



PRINT! DOCUMENT :: SERIES ONE

Strange Coherence

BILL CONSIDINE

the trouble with bartleby
in collaboration with
exit strata creators collective







WATER

I can't help it, if the language
I use to be myself
is a boys' guide to romantic
poetry, an infatuation
with a junkyard, with climbing
alone over dirt mounds, through a
vacant lot made of gravel and mud,
through high, brown-thistled weeds, trash,
through ruins to the river.
These are tidal waters, They flow backwards.





STEEL WORKS

Blast furnaces, huge black silos,
 shoot white-hot sparks
 and billowing, orange clouds of smoke.

Clusters of furnaces burn
coal, limestone and iron.

Coal cars carry the dirt
 up tracks to the top of the furnace.

The steel rolls out in bars,
the slag in railroad cars,
 white-hot.

The mounds of ore make pyramids
beside the rolling mills, foundries,
forges and tin mills,
like long, sheet-metal barns
between railroad tracks and the river.

Allegheny Mountains
 Monongahela River
 Mon Valley, Steel Valley
 Youghiogheny River.

Kelsey Hayes
 the tin mill
Christy Park Works
Fort Pitt Foundry
 “The Valley Forge”
Reliance Steel
National Plant, USS

United States Steel
McKeesport-Duquesne Works
National Tube
the Irvin Works



the Edgar Thomson Works
Carey Furnace
the Braddock Plant
 “Big Dorothy”
 the open hearth furnace

Homestead Works
LTV J & L Steel
 Jones & Laughlin
Mesta Machine
Metaltech
Duquesne Slag

Chesapeake & Ohio
 C & O
Baltimore & Ohio
 B & O
Pennsylvania Railroad
Pittsburgh & Lake Erie
 P & L E
Erie & Lackawanna

The pig iron plant closed down.
Its hay-day was railroads,
 then beams and tubing
 then bomb manufacture.

A challenge raves
 about money & debt issues,
 then bubbles into creepy silence.

The works are all a dark
 at night along the river.
The place is less like hell,
 an empty valley.
The steelworkers' homes decay.





CARNIVAL

I'll sell you
mud & straw & the smell
of exotic and sick animals,
a stranger's frank stare,
a fetus in a bottle,
a naked girl in a box
of knives,
My Live Quarrel with a
Woman Behind a Curtain!

My first carnival was at Boys Town,
in a benefit for Boys Town.
My father took me,
and I can still see him
young on that day.
We paid to step into a truck
to see a cynic's "rhinoceros,"
that looked like a scrap of hide
in murky water.





My first time in New York,
at Coney Island,
a sideshow barker in a red coat
argued onstage
with a purple-veiled showgirl
and a lean sailor in the crowd.
I wouldn't leave.
My Aunt Peg still tells the story.

“Through onion fields
and hilly woods,
I walked with my love,”
sang the soon-to-be-married,
“to the traveling carnival.”





DOG AND BIRD ACT

What could be more romantic
than my mother playing
Johnny Mathis constantly?

Then Dad, drunk in his
plumbing clothes (jeans and a workshirt),
surrounded by beer breath,
opened the cage in the dining room.

Dad scared out Mom's pet
parakeet, pretty Dickybird,
in a wild night at our house.

The green bird fluttered to
the mantel while
Dad taunted the dog.
"Get the birdie! Come on!"

The dog barked excitement.
Dad pushed the bird from
the knick-knacks on the mantel.
The tame bird hopped to the rug.





“Get the birdie! Come on!”
We boys cried no,
together in the living room.
The bird hopped again,
couldn’t fly, and
all our family ran shouting.

Then the black dog pounced
on the bird on the rug.

The young dog strutted
with Mom’s pet in its teeth.
“Grr Grr,” sang the proud dog
of its kill. Boy, was
Dicky stiff and green
in Roscoe’s mouth,
in our black dog’s head-
shaking, high-stepping prance of
triumph through the house.

Dad chuckled and sighed,
red-faced, weary on the floor.

Mom cried in the kitchen,
after the screaming and
chase through the house.





