

Original article

## **Decolonial perspectives on José Martí's *La Edad de Oro*: education and Latin American identity**

**Perspectivas decoloniales de *La Edad de Oro* de José Martí: educación e  
identidad latinoamericana**

**Perspectivas decoloniais sobre *La Edad de Oro* de José Martí: educação e  
identidade latino-americana**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article proposes a decolonial approach to the journal *La Edad de Oro* (The Golden Age), which became a veritable educational project based on a media platform that served as a forum for disseminating the revolutionary thought of Cuban national hero José Martí. It articulated a journalistic discourse focused on education and, above all, on the identity values of new generations of Latin Americans at a crucial moment in 19th-century modernity. The essential purpose of this research was to systematize the particularities of Martí's communicative and pedagogical discourse in *La Edad de Oro*, highlighting its critical and decolonial nuance, oriented toward forging an inclusive, indigenous, and emancipatory Latin American identity. To achieve this, a qualitative and historical-descriptive approach was adopted, based on a bibliographic and documentary review and an analysis

of Martí's journalistic discourse, supported by the theoretical framework of the Modernity/Coloniality-Decoloniality group. The study's findings revealed the multiple perspectives from which Martí envisioned patterns and instilled a sense of regional identity among young people, through an emancipatory symbiosis between communication and pedagogy, in constant dialogue and counterpoint with the dominant Eurocentric thought. It concludes that Martí's work in *La Edad de Oro* constitutes an essential reference point for liberating education and Latin American identity. Its enduring relevance lies in the projection of a critical and emancipatory thought that transcends its time and remains key to understanding the pedagogy of decoloniality.

**Keywords:** education; the golden age; decoloniality; Latin American identity; Martí; decolonial pedagogy.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo propone un acercamiento, desde una perspectiva decolonial, a la revista *La Edad de Oro*, devenida en un verdadero proyecto educativo basado en una plataforma mediática que sirvió de tribuna para la difusión del pensamiento revolucionario del prócer cubano José Martí. En ella se articuló un discurso periodístico enfocado en la formación educativa y, sobre todo, en los valores identitarios de las nuevas generaciones de latinoamericanos, en un momento tan crucial como la modernidad decimonónica. El propósito esencial de la investigación fue sistematizar las particularidades del discurso comunicacional y pedagógico de Martí en *La Edad de Oro*, evidenciando su matiz crítico y decolonial, orientado a la forja de una identidad latinoamericana inclusiva, autóctona y emancipadora. Para lograrlo, se asumió un enfoque cualitativo e histórico-descriptivo, basado en la revisión bibliográfico-documental y en el análisis del discurso periodístico martiano, apoyado en el marco teórico del grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad-Decolonialidad. Los resultados del estudio permitieron revelar los múltiples ángulos desde los cuales Martí avizoró pautas e inculcó una conciencia de identidad regional entre los más jóvenes, mediante una simbiosis emancipadora entre comunicación y pedagogía, en constante diálogo y contrapunto con el pensamiento eurocéntrico dominante. Se concluye que la obra martiana en *La Edad de Oro* constituye un referente esencial de educación liberadora e identidad latinoamericana. Su vigencia radica en la proyección de un pensamiento crítico y emancipador que trasciende su tiempo y continúa siendo clave para comprender la pedagogía de la decolonialidad.

