Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies

Tian, Xiaofei. "Mastering Meaning: Self-Exegesis in Medieval Chinese Poetic Writings". *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies*, vol. 5 (2024): 77–105.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.25365/jeacs.2024.5.tian

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mastering Meaning: Self-Exegesis in Medieval Chinese Poetic Writings

Xiaofei TIAN
Harvard University, USA
stian@fas.harvard.edu

Self-exegesis or auto-commentary (*zizhu*) represents the author's conscious, active control over the meaning and reception of their work and blurs the boundary between author and reader, text and paratext. Although not unique to the Chinese tradition, self-exegesis has been prevalent in classical Chinese poetry from the late eighth century onward. Indeed, one of the formal features that distinguish classical poetry from modern vernacular poetry is that the latter is largely devoid of authorial annotations. This article reconstructs a history of auto-commentary in medieval poetic writings through the eighth century and examines the implications of adding exegetical notes to one's own writings.

自註是作者對於其作品的意義和接受所作的有意識的、主動的控制，模糊了作者與讀者、文本和副文本之間的界限。自註並非中國傳統所獨有，但自八世紀晚期起，它在詩歌創作中日益流行，以致中國古典詩歌與現代白話詩歌在形式上的一個主要區別就在於後者缺乏詩人的自註。本文重構中古詩歌傳統中作者自註的歷史，並討論自註對解讀詩人作品的意義和影響。

Keywords: auto-commentary, medieval Chinese poetry, Xie Lingyun, Yan Zhitui, Du Fu, poetry

關鍵詞： 自註，中國中古詩歌，謝靈運，顏之推，杜甫，賦

The Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies (JEACS) is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by the EACS, www.chinesestudies.eu. ISSN: 2709-9946

A commentary is a verbal construct that purports to aid the comprehension of a text and bridge the gap between the author and the reader. Broadly construed, it may be said to encompass lexical glosses, explanatory paraphrases, intermittent clarifying notes of various sorts, and even paratextual material such as prefaces and colophons. But when an author sets out to write a commentary on their own work, the auto-commentary complicates the simple, clear-cut division of author and reader. It both delimits and expands interpretative possibilities.[1]

The practice of self-exegesis is not unique to Chinese literary tradition. Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) is commonly recognised as the European poet who played a foundational role in the emergence of self-commentary in Western literature (Ascoli, 175–226). Chinese poetic self-exegesis first became prominent in the genre of *fu* 賦 (rhapsody or poetic exposition) in the fourth and fifth centuries. Beginning in the late eighth century, it was increasingly prevalent in the lyric *shi* 詩 poetry, and eventually became so common in classical poetry that it is often taken for granted by a reader or a scholar. The Chinese term is *zizhu* 自註, literally self-annotation, which refers to authorial notes inserted in a text and does not include a poem's preface (*xu* 序). Such notes typically appear in a smaller font size than the text of the poem does; they can be frequently found under the title of a poem (like the *rubriche* or rubrics in Italian Renaissance lyric poetry) or at the end of a poem, because in the vertical format of a premodern manuscript, those are the two places where one can most easily insert a note. There is also the interlinear note, which is inserted between the lines within a poem. These notes usually serve two purposes: 1) they identify the *who*, *when*, and *where* in a poetic line and offer details that cannot be inferred from the text, and 2) they offer lexical and phonological glosses for unusual words or phrases, be it a dialectal usage or some regional flora or fauna. Self-commentary in rhapsodies, as we will see, can also perform an explanatory function to elaborate textual meaning, but generally speaking the auto-annotations in *shi* poetry tend to be informative rather than elucidative.

While *shi* titles, especially the long, narrative ones, can provide crucial background information about the compositional circumstances of a poem, an authorial note inserted into the poem can often explain a local detail in ways in which its title cannot. A note is always composed after a poem is written and speaks strongly to a poet's concern with the audience, whereas one cannot unequivocally claim the same about a poem's title. This point of difference is particularly salient in a social poem addressed to a specific recipient: the addressee needs no notes to understand the references made in the poem, but a reader other than the addressee most likely will. There are numerous social poems in the premodern Chinese tradition, but the existence of auto-commentary in those poems points to a concern going beyond the compositional occasion and beyond the poet's immediate social circle. In all self-exegeses, authors actively insert their voice into a text and insist on a specific understanding—a *proper* understanding—of a line, a stanza, or a work as a whole, through which they attempt to exert authority

[1] The original version of this paper was presented at the international conference on "Du Fu (712–770): China's Greatest Poet," held at Harvard University on October 28–30, 2016. I would like to thank my discussants, Paul W. Kroll and Ding Xiang Warner, as well as the conference participants and audience, for their comments. Subsequently, I presented a revised version of this paper at "Commentary - A Text - A Gesture: A Workshop on Commentarial Traditions in China and Japan," organised by Marie Bizais-Lillig, at the University of Strasbourg, and also at the University of Zurich and Goethe University Frankfurt. I am grateful to the audiences, to Marie Bizais-Lillig, as well as to the two anonymous reviewers, for their helpful feedback. I thank Alison Hardie for her careful editing. All remaining errors and imperfections are solely mine.

over a text and control its meaning, although sometimes, as we will see, self-exegesis complicates a text rather than clarifies it.

Self-exegesis is one of the formal features distinguishing classical Chinese *shi* poetry from modern vernacular poetry, which is largely devoid of authorial notes. It deserves more critical reflection than it has received so far.[2] In this essay I discuss self-exegesis in medieval Chinese poetic writings with these questions in mind: When did self-exegesis first become notable and eventually become a habitual practice in the Chinese poetic tradition, and what does it signify? How does a self-exegesis function in its interaction with the poetic text, and what does that tell us about how the author envisions each form?

In what follows I will first reconstruct a history of auto-commentary in early medieval poetic writings as we know it, with a focus on two famous rhapsodies that come with a self-commentary: Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains" ("Shanju fu" 山居賦) and Yan Zhitui's 顏之推 (531–590s) "*Fu* on Viewing My Life" ("Guanwosheng fu" 觀我生賦). I read the latter in juxtaposition with Yu Xin's 庾信 (513–581) "Lament for the South" ("Ai Jiangnan fu" 哀江南賦), the other well-known autobiographical rhapsody from the late sixth century by an author with similar experiences who nevertheless did *not* choose to add a self-exegesis to his work. The essay concludes with a consideration of Du Fu's 杜甫 (712–770) poetry, which marks the beginning of the popularity of writing self-exegesis for one's *shi* poetry.

Self-Exegesis in the Early Poetic Tradition

In China, commentarial tradition was first developed as a way of teaching and instructing students in a given classic, and the preservation of an early text is often inseparable from the particular version of that text used and transmitted by a certain exegetical tradition, such as in the case of the *Shi jing* 詩經 (Puett 2017, 112–22). Thus, commentaries had started out as a necessity. Yet, as the texts with commentaries acquired canonical status as "classics" *jing* 經, commentaries themselves gained a certain cultural cachet. The difficulty of a text that makes commentary a requisite can thus be turned around and become a pedagogical necessity used to the advantage of the commentator. The existence of a commentary underscores a text's need for commentary, confers authority on the person producing the commentary, and makes the commentator indispensable. At the same time, the judgment of a text as deserving a commentary and the very act of adding a commentary to a text both elevate the text to a noteworthy classic and rescue it from the threat of sinking into oblivion, effectively shining a light on it. Enenkel and Nellen consider an important function of the early modern commentaries in European literatures as "that of awarding *auctoritas* to the source text, upgrading it to the status of an

[2] My attention was drawn to auto-commentary in classical Chinese poetry when I was working on my book *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China*. I discussed the striking juxtaposition of the poet's explanatory notes with poetic lines in late Qing poems on travel to foreign countries in a section titled "Tension between Poetry and Prose" in Chapter Five (Tian 2011, 219–24). When I was drafting this article in 2016, while there had been some Chinese-language studies of self-exegesis related to individual poets, and there had of course been quite a few studies of the great early medieval poet Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) auto-commentary in connection with the examination of his "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains" (see below), I was not aware of any study in English dedicated to the general topic of *zizhu*, self-exegesis, in the Chinese poetic tradition, from its first appearance in early medieval China through the late eighth-century when it first became a widespread form.

authoritative text" (Enenkel and Nellen 2013, 15). This observation is pertinent to the Chinese commentarial tradition as well.

It is perhaps only natural that the first belletristic genre that would acquire a commentary was *cifu* 辭賦, rhapsody or poetic exposition, known for its exhaustive, hyperbolic descriptions of an encyclopedic nature and its difficult lexicon. The received version of the *Chuci, Chapter and Verse Commentary to the Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句), was compiled by Wang Yi 王逸 (fl. 130–140) on the basis of an earlier *Chuci* anthology by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE). Following Liu Xiang's model, Wang Yi added his own work, "Nine Longings" ("Jiu si" 九思), at the end of the anthology, which, like other pieces in the anthology, is preceded by a biographical sketch of the author. It also has a commentary appended to it. The commentary adheres to the basic form of annotation established elsewhere in the anthology. That is, the commentator explains the meaning of each line by largely paraphrasing and pointing out the symbolic meanings of plant, animal, and other imageries. For instance, to the line "I long for the numinous moisture so as to apply ointment to my hair" 思靈澤兮一膏沐, the commentary states: "'Numinous moisture' is heaven's nourishing ointment; it is a symbol of benevolent governance" 靈澤, 天之膏潤也, 蓋喻德政也 (*Chuci buzhu*, 17.320).

Wang Yi's anthology became the basis of Hong Xingzu's 洪興祖 (1070–1135) *Supplementary Commentary to the Lyrics of Chu* (*Chuci buzhu* 楚辭補註), which gives us the received *Chuci* texts today. Hong Xingzu made a suggestive comment on the "Jiu si" commentary: "Wang Yi must not have written an auto-commentary. I am afraid that it was composed by someone like his son Yanshou or such" 逸不應自為註解, 恐其子延壽之徒為之爾 (*Chuci buzhu*, 17.314).

Instead of convincing anyone that the commentary was written by Wang Yanshou "or such", Hong Xingzu's speculation merely succeeds in calling attention to the authorship of the commentary. That Hong never explained why he believed Wang Yi "must not" have written an auto-commentary does not help his case. Could Wang Yi be the first known author of an auto-commentary?

