

## **Memoria**

By Thomas Elliott

Come see me as I am.  
If memory is clinging to me  
and I refuse to let it go  
since it has only done me well,  
please, be understanding: baptize it as well.

I cannot forget, won't let myself  
abandon the friends I made.

What rises to the surface?  
Why this shame, this fear,  
like I am being asked to choose oblivion?

And where has my verse gone?

Lord, do I betray You  
by choosing to relish gifts You have given,  
refusing to turn from the peace that has striven  
to unite by love, by reason's love, the murdered-by-sin  
with the murdered-by-sin, but risen-to-life?  
Is hating the strife something wrong?

My anxious heart strays.  
I will not be baited to strife I have hated.  
What seized my heart and made it incapable of forgetfulness?

A living memory.  
Unity.  
Passion for life and hope for our children.  
Unremitting commitment to those least-committed to.  
Compassionate suffering with those who have tears in their eyes  
because of my fathers' crimes;  
because of my lifestyle's crimes;  
because of forgetfulness of my sins' long-reaching tentacles.

And rainy days.  
And summer morning haze that lifts

to open eyes to towering heights.  
And friendship mists that hide and seal,  
preserving wonder, parting only to reveal  
more mysteries, embodied in a history,  
one single, woven history  
walking before me and laughing  
or beside me and gritting his teeth  
or inside me.

Guatemala — land of trees,  
can I enumerate the species  
that give it the glorious name,  
the golden haze, the emerald vault  
of forest-canopy that serves as home  
to swinging monkeys and to secret dreams,  
that fosters wonder like a fern  
and ripens men like fruit?

I stammer – stammer – standard,  
for a little boy like me,  
with his eyes buried in the stars,  
and his heart not far behind.  
At least the page is full  
with something we can kindly call  
a memory.