**Palabras clave:** educación; la edad de oro; decolonialidad; identidad latinoamericana; Martí; pedagogía decolonial.

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## RESUMO

Este artigo propõe uma abordagem, a partir de uma perspectiva decolonial, da revista *La Edad de Oro*, que se tornou um verdadeiro projeto educativo baseado em uma plataforma midiática que serviu de tribuna para a difusão do pensamento revolucionário do herói cubano José Martí. Nela, o autor articulou um discurso jornalístico voltado para a formação educativa e, sobretudo, para os valores identitários das novas gerações de latino-americanos, em um momento crucial da modernidade oitocentista. O objetivo principal da pesquisa foi sistematizar as particularidades do discurso comunicacional e pedagógico de Martí em *La Edad de Oro*, evidenciando seu caráter crítico e decolonial, orientado à construção de uma identidade latino-americana inclusiva, autêntica e emancipadora. Adotou-se uma abordagem qualitativa e histórico-descritiva, baseada na revisão bibliográfico-documental e na análise do discurso jornalístico martiano, sustentada pelo referencial teórico do grupo Modernidade/Colonialidade-Decolonialidade. Os resultados revelaram os múltiplos ângulos a partir dos quais Martí vislumbrou diretrizes e promoveu a consciência de identidade regional entre os jovens, por meio de uma síntese emancipadora entre comunicação e pedagogia, em constante diálogo e contraponto com o pensamento eurocêntrico dominante. Conclui-se que a obra de Martí em *La Edad de Oro* constitui um referencial essencial para uma educação libertadora e para a identidade latino-americana. Sua atualidade reside na projeção de um pensamento crítico e emancipador que transcende seu tempo e continua sendo fundamental para compreender a pedagogia da decolonialidade.

**Palavras-chave:** educação, la edad de oro, decolonialidade, identidade latino-americana, Martí, pedagogia decolonial.

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## INTRODUCTION

Aware of the influential role of the press in communication processes and in the daily life of human beings, the great Cuban revolutionary José Martí -rightly called the Teacher- envisioned in his magazine *La Edad de Oro* a media project with an emphasis on education and the liberation of Latin American educational and identity thought.

The 19th century emerged as an era of advancement in science and human thought, in which the press, beyond its purely informative functions, played a significant educational role by instructing and enlightening the masses. This occurred amidst the historical upheaval that marked a shift in eras with the increasingly overwhelming advent of a Modernity that did not progress equally in the Global South and the Global North. It was a modernity where "civilization" (understood as the colonial/imperialist West and its tangible and intangible heritage), in its fierce battle against "barbarism" (the non-Western), revealed its darkest face to the Third World through capitalist globalization -following the colonization of the Americas that began in 1492: the coloniality of power.

According to Aníbal Quijano (2020), this coloniality -a phenomenon whose serious global implications continue to be the subject of arduous debate and analysis to this day- is "one of the constitutive and specific elements of the global pattern of capitalist power. It is based on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world's population as the cornerstone of this pattern of power, and it operates in each of the planes, areas and dimensions, material and subjective, of daily existence and on a social scale" (p. 325).

In this regard, its ontological dimension is the so-called coloniality of being, "which constitutes the lived experience of the modern/colonial world system, in which certain populations (non-Western ones) are made inferior by totally or partially dehumanizing them, while others appear as the very expression of humanity (the Eurocentric Western civilization)" (Restrepo and Rojas, 2010, p. 156).

Therefore, the coloniality of being "consists of (...) in generating the idea that certain peoples are not part of history, that they are not beings. Thus, buried under the European history of the discovery (of America) are the silenced histories, experiences and conceptual narratives of those who were left out of the categories of human beings, historical actors and rational entities" (Mignolo, 2005, as cited in Munsberg et al., 2021), thereby configuring the dispossession of the human condition (dehumanization or subhumanization) suffered by the colonized Amerindian peoples and that the peoples of the Global South continue to suffer today.

Meanwhile, in its epistemic dimension, the coloniality of power is reflected through the coloniality of knowledge, understood as "the hegemonic system of knowledge construction that excludes, eliminates or limits other ways of seeing and constructing knowledge that are outside of Eurocentric theological, philosophical, scientific and technological conventions" (Tabares, 2022, p. 38),

transfiguring itself into the silencing and occlusion of all forms of knowledge that do not conform to the Western one.

In this sense, the coloniality of knowledge includes "the imposition of educational systems and epistemologies that perpetuate the Eurocentric worldview, insofar as they marginalize the knowledge and perspectives of colonized populations" (Moreno-Gómez, 2024, p. 10). In this regard, authors such as Freddy Moreno-Gómez (2024) point to the persistence of the coloniality of knowledge through what he defines as colonial education, when "educational systems perpetuate the coloniality of knowledge based on colonial structures that promote a biased version of science, minimizing contributions from other ways of knowing and understanding" (p. 12).

