

THE CAPITANO REVIEW



idling the shoreline where the rock is ground and
polished into jewels by this
overdose of clarity.

—DON MCKAY, *Drinking Lake Superior*

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The Capilano Review is published four times a year from Capilano College, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V7J 3H5.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of The Canada Council, the Capilano College Humanities Division, the Government of British Columbia through the B.C. Cultural Fund and Lottery revenues.

The Capilano Review is a member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers' Association and COSMEP. Microfilm editions and reprints are available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

We are always pleased to receive good material, especially from artists we haven't published before, but we cannot take responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts should be submitted to the Editor, and must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope and Canadian postage to ensure return.

Printed in Victoria, British Columbia, by Morriss Printing Company Ltd.

Second Class Registration Number 4593

ISSN 0315-3754

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Number 39

1986

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Gary Geddes / KITENMAX, THE RUSSIAN GANG, AND THE ENEMIES OF FICTION

Reverend McClure shot up the Russian Gang while they were trying to rob the bank at Hazelton. He was tending his flock in the Anglican church just after 10 a.m. on the seventh of April, 1914, a moment when European diplomacy was at its lowest ebb and archdukes and bank robbers had been better off home in bed. Half of McClure's parishioners ought to have been there, too, given the pious tilt of heads and the organ-base of snores that served as a mortal back-up to the Reverend's timeless message. The allusion here to Europe is not entirely gratuitous, even in postmodernist fiction of this sort, though no one in this pioneer settlement in British Columbia was giving it the slightest thought; indeed, the Reverend would hardly have credited them with thought at all. Still, as a battle of sorts was brewing on both fronts, I may be forgiven for appearing to introduce what is known in the trade as an historical aside: an aside is not necessarily an affront.

I hope the minister's name does not put you on the wrong track. Donald Redman McClure was not an Indian. That's one of the hazards of working with materials of the documentary sort: the cargo of inherited detail often shifts, rendering the vessel of fiction unstable at best. There were no mixed blood cells warring for ascendancy in the blue veins that stood out on McClure's freckled and hairy wrists. The minister's racial heritage was as pure as the mongrel origins of the Scots might allow; only his religious principles appear to have been watered down to accommodate that special brand of pragmatism called the Church of England, that allows catholicism and adultery on the same ticket.

I'm telling you what happens to get it out of the way. I know you're that kind of rare breed of reader who's too sophisticated to be concerned with mere plot. You'd be more like Ortega y Gasset's Reader B. Reader A is a species of slob or cretin who pokes around in literature just to get his kicks; he can't wait to see how things turn out. He probably drools a lot too and reaches for the popcorn at the end of every paragraph. Reader B's another kettle of fish altogether, the refined type who sips at a piece of writing, swirling the syllables and consonants in his glass like a gourmet, savouring every nuance but swallowing nothing. No chugalugs for him.

While the congregation laboured under the weight of "Rock of Ages," their Sisyphean endeavours were punctuated by the thud of an explosion from somewhere up the street. McClure might have ignored the faint interruption entirely had not the concussion set the tiny glasses of wine rattling on the communion tray. Through the hole in the east window he saw two puffs of smoke issue from the entrance of the small log structure that housed the Union Bank, rendering momentarily headless the seven horses tied up there. I have no idea what apocalyptic thoughts this series of images sent galloping through the Reverend's mind. I suspect his thoughts might be tidily summed up in the phrase: "Shit, the church funds!"

If you've noticed how this story keeps lapsing into sloppy colloquialism and flirting with local colour, blame Graham Cox, proprietor of the Galena Club next door, who provided both the original stained-glass window and the atmosphere of moral turbulence which led to its demise. McClure would never have seen the smoke, the horses, and the bank had Cox's rowdy patron not shot out the window in a fit of spiritual ecstasy. The Reverend rationalized not fixing it along the lines of the Pleasure-Pane principle: i.e., the removal of the pane gives me pleasure by

- 1) thwarting the gift of this unholy American billiard shark,
- 2) guaranteeing a certain discomfort to my slack parishioners,
- and 3) affording me a command of the street leading into town.

If I did not know that plot, character, and setting are the enemies of fiction, I'd be inclined at this point to give you a description of the town. That kind of thing is best handled, if at all, by the visual media. After all, who needs ten pages of local colour when he can get it all at a glance by flipping channels to *Guns smoke* or *The Rifleman*? Not me. Besides, Hazelton was a fairly ordinary town in 1914; it still is. You know the type—main street, hotel, barber shop, general store, false fronts, and so on. In this case, the general store

was called Sargent's and advertised itself as THE FAVORITE SHOPPING PLACE, thereby specializing not only in aggravating American spelling, but also in MINER'S PROSPECTOR'S AND SETTLER'S SUPPLIES, not to mention GROCERIES AND FELT GOODS. According to Arthur Polson, a local resident who had attended both the church service in question and the subsequent baptism by gunfire, clothing was not the only goods to be felt in Sargent's store.

Hazelton was ordinary, but it was no slouch of a town. All the big words, including LOVE, DISASTER, and FORTUNE, passed through the settlement, in the form of long and short taps on the Yukon Telegraph Line. A fair share of poets and other wierdos also passed through the town in the coaches of the Canadian National Railway, blunt-nosing its way downriver to the Pacific Ocean 177 miles westward at Prince Rupert. And the most rudimentary research, if that were our task here, would indicate that Hazelton stands at the junction of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers at the foot of the ominous Roche de Boule, from which the native spirits were alleged to have made their ascent through a hole or trap-door in the sky into heaven. Of course, I place no significance on such trivia. The reader of fictions is not some prospector waiting for supplies of information in Manson, Vital, Tom's Creek, and a hundred other diggings. You and I, Reader B, have better fish to fry.

The characteristic restraint I have exercised pertaining to matters of plot and setting must be extended to the unwitting antagonists in this frontier opera. About the Russian Gang, who were taking up their own collection before the altar of Mammon, almost nothing is known. Did they wander by chance onto the shifting sands of this melodrama? After all, they could have knocked off bigger banks in better places. Or were they fugitives from American justice, who thought they could find easy pickings and fewer dangers north of the 49th parallel? If so, they were mistaken on both counts. Perhaps, like all Russians, they were simply Romantics, searching for the last true frontier, that area of border-blur where a man can test himself against the unknown. In that case, they were not far wrong in their choice of Hazelton, which sits dead-centre in the province; what lies beyond it is either unexplored or uninhabited—some would say, unimagined. I don't know why they robbed, or rather tried to rob, that particular bank. Maybe they were spooked by the place, that whacking big mountain back of town on which McClure's god

cleaned his boots, sending down avalanches of snow and rock in all seasons, those ghostly willows and gnarled moss-covered cottonwoods that look like hairy mastodons in jungles drawn by artists in the last century who had never set foot out of Clapham Common.

If the thought of seven Russians from the United States robbing the Canadian branch of an English bank and being shot by a Scottish minister of the Church of England, using a Belgian rifle with French bullets strikes you as bizarre, you are approaching a definition of what it means to be a Canadian. Very eclectic bunch we are—and thrifty too. The first Russian, lifted out of the doorway by the force of McClure's bullet and dropped facedown in front of the wicket, simultaneously closed his account and took out permanent residency, the easy way.

You can still find the odd postcard in Hazelton with a photograph of Boris Manikoff, taken after he was sentenced to twenty years on May 13, by Judge Young in New Westminster. You'd have to have a name like Young to throw time around so casually. The number on Manikoff's postcard is 67391, if veracity concerns you. He looks neither mad nor inspired, only bored, as if he'd read too much conventional fiction. Arthur Polson's widow donated a couple of other photographs to the public archives in Victoria, one of which shows two of the wounded Russians laid out like firewood in a wagon, where they subsequently died. The other shows two more sprawled dead on the boardwalk, arms akimbo, one with his right boot crossed neatly over his left ankle, as if he were taking a nap under the hazel boughs.

If you've paid attention, alert Reader B, you'll have noticed that only six Russians are accounted for. The seventh, who was apparently the leader, escaped severely wounded, like those bad guys in the movies who learn nothing from the sacking of Paris or Nanking or Lawrence, Kansas and survive, out of spite it seems, to outdo themselves and plan some grotesque revenge in the sequel. Don't look now, but this guy who was tracked downriver and managed to evade the good citizens of Hazelton may still be out there somewhere, working for B.C. Forest Products or plotting World War III as an encore. My theory is that the seventh Russian was so disenchanted by his failure to acquire private capital that he returned to Moscow to lead the Bolsheviks to victory.

