Reflective Encounters: Illustrating Comparative Rhetoric

Comparative rhetoric, according to George Kennedy, is “the cross-cultural study of rhetorical traditions as they exist or have existed in different societies around the world” (1). A young but promising enterprise, comparative rhetoric aims to reach and cultivate what may be called a “creative understanding” with another rhetorical tradition and with “its new aspects and new semantic depths” (Bakhtin 7). Like any other comparative undertakings, however, comparative rhetoric faces at least two major challenges. One can be characterized as a perennial temptation to resort, in varying degrees of explicity, to a “deficiency” model—where one particular culture (read as non-Western) is determined to be lacking a concept of rhetoric or, worse still, a rhetorical tradition. And related to this temptation is a desire, largely based on one dominant (read as Western) rhetorical system, to identify some “rhetorical universals” across discourse and across culture in spite of the multifaceted, contextually diverse nature of rhetoric. The other challenge has to do with what Mary Garrett calls “a methodological paradox” (“Some” 54): to study another rhetorical tradition for purposes of comparison, one must start somewhere, most frequently with a set of principles or concepts external to the culture (but familiar to the researcher). On the other hand, there always remains the danger of imposing these principles or concepts, however inadvertently, on that other tradition and creating a forced fit or dissonance as a result of such imposition.

In this essay, I will construct a brief history of this young discipline of “comparative rhetoric” and of its divergent responses to these two challenges. While developing this narrative, I will focus on representative works that have appeared over the past forty-some years. I will discuss the advances that have so far been made, and tease out, whenever appropriate, the logic of Orientalism that has also stifled many comparative undertakings. I will close this essay by exploring an “etic/emic” approach—one that will better meet these two challenges and that will yield what I call “reflective encounters” where different rhetorical traditions can truly converse with and learn from each other.

In 1966, Robert Kaplan, in “Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education,” analyzed the organization of individual paragraphs in approximately
six hundred compositions by ESL (English as Second Language) students and sought to identify rhetorical differences in their writings to contrast with rhetorical characteristics in English paragraph development. His essay thus pioneered an area of study that is now known as “contrastive rhetoric.” Altogether he identified five types of paragraph development for five cultural groups, and each type reflects a corresponding culture’s thought patterns. For example, paragraph development in Anglo-European expository writing follows a linear path, whereas speakers of Semitic languages construct paragraphs based on a complex series of parallel constructions. Oriental writing, on the other hand, can be characterized by an indirect approach as its paragraphs are “turning and turning in a widening gyre” (10). In Romance languages and in Russian, paragraphs allow for a degree of digressiveness—one that could be overbearing to a writer of English.

Since the publication of this seminal essay, many studies have appeared that focus on discourse patterns across cultures—patterns that may intrude upon ESL students’ effort to write in English. As expected, these studies have also criticized Kaplan’s essay because it privileges the native English speakers (Matalene); because it lumps Chinese, Thai, and Korean speakers in one “Oriental” group (Hinds); and because it conflates rhetorical patterns with thought patterns (Severino). And Kaplan himself has since modified some of the claims made in the 1966 essay (“Cultural Thought Patterns Revisited,” “Foreword”). In her most recent essay on contrastive rhetoric, Ulla Connor further discusses the challenges facing Kaplan’s original argument, noting, for example, that rhetorical differences may stem from multiple sources, and that the concept of culture, construed as homogeneous in Kaplan’s case, needs to be complicated and localized (503-07).

In spite of these widely acknowledged shortcomings, what remains instructive and useful is Kaplan’s insight that discourses across cultures differ not only in grammatical features, but also in generic and rhetorical patterns, in expectations between readers and writers. It is this insight that in part has contributed to the need to study these differences for their own sake, and the emergence of comparative rhetoric. Otherwise put, discourse is now no longer viewed as simply “a collection of (more or less) correct syntactic structures, but rather represents a complex multifaceted, multidimensional set” (Kaplan, Foreword ix). Before teachers and rhetoricians can determine, for example, how organizational patterns from ESL students’ home languages (mostly non-Western) interfere with or intrude upon their writing in English, they may have to understand, first of all, what these organizational patterns are; how they co-occur with other rhetorical features in that language; and why they differ from those organizational patterns in English—and much more. To achieve such an understanding, to engage most productively with other rhetorical practices and traditions, thus becomes an important enterprise itself. While contrastive rhetoric may still address some of these questions, its primary goal is to study ESL and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing across languages and cultures; as a subfield of applied linguistics, contrastive
rhetoric does not set out to study individual rhetorical traditions and their practices in their own times and places. The question, then, becomes this: how does one go about achieving this understanding and studying different rhetorical traditions and their practices? And how can one actually compare one rhetorical tradition with another—without invoking the deficiency model or without forcing an inappropriate fit or contrast?

1. Opening up the Dialogue

One of the early practitioners in comparative rhetoric has to be Robert T. Oliver, who played a significant role, starting from the 1950s, in urging us to study Asian rhetorics in order to broaden our horizon of rhetoric study, which had been dominated by Western or Aristotelian tradition. His work in the 1950s (Syngman, "Speech") and 1960s ("Rhetorical Implications," "Rhetorical Tradition") culminated in the publication of Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China (1971), a groundbreaking study of Indian and Chinese rhetorical tradition.

Much to his credit, Oliver makes it abundantly clear at the outset that the aim of this book is to identify and conceptualize the rhetorical theories and practices of ancient India and China on their own terms, not on Western rhetorical terms (3, 261). Since each culture is informed by its own unique value system(s), any effort to study such a culture from the outside has to be carefully guarded (5). Failing that, any study will probably amount to "trying to measure the salinity of water with a ruler" (3). As a result, Oliver is determined not to impose the Platonic-Aristotelian concept of rhetoric on Indian and Chinese tradition because the conditions that resulted in the birth of Platonic-Aristotelian rhetoric were nonexistent in ancient India and China (9). Nor is he going to judge any apparent differences between the East and the West through the lens of the West—such an impulse should be replaced with a desire to discover what alternatives these rhetorics do represent (6).

For example, while rhetoric in the West has been theorized and practiced as a separate and special kind of knowledge since ancient Greece, rhetoric in ancient India and China is not a separate inquiry, but an inherent part of an overall worldview. This divergence does not lead Oliver to declare, as it would be quite tempting to do, that ancient India and China lack rhetoric (261). Instead, it only reaffirms the fact that because (the study of) rhetoric is of such importance to the rest of human knowledge in the East it has been viewed as an integral part of generalized philosophical speculation (10, 260). The ultimate objective is, therefore, "not to find the rhetoric of the East but to find ways of identifying and depicting it in a fashion that will make it meaningful to Western minds without thereby denying its essentially holistic character" (11).

