

A message from Kathleen



Kathleen Raine (1908-2003) and I were friends for 15 years. In certain ways, our worlds didn't meet. That had a certain advantage: it meant we met beyond them, really as two kindred spirits or souls, and at a level of equality that only the invisible world can comprehend. I visited her for tea at her downstairs maisonette in Paulton's Square, Chelsea. She was also a wonderful correspondent (I have written about her letters to me at greater length in *Caduceus*, issue 61, Autumn 2003: 'Letters to a Young Poet'). However, for reasons I have already alluded to, I wasn't invited to her memorial service, and I really missed being there. Thanks to HRH Prince Charles, she was well celebrated in the Queen's Chapel with 200 select guests, having also received the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry. I imagined her surrounded by gold and candlelight. It was certainly a glamorous send-off for a poet who had never had any substantial amount of money to call her own.

What happened at 4 in the morning three weeks later was totally unexpected. I woke at the top of my tall Victorian house (on the edge of Stroud), and still with my eyes closed, saw Kathleen's face as if just in front of mine, intimately recognizable as if she was still in her body. What she said to me turned all glamour and envy upside down. She spoke to me both in words and telepathically (mind to mind) at the same time. The words were her own, and this is their translation. I want everyone to feel much better, and what I mean by that is 'raised in spirit'. That is the important thing, that is the only thing: not fame or glory, you see, but to feel well—which itself is glorious !

She ended with this exclamatory flourish that was all of her own, like a signature, and for a nanosecond I could see her smiling and laughing before her face dissolved into the night's silence, and I turned on the light switch reaching for my pen.

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