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Tide Mills

Minoli Salgado

There is no grass here,
No ground for roots to take hold.
Ocean churn, frothy sea kale,
Random sea birds,
Holy stones nuzzling ruins of a mill.
Muffled feet offer footfall
To loose desultory winds.
No grass or ground for rooting
The routine movement of dull air.

Five thousand winged miles
At Cinnamon Gardens,
In the coffin house architected
For family life, the telephone
Is disconnected, the doorbell mute.
Vast columns of print cage
Yesterday's news, screen out
Hibiscus light. The lizard slumps
Upon the sofa, calculating time's flood,
Licks his lips with coins of sputum,
Double-tongued with black blood.

These are her vanishing hours,
Tinselling and congealing
In the empty sockets of his eyes.

Her face, a paper rose,
Petals the scrapbook of the heart.
Residue of residence
At the moon-gate of return.
Fumbles in the cupboard
Of a mind emptied of the past.
Shuffle the cards –
Quick, quick –
Into new order and restart.

She was, is, and ever will be
The beginning, the brightest star.
Still ticking origin
Numb hands, numb feet, warm heart.
'Call me.' 'I call daily.'
'Call me.' 'I do.'
I call always till she says 'You' –
The finger falling upon
A photo of herself.

She has forgotten her self
And in forgetting remembers me.
O, let this pronominal slip be the necessary spell
Magic and meld the beginning and the end.
Shuffle quick now – enter
Warm, undivided skin.
Let eyes blur into focus,
Heart stutter and sing,
Small feet find familiar footing as
Rooting grass springs
Savage and green about us,
One and indivisible –
Tayatha Aum ...

All quenched the liquid fire.
An ocean storm spent
On a firmament of relinquished desire.

Notes

The poem links T.S. Eliot's world with mine, drawing on three elements foregrounded in the Arena documentary: Eliot's sense of rootlessness, his desire for domesticity and the place of scrapbooks in his life. It also speaks to his poetry, particularly his spiritual search in Four Quartets (all based on locations that spoke to him emotionally and spiritually) and his references to Buddhist teaching.

Tide Mills is the name of a derelict village in East Sussex that stands on an area of vegetated shingle beach and wetlands between Newhaven and Seaford.

Cinnamon Gardens is a leafy, affluent district of Colombo, Sri Lanka, once known for its large, multigenerational homes and arboreal roads.

'Tayatha Aum' is the opening phrase of a Buddhist mantra for healing mental and physical suffering.