



## By ‘inevitable association:’ Latin American modernist anti-rhetoric and the inescapable figure of the rhetorician

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates the history of rhetoric in Latin America at the end of the nineteenth century by situating and analyzing allusions made by José Enrique Rodó (1872-1917) and Rubén Darío (1867-1916) to one of the most widely-circulated Spanish-language rhetorical handbooks in Latin America, Spaniard José Gómez Hermosilla’s *Arte de hablar en prosa y verso* (1826). Rodó and Darío were both associated with literary modernismo, a movement coming from Latin America, that sought to revive Spanish language literature. On the one hand, the anti-rhetorical arguments of these two writers contributed to the narrative of a decline in the rhetorical tradition through belletristic rhetoric, a narrative that still persists in some scholarship. On the other hand, modernists like Rodó engaged in a process of synthesis, which concerned itself with pedagogy, selectively borrowing from the classical tradition and aiming to inculcate aesthetic sensibility and good taste in the rising generation. I examine references to rhetoric and to Hermosilla in Darío’s short story “El Rey Burgués” and in Rodó’s essays, including *Ariel* and “La despedida de Gorgias” in order to suggest that this synthesis was both oppositional and revisionary. Particularly, in Rodó’s essays, the figure or persona of the rhetorician functions as a protagonist whose philosophical anti-foundationalism can be read as a revision of the classical tradition that promises to renew its relevance rather than declare its end.

And if rhetoric be now already dead, and thoroughly dead, why do you undertake to resuscitate it, even by endowing it with new vestments?

-Jesus Castellanos (1878-1912)

### Introduction: rhetoric playing dead

Eloquence was an important measure of social authority in Latin America for most of the nineteenth century—or so claims Julio Ramos (2009)—until it faced what he calls “la violenta reacción antirretórica” [the violent anti-rhetorical reaction] of fin de siècle Modernista writers (p. 102). That very anti-rhetoricism is worth examining and situating as an anti-imperial reaction against literary precepts extending from Spain, rather than as a rejection of the entire ancient tradition of rhetoric. In order to do so, I turn to two leaders of the movement, the Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodó (1871-1917) and the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío (1867-1916). It is well known that Rodó’s early essays won him disciples in various places in Latin America for his championing of Latin American culture in the face of the imperialist threat of the United States, but his ideas on rhetoric in particular deserve greater attention. Max Henríquez Ureña (1885-1968), a Dominican-born scholar who reprinted José Enrique Rodó’s widely successful *Ariel* in Cuba in 1905 while his brother was furthering Rodó’s reputation in Mexico, cites the epigraph in a speech given at the Escuela Normal del Oriente in Cuba in 1918. The speech was published as “El ocaso del dogmatismo literario” in Spanish and “The Decline of Literary Dogmatism” in English the following year.<sup>1</sup> Enríquez Ureña recalls that his friend, the late Cuban writer Jesús Castellanos, also a proponent of Rodó’s ideas, made this statement in response to the suggestion that a new rhetoric be written to match the transformations that literature had undergone in the course of the nineteenth century.

For Henríquez Ureña, the rhetorical treatises that had been used to teach literature relied on literary dogmatism, embodied in nineteenth-century handbooks that were referred to as preceptive rhetorics because of their tendency to amass precepts or general rules about writing. These texts had a range of titles, most often some variant of *Rhetoric and Poetics*. Accepting Castellano’s argument that rhetoric is at last dead and need not be revived, Ureña argues that looking for a new rhetoric misses the fact that rhetoric is already “bankrupt:”

The bankruptcy of rhetoric became manifest from the moment in which, in the work of authors of treatises, rhetoric sought a shameful name and caused itself to be called ‘literary preceptive,’ [preceptiva literaria in the Spanish] in order that it might encounter no difficulties in the market. However, both in these treatises upon preceptive literature and in the former ones upon rhetoric, questions were studied that seemed to be related rather to literary archaeology than to the art of writing. It is well known that no one learns to write by means of a treatise upon rhetoric, and that if he could learn anything, it would serve him little, as nearly all the varieties of literature discussed by the books upon rhetoric are dead varieties, vanished and forgotten... (1919, p. 178)

This critique of rhetorical treatises strikes at a vulnerable point: their alleged utility. Aradra Sánchez (1997) has observed that the debate over the usefulness of rhetoric and the rules that came with it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries eventually made it something of a commonplace for writers to begin rhetorical treatises with a discussion of the usefulness of

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<sup>1</sup> “El Ocaso del dogmatismo literario.” Quotations here are taken from a 1919 translation. All other translations from Spanish are mine.

rhetoric and literary studies (p 144). In this sense, Henríquez Ureña's critique of the usefulness of rhetoric is just one iteration in a rather protracted debate. And yet, this anecdote illustrates the distance that Rodó's ideas about rhetoric had traveled. Henríquez Ureña relies on Rodó for his argument that rhetoric concerns itself with "literary archaeology" rather than production. He includes a lengthy citation from an essay written by the lately departed "Master" entitled "La Enseñanza de la Literatura" and borrows from Rodó much of his argument about the limitations of rhetoric and the need for new methods of literary instruction. Like Rodó, his then disciple in Cuba points to the Spanish rhetorician José Gómez Hermosilla (1771-1837), author of *Arte de hablar en prosa y verso* (1826) as emblematic of the dogmatic preceptive rhetorics.

Hermosilla's star was certainly fading. As a monarchist and a conservative literary critic, he had met with resistance in Latin America from the start, but he had remained popular enough for his manual to manage a prolonged death. For example, in Colombia, the future President of the republic, José Manuel Marroquín, would base his own *Lecciones Elementales de Retórica y Poética* (1893) on Hermosilla, arguing that Hermosilla's rhetoric was the most well-reasoned, systemized, and clear of any of those produced and that it had been unfairly plagued by reactions to Hermosilla's literary criticism (p. 26). Enrique Álvarez Bonilla (1916), minister of public instruction under Marroquín's government, would publish an abridgement of Hermosilla without attribution. The Chilean historian Diego Barros Arana (1908) had praised Hermosilla (though less exclusively) in his *Elementos de retórica y poética* first published in 1867. Despite these extensions of the handbook tradition, it soon began to look like an anomaly. Barros Arana's biographer Donoso (1931) dedicates only half of a paragraph to his handbook, suggesting that rhetorical instruction is no longer as extensive or important as it once was in spite of his admission that the numerous editions of Barros Arana's manual suggest it must have been useful in its day (p. 26). At the end of the century, as writers like Rubén Darío and José Enrique Rodó launched anti-rhetorical arguments, the conclusion that the handbooks were useless became more and more persuasive.

