

The Ultimate Colony: A Poem for the Interior

In this
Naipaul's "Ultimate Colony",
Nostalgia,
marked by our bare-footed traipses through rainy season pools,
pit-pan races at Easter regattas,
hiccate meat and plaintain sides,
youths, bare chested and bold,
mining the emerald tides of the Olde River,
is its saving grace.

There are no Victoria Crosses or
marble elegies
immortalizing valour
save for our own jade
and the folk tales
and the bush songs of the interior,
and the memories from the lagoons in moonlight
quilted into bush leaf canvases with jungle vine and chicle sap.

There are no heroes,
but for the men who braved the currents on the logwood rides
and those who battled the drunken frights of the piccado road,
vainly ignoring the advances of beautied spirits
and claw-footed sirens
sheltering in Xieba shades or
resting near the muddy, weap-y
edges of some bushman's pool.

"This is our story, this is our song"
Heroes and heroines
knighted by the Cross at Passiontide,
and at Christmas
and at New Year's time,
their deeds recorded on the backs of the
cabbage tree pews and on the cement plastered walls of the
church in the wildwood
with their chanting,

“Oh, come, come, come...”

What industry,
but for the corned palms
that willingly gathered the sheaves from the ‘plantache’,
or for the women who patched cashew seeds
over cast iron coals in the dry,
or for the leathered brows that sweated ignorance under diesel engines
and birthed progress,

or for the
man-woman stresses that were tempered
by evening brams
and bedroom brawls,
their twilight catharses?

The Ultimate Colony?
Indeed.

Courtney Gillett