

CHRISTINE CASSON

## The Beach at Hull

A concrete wall and metal fence divide  
macadam and wet sand, strewn with kelp  
from the morning's tide. By noon, the Atlantic,  
limp, laps the shore. Across the street, a diner,  
blue-green and mirrored silver to remind us  
of the sea, steams clams "every afternoon."  
Ours are full of sand; grainy puddles blotch  
our roughened plates. Jeannie owns it, locals say,  
comes from the "alphabet neighborhood,"—small  
clapboard homes set on crowded lots—lives on "Y,"  
has been serving food for more than forty years.

Here, mid-day, mid-week, retirees gather  
to lessen their time alone, talk of family,  
children grown, the friends that would have joined them,  
maneuver walkers through the chairs' tight maze,  
park them like shopping carts beside the walls.  
A glass of chardonnay or beer, white fish  
on pulpy bread with chips, and slaw chopped fine  
that's easy to digest—they pass the afternoon,  
while we watch pigeons waddle by, seagulls peck  
halfheartedly at weeds, the ocean's murky swell  
out-turned, buttressing the iron clamp of sky.