The writer of postmodernist fiction is not, of course, concerned with cause and effect. It doesn't matter a whit to him that Reverend McClure over-reacted in shooting those robbers or that, perhaps, he

was enacting some fundamental truth of human nature which says that violence is a response to too much stimuli, that it is an attempt to restore the order and identity that has been threatened by an avalanche of unfamiliarity. Put on your high beams some night during a snow storm and observe that the driving snow has a hypnotic effect that begins to make you feel dizzy or sick. It's enough to drive an epileptic into seizure. Imagine yourself, then, in a frontier situation in which things are coming at you too quickly. You can't organize them, can't find a base to hold on to. All your familiar faces and landmarks are behind you, rituals too. So you hang on desperately to the religious observances and one day something happens to rob you of the comfort of those observances, to tear off your mask of order and respectability, and you go haywire. We don't need fiction to tell us this kind of thing.

What, then, do we need? Now that the real enemies of fiction have, like the Russian Gang, been eradicated, the stage is clear to get on with the main business at hand. But what is that other business, Reader B? Art is a two-way process, a collaboration between writer and reader, so the onus is on you to tell me where we go from here. Seriously, I'm at a very delicate stage in my literary development; I could regress completely, backslide all the way to realism. There's bound to be a lot of residue from all those years of mistaking art for life. Landscapes don't bother me. The ones I pass on the train from Rupert to Hazelton or Kamloops to New Westminster have been imitating art for so long, they look less like themselves than passages from the work of my favourite writers. The same is true of friends; all their misadventures sound as if they've been lifted from the pages of Dostoevsky or Vonnegut. That's why they throw around words like 'tragedy' and 'farce' so loosely, to describe such non-literary events as missing a bus or swallowing an emerald.

But characters? Don't ask me about characters. You hang around them too long and you start treating them as if they were human. I mean, try telling a young character who's hot-to-trot for whatever life fiction has to offer that he's only a linguistic construct and watch the shit hit the fan. You'll be lucky if you wind up with only a sleepless night, a bloody nose, or a lawsuit. Try convincing a crowd of placard-waving characters that the dehumanization of art is not inhuman and they'll probably lynch you to prove their own humanity. They think God put writers on earth to give life to every unborn character. Who wants to be nothing but a conduit between

past and future? Not me, I assure you. I've had some bad moments lately, in connection with McClure and his dance-partners: late-night calls, threatening letters, even offers of money. The wife of Boris Manikoff wrote to me from a small town in Oregon to say that, unless I gave her admittance to this fiction, she'd show up in court and tell the jury that one of her eleven children had been in desperate need of an expensive operation to save her life. You can imagine what complications that would have caused, shifting the weight of sympathy away from McClure and towards his victims.

Yes, I'm embarrassed to say, they read me, know my weaknesses. Like panhandlers, they know at once if you're a soft touch. Like refugees, they'll do anything—I mean anything—to gain admittance. When I was considering the elimination of that small passage pertaining to Graham Cox and the stained-glass window, as being of marginal significance to the fiction, I received a hand-delivered parcel late at night from a dreadful criminal type whose face had been so badly cut up he wore a permanent sneer on one side of his mouth. The parcel contained a hundred dollars in American funds and an ear.

Believe me, Reader B, I've tried everything: unlisted numbers, emigration, plastic surgery. But they always find me. When my publisher objected to an earlier version of this piece as inconclusive and sub-standard and advised dropping it from the collection, my house was picketed for several weeks and none of my friends in the Writer's Union would cross the picket-line. Maybe God had in mind a nice abstract creation, too, an exercise in pure form, but couldn't hack the pressure, all those disembodied voices out there whispering: Write me in, write me in, write me in.

Reading over what I've written, I see an apology is in order for indulging my penchant for sarcasm and giving in to a lately developed urge towards self-exposure and exhibitionism. I see, too, that a couple of subliminal fish images have surfaced that may be significant. The fish is supposed to be a Renaissance symbol for Christ. Are these images evidence of an evangelical strain akin to that of Reverend McClure moving unnoticed in me or just indicators that I'm destined to open a fish and chip joint in Hazelton, little fried fingers of Pacific cod wrapped in news of the latest war or bank robbery? I wish I knew. One thing's for certain: somebody's going to make one helluva film out of the stuff I can't use in this story.

By the way, last week a friend of mine told me the Indian name for Hazelton is *Kitenmax*, meaning people who fish by torchlight. What do you make of that?

Lucille King-Edwards / TWO POEMS
BLUE LAKE GRAVEYARD

123 degrees
and only shade

(It's 3 a.m.

Old Dutch women
hunch on boxes
picking
the rotten & deformed
all night,
choosing the worst.

The best

move on

belts;

fall.

Steam rises.

Catwalk boys lounge

monkey-fashion
with sticks

send laggard tins

down to

rag-doll girls.

Wet feet.

Peeled poireaux hands.

Smell of hot green beans.

30 days without a Sunday.

Morning hours away.

Bodies flop pass out.
The nurse passes out salt pills
(stomach cramps.

Scalded beans
slide
down shutes.

Hands flail.
Pockets move by
(3 to fill a second.

Cans click & whirl.

Forewomen circle
(buzzards in dim light

look for sluggards
half-asleep
green flesh mounting
beneath fillers
(a can stuck.

Back in the light
past the dark
spatulate palms slap
labels on dervish cans

twirling
down to the wrap-up

Del Monte Grade A.

ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP

Over the elm tree

a mesozoic vision:

not a bird this mind knows

in its shape

body strung out fossil against sky long beak
hanging
pouch

No dig-find

this malaprop

bird

flapping

a reminder

that boulders

rise from earth

hunch the descending hills.

Don McKay / FIVE POEMS

STURNUS VULGARIS

I

Untrue to their colours, they wear
acne in the winter and an oil slick of deceptive
shimmers in the summer, waddling their squat
poxy bodies on the lawn. Pests. Bad Guys.
Illegal immigrants
stealing nesting sites from Bluebirds,
Kestrels, Red-headed
Woodpeckers. Once introduced in North America
(New York, 1890)
they swept across the landscape like free enterprise.

Against the
furnace of society
they warm themselves
and mock: whistling
warbling wheedling segue skitter
squeak chirp chortle they
impersonate the local dignitaries, e.g.
cardinals, flickers, phoebes, peewees, phone calls, dogs,
cats, chevrolets and ultra
sonic T.V. frequencies.
You step outdoors into a soundscape skewed,
perverted into satire.

II

Time was,

no seriously folks,

I'm into this roots and buries number, no kidding and incidentally its terrific to be here in beautiful downtown London Ont., city of malls, cardinal capital of the universe and birthplace of regionalism, moderate applause, thanks that'll do, actually while I'm on the subject I've brought testimonials from grateful Celts, Kwakiutl, Yoknapatawphans, William Carlos Williams and the mayor of Oberammagau, a village in Germany, all eager to have membership cards and bumper stickers, no really, its super to be here among so many cardinals, as we exrootless cosmopolites will often pontificate, when in Rome (*italics would be apt here squire*) *do as the Romanians* do, ok, so here I am cardinalizing in your forest city, right, and you're all saying to yourselves like what the fuck does he know, is he on *drugs* or something, what's mything man, where's his cosMOlogy or is he like from *out of town* or somewhere, and by the way are there any folks here tonight from Tilsonburg, Tobacco Capital of Canada, hey wonderful, keep smokin' man, really, one of the least objectionable forms of public oral gratification, you getting much of that street fellatio around here, no? not like Hamilton where recent figures show they cut lung cancer stats significantly, but folks seriously,

tonight, since, as adumbrated earlier in my address, I'm into roots and buries, family trees, ha, barking up my archetypes woof woof, I'm going to cut the comedy (misnamed paranoid schizophrenia by my ex-shrink) and deliver the straight stuff: here we go, *Cosmogony Sturnus Vulgaris*, catchy huh? subtitle how come starlings are the last true birds, so fabulous, so — let's have a little hush here folks, avec some wispy fiddles, maestro Lombardo s'il vous plait — so

how zhall I

zay cheri, zo *mahnyfeek* — uh, yeah well as exPounded previously in my Discourse friends,

TIME WAS

everybody had our scintillating moves, as Danny Gallivan, a prince of a guy and a personal friend of mine, would say, undt zey ver making mit der mitternachtsnack undt der hippetyhoppen all der

time like what I'm saying here's essentially caDENza city man,
arpeggioso mio before you could say care for a cuppa cola you'd be
doing this dissolve into another slim exquisite *je ne sais quoi*, tovarich
you were life of the party like this non-neglected negligée where
everywhere was eros, truth was tinsel, etcetera uber alles—

OK so far?

