

*Troubles*

I have the memory of the quay at Kinshasa,  
yes, of leaning on the blebbed rail of the steamer  
as it left behind the lined-up dads  
dwindling into sheds and the blind  
bush of a bend. Though what we fled had

spun lint turbans, blood-spotted,  
around their heads and torn some collars  
they grinned, nevertheless, sliding past us,  
each side mimicking  
the other's waves, as if glad to be gone.

A lot of dads, and behind them the invisible  
mobs with chains, fabricated *pangas*,  
the Congo's soft ovals of harm.  
At any rate, what I remember  
is not so clear that I cannot bear

the smothered feelings of loss, nor feel  
the steamer's slow pulling away  
in a tremble of throbs under my feet  
some thirty-four years later, fearful still  
(the airport closed, the pot-holed roads

mutinous with steam, a whole country's  
steering gone) of growing up  
and being left behind there, waving with  
my sticking-plastered hand until  
everything I love is lost beyond the bend.