Bodies in Vertigo: the language of liminalities

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ABSTRACT

Starting with my own travel experiences, and with the help of poets, Elizabeth Bishop, Jorie Graham, and Emily Dickinson, I create a theory of displacement, called Vertigo. Vertigo is not only a sense of falling, but a sense of detachment from reality that I felt traversing through different cultures, languages, and worlds for the first time. Vertigo is a liminal, transformative space that allows an individual to experience the created nature of their own worldview and culture. This is also a physical experience, as Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson give evidence to in their poetry, as the individual experiences a heightened sense of their physical bodies. This work acknowledges the privileged position of the traveler, and reveals that often the observations we make in this privileged position can be moves of colonization. Poetry is one way to both acknowledge these moves, and to also show what we can learn from these moments when we continue to question and explore. Additionally, poetry, as a medium of mindful reflection, allows for a language that is capable of handling the physical knowledge of the body; the mental mapping of the cultural and personal realities of the individual; and also the geographic and political landscapes that surround an individual or population, simultaneously. With this understanding, the theoretical framework for displacement, bodies, and place, which Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson give us, is the foundation for exploring how poetry can provide knowledge for more "scientific" writing, such as, cultural geography or cognitive science.

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Introduction: Bodies as Topopoetry

I am of the body to tell you that in order to see the strands that make up the complexities of your location, your be-ing, your doing, your place, your space, you must leave it. You must travel to the very edges of your skin.[1]

In the work that follows, I explore the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, Jorie Graham, and Emily Dickinson to develop a theory of displacement, what I call Vertigo. This is a personal journey through the topography of countries and poems, experiences and people. I have found that even in previous nondualistic theories of place and space that the possibility of displacement is not taken into account. It appears we take for granted our places and identities, for as we will see in the poetry of Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson that the ground can fall beneath your feet and your identity, your "I" can be stripped from you. It is crucial that we understand the interconnectedness between identity politics of the body, location of place, and nondualistic space, before developing a theory of displacement. Poetry has a unique capability of handling the issues of bodies, identities, and places simultaneously. Additionally, poetry can provide both a knowledge base for building theories of place and/ or displacement, and also enhance existing knowledge about bodies, identities, places, geographies, etc. by adding alternative critical theories to the analysis of poems. The particular ways that I approach my understanding of Vertigo and displacement are within a nondualistic sense of space and place, while also giving value to the lived experience of the body. The poets that I have chosen are interested in these same articulations and tensions between bodies and spaces, and their engagements with their identities, experiences, worldviews, cultural assumptions, and locations are

[1] These asides throughout this work can be thought of as "jazz pieces." They are additive "riffs," that may be pieces of poems, quotes, or simple musings. They are meant to resemble notes written into margins, a reminder that there is always more to a text than just the words on the page, as outside thoughts and sources are always seeping in to our readings, reminding us of something else.

what I believe to be a unique subset of poetry, topopoetry.[2] Although past theorists of place, identity, space, and bodies have provided frameworks for understanding the fluid, co-creating nature of these material realities, I contend that they lack both an emphasize on the corporeal body, as a situated and lived reality (capable of producing real knowledge), and the possibility of displacement. In the experience of displacement, the vertiginous traveler sees the fallacy, or constructed nature, of her own material reality, while also experiencing a heightened sense of her corporeal body. The poets, Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson, provide evidence of the physical body and the written body (and at times they are the same) as sources for knowledge production. So in short, this introduction stresses the nondualistic relationship between individuals and place; the agency of the situated, physical body; the radical possibilities of reconfigured material realties; and poetry as a dynamic, mindful reflection for the Vertigo traveler. Understanding these relationships is crucial in how I read Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson, and maintains why their poetry, in particular, addresses each of these issues in our search for a theory of displacement.

Language has always existed in movement, we exist in movement. We speak/spoke because of movement, we live/lived because of movement.
You survive in this moment because of the movement of your breath, in and out, in and out.
Quiet short breaths, in and out. As this text lives as your eyes moves across the lines, black marks, white spaces, black marks,_____.

First, it is important to establish how I use the terms *otherness* and *boundaries* in discussions of identity, place, space, bodies, and other material realities, in both this introduction and the work that follows. In my work I associate "otherness" as a perceived

[2] This phrase is inspired by Sten Moslund's work in "The Presencing of Place in Literature: Toward an Embodied Topopoetic Mode of Reading," as he states "[w]henever the question falls on literatures of a more place-specific nature…we may even be speaking of topopoetics as *lang*scaping of literature or a reading that maps the work as a *land*guage" (30).

otherness of the poet, or a situated body. It is a place-holder for an experience that an individual does not yet have language for. Otherness is the not-yet-acknowledged intersection between a body and its shifting material reality. This same idea applies to the concept of boundaries, which I do not see as dividing or bounded lines, but instead, as lines of intersections that are in influx and co-creating the other. The writers that we look at all engage, in one way or another, issues of "otherness" and "boundaries," but this is a perceptional, situated experience of changing worldviews. The experience of displacement causes seemingly essentialist moments, but by showing sharp contrasts and juxtapositions in their poetry, Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson are actually demonstrating a fluid, shifting relationship to the places they travel. As Doreen Massey states in *Space, Place, and Gender*, "[t]hinking of places in this way implies that they are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations. It applies that their 'identities' are constructed through the specificity of their interaction with other places rather than by counterposition to them" (121). Additionally, the poets' work demonstrates the importance of embodied perception in understanding their individual negotiations between the varying discourses of spaces and places.

Each Contain the Other: The Nondualistic Relationship between Space and Place

Vertigo, as a theory of displacement, stresses the agency of an individual's corporeal body, and the physical spaces that surround and inform a body's worldview. One issue with this endeavor is that it appears our interest in physical place has shifted to nonphysical space. As Jeff Malpas, philosopher of place, notes, "within much contemporary literature, in geography and beyond, space appears as a swirl of flows, networks, and trajectories, as a chaotic ordering that locates and dislocates, and as an effect of social process that is itself spatially dispersed and distributed" ("Putting space in place" 228). Vertigo, through the

poetry of Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson, establishes how place also contains these chaotic orderings. Both space and place contain elements of the other one, on a fluid, shifting continuum.

I am saying that we exist like a circle always moving, always in new a cycle of birth and death.
A circle whose Circumference is always reshifting, and retracing its boundaries.

In "Putting space in place: philosophical topography and relational geography," Malpas states that "[he] hope[s] to put space back into relation to place (and place to space) in a way that also retains the distinction between them" (227). Vertigo not only builds off the work that he and others have done with place/space, but it also shows the importance of bodies in discussions of place and space. If agency is not given to bodies then the work we do with displacement will mean nothing. The vertiginous traveler sees the spaces, the flows, the networks that move between place and bodies. The binaries between space/place and mind/body must be deconstructed, but productively. I argue that this is not only vital in theories of displacement, but it is the way that all engagements of space and place should be conducted across disciplines, including poetry.

The differences between space and place are subtle moves between our systemic relationships. Our skins, the atoms that make us up, that are so close to touching the world, but never will, are the first places that we learn to live. In addition to body agency, we must also see the ebbs and flows between bodies, space, places, noplaces, consciousness, language, and unlanguage, and the intersections between, in, and out of them that create what Jacques Derrida referred to as, the "chains of iterable marks" ("Signature Event Context" 18). [3] Vertigo, as we will see, shows this radical possibility of

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For Derrida, there is no limit to the amount of times a sign can be repeated as a word is produced in chains of varying contexts. These chains are innumerable and invariable; there is no source, just a black

innumerable material realities, as well as, the potential loss of material realities. In the poetry that we investigate this will appear as a shifted worldview, an altered consciousness, or a broken home. To work within one is to work within, or out of, any of them, all at once, and not at all.

This includes, as Eric Prieto states in *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place*, understanding that "place is a *human* relation… [a] site does not become a place until a person comes along and enters into a meaning-generating relationship with it" (13). It is important to see the human in the systemic relationship between place, space, and noplace. Bishop, Graham, and Dickinson use poetry as a medium capable of holding these issues up simultaneously, so that we might produce knowledge from their interconnected and shifting relationships. Again, experiencing Vertigo, or displacement, allows the connections of bodies and places and their constructed nature to become apparent to us. Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, in their work *The Embodied Mind*, state that they "hold with [Maurice] Merleau-Ponty that Western scientific culture requires that we see our bodies both as physical structures and as lived, experiential structures—in short, as both 'outer' and 'inner,' biological and phenomenological" (xv). [4] What I am interested in is the

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hole full of indescribable worlds. The possibility of these innumerable and indescribable worlds becomes apparent to the poet in the experience of Vertigo.

[4] Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in *The Embodied Mind* seek to find ways that an embodied human experience contributes to cognitive science. As they state, "the self or cognizing subject is fundamentally fragmented, divided, or nonunified" (xvii), and the work done in cognitive science, not only does not account for this, but "is limited and unsatisfactory, both theoretically and empirically, because there remains no direct, hands-on, pragmatic approach to experience with which to complement science" (xviii). In order to rectify this bridge in modern science, the writers reach towards Buddhist tradition and philosophy, because "the concept of a nonunified or decentered (the usual terms are *egoless* or *selfless)* cognitive beings is the cornerstone of the entire Buddhist tradition" (Varela, Thompson, Rosch xviii). Similarly, I argue that poetry can be a mindful bridge between the experience of the individual and more scientific work.

intersections and flows between the outer and inner, where and how they interact, as they co-create the other.

The Vertiginous, Situated Agency of the Physical Body

What is truly productive for us, then, in understanding place, is looking for ways to see where these two views of the body meet, the inner and outer, the abstract and physical. For example, we might look at how an embodied narrative provides insight about a place that would otherwise be lost in more "scientific" endeavors, such as geography or cartography.

In order to accomplish this we must first give agency to corporeal realities before we can look at displaced bodies in topopoetry. It is crucial to find objective knowledge through the situated body; this is of course an argument inspired by Donna Haraway and her case for "situated knowledges" and what she calls the "science question" in feminism.[5] Feminism, specifically a theory of situated knowledges, is crucial in complicating the systemic relations between different worldviews. This lens of feminism maintains that translations are always partial, never whole, and never completely transparent. A feminist view keeps us accountable by understanding that situated knowledges are limited and partial. Haraway states that a feminist objectivity "is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see" (87).

In order to keep away from this one-eyed view that "fucks the word," Haraway argues that we must reclaim vision (86-87). Vision "is the gaze that mythically inscribes

[5] Feminism, here, is not necessarily to highlight issues of gender (although it is important to keep in mind all of the threads that make up an individual's lived, situated reality), but to use situated knowledges as a productive methodological approach in giving agency to bodies while also keeping in mind the fluid relationships between their material realities.

all marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation" (86). Whether the scope is too far removed or too close to the subject, the details, connections, and contradictions get blurred. In order to reclaim how the vision machines work, both biologically and technologically, we must learn how "to see from the peripheries and the depths" (88). [6] How is this productively possible? Instead of having a "mastery theory," we find value in "webbed accounts" (91). We can think of knowledge producing as web weaving. As Haraway states, "[w]ebs *can* have the property of systematicity, even of centrally structured global systems with deep filaments and tenacious tendrils into time, space, and consciousness, the dimensions of world history" (92). This theory of webs also gives us room to explore scale of material realities.

For there to be a nondualistic sense of self, there must also be a nondualistic sense of place. You cannot have the binary of one, and strive for the other. We co-create our existences from the phenomenon of dwelling. We dwell in bodies, in homes, in places, in identities, in languages, in poems, and in skins. But we are also already leaving the homes we build. Writers in Vertigo seemingly create dualistic boundaries, but it is only through mindful reflection, like poetry, that the writer is able to show the flow, the interconnectedness of the boundaries of alternative material practices. Ken Wilber explains of boundaries, "when you establish a boundary so as to gain control over something, at the same time you separate and alienate yourself from that which you attempt to control" (*No Boundary* 30-31). In the face of apparent otherness, individuals

[6] Although we must be careful to not appropriate or romanticize those visions, or sources of knowledge, that are "less powerful" (88). Differences in visions are valuable because the knowledge base increases, not because one vision thread is more valuable than another.

create boundaries in order to gain control over their new physical surroundings, which their material existences no longer have connections to. When we look at moments of Vertigo we see an interesting juxtaposition of detachment from the poets' surroundings, and, yet at the same time, an increased bodily awareness.

For the interconnectedness between our bodies and material realities to become visible to us, some trauma must happen. Displacement is such a trauma. Travel, as displacement, is the physical manifestation of our already moving identities and relations to the world. For, we are always in movement, which means we are always, already negotiating through systems of exile and home, of absence and presence. It is the nomad or nomadess that already understands the slim distinction between the movements of exile and placement, and so s(he) lives as we breathe, in and out, in and out. That is, the nomad moves through physical displacement, in such a way that it reflects the dynamic, unstable, weaving self. The nomad is mindfully embodied, and boundaries are only passing aggregates. Most of us are not nomads, but travelers, meaning that boundaries still exist.

Bodies, languages, poetry, places, and identities are all components of our material reality, all components that we dwell in, that we make homes in, and that we ultimately leave, indefinitely. Henry Sussman describes building a home within language; "[m]y home is not a preexistent address, structure, or series of venues that I enter and leave. My home does not exist or pre-exist; periodically, it happens around me, it comes into being" (40). Sussman observes that for Martin Heidegger the act of dwelling "was inseparable" from the act of thinking and writing; "[t]he wanderings of thinking and

writing can be gauged only against the backdrop of dwelling" (41). [7] One way to see the movement between dwelling and homelessness is to move between different cultures, different languages. Sussman observes cultures as "the exchange between outsiders who leave traces and the community of readers who take them in and interpret them" (18). This shows the fluidity of bodies and material practices, like culture and language. Writing is evidence of exiles and the homeless; it "is a state, but bearing no nationality. Its citizens are precisely the stateless and the homeless" (Sussman x). We are all writing, in some way, but those that are mindful of the practice of writing accept the exiled self.

"The ultimate secret that the wanderer conveys is the mystery of language the aporetic backdrop of mutually disqualifying propositions against which language nonetheless takes effect and happens" (Sussman 42).

Each of us is already wandering, already wanderers. We are exiles. We are nomads. We are Gypsies.
We have no home but for the one we leave.

