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Reseña de "Bob Marley: A Biography" de David V. Moskowitz / "Bob Marley" de Garry Steckles

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David V. Moskowitz. 2007. *Bob Marley: A Biography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 124 pp. ISBN: 978-0-313-33879-3.

Garry Steckles. 2008. *Bob Marley*. Oxford, England: Macmillan Caribbean. 267 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4050-8143-6.

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Since Bob Marley's tragic death in May 1981 from cancer, a number of books have been written about the "King of Reggae." With colorful titles such as *Catch A Fire: The Life of Bob Marley* and *Bob Marley: Spirit Dancer*, Marley has arguably been overrepresented as a biographical subject. Music critics, reggae experts, family members, ex-band members, and even the Wailers' former manager, Don Taylor, have all gotten into the act. In fact, there have been so many biographies written about Marley that one would think that he was the only reggae artist worth writing about. If you are looking for new insights into Marley, the various incarnations of the Wailers, or reggae in general, you probably won't find it in either of these two volumes. But that would be missing the point.

The purpose of these new biographies is not to add new insights into Marley's life or his music legacy, but to reach new audiences that might find Marley's ascendency from the rural poverty of Nine Mile, Jamaica, to his role as global ambassador of reggae and *par excellent* messenger of the Rastafarian movement to be both instructive and inspirational. Greenwood Press, which published Moskowitz's *Bob Marley: A Biography*, notes that Moskowitz's book is part of a biographical series "tailored for high school students who need challenging yet accessible biographies." Steckles' volume is part of *Caribbean Lives*, a series devoted to publishing "short, readable biographies that reveals the wealth of talent and individuality to have emerged from the region." Both books serve their target audiences effectively. I would also recommend both volumes to new devotees of Marley and his music.

Starting with Marley's birth to Cedella Malcolm, a Black Jamaican teenager, and Norval Marley, a middle-age White Jamaican, Moskowitz traces Marley's short, but incredibly eventful, life. However, Marley's life cannot be characterized as a seamless, upward trajectory from humble beginnings to wealthy, reggae star; there were too many stops and starts along the way, too many heartbreaks and disappointments, and too little time to fully achieve ambitious goals. To this end, *Bob Marley: A*

Biography does an excellent job navigating this biographical minefield. At the conclusion of the book, Moskowitz discusses Marley's musical legacy, legal controversies, and provides short, but illuminating, mini-biographies on Marley's large family (Rita Marley and twelve children). While the book does tend to drag in the middle, especially when the author lists Marley's numerous world tours during the mid-to-late 1970s, the book's accessible writing style, organizational structure, colorful examples, and the author's own passion about the subject will certainly keep the young reader's interest. At the same time, Moskowitz should be commended for avoiding the trap of glorifying or sensationalizing reggae's best-known artist.

Small and compact, Steckles' *Bob Marley* packs a powerful punch. At least a third longer than Moskowitz's book, Steckles provides an even more in-depth coverage of Marley's life. The book begins with a series of quotations from a wide variety of admirers (including reggae expert Roger Steffens, Carlos Santana, and former Miss World, Cindy Breakspere who gave birth to Damian Marley), which should dissuade readers from assuming that Marley was simply a reggae musician. Following the same chronological pattern as *Bob Marley: A Biography*, Steckles expertly narrates Marley's early hardships and his later musical success. *Bob Marley* even sheds new light on Charles Comer's role in shaping Marley's international profile and popularity (Comer was Marley's publicist during the 1970s). After describing Marley's sad and depressing decline and death, the author concludes by discussing the reggae star's continuing popularity, and the unfortunate legal chaos that included Rita Marley and members of the Wailers (he even included excerpts from court documents). The writing is smart and engaging. The examples and narratives are expertly drawn from a variety of credible sources, including illuminating quotations from Marley, band members, music critics, and other relevant sources. His knowledge of reggae music and Jamaican culture is never in dispute. After reading both books, I was reminded of several other outstanding champions for human rights—Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer—whose humanitarian accomplishments are even more incredible considering the fact that all died relatively young.

To be sure, both *Bob Marley: A Biography* and *Bob Marley* are not critical biographies. From the outset, both writers greatly admire not only Marley's musical genius, but his street instincts, generosity, compassion, humble demeanor, and his global vision—his ability to see past political parties, race, tribe, castes, and nationality in an effort to construct a worldview of global peace and justice. Although both writers stop short of glorifying Marley, both occasionally slip into hyperbole (“[Marley's] face would become the best-known in the history of mankind...”; “Robert

Nesta Marley was the first and possibly the only superstar to emerge from the third world”). Still, both books inspired me to dust off some my Marley albums (vinyl!) and recapture the musical magic of some of (Bob Marley and) the Wailers’ best work: “Concrete Jungle,” “400 years,” “Get Up Stand Up,” “Small Axe,” “Revolution,” “Rastaman Vibration,” “Exodus,” “Zimbabwe,” and “Redemption Song.”

While I recommend these two books, I encourage acquisition editors and publishers to consider biographical projects on Marley’s musical peers (e.g., Joseph Hill of Culture). While Marley is richly deserving of all the attention he has received, he was—in the end—just one of many messengers who extolled the Rastafarian creed: One Love.

Guillermo B. Irrizary. 2006. *José Luis González: El intelectual nómada*. San Juan: Ediciones Callejón. 296 pp. ISBN: 1881748413.

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El texto de Guillermo B. Irrizary es uno de los estudios más completos que se han publicado hasta el momento sobre la obra del escritor antillano José Luis González. Irrizary realiza un análisis y una interpretación singular de la obra de nuestro autor.

El crítico divide su estudio en diez capítulos. Todo su análisis gira alrededor de los conceptos de nomadismo, facialidad, territorialidad y reterritorialidad. En el primer capítulo, Irrizary utiliza la noción de *nomadismo óptico* para explicar la perspectiva internacionalista de González. Expone que las circunstancias del exilio lo llevaron a desarrollar una perspectiva desterritorializada. Emprende una defensa de nuestro autor frente a las perspectivas nacionalistas más estrechas. Sin embargo, olvida que González no ha sido el primer autor con una perspectiva desterritorializada en la literatura puertorriqueña. Recordemos como surgió el *Album Puertorriqueño* y el tema y ambiente de nuestra primera obra de teatro escrita por Celedonio Luis Nebot, *Mucén o el triunfo del patriotismo*.¹ Otro de los planteamientos, expuesto en el primer capítulo, es la supuesta heterodoxia de José Luis González. González se entrena en el campo de la filosofía política del marxismo determinado por las categorías del estalinismo y el eurocomunismo. El supuesto legado hete-