Bridging Formalism and Stylistics: A Dual Approach to Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art"

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ABSTRACT

The study explores Elizabeth Bishop's poem "One Art" (1979) using a unique bridged approach, combining Russian formalist theories and Geoffrey Leech's stylistic framework to provide a multifaceted analysis of the selected poem. This study aims to demonstrate the poem's true artistic value, arguing that a comprehensive understanding of the poem requires a combination of these two approaches beyond just lens analysis. Both approaches shed light on the text itself. Also, this study fills a gap in current literature, using a qualitative descriptive method. It offers an in-depth analysis of the text's formal elements, such as defamiliarization, figurative language, structure, and form, integrated with stylistic elements like graphological, lexical, semantic, and discoursal levels, giving a better understanding of both structure and emotional content. Based on the findings of this study, it has been determined that formalism and stylistics do not oppose but rather complement each other. It examines how fabula and syuzhet work together and focuses on defamiliarization as the poem's main impact. It reveals the villanelle structure and Bishop's stylistic choices defamiliarize the experience of loss, revealing a complex struggle rather than mastery and highlighting the use of formalist and stylistic analysis to confront human suffering and grief.

KEY WORDS: Elizabeth Bishop, Russian Formalism, Leech's Stylistic framework, One Art, Defamiliarization, Stylistic Choices, Villanelle.

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

Literary analysis covers a range of approaches, each offering a distinct viewpoint for analyzing a work of literature. Formalism and stylistics remain crucial in literary analysis, particularly in the study of poetry, as they offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on how poems achieve their objectives and convey meaning. Formalism, with its roots in Russian Formalism, has long been employed to study poetry, focusing on features such as meter and rhyme. Formalism frequently ignores the importance of a work's personal, historical, and cultural context (Bressler, 2011, p. 49). Stylistics, on the other hand, introduced linguistic insights to literary studies by investigating the complexity of language and its impacts. It is a linguistic approach that focuses on the language itself, which examines works of literature by linguistic elements such as word choice, sentence structure, and literary devices. It combines literary criticism and linguistics to investigate how language influences our understanding of literature (Wales, 2011, pp. 399-401). While beneficial, these methods have been used in isolation.

Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art", with its seemingly simple language set within the complex structure of the villanelle, is a fascinating case study of this combined approach with its relevance to contemporary poetry, as it is a modern poem. Its significance for modern poetry comes from the illustration of how formal limitations can raise emotional expression rather than restrict it. Many modern poets intentionally apply this tactic to achieve a balance between structure and personal voice. It took considerably less time to write "One Art" than other of Bishop's poetic works; it was written in only a matter of months, while a poem like "The Moose" took almost twenty-five years, which was a record for Bishop (Tóibín, 2015, p. 100).

While One Art has been analyzed through both

formalist and stylistic approaches, when used independently, they provide incomplete insights into the mutual interplay of form and meaning. Therefore, this study bridges the gap between stylistics and Russian Formalism by applying Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" to both. It focuses on how Leech's stylistic framework, foregrounding, deviation, linguistic features, and meaning work with formalist principles; defamiliarization, form and structure, literariness, fabula, and syuzhet, to reveal the poem's artistic significance. This combined approach offers a thorough textual analysis, a deeper appreciation of the text's emotional complexity, a clear evaluation of the text's language skills, and a more objective reading of the text. This study investigates how the language of the poem is shaped and impacted by the villanelle form, which has built-in repetitions and limitations. The investigation begins by explaining literature regarding the topic, with a summary of Russian formalism and Geoffrey Leech's contribution and theory on stylistics. Next, it examines the poem's formal structure, including the villanelle structure and its influence on meaning. After that, it goes into the texts' important stylistic features, using Leech's framework to highlight the complexities of language and how they contribute to the poem's emotional resonance. As the final analytical step, this study combines these results, demonstrating how language and form work together to create the poem's powerful effect and highlight the subtle conflicts and harmonies between the poem's creative language and structure.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Russian formalism and stylistics are different approaches that both focus on the text itself, which makes them useful methods to understand the artistry of Bishop's poem "One Art". In the early 20th century, Russian formalism emerged in Russia. It changed people's perspectives about literature by setting up principles for looking at literary works, excluding external factors like the author's biography (Habib, 2005). Formalism explores the text's structure, form, and literary devices to figure out how these elements produce meaning (Elrich, 1980). Stylistics, on the other hand, is a field of study that started in the middle of the 20th century. It examines the linguistic elements of both literary and non-literary texts to show how language affects meaning (Wales, 2014, p. 400). Furthermore, recognizing how these approaches highlight "One Art" shows how Bishop employs language and form to enhance the emotional effect of loss, demonstrating the poem's creativity as a controlled portrayal of a catastrophic event.

Applying these frameworks to "One Art" begins with a formalist interpretation focusing on the villanelle form. This form creates 'defamiliarization', a term coined by Shklovsky, making the familiar strange (Bressler, 2011, p. 49). Because of its natural repetition, the villanelle form takes the well-known sense of loss and makes it seem ritualistic and oddly detached. Specific lines repeated throughout the poem indicate that the speaker is in an attempt to manage the intense emotion. On the other hand, Leech and Short (2007) explored the concept of 'foregrounding', which involves highlighting key elements of a text, such as repetition and strange word choices. The word "lost" is repeated in the poem, especially after each stanza, showing the theme of loss and pointing out how common it is, because its meaning shifts with each appearance. Next, Roman Jakobson emphasizes 'literariness' - the set of characteristics that determine a piece of art, which includes literary devices, figurative language, and sound devices (Steiner, 1984, p.201). Stylistically, Leech's concept of 'deviation' is important; it is what makes a literary text differ from ordinary language (Leech & Short, 2007). These deviations, whether lexical, syntactic, or semantic, serve to emphasize certain features that produce specific effects.

