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# [Review of] Jose Marti and the Global Origins of Cuban Independence

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*José Martí and the Global Origins of Cuban Independence.* By Armando García de la Torre. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2015. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 225 pp. Paper. \$30.00.

José Martí is the subject of countless studies from a wide variety of disciplines. Martí was a patriot, an exile, a prolific author, and a commentator on US life and policies in the 1880s and 1890s. His profile as Cuba's national hero and as a figure whose political legacy endures has prompted heated debate between Cuba and its exile community. His outsized role in Latin American history and literature ensures that many studies of his life and works begin with a ready-made agenda or a desire to recast, revise, or retranslate his words, not always successfully. This work is a welcome departure; its vision is fresh. Like Koichi Hagimoto's 2013 *Between Empires: Martí, Rizal, and the Intercolonial Alliance* and Cuban scholar Cintio Vitier and Japanese writer Daisaku Ikeda's *José Martí, Cuban Apostle: A Dialogue* of the same year, Armando García de la Torre's new study situates Martí's significance in a global context that is not linked to socialist solidarity and in a way that expands our view of Asian (including India) and Latin American intellectual connections. All three texts take Martí beyond a US/Cuban transnational framework and underscore his universality.

García de la Torre's book conceives of Martí as a modern nation builder. Its author shows that Cuban independence as promoted by Martí was constructed in a framework of global ideas, including concepts derived from Ralph Waldo Emerson, Krausism, and Hindu philosophy. García de la Torre underscores the significance of the Caribbean (in contrast to Latin America as a whole) to Martí, highlighting the area as a crucible of global ethnicities: enslaved Africans, indentured Asians, and Europeans wealthy from slavery. The author traces a spiritually driven campaign on

the part of the Cuban against political, racial, and social injustice that can be seen as a global human rights agenda. And he describes the future Cuba that Martí envisioned as a divine entity, a “God-*patria*” based on a commitment to the welfare of all. García de la Torre sees this “divine nation state” (his wording) as one where sacrifice and duty joined with knowledge would prevail, an echo of Martí’s popular aphorism “*Patria es humanidad*” (p. 87). Some may find the author’s attribution to José Martí of the concept of a “divine nation state” overstated, and this portion of the work will likely stir debate.

The major texts referred to by García de la Torre are the *Manifiesto of Montecristi*—Martí’s statement, written in the Dominican Republic in spring 1895, declaring the goals and intentions of the Cuban Revolutionary Party—and two global-themed pieces from Martí’s magazine for children *La Edad de Oro* (The golden age), “The Story of Humanity, Told through Its Houses” and “Journey through the Land of the Annamese.” García de la Torre also points to Martí’s debt to Ralph Waldo Emerson and Hindu sacred wisdom and studies Martí’s lengthy 1885 biographical essay about US general Ulysses S. Grant. Studying Martí’s essay on Grant allows García de la Torre to point to Martí’s opinions about governance and nation building and to show how an understanding of the American Civil War and its aftermath could be instructive for Cuba, especially since Grant was both a military leader and a president.

Within the field of José Martí and Cuba studies, the book contributes in ways beyond its global emphasis: it illustrates that Martí’s ideas about the United States and about race were complex, while clearly conveying how Martí opposed US imperialism and subverted prevailing racial and ethnic ideas. It delivers an essential truth: that many Martí studies are more about how critics interpret Martí than about how Martí perceived himself. Chapter 5, on Martí and race, is a useful compendium of the Cuban writer’s thoughts on race, profiling his relationships with three

prominent members of the African diaspora: General Antonio Maceo of the Cuban independence wars; Afro-Cuban Rafael Serra, who worked with Martí in New York; and Juan Gualberto Gómez, with whom Martí collaborated in Cuba.

The range of scholarly sources used is sound and balanced, and documentation is thorough, although identification of sources and permissions for the illustrations would have been helpful. Translations from Martí's works, done by the author, are a strength and a pleasure to read; Martí is notoriously difficult to translate effectively.

Who will read this text? *José Martí and the Global Origins of Cuban Independence* should be on the bookshelves of all those who write about Martí and his role in Cuban history, and this is a good book for introducing many aspects of Martí to a general audience. While some portions seem a bit repetitive, the writing is clear and free of jargon. This book will be useful to a variety of readers.

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