The Radical Possibility of Reconfigured Material Realities

Another way of realizing the illusion of boundaries is to move through a poem like a place, or see a place like a body. So that we are not only seeing the exilic features of each temporary, shifting boundary, but the temporary boundaries that are possible between them as well. Karen Barad's theory for agential reality confirms this possibility

[7] Sussman also acknowledges "the close tie between homelessness and the paradoxical meanderings of the wanderer" in Heidegger's philosophical thought (41). Additionally, Heidegger's concept of *daesin* acknowledges the fluid relations between place and body, or as he words in order to stress the dynamic, ongoing process, "be-ing." Heidegger explains the relationship between dasein and mindfulness: "Da-sein means taking over the distress of the grounding of the truth of be-ing – it is the beginning of a history that has no 'history'. From the perspective of thinking, mindfulness means preparing the preparedness for such a takeover in the form of a knowing-awareness of be-ing, because thinking requires into the truth of be-ing in imageless saying of the word" (Mindfulness 17). Da-sein also helps to see how the body fluid in its relationship between the places it inhabits.

between material realities.[8] Through agential reality we can see that bodies, texts, identities, spaces, histories, times, places, and locations are all produced as material practices. If this is to hold, then we can see all these issues as material "bodies" or material "locations" whose boundaries can be (re)worked and (re)configured. Although Barad works against notions of geometrical conceptions for "politics of identity" and "politics of location," (104) I maintain we can use this theory to flip the notion of location so that poems, bodies, identities become places, of sorts, in which we can productively "visit." So when I say that Bishop and Graham traveled with me to Morocco, Turkey, and Sri Lanka, and that Dickinson was waiting for me back home, I mean this in more than just a metaphorical sense. This is a flattening of power relations between differing material bodies. Bodies, poems, languages, identities, places, times are all "boundary drawing practices" or "material-discursive practices" and the "intra-actions entail the making of boundaries, the specification of the domains of interiority and exteriority that differentially separate from the unintelligible" ("Re(con)figuring Space, Time, Matter 91). Haraway also asks the question "[a]re biological bodies 'produced' or 'generated' in the same strong sense as poems?" and suggest that "poetry and organisms are siblings" (97). We can read bodies and places like poems, and we can travel to poems as places.

In this work we will create Nomad Art together, as a kind of webbed knowledge that maintains this radical possibility of different worldviews. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's describe, "the nomad line is abstract in an entirely different sense,

[8] Material matter is co-created in a non-dualist model of identity (re)creation and (re)working through human and materiality, in what Barad calls *agential reality.* As she describes, "[a]gential reality is continually reconstituted through our material-discursive intra-actions. Therefore, we are not only responsible for the knowledge that we seek, but in part, for what exists" ("Re(con)figuring space, time, matter" 87).

precisely because it has a multiple orientation and passes *between* points, figures and contours: it finds a positive motivation in the smooth space it traces, not in any striation performed in order to ward off anxiety and subordinate the smooth. The abstract line is an affect of smooth space, not a feeling of anxiety that calls forth striation" ("Nomad Art" 20). [9] The nomad line cuts through striated spaces in order to map out the smooth spaces, that is, it finds a perspective so close (or far way) that all the striated lines blur and smooth out, until there is no distinction between the lines.[10] The nomad body, a body without organs is even more alive, because "everything … passes *between* organism" ("Nomad Art" 22). [11] The nomad has the ability to find a home in absences, because (s)he traverses the world as smooth spaces.

We will see moments of the nomad in each of Jorie Graham, Elizabeth Bishop, and Emily Dickinson's poetry. These poets see bodies as languages themselves. Often they explore the limitations of bodies and languages simultaneously as they find the interconnectedness of those boundaries. So if the limitations of bodies are the same as language, then we can also theorize that we can experience Vertigo through language as a medium of displacement, and not only through physical travel. We will explore this idea more thoroughly with the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Dickinson, because her lived

[9] Keeping with our vocabulary, we can think of smooth and striated space as absence and presence.

[10] Deleuze and Guattari explain this as, "[t]he opposition between striated and smooth space is not simply that between the global and the local…Where there is close vision, space is not visual, or rather the eye itself has a haptic, non-optical function: no line separates earth from sky, which are the same substance; neither is there any horizon, background, perspective limit, outline or form, or centre; there is not intermediary distance, or all distance is intermediary" ("Nomad Art" 17).

[11] Nomad Art also resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome, where realities are "lines of flight, movement deterritorialization and destratification" ("Rhizome" 1). The rhizome also serves for an appropriate metaphor for our work, because it is also a map. As Deleuze and Guattari stress, "make a map, not a tracing," because "[t]he map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a mediation" ("Rhizome 12).

experience was much different than that of Graham and Bishop, shows how we can move through different material practices, such as time and space, like nomads.

Poetry as a Dynamic, Mindful Space for the Traveler

Travel, or exploration, in language and/ or location allows you to experience liminal spaces, because it allows more mindful access to the threads circulating between the known and unknown. You no longer see these seemingly dualistic relations as opposites, but each containing the other. It is also the break or the in-between space of language that poets so often create to map out the borderlands, or limits, of consciousness. This project sees the ways that poetry can be a critical analytic within geocriticism, which as Bertrand Westphal states, has "three fundamental concepts: *spatiotemporality* (no spatial analysis may avoid temporal concerns); *transgressivity* (no representation is stable; on the contrary, as in Deleuze's deterritorialization process, permanent fluidity is the characteristic of representations and consequently, of identities); and *referentiality* (any representation is linked within the referential world)" ("Forward" xv). In poetry, we must accept that the space explored is of a particular temporal identity, and that the idea of place is always in transition, permanently fluid as the reader experiences it again, and that this experience simultaneously explores the fluidness of identity, for both the reader and the author. This is what Robert T. Tally Jr. refers to as "literary cartography" (1).[12] Increasingly, it seems, that researchers are learning the value that literature or "the strategic role that literary representations play in shaping our conceptions of human spatiality" ("Geocriticism, Geopoetics, Geophilosophy, and Beyond" Prieto 13-14). Poems are artifacts of our spatial narratives, that is to say, our

[12] Referencing the phrase, Tally states, "[u]sing *literary cartography*, a writer maps the social spaces of his or her world; a geocritic would read these maps, drawing particular attention to the spatial practices involved in literature" (1).

bodies, our corporeal existences are *topopoetry*. Topopoetry acknowledges both the fluid body and its corporeal existence within the world, and the writing produced from these mindful engagements of place is aware of and is also engaged with the changing personal and political landscapes of the individual. The process is always cyclical.

Poetry is a way to understand the "otherness" within ourselves, because poetry seeks to move past traditional narratives of time, place, history, self, and anything else that falsely gathers presence. Intuitively, poetry plays with language so that it can break apart the surface of things, in order to get to the enfoldings beneath them. Alejandro A. Vallega, seemingly using the language of Derrida, notes that language occurs "as presencing and absencing" and when engaged with "this structure of disclosure in its alterity opens possibilities for beings leading well beyond already operative configurations of the senses of beings. Poetry, if understood in terms of this disclosedness and not merely as a mimetic art, bears such possibilities" (88). Sten Pultz Moslund notes that presence affects our senses, in much the same way that art can touch our bodies, and bring the "world close to our skin" (32). Noting that Deleuze coined the term "sense-effect" to denote such a phenomenon, a Deleuzian reading of literature reveals, "the characters of the place no longer differ from the wind blowing or the colors of the landscapes or its sounds" (Moslund 32-37). Moslund also believes that "[t]o appreciate the poetry or the earth or physicality or the palatial depths of language—to reopen the sensory experiences of words that have been closed off by our cerebral and discursive preoccupations—is almost like resuscitating a dead language within a living

one" (39). Through this practice we will speak of bodies as *lan(d)gauges* within a holistic, nondualstic understanding within the multiplicities of space.[13]

Furthermore, it is the poet's eye/I that is one of the few mediums capable of conveying the embodied experience of the individual, while simultaneously able to see the social and cultural workings between a space and a poet's identity. It is a very particular kind of mapping, a holistic, nomadic map. As Heather Yeung further explains:

> [t]he poet thus communicates with a freedom of affect that the geographer or naturalist cannot notate, bridging the gap between the ready-to-hand of the observer in the natural setting, and the present-at-hand of the geographer or naturalist's detachedly observed phenomena or specimens. Through this freedom of vision and voice, the "I" (enunciating first person pronoun) and the "eye" (or angle of poetic vision) of the poem become necessarily interchangeable, producing a blurring between landscape and voice that the reader of the poem must subsequently negotiate, engaging affectively with the poem on a level different than that of its creator (209).

Additionally, the poet, through writing and mindful reflection, investigates how a displaced body scrambles to trace the boundaries of its own sociocultural understanding, or limitation.

For the travel poet, Vertigo maps the boundaries between the body's physical geography and that of an outside experience. The interactions between these forces help to create perception, or a situated worldview. Vertigo is an extreme bodily awareness of the body's perceptional limits. Each experience is specific to its own situated body of knowledge. Vertigo knowledge is, likewise, limited and partial. It is a local knowledge experience as the body traverses between boundaries. In postmodernity, because "[t]opography and geography now intersect literary and cultural criticism in a growing

[13] Again, this word play of "*land*guage" is taken from Moslund. As he states, "[t]he fusion of 'language' with 'land' or 'landscape' points to the way a work's language may be laden with the natural and cultural symptomologies of its setting, endowed with sensory energies that are intricately evocative of things like the topography, flora, fauna, and climate of the place" (31).

interdisciplinary inquiry into emergent identity formations and social practices," I argue we can use the knowledge produced from poetry to look at experiences of traversing boundaries in experiences of displacement (Kaplan 144).

However, some bodies have the privilege of traveling, while others are forced into displacement. Caren Kaplan says that one issue of travel is "[i]f the tourist traverses boundaries, they are boundaries that the tourist participates in creating; that is, an economic and social order that requires "margins" and "centers" will also require representation of those structural distinctions" (58). There is a difference between those forced into otherness, and those that have the luxury to seek displacement. The traveler can perpetuate binaries, such as First World/ Third World; modern/ traditional, developed/developing, etc. To prevent this, Haraway stresses that we must be aware of and complicate our own positions within the world. Additionally, in looking at our approaches to poetry, we also "need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate colour and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name" (Haraway 87). Language is also limited, partial, and slippery.

In the piece that follows I work with my own situated experiences in several different kinds of writings, alongside the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop, Jorie Graham, and Emily Dickinson, respectively. Because travel is privileged displacement, I am first concerned with where my own voice is, as a white, American woman. In addition to my own experiences, Bishop's poetry will show how we are able to delicately (tra)verse through various socio-political landscapes. Then we deepen our working definition of

Vertigo through Jorie Graham's own poem entitled "Vertigo." Graham also contributes an interest in bodies to the theory of Vertigo. In defining the term "body" used within Graham's poetry, Calvin Bedient states that "[t]he body is baggage in the effort to reach the absolute" (277). As seen again and again in her poetry, the body is situated and its knowledge partial, yet she still reaches for a way beyond the limits of her body, but will ultimately fall short. Bedient also defines Graham's use of "story" (plot, outline) as "[a] cover-up for nowhere, notime, nohow" (289). This will be important as we (tra)verse through corporeal limits to boundaries of place and time, from Graham's mapping of consciousness to Dickinson's. We further complicate this issue of displacement by including Emily Dickinson as a Vertigo poet. As stated before, the experience of Vertigo cannot be applied universally, but objective knowledge can be found by investigating these three poetic bodies.

Poems are artifacts of consciousness: the knowledge produced from situated bodies.

Too often when we read, our bodies are displaced. Read this mindfully. Allow your body to become a part of your reading experience. Marry the experience with your body. Approach this text as a walking meditation, like the swirling, hypnotic force of a whirling dervish.

It is not only the content that follows but it is the form, that is, the text embodies the experience. These are not only places that I have explored, and I tried to capture the notion of exploring as best could, but it is your experience as well. You now hold the power, you are now the explorer. I am only the shade of a body, like a snake [serpentina] shedding, you will see where a body once was and what is left of it.

Written bodies are like snakeskins: pale, fragile proof that a body once was here and lived, moved, breathed, and proof that it continues to move again outside of the skin that it left for you to investigate and find.

You are the dancing body; these pages are nothing more than musical suggestions.

Bodies in Vertigo—the language of liminalities

How Does a Journey Start?

I was sitting in the back of a large, white van looking out at the streets of Rabat, my forehead pressed to the glass. We had stopped at a local convenience store while our hosts ran into to get us some snacks for the road. We had been in Morocco for a couple of days, and were now headed up to the Berber country of Azrou. I was a senior in undergrad, and it was my first time outside of the United States.

I suddenly felt hot. I felt like I was heating from the inside out. There was only a pane of glass separating me from the sandy streets of Morocco, but I felt so removed. I became keenly aware that I could not touch *it*. I could not touch the sand. I could not touch the store, the palm tree, anything. I wanted to jump out of the van and breathe in the hot air. But I only inhaled air-conditioning. And I only felt glass. A temporary boundary. A metaphor for a lens that would have still removed me.

"When the windshield became the only border between us, things became strange" (Rowe 1).

I felt like I was falling. I felt vertigo. Yet, I was still isolated and bounded. It was a heightened sense of my body, while my mind traced its own boundaries.

In Morocco I felt trapped, as if I was looking at the world through a smeared lens, everything was distorted. I was trying to read this new culture with my own language, my own stories, and they did not fit.

Landing in Rabat

The bus drives us to the hotel.
Dust, something green, palm trees,
as we pass what seems like a park,
a man lies belly down on cardboard,
as a couple twenty feet away
sit picnicking on the grass.
I imagine her *hijab* to be hot,
as sweat rolls down my open, freckled neck,
as boys play soccer, kicking up dust.

My eyes cut a thin slice of humanity,
an experimental scientist
with an indecisive blade.
I do not know this skin of condition
that begins to shift between particles,
the view of the sum of our parts.

Looking through the window,
I felt its lens hot and silent.
I tried to listen,
to hush the stories in my head,
to hear what the rhythm,
the language of the city would say.
But it would not speak to me.
Dust and veils,
dust and veils.

"How does a journey start?" My journey did not start when the jet plane took off from Dulles airport. It began when I found myself stuck on a van, between two worlds.

"How does a journey start? What un/certainties compel one to take up again the by-now-familiar question of "Those Who Leave" and to depart anew through the conditions of 'the Border'—a 'place' so widely and readily referred to in the last few years that it already runs the risk of being reduced to yet another harmless catchword expropriated and popularized among progressive thinkers?" (Minh-ha 46).

Jump from the cliff with me, feel the emptiness in your stomach,
land on new ground, creating, destroying, creating borders
by the politics of our feet.

Vertigo is a feeling I carried with me that summer to Morocco, Turkey, and Sri Lanka. But the word itself was harder to find. But eventually I found myself mouthing it to people in conversations, it showed up in my poetry, it was something that was becoming my own. Now, when I think of my experience of finding the wor(l)d, some three years removed from my first trip to Sri Lanka, I think of beachcombing. I think of myself walking along the

shores of the Indian Ocean at the end of the day, and looking for nothing in particular, but looking. Finding the word, Vertigo, was like finding a seashell. A seashell, something like a conch, the ones that spiral out from the center, and I could hold it to my ear and be filled with sound. However, my journey with Vertigo is also, in so many ways, a rediscovery. A (re)remembering. I remembered, or realized the shell was never mine, but always the oceans, always something much bigger than myself.

Vertigo is a slip, a way into error, into otherness; a liminal space. It is the mapping of a consciousness between boundaries. It is more than just a feeling of falling; it is the experience of "stuckness" between two worlds. Placed in other cultures that could not speak to me, I felt paralyzed. I felt like I was suspended watching the world pass, but I was no longer moving in it. I realized that I had to first be patient and listen to what the silence was telling me, before I could hope to speak through the fog.

`Vertigo is only a temporary condition, because the things that allow us to reach it (language, consciousness, etc.) are fluid constructions as well, and are always changing. We travel to find ourselves in otherness. To inhabit a different way of seeing the world, backwards or upside down. To find ourselves stuck, and then to watch otherness slip away from us, always a little in front of us, mapping out new boundaries.

