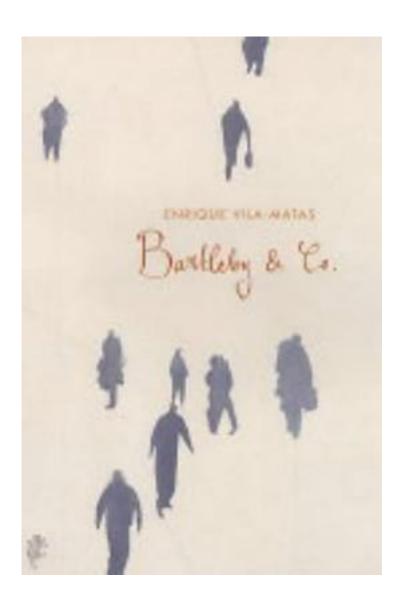
Bartleby & Co.



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In Bartleby and Co., an enormously enjoyable novel, Enrique Vila-Matas tackles the theme of silence in literature: the writers and non-writers who, like the scrivener Bartleby of the Herman Melville story, in answer to any question or demand, replies: "I would prefer not to." Addressing such "artists of refusal" as Robert Walser, Robert Musil, Arthur Rimbaud, Marcel Duchamp, Herman Melville, and J. D. Salinger, Bartleby and Co. could be described as a meditation: a walking tour through the annals of literature. Written as a series of footnotes (a non-work itself), Bartleby embarks on such questions as why do we write, why do we exist? The answer lies in the novel itself: told from the point of view of a hermetic hunchback who has no luck with women, and is himself unable to write, Bartleby is utterly engaging, a work of profound and philosophical beauty.

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