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■ ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Nonhuman Agencies in Elizabeth Bishop's Poems as Subjects in the Era of Climate Change*

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Abstract: *This study delves into how nonhuman species in Elizabeth Bishop's poems create a world through entanglement and symbiosis among multiple species, exerting their inexhaustible agencies even as their lives and habitats face disruptions from unpredictable encounters with human species, leading to their precarity and indeterminacy. In "The Moose," "The Armadillo," "The Fish," and "At the Fishhouses," animals are portrayed as subjects whose homes are encroached upon or whose lives are endangered by human activities. Climate change, fueled by colonialism and industrial capitalism, exacerbates the vulnerability of animals, plants, and the marginalized populations of colonized nations. In Bishop's poems, animals symbolize not only nonhuman subjects disturbed by climate crisis but also the human minorities burdened with climate injustice. Despite their challenges, these nonhumans are not merely passive victims; they are dignified subjects who actively exert their agency through interactions with humans,*

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thereby influencing and transforming human perspectives and behaviors. This represents a planetary ethic of cooperation and sympathy among multiple species in the Anthropocene, transcending the boundaries between the living and non-living.

Keywords: *climate change, Anthropocene, Elizabeth Bishop, multispecies, Anna Tsing*

1. Introduction

Elizabeth Bishop (1911-79), an American female poet, throughout her life created poems featuring socially marginalized figures such as women and workers, as well as animals, plants, and objects as the main agents. She wrote many works featuring "various peripheral speakers," including animals and children, and notably left "a list of memorable animal writings" (Cleghorn and Ellis 1, 10). This includes "Seascape" and "The Fish" from *North & South* (1946), "At the Fishhouses" from *A Cold Spring* (1955), "The Armadillo" and "Sandpiper" from *Questions of Travel* (1965), and "Crusoe in England" and "The Moose" from *Geography III* (1976). As exemplified in "The Moose", "there is something both 'homely' and 'otherworldly' about all of Bishop's animal poems" (*CP* 173), reflecting Bishop's complex attitude toward animals: she sees a "likeness" to humans in them while simultaneously respecting their alterity (Cleghorn and Ellis 10).

This study aims to advance the ecocritical discourse on Bishop's animal poems by analyzing nonhuman agencies in her poems as subjects in the era of climate change, seeking to discover the possibilities of symbiosis and coexistence between the human species and multiple species in the Anthropocene, a time of disruption and pollution. This study delves into how nonhuman species in Elizabeth Bishop's poems create a world through entanglement and symbiosis among multiple species, exerting their inexhaustible agencies even as their lives and habitats face disruptions from unpredictable encounters with human species, leading to their precarity and indeterminacy.

In pursuit of this goal, the article seeks to borrow and appropriate the framework and terminology of Multispecies Anthropology as expounded by anthropologist Anna Tsing in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015). Tsing's Multispecies Anthropology aims to deconstruct rigid dualisms between nature and culture,

and between humans and nonhumans, offering insights into how human and more-than-human contexts co-construct culture. This reflects recent trends of posthumanist cultural anthropology. Her work underscores understanding organisms not as singular species but as multispecies assemblages, and highlights that humans themselves host numerous microorganisms, challenging the notion of humans as a singular biological species.

The terms used in this paper, such as "unpredictable encounter," "contamination," "disturbance," "making history," "making worlds," "precarity," and "indeterminacy" are borrowed from Tsing's *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. However, this paper clarifies that these terms are expanded and adapted beyond Tsing's strict evolutionary biological sense to encompass broader social and ontological dimensions. Tsing explains the codevelopment of multiple species through the contingencies of interspecies encounter, illustrating many organisms which develop through interactions with other species, and she articulates how the complex of organisms and their symbionts can lead to the development of new species (141-42). However, this paper encompasses the affective, sensory, psychological, and social transformations that can occur instantaneously at the moment of interspecies encounters. In other words, it clarifies that the expressions applied in the analysis of Bishop's works are not based on strict scientific principles but are instead crafted by combining ecological insights with literary metaphors.

In the following sections, this paper explores "The Armadillo," "The Moose," "The Fish," and "At the Fishhouses" from this perspective. In these poems, animals are portrayed as subjects whose homes are encroached upon or whose lives are endangered by human activities. Climate change, fueled by colonialism and industrial capitalism, exacerbates the vulnerability of animals, plants, and the marginalized populations of colonized nations. In Bishop's poems, animals symbolize not only nonhuman subjects disturbed by climate crisis but also the human minorities burdened with climate injustice.