Furthermore, Eichenbaum's formalist emphasis on form over content emphasizes the villanelle structure's critical significance in conveying loss. The poem's rhythm, rhyme, and tone enhance its emotional impact and indicate its literariness (Habib, 2005). Moreover, stylistically, the poem's regular rhyme and meter give the impression of ritualistic repetition, underlining the idea of loss (Leech, 1969). Additionally, Bressler (2011) discussed Shklovsky's ideas about fabula (the chronological order of events) and syuzhet (how those events are portrayed) (p. 50). Analyzing the syuzhet demonstrates how authors use the fabula to attain particular artistic results. The text's fabula consists of many losses, each one appearing to be more important than the others. Nonetheless, the poem's presentation of these losses, known as syuzhet, is skillfully constructed to convey an increasing emotional impact. According to Leech (1969), meaning can be either connotative or denotative, recognizing that words have both explicit and implicit meanings that influence the overall impression of a text. The term 'lost' in the poem denotes something that has been misplaced or cannot be found. But it also has meanings of sadness, grief, and a sense of closure, all of which add to the poem's emotional impact.

Even though both methods are applicable, they lack, individually, a complete understanding of the poem. Formalism focuses more on the "what" questions, answering questions regarding the structural elements and the form; it ignores analyzing the complex

interactions between language and meaning, in other words, it may miss the feeling of the poem, specifically the increasing sense of grief and sadness (Selden et al., 2005, pp. 36-37). As Burke (2023) mentions in the Handbook of Stylistics, stylistics puts more emphasis on the "how" questions. It carefully examines language. However, it neglects the artistic lexical choices that contribute to a poem's thematic unity and impact. In simpler terms, it might miss why the poet chose to arrange words in that specific way (p.100). Bridging both formalism and stylistics gives an in-depth textual analysis of "One Art" and leaves no room for confusion, which means that this dual approach illustrates both the structural complexity and linguistic richness of "One Art", therefore enabling a more complete and sophisticated examination of it. These methods are especially applicable to Bishop's poem since its finely chosen language and complex meaning changes allow for stylistic exploration, while its highly structured form (the villanelle) invites formalist examination.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature examines existing scholarship on Bishop's poem "One Art", with a particular focus on formal and stylistic analyses that illuminate its theme of loss. Much criticism has been aimed at thematic and biographical observations of Bishop's work, but this review focuses on studies that examine the poem's structure and style. By surveying these analyses, this section situates the present study within the broader discourse on "One Art" and its formal intricacies.

Several studies have paid attention to form or style to understand the poem. Early research, starting with Schwartz (1977), analyzed "One Art" based on the villanelle form, repetition, and verse, without considering how specific words create meaning. He concluded that the formality of the verses increases the emotional sense and contributes to personal pain (pp. 47-49). Next, Shapiro (1979) acknowledged the connection between the poem's theme of loss and its villanelle form, arguing that the form's essential repetition increases the impact of loss. The notion that forms mirror content is a common theme in "One Art" analysis.

Moreover, Gadpaille and Onič (2019) introduced the concept of "polysemic repetend", showing the several meanings existing within the poem's refrains. Their study of the villanelle form expands on Shapiro's first observation by demonstrating the complexity of repetition and suggesting that it's not only about reinforcement but also about ambiguity and changing meaning. Analyzing the poem through its form points out how meaning can be shifted with each repetition. The

speaker may try to convince herself that loss is easy, but the repetitions show the speaker's struggle to control and understand loss. However, Shapiro (1979) and Gadpaille and Onič (2019) face limitations in their analysis of "One Art" because of their over-reliance on form, and the emotional complexity was not within the scope of their study.

Besides structure and formal analysis, scholars have also observed the stylistic elements that contribute to the poem's emotional impact. Jose et al. (2024) explored the poem's stylistic aspects, focusing on poetic expressions as lexical, syntactic, and phonological features, and others, but did not consider its form and meaning. They claim that "One Art" not only explores the poet's relationship to loss, and the mastery of language Bishop uses to enter the reader's mind, somewhere deep and reflective, where the fact of loss is seen and transcended (p.10). Yamani (2024) only depicted the lexical choices of the poem by analyzing how Bishop uses language, as seen in the repeated phrases such as "lose something, every day," which reflect how she is gradually coming to terms with loss (p.475). Her study, however, barely connects these outcomes with the formal structure of the poem. This study uses Russian formalism theory with Leech's stylistic framework to connect these lexical findings to the poem's form to analyze its emotional impact. Moreover, Agustin & Bram (2023) investigated the poem in a comparative stylistic study, which provided extensive insights into it by focusing on key stylistic features. Their study offered a comparative perspective on Bishop's artistic choices within the limits of form. On the other hand, Doreski (1994), in his research on Bishop, focused on the significance of engaging with stylistic elements to grasp the inevitability of loss fully. This leads to further research on the way form and content interact in the poem (cited in Blasing, 1994, p.403).

Notably, no research has applied both Russian formalist theories and Leech's stylistic framework to "One Art", which leads to limiting a deep analysis of the text's form and language. Combining these methods can show the full meaning of the poem, conveying the speaker's emotional journey and the poet's mastery of language. Dividing them creates an incomplete picture and a poor understanding of the "One Art" 's significance. This study looks at "One Art" using both Russian formalism theories and Leech's stylistic framework to address this gap. It argues that this combined approach reveals the poem's true artistic value. It explains how formal and stylistic elements work together to show loss. Additionally, it demonstrates how the poem's complex portrayal of loss comes from the interaction of Leech's categories, such as foregrounding, deviation, linguistic levels, and meaning. It also discusses

formal concepts like literariness, form and content, the interaction of fabula and syuzhet, and defamiliarization. This study will show how the repetition of the villanelle defamiliarizes the experience of loss, turning it into a ritual because of its repetitive structure. Moreover, it analyzes Bishop's intentional language choices, like "the art of losing," which highlights the central theme and establishes a layered emotional tone. Thus, it investigates the poem's syuzhet (arrangement of losses) and fabula (the plot), which heightens the emotional resonance. This narrative increases the reader's emotional involvement because of the speaker's growing grief, making the struggle more intense and unbearable. This study intends to provide a deeper analysis and understanding of "One Art" than existing studies. It will indicate that the poem's formal boundaries are not decorative but actively influence its examination of loss. Finally, it will point out that Bishop's deliberate stylistic decisions work with the structure to produce a significant emotional impact.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze Bishop's poem "One Art", combining Formalism and Stylistics to examine its language, structure, and form. It reveals how these elements work together to convey the theme of loss. This approach is suitable for offering a deep and complex understanding of the poem's artistic details and how their interaction adds to the overall impact and thematic resonance of the poem.

