

RISKY PEACE

Edisto River, South Carolina

River mornings in May,
rich with the smell of spring rain.
We meander through South Carolina wilds
where green and yellow turtles sunbathe,
tupelo trees guest the sleek black river.

Lily pads and magnolias seem to bow,
a lush path for our canoe.
We slide past cottages with ragged screens,
cracked gray shingles,
pine needles clumped on corrugated roofs.
Empty stools wait
for fishermen to cast off from them
I expect to see Mark Twain slouched in a chair,
telling stories,
maybe rocking.

Our fingers appear and disappear
in the tea-colored water,
stained for a moment,
with the fullness of quiet.
Crickets chirp,
Spanish moss drizzles like saxophone tones,
and each moment
is sweetly slowed.

Downriver,
the sear of a chainsaw
and power plant turbines
swallow the silence.

Is it the high-pitched whine of progress?
Or the howl
of this river's soul?