

cold feet & sunlight in the spring

My feet are cold.

A sunlit day in March. Lying on my back in the garden.

And my feet are cold - like icicles?

No. What do I feel?

A slight drawing in of the skin, the flesh ... a contraction

A background humming in my feet.

Lying on my back in the garden

The naked tree branches above me

Sunlight, alternating light & shade along the bark.

Zigzagging from outreaching twig to outreaching twig.

My feet are cold.

Is that a breath of pink at the end of the cherry buds?

Dreaming of the carpet of cherry blossoms to come

... first all over the tree, then to the lawn,

Then to the soles of our shoes & into the house.

Taking nature into ourselves.

My feet are cold. What do I feel?

A slight drawing in of the skin, the flesh ... a contraction.

Blueness. Looking up. Blueness. Blue.

Sunlight all over the house wall cliff.

Everywhere a new Spring whitewash, a sunwash.

Looking up into blue. Looking down into water.

But water is never this blue bottomless stillness.

Sliding away, expanding away.

My feet are cold. A contraction.

A background humming in my feet.

Men's voices from the neighbouring house.

And by the canal, children squeaking & cawing too like birds

While the birds themselves chirp & chirp ...

A dotted line of sound across the traffic backdrop.

My feet are cold. Lying on the lawn in March sunlight,

A bottomless blue sky above expanding away for ever.

March/April '12

"surviving"

My heels are kicked into a snow ledge. I'm cold.
And down below, the snow chute disappears over a cliff.

No way back. No way forward.
And the high vertical rock of the gully walls
is unscalable for me.

Shivering - cold, shock & fear.
The mind says *"Get problem solving"*.

Phone calls. The life-saving happenstance of being in mobile range.
"Fire, police or ambulance?" "No. Mountain rescue please."

The minutes tick by. Will they find me in time?
I'm a bit of a needle on the haystack of this multiple-gullyed mountain.
And I'm getting colder. The open mouth at the end of the snow chute
howls with the wind.

"I think I'll make it." My deep, parent-gifted optimism holds up.
"But there's a real chance I won't." Reality has its voice too.

I don't want to be using my mobile for non-emergency calls
- battery & keeping the line open.
And anyway, it would be cruel to let darling Catero know what's happening.
All she could do is imagine and worry herself sick.

I pull out a dictaphone I have with me.
If I go over the edge,
maybe the dictaphone will survive the fall.

I leave a message describing my situation and I say:
*"Hopefully I will be able to play it back to you
and we can laugh together about it,
and if by chance that doesn't happen,
what do I want to say to you?"*

And I tell her how much I love her
How good our life together has been.
I talk a little about the kids
and her life if I don't make it.

I tear up listening to it.

A kind of a privilege to hear what you end up saying
when you think maybe you could die
within the next few hours.

And now, safe, early the next day.
Remembering. Re-listening to the message I recorded.
Hearing again the roaring of yesterday's wind.
What do I feel?
Tearful gratitude and deep love.
Gratitude and love.
A good inscription for my grave stone.

April/May '12

these are the days: fawcett mill morning

Before breakfast.
Standing leaning over a gate.
This is it.

Sheep & lambs call & respond.
Sunlight on white stones,
on speckled stones, on softly rounded stones.
Chirping, chattering, caroling of morning birds.

Breeze chilled hands, sniffing nose.
Sunlight, happiness, gratitude.
Tearfulness, tears & fullness.
Everything is and almost bursts with being so.

Blossom on the hawthorn,
lime green lichen and startling creamy flowers.

Tears. Brimming over.
These are the days.

May '12

"shelling peas by the pool"

Shelling peas by the pool
Here in South West France.
The late afternoon May sunshine
Still strong.

Pressing on pod bellies
To break them open.
Then pushing down with a thumb
Unzipping, popping them out.

Small green spheres, perfect.
Breaking the miniature stalks
That hold them to the seams.

The pods themselves, veined,
Swollen, pregnant.
A manic obstetrician,
I deliver their babies.

