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FOR NY Center for Visual History
625 Broadway
New York, NY 10012

PROGRAM ELIZABETH BISHOP
Program 1

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MUSIC

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ANNOUNCER

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TITLE:
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MUSIC

TITLE:
VOICES & VISIONS

TITLE:
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WOMEN ANNOUNCER

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.

Think of the long trip home. Should we have stayed at home and thought of here? Where should we be today?

Is it right to be watching strangers in a play in the strangest of theaters? What childishness is it that while there's a breath of life in our bodies, we are determined to rush to see the sun the other way around?

Oh, must we dream our dreams and have them too? And have we room for one more _____ sunset still quite warm?

But surely it would have been a pity not to have seen the trees along this road, really exaggerated in their beauty, not to have seen them gesturing like noble pantomimists robed in pink, 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 traveler takes a notebook, writes:

Is it lack of imagination that makes us come to imagine places, not just to head home? Or could Pasqual have been not entirely right about just sitting quietly in one's room?

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

TITLE:
ELIZABETH BISHOP
ONE ART

TITLE:
MARK STRAND
POET

MARK STRAND

Well, Elizabeth Bishop is a great poet. I'm not sure it's because she never wrote a bad poem. She never wrote a bad poem, I don't think.

TITLE:

HOWARD MOSS
POET

HOWARD MOSS

I think of all poets, Elizabeth is most admired by the most varied group of poets.

TITLE:
MARY McCARTHY
WRITER

MARY McCARTHY

I would like to have been Elizabeth, I think, to have had those wonderful images, those very amusing images and have it in my mind, just as -- I don't know -- I would like to have been Mozart, for the same kind of reason. Not for fame, but because of the music.

TITLE:
LLOYD SCHWARTZ
POET

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

She didn't want to be in the public eye. She was a very shy, very private person.

She, you know, left America for 15 years to live in Brazil. She never found a place in the world that she could really call home, that she could be absolutely comfortable with.

TITLE:
JAMES MERRILL
POET

JAMES MERRILL

She gave herself no airs. If there was anything the least bit artificial about her -- her character and her behavior, it was the wonderful way in which she impersonated an ordinary woman.

MUSIC

Underneath, of course, was this -- this incredible fresh genius who wrote the poems that you adored.

MARY McCARTHY

At Vassar, I was class of '33, and she was class of '34. I entered the fall of the crash, September '29. So we lived through college in the depression years. And so we were, I think, more rebellious, more different, though not necessarily in conventional ways.

Vassar was the way it always is, and it was educating girls rather well, in a sort of

classroom way, but I think also inculcating a certain notion of superiority, that was very, very Vassar.

Elizabeth had a very amusing face, she had amusing hair, which was very, very electric and kinky, alive. She looked like somebody from the last century.

It was funny that a girl who was so shy and also so independent went out for things. I think we had more sense of her as a comic writer. I think as a poem she wrote about living next to the toilet, and -- let's see if I can remember it.

Ladies and gents, ladies and gents, flushing away your excrements, I sit in here beyond the wall, a sad continual waterfall, that sanitary pipes can give to still our actions primitive.

Now that poem was well known in the smoking room of our hall.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

The fascinating thing about Elizabeth as an undergraduate was how accomplished a writer she already was.

And, of course, Marianne Moore was her great influence, and someone who really took Elizabeth under her wing for many years.

MARY McCARTHY

Finally, Elizabeth met her, and she met her through Fannie Borden, the Vassar librarian, who was an old friend of Marianne Moore. She arranged the introductions.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

They hit it off remarkably, and became great friends. They went to the circus together. Marianne Moore had a passion for circuses and, of course, wrote lots of poems about animals.

MUSIC

MARY McCARTHY

Certainly, between Bishop and Marianne Moore, there are resemblances -- the sort of close microscopic inspection of certain parts of

experience, aspects of experience. I think there was something a bit too demure about Marianne Moore, and there's nothing demure about Elizabeth Bishop.

