more emotional interpretations of hunger and satiety were similarly frustrated, although this appears to have been due to Bishop's frequent role as a distanced observer and the absence of these concepts being used metaphorically by Bishop.

With time and space, time referencing was evident as well, particularly in concentrated moments of orientation, as evidenced in time's typical proximity to spacial diction, but time was far less prevalent than spacial referencing. Spacial diction, often due to its coupling with visual details, was the most evident expanded sense in Bishop; however, it typically served to assist visuals; indeed, unlike sound, which temporarily shifted the sensory focus from sight, spacial diction maneuvered sight, and the combination of sight and spacial diction attests to Bishop navigating a landscape of multiple visuals in orientation of the reader. The greater frequency of space to time suggested that Bishop's visual approach requires navigation of space more than time, particularly as time is often held fast as Bishop moves over her subjects. But at times the mingling of time and space words--against the effort to code explicitness--were the most difficult to separate in coding (even within the context of surrounding lines, time and space's resistance to separation suggested that physicists needed only to look at language to first consider their relation).

The significance of spacial coding is that despite its prevalence and frequent intertwining with visual description, interesting patterns of spacial diction emerged which revealed at times its own cadence and at times its navigation through stanzas otherwise relatively devoid of sensory detail; in these moments, spacial diction warranted exploration separate from other sensory data,

and its designation as closed-class diction versus the more typical, descriptive focus on open-class diction, highlighted the contribution of the coding itself. Although less frequent, time referencing as well had interesting moments of use and was present enough to warrant inclusion in the analysis model.

In addition to the lack of lower sensory detail, another unexpected finding was the frequency of Bishop's questioning voice in her work, an aspect particularly of interest to sensory description which, as with most description, assumes imagery built from various but certain detail. This aspect of questioning in Bishop has been noted by critics but the coding demonstrates its frequency, and the additional consideration and coding of the conjunction 'or' when serving the same purpose reveals this aspect of Bishop's voice as prevalent and fully developed as a strategy, whether conscious or not. Contrary to challenging Bishop's work as somehow inexact, her consistent use of the conjunction "or" and the question mark throughout her poetry in fact challenges that "exact" description be confident in every detail; Bishop's demonstration of openness at some point in nearly every poem--all the while providing a convincing visual observation--opens each moment to capturing the possibilities, rather than settling for one descriptive detail that fails to capture or is at risk of inaccuracy; indeed, this openness can be read as detailing of the highest priority. In this, Bishop opens ekphrasis as well. In translating one medium, one experience into another, Bishop abides imprecision when exact details escape memory or language--the former humanizing description, the latter accepting the limitations of the ekphrastic act.

The significance of this finding is the frequency in which Bishop poses questions, both within and across her poems, and the use of the conjunctive "or" when used to present a choice

of detail. Significant is Bishop's strategic use of these instances of open detail to perhaps counter-intuitively augment description through uncertainty and/or choice of detail. As well, the finding is significant in unexpectedly expanding the coding to consider punctuation and the closed-class "or" as impacting description in Bishop. In relation and relevance to sensory analysis, this openness challenges explicitness of sensory data, effectively allowing for multiple sensory possibilities without engaging in synaesthesia, and the resulting ambiguity relaxes and opens Bishop's otherwise tightly focused gaze. Much of Bishop harkens back to ancient ekphrasis in her utilizing the "powers of writing and inviting the audience to measure the power of verbal description against the visual" (Heffernan in Francis 10, at length above); but her moments of uncertainty complicate this act and affords the reader opportunities to consider multiple images, essentially leaving certain sensory information open for the imagination.

In addressing the fourth question--whether a more heterarchical, multi-sensory interrogation opens the poet's work to fuller sensory criticism and appreciation--the multi-sensory coding of Bishop's poetry tracks her points of visualization to reveal not only the consistency but the primacy of her visual approach throughout her work. Yet the coding also allows Bishop's non-visual sensory invocations to be readily accessed and assessed. The analysis here reveals how Bishop uses each of the five traditional senses as well as the expanded sensorium as defined by this project. With coding, Bishop's limited but effective uses of sound in momentary bursts are separated from the visual detail that typically surrounds them (that the visuals are often concentrated in and around sound invocations, further reveals a sensory turn-taking in Bishop's use of sight and sound, when in proximity to one another). The analysis here reveals that, although Bishop's poems are often works of every day experience, the base senses of smell, taste,

