

Elizabeth associated
with southern asian
countries, trees being



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Elizabeth Bishop's "Questions of Travel" offers a glimpse into the places travellers journey through. Using Roman Jakobson, Jeremy Scott, and other theorists' explanations on the literary poetic functions, sound, foregrounding, and deixis to analyse how the addresser is unable to truly comprehend the society they traverse through. Where their perceptions are biased, clouded and blurred by the inklings of past experiences. The poetic function can be identified with Jakobson's communication model (1960), the message of the poem speculates on the addresser's opinion of traveling and the failure to gain an appreciation for it; hence the title 'questions' its necessity.

The message demonstrates discomfort and passes it on to the addressees, even though it is a displaced interaction, creating a sombre atmosphere of distress that Bishop associates with travel itself, and subconsciously, the foreign. When first reading the poem, the setting could have been Asia due to various Asian imagery, such as the rainy and cloudy weather projected throughout and how the imagery of flooding expressed by the metaphor; "the mountains look like the hulls of capsized ships..." This suggests a summer monsoon season associated with southern Asian countries, trees being "robed in pink" suggesting Sakura blossom trees, "wooden clogs" akin to the traditional geta sandals, the deictic expression: "to see the sun the other way around" Bishop being from the USA meaning the other side is most likely Asia, and finally "a bamboo church"; a material only commonly found in China. However, Scott (2013) suggests the setting is placed in Brazil, portraying the polysemy present in the poem, as he states; "the clogs have not been civilised; the church of 'Jesuit baroque' evokes the earlier sixteenth-century colonisers who founded numerous missions in Brazil and

are the subject of an earlier poem in the collection, 'Brazil January 1, 1502'. The sound of the poem is fashioned much like other modern-day poetry, written in free-verse as there is no form of rhymes present, though in the terms of the poem's metre, the style consists of an anapaestic beat of two unstressed and then a stressed syllable.

The poem's foregrounding can be attained through deviation and parallelism as Boris Tomashevsky (1965) notes; "The old and habitual must be spoken of as if it were new and unusual. One must speak of the ordinary as if it were unfamiliar". The defamiliarisation forces readers to look, allowing them to see things from a different, unusual perspective through methods that are linguistically noticeable. In terms of internal deviation, which is something that breaks the established patterns within a text, Bishop creates grammatical deviations; rhetorical questions throughout the second and fourth stanzas, for instance; "must we dream our dreams and have them, too?" and other similar rhetorical questions. This use of language differs from the established pattern Bishop has created within the text, further portraying the sombre tone of the message. The speaker conveys their pessimistic views on travelling and how they seem better in 'dreams'. In terms of the deixis of the poem, Keith Green (1992) discusses "Deixis and the Poetic Persona" which is a classification depending on the deictic centre. The deictic expressions are anchored to the "point zero" of the poem, whether it be centred around time, place, person, or situation, usually in an egocentric manner.

For example, referring to place the speaker mentions their position as "

here"; in juxtaposition to "home". This adds semantic density to the lexicon <https://assignbuster.com/elizabeth-associated-with-southern-asian-countries-trees-being/>

as the narrator cannot identify with what they are beholding; the world in which they find themselves seems fake and foreign. Likewise, the first half of the poem is strongly suggestive of sight, using deictic expressions to manipulate the readers' senses to make contact with the desired imagery. Phrases such as " watching strangers", " to see the sun.

..", " to stare at", and " at any view" subtly focuses the reader to pay attention to the scene around them. Each specific expression indicates an attempt made by the speaker to highlight their surroundings. However, the line; " crowded streams hurry too rapidly down," directs the reader not to the imagery but rather the polysemy message.

Instead, Bishop alludes to the mechanisms of the human capacity to process sight, therefore losing the ability to properly experience the spectacles and marvels of another's native environment. Scott (2013) supports this as he states one of the features of stanza three is perceptual deixis and modality, as there are seven experienced events related in the present perfect which relate to some point in time and that these direct the readers using senses, as he writes; " Of the seven types of process encoded in the verbs (' see', ' hear', ' ponder'), all but one are mental processes."