## Poetry Porch: Poetry

## **Doomed Liner**

by Michael Todd Steffen

The letter, written by American businessman and Titanic passenger, Oscar Holverson, fetched £,126,000.

---BBC News, 21 October 2017

That's what this morning's online article calls the Titanic. It reminds me of the poet whose poem sinks line by line, though being a poet he tells himself it *sings*.

The article's about a letter that a man wrote to his mother. It sold for \$166,000 yesterday at an auction, found on the body of the man drowned in the sinking, begging the question—Are poets killed on poems when they go down?

As we go deeper, the letter carries stains from its time in the Atlantic.

Everything gains value when stained and you cannot bleach out the accumulation of grime. When the poem runs up

on the iceberg of apathy or disbelief, a reader's palate expecting perhaps a poem that goes up instead of down, like closing your eyes and expecting a banana and tasting an orange. It chokes a little.

The letter is slipped back into the self-addressed stamped envelope which, left unopened, sits in the breast pocket of your jacket.

The grateful will praise the food and music on the ship.
They'll sell the poem from your body at an auction.
You may express Holverson's anticipation,
"If all goes well, we will arrive in New York
Wednesday A.M."