"Nine Longings" has a preface, the last part of which reads:

> Since Yi shared the same homeland with Qu Yuan, his feelings of lamentation and sorrow for him differ from other writers. He secretly admired the ways of [Liu] Xiang and [Wang] Bao and composed an ode with the name of "Nine Longings" to expand on [Qu Yuan's] verses. There has been no exegesis for it, and so a commentary about its meaning and intent is given.
>
> 逸與屈原同土共國， 悼傷之情與凡有異， 竊慕向、褒之風， 作頌一篇， 號曰九思， 以裨其辭. 未有解說， 故聊敘訓誼焉 (*Chuci buzhu*, 17.314)。

The author of the commentary is unclear: it could be Wang Yi, or it could be "I"—whoever it was who wrote the preface. The modern scholar Huang Linggeng argues that the preface was written by someone from the fifth century or later, and that the commentary was not likely by Wang Yi, either (2002,

54–55).[3] One could take issue with Huang's claim, but ultimately there is no definitive proof either way.

Had Wang Yi indeed been the first author of an auto-commentary, that would have made him an outlier anyway, for *fu* commentary first flourished in the third century, and there is no concrete evidence that writers were annotating their own *fu*.[4] A story claims that Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–305), the author of the three famous *fu* on the capitals of the Three Kingdoms, annotated them himself but attributed the annotations to contemporary scholars: "The notes and annotations were all produced by Si himself; he wanted to promote his writings, so he attributed the annotations to contemporaries" 凡諸註解, 皆思自為, 欲重其文, 故假時人名姓也.[5] Though the story is not considered credible, the claim clearly suggests that a commentary, especially when written by prominent scholars, increases the value of a work.

The first known exegesis of *shi* poetry in the five-syllable line, which at the time was still a relatively lowbrow form, was also produced in the third century. This was Ying Zhen's 應貞 (d. 269) commentary on Ying Qu's 應璩 (190–252) "One Hundred and One Poems" ("Baiyi shi" 百一詩), although both the commentary and most of the poems have been lost.[6] Ying Qu's poems supposedly commented on current affairs and were all written in the five-syllable line. His contemporary readers had allegedly found the poems shocking and strange, with some even saying that they should be burned.[7] Considering that Ying Zhen was Ying Qu's son, his commentary might represent an attempt to lionise his father's unconventional writings by evoking Han scholars of the Classics transmitting exegeses to their descendants as part of the "family learning" (*jiaxue* 家學). The next known commentary on five-syllable-line poetry appeared nearly two centuries later; this is the exegesis of Ruan Ji's 阮籍 (210–263) poetic series, "Singing My Cares" ("Yonghuai shi" 詠懷詩), authored by literary luminaries Yan Yanzhi 顏延之 (384–456) and Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513), and partially preserved in Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commentary on the literary anthology *Wen xuan* 文選.[8]

We find, however, little evidence that early medieval poets wrote notes for their own poetry, an observation that nevertheless must be qualified by the fact that our sources in this regard are extremely limited. More than ninety-five percent of pre-Tang poets' collections are no longer extant (Lu 1983, 3:2787); pre-Tang literary collections are largely reconstituted from later encyclopedias and anthologies, which would not necessarily include original authorial notes. Judging from the handful of pre-Tang literary collections passed on to us, such as that by Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427), we note

---

[3] I am obliged to one of the anonymous reviewers for alerting me to Huang's writing on this point.

[4] It is uncertain if the commentary on Yu Chan's 庾闡 (fl. 317) "*Fu* on Yangdu" 揚都賦 was written by himself or by another person (see *Shuijing zhushu*, 14.1249).

[5] From *Zuo Si biezhuan* 左思別傳, cited in Liu Xiaobiao's 劉孝標 (462–521) commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* 世説新語 (Shishuo xinyu, 4.247).

[6] It is recorded as being in eight scrolls in *Sui shu* 隋書 "Bibliography" 經籍志 (Sui shu, 35.1084). See David R. Knechtges' discussion (2010, 173–99).

[7] Zhang Fangxian 張方賢 (fl. late third c.) states this in his *Chuguo xianxian zhuan* 楚國先賢傳, cited in Li Shan's 李善 (d. 689) commentary to *Wen xuan* (Wen xuan, 21.1015). Zhang Fangxian should be Zhang Fang 張方 (Sui shu, 33.974).

[8] See a discussion of this commentary in Stephen Owen, "Introduction" to *The Poetry of Ruan Ji* (Owen 2017, 9–10).

that the function of providing compositional background is often fulfilled by a poem's title and occasionally its preface.

One interlinear note from pre-Tang poetry that looks like an authorial note is from the poet Jiang Zong's 江總 (519–594) poem, "Written upon Entering the Qixia Monastery at She Hill" ("Ru Sheshan Qixia si" 入攝山棲霞寺), preserved in *An Expanded Collection of Propagating the Light* (*Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集) compiled by the monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) (Lu 1983, 3:2583).[9] In his preface to the poem, Jiang Zong dates the writing of the poem to the sixteenth day of the eleventh month in the *yisi* year (December 12, 585), and reminisces about his annual visit to the monastery between 582 and 584. The poem contains the following lines:[10]

高僧跡共遠　I share the distant tracks with the eminent monks;
勝地心相符　my heart is in tune with the lovely place.
樵隱各有得　Woodcutters and recluses may each have their gains,[11]
丹青獨不渝　cinnabar and blue pigments alone do not change.

An interlinear note appears after the last line: "The monastery still has the portraits of Masters Lang and Quan, Mr. Ming Sengshao the Buddhist layman, and Assistant Governor Xiao Shisu" 寺猶有朗、詮二師、居士明僧紹、治中蕭眘素圖像.[12] It is likely that the poet himself inserted this note to explain what he meant by the line "cinnabar and blue pigments alone do not change".

In contrast with *shi* poetry, we see the first explicitly documented instance of auto-commentary in rhapsodies in the early fifth century. Xie Lingyun, an avid reader of *Chuci*, wrote a self-exegesis for his poetic exposition, "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains". The *fu* text and its lengthy auto-commentary are preserved in *The Song History* (*Song shu* 宋書), which was compiled and presented to the throne in 488 by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513).[13] It constitutes an important link in the early history of self-exegesis.

---

[9] This poem appears in the tenth-century compilation *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 under the title "Expressing My Intent on Visiting Qixia Monastery Again" 再遊棲霞寺言志 (233.1174). The note is missing there, but *Wenyuan yinghua* is not always consistent in including authorial notes.

[10] All translations in this article are mine unless otherwise noted.

[11] This is a reference to a citation in Zang Rongxu's 臧榮緒 (415–488) *Jin shu* 晉書: "He Qi said, 'Hu Kongming once said, 'A recluse is in the mountains; a woodcutter is also in the mountains. With regards to being in the mountains, they are the same; but the reasons why they are in the mountains are different.' Isn't this so!" 何琦曰, 胡孔明有言, 隱者在山, 樵者亦在山, 在山則同, 所以在山則異, 豈不信乎 (Wen xuan, 30.1397).

[12] The Buddhist monk Falang 法朗 (507–581) had studied with the monk Sengquan 僧詮 at She Hill. Ming Sengshao (d. 483) was a recluse residing at She Hill and donated his house there to establish the Qixia Monastery. Xiao Shisu (d. 509) had served as Assistant Governor of South Xuzhou Prefecture and finally retired to live at She Hill.

[13] Shen Yue states, "[Xie Lingyun] composed '*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains' and annotated it himself" 作山居賦並自注 (Song shu, 67.1754). An earlier *fu* on astronomy with a commentary that might have been written by the author himself will be mentioned below.

Xie Lingyun's Auto-Commentary

Xie Lingyun was a descendant of an old aristocratic family that had held great power in the Eastern Jin. After Song replaced Jin, he supported the wrong prince in the power struggle at court and was exiled to a provincial post. In 423, he resigned from his post and lived in retirement on his enormous home estate in Shining 始寧 (in modern Zhejiang). It was during this period that he wrote "*Fu* on Dwelling in the Mountains".[14]

Any appraisal of Xie Lingyun's self-commentary must be situated in a discussion of the poetic exposition itself.[15] This poetic exposition is, in many ways, a conscious assertion of the values of private life against the values of public life and celebrates the author's prominent clan lineage and aristocratic identity as opposed to the claims of the state and to imperial power.[16] The estate not only has all manner of mountains and waters in a wide geological variety, but also contains a dizzying array of animals, fish, plants, and trees. Such an exhaustive description evokes the Han imperial hunting parks extravagantly depicted by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (ca. 179–117 BCE) as a microcosm of the Han empire, even as Xie Lingyun himself is quick to make a distinction between his *fu* and those Han works: "My present rhapsody is not about the splendours of capitals, palaces, hunting expeditions, and beautiful entertainers, but rather mountains and flatlands, plants and trees, waters and rocks, crops and farming" 今所賦既非京都宮觀遊獵聲色之盛, 而敘山野草木水石穀稼之事 (*Song shu* 67.1754). Yet, through deliberate differentiation and negation, the author paradoxically constructs a relationship between the Han rhapsodies on imperial parks and his paean to his mountain estate precisely because he explicitly denies it.

Cheng Yu-yu makes a convincing argument regarding the author's physical movement through landscape and his reliance on personal empirical experience to spatially define landscape being fundamentally different from the general, abstract, often imaginary statements about things and spaces in Han rhapsodies (Liu 2009, 77–80). This is undoubtedly true, but physical movement through landscape is also a way of marking ownership over landscape, in much the same way as a monarch displays and asserts authority by journeying through the territories of his kingdom. On a rhetorical level, what is described by Wendy Swartz as an "exhaustive enumeration of things and activities on his estate" cannot but recall the rhetorical device deployed in those grand Western Han poetic expositions

---

[14] Francis A. Westbrook translated the entire piece in "Landscape Description in the Lyric Poetry and 'Fuh on Dwelling in the Mountains' of Shieh Ling-yunn", PhD diss., Yale University, 1972. A partial translation by David R. Knechtges is included in his paper, "How to View a Mountain in Medieval (and Pre-medieval) China", delivered at the Workshop on the Kinetic Vision in Medieval China at Harvard University (May 2007). The paper, titled "How to View a Mountain in Medieval China", subsequently appeared in Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry, Vol. 6 (published by Center for East Asian Research at McGill University, 2012). Its Chinese version is entitled "Zhongguo zhonggu wenren de shanyue youguan: Yi Xie Lingyun 'Shanju fu' weizhu de taolun" 中國中古文人的山岳游觀: 以謝靈運山居賦爲主的討論 (Liu 2009, 1–63).

