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Rhetoric and Oratory in New Spain and the Nineteenth Century in Mexico
Retoryka i oratorstwo w Nowej Hiszpanii i dziewiętnastowiecznym Meksyku

Abstract

The conquest of America brought with it the introduction of rhetoric as a model of teaching and as a practice in the different manifestations of religious discourse, of which the preaching or sermon was the most important for scholars of the colonial era (16th-18th centuries) who, on the other hand, gave little importance to the three political genres: deliberative, epideictic and judicial or forensic, although these had not disappeared as discursive practices. The great classical deliberative oratory had taken a backseat in New Spain but continued to develop in the consistories of the mayoralties and in public debates; the judicial genre continued to be exercised in lawsuits before the Inquisition and local judicial bodies and the epideictic genre was manifested in the lives of saints and praises of various kinds. This situation changed during the 19th century, particularly in the second half, when great parliamentary oratory, civic and patriotic speeches that flooded the republic and judicial oratory flourished because of the new political conditions brought about by the struggle for independence and the triumph of liberalism, in addition to other important genres such as history and journalism. The purpose of this essay is, first, to offer an outline of oratory practices and rhetorical teaching during the Colony, emphasizing the importance of sermons and the oblivion of other discursive expressions and, second, to show the emergence of political genres during the 19th century, which reached their greatest splendor in discursive practices and liberal education.

Podbój Ameryki przyniósł ze sobą wprowadzenie retoryki jako modelu nauczania i praktyki w różnych przejawach dyskursu religijnego. Dla uczonych z epoki kolonialnej (XVI-XVIII w.) kazanie lub homilia były najważniejsze. Jednocześnie nie przywiązywali oni większej wagi do gatunków: deliberatywnego, epideiktycznego i sądowego, chociaż te nie zniknęły jako praktyki dyskursywne. Wielkie klasyczne oratorstwo polityczne zeszło na dalszy plan w Nowej Hiszpanii, ale nadal rozwijało się w trakcie zgromadzeń burmistrzów i debat publicznych, gatunek sądowy był nadal wykorzystywany w procesach przed inkwizycją i lokalnymi organami sądowymi, a gatunek epideiktyczny przejawiał się w żywotach świętych i różnego rodzaju pochwałach. Sytuacja zmieniła się w XIX wieku, zwłaszcza w drugiej połowie, kiedy w wyniku walki o niepodległość i triumfu liberalizmu, w nowych warunkach politycznych, rozkwitło oratorstwo parlamentarne, polityczne i sądowe oraz retoryka historyczna i dziennikarska. Celem tego eseju jest, po pierwsze, przedstawienie zarysu praktyk oratorskich i nauczania retoryki w kolonii, przy podkreśleniu znaczenia kaznodziejstwa i pomniejszeniu innych form dyskursywnych, a po drugie, ukazanie pojawienia się gatunków politycznych w XIX wieku i ich rozkwitu w praktykach dyskursywnych i edukacji liberalnej.

Key words

oratory, rhetoric, New Spain, 19th century, liberal education
oratorstwo, retoryka, Nowa Hiszpania, XIX wiek, liberalna edukacja

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Rhetoric and Oratory in New Spain and the Nineteenth Century in Mexico

The oratory practices and rhetorical teaching inherited from the classical tradition of Greece and Rome entered the so-called "New World" with the conquest of the peoples of America by the Europeans with fire and sword and through acculturation (imposition of political systems, religions and sciences). Their societies had their own discursive models and their own teaching content that can be explained from the ancient classical theory, which is not the subject of these pages,[1] since what is sought is to offer an outline of oratory and its teaching in the new lands conquered in substitution of the original ones during the three centuries of Spanish domination (16th, 17th and 18th centuries) and the new course that they experienced with the flourishing of political oratory, history and journalism during the 19th century, and the teaching that these genres were the object of. For this reason, I divide this essay into two parts and each part into two sections. The first one addresses oratory and rhetoric in New Spain and the second deals with discursive practices and their teaching during the first century of Mexican Independence, although I limit myself to only the three canonical genres: deliberative, epideictic and judicial. The purpose is not to delve into this topic, but to show the different nature of the two periods studied. Finally, I end by emphasizing again the importance of rhetoric and oratory in the 19th century.

