

# Untangling the Allegory: The Genuine and the Counterfeit in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* (The book to enlightenment of the journey west)

Carl A. Robertson

## ABSTRACT

The history of criticism of *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West) throughout the twentieth century has been a debate over the nature of the allegory of the story cycle. Without more evidence on the foundation of the text and a growing criticism of *Xiyou ji* as a multivalent story, the early commentaries on *Xiyou ji* are now more relevant. The first major commentary, *Xiyou zhengdao shu* (The book to enlightenment of the journey west) argues in depth for an allegorical reading of *Xiyou ji*, but employs tools from two ostensibly incompatible source texts, the *Wuzhen pian* (On apprehending completion) by Zhang Boduan and the commentary of *Shuihu zhuan* (Account of the water margin) by Jin Shengtan. The commentary reveals its varied reliance upon these sources and provides for an eventual compatibility by the usage of the paired terms for the genuine (*zhen*) and the counterfeit (*ji*). The meanings and references of these terms and even the complementarity itself are read variously in the commentary, but taken as a fluid poetics of signification, the idea of the genuine establishes a solid foundation of the allegorical reliance on a transformable self and hence an idea of reading for personal transformation. Subsequent uses of the terms for the genuine and its complement, such as found in *Honglou meng* (Dream of red mansions) may have received a telling contribution from the transformational framework of *Xiyou zhengdao shu*.



## KEY WORDS

*Xiyou ji*, *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, commentary, allegory, figure, Zhang Boduan, Jin Shengtian, Daoist transformation, genuine, *zhen*, *jia*, poetics





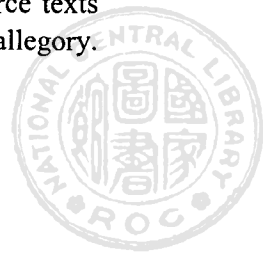
The history of the criticism of *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 (Journey to the west) over the past century is an argument over allegory, if nothing else. The modern form of the debate began when Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) expunged all traditional commentary and allegorical readings and mandated the text as tonic for national vigor—perhaps only another form of allegory.<sup>1</sup> For a time the criticism focused on questions of authorship with several decades of intense textual investigation ensuing, which should be understood as the attempt to verify allegorical (or anti-allegorical) views. Recent critics, lacking solid evidence on the formation of the text, tend to view *Xiyou ji* as multivalent. Regardless of the outcome of the debate, twentieth century criticism of *Xiyou ji* should be seen as a contest over the form of allegory assigned to the tale. Without unforeseen discoveries, consensus will only now be gained through internal evidence of the text. Discussion has now reached a point of equilibrium which allows for a more congenial investigation of the traditional commentaries. Since traditional commentaries operated under similar conditions of uncertainty, they are neither as autocratic as they have been portrayed nor as reliable as may be expected. This paper examines the allegory presented in the first major commentary to *Xiyou ji*. Close examination of the key concept of the genuine shows a shifting dynamic which places high value on personal transformation with attendant emphasis on identity of the self and the capacity of the reader.

*Xiyou zhengdao shu* 西遊證道書 (The book to enlightenment of the journey west) is the first major commentary to *Xiyou ji*, published in 1663 by Wang Qi 汪淇 (*zi* Xiangxu 象旭, *hao* Danyizi 憺漪子) (ca.1600–1668) and Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (*zi* Taihong 太鴻; *hao*



Xiaocangzi 笑蒼子, Banfei jushi 半非居士 (1611–1681). Wang and Huang were two Daoist enthusiasts and Ming loyalists who first collaborated on this text, afterwards making several books together.<sup>2</sup> This paper treats *Xiyou zhengdao shu* as a creative work in its own right, putting aside for now questions on the meaning of the text of *Xiyou ji*. This commentary makes pronounced claims on allegory, constantly justifying its alternative reading that the text is a key to Daoist transformation. But it is a complex argument which seems to embrace contrary interpretive forces, both literati and Daoist.<sup>3</sup> The commentary employs a category, or correlative pair, which runs like a thread throughout the claim for allegory, even to fundamental assumptions on how to read allegorically.

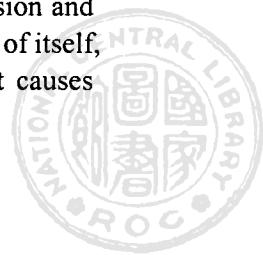
This category is the idea of the genuine, usually comprised of a correlation between *zhen* 真 (genuine, transformative, authentic) and *jia* 假 (false, counterfeit, destructive, fictive). The correlative pair functions as a poetics, with dynamic and resonant relationships which alter from place to place in the commentary and in relation to basic ideas of the way the narrative works. In *Xiyou zhengdao shu* this pair often principally derives from and relates to two texts: an early Internal Alchemy (*Neidan* 內丹) text named *Wuzhen pian* 悟真篇 (On apprehending completion) by Zhang Boduan 張伯端 (epithet Ziyang Zhenren 紫陽真人) (987–1082); and a seminal work of late Ming literary criticism, the commentary on *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (An account of the water margin) by Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608–1661). The commentary cites both texts explicitly and uses both to contribute to discussions on the genuine. These source texts do not seem to have any relationship to each other in any other context except here as *Xiyou zhengdao shu* juxtaposes discussions from each in its analysis. What pulls the two disparate discussions together within the commentary is a core assertion on the fundamental nature of individual identity and significance. It seems the commentary asserts in all its poetic dynamics the idea of a perfectible, transformative self.<sup>4</sup> Tracing the concept of the genuine takes this paper through references to these source texts and finally to a basic idea of self at the ground of the claim to allegory.



### Transformative *Zhen* from *Wuzhen pian*

*Zhengdao* is originally a Buddhist term for enlightenment. By citing it in the title *Xiyou zhengdao shu* identifies itself with the aspect of Daoism focused on the personal quest for transformation.<sup>5</sup> Within the cover the commentary clarifies the Daoist approach to transformation in several key positions and also by an application of transformation theory in notes extending throughout. Perhaps the key assertion lies in a preface attributed to the Daoist patriarch Yu Ji 虞集 (1272–1348) in which the commentary claims “the main point [of *Xiyou ji*] can be covered in one phrase: restore the cast-off heart! (*shou fangxin*)” 而大要可以一言蔽之，曰：收放心而已。<sup>6</sup> The “cast-off heart” refers to the Daoist idea of the lost self, or the self fragmented or divided through neglect.<sup>7</sup> This statement provides the central governing reading of the commentary (the Yu Ji Preface is the most significant component of the commentary and probably its greatest single contribution to critical comment on *Xiyou ji*), but the *application* of an allegorical reading takes place in the copious notes prefatory to the chapters, and it is in these notes that the commentary really works out the category of the genuine.<sup>8</sup> Not all of the prefatory notes refer to the Daoist system, but most do, and nearly all of these provide a consistent, if idiosyncratic, reading of Daoist allegory.

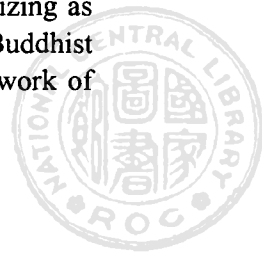
Although this paper focuses primarily on the intertextual relationships between *Xiyou zhengdao shu* and two source texts, there are other antecedents that should be considered here. The concept of *jia* as used in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* may well have received influence from Buddhist texts. Specifically the teachings of Zhiyi 智顓 (538–597) of the Tiantai 天臺 School of Buddhism provide an extensive system of thought concerning *jia*. Zhiyi posits the existence of three truths (三諦 *sandi*), the truth of void or emptiness (空 *kong* or *sunyata*), of illusion (假 *jia*), and a third which he proposes as the most valid, the mean (中 *zhong*). The mean is that one learns emptiness by way of illusion and learns illusion by way of emptiness. The doctrine of emptiness, of itself, leads to a confidence in its verity (*zhen* 真) so great that it causes



attachment to itself. One must see that even emptiness is an illusion. The doctrine of illusion leads to the same confusion, which can be remedied by understanding emptiness. Within the truth of the mean (*zhong*) one can avoid the dangers of attachment to concepts of emptiness or illusion.<sup>9</sup> In this example of Buddhist discussion, *zhen* is used in a negative sense as overweening confidence in what is not ultimate, but *jia* assists the follower to achieve progress.

Buddhism also provides an extensive discussion on utilizing fictional discourse to invite and encourage adherents to the path of salvation. The Lotus Sutra, for example, dwells extensively on the idea of “expedient means” (方便 *fangbian* or *upaya*). “The Buddha,” it states, “by the power of *expedient devices*, [d]emonstrates the teaching of the three vehicles. The living beings, attached to this object and that, [h]e attracts and thus enables to extricate themselves” (25; italics added). *Upaya* teaches that Buddhism can transmit teachings not considered finally valid in order to lead to the next higher order of thought in a progress toward enlightenment. In *The Vimalakirti Sutra* the householder Vimalakirti teaches bodhisattvas and others the power of expedient means to bring people to enlightenment. The idea of expedient means from these and other Mahayana sutras gives value to tales that are not true, such as the *Xiyou ji* with its deliberate falsification. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* implies artifice in a similar sense with the word *jia*, especially in regards to ideas of fictionality as shown below. There is even a sense of using fiction to teach higher truths in the commentary, and although it is not identical to *upaya*, there are senses of the term *jia* with resonance to Buddhist usage.

