Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2002 Carfax Publishing Taylor & Francis Group

The Beautiful, the Good, and the Natural: Martí and the Ills of Modernity

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The United States has not changed much over the past hundred and twenty years or so. That, at least, is the impression one gets from reading the chronicles written by José Marti during the fifteen years that he spent there at the end of the nineteenth century (1880–95). To today's readers, many of Martí's dispatches to his Latin-American readers sound strangely familiar, whether they deal with the emancipated behaviour of the First Lady, the eternal conflicts between Democrats and Republicans, or with criminal trials that mesmerize the entire nation for months on end. What to think, for instance, of an article on a presidential election which the director of Argentine newspaper *La Nación* found so outrageous that he decided to present it as a series of 'narraciones fantásticas' [fantastic tales] (Rotker, *Fundación*, p. 105)? One cannot help wonder what Martí would have written on the two most interesting judicial disputes of *our* end of the century: that between Kenneth Starr and President Clinton, and that between Baltasar Garzón and Augusto Pinochet. For Martí, Clinton's behaviour might well have been just another example of the Americans' incapacity to resist the temptations of the flesh, a weakness typical of a nation that has all but abandoned its Puritan roots and, with it, all sense of moderation. Garzón's crusade against Pinochet, by contrast, might have inspired Martí once more to sing the praise of Latin idealism, characterized by that 'sublime demonio interior, que nos empuja a la persecución infatigable de un ideal de amor o gloria' [sublime demon within, that drives us to the tireless pursuit of an ideal of love or glory] (*OC*, IX, p. 126; *AJM*, p. 106).[1]

Like many of his contemporaries, Martí read the history of the modern world as a struggle between two great, but radically opposed, civilizations, divided along the linguistic lines of English and Spanish. For Martí, the Hispanic and the Anglo-Saxon worlds are, so to speak, the West's yin and yang: They are the respective embodiments of spirit and matter, the beautiful and the practical, the high and the low (Ramos, *Desencuentros*, pp. 190, 195). This binary paradigm underlies all of Martí's *Crónicas Norteamericanas*, but it also constitutes the conceptual base of 'Nuestra América' (1891), the speech in which Martí famously defended the cultural and political autonomy of Spanish America.

In 'Nuestra América', as in many other places in his extensive oeuvre, Martí vindicates Latin-American cultural idiosyncrasy through an invocation of what we would now call the principle of cultural diversity. For him, a *modernista* after all, that diversity was the condition and natural expression of the fundamental

ISSN 1356-9325 print/ISSN 1469-9575 online/02/020173–21 © 2002 Taylor & Francis Ltd
DOI: 10.1080/1356932022000004238

harmony structuring the universe. It was the same harmony whose essence he sought to express as a poet and which, at a political level, he hoped to bring back into a social world that, in his eyes, had been damaged by an excessively materialist and rationalist modernity (Jrade, p. 418; Pita, p. 130; Rotker, 1992, p. 42). The United States' subordinating or suppressing the cultural identity of its Hispanic neighbors would result in an asymmetry that, for Martí, was doubly objectionable—in ethical as well as aesthetic terms, with *balance* being the key criterion in both. Not coincidentally, the great Spanish reformer Joaquín Costa argued around the same time that the world needed 'una raza española grande y poderosa, contrapuesta a la raza sajona, para restablecer el equilibrio moral en el juego infinito de la historia' [a great and powerful Spanish race, opposed to the Saxon race, to restore the moral equilibrium in the infinite play of History] (quoted in Litvak, p. 179).

As this quote from Costa already indicates, Martí was not the only one to understand the course of Western history in terms of a struggle between the Hispanic and the Anglo-Saxon. In fact, many Spanish-speaking intellectuals around the turn of the century, on both sides of the Atlantic, found it an attractive and useful paradigm (Litvak, pp. 155–199). For them, it not only served to explain and interpret international and national realities, but also to legitimize a particular course of action. Specifically, it allowed them simultaneously to vindicate their cultural heritage *and* their own position as men of letters within that very heritage (Ramos, *Desencuentros*, p. 194). In this context, it is worth noting the parallels between Martí and two other Spanish-speaking essayists of his time, who were as crucial as Martí for the formation of a cultural conscience in their respective national communities: Ángel Ganivet (Spain, 1862–98) and José Enrique Rodó (Uruguay, 1871–1917). Both are principally known for a single emblematic text—Ganivet's *Idearium español* (1897) and Rodó's *Ariel* (1900)—in which, as Martí had done in 'Nuestra América', they tried to define their nations' cultural idiosyncrasy and formulate strategies to resist the imperialism of a Northern modernity that they simultaneously admired and despised. If, for Rodó, the United States was the land of unbridled materialism and spiritual atrophy, Ganivet concluded something similar from a prolonged stay in Belgium. '[E]stas razas tienen tan poco calor', he wrote to a friend in Spain, 'que sin estímulo poco o nada harían en el terreno del arte … . Pero sin saber nada, saben someterse a una cabeza y trabajar como burros' [these races have such little warmth, that without external stimuli they would not accomplish anything in the field of the arts … . But, while being ignorant, they are capable of submission to an authority and they can work like dogs] (*Epistolario*, pp. 846–847, 903).

As we will see in what follows, the projects that Ganivet and Rodó embarked upon are not very different from Martí's. Nevertheless, they have not enjoyed the same kind of reception. Even though Ganivet and Rodó maintain a good part of their status as national icons, it has also been recognized that their attempts at vindicating their Spanish or 'Latin' cultural heritage have significant reactionary aspects that cannot be ignored. It has been pointed out, for instance, that both tend to express themselves in strongly essentialist terms. And while it is by now clear that Rodó's defence of Latinism comes with a fair dose of elitism and misogyny (Aronna, p. 124), scholars have also identified Ganivet's mythifying and nationalist tendencies, as well as a fundamental conservatism that led him,

among other things, forcefully to reject democracy as a form of government (Ginsberg, pp. 38–39; Subirats, p. 172; Labanyi, p. 35).

In the case of Martí, by contrast, there have been few studies that investigate, let alone question, the ideological foundations of his Latin-Americanist discourse. The fact that he is still considered to be the spiritual father *par excellence* of Latin-American anti-imperialism, as well as founder of the Cuban nation, has won him a mythical stature that does not seem to invite many critical approaches. What dominates in Martí scholarship, therefore, is hagiography (Santí, 1998, pp. 185–186; 1999, p. 67). It is not that Martí has not generated scholarly polemics; as is well known, various groups have disputed each other's right to appropriate him as their political or spiritual father figure. But since all of these groups need Martí's ideological authority for their self-legitimization, it rarely occurs to them to question that authority (Stabb, p. 663; Kirk, p. ix; Jrade, p. 1).