1. Oratory and Rhetoric in New Spain (Mexico)[2]
Spreading and Importance of Preaching in New Spain

The conquest of America brought with it the affirmation of rhetoric as a model of teaching and as a practice in the various manifestations of discourse, particularly

1. Some general expositions on rhetoric in Latin America have been published by McManus (2021), Romano (2013), Villanueva and Baca (2010). On the rhetoric of ancient Mexico, a subject that I will not deal with here, you can consult Abbott (1987), Carrasco (1999), Cocom Pech (2004), Kennedy (1998, 100-108), Ramírez Vidal (2008, 2021), Ruiz Bañuls (2013).
2. On rhetoric in New Spain, see Abbott (1996), Beuchot Puente (1998), Laird (2006), McManus (2021), Osorio Romero (1980, 1989), Ramírez Trejo (2002, 2010, 2011, 2012), and the annotated bibliography in Zaragoza (2007).

the use of the sermon in all walks of life. From the famous sermon by Fray Antón de Montesinos, delivered in Santo Domingo in December 1511 (León Portilla 2009), to the *Panegyric of the Glorious Virgin and Doctor Saint Teresa of Jesus*, delivered by the pro-martyr of the independence of Mexico, Fray Melchor de Talamantes, in 1802,[3] to mention two very well-known works, at the beginning and end of the New Spain period, respectively, the servants of Christ delivered countless sermons of very diverse nature.[4] In New Spain, numerous works of this genre were published and distributed, which shows the importance the genre had and the breadth of functions it fulfilled, not only in the promotion of faith, but on practically any occasion. This was the oratory genre that predominated in the long New Spain period, but not the only one in existence. As stated by the greatest scholar of this oratory genre, Don Carlos Herrejón Peredo (2003, 11):

> The sermon is not simply a type of Christian preaching; it is a historical form that presents a development linked to the circumstances of each era. If we were to define it, we would say that it is a form of Christian preaching of a certain solemnity and formality, governed by the Bible and tradition, as well as imbued with the principles and resources of rhetoric.

Regarding its importance, Herrejón Peredo (1994, 59) states:

> Rhetorical discourse, particularly the sermon, was the most cultivated and printed genre in New Spain: around 1,812 oratorical pieces are recorded individually in the aforementioned records [of Toribio Medina]. To these we should add those that appear in collections of sermons, which probably bring the number to just over 2,000 printed works of oratory in New Spain Mexico.

However, the speeches that were given or written in New Spain fulfilled very different functions, whether it was the famous pronouncement that the conquistadors read before the Indians so that they would submit to Spanish rule or the speeches that were given during festivals or within the walls of the University or family epistolography.[5]

The Value of Sermons

The above outline refers to oratory, that is, to discursive practice. But are the discursive expressions to which we have referred worthy of receiving applause? Do they have merits that make them worthy of note?

Mexican scholars, since the 19th century, but especially in the last 50 years, have diligently studied all this oral and written discursive production. The most important primary sources are the records of Mariano Beristáin y Souza entitled

3. Talamantes (1803). Herrejón Peredo offers an analysis of that sermon (200-209) which he considers "one of the best models of a neoclassical sermon and the only one printed by the author" (200).
4. Here we follow Herrejón Peredo (1994, 2002, 2003).
5. The list of the 1,812 sermons appears in Herrejón Peredo (2003, 387-421).

Biblioteca Hispanoamericana Septentrional (1813) and that of Toribio Medina entitled *La imprenta en México* (1539-1821) (1909-1912).

There was also interest in Mexican oratory beyond the sermon. In 1904, the descendants of Francisco Pimentel published the work entitled *Escritos póstumos. Novelistas y oradores mexicanos*. The study of oratory covers the period from the 16th century to 1880 and is divided into four genres: sacred eloquence, from the 16th to the 19th century; then, forensic oratory, from the 17th century to the present day; next, a word about parliamentary oratory and finally "some news about academic oratory." Of the 171 pages devoted to oratory, 95 deal with sacred oratory, 16 with forensic, 50 with parliamentary and 10 with academic.

Pimentel does not study all sacred eloquence in Mexico but only that with literary virtues, leaving aside that which served "as a means of religious propaganda among the indigenous people" or "as a political lever for the Spanish rulers, by virtue of the influence that the clergy had over the nation, especially among the Indians and the mestizos" (1904, 342).

But that oratory was static and lifeless. The letter had been recovered but not the spirit, pronunciation, gestures or body movements that give vigor and vivacity to the language.

In 1905, Jesús Urueta wrote (in Ajam 1905, 179):

> A broad gallery of our orators, from preachers to academics, can be found in volume V of the *Complete Works* of the very erudite writer D. Francisco Pimentel. Unfortunately, his erudition was simple erudition: he was not a critic — in the modern sense of the word — because he lacked literary taste. His judgments, applied to *printed speeches*, as *written works*, are, for that very reason, false. Instead, they tell us nothing about the *oratory* of the orators. (And oratory is the process of preparation, the voice, the gesture, the effect caused . . . in a word, the work of the platform, not the work at the desk).

