

ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the articulation between rhetoric and discourse, basing its reflections on José Luiz Fiorin's *Figuras de retórica* [Figures of Rhetoric] (2014). This work examines the contribution of Classical Rhetoric to Discourse Studies. It retrieves and brings a new meaning to the idea of ornament, which relegated Rhetoric to a mere study of images/figures. It presents figures as enunciative operations that intensify the meaning of some elements of discourse, restituting them with their argumentative dimension. The article incorporates, into its own argumentation, the figures of speech and rhetorical resources that are explained by the author of the book.

KEYWORDS: Rhetoric; Discourse Studies; Semiotics; Argumentation

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é discutir as articulações retórica/discurso, tendo como centro das reflexões o livro Figuras de retórica do semiótico José Luiz Fiorin. A obra examina a contribuição da retórica clássica aos estudos do discurso e resgata, para ressignificá-la, a noção de ornamento, que relegou a retórica a um simples estudo de figuras. Apresenta estas últimas como operações enunciativas que intensificam o sentido de algum elemento do discurso, o que acaba por lhes restituir sua dimensão argumentativa. O artigo incorpora, à sua própria argumentação, figuras de linguagem e recursos retóricos explicados pelo autor no livro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Retórica; Estudos do discurso; Semiótica; Argumentação

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The only reason why the title of this article does not sound pretentious is that it is associated with the book about which I will write. In a journal that is dedicated to those who study discourse, it would not be possible for me to present a discussion on the unfolding, repercussion, resumption, reconception of classical rhetoric present in recent studies of linguistics and text theories. Undoubtedly, this is a task for someone who masters the topic and is also able to organize the discussion in such a way that it shows not only its historical tradition and the different moments in which it was (not) associated to language studies, but also its current importance to discourse studies. Besides, a work that resumes rhetoric studies must be done by someone who has enough erudition so that countless and diversified examples of the universal mechanisms of discursivization and textualization related to the field of rhetoric can be given. With that in mind, I came across the work *Figuras de retórica* [*Figures of Rhetoric*] (FIORIN, 2014), which I would like to share with other readers. *Figuras de retórica* [*Figures of Rhetoric*] was written by the Brazilian linguist and semiotician José Luiz Fiorin.

I thought it would be important to start out this thematic discussion with a metaphorical definition of the book, which would capture the spirit and the body of the work. Curiosity made me google the sentence “the book is a jewel.” I wanted to find out different ways this metaphor was used to characterize books. I found a page on which the ever modest Pelé stated that one of his biographies (the one based on the objects he has collected throughout his life) was “a jewel; I don’t know if I deserve that much.” I found a review of a book on the history of Minas Gerais. The reviewer stated that the book clearly showed the “traits of the people of Minas Gerais,” and was thus “a jewel to be treasured.” I also found a review of a self-help book. The reviewer wrote that, despite its “many typos and grammar mistakes,” the book was “a jewel.” Then, I drew myself away from this kind of metaphor, whose meaning, according to my web search results, is spread out and diversified. I believed it would be inaccurate to use it with one of Fiorin’s books. However, curiously, the Mozambican writer Mia Couto, the one whose books sometimes lie on Fiorin’s bedside table, has a definition of books that is very close to the idea of *preciousness* that I was looking for at first. He declares that “books are chests of treasures that we find nowhere else.”¹

¹ Text in original: “o livro é uma caixa de tesouros que não encontramos em mais lado nenhum.”

Despite the fact that I found the quotation on one of those web pages where we find beautiful sayings but cannot find their source and thus cannot trust them, I was able to cite someone. Mia Couto's saying fit like a glove to what I wanted to say. In fact, this new metaphor *fit like a glove* hints at the reader that my inspiration is withered, pale, and is a prosopopoeia that reiterates the choice for the intended content.

Leaving behind this sequence of rhetorical figures, which only shows that we use them in our speech all the time and that they do not always produce good aesthetic effects, Mia Couto's metaphor increases prestige and comfort to the idea expressed by the word *jewel*. I could almost say that the Mozambican writer was thinking exclusively of Fiorin's book when he wrote that and that this is the reason why this metaphor (and not Pelé's) dropped into my lap and fell into my liking so that I can present *Figuras de retórica* [Figures of Rhetoric] in this paper.