### **Modernismo and rhetoric**

Because a full history of the manuals produced and circulated during the nineteenth century would be beyond the scope of this article, I have chosen to focus on the end of that influence, on the moment that seems to have sealed in the popular and scholarly mind the fate of nineteenth century rhetoric. Narratives of decline in rhetoric have been numerous. Some have argued that rhetoric is essentially premodern and that "the demise of rhetoric coincides with that long and arduous historical process that is often termed modernization" (Bender & Wellbery, 1990, p. 7). If some have seen the nineteenth century as premodern rhetoric breathing out its last, others have characterized this period in North America as one of innovating and extending the New Rhetoric of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Johnson, 1991). Julio Ramos (2009), writing from outside of the discipline of rhetoric, has argued that eloquence in nineteenth century Latin America avoided the disciplinary fragmentation that occurred in Europe but was also not merely an extension of the classical period. Eloquence, he suggests, was functional, serving the forces of rationality that would eventually replace it, in a process he refers to as an "uneven modernization (*modernización desigual*)" (2009, p. 103). If rhetoric were eventually to be replaced, then with

what? In modernista anti-rhetoricism, the Latin American rhetoric that emerges is one of shaping identities. Bialostosky and Needham (1995) suggest that the supposedly anti-rhetorical British romantics took up the persona of the biblical prophet and the ciceronian orator as models for their self-publicizing authorial personas (p. 8). In the case of Rodó, this theorist of modernismo takes on the persona of the philosopher rhetorician, the venerable sage, in a marriage of platonic dialogue and sophistic anti-foundationalism.

We can analyze *modernista* rhetoric as an anti-foundational battle of form over content. Modernismo in this case refers to the Latin American and Spanish literary movement that sought to revive literature in the Spanish language by adapting romanticism and symbolism in what was often considered a movement of "art for art's sake" (thus the anti-rhetorical bent). In grappling with rhetoric, this movement resisted established notions of taste and formalism. Giorgio Agamben(1999) has argued in his text on aesthetics, *The Man Without Content*, that the rise of the concept of the man of taste, rather than corresponding to a "more receptive attitude toward art or even to an increased interest in art," instead, "calls into question the very status of the work of art." The precepts governing taste and productive of men of taste are thus at odds with the creators of taste's objects. As Agamben argues, the relationship is paradoxical. On the one hand, we have a stronger distinction between *artist* and *nonartist* (or the role of the artist and the role of the spectator), but the increasing emphasis on artistic freedom relegates the spectator's role in artistic creation to a passive one, becoming "more similar to an evanescent ghost the more refined his taste becomes" (1999, p. 16). On the other hand, the artist's flight toward an ideal freedom from the spectator's loosening strictures has a tendency that Agamben maps into a binary of rhetoric, embraced by those concerned with *form*, and *terror*, embraced by those wishing to escape the corresponding burden of meaning. Using as an example an artist in one of Flaubert's novels who tries to escape meaning only to unintentionally create it, Agamben suggests that "Fleeing from Rhetoric has led him to the Terror, but the Terror brings him back to its opposite, Rhetoric" (1999, p. 10).<sup>2</sup> In our case, inasmuch as modernist anti-rhetoric resists one standard of taste by adopting another, it is threatened by a similar impulse to return to the order of rhetoric.

Thus, even in his argument against rhetoric, which we cited at the outset, we find Henríquez Ureña longing for some sort of system: "If the vogue of Hermsilla were to continue, the evil would be less serious, because in Hermsilla we find at least a body of systematic principles, within narrow limitations, but precise and clear" (1919, p. 179). Rather than simply make the point that anti-rhetoricians use rhetoric, I view this binary in terms of a dialogic relationship that reshapes the rhetorical tradition in a process of modernization at the end of the nineteenth century, looking on to the twentieth, within an undervalued chapter in the history of rhetoric. Modernista writers, in some ways, saw themselves as literary terrorists, resisting the stricture and formalism of rhetoric, especially in the case of someone like Darío. But at the same time, through Rodó, the movement also concerns itself with pedagogy in an effort to extend a revised version of the rhetorical tradition and to popularize good taste. This analysis emerges against the backdrop of work being produced in Spanish-language rhetoric and the underestimated

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<sup>2</sup> Agamben borrows this binary from Jean Palhaun's *The Flowers of Tarbes*.

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influence of Hermosilla in the Americas. After visiting this backdrop, I trace reactions to the rhetorical tradition. I will examine the figure (or persona) of the rhetorician first briefly in Darío's writing, and then more extensively in Rodó's essays, where I focus particularly on his use of fictional rhetoricians as protagonists.

### Nineteenth-century Latin American rhetoric

Though scholars in the United States (e.g. Abbot and Romano) have begun to cover the history of rhetoric in Colonial Latin America, scholarship on the history of Spanish Language rhetoric in the nineteenth century seems to have escaped the notice of most U.S. scholars. The 2010 update to *The Present State of Scholarship in the History of Rhetoric* suggests that rhetoric historians have still not paid great attention to nineteenth century rhetorics in Spain or Latin America. Lynee Lewis Gaillet, composing the chapter for the nineteenth century, observes that conferences of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric have had scattered presentations on continental and non-western rhetoric during the period while mainly focusing on British and American texts and discussing non-Anglophone writers largely in terms of the influence of the "big three" Blair, Campbell, and Whatley (2010, p. 169). Perusing back issues of the society's journal *Rhetorica*, she notes as an exception to this trend in Don Paul Abbot's "A Bibliography of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Spanish Treatises" (1986) and his essay on the rhetoric of Gregorio Mayans y Siscar (1993). Unfortunately, however, Gaillet's update misses the varied work being done on the history of rhetoric and published in the Spanish language, including a handful of book-length studies.

