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Donna HOPE (ed.), *Reggae from Yaad. Traditional and Emerging Themes in Jamaican Popular Music*

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International Reggae...

because of Jamaican popular music's global reach and of the impact of capitalism and ethnocentrism, while Jamaican artists may maintain their polarity within other local cultures, they will face difficulties in leaving the island's

shores, while at the same time foreign reggae and dancehall artists will set the trends in the genres.

Dennis HOWARD

Donna Hope (ed.), *Reggae from Yaad. Traditional and Emerging Themes in Jamaican Popular Music*, Kingston, Ian Randle, 2015.

Reggae from Yaad offers a gathering of Caribbean and international scholars involving some key practitioners and historical agents into a broad reasoning on the ramified pathways (or "trods") of reggae music. Donna Hope has to be hailed for editing this enlightening volume on important historical experiences and developments still (fairly) untold and the current contentious issues encompassing the sexual politics of reggae music (including dancehall). As perhaps the most prolific cultural critic of dancehall for the past decade, there could hardly be a more competent editor for this book emerging out of the 2013 International Reggae Conference hosted at UWI, Kingston, Jamaica. It is organised in four well-framed sections dealing with two major themes as indicated above, one representing "half the story never been told" of reggae within and beyond "Yaad." Yard (in English spelling) is one of the key signifiers for a presumed grassroots Jamaican identity. The ambiguous notion may take on the meaning of a private home—be it a rural household or an urban (ghetto or shanty town) housing area as in tenement yard—or, depending on the situational context, could also indicate the capital Kingston or entire Jamaica. The second major

theme reconstructs and deconstructs the practices and antics of reggae's "rude offspring," dancehall, as a social and aesthetic space.

The conference volume is no exception to the academic tradition of Caribbean studies in bringing together scholars and practitioners. Meanwhile it appears to be well established that this participatory discourse opens up new ways for research and, after all, is much more exciting than the somewhat sterile "pure" academic exchanges. Remembering very well the appearances of leading Rasta elders such as Mortimer Planno or Mutabaruka at scientific conferences, it must have been exciting moments to listen to Alan "Skill" Cole reflecting on his close "bre-drin" Bob Marley or to the authentic originators of many fresh styles in reggae, namely the producers Bunny "Striker" Lee, King Jammy and Bobby Digital. Therefore the volume paves its own access road into the "Yaad" basement of reggae with these voices under the apt heading "legendary reasonings."

Perhaps unavoidably some of the immediacy is lost when "Words, Sounds, and Power" are turned into just (written) words. Particularly in the case of Alan "Skill" Cole's chapter whose

emotional approach into "*dem times deh*" (the historical era of the 1960s-70s) always employs Jamaican Patwa, which is then translated into "proper outglish (English)" in brackets for readers unfamiliar with the Jamaican speech melody. However, the personality and genius of reggae's undisputed icon shimmer through the transcription, but Cole's presentation goes beyond the symbolic realm and provides important data for some more material claims concerning the legal ownership or intellectual property rights of Bob Marley's music. When he points to Aston "Family Man" Barrett as THE (*sic*) man behind the music, Cole re-enters the stage as a historical witness in a potential legal arena of withheld copyrights. His account is written from the perspective of a participant, direct observer, and personal advisor, rather than a "reggae scholar."

The following conversation of the three aforementioned reggae producers directed by one of the "chairless," but nevertheless leading "reggae Professors," David Katz, similarly sets the record straight for warning the younger generation of milking the music for mere material gains and forgetting about its foundation in the heart(beat) and love for the people. These renown producers have all the rights to say that some new artists sound like auto-tuned chipmunks. Apart from its implicit and explicit critique of contemporary dancehall, the transcribed discourse provides a historical document on its own terms on the important transformation of reggae into the digital era.

Section 2 offers "Discourses beyond Yaad," namely on reggae music and Rastafarian lifestyles in Havana and on certain aspects and actors relevant for the history of Caribbean music in Britain. Both chapters by José Luis

Fanjul Rivera (on Havana) and Shara Rambarran (Britain) provide rare insights into the respective music scenes. They appear both quite selective and descriptive and are therefore recommendable readings mainly for those with special interest into these particular geographical and historical spaces. Section 3 contains three articles, the first of which analyses ska as Jamaica's independence music. Although fairly short, it goes sociologically much deeper than the two articles on Havana and Britain. In her attempt to juxtapose the two skas of downtown and uptown, Heather Augustyn turns the spotlight on Kingston's key social division line and thereby highlights the contested cultural politics of good (European) and bad (African) expressions and experiences. Her choice of quotes from song texts, interviews and media pieces underlines her treatise of the (post?)colonial state of mind, my all time favourite being a passage of a (1964) Daily Gleaner column condemning the "outrageous dance called ska": "And the sight of a roomful of young people doing ska is more reminiscent of souls in Dante's Inferno than of civilized humans dancing."

