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The Poet and His Bridge
by Hugh Cook

Because I am a college instructor, my hands have a tendency to get soft (as does my belly). You pay a toll for pushing a pencil all year. The last sentence, as it is turned out, was prophetic, for last summer I decided to join the world of manual laborers and managed to find a job in bridge building.

Now, you've got to understand that my bridge was nothing in the height of the Golden Gate; rather, it was fairly litle span on a highway running through the cornfields of northwest Iowa. Nevertheless, to a guy who gets queasy putting up second story storm windows, this bridge was high enough to let me tell you.

As I was numbly flitting from girder to girder with the greatest of ease, I was unable to get rid of the teacher of literature in me, and I found my thoughts often going back to Hart Crane and the story of his bridge. Hart Crane was a poet who lived in the first part of our century, doing his most important work in the 1920s, and in order to tell his story adequately, I've got to do it in some-what circuitous route. So let me give you a bit of background first.

The 1920s were a fantastic decade in America. It was the period now known as the Jazz Age, a time of flagpole sitters, silent films, gangsters, speakeasies, flappers, bootleggers, prohibition, the fix of the World Series (really!), the Charleston, Charlie Chaplin, and Charles Lindbergh—a time of high-living, flappers, bootleggers, prohibition, the fix of the World Series (really!), and spent almost as quickly.

America had just gone through a World War, and the younger generation who had started the century with optimism, were disillusioned, were tired of great causes. They decided to live it up instead.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, an American novelist and participant in the sevelry, has said, Scarcely had the staid citizens of the republic caught their breaths when the wildest of all generations, the generation which had been adolescent during the confusion of the war . . . danced into the linelight. This was the generation whose girls dramatized themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders and eventually overreached itself less through lack of morals than through lack of taste. May one offer in exhibit the year 1922?

That was the peak of the younger generation . . . and with a whoop the orgy began. A whole race going hedonistic, deciding themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders into the linelight. This was the generation whose girls dramatized themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders and eventually overreached itself less through lack of morals than through lack of taste. May one offer in exhibit the year 1922? That was the peak of the younger generation . . . and with a whoop the orgy began. A whole race going hedonistic, deciding themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders into the linelight. This was the generation whose girls dramatized themselves as flappers, the generation that corrupted its elders and eventually overreached itself less through lack of morals than through lack of taste. May one offer in exhibit the year 1922?

Eliot characterized it as "The Wasteland," which was the title of his long (Continued on page 5)

They Say . . .

As long as he's up there looking down at Us The World will carry on and We'll Be able to have a great old time with Each other (Friend and family) anywhere We Please because god is Good and Kind and Nice and Sweet and . . . he watches over Us And We don't have to worry if Our Money is low or if our Cars need repair or if Our Earth is full of poverty and death and suffering and sickness and . . . We don't have to worry or Do anything special or Get shook over it because As long as he's in heaven god will take care of the whole mess Barb Walvort
to Frannie as they take her back to The Retreat
good-bys
I will not say remember me for you cannot, did not know me while I tied your shoelaces, tucked you into bunk, put food within your grasp, removed before you shoveled in too much, abruptly ended the three times a day meaningful happening.
but water touched you too, the up and down and up and down and up and splashy cool, above all changed you into light and free.
more than enough of heavy in a life taught you to sit immovable in sand faced by a futile climb, not angry or with stubbornness, only but surely there. yet not just there, a rock, no, you can love (grab). chunky damp arms circle me neck, hands locked, fists pound my head until I say enough, Frannie, enough, you understand what else? does it matter to you if I love you or how I feel so glad to see you go?
a trying time unless it meant to one of us something.
what means to you? are you the happier of us that is and mean are synonymns? no why.
or is the ringing in my head, “buh-buh-buh-guh,” your question-answer? or just mine, my intellect imposed on you? my question for you but for me as well. oh Frannie let me tell you what I think I know
oh Frannie let me tell you

Frannie . . .

