

# Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge" (Webster/ Mulligan)

*by* Con Chapman

I park my car on the bridge but  
before leaving for the train, I sit  
and listen to the opening bars of  
Strayhorn's "Chelsea Bridge."



Something fluttering, as if  
on the wing—a delicate thing—  
it ascends from below,  
from the baritone,  
a virile voice among the reeds,  
and above it, a tenor note floats.

Three men produced this thing,  
yet it is delicate as a doily,  
and for all that—masculine, resigned.  
One imagines the bridge off in the distance  
through fog, the sun coming up or going  
down over a drowsy town.

And then the verse; a stroll across the span  
by a preoccupied man who, when he is done,  
looks up from his introspection to see  
the sun, the first or last light of the day.

The chorus is a melancholy enlightenment;  
this is all I have, he thinks, the only  
transcendence I'll get out of this day.  
I should seize it while I can.

I turn off the car, and take my bags down  
to the platform. To the east, the sun lights up  
the iron rails with rays of orange that  
splice across the blackish tracks.

