



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Expression of Marti's ideology in letters to his mother Leonor Pérez

Expresión del ideario martiano en cartas a su madre Leonor Pérez

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Marti's epistolary addressed to his mother is an expression of his independence ideals and human values.

Objective: To characterize Marti's ideology through his letters to his mother Leonor Pérez Cabrera.

Methods: a historical documentary research was carried out, in which theoretical methods such as documentary analysis, historical-logical and systematization were used.

Development: the epistolary of Martí and his mother Leonor Pérez, reflects the great affection they had for each other, the deep convictions that were instilled by their family, the human and moral values that were consolidated in their way of acting, their indomitable fighting spirit, their independence essence and their confidence that the struggle was the only way to overthrow colonialism and oppression against the peoples, their willingness to give their lives for the independence of Cuba and their total dedication to the libertarian cause of the greatest mother: the Homeland.

Conclusions: through the epistolary we can perceive Marti's ideology forged under the moral precepts of his family and his position before the social injustices of the time, which was manifested in his high spirit of rebellion, his humility, his honesty, his deep pro-independence and revolutionary convictions, to which he gave his life, an example for the young rebels of later generations of Cubans, who as good disciples have not let his legacy die, reaching our days as a worthy example to be followed by future professionals of high human sensitivity in their daily work.

Keywords: Humanities; History; Historiography.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el epistolario martiano dirigido a su madre es expresión de sus ideales independentistas y valores humanos.

Objetivo: caracterizar el ideario martiano a través de las cartas a su madre Leonor Pérez Cabrera.

Métodos: se realizó una investigación documental de corte histórico, en la cual se emplearon métodos teóricos como análisis documental, histórico-lógico y sistematización.

Desarrollo: el epistolario de Martí y su madre Leonor Pérez, refleja el gran cariño que se profesaron, las profundas convicciones que fueron inculcadas por su familia, los valores humanos y morales que se consolidaron en su modo de actuación, su espíritu indomable de lucha, su esencia independentista y su confianza en que la lucha era la única forma de derrocar al colonialismo y la opresión contra los pueblos, su disposición a dar la vida por la independencia de Cuba y su entrega total a la causa libertaria de la madre mayor: la Patria.

Conclusiones: a través del epistolario se percibe el ideario martiano forjado bajo los preceptos morales de su familia y su posición ante las injusticias sociales de la época, que se manifestó en su elevado espíritu de rebeldía, su humildad, su honestidad, sus profundas convicciones independentistas y revolucionarias, a las que entregó su vida, ejemplo para los jóvenes rebeldes de posteriores generaciones de cubanos, quienes como buenos discípulos no han dejado morir su legado, llegando hasta nuestros días como digno ejemplo a seguir por futuros profesionales de alta sensibilidad humana en su diario quehacer.

Palabras clave: Humanidades; Historia; Historiografía.

INTRODUCTION

To read the literary works of our José Martí is like crossing that mysterious border that divides the hero from the man; it is to bring to our days the feelings of an era or to relive the emotional state of a being, whose texts are full of love, affection, sympathy, passion and human sensitivity.

To delve into the life and work of Martí is to know the simple, genuine and special man he proved to be and allows us to see him as a human being, not as the hero he was. The collection of letters between the young Martí and his mother Leonor Pérez Cabrera, takes us into the path of the purest feelings, values, principles and convictions of the most universal of Cubans .⁽¹⁾

The letters to his mother are part of a whole, which is the enormous Martí's epistolary and that in the subject under investigation collects those of personal character addressed to his beloved mother.

His mother Leonor, knew of everything that her son did, his poems, his writings, his verses, everything in favor of the freedom of Cuba. All for the love of the Homeland .⁽¹⁾

From Caimito del Hanábana, one of the few places in the interior of the Cuban archipelago where the presence of José Martí is recorded, a point in the geography of Matanzas, a few kilometers from the town of Amarillas, in the municipality of Calimete, a Memorial was erected to glorify the life and work of the Master, a solar project of commemorative and environmental architecture that recalls his stay in the place from where he wrote a letter to his mother Leonor Pérez, considered his first written work and the oldest of his missives that is preserved.⁽²⁾ Objective to characterize Martí's ideology through the letters to his mother Leonor Pérez Cabrera.

