CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

“It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.”

Elizabeth Bishop, for whom destiny was very ruthless from the very beginning of her life, converted all her pain, trauma and losses into a distinctive poetry. She didn’t sympathise or pity herself, on the contrary, took to travelling and creative writing to compensate for the grim fate and emerged victorious. She contemplates her loss in most fanciful way which is apparent in her poems. Unquestionably, one of the most important American poets of the twentieth century, Elizabeth Bishop's poetics is one distinguished by tranquil observation, craft-like accuracy, care for the small things of the world, a miniaturist's discretion and attention. What is amazing is that different elements coexist in her work without destroying the integrity of an established tone or texture, the music of a line, or the clear amusement of a stanza.

Among the many losses in Bishop’s life, loss of home was the predominant one, representing family, love, relationships, security and stability. In her search for home, Bishop constantly moved from Worcester to Nova Scotia, from Nova Scotia to Boston, from New York to France, Spain, North Africa, Ireland, Italy, from Key West to New York, from New York to Brazil and from Brazil to Massachusetts. “There are in her poems no final visions—only the saving, continuing, precise pursuits of the travelling eye,” says David Kalstone. "The entire corpus of her work has to be understood as the record of one hypersensitive person’s cautious, watchful, self-conscious inching towards the truth. It asks to be read as an autobiography, but as an autobiography told from the ‘inside looking out’,” writes Anne Stevenson. Instead of a year-by-year chronicle of a life, Bishop’s poems give an impression of a slide-show of places, people, creatures and small events, all of which have been, enacted and carefully noted down in the clear mirror of the writer’s memory. This is why, as one moves through her work from first book “North & South”, to “A Cold Spring”, to “Questions of Travel”, to
“Geography III”, and on to the last poems, one has the experience of a complete travel yet firmly rooted to Nova Scotia of childhood.

By examining “The Theme of Displacement and Search for Home” in Elizabeth Bishop's work and its significance in her life, we gain a greater understanding of Bishop’s poems, her style of writing and her subjects. Bishop can’t simply be labelled as "A Great American Poet," for, in many ways, it is been established that she is also a Canadian and a Brazilian. This research on Bishop’s displacement throws light on the impact of the culture, people and landscape of America, Canada and Brazil upon her work. Clearly, due to immense displacement in her life, there is throughout, a search reflected directly or implied in her work. Bishop's poetry indicates the pain, the trauma, the void, the strength, and emotion associated with displacement and her search for home. There are different shades of displacement seen in her poems like physical displacement as in the poem “Arrival at Santos”; psychological displacement as in the poem “Crusoe in England”; displacement into different points of time i.e. past or present, as in the poem “The Moose”; displacement into the surreal world as in the poem “Love Lies Sleeping”; displacement into animal world as in the poem “The Fish”; displacement into the geographical world as in the poem “The Map”; or displacement into the world of non-living thing as in the poem “The Monument,” etc.

The loss of home was a significant loss of Bishop’s life which is synonymous to the loss of loved ones and security in her poems. Bishop spent her entire career thinking about how best to dramatise and frame her investigation of different abodes in her art. Her distinction as a poet is her making of the home within the framework of language through the routes of memory lanes, travelling, describing and loving it. Bishop in different phases of her life has explored the concept of home in different perspective.

Chapter I of the present study introduces Bishop, along with the strengths of her literary style. Bishop’s writings are better understood if they are explored in the light of her biographical details, hence there is a detailed investigation of her life. It is understood that it is the force and stress of her feeling of homelessness due to which she took to travelling and search for home. This chapter also
establishes Bishop’s place in the tradition of American literature and her
prominence among her contemporaries.

In chapter II of the present investigation entitled ‘American Phase’ it is
established with the help of her poems from the volume “North & South” that
‘Home’ for Bishop is not only the place which can be boarded but they are also
spaces which are enclosures reflecting the captivity of writer’s mind expressed in
art. The study of this volume of poetry reflects Bishop drifting to the world of
unknown, the surreal world, though not completely relying on it. Bishop does not
face her personal trauma directly in the poems though touches upon them
indirectly.

Bishop’s love for sea and islands is established in the poems like “The Map,”
“The Imaginary Iceberg” and “The Monument,” for they were the special places
from her childhood closely associated with her home in Nova Scotia. In the poem
“The Map,” Bishop creates an enclosure of land around the sea representing a
home. There is a geographical displacement shown in the poem from land, to
sea, to Labrador, to bays, and ultimately to the Nova Scotia landscape and sea.
Bishop’s search for identity and place in the grand design makes her a
wanderer rather than a traveller. The map becomes an emblem of imaginative
promise to search a route towards home.

In the poem “Large Bad Picture,” Bishop explores and understands her past
in order to overcome the feelings of displacement, asserting a familial and artistic
identity. It is found that there is a concern, a quest in Bishop’s poetry to belong
somewhere, to find a home. Bishop creates verbal bridges in poetry in order to
get connected to her past as enumerated in her poem. Bishop, in this poem, is
reminiscent of her happy home at Great Village thus she is displaced into her
past, searching the same home through art.

Bishop’s poem “The Gentleman of Shalott” exhibits the split or the divide
which is an essential reality of Bishop’s world, her displacement to a lesbian
identity. This love poem reflects her search for sexual identity and love beyond
the barriers of gender divides. This poem denotes a way is Bishop’s search for
home – as love, warmth and security are symbolic of home in her poems and vice
versa.
In the poem “The Imaginary Iceberg”, Bishop creates an enclosure in the image of an iceberg. It is seen that there is an element of fatigue due to continuous travel and the feeling of homelessness. Hence movement is momentarily surrendered for the sake of stability and there is a need for captivity in the image of iceberg. The idea of ending travels, when one discovers the iceberg implies that search should go on until the set ideal or destination is achieved. The image of iceberg also implies the innermost self after struggling in the physical immensities to find the lost element of one’s life.

