

Twenty

(For my daughter)

Sick with child you curl on your own hearth,
knees tucked to belly packaged by shivering arms
in two sweaters, one yours, the other his.
Jemmah-dog, expert from her six-pack birth,
snuffles your skim-milk face, grumbles and sees
about her own brief mothering: they'll be gone,
young dogs responsible for fences, farms,
people, before you let her mate again.

The father of my child and the father of yours,
obscurely alike, chat plans and make the tea.
Reflecting smile to smile half-certain, we
find half enough to say. Well, twenty years.
My smile quirks: gut-long, the familiar turn
of a lingering quick child-sickness of my own.