

WORDS OF A REQUIEM

1. REQUIEM

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine: et lux
perpetua luceat eis.
Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison

And may they lie in eternal sleep,
in the darkness which closed round them.
In a silence that is total,
they walked the darkest road.

We will hold them in our memory
though we have no hope of meeting,
in a darkness indivisible
that settles on our world.

Kyrie Eleison,
For the things we did. The things we did not do.
For the words we said and the words left unsaid.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison,
for the feelings we showed and those we tried to
hide.

Christe Elison.
At the start of the longest highway,
obscured by thoughts and fears.
We do not know its ending.
We wait with little hope.

Kyrie Elison, Christe Eleison, Kyrie Eleison.

Reader

*Let us consider two journeys. One of them takes
place in absolute darkness. We can know
nothing about the progress of our dead loved
ones. They are beyond our sight; beyond our
touch; beyond our imagination - beyond even
our deepest love. The second journey is our
own and it is, for much of its length, too real, too
vivid. At its beginning we feel there is no ending.
We look down the road; it disappears over the
horizon. We look at it numbly, knowing only that
something is wrong; a chair is empty; the key
does not click in the lock at the expected time;
there is one less person at the table. A question
hangs in the air." This is our journey. The
longest journey is the journey within."*

2. ORGAN VOLUNTARY

Reader

*We may not even know that our journey has
begun, we feel so distanced from our former
concerns. But the numbness melts gradually as
questions intrude on us: What did he do that he
should suffer this? Why did she have to die
when there are so many who deserve death?
Why have I been left alone? Why?*

*And when there is no answer to these questions
we feel a sudden anger. "Anger would inflict
punishment on another; meanwhile it tortures
itself." In those hot moments we look at the
world and it is hateful to us. Better that it be torn
down, that the stars should fall from the sky than
we witness laughter, enjoyment, the everyday
business of living - continue when the person
that we love is dead.*

3. DIES IRAE, DIES ILLA

Earth is cracking at our feet.
Stars are falling through the sky.
The night's a dark and dreadful place.
Anger licks at the dark red sea.

Thunder rolling in the clouds.
Lightning striking through the rain.
This road's a black and angry place.
The air hot as a furnace blast.

Dies irae, Dies Illa,
Solvat saeculum in favilla.
Teste David cum Sybilla.
Dies, Dies Illa.

Quantus tremor est futurus
Quando iudex est venturus
Cuncta stricte discussurus!
Dies, Dies Illa.

We try to change the way things go.
We try to put our fear to sleep.
This dream's a red and dreadful place.
We wake to find no mercy.

Dies Irae, Dies Illa.
Solvat caeculum in favilla.
Teste David cum Sybilla.
Dies, Dies Illa.

4. LACRYMOSA

Lacrymosa dies illa,
Qua resurget ex favilla,
Judicandus homo reus.

Dies illa.
Huic ergo parce Deus.
Pie Jesu Domine,
Dona eis requiem.

We cry for those who go before.
We cry for those who surely follow.
We cry as blind as new-born infants.
We cry as blind as sad old men.

Bring them back, bring them back,
let him walk through the door,
let her sit in her favourite chair.
Bring him back, bring her back
We look to the garden
and hope to see them there.

We cry for us, who stay behind.
We cry for our empty rooms.
We cry, knowing we must follow them.
We cry until we see no more.

Bring them back, bring them back,
let him walk through the door,
let her sit in her favourite chair.
Bring him back, bring her back
We look to the garden
and hope to see them there.

Huic ergo parce Deus,
Pie Jesu Domina,
Dona Requiem

Reader

Our anger is cooled by tears, shed for the loved one, and for ourselves. Then a calmer mood settles and we begin to remember. Sometimes we do it deliberately; sometimes it takes us unawares as we sit at home, travel to work, listen to music, meet with friends. We remember a holiday; a shared joke; a characteristic gesture. Sometimes we cry. And we remember that the dead are still travelling towards some unknown destination. We think of them wherever they are. Our memories walk beside them, their silent companions." Forgetfulness leads to exile while remembrance is the secret of redemption " 3

*Let me walk to daylight's end.
Dreams will neither make nor mend
cracks that mar this well-known place.
I think of you and your quiet grace.*

*Let me not fall in despair
standing by your favourite chair,
longing for your tired face.
I think of you and your quiet grace.*

*Absence makes the mind lose track;
hearts retain what thinking lacks.
The sudden shock of memory's trace.
I think of you and your quiet grace.*

*Houses's crumble, cities change:
my own past - transmuted, strange.
I sink in sand without a base.
I think of you and your quiet grace.*

*Viewing such with gentle smiles -
clicking clocks, smooth sundials.
Ignoring the consuming race.
I think of you and your quiet grace.*

5.RECORDARE

Remember our mothers, remember our fathers,
remember our childhood friends.
Remember the sick and remember the healthy,
who stood where the daylight ends.

