In a tidepool by the North Sea
that model of life-courage
the limpet: like a million empty
shells except impossible
to nudge from its inch. Furlongs aside
the golfers meditate the green,
outlets for the woolen mills
filter a stream of tourists,
and builders with hammer-claws
deslate a house.
Around the pool the gaunt ribs
of land run out toward Norway
and a child with a split pail
denounces the sea in unintelligible Scots.
What makes the headlines in the limpet news?
If it grows despondent
its gurus say, Hang on,
work with being a limpet,
express your rage at this rock,
your rock, to which rage binds you.
It thinks of sex as a cloud of smell,
a sporadic weather. Many are called,
few chosen. The limpet is best
at saying no, and won't have fun.
It goes on relieving
the water of jiggling life.
Gulls cry in the middle air and the sun,
primping in the mirror of the pool,
resembles a starred
shell, a corona
knocked flat as a hat,
a kind of center
where everything begins to wheel.
Devoted to the moon's big tug, the limpet
feels the receding
suck of the sea and hears
sibilant down the long halls
the surf’s tenacious nails.