METHODS

A historical documentary research was carried out, based on the bibliographical review of 15 historical documents, in which theoretical methods were used to carry out an objective analysis supported by the corresponding interaction of the following methods:

Documentary analysis: in the conformation of the theoretical foundations of the research, in the identification of the letters written between José Martí and his mother Leonor Pérez Cabrera.

Historical-logical analysis: used to define the historical-social development of José Martí's life.

Systematization: to establish the regularities in the analyzed letters and their relation with Martí's ideology.

DEVELOPMENT

The first preserved manuscript of José Martí was the letter that on October 23, 1862, at the age of nine, the boy Pepe wrote to his mother during his brief stay in the place known as Caimito del Hanábana. Under the custody of the Centro de Estudios Martianos there is a valuable document considered the first manuscript preserved of the many written by José Martí, written precisely 160 years ago, a vital experience that he would later turn into verses and undoubtedly one of the most influential passages of his life, who addressing his mother expressed in his farewell words: "... a little kiss to the family, receive them from your obedient son who loves you with delirium".^(2,3)

These words reflect the love engendered in Martí for his family, the excellent standards of formal education he learned in their bosom and the close relationship he maintained with his loving mother despite the distance that for a long time kept them apart.

When interpreting his words in a letter sent to his mother during the difficult days of prison and forced labor for confronting Spanish colonialism, it is possible to understand his decision to fight despite feeling that his life would be short because his physical health was not with him, when he wrote "I am very sorry to be behind bars, but my prison is of much use to me. It has given me enough lessons for my life, which I predict will be short, and I will not fail to take advantage of them..."^(1,2)

Martí was a man ahead of the moral and ethical precepts of his time, he would not be the man who would only take care of his family, nor would he represent his various sisters in a discriminatory society full of inequalities between social classes.

His mother maintained a close relationship with Martí through her letters, in which they both demonstrated the great values of their family, honesty, humility, desire for freedom, formal education and respect for others.⁽¹⁴⁾

Scholars of Martí's work suggest that probably the first verses written by our José Martí were dedicated to his mother Doña Leonor Pérez, in 1868, when he was barely 15 years old. These verses can be found in volume II of his complete works under the title "To my mother ",⁽⁵⁾ which express:

"Mother of the soul, dear mother,
They are your birthplace, I want to sing;
Because my soul, filled with love,
Although very young, never forgets

Of the one who gave me life.
To God I constantly ask
For my parents immortal life;

For it is very pleasant, on my forehead
To feel the touch of an ardent kiss
That from another mouth is never the same".

Doña Leonor Pérez always kept with great affection those verses of her beloved son José Julián, as she called him.

Two years later, on August 28, 1870, from prison, Doña Leonor received a photo of Martí with the prison suit and the chains that he had to drag, with the shackle at the foot. On the back of the photo these words:⁽⁵⁾

"Look at me mother, and for your love do not cry,
if slave of my age and my doctrines
your martyred heart I filled with thorns,
think that flowers are born among thorns".

Martí's verses that, like so many others, have been studied, interpreted, taken to cinema and television and set to music by researchers and artists from Cuba and the world.

According to several authors, Leonor thought that the sacrifices made by her son were useless, since all the countries of the world suffered the same evils and she considered that there was no human force capable of remedying them. In his letters he repeated an old saying: "anyone who becomes a redeemer comes out crucified". Therefore, he urged him to leave journalism, moderate his ideas, return to the bosom of his family and cultivate his great talent for his own benefit.^(4,5,6)

The authors consider that the martyrological expression of Doña Leonor Perez is manifested in many of the letters that she sent to her son, evident was her suffering for the sacrifices that Martí made when defending his independence ideals, for the health problems that he suffered and his tireless fight for the good of all, that surpassed the enormous desires multiple times expressed by her in her letters, to have him to her side to give him affection and to receive from him, the economic support for the family in a difficult economic situation.