According to Ayton (2023), "A qualitative descriptive study is an efficient design for research by practitioners due to its short timeframe and low cost. Researchers can stay close to the data and events described." The primary data of this study is the poem "One Art" by Bishop, published in 1979. The data collection involves close reading and repeated engagement with the text to find formal elements and stylistic features relevant to the research questions. Similarly, close reading was done to find patterns aligned with Leech's stylistic elements and Russian formalist principles. These findings are meticulously recorded, highlighting how they improve the poem's emotional impact and significance. Furthermore, Elizabeth Bishop's modern poem was specifically chosen for this study because Bishop's remarkable use of the villanelle indicates the creative interaction with traditional forms frequently occurring in contemporary poetry. Thus, Bishop uses the villanelle's repeating structure to foreground style in "One Art", and this purposeful form gives the well-known experience of loss a remarkably unfamiliar twist. When addressing difficult topics like loss, this is an excellent subject for

bridging Formalist and Stylistic analysis as it provides a rich setting for exploring the interaction between conventional poetic forms and modern expression.

The analysis follows three stages: a formalist reading, a stylistic reading, and finally an integrative approach that bridges both. In this dual approach, formalism has been used first, based on Russian formalism principles. This emphasizes examining the poem's essential elements, including defamiliarization, literariness, rhyme scheme, Fabula & Syuzhet. Analyzing these formal components allows for a fundamental understanding of the poem's structure. Following that, the study employs foregrounding, deviation, linguistic features, and levels of meaning (denotative and connotative) to explain how language creates meaning. It builds on the formalist understanding to show how syntax, figurative language, and word choices convey the poem's emotional nuances and produce specific effects within the formalist framework. This study solely focuses on text, excluding historical or biographical background, to emphasize how internal textual organization shapes meaning from the poem. This combined approach addresses the limitations of purely formal analysis and offers a more thorough defense of the way language and form work together to produce meaning, aligning with contemporary poetry. In addition, the poem's interpretations were consistently supported by textual evidence to minimize the possibility of researcher bias, following qualitative consistency principles in textual analysis. To ensure a theoretically sound approach, the analysis was guided by the principles of Formalism and stylistics. Throughout the study, theoretical concepts were properly attributed. The ultimate goal was a careful and authentic reading of the poem. By demonstrating the connection between "One Art" 's form and style, this study aimed to improve our comprehension of the poem's complex emotional impact and Bishop's artistic technique.

3.1 Analytical Framework

This study begins with a formalist analysis drawing on the foundational theories of Shklovsky, Eichenbaum, and Jakobson. First, closely read the poem multiple times. The primary objective of this approach is to determine the text's literariness. Then, consider the poem's shape, such as the length and number of stanzas. Then, identify the sound devices: rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and consonance. After identifying those patterns, these sound devices and patterns contribute to the poem's musicality, emphasis, and intentional disruption of flow. It is also vital to analyze literary devices such as metaphor, simile, and irony, as these deviate from ordinary language and foster new perspectives. Following this, analyze the narrative structure using the

concepts of Fabula and Syuzhet. Examine how the poem is recited; if the poem tells a story, the plot, and point of view, and will be able to tell if those elements are manipulated to create a literary effect. After identifying and analyzing those elements that determine literariness comes the next vital step, which is determining defamiliarization. Outline examples where the poem presents familiar objects, ideas, or experiences in an unfamiliar or strange way. Point out the syntax and diction of the poem, meaning, word order, sentence structure, and word choice, which are crucial parts that determine defamiliarization. Likewise, analyze how this word choices affect the text's overall impact and is influenced by these formal components. Finally, specify which device or devices in the poem appear to be the most striking, structurally organizing, or functionally significant. Be in a position to decide how the poem's other devices relate to the dominant feature. Formalists believed that certain literary devices would stand out and shape the reader's interpretation as well as the overall structure of the text. Identifying this dominant feature can deepen one's understanding of the poem's aesthetic unity.

The stylistic analysis, drawing from Geoffrey Leech's framework, begins with several readings of the poem to grasp an overall impression. The first step is to identify linguistic elements: phonology (sound), graphology (visual layout), lexis (word choice), grammar (syntax), semantics (meaning), and discourse (organization). These levels are the basic building blocks of the poem. When reading the poem to point out phonology, pay attention to how the poem sounds to note if the poem rhymes or has rhythm. Then, in graphology, note if the poem has long or short lines, unusual punctuation, unusual capital letters or spacing, and if the stanzas are different. Next, to identify lexis, examine simple/complex, formal/casual words. If any specific words are repeated, or there are words that you do not usually hear. In the semantic level, examine what the words and sentences literary mean or if there are places where the meaning is not straightforward. After that comes the grammatical level, where attention is paid to how the words are arranged in sentences. Note if the word order is typical/strange, the sentences are long/short, and there are incomplete sentences. Finally, in discourse, study the overall flow of the poem, noticing the way ideas are connected throughout the poem, one line to the next, stanza to stanza, and whether a story is told or there is an argument built. Another important step is to identify foregrounding through parallelism (repetition of words, sounds, or patterns) and deviation (linguistic departures from the norm). Parallelism and deviation can occur at various levels: phonological, graphological, lexical, semantic,

grammatical, and discourse. Notably, not every level of deviation or parallelism occurs in a single poem, but the presence of even one of the levels can make an important contribution to the overall stylistic effect and foregrounding of the poem. Both parallelism and deviation are deliberate choices made by the poet that influence the reader's interpretation and experience. Finally, the last step is identifying meaning, denotative (literal) or connotative (emotional/associative), considering how word choice and arrangement contribute to the poem's deeper significance. Finally, the combined stage bridges formal and stylistic analyses to demonstrate how the poem's linguistic and formal structure interacts to influence the reader's experience and artistic impact.