“Casabianca” is Bishop’s salute to the obedient efforts of a son towards his father. Bishop unfortunately never in her life got the opportunity to experience the filial love, which she tries to create in this poem. It is a very cynical love poem, wanting self destruction in love. Her lesbian identity was also one of the reasons for her failure in love which kept her away from her dream of home and caused a continuous displacement in her life.

The poem “A Miracle for Breakfast” with all its homely images displays Bishop’s eye for simplicity and love for home. It is seen that in this poem she talks about small happiness and charities which may look small but ultimately give the utmost satisfaction in life. Bishop associates the “crumbs,” the basic necessity of life with “mansion” which is an ardent necessity for Bishop. Home, a basic and primary need of life remained unfulfilled from her childhood due to early disintegration of her family, hence her poems are seen haunted by such basic need of life and to achieve them is a form of miracle for her. This poem is indicative of Bishop’s simple but appealing ideology.

The untimely awaking in the poem “Roosters” due to the commotion of the cocks demonstrates Bishop’s concept of cruelty related with home. Bishop, in the poem, turns home into a chaotic place similar to Bishop’s childhood home where she suffered due to her mother’s mental illness. Bishop presents a horrifying and aggressive image of home by painting it with a destructive gun metal colour. The war imagery in the poem and its merger with the concept of home is the direct outcome of her various displacements to the war affected places and her personal experience of home.
Bishop creates the image of home in “close-built bower” in the poem “The Weed” similar to a prison resembling her Worchester paternal grandparents house, where she lived lonesome days as “cold and closed built bower.” Symbolically, Bishop projects her pain and trauma of homelessness in her poem though not directly but through the way of dreams and mysticism. Bishop’s physical displacement away from Nova Scotia was a kind of split or separation which inflicted much trauma upon her and was a reason for her on-going hunt for her childhood home. Similarly, the weed being uprooted from its place caused more pressure of survival on it.

It is seen that Bishop in her poems explores the idea of considering the whole world as her home, the poem “The Man-Moth” is the best example of this ideology. In this poem Bishop projects the city life fearful. Home is the place which is supposed to give solace to the man-moth but it fails to do so, for it is just a cement structure with no love or warmth in it. Bishop makes her allegorical figure partake her fear of the urban environment and she in turn shares a moth like compulsion to leave his cocoon, his home, in order to investigate the moon light, a thing that Bishop fears the most. Bishop’s life to some extent is like the man-moth because they both are lonely, love is missing in their life and leaving their home is painful for them.

In the poem “Love Lies Sleeping” Bishop describes the plight of having a home in the urban city and the experience of comatose relationship associated with it. Landscapes for Bishop meant the real inner spaces, the spiritual self; it also is reflective of home in larger sense. The urban landscape, which is confined into the “fused beads of iron and copper crystals”, is reconstituting the world, and is in danger of being continually lost. The city dwellers awake in their “iron beds” in their houses made up of not love and warmth but of “stony walls.” The description of the urban residential place is nothing more than a cage or a prison. The city lovers are not platonic lover but they are hunters feeding on passion. Pure feelings and relationships are missing in the urban life, everything seems to be artificial and hollow and Bishop rejects such living. Bishop had restless living in New York; on the contrary she was always in search of home and true love which she missed all her life.
“Jeronimo’s House” is Bishop’s own reality and fascination of a place called “Home” described in abundance of details. For Bishop as for Jeronimo, this beautiful and precious little house is invulnerable refuge from the chaos of the world. But home, in the poem, has fragile quality, made up of paper, hence it becomes terrifying.

The poem “The Unbeliever,” is at once enclosed and exposed, static and moving, an emblem of displacement. The illusion of security played upon in the poem, alludes to the illusion of security created by our well built homes, gets exposed in the times of calamity. At the level of allegory, the sleeper on top of the mast is sustained in the air and propelled through the water by the mast and sails. Bishop creates the illusion of security and strength in the poem. Though, in the time of disaster, the illusions of security and strength would be exposed and shattered. Nevertheless, the sleeper, who is the unbeliever of the poem, doubts and fears the environment. The traumatically unreliable love object the “sea” is hard and heartless for Bishop.

The poem “The Monument” presents a unique case with regards to enclosure. The monument has the capacity to shelter what lies within it and accommodate everything into itself like a home. Bishop in her poems creates homes similar to prisons and her images of enclosures are also cages. She seems to surrender her sojourn only to get captive in one such cage called home.

Bishop’s past is symbolically presented in the poem “Paris, 7 A.M.” in the form of reference to her childhood memory of “house.” The captivity of time is the captivity of Bishop in the memories of “home,” a square with four walls where everything freezes. The “snow-forts” and “the sand-forts” built at the beach with the assumption of permanency due to childhood innocence create an irony suggesting the destructiveness of permanent structures. Though, the strength of such delicate or frail things, in life, in the form of memories is more than the well built buildings with no warmth.

Bishop reconciles the psychic and physical experiences of home in her poem “Sleeping Standing Up”. Bishop’s obsession with home is clearly felt in this poem. The children are seen paving a “crumbs or pebbles” pathway towards their house. Unable to find the way home, Bishop is utterly dejected. Past remains
dead, the former home seems to be unreachable. It reflects her own plight to discover her home out of the flux of history and geography of Nova Scotia which is difficult to reach.