Under the current global climate change, "the terrors of indeterminacy" and "precarity" seem to be the fate of everyone, not just a few vulnerable people (Tsing 1-2). Rather, as Tsing suggests, we need to view "indeterminacy" and

"precarity" not as "an exception to how the world works," but as "the condition of our time" and "the center of the systematicity we seek" (20). Therefore, particularly noteworthy is that despite their challenges, those nonhumans in Bishop's poems are not merely passive victims; they are dignified subjects who actively exert their agency through interactions with humans, thereby influencing and transforming human perspectives and behaviors. Within these Bishop's poems, despite human disturbance and interspecies contamination, the agency of each organism that changes everyone's world and makes worlds is not suppressed. Instead, we find out that new possibilities for life emerge through these indeterminate events. This may represent a planetary ethics of cooperation and sympathy among multiple species in the Anthropocene, even transcending the boundaries between the living and non-living.

2. Interspecies Encounters and Disturbances in "The Armadillo," and "The Moose": Discovering Commons of Multispecies

The narrative of "The Armadillo" revolves around the Brazilian custom of floating fire balloons on saints' days. The overall structure is: "The illegal fire balloons cause devastation to the animals that live downwind—from the owls that flee their burnt-out nests to a glistening armadillo that leaves the scene" and finally "a baby rabbit" jumps out (Cleghorn and Ellis 10). Accordingly, this work has been understood to convey the speaker's "feelings about human carelessness, … toward the natural world." (10). In this context, there have been interpretations that categorize the poem as a nature conservation poem or an antiwar poem, associating fire balloons with explosions like bombs.

By advancing this interpretation further, this paper suggests that "The Armadillo" can be said to possess the characteristics of Anthropocene literature, as it figuratively addresses the issue of how human activities impact the habitability of the Earth. This poem depicts how the lives of nonhuman beings are threatened and their habitats are destroyed by illegal human activities. It begins as follows: "This is the time of year / when almost every night / the frail, illegal fire balloons appear" (*CP* 103). The phrase "illegal fire balloons" can be interpreted

as symbolizing the destructive nature of human civilization that has led to the Anthropocene. Behind the movement of this artificial object lies authoritative, violent, and illegal human thoughts and activities.

From the 2nd to the 4th stanza, the description of the lights and colors of the balloons emphasizes the aesthetic beauty of these artificial objects. However, it also implies the lurking danger within. The poet compares balloons of various colors to planets indistinguishable from the stars, highlighting the similarity between artificial objects and celestial bodies, saying "it's hard / to tell them from the stars— / planets" (*CP* 103). As the descent of the balloons is likened to the movement of celestial bodies, a sense of agency and vitality inherent in inorganic nonhuman entities, encompassing both artificial objects and planets, is conveyed. Then, the line "they flare and falter, wobble and toss" (*CP* 103) depicts the moment when the explosiveness and danger of the balloons begin to become visible. The balloons' uneasy and precarious movement ultimately becomes "in the downdraft from a peak, / suddenly turning dangerous" (103).

> Last night another big one fell.
> It splattered like an egg of fire
> against the cliff behind the house.
> The flame ran down. We saw the pair
>
> of owls who nest there flying up
> and up, their whirling black-and-white
> stained bright pink underneath, until
> they shrieked up out of sight. (*CP* 103)

The line "It splattered like an egg of fire" (*CP* 103) depicts the balloon as if it is a living organism, imbuing it with a sense of life. In this way, it seems that not only the agency and subjectivity of animals like armadillos but also that of inanimate objects such as fire balloons is of significant interest to the poet. In this poem, unpredictable encounters and interactions between inanimate objects, nonhuman organisms, and humans are crucial events. For Bishop, the focus of exploration seems to be the disturbances and possibilities of coexistence among these diverse

species. This poem illustrates how disturbances and interactions among various species lead to the emergence of new changes, rather than presenting a unilateral perspective of a single species.

The appearance of "the pair // of owls who nest there" (*CP* 103) definitively introduces issues of sustainability of habitats in the Anthropocene, raising questions about Earth's habitability. The pair of owls' "flying up" (103) signifies that disturbances caused by human-made objects have prompted these animals to migrate and move. The unplanned encounter between the owls and the fire balloons brings about changes in the owls' lives. However, focusing on the owls' ascent and mobility allows us to approach this situation from the perspective of their adaptability and resilience.

