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Feminism for the Descamisadas: A Rhetorical Analysis of Eva Perón's Speeches

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Abstract

Eva Perón's "moral reform" feminism inspired the beginnings of feminist expansion in Argentina by praising tradition while promoting gender equality. Peronism, a populist movement, mobilized the Argentine working class after decades of socioeconomic oppression. Perón empowered Argentine working-class women, her descamisadas ("shirtless ones"), in fiery speeches. Her feminism was exceptional for a first-wave feminist context: working as a female politician in a traditionalistic nation. Though scholars have labeled Eva Perón a "non-feminist," I contend that her approach to feminism was extraordinary because of her ability to craft rhetorical appeals to working-class women. I analyzed Eva Perón's speechwriting during her political career (1946-1952), determining how her visions for feminism and social welfare changed over time and by location. I utilized the rhetorical framework, starting with the historical and rhetorical situation and then finishing my analysis by examining how Eva Perón's rhetorical choices appealed to messages of respect, loyalty, and love.

Keywords: Argentina, Eva Perón, Evita, feminism, Latin American Studies, perónism, politics, populism, rhetoric

Introduction

Maria Eva Duarte de Perón is more than “Peronism’s First Lady” or the real woman behind Madonna’s theatrical debut in Weber’s “Evita.” The conditions of Argentine society during Eva Perón’s political career created the perfect incubator for the beginnings of feminist expansion. By praising tradition while promoting gender equality, Eva Perón created an approach to feminism that appeals to working-class women, her *descamisadas*. Despite being active in politics for only six years (1946-1952), Eva Perón’s impact on Argentine feminism remains profound today because of her rhetorical mastery.

Though much of the scholarship surrounding Eva Perón’s feminism ultimately deems her a “non-feminist,” I contend Eva Perón’s “moral reform” feminism was powerful and had a significant impact on Argentine feminism. My research frames Eva Perón’s rhetorical choices in a first-wave feminist context unique to Argentine culture. To complement this, I have plotted Eva Perón’s feminism on a map of Argentina by marking important speech locations and specifying unique rhetorical appeals from each speech catering to her audience. This spatial visualization will aid future scholars in understanding Eva Perón’s manipulation of rhetorical appeals to achieve her feminist impact in the historical context of her political career.

Research Statement

My research will analyze Eva Perón’s rhetorical choices and how they contribute to the type of feminism I believe she subscribed to: “moral reform” feminism. Eva Perón lived through feminism’s first wave (1800s-early 1900s) which tackled issues of “family, motherhood, chastity, prostitution, birth control and the double standard of morality” (Shulman 590). Feminism’s second wave began in the mid-1900s with the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan’s book, *The Feminine Mystique*, as the women’s liberation movement began (Shulman 591). Today and since the 1990s, “third wave” or “choice” feminism which advocates for giving “women choices and not pass[ing] judgment on what they choose” has become mainstream (Snyder-Hall 255). According to modern feminist standards, Eva Perón would most likely not be considered a feminist because of her messages of domesticity and subservience to one’s husband. I believe Eva Perón’s feminism follows 20th-century Uruguayan doctor and moral reformist Paulina Luisi’s definition:

Feminism is “demonstrating that woman is something more than material created to serve and obey man like a slave, that she is more than a machine to produce children and care for the home; that women have feelings and intellect; that it is their mission to perpetuate the species and this must be done with more than the entrails and the breasts; it must be done with a mind and a heart prepared to be a mother and an educator; that she must be the man's partner and counselor not his slave” (Luisi 48).

Moral reform feminism does not “attempt to make structural changes” like modern-day feminism hopes to in dismantling gender roles (Little 387). Eva Perón did not advocate for gendered structural change in Argentina as “her goal was never their [women’s] 'liberation' as understood by feminists today” (Wynia 63). Instead, Eva Perón sought to be a model for working-class wives, encouraging them to challenge tradition while being subservient to their

husbands (Courtney 19). Even though “Peronist feminism was not profoundly radical enough to totally challenge the established role of women,” studying it is important since it was powerful enough to mobilize previously disenfranchised working-class women towards political and social empowerment (Hollander 55). Today, Peronist politicians embrace feminism as part of their fight for human rights in *all areas except* the “legalization of abortion” which remains a lively fight for Argentine feminists likely because of Catholicism’s prevalence in Argentine culture (Morgan 139).

Eva Perón’s legacy matters. Eva Perón created a unique and highly personalized rhetorical style only she could portray because of her genuine love for the Argentine working class.