[15] A note should be made about my analysis of Xie Lingyun's auto-commentary in this section, which was first written in 2016. In 2021, after I heard Professor Olga Lomová's presentation on Xie Lingyun's rhapsody at the 23rd Biannual Conference of the European Association of Chinese Studies, I shared my paper with her; however, I did not receive her paper until after I had finalised and submitted mine. Hence, this current section has basically remained what it was without the benefit of Professor Lomová's insight.

[16] See Saito Mareshi's discussion (Saito 1990, 61–92). Cheng Yu-yu 鄭毓瑜 further points out the political and economic power contestation with the state ownership of land inherent in the management of the great aristocratic estates in the Southern Dynasties in "Shenti xingdong yu dili zhonglei: Xie Lingyun 'Shanju fu' yu Jin Song shiqi de 'shanchuan', 'shanshui' lunshu" 身體行動與地理種類: 謝靈運山居賦與晉宋時期的"山川"、"山水"論述 (Liu 2009, 77–80).

(Swartz 2015, 22). For instance, as Westbrook observes, by using the formula of four directions to depict the estate, Xie rhetorically places his mountain dwelling "at the center of the cosmos—the same way the Han *fuh*-writers did the emperor's court" (Westbrook 1972, 218). Indeed, even as the author personally moves among the mountains and streams, many of the activities that put the human agent in an intimate, interactive relation with nature are performed by his retainers and slaves, not by the aristocratic poet himself. This comes through clearly in Xie Lingyun's own words:

山作水役　Work in the mountains and labour on the rivers
不以一牧　take more than one overseer;
資待各徒　I rely on my various retainers,
隨節競逐　who through the seasons compete to outdo one another.
陟嶺刊木　They climb the peaks to fell trees;
除榛伐竹　they remove the bushes and cut down bamboos;
抽筍自篁　they cull the shoots from bamboo clusters;
擿箬于穀　they pick rattan leaves from valleys.
(*Song shu* 67.1766)

The list of the retainers' tasks goes on and on. As Xie Lingyun's *Song shu* biography states, "Because of his grandfather and father's extensive estate, Lingyun enjoyed great wealth. He had numerous slaves, and his family subordinates and retainers numbered hundreds. He had them boring through hills and draining lakes, and engaged them in ceaseless projects" 靈運因父祖之資, 生業甚厚, 奴僮既眾, 義故門生數百, 鑿山浚湖, 功役無已 (*Song shu* 67.1775).

Xie Lingyun also shows his estate as being superior to imperial parks because of his spiritual attainments and his refusal to hunt and kill:

顧弱齡而涉道　I recall that I embarked on the Way from a tender age,
悟好生之咸宜　and I recognized the universal appropriateness of loving life
(*Song shu*, 67.1763–764).

This forms an explicit contrast with the imperial hunting expeditions depicted in Han rhapsodies. Furthermore, in addition to plants and animals in water and on land, his home estate is a resting place for eminent monks. The master of the estate, discussing metaphysical doctrines with the Buddhist clergy or reading and writing in his lodge, is a transcendental figure who infuses his dwelling with profound spirituality and sophisticated culture (*Song shu*, 67.1764–765, 67.1770). When Xie Lingyun says that he does not depend on anything from outside (*budai waiqiu* 不待外求), he means it: his estate is replete with both physical and spiritual resources (*Song shu* 67.1769). In this, his estate is even

better than the imperial parks, but one would do well to keep in mind that its identity is based on its *difference from them*.

Thus, one cannot fully appreciate Xie Lingyun's piece without knowing the tradition it both inherits and departs from. Xie Lingyun is indeed reacting against the earlier *fu* praising the empire, but he does so by applying the imperial rhetorical mode of political sovereignty and ownership to his own family estate. His wide-ranging investigation of the sprawling estate, his measurement and management of local sites and products, are analogous to the kind of land survey performed by an imperial official or, better yet, to the oversight of a peripatetic sovereign on an inspection tour of the empire. I contend that much of his self-commentary should be read in these terms, for one of its most noteworthy aspects is the author's detailed representation of local topography and his supply of specific referents for general, vague, and categorical statements, a rhetorical move to name and map the place and bring out its identity.

Take the following passage for example:

近東則	Near to the east are
上田下湖	Upper Fields, Lower Lake,
西谿南谷	Western Gorge, Southern Valley,
石塘石滂	Stony Barrier, Stony Spurt,
閔硎黃竹	Min Millstone, and Yellow Bamboo.
決飛泉於百仞	Bursting forth are waterfalls cascading for hundreds of yards;
森高薄於千麓	standing in rows are tall groves ranged over a thousand foothills.
寫長源於遠江	The waters pour forth their long flow into a distant river;
派深蹊於近瀆	a tributary from a deep spring feeds a nearby irrigation ditch.[17]

Below is a part of the commentary to the above lines:

> Upon entering Western Gorge, one finds Stony Barrier. Stones form an obstruction here, and thus it is called Stony Barrier. Stony Spurt is located east of Western Gorge. If one travels nine *li* south of the county, on both sides there are steep precipices several hundred feet high, and water cascades down from above. Near the outer gorge there is a tiered sluiceway extending ten-plus *li*. The entire way the cascading current swiftly rushes, and all around it are sheer cliff walls and green bamboo.
>
> 入西谿之裏，得石塘，以石為阻，故謂為石塘。石滂在西谿之東， 從縣南入九里，兩面峻峭數十丈， 水自上飛下。 比至外谿， 封墱十數里， 皆飛流迅激， 左右巖壁綠竹。

[17] Translation by David R. Knechtges, with slight modifications (Liu 2009, 34–35).

The *fu* text lists eight local place names, followed by four lines of landscape description that could easily be applied to many scenic places. The commentary excerpt explains the name of Stony Barrier, pinpoints the specific location of Stony Spurt, and provides details for the couplet about waterfalls and groves, which turn out to be bamboos. By supplying and preserving such detailed local knowledge, Xie Lingyun substantiates and anchors an otherwise general and categorical literary language of the *fu* genre in the specifics of the time-space reality. Commentary becomes a means of individuation.

Individuation does not stop with places and things, for by offering a commentary on his own work, the author is purporting to give the fullness of himself as an individual, an all-encompassing expression of what he experiences, what he means, and what he knows. When adding a commentary to the primary text, what an author does is to create dual voices: one rushes along in lyricism, while the other slows down to elaborate, explain, supplement, and rationalise; *only when the two discourses are combined do we hear the totality of the author*. Together the dual voices form a mutually complementary duet, each having equal importance to the whole piece.

A good example is the opening sentence of the rhapsody and its commentary. The *fu* text begins with the image of reading and recuperating from illness:

> Master Xie was lying indisposed at the top of the mountain. He browsed the books passed down by the ancients, which were in perfect accord with his own mind. With a sense of relaxation and detachment, he smiled and said....
>
> 謝子臥疾山頂，覽古人遺書，與其意合，悠然而笑曰……

The language here is plain and direct. No psychological astuteness is required for any reader to grasp why Master Xie, that is, Xie Lingyun, is smiling, as he finds himself agreeing with the ancient authors he is reading. It thus comes as a surprise that the author deems it necessary to add a commentary here:

> When there is mutual understanding of a principle, one feels comfort and pleasure. <u>The books passed down by the ancients are in perfect accord with his own mind</u>, which was why he smiled. Sun Quan, too, once said this to Zhou Yu: "Gongjin, your mind and Our mind are in perfect accord."
>
> 理以相得為適。古人遺書，與其意合，所以為笑。孫權亦謂周瑜：公瑾與孤意合。

As we can see, the underlined section of the commentary repeats the *fu* text verbatim and appears quite redundant. The repeated section is framed by a general statement about "mutual understanding" (*xiangde* 相得), and a seemingly random quotation from the Wu ruler Sun Quan (182–252) addressing his general Zhou Yu (175–210).[18] The Sun Quan quotation ends with the phrase "in perfect accord" (*yihe* 意合), marking the third time this phrase appears from the *fu* text to the commentary.

[18] Cited in Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451) commentary to Sanguo zhi 三國志 (Sanguo zhi, 54.1262).

Why explain something that needs no explication? The reason is certainly not hermeneutical. Instead, I suggest that it is to add a new layer of meaning to the primary text by underscoring a peculiar relation between the reader (i.e., Master Xie) and the past authors: Master Xie relates to the ancients not only as an equal, but, as he further extrapolates, as a lord to his vassal. In other words, instead of being passively influenced, enlightened, or awed by wisdom from the past, he is in perfect command, his understanding stemming from his own mind. The word *shi* 適 ("comfort and pleasure") used in the commentary contrasts with his indisposition (*woji* 臥疾) in the primary text and echoes the "smile" highlighted through repetition. The self-image thus presented through the text and the commentary is a man in complete control of himself despite his professed ailment, *ji*, a general category for illness that is never specified, mentioned only to be ostensibly elided.

Ironically, if an auto-commentary offers the reader the fullness of meaning intended by the author, then it is in fact the auto-commentary that renders the primary text inadequate, for, as the above example demonstrates, the reader would not know that the primary text requires an explication until the author obligingly provides it. Thus, strangely, *an author's self-commentary produces a lack in the primary text that would otherwise not have been there*, and in this way Xie Lingyun's auto-commentary constitutes an essential part of the whole work rather than being secondary to a primary text.

Below is another superb example of Xie Lingyun's innovative use of the commentarial form:

近西則	To the near west:
楊賓接峯	Yang and Bin touch the peaks;
唐皇連縱	Tang and Huang are connected to the tracks;
室壁帶谿	the Chamber and the Wall surround the ravine,
曾孤臨江	Ceng and Gu overlook the river.
竹緣浦以被綠	Bamboos grow along the riverbanks,
	covering them with green;
石照澗而映紅	rocks shine forth in the stream,
	a reflected red.
月隱山而成陰	The moon is concealed by the hills, forming darkness;
木鳴柯以起風	trees sound their branches, a wind rising.