> The ancient owls' nest must have burned.
> Hastily, all alone,
> a glistening armadillo left the scene,
> rose-flecked, head down, tail down,
> and then a baby rabbit jumped out,
> short-eared, to our surprise.
> So soft!—a handful of intangible ash
> with fixed, ignited eyes. (*CP* 104)

The term "ancient" (*CP* 104) can be an ambiguous expression, meaning that this place has been the owls' long-term habitat while simultaneously implying that the owls have left an old dwelling to seek a new one. Despite the invasion and disturbances, the vitality of multiple species stands out. A "baby rabbit" (104) demonstrates the unyielding vitality and possibilities of life, even in a disrupted and invaded habitat. The appearance of the possessive pronoun "our" in "to our surprise" (104) reveals the presence of human observers. It explicitly highlights the relational dynamics between human beings and nonhuman species, amidst the specific situations depicted in the poem. The place was a common habitat shared by owls, armadillos, and rabbits, where diverse species lived in symbiosis and coexistence. Furthermore, the site turns out to be a common ground where humans and artificially created objects encounter diverse animals, intricately

entangling with each other. The relationship is not harmonious and is asymmetrical, yet mutual.

This fable depicts the habitat shared by owls, armadillos, and rabbits losing its stability and being placed in the conditions of indeterminacy and precarity, while still allowing readers to witness the uncontrolled lives of these multiple species in this blasted landscape. Although their collective home is ruined by human imprudence, the response-ability and agency of these animals, along with the empathetic gaze of the human observer, suggest possibilities of coexistence and collaborative survival within environmental disturbance. The baby rabbit jumping out and the human onlookers' unexpected encounter subtly hint that the conditions of precarity and indeterminacy "also make life possible" (Tsing 20) and that "livable collaborations" (28) work across species for human and nonhuman survival. This moment suggests that both human and nonhuman species change through collaborations across species.

Evidently, the animals in this poem may symbolize the indigenous people who were forcibly displaced from their lands by colonial invaders. The imperialists orchestrated the extraction of coal and the transfer of coal energy to satisfy their greed for expansion, thereby forcing the residents of colonized nations to endure the deprivation of their residential freedoms and the exploitation of their labor. Accordingly, the animals in "The Armadillo" also evoke imagery of residents in underdeveloped countries who have been disproportionately affected by climate change caused by the development and conquests of advanced capitalist colonial nations. This poem symbolically places marginalized humans, who suffer even more in the era of climate change, at its center. It provides a stage for socially disadvantaged individuals whose habitats have been disrupted to express their gestures and voices. However, Bishop portrays them not merely as victims, but as resilient and responsive agents capable of adapting themselves relationally to environments. The poet emphasizes the dignity of these marginalized humans and other creatures in the era of climate change, highlighting their enduring vitality and their capacity to participate in shaping the world.

The poem "The Moose," which follows a bus journey from Nova Scotia to Boston, begins with a description of the natural features and landscape of the area.

It introduces scenic objects like the bay, the river, the sun, roads, maples, and farmhouses in parallel, without revealing any human subject. Then, a bus appears as one of the primary agencies leading the narrative with the lines "through late afternoon / a bus journeys west" (*CP* 169) in the 5th stanza. In this stanza, the bus is portrayed as a technologically produced nonhuman entity that possesses not only metallic and artificial qualities but also vitality and subjectivity: "the windshield flashing pink, / pink glancing off of metal, / brushing the dented flank / of blue, beat-up enamel;" (169).

In the next stanza a human passenger as "a lone traveller" appears for the first time. The bus which, carrying her, departs once again, continues to be depicted as an active subject. The progression of the poem follows the movement and route of the bus. As the bus passes through the locations of Nova Scotia, the poet casts a gaze upon an ordinary woman engaged in household chores. Then the bus passes "The Tantramar marshes," filled with "the smell of salt hay" (*CP* 170). This phrase, referring to the Tintamarre National Wildlife Area on the border of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, indicates the specific geographic route of the journey and gradually reveals the poem's ecological interest in a sensory manner.