What is inside a chest of treasures? Houaiss (2001) gives three definitions for the word *treasure*: 1) "a collection of anything of value, such as money, jewelry, precious metal and stones, valuable property, either kept or hidden"; 2) "the place where the money of a government is kept and/or administered; treasury"; 3) "a collection of precious objects," such as "valuable garments and ornaments in some churches."² In our imaginary worlds, treasures are either found on pirate ships or buried in mysterious grounds, and we find them either by chance or through maps.

Of what coins and jewels is Fiorin's book made? What treasure chest is this book about which we write here? Before answering those questions, I would like to go back to Mia Couto's saying, which does not associate a book only with treasure, but with a chest of treasures that encompasses and protects the treasure in a box. As the author pluralizes the word, he seems to enhance the rare, bright, and powerful nature of the word *treasure* and to associate it to a sparkle of a thought. Fiorin's book is a chest of treasures. We thus employ the metaphor in its totality, for we can associate its common characteristics and its improper relationship. A book is not a chest of treasures, but it can become one if it is given characteristics of the chests of treasures that we would love to find buried in our backyards, which, by the way, we do not have anymore. Here we establish "semantic concentration," by means of which we can give "concreteness to an abstract idea," make meaning more "stressed," and enhance its intensity.

² Text in original: "conjunto de riquezas de qualquer tipo (p.ex., dinheiro, joias, pedras e metais preciosos, bens valiosos) guardadas ou escondidas; [...] lugar onde se guardam e/ou administram as rendas do Estado; erário; [...] coleção de objetos preciosos [...] alfaias e ornamentos de valor que se guardam em certas igrejas."

We thus establish the “predicative compatibility of similarity” (the book is like a treasure; the book is as precious as a treasure), limit the “semic extension of coexisting elements” (coins, jewelry, gold are elements that coexist, but are not considered here), and enhance the intensity of common features that treasures have (brightness, scintillation, luminosity, power, value). Why do we do that? Because we want to argue in favor of the book and to persuade readers of its qualities. We want to tell them that they have to read it. Besides, we want to praise it and to recognize its brightness and scintillation of thought. We do that so that readers do not get tired of reading a list of qualities, of laudatory attributes, which may tire them, upset the author (the one being praised), and embarrass this article writer.

We could also use metonymies to define Fiorin’s book. We would thus give the example of this Fiorin being crowned for devoting his academic life to the study of the relationships between rhetoric and discourse theories, or the example of the marriage between his erudition and didacticism. In order to intensify meaning, we refer to the work by its author and transfer his characteristics to the work. “This is a Fiorin” means that this is another of his books, endowed with every single characteristic of the other books he wrote: it covers a specific field of interest, such as discourse, text, argumentation, etc., and keeps some writing features, such as clarity, erudition, abundant and convincing exemplification, intelligent argumentation, etc. By using a metonymy, “semantic diffusion” occurs, for in the “extension domain” we transfer “a semantic value to another one” in “semic expansion.” This way, readers can grasp its meaning faster, as they quickly associate “this Fiorin” to other Fiorin and his characteristics in a process of meaning intensification. I used a metonymy not only to expand its meaning and to strengthen it by means of a profusion of associations derived from it, but also to argue in favor of the book and to convince the reader of its quality.

Moreover, I used metaphors and metonymies to didactically show their form and use in discourse as if this were a teaching activity. I used them to prove that I have learned the teacher’s lesson. Besides, if I started this article out by demonstrating the argumentative value of metaphors and metonymies, it is because the main strength of the book that we are analyzing lies in the presentation of the discursive role of figures and tropes. This presentation is based on the legacy of classical rhetoric and on the author’s obstinate, dense, and mature reflection, one that is capable of articulating rhetorical principles between linguists and discourse theorists.

