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Abstract

In the paper, the author outlines the sources of the rhetorical tradition in Argentina, as well as the main trends in the contemporary research within rhetoric. She points out the most important centers of research, influential authors and their theoretical and methodological input into the scholarly discussion on rhetoric in Argentina. After having discussed the general framework, the author presents contributions of individual scholars

Key words

rhetoric, tradition, theory, method, Argentina

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Rhetoric in Argentina: an overview

Rhetoric in Argentina dates back to colonial times. In 1610, the Jesuits built the Colegio Mayor in what is now the province of Córdoba. In 1613, the Jesuit University of Córdoba, the country's first university, was established when King Philip III of Spain gave the Jesuits the power to grant degrees. In 1757, the Jesuits drew up a manuscript catalog, the *Index Librorum Bibliothecae Collegii Maximi Cordubensis Societatis Iesu*, containing records for about three thousand works – some six thousand volumes – in the University's library holdings. After the Jesuits were expelled from the Americas in 1767, by order of the Spanish King Carlos III, the University was then run by the Franciscans, a fact which contributed to the sequestration, deterioration and loss of many of the books in the Jesuit library. In 2005, a team led by Alfredo Frascini, from the National University of Villa María, published a critical, philological and bibliographical edition of the *Index* (edited by Frascini & Sánchez 2005) which featured texts on a variety of subjects, including many works on oratory, sermons, exchanges of correspondence, accolades, encomiums and eulogies, controversies and translations of Aristotle into Latin. Other team members (Sánchez, L, Demaría, F & Kalinowski, J 2012) published a collection of translations from Latin into Spanish of prolusions, small pieces of academic oratory drawn up by the Jesuits shortly before their expulsion and delivered as preambles to the defense of a doctoral thesis.

However, there are not many studies on the history of rhetoric in Argentina. At the University of Buenos Aires, Narvaja de Arnoux & Blanco (2004) and Arnoux (2013) have researched rhetoric teaching in nineteenth century high schools and they have stressed its importance in the training of the elite who would lead and control the state apparatus.

Rhetoric Studies in Argentina has three main branches. The oldest of these is made up of academics working on Greco-Roman antiquity, such as Alfredo Frascini. One notable figure in this area was Ramón Alcalde (1923-1988; see Alcalde 1996). After the return to democracy in 1983, Alcalde reintroduced themes from Rhetoric into the courses in Ancient Greek language, thought and culture at the University of Buenos Aires, while the renowned Latinist, Eduardo Prieto

(1916-2003), took a similar initiative with the same university's Latin programs (e.g. his translation of Petronius' *Satyricon*). All these themes had been censored by the obscurantist military regime that came to power in 1976 (by the way, this confirms Michel Meyer's observation in his book *Principia Rhetorica*: "Rhetoric is reborn when dogmas crumble"). Other important figures in this tradition have been Nora Andrade (2009) and Josefina Nagore (see Nagore & Crogliano 2014), also professors at the University of Buenos Aires.

At the present time, Graciela Chichi specializes in the Rhetoric of Aristotle at the National University of La Plata (Chichi 2014), while at the Universidad Nacional del Sur Viviana Gastaldi has contributed to understanding the relationship between sophistry and Greek theatre in the fifth century B.C. (Gastaldi 1998; Gastaldi ed. 2006). At the National University of Rosario, Nora Múgica and Liliana Pérez have authored a manual of rhetoric focusing on the work of Cicero (Múgica & Pérez 2006), while at the National University of Cuyo, a team headed by Cristina Salatino has made a new Spanish translation of Cicero's *Orator* (edition 2013) and will publish one of Cicero's *Topica* next year. Finally, at the University of Buenos Aires, Alicia Schniebs leads a team that has published a new Spanish translation of *Facta et dicta memorabilia* by Valerius Maximus (edition 2013).

