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"The Biggest Callaloo Anybody Ever See": Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*

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> CALLALOO
> A typical West Indian potpourri, its name is an old Arawak word, served traditionally on Sunday.
>
> Ingredients:
> 1 big armful dasheen leaves (an indigenous swamp plant)
> 12 African okras
> 1 cp. coconut milk
> 12 crabs
> ½ lb. saltbeef, or nice hambone
> 1 clove garlic
> touch of East Indian curry, seasoning
> 1 big basin boiling water
>
> Scald crabs and scrub well. Soak and cut up saltbeef. Wash dasheen leaves and strip off stalks and midribs. Wash and cut up okras. Put dasheen leaves in rapidly boiling water (this gives them their rich, dasheen-green colour). Add remaining ingredients and simmer until soft, about 3-4 hours. Stir thoroughly. Do not remove meat from crabs: West Indians prefer to spend the afternoon picking them clean and sucking them dry. Other ingredients may be added as desired: bhaji, bodi, bluefood, cassava, eddoes, tanya, greenfigs. Plantain, pigeonpeas, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, dumplings, and all ground provisions. Any and everything goes into a good callaloo. Serve with endless foofoo. (Antoni 317-18)

Callaloo is central to an understanding of Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*. In fact, the recipe for the dish, as it appears above, is included in the text as one of the many types of discourses sewn together to create this eclectic and unconventional narrative. This dish, made up of various ingredients, becomes a metaphor for this text in which discourses and stories converge and diverge to construct the myth of Magdalena Divina, the central character. Callaloo may be seen as a metaphor for the West Indian identity that is associated with heterogeneity, hybridization and indigenousness, but the comparison is sufficiently complicated to simultaneously (and perhaps paradoxically) represent homogeneity, fusion and integration. This mixture is evident not only in the racial and cultural diversity of the fictional island of Corpus Christi in which the story is set, but also in the structure and the experimental nature of the narrative. An encyclopaedic wealth of information from science, religion, history, literature and the arts is integrated into a veritable potpourri. It is for these reasons that I regard *Divina Trace* a "callaloo narrative."

Although Antoni's Corpus Christi is fictional, it is modeled on the island of Trinidad which is perhaps most associated with callaloo. This is especially obvious through the place names that are very similar to many toponyms in Trinidad if not through the similar racial composition of the island. Trinidad has been associated with callaloo in other writings as well. Aisha Khan in her book *Callaloo Nation: Metaphors of Race and Religious Identity among South Asians in Trinidad*, and Viranjini Munasinghe in *Callaloo or Tossed Salad?: East Indians and the Cultural Politics of Identity in Trinidad*, for example, use the metaphor to represent multiculturalism, variety and syncretism—the recipe above points out that "[a]ny and everything goes into a good callaloo" (Antoni 318). But the recipe also characterizes the dish as "typical[ly] West Indian" suggesting that hybridity is a shared feature of the West Indian islands, not only Trinidad. Other West Indian islands do have variants of the callaloo dish—for example, Guyana's pepperpot—so *Divina Trace* seems to be concerned not only in attempting to define Trinidadian culture and identity, but also that of the West Indies as a whole. As Claude Lévi-Strauss observes, "the cooking of a society is a language in which it unconsciously translates its structure" (595). Khan, Munasinghe and Levi-Strauss all show the close connection between food and reading culture. The recipe characterizes West Indian identity as a mixture of diversity and indigenousness as callaloo is described as a "potpourri" of which the main ingredient is "an indigenous swamp plant" (Antoni 317). The recipe further mentions three distinct culinary influences—Arawak, African and East Indian. As Brinda Mehta argues, "the recipes for the preparation of creole food reflect an inherent hybridization of different culinary experiences and styles" (124) —elsewhere referred to as "creative 'masalafication'" (119)—and "spices [. . .] communicate an important lesson in cultural and racial harmony by showing how the blending of spices from different culinary traditions can produce an even more appetizing curry, colombo or callaloo" (118). According to Linda Brown and Kay Mussell, foodways define identity and "celebrate cultural cohesion" (5), and Dean Karpowicz argues that *Divina Trace* "creates identity as well as represents it culturally" ("Postmodern Collective"). This is done through the metaphor of the callaloo dish.

