

R.L. Cook

## FORTY-NINE

This is the landscape of remembered years  
When, a Colossus in the seven-league boots  
Of youth, I straddled with an open heart  
A summer vista, breathing land and sea.  
That landscape and that time  
Seemed static: O the sky flowed through my heart;  
And these were days of drift and dream.  
Moving from quiescence to desire  
Along a lonely track—lovely in loneliness—  
I never knew fulfilment, never felt  
This urgency, finality, despair.

This is the landscape of the breaking heart  
That healed under the touch of sky and sea:  
This is the landscape of another time  
To which, with hope and grief, I have returned:  
This is Avilion—O this was all  
I wanted, all I could not find  
In the drowned years between that time and now.  
On lonely, loveless seas, in war  
I found fulfilment and the open heart was bruised  
Too much by complex truth for sea or sky to heal:  
The simple panacea of the sun  
Began to lose effect—the only cure  
Was more and more complexity, or death.  
This long-remembered landscape was obscured  
By distance's distortion till it seemed  
A graveyard where the past crumbled away  
Into the sand, leaving a few bright bones  
Of memory as beacons for a mind  
That drifted over bleak nostalgic wastes.

This spring, that landscape now I find  
Before my eyes, unchanged. Now when I see  
These half-forgotten contours, I see too

The years between, drowned in an unmarked grave,  
And images of bones. O now before me  
Two landscapes merge, one real, one in the mind:  
And though this April coils the same green plume  
Of life across the land; although the lark,  
Pinpointing heaven, sings like yesterday,  
These springs for me are short and colder now  
That I am forty-nine.

28