

On Passing

John Donne taught us
"No man is an Island
Entire of himself
Each is part of the main"
yet when one is forced,
By sheer accident of birth
To watch one's father
Erode back into that
Primitive of being
Who knows neither
self
Nor others
And relies not on his own wit
And deed
But on the conscious act
Of strangers
Is he still then part of the main?

As the island in the middle
Of the raging stream
Is itself eroded
Lost over the eons
To its own destruction
Does it not end up
Somewhere down stream
As part of another island
Or as part of some
Emerging delta
Where life begins anew?

Should we then
Stand in the way
Of nature
And build a dike
Against the raging torrent
Or should we understand
That what Donne taught us
Was that
We do not toll the bell
We simply
Listen to its chime