

At the Grave of John Buchan

“Gang as if ye was something growing” — Gillie saying

The vicar half-smiles, “Only his ashes.”
A disc half-mystical and pseudo-Egyptian,
Usual cherishing prayers
About friends, *Nostrae Patriae*, the plowing muses.
Fetid nettles, staple for home-fashioned beer,
A sun-lid for senescent empires.

You would find me modern: “chronic” and underferd
So every year you bandied more works,
Casts from fly-books,
Cribbed tales, history to flout your toy Oxford,
Forced from the leisure of your sick child-bed year
To take long looks.

Rich grass scampers at this field’s edge,
Barley bowing like your officious negroes, and the sun
Draws wheat to cane —
All miscast, as your wish for “buried in Africa.”
Sky ruffles to confusing seas, cars
Thresh the loosened grain.

For you things connect: poison yews
Pen you, gunless, beneath a ventriloquizing quail.
In the lagged summer heat
They candle you at corners, the circle squared.
The wife outlasting another thirty years
Obedient at your feet.

Clover spreads like hands. I recroft and name
The plain below in your hobbledehoy rivers.
A layabout, I try to bless
The clear familiars of your left-off fishing book
And you, amidst all your errata, in dirt making
An earthy roundness.

FRANCIS BLESSINGTON