The book’s objectives, which are fully reached, are to (i) examine the contribution of classical rhetoric to discourse studies, (ii) resignify the notion of ornament, which relegated

rhetoric to a mere study of figures, and (iii) present figures as “enunciative operations that intensify the meaning of an element of discourse” (FIORIN, 2014, p.10).³ In the last paragraph of the book’s preface, some marks of subjectivity make readers aware of what is in Fiorin’s mind and heart:

In building democracy, dissention and persuasion are essential, and rhetoric was an adventure of the human spirit that promoted the understanding of the means enunciators use to fulfil their persuasive task. This book is an invitation for you to participate in this adventure, which aims to make humans more humane (2014, p.11).⁴

Although *humanist* and *democrat* are terms whose meaning may be emptied out as a consequence of their bad use, I run the risk of enunciating them here in order to share my impression that this Professor reveals his taste for conversations, differences, that he respects the word of other people and is able to recognize when he is wrong (maybe he would say, “but I am never wrong!”). I would thus say that *humanist* and *democrat* are a thematic condensation that is in tune with what Fiorin is: a semiotician, a linguist, an expert in rhetoric, who can give words the intense dimension they should have. I will show this further on.

In *Linguística e retórica [Linguistics and Rhetoric]*, Fiorin presents the historical and political reasons by which rhetoric suffered some discredit after its dominant role in language studies for over two thousand years. “Scientific positivism and romantic aesthetic” summarize the values that ended this prestige. On the one hand, there was the ideal of “transparency, objectivity, and neutrality of the scientific discourse” that constrained freer, subjective, and figurative expressions. On the other hand, there was the conflict between “originality, individuality, and subjectivity,” expected from literary discourse in romantic aesthetics, and the “idea of a stock of common-places and procedures at the writer’s disposal,” commonly associated to the art of rhetorical persuasion.

The author briefly creates a narrative about these waves that traverse history, condemning it to a come-and-go movement: it is resumed and given new meanings before going any further. This is how the linguistic studies of the period (when linguistics became regarded as science) adhered to the formalistic principles of a science that creates laws of how

³ Text in original: “operações enunciativas para intensificar o sentido de algum elemento do discurso.”

⁴ Text in original: “A retórica foi uma aventura do espírito humano para, na construção da democracia, em que são essenciais a dissensão e a persuasão, compreender os meios de que se serve o enunciador para realizar sua atividade persuasória. Este livro é um convite a participar dessa aventura, que visa a tornar os homens mais humanos.”

things work. Only further on, when linguistics became exhausted and turned to scientificism, did it take discourse into account. Besides, it reconceptualized language and reestablished the relevance of persuasion and argumentation studies. This is the path through which rhetoric begins to be resignified. At this point Fiorin offers an inestimable contribution to the history of text and discourse studies by giving Benveniste a well-deserved place as founder of this new paradigm and of a theory of enunciation that replaces human beings in social life. Benveniste does that by understanding discourse as a “social language activity” (FIORIN, 2014, p.14).⁵

Fiorin shows that when linguistics focuses on text and discourse, it becomes closer to rhetoric. Having done that, he presents authors who were devoted to build this proximity. He thus establishes two paradigms for this articulation: the one built by Jakobson and the other systematized by Barthes. The difference is that rhetoric was conceived either as the “very condition for the existence of discourse production” or as a “still valid instrument for discourse analysis” (FIORIN, 2014, p.18).⁶ Fiorin follows the first path in the wake of Jakobson’s paradigm and presents his core contribution: Jakobson articulated syntagm and paradigm with metonymy and metaphor, respectively operated by contiguity and similarity, and considered them the two modes of organizing thought and discourse. The book’s passage on Jacobson is beautifully exemplified with some of Picasso’s and Dali’s paintings.

I would like to linger over this passage for two reasons. Firstly, Fiorin’s analyses bear witness to the usefulness of these concepts commonly used in his texts. His analyses of poems, movies, and now paintings are unforgettable. Although he has attempted to excursion into more popular TV programs, advertising appeals, or popular newspapers (which he does it well, by the way), it is in the sphere of aesthetics that the author is freer to fully exercise his talent of interpretation. This is how he teaches us that analysis is a movement of deconstruction through which the effect of unity of creation is lost to reach the effect of unity of interpretation. The second benefit of using paintings as examples is that the author shows that the mechanisms of meaning production are found in any kind of language, which comprises these mechanisms that are activated in different ways, depending on the material expression that gives form to content.

