

Bayou

Slowly the rain plays thin strings, plucking.

Wet and grumbling beneath the sassafras and pear,
a woman slouches from her shack to weed,
pouring her muttering among the trees,
rippling the dripping air.

Odors of oil and fish untwist,
unraveled from air by fingering wet;
gripped in green steam the cypress sweat.
Grey-eyed morning, blurred in the damp,
wades on pale legs into the swamp.

Slowly the rain's strings stay, unstrung.

An egret melts out of cypress leaves,
its creenings drizzling and sweet;
Down to the grass and mud it glimmers
like liquid silver.

Lured by myrtle blooms oozing through dim,
the tidewater comes on its knees:
an old man puzzling between dark roads,
feeling familiar trees.

—Pamela J. Hamblin