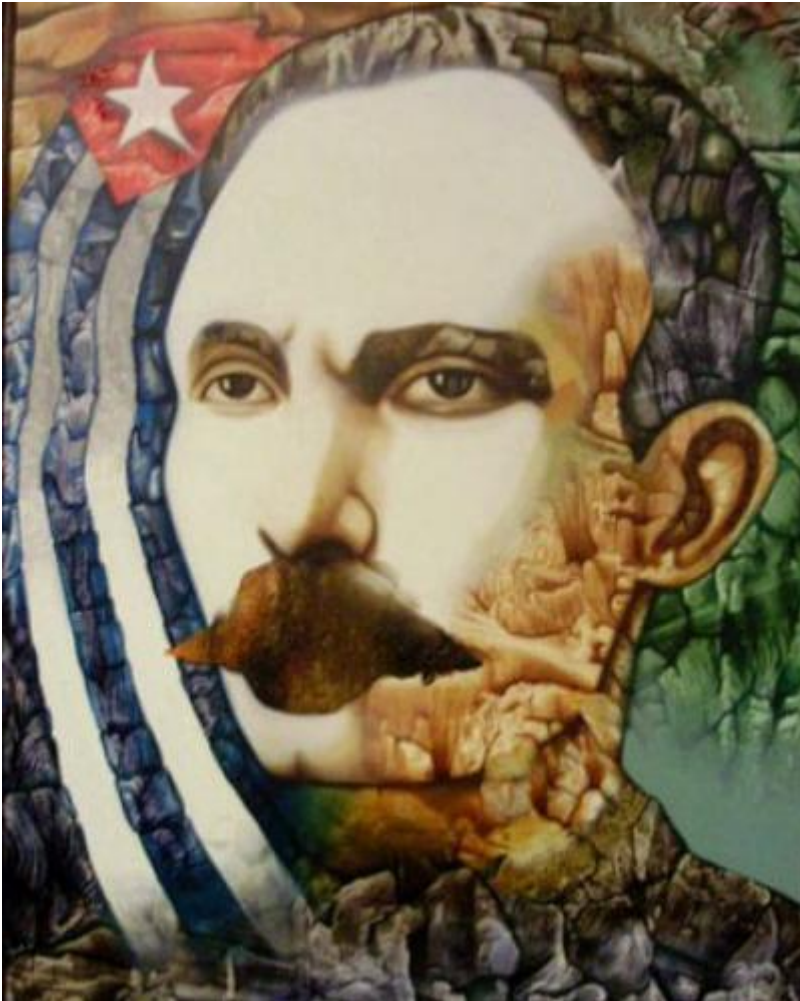


Ruben Darío: Jose Martí was true Father of Modernism



This is Radio Havana Cuba's "The Voice of Jose Martí." Part One focused largely on the War Diaries of Martí, ending with his death on May 19, 1895. In Part Two it was Martí's observations and views on North American life. Part 3 features profiles of Martí in the writings of famous authors both of his own time and those who wrote later.

This program describes aspects of the influence that Martí had over the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío. The main source of information in this program is Rubén Darío, *Jose Martí y Cuba* by Arnoldo Varona on www.TheCubanHistory.com

José Martí was preparing for the necessary war from exile while, in Cuba, the most experienced patriots recognized that waiting would be inevitable. The capital was quiet and repressed on July 27, 1892, when Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío's steam ship disembarked its passengers. He was in transit to Spain as representative of Nicaragua to the celebrations for the fourth centenary of Columbus' discovery America.

