



THE
MULGRAVE
ROAD

By CHARLES BRUCE

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by

CHARLES BRUCE

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CHARLES BRUCE

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C. B.

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1

*You can see the rainclouds gather and pass,
Over Hadley's Beach or the Artois plain;
And dust on the grass is dust on the grass,
In Guysborough County or Port of Spain.*

NOVA SCOTIA FISH HUT

RAIN, and blown sand, and southwest wind
Have rubbed these shingles crisp and paper-thin.
Come in:
Something has stripped these studding-posts and pinned
Time to the rafters. Where the woodworm ticked
Shick shick shick shick
Steady and secretive, his track is plain:
The fallen bark is dust; the beams are bare.

Bare as the bare stone of this open shore,
This building grey as stone. The filtered sun
Leaks cold and quiet through it. And the rain,
The wind, the whispering sand, return to finger
Its creaking wall, and creak its thuttering door.

Old, as the shore is. But they use the place.
Wait if you like: someone will come to find
A handline or a gutting-knife, or stow
A coiled net in the loft. Or just to smoke
And loaf; and swap tomorrow in slow talk;
And knock his pipe out on a killick-rock
Someone left lying sixty years ago.

LAMBS AT EVENING

THE old ewes ruminates; their ancient eyes
Are blurred with something you could take for thinking;
The taste of frosty grass, the blating cries
Of young ones lost, the wind, the late sun sinking.

But the young lambs, replete, and quickly tiring
Of rest, and unimpelled of why or whether,
Suddenly break—instinctively conspiring
To rush the rutted pasture track together.

Past the grey stonepiles, and the rotting stumps
They race, through withering grass, in crumbling gravel—
Surge in the wheel tracks, leap the tufted humps
In the mock fury of their plunging travel.

Until, by their own singing blood assailed,
Themselves encircled by the thing they are chasing,
They swerve and halt. Knob-kneed and shiver-tailed,
They halt between the racing and the racing.

The late sun sinks. The old ewes ruminates;
And unconcerned with fleeing and pursuing,
Observe; and view the falling night, and wait—
Austere and prim and grey, and slowly chewing.

BACK ROAD FARM

THIS house is built within a sheltering
Sweep of the hills. You will not find the sea
From attic windows; and the seasons bring
No lift and change of tide, here in the lee
Of the land's high windbreak, where the buffeting
Onshore wind is tripped on the mountain's knee.
No mist of blowing salt is flung to sting
The trusting flesh. You will not find the sea.

This property is private. Drifting rain
Beats on its shingles and its native stone;
The wind of August on its leaning grain
Is dark with shadow, and the leaves are blown
To a soft thunder. But the hills remain;
Their strength is certain and their purpose known.
Only at night, in the stillness, low and plain
You can hear the far deep rumor of sea on stone.

TIDEWATER MORNING

SEARCHING the windy strait with narrowed frown,
She finds between the wrinkled rise and fall
Of marching seas, a dory, cruising down
The channel's reach with tubs of running trawl.
His time were better spent, she knows, attending
The careful urging of her common sense:
Breaking the upper field to seed, and mending
The kitchen roof, and bracing flattened fence . . .

But as he climbs the rutted pasture now,
Hungry from wind and tide, and oar and barrow—
Her heart forgets the sowing and the plow,
Meeting again the strength that never took
its grace from gardens, and the long clear look
That never learned its blue behind a harrow.

BIOGRAPHY

HIS speckled pastures dipped to meet the beach
Where the old fish huts stood. At his front door
A man could stand and see the whole wide reach
Of blue Atlantic. But he stayed ashore.

He stayed ashore and plowed, and drilled his rows,
And planned his hours and finished what he planned.
And made his profits: colts and calves and ewes
And buildings and piled stone and harrowed land.

He was a careful man, a trifle cold
To meet and talk to. There were some who thought
His hand was a bit grasping, when he sold;
A little slow to open when he bought.

