Praxis of Jose Marti: Politico Literary Discourse and Agency for Independence Movement

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Abstract

This article explores Jose Marti's political mobilization in general and extrapolates Marti's praxis specifically. A multifold analysis is conducted as follows: first, the analysis explores the narrative of Jose Marti regarding the development of his consciousness and his role in changing the historical trajectory of Cuba; second, the analysis examines Marti's political praxis in engaging with the geopolitical semiotic field and mobilizing Cuban cultural communities for the Cuban War of Independence.

Keywords*: Jose Marti, praxis, multi-racial agency, semiotic analysis*

Introduction

Jose Marti is revered as a Cuban national hero. According to Fidel Castro, Marti's "high ideal" inspired the armed attack on Moncada Barracks, Santiago de Cuba, in 1953 (Castro, p. 23, 2001). Castro asserted that "the intellectual author of this revolution is José Martí, the apostle of our independence," thus assigning Marti responsibility for the armed uprising in 1953 (De la Cova, 2007, p. 203–211 and 259–266). However, the significance of Marti's extraordinary ideas has been largely overshadowed by the recent memory of the post-Cold War development. As Deborah Shnookal assesses, "[T]he tumultuous US-Cuba relationship cannot be explained simply as a Cold War construct but has a much longer and more complex history" (Shnookal, 2007, p. 3). Marti's thoughts

deserve more than impressionistic interpretations and fragmented treatment based on recent Cuban-US history.

Marti, though renowned as a foremost Latin American political and cultural figure, has not been visible as a major thinker and pedagogical practitioner, particularly in the North American cultural landscapes. Given the abundance of research on political movements, Rubin notes that "[however] each movement offered a relatively conventional story by the media, public opinion and some academic researchers" (Rubin, 2004, p. 110). The author, cognizant of the pedagogical void thereof and lack of representation, recognizes the pedagogical values of Marti's work vital to reinvent the accustomed narrative of the research on political movements.

His political organizing, campaigns and literary production are the results of his critical reading of the world and contingent on geopolitical and historical conditions. His life and work, as praxis, engaged in a recursive process of reflection-theory-action; as a pedagogy, Marti's praxis created structures of new meanings and reorganized semantic relations, forging a Cuban independent agency.

From this perspective, Marti's literary work can be seen as a reflexive circuit from the articulation of the world under oppressive conditions to the mobilization of an independence movement. Marti's literary-politico discourse thus is pedagogical in nature that the organizing of ideas is of and for the mobilizing of agency.

In light of the call for politico-pedagogical unity, this research on Marti's thought explicates the organizing structures of meaning construction and expression through analyses based on the method of semiotics.

A Semiotics Lens for Reading Jose Marti

This essay explores constructs, which constituted his politico-literary discourse, mobilized Cuban communities and ignited the Cuban War of Independence in 1895. Therein are the thematic predicates of anti-oppression and liberation in the historical crossroads from the colonial era to the nationalist movement of the ex-colonies for independence. The essay investigates Marti's biographical ethos, explores the themes of his praxis at the discourse level, decodes the thematic clusters of signs and symbols embedded in his poetics, essays, prose, etc., and then organizes his interlocutors' relationships at the sociopolitical/cultural level.

The method of semiotics – the study of signs and symbols – is employed to explicate the organizing structures of meaning construction and expression. The meaningful signs are motivated signs, where Kress explains that "[a] motivated sign has a close relationship – [though] not an arbitrary one – between signifier and signified…Motivation [which can be perspective or expectation of relativity] drives a relationship between the sign-user/sign-maker and the means which s/he uses when enacting representation" (Cobley and Jansz, 2003 p.167). Semiotic analyses study the cognitive processing underlying one's ways of perceiving and the uses of signs and symbols, including syntactic structure, semantic relations, morphological constructions, and sociocultural pragmatics. Motivation, as the mastermind, creates a thread of logic from clusters of meaningful units. Hence, semiotic structuralist methodology is conducive to explicating the discursive contexts of the signs and symbols, organizing the thematic clusters of the codes, and structuring the sociocultural relations, etc.

Marti's life and work are inextricably rooted in his native land. The motivated signs may take the form of signage, symbolism, metaphor, references, lexicon or a story. The political motivation and nostalgic connotations are invoked by

the coinage of *la patria*. Cuba in the code *la patria* encapsulates both the means and the ends of the independence pedagogy and movement. Even in modern Cuba, the slogan *la patria o muerte* (i.e., fatherland or death) transmits cultural-political currents and delivers a transcendental reverberation through the history. Cuba, an isle of the tropics, embodies a metaphysical landscape of signs of motivations.

Marti's politico-discourse and activism, congruent with Freirean praxis by "conscientization" by "perceiving social, political and economic contradictions to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2017, p. 35). The pedagogical approach to Marti's work, beyond the consumption of his ideas, investigates how the signs and symbols are clustered and organized thematically at the discourse level and then follows by applying analyses to investigate how the interlocutors' relationships interact and how they respond to the call for action at the sociopolitical/cultural level.

Results and Discussion

A Revolutionary Life

Marti led a revolutionary life and also a pedagogical life for the enchanted. Marti, a symbol of Cuban patriotism, is a cultural icon among Cubans as an ideologue of Cubanism. He is considered an influencer who shaped cultural aesthetic tastes and consolidated the Cuban identity as separate from the colonial culture. His ideals and phrases have become idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, justifications for personal idiosyncrasy, declarations of resistance as a particular cultural identity, and representations of solidarity for universal idealism. He is an essential part of the past, the present and the formation of the Cuban identity. Culturally and ideologically, Marti, the native son of the tropics, reinvented Cuban agency.

