

## Cottesloe Beach

Beyond crackling blind  
the beach explodes with the  
blue-gold vigour of summer  
while in the gloomy dining room  
opposite my aunt  
at the ponderous table  
I long to kick off buttoned boots  
run into tiered waves  
splash foam in sparkling arcs  
feel that icy shock from  
water smacking  
against hot limbs.

The black girl from the orphanage  
sullenly slops soup into bowls  
carelessly splashing the starched cloth.  
My aunt berates her,  
neck an angry red  
above a tight- collared blouse.  
The girl's dark eyes are unfathomable  
suggesting a resilience

borne of suffering.

I imagine peeling off stockings

feeling sand powdery between toes

abrasive against bare legs.

We sit in an uncertain silence.