Michael Barnett, *The Rastafari Movement: A North American and Caribbean Perspective*. London: Routledge, 2018. ix + 189 pp. (Paper US\$ 44.95)

This book by Michael Barnett has a certain taste of time warp in the sense that it takes readers to a theoretical time and place where the important questions about the Rastafarian movement were what it was about and who the Rastafarians were. Now, however, what we need more of in Rastafari studies is increased attention to modes of differentiation between Rastafarian individuals and collectives, in-depth analysis of particular Rastafarian experiences and modes of thought, and reflections on how Rastas mobilize their vast symbolic repertoire in order to claim rights and reparation for the historical violence they have experienced. It is no surprise that the book's most provocative part—Chapter 7, “Out in the Field”—consists of transcriptions of interviews that Barnett conducted in Florida and various parts of Jamaica. In these interviews readers can grasp how certain individuals and collectives view and treat their (Rastafarian) Others, and how their modes of thinking and making politics emerge through a peculiar style of poetics that reworks many leitmotifs of biblical and Pan-African origin. Nevertheless, there is a question about the way Barnett connects this chapter to the others. Instead of being analyzed, the problem of difference that emerges in this chapter only serves to illustrate his point of view—that is, that differences within the Movement are just a superficial manifestation of an underlying common belief system.

There are also other issues with Barnett's approach, starting with the book's title. His “Caribbean” is mostly Jamaica, with passing comments about the Rastafarian Movement in other Caribbean countries. His “North America” is also very much restricted to Florida, where he has conducted fieldwork among Rastas and members of the Nation of Islam. The title of the eighth chapter (“A Comparison between the Rastafari Movement and other Black theological movements, such as the Nation of Islam and the Black Hebrew Israelites”) gives the mistaken impression that the Nation of Islam and Black Hebrew Israelites are just two of several movements to be treated; there is no comparison with, for example, Black Baptism, Santería or Candomblé. Barnett's mobilization of theory raises questions as well. Some publications from the 1960s are treated as “contemporary” (for example, Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* [1967], “a contemporary social constructionist perspective” [p. 3]) and texts published in the early 1990s are presented as “recent.” At the same time, some of the most important works on the Rastafarian Movement that have been published in the past decade are mysteriously absent from his argument, without even being referred to in endnotes.

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Barnett states that being a Jamaican Rastafarian himself provides him “with more insight than many outsider researchers could discern from just conducting interviews” (p. vii). This stance might well be a trap. In Barnett’s case, being a Rastafarian seems to force him to look for coherence, reasoning, and a common logic that would dwell in the core beliefs of the movement—a move that hinders him from exploring the power of dissent, difference, and transformation as constitutive forces of the Rastafari movement’s life. Last but not least, there is Barnett’s treatment of Rastafarian native concepts in his fifth chapter. Instead of being imbued with life, making sense according to who mobilizes them in particular ways, his approach treats the native concepts as if they were independent of the people who activate them as tools for contextualization. We must remember that one of the commandments of contemporary sociology and anthropology, as Bruno Latour has put it, is “Thou shall not freeze-frame” (in James D. Proctor [ed.], *Science, Religion, and the Human Experience*).

The book’s highlight is the transcription of interviews which give the flavor of the speakers’ points of view. Barnett’s sound reflections on the different epochs of the Rastafarian movement and its characteristics are also a real strong point. His attempt to draft a timeline for the movement’s history is something that makes sense for the Jamaican experiences, though we would need more data, more fieldwork, and more ethnographic reflection to extend it to North American experiences. This timeline expands the classic division envisioned by the late professor Barry Chevannes in *Introducing the Native Religions of Jamaica* (1995).

Barnett’s book, which consists of nine chapters and an appendix, will not appeal to those who have already been engaged in Rastafari studies for some time. But it will serve as a useful handbook for those who are just entering the field. Its nontechnical language makes it quick and easy reading.

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