The Spanish language has seen recent rhetorical manuals (Albaladejo's *Retórica* (1990) and Hernández Guerrero's (2008) *El arte de hablar*) and, in the last decade and a half, a number of works have appeared that cover the history of rhetoric in Spain during the 19th century (Hernández Guerrero's and García Tejera's (1994) *Historia breve de la retórica*, Aradra Sánchez's (1997) *De la retórica a la teoría de la literatura: siglos XVIII y XIX*, González Alcázar's (2005) *Procesos de la poética clasicista: los tratados de preceptiva españoles del siglo XIX*). In Latin America, works tracing rhetorical histories have tended to operate more along the lines of the wide-ranging discipline of philology, encompassing literature, history, and linguistics. For example, Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux's (2008) *Los discursos sobre la nación y el lenguaje en la formación del Estado: Chile, 1842-1862: estudio glotopolítica*, examines debates about language standards and grammar in Chile that contribute to our knowledge of Latin American rhetoric but under the auspices of discourse analysis. And Jorge Ruedas de la Serna's edited collection (1998) *De la perfecta expresión*, includes essays that cover important rhetorical texts.

Of course, an additional problem is that many Spanish-language discussions continue to pass over the period on their way to the mid-twentieth century revival. This is the case with Francisco García García's (2005) introduction to a special issue of a journal focused on rhetoric. García "jumps" over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as the period in which,

with its schools of rhetorical theory and practice that would finally lead to the disappointing Preceptive Rhetoric; we observe again a considerable decadence of rhetoric which provided empty formulas for a formal and routine education in the entire first half of the 20th century. (p. 6)<sup>3</sup>

García Tejera has argued against characterizing rhetoric in nineteenth century Spain as a “barren moor” where the ideas of the past are repeated mechanically. Aradra Sánchez’s study (1997) shows that the glut of locally-produced rhetorical manuals in Spain responded to the economic necessities of underpaid professors and that not all of them were first-rate. González Alcázar (2005) has suggested that the proliferation of manuals and the simplistic pedagogical nature of many of them has resulted in a superficial reading (pp. 16-19). Those texts that managed any influence outside of Spain were generally backed by the government, like Gómez Hermosilla’s. Most likely because Hermosilla’s work saw one of the longest and most widespread receptions of the preceptive rhetorics in Latin America, modernista authors most frequently refer to him as emblematic of the ills of a declining rhetorical tradition.

### The reign of good taste

Hermosilla does not appear in Thomas Conley’s (1994) *Rhetoric in the European tradition*, and those Spanish-language scholars who do talk of him see his rhetoric as anachronistic even at the time of its publication. The duration of his influence, however, leads us to question that assumption. Rodríguez Monegal and Leyla Perrone-Moisés (1995) refer to Hermosilla as “el retórico olvidado [the forgotten rhetorician],” whose manual, despite timeworn ideas, had “una larga dictadura [a long dictatorship]” dominating the market in both Spain and the Spanish post colony in a level of success matched only by Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* in translation (p. 13). Because Hermosilla’s neoclassicism had him most concerned with the ills of the baroque, he missed the romantic literature of his day, resulting in an “asynchronicity between the teaching of rhetoric in the classroom and the practice of poetry outside of the classroom” (p. 16).<sup>4</sup> As a result, Hermosilla “for almost 30 years, like a dead star that continued to light up the skies of teaching in the Hispanic world” kept defending “a rhetoric and a practice that poets had already surpassed in 1830” (Monegal & Perrone-Moisés, 1995, p. 16).<sup>5</sup> In the same way, Luis Mario Schneider views Hermosilla’s rhetoric as “untimely,” suggesting it relies unquestioningly on neoclassicism and is composed “in an intellectually

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<sup>3</sup> “con sus escuelas de teoría y práctica retórica que desembocaría finalmente en la decepcionante Retórica Perceptiva; observaríamos de nuevo una decadencia considerable de la retórica que proporcionaba fórmulas vacías para una educación formal y rutinaria en toda la primera mitad del siglo XX.”

<sup>4</sup> “desfasaje entre la enseñanza de la retórica en clase y la práctica de la poesía fuera de ella”

<sup>5</sup> “Durante casi treinta años, como una estrella muerta que sigue iluminando el cielo de la enseñanza en el mundo hispánico[...] defendiendo en sus libros una retórica y una práctica que los poetas ya habían superado en 1830”

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inquisitorial atmosphere that answers to an ideology of individual taste" (1998, p. 275).<sup>6</sup> It's "Vademecum character," he says, makes it something of a "phantom book" when it comes to tracking its influence (1998, p. 277). Given the anachronism these critics see in Herмосilla's work at the time of its publication, the reaction against Herмосilla at the end of the nineteenth century would seem misguided. However, Mexican scholar, Jorge Ruedas de la Serna (2004), suggest that those who have believed the anti-rhetorical narrative are mistaken and that criticizing rhetorical manuals was fashionable despite the fact that writers "surreptitiously made use of them, in particular that of Gómez Herмосilla" (2004, p. 23).<sup>7</sup>

The rhetorical emphasis on taste—something that could be considered arbitrary by detractors—was at the core of belletristic rhetoric and its derivatives. Barbara Warnick (1993) has shown that the Scottish Belletrists and their French antecedents considered taste a receptive capacity parallel to ability in producing aesthetic texts. She explains that the lecturing rhetorician and handbook author become a sort of model critic and that "the person possessing taste could distinguish works of artistic merit from shams and could explain why by considering such qualities as propriety and sublimity" (1993, p. 17). The standard of taste was characteristically elite: "All of the belletrists agreed, too, that there was an elite somewhere to which one could look to establish a taste standard" (1993, p. 5). Warnick goes so far as to argue that the belletristic interest in psychological connections to aesthetic phenomena represents a new canon of rhetoric concerned with reception.

Recalling our rhetoric/terror pairing from Agamben, the taste standard becomes the point of attack for would be terrorists seeking innovation. Good taste was associated with standard, educated, elite speech. José Hernández (1834-1886), the Argentinian author who composed the classic epic gaucho poem *Martín Fierro* remarks in the in the preface to his second installment, *La vuelta de Martín Fierro*, that because

the Gaucho doesn't even know the elements of his own language...it would be an impropriety and a censurable untruth, that someone who had never opened a book would follow the rules of the art of Blair, Herмосilla, or the [Spanish Royal] Academy. (1879, p. 5)<sup>8</sup>

Some strains of resistance to belletrism were linguistically democratic. For example Ramón A. Salazar (1897), writing of Guatemala's intellectual history argues that "The reign of Herмосilla has fallen to the ground. The dithyrambs, the pompous enthusiasms, the exclamations of admiration, that some employ, are simply ridiculous and of bad taste" (p. 230).<sup>9</sup> Thus as

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<sup>6</sup> "atmósfera intelectualmente inquisitorial que responde a una ideología de gusto propio"

<sup>7</sup> "subrepticamente recurrían a ellas, en particular a la de Gómez Herмосilla."