However, in her letters, Leonor did not pronounce herself against the independence of Cuba, but she did try to convince Martí not to expose his life for that ideal.⁽⁷⁾

There are many reasons to understand her mother's concerns. In addition to the delicate state of Martí's health and the sufferings that he suffered for his pro-independence actions, the family was going through difficult times due to the ailments of Don Mariano, who died in 1887, twenty years before her, who saw six of her seven daughters die one after the other and was practically blind before she was sixty years old. Among other family and social situations.⁽⁸⁾

Martí wrote an emotional letter to his mother in 1892 in which he expresses his enormous affection for his mother and how much he needed her, without abandoning his ideal of struggle for the older mother, the homeland:⁽⁹⁾

I still do not feel strong enough to write. It is nothing, it is not any illness; it is not any danger of death: -death does not kill me, I fell a few days when the infamy was very great; but I got up. People love me, and have helped me to live. I need you so much, I think of you so much, I have never thought of you so much, I have never wished so much to have you here. It can't be. Poverty. Fear of the cold. Sorrow of the confinement in which you will have to keep her. Sorrow of having her and not being able to see her, with this work that doesn't end until half past ten at night. Well, times are bad, but your son is good. -Nothing more now, you know everything, this word of son burns me. Read that book of verses, start reading it on page 51. It's small - it's my life. But don't think that you are slacking, or that you are at any risk, or that you are in worse health than was this son who has never loved you as much as he does now.

The authors consider this manuscript as a manifestation of the political maturity and the solidity of principles, converted into convictions, of the man who since his childhood cried for the poor of the earth and was enraged by the injustice against the slaves during the Spanish colonialism, which would lead him to be the apostle, the hero and the most universal of all Cubans, who fell in Dos Rios to immortalize his figure by giving his life to the freedom of the greatest mother: the Homeland.

As a result of José Martí's death and in the face of so much maternal pain, she must have repeated to herself what she wrote to her beloved son before: "everything happened as I warned you: you finally died crucified and plowed into the sea".⁽¹⁰⁾

However, it is necessary to highlight other facets of Doña Leonor that gave her strength to support her son; among them, her energetic character and courage, put to the test in complex situations such as the assault of the volunteers to the Villanueva theater in January 1869. Upon hearing the shooting, and assuming that his sixteen year old son was at the scene, he went in search of him without considering the danger. Martí, in relating the event, said "...he went to look for me in the midst of the wounded people, and the streets crossed with bullets, and over his own head the bullets that were shooting at a woman, there, in the place where his immense love thought he would find me".⁽²⁾

On another occasion, when Martí was in prison, Doña Leonor, with her tenacity and energy, managed to get him out of that torment. He was sent to Isla de Pinos, and later deported to Spain. Leonor also suffers with fortitude the death of don Mariano, and also tries to comfort her son for that loss. She writes to him in these terms: "...take comfort, son, in knowing that your father went down to the grave without lacking anything he needed, and all his old boy's whims were satisfied...".⁽¹¹⁾

In Leonor's writings, a natural intelligence is evident, over and above her defective spelling and writing. This wit is seen, for example, in the lucid communications she addresses to the Superior Civil Governor of Cuba and to the Governor General, both in 1870, when she asks for leniency for Martí. And it also stands out in his own letters to his son, in which he touches, with admirable sagacity, the most sensitive fibers of his soul.⁽³⁾

Both Leonor Pérez and his father Mariano Martí instilled in him values that allowed an ethical and moral formation in accordance with the principles of his family, which served as an example to temper in Martí, virtues such as modesty, solidarity, justice, love of work and justice, among others.⁽¹¹⁾

Not many of José Martí's letters to his beloved mother Leonor Pérez Cabrera have been preserved, but particularly the last two letters highlight how he was able, with respect and at the same time with great love, to express to his mother considerations about what he felt in relation to the cause of the independence of his native land from Spanish colonial rule and his decision to give his contribution to achieve that goal.

The last two letters from Martí to Leonor, that are known, were dated in New York on May 15, 1894 and in the Dominican city of Montecristi on March 25, 1895, respectively. In the one of 1894, Martí expressed to her in the initial part of his missive: "Mother dear: you are not yet well in your eyes, and I am not cured of this silence of mine, which is the modesty of my great affections and my way of complaining against the fortune that robs me of them and as revenge for this fault, the need to speak and write so much in public things, against this passion of mine for recollection, more and more stubborn and anxious." And he then posed to him, in detailing how he conceived that the existence of human beings should develop: "But as long as there is work to be done, a whole man has no right to repose. Let each man render, without anyone scolding him, the service he carries in him."