TITLE:
ROBERT GIROUX
EDITOR

ROBERT GIROUX

And, of course, it was a lifelong friendship, particularly important in Elizabeth's career, because it was Marianne who got her first poems -- it was her first poems were published in an anthology.

It was called TRIAL BALANCES, and it consisted of new poets introduced by older poets. And Marianne introduced Elizabeth.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

Her first book was called NORTH AND SOUTH. It was published in 1946. I think NORTH AND SOUTH really does embody a kind of central idea in her work, that these two things, these two polarities, and they are polarities, both exist at the same time.

The first poem was called THE MAP, which was probably the first poem that she wrote after she graduated from Vassar, and was first published in 1935.

JAMES MERRILL

Whether she knew it or not, The Map raises questions and feelings that would be with her for the rest of her writing life. It's a poem that dates from the early '30s, and she was still able to call her last book published in 1976, GEOGRAPHY THREE. She was fascinated by where things were in relation to one another.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

THE MAP. Land lies in water. It is shadowed green. Shadows, or are they shallows, at its edges, showing the line of long seaweeded ledges where weeds hanged, 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. The shadow of Newfoundland lies flat and still. Labrador is yellow where the moony eskimo has oiled it.

The names of seashore towns run out to sea. The names of cities cross the neighboring mountains, the printer here experiencing the same excitement as when emotion too far exceeds its cause.

These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger like women feeling for the smoothness of yard goods. Mapped waters are more quiet than the land is, lending the land their waves own confirmation. And Norway's hair runs south in agitation , profiles investigate the sea where land is.

Are they assigned, or can the countries pick their colors? What suits the character, or the native waters best?

Topography displays no favorites. North's as near as west. More delicate than the historians are the mapmaker's colors.

JAMES MERRILL

THE MAP is in a way the image of a whole natural, emotional, vivid, passionate, almost childlike world, a more lovable enterprise than writing down the deeds of human beings, which would be history.

MUSIC

ROBERT GIROUX

When I came to edit Elizabeth's prose, I realized I didn't know much about her life. She was a great friend, but you don't necessarily know the biographical facts, and it was a little mysterious.

She was born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1911, and her father died when she was eight months old. She never knew her father.

Elizabeth's mother had a very serious reaction to her husband's death, and began to have a sort of mental disorder. The mother's serious

breakdown occurred when Elizabeth was only five years old -- that's in 1916. And she went into a sanitarium, and she was there for the rest of her life. And I think she died in 1934. So Elizabeth was brought up by her grandparents in Nova Scotia.

SOUNDS OF HYMN-SINGING

TITLE:
MARGARET MOTLEY
NEIGHBOR

MARGARET MOTLEY

Life in _____Village was rather a tight community, really. We had two churches, Presbyterian and Baptist. And they were all very friendly. They had lots of parties. They had to amuse themselves, you know, while there wasn't too much outside communication, in those days.

She went to the Baptist church. The Baptist church was not very different from the Presbyterian church here. Perhaps we sang hymns a little more vociferously than the

Presbyterians did -- I don't know.

HOWARD MOSS

I think the first poems she probably heard were hymns.

I think Elizabeth concentrated on her childhood, because it was a sacred period in her life. It was a life of animals. She was brought up on a farm. There was nothing more magical to Elizabeth than the appearance of animals, the sudden appearance of animals, because they connected one to a real and a natural world. The great example of it, of course, is THE MOOSE.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

THE MOOSE. From narrow provinces of fish and bread and tea, home of the long ties where the bay leaves the sea twice a day, and takes the herrings long rides, where if the river enters or retreats in a wall of brown foam depends on if it meets the bay coming in, the bay not at home.

Through late afternoon, a bus journeys west. The passengers lie back, snores. Some long sighs. A dreamy navigation begins in the night, a gentle, auditory, slow hallucination.