The great exception to this rule is Julio Ramos, whose highly nuanced critical stance serves as the starting point for what follows.[2] In *Desencuentros de la modernidad* (1989) [*Divergent Modernities*, 2001], Ramos recognizes what is innovating, prophetic and still valid in Martí's discourse, while at the same time identifying other, less praiseworthy tendencies. Among the latter, he points out that Martí's legitimization of the 'spiritual' as a defining characteristic of Spanish-American culture and, within that culture, of the *letrado* [man of letters], also implies a will to power that relegates the non-spiritual Other to a subordinate position (1989, pp. 198, 243). Ramos further notes Martí's tendency to naturalize the model of the core family, his elitist rejection of mass culture and, finally, his negative representation of the urban masses as the feminized embodiment of desire, a social element that is out of control and therefore considered dangerous. Even so, Ramos betrays a certain hesitation when it comes to distancing himself from the political content of the chronicles.[3]

Here I propose to take this critical approach one step further. Following Ramos, Rotker and Jrade, I will start from the assumption that Martí—like Ganivet, Rodó and countless other Hispanic intellectuals of the time period—uses the binary paradigm opposing the Hispanic to the Anglo-Saxon in order to define his position vis-à-vis modernity itself. Rama, Pérus and others have shown that, for Martí, modernity is characterized by rapid and constant change in all social realms, and that he was quite aware of, and worried about, the direct consequences of these changes for his own position as a writer. In addition, however, he was particularly preoccupied with three related phenomena. In the field of international relations of power, he observed the rise of Anglo-Saxon nations at the expense of the Latin countries. In the field of social relations, he noted the increasing presence and importance of the working classes and the birth of a true form of mass culture. In the field of gender relations, finally, he observed the budding emancipation of women. Throughout his North-American chronicles, Martí returns time and again to these three subalternities of nation, class and gender—subalternities, of course, that continue to preoccupy us today.

I will argue here that the ideological position from which Martí approaches these three forms of subalternity is not altogether different from those taken up by Ganivet and Rodó. All three writers ultimately judge them with what is, in essence, a double standard. Starting from an interpretive paradigm based on an aesthetic ideal of *harmony* and a Romantic ideal of the *natural* or *organic*, they are

able to formulate a strong denunciation of the cultural, economic and political subordination of the South to the North, or the Latin to the Anglo-Saxon. At the same time, however, they mobilize the same arguments to *legitimize* the subordination of women and the working class. This contradictory strategy allows them to defend, at an international level, the importance of Latin culture and, at a national level, the privileged position of their own class of lettered men. Thus, they end up presenting themselves as defenders and guardians of a high culture based on a 'disinterested' aesthetic, which they argue is being threatened by the advent of a modernity that is both excessively materialistic and void of spirituality.

In the framework of this argument, this essay will reread some of Martí's North-American chronicles in order to question the relation established in them between style and ideology, or between ethics and aesthetics—two terms, of course, on whose mutual identification *modernismo* is largely founded. For the *modernista*, the beautiful is not at odds with the good or true; on the contrary, the three are considered identical (Rotker, 1992, pp. 70–71; Jrade, p. 10). That is also why Rama, Pérus and Rotker are quite right to reject the assumption, defended by traditional *modernismo* scholarship, that the aestheticism or 'ivory-tower syndrome' of the *modernistas* excluded any ethical or social concerns. As is well known, moreover, this relatively recent rejection of a purely 'literary' reading of *modernismo* has coincided with a renewed interest in the journalistic work of Martí, Darío and their contemporaries.

The analysis of *modernista* journalistic chronicles has in fact proved to be extremely fruitful and illuminating to an understanding of *modernismo* as not only a literary and aesthetic phenomenon, but also a political and social one. Similarly, Rotker, Ramos and González Pérez have pointed out the remarkable generic hibridity of the *modernista* chronicles: The literary chroniclers pour a referential, journalistic, political or essayistic subject matter into a stylistically poetic mould that nevertheless is being published in the ephemeral and hardly aristocratic medium of the middle-class newspaper. This line of research has also served to prove the importance of the chronicle for the development—or even the birth—of a truly Latin-American literature.

Here I wish to focus precisely on the tension between the aesthetic form of Martí's chronicles and their ethical or referential content. The subject is more problematic than critics have wanted to admit. Rotker, to be sure, reads the chronicles as 'spaces of condensation' and manifestations of 'the unresolved contradictions' of the historical moment (1992, p. 10). On the other hand, however, her book also aims to *resolve* the tension between medium and message. According to Rotker, the very generic form through which Martí represents North-American culture, while defining Latin-American culture and defending the latter against the former, constitutes at the same time the birth or 'foundation' of an 'own' and 'original' Latin-American literature (1992, pp. 9–11). In this sense, Rotker's argument returns to the typically *modernista* identification between the three central concepts mentioned: ethics (the good), aesthetics (the beautiful), and nature (the proper, autochthonous, or organic). For Rotker, Martí's chronicles are of great literary value *and* authentically Latin-American; and even though her study does not concentrate on their ethical or ideological status, at no moment does she seem to question that status (1992, pp. 10, 123, 136).

In a departure from Rotker's position, the aim in what follows is to suspend and problematize this identification between ethics, aesthetics and authenticity. But perhaps we should ask ourselves first why we continue to read writers like Martí, Ganivet and Rodó. Why are they still so attractive to us? Rotker is right to underscore, for the case of Martí, the literary value of his oeuvre, including his journalism (1992, pp. 123, 136). But that is surely not all. More important, I would argue, is the fact that we still very much recognize our own contemporary concerns in these three authors' radical rejection of international subalternity. Inasmuch as 'Nuestra América', *Idearium español* and *Ariel* defend a set of peripheral cultures against a hegemonic modernity, they are the discursive cradles of Hispanic anti-imperialism. On a more general level, however, the critique of modernity formulated in these texts precedes in many ways the disenchantments of our own postmodern time period (Aronna, pp. 273–274; Paz, p. 42; Ramos, 1989, p. 205). Even so, it behoves us to wonder to what extent these texts really continue to be valid. Are their counter-hegemonic strategies still of any use to us? From the analysis that follows one might conclude that these anti-imperialist discourses can, indeed, be salvaged, but in a partial and indirect way, and perhaps only to the extent that their contradictions invite us to reflect on the ideological foundations of our *own* defence of cultural diversity and autonomy.

Martí in the United States

'[Y]o no haré en mis cartas … sino presentar las cosas como sean' [In my letters … I will solely present things as they really are], Martí promised the director of Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* in 1882. 'Mi método … ha sido poner los ojos limpios de prejuicios en todos los campos … Y cada mes … le enviaré mi carta noticia, que procuraré hacer varia, honda y animada … . Lo pintoresco aligerará lo grave; y lo literario alegrará lo político' [My method … has been to direct my eyes, free of prejudice, to all fields … And every month … I will send you my newsletter, which I will try to make varied, profound, and animated… The picturesque will lighten up the serious; and the literary will enliven the political] (*OC*, IX, pp. 16–17). While it is doubtful that Martí's representation of the United States was as objective as he wished it to be, his chronicles are surely varied and entertaining. But they are above all ambivalent. To be sure, Martí admires the young nation of his exile, but he does so in a reserved and partial way. For Martí, the United States is simultaneously utopian and dystopian; it embodies his greatest dreams and his worst nightmares. If Martí praises the Puritan virtues of the Founding Fathers, he is frightened by the materialist sensuality and the insatiable urge for pleasure that he believes he perceives in the Americans of his own time. He celebrates the country's remarkable degree of political freedom, but criticizes the apparent chaos that results from it. Even though he idealizes the unitary spirit of what he calls the 'old' American people—again the Puritans—he is pessimistic about the lack of patriotic sentiment and integration of the many new immigrants. He believes in democracy, but fears the vote and rule of the 'masas incultas' [uneducated masses]. He is enthused by the country's modernity, and he even dedicates a highly poetic text to the newly inaugurated Brooklyn Bridge; but he also denounces the working conditions in the factories and the sheer ugliness of

modern constructions like the suspended railroad tracks, 'monstruos que turban [los] sueños [de la ciudad], calientan su aire y llenan de humo sus entrañas' [monsters that disturb the city's sleep, heat up its air and fill its organs with smoke], whose constant noise is, moreover, an impediment to the 'reposo' [peace] and 'limpieza' [cleanliness] necessary for the development of high culture (*OC*, XI, pp. 447–448). Even his rejection of mass culture as embodied in the amusement park of Coney Island is more hesitant than Julio Ramos makes it seem (pp. 202–228).[4]

