

## Anxiety

Across a shelf of rock and algae  
too far off to threaten, waves test  
the stout defenses  
of the shore.

In fertile pools gulls  
swoop  
and screech after prey,  
loons' slender silhouettes  
dip  
beneath an opaque bay;  
the purr of a lobster boat  
disappears  
into the curve of island and mist.

Here in the intertidal zone,  
in the withdrawal of the moon's turbulent  
cover,  
the air is silent.

Neither ripple nor moan  
disturb its perfect  
loneliness.  
Beachcombers, intent  
on clam beds  
or the sea urchin's spiny surprise,  
step across this slight  
impediment to desire,  
noticing neither the forests  
of matted dulse, nor the dark  
iris pools  
of deception.

A watcher of shadows,  
a student of intervals,  
I tune my ears to the sounds  
of preparation:  
out of earshot of gull

and beachcomber,  
the rat-a-tat-tat  
of tiny air sacks among the sea  
wrack;  
a crab scuttling among clams  
in search of meat;  
gaping barnacles,  
like pictures of swollen children,  
wave a frenzy of feathery tongues;  
snails, those wounded civilians,  
turn gingerly in sleep;  
the slate-cloaked Anurida descends  
from his perch among the rockweed  
dragging a reluctant mussel;  
predacious worms lie coiled  
in the deeper,  
darker recesses.

~Sheila D. Collins