

MARTÍ AND HIS PLACE IN TIME: A DISCOURSE ON METHOD AND POLEMICS IN MARTÍ STUDIES

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Abstract: This article builds on Ottmar Ette's groundbreaking study on the historical reception of Cuban patriot and poet José Martí. Ette's work covers Martí's reception from the early days of the first Cuban Republic until the early 1990s. His final chapter discusses a critical impasse in Martí studies and recommends the desacralization of the Cuban patriot's image to move research forward. Soon after the publication of Ette's work, there was a plethora of research on the Cuban poet's legacy, both in traditional university presses and in web-based journals. This expansion in the dialogue brought renewed debates about the uses (and abuses) of Martí's image. In contrast to Ette's call for desacralization, this article focuses on the methodological differences that emerged in the interdisciplinary debates that pitted historians against literary humanists. This article contends that what can move research on Martí forward are the contextual readings of his work that frame him as one of the most significant Latin American writers of the late 19th century.

Key Words: Debate, Martí Studies, Literary Methodology, Contextualized Readings, History

Medardo Vitier's *La filosofía en Cuba* (1948) traces Cuba's academic and philosophic transition from Old World Scholasticism through Positivism. His work focuses on the major figures in Cuban philosophy that contributed to the emerging tendencies that prioritized the observation of Nature over the passive assimilation of logical and rhetorical structures from ancient Classicism. The academics that sought to modernize Cuban philosophy include José Agustín Caballero, Father Felix Varela, the González del Valle brothers, José de la Luz y Caballero, José Manuel Mestre, and Enrique José Varona. The author also dedicates a chapter to the polemics of the day and writes

desde la reforma efectuada por el P. Varela en el segundo decenio del siglo XIX hasta la muerte de José de la Luz en 1862, hubo considerable actividad filosófica en la Habana, así en la enseñanza como en la publicación de trabajos polémicos. Estos interesan por los asuntos en sí, y porque reflejan la cultura del ambiente (115).

What is significant about Vitier's characterization of the polemics is not just that ideas transform themselves in a dynamic that pits the new against the old, but also that philosophy encompasses a discursive field that is demarcated by the parameters of culture. His view is not only concerned with discerning an exclusive notion of right or wrong, but rather with understanding what these philosophers thought, how they arrived at their conclusions, and to what extent their ideas were in dialogue with political, social, economic, and philosophical currents surrounding them. In this respect, my interest in this essay is in examining some of the polemics over the last decade regarding José Martí. I contend that each debate not only proposes a vivid clash of perspectives but also a fascinating consideration of methodology and an attempt to bring new elements of Martí's work to light and his placement in time.

The bulk of the historical debate over Martí's reception has been covered in Ottmar Ette's important study *José Martí Apóstol, Poeta, Revolucionario: una historia de su recepción*. One of the richest bibliographic reviews available, this work indicates where scholarship has been and, above all, how Martí's image as the Martyr-Saint-Apostol has been used by every Cuban government and political movement since the foundation of the Republic. While many approaches examine the place of writing, which is the specific historical context in which the text emerges, Ette's work focuses on the place of reception. He contends that in the one hundred years following Martí's death, the Apostle has been the figure of political legitimation for numerous and contrasting political movements. Nonetheless, Martí's work has often been interpreted outside of its original context and placed at the service of political and ideological ends. In these cases, more than to the text itself, critics appeal to the image of Martí, his sacrifice, and his calls for political unity (24). Ette's overall argument is that these interpretations derive from their desire to achieve political and historical utility. As a result, he reveals the social conditions that participate in the construction of meaning (25). Published in 1995, the study does not deal with much of the reception of Martí during the 1990s onward. Nonetheless, his final observation describes an academic deadlock in Martí Studies on the island and posits desacralization as a way out of the impasse (409).¹

From the onset, it is my impression that desacralization would not diminish Martí's stature in Cuban history and culture because, both sacralizing and desacralizing, augment, often vehemently, and continue to disseminate Martí's image. Moreover, desacralization is perhaps better seen as one of two poles along a spectrum that ranges from a quasi-religious or teleological approach to his life and work to a focus on humanizing him. In this sense, the shifting is not new, and what is

1. Jorge Camacho's "José Martí, el giro desacralizador" also locates its critical perspective in this critical impasse on the island, which is due to the constraints on Martí scholarship imposed on the island by the Cuban government. He concludes, "podemos decir que las interpretaciones de Martí en los últimos 30 años tanto en la academia norteamericana, en el arte y la ficción, se han caracterizado por su 'giro desacralizador'. En estas representaciones e investigaciones del héroe se pone el acento en zonas oscuras, antes invisibilizadas de su obra (invisibilizadas por el poder y la crítica) como son la representación de género, las drogas, el psicoanálisis, su visión patriarcal o sus interpretaciones racistas o etnocéntricas de negros e indígenas. Son lecturas que van en contra de su imagen sagrada impuesta por la propaganda política o los mismos críticos tradicionales y que algunos consideran estigmatizadoras y, por esto, son censuradas o criticadas" (15).

emblematic of these two extremes are often the so-called mysteries: (e.g., the missing pages of his diary and the circumstances of his death at Dos Ríos), on one side, and his intimate life (e.g., his troubled marriage and his relationship with Carmen Miyares de Mantilla). This movement toward a type of humanization emerged among the Minoristas in the 1930s and later during the 1953 celebration of the centenary of Martí's birth. Among those that were associated with this group were Felix Lisazo, a coeditor of the *Revista de Avance*, and Jorge Mañach, both of whom sought to humanize Martí (Ette 108-110). This period also corresponded with an attempt to revitalize Martí Studies not only by proposing more research and the publication of his *Complete Works*, but also by presenting aspects of Martí's personal, private, and intimate life.