<sup>8</sup> "El gaucho no conoce ni siquiera los elementos de su propio idioma, y sería una impropiedad cuando menos, y una falta de verdad muy censurable, que quien no ha abierto jamás un libro, siga las reglas de arte de Blair, Herмосilla a la Academia."

<sup>9</sup> "El reinado de Herмосilla ha caído por los suelos. Los ditirambos, los entusiasmos ampulosos, los ayes de admiración, que algunos emplean, son simplemente ridículos y de mal gusto."

Hermosilla's long dictatorship crumbles to the ground, new movements, like the modernismo I will examine hereafter, promised to escape from the arbitrary rules of literary taste.

### Modernista anti-rhetoric

Emir Rodríguez Monegal argues that Rodó and Darío theorized poetics for the writers that would follow them:

Of all the versions of the Symbolist dream offered by Spanish American literature at the turn of the century, none was more beautiful and persuasive than the two produced by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Dado, and the Uruguayan essayist, José Enrique Rodó. Their work was decisive in shaping Spanish American 'modernismo' and in making its poetics into a coherent body to be followed by the Hispanic writers. (Balakian & Balakian, 1984, p. 669)

If Rodríguez Monegal is correct about their creating "a coherent body" for their disciples, we should note that Rodó, as we will see, was more concerned with connecting the theory to pedagogical change than Darío, who prided himself on being inimitable. Both resisted the belletristic rhetoric that preceded them. Modernismo runs roughly from 1888, when Rubén Darío published *Azul*, a collection of short stories, near the time that Darío and José Enrique Rodó died (Darío in 1916, Rodó in 1917). As such, this period coincides with the *modernization* that took place in the study of languages at many universities, moving away from classical languages to the vernacular. There were, of course, many forces at play in that change, but the anti-rhetorical stance of the modernist movement promised a break with the past. Avant guard literary movements that involved the likes of Jorge Luis Borges in the 1920s would position themselves in relation to Darío. Consider, for example, the "Manifiesto Martín Fierro," published in 1924 and written by the poet Oliverio Girondo, which credits Darío and his linguistic "movimiento de independencia" [independence movement] as a precursor to their own sensibilities. Just above the last page of this manifesto, the editors of *Martín Fierro* printed a caricature referencing the Colombian poet Vargas Vila's glowing report after a visit to Rodó's former home city of Montevideo that year (see Figure 1 below). The central figure of the image is a bust of José Enrique Rodó (identified in the caption as "Platón-Rodó"), around whom the other figures are arranged in worshipful tableau. This particular caricature is a response to Vargas Vila's conference series, which had started in Montevideo; the writer most likely alludes to Vargas Vila's statement that "Montevideo is to Buenos Aires what Athens was to Rome," indicating that he saw Uruguay as culturally superior (1925, p. XIX).<sup>10</sup> That the artist places Rodó at the center of the image points, if paradoxically, to the importance of Rodó's thought and to his association with classicism. Even as writers turned away from the classics—even disavowed them—the concepts of the classical tradition continued to hold sway. In the latter part of this article, I will examine specifically Rodó's adaptation of the platonic dialog, particularly in his "*La Despedida de Gorgias*."

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<sup>10</sup> "Montevideo, es a Buenos Ayres, lo que Atenas era a Roma"



Figure 1 a 1924 cartoon featuring a caricature of Rodó as a bust of Plato, appearing in the fourth issue of the Argentine literary magazine Martín Fierro.

### Darío and the rhetoricians

With regard to Rubén Darío, we need look no further than the text that launched the modernismo movement to see the way in which he gestures toward a resistance to the classical tradition. Darío's *Azul* opens with "El Rey Burgués," which depicts rhetoric as antithetical to poetic innovation. The story tells of a king with an elaborate court filled with kitsch and thronged by rhetoricians, grammarians, and jesters. One day a poet arrives hungry and is told to speak to earn his food. When he does, the king wants to hear nothing of the poet's "jargon and ideals" and instead makes him crank a music box by the aviary where he is forgotten and eventually freezes to death while the king and his court applaud the improvising of the professors of rhetoric. Prior to this sentencing, the poet makes a plea against the king's bad taste. The king loves reading popular literature, in addition to "beautiful books [bellos libros] on

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grammatical matters, or hermosillesque criticisms [críticas hermosillescas]" and is "of course: staunch defender of academic correctness in letters, and of the polished ways of the arts; sublime soul, lover of sandpaper (lija) and orthography" (2007, p. 64).<sup>11</sup> The ironic nature of the story has not escaped critics. What has not been made more of is the way that the story is alluding specifically to instruction in grammar (bellos libros alludes to Andrés Bello, Latin America's foremost grammarian) and to *belletristic rhetoric* and *poetics* (hermosillesca clearly refers to José Gómez Hermosilla). Darío capitalizes on the fact that both of these names (Bello/Hermosilla) derive from words that mean beauty, an ironic twist given their position as established authorities for the King's poor taste. At the height of his diatribe, the poet inveighs

Rhythm is prostituted, praises are sung and syrupy poems made to women's beauty spots. Furthermore, Lord, the shoemaker criticizes my hendecasyllables, and the Professor of Pharmacy adds semicolons to my inspiration. And you, Lord, authorize all of this!... The ideal, the ideal...

Darío's poet articulates a theory of art as high culture that does not dip down into "bourgeois language" but also is not concerned with the meticulous precision of the rhetoricians' rules. The capacity of rhetoric to articulate standards of taste is challenged in the character of the King who—steeped in rhetorical criticism—is unable to distinguish between art and kitsch.

