

A black and white photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by their hand. The person's right hand is raised, with fingers spread, covering the upper part of their face. Only their left eye is visible, looking directly at the camera. The background is dark and textured. The text 'THE CAPILANO REVIEW' is written in a white, serif font in the upper right corner.

THE
CAPILANO
REVIEW

there are those i have harmed

i wing dream messages to them

there are those who have looked long into the face of fear

i thank them

— Betsy Warland

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COVER
Barrie Jones

THE CAPILANO REVIEW CONGRATULATES

Elizabeth Hay whose story "Hand Games," published in *TCR* 2:12, won the National Magazine Award Gold for fiction. "Hand Games" also tied for first place in the fiction category of the Western Magazine Awards and is one of the finalists for the Journey Prize.

Elizabeth Haynes whose story "Synapsing," published in *TCR* 2:13, tied with "Hand Games" for first place in the fiction category of the Western Magazine Awards.

Patrick Friesen whose five poems were published in *TCR* 2:15, won the McNally Robinson Award for Manitoba Book of the Year 1994 for *Blasphemer's Wheel*, published by Turnstone Press.

Betsy Warland / CLOUDNOTES

altocumulus

i prepare my heart for you
am learning to read the clouds for instruction

altocumulus considers moisture
considers sun

from the palm of a dune
i watch them form, darken, shift

this morning i awoke repeating your number
rhythmic as waves

a voice also comes:

"expect nothing"
"forget everything"

altocumulus considers moisture considers sun

in the dunes at Outlook
lying in sun's first warmth
you soon to leave

the gulls the
Saskatchewan lapping
cirrus sighed content overhead
as i held you long in nothing said

mixed skies

"I was hoping you'd call"

we talk

with shore's need for sea's endless caress

longing

rising receding rising

as the plates beneath

grind and shift

sadness relief aftershock joy

mixed skies this morning

altocumulus

a bit of blue downwind

stratocumulus undulatus

(grey water-droplet clouds)

your long silence after

"i prepare my heart for you . . ."

tears cresting through days of sea and ferries,

roads, mountains and prairies

'i prepare my heart for you'

mixed skies again

on a silver band
raven and eagle are beak to beak

sky surrounds them

altocumulus, stratocumulus,
cumulonimbus with virga
and praecipitatio reaching the ground

our first night

“I just want to lie beside you”
tentativeness so daring, touching
your breathing

staccato
until you settled nose to nose
inhaling

exhaling
our sleep-soft breath

tideline

the sea exhales two conch, an agate,
stone of starry night, stone of
sand with fossils shining black and
small triangular blood stone

(piece of my heart)

for you for

you

cirrus thoughts

i thought of you

and came

i thought of you and

came again

the thought of you

came to me

your tongue

a wild strawberry

nimbostratus

jagged slateblue nimbostratus opacus

press down

relinquish rain

forest revels green

beneath its sheltering canopy

raven calls

i answer

calls

i answer

call

answer

at the mouth of the tea-brown Tlell

the silver kiss of Hecate Strait

immature eagle feather

floats to me

nimbostratus again

dew point

nimbostratus praecipitatio inhales trees, sea
lifts opalescent exhaling layers and layers of
clouds, mountains into Skidegate Inlet
nimbostratus praecipitatio inhales again
distance forgotten in the soft embrace of near

yet you circle within
dove after the flood

sea level

Queen Charlotte Sandspit Lanscoone Rennel Beresford Langara

six fault lines murmuring below
i tell you
you say “. . . like my life feels”
and
“be careful”

as if

i say

“that’s why it’s so powerful here”

Ring of Fire

(geologies’ integrity)

portholes of cirrus

early out on its polished curvilinearity
surface and reflective colour
in perfect sensuous harmony
(Brancusi would weep)

this close —

it is not flat but undulating
all lived and living lungs contracting,
expanding in hypnotic syncopation

this close —

the morning i awoke
everything moving
trembling for weeks

months later

i recognized you

curve and motion

nimbostratus surrenders to altocumulus to
portholes of cirrus and

stratocumulus bluesky eyes

there and

there

and there

watching
like eagles sentinel in shoreline spruce

in the abandoned village of Skedans (Raven Village)
Haida Watchman Charlie Wesley tells of
disease, missionaries burning poles
taking children

this close —
to destruction
his quiet humour

a porthole or eye
in a long-grey stormy sky

sky dark

waves wake me

rock me with increasing intensity

this close —

there is only the being in it

nothing to be done, my body's violent

trembling calms, recognizing motion sickness for fear
there are those i have harmed

i wing dream messages to them

there are those who have looked long into the face of fear

i thank them

there is you

this close —

heart is not beat

but tremor

Susan Holbrook / misling the laureate

there was a word i used to know fully, it was full-blown, offering itself simple (a memo, or a bad idea). the word i knew was 'misled' [mīzəld] and it appeared often in Trixie Belden, Emily of New Moon, Anne, Nancy, Pat, someone was always getting misled [mīzəld]. the infinitive 'to misle' never showed itself, but i didn't notice, since all the books i read flew in the past.

one day i found out about 'misled'. after that the mysteries of my heroines became more complex; sometimes they were misled, and sometimes they were misled [mīzəld], an act far more sinister, malice there, a sour gut. misling, make no mistake, is done with a sneer.

err or else
err borne
bruit Buic
Bel Air
leafy plans
red paint, tin
scratches divine and
errant like a knavel
just popped-out
i suppose

and 'laurels.' what else could they have been, and what else could they be, except buttocks, what else but butts. we were supposed to look down on people who 'rested on their laurels,' the moral Don't rest on your laurels meaning don't sit around on your ass. laurels was just a polite way of saying it, so that laurels meant buttocks in a vague way, vaguely buttocks in the fashion of vague words like loins and haunches.

in grade 5 we learned about the victorious Olympian athletes who had laurels placed on their heads. that was my first pornography.

Charles Bernstein: . . . *I want to suggest that poetics must necessarily involve error. . . . Error as projection (expression of desire unmediated by rationalized explanation): as slips, slides . . .*

apparently, after Daphne frustrated Apollo's attempts to rape her, the angered god transformed her into a laurel bush and broke off a branch. the mythical residue of the word: a symbolic rape that is our wreath of distinction. this association is always now in attendance, every time i read the word 'laurels.' but i look both ways, and it will never never edge out the hegemony of just half a plain bum, a bony or freckled, vague, powdered, blue-veined, fire engine cheek that can sit flat on a chair or go about posturing with celebrity dreams.

slips, slides. slipping when you stay in the pool because your suit's worn thin or after 400m it slips to expose a nipple, fish-kiss (for how long) stand on tiled green-white deck not pink-white the men's oops shower stranger alert to your leg the blood running down exit down by the shallow end and on the way home in the snow hair freezes into sticks boys throw insults, Suck me Off! Suck *me* Off! i shout back, at a loss, stars recede, breath and snot frozen, accidental when the car hit black ice, hair chiming in the ears.

THINGS LEARNED THROUGH TRIAL AND ERROR:

DON'T LIE TO YOUR MOTHER WHEN SHE ASKS YOU IF YOU PUT
ANYTHING DOWN THE TOILET, THE PLUMBER WILL COME AND
FISH UP YOUR JACKS ONE BY RED BLUE YELLOW GREEN ONE,
THOUGHT THE EVIDENCE WAS LONG GONE, FLUSHER.

DON'T BRING A TOMATO SANDWICH FOR LUNCH.

DON'T BE SMUG.

DON'T BEAT YOURSELF UP.

DON'T WEAR PINK AND ORANGE TOGETHER.

Many of my mistakes were generated out of a misling logic of hybridity. so when i burst through the front door after swim practice and shouted 'I'm RAVISHED' it was because that was the only word which went hip to hip with both 'famished' and 'ravenous,' state and desire. in these cases mistakes were about words that live next to each other, mistakes only trying to be neighbourly.

in french dogs say
oiau oiau
english dogs take a bow
a bow, a laurel,
marrow brow
bone dogs take the prize, laura.

in grade 1 we learned about abbreviations like Dr. and etc. i was all for this economical idea, and started to sign my work Susan Hol. my name was as big as Incorporated, anybody could fill in the rest.

Freud says, "We notice, too, that children, who, as we know, are in the habit of still treating words as things, tend to expect words that are the same or similar to have the same meaning behind them — which is a source of many mistakes that are laughed at by grown-up people" (120).

Big Bird posits

"big people

small people

matter of fact all people

everyone makes mistakes so why can't you."

there was that other admonition, Don't burn your britches. i got a whiff that this had to do with friendship somehow, couldn't figure it out, except when i connected it with liar liar pants on fire. the main point was don't play with matches around your britches, the danger being of course that you might ultimately burn your laurels, and then you couldn't rest on them if you wanted to.

i realize that most of my mistakes clatter around the body, my contradicting tattoos.

Nicole Brossard: Very young, I perceived language as an obstacle, as a mask, narrow-spirited like a repetitive task of boredom and lies. Only poetic language found mercy in my eyes Very early I had a relationship to the language of transgression and subversion (75-76).

i was not as precocious. when i was younger i didn't know when i was on the wrong side of the Law. my errors, my subversions, were unconscious, secreted and embraced somehow by my skin, nerves, blood, a body threatened by language which was slowly misling it.

some mistakes are shared. nicole mar. and i admit to each other that we wondered how to eaves trough on a conversation. this is the radio of gossip, accumulated shinglings of omission and desire, rumour pours, humours splash to the dirt and the roof is dry and correct.

error happens all the time in songs. i still believe there is a wee olive in a yellow submarine. maybe my britches and laurels problem arose because clichés are little songs, they share the slurring la de da. repetition of *wah wah, givin' me a wah wah* — that's a poetry you can't mistake. from a telephone wire.

DON'T LEAVE YOUR CONTACTS IN A GLASS OF WATER BY THE BED
AND THEN GO TO SLEEP THIRSTY.

DON'T OVERESTIMATE THE ABSORBENCY, EVEN OF SUPER PLUS.
IF, LIKE ME, YOU HAVE A THIRD KNEE, DON'T KNOCK IT, IT'S AN
OSTIO VOLCANO, X-RAY GROTESQUE.

DON'T LET SLIP YOUR SHAME DON'T LET IT SLIDE.

the other kids in grade 8 told me i had an innocent face, especially my boyfriend, said that made it hard to kiss me. in library period, Carlo Pica would try to get a laugh, sea water stare, test my sexual knowledge. Hey Susan, do you know what a hard-on is. Hey, do you know what masturbation is. Hey Susan, do you know what a blow job is. My answer, always a bored yes to all these questions, was most indignant at that last one, though i refused to elaborate, my image of the act far too gorgeous. they could have their stupid hard-ons and laurels on their heads and so on but the blow job was my spectacular cinema. my image of the first part would have conformed to Carlo's i guess but the climax i imagined was errant: i would raise my head, puff out my cheeks and high C blow a chromosomal fire-burst all over the wriggling chest of my Olympian victor.

Susan Bordo says our automatic bodies can work against us. the "docile, regulated body practiced at and habituated to the rules of cultural life" (13) can throw our conscious politics out to sea, a salute smacks you in the forehead before you even gave an order to the tiny men in yellow hardhats lounging in your neural pathways. but what if it also works the other way around: what if your crossed-eyes, your gas, your tying tongue are more radical than you are

what a ghastly
mistake
boo boos
terrify, spine-
crack
shingle out
throatings
of boudoir
 there is mousse
 on the roof
 of your mouth!
furniture burns

laurels
of the sorrel mare
what a sorry
sorry wheelbarrow
horse
but listen
go this way
faltering takes
time
or that

it wasn't that language misled me. i misled [mīzəld] language.

Sidonie Smith: . . . *since woman is necessary for the
preservation of the divinely authored
species, scholastics such as Aquinas refused
to label her, as Aristotle had, a monstrous
or unnatural creation; instead, they labeled
her . . . "misbegotten man."*

that mis- is their take, their pool, their reading lesson. but contradic-
tions well up, clouds of ink or blood obscure and beget.

what is transgressive is the persistence of error, you never learn, i still
misle, acquiring my mistakes at that crucial Piaget time, try to resist
the allure of that Pink Pearl by the hole-punch it will rub your error
into tweedles, consume its own perfect pink martyr self.

DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR COMPUTER'S SPELL-CHECKER
WHEN IT SUGGESTS YOU CHANGE FEMINIST TO FEMME FATALE.

AND DE BEAUVOIR TO THE BEAVER.

DON'T LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES.

DON'T GIVE ME LIP YOUNG LADY.

DON'T EXCEED DAILY RECOMMENDED.

DON'T KNOW WHETHER 9-1-1 IS REALLY JUST FOR ARROWS
THROUGH THE HEART OR WHAT.

DON'T BOW TO A WORD THAT DOESN'T SIT RIGHT SIT WITH YOU.

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lucas mulder / EIGHT POEMS

autumnal poem

for my mother

the wind.

fallen in the
garden,
content to sit
(for hours perhaps)

then up
carried by the

breath
th

t
t
huh, huh,

breathing.

the rake, working,
then the wheelbarrow:

hard.

rip up the last
of this years beets, the potatoes
(some leaves here, too)
“this’ll put an end to these calluses
for sure”

it all
gets burnt,

gets slowly

gone.

pulling in. the breadth of
land: the furrow, detailed
in frost. latticed
on the window's pane, too.

the bedroom
beyond,
and moreover:
the warm hand. placed
lovingly to head,
brushing the hair
away.

her complexion that of frost
(no! too romantic.
so i write:)

'when she sleeps
her complexion that
of a sleeping
woman,
in this: an
old farmhouse with
little heat,
too.

ii.

brown
and mud
and brown, rich

this is the way
of home.

fragrant to the ear: the river in the distance

i know that it is wrong to speak of both the ear and the river thus
do not worry, it shall sort its own self out.

iii.

careful to describe it
right.

the fresh cedar, cut. deer-
shit on the leaves on the earth-
steaming.

careful to get it just
right

the detail, so lovely.

iv.

noiseless.

it happens just like that.

"it is in response to an ever deepening cold!"

*

the heart. apart

and before you.

the capacity for

caring, so much so,

you make the sacrifice

without

thinking.

the autumn wind.

here a good friend

has written:

'the chestnut leaves

gather.'

awe expressed through fingers tips (so gently at first

sunlight.
tenuous.
a ring.
filled w/ the breath
of ivy
and the waver
of night
arising.