Since the publication of Ette's work, there has been a veritable plethora of publications about Martí. While it would be difficult to mention them all, some of the noteworthy contributions include Carlos Ripoll's *La vida íntima y secreta de José Martí* (1995), Enrico Mario Santi's *Pensar a José Martí* (1996), Luis Toledo Sandé's *Cesto de llamas* (1996), Rafael Rojas's *José Martí: la invención de Cuba* (2001), and Angel Esteban's *Becquer en Martí* (2004). This period also gave rise to publishing in English ranging from new translations of Martí's *Versos sencillos* (1997) and *Selected Writings* (1999 and 2002) to more erudite collections of essays, like Jeffery Belnap and Raul Fernandez's *José Martí's "Our America"* (1999), Julio Rodríguez Luis's *Re-Reading José Martí* (1999), and Óscar Montero's *José Martí: An Introduction* (2004). Likewise, there have been a series of publications dealing with the construction of Cuban nationalism that have also shown how the island's racial diversity was subsumed in and obviated by the concept of national identity (Perez, Ferrer, De la Fuente, and Helg). Far from reaching a point of critical fatigue, the more that is written, the more interesting Martí becomes.

One of Ette's principal contentions is that political circumstances in Cuba shape the uses of his iconography (e.g., the construction of statues and naming of public parks and plazas), the selection of texts to be published, and the readings of the same. The Special Period was no exception. In the wake of the economic chaos that came with this crisis, young intellectuals on the island took an opportunity to re-examine cultural politics. Marta Hernández Salván, in *Minima Cuba: Heretical Poetics and Power in Post-Soviet Cuba*, frames the crisis in terms of psychoanalysis and suggests that the collapse of the economy was analogous to a psychotic episode in which the subject lacks a primordial signifier, or law of the father. The result, at the level of the symbolic economy, was a type of cultural schizophrenia in which the accepted or recognized ideology had lost its ability to signify. This rift manifested itself between the exercise of power by the regime and its ostensible ideology. (172).

In this atmosphere, young intellectuals associated with the group that met informally at poet Reina María Rodríguez's azotea emerged to form Paideia and later a second group called Diáspora. Among these individuals, there was some expectation that movements like Perestroika and Glasnost would take hold on the island and provide a type of cultural opening in which they could remain loyal to the Revolution and its historical goals, and at the same time, carry out their critical and cultural projects independently (177). These groups were linked to prominent young Cuban intellectuals like Rodríguez, Víctor Fowler, Rolando Prats Paéz, Ernesto Hernández Busto, Emilio Ichikawa, Rafael Rojas, Radamés Molina, among others (178-179).² At the center of their thoughts were new methodologies and critical approaches. Ichikawa and Rojas, for example, lectured on post-Marxism and structuralist thought.

At its core, Paideia was a Greco-Roman humanist project that pondered what it meant to be ethical and how to achieve this notion of ethics

2. For more background into the Proyecto Paideia, see *Revista Cubista* Dossier: Proyecto Paideia-Tercera Opción, Verano 2006; <http://cubistamagazine.com/dossier.html>. Other notable intellectuals were: Iván de la Nuez, Jorge Ferrer, Omar Pérez, Armando Suárez Cobián, Atilio Caballero, Rafael López-Ramos, Alberto Garrandés, Bertrand Rosenthal, Ricardo Alberto Pérez, and Antonio José Ponte.

through education and culture (183). Among its tenets was the idea that the Revolution should be a process of constant evolution. The group also demanded that the state recognize the importance of intellectuals and called for understanding culture in terms of its multiplicity. In the final points, it criticized the reductive use of the notion of the popular, the ideological fiction of the New Man, and the teleological understanding of history (179-180). Although the foundational documents only give a scant reference to José Martí, the debates over the last decade or so are informed by the experience of this younger generation of scholars rethinking the revolution in the wake of the Special Period.

Amid this resurgence of publications about Martí, young Cuban writers and intellectuals were occupied with rethinking Martí, not in light of US-centered multiculturalism or postcoloniality, but rather in terms of classicism and democratic idealism. Jorge Camacho describes a series of art exhibitions at the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s in which artists like Tomás Esson and Alejandro Aguilera added an element of irony to the heroic vision of Martí as a means of criticizing the official governmental teleology that posited self-sacrifice as one of its core tenets.³ This is not to say these reformulations came exclusively through the work of the members of Paideia. Others outside the island were seeking new ways of approaching Martí: these contributions range from critiques that demonstrate that the official uses of Martí are often based on partial readings (Morán), speculation over what Martí would or wouldn't have done (Alfred López), and denunciations of the outright falsifications and distortions of Martí's work (Saumell and Ripoll). Enrico Mario Santí sought to "think through Martí," an approach that entails a focused contextual reading and the placement of his work in the social dialogue of the period (Santí 68); Emilio Bejel examined the cult of Martí as a form of unresolved mourning (Bejel), and many others have sought to broaden the discussion of Martí's work to questions of gender, class, performance, iconography, relics, ethnicity and immigration (Santí, Bejel, Morán and Camacho).⁴

Even though many of these are poignant critiques of the ideological uses of Martí's image, it would be wrong, however, to assume that ideology no longer plays a role in these new approaches. As Slavoj Žižek observes

If our concept of ideology remains the classic one in which the illusion is in knowledge, then today's society must appear post-ideological: the prevailing ideology is that of cynicism; people no longer believe in ideological truth; they do not take ideological propositions seriously. The fundamental level of ideology, however, is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself. (The Sublime Object of Ideology 33).

To some extent, this notion of not taking ideological truths too seriously emanates from Antonio José Ponte's essay, entitled "El abrigo de aire." A text in which the author contemplates a "lighter than air" notion of Martí, one that includes the humor and irreverence that served as a mechanism of defense from the excess of revolutionary slogans and moral imperatives that saturate official Cuban political culture. Regarding the differences between the most recent critical discourse and that of previous years, the difference is that contextual readings have replaced the hermeneutic of creating an ethical and moral background to justify political action. This is not to say that Martí is no longer the center of impassioned debate. On the contrary, the question of how academic disciplines produce knowledge occupies the crux of my interest. At the heart of our contentions about Martí's work are the methods by which our disciplines lay claim to knowledge.