Herrejón Peredo (2003, 18-19) makes a characterization of the New Spanish sermon comparing the written and the oral:

> The sermon or speech, as it came from the lips of the speaker and as it was heard in its circumstances, is at a notable distance from the written text and its reading, even when the words are the same. This distance is not simply one of time and space. Orality acquires a different meaning thanks to the modulation and imposition of the voice, and is accompanied by other means of expression, such as gestures, gesticulation, the look, the entire attitude of the body and the person. The orality of oratory implies an audience and a history that gives an account of this encounter between speaker and listeners.

Rhetoric in New Spain

Numerous anthologies and studies have been published on oratory in Mexico during the colonial period, which I will not mention here (cf. Herrejón Peredo 2003, 14). Instead, I am going to deal with another problem related not to oratory, but to rhetoric.

To do so, I will first answer the following question: what made it possible for the New Spanish sermon or the political rhetoric of the independent and contemporary era to exist? Did the orators of the different genres have a rhetorical education or did their discursive qualities emerge naturally? As the ancient masters of rhetoric said: a first cause of eloquence are natural abilities such as voice, memory or creative ingenuity. The orator is born. But it also requires constant practice, example and imitation. In Homer's *Iliad* (IX, v. 443), we read that Achilles was given to Phoenix so that he could teach him to speak and to fight. Many centuries later, Roman children were taken by their parents to a renowned orator, so that they could learn from him not only moral values, but also the ability to speak. Practice makes a master. But the orator is also made through technique, that is, through a serious, hard and constant study of the precepts of rhetoric under the guidance of the rhetor. Naturally there are good and bad teachers. Isocrates and Quintilian recommended being careful with charlatans.

Art makes the master, that is, the discipline that teaches how to elaborate and present effective speeches, which allow persuading different types of recipients. Did the Fray Montesinos have an education that allowed him to produce effects on his recipients? Of course he did. The missionaries in the invaded lands had been educated to spread the word of the Lord, and Fray Montesinos had been educated in Salamanca (León Portilla 2009, 35). A long educational tradition supported sermons. Pastoral teaching was based on manuals entitled *Ars praedicandi*, *Ars concionandi* or *Ecclesiastical rhetoric*, and on homiletics, known as art or science of preaching, or how to prepare sermons. All these works contain a series of formulas, techniques or precepts that show how to acquire the art of spreading the faith.

Treatises on pastoral rhetoric in Mexico have been the object of deep attention in studies of many scholars. Osorio Romero, an illustrious ancestor of ours, published several works on oratory and rhetoric. In 1980, his *Floresta de Gramática y Retórica en Nueva España* (1521-1767) came out of print, and, in 1989, *Conquistar el eco. La paradoja de la conciencia criolla*, a work that contains two important works on rhetoric entitled "Rhetoric in New Spain" (135-171, especially 147-171) and "The teaching of rhetoric in the 16th century in New Spain" (189-208) was pubslihed.

The first text begins by saying:

> The history of rhetoric in Mexico has been totally forgotten. Its oblivion has meant, consequently, that we have underestimated the history of our literary precepts. Therefore, we have written nothing about the evolution of our rhetorical and poetic theories, of oratory in its various genres and, especially, of sacred oratory. However, for centuries rhetoric was the discipline that provided our ancestors with information about the beauty, usefulness and resources of literature; it was, in short, the crowning of the trivium, of the educational system, a new rock for Prometheus, which Justo Sierra called "the literary chain that anchors us in the past."

But this phenomenon was not new, since Fadrique Furió had already expressed in 1554 in his *Institutionum Rhetoricarum libri tres*: "Shall we tolerate that rhetoric be chained and oppressed for so long? By no means. Let us open the prison, knock down the doors, break the chains and free it from tyranny" (Osorio Romero 1989, 143).

The teacher Osorio Romero is particularly interested in rhetoric as a literary theory, which is why he is right about the forgetfulness of rhetoric. Literary rhetoric was a derivative of the rhetorical matrix, which was forensic or judicial rhetoric, that is, the rhetoric of the courts, both in Greece and in Rome.

Scholars of rhetoric in the colonial era have spent time investigating sacred and academic rhetoric, but little importance was given to other genres and species. The reason seems quite clear, since as Herrejón Peredo (2003, 17) says:

> Rhetorical discourse in New Spain had its main concretion in sacred oratory, that is, in the sermon. Civic discourse, expressed in an oratory piece celebrating some past or present event, such as the welcome to a viceroy, had little presence compared to the sermon. The same happened with academic discourse, which although was cultivated as much or more than civic discourse, remained far below sermon production.