In the creakings and noises, an old conversation, not concerning us, not recognizable, somewhere back in the bus, grandparents' voices, uninterruptedly talking in eternity, names being mentioned, things cleared up finally, what he said, what she said, who got pensioned, deaths, deaths and sicknesses, the year he remarried, the year something happened.

TITLE:
FRANK BIDART
POET

FRANK BIDART

In Bishop, description is never wholly or simply descriptional. They are always moral landscapes, they always embody an emotional journey -- the warmest image of peace and security in her work is in the passage in THE MOOSE where she thinks about the grandparents'

voices. And it is an image of home, but it's an odd home. It's a home without a mother, without a father.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

She died in childbirth. That was the son lost when the schooner foundered. He took to drink. Yes, she went to the _____ . When Amos began to pray, even in the store, and finally the family had to put him away.

Yes, that peculiar affirmative. Yes. A sharp indrawn breath, half-groan, half-acceptance, that means life's like that. We know it. Also death.

MARK STRAND

And then the sense of resignation about all that bad stuff, that bad news that's brooded about. Yes, that peculiar affirmative. Yes, a sharp indrawn breath, half-groan, half-acceptance, that means life's like that. We know it. Also death.

Suddenly, the bus driver stops with a jolt,

turns off his lights. A moose has come out of the impenetrable wood and stands there, looms rather, in the middle of the road.

It approaches. It sniffs at the bus' hot hood, towering, antlerless -- it's a female. High as a church, homely as a house, or safe as houses.

TITLE:
WHY, WHY DO WE FEEL (WE ALL FEEL)
THIS SWEET SENSATION OF JOY?

Taking her time, she looks the bus over -- grand, otherworldly. Why? Why do we feel -- we all feel this sweet sensation of joy? The moose has appeared like a vision in the night, and we are permitted this -- this brief view. But what is more important, this sweet sensation of joy in the middle of our travail, in the middle of this life of hardship.

It's -- it's just like Elizabeth to make the moose friendly, and female.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

For a moment longer, by craning backward, the moose can be seen on the moonlit macadam. Then there's a dim smell of moose, an acrid smell of gasoline.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

She was absolutely meticulous about her -- about her writing. Poems would take, you know, years to complete. Long poems would take even more years to complete. I think she worked on the moose for 20 years, something like that.

They're not poems that begin with conclusions, or even come to conclusions, that they're working something out. I think it was her way of writing poems, of thinking on the page.

ROBERT GIROUX

She was taken away from her Nova Scotia grandparents -- she loved them deeply, she really had affection and had a home there, you see. And she was taken back to Worcester by her father's family, a very wealthy family,

into a mansion where she was terribly unhappy and lonely. It's effect on her was her many illnesses which followed. She contracted asthma, eczema, as a result of this displacement.

HOWARD MOSS

IN THE WAITING ROOM may be the most important poem of Elizabeth's, in terms -- or Elizabeth. It's that moment in which she became aware of being herself, of being conscious.

FRANK BIDART

The moment of a child first experiencing her own, his own, identity, and that moment of terror and panic and alienation, and how that was a fundamental experience in the life of the child.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

IN THE WAITING ROOM. In Worcester, Massachusetts, I went with Aunt Consuelo to keep her dentist appointment, and sat and waited for her in the dentist's waiting room. It was winter. It got dark early.

The waiting room was full of grown-up people, arctics and overcoats, lamps and magazines. My aunt was inside what seemed like a long time, and while I waited I read the National Geographic. I could read and carefully study the photographs.

The inside of a volcano, black and full of ashes. Then it was spilling over in rivulets of fire. Babies with pointed heads wound round and round with string, black naked women with necks wound round and round with wire, like the necks of light bulbs. Their breasts were horrifying.

I read it right straight through. I was too shy to stop. And then I looked at the cover, the yellow margins, the date.

Suddenly from inside came an "oh" of pain. Aunt Consuelo's voice. Not very loud or long. I wasn't at all surprised. Even then I knew she was a foolish, timid woman. I might have

been embarrassed, but wasn't.