'o, the heat
from this wall . . .
still,

still:

ringing:

the song of
crickets
arising
tenuo/
us then
so
crisp and clear.

o'

the moon, too
beginning to
 whis-
per in the
grass.

three polaroid poems of wales
for Owen Jones

o

HIKERS:
Please Shut Gate.

on _____ mountain
light begins to mottle the bark:
 douglas fir
 larch, some oak
 & holly
mixed forest
 ? a fruit tree

the trail blurs
becomes hesitant:

a garden path
 (is this the right way?)

suddenly a cottage & an old woman smiling

that's how it was:

a pause : plum or crab apple

a pause : with hand on the latch

(*'is this* the right way?')

a pause : the cottage/ the old woman already smiling

a pause : before i too began to smile

o

t b h l e u e w s i h n e d d b l o w s

i l n o c f k r e o d m t t i n g e h t s e a

o an instructional
for dylan thomas

sit on a hill overlooking the river

watch the sea birds circle

let all thots go

experience, first hand, the line:
'now the heron grieves in the weeded verge.'

balance

¹ rain) *the street is drying*

² $\overline{\text{rain}}$ (ing *the street is dry*

whereas ¹ is the result of mild precipitation (or precipitation recently ended) in combination with heat, i.e. sunshine, or wind; while ² is without the presence of precipitation, though the possibility of such is suggested.

*for roy kiyooka

silent of the voice
singing, 'sing-
ing'

(that is
to say:)

semen

falling
on
my

belly

*the shine. the
shine of a
glistening.*

day the shine. the
(and) shine of a
night glistening.
in the shine. the
(each) shine of a
light glistening.

might the shine. the
(undo) shine of a
light glistening.
day the shine. the
evening shine of a
rolling. glistening.

untitled, or impetus

1.

in the next room: the television on and you r 'r' 'r' 'r'
ricochets, makes its way through space, falls
into my ear

now, inside, becomes what i call 'laughter'

'laughter' itself laughs!
sits down crooked on the page

2.
the bowl, she
hands me
is no-
thing but space
which tea has filled, space
which slowly we empty

a rim of laughter shared
between us

slowly, slow

l
y

tea's gone.

-emptiness shining

3.
in this small room-

my 2 feet
move
back & forth,
searching
out a place
to put these words.

4.
you, that is, her & me:

...Γ.....Γ.....Γ.....Γ.....
.....Γ.....Γ.....
.....Γ.....
.....Γ.....Γ.....Γ.....
.....Γ.Γ.....Γ.....
.....Γ.....Γ.....
.....

6.

l

u

t

&

a

h

e

o

e

p

g

m

s

r

IN PROCESS

12-12-1944

K.D. Miller
LEARNING TO WRITE BIG

Kelly licks her finger. Presses it into the toast crumbs on her plate. Licks them off.

Long before I wrote any of the three Kelly stories which appear in *A Litany In Time Of Plague*, I saw a nameless woman seated at a breakfast table across from her husband, licking toast crumbs off her finger. There was something at once childish and mature about the gesture. I sensed that she was playing for time. Keeping the lid on. Keeping her temper about something small, for the sake of something big.

Actually, I'm not sure I knew that much. I certainly hadn't guessed that her marriage was in trouble. But I did know that the vision of Kelly licking toast crumbs from her finger was important. Important enough to leave alone.

So I did. I didn't pester it or try to make it do anything. I knew it would stay safe in memory until it was ready to tell its story.

If this is sounding a bit precious, all I can say is that the more I write, the more I am convinced that, for me, writing begins with something like a visitation. I feel as if I am being haunted by a character's ghost, long before that character's literary birth. And it's always a character that does the haunting. Never a place or thing or event.

People have sometimes remarked on my minimalist settings, the way my characters seem to float eerily against a backdrop of time and place that are only vaguely, if at all, identified. This could be a result of my theatre training. Subconsciously, I might be trying to write plays.

It is true that I almost never adopt the omniscient point of view. I much prefer working behind the mask. I like the gritty particularity of character, its abrasive limitations. The more unreliable a narrator promises to be, in fact, the more likely I am to let him tell his own story and bend it completely out of shape. Three of the stories in *A Litany In Time Of Plague* are told by Raymond Mayhugh, a man so entirely self-absorbed that he has yet to make his own acquaintance.

But back to Kelly licking her finger. Not long ago someone sug-

gested to me that a novelist takes more “responsibility” for her characters than does a short story writer. Well, I fluffed up and clucked that I took *full* responsibility for my characters, thank you, as much as any novelist. That exchange still rankles. Probably because I have no idea what it was about.

One of my dirty little secrets is that although I have written short stories for years, I haven’t a clue what a short story is. That is, I could not stand at the front of a classroom and chalk onto the blackboard three defining characteristics of same. Or two. Or even one. How short is short, anyway?

Now and then I get worried about my ignorance and thumb through a how-to-write book, where I usually find some kind of definition. I read it, marvel at its clarity and wisdom, then promptly forget it. And go back to writing short stories. Whatever they are.

And now, to my surprise and embarrassment, I am writing a novel. Whatever that is. Thank God that Kelly is my viewpoint character. I wouldn’t dare take this step if I didn’t have her damp-fingered hand to hold.

Actually, I feel more as if I were falling into a hole than taking a step. I did not consciously decide to write a novel. If anything, the decision was made for me by the book itself. I was busy working on a second collection of stories when something started nudging the back of my mind. I kept imagining Kelly in some kind of distress. Hiding out in surroundings that were at once comforting and alien to her.

I didn’t know where she was, what was wrong, or what was going to happen to her. But I did know I wanted to find out, and that the finding out would take time. Without knowing what the work would be, I could sense its bigness, its slow-moving depth.

As for the embarrassment I mentioned, I suppose that comes of my having claimed for years to be *exclusively* a short story writer. I’ve actually gotten a bit militant at times, particularly when I’ve been reminded that short stories don’t sell. Recently a bookstore manager told me that he has started pushing my book as a novel, since the linked stories make it teeter on the brink of being one anyway. As grateful as I was for his support, I was miffed by the form it had to take.

Why *don’t* short stories sell? Why have I so often run up against the

notion that a short story writer is in training to be a novelist? That once she gets it right, she'll write a *real* book? Does a flautist aspire to play the tuba? Because it's bigger?

I would like to think that, when it comes to the flute versus the tuba, music is music. I would like to think that, in the case of the short story and the novel, writing is writing.

But I know in my bones that I couldn't produce a decent haiku or libretto to save my life. Form does matter. A novel is different. And there's only one way to find out just how different it is.

I admit to hugging the shore. It is no coincidence that Kelly licks her finger on the first page:

Kelly is spooning warm peas and carrots into her mouth. She was able to use her fork on the scalloped potatoes, because they stuck together. And she could spear the pieces of roast pork she managed to cut up. But she couldn't lift the peas and carrots to her mouth with her fork, because they kept shivering off the tines. She tried three times before she saw Sister Nancy, still talking to one of the other guests, quietly put down her own fork and picked up her spoon.

There is conversation going on all around her in the convent dining room. She tunes in now and then, sometimes catching a phrase or following part of an anecdote. At the moment the voices are just noise while she chases a clump of peas around her plate. She finally traps it against her finger with the edge of her spoon. Lifts the spoon to her mouth. Licks her finger. Glances up in time to see one of the other guests politely looking away.

Well, she thinks, too bad. This is the first decent food she's had since Friday. What did she eat yesterday? Peanut butter on stale crackers, and half a canned peach. This morning? Kraft Dinner.

Now look at her. Gobbling food like a baby with her fingers and a spoon. Maybe for an encore she'll pee on the floor.

She did that once too. In the first grade. Didn't want to raise her hand and let the whole world know she had to pee. Thought she could hold it. Couldn't.

She remembers feeling amazed. Before the shame hit her. Amazed by the sudden release. The lightening. The pleasure, even.

But then there was the splattering on the floor, and Miss Ackroyd's "Why didn't you raise your hand and ask to leave the room, young lady?" And her own rising wail, "I don't kno-o-ow!"

She really didn't know. Couldn't imagine what had gotten her to the point of wetness running down her legs, soaking into her socks. The eyes of her classmates on her. Awed. Admiring, in a way. Then, as Miss Ackroyd's voice rose righteous and scolding, glad it wasn't them. Glad it was her.

She was made to stand beside her puddle until the janitor arrived to mop it up, and was made to apologize to him. "I'm very sorry I —" What could she say? What possible words could there be that would not be worse than the thing itself? "— did that." She pointed a shaking finger at the puddle on the floor.

Her hand is shaking again now. Some of the peas and carrots have fallen off her spoon, but some remain. She gets them to her mouth. Chews. Swallows over her stretched and aching throat.

A woman beside her is chatting brightly to Sister Nancy. Kelly tunes in. "— my annual treat," the woman says. "A whole week of nothing. My husband and kids know they can't phone me here unless the house is burning down. And maybe not even then."

"We get a lot of mothers as guests," Sister Nancy says.

Two other nuns at the table nod agreement. "And a lot of CEO's, too," one of them adds. A very old nun. Her face oddly smooth and tender, like a baby's. Sister Ursula? Kelly can't remember.

"People who live in a shoe." Sister Nancy again, sighing and shaking her head. "Who have so many children, they don't know what to do." She glances at Kelly, then away.

I don't have any children, Kelly thinks. I'm not a mother. I'm not a CEO. I don't live in a shoe.

She wonders how bad she looks. Is her face still blotchy? Nose swollen? Eyes piggy? Nobody has pressed her to speak, which is kind. Probably they can tell at a glance that she's lost it. Whatever "it" is. What do people mean, anyway, when they say they've lost it, or that they're losing it?

She doesn't know. She's too exhausted to care. She just wants to eat. She has cleaned her plate like a child, in order of preference. First potatoes. Next meat. Now, spoon to peas and carrots. Then up to mouth. There. Didn't lose a single pea that time. Good for you, Kelly. Maybe by the end of three days you'll be eating with a fork.

Will that count as a miracle, she wonders, and almost smiles. Could there be a Saint Kelly?

I couldn't say how many false starts it took to get that far. For one thing, I was amazed to find myself beginning at the beginning. Usually, I surface in the middle of a story and flail toward the edges. Or I begin at the end and have to backpedal to find out how I got there.

I worried that it might be amateurish to be starting my novel on page one. Starting and restarting it, that is. Then I found myself reading some writers-talk-about-writing article, and there was Brian Moore saying that he did exactly the same thing. He compared himself to a streetcar nudging around, looking for the right track. Trying this or that one and getting nowhere. Then finally finding the right one, and *zoom*.

So maybe what I was doing *was* professional after all. Sophisticated, even. Because Brian Moore did it too.

It is at times like this that I seriously wonder if I will ever become a writer in my own eyes. What is a "writer," anyway? The words imply someone who knows what she's doing. Can see around corners. Or at least has some inkling, at the top of a page, of what she might find at the bottom.

Well, forget it. Recently I was the guest of a book club that had chosen *A Litany In Time Of Plague* for discussion. I sat in a nice lady's living room, clutching a glass of wine and babbling on about *What I Do* and *How I Write*. All the while cocking an imaginative ear for the wup-wup-wup of a helicopter approaching. Getting closer. Hovering over the house. Then somebody leaning out of it, shouting into a bullhorn, DO NOT LISTEN TO THIS WOMAN. THIS WOMAN DOES NOT KNOW WHAT SHE IS TALKING ABOUT.

Do other writers feel this way? Does, by any chance, Brian Moore? Back to page one. And Kelly licking her finger.

I had found the right track. And I did go *zoom*, for about forty pages. Then I leaned back to read what I had written. And sat up appalled.

I had written those forty pages in a matter of days, going a mile a minute. Skimming the surface. Telling everything. Showing nothing. What was on paper was so thin and poor and unfelt that I seriously wondered if I was burnt out after one book.

Here's what had happened. I had rejected the notion that bigger is better. Fine. But in doing so, I had forgotten that bigger is *bigger*.

And that the bigness of a novel is not simply a matter of length. In other words, I had been trying to play the tuba the way I would the flute, and had produced a squeak.

It was one of those wonderful moments when you realize your alternatives are to quit, start over or start drinking. I had a drink and started over. That is, I began the process of learning to write *big*.

For years, I had written small. I had suggested, hinted, implied. Depended on my reader to find my subtly camouflaged clues. In editing my own work, I had done more crossing-out than anything else. Every word, as far as I was concerned, was there on sufferance. Either it went with the single thrust of the story or it went, period.

Now, I had to teach myself to do the opposite. To be generous without spoon-feeding. Forthcoming, but not gushy.

Actually, it was more a matter of *permitting* than teaching. I had to give myself permission to write something as big as a novel. And I had to give myself that permission over and over because I kept forgetting I had it.

For weeks, I resisted writing a physical description of Kelly. It should have been such a simple thing, letting my reader know what a character looks like. Why was I being so shy about it?

One reason was that I couldn't find the appropriate spot to work it in. Another was that I have always been irritated by pure description, by the way it slows a story down.

Well, I was right and I was wrong. The clue lay in my choice of words. *Pure* description is indeed gratuitous. And it does slow down a *story*.

But I wasn't writing a story, remember? I wasn't trying to get down on paper the psychological equivalent of a single leaf falling, or a single bell tolling once. I was crunching through a whole forest in the middle of autumn. I was in Notre Dame Cathedral, right underneath Quasimodo doing his scales.

Besides, who said description had to be pure? Why couldn't it get its hands dirty? Do a little work?

There was a mirror above the sink in the convent room. Kelly studied her face. The pouches under her eyes weren't too bad, considering all the crying she

had done in the last week. She turned her face and checked out the line from eye to chin. Round, but not bulging. Well, it was years since she had seen her cheekbones.

There was a small hand mirror lying face down on the shelf above the sink. She lined it up with the wall mirror and studied her profile. As usual, her nose, its smallness and snubbiness, surprised her. For some reason, it felt bigger than it looked.

She had always wanted a big nose. She used to joke that she had married her ex-husband Phil for his nose, a gorgeous schnozz that honked when he blew it and muttered rhythmically all night. When she was married, she went through a stage of expecting to see Phil's long canine muzzle when she looked in the mirror, and being surprised by her own abrupt, foreshortened little face.

She put the hand mirror back down on the shelf. It made a loud click, and for the first time she noticed how quiet the place was.

Okay. That simple description is doing some hard work, and getting me all kinds of good stuff for free. Until I wrote it, I didn't know Phil had a big nose. I didn't know Kelly envied it. I didn't know she sometimes looked in the mirror and was surprised to see herself instead of Phil.

What I had found was the relationship in a nutshell. The thing that had both held the marriage together and pulled it apart.

After that, writing began to feel like treasure-hunting. Instead of crossing-out, I took to drawing a symbol in the margin that looked like this: $\angle$. Between the spreading arms of that symbol, I would write, "more about martinis" or "expand" or "why?" or just "?"

At first, I thought of this symbol as a wedge nudging into a crack and forcing it wide. Then I got terribly earth-motherish and thought in terms of a branch being grafted into a living trunk. Yuck.