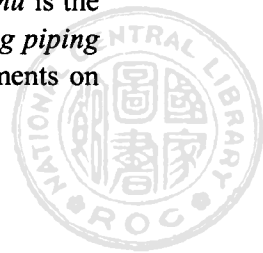
Clearly, then *jia* has specific and important relevance to Buddhist discourse. *Zhen*, however, is not a Buddhist term. Zhiyi himself refers to a state or quality beyond language and theory which he refers to as “substance” (真實 *zhenshi*). It does make use of a binomial term incorporating *zhen*, but it is not part of his system of thought or of Buddhism and is not a specialized term which he defines (Swanson 128). The idea of the counterfeit, even of deliberate fictionalizing as found in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* may be seen to derive from Buddhist thought, but it is not counterposed to *zhen* in any Buddhist work of



which I am aware. The Buddhist idea of *jia* is not part of a complementarity, rather more of a shared process in the formal texts. When *Xiyou zhengdao shu* makes use of *jia*, then, it touches upon a rich set of antecedents in Buddhism, but the relationship of *jia* to *zhen* in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* seems to be an innovation not found in formal Buddhist texts.<sup>10</sup> The relevance of Buddhism to *Xiyou zhengdao shu* depends upon the extent to which the commentary absorbs a Daoist teaching heavily reliant upon Buddhist organization, methods, texts and even nomenclature. When the commentary states that *Xiyou ji* derives from both Buddhist and Daoist sources, for example, this is actually an argument for a Daoist perspective.<sup>11</sup> This is not to say Buddhism is not relevant to the commentary. It is indeed by virtue of the Buddhist reference that we may be assured of the particular Daoist position, with a claim to personal salvation.

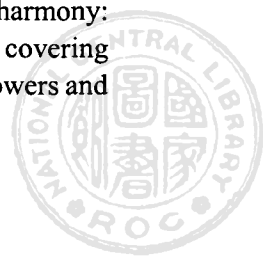
There are other possible antecedents to what I call the category of the genuine and Anthony Yu refers to as “*zhenjia* dialectic” (*Rereading* xii). The pairing of the terms *zhen* and *jia* existed in common use from at least the *Shi ji* 史記 (Records of the historian, ca. 86 BCE), but I am unable to trace their appearance in religious or philosophic discourse before the appearance of *Xiyou ji* (the earliest manuscript *Shide tangben* 世德堂本 dated 1592). Late Ming literati were greatly concerned about the genuineness of the cultivation of the Mind, which discussions did refer to *zhen* 真 and *wei* 偽, “false,” “hypocritical” or “forged” (see Epstein 7). Yuan dynasty debates on the verity of Daoist scriptures also utilize these same terms (Robertson 166). It is possible that popular commentaries on Buddhist texts may have explained Mahayana doctrines in interchangeable terms of *zhen* and *jia* but that is a matter of further research. Antecedent discussions pairing *zhen* and *jia* were most likely from extant vernacular tales or vernacular forms of religious discourse.<sup>12</sup> There are at least two relevant antecedent texts, however, that *Xiyou zhengdao shu* clearly cites.

One is a commentary on *Xiyou ji*. Of the seven commentaries containing the entire hundred-chapter text, *Xiyou zhengdao shu* is the second.<sup>13</sup> It refers to its only antecedent, *Li Zhuowu xiansheng piping Xiyou ji* 李卓吾批評西遊記 (Mr. Li Zhuowu [Li Zhi] comments on



*Xiyou ji*),<sup>14</sup> the title of which claims attribution to the scholar and iconoclast Li Zhi 李贄, *zi* Zhuowu 卓吾 (1527–1602), but is generally accepted as the work of a “shadowy figure,” Ye Zhou 葉晝 (ca. 1640), who apparently produced a series of commentaries on *xiaoshuo* under Li Zhi’s name (Plaks 1987, 515). Though this commentary offers only meager remarks, it expresses partisan loyalty to Daoism, including one citation of Daoist patriarch Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓 (b. 796), thought to be a founder of Internal Alchemy.<sup>15</sup> There are also a handful of references to *zhen* and *jia* regarding disguised figures and several citations of *zhen* as a descriptor of authentic writing. One case in point praises the writing of *Xiyou ji* as “writing false (*jia*) things as if they were genuine (*zhen*) events” (說假事宛如真事, 1278), the clearest expression of its kind. Hence the “Li Zhi” commentary does contain in telegraphic form hints of a Daoist perspective and valorization of writerly qualities as personally authentic, but certainly not the developed poetics of an interplay within the category of the genuine. It appears that the primary antecedent containing the pairing of *zhen* and *jia*, however, is *Xiyou ji* itself. The discussion and citations below suggest how the commentary relies somewhat on its text for these values, but the central purpose of this paper will remain with the poetics and innovations found within the commentary.

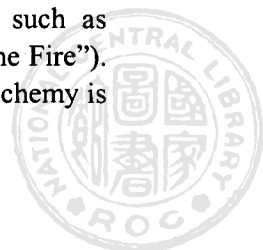
In spite of any other inspiration and even outright admissions in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* for other textual sources, the direct claim of the commentary resides within a Daoist framework, and views other texts and traditions from that perspective. It consistently argues for a Daoist view. The majority of Daoist-oriented notes correlate the five phases (Wood, Fire, Metal, Water, Earth) to items in the text of *Xiyou ji*, drawing on any kind of possibility from slight hints in names to explicit declarations of allegory in chapter titles and embedded poems. For example, the commentary addresses the tranquility of Monkey in his home in Water Curtain Cave on Flower Fruit Mountain, before the journey properly begins. The commentary notes that Monkey’s peace derives from the full complement of the five phases, each in harmony: Metal is present in the iron bridge, Water from the waterfall covering the cave, Earth in the form of the mountain, Wood from the flowers and



fruit, and Fire from the cooking fires and utensils within the cave. Monkey loses this stability because of imbalance among the phases.<sup>16</sup> Names of demons and their lairs often provide material for five phase treatment.

*Xiyou zhengdao shu* also addresses some larger patterns with five phase analysis, as when an episode represents an excess requiring compensation. Following the fiery experience of Red Boy, for instance, the commentary notes a narrative lull in preparation for the watery episode of Black Rooster Kingdom—since the phase of Fire is consumed by Water.<sup>17</sup> Fully one third of the roughly four hundred prefatory points utilize five phase analysis.<sup>18</sup> The five phases derive from ancient tradition and could refer to any number of specific positions of belief, or none in particular, but *Xiyou zhengdao shu* establishes that its system of analysis derives from the system in *Wuzhen pian*. The commentary cites Zhang Boduan by name several times and quotes an entire passage from his text,<sup>19</sup> but it offers the most striking evidence of its dependence through an involved application of Zhang's theory, shown by use of the term *zhen* in a sense taken directly from *Wuzhen pian*.<sup>20</sup>

*Zhen* has a history as a technical term for Daoist transformation, a word with ancient associations of spiritual ascension.<sup>21</sup> *Wuzhen pian* uses the term *zhen* in this sense to name an ultimate goal of development, which is not uncommon in Daoist texts, as in the *Santong qi* 參同契 (Harmony of the three). The text is composed of several hundred sermons in verse that teach the path to enlightenment through meditation on *yin-yang* and the five phases. It is one of the early major texts of the school of Internal Alchemy, if not the first major text for late imperial Internal Alchemy schools. The emphasis on final goal is consistent with the commentary, but it is shared with many other texts as well. *Wuzhen pian* does make a unique application of *zhen*, however, that the commentary directly mimics. In *Wuzhen pian* the term *zhen* also describes certain qualities of meditative development, to designate certain qualities of the five phases by forming binomes such as *zhenshui* 真水 (“Genuine Water”) or *zhenhuo* 真火 (“Genuine Fire”). The terms are not explained, but since the goal of Internal Alchemy is

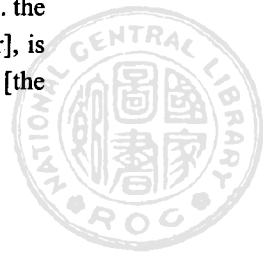


to achieve cessation of the cycles of *yin* and *yang* through visualization of the five phases, the *zhen* quality of one of the five phases probably refers to the *effective* aspect of these meditational concepts, that quality of the meditational virtue of Fire, for example, which leads to personal accomplishment.<sup>22</sup> Hence “Genuine Water” *zhenshui* should better be translated in the context of *Wuzhen pian* as “Effective Water” or “Transformational Water.”<sup>23</sup>

*Xiyou zhengdao shu* routinely uses identical terms. For example, the commentary refers to Heaven-Reaching River as “Effective Water” (*zhenshui*), since the pilgrims traverse the obstacle successfully. Guanyin’s vase of sweet dew is also called “Effective Water” as it resolves a serious crisis. The commentary considers whether Black Water River may be “Effective Water” due to its cycle within the five phases.<sup>24</sup> In Chapter 47, in regard to the removal of the animal spirits posing as Daoist priests, the commentary remarks that passing this obstacle “the (embodied) self [obtains] Effective Water” *wushen zhenshui* 吾身真水.<sup>25</sup> This last sense explicitly associates “effective” *zhen* with personal progress to completion. These few citations among many indicate the routine application of Internal Alchemy terminology. The commentary uses effective *zhen* as an organic component of its extensive five phase analysis, an application with direct reference to the theories of *Wuzhen pian* that verifies the centrality of transformation claimed by the title and the Yu Ji Preface.

But the Daoist application in the commentary is not entirely compatible with the existing text of *Wuzhen pian*. In several passages another descriptive term is used which is *not* found in Zhang Boduan’s system. In four locations *Xiyou zhengdao shu* includes the term *jia* (false, counterfeit) to form binomes placed counter to descriptive *zhen* terms. The examples are few but significant. Note that nothing draws attention to the altered system—among the welter of five phase comments it appears perfectly routine.