3. Jorge Camacho, "Los Herejes en el Convento: La recepción de José Martí en la plástica y la crítica cubana de los años 80 y 90" *Revista Espéculo*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. 24 (2003). Web.

4. There have also been attempts, some more successful than others, to place Martí within a broader notion of American studies (Lomas, López, and Montero). Also, it should be noted that not all critics have embraced humanization. Emilio Ichikawa advised against it, and Miguel Cabrera Peña's book, entitled *¿Fue José Martí racista? Perspectiva sobre los negros en Cuba y Estados Unidos* overtly advocates for the use of Martí's image to promote a political project of racial equality in Cuba.

My focus on polemics should not be construed as an attempt to revive (or relive) heated discussions, but rather to suggest that many of these debates are variations on the same fault lines that have always been present within Martí Studies. In terms of scholarship within the revolution, there was a clear privileging of Martí's political writing over his work as a creative writer or poet. The chronicles, letters, and speeches occupied a higher position in this hierarchy while his drama, fiction, and translations were considered as marginal productions. As Ette indicates, lyric poetry was almost completely left aside (Ette 194). The notable exception was the work of Cintio Vitier and Fina García Marruz who tend to arrive at Martí's politics through his poetics (198). This tendency to privilege the political readings also had an interesting effect on Martí in time: those who privilege the political texts see his work developing in phases or stages, culminating in Cuban separatism and political action. Ette adds that Martí as a creative writer was better covered by critics outside of Cuba. Manuel Pedro González and Ivan A. Schulman worked extensively on Martí's work as a stylistic precursor or initiator of Latin American *modernismo* through his journalistic prose and poetry. This is not to say that Schulman's work was less historical. On the contrary, he saw that the poetic tendencies that began with Martí likewise culminated in the poetic prose of novelists like Miguel Ángel Asturias, Manuel Mejía Vallejo, Alejo Carpentier, and Mario Vargas Llosa (*Martí, Darío y el modernismo* 54-59). So, while one side saw Martí's political culmination in separatism and the Revolution of 1959, the other saw his cultural culmination in *modernismo* and the Boom. In both cases, Martí belonged to the ages through his ability to influence the future.

Although the debates unfolded in the electronic journals *Cubaencuentro* and *La Habana Elegante* and the blogosphere, the tensions surrounding the debate share the parameters that Ette noted in his study: the privileging of Martí's essays and speeches among political/historical critics, on one hand, and the privileging of Martí's poetry and literary work on the other. The differences will be drawn along the disciplines that mark the distinction between poetic and prosaic discourse, public and intimate, and Martí's place in time between Latin America's neo-classicism and *modernista* periods. The specific controversy I am referring to emerged on *Cubaencuentro.com* between May 20 and June 19, 2008.⁵ The participants in the debate were Duanel Díaz, Miguel Cabrera Peña, Jorge Camacho, and Francisco Moran. The debate began when Díaz published a text around the 106th commemoration of the foundation of the Cuban Republic that urged a reconsideration of the writers of the early republican period. The title of the opinion piece, "Los factores del país," borrows a line from Martí's "Nuestra América" in which the Apostol argued that self-governance was premised on a deep study of the characteristics of the nation. Díaz reminds readers that Martí himself did not undertake such a study and suggests that such a task would fall on writers like Francisco Figueras and Fernando Ortiz.

Díaz wrote about post-independence frustration. For many, the Cuban Republic was stillborn: the US military occupation and the Platt Amendment were blatant reminders that national sovereignty had not been achieved. As Díaz observes, negative insularity, a critical perspective that emerged in this period, saw the struggle as an economic, social, and political disaster for the island, and considered that the internal factors of the nation were poorly suited for independence. Díaz's reading is largely historical in the sense that he contrasts Martí's lyric optimism and the prosaic scientific-like skepticism of Francisco Figueras. These factors of the nation were not only questions of theme, but also form: Martí's literary style created a poetic and highly idealized vision of what the nation could be, and Figueras' direct style had scientific pretensions that appealed to sociological authorities (See "Los factores del país II").

5. Although this researcher is not privy to the specific reasons, several of these posts were removed from *Cubaencuentro* not long after they were published. Fortunately, the author of this text has printed copies.

The central question of Díaz's meditation on negative insularity, an important topic for scholars of Cuban and Puerto Rican culture, was largely lost in the ensuing discussion. The remainder had little to do with Figueras or the broader point of literary vs. scientific writing. The bone of contention was the degree to which nineteenth-century scientific writing was also present in Martí's writing and whether "Nuestra América" inverts Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's notion of civilization and barbarism. In this respect, Díaz offers Martí's own words to suggest that he opposed Sarmiento's concept of civilization: "No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza" (OC, vol VI, 17). To some extent, this position aligns with the canonical reading of Martí against Sarmiento, which is featured prominently in Roberto Fernández Retamar's essay "Calibán" (44-45).⁶

Jorge Camacho's response was entitled "Vigilar, temer y reformar: la biopolítica y el 'sueño' martiano. Una historia de exclusiones irresueltas". The central focus of his response was not the language of republican frustration or negative insularity, but rather a demonstration that scientific discourse also appears in Martí. Camacho's method can be described as an analysis of "discursive practices," which according to Foucault can be "characterized by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories" (Foucault 199). These practices are "embedded in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns of general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them" (200). Through Camacho's reading of Martí as a participant in the institutional discourses of the late 19th century, he argues convincingly that his views on the Other were not opposed to those of Sarmiento. In short, the crux of the debate is related to where Martí was located in history and in relation to Sarmiento. Camacho frames Martí's views in the broader cultural and scientific discourse of the late 19th century. This, of course, includes the discourses that were known as positivism, Darwinism, evolutionism, and eugenics.

