

Hui Wu, *"Guiguzi," China's First Treatise on Rhetoric: A Critical Translation and Commentary*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, xiv + 180 pp. 2016. ISBN: 9780809335268

"*Guiguzi*," *China's First Treatise on Rhetoric: A Critical Translation and Commentary* consists of Hui Wu's translation of the classical Chinese text of *Guiguzi*, accompanied by an introduction to the original text, notes on the translation, and a glossary of the key terms in Guigucian rhetoric. C. Jan Swearingen also contributes a concluding commentary on the similarities and differences among the rhetorics of *Guiguzi*, the sophists, and the Pre-Socrates, as well as Plato and Aristotle. This book offers the field a much-needed direct encounter with indigenous Chinese rhetorical theories and concepts. In the past two decades, both comparative and Chinese rhetorical studies have significantly remapped our sense of "the" rhetorical tradition. Mary Garrett, Xing Lu, Arabella Lyon, LuMing Mao, and C. Jan Swearingen (to name a few) have reinterpreted key Chinese rhetorical concepts, terms, and modes of meaning-making in order not only to understand Chinese rhetoric in its own contexts but also to change the paradigms of rhetorical criticism in the present age of globalization. However, not much scholarly attention has been paid to translations of classical Chinese treatises. Limited primary textual evidence and inaccurate translation have contributed to orientalist (mis)readings of Chinese rhetorical theories, in which the Chinese tradition is held to lack rhetorical thinking. Such a deficiency narrative has spurred comparative rhetoricians to study Chinese rhetoric without the burden of the Eurocentric model, and here I am thinking of Xing Lu's *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century B.C.E.: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric*. I am also thinking of LuMing Mao in his "Essence, Absence, Usefulness: Engaging Non-Euro-American Rhetorics Interologically."

Being well aware of the "paucity of primary texts and inadequate translations," Hui Wu allies herself with attempts to remake the Chinese rhetorical tradition (p. 7). In particular, Wu distinguishes the Guigucian rhetoric from Confucian rhetoric. The latter expresses a strong mistrust of eloquence and stresses a strict connection between language use, action, and moral orders. In Wu's estimation, the addition of *Guiguzi* to the landscape of rhetoric "offers an opportunity for critical studies of an indigenous rhetorical theory and practice excluded from the rhetorical canon in both China and the West" (p. 9). By bringing *Guiguzi* back into conversations of non-Greco-Roman rhetorics, the translation and commentaries of Wu and Swearingen redefine the scope of rhetoric, innovate with Guigucian rhetorical terms and concepts, and offer us language to think outside of Eurocentric logic and rationality.

In order to situate her translation in the sociopolitical context of the original, Wu first takes her readers back to the pre-Qin Warring States period (475–221 BCE). In so doing, she reassesses *Guiguzi* by critiquing the dominant receptions of the book in both Chinese and Western contexts. While *Guiguzi* is conventionally seen as a magic book on war strategies, Wu dissociates it from issues of military deployment. According to Wu, although *Guiguzi*, Master Guigu, is the presumed teacher of the *zong-heng* practitioners (who

were travelling persuaders famous for eloquent military consultations), his rhetorical theory is “independent” from that of his students, because “the entire treatise [*Guiguzi*] hardly develops any notions or terminologies directly related to the school’s [the *zong-heng* school’s] war strategies” (p. 20). Further, instead of accepting that *Guiguzi* is unfathomably difficult or enigmatic, Wu portrays it as a “profound theory of rhetoric” (p. 20). Closely related, she rejects the common Western characterization of *Guiguzi* as a “Chinese Sophistic,” as if it intends to teach manipulation and distrust. She further points out that such a Western understanding forces us to understand *Guiguzi* in terms of the debate between Plato and the sophists about communicative ethics. In Wu’s English translation, *Guiguzi* is neither a magic book on military affairs nor a mysterious or deceptive anti-rhetorical doctrine. It is instead a treatise about a rhetorical theory that relies on *yin-yang* philosophy, the *Dao*, and moral doctrines to develop rhetorical tactics for building human relationships. For instance, reflect-respond (反应) as one pivotal rhetorical tactic urges rhetoricians to observe the situation, examine what is heard, reflect upon the audience’s feelings, and use analogies to invite responses. This Guigucian tactic privileges human connections in the sense that it emphasizes weighing the likes and dislikes of the audience, and it stresses efforts to maintain “physical, emotional, and geographical closeness” between interlocutors (p. 27).

