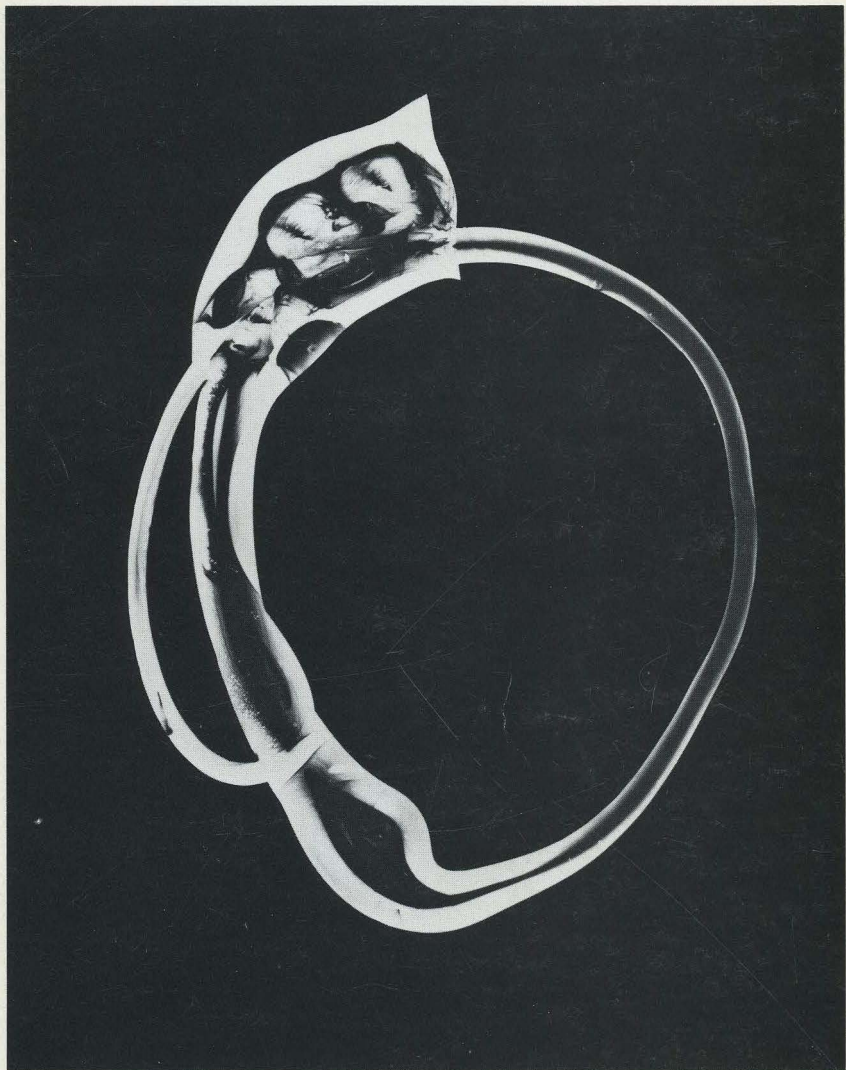


# THE CAPILANO REVIEW



“that one hour, the heart is an accountant.  
and the next hour, a bugle boy.  
and the next hour, invites children to dance.”

— NORM SIBUM

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# THE CAPILANO REVIEW

Number 20

1981

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## Norm Sibus / SIXTEEN POEMS

### a daydream from the park

a rose fills with wind in the afternoon.  
wine bottles flash, ascending fish in the sun.  
the sky becomes longer, our days blue.  
you begin to appear, a vision again.  
loose blossoms swirl across our streets,  
plum-colored and white. as flesh.  
every need, a matter for a bureau  
of one kind or another, as if  
the wind sews my face against intentions  
of all laws, clean and unclean,  
already registered or being sworn to now.  
a child wanders from his mother to go  
among the drinkers. the mother holds her breath.  
i think of us presenting our mouths,  
as if they were suitcases  
packed with smug triumphs over deaths, isolations.  
a wind grabs hold of a tree and lifts the leaves,  
the hair of a woman in this park.  
birds snarl at insects, worms, dull grubs, the  
grass where dandelions once  
performed their quiet, uncelebrated dance.

the courtyard  
648 Victoria Drive

when wind blows across the ford ranch wagon  
    parked forever,  
    holds a single morning-glory,  
impervious cat,  
lost dog,

and a gull rises  
    and i cannot do without this bird,  
    ever,

and i am not the wind who can count leaves,

and as the police cruiser passes  
    with headlights flooding the air,

beneath clouds more deft than i can bear,

then love,  
    i have nothing to say for you

    when the wind  
    blows like this.

## in pleasure

a curled cat lifts its paw in pleasure  
to a wind blown leaf.  
odds and ends move by us like that,  
the mouths of all love i know.  
leaves are heartache, gathering at doors.  
wind and loose things,  
scattering and buoyant things obeying the season.

## from 648 Victoria Drive

so a dream barely disappears  
and morning blows through the window.  
with white roses, a dead bee, a kitten mewing  
and wandering.  
the first letter i have ever received  
from my father  
lays out his many ailments, his blood pressure,

his sneaking of the cooking sherry.  
from the old lead smell  
of the Victoria Apartments,  
from swollen painted garden rocks,  
the bleached domestic lingerie  
on lines the wind knowingly fingers,  
i know now

like my father knew,  
others will join me  
as rueful,  
get drunk this day and fall  
from pale colors of the sky  
like these petals of white  
roses falling from desire.

## the palpable peach

waiting to become an old man  
is not as hideous as it may seem,  
when in my envisioned suit  
and on the street  
i will come to the bits of smell and color  
living might have for me

still living, forgotten, rid of  
loyalties and truths suffered  
long enough, the palpable peach, its  
soft and heartstopping juice, the  
inevitable conclusion held in  
some corner of my mouth.

## a slow dance

these flowers have been too long  
purple against the white house,  
packed like meat in clear ice.  
they will rot when the air  
changes again,  
melts in slow dances.  
the ear will be full  
of the death of these flowers,  
and the eyes will register  
for a moment the memory  
of spring, and then return  
to fragile carcasses, color  
mauled, run on and without form,  
a quiet undreamed of mockery  
melting in a slow dance.  
as when a lover's smile  
turns from a familiar warmth  
into remembered shapes  
and will be claimed no longer  
and the calling back is a winter.

## as a matter of course

the old man,  
                    bony pipe set on his grey lip,  
            watches evening traffic pass.  
he knows something about this life —  
glamorous,  
    patient  
            frail as a choir of sunflowers bending  
                            to the street

my own landlord is a younger man who  
                    for lack of family  
                            hangs  
knotted bunches of garlic that crinkle in the sun,  
shakes roots,  
polishes flowers  
                    on a laborer's knees,  
                    resilient.

how the two of them together, trundle off  
    with hipboots and an armful of faded nets,  
            put a move on the smelt off the seawall,  
soak up brine in their rumpled hats, fine eyes,  
            get a little drunk.  
    later, warm a mouthful of the slender  
fish taken like splinters from the sea.

## two women, two kids

hydrangea, a blue sunset in their front yard.  
the fisherman who built the house  
let the colors of salmon pass from his planting  
hand. oh, he is a wild one,  
these women say, happy now to have a wooden  
floor, live on a hill, have a  
playmate for the kids. the house humbly painted  
white with red window trim.

it has been this way, too.  
she saying, you wild, you silly boy.  
in a night when rain thickens the lawn  
and sends flowers spinning,  
pulling on her pale hose, grinning,  
in the house where the screams and  
milky kisses of women and children  
are a nervy drunkenness  
fierce with leaping nipples.

when the men come to visit  
shedding their clothes, they listen.

## winter

the chill gnaws at roses breaking  
vein by vein in criss-crossed shadows,  
the flower's bowl marbled  
and petals decayed —  
even if once pink, white or yellow —  
or any other full-throated color,  
humanly blooded, warm  
or full marks of love hovering  
like birds in gardens,  
or strayed against a rooming house —  
from which — say last night,  
yells and bottles were pitched into the street,

into the structure of the night —  
bodies piled on the barricades  
of intolerance, want, indifference.  
this is how dreams speak  
late in the night  
and how someone roused  
might hear it,  
and how the sky turns cold among us  
and how roses fade  
from the fading eyes of beholders.  
dreams bound to nature  
can only make such sense of it.