What took me completely by surprise was that it was me, my voice, in my mouth. Without thinking at all, I was my foolish aunt. I, we, were falling, falling, our eyes glued to the cover of the National Geographic, February 1918.

I said to myself, three days and you'll be seven years old. I was saying it to stop the sensation of falling off the round, turning world into cold blue-black space.

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

FRANK BIDART

She falls out of this world that she thought she knew, and she does things to try to hold on to the world, to recollect herself, to possess an identify again.

But on the other hand, that very identity that she wants to hold on to is mysterious and scary in itself. But I felt, you are an "I," you are an Elizabeth, you are one of them. Why should you be one too? And what is it to be an Elizabeth, one of them?

I scarcely dared to look to see what it was I was. I gave a sidelong glance, I couldn't look any higher, at shadowy gray knees, trousers and skirts and boots and different pairs of hands.

What are the connections between us, and what is it to be the strange creature with pairs of hands? People have pairs of hands.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

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? How? I didn't know any word for it. How unlikely.

The waiting room was bright and too hot. It was sliding beneath a big black wave, another and another. Then I was back in it. The war was on. Outside in Worcester, Massachusetts were night and slush and cold, and it was still the 5th of February, 1918.

MUSIC

Elizabeth often said that if she could be anything other than a poet, she would be a painter. In fact, she often said that she would rather have been a painter than a poet. And, of course, she did do water colors.

You could read the poems and know that she was someone who loved paintings, and loved art, loved to look at things.

TITLE:
OCTAVIO PAZ.
POET

OCTAVIO PAZ.

She has the eye of the artist, of a painter.

Many times poets develop sometimes too much the ear. She had -- she had a beautiful ear, great ear to hear the voice, to hear the words. But better than that, eyes.

She loved Joseph Cornell, and she did at least one Joseph Cornell box, which is quite magical, quite impressive.

I think what Elizabeth loved about Joseph Cornell was the sense of fantasy and juxtaposition, that heightened sense of real objects put together in totally unexpected, even bizarre ways.

JAMES MERRILL

Many critics have spoken about the influence of surrealism on Elizabeth's work, and she herself, in her notebooks and sketches, was very drawn to the kind of hallucinatory, nevertheless very clearly-defined, image that you associate with surrealism.

HOWARD MOSS

In THE MAN MOTH -- it's a misprint from

mammoth -- and it appeared in the newspaper, and that gave her the idea for a man moth.

Elizabeth's created a character called the man moth, who flits about cracks in the buildings -- it's a city poem.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

She talks about it as her poem about New York, and I think it's really her poem about being an artist.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

Here above, cracks in the buildings are filled with battered moonlight. The whole shadow of man is only as big as his hat. He does not see the moon, he observes only her vast properties, feeling the queer light on his hands, neither warm nor cold, of a temperature impossible to record in thermometers.

But when the man moth pays his rare, although occasional visits to the surface, the moon looks rather different to him. He thinks the moon is a small hole at the top of the sky,

proving the sky quite useless for protection. He trembles, but must investigate as high as he can climb.

Up the facades, his shadow dragging like a photographer's cloth behind him, he climbs fearfully, thinking that this time he will manage to push his small head through that round, clean opening, and be forced through, as from a tube, in black scrolls on the light. Man, standing below him, has no such illusions.

But what the man moth fears most, he must do, although he fails, of course, and falls back, scared but quite unhurt. Then he returns to the pale subways of cement he calls his home.

He flits, he flutters, and cannot get aboard the silent trains fast enough to suit him. The doors close swiftly. The man moth always seats himself facing the wrong way, and the

train starts at once at its full, terrible speed, without a shift in gears or a gradation of any sort. He cannot tell the rate at which he travels backwards.

Each night he must be carried through artificial tunnels, and dream recurrent dreams. Just as the ties recur beneath his train, these underlie his rushing brain. He does not dare look out the window, for the third rail, the unbroken draft of poison, runs there beside him.