Indeed, in the 19th-century Latin American context, whereas -independence movements advance and consolidate- persistent colonialism gradually transformed into coloniality, both the press and education became vital ideological fronts for shaping citizens within the framework of the forging of nascent nation-states and a sense of identity for the subcontinent. It is no coincidence that great 19th-century figures like Martí or the Argentinian Domingo Faustino Sarmiento -an ideologue of a different kind of Latin American identity (one with a European sensibility), quite distinct from Martí's vision of Our America- debated the crucial role of education in the press, illustrating the importance that the intellectuals of their time attributed to this sphere, which had a profound impact on identity formation.

However, it is his vision, ahead of its time and with a marked decolonial essence, that distinguishes Martí from his contemporaries, and *La Edad de Oro* -as an identity bastion- will be no exception in his struggle to generate critical thinking from childhood in the face of the coloniality of being (identity) and of knowledge, as a full-fledged precursor of a decolonial Education/Pedagogy. And it is that "the objective of decolonial education is to decolonize knowledge and decolonize being [...] that the subject realizes where he is and decolonizes himself by decolonizing knowledge" (Mignolo, 2013, as cited in Argüello, 2016), and in that context the intellectual task of the Apostle is dedicated to producing critical thinking, which is that "capacity to scrutinize the places of colonial enunciation, identify the rhetorics of modernity, reflect on the practices of the self and accompany the agencies required to "heal" the wounds of coloniality" (Argüello, 2016, p. 114).

Critical thinking from a colonial perspective [...] aims to be a constant process of intellectual decolonization that should contribute to decolonization in other areas: ethics, economics, and politics

(Mignolo, 2003, as cited in Argüello, 2016). And with this, Martí becomes an essential figure for study and consultation, a prominent precedent for a "pedagogy built from decolonial otherness that fosters a political, ontological, and epistemological tension with the major hegemonic centers of power and modern/Western knowledge and makes possible an 'other' positioning of being present in the diverse societies of Our America" (Méndez-Reyes, 2021a, p. 10).

Therefore, given the enduring relevance and necessity of a liberating ideology like the one embodied by José Martí since the 19th century, this article aims to delve -from a decolonial perspective- into the journal *La Edad de Oro*, which became a major educational and media project of Martí's vision, as well as a platform for identity formation and development for new generations of Latin Americans, at such a crucial moment as 19th-century Modernity, within the framework of the counter-hegemonic emergence of "Our America." In this sense, and as its essential purpose, this research sought to systematize the particularities of the communicative/journalistic and educational/pedagogical discourse, with critical and decolonial nuances, in José Martí's *La Edad de Oro*, specifically focused on forging an inclusive, indigenous, and emancipatory Latin American identity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted from a qualitative perspective and under a historical-descriptive approach, in which bibliographic-documentary review, discourse analysis and the theoretical framework emanating from the Modernity/Coloniality-Decoloniality group were used. In this endeavor, after noting the almost total absence of previous analyses of *La Edad de Oro* from the decolonial perspective, through an exhaustive bibliographic-documentary review, the four issues of *La Edad de Oro*, contained in volume 18 of *Las Obras Completas de José Martí*, were examined, as well as the assessments made by the Apostle in his correspondence about the magazine, underlying volume 20. Tangentially, part of *Las Obras Completas de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento* (volumes 2, 4 and 38) was consulted, which, under the logic of discourse analysis, led to examining in the fundamental aspects Martí's discourse, in perpetual dialogue and counterpoint with Sarmiento's, and its contextual relationship.

Specifically, the critical-decolonial discourse analysis led to a textual examination protocol that took into account four fundamental dimensions: identity heritage (recurring terms and issues such as the indigenous contribution to the notion of "Our America" in an emancipatory key, the native versus the foreign, the European/Western versus the Global South); pedagogical strategies (analogies,

historical counter-narratives, intergenerational dialogue); ideological counterpoints (explicit/implicit comparison with Sarmiento's discourse); and decolonial markers (dismantling of Eurocentrism and vindication of ancestral knowledge).

This was further enriched by an additional analytical layer, provided by the perspectives of leading theoretical figures in Decolonial Studies, such as Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, to name just a few of the most prominent. This analysis was organized around three central categories: Coloniality of knowledge (epistemicide in educational content); Coloniality of being (models of identity within the framework of 19th-century Latin American Modernity, with an emphasis on Martí's decolonial proposal for a non-Eurocentric identity construction); and Decolonial pedagogy (educational strategies in Martí aimed at fostering decolonial thought).