But no one said it that way. When you heard
His habits mentioned, there would be a pause.
And then the soft explanatory word.
They said he was dry-footed. And he was.

COAST FARM

HUSTLING sheep to the barn, out of the squall, in April,
Shoulders hunched, hands in mackinaw pockets,
Numberless wisps of what he did and was
And learned to expect, and felt, and pondered over,
Drift in his moving flesh:

He walks in stubble
Trampling in damp earth the wet glistening stems,
And the dry rustle of last year's yellow oats
Lives in the senses; while the moment drifts
He sees, hears, feels the rush of wind and shadow,
Feels in his grip the scythe—

The scythe, the shoulder's ache and the clenched grip
On skinsmooth handles; and the moment fades—

Fades, and reshapes: his flexed fingers crook
To the gripped jolt of oars. The falling swath
Is rolling groundswell; where an oatfield was,
The dark fleet glitter of next summer's herring
Gleams; till the shimmer wavers and is lost
(wet oilskin, blowing spray)
In sodden fabric and the bite of rain.

Always the small swift thing that takes you backward;
The thing remembered, blurring in something else,
Next year, tomorrow. And the thing in that
Or the thing seen, heard, smelt, tasted, touched,
Turning again to now.

An old ewe blats:
Spring fencing, sheep to shear.

The colored images
Move in a sea of sense, and waves of thought
March to the shore of mind.

Halting, he turns to lift one ranging glance
At raingrey water under a sea of cloud.

COUNTRY SUNDAY

FAR up the pasture at the edge of sky
Toy cattle, red and black and brindle brown,
Doze under kneehigh maples. Nearer by
The colt-size gelding at the fence puts down
A tentative hoof, and idly, switching flies,
Snorts and is still. Along the stable wall
The garrulous hens, drowsing with lidded eyes,
Forget to peck and chirp. And over all

The languorous sunlight swims . . . No shouted word,
No laugh, no bark of engines. Nothing jars
The insect-busy stillness; beast and bird
Take dreaming rest. And by the pasture bars,
A boy in breeches and a drawstring blouse,
Wealthy with time (and free to spend it so)—
Gravely observes the Sunday calm of cows
And hens and horses. Wondering how they know.

DISAPPROVING WOMAN

THE look she gives you is a tightened thread
Between the stitches of her spoken thought.
In the deft warning of her shaken head
A guilt is whispered, and a lesson taught.
The careful shadow of remembering doubt
Lives in her eyes, and with an upright mind
She meets affliction: resolute, devout,
Never unkind and never wholly kind.

The years have given her all the years require:
Birch in the woodbox, credit at the store,
Comfort and friendship, work and food and fire;
But life has endless grief to answer for—
Death, and the sins of men and the blood's desire,
And muddy footprints on the kitchen floor.

STORIES

IT WAS before his time, but he had heard
Old men remembering, and now again
In his own age it came to him: the word,
The vanished laugh and the lost gesture.
Then
From dream and word the image: keel and frame
And adz-hewn timbers and a name in gilt.
Raked spars and blustering canvas and a name,
Spoken, remembered: "On this beach they built
The *Princess Dagmar* . . ."

He would sail them up
Out of the sea of time, and they were true.
We listened; along the wharves the harbor lop
Splashed the black pilings. And the thing we knew
Was true as Jason; and the thousand keels
At Aulis; or the loom of Hiram's fleet
Off Tyre, with peacocks. And those blackened sails
Blown homeward from the island they called Crete.

WOOL

SHE turns the ancient wheel,
With grave and careful eyes
Fixed on the moment's thought;
And her veined hands are wise

In the touch of a living craft,
And the fibre of carded wool
Rolled in the brushing wire
For the steel spindle's pull.

She lives for a moment now
In a room bright with sun
In the house of her musing mind;
And the brief dreaming done,

Turns again to the spinning,
With senses keen to the feel
Of the yarn, and the muted throbbing
Of whirling spindle and wheel.