But does Oliver actually succeed in delineating ancient Indian and Chinese rhetorics on their own terms? In my view the outcome is a mixed bag. As I have already suggested, one cannot emphasize enough the significance of this book in terms of its call to study Asian rhetoric as a distinctively important phenomenon
—"alongside," not based upon—"Western expressions and alongside the categories and the theories derived from these experiences" (Wilhelm 306). Its significance becomes all the more impressive when one thinks of its own historical context—a context that predates, for example, both Clifford Geertz's Interpretation of Cultures (1973) and Edward Said's Orientalism (1978).

Perhaps because of its unique place in history, Oliver's book also reveals a few problems that are indicative of its own time, of the challenges facing a young discipline. First, while Oliver tries very hard to represent ancient Indian and Chinese rhetoric on their own terms, the sources he relies on are sometimes not reliable, and the conclusions he arrives at subsequently become either too general or somewhat stereotyped. For example, in chapter 6, "China: The Rhetorical Milieu," Oliver discusses, among other characteristics, traditional uses of speech in ancient China while relying on limited secondary sources. One of the major principles guiding the speech conduct of ancient Chinese is li or ritual action, which is manifested in the five basic relationships—between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and between friends (92). By carefully safeguarding these relationships one can help maintain harmony—though at the expense of suppressing individuality (91-92). The Chinese text on which Oliver bases his analysis is The Doctrine of the Mean, one of the treatises on ancient ceremonies and etiquette believed to be written by Confucius's grandson. While there is no denying its importance, it seems at best inadequate to base the characterization of li on a few quotations from this book. What about Li Ji (Records of Rituals) and Shi Jing (the Book of Odes), two of the five classical Chinese canons? Both these texts provide detailed descriptions and prescriptions about different kinds of rituals and ritual actions in the pre-Qin period (221 BCE). And what about the Analects, which contains Confucius's own teachings on li, on how to actualize one's moral attributes by performing ritual actions? Any attempt to make sense of li and to characterize the rhetorical behavior of the ancient Chinese will necessarily become limited in scope and depth without some consideration of these works.

Second, and perhaps more problematic, is Oliver's use of Jesuit missionary accounts. In trying to explain why there was this apparent guardedness against talk in ancient China, Oliver invokes Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, a French Jesuit whose writing about China contributed a great deal to the eighteenth-century impression of Asia (94). Ironically, Du Halde had never set foot in China himself, and based his work primarily on reports by other Jesuit missionaries. Therefore, Du Halde's account is at least twice removed from primary sources, and any thesis based on this kind of account becomes suspect at best, if not downright questionable. So, based on Du Halde's observation that ancient Chinese simply contented themselves with reading and imitating the most eloquent compositions, and that their eloquence was expressed in a concise but mysterious style, Oliver concludes that "the ancient Chinese were distinctly traditionalistic," and that "what was
practiced, they meant to follow” (96). Such a conclusion sounds not only quite reductive, but also stereotyped—because the West has always expected the ancient Chinese to be “traditionalistic” and to be reverent and imitative of the past. Du Halde’s account has also led Oliver to claim that the ancient East was not interested in logic, and that it favored neither definition nor classification because “intuitive insight was considered to be the superior means of perceiving truth” (259; cf. 10, 126). However, anyone who has been exposed to the words and deeds of the ancient Chinese will come away with a very different impression simply because many ancient Chinese texts contain examples of persuasion by definition, analogy, and deduction. Indeed, these examples can only lead to an opposite conclusion; that is, that ancient Chinese writers were no less masters of logic than their Western counterparts—if only their logic is not pegged as a close or distant cousin of Western logic (see, for example, Angus Graham’s discussion of the Later Mohists’ logical writings).

Third, there are revealing misinterpretations in Oliver, which in part may have been created by his dependence on translated materials. For example, when discussing Confucius’s views on persuasion, Oliver claims that Confucius values antiquity or tradition, rather than individual ideas, for the advancement of ideas or positions (137). Such a claim draws its support directly from Confucius’s famed remark: “I transmit but do not create. Being fond of the truth, I am an admirer of antiquity [...]” (24; bk. 7, par. 1). But this passage does not have to be a paradigmatic example of Confucius’s apparent aversion to individual ideas if it is read within the entire context of the Analects. In short, if the Confucian conceptualization of the self sees both the past and the present as an integral part of an individual’s social environment, admiring antiquity or ancient ways of doing things becomes part of this process of self-cultivation and self-actualization, of discovering the new or the unfamiliar (Tu).

In fact, Confucius does not pit his reverence for tradition against his openness to discovery. He describes both his love for tradition and his desire to discover the new this way: “I am not one who knew about things at birth; I am one who through my admiration of antiquity is keen to discover things” (25; bk. 7, par. 20; emphasis added). Therefore, for Confucius, to be a transmitter rather than an innovator is to interact with others within the broad cultural continuity of his time. Just as Aristotle’s idea of mimesis aids in the development of personality or character (Hill 155-57), so Confucius’s emphasis on the transmission of (ancient) knowledge helps both communicate with the tradition and expand the circle of human interrelatedness.7

These missteps, however unintended, have led Oliver to make generalizations in places where they may not be warranted. Nowhere is this more problematic than in the last chapter, “Characteristics of Asian Rhetoric,” where Oliver provides nine “focal points” or defining characteristics of Asian rhetorics. Several problems come to mind. First, throughout the book, Oliver identifies rhetorical traditions in
ancient India and China and further links these traditions to their corresponding cultures. But whatever conclusions or “focal points” he arrives at can only be about Indian and Chinese rhetorics, and it is quite a stretch to suggest ancient Indian and Chinese rhetorics are representative of Asian rhetorics. No matter how influential these two rhetorics may have been in history, it would be inconceivable to claim that other Asian countries simply do not have their own indigenous rhetorics, or that whatever tradition they celebrate originates from India and China only. Second, even within ancient Indian and Chinese rhetorical traditions there are bound to be other rhetorical tendencies. These other tendencies, while they may not be as dominant as Buddhism or Confucianism, should serve to remind us that any culturally-based rhetoric is necessarily multidimensional. Oliver’s failure to consider them betrays a dominant assumption in comparative rhetoric that “there exists an easily abstractable and consistently definable set of ‘essential’ characteristics in Chinese or any other rhetorical traditions” (Yameng Liu 322). Third, in spite of his stated intention to describe these two traditions “in their own terms” (Oliver, “Communication” 261), Oliver’s descriptions remain stubbornly tied to Western terms. For example, the first two of his nine “focal points” are that “the primary function of discourse is not to enhance the welfare of the individual speaker or listener but to promote harmony,” and that “rather than encouraging individuality of style or of method, [...] the value of adhering strictly to patterns of expectation” was stressed whereas “originality was discounted” (261-62). Do these not look more like descriptions of Asian rhetorics in Western terms than “in their own terms” (Yameng Liu 323)?

