In Memoriam: Sidewheeler Uncatena

The paddlewheel boat, with her walking beam,
Her churning wheels and her plume of steam
Has paddled upstream; far, far upstream
Beyond the wharves of the morning.

She was dazzling white and fretted with gold,
Her name on the paddlebox stood out bold;
She walked over waves with a queenly stride,
Her tall, thin smokestack shrill with pride.

Uncatena, Priscilla, Commonwealth,
   Grand Republic, Avalon,
Mary Powell, Gay Head and Naushon,
Cygnus, Pereus, Charter Oak,
Ticonderoga and Roanoke,

And a thousand others — each one dear
To the long lost children on the long gone pier.
There was nowhere a harbor that could not boast
Of its paddlewheel steamboat — the best on the coast.

Something of America steamed away
On the cindery decks where the violins play;
Something of America followed the track
Of the paddlewheel boat, and it never came back.

The paddlewheels stopped, and the walking beam;
Excursions ended in a landlocked dream
At a mooring upstream; far, far upstream
Beyond the wharves of the morning.

Robert Hillyer