How should we explain this fundamental ambivalence? It has been said that over the fifteen years of his exile in the US, Martí became increasingly critical of his host country because he was increasingly able to see beyond appearances and perceive the injustice, exploitation and imperialism that underlay North-American hegemony. It is true that Martí, who arrived in the US with an excessively idealized image of the country, underwent a gradual process of disenchantment, as he believed he saw more and more signs of the nation's moral, social and political decadence (Kaye, 1987, p. 210; Rotker, 1999, p. 23; Kirk, p. 48). And yet, Martí's ambivalence is more profound than this simple scenario of illusion–disillusion would suggest. It is not hard, for instance, to find critical judgements in his first chronicles, nor is the admiration entirely absent from his later texts.[5] It makes more sense, therefore, to argue that Martí's ambiguous attitude toward the United States responds to a profoundly ambiguous position vis-à-vis modernity itself. We will return to this point in a moment.

First, however, I would like to propose a third explanation of Martí's equivocal attitude, an explanation derived precisely from the fact that his chronicles are *journalism*, that is, quotidian, provisional and impermanent. In this context it is worth taking a closer peek into the kitchen of Martí the journalist. How did he go about writing his chronicles? It has been known for some time now that a large part of Martí's 'raw material' was taken directly from the United States media. As Rotker has argued, however, this does not mean that his texts are mere reflections, translations or summaries of their American sources (1992, p. 231). On the contrary, Martí submitted those sources, in the first place, to a selection process—among other things, to lift out those topics that he thought would stir the interest or curiosity of his Latin-American readers. In the second place, he submitted his sources to a process of literary elaboration, which mostly consisted in an intensification of figurative language and the introduction of subjective elements. As Rotker rightly argues, this 'literaturization' or 'fictionalization' of the original journalistic material is what makes us still read Martí's chronicles while no one makes a habit of reading the *New York Times* from the 1880s.

What Rotker does not explicitly address, however, is the fact that, as part of this literaturization, Martí in effect attempts to *erase* the traces of his sources. When he speaks of newsworthy events that took place outside New York, at which he could not have been present himself—the Charleston earthquake, for instance—he nevertheless makes it seem as if he had been there. There are many similar instances in which Martí spuriously assumes the role of eye-witness, describing scenes and events as if he had experienced them first-hand, while in fact he is recreating them indirectly, basing himself on the reports in the American papers, or simply inventing them (Rotker, 1992, p. 238; Kaye, 1987, p. 222).

One could argue, as Rotker does, that the creative licence of the literary author provides him with the liberty to transgress the professional ethics of the journalist (Rotker, 1999, p. 27). More important for the argument presented here, however, is that Martí's writing method also glosses over his *dependence* on the American media or, more precisely, on the New York newspapers that were his main window to the US. In fact, I would argue that this dependence was not limited to the bare facts, but that it also extended to the editorial aspect of the news. Martí mined the American papers not only for the facts but also for political and moral judgements of the events on which he reported. Martí himself admits as much in an 1882 letter to Bartolomé Mitre, director of *La Nación*, when he states that his method for writing chronicles has been:

> poner … el oído a los diversos vientos, y luego de bien henchido el juicio de pareceres distintos e impresiones, dejarlos hervir, y dar de sí la esencia,—cuidando no adelantar juicio enemigo sin que haya sido antes pronunciado por boca de la tierra … y de no adelantar suposición que los diarios, debates del Congreso y conversaciones corrientes, no hayan de antemano adelantado.
> (*OC*, IX, p. 17)
> [to … turn my ears to the various winds, and, once my mind is well stocked with different opinions and impressions, to let them boil, and surrender their essence,—taking care not to advance a hostile judgement before it has been pronounced by mouths of the land itself … and not to advance a supposition that has not been brought up beforehand in the newspapers, the debates in Congress, and daily conversation.]

When interpreting Martí's representation of the United States in his chronicles, therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the doubts, criticisms and fears he expresses at certain moments might well have been as present in American public opinion as his optimism, admiration and praise elsewhere. Martí's representation of the American city as a dangerous source of disorder and unbridled passions, for instance, analysed in detail by Ramos (p. 190), was a commonplace in the US public discourse of the time period (Smith, pp. 2–7). The same thing can be said of Martí's tendency to idealize the 'original' North-American society and blame its moral decadence on the 'contamination' or 'contagion' by the vast currents of newly arrived European and Asian immigrants.

Martí's indirect and provisional writing process, then, provides at least part of an explanation for the fact that his views of American life are sometimes ambivalent or contradictory. Inevitably, some of Martí's judgements were as ephemeral and disposable as the newspapers that inspired them, and in which, in turn, they themselves were published. However, as we have seen, an understanding of Martí's writing process also implies that those judgements were not always solely or necessarily his. If we visualize the US public sphere as a large body of water run through by many different currents, Martí is not more than a boatsman whose control over his own ship is as limited as his capacity to understand where he is going. Sometimes all he can do is go with the flow. Hence the ambiguities that jump out at us, who are able to read the chronicles as a whole and with the privilege of a historical distance unavailable to the author himself.

And yet, if Martí's judgements are not always his own, the style in which he

expresses them certainly is. In fact, the *rhetorical* constancy and conviction of the North-American chronicles stands in sharp contrast with their ambiguity and vacillation at the level of content. One cannot help think that, for Martí, rhetoric at times becomes a means of compensating for the chronicler's lack of security at an epistemological, political and moral level. Style thus turns into Martí's anchor, the only true guarantee of *authenticity*—the *modernista*'s highest value—in a chaotic and hostile modernity or, for that matter, in the impersonal space of the newspaper (Rotker, 1992, pp. 45, 116, 123; Jrade, p. 6). At the same time, one can wonder if the security that Martí's personal style seems to offer is not a false one. More than one critic of the chronicles has noted the predominance of hyperbole, as well as the prodigious proliferation of metaphor. Martí's selection and presentation of North-American news is never really free of sensationalism, but there are also moments in which his language comes close to demagogy. Occasionally, Martí seems to let himself be carried away by his own rhetoric to the point where he loses control over his own words, and his metaphors get the better of him.[6]

The Masses

Instead of assuming a neat identification between style and politics, or ethics and aesthetics, then, it makes more sense to postulate a radical split between the two. At the very least, this allows us better to understand the chronicles' many contradictions. It explains how, in a couple of months' time, Martí could drastically change his opinion on something without diminishing the enthusiasm and rhetorical conviction with which he defended that opinion. As several critics have pointed out, the clearest example of this kind of about-face is to be found in Martí's coverage of the trial and execution of the German and American anarchists arrested after the Haymarket Riots in Chicago, in May of 1886. During the trial, in two chronicles written in May and September of 1886, Martí uncritically adopted the xenophobic rhetoric of the American press and public opinion, painting the anarchists as representatives of a barbaric immigration subversive of the nation's democratic values (Smith, pp. 148–155). The Germans were for Martí 'meras bocas por donde ha venido a vaciarse sobre América el odio febril acumulado durante siglos europeos en la gente obrera' [mere mouths through which the European workers' feverish hate, accumulated over centuries, is being spread over America]. Their sinister ideas had invaded 'los espíritus menos racionales y más dispuestos por su naturaleza a la destrucción' [the less rational minds and those minds most naturally predisposed towards destruction]. Paradoxically, Martí pointed out, it was the democratic climate of the US that had 'permitido el desarrollo de una cría de asesinos' [allowed for the development of a breed of murderers] (*OC*, XI, pp. 55–56).