Soon after, a "freckled, elderly" (*CP* 171) woman climbs in, which means another ordinary woman enters the text as active agent. The woman's utterance, "A grand night. Yes, sir, / all the way to Boston" (171) is the first human voice heard, and the first human conversation spoken in this poem, which reveals a concrete direction of human journey for the first time. Through the destination of this ordinary woman, it indicates where the bus and its passengers are headed. In the line "She regards us amicably" (171), the first appearance of the objective pronoun "us" visualizes the collective passengers for the first time. Through the warm gaze of an ordinary female passenger, an encounter, connection, and interaction with her and the other passengers are established. The poetic term "Moonlight" in "Moonlight as we enter / the New Brunswick woods, / hairy, scratchy, splintery;" (171) indicates the passage of time, and signifies that the bus has been continuously running into the night without stopping. New Brunswick is a province in southeastern Canada, located on the Atlantic coast. The landscape formed by the New Brunswick woods and mist is described as possessing

animality, vitality, and subjectivity: "moonlight and mist / caught in them like lamb's wool / on bushes in a pasture" (171).

In the next stanza, for the first time, the speaker's attention turns toward the human "passengers" (*CP* 171). The dreamlike conversations created by each passenger in their own distinct voices, form a mosaic of diverse human relationships. The mentioned names and personal events such as life, illness, and death compose a mosaic of human histories. This can be seen as the process of making history by humans. "'Yes …' that peculiar / affirmative. 'Yes …'" (172) indicates the stage of affirmation and acceptance regarding human life and death. At this moment, the life and death of the nonhuman moose infiltrate into it. A sudden event occurs, shocking the notion that humans can understand all life and death only through human history like "Life's like that. / We know it (also death)" (172), as the life and death of nonhuman being intervenes abruptly. The entanglements of human lives are revealed to be intertwined with nonhuman lives as well. Following the rich human chorus, the sudden emergence of the nonhuman moose as a new solo brings about a dramatic effect structurally.

At this moment of happening, the ordinary bus driver emerges as a significant human agency in this poem: "—Suddenly the bus driver / stops with a jolt, / turns off his lights" (*CP* 172). He plays a central role in the relationships between humans and nonhumans. He is the first witness to the prophetic event of sudden encounter between humans and nonhumans.

> A moose has come out of
> the impenetrable wood
> and stands there, looms, rather,
> in the middle of the road.
> It approaches; it sniffs at
> the bus's hot hood.
>
> Towering, antlerless,
> high as a church,
> homely as a house
> (or, safe as houses).

A man's voice assures us
"Perfectly harmless. …"

Some of the passengers
exclaim in whispers,
childishly, softly,
"Sure are big creatures."
"It's awful plain."
"Look! It's a she!"

Taking her time,
she looks the bus over,
grand, otherworldly.
Why, why do we feel
(we all feel) this sweet
sensation of joy? (*CP* 172-73)

"The impenetrable wood" (*CP* 172) implies the forest's unapproachable alterity, the irreducible heterogeneity of nature. The scene of the moose standing "in the middle of the road" displays the nonhuman's dignified presence and authority. "Towering, antlerless, / high as a church" (173) expresses the moose's sacred and noble dignity, while "homely as a house / (or, safe as houses)" (173) conveys its affinity and companionship with humans. In other words, these lines capture the moose's ambivalent nature at once. The differences and interdependence between species are simultaneously revealed. "Perfectly harmless. …" (173) contains a vision of harmonious symbiosis and coexistence arising from this unexpected encounter between humans and nonhumans. It is noteworthy that the bus, as a fossil fuel-based mode of transportation, symbolizes coal fuel and connects to the issue of climate change. Thus, when the moose approaches the bus and "it sniffs at / the bus's hot hood" (172), the site becomes the intersection of human culture, which has caused climate change, and nature, which has embodied the era of climate change. This scene symbolizes that human culture and nonhuman nature, while contrasting with each other, are inseparably entangled in the Anthropocene.

In appreciating the moose, diverse human voices, each different from one another, coexist equally: "Sure are big creatures," and "It's awful plain" (*CP* 173). Patricia Yaeger states that the abruption of human and nonhuman confrontation "startles the mind into another dimension," which leads to "dispersed and heterogeneous responses" from each perceiver instead of "the unitary status of the self," and the connection between these perceivers while they comment, moving from one meaning to another (207). Meanwhile, the poet seeks to discover feminine subjectivity within the nonhuman through the sentence "It's a she!" (173). Therefore, the pronoun changes from "It" to "her" and "she": "Taking her time, / she looks the bus over, / grand, otherworldly" (173). Here, the poet creates a solemn and discreet feminine agency. This female subject does not succumb to fear or anxiety from unfamiliar beings. Instead, she stands at the center of the landscape, exerting influence on her surroundings and embodying a powerful feminine agency that initiates change.

