



PROJECT MUSE®

Wan

Deborah Richards

Callaloo, Volume 26, Number 1, Winter 2003, pp. 1-3 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cal.2003.0028>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/39848>

WAN

by Deborah Richards

who I am that never lived
off land or fishing net

or took mattock to chop
plantation corn crop

who never prayed in white
walled church, nor sang

with a clapping and a clapping
of hands, light palms together;

I am no 'nanse expert
nor spiritual earth mother

do you think I know how
to be an islander insider;

I am not who you think
I forget my islandness

yet with those soft parts
of Bajan speech I reap

the rewards that grind those
exiled from native soil.

who I am that never
shake down coconut palm

that have (instead) a hot cuppa
with milk tinned and evaporated

CALLALOO

in the mother country while island
home's still on loan indebted

to the repayments that require
a sacrifice we know that

so let's calculate
the ways of the caribbean;

miss lisa in oropoche
tesora oil field speaks

the island beat sending sunshine
in buckets and filling us to burst:

*it has bun it has macaroni
cheese it has pig trotter*

it has my grannie soaking raisins
in rum for blackcake

it has my grandfadda cutlass
on back terrace it has mutha

with a Sunday smile for those
who doubted her escape

with a dark-skinned man
and a promise of better days

in the land of English ladies
and gentlemen let us pray for those

who do not know the proper
defence against a moving referent.

who we are that slap down
the domino hard and party

in the front room moving
to the *un-dah un-dah* sounds of ska;

we're forced into "immigrant"
intangible, discretely separate

CALLALOO

we are ectopic presence
out of place *sure sure*

but we chose to go like others
before (“yes, englan’ is the place

for me”) to find our feet
and return rich and settle back

“foreign” among island accents
as our children and grandchildren

dodge a childhood of compatriots
to become tourists to these isles;

yet we reschedule home each
time for both sides of the line.