In an interview with Michelle Caswell, Munasinghe furthermore discloses that Trinidadian East Indian descendants object to the metaphor because "[t]hey argued that since the ingredients making up the 'callaloo' are boiled down to an indistinguishable mush, the original ingredients lose their respective identities and blend into one homogeneous taste" (qtd. in "The Indian Community"). Although the dish in this description represents fusion rather than heterogeneity, this idea is also important to the text's construction of a West Indian identity that is at times also represented as "an indistinguishable mush." The hybrid nation that the callaloo metaphor is meant to reflect and describe is more than just the result of the influence and confluence of different cultural traditions. It becomes, by virtue of the tangling and interweaving of these various

strands, a new space, a new identity, difficult to define and to describe. The difficulty in determining whether callaloo represents multiculturalism or fusion is reflected in the motif of distortion in the text, revealed in the very narration of the stories where truth is twisted and difficult, if not impossible, to decipher: "Antoni offers a world in which parentage is confounded, one can be just a little bit pregnant, and deformities are literally reborn as perfections" (Matos "Meiotic Fictions"). This concept of distortion that appears and is developed throughout the narrative helps to construct West Indian culture and identity as complex and indefinable indeed.

The stories in the text centre on Magdalena's origins, her life and her death. Magdalena herself becomes a symbol of the cultural diversity and fusion of Corpus Christi since she is modeled according to and embraced by the different religious groups in the island as Papee Vince narrates:

> [S]he had already come to each of we individually in we time of need: to the Pañyols as Divina Pastora, to the Amerindians as Akambo-Mah, to the Africans as Mamma Latay, to the East Indians as Kali Mai. Now she came to all of we collected and together as Magdalena Divina. (377)

She resembles the Virgin Mary in many ways—not least by her imperforate hymen after pregnancy, which suggests a sort of "immaculate conception"—but she is also associated with Mary Magdalene, while the retelling of the Ramayana associates her with the Hindu Goddess Sita. She becomes, then, "a deity whose roots cannot be clearly traced to just a single source; she is the syncretic result of historical entanglement, of the confluence of cultures in a new 'whirled' space" (Dalleo 29).[1] Even her appearance symbolizes the different racial and religious groups: "at first glance this Magdalena looks no different from all the little half-coolie, half-Creole, half-Warrahoon, half-so-and-so little callaloos running around" (Antoni 36). According to Evelina, however, "she is a white woman [. . .]. White white and beautiful and fair as morning sweet self—never mind what foolishness you hear bout she being a callaloo mix up with coolie and Creole and Warrahoon and every kind of blood with blood, Papamoi!" (Antoni 71). These varying descriptions of Magdalena as well as the inconsistency in the accounts of her origin, life and death (as well as that of her frog-child which may—or may not—have been an anencephalic foetus) create a great sense of mystery around this character, and the text seems to be as much about piecing together her identity as it is about showing the impossibility of doing so: "Is this Magdalena an ordained nun, a married woman, or a consecrated whore? And the answer

[1] Raphael Dalleo also examines the family tree that begins the novel only to show that the lineage, not only of Magdalena, but also of almost all of the major characters is suspect, "turn[ing] the straightforward Domingo family tree into a crisscrossed spider web." Saadiqa Khan further points out that the inaccuracy of the family tree highlights the fact that many of the members of the Domingo family may be products of miscegenation (24-25). Perhaps this is why *Divina Trace* could be regarded "an ethnologically promiscuous text" (Benitez-Rojo 189).

[. . .] is obvious enough: she is all three" (49). In fact, as Papee Vince points out, "the most salient feature of this black Madonna [Magdalena] [. . .] is she universality, the all-embracing all-comprehending expansiveness of she great love" (347). The textual figure, the callaloo, is therefore enriched in its multiple meanings, and in its definitions of West Indian identity, by the passage in which her disfigured "crapo-child" is supposedly boiled and served at Christmas dinner:

> It is the biggest callaloo anybody ever see and anybody who taste it say it is the best they ever eat. We are all gather round the table for this big Christmas dinner [. . .] and when these boys start to eat they can never stop, that soon I begin to think this story will no finish a-tall before they burst. All you can hear in the house is slup slup slup with the spoons scraping the bowls, and pass some more of that callaloo please! (418)

The otherwise repulsive crapo-child, disfigured and distorted as its features are, becomes the main ingredient that makes a callaloo so delicious that none of the boys can have his fill. Perhaps the text suggests, then, that the dissolving of the boundaries in West Indian societies, although it involves distortion of the parent cultures and identities, results in the creation of a new cultural space that is defined by the very difficulty of defining it.