Methodology

To understand Eva Perón’s visions for social change, I analyzed the rhetorical devices utilized in her speeches. Eva Perón’s fiery tone and loving, emotional appeals define her unique rhetorical character.

Eva Perón is known for her rhetorical mastery and orature. Despite the undeniable association between the “Evita” name and powerful speeches, there remains no accessible, common transcript log of Eva Perón’s speeches available online. Spanish transcripts of her speeches are only easily accessible if they are one of her most famous works, such as the 1951 “Speech to the Descamisados.” While conducting preliminary research, I discovered a PDF document compiling Eva Perón’s speeches in the original Spanish text.¹ Finding peer-reviewed translations of any of Eva Perón’s speeches is a virtually impossible task. Therefore, I took the time to translate the Spanish text so I would have options of speeches to choose from for my rhetorical analysis. I chose to translate as many speeches as possible to improve the accessibility for English-speaking scholars studying Eva Perón’s speechwriting. Since the PDF document was made up of scanned speeches in their original format, I was unable to ‘copy and paste’ the Spanish text and put it into an online translator. Thus, I manually transcribed each speech, then put that transcription into an online translator to receive the English translation. I used Google Translate as my primary translator, and Bing/Microsoft Translator as a secondary translator when the first translation was grammatically flawed or incoherent. I have made both the original Spanish text and English translation of 25 speeches available on my website² to improve the accessibility of studying Eva Perón’s rhetoric for both English and Spanish speakers.

Since I am not a native Argentine Spanish speaker, I could not understand some of the cultural language within Eva Perón’s speeches. Despite this, I believe I understood the messages Eva Perón conveyed in her speechwriting. A previous scholar analyzing Eva Perón’s rhetoric described using translations in their research, arguing “the message of Eva Perón was not hindered by the translations, and her rhetoric was successfully conveyed” (Masut 192).

When deciding which speeches to translate out of those included in the PDF, I chose 25. I chose these final 25 speeches either if (1) the speech title had something to do with feminism, or if (2) the speech was delivered in a unique location. This method assured the most accurate

¹ Link to PDF of original Spanish speeches: <https://bcn.gob.ar/uploads/Obra-completaEva-Peron.pdf>

² Link to my website: <https://sites.google.com/view/descamisadas/home>

analysis of Eva Perón’s rhetorical appeals to feminism and how it changed over time or varied depending on location. I only included 12 out of the 25 speeches for my rhetorical analysis. The other 13 speeches were included exclusively for my spatial analysis of Eva Perón’s feminism. I wanted to limit the number of speeches included in my rhetorical analysis as much as possible to ensure close analysis. I chose the 12 speeches to be included in my rhetorical analysis by examining the speeches for repeated rhetorical strategies. After conducting a preliminary analysis, I decided on the final speeches by picking those with common rhetorical strategies but different claims. I applied David Jolliffe’s Rhetorical Framework (Figure 1) to conduct my rhetorical analysis. This method reworks the traditional rhetorical triangle backward: starting with the rhetorical situation and ending with rhetorical devices. Using this framework, I analyzed each speech for its thesis and then began to evaluate rhetorical devices applied to develop the thesis. Since I was analyzing historical speeches, this framework worked best because it prioritizes the rhetorical situation before analyzing rhetorical strategies. Working around a presentist bias allowed me to understand the full scope of Eva Perón’s feminist speeches for her context: a post-war Argentina still operating under traditional gender roles.

Jolliffe’s Rhetorical Framework Diagram

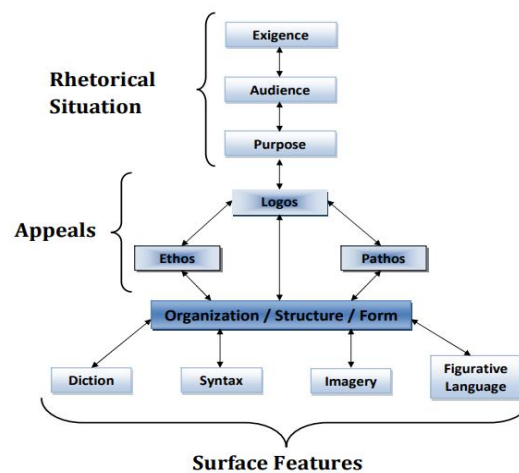


Figure 1³

I decided to include a spatial visualization to further contextualize my rhetorical analysis. To achieve this, I used StoryMaps, an online application that allows users to place text and images on an interactive map. I created two maps visualizing my findings: (1) a map of 5 speeches delivered outside Buenos Aires, and (2) a map of 12 speeches delivered inside Buenos Aires. Since some of my translated speeches were delivered at an unknown location or delivered by radio, I could not include all 25 speeches in my final StoryMaps. For the speeches I did know the location, I mapped them in chronological order to take the viewer on a journey of Eva Perón’s political career. I included the speech’s English title, a quote representing the speech’s thesis, and a quote representing a rhetorical appeal on each speech’s plot point. Creating this spatial visualization traced common rhetorical patterns across Eva Perón’s