## from the unabashed flower of existence

so many times i find the world  
    find its sweetness  
a mood that can be moved  
side to side in the mouth, sociable  
tongue,  
    a lover bowed to food, desire  
bowed and singing  
to image,  
entrenched longing,  
the cafe full of its sounds

the ear — coiled,  
the ear snailshaped, its  
grand bone, slender  
oracle a purpose more steadfast  
than any silicon chip  
or awry economy.  
the window, an ear  
on the loneliness, winter downpour.

## dragged through the streets

i have seen human eyes like these.  
the deer, lashed to the camper,  
the hunters walking, conspirators stretching  
the west into the supermarket on Commercial Drive.  
the brown creamy hides, a beautiful liquid,  
stiff snouts bootblackened.  
the delicate dancers laid low beneath  
the weekend's unmoved sun,  
among hangovers procured and gnawed as bones,  
bright giblets of failure,  
even as our concern for each other  
does not cease  
and the world consummates disaster after disaster.  
dead, these deer are brutes on the street of roses.

## remembrance day

men from other places convene and dine  
on these streets and uphold home-grown glories —  
down from the bush cracking gold in the cabs  
at eight dollars a case off-sale.  
lest they not enjoy the expense,  
they are driven. imaginations livid.  
old woman's face made-up for the Legion  
glows like an early christmas card.  
november the eleventh. trumpets.  
the old stumble and remember.  
green-clad and abreast, the eleventh hour  
in simple passion marches on veteran streets, veteran hunger.

## such devils

something in our bellies glistens more than hunger —  
listening is as sudden.  
a gull struts — white in my ear.  
denuded and ash gray,  
or ash bright in the sun, trees stand humbly  
on so hard a ground the moon cannot soften.  
new lovers will stretch the laws.  
nothing so unusual with us — climbing  
each other's bellies, peeking  
into each other's eyes.  
strange cats have been offered food.  
all in an ear —  
(when the heart claims it), listening  
to the quick body and the slow heart itself,  
a natural line of resistance  
to all our devils —  
our eyes  
muscular as loping animals.

## bullets

some nights thin out words.  
and now my friend will go home, sleep,  
complain of a million things  
or nothing.  
he said  
‘it is not what a bullet is made of,  
that kills you.’  
tomorrow may improve.  
bullets in our lives  
wormlike  
not even houses of love can keep out.  
women in the rain, Georgia Street  
umbrellas twirled with gloved hands.  
they glide beside the rainbowed cars.  
men in cowboy hats  
walk and talk with them.  
the street, rainbowed; speech, rainbowed;  
a kiss is just a kiss.  
there is a kiss the color of pearl  
that marries the early morning sky.

my friend when he spoke of bullets  
did not smile slickly  
like most people do  
men and women, doll-like.  
he touched my shoulder  
stripped himself of speech  
got out of the car.  
driving away,  
i could not appeal his despair.  
some nights sans speech  
passing men and women in the rain  
houses of love  
made of umbrellas, perfumed hands.  
this afternoon,  
i watched a heron, pale light;  
the sea curved like a breast.  
still i am the same man.

## Mendelssohn and i

the fourteen year old Mendelssohn and i  
drive through the grey city  
with violins sweet and ludicrous.  
Mendelssohn plays and darling, i imagine for you  
a flower absolutely wild and yellow.  
Mendelssohn plays and the butcher scrapes  
fat from the foaming ribs. blood  
drips from his apron, intimately, coarsely.  
Mendelssohn plays and the bus driver quits  
a busload of snoring, malevolent breath  
and desires to go a-tango-ing.  
Mendelssohn plays, a cat whines.  
Mendelssohn plays. guilt rises, expectant  
and virginal above the city. at play, blushes  
white across the sky.  
Mendelssohn plays and another cabbie  
hails me from his car, says, 'hey,'  
friendly-like says,  
'you won't squeeze money from this city  
parked in the shadows like that,' drives off  
proud of his advice.

Mendelssohn plays.  
Dave and family come to open the cafe  
and stamp their feet at the door in the new cold  
like miniature horses.  
Mendelssohn and i are hungry.  
perhaps darling, you might feed us.  
you smile and somewhere in your sleep you  
are a blush upon your pillow.  
Mendelssohn plays, tired.  
as the light lifts now. the light leaves us with its spirit.  
Mendelssohn plays on and Dave  
lilts with hands of coffeecups, turning  
this way and that.  
like a musician peering over his violin, he too  
looks to be fed.  
and darling,  
flower,  
see how this hour passes,  
and passes quickly.

## the enthusiasm

somehow, even the gentlest of talk assassinates.  
who could have warned Catullus  
in the fast lane  
that his heart would flop like a fish?  
that one hour, the heart is an accountant.  
and the next hour, a bugle boy.  
and the next hour, invites children to dance.  
haze and yellow leaves  
surround the city  
and it is still so damn warm  
and desire waits  
for a second  
wind, shy beyond belief.

## Fred Wah / FIVE POEMS

breathing in the water so much a breath  
to make a time times so simple rhythm  
early snow mountain peaks body hair finger-  
nails the death past 54 measure know  
nothing rotten smell histories it like  
layers of froth the scarlet letters parts  
of our genitals my breathing in the pool  
lengths stretched father's parts out

my father hurt-  
ing at the table  
sitting hurting  
at suppertime  
deep inside very  
far down inside  
because I can't stand the ginger  
in the beef and greens  
he cooked for us tonight  
and years later tonight  
that look on his face  
appears now on mine  
my children  
my food  
their food  
my father  
their father  
me mine  
*the* father  
very far  
very very far  
inside

father it is fall  
the leaves turn  
the hills  
wait for winter again  
the river and the town  
the cars  
reflect the sunlight  
movement is in holding  
bodies with the years  
I am over forty now  
they took down the Diamond Grill sign  
mother has returned from China

time  
is an interference  
with work  
                    music  
has shape                      (splitting birch this weekend)

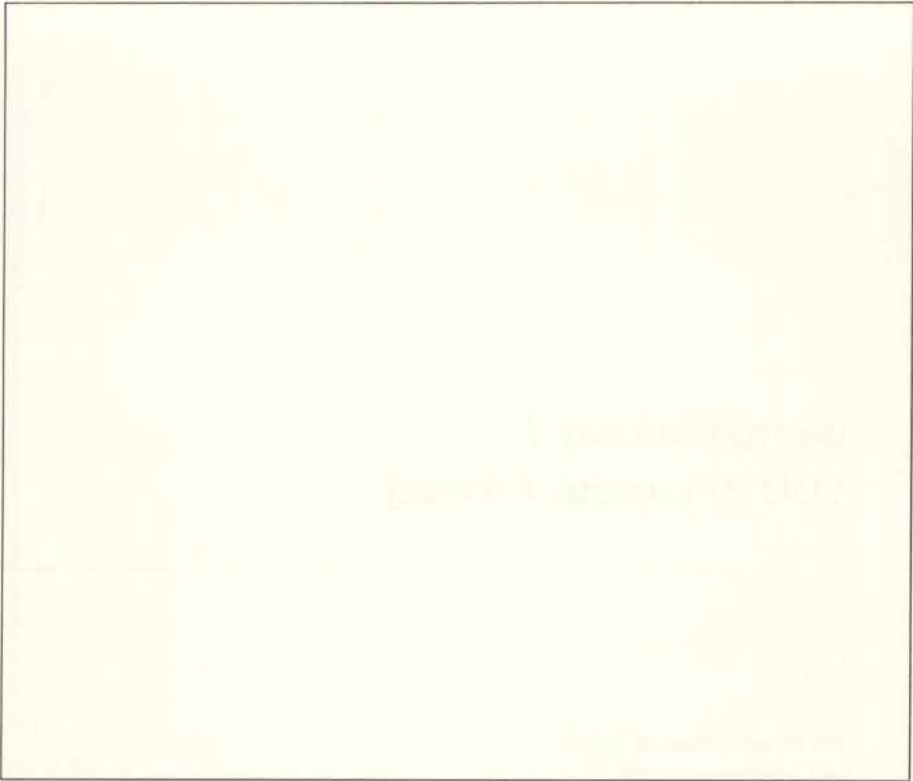
father  
again it is another season  
the turning of it all  
the spin  
is sound  
yet soundless at the core  
to say this to you is nothing now  
nothing  
yet

the father grandfather  
lineal  
grampa's smile  
your walk his  
smile

the grampa  
eyes  
your brown  
eyes your  
serious dark  
brow

my shoulders  
his watch  
your ring  
him  
thinking me  
about this  
all of this  
all of it  
thinking

lineal  
face, body  
a hemis-  
phere



when you die it snows  
late september mountain peaks

every time it happens, I see it  
and I think of you then

your sister Ethel  
she says white is unlucky

it snowed today at timberline  
it's never very far away is it

each year  
your death makes more sense to me

I can feel more of you in it now

## George Stanley / YOUTH (Joseph Conrad)

poetry embarks us  
on a sea

the thought that existence  
becomes, recurrently,

an object of knowledge  
means nothing

between the rope  
& wind.