This is also reflected in the Carnival of Corpus Christi on which the main events of the text centre. Corpus Christi's Carnival is analogous to the Trinidadian Carnival, but because it is celebrated on Holy Thursday, it represents a festival in which "several important elements of Christian doctrine and worship—the Mass, the Blessed Virgin, the Passion—come into play" (Patteson 156). Despite these Christian aspects, this Carnival is also obviously influenced by the different racial and cultural groups of the island in the same way that the callaloo dish is. Papee Vince tells Johnny,

> [T]his Catholic carnival, this fete with which you have come to identify yourself, did not originate as any kind of Catholic carnival a-tall. Quite to the contrary. Because it was not taken over by the Catholics of Corpus Christi until much later, as initially it was a Hindu and Shango fete: a festival of East Indian and African origin. [. . .] Furthermore: the original Corpus Christi Day did not take place on Corpus Christi Day a-tall. That is to say, it did not occur on Holy Thursday, but on Good Friday: the day of Christ's death. The day when all the East Indians and Creoles and Warahoons went into the Catholic church to take up Magdalena, parading her joyous through the streets, resurrecting her up to take He place. It was a day known not as Corpus Christi, but as the Day of Suparee K Mai: the Day of Mother Kali, Black Hindu Goddess of Death and Destruction. (349)

Edouard Glissant's poetics of relating might be applicable here as he defines Caribbean poetics as a tension between sameness and diversity. The text constructs a world of diversity and heterogeneity through its inclusion of various traditions and religious backgrounds, but it simultaneously dissolves boundaries and differences by creating festivals that are all-embracing and celebrated by all.

This complex description of West Indian identity is also reflected in the linguistic structure of Antoni's text. *Divina Trace* is a prime example of M.M. Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" or "many-voicedness" since there are

multiple narrators (some not even alive), each with his/ her particular idiolect and worldview. Because the "same" story is told and re-told throughout the text by different characters, this leads critics such as Rhonda Cobham to regard the novel "an exasperating and tedious experience" (49), and Gustavo Perez Firmat to argue that "at times [. . .] sweet-tasting callaloo [turns] into a bewildering hodgepodge." However, the constant retelling is important and necessary as the very idea of truth is challenged and the end result, according to David Lichtenstein, is a "heterogeneous and nonlinear narrative" that constructs the Caribbean "not as a single unit, but rather a diverse conglomeration of characters and cultures" ("Hypertext and Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*"). Binaries cannot exist in the text, and if they do as in the case of science and religion, they are constructed only to be demolished through ingenious syncretism, or to be proven inadequate as explanations of events. As Lichtenstein further argues, "one's conception of any character/subject as unified or homogenous becomes problematic" ("Hypertext and Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*"). In fact, Antoni, in an interview with Peter Josyph, explains that the Warrahoon "Na-me-na-na-ha! Na-me-na-na-ha! Na-me-na-na-ha!" at the end of the first paragraph of the novel translates to "I don't understand! I don't understand! I don't understand!" a most appropriate way, in his opinion, to begin the text (qtd. in "Walking Down").

Heteroglossia is conveyed through the text's multiple narrators each with his/her own linguistic register. As Lichtenstein observes, this "multi-subject narrative structure produces a kind of Bakhtinian multi-vocality" ("Hypertext and Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*") or Antonio Benítez-Rojo's "polyrhythm" that in turn reflects the diversity of West Indian culture. This is what Mehta calls "linguistic creolisation" (122) and Cristina Garcia, "a callaloo stew of Trinidadian dialects accented with their own cadences and idiosyncrasies" ("Superb First Novel"). Apart from the different speaking styles of each character, the text also is replete with words from different languages, sometimes even in the speech of a single character. Mother Maurina tells of Magdalena's speech and her attempts at communication by pointing to a picture of a dog followed by the recitation of the word in different languages: "potcake, perro, chien, canis! And Magdalena smile now pointing to the picture sheself: potcake, kutta, kanga, wa-roon!" (147). Mother Maurina's language also reflects the callaloo of languages and cultural influences of the island in her speech that slides effortlessly from one language to the next: "the children running holding hands screaming together in the red blood morning Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero oy chanter a Dieu que baja del cielo oy oy oy a recibir su alma oy yo-yuga yo-yuga ba-damba-da-bamba oy oy oy oy oy!" (155). These two examples illustrate both aspects of the callaloo metaphor as diverse languages (like the callaloo ingredients) are strung together and combined to form a single sentence (the resultant callaloo soup). Homogeneity of meaning is therefore constructed through the medium of heterogeneous languages

