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Religion, Diaspora, and Cultural Identity: A Reader in the Anglophone Caribbean. JOHN W. PULIS (ed.). Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999. xi + 417 pp. (Cloth US\$ 90.00)

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This volume brings together the work of fourteen scholars of West Indian religious beliefs and practices. It will be a handy guide for future research, especially since the chapters, taken together, usefully summarize the literature to date on religion in the Caribbean and in Caribbean diasporic communities. The editor is to be commended for providing a sense of coherence to the very disparate case studies presented here. The analytical focus of the book is the formation of West Indian religiosity in the diaspora – and, indeed, as Aisha Khan puts it forcefully in her contribution, of the very idea of religion itself, constructed as a cultural and an analytical domain separate from other domains of social life. Refusing to view Caribbean religion as either made up of timeless traditions or as cut from whole cloth, and resisting temptations to see diaspora as a unidirectional flow from the Caribbean to immigrant communities in North America or to view cultural hegemony as a process emanating from North America southwards, the volume's contributors see diaspora itself destabilizing the traditional/modern dichotomy. Several contributors reveal the utter embeddedness of rational secularism and modernity, with their narratives of progress and development, in dominant Western religious cosmologies, and Caribbean religions' implicatedness in the constitution of specifically West Indian modernities at home and abroad.

The book is divided into two parts. The first contains chapters emphasizing the West Indian diaspora in particular northern locales such as New York City and the Netherlands as well as in dispersed global mediascapes. The second is focused on West Indian communities in the Caribbean, mainly Trinidad and Jamaica. All of the chapters, save Ineke van Wetering's, concern the Anglophone Caribbean and its diaspora. Each part is introduced by a short commentary reviewing the contributions of the chapters that follow – the first by Kenneth Bilby and the second by Carole D. Yawney. The book contains an introductory essay by the editor, and a historical overview of religion in the Caribbean from before the Conquest to the present by Robert J. Steward. The entire volume is framed with a forward by John Szwed and an afterword by Richard Price. Overall, then, the editor has created an impressive package. Its shortcomings include the uneven quality of

the contributions, the inevitable trade-off between maintaining theoretical coherence and striving for encyclopedic scope, and perhaps an over-emphasis on Rastafarianism. But these are the sort of faults one expects in edited collections. Fortunately there are some real gems here that more than suffice to carry the volume.

In Part One, John Homiak criticizes the mapping of the local/global distinction onto scholarly appreciations of Rastafarianism as a "cult" versus a "transnational community and international network of black cultural resistance" (p. 87). His analysis of new media technologies in the formation of a globalized Rastafarian mediascape points up the ever-present "interplay between local developments and global events" (p. 87) that have characterized the movement since its inception. Carole Yawney tracks Rastafarianism from Jamaica to Toronto, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and beyond. Recounting a chant that begins and ends with the phrase "we are only visitors here," Yawney reflects on the ephemerality and "being-in-transition which pervades" not only the Rastafari world but also its scholarly engagements. Philip W. Scher recounts the Crown Heights affair in Brooklyn, which brought the Caribbean and Hasidic Jewish communities into conflict. He argues that city-based policies allocating resources dependent on a community's ability to appear as a single "tile" in a great "ethnic mosaic" demonstrate the resource-competition model of ethnicity to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, not an analytical verity. Wallace C. Zane shows how the Vincentian Spiritual Baptist repertoire, including "travel to different lands" (p. 26) like Africa and Caanan, resonates with their more mundane but no less significant transnational journeys in which the Vincentian Converted demarcate themselves from other Spiritual Baptist communities. Ineke van Wetering demonstrates a similar boundary-maintenance, the result of colonial hierarchies between Creole Surinamese and Ndjuka and Saramaka Maroons which persist in the metropole.

In Part Two, Garth L. Green writes on the controversy surrounding Paul Minshell's 1995 "Hallelujah" float, which brought contending visions of faith and some marginalized Pentecostal congregations a certain degree of public prominence. At the same time, because it centered on Carnival, the debate over Hallelujah became a debate over the character of the nation itself. Stephen Glazier's article on Spiritual Baptist music in Trinidad blurs the analytical boundary between sacred and secular, and troubles the search for "a simple, linear path of development from a single [cultural] source" (p. 278). James Houk's chapter on orisha in Trinidad considers the incorporation of Kabbalistic and other religious traditions in mourning rituals. He situates his chapter in terms of Victor Turner's "communitas/structure" dichotomy. Part Two contains two more essays on Rastafarianism: Barry Chevannes writes on the theological problem posed, for a faith which emphasizes a spiritual "triumph over death" (p. 348), by the passing of

Rastafari heros (a problem resolved by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's mortuary practices); John Pulis discusses "citing-up," a form of scriptural reading in which the textual is subordinated to the spoken. Kenneth Bilby's insightful essay interrogates "community" as a keyword in diverse forms of Jamaican religious belief and practice (Kumina, Convince, and Rastafari), and finds varying configurations of identity and place in the imagined spaces of a specifically West Indian modernity. Diane Austin-Broos's chapter on Pentecostal communities in Jamaica, a taste of her most recent book (Austin-Broos 1997) brilliantly recounts the indigenization of North American Pentecostalism. She shows how the poetics of Pentecostalism provide spiritual and material evidence, for believers, of the poverty of narratives of "history" and "progress" underlying dominant modernities. Finally, Aisha Khan's fascinating interrogation of the analytical category "religion" through ethnographic material from her work among Indo-Trinidadians calls upon us to examine "local determinations of what can be categorized as 'religion,' and why" (p. 249). Defining "religion," then, becomes more a matter of hegemonic cultural practices than universal analytical categories.

Indeed, in their respective foreword and afterword both John Szwed and Richard Price find this volume's main contribution to be its unsettling of some of the received categories of Caribbean studies: syncretism, accommodation, resistance, religion, traditional, modern. In the end, then, this book is about much more than "Caribbean religion" narrowly defined. It is about the enduring problematics of modernity and hegemony through diasporic spaces and temporalities, calling into question the imagined and the real, the transcendent and the mundane.

REFERENCE

AUSTIN-BROOS, D., 1997. *Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.