

After Baptism, He Speaks

by John Riley

Today I am seventy-four soon seventy-six
years will have passed beneath my feet
unseen, too light a trickle
to wet the earth, nor a lyric either.

The world is full of dead dogs
and the words of muddy old men.
More can be remembered than unloaded.
I thought my brow could bear the pressure
that would carry me over the arc
to where the last bells ripen,
set free all my clandestine things,
but sounds too soft to echo
convinced me to stop
where sleep might accommodate me.

Outside stands a belief.
Inside the room grows smaller until
all that is left is a forest
in the mind of a man
who wants to imagine empty spaces.