During the thirteen months following the trial, however, its judicial flaws are revealed, and a small but important part of American public opinion becomes sympathetic to the condemned men (Kaye, 1987, p. 223; Smith, p. 123). Martí, too, changes his mind. In fact, the political stance of his chronicle on the hanging of the anarchists, in November 1887, is diametrically opposed to what he had written during the previous year. Already in the first paragraphs, Martí implicitly distances himself from his previous position. Instead of condemning the anarchists, Martí now scolds those who, like himself, had been 'incapaces de

domar el odio y la antipatía que el crimen inspira' [incapable of controlling the hatred and antipathy that crime inspires] and had therefore passed judgement on 'los delitos sociales sin conocer y pesar las causas históricas de que nacieron, ni los impulsos de generosidad que los producen' [social ills without knowing and weighing the historic causes from which they come, or the generous impulses which produce them] (*OC*, XI, p. 333; *JMR*, p. 86).

Driven by the analysis of these 'causes' but, we might assume, also by the changes in American public opinion, Martí's boat has turned 180 degrees. What had been xenophobia now has turned into solidarity and commiseration. Martí is forced to recognize that even in the United States there are instances of social injustice that, though they might not legitimize the use of violence, they at least make that violence comprehensible:

> ¿Quién que sufre de los males humanos, por muy enfrenada que tenga su razón, no siente que se le inflama y extravía cuando ve de cerca … una de esas miserias sociales que bien pueden mantener en estado de constante locura a los que ven podrirse en ellas a sus hijos y a sus mujeres? (*OC*, XI, p. 337)
>
> [What man suffering from human wrongs, no matter how much he restrains his reason, fails to feel inflamed and misled by one of those social evils which might well keep in a state of madness those who watch their wives and children rotting in these social evils, especially when he examines them closely … ?] (*JMR*, p. 91)

While Martí had previously denounced the violent actions of the convicted workers in pathological terms, he now maintains that they spring from the 'ánimo generoso' [generous soul] of men who are incapable of accepting the inhuman conditions in which they are forced to live. 'Del infierno vienen,' Martí writes; '¿qué lengua han de hablar sino la del infierno?' [They come from hell, what language must they speak but the language of hell?] (*OC*, XI, p. 338; *JMR*, p. 93).

It is important to point out that Martí at no time explicitly recognizes his own radical change of mind with regard to the anarchists' culpability. The later text contains no references to the chronicle on the trial written in the previous year, even though both were published in *La Nación*. Even more surprising is that, while both texts defend opposite arguments, both mention the same facts, invoke the same tropes, and employ the same rhetorical devices. When he still aimed to condemn the anarchists, for instance, Martí diagnosed them in pathological terms as:

> hombres de espíritu enfermizo … empujados unos por el apetito de arrasar … , pervertidos otros por el ansia dañina de notoriedad … ,—y otros, ¡los menos culpables, los más desdichados! endurecidos, condensados en crimen, por la herencia acumulada del trabajo servil y la cólera sorda de las generaciones esclavas. (*OC*, XI, p. 58)
>
> [men of sickly spirits … some of them driven by the hunger for destruction … , others perverted by the harmful urge for notoriety … , and others—the least guilty, the most wretched!—hardened, steeped in crime, through the accumulated legacy of subservient labor, and the silent pent-up anger of generations of slaves.]

He wrote that '[s]us artículos y discursos no [tenían] aquel calor de humanidad

que revela a los apóstoles cansados' [their articles and speeches did not have the warmth of humanity that reveals tired apostles] (*OC*, XI, p. 57) and observed indignantly that '[t]res de ellos ni entendían siquiera la lengua en que los condenaban' [three of them did not even understand the language in which they were being convicted] (*OC*, XI, pp. 55–56). A year later, by contrast, writing from a different moral paradigm, he characterizes the anarchist August Spies as a 'serene' man who spoke 'con cáustica elocuencia, mas no de modo que sus oyentes perdieran el sentido, sino tratando con singular moderación de fortalecer sus ánimos para las reformas necesarias …' [with caustic eloquence—not so that his hearers swooned, but to attempt, with singular modesty, to fortify their spirits for the necessary reforms] (*OC*, XI, pp. 340, 346; *ITM*, p. 310).[7] Now the blame, and therefore the pathologizing diagnosis, is reserved for the police, which in the chronicle from 1886 had been the innocent victim of European barbarity. '¿[N]o fueron', Martí now wonders, 'las fiestas de sangre de la policía, ebria del vino del verdugo como toda plebe revestida de autoridad, las que decidieron armarse a los más bravos?' [was it not the blood feasts of the police that put guns into the hands of the fiercest? The police are drunk on the wine of the executioner, like all the common people when clothed with authority] (*OC*, XI, p. 343; *ITM*, p. 305). And the young German Louis Lingg, whom Martí had criticized a year before for not even speaking English, now not only incites the chronicler's commiseration—'¡ni inglés habla siquiera este mancebo que quiere desventrar la ley inglesa!' [That youth so eager to deflate English law cannot even speak English!] (*OC*, XI, p. 347; *ITM*, p. 312)—but even inspires him to a lyrical passage in which he praises the extraordinary physical beauty of the boy:

> Lingg … [n]o consumía su viril hermosura en los amorzuelos enervantes que suelen dejar sin jugo al hombre en los años gloriosos de la juventud.… [B]ello como Tannenhauser o Lohengrin, cuerpo de plata, ojos de amor, cabello opulento, ensortijado y castaño. ¿A qué su belleza, siendo horrible el mundo? … Acababa de llegar de Alemania: veintidos años cumplía; lo que en los demás es palabra, en él será acción … . (*OC*, XI, p. 341)
> [Lingg … never wasted his manly beauty on those intense and enervating love affairs that generally sap the strength of man in the glorious years of his youth.… [A]s handsome as Tannhäuser or Lohengrin—well-made body, seductive eyes, a head of thick, curly, chestnut hair. For what purpose all this beauty in such a horrible world? … At the age of twenty-two he had just arrived from Germany. What in other men was mere words, in him was action.] (*ITM*, pp. 302–303)

This passage is also interesting because it clearly shows Martí's chronicles to be the meeting point, or melting pot, of two contradictory discursive currents. On the one hand, we note the obvious presence of *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism, which allows Martí to allude to two operas by Wagner in order to highlight Lingg's uncommon handsomeness. What is more, Martí's exalted celebration of the boy's beautiful body, which is made to stand out against the ugly world in which it was forced to live, is not devoid of homoeroticism. On the other hand, however, Martí resists this decadent tendency of his own discourse, refraining it first with the adjective 'viril' and, later, through the pseudo-scientific representa-

tion of love as an 'enervating' state of mind that 'saps' a man's strength. In this last passage, we clearly note the influence of the *other* hegemonic discourse of the moment: positivism (Molloy, p. 41). In the end, Martí makes an implicit case for chastity: Instead of 'wasting' himself on love, young Lingg rightly put his manly energy at the service of a noble cause.[8]

Taken together, Martí's texts on the anarchists' trial and execution illustrate a development that would be strengthened in his later chronicles. As Kaye argues, Martí's *volte face* signals a key moment in his political thinking (1987, p. 225). The more he became disillusioned with the social conditions in the United States—a nation which 'por el culto desmedido a la riqueza, [había] caído, sin ninguna de las trabas de la tradición, en la desigualdad, injusticia y violencia de los países monárquicos' [due to its boundless worship of wealth, had relapsed, unhindered by any of the bonds of tradition, into the inequality, injustice, and violence of the monarchical nations] (*OC*, XI, p. 335)—the more solidarity he had with the lot of the working classes, though only up to a certain point. In spite of his increased understanding of the reasons for the workers' violence, he refused to abandon his general reformist stance, and would continue to reject revolutionary action as an artificial and non-organic solution to social ills. As Kaye points out, it is important to recognize the limits to Martí's position in favour of workers' emancipation—limits imposed, ultimately, by Martí's steadfast adherence to the Krausist ideal of harmony at the aesthetic, personal and social levels.