Marti was born in 1853, and his political and cultural significance persist in contemporary Cuban life. Marti's persona is multifaceted, i.e., a political exile, a vagabond, a poet, a journalist, and also a teacher/professor. Marti lived intensely and fought tirelessly for the political project to free Cuba. At age 17, due to an injury caused a blow from a chain at the Presidio, a political prison in Havana, he suffered from chronic and debilitating pain.

He taught language, philosophy and literature in Guatemala; in Venezuela he held classes in oratory, later became a faculty member in Literature and French; in New York, he assisted founding La Liga, for which he taught literacy and political education to working class Afro-Cuban exiles.

Marti never lived to see the fruition of his political project to establish an independent Cuba; he was shot and fell on the Dos Rios battleground in May 1895 at the age of 42, 39 days after landing in Cuba to begin the war. His fate was sealed, contradicting his will as recorded during his last days, when he wrote "I called for this war, and my responsibility does not end with its onset, but begins" (Marti, 2007a, p. 233-236). His words had a prophetic significance; his work continued to generate influence long after his death.

Marti left the world a profuse amount of writing. Much of the literature concerning Marti has investigated and made assertions regarding his political works, impacts and educative ideology; however, the existing literature has focused less on Marti's ways of perceiving meaning and signification for meaning construction and creation. Marti's praxis encodes a cultural narrative of Cuban identity that is integral to the geopolitical sovereignty of the island of Cuba, where generations of mixed-blood indigenous Cubans prospered and took refuge with/in their native land. A cultural narrative infused with a new voice

and Cuban identity is an essential part of, indeed, is inseparable from, actualizing the goal of the Cuban revolution.

Understanding Marti's praxis requires a historical visit to a world divided between the European continent and the new colonial society. This world was not only connected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonist migration and shipments of raw materials but also separated by colonial imperial domination and subject to the hierarchy of a caste system. In this historiographic context, the onset of the conqueror-conquered, master-slave relation can be found in the origin of coloniality and colonialism.

Decolonizing Language and a New Consciousness

According to Wilhem von Humboldt (Cobley & Jansz, 2003, p. 143), language is conceived as a process (*energia*) rather than as a final product (ergon). Fiercely, Marti worked for Cuban independence through community organizing work of "uniting, stimulating and teaching through a powerful weapon: the pen" (Manach, 1950, p. 208). His distilling process from ideas to realization is reflected in his literary-politico discourse, which is of pedagogical in nature, that the organizing of ideas is of and for the mobilizing of agency. The biographer of Marti, Manach, writes, "Marti's writing of articles was a discipline that obliged him to study and analyze events" (Manach, 1950, p. 211). Marti's experiences living and working in Mexico, Guatemala and Venezuela resulted in "the American direction," (Manach, 1950, p. 207), by which the Cuban independence stipulated the liberation of Latin America. To achieve independence, existential contradictions/conditions had to be confronted, exteriorized, and decolonized. The American direction predicated in the consciousness of intersubjectivity to distinguish the Eurocentric-colonial epistemology of imitation from the one rooted in Latin America. The Latin American agency and identity must come to "a full realization of itself in the

challenge of new times; [must resurrect the American intelligent culture and liberty from within]" (Manach, 1950, pp. 207-208).

According to scholars of coloniality, "Occidentalism [therefore] is the self-image of the west (the geohistorical location) that began to take shape with the initial formations of European identity (distinct from Christendom) and the geopolitical consciousness of Europe as the center of a newly emergent worldwide system" (Elias, 1978, p. 3). Against this philosophical cultural backdrop, Marti's politico-literary discourse subverted the Occidental colonial identity that had mirrored the oppressor/slave dichotomy since the emergence of 16th-century coloniality. In his vision, New World poetry and discourse articulated the consciousness of an identity rooted in the historiography of the Caribbean and Latin America. Marti is one of the foremost Modernist poets in Latin America. The tenderness of his poetics, the burning nostalgia for Cuba, and the tropic imageries were sung free of contriving rhetoric and of difficult harmonies of Romanticism. *Ismaelillo*, a collection of poetry dedicated to his son, bears the mark of Modernism in breaking down conventional formulas of representation. His aesthetics was emerging then in its organic overtones of a Latin American original voice. García Álvarez comments, "Marti's poetics was thus opening the space for the renewal of the Latin-American poetry" (García Álvarez, 1999). For the publication of *Ismaelillo*, Marti wrote:

> My objective is to disembark from the useless language: to make it lasting, making it sincere, vigorous, and sober; leaving no more leaves than necessary to make the flower illuminate. Do not use word in verses that is not in itself, a real and inexcusable importance. Denounce the vulgar cult of rhyme, and make this slave of thought, through yours, your organ and your suit (in García Álvarez, 1999).

Marti's verses project a vision and imply a growing new consciousness, with generative metaphysical landscapes constitutive of natural signs and cultural

symbolism that are metaphors to be mobilized. Marti's literary expressions palpate with rhythms of passion and reason that reflect his lucid reading of history. Examining native culture and colonial cultural civilization, Marti critiqued "we are not yet sufficiently American; every continent must have its own expression; …There are men in America who are letter-perfect in European literature, but we do not have one exclusively American writer" (Marti, 1979a, p. 93). His ideation of world and discourse parted ways with the Occidental ideologues of his time and with the European conventionalists. In the essay *Our America,* Marti called on New World poetry to break away from the language of Romanticism: "[poetry should cut] off its Zorrilla-esque mane and [hang] the ruddy vest from the glorious tree" (Marti, 2002a, p. 293-294).