Furthermore, the sermon was divided into numerous species and the academic genre was added. Some reduced oratory and rhetoric to the three canonical genres, as exemplified by Friar Diego Valadés: deliberative, epideictic and judicial. An attempt was also made to adapt all discursive production to these three genres. For example, the Spanish rhetor García Matamoros identified the academic or didactic genre with the epideictic or demonstrative genre: "the genre of refutation, which is used for accusation and reprimand – refers to the judicial genre. The instructive, censorious and consolatory genres are species proper to the deliberative genre" (cf. Pérez 2021, 43).

Others, however, preferred to give a separate place to the sermon as a religious and academic genre, as Francisco Pimentel did. In any case, the texts of sacred rhetoric of the 16th century were based on the classical rhetorical theory of a political nature and adapted the theory to the needs of the genre, although sometimes they applied it to the sermon almost without changes, that is, as if the sermon were a lawyer's speech.[6]

However, although the great deliberative oratory of antiquity had taken a backseat in New Spain, it continued to develop in the consistories of the mayoralties and in the public debates of towns and villages in defense of their rights. The judicial genre continued to be expressed in lawsuits before the local judicial authorities or within the walls of the Inquisition. The epideictic genre was deployed in the lives of saints and praises without following the homiletic models. One example

6. See, for example, Valadés (2019, 435-451), Osorio Romero (1980, 363, 408).

among many others is the case of the Irishman William Lamport who arrived in New Spain in 1640. He was tried and imprisoned in 1642. He remained in captivity for 17 years, accused of heresy, among many other charges. The real reason was that he had opposed the colonial authorities, had tried to make Mexico independent from Spain and become the first king of the new country. In the end, he was sentenced to death at the stake and executed on November 19, 1659. Today, his statue is in the Monument to Independence, along with the urns containing the remains of our insurgents. Among his works, the so-called "Proclamation for the Liberation of New Spain from Subjection to the Crown of Castile and the Uprising of Its Natives" stands out, a work of first-rate political rhetoric written in extreme conditions during his captivity (Ramírez Vidal 2017, 8). One would not have to look far to find countless examples of works in which the influence of the political rhetoric of antiquity could be found.

2. Oratory and Rhetoric in the 19th Century
Political Oratory

But it was above all in the 19th century, more than in any other era, when political oratory exploded in Mexico due to the desire for emancipation that animated the men of that century. Although the sermon traditions did not stop, they were increasingly limited to the spaces of faith. The oratory genres of Antiquity — deliberative, epideictic and judicial— were once again deployed in all their splendor, at first timidly, then with all their vigor. If one seeks the classical rhetorical tradition in Mexico, one must look more in that period and in those genres than in New Spain and in the sermon.[7]

While the royalists and the insurgents first, and the liberals and conservatives later, were destroying each other on the battlefield, a parallel discursive struggle of political propaganda was taking place that reached the other side of the ocean in support of one side and the other. The war was fought with the rifle and the pen.[8]

The first political oratory took place during the period of the War of Independence, from 1810 to 1821, not only in the form of proclamations, relations and war reports, but also sermons, civic speeches and judgments against adversaries. Hidalgo was an accomplished orator. He himself was proud of having delivered solemn sermons, such as the one dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary, and he was a worshipper of the word in the style of the Holy Fathers (Herrejón Peredo 2003, 318). It is probable

7. If New Spain's oratory and rhetoric have already been the subject of numerous studies, the rhetoric of the 19th century, on the other hand, has attracted little attention. A brief exposition is found in the prologue to Ramírez Vidal (2024a), with a bibliography. It is also necessary to mention Palti (2012, 276-286) where the work of the bishop of Michoacán, Clemente de Jesús Munguía, stands out.

8. Herrejón Peredo (2003) offers a broad analysis of printed sermons against insurgencies (287-315) and spoken sermons in favor of them (317-342).

that the misnamed "Cry of Independence" ("Grito de la Independencia") was the epilogue of the sermon that Hidalgo had delivered before a few people: "Long live Our Lady of Guadalupe! Dead to bad government! Long live Fernando VII!" Only the end of the sermon, where he makes the call, is preserved. Everything else was lost, and even the expressions that are preserved were probably not the originals.