## RESULTS

The greatest educational project carried out by José Martí from the public platform provided by the press was, without a doubt, *La Edad de Oro*, an initiative in which he was able to combine in an organic and natural way that scientific and humanistic training that transpired in his condition as a great intellectual and encyclopedic man.

Through that magazine, the Apostle sought to contribute his message to childhood and to the educational formation of a better citizen for Latin America, with an emphasis on forming, in an emancipatory key, the moral, useful and wise man of the future, who knew his history and the world around him.

Martí understood, and *La Edad de Oro* was clear proof of this, that children are the hope of the world, revealing in his worldview the early capacity of the child as a political subject. In other words, children are not passive recipients, but rather agents of historical transformation.

Based on this understanding, he linked in the magazine a truly counter-hegemonic pedagogical project with a strong identity background, which challenged colonial education, which sought to form subjects (Latin Americans subordinated to a Eurocentric/Western thought), so that Martí could focus on forming critical citizens, active subjects with their own original thought.

In this sense, the analysis of the magazine revealed that José Martí conceived an unprecedented pedagogical proposal in the Latin American context of the 19th century. Unlike children's publications

of the time, which were based on Eurocentric foundations and tended to be limited to moralizing or recreational content, Martí structured an educational program that articulated three fundamental dimensions:

- On the one hand, scientific training, including detailed articles on the technological advances of modernity (steam engines, suspension bridges, electricity), industrial processes (glass and iron manufacturing) and geographical discoveries, always adapted to children's understanding.
- On another level, his critical humanism stood out, visible in several articles that functioned as lessons in comparative universal history, equating American civilizations with European ones and highlighting their equivalent contributions to human development.
- The third aspect was moral education: through fables, poems and biographical stories, he instilled values such as honesty, continental patriotism and social solidarity.

This tripartite approach, permeated by a decolonial perspective, stemmed from his conviction that only an education combining scientific knowledge, historical awareness, and ethics could cultivate citizens capable of transforming Latin America. As a precursor of decolonial pedagogy, José Martí, rightfully called the Teacher, developed decolonial strategies in his pedagogical discourse, embedded within the media platform offered by the magazine. In this sense, the Apostle employed innovative resources in *La Edad de Oro* to deconstruct the colonial imaginary, which manifested itself in two main directions:

### **1) Reclaiming the original past**

In articles such as "*The Indian Ruins*" or "*The History of Man Told by His Houses*," Martí carried out pioneering work in historical recovery by:

- To describe the beautiful cities of diverse Indigenous peoples, such as the Maya and Aztec, with their spectacular palaces, temples, and advanced infrastructure, or the elaborate houses of the Quechua, is to show the world the chapter of history that the European conqueror tore from the universe with the genocide and destruction of the original cultures in the Americas. The colonizing project sought to impose the Western power model as the only viable paradigm, systematically obliterating the worldviews, knowledge, and social structures of the Indigenous peoples, which demonstrated a greatness comparable to or greater than that of Europe at the time.

- Compare American characters, customs, and institutions with their equivalents in Western culture with a European-Judeo-Christian substrate (for example: the poet king Netzahualcoyotl with the Hebrew Solomon; the Tlaxcalan orators with the Athenian Demosthenes; ritual sacrifices in America with those of classical Greece; or the bonfire of the Spanish Inquisition).
- To dismantle the black legend forged by colonial chroniclers, who magnified the most controversial, dark or negative aspects of the American Indians, making them seem exclusive to such native peoples in their apparent condition of "barbarians", while deliberately omitting their cultural advances.
- To discredit the prejudices that associated indigenous people with barbarism, showing that ignorance and superstition were not exclusive to any people, but arose where education was lacking.
- To show that human nature/condition is the same everywhere, except for the specific differences in context that distinguish or particularize each man, ethnicity or culture.
- To denounce the coercive practices of colonialism in the subcontinent by criticizing the bloody process of conquest -masked as a "civilizing" enterprise-, exposing the cruelty of European colonialism in texts such as *Father Las Casas*, where he lashed out at colonial violence against pre-Columbian civilizations, or *The Indian Ruins*, a prime example of the splendor of that indigenous America before it was devastated by physical and epistemic extermination.