Another branch of Rhetoric Studies in Argentina works within a discourse analysis perspective. One group, of which Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux is a member, focuses on the relationship between rhetoric, power and ideology. Narvaja de Arnoux herself approaches the history of rhetoric from the perspective of language policy and planning as well as studying the presidential rhetoric of Hugo Chavez (Narvaja de Arnoux 2008), among others. My own work, which analyzes the rhetorical dimension of political-ideological intelligence and explores the rhetoric supporting various military coups in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (Vitale, forthcoming), has found fertile ground within this group. A different group, made up of researchers such as Patricia Vallejos of the Universidad Nacional del Sur (Vallejos 2013), and María Marta García Negroni of the University of Buenos Aires (García Negroni 2011), has examined the rhetoric of science and academic discourse. At the same university, Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux¹, Mariana di Stefano, Cecilia Pereira (Narvaja de Arnoux, Di Stefano & Pereira 2002), Roberto Marafioti (Marafioti ed. 2010), Analia Reale and myself (Reale & Vitale 1995; Mateo & Vitale 2013) have revisited the role of Rhetoric in the teaching of writing and argumentation (Pérez & Rogieri eds. 2012), while another group of which Martín Menéndez is a member, approaches Rhetoric from pragmatic discourse analysis and the study of multimodality (Menéndez 2012).

1. Shortly after the return to democracy in 1983, a freshman year (known as the Common Basic Course or CBC) was introduced at the University of Buenos Aires, where Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux pioneered a new approach at the rhetorical tradition in teaching writing to students entering in higher education.

A third branch of Rhetoric Studies deals mainly with the Semiotics of Culture. The most outstanding example of this approach is the Rhetoric Study Group (*Grupo de Estudios de Retórica* or GER), led by Silvia Barei at the National University of Córdoba (Barei & Pérez eds. 2006). Starting from Juri Lotman's conception of semiotics, GER analyzes different text types – literary, journalistic and legal, among others – with an emphasis on the construction of metaphors and their relationship to culture. The group is currently exploring Biorhetoric (Arrizabalaga ed. 2013).

In Argentina, however, there is so far no specialized postgraduate program in Rhetoric and it receives little attention in universities². Hence, the Argentina Association of Rhetoric (www.aaretorica.org) was created in 2010, with the purpose of promoting academic exchanges with Argentine specialists in the various branches of Rhetoric, encouraging better representation at universities and establishing ties with the international scientific community. In its charter, the Argentina Association of Rhetoric (AAR) states that its committee should be composed proportionally of scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity and specialists dealing with Rhetoric from interdisciplinary perspectives, in order to stimulate dialogue between the three branches mentioned above. In 2011, the Association created the online magazine *Rétor* (www.revistaretor.org), the first journal in Argentina devoted exclusively to Rhetoric. *Rétor* is already included in LATINDEX.³

The Argentine Rhetoric Association was formed in 2010 along with the Latin American Association of Rhetoric (www.alretorica.org) following the First National Conference on Rhetoric and the First Latin American Symposium on Research in Rhetoric Studies.⁴ The keynote address, delivered by Gerardo Ramirez Vidal of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, was reformulated and published as an article in the first issue of *Rétor*. Other plenary lectures were published in the book *Tendencias actuales en Estudios Retóricos (Current Trends in Rhetoric and Communication Studies)* and conference presentation papers are included in the Book of Proceedings, available on the Association's website. In

2. In fact, there is only one institution: the Rhetoric Studies Centre, created by Nora Múgica at the National University of Rosario.

3. Other older journals – like *Synthesis*, published by the Center for Hellenic Studies at the National University of La Plata; *Argos*, by the Argentine Association of Classical Studies (AADEC), *Annals of Classical Philology*, by the Institute of Classical Philology at the University of Buenos Aires, *Circe*, by the Institute of Classical Studies of the National University of La Pampa; *Revista de Estudios Clásicos* (Journal of Classical Studies) by the Institute of Classical Languages and Literature at the National University of Cuyo; *Ordia Prima*, co-published by the National University of Córdoba and the National University of Litoral and *Stylos*, published by the Catholic University of Argentina – contain articles on Rhetoric, although the scope of these journals is much broader.