Enjoy the moment folks because that old devil minor key comes
creeping in at this point, thank you maestro Lombardo, hey he's
some kinda guy, right folks? London's own and one of the first to
translate jello instant pudding into music, bet you're surprised to
hear the Royal Canadians *do* minor keys like catching a Mountie
bugging the Ploughshares offices or scratching his nuts in front of the
parliament buildings, hey never mind, just listen to it sidle through
the atmosphere like the fine whine from an IBM 5000, OK, so

How Come You're So Dull

is basically the title of this chapter of the treatise,
folks: Answer, because, amigo, you wanted to be one

(1)

one

item with a single sun (the most obvious, least subtle sun) blabbing
away inside you early to bed early to rise you got yourself enamoured
of the sentence snip snap/ ABCDEFGH I'm switching to another
channel here, Sesame Street fans, just imagine you've wandered
through Wanda the Wicked Witch, through Yuck to the big Zero,
which is where you wind up everytime, typing: the quick brown fox
jumped over the lazy dog, the quick brown fox jumped over the lazy
dog encore, capito? sure you do—encore was a lazy dog, but man
you were one smart sapiens we gotta hand it to ya grabbed that syntax,
owned it, wore it like a fucking necklace, right? Encore yapping
round you, begging for a milk bone.

So where we at, mon? There's you and your
satellites, singing the hearty anthems of yourselves smiling like a
coke commercial, here's us slipping through the noose, still
wearing the entire night sky speckled blue black purple
drunk on its deep unthinkable
spaces we compose and decompose in manyness;

the wombed

curvaceous lynxes zonk the piqued and jaded goldfinch,
joking zebras film the vapid ox-eyed cows, cheri, we are
the first surrealists, so witty, so
(how zhall I zay)

illicit we
improvise upon your dull routines and everywhere
outfox your fucking foxes.

III

Children of the Night Sky

When Night Sky felt constellations organizing like unions, claiming bear, chariot and archer from his free undifferentiated space, he knew he would need an operative working secretly behind the lines. Plucking pieces of himself he fashioned the first starling, filling it with flux for maximum adaptability. We'll beat them at their own game, kid, he whispered.

But of course the starling,
still voiceless, couldn't answer. Hmmm. Night Sky knew a voice could be his spy's achilles heel, the first phrase in seduction. Still, his starling could hardly manage in the ordered world without one. So he took the deep rich echo of his emptiness, packed it like a snowball and planted it inside the starling's chest. Then he took a shaft of starlight, drove it through the throat. Now every time the starling tries to sing itself, its voice punctures on the silver nail and splatters like light through a prism or water through a garden sprinkler.

Which is why,
if you catch a starling, pry open its beak, and reaching down its throat with a pair of needle-nosed pliers, extract the silver nail

epics will implode into their
spaces with a hush like babies breathing

and you will
learn something about nothing.

DRINKING LAKE SUPERIOR

Come on foot
and from far off,
carrying your pack of what
is necessary, falling
with the shield in drastic waves of rock, ridge by
ridge down the valley of a stream or fault until
your thirst is its desire, sung
cut from morning by White-throated sparrows.
As you walk, rehearse
your dealings with the elements:

have you made a poem out of wind, or drawn
gods on the rock in rock's red ochre?
Can you fly?
Have you been buried (however briefly)
or on fire?

By the time you reach this beach you should be
something of a fool,
idling the shoreline where the rock is ground and
polished into jewels by this
overdose of clarity.
Drink.

Blood bone flesh weather water make
a man.

FINDING SILENCE

may not be easy
as it sounds.

It doesn't. Some
border crossing must be happened on, must
happen. Once, the watcher,
following a many-breasted warbler into spruce
was pierced with sudden focus as the raindrops, poised
on needles, glanced,
sharpening light.

Not as eyes

but lenses of remote
surveillance. Closed circuit T.V., possibly
the sky's, he couldn't say. He paused
like this:

A Saw-whet owl caught in your headlights, all
vowel.

Who can afford such recognition?

Once our thinking was another species.

Once our minds, lithe with risk and mystery, once we were
watched as warblers, not as terrorists,
are watched.

MIDNIGHT DIP

Whose dumb idea was this
anyhow? Silently
the chill air purges content and establishes
its interrogative. This is going to be
more dangerous than we supposed, wrapped
in our living room of beer and friendly conversation.
Moonlight
sheds itself along the path, madly
abandoned underwear.
What essences await us in the lake,
that lived inside our talk as easily
as bath and wash, now
sharpening to something like the afterlife of music moving in an
arc beyond the reaches of its melody?

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

Act 13. Tinkerbelle is dead, a crumpled kleenex by the sofa. Lost boys and girls are playing indians and pirates in the rec room, brandishing their edges, really bleeding. Fluorescent lighting. Each totes a pack oozing the PCBs of his and her sad histories, a sort of Germany.

Back in Act 12, voice put down its animals and has taken up the telephone, paring down to buzz whine click.

I'm not home right now.

So what? I got your number

into which

you will reduce, or else:

the original recorded message, something muttering for chrissake

let there by dark.

Caroline Adderson / AND THERE IS NO JUNTA

I go through these reports every evening. I have done so for months. We sit together, you with your *Harrowsmith*, I with my *Testimony on Secret Detention Camps in Argentina*, my *Amnesty International Report 1980*. You nudge me and point to a photograph of a glaring red tomato. Next year, let's dig up that east plot, you say. We have too many pumpkins anyway.

I sip from my familiar cup and ask if I may read something aloud to you. My request annoys you. I see that by the way your lips tighten into a sharp line. Your mouth is a keloid scar. I read on to myself.

Page 152. The methods included beatings with fists and truncheons; la chicharra—torture by electric shock to all parts of the body including genitals; forcing mineral water up the nostrils; immersing the head or whole body in dirty water until the victim is near drowning.

I am dizzy again. I lay my head on the cold page. Something I remember about truth comes back to me. Truth wears a black hood. My ears ring. You put your heavy hand on my shoulder and kiss my hair. I know how you think. I tell you it is time I lived with meaning. You smile and ask what meaning this all has to my life. We live in a global community, I say. The world is no longer large but a very, very small place. You smile again.

We are driving on Sunday morning in our old red Toyota. The clutch makes the noise of a flat stone run swiftly across the face of a washboard. At the top of Fraser Street we look out over the warehouses, over the river to where some hispanic Saint John shines on the islands in the strait.

This morning the sky is finally clearing. The grey cover has whitened, swollen and divided into clusters on the darkening blue. Your hands grip the leather cover of the steering wheel and we absorb the shock of the road without noticing.

Ten years of happy marriage, you say.

I nod.

Thirty-five years old and my own dream farm, you say.

I nod. You love to remind yourself of the good things in life.

They entered our house and drove all of the men out at gun point. My husband, they dragged him out by the hair. All the women were too frightened to move to the window. But I needed to see my husband. They threw him on the ground and peeled the skin off his face with razor blades. Then they slit his throat.

You switch off the radio with your large brown hand.

We turn onto the road that leads to our farm. Our neighbour's son is bent over in the ditch. He looks up when you honk, grinning and waving and pointing to the dead gopher he holds by the tail, high in his right hand. I turn my head quickly to the other side. The sheep are grazing near the fence. One has a lamb. It is too late for lambs.

I am having afternoon tea at the kitchen table. You are rubbing Dubbin on your boots. Your strokes are firm and careful and you concentrate. I am free to watch you. Skin is elastic, but it will be broken into. Skin may be shredded until the bone emerges from the bloody tangle of tissue.

Are you going out, I ask.

Yes, you say. You are hiking through the woods to the river. You are doing this for pleasure.

I ask you not to go. Such a walk is dangerous alone, I say. You raise your black brows slightly and then laugh, laying your stained rag on the table. Your hand pauses briefly on my shoulder as you walk past me and out of the room.

I have told myself that there is no junta in Canada. And there is no junta.

As I continue to sip my tea I watch you descend past my vision. You take the path behind the house which eventually fades away into green and damp. You have a stick and you slash the way before you as you take your long, heavy strides. When you are halfway down the slope you stop to listen for the flow of water and to determine your best possible course. As you stand, you are approached from

behind. Although this stranger's steps are made obvious by the snapping branches and the rustling brush, you hear only the steady rhythm of the river water, a flow as regular as blood. When you finally turn you see this stranger has no face and he wears garments coloured so he may hunt in the wood without being seen. His boots are black and the moisture from the grass forms beads on their shiny surface and rolls down the round, steel toes. He shoots you in the leg and as you crash to the ground, he presses his iced barrel into your eye socket.

You return in time for dinner, but I have prepared nothing. I am somehow still at the kitchen table. Together we slice the thick crusty bread and warm yesterday's soup. Over our meal you tell me that there are salmon in the river and you are returning tomorrow to cast your line. I tell you I will not be going along.

This evening the sheets feel dirty, like someone else has slept in them. You read by the yellow light of the night table lamp and I lie next to you watching you turn the pages with your fingertips. You shut off the light and I am temporarily blinded while my eyes adjust to the darkness. I feel your large hands across my back as you draw me underneath you.