the port of embarkation  
opens in a clear moment

crossed by imponderables.  
at the taffrail i stand

overwhelmed  
by the multicoloured

& swarming  
ecstasy.

the rest of the time  
spent stupidly,

mirror by mirror each face  
slightly altered demands

faked recognition & dodges  
in probability's thicket

never to be recaptured  
tracking the whiz & carom

of alien bodies.  
each of them, too,

gulps understanding  
like space w/o air

floats on giddy delights  
at dusk returns to its creator,

the street.  
wherever i wandered

i looked for the door  
or the glint

within that betrays  
common knowledge.

stretched linearly  
by strands, holes

alive as an eye  
in curtains bluew

on either side  
reduced in size

narrowing in the distance,  
rigid,

but fond,  
illusion. found, yes,

what block butted on what  
rooms backed on the gap

of an old city wall  
fitted w/eight candy colour conduits

citron & cadmium circuits  
discreet calls to power,

to pardon, eh?  
'sources.' wound up time

nears the depletion  
of its plot. pot metal

beginning to shudder & rattle  
awakens qualms

of adjacent  
vacancy.

late in the day  
the city slides

into heaps & burrows  
billows & furrows

like those of the sea.  
at the boundaries of acquaintance

i felt the absence of horizons  
fealties broken like the sudden

disappearance of trolley wires.  
the lights in the fog go on

further than the pavement  
but on land

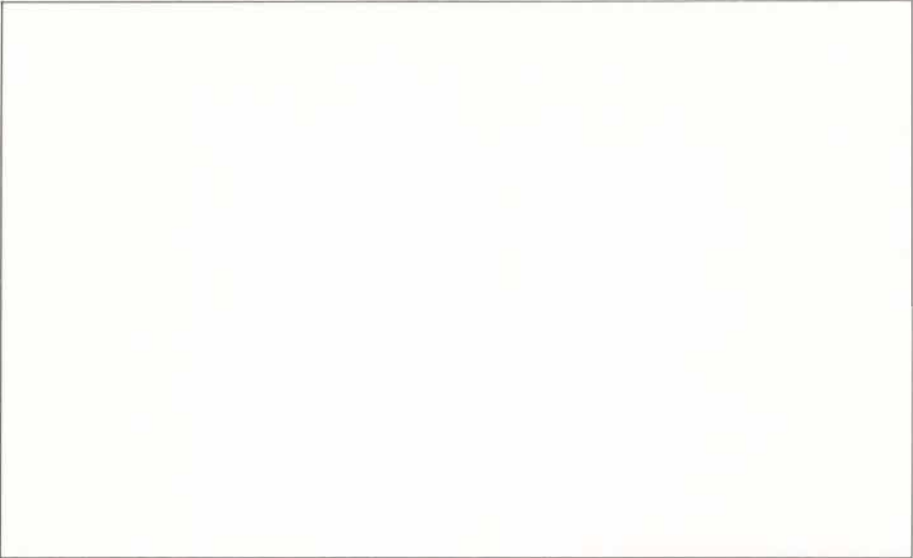
there is no ship.  
up the hill

on winding, cobbled, cul-de-sacs  
(where 6 months ago

there was nothing but dirt)  
from the balconies of consciousness

i heard the eyeless thoughts push out  
on their journey to the stars

w/burned stumps rummaging  
in cultural inventories.



silence, silence  
& blood

on the institutional  
stairs.

words say  
what 'voices' say,

locked home,  
the moment endures.

in eight colour conduits  
the elements of memory

are lopped to fit the  
frame. the maze

of insides, outsides,  
closes. the eyes

o'erflow  
the game.

rise, rocking  
watery hills of time

in  
unmirroring windows

birds  
float, moving points

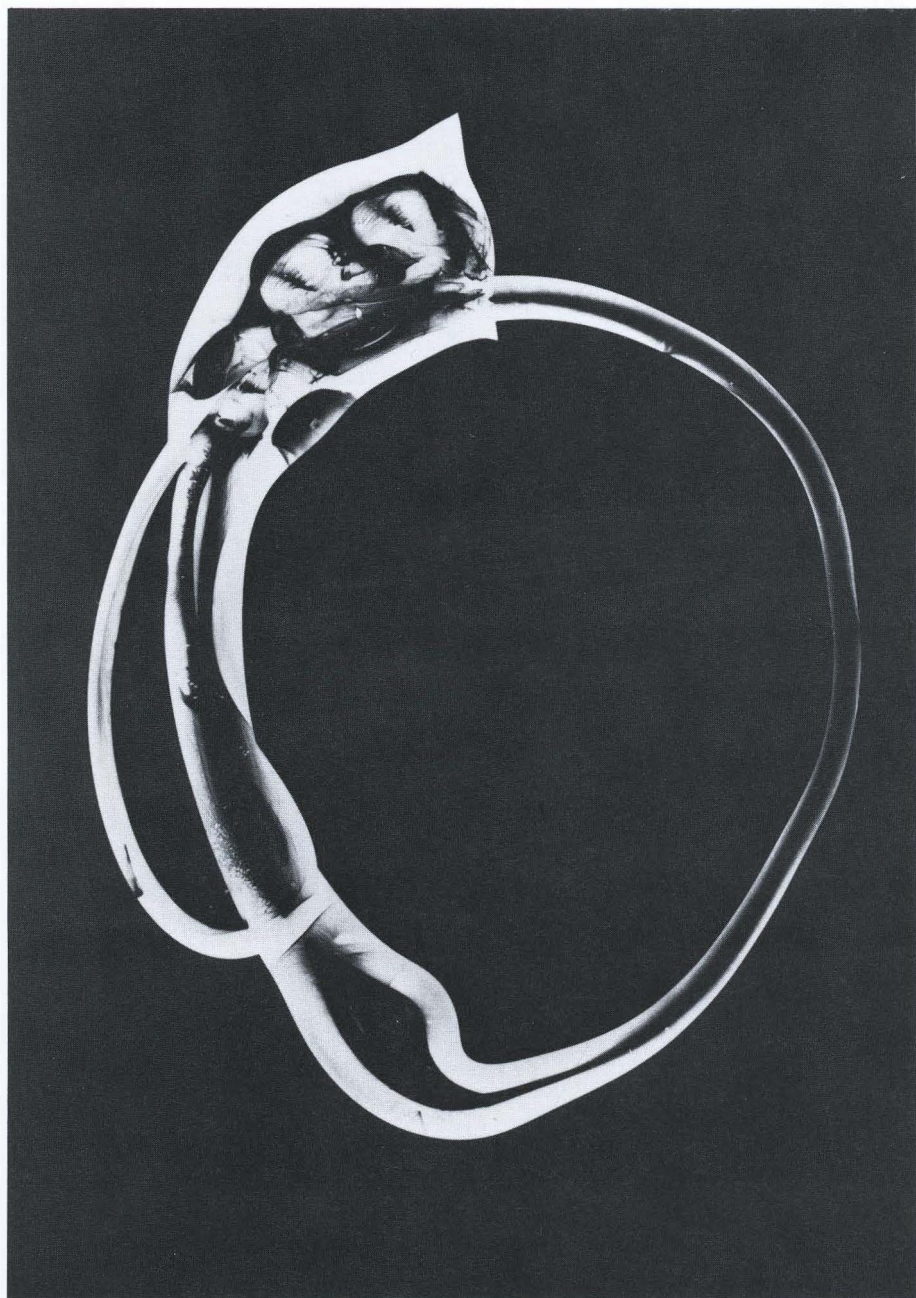
triangulate  
(you & i)

distant prospects  
among the living.