4. The Latin American Association of Rhetoric consists of the Argentine Association of Rhetoric; the Brazilian Society of Rhetoric, created in 2010; the Peruvian Association of Rhetoric, founded in 2011; the Mexican Association of Rhetoric, created in 2012; Chilean Society of Rhetoric, founded in 2013 and the Colombian Association of Rhetoric, created in 2014. In 2014, the Ibero-American Organization of Rhetoric was formed in Portugal: it includes the Latin American Association of Rhetoric, national associations and institutional research groups in Latin America, the Portuguese Society of Rhetoric, formed in 2013, and institutional research groups in Spain that are currently promoting the creation of the Spanish Society of Rhetoric.

2011, the Argentine Rhetoric Association organized the First Exchange Forum for Research Teams in Rhetoric Studies, whose Book of Abstracts is also available from the same website. The opening address was given by Philippe-Joseph Salazar of Cape Town University, South Africa, and the closing speech was made by Adelino Cattani of the University of Padova, Italy. In 2013, the Argentine Rhetoric Association held the Second National Conference on Rhetoric and the First International Conference on Rhetoric and Interdisciplinarity, whose keynote address was delivered by Marc Angenot, McGill University, Canada. This talk, together with the plenary lecture given by Maria Silvana Celentano from the G. d'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara, and various presentation papers, have been published in the Book of Proceedings, also available on the web. Other communications have been published as articles in the eBook *Rhetoric in South America*, available without cost from www.africanrhetoric.org

Presentation of the thematic issue

This issue of *Res Rhetorica* is devoted to rhetoric in Argentina. Without attempting to be exhaustive, it features four articles whose conceptual framework and subject matter are representative of the ways in which rhetoric is addressed in this country.

Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux's "Teaching eloquence in a transition period: Hispanic handbooks of rhetoric in the first half of the nineteenth century" analyzes four rhetoric manuals published in Spanish and once used in secondary schools in Spanish-speaking America. She does so from the framework of *Glottopolitique*, an approach to language policy in which rhetoric is seen as interventions in the public space of language aimed at shaping the subjectivities required by different social processes. Here, the processes included the setting up of educational institutions to train lawyers in public speaking in line with the creation of new representative institutions.

In contrast, Silvia Barei and Pablo Molina Ahumada's "Rhetoric constructions. From metaphor to metaphoric order" is framed within the Semiotics of Culture and theorizes rhetoric as a mechanism underlying *all* forms of communication. Metaphor is central to this approach; thus the authors reflect on what they call the *metaphorical order*, a cognitive and ideological device for structuring thought processes. Examples to illustrate this approach are taken from both contemporary Latin American public discourse and Argentine literature.

Martín Menéndez's "The rhetoric dimension of discourse analysis: a strategic approach" argues that multimodal discourse analysis examines the traditional issues of rhetoric from a pragmatic-discursive perspective and is therefore a part

of rhetoric. Starting from systemic-functional linguistics, Menéndez proposes a method for studying the multimodality of discourse which highlights the notion of strategy, defined as a plan for achieving a particular purpose.

Finally, my own article, “Public memory and the contemporary epideictic genre: Death notices devoted to Jorge R. Videla,” draws on contributions from the old and new rhetoric to explore the relationship between the epideictic genre and the construction of public memory. It analyzes the death notices dedicated to the former dictator and their controversial relationship with a hegemonic memory that condemns Argentina's last military dictatorship of the twentieth century. To this end, it explores what I call *rhetorical-argumentative memory*, that is, the recycling and reformulation of previously used persuasive strategies in a new situation.

It only remains for me to thank my colleagues of the Polish Rhetoric Society, and especially their president, Maria Załęska, for their kind invitation to serve as guest editor.

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