

rivers, inlets, outlets

the emotions begin to trickle
then flow
streaming (down my face) to
destinations unknown.

can cultures (like vultures) steal a childhood
like the song says?
is that why i am sad?
was my childhood stolen?

or did my mom just walk away
from the river in which we were walking
too early
taking with her the shirt on her back

or am i just reminded of
my lost innocence
(or was it stolen?)
or of my once effortless kindness

these things have left and gone away
replaced by an impermeable haziness
where rivers (and their inlets and outlets too)
strain to reach their banks

and so the song plays when i was a boy
and then the tears flow
for times past
or for reasons lost in the haze

Radiance

I went to bed last night lamenting the passing of youthfulness
Teary-eyed about days that seem distant and irretrievable

I woke up to smiling faces at the very heart of youthful exuberance
Two daughters of innocence, laughter, and sunlight

So is it that the one must be surrendered
As the other is ushered in

Or is it that the one is extended
By the very existence of the other

Either way, the surrendering and the extending
Made easier by the radiance of our children

Radiance blinding radiance
Squinty-eyed radiance

It's just the person next to you

I once cared about the world;
Now I only care about the person next to me.

To those who are trying to save the world, consider this Catch 22:
If you care and struggle,
Pain and frustration will be your daily lot
In a world all too deaf to hear your heart-felt call.

If you abandon the fight and turn away,
The pitiful human condition will still scratch at your door
Reminding you of your own callousness.

You have only misunderstood the call you heard:
It was not a call to arms,
Nor was it a call to fall in line,
It was just a call to come home.

Return to yourself and your loved ones;
Make the person next to you smile.
Ease their pain just a little,
And the whole world is yours.

And remember yourself, and for yourself,
Remember that the title of the book was "Seize the Day"
Not a decade, a year, or even a month,
Just seize the day.
Seize its beauty, its spontaneity, its love, and its moment.

And when you have that for yourself,
Make the person next to you smile.

The Better Part

The better part of me breathes deep
And then another breath, slowly, slowly

The better part of me lets my shoulders drop
Frees them from the tenseness of their perpetual prison

The better part of me knows that 5 minutes is only 5 minutes
Late or early, the earth will not fall off its axis

The better part of me knows that anger just rents precious space
Rent that I can't afford, space that could be used for so much more

The better part of me takes one bite less and one jog more
Reveling in health and clear senses, shunning gluttony

The better part of me knows that when I'm the better part
It's better for me, better for you, and better for others

Because

The better part of me recognizes that people are trying
Even when they don't succeed, failing me or failing others

The better part of me knows that something can be done right
Even if it's not done my way, my way, my way

The better part of me accepts unconditional love
Neither questioning its motives nor its inevitable imperfections

The better part of me knows that wanting more
Just means that we're not looking closely enough at what we have

The better part of me knows that wood needs space
Or the flames will not flourish

The better part of me breathes deep
Oxygen does me good

It does us all good.

Limited Set

What matters
Is a limited set:

Family.
Friends.
Health.
Fall leaves.
Yes, fall leaves.

Time spent on anything else
Is literally a waste of time
Literally.

Energy spent worrying about anything else
Is literally a waste of energy
Literally.

The limited set
Is what there is
It is all there is
It is

Family.
Friends.
Health.
Fall leaves.
Yes, fall leaves.

The very things
The loss of which will come.
Will painfully come.

Why oh why is what matters so much
Also that which we inevitably lose
That which is so dear
That limited set
The same set that could be gone tomorrow.
Will be gone.

The limited set matters,
Fleeting though it may be.
It matters.
It is all that matters.

All there is to cherish.
Every second.
Every Hour.
Every Day.
Always.
Limited.