Pat De Young

First Day

they were best of friends
Toby and Mom
they had just spent
five years and two months together
and now the day came
Mom and Toby walked the three and a half blocks that ended their path by the large red brick building
Mom pulled the huge green door open while Toby jumped up and in and looked and way up somewhere there was a grey ceiling
red sign hanging down blinking words that Toby couldn’t read
Mom started up the steel stairs with painted red tops come on Toby whispered Mom’s heart they say its for your own good Toby followed Mom step by big step Hanging on to the black steel bars topped with a role of wood
Toby got to the top where Mom was standing next to a younger woman who looked like Mom did on those wedding pictures that Mom showed him
the woman with a big smile put her hand on his shoulder to lead him to another smaller door
he looked back trying to run with mom but she waved with a lined face
so he went like many others has been done before and she went like many mothers had been done before and cried in her house work wondering how education would solve this problem

Kay De Jong

the visionary

i’d be a priest a thousand years ago, and prefer anemones to corn fields. Half a century beyond would i, perhaps, stretch my length in dahlias and overcome this listlessness. i’d wax melancholic. i would paint signs in beach sand, point sea-ward and sigh as the letters and forms dissolved and think myself a paragon of truth.
there would be a feudal lord to flee from, to dart into thickets to die hunted and starving, berriden with plague, perhaps?
and my tongue would be too large for my mouth so i’d suffocate myself. No need of sheriffs.
but, instead of this escape, this epic, i lapse into fatigues of fact and matter and see again the good old cornerroom.
yet i can’t forget i might have been a priest a thousand years ago and would’ve preferred anemones to corn fields.

Tina LaBrenz
by Tina LaBrenz

A fat brown locust proceeded to devour what was possibly the last healthy plant in a once prosperous tomato patch. His thousands of brothers and cousins were, at that very moment, chewing the same destruction among the cucumbers, peppers, carrots and beans—all contributing in their jerky, screeching way to the collective destruction of old Heather McAllister's sole means of support.

Heather herself was standing at the gate to her garden, watching, one wrinkled brown hand resting on the gate-post, the other, gnarled from illness, gripping her oak cane for support and maybe also comfort. She had been studying the horde of insects all morning, knowing well that there was nothing more she could do to keep them away. She had simply lost the game with them, being too old and too tired to combat their persistent nibble. Being too “behind-the-times” had also contributed to her defeat, for her farmer neighbors had for years known the use of insecticide sprays and chemicals of technical names and functions with which to fight such scourages of nature as the locust. Leaving these death-coated fields to their owners, the insects had hopped, flown and been blown elsewhere in their relentless search for another green pasture.

Eventually they discovered Heather's half acre of vegetables, tucked behind the hard crusty armor, were all to no avail in the end. Others took their place in a relentless battle which numbers would inevitably win.

To Heather, that had been long long ago. Still standing and gazing as the locust gorged their gluttony, fat abdomens on the garden she had toiled many long hours to produce, Heather grew weary of the sight, and, with a resignation tempered by age and a determination fostered by hard work and simple goals, she turned and hobbled slowly over the dusty, worn path leading to her shack. Enterin, she found Celia Laney, a nurse from the Preckett City Medical Center and friend of Heather's daughter Barbara who also lived in Preckett City. Miss Laney stopped to check on Heather two or three times a month to give attention to the woman's right hand and leg, partially handicapped by a stroke suffered the year before, and also to bring news about Barbara whom Heather had not seen for years though they lived but forty miles apart.

With the same clinical and efficient cheerfulness nurses everywhere learn to use, Miss Laney greeted the old woman, "Well, Heather, you never cease to amaze me, how you can look so good at your age and you taking care of yourself all alone out here," her mouth still smirched with the stains of her work, the telltale lines of worry already running their furrows across her brow and around her eyes. "Barabara sends her love and asked me to ask you if there is anything you need," she added, since Heather had remained silent.

"Miss Laney, I'm glad to see you here today. I been expercin' some hard times and I want to tell you about myself," Heather stated abruptly.

Miss Laney instinctively masked her initial surprise at such a statement, for on previous visits, she had discovered that, unlike the many elderly people she cared for at the geriatric wing of her clinic, Heather apparently did not care to speak of her past life and never complained. Miss Laney had greeted this characteristic with gratitude for she had little time to hear the personal histories of the elderly who had, in her opinion, passed their stage of usefulness and influence in today's world. Nevertheless, now she was strangely interested in Heather's words. But fear that a launch into Heather's story might tie her up until late afternoon made Miss Laney hesitate as she tried to think of a way to change the subject without making her intention obvious.