I dream you are alone in an empty room rubbing a silver jug with tarnish remover. Outside there is some kind of street festival with Latin American dancing. Guitars are playing and I am aware of a stream of red skirts although I cannot see them. Two men in black enter the room and nod to you. You put the jug and the rag down and strip off your clothes. You lie face down on the dirt floor. When I awaken, I have a headache.

Ten happy years of marriage; you must be tired, you say.

Your sister comes to me this morning. I am in the bathtub and have been for two hours. The water has grown cool and the skin on my hands and feet has withered and whitened as a disease. My eyes are closed and I feel her dip her pointed nails into the water. The slight ripples crawl across the surface and slam into my body. You look like a corpse, she tells me. Why did you not answer the door?

I tell her that I did not hear the bell. My eyes are still closed and I am imagining the green sea water welling up over

me and into my nostrils. She tells me I should leave the bath. I smile slightly and begin to sit up.

When I am dressed we move out to the garden with tea. Your sister smokes her cigarettes, sucking on the filter and blowing yellow smoke out of her nose in staccato spurts. She smiles often. A piece of peppermint is wedged between her front teeth. She tries to pick it out with her painted nail, then uses her matchbook cover, all the while talking and flexing the ankle of her crossed leg.

She asks me to go to Montreal with her for the week. It will be good for us both, she says. She will buy a wardrobe and I can go to the galleries. We can see *Giselle* or we can go down to New York for a few days. You should get out of the woods, she says.

I say no.

Lately I am tired. Since my dream I lie still for two or three hours before I can sleep. During this sleepless period I see my day pass before me like a slow motion film, exactly as it must have happened, but I watch instead of act.

I am rising in the morning, smoothing the eiderdown quilt over the mountain of your body. I am standing by the window watching the shadows move in the garden. I am drinking coffee. I am reading. I am wondering why I do what I do and for how long I can do it. I am watching you.

Page 141. . . . Twenty-seven year old engineering student Alejandro Coti Lopez was abducted in the presence of uniformed members of the National Police on March 5 by men in unmarked cars near the university. The next day he was found dead in a ravine about 22 kilometres from the capital. His hands were bound and his hair was impregnated with an insecticide called Gamezán. He had apparently been asphyxiated. Torture by means of a rubber hood dusted with Gamezán has reportedly been a common practise of the National Police since the 1960s.

Your second sister comes to me. I sit in an armchair I have taken out behind the house to where the vines have slid their groping arms into the cracks of the wooden siding and wound around the branches of this frenzied spot, in strangulation. My sweater is against my bare skin. It chafes my neck.

This sister is more direct. She comes around and sits in front of me, crosslegged on the ground. I have not much time, she says. She wants to talk to me, although she has not much time.

I push myself deeper in my chair and pull my hands into the rough cuffs of my sweater. My shoulders are hunched. The turtleneck rises past my mouth.

Look, your sister says, you are upset over nothing. She pulls individual blades of grass out of the ground and bites off the tender root stalk. I hear her front teeth click and scrape together.

I am silent. She falls silent, then leans forward and rests her elbows on her knees. Besides, you are not responding appropriately. After she says that, she is sorry that she did. I see her face flush and her head fall. She stands up. I have to go to work, she says. Will you come into the city for the day?

I say No.

Some of these afternoons I am afraid you will not come home. I see the truck pulled over on the side of the road. The engine is cold and the clutch immobile. The passenger door is wide open, the window shattered. Wind blows dust in circles around the tires. I have said there is no junta.

We eat dinner in the kitchen. I have made you a special meal. This is the first thing I have cooked in weeks. You are surprised to see the table set with our wedding pottery and the vase of morning glory that trails onto the table and around the wine goblets. You say very little but look up from your plate frequently.

Your sisters came, I say.

You ask me what they wanted, although we both know you sent them here yourself.

They think I am crazy, I say. You do not look at me. The telephone rings. You leap away from the table to answer it.

I hear you on the phone. It is our neighbour who owns ten acres across the road. There is trouble. You return to the table and explain. Our neighbour's sheep have been attacked by wild dogs and the pasture fence was torn down.

Damn, you say, sheep are more trouble than they are worth.

We resume our dinner, but the sisters are not mentioned again. When we are finished and the table is cleared, we take our tea into the livingroom and light a fire. I sit in the armchair facing the window and you pour me a cup. You crouch over the hearth. Your spine is the line of a fragile arc.

Ten happy years of marriage, you say.

The window looks over the yard to where the woods begin to climb down the embankment to the river. It has rained. The sky breaks apart into floating chunks of fading black. A red horizon hides in the trees.

When the fire is lit you lean against my chair and stroke my feet. I am conscious you are being careful. I try to be careful too.

The farm is going so well, you say. All seems to fall so naturally in place. Just let things be, you say, and everything will fall in place. You talk in a vacuum, I think, but you carry on.

As you speak, something flashes past the window. I jerk my foot away from your hand. The cup clatters on the floor. Howling reaches me as I put my hands and face against the cold glass.

My God, the dogs are in the yard, I shout. You hold me and say that we are safe inside. We are safe when our doors are closed and we are inside.

I look out again. The dogs race through the trees. In their movements there is frenzy. They shred the ground with their claws.

I am sickened. My limbs constrict me. I want to close my mind but I am open and against the window. You are pressing me harder against the window.

Oh my God the sheep. You shout in my ear. My head rings. The white bodies pour into the yard. Dogs attack in an instant, a chemical reaction. One clamps the neck of a sheep and pulls her to the ground. She looks so stupid, so foolish, her thin white legs kick wildly, her fat belly holds her down on the lawn. Her eyes are flames. She shrieks; another dog tears open the bulging white sack.

They move in groups, the dogs, and play games with their victims. They surround a sheep. Each runs at her, retreats, forces her to batter her own body against a tree trunk. They bite at her buttocks, tearing out clumps of red-rooted white wool. They move her to exhaustion, then lunge at her corporately.

And they laugh. The peals rise and penetrate the glass. By the pumpkins there is the lamb who starts and stops, unsure whether to go to her mother or to wait. Her mother is driven backwards and forwards in the circle of dogs.

From across the yard I think I see that the spines on the pumpkin stem snag the new, coiled wool. The single white threads stretch out at their full length like tiny, silken springs. From across the yard and through the glass I smell the warm almond milk on the soft gums and the slippery tongue. The dark eyes are plastic buttons, darting back

and forth, bursting with blood. Her mouth is down and she flies out from under the pumpkins.

I push you aside and run for the door. You were not expecting my force. You shout behind me. I do not hear what you say, but I feel your voice vibrating through the air. The porch steps are wet. My feet both burn and freeze. When I touch the grass, there is numbness spreading through me.

I have lost sight of the one I am running for. I just run toward that circle. I follow the stench of blood, the stench of truth. I have no torturer to rise against. But I can rise.

Stop.

All motion ceases. The pack, the ring of yellow eyes pauses in its carnage.

Go, I say too softly. Get out. Go. I want to scream. Get out. I raise my voice. Go away. Go, and I scream in a torrent. Something has dislodged, I feel. I feel something has slipped as I scream and move toward the button eyes, the neck broken in one movement.

The dogs begin to run. Some move out in formation, circling me then disappearing in the wood. Others scatter. One does not want to give up his delight. He bites into that small dead torso and drags it along as he paces backwards. His eyes fix on mine. He growls. I move forward with his retreat. Then, in a spasm, I swing my arm out and grab his bloody muzzle. He veers back suddenly, pulling me down, then vanishing in the trees.

I sit up in the wet grass. There is blood on my clothes. You approach and kneel down beside me, but you do not look at me or touch me. I think that you do not know what you are doing, you say.

I do, I say. My face is in my hands, but I am clear. I am very clear.

Damnit, you do not. You yank my hands away from my face and look at me. Slowly your expression softens. You drop my hands and bend forward. I lift you gently and you bury your head beside my neck.

Oh my God, you say very softly, oh my God. You just do not respond appropriately.

I take your head in my hands and kiss both your eyes. With my hand I feel under your shirt for the spot where I think your heart must be. I press my head there and think, but do not say out loud, that you do not respond at all.

Vince Dziekan / (RETURNING TO) THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

The full suite of photographs together with the entire accompanying text that constituted Vince Dziekan's *(Returning to) The Scene of the Crime* was shown first in April 1986 in the Richmond Art Centre, and next at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in May 1986 as his graduating exhibition. Several images have been eliminated from the original sequence here in *TCR*'s version of *(Returning to) The Scene of the Crime*, and most have been reduced to fit our pages. In addition, because of copyright, most of the texts, drawn from Genesis and the crime stories of Mickey Spillane, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, which were paired with the photographs, have here been eliminated.