Elsewhere, in "Dilucidaciones," Darío is more explicit about resistance to the rhetorical tradition, framing the debate as a resistance to cliché:

The predominance in Spain of this type of rhetoric, still persistent in some strongholds, is what we who fight for our ideals are combatting in the name of the amplitude of culture and of liberty. It is not, as some professors and chroniclers suspect, the importation of another rhetoric, of another *poncif*, with new precepts, with new classifications, with new codes. And, above all, are we discussing a matter of forms? No, we are discussing, above all, a matter of ideas. The verbal cliché is harmful because it encloses in itself the mental cliché, and together they perpetuate stiffening and immobility (1907, p. XV–XVI)<sup>12</sup>

In this way, Darío's project promises verbal terrorism, freeing ideas from formal limitations, while insisting that such freedom is possible without importing all of the structures and baggage

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<sup>11</sup> "ensanchar su espíritu, leyendo novelas de M. Ohnet, o bellos libros sobre cuestiones gramaticales, o críticas hermosillescas. Eso sí: defensor acérrimo de la corrección académica en letras, y del modo lamido en artes; alma sublime amante de la lija y de la ortografía"

<sup>12</sup> "El predominio en España de esa especie de retórica, aún persistente en señalados reductos, es lo que combatimos los que luchamos por nuestros ideales en nombre de la amplitud de la cultura y de la libertad.

No es, como lo sospechan algunos profesores ó cronistas, la importación de otra retórica, de otro *poncif*, [xvi] con nuevos preceptos, con nuevo encasillado, con nuevos códigos. Y, ante todo, ¿se trata de una cuestión de formas? No. Se trata, ante todo, de una cuestión de ideas. El clisé verbal es dañoso porque encierra en sí el clisé mental, y juntos perpetúan la anquilosis, la inmovilidad" (XV-XVI)

of *preceptos* and *códigos*. Poetry is instead based on the “music of ideas,” as Darío call it, insisting that there are not schools but poets and that “the true artist comprehends all ways and finds beauty beneath all forms” (1907, p. XXIV).<sup>13</sup> Thus Darío positions modernist rhetoric against restrictive verbal clichés that would make the poet crank the music box rather than sing the song of ideas.

### **Modernista rhetoric as oppositional**

The Modernismo that Darío and Rodó were engaged in would reshape letters in the Hispanic world. Mejías-López (2009) has argued that the movement represented something of a takeover, with the post colony redefining Spanish letters and shifting the center of Hispanic culture to the Americas. It is not surprising then that part of their target would include the criticism and didactic works of rhetoric that had perpetuated certain forms and patterns of taste from Spain. The United States’ decisive victory against Spain in a series of battles that lasted a mere ten weeks in 1898 launched the country as a world power and would weaken Spain’s cultural grasp on the colonies. As the great beast of the north was becoming a global power, Rodó was composing the collection of essays *La Vida Nueva* (1896-1899), which preceded Ariel. He paraphrased John the Baptist in “El que vendrá,” describing the need for the advent of an intellectual savior but then announced in “Rubén Darío” that the modernist poet Darío was not the poet of America. Though critics have tended to read this essay as Rodó’s critique of modernismo, the more convincing argument is, as Mejías-López points out, that this was actually more of a rivalry for leadership within the same movement. (2009, p. 107). Mejías-López also observes that Darío’s reception in Spain was often tinged with observations about his racially mixed status, something that may have motivated Rodó in playing against Darío’s earlier references to Caliban in Rodó’s most famous work *Ariel*. (2009, p. 107).<sup>14</sup>

Both the opposition to Spain and Rodó’s own elite background go some distance in explaining why he has been criticized for not appreciating sufficiently both the intellectual tradition in his own Spanish language (Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert, 2008, p. 162) and the cultures of the indigenous populations in Latin America. Walter Mignolo faults Spanish American Creoles for reinforcing what he calls an “internal colonialism” in the aftermath of their break from Spain by redirecting the colonizer’s “colonial difference” onto minority populations, what he calls “internal colonialism.” He suggests that by attempting to break ties with Spain while still maintaining dependence on Europe via France and its promotion of *latinidad*, Creoles “turned their backs on Indians and Blacks and their faces to France and England”(2006, p. 67). Rodó’s keen sense of *Americanismo* extended beyond national borders in the sense of a Magna Patria, which, as recent studies further expound, also attempted to include Brazil, (Newcomb, 2010, p. 377). For this reason, it is unfortunate that that indigenous roots are a “constant lack or omission” in Rodó’s imaginary (Brotherston, 2001, p. 48). Metropolitan Montevideo, where the indigenous population of Uruguay, the Charrúa, had been all but eradicated in the 1830s took its model from Europe more than from local roots. But Camilla Fojas (2004) has suggested that

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<sup>13</sup> “El verdadero artista comprende todas las maneras y halla la belleza bajo todas las formas”

<sup>14</sup> This is the potential racism, of course, that Fernández Retamar attempts to reverse in his own “Calibán” (1971).

resistance to Rodó's *Ariel* as being too cosmopolitan and even effete has led critics to overlook its radical nature. Our sensibilities shouldn't keep us from recognizing Rodó's value as an oppositional discourse in resistance to U.S. hegemony.

### **Rodó and the rhetoric of the essay genre**

By appropriating the figure of the master teacher as a protagonist in his essays, Rodó himself becomes something of a masterly rhetorical figure. Critics have tended to talk about Rodó's rhetoric in terms of the persuasive nature of the essay. Both González Echevarría and Silvia Malloy recognize that "Ariel" seems to be patterned after a Socratic dialogue without the dialogic conversation that occurs in such texts. Because the essay genre aims at persuasion and because Rodó writing is often figural, critics generally speak of Rodó's writing in terms of its *rhetoric* without reference to the history of rhetoric with which we are concerned here. In this persuasive mode, critics have discussed Rodó as overly forceful. Gonzalez Echevarría has read "Ariel" as a violent imposition of the master's ideals on the virtually silent pupils in the classroom. Although González Echevarría complains about Rodó's overly ornate style, he suggests that what redeems Rodó's *Ariel* from irrelevance is the "resiliency of the figures explicitly put on stage" and the way they operate subtextually to subvert and deconstruct the book's narrative (Voice 19). González Echevarría is speaking of such figures as the central one in *Ariel*, a heavy bronze statue that ironically symbolizes an airy spirit "Turned into a bronze statue, later into the inscription on the coin, the voice of the master begins to take on an ever more menacing shape; it is heavy, wounding, inscribed" (27).