Suffice it to say that Camacho's reading is based on the broader conception of discourse that all the parties shared due to their participation in the intellectual culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To support his argument, Camacho cites Martí's notebooks, indicating that he saw atavistic traits among Afro-Cubans (OC XVIII, 284). These observations suggest that he may not have foreseen radical changes in the social structure in postcolonial Cuba and that he viewed Cuban cultural, economic, and political development in terms of evolutionism, reform, and education, tendencies that, along with increasing European immigration, were credos of positivism and liberalism of the period. In his subsequent responses, Camacho adds further support for his broader view of Martí by citing the work of Cuban Studies scholar Aline Helg, specialists on the scientific discourse of the 19th century (George Stocking, Bernard Seeman, John Jackson, and Nadine Weidman), and additional references from Martí's *Complete Works* ("Los caminos trillados" 10 May 2008).

Miguel Cabrera Peña likewise joins in the discussion. In "El discurso de la raza," he is critical of Camacho's broadened view of Martí's discourse and admonishes him for not having paid stricter attention to the critical works of Julio Ramos (*Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina*, 2003), Susana Rotker (*The American Chronicles of José Martí: Journalism and Modernity in Spanish America*, 2000), and Rafael Rojas (*La invención de Cuba*, 2000). Regarding the references to the so-called African savagery in Martí's notebooks, Cabrera Peña suggests that, at the time when the text was written in the summer of 1880 or 1881, Martí may have held eugenic ideas, but that by the time he fully dedicated himself to Cuban separatism, he distanced himself from those same ideas (6 June 2008).

6. See Roberto Fernández Retamar's *Todo Calibán*. It should be noted that Retamar supports his view of Martí in stark contrast to Sarmiento by citing the following segment from Martí's *Miscelánea*: "el pretexto de que la civilización, que es el nombre vulgar con que corre el estado actual del hombre europeo, tiene derecho natural de apoderarse de la tierra ajena perteneciente a la barbarie, que es el nombre que los que desean la tierra ajena dan al estado actual de todo hombre que no es de Europa o de la América europea" (Retamar, OC VIII, 442).

What emerges in Cabrera Peña and Díaz is a hermeneutic in reading Martí: a specific method that contextualizes Martí's writing in the political immediacy of the tensions between autonomism, annexationism, and separatism. By separating Martí's work into historical phases, he creates a space to privilege some texts and designate others as insignificant. This view also looks to the language of the revolution of 1895 to understand that of 1959 and one that is skeptical of the use of Foucault to understand the inherent romanticism that is evoked by both movements ("Foucault y el debate cubano", 6 June 2008). Cabrera Peña's caveat regarding the broader view of 19th-century discourse is founded on the notion that Foucault saw modern societies as fundamentally repressive and this view doesn't make a distinction between republican and totalitarian Cuba. This hermeneutic also imposes a temporal fragmentation on Martí: either there is a presumption that there was a marked difference between Martí's public and private expression, as well as his poetic and prose writing, or Martí's work is divided into historical phases in which his sense of ethics reaches its pinnacle in the separatist movement (and his martyrdom). To some extent, these constraints on reading are related to Díaz's point of departure and research concerns: the worrisome linearity between the revolutions of 1895 in 1959. For him, this link is not to be found in the repressive mechanisms of the republican state nor in the concepts that Martí shared with cultural discourses the discourses of 19th-century liberalism, but rather in Martí's thinking that resisted the liberal processing and representation of the specific flaws in Cuban character.

Francisco Morán's intervention, several days later, brought the debate to a close. At this point, the meditation on negative insularity and the project of studying the factors of the nation, the topics that initiated the discussion, had been largely forgotten. Morán's intervention, nonetheless, was both eloquent and insightful. Like Camacho, he aimed at the canonical notion of describing Martí in contrast to Sarmiento. In the post entitled "Civilización y barbarie" he writes: "Más a menudo que no, en el centro mismo de los discursos emancipadores en cualquiera de ellos y dónde quieres que se produce, no resulta difícil encontrar en su interior aquello a lo que con más firmeza se oponen" (18 June 2008). Reading with microscopic precision, he unpacks a hidden ambivalence in Martí's apparent celebration to the demographic diversity in the continent and his allusions to the "indio mudo," the "negro oteado" and the "masa inculta." To conclude, Morán returns to the original paragraph from "Nuestra América," in which the phrase "No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza" appears, and he emphasizes its original context. Although Martí distances himself from the notion of the criollo exótico, he states that the "hombre natural" (read: uncultured, indigenous and mixed-race underclass) rewards the superior intelligence of the politician/teacher that knows the elements that comprise the nation and more precisely knows how to bring education and reform to them even those this "masa inculta" is, as Martí describes it, "perezosa, y tímida en las cosas de la inteligencia, y quiere que la gobiernen bien" (OC VI, 17). In this respect, the phrase, "No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza" is not an outright rejection of Sarmiento's binary, but rather a variation on the same theme. Still in place is the elitism of the politician/teacher's superior intelligence, over the other who is driven by instincts. While the other for Martí is not irretrievable, nor is he an equal partner in governance.

After this encounter, both Camacho and Morán published their more extensive readings of Martí's relationship with the philosophies of the late 19th century. Camacho's book, entitled *Etnografía, política y poder a finales del siglo XIX* (2013) focuses on the representation of Native Americans in the context of Martí's ideas regarding progress, the capitalist market, and the educational reforms carried out by liberals in

Mexico, Guatemala, Argentina and the United States in the late 19th century. What makes this topic germane is that it covers a period of Latin American history that frequently receives short shrift. The 19th century marks Latin America's integration into the world economy and the implementation of liberal nation-building projects. This period also saw perhaps one of the largest appropriations of land in modern history: the Batalla del desierto in Argentina, the Guerra del Pacífico in Chile, Perú and Bolivia, the territorial expansion of the United States into Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California and of the American North West, the appropriations of land for coffee production in Guatemala, and the land politics of the Reforma in Mexico. These takeovers invariably led politicians and intellectuals to regard the indigenous population as a problem and obstacle to the construction of the modern nation-state.