LOST AND FOUND

What's that? A slanted floor, secret,
A private musing that wrecks neglect,
That ravel loss, bounced on the beat
Morning glories of laughing alarms,
Cricked in the cold neck of nightmare
Facings, scurried out of knowledge
With rueful puns, ironies of an iron yard,
Another deafened nearness of the signs,
Clatter up the window where, yes,
A bridge shines blue and gold till midnight
And zodiacs dance faster after dawn,
Bursting into work light and staggered men
And talk of drug gun fire in the east,
No, not the sun, just drunks reeling
As their blood reels, as the blurt name reels
Through a hunk bellied aslant in another
Silent onslaught ravage of a passion.





THE BUILDING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The United Nations Building,
From rusted winches and black gears and
Pulleys strapped with steel, from rusted
Gangways, broken-backed, asunder,
In the lap and low reach of the river,
From treacherous walkways, haphazard,
with weak wood, spikes and rough jumps,
From charred, broken, understructure beams
Building through moss from out of the river
And from the war and the loading of ships from the island,
At the base of the black cabin in the wreckage
Of a railroad, at the spider's steel feet,
On the opposite bank of signs for the city,

Could be a hot-spot in a suburb of style.
It peoples its stoic porch with imaginings.
A man with an iced drink strolls to touch a lady's chair.
Elegance keeps its secrets, fooling no one.
Faces are asunder, of course, with longing,
Love and loss and the one more imagined dance
With the night crashing into its shape.
There they would lean on the railing.
Out the open doors of smoked glass onto the veranda
Comes the tinkle and thud of a jazz combo.
Inside could be game and private dining rooms,
The curtained gambling room, austere,
The caddy-master's son with a tray of fried dough balls
And cheese, the woman back from miscarriage.
The maestro chuckles in his domed office,
Demanding back the jewels stolen from a friend
Or a warehouse full of imported chocolates.





It all happened on television
Or on a hill in a less developed region,
Bruised with the blessings of buried dirt.
Shining traffic flows more darkly past the assembly.
This is the ruins of a railroad and the lap of a river
And the many fast-passing whirrs and flappings
Of helicopters rushing finance at the world.
This is the enduring of iron, wood and stone,
A temple of this and the last century,
As much of the past as worships still unseen
This venture petering into the river.

Here, what was across the river is here and changed.
Here the nations meet on a payday of iron.
Here gather the words that are elements
Bare to all force and enduring.
This is the Building of the General Assembly,
East of the East River.

Here, what was wished will be uttered on a dare.
It will go to its death having always died.
It will go on in sunlight and on the moon.
It will gather the peace that dances in colorful costumes.
The tribes of feathers and iron clash in laughter.
This too is assembly, shout the speakers.
Rhetoric spins the grammars back to thanks.
Warriors dizzy with display fall to sleep off the past.
They wake at once, astounded with hammers.
What will be built is no order of dismay.
Choo-choo impels the child's caboose.
Christmas gives the virgins back their beds.
Easter does more than take a walk this time.
Censor! Look back at the approach, where you are.





On the spare, wrecked bank of the river,
Worry and prepare regardless, though
That shout changing earth course could not, could not
Even cross the river, except as odd debris.
Deliver the speech, demanding
No radioactive fervor of death,
Calling for no iron tomb as a dwelling,
Not blaming blood oath crimes of the enemy's fathers,
Not lusting war for graves still unhonored
Or for youths brimming with blood,
Not claiming boom for final Bible completion.
I urge the assembly, Build beyond and
Out of a temple broken by the river.

(White-haired in an asylum, the modern prophet
In a hospital gown greets poets
With a quick handshake and turns their talk to
His mission: Tell the world to build the temple.
The poets are stuck with old themes,
Reduced to simple words and hospital fare.)
Go ahead and build the steel temple.
We will see what we worship there.





CASSANDRA

The exile, the hillbilly queen,
driving all night
the white Thunderbird
reaches the capital.

She walks a long hall into screams
from the dim stink lobby,
from the furious boys
slamming chains,
spitting beer and piss.

She sets a time for tomorrow
and gets out.
More coffee and hamburgers...
Oil for the car...
In the coffee shop ladies room,
she puts on an old dress
inside-out,
to walk among the statues
waiting for her appointment.





She decides
she can only tell her closest friends
the tragic news and surprises
she carries under her wild heart,
where all these developments began.

Right away she leaves.
She takes the wrong bridge out
and drives another lost night.
The car won't stop.

She finally sleeps
on cushions on the floor
of a family of strangers.
The car keeps igniting
and coughing in the driveway.
They laugh and bring her tea
whistling into their sun room.
She can't tell them.
Later the children awaken, afraid.





