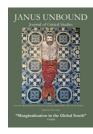


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#### Andreae Callanan

# Queenie at the flakes

Queenie knows this sensation: salt crusting skin, salt catching in the throat, salt and fishsmell straight to the brain like a cure for fainting. Saltfish, same cream-and-silver boards bought and sold by women in the bright, brazen markets of home.

Has she never wondered until now just how this fish, netted in the coldest currents of a distant ocean, had come to grace her breakfast plate each Sunday of her early life? Had anyone ever spoken of so much salt sailing north as ballast, returning as barrels of slab-stiff cod?

In the bowed backs of the women and girls who clean and salt and watch and stack the fish, who brush away flies and rinse away maggots, who shield their work from ruin by rain, from scorching by sun, does she glimpse the forms of those who rake and shovel salt from West Indian ponds, hands swollen to cracking, eyes unfixed, awed by the gleaming white of their harvest?

And does something in her blood know the saltfish meals of her country for what they once were: fodder, not food. Fish no good for winter, worse again than the scraps these salt-skinned folk indulge in?



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### Queenie at the flakes

## **Biography**

Andreae Callanan is a doctoral candidate in English at Memorial University, and author of *The Debt* (Biblioasis, 2021).