³ Link to image used for Jolliffe’s Rhetorical Framework diagram:
<https://www.cusd80.com/cms/lib/AZ01001175/Centricity/Domain/8219/jolliffes-rhetorical-framework1.pdf>

speechwriting; for example, I found appeals to credibility were used most often in speeches delivered outside of Buenos Aires. I envision these maps as a starting point for audiences interacting with my research. Hopefully, after interacting with the maps, audiences will feel motivated to read the speech's full text on my website.⁴

Additionally, my speech translation process leaves room for error. Since I had to manually transcribe each speech, I could have missed some words or punctuation included in the original text. When I could not read a word due to smudging or misprinting, I left highlighted ellipses in the original text and translation to notify the reader of the discrepancy. At times while transcribing the original text, I used Google Docs' grammar or spell check functions as suggestions appeared. This could have led to the insertion of words or punctuation not included in the original text. Ultimately, my transcription may have been inaccurate leading to an inaccurate translation. And because I used online translators, my translations may be grammatically incorrect, mistranslated, inaccurate for mid-century Spanish, and/or missing important cultural or political references. Ideally, I would have asked multiple native Argentine Spanish speakers to translate each speech to ensure grammatical and cultural accuracy. This was not feasible for my research, but I would encourage future scholars to take this step to develop the translations' accuracy.

My research findings, StoryMaps, and website create a foundation for future researchers to use as their translation and rhetorical analysis sources. The StoryMaps are not discussed later in this paper, but rather serve as a starting point to spark interest in audiences prior to reading this paper. I hope future researchers improve upon my initial findings so that the study of Eva Perón's rhetorical mastery becomes a robust, scholarly field.

Results: Rhetorical Analysis

Introduction

Eva Perón created a legacy of moral reform feminism in Argentina through her profound, unique rhetorical style. Her clever selection of rhetorical choices left her audience of beloved supporters reassured in their dedication to both her persona and her cause. Eva Perón earned her credibility (*ethos*) by establishing the "Evita" name, emphasizing her humility, appealing to Argentine family values and religious traditions, and using her husband's credibility for herself. Eva Perón's love for her *descamisados* was genuine, strengthening her emotional appeal (*pathos*) in her usage of hyperbolic, revolutionary, and imperative speech. Eva Perón appealed to logic (*logos*) by building logical frameworks such as equating herself to all Argentine people and through a "fate vs. destiny" motif throughout her speeches. However, her speeches sometimes included logical fallacies such as "us vs. them" logic and fear tactics. She demonstrated her rhetorical mastery when blending the three rhetorical appeals in a line of speech. Eva Perón used this method when speaking on what she was most passionate about: her *descamisados* and feminist nationalism.

⁴ Link to my website: <https://sites.google.com/view/descamisadas/home>

Rhetorical appeals to credibility (Ethos)

Eva Perón prioritized establishing credibility because of her status as a female politician in a nation that abided by the “traditional view of the Latin American woman: that of a female preoccupied with sin and salvation and with no interest in the world outside the home or increased rights for her sex” (Little 386). As a 20th-century Argentine woman, who was also illegitimate-born, a former actress, and in a position of power, Eva Perón could never naturally receive the same respect her husband, President Juan Perón, did as a hypermasculine, respectable military man.

Today, most Argentines and the rest of the global population recognize Eva Perón as “Evita.” Eva Perón described the context of her nickname, saying, “only the people call me “Evita.” ... Men of the government... who call on me usually address me as “Señora”... they see in me only Eva Perón” (Perón *My Mission in Life*, 63) The “Evita” name has left a legacy of love because of Eva Perón’s embrace of the title. Eva Perón’s appreciation for the name is prevalent in two speeches from the summer of 1949. In a July 1949 speech to the women’s assembly of the Peronist Party (later the Female Peronist Party), Eva Perón’s imperative speech, directing her audience to “see in me, in *compañera* Evita, not the wife of the President of the Nation” (Perón 7/29/1949 Speech, 143). By embracing the “Evita” name, Eva Perón assured her audience she preferred their company rather than being around those who only saw her as the First Lady. Further, Eva Perón made her preferences regarding her name clear in her 1949 May Day speech when she spoke plainly to her audience, “I prefer to be Evita, before being the wife of the President” (Perón 5/1/1949 Speech, 97). The “Evita” name indicates immense respect, yet Eva Perón remained humble throughout her political career despite endless praise from her *descamisados*.

