

HEATHER TRESELER

Factories at Clichy

For L. B. (1960-2018)

We came to think of it as our painting: two figures
embracing in a corrugated field, its patina of sunlight
and stroked grasses beside the soot-stacks of factories,
their stern faces flat as prisons. Plumes of smoke
unraveling the shirt of sky.

“You can’t have Paris without the mills of Clichy—”
you say, and I think of night cafes, an opera house
flanked by winged horses, balconies spilling like
bosoms in bloom. The morning streets, swept
and rinsed clean as a sleeper’s eyes

of tousled dream. “You have the rest of your life
to work,” you add with such pointed sharpness
that I kiss you in the gallery where the touching
of art is otherwise prohibited, and an ancient light
or shadow falls across your face.

How Van Gogh’s lovers, narrow and undefined,
clutch each other as if at sole possessions, released
from assembly lines to this unruly field of wild
rye, long-haired rue: meadow of another
age I might have walked with you.