It was Paul Claudel who declared that to contemplate a painting, it takes all resources of patience and syntax (2003, p.133). Floch (2002, p.4) well justified the need for patience, since according to him it is necessary to draw away from the accessories and the dispersions of the

⁵ Text in original: “atividade social da linguagem.”

⁶ Text in original: “condição mesma da existência da produção discursiva [...] instrumento ainda válido de análise discursiva.”

world's visual appeals, in which a torrent of images flood. This patience is a result of the duration of contemplation, which is necessarily opposed to the suddenness of aesthetic impact. Impact is decelerated so that its meaning, which goes beyond emotion or fright, may be produced. Syntax is a necessary part of this decelerated movement of deconstruction, in which dots, lines, colors, and movements are segmented so that the composition/organization that gives form to ideas may be achieved. This is what Fiorin does when he uses Picasso's *Guernica* to give examples of metonymies and Dali's *Sono [Sleep]* to give examples of metaphors:

Picasso's painting *Guernica* is metonymic, for it is constituted of implied elements that show the horrors of war. The painting is not colorful; there are only gray, white, and black colors. There is no relief in the painting either, and color and relief are the two elements that nature unfolds to human beings. To eliminate them is to show that only death exists; nature and life are no more. The images of deceased people and the things represented, such as the kerosene lamp, the electric lamp, the fire flames, and the bull showcase that German aviators destroyed life, understood from the viewpoint of nature and history. *Guernica* represents the horrors of war with its procession of destruction: life, art, and civilization disappear. Dali's painting *Sono [Sleep]*, in turn, is metaphorical. In it a head sustained on various crutches on the ground is represented. It is believed that if one crutch collapses, so will everything else. Thus, there is a semic intersection between the "head sustained on crutches" and the "sleep": precariousness and ephemerality (2014, p.15).⁷

According to Fiorin, Jakobson's paradigm, which characterizes rhetorical resources as discourse procedures, is present in every linguistic manifestation. In the field of Linguistics, this paradigm is inherited by Pragmatics and discourse studies, which give it back to Linguistics, which in turn provides it with in its own models.

For a moment, let us linger over French semiotics and the contribution that the Brazilian semiotician attributes to Zilberberg (2006; 2011), who postulates that rhetoric needs to be retrieved so that it can be incorporated into semiotics. Thus, it would deal with affectivity and the sensitive components of discourse. Fiorin reminds his readers that among the objectives of

⁷ Text in original: "O quadro *Guernica*, de Picasso, é metonímico. Ele é constituído de elementos que se implicam para mostrar o horror da guerra. No quadro, não há cor, apenas cinza, branco e negro. Nele, não há relevo. A cor e o relevo são dois elementos com que a natureza se dá a conhecer ao homem. Eliminá-los é mostrar que não existe mais natureza e vida, mas tão somente a morte. As figuras dos caídos, bem como as coisas representadas (a lâmpada a querosene, a lâmpada elétrica, as chamas do incêndio, o touro), mostram que os aviadores alemães destruíram a vida, considerada tanto do ponto de vista da natureza quanto da história. *Guernica* representa o horror da guerra, com seu cortejo de destruições. Com ela desaparece a vida, desaparece a arte, desaparece a civilização. Já o quadro *Sono*, de Dali, é metafórico. Nele, representam-se uma cabeça segura por frágeis forquilhas. Tem-se a impressão de que, se uma cair, tudo desabar. Há uma interseção sêmica entre "cabeça segura por forquilhas" e "sono": a precariedade, a efemeridade."

rhetoric we find not only the verbs “to show” and “to prove,” connected to the intelligible component of languages, but also the verbs “to delight,” “to please,” “to move,” and “to be moved,” related to the order of affectivity (2014, p.20). In order to give examples of these discourse components, he presents different and possible readings of a poem by João Cabral de Melo Neto. Before going any further, it is important to comment on the richness of Fiorin’s exemplification, which is used not only to teach, but also to please and to move the reader. Fiorin reminds us that figurativeness is the condition for discursive activity to exist. That is due to that fact that the figurative organization of a text is a result of its interpretations and its connection with history and ideology. Besides, the path through which the figurative component is densified gives the proper dimension for representing and symbolizing the subject. In his analysis, Fiorin also shows that argumentativity is an integral component of every discourse and uses two mechanisms, namely, implication and concession. “Implication is about regularities” and is found, for example, in political discourses that associate economic growth to new job offers (if there is more production, there are more job openings). Concession “defies all expectations and gives access to discontinuity, which is so striking in life” (FIORIN, 2014, p.22).⁸ Concession deals with the unexpected and the unforeseeable; it is what allows Manoel de Barros to state that “everything that I do not create is fake.”