To explain [the Green Buffalo episode] from the five phases . . . the Metal of Gold (or Metal) Helmet Mountain [the buffalo’s lair], is Counterfeit Metal (*jiajin*); the Metal of the Iron Pestle, [the



subduing weapon,] is thus Genuine Metal (*zhenjin*). Counterfeit Metal can not withstand Fire, but genuine Metal defies Fire.<sup>26</sup>

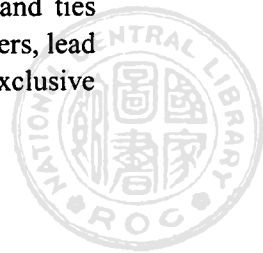
若以五行論之，牛為醜屬，土也；其色青，則土而兼木；窟於金兜，則土而兼金。天下但有不畏水之土木，寧有不畏火之金？況以心猿之真火臨之，宜無有不銷釋者。而卒無損其毫毛，則以金兜山之金，假金也；金剛琢之金，乃真金。假金畏火，真金不畏火。<sup>27</sup>

If *Xiyou zhengdao shu* is utilizing five phase analysis for paths to ultimate transformation (*zhen*), then how are we to make sense of the pairing of the transformative with the counterfeit? Perhaps here the criterion of success for *zhen*—one aspect of Metal is effective at subduing some other quality of Metal—is compatible with Zhang’s idea of effectiveness. We have more clarification and an argument in the initial pairing of the two qualities in Chapter Two:

[The term] Water [in this episode] is the same one [for Water Belly Demon and Water Curtain Cave], but there are differences between Water Curtain and Water Belly. “Curtain” is of the Dao, “Belly” is of the Demonic. This is nothing more than the difference between Genuine Water (*zhenshui*) and Counterfeit Water (*jiashui*). The discussions in these days on dragons, tigers, lead and mercury, are they not [correspondent with] “Curtain” and “Belly”?

同一水也，而有水簾，水臟之別。簾則為道，臟則為魔，只是真水假水不同也。今之談龍虎鉛汞者，將為簾乎，將為臟乎？<sup>28</sup>

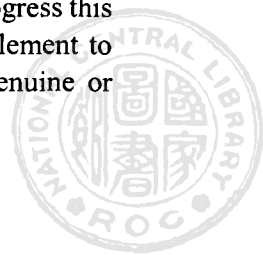
This passage is the first example of five phase analysis in the body of the commentary (aside from the Yu Ji Preface). It also initiates the pairing of *zhen* and *jia* and equates the pairing roughly with a complementary pairing of Dao and Demonic, respectively, and ties these to specific Internal Alchemy discussion, as “dragons, tigers, lead and mercury.” The last are sets of *yin-yang* correlative pairs exclusive



to Internal Alchemy texts, also found as well in the text of *Xiyou ji*. Hence the commentary here shows an effort to demonstrate the relationship between *Xiyou ji* and *Wuzhen pian*, but there is no explicit recognition of the innovation on the theories of the source text. This passage does provide a way for the pair to function in complementary terms, though, in which description of success can be complemented by description of hindrance to progress—in terms of “Demonic” or destructive qualities.

By placing *jia* complementary to *zhen* in reference to the phase Water (*zhenshui, jiashui*) *Xiyou zhengdao shu* dramatically alters the received understanding of the system derived from *Wuzhen pian*, *Santongqi* and other alchemical texts. In previous texts *zhen* is not correlated to *jia* because it means something different than the common sense of *zhen* and *jia*. In the traditional Daoist texts *zhen* means transformation, ascendance, completion, even perfection. By juxtaposing *zhenshui* (which in *Wuzhen pian* is an aspect of the phase Water effective towards personal completion) with *jiashui* the original framework is changed. *Zhen* as used in the commentary now can take on the common meaning of “genuine,” original, identity, not an impostor, not a deceit. Rather than see this as a careless conflation, it seems rather to deliberately provide for the Daoist sense of *zhen* to carry two simultaneous meanings—both “transformative” and “genuine” here, so that it can also have a sense of “transformative” in contexts where it primarily signifies “genuine.” The introduction of *jia* as a Daoist descriptor establishes a dialectic or poetics that incorporates both senses of *zhen* and also draws *jia* into a Daoist framework which apparently never before made use of it in this sense, at least textually.

*Jia* can make sense in the Daoist perspective as it takes on the sense of obstacle to personal achievement, which is clearly indicated in the passage above. Although a dramatic innovation for a text, it may be the case that *Xiyou zhengdao shu* merely put into print what already existed in orally transmitted teachings.<sup>29</sup> As an obstacle to progress this sense of *jia* could be translated as “destructive,” as a complement to effective qualities. The terms may also refer to what is genuine or

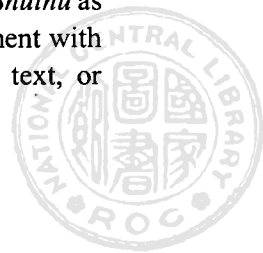


counterfeit. A correlative pair of effective-or-genuine (*zhen*) and destructive-or-counterfeit (*jia*) then still contributes to the foundation in *Wuzhen pian*. The genuine and the transformative are not contradictory in the system of the commentary. In fact we may see in the concept of *jia* a means for employing five phase analysis to the text when explanations begin to get difficult, as when the Green Buffalo and Monkey are both correlated to Metal in the same episode, thus preserving the Daoist motive of the reading. Hence *Xiyou zhengdao shu*'s expansion of the transformative system as found in *Wuzhen pian* still maintains the value of personal movement and development for ultimate objectives. The stated objective found in the Yu Ji Preface to elucidate the allegory of the text is still viable and consistent.

Thus far it seems that *Xiyou zhengdao shu* works to accommodate Daoism for the purpose of the text and also accommodates the reading of the text to clarify and even improve on Daoist teachings. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* seems to take *Xiyou ji* as a valid work of Daoist doctrine, significant enough to justify an alteration of the system of its source. The subtle exception of inserted counterfeit qualities serves to prove the rule that the commentary follows the Daoism of personal transformation advocated in title, preface and a mass of comments, including the large category of five phase comments. There is not a sense of ambiguity in spite of the inserted correlative. The reference is clear and the alteration is acceptable. But also within the commentary there is another frame of reference of the genuine to a text that is not Daoist, but which is also taken seriously, and it is between these two contexts the commentary begins its poetics on the nature of the genuine.

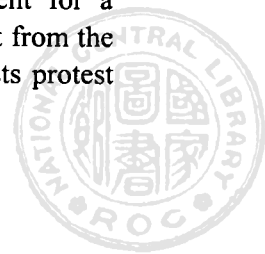
### *Zhen* of Personal Authenticity from Jin Shengtan's *Shuihu zhuan*

Although references to Jin Shengtan's text and methods are not as prevalent as the references to the system in *Wuzhen pian*, there can be no question that *Xiyou zhengdao shu* engages Jin's version of *Shuihu* as a serious work as well. In a word, the commentary's engagement with *Shuihu* equates roughly with the affective qualities of the text, or



writing for pleasure. The commentary also establishes that the mythic quality of *Xiyou ji* does not limit the text but rather lends coherence and increases its compositional virtue, which stands in sharp contrast to explicit and harsh criticism by Jin Shengtān. A brief review will show how Jin Shengtān's literary criticism supplies *Xiyou zhengdao shu* with a meaningful context to establish an ethos of personal authenticity, including Jin's criticism of *Xiyou ji*. The success with which the commentary absorbs the ideas of personal authenticity can be shown by the sharp critique delivered by subsequent Daoist commentators on *Xiyou ji*, but also in its incorporation into a later masterpiece. That being the case, it is imperative to note that the application of Jin's criteria to the text also shows the commentary's actual foundation upon overarching Daoist meaning, even while citing another frame of reference outside of a Daoist perspective. Here also the range of poetics expands as *Xiyou zhengdao shu* pairs *zhen* and *jia* in its reference to Jin Shengtān's criticism. It is here that the reader must either suspend judgment or apply effort to maintain a sense of consistency to the idea.

Jin Shengtān's revolutionary commentary on *Shuihu* valorizes contemporary perspective, as opposed to that of great antiquity, by demonstrating the value of a popular, undeniably modern text derived from a story cycle on brigands in a marsh. David Rolston has recently established Jin Shengtān's commentary as a labyrinthine advocacy of personal authenticity, which this paper takes as the basis of his commentary's approach.<sup>30</sup> Jin's commentary claims the patterns and qualities of the composition of that text demonstrate its value, achieved by a master of deliberate and careful design (attributed to an ostensible author, Shi Nai'an). To show the sophisticated patterns he finds in his text, he makes use of fifteen terms which he derives from literary and dramatic criticism (20ff; cf. John C. Y. Wang, *passim*). From aspects of fine detail such as the close reading of particular words to larger patterns of movement or significance and juxtaposition, Jin constantly argues for an integrated narrative, written or made by an organizing, perceptive intellect. All of these equate with an argument for a significant text with affective qualities. By choosing his text from the genre of *xiaoshuo* (unverifiable narrative),<sup>31</sup> he also suggests protest

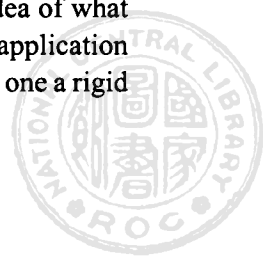


with the historiography valorized by the imperial administration for assumptions of verisimilitude.<sup>32</sup> The contrast hints at an aesthetic subversion I also find in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*. A late comment betrays deference to Jin's methods and values, showing how *zhen* here applies to an *aesthetic* significance.

