

WATERY DAZZLING DIALECTIC (OR A GENDER PROEM)

inspired by Elizabeth Bishop's "Santarém"

Look at those two rivers, those two rivers that Elizabeth overlooked while she lived in Santarém. Not the sky, of gorgeous under-lit clouds she saw. But the rivers, where the green-blue river meets the muddy river—muddy-brown like the Mississippi. It's the Tapajós merging with the Amazon. Look at the meeting of the two, closely; more closely than you've ever looked. Stoop down in the boat. Kneel on your knees in the boat. Lean over the edge at the very touching of the two—where the seagulls shimmer off the water—where sun glimmers. Push down your palms at the very line, then scoop them up: the two distinctly colored waters. What do you see now, cupped in your palms? Not the dense brown, like first you saw, not the green-blue, but another color, another color.