(including the non-verbal pictorial representations referred to in the first example). Mother Maurina's description of the various languages (none of which she speaks) spoken by Magdalena further constructs the latter as a composite being representative of West Indian identity—Hindi, Creole and Warahoon are "three funny languages sounding the first like an oldman blowing struggling to make a caca, and the second groaning stretching he totee shaking to squeeze out a weewee, and the third is holding he breath fighting to force a fart pfffft" (142). The description, however, links the different languages through the references to lower bodily functions suggesting a sort of base/ic universality of human experience. Again, Antoni seems to complicate ideas of the distinctive and the indistinguishable, and we are reminded of Benítez-Rojo's Chaos theory in which he describes the Caribbean as impossible to define because it is characterized by disorder beneath which there are repeating regularities that suggest the possibility of Caribbeanness.

The many-voicedness of the text is also conveyed through the use of a variety of discourses within the speech of the narrators such as elements of storytelling and folktales, proverbs, prayers, songs, epic poetry, letters, newspaper accounts, a recipe and an excerpt from a medical textbook. Because the oral is contrasted with the scribal (in the passage in Hanuman's narrative where an awareness of the problems of publication is suggested), there is also the suggestion of an awareness of diverse audiences. These elements seem to construct an oral discourse because as Papee Vince says, "why the ass would anybody in they right mind want to read out a story dead, that they could hear in a hundred different living versions" (368). According to Lichtenstein, the use of "storytelling and oral history makes clear [. . .] the dynamic interaction between narrator and audience" ("Hypertext and Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*"). Papee Vince tells Johnny, "I can only give this story back to you the way life give it to me—the way the story ask itself to be told—with all its many deceptions, and cumbrucations, and confufflations. Because all that is essential to the telling of this story" (342). The whole text, in fact, is filled with digressions and contrasting stories such that there can be no real perception of the truth about Magdalena either by Johnny or indeed by any reader. Lichtenstein also argues that the eclectic narrative strategy allows an exploration of "the interaction between storyteller and audience" (Lichtenstein "*Divina Trace* and Polyrhythm"). Indeed, there is a great element of storytelling in the text as Johnny is almost always listening to or remembering a story told by the various narrators. The oral nature of the discourse is thus emphasized.

Nowhere is the callaloo metaphor better illustrated than in the Hanuman section of the text that represents somewhat of a primordial soup with its "non-syntactical, highly associational flow of words and syllables [. . .] a verbal version of the tangled Maraval Swamp" in the text (Patteson 150). Eric D. Smith expands on the linguistic complexity of this section:

> The Hanuman section [. . .] attempts to explode the arbitrated boundaries of language, dislocate conventional syntax, and verbalise the semiotic—to name the Kristevan unnameable. [It] reads like a palimpsest upon which the ancient, half-legible texts underneath infuse the new with variant meanings and vice versa, resulting in a maddening multi-textured narrative shot through with myriad allusive and associational "meanings." (108)

This experimental nature of the language is also reflected in the text's description of it as "Dis mudthick-mudswamp of monkeylanguage" (216), reminding us of Munasinghe's description of callaloo as "indistinguishable mush" (qtd. in Caswell "The Indian Community"). Antoni's passage is replete with allusions, puns and word- and sound-games through which meaning is suggested. As he reveals, "all of [the] language is meant to be played with by the reader [. . .] the book is about the fluidity and malleability of language. Language is such a liquid medium in the Caribbean, constantly shifting and reinventing itself" (qtd. in Josyph "Walking down"), again demonstrating why the callaloo dish with its somewhat contradictory interpretations of fusion and diversity is indeed apt as a metaphor for the Caribbean region.

