

Movement 11

The Dead

The life of another house
is what they seem,
the wind in a stranger's tree
at the end of the suburb,
a doorway filling with light
and the whisper of snow,

and I think they are still passing through:
weavers and children, and women with songs in their
heads
held on the air like an echo of bells or water;
I know who they are, condensed in the brick-dust and
nettles,
I know how they lose their names
in the motionless earth

and how they return on these autumn
mornings, through the taste of smoke and loam,
a slow weight that shifts in my hands, a moment's
warmth
the glimmers of an afterlife deferred
for the promise that must be fulfilled
in the shaping of language.

John Burnside

From J. Burnside (1991) *The Myth of the Twin*. London: Jonathan Cape.