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- 65 Staša Bader, **Worte wie Feuer. 'Dance Hall'-Dichtung in Jamaika und England. [Words like Fire. Dance-Hall Poetry in Jamaica and England.]** Dissertation, Zürich (Prof. Henri Petter). Neustadt: Schwinn, 1988, 275 pp., SFr 27.–.

Talking about 'literature', one immediately thinks of written literature, of books. But in ancient times and in oral cultures, literature has been transmitted and preserved by word of mouth, i.e., orally. The book 'Words like Fire' takes a special interest in the rich popular oral literature of Jamaica.

The little island in the Caribbean has turned the world's attention to its songs and music in the seventies and eighties of this century. A lot has been written on Jamaican music and especially on Reggae. But not many publications have taken an interest in the most vital and socially important art-form: Jamaica's Dance-Hall Poetry. The main aim of 'Words like Fire' is to describe the Jamaican Dance-Hall Culture from its origins to its latest exponents. Its social background and implications are of equal importance with its artistic expressions. Music, rhythm, electronic amplification, and acoustic effects play an equally important part in the poetic expression to the words and texts themselves. 'Words like Fire' includes the texts of such famous deejays and Dub poets as U-Roy, Eek a Mouse, Big Youth, Yellowman, Oku Onuora, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Smiley Culture, and Michael Smith.

Due to the unexplored nature of the field, the author has collected material from original sources in Jamaica and England. A lot of texts have been recorded with his personal tape-recorder, but commercial records and cassettes have also been used. Since the immediate context of a performed poem is of vital importance to the implied meaning, Dance-Hall nights are described in detail. The author has talked with deejays, sound-system owners, radio speakers, and critics in Jamaica and London. His experiences from living in Harlem New York and Jamaica, and his visits to London, Cuba, and Senegal have widened his view on Black culture, which made it possible to add valuable observations on links between Black culture and our modern communication-dominated times.

Contrary to the popular belief, the dissertation shows how popular oral culture is not necessarily destroyed by modern age. Due to the possibilities of electronic amplification and distribution, the voice of the Jamaican people has found new means of expression. Jamaican Dance-Hall Poetry has not only played an important part in defining Jamaican identity at home and abroad. Thanks to its technological innovativeness, it has prepared the way for the important Black American artform of Rap, and it continues to be a vital part of the global exchange of creativity and ideas.