JILL CLEZY IRELAND

HORSESHOE BAY (South Australia)*

The sand extends,
In a giant clown-smile,
From one township, to another,
Twelve kilometres away.
Painted swings and slippery slides,
Whose metallic sheen has been dulled
By a hundred battered bottoms,
Cluster where grass meets sand.
The tired beach resort lies
Waiting for a new event.
All the sounds are one sound —
The screaming of happy bathers —
For the one sad sound is drowned
By the waters offering refreshing relief.
Suddenly an ownerless voice blares out
And the happy screaming stops as the words penetrate.
A nameless holiday-maker rises from his sodden towel,
And becomes, once again, the beach’s “Doctor on Call”.
I grow an inch or two with pride, as my father, pulling on his shirt, breaks into a run towards the kiosk.

At Horseshoe Bay.
But a man drowned today
So we can save the peaches!
Victory — she lets us in
Into all the searing locks.
We wriggle salty hair clips
Wafts from the tight-shut car.
The warm smell of peaches
When we see the car-keys locked inside.
The horror on our faces grows
A man drowned in the smiling surf.
“I need a pen, to sign the certificate”.
But when he comes, he cannot stay:
Tiring, we sit in the shade of the car.
We wait for Dad to come back to our game.
Bobbing in the water, eating fresh, furred peaches,
“When the patient is comfortable and resting quietly”.
We know, my sisters and I, that he will return:
*(To be read in an anticlockwise direction)*