Vertigo is a personal experience. Each Vertigo experience comes from a situated worldview with specific boundaries, traced out by cultures and bodies. Vertigo maps the boundary between the body's physical geography and that of an outside experience. The interactions between these forces help to create a perception, or a situated worldview. Neither place (or what we perceive as the materiality that is separate from ourselves), nor our physical bodies (or the physical materiality that we perceive as ourselves) is separate

from the other, but they co-create one another in time. Understanding this nondualistic relationship between place and bodies is a crucial first step in the theory of Vertigo. Then, we can see Vertigo as experience, when material realities are stripped away, desperately trying to reassemble, to reform, to recreate, to rewrite, this new space within terms that the self can identify with. Vertigo is an altered state of being; it is consciousness entranced. One way to follow the movements of the trance is through poetry. Edward Canda, also has an interest in liminality, and states the word is derived from Latin, meaning "passageway or doorway" (36). [14] This etymological context of liminal will be important as we look for moments of transformed consciousness through Vertigo. As Canda states, "[i]f you stand right in the middle of the passageway, you are neither inside nor outside. This position is neither here nor there; it's ambiguous, uncertain, and in-between. This position gives the option of moving between places" (36). So we will learn to be transients in the liminal. Poetry, or here Topopoetry, is a productive and mindful way to share and (re)experience Vertigo.[15] This is a mindful awareness not only of our own experiences, but the experiences, histories, stories, and other threads of realities, of others as well. We can at anytime stumble across the awareness of their existences, but they are always, already connected and rethreaded into our own material consciousness. The delicate balance of poetry, like spinning spider webs in morning dew, is examining other, at times, conflicting spaces of consciousness while entranced, and entrancing.

[14] Canda's research looks specifically at the value of liminal spaces for social work "dealing with spiritual diversity," however I believe that his understanding of liminality is applicable to the liminal experience of Vertigo, particularly as a transformative space (36).

[15] The idea of Topopoetry is more fully investigated in the Preface, but it is poetry that is interested in the issues of space, place, identities, geographies, and the boundaries and intersections in and between all of threads. It is poetry that is able to explore all of those issues at once as the language traverses over diverse and unchartered topographies.

The Rain Retreat

Tonight,
the sky opens up for us.
And with open elephant hearts,
we spread out our arms
and dance without fear.
We move through rain
with the religious devotion of children.

American nymphs released by the waters
of a Sri Lankan rainfall.
At right past twilight,
I hike up my black cotton skirt
so my legs will be as free
to move as lizards do out from rocks.
Removed, all inhibitions.

I showed them how, when I was child,
I would look up at the sky,
and spin, and spin,
and when I fell
I watched as the world kept turning without me.
A child's simple, dizzying theory on how the world was round.

My hair is wet and black,
like the palm trees spinning above me,
Chains hung down from rooftops,
and we pulled them apart
to watch rain construct
to shadows of chain metal.

A single lighting bug flickers,
and I don't know the code,
but I think I'll just call him Morse anyway.
Besides the ones at home are slightly green,
just shrunken Gatsbys .

The threads are always, already moving, snapping, always.
They pull and replace, replace, replace.
We exist in movement.
In the movement between your body, touch it.
Close your eyes, scan your body from head to toe.
You are already what is outside of that space, too.

Vertigo is an extreme awareness of the body and its situational limits; it is the mapping of the self as the in-between flux of body and place, space and mind, breath and

action. Each experience is specific to its own situated body of knowledge. The knowledges produced from Vertigo are not just personal accounts, but because of mindful reflections, such as poetry, we can see how each Vertigo moment is also a mapping of political and social landscapes. These bodies are in places, embodied in culture, embodied in language, embodied in nationhood, embodied in identities. As Rachel Silvey points out "attention to corporeal geographies and migrants' embodied experiences can reveal the racialized and gendered containment practices of the state, and goes further to explore the state itself as embodied" (5).[16] *Language is also limited, partial, and slippery.* To learn to speak liminally is to learn the language of transience and nomadism.

To be nomadic is to have the will to travel between stories. We are always, already moving between them, but the nomad already knows this. Speaking in nomad, Bishop shows the instability of our stories. We must learn to dance between them, to move without falling, but to recognize the sensation of freefall, in the transition between places (language, stories, culture, poems, and bodies); this is both the search and acknowledgement of Vertigo. Place, people, paper, presence—our lived realities are all just different shifts and (re)arrangements and (re)workings of the same available material realities. It is only one more shift and material pieces themselves are exchangeable.

Since this was my first time outside of the United States, my only other "cultural" experiences were because of stories, words, poems, and other writings, which also became indoctrinated into the way I understood (or how I thought I was supposed to

[16] Rachel Silvey here is referring to Alison Mountz 2001 as cited in Nagar, R., Lawson, V., McDowell, L. and Hanson, S. 2002: Locating globalization: feminist (re)readings of the subjects and spaces of globalization. Economic Geography 78(3), 257-84

understand) the world around me. Up until then, I could only experience otherness through the stories of others. However, I learned that these were also my stories.

Throughout this piece I develop a theory of Vertigo from my own experiences, along with the Topopoetry of Elizabeth Bishop, Jorie Graham, and Emily Dickinson. These poets were the first ones to explain Vertigo to me. This also puts into practice the theoretical work provided in the introduction. “Bodies in Vertigo” is a map, it is a travel companion; it is yours to make and unmake. It follows my own journey in the accidental discovery of Vertigo, of my own falling, and then the journey back home. We traverse through corporeal limits to boundaries of place and time. We trace the lines around perception, find the arc of knowing, and at times, such as Elizabeth Bishop does, we deal with these limits by flipping the world upside down. The lines that we trace do not follow like the ones between geographic boundaries, countries, or even demographic and cultural markers, but we follow the invisible lines behind them and between them, that are constantly moving and unmoving. It is through Graham that I found the vocabulary for the phenomenon of Vertigo. The same movements between places are also the same lines that we find in language. But as I found in my own experiences, both traveling in the countries and in the poems, these lines do not exist separately from the bodies that experience them. It is the bodies that co-create these intersecting spaces.

Traveling is the search for Vertigo; but can we claim what is traveling and what isn’t? I hope to extend and deepen our definition of travel by including Dickinson into the practice of Vertigo as a travel poet. Quoting from his interview with Jorie Graham, Thomas Gardner says that contemporary writers are "’drawn to situations in which the problems with reference are roiled up,’" they are being drawn to situations in which the

limits of knowledge, our finite skin, are in play and in which responses other than knowing (or turning in disgust from a failure to know) are possible" (*Regions of Unlikeness* 4). I maintain, and I am sure Gardner would agree, that this same statement is true for Dickinson. As stated before, the experience of Vertigo cannot be applied universally, but we can find some objective knowledge by investigating these three poetic bodies and begin weaving our own personal experience with theirs. I argue that the exploration of other worlds is not held or limited to movements by the physical body, although, Vertigo will ultimately remind us of our corporeal existences.

Poems are artifacts of consciousness: the knowledge produced from situated bodies.

Traveling with Vertigo, Through Time and Space

When I went to Morocco I did not only land in Rabat, but I also landed on the shores of Brazil in 1958 and "Brazil, January 1, 1502." I carried Elizabeth Bishop in my head, scared that my own writings, my own poems, would become an agent of colonization. I got on the plane with an open heart, open mind, waiting for the experience to wash over me, a cleansing, a Baptism. I thought I came free, but I came heavy. I felt like no matter how many times I slammed myself against a rock, trying to reshape my edges, so I could better fit, better read, better learn this strange, new world around me, I couldn't. My eyelids were heavy, heavy from the smog of their own view. It was smog, like a whisper, but also with the loud steam of a freight train. However, I learned that by exploring, traveling, writing, painting, and eating, that we are able to slowly reach into those places where edges turn soft, and we can finally touch one another.

Similarly, Bishop is interested in geography and history, and the bodies that inhabit those places. That is, their corporeal locations and the stories that they live in.

Both geography and history are kinds of houses that people live in, move through, and leave. We can witness this in Bishop's poetry by how her mind moves through both. Susannah Hollister states:

> When Bishop favors geography over history, then, she does not choose against human subject matter. Rather, her focus on geography as a major theme and source of imagery is the most enduring example of a characteristic, counterintuitive move: turning away from the social in order to pursue it. The many critical accounts of geography in Bishop's work focus mainly at the level of the individual, reading Bishop's maps and landscapes as expressions of an epistemology, a psychology, or an identity (399-400).

Bishop's movements between history and geography are always linked; they define the other. It is the individual's place within a specific geography and history that defines their identity. History, geography, and time are weaving and unweaving threads in our lives, and they are made and unmade. Bishop is also interested in the traveler who willingly migrates between these spheres, who looks for another point of reference. As C.K. Doreski puts it, "[t]he struggle to find a language willing to accommodate the traveler's fluid, trope-empowered knowledge (even as it concealed her personality) defines Bishop's career" (xi).

Traveling that summer to Morocco, Turkey, and Sri Lanka I found intellectually talking about different worlds or cultures, was one thing, but experiencing them was another. Where my own worldview met against another, like rock and air, I felt myself held, suspended, and stuck. In "Brazil, January 1, 1502" Bishop gives us a way to handle the world when we find ourselves in Vertigo.

"Brazil, January 1, 1502" was the date the Portuguese first came to Brazil, and the way that Bishop reads the landscape of Brazil is a postcolonial awareness of space. The connection between Bishop and the Portuguese explorers becomes apparent as the

narrator adjusts her eyes to this new, foreign landscape, and assumes this is how they saw it, as well. In the first stanza Bishop purposefully tries to "weave" together a picture of the landscape for the reader. She even begins with an epigraph from Sir Kenneth Clark, "…embroidered nature…tapestried landscape" (Bishop 89). Painting with large brush strokes she describes, "big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves,/ blue, blue-green, and olive, with occasional lighter veins and edges…"(Bishop 89).

Through her descriptions, Bishop quite deliberately creates a tapestry of this new world. She creates a space that is framed by a particular set of eyes, the travelers', denoting the privilege of displacement.[17] However, in the position of the privileged traveler, Bishop does not immediately recognize her frame of the landscape. We often think of nature as the opposite of culture, but nature both as a physical and metaphysical place is already written over by culture. We read places, even within the wildness of nature, as landscapes with a particular kind of language. However, Bishop becomes aware that her language does not quite hold; it slips and struggles. We see this with her use of dashes, or blanks: "and flowers, too, like giant water lilies/ up in the air—up, rather, in the leaves--/ purple, yellow, two yellows, pink…" (89).

Bishop takes her tapestry off the frame to examine it more closely, thinking, perhaps that she had missed something, instinctively knowing that something did not fit, but unable to put her finger on it. Off the loom she sees, "[a] blue-white sky, a simple web, / backing for feathery detail: / brief arcs, a pale-green broken wheel, a few palms, swarthy, squat, but delicate;" (89). Her descriptions also show the working mechanisms of the tapestry, including, web, backing, and wheel. She begins to story and give life to

[17] Gardner acknowledges that Bishop purposefully uses the tapestry cliché to highlight our "desire for order, "which is "implicit in our use of such language" (*Regions of Unlikeness* 15).

the tapestry. First, by telling "the big symbolic birds to keep quiet," but they cannot because "[s]till in the foreground there is Sin" (89). Lizards appear in the tapestry, "five sooty dragons near some massy rocks" (Bishop 89). Bishops describes sin in terms that she knows, coloring in the scenery. The rocks are described as having lichens like "gray moonbursts / splattered and overlapping, / threatened from underneath by moss / in lovely hell-green flames, / attacked above / by scaling-ladder vines, oblique and neat" (89). Perhaps not as apparent as "hell-green flames" the moon has traditionally been connected with sin, lunatics, madness, and a woman's body (also connected with sin). She feminizes the landscape by directly giving leaves that say, "'one leaf yes and one leaf no' (in Portuguese)" (Bishop 89). This seems to echo little girls plucking flowers, chanting, "he loves me, he loves me not." But she imagines the leaves saying this in Portuguese, and the language does not fit. So she returns to the lizards where a mating ritual takes place:

> The lizards scarcely breathe; all eyes
> are on the smaller, female one, back-to,
> her wicked tail straight up and over,
> red as a red-hot wire (Bishop 89).

Suddenly the tapestry becomes an art piece called, "Sin," that is imbued with all of the images of Paradise, Eden, and then, finally, the Fall. She has reproduced the cornerstone story of Western tradition onto the scene. It was not until she was able to make a feminine connection with the female lizard, backed into the corner, that Bishop was able to relocate her own body, and simultaneously find the real sin in the situation. However, it is also important to note the nondualistic sense of place/space and body/ mind that is played out here. It is not just the space that Bishop occupies, relative to time and place, which is knowledge taken from her own body. But it is also the particularities of the landscape, the yellow flowers, the large leaves, and the lizards that cue Bishop to certain

stories. That is, it is not the place that is necessarily being constructed, and it is not Bishop whose self is independent from the place she is in, but it is a simultaneous movement that creates the material reality of both the colonialized landscape and the realization of Bishop as a female body. Here, she simultaneously embodies the explorer and the native woman. She is both a human body and a lizard's body, both capable of being colonized.[18] The self is slippery.

This sudden jolt back into her female body, like "a red-hot wire," a heightened awareness of her consciousness and culture is Vertigo.[19] Vertigo is realizing that your language and your stories are limited and partial. Bishop falls through history, and still dizzy in Vertigo, she realizes that by framing and storying the landscape she had reproduced the same trauma done to Brazil in 1502 by the explorers. This realization forces her to retrace and remap her experience of this place. She describes the trauma as "the Christians, hard as nails, / tiny as nails, and glinting, / in creaking armor, came and found it all, / not unfamiliar" (Bishop 90). The Christians they found it all, they found their entire story here, and framed this new land to match it. It was not unfamiliar to them, when it should have been. There was "no cherries to be picked, no lute music," but they still weaved the pieces together of opulent, lush forest "to an old dream of wealth and luxury/ already out of style when they left home—wealth, plus a brand-new pleasure" (Bishop 90).

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[18] Vandana Shiva, like Haraway, has noted the oppression of Western science, particularly for women, and additionally has pointed out the image consciousness connection women and nature. As she summarizes, "[t]his view of science as a social and political project of modern Western man is emerging from the responses of those who were defined into nature and made passive and powerless: Mother Earth, women and colonized cultures" (167). Bishop aptly gets to the historical background that has helped to foster such power relations, which Shiva is also interested in.

[19] Although this poem traveled with me, I could not have seen the Vertigo within it, until I experienced my own misreading of another culture, language, place. The space of the poem changed as my own place changed.

Bishop imagines the Christians coming back from Mass singing *L'Homme arme*, or a similar tune, and unable to see the irony of it all.[20] Tearing back into the landscape, back into the tapestry and story they had framed:

> they ripped away into the hanging fabric,
> each out to catch an Indian for himself—
> those maddening little women who kept calling,
> calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
> and retreating, always retreating, behind it (Bishop 90).