Before she could do so, Heather motioned with her cane for Miss Laney to sit down in the rickety kitchen chair to her right. Meanwhile, Heather shuffled to her rocking chair sitting across from Miss Laney and carefully lowered her burden into it. She paused for a few moments and then began, "Miss Laney, I never had no soul to talk to but you for these many months, and though you're not kin, I got to speak to ya' on these matters. I ain't never had no children a' mine live but Barbara, an' she's been a stranger to me since she married her insurance fella an' left this house for the city. I know you got things to do an' I know you don't have no obligation to listen to an old woman gab, but somebody's got to know what I aim to do.

Suddenly Heather stopped talking, her usually dim eyes have spotted an intruder. She stretched out her freckled, dry hand and swatted at a locust that had followed her indoors and clung to the arm of her chair. Her aim proved perfect, and the locust fell to the wooden floor, a heap of broken, twisted angles, with clear fluid draining from its body like gasoline from a wrecked tank. "Them little devils!"

Surprised at her own violent outburst, Heather felt a need to explain, "Miss Laney, it's the darndest thing I ever did see, the way I like killin' them little bugs. I ain't the violent kind, my Barbie'll tell ya' that, and I ain't got nothin' personal 'gainst them, they're just little devils to me. They click their legs together like locomotive wheels a' trunnin', and their eyes a' buged out and big like they was doin' all that eatin' out of a fear of Lucifer himself."

Heather paused and looked genuinely puzzled—her expression foreign to a normally placid face.

"Never mind, Heather, they're making a lot of extra work for you here. It's only right that you should hate them," Miss Laney said, attempting to console Heather and hide her own embarrassment at the same time.

"No... no, that ain't no excuse to hate. My children all gave me more wrath than I ever needed when I was a young lady. I was a greenhorn when I married, but I've seen the world and I know better than to hate things. Livin' things is Livin' things. They all got their purpose, but sometimes I don't see why they got to do the things they do. I try to accept, but it gets harder ever' day."

"Now Heather, you mustn't feel that way, Miss Laney began again.

"They're all just little insects. They'll go away soon, I'm sure." But even as she said this, Miss Laney had to admit that she felt a terrible revulsion to the little specks dancing about the floor.

There was a long lourge now as Heather rocked her chair slowly and unevenly while Miss Laney sat uneasy and speechless across from her. Heather looked almost peaceful at first glance, but her rheumy, aged eyes were glazed from contentment or absent-mindedness, but from the private memories running behind them in Heather's eighty-year-old mind.

"You know, Miss Laney," Heather said as she became conscious once more of her guest, "I been here on this land for nigh onto sixty years. My man and I cleared these woods and built this house with a lot of sweat and toil. I grew callouses thicker than a thinl and near broke his back a' plowin' and shovelin' and fightin' the snow and drought an' tryin' to scratch out a livin' from the earth. And me, I almos' scrubbed my skin off cleanin' and cookin' and lookin' after my man. When my children were borned, I nursed and raised every one of 'em as best I could and I watched 'em grow to be just little tykes, and I watched 'em die. Out a' four little babes, two died a tet'nus that winter. I quit this place. I can't do it no more."

Miss Laney sat back in her chair. Once again she thought how senseless it had been to introduce God into the situation. She had wanted to console but had recoiled in only making the old woman blame her troubles on the devil when it was really the fault of a bunch of little bugs. She resolved to herself that next time she would know better and stick to her profession as a nurse—healing the body—and not branch out into theology or psychology.

Seeing that Heather was preoccupied with her thoughts and realizing that she was a full nine minutes late already, Miss Laney stood up and crossed over to Heather, saying good-bye and touching Heather's hand simultaneously, knowing as she did so that Heather noticed neither. She searched Heather's face once more, and finding nothing there of depression or physical ailment but age, she turned and left.

Heather did not stir from her chair until the sun was low in the sky, burning the western clouds deep shades of orange and red. Stiffly and slowly, she rose from her rocking chair and limped to the dresser in her bedroom to begin packing for her trip to Preckett City and Barbbara. With the meticulous care of an economy born from want, she folded each piece of clothing neatly and placed them in the ancient brown suitcase she kept under her bed. When she was finished with this, she carried and pushed the suitcase to the opposite side of the house. "I'm ready now and I ain't particular about our outside in the dirt beyond the porch, swept the old wooden floor, dusted the sparse pieces of furniture and lit the gray oil lamp on the kitchen table since the sun had now set and all daylight had gone with it.

