



by Ann Howatt Krahn*

Place?

To ask wets tap-roots keen for water.

Its people say "The Island", Grand Tracadie on its Atlantic Shore.

And naming it, I *am* there, pulled by the gravity of glacial quartz and native sandstone, merging with my watery ancestors, swimming among our salty selves. Horizons are illusions, vast and boundless; the mind empties. And in the dunes, the stillness is not really still; for when I *see*, every small thing is in some movement, some oscillation; the energy radiates, warm on the cloudiest of days. Nor is the silence really silent, especially in the long grass of the Fox Hills...where still eyes, once engaged, are enigmas, deep in all directions.

The night sky positively hums; and then lies breathless. And when it arches to the dragon's thunder, the stars shake.

Its marsh in spring is damp and greenly wild, singing in the hawk's shadow-wheeling in the warmth of summer--weighted with the scent of spruce and bayleaf. And in the moon-high tides of autumn storms, the dune grass, wet and blond, drums like wings against the hills. While the winds chant for winter, and the ancient songs of water under ice.

This island lives within me. Its tides are mine.

I know this Inside Place as My Island-

a space edgeless, fathomless, drawn in mystery. It is compelling, intense, yet infinitely still, knowing, somehow, before I do. There are wonders there, which I can't imagine. This place absorbs each joy and sorrow, and accepts those of my ancestors.

This boundless, inside place is My Island; it travels with me; it celebrates all wonders and re-cognizes all pain. It listens to the unacceptable; and when there is healing, it is sanctuary.

My Island woke to midnight chanting in Alexandria; it rose on the incense of Japan; it tasted the growing things of Bali. My Island goes everywhere, yet it stays home. Yes, I sense that it has been everywhere before me--that it knows its world, and this place is vast and deep.

Water bright and shadow black, blood beating in the ocean
Is this Island.

*Ann Howatt Krahn is conducting graduate research in environmental thought from the perspectives of psychology and material culture.