The problems I have discussed here should not by any means detract from the significance of what Oliver has accomplished in this book. Since 1971, a growing number of scholars from the social sciences, philosophy, and humanities have responded to Oliver’s call to depict Asian rhetorics in a way that is both meaningful to Western minds and truthful to their own holistic character (11). These efforts have in general enhanced our understanding of Asian rhetorics and further highlighted the urgency to move beyond the deficiency model in comparative rhetoric.

2. The Pitfalls of the Deficiency Model

In 1985 Carolyn Matalene published an influential essay on the study of Chinese rhetoric based on her experience in China as an American writing teacher. While Matalene shows no inclination to identify any rhetorical universals based on Western terms (789), she fails to move away from binary characterizations and subsequently falls into the trap of the deficiency model. Drawing on Oliver’s Communication and Culture as well as on her Chinese students’ writing, she suggests that Chinese rhetoric places emphasis not so much on originality and individualism as on preserving and promoting communal harmony and cohesion (795). To fulfill this function, Chinese rhetors or her Chinese composition students
like to appeal to authority and tradition rather than to Western logic (800). They also like to accumulate a series of parallel or complementary images instead of developing an argument from a synthetic or analytic perspective (789). It is one thing to call our attention to these important differences between Chinese and Western rhetorical practices; it is another to describe them in binary or one-dimensional terms. It becomes more problematic to attribute these differences to a lack of individualism in Chinese rhetorical practices. Granted that Chinese rhetorical practices may not possess the kind of individualism that Matalene talks about, it just seems implausible to base a categorical distinction on this lack of individualism. What about all the other social, cultural, and linguistic forces that have been in play and that may very well have shaped Chinese rhetorical practices?

Ironically, even when attempting to analyze those social, cultural, or what he calls “ethnologic” influences on Chinese rhetorical practices, David Jolliffe still seems to be resorting to a mode of analysis that resembles the deficiency model. For example, he states that “the ideal Chinese writer is a cooperative member of a collective, not a novel, independent, individual” (268). This subordination of the individual to the group has been manifested in contemporary social movements in China. And it further leads the ideal Chinese writer to employ a characteristic, recognizable mode of reasoning characterized by the repeated use of maxims, analogies, and authoritative statements (269). It becomes clear that, for Jolliffe, it is this lack of Western individualism that has shaped Chinese writers’ compositional behavior and that has led them to conform to the collective cause (272). Again we are seeing some very superficial correlations with hardly any effort being expended to reflect upon and contextualize cultural influences. There have even been attempts to address directly the lack in Asian rhetorics of Western rhetorical characteristics or attributes. In an essay titled “The Absence of a Rhetorical Tradition in Japanese Culture,” John Morrison claims that “Japanese culture does not have the necessary institutional ingredients to nourish a rhetorical tradition” (90). He bases his claim on the hierarchical structure of the Japanese family, which values cohesion and harmony and which minimizes individualism, and such a structure thus has little, if anything, to do with a rhetorical tradition (90-93). To substantiate his sweeping claim, Morrison examines the Japanese national character, which is characterized in one fell swoop as socially submissive, rhetorically nonargumentative, religiously meditative, and linguistically handicapped in following logical processes (95-100). All these characterizations naturally contribute to this lack of a rhetorical tradition in Japanese culture.

Such a conclusion is fatally flawed for at least two reasons. First, Morrison seems to imply that there is only one rhetorical tradition in the world—namely the Western rhetorical tradition. Or he never bothers to define what other rhetorical tradition he is trying to discern in Japanese culture. It is then only logical that he does not find the Western rhetorical tradition in a non-Western culture. It would be extraordinary if he did. And the fact that Japanese culture does not include the
Western rhetorical tradition does not mean at all that it does not have a rhetorical tradition. Second, to make a claim of such scope necessarily calls for substantial evidence, going beyond secondary sources or broad generalizations.9 In fact, as long as there is communication, there is rhetoric—people using language in competing contexts to communicate, to discover, to build relationships, and to enhance communal values.

In a similar vein, Carl Becker argues that the Far East, represented mainly by China and Japan, lack public argumentation and debate, and he further attributes this lack to linguistic, sociohistorical, and philosophical barriers that exist in both countries. While Becker states that he has no intention to impose Western models of communication upon China and Japan (90), his actual analysis fails him because he practices what may be called “negative correlation.” For example, Becker claims that both China and Japan developed hierarchical societies “in which the very notion of two individuals being absolutely equal became almost inconceivable” (76). The existence of a hierarchical society then correlates with the development of the tendency toward intolerance of debate or argumentation and toward refusing impartial hearing to opposing viewpoints (77). However, no evidence is provided of how such intolerance or partiality is manifested in practice by Chinese or Japanese—except through some secondary materials. A conclusion of this scope demands evidence of the same scope, which is evidently lacking in Becker’s case. As a matter of fact, it flies directly in the face of studies that convincingly demonstrate, for example, that China indeed has its own tradition of argumentation and persuasion—studies that actually describe Chinese rhetorical practices on their own terms (Garrett, “Classical”; Kroll; Lu and Frank).

In the same essay, Becker describes classical Chinese as a language that lacks copulas, plurals, or tenses, which he goes on to correlate this lack with the language being inherently telegraphic and ambiguous (80-81). He further claims that modern Chinese remains highly ambiguous, and that it is “used less to communicate than to commune, congratulate, emote, and to begin and end activities” (82). But Chinese, or any other language for that matter, does not have to possess these grammatical markers, as English does, to be “unambiguous” or “more communicative.” Not only do contextual cues make Chinese just as unambiguous and as communicative as English, but also, unlike English, a substantiv language, classical Chinese is an eventful language that is more concerned with how things stand in relation to other things at particular times than with how they are in themselves (Ames and Rosemont 20-23). To claim that Chinese is therefore ambiguous or that it violates the logical expectations of the West (Becker 83) amounts to nothing less than imposing Western linguistic terms and communicative expectations on Chinese, which is altogether a different language. To use this kind of logic on Becker, one could easily claim that English lacks subtlety and embeddedness—a claim that is just as erroneous and off the mark. In addition, Becker’s claim also assumes that the same grammatical
constraints apply both to writing and to speaking—an assumption that has no plausibility whatsoever (Ames and Rosemont 36-37).