and touch barely register in Bishop's poetic voice and narrative, despite when speaker and story are enveloped by environments which invite lower sensory detail, whether that detail be alluring, repugnant, or simply existent. Although based on the literary synaesthetic approach of past critics, the coding shows that Bishop rarely engages in synaesthetic transfer, and Bishop's metaphors tend to be situational rather than at the level of isolated, sensory diction. Despite the consistent presence of the visual in Bishop's work, even visually laden works have momentary glimpses of another sense, so that a poem rarely presents as a consistent sensory expression throughout, and there is no sense that Bishop experimented with or prioritized any one sense in order to intentionally create a singular sense poem (including visual), such as a work that primarily experiments or purposefully speaks from one sense; for all the sound qualities of "Roosters," it is not primarily a sound poem, and although she imagined her "Songs for a Colored Singer" to be sung, this is evidenced in the rhythm rather than the type of sensory diction. And although there are visually dense poems, these read as a tightening of the visual, observational method she already primarily engaged in, rather than an experimenting with the visual boundaries of verse.

In addition to the lack of lower sensory detail, another unexpected finding was the frequency of Bishop's questioning voice in her work, an aspect particularly of interest to sensory description which, as with most description, assumes imagery built from various but certain detail. This aspect of questioning in Bishop has been noted by critics but the coding demonstrates its frequency, and the additional consideration and coding of the conjunction 'or' when serving the same purpose reveals this aspect of Bishop's voice as prevalent and fully developed. Contrary to challenging Bishop's work as somehow inexact, her consistent use of the conjunction "or" and

the question mark throughout her poetry in fact challenges that “exact” description be confident in every detail; Bishop's demonstration of openness at some point in nearly every poem--all the while providing a convincing visual observation--opens each moment to capturing the possibilities, rather than settling for one descriptive detail that fails to capture or is at risk of inaccuracy; indeed, this openness can be read as detailing of the highest priority. In this, Bishop opens ekphrasis as well. In translating one medium, one experience into another, Bishop abides imprecision when exact details escape memory or language--the former humanizing description, the latter accepting the limitations of the ekphrastic act.

In re-evaluating Bishop and as stated in addressing the first question, a multi-sensory analysis of Bishop reinforces, poem by poem, line by line, the critical consensus that Bishop was a visual poet. Bishop's primary use of the visual has her at once present yet removed, and, as shown earlier, critics (McNally; Bertin; Costello) have commented on this separation but the distance is within the word usage itself, primarily in lack of lower sensory detail which indicates close proximity to the subject. And although distance can be traversed by sight and sound, visual close-ups and auditory whispers are not prevalent in Bishop. The sensory analysis here highlights this visual dominance as evident at the diction level, but the limited use of the lower senses is felt in a poem as whole. Smell, taste, and touch are of the body, and the body as medium is relatively absent in Bishop--which is peculiar; as noted earlier, for all her travels, various residences, and varied experiences, there is almost no poetic documentation of the beauty or ugliness of scents, taste, and textures. There is no claim here that Bishop's work was sensually underdeveloped for her purposes, and precision in poetry requires choices and priorities. However, the gaps in lower sensory knowledge, particularly in environments lending themselves to lower sensory

experience, challenge the critical view that Bishop convincingly engages in capturing the essence of the moment or of a thing, unless we are willing to accept that experience is truly knowable by sight alone, or by appearances gauged and assessed by one lone sense. If more intimate sensory knowledge appears necessary, this can readily be afforded by the lower senses of smell, taste, and touch, and although Bishop occasionally invokes these senses, she stops before describing what food and drink taste like and it is perhaps more striking that almost nothing smells good in Bishop's corpus. As well, the occasional touch is essentially a deeper visual, so that textures may be observed and cataloged but not truly experienced. As explored above, even in "The Fish" where the speaker closely examines the catch, there are no moments of the fish actually being touched; the description is visual, of course, and the two potential touch references are situated visually, not tactilely: "wet" within "I saw . . . grim, wet, and weaponlike," and the term "coarse" within "I *thought* of the coarse white flesh" (emphasis added). For the speaker to have finished with "And I let the fish go" means the fish was indeed touched--the fish held and the hook removed, and although Bishop perfectly skips the details of the release for full effect, both as surprise and abrupt closure, in its entirety no tactile description emerges from a poem perhaps assumed to contain at least some minimal tactile quality given both the subject matter and the level of detail engaged in. The well-anthologized "The Fish" is perfect in many ways, but it sits strangely as only a visual experience. Despite Bishop's varied experiences and her attention to minute details which notably often include those of everyday life, the lower senses were simply not significant contributors to her poetic voice.