3.2   Analysis and Discussion

3.2.1 Form, Structure, and Graphological Level

The poem comprises nineteen lines divided into six stanzas, creating a villanelle form. It is divided into five three-line stanzas (Tercets), followed by a four-line stanza (quatrain). This type of poetry establishes a sense of rhythmic expectation. As Shapiro (1979) argues, this complex structure, characterized by repeated lines and refrains such as "The art of losing isn't hard to master," conveys a sense of both inescapable destiny and the struggle against that inescapability. He illustrates how the rigid form of the villanelle serves to "restrain the emotion that might otherwise become excessive," enabling the poem to control its exploration of deep loss. The "rigid structure" of the villanelle serves the fundamental purpose of "restraining the emotion that might otherwise become excessive."   Even if the villanelle's rules limit the emotional impact, the form's cyclical structure represents the speaker's attempt to deal with loss and its recurrent nature. Also, the initial tercets of "One Art" begin with minor losses to significant ones; however, according to the speaker, "none of these losses will bring disaster." This formal control is directly represented as a "practice" towards "mastery." Thus, this analysis highlights the villanelle's role in mediating and containing the presentation of severe loss, initially presenting it as manageable. This emphasizes that Bishop tries to hide the true meaning of the poem by making it seem easy to deal with loss, then it suddenly moves to deep personal pain, revealing her lack of "mastery".

Along with the formal analysis, a more thorough analysis of the graphological level reveals a complex interaction between order and subtly disruptive elements. Leech (1969) argues that the text's visual elements, including capitalization, punctuation, and layout, create deliberate deviations that serve to draw the reader's attention and convey stylistic significance.

Bishop masterfully shows how graphological choices can underline a poem's emotional effect. The villanelle form is a fundamental graphological choice that produces visual effects through repeated lines and refrains. Bishop carefully uses punctuation to control the poem's rhythm and emphasis. The poem uses several punctuation marks such as commas, exclamation marks, full stops, dashes, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, hyphens, and brackets. The use of periods and pauses at the end of each refrain illustrates the finality and declaration of these statements. Added to that, the visual repetition of refrains such as "the art of losing isn't hard to master" and "loss is no disaster" is an important example of graphological patterning. This structured visual pattern, with consistently medium-length lines and the standard five tercets followed by a quatrain, establishes an orderly, mastered approach to loss. However, beneath the surface, Bishop adds graphological deviations that reveal the speaker's underlying weakness, while those refrains point out control, enjambment in lines such as "Lose something every day", "Accept the fluster / of lost door keys" establish a more conversational, flowing rhythm. This visual movement gently destroys the form's strictness, evoking the messy reality of loss. From a formalist perspective, this enjambment from deviation is a defamiliarizing device; it breaks the flow and forces the reader to face loss. Bickley (2021) indicates "the modern villanelle allows for greater enjambment and caesura, allowing the poet more freedom and a less rigid reading experience, allowing rhymes and meter to be hidden." Additionally, the use of semicolons and colons guides the readers throughout the poem, suggesting that even the losses are separate, they are all part of the same "art". This is also evident in Agustin & Bram's (2023) claim, "the variation in using punctuation marks indicates that one is struggling to accept the death of the person she is talking to." The poem uses capitalization and italics significantly, which strengthens the poem's idea of loss.

The poem's title, "One Art," itself raises questions. This indicates that only a few existing studies on "One Art" analyzed the title itself; while many studies touch upon the title's meaning as a starting point, they did not delve deeply into the title's analysis to uncover its central idea. Most of the studies are formal analyses rather than stylistic analyses. The title is a significant part of the text; knowing and analyzing the title somehow gives the text's overall meaning, telling the reader what the text is about. The bishop in the title provokes the readers, making them ask themselves questions. The title emphasizes the 'mastery' of loss. Many ideas are implied, such as "this is the only art," "this is a style of losing," "the art of losing is the only art," "the art of losing is an art that can be mastered," and other statements that suggest that loss is

something that can be controlled and adjusted. This aligns with Professor M's (2020) claim that Bishop in the title is deceiving readers that losing is an art that can be mastered. To put it another way, "someone can become a loss expert and conquer it, something that a human being can overcome".

Nevertheless, the poem's final line creates the most impactful graphological example. A dramatic visual break is created by the parenthetical italicized phrase "(Write it!)". The speaker is pushing themselves to finish what they started, encouraging themselves that they can overcome this. The speaker struggles to face the harsh reality of loss and the complex emotional impact it leaves on them. While the italics provide an additional visual cue for vocal stress, indicating a sudden, uncontained emotional eruption, the brackets visually 'enclose' a desperate, self-directed command. In contrast to previous formal scholars like Doreski (1994) and Costello (1991) who argue that the parenthetical italicized "(Write it!)" in the final stanza connects to the title, suggesting that "One Art" may also refer to the act of writing itself, that writing poetry is a way of processing, overcoming, and 'mastering' loss itself. Writing becomes a form of art that aids in the recovery from disaster for both the speaker and the reader. This analysis claims that the stylistic impact of "(Write it!)" does not indicate that writing is a means to master and overcome loss; language is not a tool for mastery in this case, rather it is a desperate, inadequate attempt to record an uncontainable "disaster", illustrating the speaker's ongoing vulnerability as opposed to artistic victory over grief. In addition, the poem is also sharply challenged by the em-dash (—) that comes before the final refrain (" —The art of losing isn't hard to master"), which serves as a dramatic visual break. Together, these combined visual isolation foregrounds the speaker's loss of control. The poem's systematic structure carefully creates a visual shattering of the 'mastery' illusion, forcing the reader to confront the raw, uncolored truth of a genuine disaster. Although the cyclical nature of the villanelle provides a foundation for "mastering" loss, Bishop's deliberate use of graphology, from the enjambment flow to the shocking final punctuation, also reveals the emotional truth underneath. Both are not passive; rather, they work together to offer a comprehensive, varied explanation that captures the poem's nuanced portrayal of the inescapable reality of loss.

3.2.2 Sound Devices and Phonological Level

To fully comprehend the nuanced influence of rhyme in Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," both formalist theory and Leech's stylistic framework for the phonological level may be used, particularly when considering the use of

perfect and slant rhymes in the poem. The poem is a villanelle, using the rhyme pattern ABA. The rhyme scheme (ABA ABA ABA ABA ABA ABAA) is the dominant sound device that shapes the whole poem. There are only two rhymes used throughout the poem, the A rhyme "master/ disaster" and the B rhyme "intent / spent". This study's analysis is also consistent with Gido et al. (2022) about rhyme scheme. They imply that "One Art is a villanelle with one ABAA quatrain with five ABA rhyming tercets". Also, "master" and "disaster" are the central rhyme pair that are repeated throughout the poem, constantly opposing the speaker's claim of overcoming the tragedy. The repetition of the word "disaster" gains increasing weight as the poem goes on, hinting at the emotional confusion beneath the surface, revealing the failing nature of self-deception. On the other hand, "intent" and "spent" are the second rhyme pair that connect the idea or purpose of the poem with the feeling of something being lost, the passing of time, and eventually revealing the truth. Notably, the extremely regular and repetitive rhyme scheme of the villanelle, particularly the perfect rhymes of "master" and "disaster," highlights parallelism and shows the speaker's attempts at control. The use of slant rhymes, such as "fluster," on the other hand, deviates from this established sound perfection and brings attention to the underlying emotional disaster. Fox (2025) claims that "this rhyme creates an echoing or circular feeling for the reader, telling them it's always here and loss is always recurring, as the poem repeats certain words in each stanza, but their significance increases each time".

