



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

[Review of: B. Fernandes Pereira (2012) Retórica e Eloquência em Portugal na época do Renascimento]

Meerhoff, K.

DOI

[10.1525/rh.2016.34.1.110](https://doi.org/10.1525/rh.2016.34.1.110)

Publication date

2016

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Rhetorica: A journal of the history of rhetoric

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Meerhoff, K. (2016). [Review of: B. Fernandes Pereira (2012) Retórica e Eloquência em Portugal na época do Renascimento]. *Rhetorica: A journal of the history of rhetoric*, 34(1), 110-113. <https://doi.org/10.1525/rh.2016.34.1.110>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)

B. Fernandes Pereira, *Retórica e Eloquência em Portugal na época do Renascimento*, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 2012; 988 pp. ISBN 9789722719711

For most people, the rich history of Portuguese rhetoric is *terra incognita*. The comprehensive survey of Belmiro Pereira offers a unique occasion to explore these unknown fields and discover their many treasures. Many ISHR members will be delighted to see their names in the footnotes of this extremely well documented book. It starts with an overview of medieval rhetoric and the transmission of ancient texts during this period; there are chapters on the *artes dictandi* and *artes praedicandi*, on classical rhetoric in medieval Portuguese culture, on reading the Fathers of the Church, on the growing interest in the works of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As in other parts of the book, Pereira indicates where the manuscripts of these works are to be found: this precise information about the major places of learning in Portugal and Spain is very welcome. It also shows the aim of the author to present rhetoric in the wider context of education, culture and religion.

This aim continues to be pursued in the second part of the book, which deals with rhetoric and the rise of humanism in Portugal. The prominence of rhetoric in Renaissance culture is considered in an international perspective, with special emphasis on developments in Spain, France and, more unexpectedly, in Germany and the Low Countries. Indeed, one of the major discoveries in this book is the importance of Northern humanism for the evolution of rhetorical education in Portugal. The author has founded his research on an extensive knowledge of the sources in the various countries under consideration. His reading of studies published in all these countries on the subject of Renaissance rhetoric is vast, up to date and accurate. A student of German or Spanish rhetoric may learn a great deal from this book about his or her own field of interest.

The presence of major works of ancient, medieval and Renaissance rhetoric in the more important Portuguese libraries is documented for two

periods, before and after the year 1537. The author singles out the years 1527 to 1548 for special consideration. In these two decades the King of Portugal, John the Third, sent his country's most promising students to Paris to have them acquaint themselves with the ideas and methods of Erasmian humanism. They gathered in a college run more or less permanently by Portuguese scholars: Sancta Barbara, in French Sainte-Barbe. Moreover, the syllabus of the Santa Cruz monastery in Coimbra was reorganised according to modern standards. Finally, in the year 1548 the humanist Colégio das Artes is established by order of the King in the same city; and teachers educated in centres of learning in Paris and elsewhere in Europe are engaged to bring to Portugal the methods of reading and writing developed by major humanist educators. According to B. Pereira 1537 was a pivotal year: the centre of higher education was transferred from Lisbon to Coimbra and the King's brother Henry (D. Henrique) founded in Braga a new college, Saint Paul's. In this latter college, the influence of Northern humanism is conspicuous due to the presence of teachers such as N. Clenardus and J. Vasaeus. Pereira gives a great deal of attention to the career of A. Pinus (Pinheiro), educated in Paris and afterwards entrusted with high offices at the Portuguese court. As a pupil of Strebaeus at Saint Barbe's, he wrote a celebrated commentary on Quintilian, book III, published by his master's friend and editor, M. Vascosanus. He left a number of writings in Latin and in Portuguese. His orations as a bishop and court official are noteworthy; his treatise on Portuguese eloquence is unfortunately lost. Pereira demonstrates that this orthodox scholar and priest was familiar with Melanchthon's *Elementa rhetorices*, and criticised it in his commentary on *Inst. Or.* III, before giving it to a fellow countryman, who took it to his homeland where he taught at the College of Arts.

Pereira gives proper attention to the academic orations pronounced in Coimbra in the brilliant first period of its existence. Many of them were reprinted and translated in the second half of the 20th Century. They are often addressed to the founder of the College of Arts, John the Third (1502–1557), whose statue of whom is still to be seen on the terrace adjacent to the famous library of Coimbra University. He is the *rex inuictissimus*, reigning not only over Portugal and the Algarves, but over Africa, Arabia, Persia and India as well.

