PART V

AFTERLIVES
It would be fascinating to have looked over the shoulder of the historical Li Zhi as he read what were to become known as the “four masterworks” (si da qi shu) of the Ming novel, all of which were in circulation during his lifetime. As a student of fiction I have searched for evidence of just how their original readers responded, any remarks or notations that might reveal their intellectual and emotional reactions when Ming readers encountered this new and largely unprecedented literary form, the extended vernacular prose narrative studded with poems. But unless a copy with extensive marginalia can somehow be identified, that goal is elusive. Instead, we must be content with the rather more self-conscious commentaries that became a conventional feature of lengthy prose narratives around the turn of the seventeenth century.

One of those commentators was, ostensibly, Li Zhi. And yet very little of this body of commentary can be safely attributed to his brush. The imaginary figure introduced here is the fictitious Li Zhi, conjured up using his style name (hao) Li Zhuowu as commentator for the novels Loyal and Righteous Outlaws of the Marsh, or Water Margin (Shuihu zhuans), Romance of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguo zhi yanyi), and Journey to the West (Xiyou ji). “Li Zhuowu” refers here only to the persona created as a literary commentator and critic, not the historical Li Zhi.

Scholars in China and the West began to treat indigenous Chinese fiction commentary and criticism as an area for serious study only in the 1980s. Some took the attribution of this commentary to Li Zhi as reliable
and reflective of his presumed philosophy of the novel. Instead, my purpose here is to interrogate “Li Zhuowu” as a persona created to embody a model reader. I hope thereby to contribute to a larger sense of how readers during the late Ming appreciated the historical Li Zhi while drawing attention to the growing importance of commentary in Chinese literary history.

**COMMENTARY ON THE VERNACULAR NOVEL**

By around 1600 the Chinese vernacular novel was reaching its first stage of maturity, and commentators addressed reading audiences according to their presumed level of sophistication—suggesting that at least some readers were highly educated, and others simply were not. Commentaries in his name and attributed to the historical Li Zhi gained a certain amount of literary authority, thereby appropriating his elite aura for the relevant novels. Commentaries in the name of renowned cultural figures ostensibly would insinuate vernacular fiction into the category of genres that appealed to the most highly educated and thus provide the reader with sophistication by association. It is not surprising, then, that publishers would wish to associate Li Zhi’s name with commentaries on three of the four major Ming-period novels, the “masterworks” that later became central texts in the literati novel tradition.

Commentaries played an important role in the development of vernacular fiction in China, both demonstrating and inviting participation in interpreting a text. They elicited and modeled individual visions of what the narrative meant, or at least implied, inviting the reader to engage with the text emotionally as well as critically, to create personal versions of fictional tales. In addition, commentaries might also embody the not-always-positive evaluation of literary style from the position of a detached and critical observer. Moreover, beginning in the late sixteenth century, when commentary became a regular addition to most new novels, these para-texts suggested ways to improve one’s own writing by studying their stylistic features. Attending closely to style—especially of the classics, of course—was a central practice in civil service examination preparation at the time, one that the historical Li Zhi encouraged. Commentaries integrated fiction into mainstream writing practices by insisting on both the literariness and the didactic value of vernacular fiction. This was a crucial step in the development of the novel as a vehicle for literary and artistic expression for literate elites (wenren).
FICTION COMMENTATORS

The sixteenth century produced a number of now largely forgotten novels. Their authors were editors, printers, and professional writers. None of the sixteenth-century novels was an individual creative work; all—even the masterworks—were to some degree compiled and adapted from earlier texts, whether historical or religious or from the large, shaggy category of xiaoshuo. Many shared plot materials with contemporary plays and other oral performance forms as well. Scholars attribute the introduction of novel commentaries to purely commercial motives. Even so, the appearance of commentaries signaled a developing contest in the novel format between collective knowledge and shared, orthodox values, on the one hand, and the perspectives and evaluations of identified individuals, on the other. They also heralded and encouraged private, silent reading and authorized a range of personal emotional responses.

An early commentator, editor, and printer was the Fujian bookseller Yu Xiangdou (ca. 1555–after 1637), whose books exemplify the distinctive style of Jianyang, Fujian booksellers who printed illustrations in the top register of every page and text in the lower two-thirds. Sparse comments and explanations appear in the margin above the illustrations. Yu Xiangdou printed several early novels with his own commentary, including Outlaws of the Marsh Chronicles, with Dense Commentary (Shuihu zhizhuan pinglin, 1594) and Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms, with Dense Commentary (Sanguo zhizhuan pinglin, ca. 1600). He also printed an edition of Romance of the Three Kingdoms with commentary attributed to “Li Zhuowu.”

The Li Zhuowu commentaries played a pivotal role in the growth of fiction criticism, heralding the beginning of a second stage in its development. They both expanded upon earlier commentarial practice, most notably by the bookseller Yu Xiangdou, and anticipated later developments by the better known literati fiction commentators Jin Shengtan (1608–1661), Mao Lun (1605?–1700?), his son Mao Zonggang (1632–after 1709), and Zhang Zhupo (1670–1698). In addition to quandian, the then conventional marks of emphasis alongside lines of text, the Li Zhuowu figure favored meipi and jiapi (marginal and interlinear/interlineal comments, respectively), forms pioneered by his predecessors. These brief comments recorded seemingly spontaneous reactions to specific lines of text, as Yu Xiangdou had done. But Li Zhuowu’s extensive reliance on general observations (zongping) at the ends of chapters was an innovation in novel criticism. His model was most assuredly the sober reflections left by the great
Han-period historian Sima Qian (ca. 145–ca. 85 BCE) in his *Historical Records* (Shiji). As we will see, the tenor of Li Zhuowu’s chapter postfaces is thoughtful and more complex than his terse exclamations within the text. In their degree of critical sophistication, these comments were also exceptional for the time; they set a standard avidly followed by subsequent generations of fiction commentators. To some degree, his marginal and interlinear comments also provided a new model. The literary historian Ye Lang concludes that Li Zhuowu was the true founder of novel criticism in China.10

