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REVIEWS

Georg Schwarzmann. *The Influence of Emerson and Whitman on the Cuban Poet José Martí: Themes of Immigration, Colonialism, and Independence*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010. vi + 299 pp.

The influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman on José Martí is a worthy and important arena of research because it explores one of the most important nodes of interamerican literary exchange over the last century and a half. The beginnings of Whitman's considerable influence in Latin America can be traced to Martí's hearty endorsement of the poet, and Martí's articulation of a politics of resistance to neo-colonialism in "Our America," which has enjoyed so much currency in American and Postcolonial Studies in the last two decades, provides a fascinating example of the inherently comparative nature of American literatures. Georg Schwarzmann's new study, *The Influence of Emerson and Whitman on the Cuban Poet José Martí*, provides a thorough reading of the points of contact among their writings, paying particular attention to their political philosophies of individualism, democracy, socialism, U.S. imperialism, immigration and race. The study is a reminder to read Martí widely and generously, rather than selectively and with ideological interest. Like Whitman, Martí is a thinker of considerable range and even contradiction, and yet he very often becomes the emblem of a kind of mind his readers wish to find.

Perhaps because of the way Martí has been invoked by Cuban intellectuals and by the left-leaning interests of the New American Studies, few scholars have been willing to identify the principles in Martí's thought, as Schwarzmann does, that are consistent with Emersonian and Whitmanian conceptions of the self and of democracy that continue to enjoy currency in mainstream and even conservative U.S. political culture. Indeed, the José Martí of the Cuban exiles is largely absent in current literary scholarship. Schwarzmann's study, unfortunately, doesn't provide enough engagement with the ongoing debates in Postcolonial, American, and Latin American Studies to make his argument relevant or persuasive. In the process of rescuing the more conservative Martí, he frequently overstates his case and creates ideological stereotypes, as if all leftist readers of Martí unreflexively favor Cuban suppression of democracy or, for that matter, as if all supporters of free markets have the best interests of the developing world in mind. His favorite targets are Roberto Fernández Retamar and Ivan Schulman, but he doesn't fully confront the complexity of their thought over their careers, nor the scholarship of such thoughtful scholars as José David Saldivar, Jeffrey Belknap, Brook Thomas, Julio Ramos, Lillian Guerra, and others. Schwarzmann's Martí escapes with nary a blemish of his own. Because it does not sufficiently treat the theoretical underpinnings of its own conservative political philosophy nor the broader theoretical questions of postcolonialism and postnationalism that have informed the rise of

Martí's stature in the interamerican context, Schwarzmann's study leaves us still mired in polemics.

Despite its weaknesses, Schwarzmann's study deserves a response that would seek to understand Martí's fascination with Whitman and Emerson and with modernity more satisfactorily, especially given Martí's burgeoning critique of U.S. imperialism, although one might argue that Julio Ramos has already done so. Both American writers had their moments of ecstatic paroxysms over the destiny of U.S. imperialism, but it seems more than an instance of textual omission, as Schwarzmann claims, that explains Martí's skillful and ideologically motivated appropriation of Emerson and Whitman. If Martí has been misread by leading Marxist intellectuals in Cuba and abroad, he is also misread by his conservative followers, which only means that some self-reflection is required as we attempt to reread him anew. Moreover, perhaps Martí's multiple personalities today are a function of the fascinating multiplicity of his thought itself and of the complex circumstances of fighting for the independence of his homeland from within the context of a nation that inspired and threatened Cuban independence almost in the same breath, as it still does today. That complexity is missing in Schwarzmann's Martí. His is a classic liberal thinker—in favor of commerce and free markets, republican forms of government, education and advancement of all minorities, suspicious of American imperialism but unambivalent about the advantages of modernity. But to defend Martí's view that there are no races, for example, because it resembles Bartolomé de las Casas's courageous but excessively paternalistic view of Native Americans or to defend him simplistically as a "universal" writer, as Schwarzmann does, only creates the kind of obfuscations that poststructuralism feeds on. Maybe it is time for some new readings that admit to their own interests, that acknowledge contradiction, error, and ambiguity, and yet remain committed to building ideas without ideological cynicism or paranoia. Maybe then we can start to understand where we in the plural Americas go from here.

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