Finally, I saw the thing for what it was. The mathematical symbol meaning "is less than." What was on the page was less than what could and should be there. The greater quantity was unknown. And it was the unknown that would give meaning to what was already on the page.

A case in point was the paperback mystery Kelly is struggling, for some reason, to get through:

. . . Not one of the characters had the slightest motive for killing the dead person. They did have all kinds of reasons to kill each other, but didn't seem to know where to start. Every few pages, one of them would reveal that they had had an affair years ago with one of the rest, and had borne or begotten yet another in the group, who was just as surprised as everybody else to find out who his parents really were. Meanwhile, the dead person was still dead and no opportunity, means or motive had come to light.

This description showed up in my original forty-page marathon. It had the same gratuitous quality as the rest of the material, and came very close to being axed.

Then I realized that the humour of the situation lay not in the book's being badly written but in Kelly's struggle to go on reading it. Especially in the state she's in.

She has, as she admits to herself, lost it, and has been sent home from work by her boss, with orders to heal herself by Monday:

"Look," Deirdre said to the nonstop blubbing mess Kelly had become by Friday noon. "You're stressed. Okay. It happens." Since her promotion to branch head, Deirdre has taken to talking in little barks of one or two or three words. "So go home. Veg out. Watch the tube. Shop. Buy something. Come back Monday. You'll be great."

That's a tall order, particularly for Kelly, who has no idea what's wrong with her, couldn't veg out to save her life, and doesn't even own a tube.

In the original forty-page skim, I had Kelly go right to her bedroom and try to read:

She sat on the bed, picked the book up, held it on its side and measured its thickness. Almost three inches. And her bookmark was barely half an inch in. She sighed. Sheer loyalty to her favourite author had gotten her that far. That and the price. Seven ninety-five. More like nine, with tax.

She opened the book to where she had nodded off the night before. Dimly, she remembered Lady Jessica blurting out that, owing to a sex change operation, she was not only Lord Bellingham's mistress but also his presumed-dead nephew.

Maybe if she made a list of characters, Kelly thought. Or drew a family tree to help her keep track of who had done what to whom. But that seemed too much like work. And she was supposed to be vegging out.

Something was not working. Something was not hanging together. Why would such a bad writer be Kelly's favourite? And why, given her frayed nerves, would she struggle on with the book, even for the sake of loyalty? Why wouldn't she just curl up on the couch in front of the tube?

Because she doesn't have a tube. Remember? Oh. Right. Excuse me?

It was time for another "is less than" symbol. Okay:

< WHY DOESN'T KELLY HAVE A TUBE?

Everybody has a tube. Why not Kelly? In answering that question, I came up with answers to a few more I hadn't even gotten round to asking:

She had gotten rid of her TV a couple of years ago when she caught herself watching a week-long Dirty Harry film festival, even though she had seen each of the movies at least twice. How much better it would be, she had lectured herself, to devote those hours to yoga classes. Volunteer work. Courses in how to invest her money.

Well, she resolved, she would do all those things and more. She would pare herself down. Become lean and capable and knowing.

Then she discovered mysteries. She had never read mysteries before, but once she started she went through them like popcorn.

Now, as she went into her bedroom where her latest paperback was sitting on her night table, it occurred to her that Inspector Wexford, Adam Dalgleish and Lord Peter Wimsey might be just classier versions of Dirty Harry.

Okay. So far, I knew why she was reading a mystery. But it still didn't make sense for her to be ploughing through such a bad one. The old excuse, loyalty to her favourite author, didn't hold water any more. If she's become a true mystery buff, her favourite would be the likes of P.D. James or Ruth Rendell.

I decided to go sleuthing through the three Kelly stories in *A Litany in Time of Plague*. In the middle of "Requiem," I found the clue I was looking for:

Kelly knows there is something about her that attracts the unfortunate. It's no use trying to avoid the unfortunate either, because they find her. Wispy old ladies grab her arm for ballast in heavy traffic and high winds. Bores back her into corners at parties, seeming to know that she'll smile politely through their bad breath. Refugees of totalitarian regimes seek her out on subway platforms. They have some obscure address to get to for a job interview, but they won't ask the drivers for help because they're terrified of anyone in uniform.

Of course. The author of the mystery had to be someone who had snagged Kelly's overabundant sympathy. Someone who was at a disadvantage. Time to go *zoom* again:

The book was written by eight people. According to the back cover blurb, each of the eight had yearned to write mysteries, but had been kept from achieving his or her potential by long-buried memories of one kind of abuse or another. Together, the victims had tapped each others' traumas until they had felt sufficiently empowered to apply for literary arts grants sufficient to support them for three years while they produced the eight hundred-page paperback for which Kelly had paid eleven ninety-five. Thirteen fifty, with tax.

Five dollars out of every sale, the blurb assured her, would go to support the support group, which now had full charity status and called itself Survivors Unbound: Celebrating the Creativity of Repression (S.U.C.C.O.R.).

Kelly had bought the book because she felt guilty about having no repressed memories. Or at least, none that she could discern.

Her good health, the fact that she was employed and had a roof over her

head, made her feel more and more like a walking reproach to the whole hurting world around her. When she rode the bus to work and looked at the ads, she felt rebuked for not having spina bifida or muscular dystrophy, not being a street kid, not needing to be saved by the Salvation Army, and not being one of just twenty-seven albino kinkajous left on earth.

The same thing happened when she opened her mail, and the same ads came at her again, complete with tear-off portions she was entreated to fill out and mail back, indicating the amount she agreed to have automatically withdrawn from her bank account on a monthly basis. She would keep the ads tucked into her desk blotter for a few days, then furtively transfer them, one by one, to her waste paper basket.

The paperback book had been particularly troublesome because Kelly secretly envied people who were able to repress memories. She herself couldn't repress a thing. Certainly not abuse. Any humiliation or petty cruelty she had suffered at the hands of her loved ones was always right there for her, instantly accessible, in full colour and excruciating detail. This envy exacerbated her guilt, making her try all the harder to plough through the book.

What was emerging was something I had known before, but had had to learn all over again. Namely, that Kelly is too nice for her own good. Much too nice for the world in which she must live. The world that is driving her nuts.

Kelly lacks the necessary cynicism, the layer of emotional callus needed to deal with things like downsizing in the workplace. (Or "rightsizing," as it has been recently euphemized.) She breaks down at the sight of the brown bag lunch left behind in the staff room fridge by a man who's just been laid off. She didn't like the man, but she didn't want him to disappear either.

She feels increasingly disoriented in her own neighbourhood. Every time she takes a walk, she finds more stores with their windows papered over, and signs announcing whatever new business is going to nudge into the space for a little while until it goes belly-up too.

She is distressed by the increasing size and changing demographics of the beggar population:

Shambling old winos are giving way to young men in still-clean designer jeans. Their hair looks like it has been cut in the last month, their teeth are in good shape and they don't smoke. The last one who said to her, "Help the homeless, Ma'am?" held out a Gucci shoebox jingling with loonies.

What pushes Kelly over the edge is her own vulnerability to what she sees. Her overwhelming sense of personal liability. She is too good a samaritan. Filling a brown paper bag at Loblaws with Kraft Dinner and canned goods for the food bank merely compounds her guilt, rendering her incapable of buying her own groceries:

She stood staring at the fresh vegetables. They didn't look like things to eat. They were too shiny and bright and colourful even to touch. Just when she was telling herself not to be silly and was working up the nerve to reach for a red pepper, the automatic sprinklers came on and gave everything a bath.

Fruit was just as alien. Apples. She had never thought before about how many different kinds of apples there were. Macintosh. Granny Smith. Royal Gala. Delicious, red and golden. Spartan. Who named them, she wondered suddenly. Who decided these things?

And oranges. Navel. Valencia. Mineola. Clementine. Blood. Somebody had actually developed a blood orange. Why? For what? Did she need a blood orange? Was she entitled to a blood orange?

Then there were all the strange new things she couldn't identify, from countries she couldn't place. Ugli fruit. What would she do with an ugli fruit? It actually was ugly, kind of like a turnip. How would she eat it? And where exactly was Kuala Lumpur?

In the deli section, her cart still empty except for the food bank bag, she watched an employee cutting slabs from a huge block of Monterey Jack cheese. Kelly has always loved cheese. A friendly food, solid and satisfying and easy. She usually makes her choice for the week with barely a thought from a shortlist of favourites. Havarti with caraway. Old cheddar. Colby. Brie. But this time her favourites were lost in the abundance of cream cheeses and blue cheeses and cheeses with green veins running through them and cheeses with almonds embedded in their tops and cheeses with cherries lurking all the way through.

The employee slicing the Monterey Jack must have felt Kelly's presence, because he turned and said severely, "May I help you?" She shook her head and wheeled her cart away.

In the end she bought a second round of canned vegetables, canned fruit, peanut butter, Kraft Dinner and beans. The cashier looked at her curiously and asked if she wanted another brown paper bag for the food bank.

I'm not going to claim that all of the above came about as a result of my asking myself why Kelly didn't have a TV. But when I asked that question, something did click into place. Then one thing led to another, and another.

Questions and answers. Seeking and finding. I had always thought novels were planned and plotted things. Maybe, for other writers, they are. In my own case, I have to admit that for all my scribbling and scratching out and cutting and pasting, the work is ultimately out of my conscious control. I rely as much as I ever did on my "visitations," those hauntings by characters as yet unborn.

Meanwhile, the < symbols continue to show up in the margins. The material between their spreading arms is causing the book to grow more or less the way an onion does, by generating new layers from within. You might say the thing isn't so much getting longer as putting on weight.

And I am pleased to say that much of the material in the original forty pages is salvageable. In fact, some of it seems almost to have been waiting for me to catch up with it. To get to the point of being able to appreciate it. Like Kelly licking her finger. And like Sister Nancy referring to her as someone who, though childless, in fact has so many children she doesn't know what to do.

Well, she still doesn't know what to do. And I don't know what I'm going to do with her. That is, I don't know what is going to happen to her during the three days she hides out in the convent.

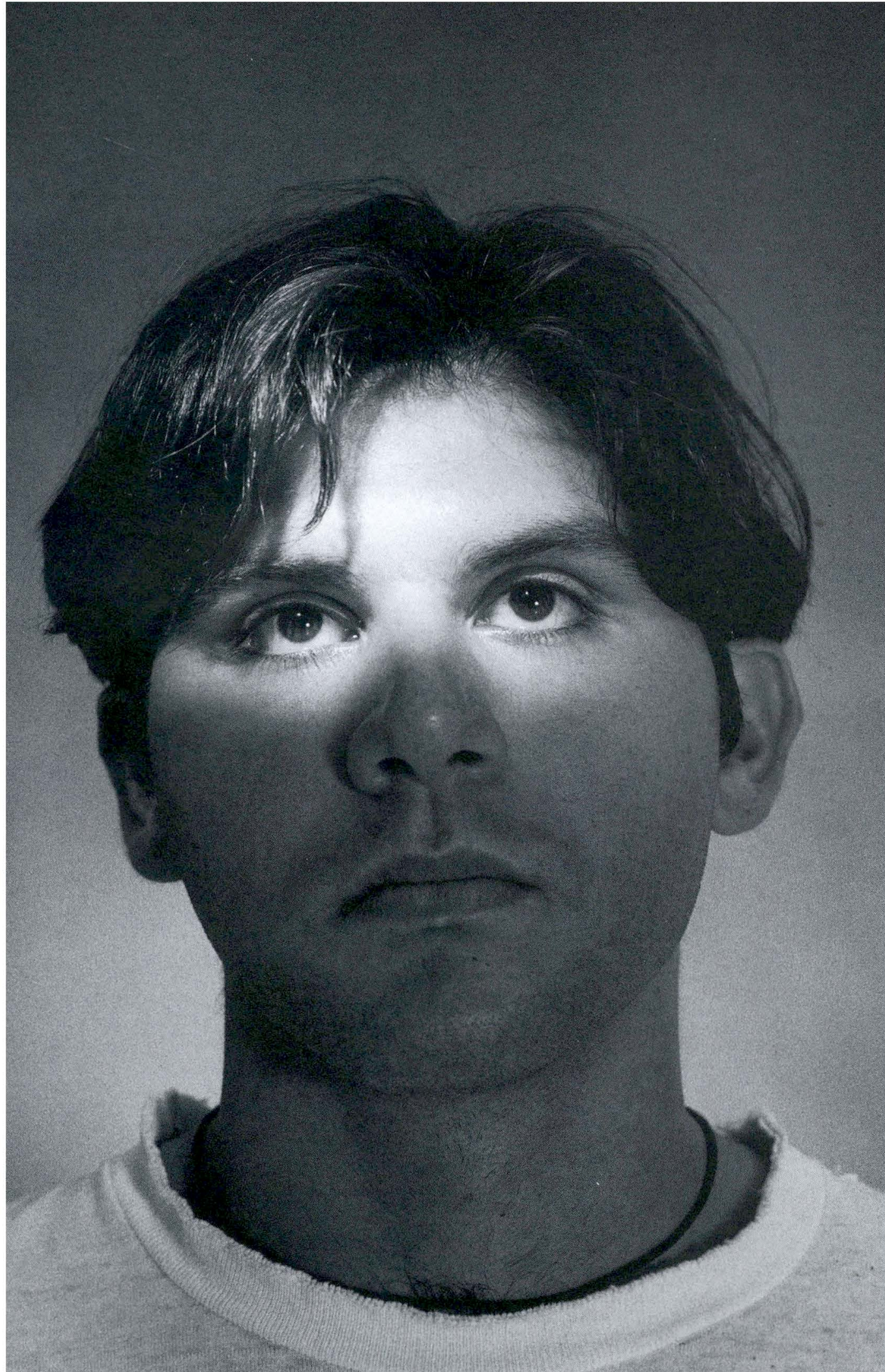
I do know she is not going to come away with any pat answers. Sister Nancy is not going to be a wimpled "Sarge" in a spiritual boot camp, whipping Kelly into the shape of a clean, serene praying machine.

But beyond that, I haven't a clue what the book is going to con-

tain. Maybe that's why question marks continue to appear most often between the spreading arms of my "is less than" symbols. Those question marks are my way of interrupting myself and saying, Excuse me? What do you mean? What are you talking about? What is underneath this? What is behind and beyond it? How does it relate to Kelly's past, present and future?

And above all, what has it got to do with her licking her finger?