“Cirque d’ Hiver” is a clever, perceptive and a humorous poem with realistic details in it. It is the best example of the influence of displacement in Bishop’s life. Due to her various displacements, Bishop became aware about the various social issues, one of which reflecting women’s position in the society is explored in this poem. The dancer, in the poem, represents the traditional reserved woman, with restrictive roles of mother and wife, with the absence of opportunity to develop and accomplish goals outside their home.

It is revealed that Bishop in her poems of Darwinian concentration reflects her minute observation associated with her physical displacement. In “Florida” Bishop describes the geographical changes occurring on the landscape and displays her concerns, her lament upon the depleting conditions of the place. The “Moon,” in the poem, is symbolic of a true exposure of the state’s political and racial environment, including the deliberate and exhaustive disenfranchisement of Florida’s Black population. Bishop doesn’t treat man and nature differently; on the contrary, man is dissolved in nature in her poems. nature is symbolic of home for man. Bishop’s poetry implies that man and nature share an inscrutable equality and that they are subjected to some ruthless, mysterious force.

“The Song for a Colored Singer” is Bishop’s Key West poems in which her love for black is reflected. In the first song, Bishop presents the miserable condition of the black woman’s life who despite of all disparity remains hopeful in life neglecting the irresponsibility of her man. In the second song, Bishop presents a problematic personal relationship at the centre of the black woman’s unhappy life. She represents all the oppressive women who are committed for a change in their life recognising their needs and capabilities for independence and better living. Harmonizing the singer’s voice with history- the war is a major metaphor in the third song. Bishop, in this poem, reflects upon the repercussions of war and the ultimate animosity, hatred, disaster which are the natural outcome of the war. Bishop’s choice of “moon” over war, in the poem, advocates love and compassion over hatred. The fourth song of the poem expresses the feeling of a group of oppressed people coming to a realization of their identity. For years
together, the black community was being oppressed and their plight Bishop identifies in this poem. Bishop’s sensitivity towards social issues is the direct outcome of her various displacements in life leading to an elaborate understanding of different social issues and concerns. “Song for a Colored Singer,” the catalyst to her success, was a daring poem in the 1940s in its insistence that white and black concerns find their common ground, that racial and gender struggles cannot be isolated from each other.

Bishop, in the wake of searching a home for self, reaches to the original existential resting place the mother’s womb which is the safest place ever in the journey of life. ‘The Fish’, ‘Filling Station’ and ‘The Moose’ – are poems where, Bishop creates versions of wombscapes not just as imagined retreats, or resting places from the difficulties of her life as woman and poet, but as actual spaces that become spaces of transformation and revelation. In the poem “The Fish” Bishop transforms a narrative about possession and domination and death into one about sympathy and survival and the triumph of love. Bishop’s boat is transformed into a womb, a shrine where the only possibility is that of survival.

The volume “North & South” reflects that ‘Home’ for Bishop are not only the places which can be boarded but they are also spaces which are enclosures reflecting the captivity of writer’s mind expressed in art. The present paper establishes Bishop’s fixation of the concept of home in her childhood and its relation to the mother image which is not directly referred to in Bishop’s poetry. The study of this volume of poetry reflects Bishop drifting to the world of unknown though not completely relying on it. Bishop does not face her personal trauma directly in the poems though touches upon them indirectly.

Chapter III of this study entitled ‘Brazilian Phase’ focused on Bishop’s three books of poetry namely “A Cold Spring”(1955) “Questions of Travel”(1965) and “Uncollected Work”(1969). In the light of the work published in this phase, it is established that Bishop’s displacement to Brazil and her Brazilian lady love Lota de Macedo Soares had a greater influence upon her life and writings, resulting in more direct expression of personal feelings in her poems, added with the elements of trance-culture in them.
Bishop’s second volume of poetry “A Cold Spring” is the best example of her transitional poems with few of her love poems, reflecting a newer dimension in her writing but her art still is reflective of her search for her Nova Scotian home. Poems in this volume reflect a lesbian adult struggle to come to terms with the sting and suffering associated with love and relationship. The new found relationship, in the odyssey of love, in Brazil, gave her courage and inspired her to write on personal traumas. It has been observed that search for love is synonymous to search for home in Bishop’s poetry.

The title poem of this volume with the same name “A Cold Spring,” is a happy poem reflecting Bishop’s happiness due to her physical displacement to Brazil. Bishop’s desire of man being a part of nature and both coexisting cordially with each other is reflected in this poem. Bishop deliberately brings together human, civilisation and urban elements in the poem and identifies them with nature. The images in the poem do not stress the importance of nature for man. In fact, Bishop shows man in continuum with nature, where everything is placed in equality.

Bishop’s poems show a definite shift from an earlier often detached point of view to a more active and sensual one. But the poem “Invitation to Marianne Moore” acts as a relief from the intimacy of Bishop and Moore’s relationship. In this bold poem, it has been observed that there is a desire to connect with someone else, openly aspire for her search. Bishop, in Brazilian Phase is seen accepting her love and disappointments in a more candid way.

“The Shampoo” is another kind of invitation to accept one’s self by accepting love. This poem is an outcome of her displacement to Brazil which gave her the courage to express her most personal feeling of intimacy that is rare for a reticent writer like Bishop to articulate in her art. It is witnessed that a sense of loss often permeates Bishop’s work; similarly the desire for connection and intimacy becomes increasingly prominent. These poems celebrate Bishop’s happiness and fulfilment in Brazil. There is a festive displacement in Bishop’s life from loneliness to companionship. It is in Brazil that Bishop’s search for home was sufficed to an extent of eighteen years.
In the poem “Argument,” there is a displacement of emotions from the past time to the present. Bishop’s companionship with Lota de Macedo Soares, in this period gave her some amount of fulfilment but it also connected her, through poems, to her earlier days of Nova Scotia. Bishop got frequently displaced, through her poems, from the present time to her past history. Bishop creates history of her childhood days in her poem and displaces herself into it. Her memory is a calendar of past days, full of “Compliments of Never & Forever” incorporating all the elements from the past. Past is like an ocean, always there unmoved, into which the present sinks.