Evening falls on the panes
And her body moving still,
Rapt in the wakened youth
Of old and stubborn skill—

Matching the carded rolls
To the wheel's droning rhyme,
With her grey eyes amused
At the long skein of time.

THE OTHER SHORE

THE opposite shore was low and far, and flawed
With Asian darkness. Nothing gleamed. No stir
Of wind or tide could reach the cobalt blur
Of that dim country under sleeping cloud.

We sailed that water once, on drumming wind.
Astern the landmarks merged and fell away.
And slowly there, across that marching sway
Of seas, the blue shore lightened . . . and was land.

Far out, beyond our bowsprit's veer and swerve
The blue land livened: planes of bronze and green
Broke on the slopes unfolding there, between
The shawl of cloud and the white thread of surf.

Slowly it sharpened: hills and climbing roads,
And fields above that measured rise and fall . . .
Barns, fences, houses, cattle, beetle-small
In pastures hemmed from the dark cape of woods.

Earth, rock, fields, people, were the leaf and bloom
Of that strange land. We sheltered in its lee.
And turned and saw the whole wide sky and sea,
And low and far, the cobalt blur of home.

FALL GRASS

THIS is the season when the darkest grass
Flows in its deepest waves, on fading stubble;
The time of cloud; and cattle brought to stable
At dusk; and moonlit water still as glass . . .

Smoke in the mornings, and always a crow caws
On wagging wings. Across the first strewn litter
Of leaves a squirrel scurries, and children loiter
In roadside pastures after ripening haws.

Time to be thoughtful: time to be getting on
With threshing, and fall plowing; time to gather
Eelgrass, for banking house . . . A frail white feather
Of frost shines in the grass blades and is gone.

Slowly the days grow colder, the long nights fall;
Plows turn the stubble, fires are tended, and apples
Mellow in cellars; and under the roots of maples
Mice are burrowing. And the high geese call.

EASTERN SHORE

HE STANDS and walks as if his knees were tensed
To a pitching dory. When he looks far off
You think of trawl-kegs rolling in the trough
Of swaying waves. He wears a cap against
The sun on water, but his face is brown
As an old mainsail, from the eyebrows down.

He has grown old as something used and known
Grows old with custom; each small fading scar
Engrained by use and wear in plank and spar,
In weathered wood and iron, and flesh and bone.
But youth lurks in the squinting eyes, and in
The laughter wrinkles in the tanbark skin.

You know his story when you see him climb
The lookout hill. You know that age can be
A hill for looking; and the swaying sea
A lifetime marching with the waves of time.
Listen—the ceaseless cadence, deep and slow.
Tomorrow. Now. And years and years ago.

EARLY MORNING LANDING

IN DAYLIGHT, there is life and living speech;
The constant grumble, the resilient splash
Of slow tide lifting on a slanted beach;
And blowing sunlight. And the measured flash
Of the sea marching . . . But the beach and bay
Are vague as midnight now; in midnight thinned
At the sky's edge by the first hint of grey.
And calm as sleep before the morning wind.

Calmer than sleep. But the eyes lift to find
In the veiled night the faint recurring spark
Of a known beacon. And the listening mind
Wakes in the stillness; and the veil is stirred
By a dim ghost of sound—a far-off word
And the soft thump of rowlocks in the dark.

MARCH DAY: WINDY

THIS day you wonder, finding nowhere quite
What you expect to find. The strident air
Surrounds you like a sea of sweeping light;
The hills and fields return you stare for stare.

Humpbacked and grim, the giant juniper
Bows down to scowl; across the crawling grass
Beyond, where the twin Balm o' Gileads were,
Two strangers halt and stiffen as you pass.

Something is altered here. The difference
Between you and the blowing world is thinned.
You turn to face the house, and common sense,
And see a woman shouldering the wind.

Turn to the barn, and see an old man leaning,
Intent, to hear those droning syllables—
Those phrases harsh and high, and wild with meaning,
Of shouted sound from granite-throated hills.