In this structuralist piece, Dziekan organized complex, multi-levelled references through his juxtapositions of image, altered image and text. One photograph appears in two different versions at the beginning, middle and end of a cycle. At the beginning and at the end it is a group of matrons near a giant pineapple in a Queensland, Australia park, a snapshot from Dziekan's visit to that site. In the middle, however, collaged art materials transform the women and a man into allusions to the Temptation and Fall. These three photos are the only ones whose textual counterparts are from Genesis. All the other photos are grouped in pairs or clusters of four, and each life-derived image is amended with sometimes repeated art historical borrowings and book cover and movie poster materials. These latter refer principally to the racy and violent novels from which the counterpart texts are taken. The faces and bodies of well-known actors and actresses have been collaged over those of the strangers in the tourist snapshots Dziekan took on several trips. In many, one discovers Bogart beside Adam, or Bacall near Eve.

These collages are Dziekan's visual way of saying we live the cycles, the myths, consciously and unconsciously. Cited below, to explain more fully how these myths work intellectually for him, are excerpts from Dziekan's catalogue for the exhibition.

ANN ROSENBERG

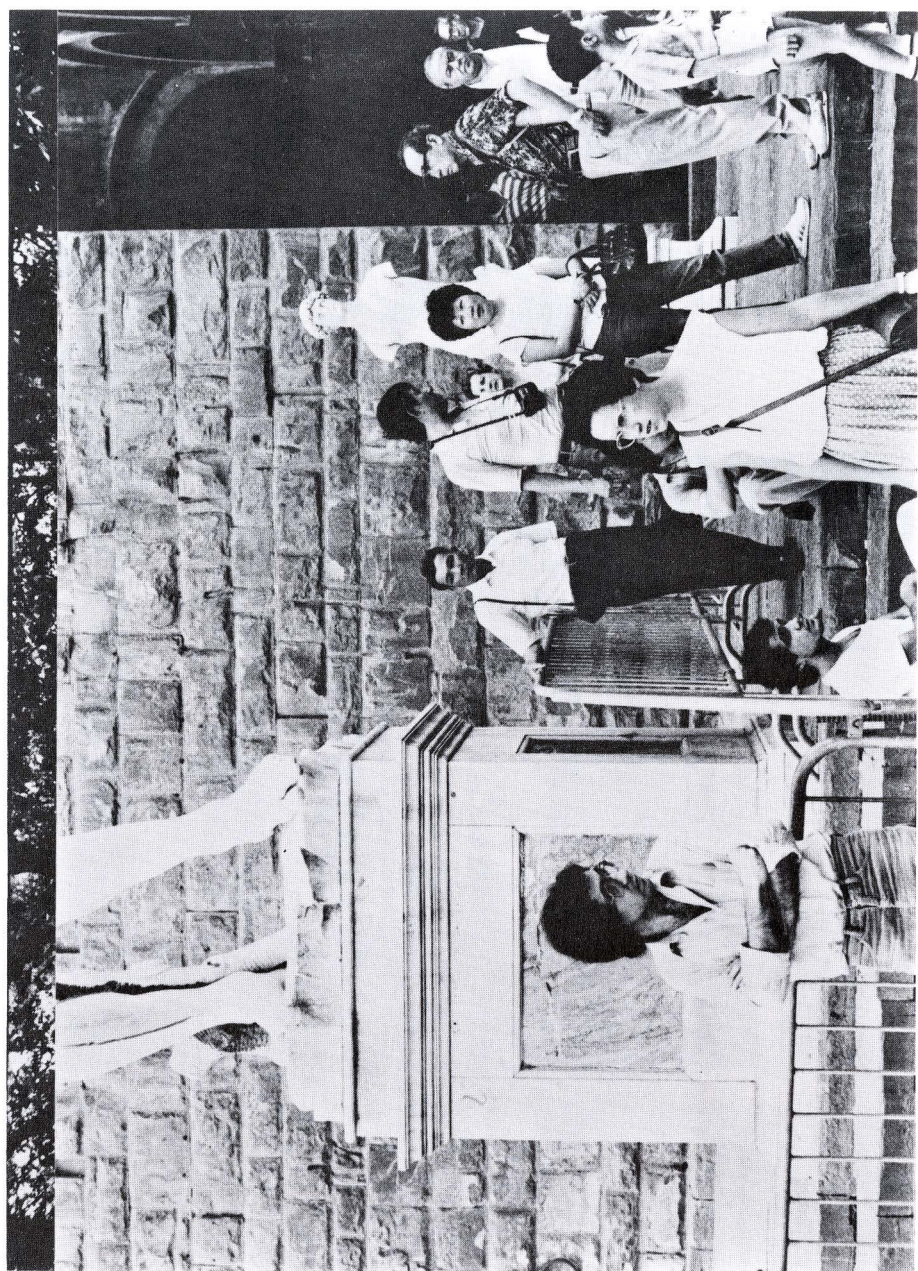
Associate Editor, Visual Media

I

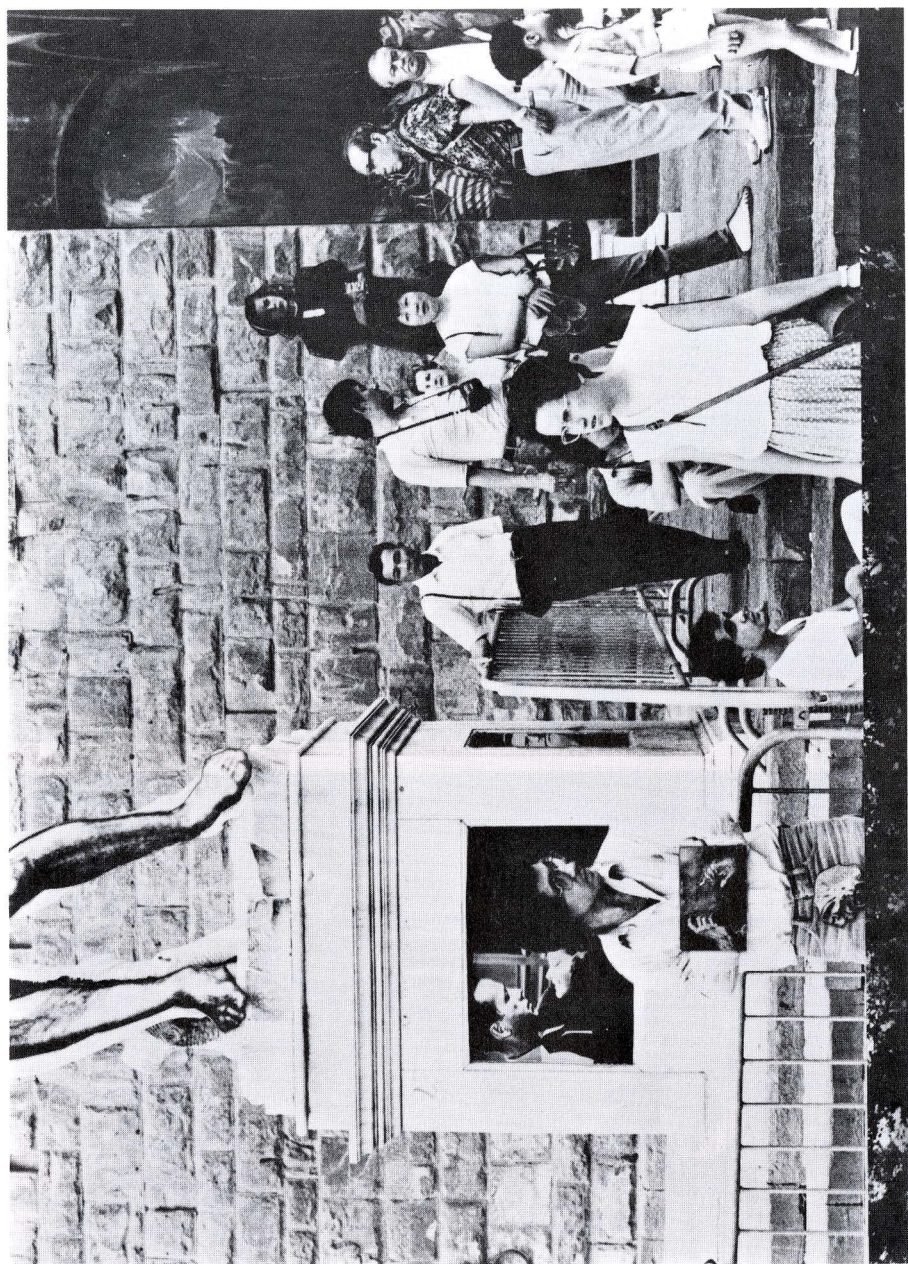








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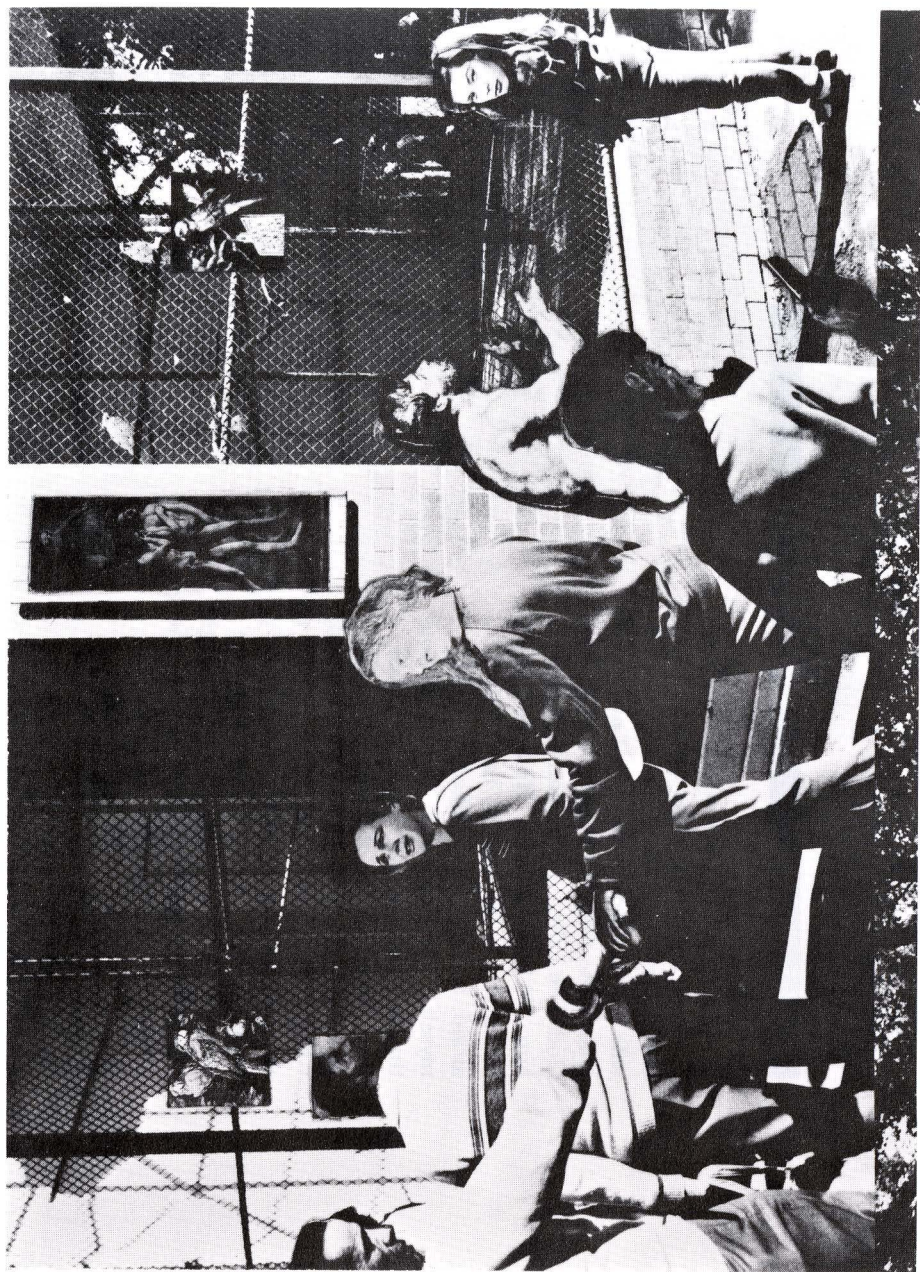