Eva Perón downplayed her powerful status and instead appealed to humility in her speeches. Perón delivered her last Loyalty Day speech in 1951 and stressed the unimportance of her status: “I’m not important because of what I’ve done; I’m not important because of what I’ve renounced; I’m not important because of what I am or have” (Perón 10/17/1951 Speech). Instead, Eva attributed her importance to “the love of this people” (Perón 10/17/1951 Speech). As long as the *descamisados*’ love enabled her credibility, Eva Perón opted to downplay her own. She maintained the *descamisados*’ respect since they believed she had less for herself. In one of her first speeches addressed to the Female Peronist Party in March 1950, Perón referred to herself in the third person, “it doesn’t matter if Evita is ugly or pretty,” detaching herself from the “beautiful, power-hungry man-eater” myth and preserving an image of pure humility; continuing the line with an antimetabole delivering a metaphor for beauty, “beauty is not in the face, it is in the soul.” Eva Perón wrote repeatedly of her lack of self-admiration, assuring the public she was a humble woman worthy of their respect and political support.

Perón further worked to earn her audience’s respect (unlike previous Argentine oligarchal politicians who thought themselves “above” earning the working class’s respect) by speaking to shared cultural beliefs: Catholicism and traditional family values. Her choice to refer to her followers as *descamisados* “would draw an almost holy liaison between leader and followers,” developing her saint-like, pious image (Masut 36). Perón’s September 1947 speech following the announcement of Argentine women’s suffrage aimed to direct women towards their holy “high mission” in the home (Perón 9/23/1947 Speech, 51). In the speech’s second

section describing the fight for suffrage, she applies parallel structure in writing, “it was and is the faith placed in God, in the future of our country, in general Perón, and in our rights. Thus we stripped the false apostles of their masks” (Perón 9/23/1947 Speech, 50). The parallel structure created in this line instructs Eva Perón’s audience to prioritize what she believes is most important to Peronism’s success: following tradition while embracing social change. Additionally, in referring to those against women’s suffrage as “false apostles,” Perón carefully places herself on the righteous, holy side of the fight, and later in the speech, she refers to women as “missionaries of peace” (Perón 9/23/1947 Speech, 52). The references to religion in this speech are an attempt to prove women’s suffrage is a success in God’s eyes. Here, Eva Perón seeks to convince opponents to put their faith first as they embrace the new law. Perhaps Perón’s frequent allusions to religion attempted to overcome her past as an illegitimate child and former actress, as well as her controversial status as a woman in power.

In one of her first political speeches, Eva Perón built parallel structure appealing to credibility by emphasizing her desire to be “closer to those who suffer, closer to those who ask, closer to those who work hard in the daily battle for the bread of their husbands, their mothers, and their children” (Perón 10/9/1946 Speech, 16). Perón wrote often of her dedication to preserving the dignity of the Argentine home because she knew speaking to a highly sensitive and personal subject such as family would win the people’s respect. In a May 1950 speech regarding women’s civic rights, she further described her goals for Argentina to become “a great family; the family that General Perón covets” and her aspiration “to be for Peronist women like a mother, like a sister, who tries to understand them, help them and make them understand and help each other” (Perón 5/4/1950 Speech). Perón wrote Argentina as a family, and herself and Juan Perón as its parents. Eva Perón’s dreams for this “great family” appealed to her status as a respectable woman. 1940s Argentines may not have respected a woman who sought to become “the ruler of a great nation,” but they surely would respect a woman who sought to become “the mother of a great family.”

In addition, Eva Perón gained respect as a female politician seeking feminist change in a traditionalistic nation by repeatedly thanking her husband, President Juan Perón, for her success. Eva Perón wanted her audience to perceive her as “a woman who was dedicated to bringing to the President, the hopes of the people,” as she remarked in her official resignation from public service (Perón 8/31/1951 Speech). In one of her last public speeches in August 1951, Eva Perón used chiasmus: “everything I think about, that everything I possess does not belong to me: it belongs to Perón, because he gave me everything” (Perón 8/22/1951). By applying a syntactical manipulation of “everything,” Eva Perón modeled the level of subservience a traditional Argentine woman should adapt. Though her frequent nods to Juan Perón may seem alarmingly anti-feminist or self-demeaning according to modern standards, they make sense considering her career choice in the time and Argentine culture. Eva Perón operated in unconventional circumstances that motivated her to make unconventional rhetorical choices to maintain credibility.