**WHO WAS LI ZHUOWU?**

Despite his explicitly acknowledged fascination with *Outlaws of the Marsh*, the historical Li Zhi wrote very little about it that can be authenticated.11 Instead, the commentaries produced for editions of various printing houses, especially Rongyutang in Hangzhou, were mostly written by one Ye Zhou (Ye Wentong, also known as Ye Yangkai, fl. 1595–1624), of Liangxi (modern Wuxi in southern Jiangsu, near Suzhou). A man of considerable learning, in 1594 he had studied with Gu Xiancheng (1550–1612), founder of the politically active Donglin Academy in Wuxi. Contemporary accounts portray this Ye Zhou as an eccentric, “a frustrated scholar addicted to wine who supposedly met his end at the hands of the husband of a woman he was having an affair with.”12 Qian Xiyun (fl. 1612) scornfully describes Ye as a poor scholar who drank too much and supported himself by ghostwriting. But several decades later the noted scholar-publisher Zhou Lianggong (1612–1672) pronounced Ye a man of broad knowledge despite his unconventional behavior. To later readers he was remarkable for his deep feeling and sharp wit, the source of a number of jokes that circulated among his friends.13 Ye probably supported himself primarily by writing prefaces, commentaries, and the like, as did many others during the late-Ming period.14 Rongyutang and other publishers must have been satisfied that his writing would attract customers. We might further conclude that his commentaries were successful in projecting an image that readers were content to identify with Li Zhi.15

Ye Zhou’s Li Zhuowu commentaries included the three novels as well as *Red Duster* (Hongfu ji), *The Bright Pearl* (Mingzhu ji), *The Jade Case* (Yuhe ji), and other chuanqi plays. There is no question that he penned the comments on *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*; he identified himself as Ye Zhongzi (Second Son) in several chapter-ending comments. In style and content, these three Li Zhuowu commentaries closely resemble one another.
Modern scholars of Chinese fiction commentary have been careful to distinguish between what might safely be attributed to the historical Li Zhi and what seems to have been crafted by the commentator Li Zhuowu. Li Zhi’s comments on *Outlaws of the Marsh* are recorded in his essay “On the Childlike Mind” (Tongxin shuo) and in his preface to *Outlaws of the Marsh*, both found in *A Book to Burn*; portions were copied into the Li Zhuowu prefaces to two subsequently quite influential imprints of the novel. These were the Rongyutang edition, which was printed in 1610, and the Yuan Wuya edition of 1612. If any comments are authentically Li Zhi’s, they appear there.\(^{16}\)

In “On the Childlike Mind,” Li Zhi asserts that all the finest writings express authenticity and spontaneity; he singled out the Yuan play *The Western Chamber* (*Xixiang ji*) and the Ming novel *Outlaws of the Marsh* as prime examples of these values.\(^{17}\) The ambiguity in precisely how authenticity is manifested becomes the starting point for the Li Zhi prefaces to *Outlaws of the Marsh*. There authenticity is interpreted as loyalty to the throne (zhong) and generosity, altruism, and righteousness toward one’s comrades (yi). The *Outlaws* preface praises bandit leader Song Jiang for his supposed exceptional loyalty and righteousness, his outstanding strength and virtue (li and xian) in an age of corruption and weakness at court. In response to the ideology of his age, Li Zhi emphasizes the commanding presence of the strong leader and his unfailing influence over the others among the novel’s 108 heroes. Thus he urges that at court and in the provinces, all persons in positions of authority should read and take inspiration from the virtues of Song Jiang and his band. The authors of the text were motivated by their outrage (fen) at the state of the Yuan rule, he asserts.\(^{18}\)

**COMMENTS ON OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH**

The Li Zhuowu commentary on *Outlaws of the Marsh* discussed here is from the Rongyutang (1610) edition.\(^{19}\) Ye Zhou’s interests in *Outlaws* certainly include its literary aspects. In chapter 10 he repeatedly praises descriptions of the misadventures of the hero Lin Chong with interlinear comments composed of a single word, “[Like a] painting!” (*Hua*); in chapter 11 he does the same, again repeatedly, adding praise for the writing to that for his subject: “Marvelous in action and description!”\(^{20}\) Of Lin Chong’s slaughter and butchery of the childhood friend who betrayed him, a marginal comment declares, “What a happy killing! Had he stabbed him to death as he did the others, with one thrust of his spear, it would have held no interest.” Once his enemies are dispatched, Lin Chong decapitates them,
then ties the heads together by their hair and dumps them on the offering table before an image of the mountain deity in the temple where he had taken refuge from a storm. At that, Li Zhuowu comments, simply, “Interesting!” (Qu). On the hero’s actions thereafter, the comments frequently read “Marvelous!” (Miao) or again “Like a painting!” When Lin catches a whiff of warm wine, Li’s comment is “[What a] great idea!” (Hao xiangtou). When a group of farmers refuse to share their drink with Lin Chong he comments, “Detestable!” (Wu), “Boring!” (Mei qu), “Laughable!” (Kexiao), and “How rude!” (Mei li). Once the farmers have scattered and Lin Chong helps himself to their wine, a marginal comment reads, “Here it becomes interesting again” (Dao ci you you qu).

The Rongyutang chapter-end critique makes the commentator’s concern with the art of writing even more explicit, albeit not theoretical: “The Bald Old Man says, ‘The text of Outlaws of the Marsh is fundamentally fictitious, but all because it describes situations truthfully, it deserves to last as long as heaven and earth. As with Li Xiao’er and his wife in this chapter: their absurdity was as clear as a picture. When later you get to the “Creating Chaos in Heaven” array, it is so fake that it is hard to read no matter how much effort you put into it.’”

What we see here initially is a rather subjective response to specific textual elements, with several general patterns: the commentator likes certain of its characters, and he enjoys the dense vernacular description of individuals and actions characteristic of the tales that compose Outlaws of the Marsh. The larger campaigns in the later parts of the novel that emphasize strategy and magic are of less interest. But the Li Zhuowu comments also reflect his views on what constitutes good fiction: the commentator’s enthusiasm for particular characters and their struggles can be seen in the misadventures of Yang Zhi in chapter 12. The commentator’s interest in the individual seems focused on his moral reactions to challenges, wherein personal choices take on significance for both society and the state.