Along with the main perfect rhymes in the poem, Bishop also uses slant rhymes on purpose at important points. Such as "fluster" in line three, which rhymes with "master", makes a small phonetic dissonance that formally breaks the poem's control over sound. Stylistic analysis shows that the speaker is unsatisfied, which means they are not as "mastered" at losing as the claim. They are going through emotional turmoil beneath the surface. Literary critic and Bishop expert Lloyd Schwartz (1977) claims that her skills come not just from following the conventions but also from breaking them on purpose to produce a strong effect. Additionally, the speaker's underlying sorrow and control are tightened because of slant and dominant rhymes. The speaker's sadness is contained by the formal precision, but an unmastered and unseen emotional reality is revealed by the phonetic imperfections in the poem.

In addition to intricate rhyme schemes, the poem's rhythm also enhances the phonological effect and emotional impact. Rhythm is used as a stylistic element and formal device in "One Art". The poem is written in iambic pentameter, which establishes a norm for the villanelle form and a way to set a conversational and controlled tone. However, Bishop's use of deviations, such as spondees like "so many things," functions as a rhythmic device that defamiliarizes the flow and adds stylistic weight and emphasis. Though these subtle variations are stylistic choices that reveal accelerating grief, the villanelle's repeated refrains—a crucial rhythmic device—convey forced control. Crucially, the speaker's composed appearance is shattered by strong rhythmic devices and stylistic choices, such as the stressed "I miss" and the final, emphatic "disaster" (emphasized by the "(Write it!)" interruption), which expose the speaker's deep vulnerability and the actual suffering that lies beneath the surface of loss.

The poem also includes other sound devices such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance. Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds, like the 'l' in words such as "losing" (lines 1, 4, 7), "lost" (line 5), "last" (line 10), and "lovely" (line 13). This element works as a formalist device to create a delicate, flowing connection between phrases. This device strengthens the language's structure. Style-wise, this alliteration highlights the enduring presence and pervasiveness of loss, adding a melancholic and resigned tone. Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds. In the poem, particularly the short 'a' in words like "art," "hard," "master," and "disaster" (throughout the A rhyme), is a formalist strategy that implies a deep, echoing relationship between these key concepts. In terms of style, this assonance emphasizes the link between the speaker's control and tragedy, being produced through repeated occurrences of consonants within or at the end of each syllable. For instance, the "st" sound in "master", "disaster", "faster", and "vaster" is a formalist technique that gives the lines a persistent "stickiness" and binds them together. Stylistically, it gently draws attention to the speaker's struggle with the same idea, even if they try to downplay it, giving the sense that the same linguistic elements are dealt with in their mind. Further, this bridged approach reveals the arrangement of sound devices through parallelism and deviation. Parallelism is a formalist technique used for regularizing sound and expressing the speaker's will at control, such as (constant rhymes, iambic rhythm, repeated refrains, and subtle assonance/alliteration). Deviation on the opposed side, such as (slant rhymes, spondees like "so many things" and "(write it)" are stylistic choices and rhythmic devices that unexpectedly break these patterns, defamiliarize the language, and highlight the speaker's intense emotional impact.

3.2.3 Figurative Language, Lexical, and Semantic Level

3.2.3.1 Metaphor

The poem employs two crucial metaphors, revealing the text's structure and meaning. Losing is portrayed by the controlling metaphor as an "art" or skill ("The art of losing isn't hard to master"), which highlights the poem's inherent deception. According to Formalist theory, this framing creates a dominant organizational principle for the text, emphasizing the speaker's deliberate, manufactured effort to explain and control loss. This implies that the speaker is attempting to refine loss and transform it into an art form. Which means "the art" of the villanelle itself becomes a metaphor for the speaker's attempt to control and regulate loss". On the other hand, lexical choices such as "art," "master," and "practice" belong to a semantic field of skill, and when applied paradoxically to the painful reality of loss, these repeated words establish a unified effect and significant semantic tension. As Hama (2020, p.93) in his study entitled Imagism and Imagery in the Selected Poems of Major Imagist Poets highlights "behind each concrete picture, there also lies an abstract image drawn by the words" (p. 93). By this, he illustrates that writers not only paint the scenes, but also express their feelings and emotions as they feel that the form is essential to content and vice versa. The form or image has no meaning without content, like an empty canvas. Poets 'rescue' images, and capture the scenes that have touched or moved them, and if this tenderness is absent, the poem cannot be at its best. This proves that meaning in poetry often lies in the juxtaposition of emotional resonance and formal precision. Bishop captures this process by comparison to art (loss as the layered or experimentally worked canvas, which, in difficult ways, is "hidden" and "glaring").

Similarly, the repeated phrase "loss is no disaster" develops the implied metaphor of loss as a "disaster." As the poem progresses, the steadfast word "disaster" undergoes a significant semantic change, shifting from its originally dismissed meaning to a devastating impact. The word "disaster" gains semantic weight and negative connotations due to Bishop's frequent lexical repetition. This results in the raw "(Write it!) like disaster," a powerful emotional and semantic realization that shatters the "mastery" facade and emphasizes how ultimately the "art" metaphor fails to adequately contain overwhelming grief. She addresses her audience directly, claiming that what she has lost is more powerful than all the other losses. This aligns with Yamani (2024)'s claim, "the final loss is a disaster for her since she has lost the love that remains within her," so she is left with a completely exposed person full of pain and grief.