Rhetorical appeals to emotion (Pathos)

As a woman following traditional standards of femininity, Eva Perón’s rhetorical skill extended to appeals to emotion. The most common emotion associated with the “Evita” name

is unconditional love. Perón defined love as “giving oneself, and to give oneself is to give one’s own life” (Perón *My Mission in Life*, 69). She showed love to *all* Argentines (given they were Peronists; and according to Eva Perón, every Argentine was a Peronist) regardless of class. Perón preferred her lower-class followers, almost as if they were her favorite child in the great Argentine family. As she framed it in a speech to the Female Peronist Party: “the smaller the more I want them. The one that seems most insignificant to you is the one that is closest to my heart” (Perón 5/4/1950 Speech). Eva Perón’s preference for those of lower classes is not shocking considering her own lower-class background.

Abnormal, and at times hyperbolic, displays of love are common throughout Perón’s speeches. She wrote of sacrificing her life out of love in her most famous work, the “Speech to the Descamisados,” when she hyperbolized, “if this people asked me for my life I would joyfully give it, for the happiness of one *descamisado* is worth more than my entire life” (Perón 10/17/1951 Speech). The number of hyperboles connecting love and sacrifice in Eva Perón’s speeches lead the audience to deduce that these hyperboles may have been literal. Perón worked tirelessly to repay the debt she owed to the workers for putting her into power. Since her ultimate mission was achieving moral reform feminism throughout Argentina, her speeches directed to her beloved Argentine sisters included hyperbolic, sacrificial speech most frequently. In a 1950 speech at the Female Peronist Party headquarters, Perón asserted she would sacrifice “her life for the sake of the greatest ideal, such as the happiness of the *descamisadas* of the Homeland” (Perón 3/2/1950 Speech, 182). Thus, realizing her vision for Argentine women was Perón’s greatest motivation. She dramatized the importance of women’s involvement in the movement, else the movement’s “failure would be that of the entire nationality” (Perón 7/29/1949 Speech, 145). Perón’s greatest want was to inspire the beginnings of an Argentine feminist revolution, so her deployment of fear tactics and hyperbolic speech was a definite way to assure the *descamisadas* would follow her directions. After all, the *descamisadas* owed plenty to Eva Perón because of her social welfare initiatives.

Eva and Juan Perón took the “long way” to power: populism, taking time to gain each worker’s vote and undying loyalty along the way. Peronist expansion was a revolution for both Argentine history and the people. Eva Perón developed this lingering revolutionary spirit by selecting rebellious, freedom-fighting diction in her political speeches. In her 1947 speech following the announcement of female suffrage, she passionately wrote, “we embroidered the colors of the country on the liberating flags of half a continent! We sharpened the ends of heroic lances that defended national sovereignty against invaders!” (Perón 9/23/1947 Speech, 51). Perón’s repetition of “we” put her directly with the workers who rallied for Peronism, despite her being one of the individuals who received power because of the revolution. Additionally, her choice of metaphors comparing the workers’ fight to the national flag or swords contributes to patriotic imagery. Overall, Perón’s revolutionary diction in this line rallies her audience towards the same patriotic fervor they felt during the original Peronist revolution of 1945. Later in 1949, her rhetorical choices seemed to turn away from revolutionary calls to action as she urged her audience to proceed “not with their hands clenched or with a gesture of rebellion, but with joy and clapping their hands” (Perón 5/1/1949 Speech, 93). However, since this 1949 speech celebrated May Day with a laudatory tone, it is not surprising that Perón did not include her typical fiery rallying cries. Perón’s careful application of chiasmus in this line seeks to change her audience’s way of thinking into a pacifistic mindset. Later, in her iconic

1951 "Speech to the Descamisados," Perón revoked her previous call for peace and went back to her original revolutionary calls stating, "I know that you will pick up my name and will carry it to victory as a banner" (Perón 10/17/1951 Speech). Eva Perón's choice of metaphor giving her name the ability to be flown as a banner not only gives her name revolutionary power but further credibility. In sum, revolutionary speech appeals to the emotions her audience felt while marching on October 17, 1945, fighting for Juan Perón's reinstatement. By referencing these genuine emotions in her speechwriting, Eva Perón makes the reality of achieving her political goals (including moral reform feminism) possible with the audience sharing in her mood.

