

TO ERNIE

(On the occasion of his funeral)

I met him first when he was a budding barrister.
He seemed above average in intellect and perceptivity
(They do not always go together).
Subsequently we had many a spirited exchange.
I did not always agree with him nor he with me.
He could be exasperating (He must have thought so of me).
But always he was a formidable foil.
One thing on his side—he was honest (I'll give him that).
With a persistent insistence on sticking to the facts
As he knew them, or believed them to be.
And he was as avid as he was persistent
In the pursuit of truth and justice as he saw them.
He asked no quarter and gave none.
To those who were close to him and cared for him,
This could evoke a stark and graceless encounter.
But had he not cared for them, he would not have bothered
To put their care for him on the line
In the interest of confronting them with truth.
But one thing always prevailed for good or for ill—
You knew where he stood and where you stood with him.
And where he stood was uncompromisingly for the right,
As, he saw the right, or thought he saw the right.
Nor could any relationship with him survive
If he did not perceive the same spirit in the other.
And yet he was not without fault or struggle.
In the later years he was beset by physical ills.
Still, his faith remained secure.
A gift of God to his spirit, untouched
By the cataclysms of the mortal cocoon.
Indeed, through it he reached out to others.
Nor was his assistance, confined to matters of faith.

He had a heart for genuinely serving his clients.
Unique in the practice of law, was his earnest effort
To find the best way—the practical, the simple, the least costly—
To resolve the tangles of troubled human beings
Not always through the impersonal juridical maze
But in the more personal climate of reality and reason.
In these respects and more, we will miss him—
The vacillating emotional tides along with
The penetrating capacities of his mind.
Perhaps there will be, perforce, a calmer lagoon now.
But there will be also a strange emptiness
In the absence of the tossing seas.
But, be all of that as it may, he is at rest now.
The "mortal coil" with its earthly madness
Has been jettisoned and there is now eternal calm.

David Morsey
(February 11, 1991)