This negative correlation seen in Becker is in large part informed by a methodological bias that focuses on what is absent, rather than on what is present, in non-Western rhetorical traditions. To make this bias work, though, Western rhetorical terms or systems have to be invoked as a default standard, because any claim for an “absence” necessarily presupposes and validates the knowledge of a “presence.” Behind this bias then lurks, unmistakably, the logic of Orientalism.

Thanks to Edward Said, we can now appreciate what Orientalism represents and what kind of influence it can wield on comparative rhetoric. For Said, Orientalism constitutes a particular style of thought that does not seek a necessary correspondence between its own representations and the reality of the Orient. Instead, it sets out to impose its own set of ideas and values upon the Orient to the extent that the Orient turns out to be a homogeneous and unchanging phenomenon that possesses regular, domesticated characteristics (42). As such, Orientalism has less to do with the Orient than it does with the Occident—with its controlling vision that projects itself as the idealized standard and the Orient as its very antithesis, as an object that vacillates between the familiar and the exotic and that should be properly contained, controlled, and converted (12-13, 59-60, 67-68). Consequently, the Orient becomes the benchmark against which the Western European superiority is measured, and it serves as a living testimony to “the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority” (42).

It is perhaps not that difficult any more to spot Orientalism in its most naked forms. One scorns and then avoids those who use Western systems of thought or norms to adjudicate or to make value-laden judgments about rhetorical traditions in the East, without making any effort either to reflect upon their own systems or norms or to search for interpretive norms or categories that inform these Eastern traditions. Similarly, no one gives credence to studies that outright declare a deficiency of some sort in these traditions or that characterize them as homogeneous and unchanging. On the other hand, the logic of Orientalism can take more subtle forms that are harder to detect or to avoid—especially when they are hiding behind admirable intentions and genuine efforts to do otherwise. George Kennedy’s Comparative Rhetoric is perhaps a case in point.

Anyone who has read Comparative Rhetoric has to admire Kennedy’s scholarly dedication to a project that aims to “identify what is universal and what is distinctive about any one rhetorical tradition in comparison to others” (1). He wants to apply Greco-Roman concepts and models to these other traditions so that he can develop a universal theory of rhetoric that will apply to all speech communities and to all cultures—hence his definition of rhetoric as “a form of mental and emotional energy” grounded in nature (3-4, 215-16). And no less impressive is the variety of non-Western rhetorical practices he brings attention to
in this book—practices that range from preliterate societies among Australian aboriginals (ch. 3), South Pacific Islanders (ch. 4), and North American Indians (ch. 5) to ancient literate cultures like the Near East (ch. 6), China (ch. 7), and India (ch. 8). His discussions in these chapters provide some good starting points for anyone interested in pursuing comparative rhetoric and in studying world rhetorics. Even though he explicates these non-Western traditions under the shadow of Greco-Roman rhetoric—a point I will return to shortly—Kennedy provides some meaningful introductions to these cultures’ rhetorical practices, to their concepts, and to some representative examples of their oratory and/or their literary composition. These are no small accomplishments.

There are, however, two problems that are embedded in, and in turn handicap, Kennedy’s project. First, Kennedy seems to be following an evolutionary approach toward the study of rhetoric. For example, he begins his treatment of rhetoric with animal communication since he grounds rhetoric—a form of energy—in nature. He then moves to study Aboriginal, Amerindian, and various other nonliterate cultures—where rhetoric had progressed from the early stages of humanity. His evolutionary march then continues through the ancient Near East, classical China, and India, and it reaches its final destination in classical Greece and Rome—where rhetoric grew into a separate discipline distinct from other areas of study (191, 212).

Such an approach to the study of rhetoric, in spite of Kennedy’s good intentions, is highly problematic because it seems to be promoting what may be called “an ideology of rhetorical Darwinism.” This ideology assumes a logical connection between adaptive and expressive capacity in a rhetorical system and that system’s survival and growth. To the extent that a rhetorical system in a given culture survives spatiotemporal transformations and grows into a mature, well-developed system, this system is believed to have stronger adaptive and expressive capability than those other rhetorical systems that do not exhibit this developmental trajectory of growth and maturity. This kind of assumption thus disregards social, cultural, and historical conditions that necessarily attend different rhetorical systems and that have to be accounted for before any conclusion can be reached about the adaptability or survivability of these systems. A corollary of this ideology is that some cultures are innately more capable of producing a mature, fully developed rhetorical system than some others.

To be fair, Kennedy never states that he is promoting this kind of assumption. Nevertheless, one cannot help but associate his approach with the ideology of rhetorical Darwinism, because the resemblance between the two is just too eerily strong to be ignored. A project that aims to develop a theory of rhetoric for all cultures simply cannot afford to promote such resemblance or even the semblance of it—his disclaimers notwithstanding.

Second, Kennedy sets out in his book to test the applicability of Western rhetorical concepts in other non-Western rhetorical traditions—so that he can
modify these Western notions and achieve a better understanding of rhetoric as a more general phenomenon of human life (5-6, 217). He rules out any serious consideration of rhetorical terms and systems developed by other traditions because these terms and systems are "unfamiliar" to most Western readers and thus can be "confusing" (5). So, Kennedy consistently uses a host of Western rhetorical terms like *judicial, deliberative,* and *epideictic* to make sense of those other traditions, even though the latter are distinctly different from the culture that produced these terms. Kennedy certainly would tell us that the use of these terms for “testing purposes” is not the same as the thoughtless imposition of them on target traditions. I concur. However, this kind of “testing” can easily reduce comparisons to some simple or forced identifications of similarities and differences by relying on superficial congruences or mismatches (Garrett, Review 432). More seriously, it may create a rhetorical hierarchy that values one set of terms and systems over other sets and that foregrounds the presence of Greco-Roman rhetorical terms over the assumed confusion attending non-Western rhetorical terms. As a result, this kind of testing teeters dangerously on the edge of a comparison that smacks of the logic of Orientalism.