Regarding Camacho's research method, his approach is thoroughly literary. Unlike Ette, his focus is writing, and he treats Martí's chronicles as allegories, metaphors, and analogies through which the Cuban writer conveyed his beliefs, value judgments, and ideological positions. Camacho's ostensible purpose is to consider the theoretical suppositions of anthropology and ethnography and examine how these influenced the assimilation of the indigenous populations into the nation-building projects. In doing so, he makes a strong case that Martí expected Native Americans to assimilate the ideas of Western civilization, break with their nomadic and tribal ways of life, adopt farming and private property, and individualism (111-116).

What is most polemical about this study is the possible relationship between ethnocentrism, criminal anthropology, and scientific racism. Although these lines of thought corresponded in time and space with Martí, they differed in significant ways. Camacho uses discourse and comparative analysis to suggest that scientific racism and ethnography share many of the same value judgments about indigenous cultures. At the same time, he maintains a clear distinction: scientific racism or eugenics saw human potential as codified in the biological properties of individuals. Ethnography, in contrast, saw human potential as their ability to adapt and adopt new cultural practices. At no point does Camacho argue that Martí was a major proponent of the precepts of biological racism; he does, however, find that his discourse occasionally shares common ground with biological racism.

Regarding ideas like evolution, Camacho makes a cogent argument for an ethnographic notion in Martí's work in which historical development follows a narrative of maturation. In the early stages of this notion of history cultures that occupy lower levels of development act like children (23; 72). To support this contention, Camacho cites Martí's depictions of how Indians in the American West responded with child-like fascination to the introduction of mechanization in agriculture. Camacho concludes that Martí was a "type of evolutionist" in the sense that all humans can achieve perfection (i.e., maturity) through assimilation (29). Camacho does not argue that Martí adhered to extreme biological notions of race, but he does state that Martí's view of the modern nation-state in the Americas was ethnocentric and presumed that the benevolent assimilation of native populations was a necessity. Camacho also demonstrates that Martí virulently criticized the US Indian agents that failed to carry out their duties. This notion of Martí places him in dialogue with other intellectuals who saw communal landholdings as obstacles to the basic premises of economic liberalism (42) and suggests that Martí and Sarmiento were not at opposite extremes of Latin American cultural and political discourse (87-88).

Francisco Morán's *Martí, la justicia infinita* also employs the close-contextual reading method to the texts that Martí wrote between 1875 and 1894. Like Camacho's approach, he provides a materialness to

Martí by contextualizing him—not as belonging to the future—but very much a part of the late 19th century. True to his method, he argues that despite Martí's inclusion in most anthologies of Latin American literature, many critics base their conclusions on aphorisms that reify their own ideological or critical position. The metaphor for this type of reading harks back to Gabriela Mistral's comment that Martí's oeuvre was a goldmine whose wealth had no limit.⁷ In contrast, Morán, whose own prose at times is highly ornate and complex, confronts Martí's style. In doing so, he perhaps inadvertently recovers a Martí who, at times, favors economic liberalism, forms alliances with wealthy benefactors, sees a danger in the uncultured energy of organized labor and working classes, and whose rhetoric was crafted to bring his readers and listeners under his sway.

Although Morán doesn't provide a specific term for what he describes, he depicts what I call discursive drift, an overlap between ethnography and eugenics. There are many examples. In the first chapter, Morán draws an analogy between Martí's desire to be known as a "poeta en actos," as an audacious creator, as an individual with the nostalgia for the age of great feats with the semantic charge of 19th-century anarchism. In effect, Morán suggests that Martí shares this imperative to act with a political movement that he doesn't identify with. As a result, the violence implicit in the direct action of the anarchists becomes largely discursive: moral and ethical imperatives are converted into rhetorical bombast.

Morán's study also addresses Martí as an observer of life in the United States in a period in which millions of immigrants entered the country. He shows that Martí's writing reflected a high degree of social anxiety and ambivalence regarding this flood of immigrants. He notes that Martí depicted the Germans and Swiss as industrious, and the Scandinavians as physically beautiful, industrious, well-built, and honest (384). However, Italian and Irish immigrants were presented in less than favorable terms. While Martí saw the Irish as hardworking, he also characterized them as having a "rostro áspero y huesoso, nariz corta y empinada, ojos malignos y breves, maxilares breves, labios belfudos y apretados, y barbilla ruin que les cerca como un halo el rostro" (385). This physio-characterological description of Irish working-class immigrants coincides to some extent with the depictions used by criminal anthropologists to describe delinquents. At no point does Morán argue that Martí was directly influenced by or sympathized with the ideas of writers like Cesare Lombroso, but rather that this perspective was common during that period. Further, concerning Martí's ambivalent references to Herbert Spenser, Morán suggests that this terminology reveals both a strong sense of paternalism as well as an occasional drift toward the framework of Social Darwinism and eugenics (568-575).

Despite the well-conceived contextual (i.e., literary) readings that Camacho and Morán have offered, it should come as no surprise that their conclusions have been met with some skepticism by those who are grounded in historical approaches. One that has articulated some reservations is historian Rafael Rojas, author of the ground-breaking study, entitled *Isla sin fin*. Suffice it to say that a historical method differs from literary close readings in the sense that it consists of tracing motifs, images, philosophical currents, and influences from one period to another, uncovering affinities in the expression of civic values over longer periods. Rojas' analyses can often be characterized by a lengthy chain of affiliations that link historical figures in a timeline that can range from Classical Antiquity to the contemporary era. This approach in *Isla sin fin* highlighted two long-standing tendencies in Cuban culture, insularity and instrumentality, and provided a template to read much of the island's history.