Fischer notes "Marti [broke] away from the gothic romanticism of Zorrilla and purposefully [forged] a fresh American poetry" (Fischer, 2002, p. 14).Fischer notes "Marti [broke] away from the gothic romanticism of Zorrilla and purposefully [forged] a fresh American poetry" (Fischer, 2002, p. 14)."Marti was breaking up [meters] and rhythms to make his poetry seem like a "bristly" (Manach, 1950, p. 214). Fischer notes "Marti [broke] away from the gothic romanticism of Zorrilla and purposefully [forged] a fresh American poetry" (Fischer, 2002, p. 14). Marti's language bore the signage of a Latin American independent agency: "these are my verses. they are as they are. I borrowed them from no one. As long as I could not enclose my visions in a way that is appropriate to them, let my visions fly. Just as every man wears his physiognomy, and every inspiration his language" (Marti, 1970, p. 57). Discarding colonial bureaucratization, the path of poetics is generative. Marti noted, "[t]here are no permanent works, because works produced during times of realignment and restructuring are shifting and unsettled in their very essence: there is no established path" (Marti, 2002b, p. 44). On the dialectic of literary conventions and liberating the consciousness, Marti resolved, "as long as I was

unable to enclose my visions whole within a form that befitted them, I let them fly…" (Marti,1970, p. 57).

Jrade notes that Marti, among other authors of his era, felt and rejected the limitations of the metrics and the colonial language to fully capture the experiences of the poetic self. In that contemptible time, human subjects were reduced to "loss and alienation [due to] the insensitive materialism and unrelenting pragmatism of modem life" (Jrade, 1999, p. 3-4). His aesthetics reject the manufacture of art, an extension of the epistemology of classifying and domesticating nature as a collection of pinned specimens of conquests. Art is an essential condition of creation, and art is animate. In actuality, "[art] isn't the isolated product of an active mind, but the result of a common artistic aptitude that is continually exercised. It isn't an exclusive manifestation, but an essential condition" (Marti, 2002c, p. 72). Marti distinguishes the artistic productions from those of the commercial/industrial art:

> A daring painter paints happily,
> On the wind's canvas to sow the foam of obscurity;
> A great painter abides and paints with colors divine,
> but must his genius confine to painting flowers on ship sides…
> a poor painter who stares at the sea while he is painting –
> At the waves raging and fainting –
> with the deep love that he bears (Marti, 1997a, p. 77).

Artistic creations wrestled against the confines of coloniality. Art as an industry played the role of servitude to pleasing the consumers' taste. Marti saw a culture of unfreedom in the manufacturing chain of commercial art. "Craftsmen [were] damaged by the enslaving influence that the consumers' taste exerts on the [producer's] faculties" (Marti, 2002c, p. 72).

The U.S. exemplified a gluttonous material culture of rising industrialization that mechanized the cycle of overconsumption and mass production. Marti observed a skyline changed by skyscrapers, and towers framed the landscape on the canvas of human consciousness. The landscape of steel and poured concrete occupied in the industrialized urban America. His essay *The Brooklyn Bridge* observed an American cultural obsession with immensity and progress (Marti, 2002d, p. 143). A contradiction of humanity and prosperity was entertained: "The creator of the bridge, and those who maintain it, and those who cross it seem – but for the excessive love of wealth that gnaws at their intestines like a worm – men carved out of granite, like the bridge" (Marti, 2002d, p. 141). The mind was an industrial slave in the capitalist system of the U.S. which was profited from black-bodied slavery/labor (Marti, 2002e, p. 63):

> Bodies are nothing now but trash,
> pits, and t
> atters! And souls
> are not the tree's lush fruit…
> but fruit of the marketplace,
> ripened by the hardened laborer's brutal blows!

It is "a contemptible time," Marti lamented" (Marti, 2002b, p. 44). North American imperialism began its ascendancy in the wake of the receding tides of colonial regimes. The colonized were bound continuously within the confines of Occidentalism. Marti's poetry pronounced a necessary revolt against the conventions of the old world. Marti perceived "a kind of dismantling of the human mind. The roots of the old poetry are in decay, shaken by the wind and the critical spirit" (Marti, 2002b, p. 45 & 48). Marti's literary production were a vehicleof expression for mobilizing a new consciousness. Marti's poetics employ natural elements/signs as analogies of the indominable force of human consciousness and its desire for freedom.

> I know that when the world is weak
> And must soon fall to the ground
> And, then, midst the quiet profound
> The gentle brook will speak(Marti, 1997b, p. 21).

For Marti, the New World poetics flows and rhymes as a "gentle brook. "In other words, nature and consciousness are mutually reflexive, their clarity is distilled by movement, and their force is cumulative. Marti's view on New World poetry is fluid, reflective and existentially meaningful. Carved out of "difficult sororities" and schemes, poetry created passages of consciousness with "sculptural lines, vibrant as porcelain, airborne as a bird, [with far-reaching impacts] fiery and devastating as a tongue of lava" (Marti, 1970, p. 57). Marti's language of poetics draws on and entwines the rugged endurance of living with idealistic struggles in his metaphysical landscape. "The mind solicits multifarious ideas from everywhere, and those ideas are like coral and like starlight and like the waves of the sea" (Marti, 2002b, p. 44-45). These experiences essentialize the humanism of seeing the self in/with nature: "Man ascends to his full beauty in the silence of nature" (Marti, 2002g, p. 375). The reach of humanism and the sensitivity of nature delimit his Cubanism and geopolitical sovereignty. During his last days recorded in *War Diaries*, Marti's poetic self was immersed in the Cuban constellation day and night.

April 18, 1895

> …Over a high hill, we pass the Jobo [Jojo] River six times. [Up] the steep hills of Pavano, with El Pomalito up above. [Around] us, the river valley, and beyond, the blue mountains crested with clouds. . . [Even] in the darkness, I can see [the mountain covered] with copeys and paquas– short, spiny palm – [I] hear the music of the forest. [The music] opens its wings and alights, flutters, and ascends… (Marti, 2002g, p. 384-385).