The commentator’s position becomes more politically engaged once Song Jiang, the eventual leader of the Liangshan bandits, is introduced. In the critique following chapter 18, he declares, “In general there has been little difference between catching a thief and becoming a thief or arresting a robber and becoming a robber. In order truly to get rid of all thieves, the most important thing is to get rid of those constables” (340). In chapter 39 Song Jiang, in his cups, writes a rebellious poem on the wall of a wine shop. There the retired official Huang Wenbing sees it and uses it to curry favor with the local prefect. The Li Zhuowu chapter postface as printed in the Yuan Wuya edition reads, “Huang Wenbing copied down the rebellious poem in order to prove that Song Jiang’s madness was a ruse. This was an
evil intent, but he was not a man of no worth. It is just that he was trying to harm another person to get the attention of the magistrate, and so made himself detestable” (733).

In these two places, Li Zhuowu emphasizes the personal capacities needed by the administrator and the consequences of their absence. Moreover, he draws attention to the ways that concern for personal advantage can draw an otherwise laudable character into self-destructive acts.

One of the novel’s more gruesome scenes occurs in chapter 41. Led by the naked, ax-wielding Li Kui (interlineal comment: “Truly loyal and righteous!”), seventeen of the nascent Liangshan outlaw band had rescued Song Jiang from the execution grounds in the previous chapter. Now Song enlists the Liangshan band to take revenge on Huang Wenbing for provoking the arrest. Although they leave his righteous brother and all of the villagers unmolested, they exterminate the rest of Huang’s immediate family. On the slaughter of these innocents, Li Zhuowu comments, “Since he knows that [his arrest] had nothing to do with the common people of Wuweijun, he should also know that it had nothing to do with the forty or fifty men and women of his household; for what reason did he harm them as well?” Once captured, Song Jiang has Huang stripped and tied to a tree while the outlaws drink (“A fine diversion!”), cursing him roundly for the harm Huang brought him. (This is no wonder, since Song Jiang has no sense of propriety.) But the cruel punishment Song levies is ostensibly in response to Huang’s (nicknamed “Huang the Stinger,” Huang Fengci) running roughshod over the local population; Song aims to remove his stinger (“Interesting!” [Qu]), he claims. The work of carving the living victim’s flesh is given over to Li Kui (“A Buddha!” [Fo]), who refuses Huang the speedy death he requests (“Interesting!”), but after the description of the agonized execution, the marginal comment reads “Excessive!” (Tai shen). And as the outlaws congratulate Song Jiang on his revenge, Li Zhuowu asks, “What is there to celebrate? This makes no sense!” At the end of the chapter he offers an impassioned critique of the whole episode: “Huang Wenbing was also an intelligent man, a man of use to the state. Having seen the rebellious poem, how could he not have been alarmed? Song Gongming should not have blamed him for it. The raid on the execution grounds at Jiangzhou was all for the rescue of the two lives; it was unavoidable. But as for [the raid on] Wuweijun: in the end how could someone so understanding carry out such acts? A grave wrong, a grave wrong!”

Thus in an intense section of the novel, we see Li Zhuowu responding somewhat inconsistently, but his comments regularly record an immediate, very personal and emotional response to the text.
We also see an impatient, even irascible face of the commentator when he critiques the positions of his predecessors. In the postface for chapter 52, Li Zhuowu scorns a previous commentator’s reproof of Li Kui’s killing Luo Zhenren as simplistic: “These words are just so much gas!” By contrast, Li Zhuowu then explains his position on *Outlaws of the Marsh* as fiction: “Every action, every word can be interesting. Every piece of writing in the world should take interest as its highest priority. If it is interesting, what matter that the event or the person should be wholly fictitious?” (984).25

**COMMENTARY ON ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS**

The first edition of the perennially favorite historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, presumably completed during the late fifteenth century, was published in 1522, making it the earliest of the “four masterworks” and, indeed, the progenitor of the entire novel tradition in China. By the 1550s book printers in Fujian were producing a discontinuous fictional history of China from time immemorial through the founding of the Ming in compilations that centered primarily on individual dynastic periods.26 *Three Kingdoms* was the model, but few approached that level of literary sophistication in theme, characterization, and style of language. Except for reconceiving its chapter divisions and relatively minor editing by the father-and-son team Mao Lun and Mao Zonggang in the 1660s, no later editor made significant changes to the text: it remains a largely untouchable classic—in marked contrast to other early novels that were regularly rewritten and extensively adapted from their first appearance through the twentieth century.27

The Li Zhuowu commentary in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is certainly the work of Ye Zhou.28 His comments here again take the form of chapter-ending general critiques (zongping) and laconic exclamations scattered throughout each chapter, either as comments in the upper margin of the page or, more frequently, placed within or between the lines of text.29 Generally the novel is not heavily annotated; Ye Zhou’s persona passed over without explicit notice many elements of the text that would attract extensive attention from subsequent readers and commentators.

The tenor of the Li Zhuowu comments clearly varies according to their location within the text. Some chapter-end critiques often seem flippant, suggesting ways to cut the annotated text rather than how to interpret it, as other Ming literary commentators would later do.30 At one point Li Zhuowu quotes himself (chapter 117); in chapter 105 he quotes a quip he made in response to another person’s question, as if recording a conversation among
friends about the novel. Yet at novel’s end he comments gravely on the transience of all grand endeavors.\textsuperscript{31}

By contrast, in his interlineal comments he explains events and the factors that provoked them as if for the benefit of less conscientious readers. Among his first is a sardonic comment on Liu Bei. When Liu is described as a “hero” who “was not particularly fond of reading,” Li Zhuowu responds, “Taking no joy in reading is the mark of a hero.” Li Zhuowu regularly comments on the events narrated in ways that reveal his emotional engagement with the text and its characters. Clearly the commentator did not like General Cao Cao; he frequently criticizes him for his vaunting ambition and his vanity.\textsuperscript{32} When Cao Cao finally realizes that he is dying, the interlineal comment reads, “Finally the old traitor understands. Were he alive today, who knows how many scandalous acts he would have committed!” Such bleak humor is more regularly visible here than in the Outlaws of the Marsh commentary.

Li Zhuowu takes the side of Liu Bei in his quixotic efforts to restore the falling Han imperial house. Liu’s general Guan Yu is a favorite. “Guan Yun-chang [Yu] has the compassion of a saint or a Buddha and thus could not [kill Cao],” the commentary says, with apparent enthusiasm. His remarks about the ferocious general Zhang Fei are almost affectionate. In chapter 45, when Zhang Fei comes with an unneeded rescue mission in case Liu Bei had fallen afoul of a plot on his life, Li Zhuowu writes, “That old Zhang: always acting rashly!” (568).