Barrie Jones
THE NAKEDS





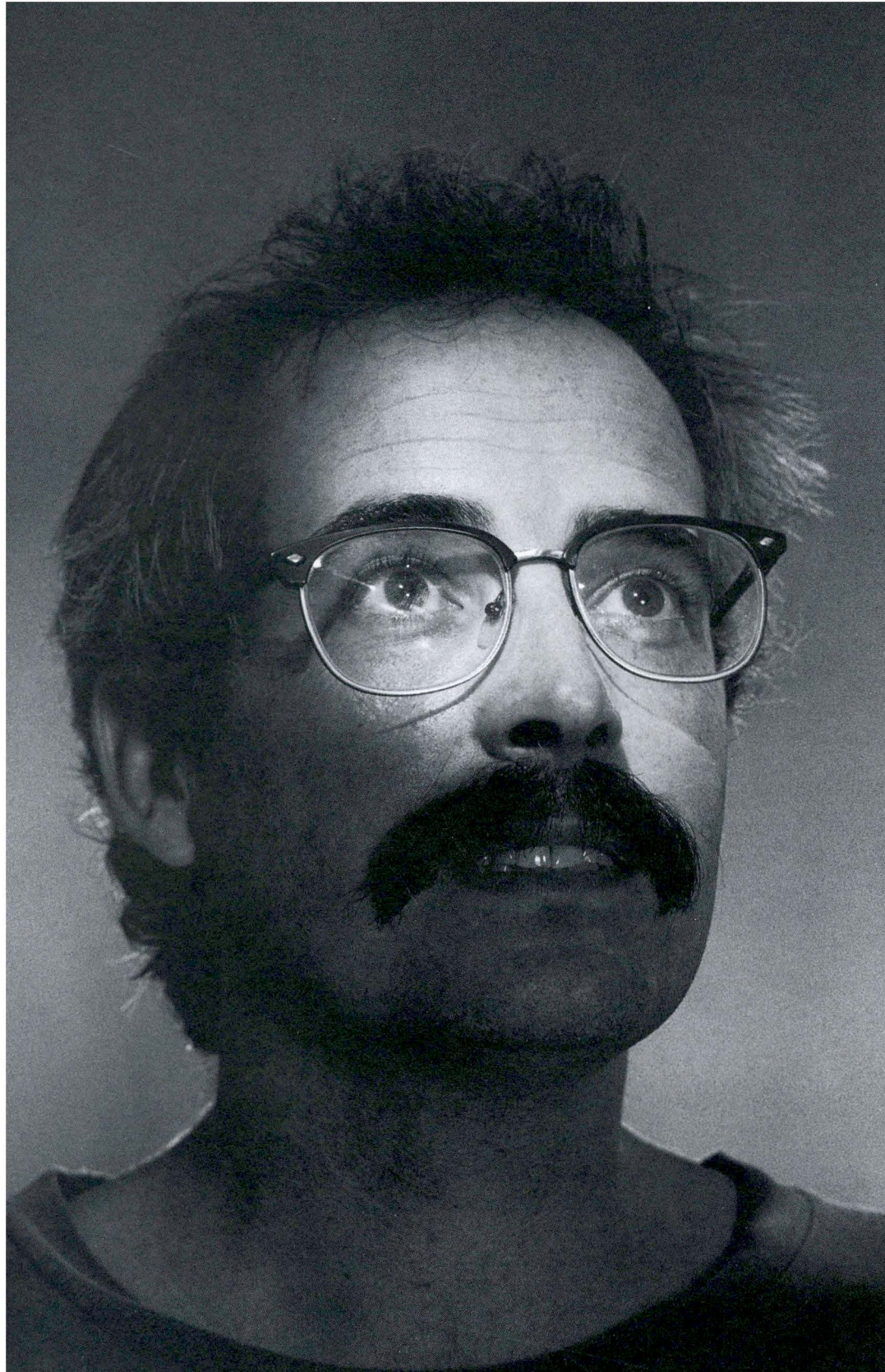




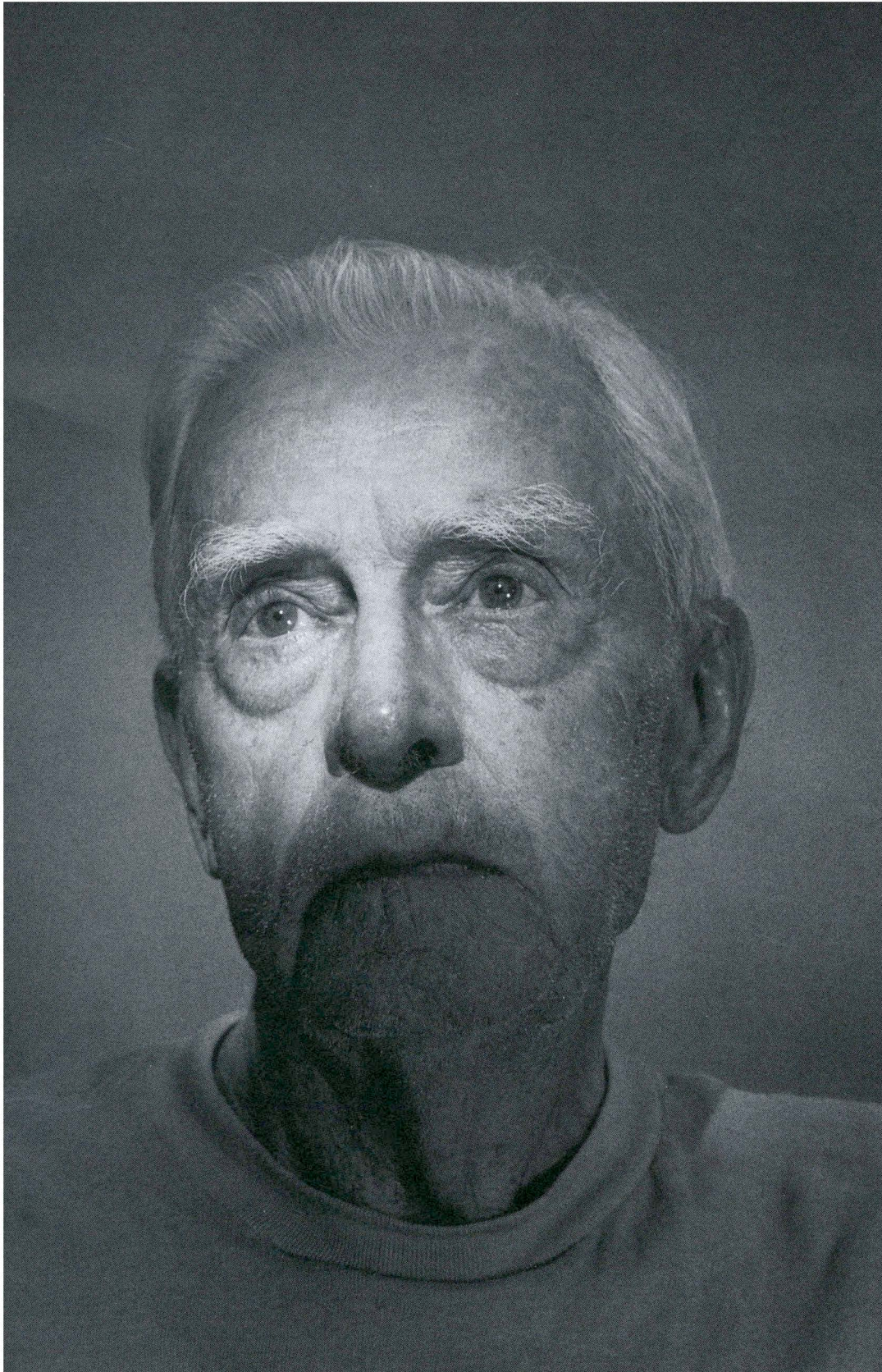




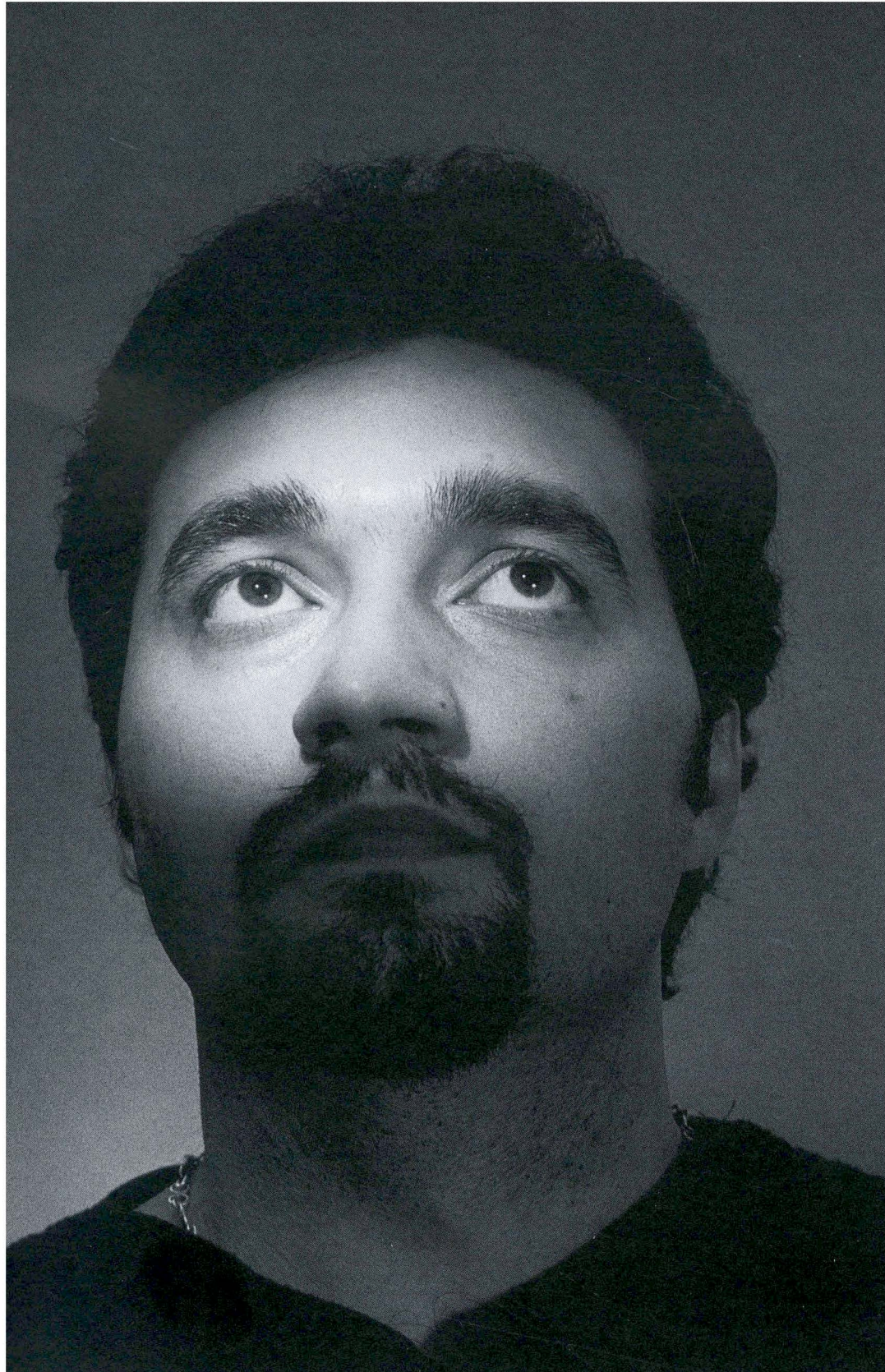










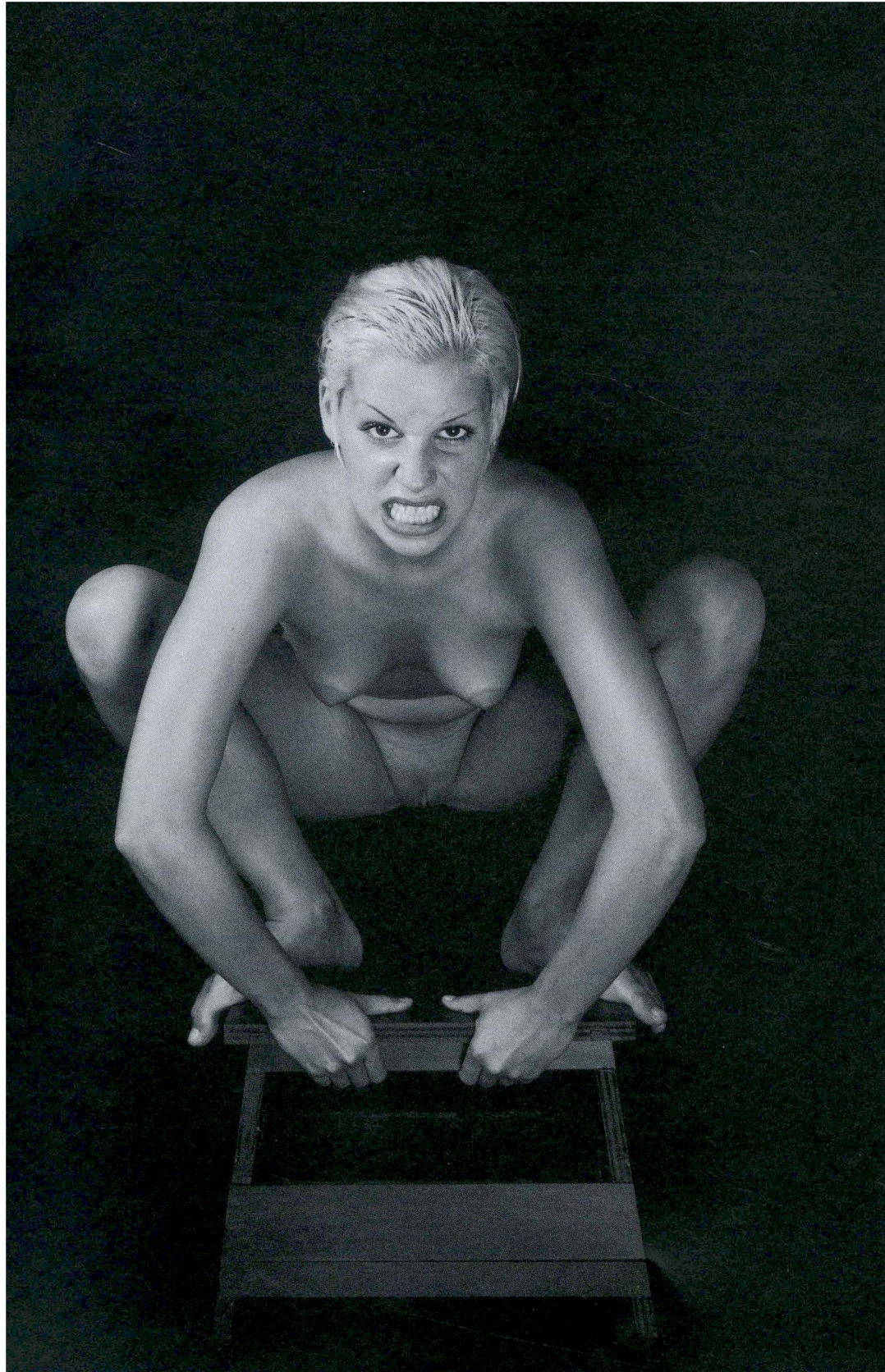


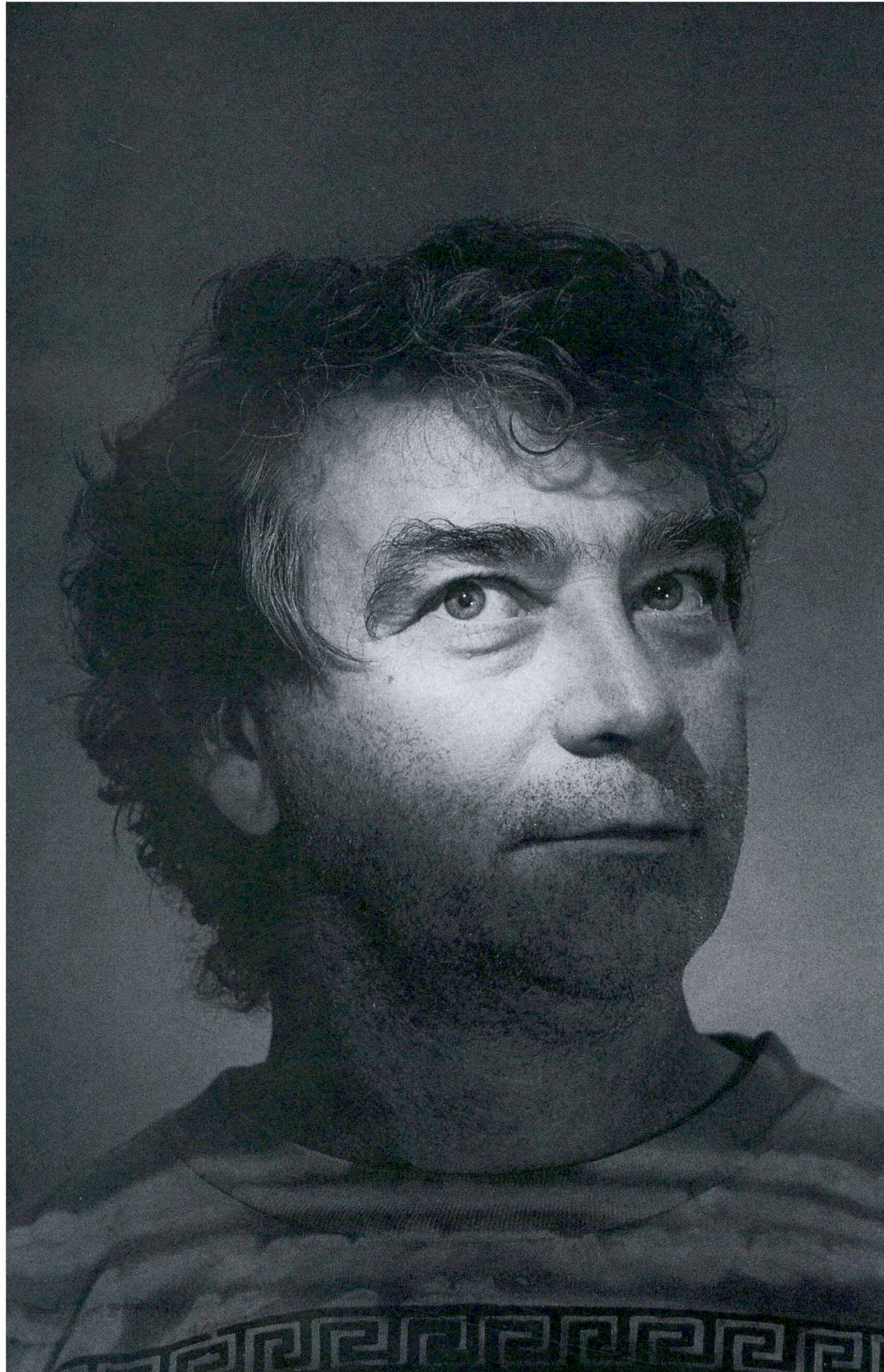




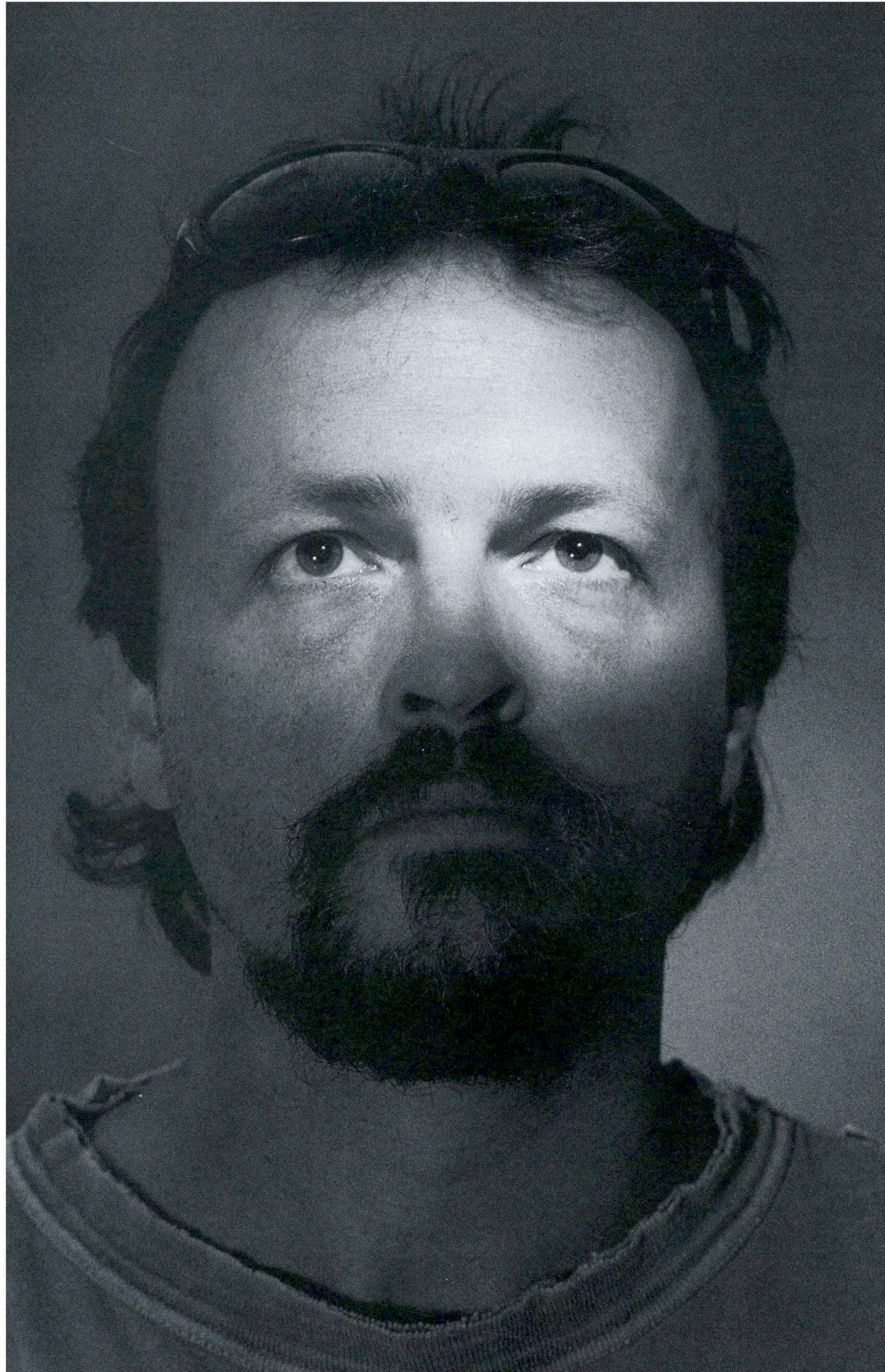




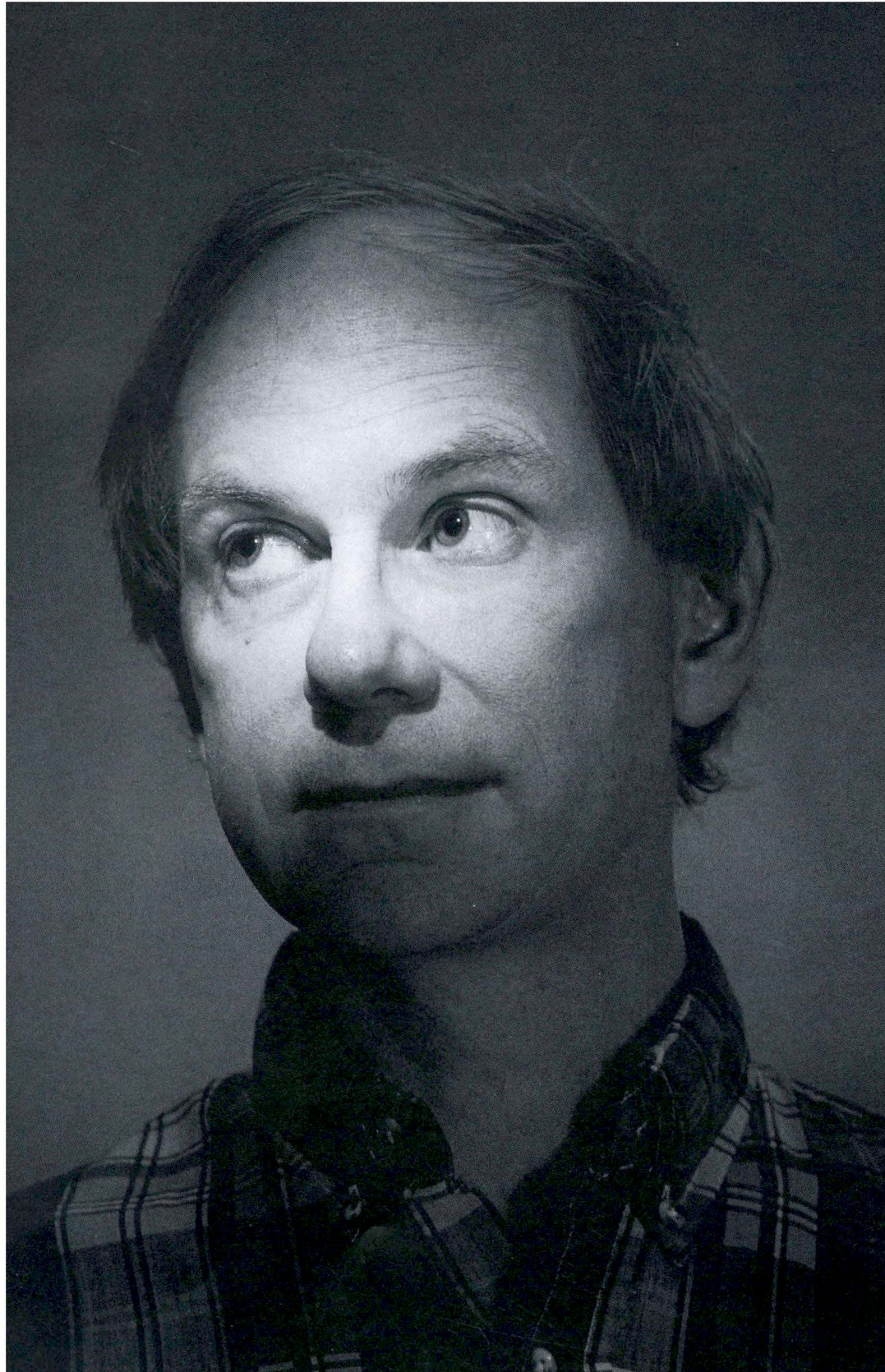








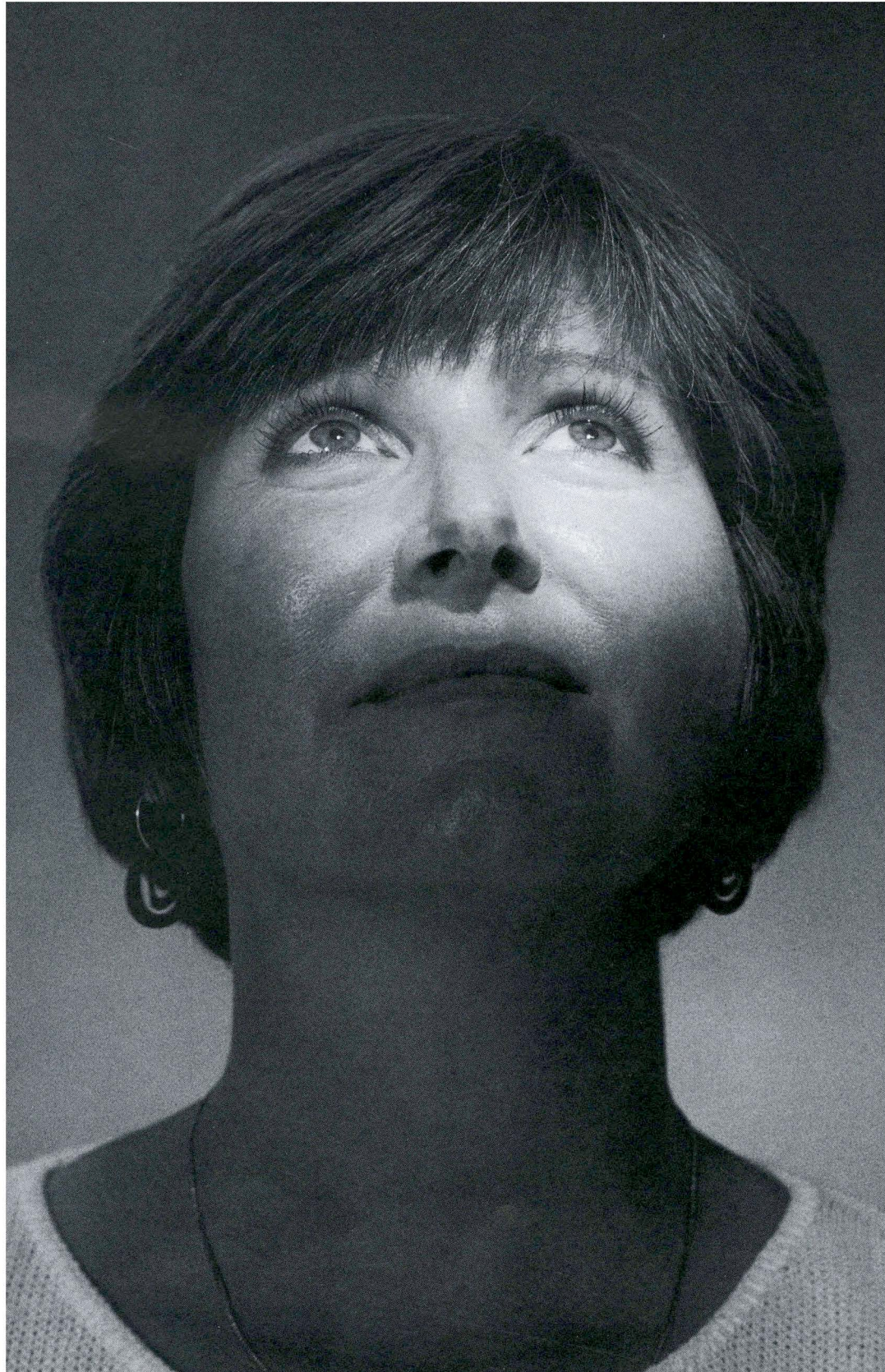












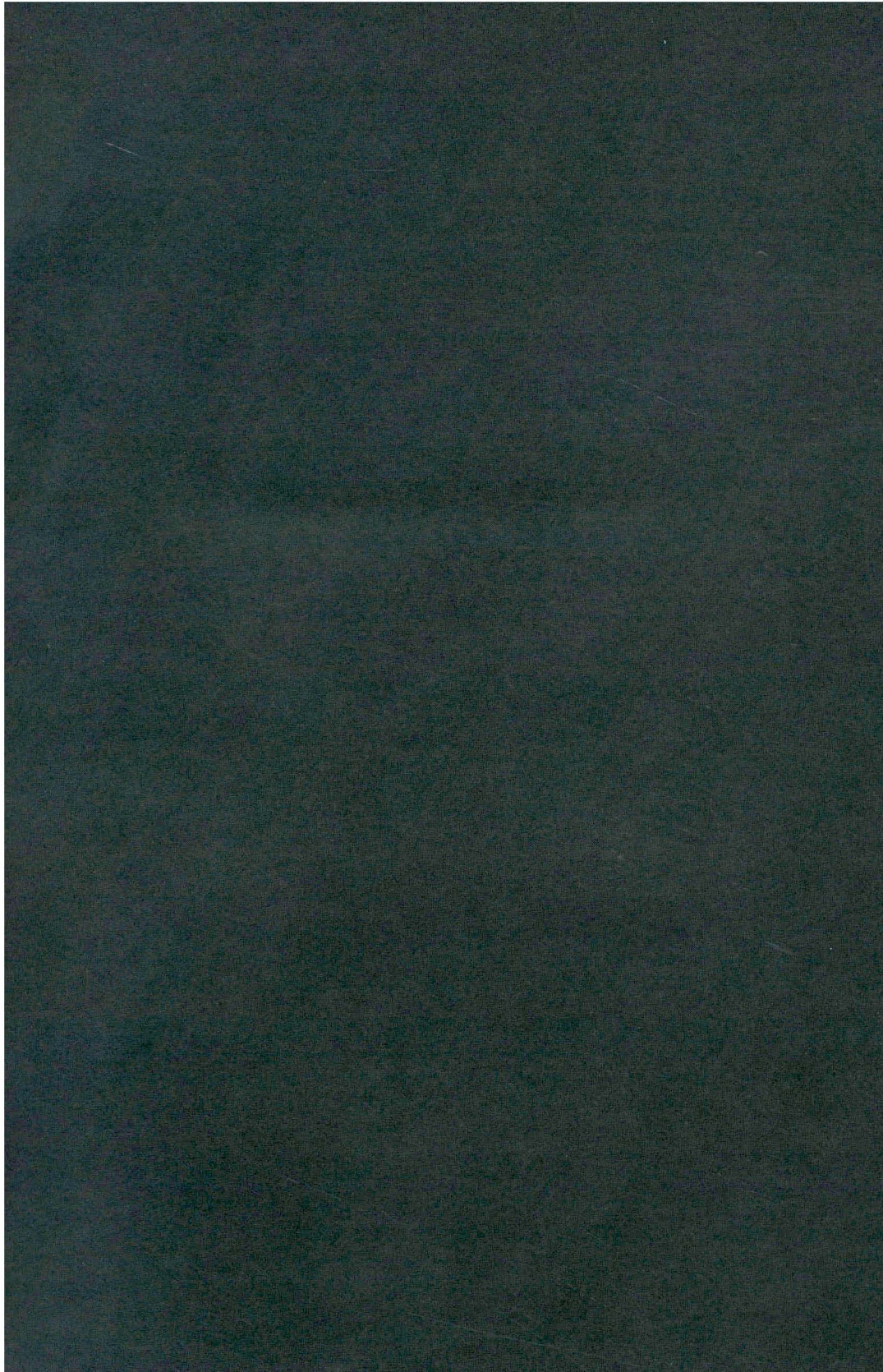












ARTIST'S STATEMENT

For a number of years I have explored individual and group identities as cultural icons, emblems, and personal portraits. The collective identity presented by a uniform has a lingering historical resonance and an ongoing cultural presence. Through a number of older bodies of work, such as the *Hockey Series* and the *Trans-Canada Bicyclists* and such recent series as *Uniformed* and *Workers' Banners* I have concentrated on the effects of a uniform both on the wearer and the observer. One quality of the uniform is the ability to include or exclude one from the group. Despite the fact that uniforms may elicit fear or at least suspiciousness in many people, they retain an exciting and powerful effect on most of us. I am interested in acknowledging this contradiction.

This work in progress, *The NAKEDS*, deals with many of these issues — the idea of individual identity versus collective identity, of inclusion or exclusion from a group, and the dynamic between the viewer and the viewed.

The nakedness acts on these figures and these viewers in many of the same ways as does a conventional uniform. Those who are naked are united and separated both from those who are clothed and from those "reading" the images. The primitiveness of nakedness is both repellent and attractive to these latter groups, and in either case has a visceral effect on us, much as a uniform does.

These images are "naked" rather than nudes. The impact of the work is directly related to an observation of, curiosity in, and gut response to nakedness. They are not nudes in the conventional sense because they are not primarily concerned with the aesthetics of form or sensual/sexual availability (desirability). The work, however, is concerned with the state of looking and of being looked at. The observer's stare is met, challenged, and returned unselfconsciously by the figures.

The age, sex, and appearance of the figures is not meant to be all

inclusive or particularly significant. They become tribal by virtue of their nakedness and the nature of their activity and relationship to the viewer. The choice of subjects (figures and faces) is meant to be varied and is determined mainly by my photographing people who come from my circle of acquaintances and associates.

Whether motivated by an interest in the politics of the body or by a desire for personal exploration, most of those who participate do so for themselves first and only secondarily as contributors to my project. Almost all have expressed a great deal of personal satisfaction with the experience of modelling. A number of times I have been approached by individuals asking to be included in the series after seeing the photo of a friend and hearing of their experience. As the artist, I find the photos themselves more powerful than the act of making them. Therefore, I ultimately detach these images from the reality of the photo session — which for the subjects may be their most powerful experience of this work. As the artist, however, I now use the images of those personal moments to construct a fictional narrative/situation.

This body of work was first conceived as a series for gallery exhibition which — because of the nature of its content, scale, repetition, and number of elements — when viewed creates a ritual-like space for the viewer to enter. Once in this space the viewer becomes an integral part of the whole piece.

Preparing a bookwork, however, requires a different sort of discipline because of the need to direct the flow, timing, and sequence of the images, thereby controlling the options of how one can view and experience the work. The images can be experienced individually but never as a whole, only as a sequence. In that sense, memory (of those images that came before) plays more of a role in a bookwork than in gallery work.