Marti's prophetic voice reverberates across temporal and spatial dimensional boundaries; his wide-eyed consciousness yearns to escape the colonial cage and to bring an end to a life of political exile. As a synecdoche, the piercing "black eye" in a yellow canary refers to the whole of human consciousness.

> I am still taken aback, with a simple schoolboy's glee.
> By the yellow canary, whose eye is so very black! (Marti, 1997c, p. 79).

Barnett thus describes Marti's aesthetics and language, observing that Marti created "figurative language, not for art's sake, but as a vehicle to convey the political message that will both inspire and convince his audience to provide material and spiritual support for the war. Tone, imagery and other rhetorical elements contribute to the persuasive and affective impact of the text" (Barnett, 2006, p. 5).

The Cuban Son/s of Ideas, Myth, and Agency

Marti was shot in battle at Dos Rios, where the two branches of the Rio Cauto diverge; with his death, his mission as a mythic agent was complete. Marti lived the life of a vagabond in his pursuit of political organizing; a man of no country, he wrote these verses in 1882, thirteen years before the fatal date.

> When I die without a country,
> Nor to any man a slave,
> I want a wreath on my grave
> and a flag draped over me! (Marti, 1997c, p. 79).

Marti fought two wars. One was a war of ideas that reached deep into the hearts of Cuban communities abroad and inspired them to return Cuba. The other was the fight to begin the war of independence, and this war played out during the

last 39 days of his life after he landed in La Playita, Guantanamo, from Haiti. His homecoming marked a seal on his own myth.

> From this world I will depart,
> And the natural door will try:
> Green leaves will cover the cart
> On which I am taken to die.
> Don't in darkness let me lie
> With traitors to come undone:
> I am good and as the good die,
> I will die face to the sun! (Marti, 1997d, p. 75).

His martyrdom was the culmination of his historical destiny and the completion of his myth as a man. Both symbolism and images invoke the sense of shared affective, spatial and temporal dimensions in the historiography of Caribbean Latin America. Therefore, the meaningful signs that resonated with the interlocutors are the motivated signs.

Marti, a perpetual exile, confronted the ontological paradox of having no country, only a burning desire born of nostalgia to fight against the oppressive anxiety of life. His politico-literary discourse essentialized la patria, which encodes intense cultural and natural experiences of the Caribbean tropics. The codification in la patria essentializes the geopolitical location and distinctive sensitivity of Cubans. Politically, la patria represents the emotional contradictions of oppression and the nostalgic longings burning in a political being. In the allegory *Abdala* (Marti, 2002h), which narrates an African prince's rebellion against foreign invasion, and *Ismaelillo*, the collection of poems dedicated to his son (Fischer, 2002), Marti foretold the revolutionary trajectory of his return to liberate his patria, Cuba. As promised in the allegory *Abdala*, Marti, a son of the tropics, fought in wars to drive out foreign invaders.

The story of Marti during the last days of his life suggests a revolutionary trajectory wherein fatherhood, the son and la patria intersected. In April 1895, when he made his way back to Cuba, Marti was armed and had coordinated expedition fronts within and outside of Cuba led by veterans from previous wars. On April 10, 1895, Marti and the War Veteran, General Maximo Gomez, and three companions embarked from Haiti's northern port, Cap-Haïtien, on a voyage to Cuba by a steamer. General Gomez recounted later of the perilous condition:

> The steamer departed at once and we are left, abandoned to the horror that envelops us…we take to the oars [and row our boat for three miles] …The darkness is deep and the rains grow stronger. We have lost our way… (in Lopez, 2014, p. 294).

After hours of boat-rowing, Marti and four other companions finally approached the shore of La Playita de Cajobabo in the province of Guantanamo. General Enrique Collazo wrote of Marti's existence during his final years that "he lived as a nomad, with no home, no trunk…he would stay at the nearest hotel wherever sleep happened to overtake him…" (in Lopez, 2014, p. 285). To fulfill his dream to fight for his country, Marti divested himself of "allegiances to class, caste or ancestry, Marti had at last become as he had once portrayed himself, a man 'without a country, but without a master'; he could land in Cuba secure in the knowledge that he had literally nothing to lose but his life" (Lopez, 2014, p. 285).

Among many arrangements prior to the voyage, he wrote to his son, Jose Francisco Marti. The voice is as certain as that of a father to a son to whom he devoted his actions and sufferings. Tenderly, he bade farewell:

> Son:
> Tonight, I leave for Cuba: I leave without you, when you should be by my side. As I part, I think of you. If I disappear along the way, you will receive with this letter the watch chain [*leontina*] that your father used in life. Farewell. Be fair.
> Your
> Jose Marti (Lopez, 2014, p. 290)

This terse passage conveys inexplicable tenderness and an irreconcilably unfulfilled fatherhood caused by separation from his wife. Using the son as a metaphor, Marti vicariously expressed his vulnerable humanity, cut deep in his viscera.

His son as a source of inspiration is a recurrent theme in Marti's poetry. The entries about his son enable Marti to relieve his wounded fatherhood and manifest paternal tenderness. At the same time, as a son of the tropics, Marti's alter ego represents cycles of generations of the mixed-blood Cuban race. In the personal and political dimensions, the referent of the son/father pair – the sons of the patria – encodes the colonial existence of conflicts and contradictions wherein an unbearable being is trapped and familial relations remain unfulfilled for a political exile. The son/father pair protracts the colonial bondage of Cuba and the alienation of Cuban sovereignty under Spanish colonization.

