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Reseña de "Reggaeton" de Raquel Z. Rivera, Wayne Marshall, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez

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of the recordings are only mentioned in footnotes. This could have been easily addressed with careful editing to better aid readers in utilizing this resource (for example, “listen to track 1 on the compact disc”). Furthermore, the sequencing of some tracks inexplicably differs from the narrative flow (for example, discussion for track 26 is on 249, while that for track 27 is on page 237).

Despite these shortcomings, *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean* has much to offer to anyone interested in examining the historical and contemporary processes of cultural creation and re-signification in the Caribbean as experienced through music and dance. Overall, the contributing essays do well in their explorations of the complexities of creolization. Providing a very solid concluding chapter, Bilby and Neely remind us that rather than merely blending cultural practices, creolization has entailed a generative tension between the interpretive poles of “resistance” through assertions of humanity, on the one hand, and “concessions” to hegemonic colonial values that reinforced structures of domination, on the other. In reality, people have fluidly and dynamically adapted to the opportunities and constraints of their social relations and in the process have created powerfully affective means of negotiating and engaging their social worlds. The authors conclude by poignantly summing up the paradoxes of Caribbean social relations in-the-making, stating that “these culturally ambiguous legacies of European colonialism and African-Caribbean creativity have much more to tell us about both the beauties and the contradictions of cultural life in this part of the world.”

Reggaeton

Edited by Raquel Z. Rivera, Wayne Marshall, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez
Durham: Duke University Press, 2009
370 pages; 295 [paper]

REVIEWER: David F. García, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill

Reggaeton is a comprehensive and strategically varied study of one of the most popular youth music and dance genres of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Its intellectual and methodological breadth reflects the innovative visions of its editors, Raquel Z. Rivera, Wayne Marshall, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez. Rivera and Marshall, a sociologist and ethnomusicologist, respectively, are leading scholars, journalists, and bloggers in hip hop and reggaeton. They are joined by anthropologist Pacini Hernandez, a leading scholar in Spanish Caribbean, Latin American, and Latino popular musics and cultures. Though the chapters take the reader to reggaeton’s varied places and spaces of signification and interpretation, the volume as a whole teases out the key processes and issues that link this otherwise transnational dance music culture. These include reggaeton’s localizations (for example, its overlapping places of origin and sites of popularization), identifications (for example, as articulated by its musicians and audiences of Panamanian, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Nuyorican, and Cuban backgrounds), genderings (for example, as perpetuated and contested in the lyrics, dance moves, and career choices of its main protagonists), and racializations (for example, the intersections of class and race in its productions and receptions). As the editors note in their introduction, “Given our strong, abiding interests in the

region's musical, social, and cultural dimensions, and our overlapping but distinct disciplinary orientations, we felt both motivated as well as positioned to take on the complex tasks of 'reading reggaeton' and thinking about how an anthology of essays might attempt such a project" (p. 13).

The volume contains eighteen chapters, not including the introduction, written by contributors with diverse perspectives. The chapters are organized into six parts: I. Mapping Reggaeton, II. The Panamanian Connection, III. (Trans)Local Studies and Ethnographies, IV. Visualizing Reggaeton, V. Gendering Reggaeton, and VI. Reggaeton's Poetics, Politics, and Aesthetics. The chapters range from critical analyses and historical studies of the music and dance, and alternative readings of collections of still photographs and visual art, to interviews with some of reggaeton's central figures and even reflections written by artists themselves. Part I consists of Marshall's overarching explanation of the shifting and circular nature of reggaeton's early development in the 1990s and early 2000s by comparing its rhythmic structures to those of Jamaican dancehall reggae and hip hop; tracing the localizations of reggae in Panama and Puerto Rico, focusing on reggae's hybridizations with rap and the resulting music's re-significations as *música negra*, *melaza*, *underground*, and *dembow* in Puerto Rico; and analyzing the music's aesthetic shift toward *latinidad* made by early innovators such as DJ Playero, DJ Nelson, DJ Joe, DJ Blass, and eventually the duo Luny Tunes, which accompanied the coining of the label "reggaeton Latino." The chapters in Part II offer insight into the music's murky emergence in Panama as Spanish reggae and dancehall. Christoph Twickel begins this section by providing an in-depth history of Rastafarianism, Rasta culture, and reggae in Panama based mostly on the oral testimonies of Rasta Nini, an early Panamanian Rasta activist. The next two chapters are transcriptions and translations of interviews with Renato and El General. The first details the development of *reggae en español* in the 1980s and its popularization internationally via Renato's "La chica de los ojos café." In the second interview El General traces the thriving underground reggae scenes in Río Abajo, a largely West Indian neighborhood in Panama City, and Colón beginning in the 1970s. His narrative also traces his own recording and performance careers, which began in New York City in the mid-1980s for a mostly non-Latino American audience.