BLAKE

How can I create a voice that's bold
Enough to daze the savages, cave men,
Who pile up war machines like rocks again,
Who think big bucks crush enemies with gold

And iron warheads? What word magic told
These dreamy apes their rage was god, to send
Blast master death and boom fire kill and bend
All brittle bones to their terrible mold?

Shout to us, Blake! Prophecy new fate.
You drew a face in the sky to hide God
From angry poets of revenge and hate.

Their prayers, crudely recalled, still shape the odd
Abstractions of these Beasts with big, gory
Scenes. Call to us now a calmer glory.



LIKE KIDS ROLLING, DIZZY

Like kids rolling, dizzy
down a hillside, squealing,
the earth is reeling
through cold snaps and spells of freezing,
through warm days, wild winds, mild nights
downpours, a world of
gooey, gray slush. Puddles
reflect blue skies as bright
as the first purple
crocus in a cool dirt garden.
The skies are full of ducks and robins.
People are emerging
onto the pavements of a modern
city seething with spring.

Which young woman will show you
the buds that tip the bare trees?
Who will make a gift of a true
promise, revealing which sprouts will be
hyacinths and yellow daffodils?
Basking in the rough breeze,
weathering bluster, drizzle, chill,
you can, you will
easily be a blossom,
all love in human
outburst to the sun.





MY LIFE UNDERGROUND WITH DOBIE GILLIS

by Maynard G. Krebs

All at once, Dobie's Dad
said to me, "Bongo,
Beat means beatific
and Kerouac must die
to get a book published
and rise to be a star
as dopey good Dobie in love
with – good choice, good luck –
Tuesday Weld wearing only her bobby sox."

All night every night
Kerouac came in from Queens
on the subterranean subway,
the 7 and F trains,
and all night every night,
Dobie flew in
from Cleveland with genius
baseball catcher Thurman Munson
in Munson's astro-jet,
over all the roads faster,
rushing in the night to
touch and go
in Alphabet City.

In those late nights,
Zelda Gilroy was the most, man,
quick-witted, beautiful, brave,



and she was the most neglected
and the most earth essential poet,
in timeless recording of this
Hot Flurry of Emotions,
these teeming eruptions, these tears,
this laughing faster, this think
think think with Nietzsche,
this stumble to
the floor exhaustion
as if sweet confession
was an epic adventure.

And Dobie said to me in my home,
“That was no way to say Hello,
and then even my anger bored me,
hell, and giraffes and daffodils
and race holocaust History
borrowed all my booze money,
and the sun arose ponderously,
and there I was, caught whispering
with the soul of love
on a date with some preppy.”

And I said to Dobie,
“Take your time,
wait by the river of the
Zen Lunatic Buddha,
give now to your dying mother
what she gave to the kids
in the steep backyard,
peanut butter for the wargames
of boys fighting Mexico.
Work?” I gulped.





“Work? When there’s a job
worth doing, I’ll play,
but not for hell in this cult
of busyness and bosses.
Who’s on first, What’s on second,
Who’s at bat?
No, Who’s on first and
Abbott and Costello ran off
with my love
life laughing, ha! I love a joke!”

The Wind Spirit of the West
blew us all away.
Those were the days of departure,
with nowhere else to go.

Then I, Maynard G. Krebs,
waited out the Sixties
and the Seventies lost
in the Pacific with Tina Louise
in a miniskirt on
Gilligan’s island.
Now I’m a planet, a cartoon,
like Orion and the dawn
pink with blushing.

Saturday morning is mine.
Dobie is, like, geniusville, man, bop.
So’s Zelda Gilroy, a great artist, bop.
Tuesday Weld’s still pretty wild.
Dobie’s Dad is fine.
Hello, glad to see you.





RELAXING

First let me hear, my shepherd,
rainwater flowing underground,
in storm sewers.

I'll give thee a mechanic's tune,
drumming on a hood
in a tractor repair shop,
garage doors open to May.

Across the green ball fields,
let's picnic under the elms
above a pale river.

Three crows rest in the yellow
blossom dogwood.

I've abandoned April's songs
like the prizes I won
in the mountains with my songs
of last summer.

Tryllis is alive and sings
about robins. Apollo
will choose with perfect ears.