The commentary to this section reads:

> 楊中、元賓，並小江之近處，與山相接也。唐皇便從北出。室，石室，在小江口南岸。壁，小江北岸。並在楊中之下。壁高四十丈，色赤，故曰照澗而映紅。曾山之西，孤山之南，王子所經始，並臨江，皆被以綠竹。山高月隱，便謂為陰；鳥集柯鳴，便謂為風也。

> Yangzhong and Yuanbin are both close to the Little River and touch the mountains.[19] Tang and Huang emerge from the north. The Chamber refers to Stone Chamber, which is to the south at the mouth of the Little River; the Wall is the north bank of the Little River. They are both below Yangzhong. The Wall is forty zhang high and has a ruddy hue, hence I say, "[rocks] shine forth in the stream, a reflected red." The place to the west of Ceng Hill and south to Gu Hill is where Master Wang had started building.[20] Both hills overlook the river and are covered with green bamboos. The hills are tall and conceal the moon, and one mistakenly thinks that it is dark and cloudy; birds come to roost and branches rustle, and one mistakenly thinks that a wind is rising.

The first part of the commentary locates, like a GPS system, Yang and Bin, Tang and Huang, Chamber and Wall, as well as Ceng and Gu. Then the author proceeds to explain what he means by "a reflected red". The explanation exposes a potential misunderstanding on the part of the reader that the red might be the colour of some flowers or vegetation. This is a misunderstanding that would not have been recognised as such and thus could be said not to have existed had the poet not provided the commentary.

A similar move is made in the commentary to the last line, "trees sound their branches, a wind rising" 木鳴柯以起風. It is possible to understand this line as simply saying that a rising wind rustles the branches and causes the trees to sing. The commentary, however, disrupts the easy, commonsensical reading by offering a new element, namely birds. How do birds fit in the picture here? It turns out that birds alighting on the branches cause a rustling noise, which the poet has mistakenly thought to be the sound of wind (*wei wei feng* 謂為風). One could say that the commentary *clarifies* what the poet really means; but one could also say that the commentary *creates* a misunderstanding that would not have been there, by adding a wrinkle to the primary text. In fact, the commentary gives rise to new confusion, for many scholars seem to have misconstrued the commentary and are led to believe that the sound from the trees is of birds singing.[21] Nowhere, however, does the poet ever state that the birds are singing. The original text states simply and clearly: "birds roost, and branches sing" 鳥集柯鳴. In other words, birds coming to roost on the branches cause a rustling noise, leading to the poet's misperception of a rising wind.

Xie Lingyun's sleight of hand encourages us to reconsider the writing process and the relationship of a text and its commentary when the commentary is composed by the same author. Normally, we

---

[19] The Xiao River or Little River is the Sheng Stream 嵊溪.

[20] Westbrook believes that it might be Wang Hongzhi 王弘之 (365–427) (Westbrook 1972, 226). Wang Hongzhi, a member of the Langye Wang clan and a well-known recluse of his day, built his house in Shining and was befriended by Xie Lingyun (*Song shu*, 93.2282). Later in the fu commentary Xie Lingyun also mentions that Wang Jinghong 王敬弘 (360–447), a cousin of Wang Hongzhi, had built a Buddhist monastery to the far south of Xie's estate (*Song shu*, 67.1759).

[21] Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書 (1910–1998), who is largely critical of Xie Lingyun's auto-commentary, even suggests that *mu ming ke* 木鳴 ("trees sound their branches") be emended to *niao ming ke* 鳥鳴柯 ("birds sing on the branches") (Qian 1979, 4:1289). But that is clearly not what the commentary says. Westbrook's translation of the commentary likewise betrays a misconstruction of what is making sound: "Birds gather on branches and sing; I say the wind rises" (Westbrook 1972, 220). Also see Knechtges (Liu 2009, 39).

assume the secondary nature of a commentary, which is always written *after* the primary text. But in the case of a self-commentary, we must ask: which is primary, and which is secondary? Can the two be adequately distinguished in their composition? Would the poet have written the *fu* text the way he did if he did not know he could deploy a self-commentary to complicate and enrich the meaning of the primary text? What Xie Lingyun's self-exegesis shows is that, when an author gives an auto-commentary, the author finds two equally important voices performing a duet together, each playing its own part in the totality of the whole work.

An Important Precursor and a Negative Model

An older contemporary of Xie Lingyun, Zhang Yuan 張淵 (fl. 383–429), a northern astronomer, wrote a "*Fu* on Viewing Celestial Phenomena" ("Guan xiang fu" 觀象賦), which is preserved in his *Wei shu* 魏書 biography along with a commentary (*Wei shu*, 91.2107–117).[22] Unlike in Xie Lingyun's case, the authorship of the "Guan Xiang fu" commentary is not clearly stated, although Zhang Yuan himself is the most likely candidate. The commentary contains glosses of words and interpretive paraphrases of lines, but most of the notes explain the constellations and astronomical lore in the *fu* text. At the beginning of the *fu*, Zhang Yuan makes a reference to *The Classic of Changes* (*Yi jing* 易經) to demonstrate the importance of observing celestial objects. The citation from *The Classic of Changes* finds a later echo in a landmark work in the self-exegetical tradition, namely Yan Zhitui's "*Fu* on Viewing My Life". Yan's title is taken from the "Viewing" ("Guan" 觀) hexagram in *The Classic of Changes*: "Here the viewing is of my life: a noble man will be without misfortune" 觀我生, 君子無咎 (*Zhou Yi zhushu*, 3.60).

A descendant of a northern émigré family who had fled the non-Han invasion to south China in the early fourth century, Yan Zhitui grew up under the peaceful reign of Liang Emperor Wu 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) but was caught up in the devastating Hou Jing 侯景 Rebellion in the mid-sixth century. After the new Liang capital Jiangling (in modern Hubei) fell to the army of the Western Wei in 555, he was taken to the capital Chang'an in the north as a captive. Upon hearing that the Northern Qi court allowed detained southern courtiers to go home, he risked his life escaping to Qi in 556. But soon after he arrived, his former home state Liang was replaced by the Chen regime, and he ended up staying at the Qi court. In 577, the Qi fell to the Northern Zhou, and Yan Zhitui was taken back, once again as a captive, to Chang'an, where he wrote the autobiographical "*Fu* on Viewing My Life".[23]

Yan Zhitui's self-commentary forms a sharp contrast with Xie Lingyun's, because it is strictly limited to annotating events large and small, both in national political life and in his own life, in what may be

[22] Zhang Yuan is also known as Zhang Shen 張深 (such as in Bei shi 北史) or Zhang Quan 張泉 (such as in Li Shan's commentary to Wen xuan) to avoid the taboo name of the Tang founding emperor Li Yuan 李淵.

[23] The rhapsody along with its self-commentary is included in Yan Zhitui's biography in Li Baiyao 李百藥 (564–648), comp. Bei Qi shu 北齊書 (Bei Qi shu, 45.618–26). For a recent English translation with collated Chinese text, on which the text and translation in this article are based, see Family Instructions, 462–515. Subsequently I will identify the citations by line numbers.

called a historical mode. For instance, when narrating the beginning of his public career, an important moment in the life of an early medieval male elite member, he writes:

> 未成冠而登仕 Before reaching the age of capping, I had already entered service;
>
> 財解履以從軍 having just "taken off the shoes," I joined the army (ll. 77–78).[24]

To these two lines he appends a note:

> At the time I was nineteen *sui*. My first appointment was Right Attendant of the princedom of Xiangdong [Xiao Yi, later Emperor Yuan or Xiaoyuan]. Later, I was additionally appointed Adjutant to the Defender-general of the West in the Section of Justice due to military merit.
>
> 時年十九，釋褐湘東國右常侍，以軍功加鎮西墨曹參軍。

The information in this note, as well as in the preceding one, is not crucial for understanding the primary text. It is *extra* content added to provide a fuller portrait of the author, and it is crucial for a work of autobiography. Indeed, one's place of origin, the age at which one enters service, and the name of one's first office are exactly the sort of information that constitutes essential elements in a standard biography in a dynastic history—and, as we will see below, Yan Zhitui's *Bei Qi shu* biography made good use of such information from the *fu*. Previously, the most obvious type of autobiographical writing is the authorial self-account (*zixu* 自敘/序) included in a work of history, a work of "masters' literature", or a literary collection. Yan Zhitui manages to write an autobiography in a rhapsody by utilising self-commentary to provide prosaic biographical details, which would not have been possible to give in the *fu* genre.

If Yan Zhitui explicates a phrase, it is not to gloss the meaning of a lexically difficult term but to explain why he chooses to use it. For example, when offering an account of how the Jin ruling house and the elite, including his own ancestors, were driven south by non-Han invaders in the early fourth century, he writes: "Thereupon my Lord and King moved east; / thereupon my ancestor soared to the south" 吾王所以東運, 我祖於是南翔 (ll. 15–16). He finds it necessary to clarify the reference "my Lord and King", so he inserts a note here:

> Jin Zhongzong [Jin Emperor Yuan, r. 322–324] crossed the Yangzi River to the south as the Prince of Langye. I, Zhitui, am originally from Langye, therefore I refer to him as "my Lord and King."
>
> 晉中宗以琅邪王南渡，之推琅邪人，故稱吾王。

[24] "Taking off the shoes" refers to becoming an official, as one must take off one's shoes when entering the palace to see the ruler.

Yan Zhitui's ancestors were from Langye (in modern Shandong), and he considered himself as a native of Langye, even though by his time his family had resided in the south for many generations.

Sometimes Yan Zhitui provides details to substantiate the categorical language of the *fu*. For instance, in ll.197–98 Yan describes the captives' journey to the Western Wei capital Chang'an after the fall of Jiangling:

牽痾疹而就路	Debilitated by illness, I embarked on the journey,
策駑蹇以入關	whipping on the lame nag, I entered the pass.

To the first line above he appends a note saying, "At the time I was suffering from beriberi" 時患腳氣; to the second line, "The officials were given feeble donkeys and emaciated horses" 官給疲驢瘦馬. In ll.289–92, narrating the fall of the Northern Qi, he writes:

六馬紛其顛沛	The Six Steeds stumbled and fell into disorder;
千官散於犇逐	as a thousand officials dispersed in flight.
無寒瓜以療饑	There were no cold melons to cure hunger;
靡秋螢而照宿	nor autumn fireflies to illuminate camping at night.