Rivera begins Part III with addressing the ways in which the production and consumption of *underground* rap and reggae music provoked a fierce national debate and even police raids in Puerto Rico in the mid-1990s. The debates and raids concerned the contents of the music and lyrics as well as the class, race, and dress of the *underground* artists themselves, all of which were perceived as threats to Puerto Rico's normative understandings of national musical culture and morality. Pacini Hernandez follows with a study of the Dominican sites of reggaeton's history in Puerto Rico and New York City. Here we learn of the tensions and cooperation that have shaped racial, social, and cultural relations among Dominican immigrants and Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico, immigrants of both groups in New York City, and the musical styles that ensued, including *merenrap* (fusion of Dominican merengue and rap), reggaeton, and eventually *bachatón* (fusions of Dominican bachata and reggaeton). Reggaeton's (trans)local history is demonstrated in many ways, including the story of the duo Luny Tunes. Luny (Francisco Saldaña) and Tunes (Víctor Cabrera) were born in the Dominican Republic, and then Luny immigrated to Puerto Rico; however, he eventually met and initiated the partnership with Tunes in Peabody, Massachusetts, where their families had settled. By the early 2000s the duo had produced a string of successful releases for Ivy Queen, Tego Calderón, Daddy Yankee, and other Puerto Rican reggaeton artists, in

part by infusing the music with rhythms from *bomba*, *salsa*, hip hop, reggae, and dancehall. Yet claims of national ownership of reggaeton, informed in part by the economic and racial tensions that have enveloped Puerto Rican and Dominican relations, has continued to shape the discourse of reggaeton's origins among its Puerto Rican and Dominican audiences. Another illuminating chapter is offered by Geoff Baker, who explores the challenge of reggaeton's popularity as a dance and musical style in Havana to Cuban cultural and intellectual traditions. This challenge is particularly palatable in the contrast that Cuban officials and intellectuals make between Cuban rap and reggaeton, the former having gained recognition and support by the government for its engagement with social and political issues in line with the nation's socialist ideals. The imitation of Puerto Rican reggaeton by Cuban musicians and their lack of adaptation and production of a Cuban style (the exception being *timba*-reggaeton fusions) also challenges notions of national culture, though Baker convincingly suggests that the signifying capacity of the dancing body is where critiques of state ideology and the Cubanization of reggaeton are actually located. José Dávila concludes Part III with a study of the intersections of *crunkiao* artists—who rap in Spanish, English, and Spanglish over hip hop beats and not reggaeton's dembow rhythm—and reggaeton artists in Miami. Here, again, we learn of the cultural tensions, this time the politics of language played out in rapping, between immigrant groups, namely Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, and Miami-born Latinos, which factored significantly in the development of *crunkiao* (a Miami adaptation of the Southern style of hip hop known as *crunk*) by Plátano, Pitbull, and others.

Part IV contains visual texts of reggaeton produced by Miguel Luciano, Carolina Caycedo, and Kacho López. Marshall and Rivera note that these images pose vexing questions about cultural identity, resistance, gender, feminism, social injustice, and power in the reggaeton era. Félix Jiménez begins Part V with an analysis of the career of Glorimar Montalvo Castro, better known as Glory, whose sexually imbued vocal choruses on recordings by Daddy Yankee, Don Omar, and others “would homogenize the feminine in [reggaeton's] hypermasculine world” (p. 231). Jiménez compares the successful solo career of Ivy Queen—based in part on her ability to transform her public personae—to Glory's attempt at establishing her own career only to be thwarted, Jiménez argues, by her voice's aural seductiveness, which marked the extent to which her personae had meaning for reggaeton audiences. Alfredo Nieves Moreno offers an equally intriguing critique of reggaeton's hypermasculinity by explaining how the Puerto Rican duo Calle 13 constantly and creatively “denaturalizes” reggaeton's aesthetic of the “barriocentric macho” in their music and videos through humor and political satire. Jan Fairley follows with an attempt at explaining the front-to-back positioning of the male and female dancer as symbolic of Cuban women's new roles in the informal economies since Cuba's Special Period, and as having antecedents in other popular and folkloric Cuban dance traditions.

The final part concludes the volume's multidisciplinary approach to reggaeton with five varied texts. The first, “Chamaco's Corner,” is a poem by Gallego (José Raúl González) which served as an introduction to Daddy Yankee's 2000 debut album *El cartel de Yankee*. Alexandra T. Vazquez's chapter frames an aside made by Ivy Queen on stage in Panama to explore the discourse of race as articulated by Latinas and, thus, identify a Latina voice that otherwise is rarely heard in reggaeton. Haitian-Puerto Rican rapper Wilmo E. Romero Joseph discusses the development of *underground* in Puerto Rico and its eventual popularization as reggaeton, all the while critiquing the music and its objectification of women's bodies from the perspective of a rapper. We hear from another voice, reggaeton star Tego Calderón, giving a pointed and

firsthand critique of racism in Puerto Rico and the rest of Latin America. Frances Negrón-Muntaner concludes by identifying the complexity and surrealism of Residente's poetry as vindication for reggaeton perceived otherwise as "trash" among its detractors.

Despite its sophisticated theorizing and comprehensive treatment, this volume does on occasion suffer from relatively minor problems, beginning with instances in which authors uncritically lend various transnational musical styles a national essence, as in "Puerto Rican" salsa (p. 143) and reggaeton (p. 146). Similarly, in one instance, Latinos and non-Latinos are essentialized as sexually natural and challenged dancers, respectively (p. 281). Also, redundancies occur as in the explanation of the origins of Visitante's and Residente's nicknames in Nieves Moreno's and Negrón-Muntaner's articles.

Nevertheless, this volume is a timely and incredibly valuable resource for undergraduate and graduate courses in Latin American popular culture and Afro-Latino Studies as well as for a general readership. Reggaeton embodies a very rich site of cultural and social analysis of contemporary popular culture of the Spanish Caribbean, and the editors of this volume have successfully brought together the kinds of perspectives needed to begin to understand this music's richness and significance.