By first colonizing the landscape, fitting wildness to a frame, the explorers pursue further into the picture; they "gave themselves permission to act on what their interpretive tapestries had offered them—a world ready for the taking, the inhabitants seen both as spoil and as players in an ancient sexual drama" (Gardner *Regions of Unlikeness* 16). This scene echoes the four sooty dragons surrounding the one, lone female. Believing this culture to be primitive, closer to nature, it was their right to do as they pleased with them. Imagine Bishop standing among the lush, bright, and green forest and suddenly hearing the clanking of chainmail, the screams of women, each to each, helpless, piercing screams on deaf ears. That is, unless the birds have woken up in time to hear their screams, which seems slightly arbitrary, since those big, symbolic birds were told to keep quiet.

They echo this to her.
She echoes this back to us.
The stories are the same, they cycle.
And still I write in my journal, three years later, of finding Paradise in Morocco.
Of a farmhouse in the countryside of Azrou, where cherry trees hang ripe and full.
Waiting to be picked.
I too have told the birds to keep quiet.

[20] L'Homme arme was a secular tune that became a part of Mass. It warned that the armed man should be feared, and the ironies should not be lost on the reader.

I carried "Brazil, January 1, 1502" in the back of my mind as I traveled. When I sat down to journal or to write a poem, I wanted to be consciousness of the way I mapped, or threaded the world in front of me. I did not want to force my own paradigm on another, or if I did, I could catch myself doing such colonizing moves, as Bishop demonstrated. However, I could not have known, until I experienced it bodily, like the sensation of the lizard's tail, a red hot poker, of falling into Vertigo. It is an acute awareness of your limited place in the world, on the edge of the wildness and foreignness of a world without stories (or your stories). However, by weaving our stories together we can create knowledge about and our liminal experiences. These kinds of situated and embodied knowledges "require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent and not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of 'objective' knowledge" (Haraway 95). Bishop does this, as I am doing this with you, with her experience of the place with colonized natives. It was an experience that she could not have planned for, as I also learned. I found amidst Vertigo, that I could not and did not know how to write in that space. But slowly, I found my way through language again. I realized that there would be no way to speak or write, to go into language at all, without having the shadow of my paradigm breathing warm into my sentences, like fog on glass. However, I found out that if I was careful, I could use writing as a way of working around these stuck places. So I stuck my dirty fingers on the glass, and began to write.

(moving out of) No Place

Veiny fingers of self like roots,
plucked, uprooted
nutrient vessels naked, exposed,
like tiny white hairs still twitching
to their known soil,

dry, desert-oasis like,
with the illusion of being quenched.

Reality shifts
when placed in a vacuum,
the Silence, the universe cracked.
The fluidity of self is momentarily paused
When frozen in a container of dry ice,
(please don't crack, please don't crack).

Like eyes held open with metal clasps,
waiting in an icy blue paralysis
of red veins straining
and pupil dilation.
Look! (For what?)
Placed behind a thin sheet of smudged glass,
a covering of midnight clouds.
Just waiting for the clearing,
the unthawing.
Particle
by atom,
I could use my lips,
mouth, tongue.
I could speak (can you hear me?).
Slowly, language trickled
like a thread of yellow lighted fabric through a leaf,
moving through its veins
until I could converse back with it.
Just the beginning of a slight taste of frenzy
on the edge of my tongue,
the cold sweetened burn of ice.

More, all I wanted was to be
is awakeningly reading, speaking
to the lost, forgotten parts of myself,
capturing the movement of reflective shadows.
Just a thought.

My heart so full,
it presses its self to anything
like putty, a thick crimson liquid
it forms itself over,
creating new shapes,
viscously hungry.

Experiencing Vertigo makes you question the world around you, and your place in it. This is a person becoming acquainted with the nondualistic making of her own space and place. It is here that the order of time and place becomes arbitrary. The realities of time, space, and place are not linear, but are layered, moving, and changing entities. People and places are not things we can frame and objectively identify. The native people, as depicted in Bishop's poem, were displaced because of the movement of particular frames placed over top them. Frames and stories that allowed for the burning, raping, and pillaging of particular places and bodies. Through her own displacement, and the experience of Vertigo, Bishop can tell the story of these other displaced bodies.

Again, the word "travel" suggests a luxury, an indulgence. It is an experience not endowed to all. Our postmodern concept of the word is also very particular, and "displacement is not universally available or desirable for many subjects, or is it evenly experienced" (Kaplan 1). Questioning travel itself can be induced by the experience of Vertigo. We can see this quite clearly in Bishop's "Questions of Travel," which is a natural progression from experiences like "Brazil."[21]

Bishop begins by stating, "[t]here are too many waterfalls here; the crowded streams / hurry too rapidly down to the sea" (91). Again, she starts by framing the landscape. Bishop observes "and the pressure of so many clouds on the mountaintops / makes them spill over the sides in soft slow-motion, / turning to under our very eyes" (91). The story that she weaves for us here is of acceleration, pressure, and transformation, words that show postcolonial reflection. As she is languaging the natural

[21] Caren Kaplan pulls the title of her work straight from this poem, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement.* Where she, like Bishop, questions "the mystification of such figures [as 'us' and 'we'], to historicize the notions of 'home' and 'away' in the production of both critical and literary discourses" (Kaplan 7).

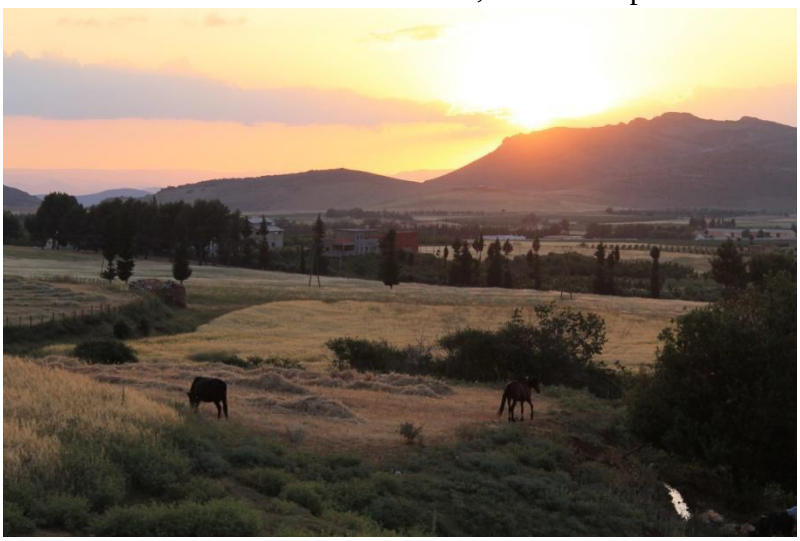
world she cannot help but to transfer her own frustration with a particular kind of life. This also suggests that we are too quick to frame and colonize, and the world transforms before our eyes. Bishop says that "if those streaks, those mile-long, shiny, tearstains, / aren't waterfalls yet, / in a quick age or so, as ages go here, / they probably will be" (91). If nature changed as fast as we change our immediate, tangible world around us, then of course clouds would become waterfalls "in a quick age or so." Gardner points out the feeling of exhaustion that emotes from the poem; "[t]hat exhaustion, as we might expect, opens up, within its acknowledgement of limits, a space of questioning" (*Regions of Unlikeness* 60). The question then becomes, where are clouds going so fast that they change completely? Bishops states that if "the streams and clouds keep traveling, traveling, / the mountains look like the hulls of capsized ships, / slime-hung and barnacled" (91). The streams and clouds run by so quickly that ships get tossed over, left, and forgotten. She is weighing the great cost of travel, or this new kind of travel, and asks, what is gained? What is lost? If we are always rushing to get to the next location, the next great thing, then we are in danger of losing sight of mountains. This nostalgic moment is for when traveling was a great journey, in great ships, that took years and patience. This was a time of exploration, instead of vacation. However, as we saw in "Brazil" the time of exploration also came with its own set of perils. This was also a time it was unheard of for a woman to travel the world.

Black coffee stains
and another red eye flight.
I'm too tired to write, and
I wait in line for an hour for a passport stamp.
Those that don't have a blue eagle on the front of theirs,
wait two.
I move past, as our eyes white-wash each other.
I don't know the memories I've lost.

Bishop asks me, "[t]hink of the long trip home," and questions "[s]hould we have stayed at home and thought of here? Where would we be today?" (91). She is not only asking me as a fellow traveler to think of the long journey back home, but she is simultaneously traveling through time. Kaplan states "Bishop's subjects (the 'us' and 'we' of the poem) are not universal, although they can be glibly assumed to be transcendental figures of displacement in a modern world of fragmentation" (7). I see Bishop's subjects as particular kinds of displaced bodies, ones that have the luxury of pondering the movements they *decide* upon. These are not bodies that are forced into displacement. Here she is also questioning the narrative of Western expansion, imperialism, and colonization. For those that have experienced "Brazil" and who have felt Vertigo, where are we supposed to be? After internalizing the histories of violence in your skin, where should you be? Should you travel at all? Postmodern travel exhibits voyeurism, the gaze projected on another way of life for your personal growth, or entertainment. Without properly acknowledging your own partial knowledge or worldview then it is too easy to reframe and story the world on our own terms. We search the world with mirrors to our faces. Bishop, weary of frames and other voyeuristic tendencies of travel asks, "[i]s it right to be watching strangers in a play/ in this strangest of theatres?" (91). Here we can see quite literally, in postmodern travel , how other worlds become a production for us to enjoy. However, we get the luxury of walking out of the theatre. She continues, "[w]hat 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?" (Bishop 91). This question is particularly interesting to me, because turning the world around, looking at it in a different way is how Bishop works in many of her poems. She tries at

first to see something straightforward, but then realizes this fails her and attempts to get at an issue either backwards, or inside out. However, what she asks here is, is there a difference between truly learning how to see the world at different angle, and only looking for the sake of looking? As Haraway maintains, "[v]ision is *always* a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicitly in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted?" (90).

Postmodern travelers have the luxury of frivolously spending their gaze. We turn the sun around if only to look at the "tiniest green hummingbird in the world" or stare at some great "inexplicable old stonework" that is "inexplicable and impenetrable, at any view" (Bishop 91). These can only be seen, we cannot get to the essence of them, it is pure gaze, pure surface. We objectify the world for our pleasure, and its wonders (or what is named as wonder). Bishop questions if these things are "instantly seen and always, always delightful?" (91). We have been able to take so much of the world, that Bishop challenges, "[o]h, must we dream our dreams/ and have them, too? / And have we room / for one more folded sunset, still quite warm?" (91). With our eyes so filled with wonders, do we even have room for a simple sunset. The way Bishop adds at the end, "sill quite warm" feels like she is calling us to join her, that there is still time, and the sunset is still warm for us.



But as she does, Bishop comes back at these questions another way:

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 (91).

Here she is turning around her own worldview, and confesses *I have seen the sunsets too.* She says that she has seen the beauty of trees, but she also still acknowledges theatricality of the experience. Part of the experience of traveling is the journey on the way to your destination. Traveling also happens when you do not expect it to, like stopping for gas and hearing "the sad, two-noted, wooden tune of disparate wooden clogs" (Bishop 91). If we had stayed at home we would not have heard "the other, less primitive music of the fat brown bird." In both of these points, Bishop is quite deliberately moving the focus from sight to sound. She is saying that travel is not only about the eyes gazing, rightly or wrongly, at the world's wonders, but it is about learning to listen, as well. If you listen you can hear the stories of the world, and they are different from your own. To travel mindfully, we must travel with more than just our eyes. If the traveler had stayed at home, she could not have "pondered / blurr'dly and inconclusively, / on what connection can exist for centuries" between the sounds of wooden clogs and "the whittled fantasies of wooden cages" (Bishop 92).

A Moroccan Hamam

We were led
undressed, naked
behind the veil,
a plastic curtain
pulled back, and I was hit
in the face with a wall
of hot, thick steam.
I could feel my skin
immediately try and drink its fill,
dermis overcome.

Bodies.
Everywhere bodies.
Their shape soft, too moveable,
from one to the next
dented stomachs, full hips,
breasts, and thick thighs
all filled the room.
All seemed to shape to the same
one (presence),
somehow questionably contained.

A multiplicity
of one,
that wasn't whole.
Because I watched it from the corner of my eye
shift,
not settling (it moved again),
just a live and stained microscope slide
(impossible they say)
section of a thing called,
woman
scrubbing and scraping away
dead skin.

Bodies that told ancient stories,
as steam takes silence
into rising moisture,
cleansed, refreshed,
unsaid words silken complexions.

It occurred to me slowly,
as English words conversed
between a friend (her rich, deep earth skin)
and I (pale and sun freckled)
that they did not clash with theirs,
but melted, blended.
A woman handed me a stool with a smile.

In this secret world of women,
this found interval of feminine metamorphosis,
I was a part of the presence,
the story
that not only edged itself
 like steam to the corners
and cracks in this tiled room,
but that was continuously filtering,
pulsing through the illusions of space.
I could not be touched here.

I could only feel the infinite.

We dumped water on our heads
once more,
scrubbed,
once more.[22]

"Questions of Travel" time travels in another way, as well. The poem is cyclical and goes back to the place where Bishop began to write the poem. If she had stayed at home she would never "have had to listen to rain / too much like politicians' speeches: / two hours of unrelenting oratory / and then a sudden golden silence / in which the traveler takes a notebook" (Bishop 92). This golden silence, after coming out of the rain, the fog, a smeared lens, is like coming out of Vertigo, when the world shines in a new way. The exploration of Vertigo requires mindful practice. This practice is the exploration of questions, questions as spaces that open up in such intervals that Vertigo invites. "Questions of Travel" is about reflecting on multiple instances of Vertigo, these are past experiences for a traveler who has led and continues to lead a vertiginous life. Reflecting on these past intervals leads Bishop to write two questions in her notebook:

> "Is it lack of imagination that makes us come
> to imagined places, not just stay at home?
> Or could Pascal have been 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?" (92).

[22] Maria Lugones in her work, "Playfulness, 'World'—Traveling, and Loving Perception" believes that one way to get past the hegemonic role of arrogant perceivers is to approach your world-traveling with love. I take a more literal reading of this metaphor she creates throughout her piece, and maintain that a "loving perception" is another way to mindfully travel. As she states, "[s]o traveling to each other's 'worlds' would enable us to *be* through *loving* each other (8)." I hoped I portrayed one of my own experiences with loving-perception in this Moroccan Hamam.

Kaplan points out that "Bishop's paradoxical question, whether "lack of imagination" brought about the occupation of "imagined places," is rarely raised in the literature of Western travel" (7). Haraway also notes that the "Western eye has fundamentally been a wandering eye, a traveling lens. These peregrinations have often been violent and insistent on mirrors for a conquering self—but not always" (90). By questioning her own traveling lens Bishop resists the mirror tricks of her own Western paradigm. It is important for our practice to note that the journey that Bishop takes here is through memory, not directly through the physical body. Bishop does not only question issues of the displaced body, but also complicates the notion of home. As Gardner observers of Bishop's work, "[h]er poems look closely at or acknowledge the limits of our drives to grasp or know or make a home; and they discover that such drives, once forced to operate without guarantees of mastery, are quite powerfully charged and frail and alive" (*Regions of Unlikeness* 32).

This poem maps an entire process of Vertigo, and then circles back around itself. Just as Gardner describes, she leaves questions of home and the traveling body open, and unmastered. Bishop resists closure. Travel and Vertigo open up fluid, questioning spaces.