GIRLS IN THE PARLOR

THEY have held funerals and weddings here.
And on the wall, in cardboard and dull gilt,
They keep the faces, bearded, stern, austere,
Of men who cleared the place, and plowed and built—

And women: bold, shy, laughing, sensitive,
Or stiff with pride, in frills of lace and lawn,
Who came serenely to this house to live
And brought their girlhood with them, and are gone.

This is the room they held against the claims
Of earth and sea and time—the touch of grace.
And you can see them in their oval frames
In gowns of buttoned satin, and white lace.

ORCHARD IN THE WOODS

RED spruce and fir have crossed the broken lines
Where ragged fences ran; ground-juniper
Covers the sunny slope where currant bushes
Blackened their hanging clusters in green leaves.
Where oats and timothy moved like leaning water
Under the cloudy sweep of August wind,
The crop is stunted alders and tall ferns.

Above the cellar's crust of falling stone
Where timbered walls endured the treacherous
Traffic of frost and sunlight, nothing stands . . .
Under the wreckage of the vanished barn
A woodchuck burrows. Where the dooryard was,
The matted grass of years encloses now
Two horseshoes and a rusted wagon-tire.

Only the apple trees recall the dream
That flowered here—in love and sweat and growth,
Anger and longing. Tough and dark and wild,
Grown big of stump, rough in the bark and old,
They still put forth a light ironic bloom
Against the green utility of spruce.

Clearing and field and buildings gone to waste—
But in the fall, a gunner going home
Will halt a moment, lift a hand to reach
One dusky branch above the crooked track,
And, thinking idly of his kitchen fire,
Bite to the small black shining seeds and learn
The taste of ninety seasons, hard and sweet.

NORTH SHORE

FORGET the trumpets and the studied gleam
Of polished phrases, and the ringing speech;
We know the record; and we know the dream
That quickens where these hills and rivers reach.

Think now of common things, remembering now
The earth's long habits time could never break:
Seed in the furrow, apples on the bough . . .
Steep Creek and Sand Point and Manassette Lake.

*Smell of the rain-wet stubble and no wind blowing,
Chimney smoke, and glitter of rain in the grass;
Grey light growing
And the wide bay smooth as glass.*

Look inward now at hill and field and shore,
The strait's dark channel ringed with morning red;
And yellow lamplight through an open door . . .
Melford and Oyster Ponds and Ragged Head.

The careful nations, in their long pursuits,
Amend the treaty and revise the plan—
But Mulgrave shivered on the convoy routes
And Boylston cleared the rubble-heaps of Caen.

*Clattering wheels on the road, and a dark wind crawling
Up from east, and the far surf curling white;
Grey dusk falling
And the flicker of Queensport Light.*

THE MULGRAVE ROAD

IF THEY stay they stay, if they go they go;
On the Mulgrave Road it's a choice you make.
There's an axe in the stump and a fork in the row
Or a bag to pack and a train to take.

Sandy was one of the wandering sort;
Not for adventure, not for play;
But a fellow that cut the talking short
And followed the earth for a season's pay.

It was just that his hardwood stand was gone
From the sidehill woodlot across the creek—
And he shipped on a tramp at West Saint John
For Boston, Georgetown and Martinique.

His hands were busy with sea and stone,
Timber and tractor, rope and bale.
The years grew short. And his grin was known
In Denver and Brandon, Spokane, Trail.

He knew Dundee and the Surrey Docks
And the wired shoulders of Vimy Ridge
As well as the road of gravel and rocks
From Grady's Place to the Iron Bridge.

You can see the rainclouds gather and pass
Over Hadley's Beach or the Artois plain;
And dust on the grass is dust on the grass
In Guysborough County or Port of Spain.
It was oar and crosscut, shovel and crank,
Hour by hour and year by year;
Till he heard, in a dory on Georges Bank,
Adventure calling, sudden and clear.

If they go they go, if they stay they stay;
But once in a hundred a man will pack
His clothes—and his habits—and roll away;
Or a lad with the wandering eye come back.