To the last couplet he appends a note saying, "It was in the last month of winter, so we had none of those things" 時在季冬, 故無此物. Without the notes, it is possible for the reader to read "illness" (*ezhi*) and "lame nag" (*nujian*) as broad, categorical references, and "cold melon" (*hangua*) and "autumn firefly" (*qiuying*) as mere poetic hyperboles. Yan Zhitui, however, wants to ensure that we understand these terms as pointing to real referents in the physical world external to the text. The poetic images and rhetorical gestures in the *fu* text are thus actualised and specified by the notes.

Some of the details provided in the self-commentary are Yan Zhitui's personal experiences that would not have been known to anyone but himself and those immediately involved. For instance, in ll.113–168, he relates how he was captured and almost executed by Hou Jing's army, but was saved unexpectedly by a stranger:

幸先主之無勸	Fortunately there was no Former Ruler to urge my execution,
賴滕公之我保	instead I had a Lord of Teng who preserved my life.[25]

> I was a captive in Hou Jing's army and was supposed to be executed. Wang Ze, the Director of Hou Jing's Branch Department of State Affairs, with whom I had had no

[25] The Former Ruler refers to Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223), who had urged Cao Cao to kill the captured general Lü Bu 呂布 (d. 199). The Lord of Teng was Xiahou Ying 夏侯嬰 (d. 172 BCE); he saved Han Xin 韓信 (d. 196 BCE) from execution, who was to play a crucial role in the founding of the Western Han.

prior acquaintance, intervened on my behalf more than once. Thus I was able to escape death, and was taken back to the capital as a prisoner.

之推執在景軍，例當見殺。景行臺郎中王則初無舊識，再三救護，獲免，囚以還都。

剟鬼錄於岱宗　　From the register of ghosts at Mount Tai my name was taken off,

招歸魂於蒼昊　　my soul was summoned back from the gray heavens.[26]

At the time I had already taken off my robe [i.e., was getting ready to die], but was saved at the last minute.

時解衣訖而獲全。

荷性命之重賜　　I owed to that man my second life,

銜若人以終老　　I will be grateful to him till the end of my days.

Yan Zhitui makes two textual references in ll.113–14, but instead of identifying the allusions, he uses the self-commentary to re-narrate the incident in plain prose and, most importantly, gives the name and office of the person who saved his life. Once again, this is an *additional* piece of information that is not crucial to the general narration of events but to the history of an individual: the identity of his benefactor had a great deal of significance to Yan Zhitui, and, in his eyes, deserved to be recorded. Yan's biography in *Bei Qi shu* duly makes a note of this incident and mentions Wang Ze's name, a piece of information that is almost certainly gleaned from Yan's self-commentary to his rhapsody (*Bei Qi shu*, 45.617).

If Wang Ze's identity is something that could have been known only to Yan Zhitui and a small circle of people directly involved, Yan's *fu* also relates many national events that would surely have been part of public knowledge. In the latter case, one is compelled to ask why Yan Zhitui considers it important to incorporate them in his *fu*. For instance, ll.67–70 describe the internal feuding of the Liang princes:

子既殞而姪攻　　A son was destroyed, and a nephew was assaulted;

昆亦圍而叔襲　　the elder brother was besieged, and the uncle was attacked.

褚乘城而宵下　　Chu climbed over the city wall and descended in the evening;

杜倒戈而夜入　　Du turned their halberds around and surrendered at night.

The commentary reads:

[26] It was believed that the souls of the dead would go to the underworld at Mount Tai.

> Because [the Commandery Prince of] Hedong [i.e., Xiao Yu 蕭譽] did not provide warships, Emperor Xiaoyuan [Xiao Yi 蕭繹, Liang Emperor Yuan] sent his son and heir, Fangdeng, to replace him as governor of Xiangzhou. When the heir's army arrived, Hedong did not have time to mount a defense. Trusting the counsel of crooked advisors and coveting Hedong's women and wealth, the heir planned to launch an attack. Hedong became desperate and fought back, and the heir was killed. Emperor Xiaoyuan was so enraged that he sent Bao Quan to besiege Hedong. Subsequently [the Commandery Prince of] Yueyang [i.e., Xiao Cha 蕭詧, Xiao Yu's younger brother] declared he would go on a great hunting trip, leading his army to attack Jingzhou in hope of lifting the siege of Xiangzhou. At the time, Du An of Xiangyang and his brothers resented that they were being coerced and had not been told the truth, nor did they approve of this campaign, so they surrendered to Xiaoyuan with eight thousand soldiers in the middle of the night. Thereupon Yueyang fled. Chu Xianzu on Hedong's staff went to join Yueyang, and Xiangzhou fell.
>
> 孝元以河東不供船艦，乃遣世子方等為刺史。大軍掩至，河東不暇遣拒。世子信用羣小，貪其子女玉帛，遂欲攻之，故河東急而逆戰，世子為亂兵所害。孝元發怒，又使鮑泉圍河東。而岳陽宣言大獵，即擁眾襲荊州，求解湘州之圍。時襄陽杜岸兄弟怨其見劫，不以實告，又不義此行，率兵八千夜降，岳陽於是遁走。河東府褚顯族據投岳陽, 所以湘州見陷也。

These events, complicated as they were, would have been known to many of Yan Zhitui's contemporaries, not only because some lived through the chaotic times themselves as Yan himself did, but also because many historical accounts were circulating at the time.[27] One may argue that Yan Zhitui, writing his rhapsody in Chang'an after 577, was thinking of his northern audience who may not have been familiar with what had transpired in the south almost a quarter of a century before; but it is equally likely that he was thinking of the younger generation such as his own sons, to whom he addressed book-length "family instructions", and of a future readership.

The concern with readership in a self-commentary can be demonstrated by a negative example and a counterpart of Yan Zhitui's "*Fu* on Viewing My Life": the famous autobiographical rhapsody from the late sixth century, "Lament for the South", composed by the great writer Yu Xin 庾信 (513–581). Like Yan Zhitui, Yu Xin was a former Liang courtier; he was sent on a diplomatic mission near the end of the Liang, was detained in the north, and never returned to the south. One of Yu Xin's best-known and most influential works, "Lament for the South" is a long, elegiac rhapsody relating the events around the fall of the Liang and Yu Xin's experience through these chaotic times. It is just as filled with national and personal events as Yan Zhitui's *fu*, and at the same time is much more densely allusive. Indeed, it is so packed with textual references that the erudite scholar Qian Zhongshu opines

[27] Several eye-witness accounts were in circulation at the time, such as Xiao Shao's 蕭韶 *Taiqing ji* 太清紀, and Xiao Dahuan's 蕭大圜 *Huaihai luanli zhi* 淮海亂離志. There was also Liu Fan's 劉璠 *Liang dian* 梁典 and He Zhiyuan's 何之元 work of the same title, detailing Liang history (*Sui shu*, 33.958).

that Yu Xin ought to have written a self-commentary for it (Qian 1979, 4:1287). But Yu Xin never did. Instead, we learn that, not long after Yu Xin's death, Yang Yong 楊勇 (568–604), the ill-fated crown prince of the Sui, ordered Wei Dan 魏澹 (ca. 540s–600s) to produce a commentary on Yu Xin's literary collection, from which the exegesis of "Lament for the South" eventually went into circulation independently in a single scroll (*Sui shu*, 58.1416).[28] Two more commentaries on "Lament for the South" were written in the eighth century, showing how popular the *fu* was and how much it was in need of a commentary for an average reader to fully appreciate its content.[29] This does not necessarily mean that Yu Xin was indifferent to his readers; rather, I suggest that he was writing with a special audience in mind: namely, his fellow members of the southern diaspora who shared his traumatic experience and his language of southern court literature.[30] This audience did not need a commentary to understand the rhapsody. Yu Xin, however, does not seem to have been particularly concerned with future readership.

Yu Xin's *fu* must have struck a chord in Tang readers after the An Lushan Rebellion shattered the peace and prosperity of the empire and many were displaced in the ensuing civil wars. Cui Lingqin 崔令欽, the author of a commentary on "Lament for the South", wrote that in his post-Rebellion sojourns he reminisced about his former life in the capital "that was nevermore" 不可復得.[31] One of Yu Xin's most avid readers was Du Fu, who famously wrote, "Yu Xin's life is the most dismal of all: / in twilight years his poems and *fu* stirred the River Pass" 庾信生平最蕭瑟, 暮年詩賦動江關.[32] In the last poem he wrote before his death, Du Fu describes himself as "a man of sorrow, just like Yu Xin" 哀傷同庾信.[33] Yet there is a profound difference between the two poets: while Yu Xin might not be writing with a future audience in mind, Du Fu certainly was. Du Fu would not have failed to notice the need for a commentary in reading Yu Xin's poetic works, and he clearly did not want to leave it to others to provide notes for his writings. Thus, he took Yan Zhitui to be his model and largely adopted the historical mode of Yan's auto-commentary. In what follows I will turn to Du Fu's authorial notes, many of which, as we will see, are crucial to the interpretation of the poems.

---

[28] Recorded as one scroll with Wei Yanyuan's 魏彥淵 commentary in Zheng Qiao's 鄭樵 (1104–1162) *Tong zhi* 通志 (70.826). Yanyuan was Wei Dan's courtesy name.

[29] The commentaries were by Zhang Tingfang 張庭芳 (fl. 718), who also wrote a commentary on the 120 "poems on objects" 詠物詩 by Li Jiao 李嶠 (ca. 645–714), and Cui Lingqin 崔令欽 (fl. 710s–750s), the author of *Jiaofang ji* 教坊記, a nostalgic memoir about court music before the An Lushan Rebellion of 755 (*Xin Tang shu*, 60.1622).

[30] I discuss this point in fuller detail in my article, "Yu Xin's 'Memory Palace'" (Tian 2018, 124–57).

[31] Cui's preface to "Jiaofang ji" (*Quan Tang wen*, 396.2962).

[32] "Singing My Feelings at Ancient Sites" 詠懷古蹟 No. 1 (*Du Fu quanji*, 7:3842). English translation is Owen's, with slight modification (Owen 2016, 4:360–61). Du Fu's poems and their titles in this article are Owen's translations with occasional modifications.

[33] "Fengji zhouzhong fuzhen shuhuai sanshiliu yun fengcheng Hu'nan qinyou" 風疾舟中伏枕書懷三十六韻奉呈湖南親友 (*Du Fu quanji*, 10, 6093; Owen 2016, 6:232–33).

