

THE SHIP

(What is dying?)

I am standing on the seashore.
A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze
and starts for the blue ocean.
She is an object of beauty and strength and I stand and watch her
until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud
just where the sea and sky come down to mingle
with each other.
Then someone at my side says: 'There! She's gone.'
Gone where? Gone from my sight that is all.
She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she
was when she left my side,
and just as able to bear her load of living
freight to the place of destination.
Her diminished size is in me, not in her;
and just at the moment when someone at my side says:
'There! She's gone,'
there are others watching her coming,
and voices ready to take up the glad shout
'There she comes!'

(And that is dying.)

Henry van Dyke