Fiorin then shows that “rhetorical argumentation repertoire is mainly implicative” and then explains that due to the fact that discourse studies inherited rhetoric, they ended up recognizing that “every speech act has an argumentative dimension and a tropological dimension.” As a result, they reconceive rhetoric as that which “disturbs grammar and any putative logic of language” (FIORIN, 2014, p.23).⁹

Fiorin also reflects long on tropes of argumentation. He demonstrates that the five canons of classical rhetoric were separated into two groups: topology, composed of *inventio* [invention] and *dispositio* [arrangement] (related to convincibility and persuasion), and tropology, the theory of tropes, of figures, which are regarded as ornament, “pompous discourse,” being, therefore, unnecessary to argumentation.

As he ends this discussion, he expounds that the theoretical and historical presentation of the subject, i.e., the etymology of the word “argument,” intends to restore the importance of the ornament. For him, this point is not a superfluous issue, but a concept that “shines, glitters,”

⁸ Text in original: “rompe as expectativas e dá acesso à descontinuidade do que é marcante na vida.”

⁹ Text in original: “perturba a gramática da língua e uma pretensa lógica da linguagem.”

as the root of the word argument, *argu-*, means “make an idea shine.” “Argument is that which enhances an idea and makes it shine” (FIORIN, 2014, p.27).¹⁰

After that, he systematizes the theoretical framework of figure studies and shows the consequences of such assumption, declaring that “rhetoric is the discipline of meaning impropriety” (FIORIN, 2014, p.28).¹¹ Thus ‘shine’ is inside impropriety, and ‘glitter’ stems from “predicative inadequacy.” And all that is in literature, art, and in a casual conversation; in children’s drawings and in a piece by Bach; in a political discourse, in a religious sermon, and in a parent’s admonition. This is what Fiorin writes about, viz., the universal use of figures and tropes and the discursive result of their use, the condensation or expansion of textualization, the discourse that intensifies or minimizes affection and passion, and the language that takes in the sensations of the body and expresses the emotions of the soul.

In the following chapters, Fiorin gives a thorough explanation of each figure and trope in an erudite-didactic tone, which is a distinctive characteristic not only of this work, but of other of his works. As the reader will see, his approach is original and productive, once he does not simply present a list of figures as grammar textbooks usually do; on the contrary, he connects procedures to their effects and by means of an admirable effort of systematization, he tries to associate them, reiterate them, and show their differences. He thus separates lexical tropes from grammatical tropes and classifies them according to the mechanisms that constitute them, viz., concentration and condensation or expansion and diffusion. Metaphor, for example, is next to prosopopoeia and oxymoron; they are tropes related to semantic concentration. Metonymy, irony, and hyperbole, in turn, are tropes related to semantic expansion. As to grammatical mechanisms, syllepsis exemplifies the tropes of semantic concentration; enallage, metalepsis, and hendiadys are examples of tropes of semantic diffusion. It does not really matter if a number of language scholars are unaware of what hendiadys is; in fact, very few will probably know what epenthesis stands for – let alone anaptyxis.

I will not make the readers’ life any easy by explaining what is well explained in Fiorin’s work. However, I invite them to read his book also for a great number of reasons. I invite them to read it because it is a contribution to rhetoric reconception in an original, relevant, and enticing way. I invite them to read it because this Fiorin is a chest of treasures that keeps the secrets of language. Inside this chest there can be found the precious map that guides us through paths of meaning production. Moreover, it also safeguards the knowledge of a man

¹⁰ Text in original: “O argumento é o que realça, o que faz brilhar uma ideia.”

¹¹ Text in original: “a retórica é a disciplina da impropriedade do sentido.”

who is devoted to languages and linguistics and the richness of his academic life, which is prolific, and shows his generosity for sharing it with us.

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