One of Bishop's earlier attempts to reconnect with the past is also seen in her poem "Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance." The inspiration for the poem is the Bulmer Family Bible. In the poem, a traveller is tantalised by the promise of a vision beyond the random encounter. Bishop talks about a home or a childhood place where she is not allowed to grow at the hands of a brutal destiny.

It is seen that, during Bishop’s various physical displacements, she achieves communion with a place, coming to terms with a place obviously has its roots in her own life’s instability. The titles of Bishop’s poems tell us where the speaker is and descriptions of the surroundings tell us whether she has come in terms with the place. These places are Geographical mirrors in her poems. “The Bight” is one such poem describing the chaotic nature of place and existence. There is a sense of mechanised beach for “little ocher dredge at work,” leading to the destruction and erosion of the natural beauty of the beach. The whole poem can be read as an extended metaphor for the poet’s life where “All the untidy activity continues,” making the poet “awfully cheerful”. This is where Bishop allows her birthday to be celebrated, in a storm ridden inlet where small-craft victories are celebrated. Places in Bishop’s poetry are not the luxurious types but the places of struggles. Where there is the grime of work, there is also the trace of energy and therefore hope, whether at the “Filling Station,” “At the Fishhouses,” or “The Bight.” Where ever there is work going on, the world is constructed in the midst of it. These are the places where Bishop seems to be more homely and comfortable than the urban luxurious houses.
Sea is a symbol of home for Bishop and its expanse indicates her ongoing search for home. In the poem “At the Fishhouses,” Bishop considers her origins, her home and the absence of maternal warmth in her life. “The rocky breasts” an image Bishop often associates with the Nova Scotia landscape is symbolic of her mother. Loss of mother is loss of home for Bishop and ultimately the loss of a sacred and secured place on the face of the earth which she tries to search through her poems.

Bishop in her poem “Insomnia” articulates the disturbance or anxiety that leads to sleepless nights. The anxiety in case of Bishop herself is an unrequited love. Bishop’s poems in this period were explorations of loneliness and separation – such as “Argument” (1947), “Varick Street” (1947), and each of the poem from “Four Poems” namely “Conversation,” “Rain Towards Morning,” “While Someone Telephones,” and “O Breath” (1949-1951) – making it clear that failing love troubled Bishop deeply. These poems, with their strange, almost surrealistic, patterns, breathe pain and in their anxious fragile beauty, acknowledge love’s dangerous but compelling force.

The New York of “Varick Street” is more sinister, suffocating, and surreal than the New York depicted in “The Man-Moth” and “Love Lies Sleeping.” The relationship in the “Varick Street” is doomed repeatedly in the inauspicious refrain: “And I shall sell you sell you / sell you of course, my dear, and you’ll sell me.” [CP 75] In the New York setting, the speaker and her “dear” are trapped in a relationship of consumerism in which they will inevitably sell each other off. In this dismal poem, Bishop reveals that even if one finds love, it cannot shelter us against the threats of the city’s corruption and consumerism. This poem doesn’t show great ease and conviction in treating personal painful emotions.

“The Prodigal” is a parable concerning parental and filial love, but Bishop doesn’t seem to make love easy. Bishop portrays in detail the prodigal’s peculiar life in an apparently modern barn, the home he has chosen for himself. In the wake of finding a home for self Bishop’s characters seem to occupy unnatural places like barns and sty. Bishop is reminiscent of the natural beauty of Nova Scotia in this poem. The Prodigal exhibits the strength of the human spirit as he can admire anything and everything in his surroundings, which makes him endure his imprisonment for some more time. The very last word of the poem,
“home” implies recovery and healing. “Home” is the only destination towards which all the search of the Prodigal as well as of Bishop is directed. A drinker trying to find his way home is one way of describing the poem, written by an alcoholic for whom home and homelessness were central preoccupations. The Prodigal has made up his mind to go home. Home represents love and security, for Bishop, are the only search her nostalgia pervades in her life. As it seems difficult for the Prodigal to reach home without hindrances so is it for Bishop, difficult to reach the place called “home.” Hence, the search for home, in Bishop’s poems, is an ongoing process.

“Faustina, or Rock Roses” celebrates the relation between the master and the servant and also dramatizes “service,” turning hierarchy into a bizarre democracy. Socially there are gulf seen in this relation but in the poem they share the same domestic space. Bishop’s displacement to Brazil in particular and her various travels down South gave her profound understanding of class, race and gender. Bishop very well portrays the plight of the underdeveloped countries and their people in her poems. Bishop’s obsession for home is seen in many of her poems but in this poem Bishop creates not Jeronimo’s “fairy palace,” on the contrary Faustina’s “crazy house.”

“Letter to N.Y.” is Bishop’s letter poem “For Louise Crane.” The poem has somewhat a pleading tone and it refers to Louise’s mother Mrs. Crane who was less supportive of Louise’s affair with Bishop. It was with Crane that Bishop made her first house among “three loved houses” mentioned in the poem “One Art” although, they could not nest their much loved home in Key West for a longer time. Distancing from Crane, Bishop took to extensive physical displacements which ultimately brought her to Brazil.