The challenge for me was not to try to represent the experience of viewing the work in a gallery but somehow to bring to the “reader” some of the many levels present in the experience of looking and being looked at without distancing the “reader” from the visceral impact of the images.

In this bookwork the “reader” sees the viewer observing the figures as the figures challenge and observe the viewer. But furthermore, the “reader” also has the opportunity of entering into the work as a viewer

on another level, thereby creating a triangular dynamic of observer and observed that would rarely occur in a gallery exhibition.

This bookwork also creates for me a logical pause in the development of *The Naked*s. I am using this break in shooting to contemplate new possibilities suggested by this publication as I shape the work for gallery exhibition.

— Barrie Jones
August 1995

BARRIE JONES
SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Solo Exhibitions

- 1992 *Barrie Jones*, Mercer Union, Toronto, Ontario.
- 1991 *Young Women and Young Men of Canada*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario (catalogue).
- 1990 *Looking for Paradise*, Artcote Gallery, Windsor, Ontario.
- 1989 *Personal Rituals and Young Women of Canada*, Forest City Gallery, London, Ontario.
- Trans-Canada Bicyclists*, Forma Gallery, Novi Sad, Former Yugoslavia.
- 1981 *Beyond Sensation*, Founders College Gallery, York University, Toronto, Ontario.
- 1978 *Hockey Shots*, Nova Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Group Exhibitions

- 1993 *Site Survey*, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa, Ontario.
- Southwest Biennial 1993*, Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario.
- 1992 *Beau*, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa, Ontario (catalogue).
- 1990 *Pictures of People*, Gallery 101, Ottawa, Ontario.
- 1986 *Photography*, Detroit Focus Gallery, Detroit, Michigan.
- 1985 *Interior Rites: Domestic Scenes and Rituals*, ARC (Artculture Resource Centre), Toronto, Ontario.
- 1983 *October Show*, 1078 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Vancouver: Art and Artists, 1931-1983*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia (catalogue).
- 1980 *Young Contemporaries '80*, London Regional Art Gallery, London, Ontario (catalogue).

Michelle Alfano / LANDSCAPE WITH TREES

She tries to rise but can't. We both know she isn't able to but still there is this pretense maintained each time. The disease has taken a strange course. She is emaciated from her waist up, her arms and wrists no bigger than a child's. Her wedding ring has fallen off so many times she keeps it on a necklace. Sometimes the weight of it seems so heavy I think her thin neck might break. I feel her disappearing weight between my clumsy fingers when I shift her. But her stomach, legs and feet are swollen and misshapen, so that she can no longer walk or use the bathroom without my help. Only slippers fit, nothing else.

This is a portrait of her. The canvas is covered in black and an image has been scratched out with a knife. The neck is crooked slightly to the side. Caverns form around the eyes. The hands are clenched and the only things that have colour are the eyes which I paint bright yellow. When it is done I hide it under my bed beneath some sketchpads.

"I've run out of cigarettes. You forgot to buy me cigarettes."

So? I continue watching television, surfing through sitcoms and infomercials.

"I said I need my cigarettes." She smacks her mug of tea on the coffee table. There were already dozens of little dents there that couldn't be erased.

"Alright, alright." I get up and throw my jacket on.

"Not that one, it makes you look fat."

"I am fat," I mumble more to myself than her. She only grunts and grabs the remote control. It is a relief to leave the house anyway. It has acquired a smell, you know the kind I mean. It tells you the old and ill live there. I feel like I've known that smell all my life, you'd think I'd be used to it.

The streets are white with snow and the air so clean it hurts my lungs as I breathe it in. The snow covers the grime of the street. I hate