The poetic devices in *Ismaelillo* present an array of natural, native, and spiritual qualities. Simultaneously, the metaphor—expressed in the triad of the son, the father and the native land—carries within it the eschatological futures of human relations, culture, and community. In the poem, *Ismaelillo*, the protagonist, is Marti's king, his patria and his soul. However, Marti is also a political exile pursued by an existential state of alienation, living in a perpetual state of waking unrest and pounded by crashing waves of anxiety. In his "*I dream with eyes open*" (Marti, 2002i, p. 38-39):

I dream with eyes wide open;
All day and night I'm dreaming.
Upon the spume of wide, rough seas,
And through the dry sands curling
Across the barren desert lands,
And on the mighty lion,
Monarch of my heart and soul,
Mounted merrily astride,
Astride the tame and gentle neck, -
A little boy who calls me,
Floating, evermore I see!

Through the trope of a native son, Marti's theme of agency embodied his political poetics. The heightened consciousness of eschatology in the voices of generations of Cubans calls to him to go against the colonial grain of existing but not living. The multitudes wake from colonial bondage to the slavery that was brought over the tormenting sea and perpetuated.

I have [hidden] in my brave heart
The most terrible of pains,
The son of a land in chains

I hear a sigh across the earth
Over lands and seas,
And is not a sigh –
But my son awakening from sleep (Marti, 1997b, p. 19 -21).

Marti's political drama, *Abdal*a, reflected his aspirations for independence. The play's protagonist, an African prince, underscored the historical events in which African slaves achieved independence in Haiti and led uprisings in Cuba. Written at age 16, the play, a retroactive "allegory of the Cuban War of Independence" (Allen, 2002, p. 3), was more than a creative production; in the

script, he was the author and the prescient protagonist of a narrative-like drama. In the literary play, Marti's revolutionary future was enacted as a ritual. In the literary space, his praxis developed, and his political philosophy was articulated. Marti as a mythical agent was being created.

As early as age sixteen, Marti was sentenced to a forced labor prison. He persistently defied the omnipotent pursuit of death and even predicted his early death. He wrote to his suffering mother, Elenor, from Lazaro political prison,

> I am sorry to be behind bars, but I'm getting a lot out of prison. It has taught me many lessons that will be useful in my life - which I predict will be short, and I won't fail to make use of them (Marti, 2007b, p. 211).

Throughout his life time, he endured chronic and severe physical pain from wounds caused by iron shackles during his imprisonment. In a photograph taken of him at age seventeen, Marti is seen in his prison uniform and iron shackles. On the back of this photograph, Marti writes to his childhood friend as follows:

> Brother in pain, never see
> In me the slave that cowardly cries;
> See the robust image of my soul
> And the beautiful page of my history (Marti, 2015, 17:30).

His note reveals his piercing prescience of the inevitability of his role as an author of Latin American history. Marti was subsequently twice made a political exile. Marti found himself inextricably connected to "the suffering [island] of the sea", Cuba, anguishing over her enslavement and laboring tirelessly for her liberation. Cuba was a metaphysical compass in Marti's life trajectory and a meaningful logo for him that was intertwined with his quest for the fulfillment of existence.

Marti's agency was exercised in an epoch when the imperialist tide was on the rise as colonialism receded, yet Marti pronounced and perceived a future for neither. For Marti, the present is liminal; hence, its future is not yet determined. Marti's life implies a dialectic of word and world. Marti reiterated, "like a glittering sword, words are my warriors – [they] are gashes in my own entrails" (Marti, 2002j, p. 57). Congruent with Bruner's "life as narrative," (1987), the life worth living is the well-examined one; the life Marti led and the telling of it cohere in the praxis, theory-action reflection, of a revolutionary life.

From Marti's politico-literary narrative, a "conscientising" (Freire, 2017) process for resolving contradiction or quandaries can be gleaned. Myth is an expression/genre that essentializes anthropological experiences, "every one of which," Levi Strauss postulates "is driven by the obsessive need to solve a paradox that cannot be solved, a mess that cannot be cleaned up" (Levi Strauss 1963; 1965). In Marti's case, he himself is an embodiment of a myth immersed in a paradox of colonialized existence. His political project sought to resolve the contradictions that pivoted on the colonizers and the colonized, the slaver/slave, civilization/barbarity and in the dichotomy of epistemology, object/subject, being/alienation, lightskinned/ darkskinned. As an author, an agent, and a protagonist of his own myth, he rejected the model of either-or in sorting out the historical context and relational vicissitudes. The protagonist Marti battled the monster of coloniality and imperialism with his words and ideas to free "the suffering [islands] of the sea" and reclaim Cuban geopolitical sovereignty. Myth and narrative, according to Levi Strauss and Doniger, succinctly explicate the role of human subjectivity in social movement and narrative change. That is, "a human narrative [is as much] … to transform the paradox, …involving subjective structures [of the aesthetic, political, social, and moral]" (Doniger, 2009, p. 199-200) "as it is to transform [the popular consciousness in

challenging] the existent system and create a new one through revolution" (Levi Strauss 1963; 1965). Similarly, Marti perceived both organizing ideas and mobilizing community as bound in dialectical movements. He commented on his experiences, observing that "the [movement] is contagious. Before assembling a collection of my poems, I would like to assemble a collection of my actions" (Marti, 2002k, p. 73). Marti's praxis as myth or allegory coheres to the reflexive relations of language, subjectivity and reality as important constructs for social change.

Marti employed modernism as an anti-structure to coloniality to organize the themes of anti-colonialism and anti-oppression. Marti's narrative spins his praxis as myth, with he, himself, as the agent and the author of the revolutionary war. Modernism grew out of "Romanticism's revolt against the effects of the Industrial Revolution and bourgeois values; its motive was to critique the bourgeois social order of the nineteenth century and its world view" (Graff, 1973, p. 383-417). As a modernist poet who was motivated "to break down the conventional formulas of representation [of romanticism]," in his Prologue to *Simple Verses*, he identifies this essence as an "indomitable love of freedom, or the painful love of beauty... putting feelings in plain and sincere form" (Marti, 1997e, p. 15). As a lived myth, Marti embodies an anti-structure of coloniality. Myth as a device explicates Marti's articulation of consciousness to resolve the ontological paradox engrained in historical contradictions and cultural oppressions. Marti also expressed his literary creation in the genres of "historical, mythological, literary, or other narrative themes" (Martin and Butlin, 2020). His political project tells a my history of Latin America about the subjectivity of the myth creators and their struggles for liberation.