*20. 3. 81*



## Basia Irland / OUROBOROS



## ouroboros ii

The others  
meet in this ancient garden  
joining hands to  
encompass  
you  
hanging from your cross  
dripping layers  
of skin  
shed  
into the wind  
of rebirth and rocks

(Dry-tongued marks  
trace concentric words.)

Gyrating through the garden,  
past dancers  
and on toward  
the stream,  
your self-containment  
perpetuates the continuum.



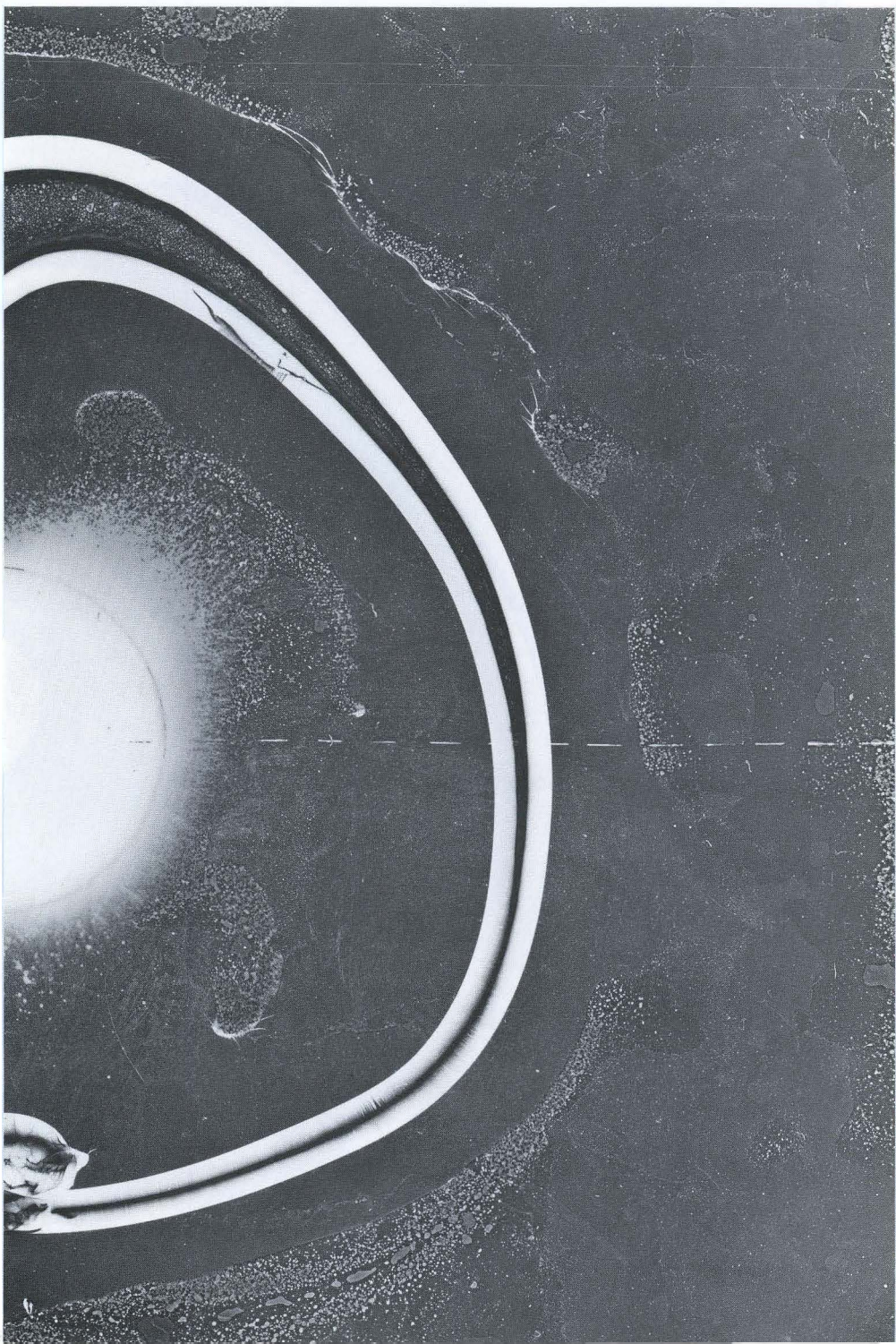
## ouroboros iv

Lying exposed in horses'  
excrement for twenty days  
you devour your tail  
and swirl around scholars  
attempting to counterbalance  
opposing forces.

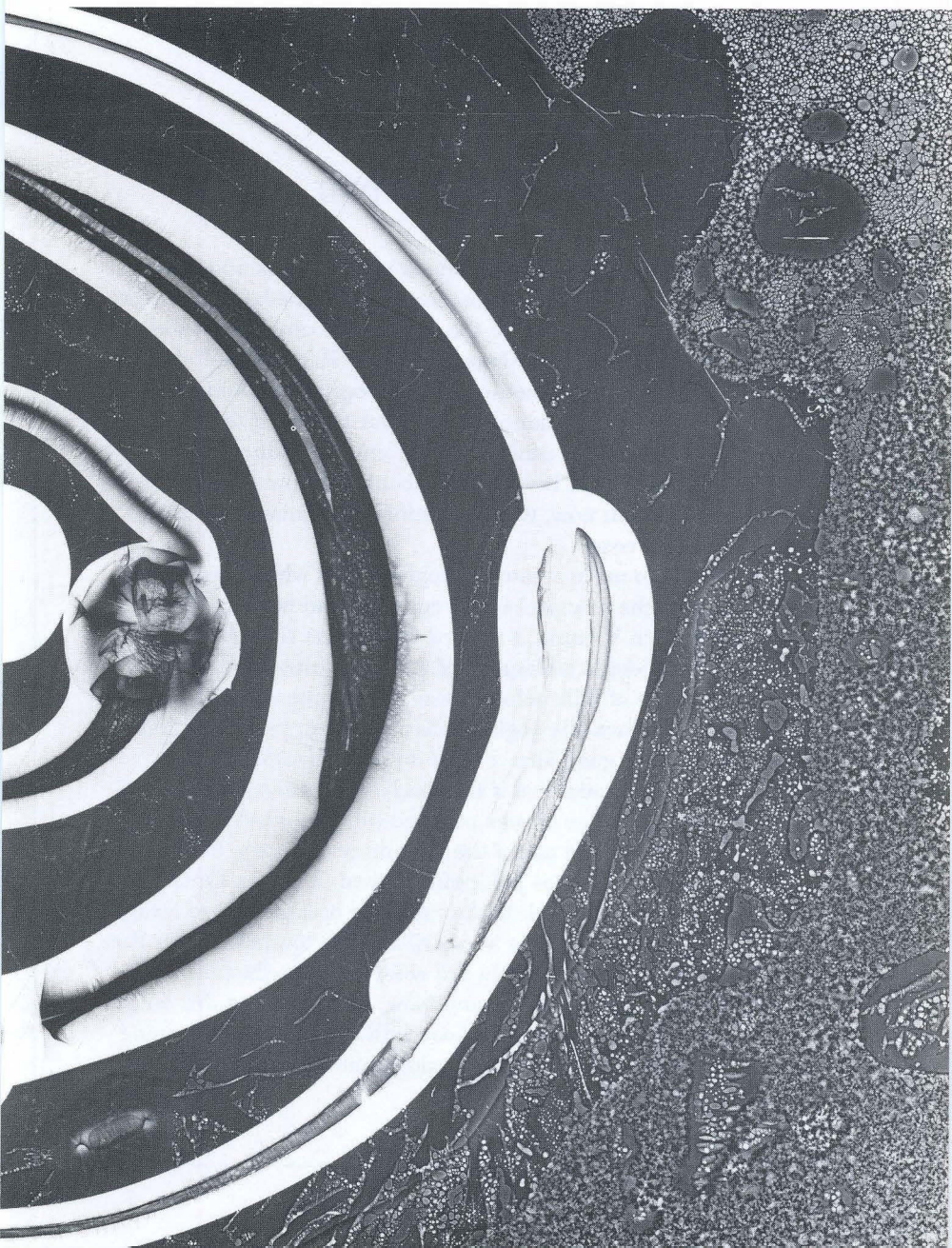
While mist floats  
among the icicles  
bumping into reasons  
for returning to the river,  
transmutation begins.

