

Calabash

A JOURNAL OF CARIBBEAN ARTS AND LETTERS

Volume 2, Number 2: Summer/Fall 2003

Information about this work:

Toda isla es un jaula (Every Island is a Cage)

By: LILA DÍAZ (Translated by RODRIGO ROJAS)

Start Page: 37

URL: <http://library.nyu.edu/calabash/vol2iss2/0202037.pdf>

Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters is an international literary journal dedicated to publishing works encompassing, but not limited to, the Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The Journal is especially dedicated to presenting the arts and letters of those communities that have long been under-represented within the creative discourse of the region, among them: Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, Maroon societies, and the Asian and Amerindian societies of the region. Calabash has a strong visual arts component.

Calabash is published by New York University. Please contact the publisher for further permissions regarding the use of this work. Publisher information may be obtained at: <http://library.nyu.edu/calabash/about.html>

Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters

© 2003 New York University

Author Lila Díaz, translated by Rodrigo Rojas

TODA ISLA ES UNA JAULA

• • •

TODA ISLA ES UNA JAULA

Ninguna vida nos pertenece, somos una
isla en soledad
con la suerte echada al hombro vemos
alejarse nuestras tierras
escapistas de la muerte, sólo poseemos
el recuerdo de la sangre.

Con una pena inmensa, como la del mar
que atravesamos
somos la escoria, inmigrantes que se
descuelgan en los tubosen las máquinas
del barco.
Toda isla es una cárcel,
una trampa acorralada en la conquista.
Llevamos nuestro nombre en la solapa
saltando de charco en charco hacia la
tierra prometida.

Somos una fila interminable, un
horizonte en el puerto
anotamos con barro el nombre de esta
isla, *Ellis*,
con el lenguaje de señas que lloramos.
Cuarenta días de peste en nuestras
sombras, con el alma examinada
hemos sido devueltos al barco,
deformes, ancianos,
una marca es lo último que vieron
nuestros hijos
en el dolor de sus ojos, sólo la cruz
blanca que nos pintaron en la espalda.

Nos han vuelto suicidas, una isla en
soledad
clavadistas de brazos abiertos al nuevo
mar de los despojos
anclados por siempre a los fondos de la
ciudad.

EVERY ISLAND IS A CAGE

No life belongs to us, we are an island in
solitude
we shoulder our destiny; we see our land
receding.
We are the escape artists of death, all we
posses is the memory of blood.

With a sorrow as immense as the sea we've
crossed,
we are the dregs, immigrants that cling to the
pipes of the ship's engine.
Every island is a prison, a trap set by
conquest.
our names written in the lapels of our coats
while we leap from puddle to puddle toward
the promised land.

We are an endless line, this harbour horizon.
We scribble the name of this island in mud,
Ellis,
a language of signs that lets us to weep.
Our shadow is forty long days of disease, our
soul examined
we are sent back to the ship, aged, deformed.
through the pain in their eyes,
a sign is the last thing our children see,
a white cross painted on our backs.

They have turned us into suicides, islands in
solitude.
With arms locked wide, we dive wastes sea,
forever anchored to the city deep.