I'LL MAKE THE CONFESSION

I'll make the confession. Every hour,
I think of you. Your name comes aloud
When I'm alone. In banter in my crowd,
I'm careful not to reveal your power
with an astonishing slip of the tongue,
your name, so familiar, for another.
You drop the phone when I call. Don't bother
to call me back, if you dare. I've rung
your home and work numbers and learned your proud
pleasure in refusing me, your drunk
laugh, even your contempt on your stoop, from above.
When we walked, you ran. Your virtue is a cloud.
It means social position. I've not sunk
to giving this charade the name of love.





PAY PHONE 1983

Now men use all the public
telephones in the night.
On the dark avenue
and in the delis and bars,
they hog the phones.
It's late, they have to
talk with women.
One, with a phone he thinks
is broken, keeps trying
to call the operator, dangerously.
I can't find a free phone
in twenty blocks and panic
that I'll reach you too late.









NOTES ON A MAN KISSING A WOMAN

The man is transparent to paper.
She hides her face in her hair.
Where she looks in pleasure is a secret.
She swells from his loins.
Abandon spreeds her long arms.
Her thighs are huge flesh
About to quake open and lift.
She dreams of silver platters.

He is intent on this mystery given
To his lips in light odors and
Expanse away, away.
Her loins fill his arms and head.
He gives his face to her flesh
And turns each tinge and color
Of her shifting flesh, rolling here.
She dreams of steel and glass towers.

Her hands cup open.
He stares into her belly.
He has to kiss her,
Night after day after night after day,
Returning, arousal and want.
He dreams in repetition, again and again,
The woman given to want.

Ah, the colors...
And the graceful sweep away...
She would be red if his eyes were closed
And all her flickering hair yellow.
His arms turn orange.
Green emerges on her belly.
He walks in to the page
To turn from the page into her body.



AT A FOUNTAIN

Day

Off an avenue, in a corner park,
a fountain features two seals
made of cement and small white stones.
As big as the seals on rocks in the bay
offshore of San Francisco, far away,
the smooth, cement-flipped seals
spout into a wading pool,
in flashing arcs that sizzle on the pool.

On park benches under the trees
nearby, weakened, apparently
homeless men have gathered.
One old man fiddles
with coffee cups and plastic bags,
talking to himself.
Another slowly paces, scratching his arm.
A dirty, heavy man sprawls on a bench
and thin ones huddle in sleep
with burnt faces, touched
with exhaustion and exposure.
Other young men, who look clean
and new to the outdoors, each
sleep alone in the shade.

Two men wrestle into the wading pool.
One holds the other in the spray,
and they both get soaked.
“There!” the bearded one says,
spanking the captive on his jeans.
“I’m sorry!” laughs the victim,
waving his hands above his bandanna
as he prances from the water.

They walk back to their group,





a raffish band, who look like hippies,
ex-convicts, unemployed alcoholics,
welfare mothers and glum, young women
who nurse their last beers
at the chess tables.

Soon the old man with plastic bags
and cardboard cups speaks out, loudly,
against people who don't work
and nuclear war planning
and people who come to the park
without recognizing that he lives there,
people who pretend he's not there,
like the one with the book.

Homeowners come,
tall, professional men
with dogs and cameras.

The old man stoppeth one,
to talk about where to buy shoes.
After some more talk about politics,
he tires and gets quiet.

Soon a young mother comes
into the quiet. She encourages
her toddler to walk
all the way around the wading pool.
The boy picks his way to a tree.
The kid takes off.
His mother calls to wait, and
she follows the child who wanders
through sad and sleeping giants.

In the same savage, sylvan spell,
I wander in sadness out of the trees.





Dusk

But in the mist of an evening
in the City, in spring,
a black storm coming
on cool winds, I return
to the fountain.

The old man who muttered and raged
flees, bent over double
with the weight of two
blue plastic bags, as he scurries.
I wonder what shelter he goes to.

I pull from the wading pool
three pieces of litter,
a coffee cup, a stick and a cellophane bag,
by walking three times into the fountain.
Each time, the spray and the rain thicken.
I feel the pure dance
of water bounding off concrete.
The seals take part in the world
situation, wetness, downpour.

The people who live in the park
talk beneath the thickest trees.
They murmur and sing at their table.
As the rain quickens, their voices rise.

A thundercloud breaking on a crowd
of homeless people is my story,
but I run away from looking
for wisdom in such a sorry group.
I settle for love, with distaste,
at a distance.
I wanted the fountain and flee the storm.