I have found the more I travel, that summer and since, that Vertigo is not just a terrifying place. As I became more comfortable in the uncomfortable, the otherness that I faced daily, Vertigo became the issue that I was interested in, and what I was finally able to name. I began to think of it like golden silences.

Art comes from these places.

The journey back home was also a part of my Vertigo experience. In the cyclical experience of our material realities, from familiar to other, from other to familiar, I found myself a stranger in my own home. I could no longer touch the world that I had known so well. The place called home had changed, something had broken, in the spaces around,

in-between, and around my life, something had broken. But it wasn't anything that I could name; it wasn't anything that language could explain.

I could no longer touch the world.
The world simultaneously was silent, hushed, and rushed in. *It was deafening.*

Stepping down off the plane in D.C., did not stop the sensations of falling. But home became another space that opened up and I fell through. So we must include the journey back home, coming back, as part of the language of travel, of Vertigo. This complicates what we define as travel, for it is not simply the moving away from, going, but it is also returning. But as I have experienced, there is no such thing as a return. Returning is just a part of the mapping that is recreating the circumference of worldviews we apply to spaces called selves and homes. But these processes are always, already occurring, always recreating the spaces that the self momentarily dwells in. The question that arises, then, is long-distance, life-changing, immersed-into-other-culture travel necessary to experience Vertigo, if the same cycles are happening in all of our lives to begin with? Can intervals open up in the most mundane, unexpected places, and can we fall through them just as easily, and traumatically?

Are we at any moment in danger of falling?
Yes.

We exist in movement.
We have no home, but for the one we leave.

Bishop, through a childhood memory in a dentist's office, helps us to prove this in her poem, "In the Waiting Room," by complicating the notions of travel, in both time and place. Looking at Bishop and the subject of time, Susannah L. Hollister states, "[time] might be measured at multiple scales that make for similar feelings of disorientation; Bishop writes about the surprise of recalling a distant part of one's own history as though it were immediate" (405). This is crucial, for the partial knowledge of a child is quite

different than her simply reflecting on an experience. The experience of Vertigo is bodily. Bishop, in order to capture this moment, not only reexamines this bodily feeling, but also makes the reader experience it as well.

You can hear the confidence of a child, in the way Bishop maps the outside space, "[i]t was winter. It got dark / early." Bishop then maps the outside, "[t]he waiting room was full of grown-up people, / arctics and overcoats, / lamps and magazines" (179). She goes over to the magazines and picks up a *National Geographic*.[23] She states "I could read," but focuses on the photographs (what child doesn't' do this?). She observes:

> the inside of a volcano,
> black, and full of ashes;
> then it was spilling over
> in rivulets of fire.
> Osa and Martin Johnson
> dressed in riding breeches,
> laced boots, and pith helmets.
> A dead man slung on a pole
> -- "Long Pig," the caption said.
> 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 (179).

It is essential that the reader get all of these accounts at once to feel the Vertigo themselves. Bishop wants to make the reader feel as well, through the eyes of a child, the act of peering down into the mouth of a volcano and the sensation of spiraling round and round down into it. Bishop, as a child, has slipped into otherness, like a surreal movie. The images that Bishop uses here are bound, laced, and wired, but they also spill over their bindings, which by juxtaposition, makes them seem wilder. This echoes how the

[23] Observe that Bishop is simultaneously mapping out details of both inside and outside. This is clearly outlining the boundaries and spaces between them, but as the reader may guess with Vertigo, these boundaries do not hold.

images, although in a magazine, in a world of dentists and overcoats, can spill off the page and touch her. This causes Bishop to jerk back in her body: "I read it right straight through. / I was too shy to stop. / And then I looked at the cover: / the yellow margins, the date" (179). She looks at the cover at the yellow banners and the date. These are comforts, frames, and reminders of a place and time that she knows.

The body is no longer a safe binding, but permeable to the outside world. Bishop hears her aunt's voice "an *oh!* of pain," however, the sound does not come from the dentist's room, but from *inside her.* She knew her aunt was "a foolish, timid woman," but what surprised Bishop was that she internalized the voice, that it came from inside her. The self is no longer a stable entity, and "[w]ithout 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" (Bishop 180). Once the self begins to dissolve, she (they) are overcome with Vertigo, once more. Bishop continues to stare at the cover of the magazine, searching for confirmation of the world she knew.

Having gotten wrapped up in the foolish, timid aunt, Bishop tries to remind herself of things she takes pride of, in her "I"ness. She says she does this "to stop/ the sensation of falling off/ the round, turning world/ into cold, blue-back space" (Bishop 180). She is on the very edge of knowing, of perception, of language. Bishop reminds herself that she is going to be seven years old in three days. Reminding herself that she is an I, an Elizabeth, one of *them.* However, "them" shows how her identity has spilled over into others. *Boundaries are now places of uncertainty; they are places that we can fall through.* Afraid she would find her own face staring back at her, she can't look at the

other faces in the room. She can't look past the trousers, skirts, and boots, knowing "that nothing stranger/ had ever happened, that nothing/ stranger could ever happen" (180).

"Why should I be my aunt, / or me, or anyone?" The self is arbitrary. What "held us all together / or made us all just one?" I'm searching for a word that will hold, that will describe what this thing was that was wired between us, but I cannot. I have reached the limits of knowing, the edge of language. At the loss of language, the waiting room becomes bright "and too hot. It was sliding / beneath a big black wave, / another, and another" (Bishop 181). Dentist waiting rooms become Moroccan buses. My hot body, it moves like waves, out away from me. I am somewhere stuck between the panes of glass, somewhere beyond the palm tree. I see myself walking along the streets, in front of the store, I ring up the purchase, snacks for some strange foreigners on the bus.

Goodbyes, you leave and take

The moon was large,
full, nearly bursting
when we pulled up to a 5am airport.

I felt the departure to be solid,
definite, but I saw the yellow,
almost orange
white light of a filled moon
leak out and bleed
to an open, waiting starless sky.
She blew the pale azurelian,
edged in pink, fluid, now foaming,
sky back into me.

Not fearing wind or vertigo,
I would be taking more than I could carry on,
as I swirled, lapped around
somewhere out in the beaches of Casablanca.

We have traveled to the edge of the universe and back. At the edge of the universe, out on the circumference of knowing, there is a home. I have been there and

left, I have come back and left. I come and go, come and go, like waves, dark uninviting, and seductive, washing over me. On the edge of it all, the home we leave and return to is like "night and slush and cold."

Bishop's mode of travel is not straightforward. It oscillates between her own perception, her own body, and others. Aimee Rowe describes the movement between ourselves and others like breathing: "[i]t is the expanse of this movement between reaching and retreating, in this oscillation between here and there, that "I" and "she" and "we" are becoming… Through the management of this movement across power lines, ideology courses through an affective chord, experienced in the body's interior, as the reverberations of shifting fault lines" (2). Bishop also travels through our historical consciousness and their fault lines, across time and space. Kaplan states that "[d]isplacement, then, mediates the paradoxical relationship between time and space in modernity" (35). Vertigo is not just the mapping of an abstract consciousness, but the displaced body across new geographical boundaries. Bishop demonstrates what happens when a body of knowledge comes into contact with another world of knowledge. Her experience of Vertigo is subtly announced, but it can be found in her altered worldview. These moments in Bishop's poetry are crucial. If she cannot get at the world one way, if she finds herself in Vertigo, suspended and unable to speak, then she flips and approaches the world in a new way. This is one way to handle Vertigo.

I have been to the edge and back,
it is night and slush and cold.

Additionally, Bishop is not only telling us that Vertigo can happen in the most mundane of places, that at any moment we can find ourselves out on the edge, dizzy, cold, and numb, but that these are moments that you cannot forget. Like "Questions of

Travel," this is a reflection on a past Vertigo experience. The dark of night on the edge of the world is something you will carry with you in your bones like iced marrow. The traveler is forever changed. The traveler can never go back home.

Afraid of the fall, addicted to the fall, the traveler is never still,
suspended in stuckness, with a dizzy sense of home and exile,
always having to chase back and forth,
back and forth
between the lines.

Sketching Lines, Mapping Vertigo

The oscillating movement, the back and forth motion of the self on the edge of knowing and unknowing can also be thought of as silence and voice. Experiencing Vertigo is like experiencing the space between sound and silence, speaking and unspeaking. Vertigo is silencing, because it reminds us that we are always between the two, like waves on the sand. *Back and forth, back and forth.*

Many times, when Jorie Graham looks at the world, or tries to language the world, it silences her. But she learns to inhabit or embody silence, and through silence she can speak again. Readers of Graham's work will also know that she is inspired by art and artists. Graham loves the idea of a brush right before it touches a canvas; "I love to imagine that one-inch gap between the end of the brush and the beginning of the canvas on the floor" (Gardner *Regions of Unlikeness* 215). This is a moment of charged possibilities. It is within these blank spaces, these moments right before creation that Graham seeks to engage. Moments that both poetry and painting share, "blank spaces are placed within the poems to signify the gap between pen and paper and the openness of what might occur there" (Shifrer 142).These blank spaces are silences. Graham says in "Some Notes on Silence," that she is "probably in love with silence," and describes it as,

"[s]ilence which drowns us out, but also which ignores us, overrides us, silence which is doubt, madness, fear, all that which makes language slip and bend" ("Some Notes on Silence" 409). So of course the world that works against silence is sound. She says that she would like to believe that they are not two separate worlds, "but that they become each other, that only our hearing fails" ("Some Notes on Silence" 409). Each contains the other.

I had started to read Graham's poetry around the same time as Bishop. Where Bishop had traveled with me outright, passport and plane ticket in hand, Graham was this tiny thing that stowed away in the crevasses of my suitcase, her silent voice working like a smoky whisper through its stitches. Again, the discovery of the thing I called Vertigo (which is of course an uncountable number of things) was a rediscovering of things I had already experienced. I carried Bishop with me when I traveled, I traveled back and forth to the places and experience she had, and she experienced Morocco, Turkey, and Sri Lanka with me, as she continues to discover them with me. But there was another traveler with us, one that I did not realize until the return home. Graham was already there teaching about the simultaneous silent, yet, deafening sounds of Vertigo, and it was Graham that had already called this thing Vertigo. I picked up the shell she had dropped before me, perhaps with the same realization, that it was also never hers alone.

When Graham writes her poem, "Vertigo" she paints a picture, similarly to the ways Bishop wove a tapestry, of the boundaries between the spaces of silence and sound. Helen Vendler says that "Vertigo" is an "assent...to uncertainty and unpredictability: this is the Vertigo felt as one abandons old and predetermined ways in favor of the pull of the unknown beyond the precipice of the new" (47). This is also the space between, or border

of, new and old. We might also see this as the experience of a traveler as they investigate new experiences and worlds. Just as Vertigo is in the middle of an experience, Graham starts the poem within the middle of a story; "[t]hen they came to the very edge of the cliff and looked down. / Below a real world flowed in its parts, green, green" (64). By describing the world below as "real," she is also saying the place they now inhabit is otherworldly, just as the mind is. Again, the relationship between mind and space is a nondualistic (re)creation. Normally, in the movements and interactions in our everyday lives, we are unaware of this relationship. However, it is in Vertigo that a heightened awareness extends to these spaces. In our failed attempts at language to describe the relationship and connections between the mind and body, dualistic images appear. Again, these are similar moves to the way that Bishop wrongly framed the landscape, or the way she, as a child, continually looked for the yellow frame of a *National Geographic*.

Already mapping out the boundaries, Graham describes two elements as planes of existence that meet; "[t]he two elements touched—rock, air" (64). One is the world of reality, of tangibility, of structure, and of sound. The other is otherworldly, ungraspable, and silent. These two drastically different worlds lay right next to each other, without conflict. They simply touch and a boundary line is formed. However, Vertigo happens on boundary lines. Once the poem becomes aware of this boundary, which it now inhabits, some space between rock and air, sound and silence, then the mapping of consciousness begins.

Graham begins to investigate and play with these boundary lines: "[s]he thought of where the mind opened out / into the sheer drop of its intelligence." There is no longer a group within the poem, but a "she." Vertigo is an experience of the individual body

within its own boundaries. But by starting with a group, Graham further emphasis the isolation and containment of bodies and reality against the discovery of another world. Additionally, this is not specifically the poet talking; it is not the typical poetic "I." This perspective not only maps the boundary of the body with separation of the individual, but also shows how the mind is beginning to open and trace the lines of the worlds around her. A bird catches her eye as she finishes the stanza:

> the updrafting pastures of the vertical in which a bird now rose,
> blue body the blue wind was knifing upward
> faster than it could naturally rise,
> up into the downdraft until was frozen until she could see them
> at last (Graham 64).

Here, again the issue of place becomes important. Tracing the boundaries between herself and the outside, she becomes aware of a life that she cannot inhabit: a life with wings. She watches the bird as it flies, "broken down, broken free," as each movement, each flap of the wing, each turn in the air, is free from the others, independent, yet all connected, all one. Graham says this is "watching the laws/ at work, *through which desire must course"* (64). We could even go as far as to connect her observations of laws of movement to the nondualistic production of realities. That is, Graham acknowledges the interconnectedness of the bird's reality (and perhaps realities writ large), while also adding something to the conversation, *desire.* If we take Graham's observation of the bird, and work with it as a metaphor for the nondualistic systems of place and space, we can see how it is both the bird and the air that create flight; they co-create the other. The same goes for worldviews and perceptions, or our own lived realities. But again, the question is, what of desire? As we will continue to see, desire is yet another reason for

why embodied realities are crucial in developing a nondualistic sense of place, and displacement, because desire is also a mechanism for co-creation.

Just as the bird moves, rising and falling, so does the narration of the poem. Graham reaches the edge of knowing, as she writes, "[u]ntil they made, all of an instant, a bird, a blue / enchantment of properties no longer / knowable" (64). The bird has a different set of laws, a different worldview, a different material reality, a different systemic reality altogether. As with Bishop, the edge of knowing is also the end of language. If she was able to move completely in this space of air or silence, then she would be past the structures of language and of self. In this moment she believes if she could lean out far enough she could become a part of this other world. She let understanding fly as she leaned "outward from the edge now that the others had gone down" (64). This is Vertigo. The moment where you feel your world colliding onto the edge of another, and yet, you lean a little further out. She asks,

> How close can the two worlds get, the movement from one to the other
>
> being death? She tried to remember from the other life
> the passage of the rising notes off of the violin
> into the air, then air, chopping their way in,
> wanting to live forever—marrying, marrying—yet still free of the orchestral swelling (Graham 64).[24]

The end of language, of mind, of imagination is also the end of the body. She tries to imagine a previous life, presumably one without a body, where she can try and speak in a new kind of language—music. Within this new way of languaging the world she

[24] It should also be noted how these long lines suddenly drop, reflecting the rise and swell of the body on the edge of knowing, as "desire always prolonging itself further and further over a gap it nonetheless does not wish to close. In this search by desire, mind will always outrun the body" (Vendler 48). Graham also says of *The End of Beauty* "[i]t's not a critique of language as much as it is a critique of desire as it manifests itself in language" (Gardner 221).

finds a different way of "knowing" the bird. The ways that a violin swells independently is a sound made separate from the rest of the orchestra. Yet, the orchestra is all instruments moving freely to create a whole. The movement between violin and orchestra is them "wanting to live forever" but the sounds are never fully married. It is always in action, in movement, in sound, it is "marrying, marrying," and it is never made into a static thing. Vertigo is always an active experience, a mapping. It is never *the* map.

