

A Foot up on Mount Jefferson

When I removed my socks
first the heavy rag wool one
and then the long thin polypropylene
from my foot
on the top
of Mount Jefferson
in the middle of the
Presidential Range
of the White Mountains
last Sunday,

the five little toes, all white and
wrinkled and pressed into an awkward
intimacy with one another,
relaxed, relieved of all that stress.



At first they just sat there
testing the cool
breeze of the summit
feeling the strange buzz of the end
of summer gnats
reaching through the haze for a little
moisture and light.
Then they wiggled,
testing their new freedom,
encouraging the blood to flow.

Looking down at them, poised
on the great grey rocks spattered with mica and lichen,
I had to feel a certain sympathy
for each,
I had to feel compassion
and some small pleasure, too,
knowing my control, my power,
my will to lace things up again.