3. From Western Terms to “Their” Own Terms

In the late 1980s and early 90s, a number of scholars in rhetoric and communication studies began a paradigm shift—a shift away from relying on Western rhetorical terms to developing native terms or systems to study non-Western, notably Asian, rhetorical traditions.

J. Vernon Jensen was one of those early practitioners in this respect. For example, in 1987 he proposed a ten-week course on teaching East Asian rhetoric that would focus on Korea, Japan, and China ("Teaching"), and he also compiled a bibliography on East Asian rhetoric ("Rhetoric"). Both undertakings reflect Jensen’s determination to explore Asian rhetorics on their own terms. Teachers now may choose a different set of texts in East Asian rhetoric so as to take advantage of the progress that has been made since the late 1980s. In addition, what Jensen did then brought much-needed attention to studying Asian rhetorics, or any other non-Western rhetorical tradition for that matter, on concepts and contexts that are native-born and -bred.

In the same year, Jensen published “Rhetorical Emphases of Taoism,” where he focuses directly on Laozi, Zhuangzi, and to a lesser extent Confucius to identify five rhetorical emphases of Daoism. However, because he relies too much upon translations, and because he fails to give adequate consideration to historical context, his conclusions often appear to be superficial or tend to reinforce inaccurate characterizations of these individuals. For example, Jensen suggests that Laozi and Zhuangzi both deprecate eloquence and even speaking in general, and that they equate argumentation with contentiousness, with decreasing mutual understanding (221-23). He derives this kind of conclusion from such remarks in
Laozi’s *Dao De Jing*: “A good man does not argue; / He who argues is not a good man... / The Way of the Sage / Accomplishes, but does not contend” (qtd. in Jensen 224). Jensen may have been led astray by Lin Yutang’s translation, upon which he depends exclusively. For it is misleading to translate *bian* in the original *shan the bu bian, bian the bu shan* as simply “argue” without placing it in its proper context. *Bian* as a verb in classical Chinese really means “to distinguish or discriminate” or “to make fine divisions.” And if we situate this remark within the overall context of *Dao De Jing*, what Laozi is objecting to here is not so much to “arguing” as to relying too much on this inadequate medium called “language” to distinguish “this” from “that” or to separate “right” from “wrong” (see *Chuang Tzu* 34-35). In other words, this objection to *bian* is no more than an indication, on the part of Laozi and Zhuangzi, of a mistrust of or a cynicism toward language as an all-too-powerful tool. Similarly, the rendering of *zheng* as “contend” with no proper contextualization is problematic, too. While there might be a prima facie correspondence between *zheng* in Chinese and “contend” in English, such correspondence has to be carefully interrogated because “to accomplish without contending” actually reflects the overall Daoist disposition “that allows one to take other things on their own terms” (Ames and Hall 204). Given this disposition, any claim about deprecation of argumentation by Daoism becomes questionable, to say the least.

To study non-Western rhetorical traditions on their own terms can lead to positive representations of these traditions rather than to conclusions involving “deficiency” that we have encountered in some of the studies discussed previously. This outcome is demonstrated in Jensen’s “Values and Practices in Asian Argumentation.” Rather than focusing on the “lack” of argumentation practices in Asian rhetorics, Jensen provides ample evidence to show that these practices do exist in Asian rhetorics, whether based on authority, analogy, or other modes of reasoning (158-62). There are only rhetorical differences, not absences versus presences, between East and West (164). This kind of representation signals a clear departure from the kind of approach that Morrison or Becker adopted. It shows what can happen when one moves away from the logic of Orientalism to a mode of discourse that rejects Western viewpoints as the only points of reference or origin and that insists on reflective encounters with the locals, and complete participation in their environments.

Reflective encounters call for critical interrogation and informed contextualization. In a series of essays published between 1993 and 1995, Mary Garrett studied several aspects of rhetoric in early China and discussed her findings not as examples of “lack,” but as manifestations of a distinctive rhetorical tradition—a tradition that constitutes a viable alternative to Western rhetorical tradition.

One of the aspects Garrett considers is argumentation or disputation in ancient China. In “Classical Chinese Conceptions of Argumentation and Persuasion” Garrett analyzes Chinese words that are most commonly used to describe
argumentative speech activities in classical Chinese texts (500-200 BCE), as opposed to testing them with Western terms to determine whether these classical Chinese texts lack argumentation. She specifically focuses on bian ("dispute"), shuo ("argue," "explain"), and shui ("discuss," "persuade") as representing three discrete speech activities. Her careful analysis of each of these activities, their relation to each other, and their concomitant philosophical and cultural contexts ably demonstrates that there was simply no lack of argumentation in classical China. Further, while none of these terms specifically refers to debate on public policy issues, it does not mean that there were no such debates in traditional China—in fact a variety of other words were used to refer to such debate (113). Finally, these three terms reveal a number of deeper psychological, cultural presuppositions that are nonexistent in Western argumentation (113-14). These contextualized meanings further illustrate how one can study non-Western rhetorical traditions on their own terms in a productive manner.¹¹

If the essay "Classical Chinese Concepts" focuses on specific terms for argumentation in classical China, some of Garrett's other essays published in this period turn to the activities of argumentation or disputation. For example, in "The 'Three Doctrines Discussions' of Tang China," Garrett examines the imperially-sponsored debates in medieval China between representatives of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. These debates began during the Period of Disunion (221-580 CE) and were abandoned in the later Tang Dynasty (after 870). In "Chinese Buddhist Religious Disputation" Garrett discusses the Chinese practice of competitive religious disputation that took place in Buddhist monasteries—a practice that began in the late fourth century and continued into the twentieth century (195). Both activities, related in their religious focus, demonstrate that there is argumentation or disputation in the Chinese rhetorical tradition to go around. Moreover, because of the difference in their attending philosophical and cultural conditions, these two activities help accomplish different rhetorical and political objectives. Briefly, the rulers used the "Three Doctrines Discussions" as a rhetorical strategy to create an appearance of openness and impartiality, and to help establish a sense of legitimacy for their own ethos and for their regime. Once the need for legitimation became less pressing for the rulers, the "Three Doctrines Discussions" were reduced to "a shadow play" and eventually disappeared altogether ("Three" 159). On the other hand, the practice of Chinese Buddhist disputation not only applies a mode of argumentation that reminds one of Aristotelian dialectic ("Chinese" 200), but also reveals a (usefully limiting) view of language that considers religious disputation "as a self-consuming artifact" (195, 204-07).