From an ecofeminist perspective, Shadi Neimneh and Amneh Abussamen state that "the she-moose," evoking amazement in the passengers, points at the superiority of Mother Nature over human beings, and Bishop's language implies "the elevated position of nature, aptly a symbol for women" (145). On the other hand, according to them, it seems that "the road established in the middle of the moose's habitat indicates man's exploitation of the woods at the expense of animals," and "the she-moose might be read … as a symbol for women who are marginalized in the patriarchal world" (Neimneh and Abussamen 146). From this perspective, the moose who gets out to find the annoying noise from the bus engine can be said to represent nonhuman species harmed by anthropocentrism while simultaneously symbolizing women oppressed by androcentrism.

The passage "Why, why do we feel / (we all feel) this sweet / sensation of joy?" (*CP* 173) describes the changes humans experience through accidental encounters. The agency of the moose significantly affects and transforms humans without direct contact. The aesthetic expression of interspecies relationships is highlighted. Yaeger argues that the moose, remaining "external and impenetrable" to the end, hovers between both zones of the beautiful and the sublime, and the human subject and nonhuman object "have entered into an intersubjective dialectic of grandeur in which the poet refuses to annex what is alien" (208-09).

Obviously, human species experience new and unfamiliar affective transformations through encounter with this alien nonhuman species. This encounter leads to a new affective experience that changes not only their perception of nonhumans but also their self-awareness. Within this interconnectedness and dependency on the nonhuman, humans experience an awakening, recognizing their own existence in a new light.

> "Curious creatures,"
> says our quiet driver,
> rolling his r's.
> "Look at that, would you."
> Then he shifts gears.
> For a moment longer,
>
> by craning backward,
> the moose can be seen
> on the moonlit macadam;
> then there's a dim
> smell of moose, an acrid
> smell of gasoline. (*CP* 173)

The moose transforms "our quiet driver" (*CP* 173), prompting insightful observation and engaging him to speak to the passengers. In the action of his shifting gears to give the passengers a better view of the moose, the dynamic agency of the bus driver stands out. Just like the bus, "macadam" (173) symbolizes industrialized human civilization that accelerates climate change, particularly through transportation systems based on fossil fuels. In the final lines "then there's a dim / smell of moose, an acrid / smell of gasoline" (173) the mingling of the two scents embodies the entanglement of two species. The intertwining of the different scents sensorially materializes the coexistence and symbiosis of multiple species in one place.

Coal energy is identified as a cause of climate change and is directly linked to the expansion of European imperialism (Baldwin 293). Therefore, terms related to fossil fuel-based transportation, such as "bus," "macadam," and "gasoline," can

be interpreted as connected to the colonial capitalist and imperialist civilizations that are the historical origins of climate change. These colonial and imperialist activities have disrupted the habitat of nonhuman beings like the moose. The important point here is that such disturbances and intrusions cannot completely diminish the moose's intense vigor.

As Tsing says, "Unpredictable encounters transform us," remaking us as well as others, and by nature, encounters are "indeterminate" in that "we are unpredictably transformed" (20, 46). The confrontation between the moose and human beings exemplifies the indeterminacy of encounters. As the poetic situation implies, the encounter between the two species can sometimes be harmful and at other times bring about prosperity. One evident fact is that through this encounter, the assemblages of both species change, and it remains indeterminate how they are transformed. As the body and mind of the human species change in relation to these encounters, the body and life of the moose undergo this process as well. Humans and the moose "share such here-and-now transformations through encounter" (Tsing 47). Whether through disruption and invasion or through care and empathy, encounters between humans and nonhumans expand the possibilities of their lives due to the indeterminacy inherent in such encounters.

3. Multispecies Making Worlds in "The Fish," and "At the Fishhouses": Nonhuman Subjects Making History

In the first line of "The Fish", "I caught a tremendous fish," the "I" is the human subject of the action, while "a tremendous fish" is the nonhuman object of the action (*CP* 42). This first line should be compared to the contrasting final line of the poem, "And I let the fish go" (44). Between the first and the last line, one must observe the significant changes in the subject-object relationship brought about by the interaction and encounter between the human being and the fish. One must pay attention to the transformation of the "I" inspired by the history and agency of the fish. Words like "venerable / and homely" (42) and "admired" (43) convey both a respect for the differences between species and a sense of kinship, empathy, and companionship between them. Phrases describing the fish's skin and patterns as "like ancient wallpaper" and "stained and lost through age" (42)

highlight the historical nature of the fish's body, that is, the material historicity of the nonhuman corporeality.