Further, Perón appealed to the emotions of her audience in her speeches by giving them direct instructions as to how to be better followers. In a 1947 speech titled "Message to the Argentine Woman," Eva Perón told her audience, "the woman must affirm her action. The woman must choose. The woman, the moral spring of a home" (Perón 1/27/1947 Speech). This speech describes Perón's image of the new Argentine woman: (1) strong, (2) politically empowered, and (3) united with other women in a common force" (Perón 1/27/1947 Speech). The choice of anaphora in repeating "the woman" at the beginning of each line creates powerful delivery and drives her speech's message into the memory of her audience. In her 1950 speech at the Female Peronist Party headquarters, Perón manipulated syntax with a chiasmus instructing women, "they must be tolerant, because we must tolerate to be tolerated" (Perón 3/2/1950 Speech, 182). In using this structure, Eva Perón seeks to change her audience of women's thinking from being tolerant of men out of tradition to being tolerant with the purpose of achieving more respect. Her application of instructions to her audience demonstrates her respect and trust in them. By building this mutual respect, Perón was free to use emotional appeals without coming across as demagogic or overly emotional.

Rhetorical appeals to logic and reasoning (Logos)

The most common line of reasoning in Eva Perón's speeches is that she is equal to the people and is therefore fighting alongside them in their struggle for social justice. Since Perón's most passionate social fight was achieving moral reform feminism, she claimed she too felt the struggles of Argentine women. In her 1947 "Message to the Argentine Woman" speech, Perón reasoned "my fight is also the fight of the heart of the woman" (Perón 1/27/1947 Speech). In her speeches, Perón often places herself in fights that are not her own. By diminishing her status as a powerful woman, she does not appear to audiences as if she has a savior complex. Her audience becomes less skeptical of her involvement in their social struggles and more willing to embrace her assistance. In establishing this line of reasoning, Perón is able to take credibility for her followers' achievements since according to her logic, they would also be her achievements. In a 1951 speech to Peronists, Perón strengthened her logic by writing, "I have always wanted to be confused with the workers, with the elderly, with the children, with those who suffer, working side by side, heart to heart" (Perón 8/22/1951 Speech). By repeating "with the" and applying parallel structure at the end of the line, Perón creates a rhythmic pattern that puts both herself and the people as the subjects of the sentence and "working" as the action they are doing together. In doing so, Perón reassures the people that they are not alone in their fight for social change since she is fighting alongside them. Significantly, she also equates herself with the people she loved the most, her *descamisados* ("shirtless ones"). In her 1949

May Day speech, Perón includes herself with the *descamisados*, writing, “we, the *descamisados*... want them to live to see the reality of General Perón” (Perón 5/1/1949 Speech, 95). Eva Perón envisioned the fight for Peronism as one that she, a fellow *descamisado*, would work tirelessly to achieve.

In addition to Perón’s choice of equating herself to her audience, she also appealed to logic and reasoning by frequently analogizing fate and destiny. As a believer in destiny, Eva Perón wrote, “I think that if anyone finds himself suddenly carried to a post of responsibility in the fight for a great cause, he should search in his life and in his past for some explanation, and he will be sure to find it” (Perón *My Mission in Life*, 34). In describing her journey, Perón reasoned that it was her inherent will to improve the lives of others that led her to political power that would give her the means to do so. She wrote of fate and destiny often, making it a common motif throughout her speeches. In her 1947 speech titled “Announcement of the Law of Feminine Vote,” Perón concluded: “let us raise that faith and illuminate with it the path of our destiny. It is a great, passionate, and happy destiny” (Perón 9/23/1947 Speech, 52). In this line, she develops her logical choice of equating herself with the people by describing their shared destiny of building a new Argentina. In her “Message to the Argentine Woman” speech, Perón describes her relationship with fate: “just as fate made me be the wife of General Perón, your president, it also made me acquire the parallel notion of what it means to be the wife of Colonel Perón” (Perón 1/27/1947 Speech). When she talks of “fate,” she is almost always describing events of her past. Whereas when describing “destiny,” Perón is almost always envisioning her ideas for the future and the active choices both she and her followers are making to achieve that vision.

