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Nota di contenuto	Introduction -- Part I. Xi in early modern context. Theatrum mundi: the theatrical, the playful, the ephemeral; the structuring of Xi in illustrations and a prologue theatrical -- Part II. Playful theatricals : Shuihu zhuan and Xiyou ji. Staging, spectacles, and acts of recognition; Staging, mimicry, and acts of appropriation; Acting, quren, and the authenticity of incongruity; Acting, jiaren, and the artifice of congruity; Viewing : perceptive and fleshly eyes -- Part III. Didactic theater versus playful theatricals : tropes of theater in Zhishang chuntai and Wusheng xi.
Sommario/riassunto	The cultural fascination with and imagination of theater has long been overlooked as an important historical and literary context for reading Water Margin and Journey to the West . This study focuses on the concept of “the theatrical” to read those novels and their commentaries. Imbued with performances, playacting, spectacles, and spectatorship, the early modern theatrical novel borrowed heavily from theater to conflate the theatrical and the real, juggle theatrical roles, persons, and identities, and contest orthodoxies by challenging and appropriating sites of control and authority. This study showcases the theatrical novel’s unique position as a new form of literati self-representation in

response to the destabilizing social and political forces of early modern
China.