Woman

This same adherence to the ideal of harmony explains why the relative radicalization one perceives in Martí's position vis-à-vis the working class is all but absent from his attitude towards Unites States women. The first thing the chronicler tells his readers is that women in his country of exile are quite unlike their Latin counterparts. In 1882 he writes: 'No ve el norteño en la mujer aquella frágil copa de nácar, cargada de vida, que vemos nosotros; ni aquella criatura purificadora a quien recibimos en nuestros brazos cuidadosos como a nuestras hijas, ni aquel lirio elegante que perfuma los balcones y las almas' [The northerner does not see woman as that fragile cup of mother-of-pearl, filled with life, that we see in her; nor does he see her as that purifying creature whom we receive in our caring arms as we do our daughters, nor as that elegant lily scenting balconies and souls] (*OC*, IX, p. 248). On the one hand, Martí understands the reasons for this difference. He is well aware that his perception of gender relations is determined by his own cultural background and that, therefore, however much 'no placen mujeres varoniles a nuestra raza poética e hidalga' [our poetic and gentlemanly race has no liking for manly women], '[no] es cuerdo sujetar a nuestro juicio de pueblos romanescos … los menesteres y urgencias de ciudades colosales' [it is not sensible to subject the needs and urgencies of colossal cities to our judgment as Latin peoples] (*OC*, IX, p. 248). He also realizes that, in the 'savage' modern society, woman cannot help but become manly. 'En esta ciudad grande', he says, '… la mujer ha de cuidar de sí, y … ha de hacerse piel fuerte' [In this big city, … woman has to take care of herself, and … has to harden her skin]. But this does not imply that he approves of this masculinization. '¡[C]uánto apena', he exclaims, 'ver cómo se van tro-

cando en flores de piedra, por los hábitos de la vida viril, estas hermosas flores! ¿Qué será de los hombres, el día en que no puedan apoyar su cabeza en un seno caliente de mujer?' [How sad it is to see the habits of manly life turn these beautiful flowers into flowers of stone! What will be of the men, the day they cannot lean their heads on a woman's warm bosom?] (*OC*, IX, p. 392).

Again, ambivalence is the predominant characteristic of Martí's view of women. On the one hand, he states that 'el espíritu femenil [es] origen del sentido artístico y complemento del ser nacional' [the feminine spirit is the origin of artistic sense and a complement to the national character] (*OC*, IX, p. 123) and that, if the United States is to be saved, it will be thanks to its women:

> sólo en la mujer reside aquí … la virtud robusta que baste a compensar los desórdenes de poder, y la sordidez y rudeza de la vida, a que parece el hombre americano encaminado … . [E]n la armonía y originalidad sorprendentes de sus trabajos mentales, en su desinterés relativo, pero siempre superior al hombre, se ve el único retoño de aquella cristiandad, el único asomo de aquella levadura de pureza, que será dentro de poco indispensable para sujetar a esta nueva Roma. (*OC*, XII, p. 156)
> [Only in women … does the robust virtue reside that is capable of compensating for the excesses of power, the squalor and harshness of life, for which the American man seems to be heading … . Only in the surprising harmony and originality of their mental labor, in their disinterestedness, which is relative but always superior to the men, does one see a budding of the Christianity, a hint of the uplifting purity that will soon be indispensable in order to restrain this new Rome.]

On the other hand, however, this positive valorization of the 'feminine spirit' does not mean that women do not have flaws. What Martí defines as 'feminine' does not seem exclusively to reside in women, nor is it their only attribute. Martí's representation of woman also includes a series of less laudable tendencies—he specifically mentions her 'deseo de pecar' [yearning for sin] and 'apego sensual' [weakness for the sensual] (*OC*, XII, pp. 156, 301)—and at times it borders on misogyny. In 1887, for instance, he cynically states that women's participation in US politics is quite appropriate:

> La política, tal como se la practica ahora, ¿qué es más que mujer? Todo se hace en ella a hurtadillas, con insinuaciones, con rivalidades, con chismes: los hombres entran en ella con colorete y polvos de arroz, como las máscaras: al que asoma en ella con amor a la patria y franca lengua, lo escarnecen, lo aíslan, lo acorralan: ya no es coraza la que usa la política, sino corsé flexible: ¡bien está la mujer en este arte de mujeres! (*OC*, XI, p. 185)
> [Is politics, as it is practiced today, any different from a woman? Everything done in politics is done in secret, with hints, with rivalries, with gossip; whoever appears in politics with love of country and open speech is bitterly opposed, isolated, intimidated, driven out: politics does not use a tough suit of armor any more, but a flexible corset. A woman does well in this womanly art!] (*ITM*, p. 190)[9]

Martí's essentialist vision of gender relations is clearly revealed in his chronicle on the work of philanthropist and educator Peter Cooper, whom he praises for

having understood that 'el modo verdadero de educar a las mujeres, … es habilitarlas para vivir con honradez, de labores naturales a su sexo hermoso' [the proper way of educating women … is to prepare them to live in decency, working in occupations that are natural to their beautiful sex]. Needless to say, an important part of those 'natural tasks' is to take care of the man:

> A solas, cuando nadie lo vea, cuando el hombre se limpie cansado la sangre del corazón, la mujer ha de ponerle la mano en la frente, ha de llevarle una taza de agua y azúcar, bien hervida, a los labios. (*OC*, XII, pp. 242–243) [Alone, with no one else present, when the tired man cleans the blood off his heart, the woman has to put her hand on his forehead, and bring a cup of well-boiled sugar water to his lips.]

What Martí likes about Cooper's educational project is precisely that 'a estas niñas les empiezan a enseñar aquí esto, a hervir bien el azúcar, … a asar la carne de manera que no tenga que salir a la calle, en busca de los digestivos de la cervecería, el marido maltratado' [this is what they begin to teach these girls here, how to boil sugar well, … and to grill the meat in such a way that the mistreated husband does not have to go out into the street and into a bar in search of an after dinner drink] (*OC*, XII, pp. 242–243).