Often the commentator criticizes characters harshly, commenting, “Fool, fool!” (Chiren, chiren [619]). But he can also respond positively. In chapter 117, after Zhuge Chan falls in a hail of arrows and slits his own throat with a sword, his son Zhuge Shang makes a suicidal foray into the besiegers of his city to die with his father. The commentator praises him for his action: “A loyal subject, a filial son, a benevolent grandson!” (1420). In chapter 45, when Zhou Yu in his frustration orders a messenger from Cao Cao beheaded in violation of the rules of warfare, he is stopped by his officer Lu Su, who rebukes him: “When two states go to war, they do not execute emissaries.” Zhou Yu retorts, “Behead this emissary to show our mettle!” “Just right! Just right!” (Da shi, da shi [569]) Li Zhuowu applauds interlineally.

One episode particularly engaged this commentator’s attention: Liu Bei’s famous three visits to Zhuge Liang’s thatched hut to enlist his aid as a strategist in preserving the Han Empire. In chapter 37, on their first visit, Liu gives the houseboy a long list of his titles in introducing himself. The boy replies, “I can’t remember so many names!” Li Zhuowu comments, “This boy is one marvelous fellow!” (Tongzi bian shi miao ren le [464]).
Following a description of the area around the hut as Liu Bei sees it, the commentary reads, “He is also excellent at elements of scene, indeed a marvelous writer! (Yi shan shu jingwu. Gu shi miaoshou [464]). When Zhang Fei explains that he is concerned only that Liu Bei is wasting his time, Li Zhuowu chuckles, “A Buddha—Zhang is a Living Buddha!” (Fo: Zhang Huofo [466]). Similarly inconsequential remarks continue throughout the episode, revealing a reader who is relishing the text more than he is carefully analyzing it, presenting his preferences rather than seeking to discover the art of fiction.

Most irreverently, on the eve of the great Red Cliffs naval battle that ultimately decides the fate of the realm, as Liu Bei and his allies worry about whether there will be a southerly wind to aid their attack, the Li Zhuowu comment reads, “The ‘southern wind’ [nanfeng] has always prevailed; we need not worry about it” (613). One can only assume that he was not referring only to movements of air masses from the south but also to the “fashion” among literati for romantic involvement with boys and young men (nanfeng or the “southern” or, by pun, “male fashion”). He attributes this observation to a monk named Riniu.

However, in the chapter-end evaluative commentaries the commentator perhaps most frequently presents himself as a somewhat curmudgeonly older man who has seen through most of the foibles of his age. At the end of chapter 105, as Li Zhuowu he quotes comparisons of a major historical figure, Zhang Liang (d. 186 BCE), chief strategist for the Han dynasty founder, with Zhuge Liang as a means to reinforce his sense of Zhuge’s greatness in attempting to restore the Han Empire. But the person quoted here is the real commentator Ye Zhou, a private joke for readers who knew his true identity. Then he continues, disparaging any alternative interpretations of historical as well as fictional characters, “Would not a couple of comments made recently by [Ye] Zhongzi of Liangxi be relevant in relation to these two gentlemen? I append them here. Zhongzi said, ‘Zifang was a knowledgeable sort of person and Kongming was a sincere sort.’ The imperceptive foolishly say that Zifang was false and Kongming was true. Dear me! How could such people be fit to discuss those two gentlemen with!”

At the end of chapter 112, the Li Zhuowu persona further endorses his own insights by making a sarcastic comment about what he considers a lack of originality. Referring to the literal meaning of the title Romance of the Three Kingdoms, he observes, “Since [similar events] were narrated previously, this does nothing more than change the names to pad out the narrative. How irritating! This is why it is an ‘elaboration’ [yanyi] of the Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms [Sanguo zhi]. Laughable!” (1367).
Elsewhere he also sympathizes with the need for fictional elaboration. At the end of chapter 21 in reference to Liu Bei’s dropping his chopsticks, Li Zhuowu observes, “This [episode] was added in by some later person and is not to be taken as authentic. Anyone who reads the Popular Romance of the Three Kingdoms must first distinguish such things. Even so, this is a ‘popular romance’ [tōngsu yanyi, more literally, a ‘popular elaboration’] and not official history. If it were not so [embellished], then how could it be ‘popular’?” (265).

Ye Zhou in the guise of Li Zhuowu makes critical observations on his contemporaries as well: praising the sterling qualities of Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang for their acknowledgment that Cao Cao must be allowed to live, he observes that they are “not like people nowadays who would hate [Cao Cao] and wish him dead” (618). Here again, Li Zhuowu is presented as a reader who appreciates the text, an interpreter and appropriate model for readers unfamiliar with the form. Despite his sharp tongue, he generally provides thoughtful, personal interpretations, with empathy for and understanding of these fictional characters.

**COMMENTS ON JOURNEY TO THE WEST**

In the rush among China’s new generation of scholars in the 1920s to identify individual creators for all of China’s great works of popular literature, Hu Shi (1891–1962) was the first to identify Wu Cheng’en (ca. 1500–ca. 1582) as the author of Journey to the West. The evidence he cited was slight and dated long after Wu’s death. In recent decades, scholars have become less confident in this attribution; the novel is now often considered a work of collective authorship, as are Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Outlaws of the Marsh. In large part this is because an increasing number of textual sources have been identified for the novel, ranging from local tales of extraordinarily human-like monkeys in Hangzhou to Chinese-language summaries of the great Indian epic Rāmāyaṇa. Even so, because the earliest extant version, the 1592 Shidetang edition, is so highly polished, its various parts so skillfully adapted and smoothly integrated, it could have reached this stage only through the concerted efforts of one or a very small number of tremendously creative writers working together over a relatively long period of time.

The edition known as the Journey to the West with Mr. Li Zhuowu’s Commentary (Li Zhuowu xiansheng piping Xiyou ji) for the most part follows the text of the 1592 edition and carries a prefatory comment (tici) written by the playwright and novelist Yuan Yuling (1592–1674) seemingly
dating from the 1620s. There are relatively few “eyebrow” comments (meipi) in the upper margins of pages scattered through the text. Here as in the other novels, many comments within the text consist of only a single word: “Interesting!” (Qu), “Fantastic!” (Huan), or “That ape!” (Hou). The original “General Principles” (Fanli)—perhaps also penned by Ye Zhou—cautions that the novel will force the reader to “hold his sides with laughter” (pengfu) even as its message “seeps into his heart” (qinxin); the general critiques embody the subtlety of all the Daoist masters in transferring anguish into hilarity and scorn, it observes. The “General Principles” also explain that these laconic interjections draw attention to the narrative’s philosophically important subtexts. For his part, Yuan Yuling lauds its indirection, praising the “fantastic” (huan) elements of the novel as composing its “truth” (zhen) and directing the reader to pursue its subtle implications. As the editors of this volume describe them, the commentator’s concerns are with the emotional relationship between the individual mind and the world, with explaining points of literary excellence, and with castigating the foibles of his contemporaries.  