FRANK BIDART

The most fascinating thing about her image of the artist is that there's always a kind of threat -- the third rail is always running alongside.

The artist is also different. He always sits himself in the subway traveling backwards, not the way everyone else would prefer to sit.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

If you catch him, hold up a flashlight to his

eye. It's all dark pupil, an entire night itself, whose haired horizon tightens as he stares back and closes up the eye.

Then, from the lids, one tear, his only possession, like the bee's sting, slips. Slyly he palms it. And if you're not paying attention, he'll swallow it. However, if you watch, he'll hand it over, cool as from underground springs and pure enough to drink.

FRANK BIDART

The tear at the end of the poem is what the artist has to offer, his or her experience of life that becomes a kind of clarifying vision for whoever asks for it.

Elizabeth met Robert Lowell in 1946. Randall Jerell, the poet, introduced them, and they became very good friends, and remained close friends and tense friends for the rest of their lives.

FRANK BIDART

Elizabeth said that she was also tremendously

attracted to Robert Lowell. He was adorable. He looked like James Dean, she said. She wanted to, you know, fix up his clothes.

MARY McCARTHY

I think Elizabeth was in love with him, really in love with him. She loved him because he was a poet, and she loved him because he was mad. And she had a vein of madness, as is known, in her own family.

FRANK BIDART

There was a point when he told people that he was going to propose to her. She was his favorite poet. He said that -- that many times.

MARY McCARTHY

I think she offered more criticism of Cal's work than he did of hers. I think her work was too perfect to invite criticism, you know.

FRANK BIDART

They had a good time together. They had fun. There was some instinctive connection that was obviously very deep and that never ended.

HOWARD MOSS

I think because of her mother's illness there was a certain reserve, a certain restraint, and a desire not to overdramatize anything.

MARY McCARTHY

Yeah, there was certainly a lot of reticence in Elizabeth, and there's reticence in her work. But you do sense that it represents a very tight control, and a certain kind of passionate feeling. I think she's indeed capable of passionate feeling, but also of coolness -- both, both. But I think -- yes, I think it was a positive quality, and the control makes you sense the tendons of control, what's being held back.

TITLE:
THE SHAMPOO

(POEM FOLLOWS)

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

THE SHAMPOO. The still explosions on the rocks. The lichens grow by spreading gray, concentric shocks.

They have arranged to meet the rings around the moon, although within our memories they have not changed. And since the heavens will attend as long on us , you've been, dear friend, precipitate and pragmatical. And look what happens. For time is nothing, if not amenable.

The shooting stars in your black hair in bright formation are flocking there so straight, so soon. Come, let me wash it in this big tin basin, battered and shiny, like the moon.

OCTAVIO PAZ.

I think in this poem, THE SHAMPOO, talking about this very daily matter, practical matter, to clean your hair, and who becomes a kind of cosmic meeting of not only of two persons but I should say of two planets, or two stars. And that is also an insinuation of this metaphor of the skies. And the shampoo is a metaphor of love. And she never talks

about love in this poem, but it's a love poem.

ROBERT GIROUX

After her graduation from Vassar, she went abroad for the first time, and for the rest of her life she lived in many parts of the world. She lived in New York City, Key West, she lived abroad.

MARK STRAND

There's always the possibility of finding a place for herself, that her travels will end and she will settle down. But that, of course, is illusory. I mean, the possibility of home is what we need to keep going. If we have home, why travel? And if our whole career is predicated on our movement from one place to another, or better our identity is predicated on movement, home is best as an ideal.

MUSIC

ROBERT GIROUX

Elizabeth went to South America, to Brazil, in 1951. She had no intention of remaining there, but she became ill. She explains it that she ate the fruit of the cashew plant.

This made her deathly ill, apparently. So she was there for a long time, and then decided to stay.

