

The Dream

BEN JACQUES

28

Halfway into sleep,
moving in both directions,
he steps into the room of the old,
beginning again the ancient task
for which he is known beyond recognition;
found by the eyes, the gray shirts
and the night shirts, speaking:
I know you too, old men, old women,
past remembering, know each of your feet
of the ditches of salt,
the right one, the left one,
which I will bathe in bowls of hot water.

I will open the windows
and prepare a small wind
to blow over the jar of the oils of eucalyptus.
I will stand you in strength
on a new grass mat,
and give you clean shirts,
new day shirts embroidered with red.
I will rinse out your mouths
with bright words, and care for your teeth
as trees grow new leaves.
I will lead you outdoors
and show you a new gaze.
Your eyes shall find young stars
in the low sky.

Partway into waking,
turning in each direction,
and in the way of forgetting
past speaking, he steps
from the room in a light
neither young nor old,
then walks toward the river,
hearing the sound of dark wings
and the sound of dove wings
over the dark and light water.