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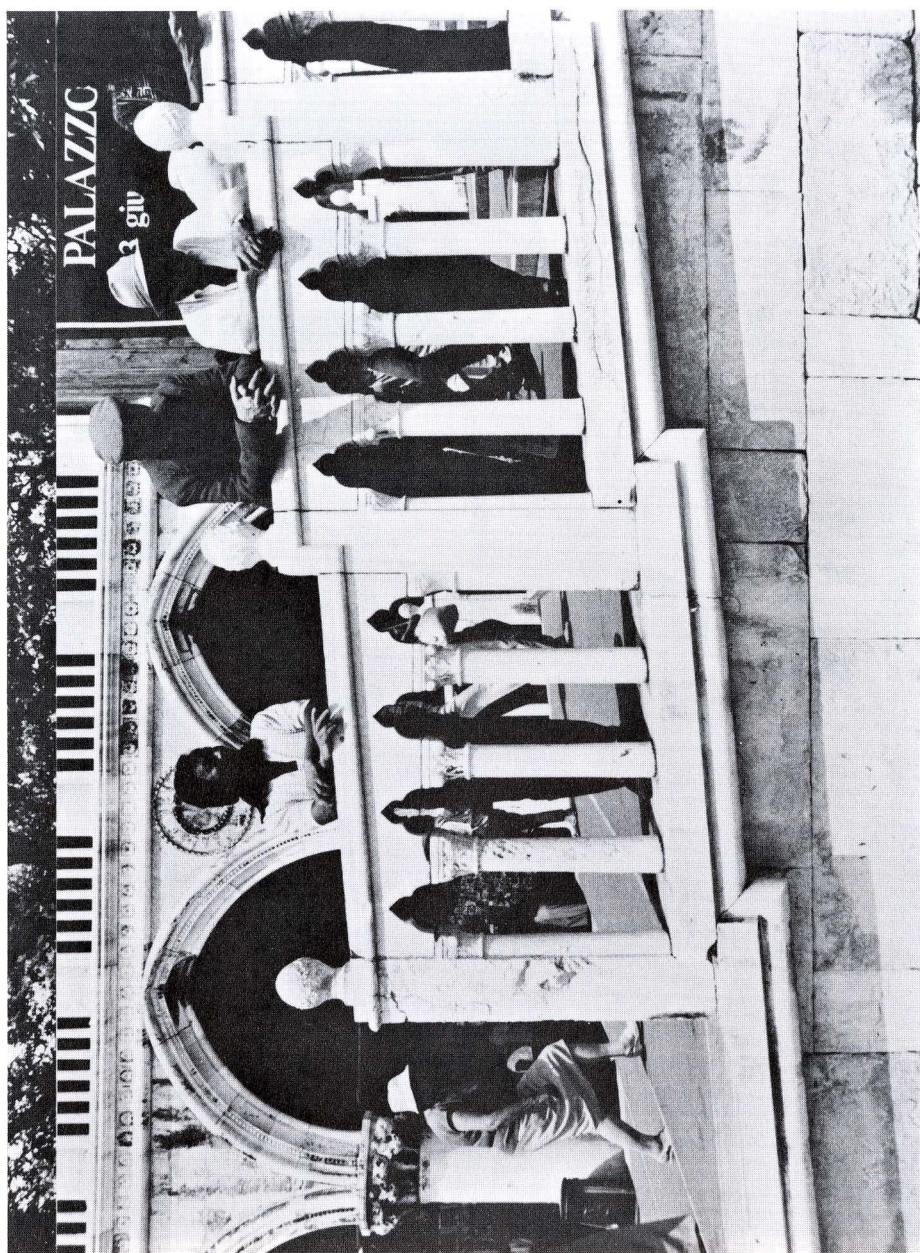


VIII

When they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself." Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat." The man replied, "The woman whom you put here with me — she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it." The Lord God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?" The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it."

Genesis 3:8-13





IX











XIV



When men learn to be men maybe they
can handle dames.

Mickey Spillane,
Kiss Me, Deadly

XV



EPILOGUE

The hero myth has a habit of recurring and reappearing in various (dis)guises; in our case, in the story of Adam and Eve and in the crime fiction of the 1930s and '40s, especially in that by "The Unholy Trinity" of Mickey Spillane, Dashiell Hammett, and Raymond Chandler. . . . As a representation of the soul, a myth relates to the human race or a culture in the same way that a dream relates to the individual. . . . In this way, the myth of the Fall occurs and continues to recur in the individual.

A key to success in the crafting of mystery fiction is melodrama. It is this exaggeration which makes the differences between reality and fantasy more evident while relegating the similarities between them into even deeper subtlety. . . .

The notion of crime and punishment is the essential moral. Once crime fiction was recognized as a literary genre worthy of investigation and criticism, it became subject to all sorts of interpretations. It was always evident that the detective story is essentially an allegory of good and bad, good-guy and bad-guy. . . .