The lines "He was speckled with barnacles, / fine rosettes of lime, / and infested / with tiny white sea-lice" (*CP* 42) exemplify Donna Haraway's concept of companion species. Haraway, in "The Companion Species Manifesto," argues that multiple species of beings, including humans and nonhumans, have co-evolved as mutual components of each other's bodies and lives. She terms this relationship "companion species," saying "[we] are, constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh" (Haraway 94). Haraway hopes that by telling "a story of cohabitation, coevolution, and embodied cross-species sociality," her manifesto might offer "livable politics and ontologies in current life worlds" (96). Resonating with this thought, the poet reveals that, while the fish appears to be a single species, it actually embodies the coexistence and symbiosis of multiple species. The fish's body represents the essence of companion species, highlighting the interconnectedness of diverse life forms.

The phrases "They shifted a little, but not / to return my stare" (*CP* 43) signifies that the fish is alive and indicates that this nonhuman cannot be controlled by the "I" (42). This reveals the nonhuman life force that can never be extinguished, even by violent human activities. The "I" feels that the fish's history is longer than his own and perceives the fish as an elder, which represents a sense of reverence that transcends species boundaries.

> I admired his sullen face,
> the mechanism of his jaw,
> and then I saw
> that from his lower lip
> —if you could call it a lip—
> grim, wet, and weaponlike,
> hung five old pieces of fish-line,
> or four and a wire leader
> with the swivel still attached,
> with all their five big hooks
> grown firmly in his mouth. (*CP* 43)

The speaker's observation of the fish leads to a sense of admiration for it, thanks to a scientific seriousness that reads its history from the nonhuman physicality instead of injecting human thought into it. "The speaker as hunter admires the history of her catch hanging from its mouth in the form of hooks, fish-line, leaders and swivels," and she recognizes "that the fish … is a fellow creature with a lived and living history" (Fortuny 1106-07). This section deals with the history of how the fish has interacted with humans and the world, and it implies the influence that humans and the world have received from the fish in this process. This fish has been a participant in the process of shaping human life and world history.

All organisms can alter their environments for living. "Making worlds is not limited to humans," but "every organism makes worlds" with its activities of making lives (Tsing 21-22, 292). The fish's body, inscribed with the process of survival, awakens the speaker to the world-making of nonhumans. The phrase "a five-haired beard of wisdom" also describes the fish's historicity and agency as a dignified subject. It can be said that the body of the fish embodies the overlapping and intertwining histories of nature and human culture.

> Like medals with their ribbons
> frayed and wavering,
> a five-haired beard of wisdom
> trailing from his aching jaw.
> I stared and stared
> and victory filled up
> the little rented boat,
> from the pool of bilge
> where oil had spread a rainbow
> around the rusted engine
> to the bailer rusted orange,
> the sun-cracked thwarts,
> the oarlocks on their strings,
> the gunnels—until everything
> was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
> And I let the fish go. (*CP* 43-44)

"The little rented boat" and "the rusted engine" (*CP* 44) signify that the speaker is a very poor and ordinary human subject in an industrialized capitalist society, to the extent of using old, humble, and shabby machinery. The phrase "victory filled up / the little rented boat" (44) depicts an event where, despite the speaker's poverty and ordinariness, she feels a sense of triumph from encountering the honorable and respectable nonhuman fish. This captures the moment when the entanglement and disturbance between the human and nonhuman bring about a transformation in the human subject. Here, the boat "from the pool of bilge / where oil had spread a rainbow / around the rusted engine / to the bailer rusted orange" (44) is related to climate change as a fossil fuel-based mode of transportation. Therefore, this story of the human and the fish crossing the fear of contamination and disruption, and transcending the boundaries of life and death to make worlds together, is directly connected to the ethics of multispecies symbiosis to be pursued in the Anthropocene.