Glittering in assumed  
radiance, you find yourself  
etched into another  
ancient page  
of drawings.  
Robed figures  
bearing bound and winged volumes  
paddle against the current  
to reach you.









Audrey Thomas /

## GRAVEN IMAGES: A Memoir

I am probably the only person in Canada who can look at a package of Knox gelatine and think of Romance. Perhaps the housewife who ponders the glossy illustrations of the desserts she can make if she will only send for her free Knox "Make It Happen Recipe Book" — strawberry swirl, chocolate mousse, orange-vegetable mould and so on — is just as much a Romantic as I am but I doubt if the word "Knox," all by itself, can conjure up her entire childhood the way it can for me. I will tell you how it came about and how *I* came to be thinking about all this now, two days before Christmas, on a small island off the B.C. coast.

I had decided to make a batch of yoghurt, and while I was checking directions on the new package of culture I had bought at the health food store in Victoria, I noticed for the first time the suggestion that if one added a tablespoon of gelatine, softened in a little water, to each litre of milk before it was heated, one would end up with a thicker product. My yoghurt has never been very thick and so this seemed like a good idea. I went down to the store by the Government Wharf and asked if they had any gelatine. Indeed they did, and I was handed an orange package with the word KNOX in large black letters printed across the top and underneath, in very small black letters, "Thomas J. Lipton Limited, Toronto, Ontario." As I walked back up the path to the cabin the ocean dropped away, the sea gulls, the barge hauling a load of sawdust towards Porlier Pass, the arbutus trees with their bright red winter berries, the pines, everything connected with Here, and Now, this place and this time, and I was in a small green rowing boat with my older sister, leaning dangerously over the side and staring down into deep water about fifty yards from shore.

"Do you see them?" she is saying. "Do you see the bones?"

The year was, I suppose, 1945 or '46, and we were on our annual visit to my grandfather's summer place, or "camp" as he called it, in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. We were old enough now to take out the rowboat, our very own boat called "The Pin Up Girl," along the lake, provided we stayed reasonably close to shore and remembered not to stand up if we wanted to change places. We were not yet allowed the freedom and responsibility of a motor. That came later, when, in our daring two-piece Jantzens, we zoomed across the lake to the Public Campsite and in imitation of the Bright Girls of the *Saturday Evening Post* stories, tried out a bit of snappy dialogue on the college boy lifeguard. For now we were content with simpler pleasures: picking endless saucepans full of blueberries, hiding from each other in the burnt-out tree stumps of the forest just beyond the cottage, solemnly raising the flag each morning, taking it down at sunset, folding it according to the prescribed manner, following our beloved grandpa around as he stuck lighted cigars in wasps' nests under the eaves (allowing us each one lung-searing puff before he stuck them in), walking barefoot along the sandy road, bordered in milkweed and Black-eyed Susans, out to the highway for the mail. If we had been gone too long, or what seemed like too long (our mother was an awful worrier) on the lake or along the beach or in the woods we would hear the faint but commanding clang of an old brass bell which hung on the front porch. This bell also called everyone to lunch and dinner and could be heard at a great distance.

It was an idyllic existence in many ways, and when I was seventeen and away at University and heard that my grandfather, then about eighty-five, had decided to sell the place, I could not believe it. It was like selling a part of my soul. My parents had no money; my uncle in Massachusetts wasn't interested; my grandfather's place, "My" place, would go to strangers: "Lock, stock and barrel" said my mother's bitter voice over the telephone. I cried secretly for days. I think I cried the way I have never cried since. I was right to mourn: my childhood had just come to a sudden and arbitrary end. My grandfather never really recovered from this sale. He lived on until 1964 but his heart wasn't in it. We went to see him, in town (we lived in the same town then) but he seemed dazed, almost shell-shocked, and began to "fail" very quickly. After he died I received a share in his house and when that was sold I took the money and

bought this place on Galiano Island. He would have liked that. He had seen the Pacific once, and wrote me a letter about it, from the famous Empress Hotel in Victoria. "A dandy hotel," he thought, and sent us both his love. (I have the letter still, in his wonderful copper-plate handwriting. "I hope you are behaving yourselves and not giving your ma and pa too much trouble.")

I think those summers in the mountains, at "Grandpa's Woods," as we used to call it, were some of the happiest days of my life. We led a rather sad existence in the wintertime, for my parents did not get on (the problem seemed to be divided equally between relatives and money) and we were confused and often frightened by the constant quarrels and threats, and also by the fact that we were always in debt. I shall never forget the voice of my mother on the phone to my grandfather, or my father on the phone to his sister who taught up-state, asking for a small loan to "tide us over" (my mother) or "bail us out" (my dad). Because of this imagery I often felt that we lived in a leaky houseboat — not a proper house — which was in imminent danger of sinking. Then we would be bailed out or tided over, the bill collectors would have a little "on account" and the milk van would appear again, the telephone would be reconnected. But at my grandfather's place there was always plenty — or so it seemed to me. Things went along smoothly and looking back it would appear that there wasn't a day which didn't bring a new adventure or a happy time. It was a very isolated existence, just the cottage, on a rise, the beach below and ten acres of forest around, but we didn't see that for a long time; it didn't bother us for years. There was a large sign on the beach at the edge of my grandfather's property: **TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED**. This confused me when I was very small, as we had learned in church that we were supposed to forgive our trespassers. None came; the sign meant business. I wanted some trespassers to forgive. But my grandfather was closer to me than God. I never really doubted that he knew what he was doing.

At first there was no running water, only a red pump with a long handle half-way down the path to the lake, a pump which had to be primed with a tin mug of water, sometimes two or three, dipped out of a tin bucket. But that didn't matter; that, at my grandfather's, was fun. And at first there was no electricity, only beautiful old lamps which were filled each day by my mother or the housekeeper and whose tall, delicate chimneys could be washed and polished by a small hand if that hand was very very careful. And there was a green-painted outhouse with a crescent moon window. Because there was a War on and my grandfather was a practical joker, a sign was nailed to it that we usually saw at the Esso or Texaco station: "Is this trip necessary?" And at one point toilet paper stamped with the faces of Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini and the legend: "Wipe Out the Axis."

"Really, Dad," said my mother, who didn't like anything crude.

\* \* \*

What has all this to do with Knox gelatine?