In general, Bishop's sensory blending is most apparent in her most metaphorical, imaginative works, such as "Roosters," "Songs for a Colored Singer IV," "Insomnia," poems

which do not represent typical Bishop; yet, they are the best examples of Bishop consistently invoking various senses beyond sight, as if closing her eyes to the surrounding world and its details facilitated sustained exploration of senses beyond the visual. But Bishop's eyes were quite wide open. To revisit McNally's assertion: "Miss Bishop's poetry is, in the most literal sense, a poetry of vision (i.e., of seeing with one's eyes); in positing a chiefly visual reality, it seems to imply a singular poetic epistemology--the necessary role of appearances in the comprehension of essential, non-visible realities" (191-92). The visual privileging assumption by critics was tested here, and in the face of multi-sensory analysis at the diction level, Bishop did indeed posit "a chiefly visual reality."

The work in hand is situated within the recent, less biographical, more form-focused, academic treatments of Elizabeth Bishop's work, and the multi-sensory analysis is situated within the current cultural and literary reclamation of lower sensory detail. The coding was designed to inclusively expand the range of sensory analysis at the diction level, and the adoption of color coding through basic technology allowed for a layered coding. The colorized quality of the coding immediately reveals strings, concentrations, switches, absences, and the prevalence of sensory diction, and assists closer readings for novel, literal, and metaphoric qualities of sensory diction. Relationships and separations among differing senses are also evident and the coding reveals sensory patterns, both within and across senses.

Naturally, the coding as applied to Bishop is open to interpretation. The sensory analysis undertaken here required methodological decisions, and choices at every level had coding implications. In particular, lower sensory reclamation impacted the level of explicitness coded. The project was initiated with Bishop as a case-study due to several factors, among them her

reputation as capturing the essence of every day life and her adeptness with visual observation, and while these two factors may first appear to compliment one another, an alternate reading is that in combination they create a tension--can poetry be immersive, authentic, or convincing through primarily visual detail, or is there likely to be other sensory activity being engaged, perhaps overshadowed by the visual? In choosing Bishop there was an underlying, but ultimately unrealized expectation of the latter; however, the project was based on engaging in sensory analysis itself, with the level of sensory reclamation unknown prior to completion of the analysis.

In acknowledging their presence, the search for lower sensory detail is in itself an act of reclamation; further is systematically assessing sensory detail, including examining its absence or minimal use. However, while “minimal” reveals counting, as was done by this project, high versus low frequencies do not define reclamation. Frequency is one aspect of reclamation, and certainly finding otherwise unnoticed or neglected sensory detail in quantity is appealing, but the absence of certain sensory detail warrants discussion, or more in the case of Bishop, the minimal use of certain senses does not mean they should be further neglected through their dismissal as infrequent. Although higher frequencies of certain senses were certainly deemed important in understanding Bishop's primary strategies, a sense rarely utilized by Bishop often warranted even closer analysis; indeed, it is in these select occurrences where Bishop is perhaps most fascinating. While the high quantity and quality of her visual direction may close down ambiguity, her sparse but consistent openness produces lapses through which the reader may more readily engage imagination. Similarly, Bishop's increased sensory variation in her imaginary works (as in “Crusoe in England”), her absence of touch description (as in “The Fish”), her paradoxical use of smell (as in “Going to the Bakery”), and her most sustained use of color in the sole poem

containing her mother (“First Death in Nova Scotia”) are arguably more interesting, more revealing, and more instructive than her primary visual approach.

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Appendix A

Bishop Frequency Word List

370 words with at least 10 uses across 110 poems

Based on Anne Merrill Greenhalgh's *A Concordance to Elizabeth Bishop's Poetry*.

In descending order of highest frequency, reorganized from the alphabetized original.