3.2.3.2 Irony

The poem makes significant use of irony, and its attempt to portray loss as a skill that can be mastered. The lines "the art of losing isn't hard to master" and "their loss is no disaster" are deeply ironic. According to Doreski (1993), the villanelle structure and its refrains reinforce this ironic stance. The poem ends with devastating and profound loss, and the speaker's calm response contrasts sharply with their internal conflict as they refer to "losing" an "art" and "something not hard to master. The positive connotation of "art" and "master" as lexical choices, show that the speaker is a skillful individual, contrast with the negative reality of "losing" which creates a rich semantic tension. The repeated claim that "loss is no disaster" is verbal irony kept throughout the poem, growing increasingly ironic as the sentimental value of lost objects increase, until the final, parenthetical "disaster" shatters the illusion. At first, the semantic meaning of "disaster" is purposefully downplayed, but by the poem's end, it has returned to its harsh truth.

3.2.3.3 Understatement (Meiosis)

Understatement occurs when something important is intentionally made less significant than it is. The whole poem can be considered an understatement because it downgrades the value of losses. The intense grief the speaker goes through is examined similarly to the loss of small objects. The lines "their loss is no disaster," "none of these will bring disaster," and "I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster." All exemplify meiosis. Remarkably, none of the discussed scholarships in this study have analyzed understatement in isolation. This current study aims to address this gap by exploring the use and impact of understatement. The frequent use of "no disaster" or "wasn't a disaster" shows that the speaker tries to belittle the value of loss. The word "disaster" is purposefully chosen to lessen the severity of the losses. The speaker's denial of the severity is contradicted by the context and the actual semantic weight of what is lost, but the accumulation of increasingly significant items (from "door keys" to "a continent") highlights a semantic conflict. This intentional understatement of the emotional cost highlights the speaker's deceit and highlights the actual importance of the losses, which increases the impact of the final "disaster" when its full semantic force is eventually permitted to surface.

3.2.3.4 Overstatement (Hyperbole)

Hyperbole, another term for overstatement, is the intentional exaggeration of something. Bishop specifically uses this figure in the lines "I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent." The speaker exaggerates dramatically when they claim they have lost cities or a continent. Formally, the poem's careful progression of losses heavily relies on this overstatement. The speaker's deliberate attempt to convey a vast level of "mastery" is

made clear by the early introduction of such enormous, nearly unattainable losses. This formal choice creates strong tension that will eventually be dramatically released by establishing an expectation of unwavering control. The evidence gathered in this study supports Bell's (2018) claim that "the speaker states they have lost realms; they are not king or queen, but what they mean is that there were places where she felt at home, like a queen of all you surveyed." Even though words like "vaster" and "continent" carry significant semantic weight, their presentation is astonishingly casual. This semantic mismatch between the speaker's tone and the enormous size of what is supposedly lost creates dramatic irony, emphasizing her desperate attempt to downplay intense sadness. Thus, the overstatement helps to establish the speaker's early, seemingly unshakeable calm until the final personal loss, when that conceptual force becomes too much to bear.

3.2.3.5 Imagery

The term imagery refers to the descriptive language that stimulates our senses and creates mental images. The poem's imagery is cumulative and unambiguous; it emphasizes definite nous over rich sensory details. The phrases "lost door keys", "my mother's watch", and "three loved houses", with "two cities…. Two rivers, a continent" alongside extremely specific details like "the joking voice, a gesture I love" are all imagery examples, and their placement establishes a clear, escalated pattern that heightens the poem's emotional intensity. The images evaluated range from minor, easily overlooked objects to vast geographical aspects. This study strongly agrees with Gido et al. (2022)'s observation regarding Bishop's use of the phrase "And look!" with exclamation, claiming that "it creates an image for the reader, demanding their attention to think and visualize the expanding scope of losses to show how universal loss is." This crucial shift broadens the poem's focus to universal losses, effectively addressing the harsh nature of loss, a shared human experience. Furthermore, there are intimate personal traits of a beloved. At first glance, lexical choices like "door keys" seem to have little semantic significance, supporting the speaker's claim of easy "mastery." However, the semantic load of the images grows with their connotative value, progressing from "loved houses" to "joking voice, a gesture I love." This gradual change in the semantic content of the imagery reveals the speaker's increasing emotional fragility, demonstrating that, despite the speaker's efforts to control and manage loss through a detailed list of concrete images, the emotional reality that those images illustrate cannot be contained

3.2.3.6 Symbolism

The poem portrays the theme of loss through careful examples. While the text uses the word "loss" as a primary concept, several words in the poem carry symbolic weight. Based on the observations gathered in this study, the entire poem can be considered symbolic, from the title to the last words of the text. The word "Art" symbolizes an escape plan, as a means of self-control and distance from emotional grief; the speaker portrays loss as a skill that can be learned and mastered. Meanwhile, the words "door keys", "hours", "places", and "names" symbolize the simple, controllable form of loss; these are things that can be misplaced or broken, creating a minor amount of "fluster."

Then, there are two symbolic meanings of the line "I lost my mother's watch". It may symbolize the mortality and passage of time. Her mother's life, or even her own life, passes as the speaker ages and grows weaker, and the minor losses become larger. It may also symbolize the speaker's connection to her mother. It's an item that can be passed down or represent unforgettable memories. A mother's watch often holds significant sentimental value, signifying a material connection to a loved one and possibly shared memories. This loss foreshadows even more significant losses that lie ahead and highlights the mounting emotional weight of what is being lost, transcending the insignificant to the intensely personal. Moreover, the poem transitions to larger losses, such as "cities, houses, realms, rivers, and a continent," which symbolize broader experiences of change and displacement. These particular environments connect her identity to these places. This is also seen in Balcarcel's claim:

The move to the mother's watch, which is a personal heirloom, losing that object was a little harder for her than the other losses. Losing houses is even harder than the previous losses, because you get attached to your house and you invest in it, and then you have to move". (Balcarcel, 2015)

It is the same thing with the phrases "I lost two cities," "some realms I owned," and "a continent," which means the speaker had to say goodbye and leave behind her investments and start over again. This is a protective mechanism the poet used, a way to distance herself from the pain of more intimate losses, like the loss of her mother's watch, which was emotionally significant. Further, the line "– Even losing you" directly addresses a person referred to as "you." This symbolizes the most devastating form of loss, as this "you" represents the speaker's loved one. The personal touch of "the joking gesture" emphasizes the depth of this loss. Although the speaker claims to have mastered loss, the repeated refrain contradicts this with "(Write it!) like disaster," revealing her struggle to "master the disaster," implying that true

loss is a catastrophe.