It was just that he knew, in his tranquil mind,
He was done with the habit of chance and change;
And his eyes were eager at last to find
Something different, something strange.

You can find him deep in his venture still,
The green oats growing, the young corn hoed—
Where the stumps are gone from a hardwood hill
By the turn of a creek on the Mulgrave Road.

Words are never enough . . .

FISHERMAN'S SON

I

Now I am thankful this unbroken flesh
Has known hard rowing, and the trenchant bite
Of cold salt water, as reluctant mesh
Came up at sunrise from the tidal night.
Wisdom was in the brief recurrent shock
Of bodies braced against a plunging line;
Familiar meaning in the liquid knock
Of building swell concerned with buoyant pine.

Only in some black biting hour we learn
How strength and wit lie dreaming in the brain . . .
Now at its need the wakened mind shall turn
An oilskin to the dictatorial rain:
What shall a little wind of words avail
Against a heart close-hauled, with shortened sail?

FISHERMAN'S SON

2

THIS ghost is much embarrassed that his son,
Learned in a gentler way of thought and speech,
Should still consider where the mackerel run
And three grey fish huts on a windy beach.
Embarrassed but unsurprised. His heart has known
That kinship tempered in an offshore blow,
More eloquent than blood to mark its own,
Pulsed always in us. And he knows I know.

Lord, I address myself to you: be kind;
Mindful of how the cosmic current sets.
Though immortality be a state of mind,
Let there be clean firm bottom for the nets.
When it is time for this quick flesh to die
Let herring school through heaven's hot July.

WORDS ARE NEVER ENOUGH

THESE are the fellows who smell of salt to the prairie,
Keep the back country informed of crumbling swell
That buckles the international course off Halifax
After a night of wind:

Angus Walters and Ben Pine, carrying on for Tommy Himmelman and Marty Welch;
Heading up the tough men who get into the news,
Heading up the hard men of Lunenburg and Gloucester,
Keeping the cities bordered with grass and grain
Forever mindful that something wet and salt
Creeps and loafs and marches round the continent,
Careless of time, careless of change, obeying the moon.

Listen to little Angus, squinting at the Bluenose:
“The timber that’ll beat her still stands in the woods.”
Yes, these are the fellows who remind you again of the sea.

But one town, or two,
Are never enough to keep the salt in the blood.

I haven’t seen Queensport Light over the loom of Ragged Head in years,
And never a smell of rollers coming up the bay from Canso.
No one ever heard of Queensport outside of a bait report;
No one ever saw the name of Ragged Head anywhere.

Off that obscure beach, Will Bruce and George McMaster
Set their herring nets, and went farther out for mackerel.
The mackerel never ran, but in July
Fat herring tangled in wet twine were silver-thick,
And the flat low in the water as we hauled around
To head back for the huts;
In full daylight now,
After the grey dusk of a windless morning;
After the bay, gently stirring in half darkness,
Tipped down again to blush at the sun’s rim.

Cleaning fish is a job you would balk at;
But nothing is mean with gulls hovering down,
Sun brighter than life on glistening eelgrass,
The bay crawling again in a quickening southwest wind.

There was always time, after the wash-barrels were empty,
After hand-barrows were lugged up the beach to the hut,
And herring lay behind hand-wrought staves, clean with salt.

Time to lie on warm stone and listen,
While the sting went out of crooked fingers and thighs ceased to ache;
Time to hear men’s voices, coming quietly through a colored cloth of sound
Woven in the slap of water on fluent gravel.

Their talk was slow and quiet, of fish and men

then talk was slow and quiet, of fish and men
And fields back on the hill with fences down,
Hay to be made through long hot days with never a splash on the oilskins,
Or the lift of water awake under half-inch pine.
The mackerel never ran; and if the herring
Had been only a story, a legend for midnight telling,
These would have launched their flats and tended the empty nets.

I know it now, remembering now the calm;
Remembering now the lowering care that lifted
From a face turned to the wind off Ragged Head.