An integral part of the success of the crime novel is that there is present a quality of redemption, the need to atone, the need to return. . . . What becomes apparent is an interesting dichotomous situation: good and evil are found synthesized within the characters' personalities. These values remain in constant fluctuation, constantly switching and shifting.

After the Fall and the expulsion from Eden, the goal for mankind is to be reunited, to synthesize the opposites (of body and spirit, of man and God, of male and female). In purely psychological terms, the alchemical secret is not a substance, but is the perception of reality on the archetypal level. . . .

LIST OF IMAGES WITH CORRESPONDING TEXTS

- I* Queensland, Australia: Genesis 3:1-7.
- II* Puerto Vallarta, Mexico: Mickey Spillane, *I, The Jury*.
- III* Florence, Italy: Mickey Spillane, *Kiss Me, Deadly*.
- IV* Queensland, Australia: Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*.
- V* Queensland, Australia: Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*.
- VI* Melbourne, Australia: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*.
- VII* Venice, Italy: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*.
- VIII* Queensland, Australia: Genesis 3:8-13 and 14-19.
- IX* Venice, Italy: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*.
- X* Melbourne, Australia: Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*.
- XI* Pearl Harbor, Hawaii: Dashiell Hammett, *The Thin Man*.
- XII* Pearl Harbor, Hawaii: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*.
- XIII* Melbourne, Australia: Mickey Spillane, *Vengeance is Mine!*
- XIV* London, England: Mickey Spillane, *Kiss Me, Deadly*.
- XV* Queensland, Australia: Genesis 3:20-24.

LIST OF APPROPRIATED IMAGES

FILMS

The Big Sleep. Dir. Hawks. With Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. 1946.

The Maltese Falcon. Dir. Huston. With Humphrey Bogart and Mary Astor. 1941.

IMAGES

Adam and Eve Reproved by God. [Anon.] Flemish. 16th Century.

Altar-frontal. Salerno.

Book cover images from Mickey Spillane's *One Lonely Knight*.

Cole. *Expulsion From the Garden of Eden*.

Cranach the Elder. *Adam and Eve*.

Durer. *Adam*.

———. *Adam and Eve*.

Genesis Mosaic. St. Mark's, Venice.

Goes. *The Fall of Man*.

Masaccio. *Adam and Eve Driven From Paradise*.

Michelangelo. *The Fall of Man*.

Riemenschneider. *Adam and Eve*.

Rubens. *Adam and Eve in Paradise*.

Titian. *Adam and Eve*.

———. *The Temptation of Adam*. [two versions]

Van Eyck. *Ghent Altarpiece*.

R. F. Gillian Harding-Russell /
OPAL'S DREAM

I OPAL LOOKING OUT

Through large spotty raindrops
blackfaced mirrors on the clear window
the glassed out green

of summer. Many faces glimmer
dark and wistful oval
inside the leaves
dripping on the eaves.

(Those other
twisted faces in the nervous twigs
she cannot place.)

Her eye is a blackbird
leaping through the heavy glass.

Something's red in the shadowy
leaves. *Whose children are those
walking in my garden?*

II LEAD MAN ON THE EDGE

But the lead man quietly reads the newspaper
holds the world static
apparently serene on a
crossword puzzle axis.

(What does the Great White Whale
think about? With such a little peephole
to the light.)

III OPAL'S PLEA

Hold me tight
between your strong fingers —
I am blue iris surrounding
your seeing pupil.

(The killer whale optimistically feeds the sly seagull
standing on the edge of the pool
at Stanley Park.)

I
like the junction
between your eyes—I am
the princess willing in the tower below
interesting rainclouds.

IV OPAL'S MEETING WITH WORDS

He doesn't know

but he lays fingers of cool clay
on my dusty knobbled heart

a thing in a cage

between wrenched ribs
surrounding a foreign country

around a column of bone.

On the hard pavement

I hear vertebrae

broken

beads.

V CHILD CROSSING OVER

A child

scoops up toads, brown and warty
(the odd remarkable emerald or curious gold
speckled)

in the creek of an old man's snarl
between furrows of hills

where nothing grows that
isn't

growing already between the scrub grasses

combed flat by migratory winds
coloured by changing leaves.

He fishes dexterously
with fingers sprawling

elastic between legs of toads

in strange green, velvet waters.

VI LEAD MAN RISING

He measures his day in glances sidelong
and short penstrokes, cheery
exchanges with bored or
well meaning secretaries.

At night, he rises a monster from the deep
hearing himself roar in the seaweed
of his sleeping. Cold sweat
and the bleeding stones
on his way up
frying
his red feet.

VII BELOW THE BELT

(Does he see children
drowning in the foam
below the deck?)

You told me not to
look back, Lead Man. Are you still
following me?

Ray Filip / TWO POEMS

APSARA

All paths folded at her feet,
She sings.
Saturated with Vietnam specials
And Dainty Rice commercials,
We sit
Cynical and tacit
In a United Church basement.

Khmer Rouge on her lips,
I remember the coffin of that Canadian Dan
From high school killed in Laos—
His seat still warm from history class.
The entire school filed by his bier,
Mournful multiple exposures of students and teachers.
Memory resurrects the silence of our winter boots
Soundlessly passing the infant infantryman.

The vocal silence of that funeral
Counterpoints her voice seeking serenity.
Her empty hands gesture with offerings,
A celestial dancer trapped
In stone tapestry of defaced temples,
Or in front of an alien audience.
Some spiritual principle makes
Of the world a chaste waste.
A woman,
A goddess of nothingness,
Bows without blessing,
In her lonely curtsy through eternity.

HAPPY MASKS COST MORE

Hollow Hallowe'en,
Basement of *La Baie*,
One-faced people shuffle
Mass market masks
To a symphony of sniffles.
Ugh ugly Bozo wigs
With zaftig blue hair,
Darth Vader death masks
More vulgar than Agamemnon's,
René Lévesque false fronts
With rubber cigarette
On which one joker wrote "prick."
A stock of smiles for extended wear:
Smiles like surface-to-surface missiles,
Smiles while your heart is breaking,
Smiles like cracks between buttocks.
Think of egos with swell heads
More frightening than these grosbeaks.
Grin only for your toothbrush.
Cackle into loud crowds,
Careful not to lose your mask.

Michael Kenyon / ORANGE RIND (FOR FIVE VOICES)

- EBENEZER I dreamed of Duncan, that he's imprisoned like the five of us, but in a distant compartment. I dreamed his dry fingertips touching hollows in the surface of the cell wall, the indentations where his fingernails once fit perfectly. Now his nails are splintered to the cuticle.
- DION A plotted dream, Ebenezer, a waking fantasy. *My dream* was of a fruit stand at dawn in the Xtalmla plain. Garance stands behind the boxes, calls to her long shadow: Lovely pears! Succulent peaches!
- CEMETERY Says you. I never dream, or if I do, I never remember. I have a lousy memory. I HAVE A LOUSY MEMORY! And I'm sick of imagining Duncan alive. Who cares? Right Basil?
- BASIL Stupid. We all dream of Duncan: Duncan lives on. I dreamed I was shaking him by the hand: everything burning, everyone dying.
- CEMETERY Good morning, Garance. Good night, Basil. This is not the time to shout.
- BASIL Stupid. We have to shout to be heard. These walls are thick. I dreamed Duncan had an escape plan.
- ABACUS Basil, your voice fades like space into walls. The name, Duncan, fades into the stone. If you can hear me, Basil, then it's as if Duncan is moving from my cell, through the wall between us, into your own cell. When I say: Duncan lies across the floor of the cell—

BASIL Cemetery, listen: Duncan's in his resting place, his cave, his stone stone stone. Is this what you're thinking?

Pause.

CEMETERY No. All I hear, Basil, is your voice on one side, Dion's voice on the other side. Beyond your voice, I sometimes hear Abacus's voice and beyond Dion's, sometimes Ebenezer's. But that's all. There is no one else. Four voices all speaking of a person who is dead. But you won't talk to me unless I play along. I hate the stories. Why not talk quietly of a meal you once ate, a glass of water, a conversation with a woman, a beautiful woman, or of a place? Why not mention other names?

... I remember drinking wine once at the Estancia Pildoras, with you Basil, and the others. The sun was setting; a slight breeze entered through the open door, into the room, swayed gently out again through the curtains closed on an open window. Can you hear me, Dion? You were there, remember? At the estancia. Duncan was dead drunk —

DION On the plain, Garance reaches out. She can't see Duncan, but she can guess his plans.

EBENEZER His arms and legs are thin and long. His torso conducts ribs and nipples and wisps of chest hair down toward the solo phallus. His white beard seems to drag his features away from the black eyes. Gradually, in a procession, first one leg, then an arm, then the other leg, then a shoulder, leave the ground. Duncan begins to rise in a horizontal ripple, until he's several feet above the cell floor, midway between root and coping. Like a ghost-leaf, he drifts on the breeze through the wall, passes into Dion's cell.

