

Christian A. Campbell



Curry Powder

Panday in power now, somebody cries.
They think they better than people,
My Trini cousins say, And they like
Wear Fila shoes. My brother and I
Laugh and add, they is smell strong
Like curry powder. Is true, we insist.

Coolies and niggers fighting these days
But great-grandmummy Nita did not fight
When she found herself facing the West
Instead, touching the Negro face of a Bajan,
Manny. She did not wear saris no more.
Calypso she liked and could wind down
With the best of them. She became deaf
To the ethereal melody of Krishna's flute.
She chose Manny, not Lord Rama in her
Hindu epic gone wrong. At her wedding
She never once uttered Ganesh's name
And she loosed the grasp of Vishnu's
Four hands from 'round her waist.
So her sister's disowned her in the holy
Name of Mother India. But she made
Dougla babies anyway and did not give
Then the sacred names of gods: Brahma,
Shiva, Gauri. She named Granddaddy
Leon, a good English name, like all the other
Rootless Negroes. And so Trinidad became herself.

You know how people go, it took many deaths
And many births for the Mullchansinghs to talk
To the Brathwaites again and, finally, Mummy
And her siblings were born looking Indian enough.
But Panday in power now and mummy warned
Me to say Indian and not coolie. One of my cousins
Told me, with grown up intuition, You know,
In Trinidad you not black, you dougla.

Panday in power now and my cousins still cuss
About neighbors with their flags of many colors
Claiming their yard for as many gods as there are
Colors. After enough cussing, we all go to eating
Pelau with roti and curry, and so, with our fingers
Stained yellow like old documents,
We, too, stink of curry powder.

