

Shipyard

blackened stewards of the city
(standing daily at pier's end)
feeling the fingers of foreign water
that lap lightly against the pickled bark

watching the slow so ocean steamer,
the tug that slips between the ships and dock
the pier sways softly under the summer sun

knock your shoes against the ten-inch planking
hear the echoes off the water below
lean against the creak of pilings
jutting up black, polished by the hug of ropes
wander the acre expanse of platform
such a small intrusion on the sea

sit on the slippery green-coated wharf
the slippery eelback green wood of 1910
hear the taffeta slipping of the waves
and the shouts and curses of longshoremen
pulling new gold from the belly of a whale
hook in hand, dark-skinned, sweating, swaggering
smiling for their patient wives in one-rooms

look again at the water society
the sea world, and men whose presidents are dirty
whose living rooms compartments in a tiny tug
whose anthem is the liner's basso goose-noise
dark faced, some small contentment, eyes fogged

watching the clouds of early city
fading far over the haze of noon