

Requiescat

for my mother

Poems

written at the time of her death by

Michæl Maxwell Steer

© 2007

Resquiescat for my mother

My mother waits in the great ante-chamber

When I kissed my mother for the last time, she was no longer there.
Her hands still waved, as if seeking to drink,
but her mind had already passed over the great river
and was safe on the other side, beyond the power of hurt.

As she has lain, falling slowly towards death, this year
I have found in her the mother I could not find in life.
All that jammed our mutual radar fell away,
and I could experience the love she always meant, but which,
somehow, got so jangled in transmission.

Towards the end we met on equal terms, she
no longer feeling that ancient need to stand her ground,
her insecurities always on display around me;
and I no longer needing to attack, for now she was beyond
anywhere where I could, at last, have made her hear me.

So, finally, we were together.

Just ... *together*, nothing more.

She told me what she wanted at her funeral – had saved
against her end not a stash of pills, but service-sheets.

And so, at last, I knew her – as she had always known me. Two angels
unable to recognise each other throu their mortal clothing.

20/5/07

In fact my mother was admitted to the sky a couple of hours after I wrote this.

Resquiescat for my mother

The Gift in Death

The gift in death
is one of ultimate clarity.
All that obsesses us
in our humdrum lives abruptly
and permanently
reduced to extreme simplicity.

We are here, now,
alive, forever united in death –
that crystalline moment
when flesh & spirit separate:
each discrete path
released from its earthly mold.

The physical, visible:
the meta-physical seen only by
the inner eye.
The path that was trodden in life at last
made manifest:
earth-bound or sky-borne in destination.

A time of uniquely
valuable focus, an aquifer
feeding our well-spring,
tears arising from long-dry ducts,
burning to light
deep-buried truth of hopes and fears.

Cherishing
the bleakness is honouring the dead –
each special feeling
bringing us contact with our own truth.
Every heartbeat
proof that the dead are always with us –
birth & death
just marks on an eternal cycle,
weaving together
the seen & unseen worlds, each as
close to other
as blood to its surrounding tissue.

20/05/2007/

Resquiescat for my mother

The Cord Snaps

We stood around the bed,
some listening,
some full of thought.
Another entered.
Greetings filled the space.
Procedures were uppermost
in people's minds,
or at least that was
what was spoken.
I wanted to honour the moment
of a passing;
but all I could hear
was the sound of ties
breaking, the clicks
of an era ending.
It was as if
the fruit that had fallen to earth
now broke apart
allowing the seeds to find
their fate alone.

23/05/2007

Resquiescat for my mother

Ave Maris Stella

And so it's down to this:

from my mother I'd wanted
a sense of place in the world –
but this she couldn't give me,
never finding her own.

Now she's dead, I see
how what she gave me was
a 'bridged uncertainty',
an inchoate knowledge of
that complex emptiness
where arrival is departure,
the world of paradox
where learning to be empty
we discover fullness.

Quantum meta-physics!

I cannot say how far
my mother finally got
along the swaying rope bridge
linking earth and sky
above the foaming rapids.

In one sense she was always
there – for even as her
frail and weary flesh
wavered each step across
the terrifying void

her soul shone, beckoning.
My mother's gift and challenge:
the journey I must complete,
that inner mystical union,
the arrival at my birth.

And so she's with me now.
Never an earthly guide,
yet now the stella polaris
which she sought herself
and so at last becomes.

03/06/2007

Resquiescat for my mother

Sonnet

I have not lost a mother, but gained a guide.
Released from flesh, and all that that implies,
I feel her presence now – a joyful bride
entering the royal mansion of the skies.

What she wanted most was to belong.
A simple soul, she wanted love too much
and had to live with loss, but it made her strong:
she felt no shame in making faith her crutch.

Where inspiration comes from no one knows:
it arises from a geology of the heart.
For me in flesh a soil which blocked my flow
my mother now in spirit seems to impart
an upward passage throu which water goes ...
and see, above, how all the fountains start!

*05/06/2007
the morning of her funeral*

Resquiescat for my mother

Prayer

Lord by your mercy
let me be her work.
Bring me to completion
as she would have wished ...
throu her grace, a feather
on the breath of god,
yet held by gravity,
let me be spirit on earth.
May I know what you want
by what she inspires.
May my life express
the suddenness of joy.
Time for a new timetable,
created not by logic
but by feeling – a clock
whose hands are moved by love.