He also asked him the following question: "And from whom did I learn my integrity and my rebelliousness, or from whom could I have inherited them, if not from my father and my mother." Martí confessed to his beloved mother that he could talk to others about other things. "With you my soul escapes me," he affirmed, "although you do not try with the affection that I would like, your trades; and to that unhappy land where you live I cannot write without imprudence, or without a lie." He added: "My pen runs from my truth: either I say what is in me, or I do not say it." He also asked him: "Let me employ serenely, for the good of others, all the piety and order that is in me". Later, when speaking about his future, he expressed with particular simplicity and at the same time with great significance: "My future is like the light of the white coal, which burns itself, to illuminate all around. I feel that my struggles will never end." A little more than ten months later Martí wrote her what was his last missive addressed to his mother.⁽¹²⁾

Also in his letter to his mother Leonor, Martí immediately made clear the meaning he attributed to his life and to the existence of human beings in general when he expressed: "Words, I cannot. A man's duty is where he is most useful".^(7,11)

He also told her that nevertheless, the memory of his loved ones was always present in him and particularly that of her when he assured her: "But with me always goes, in my growing and necessary agony, the memory of my mother".^(7,8,11)

Martí added a final note to this letter addressed to Leonor: "Now bless me, and believe that no deed without mercy and cleanliness will ever leave my heart. The blessing. Your José Martí." Relatively soon after writing this missive to his beloved mother, Martí together with Máximo Gómez left for Cuba, arriving in Cuban territory in the area of Playitas de Cajobabo, in the current province of Guantánamo, on April 11, 1895.⁽¹²⁾

In contrast with this adolescent poem, there is the letter sent by José Martí to Doña Leonor from Montecristi, Santo Domingo, in 1895, when he was already endowed with the experience of crying out for his homeland. On the eve of his trip to Cuba, he wrote her his dramatic poem Abdala:^(13,14,15)

Forgive me, O mother, that I am going away from you
To go to the country. Oh, these tears
Witness my terrible anxiety,
And the hurricane that roars in my bowels.
Weep not thou, that to my grief, O mother!
These burning tears are enough for her!

Love, mother, for the fatherland
Is not the ridiculous love of the earth,
Nor to the grass that our plants trample on;
It is the invincible hatred of those who oppress her,
It is the eternal resentment of those who attack it;

And such love awakens in our breast
The world of memories that calls us
To life again, when the blood,
Wounded springs with anguish the soul;
The image of love that comforts us
And the placid memories it keeps!

Martí eloquently demonstrated that he was a man who was aware that as long as there was work to be done he had no right to rest and that he was someone who loved sacrifice and who appreciated that a man's duty was where it is most useful.

Much can be added about the presence of the mother in Martí's feelings and trajectory. It would also be fair to recognize that Martí's allegations penetrated deeply in the mind of his mother, who realized that he would give his life to the cause for the independence of Cuba. All this reveals the great values born in the family bosom that make Leonor worthy of the monument erected in her honor by the neighbors of Reparto Los Angeles; not only for being the mother of the most universal of Cubans, but also for the deep values bequeathed, through the work of the apostle, to the new generations of Cubans.^(3,13)

The research delves into the revolutionary and pro-independence ideals of a man who was born on January 28, 1853 and who fell in combat, fighting for the independence of his homeland and the freedom of his people, on May 19, 1895, who only lived the small existence of about 42 years and who, nevertheless, was the organizer of the last of the last Cuban Revolution, was the organizer of the last of Cuba's three wars of independence in that century, the ideologist of the Revolution to whom the rebellious and angry young men of the 20th century always turned their eyes as the eternal Commander in Chief and historical leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz.⁽¹⁵⁾

CONCLUSIONS

Through the epistolary we can perceive Martí's ideology forged under the moral precepts of his family and his position before the social injustices of the time, which was manifested in his high spirit of rebelliousness, his humility, his honesty, his deep independence and revolutionary convictions, to which he gave his life, an example for the young rebels of later generations of Cubans, who as good disciples have not let his legacy die, reaching our days as a worthy example to be followed by students of medical sciences, future professionals with high human sensitivity in their daily work, who do not let the apostle die and reinforce solidarity, honesty and justice, values inherent to today's Cuban youth.

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