If you’re 120

Tom Dening

If you’re 120
You’ve lived for almost 44,000 days
Through 30 leap years
You could have blown out 7,000 birthday candles
You’d have been in middle age by World War I
You could have known folk who remembered Waterloo
You might well think De Gaulle was still in charge
In your lifetime cars, computers, tumble dryers came

If you’re 120
There wouldn’t be any schoolfriends left
Your grandchildren could be 80 plus
They might die of old age first

You’d be rather small by now
Nor see too well, nor hear
Need help with washing, dressing, maybe feeding
By vital village girls of six generations on

If you’re 120
You might not bother thinking much
You wouldn’t need to plan
Sit and smile secretly, instead
You couldn’t buy a house, insurance, holidays
You don’t run, cook, make love any more
They spoil you rotten and make a birthday fuss
Nobody’s been this old before.

Tom Dening, Consultant Psychiatrist, Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge CB1 5EF

Only one patient

Larry Culliford

There is only one patient: oneself.
Look at them before you, one at a time. Do not two eyes, nose, mouth, ears mirror your own?
This patient – this person – is endowed like you with vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch. Also feelings: sorrow and joy; anxiety, peacefulness; anger, guilt, shame, bewilderment, equanimity. Is this not so?
“But thoughts, words, deeds: these are different”, you say.
Do not words and deeds begin with and depend upon our thoughts?
When did you last, in meditation, watch your thoughts pass by uncensored? And have you recently studied your dreams dispassionately, without fear? Is there no imagination within you? Are there any impulses to speech or action you could perhaps have forgotten?
Heart and mind: these do not so easily forget. Everyone’s blood is red. Everyone’s tears are salty. If you know even a little something about empathy, you will know what I mean. And you will have the gratitude of many.

Larry Culliford, Consultant Psychiatrist, Brighton Community Mental Health Centre, 79, Buckingham Road, Brighton BN1 3RJ

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