Sema Ceremony in Istanbul

"I wish for you a peaceful spectacle"

Unfamiliar string, drum beats,
the cooing of a wooden flute
start to filter through my body,
porous to the sounds.
If part of me had ever contained a protective barrier,
it was now an open chamber for accompanying acoustics.
And I let the music inside of me
to lick the walls,
bottled emptiness waiting (always) to be touched,
and filled by electrified,
passing phantoms.
They'll tell you stories if you listen,
continually, rewritten notes.

Men in black robes come,
and bring silence into the room.
Uneasy in the quiet,
a man plays with his graying beard.
I'm grateful when an old, piercing chant begins.
Without translation, it was good and right.
Black robes begin to spin, slowly.

I try to feel their movements,
but I see their eyes instead.
An empty space that could not taste.
Arms above their heads,
music pushes them faster and
black robes turned white.
I glance to my left,
and the man who plays strange strings looks back,
his gaze too strong,
eyes beady, nose sharp.

Music is the steady stream beneath it all,
and we are but vessels grasping to learn its language.
We are vertigo sieves for it,
so that it can pulled out, leaked.
Otherwise we are colorless and blind.

However, this moment also gets us to the real drama of the poem. This is a woman mapping out the edges of her individuality, and asking "[h]ow is it one soul wants to be owned / by a single other / in its entirety?—" (64). Graham's investigation of space and place is now focused on the scale of the individual. This move also reminds the reader of the "They" introduced at the beginning of the poem, presumably a lover. Now, Vertigo is not only the mapping of physical or metaphysical worlds, but it traces the boundaries between your life and another's. She looks below the cliff, and sees cows "moving in a shape which was exactly their hunger," which was exactly where their desire coursed (64). She asks another question "—could they be men?—the plot" (64). Are men the course that desire is supposed to flow? She wants to know how to enter into a different story, someone else's story. She looks down again at the woods, streams, fields, yet another set of woods, all things birthed from the world of structure, and they all appear to be a kind of falling.[25] This is a kind of death, the opposite of what she is searching for: a place to fly and be free. She cannot enter in to either story, to bird or man. She realizes this in the space that rock and air meet. Through Vertigo she is able to move backwards to mind, language, and desire.

Listening for the wind again, Graham asks, what is in it, "that has nothing to do with *telling the truth*? What was it that was *not her listening?*" (65). This world has nothing to do with truth, it does not speak it, and it does not listen to it. It is not a world

[25] Graham is pulling at strings, trying to find the nondualstic threads that connect all things.

of language; it is the world of silence. Truths of one world do not carry over to the other. She asks what about it makes us lean towards the edge, pulls at us, and makes us wonder? This other world "cannot move to hold us," yet is able to pull our desire to the edge. She realizes this as she lets the bird go. She can lean toward the edge of knowing for a moment, before language breaks, and the story breaks. But that moment right before the break is seductive. This heightened awareness of the self as a construction of language and culture, is also a (re)discovery of her own body. The self is still tied to the world of structures and desire. Vertigo is bodily.

Body knowledge is a language that we learn to speak in the world. Her body knowledge, the edge of Graham's knowing is partial and particular to her in this moment, and yet, as readers, her discoveries and observations can also speaks to us. The knowledge learned from Graham becomes nondualstic, or even objective, when we begin the practice of weaving her stories with others, and with our own. We continue to walk on the sand, the sun burning down beside of us.

As the definition of Vertigo continues to grow and deepen in our practice, we can now add the end of Graham's poem to it:

> Oh it has vibrancy, she thought, this emptiness, this intake just
> prior to
> the start of a story, the mind trying to fasten
> and fasten, the mind feeling it like a sickness this wanting
> to snag, catch hold, begin, the mind crawling out to the edge of the
> cliff
> and feeling the body as if for the first time—how it cannot
> follow, cannot love (Graham 65).

Vertigo is the vibrant, empty, stuck space between the line of cliff and air, a new kind of story, a new way to love. There is a sickness (at times an addiction) to the mind as it fastens, snags, catches hold, begins, stops, crawls, stops, until it truly feels its body

for the first time. It does not matter how many Vertigo experiences you have, it is always a (re)discovery of your body, because it is always a new body that is found. Notably, this is precisely what the traveler experiences as she finds herself placed in new worlds. We ultimately learn through the poem that although this world of structure is limiting, the opposite world cannot hold us either. We look to the skies, and build flying structures (airplanes, poems, relationships), but we will never be sky creatures, and fly through silence without structure. However, Vertigo is the proof that we have tasted its existence.

These are the stories that become us
(Rowe 11).

In her poem, "Self-Portrait as Apollo and Daphne," Graham retells a similar drama of Vertigo. In the poem, Graham plays out the mythological tale where silence and sound become characters in her story. Graham is able to investigate her love of silence, and all that resists language through Daphne. By embodying Apollo, which is the world of canvases, structure, order, language, sound, etc, she can chase silence. Titling this poem as "Self-Portrait," Graham also claims that these are two different sides of herself, or perhaps, she is the movement or drama between the two. One side of her wants to nail down and claim the world of silence, and the other side feels violated by the chase. Symbolically, Apollo represents traditional masculine traits and Daphne represents traditional feminine ones. Brian Henry cites that Graham "gravitates towards a vocabulary of vision," in her collection of *The Errancy*, and I would add that her poetry shows an interest in "the gaze" in other collections as well, including *The End of Beauty* (106). [26] This is the flipped gaze that Haraway values in situated knowledges. The same

[26] Both "Vertigo" and "Self-Portrait of Apollo and Daphne" come out of this collection, including, also, several other "Self-Portraits." These self-portraits, I feel, share some of the same drama as Apollo and Daphne, including "The Self-Portrait as the Gesture Between Us," which is about Adam and Eve. This also

situated bodies are portrayed in this self-portrait, but this also recognizes partial knowledges through a split perspective. Although at first glance it may appear Graham plays the "god-trick" (or we could say author-god), and perpetuates these masculine/ feminine binaries, but by claiming it as self-portrait she claims a continuum of gender. The body (or written body) cannot "withdraw from [the body's particular] rhythms into the spacelessness of thought," (Rowe 2) as thoughts are bound to the bodies that form them. She accomplishes this by embodying both perspectives. As Daphne, she confides to the reader she knows what the gaze feels like, that it feels "like a long heat…a long analysis" (Graham 70). And by embodying Apollo, she admits she has also been the aggressor, or the violator. Similarly, Haraway insists "on the embodied nature of all vision, and [and that we can] reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere" (86). Embodying both points of view provides a way that we can resist the gaze from nowhere. The chase between Apollo and Daphne is the same suspended chase that the traveler enacts, between exile and home, exile and home, *back and forth, back and forth*.

As a white, female body traveling,
I have gazed,
I have been gazed at.
I have felt powerful.
I have felt helpless.

.

In "Self-Portrait as Apollo and Daphne," Graham uses herself as a "Tiresias" in order to address the continuum of gender that resides inside us all. [27] This continuum of

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shows how bodies and language can be limiting. And by focusing the title on the "gesture" (of the giving the apple) it once again shows preference to the action of things.

[27] This refers to T.S. Eliot, who makes a very similar move in "The Fire Sermon," of "The Wasteland." Eliot uses the mythological character of Tiresias, who had been both male and female to show he had been violated and he had been the violator, or he had been resisting and he had been chasing. Distinct from

gender is also used to personify the ideas of sound and silence. Graham's imagination makes the transitions between the characteristics of language and gender roles quite seamlessly. These ideas layer upon each other throughout the poem. The self-portrait addresses, in more than one way, the idea that we are an interactive identity that is continually fluctuating along continuums, in both language and body. Graham also further complicates our investigation of space and place, as the spaces that she explores and moves through in the poem are, more or less, metaphorical. However, it is through metaphors that she carves out a space for investigation. Metaphors and language, of one kind or another, are the only ways that a space becomes identifiable. If the material reality of space is interchangeable, as we have continued to show, then a poem can act and feel like a painting, a tapestry, and is not just a definable place that can be named, but poems are places where anything is possible within the landscape of language. It is here that we can expand and deepen our understanding of what travel can be, or is capable of. The traveler is a mover between spaces, between poems, time, paintings, and landscapes. As Rowe reflects on her own travel experiences, "[a]t every level of the movement among experience, consciousness, agency, belonging is a constitutive force. The conditions giving rise to experience, and the possible strategies we may imagine or deploy to intervene in those conditions are all generated within our sites of belonging" (4). Poems are also places of belonging. Poems are also places of loss.

Again, the chase between Apollo and Daphne is also the traveler's continual search for Vertigo. We get a taste for this here in section four:

can you really

Graham, Eliot places both the masculine and feminine elements in the same body within Tiresias, "though blind, throbbing between two lives/ Old man with wrinkled female breasts" (Eliot 42). Tiresias is caught in between transformation.

> see me, can you really know I'm really who…
> His touching a rhyme she kept interrupting (no one
> believes in that version anymore she whispered, no one
> can hear it anymore, tomorrow, tomorrow,
> like the different names of those girls
> (all one girl)…. But how long could it
> last? (Graham 71).

Daphne kept slipping away from me, just slightly out of reach, she would ask "can you really / see me, can you really know I'm really who…" (Graham 71). Follow Daphne, and you can find Vertigo, the terror, the trauma, the ecstasy of travel, of the other. When I ask her what she is, she does not answer me, appearing and disappearing, silent once more, moving like the spaces between my breaths. Washed away by the tide, once more.

The traveler wants to nail down, to completely inhabit this new body. But the bodily experience of Vertigo is also something that can tease, can slip through our fingers. Knowing that the language of new worlds are just on the tips of our tongues, we open our mouths, but nothing comes out but hot, silent fog. Similarly to her "Vertigo" poem, Apollo and Daphne actually begin as one entity, just as the lovers before started out as "they." The experience of Vertigo carves them out as separate beings, as separate bodies. Just as Graham described the boundary line that air and rock met in "Vertigo," so she begins this poem with the two elements, sound and silence (without bodies, yet). They are "laid up against each other, constantly erasing/ each minute with each minute" (Graham 70). This is Vertigo, the habitation of the liminal.

The Photograph

I watch Yoni on the bus to Hikaduwa
holding a photograph of her grandfather,
running, he spreads his arms out,
captured in the moment right before flight.
He would never fall,
forever shaded and colored in sepia vertigo.
Turning it upside down,

she says, "It is a different person,
but the shadow is the same."

That's when I knew,
the wax never melted from the wings of Icarus
they did not burn,
but it was his heart that was set on fire
and in ecstasy he tried to fly upside down.

I know I am right.
It is the same shadow
he is still up there.
He remains suspended, upside down with great wings
with golden tips that can still reflect,
that at times can hit you in the face,
a consumption that burns through your body like ice.
At times I have seen his shadow.

Bodies carve out spaces for themselves,
but it is not until someone shines a light,
or makes a sound
that the illusion breaks,
and a thousand complexities
lay screaming and shining for all to see.
Let us chase them.

Graham continues:

> Or there where the sun picks up on the bits of broken glass
> throughout the miles of grass for just a fraction of an instant
> (thousands of bits) at just one angle, quick, the evidence,
> the landfill,
> then gone again, everything green, green…. (Graham 70). [28]

The ellipse is a pause, a silence. As Graham uses these small silences, we can think of her lifting her brush off the canvas, pausing, and beginning to start a different stroke. It is a place of electrified possibility. Thomas J. Otten analyzes Graham's use of

[28] This new day, this new beginning seems to be already shaded by brokenness. Just a few stanzas before there seemed to be this continuum of perfect reflections between north and south, now it appears that we are being shown that the mirror plane has broken. But within the time of daybreak, within the brokenness there is an instance of pure beauty, where all the angles are right and the sun touches all of the bits of broken glass. Then as time moves forward, the instance is lost, and the pieces of broken glass fade back into the green of the grass, seemingly disappearing. This flash of overflowing color could be thought of as a kind of sound, and once the glass is faded into the green of the grass again, color is silenced. This also echoes the real world in "Vertigo" that "flowed in its parts, green, green" (Graham 64). We can see the language slipping into silence as she is left in a pause.

pauses or blanks in "Jorie Graham's_____'s." As Otten states, "[m]ore often the blank stays blank, and the apparent problem of filling in the right word gives way to the deeper problem of knowing how to read language's exclusions ...Nothingness acquires a feeling of solidity as Graham's syntax endows this sign with what this sign excludes" (185). By acknowledging the fragility of language, Graham also demonstrates the partiality of language and knowledge. Traveling makes this extremely apparent. Experiences can get lost in translation; they can fall through the cracks, through blank spaces. Graham says that she tries to suspend closure in *The End of Beauty* (*Regions of Unlikeness* Gardner 219). Vertigo cannot exist in closure. We cannot exist in closure.

Here, we can see her mapping out what the slow, loss of Vertigo looks like. I see her revisiting her time on the cliff here, and once again looking for something that will hold among the boundary lines. The slow decline from Vertigo began with two elements laid upon each other. Next, they are still a single, fluctuating unit and have not been separated, yet. But they are referred to as "they," denoting bodies. Once time passes, and the light fades back to the base level of ordinary grass, there is a pause, a silence. Something happens in that paused, momentary instance that separates them. The next two lines, sections two and three, finally show them as completely separate bodies; "[h]ow he wanted though, to possess her, to nail the erasures, / like a long heat on her all day once the day sounds set in, like / a long analysis" (Graham 70).

Graham is clearly interested in boundaries with Apollo and Daphne. Like the broken pieces of glass, the broken consciousness creates limitations. But the light upon the pieces is always shifting and shaping, creating new edges. We can learn, using these artifacts of consciousness, to map the search for Vertigo.

Poems map out the consciousness as lines, horizons, intersections, as it continues to search for otherness. That is why the search for Vertigo is always new. That is also why we travel, for that experience when we suddenly realize that we have slipped into silence.

Discussing *The End of Beauty*, Elizabeth Frost states that "[a]t stake here is the whole body of Western thought. The "materialism" of her title refers not to American middle-class values … but to the physical world--to matter and life in their troubling otherness and flux, and to our attitude toward that world, including our own bodies" (34)**.** The focus on bodies is one reason Graham's poetry is essential for developing a theory of Vertigo. The bodies that Graham and Bishop are interested in are ones that explore, question, and search, because these bodies know there are multiple lenses and perceptions that they can inhabit. Travel seems to be the premier mode of Vertigo poetry, because it is not merely abstract metaphors of moving bodies, but it is the body moving through boundaries as the mind reacts and creates new ones. But between the poetry of Bishop and Graham, we can also see that travel does not necessarily mean between imaginary boundaries of nation states, but can be between lines of imaginations that we live in, both in the macro and micro spaces of our lives. Graham's poetry provided me with a vocabulary for Vertigo, and through Bishop's poetry I learned fluency of Vertigo. Graham says that what she learned from Bishop was:

> [t]he relationship between the poem and the reader is what I learned from Bishop, the sense of the reader's soul being actually jarred between opposing sensations--commerce and contemplation..., secular and sacred, like a dying animal and like...something else. The idea that you could end up, at the end of a poem...with a different notion of reality and of your role in it: not simply a receiver of the poem, but an enactor of the ritual the poem created" (*Regions of Unlikeness* Gardner 231).

