

Choosing Sides
Collected Poems

1979 -1989

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RUNNING FOREVER

Yet in this much diluted land,
We still make flowers and bread from sand
And spire up on tenuous vines
Linke that separate yours and mine.

We sit and say and dram
Among the rows of summer grass
No sounds abound,
We taste our time

Gifts come to us,
The song the dance and move on.
We dance too,
The plotters step,
The dullard's step,
Our heavy feet and hands,
Wind rises at our backs
And turns our bodies,
In tangled hair and hem,
It sheds the deserts along our bones,
Slowly spinning in the ever turning,
Cracks the shape of us and falls to earth,
Splashing in the dust.

We step through memories long laid down
On splintered swords of light
And time is with us
Where shadows cannot follow
Ever turning on the step
In the pattern along that path.

THE SCULPTURE

A man sensed self with something else
When he chose a branch of wood.
His hands' touch met a substance,
The grasp of fingers search its form,
Transmits feelings
Of what has been,
Of what possibility.

Silent moments mark night by seasons
Herds of energy quietly burst, spent on two expressions,
Unveiling the idea and guarding against deflection.
His decision,
Hand's discovery, wood into vision,
Meeting form that was always there.

To know the limits of this work,
Comes once when wood lay on the ground
And all had gone before,
And once again when given over
To the clearer form he found.
Time separates these moments
Serving continuity,
That one idea must relate to the other;
Before it came to be,
And
The stretching of a tree.

Presented on a different stage
These forms evolved to see
The dance of men and women,
A scoop of life,
One day's pulse,
Becoming and to be.

Choosing Sides

Strange to star these notes
to someone living in this city.
This tone, then set
To stop here would be enough
and fall on the side of time
I do not choose.
The natural act well known yields only to its time
Still the motive uncorrupt,
When action seeks no controls,
For not the awareness of that desire
There would be no telling force.

Nothing said leads nowhere
To the place of unfulfilled repetitions.
Not to care
For unknown
One's own reasons
Relate to nothing
Save that part of self looking back
Indulgence turning ever inward.

Time parts the present,
Inside the worlds turn out
Meeting others having history all their own.
All forces still at play
Within each grasp textures, contours have a feel
Pleasure's names revealed.
Observe the child's head turned away
It's innocence at rest
Totaling more its years.

What saved the child from fortunes told
Is evolutionary being.
Each phase precisely times
The first year to the next
A vigil balance as guardian angels were thought to be,
Constant is the testing screen
The evolutionary being
Against a generation's bad dreams.
Observe the child turn its head away,
To laugh
To spit
Indifferent.
Celebrate the innocence,
Spontaneous at its source
Balancing in ignorance
The promises, blossoms, and painful falls.

A child's capacities endowed
Develop, blossom and sometimes fail;
Transmuted rhythms from a generation past
To a generation passing.
The child's play, free then rehearsed.
Subtle weights sorted
The lineal deposits of each days residue.
Girls often tainted, given unaware
The promise was too great.
Can fault be in the trying?

Hidden voyeurs
Press beyond the grasp.
Textures, contours becomes desires
Pleasure's names are short
Observe the child's head turned away,
Learning little of the other.
The act synapsed
By its own unreasonable past.

Choice relates to now,
Reflects a knowledge gained,
Passed through a selfless place
Of no sensations
Dispossessed of all controls.
Whose burdens are no choice at all,
Whose time is free but never now,
Creation in mechanical forms,
Synthetic colors
blinding
bending reality
Into private concentrated self.
Riveted steps lock up forms,
Darkened by the years of images hot stains,
Pictures hung on interior walls,
Sealed from perception.
Memory summons magical supports
the moment is clear
Something new might occur.

Forgetting slides to intimacy,
There fear rising
Self becomes itself again,
A future interest to the other.
The simplest human mystery,
Waiting to unfold.
In time's organic wake,
Just waits.

The fantasy outside existence
Illusionary art forms
Teahtrical in function
The tiniest illumination lost
Adding not to one inventive change.

The shield was lifted from the place it covered
Where it lived,
Has breath,
Will bleed, can feel.
By a sperm one passes at the egg.
Trust a little accident,
Fear rising,
The self becomes itself again.

Is there a side to take?
Is it relative or absolute?
The choice is always made:
For us
by us
without us.

An impasse reached.
An impasse breached,
Surprised by time consumed.
Fools and fuels us too
the laughter of our children,
Learning what I did not know.

The prize borrowed
Un-natural is possession:
The ideal form of interest
Changed
Under the weight of illusion.
Celebrate the wisdom
United in the concept
possess nothing
instruct not
Use not but marvel at
The uses of enchantment.

Tendencies to wait, follow confidences unknown.
Deception is aloneness,
Displacement is aloneness
Liking itself coming out of fear.
Sensation in their faces
Listening to their talk
In environments created
Comes to resolution
Known in that moment of life conceived,
Joy be deprived with only one moment, why?
Summoned resources beyond our imaginings.