Annotating the Self

Xie Lingyun and Yan Zhitui are important precursors in annotating their own rhapsodies, but prior to Du Fu, self-commentary in *shi* poetry had not been, as far as we know, a widespread practice. Scholars have noted that Du Fu was a unique case in habitually adding notes to his poems that are, furthermore, not limited to identifying people and places or glossing terms (Wei 2013, 152–53; Xu 2010, 32–38). From the late eighth century on, authorial notes in *shi* poetry became increasingly common. Du Fu, whose posthumous fame was first established by the mid-Tang or the turn-of-the-century generation, had no doubt played an important part in the phenomenon.[34]

The *Songben Du Gongbu ji* 宋本杜工部集, based on Wang Zhu's 王洙 (997–1057) edition (with 1039 preface) and printed by Wang Qi 王琪 in 1059, is the oldest Du Fu edition we have and includes the largest number of authorial notes. Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 (1906–1991) collected 148 notes from the edition, which are published as "Du shi zizhu jilan" 杜詩自註輯覽 (Xiao 2006, 487–98). Xie Siwei 謝思煒 gives a detailed discussion of these notes in his article, "*Songben Du Gongbu ji* zhuwen kaobian" 宋本杜工部集註文考辨, confirming Du Fu's authorship (Xie 2003, 98–113).[35]

Many of Du Fu's poems are addressed to family members, friends, and acquaintances on social occasions. In more than one case we see that the notes were added long after the poems were composed, and we realise that in doing so he was, like Yan Zhitui, not thinking of the poems' immediate recipients, but thinking of readers at a distance and/or from the future who would be unfamiliar with the compositional circumstances. For example, the poem "The Misery of the Rains: Respectfully Sent to the Duke of Longxi, and also Presented to Summoned Scholar Wang" ("Kuyu fengji Longxigong jiancheng Wang zhengshi" 苦雨奉寄隴西公兼呈王徵士) has a note: "The Duke of Longxi is [Li] Yu, [later] Prince of Hanzhong; the Summoned Scholar is Wang Che of Langya" 隴西公即漢中王瑀，徵士瑯琊王澈 (*Du Fu quanji*, 1:476; Owen 2016, 1:163). This poem is dated to 754, but Li Yu, a member of the royal family, was made Prince of Hanzhong in 756. "Lament for Spring" ("Shangchun" 傷春), dated to 764, has a note: "Langzhou in Ba is remote, and only after I finished lamenting for spring did I learn that the palace had been recovered before spring began" 巴閬僻遠, 傷春罷始知春前已收宮闕 (*Du Fu quanji*, 6:3047; Owen 2016, 3:318).

Du Fu's auto-commentary can be roughly divided into three kinds. The most common kind is to actualise and specify a general poetic term or image in the same way as Yan Zhitui does, by which means he weaves an intricate picture of poetic representation and the external world. Just to cite one example: in the poem "On the Same Topic" ("Chongti" 重題, i.e., "A Lament for Director Li" 哭李尚書), he writes, "Again I look at the Crown Prince of Wei, / of Advisors he is short Ying and Liu" 還瞻魏太子, 賓客減應劉 (*Du Fu quanji*, 10:5607; Owen 2016, 6:6–7). The Crown Prince of Wei

[34] Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) were both prolific in producing self-annotations (see Yu 2016, 148–56; Zha 2015, 85–93).

[35] Xu Mai's article, cited above, also gives a focused discussion of the methods of distinguishing authorial notes from editorial notes.

was Cao Pi 曹丕 (187–226), and Ying Yang 應瑒 and Liu Zhen 劉楨 were well-known writers on his staff who both died in the great plague of 217 and were famously mourned by Cao Pi. It is conventional to use "Ying and Liu" as a poetic designation of talented men of letters, but an authorial note appended to this couplet says, "His Excellency [Li Zhifang 李之芳, d. 768] had served as Director of the Ministry of Rites and passed away in the post of Advisor to the Crown Prince" 公歷禮部尚書, 薨於太子賓客. That is, instead of taking "Ying and Liu" as a general reference to eminent writers, Du Fu makes sure we know it is a *precise* reference. Such gestures at the world outside the text constitute an intriguing rhetorical move that insists on the precision and verisimilitude of the poetic language. The notes scattered throughout the poet's corpus thus serve as constant reminders that the poems are inextricably woven into the fabric of the life lived by the poet.

A poem "Sent to Supernumerary Li Bu the Fourteenth: Twelve Couplets" ("Ji Li shisi yuanwai bu shieryun" 寄李十四員外布十二韻) urges a friend to postpone going to an official post (*Du Fu quanji*, 10:5517; Owen 2016, 3:388–91):

	名參漢望苑	Your name was included in Han's Bowang Park,
	職述景題輿	your office continues Jing's writing on the coach.[36]
	巫峽將之郡	In the Wu Gorges, on your way to your district,
4	荊門好附書	please send a letter at Jingmen.
	遠行無自苦	Aren't you letting yourself suffer on your far travels?
	內熱比何如	How has your "inner heat" been recently?
	正是炎天闊	Right now the blazing weather is widespread,
8	那堪野館疏	how can you bear rustic inns being few and far between?
	黃牛平駕浪	At Yellow Ox Gorge you will ride level on the waves,
	畫鷁上淩虛	your painted cormorant prow will mount up over the void.
	試待盤渦歇	Wait until the whirlpools end,
12	方期解纜初	only then plan to unmoor your boat.
	悶能過小徑	If in your doldrums you stop by my little path,
	自為摘嘉蔬	I'll pick some fine vegetables for you.
	渚柳元幽僻	The willows on the isle have always been secluded,
16	村花不掃除	I won't sweep away the village flowers.
	宿陰繁素柰	Long cloudiness has made the pale crab-apple flourish,

[36] Bowang Park was established for the Crown Prince by Han Emperor Wu and subsequently used as a reference to the crown prince's establishment, to which the Remonstrance Secretary belonged. The "coach with Jing's writing on it" is a reference to the office of vice-prefect.

過雨亂紅蕖 passing rains have made a tangle of red lotuses.
寂寂夏先晚 In silence the summer wanes early,
20 泠泠風有餘 cool and brisk, there is plenty of breeze.
江清心可瑩 When the river gets clear, it can polish the mind,
竹冷髮堪梳 when bamboo grows chill, the hair can be combed.
直作移巾几 Just transfer your headband and armrest here,
24 秋帆發弊廬 then in autumn you can set sail from my humble cottage.

The poem is a seductive letter inviting a friend to spend the summer with the poet at a place where things are cool and leisurely, in glaring contrast with the "blazing weather" (*yantian* 炎天) and "inner heat" (*neire* 內熱) that beleaguer the business traveller. "Inner heat" evokes a quotation from a *Zhuangzi* story: Lord Zhuliang of Chu, upon being sent on a mission to Qi, said, "I received the king's command in the morning, and I am drinking icy water in the evening—how I suffer from inner heat" 今吾朝受命而夕飲冰, 我其內熱與 (*Zhuangzi jishi*, 2.152). Here "inner heat" describes Zhuliang's feelings of anxiety about his mission and seems quite pertinent to Li Bu's circumstance. But Du Fu appends a note to the poem: "Recently [Li Bu was] appointed Remonstrance Secretary and Vice-Prefect of Wanzhou; although he has been bedridden, I have heard that he has already readied his baggage" 新除司議郎兼萬州別駕, 雖尚伏枕已聞理裝. Thus, instead of being a mere allusion to an earlier text and a reference to the stress of a government job, the "inner heat" turns out to be used also as a medical term for an imbalance of the humours in Li Bu and, in light of the real-life situation, becomes a double entendre. This further brings home the witticism of line 20, "Cool and brisk, there is plenty of breeze" 泠泠風有餘, which, once we learn of Li Bu's ailment, becomes resonant with a line from the well-known "*Fu* on the Wind": "Clear and pure, cool and brisk, [the breeze] heals disease and cures hangover" 清清泠泠, 愈病析酲.[37] The poem thus very much depends on the authorial note to be turned from a verse epistle serving the immediate social function of persuasion into a literary work whose full meaning can be sustained for a broader audience.

The second kind of Du Fu's self-annotations serves to contextualise the humour of a poem. In contrast with the poet's stereotypical image as someone weighed down by the fate of the dynasty or the sufferings of the people, many of Du Fu's poems are social pieces that are light-hearted and playful: *xi* 戲, a word that is often featured in the poem title. Yet one of the most context-bound social phenomena is humour, which is socially, culturally, and linguistically determined, and often proves difficult or impossible to explicate. Some of Du Fu's notes are designed to provide the necessary context to sustain the humour of the poem for readers beyond the direct recipients. In a series of three poems, entitled

[37] Attributed to Song Yu 宋玉, anthologised in the canonical Wen xuan (13.583).

"Playfully Written, Presented to the Prince of Hanzhong" ("Xiti jishang Hanzhong wang" 戲題寄上漢中王), each contains lines about drinking (*Du Fu quanji*, 9:2674–680; Owen 2016, 3:152–57).

From #1:

忍斷杯中物　How can one bear to break off that thing in the cup,
祇看座右銘　and just look at the inscription right of the seat?
不能隨皂蓋　I cannot follow the black carriage awning,
自醉逐浮萍　I will get drunk alone, going with the duckweed adrift.

From #2:

蜀酒濃無敵　Shu ale has no competition,
江魚美可求　River fish are tasty and easy to get.
終思一酩酊　In the end I just want to get dead drunk,
淨掃雁池頭　and to sweep clean your Wild Goose Pool.

From #3:

尚憐詩警策　You still love my poems' daring lines,
猶記酒顛狂　but do you still recall my wildness in ale?

The poet appends a note to the poem explaining, "At the time the Prince was in Zizhou. When he first arrived, he had stopped drinking, and the poems playfully give an account of this" 時王在梓州, 初至, 斷酒不飲, 篇中戲述. The constant mention of drinking in these poems may seem innocuous to a casual reader, but when we learn of the prince's decision to quit alcohol, we realise that the poet is teasing the prince relentlessly—hence the "playfulness" (*xi*) in the title. The note thus produces a gap between what we understand and what the note suggests we *should* understand.

For the following poem written in Chengdu, "To Office Manager Cui of Qiongzhou" ("Ji Qiongzhou Cui lushi" 寄邛州崔錄事; *Du Fu quanji*, 6:3172; Owen 2016, 3:372–73), the poet's self-exegesis proves instrumental for us not only to appreciate the humour of the poem but also to comprehend its meaning altogether.