Empty, their mothers' hold
No longer needed.
Life purpose almost complete
Some pods now for stock, some for compost.

May '12

travelling north again

Travelling North again
After three days in Cambridge
"Grandchildren-sitting".

Memories: small child arms around our necks
Loving, cherishing, laughing, teaching,
Joyful, funny, frustrating, heart-warming.

Football, chess, frisbee, singing,
Joke telling, story reading, skin cream sorting,
Badminton playing, bus riding, lunch buying.

Tear drying, dispute settling, feeding,
Praising, explaining, sleep pleading,
Bottom wiping, sock dressing, DVD viewing.

And now travelling North again.
Tired & happy, like a returning sports team.
We did it and it was very precious.

June '12

reading the journals

Reading recent health journals over the railway train's wifi:

Social Indicators Research - "Government partisanship and human well-being."

Psychology of Well-being: Theory, Research & Practice - "Development of an individual well-being scores assessment."

British Journal of Psychiatry - "Email-based promotion of self-help for subthreshold depression: Mood Memos randomised controlled trial."

Psychosomatic Medicine - "Close relationships and health in daily life: A review and empirical data on intimacy and somatic symptoms."

Journal of Sexual Medicine - "Dramatic improvement in sexual function induced by intranasal oxytocin."

Social Psychological & Personality Science - "Power increases social distance."

British Medical Journal - "Bullying victimisation and risk of self harm in early adolescence: Longitudinal cohort study."

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition - "Effects of vitamin C supplementation on blood pressure: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials."

Journal of Experimental Social Psychology - "The name-pronunciation effect: Why people like Mr. Smith more than Mr. Colquhoun."

Neurology - "Is dementia incidence declining?"

Information pours in, like light on a sunflower.

June '12

sunday afternoon

Tired. A second strong mug of coffee.

Wind shaken tree branches in the garden behind me

Reflected in the glass of the picture above my desk.

Gusts quietly roar, bounce & bellow in the chimney.

Tiredness like a woollen cap, a half-closed visor on my forehead.

The skin of my face feels a little thicker, my limbs a little lighter. Floating.

Good coffee in my mouth. Bitter. Grounds like fine grit. Taste echoing in the hall of the palate.

Precious how coming to "now" has an innocence, a joy, even when meeting this fatigue.

Every man, every woman has their unique story, if I listen.

Every state of being, a unique melody, if I let myself feel.

Alive. Whispers of happiness ... on this Sunday afternoon.

July '12

new mobile phone

New mobile phone.

HTC One X with a 4.7 inch screen.

Your older brother kind of saved my life.

Welcome!

Dark screen like a pool.

Press "on" and worlds open up, layer upon layer

Like Tolkien's magical viewing stones - *the Palantir*

Connecting to who? Sauron? Gandalf? Aragon? Pippin?

Knowledge, danger, friendship, lost information & time.

It took someone of power, a hero, a wizard

To use a *palantir* rightly, not seduced

But able to use this magic for good.

May I learn to have the courage,

The determination to learn how you can help, my friend.

Skilful steering through clouds of information,
New ways of navigating. A smiling challenge.

July '12

walking with my brother

I last saw him two years ago
At Mum's memorial service.
His eulogy was a thoughtful description of her life.
I talked about the rawness of my heart.

And today, two years later,
Walking in the Pentlands together
Where Dad walked as a boy.

Castlelaw, walking North to the top of the hill
Then down towards Allermuir, & turning West off the ridge
Then South back to Glencorse reservoir
And completing the circle back to Castelaw.

Talking, our conversation lighting up similarity,
Lighting up difference.
Will the next time we see each other
Be the last time?

Sometime in the years ahead,
One of us dashing by plane maybe
To the other's bedside to say goodbye
Or appearing as a grizzled, bent figure at a funeral.

Pain, sadness, fondness, connection.
How extraordinary; this is my brother.
Stranger. But under the skin, in our cells,
We know each other.

July '12