Great and successful were the discursive efforts of José María Morelos and his followers to spread their revolutionary dogmas, either orally from the pulpit or in printed matter that he addressed to the public or in sheets that were distributed in the capital of the Republic, while the men were in the fray.[9] In 1810, he had given a sermon to the residents of Carácuaro in which he explained the reasons for his leaving the parish and his decision to take up arms. A year later, during his second campaign, on December 12, 1811, Morelos gave the sermon from the pulpit of the parish church of the town of Izúcar, Puebla, during the celebrations of the feasts of the Lady of Guadalupe. It was an auspicious moment, since the Virgin of Guadalupe had been the image of the Hidalgo banner. In a church in the same place, he gave a famous sermon that is remembered on a plaque affixed to the entrance. Then, on September 14, 1813, he gave a wonderful opening speech at the Congress of Chilpancingo, which has been considered "one of the most definitive speeches produced by the insurgency; a true poem to the independence of Mexico, where Morelos undoubtedly reached the pinnacle of his luminous existence."[10]

The consummation of Independence required the knowledge and eloquence of the parliamentarians who were to draft the Federal Constitution of 1824, an exercise that marked the destinies of the parliamentary practices of our country, preceded not only by the famous Constitution of Cadiz and the Constitution of Apatzingán, but also by the debates held in the town councils of cities, towns and villages of the new nation.

During the period between the reign of Agustín de Iturbide and that of Maximilian I of México (1822-1867), parliamentary oratory matured and reached its climax in the highest tribune of the Nation, particularly in the debates that led to the famous Constitution of 1857. In 1856 there was an explosion of oratory. Alongside venerable figures such as Valentín Gómez Farías, who was the first to suppress the Pontifical University of Mexico in 1833, numerous parliamentary orators emerged, such as Ponciano Arriaga, Melchor Ocampo, Francisco Zarco, Ignacio Ramírez ("El Nigromante") and many more. They rejected rhetoric understood as literary precepts, but assimilated discursive training in seminaries and institutes,

9. Cf. Hernández Silva, in Morelos (2013) [https://mhiel.azc.uam.mx/morelos/presentacion.html]: "He himself was in charge of spreading his voice, his revolutionary and social thought, through handwritten proclamations and decrees that were proclaimed, copied and distributed throughout the towns and regions dominated by his armies. Several of them fell into the hands of the royalists and ended up, for our pleasure, in the viceregal archives."
10. Fernández Delgado (2013, 279). A brief analysis of this speech can be found in Herrejón Peredo (2003, 320-322).

where theoretical and practical oratory continued to be taught, although now it was already deployed freely and strongly in public spaces. These practices continued to be strengthened by notable tribunes, among whom the patriot, writer and literary critic Ignacio Manuel Altamirano stands out, who rose from below to the summit of glory on the tribune. On June 10, 1861, he pronounced an incredible speech in the Chamber of Deputies against the amnesty that was intended to be granted to the murderers who massacred civilians and young medical students who helped the wounded on April 11, 1859, who are known as the "Martyrs of Tacubaya." The speech is of classical style, full of force and rhetorical resources. This speech begins and ends like this (Altamirano 1986):

> With all the conscience of a pure man, with all the heart of a liberal, with the righteous energy of the representative of an outraged nation, I raise my voice here to ask the chamber to reject the opinion in which the decree of amnesty is proposed for the reactionary party.
> […]
> No: reject this draft opinion; to forgive would be to become an accomplice. Jesus Christ forgave his executioners on his scaffold, but it was a matter of personal offenses and not those of an unhappy nation... Do not imitate this generous martyr because you are not in his case, and you would lose the Republic with your exaggerated evangelism. Rise up just, severe, terrible, and tell the rebels what God, through the mouth of the prophet: You used the sword... and the sword will fall upon you!

The fame of this "Mexican Danton" spread to all corners of the country. But these practices were not only observed in large urban centers, but also in the towns and villages that followed and supported one or the other side. One example of what happened in the provinces is enough.

In my town, Jonacatepec (state of Morelos, 100 km southeast of Mexico City), these discursive phenomena can be observed. On June 2, 1835, a document (acta) was issued in which the municipal corporation expressed to the interim president at that time its agreement regarding the problems that plagued the nation, and recognized Antonio López de Santa Anna as the supreme leader of the Nation, although Miguel Barragán was then acting as interim president (Fowler 2007-2010). The text demonstrates a precise knowledge of the structure of this type of document. It is divided into a brief statement of reasons and six articles, indicating at the end that they had been approved by acclamation, in addition to conferring military command of the county on Lieutenant Francisco Saldívar. The first article expresses their adherence to the centralist system, replacing the federal one.