No modifications (e.g., no combining of tenses, singulars with plurals,
separation of homographs, etc.)

1103 and
715 of
514 to
495 in
366 I
346 is
327 it
288 on
260 with
249 that
226 he
203 or
194 like
188 you
183 his
168 but
165 my
159 are
155 all
150 they
150 as
149 we

149 was
144 from
143 one
143 at
140 for
126 up
119 there
109 have
108 their
108 be
102 not
97 by
90 white
89 this
85 your
82 down
81 so
81 me
80 where
80 then
79 out
76 over
75 will
75 little
73 them
72 what
71 our
70 her
69 has
68 were
67 no
66 eyes

65 had
64 its
62 if
61 water
61 now
60 sea
60 come
58 black
57 would
57 off
55 him
54 she
53 through
53 see
53 blue
53 back
52 us
52 can
51 two
50 too
49 long
49 into
49 each
48 who
48 old
48 light
47 go
46 when
46 man
46 green
44 time
43 here

43 could
42 still
42 big
41 love
41 dark
40 how
39 some
38 small
38 again
37 more
37 look
37 gray
37 been
36 sky
34 red
34 night
34 know
34 above
33 way
33 sun
33 cold
33 'am'
32 much
32 even
32 do
32 day
31 these
31 only
31 Oh
31 got
31 feet
31 away

30 than
30 make
30 head
30 air
29 while
29 river
29 must
29 leaves
29 after
28 say
28 other
28 never
28 left
28 half
27 those
26 world
26 upon
26 think
26 moon
25 which
25 under
25 home
25 about
24 said
24 right
24 flying
23 went
23 round
23 once
23 fish
23 birds
22 why

22 rain
22 make
22 lies
22 heart
22 behind
22 always
21 watch
21 such
21 nothing
21 let
21 high
21 hard
21 dream
21 bright
21 below
21 along
21 almost
20 something
20 may
20 hill
20 four
20 fall
20 another
19 trees
19 tell
19 tears
19 silver
19 should
19 own
18 yet
18 well
18 stood

18 set
18 saw
18 rather
18 poor
18 please
18 pink
18 last
18 hat
18 great
18 glass
18 give
18 get
18 five
18 every
18 around
17 yellow
17 three
17 thought
17 take
17 stand
17 side
17 people
17 pail
17 live
17 keep
17 fine
17 eye
17 did
17 deep
17 bird
17 beneath
16 years

16 seen
16 place
16 morning
16 looked
16 itself
16 inside
16 hear
16 good
16 full
16 face
16 cloud
15 warm
15 very
15 sleep
15 sides
15 shall
15 says
15 same
15 perhaps
15 many
15 leaf
15 knew
15 heavy
15 first
15 everything
15 don't
15 does
15 comes
15 came
15 between
15 against
14 yes

14 things
14 sound
14 ship
14 mouse
14 lines
14 hands
14 ground
14 gone
14 falling
14 dog
14 clouds
14 cannot
14 can't
14 burning
14 baby
14 any
13 without
13 window
13 whose
13 until
13 turns
13 tree
13 together
13 thin
13 somewhere
13 smoke
13 open
13 mother
13 mist
13 minute
13 might
13 land

13 floor
13 find
13 evening
13 end
13 boy
13 both
13 being
13 among
13 across
12 year
12 wood
12 voice
12 turned
12 suddenly
12 straight
12 room
12 next
12 looks
12 looking
12 hand
12 goes
12 few
12 enough
12 door
12 coming
12 color
12 close
12 clear
12 brown
12 before
12 bedlam
11 work

11 wind
11 war
11 turn
11 though
11 stones
11 star
11 standing
11 snow
11 several
11 rock
11 rest
11 quite
11 play
11 new
11 music
11 money
11 Mary
11 lost
11 grass
11 flat
11 faces
11 edge
11 board
11 ancient
10 wooden
10 waves
10 walls
10 times
10 stove
10 sort
10 sometimes
10 soldiers

10 size
10 shining
10 shadows
10 rise
10 pool
10 paper
10 move
10 low
10 line
10 leave
10 large
10 horse
10 heard
10 heads
10 hanging
10 front
10 floating
10 feel
10 dry
10 drops
10 dew
10 colors
10 body
10 Babylon
10 Arthur
10 although
10 alone
10 age