As we have seen in the other novels, Li Zhuowu here again points out particularly excellent writing as a model for his contemporaries. For example, in chapter 30 a demon has transformed the monk Tripitaka into a tiger, and their faithful horse (a magically transformed dragon)—desperate to save their master—changes himself into a beautiful girl to get the demon drunk so that he can be killed. When his plan fails, the wounded horse changes back into a dragon in order to hide. In the general critique at chapter’s end, the commentator says, “For the Tang Monk to change into a tiger and the white horse to transform into a dragon is the most inspired, the most wonderful example of imagination, the most extraordinary, the most fanciful piece of writing. How could some bachelor’s-level student studying for the next examination have written something like this?”

In chapter 17 a marginal comment on an invitation from one monster to another shows his love of reading: “What an extraordinary imagination at work here—just extraordinary!” (220; JW 1.356).

More commonly the Li Zhuowu commentary here is rather provocative, often quite distinctive for its sardonic wit and philosophical insights—reminiscent of one of the Daoist masters to whom the “General Principles” likens the commentator. For example, in chapter 14 after the Monkey King kills the Six Bandits (liuzei, symbolic representations of the six sense organs, including the mind), the chapter-end comment reads, “I wonder whether in today’s world people kill off the Six Bandits, or are killed off by those Six Bandits?” (183). Reflecting on chapter 76, Li Zhuowu comments,
“Monsters frequently seem to respond very much like real people, whereas real people very frequently have feelings like monsters” (1034). And again, “A marvelous aspect of Journey to the West is simply that it speaks of the false as if it were true, causing one to smile” (1272).

In a more philosophical vein: “The East [the pilgrims’ destination] is not far—it is your own home. One would think that you should go home” (183). And when Guanyin offers a profound explanation in chapter 17, “Wukong, the Bodhisattva, and the monster—they both exist in a single thought. Considered in terms of their origin, they are all nothing.” Li Zhuowu observes, “She explained it directly!” (Shuo chu). One of his more profoundly philosophical comments is in chapter 58 (in which the Monkey assumes three forms of himself), a response to a lesson by the Buddha:

- Form has no fixed form;
- Thus form is emptiness.
- Emptiness has no fixed emptiness;
- Thus emptiness is form.

To this Li Zhuowu comments: “Extraordinary writing about illusion and form—it all leads up to this!” (781; JW 3.113).

In chapter 60, when a local spirit reveals that he had been banished for misbehaving in Heaven, the commentator remarks enigmatically, “This is absurd but it seems like reality” (801; JW 3.133). In chapter 73 the Monkey battles a monster who appears to have a thousand eyes attached to his ribs that all emit golden rays. With the help of a mountain deity the Monkey defeats the monster, who turns out to be a gigantic centipede. At chapter’s end Li Zhuowu comments, “At first the Centipede was called the Demon Lord of a Hundred Eyes, but in the end he became a blind man. When one exhausts his intelligence, he indeed becomes a great fool.” Then he gives an allegorical interpretation of the monsters as one’s own misguided mind: “Seven big spiders and one old centipede: people consider them strange and poisonous. How could they know that these are nothing but nicknames for the reckless mind—it is just that this is not visible from the outside” (992). In both cases Li Zhuowu draws attention to the wit and craft of writing in this novel.

Yet the commentator takes pains to point out the novel’s didacticism by reference to the general precepts of the “Three Teachings” taken as a whole. By doing so he confirms the reading of the novel identified by Yuan Yuling in his “Prefatory Remarks” to that edition. At the end of chapter 2, in which the Monkey King goes traveling to find a way to escape death, the
commentary reads, “Refusing to study all manner of things and yet focusing on long life—if even monkeys are like this, how much more so humanity?” He continues, “But people in this world do not only study how to achieve longevity; they also study how to shorten life. How so? [Indulgence in] wine, lust, greed, and anger are all methods to shorten life. Who among the people of this world can separate himself from these four? . . . Journey to the West is filled with parables; the reader ought not to pass them off lightly” (27). And then, perhaps not without tongue in cheek, he extols the truth of common aphorisms. In the critique for chapter 74, Li Zhuowu endorses an aphorism and roasts his contemporaries at the same time—but in conventional moralistic terms: “It is too bad that people of the world throw themselves into the web of desire and occupy the prison of emotion” (1006).

Some comments are simply fun, expressing the commentator’s delight with the narrative. At the end of chapter 19, when the Monkey King takes on the form of the Pig’s wife in order to subdue him, the final commentary says, “What a truly fine couple they made, but in the end the old lady was stronger than the old man. Generally speaking, in the world today either we have old pigs acting as husbands, or we have old monkeys acting as wives to subdue them. So how can we not fear our old ladies? How can we not fear our old ladies?!” (395). And in chapter 73, when the Monkey is told about a Thousand Flowers Cave, Li Zhuowu comments, interlineally, “What a great name for a cave!” (989). Surely there is neither serious moralization nor pointed social critique in comments such as these.