These are the fellows who keep the salt in the blood.
Knowing it fresh in themselves, needful as hope,
They give to the cities bordered with woods and grass
A few homesick men, walking an alien street;
A few women, remembering misty stars
And the long grumbling sigh of the bay at night.

Words are never enough; these are aware
Somewhere deep in the soundless well of knowing,
That sea, in the flesh and nerves and the puzzling mind
Of children born to the long grip of its tide,
Must always wash the land's remotest heart.
These are the fellows who keep the salt in the blood.

*The traffic of flesh and dust, the long percentage
Shared by the living and the powdered bone . . .*

PLANES OF SPACE AND TIME

AS WHEN, through plated folds of finite space
We peered at distance, and the subtle glass
Brought up the stick and stone of place and place,
Far hillsides, forests, cattle deep in grass,
And drew their fabric—leaf and root and limb,
The rock, the road, the falling stream, the blown
White fringe of vapor on the mountain's rim—
In, to the dooryard's earth and stick and stone:

So now, in the tiered textures of the brain—
Deeper than glass, and moving—curling sea
Comes up, and frosty pastures, and dim rain,
And faces, and known gestures.

Silently

The moving moments come: and all, all, all,
Drawn to this breath, this now, this something said
Of space and time . . . and lamplight on the wall,
And someone slowly going up to bed.

LAKE SUPERIOR COAST: TRAIN WINDOW

EAST of the port, the gaunt euclidean town
At the edge of the prairie sky, at the venturous end
Of the sea's last traffic with the climbing land—
You come to the hills. The spruce and rock steep down

To the mountain beach. Inlet and channel and reef
Return, in the slow dance of the land's turning;
Shadowed and clear and dark in the desolate raining
Of lost and shadowy light, and the lost brief

Moment; flashed and repeated in the drumming wheels.
Repeat . . . repeat . . . repeat; the flashing earth
Streams in its rhythm; and the moment's breath
Is time's deliberate breath. The wheeling hills

Drift with its tide . . . The hills and the quilted flock
Of the sky, and a gull, remotely flying
And stilled in flight . . .

Time, and the granite flowing
Of stonegrey water and precambrian rock.

OF THIS LATE DAY

STRANGE to have found, in the dust of this late day
The old faith and frankness, the shared sun,
The shared wanting and liking;
The understanding and the mirth we put away
Years ago, when the time came to accept
Another time, and the time of our own was done.

No promise ever made, yet a promise kept;
And stranger still to find it now and here
When living is rapt in a world's wheeling and striking;
And to stay and think
In the heart of this purpose, back to a wistful year—
The rough drone of a press, and the wet-sweet smell of ink.

The questioning mind looks back, and finds and forms
In questioning speech, all things that marked us after
The old doorway closed. Never so much
Of new and old merged in our dreams before.
And the mind warms
To this new grace in long-remembered laughter.
And the blood pounds at your touch.

CORNERSTONE

LET us choose now the samples of our time
To fill this crevice in the polished granite . . .

A certain austerity of mind is required here.
We shall have to include the Charter, and the record
Of San Francisco, Bretton Woods and Paris;
A print of the pillared smoke above Bikini,
And a shot of Churchill and F.D.R. and Joe
With appropriate outlines. And a print of Gandhi.
These for the sense of history, a matter of form.

More interesting perhaps to the archaeologist
Will be the commoner things: a restaurant menu,
A trout-fly and a prayerbook. Next to these
A pinch of arsenic and a strip of lace,
A G-string and a pint of blended rye.
And on the chance some hint of them may linger,
A bunch of seaweed and a garden rose.

Put in a page or two of Santayana
With a Crosby disk; and a copy of *True Confessions*.
Whatever may be said about us let us take credit
For a certain catholicity of taste.

Include a bone from Belsen for comparison
With usage in the time of the first Ptolemy.
(Tagged and recorded for the careful scholar
Lifting his mattock on the edge of time.)
But avoid editorial comment; your view is biased
By the pressure of immediate matters, and less than nothing
To the social student of 11,951 A.D.
Your opinion can only confuse the harassed brain.

