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Madeline Coopsammy

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Poems

Abstract

THE SECOND MIGRATION and RECESSION AND THE THIRD WORLD IMMIGRANT

Madeline Coopsammy

THE SECOND MIGRATION

Whoever were those mocking gods
who thought it fit to lead us
from the green wastes of the Indo-Gangetic
to the sweet swards of the Caroni
then in a new migration
to Manitoba's alien corn
never thought to state
the price to be exacted
or how or where it would be paid.
Images of a just society dangled
harlot-like before our eyes
we thought that here at last and now at last
the spectres of colour
would never haunt
our work, our children's lives, our play
that in the many-faceted mosaic
we, angled and trimmed to fit
would find ourselves our corner of the earth.
How could we not know
that time, which heals
just as frequently destroys
and like the sixties flower darlings
we too, would soon become anachronisms
be reminders of a time
a time of joy and greening
We are the mistakes of a liberal time
you did not really court us, it is true
rather, purging us with sugar-coated pills of
medicals and points and two official languages
your tolerant humanity
festered woundings of 'brain drain'

while our leaders pleaded, impotent in agony
'Do not take our best!'
'We want your best,
No Notting Hills for us,' you warned.
And so again we crossed an ocean
convinced that little Notting Hills we'd never be.
Now lounging in our bite-sized backyards
and pretending that we do not see
the curling vapours of our neighbour's burger feast
(the third this week)
wafting across the picket fence
we know that careless of our birthright
we have sold it for
a mess of pottage.

RECESSION AND THE THIRD WORLD IMMIGRANT

This honey-flowing milk and maple-syrup land
Promised a new beginning.
No longer sure of friend or foe
They fled in hope
And left the victors pecking at the spoils
As massa's day now done
He lightly shrugged aside his burden.
For the drums no longer summoned them
To bacchanalian joy
But tom-tom like
They throbbed a coming holocaust.
In despair
Like Israelites of old
They fled
To find the promised land.
The land was vast and wide
They knew
But shivered in the throes of its
Retreating glacial cover.

Yet when the winter waned
The time of love and joy and corn proved sweet and easy
The natives sang a song of welcome
As moving over gently, they swore
There's room for all.
Gullibly the strangers thought
The promise of the Spring and Summer's opulence
Would never fail
But now the land is vast and wide and cold
Suspicion, strife and envy greet them
From the circle to the island
The land is bone
Will this winter of opprobrium, want and discord never end?

Lorna Goodison

SURVIVOR

The strangers passed through here
for years, laying waste the countryside.
They took most living things
even some rare species
With half-extended wings
They took them all
now that genus is extinct.
(Lord) They were thorough in their plunderings.
So here the wind plays long mourning notes
on bones that once were ribs (savages!)
They broke them when they'd finished eating
and you know how creative God is with ribs.