In a comparable vein the next chapter by Donna P. Hope and Livingston A. White scrutinizes the agenda-setting of Jamaican print media related to dancehall, particularly the clashes/feuds between various (artists') camps. The authors provide a convincing argument that this obviously anti-downtown, anti-ghetto, and perhaps (still) even anti-Black agenda-setting covers itself in an enlightenment discourse of Caribbean modernity framed as non-violent, "civilized" (still European or maybe Creole?), progressive, gender-balanced, politically and sexually correct, and so forth. The media coverage broadly neglects the aesthetic value of

verbal clashing and the global attraction of hardcore dancehall to such unlikely locations as Tokyo, Hamburg, or Mexico City (to name but a few examples). Hope and White justifiably bemoan the media omission of dancehall as a potentially shocking, but nevertheless meaningful arena of negotiations and struggles over power, status and (even more) shocking forms of social deprivation, marginalisation, and discrimination of so-called ghetto-youths. However, the chapter relies more on statistical data than on qualitative analysis, which is perhaps still to be expected from these authors in the form of a book or other substantial work. The third contribution in Section 3 focuses on the important practice of versioning. Brent Hagerman makes the relevant point that dancehall predated the open access technology in its peculiar practice of collective authorship. Implicitly the author thereby offers a counter-argument against the media coverage of dancehall as a predominantly anti-social art.

The final, fourth section is theoretically the most interesting, picking up on the crisis discourse as analysed by Hope and White. In the first chapter Patrick Helber revisits the prevalent homophobia in the various dancehall spaces as a mirror for that part of a dominant Caribbean identity reflecting acceptable forms of sexuality. Without explicitly arguing for a question mark behind the post in "post-colonial" Helber attempts to highlight how homophobia, the (Western) criticism of homophobia and racism intersect. The author of a recent (German) monograph on homophobia and dancehall (Helber, 2015), he draws attention to the complexities involved in the international boycott and "blacklisting" of (many) dancehall artists without absolving the perpetrators of their presumed artistic atrocities.

He nonetheless somehow leaves the legitimate question open, how a social critique of their participation in reproducing colonial (and missionary) images of clean, acceptable sexuality may look like without falling back on neocolonial and racist approaches.

The critical issue of the "male gaze" on women and their respectable sexuality is the main aim of Anna Kasafi Perkins' endeavour to deconstruct the image of the virtuous woman in dancehall—as opposed to the Matey or Sketel as popular archetypes of the immoral (used and abused) woman. Her paper is an excellent treatise of misogynistic stereotypes derived (at least in part) from biblical references. Perkins convincingly carves out the habitualised internalisation of a conventional Judaeo-Christian (missionary) ethic by dancehall artists and thereby institutes a theoretical approach for a postcolonial critical stance. It presents implicitly a critique of Carolyn Cooper's earlier celebration of dancehall as a space for female sexual liberation. Based on well selected lyrical examples, Perkins rather supplies convincing evidence for the limitations to the power of female self-definition through the male gaze-derived images of respectability.

The last chapter of the volume, written by Winston C. Campbell, exerts a similar critical stance on the Dancehall artist/character Tommy Lee Sparta. The example is well chosen as the persona transfers a "gothic" aesthetic with fitting demonic references into the realm of dancehall antics. Tommy Lee Sparta's lyrics engage with acts of violence as apparently necessary masculine undertakings. In the context of heteronormative prowess, this essential endorsement of violence takes on the shape of almost a precondition for sexual encounters. Campbell

analyses these two major themes of his music as indicative of a feminine marginalization that goes beyond other expressions of subordinated female role-models prescribed by fellow dancehall artists. Some of his lyrical invitations for the breaking of sexual taboos appear counter-cultural to an extent, adding to a multifaceted controversy on values and social norms as reproduced and changed through dancehall music. Sparta's satanic demeanour does not fit into the overall Judeo-Christian worldviews and ethical values perpetuated by most Dancehall acts—against its public media image of a bewildering (sexual) “slackness.” Campbell's lyrical examples are very illustrative of the points made. What is missing in my view are the opinions and reflections of the artist himself through a narrative interview. But this remark may be owed to the anthropological interest of the reviewer.

To sum up, this very readable volume deals adequately with traditional and emerging themes in reggae studies as intended by the editor. It is fairly steeped in cultural and media studies and occasionally lacks the anthropological per-

spective beyond texts, i.e. on practices and the agents' visions and rationalizations of their practical logic (of course with the exception of the two legendary reasonings in Section 1). As already hinted at, this is one of my few critical points from the perspective of social anthropology, but should by no means diminish the achievements of the book. Quite to the contrary it provides a consistent high standard and original approach in all its chapters, which is fairly unusual for a conference book. It is therefore a highly recommendable reading not just for scholars interested in reggae, but in the cultural politics designed “back ah Yaad” for global consumption. These international travels of ideas, styles and *riddims* from a Caribbean island to all crevices and corners of the earth make the title more than fitting.

Werner ZIPS

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Michael Garnice, *The Ultimate Guide to Great Reggae*, London, Equinox, 2016.

As the influence of reggae has become more acknowledged in recent years, an array of books has appeared on the subject, ranging from biographies and historical accounts of the music's evolution to academic treatises and album dissertations. *The Ultimate Guide to Great Reggae* claims to be “the complete story of reggae told through its greatest songs,

famous and forgotten,” and while this grandiose assertion is not entirely borne out in the book's 604 pages, the weighty hardback certainly has plenty of useful reference material for the casual listener.

Author Michael Garnice, who is based in New York, is best known for his excellent Mento