On December 21, 1842, the local ecclesiastical and military authorities and residents of the town issued an act (acta) supporting the Pronouncement of San Luis Potosí against the Second Draft Constitution prepared by the Congress of the Union, recognizing Antonio López de Santa Anna as provisional president of the Republic and Nicolás Bravo as his substitute ("Act of Jonacatepec" 1842).

The act was signed first by the independentist who then served as sub-prefect and commander of Jonacatepec, Rómulo del Valle, father of Leandro Valle, hero of the Reform executed by imperialist troops in June 1861.

Once again, at the initiative of Rómulo del Valle himself, on December 7, 1844, an Act was issued against Santa Anna and in favor of national representation. In the deliberation in the town halls, "civil, military and ecclesiastical authorities, their principal residents and some of the county, and a large number of people participated" (Valle 1844, 2).

These data are enough, although there are many more, to show how the towns met, debated and made agreements to participate in the fratricidal wars and against the invaders. What happened in Jonacatepec was replicated in all the towns of the central plateau of Mexico. They were vibrant, participative, heroic towns.

Civic Orations and Patriotic Speeches

With the liberal triumph, civic oration emerged in independent Mexico. Every important man had to give a speech in commemoration of one of the heroes or one of the triumphs of the liberal side.[11] This was the case, among many others, of Gabino Barreda, who on September 16, 1867, gave a speech that would make him famous and lead him to become the most influential intellectual in our country, founder of the National Preparatory School.[12] But not only the great personalities of our country gave these speeches in the most important cities, but the same thing happened in the towns. Agustín Aragón himself, at the age of 28, gave his civic speech in Jonacatepec on September 16, 1898, at the request of the municipal council, as recorded by Émile Antoine in the Parisian magazine Revue Occidental (1901), but it was already his custom to give civic speeches, as Antoine himself says:

> Mr. Agustín Aragón spoke at many civic celebrations […]: in Mexico, on February 14, 1899, in honor of General Vicente Guerrero; on September 15, in his neighborhood [i.e., in the Veracruz neighborhood, in Jonacatepec], on the independence celebration, and on September 29, in the state of Morelos, in honor of the homonymous hero who died as a martyr for his country.[13]

To conclude this account, on September 27, 1845, Agustín Álvarez del Castillo gave a wonderful speech in the town's public square on the consummation of the Independence of Mexico, in which he presented a narrative of the history of this

11. Denegre-Vaught Alcocer (2012, 2014) has compiled two thick volumes of patriotic speeches for the consummation of the Independence of Mexico and one on the Battle of May 5.
12. See the analysis of this speech by Cardoso Vargas (2005). The rhetorical dimension of this wonderful speech should be highlighted (which is not Cardoso Vargas's purpose), in particular the structure of the work and the topics, which are based on the law of the three states of A. Comte and the three emancipations: scientific, religious and political, which mark the content of the *Civic Oration* by Barreda.
13. Antoine (1901, 68), Ramírez Vidal (2024b, 138).

nation, exalting the War of Independence and assessing the actions of Agustín de Iturbide, the first emperor of Mexico (1822-1823), considered today as a traitor to the country (Ramírez Vidal 2024b). In this speech, the orator harangued the citizens to take up arms and fight against the United States on their own borders, which were then the limits of Texas and Louisiana (1,700 km from Jonacatepec), although Texas had already become independent. I do not know if any contingent was willing to go fight against the United States. If so, the men who left knew that they would not return to their town, but they did not know that their effort would be in vain, since the Mexican forces were defeated by the invader two years later and the foreign army took over Mexico City.

Related to the patriotic speeches are the speeches of praise. Between 1877 and 1880, Emilio del Castillo Negrete published the thre volumes of his *Galería de oradores de México en el siglo XIX* (*Gallery of Mexican orators in the 19th century*), in which he analyzes a series of authors beginning with Fray Servando Teresa de Mier. Almost at the end of the third volume, there is a speech from 1877 in homage to Adolphe Thiers, who died that same year, given by the great hero of the republic Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, to whom we have already referred, who begins with the following words:

> Gentlemen:
> Tacitus, that terrible enemy of tyranny, and panegyrist of good men, said, speaking of the death of Agricola, an illustrious man who was born and educated in Marseilles, the same as the great man whose memory we come to honor today, he said, I repeat, that "the death of that general filled his compatriots with mourning, saddened his friends, and was not indifferent to foreigners or strangers" (Castillo 1880, 474).

Forensic Oratory

In a recent publication (Ramírez Vidal 2024a), I have addressed the subject of forensic oratory, observing that it reached its peak from 1869 to 1929, that is, for 60 years. This splendor of the judicial genre is due above all to the fact that during that period the jury system existed in Mexico, so that lawyers were forced to develop their oratory skills in public hearings on cases that often attracted attention and provoked morbid curiosity.