Down the lake, on the east side, past an iron deer which had been placed at the edge of the woods by some unknown eccentric and at which hunters took pot shots in autumn, past two or three cottages nestled in the trees, was the cottage owned by the Knox brothers. There must have been Knox wives and Knox children as well but I remember nothing about those lesser beings. The only people we ever heard or talked about were the brothers and they were indeed the brothers who owned Knox gelatine. They were the only famous people we knew, people who actually had their name in advertisements in such magazines as the *Ladies Home Journal* or *Women's Home Companion*. They were a "household word." I can't remember what we used Knox gelatine for in those days. Nobody in our family

liked tomato aspic and studiously avoided it at church suppers or Masonic picnics and I seem to recall that Jello, with its jewelled possibilities, had come in by then but maybe not. And nobody, winter or summer, went in for fancy desserts. In summer there was usually blueberry pie or applie pie or watermelon (apple pie with cheese, that is. My grandfather would wink at me and say, "An apple pie without the cheese is like a kiss without the squeeze" and I would run and get the block of cheddar from the old ice-box on the back porch. ). In winter we had prune whip or floating island, rice pudding or a cake my father brought from the Home Dairy. Perhaps my mother drank Knox gelatine; I seem to remember that drinking it — as a means to health — was part of the promotion. A packet of Knox gelatine, in a glass of your favorite juice, would encourage health of hair and fingernails. I even seem to remember an ad with a small girl in Shirley Temple ringlets holding up a glass. Anyway, it was always there, that orange package on the kitchen shelf and the Knox's, who seemed to have a monopoly on the gelatine market in the U.S., lived **JUST DOWN THE LAKE!**

The fact that they were a Household Word would in itself have been enough to fire my imagination for I was a terrible daydreamer and thought fame must be the most wonderful thing there was. The fact that gelatine was made from dead horses (my sister provided me with this bit of reasonably accurate information, she had also told me once that marmalade was made from goldfish) didn't deter me for long. Because the Knox brothers, as well as being famous throughout the land for their gelatine, were locally famous — or infamous — for their airplane. They had an airplane of their own! (I wonder now why they were flying it during the war — perhaps the war was over when they began to fly). On Friday evenings all of us were seated around the long oilcloth-covered table, my grandfather at the head, next to him on one side the current housekeeper, then the hired man, then next to him my father who had usually just come in from fishing for brook trout at a nearby mountain; on the other side my mother,

my sister, myself. Sometimes, but rarely, an occasional visitor to my grandfather's left. On Friday evening, the air beginning to cool, finally, after the heat of another glorious day, we would be eating fried chicken or chewing away at corn on the cob when we heard a faint sound, almost like distant thunder way away in the sky. Faint at first, then louder and louder and louder — the Knox brothers flying in from Johnstown for the weekend. When I was very small I think I got them confused in my infant mind with the Wright brothers and thought that the men who were now directly above our heads, now skimming the blue waters of the lake, now landing in a fine show of spray, had actually invented the thing they flew, not just the more mundane substance that no good housewife, for whatever obscure reason, would ever be without. Their plane was a bright crayon yellow, a modern chariot of the sun. There were bold black letters along one wing. How could a plane land on water I demanded the first time. How *could* it? It had pontoons, said my grandfather, and that became one of my first magical words, not knowing why, not looking it up until years later, just liking the sound, "pontoon."

"One of these days they're going to come through the god-damned roof," said my father, flinching, a corn cob half-way to his mouth. Although my grandfather frowned, because he himself never swore, at least not publicly, and my mother glared at my father for incurring my grandfather's displeasure, it was a well-known fact that my grandfather had indeed "spoken" to the Knox brothers about the dangerous manner of their descent to the lake. He had spoken to them and they had apologized, apparently, and yet there they were again, practically on top of us, barely missing the flagpole and upsetting the calm of a Friday evening! That my grandfather should "speak" to someone and they not immediately submit seemed both thrilling and awful. One felt the tension of an impending showdown.

They would not get their mouths washed out with tar soap, my punishment for having said I knew what “fuck” meant — I didn’t know — at the dinner table one evening when everyone was ignoring me. Not tar soap but the equivalent of tar soap. The Knox brothers would be stopped in some way and maybe even have their plane taken away from them. I imagined my sister and myself playing at the controls. I wanted to touch its yellow surfaces, to touch especially its wings and the wonderful pontoons.

In fact, nothing happened or nothing I can recall. They and their plane remained throughout my childhood as a symbol of wealth, fame and, maybe *because* nothing happened, the power that these things could bring. When we were older we sometimes used to go skinny-dipping off a float that my grandfather and the hired man had fixed to two concrete-filled drums out where the water was deep. Our end of the lake, ideal for very young children because of its shallowness, was not so thrilling for older kids. We would imagine the Knox brothers coming up from Johnstown early some Friday afternoon.

They said that you could see EVERYTHING from a plane, that you could see straight down into the water, as clear as through a window pane. Hanging onto the float, our new slim legs stretched out behind us tadpole-like, we indulged in yet another fantasy, what if one of us was floating on her back!

\* \* \*

My yoghurt set beautifully and I clipped out the form which I was to send to Toronto for my free Kitchen Magic booklet. I wanted only the address; I wanted to find out from Thomas J. Lipton, a very grand Household Word himself, whatever happened to the Knox brothers. Where did they go? I wanted to say, what have you done with them?

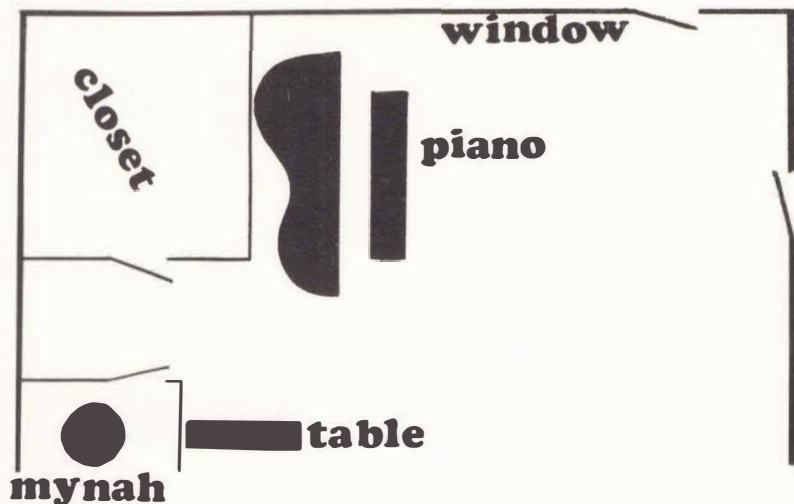
Meanwhile we drift forever in our green boat, my sister and I. My beloved grandfather is not dead, nor my much-maligned father: I can feel the sun on the back of my neck as I lean dangerously over the side.

“Do you see them?” she says. “Do you see any horses?”

I have to admit, perhaps with a certain relief, that I do not. It is a bit scary to be so far down the lake, so near to the mythical home of those mythical creatures. I am relieved when I hear, from the front porch of the cottage, my mother ringing the bell. Clang Clang Clang. Far away but very clear on the still summer air. I have not yet read John Donne; to me it is the sound of safety and wisdom, the sound, at this moment, of security.

With one impressive swing my sister turns the boat around and we head home.

Philip HUGHES /  
SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN  
WITH MYNAH



There is the sound of a car pulling up, then steps, and a man mounts the front steps.

MYNAH

How de do! Wanna arm wrestle? Go away!  
My cage is bigger than yours! Hello!

MAN

Aren't you a clever bird. Hello.

The mynah is stopped dead. The door is answered.

FRANK

Joe! Frieda, get coffee for Joe here!

FRIEDA

How do do! Won't take a second.

A letter-sweatered collegiate is tossing a football into the kitchen. He lets his mother through and goes to meet Joe.

FRANK  
My son, Fred.

JOE  
Hi, Fred.

FRED  
Hi, Joe!

FRANK  
And my daughter, Fran.

JOE  
Hello, Fran.

FRAN  
Hi!

FRANK  
How's the trip?

JOE  
Just followed your map.

FRANK  
Have another copy. For next time.  
He flicks a xerox off a stack on the table. Joe folds it away.  
Nice car, Chevy. Continental in the drive.

FRAN

We have a snowmobile, too!

FRED

Don't forget my Mercedes.

FRANK

Nah! In a Lincoln you can hear the dash clock!

FRED

That's on a Rolls.

FRAN

When can *I* get a car, Dad?! When can I, huh?!

FRED

Stick to your mo-ped, short stuff!

She punches him, he cuffs her back, they scuffle like puppies.  
Frank nudges Joe, winks. Frieda returns, stepping over the brouhaha.

FRIEDA

Yuban, Joe?

FRANK

No, but he ukes! . . . Joke!

FRED

Karate, eh?!

He floors her.

FRAN

Someday I'll beat you, Big Brother!

Father and son laugh. Fred launches Fran erect in one bound.  
They radiate animal spirits, looking set to run the decathlon, do an  
orange juice commercial, join the Pepsi generation.