McClennen (2000), who compares Rodó's essay to Emerson's "American Scholar," highlights the manipulative side of persuasion, arguing that in these essays the same voice that promises intellectual liberation actually forces the reader into agreement and that without persuasion, the essay would ultimately fail. Thus she finds in Rodó's writing examples of "linguistic manipulation" (p. 4) and "linguistic trick[ery]" (p. 7). In a sense, what McClennen is calling "rhetoric,"—which sounds more like Wayne Booth's term for bad rhetoric, or "rhetrickery,"—is also simply what Peter Rose has called the "enabling fiction," of oratory which creates a "vision of the real" by making "all potential grounds for opposing the speaker's proposals lose any serious claim to validity" (1995, p. 367). Yet these rhetorical readings of Rodó diverge from a tradition that has seen Rodó as focused mainly on aesthetics, something that Diego Alonso (2001) has resisted by highlighting the political nature of Rodó's writing. Specifically, Alonso argues that Rodó's writing represents an attempt to "create a new language" that through the influence of poetry would be "more inclusive and elusive than an analytic language founded exclusively in reason" (183).<sup>15</sup> He observes that Rodó's "rhetorical model" is based on expressing the ideals of unity and harmony "in a society that would emblemize the negation of these values" (2001, p. 187).<sup>16</sup> Thus, Alonso suggests, Rodó aims for what he calls "a politics of the ideal" (2001, p. 188).<sup>17</sup> But if Rodó advocated a political philosophy of the ideal, he was also constructing a vision of the real in his essays. Before proceeding toward Rodó's anti-rhetorical

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<sup>15</sup> "más abarcadora y elusiva que la de un idioma analítico fundado exclusivamente sobre la razón"

<sup>16</sup> "en una sociedad que emblemizaría la negación de dichos valores"

<sup>17</sup> "una política del ideal"

statements about rhetoricians and to his adaptation of the tradition through the figure of the masterly sophist Gorgias, a closer look at Prospero's description of harmony between the real and the ideal in *Ariel*, shows that Rodó's arielismo leaves the door upon to rhetoric.

### The real and the ideal

Rodó's "Ariel," adapting characters from Shakespeare "Tempest" is a long essay framed as a speech by the venerable old schoolmaster Prospero, standing next to a bust of Ariel and deploring the Calibanism or materialism of the United States. The youth of Latin America, to whom the thin volume is dedicated, are to follow Ariel's flight to obtain a harmony between action (the real) and thoughtful contemplation (the ideal), a balance that the noted hellenophile says Athens achieved: "Athens knew how to increase at the same time the sense of the ideal and the real, reason and instinct, the forces of the spirit and those of the body" (1956, p. 214).<sup>18</sup> For Prospero, "the *Greek miracle*" represents the balance between repose and activity, a balance that modernity makes difficult to achieve:

In our day, the growing complexity of our civilization prohibits the seriousness of any thought of restoring this harmony, only possible among the elements of a gracious simplicity. But within the very complexity of our culture; within the progressive diversity of characters, of aptitudes, of merits, which is the unavoidable consequence of progress of social development, there is room for the reasonable participation of everyone in certain fundamental ideas and feelings that maintain life's unity and balance--in certain *interests of the soul*, before which the dignity of rational beings does not consent to indifference among any of us. (1956, p. 214)<sup>19</sup>

Despite Rodó's elitism, the text, in arguing for the "the participation of all" carries a democratic intent. His critique, however, aims at those whom he already sees as "cultos" or cultured. What is problematic is that education "for millions of civilized and cultured souls" is reduced to the automatism of a definitively material activity" (1956, p. 215).<sup>20</sup> The antidote to northern utilitarianism is the cultivation of aesthetic sensibility.

Good taste, or a love of the beautiful becomes central to the cultural and moral development of Rodó's Latin America. Rather than migrating away from good taste, Arielism promises to harmonize good taste with modernity in resistance to utilitarianism. Among such things as

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<sup>18</sup> "Atenas supo engrandecer a la vez el sentido de lo ideal y de lo real, la razón y el instinto, las fuerzas del espíritu y las del cuerpo"

<sup>19</sup> "En nuestros tiempos, la creciente complejidad de nuestra civilización privaría de toda seriedad al pensamiento de restaurar esa armonía, sólo posible entre los elementos de una graciosa sencillez. Pero dentro de la misma complejidad de nuestra cultura; dentro de la diferenciación progresiva de caracteres, de aptitudes, de méritos, que es la ineludible consecuencia del progreso en el desenvolvimiento social, cabe salvar una razonable participación de todos en ciertas ideas y sentimientos fundamentales que mantengan la unidad y el concierto de la vida—en ciertos *intereses del alma*, ante los cuales la dignidad del ser racional no consiente la indiferencia de ninguno de nosotros."

<sup>20</sup> "...para millones de almas civilizadas y cultas, a quienes la influencia de la educación o la costumbre reduce al automatismo de una actividad, en definitiva, material"

order, disinterest, and heroism, Prospero insists that Ariel's spirit represents "buen gusto en arte" [good taste in art] (1956, p. 248). In this regard, then, rather than an utterly revolutionary aesthetic sensibility, we are still dealing with a paradigm of good taste. He argues that a lack of attention to the "inner life" will first take its toll on the sense of the beautiful. The moral sense and good taste are complimentary and almost interchangeable, insomuch that "to give someone to feel what is beautiful is a work of mercy" while the inverse is also true: duty can best be understood "as the highest poetry" (1956, p. 218).<sup>21</sup> Presented almost entirely as a lecture by the educator, "Ariel" is not much of a dialogue. The students leave dazzled and in silent contemplation, until their contact with the crowd brings them back to reality. Prospero's aim, like that of the rhetorical handbooks, is the task of teaching good taste.

### **Against the "pertenacia fría [cold pertinacity]" of the rhetorician**

The pedagogical aim of good taste ties Rodó genealogically to the belletrists that precede him, but he—like Darío—resists that tradition. If Anglo materialism fails to establish a sense of the beautiful, the rhetorician's rules partake of a similarly automated spirit. The calculated, rule-based faith of the rhetorician, he insists, simply does not represent the writerly struggle he envisions. In "La Gesta de la forma," composed in the same year as "Ariel," Rodó describes the writer's task as a battle against words; this "struggle" for style "should not be confused with the cold pertinacity of the rhetorician, who painstakingly adjusts, in the mosaic of his conventional correctness, words that the soul's tepid breath has not humidified" (1956, p. 524).<sup>22</sup> To make such a claim, he argues, would be "to compare a game of chess to combat in which blood is spilled and an empire is disputed" (1956, p. 524).<sup>23</sup> The rhetorician arranges words by rules and conventions. Rodó's writing instruction, if we take him at his word, is drastically different. Though like the belletrists, he believes in the "genius of the artist," what he calls "an art...of expression,"<sup>24</sup> would differ from Hermsilla's *Art of Speaking* in methodology, if not in its stated aim.