Famous were the cases of two women named María Teresa, one surnamed Morfín, and the other Landa, known as the "autoviudas" (self-widows), because they had killed their husbands. The cases were presented in 1927 and 1929 and both were acquitted thanks mainly to the lawyers' ability to move the judges, but also to the beauty of the accused. Of course, these cases reinforced the impression that trials were more like theatrical spectacles and that juries were easily manipulated, since they were people drawn from a list of lay citizens. Because of these critical opinions, the jury system was replaced by a written system, although a famous

lawyer, Federico Sodi, wrote after these changes: “Doing away with the popular jury was considered a prudent measure; but killing the forensic tribune was a crime against the youth of jurists” (Ramírez Vidal 2024a, 35).

The great era of figures such as Jacinto Pallares, Agustín Verduzco, Francisco Serralde, Federico Sodi, José María Lozano and Querido Moheno ended.

Rhetoric in the 19th Century

The long period of war from 1810 to 1867 was also accompanied by the power of the word. Although the focus is on military actions, triumphs and defeats, betrayals and heroic acts, speech had a relevant propagandistic function from the very beginning of the armed struggle that began with the famous “Grito” [Cry of Independence] of 1810. In addition, we can see qualitative and quantitative changes in the evolution of civic discourse that reached their climax in the last decades of the 19th century.

Given these discursive phenomena, it would be necessary to understand whether memorable oratorical skills came from chance or from innate abilities: What made it possible for the political rhetoric of the independent era to exist? Did the orators of the different genres have a rhetorical training or did their discursive qualities emerge naturally?

The ancients had already prescribed that political eloquence required a natural disposition, discursive practice and rhetorical training. In the case of nineteenth-century orators, all three conditions were met.

The education provided in New Spain was not replaced with the consummation of Independence (September 27, 1821) but continued to be offered in private and religious schools. Sermons and rhetoric continued to be taught in seminaries and religious colleges at secondary and higher levels and many of the great orators of the first three decades of the nineteenth century were educated there.

The first generations of orators received the education that was imparted in New Spain without any counterweights until 1824, since during the first quarter of the century the same discursive training continued to be imparted in the colleges and seminaries of the Church. The great orators of the first three decades of the 19th century were educated in these seminaries and religious colleges at the middle and higher levels, where they learned to elaborate and execute sermons based on the numerous books of ecclesiastical or Christian rhetoric. The cases are eloquent. The priests Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and José María Morelos were not ignorant of the art of speech. They had studied and taught rhetoric, they knew Cicero and had notable oratorical abilities.[14]

14. Cf. Herrejón Peredo (2003, 321), regarding the second one.

The paradigmatic example is Hidalgo, born in 1753, the father of the country, who studied at the Colegio de San Francisco Javier (1765), a Jesuit establishment in Valladolid (today Morelia). He studied grammar and rhetoric at the Colegio de San Nicolás Obispo (1767), in the same city, where he himself was a teacher of arts, obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1773 at the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico. His training in Latin and rhetoric and his discursive practice made him one of the most successful orators of his time. José María Morelos, born in 1765, also studied grammar (Latin) and rhetoric and was a teacher of both. Those who had been educated in the word of God could now apply their skills to war propaganda. From the pulpit in Jantetelco, Mariano Matamoros, born in 1770, persuaded believers to join the rebels, and so did the other priests in the villages, in Izúcar, in Chiautla and other rural towns.

Those who studied in these schools did so not only to become priests but also to specialize in law, medicine or canon law. In any case, everyone studied Latin and rhetoric, but the patriots did not use this knowledge for worship, but for political and ideological struggle.

One of the many cases is that of Valentín Gómez Farías, born in 1781, to whom we have already referred. He studied grammar (Latin) and rhetoric for three years at the Colegio Seminario Tridentino de Señor San José de Guadalajara, from 1797 to 1800 (Castañeda 1987, 514), from where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in arts or philosophy, for which he had to show that he had passed two courses in philosophy and rhetoric. He later obtained a bachelor's degree in medicine at the Royal University of Guadalajara, although he did not continue with his master's and doctoral studies. With this, he was prepared for the great mission that his destiny had in store for him as a great parliamentarian of independent Mexico.

Of course, these religious institutions had numerous texts of sacred rhetoric, in the style of the famous manual of the Jesuit Cipriano Soárez (1562, I use the one from 1576), which was printed a hundred times in Europe until the end of the 18th century. But there were many printed and handwritten works that had arrived from Spain or had been written and published in New Spain, and many other works about which it is not necessary to give more details here.