CONCLUSIONS

When taken as a whole, there emerges from the Li Zhuowu commentaries a consistent image of the critic of the vernacular novel. For each of the three novels, emotive interjections of one to four characters printed within lines of the text or in the upper margin of the page were produced in this name. In his degree of critical evaluation, Li Zhuowu seems to have set a new standard for the pithy observation. His chapter-ending commentaries range from the dismissive to the laudatory and take up matters of writing as well as evaluations of individual behavior. As he often repeated, he enjoyed narrative turns that struck him as lifelike. Not only did he approve of realistic action, but he also praised telling details that revealed the mentality and complex emotions of fictional characters. But he also held a negative attitude toward the women in all three novels.
Various scholars have objected to attributing some of the Li Zhuowu chapter-ending comments to Li Zhi because they seem crude in style and intellectually pedestrian, beneath the standards of the historical philosopher.\(^46\) On the other hand, with his identifiably sophisticated observations on life and art, Li Zhuowu raised the bar for novel commentary with his critique of both contemporary morals and the craft of writing. Moreover, his comments seem consistent in his admiration (at times ironic, at other times ostensibly quite serious) for the spontaneous, the unaffected, and the authentic responses of fictional characters. This is why he champions Lu Zhishen, Zhang Fei, and Sun Wukong in these three novels: in his interpretation, they have none of the absorption with self that higher status characters so frequently do. It also explains his attribution (especially in the Rongyutang edition of *Outlaws of the Marsh*) of treachery and banditry to the imperial court in contrast to the “outlaws” he admires.\(^47\)

In terms of his aesthetic standards, the Li Zhuowu critic was the first to insist that good fiction is based on reality—of type, if not of specific incident, as he explained in comments to chapter 100 of *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Marxist-inspired literary historians observe that he praised social realism in writing, a product of his materialist perspective; this explains his disparagement of descriptions of dreams, fabulous creatures, and magical battle arrays. Despite this anachronistic interpretation, from the Li Zhuowu perspective fiction should not record reality but should evoke “interest” or “fascination”\(^48\) in the reader by reflecting—perhaps concentrating—real life, real emotions. This tendency is most clearly revealed in his responses to characterization. Using such terms as “model”\(^49\) and “identity”\(^50\), Li Zhuowu praised characters who fulfilled particular conventional types, such as the violent hero or the envious and petty person. At the same time, he emphasized descriptions that individualized these characters, endowing them with unique backgrounds, interests, and personality traits. Further, Li Zhuowu praised such scenes as the interchanges among Song Jiang, Yan Poxi, and her mother in *Outlaws of the Marsh* not only for conveying their thoughts but also for what was implied in their words and actions: motivations not available to the characters themselves. In this he compares the skill of the novelist to the greatest of painters, Gu Kaizhi (344–406) and Wu Daozi (680–759), both famous for their ability to look beyond physical likeness to capture the spirit (shen) of their subjects. Among his brief comments, the word “[like a] painting”\(^51\) occurs repeatedly.

So what, if anything, do these writings that were attributed to Li Zhi tell us about this author’s image? First, we can agree with David Rolston that...
these commentaries were a “labor of love” for their sheer volume and the range of responses they reflect. They could not have been merely a way to earn a living, as Qian Xiyan opined four hundred years ago. We know that Li Zhuowu was a devoted reader, and he played the role with gusto.50 Clearly the Li Zhi being performed and projected through these comments was a reader of integrity, one who sought responsibility for moral standards as well as artistic concerns in this new literary form, the novel. He possessed acerbic wit and did not hesitate to chastise his contemporaries as fools and worse. He was a man who could be very serious in his philosophical pronouncements while maintaining his objectivity, one who clearly distinguished the purposes of fiction from other kinds of narrative, history in particular. He could make jokes, some of them fairly coarse, about common human foibles.

That this Li Zhuowu challenged the texts he read on both didactic and literary grounds suggests that Ye Zhou and his publishers—and, most likely, his educated readers as well—saw reasonable parallels between the iconoclastic thinker and a serious critic for the new and creative form that was becoming the literati novel. As a Romance of the Three Kingdoms comment declares, one cannot expect that novels (yanyi) should serve the same purposes as historical accounts; fiction should be appreciated as just that, good stories, especially when it disagrees with what the historians have written. This accords well with the image of Li Zhi as both conservative and iconoclastic.51 Interestingly, when the commentaries are read in the order presented here—which probably does reflect the order in which they were written—we see a progression in Li Zhuowu’s critical perspective. The level of humor increases from Outlaws of the Marsh to Journey to the West; there is more flippant commentary in the chapter-end critiques and a greater sense of detachment (a prerequisite for witty sarcasm) from the actions and characters in the literary texts. The same might well be true for how the real Ye Zhou conceived of his role. However, given his consistent devotion to performing in the role he created for the deceased Li Zhi, what Ye Zhou personally thought about the art of fiction is not so clear. Given the role he was assigned to play—and that he performed very well—we cannot uncritically assign the values expressed by Li Zhuowu to the real Ye Zhou, as many students of fiction have done. This would be tantamount to equating the values of a character in a play to the actor who impersonates him: there probably were significant similarities, but it would be fallacious to assume a simple identity between them. Yet when Li Zhuowu quotes “Ye Zhou’s” comments on Romance of the Three Kingdoms, the real Ye Zhou may or may not reveal a glimpse of his own thoughts; at the least,
appearing to quote himself confirms that Li Zhuowu is merely a costume Ye wears.

In sum, this Li Zhuowu commentator appears as a worldly-wise and tremendously experienced reader, sensitive to his texts and responsive to his role as potential teacher in the arts of reading. But he does not come across as a thinker upholding a particular set of ethical or rational principles. Instead he appears as a fairly developed fictional character, one whose primary characteristic is that he reads emotionally. Even when commenting on a matter of style, he does so with passion. To judge from this fictitious Li Zhuowu, the historical figure was considered to be a man of intense feelings. In this, and in the rough characters he praised, Li Zhi’s basic authenticity might indeed be expressed. One sees in the commentator Li Zhuowu the spontaneous expression of emotions generally concordant with the outlook of Wang Yangming’s School of the Mind. Whether these comments reflect the more specific philosophy of Li Zhi, I must leave to readers who know more about this real man. My concern has been with a performance by an actor using a writing brush; we cannot expect him to be presented as so intellectual as the historical person himself. Nor can I have hoped to do more than simply whet your appetite for the fun of reading fiction commentaries right along with the novels themselves—as presumably an educated seventeenth-century reader would have done.

NOTES

1 Europeanists such as Steven Zwicker in “The Reader Revealed” have explored the extensive comments left by famous persons in the margins of the books they read. I know of no such study of marginalia on a Chinese novel.
3 Lin Yaling, *Yu Xiangdou*, 77, 343ff., identifies a primary goal of the Yu family of printers as popularizing reading, especially the reading of fiction, while providing needed cultural information to the newly emerging urban reading audience.
4 Martin Huang, “Author(ity) and Reader,” 47–50, explains the appeal to the more highly learned reader made by commentary and editing practices. For Rolston’s essay “Formal Aspects of Fiction Criticism and Commentary,” see *How to Read*, 42–74. The most extensive study of Yu Xiangdou available is Lin Yaling, *Yu Xiangdou*. Lin (77, 239, etc.), too, clearly indicates how Yu attempted to encourage wide readership because of the commercial nature of his printing establishment.
5 Huang, “Author(ity) and Reader,” 41.
See Rolston, *How to Read*, 22–24, for the historical development of literary commentary through the relationships, presumed and real, between commentary, examination essays, and drama. Significantly, there is no parallel commentarial tradition for short vernacular fiction, *huaben* stories. On Li Zhi’s attitude toward examination preparation, see chapter 8.

