



The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature

Valérie Loichot

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The ubiquitous presence of food and hunger in Caribbean writing—from folktales, fiction, and poetry to political and historical treatises—signals the traumas that have marked the Caribbean from the Middle Passage to the present day. *The Tropics Bite Back* traces the evolution of the Caribbean response to the colonial gaze (or rather the colonial mouth) from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first. Unlike previous scholars, Valérie Loichot does not read food simply as a cultural trope. Instead, she is interested in literary cannibalism, which she interprets in parallel with theories of relation and creolization.

For Loichot, “the culinary” is an abstract mode of resistance and cultural production. The Francophone and Anglophone authors whose works she interrogates—including Patrick Chamoiseau, Suzanne Césaire, Aimé Césaire, Maryse Condé, Edwidge Danticat, Édouard Glissant, Lafcadio Hearn, and Dany Laferrière—“bite back” at the controlling images of the cannibal, the starved and starving, the cunning cook, and the sexualized octoroon with the ultimate goal of constructing humanity through structural, literal, or allegorical acts of ingesting, cooking, and eating.

The Tropics Bite Back employs cross-disciplinary methods to rethink notions of race and literary influence by providing a fresh perspective on forms of consumption both metaphorical and material.

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