The last part of Pereira's book is quite naturally focused on Jesuit rhetoric and on the integration of ancient learning and Christian faith. Extensive analyses of the writings of some major representatives are given, and Pereira singles out three of them for fuller analysis. The RF P. J. Perpinianus, C. Soárez and T. Correia were prolific authors and celebrated orators. Their treatises on rhetoric at first sight seem only to reflect a profound knowledge of the best ancient sources. Father Cipriano Soárez's highly influential manual has an eloquent title in this respect: *De arte rhetorica libri tres ex Aristotele, Cicerone et Quintiliano praeipue deprompti*. First published in Coimbra in 1562, it became the official handbook for Jesuit institutions all over Europe. It is, indeed, a very clear introduction to rhetoric, which openly refers to its many classical sources in the margins. No modern authors are ever

mentioned, but one senses their influence in details of its presentation, and in the foregrounding of certain aspects of ancient theory, such as oratorical rhythm. Clearly, Soárez must have read the works of Melanchthon and Ramus meticulously. His chapters are short, his definitions unambiguous and frequent. He stresses the importance of relating a particular case to the general issue behind it, and dedicates a special chapter in the beginning to this point, previously highlighted by Melanchthon: *Quomodo hypothesis ad thesim reuocanda sit* (I, 6). B. Pereira now and then refers to the question of modern influences on Soárez, and concludes that this important author must be located in the tradition of Ciceronianism represented in Italy by P. Manutius and in France by “the Parisian masters of Sainte-Barbe, especially by humanists like Strebaeus” (p. 808).

In the pages concerning Jesuit rhetoric, B. Pereira is as always attentive to the broader international context. Thus, we follow the career of T. Correia, who was born in Coimbra and first studied in his birthplace, before moving to Italy to become a celebrated orator in Rome. He published his enormous *De eloquentia libri V* in Bologna, and dedicated it to Cardinal Scipione Gonzága, who – as Pereira notes with his usual accuracy – was also the protector of Giambattista Guarini and Torquato Tasso. The book appeared in 1591, with the blessings of the *curia* of the archbishop and of the holy Inquisition. Pereira notes an attack on unnamed *rhetores* and *magistri novi*, rightly identified by him as followers of Peter Ramus (p. 829–830). Elsewhere, he detects a delicate polemic against Melanchthon and allusions to contemporary oratorical practice in Rome (p. 839–840). In short, like Soárez, Correia was a man of his own time, aware of recent developments in the fields of dialectic and rhetoric all over Europe, ready to attack all those who in his eyes impinged upon the great tradition of classical oratory.

Carefully structured, well documented, illustrated with original documents, most of them front pages of books held by libraries all over Portugal, and furnished with a full bibliography and a very useful index, *Retórica e Eloquência em Portugal na época do Renascimento* is a book that invites further study of an interesting but neglected field of inquiry. The book ends with a full bibliography and a very useful index. Pereira has laid a very solid foundation and offers many opportunities to other scholars. His frequent digressions in footnotes are enticing; his quotations always correctly reproduced. It will be hard to find a mistake in this work, composed over many years after careful research in monastic libraries in hidden areas, in Lisbon’s national library, in Rome and elsewhere. The author is a cautious man; when he is not sure of his case, he says so. For instance, in a quotation where Strebaeus is praised for his outstanding commentary on Cicero’s *Partitiones* (p. 681, note), a certain Georgius is censured for his careless reading. B. Pereira suggests that the name refers “probably” to Giorgio Merula. I would suggest that it refers more probably, if not definitely, to Giorgio Valla, who was indeed, at times, a sloppy philologist. He is the author of a commentary on the same treatise, whereas Merula is not, according to Green & Murphy’s Short-Title Catalogue.

Reading B. Pereira’s *magnum opus* is always rewarding, if not always easy for non-native readers of Portuguese. In many cases, this reviewer

had to resort to the footnotes with their quotations in Latin in order to fully understand the text. This confession is a hardly covert recommendation to publish as soon as possible an English translation of this wonderful book, written in the best tradition of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric.

KEES MEERHOFF, AMSTERDAM