Upon arriving in Brazil, Bishop began writing more stories and poems based in her childhood in Nova Scotia. The geographical displacement to Brazil brought Bishop close to her memories of Nova Scotia. In “Cape Breton,” the theme of the disruption and destruction of nature due to the encroachment of urbanization is strongly evident. Bishop’s displacement from the simple country life of Great Village to the fast life of New York was a painful displacement for her. The fact that the man is carrying a baby in the poem suggests the conspicuous absence of a mother figure - a common element of Bishop’s poetry.
Bishop associates the evasive ideal of a home, as indicated by her use of the adjective “invisible house” with this landscape. The “invisible house” is also indicative of the homemaker’s absence, that is, absence of mother in the poem.

It is seen that Bishop did not believe in settling down, for no place gave her the warmth of home. Bishop never found herself in any stable location, but rather in transit. Travel was Bishop’s nature, a dominating metaphor for the human condition. Even dreams, which we associate with wish-fulfilment, are in Bishop’s poetry revelations of homeless natures. Bishop makes such a revelation in her volume of poetry “Questions of Travel.” “Questions of Travel” is divided into two sections: Brazil, and Elsewhere. The first section, “Brazil” highlights her concerns about travelling and deals with her physical presence in the country. The poems in “Elsewhere” section reflect her nostalgia and the sense of loneliness.

“Arriving in Santos” opens the door to Bishop’s Brazil. Bishop’s restlessness in the poem reflects an agitated search for something. The continuous movement presented in the poem signifies that her search for home, although leading to creativity, makes her anxious and is ongoing. Finding a home for self is the ultimate destination of travel; in the process it also reveals our origins and, thereby impart meaning to the journey of our life. The poem also reflects the theme of geographical displacement “to the interiors” i.e. towards the country life.

In “Brazil, January 1, 1502,” Bishop imagines a Brazil of the past, characterized by an abundance of exotic tropical flora and fauna. Bishop was enamoured with the nation and its landscape, but she also questioned her place – as an expatriate or outsider – in the country. Bishop’s displacement throughout her life has raised questions of land identity for her. The paradox of Bishop’s life – the regions in North America that should have been home for her have become elsewhere, and Bishop felt already at home in Brazil. Bishop was in love with Brazil for she had found a home there. Her geography has changed: her map had become Brazil-centric. This change of perception has occurred because Brazil was very much like Nova Scotia, it was her paradise regained! Bishop shows native resistance to colonization in this poem because the native wealth, the landscape and its women are exploited at the hands of intruders. Home should be well guarded from the intruders or else it would be seized.
“Questions of Travel,” sees the conversion of the tourists’ heart by questioning their travel. The poem is a record of Bishop’s experience as a traveller and the difficulty involved in the process of conveying otherness. In this poem, Bishop considers how we might appreciate another culture. For Bishop, her wanderings are idiosyncratic engaged in looking for a home. The majority of Bishop’s poems, deal directly with the experience of travel. None of poems posit a secure home, from which the characters depart or they don’t even have ideal destination towards which they can move. “Home” no longer accommodates any of Bishop’s characters.

Bishop’s characters are not only displaced themselves but they are disarming to others by their conspicuous vagabondage. In the poem, “Manuelzinho” the relation between the patron and the tenant-farmer is based on the inequality between them but there is also reversal of roles, when “superior” and “inferior” lose all meaning. Bishop’s subject in this poem shifts from sea, ship, ports etc., to places like property, house, and territory, and to the dynamic forces shaping the relationship of employer and employee. Bishop’s various displacements acquainted her to the different cultural constituted identities, which can be clearly seen in her descriptions of Manuelzinho, his family and children. The poem ends with the patron’s humility and warmth for Manuelzinho, making the readers believe that Bishop’s displacement made her more humane. Leaving the trauma of losses aside, she has invested herself to more positive creativity than ever, which is due to the festivity her physical displacement brought in her life.

In Brazil, Bishop found a place she could call ‘home’ for over a decade and a half. Bishop’s move to Brazil enabled her to conceive home in her poetry and discuss how her ‘geography of the imagination’ accommodates her changing notions of home. Bishop’s Brazilian love Lota understood Bishop’s need for a house and built her “Samambaia” home which is the setting of many of her poems like: “Electrical Storm” which immortalises Tobias the cat, “The Armadillo”; “Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics,” and “Song for the Rainy Season.”

Bishop in her poem “Song for the Rainy Season” invites the occupants of the natural world to be a part of her house. She opens the door of an “open-house” to the mist infiltrating the house and causing “mildew’s / ignorant map” on the wall. The progressive architecture of Lota and Bishop’s “Samambaia”
house was such that the outer environment could be felt indoors and also in Bishop’s poems. Bishop’s house is sensuously described in the poem. The nature is displaced into the “house” along with the animal world and Bishop maculates, cherishes and rejoices it.

In “The Armadillo”, the home is under a literal and metaphorical threat. Man as well as animals, build houses to guarantee their safe living but this illusion of security gets shattered in this poem. Bishop in this poem depicts the susceptibility of our well-made houses as well as the feeble nests of birds in the face of a man-made disaster.

Bishop focuses on the more personal interior of a house in her poem "Sestina." The poem is set in the rural atmosphere of her childhood, her Nova Scotian home, along with her grandmother where her mother’s absence is conspicuous. Her nostalgia is a kind of psychological displacement to her past, full of sorrows and longing for home, which is synonymous to mother’s warmth in Bishop’s poetry. The present study establishes Bishop’s fixation of the concept of home in her childhood and its relation to her mother who is not directly referred to in her work. The understanding of a troubled child is expressed only in her drawing of the “rigid house” in the poem. The house is rigid because it’s not being affected by the tears which are flooding the poetry. Bishop never outgrew the spectre of her mother and the terrible feeling of not belonging.

In the poem “Manners”, Bishop witnessed the transition from the old to new while she undertook various physical displacements in life. Bishop’s deep attachment to the old system of etiquettes, as reflected in her love for her maternal grandparents and the Nova Scotian heritage, has been investigated in this poem.