Rubén Darío and Cuban poet Julián del Casal met and shook hands in the editorial

offices of *El País* newspaper. They had known each other -through the post office- since 1887, and also through the pages of *La Habana Elegante* magazine that the Nicaraguan poet received frequently and in which the works of both poets were published. The journal *El Fígaro* laid on a banquet for Darío, also attended by Casal; Enrique Hernández Miyares who had published an article on Darío in the July 31, 1887 issue of *La Habana Elegante*; Cuban poet and journalist founder of *El Fígaro* the eminent Manuel Serafín Pichardo was there and others. Raoul Cay -editor of *El Fígaro*- recounted that the consumptive poet "Casal barely ate lunch, the admiration he felt for Rubén and the joy of having him close, took away the appetite of the somber poet of Nieve." The Havana days of Darío passed in continuous walks, gatherings, and entertainments. When leaving, on the afternoon of July 30, he left the Cuban intelligentsia under his spell.

Darío was eventually presented to José Martí in New York City in 1893 and he was deeply impressed. Martí courteously invited him to attend the Hardman Hall that evening where he would be speaking. Darío

accepted and upon hearing Martí's oratory his admiration for the Cuban thinker and politician became even greater.

In his Autobiography Darío wrote about the emotional and unique encounter with Martí in New York: "We went through a dark passage; and, suddenly, in a room filled with light, I found myself in the arms of a small man with an enlightened face, a sweet and domineering voice at the same time and who said this one word: son!"

The distances were dissolved forever and Darío's humility and nobility would permanently recognize the leadership of the Cuban poet and revolutionary. Of Martí's speech on that occasion Darío wrote: "profuse prose, full of vitality and color, plasticity and music."

Following the example of José Martí, another modernist poet who also led the national liberation movement in Cuba against Western colonialism, Darío's writings were interwoven with thematic references to anti-imperialism and racial harmony only possible in a post-colonial future.

An exemplary and still not very well known poem in that order of ideas is found in Darío's Songs of Life and Hope or Cantos de vida y esperanza written in 1905, 10 years after the Cuban Apostol's death yet highly reminiscent of Martí's thought. In it, Darío challenged the United States, as "The future invader of the naive America that has indigenous blood". As such, the colossus of the North, with its cynical fusion of the cult of Hercules and the cult of money, was critically contrasted with "our America, which had poets since the old times of Netza hualco yotol".

Martí had written for the prestigious Buenos Aires newspaper La Nación since 1882, the date when Bartolito Miter incorporated him as a correspondent, and it was in the pages of La Nación that Darío first became acquainted with the lyricism of Martian prose and where he soon joined the cult of, devotion to and passion for figure of the Cuban poet. In 1892 he had dedicated "La risa" to José Martí.

Some months before the death of the Martí in 1895, Darío published The insurrection in Cuba or La insurrección en Cuba where he exalted the patriotic, revolutionary values, the high moral and aesthetic carat of which, with his fiery speeches Martí brought tears to his eyes: "He is the Amazonian writer ... the richest writer in Spanish language, he is the Vanderbilt of our letters."

In the obituary, under the title of José Martí, it is not the father who reproaches the son, but the son, as Martí called Darío, who recriminates the Father: "And now, teacher and author and friend, forgive us for showing you resentment of those who loved and admired you, for having gone to expose the treasure of your talent ... Cuba may be late in fulfilling you as it should. American youth greets you and cries; but, oh master, what have you done!"

In 1911, Darío, to settle debts, made an extensive analysis of the work of Martí, one of the most extensive dedicated to a poet. Four long essays were sent to La Nación the first three of under the Title "José Martí, Poeta" which are published on May 29, June 3 and 10, and the fourth essay under the name of "Free Verses" published on July 8, 1911.

In these essays Darío makes a complete, careful and rigorous analysis of one and each of Martí's works, his verses and prose, even his prologues, pointing out, criticizing, reflecting and certifying the quality of Martí's rich literary production, to end up recognizing that it was not he himself who contributed the germ of modernism but Martí, "that archangel with a steel breastplate, who was seen at that time, in New York and in Washington, as having the wings of a swan."

And in future programs we will endeavor to bring you Rubén Darío's reactions to José Martí's formidable literary output as published in La Nación of 1911.

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