As Ramos rightly shows, the idyllic vision of the harmonious family presented in this text forms also the basis of Martí's social utopia (p. 201). The family is both the microcosm and synecdoche of the nation: '¡Mantengan la casa', Martí exclaims, 'los que quieran pueblo duradero!' [Those who want to have a lasting nation, let them take care of their house!] (*OC*, X, p. 225). For Martí, a people is or should be like a family, an 'apretadísima comunión de los espíritus' [very tightly knit communion of spirits] (*OC*, X, p. 157). Similarly, a nation should be like an orderly household. '[L]os pueblos', he writes elsewhere, 'necesitan de los dos sexos, como la familia, y un pueblo sin alma de mujer, o con cantineras por esposas, viviría como una horda de mercenarios o como un barrio chino' [Nations need both of the sexes, just like families do, and a nation without a feminine soul, or a nation with barwomen for wives, would live like a horde of mercenaries, or live like they do in Chinatown] (*OC*, XII, p. 301); 'un pueblo sin mujeres no es simpático' [a nation without women does not inspire sympathy], he states in a text on Chinese immigrants (*OC*, X, p. 306). That is why he believes that '[q]uien quiera matar a un pueblo, eduque a las mujeres como a hombres: la animalidad y el egoísmo son los enemigos del mundo: se necesita crear en los pueblos … el desinterés …' [those who wish to kill a nation should educate the women as if they were men: animality and egoism are the world's enemies: in nations it is necessary to foster … disinterestedness] (*OC*, XII, p. 242).

The harmony that Martí believes should reign in families as well as nations is not only associated with notions of balance and symmetry, but also of order and hierarchy. A harmonic community is a community in which everyone occupies the position that is fitting to the essence of his or her being. Thus, woman's most natural function is to take care of man, form a home that will literally domesticate him, and, with her feminine grace, awake in her male companion—who 'vive, sin saberlo, enamorado de la belleza' [is unwittingly in love with beauty] (*OC*, XII, p. 301)—a spirit of disinterestedness. Any other role division, however justified by social or historical circumstances, goes against these essential func-

tions and is therefore, in Martí's eyes, anti-natural, anti-harmonic and even anti-aesthetic.

'Our America'

For contemporary readers of Martí, this deep-rooted essentialism in gender matters, founded on strong notions of harmony and the natural, is perhaps the hardest ideological pill to swallow. I would argue, however, that the anti-imperialism that still attracts us in Martí is ultimately founded on very similar essentialist tenets. It is well known that Martí strongly rejects US imperialism because, as he writes, '[t]ambién la fuerza tiene su deber, que es el respeto a la debilidad' [strength, too, has its duty, and its duty is to respect weakness] (*OC*, XII, pp. 239–240). This is the principal message of 'Nuestra América', a speech Martí gave in 1891. Its argument invokes the same concepts of the harmonious, the natural and the organic in order to denounce any imposition of foreign forms of government on the peoples and nations of Latin America. Instead of trying to imitate Europe, Martí writes, Latin-American leaders need to *study* the Latin-American peoples, and get to know their essence, in order to govern them better.

At first sight, the Latin America presented by Martí in this essay is limited to two major social sectors opposing each other, whose representatives are the 'fake man of letters' (*letrado falso*) and the American 'natural man' (*hombre natural*) (Belnap, p. 200). In reality, however, the essay's conceptual structure is founded on three main elements. The first of these is constituted by the governing classes that look abroad for inspiration, renounce their own country and culture, and 'aspiran a dirigir un pueblo que no conocen' [aspire to govern a people that they do not know] (p. 39; *OA*, p. 85). The second element is this unknown *pueblo,* ignored and despised by its own leaders. This is the series of 'elementos naturales desdeñados' [disdained native elements] that are fooled into supporting the 'tyrants'; the 'pueblos originales' [original peoples] that should not be governed by 'leyes heredadas de cuatro siglos de práctica libre en los Estados Unidos' [laws inherited from four centuries of freedom in the United States] (p. 39; *OA*, p. 86). These original peoples, which include 'las masas mudas de indios' [the silent Indian masses], are embodied in the figure of the 'natural man,' which, as Martí states, has vanquished the 'libro importado' [imported book] and 'los letrados artificiales' ['learned and artificial men] (p. 39; *OA*, p. 86).

But the 'natural man' is not necessarily a positive element. He is uneducated, can be violent, and is ready to 'recobrar por la fuerza el respeto de quien le hiere la susceptibilidad o le perjudica el interés' [forcibly regain the respect of whoever has wounded his pride or threatened his interests] (p. 87). In another passage of the same essay, Martí refers to the same social element in much less laudable terms as 'las masas incultas': 'En pueblos compuestos de elementos cultos e incultos, los incultos gobernarán, por su hábito de agredir y resolver las dudas con su mano, allí donde los cultos no aprendan el arte del gobierno' [In nations composed of both cultured and uncultured elements, the uncultured will govern because it is their habit to attack and resolve doubts with their fists in cases where the cultured have failed in the art of governing] (p. 39; *OA*, p. 87). The uneducated mass of Latin Americans 'es perezosa, y tímida en las cosas de la inteligencia, y quiere que la gobiernen bien; pero si el gobierno le lastima, se lo sacude y gobierna ella' [are lazy and timid in the realm of intelligence, and

they want to be governed well. But if the governments hurt them, they shake it off and govern themselves] (p. 39; *OA*, p. 87). The positive or negative disposition of this particular social actor, then, depends on the treatment it receives from the governing classes: 'El hombre natural es bueno, y acata y premia la inteligencia superior, mientras ésta no se vale de su sumisión para dañarle, o le ofende prescindiendo de él, que es cosa que no perdona el hombre natural, …' [The natural man is good, and he respects and rewards superior intelligence as long as his humility is not turned against him, or he is not offended by being disregarded—a thing the natural man never forgives…] (p. 39; *OA*, p. 87).

But who embodies this superior intelligence that the natural man is ready to obey and appreciate? This is where Martí's third main social actor finally comes in, the only element defined in purely positive terms. This third element is the 'mestizo autóctono' [native halfbreed] who 'ha vencido al criollo exótico' [has conquered the exotic Creole]; the '*real man*' that the continent is giving birth to. It is thanks to him that the Latin-American republics will be 'saved' (p. 41; *OA*, p. 90). It is true that Martí attributes a crucial role to the 'natural man', noting, as said, that he 'is good, and he respects and rewards superior intelligence'; but he only does so to the extent that this natural man respects the 'real man' who knows to 'govern him well'. Harmony, then, is never seen independent from the idea of social order (Kaye, 1986, p. 81).

As has been pointed out many times, one of Martí's most laudable traits—also evident in 'Nuestra América'—is his principled rejection of racism. But in spite of his famous assertion that 'no hay odio de razas porque no hay razas' [there can be no racial animosity, because there are no races], his views of international and intercultural relations still seem to be predicated on essentialized categories closely associated with the concept of race, though the Spanish concept of *raza* should be understood in cultural more than ethnic terms (Pike, pp. 128–145; Belnap, pp. 204–205). In one of his North-American chronicles, Martí writes, for instance, that there are 'razas avarientas que son las del Norte, cuya hambre formidable necesita pueblos vírgenes' [greedy races, which are those of the North, whose formidable appetite needs virgin nations], and 'razas fieles, que son las del Sur, cuyos hijos no hallan que caliente más sol que el sol patrio, ni anhelan más riqueza que la naranja de oro y la azucena blanca que se cría en el jardín de sus abuelos …' [loyal races, which are those of the South, whose offspring find that the only sun that warms them is the sun of their fatherland, and who do not yearn for any riches other than the golden orange and the white lily grown in their grandparents' garden] (*OC*, IX, p. 224). Ultimately, Martí's defence of Latin-America's right to cultural and political autonomy is also founded on the same concept of race. He rejects the idea of a world dominated by the brute 'masculinity' of the avaricious Northern cultures, bereft of the 'grace' and 'spirit' of the 'Latin race.' Martí's rejection of any form of foreign tutelage, from the US or Europe, is legitimized by the notion that Latin America is *essentially* different.