Part of the motivating or justifying force behind comparative rhetoric is to achieve better understanding of Western rhetorical tradition by learning more about non-Western rhetorical traditions—so that Western rhetorical tradition can be re-examined, refined, and enriched through those other traditions. Or as Eugene
Eoyang puts it, “our task is not to disown our own heritage, but rather by comparing it with another heritage, to truly discover it, to see it in relief against the background of a different context” (106). Garrett’s study of pathos (“Pathos Reconsidered”) and the essay on Aristotle’s topoi by Sharon Blinn and Garrett are examples of such efforts. By turning her attention to how emotions were treated in classical China, and how heart and mind were conceptualized together as an inseparable whole by classical Chinese philosophers/rhetoricians, Garrett is able to suggest new ways on how to approach or reconceptualize the old Greek notion of “pathos” (“Pathos” 32-36).

Responding to the claims of some Western communication scholars that Chinese reasoning patterns are fundamentally different from Western modes, Blinn and Garrett apply Aristotelian topoi to the Zhan Guo Che, a classical text of Chinese literature compiled by Liu Xiang (76-6 BCE). Their analysis indicates that this text does employ the Aristotelian topics, including “a fortiori,” “topoi of comparison,” “cause to effect,” “testimony,” and “simple consequences” (96-104). Their rationale is that if this classical text uses these Aristotelian topics, then Chinese people are rational and their modes of thinking are not that different from the West (95-96). Their textual analysis leaves no doubt about the fallacious nature of the view that the Eastern mind is “irrational” or “nonlogical.” On the other hand, their decision to use classical Western rhetorical concepts to achieve a better understanding of Chinese patterns of reasoning and further to uncover the value of such concepts as crosscultural tools reveals an interesting bias on their part (109). While there might be a strong intellectual tradition in the West that gives pride of place to Greek rhetorics, this tradition does not have to be inherited in comparative rhetoric—where the point of origin can be non-Western, and where tools for crosscultural comparisons can be based on non-Western terms or concepts.

In “What’s in a Name?” I also address the implication of using Western terms like “rhetoric” to characterize classical Chinese philosophers/rhetoricians like Confucius; in particular, I explore the conflict in ideology between what is embedded in Western “rhetoric” and what is conveyed in Confucian discourse. For example, I suggest that Western conceptualizations of rhetoric by Plato, Aristotle, and Kennedy share a causal, rational ideology and look for a common “agent” or “process” that “can bring an ‘unruly’ object or nonbeing into order or being” (512). On the other hand, Confucian discourse, evidenced in the Analects, does not share this ideology, and in fact Confucius practices, in the Analects, a participatory mode of discourse that embodies such features as accumulating and transmitting knowledge, performing reciprocity, and acting in accordance with ritual or rites (514-17). This kind of discourse makes no pretense to an orderly account of things, nor does it correlate itself with a distinctive origin or an efficient cause. By comparing Confucian discourse with Western “rhetoric,” I want to drive home again the importance of studying non-Western rhetorical practices on their own terms and through their own discourses.
In 1998 Xing Lu published *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century B.C.E.: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric*—a book aimed at studying classical Chinese rhetorical practices on their own terms. Determined to move beyond the biases and constraints of Western rhetorical terms and frameworks, Lu sets out to capture classical Chinese rhetorical experiences by examining their attending social and cultural contexts, by identifying terms associated with language art, rational thinking, persuasion, and argumentation, and by analyzing classical Chinese texts that embed rhetorical experiences and conceptualizations (3). She discusses five philosophical schools during this momentous, and at times quite tumultuous, period in classical China: Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, Legalism, and the School of Ming. She bases her analysis mainly on the primary Chinese texts, and she also considers certain secondary materials to help shed light on the contextual meanings of the primary texts. This kind of attention to the original texts allows her to discern rhetorical practices that have otherwise been overlooked and to provide a systematic, compelling account of rhetoric in ancient Chinese.

One of the thorny problems facing researchers in comparative rhetoric is how to describe non-Western rhetorical practices by using their terms and concepts when the latter are not readily available, and when “canonical” terms from the West are overbearingly present. Lu deals with this problem effectively. She identifies and discusses in detail six key related terms—yan, ci, jian, shuilshuo, ming, and bian—which are all used in classical Chinese texts to either describe or conceptualize speech patterns and persuasive discourse (89). She gathers extensive evidence from historical, literary, and philosophical works to explore the origin, evolution, and transformation of these terms. Between these six terms she argues that yan, ci, jian, and shuilshuo “best capture the Chinese rhetorical activities in literary and artistic expressions and in political persuasion” (93). On the other hand, ming bian as a joint phrase conceptualizes these experiences and formulates “a philosophy of language, theories of logic, argumentation, persuasive speech behavior, and artistic use of language” (93). This kind of careful, contextualized examination thus enables Lu to show how ancient Chinese conceptualized rhetoric and how they put to practice their conceptualizations (89-90). And Lu’s study of these Chinese terms is made more compelling thanks to her efforts to develop the cultural contexts for the period she is studying. She starts from the Xia Dynasty (2100-1600 BCE) and goes all the way to the time of unification of China by the Emperor of the Qin (221 BCE). She examines Chinese mythology, ancestor worship, and divination, and she looks at different forms of speech that were emerging into viable forms of communication and that contributed to the rise of the educated intellectual elite (shi) (63-64). These kinds of contextual analysis—though some are more satisfactory than others6—demonstrate that China of the fifth through the third century BCE enjoyed a flourishing civilization and much
diversity of philosophical thought, both of which gave rise to rhetorical theories and practices that were represented in these six key terms.

Because these terms are both different and overlapping in meaning with each other, and because some of them (like ming bian) are also similar in meaning to the Greek terms logos and rhetorikê, Lu proposes what she calls “a language of ambiguous similarity” to facilitate the discovery of both the “culturally specific” and the “universally similar” in rhetorical and cultural studies (91-92). While I applaud Lu’s objectives, I do not know if the kinds of reflective encounters I have been referring to will be enhanced by this “language of ambiguous similarity.” In my view, what makes any comparative undertaking meaningful and compelling does not depend on ambiguous similarities that may obtain between two rhetorical traditions under consideration. Rather, it depends on whether there is genuine reflective engagements with both traditions; whether one is willing to interrogate the familiar inside out and to pursue the unfamiliar on its own terms. To assume that only this “language of ambiguous similarity” can help locate the “culturally specific” and the “universally similar” appears to be both limiting and limited.