Yu left his personal mark on *Journey to the North* (Beiyou ji, 1602) and *Journey to the South* (Nanyou ji) in the form of poems within the texts expressing his reaction to specific passages. Lin Yaling, *Yu Xiangdou*, 215–31, 243, etc., cites numerous instances in which Yu wrote his commentary in the form of poems. See also Ma Youyuan, “Cong pinglin ben.”


Lin Yaling, *Yu Xiangdou*, 231–39, comments on the subjectivity of his views.


Rolston, “The Authenticity of the Li Chih Commentaries,” 356, notes that in 1592 Yuan Zhongdao saw one of Li Zhi’s disciples copying out the *Outlaws of the Marsh* text with Li’s commentary. It seems no copy of that version has survived.


The editions of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* with the Li Zhuowu commentaries were frequently reprinted. For a detailed comparison of various versions, see Liu Haiyan, *Ming Qing Sanguo zhi yanyi*, 97–148. Rolston, *How to Read*, 38–39, has summary comments on Ye Zhou as commentator. See also Plaks, *The Four Masterworks*, 288–89.

Lin Yaling, “Ye Zhou xiaoshuo,” 102n4 summarizes current scholarly thinking on this question, concluding that the most authoritative is that of Ye Lang, “Ye Zhou pingdian.” Ye concludes that the Yuan Wuya edition incorporates comments by Li Zhi, Xu Zichang, and Feng Meng-long. Lin Yaling (105n13) observes that some consider Xu Zichang just another penname used by Ye Zhou; Ye Lang, “Ye Zhou pingdian,” 296–97, credits Ye Zhou with composing a book in Xu Zichang’s name; see n. 28 below.

Li Zhi, “Tongxin shuo,” in *LZ* 1:276–79. Lin Yaling, “Ye Zhou xiaoshuo,” 106, cites Huang Lin’s argument that *The Western Chamber* commentary was also penned by Ye Zhou.
18. Zhongyi Shuihu zhuan, Li Zhi preface; the identical text is to be found in Li Zhi’s Fenshu, j. 3. Rolston, How to Read, 36–38, notes its relative superficiality. For a translation, see Li Zhi, A Book to Burn, 125–28.

19. The filiation of the textual lines of Outlaws of the Marsh is complicated, with 120, 110, and 100 chapter versions in circulation by around 1600. Both the 1589 Tiandu waichen (Wang Daokun) edition Loyal and Righteous Outlaws of the Marsh (Zhongyi Shuihu zhuan) and the Rongyutang edition of 1610 have 100 chapters; the Yuan Wuya edition of 1612–14 also carries commentary attributed to Li Zhi but has 120. Lin Yaling, “Ye Zhou xiaoshuo,” 102, 102n6; Ma Tiji, Shuihu shulu and Shuihu ziliao huibian suggest that the Yuan Wuya edition was based on the manuscript that Yuan Zhongdao saw Li Zhi himself working on. The standard study was for years Yan Dunyi, Shuihu zhuan de yanbian. For descriptions of these several versions, see He Xin, Shuihu yanjiu; Rolston, How to Read, 404–30; and Plaks, The Four Masterworks, 280–89. There are translations by Pearl S. Buck, All Men Are Brothers (1933); J. H. Jackson, The Water Margin (1937); Sidney Shapiro, Outlaws of the Marsh (1981); and John and Alex Dent-Young, The Marshes of Mount Liang (1994–2002).

20. Lin Yaling, Yu Xiangdou, 215, notes that Yu Xiangdou’s comments are similarly emotive, many composed of merely one or two words. Wu Yinghui, “Commentary,” 51, notes that the Li Zhuowu commentaries to the famous plays The Lute (Pipa ji) and The Western Chamber in their Rongyutang editions give the impression of “spontaneity and immediacy” and appear to be the product of “a dynamic process in which the commentator enacts a reader who would cry at one moment and laugh at another, slapping the desk and kicking his heels. . . . The person behind ‘Li Zhuowu’ is highly conscious of and deeply invested in creating a dramatized, appealing image.” See also nn. 48 and 52 below.

21. See Shuihu zhuan huipingben, 201 (ten times!), 206, 208, 209, 211, 214, 215 216, 217; all are comments from the Rongyutang edition and thus all by Ye Zhou. Page references are to this edition.

22. Shuihu zhuan huipingben, 218; the battle array appears in the band’s collective campaign against the Liao Kingdom in the north in chapters 88–89 of the 100-chapter version. Li Zhuowu expresses repeated enthusiasm for the clever plot twists in the “Taking the Birthday Presents by Guile” episode in chapter 16, 294–303.

23. For the Li Zhuowu comments, see Shuihu zhuan huipingben, 239–40. Praise for characterization is even more pronounced in his response to the character Lu Zhishen in chapter 9’s final evaluative comment.

24. Wu Yinghui, “Commentary,” 51, comments insightfully that in his play commentaries Ye Zhou’s “predilection for over-the-top reactions and straightforward dirty words often make the little drama he was performing at the margin of the text outshine the main drama in the play text.”
25 For a similar comment, see ch. 22, 480. Lin Yaling, Yu Xiangdou, 325–26, etc., notes that this comment was directed at Yu Xiangdou, whose view of fiction, its function, and its art differed significantly from later commentators.

26 Lin Yaling, Yu Xiangdou, 283.

27 For its textual history, see Rolston, How to Read, 430–39; and Plaks, The Four Masterworks, 535–36. The novel has been consistently known in English as Romance of the Three Kingdoms, with full translations by Brewitt-Taylor (1924) and Roberts, Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel (1991).