## 2) Construction of an emancipatory mythology

The *Three Heroes* section established a secular Latin American pantheon by presenting Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, and Miguel Hidalgo as:

- Sacred figures not by divine design, but by their commitment to freedom.
- Models of virtue with human dimensions (their mistakes are mentioned, but their libertarian legacy is valued above all).
- Founding symbols of a shared history that transcended national borders.

## Educational-identity counterpoint between Martí and Sarmiento

At a contextual level, *La Edad de Oro* becomes an implicit scenario for a major dialogue, debate or controversy between Martí's pedagogical and identity-based visions with respect to those of the

Argentine politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, one of the main champions of Modernity in the subcontinent.

Specifically, within the framework of the contrast between Martí's and Sarmiento's worldviews, the study presented evidence of two distinct pedagogical models, each with its own underlying identity: on the one hand, Martí, who viewed education as a tool for cultural emancipation and the appreciation of indigenous culture; and on the other, Sarmiento, who championed Eurocentric assimilation and the denial of the indigenous substratum. This opposition was particularly evident in their treatment of pre-Columbian history, their conception of American identity, and the cultural references they legitimized.

In that sense, the study contrasted two competing educational paradigms (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Competing educational paradigms

Dimensions	Martí model	Sarmiento model
Epistemological basis	Dialogue of knowledge (European/American)	Eurocentric cultural transplant
Historical treatment	Critical recovery of the original past. Reclaiming the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples, where the pre-Columbian is not a "primitive past" but a foundation of identity.	Denial of pre-Columbian history or omission of the indigenous past
Educational purpose	Formation of critical and indigenous citizens. Appreciation of our own culture in the face of foreign influences. A path towards original thought (rooted in and inspired by decolonial thought).	Cultural colonization through the education system: assimilation of European cultural patterns (coloniality of knowledge)

This divergence was exemplified mainly in:

- The interpretation of the civilization/barbarism dichotomy (for Martí, true barbarism was ignorance and superstition; for Sarmiento, it was non-European).
- The conception of identity (mestizo and inclusive in Martí's vision versus white and exclusive in Sarmiento's worldview).

## **Construction of subcontinental identity from a Martí decolonial perspective**

In the context of forging regional identity, Martí developed key discursive strategies in *La Edad de Oro* to forge a Latin American and decolonial consciousness:

- The vindication of indigenous civilizations through comparisons with classical European figures, to highlight their value within the framework of universal history. Moving away from traditional narratives that denied or minimized the indigenous presence, Martí emphasized the greatness of these cultures, establishing parallels between their achievements and those of classical civilizations such as the Greek, thereby seeking to dispel the notion of inferiority imposed by colonial discourses and reinforce the self-esteem of Latin American children regarding their cultural heritage.
- Dismantling Sarmiento's controversial dichotomy of Civilization/Barbarism -an expression at the Latin American level of the pair Modernity/Coloniality-, which Martí combated through the frequent use of analogies, counter-narratives and concrete historical examples that dismantled colonial racial stereotypes, also subverting colonial hierarchies.
- The rescue and exaltation of emancipatory figures such as Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, and Miguel Hidalgo, as role models and foundational examples of a common subcontinental struggle against colonialism and European/Western metropolitan power. These heroes were not venerated as distant statues, but as human beings with virtues and flaws, whose actions were imbued with ideals of justice and freedom; they offered young readers models of civic conduct and social commitment, reaffirming the value of personal sacrifice for the collective good of the subcontinent.
- Implicit critique of the indigenous epistemicide in colonial educational systems.

## **José Martí's *La Edad de Oro*, a precursor to decolonial pedagogy.**

Analyses confirmed that *La Edad de Oro* was ahead of its time by harmonizing key principles of contemporary decolonial pedagogy in its texts:

- Intercultural approach: equitable valuation of all cultures.
- Situated knowledge: linking learning with the American context.
- Critical thinking: questioning colonial narratives.
- Cognitive emancipation: using education as a tool for liberation.