While Martí celebrates certain specific attributes of women and the masses of 'natural men', then, his attitude vis-à-vis their social emancipation is profoundly ambivalent. This same ambivalence is evident in the texts by Ganivet and Rodó. If the latter accepts democracy, it is not as a means of popular emancipation, but as a mechanism of social selection that will allow the *real* aristocracies to rise to the top. And Rodó only accepts a form of democracy that is constantly checked

or 'rectified' by 'una activa autoridad moral que la depure y encauce sus tendencias' [an active authority that purifies and channels its natural tendencies] (pp. 24, 31). Ganivet, in turn, flatly rejects the struggle for democracy he witnesses in Belgium. Democracy, in his eyes, can only lead to 'la anulación de todas las personas de sentido común y la exaltación de todos los elementos bajos de la sociedad' [the annulment of all people of common sense and the exaltation of all the lower elements of society] (*Epistolario*, pp. 911–912). In addition, Ganivet dismisses the increasing participation in public life by Belgian women: 'si llega un día en que la mujer de carrera, … se encuentra por todas partes, … habrá que suplicar a la Providencia que caiga sobre nosotros otra nueva invasión de bárbaros y bárbaras, porque, puestos en los extremos, es preferible la barbarie a la ridiculez' [if there comes a day in which professional women … are to be found everywhere, … we will have to beg Providence for another invasion of barbarians, male and female, because if we have to choose between extremes, barbarism is preferable to ridicule] (*Epistolario*, p. 876).

Conclusion

To what extent can we allow ourselves to ignore the retrograde elements in these three essayists? Is it possible to salvage their condemnations of racism, imperialism and capitalism without adopting in some form their antifeminism and elitism? Octavio Paz takes the whole affair lightly. The 'definiciones sumarias' [summary definitions] of Latins and Anglo-Saxons proposed by Rodó, he says, 'nos hacen sonreír' [make us smile] and '[n]os parecen superficiales' [seem superficial to us] (p. 43). But at the same time, Paz denounces the cultural arrogance of the Anglo-Saxon world, which he believes is much stronger than that of Rodó. It is true, of course, that, placed within their historical context, the essentialisms that jump out to us in the writings of Martí, Rodó and Ganivet can be seen as 'strategic' positions or even as useful form of identity politics, entirely justified by the brutal North-American and European imperialisms that these essayists aimed to denounce. Similarly, it is only fair to admit that Martí's Pan-Latin-Americanism, like Rodó's Pan-Latinism, was an understandable and even praiseworthy attempt to form an international alliance against a Northern hegemony whose patriotic megalomania was at least as essentialist as the texts of these Hispanic intellectuals.

Still, these considerations do not mitigate the problematic fact that these intellectuals' retrograde attitude toward the social role of women, as well as their elitist posture vis-à-vis the lower classes, originates in the same notions of harmony and the natural on which they base their arguments against imperialism. If, at an international level, the cultural autonomy of the Hispanic world is defended by arguing that its cultural essence entitles it to a position of power, the subordinate position of women is defended as corresponding to their feminine essence, as is the political leadership of the 'superior men' over the 'naturally' subaltern masses.

In Martí's case, as we have seen, these contradictions are related to the ambivalent attitude he adopts toward the United States and modernity in general. More specifically, this ambivalence is manifested in a double vacillation. In the first place, one perceives in Martí a tension between, on the one hand, his desire or nostalgia for *order* (or harmony) in social and aesthetic terms and, on

the other hand, the *disorder* (or excess) of his style, with its uncontrollable proliferation of figurative language. Second, the rigidly binary semantic structure that Martí sets up in his chronicles and essays runs into trouble when he tries to translate it into terms of gender. On the one hand, the feminine is associated with grace, disinterestedness and aesthetic faculties; it is, therefore, what is *lacking* in the materialist modernity of North America. On the other hand, however, the feminine represents the uncontrollable desire of the masses, the rule of the passions—in other words, precisely what makes modernity so dangerous and frightening (Ramos, p. 189). The feminine, then, is simultaneously in need of protection and restraint: it is modernity's opposite as well as its essence.[10]

In intercultural terms, as we have seen, the categories of the feminine, 'natural man' and the Hispanic come together in one sole 'us' opposed to an Anglo-Saxon 'them'. *Within* the Hispanic, however, Martí makes a subdivision between, on the one hand, the natural and feminine elements and, on the other, that of intelligence, which is assumed to be masculine, and whose mission is to *study* the former two inasmuch as they embody the essence of Latin-American identity. But once sufficient knowledge of these elements has been acquired, the intelligent male is also called upon to use this knowledge in order to 'govern them well', that is, to control and canalize their innate violence. Natural man (*el pueblo*, the folk), as well as woman, is presented primarily as a *source* of inspiration and authenticity. Both are muses, but passive muses, in the same way that it is only from her position *within* the home that woman is able to 'inspirar a los hijos el desprecio por los placeres materiales' [inspire in her sons contempt for material pleasures] (*OC*, XIX, p. 124). It is in the *pueblo* and woman that Martí locates the origin of Latin-American identity and the aesthetic disinterestedness that constitutes its principal value and virtue, and that is presented as the only remedy to heal the damage done by an excessively Northern, rationalist and materialist modernity (Pita, p. 139).

Martí, then, is not antimodern. What he proposes is an alternative modernity, a modernity able to incorporate the feminine and natural elements that are trampled and excluded in the North. But he is not willing to give up his desire for order (Pease, p. 48). Nor does the remedy work if these original and innocent elements change their role in any fundamental way. In principle, Martí does not disapprove of US women being incorporated into modern society. What he fears is that this will lead women to lose their womanness—to stop being submissive, servile and innocent—because this would also cause women to lose the 'charm' that constitutes their essential value. The same holds true for the 'natural' elements that need to be studied and governed well by their leaders. These, then, are the limits to Martí's understanding of the subalternities of culture, class and gender. His texts, nostalgic for order, are rooted not only in the essentialisms of his time, but also in Enlightenment ideology (Ramos, p. 188). Martí never loses faith in the project of modernity and the utopia of progress. Needless to say, for Martí the driving force behind progress is, ultimately, educated and male. At the same time that he criticizes the excess of 'masculinity' in the United States, he laments its relative lack in Latin America. The modernity that he proposes for his own continent, therefore, also implies a degree of 'masculinization'; after all, as he wrote in 'Nuestra América,' 'los pueblos viriles … sólo aman a los pueblos

viriles' [strong nations … love strong nations, and them alone] (*OA*, p. 93) (Santí, 1998, p. 188; Pita, p. 133; Belnap, p. 192).

Finally there is one other contradiction, pointed out by Maarten van Delden, that also shows to what extent the Latin-Americanist and 'spiritualist' discourse of the turn of the century remains indebted to an ideology of progress. If Martí, Ganivet and Rodó invoke the *natural* it is also because it allows them to bolster their arguments with the authority of the natural sciences. Paradoxically, they take advantage of the prestige of positivism to advance positions that, in themselves, are profoundly idealist. Rodó, for instance, argues that 'la ciencia muestra cómo en la inmensa sociedad de las cosas y los seres, es una necesaria condición de todo progreso el orden jerárquico' [science shows how in the immense society of things and beings, hierarchical order is a necessary condition for all progress] and that the 'ciencia nueva habla de la selección como de una necesidad de todo progreso' [new science speaks of selection as something necessary to all progress] (pp. 32, 28). In that way, however, he builds his aestheticist argument on a particular interpretation of Darwin that Van Delden rightly summarizes as the principle of 'the survival of the prettiest'. In Martí there is a similar positivist presence, especially, as we have seen, when he pathologizes the recent waves of European immigrants or, in more general terms, the 'uneducated masses'.

