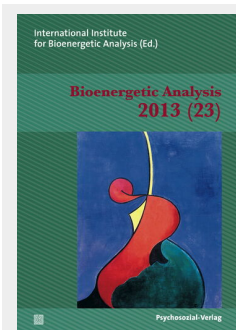


Mica Baum-Tuccillo

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Memorial Note about Elaine Tuccillo

*Mica Baum-Tuccillo*¹

To all of you lovely people,

As most of you know my mom was diagnosed with lung cancer this past June. Sadly, she passed on Friday morning, after a struggle that went on for several months. She was in home hospice at our house in Montauk, a place she loved completely and felt more spiritually at home than any other place in the world. My family cared for her until her very last breath. My brother, my dad and I were all with her when she found her way and she will continue to be with us as we try to find ours. She was surrounded by people who loved her, old friends and family. I am so grateful for the fortune to have been able to feel her love, warmth and unbelievable strength consistently in my life and even during her illness and now, after her death.

This has been an unfathomably difficult process for me; to watch her fade away so quickly and yet feel as though she was fully herself until the last moment. She was so strong throughout – diagnosis, treatment, pain, discomfort, and finally an acceptance of the inevitable truth that we would have to let go of the physical expression of her spirit. Even as the disease took her to what I can only imagine were unbelievable depths of pain, she continued to think more clearly and from a place of deep love. She was our guide throughout, and she will continue to guide us.

Up until the last days, there were many moments of pleasure and deep love and humor. Until a week ago, on warm afternoons we would help my mom dress in three layers of neoprene surf gear so that she could swim in the pool, her most joyful activity. We continued to heat the pool to 92 degrees while everyone else's pools out here on the island are months closed. Blasting The Best of Sade CD – many of you are

¹ The following was written by Mica Baum-Tuccillo, following the November 16, 2012 death of her mother, Elaine Tuccillo.

familiar with this part of the ritual – we would stand with her in her Italian movie star sunglasses, my dad and I in neoprene as well, and feel a profound joy in the midst of all the sadness, confusion and grief. JP, my partner, and my brother and his fiancé Amity would tend the fire in the portable fire place, which we would warm my mom's towels on so she wouldn't freeze on the slow procession back up the stairs to the house. There were many cherished moments in the past few months, some spent in hysterics watching episodes of Modern Family, moments of music and accompanying my mom to her jazz group and many others in profound conversation about love, psyche, politics. In some ways I felt more close to her in the last months than ever before.

The most important thing I learned from my mom became even more clear in the past few months, caring for her night and day. She taught me on a deeper level than I ever knew possible that love is the most powerful force. Not that it needs to conquer, but that it can gently, forgivingly and thoughtfully open doors that did not even appear to exist until you have the strength to look for them.

As my mom's cancer spread to her brain and she began to lose cognition, we were with her, as were many of her friends and family. By her side, comforting her, helping her make this transition that none of us can truly imagine the depths of. During this time, in this present moment, and going forward I have never once felt alone. I want to thank you all of you receiving this email for that. Thank you so much for the support and love you have given me as I have gone through this. I cannot believe my fortune to have each of you holding my heart with yours. I would not have had the strength to care for her as I did without you all. Thank you for your letters, for your wishes, your thoughts and kind words. While there is so much I can't say in this email, the most important thing to know is that you were all with me, and my family. As hard as it was to watch her go, and how hard it is to go on without her, I know that I am loved and I am not alone. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you.

Love,

Mica

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