MARTÍ, José (January 28, 1853 – May 19, 1895)

José Martí was a poet, journalist, translator, and Cuban patriot who dedicated his life to Latin American independence. In 1895, he died in a failed attempt to liberate Cuba from Spanish colonial rule. In his lifetime, Martí endured imprisonment, deportation, and exile. The publication of *Ismaelillo* in 1882 stands out in Latin American poetry and situates him as perhaps the first Hispanic American modernist. In his essay, “Our America,” Martí aligns his vision with Latin America’s indigenous population, the interest in which resonates with European theoretical thought surrounding the power of the “Volk.” His Roman Catholic faith had special bearing on his optimistic view of South America and its future place in the larger Christian community of nations. His interest in the Arab world suggests an early identification with Arab modernity and anticolonial movements in North Africa in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Of special importance is Martí’s exile in the United States, where he lived for most of his adult life and where he published some of his most salient essays, particularly “North American Scenes” and “Letters from New York” (1880-1890). He thus became an important ambassador of U.S. culture in Latin America.

Bibliography: Oscar Montero. *José Martí: An Introduction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

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