In narrative writings how are the skillful [writers] differentiated from the bumbling? Simply in that the bumbling ones tell the truth (*zhen*), but it becomes false (*jia*) [in their treatment of it]. The skillful tell a falsehood, but it becomes authentic (*zhen*) [in their treatment of it]. As in the [story] in this chapter, is it that there are really, actually such characters and such events? The vividness of depiction is overwhelming [such that] it causes readers not to dare suspect it as false on the first reading, and on the next reading not to harbor doubt that it is authentic (*zhen*). [The] convincing detail [of names of characters] and life-like [incidents in the tale of Tripitaka's childhood cause that one] can not tell . . . who is a genuine [historical figure] (*zhen*) and who is invented (*jia*). . . . Even touching upon the two gentlemen, Zuo [Qiuming] and [Si]ma [Qian], I fear they were no different than this facility [in writing].”

從來敘事文字，巧拙從何而分？只是拙者說真成假，巧者說假成真。如此回所記載，寧必確然實有其人其事哉？而傳神寫照，咄咄逼人，令讀者一讀不敢疑其假，再讀不疑其真。且無論寇媼之無誑，賊口之供招，獄卒之侵凌，與夫豆腐翁媼之私語，只如陳少保，寇銘，銘老兒，張旺，張氏穿針兒，薑乾一，薑坤三許多姓名，鑿鑿可據，竟不知與陳光蕊，劉洪一回事孰真孰假。即起左，馬兩君而操觚，恐亦未易有此。<sup>33</sup>

Note the appearance in this passage of four citations of *zhen* and the direct pairing with *jia*. Not one of these uses of *zhen* could refer to the Daoist sense of completion in *Wuzhen pian* (although the idea of what is genuine may connect with the commentary's special application discussed above). Here *zhen* refers to two different qualities, one a rigid



reliance upon factual presentation (as with the verisimilitude of orthodox historical texts—see below), and the other an authentic presentation/reception of personal experience. These qualities are offset or complemented by a meaning of artificiality, referring to hypocritical error or pleasing invention (*jia*). The positive senses of *zhen* and *jia* in the passage above signify the personal authenticity of well-crafted composition. In this passage the commentary discusses what constitutes good writing, which depends entirely on the enjoyment of the reader, and the reader's enjoyment of it identifies with uncertainty about the reliability of events or figures in the tale. There is no question in this passage that the story is invented, but the reader should *experience* a sense of believability and should engage it with the weight of feeling. These are the same qualities advocated by Jin Shengtān in his promotion of *xiaoshuo*.

The sense of subversive hints is also resonant with that of Jin Shengtān and is a corollary to valuing the reader's experience. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* asserts the validity of *xiaoshuo* precisely because it is unverifiable (*jia*), and declares it as at least equal to the work of the founders of Chinese historiography. The names of these founders, Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (ca. 556–451 BCE) and Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–186 CE), indicate reliance upon an idea of an author, a perceptive intellect who composes patterned, significant texts. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* boldly claims *Xiyou ji* as a contender for this orthodox sort of writing, implying superiority through its deliberate falsification (*jia*). This passage shows reliance upon the values of Jin Shengtān's commentary even though he does not pair *zhen* and *jia* in his critical methods. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* does refer to Jin Shengtān, but its response to his criticism of *Xiyou ji* shows an affirmation of its Daoist position.

It responds because Jin Shengtān is perhaps the harshest critic of *Xiyou ji* in all of traditional literature. In his introductory preamble to *Shuihu*, Jin Shengtān writes that *Xiyou ji* “is only kneaded and pinched together at the segments, like fireworks on New Year's, one batch after another going by without anything connecting them together.” He next asserts *Shuihu* as an ideal *xiaoshuo* because it avoids mythic elements



such as “ghosts, gods, demons or omens”<sup>34</sup> unlike *Xiyou ji* which, “whenever it arrives at a place it cannot get through (*nong bulai*), then Guanyin saves [the situation].”

西遊又太無聊地了，只是逐段捏捏撮撮，譬如大年夜放煙火，一陣一陣過，中間全沒貫串，便使人讀之，處處可住。．．．水滸傳不說鬼神怪異之事，是他氣力過人處。西遊記每到弄不來時，便是南海觀音救了。<sup>35</sup>

These two attacks are closely related. Jin implies the work is fragmented because of its manipulation of fantastic elements. The interference of the bodhisattva, according to Jin, creates episodic, disconnected narrative. Jin’s comments, again, focus on the question of composition because *Xiyou ji* brings in the bodhisattva due to a writerly difficulty (“cannot get through” *nong bulai*).

*Xiyou zhengdao shu* apparently responds directly to Jin’s critique and justifies *Xiyou ji* in Jin’s terms, but also reveals an underlying purpose it reads in the tale which Jin rejects.

Whenever [one] writes a great work, there must first be a place where the overall plan is presented. The [narrative] strand is then in the hand and does not become tangled. . . . If [the pilgrims] were brought together by a star spirit after their ascensions, they would equate with Li Kui, Wu Song, and Lu Zhishen [major figures in *Shuihu*].<sup>36</sup> The marvel of the author in this book is in the several hidden [prefigurations] (*maifu*) in this chapter; first of “sand” [first character in the name of Sha Monk], second of “pig,” third of “horse,” and fourth of “monkey;”<sup>37</sup> the order is clearly not accidental. Even as Tripitaka goes out from Chang An, passes the Two Border Mountain, the path lies neatly arranged into the future, whereupon there is an order to [events] with the strength of bursting bamboo, [which proceeds] without the least bit of effort. This is the great plan of the novel. The vital skill of writing is never far from [following a plan]. Is it not only *xiaoshuo* (unverifiable narrative) that does it in this manner?



凡作一部大文字，必有提綱挈領之處，然後線索在手，絲絲不亂。．．．此三徒一馬者，固非長安所隨，唐王所賜者也。若必待登程之後，逐一零星湊合，便是水滸傳中之李逵，武松，魯智深矣。此書作者之妙，妙在於此一回內盡數埋伏，一沙，二豬，三馬，四猿，先後次第，灼然不紊。及至唐僧出了長安城，過了兩界山，一路收拾將來，便有順流破竹之勢，毫不費力。此一書之大綱領也。作文要訣，總不出此，豈獨小說為然？<sup>38</sup>

In this passage we see Jin's methods: the value of *xiaoshuo*, the signs of deliberate composition, the unity of the text. But this passage also directly opposes Jin's critique of *Xiyou ji* by asserting its equivalence with *Shuihu* through divine purpose. Against Jin's own statement, *Xiyou zhengdao shu* finds coherence in *Shuihu* in an overall spiritual structure.<sup>39</sup> Moreover the commentary associates the locus of order of *Shuihu*, its mythical beginning, with the key to the structure of *Xiyou ji*, the apotheosis of the Pilgrims at the conclusion. The commentary establishes the unity of *both* texts through their bases in spiritual structure. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* identifies the structures provided by Jin Shengtan but finds it supported by values of divine assistance.

To further show how *Xiyou zhengdao shu* can simultaneously use Jin's terms while bearing an allegorical weight, consider the commentary's use of *miao* 妙 "marvelous," one of Jin's terms. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* seems to use "marvelous" exclusively to signify exceptional writing, but close reading betrays that it also involves the grand scheme of spiritual development as well, because exclamations of "marvelous" in the commentary also connect the divine purpose of the text with the *xiaoshuo* values of unity, deliberate pattern and the pleasure of the reader established by Jin Shengtan. In reference to the Red Boy (*Honghai'er* 紅孩兒) incident, for example, *Xiyou zhengdao shu* explicitly remarks on the compositional pleasure of the text, its value in engaging the reader.

The marvel (*miao*) of this episode is not in the battle engagement, not in placing the fires [of Red Boy], nor is it in using the ocean



waters to extinguish the fire, but just in the tipping of the pure vase over the mountain, writing the character “mystery” in the palm of the hand, causing the demon to forget its fire, its reason for fighting . . . This is called good writing; this is called a grand style.

而此傳之妙，妙在於不鑿兵，不放火，亦不用海水滅火，只將淨瓶傾於山上，迷字寫於掌中，使此妖忘其為火，並忘其為戰，自然而然，不動聲色，拱手而入法門，受戒行，西來大意，已了了無餘矣。此之謂好文字，此之謂大手筆。<sup>40</sup>

This passage is clearly focused on the compositional qualities of the text. However, note that the qualities praised in this passage are those of conversion, indicating an eye for allegory. Good writing is identified here as what describes the bodhisattva’s direct actions, not the fight between Red Boy and Monkey nor the engaging narrations of water-and-fire contests, which lead to numerous five phase discussions in the commentary. These may be quite important in the commentary, but they are not what constitutes grand style in writing. The affective power of the chapter is in the description of Guanyin’s resolution of the conflict. The *xiaoshuo* values of readerly engagement focus on reclamation of the wayward creature Red Boy. Red Boy, after all, is an errant spirit who properly belongs under the bodhisattva’s guardianship. This note is significant because it shows that the commentary’s evaluation of style requires a valorization of the function of the bodhisattva in the narrative. This kind of narrative action is precisely what Jin Shengtan claims to abhor, and yet *Xiyou zhengdao shu* employs the tools (and the value of personal feeling) he provides in order to identify it.

The commentary also finds divine purpose in another passage more clearly delineating affective response. When Monkey deceives and entices Pigsy to join the pilgrims by masquerading as Pigsy’s wife, Cui Lan, the commentary explores how this pleasing counterfeit engages the reader.