it when it's winter and there's no snow on the trees. They look so naked, vulnerable. I wonder if the snow acts as a sort of blanket of warmth. I know it's heavy, I've shoveled enough of it. I trudge into the variety store and see old Joe behind the counter smoking a cigarette which he's not supposed to do but does anyway. He's wearing the same old brown cardigan which his daughter bought him a dozen Christmases ago. It's dirty and frayed but Joe doesn't care.

"Hey young Lisa, how you doing?"

Joe always calls me young Lisa even though I'm almost 30. He remembers me from when I used to poke into the candy jars for penny candy or bought plastic milk jugs.

"How's your mother?" he asks as he rings up the cigarettes.

"Aaah . . . you know . . ." I mumble. I never know what to say. *She's fine thanks, she'll be dead any day now.* But of course you can't say that.

"I know sweetheart, go on . . . take some candy." This is our daily ritual now that Ma's sick. It wasn't so long ago that he used to chase me out of his store for loitering.

"That's okay, Joe —"

"C'mon young Lisa, you're not too grown up for candy are you?"

"Naaah, okay. Thanks Joe."

"Say hello to your mom, okay?"

"I will."

I slosh back home. Boy, the lady at Weight Watchers is going to have a fit when I tell her, if I tell her. I pop the strawberries into my mouth, you know the kind, marshmallow inside with sugar and red dye on the outside? I used to love those. When I come home, Ma is looking at one of my paintings. She has an already used cigarette butt clamped in her tightly screwed mouth. Little lines like cracks emanate from her mouth. She sometimes does that until she gets her fresh pack.

"Why is everything you do so ugly and sordid?" she mutters.

"Well maybe I'm ugly and sordid, did you ever consider that?"

"Well, you could be pretty if you wanted to. Did you get the cigarettes?" I take the painting from her as she grabs for her cigarettes. Yeah, kinda like being happy. If we could choose to be happy, wouldn't we all be happy? If I could be pretty, don't you think I'd choose to be, I want to say to her.

I hear her click on *The Wheel* as I go up to my bedroom. I've got an easel set up by the bedroom window with a cloth covering a canvas I'm working on. I don't know why, it faces onto the brick of our neighbours' house. But it just seemed the thing to do. I look at my painting, the new one. The predominant colour is black, that ought to tell you something. I used to give them all short, simple titles like "Death," "Exile," "Prism," "Absinthe," "Quarry," but I heard one of my art college teachers comment to another student that titles like that were sophomoric and trite so now I have long titles like "elderly woman with cane in variety store" or "behind the railroad tracks along belview." They're always in lower case, like e.e. cummings or Pearl Jam song titles.

This is the house, it's gray with many small rooms. I have made them different shapes, triangles, trapezoids, distorted rectangles which look like they have been pulled and tortured into another shape. In one room is a brightly beating organ, perhaps a heart, not red, just pink. This is my room.

"Lisa! It's time for my shot."

"I'm coming!" I hate this part of it. Just before we found out about the cancer she developed diabetes and now I have to give her insulin shots twice a day. Ever since Pa died she'd predicted her own demise every six months. Each ailment was heart disease, cancer, a virus. Now it's the real thing. Her arm is so thin it's hard to find a vein. She hates it too. The idea of the blade entering skin, slicing through —

"LISA!"

"Okay, okay."

"Look at your father's garden," she says as she looks out the window into the backyard. "It'll never be ready in spring, we've let it go . . ." She is hurt that the garden has deteriorated. Since Pa's gone we can't seem to maintain the garden but I can't do everything, work at the store, take care of her, paint *and* do the garden. I say it out loud. I withdraw the needle, wipe it and put it away.

"Your father did." The big hero. When he was alive he was the alcoholic abusive loser. Now he's the hero who took care of everything.

"Yeah well . . ." I stop myself. It'd only start another fight. But

she's already changed the channel. So have I, come to think of it.

