

To Elizabeth Bishop

Andalusia
Milledgeville, Ga.
13 January 57

Dear Miss Bishop,

You were very kind to write me and it means considerable to me to know that you have read and liked my stories. The stories are, by now, much better travelled than I am, as I have never been out of the United States and have been few places in it. Every now and then I get some perception of how they might be taken by someone out of the country and it is a revelation that enlarges my own view. I hadn't realized that life in Brazil might resemble life here in the South but I guess there are many similarities. We have a lot of students who come here from South America. A friend of mine who taught a special course designed for them and their problems with English told me he found them much disgruntled at having to read the short stories he assigned. "Why do we have to read stories like these?" one of them asked him. "Nobody gets married in them." Which is an attitude I am right familiar with from hearing my connections estimate my own work.

You were good to mention them to the editor of *Revista Contemporanea* and I would like to see some of them used. There is a French translation in the making but that is the only one. They have received a little critical attention in Italy; at least, Robert Fitzgerald, who is now living in Genova, sent me a translation of an essay on Miss Eudora Welty's stories and mine, done by Mario Praz, the Romantic Agony man. He described the story called "A Circle in the Fire" in such a way that I barely recognized it but otherwise he appeared to know what they were about and to approve. He had apparently once visited Savannah which he described as "a city of decayed 19th century elegance, negro shacks, suffocating heat, lugubrious large trees draped with 'Spanish moss' and innumerable mosquitoes."

Once Cal Lowell showed me a picture of you (I am supposing the same Miss Bishop) sitting on a porch in Florida; he left me with the vague notion (how much owing to him and how much to my imagination I don't know) that you travelled up and down the coast, sort of with the seasons. If that is the case and you ever pass by here or near us, my mother and I would be so pleased to have you stop and visit us. She and I live in the country a few miles outside of Milledgeville. The place is a dairy farm and I am glad to say that most of the violences carried to their logical conclusions in the stories manage to be warded off in fact here—though most of them exist in potentiality. We have a Polish displaced family and are now dickering to get a Hungarian family as well. We have two sets of colored people and up until a year ago we had some good country people too, but they couldn't stand the Poles and so decamped. Off and on we find ourselves with some not so good country people but they are the type always on the move and we never have them for long.

Thank you again for writing me. I have a great respect for your own work though I am almost too ignorant ever to know why I like what I like. I used to live with the Fitzgeralds in Connecticut and I remember that Robert always spoke of you with great admiration.

Sincerely,

**Flannery O'Connor to Elizabeth Bishop,
from *Flannery O'Connor: Collected Works*
(Library of America, 1988), pages 1020–1022.**

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