Witness the easy fullness, as waves glide to the shore.
Movement seen and heard
Eternal motion of space, unseen, unheard,
Forms changing form.
Water spreads to its thinnest limits
Perfect half crests mark and map the shore
Proving earth is round.
Released, the space tumbles
Quietly on its shore,
The peaceful display,
Makes no marks,
Knows no limits.
Being there is most like itself
Unclaimed, recradled, exchanged.

THE SHOWOFF

The fantasy of you is held
Along the contours of my pillow
Where the horizon meets the dark wall
And I know you will not mind
But I wonder how a nightfall later
I ever slept in this empty room
Where you no longer appear.

In a moment untouched by appetite
Memory serves us surprise
As if dreams evolved with animals
Giving each other night without desire
Nothing asked, all the pleasure
Was in thy presence.

The fantasy lay beyond the means to possess it
The mystery then the simple play
Of the kind of god that likes to show off
However beautiful his display.

ANNIVERSARY FOR DORIS

Thirty-six
Count them in telling
Matters not beginning
Reasons speak to reason
Filling half the wish to know.

Then voices find the music
And glide upon the lift of mystery
Mastering in the telling
The messenger redeemed.

Played these many years,
In the silence before they met,
Now across a simple table
Singers of their song, dance on,
Fresh earth beneath their feet,
Long rows to horizons reach
Not strangers when they meet.

Follow footfalls long laid down
Laced by echo's cast in air
Past each sound though all seasons
No strangers dance this ground.

Slow dreamed amidst our sleep
The peace the place we see them leap
Who wrote this music
We know so well.

A guest at the table
A young boy chosen to bear witness
Too young to understand
But nods in his entrance
Begin his sweet beginnings
That might pass down these gifts
Time present to time future to enrich so young
Who will celebrate his day
Imagined now, light years away.

EVERY DAY

Mysteries folded into clouds
Fat loaves of flour glisten on the table
Forms reach out and perish at the touch
Ever present to the senses
Tantalizing to the eye
Quickening the heart.

This morning's gift
Large drops of water hidden in the pine tree
Tiny darts of light
Rhythm brighter than the sun
Gems among the needles
Slowly wavered by the wind
Turning in the light to high colors of the rainbow,
White, red, yellow, a flash of green.

The dryness of the following morning
Catches not the eye moved to common beauty
Searching for the difference
Welled up to find much more.
Beauty arrayed in daily forms
Unlike sparkles in a tree
We're all that nature has
Comes wandering into being.

What messages does it bring?
Are we beggars at the fair
Entreating always?
Come see me in all my forms
Watch me as I sparkle
Do not pass and do not hear.

Mysteries folded into clouds
Mysteries quite at hand
Songs sung soft and loud
Mysteries where you stand
If you miss me
When you miss me
You are lost
Not touched
Not felt
Nor seen nor heard
Far less than any grain of sand
Rising to the wind
Flowing with the sea
Changing in the sun
Not one grain be cast into nothing
But for loneliness be damned.

AT SUMMER ON A BUSINESS DAY

This lassid mood no thought of spring it owned grey days
Climbing temperature
Lower did I feel
And lower did I stay

Interrupted now by the telephone
For lunch he wants this caller I summoned by profession
Back to my time now.

A mood of hours begins to lift
I waited too long to feel
I love this indulging, it's free access to my brain
To make activity without giving anything to it.
I stay at this plane and laugh at the world
Indeed contempt is a curse.

A poem has feelings, how the rules of grammar twist and fail meaning,
A dusting at the edges
Words find their way
No overlay
Brief and fleeting I rise in time
Just enough.

QUIET FRIEND

I wish I could have been
Your quiet friend
Instead of making so much noise
I wish I could have been your friend by day
As each begins and ends,
Where shade and shadows grow,
No stops to count its time.

Your music barely heard
Came flashing through your eyes
The first sharp sense of meaning,
Excites me
And I begin my song
Without prelude
Rhythmed through the centuries of my mind.

She slept alone those many years
Her lover gone to die
Now in your brief company
She entreats you to her bed,
No greater act in human history
Assures the
Purity of love
As when an old woman
Invites her granddaughter to her bed.

CRY COMING

First you cry
Then you come
First you try
Then you run
First you smile
Flat on your face
Crawl, run, jumping in place
Behind a glass, plastic to touch
Straight up the wall
We stand in a rut
Peering at someone I know
and see in between memories pass
Locked in the glass unable to scream
New layers distance the face that fades
There alone a hand on my knee
I need introduction to me

Pry open every seam
The pretense rides
On the back of fear
I won't play if you won't hear
Each time you get the taste
The shock shot back across your face
Now by the sweet embrace
Stand where you are
No rights to the cookie jar.

Patience rises in
Silence unseem
The selfish force never made on good dream.