Hui Wu’s critical translation, therefore, parses out a rhetorical thinking that is different from the Aristotelian investigation of logos, ethos, and pathos. Based on an annotated edition by Tao Hongjing (456–536 CE) in the Liang Dynasty, Wu presents *Guiguzi* in three books of fifteen chapters. Emerging from these chapters is a view of persuasion that is less about progressing toward the end of convincing an audience of a rhetorician’s agenda and more about continuously nurturing human relationships. Rather than proceeding linearly toward designated goals, persuasion is a responsive and flexible engagement with an audience of one—that is, the ruler. To achieve this engagement, persuasion entails finding means to induce responses from the audience. The treatise of *Guiguzi* concretizes these means of persuasion by deciphering clusters of rhetorical tactics, such as “open-shut,” “reflect-respond,” “weighing,” and “gauging.” For example, when teaching reflect-respond, *Guiguzi* says, “Hear what he [the audience] says based on his speech. When his statements are inconsistent with what you observe, inquire in response, and you [the rhetorician] surely can evoke a reaction. All spoken words represent images of things; all things are comparable. With images to compare, you can foresee what comes next” (1.2.2). Central to reflect-respond are “listening, analogy, and reflection” (p. 24). According to Wu, in Guigucian rhetoric, listening, or more precisely, weighing the singleton audience’s feelings and motives, is the “primary step in persuasion” (p. 27). Also, adhering to analogical reasoning and correlative thinking, rhetoricians are taught to use “correlative meanings of paired terminologies as if they are naturally related” (p. 28). Both listening and speaking is based upon self-reflection, which is the “key” to “collect information” and “relate to the audience” (Wu p. 28). Most importantly, *Guiguzi* sees listening, using analogical images, and reflecting to be coexisting and interdependent. Taken

together, *Guiguzi* teaches rhetoricians strategies for responding to *yin-yang* rhythms. The responsive, adjustable rhetoric that emerges from *Guiguzi*, Wu argues, offers “nonpejorative terminologies” to “talk about wisdom, virtuous intelligence, human relations, and persuasion” (p. 24).

Along with reconsidering concepts and terminologies in Guigucian rhetoric, Wu’s translation also practices a “both-and” approach to comparison. As a project that recontextualizes associations between classical Chinese and Western rhetoric, this book—according to Swearingen—offers the field new insights about ways of enacting correlative thinking and methods of “reading both ways” (p. 122). In her footnotes, Wu dedicates significant amounts of space to cross-examining annotations, different editions, alternative translations, and scholarly analyses of *Guiguzi*. She also explains her choices of translation, such as how she negotiates in modern English with the kind of grammatical structures, styles, and correlative thinking that are so deeply rooted in classical Chinese language. Further, at the end of the book, she provides a glossary of *Guiguzi*’s rhetorical terms in order to demonstrate how those terms may take on different shades of meaning in different chapters of *Guiguzi*. She also traces the linguistic paths of those terms in both classical and modern Chinese and describes their commonalities and disconnections with Western rhetorical terminology. In so doing, Wu captures the textual sophistication of the original classical Chinese text. Allied with Wu’s attempts to activate a dialectical conversation between Chinese and Greek rhetorical thinking, C. Jan Swearingen, in her concluding commentary, gives a thick description of the similarities and differences among *Guiguzi*, the sophists, Pre-Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. By placing Guigucian rhetoric alongside the early Greek rhetorical tradition, Swearingen strives to approach two traditions not by means of “oppositional contrasts” but with a view to “harmonic complementaries” (p. 155). Together with Wu’s English translation of *Guiguzi*, Swearingen’s comparison reclaims overlooked concepts, genres, and terms in early Chinese rhetorical dialogues and reconsiders their implications for the Greco-Roman model.

It is therefore time for scholars studying the various rhetorical traditions to further explore and clearly articulate the implications of Guigucian rhetoric in our own time. Methodologically, how could we decolonize comparative approaches to understanding persuasive acts in non-Greco-Roman traditions? Closely related, how could we reconsider and actually practice Guigucian rhetorical tactics in order to mediate discords and negotiate compromises in intercultural contexts? And pedagogically, how could we adapt and teach Guigucian rhetoric so as to cultivate students’ attunement when writing across cultures and communities? Responding to these questions will bring out the richness of Guigucian rhetorical theory and its attendant cultural meanings. More importantly, it will afford us a mode of comparison apt for studying the multiple rhetorical traditions interacting with one another in an era of globalization.

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