Bishop in her poem “First Death in Nova Scotia” is seen facing the question of death directly. These uncalled memories are the burden of grief from her earlier life which she releases through this poem. Bishop’s physical displacement to Brazil made her to investigate the childhood queries and free herself from the troublesome memories with a braver persona. It is significant that her mother was brought to life in a poem about death. Domesticity is frail, and it is shaken by the final strangeness of death. Until death, it is believed that we are truly, in this
world, in our mother’s house safe and secure, that “somebody loves us all.” But this truth of homeliness is ripped off at the tyrant hand of death.

Bishop domesticates strange, remote, filthy, and untidy place in her poems. She mocks at one such filthy and messy place with black appearance in her poem “Filling Station.” Surprisingly she finds signs of order within its filth and disorderliness. Bishop converts the garage into a home with the presence of the whole family and the absence of mother made more conspicuous. The domestic becomes compulsion in every location we reside, be it filling station, it promises homely tranquillity, meaning, and love in Bishop’s life. It seems that Bishop’s search for home takes her to filthy places like these, reflecting the pressure and need for nesting. The poem is about the poet’s spiritual search for her mother and also for a home. For Bishop – who never saw her mother after the age of eight when she was committed to an asylum and whose early experience of home was traumatised by her mother’s madness – it is a poem in which she is able to reclaim the nurturing space of the lost mother. It is a poem of healing, of restoring the rift between infant and mother that occurs at birth.

Bishop has lived a life of a nomadic. Her various displacements in life were not due to frustration or an escape, but were directed towards discovering self and exploring various possibilities hidden in self, about which otherwise she would not be conscious of. “Sandpiper” is one such poem where Bishop talks about “a bird” who is an explorer like her. Sandpiper in many ways is similar to Bishop for both of them are focused in their search so much so that all the temptations of the world are ineffective to divert their attention.

The poem “Visits to St. Elizabeth” reflects Bishop’s uneasiness to visit a mental asylum to see the modernist poet Ezra Pound. Bishop is seen willing to dwell in most of the dingy places like filling stations, rigid houses, crooked houses etc but she does not dare to engage in a mental asylum for it is associated with her painful memories of her childhood. It is the time to investigate her own historical time, her own time to employ personal memory. History, for Bishop, becomes the relieving and inevitable refiguring of experience in art.

Bishop’s love for nature is reflected in her “Uncollected Work.” She muses upon nature and its inhabitants in her prose poem “Rainy Season; Sub-Tropics”
and makes us think of the beautiful, “Giant Toad,” “Strayed Crab” and “Giant Snail,” all these creatures who “go travelling the same weathers.” The physical displacement is painful for these creatures and it creates in them the feeling of nostalgia. There creatures are the mouthpieces of Bishop articulating her anxiety behind her displacement. These animals tackle the burden of displacement vigilantly very much like Bishop. Bishop enters her protective shell, in the form of her art, still her distress related to the physical and spatial distance from Nova Scotia inculcated in her the feeling of homelessness and deep nostalgia.

The “House Guest” symbolises the failure of the domestic orders, the inevitable intrusion of uncontrollable elements into our lives, towards which we may react openly and creatively, or defensively. This poem is a direct outcome of her childhood instability as she was shunted from one relative to another after her Mother’s committal to mental asylum. Bishop presents this homeless figure, the house guest, with a detached, third-person narration so as to maintain distance to a womblike mystery and a reluctance to associate with these homeless figures. She housed them in the obscurity of storm; “right in the room of falling rain.” So Home in her poetry has an uncertain character, exposed to the entire nuisance be it natural or human.

Bishop’s search for her Nova Scotia house continued in her days at Brazil which took her to the interiors of Brazil to Ouro Preto, a town in the mountains of Minas Gerais. The last of Bishop’s Brazilian poem is entitled “Under the Window: Ouro Preto” which reflects her nostalgia and love for provincial living, the poem is also an affectionate tribute to Nova Scotia. Living in Brazil, she seems to be self-centred; restricting herself to her home in the midst of the provincial beauty and magnanimity of common living reflecting her love for home and getting captivated in it. Her homes are also projections of a captive mind creating prisons for self.

Chapter IV of this study entitled “Search for Home” investigate the final physical displacement of Bishop, her home coming, back to America to make a living and search the final solace in her life, her home. Bishop in her later volume of poetry “Geography III” presents her urgency and intimacy of establishing home in a more apparent and autobiographical way. ‘The Theme of

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Displacement and Search for Home’ is explored with the help of the poems from her last volume of poetry.

The most famous poem, “In the Waiting Room,” the opening poem of “Geography III” concerns young Bishop's sudden awareness of both the division and the connection between herself and the world. Bishop displaces into the past is not in the comforts of home but in the closure of dentist’s waiting room. Bishop describes enclosed spaces like waiting rooms, ports, islands, etc which are not microcosms or escape from history. These places do not accommodate or displace the world so they are definitely not a home to Bishop; they become places to encounter the world in a forced way. The poem shows double displacement, one when the adult Bishop displacing herself to her childhood memories, and second when young Bishop displaces herself to the world of National Geography to the world of childhood fears and insecurities.