To further validate how these six key words embody rhetorical concepts and experiences in ancient China, Lu devotes one chapter to each of the five schools, with some careful analysis of how each school conceptualized language and speech, how each connected its conceptualizations to its philosophical views, and how its conceptualizations (especially about ming bian) compare with those of Greek rhetoricians and philosophers. Overall, her analysis provides new contexts and perspectives for classical Chinese rhetorical experiences, and it effectively debunks many Western scholarly misconceptions about Chinese rhetoric (27-33, 288-310). Lu’s project serves as a good example of pursuing what she herself calls “multicultural rhetoric”—one that, in her view, both celebrates diverse rhetorical practices and honors universal values (308-09).

I am definitely less sanguine, though, than Lu about the “universal rhetoric” she advocates in her discussion of ming bian and Western “rhetoric” (see also 303, 325). To the extent that rhetorical practices are shaped by their own unique cultural experiences, any formulation now of a “universal rhetoric” that transcends cultural differences risks becoming too vacuous and thus losing any practical appeal or value. Not only does any formulation of a “universal rhetoric” require a comprehensive understanding of many non-Western rhetorical traditions—we have just begun the latter undertaking—but also a rhetoric that both celebrates the local and honors the universal sounds awfully idealistic, if not unrealistic. For me at least, the more any rhetoric celebrates its own (local) tendencies, the less it will satisfy the outside (universal) expectations.

4. Toward Reflective Encounters

So, what now? Comparative rhetoric has made some noted advances since the publication of Oliver’s Communication and Culture in Ancient India and China.
Yet it still remains methodologically appealing to invoke direct oppositions or polarizing characteristics—especially when they appear least objectionable or most accessible. These oppositions create an ease of exposition because descriptions of any kind in oppositional terms can strike us as “comparison-worthy” and as more telling, if not more convincing. Therefore, one continues to hear that Eastern rhetorical traditions practice indirectness (as opposed to directness), deprecate argumentation (as opposed to debating), and promote or value silence (as opposed to talking). Even in Lu’s *Rhetoric in Ancient China*, one finds such binary descriptions in places where they may not be most appropriate. For example, Lu concludes that theoretical formulations of rhetoric in ancient China are “implicit” and “less clearly defined,” whereas rhetorical elements in the Greek context are “explicit” and “well defined” (90, 293-94). Once again, we see the language of opposition at work. In view of Lu’s own contextual analysis of ancient China, it would seem more appropriate to characterize these theoretical formulations of rhetoric in ancient China as “holistic,” or “correlative.”

This language of opposition, which may have been based on Western rhetorical tradition in the first place, further entices rhetoricians to declare deficiencies of various kinds, almost invariably, in non-Western rhetorical traditions despite paltry evidence at their disposal to substantiate these declarations (Liu 322-23). Or they simply “compel” rhetoricians to use Western rhetorical terms or systems to study non-Western rhetorical practices either to test the utility of these Western terms or to claim some rhetorical universals—because failing to do so is seemingly to deny these traditions their humanity (Hall and Ames 123). As indicated in my discussion previously, such approaches only help decontextualize these traditions or contextualize them on terms consistently not their own.

I propose a third approach, which I call an “etic/emic” approach. The etic/emic distinction derives from the distinction in linguistics between phonemics and phonetics. Phonetics represents sound categories by concepts relating to the acoustics of speech sound, which is not part of a particular language. On the other hand, phonemics represents sound categories according to their internal function in language. Thus, an etic description is “based on conceptual elements that are not components of that system,” whereas an emic description is “based on elements that are already components of that system” (Goodenough 16). As the sociolinguist Dell Hymes points out, “an etic account, however useful as a preliminary grid and input to an emic (structural) account, and as framework for comparing different emic accounts, lacks the emic account’s validity” (*Foundations* 11). To study non-Western rhetorical traditions, one surely must start somewhere—usually from where one is and with terms and concepts close to home. In other words, we may not have any choice than to articulate other rhetorical traditions first by seeking out frames and terms found in our own tradition. But if our larger goal is to study these traditions on their own terms, we must move from the etic approach to the emic approach—so that attention can be directed toward materials and conditions that
are native to these traditions and so that appropriate frames and language can be developed to deal with differences as well as similarities between different traditions.

There is more. Every etic/emic process begets a new one, and each process raises the level of understanding and enriches the modes of reflection. So, while non-Western rhetorical traditions or practices should be studied on their own terms, it does not mean that they remain on their own terms forever. In fact they cannot—incomplete or insufficient as such studies might be at present time—because the “here and now” will always be exerting pressure on these emic accounts, and the “etic” moment will always be intruding on them. To paraphrase Mikhail Bakhtin, any practitioner of comparative rhetoric has “to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture” (7, original emphasis). That is, in light of their own time, space, and culture, comparative rhetoricians can gain fresher perspectives on the internal dynamics of their object of study. Put differently, positions that are located in other spaces, in other times, in other rhetorical traditions will have a place in comparative rhetoric as long as they are not driven by the logic of Orientalism, and as long as they do not displace emic accounts or disregard self-interrogation.

The etic/emic approach yields reflective encounters. The whole aim of reflective encounters is to develop a creative understanding of different rhetorical traditions. Such an understanding is a result of studying other traditions on their own terms and of developing an ongoing dialogue between these other traditions and Western rhetorical tradition. For rhetoricians nurtured in Western rhetorical tradition who are interested in learning about non-Western rhetorical traditions, reflective encounters can lead to a productive interrogation of their own (often dominant) tradition, their own (often privileged) position, and their very (often well-meaning) representations of the other. In this manner there will not be much room left for the logic of Orientalism. On the other hand, for rhetoricians whose rhetorical traditions are the “other,” and whose representations of the “other” are often believed to be more authentic and thus more authoritative, reflective encounters can yield a willingness to complicate their representations even though they are already considered “native.” Further, reflective encounters can help these rhetoricians cultivate a much-needed awareness that the process of studying (one’s own) rhetorical and cultural experiences is always a process of recontextualization, no matter how intimate they are with these experiences. As a result, the danger will be greatly diminished of reverting to the logic of Occidentalism, a derivative of Orientalism—a logic that perpetuates the same kind of ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and dualism as does the logic of Orientalism, though this time it is performed against Westerners or against those who have been tirelessly dishing out the logic of Orientalism. For both these groups of rhetoricians, reflective encounters renounce domination, adjudication, and assimilation, and they nurture tolerance, vagueness, and heteroglossia. Since they are always open-ended, reflective
encounters become relational and ever-expanding. It is these kinds of encounters that should constitute, I submit, the making of comparative rhetoric in the twenty-first century.

