First published in 1975, The Cage was a graphic novel before there was a name for the medium. Cryptic and disturbing, it spurns narrative for atmosphere, guiding us through a labyrinthine series of crumbling facades, disarrayed rooms and desolate landscapes, as time stutters backward and forward. Within the cage’s barbed-wire confines, we observe humanity only through its traces: a filmic sequence of discarded objects – headphones, inky stains, dishevelled bedsheets – scored by a deafening cacophony of breaths, cries and unsettling silence.

Considered an early masterpiece of the graphic novel medium, the Canadian cult comic has been out of print for decades in its English version. This new edition, which includes an introduction by comics master Seth and a preface by the author, brings Martin Vaughn-James’s nightmarish vision to a new generation of readers.

‘I don’t use the word “masterpiece” lightly. I think The Cage is a masterpiece of comic art.’
– Seth

Praise for Martin Vaughn-James (1943–2009)
‘Vaughn-James remains a significant figure in comics history because his work was singular, literate, experimental and often unsurpassably good.’
– The Walrus
THE CAGE
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French edition copyright © 2006, Martin Vaughn-James,
Les impressions nouvelles and mécanique générale / Les 400 coups

This book was commenced in January 1972 in Toronto and completed there in February 1974. The major part of the work was done in Paris during 1972 and 73.

Originally printed in an edition of 1,500 copies at the Coach House Press in Toronto in 1975.

Issued in French in 2006 by Les impressions nouvelles and mécanique générale / Les 400 coups

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THE CAGE
for Sarah

*through the arcades, indestructible longing casts its dangerous
and lovely shadow on the heart*
... the cage stands as before ... unfinished and already decayed
as if its construction had been abruptly and inexplicably arrested ...
... its builders overtaken in their endeavour by some event
which for all their skill they had never for an instant anticipated
... an eruption so sudden and so violent that it reduced to rubble
the elaborate structure (of which the cage was merely one feature)
one facet of a complex network of forms arranged according to some logic
separate and alien to the surrounding desolation ...
a labyrinth of distorted signs stretching out across the plain...
a wild attempt to contain the inevitable flood of mute destruction
... a string of bloodied rags and broken nails obliterating everything
... but this barren cube ... significant only because it remains ...
an empty analogy ... a vacuous, stale and airless bag of words ...