28 Ye Lang gives convincing evidence that Ye Zhou also wrote the collection of anecdotes Leisurely Notes from Useless Wood Studio (Shuzhai manlu, 1612) attributed to the Suzhou playwright and printer Xu Zichang (fl. 1596–1623); there, too, Ye Zhou quotes his own witty comments in ways that a third-person writer would not have done. Ye Lang, “Ye Zhou pingdian,” 296–97, concludes that Xu and Ye might have collaborated. See Rolston, How to Read, 358–59. See n. 17 above.

29 Detailed surveys: Wei An, Sanguo yanyi banben kao; Nakagawa Satoshi, Sanguo zhi yanyi banben yanjiu; and Liu Haiyan, Ming Qing Sanguo zhi yanyi. For a history of editions with the Li Zhuowu commentary, see Hegel and Sibau, “Introduction.”

30 Rolston, Traditional Chinese Fiction, 3.

31 Sanguo yanyi huipingben, 1457. Unless otherwise noted, all page numbers in parentheses are from this edition.

32 In his evaluative comment on chapter 105 Li Zhuowu even comments on his own dislike for Cao Cao; see Sanguo yanyi huipingben, 1292.

33 As Rolston, Traditional Chinese Fiction, 222n28, points out, Ye Zhou regularly chides Liu Bei for hypocrisy. Interestingly Li Zhuowu refers to both Li Kui and Zhang Fei, the two most violent warriors in Outlaws of the Marsh and Three Kingdoms, respectively, as “Buddhas.”

34 Both in Li Zhuowu yuan ping xiaoxiang guben Sanguo zhi 49.41 and in Sanguo yanyi huipingben, 613, the monk’s name is clearly Riniu. However, in the chapter 21 postface, he quotes Monk Bainiu, who was a noted early Qing calligrapher. Hence the import of this attribution is unclear. See Sanguo yanyi huipingben, 265. Rolston, How to Read, 69, observes, “Lighthearted comments were an important part of the [commentary] tradition from the beginning.” Most of the comments in these novels are not particularly jocular, however.

35 Sanguo yanyi huipingben, 1292. He continues here by quoting the sarcastic comment of “a friend,” again as if these evaluative comments reflect conversations about the novel during social occasions.

36 See Hu Shì’s 1923 essay “Xiyou ji kaozheng” and the response from historian Dong Zuobin in Hu Shì, Zhongguo zhanghui xiaoshuo kaozheng, 219–58.

37 Anthony Yu, Journey to the West (hereafter JW), 1.1–17, surveys these diverse sources.
See Xu Shuofang’s introduction to *Li Zhuowu pingben Xiyou ji*, edited by Chen and Bao (page references are to this edition as *LXYJ*), 1–4.

*LXYJ*, “Tici,” 1; “Fanli,” 1; “Qianyan,” 6. The single words that appear in the comments are stressed both by Yuan Yuling in his “Prefatory Remarks” and by the editor (Ye Zhou? Yuan Yuling? the printer?) of the “General Principles.” Interestingly, the “General Principles” explains the meaning of “interesting” (*qu*) as having been established by the popular late-Ming poet Yuan Hongdao in his collected writings, *Yuan Zhonglang ji*, but many writings were spuriously attributed to Yuan.

*LXYJ*, 1.398, the chapter-end comment, in this novel called *zongpi*. Rolston, *How to Read*, 18, presents this comment somewhat differently.

*LXYJ*, 1.225; translation from *JW*, 1.363. Ye Zhou makes the same comment in ch. 16, 1.210. This is a Chan Buddhist term for a profound comment that reveals insight into the true nature of reality.

This echoes Yuan Yuling’s statement in his “Prefatory Remarks”: “The monsters are none other: they are our very selves.” One wonders what the relationship was between Yuan Yuling and Ye Zhou: did they work on the text at the same time? Did they discuss the text and collaborate on editing it? Or was the commentary complete when the printer invited Yuan to write this preface, and so there was no contact between them? Information on such practical matters would greatly benefit scholarly understanding of the novel production process.

On the historical Li Zhi’s engagement with “Three Teachings” values, see chapters 2, 6, 9, and 11 in this volume.

Lin Yaling, “Ye Zhou xiaoshuo,” 108–9. By comparison, evaluations of writing style in the Yuan Wuya edition of *Outlaws of the Marsh*, chs. 4, 5, 9, more likely to have been based on Li Zhi’s evaluations, tend to be significantly longer, eight or more characters each. In length and content, they reflect late-Ming examination essay criticism; Ye Zhou’s brief comments do not, according to Lin.

As Ye Lang, “Ye Zhou pingdian,” 286, points out. This contrasts with positive views of women articulated by Li Zhi, as Pauline Lee demonstrates in chapter 7.

Ye Lang, “Ye Zhou pingdian,” 293, noting that some reflect both substance and style of Fujian printer Yu Xiangdou and may have been adapted from Yu’s comments.


Ye Lang, “Ye Zhou pingdian,” 300, referring to the general comment at the end of *Outlaws of the Marsh*, ch. 50.

Lin Yaling, “Ye Zhou xiaoshuo,” 114, counts more than forty *hua* comments in *Shuihu zhuan* ch. 9 and more than eighty in ch. 20. On Ye Zhou’s focus on individuality in characterization, see 115–18. Interestingly, in a 1592 essay, “Zashuo,” Li Zhi draws a contrast between the consummate artistry (*huagong*) of
the excellent writer and the creative genius (*huagong*) that makes some works even more outstanding; see Li Zhi, *A Book to Burn*, 102–5. Thanks to Rivi Handler-Spitz for pointing this out.


51 Yu, *JW* 1.24, maintains that the *Journey to the West* commentaries were written by Li Zhi: “The remarks themselves, usually appearing in ‘end-of-chapter overall commentary,’ . . . [are] consistently sardonic and witty enough to recall aspects of Li’s rhetoric and style”; they “hardly hew . . . to the line of later criticism that tends to exalt either Neo-Confucianism or Quanzhen Daoism, a conscientiously syncretistic blend of Chan Buddhist and Daoist ideas advocated by the lineage.” Yu does not consider questions of dating or comparisons with other Li Zhuowu comments that show the consistent work of Ye Zhou cited earlier.

52 Wu Yinghui, “Commentary,” 48, observes, “A large portion of the commentary [on *The Western Chamber*] reveals moments of the author’s mind and the characters’ mind stirred by pure *qing* and unobstructed by learning or pretension.” This too supports a general identification between Li Zhuowu and the real Li Zhi.