JAMES MERRILL

Brazil must have represented for Elizabeth a kind of clarifying mirror, you know, with its strangeness for the things that she needed to see freshly again in herself. I mean, she found correspondences in the landscapes between the subjects and images that had obsessed her all of her life. But she can treat them in a way more freely thanks to the distance.

OCTAVIO PAZ.

She was a New Englander from very Puritan ancestry, with difficulties to _____ her feelings, and that, perhaps for her, Brazil -- in general, South America, but specifically Brazil -- was something to open, not her mind, but perhaps her _____ and her sensibility.

MARY McCARTHY

I think she fell in love with Brazil and the

South, as well as with a woman, Lotta.

Then she lived with her friend, Lotta, for 10 or 11 years after that. First she lived in Rio. Then they shared a house in Metropolis. And her third residence, her final residence in Brazil, was a beautiful 18th-century colonial house in Uro Preto.

She called it Casa Marianna, after Marianne Moore. And she described it as having five bedrooms, a waterfall, a panorama of seven baroque churches, and just about everything except a telephone.

JAMES MERRILL

In Santerian we got one of these pictures of the Brazil that Elizabeth has already left when she writes the poem, so that it's suffused with a glorious nostalgic, almost Biblical light, it's so far back in her history. What she doesn't talk about directly in the poem are the colors of the two rivers side by side, the blue and the brown river.

But these colors, you notice, get displaced onto the landscape itself. The colonists who have left, blue eyes in brown faces, that she sees on the street, that the doubleness, the beautiful exhilarating doubleness which she calls the watery dazzling dialectic.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

SAN TUREN. Of course, I may be remembering it all wrong, after -- after how many years? That golden evening I really wanted to go no farther.

More than anything else I wanted to stay a while in that complex of two great rivers -- _____ Amazon grandly, silently flowing, flowing east.

Suddenly there'd been houses, people, and lots of mongrel riverboats skittering back and forth under a sky of gorgeous underlit clouds, with everything gilded, burnished, along one side, and everything bright, cheerful, casual, or so it looked. I liked the place. I liked

the idea of the place. Two rivers.

Hadn't two rivers sprung from the Garden of Eden? No. That was four. And they diverged. Here only two, and coming together. Even if one were tempted to literary interpretation, such as life, death, right, wrong, male, female, such notions would have resolved -- dissolved -- straight off in that watery, dazzling dialectic. Two rivers full of crazy shipping. People all apparently changing their minds, embarking, disembarking, rowing clumsy dories.

After the Civil War, some southern families came here. Here they could still own slaves. They left occasional blue eyes, English names, and oars. No other place, no one on all the Amazon's 4,000 miles, does anything but paddle.

A dozen or so young nuns, white-habited, waved gaily from an old stern-wheeler, getting up

steam, already hung with hammocks, off to their mission, days and days away, up God knows what lost tributary.

JAMES MERRILL

In THE BLUE PHARMACY, the pharmacist had hung an empty wasp's nest from a shelf, small, exquisite, clean, mat-white, and hard as stucco. I admired it so much he gave it to me. Then, our ship's whistle blew, I couldn't stay. Back on board a fellow passenger, Mr. Swan, Dutch, the retiring head of Philip's Electric, really a very nice old man, who wanted to see the Amazon before he died, asked, what's that ugly thing?

FRANK BIDART

There was always a subject in her work of economic disparities, and the relation between rich and poor. But I think it heightened all those issues, it made them more dramatic, more savage.

PINK DOG is a poem about the brutality with which outcasts are treated. And she

obviously, throughout her life, to a degree identified with outcasts.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

It's a poem written in three-line stanzas in which every line rhymes. So it has a kind of nursery rhyme feeling about it. It's another one of her animal poems. But it's a poem about a creature who is homeless and poor and ugly and ill. I think it's partly a poem about being female, about being a woman. But I think that reduces it. I think it's about -- there's a kind -- it's about a kind of horror of isolation, a horror of not fitting in with a world that is -- that seems to be having a good time, or that is forcing itself to have a good time.