Heather once more sank into her rocker to rest a moment. While she rocked, she murmured to herself that perhaps it would be best to leave for Preckett City tonight instead of waiting for morning. "I'm ready now and I ain't particular fond a' seein' them little devils anymore nor my ruined garden," she whispered (Continued on page 5)
Scholarship

September
They said
we're going to the drive-in
for an hour
come along

I can't
I said
I got to study

you have next mornin off
They said
I went along

November
They said
we're going to the movies
for the evening
come along

I said
it's not that I don't have time
but
I got to study

I went along

February
They said
we're going to the city
for the day
come along

(I had to study)
I went along

April
They said
we're going to the lake
for the weekend
I went along

May
He said
I'm going to my office
for a moment
come along

He looked at my transcript
looked over his glasses
over his desk
over at me

young man
He said
you should have studied
so-(uh) long

Yawn Sun Song
Shine early morning
Light in this cave place
Don't waste no sunshine
Don't waste no blue sky
Warm that north wind and
Let me be in it
Florescent lighting
Illumination
Topping thin windows
Fly three white pigeons
Black dots in blue sky
Black in white sunshine
Don't waste no sunshine
Let me be in it
Drowning farm acres
Illuminated
Wring out sponge acres
Sunny warm blue day
Thousands of volumes
Illumination
Outside blue sunshine
Inside it's class time
What if I miss mine
Yawning and nodding
Hey
Dreamer
Wake up
Live!!

Ron Rupke

Allen Vander Pol
poem published in that same year, 1922. Using imagery from Ecclesiastes, the book describing vanity of vanities, Eliot characterized his generation in these words:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stormy rabish! Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water.

To the neo-Romantic poet Hart Crane, Eliot’s bleak picture was too harsh a judgment. When Crane read Eliot’s indictment of the 1920s in The Wasteland, he resolved to answer the pessimism of Eliot’s poem with a long epic saluting America’s limitless past, present, and future. Out of that resolve came Crane’s major work, The Bridge.

Crane’s day, for that same human vision of man’s mastery over God’s creation (let’s not forget that) has created our present industrial, mechanized monster.

I’m not intending to fall into the trap that many fall into of letting art or poetry be modern man’s salve from the impersonality of technology. Only Christ can be our “bridge.”

Perhaps Crane came to realize the falseness of his idol. Two years after publication of The Bridge, Crane took a trip to Mexico. On an appeal from his family to return home, Crane boarded the steamship “Oriiba.” On the second night out, the night watch had to prevent Crane from jumping overboard, but on the next morning, the morning of April 26, 1932, Crane calmly walked to the stern of the boat, and, in the sight of a number of passengers, leaped into the sea. The boat stopped and searched for an hour, but futilely.

Hart Crane was never seen again.

ENCOUNTER WITH LOVE — (Continued from page 1)

watched Teresa drive around in the beautiful new car which he let her use. God had blessed him with a sizeable income while he was back home. It was a great comfort knowing that he had money in the bank to get started with when he returned. God, you’re wonderful!

Thad found himself sitting at his desk with the letter in his hand. This was the moment he lived for while he was away. Reading Teresa’s letters was like devouring a delicious meal after a long day. He opened the letter slowly and carefully, savoring the experience in full. He unfolded the letter and read its short message.

> “Dear Thad, I am so very sorry to have to tell you this. You mean a great deal to me and I don’t like hurting you. I’m sorry but I have fallen in love with another man. I don’t know what to say. I’m sorry. Please understand. Please forgive me. Teresa.”

Thad could not believe the words he had just read. Sitting back in his chair he stared blankly at the single page in front of him. A half hour went by before Thad realized fully what had just happened to him. A feeling of sickness and despair swept through him. His frustration soon turned to anger. He got up from his chair and slammed his way outside. And then he ran. He ran till he could run no more and then he flung himself down on the grass. He gave the sky a defiant look and shouted “I-hate-you-God!”

THE LOCUST — (Continued from page 1)

to no one in particular, “Besides, them little bugs don’t work at night so I won’t have ‘em hoppin’ all over my clothes and shoes if I leave now.” With that in mind, Heather creaked to her feet, eased herself to the door and looked out.

