

Body and Self in Tales of the Strange of Medieval China

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Zhiguai 志怪 and *chuanqi* 传奇

- *zhiguai* 志怪: *zhi* ‘to record’, *guai* ‘strange’, ‘anomaly’ → ‘Record of the Strange’, ‘Strange Writing’
- *chuanqi* 传奇: *chuan* ‘to transmit’, *qi* ‘unusual’, ‘strange’ → ‘Tales of the Supernatural’
- *gong’an* 公案 ‘public cases’ → detective stories

Origins and early examples

- *zhiguai* (designates a literary genre since Ming):
 - Later Han Dynasty (25-220), Six Dynasties Period (220-589) material
 - Representative works: *Soushen ji* 搜神 *Records of an Inquest in to the Spirit Realm* by Gan Bao 干宝 (ca. 280-356)
 - *Lieyi zhuan* 列异传 (*Tales of Marvels*, c. 220), Cao Pi 曹丕
 - *Bowu zhi* 博物志 (*Record of Strange Things*, c. 290), Zhang Hua 张华

Origins and early examples

- *chuanqi* 传奇: Tang (618-907) – Song (960-1279)
 - *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (*Extensive Records of the Taiping Era*); 978 AD
 - 7000 stories from Han-Song in 500 *juan* 卷

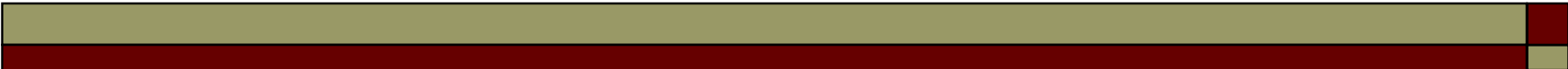
Xu Shen (AD 30-124)

- Wo 我 I/me/myself, refers to one's body as one's self
- Zi 自, self, means nose, and resembles the shape of the nose
- Wu 吾, I, is used to refer to [one's] self, [signified by] the pictographic radical, kou (mouth)
- Ji 己, self, means the centre of [the body] and resembles a human belly.
- Shen 身, I, means the spine [of the human body].

Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove

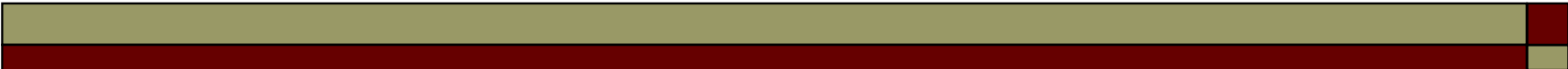


Painting in the Long Corridor of the Summer Palace, Beijing



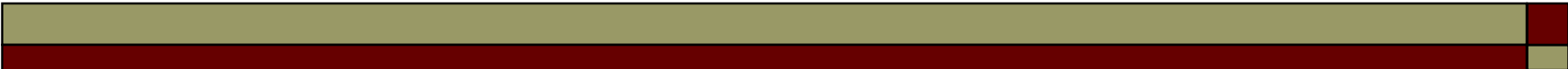
Shishuo xinyu 世說新語 (*New Account of Tales of the World*)

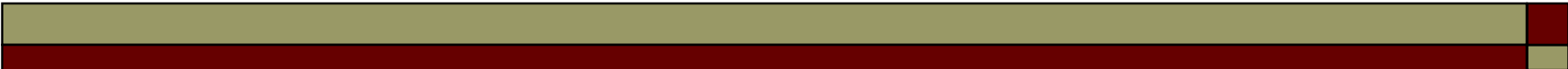
When Huan Wen was young, he and Yin Hao were of equal reputation, and they constantly felt a spirit of mutual rivalry. Huan once asked Yin, "How do you compare with me [wo]?" Yin replied, "I [wo] have been keeping company with myself [wo] a long time; I [wo] would rather just be me [wo]. ("Ranking with refined words"; 9/35)

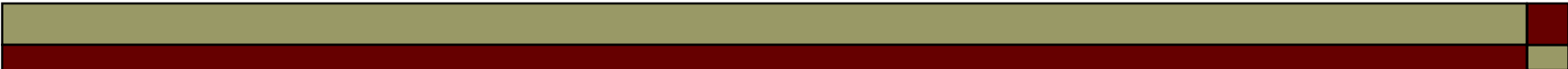


Tang Taizong (r. 626 to 649)

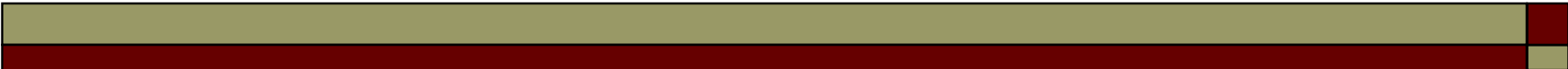
“We use bronze as a mirror to straighten our clothes and cap, the past as a mirror to understand [the causes] of the rise and fall of states, and a person as a mirror to recognize our merits and faults. I have always maintained these three mirrors to prevent myself from making mistakes.” (Qian 2001, p. 369-70)

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- *yan bu jin yi* 言不盡意, “words can not fully express the meaning”
 - *yi xing xie shen* 以形寫神, “to use the body to depict the spirit”

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- ❑ Liu Shao (186?-245?): “A person is born with a body (*xing*), and the body embraces the spirit (*shen*). If we [the observers] can grasp this person’s spirit, we can investigate the principle and completely understand this person’s nature (*xing* 性).”
 - ❑ Xi Kang: “The relation of the spirit to the body is like that of the ruler to the state. When the spirit is disturbed on the inside, the body wastes away on the outside, just as when the ruler is confused above, the state is chaotic below.”
 - ❑ Ge Hong (284-363): “In judging and evaluating a personality, observe the body and then get to the spirit.”

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- On the eve of Xi Kang's execution in the Eastern Marketplace of Luoyang (in 262), his spirit and bearing showed no change (*shenqi bu bian* 神氣不變). (6/2)

 - Wang Hui once went to visit Wang Xizhi's widow, Chi Xuan, and asked, "Haven't your eyes and ears suffered any impairment yet?" She replied, "Hair turning white and teeth falling out belong in the category of the physical body. But when it comes to eyes and ears, they are related to the spirit and intelligence. How could I let myself be cut off from other people. (19/31)



The Subterranean Magic Fungus

“From this moment his hearing and sight became clear; his physical strength increased, his appearance became juvenile, and where his hair had become incomplete/bald it completely grew again like the hair of a young girl. Also, where his teeth had fallen out, new teeth grew in an even row.”

Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍

A single leaf might usher in a disposition/intention (*yi*) and the mere sound of chirping insects can be enough to evoke something in the heart. How much more so when a refreshing breeze and a bright moon appear on the same night, or when we experience radiant sun and a spring forest in the same morning?”