This is not to say that the historical methodology should be privileged

7. See also Gastón Baquero's *La fuente inagotable* (1995).

over literary approaches or vice versa. My point is to celebrate the differences, observe the consensus when it is apparent, and note how each of these disciplines locates Martí at different places in time. For a historian, ideas are not bound by the immediacy of context because they are effects of the past and can influence events in the future. This affiliation can link people and events that are separated by hundreds of years. For example, in *José Martí: la invención de Cuba*, Rojas observes that there is a tendency in Martí to sacralize his homeland, which, he adds, is part of the “esa tradición cívico-republicana—tan difundida en Hispanoamérica—que se extiende de Cicerón a Maquiavelo y de Montaigne a Rousseau” (72). Likewise, Rojas’ reading of a poem like “Sueño con claustros de mármol” or “En torno al mármol rojo” are indicative of Martí’s inherent classicism: “una arquitectura marmórea, monumental, cívica, neoclásica, republicana” (90). The crux of Rojas’ view is that Martí was a “classical republican.” He borrows from Agnes Heller’s work on the five values of the civic republican model (i.e., tolerance, bravery, justice, solidarity, and prudence) (87), and from David Brading’s study of criollo patriotism and classical republicanism in Simón Bolívar and Friar Servando Teresa de Mier to suggest that he finds Martí much closer to these tendencies than to the liberalism expressed by Sarmiento (87). This affiliation placed Martí alongside other Latin American *próceres* at the beginning of the 19th century.

Given that the curriculum in the schools Martí attended as a young man contained classical works and that he translated works by J. P. Mahaffy and Augustus S. Wilkins, it should be of no surprise to find abundant references to classical ideas.⁸ So, while classicism is present, Brading’s study of both criollo patriotism and classical republicanism place these two tendencies in the early 19th century, —almost half a century before the bulk of Martí’s work—. In terms of literary history, we usually place neoclassicism in Latin America between the middle of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the 19th century. The Cuban writers that we consider most representative of this tendency are Manuela de Zenquiera y Arango (1764-1846), Manuel Justo Rubalcalva (1769-1805), Manuela María Pérez y Ramírez (1781-1853). This is the period of the formation of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, José Agustín Caballero, and Félix Varela (Henríquez Ureña 78-100). It makes one wonder if there is an underlying teleology that either presumes that Latin American independence was concomitant with classicism, as if each Republic had to pass through the same historical stage; or that Latin American cultural history moves like a pendulum, moving back and forth between classical rationalism and romantic passion.

What is especially fascinating is that Rojas’ ostensible purpose in *José Martí: la invención de Cuba* addresses the historical and literary division among critics. Rojas aims at coming to terms with two marked traditions within Martí Studies: the first, represented by biographers like Félix Lizaso, Luis Rodríguez Embil, Jorge Mañach, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Carlos Ripoll, and John Kirk, who focus on the “cuerpo del héroe e imaginan que la superación de la ambivalencia se da por medio del sacrificio de la poesía en aras de la política” (83); and, the second, formed by literary critics like Cintio Vitier, Manuel Pedro González, Iván Schulman, Enrico Mario Santí, Emilio de Armas, and Julio Ramos, who comprehend Martí’s work as the creation of a poetic image of the world that participates in history (84). Rojas proposes an approach to this dualism that both distances itself from the myth of synthesis and resists the supposed absolute incommunicability of the discourses of poetry and politics (85). He refers to these as two textual worlds in which Martí moves from the traditional to the modern. What links these two, for Rojas, is the formation of civic republicanism (e.g., focus on virtue) in both poetry and politics. In this sense, Rojas focuses on classical references and allusions in poetic texts that are thought to stem from the political. His critical intent is to find the politician (el actor republicano) in the poetic text.

8. For background on Martí’s classical education, see Elina Miranda Cancela’s “Greece and José Martí.”

At the same time, Rojas follows the tendency among the biographers that suggests that Martí sacrifices both personal interests and poetic creativity. To substantiate this, he describes a pattern in Martí's life and writing: poetry is a refuge for his disenchantment with the political world. His approach is both biographical and historical. He uses the dates of publication to argue that the act of writing poetry was a flight from the political, away from the modernity that appears in Martí's chronicles, his oratory, and his essays (read: prose). What may be at work here is the traditional view of the poet as withdrawn, marginalized, working alone by candlelight, and lamenting his frustrations with the world around him. Rojas writes, "Es cierto que el estado de renuncia a la poesía se intensifica justo cuando el sujeto se distancia de la esfera pública política" (91). He adds that *Ismaelillo* was written in Venezuela while he taught in two schools and directed the *Revista Venezolana*; *Versos libres*, a text that Rojas dates principally to 1882, was composed when Martí began to affiliate himself with separatist groups; and, *Versos sencillos*, were written while he recovered from an illness in the Catskill mountains. He concludes that "la escritura poética es para Martí un ejercicio solitario que reconstruye la intimidad afectiva del poeta después de una participación intensa en lo público" (91).

Although several of Martí's poems and comments lend some credibility to this reading, these so-called flights can also be considered as contrived performances designed to engage the public and the political through personalism. In terms of bibliography, it may be hard to separate Martí's creative and political work into neat piles. He likely cultivated both genres at the same time. He wrote politicized editorials in the *Revista Venezolana* around the same time that he penned the works that comprised *Ismaelillo*. Aside from issues related to when the texts were written, my principle caveat regards how historians and biographers have viewed Martí's poetry. Invariably, they place it in the realm of the intimate or private. However, this is not the only way to read it. It is also possible that Martí's use of poetic intimacy functioned as a staged demonstration of vulnerability, a sign of courage and disclosure in the face of spiteful public discussions of his personal life. In short, these may have been carefully crafted for public consumption. What makes poetry seem to be a flight from the public/political stems from how this genre stages the experience of the self. Its appeal is different from that of the essay or the speech because it engages the audience, not through the appeal to the collective self via ideology and history, but rather through disclosing individual experience as a sign of courage. This notion of staging vulnerability coincides with the performativity that Emilio Bejel has discussed in Martí's very intentional uses of his public image (28). One can also question the degree of his rejection of modernity. While Martí expressed some reservations about some aspects of modernity, he also took advantage of the possibilities afforded by telegraph, photography, and newsprint. Poetry was just one more tool in his arsenal of expression. One should ask how poetry could be considered intimate if the poems were carefully crafted, repeatedly edited, published, circulated, and read publicly.⁹