With the moon not yet up and clouds obscuring the stars, the night was coal black but warm. There was no wind, Heather was pleased to note, but she did not really care for the quiet stillness either. Extinguishing the oil lamp she had carried to the door, she carefully placed it on the floor, picked up her suitcase and stepped out, closing the door behind her.

Picking her way in the dark as best she could, Heather was panting and shaking by the time she reached the edge of the gravel road bordering her property. The starin of carrying such a heavy burden and the trickiness of finding her way in the black, foreign night forced Heather’s heart to pound furiously inside her chest, but it was strong and she began to feel better after resting a few minutes. She had come this far in hopes of snaring a ride from her neighbor Arthur Pood, who often passed by her place in his truck on his way to the city or another farm. After standing there for several minutes, it occurred to Heath-er that her chances of flagging down his truck would be better if she stood on the opposite side of the road, so oncoming traffic would face her where she waited.

Still tired from her hike to the road and plagued by the darkness and her own weak eyelight, Heather stumbled when halfway across and could not catch herself in time to keep from falling. She landed on her side—the cane flying out of reach with the force of her fall. Attempting to sit up, Heather discovered that her entire right side ached with the pain of a broken bone, probably her hip as well as she could estimate. Lying there helpless in the middle of the road, Heather heard the roar of an engine coming over the hill and saw the big, bulging headlamps and broad grinning front grill of a truck moving toward her with careless speed, but she was spared seeing it leave Heather McAllister crumpled in the road as it sped away toward Preckett City.
Poet
I saw a poet flying higher and higher and highest inside an eastern dawn possessing four blood red walls of the yawn closing him in the confines of a dying sun—a sun all too ready to die. Against the choking walls lay the broken bonds of fellowships forgotten and long-gone. The poet was all too ready to die.

Mark Okkema

Problems
Problems—
I had all kinds of them
I would bury myself within myself and ponder and wonder and try to figure them out. But I needed to know those of importance—and otherwise. I found myself with chaff and grain in hand not disdaining which was which;

Until I realized that there was one who wanted to help—
He knew the difference between the chaff and grain better than I

Joyce Moore

Prophet
a guru in his blue jeans waded through the water out across the river and all the people followed laughing at reality jumping up and down splashing all the water on each other's faces they reached out for his wisdom which he gave to them with love and they swam off down the river out into the ocean yelling to their saviour that they were one forever while the sun shone brightly on all the drowning followers.

Tina LaBrenz

Ballad of Poochie, No. 12
When Robert walked onto the court, the crowd roared, “Poochie, ooOHH— Six foot six and black as coal, just watch that nigger go!”

He rode the bench his freshman year until about game four. He’d block a shot and we’d count five before he hit the floor.

His sophomore year he learned to shoot from ten feet out or less. His coach pulled “D”’s from Poochie’s profs, no trouble, fuss or mess.

Outscored them white boys three to one—
Some thirty points a game—
His senior year, all-state, all-south; sportswriters knew his name.

We did a graduation thing That Poochie didn’t do. He’d done his four years’ time for us. And flunked. So he was through.

Pat De Young

Untitled
I met a boy in St. Paul he was lonely We talked by the rocky beach his tanned face shadowed by the fire Did anyone love him he had a girl Marianne she seemed to care about him even if she was only sixteen She loved him enough to give herself and was supposed to have his Mari didn’t want it she was fixed up He wanted the baby to love—his own and she took it letting him go His ma and pa never found out until the law helped her mama accuse The preacher tried to help answering less questions and giving the wrong answers The folks handed him a Bible it was all in there But somehow he was still lonely I talked to him five hours listening to hate for me, Ma, and Pa I tried to answer his questions to prove there is a God, life, and love but I couldn’t I could only answer what I had learned what we’d both been taught only, he looked for his own different answers to his own different questions I left him with my thoughts Six months later I saw him again happy to see me but he didn’t remember my name He was the same and I never saw him again.

Becky Maatman

Poem
My mother has books on her library shelves Books she has kept over the years Their dog-eared pages opened her life To Napoleon, Marx and the Cherokee. Between me and the others the pages flipped shut From history to stichery her living has shifted Gingham's tweed plaids now clutter her room Trimmed by dusty volumes.

Jeanie Zinkand

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