At the mall where I work in the afternoon, the smokers are huddling outside like a pack of shivering animals. One of the guys with a cigarette dangling from his lips calls out, the same one as yesterday and the day before, "Hey baby need someone to keep you warm?" I turn my face into the lapel of my coat so he doesn't see me smile. Some guy beside him makes a motion with his hips and hands when I sneak a look.

"See ya!" he yells. I like his hair, it's long and dark. The "dirty look" Ma says.

When people ask me where I work I rarely say Pennington's. If I did, I know they'd say, 'Oh the store for fat women?' so I don't say. They hired me because they wanted to attract a "younger demographic."

"Oh you mean like fat girls as opposed to fat women?"

"Well yes, dear," my boss said. She adjusted the fake pearls across her bosom. The plastic coating is flaking off the bottom of the pearls. I know because I almost lifted them once but then saw they weren't real. She turned to put away dresses left in the changing room. I meant to tell her that her foundation was smeared across the bridge of her nose like a stroke of fresh paint. I can paint better than she can apply makeup.

As I hang up some new dresses, I think about that guy outside the mall. He's thin and tall and, maybe Ma's right, not that clean. But still. Just because you weigh more than 100 pounds doesn't mean you don't have sexual desires.

One time I went to a dance down at the Sons of the Ukraine hall and this guy who was stoned asked me to dance. He wanted to know how much I weighed. I asked why and he said he was surprised that I was a good dancer because I was so big. So I took my big hand and shoved him in the face. He fell down and then I left the dance.

A gaggle of women come into the store — a mother, two daughters all dressed in varying shades of pastel. They remind me of those Russian dolls Ma has at home that fit inside each other, the youngest daughter fitting into the older one and both of them into the mother. I don't know why but it irritates me more when I see women and girls

my size wearing these colours. At least I have the good sense to wear black. I drag myself over to the group. The girls lag behind the mother. It's the first time for them in Pennington's. I can tell they are irritable, curling their fists and crossing their arms. I recognize the look in their eyes. I try and show the girls something nice and not too ugly because I know they will be teased for shopping here by their friends. The youngest one warms up to me, she is more ashamed than angry. I lean over and whisper in her ear, "You've got really pretty eyes." She is a little shocked and she blushes but then smiles and takes my hand as we walk around the store picking out clothes. When I leave the store after my shift I look for that guy but he's gone.

I look at my art books. I prop one on the coffee table and choose a picture. I love the moderns but choose Caravaggio. The contrasts of dark shadow and brilliant colour. I slip my hand between my thighs. I work slowly. I concentrate on the page I've selected. On the sculpted thighs of the man half hidden in shadow. I think it's the Martyrdom of St. Matthew or is it St. John the Baptist? I move up and down slowly, slowly, pushing harder towards the end until the colours of the page are imprinted on my brain.

I get up and go into my bathroom. I look in the mirror and take a lipstick out and start to put it on. I wonder if I add lip liner whether I can make my lips look fuller. I peeked at my boss' fashion magazine and read it somewhere. I worry that I'm getting that pinched look like my mother. I look at my face and instead put a big pink X on the mirror. I almost wipe it off then decide no. I turn sideways, suck in my stomach and mentally lop off half my thigh on each side.

I hear Ma in her bedroom. She has recently started to sigh very loudly with each turn or movement. I help her dress and prepare breakfast, filling her cereal bowl and pouring her tea. I bring an extra blanket into the kitchen. We eat there because it's warmer than the dining room which we used to use "when we were a happy family." This is Ma's favourite phrase lately and I wonder if I should add Alzheimer's to her list of ailments. When exactly were we that, I want to snap. I decide when I get my own place that I will never eat in the kitchen and that the cutlery will match and I'll never buy dishes with

flowers. I hate flowers, their frail and beautiful heads so slender they look like they will snap. Everything will be black. The dishes, the furniture, the bookcases. And no pastels.

Ma settles in her chair and slowly spreads a napkin over her lap.

"You bought the wrong oatmeal again."

"Did I?"

"You most certainly did."

"Try the bran then." I pour myself some tea with lots of sugar and milk. It feels like only a short time ago Ma was preparing my breakfast before school.

"You know I hate that stuff. It's like chewing on twigs. You know I've asked you twice to buy the kind I like."

"I KNOW —" I start to say. I feel my face flushing red.

She is pulling on her long gray braid, doing and redoing it with slow, tentative fingers. It's as if she's underwater and her fingers are fighting the force of it. Her fingers remind me of her doing my braids each morning, scraping my scalp with the brush until the sides of my face stretch up and back in her worn hands. So I just stop yelling.

I get to the mall for work, he's not there. At least I didn't waste the lipstick. Some kids are sniggering at the front door of the mall. I show them my middle finger and watch their shocked expressions from the other side of the glass. "Not all fat people are passive wimps, you little pricks," I mutter. I may be fat but I'm not blind or deaf. It shouldn't, but it bothers me the rest of the afternoon. As I leave the mall after work he is there and walks beside me out the door.

"Hey, 'scuse me Miss, would you like to go for a coffee or something?"

I turn to look at him. "I don't even know you," I say, attempting indifference.

"Sure ya do, I say hi to you every day."

"I don't know your name."

"Willie, my friends call me Hawk."

He extends a hand with bitten down, dirty nails towards me. Ma was right. But he does have nice eyes. So black I can't make out the pupils. Now we are both standing in the middle of Barton Street and I don't know what to say.

"Would you like to go for a coffee?" He gestures towards the Tim Horton's. I nod yes and walk with my head down, my chin and mouth muffled into my scarf the rest of the way to Tim's.

Once we're comfortably settled in those plastic molded chairs we talk for a while. I find out he's not working but then neither is half the city. He lives with his mom. He's broke. But then so am I. I have a coffee and one donut in front of me. I decide to be magnanimous and buy his since he says he forgot his wallet at home. He smiles a wide smile full of white teeth. Two jut out like fangs which is oddly attractive. He eats two, three and then four donuts and three cups of coffee as if he's starved.

"I don't know where *you* put it," I say. He stops mid swallow and gives me a look that says "Well I know where you put it." I decide not to pursue it.

"Are you a virgin?" he asks finally after a very long pause. He turns away and looks out the window. He asks again as if he is about to laugh.

"What are you going to do about it if I am?" That shocks him and for the first time we both laugh.

"Welllll — " But he has nothing to say. We finish our coffee and I wonder if he's trying to find a way to escape. We start to walk home in the direction of my house.

"You know you're really pretty."

"Oh please . . ." I hate those kind of lies.

"No really, you've got — you've got great hair."

I think about what he said. I do have great hair, even Ma says so. It's long and black with just the hint of a wave. I dye it black but usually I have it in a ponytail so it's hard to tell what it's like. He reaches out and touches a strand. He takes it and puts it in his mouth. I let him and I like it. I didn't think I would. He kisses me on the mouth softly when we part like he's had a lot of practice. He even puts his tongue in my mouth and plays with my hair. He leans into the side of my thigh and I feel him there. We make plans to meet the next day after work.

Ma is up watching TV and the nurse, Mrs. Bauer, is gathering her things to leave.

"Where've you been?" Ma asks. "Mrs. Bauer's been waiting for you

so she could leave." And so has Ma, as I can see from the set of her back.

"Not to worry," Mrs. Bauer says and winks at me. Her hand, like the colour and feel of softly worn brown leather, pats me on the cheek. She cares for Ma while I work and I know that I am the least of her problems. I walk her to the door.

"Goodbye darlin'," she says in her sweet Jamaican murmur, picking up some of the warmth that envelops me.

I paint a dark silhouette, just an imprint of a face and neck, elongated breasts and round thighs. In the center, between the thighs is a hard dark fruit. The face of the woman, if visible, could be one of extreme sorrow or perhaps joy. It's difficult to tell.

When we make it, it's in my room while Ma is taking one of her naps in the afternoon. I have the day off. I make her warm milk to lull her to sleep. I turn the radio on low, some classical music to soothe her. In her sleep her mouth is working and her hands twitch slightly. Perhaps it's pain, perhaps it's anxiety. The two remain inseparable now.

He peels away my clothes one article at a time. They make a small black mountain topped with filmy cap of underwear and bra. New and never worn before. I notice the tattoos for the first time. The unmistakable name of a girl, Alison, in garish red and blue etched on the space where his heart is. He sees me stare and covers it with my hand as if to erase or hide it. He is hard and angular in contrast to my many valleys, hills. He travels up and down the hills with tongue and hands. He pulls my hand down towards his thighs. He pushes my hand towards him. I watch him grow, spout spume, then fall backward on the bed with him on top of me.

"You're a painter, paint me," he says and spreads his seed over my body.

I bite the words back as he leaves by the back door. I will swallow my tongue before I say it. What do you say, *Call me? I'll call you. Will you call me?* In the end I say nothing. I don't know what to say. I should have practised this part. Before he leaves I shove a twenty into his jean

jacket because I know he needs it and don't want to have to say no if he asks. He kisses me in that little space between the bones which ridge my chest. His mouth is warm and sticky and my fingers linger where his mouth was. I hear my mother moan and shift and call out to me. He smiles and I close the door after him seeing him skid on the ice like a small boy down the alley which lines our backyard.

I am like that small tree that Mrs. Bauer bought for Ma one birthday. I saw its bark blistering and tore off a strip thinking that it would grow back healthier but it lay stripped and open with nothing to protect it. It never grew back.

My mother knows that something's happening. Can smell the passion or hear the tiny sounds of something intangible and real which escape me. It is unnatural for me to be pleasant. To be happy. She is suspicious and determined to find out. She picks up the telephone even when she knows that I've answered it. She reads my mail which is just bills, art magazine subscriptions and coupons. I hear her tell Mrs. Bauer that I receive phone calls and stay out late at night. She is worried she says. I could be taking drugs or be a prostitute. You never know she says.

"Oh Missus, Missus," says Mrs. Bauer. "You watch too many of those soaps." Then she laughs and pours my mother some more tea.

This is him. The canvas is shiny, almost wet looking, dark swirls like hair are interspersed. The colours are red, blue, the colours of his tattoos. Sometimes green. I rub my hand against the canvas before the paint dries until it hurts and smear the paint on my legs in a long thick line straight up. I leave the paint on and don't bathe that night or the next.

Ma is deteriorating. She is thinner and thinner. Angrier and meaner. She is more alone than ever because now I won't even fight with her. This is her last link to our old life as we have always fought, no more so than when she became ill. Sometimes I think I hear her crying in her sleep. It is the pain, I think, not me. Or I don't care what is the source. It would be a relief if she died then I immediately erase that thought as if it played on a tape recorder and I can do that.

She hauls out the old photographs of her wedding. They are

tinted black and whites with the bridesmaids in alternating dresses of peacock blue and Pepto Bismol pink. Once I asked her what colour the dresses really were but Ma didn't remember. The photographic fantasy now supersedes the reality. She speaks about Pa and how handsome he looked on his wedding day. She doesn't mention he got so drunk he smashed up the motel room in Niagara Falls and spent their wedding night in jail. Or that shortly after that he started to beat her.

Once I asked in front of guests, "Where is your wedding dress now?" I wanted to see it, try it on. Slip on the yellowed satin pumps and fragile veil. I was small enough and thin enough then that I could have easily done so. But Ma avoided my question and when the guests left she grabbed me by the arm and dragged me into the living room so they wouldn't see us from the driveway as they left.

"Stop asking that question, you little idiot," she hissed and pushed me away. Later I found out from Mrs. Bauer that the dress had been rented and she was too ashamed to tell me. Now she holds the album open and points to her bird like figure.

"Do you see there? I was almost 30 and still smaller than you are now," she says with a great deal of satisfaction. It is something that she points out to me often then clucks her tongue and says, "Touchy, touchy" if I get angry.

"Well, some of us weren't meant to be Barbie dolls, Ma," I say and continue to eat my Häagen Dasz and cookies while watching TV. She is mildly shocked at my insolence and pushes her wheelchair into the bathroom, presumably as far away from me as she can get.

I feel a mild discomfort that we are having sex in the house under Ma's nose but I have no money to go elsewhere and for some reason he won't let me go to his house. His mother would object he says. We don't have dates, unless you count going to Tim Horton's a date. But I don't care. I want him to fill this hole which is my life, even to hear his lies sometimes.

Willie borrows money but I don't care. He says it's for rent but I know his mother takes care of that. It might be for other girls. I think I can smell them on him. The sweet sickly smell of cheap perfume or hair spray. Faint traces of candy pink lipstick on his wrists or stomach

which he thinks I can't see. Sometimes he disappears for days and doesn't call. I refuse to call him back when he returns then break down. I devour him as if I am a starving woman, even though I am embarrassed by his inane cackle while reading comics. He strews his clothing around the house as if tempting my mother to find a pair of underwear, a sock. He casually pushes my art books off the bed until they are damaged or torn and this seems to give him pleasure.

One night Ma calls to me, the urgency in her voice translates in my dreams to a siren turning around and around in my head. Finally I am up and running into her bedroom.

"Call an ambulance." Her words push through the fear in her voice.

"Okay, Okay." I freeze, what number do I call? I can't remember. I beat my fist against my hip.

"9-1-1," she says slowly as if talking to a child. It takes me several tries to get the number right.

In the ambulance she is slipping away, away from me into another place, perhaps where my father is. I imagine that she is either happy now or they have resumed fighting, probably the latter. I sit like a child by my mother's side, transfixed by the machines, the blurring landscape. The attendant looks up at me. She is young and new at this. Her fingers tremble as she adjusts the beeping machines.

"She's in a c-c-coma," she stutters as the ambulance races to St. Joe's.

I call Willie from the hospital and get the wrong number, just a girl giggling, obviously drunk. I hang up. I have no change left. I've brought nothing.

I come home the next morning in my bathrobe and slippers. I didn't realize until I got to the hospital what I was wearing. I make a pot of tea. I switch the television on automatically just to fill the house with sound. I hear a knock on the door. I see it's Willie. I tell him what happened.

"Gee, that's awful. Do you want me to stay?" His voice is hopeful.

"No, I just need to be on my own." I stare out into the garden and look at the small peach tree Pa planted.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah . . ."

"Well do you think I could come in and just borrow a few bucks,
I —"

"What did you say?"

"I — uh — needed a couple of bucks just to tide me over —"

"No, I don't think so," I say in my best grownup voice. I feel as if I have been doused with gasoline and set aflame, my voice a disembodied contrast to the rest of my body.

"There's no need to get snotty, you selfish cow —" He stops himself then waits for my response. I take my clenched hand and shove him out the door.

"Lisa!" He brings his face close to the glass and stares at me. I almost put my fist through the glass. He sees this then leaves, kicks the door, the fence, the garbage can as he goes.