[The passage] is marvelous in that it is neither actual (*zhen*) nor

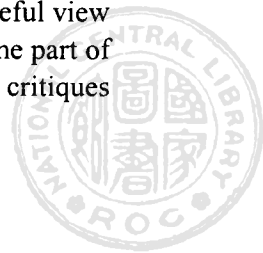


false (*jia*), neither tight nor loose, neither sweet nor bitter. Its affective and literary qualities are both superlative, causing Pigsy to laugh to tears, nearly to death, which alone [counts as] the style of vivid portraiture, [as vivid as episodes in *Shuihu*].

篇中描寫行者變翠蘭處，妙在不真不假，不緊不松，不甜不苦，情文兩絕。使老豬笑涕死活不得，才是傳神繪影之筆。若使見面就打，何易水滸傳之小霸王醉入銷金帳耶。

Here again we find the correlative of the genuine distanced from the Daoist perspective. *Zhen* and *jia* refer to a pleasing ambiguity for the reader, for whom Pigsy acts as an implied reader. The comparison to *Shuihu* and the reference to composition further mark this passage as one concerned with *xiaoshuo*. What the two texts (*Shuihu* and *Xiyou ji*) share is a telling engagement of the reader. But at the same time Monkey's antics lead to Pigsy's conversion and commitment. This passage, then, marks how the vividness of the description functions for the reader as the deceit functions in the text for Pigsy. It is the same movement praised in the Red Boy episode, toward the goal of ultimate transformation.

In these passages on the compositional value of *Xiyou ji* that make particular reference to Jin Shengtang and his methods, the sense of the genuine acquires a range of meanings beyond any simple definition. The poetics of *zhen* and *jia* stands in an unresolved state with various contexts and significations. The tension places reliance upon the activity of the reader. If the reader chooses to resolve a working idea of how the terms function (a reader may choose not to resolve anything), then we may view this as an invitation for the reader to participate in making decisions in the face of the commentary's ambiguity, or we may view it as a more forceful requirement, in which the reader must decide among possibilities. Martin Huang feels that the *xiaoshuo* commentators in general, and *Xiyou zhengdao shu* in particular, impose an unwanted interpretive mandate upon the reader (48). A careful view of the poetics, however, permits more necessary activity on the part of the reader than would be otherwise acknowledged. Again, the critiques



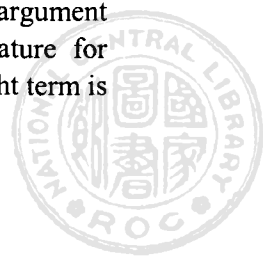
of later critics suggest their dislike for the ambiguity. The sense of final goal as one possible perspective drives the need to decide. A more secular view carries no incumbent requirement.

These passages all function through the sense of personal authenticity, of reading for pleasure and identifying good composition as pleasurable. The allegorical underpinning of *Xiyou zhengdao shu* shows through in these and other passages in which the pleasure of the reader seems to require a delight in the mythic qualities of the text. All the while the usages of *zhen* and *jia* are various. The senses of these terms are still suspended against the Daoist application and its innovative use of *jia*. Does the innovation in the commentary only provide for the involutions of *zhen* and *jia* as it relates to personal authenticity?

The poetics of *zhen* and *jia* are certainly dynamic, but there is significant coherence in a shared focus on the individual, which seems to be the real point of the poetics, after all. Jin Shengtan's valorization of personal authenticity places a great value on feelings and emotion while Zhang Boduan's theories build on the possibility of the self to reach an eventual stage of completion. The commentary's poetics allows for a personal exploration of the idea that individual feeling can work for Daoist completion. And yet the category of the genuine continues in still other contexts that may help us read through a frame of allegory which is not clearly spelled out. Even though justifying the alternative reading of the text (allegory) is, by volume, the primary concern of *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, the commentary does not specify a structure. Tracing the genuine takes us to hints provided in small parts of the commentary that help identify how figurative language functions.

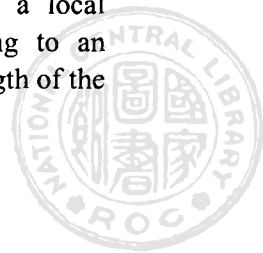
### *Zhen* of the Restored Figure

In order to discuss how allegory functions, however, I must first clarify terms. The question is in finding the right words for an argument from the traditional period which lacks precise nomenclature for figurative language. Part of the problem in identifying the right term is



that traditional Chinese literary criticism has no technical term for allegory. The closest analytical terminology consists of several loose terms for figurative reference.<sup>41</sup> *Xiyou zhengdao shu* makes a claim for allegory if for no other reason than its argument for figurative readings cover more than local reference—as Andrew Plaks cogently argues (*Archetype* 168–71). On the other hand, there are good, sound arguments for distinguishing between “figure” and “allegory,” which must be considered because *Xiyou zhengdao shu* merges these distinctions and yet implicitly relies upon them. For some critics, such as Erich Auerbach, “figure” refers specifically to associations made between two historical beings or events, while “allegory” refers only to fictional narratives (the artificiality of which forces appeal to another meaning).<sup>42</sup> From passages above, such as comment on the falsity of the founders of Chinese historiography, it seems the commentary identifies the value of allegory within its deliberately fictional or invented qualities, eschewing the assumptions of verisimilitude in orthodox history. But passages below indicate continued habits of reading that seem to rely on a sense of figure in Auerbach’s sense, an idea of historical or at least tangible relevance, and which also seem to form the ground for allegory in the commentary.

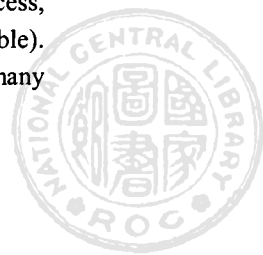
Another part of the problem in terminology is that *Xiyou zhengdao shu* seems to take the view that figurative readings of all sorts are welcome in the same basket of commentary and often on the same level. A local observation of what would seem to be metaphor is just as useful for showing that the narrative can be read for the Dao as are the large-scale patterns of significance. For example, the narrative’s mention of the term *fangxiaxin* 放下心 (usually “be careful,” or “relax”) is read to mean “losing” (*fang*) the heart (*xin*), which the commentary deems worthy of a full prefatory comment.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile Monkey’s banishment on two occasions indicates the same thing, the heart misplaced.<sup>44</sup> These are not equivalent levels or types of figuration—one is simply a word of dialogue, the other an episode extending over several chapters. Anything might prompt a local observation on a “borrowed” or figural meaning, leading to an onslaught or deluge of figurative readings which over the length of the



commentary (and due to thetic statements in key locations) stretches to allegory. Implicitly the reader has a mandate to read constantly for figurative meaning, without rest. In the mass of figurative reference, then, what is the fundamental figure? Does the commentary provide any sense that there is a ground to reading, that there is that something behind the text for which the reader must strive? Is there an axis to the spin of the poetics of the genuine? The commentary does provide some hints along the thread of the genuine. These are not explicit declarations of the same emphasis as the general assertion that *Xiyou ji* is allegorical, but appear rather as habits of reading and thought that offer the role of self as part of the reading process and as the recipient of transformation through reading. The ground of the figure—from which to read and the goal for which one reads—is a formulation of the self.

Hence for the purpose of this paper “allegory” signifies a broad application to a secondary meaning which relies on even more basic concepts of figurative or figural reference. The basic unit of allegory in the sense taken in this paper is a figure, a single item of the extensive allegory identified in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*. The commentary makes a brief explicit note on a basic kind of figure as it addresses doubled characters or impostors. Note this comment takes its prompt from the pairing of *zhen* and *jia* in the narrative and extends the range of *zhenjia* poetics beyond what we have seen thus far.

The title [of Chapter Ninety-Five] reads “The False (*jia*) Coalesces to Acquire a Form,” “Genuine (*zhen*) Yin Returns to the Right.” It is clear [from this] that where there is the genuine there must be its counterfeit. This entire book of *Xiyou [ji]* is full of counterfeits (*jia*), even to the extent of the counterfeit Pilgrim, three counterfeit [Tripitakas], a counterfeit Guanyin, and a counterfeit Tathagatha . . . an innumerable multitude [of counterfeits]. [They even extend as far as] the Green Lion’s counterfeit of the King of Black Rooster Kingdom, and the Jade Hare’s counterfeit of the Indian Princess, both of whom are manifest before one’s eyes and ears (or tangible). Since these can be falsified, then there must also be many



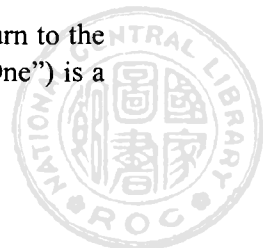
charlatans (*Liqiu*)<sup>45</sup> in the thousands of nations of the world [in the book], indeed. Even so, with the arrival of the Accomplished One (*zhenren*) the impostors and forgeries are immediately revealed. What then is the Pilgrim [Monkey] in relation to the [magic] Qin Mirror or the rhinoceros horn of Ox Island [that reveals hidden intentions]<sup>46</sup>? It is none other than Pilgrim's ability—the heart of one entering the Dao contains the genuine but no falsehood (*jia*).

提綱雲「假合形骸」，「真陰歸正」。天下事莫善於真，莫不善於假，然而有真不能無假者，亦勢使然也。西遊一書，其為假者多矣。如假行者，假唐僧三眾，假觀音，假如來，不一而足，猶曰杳渺不可究詰也。至於青獅之假烏雞國王，玉兔之假天竺公主，皆昭然在人耳目之前。此而可假，則凡大千世界家國之間，其為黎丘也多矣。然而真人一至，則奸偽立破。由此言之，行者其秦宮之鏡，牛渚之犀乎？是非行者之能也，入道之心固有真而無假也。<sup>47</sup>

The figure (a historical person) is what is genuine here, another layer of significance of the term, or rather two more senses. One sense is the genuineness of figures such as the King of Black Rooster Kingdom and the Indian Princess who are human figures in *Xiyou ji*. The other is the quality of the *Zhenren*, here Monkey, which I discuss below. This passage makes a note that these two human figures, King and Princess, are “manifest before one's eyes and ears” or tangible, perceptive to the physical senses. The impostors of other types of figures are not as significant, simply masquerades of invented characters.