Notes

1 As a contested term, “rhetoric” has been defined differently relative to its various contexts—historical, social, cultural, and technological, as well as personal, just to name a few. For a number of the works discussed in this essay, the notion of persuasion and argumentation or the notion of the artful use of language seems to be a constant undercurrent. Like some other rhetoricians discussed below, I associate rhetoric with people using language in competing contexts to communicate, to discover, to build relationships, and to enhance communal values.

2 The focus of this essay will be on studies that compare Western rhetorical tradition with Asian traditions and, more specifically, with Chinese rhetorical tradition. Of course, this does not mean that there have been no studies attempting to investigate other non-Western rhetorical traditions with a comparative lens. Nevertheless, comparative rhetoric has consistently looked to the East and to the Chinese and—to a lesser extent—the Japanese for comparison, and vice versa. In these areas lie, I confess, both my interests and my bias.

3 Research in the ethnography of communication spearheaded by Dell Hymes (“Ethnography”), with its view of language use as situated and as part of larger cultural, communicative events, certainly served as a useful ally to comparative rhetoric. Similarly, research in intercultural rhetoric in the 1970s and 80s also had positive influence on the rise of comparative rhetoric. For example, intercultural rhetoric, like comparative rhetoric, stresses the need to develop local knowledge rather than one single, universal criterion (Starosta, “On Intercultural” 231-32), and to relate particular rhetorical forms to their rhetorical legacy within their own ethnic culture (Starosta, “On the Intersection” 155). On the other hand, intercultural rhetoric is much more interested in the intersection between culture and rhetoric in a cross-cultural setting, often coupled with an ethnographic focus. In addition, earlier work among sinologists contributed to an interest in Chinese rhetoric—an interest that in no small measure provided an important impetus for comparative rhetoric in general and for the study of Chinese rhetoric in particular. For example, Shih’s translation of Liu Xie’s Wenxin Diaolong and J. L. Crump’s study of Zhan Guo Ce offer a valuable insight into rhetorical experiences in early China.

4 Drawing upon Donald Bryant’s work, Oliver characterizes rhetoric as “the function of adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas,” and “of adjusting people to people” (6). And it is perhaps equally revealing that he follows this culturally neutral definition of rhetoric with this remark: “The province of rhetoric, as Aristotle pointed out, is the realm of probabilities.” As I look back now (of course with hindsight), it may be necessary, if we want to reverse the longstanding Western bias embedded in such a remark, to replace it with something like: “The
province of rhetoric, as Confucius pointed out, is about cultivating mutual understanding, about fostering an ever-growing web of interpersonal relationships."

5 The other three canons are: Shang Shu (the Book of History), Yi Jing (the Book of Change), and Chun Qiu (Spring and Autumn Annals). All five canons are believed to be authored or compiled by Confucius (Legge 1-2).

6 Similarly, commenting on Confucius’s modesty about his own eloquence, Oliver observes that Zhuangzi, on the other hand, accuses him of too much eloquence, bordering on irresponsibility (131). But again this is misleading, because the Confucius who appears in Zhuangzi is not a real historical figure; rather he often serves as a straw person of many different stripes depending on the purposes of the argument in question.

7 Xing Lu also points out similar problems with Oliver. By relying on problematic translations, he draws inaccurate conclusions about the Dao De Jing, and its views on communication and rhetoric (37-38).

8 Incidentally, the word “individualism” is often translated into Chinese as geren zhuyi, which conveys a negative, rather than positive, connotation like “self-centeredness” or “selfishness.” Most Chinese, I suspect, would not want to be associated with this connotation anyway.

9 Yumiko Yokochi and Bradford Hall compare the differences between Japanese and American discourse. Their study suggests that Japanese culture nurtures its own communicative tradition centered around wa—“unity or the desire to be one with those of your group” (194), and that the Japanese concern over wa makes them no less rhetorical. Similarly, Koichi Okabe also makes it clear that Japanese culture has its own rhetoric, which “functions as a means of disseminating information or of seeking consensus,” and which is “by nature intuitive, emotional, and adaptive” (38). Unfortunately, Okabe’s good effort is marred by a persistent tendency to characterize Japanese culture and rhetoric in binary terms—his disclaimers notwithstanding. Anyone who has read Takeo Doi’s piece on the Japanese concept of amae cannot help but admire how rhetorical Japanese speakers are because they constantly have to assess whether their desire to show “sweet dependence” on their interlocutors can be gratified, and how and why they should rein in such desire. And Hazen’s analysis of argumentation in Japan clearly demonstrates the existence of logic and reasoning in Japanese communication, albeit different from the Western style of communication.

10 The original verse in Dao De Jing is sheng ren zhi dao, wei er bu zheng and Ames and Hall’s translation is “The way of the sages is to do without contending” (204).

11 In the same year (1999) Xing Lu and David Frank published an essay that takes the same approach: it focuses on bian and on its linguistic, philosophical, and cultural context to make sense of classical Chinese bian practices. They also propose that bian is the closest equivalent of the English word “rhetoric.”
12 Of course, reflections on one’s own tradition based on an exploration of the other can turn into “an unattractive kind of cultural narcissism” if such exploration of the other becomes endless interrogation (Garrett, “Some” 58-59), which in turn may amount to another form of Orientalism.


14 In “Asian Challenge” Garrett also provides evidence that classical Chinese modes of argument—argument from authority, from consequence, and argument by comparison—are more similar to, than different from, Western modes of argument (299-302). In a similar vein, Andy Kirkpatrick, by considering contemporary Chinese textbooks on composition and rhetoric, argues that Chinese rhetorical styles of argument are not only diverse but far from unique.

15 Garrett, in her more recent piece on methodology in comparative rhetoric, seems to be addressing this bias as well (“Some” 56-57). For more on this bias, see also Mao (Review).

16 For example, as Carine Defoort points out, Lu tends to treat her ancient texts as homogeneous or noncontroversial (710). In doing so, she seems to be undercutting the very approach she has advocated so well—one that is most attentive to local contexts, to internal dynamics.

17 To call Occidentalism a derivative of Orientalism perhaps gives too much credit to the latter. To be fair, Chinese emperors would have to be considered the earliest practitioners of Occidentalism because they conceived of themselves as “Sons of Heaven,” and they regarded Europeans who dared to knock at the gate of the Middle Kingdom as barbarians required to perform three kneelings and nine prostrations before the Son of Heaven.

Works Cited


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