I take the phone and remove it from its jack. For good measure I toss it into the backyard and it smashes against the peach tree. I go upstairs and stand by the window, uncover the easel and look at the painting I have been working on. It's unusual for me to work on landscapes. I've always considered them boring. It's the view behind the house towards the mills and the railroad tracks.

Landscape with Trees. They are thin and brown and their branches are barely perceptible. More like the veins on the back of your wrist which peter out into nothingness. The trees are naked, cold. I feel the iciness of each brush stroke down to my fingertips. I paint a thin white line of snow on each branch.

Natalee Caple / GEORGE LOVES ODETTE

Odette is sitting in Commerce Court eating her modest lunch. She chews slowly and reads the book that is resting in her lap. A tall aboriginal man with long, gray streaked hair walks hesitantly up to her. When she glances up he says, "Can you spare a dollar for a sandwich?"

She looks quickly down again without answering. He continues to stand in front of her. She can see his legs trembling inside of the thin fabric of his pants. She feels him moving and she looks up. She feels the people around her gasp. He is holding a gun to his ear. He looks into Odette's eyes.

"I'm a good man," he says, "I'm an educated man."

And he shoots himself. For a few seconds he remains standing, startled, and then he crumbles at her feet.

She is late for work. When she steps into the studio she leans against the wall and slides down to the floor and pulls her shoes off.

George comes around the corner with his Polaroid camera in one hand, the other hand dragging a tape measure.

"Take a picture of my head," he says.

"What?"

"Take a head shot of me, take a picture of my face. Come on, Odette."

He thrusts the camera into her hand, straightens up and smiles wildly. Obliging, she photographs him. She pulls the black square to make it roll out faster and shakes it to help it dry.

George is pulling the tape measure around his head, apparently measuring his skull.

Odette watches him quietly.

"George," she says, "don't call me Odette. My name is Carolyn."

He looks at her and smiles.

"Carolyn's not a good name for an artist's model. Odette suits you better."

She shakes her head and folds her arms across her chest.

"I don't care. My name is Carolyn."

He puts the tape measure down and cocks his head.

"I tell you what, we'll spell it c.a.r.o.l.y.n. but we'll pronounce it Odette, O.K."

She looks down at the Polaroid. George's face is beginning to emerge from the gray, photographic milk.

"Here you go," she says, and hands it to him. She pulls her book out of her pocket and tries to find the page she left off at. She finds it wrinkled and spattered dark brown.

Glancing at the cover George shakes his head.

"Odette, why can't you read trashy novels?" His voice is wheedling. "I would like you better if you read trashy, romantic, historical novels."

She doesn't respond. She just curls herself into a fetal position on the floor and continues to read. He steps behind her and crouches to the floor. He puts a hand on her shoulder and shakes her lightly.

"Hey, why are you still dressed? What time is it? It's four o'clock already, we have to get started." She doesn't respond. He falls behind her and lying on his side he gathers her against him and pushes his face through her hair to her ear.

"Odette, Odette, Odette, something's up, tell me." But she doesn't answer him.

"Look at my teeth. They're all stained and crooked. These aren't my teeth. All I need are the dental records to prove it."

Odette stands on her toes to look at his teeth.

"Your teeth are ugly but your teeth were always ugly, you just never noticed before."

He pushes her away and says sadly, "Yes, but they were my teeth. It was my ugly."

Odette turns her back and walks away from him.

"George, if someone replaced your head you'd die, believe me."

He regards her suspiciously.

"Are you a doctor? Tell me Odette, what do you know about transplants? About immuno-suppressant drugs?"

He stares into his coffee. Swishing it around and around in its

heavy clay mug.

"I promise," she answers wearily, stretching her arms up over her head as she speaks, "if I ever cut your head off, I won't give you another one."

The room is cold because the studio windows are open to the night air. Odette is sitting naked on top of a four foot pyramid of orange crates, her legs crossed, her arms wrapped around herself for warmth. Her teeth are beginning to hurt from chattering. The curtains billow in with the wind.

George is supposed to be sketching but he is poring over the head shots that he was able to find of himself, taken over the last few years.

"You know it probably isn't a bad idea for you to take a head shot of me every day even if it does turn out to be my head. After I'm dead you can put together an animated film of me aging."

Odette turns her head and looks out the window across the street at the apartment building. In the window parallel to hers a young boy, maybe ten or eleven, blond and fragile looking, is standing, staring at her. She cannot see what he is doing with his hands. When their eyes meet he moves to the side, behind the curtain.

"George, I'm cold," she says.

He looks up from his desk at her and his pupils dilate. He sees her trying to control her shaking. He sees that her lips and knuckles are beginning to edge blue. He opens a drawer and takes out the camera. He lifts it to his eye and she is blinded by the flash and the sudden mechanical whir.

They are lying together in bed. Their bodies shine with the last bits of light left from the day.

"It is cold," he says with real wonder.

Odette rolls onto her back and stares at the bubbled paint on the damaged ceiling.

George crawls up against her and throws one arm and one leg across her body to reel her back into him.

"Do you have any brothers or sisters?" he asks her. She is counting

to a thousand in her head.

"I have an older brother. He's in school in B.C. He's going to be an architect."

George stops her by rolling on top of her and kissing her mouth. He smooths her hair away from her face and stares at her. He measures the length and width of her small face underneath his hand.

"I was hoping you had sisters. I had this image of three little Odettes, the oldest one nine, another one eight and the youngest only six." She stares back at him, her eyes crossing because he is so close.

"Why do you want me to have sisters?" she says. "So that you can have more models lined up for when I'm too old for you?"

He laughs and bends to whisper in her ear,

"No Odette, I want to know what you looked like before I met you. I want to watch you turning into a woman over and over again."

She turns onto her stomach knocking him off her as she turns. She bunches up the pillow against her face. She bites the inside of her cheek until it bleeds. He takes this opportunity to slip inside and begin again.

In the middle of the night he sits up straight in bed and screams as if all his internal organs are twisting themselves inside out. She covers his mouth, she begs him, but he continues to scream.

"George, what are you dreaming?"

"This is not my head," he says. "These are not my dreams. I am thinking things that I have never thought before."

In the morning she lets him sleep. She sits at his desk and pores over the Polaroids that he has taken of her recently, her toast in one hand, her coffee in the other.

She does not know that he is around the corner watching her look at herself.

"Odette," he asks himself, "Would you still pose for me if I weren't paying you?"

He looks at her again and sees himself sitting at his desk. The

absolute nakedness, the absolute feminine vanity of his infinite white skin seeing itself, seeing the light hitting it. He steps back and imagines that he is a bullet aimed at Odette, struggling towards Odette through this glance.

"Odette, would you still pose for me if I weren't paying you?" She looks over to see him lying on the floor by the corner.

"No," she says. She cannot understand the question.

"Would you still be sleeping with me?"

"You don't pay me to sleep with you," she says, and looks back to the pictures as if he has been easily dismissed.

"I pay you to come here and that's one of the things that you do when you come here." George is beginning to sound tortured. He is pushing his body towards her along the floor with his legs.

"George, if you want me to pose I will pose, if you want to fuck I will fuck, but for God's sake get off the floor. You're making me nervous."

George stands up and stares at her. She ignores him.

"A person can live within another person's head," he begins to yell, "can migrate into new patterns of thought, incorporate someone else's memories into their own fascination with themselves, but when you take their arms and legs and heart as well they have to die. They have no choice."

Odette throws the scalding mug of coffee at him, picks up the photographs of her and leaves, slamming the apartment door behind her. George rushes to the window and calls after her as she runs down the street.

"Odette! Odette! Carolyn!"

And for two weeks he is calm. He calls her at night and whispers all of his memories of her over the phone, the things she wears, the way she sleeps. He makes outlandish promises concerning vacations, time away together, some place warm. He manages to convince her to come back. He gives her the cheque when she comes in the door. He photographs her with her clothes on. He brings her coffee and even leaves the windows closed, the curtains drawn.

On the first day that she agrees to undress for him again he places

a chair in the centre of the room for her, opens the curtains and busily gathers his pencils and papers.

She is good for me, he thinks. Everything about her makes sense as long as she is actually here.

"Odette," he says without looking up from the heavy paper and charcoal. "Tell me a secret."

"Don't be stupid, George. A secret is something you don't tell anybody."

"You don't have any do you?" he says and smiles at her warmly. "You're so innocent you could smuggle cocaine across the border cupped in your hands and nobody would ever stop you." Outside the window a man in a cherry picker is working on the electrical lines for the building. Because it is day and the light shines on the windows he cannot see Odette, sitting naked only a few feet away from him.

"I have secrets," she tells him disdainfully, and shifts her legs, watching the cherry picker carefully, unsure of her protection.

"Tell me then," he says and stops his drawing of her.

"I can't." She is unnerved by his attention being directed under her skin. The man in the cherry picker is very close to the window. She thinks to herself, if his shadow falls across the window he'll be able to see through me.

"You keep a secret for a certain length of time and then you can't tell it anymore."

George lays his pencil on the floor and it rolls away. He walks over to Odette sitting in her wooden chair in the middle of the wooden floor of the huge white room. He falls on his knees in front of her and puts his arms around her waist, his face into her lap.

She puts her hand through his hair. She leans her body over him but she does not know how to comfort him.

"He's going to meet you on the street." He speaks to her belly. "He's going to look at you and know everything that I know about you. He'll see you with your blouse open at the front, with your dress pushed up to your waist, with your long skirt flipped across your back. He's going to see you and he's going to look around in my head and figure out where I live and come here and kill me."

George is shaving in the bathroom. Odette has not arrived yet. As he holds the skin of his cheek taut and pulls the razor along it he becomes increasingly irritated by having to continue caring for a face that no longer belongs to him. He puts the razor aside and looks at his shoulders and chest. He runs his hand over his stomach. He leans in close to the mirror to examine his neck. He hurries into the studio to find something.

When he returns to the bathroom he has a red marker in his hand. With a towel he wipes the area around the base of his neck dry, and taking the cap off of the marker, he begins to draw a line around the precise border between him and the other.

The door bangs open and Odette rushes in. She sees the empty studio and walks immediately to the bedroom. George comes out of the bathroom and walks into the bedroom behind her.

"George," she laughs as she turns around and bumps into him. She puts her hands on top of his shoulders and jumps up, grabbing him around the waist with her legs so that he can hold her there. He holds her wrapped around him and listens as she spills her news excitedly forth.

"I've found him. He lives across the street. I saw him watching us through the window once but I didn't know until today that he was the one. It's not even a man wearing your head, George, it's just a little boy. It should be easy to get it back from him!"

"Are you sure?" George asks her becoming infected by her excitement. "How could you tell?" He carries her across the room and deposits her on the bed. They lie facing each other.

"I was sitting on a bench outside reading my book before I came up and I heard someone bouncing a basketball on the sidewalk beside me. I looked up and there he was, standing beside me looking at me, this blond, thin faced boy. He just kept looking at me so boldly that I got nervous. He was bouncing his ball and rolling his look over me the way you do when you are trying to figure out what position you to put me into before you draw me. And then I remembered seeing him before. He lives in the apartment across from you. He stands at the window and looks at me while you draw. I realize now that you don't look at me when you draw anymore, but while you are drawing, he is looking."

George listens intently, nodding his head along with each point.

"And then I asked him what his name was and he just kept bouncing that ball and staring. I asked him again, 'What's your name?' and he kept staring and bouncing. And then he sneered at me, 'I know *your* name.' And I said 'All right, what's *my* name?' and he paused and then he said, 'It's either Carolyn or Odette.' "

George leans up on his elbow and stares into her eyes.

"It's him. We've got to catch him."

It takes them two days to build the cage. They tear apart all the orange crates and nail them together with long cross beams made out of two by fours that George steals at night from a new housing development a few blocks away. The crates make up the top and bottom of the cage and the bars are made of two by fours nailed to the top and bottom. The door is still a hole in the cage. George is prepared to tear off the bathroom door and nail it over the hole once they have the boy.

"Odette, stand in the cage."

Odette looks at George. "But George, I'm helping you."

George takes the two steps that it takes to stand against her. He leans down to brush her hair off her shoulder and whisper in her ear, "Look out the window." Odette looks over George's shoulder out the window and sees that the boy is standing half hidden behind a curtain, watching.

She steps into the cage, ducking because it is not tall enough for her to stand.

"You are such a good girl," George croons. "Now take off your clothes."

Odette unzips her jeans and sits on the floor of the cage to pull them off. She pulls her sweater over her head and sits there in her bra and panties looking at George.

"He's seen you before," he says, so she finishes undressing and George reaches through the bars and pulls her clothing out.

"It's not going to work, George. He can see the door. He knows I can get out again." George stands and stretches his arms to grip the sides of the cage and shakes it.

"O.K., you're right. Come and stand just outside the doorway," he

tells her and she comes. She stands in front of the doorway and covers her head when George tells her to. He walks around to the other side of the cage and pushes it so that it falls over her, knocking her to the ground and trapping her inside. George runs to his desk to get the camera and steps around the cage taking pictures of Odette as she gets up and shakes her head and gathers her legs against her chest.

"I hurt my back. Let me out."

But George is getting a hammer and nails from his desk and striding back to busily begin nailing the sides of the cage to the floor.

"George, I hurt my back. Let me out. He's not going to come over here and jump in a cage with me while you're here. And if you nail it down how can he get in?"

"He's little. He can slip through the bars."

"If he can slip in then he can slip back out again. Let me out." She looks at him through the slats. "But, George," she says, "I'm helping you."

He stands pressed up against the cage with his arms wrapped around the sides.

She looks around to the window and sees the boy now standing in full view in the middle of the window, pressing himself against the glass in imitation of George, holding onto the window frame.

"I'm cold," she says.

It's so dark. She feels the tiny sharp stabs of splinters working their way deeper into her every time she moves. She stares out at the hollow, empty dark of the boy's window. She sits in the corner holding herself together for warmth. Eventually she falls asleep still sitting up, leaning against the cheap, citrus smelling wood.

When she sleeps she dreams she is lying on a beach listening to the water rushing in and out over the sand. She can feel George's body beside her and his low voice whispering in her ear asking her what she is dreaming.

"I'm dreaming that I am on an operating table," she tells him. "There's a huge light shining down on me and people around the table moving around, whispering. I'm dreaming that a man with a cold, deep voice leans close to my ear and whispers to me,

“‘What-is-in-your-heart?’

“‘I don’t know, I don’t know.’ And then I feel a scalpel pressing at the base of my throat, sliding down into my chest, and a hand reaching in and pulling something out.

“From somewhere over my head I hear someone press the play button on an old portable tape recorder, and I hear our voices recorded over the phone, me saying, ‘I hate you, I hate you so much I could spit.’ You saying, ‘That’s all right. Tell me more.’”

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