What happened to the following generations of orators born from 1824 to 1867? Teaching in religious schools continued to predominate, so that future orators continued to be educated there. However, based on the federal Constitution of 1824, new liberal establishments called Scientific and Literary Institutes began to be founded in Mexican territory, where secondary and higher education was imparted, but it was not a radical change, since the subjects of yesteryear were still preserved,[15] although with the introduction of new chairs, whose number,

15. The teaching of catechism was not abolished in public schools until 1861.

however, was very small compared to the ancient religious establishments. Now, Mexicans continued to learn effective communication both in traditional seminaries and colleges and in the new liberal scientific and literary institutes. The great sacred orators, among them the famous Monsignor Munguía, learned in these establishments, but many others preferred to apply their knowledge of rhetoric to civic ends in the struggle for power. The unique case is that of Don Benito Juárez, the president of Mexico from 1858 to 1872, who was the driving force behind the great changes in the republic. He was born in 1806 and studied first at the Seminary of Santa Cruz in Oaxaca. He did not pursue a religious career but entered the Institute of Sciences and Arts of Oaxaca, where he completed his law degree in 1834. That is, he studied at a Catholic seminary and a liberal institute. Engineer Aragón, when he was a student at the National Preparatory School, around 1884, had as a school assignment to translate the Jesuit *Ratio studiorum* from Latin to Spanish.[16]

After completing their high school studies, young people could enroll in higher education colleges where different courses were taught. The teaching of rhetoric was introduced into the curriculum of the National School of Jurisprudence, under the title of "Chair of Forensic Eloquence" taught by eminent figures such as Altamirano, Pallares and Verdugo. From there graduated the great orators who would achieve the supreme good of eloquence in the forum, a phenomenon that we have already presented. The books used from the first half of the century came from Europe, particularly from Spain, such as the well-known text *Elementos de Elocuencia Forense* by Sáinz de Andino, published for the first time in Madrid in 1827 and reissued many times, one of them in Mexico in 1898. To this we should add *El arte de hablar en público* by Maurice Ajam (1905) and other texts both foreign and national (cf. Ramírez Vidal 2024a, 41). Forensic eloquence was adapted to other discursive genres, such as political discourse and epidictic. There was an extraordinary awareness of the persuasive and formative power of the word.

But also, in the second half of the 19th century, oratory was learned in practice in elementary school. There, children participated in patriotic festivities together with their teachers, who educated them in the art of the word, in the use of the resources of oral language, which happened in every population where there were public educational establishments. All this means a great school of political eloquence. Thus, it could be said that citizens learned to speak and persuade in schools and in practice from childhood. At this level, the teaching of oratory had already broken free from the ties that had kept it subjugated to faith and had become a civic education in defense of the liberal project.

16. Aragón (1910, 662): "I, who translated his *Ratio studiorum* as a school exercise."

Conclusions

During the colonial period in Mexico, the practice and teaching of sacred eloquence had been privileged, to the detriment of political discourse. The sermon has attracted the attention of current scholars of rhetoric, not only that devoted to the propagation of faith, but also that used in funeral honors, panegyrics, thanksgiving, *autos-da-fé*, etc. [17] This does not mean that deliberative and judicial oral discourse did not exist, but only that they had a secondary function in New Spain society.

On the other hand, the 19th century, especially its second half, has been considered by critics as the moment of crisis of rhetoric in the face of oratory and colonial rhetoric. This is so, but only in relation to literary rhetoric. In return, political eloquence (parliamentary, forensic and epideictic) and its teaching flourished in all their splendor in that period. Parliamentary oratory gained great momentum from 1824 and reached its zenith during the constituent assembly of 1856-1857 but was then silenced in the soundless chambers during the Porfirian period (1877-1911); forensic eloquence had its splendor in the last three decades of the 19th century and the first three of the 20th; patriotic speeches had their peak in the second half of that century.

From the above we can assume that the tradition of classical rhetoric and its reception received great encouragement in the 19th century, and not the colonial period, since the sermon is not a source of classicism, but alien to it, both by its religious nature and by its form, although it succumbsed to its influence. In return, the political eloquence of classical Greece and Rome (whether in practice or in teaching) was expanded in that fortunate century. It was then that the parliamentary and deliberative discourse could be heard in the legislative halls and in the town councils, while on national holidays the patriotic speech and civic oration were declaimed, which great men were required to pronounce for social recognition or the diffusion of the political creed, while in the courts the voice of the lawyers was heard before the juries.

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17. Cf. a list of sermons by topic and genre by Herejón Peredo (2003, 459-493).

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