Despite her effective appeals to logic featured in her speeches, Perón tended to make logical fallacies. The two fallacies she applied the most, “us vs. them” speech and fear tactics, are the fallacies most used by politicians because of their appeal to the masses. An author applies “us vs. them” or “false dilemma” logic when they want their audience to believe there are only two sides to an issue and that their side is the “right” side” (Zhou 26). In her “Announcement of the Law of Feminine Vote” speech, Perón creates an “us vs. them” fallacy: “our eternal enemies, the enemies of the people and their claims, used all the oligarchy’s resources to prevent our triumph” (Perón 9/23/1947 Speech, 49). In addition to including herself with her audience, Perón designated the oligarchy as their “eternal enemy.” But as a figure in a position of power, some could consider Eva Perón herself as a part of the new oligarchy. In reality, “us vs. them” arguments commonly fail because there are usually more than two sides to an argument, as all complex situations require nuance. Perón knew this but chose to rely on “us vs. them” reasoning because it kept her as a hero in the people’s minds and put a target on someone else. Her descriptions of the oligarchy, or “them,” are often harsh generalizations such as, “those laggards of the national awakening will have only one excuse: their mediocrity” as described in her 1949 May Day speech (Perón 5/1/1949 Speech, 94). Perón frequently describes the people, or “us,” as exceptional and revolutionary and the elite, or “them,” as mediocre and traditional. This comparison of “old vs. new” is prevalent throughout Eva Perón’s speechwriting. This motif is ironic, however, considering Perón’s goal of achieving moral reform feminism and a return to tradition throughout Argentine homes; despite being a figure of “womanly love,” Eva Perón’s speeches were known for their sometimes fiery tone.

Perón was not afraid to show her true emotions, especially when speaking about topics she was most passionate about, including her love for her husband. In her 1949 May Day speech, Eva Perón threatens her beloved *descamisados* with, “yes; life for Perón, because if we lacked him, we would have dark hours for national progress and for the happiness of the humble homes of the country” (Perón 5/1/1949 Speech, 95). Though deploying fear tactics and slippery slope reasoning is one of the most faulty logical fallacies, Perón knew they were effective in gaining the support of scared people. Life for working-class Argentines pre-Peronism was incredibly difficult, full of union-busting, low wages, and poverty. Eva Perón saw this fear as a sure way to maintain her audience’s loyalty. Though most of her speeches were noble and honest, Perón was not afraid to choose “dirty” rhetorical strategies as long as she knew they would keep her in power and able to achieve her visions for social change and feminism.

Blend of the three rhetorical appeals

The most impressive aspect of Perón’s rhetorical capabilities was her ability to blend rhetorical appeals. This pattern is common whenever Eva Perón references the first Loyalty Day, October 17, 1945, when Peronists marched toward the presidential residence chanting, “bring back Perón” demanding Juan Perón’s reinstatement following his arrest (Masut 33). Eva Perón considered herself to be spiritually with the workers who marched on that day. In her most famous speech, the “Speech to the Descamisados,” Eva Perón commemorated the sixth anniversary of Loyalty Day in writing, “with all my soul I wanted to be with you and Perón on this glorious day of the *descamisados*. I can’t ever miss this October 17 appointment with my people” (Perón 10/17/1951 Speech). This line, honoring Loyalty Day, perfectly combines rhetorical appeals. By appealing to credibility by referencing Juan Perón as the figurehead of this day, Perón’s speechwriting placed her as a middleman between the people and the president, creating credibility for her necessity to the success of the Peronist movement. Additionally, her position as a middleman placed her primarily with the people before her husband, further appealing to logic and reasoning. And most prominently, Eva Perón’s hyperbolic speech in this line, “with all my soul,” appeals to emotion by fully connecting herself to her audience in her dedication to their shared cause. Perón knew exactly how to connect herself, a woman in a position of power, to an audience that should not have embraced her as much as they did because of their socioeconomic differences.

Perón’s ultimate goal was achieving moral reform feminism; achieving any sort of social change amongst this population would require their utmost support of both the movement and Perón herself as the movement’s figurehead. To build this trust, Perón appealed to the unsung heroes of that October 17, 1945: the women. In one of her earliest political speeches, she wrote “in the evocation of October 17, it is when I feel linked to millions of women... whose friendly and feverish friendship, I feel each day with greater strength next to my heart” (Perón 10/9/1946 Speech, 16). By connecting herself to the nation’s women, Eva Perón appealed to logic by distancing herself from the government and more towards the people. Perón blends in another rhetorical appeal, an appeal to emotion, by describing her intimate friendship with Argentine women. And finally, Eva Perón establishes credibility by describing how her relationship with the nation’s women is getting “stronger” each day, depicting the growing,