Using the methods of his time he will have to determine—
Or seek to determine—on his own responsibility,
On the assorted facts you leave at his command
And the witness of his own day and people
Whether the curious recurrence of original cruelty
Is evidence that nothing in nature changes,
Or only a repeated landslide across the mind
In the course of a difficult ascent.

Put the facts in the box and forget the opinions;
The only views of any value will be obvious.
Put the facts in the box and leave it. You can be sure
Only of this: no matter how closely packed the data,
How clearly drawn the uncomplicated fact,
It will not be enough . . .

What spade of theirs shall turn the silent middens
Of heart and brain and nerves we call the mind?

Or heart and brain and nerves we call the mind:
Or, if you like, the spirit?

How shall we prison here the measured thought:
The flat name inked on the cheque, the playground built,
The church endowed—and the compensation case
Fought to the last in the last grey court of appeal?

Or draw the purpose of the stubborn dream:
A stonedrag moving down the slanted field
And a boy's years of learning purchased here
By knuckled fingers dark with harrowed earth?

How shall we pack immortal in a box
The wastage and the splendor of our days?
Better to stick to the known, the empirical facts
And leave the intangibles to the chance encounter
Of a steel drill touching unexpected iron . . .

Better to leave the dream in fading vestige,
In signs preserved by the chemistry of chance—
A lettered ring from a boy in San Antonio
To a girl in Antigonish; or a painted canvas
Merging its colored threads with the pressed clay,
The rotted leafage of ten thousand years.

Only by the peculiar logic of accident
Shall they catch a glimpse of the dreaming blood and the mind,
The circle of love and anger, of motive and impulse,
Hinted here by the flakes and the crumbling metal
In the little pockets and crumbs of a whiter dust
Where the fires of flesh burned down.

All we can leave, in the end, that bears on the question
Is neither locked in the box nor the layered earth;
But lives in the blood, in the measure of love and hate
Their veins inherit from the living now:
The traffic of flesh and dust, the long percentage
Shared by the living and the powdered bone.

What buoyancy is added here to the stream of love?
What pressure lessened in the weight of malice?
But the long answer in the beating blood
They fathom in the end no more than we.

Let them do their best with the package sealed in the stone,
The scraps and prints in the impersonal mould
And the ash of our buried fires.

SKETCH FOR A LANDSCAPE

BEHIND me on this ancient ledge
Of rock along the mountain's edge

The wind goes washing through high trees
Remotely, with a sound of seas.

Far out and down, the casual sea
Curls to the land deliberately.

Between, the rolling fields lie low
In wind and sun. Far off, a row

Of poplars, dark on speckled blue
Curve to the sky. And nearer to . . .

A field, a pasture, someone going
From house to barn, a clothesline blowing;

A pond, and maples on a hill
That move, and cattle standing still;

A road, and whirling dust; a brook—
And in its looped and gleaming crook

A man with horses, harrowing land.
He halts a minute there, to stand

And look beyond his pasture, where
A high kite hangs in streaming air.
And higher than the heart can fly
A white gull sails the blowing sky.

I like it here. I like to sprawl
On rocks and grass and see it all;

Although I know that curling seas
And hills and fields and rocks and trees

And men and boys with kites to fly
And women putting sheets to dry

And gulls on waves of surging air
Will never get me anywhere.

NOTE FOR A TEXTBOOK

THE question is never answered, never resolved,
The circle of love and anger never squared,
The stubborn instinct not translated yet
In decimals, accurate and predictable
In union dues or payroll cuts or blood . . .

Always a symbol lost in the lovely theorem,
A fraction that will not fit in the sum of the system,
A jutting thrust in the graph of the commissar's forecast,
A troublesome blank in the gauleiter's careful accounting,
An awkward hitch in the plans of the second vice-president.

The answers worked on the slate are never the same,
And the answers proved in the back of the book are wrong.

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TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Mulgrave Road* by Charles Tory Bruce]