邛州崔錄事　Office Manager Cui of Qiongzhou
聞在果園坊　I have heard is in Fruit Garden Ward.
久待無消息　Long have I waited, but have had no news,

終朝有底忙　what keeps you so busy all day long?
應愁江樹遠　You must worry that my river trees are too far
怯見野亭荒　or fear seeing the wildness of my rustic pavilion.
浩蕩風煙外　Beyond the surging turbulence of smoke in the wind
誰知酒熟香　who knows of the fragrance of my mature ale?

The opening couplet is abrupt and unusual, its function being merely to highlight the contrast of the two place names: Qiongzhou vs. Fruit Garden Ward. A note to "Fruit Garden Ward" states: "Name of a ward in Chengdu" 坊名, 在成都. Unlike Xie Lingyun in his self-commentary, Du Fu does not always explain a local place name in his poems, and when he does take the trouble to do so, there is a reason for it. The point of the first couplet is that, though an official of Qiongzhou, Mr. Cui has taken a break from his duty and come to Chengdu—and he is right there in Fruit Garden Ward—but he has not visited Du Fu, who sends him this poem to tease him affectionately: "What has been keeping you busy all this time?"[38] Without knowing where the ward was, one would not be able to understand the opening couplet, and the rest of the poem would become equally incomprehensible.

Sometimes humour is produced through the note itself. For instance, ll. 13–20 in "Song of Leyou Park" ("Leyou yuan ge" 樂遊園歌) read (*Du Fu quanji*, 1:214; Owen 2016, 1:68–69):

卻憶年年人醉時　I think back on the times that I was drunk year after year;
只今未醉已先悲　today, though not drunk yet, I've already grown sad.
數莖白髮那拋得　These several strands of hair turned white,
　how can I get rid of them?
百罰深杯亦不辭　a hundred forfeits of full cups,
　and still I don't refuse.
聖朝亦知賤士醜　I also know that in this sagely reign
　a low scholar is repulsive,
一物自荷皇天慈　when each single creature in its own right
　receives the grace of Sovereign Heaven.
此身飲罷無歸處　Finished drinking, this body of mine has nowhere to go,

[38] Gu Chen 顧宸 (1607–1674) believed that Mr. Cui was a native of Qiongzhou and had been living in Chengdu at the time (*Du Fu quanji*, 6:3172). This is not likely. For one thing, whenever a person's provincial post is given, it is customary to give the prefecture or commandery where he was serving before giving his surname and the title of his office (e.g., Vice Prefect Jia [Zhi] of Yuezhou 岳州賈司馬, or Prefect Yan the Eighth of Bazhou, 巴州嚴八使君). For another thing, had Mr. Cui been a long-term resident of Chengdu, it would make the second line "I have heard you are in Fruit Garden Ward" sound strange.

獨立蒼茫自詠詩　　I stand alone in a vast expanse chanting a poem to myself.

The poem derives its power from the poignant contrast of a boisterous partying crowd and the melancholy figure of the poet standing alone and chanting poetry. However, a note under the title—"On the last day of the first lunar month, at Administrator Helan Yang's feast, I composed this poem while drunk" 晦日賀蘭楊長史筵, 醉中作— forms an amusing juxtaposition with the line, "today, though not drunk yet, I've already grown sad." It undercuts the poet's melancholy, which, now that we know he wrote the poem while drunk, seems more of a sentimental outpouring under the influence. Without entirely taking away the moving power of the image of the solitary poet, it nonetheless injects a gentle self-irony.

The third kind of Du Fu's self-annotations functions as the key to an interpretation that the reader might not have otherwise arrived at without the poet's note. When this happens locally, the poet, reminiscent of Yan Zhitui, uses *gu* 故 ("therefore") or *gu yun* 故云 ("therefore, I write") to explain the couplet in question, such as in "Wang Unexpectedly Brings Ale and Gao Drops By with Him; We All Used 'Han' as the Rhyme Word" ("Wang jing xiejiu Gao yi tongguo gongyong han zi" 王竟攜酒高亦同過共用寒字; *Du Fu quanji*, 4:2442; Owen 2016, 3:74–75). But often a note helps explain the entire poem, not just one couplet. Take for example the poem entitled "To My Nephew Zuo" ("Shi zhi Zuo" 示姪佐; *Du Fu quanji*, 3:1597; Owen 2016, 2:188–89):

多病秋風落　I was very sick as the autumn wind was waning,
君來慰眼前　you came to console me with your presence.
自聞茅屋趣　Since I heard of the enticements of the reed-thatched house,
只想竹林眠　all I can do is to fantasize resting there in the bamboo grove.
滿谷山雲起　Mountain clouds rise, filling the valley,
侵籬澗水懸　soaking the hedge, a stream hangs in a little waterfall.
嗣宗諸子姪　Of all the sons and nephews of Sizong
早覺仲容賢　it was early recognized that Zhongrong was most worthy.

Sizong was the courtesy name of the poet Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–263), known as one of the "Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove", and Zhongrong was the courtesy name of his nephew Ruan Xian 阮咸, another of the Seven Worthies, here representing Du Zuo. Reading through this poem, we may think of it as a simple thank-you note to a sweet nephew for coming to visit the sick poet, who expresses a desire to live a leisurely life in a rustic setting. But an appended note to the poem changes this perception. The note says: "Zuo's thatched cottage is in Eastern Bough Valley" 佐草堂在東柯穀. Such a note is certainly not intended for the poem's addressee, Du Zuo. Instead, it is for the benefit of the reader. It enables the reader to realise that the thatched house, the bamboo grove, the valley, and the

hedge in the two middle couplets all describe Du Zuo's property.[39] In other words, the poem expresses a wish to move in with his nephew! With this realisation we can see how the poet's praise of the nephew in the final couplet is double-edged: it both expresses appreciation of the nephew's visit and functions as an exhortation of him to live up to the "worthy" image of Ruan Xian.[40]

A more extreme case of the third kind of auto-commentary is the note appended to the title of the poem, "Departing from Qinzhou" ("Fa Qinzhou" 發秦州): "In the second year of the Qianyuan era [759], I left Qinzhou to go to Tonggu County and recorded the journey in twelve poems" 乾元二年自秦州赴同谷縣紀行十二首 (*Du Fu quanji*, 4:1699; Owen 2016, 2:232). This note is crucial in the establishment of the twelve ensuing poems as an interconnected set (*zushi* 組詩) whose overarching structure and meaning entirely depend on the grouping together of the poems (Tian 2020, 93–108). Without the note, it would have been unnatural to treat the poem "Phoenix Terrace" as the final poem of a poetic set recording the poet's journey from Qinzhou to Tonggu, for Phoenix Terrace is a mountain to the southeast of Tonggu and would be out of the poet's way on his journey from Qinzhou to Tonggu (see Yan 1986, 836; Li 2003, 44–51). Indeed, a poem on another Tonggu site, "Myriad Fathom Pool" ("Wanzhang tan" 萬丈潭), seems to match the "Phoenix Terrace" poem so well that some scholars have discussed the two poems together as a "pair" (for example, Huang 2005, 83–128). However, in the early editions of Du Fu's collection, "Myriad Fathom Pool" is always strikingly placed *before* "Departing from Qinzhou," with a note saying, "Composed at Tonggu County" 同谷縣作.[41] The unusual placement of the poem in the collection and its appended note show that the author wanted to ensure the reader knows "Myriad Fathom Pool" was composed at Tonggu and yet would not confuse it with the set of twelve Qinzhou-Tonggu poems.

The note for the Qinzhou-Tonggu series is an explicit instruction for reading; that is, by circumscribing his record of the journey to twelve poems, the poet calls the reader's attention to the range of the poetic travel account and encourages the reader to conceive of these twelve poems *as a whole*. This, however, is not the most typical of Du Fu's auto-commentaries. Nor does Du Fu perform what Sherry Roush describes as "ostensibly interpretive prose intervention" (Roush 2002, 5), such as paraphrasing or glossing. Rather, Du Fu more often than not tends to use authorial notes to offer clarification to the compositional circumstances and, by doing so, promote a reading of the poems, not as self-contained in themselves, but as connected to the world external to the poems, which is nonetheless constructed

[39] Owen's translation uses "your reed-thatched house" and "your hedge" to make it clear that the poet fancies Du Zuo's house (emphasis added). The original Chinese text, however, has no such possessive pronouns and so the reader could easily misunderstand but for the authorial note. I have modified Owen's translation above to preserve the ambiguity of the poem.

[40] The poet's disappointment with Du Zuo, who did not invite his uncle to come and live with him, can be seen in the three poems "Sent after Zuo Returned to the Mountains" 佐還山後寄三首, in which Du Fu chides Du Zuo for being slow in sending grain and asks for "frosty chives" (Du Fu quanji, 3:1600; Owen 2016, 2:188–91). If the reader reads on, just one poem later there is a poem "On an Autumn Day the Recluse Ruan Brings Thirty Bunches of Chives" 秋日阮隱居致薤三十束, in which the poet thanks Ruan for giving him a basket full of chives and says in an apparently pointed manner, "[Ruan] didn't wait for me to send a letter asking" 不待致書求 (Du Fu quanji, 3:1614; Owen 2016, 2:192–93).

[41] See Song ben Du Gongbu ji, 144; Xinkan jiaoding jizhu Du shi, 6. This is contrasted with the ordering of these poems in major Qing dynasty editions, which usually place "Myriad Fathom Pool" after "Phoenix Terrace" and the "Seven Songs Written While Residing in Tonggu County in the Qianyuan Reign" 乾元中寓居同谷縣作歌七首, which mechanically follows the place (and presumed time) of composition but neglects the author's intent.

out of nothing but the poet's auto-commentary. The notes are indices of the fullness of, and a "gesturing to", an unrecoverable "real world". This historical mode of auto-commenting, a legacy of Yan Zhitui's autobiographical *fu*, became the most important type of poetic self-exegesis after Du Fu.