Who passed the checkpoint smiling.
Who passed the border in pain.
Who hoped for another meeting,
but were never welcomed again.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
juste judex ultionis,
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Remember our mother, remember our father,
who walk in another place.
Whose absence is so total.
Whose deaths cannot be faced.

Whose lives have formed a circle.
Whose lives have no refrain.
Whose lives have measured our own lives.
Who began and ended in pain.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
juste judex ultionis,
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

6.OFFERTORIO

Reader: Deliver them from death's appetite. May they never be swallowed and perish. We offer sacrifice and prayers mixing our prayers with songs of praise.

Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriae, libera animas
omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni
et de profundo lacu.

Tu suscipe pro animabus illis, quarum hodie
memoriam facimus, fac eas, Domine.

Libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas
tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum.

Libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de
poenis inferni et de profundo lacu, de morte
transire ad vitam.

Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriae, libera animas
omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni
et de profundo lacu.

Reader

*Our world begins to move from Winter to a slow
and painful Spring. We can see some sort of
ending to our journey. Suddenly, at the end of a
busy day we find that we have not thought of
him or her once. We are frantic with guilt. We
clutch at grief to punish ourselves but the it no
longer wounds us the way it did. Our
remembrance may seem short-lived; but our
loved ones lived and worked in the world, which
bear their traces forever.
"I shall remember while the light lives yet
And in the night-time I shall not forget." 4*

7.LUX AETERNA

Lux aeterna, luceat eis, Domine, cum sanctis
tuis in aeternum, quia pius es

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux
perpetua luceat eis. Amen

May eternal light shine down on us
from the sky, where bright jewels hang.
Light that will not fade shine down on those
who walk the darkest road.

*Reader: The light will not be extinguished.
Our dreams will not be lost.
Though the journey is long and weary,
the land is rough, the sea storm-tossed.*

May the light shine down forever
as we travel with our dreams.
May it shine on light and space and sea
as we make the journey that never ends.

*Reader: The light will not be extinguished.
Our dreams will not be lost.
Though the journey is long and weary,
the land is rough, the sea storm-tossed.*

Lux aeterna, luceat eis, Domine, cum sanctis
tuis in aeternum, quia pius es

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux
perpetua luceat eis. Amen

Reader

*The world remembers. Its memory holds all that
was most dear to us about those who no longer
walk in its landscape, who now walk somewhere
else.*

*Some men have a dream of the world
and break the real world to make their dream
real.*

*Some men say the world is botched and
set out to destroy it. Some men take
the world as it is - watch it, walk it,
touch it, show it, as close as their skill allows.
They approach the world with gentleness,
loving their families and sweet desserts,
avoiding arguments and hurt.*

*In looking at it through new eyes we understand
that "Any man's death diminishes me, because
I am involved in Mankind and therefore never
send to know for whom the bell tolls." 5*

8.INTROIT TO AGNUS DEI

Instrumental

9.AGNUS DEI

Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis
requiem

Some are lambs. Some are lions.
Protect the lambs from the lions
and the lions from themselves.

Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis
requiem

Some are judges. Some are victims.
Let the judges fail in their certainty
and the prisoners grow in your mercy.

Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis
requiem

Some are dead. Some are living.
May the dead walk on to their dwellings.
The living see them arrive.

Agnus dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona eis
requiem.

Reader

We are not here to lie to each other, to give too easy consolation. As we fall asleep, we sit up, suddenly awake, remembering our lack of charity, unfinished business, the misunderstanding that was never resolved. And walking down the street we realise that society continues, that men's affairs have not been knocked off their axis. We still do not know our loved ones destination, but if their journey is to mean something, if it is not to disappear like frost on the window when the Spring finally arrives, we need more than memory: we need to look plainly at what is around us. We must learn from the qualities that caused us to love that person in the first place - his gentleness, her sympathy, his lack of self-righteousness, her charity, his learning, her strength. And perhaps there is a sense, even for those who never felt it before or believed it was possible, that there is a power to accomplish these great, good ends. And that this power is greater than we can imagine...

10. REX TREMENDAE

Rex tremendae majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Power in the splitting atom.
Death in glass containers.
Weapons crouched in silos.
Energy singing in the wires.

Thoughts turned into actions.
Slipping into war.
Aircraft on the skyline.
Crackling in the air.

Bless the King who gives up power, save the power of peace.
Bless the King who gives up weapons and arms himself with love.