3.2.4 Fabula, Syuzhet, and Stylistic Progression

The fabula of "One Art" presents a logical sequence of events as they would occur in reality. The poem begins by teaching the art of losing, portraying it as a trivial matter that can be managed. Schwartz (1977) argues similarly, stating, "mastering the art of losing can mean two things, learning not to mind, and learning to lose more" (p.47). This analysis demonstrates that the speaker seeks to persuade the reader that losing can be mastered through practice. The process starts with minor losses and progresses to larger, more significant ones, which are still not disasters. Ultimately, the fabula culminates in the last significant loss or the ultimate loss—the loss of "you," the most difficult and painful loss, carrying the heaviest emotional weight. On the other hand, the syuzhet is how Bishop presents these events in the poem. It opens with a discussion of losing small, everyday objects in a lighthearted, almost dismissive tone ("door keys," "time"). The speaker attempts to persuade both themselves and us that "the art of losing isn't hard to master." The examples of loss escalate in significance as the poem progresses, spanning from houses and a mother's watch to cities and continents. However, the speaker utters phrases like "And look!" while maintaining a stiff upper lip and pretending to be indifferent.

Additionally, the meticulously constructed facade is shattered by the last stanza's revelation of losing "you". The brief and intense emotional suffering is revealed by the intimate parenthetical ("the joking voice, a gesture/ I love"). The recurring refrains gain an ironic and melancholic weight. Despite all the earlier assertions, the final, desperate exclamation "(Write it!) like disaster" is the breaking point that exposes this specific loss as a profound disaster. Shapiro (1979) asserts, "Throughout the poem, one imagines a certain harmony between the mind and the text, but we are shocked to learn that this has turned into a text of transgression and insanity." This indicates that the plot encompasses not only the act of losing but also the speaker's own mind, which transforms; this rebellious mind strives to break the emotional rules the speaker attempts to establish. Writing itself and the identity of "you" fade away, adding to the unraveling and madness.

"One Art" 's stylistic progression adds depth to the reading by carefully listing losses in ascending order of emotional impact. The poem's progression is primarily constructed through lexical choices. The nouns representing lost items carry significantly greater semantic weight. Small, easily replaceable items ("door keys") give way to abstract concepts ("time"), followed by personal belongings ("mother's watch"), important geographical locations ("loved houses," "cities," "rivers," "a continent"), and finally, the irreplaceable individual ("you"). The semantic weight increases with each new lexical item, heightening the emotional impact and unveiling the true, unmastered nature of serious loss. Gido et al. (2022) argue: "She believes that if she can overcome her pain and let go of her feelings, she can start over and make progress, but she finds that to be too difficult." However, they discussed Bishop's biography, asserting that the losses of her parents and her lover inspired her to write the poem, making it "autobiographical." This study may deem the reference irrelevant and unnecessary. Both approaches focus solely on textual analysis and do not incorporate the author's biography. This allows for an understanding of how the form and rhetorical devices of the syuzhet adeptly structure the fabula's escalating series of losses. Additionally, the speaker's deep yet ultimately unresolved struggle with the "art of losing" unfolds through the stylistic progression that methodically heightens the emotional impact, especially through deliberate lexical choices.

3.2.5 Grammatical and Discoursal Levels and Their Impact on Formalism

The poem skillfully employs grammar and discourse to evoke a strong emotional response. Focusing on a speaker's struggle with loss. From a grammatical perspective, the poem's villanelle has a strict structure with its rhyme scheme and repeated lines. Primarily composed of declarative sentences, especially in the early stanzas like "the art of losing isn't hard to master" and "loss is no disaster," the text establishes a kind of grammatical regularity that presents the speaker's claims as factual and controlled, producing a calm tone that fosters an atmosphere where the speaker imparts philosophical lessons. However, in the last stanza, the imperative line "(write it!)" introduces a deviation that disrupts the calm tone and transforms it into calamity. As noted, the poem unfolds at a didactic pace, with straightforward sentences. On the other hand, regarding the nouns used in the poem, there is a shift from concrete nouns like "(door keys, mother's watch)" to more abstract geographic nouns such as "(cities, rivers, a continent)," culminating in the final pronoun "you" as a lost object. The poem's emotional depth is significantly enhanced by these changes.

Moreover, the poem uses verbs to convey authority and control, but later tonal changes indicate a shift in emotional state, such as "(losing, master, practice)". Also, the state verbs blend control with acknowledgement of loss, like "(isn't hard, is no disaster)". The repetition of the

verb "losing" highlights the unavoidable nature of loss and grief. Adjectives like "badly spent" bring emotional depth to nouns. Additionally, techniques such as enjambment ("Accept the fluster / of lost door keys") and the abrupt parenthetical "(Write it!)" disturb the poem's calmness and result in grammatical foregrounding.

When it comes to the discoursal level, the poem generates an instructional discourse mode. The speaker acts as a guide, providing lessons on how to "master" the art of losing. Lines like "lose something every day" create an environment of calm and controlled situations. This specific speech presentation distances the speaker from the emotional weight of loss, inviting the reader to rationalize loss rather than to feel it immediately. The stylistic progression of losses discussed can also be considered a key discoursal feature, as it forces the reader to acknowledge the growing magnitude of losses despite the speaker's effort to downplay them. Bishop uses verbs to reflect the speaker's attempt to control and master loss, while the nouns and adjectives convey a sense of detachment, emphasizing the inevitability of loss." Furthermore, the most significant shift occurs in the final line, where a quick discoursal shift to a direct, intimate address and uncensored thought (" —Even losing you... (the joking voice...)") stylistically shatters the controlled facade. This reveals the "art of losing" as a weak coping strategy, culminating in an acute awareness of unresolved grief. Notably, none of the existing scholarship on Bishop's "One Art" has analyzed discourse in stylistics; research such as that by Jose et al. (2024) recommends further investigation into discourse. The text employs both parallelism and deviation to achieve discoursal foregrounding. The unexpected shift from the speaker's original, detached tone to an intimate, raw address and unfiltered thought in the final stanza is a deviation that underscores emotional breakdown. Furthermore, the speaker's desperate "practice" and the growing, uncontrollable effects of grief are shown through parallelism in the ordered progression of losses, from minor to major. Both grammatical and discourse elements work together to create a narrative that shifts from a controlled mind to an uncontrolled one. This skilled use of language emphasizes the poem's originality, creating a deep sense of unfamiliarity with loss, which is central to Formalist ideas.