Conclusion

In this article, I review the early history of *zizhu* in the Chinese belletristic tradition, pinpointing important landmarks in the trajectory of self-exegesis for rhapsodies and *shi* poetry, while attempting to delineate some characteristic features of poetic auto-commentaries. From its primary function of glossing, explaining, and generally facilitating comprehension, an author's self-commentary can be used as a powerful tool to add layers of meaning to a text; it can neutralise the generality of categorical poetic language by endowing a text with individuating details, and it can help an author actualise their particular vision for how a text could or should be read. A commentator is, first of all, a reader; but when an author personally takes on the role of a commentator, the boundary between primary text and commentary becomes blurred. Indeed, like in Xie Lingyun's case, a self-commentary might very well impact how the primary text is written.

Chinese poetic auto-commentary became prevalent from the late eighth century on. One of the longest extant Tang dynasty poems, Zheng Yu's 鄭嵎 (fl. 838–859) "Jinyang Gate" ("Jinyang men" 津陽門), has a lengthy self-commentary. As Paul W. Kroll observes, it totals more than 2,200 characters, exceeding by far the poem's 1,400 characters, and "outdoes all its forerunners of any sort" (Kroll 2003, 291, 292). Since most of Zheng Yu's poem is cast in the words of an old man recollecting his youthful experience at the height of the dynasty, the poet's commentary, which is restricted to the old man's lines, strikingly possesses a double identity: it is both an auto-commentary to his own poem and a commentary ostensibly on someone else's words.

The origin of commentaries as attempts to illuminate the classics, *jing*, confers the appearance and status of authority on a text with commentary. The subsequent expansion of exegetical practice from the classics to an author's own belletristic writings indicates the changing ways in which literary self-representations were regarded as well as the increasing importance being attached to them. Prosaic self-exegesis to poetry and rhapsodies is a peculiar mode of self-reflection offered by an author who attempts to read and consider their own work as a reader. It produces a distance from the author within the author, a split of the self. The widespread practice of adding contextualising notes to one's own poems, from Du Fu onward, bespeaks a particular penchant on premodern Chinese poets' part to embed lyric poetry in a historical framework. Instead of being an art separate from life, classical Chinese poetry is itself turned into a self-commentary on the poet's life.

Bibliography

Ascoli, Albert Russell. 2008. *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bei Qi shu 北齊書 (History of the Northern Qi). 1972. Li Baiyao 李百藥. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Chuci buzhu 楚辭補註 (*Supplementary Commentary to the Lyrics of Chu*), compiled by Hong Xingzu 洪興祖. 1983. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Du Fu quanji jiaozhu 杜甫全集校註 (A Collated and Annotated Collection of Du Fu), edited by Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 et al. 2014. 12 vols. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe.

Enenkel, Karel and Helen Nellen. 2013. "Introduction." In *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (1400–1700)*, edited by Karel Enenkel and Helen Nellen, 1–76. Leuven: Leuven University Press.

Family Instructions to the Yan Clan and Other Writings by Yan Zhitui (531–590s), trans. with an introduction and notes by Xiaofei Tian. 2021. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Guo Zhida 郭知達. *Xinkan jiaoding jizhu Du shi* 新刊校定集註杜詩 (A New Collated Edition of Du Fu's Poetry with Collected Commentaries). (1226) 1982. Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju.

Huang Linggeng 黃靈庚. 2002. "'Jiu si' xuwen ji zhu zuoyu liuchao kao" 九思序文及註作於六朝考. *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 古籍整理研究學刊 2: 54–55.

Huang Yizhen 黃奕珍. 2005. *Du Fu zi Qin ru Shu shige xiping* 杜甫自秦入蜀詩歌析評 (Analysis of Du Fu's Poems Moving from Qin to Shu). Taibei: Liren shuju.

Knechtges, David R. 2010. "The Problem with Anthologies: The Case of the 'Bai yi' Poems of Ying Qu (190–252)." *Asia Major* 23.1: 173–99.

—. 2012. "How to View a Mountain in Medieval China." *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry*, Vol. 6. McGill University: Center for East Asian Research.

Kroll, Paul W. 2003. "Nostalgia and History in Mid-ninth-century Verse: Cheng Yü's Poem on 'The Chin-yang Gate'." *T'oung Pao* 89.4–5: 286–366.

Li Jizu 李濟阻. 2003. "Du Fu Longyoushi zhong de diming fangwei shiyi tu" 杜甫隴右詩中的地名方位示意圖 (A Map of Place Names and Locations in Du Fu's Longyou Poetry). *Du Fu yanjiu xuekan* 杜甫研究學刊 2: 44–51.

Liu Yuan-ju 劉苑如, ed. 2009. *Youguan: Zuowei shenti jiyi de zhonggu wenxue yu zongjiao* 遊觀: 作爲身體技藝的中古文學與宗教 (Kinetic Vision: Medieval Literature and Religion as a Bodily Technique). Taibei: Academia Sinica Chinese Literature and Philosophy Institute.

Lu, Qinli 逯欽立, comp. 1983. *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 (Complete Poems of Pre-Qin, Han, Wei, and Northern and Southern Dynasties). 3 volumes. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Owen, Stephen, trans. 2017. *The Poetry of Ruan Ji*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

—, trans. 2016. *The Poetry of Du Fu*. 6 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Puett, Michael. 2017. "Text and Commentary: The Early Tradition." In *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature (1000 BCE–900 CE)*, edited by Wiebke Denecke, Waiyee Li, and Xiaofei Tian, 112–22. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Qian Zhongshu 錢鍾書. 1979. *Guan zhui bian* 管錐編 (Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters). 5 volumes. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Quan Tang wen 全唐文 (Complete Tang Prose), compiled by Dong Gao 董誥 et al. 1987. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Roush, Sherry. 2002. *Hermes' Lyre: Italian Poetic Self-Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Saito Mareshi 斎藤希史. 1990. "居の文學—六朝山水/隠逸文學への一視座" (The Literature of Staying Put: Views Regarding Six Dynasties Landscape/Reclusion Literature). *Zhongguo wenxuebao* 中國文學報 42: 61–92.

Sanguo zhi 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms). Chen Shou 陳壽. 1959. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Shishuo xinyu 世説新語 (A New Account of the Tales of the World), compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶. 1984. Taibei: Huazheng shuju.

Shuijing zhushu 水經註疏 (An Annotated Commentary on *River Classic*). 1989. Li Daoyuan 酈道元, annotated by Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and Xiong Huizhen 熊會貞. Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe.

Song shu 宋書 (History of the Song). (488) 1974. Shen Yue 沈約. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Song ben Du Gongbu ji 宋本杜工部集 (Song Edition of Du Fu's Collection), compiled by Wang Zhu 王洙. (1059) 1957. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan.

Sui shu 隋書 (History of the Sui). (636) 1980. Wei Zheng 魏徵. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Swartz, Wendy. 2015. "There's No Place Like Home: Xie Lingyun's Representation of His Estate in 'Rhapsody on Dwelling in the Mountains'." *Early Medieval China* 21: 21–37.

Tian, Xiaofei. 2011. *Visionary Journeys: Travel Writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-Century China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

—. 2018. "Yu Xin's 'Memory Palace': Writing Trauma and Violence in Early Medieval Chinese Aulic Poetry." In *Memory in Medieval Chinese Text, Ritual, and Community*, edited by Robert F. Campany and Wendy Swartz. Leiden: Brill.

—, ed. 2020. *Reading Du Fu: Nine Views*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Tong zhi 通志 (Comprehensive Record). 1987. Zheng Qiao 鄭樵. Taibei: Shangwu yinshuguan.

Venturi, Francesco, ed. 2019. *Self-Commentary in Early Modern European Literature, 1400–1700*. Leiden: Brill.

Wei Na 魏娜. 2013. "Lun Tang shi zizhu yu qingyun de guanxi" 論唐詩自註與情蘊的關係 (Self-annotation in Tang Poetry and Its Relation to the Emotional Content). *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* 文藝理論研究 4: 152–53.

Wei shu 魏書 (History of the Wei). (554) 2017. Wei Shou 魏收. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Wen xuan 文選 (An Anthology of Literature), compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 with Li Shan's 李善 commentary. 1986. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.

Wenyuan yinghua 文苑英華 (The Finest Blossoms of the Garden of Literature), compiled by Li Fang 李昉 et al. (986) 1966. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Westbrook, Francis A. 1972. "Landscape Description in the Lyric Poetry and 'Fuh on Dwelling in the Mountains' of Shieh Ling-yunn." PhD diss., Yale University.

Xiao Guangqian 蕭光乾, ed. 2006. *Xiao Difei Du Fu yanjiu quanji* 蕭滌非杜甫研究全集 (A Complete Collection of Xiao Difei's Studies of Du Fu). Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe.

Xie Siwei 謝思煒. 2003. *Tang Song shixue lunji* 唐宋詩學論集 (A Collection of Articles on Tang and Song Poetics). Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan.

Xin Tang shu 新唐書 (New History of the Tang). (1060) 1975. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Xu Mai 徐邁. 2010. "Du Fu shige zizhu luelun" 杜甫詩歌自註略論 (A Brief Discussion of the Self-annotation in Du Fu's Poems). *Du Fu yanjiu xuekan* 杜甫研究學刊 3: 32–38.

Yan Gengwang 嚴耕望. 1986. *Tangdai jiaotong tu kao* 唐代交通圖考 (Evidential Research on Tang Dynasty Route Maps). Taibei: Academia Sinica.

Yu Zhiyue 俞芝悅. 2016. "Lun zhong Tang shiren zizhu qi shi tixian de duzhe yishi: yi Bai Juyi Yuan Zhen deng shiren wei zhongxin" 論中唐詩人自註其詩體現的讀者意識: 以白居易元稹等詩人為中心 (On the Awareness of Readership in Self-annotations of Mid-Tang Poets, with a Focus on Bai Juyi, Yuan Zhen, and Others). *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* 文藝理論研究 1: 148–56.

Zha Zhengxian 查正賢. 2015. "Lun zizhu suoshi Bai Juyi shige chuangzuo de ruogan tezheng yu yiyi" 論自註所示白居易詩歌創作的若干特徵與意義 (On the Characteristics and Meanings of Bai Juyi's Poetic Compositions as Manifested in His Self-annotations). *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 2:85–93.

Zhou Yi zhushu 周易註疏 (Annotations and Commentary on the *Classic of Changes*). 1965. In *Songben shisanjing zhushu fu jiaokanji* 宋本十三經註疏附校勘記, compiled by Ruan Yuan 阮元. Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan.

Zhuangzi jishi 莊子集釋 (Collected Explanations of Zhuangzi), compiled by Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩. 1995. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.