

Tout Moun

Caribbean Journal of Cultural Studies

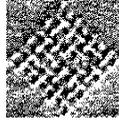
*Seeking Space
Shaping Aesthetics*

Vol 5: No. 1 ▪ March 2019

<http://www.mainlib.uwi.tt/epubs/toutmoun/index1.htm>

© The University of the West Indies, Department of Literary Cultural and Communication Studies

POEMS



JANNINE T. HORSFORD

I would not make bread there

I owned no oven. Plus –
My sadness was the heavy kind:
These leaden arms could not settle

into any moment
to coax and convince no dough
of its worthiness.

I could not mother its slouching.
Could not
look with misty eyes upon its sullenness

its wet kissing of teeth, its slumping
counter-ward.

*How were my loaves to come up, when
daily my own longing splayed
in the middle of Exeter Road?*

But also –
What heart here was warm and red
enough?

What soul
would stand before me with its raggedness
its mewling noise, eyes glistening

with what we both knew:
you could walk through a day or you
could carry it.

And since there was no one
to sit with me in my simpleness

I could not offer up laughter, an ear tilted
a fresh-baked, warm-hearted
roll.

Inheritance

We have my father's Granny's pot, fished
from under the house by my sister who glimpsed

its white enamel and dented indigo rim, who
from the way she lurched then shook

must have heard it murmur, speak
from where it lay on its side in the rubble

of iron frames, tall grass and commess of weed
below the house that years later was spread-eagled

on this street like a woman fallen
not caring that her half-a-slip had rolled up and

her bloomers were showing. The house looted
of the fine things that once filled it

but this, Great-granny's chamberpot, saved
by its lowliness, its inside yellow-brown, rusted

from years of her nightly rainshower of pee, and surely
bearing some stamp, some etheric heat

of my father's grasping palm on its handle
as he emptied it on mornings, drawing in his breath

against the frothing funk of it
not knowing fifty years later his children

hungering for our history—we
would tremble our way to this enclave: seaside

insular Charlotteville bearing a warm longing
to raise from the dead those people, wanting

so badly their grease and their dirt, their smells
those people salt and mineral.

We did not want the usual heirlooms – no band
of glinting Guyanese gold: nothing jewelled—trivial.

So when we saw our piss-pot inheritance wink
at us from a bed of rubble, rust, grass

my sister who, for bush and weed nurtured a known hatred
would venture into the undergrowth, suddenly

unafraid of hidden life, the bristling of centipedes
as she called to me, but never faltered, filled

in that moment with that pulsing, propelling
thing that comes over and into you when

what you need is in sight.

Tobago, August 2017

Banner of sky. Brilliant. Singeing.

Cotton ball clouds.

A coconut palm slanting

into the consciousness.

The loose weave of a fence

made of green-green stalks

of corn.

A deep heat and a Sunday quiet.

Sister

Just as some claim the streets, they
stake the dark, loving its texture.
Like this lady streaking the skylines
spurning cluttered living-rooms for
the breadth of an ink sky.

Meanwhile her sisters rot beautiful
in their choked-up living rooms, maddened
by their tradition of figurines: ceramic lambs
by the dozen and sideboards
made holy with cherubim.

Who is she
to be wedded to fire, each night singed
by those insatiable fingertips and multiple
thrusting tongues?
While they are noosed to their marble husbands
with their stoic necks that do not bend.

So they plot, whisper, set traps.

This time
instead of the rust of their blood, the bland
of their spit – they find her indigo pelt
where she has folded it neat...and bruise it
with what has always caused forgetfulness – the thing
on which some blame the dim-wittedness
of their children.

So when the jubilant silver of her comes
sharp as a gasp through that gap in the breadfruit
and mango trees, softly calling, calling
the heavier self to come to her: *Come, Come,*
flesh is muted by salt and cannot answer.