The speaker releases the fish after realizing the uncontrollable agency of the nonhuman, the liveliness that exists beyond human management. Such realization brings a revelatory moment to the human speaker. Here, the nonhuman is not merely an object of fishing but a subject actively participating in making worlds. Although the fish may appear as a humble creature, through its encounters with a human subject, it becomes a subject that transforms the human and creates the world. The conclusion of this poem exemplifies new emergences and transformations resulting from mutual contamination and disruption between humans and nonhumans. It illustrates a situation where contamination and disruption between different species lead to possibilities of new life. In "The Fish," the disruption and contamination between human and nonhuman species become an event that renews and redefines the liveliness of the human species as well as that of the nonhuman species.

Tsing explains that we "are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others" (27). For the human speaker and the fish, contamination changes mutual worlds. According to Tsing, since everyone "carries a history of contamination," the "evolution of our 'selves' is already polluted by histories of encounter" (27, 29). The traces of fierce battles left on the fish's body indicate that the histories of human species and nonhuman species develop

through contamination. They remind readers of the undeniable fact that human lives and nonhuman lives are mixed up with each other. The act of the speaker returning the fish to its original habitat implies that through contamination, new directions for life or the possibility of greater diversity of life may emerge.

The poem "ends with a form of collision and collusion of culture and nature" (Fortuny 1106). The "rainbow" (*CP* 44) emerges as a beauty created by contamination from engine oil. The intersection of engine oil and the life of the nonhuman generates the beauty of a rainbow, even amidst technical pollution. The rainbow might be a product of the conflict and entanglement between nature and culture. Different species coexist and symbiotically thrive through mutual contamination and disruption. "The Fish" elaborates on how multiple species collaborate, become-with, and evolve by contaminating and disrupting each other's habitats.

"At the Fishhouses" provides the exterior landscape of Nova Scotia, a province of Canada, "with detailed descriptions," yet "the geographical settings" of the poem "are connected with Bishop's biographical facts" (Kim 168-69). The poet spent her earlier life at Nova Scotia, located on the Canadian east coast. Having experienced the natural environment there, she possesses empirical knowledge and memories of the place. The poem begins with the description of the fishhouses, where "an old man sits netting" (*CP* 64). He is working "at the water's edge," (65) "a location where land and sea, the human and the natural, meet and mix" (Rosenbaum 65). The speaker's conversation with him along with her observations of the fishhouses and the old man, evokes the speaker's memories of the local nature, leading to a deep meditation on the natural environment and knowledge about it.

> Up on the little slope behind the houses,
> set in the sparse bright sprinkle of grass,
> is an ancient wooden capstan,
> cracked, with two long bleached handles
> and some melancholy stains, like dried blood,
> where the ironwork has rusted.
> The old man accepts a Lucky Strike.
> He was a friend of my grandfather.
> We talk of the decline in the population

and of codfish and herring
while he waits for a herring boat to come in.
There are sequins on his vest and on his thumb.
He has scraped the scales, the principal beauty,
from unnumbered fish with that black old knife,
the blade of which is almost worn away. (*CP* 64-65)

As the speaker, mentioning "He was a friend of my grandfather" (*CP* 64), and offers the old man a cigarette, which he accepts, they discuss "the decline in the population / and of codfish and herring" (64). This scene foregrounds the human histories that have been shaped by human subjects based on this region. The fact that this poem ultimately explores the nature of history and the knowledge of that is explicitly revealed in the latter part of the poem through the lines contemplating history and knowledge, derived from the sensory experience of the seawater of the North Atlantic: "It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:" and "our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown" (66). However, the speaker's meticulous observations of the fishhouses, as well as the body and vest of the fisherman, allow readers to realize that such history has been formed through a process of history-making by multispecies, involving interactions and encounters between human and nonhuman agencies. It makes one feel that cultural history and nonhuman history are intricately intertwined, creating the world without clear distinction between them.

The fisherman's old knife condenses and deposits the fisherman's personal history, the collective history of the local residents, as well as the history of the fish and encounters between humans and nonhumans: "He has scraped the scales, the principal beauty, / from unnumbered fish with that black old knife, / the blade of which is almost worn away" (*CP* 65). The description shows that the fisherman "has made his living from nature, with his knife embodying this way of life" (Rosenbaum 65). In the line "There are sequins on his vest and on his thumb" (65) the fisherman's body and attire covered with fish scales render this ordinary human subject as a historical embodiment of corporeality blending the natural and the cultural. Although here "Bishop's speaker draws attention to the aesthetic properties of the fish scales," in fact, the "beauty of the scales"

suggests "their violent separation from the fish" (Rosenbaum 65-66). The history of intense violence, disruption, and intrusion that the fisherman and the fish have engaged in over the years is vividly revealed in the following passages: "an ancient wooden capstan, / cracked, with two long bleached handles / and some melancholy stains, like dried blood, / where the ironwork has rusted" (*CP* 64). The ancient capstan bears "the signs of the literal mixing of saltwater and air, sea and humanity, but figuratively connote weaponry, armor, and wounds, indicating a more violent encounter" (Rosenbaum 66).