Like Darío, Rodó signals Hermsilla as an inevitably negative figure associated with the handbook tradition. In "La Enseñanza de la literatura [The Teaching of Literature]," he says:

The name of any rhetorical theorist calls forth in our spirit, by inevitable association, the figure of Hermogenes or at least the figure of Hermsilla...This particular bias has its foundation, and it is that no genre of didactic works exists where the poverty, the insipidness, coldness, and the routine immobility that tend to devalue these kind of books appears in such disconcerting plentitude as in texts of rhetoric and literary theory. (1956, pp. 531–532)<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>"Dar a sentir lo hermoso es obra de misericordia."

<sup>22</sup> "no ha de confundirse con la pertinacia fría del retórico, que ajusta penosamente, en el mosaico de su corrección convencional, palabras que no ha humedecido el tibio aliento del alma"

<sup>23</sup> "comparar una partida de ajedrez con un combate en que corre la sangre y se disputa un imperio"

<sup>24</sup> "un arte...de la expression"

<sup>25</sup> "El nombre de cualquier preceptista de retórica suscita, por inevitable asociación, en nuestro espíritu, la figura de don Hermogenes, o por lo menos la figura de Hermsilla... Esta particular prevención tiene su

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Because of what he calls "inertia of ideas," these manuals have not evolved with the literary genres such as the "protean" form of the novel (which he feels better represents the spirit of the times):

In general, the type of literature that they speak to us about is that which was prevalent more than a century ago (and even then was conventional and artificial), and corresponds very little to the literature we cultivate and feel. *The writer lives in one world; the rhetorician lives in a very different one.* The writer learns, corrects himself, transforms himself. The rhetorician is impenetrable and immutable. In a verse from "The Contemplations" Victor Hugo bragged of having put the Phrygian cap on the French dictionary. No one can brag of having placed on a treatise of rhetoric the symbolic cap of freedom, or even anything that might substitute for the schoolmaster's bonnet. (1956, p. 532 emphasis added)<sup>26</sup>

Rodó's elevating of the importance of the writer's world above that of the rhetorician parallels his distinction between material and spirit.

Rodó's terms, *Inertia of Ideas* and especially *literary archeology* are in keeping with the earthy symbolism of his "Ariel," linking rhetoric to earthly and automated pursuits. His critique about immutability is merited when we look at Hermsilla's belief in the fixity of rules. He defines an art as a set of rules or laws: "certain laws that prescribe for the artist what he should do, and what he is obliged to avoid so that his works have all possible perfection" (1826, p. 1).<sup>27</sup> All art, he says, relies on these laws, which are "eternal principles and of eternal truth" (1826, p. 1).<sup>28</sup> Applying this concept renders the "arte de hablar" as "a collection or series of true principles, immutable and founded in the very nature of man; which teach us what we should do and what we must avoid, in order to speak in the way best fitted to the end that we propose" (1826, p. 2).<sup>29</sup> Hermsilla and Rodó differ on rules just as they regard the classical tradition differently. Whereas Hermsilla suggests that all that one can say about rhetoric has already been said and one can merely attempt to repeat it with "more clarity and philosophy," Rodó insists that "the

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fundamento, y es que no existe género de obras didácticas donde la pobreza, la insipidez, la frialdad, la inmovilidad rutinaria, que suelen desvalorizar los libros de esa índole, aparezcan con tan desconsoladora plenitud como en los textos de retórica y teoría de la literatura"

<sup>26</sup> "en general, el tipo de literatura de que nos hablan es el que prevalecía hace más de un siglo (y que ya entonces era convencional y artificioso), y tiene muy pocas correspondencias con la literatura que cultivamos y sentimos. El escritor vive en un mundo; el retórico vive en otro distinto. El escritor aprende, se rectifica, se transforma. El retórico es impenetrable e inmutable. Víctor Hugo se jactaba, en algún verso de *Las contemplaciones*, de haber puesto al diccionario de la lengua francesa el gorro frigio. Nadie puede jactarse de haber puesto a un tratado de retórica, no ya el gorro simbólico de la libertad, pero nada que sustituya al bonete del dómine."

<sup>27</sup> "ciertas leyes que prescriben al artista lo que debe hacer y lo que está obligado á evitar para que sus obras tengan toda la perfección posible"

<sup>28</sup> "principios eternos y de eterna verdad."

<sup>29</sup> "una colección o serie de principios verdaderos, inmutables, y fundados en la naturaleza misma del hombre; los cuales nos enseñan lo que debemos hacer, y lo que nos es preciso evitar, para hablar de la manera mas acomodada al fin que no proponemos"

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classifications of the classical rhetorics should be revised and adapted to the order of current literary reality" (1956, p. 532).<sup>30</sup>

Despite his contentions against rhetorical handbooks, Rodó insists that a new literary textbook needs to be written, addressing new genres and opening the door to what Rodó calls the gospel of beauty. This book of "initiation" would aim "To tear down this ancient framework of classifications and hierarchies" and beyond "*instruction*" would offer an "*education* in aesthetic sensibility and taste" infused with a spirit of

suggestive virtue, the gift of interest, a pedagogic sympathy; and when thus realized, its field of action could move beyond academic limits and function as popular reading that would spread the good news of the beautiful and prepare the people to receive the dignifying and civilizing influence of good literature. (1956, p. 533)<sup>31</sup>

Certainly, we can't overlook the ever-present civilizing mission of letters. Hugh Blair similarly insists that education can improve taste, which is "a most improvable faculty" (2005, p. 11). Herosilla announces in his prefatory letter to the Queen of Spain that he intends for his text to "solidly establish the principles of good taste in literary materials."<sup>32</sup> On the one hand, Rodó's focus on a pedagogy of good taste seems to extend from the rhetorical tradition, but on the other, he insists in adapting and disrupting that tradition. Though both Rodó and the belletrists concern themselves with taste, he sees their rules (including those of Blair) as sustaining an artificial literature.<sup>33</sup> All of this, however, does not stop Rodó from employing the figure of the rhetorician as protagonist in his essays. To illustrate what I am calling Rodó's rhetorical philosophy, I conclude by examining Rodó's brief essay on Gorgias as an attempt to "revise" the classical tradition.

