

Début

n and *b* were in their dictionaries when Art fell. *n* was *néant*. *b* was betwixt. Side by side and at times apart they were glutinous and unlawful. They were referred to in some circles as *necessary evils*. Circumscribed, disregarded, out-cast. Scarcely tolerated. The folly ascribed to them served primarily to excise them, to render them *harmless* or *insignificant*.

We have been split at the hoof, *n* said. Where she went she left marks clippety-clop.

A tear down *b*'s face cleaved it in two.

A century ended one hundred years ago. *Plus ça change*. Demonstrably. A span of time is not equatable with years passed. We have new fonts if little else. The writing on the wall is illegible. *Le cri* is the echo of a drunken frat boy hitting the sidewalk. He lands face first in vomit, oblivious to the dissonance of fallen cities. While his friends identify chunks of carrots and evaluate the quality of bile, ancient walls *s'effritent* immeasurably.

The author is not positing *a better day*.

Merely we are watchful: *nous veillons*.

b produced *Commodify me*. How the Artists swooned! (They had forgotten irony.) Some heard *Come modify me*. They were doubly rapt. They dinned *b's unexpected turn-around!* (Allowing this once for the *minuscule*; for hadn't he too, *enfin*, capitulated?) Indeed he was spinning. With impatience no doubt as *n* saw him off at *la gare*. He was boarding a train and *n* was seeing him off. The city grew impatient for that departure.

Everywhere artists were fucking. They were uncharacteristically immoderate. Art fell further. *n* and *b* grew silent. One waved a white hanky. The other brushed aside a tear. For they courted anachronism. Half-smiles. And the body's curvature as the train pulled out of the station. *n* tucked her soft cock into her skirt. This was no time for jubilation. *n* and *b* were in mourning. Each for the other and individually. The road was long across the ocean and neither had learned to fly outside of sleeping. They were suddenly wide awake. They were slipping from the page. Inconsolably.

From the start they had been unabashed *idéalistes*. They had entrusted their tongues to language and privileged labials over all other sounds. That is, until they were confronted with *la langue's* unmentioned parsimony. They were crest-fallen, each and together, and both refused speaking, inevitably. The consequences were abysmal. *L'abîme*, whispered *n* as she disappeared but not without shaking a fist. They were crossing themselves out of their city: *rayé,e,s*. They had cast themselves against the brashness of white, the flickering screen, the unwritten page, the frothing sea, the blinding snow.

n's last words, as *b* had recorded them, were inaudible.

As they slipped through the broken link of a twisted metal fence, they glanced back at nothing.

The contorted faces of the Artists turned skyward.

At the joining of two streets, a book caught fire. *b* put the match out with his tongue and fluttered his eyes.

The body is heat. Art is desire. Their city had altogether fallen.

Venæ Cavæ

n and *b* were at an etymological disadvantage. They spoke the full weight of words. They were not erudite but careful. That is, they took care in speaking and more particularly in not speaking. Their sentences were cumbersome at times and as a result most refused intercourse with them. Neither *n* nor *b* objected, as they too refused intercourse, although let it be said that they were in the throes of a rather comical miscommunication. A sexual subterfuge. They delighted in the discomfort aroused in their interlocutors, which did not go unnoticed. And although they took pleasure in these peripheral provocations, their vendetta was with Art, more specifically with the Murderers of Art.

Their century had ended without logistical complication. All was well. The gravity of the matter could not have been overstated. *n* and *b* were hollow veins, pumping air into a bloodless heart. Their combined sorrow was cavernous. Their rage incendiary. For a while they knocked about. Into walls, into one another. They were disoriented, estranged. Eventually they grew calm. In reality they were seething. They were but two. One disappeared inside the other. *n* inside of *b*. *b* inside of *n*. They crossed one another out saying *Art lost to numbers*. They were painfully right.