

**The St. John's Crowd**  
**by Sheila Koop**

I miss the screech of the seagulls  
who careen like sails on air –  
my flotilla of hope

squawk and call, circle and gather  
their rite of place as they  
jostle for the perch with the best view  
for stealing.  
This is your turf –  
where the gull shades,  
white and grey and black are  
watercolours splashed on salty blue sky.

You loved this view –  
oily trawlers of red and yellow  
that float in the harbour,  
dwarfed by massive naval ships  
they groan as they sidle up to the pier.

The bright painted clapboard houses where  
you lived and collected rent,  
the gull-like opportunist in you.  
People nests, lined up the hills like kids  
waiting for the bell to ring. Above  
the ocean, their blue-green gaze  
fixed on freighters and fishing boats  
who pass like friends in the Narrows.

You were proud of the climb up Signal Hill –  
follow its rise, survey the Atlantic  
a perfect sea bird's view  
breathe the salt  
feel swallowed up: hikers tiny beside  
rock fissures where  
the ocean roars and hisses.

Our last summer visit with the garrulous gulls –  
their shrill language  
their restlessness  
their constancy.

The faraway life you had with the St. John's crowd;  
their laughter poised to tickle the underside of life,  
comfortable in their rugged rooms.

The noisy gulls, they make me wonder how to miss you now.