The structure of the text also contributes to the ideas of diversity and assimilation, of difference and distortion in relation to the callaloo metaphor. The actual structure of the text is arranged according to the idea of a mirror. There is, in fact, an actual reflective sheet that acts like a mirror in the middle of the text, but in which the reader sees a distorted representation of his/her facial features. The effect is similar to that of the callaloo dish in which the ingredients meld one into the other. The mirror effect is therefore not only analogous to the callaloo dish but also serves as a reflection of how the callaloo metaphor shifts between the distinguishable and the indistinguishable.

There is also a picture of the "crapo-child" in the first half of the narrative that is mirrored in the second half by the negative of that image. The multiple narrators in the text include Granny Myna, Papee Vince, Evelina, Dr Domingo, Mother Superior Maurina and Magdalena, in that order, followed by the story of Hanuman, the monkey god in Hindu mythology (here appropriated to a West Indian context), and then the reverse order of the other narrators. Smith, however, argues for a far more complex arrangement of the text. He sees the structure following Hinduism's "massive historical cycles running in ascending and descending order":

> The four repeating stages are called Maha Yugas, and the cycle runs first in descending order from Krita Yuga to Kali Yuga where it breaks down into a fertile, if destructive, chaos, then ascends from Kali Yuga back to Krita Yuga. Hence, one completion of the cycle can be plotted as such: Krita-Treta-Dvapara-Kali-(Chaos/Cataclysm)-Kali-Dvapara-Treta-Krita, a sequence that parallels the chiastic sequence of narrators in *Divina Trace*. (105)

Smith also points out the resemblance of Vico's three-part cycle consisting of the ages of the gods, heroes, and men, followed by chaos and

then by an altered repetition of the cycle (106). Antoni, however, proposes another arrangement of the text as one corresponding to a Roman Catholic rosary: "Divisions of three and five and three and five repeat over and over until it becomes a sort of mystical, age-old structure" (qtd. in Josyph "Walking Down"). The many possible interpretations of the structure suggest once more the confluence of cultural and religious traditions in this callaloo narrative.

Despite this façade of unity and perfect symmetry, though, the eclectic nature of the narrative that includes myths, folktales, and various other discourses, along with the contrasting stories of the narrators all conveyed through the narration of Johnny, creates, like the mirror, a much distorted image of reality. Indeed, temporal discontinuity[2] and the fact that Johnny even dreams some of the stories contribute to this effect and questions the nature of the story that seems more like myth and, according to some critics, marvelous realism.[3] In fact, as Papee Vince tells Johnny, "this story you hearing might be nothing more than a simple island folktale, telling of simple island folkpeople" (341).

The mirror page in which the reader is suddenly faced with his/her reflection in the middle of the narrative contributes to the complex portrayal of West Indian identity as callaloo. According to Saadiqa Khan, the "distortion by the mirror is a feasible manner of demonstrating that the identity of the Caribbean persona is distorted, complex and complicated due to the syncretism that occurred in this landscape of several diasporas" (16). The mirror is accompanied by a direct address to the reader by Hanuman (in whose narrative the mirror appears): "SEEING IN DE PAGE you own monkeyface ee-eeing, quick out you dreamsleep walcott! You: Tara potto? She: you monkeymummy? Macaca sinica dis literary cacashit!" (203). John C. Hawley argues that "the reader is forced to recognize her or his role in the ritual, the 'reading' of oneself that characterizes, from a postmodern point of view, one's engagement with the language" (93). The text preceding the mirror is also very helpful in explaining its presence and contributes to the engagement of the reader in the narrative:

> Ceropithecus atheiops now, thinking, youself soon you unearth, Humannature: you forget you a monkey!
>
> Dat sapian night, desperate, you dropasleep deaddrunk, again dreaming you writereading, you simian Bible of baboons ee-eeing. Ayes close now you page-searching, by touch, again by smell, you simian fossil potto, simian primate missinglink: [the mirror follows] (202)[4]

[2] For more on chronology, see Patteson.

[3] For example, see Hawley and Karpowicz. Karpowicz argues that the story is developed "as a myth rather than an accurate account of actual events."

[4] Many thanks to Laia Jofre Monseny and Eleftheria Papakonstantinou who contributed to a more informed reading of such passages.