One such example of how the intimate can be staged in modern poetry can be found by comparing a historical and literary reading of Martí's "Amor de ciudad grande." Many frame the poem in terms of a flight from modernity, a rejection of the city, and an appeal to the rustic simplicity of nature to recover both physical and spiritual health, like what is seen in the prologue of *Versos sencillos*. A close reading yields different, and no less valuable, insights into the poet's view of urban space, a space where he lived and worked for most of his adult life. The difference is that the close reading places the poetic self in the moment, in its context, like a snapshot of an instance. However, to contextualize the poem in its internal meaning, one must remember that the theme is love. The central premise of the poem is that the velocity of urban life, –the mentality of instant gratification–, is

9. See Ivan A. Schulman's critical edition of *Ismaelillo*, *Versos libres*, *Versos sencillos*. Although *Versos libres* was not published during his lifetime, the annotations documented by Schulman in his critical edition indicate that the manuscript was being prepared for eventual publication.

ill-suited for lasting and mature relationships. For this reason, Martí uses the metaphor of toxic wine throughout the poem. Quality cannot be rushed. The images present the young virgin who, in earlier times, would have died before giving her hand to a young man she didn't know. It is the speed of the city that ruins the fruits of love, conjugal relations, and family, which are treated like fruits that are squeezed to ripen them before their time. Further, the disregard for the quality that comes through maturation is what allows the poor souls of the city to fall prey to sexual predators that consume them like cheap wines. The "copas por vaciar" is an image not an all-encompassing view of modernity, but of how the speed of the city life has turned love (read: courtship and sexuality) into an object of consumption, which, is something that an honest man should fear.

In any case, these methodological and disciplinary differences re-emerge in a series of back-and-forth debates in cyberspace after Rojas reviewed Camacho and Morán's books. The first comments appear in Rojas' blog, entitled *Libros del crepúsculo* in two of his book reviews, and the responses are later presented in one of the final issues of *La Habana Elegante* as separate comments by both Rojas and Camacho. My point is not to rehash the discussion point by point but rather to posit that Martí's place in time and the academic tools that each party employs play a large role in the formulation of their positions. Despite some praiseworthy initial comments, his first objection regards Martí's placement in time. With respect to Morán's study, he writes, "me sigue pareciendo anacrónica o forzada la percepción de acentos 'lombrosianos' o 'eugenésicos' en Martí" (*Libros del crepúsculo* 5-25-2014).

In a second review published in *La Habana Elegante*, the historian makes a similar assessment of Camacho's approach and writes, "Camacho cae en varios anacronismos, como identificar las ideas raciales del cubano con autores y obras posteriores a Martí mismo..." (*LHE*). Rojas supports his reservation in three ways: first, he argues that Martí's notion of liberalism was based on the historical currents that originated in the early years of Latin American independence. Thus, he rejects the idea of Martí in dialogue with contemporary liberals who had adopted positivism as a state philosophy in several Latin American republics. For Rojas, Martí's notion of liberalism was derived from an earlier manifestation of "liberalismo romántico, matizado por un fuerte republicanismo neoclásico." He adds that the ideas that influenced Martí were Spanish Krausism and North American Transcendentalism, which belong to the first several decades of the 19th century ("Un libro inevitable").

A second objection appears to be based on how Rojas sees historic agency. His notion of discourse is synonymous with the articulation of a belief system that served as Martí's guidelines for action. The operant concepts here are "direct influence" and "philosophical adhesion." To some extent, it is a search for sources. His phrasing is particularly relevant to comprehending this methodological approach. In the blog entry, entitled "Martí, Lombroso y el derecho penal," he writes, "no parece haber rastros de que Martí haya leído a Lombroso o simpatizado con sus tesis..." and in "Martí, la eugenesia y los migrantes" he poses the question, "¿Hay evidencias de que Martí leyó a [Francis] Galton, [Joseph Arthur de] Gobineau, [George Vacher de] Lapouge o [Houston Stewart] Chamberlain o que simpatizara explícitamente con sus ideas?" (Emphasis added). The key terms refer to first-hand knowledge of the texts and total adherence to the theories. In another section of this same entry, he uses the phrase "Martí no llegó a conocer plenamente" to describe the probable or improbable influences of sociology, anthropology, and ethnography.

The third objection hinges strictly on his definition of scientific racism. He elaborates this last point in "Martí, Lombroso y el derecho penal"

(*Libros del crepúsculo*, January 31, 2015) and “Martí, la eugenesia y los migrantes” (February 4, 2015). In both, he reiterates his position that attributing scientific racism to Martí misplaces him in time. The diffusion of Lombroso’s ideas, he argues, didn’t coincide with Martí’s work and because of his studies in Spain Martí would have been influenced by criminologists who rejected a biological basis for criminality (Jan 31). The strength of Rojas’ argument is found within these strict disciplinary constraints. He paints historical tendencies with broad strokes in his search for signs of direct influence and card-carrying affiliation.

Understanding the difference between these critics may boil down to how each discipline approaches the notion of discourse. Neither Camacho nor Morán was arguing that Martí was a standard bearer of pseudoscientific racism. Nonetheless, some of these concepts appear in his work. For literary humanists, the term “discourse” derives from the Latin word *discursus*, which implies a movement “to and fro” (White 3), which identifies the parameters of the entire field of meaning and space of representation. In this sense, the discourse of the late 19th century was saturated with discussions of race. Hence, it should not come as a surprise that some of these ideas find their way into Martí’s writing and thinking. This implies that Martí could use language from evolution and anthropology without adopting all the precepts and without taking positions as extreme as the notable eugenicists.