But perhaps the greatest contradiction underlying these texts of Martí and Rodó is that, at the same time that they invoke the natural and the organic, they seem to be promoting an *intervention* in the course of nature in the name of a utopian project. Here, again, we see how modern they really are. On the one hand, Martí writes: 'De las raíces suben los pueblos' [nations grow out of their roots] (*OC*, XII, p. 153); but on the other he maintains, speaking of Latin America: 'De raíz venimos mal; y tenemos que sacarnos la raíz, y ponernos otras' [Our ills stem from our roots; and we need to pull off our roots, and put on new ones] (*OC*, X, pp. 260–261). As said, we should not forget that the Latin American intelligentsia of the turn of the century enthusiastically but selectively adopted *two* European discursive currents: both decadentism and positivism (Molloy, p. 41). Martí betrays the influence of the latter especially in his preference for medicalized metaphors. For him, the anti-natural, the inorganic and the ugly are almost automatically associated with sickness (Pita, p. 134). In 'Nuestra América', to be sure, he criticizes the 'letrado falso' for adopting European positivism; but this does not mean that Martí himself rejects the pathologizing tendencies of positivist thinking. Rather, he inverts them (Belnap, pp. 192–196).

More than a century after his death, José Martí still wields considerable discursive authority. It might be time, however, to start reading him more critically. This will perhaps also lead us to examine to what extent current ideas of cultural diversity and autonomy, and the accompanying forms of identity politics, are ultimately founded on an ideology of the harmonic, the natural and the organic. It might lead us to wonder, in other words, to what extent we are still caught in the same contradictions as Martí, Ganivet and Rodó.

Notes

1. The Spanish quotes are from the 1963 edition of Martí's *Obras completas* (*OC*), with the volume number indicated in Roman numerals. For the English translation, I rely where possible on

existing English translations, taken from *The America of José Martí* (*AJM*), *Our America* (*OA*), *Inside the Monster (ITM),* and the *José Martí Reader (JMR)*. In those cases where no English source is cited, the translations are mine.

2. Among other recent critical approaches to Martí are those of Pita, Sánchez and Molloy.
3. He writes for instance: 'Hay que aclarar: no descartamos como falsa la crítica martiana a la reificación de la vida diaria en la sociedad capitalista; impacta la actualidad de esa crítica.… Sin embargo, no podemos asumir la *ideologización* de los términos (cultura/falsa cultura) que presupone la organización antitética, demasiado esquemática, de esa crítica a la reificación' [Of course, such a hypothesis would in no way invalidate Martí's powerful critique of the reification of daily life in capitalist society; in fact, his early critique of massification is still pertinent today.… It would be equally naïve, however, to accept the ideologization of such terms as 'culture'/'false culture,' which presupposes an antithetical, all-too-schematic order behind Martí's critique of reification] (1989, p. 205; 2001, p. 222).
4. Ramos reads the 1881 chronicle about Coney Island as an essentially negative evaluation of the modern city. In reality, however, the text is not only about the city, nor are its conclusions solely negative. In the first place, the Coney Island amusement park is constructed as the *opposite* to the city; in a sense, Martí represents it as a modern version of the *locus amoenus.* Coney Island is a 'lugar amplio de reposo, de amparo y de recreo,' 'donde las familias acuden a buscar, en vez del aire mefítico y nauseabundo de Nueva York, el aire sano y vigorizador de la orilla del mar' [spacious amusement area, providing relaxation and recreation … , where entire families come to escape the foul, nauseous vapors of New York and fill their lungs with the healthy, invigorating salt air] (*OC*, IX, pp. 123–124; *AJM*, pp. 103–104). In his chronicle, moreover, Martí's criticisms are alternated with genuine manifestations of praise and admiration—'¡cuánta hermosura!' [such beauty!], the chronicler even exclaims at one point. Furthermore, Martí calls attention to aesthetically pleasing aspects of the modern constructions, such as the 'pilares elegantes' [slender pillars] supporting the docks (*OC*, IX, pp. 124, 127, *AJM*, p. 104).
5. His famous characterization of the United States as a 'tierra vacía de espíritu' [nation … void of spirit], for instance, is from 1881 (*OC*, IX, p. 126; *AJM*, p. 107). See also Rotker (1999, p. 19).
6. Martí's tendency to slip 'from the literal into the figurative', noted by Ramos, is in effect a trap (p. 195). In 'Nuestra América', for instance, Martí gets lost in his own metaphor, and ends up speaking of '*el pueblo*' [public opinion] accusing '*los pueblos*' [the peoples] of being thieves: 'Los pueblos que no se conocen han de darse prisa para conocerse, como quienes van a pelear juntos.… Los [pueblos] que … cercenaron … la tierra del hermano vencido, … si no quieren que les llame *el pueblo* ladrones, devuélvanle la tierra al hermano' [Nations that do no know one another should quickly become acquainted, as men who are to fight a common enemy.… Those (nations) who … (lopped) off the lands of their defeated brother … , ought to return the lands to the brother, if they do not want the people to call them robbers] (p. 37, emphasis added; *OM*, p. 84). Rotker sees this differently: 'Martí se vuelca en una prosa florescente que a veces parece sobreabundante, hiperbólica: hay que leerla con detenimiento para darse cuenta de que nunca infla, que no hay frases vacuas, que las ampliaciones suelen ser una forma de precisar …' [Martí's prose gushes, so that at times it seemes overabundant or hyperbolic: But one has to read it carefully to realize that he never inflates, that there are no vacuous phrases, that the expansions usually are a way of expressing himself with more precision] (1992, p. 207). Kaye, on the other hand, points out that Martí's prose at times spins out of control (1987, p. 221).
7. I have introduced a slight correction in the *ITM* translation, which reads: 'not so that his hearers missed the import of his message' (p. 310).
8. It is interesting to note, again, that Martí has never seen Lingg in person. He only knows him from the drawings and descriptions that appeared in the US newspapers. Lingg's good looks were in fact legendary; but while the American press tended to read them through the paradigm of the devilish 'fatal man', representing Lingg and his companions as seductive agents of Evil (Smith, pp. 134–135), for Martí Lingg's physical beauty could only be a proof of the young man's virtue and nobility.
9. I have again introduced a slight correction in the *ITM* translation, which reads: 'a woman who uses politics is not a tough suit of armor, but a flexible corset' (p. 190).
10. Ganivet expresses this ambivalence with extraordinary lucidity: '[M]i posición es indecisa y mis tendencias dudosas y a veces enemigas. Mi instinto me arrastra a lo ordinario, o mejor a lo popular, a lo que gusta e interesa al pueblo bajo, hasta el punto de que una copla popular … me

impresiona mil veces más que una poesía o una composición musical de autores que sean reputados por genios. En cambio, tomado el pueblo como organismo social, me da cien patadas en el estómago, porque me parece que es hasta un crimen que la gentuza se meta en cosa que no sea trabajar y divertirse' [My position is indecisive, and my tendencies are full of doubt and sometimes contradictory. I am instinctively attracted to the ordinary, or rather to the popular, to the tastes and interests of the common folk, to the point that … I am a thousand times more impressed by a folk song than by a poem or a musical composition created by men who are considered to be geniuses. As a social body, on the other hand, I can't stand the folk, because it seems to me it is nothing less than a crime for the mob to be involved in anything other than working and enjoying itself] (*Epistolario*, pp. 906–907).

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