The passage refers to the evolution of the human species from the monkey (perhaps another reason the section could be described as a primordial soup) that relates to the "monkeyface" that is reflected in the mirror, but it is the "simian fossil potto"—most likely referring to the tailbone—that is the "missinglink." The colon that follows suggests that the face seen in the mirror is the "missinglink" so it also becomes related to the tailbone or the rear end. The connection becomes even clearer when Dr Domingo tells Johnny about the man who had swallowed a glass eyeball. When he looks in the anuscope (a mirror), he "find[s] the asshole looking out" (299). The reader therefore becomes not only a monkey but also an asshole in this text of "literary cacashit" (205). While some critics (including Khan and Benítez-Rojo) suggest that it is the Caribbean reader who will see his face and his role in the text[5], there is no reason to suggest that the same is not true for any reader. In fact, the mirror reminds us that everyone is a monkey. It does not only extend to the Caribbean person of African descent ("Ceropithecus atheiops") but as Hanuman says to any reader, "you forget you a monkey!" *Divina Trace* is constructed such that the reader literally becomes involved in the text. The construction of multiple voices and rhythms in the text (Bakhtin's heteroglossia) as well as the involvement of the reader through the postmodern technique of the mirror all contribute, according to Benítez-Rojo, to the text's polyrhythmic and interpretive complexity. This leads him to regard *Divina Trace* a "spectacle" or "performance" (218-21).[6]

There is, however, another passage that has been surprisingly ignored by literary critics, but that I find crucial to an understanding of the presence of the mirror:

> [. . .] I look down now to see myself reflected on the silvergreen surface: squashed and mirror-ripple distorted, twisted on my back appearing now to float inside of the bottle myself—my head protruding out from the rim looking up at myself looking down—down again through the silver rippling surface into the depths [. . .]. (225-26)

Here, as Johnny looks at his reflection in the swampy water, which itself imagistically resembles callaloo soup, he identifies himself with the crapo-child. He sees his reflection distorted in the water, but he also fancies this reflection looking at him from within the water through a distorted lens such as the bottle—another instance in which the mirror is associated with callaloo. This suggests that, in a sense, Johnny is the crapo-child and so is the reader! The negative images of the foetus thus become even more relevant. All of the illustrations (including the mirror) present images or representations of the crapo-child. The two negative illustrations give an

[5] For example, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, "Three Words Towards Creolization."
[6] Benítez-Rojo, "Three Words Towards Creolization." See also Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James Maraniss (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1992) 218-21. Here, he describes the Caribbean novel as a "spectacle" because it "set[s] itself up at all costs as a total performance" (218).

image not of a perfect baby but a disfigured deformed baby—very much like the distorted, disfigured image seen in the mirror. Furthermore, Dalleo translates the word "potto" to mean "baby" (presumably a derivative of the French "popo"), not "the rear end" or "ass" as I do. The "missing-link" for him is therefore the baby, the crapo-child, not the tailbone. Hanuman's address to the reader—"You: Tara[']s potto? She: you monkeymummy?" (203)—therefore, also suggests that the reader is the crapo-child. However, the mirror links these interpretations of the reader as "potto" as it reflects the monkey-face, the asshole and the crapo-child. There is therefore a possible reversal of "misrecognition" in Jacques Lacan's famous "Mirror Stage" at work here. What the reader sees is not an idealized version of the self but a distorted, disfigured representation of self—and therefore of identity.[7]

Antoni's intricately constructed text is therefore an extremely important work in its redefinition and reinterpretation of West Indian literary theory, history and epistemology. Although the callaloo narrative supports Glissant's poetics of relating and Benítez-Rojo's Chaos theory in that it shows the paradoxes, contradictions and complexities inherent in attempts to define the Caribbean, Caribbean identity and cultural practices, it presents another model that further interrogates almost every aspect of personal and communal identity in ways that obfuscate any kind of definite conclusion. The callaloo metaphor, representative at once of heterogeneity and diversity but also of assimilation and fusion, constructs the West Indian identity as complicated and convoluted by various influences and elements but one that is delicious by virtue of these various seasonings and merging of flavours. Not only the text but also the West Indies therefore become represented by "the biggest callaloo anybody ever see and anybody who taste it say it is the best they ever eat!" (418).

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[7] Many thanks to Saadiqa Khan for her contribution to this reading of the novel.

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