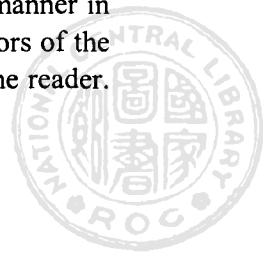
This implies that in *Xiyou ji* those impostors with the ability to take on the appearance of tangible beings are of a higher order of threat than those posing as invented types. Impostors are here labeled *jia*. Elsewhere *jia* could signify a pleasing ambiguity, but not here. There is no sense of delight in the trick of posing one entity for another, but rather this passage concludes with a serious statement on what a Daoist must do in regard to deceptive counterfeits.

The other sense of genuine in this passage seems to return to the Daoist sense of final completion. *Zhenren* (“Accomplished One”) is a



Daoist title for one who has achieved completion. It is also the title Monkey achieves at the end of the tale. Here the commentary implies that Monkey acts as that part of the self that perceives anything contrary to its own progress.<sup>48</sup> Only “the heart of one entering the Dao” can perceive the real threat. This last line of the passage addresses potential Daoist adherents, or in other words, the reader. The inherent idea is of the relevance between figures in the text and the possibilities of the reader. The most compelling entities, historical figures of an order like the reader, can be dangerously deceptive. The antidote to error is a reader who will act as a *zhenren* to follow the Dao and accept the challenge of personal development for final goal. In this sense Monkey acts as the governor of a set of parts of the self. He is the one whose acts will be most effective at healing the division of the self (see Shao 2). The commentary, then, here identifies a type of figure as distinct due to its shared plane with the reader. The immediacy of this type with its attendant dangers is a reflection of the reality or relevance of the reader’s identity. By implication the larger frame of figurative meaning, the purpose or allegory of the journey, depends upon the possibility of identifying transformative selves.

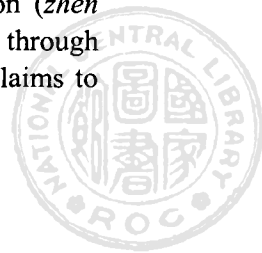
*Xiyou zhengdao shu* also argues from the figural sense that completion is one of personal character and in so doing shows how to undo or read through the fundamental figure. The commentary shows how this is done by reading the “true natures” (*benxiang* 本相) of historical figures in reference to the figures of the text. This critical act signifies that the function of the figure can be identified. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* cites a poem by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) that claims the moral paragon of antiquity, Duke Zhou 周公, was horribly frightening, while the vilified rebel of the Han Dynasty, Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE, 23 CE), was modest and respectful with inferiors. Events reveal the true natures of humans since “the upright are manifest, but the wicked are not. The genuine (*zhen*) are manifest, the counterfeit (*jia*) are not manifest.” The apparent attributes, frightening and modest, respectively, “were not their true natures.”<sup>49</sup> Here we see a manner in which a deceptive figure, corollary to the counterfeit impostors of the passage on Chapter Ninety-Five above, can be revealed to the reader.



Subsequent events in history show the true characteristics of Duke Zhou and Wang Mang. Both are historical figures, so both figures function as the tangible figures of the King of Black Rooster Kingdom and the Indian Princess.

As figures they can be read and understood by the reader, a description of which is called *zhen*, because only the *zhen* are revealed—the manifestation itself indicates what is genuine. Taken together with the discussion on the impostors, this passage indicates an assumption of how the reader works through the text, by reading for patterns much like historical texts, as a relationship between reader and the figured other of the text. This is different than the general opposition to historiography seen above, but perhaps only in the sense that the commentary controls the purpose of the reading rather than depending upon imperial or official control of orthodox historical texts. When given an opportunity to provide its own significance, the commentary falls back upon the tradition of reading figures of history as relevant to Daoist transformation.

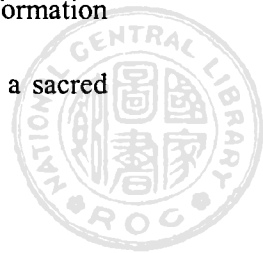
A concept of a personal identity of the reader is critical in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* because the entire reading project is headed by the instructions of the Yu Ji Preface: the events and figures of *Xiyou ji* “are none other than what my self makes of *yin* and *yang*,” and hence the tale is to “restore the cast-off heart.” The heart is the residence of the utter self in Daoism (Robinet 207). The Yu Ji Preface offers an example of a reader (Yu Ji himself) working through an allegory with minimal clues. His musings lead him to observe that as Monkey is able to achieve apotheosis (*foguo* 佛果), then “when one’s heart is restored it is called the genuine heart (*zhen xin*).” The path to completion is the path to the genuine self, which exists in potential—much as the reading of the tangible figures, and the manifestation of true nature are also potential. The idea is that the figure can be revealed (or unpacked, disentangled, or undone as we might say it). The point of reading the figure is to identify the role of the self and even to restore the self to its proper relationships and its true nature. The genuine person (*zhen ren*—a pun, but one allowed by the broad poetics here) can see through falsehood and figurative sleight-of-hand. Internal Alchemy claims to



do just that, to lead a person to moral achievement by undoing the process or cycles that lead to its corruption.<sup>50</sup> For common Daoist adherents, the completed self is an accomplishment for the future, always potential, and so it is always understood as a figure, a type of the present self but in perfected fulfillment. The commentary indicates a possibility of the reader figured in the text and an allegory of the self's successful transformation. *Zhen* here begins to take on the idea of the process of achieving a genuine and authentic self which finishes and completes the figurations of the mind and of texts, a kind of recovery. That recovery is achieved through the process of personal engagement within the narrative.

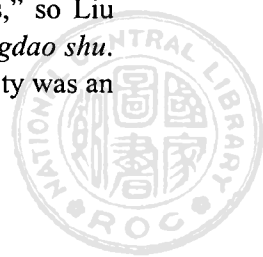
These few indications above only hint at the idea that the reader is *zhen* and capable of reading through the *jia* of the figurative readings of the text, of identifying the deliberate allegory the commentary sees in *Xiyou ji*, but the commentary's underlying grounding in a perfectible self, however, remains a firm element of the poetics. Every term in *Xiyou ji* is available as a figure of the journey of the self. The fundamental claim of *Xiyou zhengdao shu* remains throughout that *Xiyou ji* is a journey toward a final goal, internal to the self. The fulfillment of the affective expression, as found through Jin Shengtan's methods, is one with that figuration. The potential of actual personal recovery thus informs the category of the genuine. The complementary category of the genuine/counterfeit or as it also appears, the effective/destructive, authentic/orthodox, and revealed/occluded—these include the idea of *zhen* as a recovery of the self, an apotheosis (*chengzhen* 成真) out of figuration. Reading in this sense is a resurrection of the figure from the page into the reader. The reader must do the work—the commentary requires a creative effort to see these dynamics within the text even though it provides ample suggestion. The Daoist ideas of personal transformation then still function within the poetics. The commentary asks for creative approaches to ambiguities, but the foundation of the self described here depends upon a Daoist worldview and the assumptions of personal transformation also retain a significant sense in the poetics of the genuine.

Does *Xiyou zhengdao shu* succeed in making *Xiyou ji* a sacred



text of personal transformation? It is true that the subsequent history of the reading of the story cycle is filled with assumptions of a grand overall meaning to the text and its significance, much of it opposed to the position in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*. A brief review of commentaries is in order here as they break with ideas that seem to jump over them and descend directly to *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of red mansions, also known as *The story of the stone*) and its critics. There is a thread of poetics in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* that is not picked up again until the Gates of Illusion in that masterpiece, discussed below.

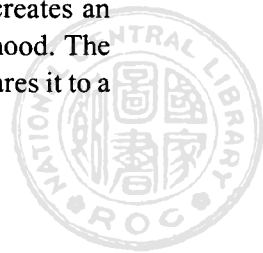
Most of the later commentators see *Xiyou ji* as a serious guide to Daoist development, but do not allow for any sense of personal authenticity as found in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*. Chen Shibin 陳士斌 (ca. 1696) in *Xiyou zhenquan* 西遊真詮 (Genuine commentary on *Xiyou ji*) presents a meticulous, methodical explication of the Dao in *Xiyou ji*. The terms *zhen* and *jia* occur numerous times throughout his commentary, including genuine and counterfeit forms of the five phases, but Chen in his finely crafted commentary seems to be rarely if ever interested in the idea of *zhen* as a writerly quality. He appears to view *Xiyou ji* as a marvelous manifestation of an intertextual nexus of the great works of divine or primal origin, or Genuine Beginning (真乙 *zhenyi*). Everything in his commentary is consistently linked back to primal origins, the recovery of which is the goal of Internal Alchemy. Chen has caustic words at the opening of his commentary critiquing predecessors (前人 *qianren*) for their twisted commentary and blundering ignorance of the Dao.<sup>51</sup> Liu Yiming clarifies Chen's view, which he adopts and develops. Liu castigates Wang Qi by name as exercising "private guesses" (*sicai* 私猜) and jokes (*xixue* 戲謔) to corrupt the reading of *Xiyou ji* (*Ziliao huibian* 343; Liu 50; cf. Rolston 297). This rebuff clearly addresses the element of personal authenticity in *Xiyou zhengdao shu* as Liu clarifies in his second preface that *Xiyou ji* is emphatically not "a book of genius" (*caizi zhi shu* 才子之書) but rather one of divine purpose (*shenxian zhi shu* 神仙之書). Jin Shengtian labeled *Shuihu zhuan* to be one of seven "books of genius," so Liu isolates reference to Jin as the critical feature of *Xiyou zhengdao shu*. The comment shows that the inclusion of personal authenticity was an



identifiable feature of *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, an inherent part of the poetics, so recognizable as to be vilified by later purist commentators.<sup>52</sup> The several other commentaries do not refer to *Xiyou zhengdao shu* in any other way than to accept the attribution first proposed in it, but they do each accept an almost solemn dedication of cosmic purpose to the text.<sup>53</sup>