FRANK

Fan-tas-tic! The whole family! Karate, football, tennis, general high jinks. . . . Active? We invented the word, eh, boy?!

He slaps his son on the back. Detonated, Fred chins himself on a door lintel. Attention lurches 180° as Fran tears into Rachmaninoff. Frieda waves her hands, taps piano, slams hands on it. Fran stops.

FRIEDA

Fran, dear. Why not show how NICELY you play the piano?

FRAN

Yes, Mother.

She resumes less ferociously, in an abbreviated performance. Applause.

FRANK

That's my little girl!

JOE

Certainly plays with verve.

FRANK

\$1200 for lessons! Second place, county competition! Third runner-up, Miss Connecticut!

Fred thrusts flowers from a vase.

FRED

You may not be so hot in the gym, Sis, but at the keyboard—Wonder Woman!

FRAN

Oh yeah?!

She rises to a handstand on the bench. Applause. Frank gives an ear-piercing whistle. Fred laughs, hugs himself, pelts with more flowers. Frieda slams hands on piano, shakes head. Frank grabs a large card from the table and holds it up: 9.6. Frieda gets vacuum from closet. Fred helps with clean-up. As people finish bustling, they "turn off" and sit like statues. Fran comes down.

JOE

So, what else do you do?

FRAN

You name it, Mister!

JOE

(laughing, affable) How about hobbies? What do you do when you're not . . . ?

FRAN

Sail.

JOE

Oh, do you? Done some boating myself. Great fun.

FRAN

I've done a lot!

JOE

I'm sure you have. Nice, being out on the water, on a clear afternoon. I enjoy spending whole days, don't you?

FRAN

I'm Vice Commodore!

JOE

Surprised if I found otherwise. I bet sailing provides you an opportunity to be doing something — right? — and at the same time get away from it all.

FRAN

I guess. No people. Not even a piano.

JOE

Or bench. Free, to be yourself.

FRAN

How about a little “Slaughter on Tenth Avenue”?

JOE

. . . the wind take you. . .

FRAN

This may sound crazy. . .

JOE

Try me.

FRAN

Sometimes out there . . . I forget my last name. I mean, if someone asked me suddenly. Isn’t that . . . ?

JOE

I believe it.

FRAN

Why am I telling you this! What a bore! Wanna hear Ma and me do “Chopsticks”? Some cheerleading? Poms right over. . . I guess it’s the being out there, with no schedule. . . Almost won the regatta last year!

She lunges toward the mantel, but he checks her.

JOE

Trophy. Very good. But I'll bet, Fran, it's not so much the competition. . . .

FRAN

No races?

JOE

. . . as just getting on the boat and going.

FRAN

. . . the wind . . . the swell of the water. . . Like what it must have been like before you were born.

She blushes, self-appalled. Frank momentarily springs to animation.

FRANK

World class!

Avoiding Joe, Fran tickles the ivories.

JOE

Just scudding along. . . .

FRAN

Yeah, well. . . .

JOE

Out in the blue. . . .

FRAN

Sun. Salt air. Invigorating.

JOE

Not to perform, be anything in particular. Just. . .

FRAN

Right.

JOE

No goals or role-models. Just free, yourself. . .

FRAN

(striking loud chord: ) . . . and ALONE! . . . Excuse me; have to go out back. Some sails to hang up.

JOE

I understand.

She exits. Silence, for a count of five.

FRANK

FRIEDA

Well sir!

Have some fruit? (passing some)

Don't mind if I do!

Father and son toss apples. Fred catches his in his mouth.

JOE

Well, Frank, this is some menage. With your success, I guess a posh suburb like Donnybrook Heights was just. . .

FRANK

"The house that widgets built." Guess how many last year: 237,000.

FRED

A long way from selling silver polish door to door.

JOE

You certainly had your fingers on the public's pulse.

FRED

Or somewhere.

FRANK

"The name doesn't go on before the quality goes in."

FRED

That's what he said about getting up to 220, making the team, and wearing my letter.

FRANK

Well, it was my school, too, ya know!

Fred points out the "S" on his sweater and mutters. . . .

FRED

Strasbourg goose. . . .

On his feet, Frank prompts Fred in a chorus of a school song, then goes to the closet and wheels out a projector. Fred pushes a button and watches as if following descent of a screen. Frieda moves about as if pulling down shades. Fred goes to the kitchen and throws the football in several times. On the last toss two balls return. After glancing into the yard, Fred rejoins the group.

FRANK

Now, here is Fred on defense. . . . Huh? Huh?!

JOE

Certainly plays with "conviction."

FRANK

Now, offense. Stiff-arm, and right over the tackler!

Fred chins himself again. Frieda slams hands on piano. The lintel comes off. Frank slaps Fred on the shoulders, then gets ladder and hammer from closet and tends to repairs. Frieda pulls up shades. When the parents run out of bustle, they "shut off" as before.

JOE

Fantastic football, fella. You obviously have the old family. . . . So; what are you studying? Business. No? Law. Medicine?

FRED

Anatomy. Biology. (lowering voice:) I think I'll teach.

JOE

Oh, I *see*. Once you have the degree and are out. . . .

FRED

Right.

JOE

Anatomy. Not so much for the sports tie-in. Not the physical angle. Instead, for the . . . the. . . .

FRED

Order.

JOE

Uh. Order? Mm. "Order." I *see*. The rationale *behind*.

FRED

To look at some guy in motion: "Ah ha! Adrenal gland on line!" I see the person with all his parts functioning — like a slide in a biology lecture — or an old Bufferin commercial, with the transparent stomach.

JOE

Transparent guts. Clear as a football play, all X's and O's. What sets off the performance. What struts about. . . .

FRED

You know. . . .

He looks about and Joe and Fred lock pinkies momentarily in the age-old kids' sign of "keep a secret."

. . . it's a strange thing, my liking for anatomy.

JOE

Tell me about it.

FRED

When I'm in my room, not studying or tossing the pig-skin, I just sit and . . . say the bones of the body.  
208. Takes about half an hour. I don't know why, but I enjoy that.

JOE

Peaceful. Ordered.

FRED

Yeah.

JOE

Like a monk saying his beads. Transcendence. Purity.

FRED

Uh. Well. Something like that.

He begins moving his lips; catches himself.

Pardon. Think I'll go check out back. Look at the constellations. Nice meeting you, Joe.

JOE

They say it's a good night for Orion. And say hello to your sister for me.

FRED

I will. I definitely will.

Grabbing up the Hubble guide to the galaxies, he exits. Silence, for a count of five.

FRANK

Gosh, kids are great. Growing. Winning. More to report in each year's Christmas cards. Resumés getting longer. Moving up and on.

FRIEDA

Even sitting out on the lawn. Just not to make a habit of it.

JOE

You know, I would have expected you to have a dog.

Frank opens the closet and whistles. A person dressed in a dog suit bounds out yapping.

FRANK

Up, boy! Down, boy! Roll over! Catch! Fooled ya, boy!

The "dog" comes to rest near Joe, who pats him.

JOE

Feisty animal. Well trained. Dog, dog, dog, dog. . .

Silence, for a count of five. The dog goes to the back door and Joe lets him out, then on his return samples a cookie from a plate.

Mmmm. Make these?

FRANK

First prize at! . . . at! . . .

JOE

The kids, this house. . . . Do you have help?

Frieda shakes her head.

FRANK

But she could have!

JOE

Everything so. . . .

FRIEDA

S&H Green Stamps.

JOE

Don't tell me: that quilt. . . .

FRANK

Tell 'm what the museum said, honey!

FRIEDA

You.

JOE

While Frank's away with the widgets, and the kids are yawling and ketching or telling their bones, here you are. . . .

FRIEDA

Listen, Joe; all of that is nothing. Just hustle and bustle.

FRANK

Ahem. It is not "nothing." The reason I married you. why, in all. . .

FRIEDA

Now here is something. Go ahead, look. They're by me.

JOE

Collection of poetry. No. Double Crostics?

FRANK

Tell him what Doris Nash Wortman said!

JOE

I particularly like 37 down.

FRIEDA

Which puzzle? Which one?