From Significations to Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Forces

Marti scripted, enacted, participated in and mobilized a comprehensive political project in the reconstruction of language, subjectivity and reality. The independence movement and war 1) delimits the colonial boundary, 2) locates Cuban historiography on the world map, 3) pronounces a natural humanistic agency, and 4) deflects the conditions of colonialism and detains imperialist invasion. Marti wrote about organizing and mobilizing. To his long-time friend Manuel Mercado on May 18, 1895, the day before his fatal fall in Dos Rios, he related the action of the revolution and the needs of a nation:

> The revolution is eager for a concise and respectable republican representation – the same decent spirit of humanity, filled with a desire for individual dignity in representing the Republic…As for me, I realize that a nation cannot be led counter to or without the spirit that motivates it; I know how human hearts are inspired, and how to make use of a confident and impassioned state of mind to keep enthusiasm at a constant pitch and ready for the attack (Marti, 2007c, p. 256).

Marti's reflection underscores the conduit-like nature of political agents. For Reddy, it is the locus of a system wherein "energy [is] expended" (Reddy, 1979, p. 308). This system is transactional in nature in the transmission of ideas and has intersubjective effects with sociopolitical and psychological influence. Anthropologist Eric Wolf captures the intersubjective/transactional nature of the pathways to power constitutive of (1) the power of potency characterized by particular individuals; (2) an ego that imposes its will for social action upon another; (3) tactical or organizational power through which individuals circumscribe the actions of others; and (4) structural power that, if sufficiently powerful, organizes the settings and specifies the direction and distribution of energy flow (Portis-Winner, 2006, p. 341). Marti's discursive praxis precisely encapsulates the perlocutionary force (Austin, 1962) through which the rippling effects of power, organizing, and mobilization are generated among his

interlocutors. According to John Seale's speech act theory (Searle 1976), Marti's politico-literary discourse was demonstrative in his "commissive act" with his interlocutors/the Cuban communities, resulting in "promising, planning, vowing," and donating, including organizing and fighting in the independence war.

To Cuba

The metaphysical field of semiotics is fertile ground for discovering and mobilizing consciousness. From the natural and cultural contexts, Marti's praxis is derived from and political subjects are situated or find themselves in "a shared habitus" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78-79), wherein cultural tropes and natural signs are embedded. "[The gleaned] imaginaries and representational assemblages in the milieu interact with the personal imagination mediating how people act, cognize and value the world" (Salazar, 2020, p. 770). Along these theoretical lines of imagination, identity and mobility (Salazar, 2020, p. 770), Marti's politico-literary discourse functions as much as an analysis of meaning for power restructuring as a directive and commissive; the illocutionary and perlocutionary forces rest with his auditors who were committed to engaging in the independence movement through organizing and action.

Marti's struggles departed from "an imagined possibility (imagination) to a reality (the products of imagination)" (Salazar, 2020, p. 768). Cuba had experienced war fatigue from the Ten-Year War (1868 – 1878) and Querra Chiquita (1880) and was plunged into broad social chaos compounded with acute political disorder under colonial governance. In the larger context, according to Hugh Thomas, Marti was able to break the "political stalemate" (Thomas, 1970, p. 153). Roberto Gonzalez Echevarría similarly commented, "Marti's greatest political achievement was to bring together the disillusioned

and factious veterans of the Ten-Year War by convincing them of his own and the new revolutionary commitment" (Gonzalez Echevarría, 2002, p. xiv). Guided by his imagination "[an] essential part of the continuous process of crafting selfhood and concrete strategies for future mobility" (D'Onofrio & Sjo€berg, 2020, p. 745), Marti began his organizing work in New York by conducting classes about his revolutionary ideas as literacy programs and raising funds from the exiled communities and Cuban Black tobacco workers in New York and Florida, US. During late 1894, "Marti was impoverished, often ill, and probably suffering from tuberculosis," according to Thomas (1970, p. 172). Marti coordinated both external and internal expeditions to Cuba to ready multiple fronts of offensives. In the same year, a large arms shipment to Cuba he had organized was seized. There was disbelief that Marti was the mastermind of these subversive activities. According to Thomas, however, there were also those who believed Marti to be a poet and a dreamer and who were more impressed by "the imaginative promised of his plan than its temporary frustration" (Thomas, 1970, p. 172). Similarly, Alexandra D'Onofrio and Johannes Sjoberg argue and affirm that "human imagination has the ability to contradict reality" (2020, p. 744). Enmeshed with his biographical narrative and his political engagement, Marti's praxis embodied a pathway to power that channeled people's yearning and inspired them to crossover and was, at the same time, a revolution in process.

The Trinity of The Sun, The Sons, and La Patria

Marti's poetic imagery is a mixture of speech acts – assertive and directive (Seale, 1976) – aiming to draw Cuban geocultural borders in a large scheme. The trope of the sun, like a cultural and emotional compass, underlines the notion of one's native land; it is also a collective geocultural reference that invokes intense sensory memories of one's origin in the tropics. Colonization was navigated by way of the sea,sailing and crossing the two sides of the

Atlantic Ocean. La patria (the native land) was held captive by the tormenting sea. His literary themes address the alienation and dehumanization of colonialism. Colonization distorts being, contorts relations, systematically destroys aborigines through genocide and displaces natives into diaspora. To prepare to cross the sea, Marti posed a moral question affectively: *¿A quéiríamos a Cuba?* (Marti, 2020),

> What does the sun matter? what does the snow matter? what does life matter? The motherland pursues us, with the begging hands: Its pain interrupts the work, cools the smile, forbids the kiss of love, as if it were not entitled to [one] away from the native land.