Even twentieth-century revolutionaries and their followers chose to read *Xiyou ji* as a powerful text capable of transforming its readers in dramatic ways. But the most intriguing possible heritage of *Xiyou zhengdao shu* lies rather in the utilization of *zhen* and *jia* in *Honglou meng*. The most prominent appearance of the category appears on the gates to the Land of Illusion, translated by David Hawkes as: “Truth (*zhen*) becomes fiction (*jia*) when the fiction’s true; / Real (*you*) becomes not-real (*wu*) where the unreal’s real” 假作真時真亦假；無爲有處有還無 (Hawkes 55; Cao 8). One can see a resonance with passages such as the reference to Black Rooster Kingdom in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, discussed above, in which the skillful writers are those who “speak false [but it becomes] genuine” *shuo jia cheng zhen* 說假成真; or the brief citation in the forged Li Zhi commentary on “writing false (*jia*) things as if they were genuine (*zhen*) events” (above). According to Hawkes’ translation, *Honglou meng* conveys *zhen* and *jia* as correlatives on “fiction,” implying the greater “truth” available in deliberate fiction, but also a tension in the interrelatedness of the terms. This translation does effectively carry out the same intriguing tie between a deliberate falsehood conveying a greater personal authenticity as we see above.

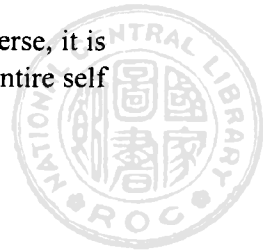
“Fiction,” of course, is a broad term to use, as are “truth” and “real.” But in Anthony Yu’s cogent analysis, the terms are not only concise but appropriate to the range of meanings *zhenjia* takes within *Honglou meng*. Yu sees *Honglou meng* as a masterpiece on reflexive artifice, in which the making of the work as fiction is part of the narrative itself. What Yu means by reflexive artifice is an idea of engaging the reader through a deliberate fictionalizing that creates an absorbing experience but which also indicates its own falsehood. The reflexive quality of the artifice Yu discovers as he aptly compares it to a



mirror and refers to the mirror-knowledge of Buddhism (145). Illusion (*jia*) and reality (*zhen*) reflect back and forth without clear referents. Even so the reader is invited in to the world of the writer. The objective of writing is thus to transcend boundaries and limitations of text. I may be forgiven for such crass oversimplification to note that Yu is opposing a long tradition of reading *Honglou meng* as documentary history. *Honglou meng* is so complete as a world that readers and critics forget that it is fiction. The point here is that the text of *Honglou meng* provides an example of engaging writing worked to a high degree of artistic excellence. But as Yu and other careful readers note, the point of the artistry is recognition of the illusion of its fiction. “The real goal is wisdom,” writes Dore Levy (155).

To press the point further and examine the *zhenjia* poetics of *Honglou meng* as a possible extension of the discussions in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, I would have to admit to an incredible fullness in *Honglou meng* far more extensive than anything provided for in the earlier commentary. Almost alone of the commentaries to *Xiyou ji*, however, *Xiyou zhengdao shu* establishes a serious religious discourse tied by its poetics on the genuine, the pairing of *zhen* and *jia*, to an engagement with affective drives of the reader. *Honglou meng* teaches how valid that can be, even after the fact. But the framework of the poetics on *zhen* and *jia* in *Honglou meng* is certainly more tied to the concept of *jia* in a Buddhist sense, a constant enticing to and turning away from the world of illusion. I would argue that *Xiyou zhengdao shu* is far more oriented to a Daoist sense of *zhen*, of the promise of personal transformation. Does the characterization of *Honglou meng* verify the reading of figure as explored in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*? Is the protagonist Baoyu 寶玉 real? Is Baoyu the reader? At this point, this article can proceed no further into what appears to be the choice of readers and their individual activity. But after the careful explication of reading a poetics of the genuine in *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, it seems there is a fascinating possibility for reference between it and the criticism of *Honglou meng*.

What is real? Perhaps as modern and ancient texts converse, it is the hope, and sometimes the failure, of the restoration of an entire self



to wholeness and health. For what we have in the pages of *Xiyou zhengdao shu* is not what Hu Shi apparently found in it, a repressive tangle of imperial constraints, but instead an opening into the possibility of reading, of discovering potentials of the self in the movement of careful reading.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hu Shi opposes all figurative reading at whatever level. “[T]his *Xiyou ji* is at most an interesting and comic work of fiction, fantastic fiction, and contains no marvelous symbolism. At most there is nothing more than a tone of satire and criticism in it. This satire is very clear. There are no minute [hints of allegory]. It is worthless to seek deeply for them” (quoted in Robertson 20).

<sup>2</sup> For biographical information see Robertson 54–59. Widmer’s articles provide extensive biography of Wang Qi. Huang Yongnian describes Huang Zhouxing’s background at length (31ff).

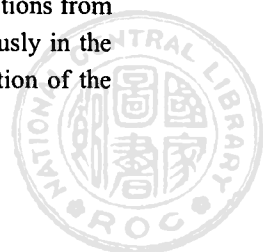
<sup>3</sup> These complications may simply be due to the milieu from which the text came, where some elements of literati society were deeply involved in Daoist activity. The argument for allegory is further complicated by the apparent inclusion of several forged elements which brings in issues that cannot be dealt with here, see my forthcoming article “The Yu Ji Preface in *Xiyou ji* Studies.”

<sup>4</sup> The word and meaning of “ultimate transformation” I have taken from Lawrence Thompson, who contrasts “the way[s] of personal transformation” with the general practice of Chinese religion as part of state, family and community ritual to achieve social harmony. The Daoist argument of the commentary locates its concerns solidly within the path to personal transformation (80–118).

<sup>5</sup> Many of the texts, terms and structures of late imperial Daoism were openly borrowed from Buddhist sources (Schipper 14).

<sup>6</sup> *Huang Zhouxing dingben Xiyou zhengdao shu* (2), XYZDS hereafter.

<sup>7</sup> The preface portrays Yu Ji working through what become the basic elements of the allegory for the commentary, after receiving suggestions from two mysterious Daoists. The Yu Ji Preface functions so harmoniously in the purpose of the commentary that it appears to be a deliberate creation of the



commentators. The preface may be an extension of their ideas on the superiority of invention as expressed in some passages cited here rather than intended to dupe readers. Liu Ts'un-ren suspects its veracity as do Widmer and Rolston. Plaks searches in vain for a copy of the preface in the traditional period that does not lie in the pages of the commentary (*Four Masterworks* 523–24).

<sup>8</sup> The prefatory comments usually provide separate items of three or four points which analyze aspects of the chapter which it precedes, occasionally with regard to the larger units of the episode or encounter or rarely discuss larger themes—such as the occurrence of doubled figures throughout the text as discussed below.

<sup>9</sup> For further discussion see Robertson (162–67) and Swanson (118–32).

<sup>10</sup> It is possible that vernacular and informal texts do pair terms in this way. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* may actually provide a bridge between formal and informal texts, but that is an area for further research.

<sup>11</sup> Shao Ping writes “Buddhism may be important to this [Shao Ping’s] study, but it is considered as an essential part of Zhang Boduan’s [D]aoist theology that incorporated Chan thought [禪 also known as Zen]” (9). “[禪 also known as Zen].” Shao here refers to the adoption of Chan (or Zen) doctrines, texts and organization by Internal Alchemy practitioners. *Xiyou zhengdao shu* operates in the same way, the Buddhist reference reinforcing their Daoist perspective. Of course anyone who approaches *Xiyou ji* from a purely Daoist perspective, exclusive to Buddhism, will run into difficulties in several places, but there is little doubt that is the point of view of this commentary.

<sup>12</sup> *Zhen* and *jia* are paired, for example, in *Han Xiangzi quan zhuan* 韓湘子全傳 (The full account of Han Xiangzi), ca. 1623. References seem to range between ideas of personal authenticity with other references to the Daoist meaning of *zhen* (<http://open-lit.com/bookindex.php?gbid=226>; accessed 28 September 2007).

<sup>13</sup> The commentaries in chronological order, by author, title and date only (excepting *Xiyou zhengdao shu*): Ye Zhou 葉晝, attributed, *Li Zhuowu xiansheng piping Xiyou ji* 李卓吾先生批評西遊記 (Mister Li Zhuowu [Li Zhi] comments on *Xiyou ji*), ca. 1626–1644; *Xiyou zhengdao shu*, 1663; Chen Shibin 陳士斌, *Xiyou zhenquan* 西遊真詮 (True commentary to *Xiyou ji*), 1696; Zhang Shushen 張書紳, *Xinshuo Xiyou ji* 新說西遊記 (New



explanation for *Xiyou ji*), 1749; Liu Yiming 劉一明, *Xiyou yuanzhi* 西遊原旨 (Original guide to *Xiyou ji*), 1802; Zhang Hanzhang 張含章, *Tongyi Xiyou zhengzhi* 通易西遊正旨 (The Novel, *Xiyou ji* and correct guide), 1839; and Han Jingzi 含晶子, *Xiyou ji pingzhu* 西遊記評註 (A commentary on *Xiyou ji*), 1891. See Robertson (17); for the most complete bibliography see Plaks (523–30).