The wor(l)d is not my own.

Vertigo is a human condition. It is the same as living and breathing and loving and hating. You breathe, in and out, as you read this. You love as you read this. You hate

as you read this. You move, you breathe, you travel. You are present, you are absent, and you create borders between each. As Rowe describes:

> This movement of expansion and contraction that traces the encounter with the other is like breathing. Our chest rises and falls. Our breath quickens when we activate our bodies-in-motion, when we dance or run or swim until our limbs are heavy as sopping rags. It deepens when we sit in deep reflection, meditation, prayer, [*poetry*]. It intensifies when we surrender to the intimate touch of a lover. It races when we are afraid in the presences of, face-to-face with, an-other [*when we fall into Vertigo*]. These deeply intimate gestures that mark our daily movement link our bodies to our breath to our capacity to re-make the expanse of our connection with others *[and with the other inside of ourselves*]. These gestures mark the movement between expansion and contraction, between inhale and exhale, that manifest the relational conditions of subject formation [*and consequential material realities*] (1).

All bodies are unfinished poems in wild wanderings.

The Long Journey Home (The Odd Secrets of Lines)

Emily Dickinson didn't reach out to me until after I got back home from my second trip abroad, back from the previous three countries. The experience of both traveling back to the places I had been a year before, and traveling back home was a strange kind of waking up. In traveling we leave pieces of ourselves behind, coming back, I found pockets of places that could now be called "homes." But these places of now comfort were also proof that I had been out on the line. And it was Dickinson, who found me, still tracing along in the sand, searching for language. I could not find the words to say I've discovered we are constantly traveling, displacing, creating, displacing, creating homes. She handed me another broken shell and said, "See, the other half of finding the world in otherness, is turning around right before you fall, and finding home has become other too."

I have traveled until my home was broken.

What do we say for a poet whose material reality did not change drastically, at least compared to the travels and adventures of a poet like Elizabeth Bishop? Travel poetry, as I see it, seeks to work within the tension of the displaced body and its worldly experiences. The displaced body creates a displaced mind, and through poetry or writing, we can take a small piece of a new experience and begin to play with it; "[p]erception is only an abstraction until embodied in a work of art, and in practice of art the medium, not intention, perception, or imagination, is the primary shaping element" (Doreski xi). This practice, this play of perception is a back and forth motion between what the writer knows and what is unknown. Through the act of writing, of creating art, the poet is breaking apart and piecing back together a new understanding of their world. Some may argue that this definition could define all poetry. However, what separates this breaking apart and remixing of consciousness and worldly experiences from other poetry is that travel poets have a particular interest in boundaries. As we have seen with both Graham and Bishop, these boundaries are not simply the imaginary lines separating regions and countries, but they are the boundaries of the conceptualized self and the outside world. This outside world becomes "other," and writing is one way to understand it. Additionally, it is not merely the outside world, no matter the scale, but we can also find otherness within ourselves. *Nations and fictions and bodies.*[29] As Trinh Minh-ha explains, "[t]he name 'other' never to be found merely over there and outside of oneself, for it is always over here, between Us, with Our discourse that the 'other' becomes a nameable reality" (45). Poets have always engaged with otherness, by either placing themselves in it bodily or writing themselves into it, and sometimes, both.

[29] "*Nations and fictions"* writes Minh-ha, as she also explores the stories that help create our knowledge of identities, as individuals, cultures, and countries.

As we have continually pointed out, it is too dualistic of a notion to claim the views of mind or body when they both simultaneously co-create each other. The undulating lived (and living) experience of the mind and body together, within specific space and place parameters, is the material reality of the individual. Bishop and Graham play with the dimensions of their lived realities, where a poem, a painting, a tapestry can take us to the very edge of what we know to be human. A place, a country, a nation state, some kind of geographical location is space wrapped in cultural skin; it is space that has been given an identity. It is not until you leave that you find the unnatural order of it. This idea can be scaled down to the cultural skin that creates your own identity. *You must travel to the very edges of your skin,* and back again, to see the making of your own worldview. With back and forth motions, we can mindfully weave webs for a more objective knowledge than what we could otherwise have, alone.

Emily Dickinson's idea of Circumference is similar to the ways that travel poets, like Bishop, move between boundaries in search for otherness.[30] As we will see, as she is also interested in margins, otherness, limitations, identity, and boundaries, Emily Dickinson becomes a travel poet in her own right.

Just like Bishop and Graham, boundaries are also important points of travel in Dickinson's work. Both of the previous poets applied different strategies for seeking

[30] I have used Dickinson's vocabulary throughout this piece. She has already been with this from the beginning. Her work had already influenced the theory of Vertigo to keep her out. It is time to let her speak for herself.

what was beyond boundaries, what we could know, or what language could hold. In addition to this same desire, Dickinson also shows that the boundary itself is a place for exploration. Dickinson is interested in the thin line of Vertigo.

In my reading of Circumference I do not wish to speculate what Dickinson identifies beyond human limits.[31] This space could be seen as death, God, time, or it could be all those things at once, and more. It is not my intention to map what that space is.[32] Instead, I map how Dickinson moves between those spaces. I agree with Jane Eberwein's reading that most of the time the inner circle of Circumference is related to the "private space of personal consciousness—to her own identity—and that other circles connoted, by metaphorical extension, either consciousness or the range of knowledge accessible to the consciousness. This identity exists within the circumferential margin that represents its limit" (160-161). Identity is defined not only by what is within the inner circle, but its associations with the margins of the unknown, as well. Think of the traveler who must accept a fluid sense of identity as the self is continually displaced in search for the unknown. Dickinson displaces her identity as she reaches for the edge of Circumference, for that point when knowing breaks. That is, Circumference marks the

[31] The term "Circumference" shows up repeatedly in images and ideas throughout several of Dickinson's poems. Jane Eberwein says the dictionary Dickinson would have had access to gave three meanings for circumference; "'the line that goes round or encompasses a …circle'; 'the space included in a circle'; and 'an orb; a circle; any thing circular or orbicular.'" (160). Eberwein also states that because of the three different meanings, scholars sometimes disagree as to whether circumference includes the entire circle or only the edge. (160). It is my reading of Dickinson's poetry, as I will show, that at times circumference is an all encompassing circle, at times it marks the edges of a boundary, and sometimes it is both.

[32] Robert Weisbuch identifies three main points when reading Emily Dickinson: "Don't point; don't pry; don't settle for one truth" (Weisbuch 197). According to Weisbuch, going against any of these three guidelines limit your experience with her poetry, and blind you to the multiple truths that are layered throughout Dickinson's work. Dickinson's poetry is not about finding a specific subject matter or content, "but enact(s) a way of seeing everything at once." (Weisbuch 198). This is a very postmodern way of reading Dickinson, and for me the keyword here is "enact." Again, we are traveling across material realities, including time and space, in the style of Dickinson as well.

edge of knowing or personal consciousness, and Dickinson is interested in what is revealed on that line.

Vertigo is an accidental discovery, a slip, a falling, but through the exploration of the experience, art is made. It does not matter the size or radius around the boundaries of your worldview, but it matters to us in this practice what happens when the boundaries start to shake, when the world beneath your feet falls away. Traveling is going past your own boundaries of knowing. Traveling is moving between concentric circles beginning with the atoms of your skin and going to the edges of the universe, with entire towns, countries, worlds, cultures in between. However, once you find the thread that connects them all, the order of them becomes arbitrary. Bishop was not America's only travel poet, as some have speculated, but Dickinson was traveling beyond borders long before.

Bishop recognized that Dickinson was interested in similar issues as herself. For example, Lynn Keller and Christanne Miller write that Bishop "identifies Dickinson as a poet of her own pet subject, 'Geography'" (535). Keller and Miller cite "indirection" as a literary tool used by both Bishop and Dickinson that allows them to exercise "quiet control" that "manifest[s] in both language and in representations of the self" (553). I am less interested in their investigation of indirection as an important strategy for the women poet who is "vulnerable because of her sensitivity and because of her unconventional views," and more interested in what it allows these poets to do within language (Keller and Miller 553). This is also what Gardner describes as "the power of Dickinson's wandering language" (*A Door Ajar* 9). Graham, also interested in Dickinson's traveling language, describes it as an "inward movement, action, a kind of aggressive, trampling-over movement" (*A Door Ajar* Gardner 198). The inward movement and tracing around

an issue allows a space to open up in between boundaries. This space becomes the new site of investigation that Dickinson explores. The crux of Dickinson's art is that she is graceful enough not to fall on either side of the boundaries, but remains afloat through inward movement. She creates worlds. And then travels them. Vertigo can be more than just the feeling of falling, but as seen in Dickinson's poetry, it can be a momentary suspension that repeats as she moves between the known and unknown. But this boundary can only be created through movement. Dickinson must reach for something, and then let it go, repeatedly to find a momentary home in the suspension. Her Circumference poems are purposeful maps that denote the indirection, wandering, and moving of the personal consciousness as either situated in a body, or projecting to another situated body. Indirection allows her to travel.

We can follow the map of Circumference or Vertigo in her poem 359. It begins as an ordinary observation. Dickinson watches a bird coming down the walk. However, as Dickinson continues to watch the bird, the disconnection between the two embodied worldviews becomes clear. We can see through the use, or misuse of language as she states, "[h]e bit an Angle Worm in halves/ And ate the fellow, raw." The idea of "raw" food is from her own point of view, not the bird's. She continues usurping the bird's perception as she describes the bird drinking the dew from the "convenient Grass" and hopping sidewise "To let a Bettle pass –." (163). These observations work toward humanizing the bird, but in reality Dickinson has no basis to infer whether the actions of the bird are motivated by convenience or politeness. In the next stanza she continues this same trend as the bird "glanced with rapid eyes," which "looked like frightened Beads." (163).

But the bird will fly away: "and he unrolled his feathers, / And rowed him softer Home –." (Dickinson 163). In this line the bird becomes aware he is being watched, but something else is going for Dickinson. Everything up until this point has been a reflection or reconstruction of the poet onto the bird. However, when the bird unrolls his feathers the two become separated. Dickinson has no reference for what a world of feathers or a sky home would be like—words fail her. This is where knowing breaks. Not every traveler will realize the false perception or worldview that they place on others, but a traveler of Vertigo will. Vertigo is a vital experience that allows the weaving of objective, partial knowledge to begin. Even as slippery as the language of Vertigo might be, this unraveling is vital. Dickinson's indirection allows her to get between the boundaries, without essentializng. The mindful study of borderlines is more than looking at the intersections (or, at times, lack of intersections), but it is also an investigation within, between those intersections, and the invisible, dark, silent spaces around the lines. Norma Alarcón, Caren Kaplan, and Mino Moallen explain that "'[b]etween' refers to a peculiar form of temporality, a 'suspended movement,' a moment of simultaneity and mutual inclusiveness or the spatiotemporal interval of *difference* essayed by Derrida (1982)" (15). This is the same language we used to describe Vertigo as well. Indirection is a purposeful wandering within language to reach these in-between spaces.

Dickinson steps into language once more, dancing Circumference. In the final stanza she works within this new space that has opened:

> Than Oars divide the Ocean,
> Too silver for a seam,
> Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon,
> Leap, plashless as they swim. (Dickinson 163).

As the bird flies away it carries and extends the edges of Dickinson's perception. The bird has gone beyond circumference or language, but has also mapped out the edges of these boundaries for Dickinson to explore. The movement of the bird's wings rowed him softly home, like oars dividing the ocean without even leaving a "seam." Dickinson continues to move back and forth between the known and the unknown when she gives the example of butterflies swimming on the banks of noon. Like the bird, the butterflies are able to float and splash in the air without leaving a trace. The bird and the butterflies show Dickinson that there is a world other than her own, which she has no language for. Vertigo is the space or break between the boundaries, the interval between these two worlds. Dickinson and Graham are now on the edge of the cliff, both standing on the edge of knowing, and watching another world soar before them.

And again, I find myself in Morocco.
Sitting, calmly observing from the mountains the world below,
with Dickinson and Graham on either side. Saying nothing,
we watch as the bird flies from the trees, below the rock, and back up again.
The braying of a mule behind our back,
our help back home.

Unnamed

I sit cross legged on top of the Atlas Mountains,
taking in the rustic red roofs of Azrou,
like a gathering of concrete wildflowers
amongst the patchwork of fields,
all stitched and worked,
framed by hands.

It looks like someone drew a line in the air
from the city to where the dense,
wild clustering of trees rise
with the rock and their prideful zest
to where I sit now,

Or perhaps I'm just framing it wrong,
wanting to find the order,

the language, a pattern of a mountain,
whom I do not know.
I inhale.

I do not know if I can trust my eyes
or feet,
in this moment,
in the place where earwicks
fly around like fairies,
and a red bird reigns,
unnamed
above the trees.

the updrafting pastures of the vertical in which a bird now rose,
blue body the blue wind was knifing upward
faster than it could naturally rise,
up into the downdraft until was frozen until she could see them
at last (Graham 64).

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon,
Leap, plashless as they swim. (Dickinson 163).

The in-between is slippery, and it is dangerous. Yet, we still have to make thejourney.

Between boundaries you can hang suspended right above a new world. However, you can only speak boundaries when you have one-half of yourself in the inner circle. Tracing lines around the experience, as writing allows us to do, gives Dickinson the ability to hang, suspended in Vertigo, just a little longer. This is different than what we've seen before. She is not just recounting the experience through writing, but writing itself is a material place that she can explore through. *Passports are made of paper and ink.* One way to get back to Vertigo is to work upside down; perceptions must be flipped. This is what Marilynne Robinson seemingly describes in a discussion of the same poem with Gardner, "[s]he's earning some reversal…That's the transformative vision…She is telling us to look at things in a way that we've never done before…that the world is

available to being seen very differently from the way we ordinarily see it" (*A Door Ajar* 65). In this poem and others, she uses inversion to trace Circumference and reach Vertigo.

This also happens when the writing body travels to other lands. Traveling can expand and break apart an individual's perception in order for other worldviews to appear on their horizons. This is what we have seen happen in Bishop's "Brazil, January 1, 1502." Dickinson traces the circumference of the known and unknown without moving from her garden, yet, she still divides oceans.

We travel to find the world upside down.
We travel to find ourselves upside down.

I watched her from the top of the red mountain,
she, only a little ways below,
dancing and balancing above an ancient pool,
now a collection of rain water on top of the world.
With her arms out, her reflection did the same.
She moved, it moved,
as the wind of vertigo moved through me,
showing me all of the red, dusty steps back down
to the fall.

On top of the lion mountain, an ancient kingdom
was supposed to be protected,
but I saw through the cracks,
her reflection living and breathing,
trapped below this red dust,
just waiting for this moment
where the sky fell and it could dance,
this one time, and then
nothing.

We are never whole,
the world hides us from ourselves.
These scattered pieces,
they call to me,
reflections of all that we might be,
when the world collapses.

Travel

is taking the self to edge of knowing, moving away, always from the unstable boundary of home.

Identities, as bodies, do not only travel, but they are places to travel to.