This educational approach reflected an early attempt at what is now recognized as decolonial pedagogy, since Martí proposed an education that broke with Eurocentrism, affirmed local identity, and gave voice to the silenced. His intention was to combat ignorance and superstition not through cultural imposition, but through the recognition of human diversity and the universal values that each person contributes. His educational proposal was also a political project, aspiring to the transformation of society through the formation of cultured, critical, and engaged citizens.

Looking to posterity, Martí designed with *La Edad de Oro* a profoundly transformative journal, proposing an educational model rooted in Latin American reality inclusive, pluralistic, and emancipatory. He anticipated the critical and decolonial pedagogies of the 21st century and laid the foundations for an education that seeks cultural equity and respect for diversity. For Martí, education was not only a right, but also a tool for liberation, capable of forming citizens able to transform the world in which they lived.

This great work of Martí's journalism -questioning the educational paradigms of Modernity/Coloniality- was not just a children's magazine, but a transcendent alternative educational proposal, created from and for Our America, whose principles remain fully relevant thanks to its innovative pedagogical design, with an approach that prioritized not only technical instruction, but also moral formation and the development of critical thinking, linked to regional identity.

## DISCUSSION

José Martí carried out one of the most ambitious and impactful educational projects in the press with the publication of *La Edad de Oro*. In this magazine, Martí presented a holistic vision of humankind, combining scientific and humanistic knowledge to educate future Latin American citizens from a perspective that valued both wisdom and morality. His goal was to prepare new generations to understand their history, their environment, and their role within their society. From an educational perspective, Martí conceived a magazine that not only informed but also educated and transformed. It reflected a commitment to responding to the cultural, historical, and social needs of Latin American children. As he himself stated:

*La Edad de Oro* is published: so that American children may know how people lived before, and how they live today, in America and in other lands; and how so many things are made of glass and iron, and steam engines, and suspension bridges, and electric light (...); so that children may know the

famous books that tell of the battles and religions of ancient peoples. We will tell them about everything that is done in the workshops, where stranger and more interesting things happen than in fairy tales (...) We work for children, because children are the ones who know how to love, because children are the hope of the world" (Martí, 1991a, pp. 301-302).

Martí conceived of the child's education as a process that should begin with their own reality, without depending on foreign models alien to American identity. Through *La Edad de Oro*, he sought to cultivate well-rounded human beings, happy in their environment, proud of their origins and their cultural heritage, and aware of their social duty. His vision of the model Latin American citizen was expressed in a letter to his friend Manuel Mercado, dated August 3, 1889:

"It does not truly seem that *La Edad de Oro* should come into the world (...) under very bad omens... I enter into this undertaking with great faith, and as something serious and useful, which the humility of its form does not diminish in its importance of thought... You will see from the circular that it carries profound thought, and since I have taken it upon myself, which is no small burden, it must be so that it may help in what I would like to help with, which is to fill our lands with original men, raised to be happy in the land in which they live and to live in accordance with it, without divorcing themselves from it, nor living unfruitfully in it, as rhetorical citizens, or disdainful foreigners born as punishment in this other part of the world. We must raise our children as men of their time, and men of America. If I had not had this dignity in my eyes, I would not have entered into this undertaking" (Martí, 1991b, p. 147).

If the great call of Modernity -propagated by champions like Domingo Faustino Sarmiento- was to live and think in the European way, Martí sought, on the contrary, that the magazine "respond to the special needs of the Spanish-speaking countries in America, and contribute in each issue directly and pleasantly to the orderly and useful instruction of our boys and girls, without vain translations of works written for children of different character and countries (...) *La Edad de Oro* wishes to put in the hands of the child of America a book that will occupy and delight him, teach him without fatigue, tell him in picturesque summary the past and the contemporary, stimulate him to employ his mental and physical faculties equally (...) to replace the sickly and rhetorical poetry that is still in vogue, with that other healthy and useful one that is born from knowledge of the world; to study in preference the laws, agents and history of the land where he must work for the glory of his name and the needs of sustenance" (Martí, 1991a, pp. 295-296).