<sup>14</sup> In reference to the unfolding of five phase development in Chapter 22 *Xiyou zhengdao shu* claims “If it were not for [Huang Zhouxing] and me [voice of Wang Qi] seeing through things with cool detachment would not [all readers] be deceived by the generation of Li [Zhi] and Ye [Zhou]?” 若非半非居士與余兩人今日冷眼觀破，豈不被李卓吾、葉仲子輩瞞殺乎？(XYZDS 187).

<sup>15</sup> Among these comments includes this defensive note, “If today there are no true Daoist priests, then false Buddhist monks are certainly many!” 如今真道士也沒有，假和尚太多 (605).

<sup>16</sup> The text reads “The Flower Fruit Mountain above, with the Water Curtain Cave and Iron Bridge, all five phases were compliantly prepared. As this was Monkey’s retreat, where he was given the ideal property, why could he not settle here?” 前之花果山，水簾洞，鐵板橋，宛然五行具備。是心猿一出世，而即賜於天造地設之家當矣，此中何嘗不可安身乎？(XYZDS 60).

<sup>17</sup> XYZDS 299.

<sup>18</sup> From a rough index compiled by the author.

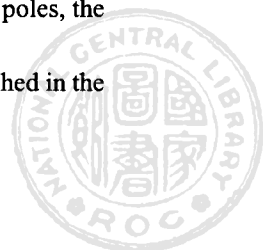
<sup>19</sup> In Chapter 62 the commentary cites Number 52 of the central fascicle of *Wuzhen pian* to draw comparisons to “gold light” used in both texts (XYZDS 517; cf. Wang Mu 116).

<sup>20</sup> The denominational tendency suggested by the particular text has been noted by Catherine Despeaux and others, who also note the polemics of the subsequent commentaries of *Xiyou ji* (61–75).

<sup>21</sup> Xu Shen (d. 120 CE) claims the original graph refers to a person on an altar ascending into the spirit world (“真”). See also Wieger 101.

<sup>22</sup> Robinet describes the goal of Internal Alchemy: “One must seize upon and live this moment of eternity, the moment when the world was born, before the division into two, the time of the coincidence of the two opposed poles, the unknowable human *summum* (*renzhiji* [人之極])” (219).

<sup>23</sup> *Wuzhen pian* develops these terms from foundations established in the



*Santong qi* 參同契 (Harmony of the three) by Wei Boyang 魏伯陽 (ca. 142).

<sup>24</sup> XYZDS 353.

<sup>25</sup> XYZDS 390.

<sup>26</sup> From Chapter 51, XYZDS, 442.

<sup>27</sup> XYZDS 442.

<sup>28</sup> XYZDS 13.

<sup>29</sup> Shao Ping postulated the likelihood that an oral tradition of “false” phases existed previous to 1663, the publication date for *Xiyou zhengdao shu* (conversation with author).

<sup>30</sup> David Rolston, for example, expresses Jin Shengtian’s position as “revolutionary,” including an idea “of something approaching self-authenticity,” a reading which is concealed under protestations of innocence (*Traditional Chinese Fiction* 25–26, 41).

<sup>31</sup> Martin Huang 42.

<sup>32</sup> See Lu 113.

<sup>33</sup> XYZDS 812.

<sup>34</sup> 子不語怪，力，亂，神 *The Analects* 7.21 (Lau 88).

<sup>35</sup> *Shuihu zhuan huiping ben* 17.

<sup>36</sup> The heroes of the marsh in *Shuihu* begin the narrative as star spirits descended to earth.

<sup>37</sup> These are characters from the text which follow the introduction of the characters to the troupe of pilgrims in precisely reverse order.

<sup>38</sup> XYZDS 68.

<sup>39</sup> Jin maintains the supernatural element of the tale as he received it, but incorporated it into a prologue (or “wedge” *xiezi*) that “quarantined” the supernatural (Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction* 29).

<sup>40</sup> XYZDS 344.

<sup>41</sup> Terms used in XYZDS include 借 A 以寓 B / 假 A 以寓 B (to borrow A to replace (lit. “reside”) B) or a reduced form of these terms (*jie* 借, *jia* 假, *yu* 寓). The commentary can also comment on the “overall meaning” *dazhi* 大旨 in reference to the author’s intention—usually a form of allegorical interpretation.

<sup>42</sup> Pauline Yu’s discussion gives an excellent overview of the distinction (22–23).

<sup>43</sup> XYZDS 23.



<sup>44</sup> See XYZDS 259.

<sup>45</sup> *Liqiu*, monsters who appear in the shape of child relatives, from *Lüshi chunqiu* (Annals of Mr. Lü). These figures, which do not appear in the text of *Xiyou ji*, are particularly dangerous because they appear in human form, closer to the un-figured world of quotidian life.

<sup>46</sup> “Qin Mirror” refers to a legendary mirror belonging to Qin Shihuang, which revealed the intentions of those reflected in it. “Rhinceros horn of Ox Island” is an idiomatic reference to ability to discern weakness or falsehood, after an account of a certain Wen Jiao 溫嶠 in the *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of the Jin dynasty) who lit a rhinceros horn to light his way through a fording place, the glare from which torches revealed spirits under the water.

<sup>47</sup> XYZDS 797.

<sup>48</sup> Monkey is the only character in the narrative who is never deceived by a counterfeit form.

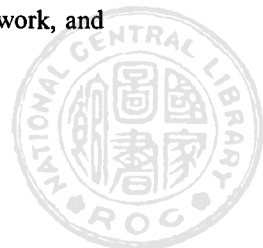
<sup>49</sup> 白香山詩云：“周公恐懼流言日，王莽謙恭下士時。” 恐懼，謙恭，總廢棄人本想，必待風雷拔木，赤烏幾幾，而周公之本相始現；進鳩奪壘，腐肉切舌，而後王莽之本相實現耳 (XYZDS 179).

<sup>50</sup> Eskildsen discusses this at length, but the term is not the same used here.

<sup>51</sup> Chen writes in his opening comments: “It is pitiful . . . the way preceding critics (*qianren*) have twisted and confused things. . . . All they can do is trace and dissect the structure into a tangled mess.” 但惜前人素解紕謬，聾聵已久，不得不逐節剖證，以指迷津 (10).

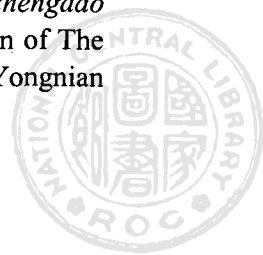
<sup>52</sup> There may be other elements of a denominational argument in addition to the rejection of personal authenticity, as Catherine Despeaux argues. No slight should be imputed to the subsequent commentaries. Each seems to take *Xiyou ji* in the highest possible regard, as a text revelatory of those things most precious to their conceptions of the cosmos (see below).

<sup>53</sup> Zhang Shushen describes many years of pondering before concluding that *Xiyou ji* was a text to train neo-Confucians in the arduous task of sincerity (*cheng* 誠) (2). Zhang Hanqing writes that it is the story of the Three Teachings united in a heart intent on saving the world (*jiushi zhi xin* 救世之心) (Zhu 337). Han Jingzi attempts to follow after and improve on Chen Shibin’s work, and reads it in no less dramatic terms (Zhu 363).

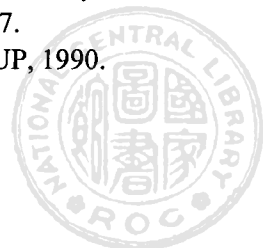


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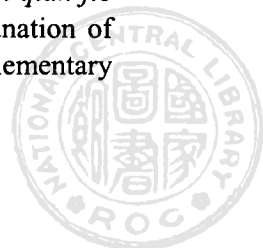
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**Dr. Carl A. Robertson** teaches Chinese language and literature at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, USA. He received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at the University of Oregon in 2002. He holds a master's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and a BA from Brigham Young University. His interests include narrative and lyric theory, literature and religion, poetry and calligraphy.

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## 解開寓言的結：《西遊証道書》中的真與假

### 摘要

二十世紀的《西遊記》批評史環繞在故事系列之寓言性質的爭辯。在文本根據缺乏進一步的證據，及把《西遊記》視為多重涵義故事的批評日益增多的情況下，早期的《西遊記》評點如今越發有意義。第一本主要的評點《西遊証道書》深入主張對《西遊記》作寓言式的閱讀，但卻使用了兩個表面上看來互不相容的原始文本：張伯端的《悟真篇》及金聖嘆的《水滸傳》評點。《西遊証道書》對這些原始文本有不同程度的依賴，並經由使用真與假的相對語提供了終極的可相容性。這些用語的意義與指涉及其相互補足性在評點中有不同的解讀，但是作為表意的流動詩學 (fluid poetics)，真的概念為成道之我的寓言式的依賴，及因之而生的由讀書而成道的概念，建立了堅實的基礎。嗣後對於真及其相互補足的用語，例如在《紅樓夢》中發現的，可能是由《西遊証道書》的成道架構獲得有力的貢獻。

關鍵字：《西遊記》，《西遊証道書》，(小說) 評點，寓言，譬喻，張伯端，金聖嘆，道家的成道，真實，真，假，詩學