“Crusoe in England” is the longest and the most ambitious poem of Bishop’s last volume of poetry. Crusoe’s island is an odd combination of elements from Cape Britain, South America, Worcester and all the places where Bishop has lost and found herself. Bishop’s Crusoe is her mouthpiece expressing her idea of home and painful nostalgia. The idea of home, as opposed to that of travel, is a site of conflict that centres on the tension between autobiography and geography in this poem. While on the island, Crusoe was intensely in search of home and when come back to England he feels tied to the umbilical cord of his island. Bishop and her characters share the Crusoe’s dilemma. Home becomes an unattainable territory. Bishop displaces herself into creativity and intensifies her search for home in it; similarly Crusoe finds his creativity giving him happiness. For Bishop “home” is often not the home of one’s birth, but a place created in exile. Bishop’s stay in Brazil gives her the perspective of an unrescued Crusoe trying to remember a lost self and home. The island keeps intruding on Crusoe’s dream of home as Nova Scotia intruded upon Bishop’s dream. Displacement to the world of dreams was a necessity for Crusoe as well as for Bishop to overcome the repressed feeling of home. Friday becomes home for Crusoe as Lota for Bishop. Crusoe took Friday “home” to England, where he died, while Lota followed Bishop to New York and committed suicide. With the loss of Friday, Crusoe lost his home forever, as Brazil was lost to Bishop after Lota’s
death. Bishop intermingle the complexity of the idea of "home" and "love." For Bishop, a permanent house is not in nostalgia, not in self created surroundings, not in self-pity, not in strangeness and not even in love and yet these failed attempts of comfort are preferred homes than the total withdrawal.

It is seen that Bishop's “Night City,” enumerates the episode of the air travel from where a forbidding climate and urban horizon are viewed. Bishop, a passionate traveller focuses in this poem on the degeneration of an urban city, which she has witnessed over her years of displacement from one place to the other. She creates the image of "tycoon," in the poem, who is weeping by himself as he is responsible for the “A pool of bitumen,” and “a blackened moon.” He is crying along because in the wake of progress and materialistic development he has lost his loved ones. Bishop in this poem does not create a home but a “skyscraper” where there is no love or peace but only burning off guilt. There are “incandescent” in and around the people living in those high building but these glowing and shining lights cannot illuminate the hearts of the borders, hence there prevails an eternal darkness.

“The End of March” is a rare poem where Bishop actually appears as a character. Bishop seems secretly fantasized about living in an abandoned mysterious “shingled green” house on the beach. Bishop’s fondness for remote places seems to be compelling for the “dubious” and “impossible” “summer house.” The house in the “The End of the March” resembles the many fragile houses she evoked in her poetry. The house which Bishop desires for, in her poems are never reached, they are illusionary escape from her Nova Scotian home to the remote dream-house, her “proto-dream-house” and her “crypto-dream-house.” The house represents a retreat and a release from a past world which is impossible to lift. The crooked box, the dream-house of the poem is prison-like in many ways; it is a rough but adequate shelter with constrains enough to provide the stimulus, necessary for creative activity. Here in the “naturalness,” Bishop’s house as a “crooked box” is like a vengeance upon her dream of home.

Bishop meticulously records her dream in her poem “12 O’Clock News,” expressing her anxiety about writing, stretching the technique of surrealism a little further. While on travel, Bishop seems to be in search of “Home” but in the
poem, she is in her room and transforms it into a war field. Bishop describes a lost war where soldiers are dead. But somebody probably from the opponent’s party calls them childish, hopeless, inscrutable, impractical, and “their leaders” in a sad state of “corruption.” The irony is directed towards Bishop’s own sense of insurmountable odds, her own dependence on the inanimate objects for her creative process. Bishop, in her accustomed surrounding of her “home” questions the very process of creative writing.

In “Poem” Bishop talks about the possibilities of preserving what dies. It is a detailed description and meditation on a work of art, finally dealing with the implication of its existence. Bishop, displaces herself to the past, gazes idly at a small painting done by her great-uncle and begins yet another meditation on the domestication of the world. Both Bishop and her “great-uncle,” “Uncle George,” “an R.A.,” took the scene from Nova Scotian life, committed it to memory and commemorated it through art. Bishop united herself with the artist as both loved this unimportant corner of the earth and it has also existed in their lives, in their memories and in their art.

Bishop’s physical displacement throughout her life engaged her with the world and with self through inquiry, even when distance and difference may result. “Five Flight Up” is an ironic and painful composition. The memories of the past take over the reality of present and are difficult to lift for the poet.

It is seen that in “One Art” Bishop conveys the mastery she achieved over losses. Bishop confesses that loss of travel means her lifelong displacement is lost to her. Her displacement was in the wake of search for home; hence, she lost all her lovely homes. “One Art” is Bishop's elegy for her whole life. Working through each of her losses – from the bold, painful catalogue of the first loss to the final loss – is a way to overcome them or, if not to overcome them, then to see the way in which one might possibly master oneself in the face of loss.

“The Moose” is a poem expressing Bishop’s nostalgia which recalls the pristine wonders of her Nova Scotia. Bishop looks back to her origin, her roots—as if she is both literally and figuratively moving away from them. The entire first half of the poem is the movement of “goodbye, the movement away from “home.” Bishop creates the bus as “homely as a home” imparting a feeling of
placement in it. Bishop’s characters never appear in places of origin or destination but they are in transitions. The poem domesticates – the land, the human affections and the non-human world. The moose is given both sacred and homely associations.

Bishop's “New Poems,” a collection of four poems was published in the year 1979 after she passed away displays the craftsmanship as the trademarks of her best writings represented in these last poems.

In "Santarem," we once again find the poet travelling. Travel is to Bishop's cosmology the metaphysical vehicle that defines the place of consciousness in the world. Sensitivity to details turns her poems into a kind of travel books showcasing the effect of displacement in her writings. It reflects fluidity on part of Bishop’s poetry to accept cultural changes arising due to her displacements. The “conflux of two great rivers, Tapajos, Amazon,” in the poem, is symbolic of two varied cultures coming together. There are also indications of the hitch felt during the cultural and literal transformation due to displacement. Bishop very skilfully gives the solution to find the midway in different cultures and make one’s own space. Bishop is seen impressed by the provincialism and casualness of the place. Bishop tests the very origins of literary sexual difference by trying on a comparison between Eden and Santarem, the canonical genesis of guilt related to gender. The physical displacement to various places gave Bishop a release, a sense of freedom from the age old dogmas attached to sexuality and gender of an individual. “Santarem”, Bishop suggest a miniature form of a house, a “stucco” “nest” which reflects the complexities of all the homes she entertains in her poetry.

