

## Movement 7

### Fields

#### **I Landfill**

In ways the dead are placed  
  or how  
they come to rest  
I recognise myself  
  insomniac  
  arms  
angled  
  or crossed:

children in skullcaps  
soldiers with hob-nailed boots  
or sandals placed like gifts  
beside their feet...

  Once  
In rural Fife  
  and Angus  
  farmers held  
one acre of their land  
  untilled  
  unscarred  
to house this mute  
concurrence with the dead  
choosing from all their fields  
one empty plot  
that smelled or tasted right  
  one house of dreams.

They walled it in  
and called it Gude Man's Land  
  or Devil's Piece

and some would say they guessed well every time

John Burnside

knowing the gist of the thing  
  the black in the green  
of stitchwort.  
                          Though I can't believe they thought  
that tremor in the grass on windless days  
was devil's work:  
                          yet  
where they found old bones  
  or spills of blood  
where birdsong ceased  
and darkness stayed till noon  
they recognised some kinship with the dead  
with bodies they had found  
  in nether fields  
the faces soft  
                          still lifelike  
  grass and roots  
decaying in the gut.  
They guessed it well  
  divined its mysteries  
and left it to the pipistrelles  
and jays....

*John Burnside*

Extract from *Fields. Part I – Landfill*. From J. Burnside (2000) *The Asylum Dance*.  
London: Jonathan Cape.