undeniable power of Peronism. Perón knew that if Peronism gained near-unanimous support throughout Argentina (or if she could pretend that it did), then she could then begin enacting more extreme social change for women. Further, she believed Argentina's "true owners are the *descamisadas* of the Homeland, the *descamisadas* of October 17 of 1945" (Perón 5/4/1950 Speech). Eva Perón reaffirmed her loyalties were always to the working class before the oligarchy, and with the *descamisadas* before all else. Perón's vision for Argentina ended with the empowerment of working-class women which was never realized in global history thus far. In order to realize this dream, Eva Perón encouraged the nation's women to take pride in their country.

Perón's goals for social change, including moral reform feminism, defined her political career. She described this great responsibility in a 1949 speech to Peronist women: "Argentine women, all of us, have made ourselves responsible before the country and the world that is watching us" (Perón 7/29/1949 Speech, 142). Eva Perón knew her visions for a New Argentina were revolutionary and to achieve this vision, the nation's women had to be committed to that vision as well. Therefore, Eva Perón included women in her appeals to credibility, for her "great responsibility" was also theirs. Perón wrote herself as an equal to the people, appealing to logic. And though Eva Perón fully believed she would one day move on from tradition and start working to achieve the radical change she wanted, it probably would not have happened considering conservative Argentine culture. Considering this context, this line appeals to emotion because of its hyperbolic, dream-inspiring nature. Eva Perón instructed her audience of loyal, trusted women to make immediate change instead of dreaming of a better future. In a speech arguing for women's suffrage before its legalization, Eva Perón instructed women, "you are the Witness, the Actor and the Judge of your own national conscience" (Perón 2/12/1947 Speech, 23). Eva Perón's confidence throughout the speech creates an appeal to credibility as it almost seems that she knows something her audience is unaware of – the inevitability of women's suffrage. Ultimately, this line is a message of encouragement, appealing to emotion by empowering women to realize their civil potential. Finally, Eva Perón's description of female autonomy and civic responsibility describes her political vision for women, appealing to logic through feminist political theory. Of course, Perón's description of "nationalist feminism" is not complete without designating an enemy to the cause. Eva Perón specified the movement's opposition as the oligarchy, full of mediocre men. When describing the flawed logic of her enemies, Perón wrote "if the spectacle of more than 6,000 *unidades basicas* ["Basic Units"] organized in two years were not enough for them... the Peronist women will still give the definitive proof of their civic conscience" (Perón 10/29/1951 Speech). This message of perseverance appeals to emotion by encouraging empowerment within the audience. Perón's most effective method of appealing to emotion was through love, whether through sacrificial speech or messages of encouragement. Her unified, powerful force of trust between herself and her followers appealed to her credibility. And perhaps the strongest rhetorical appeal in this line is the appeal to logic and reasoning. Though using an "if-then" logical fallacy, Eva Perón made logical sense to those working the hardest for the Peronist movement. After all, if Eva Perón's followers truly believed in her messages of nationalist feminism and worked for it daily, they would not be quick to give up that ideology because of some criticism.

Conclusion

Whilst scholars researching Eva Perón's impact have commonly deemed her a "non-feminist," I claim the rhetorical choices made in her speechwriting represent moral reform feminism. Though Eva Perón's feminism upheld conservative values in a first-wave context, her feminist ideas were still revolutionary considering mid-century Argentina's reliance on traditional gender roles. For far too long, researchers have ignored the conditions Eva Perón existed in and viewed her feminism through a modern lens. Eva Perón's rhetorical mastery, especially her ability to blend all three rhetorical appeals, led to her forming a genuine mutual respect with her audience of *descamisados*, allowing her to achieve great social initiatives. Specifically, Perón's rhetorical choices that appealed to working-class women (such as appeals to tradition or family values, hyperbolic and sacrificial speech, and "us vs. them" logical fallacies) mobilized a previously silenced class to political and social empowerment. Eva Perón and her *descamisadas* were an unstoppable force, creating the Female Peronist Party and inaugurating Transit Homes for internal migrants moving to Buenos Aires from rural areas. My research findings, specifically my interactive StoryMaps or speech translation database available, open new avenues for further development. Future scholars should acknowledge Eva Perón's feminist impact and stop complying with the standard of undermining her impact. Eva Perón's brilliant speechwriting should be celebrated for the amazing feminist legacy it inspired.

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