MUSIC

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

The sun is blazing, and the sky is blue,
umbrellas clothe the beach in every hue.
Naked, you trot across the avenue. Oh, never
have I seen a dog so bare, naked and pink,
without a single hair. Startled, the

passersby draw back and stare.

Of course, they're mortally afraid of rabies. You are not mad, you have a case of scabies, but look intelligent. Where are your babies? A nursing mother by those hanging teats. In what slum have you hidden them, poor bitch, while you go begging, living by your wits?

Didn't you know? It's been in all the papers, to solve this problem, how they deal with babies? They take and throw them in the tidal rivers. Yes, idiots, paralytics, parasites go bobbing in the ebbing sewage. Nights, out in the suburbs where there are no nights.

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?

FRANK BIDART

In the cafes and on the sidewalk corners, the joke is going around that all the beggars who can afford them now wear life preservers.

In your condition, it would not -- you would not be able even to float, much less to dog-paddle. Now look, the practical, the sensible solution, and then one wonders, what will the solution be? Well, it's to dress up, it's to go to the carnival.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

Now look, the practical, the sensible solution is to wear a fantasia. Tonight you simply can't afford to be an eyesore. But no one will ever see a dog in masquerade this time of year. Ash Wednesday will come, but carnival is here.

What sambas can you dance? What will you wear? They say that carnival's degenerating. Radios, Americans, or something, have ruined it completely. They're just talking. Carnival is always wonderful. A _____ dog would not look well.

Dress up. Dress up and dance at carnival.

JAMES MERRILL

Elizabeth left Brazil for good in 1970, and by fall she was installed at Harvard. She wanted the kind of security that would come from a regular teaching job. So she moved to Boston, and it was there that she spent the last years of her life.

By the time Elizabeth published GEOGRAPHY THREE in 1976, it seemed to me there was nothing that she couldn't write about directly, or imply in her work.

The human being here who writes these poems is wiser, sadder -- there are many elements that combine to make a poem, this poem, CRUSOE IN ENGLAND. One thing, certainly, is Elizabeth's lifelong love of Darwin, who traveled to the Galapagos, as Elizabeth herself did. Some of those details certainly contribute to the poem.

But I think it's really a poem that draws a tacit connection between Crusoe as an old man, back where he began, having been to all of these strange places, and Elizabeth coming back from her years in Brazil.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

A new volcano has erupted, the papers say, and last week I was reading where some ship saw an island being born.

At first a breath of steam 10 miles away, and then a black sleck -- basalt probably -- rose in the mate's binoculars and caught on the horizon like a fly. They named it. But my poor old island, still unrediscovered, unrenamable -- none of the books has ever got it right.

Well, I had 52 miserable small volcanoes I could climb, with a few slithery strides, volcanoes dead as ash heaps. 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? With my legs dangling down familiarly over a crater's edge, I told myself, pity should begin at home. So the more pity I felt, the more I felt at home.

FRANK BIDART

The crucial passage is the passage about the flute, and making the flute -- she said, I drink an awful, fizzy, stinging stuff that went straight to my head, and play my homemade flute -- I think it had the weirdest scale on earth -- and dizzy whoop and dance among the goats. Homemade, homemade, but aren't we all.

I think there's a way in which everything in BISHOP is homemade. That is, it is centered in her own perception. There's a kind of absolute authenticity about every word spoken at every time. And there's a sense that, well, perhaps this is modest, perhaps this is not the insight one needs or wants, but it's

what I have, and that's what I can make.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

Dreams were the worst. Of course, I dreamed of food and love. But they were pleasant rather than otherwise.

But then I 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 frog's eggs turning into pollywogs of islands, knowing that I had to live on each and every one, eventually, for ages, registering their flora, their fauna, their geography.

Just when I thought I couldn't stand it another minute longer, Friday came. Accounts of that have everything all wrong. Friday was nice. Friday was nice, and we were friends.