It is seen that Bishop in her poem “Pink Dog” writes scathingly of assaults inflicted upon a sickly depilated bitch, to which Bishop turns cruel as well as cold. She takes on the subject of Carnival and the social and political corruption of Brazilian society. Bishop notices the bitch with no hairs on the body, virtually looking naked and projects onto the animal world the hysteria of a woman who has been sexually insulted. She finds a reflection of herself in the diseased dog and makes that dog stand for her own sense of misuse as well as for the outrageous violations against womankind in a misogynist society. She must don a costume to survive and to continue the “celebration” of life known as carnival.
Metaphorically Bishop refers to art as a costume through which life can be rejoiced. The speaker of the poem and the pink dog are related by their exposure, their gender, and perhaps by their vulnerability.

"North Haven" was the place where Bishop spent several of the last summers of her life and she writes an elegy with the same name for friend and fellow poet Robert Lowell. In this poem she is seen celebrating the natural beauty both the friends enjoyed on this island. Although she is looking at one of Lowell’s most beloved seascapes in Maine, she resists the pathetic fallacy.

Bishop's "Sonnet" is taken to be her last poem. And it feels like a posthumous poem, with its images of release from illness, from emotional conflict, from being "a creature divided." It's the closest thing we have to her final poetic testament. This poem seems to be more directly autobiographical. Bishop deals with sexual identity and the struggle in this poem. She loved living in Brazil, away from New York literary politics and gossip, yet it was hard for her to be separated from her native country and language, and from the recognition of her admirers. "Dear, my compass / still points North," indicate her pull towards her origins but she also loved living in Brazil. Bishop finds it difficult to decide and still wavering about her true home.

Bishop once said that writing poetry “is a way of life, not a matter of testifying but of experiencing. It is not the way in which one goes about interpreting the world, but the very process of sensing it.” She has a pure sensibility to adopt the outer world into her poetry and portray it with utmost sincerity and humane ending as seen in poems like “The Fish” and “Roosters.” There are epiphanic movements in her poems as shown in the poems “In the Waiting Room” and “End of March.” In poems like “The Moose” and “End of March” Bishop seems to part maturely from her illusion of home and bid it an adieu.

Bishop in her poetry rejects home as a symbol of permanence and wholeness, of the integrated self; we must keep inscribing homes, the intimacy and loss they imply, while the memory of them change over time. Often the fragile houses in Bishop’s poetry cannot really be inhabited as in “Jeronimo’s House.” Even the real houses like “the crypto-dream-house” of “The End of the
March,” are evoked and withdrew without the possibility of dwelling. Bishop fantasizes living in a boarded-up house but dismisses the possibility of boarding it as “perfect! But – impossible.” Throughout her poems, dreamlike images appear, constituting an imaginative reality that parallels her search for stable home, as she sought to recreate the Nova Scotian home in poetry. Her rootlessness seems to suggest an exaggerated version of the lives of many restless travellers, who often moves in hope of making new homes and abandoning old ones. For Bishop, her attempts to establish a home and a stable life are complicated due to the unique characteristics: her status as an orphan, and to some degree, her sexual identity as a lesbian. Dwellings, in Bishop’s work, signify the childhood trauma of being orphaned, and the recurring memory of that trauma; the memory of being taken away from Nova Scotia.

William Shakespeare has rightly said that “Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them” and Bishop is one such writer, who is born great and achieved greatness through her untiring but perfect efforts; but unfortunately she is critically less explored. Bishop deserves to be read and valued not only for her simple language and images, or for her personality within the poems, but for the way she locates herself in the world. Robert Lowell, her friend, once compared her originality to Kafka and expressed:

“You don’t know what will come after any one line. It’s exploring.... She’s gotten a world, not just a way of writing.”

Hence, there is so much of what is most valuable about her, remains in her work. It’s one of the things great art is supposed to do. There is an immense scope to carry out studies on different aspects and areas of her writings. She has to her credit 110 remarkable poems; translation work in three languages; letters, in the form of old correspondence; and a few very outstanding autobiographical prose pieces- are penned by her. Though her literary output is not much, still there is a need to examine her work in greater details to bring out to the readers the real worth of Bishop. Bishop had won many prizes in her lifetime for she became the first woman and first American to receive the “Neustadt International Prize.”

Bishop, the most thoroughly secular poet of her generation - and it makes
an impressive, attestation to her extraordinary record of successes in her dealings simply with the world of eye and ear that, even so, she was well-nigh universally regarded at the time of her death in October 1979 as one who had ridded something to our literature in the ways that only genius can. At her death, her place among poets was less certain as she was overshadowed by more prolific and public contemporaries; Bishop once rightly said; "I'm not interested in big-scale work as such," she once told Lowell that, "Something needn't be large to be good." In the words of Earnest Hilbert, "If Anne Sexton is the Siren of the dark psyche, Adrienne Rich the Pilot of political vitality, Jorie Graham the Valkyrie of philosophical investigation, Bishop is surely the elder Sybil of everyday human life, wandering the waste lands, as it were, and revealing her wise art only to those who actively seek it out." For those who continue to seek her art and lifework, these reading are nothing less than essential.
REFERENCES

CHAPTER V


