

IMMORTAL MARINER  
(At the Art Institute of Chicago)

His heart went out to sea when he was ten,  
a boy whose toys were pencils, brushes, paints  
he borrowed from his artist mother when  
his talent overwhelmed all her complaints.  
She realized he had a special gift  
that ranged beyond the limits of her palette.  
She understood he must be set adrift  
in years ahead. It hit her like a mallet.  
And drift he did, on times and tides of ocean,  
painting waves and windstorms, fishing boats,  
all drawn from depths of mood and shaded motion,  
capturing each moment as it floats  
on nuances of sun and shadow scoped  
on spectrums gleaned from all he ever hoped.

With living colors cloned from old salts' eyes,  
the sea and solar secrets of refraction,  
his canvas blends a mix of gasps and sighs  
in peaceful themes and stabbing peaks of action.  
With loving strokes of light he poetized  
each scene with potent truth and inner soul.  
Now gazers linger, awed and magnetized  
by artist, subject, swallowing them whole.  
His audience, as always, loath to leave,  
collects before his "Gulf Stream" and "Life Line."  
They speak of artistry that can achieve  
such urgent feeling, make you taste the brine.  
Another Winslow Homer hasn't come  
to share such mastery of medium.