THE CONCRETE

Hard and gray,
an exact image of concrete
covers the earth
for block after block
around my home.

The broad and famous
Hudson River, a fiord,
its waters pouring north
from the cold sea,
is locked away here,
cooped, behind wires,
high fences,
empty ruined piers
& locked warehouses.

All that can be reached
only by dashing across
The West Side Highway.
In the middle of six lanes
of full and moving traffic





is a concrete wall,
waist-high, to climb over.

Heat stifles the breath.
glare hurts the eyes,
the sun a killer.

Forget this inquiry.
Impassable road. High fence.
Untouchable river.

all traffic

stream as our river
of steel, pour
steel and glass.





WHEN I LIE ON MY COUCH

When I lie on my couch,
I can still hear Ninth Avenue.
I think about my job
with the Taxi Bureau,
in a dream flow of taxicabs,
black cars, radio cars,
gypsy cabs,
limousines & liveries.
I see L-plates & Z-plates
& T-C plates.
I remember walking to Eighth Avenue.
In my first response to the avenue,
I felt the heat and the gray expanse.
The traffic approached,
like a waterfall.
I saw a rainbow,
full of Yellow Cabs.
Were these cars my daffodils?
I nodded to the ground, remembering
with joy a play I made, called,
“Agamemnon, King of Cars.”





As I lie in a field of concrete,
beside the busy ocean,
I feel the strange
coherence of my life with pleasure.
High noon in metropolis:
the glass & metal cars
shine. Suns dance
over the windshields.
From the fenders & trim,
stars flare,
stars in daylight.
But I shift, unsettled
by the next thought: using the
image
that orders my life is more than
freedom in a sweet lyric.
It's a fact as a fetish.
Cars drive my work and world.
I sing the machine, like a slave
in love with its power.
I can't rest, the noise
of traffic in my mind.





ON THE WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE

Ruins: an abandoned bridge at night,
connector of sectors of urban blight ...

Railroad tracks & steel crossing a river
are the arms of my Muse, beckoning.
I ask the police. Yes, I can walk right
across the dark, damaged bridge to the sky.

Relying on rust-splotched girders & rivets,
I slowly rise on an arc through the dark.
I keep going up on steel beams through bright
windows and music, through radio waves,
through homes stacked twenty stories high.

The black river flows far beneath my feet,
glistening through the broken street.
Upstream, it curves and seems to give way
round a cliff, round the bedrock mass
of housing projects of a grand civic past.

That view means more than a moment alive...
The bridge will be repaired, and both sides thrive.







William Considine is a poet and playwright living in New York City. For more of his work, see williamconsidine.com.

The poems collected here appeared over a period of x years, from 198x-199x. The author wishes to thank the editors of the publications in which some of these poems first appeared: Downtown, Pan Arts, New Observations, Red Tape, Cover and The National Poetry Journal of the Lower East Side: Dorothy Friedman August, Michael Curtin and Frank Shifreen, John Shaw, Michael Carter, Jeffrey C. Wright, Peter Paul Miller and Jim Feast.

He also wishes to thank Edmond Chibeau and Mitch Corber, who made videos of certain of these poems, and Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, publisher and editor of this chapbook series.

- William Considine, 2013





THE PRINT! DOCUMENT

Strange Coherence

by

WILLIAM CONSIDINE

was designed in collaboration

in

Brooklyn, NY

and

was set in Minion Pro & Edition

and

was printed in limited edition

by

SPENCER PRINTING

in

Honesdale, PA

c. 2013

THE EDITION IN YOUR HAND IS NUMBER ___/100

exit strata / the trouble with bartleby

www.exitstrata.com / www.thetroublewithbartleby.net







THE PRINT! DOCUMENT SERIES

is a project of

the trouble with bartleby
in collaboration with
exit strata creators collective

TITLE IN SERIES ONE (2013) INCLUDE:

The Sword of Things
TONY HOFFMAN

an admission, as a warning against
the value of our conclusions
ALEXIS QUINLAN

Strange Coherence
BILL CONSIDINE

Talk About Man Proof
LANCELOT RUNGE
& JOHN KROPA

Original woodblock prints / cover art
KEVIN WILLIAM REED

Series curator / editor / book design
LYNNE DESILVA-JOHNSON

