

GAIL SCOTT / from *The Obituary*

Featuring Rosine, her super-ego the Bottom historian, her neighbour [aka the landlord] and various townees, alive + deceased.

[Neighbour's Cut]

The Street

[NEIGHB: She worked on the police desk. It made me nervous. Admittedly, the parquet floors, she kept nice. Also, she slept with women, a point in her favour. I thought initially. I accepted to talk politics. But something was not according to Hoyle. A wasp in a Frenchy sweater cannot be trusted. Not in this place. I said, have you noticed a Marxist does not invest in futures? To test her. The rental property was for until Dacha Tranquilité, my little organic farm, grew feasible. The orchard was maturing. I said, wanting to be civil, you're a little back with the rent. She answered, fingering the ivory spiral pendant hanging from her neck, did I know Louis Riel'd♥ lived in the 'hood? Lena with the cheekbones, on the second, a better tenant, was complaining, the weird vibrations coming from over woke her. I wrote a letter. You should have seen what airs Ms. 4-9-9-9 put on then. Like she was onstage. Flouncing down the stairs, striped top, you could peel it, workboots + stockings. Always different, from one day to the next. Like a girl. Like a boy. After she left the police desk at the paper—to put it better, after the police desk left her, A MULLET! I cannot tell a lie.]

- ♥ What's in a name, especially if perpetually under reconstruction by guilty opportunists? Riel, French/Dene, hanged by Canada for starting a republican-style revolution, proffered myth as a bulwark against future historicism, adding Hebrew ascendance to the ancestral stew. So [as our story goes] our protagonist hearing from her mother, Veera, who heard it from her mother, the Metis Prisc Daoust, who declaring while serving the Sunday roast, using her Coronation-pattern sterling, that Louis Riel was the reincarnation of David. She read it in the paper.

STREET: In another frame, down street [elaborate white-painted wrought iron round exquisite tiled garden]: birds leaves begin falling. Man clenching fists in window. Face, arched nose, sensitive lips, swollen with anger + frustration. We had thousands of books. They burned them, saying why don't you Ay-rabs ever learn a thing? A tear running down cheek. Thinking of his father. He had huge culture + education + worked in a laundry. We've been here a hundred years. Man's face so swollen you can see heat coming off him. His kids, we are lumpen. Sitting at his desk, writing dots + circles in graceful right-to-left script. Weeping now fully.

[NEIGHB: I said to Jacko, put a carpet to drown the racket. She's driving Lena on the second sleepless! Plus send a letter. I need the rent for the dacha. In the orchard, the fruit, instead of falling, is ripening on the branches. Around it growing oats, to feed the rabbits. The day she answered the door, head to toe in leather, studs around her neck, my teeth—I caught a glimpse reflected in the leaded oeil-de-boeuf portal, a nice touch by Jacko before he left, which was fine with me—my TEETH were black with malice. She laughed + said: —*Never judge a book by its cover*. A voice also laughed behind. Lena, clean, nice with the children, told me there was screaming with pleasure every night. When you knew there hardly came a soul. People here are tolerant. But that girl was a sneak. She drilled a hole in the floor. Over Lena's bed. God alone knew why.]

STREET: There had been some rain. People having voted, scurrying over wet pocks in sidewalk, or jostling mid Épicerie Directe's air-conditioned crowded fruit. On th' radio, ridings going right. Kamouraska-Temis-couata. Dubuc. Matane. Woman, in paying, hoisting bum on brown grocery counter, fingering curls of handsome boy cashier. —*Moi*, she saying. *And Mother before me. We always worked for th' unions. Th'*

Independence Party. Th' French language. —Euh, excewse [I/Rosine interjecting] euh, puis-je payer? Th' woman, dark hair, slim pants, crossed at th' knees, nice heeled boots, in English: —Oh, from your accent, you're Cana-dienne. I don't blame you. For what you do. But we Québécois, we've been fighting for centuries. I/R: —J'ai vote Solidaire! Woman: —Moi, I'm strictly indepen-dantiste, but if Canadienne like you . . . I/R [angry]: —I'm more autochtone [exaggerating peut-être]. Than anything! Woman: —Oh? Me too, ¾ Abenaki. You Mohawk? I/R shaking head. We walking out together. Woman, turning East on Dada-Jesus. Oigawwi! Goodbye! Word learned from Grandfather.

[NEIGHB: I told the shrink MacBeth:

Can you believe she stole the salt bag?
Like Miss Environment protects the lilacs?
I said, what makes girls like you tick?
Oh she said, I hear it makes you retch . . .]

STREET: In hotel foyer. One block over. Hot October. I/Rosine passing *Free Khalid X* flyers. For th' principle [+ small remuneration]. Th' air conditioning. Refreshing for a minute. Professors milling at cocktail table. Cuban with no future in R story, coming up + saying: —*Cuban-American. No, Canadian, he amending. I liked what you saying in your futuristic pamphlet. So oh-penn Give me your e-mail. Writ in little book with flurry of CIA agent, he walking away, grey tufts of hair flying about large beige ears. Meaning now they've got me in their system. Autrement dit: as one orgasm producing another, wide ass switching back + forth, suspect as th' colour beige: so one cliché, etc. Till every Cuban a spy. In her defence: was not Rosine Dousse a small smooth woman arriving from Haeckville, AB [via Grandpa's friend madame B's in border town of S-D]. And getting in initially with group, designated DANGEROUS by Fed. Gov. Ag. For whom any info, when requested under Freedom of Information Act, forwarded nearly totally felt-pen deleted. As per para 7a in legislation wherein any gov. inst. refusing to*

give access to a rec. requested under Act, shall state: *This rec. does not exist.*

[NEIGHB: I said, Jacko, we need a lawyer. Relax, he told me as he exited. Going down substantially in my estimation, he hit the road for Toronto. Like he knew already the place was going up in flames.]