DION I see Duncan's feet, his knees, his belly, his chest, his neck, his head. His body surfs the air the width of the cell. And now he's passing into the opposite wall. His feet disappear, his knees, his belly, his neck, his head. ...

CEMETERY I'm trying real hard.

BASIL Just *say* you see him, Cemetery.

CEMETERY I see Duncan's knees, his scrawny chest, and everything.

BASIL Duncan looks so peaceful as he floats through the cell. He's plotting his escape with great care, taking notice of all the details. His eyes twinkle as he pushes effortlessly through the wall into the next cell.

ABACUS Here is no air current. Duncan reclines, suspended just above the floor. He's listening; I can almost hear Garance's voice asking what he's dreaming about. Duncan looks from the corners of his eyes at me, it's a pleading look: I shall transmit my dream, it says, and you, Abacus, you shall give it voice.

Garance, Duncan says, I'm dreaming about fruit. I'm dreaming of an orange you once gave me and which I can't remember eating. It had five cells. I remember all the melons, peaches, mangoes, rhubarb, apples and pears I ever ate, but I can't remember the orange... Now, I'm running along the path from town, past the schoolhouse. From here Xtalmla looks like a smouldering pomegranate against the dark sky. A woman walks down the school steps toward me carrying a toolkit, a crowbar and a bag of oranges. She says: It's much warmer where the incendiaries land.

BASIL I ask her for an orange and she gives me two. We make our plans together; her name's Garance, she tells me; she knows a ranch on the plain where we can rest.

CEMETERY I think we did this one before.

DION A clear sky sometimes shines between the black columns of smoke. Sometimes, too, the flames from town are invisible. We head for our favourite cafe where Garance orders crepes with hot loganberry sauce, a loganberry mousse, chocolate cake and those special shortbread biscuits fashioned in the shape of cats. I order bread and water.

EBENEZER We hike for miles, across the plain to the Pildoras Estancia. On the ground floor of the house a party is in progress; we stroll gracefully through the contorting bodies. Some-

one pauses in mid-reel to say to Garance, El Dorado, and she faints into my arms. Upstairs, a man comes at me with a drink in his hand. Once I've put Garance down, he's easy to get rid of: my first killing. Throughout the night in the attic, Garance and I make love. At one point, she turns to me — I'm behind her — and says: I'm asleep, Duncan, dreaming of the Lizan City Subway System. I didn't know there was a subway in Lizan, I gasp.

At daybreak, the sun streams through the window onto Garance's white limbs. We hear the distant clatter of someone breaking bottles on the ground floor. From the attic we creep past the man on the stairs; my boots stick to the linoleum.

DION No. I left the woman sleeping in the attic, the party members sprawled snoring over the stairs. I walked into the plain, peeling an orange.

CEMETERY I'm cold. No, I'm not cold. I'm bruised. I've terrible haemorrhoids, a sore throat. I can hardly speak. And Duncan was killed, or died, a long time ago. I dream Duncan is dead. You hear that, Basil?

BASIL I've walked for days and I've made it to the foot-hills, almost to the border. I carry the crowbar and one orange. When I sleep, I realize I'm only dreaming I'm asleep. When I sleep I dream five men in a line of adjacent cells. Within each cell, each man is dreaming of me —

CEMETERY Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. My name is Duncan — I'm ... I'm escaping —

BASIL When I wake up, I forget I'm asleep and that this is all a dream. My name is Duncan, I tell myself. I'm escaping.

ABACUS And the fact is we're each of us alone, neither warm nor cold. The fact is Duncan, when we bring him here, fills us with hope. His plans for escape, his plans for government, his ideals, are magnificent. He's pleased with the way we narrate his dream. Garance, too, is happy.

Duncan speaks; no sound is emitted; I read his lips. These are the final plans: Garance waits on the outside, in a

wattle shack in the orchard. She's baking rhubarb crumble and buttermilk muffins against our break-out: she knows we'll be hungry. She has a jeep and will help us reach the border. There is, she confides in a serious tone, patting her belly, the possibility of children.

BASIL When we've crossed the border, we'll celebrate. We'll find a place where we can all live together. We'll build five shacks side by side and at night, before going to sleep, we'll be able to talk back and forth in quiet voices.

CEMETERY Sometimes . . . I like to scrape my teeth on the wall . . . when I'm fed up . . . all this crap about escaping . . . my front teeth feel good against the stone —

DION Until we achieve our — ahem! — objective, we'll — ahem! — we'll need no food or sleep. We'll dream standing up! — and it won't be of orange groves or borders. I'll whisper your name — Ebenezer — listen — Ebenezer —

EBENEZER Dion?

DION Cemetery —

CEMETERY Dion? Basil?

BASIL Abacus —

ABACUS Basil —

Pause.

ABACUS Basil!

Pause.

BASIL Of course it could be we're just waiting for the firing squad. Maybe we'll have to dig holes in the ground before they shoot us. I can almost hear the rifles being cleaned, bolts slipped into place —

CEMETERY Are they coming for us, Basil? Can you hear them?

DION If I close my eyes I can almost hear —

CEMETERY I feel real strange — feverish — don't you feel strange?

BASIL Click-chk! Click-chk!

CEMETERY I feel like . . . maybe we should have another dream, something easy—you know—

DION —about the rats, the rats scuf-scuffling along the tunnels. . . .

EBENEZER I glide through these walls—it's very simple—tramp through the subway tunnels, along platforms and up a steep corridor to street-level—just like that. Anyone coming with me? The rats won't trouble us, nor the trains: I've memorized the transit schedule.

We surface at night in the centre of Lizan City. Traffic is slow and heavy; the movie crowds spill from the cinemas onto the sidewalks. The pedestrians' faces glow brighter than day, the intersection's lit by a huge neon sign: *THE LIGHTER*. Beside the subway exit, Garance waits at the curb in a slick black TransAm. As we push between the astonished bystanders and clamber in, Garance tells us she traded the jeep, but if we squeeze, we can all fit.

By the time we reach the edge of town, the night inside the car smells of orange blossom.

DION I see a large tabby cat cleaning its paw by the *City Limits* sign.

CEMETERY I think that if the cat dreams, it will not dream of me. At the roadside I see two eyes rushing like headlights. When I look back, the cat is gone.

BASIL Someone's escaping!

CEMETERY *Begins clapping.*

ABACUS There's always someone escaping, but whenever they escape, they forget to stay quiet so we can know they've really gone, really made a clean get-away. Cemetery almost made it once, but he got delirious, began raving about politics.

DION *Begins clapping.*

ABACUS On the edge of town we meet Duncan. About time, he says with a smile, and climbs in. Six men and one

woman in a TransAm. The jeep was too conspicuous, Garance laughs. We're riding skin to skin, crammed in together, all dreaming of the woman at the wheel who drives us through the night.

EBENEZER *Begins clapping.*

BASIL Past the cafe where she relates eating a meal of crepes with loganberry sauce, loganberry mousse, chocolate cake and coffee. Those were the days, she sighs. And we all sigh. Cemetery says:

Clapping ceases.

CEMETERY You forgot to mention the special biscuits shaped like kittens. My father used to drown kittens when I was a boy.

DION When I was little, we lived near a house where an old gentleman kept hundreds of cats and hundreds of rats: just enough rats to feed the cats.

EBENEZER At dusk the following day, we reach the border; Garance and Duncan have arranged a circus, a gigantic celebration in the middle of a field in a beautiful green valley. Hundreds of gypsies swallow swords by the light of the half-moon. And we drink and dance and eat all night; we share Garance between us; each has her once. We sleep through the next day; we're safe among friends.

DION If we each have her once, that's six times Garance makes love, or is it five?

Pause.

CEMETERY I'm not sure, I think I have gangrene... in my finger
... I've enough of gangrene, and of cats...

Pause.

BASIL It's stopped working again, Abacus. It never lasts long
any more. It used to work. It used to cheer me for quite
a while afterwards. Once, I remember, the story, the
dream, rolled on and on until I thought I was alone,
and outside, right outside, dreaming of... I can't
remember.

Pause.

ABACUS Tomato's a fruit, I believe. Isn't tomato a fruit?

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GARY GEDDES is an editor, poet, playwright, critic, anthologist and writer of fiction. His latest book, *The Terracotta Army*, won the Americas Best Book Award in the 1985 Commonwealth Poetry Competition. He has a book of stories, *The Unsettling of the West*, forthcoming from Oberon Press and three collections of poetry: *Changes of State* (Coteau), *I Didn't Notice the Mountain Growing Dark* (Cormorant Books), and *Hong Kong*.

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\$5.00

ISSN 0315-3754

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