If only he had been a woman. I wanted to propagate my kind, and so did he, I think.

poor boy. He'd pet the baby goat sometimes, and race with them, or carry one around. Pretty to watch. He had a pretty body. And then one day they came and took us off. Now I live here, another island. It doesn't seem like one, but who decides. My blood was full of them, my brain bred islands. But that archipelago has petered out.

I'm old. I'm bored, too, drinking my real tea, surrounded by uninteresting lumber. The knife there on the shelf, it wreaked of meaning like a crucifix that lived. How many years did I beg it, implore it not to break? I knew each nick and scratch by heart, the bluish blade, the broken tip, the lines of wood grain on the handle. Now it won't look at me at all. The living soul has dribbled away. My eyes rest on it and pass on.

The local museum's asked me to leave everything to them, the flute, the knife, the shriveled shoes, my shedding goatskin trousers

-- moths have gotten the fur -- the parasol that took me such a long time remembering the way the rib should go. It still will work, but folded up looks like a plucked and skinny fowl. How can anyone want such things?

And Friday, my dear Friday. Died of measles 17 years ago come March.

JAMES MERRILL

She leaves it to us to -- to make whatever kind of intimacy we would like best to imagine between Crusoe and Friday. She doesn't spell it out. She says that Crusoe thought Friday was a -- was a -- was a pretty young man, and the rest is left to our imagination.

LLOYD SCHWARTZ

What happens to Crusoe when he goes back to England is that he's rescued, but he is almost more alienated once he's back in civilization, and that there's something terribly moving and sad about Elizabeth's identifying with this situation.

In 1976 she won the _____ International Prize given at the University of Oklahoma. This was the first time this prize had been given to an American, and it was also the first time it had been given to a woman.

M.C.

Ms. Bishop, I have the great pleasure to present to you this award, which is sizable, and handsome, but carries with it, we believe, the high regard of the literary world.

ELIZABETH BISHOP

Thank you very much.

APPLAUSE

ELIZABETH BISHOP

It is extremely gratifying that, after having spent most of my life timorously picking around the coastlines of the world, I've been given recognition from so many different countries, and also from Norman, Oklahoma, a place so far inland.

MARK STRAND

I think she annoyed some people, because they -- they thought she was deliberately coy, or

evasive, or quaint. I think she observed a kind of decorum, and in the end was very generous, because she gave whomever she was with lots of room, and lots of leeway, and never embarrassed them.

Elizabeth died October 6th, 1979 of a brain aneurism. She was writing her best work. Her public readings were better than ever, were warmer, were more conversational.

I think she was becoming more and more confident, and less and less shy. So, it was a terribly tragic loss to everyone who knew her and loved her work.

MARY McCARTHY

People use the word "great" writer. I don't think "great" is the adjective I would use for Elizabeth, which is not derogatory to Elizabeth, to say that -- maybe it's derogatory to "great" to say that. I really do not like the formula, a great writer, and it suggests somebody very big. Well, all her

gift is in precision, in neatness, in smallness.

JAMES MERRILL

She made you feel at once welcome in her work. You felt that the work didn't aspire to be grander than her own dimensions.

OCTAVIO PAZ.

She was a master of silence, and that is very important. This communication of not only of the evident things, the said things, but the unsaid things. Because I think our lives are made not only for the things that we said, but the things that we don't say, that we cannot say. And the job of the poet is to show it, to show the silence. And Elizabeth was a master in this difficult art.

WOMAN ANNOUNCER

ONE ART. The art of losing isn't hard to master. So many things seem filled with the intent to be lost, that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster of lost door keys, the hour badly spent. The art of losing isn't hard to master. Then practice losing farther, losing faster, places and names and where it was you meant to travel. None of these will bring disaster. I lost my mother's watch. And look, my last, or next to last, of three loved houses went. The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And vaster. Some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent. I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

Even losing you, the joking voice, a gesture I love, I shan't have lied. It's evident, the art of losing's not too hard to master, though it may look like, write it like disaster.

MUSIC

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