In the pages of *La Edad de Oro*, the reader finds texts on scientific education, accompanied by others of a humanistic nature, which together sought to provide a well-rounded education for children. For Martí, being cultured was the path to freedom from true barbarism: ignorance and superstition. Thus, he stated:

"Each issue will contain, in a style that is interesting to read like a story, articles that are true summaries of sciences, industries, arts, history and literature, along with travel articles, biographies, descriptions of games and customs, fables and verses. The topics chosen will always be such that, however much doctrine they contain, they do not seem to contain it, nor alarm the young reader with the scientific title or the elaborate language" (Martí, 1991a, p. 296).

In this way, Latin American children learned about stories like *Meñique*, poetic compositions like *Los zapaticos de rosa*, lessons in ancient history like Homer's *Iliad*, and articles on science and industry, such as *The History of the Spoon and the Fork* or *The Paris Exposition*, which presented the advances of the time and Latin American participation in global events.

Martí also adopted a decolonial approach in his historical analyses and in disciplines such as architecture. In *The History of Man Told by His Houses*, he emphasized the equality among men, dismantling racial myths and Sarmiento's civilization/barbarism dichotomy.

"The Maya of Yucatán did not know that the Gauls lived across the sea, where France is now, but they did the same things as the Gauls, and as the Germans, who lived where Germany is now. Studying teaches us this: that man is the same everywhere, and appears and grows in the same way, and does and thinks the same things, with no difference other than the land in which he lives..." (Martí, 1991a, p. 357). In contrast, Sarmiento considered European superior and American barbarism a subordinate category. His educational programs, although modern, had a segregationist logic with an ethnic-racial slant, fostering the epistemicide of Indigenous peoples.

"Indigenous, primitive, prehistoric races, deprived of all rudiments of civilization and government, are mixed into our being as a nation; and only the school can bring to the soul the germ that in adulthood will develop social life; and introduce this vaccination, to eradicate the death that the barbarism ingested in our veins will give us..." (Sarmiento, 1900, p. 420).

If Sarmiento sought to erase the indigenous past, Martí exalted it in all its grandeur and splendor, denouncing the brutality of the conquest in texts such as *Father Las Casas*: "Those murderous conquerors [who] must have come from hell, not from Spain" (Martí, 1991a, p. 440).

In *The Indian Ruins*, Martí recovered episodes from the subcontinent's ancient past, integrating new generations into the history of their ancestors and promoting the inclusion of indigenous people in Latin American identity. Furthermore, Martí highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of American civilizations by comparing them with Europe.

"There are kings like the Chichimec Netzahualpilli, who kill their sons because they broke the law, just as the Roman Brutus had his son killed; there are orators who rise up weeping, like the Tlaxcalan Xicotencatl, to beg their people not to let the Spaniard enter, as Demosthenes rose up to beg the Greeks not to let Philip enter; there are just monarchs like Netzahualcoyotl... There are sacrifices of men, like that of the Hebrew Abraham... Superstition and ignorance make men barbarians in all nations. And the victorious Spaniards have said more than is fair about the Indians in these matters..." (Martí, 1991a, pp. 381-382).

Thus, *La Edad de Oro* constitutes a precedent of decolonial pedagogy, promoting cultural plurality, cognitive emancipation and the recognition of indigenous history as part of the Latin American identity construction (Méndez-Reyes, 2021b, p. 87; Ochoa, 2023, pp. 160-161).

In articles such as *Three Heroes*, Martí offered models of identity and morality:

"These three men are sacred: (Simón) Bolívar, of Venezuela; (José de) San Martín, of the Río de la Plata; (Miguel) Hidalgo, of Mexico. Their mistakes should be forgiven, because the good they did was more than their faults... The grateful speak of the light. (...) These are heroes: those who fight to make peoples free, or those who suffer in disgrace for defending a great truth" (Martí, 1991a, pp. 305, 308).

Thus, Martí promoted a historical and cultural memory that rescued the indigenous, integrated the indigenous people into the historical narrative, and constructed an active subject, critical and proud of their identity. In contrast to Eurocentric education, *La Edad de Oro* stands as a precursor to decolonial pedagogy, laying the foundations of the Latin American identity that Martí called *Nuestra América* (*Our America*).

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## Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

## Authors' contribution

The authors participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.



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