



# Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil

*Bethany Hicok*

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## Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil Bethany Hicok

When the American poet Elizabeth Bishop arrived in Brazil in 1951 at the age of forty, she had not planned to stay, but her love affair with the Brazilian aristocrat Lota de Macedo Soares and with the country itself set her on another course, and Brazil became her home for nearly two decades. In this groundbreaking new study, Bethany Hicok offers Bishop's readers the most comprehensive study to date on the transformative impact of Brazil on the poet's life and art. Based on extensive archival research and travel, *Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil* argues that the whole shape of Bishop's writing career shifted in response to Brazil, taking on historical, political, linguistic, and cultural dimensions that would have been inconceivable without her immersion in this vibrant South American culture.

Hicok reveals the mid-century Brazil that Bishop encountered--its extremes of wealth and poverty, its spectacular topography, its language, literature, and people--and examines the Brazilian class structures that placed Bishop and Macedo Soares at the center of the country's political and cultural power brokers. We watch Bishop develop a political poetry of engagement against the backdrop of America's Cold War policies and Brazil's political revolutions. Hicok also offers the first comprehensive evaluation of Bishop's translations of Brazilian writers and their influence on her own work. Drawing on archival sources that include Bishop's unpublished travel writings and providing provocative new readings of the poetry, *Elizabeth Bishop's Brazil* is a long-overdue exploration of a pivotal phase in this great poet's life and work.

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