Be

Be	Inspire	Complete
Breathe	Learn	Smile
Allow	Build	Share
Love	Fulfill	Merge

06/06/2007

The morning after the funeral

Resquiescat for my mother

Rebirth

In a relationship with a parent
that doesn't quite work we are constantly like
a mechanism that reaches a point
where another gear should engage ...
It's like a design fault we carry around
and reproduce in later life.

The infant impulse is to blame,
to demand our unmet need;
but a mature perspective shows us
that such incongruity
makes a first-class tool for seeing
into the nature of life itself.

I kept mama at bay because
her wish for a shared love deluged me,
drowning my young awareness in what
could have nurtured my growing life;
so that I became a body
sinking where I should have swum.

Here we see how karma works
over successive generations.
My mother looked for that great love,
that one enduring incandescence
which every woman craves and no man
ever truly understands –

she wanted especially to live throu me.
She did not see how the same boat
could not have rescued both of us.
I lit out and swam to shore.
I'm not sure she ever did,
marooned at the mercy of the sea.

Resquiescat for my mother

I've heard of a therapy in my dreams
where parents and children swim together
on the current of their eyes,
borne upstream on natural love
that comes when two are willing to
voyage on that waterless river.

With human eyes *we* could not do this,
but now I sense a dam of blessings
tower above me. Keeping focus
on *her* eyes I remove a block
and all around cascades a wall
of heaven-scented butterflies.

And yet I find I'm still alive!

The gift: to live within this state.
The challenge: to accept an angel
whose energies I long rejected.
The wave has broken over me
leaving a tide of stardust and rose petals.

21/06/2007

Resquiescat for my mother

Coherence

The letters tumble off the page,
which becomes a vacuum,
and terror like a beast uncaged
prowls the white & glaring room.

Common meanings, held in place
by shared perception, disintegrate
when someone dies, and so the space
that's left becomes an anarchic state.

My mother's house contained her world,
all that she was therein exprest –
emptied of what she once had valued
it's as if her life's disperst,
her character obliterated –
surviving now in memory
alone, until we too, as fated,
leave the living family.

As each picture is removed
the dustlines left around the walls
leave only the ghost of love
echoing a deserted hall.

What is it lives within a space
and slowly dies as memory fades?
Where is the energy that can outpace
these implacable engulfing shades?

In music and spirituality
alike, it is the intensity
of creative clarity
that defines longevity.

Truly there *is* a narrow path
that leads across the formless waste
between the two nights till by the faith
we see the dawning of the day.

Resquiescat for my mother

Meanings *have* to fall apart,
words collapse in anarchy,
for this is how we learn by heart
and come to understand the key.

The fusion of brain and heart and will
in service of a greater good
produces a result that still
cannot be linearly understood.

Logic is for human goals.
They who seek to penetrate
the riddle some call 'god' are souls
who learn how intimately Fate
appears a dominant force; yet each
by this is given a chance for learning
how to be open to what they search
appearing another way of seeing;
one in which their integration
allows for synchronicity
to demonstrate, in their creation,
how each must own complicity.

Thus this seems to be life's riddle:
the skill with which we dance our jig
depends on how we hear the fiddle
that the mæstro plays. And that's the gig!

Studying this phenomenon
the result with which I'm faced
is that coherence alone brings clarity
and clarity alone brings grace.

And grace alone can fly us throu
the dark night of disintegration
when meanings fail, and what seemed true
mocks all hope of a salvation.

This was my mother's final journey.
We all who witness her despair

Resquiescat for my mother

knew the pain of her latter agony
and could only watch with prayer;
yet in that harsh ordeal by fire
in which all hope is burnt to dust
she never lost her heart's desire
to see God's love repay her trust.

So may she now be fathered and found,
at home, at rest, at peace; her pain
released, rewarded with the crown
which they who love till death can claim.

We can't evade the ferryman
who carries all beyond his stream
yet if we travel light we can
o'erfly the Styx as in a dream.

Thus each can clearly look at death
yet not by death be seen. For this
we have to trust the power of breath
to be exactly present: *Now is*

Always – Eternity is Now.

This is what each sage has taught
to set the spirit free, and how
all may escape when caught.

All these enigmas crowd the rooms
my mother once inhabited;
vacant now, her power perfumes
the lives of all who visited.

Tho her house be empty, bared
for other occupants, she lives
behind my eyes, and I'm prepared
to keep her idealism alive.

A fond farewell and then we part.
All that was familiar gone,
yet each of us within our heart
carrying memories all life long.

10/06-10/07/2007

Requiescat for my mother