Surely, the relationship between the old man and the fish demonstrates an asymmetrical dynamic. It is not harmonious but rather characterized by aggression and violence, yet it remains reciprocal. While the fish simply live in their habitat, the sea, the old man needs to catch fish there to sustain his livelihood. The sea is the common where human and nonhuman species coexist and cohabit, and various forms of lives of multispecies are entangled with each other. Then it becomes a site where different species' habitable realms, formed in distinct dimensions, are intruded upon and disrupted by each other. Therefore, the relationship between the fisherman and the fish goes beyond a simple predator-prey dynamic and becomes a mutually influential one. Perhaps, in the process of catching the fish, the old man has endured great pain and effort, and the fish have fiercely resisted to protect their lives. The act of catching the fish is not just a simple hunt but an experience that profoundly affects both physicality and mentality of the old man. The fish, in their struggle to survive, may demonstrate their strength and tenacity. Therefore, despite the relationship being violent and asymmetrical, it takes on a reciprocal nature. It can be seen as a form of interaction and exchange occurring between multiple species entangled in the common.

> Cold dark deep and absolutely clear,
> element bearable to no mortal,
> to fish and to seals … One seal particularly
> I have seen here evening after evening.
> He was curious about me. He was interested in music;
> like me a believer in total immersion,
> so I used to sing him Baptist hymns.

I also sang "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."
He stood up in the water and regarded me
steadily, moving his head a little.
Then he would disappear, then suddenly emerge
almost in the same spot, with a sort of shrug
as if it were against his better judgment. (*CP* 65)

"One seal" (*CP* 65), which the speaker has seen every evening, is a creature that shares a kinship with humans through its curiosity about the speaker and interest in music. However, it exists beyond human control, as its elusive movements and its "better judgment" are not constrained by human reasoning. Rather, the seal plays as an agency of transformation, who imprints its presence on the speaker and affects her mind by communicating with its gestures that seemingly express its own will. Like this, instead of attributing "moral law" to nonhumans, Bishop focuses on their aspects "alien to humanity," emphasizing "mixtures of and potential conflicts between nature and culture," as in the final lines of "The Moose" (Rosenbaum 66-67). In this scene, new relationships between humans and nonhumans emerge through encounters and interactions between different species. In some respects, the industry of this coastal village, the fisherman's livelihood, and the lives of the fish may all be seen precarious. However, the poet envisions new creation and transformation through multispecies' unpredictable encounters at the boundary between land and sea, where human species, as well as fish and seals, still share a fate as "mortal" (*CP* 65), traversing pollution, disruption, life, and death. The poem awakens readers to the fact that the sea is the common where multiple species are intertwined and coexist, each contributing to making worlds. The poet seems to tell that from the indeterminacy inherent in the encounters between these multispecies, precarity and danger arise, but so too does the potential for new life.

4. Conclusion

The concept of the Anthropocene warns that the encounters between humans and nonhumans have made their shared habitat, Earth, destructive and fertile, which leads to precarity of multi-species' life. However, in the era of climate change,

we need to recognize that these encounters and precarities are essential modes for the coexistence and symbiosis of multiple species, and rather the indeterminacy inherent in encounters can, even through pollution, disruption, destruction, and death, bring about the possibilities of new emergent effects and new diverse forms of life, offering a more hopeful vision.

To address the era of climate change with a more positive and proactive approach, we must recognize that nonhuman species are actively involved in making worlds and history, just as much as humans. These species include creatures discussed above, like the armadillo, owls, and rabbits in "The Armadillo," the moose in "The Moose," the fish in "The Fish," and the fish and seal in "At the Fishhouses." Despite human disturbances and interspecies contamination, these animals' agency and vitality remain unoppressed or uncontrollable, revealing themselves as subjects that affect and transform human species through such unpredictable encounters. The attitude that rethinks the subjectivity of the human species in relation to that of nonhuman species may be a planetary ethics of cooperation and sympathy among multiple species, which essentially required in the Anthropocene.

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