Fire in the thoughts of strangers.
Wireless signals cutting sky.
Time in liquid crystal.

Stars in night skies die.

Streams in polluted oceans.
Food in tumbled mountains.
Dust on children's faces.
Desolation in the air.

A body under blankets.
A silent look of fear.
The body slowly melting.
Crying in the night.

Bless the man who gives up actions, except the quiet caress.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison,
for wanting too much, for giving too little.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison,
for speaking too loud and drowning the silence.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison,
we wait in peace and see without wanting.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison,
we ask your mercy for all who have need.

Kyrie Eleison, Christe Eleison.
Rex tremendae majestatis.
Qui salvandos salvas gratis.
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Reader

Darkness is defeated. Borders are destroyed. Wounds heal. Great effort leads to great peace. Love will overcome reason for " Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it."⁶

In all these scenes we have been seeing partial truths, distorted images. Now we can see the complete, dazzling picture.

" One short step past, we wake eternally And death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die."⁷ In this strange hour of hope and hopelessness we turn a corner on our path and see another path joining it. At the junction stands a familiar figure. We are face to face. In our journey we have learned that a love that cannot be returned - because death stands in the way - is never wasted, never pointless: it can change us in a way we never thought possible. This is the loved ones gift to us. And we have learnt lessons about death. " It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives.

The act of dying is not of importance..."⁸ And also: "Death is but crossing the world, as Friends do the sea; they live in one another still."
9

Two journeys come together: ours is well-known, the other is a true mystery. But we can never be parted after this final meeting.

11.SANCTUS

Sanctus Dominus, Deus Sabaoth
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua
Hosanna in excelsis
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua
Hosanna in excelsis

The blue sky, specked with flying shapes.
The dark sea, flecked with shadowed forms.
We walk upon an emerald carpet.
The grey mountains, the brown tall trees,
the deep valleys, the golden plains.
We walk among the sun-drugged flowers

Hosanna in excelsis

The thin streams, frothing over stones.
The horseshoe wood, dozing on a hill.
We walk along the evening beach.
The fast people, lit by quick speech.
The deep minds, filled with curled thoughts.
We walk on the breast of a mountain.

Hosanna in excelsis

The highest places, cold in the sun.
The deepest rock, boiling at the core.
We walk under canopies of stars.
The cool zones, under heavy rain.
The frozen poles, hard as thunder.
We walk among all this life.

Hosanna in excelsis

Sanctus Dominus, Deus Sabaoth
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua
Hosanna in excelsis
Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua
Hosanna in excelsis

*Reader: Remember my mother, your father.
Whose love was not in vain.
Whose going is now a becoming*

as we hold them again.

*Already here beside us,
in touch, in heart, in sight.
At the end of a long weary journey.
Looking up at the new sunlight.*

*At the end of the long dark journey,
in the warmth of the new sunlight.
Hosanna in Excelsis*

*Requiem Libretto c 1993, Revisions c 1994,
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Quotations

¹ Dag Hammarskjöld; ² Publilius Syrus; ³ Baal Shev Tov; ⁴ Algernon Charles Swinburne; ⁵ John Donne; ⁶ The Song Of Solomon; ⁷ John Donne; ⁸ Samuel Johnson; ⁹ William Penn

Translations

These are rough translations of the quotations from the Latin Requiem used in this libretto:

Requiem: Grant them rest forever, Lord, and may eternal light shine upon them.

Dies Irae: Day of anger, day of fear. All shall crumble into ashes. David's prophecy was that they will tremble in fear when the judge shall come and search their souls.

Lacrymosa: It will be a day of bitter tears when man rises from the ashes; doomed to judgement, lost and guilty. Jesus Christ our Lord, pity your servant then and grant us your peace.

Recordare: Remember gentle Jesus, just and honourable judge. Don't let our labours be for nothing.

Offertorio: Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, free the souls of the faithful from Hell's torments and from the silent pit. Receive them for the souls we commemorate today. Allow them to pass from death into eternal life. Oh Lord, deliver them from the lion's mouth. Don't let them be swallowed by hell and perish in its darkness. Oh Lord, free the souls of the faithful from hell's torments and from the silent pit, so that they can move from death to eternal life.

Lux Aeterna: May light shine eternally on them and your saints, Lord, for you are just and good.

Agnus Dei: Lamb of God, who hears the world's sins, give us peace.

Rex Tremendae: Great king, source of mercy who saves the repentant, save me.

Sanctus: Holy, holy, holy. Lord God of Sabaoth.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Blessed
is he who comes in the name of the lord.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosannah in the highest.

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