Marti's politico-literary discourse reveals "the human depth of [that] lyrical ensemble that grew within him" (García Álvarez, 1999). Marti engaged his interlocutors dialectically in juxtaposing alienation/belonging, colonization/self-determination, and dignity/slavery. Marti's poetics articulate an array of relations to humanize the oppressed and animate their subjectivity as agents of meaning construction, in the semantic sense. His poem - *No, Insistent Music* - drives home affectively that humans need a home and justice as much as air to breath and the feel of sunlight.

> It's death, it's trembling,
> it is taking me apart from within
> without compassion!
> If I can't live …
> as a flower in the pure air a palm tree
> opens its green chalice and arrive home
> after a brutal day. . . .
> There is no home in a foreign nation! (Marti, 2014).

These themes distill the essence of natural humanism for the independence movement. According to historian Hugh Thomas, "that [Marti's] extraordinary appeal among Cubans is explained, [aside from] his great energy, his organizing ability, his sensuous proclamation of Cuban identity… by the belief that [he was a true *son of the tropics*, the most Cuban of Cubans]" (Thomas, 1970, P. 180).

Jose Marti suffered vicariously for his father. Mariano Marti had misfortunes in securing posts under the discriminatory caste system. Alfred Lopez describes the father and son relationship in the biography, *Jose Marti: A Revolutionary Life* (Lopez, 2014). Mariano Marti relied on Pepe (Jose) to carry out bureaucratic documentation due to Pepe's literacy, which emerged at a young age. Mariano endured poor health and persistent financial difficulties; subsequently, he became frustrated as his dignity was eroded and his pride humiliated. Jose Marti remained by his father's side and affectively and vicariously endured his father's struggles in close proximity.

The father-son couplet implicates a series of semantic clusters by relations, associations, or contradictions: la patria (the fatherland) in chains, conditions of being, states of eschatology, moral consciousness, etc. His poem in *Simple Verses* (Marti, 1997f, p.108) epiphanizes the state of internalized oppression of the son of a colonized man.

> When I the honor was brought
> A kind land on me bestowed,
> Neither Blanche nor of Rose I thought,
> Nor of the favor I owed
>
> I thought then of an old soldier,
> Who lies silent, with his Maker:
> Of my poor father, the soldier,

Of my poor father, the worker.

When I the pompous letter got,
Written in the noble script,
I thought of the lonely crypt,
Neither Blanche nor of Rose I thought.

His poetics mutate the subjectivity between the father/son, the fatherland/the masses, in chains/in independence. The eschatological ramifications of colonization are implied; "[a] slave is a very sad thing to see, but even sadder is the son of a slave…" (Marti, 1975, p. 221). Colonialism marked Marti as a child, a son of his father, and a Cuban son of the multitudes in chains. Marti's writing conflated events into his narrative experiences in the form of chronicles and other literary expressions, expressed in role of an immediate observer, recipient or protagonist. In his play Abdala, an African prince, the alter ego of Marti himself, sacrifices his life to liberate his kingdom from foreign invaders. Stepping vicariously into the role of the experiencer, Marti was capable of entering and exiting an event or moving in/out of a time. The device of "symbolic imaginary mobility" (Salazar, 2020, p. 768-777) converges multiple events for the purpose of essentializing the theme and gives voice to an emergent agent who is to change the narrative. The poem below recounts how, as a little boy, Marti witnessed African slaves disembarking from a slave ship:

Blood-hued lightning cleaves
The brooding storm cloud:
The boat's great door disgorges
Negroes by the hundreds.
The fierce wind was uprooting
The leafy mastic trees:
And the line marched on and on,
The line of naked slaves

. . .
Red as if it shone from a desert sky,
The sun came out on the horizon:
And cast its light on a dead slave
Hanging from a ceibo tree

A child saw this and shuddered
With passion for those who groan;
He stood below the corpse and swore
To wash the crime away with his life (Marti, 2002 l, p. 281).

Through the eyes of a child, the poem revisits the agony and inhumanity of slavery under colonization. Moral consciousness is intensified in the poem as a codification or a metaphorical conduit of oppression and dehumanization. A powerless observer/a subjugated experiencer/an accidental witness to atrocity gives way to assume the thematic role of an agent to commence a changed structure. Symbolically, structural oppression is reversed when thematic roles are shifted in the semantic organization of relations.

Cuba, Colonization and Slavery

The Americas, "the suffering islands of the sea" (Marti, 2002a, p.296), had long endured colonial plundering, slavery/trade, and tyrants. The sea bore the trans-Atlantic voyagers that contained and purged black bodies to pump the colonial economy. The seas of the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean mediated maritime expeditions and transported imperialist/colonist ambition for land and prosperity. Marti loathed the role of the sea as a historical medium of oppression:

I hate the sea…
Beneath the cleaving keel of a conquering
Ship and like some fantastic demon

> Cloaked in colossal black. . .
> I hate the sea, which [bears]
> On its complacent back the ship
> That ‘mid flowers and music brings a tyrant (Marti, 2002m, p. 67 & 69).

Indigenous genocide and slavery occurred upon the arrival of the colonists/tyrants. Marti debunked the contradictions and brutality in colonial Occidentalism, which promulgated colonial imperialist plundering, American expansionism, and indigenous deculturalization and perpetuated racism in America. For Marti, the battle against colonialism in America “not between civilization and barbarity... instead, [was a dismantling of] the false erudition against nature” (Marti, 2002a, p. 290). Cuban independence needed to first confront the logics of Occidentalism that had entangled the ambitions for greed, control and domination over humanity and nature since Columbus landed in the West Indies in1492.