YOU ARE AT HOME, A STRANGER.[33]

It is only through language that I am able to go back to the Vertigo I felt waking up back in America for the first time. It was a drugged state, the world around me a distorted blur. The walls had been moved, and everything just slightly tweaked, irrevocably. Everything was too clean. It all seemed to be so pristinely fake.

Language is a time machine. It allows us to travel across distance, time, and memory. Using the machine both preserves and distorts the experience. The same can be said for when we travel physically to a place. We both change a space, and maintain it through our experience. Memory is an unreliable map for identity and body history. The retracing of an experience, as Dickinson does, allows her to create a temporary home. In poem 853 she reaches out to Circumference again:

> She staked Her Feathers – Gained an Arc –
> Debated - Rose again –
> This time – beyond the estimate
> Of Envy, or of Men – (Dickinson 374).

Through language she distorts her own view of reality to travel to Circumference. She stretches her wings, hesitates (the fear of falling is real), but she rises and flies off "beyond the estimate." Before, as we saw in poem 359, Dickinson is stopped by Circumference, but here she has found a way to inhabit it. By writing herself into otherness, she was able to find a comfort in the estrangement. Although, writing or

[33] Borrowed from Trinh Minh-ha, who explores the identity power relations as cultures move between and among one another, elaborates on the position of the subject: "[f]or answers to this query remain bound to the specific location, context, circumstance, and history of the subject at a given moment. Here, positionings are radically transnational and mobile. They constitute the necessary but arbitrary closures that make political actions and cultural practices possible" (51).

language can be a "steady Boat" that allows you to sail to the outer edges of another's perception, it can also give you the ability to find a home in otherness. Both the poet and the traveler seek those pockets of Vertigo, where they find themselves suspended and cut off from the world, yet able to look around and observe new worlds forming around them. This (re)shifts and recreates the travelers own material reality.

At times Dickinson chooses not to map so thoroughly what she is dealing with, and instead "lays out these issues in summary form, establishing rather than enacting her central problem" (*A Door Ajar* Gardner 9). As we have seen in the previous two bird poems Dickinson knows that something is just beyond her grasp. Each time that she reaches for this place, its resistance gives testament to its existence. In poem 373 she reflects further on this world beyond limits. Dickinson begins with the statement, "This World is not conclusion." It is the only definitive statement that she makes in the poem, and the only line that she ends with a period. The rest of the poem is filled with questions and silences. Eberwein sees the opening statement breaking down as the poem develops (227). I, however, think that Dickinson still believes that the world beyond her own consciousness exists at the end of the poem. What I see changing from the beginning of the poem is that the questions about this other world cannot ever be concluded. This other world has always been a site for questioning. Just as we saw with Graham and Bishop's work, the ability to question our world opens up in Vertigo. Additionally, continual exploration and questioning of a place is protection from oppressive and essentialist frames. Her questions after stating, "This World is not conclusion," serves to keep the world beyond Circumference alive.

(Re)exploring prevents colonization, in all forms.

When Dickinson says, "[a] species stands beyond," think of the birds: this other world can be inhabited, there is a species that can live there, but not without wings. She describes this world as "Invisible, as Music -/ But positive, as Sound." Like music it cannot be seen, but it can be heard. Again, Dickinson stands on the edge of the cliff with Graham, watching the bird move like the sound of an orchestra. Together they observe the worlds of silence and sound. Music is also a way of describing Vertigo. It teases the ear, it will hold you for a moment, but you will never fully own it. Gardner describes this music as it "measures us and finds us wanting—scouring us, stripping away our 'substitutes for the unseen,' and ridding us of the assurance that we are able to truly hear anything" (*A Door Ajar* 88).

> *"Passage: the state of metamorphosis; the conversion of water into steam; the alteration of an entire musical framework. Intervals-as-passage-spaces pass further into one another, interacting radically among themselves and communicating on a plane different from the one where the 'actions' of a scenario are explicitly situated. In intensity and* resonance *(more than in di*stance actually covered), the journey here continues" (Minh-ha 50).

Sound is also born of the world of structure, and its validity can only be tested within individual perceptions. Music and situated bodies are fluid spaces, which baffle and intrigue, and allow us to travel "more than in distance."

The rest of the poem continues:

> Philosophy, don't know –
> And through a Riddle, at the last –
> Sagacity, must go –
> To guess it, puzzles scholars –
> To gain it, Men have borne
> Contempt of Generations
> And Crucifixion, shown –
> Faith slips – and laughs, and rallies –
> Blushes, if any see –
> Plucks at a twig of Evidence –
> And asks a Vane, the way –
> Much Gesture, from the Pulpit –
> Strong Hallelujahs roll –

Narcotics cannot still the Tooth
That nibbles at the soul – (Dickinson 171).

This other world cannot be defined by philosophy and becomes a riddle to knowledge. And as Eberwien aptly summarizes, "[t]he hope of immortality finds insufficient supports in human wisdom. Science, philosophy, and theology all prove inadequate to the task with dogmatic pulpit pronouncements the most ludicrously insufficient" (227).

Questions that nibble at your identity, history, geography, culture, or the world as you know it, is yet another mark of Vertigo. This feeling is what keeps Dickinson continually reaching for the margins in her poetry. It is a "dreaded yet enticing barrier" (Eberwein 161). It is also what nags at both the poet and the traveler, and it is what they continually go back for. They are continually displacing themselves. The traveler poet is addicted to that empty filling in the pit of her stomach, right before her realities rearrange, and she is grounded once more.

Vertigo is bodily. Travel is bodily. Poetry is bodily. Dickinson continues to prove the importance of the body, just as Graham and Bishop have, by making the reader also keenly aware of their own bodily presence. Gardner describes this as, "[t]hat bodily experience coming to a halt, of being brought face to face with one's distance or limits," but it is also, as he states, where a space opens for Dickinson and she can begin her investigation (*A Door Ajar)*.

Feel, again the rhythm of your body as your read.
It's breath, in and out, in and out, slowly.
Rhythmic life, like music, appearing and disappearing.

"The inhaling and exhaling is the work of rhythm, or of Breath, manifested as voice, sound, word—whether audible or silent, spoken or written, outside or within. And rhythm is what lies in-between night and day and makes possible their process of alternation in alterity. Thanks to the rhythm of the heart, mind, body and soul can be poetically tuned" (Minh-ha 57).

We are entrapped within bodies, in places, but through voice, music, word, dance

In poem 633, Dickinson feels this entrapment, she saw "no Way – the Heavens were stitched –/ I felt the Columns close." But she breaks herself down, so much that, worlds, words explode within her. As she continues, "The Earth reversed her Hemispheres – I touched the Universe." Again she must undergo inversion. The world had to turn upside down before she could touch the universe. By reversing the entrapment, Dickinson allows the reader and herself to open, indefinitely. Through language, she moves, we move, together, presently, historically. In the second stanza we find that she has found a way to inhabit Circumference once again:

> And back it slid – and I alone –
> A speck opon a Ball –
> Went out opon Circumference –
> Beyond the Dip of a Bell – (Dickinson 284).

When she pulls back the veil, she goes even further along the boundary line. As Eberwein suggests, "we must visualize the speaker's position along the margin of an exploding circle" (194). Additionally, Eberwein stresses that "she stands *upon* it but not yet *beyond* it" (Eberwein 196). She becomes a speck upon a Ball, she is suspended in Circumference—she is in Vertigo. Dickinson is at the cusp of the universe, between the known and the unknown, between language and silence. By breaking herself down she was able to reverse her point of perception and reach back into Vertigo. Dickinson's personal Vertigo, is an inward, rhythmic movement towards ecstasy.[34]

In poem 132 Dickinson reflects on the loss of Vertigo. Imagine what it would be like to touch, if only for a moment, the universe with the tip of your finger, and then the

[34] Robert Gillespie writes that the journey in Dickinson is often "inward" and denotes "consciousness, movement, ecstasy." (251).

whole world slides back and you are closed off once more. This is precisely what is happening when Dickinson writes:

> Just lost, when I was saved!
> Just felt the world go by!
> Just girt me for the onset with Eternity,
> When breath blew back,
> And on the other side
> I heard recede the disappointed tide! (Dickinson 67).

She is left washed back upon the shores of this disappointed tide, "abandoned on *this* side of the divide, the tide of Eternity washing back and leaving one with only the shore's tangles of ruin" (*A Door Ajar* Gardner 33).

We slumped down next to each other on the shore, like a couple of drowned mermaids
with seaweed and broken shells around us,
looking out and not saying a word.

gravity is like a schizophrenic building a table

Like children,
we play in the sand of the Indian Ocean
we are told
that to see the world clearly
you need to put your knees in the sand,
your head upside down
and look at the ocean between your legs.

"A gelatinous mass stuck to the earth,"
it reaches up
only to slam back down.
Crashing, tries, repeats.
An undying belief in a lunar cult, repeat.
Sun, mother-moon lights our skins on fire,
vaporization lifts liquid organic shadows into the air.

Wipe your brow,
you bound moving body of water.
Watch, feel, taste
your own vertigo
as you hang suspended,
collected in the clouds
until we all fall back down,
Refreshing, safe, whispers repeat.

In the distance,
thunderclaps become electrified veins
that are hurled to the dirt
searching for a conductor,
metal wires that light up all this unreal.
Can't you see,
we make cracks in the sky.

Coming back to the other side she has "[o]dd secrets of the line to tell!" (68). She has been on the edge of other worlds, and has came back to speak of them. However, she was just on the edge, she was "[s]ome Sailor, skirting foreign shores – some pale Reporter, from the awful doors / Before the Seal!" Dickinson makes a point to say that next time she will stay. She will stay to watch the universe slowly turn. Outside of the perception of time, she will watch the entire Circumference of the circle as it spins and slowly marks the centuries. As seen in a couple of the other poems, Dickinson also claims whatever is beyond circumference produces sound. Minh-ha says that "[t]he more displacement one has gone through, the more music one can listen to" (55). Dickinson's ears are always listening, waiting.

> Next time, to stay!
> Next time, the things to see
> By ear unheard –
> Unscruntinized by eye –
>
> Next time, to tarry,
> While the Ages steal –
> Slow tramp the Centuries,
> And the Cycles wheel! (Dickinson 68).

The travel poet too will have experienced this. She can find herself in a place so foreign, or other, that it makes her retreat back inside herself. Then something breaks, and she finds herself in Vertigo. Not quite able to engage with this new, strange world, but we are invited to watch and write. Dickinson was not able to reach beyond the line, but the point that she makes is that she has inhabited the line; she became an expert on the secrets of

the line. With our ears open we are able to listen for the songs of others that can take us to the edge, whether that song comes from a bird in the garden or a crippled woman on a dilapidated train in Sri Lanka.

First World Kids with Second Class Tickets

I.
The windows on the train
from Galle to Moratuwa
are pushed as far as they would go,
but sweat collects and rolls off
our skins like trails of ants.

The quarter of the window showing to my left
is caked in years of sun and yellow dust,
cracked like a river map,
making a shoreline,
the waves look golden,
gilded, shining
like the yellow band of a prism
filtered through age and grim.

My feet are swollen from two hours of standing
on a ride that shook and rattled
in my head
like it had never been new.
Robin's egg color blue always stained,
a thought that had gone out style
in another world, and was left
with wheels still churning.
I do not know the carbon life of locomotives.

II.
Sweaty bodies condense and push past each other
as people move from car to car
selling bread, nuts, candy, water.

My eyes and ears catch hold of her in the same instance.
My senses, paralyzingly twisted,
distorted
by this the piece of life carved out,
and presented to me,
half nightmare, half voice of salvation.

She held a cup in the crook of a hand,

bent back like a crowbar at the wrist.
The skin on the right side of her face gathered
in dark strange clumps.
Her ear was a hole on the side of her head
that looked liked lichens,
like black earth fungus rooted.

Her eye,
the one that can find me,
the other one was spinning, searching
for something in the red, liquid darkness
that seemed to cloud over and fester.
Her eye,
it burns me,
while her voice sings of a found love.
I know the sound, if not the words.
It is the melody in all that was good in humanity.
Her eye,
it looks at me,
standing, terrified, unmoving,
and not at the coins the woman in front of me places in her cup.
(Dark sunglasses, crowbars, and sweat.)

She moves passed me,
If I had just closed my eyes,
all I would have never known
anything but gilded voices.

III.
A man pulled the window further down
passed the yellow dust,
cracked, but clear.
The lens, shifted.

"So while I refused to meet her gaze and to engage her humanity in the moment of our encounter, she has continued to hold a powerful space in my imaginary. She is my teacher, remapping my reading of her 'outrageous' actions as her expression of agency and my circumscription with the folds of empire.

Some memories become homes, that when our consciousness stumbles by them circling on the edge too far, are always burning. In the dark night, they burn, and we must come home to them and relive the trauma with wide eyes and hot bodies" (Rowe 8).

Home is no longer a place of presence, it now contains an absence. The poet now has the tales of distant lands on her tongue, and she confesses: I was on the tip of the bell, the heavens reversed, and I touched the universe. *I touched the universe, and then,*

nothing. Everything is now tinted with that loss. There is no longer a distinction between Dickinson and the traveler.

Individual positioning is always a shifting and reshifting of material realities. We are all, always, already co-creating experiences, stories, and identities through our outer-internal movements. But it is not until we find ourselves in a new set of webbed knowledges that we are aware of these movements. The experience of Vertigo is to scale, from the political situations of nation-states and cultures, to the political, situated bodies of the individual. *As the pen moves, up and down, up and down, as our feet move, up and down, up and down, moving us towards something, there is absence and presence, absence and presence. Who is able to say which is which?* As Minh-ha explains, "[l]iving at the borders means that one constantly treads the fine line between positioning and de-positing. The fragile nature of the intervals in which one thrives requires that, as a mediator-creator, one always travels transculturally while engaging in the local 'habitus' (collective practices that link habit with inhabitance) of one's immediate presence, and vice-versa" (54).

Beyond the distant shore of Circumference there is yet another sea to cross, another border (Dickinson poem 720). The surface opens to reveal depths beyond imagination, where an infinity of seas laps against our multiple distorted, inversed reflections, co-creating a new set of webbed knowledges. The ground can fall beneath your feet, you can lose your "I," and blind you can finally see where your knowledge, so limited, ends. I have been to the edge, and back. I have traveled, skirting foreign shores, and back. From awful doors, and back. I am broken. And every time I go before the Seal, I break a little more. And one day, I'll be broken enough to stay.

The strange secrets of lines

I have gone to the edge,
and back.

I've lived there, for a time,
falling,
between the space of coffee spoons
and birds.

I've seen where the ships pass,
to and fro,
the white sails in the night, like clouds.

I've heard the creak of the wheel,
seen it move like a fortune,
a spindle,
and then, nothing.

I've put my hands
through the fog,
and touched something,
I felt it,
before the line broke.

I've been out there,
alone,
in the silence,
a tiny crack between the voices,
before the silver was pulled away.

I go there sometimes, still,
to fall.

The waters of the world hang suspended upside down. We can only get the hemispheres to reverse by listening to the ocean, the whole universe squeezed inside a conch shell that spirals and collapses to a speck that we can touch. For a moment. We touch it, suspended over worlds, and, then we fall.

I am but a pale reporter, walking the shore once more.

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