JOE

"Dislike of being with people; love of solitude."  
Apanthropy.

FRIEDA

You know the word! Oh, he knew it!

JOE

Now, this other puzzle: 49 across.

FRIEDA

What? what?

JOE

Longanimity.

FRANK

What's *that*?

FRIEDA

"Silently suffering while planning revenge."

JOE

22 across: "Conditions where things appear more beautiful than they are."

FRIEDA

Kalopsy. Try 3 down, same puzzle.

JOE

"Collective egoism or group conceit." Nosism.

FRIEDA

Oh! Oh!

JOE

Witzelsucht.

FRIEDA

Hyperhedonia.

JOE

Aphilophrenia.

FRIEDA

Luctation.

FRANK

Lactation. Means milking something.

Frieda grabs a dictionary and exits. A count of ten.

Well sir!

Uneasy, Frank launches out of his chair and makes gestures of turning on something. Quadrophonic sound blares. Joe looks impressed but Frank switches off, activating a pong game on a big-screen TV, standing mesmerized by the little ball traveling back and forth, till it disappears off one side of the screen. Moving to the mantel, he picks up a trophy on either side of a ship model, sets them back, wanders about, wrings hands; sits.

JOE

Yard?

Frank exits. Joe peers into the kitchen, then onto the lawn. In the gathering dusk glow ten eyes. Joe turns away. Suddenly the lights dim. The flowers in the vase wilt. The lintel falls off again. The piano begins playing "Dry Bones" ("The knee bone connecta to the thigh bone. . . "). The pong game turns itself on and two monks are seen tossing an electronic football. There is the sound of sloshing water and the ship model sinks through the mantel out of sight. A football ejaculates from the kitchen. Joe holds up a large card from the table — 9.4 — swiveling it about to face every part of the room, then replaces the card and exits.

Bye, bird.

MYNAH

Bye! Go away, we don't want any! Who was that masked man? Oh, buckle down, Winsockie, buckle down! Buckle down . . . !

Definitions of "performing words" unannotated in script. Source: *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary*.

witzelsucht: emotional state characterized by futile attempts at humor

hyperhedonia: abnormal pleasure from doing ho-hum things

aphilophrenia: feeling one is unloved, unwanted

luctation: striving for success

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

NORM SIBUM was born in Oberammergau, Germany in 1947. He has been living in Vancouver, via the U.S., since 1968. His books include *Banjo* (1972, Caledonia Writing Series), *Small Commerce* (1978, Caitlin Press), and *Loyal and Unholy Hours* (1980, Harbor Publishing). William Hoffer's Standard Editions is bringing out *Beggars* this spring.

FRED WAH's *Loki is Buried at Smoky Creek* was recently published by Talonbooks as one of a group of selected writings which also include Daphne Marlatt, bp nichol, Frank Davey, George Bowering, and bill bissett. Fred teaches in the Writing Program at David Thompson University in Nelson, B.C., and co-edits *Writing* magazine with David McFadden.

GEORGE STANLEY lives in Terrace, B.C., where he teaches English at North West College and where he represents the North for Red Queen, a personage of the Imagination.

BASIA IRLAND teaches in the Fine Arts Department at the University of Waterloo.

AUDREY THOMAS' novels and short stories are well known in Canada, the United States and Europe. She has published four novels and several collections of short fiction. Her work appears regularly in many literary and commercial magazines. Her latest publication is *Latakia*, a novel. She currently lives on Galiano Island, B.C.

PHILIP HUGHES is an ex-professor and ex-salesman who is presently "allowing [his] wife to support the toils of genius" in Brookline, Massachusetts. " 'Mynah' comes from a short story I wrote 23 years ago while growing up in a 'Donnybrook Heights.' The drama came 19 years later. Just when I was thinking that the whole thing might be only a period piece, I met someone just like Fran who does yacht and, believe it or not, delivered the line 'I'm Vice Commodore!' . . . "

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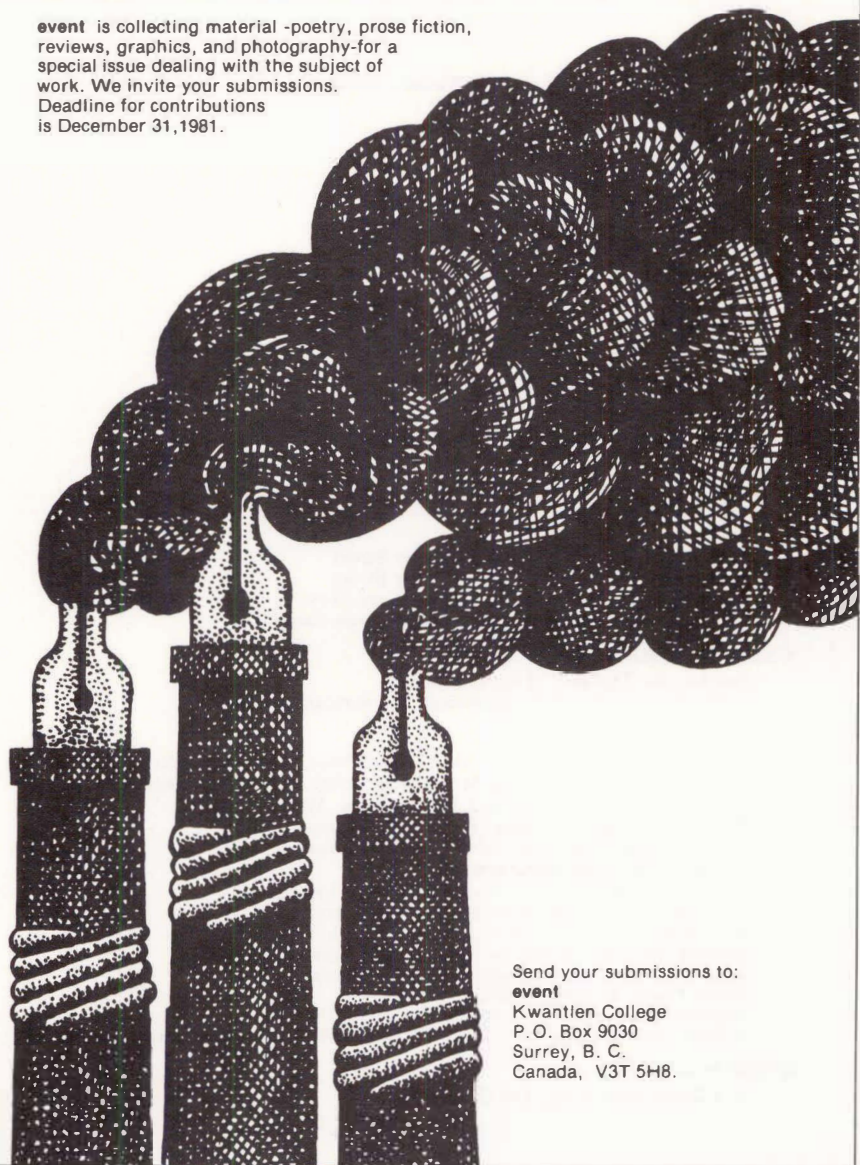
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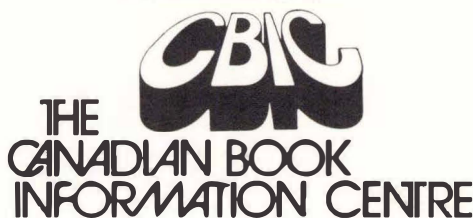
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Come to us with your idea for an event — conference, seminar, workshop, public event, professional development day, or book fair. Anything. Tell us about it and we'll help out any way we can.

We can lend you books, mail you catalogues and other printed resources, send a representative for large events or we can let you bring your group to our resource centres.

If it concerns Canadian publishing, come to us.



**There's a CBIC resource centre near you.**

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## *Coming Next*

The winning entries in  
The Capilano Review Fiction Contest:

D. M. Clarke, "Above Two Forks:  
Sunday, February 11th, 1917"

William J. Klebeck, "White Rabbits"

Mildred Tremblay, "Lily and the Salamander"

together with  
comments by the judge, Robert Kroetsch

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