One of the characteristics that is particularly interesting (and at times frustrating) about reading Morán’s study is that his footnotes often become labyrinths. It seems that Morán anticipated the kind of evidence historians would want to see and provides the answer to the question long before it was asked. He shows that Martí, in fact, was familiar with one of the works of Francis Galton. He writes,

En el índice onomástico de las [*Obras Completas*] no aparece Galton por la sencilla razón de que Martí había escrito mal el nombre del autor: «Francis Salten». Pero el folleto a que se refiere Martí –Record of Family Faculties (Londres, 1884)– y cuyo título traduce como Registro de las facultades de la familia, no deja lugar a dudas. Martí, que publicó su comentario en mayo de 1884 en *La América*, nos dice que se trata de ‘un libro nuevo, inglés, que acaba de reimprimir un editor norteamericano’ (OC 15, 396) con lo cual vemos, en primer lugar, la rapidez con que circulaban internacionalmente las teorías de la época sobre la herencia; y en segundo, la no menos rapidez con que Martí las leía y comentaba. Aquí no quiero sino llamar la atención sobre dos aspectos del comentario martiano. Por un lado, afirma categóricamente que la teoría de Galton, de que el sujeto hereda las cualidades de la familia, es ‘errónea.’ Pero casi inmediatamente antes afirma que Galton ‘cree demasiado en aquello en que hay que creer bastante: en la heredación de las cualidades de familia.’ Se trata, pues, más bien, de una cuestión de *grado*” (emphasis is Morán’s 435).

What is unfortunate is that a footnote can easily be overlooked. Nevertheless, it is in one of these notes that Morán shows how Martí assimilates scientific terms like *especies*, *germen*, and *contagio* into binary relationships that privilege male over female and the spiritual over the material. What is left for exploration is Martí’s ambivalence. What does it mean for him to state that Galton’s theory was in error, while he also seems to believe in it? For this one must return to the text in question. The answer is found throughout the text in the rhetorical questions that Martí posits at the beginning of his essay, and in the specific questions he raises over Galton’s methodology.

twisted syntax, framing the subordinate clauses that distance the subject and verb from the predicate, and deciphering how he characterized scientific/biological concepts in spiritual terms. For example, in the first lines of the review of Galton's book, he writes, "la filosofía materialista, si extremar sus sistemas, viene a establecer la indispensabilidad de estudiar las leyes del espíritu" (395). He later adds, "el espíritu está sujeto a leyes y se mueve por ellas, aceleradas o detenidas en su cumplimiento por las causas mecánicas y circunstancias rodeantes que influyen en la existencia y suelen ser tan poderosas que la tuercen o determinan" (395). What does he mean by "laws of the spirit"? We would normally consider the spiritual as apart from the material world, and distinct from the field of science. However, this doesn't seem to be the meaning he ascribes when he discusses how it plays a role in heredity. Martí adds, "Las cualidades de los padres quedan en el espíritu de los hijos, como quedan los dedos del niño en las alas de la fugitiva mariposa" (396). This metaphor suggests that the spirit of the parents (i.e., biological inheritance) is as delicate as the hand of a child that holds a fragile butterfly. It may seem odd that a text about biological inheritance will use terms like "germen paterno" and "entrañas maternas" and will eschew a direct reference to human sexuality, but this is part and parcel of how Martí sublimated biological reproduction (i.e., sex) as the emergence of spirits that shine like diamonds in the darkness of the Platonic cavern. For him, human reproduction is a transfer from the realm of the creative/spiritual to the realm of the material. This may seem confusing to modern readers, but the role that DNA plays in genetics was not clear until the 1940s. Hence, Martí's use of the term spirit can also be read as related to biological sex.

Aware that some of his readers may have understand biology as distinct from spirit, Martí outright denies that there is a contradiction in recognizing the general laws that are deduced from observing humans (i.e., the material conditions), and the "hermosa majestad, originalidad fructífera y fuerza propia y personal que hace interesante, novadora y sorprendente la persona humana" (395). Martí's excessive prudishness makes human sexuality disappear into spiritualized creativity that hides a transfer of biological material from one body to another. What he rejects in Galton's theory is the idea of destiny. If the theories of biological determinism were accurate, he asks, how was it possible that sublime and heroic acts emerge from individuals whose ancestors were less than virtuous (397)? It is not until near the end that Martí spells out his caveat about determinism. He writes, "Francis Salten [sic] quiere que su libro sea una especie de prontuario de profecías, merced al cual, dados los caracteres de nuestros abuelos y los nuestros propios, podemos predecir cómo serán nuestros hijos" (397).

Suffice to conclude by reiterating that my purpose has not been to enflame overly impassioned debates, but rather to suggest that these discussions may occur on the same fault line in Martí Studies that eschews the politics of vulnerability and relegates poetry to the intimate when Martí resisted shame by laying bear aspects of his private life. It is also important to review how our disciplines shape our readings and place Martí in time. The question of Martí's place in time is not a new issue. As Duanel Díaz pointed out, much of the revolutionary action of 1953 and 1959 was premised on the idea that Martí was not bound by the specificity of time and circumstance. His thoughts and words seemed enough to ascribe authorship of social change long after the place of writing was gone. Despite being at odds in this debate, Díaz, Rojas, Morán, and Camacho come closer, nonetheless, in framing Martí in the 19th century either through his affiliations to criollo patriotism and classical republicanism, on one side, and his discursive slippages in Latin American modernism on the other. Reflecting on Ete's suggestion of desacralization to break the critical impasse, perhaps the moves toward humanization, some of which emerged with Lisazo and Mañach, was just one more go around the

same fault line that divides the public and private, and political and poetic. In any case, the methodological approaches that focus on contextualized readings remind us of how interesting Martí Studies continues to be.

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