STREET: Speaking of flames, the other day, I/R boarding #55 North. In slanty light from port. Having once more started for but failing to reach Lachine.♥ Th' chauffeur, usual French + Irish mix, curly caramel goatee, refusing to converse. Listening to les Canadiens on radio. SHOOTING not scoring. Waves of *awhhwahwahhhh* coming up from dashboard. Meaning I/R, curling in front corner seat. Dark silk shirt, spiky cockring on wrist [grant it, a little passé in fashion]. And delivering opinion re: les chauffeurs de la STCUM. Un syndicat supposé au service du peuple. For failing to adumbrate or sing little songs. Save for chauffeur of #80, ave. du Parc. Who at all times crooning show tunes for passengers: 'Ohhhhhh, What a Beautiful Mornin'', 'We Could Have Danced All Night,' 'Bâââli Haaaa'ii' But on this particular day. #55 North, wheezing up boul Saint. Passing, on occasion, buildings on fire. Meaning I/R, who having too often kept mum, cause yielding to her time, therefore knowing th' importance of informants. Vowing to look, before afternoon expiring, into all th' little glass doors of all those fire-alarm box installations. Courtesy Les Terroristes Urbains, on corner poles up + down the street. Which little red boxes contemporaneously channelling not telegraph alarms to fire stations, but dioramas of burning boul Saint buildings. Yesterday or tomorrow. Decked in swags

♥ We materialists [like paranoids] know facts speak for themselves. *Fact:* Explorers early seeking Northwest passage to la Chine find waters permanently frozen. *Fact:* The town, mockingly named Lachine after explorer seeking, somewhat later, inland China passage, becoming main site of embarkation for fur-company voyageurs ever paddling toward lustre sun in West. *Fact:* Business is booming. *Fact:* Business keeps booming. Sun, ever brighter, thanks to CO₂ from industry's interminable march, slowly thawing far North passage, opening possible shipping route to China. Mission accomplished!

+ flourishes, appliquéed on stone hoisted from Saint-Jean-Baptiste quarries. By th' Shale Pit Workers! Themselves smoking in little appliquéed diorama insets:

Firebox 1, corner Sainte-Cat: Diorama of already torched beaux-arts porn cinema façade. Grainy charred pretty legs of women.

Firebox 2, corner Of-Pines: Falafel resto façade. Tagged 'Burning Tomorrow.' The gape-holed sinking onion turret high over. Aswarm with enterprising pigeons. Cooing. Fucking. Shitting on scare-owl's realistic feather detail.

Firebox 3, Bagg or Napoléon: French revival dormers of Kiki's Shoes [not always in matching pairs] + battered oak chamfered door: 'Burning next week.'

Firebox 4, corner Rachel: Singed Nouveau Monde Antiques card in smoking diorama window. Offering original Riel script claiming Indians of continent descendants of ancient Hebrews of Egypt.

Firebox 5, angle New-City: Mile-End vernacular [curvy cornerstone balcony], housing hotdog vendor famous, ca. 1930, for sticking finger in lieu of wiener into bun. Ere dribbling mustard + wrapping. Surreptitiously withdrawing manus particulari. Meaning some hungry mid-depression rag-trade seamstress slushing down sidewalk. Thinking she lost it. What's a girl to do? Pretend still back in Macedonia. And keep moving!

Bus grinding North, passing frail town-bred trees. Pale amber branches now that winter approaching, pluming toward sky. Or is that smoke on th' rise? Lengthening toward already sooty potlid of clouds. Spied through filthy bus window. Then one more red fire-alarm box object. Mid bakery display of aging ramekins. Loaves. Cheese rolls. Bagels. Palmiers. Jumping up + ringing bell. I rang. And rang. And

rang. —*Merci, madame*, sneering caramel-bearded driver. Braking hard, th' better to project this faithful STCUM user toward bakery display window, featuring in middle, no firebox installation: only square of red bond paper. With poem in unofficial language:

*It is with sadness we must announce the closing of
St. Lawrence Bakery
We thank our many loyal customers, retail
and wholesale
Who have remained with us and
Who have appreciated our bread, danish
and pastry products
Where the technology was primarily our
minds and hands
Thank you. Thank you very much.*

Smoke toujours on rise. I/R, though loath to give in to her time as part of th' better-lawns crowd. Having escaped to Mile-End, QC, from Haeckville, AB, via Catholic College in S-D. In search of th' action. Still, wanting, a priori, to get to safe confines of Settler-Nun Room. Miraculously succeeding hailing a Taxi Aimable. Wherein, for reasons of efficiency, coyly resisting mentioning allusions from Les Terroristes Urbains re: origin o' conflagrations. Only joking to chauffeur: — *Pretend we're in Macedonia. And keep moving.*