Cuba holds a geostrategic key access to the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and entry to South America. Colonial governance belies the complexity of a “revolution in [labor], in technique, and in the social and political circumstances of production [and capital]” in global competition and the rivalry over political economic domination among European countries and with the US (Thomas, 1970, p. 54). Meanwhile, the subjugation or abolition of slavery was the pivot, the crux of the problem, in a volatile political economy. Generations of symbiosis coalesced into a powerblock as the motor head in the liberation movement. The mixed-blood Cubans reconfigured in a multiracial identity constitutive of the Spanish immigrants, the Creoles, the mulattos, Chinese indentured laborers, runaway slaves and the Cuban exile community.

Political exiles held multiple types of significance in the formation of political discourse and financial support when organizing and mobilizing outside of Cuba. From this social political sector entered Jose Marti, an exiled Cuban patriot who carried a torch to reignite the momentum of Cuban liberation, this time with machetes of ideas.

Conclusion

Marti's praxis tells the story of Cuban national identity from the stance of patriots and exiles that intersect in a common solidarity. According to Lopez, "it is precisely Marti's written work—especially his poetry—that helped create and fuel notions of Cuban nationalism ("La Patria") culminating in Cuba's final war for independence from Spain in 1895" (Lopez, 1993, p. 26).

Marti's praxis and pedagogy spearheaded the phenomenon of nation building through mobilizing community and forging a Cuban geocultural subjectivity. A national myth of Cuba's peoples was promulgated geopolitically along with the rightful claim of national sovereignty; thereby, a new patriot's metaphysics was defined. Zittoun describes imagination as "the dynamic at stake" (2020, p. 661) in achieving symbolic (or semiotic) mobility, "the psychological integration of new experiences" (2020, p. 657). His essay *To Cuba!* announced to Cuban exiles and black cigar workers in Florida to cross the sea,

> The foreign sea, too, is a sea of blood... Cubans, there is no man without a patria, and no patria without freedom…we will be outcasts, roaming the world…Cubans: to Cuba! we must make our way across to sea! … (Marti, 2002n, p. 329).

Marti carried on the movement and embarked on expeditions to cross the sea of the Caribbean to reclaim la patria. Marti challenged the metaphysical structure of what is not yet and pronounced what might be. The notion that symbolic

moves of imaginaries are "socially guided [and] personally built" (Zittoun, 2020, p. 665) underscores the pedagogical nature of Marti's praxis.

The future of an independent Cuba depended on a coalition of the working class of "rich and poor, black and white, Chinese and mulatto, peasants and workers" (Thomas, 1970, p. 160) fighting alongside younger and older political agents. The day before his fatal fall at Dos Rios, May 18, 1895, Marti asserted once again his uncompromising stance on a multiracial liberation project and denounced the master-slave ontology:

> [The halfhearted autonomists] … they are satisfied merely that there be a master – Yankee or Spanish – to support them or reward their services as go-betweens with positions of power, enabling them to scorn the hardworking masses – the country's half-breeds, skilled and pathetic, the intelligent and creative hordes of Negroes and white men (Marti, 2007c, p. 254).

The picturesque North American landscapes were juxtaposed against genocidal profanity—a society of progress without civilization. His poetic allegory awakened the native spirits; Marti wrote of the ancestral temples of the heroes:

> I dream of marble cloisters
> Where upright heroes
> Repose in divine silence
>
> I spoke to them: "They say your sons drink
> Their own blood from the poisoned
> Cups of their masters!
> And speak the rancid language
> Of their tormentors!
> …
> And that their useless tongues are losing

Their last fire! They say,
…that your race is dead!"
The hero…the stone
Reverberates: the white hands
Seek the sword belts: down from their pedestals.
The men of marble leap!
(Marti, 1997g, p. 116-119).

Central to the independence project, Marti called for accountability of racism and the genocidal deculturalization in the Americas. The future of a truly independent patria was tied to both the liberation of the aboriginal indigenous consciousness and the mobilization of multiracial agency. Marti's sword in such battles was his ideas. That is, the "salvation of America lies in creating. Create is this generation's password" (Marti, 2002a, p. 294). The defense of geopolitical sovereignty for Latin America lies in the eschatological continuity and multiplicity of Latin American mixed races and ethnicities. American subjectivity can be rescued and civilization redeemed only through the multiracial consciousness of the natural natives –*el hombre natural*. In the lexicon of race, *el hombre natural* (the natural native) encodes a projection of the reality of "the multiplicity of Latin American peoples whose terms of identification straddle different local and [trans-racial/ethnic] circuits of power" (Baker, 2012, p. 6). Marti affirmed that Cuban independence was indispensable for completing the great confederation of the Latin American States. Latin American centrism is the predicate for geopolitical politics in action, and Latin American agency had its biocultural roots in the Cuban aboriginal heritage, including Spanish Creole, Mestizo, Chinese and Afro-Cubano hybridity.

Resurrecting the consciousness of natives is the future of America, and natural natives (*el hombre natural*), the mythical governors of republics, should speak their native tongues (Marti, 2002a, p. 294). The native consciousness is "not

merely the seed of a plant; it is the seed of dignity" (Marti, 1979b, p. 90). Replacing fumbling ideas about phalansteries of previous generations, "the real man is being born to America, in these real times" (Marti, 2002a, p. 293), *el hombre natural*, representing the Latin American consciousness, encodes Latin American agency centered uponthe natives and the natural American. "A new light will shine from those copper-color faces in Americas" (Marti, 1979a, p. 93). "*El hombre natural*," as the new Cuban natural race, encodes another myth of the Latin American agent and agency in the making of the my history of Cuban independence.

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