### Conclusion: Rodó's Sophist

Despite his anti-rhetorical statements elsewhere, in both "Ariel" and "La despedida de Gorgias" he embraces the persona of the orator/philosopher. In his farewell speech to the youth, Prospero suggests that he has always considered the chance to instruct the youth in moral matters a kind of "sacred oratory" (1956, p. 207).<sup>34</sup> Similarly, in "La despedida," Gorgias, the old master, waxes oratorical as he imparts his last piece of wisdom to his disciples. But in an adaptation of a tradition with which Rodó was obviously familiar, it is Gorgias who is condemned to death because of his dangerous philosophy and opts to drink the Hemlock in

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<sup>30</sup> "las clasificaciones de las retóricas clásicas deben ser revisadas y adaptadas al orden de la realidad literaria actual."

<sup>31</sup> "la virtud sugestiva, el don de interesar, la simpatía pedagógica, y cuando así fuese realizado, su campo de acción podría traspasar los límites de la cátedra y servir de lectura popular que difundiese la buena nueva de lo bello y preparase el espíritu de la generalidad para recibir la influencia civilizadora y dignificadora de las buenas letras"

<sup>32</sup> "establecer sólidamente los principios de buen gusto en materias literarias"

<sup>33</sup> In one instance, Rodó asks rhetorically if Robert Burns could have produced the type of literatura that he did if he had followed Blair's precepts: "Si Burns hubiera estudiado los preceptos de Blair, ¿habría desatado sobre una literatura artificiosa su oleada de fertilizante y oportuna barbarie?" (1956, p. 400).

<sup>34</sup> "oratoria sagrada"

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conscious imitation of Socrates. His final statement is that his philosophy is not the final statement on truth.

Although Rodó's Gorgias appears to advocate a theory of Platonic truth for his disciples, what emerges is an anti-foundationalist theory.<sup>35</sup> Although Gorgias' disciple Lucio is convinced that "the foundation of our conviction is firm," Gorgias insists otherwise. In fact, he teaches his disciples not to be fooled into thinking of his own philosophy as either the solid grounding for their search or the definitive end. He invites them to view his philosophy as a maternal influence, which he emphasizes with an anecdote. When he was a child, he tells them, his mother had been tempted by a woman from Thessaly to use an enchantment that would guarantee that her son would remain young and beautiful, untouched by the sorrows of the world or the realities of time. But she was warned in a dream by witnessing the effect that such a wish would have on her child. In the dream, when after a long life with her beautiful child she one day fails to find the necessary ingredients for the spell, he is converted instantly from child to an old dying man who curses his mother for having deprived him of life in her misguided attempt to protect him. Gorgias takes the account metaphorically as a warning "against the absolutism of the dogma that is revealed at once and for ever, against the faith that does not allow subsequent flight to the horizon which from the first instance it shows us" (1956, p. 464). The comparisons proliferate: his philosophy is not a religion of blind faith; it is the love of a mother who must make way for future lovers. Gorgias' philosophy, like Rodó's aesthetics aims to avoid dogmatism, a term that brings us back to the concern with literary dogmatism with which we began.

Perhaps with more nuance than in the epigraph from Castellanos, which flatly pronounces the death of rhetoric, Rodó's philosophy allows for applying a concept of renewal to the rhetorical tradition, but this would be a renewal willing to cast off the old hierarchies. Published in *Motives of Proteus*, this essay emphasizes the protean mutability that Rodó advocates in the volume under the theme "to renew oneself (*renovarse*) is to live." In the preface to the book, Rodó says his Proteus will never be published in any other way than as a loose and meandering collection of essays: "that is to say, I will never give it concrete 'architecture,' or forceful terms, it will always be able to keep unfolding, 'living'" (301).<sup>36</sup> Rodó's rhetorical theory, though illusive, argues for similar mutability. As Gorgias stands condemned to death for his anti-foundational doctrine of truth, we can imagine how Plato might have construed this doctrine as a dangerous relativism. By having Gorgias stand in for the Platonic hero, however, Rodó shifts the position of rhetoric to truth-seeking: "Do not love my doctrine," Gorgias urges,

Except inasmuch as it has not been invented as the most diaphanous and final truth.  
*Ideas become prisons as well*, like the letter. They fly over the laws and the formulas; but

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<sup>35</sup> Critics have begun to see the historical Gorgias as anti-foundationalist. This is the position favored by Scott Porter Consigny, which he opposes to readings of Gorgias as an empiricist or subjectivist. See his *Gorgias, sophist and artist*. Columbia: U. of South Carolina, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> "es decir, nunca le daré 'arquitectura' concreta, ni término forzoso, siempre podrá seguir desenvolviéndose, 'viviendo'"

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there is something that flies even higher than ideas, and it is the spirit of life which blows  
*in the direction* of the Truth. (1956, p. 464 my emphasis)

As in "Ariel," the master urges his pupils to look upward, following spirit rather than material with a warning against the clichéd ideas that worried Darío in our earlier analysis. Rather than just a binary struggle between *truth* and *cliché*, or a *terrorization* of rhetoric, Rodó's position recognizes that the conversion of a new idea into dogmatism is equally threatening. The antidote is continued adaptation. The concern is direction, not arrival.

For this reason, modernismo insists that rhetoric continue to adapt, to set itself free from the prison of its own ideas. As we have seen, Rodó takes up the problem of rhetoric's connection to literature by discussing the need for a different kind of handbook, one that, true to his anti-foundational impulse, would adapt to the changes in literature. Though Rodó is thought of as something of a philosopher, his philosophy, as articulated through the figure of Gorgias, is a rhetorical one. Prospero and Gorgias emerge as rhetoricians who serve as alter-egos for Rodó himself. Unlike Darío, who identifies with the poet emphasizing ideas and ideals over form, Rodó appropriates the figure of the rhetorician. Platón-Rodó (referred to earlier in Figure 1) is anti-foundationalist. Though modernists are remembered as anti-rhetorical, Rodó's pedagogical contribution to the movement invites us to reconsider his anti-foundationalist rhetorical philosophy as a revisionist moment in the history of rhetoric. As the impetus of this journal suggests, comparative views of rhetoric, both North and South (and increasingly the South in the North) invite us to revisit the counterpoint Rodó constructed in his "Ariel." And now, more than a century later, as interest in rhetoric and theories of writing continues to grow, we can still benefit from Rodó's invitation to revise and question the pedagogical tradition and the conventions we have inherited, in order to assure they are adaptive enough to remain relevant, to keep on living.

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