3.2.6 Defamiliarization, deviation levels, and overall meaning (denotative/connotative)

The concept of defamiliarization is a recurring theme throughout the poem. It transforms the common experience of loss into something new and deeper. The poem begins with a universal concept of loss. Still, Bishop reinterprets the typical view of loss with the line "The art

of losing isn't hard to master." She describes it as an "art" that can be "mastered," even though loss is usually linked to pain, grief, and suffering. This indicates that this unexpected technique makes the reader pause and rethink their views on loss. It also prompts them to question the speaker's honesty.

Bishop's poem looks at loss in different ways, from minor to major. It moves from small items to larger places and finishes with the important "you." The poem emphasizes the common experience of loss and the speaker's struggle to cope with it. The simple language for minor issues, combined with the strict, repetitive structure of the villanelle, creates an unsettling effect. For example, the line "loss is no disaster" reduces the comfort of the repeated phrases and reveals the deeper conflict beneath. Gadpaille and Onič discuss how the familiar is shown strangely, and the villanelle's shifting refrain defamiliarizes repetition:

Bishop's poem invokes something familiar before repurposing it in an extreme twist that borders on parody. The recurring lines in a villanelle do not even occupy the same places in the tercet structure. They could be the first, last, or second line. This distinguishes them from other types of refrains and choruses. (Gadpaille and Onič, 2019, p.76)

This shifting position directly contributes to defamiliarization; by repeatedly re-contextualizing familiar refrains, the poem emphasizes the speaker's forced calmness in the face of the growing grief of loss. Furthermore, the strongest moment of defamiliarization occurs during the final stanza's parenthetical eruption: "though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster." The reader is compelled to confront the uncontrollable "disaster" that the speaker has been subtly trying to conceal as her meticulously maintained composure unravels and the raw, urgent command to herself, "(Write it!)" mercilessly defamiliarizes the early disguises of mastery. Bishop employs subtle yet powerful methods to portray grief as a complex, often contradictory, and profoundly human struggle rather than as a predetermined emotional outcome.

Finally, Bishop employs defamiliarization to alter the poem's meaning of loss through the interaction of several levels of deviation. The poem's minor deviations from structural and phonological regularities create an illusion of control over grief. Meanwhile, medium-level deviations, such as its lexical and syuzhet development, introduce tension, undermining this surface. Thus, high-level deviations, like dramatic graphological choices, significant semantic reversals, and abrupt discoursal shifts, shatter the illusion, compelling the reader to confront the uncontained reality of loss as an unavoidable human experience. Given all the detailed analysis that has

been given, the poem's most dominant feature is the multifaceted use of defamiliarization, carried out on all poetic levels using this bridged approach. Because it operates on every level, especially concerning the speaker's efforts to manage and justify catastrophic loss. Also, while the poem denotatively presents the idea of loss, its true meaning is deeply connotative and ironic.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines Elizabeth Bishop's poem "One Art" through a bridged approach that connects Russian Formalism and Leech's stylistic framework using a descriptive qualitative method. It investigates how this combined approach reveals the poem's true artistic value. It discusses how formal and stylistic elements work together to show the speaker's intentions and the poem's emotional impact. This study finds that these approaches do not oppose but complement each other, showing insights unattainable through solely formal and stylistic analysis. Additionally, this study presents a step-by-step guide demonstrating how this integrated approach functions. As a result, this research offers a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of "One Art" by blending formalist and stylistic analysis.

This research indicated that the villanelle structure of "One Art" provides a foundation of loss, and the graphological level reveals the emotional truth underneath that structure. The sound devices linked to the phonological level showed that Bishop hasn't mastered the art of losing but rather uses these sounds to deceive the reader or functions as a self-deception technique, not a genuine mastery over loss. Also, figurative language integrated with the lexical and semantic levels highlights the poem's irony, and Bishop's struggle with loss is shown through the use of hyperbole, meiosis, symbolism, metaphor, and imagery. They highlighted that Bishop's lexical and semantic choices are deliberate. Therefore, the phrase "the art of losing" illustrates the central theme of the poem about loss. Meanwhile, by combining fabula, syuzhet with stylistic progression, this study traced the logical plot and flow of the poem, revealing that the arrangement of losses heightens the emotional resonance and increases the reader's emotional involvement with the speaker's growing sadness, making it more intense. Additionally, both grammatical and discoursal levels combined form a story that transitions from a controlled to an uncontrolled mind, which is emphasized through the unique use of language, evoking a profound sensation of unfamiliarity with loss. Furthermore, this research highlighted the repetition of the villanelle, defamiliarizing the experience of loss, turning it into a ritual, and compelling the reader

to face the harsh reality of loss and suffering. Defamiliarization, linked to different levels of deviation, shows that the dominant feature of the poem is defamiliarization. It changes the usual idea of loss into something unfamiliar, highlighting the poem's deeper meaning. This complete analysis showed that formalism affects how the poem presents loss. Bishop's deliberate stylistic choices work with the structure to create a strong emotional impact.

The results of this study addressed a gap in existing scholarship by criticizing previous interpretations of "One Art" that focus either on formal or stylistic analysis, which overlooked the complex interaction between form and meaning and failed to provide a thorough analysis of the poem's effective qualities. The success of this bridged approach demonstrates its significant potential in broader literary analysis. It explains that two seemingly different analytical frameworks are combined to gain a more comprehensive examination of the poem's artistic worth and emotional effect. However, it is crucial to recognize this study's limitations; The process of bridging two approaches is complex and takes a lot of effort. By focusing only on these two methods, this analysis is one way of reading the poem, meaning that this analysis is tied to this poem. As a descriptive qualitative study, while offering detailed and deep interpretations, it did not investigate statistical generalizability or dive into broader patterns across a wider range of literary works or genres. Moreover, this combined approach provides a practical model for future research, which pushes for a more holistic and multidisciplinary approach for the investigation of various works of literature. This study recommends that future research concerning literary criticism should increasingly adapt and apply such combined methods to illuminate deeper layers of meaning and creative artistry, not just in poetry but also in other forms of literature, such as fiction.

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APPENDIX

One Art by Elizabeth Bishop

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

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

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

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